

After Action Report: Brattonsville 2022

Our unit members attended with nine horses with riders and portrayed British Legion dragoons on both Saturday (for the Battle of Huck's Defeat) and Sunday for the Battle of Hills Iron Works.

In attendance we had the following: Chris Puckett, Fire Goddess and head of Distaff, who kept us well victualled during the event. Jesse Tarver (who portrayed Christian Houck) along with his son Jensen, Stacy Brogden, Edward Harrelson, Eric Harrelson, Nathan Poston, Dean Withers, Bert Puckett and a new recruit Joel Koon, who we welcome to our ranks. Eric rode with us Saturday only, and he brought his lovely girlfriend, Megan Alexander as well as my little puppy, Bella, to the event. Stacy was able to ride Saturday, and he missed Sunday's action to support his wife, also Stacy, in her triathlon, which she completed – You go girl! Jesse's bride, Tiffany came out on Saturday with daughter Sawyer to keep us company as well. (We also saw Austin Kirkland again, he lives close by, and we put the pressure on him to re-join the unit. He's even got a horse and all the gear, so we need to get him and his reenacting family out with us more.)

Friday night, we raised our glasses in honor and fond memory of some who we lost recently: Annie and Herb Puckett, Bert's father and step-mother, who were instrumental in forming the Third Dragoons. As members of the Second SC Line, they arranged for our fledgling unit to be insured through the 2nd so we could take the field. The Third operated as a sub-unit under the Second for its first few years until we were able to petition for membership as a full unit within the Continental Line. Herb Puckett was one of the founders of the Second SC Line, and Bert started his reenacting career in 1975 with this unit. We also remembered Jimmie J. Fox, founder of the Second South Carolina/Hampton Legion Cavalry (War Between the States). This unit was where Ron Crawley, Henry McMillan, Dan Murphy and Edward Harrelson started before forming the Third Dragoons for Revolutionary War. J.J. Fox was a career soldier, author, historian, raconteur and amazing individual. He was 87 or so when he passed. No one who knew him can forget him. We also lost (Joseph) Michael "Mike" Booth in 2021. Mike Booth was a member of the Second SC Cavalry / Hampton Legion Cavalry. Mike always wore a handlebar mustache and from all appearances was God's gift to women. He had so much charm, he always had a following at every event. He was an all-around swell guy taken too early (63) with cancer. Ride easy old friends, gone but not forgotten.

The Brattonsville folks were their usual good hosts. In particular, Eli Coburn has made it clear that anytime we want to use the site, either for a full muster or just riding, to let him know and it is ours for the use. They put us in the slave cabin near the battlefield, where we have the nice walnut trees. We used the paddock at night. Brattonsville is often a hot event, and this year was no exception. We did have some breeze, and a short storm Saturday. That resulted in more humidity later, though it cooled us down temporarily. Firewood was challenging, there was plenty, but it was not fully cured and took some effort to keep it burning. The staff came to our rescue after a 4.5 mile ride around the perimeter of the property when we discovered that we'd lost a scabbard. Eli and Austin found it using one of the site's gators so we didn't have to ride the entire loop again.

Saturday's battle with nine mounted was the traditional Huck's defeat in the large field. Jesse took his fall (one wonders how often he'll be willing to do that after recently joining Bert with the distinctive wrist tattoo – i.e. the scar where his surgeons put his wrist back together after a fall in February.) The things one will do for \$100.00! As for payment, the Site also offered the Unit \$400.00 for doing cavalry demonstrations on both Saturday and Sunday, which is welcome. These funds go into the company coffers and help to pay for insurance at the end of the year. The attendance this year by both horse and infantry was a bit more than usual. So much so that after

Captain Houck's fall, we were hemmed in and could hardly exit the battlefield. We had many compliments from spectators and staff who have seen the event in past years who said this year's fight was one of the best. Great job to all. I should note here, that other than the planned fall, we had no falls or injuries this event, no saddles slipping etc. So, kudos to our riders. A safe event is a good event.

On Sunday, we did a new scenario known as the Battle of Hill's Ironworks. Hill's (William Hill) Ironworks was only defended by about fifteen Patriots, the other militia being sent on a sortie. Christian Houck, before his untimely demise the day before (obviously, this happened earlier in the war), fell on the works with horse and foot and killed four and captured seven of its defenders, putting the works to the torch. We had an officer's meeting before the battle and agreed that the defenders would be positioned on the south road where a dragoon charge would force them into the split rail curtilage around the works (the house). Unfortunately, and as is often the case, the understanding of what was supposed to happen differed between my interpretation and that of the militia commander. The Patriots lined up within their works which sort of made our initial charge redundant. (In the actual battle, the militia anticipated Houck would attack from the south, so he rode around and hit them in their rear.) We made the charge anyway, and it made it to YouTube. Looked pretty impressive coming from all the way at the end of the field. After our charge, we retired and detailed a section of four to approach with pistols. Some of us were able to get our temperamental firelocks to work, others clicked away in frustration! The battle was supposed to be pretty quick, and the attacking infantry made relatively short work of the defenders. When the infantry charged the fence line, our horse hit the flank and cut off the survivors' means of retreat. All the rebels were captured and forced to lay down their arms.

The site provided barbecue and other fixings supplemented by dishes from the various unit for the evening meal. No music this year, but we did get to enjoy Bethany's (don't know her last name) pet boar pig, Pineapple, snorting around and cleaning up anything that was dropped.

We were invited to attend a new event in Union Co, SC that will take place October 14-16 at Cross Keys. 163 Old Buncombe Road, Union SC 29379. The Director of the Union Co Museum, Cathryn Smith (864 429 5081 uncomus@bellsouth.net) came out and talked up the event. I know this ground, (Jefferson Davis at a meal at the house when he was fleeing south to avoid capture by US cavalry). There is some room to drill and in October it should be bearable. This would be a good opportunity for a muster. If attending, I'd suggest bringing hay and water to be on the safe side. They'll have some, but new events can be challenging.

All in all, Brattonsville 2022 was a great event. Loads of fun, and we missed those of you who could not attend for various reasons. Let's all plan to take Brattonsville up on its offer to provide a location for drill and rides on their lovely property --- though we might wait for somewhat cooler weather. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of such a good group of living historians.

Edward Harrelson
3d Light Dragoons
British Legion Dragoons