When Yankees Fought Yankees

Galvanized Troops in Battle During the War Between the States

by Brian Chastain

Part 1

Galvanized Yankees

This is a study of galvanized troops being raised from Union and Confederate military prisons, and in at least in least two instances, being used in battle against their former friends. It is not exhaustive, but is intended to make this unknown or little known fact of a complicated war more available, with the hope that it can be more thoroughly researched and understood.

Most students of the War are familiar with the six regiments of "galvanized yankees" raised from military prisons in the north by the US government. Six is not an entirely accurate number, since the 5th US Volunteers (and possibly the 6th) included hundreds of enlistments other than from among Confederate soldiers (see O'Neill's Regiment below). Conventional wisdom has these units going west "to fight Indians." Gen. G. M. Dodge's description (below) shoots a proverbial hole in that theory. These units were organized near the end of the War, and sent west to guard roads and garrison posts along the frontier, in order to free up cavalry to fight Indians. By the time the units were organized and equipped, most of their actual service took place after the war.

There is one claim that the 1st United States Volunteers was used in combat against the Confederate States, firing a few shots during an expedition near Elizabeth City NC in the summer of 1864. The 1st US Volunteers, under Lt. Col. Charles A. R. Dimon, is listed in the Official Records among the troops in the brigade in question, and on the expedition from Norfolk, Virginia into North Carolina, July 27 to August 4, 1864. The stated purpose of the expedition was the capture horses, cotton, and other contraband property (ie., stealing from the local community). The official report of the expedition, and correspondence related to it, contain no reference to any shots fired, any Confederate troops in the area, or any casualties on either side.¹ The regiment was, a few weeks later in August, transferred to Dakota Territory, far from the war raging through the Confederacy.

Galvanized Rebels

Many have heard of Confederate efforts to recruit from among federal prisoners of war in military prisons in the South, but the scope of that activity has not been recognized. Military prisons including those in Richmond VA, Salisbury NC, Camp Lawton at Millen GA, and Camp Sumter at Andersonville GA became recruiting stations. Examples of Confederate units raised from among prisoners of war, which saw active service in the field, were Tucker's Regiment (under Col. Julius G. Tucker, formerly known as the 1st Foreign Battalion), the 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry (formerly known as the 2nd Foreign Battalion, under Lt. Col. Garnett Andrews), and O'Neill's or O'Neal's Regiment (Col. John G. O'Neill).

A report from Maj. John H. Gee, commanding the military prison at Salisbury NC, dated Feb. 1, 1865, shows 1,737 Federal prisoners of war recruited into 3 battalions:
First Foreign Battalion [Tucker's Regt.] 653;

Major Andrews' battalion [2nd Foreign Battalion or 8th Confederate Battalion] 677;

General York's battalion 407;

Total recruited 1,737.2

In order to grasp the significance of the results of this effort, the numbers can be better understood when compared to the total number of prisoners housed at the facility. The total prisoners on January 31, 1865 (the day prior) was 5,870. The highest number of prisoners of war on hand at one time between October 5, 1864 and Feb. 1, 1865 was 8,740 on November 6, 1864.3 Using that as a basis, since recruiting of prisoners happened around the same time, it could be estimated that as many as 20% of the prisoners there chose to change sides. The present study focuses on two galvanized units that were engaged in battle.

A closer look at the Second Foreign Battalion, or 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry brings several interesting things to light. The Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR) of Lt. Col. Garnett Andrews, commanding, provides some details. In a letter to Gen. Samuel Cooper, Adjutant and Inspector-General, dated March 17, 1865, Andrews referred to the order of February 18, 1865 that organized the command. Andrews stated that "I have raised a Battalion of six companies of Infantry from among foreigners, prisoners of war. The muster rolls are on file in your office. The Batt'n now numbers nearly five hundred effective men." The Soldiers and Sailors System of the National Park Service includes a list of 709 men enlisted in the unit. (As with all rosters there, some allowance must be made for duplicated names listed with various spellings.)

Andrews had served as major and assistant adjutant-general on the staff of Gen. Arnold Elzey, and also held a commission of 2nd Lieutenant of infantry in the Confederate regular army. He was appointed Lt. Col., Provisional Army, Confederate States, assigned to command the 2nd Foreign Battalion, to take rank March 23, 1865. The unit was redesignated 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry on March 28, 1865.5

It should be noted that the designation as "Confederate" does not indicate enlistment in the Confederate States regular army. It is often and incorrectly assumed that troops with the designation Confederate (eg., 1st Confederate Cavalry, 5th Confederate Infantry, etc.) constituted the regular army. Nearly all of the units so designated were volunteer units as most other Confederate troops, the difference being that they were composed of companies from different states rather than one state. The Confederacy did have a regular army, but that is a separate study.

**Battle of Salisbury NC or Grant's Creek, April 12, 1865**

The highlight of the battalion's service came in April 1865 during Maj. Gen. George Stoneman's raid into North Carolina. Confederate troops were in demand in the principal armies at that stage of the war, so the number and type of troops available to meet Stoneman's raid were limited. His primary objectives were destruction of railroads and bridges, and liberation of the federal prisoners at Salisbury. In the latter he was sorely disappointed, since the prisoners had been removed and the post was used as a supply depot.
As Stoneman approached Salisbury, Brig. Gen. William M. Gardner prepared the troops on hand for the best defense possible, selecting a good position behind Grant's Creek, some two and a half miles from Salisbury. Gardner had been wounded at I Manassas, then held district command in Florida prior to his present assignment with the CS military prisons east of the Mississippi River. The anchor of his line was 14 artillery pieces, without the requisite number of troops to support them. Lt. Col. (late Lt. Gen.) John C. Pemberton was present with the artillery. He had done inspection duty and commanded artillery defenses at Richmond following his service at Vicksburg, and was currently serving as inspector of artillery. Two infantry units were present. Part of the 4th Regiment NC Senior Reserves (Col. John F. Hoke) was present. The regiment had been on duty guarding bridges in western North Carolina, some companies being stationed at Salisbury. (Just four men of the 5th NC Senior Reserves were captured at Salisbury April 12, 1865, but they were likely detailed, not necessarily indicating the regiment was present.) Freeman's Battalion NC Prison Guards (Salisbury Prison Guards) was also present, and doubtless in the front line.

Freeman's Battalion consisted of 3 companies. Company A – Capt. C. D. Freeman was an Alabama company enlisted for general service. Freeman commanded the battalion by seniority. Company B was Capt. Henry Allen's Company NC Local Defense Troops, assigned to Salisbury. Company C (Capt. E. D. Sneed's Company), under 1st Sgt. W. J. Whitaker during the Carolinas Campaign, was a local defense unit according to inspection reports by Lt. Col. Archer Anderson and Maj. Garnett Andrews on June 23 and August 12, 1864, respectively. At the time of Anderson's inspection the battalion had numbered about 200. The companies operated independently and were untrained in battalion drill until Maj. Andrews ordered them organized into a battalion and the senior captain placed in command (thus Freeman's Battalion Prison Guards).

Companies B and C were raised professedly from non-conscripts according to Anderson's inspection report. Pvt. Booth of the 22nd Iowa who was confined at Salisbury made reference to very young guards. His first reference to "Junior Reserves" was Nov. 11, 1864, after the 9th Battalion NC Junior Reserves had left Salisbury for Wilmington at the end of October. It could have been Capt. Henry B. Allen's Company NC Local Defense Troops who served as guards there. The unit was or included teens, and was attached to Freeman's Battalion NC Prison Guards. Garnett Andrews, however, stated that the men had become of conscript age and should have been sent to the front.

Col. A. G. Brenizer's 1st Regiment NC Detailed Men was assigned to the post of Salisbury during the Carolinas Campaign. They were mechanics, clerks, and other government employees producing the materials of war, some of them being incapable of field service, but still able to contribute to the war effort in the shops. At least a portion of the regiment was present at the battle. Capt. P. H. Montague's Company H is documented to have been at the former prison/arsenal/work shops area, busy with the removal of stores, and was not engaged.

Two brigades of Brig. Gen. A. C. Gillem's division of veteran Union cavalry were present with Stoneman. Another brigade was nearby but not engaged. Since Stoneman's District of East Tennessee numbered 16,756 present in April 1865, and included only one other division besides Gillem, it can be conservatively estimated that Stoneman had not less than 4000 men on the raid.
Gillem started his division at 12:30 am April 12. His men saw several Confederates at the South Yadkin, verifying that Gardner had scouts covering at least 9 miles in front of his position. At daylight the advance came upon Gardner's pickets, which were pushed back to the bridge over Grant's Creek two miles from Salisbury. Just before reaching the bridge, Confederate artillery and infantry opened on them. On Stoneman's order, a detachment forded the creek 2 ½ miles above the bridge, and two other detachments below the bridge, while the main line pressed Gardner's position. Finally, the flanks being turned, a general charge of the entire line swept away the Confederate line. Stoneman estimated Confederate forces at 3000, and reported capturing 1364 prisoners, of which he said 200 escaped. It is likely the number of prisoners included a fair number of government employees and other non-combatants.

Stoneman captured the artillery and part of the infantry, while many defenders escaped through the woods. As the Southern line began to give way, the 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry arrived on the field. On April 19, 1865, Maj. Robert T. Fouche submitted a report of the engagement, recording for history one of the most unusual occurrences during the war. He reported that the battalion arrived at Salisbury at 7 o'clock on the morning of the 12th of April. Andrews, as soon as four of the six companies received arms and twenty rounds of ammunition, hurried to the front. "Upon getting near the scene of action it was discovered that the enemy had turned the flank and our troops were met going to the rear in great disorder. Without staff officers or couriers to direct, Major Andrews threw the battalion into line to receive the cavalry which was coming down on us at the charge. The men stood well, and had there been troops enough on the field to contend with the enemy[,] would have distinguished themselves; but being hemmed in on all sides, the most of the battalion was captured." Lt. Col. Andrews was wounded by saber and pistol. Maj. Fouche, succeeded in fighting his way out with a portion of the battalion. "Captain Napier, with the two remaining companies, met the enemy in the streets, checked them, and then attempted to cover the retreat...but was unsuccessful." Napier was captured but escaped two days later, rejoining the battalion. Fouche had 40 muskets remaining, expecting to total 75 when the wounded were back in the ranks. He made two important observations about the men of the battalion: "The men were all foreigners and mercenaries," and "They will serve any government for food and clothing." It would be reasonable to expect that the 4th NC Senior Reserves, older men who had seen guard duty and little else, would not stand long against 4000 well equipped federal cavalry. Twenty-five of the seniors were captured April 12. Little more could be expected from the 3 companies of Freeman's Battalion Prison Guards, who were by this time of military age, but inexperienced, and few in number. Of the infantry present, only the 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry was made up veteran troops. The point here is not the defeat, but that former federal soldiers fought federal soldiers in battle.

His service record shows that Capt. Fouche, originally commanding Company A, had been appointed as Major of the battalion on March 27, 1865, to rank from March 23, but the date of confirmation is blank. It appears that he was appointed but was not confirmed by the close of the war. Fouche enlisted in Company A, 8th Georgia Infantry on May 18, 1861. He was elected 2nd Lieutenant and promoted to 1st Lieutenant in 1863, then served on the staff of Brig. Gen. G. T. Anderson in 1864. The portion of the entry in Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia which states, "Elected Captain of Co. A, 8th Battn. Ga. Inf. in 1864. Roll for December 27; 1864, shows him present" is incorrect. James T. Moore, on the same roster, was Captain from Dec. 1, 1863; wounded Oct. 7, 1864; and on furlough on the Oct. 31, 1864 muster roll (therefore not having vacated his position). The Dec. 27, 1864 muster roll referred to here is in Fouche's service record with the 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry, and is for that battalion, not the Georgia regiment.

A Few of the Men Who Served in the 8th Battalion Confederate Infantry

William Clarke Private/Private Co. --. Residence: N.Y. N.Y.
Betts Fanier Private/Private Co. --. Residence: Troy N.Y.
Jacob Freack Private/Private Co. --. Residence: Franklin Co. PA
David Gobin Private/Private Co. C. Formerly of Co. G, 9th NH.
  Accompanied Lt. Col. Andrews home to Georgia May 4, 1865, and remained a couple
days to dress the wounds he received at the battle of Salisbury.
Charles P. Kibbler Private/Private Co. --. Residence: Baltimore Md.
Chester H. Loomis Private/Private Co. D. Residence: Hartford Conn.
  (Previously served in the 12th Connecticut Infantry)
Daniel Quinn Private/Private Co. A. Residence: Richmond Co. N.Y.
Joseph Schaumbergen Private/Private Co. --. Residence: Erie Co. N.Y.

{Continued in Part 2}

Part 2

O'Neill's Regiment

In the hopeful days of autumn 1864, while Gen. John B. Hood prepared for his advance into Tennessee,
Col. John G. O'Neill, 10th Tennessee Infantry, received orders on October 11 to proceed to Millen, Georgia
and other points deemed necessary, "for the purpose of recruiting from the Federal prisoners" for Bate's
Division in the Army of Tennessee.23 The 2nd, 10th, 20th, and 37th Tennessee had been consolidated into one
regiment, under Lt. Col. William Shy, under whom it fought at Nashville that December.24

John G. O'Neill had served as captain of Company A, 10th Tennessee Infantry, later becoming major. He
was promoted to colonel September 11, 1864, after the colonel of the regiment was mortally wounded at
Jonesboro, Georgia August 31, 1864.26

O'Neill's recruiting efforts were highly successful.27 He made a special requisition for camp items
including skillets and tea pots, "for recruits who have joined the Confederate States service." They were
received at Augusta the 7th of November 1864. He signed as J. G. O'Neill, Col. 10 Tenn. Regt., Comdg.
Recruits.28 A communication from Montgomery, Alabama on December 10, 1864 from Col. George Wm.
Brent, Assistant Adjutant-General to Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor, stated, "About 500 enlisted foreigners, under
Colonel O'Neal, of Hood's command, leave per first boat unarmed. If needed, they might be used between
Corinth and Huntsville."29 (The former federal soldiers he recruited were, in many cases, not foreign born,
as addressed below.)
The historical sketch of the 10th Tennessee found in *Tennesseans in the Civil War* includes the following: "There now follows a curious note. Federal reports of the engagement at Egypt Station, Mississippi, on December 28, 1864, state that among the prisoners taken in that fight, there were 253 men, former Federal soldiers, prisoners of war at Andersonville, Georgia, who had enlisted in the 10th Tennessee Infantry Regiment in order to get out of prison. The question was raised as to whether they should be treated as prisoners of war, or traitors to the Union. There is no mention in Confederate records of any men from the 10th Tennessee being engaged in that fight..."  

The account is valuable in bringing these facts to light, but requires clarification on several points. Most of O'Neill's initial recruits came from Camp Lawton at Millen, Georgia, with a few from Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia. A large number from Camp Sumter were added later. The total number of former federal soldiers captured while serving in the Confederate ranks at Egypt, Mississippi was 254, not 253. The federal judge-advocate who investigated the situation reported them as "Corpl. M. J. Adams, Sixty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers and 253 others..." Finally, there was no Confederate record of the 10th Tennessee fighting at Egypt because by that time O'Neill had raised an entire regiment, which was described in Confederate records and correspondence as O'Neal's (O'Neill's) Regiment. Union records refer to the prisoners captured there as belonging to the 10th Tennessee Infantry – Rebel.

**Battle of Egypt Station MS, December 28, 1864**

The recruits enlisted by Col. O'Neill were originally intended to fill the ranks of the colonel's 10th Tennessee Infantry and other units of Bate's Division in the Army of Tennessee, but the exigencies of the moment dictated otherwise. The regiment moved by boat and railroad from Montgomery to Meridian, Mississippi, then Mobile, Alabama. Lt. Col. Will. M. Levy, Assistant Adjutant and Inspector-General at Meridian notified Maj. Gen. Dabney H. Maury at Mobile December 22, 1864 that "O'Neal's regiment, 450 strong, leaves here this evening for Mobile to report to you."  

Union Brig. Gen. Ben. Grierson led an expedition from Memphis on December 21 to destroy the Mobile & Ohio railroad. His cavalry division of 3 brigades numbered 3,652 besides Grierson and his staff. The only CS troops in the area consisted of a camp of 250 dispersed cavalry at Cotton-Gin, collected by Brig. Gen. Samuel J. Gholson. These appear to have included stragglers, men who had been on detailed duty, and others without horses, which were being gathered to be returned to the front."
To meet the impending threat, Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor, commanding the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana, sent Maj. John S. Hope, his assistant inspector-general, to coordinate communication and concentration of troops. Maj. Gen. Maury placed Lt. Col. William W. Wier in command of forces sent from Mobile north toward Corinth, Mississippi by rail. Capt. Houston King’s Clark Missouri Battery, O'Neil’s Regiment, and Metts’ Battalion were on the first train, which departed at 4 pm Saturday, December 25. Wier's own 1st Confederate Veteran Infantry would follow on another train the next day.

Maj. Wier gave his reason for accompanying the first train to Enterprise, Mississippi. "Owing to the character of the troops I thought it advisable to go part of the way with the first train." This was a reference to O'Neil's Regiment of former federal soldiers. The journey went smoothly, since Wier added, "The troops all being quiet and orderly, I placed Lieutenant-Colonel Burke, commanding O'Neil's Regiment, in command of the whole, and remained over to bring up my own command..." Lt. Col. Burke was in command of O'Neil's Regiment because Col. O'Neill was still at work recruiting prisoners of war. The first train arrived at Enterprise about 4 am Monday. Burke's train reached Meridian shortly, where Maj. John S. Hope of the department staff boarded. He reported that Burke arrived with 700 infantry and a 4-gun battery without horses, the infantry armed, but without ammunition. Hope drew 17 boxes of ammunition, and moved the train north.

Wier also had concerns about his own regiment. His 1st Confederate Veterans, made up of men returning to duty from military hospitals having not yet rejoined their units, included "troops from almost every regiment in the Tennessee army." He feared that some would get off the train since many had homes or friends along the route. Wier's second train arrived at Enterprise without incident at 4 am Tuesday the 28th. Wier was well suited to his new regiment, having recovered from a wound received at Peachtree Creek near Atlanta on July 22, 1864, while Lt. Col. of the 37th Mississippi Infantry.

Further north, Hope left the troops and took the engine to Okolona for water. There he learned, at 4:30 am December 27, that the enemy was within 5 miles. Being an open prairie accessible by three roads, with no cover for the troops, Hope determined not to defend Okolona. He also learned that Gen. Gholson was in front of Grierson's column, but was without ammunition. Hope removed 14 train cars to Egypt to keep them from the enemy, sent a courier to Gholson, and returned to confer with Burke.
Lt. Col. Burke moved 270 men to a railroad bridge 2 ½ miles south of Okolona, "that being the only point where there was any timber or cover on the prairie close to the railroad." The train was held in readiness to carry Burke's men back to Egypt Station if necessary. At 9:30 am Gen. Gholson personally arrived at Burke's position, informing Maj. Hope that his 250 cavalry could only observe and report the movements of the enemy, not having one round of ammunition in the command.42

By mid-day, while Grierson occupied Okolona, Gholson's troopers fell back on Burke's position. Maj. Hope was at Egypt, "making disposition of forces, as directed by Lieutenant-Colonel Burke." That evening Burke fell back to Egypt, placing all of the troops in position to defend the railroad. The 17 boxes of ammunition were .58 caliber, but Gholson's weapons were .54 caliber. During the evening, Burke found one box of .54 caliber ammunition for Gholson's cavalry. It appears that Gholson, entitled to command by his rank, did not exercise command of the whole force, at least until his cavalry had ammunition. Prior to that time he only informed Burke and Hope of enemy movements.43

The urgency of the situation – a few cavalry without ammunition falling back before more than 3500 federals; Burke's command arriving and making dispositions for defense; artillery arriving on the train but having no horses – was intensified by the anticipated arrival of Wier's troops. Maj. Hope expected Maj. Gen. Frank Gardner, commanding the District of Mississippi and East Louisiana and present at West Point, to arrive on the train with Wier's regiment about 5:30 am.

Order of Battle – Egypt Station MS, Dec. 28, 1864

Union Forces: Grierson's Cavalry Division – Brig. Gen. Ben. Grierson44

Provost Guard & Escort – Co. F, 2nd Iowa Cavalry (40)

Pioneers – Lt. Lewis (50 negroes)

1st Brigade – Col. Joseph Kargé (1101)

   2nd New Jersey Cavalry – Lt. Col. P. Jones Yorke

   7th Indiana Cavalry – Capt. J. H. Elliott

   4th Missouri Cavalry – Capt. Hencke

   1st Mississippi Rifles (in the rear & not engaged)

2nd Brigade – Col. E. F. Winslow (825) (not engaged)
3rd Iowa Cavalry – Col. John W. Noble

4th Iowa Cavalry

10th Missouri Cavalry

3rd Brigade – Col. E. D. Osband (1726)

2nd Wisconsin Cavalry (6 companies detached that morning)

4th Illinois Cavalry – Capt. A. T. Search

11th Illinois Cavalry – Lt. Col. Otto Funke

3rd US Colored Cavalry (deployed late in the battle)

Union Strength: 3742 plus division staff; about 2400 engaged

Confederate Forces:

Wier's Command – Lt. Col. William W. Wier

O'Neill's Regiment – Lt. Col. Michael Burke (500)

Mets' Battalion (dismounted men of Ferguson's cavalry brigade)

– Capt. Michael A. Mets (200)

Clark Missouri Battery – Capt. Houston King

1st Confederate Veterans Infantry – Lt. Col. William W. Wier (500)

Cavalry – Brig. Gen. S. J. Gholson (250)

Not a brigade, but a camp of dispersed cavalry collected to be returned to the front.

A few horsemen under Capt. J. C. Shoup reported to Wier at the end of the battle.

Confederate Strength: About 1500

Fighting broke out at Egypt at 7:30 according to Hope, or around 8:15 according to Col. Joseph Kargé, commanding Grierson's 1st Brigade. (The discrepancy may be accounted for by the difference between the
appearance of federal troops and the beginning of skirmishing, and the general assault. Hope was then with the train half a mile south of Egypt. Col. Kargé deployed his own 2nd New Jersey Cavalry on the left, and the 7th Indiana and 4th Missouri on the right. The 2nd New Jersey took severe punishment in front of the stockade on the east side of the railroad, occupied by Burke's men. The regiment lost 90 killed and wounded. Kargé attacked the stockade from two sides, finally forcing its surrender. Having exhausted their ammunition, Burke surrendered about 500 men, including 1 lieutenant colonel (Burke) and 15 line officers. About the time Burke surrendered, Brig. Gen. S. J. Gholson was severely wounded (the federals mistakenly reported him killed or mortally wounded) on the Confederate left.

Col. E. D. Osband, commanding Grierson's 3rd Brigade, had arrived on the field to support the 1st Brigade. The 2nd Wisconsin Cavalry had been detached to hold nearby Pikeville, and to guard the brigade supply train. The 4th and 11th Illinois Cavalry participated in the main Union attack. They charged and dispersed Gholson's scant cavalry force, which had been well posted behind a railroad embankment on Kargé's right. For comparison, Osband's brigade numbered 1726. These 2 of his 4 regiments must have numbered over 800 men, opposed to Gholson's 250. Having driven the Confederate cavalry from the field, the Illinois troopers joined the attack on the stockade. The 3rd US Colored Cavalry was also present, apparently deployed late in the battle.

Col. Kargé reported that after fighting alongside the 2nd New Jersey for a time, the 7th Indiana and 4th Missouri, led by Gen. Grierson, went after the train with King's Battery. Grierson moved between Egypt and the train, and simultaneously charged the train with another column. Attempt was made to move the train, but not having sufficient steam to move the whole, several cars were left so as to enable the defenders to save the train from capture. King's Missouri Battery, for which horses could not be impressed in the time required, was on platform cars saved with the train, from which they "fired repeatedly into the charging columns of the enemy."

At 8:30 am Wier's train had still not arrived. Leaving Burke and Gholson in their desperate struggle, Maj. Hope moved his train south to retrieve Wier's 500 men. His train met Wier's several miles below Egypt. Maj. Gen. Gardner had not accompanied Wier from his headquarters at West Point. The second train had encountered difficulties which caused some delay. King's Battery, on Hope's train, informed Lt. Col. Wier of conditions at Egypt, and reported the enemy in pursuit.

Wier immediately formed his veterans in line of battle and advanced up the railroad at double-quick time, to a hill half a mile to 1 mile from where they left the cars. Upon reaching this position, the federals were moving to attack, and the Confederate skirmish line was already firing. Wier reported that "They moved around my right flank, causing me to change my front. From this position they bore down on me at full gallop. My men were steady and cool, and with a well-directed fire scattered them in every direction." Here the veterans captured one stand of colors. The federals retreated "to their former position near Egypt, but in full view. They immediately formed their line of battle across the railroad, two other columns moving out of the woods to join them." Wier repulsed the enemy about 10:30 am, preventing Grierson from continuing south. Hope observed that after retreating from the 1st Confederate Veterans, the federals formed in three lines of battle: one north of Egypt, one east, and one south of Egypt fronting Wier.
By 11 am there was no longer any firing at Egypt. Col. E. F. Winslow arrived on the field with Grierson's 2nd Brigade after the fighting had ended. His arrival doubtless accounts for one of the three federal battle lines observed by Hope. Grierson remained in position about 2 hours, then withdrew. About 4 pm Capt. J. C. Shoup reported to Wier with a few horsemen. These were likely to have been among Gholson's command for two reasons: no other Confederate troops were in the vicinity, and Shoup was an officer of the general staff rather than commander of a particular unit (fitting the description of Gholson's command). Now able to get information, Wier sent scouts in every direction, ascertaining that Grierson had moved west, leaving his wounded at Egypt. Thus closed the battle of Egypt Station. It had been unique in many respects on the Confederate side – use of the railroad to move troops, a veterans unit in action, and artillery firing from platform cars on the railroad. Most curious of all was the engagement of former Union troops against Union troops in battle, and the fact that many of them were northern born rather than foreign born.

Casualties

Grierson withdrew from the field leaving his dead and many of the wounded behind, in the care of Surgeon John L. Krauter of the 1st Brigade. He did not report his casualties specific to the battle, but his brigade commanders did. Col. Kargé reported the 2nd New Jersey had 19 killed and 71 wounded; the 7th Indiana had 2 killed and 11 wounded; the 4th Missouri had 1 officer reported wounded and captured, and 1 man wounded, for a total of 105. Col. Osband listed his losses as 1 killed and 17 wounded from the Illinois regiments, not reporting any loss from the colored troops. The total reported federal loss was 123, including 22 killed and 101 wounded. Kargé left 1 officer and 39 men with Surg. Krauter. Osband left 9 of his wounded on the field. In another area of gain and loss, the federal 1st Brigade captured 124 horses on the expedition, but left 210 behind.

Surg. F. H. Evans, C. S. Army, arrived at Egypt Station on December 30 with orders to remove the wounded. He found 35 wounded yankees with Surg. Krauter and a hospital steward, along with 7 Confederate wounded. Wier reported that his regiment accounted for 3 of those wounded, leaving Gen. Gholson and the 3 others as casualties of the Burke/Gholson area of the battle. He also reported 7 federal dead left on his portion of the field south of Egypt. The low CS casualty rate can be attributed to their defensive positions at the stockade and behind the railroad embankment. Evans remarked that "nearly all of the Federal prisoners are seriously wounded." Krauter informed Evans that 12-15 federal had died prior to Evans' arrival. (That number must have been 13 since 48 were left on the field and 35 were still alive.) One Confederate was left at Egypt "in a dying condition," and 1 Confederate and 1 Union soldier died in transit to West Point. Gen. Gholson, who had been left on the field, had lost his left arm, but would survive the war. Taking all of the reports together, the CS loss was 2 mortally wounded and 5 wounded. Grierson's loss was 22 killed, 14 mortally wounded, 53 wounded and carried off, and 34 wounded and captured.

Col. Kargé reported taking 500 prisoners, including 1 lieutenant colonel and 15 line officers, at the stockade. Burke is documented in federal correspondence to be the lieutenant colonel captured at Egypt. To account for the 500 prisoners at the stockade, it should be noted that only Burke's, Metts', and Gholson's troops were present on that part of the battlefield. Burke commanded 700 infantry, composed of
O'Neill's Regiment infantry and Metts' Battalion, acting as infantry. Remembering that O'Neill's Regiment had been estimated by department staff at 450-500 men on December 10 and 22, Metts' Battalion therefore numbered 200-250. Capt. Metts was listed on a roster in March 1865, indicating that he was not captured at Egypt Station. Correspondence between department staff officers in Alabama in December 1864 and January 1865 refers to the dismounted men of Ferguson's brigade. This indicates that Metts' command escaped capture at Egypt Station and transferred back to Alabama intact. Gholson's 250 cavalry were not among the captured, having been driven from the field by the Illinois cavalry according to Union Col. Osband.68

Although the reports of Lt. Col. Wier and Maj. Hope made no reference to the 500 remaining men of Burke's and Gholson's commands (except the statement that some mounted men under Capt. Shoup reported to Wier at the close of the battle), this must be why, after disengaging, Grierson formed 3 lines of battle facing 3 directions as Maj. Hope had observed – to meet any counterattack from the 3 Confederate forces he knew to be present (Metts', Gholson's, and Wier's). With the surrender of part of O'Neill's galvanized troops, their history takes another strange turn.

{Continued in Part 3}

Part 3

Galvanized Both Ways

Col. John W. Noble was the Union officer in charge of transporting the prisoners from Vicksburg to Memphis. From that point they were transferred January 13, 1865, on the steamer E. H. Fairchild, to Cairo, Illinois. Noble informed the officer in charge of the prisoners on the steamer of the peculiar nature of his prisoners. He said the prisoners "have, as they claim, been formerly in the service of the United States in the various regiments designated opposite their names on the [attached] roll." The galvanized men told Noble that "they were prisoners of war at Andersonville, Ga., when they enlisted in the Confederate service; that at the time they were in great want..." and that "they now wish to be sent to their old regiments to fight for the Union." Noble gave his opinion that "I believe that most of them are worthy of clemency, a few of special favor, but many at the same time are not to be trusted."69

The men of O'Neill's Regiment were received at the military prison at Alton, Illinois on January 17, 1865. The commander of the post reported them as having been prisoners of war at Andersonville, Georgia, having there "enlisted in the Tenth Tennessee (rebel) Regiment, and were captured by Grierson's forces at Egypt Station, Mississippi.70

Maj. Gen. G. M. Dodge, commanding the Department of the Missouri, told superiors on March 25, 1865 that "there are some 250 men in confinement at Alton, Ill., known as the 'galvanized Yankees,' ie., men who were taken prisoners by the enemy during the last year, and who, to avoid starvation and death, enlisted in Burke's battalion, of the Confederate Army, and who in the recent raid deserted on the approach of our forces..."71 Dodge, who was not present at Egypt, claimed that the galvanized men had deserted the CS army as soon as Union troops appeared. He was repeating what the prisoners had said, but the claim was simply not true. Union officers who were present, as well as the federal judge-advocate who investigated the matter, described it differently. "The fight was a severe one,"72 which went on for 3 hours. In any case, Dodge added his recommendation that as many of them as possible be formed into a regiment and sent west. "I have over 3,000 miles of overland mail and telegraph route to guard, and every regiment of infantry that I can put along it will relieve that number of cavalry to use in offensive operations against the Indians."73 Dodge's use of the term "galvanized Yankees" is notably opposite of the definition typically circulated.
A. A. Hosmer, Major and Judge-Advocate, investigated the case, reporting some interesting and alarming findings to the Secretary of War on May 13, 1865. His findings:

"Corpl. M. J. Adams, Sixty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers and 253 others, belonging to various regiments, were captured by the First Brigade of General Grierson's cavalry, at Egypt Station, Miss., December 28, 1864. They were at the time serving in the Tenth Tennessee rebel regiment. Lieutenant-Colonel Yorke, Second New Jersey Cavalry, reports that the greater part of these men were on the rebel skirmish line, and when our forces came within range they opened a heavy fire, killing 3 officers and 20 men and wounding 74 others; that he then made a charge, when they threw down their arms and surrendered. Immediately after their capture they alleged that they had been prisoners of war at Andersonville and joined the rebel service to escape death from starvation and disease. They generally claim to have done so with the intention of making their way to our lines as soon as possible, and state that they had been kept under strict guard and were not furnished arms and ammunition until the night before the engagement, and that they surrendered as soon as an opportunity occurred. Even if this were true, it would not justify their conduct, and it is believed that the Government cannot consistently recognize the propriety of prisoners escaping from the enemy by such means, and cannot place confidence in men who, even for the purpose of escaping the horrors of Southern prisons, were willing to enter the ranks of the rebel army. But the circumstances of the action in which they were captured do not justify the belief that any considerable portion of these men had any desire or intention to rejoin our forces. Being placed upon the skirmish line, they could readily have made an opportunity to pass over without suspicion on the part of the enemy; and, if prevented from doing so by their position in the line, could have fired so as to do no damage to our troops. The deadly precision of their fire shows that they intended to repel our forces, if possible. The opinion of General Hoffman is concurred in, that they are not entitled to any clemency. As to their present status, it may be remarked that they should no longer be regarded as prisoners of war, but should be held and tried as deserters. It appears by the remarks upon the rolls that six of these men cam into our lines during the night preceding the engagement and gave valuable information. It is submitted whether or not they may not properly be restored to their regiments, with forfeiture of all pay due at the time of their capture, in consideration of the valuable services rendered."74

This information is invaluable to the history of the War for several reasons. It forces upon us the fact that it was a complicated war. It proves that these former federal soldiers enlisted in the Confederate army, and fought for 3 hours against Union troops, intentionally inflicting significant casualties. Short of the six men who deserted the night before, they surrendered only after being compelled to do so, being attacked from two sides and having run out of ammunition. His stinging report, in agreement with Brig. Gen. William Hoffman, Commissary General of Prisons, recommended that they be tried as deserters. The US Army eventually chose the recommendation of Dodge over desertion, enlisting many of the men into the 5th US Volunteers.

**Burke's Battalion**

Some Union correspondence related to O'Neill's Regiment and the battle at Egypt MS refer to the galvanized troops as Burke's Battalion. This was simply because Lt. Col. Burke was in command at Egypt Station in Col. John G. O'Neill's absence. Confederate records generally refer to the unit (misspelled) as O'Neal's Regiment. Lt. Col. Martin Burke had previously served as captain and major in the 1st Missouri Infantry. Born in Galway, Ireland, Burke was a merchant in St. Louis before the war. He enrolled in the 1st Missouri at Memphis June 30, 1861, fighting at Shiloh, Corinth, and Baker's Creek, and serving through August 1, 1864. At that time he was ordered on an inspection tour of the department by Gen. John B. Hood. He was then assigned to duty with O'Neill's Regiment of Yankee recruits by order of Gen. G. T. Beauregard, commanding the Military Division of the West. Burke was appointed lieutenant colonel September 23, 1864 (to rank from May 30 with his old regiment), and was in camp with O'Neill's recruits in October.75
The Men of O'Neill's Regiment Confederate Infantry

Service records of the men who made up O'Neill's Regiment were not filed by the National Archives as O'Neill's Regiment under Confederate Troops as would be expected. The individual Confederate service records for these men are filed under the 10th Tennessee Infantry. The following two examples of their service records provide valuable insight into the men who enlisted in this unique unit.

Milton J. Adams of Vernago County, Pennsylvania, has one of the most varied records of the war, and is a good example of the men of O'Neill's Regiment. He has service records in 3 regiments and on both sides of the war. He started the war in Company G, 63rd Regiment Pennsylvania Infantry. *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865* includes a roster of the unit. Cpl. Milton J. Adams was mustered into service March 22, 1864 for 3 years. He was wounded at Spotsylvania C. H. May 12, 1864, captured at Petersburg, Virginia on June 22, 1864, and confined at Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia. The roster states that he was transferred to Company G, 105th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, but no Adams is listed in that unit. Adams changed sides when Col. John G. O'Neill recruited him into Confederate service. He has a service record as Pvt. M. J. Adams, Company A, 10th Tennessee Infantry, C.S.A. (Company A, O'Neill's Regiment). Adams was surrendered with Burke's command at Egypt, Mississippi December 28, 1864. He appears on a roll of prisoners of war at Alton, Illinois Military Prison dated January 23, 1865, with the remark, "The men whose names are on this roll are held as prisoners of war belonging to the Tenth Tennessee Reg't, captured at Egypt Station, Miss., and so reported. These men enlisted into the Rebel army while held by the Confederate authorities as prisoners of war at Andersonville, Ga." Adams was listed as having smallpox while at Alton, on February 18, 1865. He changed sides again when he enlisted in Company A, 5th US Volunteers at Alton Military Prison. The enlistment date is given as March 19 and again as April 14, 1865. The muster and descriptive roll lists him as age 22, born in Vernago County PA, and by occupation a brick maker. Between March 22 and April 30 he was on daily duty as company commissary. Adams ended his colorful military career by deserting May 23, 1865 at Easton (also listed as Osankee), Kansas.

Jesse Ammon has a similar record. He originally served in the 2nd West Virginia Infantry. After being captured at Pocahontas County, (West) Virginia December 22, 1863, he was confined at Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia. There he enlisted in O'Neill's Regiment Confederate infantry. He has a Confederate service record as Pvt. Jesse Ammon, Company D, 10th Tennessee Infantry, C.S.A (Company D, O'Neill's Regiment). He also appeared on a roll of prisoners of war at Alton, Illinois Military Prison dated January 23, 1865, with the same remark, that the men were enlisted into Confederate service while prisoners of war at Andersonville, now belonging to the 10th Tennessee Infantry (CSA), and were captured at Egypt, Mississippi December 28, 1864. As a prisoner of war at Alton, Ammon enlisted in Company A, 5th US Volunteers on March 17, 1865. The company muster and descriptive roll listed him as age 22, born in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, by occupation a clerk. He, like Milton J. Adams, deserted May 23, 1865 at Osankee, Kansas.

Service records of the men of O'Neill's Regiment, along with the statement of Union Col. John W. Noble from what the prisoners had told him, that "foreigners were first solicited, but many others finally taken," show that the regiment was not composed of foreign born yankees, but in significant numbers, of northern born yankees. The service records of the 254 galvanized men captured with Burke, whose names also appear on the roster of the 5th US Volunteers, will provide a wealth of information on the prisoners from which O'Neill recruited, the prior Union units represented among his galvanized troops, their places of birth, and whether or not they deserted the 5th US Volunteers. These latter records will not account for all of those who served under O'Neill (see the correspondence of Col. George Wm. Brent above, giving their number as 500), just those surrendered at Egypt who later joined the 5th US Volunteers.

Galvanized Confederate troops were used in battle, and this occurred on more than one occasion. Even Union accounts give testimony to their effective fighting. As Union Maj. Hosmer put it, they could have
deserted or at least fired so as to do no damage to Union troops, but on the field of battle these men chose in overwhelming numbers to stand with their new flag rather than desert it.

Notes

1. OR Series I Vol. 40 Part 1 p. 820
2. OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 254
3. OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 254-255
4. CMSR – Andrews
5. CMSR – Andrews
7. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865, Vol. 18 p. 31
8. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865, Vol. 18 p. 113
11. OR Series II Vol. 7 p. 401
13. OR Series II Vol. 7 p. 586-587
16. OR Series I Vol. 49 Part 2 p. 534
17. OR Series I Vol. 49 Part 1 p. 323 – Stoneman; p. 333 – Gillem
18. OR Series I Vol. 53 p. 1054
19. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865, Vol. 18 p. 113
20. CMSR – Fouche
23. CMSR – O'Neill p. 36
24. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 668, 750
25. CMSR – O'Neill
26. Tennesseans in the Civil War, Part 1
27. The Galvanized Yankees, by Dee Brown, Chapter 12, "A Note on the Galvanized Confederates," p. 124-126
28. CMSR – O'Neill p. 40
29. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 2 p. 701
30. Tennesseans in the Civil War, Part 1 p. 195
31. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 2 p. 701
32. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 2 p. 724
33. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 847, 852, 856
34. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 865-868
35. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
36. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871
37. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871
38. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
39. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871
40. Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898, by Dunbar Rowland
41. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
42. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
43. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
44. OR Series I Volume 45 Chapter LVII p. 844: EGYPT MISSISSIPPI, December 28, 1864 Mobile & Ohio Railroad Expedition.
Part 1 p. 856

81 M. J. Adams – Private, Company A, 10 Tennessee Inf.
82 CMSR Martin Burke – Captain/Captain, Co. D/F & S, 1 and 4 Missouri Infantry.
83 History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865
84 History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865
85 CMSR M. A. Metts Captain/Captain Co. D, 11 Mississippi Cavalry; OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 856-859 – Osband
86 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 125 – Noble
87 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 124 – Stone
88 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 358-359 – Dodge
89 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 125 – Noble
90 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 358-359 – Dodge
91 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 554
92 CMSR Martin Burke – Captain/Captain, Co. D/F & S, 1 and 4 Missouri Infantry.
93 History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865
94 History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865
95 CMSR M. J. Adams – Private, Company A, 10 Tennessee Inf.
97 CMSR Jesse Ammon – Private, Company D, 10 Tennessee Inf.
99 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864 – Hope
100 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871 – Wier
101 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 1273 Organizations Mentioned includes Metts (David W.) Cavalry – 1st Mississippi Cavalry Reserves. The regiment is listed on p. 1234 in Maj. Gen. Frank Gardner's District of Mississippi and East Louisiana, in Denis' Brigade (Col. Jules C. Denis). The index lists 1st Mississippi Cavalry Reserves on p. 870, which is Wier's report of the battle at Egypt. Despite this reference, the organization known as Metts' Battalion on the expedition to Egypt Station must be the 200 dismounted men of Brig. Gen. S. W. Ferguson's cavalry brigade, which were sent to Mobile, Alabama. OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 2 p. 677 and OR Series I Vol. 49 Part 1 p. 946 record correspondence from staff officers of Gen. G. T. Beauregard about 200 men sent from camp at Carthage AL to Mobile Dec. 5 or 10, 1864. The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi, by Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History (1908) p. 819, recording the history of the 9th Mississippi Cavalry (Miller's), formerly the 17th Battalion Mississippi Cavalry (Steede's Battalion), more specifically identifies those troops by stating that "The dismounted men of Ferguson's brigade were sent for temporary service to Mobile under Major Steede, Seventeenth Mississippi Battalion, from camp at Carthage about 5th or 10th of December, 1864." Capt. Michael A. Metts of Company D, 11th Mississippi Cavalry and the 200 dismounted men of Ferguson's brigade were therefore the Metts and Metts' Battalion on the expedition to Egypt Station.
102 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 856-859
103 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 847-851
104 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 2 p. 552
105 Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War, p. 309
106 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 856-859
107 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 847
108 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864
109 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864 – Hope
110 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871 – Wier
111 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871 – Wier
112 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 861-864 – Hope
113 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 849 – Kargé; p. 861-864 – Hope
114 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 870-871 – Wier
115 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 852 – Winslow
117 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 125 – Noble
118 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 849 & 851 – Kargé; p. 857-858 – Osband
120 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 847 – Kargé
121 OR Series II Vol. 8 p. 125 – Noble: "Lieutenant-Colonel Burke, now a prisoner on board"
122 CMSR M. A. Metts Captain/Captain Co. D, 11 Mississippi Cavalry; OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 856-859 – Osband
123 OR Series I Vol. 45 Part 1 p. 847, 852, 856 – Grierson's brigade commanders; p. 861-864 – Hope

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The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi, Volume 2, by Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, 1908.


