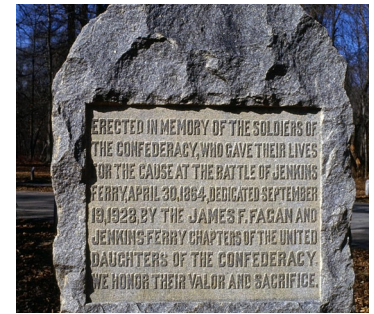


THE BATTLE CRY



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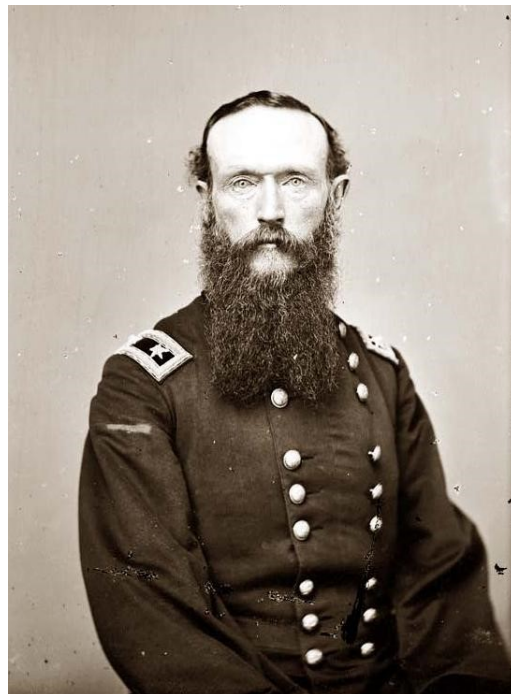
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BATTLE OF JENKINS' FERRY

NEXT PROGRAM

Nov. 15. Rodney Kite-Powell, "Judah P. Benjamin in Florida."

Meetings 2nd Tues. of the month (7 pm) GRACE CHURCH ADULT ANNEX, 8000 Bee Ridge Rd, Sarasota, FL 34236. *On Occasion time and location of the meeting will be changed.*



General Frederick Steele, USA

General Kirby Smith, CSA

April 30, 1864 (in today's Grant County, Arkansas) at a point on the Saline river, "one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War occurred." (Dillard, *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*). The place called, "Jenkins' Ferry" "became the site of a battle that produced an estimated 531 (US) and 443 (CS) casualties.

General Steele's federal forces reached Jenkins' Ferry, Arkansas on the Saline River at 2:00 p.m. on April 29, 1864 in their retreat from Camden, Arkansas to their base at Little Rock, Arkansas. They found that the river was swollen by heavy rain. The rain continued in torrents on April 29 and the riverbank and approaches became a quagmire of mud and standing water. The tired and famished federal troops could not construct their pontoon bridge and get their wagons and artillery out of the mud and over the river during the night, although the federal cavalry did get across. Since the federal commanders realized that Kirby Smith's Confederate forces were rushing to catch up to them, a United States Army rear guard built breastworks and took a formidable defensive position to oppose the Confederates when they arrived in force on the morning of April 30. With Steele continuing to supervise the river crossing, Brigadier-General Friedrich Salomon should have commanded the rear guard action against the pursuing Confederates but he left the task to Brigadier-General Samuel Rice and 4,000 federal infantrymen.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS

- **What Kentuckian headed the Kentucky State Guard, refused a commission in the Union Army, and fled south to avoid arrest as a suspected traitor?**
- **What was the source of the long standing quarrel between President Jefferson Davis and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston?**
- **What were the Iron-clad, Fort Sumter, Headquarters,, U.S.A., and the Blue Goose?**
- **How many ships were captured, burned, or sunk by the Confederate Raider Alabama?**
- **Little Round Top outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was not known by that name prior to the battle in July, 1863. What else was it called?**



Battle

Before dawn on April 30, 1864, Marmaduke's Confederate cavalry troopers arrived near Jenkins' Ferry, dismounted and skirmished with Steele's rear guard infantry force about 2 miles (3.2 km) from the Saline River crossing. Rice had placed the federal forces behind breastworks, abatis and rifle pits.¹ Rice's lines were protected by Cox Creek, sometimes shown as Toxie Creek on the right. While some accounts have stated that the federal position was bordered by an impassable cane swamp on one side and thick, rain-drenched timber on the other, other sources state that the left flank was vulnerable and only after failed Confederate efforts to turn his left flank did Rice extend the left end of his line until it rested on a steep wooded slope. The difficult approach to the federal position was only about four hundred yards wide and would allow at most only 4,000 Confederate infantry to attack at one time. In the event, the Confederates attacked in an even more piecemeal manner.

Price first committed the infantry under Brigadier-General Thomas Churchill and then the infantry under Brigadier-General Mosby Parsons to the battle as soon as they arrived on the field. In turn, they each made little headway because they had no cover for an attack and the approach to the federal position was ankle to knee deep in mud and pools of water. These Confederate divisions were sent into the attack piecemeal, brigade by brigade, not in a more concentrated effort. Gunpowder smoke added to a blanket of fog soon after the battle began. This smoke and fog made it nearly impossible for the opposing forces to see each other except by crouching down low. This served to help the defenders more since they were mainly lying behind their works and not attempting to get to them through the mud as the Confederate attackers were attempting to do. They also could simply fire into a narrow area where the Confederates had to attack and achieve effective results. The mud and standing water prevented cavalry and artillery from participating much in the battle. In fact, the Confederates lost three artillery pieces to a charge by the 2nd Kansas Colored Infantry and the 29th Iowa Infantry regiments from their fortified positions.¹

After Price's forces under Brigadier-Generals Churchill and Parsons had made little progress, Kirby Smith came up with the large Texas infantry division under Major-General John Walker. Walker carried on the attack in the same manner as the previous divisions had done, brigade by brigade.¹ All three Confederate brigade commanders under Walker were wounded in these attacks, two of them, Brigadier-General William Scurry and Colonel Horace Randal were mortally wounded. U.S. Brigadier-General Samuel Rice also was mortally wounded in the final Confederate assault at Jenkins' Ferry. After taking about 1,000 casualties in their repeated attacks against the well-fortified federal troops while inflicting only about 700 casualties on the defenders, including the capture of stragglers, the Confederates gave up the piecemeal attacks on the federal position. Before leaving the field, some African-American soldiers of the 2nd Kansas Colored regiment shot Confederate wounded near Rice's line in retaliation for the shooting of African-American soldiers who were trying to surrender at Poison Spring and the killing of wounded African-American soldiers at Marks' Mill. crossed the Saline River with all their remaining men and the artillery pieces and equip-

Battle

ment, and supply wagons which were not irretrievably stuck in the mud, which they burned. Steele's forces were compelled to abandon many more wagons in the swamp north of the Saline River. The Confederates did not renew the attack as Steele's men crossed the pontoon bridge on the afternoon of April 30. Not only were the Confederates exhausted from the morning's battle, but the federal forces had set up artillery and infantry on the opposite side of the river to protect the remaining federal soldiers as they crossed the bridge. After crossing the Saline River, Steele's forces cut and burned the pontoon bridge, which they would not need for the remainder of their march. With no way to get across the river, the Confederates could not follow them. By not trapping Steele's force at Camden or cutting them off before they reached the Saline River, the Confederates under Kirby Smith lost a good chance to destroy Steele's army, which was the major portion of federal forces in Arkansas. After crossing the river and three days' further march, Steele's forces regrouped within the fortifications of Little Rock.

WINSLOW HOMER'S CIVIL WAR

Harvardgazette, April 9, 2012

American artist Winslow Homer (1836-1910) — the self-taught master best known today for his scenes of nature and the sea — got his start as one of the “special artists” of the Civil War. They were the combat correspondents of their day, traveling and living with soldiers. Their sketches, woodcuts, and paintings showed both the horror of battle and the makeshift respite of camp life. Printed by the thousands, these images gave the American public a visual sense of the war.



Homer grew up in what was then rural Cambridge, and by 1859 had a studio on 10th Street in New York. In March 1861 he was hired by Harper's Weekly to illustrate Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address — and then stayed on with the magazine when the Civil War began a month later. Off and on, Homer spent the next four years documenting the conflict. (For a time he was attached to the 5th New York Infantry, a unit known as Duryee's Zouaves.) He sketched a war of action, color, and carnage — but he didn't ignore the lulls in between, when soldiers lounged in camp thinking of home.

Homer's Civil War days, represented by two paintings, drew a small, intent audience to the Arthur M. Sackler Museum last week. The occasion was the latest in a series of gallery talks sponsored by the Harvard Art Museums. Melissa Renn, senior curatorial associate, and senior museum educator Judith Murray provided commentary on the two works: “Pitching Quoits” and “The Brush Harrow.”

Both are dated 1865, but could hardly be more different. The first depicts Zouave soldiers — resplendent in their trademark red fezzes, short jackets, and billowing scarlet pants — pitching quoits in a crowded Army camp. (They were actually pitching horseshoes, said Renn.) The painting's dramatic use of color marks it as a Homer, Renn said, and its composition shows both romantic and classical influences.



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In this detail, the dramatic use of color in “Pitching Quoits” marks it as a Homer, Renn said, and its and classical influences.

The second painting shows two boys, one mounted on a U.S.-branded horse drawing a harrow across a barren field. That they were boys, that there were no men, and that the scrawny horse had seen Army service are all oblique acknowledgements of the exhausting war that had just ended. Critics recognize this outwardly peaceful scene as a Civil War painting as much as any battle scene could be — and that it is tender, sensitive, and poignant. To Murray, this rural scene embodies Lincoln’s wish in his second inaugural — that Americans set aside malice and “bind up the nation’s wounds.”

It also shows, she added, “the presence of the absence” — a scene that speaks to a fact of life following the war. It was an immense killing field, with a death toll of 750,000.

Murray helped develop the Engaging New Americans project at the Harvard Art Museums. It’s designed to introduce immigrants to American culture, and to show “how works of art really speak,” she said. “The Brush Harrow” is a frequent centerpiece of the classes.

In his Civil War work, said Renn, Homer never depicted dead soldiers — a commonplace otherwise in newspapers of the time. Nor did Homer depict battle scenes as heroic.

But he was not shy about the facts. Perhaps his best-known illustration from the war is “The Army of the Potomac – A Sharp-Shooter on Picket Duty” (1862). It depicts a Union sniper poised in a tree and peering through a scope mounted on his long rifle. Art historians praise it for its “dramatic diagonals,” said Renn. But to Homer it was a tragedy, and sharpshooters were the grim technicians of modern rifle technology. “I always had a horror,” he wrote later, “of that branch of service.”