



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

JANUARY 1972

Vol. 15 No. 5

123rd Meeting

DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1972

SPEAKER: JAMES BLOUNT

SUBJECT: THE CAVALRY MYTH

PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB, DODGE COURT

PRELIMINARIES: 6 PM DINNER 7 PM

JAMES BLOUNT

Mr. James Blount of Hamilton, Ohio will be the speaker for our first meeting of the new year of 1972. Jim will speak on "The Cavalry Myth". He will trace the development of the Union mounted forces in the Western Theater of the War, particularly in the Army of the Cumberland. The talk will touch upon the organization, supply, usage, veterinary services and other factors which influenced the development of the Union cavalry. The talk will be slide illustrated.

Jim founded the Hamilton CWRT in 1967 and is a seven year veteran of the Cincinnati CWRT. He is the 1971-1972 president of the Cincinnati CWRT, and program chairman for the Hamilton CWRT. Jim has been reading and studying the Civil War since he was in high school and his talk is based on his master's thesis given at Miami Univ.

A brief biographical sketch....Born June, 1935 in Hamilton, Ohio where he attended the high school there. Jim received his undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati and his Masters in history from Miami University. While at the University of Cincinnati he worked on the editorial staff of the Cincinnati Enquirer. The next six years he was a high school football and track coach; also free-lance football and basketball scout; scouted for Hamilton Taft in its perfect season in 1961-62 when they won the state championship. He now works part time for the Cincinnati Bengals as pressbox announcer, describing plays, penalties, etc. to writers and broadcasters.

Jim joined the Hamilton Journal-News where he presently is the managing editor. The paper is a daily newspaper owned by Harte-Hanks Newspapers Inc., the 8th largest chain in the newspaper business. They own 17 papers and one TV station, and based out of San Antonio, Texas. Jim assumed his new job on July 1, 1971.

Jim also teaches journalism and is the advisor to the school newspaper at the Hamilton Campus of Miami University. Other jobs include being the Chairman of the Hamilton Association of Trade Industry's Historical Monuments and Markers Committee.

ARMY MULES

Our February meeting will be a fascinating experience on a subject that to my knowledge and reading of many other CWRT bulletins and newsletters, has ever been attempted. Member Leigh Tanger will be our speaker. Remember February 8, 1972.

CLEVELAND BULLETIN BOARD

OFFICE CHAIRS AT GETTYSBURG

The Department of Interior has done it again. I have in my possession a slick pagged catalog of EMECO, Industries, Inc., Hanover, Pennsylvania in which they have photographed their various lines of office chairs against scenes on the Gettysburg Battlefield. They had the permission of the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Gettysburg National Park. Apparently nothing that pertains to our national heritage can be held in great respect. Deeds of valor and feats of great heroism and death are available for any commerical scheme. Practically the only place they missed photographing their product is in the National Cemetary. Apparently they don't have a chair that low.

The catalog starts of with these words: "In The Tradition of Gettysburg...Time honored and enduring, the Emeco 500 and 700 Series Chairs are presented here in the inspiring settings of the Battlefield, Gettysburg National Military Park, befitting their roles in traditional steel office seating. Quality and craftsmanship work hand in hand to produce these two great series of chairs." Now I ask you what relationship has steel office furniture to do with a great battlefield? It would seem that EMECO, Industries is stretching the point of tradition to the utmost limits of credulity.

I know you are tired of writing, but once again I ask that you write, first, to EMECO, Industries, Inc., Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331 asking to be sent their catalog entitled "Traditional 500/700 Series Chairs by Emeco", and after receiving it then send it along with a strong letter of protest to Mr. George B. Hartzog Jr., National Park Service, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20000. Enough of these catalogs on his desk may convince him that Civil War buffs intend to keep our national shrines intact and free from exploitation by simple minded advertising firms who dream up such fantastically idiotic layouts.

PIERCE BRIGADE FUND

The following was picked up from the Jackson, Mississippi CWRT newsletter, THE REBEL YELL. There is an organization calling itself "The Pierce Brigade" of Concord, New Hampshire with the objective of restoring the home of President Franklin Pierce. They are making the request that each state contribute \$250.00 toward this project. As of October the Mississippians had contributed \$103.00. We of the Cleveland CWRT would like to know more about this project. If Mrs. Andrews or Mr. Hilliard would mail us the booklet on President Pierce along with addresses to contact we would be most appreciative.

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU

President Lincoln made the following calls for men during the duration of the Civil War.

April 15, 1861, for 75,000 men for 3 to 6 months
May 3, July 22, July 25, 1861 for 500,000 men for 1, 2 & 3 years.
July 2, 1862 for 500,000 men for 3 years
August 4, 1862 for 300,000 men for 9 months
June 15, 1863 for militia for 6 months
October 15, 1863, February 1, 1864 for 500,000 men for 3 years
March 14, 1864 for 200,000 men for 3 years
1864 the militia was mustered into service for 100 days
July 18, 1864 for 500,000 men for 3 & 4 years
December 19, 1864 for 300,000 men for 3 & 4 years.

from: Winch, A., Chronicles of the Great Rebellion...1866

U.S.S. CAIRO

The appropriations bill has been passed and the work on the famous Civil War gunboat will commence immediately. More details in the next newsletter.

THE COURIER
OF
THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

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PITY POOR DOBBIN

Unfortunately, the Union Cavalry horse of early Civil War days left no memoirs. He wondered, in Kipling's phrase because he was "frequent deceased", or ended his career "I-C'd" (Inspected-Condemed) on account of a host of equine ailments largely acquired by being worn out in thoughtlessly conducted march, drill or patrol. The successful cavalry raid may be a daring feat, the headlong charge through a hostile steel-tipped line a brilliant one-but most solid results are gained by arriving there "firstest with the mostest" - with a force still capable of dealing a stunning blow. Many a troop or squadron defeated itself by marching too fast -- to far -- or under too heavy a load. It is on the last of the three elements mentioned that we will dwell here.

Booted and Spurred under saucy forage cap or picturesque slouch hat - the cavalryman of the early civil war period was to his horse but a minor part of a sizeable pack load. Fairfax Downey speaks of him as a "one man pack train and moving arsenal."

The trooper carried a saber over 3 feet long in a metal scabbard; a carbine or rifle and a revolver; a box of cartridges and also one of percussion caps; a cloth-covered canteen, a coffee cup, and a haversack for rations plus a few additional items now and then. He wore heavy clothing-frequently including an overcoat. The combined weight of those items adds up to 50 pounds or more.

Strapped, tied or otherwise fastened to his saddle were the following: One-sometimes two revolvers in thick, heavy leather holsters; a pair of saddle bags carrying extra clothing; toilet articles and personal small belongings.

"Cavalry Tactics" version of 1841, re-published in 1865, prescribes the following for contents of the saddle-bags; pantaloons; shirts; shaving case; handkerchiefs, gloves; socks; extra pair of boots; stable-jacket; and forage cap; a nose-bag maybe filled with feed; a heavy leather halter; an iron picket pin with a long lariat or rope for tethering the horse so he could graze a bit; two horseshoes with extra nails, and a curry comb and brush.

Add to those items: a set of gun tools and cleaning materials; a rubber blanket or poncho; one-sometimes even two - woolen blankets; extra utensils; souvenirs; and sometimes even an 8 lb armored vest. Downey in his comments says that the Union Trooper at this point resembled Alice in Wonderland's White Knight - lacking only a few such items as a mouse-trap, candle-sticks and fireirons. It was a mystery HOW the horseman attained the saddle - the more irreverent among Infantrymen stoutly asserting that this could be accomplished only with the aid of a derrick.

Some Union and most Confederate cavalry - composed of experienced horsemen-made few of this sort of blunders - and for a considerable period, such were able to out-ride and out maneuver their opponents. But those who had endured a campaign or two and learned the lesson as only such experience can teach managed to bring about a drastic overhaul of means and methods.

In the spring of 1862-1863 the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac came into being, and by the Battle of Brandy Station results were beginning to show.

THE UNION CAVALRY
1861 - 1865

The five regular mounted regiments in the United States Army were considerably confused at the outbreak of fighting in April, 1861. The remnants of the 2nd Cavalry finally beat their way back to the East, after the debacle in Texas, but the small detachments of the other four regiments, widely scattered all over the western frontier, were disordered because of the many resignations of officers to join the Confederate cause and because of their distance from events. Most of these units were eventually ordered to abandon their posts and to proceed to the active theaters of war, and a body of the new 2nd Cavalry (formerly the 2nd Dragoons, a change in name which will be explained shortly) rode, under Captain Alfred Pleasonton, all the way from Utah to Washington, D.C., in the autumn of 1861. A few detachments, however, remained at their isolated posts for the duration of the war and became the forgotten men of the conflict. The abandonment of so many frontier posts canceled the hard-won gains made against the hostile Indians through the years and brought on a renewed fury of attacks against the settlements, and it took over twenty years of postwar fighting finally to establish peace and order.

After the fall of Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, President Lincoln issued a call for volunteers and ordered an increase in the regular army which included another mounted regiment, the 3rd Cavalry, to which David Hunter of the 1st Dragoons was appointed colonel, and William H. Emory, of border-surveying fame, the lieutenant colonel.

At the battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, there were seven companies of regular cavalry attached to the Union army of 40,000 men, and these companies stood steady in that dreadful rout and covered well the panicky flight of the volunteers from the field.

The next month, on August 3, Congress passed a bill organizing all the mounted troops -- dragoons, mounted riflemen, and cavalry -- into one branch, all to be called cavalry and to be numbered by seniority, with the following results, which caused confusion then and have ever since:

<u>Old Name</u>	<u>Date of Origin</u>	<u>New Name</u>
1st Dragoons	1833	1st Cavalry
2nd Dragoons	1836	2nd Cavalry
Mounted Riflemen	1846	3rd Cavalry
1st Cavalry	1855	4th Cavalry
2nd Cavalry	1855	5th Cavalry
3rd Cavalry	1861	6th Cavalry

This changing of names was bad for morale, for the years had accumulated many traditions and much sentiment about the old titles. Also the cavalry yeallow was designated as the color of the new corps, and the facings of the other uniforms -- orange for the dragoons and green for the riflemen, to which distinctive detail all were strongly attached --- were ordered to be changed accordingly. But the usual permission was given to wear out the uniforms on hand, and these achieved a remarkably long life, some even lasting to the end of the war.

These six regular cavalry regiments were soon swamped and lost in a deluge of volunteer mounted regiments which brought the strength of the Union Cavalry to about 80,000 men by the end of the war. It would be tedious and useless to follow the course of this handful of regulars during the war, and so we shall temporarily put aside their story until the postwar resumption of Indian fighting in the West.

There were some handicaps to the raising of Union cavalry regiments. The men in the industrial and urban areas of the Northeast were largely office workers or factory laborers who had grown away from the rigors of outdoor life. But the same men, soft as they had become, had one basic virtue which eventually paid off: they were used to a certain amount of discipline and were easier to handle than the highly individualistic Southerners. However, in the states of the Northwest, which still retain a virile residue of the old frontier spirit, the men were more like the Southerners in their knowledge of horses and guns, and it was from this section that some of the best volunteer cavalry regiments were raised.

The organization of the Union cavalry had great inertia. It was much slower in starting than that of the Confederates but when it finally picked up momentum it became a veritable juggernaut and crushed everything before it. By the end of the war, under the superb leadership of Generals Phil Sheridan and General James H. Wilson, it became the best arm of the service and probably the most efficient body of soldiers on earth, and it literally tore the guts out of the Confederate forces. Sheridan's young officers, like Wilson, Judson Kilpatrick, David McMurtree, George Armstrong Custer, Wesley Merritt, and Ronald Slidell Mackenzie, were like young tigers, and once they tasted blood, they ravened for more.

But for almost two years, the great resources of the North were wasted by incompetence and the cavalry was dissipated by detail. It was initially attached to infantry commands and rather futilely used on petty defensive assignments such as outposts and patrols, as orderlies, messengers, and grooms for staff officers, and as guards for slow-moving wagon convoys which infantry could have done equally well.

It took two years to train a cavalryman, for the duties required a higher order of intelligence and initiative than the other branches, and a good trooper had to be equally efficient mounted or dismounted. The wastage during this time was fabulous. About 284,000 horses were furnished to never more than 60,000 men in the field, which was an average of almost five horses per man, and, as the actual number in the field was usually well below this number, the real wastage was even larger. One swallow too much water allowed to heated horses on long marches, by the thousands of green Union troopers in the early part of the war, meant losses of dollars -- and it happened all the time. It was in things like this that the experienced Confederate horsemen had such an advantage at the start.

The useless amount of equipment with which the Union trooper weighed down his horse at the beginning was a source of wonder to the light-riding Confederates. Captain Vanderbilt of the 10th New York Cavalry from Elmira, New York described his first escort duty in December, 1862, as follows:

...my company had been mustered into the service only about six weeks before, and had received horses less than a month prior to this march; and in the issue we drew everything on the list--watering bridles, lariat ropes, and pins -- in fact, there was nothing on the printed list of supplies that we did not get. Many of the men had extra blankets, nice large quilts presented by some fond mother or maiden aunt (dear souls), sabres and belts, together with the straps that pass over the shoulders, carbines and slings, pockets full of cartridges, nose bags and extra little bags for carrying oats, haversacks, canteens, and spurs --curry combs, brushes, ponchos, button tents, overcoats, frying pans, cups, coffee pots, etc.

After the company mounted, the captain went on:

Such a rattling, jingling, jerking, scrabbling, cursing, I never heard before, Green horses -- some of them had never been ridden -- turned round and round, backed against each other, jumped up or stood up like trained circus-horses. Some of the boys had a pile in front on their saddles, and one in the rear, so high and heavy it took two men to saddle one horse and two men to help the fellow into his place. The horses sheered out, going sidewise, pushing the well-disposed animals out of position, etc. Some of the boys had never ridden anything since they galloped on a hobby horse, and they clasped their legs close together, thus unconsciously sticking the spurs into their horses's sides.

Blankets slipped from under saddles and hung from one corner; saddles slipped back until they were on the rumps of horses; others turned and were on the under side of the animals; horses running and kicking; tin pans, mess-kettles -- flying through the air; and all I could do was to give a hasty glance to the rear and sing out at the top of my voice, "C-L-O-S-E U-P!"

After just such a purgatory of an initiation like this, the Union troopers were often rushed into action, where they usually fell victims to some roving band of seasoned Confederates who welcomed the chance to appropriate their horses and superior equipment. In fact, the Confederate cavalry depended largely on captured material and mounts to fill its needs.

Besides the enormous losses caused by the Union troopers' inexperience and poor horsemanship, they were usually totally ignorant, at first, about how to care for their horses' backs and feet, and about the proper food and necessary cleanliness for their mounts. But the troopers were not always to blame: there was one case where a shipment of horses was left on freight cars for fifty hours without food or water, and then issued for immediate service.

Gradually some order was brought out of this chaos, and the long delay for many regiments in waiting for equipment and arms was usually given to constant drilling, often mounted on bareback, which eventually brought its reward. The Quartermaster Department established great centers for feed where bales of hay were stored and issued, and six large remount depots were built in convenient localities to furnish horses as needed; and needed they constantly were, for in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1864, the government brought or captured a total of 210,000 horses to supply the army's need for 500 fresh horses a day. Later Sheridan alone required 150 new horses each day during the Shenandoah campaign. All these animals had to be constantly shod, and a small army of farriers was employed for this purpose. The largest remount depot was at Giesboro, D. C., which was established in July, 1863, and furnished horses to the Army of the Potomac.

Although the Union cavalry stood on the defensive for almost two years, there were some gallant individual efforts to redress the balance. The grand old man of the cavalry, the veteran Indian fighter Philip St. George Cooke, who was old enough to be the father of most of the rising crop of Union cavalry leaders, found time to write and publish (1861) a CAVALRY TACTICS which became the standard for the army. He also saw field service, against his son-in-law Jeb Stuart, as commander of the so-called Cavalry Reserve, a division of two brigades, in McClellan's army during the ill-fated Peninsula Campaign. During the Battle of Gaines Mill on June 27, 1862, he ordered the regular 5th Cavalry, which numbered but 220 sabers, to charge the advancing Confederate infantry, which it did at a cost of fifty-five casualties. As Cooke's young aide, Wesley Merritt, described it, "the daring charge of the cavalry...prevented...the capture or dispersion of Fitz John Porter's command." Cooke saw no further field service after this campaign but served well in noncombat positions for the rest of the war and lived on until 1895.

The Union cavalry certainly had its organizational ups and downs as well, largely depending on the prejudices of the various commanding generals. Old General Winfield Scott, veteran of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, in his seventy-sixth year, had nominal command at the out break of the war and believed that cavalry would be "unimportant and secondary" against the new rifled cannons in the broken and wooded country between the North and South. George Brinton McClellan however, who succeeded Scott, was an old cavalryman who, it will be remembered, had served on the frontier with the old 1st Cavalry and had later designed the famous McClellan saddle. "Little Mac" was a great organizer, if not an aggressive fighter, and he understood the proper functions of mounted troops, which he well called the antennae of the army; but he was relieved before he could realize his plan of assigning one regiment of cavalry to each division and forming a reserve of the regulars and some picked volunteer cavalry regiments for the Army of the Potomac in the East. His successor, John Pope, was crushed at the Second Bull Run because of the Confederate superiority in this arm which left him like a man groping in the dark. McClellan came back for a while after Pope to command the Army of the Potomac but was again relieved and no progress was made in grouping the cavalry into a compact corps until Joseph Hooker took command. In the West, it was much the same story, for General Rosecrans's cavalry remained inferior to that of General Joe Wheeler, despite Rosecrans's urgent pleas for reinforcements in the mounted arm which, however, the War Department refused to heed. It took time and sad experience to awaken the powers that were in Washington -- and some of the generals.

By the spring of 1863, the Union cavalry finally got rolling when Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson of the Illinois Volunteers led the first large and successful raid into Confederate territory, after two long years of waiting and watching the

Confederate cavalry gain the glory and the loot. Grierson left LaGrange, Tennessee, on April 17, 1863, with a brigade of Illinois and Iowa cavalry, about 2000 men, and cut a swath of havoc southward through Mississippi, burning and destroying Confederate supplies, railways, and bridges, and then rode on to the Louisiana capital, Baton Rouge, after having marched three hundred miles without any loss. The raid was a huge success and a great encouragement to the Union cavalry, but it was much aided by Streight's simultaneous raid into Alabama, which ended in failure and surrender to Nathan Forrest. The latter did not have the resources to cope with both raids. These raids had the additional purposes of distracting attention from General Grant's successful venture of passing his army across the Mississippi River from Arkansas to the east side below Vicksburg. Grierson reported after his arrival at Baton Rouge that he had found the heart of the Confederacy but a hollow shell with all the able-bodied men away on the battle line.

Another large Union cavalry raid was made in the East, at the same time, when General George Stoneman, whom we first met on Philip St. George Cooke's Mormon expedition, and young Colonel Judson Kilpatrick, of New York, raided to the rear of Lee's army in northern Virginia. The raid in itself was a success but it proved ill timed and a major strategic error for General Joseph Hooker's Army of the Potomac, because the absence of these troops as a cavalry screen allowed Stonewall Jackson to march unobserved around Hooker's right flank and to fall upon that unsuspecting general with disastrous results at Chancellorsville.

In June, 1863, the Federal cavalry, under Alfred Pleasonton, an old dragoon and Mexican War veteran, fought the bloody Battle of Brandy Station with Jeb Stuart's Corps, the first time the union force had slugged it out on about equal terms with the enemy. The following month Pleasonton commanded the Union cavalry at Gettysburg where John Buford, another old dragoon, selected the place, opened the battle, and held back the Confederates until the Union infantry arrived --- which has been called the most valuable day's work done by the cavalry in the Civil War. Later, as the battle developed, these two, with Custer and Gregg prevented Jeb Stuart from reaching the Union rear while Pickett was making his famous frontal charge.

The next big Union Cavalry raid was made in February-March, 1864, under the command of the fiery young New Yorker, Judson Kilpatrick, a classmate of Custer's at West Point. Both these young daredevils were out to make a name for themselves at all costs and both rose to the temporary rank of major general during the war, Custer before his twenty-fifth birthday. This raid had the rather visionary purpose of freeing the thousands of Federal prisoners who were rotting away in the squalor of Libby Prison and Belle Isle, just outside Richmond. Kilpatrick was accompanied by Colonel Ulric Dahlgren of New York, a twenty-two-year-old firebrand, who had already lost a leg in the Gettysburg campaign and was the son of Admiral John Adolph Dahlgren, the famous naval ordinance officer. Kilpatrick led about 4000 men, and detached 500 of these under Dahlgren to attack Richmond from the south. This little detachment was ambushed, its leader killed, and Kilpatrick was forced to withdraw when he found the Confederate capital prepared for his attack. It was a gallant attempt, which came within five miles of Richmond -- the nearest any Union forces came to that city before its fall.

In April, 1864, the real turn into the home stretch to victory came when Philip Sheridan was placed in command of all cavalry of the Army of the Potomac. Little Phil, as his men called him, may have been short in stature but he became the giant and the genius of the Union cavalry. Born to a poor Irish immigrant family, probably in Albany, New York, he had graduated from West Point in 1853, after a year's suspension for threatening a cadet officer, while forming for drill, with his bayonet, and afterwards for trying to beat up this same superior in front of the barracks, with the unfortunate result that he was beaten up himself. But that was Phil Sheridan. He would fight anybody, anywhere, at the drop of a hat. After graduation, he had served as an infantry officer on the frontier and had risen to the rank of captain at the outbreak of the war. He served then as quartermaster for General Halleck in Missouri, a staff and desk job which he loathed with every ounce of his combative soul, but finally was appointed colonel of a Michigan volunteer cavalry regiment in May, 1862, and came into his own. By the end of that year he had risen to be a major general. He later won distinction at Chicamauga and at Missionary Ridge at Chattanooga which brought him high favor with Grant and led to his transfer to the eastern theater to command the Cavalry Corps, then about 10,000 men, of the Army of the Potomac.

Sheridan was, above all things, a fighter. A short man of abrupt speech, rather bandy-legged, like Grant, plain in his dress, the first impression he made on a stranger was apt to be unfavorable. It had been so with Grant, but this opinion was quickly reversed by all who were connected with him and the Cavalry Corps soon knew it was led by a supremely capable general. Normally a rather glum and laconic man, he was metamorphosed by the action and excitement of the battlefield, where he cursed and encouraged his men, at the top of his voice, with his flaming vitality. He never, in the end, lost a battle. He had the invincible spirit always to attack after an initial reverse to his own forces, which created a wild enthusiasm among his men, who followed him fanatically, with frenzied confidence in his leadership. The Confederates had several great cavalry leaders, but the Union had one who finally overtopped them all, Philip Henry Sheridan. Sheridan actually had commanded his Michigan cavalry regiment for only a month and seven days, which seems to support the theory, so well exemplified by Nathan B. Forrest, that cavalry leaders are born, not made.

Sheridan reported for duty to General George Meade and immediately ran into difficulties. Years later he wrote in his Memoirs of Meade, "He was filled with the prejudices, that from the beginning of the war had pervaded the army regarding the importance and usefulness of cavalry." Sheridan found the men of his new command in good shape and their equipment excellent, but the horses were worn down by what he considered unnecessary patrol duty, from continuously riding a line of almost sixty miles around the camps of the Army of the Potomac. He told an unbelieving Meade that this continuous, irksome duty by the cavalry was wrong. He wanted to concentrate its strength for attack, and he felt confident he could whip Jeb Stuart, the perennial scourge, if allowed to do so. Meade reported this conversation to Grant who replied, "Then let him go out and do it." The Union cavalry at last broke its chains.

Sheridan had found the equipment of his troopers excellent, for the northern factories were turning out a flood of arms, munitions, and general military supplies. The men were furnished light and short carbines of various patterns, the famous Sharp carbine often being replaced by the Spencer, which fired seven rounds with more or less rapidity but which was difficult to reload quickly. A few were armed with the Henry rifle, an improved weapon, which fired sixteen shots with great accuracy; and there was a Colt's rifle which fired six rounds. All the men carried the Colt's revolver, of the army or navy pattern, which was fired by percussion caps. One Confederate trooper, discouraged by the far superior repeating small arms of his Yankee opponents, asked, "Say do you all load those guns you all fight with on Sunday, and then fire 'em all the week?"

The lone, straight, heavy Prussian sabers which were standard at the beginning of the war had been replaced by the light cavalry saber with a curved blade which could be fixed to the carbines as a bayonet. The McClellan saddle, which had been successfully modified to American requirements, made trouble only when it was covered with rawhide instead of leather, when it became a torture to use if split.

The silly-looking cavalry hat with a bedraggled-looking black ostrich feather, which Albert Brackett had described as "an ungainly piece of furniture", had been succeeded by the trim and practical forage cap. Although the slouch hat was also worn, especially by officers. The field uniform was still the light blue trousers, but with a yellow stripe down the outside seam for all mounted regiments, and a snug short dark blue jacket buttoned to the throat and held in around the waist by a wide leather belt which could support a revolver and saber. Boots were not ususally worn except by escort or special details.

The Union cavalry was rarin' to go, once its horses were rested, and Phil Sheridan was the man to lead it.

On the morning of May 9, 1864, while Grant and Lee were pounding each other in the horror of the struggle in the Wilderness, Sheridan's Cavalry Corps, moved in column toward Fredericksburg with the expressed purpose of finding Jeb Stuart and fighting it out with him. In the van, General Wesley Merritt, still in his twenties, led his division, and behind rode his equally young classmate of West Point, James Harrison Wilson, with another division, while David M. Gregg, a comparatively old man of thirty one, headed a third. One of the brigade commanders was George Armstrong Custer, who was in his twenty-fourth years, and all were under the command of Sheridan, who could count thirty-two birthdays. Youth was literally in the saddle.

Jeb Stuart soon discovered this invasion in force and sent Fitzhugh Lee to attack Sheridan's rear. Custer, in the meantime, had defeated an opposing Confederate force

and inflicted much damage. On May 11, the two main bodies met head-on at Yellow Tavern, where the young star of the Confederate cavalry, Jeb Stuart, was killed, with a rose in his gray jacket. Sheridan had achieved his objectives by breaking up General Lee's railroad communications, destroying large amounts of vital supplies, and defeating Stuart's cavalry, in which a mounted charge of two brigades, led by Custer, had broken the Confederate lines. Sheridan had kept his promise to whip Stuart, and his name and the morale of the Union cavalry soared accordingly.

Sheridan's next move was to clean up the Shenandoah Valley, which had been a natural highway, flanking Washington to the west, for the Confederates on their forays and raids to the north. Its fertile farms were the granary and constant source of supplies for the Confederate forces in northwestern Virginia and it was the bailiwick of John Singleton Mosby and his destructive Rangers. In July, 1864, General Jubal Early had slipped up this funnel to reach the outskirts of Washington and then on to burn Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The valley was like a rifle barrel aimed at the heart of the north and it was imperative that the aim of this barrel be reversed.

In September, 1864, Sheridan wrote to Grant, "I will go on and clear out the Valley," and on the 19th, at Opequon Creek, he won a victory which drove Early's Confederates "whirling through Winchester," as he telegraphed the news to his jubilant superiors. This success was followed up by constant cavalry aggressions by the two boy generals, Custer and Merritt, and the Union forces pushed on down the Great Valley, destroying the crops and supplies.

But on the morning of October (?) 19, Jubal Early nearly won back all he had lost by a surprise attack on the Union camp at Cedar Creek, with "Sheridan twenty miles away" in Winchester, asleep in bed. Thomas Buchanan Read's rather sentimental and dated poem, "Sheridan's Ride," was once known to every school-child, until time and two great world wars somewhat obscured the events and leaders of the Civil War; and parts of it still carry the unconquerable spirit of Sheridan and his genius for turning defeat into victory.

Up from the south at break of day,
Bringing to Winchester fresh dismay,
The affrighted air with a shudder bore,
Like a herald in haste, to the chieftain's door,
The terrible grumble, and rumble, and roar,
Telling the battle was on once more,
And Sheridan twenty miles away.

And when the general arrived on the battlefield after a mad dash of twenty miles.

The first that the general saw were the groups
Of stragglers, and then the retreating troops.
What was done? What to do? A glance told him both;
Then, striking his spurs, with a terrible oath,
He dashed down the line, 'mid a storm of huzzas,
And the wave of retreat checked its course there, because
The sight of the Master compelled it to pause.

Sheridan's uncanny personal magnetism turned an initial rout into a great victory as the beaten Union troops turned back into the fight with storming confidence. It was not strictly a cavalry battle but the cavalry completed the defeat of Early's troops and captured enormous quantities of supplies, arms, and many hundreds of prisoners. It was a final and complete victory; the Great Valley had been laid waste and no more would support a Confederate force or serve as a chute for raids to the north.

For the rest of the year 1864 Sheridan and his young tigers Merritt, Custer, Devin, and Mackenzie tore away at the remnants of Early's army. A keen rivalry led these young officers to front-line fighting and hand-to-hand encounters at the cannon's mouth. They suffered many wounds, especially Ranald Mackenzie, the youngest of all, who was wounded six times, and, after the war, went on to greater heights on the Indian fighting frontier.

In the spring of 1865, Sheridan reached his peak in the final Appomattox campaign. He returned in March with three cavalry divisions to the Army of the Potomac to join Grant before Petersburg, Virginia, where he received orders to destroy the

railroads which still supplied Lee's dwindling forces. By the end of the month, Sheridan had left Lee with but one railroad open. In early April, General Wesley Merritt led a concentration of Union cavalry at Five Forks which again defeated the Confederates, ruined Lee's avenue of retreat from Richmond to Danville, and forced him to evacuate Petersburg for the last march to Appomattox. As Lee's harassed army struggled westward in its death throes, the Union cavalry scourged it with dismounted fire from behind cover, and then each unit would mount and gallop down the line of retreat to dismount and resume their murderous fire as Lee's tortured legions staggered into range. Finally Sheridan's men were thrown squarely across the van of the desperate army. Then Lee knew it was all over and rode to Appomattox for the surrender.

In the meantime, the Union cavalry had also been furiously active in the western theaters of the war. General Sherman chose the New York firebrand, Judson Kilpatrick, to lead his cavalry on his march to Atlanta, and afterwards to the sea and northward. He called Kilpatrick "a crazy damn fool" who was just the reckless madcap needed to screen his daring march through the heart of the Confederacy, cut off from all supplies and contacts. Kilpatrick led four divisions, about 15,000 sabers, until the capture of Atlanta, and then accompanied Sherman from there on his famous march to the sea with one division of 5000 troopers.

In October, 1864, another master cavalryman, second only to Sheridan, rose in the West. General James Harrison Wilson, who had commanded one of Sheridan's cavalry divisions in the Shenandoah campaign, and had previously been in charge of the Cavalry Bureau in Washington, was made Chief of Cavalry of the Military Division of the Mississippi, which placed him on a practical equality with Sheridan. Like the other Union cavalry leaders, he was young, having graduated from West Point in 1860, and was only twenty-seven when he became a major general of volunteers in 1864. Wilson was a born organizer and a man of great flexibility who emphasized the importance of his men's ability to adapt themselves to circumstances so that they could fight equally well mounted or dismounted. In the Battle of Nashville in December, 1864, his mounted men had gained a position to the rear of the enemy and then, dismounted, had gallantly stormed a Confederate breastwork, side by side with the infantry, which was the decisive blow for victory; and this quick versatility marked his men. The Confederate general Hood said of this attack that it was the first and only time he beheld a Confederate army abandon the field in confusion.

The next year, in March, 1865, young General Wilson made his famous raid through Alabama, the largest and most successful cavalry raid of the war. It was really more than a raid -- it was an invasion by an army of cavalry, a preview of a blitzkrieg. Wilson had given much time to the drilling and equipment of his command and it was a superbly armed and disciplined force of about 14,000 men which set out from Tennessee. Most of his men were armed with the new Spencer repeating carbine, which gave them many times the fire power of the opposing Confederates under Forrest. Everything had been planned for mobility, and each trooper carried five days' rations, one hundred round of ammunition, and even extra horseshoes. Pack animals bore additional rations, and a supply train of 250 wagons furnished enough additional supplies for a sixty-day campaign. A light pontoon train of thirty boats was also brought along. Never before or since has such a splendid cavalry command been seen in the entire Western Hemisphere.

Wilson pushed forward in constant skirmishes against Forrest's scattered and war-worn troops, who, although about equal in numbers were equipped with inferior arms, and consequently, were pushed aside or overwhelmed in their desperate twilight stand for the Confederacy by this precursor of a modern, mobile, blitz army.

Wilson, to a certain extent, stole Forrest's thunder in this invasion by getting there first with the most. Besides his superior mobility, armament, and the training of his men, which enabled them to meet infantry in stand-up action, he had the advantage of an unknown objective. He fanned his men out over the many different roads leading south and forced Forrest to disperse his men on a broad front for defense. Wilson luckily captured some papers showing the disposition of the Confederates and, rapidly concentrating the bulk of his forces, he overwhelmed a weak enemy division on his left. Forrest was handicapped by the rivers which flowed north and south and so delayed east-and-west movements to unite his men.

Wilson arrived triumphantly before Selma, Alabama, a strongly fortified and most important supply depot of the Confederates, on April 2; and, dismounting his troopers, he carried the city by storm and completely routed the defenders. After

destroying all the foundries, arsenals, and stores of every kind, and after replenishing his own needs, he led his mounted men on to Montgomery where he again destroyed all the enemy stores. From there he pushed on into Georgia where he captured Columbus, West Point, and Macon. At the latter place he received news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox and of President Jefferson Davis' flight toward the southwest. He immediately sent out a force to intercept the fleeing Confederate president and, on May 10, this detachment captured him at Irwinsville, Georgia. Wilson's whole march, the longest and largest cavalry march of the war, was an extraordinary operation and recalled the colorful campaigns of the Crusaders, where a mounted army would dismount to attack a fortified position. It was a striking example of the versatility and power of a properly used force of mounted riflemen, in which horses were used for mobility and the actual fighting usually done while dismounted.

Wilson's later military career was blocked by the enmity of President Andrew Johnson with whom he had carried on a bitter feud while Johnson was war governor of Tennessee. Wilson had come to that state, before the Battle of Nashville, to take command of General George Thomas' cavalry but had found there only 5000 available mounts, because Governor Johnson had raised twelve local cavalry regiments, an act which Wilson previously, as head of a bunch of drunken rowdies, scattered uselessly near their homes, on the Federal payroll, to make votes for Johnson. He at once ordered them to duty with other northern regiments and court-martialed many absent officers. Then he secured authority from Secretary of War Stanton to requisition all horses south of the Ohio River and let the owners sue the government later. He took the horses from the Nashville cabs and streetcars and even attached Governor Johnson's fine stable of horses. There was an acrimonious interview between the two men in which Wilson spoke his mind freely. Later, when Johnson became president, he refused to advance Wilson, even stripped him of his brevet rank, and ordered him to permanent duty as a captain of Engineers. At that point Wilson resigned his commission. He has aptly been called the forgotten man of the Civil War; yet he lived on until 1925, as a successful civil engineer and author, and re-entered the army for a while as a major general in the Spanish-American War and the Box Rebellion in China.

The youth of the cavalry leaders of the war was remarkable, especially on the Union side. During World War II, the Air Force officers were proverbially young, but none of them compared with the boy cavalry generals of the Civil War. Jeb Stuart and Phil Sheridan were in their early thirties, while Wesley Merritt, George A. Custer, and Ronald S. Mackenzie were major generals of volunteers before their twenty-fifth birthdays. This latter trio went on to greater fame in the wile postwar days of Indian fighting on the frontier, and we shall meet them again.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above article was taken from THE STORY OF THE U.S. CAVALRY by Major General John K. Herr & Edward S. Wallace (Chapter VI) published in 1953 by Little, Brown & Co., Boston, Mass.

HOW CUSTER TOOK A DISAPPOINTMENT

"It was on one night on the Rappahannock, in the Winter of 1862-63," said Captain Hazleton. "Everybody knows the circumstance of Custer's promotion to a generalship over officers who ranked him. Of course it created considerable jealousy, and there was no end of intriguing against the brave young officer, who would have been greatly admired but for his rapid advance, even by those who now, in their jealousy, could see no better course than to oppose him. Custer was not a blind man, and keenly felt the jealous opposition brought to bear against him. One night a number of officers were visiting at Custer's camp and passing a pleasant evening. While the festivities were at their height and everyone enjoying himself, an orderly rode up with a communication for Gen Custer. The Gen opened and read it. It was an order relieving him from command of his brigade; that was all--there being no explanation of what was to (be) done with him. Without a word, Custer went to his best horse, bridled him with his own hands, mounted, and was away like the wind to the fields, his long hair floating behind him as his horse took fences and ditches in his master's favorite accomplishment. For some time he was engaged in the mad ride over fields and streams when another orderly rode up to where the other officers sat looking at and admiring the distant rider, and asked for Gen Custer. 'There he is--over in yonder field,'

said an aide, pointing to man and horse, then taking a flying leap. Away rode the orderly, and finally overtaking the General, he saw him take a paper from his pocket. Slowly Custer read it, and then up went his hat, and down he came at a mad run, whooping like a wild Indian, directly toward the camp. When he reached there he threw the paper to an aide, and in a low voice said, 'Set out another case of champagne!' Then he leaped from his horse, and retired alone to his tent. That paper contained an order for his promotion to the command of a division."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Taken from THE PICTORIAL WAR RECORD, New York, Saturday, September 2, 1882.

7TH MICHIGAN CAVALRY

"We were taken prisoner September 21, 1863. We were taken to Libby prison...early in December to Celle Isle Prison...Eleven of us camped together assisting each other all we could...The liveliest one of all the eleven was William Bowles, First Sergeant of L, Seventh Michigan Cavalry. He was born and reared in the English Army.

Christman Day 1863 came and with it a faint hope that a little of the sentiment "Peace on earth, good will to men" might prevail among our captors to give us a little additional allowance of corn bread or a pint of 'nigger' pea soup, one of which was our daily portion. We were always hungry, but the gnawing at our stomachs seemed even worse than usual; was it not Christman? The usual hour for issuing rations passed, but the pea soup did not come. The time dragged by. In my mind I can even now see the guant, starving crowd of men, as they stood around waiting for food that a self-respecting dog would refuse. At last we were told that the Commissary was too busy celebrating the day to get us anything to eat before the morrow.

This was too much for Bowles. He cursed the blasted Confederacy from Jeff Davis down. Suddenly after his indignation had somewhat subsided, he jumped to his feet and addressing the inseparable eleven exclaimed: "Ere ye, you blooming, hungry Yanks we are not to be swindled this way; hi ham going to invite you to a Christmas dinner we will have just as soon as we get into God's country once more." Then taking out his notebook, he wrote the names of the eleven men comprising our squad. Next followed 'Bill of fare of the dinner we did not get Christmas Day 1863' and it was an elaborate menu too. I only remember a few of the items. There was plum pudding, turkey, oysters and beef. It was his English idea of what a Christmas dinner ought to be. The very reading of it brought tears to the eyes of those starving men. We thought then that we would soon be exchanged or paroled and really expected to eat that dinner in the near future.

Time went slowly on. The last of February we were moved to Andersonville Prison, Georgia, where 35,000 Union soldiers were kept on less than 25 acres of ground during that summer and spring. One by one the men succumbed to the horrors of the place, until just Bowles and myself remained...On the 21st of November, 1864, just 14 months to the day from the time we were captured, we were exchanged and started up North. We arrived at Annapolis and spent a week getting filled up, cleaned up and dressed up. We were sights to behold, emaciated, ragged and dirty; we were the very picture of misery and yet through it all Bowles had not lost heart...He continually worried about that Christman dinner and when we reached Baltimore nothing would do but that we must go to the best restaurant in the city and have it, and we did.

"Waiter," order Bowles, "we want a table set for eleven men and give us the best service you 'have."

I remonstrated with Bowles but it was no use. "This is the last tribute we can pay to those dead comrades and I am going to 'ave it my way." Then with his memorandum book that was worn and black he called off the names of our squad of eleven, only two of whom responded. Next he read the bill of fare to the amazed waiter and ordered eleven dinners. Some time afterward the head waiter came around and said, "Your dinner is ready but where is the rest of your company?"

"They're down South dead," was Bowles reply.

Then we sat down and were served to every dish that the bill of fare contained. Eleven plates were filled at every course; it was the most remarkable Christmas dinner I ever ate. It was indeed a Christmas dinner that I shall never forget.

Taken from The Hagerstown CWRT Newsletter -- From an article by James M. Page in William O. Lee's Personal and Historical Sketches and Factual History of the Seventh Michigan Regiment Volunteer Cavalry, 1862-1865.

THE CAVALRY MYTH

by

James Blount

Development of Mounted Forces in the Western Theater of the Civil War (Army of the Cumberland)

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN ESTABLISHING MOUNTED FORCES

1. The limited role of cavalry forces in previous U. S. wars
2. Condition of the cavalry at the start of the Civil War
3. Loss of experienced leadership to the Confederacy
4. The influence of rifled weapons and geography on military policy
5. Union advantages in horse population
6. Lack of horsemanship in Union states
7. Horse procurement system subject to mismanagement and fraud
8. The absence of trained veterinarians in the United States
9. Availability of blacksmiths
10. Increased food and forage required by cavalry
11. Problems of transporting cavalry by wagons and railroads
12. Special equipment required for cavalry
13. Comparison of infantry and cavalry costs
14. Changes in weapons during the Civil War
15. The use of mounted infantry regiments in the war
16. Development of the Cavalry Bureau
17. Changes in tactical and strategic use of mounted forces
18. Emergence of new Union cavalry leaders
19. The decline of the Confederate cavalry
20. Successful Union cavalry operations

THE CAVALRY BUREAU

Established by General Order 236, July 28, 1863. "This bureau will have charge of the organization and equipment of the cavalry forces of the Army, and of the provisions for mounts and remounts...."

LEADERS OF THE BUREAU

1. Brigadier-General George Stoneman, July, 1863-Jan 2, 1864.
2. Brigadier-General Kenner Garrard, Jan. 2-Jan 26, 1864.
3. Brigadier-General James H. Wilson, Jan. 26-April 7, 1864.
4. Major-General Henry W. Halleck, Chief of Staff, also responsible for Cavalry Bureau after transfer of Wilson to field command.

MAJOR CAVALRY DEPOTS

(capacity of 30,000 horses)

1. Giesboro, District of Columbia, 625 acres, staff of 1,500 persons.
2. St. Louis, Mo., 400 acres, staff of 1,100 persons.

SMALLER CAVALRY DEPOTS

(capacity of 5,000 to 6,000 horses)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Greenville, Louisiana | 3. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania |
| 2. Nashville, Tennessee | 4. Wilmington, Delaware |

Civilian Employees included blacksmiths, carpenters, teamsters, wagonmasters and other craftsmen and laborers.

HORSE POPULATION - 1860

Union (22 states) ----- 4.5 million Confederacy (11 states) ----- 1.7 million

Horses in Western States

625,000 - Ohio
563,000 - Illinois

520,000 - Indiana
175,000 - Iowa

137,000 - Michigan
116,000 - Wisconsin

361,000 - Missouri
355,000 - Kentucky
291,000 - Tennessee

140,000 - Arkansas
131,000 - Georgia
127,000 - Alabama

118,000 - Mississippi
79,000 - Louisiana

UNION CAVALRY ORGANIZATION

COMPANY - 95 officers and men, including one captain, one 1st lieutenant, and one second lieutenant.
SQUADRON - two companies (about 190 men). One major.
BATTALION - two squadrons (about 380 men).
REGIMENT - three battalions, or 12 companies, or six squadrons, or two battalions. One colonel and one lieutenant colonel.
Volunteer regiments --- 660 to 1168 men.
Regular army regiments --- 997 to 1189 men.

Cavalry enrollment as of January 1, 1865:

160,237 men enrolled, not including mounted infantry
105,434 men present for duty
77,847 serviceable horses

COMPARISON OF CIVIL WAR INFANTRY AND CAVALRY REGIMENTS

INFANTRY REGIMENT

DAILY RATIONS

About 3 pounds of food per man per day.

SUPPLY WAGONS

One supply wagon could carry enough food for one regiment for one day.

RAILROAD MOVEMENT

About 10 to 15 cars needed for men and supplies. One box car with capacity of about 18,000 pounds, could carry enough food for one regiment for about 7 days. It cost about \$2000 to move one infantry regiment 100 miles.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

\$5 in 1861 purchased cartridge box, waist belt and plate, cap box, bayonet and scabbard, gun sling and knapsack for one infantryman.

Total cost: \$5, exclusive of uniform and weapon.

CAVALRY REGIMENT

About 3 pounds of food per man per day. About 26 pounds of grain and hay per horse per day.

10 supply wagons could carry enough food and forage for one regiment for one day. Additional wagons required for blacksmith equipment.

Besides 10 to 15 cars for men and equipment, an additional 70 cars were needed for horses. One box car could carry enough food for men and horses for 1½ days. It cost about \$6000 to move one cavalry regiment about 100 miles.

\$40 in 1861 purchased saddle, bridle, halter, spurs, holster, valise, curry-comb, brush, feed bag, lariat, picket pins and blankets for cavalry.

Total cost: \$170, including average of \$130 for horse, but exclusive of uniform and weapon.

FIGHTING STRENGTH

Every man in infantry regiment available to fight.

One out of four men held horses during dismounted cavalry combat.