

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS
AT THE DOLET HILLS LIGNITE MINE,
DESOTO PARISH, LOUISIANA¹

by

Robert Rogers²

Abstract: During May 1996, archaeologists from Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. conducted National Register of Historic Places testing at four archaeological sites within the Dolet Hills Lignite Mine, 1998-2002 Environmental/Operations Narrative Area, in DeSoto Parish, Louisiana. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of the investigations at one of these sites, 16DS228, which represents the Third Phase of the Civil War battle known as the Battle of Mansfield, fought on April 8, 1864. The Battle of Mansfield represented the culmination of the Federal Red River Campaign, which was designed to destroy the Confederate Army west of the Mississippi, and to enter and occupy Texas. The Federal strategy was based on a two-pronged attack by the land-naval force under General Nathaniel Banks and Admiral David Porter. The battle was fought in three phases. Initially, the advance segments of the Federal Army encountered Confederate forces commanded by General Richard Taylor, a few miles south of Mansfield. The Confederates overwhelmed the northerners in two successive engagements, forcing them back several miles to the farm of Joshua Chapman, where they made a final stand. During the fighting at Chapman's farm, now known as the Third Phase of the battle, the U.S. Nineteenth Corps succeeded in stopping the Confederate advance, and allowed the badly mauled Federal Army to retreat southward to Pleasant Hill, where they again fought Taylor's Confederates on the following afternoon. The archaeological investigations at the Third Phase battlefield examined an area of approximately 40 acres. Numerous historic maps and records from both northern and southern sources suggested that the investigated area included positions of two brigades of the U.S. Nineteenth Corps. Utilizing metal detectors, the acreage was carefully examined, mostly resulting in the recovery of numerous small arms ammunition. No evidence for human burials was found. Two discrete areas believed to represent Federal Army positions during the Confederate assault were identified.

SITE 16DS228 (THIRD PHASE OF THE BATTLE OF MANSFIELD)

Introduction

The Dolet Hills Mining Venture, Mansfield, Louisiana, contracted Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (EH&A) of Austin, Texas, to conduct cultural resources investigations on 3,889 acres (ac) within the Permit Area of the Dolet Hills Lignite Mine, in connection with the 1998-2002 Environmental/Operations Narrative filing with the Louisiana Office of Conservation.

The study was performed as part of the Dolet Hills Mining Venture's continuing program to comply with federal requirements for the Protection of Historic/Cultural Properties. Thirty previously unrecorded archaeological sites were located during the investigation, and two previously recorded cultural resources were reassessed. Four standing structures were also recorded. As a result of the recommendations of the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer, (SHPO), National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) testing was conducted at four of the sites recorded during the survey. This paper presents the results of the investigations at one of these, site 16DS228, the state trinomial designation given to the Third Phase of the Battle of Mansfield.

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Historical Overview

The Battle of Mansfield, fought on April 8, 1864, represented the final act in the military drama known to history as the Red River Campaign.

Militarily, the campaign was an attempt by the Union to crush the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi Department, commanded by General Kirby Smith. Stationed in Shreveport, Louisiana, Smith's force, if defeated, would have left the door to Texas open to invasion. Politically, such a victory would have given Lincoln the electorate votes to carry Texas and Louisiana in the coming elections. Economically, it would have provided northern textile mills with southern cotton and at the same time curtail the trade between the southern states and Mexico.

Federal Strategy

The Federal strategy for the campaign was based on a two-pronged attack. A combined land-naval force under General Nathaniel Banks and Admiral David Porter was to ascend the Red River to Shreveport, while Major General Frederick Steele, commanding 15,000 Federal forces in Arkansas, would converge on that city from the north. Banks' and Porter's forces numbered 30,000 men, plus 22 gunboats (ironclads and tinclads) and about 60 transports (Holmes 1962). The units included battle-hardened veterans of Sherman's Sixteenth and Seventeenth Corps, led by Brigadier General Andrew Smith, who were temporarily on loan to Banks, and two divisions from Banks' own Department of the Gulf, the Thirteenth Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Thomas Ransom, and the Nineteenth Corps, commanded by Brigadier General William Franklin. Approximately 4,000 cavalry led by Brigadier General Albert Lee completed the Federal force.

The expedition left Vicksburg and other points along the Mississippi River on March 10, 1864. After destroying the Confederate stronghold of Fort DeRussy, Banks continued his advance, occupying Alexandria and Natchitoches by April 1st. A few days later, at Grand Ecore, he committed a serious error by separating his army from the protection of the gunboats, and marched away from the river.

On April 7th the Federals reached Pleasant Hill. Lee's cavalry was probing in advance of the infantry when they encountered four regiments of Confederate General Tom Green's cavalry at Wilson's Farm, 3 miles beyond Pleasant Hill. The Confederates charged, and, although they were driven back by Federal reinforcements, this show of strength made Lee uneasy (Johnson 1993). He was concerned for his position, because he felt his mounted troops were at a disadvantage in the dense forests surrounding either side of the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road. To make matters

worse, he had been ordered to carry along his wagon train, which stretched behind him for two or three miles. This would prove a costly error indeed. Toward the end of the day, Lee was ordered to advance, and reached Carroll's Mill, about 10 miles from Pleasant Hill, where he was stopped by a strong force of Confederate horsemen.

The Battle of Mansfield

First Phase. On the morning of April 8th, General Franklin informed Banks that he planned to bivouac the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps at a point about 10 miles from Pleasant Hill. The Thirteenth Corps along with Lee's cavalry began moving shortly after daylight, meeting resistance from the outset. By advancing slowly with artillery support, they had covered about 6 miles by noon, emerging into a large clearing which included a ridge known as Honeycut Hill, which was occupied by Confederate skirmishers. Lee ordered Colonel Landrum's Fourth Division forward and they took control of the hill, deploying skirmishers one-half mile to their front. There they found Confederate infantry and cavalry massed in line of battle.

The forces confronting the Federals were commanded by Confederate General Richard Taylor, and totaled about 8,800 men. Taylor was a brilliant officer and had selected the location to fight the Federal Army during a reconnoiter on the previous day. He knew Banks well from the Virginia campaigns of 1862, and to one of his brigade commanders he remarked that "I will fight Banks if he has a million men" (Johnson 1993). Taylor deployed his forces across the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road. On the extreme Confederate right were cavalry regiments under General Hamilton Bee. To Bee's left was Walker's Texas Division, composed of the brigades of Scurry, Waul and Randal. Across the road were Debray's cavalry regiment, an artillery battery and Mouton's division of Louisianans and Texans. The extreme left of the line was held by a division of Texas Cavalry under Brigadier General James Major.

Meanwhile the Federals were strengthened with the arrival of Landrum's second brigade, giving the Fourth Division a total of about 2,400 men. The Federal flanks were covered by two brigades of cavalry under Colonel Thomas Lucas and Colonel Nathan Dudley, bringing the effective strength to about 4,800 men. Lee's wagon train at that time was about one-half mile behind the front lines. When informed by a staff officer that Banks wished him to advance, Lee replied that to do so would result in a general

engagement in which "we would be gloriously flogged" (Johnson 1993). On the opposite side of the field, and with only a few hours of daylight left, General Taylor decided to attack, opening the battle with an assault by General Mouton's division. Sweeping across the field, they were met by five regiments of the Thirteenth Corps, who repulsed the first wave of attackers. Mouton was among the first killed, and his division ended by losing over one-third of its men. Taylor then ordered General Walker to turn the Federal left flank. This effort was proving successful, and to counter it General Ransom ordered the 83rd Ohio shifted from the extreme right to the extreme left of the Federal lines. However, by that time it was evident that both ends of the Federal Army had been flanked and the entire line fell back in confusion. Thus ended the fighting of the First Phase of the battle.

Second Phase. Federal reinforcements from the Third Division of the Thirteenth Corps, under Brigadier General Robert Cameron formed a second line across the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road and were supported by elements of Federal cavalry who survived the opening fray. This new line checked the Confederate advance for about one hour, until they too were overrun, ending the battle's Second Phase. Panic then spread throughout the army and the Federal withdrawal became a rout. Banks and other officers attempted to check the flow of fugitives, but to no avail, and the general melee increased further as the retreating horde encountered Lee's wagon train along the Mansfield Road. The teamsters, having failed to turn their wagons, cut the mules from the traces and fled. The abandoned wagons prevented the retreating artillery from passing, and as a result the Confederates captured many of the guns and wagons.

Third Phase. When the confederate troops overran the Federal Cavalry's supply train, their advance was temporarily slowed as they looted the wagons. Meanwhile, at about 3:45 p.m., Brigadier General William Emory, commander of the First Division of the Nineteenth Corps, was notified to move to the front. His division was composed of 5,153 men from nine New York regiments, three Maine regiments and one Pennsylvania regiment. Rations for two days were distributed among the troops, and the entire corps, with the exception of the artillery and wagon train, was put in motion.

A second notice was soon received for Emory to hurry, as the battle was in progress. With the 161st New York in the lead, the men marched double quick and even ran to the front, covering 7 miles in about an

hour and a half (Gould 1871). Soon large numbers of retreating Federal soldiers were encountered along the road, forcing the advancing troops to fix bayonets in order to get through. General Ransom, of the Thirteenth Corps, wounded during the First Phase fighting, passed by in an ambulance and warned of the approaching Confederates (Irwin 1892).

Emory deployed his force along the mid-slope of a ridge on Joshua Chapman's Farm (Lufkin 1898:79). He sent Colonel William Kinsey's 161st New York forward as skirmishers, toward the bayou. The remainder of the First Brigade, under General William Dwight, deployed behind a rail fence, along a narrow farm road leading to the right (north) of the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road. The Third Brigade, under Colonel Lewis Benedict was positioned on the opposite side of the main road, while the Second Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General James McMillan, was held in reserve (Figure 1).

The three brigades of the Nineteenth Corps had scarcely been deployed when they were attacked. The skirmishers of Colonel Kinsey's 161st New York temporarily slowed the Confederate advance, but were forced back to the relative safety of the hill by Colonel Henry Gray's Confederate brigade, (First Brigade, Second Infantry Division). Next, Confederate cavalry under Brigadier General Thomas Green made an assault against the Federal center, charging directly up the hill into the waiting guns of Dwight's Brigade. The attack was strongest against the 116th New York, though the 114th New York also felt the heat of the Confederate onslaught. In their regimental history Surgeon Beecher wrote:

Presently a long line of rebel infantry came out in full view, directly in front. The over-confident and undaunted enemy, flushed with the excitement of victory, advanced exultingly forward, not knowing that concealed behind that fence steady arms and cool eyes aimed many a muzzle at their breasts. Every minute seemed an age. Nearer and nearer they came, when the order was given, and one terrific, blinding, stunning crash of fire sent many a man to the dust (Beecher 1866:313).

Some wooden structures, probably outbuildings on the Chapman Farm, stood near the main road in the area where the 29th Maine, 114th New York and the 116th New York were positioned. One structure was

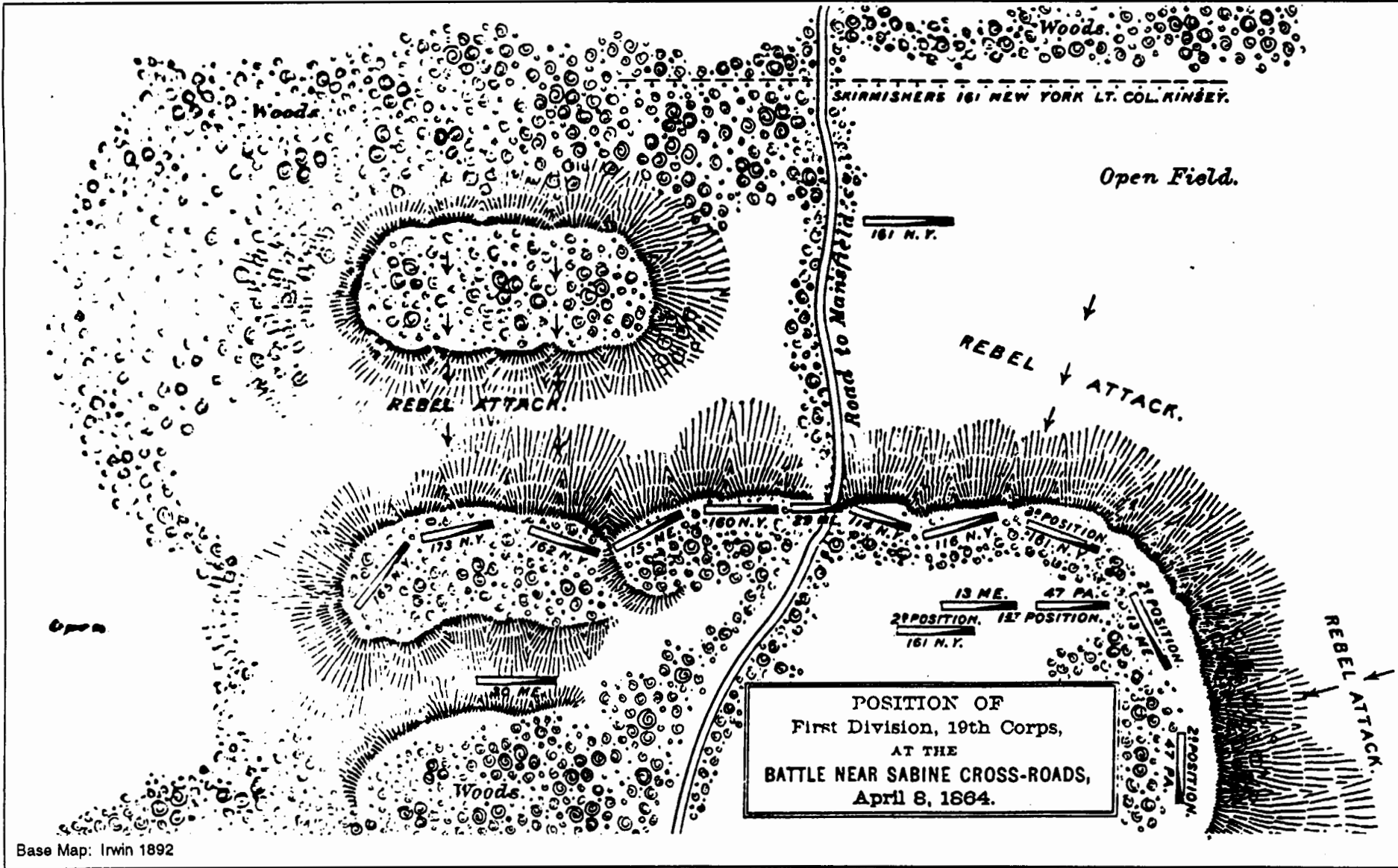


Figure 1. Third Phase of the Battle of Mansfield: Disposition of the Nineteenth Corps

used by soldiers of the 114th New York to fire on a group of Confederate horsemen who had ridden close to the Federal lines.

Two of the [Confederate] troopers, from ignorance or fright, ran directly against a fence on the Mansfield road, in front of Company K, and some young lads of the 114th New York, who had climbed into the top of the shed there and knocked a hole through the roof, fired at them and then knocked a hole through the other side of the roof, and announced to us with childish delight "We've plugged 'em!" (Gould 1871:416).

This event was also recorded in the *History of the 114th New York* (Beecher 1866), where the identity of one of the Federal soldiers is revealed as Private James Cahalin of Company G, who "elevating himself upon the roof of an old shanty, he deliberately and with telling effect fired into the advancing ranks of the enemy" (Beecher 1866:567) Cahalin would survive the battle only to be killed late in the war at Opequan, Virginia.

The Confederates were repulsed with heavy losses, though some men from the 12th and 18th Texas Infantry continued the attack briefly, getting to within 80 yards of the Federal lines before being forced to retire (Kiper 1976).

The next attack occurred on Dwight's right flank, where Brigadier General Camille Polignac's Second Brigade began a furious assault. This action may have taken place in or near the peach orchard, based on its location on a Confederate engineers map and written Confederate accounts (Hewitt 1925). To meet this onslaught, several companies from the 116th and 161st New York pivoted to their right and were joined by regiments of the Second Brigade, who, as reserves, had been lying down in the rear of Dwight's Brigade. Some of the men of the 47th Pennsylvania reportedly broke during this attack (Gould 1871). However, most of the companies of that regiment and the others held firm and the attack was stopped. The assault was recorded in the regimental history of the 47th Pennsylvania.

...they tried to flank us and bullets came raking along our line, from right to left, and annoying us exceedingly... our position was behind the brow of a hill... the boys used their knapsacks at first, for protection, and

after this we brought rails and made a barricade two or three feet high...The precaution of the commanding officers, in ordering our men to lie down and fire in reclining posture...undoubtedly saved many lives on our side (Schmidt 1986:483).

The 47th Pennsylvania suffered four killed during the attack. An account by Corporal Nichols of that regiment describes the death of one of their officers, 2nd Lieutenant Alfred P. Swoyer:

I told Lieutenant Swazer to keep down a little but he did not mind but Says they are coming nine deep. I Said wait until they come Close enough to kill. He Got hit with a Miney Ball in the Right temple and I layed him down to die. He was a Good Man and a fine Soldier (Schmidt 1986:489).

The final and strongest assault was made by General John Walker against the Federal left, held by Colonel Lewis Benedict's Third Brigade. As darkness began to fall, the 165th New York was driven back onto the 30th Maine, and a collapse of the left flank seemed imminent. However, the 15th Maine and the 160th New York were able to deliver a devastating fire into the flank of the attacking troops, and the Confederates were finally stopped. Colonel Benedict was commended for the manner in which his brigade fought. He was highly regarded by his men and could always be found in the front lines during the heat of battle. He was killed the next afternoon at the Battle of Pleasant Hill (Irwin 1892).

The Third Phase of the Battle of Mansfield ended with the coming of darkness. The cries of the wounded could be heard during the night, and many of the soldiers from both armies wandered aimlessly in search of their units. Several ended the engagement as prisoners of war, after having been captured while stumbling about in the darkness. At the close of the battle, the Confederates controlled Chapman's Bayou, and thus secured its much-needed drinking water. The Nineteenth Corps still occupied the hill.

One account of the battle, recorded in the *Shreveport Journal* of April 8, 1937, stated that a captured and wounded Confederate officer, upon interrogation, misinformed his captors as to the strength of Taylor's army, thereby inducing Nathaniel Banks to

retreat. According to this account, the general and his staff were holding a council of war in a log cabin also used as a hospital, behind the Federal lines (DeSoto Historical Society, February 1966).

Regimental records reported Federal losses during the Third Phase fighting at 24 killed, 148 wounded and 175 missing (Irwin 1892). Confederate losses are unknown, but were probably much higher. The engagement, according to Banks, lasted about 1½ hours (OR XLVI:201).

During the night the Federal Army withdrew 15 miles south to Pleasant Hill, where the two armies clashed on April 9. At the Battle of Pleasant Hill the re-grouped Federal Army forced the attacking Confederates from the field. Both armies withdrew during the night.

Concerning Human Interments

The *Official War Records* state that the Federal dead were buried that night prior to the army's retreat to Pleasant Hill (OR XLVI: 201). This is supported by the regimental records of the 116th New York. However, the records of the 30th Maine indicate that, while the wounded were taken to the rear, the dead were left unburied. In fact, many of the wounded were left behind in the care of surgeons and nurses, all of whom would be captured and taken to Mansfield on the following day (Winters 1963; Hecht 1996). H.C. Medford, courier to Brigadier General James Major's Texas Cavalry, noted that church sextons from Mansfield were going to bury the dead on the morning after the battle (Medford 1931).

Civilian records report graves were being dug at the site of the Third Phase Battle shortly after the affair. Mrs. Martha Howell Lord is reported to have retrieved the body of her husband, Stephen Lord, who was killed in the attack and was being taken to a "common grave on Chapman Hill for burial" (DeSoto Historical Society, February 1966).

Frank L. Richardson of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry visited the Mansfield battlefield shortly after the battle. He wrote:

After Mansfield, I rode through the battlefield and saw the place where men had struggled with each other like wild beasts. Here and there were long trenches, in which the dead soldiers

found their last resting place (Richardson 1923:251).

Some of the Federal dead from the Battle of Mansfield were interred in the Mansfield Cemetery. G.M. Scott, regimental chaplain of the 96th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, who was present at the Federal Field Hospital (Allen House) when it was overrun by the Confederates, participated in burying the dead in the cemetery. He wrote:

And then I attended to getting coffins and head boards marked, graves dug and the burial of the dead. I mostly had to go alone to the graveyard and it was a melancholy task depositing 80 of our men in the grave (Scott 1864).

These included both officers and enlisted men, with the latter placed in three long trenches. In 1867, these bodies were removed to the National Cemetery in Pineville, Louisiana, and unknown Confederate dead were placed in the trenches (House 1996). It is unlikely that any of the Federal dead included troops killed during Third Phase fighting, though some of the wounded men of the Nineteenth Corps, as well as their surgeons and nurses, remained behind and were captured and removed to Mansfield on April 9th. Dr. Benjamin Fordyce, surgeon of the 160th New York, was taken prisoner and spent ten weeks at Mansfield. He was allowed to select a spot in the town cemetery for the interment of Federal dead. Regarding the soldiers killed during the battle, he wrote:

The dead were left behind on the battle field until decomposition & fetor of the bodies compelled their burial having no other attention given them than that of the hogs that run wild in the extensive pine woods of that region and are nearly as fleet as deer living on carrion and wild roots disregarding entirely the fact that the bodies of those they were eating at this time were those of Union soldiers-These bodies were gathered in piles with [illeg.] in hollows in the [illeg.] and covered with dirt no graves being dug for them (Fordyce, in Hecht 1996:246).

Fordyce (in Hecht 1996) lists the names of all Federal Officers buried at the Mansfield Cemetery. While the list includes Captain Samuel Coulter, who died at the Allen House, it does not include 2nd

Lieutenant Alfred Swoyer of the 47th Pennsylvania, who as we have seen, was killed at the Third Phase fighting.

The Federals continued their withdrawal south through Grand Ecore and Alexandria, where much of the town was burned by incendiaries (Beecher 1866). The Union Navy nearly lost a large part of its valuable ironclads because of rapids exposed by low water conditions near Alexandria. According to regimental records of the 114th New York, Sergeant Theodore Evans of that regiment suggested to General Banks the idea of constructing a dam to raise the water level sufficiently for the boats to pass the rapids. It remained for Colonel Bailey of the Army Engineers to successfully construct the dam and allow the fleet to escape, thus ending the ill-fated Red River Campaign.

Previous Investigations

The site of the Third Phase battle was initially recorded by David Eschenfelder (Gregory et al. 1984). At that time it was not considered NRHP eligible, primarily because of damage to the site by looters. An inventory of private collections accounted for 6,982 artifacts from the location. This figure includes 6,895 small arms projectiles, including a cache of 1,000 unfired bullets retrieved from one hole. The remaining items included belt buckles, buttons, and gun parts.

A review of Federal records suggests that the dead may have been interred in the area on the night of April 8, 1864.

The site was revisited in September 1995 by EH&A archaeologists during the cultural resources survey of the Dolet Hills 1998-2002 Permit Area. The summit of the ridge, which was believed to have supported the Federal line, was found to have been adversely impacted by a gravel (ironstone) quarry. No soil remains on this portion of the site, which measures approximately 50 x 100 meters (m). Logging roads traverse the area as well, and these, along with timber harvesting activities, have also undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the site. A series of four shovel tests were excavated on non-bulldozed portions of the hill, revealing less than 20 centimeters (cm) of topsoil.

Although the site has been adversely impacted, it is the opinion of the Louisiana SHPO that the location is important in history and may be a candidate for NRHP eligibility status under Criterion A. The possibility of human burials renders the site subject to

the Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Preservation Act.

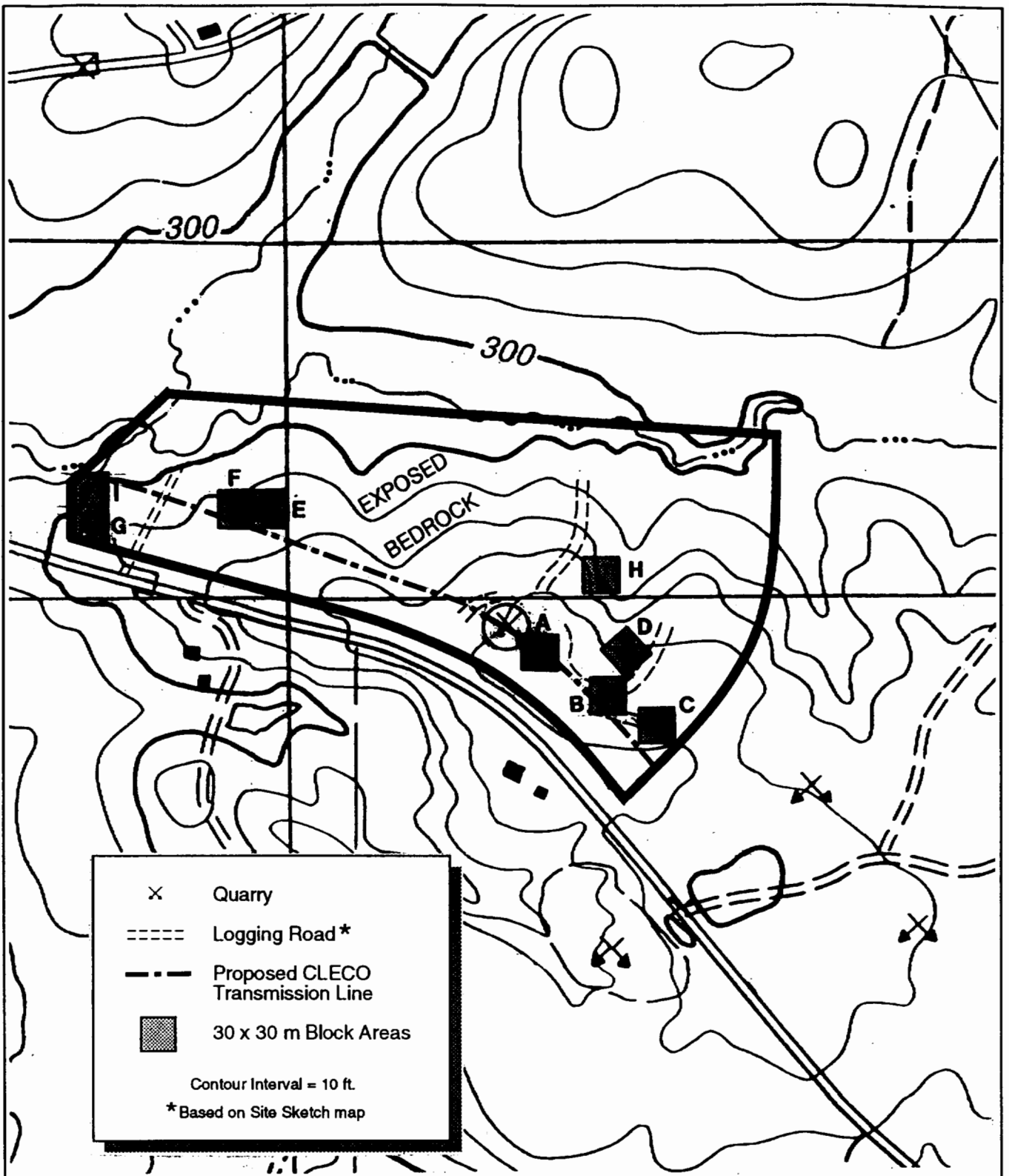
NRHP Testing Program

The NRHP testing program conducted at 16DS228 focused on a tract of land totaling approximately 38 ac, located adjacent to Louisiana Highway 175. The tract was selected for examination because it appeared to encompass portions of the Third Phase battle. Thus the purpose of the investigation was to determine whether buried cultural deposits associated with the final phase of the Battle of Mansfield existed in the area.

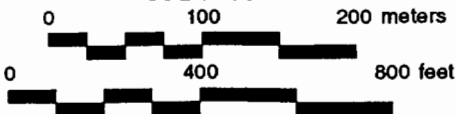
Electronic metal detectors were used to investigate the 38-ac tract. These instruments were used by members of the Pelican Relic and Recovery Club from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Because virtually the entire tract was wooded, the use of transects to investigate the tract was not feasible; instead, a series of nine discrete block areas were examined each measuring 30 x 30 m in size (Figure 2). Each block was positioned using an electronic distance measuring tool, and a hand-held compass and the locations were recorded using a global positioning system supplied by the Dolet Hills Mining Venture.

Blocks A through C were placed in the southeast portion of the 38-ac tract. Based on historic maps of the battlefield, these positions would have been in the rear of the Federal lines. It was believed that any Federal burials that occurred in the area would not have taken place in the area of the immediate conflict. This part of the tract also lies adjacent to Highway 175, which follows the route which the Federal forces used in their retreat to Pleasant Hill. Area D was selected to encompass an area which appeared to have been searched by relic hunters, based on the presence of a large pit. The remaining 30 x 30 m block areas were positioned to include the presumed location of the right wing of the Federal Army, again based on historic maps and records. These block locations were refined by a reconnaissance of the general area using the metal detectors, whereby apparent concentrations of small arms ammunition uncovered by the metal detectors reflected the locations of the engagement. These areas became blocks through E through I.

Each block was thoroughly examined by a team of two surveyors equipped with electronic metal detectors. All anomalies located within the blocks were excavated by shovel, and all artifacts recovered were bagged according to their provenience. The locations of



north



EHSA Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc.
Engineering & Environmental Consultants

Figure 2

AREAS INVESTIGATED,
SITE 16DS228

Base Map: USGS 7.5' Quadrangles; Pelican and Trenton, Louisiana

all recovered artifacts were recorded using the electronic distance measuring tool and the hand-held compass.

All recovered artifacts were returned to the archaeological laboratory at EH&A for cataloging, prior to analysis.

Following the completion of the metal detecting survey, a series of 34 shovel tests, each measuring 30 x 30 cm in plan, was excavated in and between the block areas. This exercise was performed at the request of the Office of Cultural Development, Division of Archaeology, as a means of assessing the nature of the subsurface deposits within the tract, and to compare the two survey techniques. The locations of the shovel tests were recorded using the electronic distance measuring tool and hand-held compass. None of the shovel tests yielded cultural materials.

Results

The investigations succeeded in recovering 40 artifacts related to the battle, as well as a large number of items aligned with later, late nineteenth or early twentieth century utilizations. The following items were obtained from the examination.

In Area A only a single cast iron fragment from a cooking pot was recovered. It probably dates to the early Twentieth Century.

Area B produced a fired Burnside cartridge and a brass tent tension adjusting implement. Both implements are probably associated with the battle. Also recovered, but of probably later temporal alignment, were an iron chain link and an iron hexagonal nut.

Area C contained an iron knife blade, a whiskey token, and several early twentieth century items. These were found in an apparent trash pit on which was placed a 1- x 1-m excavation unit.

Area D produced only two items, an iron latch and a brass cylinder. Neither is temporally diagnostic.

Area E yielded eleven specimens of Civil War era small arms ammunition, including a musket ball and 10 Minié balls, which, with the exception of a single .54 cal. bullet, were all fired. A brass rivet was also found in the area.

Area F also contained a relatively large number of Civil War projectiles. Eight Minié balls, all fired,

and a single percussion cap were recovered. One piece of chain link, of unknown association, was also found.

Area G yielded one .36 cal. musket ball, one .69 cal. musket ball and four Minié balls. All had been fired. Items found in the area not related to the battle included three wire nails.

Area H produced a fired musket ball and a Minié ball. Several items not related to the battle, including nails and a saw blade, were also found.

Finally, Area I contained three musket balls, a pistol ball, one piece of buckshot, and six Minié balls. With the exception of one .577 cal. Minié ball, all of the small arms ammunition from Area I had been fired. Four square nails were also found in this area.

Interpretations

Most of the evidence for military action associated with the Third Phase battle found within the 38-ac investigated tract occurs in the form of small arms ammunition which was located by metal detecting. By far the greatest number of these projectiles were recovered from Areas E, F, G and I in the western part of the tract. Federal Army records indicate that the First and Second Brigades of the First Division of the Nineteenth Corps occupied this area, having been deployed along a farm road that ran perpendicular to the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road (Irwin 1892). An unimproved track remains visible today in this area. That most of the projectiles found in and around these areas were fired bullets indicated that they came from the guns of the attacking Confederates. Many of these were seen to be clustered, suggesting that the attacking Confederates were exchanging fire with massed troops which were in a prone defensive position. Federal regimental records note that their soldiers were firing from behind a rail fence (Beecher 1866; Gould 1871).

Based on maps and records of the Federal Army, it seems likely that the fired bullets clustered in Areas G and I were shot at men from regiments of Dwight's First Brigade, which formed to the right of the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill Road. The unfired .577 cal. Minié ball found just outside of Area I was likely dropped by a Federal soldier defending this position, which would have been assaulted during the initial attack by troops of General Thomas Green. Interestingly, several square nails were also found in these areas, which may reflect the location of the wooden structures discussed previously.

Projectiles and other military items in Areas E and F can probably be associated with the location of troops confronting the second Confederate attack by Polignac's brigade. A percussion cap and an unfired .54 cal. Minié ball can almost certainly be associated with the Federal troops defending this position, and the brass rivet may have once been attached to a piece of personal equipment such as a cartridge box or belt. These items may have belonged to soldiers from one of several companies of the 116th New York and the 161st New York. Dwight had sent them to protect his right flank, where they were joined by the regiments of the McMillan's Second Brigade.

The remaining investigated areas produced little evidence of the engagement, with the exception of two fired projectiles in Area H, and the fired Burnside cartridge and tent line adjusting implement found in Area B. The Burnside cartridge is probably not associated with the Third Phase fighting, as this type of ammunition was only used by cavalry, and there were no Federal Cavalry present at the engagement. It should be noted however, that this type of ordnance was often captured and used by Confederate horsemen, though its position behind the Federal lines precludes such a use during the Third Phase engagement.

No evidence for human burials was found in the tract. While there are some inconsistencies as to whether the Federal dead were interred at the scene of the Third Phase fighting on the night of April 8, 1864 or left unburied, the strongest evidence, from soldiers of both armies as well as civilian records, is that there were burials somewhere on the Chapman farm. In the decades since the battle the location has undergone modifications, some of which have been severe. The most obvious of these has been the operation of a gravel quarry which occupies part of the hill top. The remaining portions of the investigated 38-ac tract are wooded, and have been subjected to timber harvesting. It is possible that these land uses may have obliterated all traces of possible interments, or that they remain as yet undiscovered in another part of the property. It is also possible that the ravages of wild hogs, referred to by Surgeon Fordyce, completely destroyed the remains (Hecht 1996).

The peach orchard, after which the Confederates named the battle, and the open field facing Dwight's Brigade no longer exist, both having reverted back to forest. Neither do structures associated with the Chapman farm remain, although the square nails recovered from Areas G and I may be remnants of these.

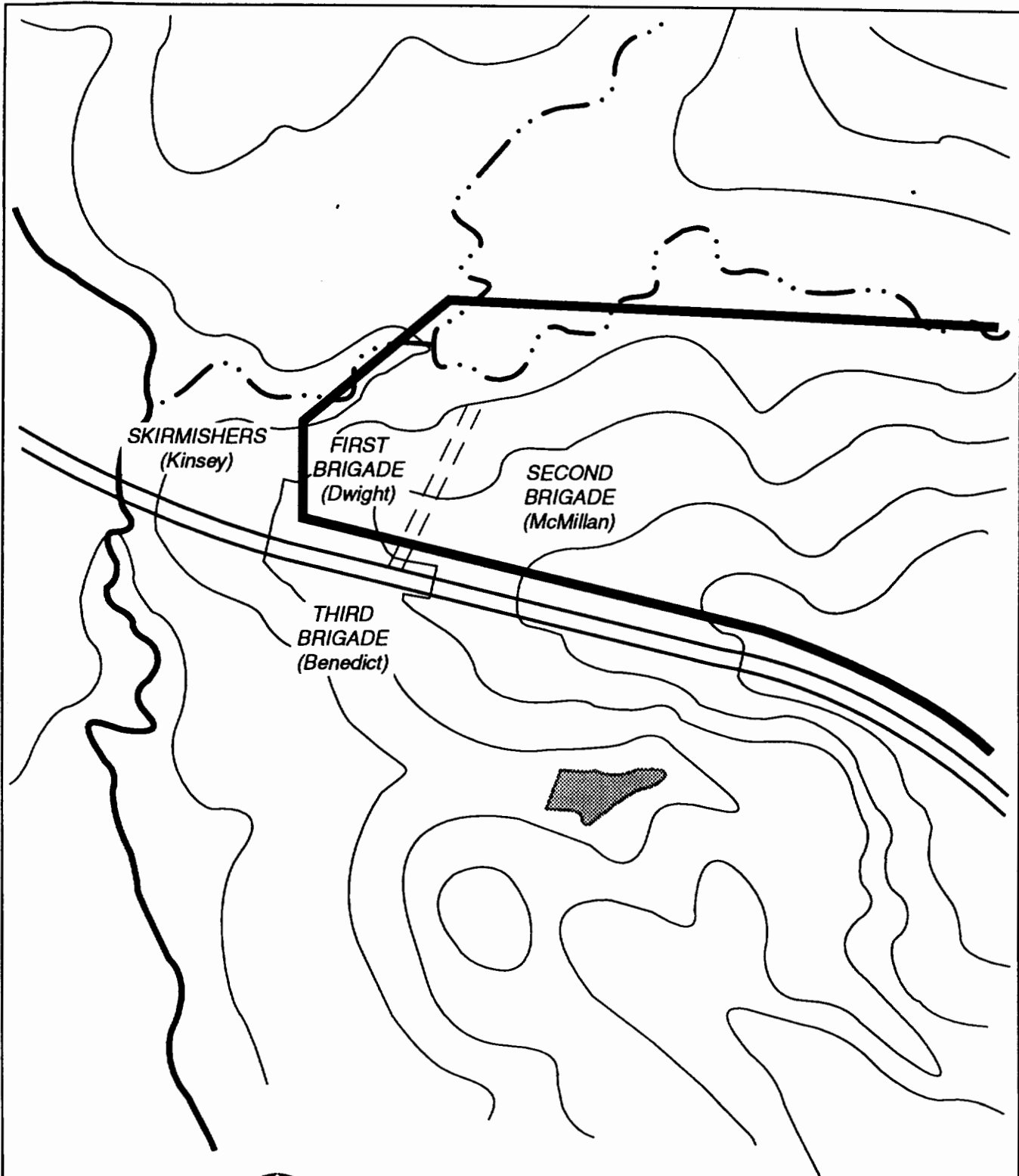
Figure 3 represents the best approximation for the location of the engagement on a modern topographic map. It shows the positions of the Federal regiments involved in the Third Phase fighting. It is based on the results of the field investigations and the review of numerous historic documents.

Summary

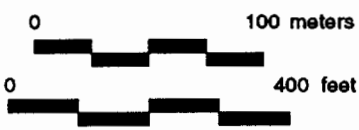
The ill-fated Red River campaign ended outside of the town of Mansfield, in the pine forests of northwest Louisiana. Although in the overall chronicle of the Civil War, the battle fought there may appear as little more than a footnote to the men of both armies, who witnessed and recorded the event in their regimental records, personal diaries and letters, it was a very serious affair indeed. During the 133 years that have passed since that engagement, the ravages of time have obscured and masked its location. The recent archaeological investigations performed on the battlefield and summarized in this paper, have shown that, by utilizing these historic records in conjunction with the systematic use of electronic metal detecting equipment and precise mapping instrumentation, it is possible to locate and recreate the sequence of historic events on the modern landscape.

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north



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Figure 3

APPROXIMATE POSITIONS OF THE
NINETEENTH CORPS AT THE
BEGINNING OF THE THIRD PHASE BATTLE,
16DS228

Base Map: USGS 7.5' Quadrangle; Pelican, Texas

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