

THE GEORGIA VOLUNTEER BATTALION

BATTALION E-BULLETIN

WWW.GAVOLBN.ORG

APRIL, 2007

In this Month's Issue:

- New Lorenz Reproduction
- Skirmish Drill: Part 1, the Basics
- The USS Water Witch Project

From the Editor

Greetings all,

As we draw to our spring campaign to a close, it's easy to pack away the gear and plan on not seeing them again until the weather cools for Tunnel Hill. I would like to challenge everyone to keep an eye out for the many living histories this summer. They are a great opportunity to drill and keep in contact with each other so that there is no disconnect between the energy of the spring, and that of the fall. Let's keep our skills up and hit the ground running in September. In this issue, I will begin the first part of a multi-part article on skirmish drill. This is a fundamental fighting skill of protecting a battalion in battle, and we are using it more and more. If you and your company want to get in the fight earlier, then take the time to learn the necessary skills to do it right. We are the GVB! We fight like soldiers, we fear no cavalry in skirmish order, and we honor our ancestors through our diligent discipline.



Also, if you want to check out a neat video of a "Rail-Bending Party at Ft. McAllister, go to <http://www.quantumtour.com/entity/mcallister/video/1/>

Kind Regards,
Andrew Jerram

Take a Part!

Take a part in this e-bulletin by sending letters to the editor, (using the same guidelines as the forum), want ads, (for sale or wanted to buy), event listings, pictures, and suggestions. Email them to bulletin@gavolbn.org.

EVENTS!!

Battle of Resaca, May 18th-20th, Resaca, GA

This year's battle promises to be great. The GVB will be Federal, under the command of Lt. Col. Young. Col. Poythress will be commanding the entire Federal brigade. More information at www.georgiadivision.org. If you haven't pre-registered, registration is \$10 at the gate.

FROM THE COLONEL

To the Officers and Soldiers of the Georgia Volunteer Battalion,
Now that the first Campaign season of 2007 is coming to a close, we can take stock of what I consider the most productive four months in recent memory for the Battalion. I'm proud of what we have accomplished and I'm proud of all of you. I'd stack us up against any organization in the country! Your efforts have made our Battalion the best in the southeast. Some of the highlights of the season for me were:

Olustee: the GVB fielded over 300 troops. While the Saturday battle could have been better, Sunday more than made up for it. I happened to see a brief video of Sunday's fight and our lines looked arrow straight and our volley's were crushing. A great time at our most faithfully attended events.

Aiken: quite a few of the Battalion made the trek to South Carolina for this event. A great event that wants us there. Those of us that went had a good time. I'll go back for sure.

Manassas: Who can say too much about this event? By far the most fun of the season for me. The Officer's Social on Saturday night and then spending the rest of the evening around the fire with the 28th, the 61st and our friend in Her Majesty's Service along with so many others, made the event for me. The Battalion drill on Saturday was flawless and energetic and I was surprised and encouraged with the level of enthusiasm that many of you had during Sunday's knapsack inspection. The desire to improve continues in every action we make.

Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation: a super good time with the boys in the Color Guard! I'll be back here with them, and hopefully many more too, when the time for this event comes round again.

Stone Mountain/Clinton/daughter's birthday: a heck of a weekend for me. I'm still tired out. Toted a musket all weekend and loved every minute. I'm glad to see Stone Mountain back on the calendar. Rick Fallaw and the 42nd have worked hard to get this one back. It'll be worth it. In the old days we fielded 200+ soldiers and I hope we will again. Clinton will always be special. It's where I and several others of us started. Griswoldville is always a tear jerker for me. Thanks to Capt. Miller and the boys in the 4th for letting me fall in with them. No need for me to "Colonize" at Clinton-- If we laid all the gold braid on the ground side by

side, we could have made a "no passing lane" from Macon to Savannah. I hope I wasn't too much trouble. I had fun.

In between these GVB events I managed to attend a couple of **living histories** here and there, the **Shiloh Living History** sponsored by Jim Butler and SCAR (great time--go next year. You won't be disappointed), one or **two event planning meetings** for future events and a few **school programs**. I'm bushed and ready for a break. But before I go

Resaca!

I hope to see many of you up there next weekend. We'll have a blast. Next issue I'll give you my take on the Fall Campaign.

Your Humble & Obedient Servant,
M. Hunter Poythress
Georgia Volunteer Battalion

PRESERVATION!!

The USS/CSS Waterwitch Project

(Abridged from http://www.portcolumbus.org/html/water_witch_project.html)

The next step in the development of the National Civil War Naval Museum at Port Columbus is the creation of the USS Water Witch. This full-scale ship representation is to be built between the museum and Victory Drive (Hwy 280/27) and represents one of the most exciting events in Civil War Naval History. The ship is to form a brand new educational programming platform, plus act as a new landmark for Columbus, an icon for South



Commons, the Gateway to Columbus

South and a signpost for Port Columbus. Fund raising is currently underway and supporters of the museum and those interested in the issues listed above may participate by being a "plank owner" on the new ship, by contributing from \$100 and up.

The *USS Waterwitch* was commissioned during the winter of 1852-1853. The hull measured 150 feet in length and displaced some 450 tons. Between May of 1861 and the summer of 1864, the *Waterwitch* served in a variety of roles including mail runner, re-supply ship, and blockader. The ship served in the Gulf and off the coast of Georgia in the Atlantic. She was responsible for the capture of the blockade runner *William Mallory* after a five hour chase in March of 1862.

In May of 1864, Lieutenant Thomas Pelot of the Confederate Navy was placed in command of an expedition to capture a US Navy vessel that was at anchor at the mouth of Little Ogeechee River near Savannah. This ship turned out to be the *USS Waterwitch*. Some 11 officers and 120 men ended up in the expedition, which left from Fort Jackson and traveled down the Savannah River on Tuesday May 31st, 1864.

In the early morning hours of June 3rd, 1864 on a moonless night, Lieutenant Pelot and his expedition quietly made their way through Ossabaw Sound toward the *USS Waterwitch*. A black slave pilot named Moses Dallas was piloting the lead ship in the expedition. According

to the Historic Register of Confederate Naval Officers, Moses Dallas was listed as a Confederate Naval Officer with the rank of pilot. Skilled pilots on Confederate gunboats were well paid (\$80 to \$100 per month) and held an officers rank, albeit without the authority.

Pelot and his forces approached the *Waterwitch* early in the morning hours of June 3rd, 1864. During the day, the monthly ship had arrived, bringing out mail and fresh provisions so she rode very low in the water. The night had been sultry and oppressive, with frequent rain and intermittent heat lightning. Several boats pulled up along side the paddlewheel and Confederate sailors and marines climbed up the side of the ship in an attempt to get to the top deck. The defending crew aboard the *Waterwitch* was around 65 men.

As the crew of the ship appeared on the deck, the commander of the *Waterwitch*, Lieutenant Commander Austin Pendergrast yelled, “All hands repel boarders! Slip the cables – go ahead, full speed!” Boarders were now jumping onto the deck and several officers tried to defend their ship. Lieutenant Pelot and Moses Dallas were among the first casualties. The Union crew of the *Waterwitch* put up a good fight, but they were overwhelmed by the great numbers of southern sailors boarding their ship. The crew fell back to the interior of the ship and went to the arms chest under the hurricane deck where they could find loaded weapons. After a short and desperate fight, there was no one left to officially surrender the ship as the entire crew was either wounded or killed.

Reports list casualties for the Confederates as nine killed, and fifteen wounded. Lieutenant Joseph Price, who took command of the raid after Pelot was killed, lists the official Union casualties at one killed and eleven wounded, but there are many estimates that place the number at somewhere around five killed and two dozen wounded.



The ship was then manned by several of the men who had captured her and they were able to steer her closer to shore in order to unload the prisoners. Unfortunately, without a qualified pilot to steer the ship, it ran hard aground in one of the river channels. It was at this point that Lieutenant William Watts Carnes of the Confederate Navy was placed in command of the captured steamer

Waterwitch. He would later command the *CSS Savannah*, the *CSS Sampson*, and was slated to be the first commander of the ironclad *CSS Jackson* that was being constructed in the Confederate Naval Yard in Columbus, Georgia.

Carnes and a platoon of Confederate Marines took several small boats and boarded the *Waterwitch*. Price turned command over to Carnes and they were quickly able to free the ship, despite the lack of cooperation from the Union Engineers below deck. Because the fires in the engines had been allowed to extinguish after the *Waterwitch* ran aground, Carnes had the rowboats placed in front of the ship and had the oarsmen row and tow the vessel with the tide, running upstream, after raising the light anchor.

Back in Savannah, Lieutenant Pelot and Pilot Moses Dallas were given a heroes farewell. The Confederate government even paid for the casket and funeral for Moses Dallas which cost over eighty dollars. The capture of the steamer was widely reported in newspapers all along the Southern Atlantic Coast, from Jacksonville to Wilmington. The

captured Union Navy prisoners were first sent to a Confederate hospital, then shipped to Macon, Georgia.

Over the next few weeks, the Union Navy made several attempts to find the captured steamer and either re-capture her or destroy her entirely. Commodore Hunter of the Confederate Navy wanted the ship to get to Savannah as soon as possible, but this was never accomplished for several reasons. First of all, the *Waterwitch* drafted too much water, up to eight and a half feet, to be transported through inland waterways to the port city. Secondly, she could not enter the Ossabaw Sound for she would immediately be attacked by Union warships. The Confederate Navy had little choice then to let the *Waterwitch* stay in the Vernon River. Finally, on December 19th, 1864 the ship was burned to prevent her from being captured by the advancing Union Army under the command of General William T. Sherman. In the end, the Confederates had possession of the ship for little more than six months, but were unable to make use of her because the Confederate Navy was not able to get the ship to a suitable port.

The captured Union officers and sailors were eventually turned over to Northern officials and an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the capture of the ship was held in Washington DC in November of 1864. Later that year, on December 15th, Lieutenant Commander Austin Pendergrast, who was Captain of the *Waterwitch* at the time of her capture, was court-martialed for “culpable inefficiency in the discharge of duty.” He was found guilty of the charge and was sentenced to be suspended from duty for two years, on half pay, with loss of rank from the date of sentence of January 16, 1865.

The *USS Waterwitch* served the U.S. Navy proudly from the time of her first mission in 1853, through the coastal surveys of South America, into the War Between the States, and up to the time of her capture in June of 1864 at the hands of a daring Confederate commando raid, piloted by a slave. Several artifacts from the *Waterwitch* are currently on display at the National Civil War Naval Museum including the original boat flag and the ship's bell that was sounded as the Confederate raiders boarded the ship. These artifacts survived only through the hands of some Southern sailor who retrieved the items off the ship before she was scuttled. Historians and researchers have been trying to locate just where the ship sank, but to this day, no one knows the exact final resting place of the United States Ship, *Waterwitch*.

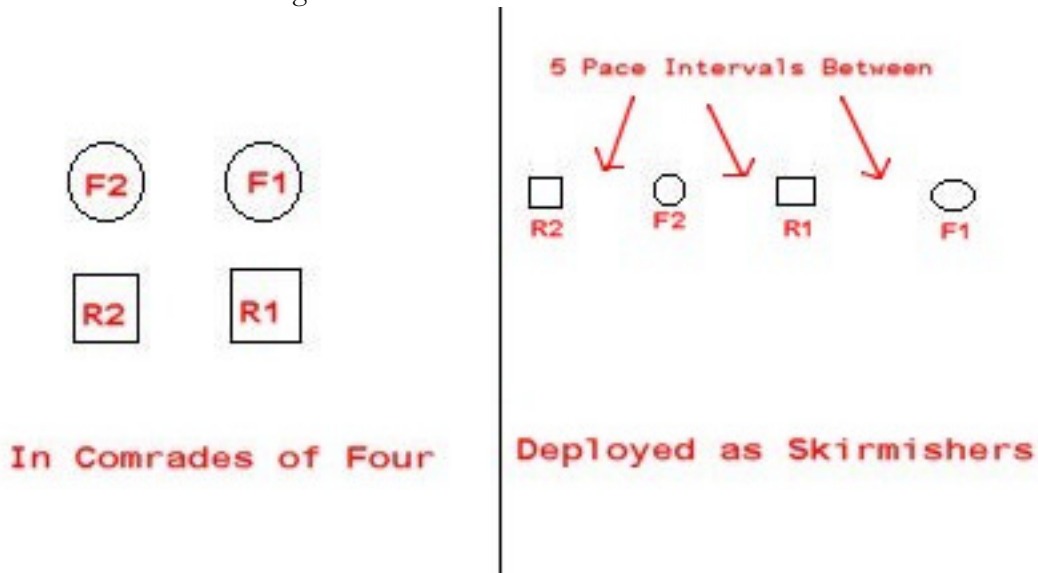
DRILL!

Skirmish Drill: The Basics

Skirmish Drill, in a nutshell is the open-order deployment of a company, usually with about 5 paces between each man. It can be a stand-alone entity, to cover a stretch of ground much longer than the unit itself, or it can be a screen for a moving battalion. In his 1862 manual, Gen. Wm. Hardee laid out some general guidelines for skirmishers. The most pertinent ones are that speed matters more than precision and skirmish order is supposed to conserve men and their energy. Take advantage of the ground, and only run when absolutely necessary. Use the double quick or the quickstep when appropriate.

The most basic unit in skirmish drill is the pairing of both front and rear rank, with a “1” and a “2” of each. These groups are known as “Comrades of Fours.” Each man needs to be familiar with and remain in contact with his file partner, the man behind or in front of him. One of the two should always be loaded in case of close attack. When the deployment command is given, (we’ll cover that next month) the Comrades of Fours march to the

desired point, and upon halting, immediately deploy in the following manner with the Front Rank Number 2 man standing fast.



In next month's section, we will cover how to deploy a platoon of skirmishers, by the file and by the flank.

Coming in Next Month's Issue

- Skirmish Drill pt 2: Deploying by the flank and off the file.

The Loyalist Arms Reproduction 1854 Lorenz Rifle

For the majority of us, our reenacting is done with an 1853 Enfield rifle musket. There are some 1861 Springfield Rifle Muskets, and some 1842 Springfield Muskets, but the most popular weapons are by far Enfields. Enfields were the most commonly imported European weapon brought in by both sides, but the second most-imported weapon has never been reproduced until now. Loyalist Arms of Nova Scotia has begun to manufacture an affordable replica of the 1854 Austrian Lorenz Rifle Musket.



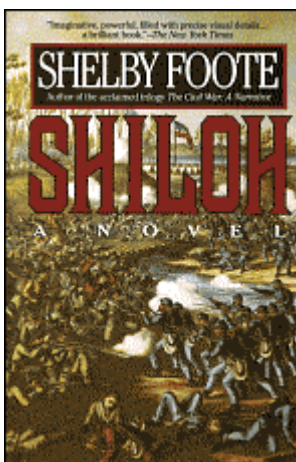
It is estimated the several hundred thousand of these weapons saw some service during the war. According to Robby Mitchell of the Armory Guards,

"The M-1854 Lorenz starts to show up in quantities in the ranks of the Confederate army in 1863. Caleb Huse, the Confederacy's European purchasing agent wrote to Maj. Josiah Gorgas on April 1, 1862 that "I am in the position to purchase 20,000 to 30,000 Austrian rifles at about 40 shillings, say about \$10. . . I must now limit myself to the contracts already made. I must pay my debts before doing anything more. As soon, however as money sufficient for the purpose is received, I shall invest it. . . in four batteries of Austrian rifled field artillery, 32 guns . . . and 20,000 rifles now in the Vienna Arsenal."

Funds had begun to dry up for purchase of the preferred Enfield pattern weapons and Huse was forced to look to the continent for additional sources of weapons. Hence the use of the Lorenz. The majority of the Georgia soldiers (Cumming's and Barton's Brig.) from the paroled Vicksburg garrison were re-armed with the Lorenz. In my mind, there is a good chance that most Western theater units that were re-armed in mid to late 1863 would have received the Lorenz."

There are some issues to be had with the reproduction, as in all reproduction rifles. The musket is smoothbore, and in .62 caliber, as opposed to the original, which was generally to be had in .54 caliber, although some were re-rifled to .58. Other minor flaws exist, but for the most part, the reproduction is sound, and for \$475, is as affordable as an Enfield. Loyalist Arms has mentioned that bulk orders of 5 or more may be eligible for a \$50 discount, so if you can't get up enough interest, talk to the gents in the Armory Guards who are planning a quantity purchase in the GVB

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Book Review – “Shiloh: A Novel”, by Shelby Foote
“A brilliant historical novel based on one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, and a look into the hearts and minds of the soldiers who fought for two days in the woods near Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee. From Lieutenant Palmer Metcalfe to Private Luther Dade, Foote's diverse cast of characters comprise unforgettable portraits. Here are ordinary men in extraordinary circumstances, trapped in a shower of bullets, blinded by the haze of gunsmoke—participants in a critical moment in American history. "A remarkable achievement...a work of art."—Van Allen Bradley.”

My wife got this book for me just before I went to the 145th Shiloh. It was one of the quickest, most enjoyable “reads” that I’ve experienced in some time...six different tales, and in a much unexpected turn, each “storyteller” comes across the path of one or more of the others before, during, or after the battle. I very much

enjoyed all of the stories, and I'm sure that you will, too. – Corporal Mat Sterman , 7th
Florida