

MESSENGER

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EVENT REPORT: 135th Anniversary Vicksburg Campaign

This event, in my humble opinion, represents the future of reenacting. The "modified campaign-style" format allows both the "hardcore" and the "family camper" the opportunity to experience something that more closely represents the actual experience of the Civil War soldier.

The preferred way to participate in such an event -- the way to get the most out of it -- was to carry only the necessities of the common soldier, participate in the two moderate marches, and bivouac with the army where it camped at night. However, provision was made for those whose health prevented full participation and those who preferred to camp with their families.

The result was an event that attempted to balance authenticity with convenience; hardship with comfort; and realism with safety. These goals were achieved with varying degrees of success.

The three-day event included three full-scale battle scenerios staged for specators, plus several smaller non-spectator skirmishes which took place on the march. Fourth Battalion, consolidated with two companies of the Louisiana Battalion, took part in all three battles and four of the smaller actions.

ARRIVAL

I carpooled with Alan Bowling and Justin Gerke. We arrived just before 3 a.m. Friday, and to our surprise found registration open. (The packet had said it would not re-open until 8:00). Locating registration -- and subsequently parking, and the camp -- was no mean trick, as signs, directions and maps were woefully inadequate.

After napping until sun-up we finally located the battalion camp, in a stand of tall woods on the Raymond battlefield. The open fields surrounding it were a literal parking lot, which was never completely cleared of vehicles until we left Saturday.

Company A of the 5th Missouri, presented with an opportunity to re-create one of the most significant events in the unit's history, could muster no more than eleven men present. This number had dropped by nearly 50 percent by the time we marched out of camp Sunday morning. Among the casualties were Justin and Alan, who departed Friday evening when Justin took ill.

THE BALL OPENS

Sir: It is my honor to report the part taken by a detachment of Co. A, 5th Mo. Infty. Vols. in an action on 8 May near Raymond, Miss.

Consolidated with Co. A, 6th Mo. Infty. Vols, and under the command of Capt. Alan Conner, we were assigned the position of Color Company. I had been appointed Orderly Sergeant, and mustered an aggregate of 20 present for duty. Our men were designated 1st Platoon.

The sun shone brightly, and climbing temperatures and humidity made the afternoon uncomfortably warm. The Brigade, consisting of McKinney's, Beck's and Rambo's Battalions, marched along a shaded lane for about a half-mile, until called to a halt. Within a quarter-hour, the report of artillery announced the opening of the ball. An approaching federal force was driving some Mississippi militia from the vicinity of Fourteen Mile Creek.

Gen. Smart deployed McKinney and Rambo into a large, freshly plowed field. Our battalion was moved by the flank behind them, and deployed on the right, by file into line, extending the brigade front to

the left, and over-lapping the federal right. McKinney & Rambo advanced, striking the federals and sending them tumbling back toward the creek. Our order to advance was given, and with a cheer we stepped off toward the creek -- nearly 200 yds distant.

As we neared the tree-lined creek, a company-sized force spilled from its banks and formed to contest us. A few well-placed volleys sent them scrambling for cover on the other side. We then splashed across the creek -- which as shallow but lined with steep, eight-foot banks -- and quickly reformed on the other side. Here we found the federals in force, and the fight became a desperate, close-range affair.

Suddenly, we were flanked. A large force appeared on our left, pouring a deadly fire into our line, and compelling us to seek safety on the other side of the creek. The federals seemed to be everywhere now, and pushed our shattered ranks relentlessly across the plowed field, toward the safety of Raymond.

IN BIVOUAC

One of the many 'magic moments' I experienced on this campaign was the sight of the battalion in bivouac. Tents were scarce (except around the 2nd Mo.) and men were clustered around small campfires in the woods, or spread out on blankets with only the light of a bayonet-held candle to illuminate. Most of us slept soundly that night. We were, however, awakened at about 2 a.m. by blood-curdling screams. Apparently someone's blood sugar level had dropped dangerously low, and he experienced a violent, delirious seizure. EMT's arrived to handle the incident, but many were unable to return to sleep afterwards.

THE AMBUSH

Sir: It is my pleasure to report to you the part taken by this company in actions during the retreat to Raymond on 9 May.

The battalion being formed in an open field and at rest with arms grounded, we were surprised on our right by the advance of a force of the enemy. The Colonel formed the battalion, and we were double-quickened, in column of fours, across the front of the attacking federal battleline. No doubt a good many boys met their Maker as a result of this foolish move. Once fronted we poured a hot fire into the enemy, which subsequently retired, allowing us to take up the march for Raymond.

We were halted after less than a half-mile march, and the battalion was moved off the road and into the woods. The plan was to launch a surprise blow on the flank of the enemy, who would be lured into the trap by our retreating rear guard. The plan worked to perfection. After nearly an hour of crouching in the foliage with the rolling of musketry coming ever-nearer, the trap was sprung! The pursuing federal column came into view on the road, and with a Missouri Yell we fell upon their flank like demons. They were caught completely by surprise, as evidenced the saucer-like appearance of their eyes. Their color bearer scrambled in three different directions before deciding "to the rear" was the preferable choice.

THE PARADE

Another of the 'magic moments' of this event came as our column entered the town of Raymond. The streets were lined with throngs of on-lookers -- many of them in period attire. Our musicians were beating a stirring cadence, and everyone was in step. Colorful homespun ribbons -- gifts of the local civilians -- adorned hats and muskets. From the historic courthouse flew the Stars and Bars. The sun shone, the crowds cheered, our hearts swelled with pride, and for a few stirring moments it was 1863. You can't put a price on that feeling.

Close on our heels, of course, was the federal column. Their welcome was not quite so friendly -- but they were 'traveling in time' just the same.

The march had been easy by most standards, but the heat and lack of conditioning caused many to drop out. Some would be lost to us for the remainder of the day, but recovered in time for Sunday.

DISASTER IN THE WOODS

Sir: The duty falls to me to report the part taken by this company in the action of 9 May before Jackson.

Heat, exhaustion and casualties had taken a toll on Smart's brigade by afternoon. Our battalion was the only one to answer the call when the enemy approached. We were posted in line of battle in a woods choked with dense undergrowth. Pvt. McKee suggested that we "dig in," but Col. Beck scoffed at the idea.

We would pay for such overconfidence.

The enemy appeared first as a small detachment of cavalry, and our boys taunted them. Shortly, however, their strength became known as battalion after battalion of infantry entered the fray -- pushing us relentlessly through the underbrush. [We were later informed that our single battalion had been faced by the entire federal force in those woods -- three full BRIGADES]. The men fought valiantly, but it soon became "the Devil take the hindmost" as our flanks were enveloped.

We tumbled from the woods and into a large field, where Johnson's Brigade waited in support. But they, too, were overpowered by the weight of enemy numbers, and the remnants of our force was driven from the field.

THE WEATHER HOLDS

Rain had been forecast for the weekend, and cries from Chicken Little had kept some of our number from making the trip to Mississippi. However, while the threat appeared as skies clouded Saturday afternoon and again Sunday morning, never more than a sprinkle or two fell.

Saturday evening we were treated to a delicious chicken & rice supper by the Louisiana contingent of the battalion -- fine folks all. We bedded down in anticipation of fighting under the blue Missouri banner on the morrow.

THE MARCH

Sir: I beg to report the part taken by this company in the actions of 10 May in Hinds County, Mississippi.

As the column left the Waverly Plantation Sunday morning, the remnants of the company were in high spirits. Most had lightened their load, and had become accustomed to the march. There was much joking and frivolity in the ranks.

Our battalion was in the middle of the line of march, with Rambo's battalion as the rear guard. They became engaged sharply as we trudged westward toward an eminence known as "Champion's Hill." After a brief rest, the battalion was to take our turn as rear guard. We didn't wait long before the enemy appeared, and we were thrown into a column of companies to block the road.

[Note: It is worth mentioning that property restrictions prevented the federal force from going around us at this point -- a circumstance which drew criticism from the feds later].

The enemy pressed, and the battalion was moved into an adjoining field to contest him. There was much confusion as companies of the battalion became separated, and federal infantry took possession of the road on our left flank. Some of the boys -- having gotten their dander up at some dismounted cavalry to our front -- charged without orders. One trooper was overrun, but I am afraid the company suffered severely to flanking fire.

We withdrew during a lull to regain the rest of the column, but were soon engaged again as the enemy pursued. Our line was formed on the crest of a wooded hill, and we were soon embroiled in a sharp, close-range fight with the Federals' advance force, which ended when we struck their left flank and closed to hand-to-hand.

WHAT WENT WRONG

This last incident is indicative of the overriding problem of this event: It was unsafe. On numerous occasions we found ourselves muzzle-to-muzzle with the enemy. In a few instances fisticuffs ensued. These may be inherent problems with un-scripted tacticals, but commanders on the field need to take responsibility for the safety issue.

After the hilltop melee we marched the rest of the way to the Champion Hill staging area, and rested for a couple of hours. I will not provide a battle report of Sunday's scenerio, as it went in no way as planned. This, of course, is the true heartbreak of this event, as this battle was the single most important thing that drew us from Missouri.

The plan called for us to enter the fight twice. (Huh?) After being withdrawn the first time, we would re-enter as "fresh troops" (i.e. The Missouri Brigade) for our moment in the spotlight: The Counterattack. We were withdrawn as planned -- after another uncomfortably Close Encounter of the Worst Kind and a false-alarm injury. But were then marched and counter-marched in the heat for over 15 minutes as the officers tried to figure out where we belonged. When we finally went forward for "the counterattack", the fed-

eral force in our front refused to budge. Someone said they were an unauthorized group of walk-ons. Arguments ensued. The battle was halted. Everyone when home. The end.

There were other logistical problems as well: The aforementioned signage problem; civilians complained of a lack of shuttle buses; water was at a premium on the march and at battle sites -- and that which we did get was brown from "minerals"; and there seemed to be a general lack of communication at the battalion/brigade level.

The failure of the Champion Hill scenerio was a crushing blow. The safety problems concern me. The other problems were mere annoyances. But -- taken as a whole -- it was an outstanding event. I marvel at how great it COULD have been. Hopefully the snafus can be addressed, and we'll see more of this type of event in the future.

1st Sergeant Dennis Faught

Co. A, 5th-6th Mo. Infy. (Combined)

HIGH BRASS ARMY

It's a problem that seemed endemic to reenactor armies: Too much brass. Small reenacting companies with an over-abundance of officers -- both commissioned and non-commissioned -- seem to abound. We call them "Zebra Companies."

Lt. Bowling recently brought to my attention some period documentation that the problem is not a new one.

William Watson was a British national -- a Scotsman -- who volunteered for Confederate service in 1861 and served as an orderly sergeant in the 3rd Louisiana Infantry. In his book, "Life in the Confederate Army" (1887), he remarks on the process of electing officers in volunteer companies. Watson explains that -- regardless of the size of a company -- a full complement of officers and NCO's were elected.

"Lieutenant G. was elected captain, and our 1st lieutenant remained as before, but, beyond this, the election was a mere farce. Two lieutenants, one orderly sergeant, four duty sergeants, and four corporals had to be elected; and the whole strength of the company was about 39. Of these eight were to be discharged on the 15th of July, ... and several were absent on detached service, while several declined to vote after the captain and 1st lieutenant had been elected; so that the voting was left almost exclusively to the candidates themselves."

This took place during May of 1862 as the regiment reorganized in northeast Mississippi. That summer, Watson complains of the weak state of his brigade, "...composed as it was of skeleton regiments, some companies not having more that 12 privates 'present for duty,' although having the full complement of officers and non-commissioned officers. Our own regiment had 133 officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, and only about 166 privates, present for duty ... *of course, these officers were only in name, they had, all under the rank of captain, to carry rifles and work as privates.*" (emphasis added)

Here we have documentation for handling excess rank the way we do in the 5th Missouri. Unfortunately, Watson makes no mention of whether rank insignia was worn. However, he never mentions any sort of distinguishing insignia below the rank of captain, and more than once ridicules gaudy displays of rank. We can draw our own conclusions from that. In the meantime, we now have historical first-person documentation of placing excess lieutenants and file-closers in the ranks shouldering muskets.

-1st Sergeant Dennis Faught

CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL DAY

Columbia's first annual Confederate Memorial Day services were held April 26 before a crowd of about 50, gathered on the courthouse square. Present from Company A were Sgt. Dennis Faught and Privates Jim Robertson and Neil Block, under the command of Lt. Alan Bowling.

The program, sponsored by Little Dixie Camp #1673 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, included an address by attorney Bill Mays, and the reading of the names of the 59 known Boone County residents who

died bearing arms for the Confederacy during the War Between the States. Among these names were ten members of the 5th Missouri, including one from Company A.

Following the courthouse ceremony, another was held at a cemetery west of Columbia to dedicate recently-erected headstones for two veterans of Jo Shelby's brigade -- brothers Robert and Joseph Douglass.

WHAT'S FOR SUPPER?

This is the final installment of some period receipts (yeah, that's the 19th-century way of saying "recipe") that can be prepared for a company. These are serialized from Veile's Hand Book of Active Service as printed in the SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY [ATLANTA, GA] June 1, 1861:

Coffee for 25 Men.

Take 12 quarts of water, when it boils add 20 ounces of coffee, mix it well, and leave it on the fire till it commences to boil, then take it off, and pour into it a little more than one quart of cold water, let it stand in a warm place full ten minutes, the dregs will settle to the bottom, and the coffee be perfectly clear. Pour it then into another vessel, leaving the dregs in the first. Add sugar, four teaspoonfuls to the quart. If you can get milk, leave out five quarts of water in the above receipt, and put milk in its place.

Peas or Bean Soup for 25 Men.

Take 14 pounds of pork, 8 quarts peas, or beans, 20 quarts of water, 25 teaspoonfuls of sugar, 12 of pepper, and several large onions; boil gently till the vegetables are soft--from four to five hours.

Receipt for a small quantity of Mashed Meat.

Cut the meat in very small pieces; heat the frying-pan, put into it one pint of water, half a teaspoonful of salt, and a teaspoonful of flour, and let it cook fifteen minutes. Salt meat must be cooked the same, omitting the salt, in its place putting a small teaspoonful of sugar, spices, or pickles, chopped fine. Dish it on some ship biscuit. Steak, chops, sausages, bacon, slices of any kind of meat can be cooked in a frying-pan, with a little melted fat at the bottom. Salt meat should always be soaked.

--Veile's Hand Book of Active Service.

ABC TO BROADCAST FEATURES ON REENACTING

Those at the Raymond, Miss. event may have noticed a crew from ABCNews taping footage during the three-day weekend. The network has announced that the footage will be featured twice during the coming months: Friday, May 29 in a story on ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, and Wednesday, July 1 in a segment on Primetime Live.

The media coverage comes on the eve of the largest gathering of blue and gray since the 'woah' -- and as the phenomena of Civil War reenacting is being examined in a new book by journalist Tony Horowitz, "Confederates in the Attic."

ABC is, of course, owned by Disney -- a company not known for its love of the Civil War community -- so only time will tell if "everyone loves Raymond."

Participation in the Opening Ceremonies of the National Sons of Confederate Veterans Convention-St. Louis, MO, August 5-8, 1998

Dear SCV Members of the 4th [Extra] Battalion:

I have been given the responsibility of organizing the Confederate military honor guard for the opening ceremonies of the 1998 national SCV convention to be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown St. Louis during the week of August 5-8. We will need approximately 16 Confederate soldiers for the event.

Although it is not mandatory, the ranks for this detail will be filled first with Confederate reenactors who are SCV members.

This will truly be a historic event in that no such national meeting has taken place before in Missouri. The theme of the conventions is: "Missouri, the 12th Star in the Confederate Flag." The Missouri Division-SCV and the planning committee want to show to the rest the world and especially members of the SCV that Missouri was and still is a Southern State and played an important role in the War Between the States. Therefore, we will portray Missouri State Guard and Confederate soldiers from Camp Jackson to Ft. Blakeley. We want to have all types of Missouri Confederate represented. From the "citizen soldier" of the MO State Guard, the partisan ranger, to the seasoned veteran of the "South's Finest" (Missouri Confederate Brigade), it is our goal to present all phases of the war and types of uniforms worn and equipment carried by our Missouri forefathers. I think we should go more towards a "field soldier" look rather than a group of "band box" troops.

This will be a unique opportunity to show our pride as Missourians and our Southern heritage. I am working on provide some amenities for those who volunteer to participate in the event. The opening ceremony will be held on Thursday morning, August 6, 1998 at 8:30 a.m. We will need to be in place at about 7:45 a.m. For those who only can attend one day of the convention, I am trying to negotiate for some hotel rooms the night before the ceremony.

Of course if you are an SCV member, I encourage you to attend the entire convention.

I need to hear from those who are interested ASAP. Please pass with message onto those in your unit who do not have e-mail. I can be reached at: (816)537-9343 (home), or (800)255-6440, ext. 495 (work). An e-mail message is also encouraged.

Deo Vindice,

Mark White

Lt., 6th MO Infantry Co. A, CSA, 4th [Extra] Battalion Commander-Elijah Gates Camp #570, SCV
Commander-Central Brigade, MO Division, SCV

CIVILIAN ACTIVITIES AT 135TH GETTYSBURG

Friday, July 3rd

8:30-9:30 am - "Confederate Substitutions", talk by Mrs. Virginia Mescher (VA.)

10-11 am - Fashion Show narrated by Mrs. Susan Hughes (Kentucky)

11-11:30 am - "History and Fashion of Men's Cravats", talk by Mr. Lynn Bull (N.C.)

12-1 pm - "Civil War Past Lives", regression talk by hypnotherapist Ms. Barbara Lane

Break - (In camp - period craft demonstration by Ms. Vicki Betts (Texas)
and Mrs. Mescher

5-6 pm - Group Regression by Barbara Lane (free session for reenactors)

6-7 pm - Band concert

8 pm - Dance (location TBA)

Saturday, July 4th

9-10 am - "The United States Sanitary Commission", talk by author/publisher Daniel Hoisington (Minnesota)

10-11 am - Children's activities in camp by Mr. Mike Mescher

11-1 pm - Brief History of Temperance. Period Temperance Rally by the Daughters of Temperance (MI.)

Break - (Craft demonstrations in camp)

4:30-5:30 pm - Fashion Show, narrated by Mrs. Hughes

6-7 pm - Band Concert

8 pm - Dance with the 2nd South Carolina String Band

Sunday, July 5th

9-10 am - Tableau by the Atlantic Guard Soldier's Aid Society and Church Services

11-12 pm - "Fremantle, an Englishman at Gettysburg", talk by Roger Hughes

*All activities take place in the civilian activities tent unless otherwise noted.

135th GETTYSBURG "TO BE OR NOT TO BE?"

Perhaps those of you with access to the internet and AOL Civil War Reenactors Boards may be aware of the problem that has developed concerning the upcoming reenactment at Gettysburg scheduled for this 4th of July weekend, however here is an update with the latest information I was able to obtain before publication of this issue. To make it short on 7 May the county supervisors of Freedom Township, PA., voted not to give a permit to the event organizers to hold the reenactment at the Bushy Farm site. There was apparently opposition from locals including emergency and police personnel with fears that there would be too many people for the infrastructure available.

The event organizers are working at this time both to change the minds of the county supervisors and to locate another site if this fails. I include a message from the AOL CW HOST dated 5/20 10:33pm CDT.

"This is the current word following the event planning meeting on site with the organizers: As of this past weekend, the event still has not gotten the permits to put on the Gettysburg event on the proposed property, and they will not know until the first week of June when the board meets again, but it is highly in doubt as the board wants to limit registration and allow no walk-ons to the event.

Don Warlick said they are looking at alternate sites, more specifically the site where Antietam was held in Maryland this past year, but are still optimistic about the current site. In any case we will not know anything for sure until the middle of June. So hang on to your hats folks and keep your fingers crossed."

Since this came out, a message dated 5/23, from Glenn LaBoeuf and Don Warlick, event organizers, states that the Maryland site has been rejected and a second site close to Gettysburg has been chosen. However the organizers are still trying to get the permits for the original site and will only announce the second site if the Freedom Township board again turns down their request for a permit at a meeting scheduled for June 1. I will give an update on any new developments to those who attend Columbia. There is also a number, 908-903-1064, which is available 24hrs for information. It has been busy when I have tried it. So there it is, at this time we are not sure if or where 135th Gettysburg will be held. You may call or E-mail me or the 1st Sgt as we are trying to keep up with developments and will give you any information we have. I will publish the July Messenger a little early so as to give you a final update if developments make that a necessity.

Alan Bowling

MESSENGER

DETAILS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

June 13-14: Columbia, Missouri. Nifong Park Living History. Camp life, drill, two skirmishes. We will galvanize one day. Confederate impression for other day is Missouri Brigade. Raw food provided for lunch Saturday and breakfast & lunch Sunday. Prepared meal Saturday evening. Company business meeting and Corporate Board Meeting Saturday evening. Sponsored by Parks & Recreation Dept & hosted by 5th Missouri Infantry, Co. A. Registration limited to 250 reenactors.

Directions: Site is at junction of U.S. 63 and Route AC in southeast corner of Columbia. Take exit, turn west, then left at traffic light (Nifong).

Registration deadline June 1. 30 Committed (18 Military).

Please remember if you have indicated you will attend and find you cannot let me, or Dennis Faught know as soon as possible. My phone: 573-442-9489, Dennis: 573-636-8336.

E-Mail- Acbcса@aol.com (for A. Bowling), Fifthmo@aol.com (D. Faught).

Thanks

Alan Bowling