

# The Woodruff Gun

## Annotations to the Margreiter Article

### Woodruffs during the Battle of Prairie Grove, Ark.

*Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Volume 22, Part 1, pp. 124-126.

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

Battle of Prairie Grove, Fayetteville, or Illinois Creek, Ark., Report of Col. Dudley Wickersham, Tenth Illinois Cavalry, commanding First Brigade, Third Division:

On pages 125-126, Wickersham reports that he advanced towards a reported engagement to support Gen. Herron with “two battalions Tenth Illinois Cavalry, and their two sections 2-pounder steel howitzers [*Woodruff guns, four of the six originally issued them, two others having been recently lost at Clark’s Mill*]. The advance drove in Confederate pickets and “received a heavy fire from the enemy”.

“At this juncture a section of the 2-pounder howitzers was ordered to their support; ere they arrived, their movements being characterized with no delay, the enemy had fallen back some 150 yards. The howitzers proceeded some 100 yards down the road in advance of my forces, and there received a terrible fire from the enemy, wounding Corpl. Levi Cassity, of Company B, Tenth Illinois Cavalry, destroying one of his arms, and Private E. McCarty, of Company G, of same regiment, both belonging to the front gun, the former in command thereof. Corporal Cassity’s horse was killed, and both of the horses attached to the gun wounded [*So a Woodruff gun and limber was drawn by only two horses*]. The others, beholding this, fell back with the remaining gun to the head of the column, then at Marr’s house, and opened into the enemy’s ranks with several rounds of canister, killing 30 men....

Just prior to these changes, Lieutenant ———— (name unable to learn), with 20 men from Companies L and M, First Iowa Cavalry, volunteered to rescue the missing gun—a perilous task, speedily and meritoriously accomplished. The enemy had not taken it from the field, having been driven back immediately, subsequent to delivering their fire upon it, by the galling fire of my howitzer. Here an individual act of heroism became known, and is worthy of mention, namely, Corporal Cassity was still with the gun, having refused to desert it.

me to witness the magnificent practice of my officers and men. Whenever a rebel battery disclosed its position, my gunners directed their fire upon it; and I am proud to say that one or two rounds from each piece was sufficient to cause the enemy to limber to the rear and "ske-daddle." When the infantry were repulsed, I directed my fire over their heads into the pursuing enemy. The enemy were checked.

The battle had now been raging fiercely for three hours, when a battery was discovered upon our right flank, blazing away like fury. I ordered the right half battery to change front forward on the right piece, and was ready to give the new comer a warm reception, when an orderly arrived and reported General Blunt on our right. This, of course, saved us the necessity of opening on our new friend.

My fire was now directed, under the immediate supervision of General Herron, upon new formations of the enemy, who were endeavoring to make a demonstration upon our left. Their flag was soon shot down, and I ceased firing, not wishing to waste ammunition. This was at 4.30 p. m. In three hours and a half, 450 percussion shells were sent screeching into the enemy's lines, and 60 solid shot from my battery. I am satisfied that there is somebody hurt. Let those who witnessed the skill and coolness of my officers and men sound their praise. I forbear. Suffice it to say, however, that I am proud of them; proud of my regiment, and proud to claim that I belong to the Second Division, Army of the Frontier.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID MURPHY,

*Captain Company F, First Missouri Light Artillery.*

C. S. LAKE,

*Asst. Adjt. Gen., 2d Brig., 2d Div., Army of the Frontier.*

#### No. 26.

*Report of Col. Dudley Wickersham, Tenth Illinois Cavalry, commanding First Brigade, Third Division.*

HDQRS. FIRST BRIG., THIRD DIV., ARMY OF THE FRONTIER,  
*In Camp at Prairie Grove, December 8, 1862.*

GENERAL: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to Brigadier-General Herron's orders, received at Sugar Creek on the morning of the 7th [6th] instant, I reached your command at Cane Hill at 9 p. m. that evening, after a very fatiguing march of 50 miles, my men weary and horses jaded and worn out from the long, rapid, and continuous marching of the previous three days. Later that evening my command received provisions and forage enough to satisfy their needy wants, through the kindly offices of Colonel Weer, to whom, through you, I beg to return my grateful acknowledgments.

Next morning [December 7], as ordered, my command was formed in line of battle in the field east and adjacent to the old camping ground of the rebels at Cane Hill, and from thence, as ordered, I marched it to Rhea's Mills, being first re-enforced by the Ninth Kansas Cavalry and a section of howitzers from the Third Wisconsin Cavalry, both under the immediate command of Colonel Lynde, where, about noon, your order directing me to open communication and effect a junction with the forces under Brig. Gen. F. J. Herron, then supposed to be engaging the enemy somewhere between Fayetteville and Cane Hill, was received.

In conformity thereto, I proceeded with my command on the old Fayetteville road, in the order hereinafter mentioned, consisting of two battalions First Iowa Cavalry, Col. James O. Gower, commanding; two battalions Tenth Illinois Cavalry, and their two sections 2-pounder steel howitzers, Lieut. Col. James Stuart commanding; two squadrons First Battalion Second Wisconsin Cavalry, Maj. William H. Miller commanding, and about 400 of the Eighth Missouri Volunteer Cavalry, Colonel [W. F.] Geiger commanding. When it had reached a point just as you enter the woods, the prairie stretching out to the left and front, and about three-fourths of a mile from the point of intersection of this road and the Cane Hill road, my advance fired into some 30 of the enemy's pickets, who fled and disappeared in the woods without returning the fire. I then deployed skirmishers into the woods from the front, and detailed an additional squadron from the First Iowa Cavalry as advance guard. When the advance guard reached Marr's house, say one-half mile from the attack just mentioned, it received a heavy fire from the enemy, who were posted there in force, forming their left wing, luckily injuring but one man, whose name will be found at the close of this report. My command closed up rapidly to the aid of the advance, and formed in close column of squadrons. The firing by this time became general between the advance, supported by another squadron of the First Iowa Cavalry, and the enemy. At this juncture a section of the 2-pounder howitzers was ordered to their support; ere they arrived, their movements being characterized with no delay, the enemy had fallen back some 150 yards. The howitzers proceeded some 100 yards down the road in advance of my forces, and there received a terrible fire from the enemy, wounding Corpl. Levi Cassity, of Company B, Tenth Illinois Cavalry, destroying one of his arms, and Private E. McCarty, of Company G, of same regiment, both belonging to the front gun, the former in command thereof. Corporal Cassity's horse was killed, and both of the horses attached to the gun wounded. The others, beholding this, fell back with the remaining gun to the head of the column, then at Marr's house, and opened into the enemy's ranks with several rounds of canister, killing 30 men.

Finding at this time that our infantry was hotly engaging the enemy from a position a short distance in my front, from an open meadow adjacent to a corn-field on my left, I left with my command to support them; when, just before reaching them, I received your order to give way to the left, to permit your battery to come to their relief, and your further order to support said battery.

Just prior to these changes, Lieutenant —— (name unable to learn), with 20 men from Companies L and M, First Iowa Cavalry, volunteered to rescue the missing gun—a perilous task, speedily and meritoriously accomplished. The enemy had not taken it from the field, having been driven back immediately, subsequent to delivering their fire upon it, by the galling fire of my howitzer. Here an individual act of heroism became known, and is worthy of mention, namely, Corporal Cassity was still with the gun, having refused to desert it.

After the formation in the field, my command met with no further attacks, and, in accordance with your orders, received after a general engagement had commenced between your battery, sustained by your infantry, and the enemy's forces, fell back  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles on the road toward Rhea's Mills; and, still later, by your orders, formed a part of the escort to Fayetteville of the commissary and baggage trains of your command, the rear thereof reaching that place on the evening of the 8th instant. I then reported with my command to Brig. Gen. F. J. Herron, finding you were beyond him.

Let me remark, in concluding, that the troops of my command are deserving of mention for the cool, unflinching spirit they evinced during the attack upon them. Not a man wavered, and during the short suspension of firing, intervening after the general attack on my front, when all was suspense and uncertainty, their bearing was soldierly in every regard.

Inclosed I beg you to find a recapitulation of the casualties.\*

I have the honor to remain, general, with every consideration of respect, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. WICKERSHAM,

*Colonel, Commanding Cavalry Brigade, Army of the Frontier.*

Brig. Gen. JAMES G. BLUNT,

*Commanding Army of the Frontier.*

#### No. 27.

#### *Report of Col. James O. Gower, First Iowa Cavalry.*

HEADQUARTERS FIRST IOWA CAVALRY,  
*Camp, Prairie Grove, Washington Co., Ark., December 10, 1862.*

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that, at 6 o'clock on the morning of the 6th instant, in obedience to orders, with the First and Third Battalions of the First Iowa Cavalry, comprising an available force of 500 men, Lieutenant-Colonel [P. G.] Bryan, with the Second Battalion, being detailed as rear guard for the wagon train of the Third Division, I moved from camp on Sugar Creek, Benton County, Arkansas, and, after marching eighteen consecutive hours, reached the headquarters of Brigadier-General Blunt, at Cane Hill, near Boonsborough, Washington County, Arkansas, at 12 o'clock on the night of the 6th instant.

On the morning of the 7th instant, I marched with my command to Rhea's Mills, 8 miles, thence south 5 miles, to Prairie Grove, as advance guard for General Blunt's division, and encountered the enemy at 2.30 p. m., posted in the timber. Squadrons L and M, being in advance, were fired upon, but no one injured. Lieut. R. M. Reynolds, with 20 men from Company A, being thrown out as skirmishers, were fired upon by the enemy, and one man of Company A, Private William H. Fortune, severely wounded in the right shoulder, this being the only casualty to the regiment.

The several squadrons being formed in line of battle in the timber, maintained their position for one hour against the continual fire of the enemy, during which time Lieutenant [J. M.] Simeral, of Company L, with 20 men, retook from the enemy one howitzer, lost by the Tenth Illinois Cavalry.

Upon the arrival of General Blunt's division, at 4 p. m., I was ordered to the support of Captain Rabb's battery, and moved my command eastwardly to a large corn-field near the battery, where I remained until 5 p. m., when, by orders, I moved  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles on the road to Rhea's Mills, and took position, standing to horse until daylight of the 8th instant, when, in obedience to orders, I moved my command northwardly 4 miles, and accompanied, as rear guard, the wagon train of General Blunt's division to a camp  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Fayetteville, where I remained until

\* Embodied in revised statement, pp. 85, 86.

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