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# The UNION STANDARD

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November 2003

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## *The Newsletter of the 1<sup>st</sup> United States Infantry, The Regulars*

### Dispatch from the Board

The small group of hardy regulars who made the long trek to NW Arkansas early this month were rewarded with a fine event. You'll find two (at least two) after action reports inside here, one official and a personal account. I'll refrain from adding my own recap except for two items that were unique

: We moved out at reveille on a reconnaissance to probe the enemy positions. Running into the cornfeds doing the same we established pickets and an outpost on the fly. Secondly, after two battles and building breastworks the camp was buttoned up for the night by 8:00 PM, much too early for our normally fun loving group.

All in all it was well worth the seven-hour trip – even driving alone.

December's drill will find us at Camp Ford in Tyler. To break the monotony of drill and more drill we will be constructing a PW shanty. This will give us the opportunity to learn 19<sup>th</sup> construction techniques. By the end of the day we will leave behind a structure typical of those found at Camp Ford 140 years ago.

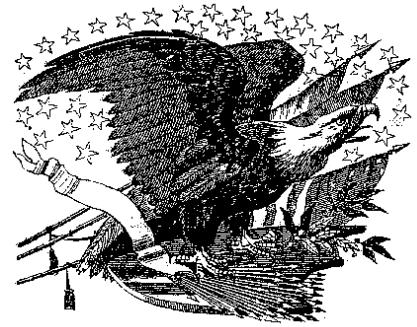
Ballots are out for the 2004 Brigade events. No directions were given for the number of events to vote for but after discussing it at the recent Board meeting John and I will vote for Gainsville on April 17-18 and Franklin, TN, a national level event on October 1-3.

Speaking of Gainsville, this promises to be one that you don't want to miss. The 1<sup>st</sup> is one of the military sponsors of this event, which will give us some say in the scenario development. There is an outstanding piece of

property comprised of rolling hills, trees, and open fields. There are practically no modern intrusions to spoil the ambiance. There will be one spectator battle – already planned to allow realistic engagement ranges and employ infantry, cavalry, and artillery in a realistic and plausible manner! After that we are on our own for tactical operations till noon on Sunday.

This past year saw us return to Fort McKavett where we learned guard mount in a post environment, cleared brush, uncovered the original fort powder magazine, burned "stores" and evacuated the post as they did in 1861. At the April tactical in the Grasslands with the close cooperation of a cavalry detachment, we "re-supplied" two out of three "forts" without firing a shot, and ambushed a column of Confederates before they requested a scenario change so they could have some fun too.

In September we fielded two good size companies at the Brigade level event in Atoka, OK. Throw in a few drills, the live fire, and a cartridge rolling party and it was a bust and productive year. To each and every man of the 1<sup>st</sup> I say well done.



*Yr Obedient Servant,*

**Don Gross**

# 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Calendar

**2003**

**DECEMBER**

**6<sup>th</sup>** Camp Ford, Tyler Texas  
**13<sup>th</sup>** Candlelight at Old City Park Dallas

**JANUARY 2004**

**17<sup>th</sup>** Drill, Arlington Veterans Park

**FEBRUARY**

**27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>** Battalion Muster, Ft. Washita OK

**APRIL**

**17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>** Gainsville

**OCTOBER**

**1-3** Franklin Tn, 1<sup>st</sup> Federal Division  
NATIONAL EVENT

## CandleLight

Anyone interested in attending Candlelight should give me a holler at your earliest convenience. I've (foolishly?) volunteered to head up our presence at Old City Park for this event on Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup>. My plan at present certainly includes baptizing the NEW company fire irons in proper fashion by taking advantage of the lower rack level to try and roast (for the first time....) a goose over the fire. Surprisingly enough the first time attempts always seem to work better than subsequent ones. How THAT happens I have no clue. Could it have something to do with Cpt CoffeeReady hovering over the fire in anticipation of roast something or other?

At any rate, if you can only make ONE event this month, please try to make the event at Camp Ford in Tyler. If that one doesn't work for you, and you're eager to wear wool and impress the residents of Dallas with your stalwart bearing, come on down to Old City Park. I'll even go out on a limb and promise we won't drill! (how's this, I promise *I* won't drill?!)

Uniform is standard – sack, coats, etc. Those who would like to be pretty for the passersby should consider their dress uniform. Short of some McFuddy style costume or a greek fisherman outfit, no one will be turned away! (I'd like to see him turn someone away! Hah! Sure, it'll happen the same time as I give up drinkin whiskey don't ya know!... Mcfuddy)

YMOS

A. Prendergast

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## Regulars to reconstruct PW Shanty at Camp Ford

December drill will be held on the 6<sup>th</sup> at Camp Ford in Tyler, TX. Uniform is fatigue, i.e. Sack coat, trowsers, and cap. No accoutrements or weapons are required. We will meet at 9:00 AM and we should be done by 3:00 PM. Lunch will be provided so bring your mess gear in your haversack. Work gloves will help keep your hands smooth and soft.

We will construct a PW shanty. We expect to dig into a hillside and construct a log shelter using only period tools. Some tools will be available but additional axes, shovels, and picks are needed to keep everyone busy.

This is our opportunity to gain up close look at the living conditions experienced by Union soldiers at the largest PW camp west of the Mississippi.

For those who desire it, you are more than welcome to spend the night at the camp, either Friday or Saturday.

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## From the National Archives

By Don Gross

I had an opportunity to visit the National Archives recently and I took the opportunity to see what they had on the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry regiment. Knowing that information on regular units is much less voluminous than the information available on volunteer regiments I was pleasantly surprised to find that much of the official correspondence is available on

microfiche. The following is the first in a series of articles that describes the official returns of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry.

The below is transcribed or summarized from hand written documents. Spelling, punctuation, and abbreviations are as in the original documents.

**Annual Return of the Alterations and Casualties  
Incident to the First Regiment of Infantry  
Commanded by Colonel Carlos A. Waite during  
the year 1860**

*Remarks* (Under this head, the Colonel will record such other facts and add such general remarks relative to the movements, service, and discipline of his regiment as may be necessary or useful for the record of the Adjutant General's Office; such as all the changes made in the Head Quarters of the Regiment, or of any Company, within the year &c.)

2. In case of loss in action, the name and rank of all killed or wounded also the time and place of action, will be specified &c, &c.)

*During the months of January, February, March, + April, the Reg. Head Quarters were at various points along the Rio Grande, in consequence of the Reg. Commander being in Command of the Brownsville Expedition, On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May the Reg. Head Quarters were established at Camp Verde, Texas. In June 1860, they were moved to Fort Chadbourne per Dept S/O No 57 where they arrived on the 28<sup>th</sup> of that month. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of Decm. The Reg. Head Quarters were again transferred to Camp Verde per D. S/O No 108. Colonel Carlos A Waite arrived and assumed Command of the Regt at that post on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1861.*

*Company F marched from Fort Cobb on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February for Camp Cooper where it took post on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the same month. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March it moved from camp Cooper and again took post at Fort Cobb on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March.*

*On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, Lieut R.K. Offley with a Detachment of Company E left Fort Arbuckle to occupy a point 15 miles south of that post. Returned to Fort Arbuckle on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April.*

Company Locations were determined from the section detailing deaths, desertions, and

apprehensions. A note of caution: these locations describe where a death or desertion took place and may or may not reflect the fact that any particular company was actually stationed there.

Band; San Antonio Barracks  
Co. A; Camp Verde, San Antonio  
Co. B; Fort Smith Ark., Fort Cobb I.T. (Indian Territory),  
Co. C; San Antonio, Camp Cooper, Fort Cobb  
Co. D; Fort Cobb, Fort Arbuckle  
Co. E; San Antonio, Fort Smith Ark.  
Co. F; Fort Cobb, fort Arbuckle, Fort Smith, Fort Chadbourne  
Co. G; Fort Stockton  
Co. H; Fort Stockton  
Co. I; San Antonio Barracks  
Co. K; Fort Lancaster, Head of Devils River, Camp Hudson, Fort Clark

For the year there were 7 deaths, 52 desertions, and 16 apprehensions. Of the deaths, five were ordinary and two were from accidents.

The regiment gained two officers fresh out of West Point that year. 204 recruits were shipped in from the General depot, 36 joined by regimental enlistment, 77 re-enlisted, and 9 were transferred in. In addition to the losses from death and desertion the regiment lost 217 men whose enlistments had expired, 10 were discharged for disability, one by sentence of General Courts Martial, 10 transferred out, and two were minors (presumably sent home to momma).

Finally, for those who are inclined to feel put upon by the current crop of officers, a few final numbers. There were 47 men tried by Courts Martial and 113 tried by regimental Courts Martial. Results were not given.

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## **Thanksgiving Proclamation**

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful Providence of

Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well as the iron and coal as of our precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are

unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the imposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the divine purpose, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this 3d day of October, A. D. 1863, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President

William H. Seward, Secretary of State

**ATTENTION TO ORDERS:**

***By order of Colonel Prater;***

Monday,  
October 27, 2003

Effective as of this date:

BILL HOSKINS is appointed Brevet Major of the 2nd BATTALION.

JIM GELLASCH is appointed Brevet 1st Lt. to serve as Adjutant of the 2nd BATTALION.

When troop attendance is such that only 1 battalion is on the field Majors Benefiel and Hoskins will serve as Wing Commanders. All other rank will adjust as required.

S.D. Prater, Colonel  
Frontier Brigade

**After Action Reports**  
**Holding the Fair Park Line**

I have the honor to report the following action on Sunday, the 9th inst. of Nov., that being the fourth day of our defense. Responding to urgent requests from the GWS staff, our battalion, consisting of elements of Cos A & D of the First United States Inf. extended our intervals northward, in so doing, we covered a dangerous gap in the Western Fair Park Line.

The unexpected retrograde movement of the units on our left created a hole in the line extending from our ammunition reserves to the first North Road. Despite our already woefully thin ranks, we doubled the length of our line to fill the breach. The men set up cook fires and made divers demonstrations to give the impression the presence of a much larger force.

Our movement commenced ere the opening of action Sunday morning and we held through its conclusion; at which time we still held our works and claimed the victors' crown. I have the pleasure to report that a number of our comrades, previously reported lost, passed safely through our lines, still hale and hardy, but strangely aged by their experience. Among them were Captain Glen Smith, sgt. Cadigan, and pvts. C. Smith, Evans, Putty, and Swift, to name but several.

We also encountered some few men and maids of loyal heart who's patriotic passions my yet be fanned into full flame at this hour of national need. While, perhaps, not a major triumph of our arms, all soldiers present remembered well their duty and endured arduous service. From such perseverance will our ultimate victory derive.

Hargis, Glen E. 5 A-1  
Senior Man Present

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### **After-Action Report, Mark Backus Dallas County, Texas, November 10, 2003**

On the weekend of November 8/9 of 2003, I experienced a reenactment experience quite new to me. I was invited by a good friend in another unit (that would be the glorious 1<sup>st</sup> US in case you're wondering "which" unit it was....McF.) to attend

one of his unit's reenactments during one of our "bye" weekends.

The Battles of Bentonville (formerly known as Cane Hill) was a totally new event for me. Located on some of the most beautiful farm acreage you have ever seen, the valley beheld a sweeping plain fronted by small elevated meadows, and bounded on one side by a long deep creek bed and on the other side by a either a heavily wooded small mountain or large hill that ran about 300 yards in length to the crest for most of a 70 degree angle. All of this and located about 25 miles north of my old school home--Fayetteville, Arkansas, about 10 to 15 miles west of Elkhorn Tavern and about 7 miles south of the Missouri state line.

The weather was beautiful and afforded those who attired themselves in a wardrobe of wool a most pleasant weekend. The weather consisted of fifty-ish degree weather in the daytime hours and forty to 30-ish degree weather after dark depending upon the strength of a fickle wind mostly failing to appear on Saturday night.

We departed Dallas-Fort Worth on Friday morning in a light rain drizzle and prayed for drier weather ahead of us. Internet weather projections carried a 30 percent chance of rain on both weekend days and we decided to take our chances so we drove our tin baggage wagon northward for about 150 miles through Indian Territory and changed our line of march due westward for about 190 miles just after eating a meal in the growing hamlet of McAlester.

The mountain country of Northwest Arkansas was its beautiful self and some of the fall leaves were still in final stages of changing color, a rare site to a lad originally from the pine country of south central Arkansas. I wished we could have seen the leaves and the valleys and the mountains, but the sun had already set and we would have to feast our eyes upon these precious gifts of God on the trip home after our tour of the Fayetteville campus and my former residence atop Mount Sequoia.

Without directions to the battlefield farmstead, we stopped at a small general store owned by the Quicky family in the little town of Bentonville. They tried to help us and pointed to the local newspaper where upon we found an article (yes I know how to read) featuring a quote or two from our good friend, Colonel Willie Huckabee. The article included a general address of the meeting place of armies and a good female citizen of Bentonville gave us directions to get this wondrous valley. We bought a small drink to clear our throats only to find the alcohol missing, whereupon I asked the madam proprietor, "This is a dry county, isn't it?" and she replied yes, we would have to travel up the main road another seven miles to Caverna, Missouri to find unsavory merchants who dealt in spirits--the destroyer of families and the scourge of mankind.

After a quick trip to Missouri, we found our valley, the event registration tent and my friend's unit. We headed to the campsite, set up tentage and unloaded our tin baggage wagon. We attired ourselves in his unit's uniform and met his comrades around the fire and introduced ourselves. The company commander was from where? New Hampshire! And the First Sergeant and the Commissary NCO were from where? Massachusetts! I now found myself a weekend guest of the 1<sup>st</sup> US Infantry Regt., 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Frontier Brigade.

All in all, I found this to be a great weekend with some very honorable men, men who have much in common with members of our 12<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry Regt. I had some amazing experiences, accompanying the company commander on a reconnoitering mission (and I thought this was just coffee talk the night before) upon the hill and towards the Confederate lines, building fallback positions near the crest of the elevated ground while pickets on both sides slugged it out with musket fire and later that morning, under the direction of an engineer officer who we referred to as "Emperor Hadrian" building a defensive position and breastworks up the side of Sunshine Hill (really a mountain) where we built what could be described as very defensible under realistic conditions supported by a

mountain howitzer. Some experiences reminded me of standard events, seeing soldiers not taking hits, being rushed around at the double-quick constantly under fire. Other experiences included an inclined march--retreating up toward defensive positions and taking on a 70 degree slope with smooth soled brogans, hanging on to trees and fellow soldiers for support was a new experience. Seeing soldiers repeated trying to attack our position and not being able to advance beyond heavy fire of rifle and cannon.

I was surprised to see some familiar faces in Northwest Arkansas. I saw Captain Tom Ezell and the 6<sup>th</sup> Arkansas there falling in with the 37<sup>th</sup> Illinois and I also saw TMVI Battalion Adjutant George Strawn and the Prairie County Avengers (Sergeant Major Preston Ware and Private Tom Morpew) serving as soldiers under Colonel Huckabee.

We lived through some good battle scenarios, which probably failed to approximate what had originally been planned and both armies were led by some excellent officers who worked hard to make this an enjoyable experience for the soldiers and the spectators. In camp, we all tried to assist the commissary NCO as best we could by helping with the cooking and clean-up. He cannot be complimented enough for such good work. After seeing a monument to a famous commissary NCO (William McKinley) at Sharpsburg/Antietam, I think there should be many more such dedicated to men of that sort at other battlefields.

I want to thank my host, Sergeant Major Mike Beard and his pards of the 1<sup>st</sup> US for a most enjoyable weekend at war.



## **Battalion Commander's report on the recent Action at Cane Hill**

Col. Prater,

Here is the report of the recent action NE of the village of Bentonville Arkansas. Order of Battle:

**Infantry Battalion:** 80 officers and men

4 Companies of Infantry:

- 1st Company = 1st US (14)/ 77th PA (2)/ 55th Ill. (3) - Capt. Gross
- 2nd Company = 1st KS \* - Capt. Cuevas/ Lt. Cosloy
- 3rd Company = 8th KS \* - Capt. Goering
- 4th Company = 7th/30th MO (16 rifles plus officers)/ 13th US (S.D.)(4) - Capt. Crofutt

\* - do not have exact counts of attendance.

Roughly 18-20 men each. Unit contacts feel free to give me the exact count for editing of report later.

**Artillery:** 4 static guns/ 28 men/ 1 mobile gun (manned by men formerly the 37th Ill. Inf.)

**Cavalry:** 5 men

**Signal Detachment:** 7 men

**Provost:** 2 men

**Field Staff:** 4 = Maj. Inf. Cmdg./ Adj. Inf./ 2nd Lt. AAG Bde Staff rep/ Capt. of Engineers Bde. Staff rep.

### **Friday Nov. 7**

Ordered into camp the assorted remnants of both battalions as they staggered in from the day's march. We camped to the east and north of a small pond, which was on a plateau of sorts overlooking the valley divided in twain by the Little Sugar Creek. A quick survey of the area noticed down the Bentonville Rd toward the SW a large group of tents setting astride the road. After a quick personal reconnaissance it was confirmed that the Confederate Army of the West was gathered in mass at approx. thrice my effective numbers. I decided to allow the men to rest and gather my final numbers before making a defense, advance, or further reconnaissance of the area. After returning from my personal reconnaissance, I was aghast to find a

congregation of large tents had been hastily erected in close association to my forces by unlicensed sutlers, peddlers, and riff-raff of multiple stripes.

The sutlers were stretched from the fenceline to approx 15 yds from the pond. To compound the situation, the sutler's vehicles stayed behind their tents facing our encampment the whole weekend. That was a personal irritant and cars remaining in camp is contrary to the spirit and letter of the FB authenticity regs from its conception. Asking Miss Leah about it she said that the sutlers wanted to keep their vehicles close by and there was nothing she could do. At large national events, the sutler rows are all purged of modern conveyances. Theoretically, it should be easier to enforce this at smaller events. I realize that we cannot control what the sutlers do, but the event hosts should foster and enforce an atmosphere in keeping with the living history environment that they wish to profit from. For this I fault them.

### **Saturday Nov. 8**

At the sounding of reveille, I tasked Capt. Gross of the 1st company to lead a reconnaissance toward the Confederate camp to determine the situation of the enemy and the best and most likely routes of their advance toward our position and recommendations on pickets and outpost positions. A nighttime reconnaissance by the engineering officer Barfield suggested that we build an "L" shaped grand guard on the SW slope of hill "A" per the engineer's reconnaissance that you have received. The angle of the "L" faced toward the anticipated enemy attack. One of the recommendations of the Capt. Barfield was to place an artillery piece at the angle that could be manipulated by the defenders to rake the draw to the west and the open valley to the south. Our line of works of the grand guard was approximately 40' above the valley floor and heavily wooded.

I assumed that the enemy's most logical approach to our works was through the woods rather than the open valley so immediately after breakfast and morning parade, I ordered two companies of the Inf. Batt. into outpost with the

other two working on the grand guard under the supervision of Capt. Barfield, affectionately known as "Hadrian" by the rank and file. The implementation of this order was hampered by an immediate and uncoordinated assault of four companies of enemy infantry, including an assault on our undefended camp. In the meeting Sat. morning, Willie Huckabee, Rob Sanders and I had decided upon a time to go into outpost. It was very obvious looking upon their assault that they were not aware of the theory of outpost. After finding Rob on horseback, I asked him was he familiar with the outpost, and he was not.

*Auth. note: I also posed this question to Willie and he was unaware of the theory of the outpost. I told him that I would forward he and Rob a copy of my Mahan-o-gram for their perusal. They were interested in finding out what I was trying to achieve, so when I explained briefly what we were trying to do, they wanted me to send them a copy of the principle of the outpost. So this should help all of us in the future to implement the line of pickets in the field more correctly, rather than just playing a game of "capture the flag" in 19th-century garments.*

After the ad-hoc council with Rob, we began to work on the grand guard. There were still elements of the enemy on the eastern slope of hill "B", so I ordered the 1st & 8th KS and the 7th/30th MO to clear the enemy from the eastern slope and summit of hill "B", culminating in an outpost being built and manned on the summit of hill "B". This they did with alacrity! Hill "B" is very steep, heavily wooded, and its summit is approx. 100' above the valley floor. With great physical effort, and a hot exchange of musketry, each company fought uphill, forward and to the right, eventually flanking and pushing the enemy from the crest of the hill. I eventually recalled the 7th/30th MO and the 8th KS to resume work on the grand guard. All three company's officers and men deserve commendation.

The 1st company of infantry (1st US/ 55th Ill./ 77th PA) was working under the direction of Capt. Barfield and had begun to extend the line of works in a south-easterly direction

toward the pond while covered by Capt. Burdine's signal detachment with their carbines. The line of works easily exceeded 100 linear feet. The 1st company's orderly Sgt. asked me if we were going to begin other works suggested by Capt. Barfield. I remarked that these looked good and to "Tell the engineer to pound sand". At that, the orderly Sgt. remarked, "You tell him sir, he's right behind you." I turned and saw Capt. Barfield's personage, and then busted out laughing. After an apology, it became a tradition that weekend of the rank and file, and the engineering officer as well, to respond to difficult requests from their superior officer, by opening the left palm facing up and making a fist with the right hand, pounding the fist into the open palm repeatedly. I trust the men will treat the Brigade commander with more of the respect due his position.

At the grand guard site, I had a meeting with the artillery commander and asked his opinion of the placement of the gun in the works. He said it would be tough but possible. I said if we could safely manhandle a gun there it would be the key to our defense. My regard for FB artillery continues to climb. By using trees as a substitute block and tackle, the gun got up the slope into position. I hope whoever reads this report can get me the unit that this gun and crew belong to. They deserve a unit commendation. After the grand guard was completed, I sent a runner to the 1st KS, still on the summit of Hill "B" to come back to camp and re-supply. I commanded Maj. Kidd's cavalry to hold the ford across Little Sugar Creek, and after re-forming the battalion, we marched to the east end of the valley, ready to be deployed whenever the enemy made his demonstration.

The enemy cavalry engaged Maj. Kidd's and because of numerical superiority, forced them back north to re-group. I deployed my infantry in a line of battle as the lead elements of the enemy infantry came across the ford and up into the valley floor. As the first enemy battalion deployed into their line of battle (I was engaged with over 2.5 times my number in two battalions) I took the men at the double quick and came around their left flank, ending up



roughly parallel to Little Sugar Creek and poured a merciless fire into their flanks. Their battalion commander either didn't know what to do or had never seen such fleet-of-foot Federals. In a ragged response he finally grabbed company commander one at a time and forced his battalion in parallel to ours.

With enemy cavalry harassing my left flank and the second battalion of enemy infantry crossing the creek, my new volunteers started to break and run under fire (per scenario) and we regrouped in the line of trees at the base of hill "A". After pouring fire by file into the enemy's ranks while they attempted to bring both battalions to bear at my shrinking number, I found it necessary to begin to withdraw to our line of works up the hill. Prior to the battle, we had the artillery to place their guns between the eastern edge of our works and the pond that our position was anchored on.

As I withdrew the battalion by company in echelon, the final company I left in the tree line was the 1st. Capt. Gross then ordered his company to ground in the tall grass and reloaded. I assume because of the interest of the enemy where our other three companies were withdrawing to, nobody seemed to see the 1st company "disappear". As I was crossing into the safety of our works I glanced downhill as the 1st company rose up in the face of the second enemy battalion advancing, and much to the chagrin of the enemy's battalion commander, delivered a devastating volley and then scurried up the hill. This left Maj. Kidd's cavalry, who was doing his best to attempt to cover my flanks, to the prurient lusts of the Confederates. Sorry, Doug.

The enemy stayed at the bottom of the hill, and traded volleys with us, and as the first enemy battalion started advancing up the hill, the gun in the angle of our defenses let them have "Hail Columbia" whilst the Confederate commander made a loud reference to fecal material. Subsequent assaults met with the same fate. To make a long story a little shorter, we could've stayed there all day facing a force many times their number and held firm. But, as scenario

called, we waved at the enemy long enough and they finally came and we allowed them to take the works.

The action later that afternoon found us halfway up hill "A" as we were prepared to force the enemy out of our occupied works and through the valley. The action went fine as we struggled to keep our alignment and control under fire advancing down a steep hill. Then crossing the works we came to understand why our forebears had to stop and dress the lines going through rough terrain. As we fought our way into the valley, we again had to push numbers twice ours and to do that we had to end up double-quicking the men to take advantage of positions that would force the rebels to withdraw. They seemed very surprised again that we just glided right by their left and right flanks and again forced them to withdraw back toward the ford. As much as we wanted to engage at realistic distances (200 yds) the narrowness of the valley didn't allow and we had some awkward moments as the enemy finally withdrew across Little Sugar Creek. Such is reenacting for the paying customers.

Sat. evening found the men back in camp in good spirits.

### **Sunday November 9th**

Sun. Morning we had Battalion parade and a bit of drill, which I was quite impressed with the alacrity of the men as I threw many different commands in rapid succession, and all were performed without blemish. In recognition of that, I dismissed the men early and complimented them on their intense cogitation during drill. We broke the camp and we then formed the Battalion for the last time to march out to the field of battle. We marched to the south, crossing Little Sugar Creek, and marched to the end of the road. We were to chase the enemy into the field of battle and they were supposed to be in skirmish order by the ford, supported by the enemy cavalry. We sent out Maj. Kidd's brave band of single-digit warriors, followed by the FB signal detachment under the command of Capt. Burdine. Maj. Kidd was

successful in forcing the enemy to the north into the valley, he crossed the creek and was soon decimated by an enemy battery to the east (his right) and a re-formed enemy cavalry formation. Capt. Burdine sent the signal to us to advance, and we began our march into the maelstrom.

The scenario called for me to defeat each infantry battalion in order and then face my line of battle to the right(east) and then drive the Confederates remnants back to the east out of sight. I saw as we came up out of the ford, one battalion in a column of divisions and the other to its right in a line of battle perpendicular to mine. I quickly ordered the men into a line of battle, and we began to fire. The confederate battery to our right opened up and dismounted cavalry formed on my right. As both enemy infantry battalions were engaging me now, I had only one recourse, and that was to double-quick the boys to the right of the battalion in column of divisions, and then hope to force their retiring easterly along the Bentonville road. It was not to be. As soon as I got on their flank, they dispatched each column to each of my flanks and the other battalion pushed toward my front. It was over. I suddenly felt like the defenders of the Alamo in March of 1836.

I decided to allow Bill to take his turn (what a spot to leave him in - sorry Bill) leading the remnants of the battalion, and he retired back to the ford. The enemy yelled for us to attack, but I counted from my prone position 125 Confederate infantry and I counted what was left with Bill and they numbered 35. It was pointless to finish the scenario per plan and the armies ended staring at each other and withdrawing after a couple of gratuitous advances by the enemy to perhaps lessen the grotesque number discrepancy. One of the reason we lost some many was we actually took 5-6 man canister hits when the enemy arty fired on our right flank. It doesn't take too many of those to reduce down quite quickly. We started with 80 men in the infantry battalion and ended up with about 30 after the battle. Bill did a tremendous job just maintaining order, and was accurate and mindful of realism enough to not continue the scenario as

it would've looked quite unbelievable to the crowd.

### Actions of Merit

- The men for their tremendous work in the "Outpost" scenario Saturday, making our line of works/Grand Guard possible, and their incredible drill on Sunday.
- The Engineering Officer Barfield for his incredible hand-drawn maps of the area, and his period and thoughtful insight on the defense of our lines.
- The Company commanders for preparing the men for drill and committing zero mistakes in maneuvers under fire - most times in tight spots.
- The FB Artillery as they were quite receptive to all our ideas and scenarios - especially manhandling that guns up the steep hill into our line of works. The Johnnie's were taken by surprise by a gun so far up a steep hill, in such rough terrain.
- The men of the 1st KS and 13th US, who traveled from Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota to support a FB event!
- The Confederate command staff - Willie Huckabee and Rob Sanders - for their openness to try to do new things and their lack of "pre-conceived notions" in planning scenarios. These guys were impressed with the "feistiness" of the Federal forces and are willing to adapt scenarios to look correct. We had meetings after each scenario was completed to de-brief each other on what went right and what went wrong. This is a good thing. They just need to study up on the theory of the Outpost.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Benefiel, Maj. Commanding  
1st Battalion, 3rd Bde.  
Army of the Frontier

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## **Hospital Conditions and Care for the Wounded (Continued)**

Meanwhile, attending physicians ascribed the ills to such imaginative and fantastical causes as “malarial miasms,” “mephitic effluvia,” “crowd poisoning,” “sewer emanations,” “depressing mental agencies,” “lack of nerve force,” “exhalations,” “night air,” “sleeping in damp blankets,” “choleric temperament,” “decay of wood,” “odor of horse manure,” “effluvia of putrefying corpses,” and “poisonous fungi in the atmosphere.”

Given such thinking, together with the endemic over-crowding and poor sanitary practices common to both armies, it is no wonder that Civil War soldiers were four times as likely to fall ill as civilians- and five times as likely to die if they did. It was not that the hometown doctors were dramatically better at their work- most of the eleven thousand physicians who served in the Union Army in camp, field, or hospital were volunteers drawn from the same pool of peacetime practitioners- the problem lay in the system itself. In 1860, one year before the start of the Civil War, there were forty existing medical schools in the United States, three-fourths of them in the North, with a total enrollment of approximately five thousand students. The demand for doctors far outstripped the number of schools, and students characteristically rushed through their classes in a year or less and then were free to hang out their shingles without (as was still common in Europe) serving a professional apprenticeship. Low standards of education, combined with a dismaying ignorance of European medical advances, meant that all Americans-soldiers and civilians-received less than satisfactory medical treatment during the war. And the sheer volume of cases-more than four hundred thousand wounded and six million sick in the Union Army alone during the four years of war-insured that even the most competent doctors were swamped with more cases than they could effectively handle.

Once ill, the soldiers could expect little in the way of practical help from their doctors. Indeed, many of the physicians’ favorite remedies made matters worse by violating the most basic of all medical tenets: first, do no harm. Civil War-era doctors were apt to prescribe a bewildering and generally ineffective array of drugs at the first sign of illness. Diarrhea was treated with laxatives, opium, Epsom salts, castor oil, ipecac, quinine, strychnine, turpentine, camphor oil, laudanum, blue mass, bella-donna, lead acetate, silver nitrate, red pepper, and whiskey. Malarial symptoms called for large doses of quinine-one unfortunate patient received 120 grams in seventeen hours-whiskey, opium, Epsom salts, iodide of potassium, sulphuric acid, wild cherry syrup, morphine, ammonia, cod liver oil, spirits of nitre, cream of tartar, barley water, and cinnamon. Typhoid sufferers were dosed with quinine, blue mass, carbonate of ammonia, turpentine, opium, and brandy. When all else failed, as it frequently did, doctors harkened back to more primitive methods of treatment: bleeding, cupping, blistering, leeching, binding, and chafing. Flannel belly bands were also widely if ineffectively used.

By far the most widely prescribed and damaging drug was calomel, or mercurous chloride. Dissolved in a chalky, bitter-tasting liquid, calomel was administered in massive doses for virtually every disease that Civil War physicians encountered. This was the era of “heroic dosing,” when patients were virtually drenched in medicines, on the seemingly unassailable theory that any drug worth taking in moderation was doubly worth taking in excess. Unfortunately, it did not require much calomel to induce chronic mercury poisoning, with horrific short-term and insidious long-term aftereffects. Some patients were given a dram of calomel every hour, causing their faces to swell, their tongues to jut out of their mouths, and their saliva to gush forth at the rate of anywhere from a pint to a quart every twenty-four hours. Heavy doses caused the victims’ teeth and hair to fall out, and in extreme cases they developed mercurial gangrene, a particularly loathsome disease that rotted the soft tissue in the inside of the mouth and caused it to slough off in a putrid mass.

Abuses were so widespread that in May 1863 Union Surgeon General William A. Hammond felt compelled to issue a directive banning the use of calomel and a related mercury-based compound, tartar emetic, in all army hospitals. "No doubt can exist," said Hammond, "that more harm has resulted from the misuse of these agents...than benefit from their administration." Hammond's farsighted order was widely ignored, and its unpopularity among other physicians contributed greatly to his removal from office a few months later. At any rate, the directive came too late to help Northern author Louisa May Alcott, who had come to Washington not long before Whitman to serve as a nurse in the hospitals. Contracting typhoid fever after only three weeks at Union Hotel Hospital, Alcott was heroically dosed with calomel, lost most of her hair and teeth, and suffered from shooting pains in her arms and back for the rest of her life.

Sharing hospital space with the ill were soldiers who had been wounded in combat. Frequently, this meant that they were recuperating from amputations of their arms or legs and, more often than not, were also battling some sort of postoperative fever caused by the incredibly filthy conditions of Civil War surgery. Antisepsis was almost entirely unknown during the war, and the rough nature of field hospitals precluded even minimal standards of cleanliness, much less sterility. The common image of the Civil War "butcher" at work in a charnel house of severed limbs and screaming victims has some basis of truth, but with important qualifications. The popular notion of a wounded soldier biting down on a bullet while a drunken surgeon sawed away clumsily at his ruined arm is a romantic-or antiromantic-figment of the screenwriter's imagination. To begin with, most wounded soldiers were effectively anesthetized before surgery, chloroform being the overwhelming agent of choice. Soldiers were often given a drink of whiskey upon their arrival at field hospitals, but this was done erroneously to combat symptoms of shock, not for anesthetic reasons.

Amputations were performed at a staggering rate after a major battle, not out of callousness or stupidity but as accepted medical practice

stemming from the experience of British surgeons during the Crimean War. The number of amputated limbs was high because the number of wounds to soldiers' extremities was also high-71 percent of all Civil War wounds were to the arms, legs, hands, or feet. The wounding agent was almost always a bullet-surprisingly, only 6 percent of wounds were caused by artillery fire-and three-fourths of all bullet wounds were inflicted by .58 caliber Minie bullets, wrongly called balls. The damage done to the human body by such a lethal projectile, fired from a rifled musket with great accuracy at a range of upwards of one thousand yards, is difficult to exaggerate. The relatively slow muzzle speed of Civil War muskets, coupled with the heavy weight of the cone-shaped lead bullet, resulted in large, jagged wounds, copious bleeding, and catastrophically shattered bones. (By comparison, the modern steel-jacketed, .30-caliber bullet, traveling at a much faster speed, is effectively sterilized by the sheer heat of its velocity and typically makes a smaller, neater, utterly aseptic hole while passing completely through the victim's body.)

More often than not, it was this shattering of bones that compelled immediate amputation during the Civil War. As one wartime surgeon described it, "The shattering, splintering, and splitting of a long bone by impact of the minie or Enfield ball were, in many instances, both remarkable and frightful, and early experience taught surgeons that amputation was the only means of saving life." Furthermore, it was accepted practice that operations should take place within twenty-four hours of the patient's wounding, before the "irritative," or infected, stage of the injury took place in rough field hospitals, not in better-equipped surgeries farther to the rear.

It was not so much the amputations themselves that caused such traumatic medical aftereffects in Civil War soldiers but the frightful and literally ignorant way in which they were carried out. No modern description of the procedure can equal the eyewitness account of Union surgeon W.W. Keen, a young Philadelphia physician who went through the war with the Army of the Potomac and later

became one of the country's most respected neurologists. Writing in 1918, half a century removed from the horrors he had witnessed at Bull Run, Gettysburg, and Spotsylvania, Keen could not suppress an almost perceptible shudder. "We operated in old blood-stained and often pus-stained coats," he wrote. "We used undisinfected instruments from undisinfected plush-lined cases, and still worse, used marine sponges which had been used in prior pus cases and had been only washed in tap water. If a sponge or an instrument fell on the floor it was washed and squeezed in a basin of tap water and used as if it were clean....The silk with which we sewed up all wounds was undisinfected. If there was any difficulty in threading the needle we moistened it with...bacteria-laden saliva, and rolled it between bacteria-infested fingers. We dressed the wounds with clean but undisinfected sheets, shirts, tablecloths, or other soft linen rescued from the family ragbag. We had no sterilized gauze dressing, no gauze sponges....We knew nothing about antiseptics and therefore used none."

The predictable result of such hurried and horrific operations was postoperative infections, of which there was no shortage of dreadful candidates. Pyemia, septicemia, erysipelas, osteomyelitis, tetanus, gangrene-the very names of the so-called "surgical fevers" are terrifying, and with good reason. Caused by the ever teeming streptococcus or staphylococcus bacteria, the fevers routinely followed invasive surgery (erysipelas was the exception, often occurring idiopathically, or spontaneously, without the necessity of an open wound). Pyemia, or "pus in the blood," was the most dreaded of all, with a mortality rate of 97.4 percent. Sufferers experienced profuse sweating, high fevers, chills, jaundice, and the affliction's mordant trademark, multiple abscesses, before being carried off within a few days of its onset.

One Union surgeon graphically charted the fever's course: "Many a time I have the

following experience: A poor fellow whose leg or arm I have amputated a few days before would be getting on as well as we then expected-that is to say, he had pain, high fever, was thirsty and restless, but was gradually improving....Suddenly, over night, I would find that his fever had become markedly greater; his tongue dry, his pain and restlessness increased; sleep had deserted his eyelids, his cheeks were flushed; and on removing the dressings I would find the secretions from the wound dried up, and what there were watery, thin, and foul smelling, and what union of the flaps had taken place had melted away. Pyemia was the verdict, and death the usual result within a few days."

(To be continued in December)

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