

AAR for Battle of Camden/Hobkirk's Hill

Nov 13-14, 2021

Dragoons, Fire-goddess, and friends,

As the company sergeant for this past weekend it has been placed upon me to record the events as I saw them in Kershaw, SC, Nov 12-14 at the reenactment of the Battle of Camden and "Logtown" (Hobkirk's Hill).

For the first time, in a long time, everyone was able to arrive on Friday. Camp was set up, horses picketed, and a quiet relaxing evening was enjoyed. Our friends from the 1st Light Dragoons arrived with no travel issues and we were all happy to see them.

Saturday morning, we were able to get all our riders up and mounted by 7:30(ish) for a morning reconnaissance of the grounds. This was a great way to dust off tack and stretch both horse's and rider's legs. It also made for a much easier "boots and saddles" call for the later drill and battle.

By 10:30 am we were mounted again and had some good drill (as good as you can hope for on a Saturday) as well as provide photo opportunities for a commissioned Cowpens Painting by our dear friend Dan Nance. He took some great shots of the 3rd LD slamming into the combined 17th LD/British Legion riders and we greatly look forward to seeing what magic he comes up with. Thank you to Dan and our Virginia brothers for participating in that.

I guess it should be noted that I indeed did come off during drill. Dammit Zack (WHO BEHAVED FINE DURING THE BATTLES!!!) decided he would play bucking bronco that morning and I held out on numerous occasions. I'm my defense, I counted to 8 in my head on the last time before losing a stirrup and going off to find the nice soft low-country sand. I'll bring a case of beer for anyone who wants to jeer at our next event. I also challenge any of you bastards to stay on that nut when he's in a mood. Haha! (Maybe he calmed down after the owner of the property came by to thank us for participating and offered a prayer for our and our horses' safety).

Battle of Camden. Late night meeting of the armies and day break battle.

By 1:15 we were mounted and split our 10 riders into two opposing platoons. I led 4 members in blue coats/bear skin helmets to play Armand's Legion and our overall commander Edward Harrelson took 4 riders of the British Legion. The two parties were supposed to lead out their prospective columns at 1:30 precisely. The British Horse always being on time, of course, played their part perfectly and marched off at 1:30 eastern standard time.

Someone called to Patrick O'Kelley: "*uh Pat. They're coming....*"

Pat: "*dammit it's 1:25! They're early....oh wait my watch is 5 minutes slow! GO GO GO!*"

So our party of horse and militia skirmishers made our "night time" march down the road. Once we "saw" the British horse Dean popped a pistol (he never misfires) and alerted the patriot forces that we had made contact with with enemy. Some fun cav on cav violence ensued before both parties of horse retired back to safe confines. Battle lines were formed as we awaited "daylight". Armand's legion left the field (historically accurate) and the second platoon led by yours truly trotted back to camp. With the magic of television and help from our distaff we changed into green coats and hauled butt over to join our British Legion friends. The combined BL Horse of now 10 riders were able to run down the

baggage train of the fleeing Gates and American Army. There were some enthusiastic screaming young ladies and children who played their part well as the cavalry ran down the baggage train and trampled a few unfortunate camp followers. No human was hurt in the making of this film although Mike Cecere from Virginia nearly shat himself as he fell pray to our wrath. (He later told me and Ed how awesome the experience was). Americans fled the field and the battle was a complete rout in favor of the British side.

Saturday night brought its usual fun with great conversation around our own fire and jollification at the Tavern Tent. Guy Fawkes was of course burned again (I feel bad for whoever the poor bastard is who has to play the role of Guy Fawkes every year). It was good to see the return of Dan Murphy for fireside chats and drinks. We also visited with Neill and Jennifer Rose (who live in Camden) and met up with Myers Brown, an old War Between the States comrade. Old and new stories were swapped and a good time was had by all.

As the Sunday morning sun rose everyone moved a little slower (side effects from libations and a lot of horse riding the day before). We were able to complete our 10:30 drill with little to no excitement. Thank God. Ed led us on another tour of the grounds and being content that horses and riders were again in relatively good shape, we went back to camp awaiting the 2:00 pm battle.

240th Anniversary of the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill. (Initial engagement at Logtown between Nathaniel Green's Patriots and Lord Rawdon's British forces.

The organizers built a pretty cool log wall to represent a lumber camp just outside of Camden known as Logtown. This is where Nathaniel Green first tried to coax out the British from Camden into a fight. Our entire force of 10 horses started out as American 3rd LD and 2 riders from the 1st LD and we protected the American left and right flanks in the approach in an attempt to take Logtown and draw the British out. We all know in the 18th century and even more so today in the 21st century, it's damn near impossible to get the Brits to move ANYWHERE. So the American force retired to Hobkirk's Hill and awaited further action. The men relaxed and took in breakfast but stayed in ranks. Just as a couple of us had dismounted shots rang out and Pat O'Kelley came to us and calmly exclaimed "why the British are upon us." Everyone formed up and prepared for battle. Lt Harrelson looked for an opportunity but finally we were dispatched to ride around to the British rear to hit some poor walking wounded and convalescents. Actually what we did was ride out of sight to once again completely change clothes to join the British forces. (Thanks again to the young distaff who helped make that change easier.) Having turned coat to Loyalist Dragoons and mounted British infantry we galloped back onto the battle field and positioned on the right side with Jaegers on our right flank in the woods. They took their shots and would then hold fire as we harassed the patriot militia flank. After a couple of charges and the militia taking saber casualties the American Army began to leave the field and we made one last charge after the fleeing enemy. We took some prisoners who were almost immediately paroled. And that concluded our action.

There were two interesting after battle ceremonies worth mentioning. On Saturday, a group of young marines were commissioned after the battle and all the reenactors stood in formation to give them a salute and volley. Very cool. Sunday's finale honored the reenactors who have passed on with similar "present arms" and a memorial volley.

Conclusion

I have personally been looking forward to this event for months. We optimistically hoped for more

riders but understand that work and family come first. It is a volunteer hobby after all. I was happy for every rider and distaff who attended. You all performed admirably with your usual attention to safety. You were asked to do a lot this weekend including uniform changes mid battle. Tiffany was in the crowd on Sunday and overheard numerous praises of the horses and riders.

We absolutely cannot thank Chris Puckett enough for rounding up the vittles and cooking. Thank you to any number of folks who stepped in to help her with firewood or cook detail.

We also would like to extend appreciation to our friends from the 1st Light Dragoons in making the trek from Virginia and Florida. We always enjoy riding and camping with you all and hope to do it again soon.

- Thank you to Edward Harrelson for being the overall dragoon commander. It takes a lot of time and effort behind the scenes to coordinate these events whether you have 10 horses or 30. Couldn't think of a better commander.
- My son Jensen had a great time playing with his reenacting friends and hanging out around the camp. Thank you for being kind and patient with him.
- Finally, I would like to extend thanks to Erick Nason and all the staff of Southern Campaign 1781 for a fantastic event. Water, straw, and firewood were readily available. A great party on Saturday night. Organizing the scenarios. All the work on the battle field and throughout the weekend. Erick, please pass on our compliments to the owners and SoCo1781 staff.

If you were not able to attend, you were greatly missed and hopefully you can make the next one.

Thank you allowing me serve as your company sergeant this weekend. It was both an honor and a pleasure.

Final numbers in attendance,

Total:

11 Dragoons

10 horses

7 distaff

Breakdown:

3rd CLD

Edward Harrelson commanding.

Jesse Tarver NCO

Ron Crawley

Stacy Brogden

Dean Withers

Darryl Brown

Eric Harrelson

Nathan Poston

Chris Puckett (Fire-goddess)

Tom West (distaff)

Benny (distaff and guest of Nathan/Tom)

Jensen Tarver (chief of mischief)

1st CLD from Virginia and Florida

Chris Treichel (officer)
James Morecraft
Edward Brown
3 family members as distaff.

I remain Your Most Humble Servant,
Jesse Tarver