

# **The Woodruff Gun**

## **Annotations to the Margreiter Article**

### **Woodruffs during the Battle of Helena, Ark.**

*Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Volume 22, Part 1, pp. 404-406.

Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas the Indian Territory, and the Department of the Northwest, November 20, 1862-December 31. 1863.  
Reports.

Attack on Helena, Ark., Report of Lieut. Melvil C. Wright, Third Iowa Battery:

On page 404, Wright reports that guns of the First Indiana Cavalry joined a section of the Iowa battery on the levee around the start of the engagement:

The second section [*of the Third Iowa Battery*], under the command of Sergt. L. S. House, which has for some time been in park on the right of the line, immediately upon the commencement of the battle pushed forward a few hundred yards to our extreme right, and took position, supported by a portion of the Second Infantry Brigade, Colonel [S. A.] Rice commanding. Immediately after getting into position, this section was joined by a battery of steel guns [*Woodruffs*], attached to the First Indiana Cavalry, and Colonel Clayton then assumed command of the whole. This officer then changed the position of his guns to a point on the east side of the levee, on our right, where he remained during the whole engagement....

injustice to the rest. To Major Owen, however, I am particularly indebted for the valuable aid and assistance he rendered me in carrying out the different orders I received, and for his coolness and bravery. Lieutenant [S. J.] Kelso, commissary, deserves notice for his timely aid in furnishing food and water to the men while they were engaged. Lieutenant [J. M.] Craig, quartermaster, also did his whole duty in his department, and B. J. Kilpatrick, ordnance sergeant, was always on hand with ammunition for the regiment and battery. Many of the men fired over 100 rounds.

Yours, &c.,

THOMAS N. PACE,

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding First Indiana Cavalry.*

Lieut. M. W. BENJAMIN,

*Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.*

### No. 11.

*Report of Lieut. Melvil C. Wright, Third Iowa Battery.*

HELENA, ARK., July 5, 1863.

CAPTAIN: In obedience to the order of the general commanding, I have the honor herewith to submit the following report of the part taken by the Third Iowa Battery in the engagement of yesterday:

In accordance with previous instructions, at 3.30 a. m. I ordered one section of the battery, under command of Second Lieut. O. H. Lyon, to a point near Battery D, on the left of our line.

The second section, under command of Sergt. L. S. House, which has for some time been in park on the right of the line, immediately upon the commencement of the battle pushed forward a few hundred yards to our extreme right, and took position, supported by a portion of the Second Infantry Brigade, Colonel [S. A.] Rice commanding, and the cavalry brigade, Colonel [Powell] Clayton commanding. Immediately after getting into position, this section was joined by a battery of steel guns, attached to the First Indiana Cavalry, and Colonel Clayton then assumed command of the whole. This officer then changed the position of his guns to a point on the east side of the levee, on our right, where he remained during the whole engagement. At 6 a. m. the 12-pounder howitzer, in charge of Sergt. L. S. House, was disabled by the breaking of the understraps which fasten the cheeks to the axle-tree, the accident being caused by a recoil of the gun. It was immediately taken to park for repairs, but could not be finished in time to take further part in the engagement.

At 6.30 a. m. the third section, which until then remained in camp, was dispatched, in charge of Orderly Sergt. J. J. Dengl, to re-enforce the right wing. On taking position, it immediately opened, and kept up a constant and effective fire against the guns of the enemy, posted on the hills on the extreme right, until recalled by order from the general commanding to Fort Curtis, where it was again effectively employed against the enemy in their last charge on our works.

The section under Lieutenant Lyon was first engaged about 7 a. m., and was after that constantly in action until the close of the battle, and for a considerable length of time very hotly pressed. During the charge on Battery C Lieutenant Lyon changed the position of his 6-pounder gun to command the ravine running from the Catholic Church westward, and, by his fire, contributed very materially in repulsing the enemy. Separated as the battery was during the whole engagement, it

is impossible to give as complete an account of the part taken in it by the different sections, and to notice particularly the conduct of my officers and men, as I could wish. While my entire command did their duty nobly, justice to them compels me to report particularly with regard to the following officers: Lieutenant Lyon was during the entire engagement with his section, directing the fire of his guns and encouraging his men by his example to deeds of valor, which, I am confident, the general commanding will appreciate. The lieutenant had his horse wounded twice, severely though not fatally.

From Colonel Clayton I learn that Sergeant House, in charge of section, behaved finely, displaying a great deal of courage and energy, as did also the other non-commissioned officers in his command.

Of Orderly Sergt. J. J. Dengl, having charge of third section, I can speak from personal observation. He was on hand, ready and active; with a thorough appreciation of the situation, he showed himself to be emphatically an artillery officer.

Lieutenant Lyon speaks very highly of the conduct, under the most trying circumstances, of the non-commissioned officers of his command, particularly of Corpl. Daniel Folsom, gunner. The loss of the battery is very light, having lost 1 horse killed and 7 horses wounded.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

I am, your most obedient servant,

M. C. WRIGHT,

*First Lieutenant Third Iowa Battery, Commanding.*

Capt. A. BLOCKI,

*Assistant Adjutant-General, U. S. Forces, Helena, Ark.*

#### No. 12.

*Report of Lieut. John O'Connell, Battery K, First Missouri Light Artillery.*

HELENA, ARK., July 22, 1863.

SIR: I take pleasure in sending you a copy of a report of the part taken by Battery K, First Missouri Light Artillery, in the engagement of July 4, 1863, at this place.

Yours, respectfully,

JNO. O'CONNELL,

*First Lieutenant First Missouri Light Artillery.*

Lieut. GEORGE W. CUTLER,

*Adjutant First Missouri Light Artillery.*

[Inclosure.]

HDQRS. BATTERY K, FIRST MISSOURI LIGHT ARTILLERY,

*Helena, Ark., July 5, 1863.*

SIR: In compliance with your instructions, I have the honor to submit the following report of the part taken by Battery K, First Missouri Light Artillery, in the engagement of yesterday, July 4:

Soon after the alarm gun was fired, I received an order from the adjutant-general to send a section of the battery into the earthworks on the levee, and I immediately ordered the second section, under command of Lieut. Thomas D. Witt, to occupy the position indicated. The first section, under my immediate command, had been placed in position the night before, at the rifle works, a short distance south and east of the hospital, at about 6 o'clock, when the enemy made the charge upon the

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*Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Volume 22, Part 1, pp. 402-404.

Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas the Indian Territory, and the Department of the Northwest, November 20, 1862-December 31. 1863.  
Reports.

Attack on Helena, Ark., Report of Lieut. Col. Thomas N. Pace, First Indiana Cavalry, Clayton's Brigade:

On p. 402, Pace notes that one of the First Indiana's Woodruffs, referred to as "our small rifled guns" even though they were smoothbore, was sent with a detachment to cover the supply train. Then his guns were ordered to the levee:

A little before 4 o'clock, on the morning of the 4th of July, two messengers came in from the picket post on the Little Rock road, bringing word that the enemy were advancing, driving in the pickets before them. I immediately ordered the bugle to sound to horse, and, forming the regiment, moved up the levee near town, and awaited orders. Soon received orders from you [*probably Brig. Gen. Frederick Salomon, commanding 13th Division, 13th Corps, although the report was addressed to Lieut. M. W. Benjamin, Acting Assistant Adjutant General*] through your adjutant, to move tents and baggage within the line of battle behind the Fifth Kansas, which was already drawn up in the open flats just above town. I immediately ordered Major [J. D.] Owen to take two companies, with one piece of our small rifled [*sic*] guns, and cover the rear of the train, and with the balance of my command I took positions as ordered. General [B. M.] Prentiss then ordered our guns some distance in front, up the levee, and Companies M and L were dismounted and sent forward as support. Our battery was commanded by Lieutenant Leflar, of Company B. For bravery shown and the terrible execution done by them, you are best able to judge, they having been under your immediate command....

parapet of Battery D. There were others who did as well as those named, but whose names have not been handed me. The entire regiment, officers and men, behaved with steadiness and judgment.

Very respectfully,

WM. H. HEATH,

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding Regiment.*

Col. SAMUEL A. RICE,

*Comdg. Second Brig., Third Div., Thirteenth Army Corps.*

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No. 9.

*Report of Capt. John G. Hudson, Thirty-third Missouri Infantry.*

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY D,

*Helena, Ark., July 4, 1863.*

SIR: I have the pleasure of submitting the names of the following officers of the Confederate Army who were taken prisoner in the attempt to charge on my battery, with near 400 soldiers:\*

\* \* \* \* \*

I have received a few straggling prisoners after the engagement was over. I will give you the full account at any time you wish. I fired my first gun at 4.25 a. m., and ceased at 10 a. m. My men behaved finely. I was supported by a battalion of the Forty-third Indiana Volunteers and two companies of the Thirty-third Iowa Volunteers.

I am, respectfully, yours, &c.,

JOHN G. HUDSON,

*Captain, Commanding Battery.*

Maj. JAMES O. PIERCE, *Assistant Adjutant-General.*

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No. 10.

*Report of Lieut. Col. Thomas N. Pace, First Indiana Cavalry, Clayton's brigade.*

HELENA, July 6, 1863.

SIR: In obedience to orders, I herewith transmit a list of killed and wounded of my command, First Indiana Cavalry, together with a statement of the part the regiment took in the attack on Helena, on the 4th of July, 1863.

A little before 4 o'clock, on the morning of the 4th of July, two messengers came in from the picket post on the Little Rock road, bringing word that the enemy were advancing, driving in the pickets before them. I immediately ordered the bugle to sound to horse, and, forming the regiment, moved up the levee near town, and awaited orders. Soon received orders from you, through your adjutant, to move tents and baggage within the line of fortifications as rapidly as possible, leaving part of the command to guard the train, and with the rest to form line of battle behind the Fifth Kansas, which was already drawn up in the open flats just above town. I immediately ordered Major [J. D.] Owen to take two companies, with one piece of our small rifled guns, and cover the rear of the train, and with the balance of my command I took positions as ordered. General [B. M.] Prentiss then ordered our guns some distance in front, up the levee, and Companies M and L were dismounted and sent forward as a support. Our battery was com-

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\* Nominal list reports 1 field officer, 6 captains, and 14 lieutenants.

manded by Lieutenant Leflar, of Company B. For the bravery shown and the terrible execution done by them, you are best able to judge, they having been under your immediate command. By this time Major Owen came up with his detachment, and fell in line with the regiment. Captain [W. V.] Weathers, aide to General Salomon, now came up with word that the enemy had captured a battery on the heights in the rear of General Salomon's headquarters, driving our infantry from their rifle-pits, and were rapidly advancing into town, and I was ordered to take my regiment under the walls of Fort Curtis, dismount them, and check their farther advance. I did so, taking the regiment on the top of the hill, to the left of General Salomon's headquarters. On the crest of the hill opposite was the battery the enemy had just captured, and over the breastworks from which our infantry had been driven they were pouring one dark, continuous stream. The boys wheeled into line, and with loud yells, commenced firing, pouring in such a storm of bullets that they soon retreated, with the exception of their sharpshooters, who, to the number of several hundred, took possession of a ravine running up the side of the hill, which was filled with fallen timber and stumps, from behind which they poured a continuous and deadly fire. Soon ten or twelve daring spirits now rushed down the hillside and up the steep ascent in front, getting a position on the enemy's left flank, just above them, occupying ground from which we had driven them. They held their position for some time, doing terrible execution, but were finally compelled to fall back, bringing with them quite a number of splendid English rifles which they had captured from the enemy's sharpshooters. Another detachment of our men soon went over, accompanied by some infantry, a company of which had come up on the hill where my regiment was stationed. (It may be proper to state here that several companies of infantry were at the foot of the hill to our right, around General Salomon's headquarters, who did good service, acting in concert with us.) The enemy, finding himself flanked, and having no chance of escape, as every one attempting to run up the hillside was sure to fall, raised the white flag, and about 100 surrendered. Quite a number still held out, seemingly determined to die before they would become prisoners. Here more than half the regiment threw away their carbines, many of them being unserviceable, having been condemned by a United States inspecting officer some time since, and supplied themselves with Enfield rifles captured from the enemy. General Salomon now sent orders for us to charge and retake the battery. Two more hills had to be crossed before reaching it, the sides of which were covered with logs and brush. The hills were several hundred feet steep, almost perpendicular; but at the word "forward" they were accompanied by two companies of infantry, and where it was too steep to walk the boys would crawl on their hands and knees. The enemy did not wait to receive us, but left their works. I was now compelled to beat a hasty retreat in consequence of the shells from the gunboat Tyler dropping in all around us, and we fell back and resumed our former position. The men were now much exhausted from charging over the hills and back. The sun was shining out intensely hot, and I ordered the regiment to the foot of the hill, under the trees around headquarters (the fighting was now over with the exception of some occasional shots), after being engaged for five hours under a continued and severe fire. My killed, wounded, and missing number as follows: Killed, 2; wounded, 8; missing, 1.

The officers and men all conducted themselves so as to meet my highest approbation. Such being the case, I find it impossible to name particular ones as deserving of notice for their bravery without doing



injustice to the rest. To Major Owen, however, I am particularly indebted for the valuable aid and assistance he rendered me in carrying out the different orders I received, and for his coolness and bravery. Lieutenant [S. J.] Kelso, commissary, deserves notice for his timely aid in furnishing food and water to the men while they were engaged. Lieutenant [J. M.] Craig, quartermaster, also did his whole duty in his department, and B. J. Kilpatrick, ordnance sergeant, was always on hand with ammunition for the regiment and battery. Many of the men fired over 100 rounds.

Yours, &c.,

THOMAS N. PACE,

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding First Indiana Cavalry.*

Lieut. M. W. BENJAMIN,

*Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.*

# No. 11.

*Report of Lieut. Melvil C. Wright, Third Iowa Battery.*

HELENA, ARK., July 5, 1863.

CAPTAIN: In obedience to the order of the general commanding, I have the honor herewith to submit the following report of the part taken by the Third Iowa Battery in the engagement of yesterday:

In accordance with previous instructions, at 3.30 a. m. I ordered one section of the battery, under command of Second Lieut. O. H. Lyon, to a point near Battery D, on the left of our line.

The second section, under command of Sergt. L. S. House, which has for some time been in park on the right of the line, immediately upon the commencement of the battle pushed forward a few hundred yards to our extreme right, and took position, supported by a portion of the Second Infantry Brigade, Colonel [S. A.] Rice commanding, and the cavalry brigade, Colonel [Powell] Clayton commanding. Immediately after getting into position, this section was joined by a battery of steel guns, attached to the First Indiana Cavalry, and Colonel Clayton then assumed command of the whole. This officer then changed the position of his guns to a point on the east side of the levee, on our right, where he remained during the whole engagement. At 6 a. m. the 12-pounder howitzer, in charge of Sergt. L. S. House, was disabled by the breaking of the understraps which fasten the cheeks to the axle-tree, the accident being caused by a recoil of the gun. It was immediately taken to park for repairs, but could not be finished in time to take further part in the engagement.

At 6.30 a. m. the third section, which until then remained in camp, was dispatched, in charge of Orderly Sergt. J. J. Dengl, to re-enforce the right wing. On taking position, it immediately opened, and kept up a constant and effective fire against the guns of the enemy, posted on the hills on the extreme right, until recalled by order from the general commanding to Fort Curtis, where it was again effectively employed against the enemy in their last charge on our works.

The section under Lieutenant Lyon was first engaged about 7 a. m., and was after that constantly in action until the close of the battle, and for a considerable length of time very hotly pressed. During the charge on Battery C Lieutenant Lyon changed the position of his 6-pounder gun to command the ravine running from the Catholic Church westward, and, by his fire, contributed very materially in repulsing the enemy. Separated as the battery was during the whole engagement, it



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Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas the Indian Territory, and the Department of the Northwest, November 20, 1862-December 31. 1863.  
Reports.

Attack on Helena, Ark., Report of Col. Samuel A. Rice, Thirty-Third Iowa Infantry, Second Brigade:

On page 395, Rice notes the support of the “First Indiana Battery (light artillery)”, which refers to the Woodruffs of the First Indiana Cavalry, the only Indiana unit involved in the battle:

While the engagement was thus progressing in the center, the enemy were also concentrating a heavy fire on the right wing, which had been assigned to my command. They [*the Confederates*] had planted a battery within 400 yards of Battery A, but protected from its fire by a point of the hill. From the concentrated fire of the First Indiana Battery (light artillery), and a section of the Third Iowa Battery, under Lieutenant Wright, assisted by our sharpshooters and a severe fire along the entire line, the enemy were compelled to withdraw their guns with a severe loss....

## No. 4.

*Report of Col. Samuel A. Rice, Thirty-third Iowa Infantry, commanding Second Brigade.*

HDQRS. SECOND BRIGADE, THIRTEENTH DIVISION,  
THIRTEENTH ARMY CORPS, DEPT. OF TENNESSEE,  
*Helena, Ark., July 7, 1863.*

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to submit the following report of the part taken by the Second Brigade in the action of the 4th instant:

The Thirty-third Missouri Infantry were stationed at Fort Curtis and at Batteries A, B, C, and D, which covered your entire line of defense. At all of these points they manned the artillery, and also had a reserve who acted as sharpshooters. The Thirty-third Iowa Infantry was ordered to report to Fort Curtis, opposite the center of your line, at day-break, so that, in case of an attack, they might readily be thrown to the support of either wing or the center of your line. At 4 a. m. the enemy, in heavy force, drove in our pickets, and opened the engagement on Batteries A, C, and D. The Thirty-third Iowa was promptly, in compliance with your orders, moved into the rifle-pits in front and flanking Batteries C and D, with a small portion acting as a reserve, who were posted so as to command the ravine between these batteries. Three companies of the Thirty-sixth Iowa were sent at once to support Battery A, and took possession of the rifle-pits, flanking it. The Twenty-ninth Iowa, with a reserve from the Thirty-sixth, was ordered to take possession of the sides of the bluffs, on the east side, and a short distance in front of Battery A, extending down to the Sterling road, and drive the enemy from the crests of the hills which they already had occupied. On Batteries C and D the main assault of the enemy was made. They hurled regiment after regiment in close column against the works, but were gallantly repulsed at Battery D, and only after a severe and bloody conflict took Battery C, driving our forces before them, but they promptly rallied and formed at the bottom of the hill. The artillery from Batteries A, B, and D, together with Fort Curtis, commanding Battery C, was opened upon the enemy, and after a severe cannonading, assisted by a galling fire from our infantry, they were driven back with a heavy loss, and the battery retaken. The heavy loss sustained by the Thirty-third Missouri and the Thirty-third Iowa on this portion of the field fully attests their undoubted courage. While the engagement was thus progressing in the center, the enemy were also concentrating a heavy fire on the right wing, which had been assigned to my command. They had planted a battery within 400 yards of Battery A, but protected from its fire by a point of the hill. From the concentrated fire of the First Indiana Battery (light artillery), and a section of the Third Iowa Battery, under Lieutenant Wright, assisted by our sharpshooters and a severe fire along the entire line, the enemy were compelled to withdraw their guns with a severe loss. On this portion of our line the enemy had, besides their artillery, a brigade of four regiments of infantry and a brigade of cavalry, under General Marmaduke, and at all points outnumbered us at least four to one, according to their own estimates. The officers and soldiers of the Twenty-ninth Iowa acted with the utmost coolness and bravery, and steadily gained ground from the first onset. The Thirty-sixth Iowa behaved in a manner worthy of all commendation. They were promptly moved to the relief of the Twenty-ninth Iowa, and drove by their well-directed fire the enemy before them, occupying the crests of the hills. The enemy could repeatedly be heard trying to rally their columns for the purpose of charg-

ing on our line, and were only prevented by the continuous fire of our line, assisted by a heavy and well-directed cross-fire from our artillery and the rifle-pits. The Thirty-third Missouri, manning the guns in the various batteries along the entire line, was at all points exposed to the hottest fire of the enemy, and deserve the highest praise for their bravery and efficiency.

The heavy loss sustained by the enemy fully attests the bravery, the discipline, and the efficiency of your entire command. There was taken by my command several hundred prisoners. We have buried 156 of the enemy. There were also taken three stand of colors and several hundred stand of arms. The rout of the enemy was complete at all points. The loss in my command was 45 killed, 96 wounded, and 30 missing.\* A full report of the above from each regiment I append hereto. As a portion of my brigade, the Thirty-third Iowa and part of the Thirty-third Missouri, were in another part of the field from that assigned to my command, and acted more immediately under your own observation, I trust, in case I have not been able to present fully the part they took in the action, that you will supply the deficiency in your official report.

A detailed account of the part taken by the various regiments of the brigade would involve not only what was done by them, but by other brigades, who bore an equally honorable part in the entire engagement, and especially that of Colonel [P.] Clayton, of the Fifth Kansas, who, with the First Indiana Battery and his cavalry, bore an important part in the engagement on the right of the line. Where all did so well, invidious distinction would be out of place. If some bore more conspicuous parts than others, it was because the position of their own commands placed them in a more important position.

I take especial pleasure in referring to Colonel [Thomas H.] Benton, [jr.], of the Twenty-ninth Iowa; Colonel [C. W.] Kittredge, of the Thirty-sixth Iowa; Lieutenant-Colonel [W. H.] Heath, commanding Thirty-third Missouri; Lieutenant-Colonel [C. H.] Mackey, commanding Thirty-third Iowa; Lieutenant-Colonel [R. F.] Patterson, Twenty-ninth Iowa; Majors [H. D.] Gibson, [G. W.] Van Beek, and [O. B.] Shoemaker, who, from their coolness, efficiency, and daring, are worthy of especial mention. They were at all times at the post of danger, cheering their men. Lieutenant [J. F.] Lacy, my acting assistant adjutant-general, acted as my aide during the engagement, and rode to whatever part of the field required his presence, and afforded me assistance of the most valuable character, and I take especial pleasure in referring to him.

I am, captain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL A. RICE,

*Colonel Thirty-third Iowa Infantry, Comdg. Second Brigade.*

*Capt. A. BLOCKI, Assistant Adjutant-General.*

#### No. 5.

*Report of Col. Thomas H. Benton, jr., Twenty-ninth Iowa Infantry.*

HELENA, ARK., July 6, 1863.

COLONEL: I have the honor to make the following report of the part taken in the engagement of the 4th instant by my regiment:

My men were drawn up in line of battle at daylight, and at 4.30 a. m.,

\* But see revised statement, p. 391.

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