



The Union Defender



The Newsletter of Phelps Camp No. 66,
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

September 2021

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING?

Here's what was discussed:

- 1) Planning continues for the camp's annual Historic Range Day, possibly in October (date TBA).
- 2) Members discussed the possibility of conducting a ceremony in Mountain Grove in May 2022 to mark the centennial of the Union Soldier monument, one of the few such monuments in southern Missouri.
- 3) Members enjoyed a short film entitled "Hold My Horse," produced by the folks at the Civil War Digital Digest. The humorous film tells the story of an actual incident in 1862 in which Union General Israel Richardson managed to "one-up" a haughty lieutenant.

NEXT CAMP MEETING

Phelps Camp meetings will now be held on the second Saturday of the month at 2 p.m., still in the Visitor Center of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

NOTE:

The event at the Clifton Cemetery will take the place of the October meeting. We will return to Wilson's Creek in November.

We hope to see you there!



HISTORICAL NOTES

The 33rd Illinois Infantry fights **the other** battle of Pilot Knob

“We were sent across the river into Missouri (Sept. 18), and made our first camp at Pilot Knob Sept. 20. Here we received our arms—old Austrian muskets, that were fed upon ball and buckshot, and were primed with a little copper covered stick of percussion with a small twisted wire at the end of it. In place of a gun-cap. They were daisies! The most ingenious man in the world would never have thought of them. But the old guns would shoot, provided you didn't get the wire-end stuck in the prime hole; and they would always let you know when a load went out. They would kind'r come back like, as if for another dose. I remember Serg't Pratt taking a squad of us out one evening to practice firing, and to set the example he gravely loaded his piece, and with great dignity and military precision fired at the target, and immediately began to wipe great drops of blood from his nose and cheek. This was undoubtedly the **FIRST BLOOD OF THE CAMPAIGN.**

[On October 15, 1861, Confederates under General M. Jeff Thompson attacked the 33rd's camp]

The writer, happening to be up and fully dressed, was in the act of walking up through the little gateway toward the cook tent, when he observed Henry Smickelseipen, who was a videt up in the cedars, running rapidly toward camp, stopping at intervals and trying to fire his gun at something pursuing him, but with out success. A few rods further on he called out loudly for the Corporal of the guard, and in an instant Orderly Sergeant Foster sprang from his tent with the order to "fall in," followed immediately by the ringing voice of Capt. Elliott; and then, as the frightened videt came down out of the cedars there came a crashing volley, accompanied with wild, fierce yells, that instantly changed the peaceful scenes of dreamland to the stern and **BITTER REALITIES OF WAR.**

The call to duty by Orderly Foster was his last, for he fell as a soldier would wish to fall, facing the enemy, strong in his convictions of duty and in his belief of a just and overruling Providence. The surprise was complete, and the history of the battles of Shiloh, Chancellorsville and Winchester show that where veteran soldiers were unexpectedly and vigorously assaulted by even inferior numbers, soldiers and officers became bewildered and proved of but little obstruction in the path of the assailants: but of this it was different. The spirit of resistance was nowise disabled. The boys sprang from their couches in their night clothes, or only partially dressed, and rushed to the little stone wall and poured shot after shot into the surging mass of the Confederates charging down upon us.

We were assaulted in our sleep, were awakened by crashes of musketry, whistling bullets, and the savage yells of our assailants. The first sight that met our eyes was a dead and bleeding comrade. We could not know their numbers. The circumstances were calculated to produce the most cruel fear, yet there was something that carried every man to his post with a grim determination to strike as long as strength remained, and conquer if he could.

The unexpected resistance offered caused the first onslaught to waver and fall back; the sight of the little stone wall was depressing; the whistling of our balls and buckshot was unpleasant. Yet they reformed up under the cedars and came down again, and yet again to meet the same sort of a welcome. A part of their force had been sent on up the railroad, but were recalled. They began to creep around to our rear, and to enfilade our line. Their shots came from all directions.

The sentinel down at the bridge Tom Royce—we had forgotten him—stood at his post, looking up anxiously toward us. The bullets were pattering around him. He was signaled to leave his post, but instead of taking to the brush, as he might have done, he started up the stony path toward camp. A hundred shots were aimed at him, yet he came on up as best he could until near the top; thrice wounded, he fell from exhaustion, but was gallantly rescued by some the boys who were watching his ascent.

For over an hour we had stood the terrible storm, and our cartridges were nearly exhausted. Elliott was wounded and five others were more or less seriously hurt. There was no longer a chance for us. We could submit, and we did.

The signal of surrender was hoisted, and the unshaven, unkempt heard of Missouri backwoodsmen swarmed in upon us with the most **HIDEOUS THREATS OF VENGEANCE**, and but for the prompt appearance of Jeff Thompson and his staff it is but fair to presume that their threats would have been executed, for a more bloodthirsty looking set of cut throats were never marshaled under the banners of the Confederacy. The upper bridge guard had a running fight for several miles, two of them being wounded, but we believe all finally escaped. Of the losses of the enemy we could learn but little, although they admitted a severe punishment, and we know that some of them then and there ended their military career.

We were kindly paroled, and without arms or equipments—some of us hardly with clothing—we started down the track, crestfallen and vanquished, toward St. Louis. I say vanquished, though only in name, for we had the proud consciousness of knowing that under the circumstances we did all that we could, and now, 23 years after, while some of us followed the old flag clear through to Appomattox, our first little battle at Big River, Mo., is impressed upon our minds indelibly.

‘Seedy,’ Co. E, 33d Ill.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 2—Catt-Crawford Cemetery: The Ozark Mountain Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution will return for the third year to honor those buried in this small family cemetery near Mount Vernon, including the Lawrence County treasurer who saved the county's funds from falling into Confederate hands. Phelps Camp members have been invited to attend in modern or period clothes, and to assist with the musket salute if desired. The program begins at 10 a.m. and is expected to last about 45 minutes.

Directions: Take the Highway 39 (Mt. Vernon) exit on I-44, and go south. Turn right almost immediately on E. Daniel Drive, which will take you past Relics Antique Mall. Just beyond Relics, go left (south) on County Road 1137. You will pass a large cemetery on your right. After about a half mile, turn left onto a farm lane that will take you to the Fulton farm house. Parking will be in the field on the right, the cemetery is on the left.

October 9—Clifton Cemetery: The Ozark Mountain Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution will conduct a ceremony to honor Thomas Nathan Clifton, a veteran of the American Revolution who died in 1864 at the age of 105. The ceremony will begin at 11 a.m. Phelps Camp has been invited to attend, as four of Clifton's sons served in the Union Army (one died during the war). Members are welcome to attend either in period or modern clothing (with SUVCW member medals, of course.)

The ceremony will be held at Clifton Cemetery, County Road 404 (Bell Springs Road): 37.262631, -92.931568 1-½ miles east of KK Highway, south of Marshfield, Missouri.