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Captain's Column, October 2016

It's October already. The year has flown by. Before you know it the Holidays will be upon us.

I would like to thank everyone who supported the unit by attending the events last month. On Saturday, 10 September, we had our company muster at Cedar Mountain. It was good to see F Company's name on the plaque commemorating the small part of the battlefield we helped to preserve. After the tour we had lunch in nearby Culpeper.

The last weekend of the month, 24 & 25 September, we had a living history program at Ft Harrison in Varina . This was another National Park Service event. It is very similar to Cold Harbor just without the candlelight tour. This was a very nice, laid back, enjoyable event. We talked to two prospective recruits that really seemed interested. Hopefully, they will join our ranks.. Those in attendance included Mike Vice, Greg Hanson, Eldridge Firth, Travis Clements, and myself. Thanks guys!

Now looking at October we do have one major event coming up and that is the Cedar Creek Battle Reenactment. I think we have eight members registered. It would be nice if we could get a few more so that we could be our own unit and not have to fall in with someone else It is the weekend of 15 & 16 October. It's usually a pretty good event. We have been there many times. If you would like to go and did not sign up please check with the 1st Sergeant. I will leave the details of the event to him.

Hope to see everyone there. Take care and God bless.

With kindest regards,
Captain Turley

1st Sergeant's Column

Cedar Mountain Muster (10 Sep 2016) - This turned out to be an excellent educational event even if I was the tour guide! We met at the Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield visitor center just south of Culpeper, VA at 1000 on Saturday, 10 Sep. From the visitor center we walked a short distance to the commemorative plaque erected by the Civil War Trust which includes F Co, 21st VA for its donation purchase of plot #99. Setting the scene came first showing how the battle of Cedar Mountain, also known as battle of Slaughter Mountain and Cedar Run, bridges the Valley Campaign and the Peninsula campaigns to become the set up for the battle of 2nd Manassas as the prelude to Lee's 2nd invasion of the North and the battle of Gettysburg. From here we explored the actual battle action including the critical role of the 21st VA as it attempted to hold its right flank position despite finding itself literally surrounded including Federals in their rear. From here we walked the Confederate lines and discussed both the tactical and strategic implications of the battle.

At about 1230 we departed for Mitchell Station Road to look over the Federal artillery and infantry attack start positions as well as visiting the Slaughter family (owners of Cedar Mountain during the battle) grave plot at a local church, plus the grave of COL Crittenden of the 13th VA Infantry, whose family give their name to the gated position on the battlefield. Additionally, we were better able to view the Confederate artillery positions at the base of Slaughter Mountain. While the weather was hot it was bearable for our 8 participants- the Alexander's, Clements, Hanson brothers, Touart, Turley, and Vice. It should be noted that Travis Clements and Mike Touart motored to the site on their motorcycles as our "cavalry" participants! Sometime between 1330-1400, w/our motorcycle contingent in the lead, we arrived at Uncle Elder's Family Restaurant in old downtown Culpeper for lunch at a great local's restaurant which Mike Touart had lined up for our late lunch. All in all, it was a very good muster!

Recommended Follow Up Reading:

Krick, Robert K., Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain, University of North Carolina Press, 1990. The definitive work on this battle and highly recommended by the former chief historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Battlefields. Unfortunately out of print, but you may find it w/CW books dealers in either hardback or paperback editions.

Blue and Gray Magazine, Vol. XXXII, #2 2016- Excellent battle account using hourly maps and good working narrative on the Battle of Cedar Creek. This is probably the best CW magazine being published w/periodic campaign and battle issues like this being authored by subject matter experts. Strongly recommend a subscription to this magazine.

Fort Harrison (24-25 Sep 2016) - Our small group of interpreters managed to pull off a good quality program! The five participants consisted of Clements, Firth, Greg Hanson, Turley and Vice w/all of us participating as privates, and the entire musket firing demonstration for the National Park Service!

I arrived on Fri afternoon on site after getting caught up in a horrendous car wreck on I-95 going south to Richmond. Having coordinated w/Bert Dunkerly, NPS Ranger, I set-up my dog tent in the designated bivouac site inside the fort and then was off for dinner at Carter's Pig Pen in

Mechanicsville. Nice cool night for sleeping, but w/mosquitoes around. After securing coffee the next morning at local establishment who should I encounter but Pvt Hanson, whom I lead over to the Fort site. All our participants were present by 0900. We provided three firing demonstrations on Sat and two on Sun w/myself providing the interpretive narration for the visiting public, and the other foursome firing their muskets. We also engaged in some serious recruiting as two individuals who had contacted us concerning membership in the Richmond area came out to see F Co in action.

Pvt Hanson provided the Sat evening meal w/what I now call “Greg’s Slop” which proved to be an excellent one dish meal of ground venison, canned baked beans, and Ro Tel diced tomatoes and green chiles. An excellent meal which I’ve added to my recipe list!

Battle of Cedar Creek (14-16 Oct 2016) - The last large scale reenactment of the year in the Shenandoah Valley w/large number of troops and a big sutler’s row along w/food vendors. The weather is usually cool, but come prepared for all kinds of weather! The following individuals are registered for the event- Johnathan Alexander, Clements, Firth, Hanson brothers, Turley, Vice and Wilson for a total of 8 participants. Come on out as a walk on registrant so we can serve as our own separate company w/ten men! All of us would do and feel a lot better w/our own company commander Tony Turley!

We will be serving w/Longstreet’s Corps and F Co will plan at this point to be bivouacked along the fence line as we’ve been in years past. I’ll be arriving on Fri afternoon so look for me as your bivouac site. I’d plan on 80-100 rounds of ammunition along w/at least 120 percussion caps as two battles are planned w/one on at 1500 hours on Sat and the other on Sun at 1330 hours which I’m sure will be real powder burners! For location purposes the Cedar Creek/Belle Grove address is 8437 Valley Pike, Middletown, VA 22645. Call me if you’ve got any questions on participation.

Respectfully,
Michael L. Vice
1st SGT, F Co,
21st VA Infantry





It was a dark and stormy night.... Oh that is Snoopy's line. Sorry

On Sept 10th, 8 members of F.Co met at the Cedar Mountain Battlefield for a staff tour, discussing in particular the role of F. Co during the battle. The group met at the parking lot for the battlefield, with the cooler members arriving by motorcycle, the rest in various models of automobile. It did end up being a hot day, and the “cooler” members later decided they would rather be cooler in temperature so regretted their decision to put vanity above practicality. (At least I did)

We began with a discussion of modern F. Cos role in preserving a particular acre of the battlefield, as close to the site of the original F.Cos location as could be determined. In the late 1990's about 165 acres was preserved with the lane that the original F.Co fought in, the original Culpeper to Gordonsville road, being the focal point of the preservation efforts. Jack A. was careful to point out that it is yet another of the nice things that F. Co can be proud of, as not many units can say they saved THE spot that our unit's original members fought over. Later we saw our name is almost at the top of the bronze tablet listing supporters of the battlefield. Jack told us hat he made sure when he sent in our money to make our company sound as grand as possible so we would get top billing. Did you know that our official name (maybe I am paraphrasing) is F. Company of the Twenty-first Virginia Volunteer Infantry Regiment, of the Confederate States of America? Please do not simply refer to the unit as simply “F. Co” anymore, we must use the complete, correct, terminology.

Sgt. Vice then took over with a synopsis of the battle, beginning with a bit of background of what had happened in the spring and summer of 1862 on the Peninsula. We discussed Robert E. Lee taking over from Joe Johnston, John Pope being brought east from the Mississippi Dept. and his efforts to advance along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad towards Gordonsville which was an important railroad interchange point, a supply depot, and hospital area for the Confederates.

After the background discussion, we walked out to Crittenden Gate which was an important site during the battle, about where the Confederates began to go into their battle formations, from their marching formations, and where General Winder of the Stonewall brigade would be mortally wounded. Speaking of which, he and Col. Cunningham of the 21st, had spent the night before in Orange in a house that still stands. They probably both had been suffering from heat stroke and were still less than 100%.

The group then walked down the old roadbed, and so must have been walking in the very footsteps of John Worsham and the rest of the original F. Co. It was too hot for a cold chill, but it is not often that one can be almost assured to step in the same steps of history that we know a good deal about and portray. At the point where the Confederate line turned left we discussed the view the Confederates would have had of the approaching Yanks, the position taken by Early on the Confederate right, and the slope that would have hidden each side from the other for a portion of the Federal advance. We discussed how the Federals actually did quite well at first, somewhat unusual for them since the Corp commander was Nathaniel Banks, a general that Jackson had bested in the Valley. The Federal Brigade that did the best was led by Samuel Crawford, a man that had been a surgeon, rather than a line office before the war.

We then walked down to the bottom of the slope and again discussed the lay of the ground, how it in some ways helped and hindered each side depending upon the point in the battle. We then advanced up the slope as the Federals would have, and worked our way along the Federal right flank, just as they would have to outflank the Confederate left. We may not have made it quite as far out as they did, but one could get the idea. We then returned to the cars and enjoyed a root beer thanks to Jack A.

We loaded up and set off for lunch, stopping first at a Church on the Federal left, almost facing the slope where Early Placed some artillery to counter Federal Artillery. It was a higher slope than the Federals were on so one would assume the Confederate guns could have a bit more range than the Federals depending on the particular gun. Jack took the requisite photos.

(someday someone will look at them and say “boy it sure would be nice to have had a picture of Jack, I cannot remember what he looked like!” though actually he was in one)

Lunch was in Culpeper, at Elders BBQ a location previously scouted by Mike Touart. The BBQ was good, though it was so hot that the AC could hardly keep up. There were a few comments (me?) that the Indian place next door smelled quite nice, and that it might need to be considered on our next foray through Culpeper.

All in all it was a nice tour, though hot. It seems at least to my memory we have had a number of years where we happened to have cooler days, yet they were in August. This year we were a few weeks later and yet it was hotter. Thanks to Mike and Jack for again arranging a nice outing for F. Co. I for one enjoy these outings as much as any other part of our activities.

Submitted,

Travis C

Fort Harrison

Richmond National Battlefield Park

From: Dunkerly, Robert <bert_dunkerly@nps.gov>

Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 3:59 PM

To: Michael

Subject: Thank you

Mike,

Once again F Co provided great assistance for our event. Thank you all for coming, I heard a lot of nice comments from visitors.

In December I'll be in touch about planning for 2017 events. And please keep us in mind for your annual meeting

Bert

Bert Dunkerly

Park Ranger, Richmond National Battlefield Park & Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site

Ode to Joe

