



The Vedette

DISPATCH AND CORROSPONDENCE



P.O. Box 2713, Roanoke, Virginia 24001
www.rockbridgedragoons.org

August 2010

President's Message –

Members of the 14th

Wow! Where has this summer gone! It seems only days ago we were all eager and rearing to go after spring drill at Cameron Plantation. This reenacting season has been markedly different from last year. Last year, we focused on small regional events and living histories where we begin to make a name for our new unit and bond as a group. This year, with our membership in Longstreet's Corps, we have been thrust into the spotlight of cavalry reenacting. While our poor numbers



at Spotsylvania, Trevillian Station, and Gettysburg did not reflect our true colors, we did cross sabers with some of the best Federal cavalry around. We are now heading to the closing phases of our year. We have two major unit events left.

First, the JEB Stuart event held General Stuart's birthplace in Ararat, Patrick County, VA will be October 2-3. This is the twentieth year for this event. Many of us have very fond memories of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains as viewed from Jeb's front yard, but sadly we have stood on the sidelines and watched the cavalry slowly evaporate from this special event. We not only need to come out in force to this event, but we need to talk it up to other cavalry units. Our unit will help coordinate the cavalry operations with the overall cavalry being under General Sheppard's command. We need maximum effort

to JEB Stuart to help out our brothers in the Corps and help revitalize an event with true cavalry roots.

Our second major unit event will be Cedar Creek on October 16-17. Over the last few years this event has grown to become a major event, conveniently located just off I-81 south of Winchester. This event will be hosted by Longstreet's Corps. We had planned to go to this event last year. However, after the damp ending of Mosby's Men Ride and the threat more wet weather that weekend we decided to bail. This event historically can be wet and it will usually be cool weather, but it will come as a refreshing change from the typical summer reenactment and most importantly this event does attract good numbers for cavalry. With a light individual schedule for Aug. and Sept., I hope we will all be ready to go as one solid unit by October.

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The Captain's Corner

From Headquarters,

As we're halfway through the 2010 Campaign, perhaps a short review is in order. The season so far, in my mind, has been dominated by our newly formed bond with Longstreet's Corps. I would consider our relationship with the 6th Va. Cavalry and the 13th Va. Cavalry as excellent now, marked by a great spirit of co-operation, which has reflected

positively in the fighting spirit of the entire brigade. I know that General Shepard feels the same. The fighting at Spotsylvania, Trevillian Station, and Gettysburg has been terrific and for the most part safe and fun. As we have had quite a few empty saddles at these unit events, we have been blessed with some great cavalry friends who have come filled the

(continued on page 8)



Too Horse!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Manassas Living History (NPS)
Individual
August 28 - 29

Jeb Stuart - Laurel Hill
★★★ Unit Event ★★★
Oct. 2 - 3 Ararat, Va.

Battle of Cedar Creek -
★★★ Unit Event ★★★
October 16 - 17 - Middletown, Va.

From the Editor

In our spring issue of *The Vedette*, you will recall I mentioned an e-mail we received from Harriet Wallace of Florida via our website. She was inquiring about her ancestor William B. F. Leech who served in the 14th Va. Cavalry. I was able to help her find some information and she sent me some history she had from the family (see page 6) Well, this is so bizarre, read this next e-mail:

Dear Sirs,

I surfed unto your website today. What an exciting and great find! My Great Grandfather, William B. F. Leech, was a private in Company H during The War of Northern Aggression. I tell people that he and I were the only two family members to not only fight in a war 100 years apart but we were both on the losing side. It's mandated somewhere that no more of our family members participate in any more wars, representing the U.S. that is.

I'm retired from the military and live on a boat in Camp Lejeune, N.C. with my wife Patty and deckhand, Jack Russell Terrier, Molly. We cruise up and down the Inter-coastal Waterway and are in Cape Charles, Va. visiting my side of the family this summer.

We're looking forward to breaking away from the coast sometime and meet you folks at one of your events. We will keep abreast of your calendar.

Best wishes and stay Semper Fidelis,

Marshall Timm

To date, we have had two visitors to our website mentioning their ancestors and both were the same soldier. I wrote an e-mail back to Mr. Timm and he was not aware of Mrs. Wallace. I gave (with permission) Mr. Timm's e-mail address to Mrs. Wallace and the last note I received they had traded e-mails and were getting acquainted.

See page 6 for the family history of William B. F. Leech that Mrs. Wallace was so kind to send me. Also, be sure to see Mr. Leech mentioned in the article below.

On a business note, we have several members who have not renewed their dues. If your newsletter has a yellow highlight over your name your dues are past due. Please send in your dues asap.

Also, we need to get our books in order regarding bounties and funds owed our treasury for un-attended events. If you are not sure if you owe a refund, call me or e-mail me at Gordon@rockbridgedragoons.org.

We hope to see you soon, keep your powder dry.

Pvt. Gordon

Valley Memory Articles

Augusta County: "Veterans" Reunion. The Meeting of the Rockbridge Dragoons at Lexington-List of the Survivors-Next Reunion to be Held at Staunton, by Unknown, August 9, 1864.

Summary: This article provides an account of an 1894 reunion of the 14th Virginia regiment, which was made up primarily of men from Augusta and Rockbridge counties, and states that the next reunion will be held in 1895 in Staunton, Augusta County.

LEXINGTON, VA., August 8, 1894.

The first annual reunion of the Second Rockbridge Dragoons or Company H, of Fourteenth Virginia Regiment, was held here yesterday. At an early hour the gray-haired veterans began to pour into the town. The trains brought their quota. Not only was the Fourteenth Regiment out in force, but other veterans were present in large numbers from various commands. Some of the old "vets" had not met since the surrender, and reminiscences and war anecdotes were the order of the day. At noon the bugle was sounded for the formation, and Company H, Company C, and Company I, mounted, formed in line facing the courthouse, under the command of Colonel John A. Gibson. To the command "Right by twos," the "vets" wheeled into column, and paraded the

principal streets of the town.

After the parade the roll was called and the command given: "Prepare for action;" the enemy to be engaged was an elegant dinner prepared by Comrade C. W. Irvine in his best style. After dinner speech-making was indulged in.

Hon. Wm. A. Anderson, Captain J. Pres. Moore, and Colonel W. Bolivar F. Leech were the orators of the occasion. Their remarks elicited the wildest enthusiasm, and the "rebel yell" made the dining-room ring.

The next reunion will take place in Staunton on Court Monday, August 28, 1895, when all the surviving members of the Fourteenth will be brought together again.

The members of the companies represented were mostly from Rockbridge and Augusta Counties. A noticeable incident of the day was that it was the thirtieth anniversary of the day when Captain Wilson lost his arm.

This command served all through the war, and was in the memorable raid through Pennsylvania.

Bibliographic Information: Source copy consulted: Southern Historical Society Papers, Vol. XXII, p.73-74, 1894

The Army Mule

I believe it was General Hooker who first used the mule as a pack-animal in the Army of the Potomac. As the mule was an important factor in army life, it does not seem out of place here to depict some of the characteristics of this animal, and the part he took in its affairs. Animals, like men, are moulded or modified by their surroundings, and hence the mule who adapted himself to army circumstances became unique.

The army mule was dun-colored and sad. His countenance was extremely solemn, and in length rivalled his ears. The sentimental in his nature was wafted from the ends of his ears, while his humor worked out at his heels. His voice was of unusual compass and pitched mostly in the minor key, harmonizing with nature in a remarkable degree. It had in it the rush of water, the sighing of winds, the filing of saws, the grating of slate pencils, and as a whole resembled a clap of thunder drawn through a course sieve.

When a mule brays he throws up his tail, and not infrequently his heels, in a sort of ecstasy. The darky drivers solemnly declared that a sure preventive of the second was to tie a weight to the first; that if a mule couldn't throw up his tail 'twas impossible for him to lift his voice. The difficulty of applying this knowledge to practical use, was that the veteran army mule allowed no trifling with his personality, and while his tail was being weighted his heels were disastrously busy. Woe to any unthinkable midnight marauder who approached his provender with evil intent! At such a crisis his voice was ominous of danger, and the victim, overtaken by the cyclone of his

heels, got an astronomical perspective not outlined in the books. He saw stars, if he retained sufficient consciousness to do so, which if he did would be by no good will of the mule.

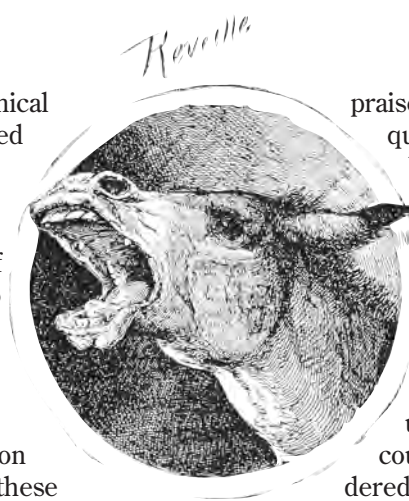
The step of the veteran army mule was deliberate and indicative of both decision and patience, though these qualities were never exercised on

trifling occasions, and showed themselves to the best advantage of coming to a dead halt when everything else evinced a disposition to move; at such times he seemed to have a monopoly of all the patience in the army. A veteran mule disdained so trifling an incident as musket firing. I've seen him, while nibbling at his neighbor's tail,

whisk his ears in modest disapprobation of musketry, but never lift his voice or heels to emphasize his dislike at so trifling an interruption as the buzz of a bullet. Shell and shot, if they struck the vehicle to which he was attached, sometimes called out from

him tones of disapproval, resembling a steam whistle with the hiccoughs.

His manner, like that of all personages of decision, was usually quiet and patient. When provender was scarce he ate rubber blankets, rail fences, pontoon boats, shrubbery, or cow-hide boots, with a resignation worthy of



praise. His firmness was a quality much derided, but of inestimable value in the miry clay of Virginia, where firmness was much needed and not usually found.

His merits have been but little understood. The army could never have floundered through its oceans of mud but for his indomitable firmness to back it. Not least among its martyrs and heroes was this unpretentious, plodding, never-flinching quadruped.

One of our colored drivers had in his team a mule of unusual size, -fat, sleek, and of inky blackness, of whom he was accustomed to say, "data r mewl knows mos' as much as folkses!" At one time when the driver was separated from his team, the black mule was unhappy and refused to be comforted. He did not eat with his accustomed appetite, and kicked viciously at all who approached from front or rear. The mule at last became so unmanageable that Jim was sent for. Upon his arrival his muleship became quiet, and allowed himself to be harnessed and driven, with a humility quite touching to those who had seen him in his refractory mood. After this who says an army mule is incapable of friendship?

One of our teamsters used to remark that one of his mules wouldn't go unless he did use the whip, another stopped "right plumb" when struck with one, while still another wouldn't pull a pound unless yelled at in a peculiar manner. I asked

him if he knew the reason of this, and his answer was, "It's de way dey's been druv, sah!" Profanity was considered indispensable in mule driving.

At different times when I attempted the difficult study of its peculiarities, the philosophical calmness necessary to such a task was broken

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Army Mules on Duty.

The Army Mule *(continued from page 4)*

by various demonstrations from this incomprehensible hybrid.

A grim humor, at times, seemed to be predominant trait, and the suddenness of its exhibition was very disturbing to reflective moods. Near approach brought out a great many qualities of which I had previously but little conception.

The mind of the army mule seemed to pervade not only its brain, but its ears, tail, and heels. He was subject to sudden transitions from joy to sorrow, which were punctuated in his own way. Sometimes this was done with a full stop, and at others with a prolonged note of exclamation, while his commas were put in with deliberation and dignity at every step. He had an accent peculiarly his own.

I don't know who it was that during the war invented the pack-mule system. The pack-mule, when loaded with a cracker box on each side and a medley of camp kettles and intrenching tools on top, was, to express it mildly, grotesque. At times, when in an overloaded, top-heavy condition, I have known him to run this side load into a tree, and in this manner capsize with his load, and it was comical to see him lying on his back with a cracker box on each side, and his heels dangling dejectedly in the air, a picture of patience and dignity overthrown; and in this attitude looking like a huge grasshopper. Pack-mules were used for working squads in the winter of 1864, on the lines before Petersburg.

One night, a mule heavily laden and bristling with shovels, picks, and axes, broke loose from his company, and with a terrible clatter and clamor, went charging into the enemy's lines, undaunted and alone. The enemy, believing they were being charged by cavalry, were in considerable consternation, and hastily formed to resist. They fired in volleys and at will, when the mule, not fancying his reception, wheeled, threw up his heels, brayed, and amid shouts and laughter, came

prancing back to his allegiance, unhurt. The boys declared that a braver charge than that of "thet er muel" was seldom made.

The value of the mule in the army was a very great, on account of his being less liable to injury than the horse. A fracas which would kill a horse would leave a mule unscathed. Sometimes two or more teams coming in opposite directions became entangled in such a manner that it seemed impossible to tell which team the harness and mules belonged.

In these intricate, trap-like entanglements the mules seemed to have the instincts of self-preservation to such a degree as to extricate himself from them unhurt. I have known a team to be overturned down a steep hillside, and

wagon and mules to roll over each other in a confusion of harness, wagon, and mules, and yet the beasts escaped uninjured.

Said a veteran soldier, "It didn't seem to hurt him any more than it would a lot of kittens rolling over each other in play." The mule was more hardy and could adapt himself to circumstances better than the horse.

An old Virginian once said to me, "Before the war I never saw a dead mule. I sometimes thought them kind of brute beasts lived forever!" Dead mules were plenty in the army. They would live on meager fare with a humility and patience almost pathetic. Under adverse circumstances, to his usual severe simplicity and melancholy reserve, was added an air of defiance.

He was hard to kill, yet there



were, sometimes, circumstances under which even this resolute creature died. When Burnside was in Knoxville, it was at one time impossible to get enough provender for the mules. The hardy hybrids, thus deprived, made a resolute struggle

for life, and gnawed at the poles of the wagons, and wagons themselves. To prevent their destruction the poles were wound with hoop iron, and trees and brush were dragged in front of the wagons, for the mules to feed upon. The line of march from Camp Nelson to Knoxville was strown with dead mules, and a veteran soldier declares that in the darkest night he could thereby smell out his way over that route.

The hardihood of the mule is illustrated by a saying of one of the drivers, "There is one of three things you must do at the end of a journey with your mules, let them roll over seven times, wade into a stream, or feed them."

He bore hard usage and the scoffs and sneers at "thet er meul" with uncomplaining heroism and was found dead on all battlefields of the war. He was of inestimable value to the army, and it is doubtful if its varied operations could have been conducted without him. Is it too much to say that to him, above some other claimants, should be given the credit of having saved the Union?



Taken from Recollections of a Private, A Story of the Army of the Potomac, by Warren Lee Goss, 1890.

Submitted by Jeff Sexton

Account of W. B. F. Leech's Death and Life – Rockbridge County News, Lexington, Virginia

W. B. F. Leech, died Tuesday morning 9:30, Aug. 13, 1907 of Typhoid Fever. His health not being good since attending the Confederate Reunion in Richmond in June. He was buried in Oxford Cemetery, Pastors James Power Smith Jr, (his father was the last surviving member of Gen. Lee's Staff) and Rev. E. G. Lynch, (of Highbridge Church). A great concourse of people witnessed the last rites. His father was John Steel Leech a highly respected citizen of Rockbridge, he represents the fourth generation in Rockbridge; Educated at Brownsburg Academy and Washington College, where he complete his education in 1757. A review of the three score and ten years, of Mr. Leech's life brings up a panorama of stirring scenes of that period in which he took an active interest and bore a useful and honorable part. He was a soldier of the Confederacy, having enlisted in the Rockbridge Rangers in 1861, he later became a trooper in the 14th Virginia Cavalry, Co. H., and was paroled at Appomattox. His participation in Reconstruction events is shown by his election as a member of the First Board of Supervisors of Rockbridge by the voters of Buffalo District, May 26, 187; and his successful re-election until May 1881, when he was defeated by S. S. Agner, Republican.

It was during his term of service that the Valley Rail Road with its debt, received attention of the Supervisors and the people. June 1, 1887, he succeeded C. A. Brady as Chairman of the Board, an office he held until his retirement. He was elected in 1875, with Governor Letcher, a member of the House of Delegates. In the exciting Daniel-Cannon campaign for Governor in 1881, he was with R. R. Dunlap returned to the House of Delegates, by the Funder Democrats of Rockbridge, but was unseated by the Readjuster majority in favor of J. H. Frazier and J. B. Lady. In 1895-97 he served a term in the House with J. S. Craig and in 1899-1900 a term with E. H. Barclay. He held the office of School Trustee from 1887 until the day of his death. He completed his last year term as member of The State Board of Agriculture of the Tenth District of Virginia. Mr. Leech was a president of the Old Rockbridge County Fair. An interested member of the Lee Jackson a kind heart, engaging social qualities and a strong mind.

Take him all in all he was Rockbridge's foremost and truest son.

W. B. F. Leech was a prosperous business man, a scientific farmer and stock raiser. He spent, since 1886, a part of his winters in Florida, having invested in and developed an orange and grapefruit grove, near Safety Harbor, Florida. He was also an effective influence in the Hillsborough County government in Florida. He was among the first to introduce the grapefruit to the Northern markets, when the fruit had to almost be given away, to get people to try to cultivate the taste. He also was the first to introduce the Berkshire hogs into the State of Florida.

He was a member of the House of Delegates 1875-76; 1876-77; 1881-82; 1895-96; 1899-1900.

When a young man, he built the home "Ingleside,"

(which at this time is still a very fine mansion). Here he kept open house to all his relatives from far and near, entertained many friends, and political powers in Virginia. All were royally entertained, bountiful and excellent provisions. Gayety in the evening, when he would get out his old violin and join in the Old Folk, Scottish, Irish and modern songs; his wife accompanying on the piano. She would sing solos, having a strong, rare, and most unusual voice, ranging from amusing to frolicom to serious expression. In looking back I can't remember anything since giving me such delight, as these evenings of long ago. After the pleasures there was always family prayers, both night and morning. Guest always being required to attend. Afterwards the serious duties of the day was undertaking in an uncompromising manner.

Bolivar Leech, was a jovial and hearty, frank friend to all in any walk of life, a very stern disciplinarian. A believer in strict honesty. A hard worker, and thrifty as well as being liberal to all, in a business like way. He educated all of his children, as far as they seemed to be inclined to go. He also helped to start each in some business or profession, keeping a strict account of every penny spent on each, when he made his will he provided that each would receive his just share, the accounts being kept since boyhood. He left the Home "Ingleside" to his wife, Margaret Walker (Houston) Leech, at her death it was to be turned over to his daughter the only daughter and oldest child, Ella Leech (Pyne). Mrs. Leech died Nov. 29, 1908. After Mrs. Pyne's death the home will revert to the heirs. Bolivar had one sister, Narcissa Eglantine Leech, who married Capt. J. A. Stain.

The children of W. B. F. Leech and Margaret Walker (Houston) Leech are:

1. Ella Leech; born Nov. 19, 1860; married Nov. 14, 1912 to Ernest O. Pyne, from Arlington, N. J.
2. Finley W. Leech; born Sept. 23, 1862; died on July 21, 1863.
3. John Houston Leech; born May 29, 1864; died on Jan. 25, 1931; married Oct. 2, 1889 to Minnie C. Tutwiler.
4. Coray Roland Leech; born July 24, 1866; died on Jan. 25, 1931; married Ollie Matilda Arnold; born Oct. , 1869; died on Jan. 3, 1908. His second marriage was to Maude Jacobs on April 15, 1908 at Marysville, Ohio; divorced her on Nov. 1928. He married third, Willie Garrant (King).
5. Dr. Walter Stuart Leech; born July 24, 1868; married on Oct. 1, 1891, to Jennie H. Tennent, at Ashville, N. C. and lived in Minnesota.
6. Magie Horner Leech; born July 24, 1870; died on March 12, 1872.
7. Charles Bolivar Leech; born Apr. 12, 1872; died on Dec. 17, 1935; she was his 2rd cousin.
8. Herbert Baxter Leech, born March 10, 1874; died on June 24, 1923; married on June 21, 1899 to Florence Levering Crane. Res. Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
9. Infant, died Aug. 1878.

The only surviving children are Ella Leech (Pyne) and Charles Bolivar Leech, at this date January 1936.

(from Harriet Wallace of Florida)

Battle of Spotsylvania – May 22 - 23, 2010



Photos by Robert London and Tammy Sexton. Picture of Steve Dunn (Wardawg) from Matt Szudzik and Darryle Delooge.

Captain's Corner *(continued from page 2)*

ranks, they've done a great job and should be mentioned in dispatches. I think you will find them faithful comrades in the future. It is exciting to me to realize, as our unit grows, the great opportunities that lay before us. This is particularly important as we move into the 150th Anniversary Battles, where we will be involved in huge, monumental fights on a regular basis. It seems to me a great thing to have a home for all this in the Corps. We have also started forging relationships with the Infantry and will look to strengthen these bonds as the Campaign progresses. By adding the lethality of the volley our offensive power will be a terror to our enemies. This will considerably strengthen our hand as we strike down the invaders starting 2011, and I would be pleased personally if our valley remains safe throughout the cycle.

As to the second half of the present campaign, we need to muster every man possible for two battles in October. The first, Mt. Ararat, the birthplace of General Stuart, is the weekend of 2-3. We have been asked (it is quite the honor) to bring a cavalry movement back to this event. We are working on some great scenarios taken from

the Battle of Brandy Station 9 June 1863 and feel this would bring honor to the General. (Here's a hint, study the opening of the Battle, and the fighting at the stonewall late in the day.) The second, Cedar Creek, is a huge re-enactment, that is commanded this year by Longstreet's Corps and is the weekend of 16-17. The fighting there is always first rate, and with the recent removal of certain Vain and Foppish Officers offers great opportunities for fighting, fun, and history. It will be a spectacle that you will not soon forget. There is also a wonderful opportunity for us to drill and camp on the Manassas Battlefield the last weekend in August (28-29) and co-operate with the Black Horse. This will present a prime opportunity to get some first rate work in on your horse, all on the original ground at the Brawner House. More detailed information on these events will be forthcoming shortly. God Bless you all and your horses.

Capt. S. B. Dunn

"Quick is the Word, Fast is the Action."

President's Message

(continued from page 2)

As we wrap up this year and approach the end of our corporate and military terms of office, let us not only be thinking of the upcoming elections, but more importantly what rules and procedures have worked and been successful and what issues we need to rethink. Many times in organizations this self-study keeps getting put off. And organizations just start following procedures of convenience. Our corporate bylaws make no provisions for convenience. If we need to do things a different way, we as a corporation, must make the adjustments to our governing bylaws.

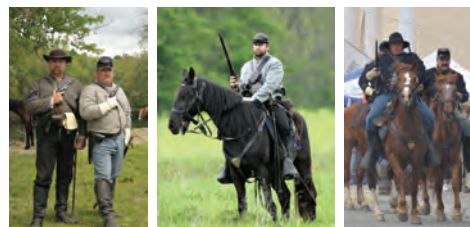
All for the old Fourteenth!!

Jeff Sexton, President

Spring Event Photos

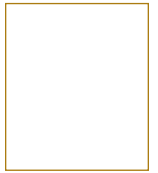


Members of the 14th, presented a merit badge program on "horsemanship" at the Spring ITT Scout Day. Below, Battle of Buchanan on April 23 - 25. Photos by Robert London and Tammy Sexton.





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All for the old fourteenth The Vedette

Official Newsletter of the 14th Virginia Cavalry, Co. H, Inc.

August 2010

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living history

