

THE ADVANCE

SO LONG 2020! This year has been very difficult for everyone! We are all certainly ready for 2021 to be much better. The Friends are making some tentative plans for 2021, but we wanted to share with you what we did in 2020. We look forward to working with and hopefully seeing all of you in the coming year! Please stay healthy and here is toasting to you and a prosperous New Year!

The Short Life of Charles Parsons' Battery

By Kurt Holman, Retired Perryville Battlefield Superintendent.

In September 1862, newly appointed Brigadier General William R Terrill arrived in Louisville. He made his name and rank by serving gallantly in the Artillery, specifically as a battery commander in the 5th US Regular Artillery. Charles C. Parsons also found himself in Louisville. Parsons' was in the 1861 class of West Point and was a First Lieutenant in the 4th U.S Artillery. Home recovering from ill health, he was cut off and unable to rejoin his command, then at Nashville, because of General Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky. The 24-year-old Parsons reported to the authorities in Louisville, offering his services. He was assigned to General Terrill's brigade.

Terrill's new 33rd brigade was made up of new troops with next to no training. Terrill and Parsons attempted to find an artillery battery for the brigade. Being none available, they proceeded to create one. They had access to five, 12pdr "Napoleon" guns, two, 12pdr field howitzers, and one, 10pdr Parrott rifled cannon. The battery was also allocated a hundred horses, 16 limbers, 8 caissons, and all the related equipment and accouterments. The problem was manpower. On September 17th, the Union Garrison at Munfordville, KY was surrounded and captured. Among the captured at Munfordville, were batteries D and G of the 1st Ohio Light



The 15th Ky Position looking toward HP Bottom House Image by Mark Lowry



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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PARSONS' BATTERY CONT.



Lt. Charles Parsons

Artillery. 24 men from Battery D and 20 men from Battery G happened to be in Louisville when the rest of their comrades were captured. These men were assigned to Parsons' Battery under the command of Nathaniel M. Newell of Battery D. These 44 men operated Parsons' two 12pdr field howitzers. These were the only trained artillerists available. The balance of the battery personnel, were detached from the 105th Ohio Infantry Regiment, who had only been in the service a month and hardly had any infantry

training and no training in artillery. Terrill's new artillery was named "Parsons' Improved Battery"

Newell's section (a section consists of two guns) made up the far left of the battery. The far right section was commanded by 1st Lieutenant Henry Harrison Cumings of Company D, 105th Ohio Infantry. One of the interior sections was commanded by 2nd Lieutenant William H. Osborn of Company I, 105th Ohio. It is unknown who commanded the remaining section of Parsons'

The 6th Tennessee, observing that the fire from the battery had slackened considerably, attempted to take the guns by Force Majeure. The battery opened a devastating fire at close range with double canister, breaking the 6th Tennessee as if it had been hit with a hammer.

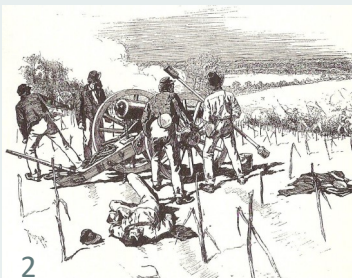
General George Maney

"Our advance...came on a large body of Federal troops strongly posted on a hill top. Directly on top of the hill was stationed a battery of six guns."

Lt. James Hall, 9th TN

"We were rushed...up into that tornado of lead and iron sweeping that knoll to save Parsons' Battery—planted in advance—where nearly every man in the battery had been killed or wounded."

Charles K. Radcliff, 105th Ohio



Battery. The battery numbered 136 men. The infantry of Terrill's Brigade consisted of a small battalion of 3 companies that escaped the Union debacle at Richmond, KY on August 30. This unit, called "Garrard's Detachment" consisted of 194 Kentucky and East Tennessee men commanded by T.T. Garrard. The brigade also included the 80th and 123rd Illinois Regiments, the 101st Indiana Regiment, and the 105th Ohio Regiment. With the exception of about 200 men, this Brigade, consisting of over 3,000 men had little to no training and certainly had seen no combat.

On Oct. 1, 1862, Buell's Army of the Ohio marched out of Louisville, ready or not. With the exception of the hot, dusty weather, lack of water, and lack of physical conditioning of the men, the march from Louisville was uneventful. Although not confirmed, Parsons and Terrill most certainly tried to train the novice artillerymen on the march. One of Terrill's great failings in this campaign was his over-attention to the artillery. He was still an artilleryman at heart and did not expend much of his time or effort thinking about the infantry. A few days before the Battle of Perryville, the 101st Indiana was detached from the brigade to guard the division's supply train. This left Terrill's brigade with only 2,400 men, right before it's major battle.

The night before the Battle of Perryville found Terrill and his men (along with the rest of Union Army First Corps) camped in around the small town of Mackville. The Corps consisted of half seasoned veterans and half raw recruits. Since they marched out of Louisville, the two divisions of First Corps would take turns leading the column so one division would not have to eat the dust of the other day after day.

On the morning of Oct. 8, it was the turn of the raw recruits to lead. Since the enemy was believed to be nearby, the decision was made to have the veterans lead the way for the second day in a row. Upon arrival on the field at Perryville, the veteran division continued on towards Perryville and the raw recruits turned left at the Dixville Crossroads to take up a flanking position on the left. The other raw brigade, commanded by George P. Webster, stayed on the hill just east of the crossroads. While Terrill's Brigade continued NW on the Dixville Road. This unfortunate turn of events would place Terrill's Brigade in the most exposed position of any other brigade in the Union Army. The commanders rode ahead. Terrill selected the position for his battery, which would be forever known as "Parsons' Hill". He directed Parsons where to place his battery and sent word back to the colonels to hurry up their infantry regiments. Cut off from the rest of their division, a brigade of veteran troops commanded by John Starkweather cut across country and occupied a high ridge behind Terrill's Brigade.

Just as Parsons was in the process of setting up his battery, they were attacked by an entire C.S. division of veteran, combat-experienced soldiers. The initial Confederate attack was made to the far right of Parsons and not directly at him. Still, the few guns already in place had to be reset to counter this first attack. Soon after, another veteran C.S. brigade commanded by General George Maney, a mere 500 yards away, rose out of the Northwest with its sights set firmly on Parsons' Battery. Because of what was termed a "misdirection of the guide" (meaning somebody got lost), the infantry of Terrill's brigade came to the battlefield piecemeal. The 123rd Illinois Infantry was laying down behind of and in support of Parsons' Battery. When Maney's men appeared, Terrill, panicked and, afraid of losing his precious battery, ordered the ill-trained, totally inexperienced, and jittery 123rd Illinois to get on their feet and charge the veteran Confederates. This action was, of course, disastrous for the Union position because the already disorganized 123rd quickly became scattered and fled from the field. Had they stayed where they were and ordered to open fire on Maney's men from the reverse slope of the hill, the outcome of the day would have been very different. This is a perfect example of Terrill's obsession with his cannons and his apathetic treatment of his infantry. Instead of driving away the threat to his guns, the useless waste of the 123rd caused Parsons' battery to be virtually defenseless. Just as the Illinois soldiers were streaming off the field

in a panic, the 105th Ohio was arriving into the already chaotic situation. Both Parsons, Terrill, and their Division Commander, General James S. Jackson were all trying to get the battery set up. Terrill also ordered the 105th Ohio to charge, but luckily for the Union cause, they ignored him and set up a devastating fire onto the Confederates in the small valley below. Maney's brigade would lose 40% of its men in this battle and, by Confederate accounts, most of these casualties were inflicted by the rifles of the 105th Ohio. The Confederates were stuck (psychologically anyway) behind a split rail fence separating the woods they were in and the open field where Terrill's men were. The Confederates tried to break through.

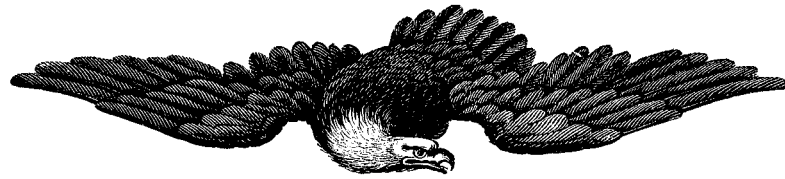
From General Maney's Report:

"The 6th Tennessee, observing that the fire from the battery had slackened considerably, attempted to take the guns by Force Majeure. The battery opened a devastating fire at close range with double canister, breaking the 6th Tennessee as if it had been hit with a hammer."

About this time, James S. Jackson, Terrill's immediate superior and Division commander, was killed instantly. Parsons and Terrill still only had five of the eight guns in action. After repeated attacks against the 105th and Parsons' Battery, the Union line began to break up and fall back in disarray. An attack squarely on their left flank by Wharton's Confederate cavalry was the last straw that broke the Union line. Just as the line was breaking, the remaining infantry of Terrill's brigade arrived, but it was too late and they were caught up on the panicked retreat. Parsons himself remained with his deserted guns and was literally dragged to safety to keep him from being killed or captured. Ironically, the two Howitzers commanded by the men of the 1st Ohio Artillery never had a chance to be deployed. One of these was saved because it was never unhitched from its horses, the other 7 guns were captured.

From Confederate Lt. Turner:

"After night, I received orders from Captain M. Smith to send my horses and limbers to the front, and withdraw some of the enemy's guns which had been captured, the enemy having taken off most of their limbers with their horses. I brought off all I could find, amounting to five 12-pounder Napoleon guns, one 12-pounder howitzer gun, and one [10]-pounder Parrott gun, with two limbers and two caissons, without limbers, filled with ammunition for the Napoleon guns."



THE HOMEFRONT

Greetings! I hope the Holiday Season is joyful for you all! We are all looking forward to a New Year. 2021 we are all hopeful will be a much better year. This past year has been challenging, but we did complete several great projects which are highlighted in the newsletter.

I am always amazed and grateful at the amount of volunteer effort we have, even in a year when getting together has been difficult at best. We came together to get some major things completed and in the upcoming year we plan to come together to complete other major projects.

The American Battlefield Trust recently gained another 60 acre acquisition known as Steedman's Advance. We stand ready to work to remove structures and do the land restoration work.

We are beginning a fund raising effort to assist the State Historic Site in replacing the static field artillery's wooden wheels to aluminum. We, of course, need your generous assistance in this effort.

Finally let us all remember that history is important to a strong and thriving nation. The remembrance of the fields upon which our nation is defined is worthy of our protection and advocacy. I urge you all to become involved in historic preservation, whether it be the old buildings in your downtown or the National Park System's holdings. Make your voice heard! Contact your elected officials and let them know that your history is worth preserving.

Chad Greene
Friends of Perryville Battlefield

Yearly Financial Report

Promotions and Events \$2,877.00
Operating Expenses \$2,425.00
Museum Exhibits \$3,155.00
Preservation and Conservation \$7,207.00

We like to let you know how we spent your donations! We also want to acknowledge the hundreds of hours volunteers spent this year. We could not have completed any of these projects without you! THANK YOU!

FRIENDS OF PERRYVILLE 2020 PROJECTS

GUNS OF THE WEST

With much help from our partners we completed the Guns of the West Exhibit. This is now part of Perryville's permanent display.

Many thanks to Wide Awake Films in St. Louis for their contribution of the educational short film. It features an artillery crew operating a gun.

Many thanks to Mike Stretch of Branding Ground Graphics for his awesome graphic designs.

Our continued appreciation to Mr. Alan Hoeweler for his loan of Greenwood 20, Simonson's 5th Indiana Battery.



Friends President Chad Greene and our good friend Steve Zahn erecting signage after modern fences were removed from Parsons' Hill.

RETURNING THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

The American Battlefield Trust is a significant partner in the preservation at Perryville. The last remaining section of Maney's advance was recently acquired.

It came with 150 years of farming debris. The Friends went to work! With monumental effort we completed that project in less than 3 months!



Maney's right flank troops including the 41st GA and 1st TN advanced around the Open Knob or Parsons' Hill. This landscape was totally obscured by the remnants of habitation throughout the late 19th and 20th Century. After careful documentation and planning the Friends began debris removal and structure demolition.



Maney's right flank movements can now be clearly interpreted. An infantryman who participated in that advance would now recognize this part of the battlefield. The historic viewshed returned as it appeared on October 8, 1862!



THE ROLL OF HONOR - OUR 2020 SUPPORTERS

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Alan and Arleen Hoeweler
Gary Nogle
Danny Preston
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Division

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FRIENDS OF PERRYVILLE BATTLEFIELD

Mission Statement:

The purpose of The Friends of Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site shall be to sustain, foster, promote and further the interests of the historic site which will be encompassed by the boundaries of the park. The Friends Group shall conduct fund raising and friend raising activities in connection with these purposes. The activities of the group shall be charitable in nature within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Friends of Perryville Battlefield

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Parsons' Battery Cont. The initial Confederate attack started at 2:00pm. Parsons' Hill fell at about 3. The newly minted Parsons' Independent Battery lasted only one hour in battle. After the capture of the battery, little is mentioned about the actions of Lieutenant Parsons. He is mentioned with praise in many reports by his superiors. When the reports talk about the loss of the battery, it is also mentioned that it was not Parsons' fault. Given the man's character, it may be assumed that he carried on fighting with his remaining gun, or with some other battery. As the survivors of Terrill's Brigade took refuge behind Starkweather's Brigade, Terrill himself was mortally wounded by an artillery shell. He died at about 2am the next morning. Although driven back to the next ridge, Starkweather's men held the line. The Confederates retreated during the night, the 33rd Brigade was no more. Parsons' Improvised Battery was no more. The Battle of Perryville ended both organizations.

With the relief of Nashville, Parson rejoined his unit. At the Battle of Stones River, now Captain Parsons, commanding batteries M and H of the 4th U.S Artillery where he did excellent service. In 1868, Parsons met and developed a deep friendship with Episcopal Bishop Charles Todd Quintard. During the war Quintard was a Chaplain in Maney's Brigade and witnessed Parsons' heroics at Perryville. Quintard recruited Parsons into the Episcopal church where the latter resigned from the army as a colonel in 1870.

Parsons was ordained as a deacon in the Episcopal Church in St. Mary's Cathedral, Memphis, Tennessee, in 1870, and again as priest a few months afterward at the same place. Both offices were performed by his friend Bishop Quintard. Parsons was rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, in Memphis, a short time; then of St. Mary's, at Cold Spring, New York, for several years, and then of the Stevens' Memorial Church, in Hoboken, New Jersey. His wife Celia died while he was at Hoboken, and his grief led him to resign his charge there, and go back to Memphis, where he remained as rector of Grace Church until his death.

Never being a man to abandon his post, Charles C. Parsons remained in Memphis doing his duty during the great Yellow Fever outbreak there on September 6th, 1878 he was one of the 5,000+ who died there.



We need your help! Artillery on static display around the Battlefield is deteriorating. We are rallying to raise funds to replace three sets of wooden wheels with aluminum. This will ensure the longevity of static artillery displays which are crucial to understanding the battle. You can donate at www.friendsofperryville.org and please indicate that your donation is for the artillery wheels. You can also mail a check directly to Friends of Perryville at PO Box 302 Perryville KY 40468. Please indicate that your donation is for artillery wheels! 8