

Chickamauga 2023 After Action Report

As I had the honor of commanding the Cumberland Guard battalion, I respectfully submit this report.

Upon arrival, I found that the Cumberland Guard battalion's camp site had been moved to a field across from the rest of the infantry due to the larger-than-expected numbers in the other battalions. That is a good problem to have, and I liked the location of the new camp. We were in a field all to ourselves and we had plenty of room. Thankfully, Marty Walker had gotten down there on Wednesday and marked out the streets.

Our battalion was a diverse bunch. We had folks from one end of the country to the other. We had soldiers from northern Michigan all the way to Key West!

The battlefield itself was beautiful; one of the best I have seen in years. A natural amphitheater allowed both spectators and participants to see the entire battle clearly. It was a hike to get there and back from the camps, but nothing different than what we have seen at other nationals. In fact, I can remember marching a lot farther at Shiloh and Gettysburg.

We had three battles, two on Saturday and one on Sunday.

Saturday morning, we formed up in the dark and marched off. That is always challenging, and especially so with the rough ground. We were in place for the battle at sunrise, which was very picturesque. The battle itself featured us supporting the cavalry as they battled the CSA infantry. As we were in the reserve, we did not fire much. But we made up for that in the other two battles.

Saturday afternoon was supposed to be Longstreet's breakthrough. However, the script went off the rails from the beginning. This being a national, that is a tradition. The numbers were obviously much higher than Perryville, and it showed. It was neat seeing columns of regiments and an actual troop-sized group of cavalry for each side.

Sunday afternoon's battle found us as the left flank of the Union army. We had some dismounted cavalry to help, but otherwise we were tasked with holding off a furious assault by the rebels. Among the enemy forces we faced we identified elements of the 44th Tennessee. We bent but did not break. Some fellows from the 66th Illinois and their repeaters were sent to us and proved crucial by laying down a great deal of defensive fire. The battle unfortunately ended with a medical situation where someone fell off their horse. But I do not believe they suffered a significant injury.

The weather was about as well as could be expected for that time of year in Georgia. No rain, and while warm during the day, it got surprisingly chilly at night. Although the weather was not particularly hot, the long marches to the battlefield did cause some heat issues, especially on Saturday afternoon. We also had an injury where a fellow tripped over a stump and sprained/broke his hand.

My compliments go to HQ who had an even more thankless job as usual over the weekend dealing with some unique challenges. Folks who have not done it have no conception how hard a job it is, and I tip my hat to them.

Lastly, I would like to thank my company commanders, Captains Walker, Fulford, Gamble, Shogren and Boyce for their hard work and cooperative spirit. The Cumberland Guard battalion was the best out there, and all credit goes to them.

Respectfully,

Col. Scott Lawalin