

Mail Call

BEGINNING MI's 20th YEAR

Editor:

As always, **MI** exceeds my every wish for a fine Civil War publication. Thanks to you and a multitude of generous collectors, a legacy of many fine soldiers will exist well into the next century.

Bob Coch
Flat Rock, Michigan

Editor:

MI is an important magazine, necessary for both experienced and beginning collectors of military images of all periods. It's a great reference.

Donald Sprague
Littleton, Colorado

Editor:

You've maintained the quality of **MI** from Issue #1 to the present. Congratulations.

Maurice Scully
Loch Arbour, New Jersey

SOUTH CAROLINA CORRECTION

Editor:

My article, *The Man Who Could Be King*, was published in Vol. XVII, No. 2, September-October 1995. The lead picture of Colonel Rion, on page 9, was captioned by me as "James H. Rion as a young officer in the 25th Regiment, South Carolina Militia." This was because of my interpretation of the "6" inside the bugle ornament on his hat as referring to the 6th Brigade S.C. Militia, of which the 25th Regiment was a part. Also, a major's or Lt. colonel's oak leaves appeared to be on his shoulder straps, not the eagles of a colonel.

I have recently acquired a copy of a letter written by Colonel Rion on May 8, 1861, which I think invalidates that identification. I now believe the caption should have read, "James H. Rion as the Colonel of the newly formed 6th South Carolina Volunteers." His description of the uniform, cap and cap ornament match those in the picture. The gold "6" in the "silver bugle" represents the 6th South Carolina. Had there been oak leaves on the shoulder straps, they would have been in the same position as the captain's bars shown in his letter.

The nature of the insignia mounted on the shoulder straps is still in doubt. One would normally expect an eagle if they conformed to those prescribed for U.S. Army officers. However, the 1861 South

Carolina uniform orders, as described in *American Civil War Armies (4): State Troops of Osprey's Men-At-War Series*, states that "colonels were to wear a gold Palmetto tree instead of an eagle." This probably explains Rion's insignia.

However, not all the descriptions in the letter, nor in Rion's picture, are consistent with the 1861 orders as given in Osprey. "Officers, according to the 1861 orders, were to wear dark blue frock coats and trousers like those of US Army officers. [Rion's letter says the pants are light blue.] The trousers were to have a 1½ inch-wide stripe for field grade officers and above, and an inch-wide stripe for company officers. Stripes were to be gold for generals and divisional and brigade staff officers; silver for field-grade officers and regimental staff, and white for company-grade officers. [The letter says the stripes for this company-grade officer was 1/8 -inch and dark blue.] Coat buttons were to be gilt for generals and staff officers and silver for regimental officers. (In fact, all state buttons appear to have been gilt.)" [The letter agrees with the silver Palmetto buttons.]

"Hats varied. Company-grade officers had blue wool kepis with a silver Palmetto tree badge in front, with regimental number on the left as viewed, and the letter 'R' on the right. This style of cap was to be worn in undress by all officers; however generals and staff officers were to wear a gold wreath surrounding the letters 'SCV' as their cap badge, while field officers were to wear their regimental numbers within a silver wreath. Regimental staff officers wore the wreath around the letters 'A' (for adjutant), 'Q' (for quartermaster), 'C' (for commissary), or 'S' (for surgeon)." [The letter says dark blue Zuave (sic) with the gold regimental number inside a silver bugle, and this was for the regimental surgeon.]

With my new assumption that the picture is of Rion as Colonel of the 6th South Carolina, the time frame for dating it is considerably narrowed. Rion was commissioned Colonel of the 6th SCV by Governor Pickens on February 19, 1861. However, he did not acknowledge his receipt of this commission until February 28th. From April 12th to early June, he was on duty at Battery Island in the Charleston Harbor area and is unlikely to have had time to get his picture taken. Then, after the regiment relocated to Summerville, he resigned his commission

continued next page

on June 15, 1861, before the regiment went into Confederate service.

I hope this clarification will help students of uniforms of that period in their attempts at identification.

James A. Gabel
Rapid City, South Dakota

ADVENTURES IN PARADISE

Editor:

I was very surprised to see this article (Vol. XX, No. 1) as I was going to put something together on the same topic. As a boy I purchased from an old dealer in Walton, New York a photo album with approximately 300 photographs of Co. F's sojourn to Hawaii in 1898. In the album is a photo of the men climbing Diamond Head and raising the American Flag (a piece of the flag is pasted in the album).

Interestingly, there are several photographs of other members with the little "brownie" cameras taking pictures. The album is a very comprehensive photographic record of their journeys. The more interesting photographs include: Camp Barber; train trip across the U.S.; Native Americans at train stops in the West; interior photo of the Mormon tabernacle; snow in the Rocky Mountains; the Presidio; camp below Diamond Head (actually on the track and fair grounds); many photographs of Hawaii; hiking across Kilawea volcano; Thanksgiving dinner in Hilo; and a welcome arch built by residents for soldiers; waterfalls; hospitals and staff; Jennie the bear; local residents, buildings, scenery; photographs of harbors, ships, and the Golden Gate; "welcome home" arch in Walton, New York. I also have a copy of the souvenir booklet and local newspaper articles with letters from the soldiers.

Donald J. Paukett
Greene, New York

CALL FOR SHIRTS

Editor:

How about running some photos of Army or Depot issued shirts, both U.S. and C.S.? I believe the U.S. issued flannel shirts in the 1850s and 60s, while the C.S. depots issued osnaburg or cotton shirts in natural color. Perhaps readers have photos that may add some knowledge on this subject.

Howard Ewing
Sterling, Virginia

It seems unlikely -- shirts were considered underclothing and are rarely seen in photos unless they are particularly fancy -- but it doesn't hurt to ask. Readers?