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A Brief History of the Missouri State Militia Cavalry in the Civil War

The United States Cavalry School

The Grimsley Saddle

Request for Assistance Answered!

Portees (Horse Vans)

The Remount Service in the A. E. F.
The United States Cavalry Association
Organized February 20, 1976
The aim and purpose of the Association shall be to preserve the history, traditions, uniforms, and equipment of the United States Cavalry, including mounted support units; to sponsor the U.S. Cavalry Association’s Museum and Memorial Research Library for educational purposes; and to preserve the literature used by the United States Cavalry throughout its history.

Article IV, USCA Constitution

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The Cavalry Journal is dedicated to the memory of all Cavalrymen.

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The U.S. Cavalry School, located near Fort Harrison, Montana, exists to preserve the culture of the United States Horse Cavalry through education in Cavalry history, horsemanship, tactics, and Army life on the American frontier. Its mission is teaching, researching, re-enacting, and portraying Cavalry living history. It also focuses on furthering the understanding of western settlement and the Native American cultures with which the Cavalry interacted.

The School was founded in 1998 by the final group of horsemen/stuntmen of the “8”s of the 1997 movie Postman. Most were veterans. At a horse campout reunion of these riders the next year after the movie, the idea of teaching the lost horsemanship skills of the U.S. Cavalry in the northwest was born. The School was founded at Twisp, Washington. The Walking D Ranch in the northern Cascades was the first headquarters location. Today training can be on the banks of the Little Bighorn River at Garryowen, Montana; Methow Valley, Washington; Helena, Montana, or at your location. Training focuses on three main items:
1. Teaching Military horsemanship and history - most usually in a 3-8 day course. Our most popular course is the Custer's Last Ride adventure and eight-day training with the Little Bighorn Reenactment, for which the School serves as the Cavalry coordinators. This course is open to ages 18 to 70, all levels of riders, and males/females. Our team has trained other horse units as a whole: the Kansas National Guard (2006, 2008, and 2009) and most recently the Fort Riley Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard (2015). Sometimes our courses are taught as 1-2 day courses as needed.

2. Staff Rides – The course we do the most is the 1-3 days Staff Ride of the Little Bighorn battlefield (with or without the Rosebud Battlefield) for military units, both U.S and Canadian. Included in battlefield rides are shooting weapons of the period, Native American weapons familiarization (shooting of Cheyenne/Sioux bows and arrows), camping on the Little Bighorn River, and much more.

3. Military Packing - We teach military packing (making improvised pack saddles out of military equipment, packing/carrying difficult military loads, operating in difficult/cold terrain, caring for equines {horses and mules}, and more); as well as riding in a combat environment (using equines with weapons, quick dismounts, rescues, and evacuation of wounded).

The basic Cavalry training course is for beginning and intermediate level riders. It is from four to six days of living the life of an Army horse soldier on the American frontier in a garrison frontier environment and bedding down in a Cavalry tent encampment. The trainee studies the tactics, techniques, and customs of the Frontier Army through a combination of academic classes and hands-on instructional activities. Equestrian training is individually tailored and includes practicing mounted Cavalry drill and conducting realistic Cavalry operations in terrain very similar to that of the Little Big Horn battlefield area. This is one of the team building programs. Trainees also learn to use the weapons employed by 19th century frontier Cavalrymen.

The advanced Cavalry training course includes most of the training from the basic Cavalry course, and adds advanced riding and reenacting training, which includes dismounted saber fighting, mounted saber fighting, advanced guidon/flag bearer training, pistol training, and demonstration training (pistol and balloons, sabers and rings/running at the heads).

If your group desires professional Cavalry instruction at your location, a specially tailored mobile training team is available. Such training includes basic, intermediate, and advanced Cavalry men training classes; and packer and pack animal handling.

Additional courses include: Cavalry orientation; complete weapons training (saber, pistol, and carbine); Cavalry tactics, drill, and marching; demonstration team riding; weapons demonstrations riding (sabers, pistols, and carbines); historical lessons (realities, tales, and fallacies of the times); and modern training & safety program (“for the unit in the public's eye and in their space”). We also offer horseback combative and mounted military operations training to U.S. Military members.

We can also train your horse for reenacting, cowboy mounted shooting, hunting, packing, and more. And we occasionally have trained Cavalry (gun broke) horses for sale.

And, family activities are available through an array of related activities to introduce them to our rich western heritage and frontier way of life. They can experience life on a frontier Cavalry post as well as visits to some of the many historical sites in the area.
Finally, ride our Staff ride of Custer's Last Stand or learn at our "Custer's Last Ride" Adventure Course and train to fight in the annual Little Bighorn Battle Reenactment.

Chaplain (Major) Stan Copeland, U.S. Army Retired and former U.S. Cavalry Association Board of Directors member, is a U.S. Cavalry School graduate (with Cavalry enlistment papers to prove it). Per Stan, “every USCA member who is able should indulge himself/herself in all things equine; in Horse Cavalry in western American history. You can do all of that (and a lot more, to boot) by participating with USCA member Keith Herrin and his U.S. Cavalry School as they do a “butt in the saddle again” (as Gene Autry sang) “School” event on the very ground covered by LtCol (Brevet Major General) Custer in his ill-fated Little Big Horn battle against an over-whelming number of American Indians. Sit where he sat when he asked his not-too-familiar question “Where the heck did all those darned Indians come from?” Keith (a professional instructor and historian) can provide you with good horses and period tack and attire, or bring your own. I learned how, in an hour or so, to break horses to stand calmly under small arms fire, which had previously always taken me hours and hours of time. Frankly, every horse should experience that. It is one more step toward making safe “bomb-proof” horses AND MULES. You will learn a LOT. So, sign up with Keith, go enjoy learning in a delightful historical location, ride a good horse with good friends in an Indians’-perspective reenactment of that long day in June 1876. Your bucket list just got longer and your calendar shorter. You better contact Keith today. (By the way, his Mom is a wonderful person, delightful to meet, enjoyable to be around—one great lady whom I highly respect and appreciate. She will brighten your stay.)"
Introduction

As the United States divided along ideological lines during the spring of 1861, so did the state of Missouri. The economies of the counties on either side of the Missouri River were dependent on hemp cultivation and hemp rope manufacturing based on slave labor. Thus, residents of those counties tended to be outspoken regarding their deep southern roots. A few southern Missouri counties were actually cotton counties with those same deep roots in southern culture and ideology, and like their hemp growing brothers were willing to go to war to defend those roots. The two main cities, St Louis, and the state capital, Jefferson City, were heavily populated by German immigrants, many of whom had fled their native Germanic states after the series of failed European revolutions of the late 1840s. These people were uniformly anti-slavery, pro-union, very outspoken about both, and equally willing to fight.

Along with those at the ends of the spectrum, there were many, perhaps a majority, whose ideologies and backgrounds placed them in the broad middle ground. Although many of these people too had southern roots, they were not slave owners and had no desire to fight for the “peculiar institution” nor did they see states’ rights as trumping the Union. Many of these people were quite willing to fight for the Union as an ideal while many more, perhaps the majority of the majority, wished only to be left alone to work their farms, trades, or professions. With the extremists at either end pushing towards war, those in the middle were forced to choose sides.

When a convention called by the pro-secession governor Claiborne Jackson failed to return the expected ordnance of secession, Jackson fled Jefferson City with the state seal and much of the state treasury, created a “rump” secession government, and declared Missouri’s neutrality in any impending hostilities between north and south. However, it was clear to anyone who cared to look that Jackson was interested, if not determined to join Missouri to the Confederacy. Others were just as determined to keep Missouri in the Union, including the powerful and influential Blair family and the Regular Army’s Nathaniel Lyon, who were supported by the German émigrés. When forced to choose, a majority of the state’s residents chose the Union. After a series of riots and foiled conspiracies in St. Louis and Governor Jackson’s unique performance in leadership, President Lincoln declared martial law in Missouri and appointed Hannibal Hamlin as governor.

Hamlin and the Union men who now comprised the state government gave their unequivocal support to the declaration of martial law. They, working with General Lyon and other authorities, took steps to suppress the rebellion in Missouri. The majority of 1861 was spent with both Unionists and Secessionists skirmishing over Missouri’s future status in the Union and fighting notable battles at Wilson’s Creek and Lexington. By October 1861, the Federal government deemed Missouri largely secure for the Union. Both sides knew by then the War would be won elsewhere. Placing strategy over sentimentality, they began moving units from Missouri to other theaters.

As history suggests, a vacuum will be quickly filled, and Unionists anticipated the withdrawal of these first line units would create a vacuum likely to be filled by guerilla bands of pro-Confederates. That is exactly what happened. During the fall of 1861, as regiments of Missouri Confederate Volunteer units left the state, companies of Confederate irregulars began to form and operate, as did groups of bandits with no clear allegiance except to plunder. With so large a number of young men gone with the volunteer regiments, both Union and Confederate, these irregular units and bandits quickly created a climate of anarchy in several rural areas of the state. The Confederacy also saw rural Missouri as a ready source of replacement units for units sent out of state, and Confederate recruiting details began to operate state wide. The need was clear to the unionist state government that something had to be done lest Missouri be lost to the Union after all, or perhaps worse, slip into complete anarchy.
In November 1861, state and federal officials agreed the most viable solution was to create a military group specifically for full time service within the state, whose main purpose was to suppress Confederate guerillas, preempt Confederate recruiting efforts, and most simply put, to enforce martial law for the remainder of the War. From this need and the dearth of first class manpower, the Missouri State Militia (MSM) regiments were born. These regiments were filled with somewhat older men than in the line volunteer regiments. The average age of the MSM soldiers was mid-30s as compared to the average age of the line volunteer regiments of mid-20s. Many of the MSM volunteers had families and desired to serve their country, but were less willing to march so very far away from home as the Army might have them do.

The MSM regiments were never intended to be the sole means for keeping Missouri securely in the Union. Rather, they were intended to pursue the mission of securing the state along with state volunteer units in federal service from Missouri and other states, as well as regular army units. The idea was that the MSM would serve as a permanent, experienced cadre for these other units as they were rotated in and out of the state based on the need for such units to be deployed elsewhere.

These regiments began to form from volunteer companies in late 1861 and early 1862, although some regiments formed around volunteer companies enlisted earlier in 1861. These companies were state units raised for state service rather than the more familiar, more common volunteer regiments raised by the states for federal service. As companies were formed into battalions and regiments during the spring of 1862, these men were given the status of state units in federal service. Roughly speaking, they could be compared to federalized National Guard units assigned to full time service within their own states for the duration of an emergency. These men were indeed full time soldiers and enlisted for three years’ service. They could be, and were assigned to any location within the state, but were not supposed to leave the state—although that occasionally did happen. During the spring of 1862, fourteen MSM Cavalry regiments, one Infantry regiment (actually more of a mounted Infantry regiment), and two Artillery batteries were formed, along with a few independent companies. The Artillery batteries usually were dispersed by sections or half sections operating with one or more regiments of Cavalry.

These regiments were uniformed, armed, equipped, and paid by the federal government.
rather than the State of Missouri. Many men supplied their own horses, tack, and saddles—for which they were compensated, with actual compensation often more than the men were paid for their service. Officers were appointed by the governor, although these appointments, at least at company grade, typically secured the position of officers previously elected by the rank and file. Once organized and after receiving what can only be called minimal training (and that may be an exaggeration), the MSM Cavalry regiments began their service in their home counties, mostly operating as companies and battalions. In terms of training, it can be said these men already could ride, something more than can be said for many other Cavalry regiments in United States service early in the War!

Battalions and regiments being formed from independent companies within a geographic region, usually four or five adjoining counties, gave regiments a very local perception of the War, which sometimes caused problems when operating within their home counties. A record of mounting atrocities and retaliatory atrocities often based on pre-war enmities led to the reassignment of some units well outside their home counties. The 13th MSM, for example, was transferred several counties away from home in central Missouri to south central Missouri in mid-1862 and remained there for most of the War.

In any history of Civil War Missouri, atrocity stories and war crimes are so numerous as to become unwieldy to recite. In one example, a field grade officer of the 13th MSM Cavalry is supposed to have shot a pro-Confederate preacher in front of that clergyman's congregation one Sunday morning for statements from the pulpit supporting the Confederacy. Numerous similar stories follow most MSM regiments. In terms of chronic misbehavior, perhaps the 5th MSM Cavalry (first organization) set the benchmark. The regiment became known as the "Thievin' 5th" for its record of depredation on citizens of all allegiances, a record so bad the regiment was disbanded early in 1863, its number and some of its soldiers being given to the 13th MSM Cavalry. It must be noted that this dissolution of the 5th and re-designation of the 13th was also part of a reduction in force occurring in early 1863. The ensuing reorganization of regiments was done to save costs for the Federal government, with other units being broken up and/or consolidated as well. This reorganization left the state with nine regiments of MSM Cavalry, one of Infantry, and apparently one Artillery battery. As stated, the MSM was not the only Union soldiers in the state.

Uniforms, Arms, and Equipment

Based on surviving photographs, it appears the soldiers were issued the standard Cavalry shell jacket with yellow facings and kepis complete with crossed saber cap ornaments. Trousers and boots appear to be standard issue as well. Accoutrements seem to have varied with the issue of weapons, but followed standard U.S. issue. Although a majority of soldiers in most Cavalry regiments were initially armed with Austrian Lorenz rifled muskets, there was often a great deal of variation in long arms within regiments—if not companies. Although the Lorenz muskets were not the best arms for Cavalrymen fighting a counter guerilla war, they were at least considered first class arms. Those examined by the author, although not up to the fit and finish of the Springfield or Enfield rifles of the period were well made arms with a reputation for reliability, if not accuracy. They were certainly better than many long arms issued to Infantry and Cavalry in other, supposedly more important, theaters of the War. That said, some regiments had a literal hodge-podge of long arms. Notably, as late as the fall of 1864, the 1st MSM Cavalry was armed with “…sixteen patterns of breach loaders, nine…types of muzzleloaders, and a few double barrel shotguns.” Some of these arms may have been privately purchased, as this occurred in other regiments. For example, during the same time period, late 1864, the Colonel of the 5th (2d organization) noted that about half the regiment had obtained, likely through private purchase, “Smith and Wesson Rifles,” likely Frank Wesson carbines firing the .44 Henry cartridges. Again, it should be noted that at least some regiments of the Army of the Potomac’s Cavalry were no better armed even at this late phase of the War.

Handguns were generally issued to MSM regiments to supplement rifles and carbines. Since the record shows these units were in numerous running fights with guerilla bands, these arms likely proved of more value than long arms—certainly more so than a muzzle loading infantry rifle. Records indicate the Savage navy revolver and the Starr were common issue,
especially the former, as were French made LeFaucheux pin-fire revolvers, an arm seemingly more common in the trans-Mississippi than elsewhere. The popular Colt and Remington products were in common use as well. Issue seems based on availability rather than any goal of uniformity. In terms of the arme blanche of the Cavalry, one general stated the saber was absolutely useless for operations conducted by the MSM Cavalry, yet, “…everybody wants one.” And records suggest rather more than half of them had one, with the U.S. model 1840 saber being common, as were German and French imports.

Operations

As several generations of American soldiers have discovered, counter-guerilla operations lack glamour and romance, and allow for very little glory. The MSM was not fighting a Mosby or even a Forrest, but rather such sociopaths as Quantrill, “Bloody Bill” Anderson, and the up and coming James and Younger brothers—and were able to fight them on their own terms. Neither side in the conflict was much on taking prisoners, the Union forces in fact being under orders not to do so under some circumstance. Civilians suspected of aiding one side or the other could expect to be rather roughly handled as well. Much of this, particularly in the northwestern counties of Missouri, was merely a continuation of the Kansas-Missouri Border Wars of the 1850s. Conflict was based on a general, bitterly partisan enmity left over from the earlier conflict, although extreme action based on a purely partisan enmity extended to other parts of the state as well.

Some of the blatantly criminal acts committed by guerillas and MSM soldiers appear to have been purely or mostly personal. Outside the city of St. Louis, Missouri was the frontier during 1861-65, and was populated by independent folk, largely migrants from Virginia and Kentucky, who had rather ingrained ideas regarding personal honor and the resolution of interpersonal conflict. It would seem that on occasion such personal matters were wrapped in ideals such as states’ rights, slavery, and preservation of the Union, but the discussion was nevertheless personal. A gloss of War-inspired idealism, regardless of genesis, made otherwise unacceptable acts more palatable if not commendable.

Regiments rarely operated as regiments or even companies, but mostly as detachments, the strength of which was determined by manpower availability and the task at hand. Soldiers were assigned to patrol the state’s few rail lines to prevent sabotage, and many others were utilized to patrol roads used for military purposes. For example, Union military operations in western and central Arkansas were supplied from St. Louis over a rail line extending only to Rolla (little over 100 miles), with supplies continuing by wagon train to depots at Springfield and then by wagon to points south. Providing escorts for these wagon trains was a major drain on manpower, but the trains were a tempting and otherwise soft target to Confederate guerrillas.
Aside from such routine guard and escort duties, MSM regiments also acted as a quick reaction force countering reports of guerilla activity and the presence of Confederate recruiting agents. Units in northwest and central Missouri spent many hours in the saddle trying to run down raiding parties harassing and preying on pro-Union families. In many cases the MSM became heavily involved in a cycle of raid and retaliation with the civilian populace caught in the middle. County histories document both guerillas and MSM soldiers burning barns, homes, and churches because owners or congregants had declared for or were under suspicion of supporting the “wrong” side. For a civilian to declare allegiance to one side or another or to act as an informant (or merely being suspected as one) was a death sentence in many parts of the state for much of the War. But this was not the whole war for these men. Larger events did occur. Two actions of note were Poindexter’s Raid during August 1862 and most importantly, Price’s invasion of Missouri during the fall of 1864.

Confederate Colonel J.A. Poindexter arrived in central Missouri during the summer of 1862 on a recruiting mission. A recent resident and pillar of Randolph County, Missouri, he recruited between 1,000 and 1,500 men for operations in Arkansas and Mississippi. He and his recruits were tracked by MSM soldiers led by Colonel Odin Guitar commanding the 9th MSM Cavalry and other units. In a series of running fights, Poindexter was repeatedly defeated with the majority of his men being taken prisoner, although some simply faded into wooded hills and went home. In any event, none reached the manpower hungry Confederacy.

In late August 1864, Confederate General Sterling Price began to form a force to invade Missouri. Although by this stage of the War, the probability that Price could take and hold the state was slim, it was a time for gambling with long odds possibly giving a large pay out. Price may have shared the motivation of Lee when that general raided into Maryland in September of 1862. Like Lee in 1862, he could obtain recruits and subsistence for the winter, and if hope against hope he could actually hold the state, so much the better. It was the recruits and the subsistence trains which led to Price’s failure, as both proved more encumbrance than asset, and in the end he accomplished little other than adding to the causality lists for the War.

Several books have been written on Price’s campaign, and a discussion of the battles of Westport, Missouri, and Mine Creek, Kansas, would make articles in themselves, with Mine Creek being one of the largest Cavalry battles of the War. In the interest of brevity, Price invaded Missouri heading for St. Louis and stopped to reduce Fort Davidson, some 90 miles south of St. Louis (September 27). This delay allowed organization of a large force of MSM Cavalry and volunteer Cavalry from several states organized into provisional brigades. Price avoided St. Louis which was well defended and turned west towards Jefferson City, intent on capturing the capital city of the state, but was turned away by well entrenched soldiers from several commands. What followed was a running 150 mile fight to Westport, near what is now downtown Kansas City, Missouri, with units engaged daily for the better part of October. Price made a stand at Byram’s Ford (October 22-23) and at Westport (October 23). Westport was fought in a series of mounted charges by both sides as well as dismounted actions. Although they fought well, Price’s men could not hold their positions, and Price, turning south the next day and trying to protect his wagon trains, watched his recruits as well as many veterans become casualties as he retreated towards Arkansas. Major actions were fought at Marais de Cygnes, Mine Creek, and Marmiton River (all on October 25) and Newtonia (October 28), each featuring mounted charges by Union soldiers.

With Price’s withdrawal into Indian Territory, the MSM returned to the routine of guard and escort duty and tracking what was left of the
guerillas after Price used them up during his invasion. Although the routine continued for some MSM soldiers to mid-1865, the War was largely over by November, 1864 with few guerillas left to fight and fewer still recruits available to make the very long journey to more active theaters of war. Most MSM regiments officially mustered into service March-April 1862 and began mustering men out as their three year enlistments expired during March-April 1865.

Conclusion

The MSM was a controversial group. Officers and men—and occasionally entire units—were accused of war crimes such as shooting prisoners and non-combatants as well as robbery, theft, and arson. All too often the accusations were well founded. Major General Alfred Pleasonton, who commanded operations during Price’s raid, made numerous accusations of cowardice and incompetence towards ranking MSM officers and bewailed the inefficiency and ill-discipline of the soldiers. Brigadier General John M. Schofield, who commanded in Missouri for much of the War (and eventually became commanding general of the Army), stated the MSM were comparable to any volunteer regiments he had seen, and exceeded many in terms of efficiency and discipline. As is usually the case in such sharply divergent views, reality is probably somewhere in the middle. These soldiers were men bordering on or well into middle age for the time—men with families, mostly farmers or small tradesmen who entered a vicious guerilla war with virtually no training or any idea what they were getting into. They were officered mostly by men who knew little more about soldiering than the men they led, and certainly no more about counter-guerilla operations. In the end, it must be acknowledged that they did in fact accomplish their mission. They were responsible in large part for keeping Missouri, a key border state, secured for the Union. Their contribution was recognized by Congress when honorably discharged MSM soldiers were given the same pension rights as all other Union soldiers who served in the Civil War, a recognition not given to other militia in the Union service.

Reference:
Volume 3 Chapter 10 - Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and Indian Territory. May 10-Nov. 19, 1861.
Volume 8 Chapter 18 - Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and Indian Territory. Nov. 19, 1861-Apr 10, 1862.
Volume 13 Chapter 25 -- Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, the Indian Territory, and the Department of the Northwest. Apr. 10-Nov. 20, 1862.
Volume 22 Chapter 34 - Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, the Indian Territory, and the Department of the Northwest. Nov. 20, 1862-Dec. 31, 1863.
Volume 34 Chapter 46 - Operations in Louisiana and the Trans-Mississippi States and Territories. January 1-June 30, 1864
History of Boone County, Missouri.
History of Howard County, Missouri

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In the March 2016 Cavalry Journal we asked your assistance to answer the following inquiry:

“Hello, I’ve attached a picture of the letter I found in my father’s 201 file. It is a letter of recommendation from his Captain mentioning him being a troop presser. My father was a Horse Soldier from 1936-1940 stationed at Ft Riley. I have reached out to several historians in the past but no one seems to know what a Troop Presser was. If possible maybe you or another Cavalry Historian can assist me on my information quest.”

To Whom It May Concern:

Pvt 1/class Nael E. Vinson has been my troop presser for a period of almost three years. During this period his work has been of an excellent nature. I can heartily recommend Pvt 1/class Vinson as a troop presser in whatever organization he may be assigned to.

A.A. Frierson  
Capt., 2d Cavalry,  
Commanding Troop E  
Troop E, Second Cavalry  
Fort Riley, Kansas  
May 31, 1940

LTC William McKern, U.S. Army and a former Armor officer, provided the answer. Presser was an Army laundry occupation. It was listed in the House of Representatives 1940 Emergency Supplemental Appropriation Bill - Laundry operator, presser – along with many other occupation specialties.

Cotton uniforms were heavily starched and steam pressed giving them a smooth and very stiff appearance. If you ever wore such uniforms, you had to pry apart the trouser/breeches legs, no easy task, just to get them apart so you could insert your feet. The same was true with the shirt sleeves. Wool uniforms were also steam pressed in order to retain their creases.

LTC McKern stated that post laundries and hospitals had steam pressing machines operated by pressers. Could it be possible Troop E also had a steam pressing machine with Pvt 1/class Vinson’s additional duty being troop presser?
Dragoon saddle was the result. He improved on the shrink-fit, rawhide covered tree by wrapping the wooden tree in form-fitting wet rawhide and stitching it securely in place. As the rawhide dried, it shrunk – pulling the nailed, wooden pieces of the tree tightly together and leaving them immovable and covered in a tough, wear-resistant cover. He also incorporated an improved sidebar design in the wooden tree. Over this, a black leather covering was added for additional protection. It did not have the hated horn. It was approved by the Army on 7 March 1848 as the official saddle for mounted service.

Since the Revolutionary War, American horse mounted units have ridden a multitude of saddle designs in an effort to find the ideal saddle. Early period saddles were of English designs that included those ridden on southern plantations and those used by European Dragoon light and heavy regiments. That influence has continued throughout the history of American Dragoon, Cavalry, and Artillery saddles. One of those, the Grimsley saddle, was an officially authorized saddle from 1833 to the 1898 Spanish American War. It was a military saddle of which there were two models, 1833 and 1847, and two types, Dragoon and Artillery.

The Model 1833 resulted from recommendations of Army officers who had experience with Spanish/Mexican soldiers and civilians who rode simple but strong saddles which were superior to the English style saddles ridden by Americans. The Spanish saddle had a deep-seated tree which provided greater security for the rider in the rough country west of the Mississippi River or if the horse was unruly.

In 1833, Lt. Col. Stephen W. Kearney and Major Richard B. Mason, U.S. Regiment of Dragoons (authorized in March 1833 and the first permanent horse mounted unit in the Army), made recommendations for a Dragoon saddle based on Spanish designs. The resulting saddle became the Model 1833 Grimsley Dragoon saddle. When the Army approved their request, the Thornton Grimsley Saddlery of St. Louis was contracted to produce 715 Dragoon saddles. One of the features taken from the Spanish saddles was the wooden tree wrapped in wet rawhide that, when dried, form-fitted the tree. Another Spanish feature was the horn on the pommel which Dragoons did not like. Unfortunately other issues with this model of the Grimsley made it quickly unserviceable in the field. Other styles of saddles, such as the Model 1844 Ringgold Saddle, filled the void until the advent of the 1847 Model Grimsley saddle.

Thornton Grimsley was a businessman and a saddler in that order. To succeed at the first he had to be both highly knowledgeable in his profession and eager to learn new techniques to improve his products. The Model 1847 Grimsley saddle was the result. He improved on the shrink-fit, rawhide covered tree by wrapping the wooden tree in form-fitting wet rawhide and stitching it securely in place. As the rawhide dried, it shrunk – pulling the nailed, wooden pieces of the tree tightly together and leaving them immovable and covered in a tough, wear-resistant cover. He also incorporated an improved sidebar design in the wooden tree. Over this, a black leather covering was added for additional protection. It did not have the hated horn. It was approved by the Army on 7 March 1848 as the official saddle for mounted service.

There were three configurations of the Model 1847 Grimsley saddle: Dragoon, Driver’s, and Valise. The last two are Artillery saddles and of these two, only the Driver’s was meant to be ridden. All three had the same basic characteristics: Grimsley shape, rawhide-covered tree, brass binding, and a black bridle leather cover with ribbed seat. While there were many other similarities, there were obvious differences. For example, only the Dragoon Saddle had rings and foot staples on which to attach equipment such as saddlebags, horseshoe pouches,
canteens and pistol holsters; and coat straps for attaching overcoats and bedrolls. It was secured on the horse by an English style girth with surcingle for added security.

Grimsley Artillery saddles were adopted about 1856 as the official Artillery saddles, replacing the 1832 Model Artillery driver and valise saddles. They were the Artillery saddles used through the Civil War, and until the 1898 Spanish American War.

The Grimsley Driver’s Saddle was the seat of the driver of the team of horses or mules pulling the limber with cannon, howitzer, or caisson attached. On the six-horse team and the two-horse team, the saddle was on the near (left) side horse(s). In addition to the girth, it was attached to the hame straps at the horse collar and to the horse’s tail by a crupper. Drivers did not carry their personal equipment on their saddles, so these saddles lacked the rings, foot staples, and coat straps.

The Grimsley Dragoon Saddle was the standard saddle for the first four squadrons of the First Cavalry Regiment which was formed in 1855. The Regiment was, for the most part, stationed in Kansas until the Civil War. In September 1859, elements of the First established Fort Larned to protect the mail on the Santa Fe Trail. Was the Grimsley saddle at Fort Larned? Maybe, as Fort Larned was established just over seven months after the Model 1859 McClellan Saddle replaced the Model 1847 Grimsley Dragoon Saddle as the official Cavalry and Dragoon saddle, and the new McClellan saddles may not yet have reached the First Cavalry Regiment.

Are there any records of the Grimsley saddle ever being at Fort Larned? If there were, they are probably long gone or buried deep in some dusty old file. However, Grimsley saddles could have been at Fort Larned. It is also very probable these Cavalrymen could have been riding one of the experimental saddles authorized for testing: Jones saddle of 1854, Campbell saddle of 1855, Jenifer saddle of 1850, Hope or Texas saddle of 1857, and McClellan saddle of 1857. I cannot find documentation showing which saddles those...
Cavalry companies had been issued at the time Fort Larned was established. Thus, I am not comfortable saying they rode the Grimsley saddle.

So, if the Cavalrymen did not ride the Grimsley saddle, what about the Infantrymen at Fort Larned? While the Indians called them "walk-a-heaps" because they walked almost everywhere they went, some rode either in wagons or on horses. If you visited Fort Larned National Historic Site in the past few years, you probably saw on the wall by the welcome/information desk the print showing soldiers on horses on a snowy day. Those are Infantry soldiers. Again, no records are available showing what saddles were at Fort Larned which the Infantrymen would have used.

That leaves the Artillery, of which the 3rd Independent Battery from Wisconsin served at Fort Larned during the last three years of the Civil War. Did their drivers ride Grimsley Driver's saddles? It is safe to say yes since the Grimsley Artillery saddles were adopted in 1856 and ample numbers of these saddles became available as the war progressed.

Now that old Fort Larned is a National Historic Site, its staff has taken great pains to replicate the fort in 1867-1868, which had four mountain howitzers, each pulled by a two-horse team. The howitzers and limbers are on display and the horse harnesses include an 1847 Grimsley Driver's saddle and an 1847 Grimsley Valise saddle. The Fort has documentation for these saddles.

Reference:

Fort Larned National Historic Site, Larned, Kansas
Frontier Army Museum, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
Fort Scott National Historic Site, Fort Scott, Kansas

In June 1941, units of the 107th Cavalry conducted field training using their newly arrived portees. When the portees arrived we found the floors were covered with flexible rubber matting made from strips of old tires, laced together with steel wire. On our first trial trip we found that the rear extensions on the horses' shoes caught in the openings of the matting. This caused the horses to fall. Accordingly, all the floors of our trailers were covered with about 2 to 3 inches of soil. Bedding straw was placed over this dirt cover. Of course the mixture immediately became fouled with droppings and urine soaked. Replacing the dirt cover was an odious and backbreaking task.

It took the squad about ten minutes to load the trailer with equipment, horses and troopers, after arrival. We routinely carried bales of hay and straw and a sack or two of oats in the forward bay of the trailer. Occasionally, we were forced, by circumstance, to load two or three bales of straw (never hay) in the middle bay.

The slat-sided, open-topped trailers were designed to carry eight horses, four abreast. In the front of the trailer was a space to carry saddles, forage, weapons and the squad members. There was a two-by-twelve plank, extending across the trailer up front at the top, where the men could ride. It was a good place to ride in warm, clear weather, but was extremely hazardous in wooded areas and vastly uncomfortable in rain, snow, or sleet. During long marches, since the squad leader was riding up
front comfortably with the driver, it was common for a trooper to spread a saddle blanket across the backs of the four horses in the front bay, and stretch out for a snooze. The outriders from the motorcycle troop either did not know how dangerous this was or did not care, for these transgressions were never reported.

Each tractor drawing a portee trailer had a horse trooper trained as an assistant driver to relieve the regular driver from Service Troop during long marches. The assistant was entitled to ride up front with the driver, while moving the machine gun platoon, since it required more than one trailer to move a squad.

After the horses became used to being loaded and unloaded into the trailers, we had races to see who could load 8 horses the fastest. We and the horses became so proficient that we could load the horses and button up ready to roll in about 10 seconds after all the other impedimenta had been loaded and stowed. Of course, there were always a few horses who, for some unknown equine reason, preferred not to ride comfortably in a portee. In order to load a fractious, unwilling horse, the four largest, strongest men in the squad lined up two on each side of the horse and humped and boosted it up the ramp, willy-nilly, into the space provided by having two other members of the squad stand at each side of the top of the ramp, and pull two horses’ tails left and right, thus moving apart the rumps of horses previously loaded. This worked every time.

When loading, the machine gunners had to deal with the problem of handling the machine gun and ammunition packs. The guns, tripods, and ammunition boxes were carried in racks which were hooked onto parallel bars running fore-and-aft along the top of the Phillips pack saddles. The “book” procedure was to unload these and stow them prior to unsaddling. We quickly found that it was easier and much faster just to have a man on each side of the horse remove the loaded saddle from the horse’s back, and carry the saddle, gun, ammunition and all into the trailer. This was not too much of a burden for two men.

Reference:
would be scattered in dark, damp, insanitary stables, barns and cow sheds in French villages.

While the G. H. Q. did not see the necessity of constructing depots with permanent barracks, stables, and supply buildings prior to the spring of 1918, fortunately we were able to obtain immediate use of the three French receiving depots at Saint Nazaire, La Rochelle, and Merignac (Bordeaux), which had been used by our allies for the reception of animals from the United States and Canada.

As additional depots were authorized some were built with French portable stables while other depots were located at various French artillery and cavalry camps and barracks.

Lack of a definite policy at the beginning of the war and for several months afterwards

Although the necessity for an organization for purchasing, receiving, conditioning, and supplying animals for the A. E. F. was evident from the day we entered the war, it was not until September 18, 1917, that a General Order (Number 39) was published by G. H. Q. organizing officially the Remount Service. However, it was not until November 12, 1917, that the designation “Chief of the Remount Service” was officially given to the officer who had been nominally in charge.

Other issues such as Tables of Organization, chains-of-command; Veterinary Services organization; procedures for the procurement and issue of forage, of harness and horse-drawn wagons, water carts, rolling-kitchens, and ambulances had to be resolved. Fortunately in January 1918, the Remount Service became a defined branch of the Quartermaster Corps with many of these issues falling under other Quartermaster branches, and the Veterinary Service, in August, 1918, becoming part of the Medical Corps.

Shortage of animals for issue

Only at one time during the entire war did the A. E. F. have its requisite allowance of animals; that was in October, 1917, when we had only one division overseas, which had been fully horded through purchases made in France and shipments from the States. The principle cause of our shortage of animals was evidently lack of tonnage, as it was reasonably considered more important to ship men and also supplies and ammunition, of which our French Allies were in the greatest need, than horses and mules.

The French Government said it could offer enough animals to equip our First Division to go overseas; and later 7,000 animals per month. Unfortunately, France was unable to supply no more than those it promised for the First Division and the United States was using its horse transports for other purposes because of France’s offer. It is an open secret that the shortage of animals became so acute during the Argonne offensive that the efficacy of that operation was almost impaired by it. Had the war lasted a few weeks longer our First Army would have become immobilized for lack of animals.

Shortage of forage

Prior to March 1918, the Remount Service was responsible for the procurement and issue of forage but was severely hindered by “Lack of Policy” to accomplish this task. Fortunately France was able to meet some of the hay requirement, but French farmers were unable to produce enough oats and hay to meet the overall forage requirement. In February 1918, all A. E. F. animals had to be placed on half rations. With the procurement and issue of forage being transferred to the Supply Division of the Chief Quartermaster’s Office and subsequent shipments from the United States, normal rations were re-established.

Mange and influenza epidemics

Mange and influenza were more or less prevalent among the animals of the Allied armies, and those of the A. E. F. did not escape the contagion in spite of the combined efforts of the Remount Service and veterinary personnel. This was unavoidable due to climatic and sanitary conditions under which horses and mules had to live and since many of the animals were already infected with influenza when they arrived at the depots.

Fighting mange was an equally hard task, as a great number of our animals contracted this disease. Dipping vats and sulphurous gas chambers were used at all Remount Depots to
disinfect and fumigate the animals affected, and both methods gave very satisfactory results.

Inadequate rail transportation

French rolling stock was worn out by the time American forces began arriving, besides being too small, with poor ventilation, and already in great demand by the British and French. This shortage of rail transportation was felt especially during the latter part of the 1918 offensive when all lines to the front were congested with long trainloads of ammunition and supplies.

Lack of liaison between Remount Service Headquarters and Division, Corps, and Army Headquarters

For a long time there was no direct connection between the Remount Service Headquarters and divisions, corps, and army headquarters. Thus, unknown to the Service were the animal requirements, gains, losses, and transfers between divisions as A. E. F. G. H. Q. did not require periodic reports of animal status to the Remount Service. In May 1918, G. H. Q. ordered weekly reporting to the Chief Quartermaster, A. E. F. In July 1918, a Remount officer was assigned to the First Corps Headquarters to look after receiving, handling, and evacuation of animals and to report animal status twice monthly. This was so successful Remount officers were assigned to the divisions in which they also addressed distribution, care, feeding, stable management, grooming, shoeing, harness care, etc. Within a short time a great improvement was noticed in the appearance and condition of the animals.

Disposal of animals after the Armistice

When the Armistice was signed there were some 170,000 animals on hand in the A. E. F. Although shipments from America were stopped, those already on their way brought the total to 192,386 by January 1, 1919. The French government was anxious to have the sale of the horses and mules as they became surplus under its auspices. Unfortunately the sales were most disadvantageous to the interests of the United States as the animals were being sold very much below their real market value. In March 1919, the French agreed to give the Remount Service authorization to conduct its own auctions and private sales, through which, by June 30, 1919, 113,098 animals were sold. The French Government purchased 33,045 A. E. F. animals for distribution among individuals in the devastated regions, while other countries also purchased animals. The A.E.F. Remount Service, by the end of October, 1919, had completed the animal liquidation sales and the sales reports, and its remaining three officers and four enlisted clerks returned to the States.

Co-operation with French Government and officials

The Remount Service was and had to be, more than any other branch of the service, in constant relation with the French authorities. Local purchase of animals, designation of sites for Remount depots, transfers of horses from the French Army to the A. E. F., sale of surplus animals to the French government and inhabitants—all these questions brought us constantly in touch with French officials and army officers. Other than a few occasions due to ignorance of language on both sides, and disregard of local customs and lack of diplomacy on our part, these occurrences did not spoil the good relations we had with our allies, who almost invariably acceded to our requests and showed us every courtesy; they were always glad to give us the benefit of their years’ experience in the war and saved us from making mistakes which had cost them dearly.

Summary

After being for many months left to struggle along as best it could and often lacking the whole-hearted support of the G. H. Q., the A. E. F. Remount Service finally came to be recognized as one of the important factors of our success, one of the main supply departments of the Army, and it won the highest praise from the Commander-in-Chief for its untiring efforts. During the two years of its existence, this organization received or bought 243,360 animals, purchasing 135,915 in France, 18,461 in Spain, 21,259 from the British Army, and receiving 67,725 from the United States.
Law at Little Big Horn is one of two new works in 2016 that cover aspects of the 1876 Sioux War which are seldom addressed. Wright’s work is important to our body of knowledge in two areas. First, the author addresses Constitutional, legal, and treaty aspects for the Centennial Campaign. Second, his work represents the contemporary urban northeast voice, far removed from the nation’s frontier. Law at Little Big Horn should generate much scholarly discourse and debate on the nation’s legal and ethical treatment of the Native Americans.

However, there are some disturbing shortcomings in Wright’s work. There is insufficient space to provide a comprehensive coverage, so a few examples are provided for the reader’s consideration.

First, the geographical area addressed in Law at Little Big Horn is within the Louisiana Purchase obtained from France in 1803, surveyed by Lewis and Clark in 1804-06, and mapped by Captain William F. Raynolds and Lieutenant Henry E. Maynadier in 1859-60. Therefore, the Government believed the area occupied by the Plains Tribes was U.S. territory. The Sioux Nation was also a misnomer because there has never been an entity by that name, much less one that had authority to conduct relations with the U.S. under the Westphalian sovereignty principles (1648~1900). Thus, President Grant’s administration, like its predecessors, did not consider a declaration of war necessary. In fact, the prevailing view of the Army’s purpose on the frontier was establishing and maintaining the peace against small, nomadic, lawless, loosely-affiliated tribes that were an obstacle to “Manifest Destiny”. In addition, the Centennial Campaign was not directed toward genocide of all Plains Indians, but in fact was a ‘focused’ operation toward forcing “winter roammers”, who neither signed the Laramie Treaties of 1851 and/or 1868 (or the 1867 Medicine Lodge Treaty) nor recognized the U.S. authority, onto the reservations.

Second, by 1874 the Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861 (revised 1863), addressed in Chapters Four and Fourteen, had been superseded through a series of General Orders and presidential executive decisions. Since Army actions on the Great Plains were to establish peace, General Order 100 (Lieber Code) contained within the 1863 Regulations was not considered relevant. Publications such as Maj Gen Emory Upton’s 1874 Cavalry Tactics (Army General Orders Number 6, dated July 17, 1873) superseded information cited in Chapter 14. In the wake of the Little Big Horn, Seventh Cavalry court-martials and inquiries followed James Regan’s Judge Advocate & Recorder’s Guide enacted by Congress in 1877.

Third, Law at Little Big Horn makes a common error in Chapter Eight about Terry’s plan and order. Among sources overlooked by the author are excellent symposiums hosted by the Order of Indian Wars (OIW) and the Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association (CBHMA). My presentation “Custer Exceeds His Authority on the Little Big Horn” during CBHMA’s 23rd Annual Symposium in 2009, published in 2010, documents the six-to-ten hour rehearsal of Terry’s plan by Terry, Gibbon, Custer, Brisbin, Hughes and Smith, using Raynolds and Maynadier’s detailed 1860 map, modifying the plan, and resolving numerous details. Terry’s ‘order’ was Hughes’ (Terry’s brother-in-law) and Smith’s (Terry’s adjutant) summary of that rehearsal. Terry’s near blindness indicates either Hughes or Smith read it to him in the morning of the 22nd, or Terry issued it to Custer without knowing what it said. Regardless, the order was specific in Custer’s responsibilities, which he willfully and intentionally disobeyed. Interestingly Terry also did not follow the rehearsal plan.

Finally, Chapter Twelve has misleading information concerning physical evidence at Luce and Nye-Cartwright Ridges. The allegation that no human remains or Indian cartridges have ever been found there leads to false analysis and conclusions. As for remains, the Lakota and Cheyenne controlled the ridges after the battle. Families removed their warrior casualties and provided final rites in accordance with their religious customs. The rest of the allegation may result from misunderstanding the 1983 fire and archeological investigations between 1984 and 1994. These investigations include three works by...
Scott, Fox, Connor and Harmon listed in the bibliography. The bibliography hints the author may not realize those investigations were confined within the limits of the National Park. Map 12 (page 151) shows Nye-Cartwright and Luce ridges which are far from the Park limits; no post-fire investigation was done there. However, Chapters 5 through 7 in Don Weibert’s *Custer, Cases & Cartridges* (1989) reveal photos, maps and detailed analysis of Indian artifacts found at these locations.

In conclusion, *Law at Little Big Horn* represents the contemporary New Englander voice. Mr. Wright’s work has already been a source for scholarly debates on various topics. This work fills a void in the body of knowledge about U.S. history while the nation celebrated its centennial anniversary. But, Terry’s plan and actions of the Seventh Cavalry are more accurately covered in other works. Always a final concern, readers should be alert when values of the current era are applied to actors’ behaviors and motivations over a century before.

**Lt. Col. Dennis K. “DK” Clark, USA Ret.,** is a member of the Board of Directors for the Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association (CBHMA) and a member of the Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee (CBPC), Little Big Horn Associates (LBHA), and the Order of the Indian Wars (OIW). He has conducted extensive research that resulted in delivering and publishing 12 papers, most of them at the Battlefield, and participated in numerous staff rides and field trips in his 34 expeditions to this battlefield. He has traveled along the Terry/Custer route from its origin at Fort Abraham Lincoln to the Little Big Horn National Monument, as well as Crook’s 1876 campaigns from Fort Laramie to the Powder and Rosebud River battlefields. He is the editor for CBHMA’s annual symposium booklet, which includes each research presentation.

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**Editor’s Notes**

*By Trooper Sam Young*

This issue of the Cavalry Journal starts my second year as the Journal’s editor, which continues to be exciting, educational, and fun. I hope it lasts for a long time!

You will note a couple of changes in this issue. We dropped the Curator’s Corner/Museum Update and the Research Library Update. Those columns were added a year ago to keep the members informed on the progress of their Association as it settled into its new home. That information will now be included in the Crossed Sabers newsletters since those are news items. It will also give us from two-four pages of space for Cavalry articles.

Articles from USCA members are always appreciated. Thank you Trooper Stan Copeland for initiating the idea of an article on the United States Cavalry School which was provided by Trooper Keith Herrin. I wish I was younger and physically able as I would have enjoyed that training. And Trooper M. George Eichenberg, Ph.D., provided another of his well researched and informative articles, this one on the Missouri State Militia Cavalry in the Civil War.

A review of old Journals generated two articles: the Grimsley saddle (since all I could find are McClellan saddle articles) and *The Remount Service in the A. E. F.* (April 1921 The Cavalry Journal).

Colonel Thomas A. Ratliff, Jr., USA Retired, in his book *Cavalryman*, describes his experiences as a young Cavalryman with the portee horse vans.

One hundred years ago, with the signing of the National Defense Act of 1916, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) was established. Cavalry, like Artillery and Infantry, was a separate entity within ROTC. I am drafting an article on Cavalry ROTC for the December 2016 Cavalry Journal. If you, or someone you know, served in Cavalry ROTC, request your input for the article. It could be a horse story, a training event, something serious, or something funny. I need it not later than 30 September.

Please send your letters and article ideas to me at journaleditor@uscavalry.org or to my home address: Samuel Young, 712 Englewood Street, Lansing, KS 66043.
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