

found itself marching with the rest of the division on the road to City Point, in the opposite direction from Petersburg. The error was eventually discovered but not until the column arrived at the outskirts of City Point. Exhausted, the New Yorkers were turned around and directed back toward Petersburg.⁶

Smith's XVIII Corps and the cavalry attacked the fortifications around Petersburg and after some severe fighting, breached the Confederate line. The door to Petersburg was wide open and ready for the taking, if only Smith could be reinforced. General Hancock received urgent messages from both Smith and General Meade, pleading with him to reinforce Smith as quickly as possible and move into the city. But when the II Corps did not show until after 9:00 P.M., and with only two of his three divisions, Smith wired General Grant that the hour was getting late and he had gained enough for one day. He would rest his troops and resume the attack at first light.

When the advance did resume the next morning, Smith and Hancock would face more than just the Petersburg Defense Forces. As Smith sat idle, portions of the Army of Northern Virginia arrived in the city to bolster the weak defenses. The failure to capture Petersburg on June 15 would haunt the army for the next ten months.⁷

It was close to daylight on June 16 when the 111th finally arrived outside the city. The original point designated for the regiment, the intersection of Harrison's Creek and the City Point Railroad, was actually a half mile behind the Confederate lines. Much time using faulty maps and local guides had been spent searching in vain for this spot. Eventually, the regiment was directed to take up a position with the rest of the First Division on the extreme left of the II Corps line. The New Yorkers filed into the works captured the day before by the XVIII Corps. With skirmishers out, the men were able to get some much-needed rest. Rations soon arrived and were distributed. The regiment's line was soon marked by cooking fires as the New Yorkers fried salt pork and boiled coffee.⁸

The booming of cannon and crackle of small arms fire was heard all morning as patrols were sent forward from the II Corps line to probe the enemy's position. Orders arrived in the afternoon for Captain Husk to begin preparing the regiment to move with the rest of the Third Brigade in an assault of the Confederate line. The area over which the 111th was supposed to attack was an open plain that sloped upward to the enemy's works and was intersected by a number of ravines. After the XVIII Corps' attacks of the previous day, the rebels had begun constructing a new line on the western side of Harrison's Creek. While this position constituted the main Confederate line, some of the original fortifications east of the creek were still manned.⁹

The object of the day's attack was the capture of the works around the Hare house. Birney would advance his division on the right of the II Corps line toward the right of the Hare house while, on the left of the line, Barlow would advance directly on the works at the Hare house. General Gibbon's division would advance behind and in support of the other two divisions. Two brigades of the IX Corps would lend their support to Hancock's infantry. The XVIII Corps was ordered to make a demonstration in their front to keep the enemy from reinforcing the point of attack.¹⁰

At 6:00 P.M., Union batteries began a furious shelling of the rebel works. Knapsacks were stacked in piles, and the men readied themselves for the coming battle. When the fire from the guns slackened, the regiment moved out of its entrenchments and quickly formed into line of battle. The 111th was on the left of the brigade, with the 126th to its right. Bayonets were fixed, rifles were held at right shoulder shift, and the order to advance