

The Eagle Eye

Volume IV, Issue V

Non Facilie Viridis Est

SEPT./OCT. 1863 {2007}

2007
CAMPAIGN
CALENDAR

THE LATEST BLOODY STRUGGLE FOR HUNTINGTON BEACH

A Report from the Field by 2nd Lieut. Dave Oneslager

Butte College
OCTOBER
12, 13, & 14
RACW Event
w/Friday School Day

Fresno
OCTOBER
26, 27, & 28
NCWA Event
w/Friday School Day

Anderson
NOVEMBER
9, 10, & 11
RACW Event
w/Friday School Day

Moorpark
NOVEMBER
10 & 11
Southern California
non-club affiliated event

Be sure to check the NCWA website for other events of interest and remember to always confirm all dates and contact the host clubs before attending!

IN THIS ISSUE!



AFTER ACTION REPORTS
145TH ANTIETAM!



A defiant Company C stands fast at Huntington Beach amidst the carnage of battle.

The 1st U.S.S.S. was ordered to join the 1st Division Army of the Potomac at Huntington Beach by order of Colonel Fradella, commanding 1st Division, due to reports of a build-up of confederate forces in the area.

The 1st U.S.S.S. arrived on August 31 and began to set up camp when Captain Ted Stahr and 2nd Sergeant Ernie Manzo (who makes good use of his Sharps dispatching rebs) arrived. It seems Colonel Berdan ordered Captain Stahr to find out our whereabouts and to inquire as to why the Colonel had not received regular reports from our company.

As I explained, neither I nor anyone else in our company had ever filed a report. Captain Stahr seemed to have a bewildered look upon his face and his response was,

“doesn’t anyone in this company know how to write?” – which caused Sergeant Holt to almost swallow his cigar with laughter! Captain Stahr said we would discuss the matter the following day.

The following day we were spared further lecture due to reports of the enemy approaching our camp. We immediately formed up and went out to meet the confederate forces with Captain Stahr taking command of the company.

The battle did not go well for the Berdans. Being on the left flank and outnumbered, we took heavy casualties and had to pull back and regroup. Upon regrouping, we found that we had 4 killed, 5 wounded, and 1 missing (Sergeant Holt).

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RETURN FROM THE 145TH ANTIETAM—PART 1

Or Reflections on the September Storm Event

By Corporal Tim Pedersen



Before I left on this venture I sort of had this wide eyed kid at Christmas feeling about going back east and playing with the big boys near where it really happened. That pretty much changed by the time things were over and we ought to be proud of what we do out here on the left coast. Mind you, it was awfully impressive be part of a battalion of hundreds of guys and then seeing that many Confederates heading your way. Boy did they look good too, not a cowboy or pirate to be seen. However you still saw your share of things that made you go “huh?” on and off the field such as not being sure of who was giving the orders and then seeing cars parked about fifty feet away from my tent kind of blew the moment for me. It just amazed me in one battle to see a wave of guys climbing a split rail fence and getting shot in the process just a few minutes after watching a spectator wander across the battlefield. Where’s the provost? What? Cars still in camp? Where’s Phil when you need him?

There were some nice moments with the guy passing out the buck tails for the one scenario involving the Pennsylvania Bucktails. What made that scenario cool was that the Bucktails “appropriated” some of the Berdan’s DST Sharps rifle, so we were spot on for that impression. Our hosts with the 2nd B were quite accommodating to us. It was great to visit some upper end sutlers and have a little sticker shock to keep the pulse running.

It was also great that I had a chance to go to the original battlefield before heading off to the event site even though at that point Dave and I were quite tired after taking the red-eye back east.

Another thing that made an impression on me was the difference in terrain. We are so used to the billiard table like terrain of many of the places we fight at. In one battle I was able to look off to the distance from the treeline we were in and see just heads and Confederate flags about two hundred yards away moving across the front of our position in a low area at the base of a hill. You could see how the two armies could just pop up in front of each other out of nowhere.



**DONNING BLUE FOR PENNSYLVANIA,
SATURDAY SAW US AS THE “BUCKTAILS”**

Then there was the humidity. And the heat. It was pretty oppressive for this Californian. I was happy to get moving and start fighting as then the humidity became the last thing on my mind. At least until the fighting stopped. My recommendation for preparation for Gettysburg 2008 for one of my fellow Berdans was to wear their uniform in a sauna for a few weeks. Watch out for uniform shrinkage though.

All in all it was a great time and I look forward to heading back east again in 2008.

— Pvt. Tim Pedersen



THE 145TH ANTIETAM EVENT TRIP - PART TWO

While Corporal Pedersen has very ably covered the actual reenactment itself, 1st Sgt Hanson and I were able to spend some extra days prior to and after the event.

Arriving on Tuesday, we were able to visit the event site and scout out the best routes there and back. One thing we did was pick up some rounds that we had left from the 140th Antietam event in 2002. Surprising they were still in fairly good shape, although several plastic bags had been chewed by mice and or rats. At the event, the rounds still went off, but somewhat weaker then obviously fresh rounds.

At Gettysburg we saw some old Berdand friends and toured he battlefield. If you have not been there for awhile , the NPS has done a great job of restoring the battlefield to it's appearance in 1862.

On Friday morning we picked up the other half of our "comrades of battle " at the Baltimore airport. Since we had time a they had never been there before, we took them to the Antietam battlefield. We were in time to join an excellent tour by one of the park Rangers. After that we went to campsite for the event.

On Sunday morning, with the event ending early in the day, we took Dave and Tim to Gettysburg for lunch and a quick tour. We hit the highlights including several prominent USSS locations such as Pitzer Woods and the Company B, 20th Maine wall.

The guys were taken to the airport on Monday and Russ

and I continued our touring.

Traveling south we first went to new National USMC Museum at Quantico Virginia. Although career Army myself, I was very impressed with the detail and exhibits. It is well worth time to visit on your next trip back east.

From there went on to Fort Monroe, the largest fort ever built in he U.S. This is also the location where Jefferson Davis was held prisoner.

The highlight of this portion of our trip was new Monitor exhibit at the Mariners Museum in Newport. The museum and it's exhibits were OUTSTANDING..... We spent over 4 hours in the museum and could have spent more time. Prior to leaving, we also visited the National Cryptological Museum at the NSA (National Security Agency). The museum covered the he history of codes, ciphers, electronic warfare plus an excellent exhibit on their use in the Civil War.

After all this war and history stuff, we last visited the National Wildlife Research center near Baltimore. The exhibits ion the wildlife and the environment was a nice end to the trip

If any readers are interested in any of these sites; please contact me for additional information.

Before I close, Russ & I would like to thanks our traveling companion Garmina for all her help and assistance. Although we did not always adhere to her advice, she was always very patient with us, for the most part.

Brevet Pvt. Ted

145TH ANTIETAM—PART 3

First off, I really enjoyed the whole experience. There is no such thing as the perfect event just as there is no such thing as the perfect trip. All in all, I would certainly do it all again, but here is a brief list of what I learned from my first time at doing an event back east.

1} Red eye flights {Tim and I flew out Thursday night at about 10:30 pm} for light sleepers like me is not the best idea. No way I am going get anything but the occasional cat nap. As a consequence, I was pretty much staggering about by late Friday afternoon in camp. Just ask Russ.

2} Flying with the rifles was a simple and straight forward affair. Sacramento International checked to see that our Sharps were unloaded, but that is made obvious by a quick drop of the block. It did become clear that rifle cases, once inspected are treated like any other piece of oversized luggage. In other words, they receive the same brutal treatment as any other baggage as Tim's battered and pierced case would later prove. Thanks, Delta.

3} I am by no means a "gadget guy," but Russ' Garmin GPS was a true enlightenment. I've since added this to my Christmas wish list.

4} What gets wet in Maryland, stays wet in Maryland. This includes frock coats, long drawers, and rolled rounds. Now I understand why Ted and Russ shrink-wrap the ammunition.

5} The standard of impression for Union Soldiers back East is really no better nor worse than us left coasters. I did however notice a penchant for smoking cigarettes at virtually anytime including morning parade.

6} The general standard of impression for Confederate troops was quite striking. Up close you could see all the subtle variations of cut and cloth that evidenced the state of Confederate clothing supply, but the variations were such that, at a distance, the Rebs truly resembled an homogeneous army. Jeancloth and homespun fabrics prevailed. There simply a complete lack of the myriad of bright colors, white trousers, and festooned hats that we often see out here. An awesome sight.

7} Best advice, if you get a chance to do an event back east with your comrades. Take it!

- Temporarily Reduced to Ranks, Dave

ANTIETAM ADVICE

The 145th Antietam website featured the following advice for reenactors at that event. In fact, the advice may be of use at any event, so we include it here. — Editor

1. Research the units portrayed at the event, and actions they were in prior to the event, and try to put yourself in their mindset, and act as they would have. This is unit and event specific, and may take a little time, but even if you just pull up the basic information on the Web, it is better than just stumbling out there for a typical shoot them up! This does require work, but the benefits are immense! It also helps you truly act like the original soldiers did.
2. Act like you are under fire. Don't stand there like iron men, in perfect ranks while being shot at. It's that simple, duck and dodge huddle together tightly. This is how troops really acted in combat, not the usual two straight battle lines firing at each other at 40 yards. This is just plain wrong. Act the reenacting part!
3. Keep at longer combat distances! Most CW combat took place at 200 yards plus. We cannot do this at most events do to the spectators, but we can keep the distance to around 70 yards or so. The 40-yard duck shooting is just plain silly. And if you are to be forced back, don't walk to the rear, run as if your life depended on it, and then rally around your flag at least 70 plus yards to the rear. Reform, look confused and go back in! A lot of Reenactors get caught in the old "well we are the 500th San Francisco, and WE never run!" How historically inaccurate and egotistic that is! What that is saying is that the reenactors are better than the original soldiers that did, and we all know that to be a lie.
4. Carry full kits. By this I mean a blanket roll or a knapsack. It gives you a more realistic feel of what being a soldier is about. And when you go into battle you have two choices, some units carried theirs in (seen among veteran units) because they did not want to lose the valuable equipment, or you can drop knapsacks by order, and leave a guard with them. It just adds to the feeling of truly being a soldier. If you do decide to use a blanket roll, do not use twine to tie it up, but rather a leather strap with a buckle, and twist the blanket like a twist of tobacco to make it ride high and tight against you, thus staying out of the way.
5. Hike up your traps. Canteens and haversacks should be worn with the top of the item at the elbow, when the arm is fully extended at the side. An examination of period photos of veteran soldiers depict this, and it is for one simple reason; equipment worn high rides better, and does not beat you to death when you run. Also haversacks should be worn outside the belt, so it is easy to grab a bite to eat, once again seen in period photos.
6. Cigarettes and beer. Most events do not allow alcohol, so this doesn't apply to too many events, but for those events who do not ban it, be sure to bring your drink of choice in a period container. It is just wrong to sit around with a can of beer in camp. This gives reenactors a poor public image, and is historically wrong. As to cigarettes, I am a smoker too, so do not take this personally, but cigarettes did not exist in any documented numbers in the US during the War Years. They were invented in France in the 1850's, and were meant for women. The habit did not get much notice on this side of the Atlantic till after the War, and then it was mostly women who started using them. What all this means is, if you are going to smoke a cigarette do NOT do it in camp, in front of other reenactors or the public.
7. Camp lighter than usual. I do not mean all campaign, but put yourself in the soldier's shoes. He probably just marched 30 miles or more the previous week, and would have carried less than when he was in stationary camp. Pull out all your gear, and determine what is NEEDED to live for 3 days. They had to do it for weeks on end. Plus sleeping in the trenches/on porches make for great team building and overall experiences. And after that last battle when you are worn out and can barely drag yourself off the field, it means less work to get home to the shower!
8. You can live without a cooler. Believe it or not, since I stated eating period foods, I eat much better at events than ever before. And I don't mean just hardtack and salted pork. Plain long grain brown rice is easy cook, and it goes great with sliced fried red potatoes and onions. For meat go to your butcher shop and pick up salt and sugar slab bacon, pick up 2 lb. or so. Be sure to boil the meat in your period cup to get rid of the extra salt, then fry it on your tin frying pan or plate, using the grease left over to then cook your veggies. Beans were issued a lot, they are the dried white beans, but they need to be soaked overnight to cook well. Soft white bread was issued to some regiments, so bring a loaf of unsliced bread or corn bread. As a treat bring coffee beans for your morning coffee, green or browned, they were issued both ways.
9. Wear nothing modern. This makes you feel more like a soldier, and not a modern guy dressed up with boxers underneath.
10. Remember you are an educator, and in everything you do be sure the public is getting a proper presentation of the sacrifices of those great men and patriots of the 1860's

TRES PINOS

A Detached Sharpshooting Squad Under Corporal Pedersen Reports from "Three Pines."

Dear Eagle Eye Readers, I have the pleasure of once again filing a report on a recent action taken by the Berdans in support of the Union Army. Recently I was dispatched to lead a small number of sharpshooters to Tres Pinos in order to block the advance of the Confederates upon the village. We arrived on a rainy morning which made setting up camp most interesting. The area I found to set up a tent was not in the most favorable spot and was to remain muddy for quite awhile. It was even doubtful if we would encounter the Rebels

under such inclement conditions, but the rain relented and plans were laid to repulse the advance of the secessionists.

There were pickets sent out while the rest of the battalion was told to stand down for a while.

Later on there was some racket from the edge of town which resulted in the hasty assemblage of our force. The sharpshooters moved through town and held the Union left, preventing any flanking by the Rebs. We did an excellent job and many times during the encounter we were ordered to move to various places to fend off the Confederate sharpshooters, who for some reason outnumbered the Berdans.

The fighting seemed to go nowhere, with no side gaining an advantage, so a truce was called to attend to the wounded.

Later that day the Rebs were stirring again so the Union troops were called forth to meet them. Before we left to battle there was a cartage box inspection. Somehow the infantry was not replenished because of the reliance on some Mr. Muleskinner, who obviously was not up to the task. The Berdans had no problems with ammunition, largely due to the fact that Colonel Berdan has a knack for heading to the rear for supplies and other important tasks. Our group had been fully equipped before Colonel Berdan departed for something else.

Once that issue was settled we headed out and were run ragged from place to place. We'd set up a line and fire at the rebels for a few moments and then the next moment we would have to rise and move by the double quick to some other spot. To make matters worse, the sharpshooters had to fight in the open without the benefit of cover while having



An all too typical example of the women we tend to encounter in down south in "Secessia." Loud talkers, slow thinkers, fast runners!

to engage enemy sharpshooters hiding in the trees. It was during this time that I took a hit and was taken to the hospital, leaving the surviving sharpshooters to contend with finishing the battle. Nothing serious had happened so it was determined that I was fit to go back to battle.

The next day I was accosted by the strangest woman who was looking for her son "Cracker." I pointed in the general direction of some infantry soldiers and said that maybe he is over there. She went that direction and a

big ruckus soon happened. She found her son but she was escorted out of camp. So ended the levity for Sunday morning. There was work to be done and I lead a squad of Berdans on a picket line and soon found Johnny and was ordered to fire on the Rebels and hold them back until help came. We did so and soon found ourselves on the run at various times, dropping back, moving forward, and changing position. The Sharps rifles came in quite handy in keeping up a steady harassing fire while the infantry boys would reload their muzzleloaders.

Sad to say, we took heavy casualties and I ended up being the lone Berdan when the Long Roll sounded in the afternoon. I fell in with the infantry and helped them out by laying in extra shots with my rifle while the others reloaded. This should have confused Johnny rather mightily. The work was rather hard and I eventually had to retire due to exhausting my ammunition. The Union carried the day and the Rebs were pushed out of Tres Pinos.

It was quite a satisfying experience in leading a fine team of sharpshooters at Tres Pinos. They held up the reputation of the elite force that the First and Second Regiments of Sharpshooters have become.



**Respectfully
Submitted,
Corporal
Tim Pedersen**

MASS PRODUCTION OF PERCUSSION CAPS

Everything you ever wanted to know about how these things were made in quantity

HOW PERCUSSION CAPS ARE MADE.

The invention of percussion locks for firearms was as great an improvement upon the flint lock as the latter was upon the old match lock. Its inventor was a pious man devoted to the arts of peace—a Presbyterian minister—whose name and the date of whose patent are recorded on page 340, current volume of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. The percussion powder was first fed into a small cup in the nipple; this was struck by the hammer and ignited the charge. The inventor of percussion caps is alleged to be Joseph Manton, an Englishman, who took out a patent in 1818. His first caps were made of small copper cups charged with percussion powder similar to those still in use. Other parties soon tried to obviate his patent by using small copper discs charged with percussion powder, but these were held to be covered by the patent. The cap was a great improvement upon the loose charge of a pellet of percussion powder placed in the nipple, and all firearms, except those furnished with Maynard's primer, or explosive cartridges, are adapted for percussion caps. An account of the manufacture of percussion caps will be interesting and instructive, especially as no clear description of the operations has hitherto been published, as far as we know.

Percussion caps are formed of a soft copper alloy, which is principally obtained from France in the form of thin sheets. The first operation is cutting these sheets into narrow strips with roller shears. The next is punching out the blank caps, and striking them up in dies in a machine. The strips of copper are fed in between small rollers over a small table which has four dies in it. A punch comes down, and at each stroke cuts out four blanks in a row from the strip. Each blank is formed like a Maltese cross, and just as it is cut out, a small round plunger pin strikes it in the middle, forces it into a small conical die in

the table below, and thus forms it into a cap. At the very instant the small die plungers are raised, a puff of wind from a blower throws the four caps out of the dies into a receiving box, and the dies are ready for upsetting another set of blanks. Sufficient copper is left in the strips after punching to enable them to be carried forward to clear the table at each stroke. Different dies are employed for caps of different forms.

The next operation is that of charging and stamping the caps. For this purpose, a strong steel plate containing about 1,000 small conical holes or dies to receive as many formed caps is used; it is laid upon the table of another small machine, a girl takes several handful of caps from the box of the die press,



The common percussion cap had to be produced by the millions during the war.

spreads them over the steel plate, and by a few rapid motions of the hand, they all sink into the holes with open mouths, ready for the percussion powder. This is a compound of fulminating mercury, of potash, sulphur, and a little ground glass. This is spread dry and loosely by hand, like meal, over the entire plate, and each cap is filled to the mouth. The surplus is then swept off with a brush from the surface of the plate. Tin foil is now laid upon the top of the plate covering the powder in the caps. A series of small plungers, each of such

a size as to fit into a cap, are now forced down upon the charged plate, cutting through the tin foil, and carrying a piece into each cap. The powder is pressed down by these plungers into a very small space at the bottom of each cap, and the pressure is sufficient to stamp the name or number on the top of each, by forcing the metal into the proper figure cut in the bottom of each hole. The pressure to which the percussion powder is subjected by this operation is so great, that strangers are always surprised on witnessing it. Sometimes caps explode by the pressure, but as the plates are strong, no damage of any consequence results.

The next operation is that of coating the inside of the caps with varnish to render them waterproof and prevent access of the atmosphere to the powder. For this purpose the plate containing the caps is placed in another machine, which has a series of little dippers, that take up the varnish from a receptacle, and supply each cap with its proper quantity. The plate containing the caps is now removed into a warm room, when the varnish dries, and the caps are then emptied out of the plates, and put up for market. Quite a number of steel die plates are employed in the process, and a set of small machines required for the entire operations of cutting the copper, punching, upsetting, charging and varnishing, will make about 400,000 caps per diem.

We have described the operations from the beginning to the finishing of one set of caps. Several sets of machines are generally run in every percussion cap factory. The demand for such caps has been so great for several weeks past, that the factories have scarcely been able to meet it by working over hours. Some caps are made with top flanges, some are perfectly smooth, and without rims, and others are corrugated. These forms are all produced by the die machine.

I hate newspapermen. They come into camp and pick up their camp rumors and print them as facts. I regard them as spies, which, in truth, they are. If I killed them all there would be news from Hell before breakfast.

— William Tecumseh Sherman

A MORNING IN THE CORN

THE 2ND USSS AT ANTIETAM

The 3rd in a Four Part Account by Veteran USSS Reenactor Roy Hodges
Part 3 : Incidents and Mysteries

In the last two newsletters I used a series of letters from Dartmouth to reconstruct a chronology of the Second Regiment USSS at the battle of Antietam. The letters, written by Sergeant Humphrey of Co E, offer important additions to our bank of information about that battle and the participation of our boys in green. At the end of our last installment, we had captured "Adj Parmelee's" flag. The break there was deliberate. Up to that point, a careful comparison of



THE BLOODY LANE AT ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD

his and other accounts enabled me to reach some conclusions about the sequence of events in Sergeant Humphrey's record and tie them to what was happening on the battlefield. After that, however, things become confusing. The battle was not a neat progression of lines and arrows on level terrain but a wild melee of jumbled units attacking and counterattacking in thick smoke. That, combined with some disjointed writing by Sergeant Humphrey, makes precise correlation very difficult. What is clear is that the 2 USSS contribution did not cease with the capture of the flag but that the Regiment was active throughout the morning into the early afternoon. This final installment consists of some incidents reported by our Sergeant and some mysteries for you to help solve. I have tried to make the quotes exact, you will notice Sergeant Humphrey was not big on punctuation. First about the Bloody Lane.

The Bloody Lane In the Stevens Regimental History, p 202, is a quote from our same Sergeant Humphrey: "Sept. 17th we entered the historic cornfield at Antietam and helped to fill the bloody lane..." This had puzzled me for some time. I could not, from the study of the literature, maps, and the site, rationalize the Sharpshooters as being part of the battle for the sunken road or Bloody Lane. That fight started shortly after the 2nd Corps entered the scene

and Sedgwick's Division was cut apart in the West Woods (about 0930). The Union troops who entered that shootout were also part of the 2nd Corps but got a little lost; failing to follow Sedgwick across the Cornfield; instead getting distracted by Rebels to the South. The Bloody Lane fight, starting about 1000, was too far South and East of the 1st Corps position for the Sharpshooters to

have been engaged. They, and the other survivors of earlier first Corps attacks were, at the time, seriously involved in halting a rebel counterattack around the Miller Farm. One of Sergeant Humphrey's Dartmouth letters gives the answer:

"Now the bloody lane or what we called the bloody lane was the lane leading down to where on the map (you show) the East Woods or Sam Poffenbergers this lone star Regt were all about there lay Cols Lieut Col Maj Cpts Lieuts Sargts Privates dead when I looked through the fence I could hardly believe my Eyes."

I believe Sergeant Humphrey's (and thus Stevens') Bloody Lane is the fence line in the meadow South of the Cornfield where the dead from "Lawton's ill fated Georgians" were scattered.

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INCIDENTS AND MYSTERIES {CONTINUES}

(our) men came back the rebs were ...after them... we went in and gave them a volley or two that stoped (sic) the rebs."

Two things to be learned from this incident: First, the sharpshooters used any chance to help the wounded. Wyman White reports the Sharpshooters were proud of the fact they always took care of their own dead and wounded. There are numerous accounts in these letters and in other writings where soldiers showed compassion for the wounded of both sides. Sergeant Humphrey cites one incident where he passed his canteen through the fence into the "bloody lane" to give a "poor fellow" (probably a Rebel) a drink. Second, after firing over 170 rounds, with some accuracy by his own account, he "filled up" again and went back to it. Remember that while you are making cartridges for your next reenactment.

Artillery: Another thing to remember while you are doing living histories, don't just explain why the green and show them your Sharps, try to make the spectators understand what it was like. During one Rebel charge, Gibbons' battery fired cannister into closed ranks of the enemy. "I saw the air well filled with hats caps every thing soldiers have I saw an arm go 30 feet in the air and fall back again it looked as though it had been torn off at the shoulder it was just awful...there was bloody work done on that part of the field." Things were not all band-box music and flags waving, it was dirt, thirst, terror, and death in some of the most horrible ways.

Butt Shots: One of the Rebel counterattacks, likely the Starke attack on the West side of the Hagerstown Pike, was soundly repulsed. As the enemy turned back for the woods around the Dunker Church they "stooped over and down to the ground as close as they could and our bullets would strike them in their but(t) end and they would keel over and to see the dust fly out of their cothing (sic) made me laugh out ha ha." A painful injury and I am sure the survivors were hard pressed to explain to their friends and &family just how they were wounded.

Hq Shots: During that long morning our boys and the rest of the 1st Corps made several charges and retreats back and forth over that fateful Cornfield. Sergeant Humphrey remembers some 3 or 4 times. During at least one of those he was far enough South to see beyond the Dunker Church to the woods behind and below it. He mentions "a place where it was pretty near if not quite perpendicular what we called a jumping off place of about 25 to 30 feet I know we went down to the lane we looked arround (sic) some and as we look over across the pike back of the woods we saw quite a number of horses so we took them to be some rebel headquarters and we put a few shots over there when they run up an hospital flag and

some of our boys thought they done that to fool us we stopped firing when we see the hospital flag."

Fighting Joe: Both Col HAV Post of the 2 USSS and Maj Gen Joe Hooker were wounded and in the same room at the field hospital. Gen Hooker's comments to Col Post are worth quoting: "When on the march up here I thought that Regt of Sharp Shooters the worst set of men to stragle (sic) I ever see but when we got into the fight they were all there why says the Gen did they not Slaughter the rebels a Regiment would march up in front of those Sharp Shooters in just 2 minutes they would fade away." It appears that those of us who on rare occasions are seen to straggle are simply being authentic. Try to convince your Corporal of that.

MYSTERIES

In addition to my inability to tie some of the incidents above to a time and place on the battlefield, there are some other things in the letters that I have not been able to figure out to my complete satisfaction. The following are some of them and I am asking for your help.

The Flag: Yes, in the last newsletter I concluded Adj Parmelee's flag was a Georgia flag. That was based on the best information available, however I would like something less circumstantial and more definitive. According to the Official Records two flags were captured by the 2 USSS, but no details are given. I have a letter from the Ezra Carmen Antietam Studies at the national Archives which reports action of the First Louisiana who fought on the West side of the Hagerstown Pike. "When our Brigade reached the fence there was no troops visible on the east side of the lane except the union lines and not over 75 steps from the lane fence on the East side of the lane and in front of the 1st La Reg it was open grounds on both sides of the lane. When we fell back from the lane the union lines that we were engaged with across the lane advanced to the lane. Some of them hopped over the east fence and picked up our Regimental Flag (which fell over the fence when the Color bearer was killed and just about the time we were ordered to fall back by the right flank. Is this the Parmelee flag? The Darius Starr letters are not a lot of help. He missed the battle, but wrote home on 15 Jan 1862: "(The Regiment) brought off two rebel flags + our Adj. was killed with a third in his hand". Somewhere there is a record of what flags were captured and by whom. I have searched the records of captured flags at the National Archives and no luck. Someone find a reference which settles this little matter and let us know.

Hq Shots: I gave you the information from our good Sergeant's letters about the Hq or Hospital behind the Dunker Church. I don't know what time the incident

CONCLUDES ON NEXT PAGE



INCIDENTS AND MYSTERIES {CONCLUDES}

occurred or any other details. Which was it, a Hq or a Hospital, whose, and just where was it located? Also where is the "jumping off place" and what is its' significance? This will be one thing we are trying to figure out on our next outing to Antietam. Come along and help.

The Log House: Sergeant Humphrey carried at least one of the wounded to "an old log we called it school house." There is nothing like this on any of the period maps we have found nor on the Park Service Maps. Where was the log house? This is another puzzle you can help us with at Antietam.

Relief: One other mystery I have not been able to solve is who relieved the Sharpshooters and when. Just after the quote in "Mad Rebels" above he says:"just then we looked to our rear and saw the 5 corp flag coming in and fired my two last shots as they charged by us we cheered and asked what corp we were told the 5th after they had passed by some one asked the time of day a fellow took out his watch and says 20 minutes past one I said ops your watch has gone out I meant by that it had stop(p)ed but others (were) there who(se) watches told the same story so we thought it must have been so Well you could have sworn we had not been in this battle more than one to two hours."In a later letter, probably in response to a question: "I know of no other troops comeing (sic) in there untill (sic) the 5th Corp came in but I cannot tell what Regiment they were or what state they were from but still it seems to be a shadow on my mind they were regulars under Gen Sykes but I am not sure of it." And in the final letter: "The rebels never got to the corn field untill (sic) about the time the 5th corp came onto the field and what dead rebs there was in the corn we fellows that were back of the stone house left there as the 5th Corp boys did not begin to fire untill (sic) they got into the corn field....I saw no troops with the exception of our corp untill (sic) we see the 5th corp come upon the field." This one has me stumped. Gen Sykes was at Antietam and his division of Regulars was assigned to the 5 Corp. Unfortunately (both for Sergeant Humphrey's account and the Union cause), the 5 Corp (and our 1 USSS) sat out the battle as part of McClellan's reserves. A few batteries and supporting infantry were sent just across Antietam creek but came nowhere near the Miller farmhouse. One likely candidate for the unit to have relieved the Sharpshooters is the 12 Corps. They were called for by Gen Hooker when his troops ran into stiff resistance at the

South end of the Cornfield and arrived on the scene about 0830, too early to coincide with our fellow's watch. Another candidate is the first division of Franklin's 6 Corp which entered the scene crossing the Cornfield well South of the Miller farm about 1300. Still Sergeant Humphrey is so sure about the 5 Corp and the time it makes me want to look further. There might be a clue in Mr Gould's (remember it was to him Sergeant Humphrey was writing) note on the back of one of the letters: "Possibly the Massachusetts (sic) Regt was the (not readable, maybe 2nd or 12--or maybe something else), They were originally the 5th Corps but at Antietam we were 1) "Banks Corps" or 2) 2 Corps of the Army of Virginia. The title of 12th Corps was given to us later." A gold star to whoever can tie all these loose ends together.

Numbers: This last one is not from the Dartmouth letters but is a puzzle just the same. In the Official Records, Col Phelps reports about 425 in his Brigade. The Official Records state 66 from the Second Regiment USSS as killed, wounded, or missing. Stevens reports (probably from the same source) the same number and says it was about 25% of those engaged. This makes the beginning strength of the 2 USSS over 260, better than half the Brigade. Now Phelps' brigade included the 22, 24, 30, and 84th New York Regiments and if the other numbers are correct, they averaged 40 men per Regiment. This doesn't sound right as a Brigade should be over 3000 men. Again from the Starr 15 Jan 1862 letter home: "They went in with 109 men + of these 58 were killed and wounded". More homework, someone help us out.

Well, that is about it for the Antietam information from the Dartmouth letters. Lets not stop here, keep on looking for more. Should your research lead to different conclusions on any of what I have presented in this series, let me know, and I will make corrections and updates in future newsletters. In the meantime:

Yours With Respect
Roy L Hodges
Cpl Co F 2 USSS
Annapolis, MD

“The confederate soldier who did the fighting at the front seldom ever robbed their prisoners. My experience was that they were well-meaning, humane and honorable, and would divide their drink and rations with their captives. They honestly believed they were fighting for their rights, and of them I have no word of complaint to offer.”

— Andersonville Diary of Michael Dougherty, 13th Penn. Cavalry

PRACTICAL WARFARE.

RIFLES AND SHOOTING.

We wish to disseminate among the people useful and accurate information on this subject. The great essentials of modern infantry tactics are quick and steady movements, combined with rapid and accurate rifle shooting. A complete revolution has been effected in the army exercises in Europe within ten years, and few of our citizen soldiery seem to be aware of the fact. Every soldier and citizen should now make himself acquainted with field exercises, by shooting at targets at various distances, from 200 up to 1,200 yards, while performing rapid evolutions. All our citizen soldiers require considerable severe drilling in the field, so as to become quick and accurate marksmen. Some general and plain instructions on this topic will be useful to all.

The first thing necessary for a soldier is a trusty rifle. It should be easily and conveniently charged, and its fire should be certain and effective. It should be capable of destroying an enemy at the distance of

three lines relatively to one another, namely, line of fire, line of sight, and the trajectory. The line of fire is the axis of the barrel prolonged indefinitely; it is the line along which the center of the ball is directed. The line of sight passes through the bottom of the notch in the rear sight of the rifle and the upper edge of the front sight. To aim is to direct the line of sight upon an object, as shown in the figure. To do this correctly, the rear and front sights of the rifle and the point or object aimed at must be in the same straight line. If the rifle has been properly tested, if it is accurate in projecting its missile, a man with a clear eye, a steady hand, and a cool head, will soon make a good marksman by carefully sighting his object, if he loads his rifle carefully.

The trajectory is a curved line described in the atmosphere by the center of the bullet in its flight. The trajectory and the line of fire become more separated as the distance of flight increases. The line of fire is above the trajectory. The bullet, during its flight, is subjected to the action of three forces, viz., the impulse of the powder, the resistance of the air,

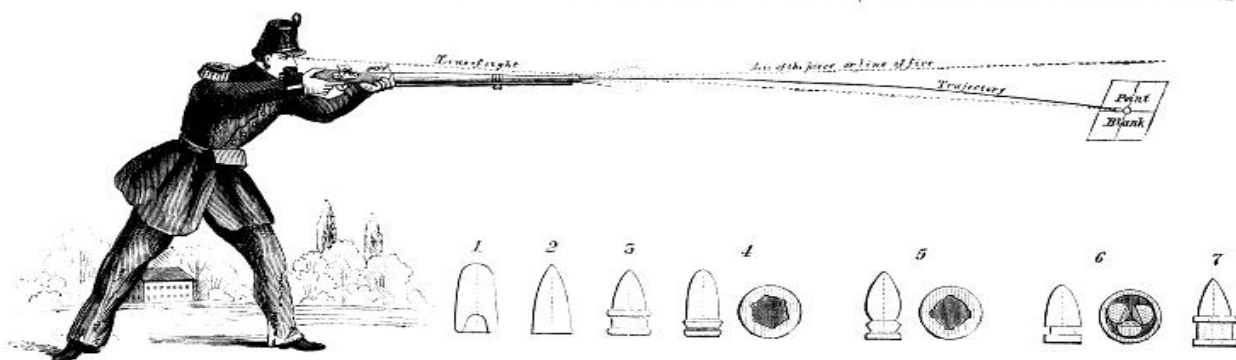
The rifles and rifle-muskets of our army compare favorably with those of the Europeans. They are like those of England; the latter were adopted from American models. No target practice in our army has, however, been ever reported to equal that of the Swiss, English, Austrian or French soldiers.

BREECH-LOADING RIFLES.

A Board met at West Point, four years ago, to test breech-loading rifles. They experimented with quite a number, subjecting them to target firing. A Sharpe's rifle was fired 18 times in 50 seconds; but Colonel Burnside's was considered the best. A second Board met in 1858, and again decided in favor of Burnside's, but did not recommend it. Colt's revolving rifle is like his pistol, in the principle of its construction. It has seven grooves of uniform depth and increasing twist. There are very few breech-loading rifles in the army; they are not so accurate as those which load at the muzzle, and they are more complex in construction.

SCHOOLS FOR RIFLE PRACTICE.

Shooting schools have been established in all the



1,200 yards with its bullet, and it should be effective in hand-to-hand combat with a sword or bayonet attached to it. A soldier should, therefore, know what his rifle can do, and what he can do with it, at certain distances. If he is ignorant of these, let him be taught before sending him to fight.

The accompanying figure represents a light infantry soldier firing point blank. The trajectory of the projectile or bullet is shown, together with the several forms of bullets used in European armies, also the American picket bullet and army cartridge.

THE BULLETS AND BORES.

Bullet No. 1 is that of the British Enfield rifle. Its form is defective. The front is too blunt, and the cylinder too long without a groove. No. 2 is the American picket bullet, without a chamber to adapt it for quick loading. When solid it carries more accurately. No. 3 is the French Delvigne bullet—it is good. The friction is but limited, as it comes only upon the two rings, and the groove is wound with a greased curl. This lubricates the missile, and tends to keep the bore clean. Nos. 4 and 5 are views of the famous Swiss bullets, with sections of their rifles. Their accuracy is remarkable. At 800 yards distance they strike targets of 4 by 6 feet 66 times out of 100 shots. No. 6 is the most highly approved French bullet, with a section of its hollow chamber, which is a three-sided pyramid. This bullet was adopted after a great many experiments as being the best. No. 7 is a double-ringed bullet with a chamber; it is good for rapid loading. No. 8 is the American cartridge, with a conical ball having three grooves. Formerly, the United States cartridges contained a ball and three buck shot.

The hollow chamber in a bullet is to admit of rapid loading. The powder expands the lead, fills the bore, and prevents windage, therefore they are not required to fit so snugly at the muzzle. A heavy bullet has the greatest range. By making it long-cylindrical in form, greater weight is secured, but such bullets must have rings or grooves in proportion to the length of the cylinder, so as to lessen the friction.

PRINCIPLES OF SHOOTING.

The general principles of firing, applicable to all rifles and fire-arms, are deduced from the positions of

and the action of gravity. The air tends to divert it from its right line of flight and shortens its range; gravity gradually brings it to the ground. The more flat the trajectory line, the more dangerous is the shooting. In order, therefore, to obtain accuracy of fire, it is necessary that the soldier should be able to judge of his distance from the object to be struck, so that the

Fig. 8.



bullet may not be directed to fall within or beyond point blank distance. The mode of appreciating distances by the eye alone should be constantly practiced and there is no other proper way of doing this than by firing at a target, first at measured distances, then at targets where the distances are not measured. There are instruments for measuring distances by inspection, such as the "lige" and "stadia," but soldiers have no time to use them in an engagement. They may be sometimes very useful in skirmishing, and each officer should carry one; but the great effort of the soldier should be the cultivation of the sight and judgment for rapid firing with the fewest and most simple devices.

AMERICAN ARMY RIFLES.

The rifle-muskets in our regular army have their grooves with a twist of one turn in six feet, and decreasing in depth from breech to muzzle. This makes the cartridge a little stiff to leave the muzzle, but its shooting is more accurate on this account. The ball has three grooves around the cylindrical part and no wedge or capsule is used inside. The weight of the ball is 730 grains, the charge of powder is 70 grains. The barrel of the rifle-musket is 40 inches long, and entire, with bayonet, 73.85 inches. The army rifle (not the rifled musket) is 33 inches long; with bayonet the weapon is 71.8 inches long. The total weight of the rifle-musket is 9.90 pounds; that of the rifle, with bayonet, 12.98 pounds.

The United States rifles are fired without patches.

European armies, and at West Point the cadets are also regularly instructed in firing at the target, but only at short distances. In England the shooting school is at Hythe. The term in it occupies two and a half months. Detachments of the regiments succeed each other there during the entire year. In France the term of practice occupies four months. Practical instruction is given to the soldiers in estimating distances by the eye, and in rapid accurate firing. Such an establishment should be commenced in New York at once.

OLD FIRING.

It has been said that "the battles of the American Revolution were gained by the rifle." The British soldiers were not then instructed to shoot at a mark; but those days are all past forever. At the battle of Vittoria, in Spain, 800 balls were fired for every man that was killed. At the battle of Cherubusco, in Mexico, 125 American balls were fired for every Mexican that was killed; this was better firing than that of the enemy, who fired 800 balls for every man killed on our side. This, however, will not do now. In England a party of 30 skirmishers can destroy a battery of light artillery, at 800 yards distance, in one minute.

NEW MILITARY TACTICS.

In the olden times, the solid columns and the desperate charge generally won the battle; but light, active troops, spread over an extended field with good rifles, would soon slaughter the best drilled columns in the world, armed with smooth-bored muskets and handled in the old-fashioned pasteboard style. Modern tactics require a more extended field for maneuvering, hence greater care is necessary in handling the soldiers, and more intelligence on the part of the soldiers is necessary for taking up proper positions, to save themselves and harass the enemy to the greatest advantage. Formerly the position of an army could be approached within 300 yards without experiencing injury from infantry fire. With the modern rifles, they could not approach nearer than 1,000 yards. Cavalry must now keep at a respectable distance until they can dash in under cover of the smoke, or be preceded with riflemen and artillery.

HUNTINGTON BEACH {CONCLUDES}

Now we hit the rebs again with a counter-attack and this time we put those lowly devils in full retreat – all was quiet the rest of the day to end the fighting on September 1st. To our surprise, Sergeant Holt showed up once again in camp!

That evening in camp, word came to the Berdans that an eyewitness reported that he personally saw Sergeant Holt run from the front line to hide

behind the artillery line and that he was later seen conversing with 3 “johnnies” unguarded, while nearby 3 Union artillery men were under heavy guard. When confronted with this accusation, he fully denied such allegations and told us that he was captured and that by hand to hand fighting, he dispatched 6 “johnnies” to meet their maker to make good his escape. This matter is still under investigation.

On the morning of September 2nd, the rebs attacked in full force. Again, the battle went back and forth until both forces withdrew from the field to re-group. Later in the day we discovered the “johnnies” had no pickets out and Colonel Fradella took full advantage of the situation. The Berdans were hidden in the ravine to the right of the reb’s flanks to stop any retreat of the rebs in that direction. He then sent the 1st Division across the bridge towards the reb’s camp and the ball was open in full order! The rebs



GRIM HARVEST AT HUNTINGTON BEACH

counter-attacked and the battle poured back across the bridge onto the field.

We were still in the ravine and knew we could be cut off from our own line, so Captain Stahr sprang into action and ordered the Berdans to charge, firing into the “Johnnie’s” rear ranks. This action shocked and confused the “johnnies” long enough to let us withdraw to our own lines. We were next ordered to form a skir-

mish line at the artillery line because the rebs were pressing hard to take the union artillery.

Upon our arrival, we started to make short work of the rebs and they started to withdraw towards their camp. The union forces prevailed and cut them off and I am proud to say the Berdans were part of the force that captured and accepted the confederate commander, Colonel Settle’s surrender. The Union army of the Potomac carried the day.

I hope this report to Colonel Berdan will restore his faith in our company due to our oversight in the past. Perhaps a good word from Captain Stahr would be of great help!

Your humble servant,
2nd Lt. David Oneslager
1st U.S.S.S. Co. “C”

U.S. SHARPSHOOTERS: BERDAN’S CIVIL WAR ELITE

ROY M. MARCOT

Reviewed by Cpl. Tim Pedersen

One of the cornerstones of research on Hiram Berdan and the US Sharpshooters is a book by author Marcot entitled *Hiram Berdan Civil War Chief of Sharpshooters Military Commander, and Firearms Inventor*. This book chronicles the events in Hiram’s life before, with, and after the sharpshooters as well as the sharpshooters themselves. Sad to say, this fine book went out of print and used copies can be found for around \$100 or more.

Luck would have it that Marcot has brought back the core elements of his book in a new book titled *U.S. SharpShooters Berdan’s Civil War Elite*.

The book contains reorganized sections and more illustration in comparison to its predecessor. In fact it is my opinion that it may be even better in the flow from chapter to chapter. One thing I did pick up on is the use of the word *SharpShooter* (italics added for emphasis). This

might be a purposeful change to emphasize the last “S” in U.S.S.S.

For those not possessing the earlier book, Marcot’s book covers the formation of the SharpShooters, the uniforms, weapon selection, descriptions of the various battles the sharpshooters were in and the break up of the two regiments. The author broke out Chancellorsville and Gettysburg into a separate chapter, probably due to these two battles may have represented the high mark for the Berdans. The book contains a wide variety of black & white and color photographs and illustrations of uniforms, weapons, and soldiers. Of course any book on the Berdan’s would not be complete with mention of the various controversies occurring throughout the existence of Berdan’s Sharpshooters. I highly recommend the book, especially in light of the preceding book on the Berdans by Marcot being out of print and used copies being available at a premium.

The Eagle Eye

THE NEWSLETTER OF WEST
COAST BERDAN
SHARPSHOOTERS



Proudly serving the Berdan
Sharpshooters of the NCWA,
ACWA, RACW, and NCWC

We also invite you to visit
the Company C website at:

www.1stussharpshooters.com

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FROM THE PATENT PORTABLE DESK OF 1ST LT. D.W. ROGERS

Camp near Kearney Mansion

I would like to begin this column by thanking Corporal Tim for taking over the reigns as Tres Pinos this year. Our ranks were a bit thin, but we still managed to field a respectable number compared to the other Union units at every event so far.

It seems hard to believe that winter quarters is so rapidly approaching. And with it comes those "end of the season" duties that have to be addressed.

First of all, rank. Consider carefully if you would like to wear a bit of extra insignia on your frock next year. All positions are open. We will try to hold elections before the close of the calendar year, so this means letters of intent to run will need to be in to the Eagle Eye by the end of November to make the winter quarters issue.

Second, a bit of a problem this year (and Ted had warned me about this one) is getting a fast response to our muster call. As Company Commander, I have to submit accurate numbers for rations to Phil Humphreys, our commissary Sgt. by a given date. Rations are sold in only in increments of 4's at 10 dollars per person. We are required to pay in advance so Phil is not out several hundred dollars prior to each event. If anyone can come up with a more efficient way to call a quick muster please let me know.

Also, don't forget that we have our annual company tintage taken at Fresno each year. This year, Ted has managed a 9:30 am slot for us. We are considering a slightly more relaxed pose this year as is seen in many period tintypes. Look through your books and on line to get a good idea.

On to Fresno!

1st Lt. D. W. Rogers

A FIRST LOOK AT THE 2008 145TH GETTYSBURG REENACTMENT!

It seems like only yesterday that we were dealing with the 140th event. Now we are looking at the 145th. In fact the web site for the event is already up and running. While back East for the Antietam event, we made contact with our Pardes from the East Coast Berdans. Checking the web site it appears that the event has been expanded in scope. The site says that they expect some 10,000 to 15,000 reenactors at the event, with over 100 sutlers scheduled to be there to sell you every thing you need, want or just have to own.

The camp sites will open for camping on Wednesday and

people can stay until Monday. All cars have to be out of camp by 0800 on Friday morning. There will be a tactical scheduled for Thursday night for the early arrivals. There will be two battles on Friday; two (one cavalry) on Saturday and two (one cavalry) on Sunday. Picket's charge will be on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm.

I will publish more information as I get it from our contacts back east. In the mean time check out the web site for the event at www.gettysburgreenactment.com

— Brevet Pvt. Ted

The deadline for submissions to the Eagle Eye is roughly two weeks before each NCWA event.

The Editor of the Eagle Eye thanks the following persons for penning articles this issue:

2nd Lt. Dave Onslager, Corporal Tim Pedersen, and Pvt. Ted Stahr