

INTERPRETIVE SIGN 4: KEARNEY'S DEATH

Female narrator:

Birney sent word to Kearny that Stevens' original attacking troops had withdrawn. Kearny wasn't so sure, and he made a fateful decision to investigate that report.

Male narrator:

In the early evening rain, as darkness increased, Kearny rode across the field in front of you, moving right to left. He then headed up the hill you stand upon where Stevens' troops had first attacked. He found remnants of the 21st Massachusetts and ordered them into the cornfield to protect Birney's flank. They protested that the cornfield, off to your right, was full of rebels. Kearny ordered the troops forward, and when they met resistance in the dim evening light, he said they were shooting at their own men. His soldiers brought forward two Confederate captives as proof that there were rebels were in the cornfield.

Ed Wenzel:

“Kearny says, ‘Damn you and your prisoners,’ and he takes off on horseback around the left of the 21st Massachusetts, and he rides straight into the corn, almost vanishes from sight, because now, it’s really getting dark.”

Male narrator:

In moments, he met the 49th Georgia. Kearny turned to ride back. Because he had only one arm, he lowered his head to reach his single arm around his mount’s neck.

Ed Wenzel:

“Charles Walcott says, ‘I saw Kearny’s horse rear up, and I saw the general turn and try to flee. He was killed instantly, shot from his horse.’”

Male narrator:

Accounts of the battle say fighting continued near the cornfield until about 6:15 or 6:30, and some accounts claim Kearny was not killed until about 9 p.m., after the battle had ended. Nevertheless, both sides began to withdraw, and darkness stopped further fighting.