

Battle of the Hook

October 17 thru 19, 2008, Gloucester Court House, Middle Peninsula, Virginia.

Impression: British Legion Detachment under the field command of Edward Harrelson

Organizational point of contact: Dan Murphy and Ron Crawley

Five of our number left South Carolina early Friday morning for the drive to Virginia in two vehicles. With us were troopers Henry McMillan on Lex, John Hudson on Two Socks, Joel Anderson on Sugar Belle, Ron Crawley on Calhoun and Edward Harrelson on Katie. Lieutenant Dan Murphy had to invoke rule number two and take a job in Georgia. (Rule number two says paying the mortgage takes precedence over playing dragoon.) Trooper Don Lyons could not attend due to an arm injury. The trip up was uneventful, though the last half of the drive was in steady rain.

We were very pleased with the signage provided by the event organizers. We found the directions very accurate and each turn was well signed. We even noticed on the way home that there were signs to get participants back to the main roads. Well done!

Once on site after dark and in the rain, it was a bit difficult to locate our correct camp. We traversed the bridge of death, which we later found should not have been attempted with a multi-ton gooseneck trailer filled with horse flesh. We were roundly scorned the morning after by the event organizer for taking our trailers to our camp, notwithstanding the fact that their surrogates directed us to do so. We managed to get one trailer stuck in the mud. After it was freed, we found the trailer parking was on a concrete slab formerly used in the dairy operation. So we had no trouble on Sunday when it was time to go.



We were most excited to have the opportunity to meet and ride with and against some of the northern troops. We renewed our acquaintance with Bob Allegretto who came down from Connecticut with Jose Torres. These gentlemen along with John Koopman and another trooper formed the contingent of Lauzun's Legion. We also met and rode with Jess Phillips of the Seventeenth Light Dragoons and we were joined on Saturday by James (Joyce) Henry of

Williamsburg who fell in with us in green to portray the British Legion. On Sunday, we were down to just the five of us and Jess Phillips, whose horse was uncooperative both days. The U.S. side added four dragoons from Williamsburg, with the section being commanded by Stuart Lilie. So, on Sunday we were significantly outnumbered. We also had more attrition in our troops on Sunday with John Hudson tumbling off twice and Ron Crawley's horse needing to be removed from the field for safety reasons.

Saturday morning afforded us the opportunity to ride first thing with Maj. Allegretto and Sgt. Torres. We covered the battlefield grounds and found the field to be remarkably well drained, considering we had about twelve hours of rain the preceding day. We returned to find an emaciated horse tied near our picket line and were later informed it belonged to Glenn Garwood of the 4th dragoons. For some reason known only to him, it was deemed prudent to bring a skeletal horse, albeit an otherwise seemingly healthy animal, to an event where the public could be stunned by the sick-looking beast. We had the pleasure of attending to our campfire, closest to the animal, and explaining that it was not our horse to the multitude of onlookers, many of whom thought the humane society should be contacted. I for one thought the attendance by such an unhealthy looking animal was the acme of foolishness. This kind of demonstration can give our hobby a black eye. In my opinion, the event organizers should have ordered it removed.



As for the battles... Saturday's battle had our Legion troops face Lauzun's French Hussars. We operated primarily on the British right, though we occasionally covered the left flank near the spectator line. The British fell back into works for the second half of the battle and dueled with the rebel artillery. We were able to keep the enemy cavalry from seriously threatening our flanks throughout the engagement. The high point for Saturday was charging lancers for the first time. Engaging a lancer adds a whole new degree of difficulty to a swordsman.

On Sunday, we were seriously outnumbered. We faced seven effective troops on the French and rebel side. Our numbers began at six, but Captain Phillips was unwilling to charge with his animal, and the eventual loss of two of our dragoons forced us to engage only cautiously. There were three high points to Sunday's engagement. First, most of our charges were right in front of the spectator line, and certainly the first few passes with all of our



troops were loud clashes of swords. Second, even with diminished numbers, we were able to overrun an exposed cannon on the rebel's right flank with no casualties on our part. We forced the deployment of a company of infantry to the flank, effectively removing them for a while as a threat to the British lines. Third, once the British forces were all drawn into the redoubt on the left, we repositioned our three effectives to the extreme right of the line. There the British skirmishers held small detached works against militia riflemen. After a crisp rifle volley, our infantry broke and withdrew. With fortunate timing on our part, we slammed into the charging militia and completely broke their momentum. By providing this relief to our troops, we were rewarded with the compliment from the British sergeant, "I have never been so happy to see Dragoons before!" I thought this charge was one of the more accurate uses of our Dragoons during the entire weekend. Too bad it was on a relatively insignificant and removed corner of the field.

In sum, the weekend was a good one. The rain on Friday let up and we had dry days for Saturday and Sunday. We were blessed by locals bringing steamed crabs and seafood chowder to us in our camps on Saturday night. We ate well and performed adequately. We were able to make and renew some acquaintances with horsemen from the north. It is our hope that in the coming years we will enjoy hosting some of these troops on our southern battlefields.



Respectfully submitted,

Edward Harrelson

Brevet Lieutenant, commanding.