

**Map Set 7.4: Pleasonton Pries
Stuart from Goose Creek
(11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)**

Many infantrymen subscribed to the belief that cavalrymen did very little actual fighting because of the popular saying that “no one sees a dead cavalryman.” Any man who held that view in Vincent’s brigade left it behind after the fight at Goose Creek. “The charges of the cavalry, a sight I had never before witnessed, were truly inspiring,” declared Vincent in his report, “and the triumphant strains of the bands, as squadron after squadron hurled the enemy in his flight up the hill and toward the gap, gave us a feeling of regret that we, too, were not mounted and could not join in the chase.”¹⁴

Gen. Gregg arrived to end the stalemate along the creek, deploying Kilpatrick’s brigade as Vincent’s men arrived on the scene (Map A). Only the artillery was dueling at this time. Stuart’s position behind Goose Creek was a strong one. The historian of the 83rd Pennsylvania noted the “banks of the creek at this point were high, steep, and thickly wooded.” Stuart also knew his position’s vulnerabilities. The steep east bank of Goose Creek forced horses onto the road and the bridge, but infantry and dismounted cavalry could slide down the slope, cross the shallow waterway, and drive up the opposite side. The short distance between the stream and the high ground behind it precluded the effective use of artillery on the soldiers crossing, so only horsemen with carbines could contest the enemy’s thrust. Stuart dismounted a strong skirmish line and placed it behind stone walls (No. 1). According to one Union soldier, the enemy troopers were “posted behind two stone walls; one at the foot of the hill, a few rods beyond the bridge, and the other at the top and almost concealed by the tall growth of wheat through which it ran.” The rest of the cavalry, armed with sabers and pistols, were of little use.¹⁵

Like a skilled chess player, Stuart planned several moves in advance. He called upon the 13th Virginia Cavalry of Col. John Chambliss’ Brigade and Capt. William McGregor’s Battery to join him at Goose Creek, and recalled the rest of Chambliss’ and Jones’ brigades as well. The latter brigade defended the sector around the town of Union with the aid of Capt. R. Preston

Chew’s Battery. Chambliss’ command was at the “Welbourne” property just to the south. After linking up on the road to Millville, Chambliss was to turn south on Trappe Road, a direct route to Upperville.¹⁶

Gregg toiled for two hours readying his troops for the attack on Goose Creek. He decided to rather boldly test the Rebel defenses and resolve by sending a single company of the 4th New York Cavalry galloping toward the bridge. Confederate sharpshooters and artillery smashed the effort. Gregg next brought up some of Vincent’s infantry. The 16th Michigan was ordered to charge the bridge directly while the 83rd Pennsylvania slid down the steep incline, forded the creek, and took on Stuart’s right flank (No. 2). The 2nd and 4th New York Cavalry, meanwhile, would provide support.

“Now happened one of the liveliest and most exciting times we had ever yet experienced,” recalled a man in the 83rd Pennsylvania, “when we were carried along, as it were, by the very tempest, whirlwind and, I might say, joy of battle into the midst of the enemy’s ranks.” Perhaps in an act of redemption, the 2nd New York Cavalry charged toward the bridge before the 16th Michigan and took the heights (No. 3). The high ground, however, was all but abandoned because Stuart realized trying to hold his position against such a powerful force was folly. He pulled his men back two miles to the outskirts of Upperville (No. 4).

Gregg’s pursuit was slow and deliberate, which allowed Stuart time to select the next battleground (Map B; No. 5). Vincent’s men, however, stayed put for the remainder of the day (No. 6). A reporter for a Detroit newspaper described it this way: “As far as Upperville our infantry led the cavalry, when exhausted after their thirteen mile march—much of it at on the double quick—and after being out of ammunition, the cavalry were obliged to lend a helping hand.”

Stuart kept the prying enemy eyes away from Lee’s infantry, but he was becoming increasingly concerned about events off to the east, where Buford had cut off the passage of Jones’ and Chambliss’ brigades (No. 7). A union of Buford’s and Gregg’s divisions could lead to an overwhelming attack against his position on the front, flank, and rear.¹⁷