

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2014 – Edition 8 – Cedar Creek Edition, Mid-November, 2014

CEDAR CREEK SPECIAL EDITION

Included in this special edition of the *Trans-Allegheny Dispatch*, are “reviews” of the 150th Anniversary reenactment of the battle of Cedar and Chris “CW” Johnson, the editor has the privilege of putting together this edition for the enjoyment of the WVRA. You will note that almost all of the pictures are of Federal troops, which I hope will serve as a challenge to the Confederates among you, to send to your obedient servant, the editor of this publication, pictures in the future.

Executive Board Meeting

Two attempts were made to hold the November executive board meeting, without success. A quorum could not be gathered. There has been email discussion about future events, primarily Rich Mountain and Droop Mountain. Chris Johnson has created a new brochure which is being reviewed at the present by Executive Board members. The WVRA has received some interest from our “pards” in the 2nd Virginia about becoming members of the WVRA.

Plans are being made to hold a general meeting in early January. With the change in the reenacting year to a calendar year, we have had to move up the meeting schedule.

Nominations Needed

Some members have stepped forth to fill the ballot for the 2015 officers, WVRA and military. But we still need nominations for Secretary and military officers for voting at the first meeting of 2015 in January. Because of membership changes, officer structure may change in some units.

Upcoming Events

More information will be added later.

WVRA Sponsored Events

Rich Mountain -July

Droop Mountain - October

Events Recommended by WVRA members

Bentonville, March 20-22

Appomattox -April 10-12

<http://www.appomattoxhistoricalsociety.org/150th.htm>

Grand Review - May 17th

Permits obtained and plans moving forward to parade down Pennsylvania Avenue

McConnellsville, Ohio - July (Contact Ralph

McCready for more information)

USV Annual meeting weekend of Jan. 10

WVRA Officers 2014

President - Mark Tennant

Vice President - Bill Brisendine

Treasurer (interim) - Tim Glaser

Secretary - vacant (Need a volunteer)

Newsletter editor (interim) Chuck Critchfield*

Website - Peter Baxter*

25th Va. Rep - Chris Johnson

1st Va. Cavalary - John Brasuk

Artillery - Connie & Sam Kraft

TASAS - Tonya Daft

* Non-voting member of executive board

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The views expressed here are not necessarily the views of the WVRA

WVRA website - wvra.org

Facebook

Chuck Critchfield - interim editor

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Cedar Creek 2014 - Ron Wenig campaigning for that copperhead George McClellan



Panoramic view of the Federal Camp with North Mountain in the background.



Jim Barnes preparing for Saturday's decisive flank attack that sent the Rebs whirling through Winchester



Chuck Critchfield, Ralph McCready, Jim Barnes, Paul Mullen, Ed Chapdelaine, Jed Smith, Larry Smith, Sean McCready



Cold mornings around the campfire - Ross Wetherell, Kevin Skaggs and Ralph McCready



It was windy. Flags stand out straight in the steady blast out of the southwest.

Reviews of the Cedar Creek Reenactment

150th Battle of Cedar Creek

At Dawn on October 19, 1864, Jubal Early's 'Army of The Valley', 21,000 men, surprised and routed two Federal corps of Sheridan's/Wright's 'Army of The Shenandoah', 31,000 men, encamped along Cedar Creek, four miles north of Strasburg, Virginia.

The Battle of Strasburg (Cedar Creek)

Camp Near Union, Virginia, October 23, 2014

Since I last wrote you from this camp, many and important movements have been made by this army. I understand that Gen. Early gives General Gordon all the credit for the movement, and his action on the field pronounces him one of our first Generals, both in planning and in executing.

About sunset on Saturday, the 18th, orders were issued to all the army to be in readiness to move at 'first call' on the morrow, Sunday, the 19th of October. Sunday afternoon's march brought us within full view of the enemy's camp a short distance in our front. Here we halted until our forces were aligned in line of battle, our regiment on the extreme left of the Confederate Army. At the command to advance we pressed on in beautiful order towards the enemy's camp, which was strongly fortified.

It was a complete surprise! Our regiment press the Federal right hard from several stands to resist our advance, but we drove them from their whole camp. The regiment then wheeled to the left to confront a Federal battery on our left flank. The Federal's fire told horribly on our line, but after several determined and effective volleys upon their position we charged and captured four guns and several cannoneers. Our attention was then turned to a Federal regiment we had been pressing up to that point, and with a 'rebel yell' we advanced towards their line and routed them back across the creek which we then crossed ourselves and formed up to exchange fire with those

stalwarts who had made a stand upon the rise beyond the creek's tree line.

As our troops had become scattered and mixed up in the pursuit, a halt was ordered to reorganize and to collect the straggling men. Many of our men had gone back to the Yankee camp and had proceeded to loot the tents and feed themselves as they were tired and hungry and had presumed the Yankees routed and demoralized. This pause and plunder proved the loss of the day afterward. It was during this halt that I was able to scan the field of battle, and there upon the plains, I could see the 'Blue Host' had reorganized themselves, rallied and were advancing in force... magnificent... irresistible!

We were then, hard press on our end of the line and were compelled to 'fall back' across the creek. The Yankees came on, strongly reinforced, and forced us back up to the rise in front of the stream and then began to easily flank our extreme left. Several attempts to rally and return fire proved utterly useless. Very soon the left was compelled to give way; and as the enemy continued to advance perpendicular to our line the whole gave way, and the bluecoats continued to press their advantage. The fortunes of War had turned against us and men began to break and turn to the rear. Our initial success had faltered and became an utterly complete disaster for our army.

The disaster was caused by the lack of troops. The enemy's line extended well beyond the left of ours, we were easily flanked and compelled to fall back. It is said that a substantial number of fresh troops from Winchester had joined the enemy in the interval between the two fights.

I remain ever to 'the cause',

Pvt. Chris 'CW' Johnson
25th Va. Inf'y Reg't

Chris "CW" Johnson



Official casualties at the battle of Cedar Creek were: Federals, 644 killed, 3,420 wounded and 1,591 missing for 5,665; Confederate estimates, 320 killed, 1,540 wounded and 1,050 missing for 2,910.

I want to thank those members of the 25th Virginia, WVRA: Guy Covey, Chris Johnson, Greg Watterson, Katrina Watterson who made the efforts to attend this sesquicentennial event of the American Civil War. Further thanks go out to those members of 'Our West Virginia Reenacting Family' in Wise's Legion: The 31st and 36th Virginia, who graciously accepted our services to 'fight' and camp with them at Belle Grove Plantation's plains.

Pvt. Chris 'CW' Johnson

Ed Chapdelaine Writes

Ed was smarter than the rest of us. Rather than fight the annual traffic jam after the battle of Cedar Creek, he stayed one more night. He writes that *"On the Monday after the Reenactment I went into Middletown and just north of the Cemetery that played a part of the Battle there is an apple orchard. I bought 2 Bush. Of Apples and took Home to Ohio, making Apple Sauce and pie filling and labeling it Battlefield Apple Sauce."*

Thanks to Ed for his pictures around the campfire on one of the chilly mornings.

Cedar Creek 150th Anniversary Reenactment

October 30, 2014 - by Jim Barnes



The 150th Anniversary Reenactment of the Battle of Cedar Creek took place on the weekend of October 17-19, 2014. I had not attended this event for some time and was looking forward to going back. It also promised to be the largest Civil War reenactment that Linda had experienced. We went down Thursday in order to get in some antique shopping in Winchester on Friday and spend the weekend at the event.

We were somewhat concerned that there was a possibility of rain; however, this did not materialize. While it had rained earlier in the week, the rain had stopped by the time we registered on Friday morning. The weather for the rest of the weekend was partly cloudy with more clearing as the weekend went along. The temperatures were cool and a bit blustery as a noticeable wind blew pretty much without letup from start to finish. This made things a bit cool sitting around camp, but was great for marching about in the field.

The Army of West Virginia was a bit sparse, with Capt. Chuck Critchfield, Sgt. Ross Wetherell, Ralph and Sean McCready, Ed Chapdelaine, Paul Mullins, Jed Smith and myself

On Saturday, we formed up for the Battle of 3rd Winchester and Lt. Col. Skaggs assured us that the battle would go exactly as scripted. I can't say for sure if it worked out that way, but the Army of West Virginia executed a long flanking movement on the rebels at the double-quick which nearly defeated me as well as the Confederates.

The main battle took place on Sunday and began with a surprise attack on the Union camp by the

Confederates. Our brigade fell back in disarray as far as the Heater house, where we reformed and began an organized resistance. Eventually, the entire federal army re-formed on the hill overlooking the house and began a coordinated counterattack which shattered the rebel line and sent Early's boys heading south.

Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed the event. I thought that the battles were well done and it was a pleasure to see so many Federals turn out for an event that far south. I don't have any official figures for the weekend, but I heard that there were over 5000 reenactors present. This included a considerable amount of cavalry and artillery. I also enjoyed some of the added features of the event. There was a lively bit of electioneering going on for the 1864 Presidential election. I believe that Lincoln easily carried the army vote although there were some vocal McClellan men present. There were also a goodly number of sutlers in attendance to enhance one's shopping pleasure. (Some creative folks had set up a period sutler tent in the Federal camp which gave a good idea of what one of these vendors would really have provided.) There was a ball at the Belle Grove plantation on Saturday night, but we were too tired and cold to attend.

Hats off to the organizers for a nice event!

- See more at: <http://www.reenactorpost.com/blog/2014/10/30/cedar-creek-150th-anniversary-reenactment/#more-8118>

150 Years Later

To me, a large event on an actual battle site is always special.

The spectacle of a large event and bodies of troops that approached the size of brigades and small divisions; full artillery batteries; larger bodies of cavalry and reenactors from many different groups has always appealed to me.

The Shenandoah Valley offers a scenic and historic venue. The ridge lines that Cedar Creek was fought on give you a panoramic view to the west to North Mountain while hiding the insidious

urban sprawl approaching from every direction and of course I-81. Unlike the wonderful venue at New Market, where I-81 is a dominant noise source and easily viewed, I-81 is hidden from us here. Some of the pictures being circulated on Facebook and other sources, show the scenic view of the Federal Camp from the Sutlers' Row.

It was good to be with our Pards from the United States Volunteers. Lt. Col. Skaggs commanded our wing of the regiment and of course Colonel David Childs, who marched with us at New Market, had ultimate direction of the regiment. As described above, our Ohio Contingent (Ralph, Sean, Ross and Ed) were joined by Larry and Jed Smith, Paul Mullin and Jim Barnes. At the Regimental level, Kevin and Ron Wenig participated. The cold days and mornings are always enjoyable with good friends to share in the misery.

The battles have been described elsewhere by Jim and CW. I will add, because I am always asked, that the amenities were fine. Water, wood and port-a-johns were not far. Although Cedar Creek's reputation for being miserly with the plastic outhouses, remains intact. I will however, relate some of the outstanding memories from experience.

One of the more hair-raising experiences involved the infamous and mysterious "Chair From the Nether Regions." Which was actually tossed into a large campfire by one frustrated reenactor. Rescued by a member of the 50th Pa., our normal neighbors in the USV camp, the Chair showed no signs of the flames that lapped at its legs and seat and only added to the legend which it is. The reenactor in question ran from the camp into the night after the incident and is reportedly still running.

Being as close as we were to the Sutlers (just a stones throw away - in fact a good throw would gone clean over the Sutler's Row), we had a constant flow of visitors to our camp. We received a number of spectators wanting to find West Virginia troops. I had a long talk with Ann Markham, great-granddaughter of Thomas Thoburn, Major in the 50th Ohio and brother of Joseph Thoburn. She is seeking more information

on Joseph, Colonel of the 1st W. Va., Division Commander in the Army of West Virginia and killed in the streets of Middletown just a mile from where we sat. She like many of us, had just bits and pieces about Joseph, but shared our curiosity about a man who so represents that generation of Americans. A Christian gentleman, dedicated to the cause of preserving his country.

There is plenty of parking at Cedar Creek for reenactors. However, getting out of that parking lot onto Route 11 and the ¼ mile to the camps is a journey that has taken some reenactors hours to make. And this year was no exception. The Virginia state police controlling the flow of traffic from the lot, allowed almost no movement from the lot onto Route 11 for many, many minutes. The fact that they were state police probably is the only thing that prevented physical violence, but in fact did not prevent verbal criticisms of traffic management from being tossed at them.

Part of Saturday nights festivities involved a torch light procession through camps for supporters of Abraham Lincoln's reelection bid. The procession, complete with torches and a bass drum, managed to swing wide of our camp, so I missed most of it. McClellan supporters were spotted earlier in the day.

We had an officers and unit reps meeting of the USV on Saturday night during which the Grand Review and Appomattox were discussed. A representative of the National Park Service was present at the meeting and confirmed that the NPS will allow all reenactors to participate in the stacking of arms on the original site, during the NPS 150th Anniversary Ceremonies. The "reenactors event" will take place nearby and those reenactors will be encouraged to participate. Stay tuned for details. The Grand Review has obtained permits and planning is underway. This will take place on Pennsylvania Avenue and is open to Federal and Confederate reenactors. The Confederates will portray the western armies. Stay tuned for more details in future issues of the Dispatch.

And did I mention, the wind never stopped.....

- C. L. Critchfield

