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**Philip St. George Cooke**. *Cavalry Tactics, or Regulations for the Instruction, Formations, and Movements of the Cavalry of the Army and Volunteers of the United States.* Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004. 416 pp. $19.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8117-0114-3.

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The Manual for U.S. Cavalrymen in the Civil War

In August of 1861, a Shiawassee County Michigan farmer named Egbert Maben enlisted in the Union Army as a cavalryman. He served in Company D of the 1st Michigan Cavalry and over the next four years saw action with the Union Army in the eastern theater, including a dramatic charge on the third day of the battle at Gettysburg. After the war he was transferred, along with other Michigan cavalry units, to the Dakota, Utah, Colorado and Nebraska territories to guard against Indians. He was mustered out of the service in March of 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Egbert Maben returned to Shiawassee County to resume his peacetime life, eventually moving on to Kansas and ultimately to Oregon. Now, 140 years later, I have had the opportunity to read and review the manual that governed the military life of my great-great-grandfather in his service during the Civil War.

The author of this book, Philip St. George Cooke, was a native of Leesburg, Virginia. He graduated from West Point in 1827 and he was a cavalry veteran of the Black Hawk War, the Mexican War, and frontier service. During the Crimean War (1853-1856) he served as a military observer for the War Department. When he returned, the War Department asked him to modernize the U.S. Cavalry based on what he had observed. The result was this manual, originally published in 1860, which became the standard for U.S. Cavalry operations during the Civil War and for years afterwards. In spite of his Virginia roots, Philip St. George Cooke remained loyal to the Union and in federal service during the Civil War, while his son served in the Confederate army and his daughter was married to Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart. Cooke retired in 1873 and he died in 1895.

The reproduction of the 1862 Government Printing Office edition that is the subject of this review combined the original two volumes into one physical volume. Part 1 (originally volume 1) is subtitled, "School of the Trooper, of the Platoon, and of the Squadron." It begins with basic instructions and definitions, including how to care for, train, and ride a horse (obviously vital information for a cavalryman). The manual gives instructions for a dismounted trooper, including how to handle a saber and pistol. It then works its way up the military hierarchy to instructions for a mounted trooper, then a mounted platoon, and finally a mounted squadron. The instructions are detailed in the commands and proper movements of the units.

Part 2 (originally volume 2) is subtitled, "Evolution of a Regiment and of the Line" and it continues the instructions begun in part 1, building on the previous sections with a colonel in command of a regiment and a brigadier general in command of a line. Each lesson and/or procedure is numbered and frequently previous numbers are cited for further guidance and instruction. Part 2 even includes a chapter titled, "Special Service of Cavalry in the West," with detailed instructions on setting up camp, caring for the horses, marching, and providing escort. The manual has many illustrations and even the bugle signals to be used in different situations.

The manual is a fascinating glimpse into the life of a U.S. cavalryman during the Civil War. The amount of training and practice that these units must have gone through to learn all the different maneuvers and procedures was a surprise. At times it is hard to visualize what the different maneuvers look like, but the detailed instructions make clear that a great deal of organization and precision was required of the officers and enlisted men. The training and discipline was made evident when it came to the key moment for the 1st Michigan Cavalry. On July 3, 1863 on Rummel Farm east of Gettysburg, General J.E.B. Stuart and his Confederate cavalrymen at-

tempted to open a second front and perform a flanking move on the main Union forces. The Union cavalry facing Stuart was commanded by General David Gregg and included General George Armstrong Custer. At about 2 p.m. the battle began in earnest with the 5th and 6th Michigan Cavalry engaging the Confederates. Eventually Custer led the 7th Michigan Cavalry into the battle. The Confederates held their position and then counterattacked. At this point Custer saw that the situation was critical and the Union forces were in danger of being swept off the field. He then rode to the head of the 1st Michigan which was starting to move forward under orders from their commanding officer, Colonel Charles Town. Custer stood up in his stirrups and led the 1st Michigan into the fight. Eyewitnesses reported that every man was "yelling like a demon" and when the two forces clashed the sound was similar to "the falling of timber."[1] The battle raged for ten minutes and then other Union forces joined the battle, flanking the Confederates and forcing them to retire.

In his official report on the battle, Custer stated, "I cannot find language to express my high appreciation of the gallantry and daring displayed by the officers and men of the First Michigan Cavalry. They advanced to the charge of a vastly superior force with as much order and precision as if going on parade, and I challenge the annals of warfare to produce a more brilliant or successful charge of cavalry than the one just recounted."[2] Interestingly, the 1st Michigan violated one guideline for a cavalry charge in the manual: in part 2, page 64, the manual states, "In charging infantry, the troopers shout; against cavalry, silence is recommended." Apparently Custer chose to overlook this error.

This edition provides a reference foundation for how a United States Army cavalry unit was organized and trained. It does not read as a novel, although some sections are more readable than others. The example of the 1st Michigan at Gettysburg shows how in the heat of battle, the instructions in Cooke's book were not always followed by the cavalry units. However, the discipline that was a result of the training detailed in the book was revealed by the 1st Michigan at Gettysburg. This book provides a basic understanding of the theory and goals of cavalry operations in the Civil War, but its value for evaluating actual combat operations is less certain.

Notes

[1]. Roger L. Rosentreter, "Come on you Wolverines: Michigan at Gettysburg," *Michigan History* 82 (July/Aug. 1998) no. 4: pp. 114-120.

[2]. George A. Custer in Frederick Whittaker, *A Complete Life of Gen. George A. Custer: Major-General of Volunteers; Brevet Major-General, U. S. Army; and Lieutenant-Colonel, Seventh U.S. Cavalry* (New York: Sheldon, 1876), p. 178.

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