

### 3 May 1864: Disaster at Snaggy Point

225 killed, wounded, and missing. [Dyer's Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, vol 1, page 753] List received from Tyler, TX, contains 185 names connected with the 120th who were captured at Snaggy Point. That included 3 sutlers.

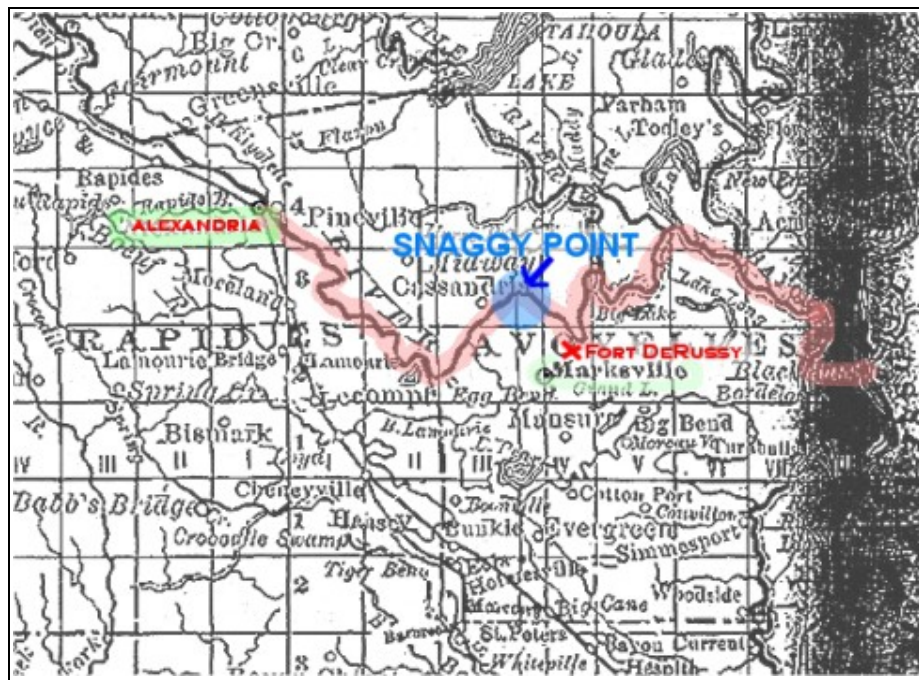
City Belle and Calypso photo with permission of **Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin of La Crosse**. [See photo on Main Page](#).

Ohio in the War: her statement, generals, and soldiers, Volume 2, by Whitelaw Reid, The Robert Clarke Co, 1895 **Section on 120th Ohio Volunteer Infantry** pp.616 - 617

The "Banks Expedition," as it was afterward named, began to assume proportion. Toward the latter part of April the Thirteenth Army Corps was ordered to re-enforce General Banks, then at Alexandria, and about to move on Shreveport, Louisiana. **On the 1st of May the One Hundred and Twentieth embarked on the City Belle, with orders to report to General McClernand, who had recently assumed command of the Thirteenth Corps, at Alexandria.** At four P. M., while the transport bearing the One Hundred and Twentieth was turning a bend on Red River, a short distance above Snaggy Point, a body of the enemy, at least five thousand in number, suddenly rose from a concealed position behind the levee, on the south bank of the river, and poured a murderous volley into the boat. The enemy's batteries also opened on the ill-fated boat, and it was almost instantly rendered unmanageable by a shell. Colonel Spiegel, in command, determined to hold the boat until the arrival of the gunboat Monarch, which had convoyed the City Belle from the mouth of Red River to Snaggy Point. But the odds were too great, and, after a [page 617] gallant resistance for half an hour, the white flag was displayed. Two or three companies on the lower deck, not seeing the emblem of surrender, kept on firing, which so incensed the enemy that he also renewed the fire from both artillery and infantry. The boat, now totally unmanageable, floated to the opposite shore from the enemy, and a large portion of the regiment jumped ashore and escaped over the levee. Others remained on the boat, prevented from ascending the bank by the rapid firing of the enemy, covering the only spot at which the bank could be scaled. To prevent further effusion of blood, the white flag was again displayed and a formal surrender effected. Colonel Spiegel, Surgeon Stanton, Assistant-Surgeon Gill, Captains J. R. Rummel, Miller, Fraunfelder, and Jones, Lieutenants Applegate, Baer, and Rouch, and two hundred men fell into the hands of the Rebels, besides the bodies of the killed. The gallant Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel was mortally wounded, and died on the following morning. The prisoners were at once marched off to Camp Ford, near Tyler, Texas.

After a terrible march, enduring the intense heat, the pangs of hunger, and heartless treatment, the wretched captives reached Camp Ford on the 21st of May. In this miserable prison, they remained over a year, and until the final cessation of hostilities in 1865.

"On the 3d day of May the enemy established batteries at **Wilson's farm** below Alexandria, capturing and burning the steamer City Belle. On the following day the Warner, with her two convoys, met the same fate." Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, at the second session Thirty-eighth Congress. [Part 2.] Red River Expedition. Fort Fisher Expedition. Heavy ordnance. Serial Set Vol. No.1213. S.Rpt. 142 pt. 2 1 Jan 1865. Page 51.



Too late to help:

"Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Alexandria, May 3, 1864. Brig. Gen. F. S. Nickerson, Comdg. First Brig., Second Div., 19th Army Corps:

General: The major-general commanding directs that you proceed with your command to Fort De Russy, and that you take possession of and occupy that fort. If you find the enemy there you will drive him from it. **At a point known as Wilson's Farm, 24 miles below Alexandria, the enemy has shown some artillery.** You will, if possible, on your way down the river, reconnoiter this position and drive the enemy from it. You will consider the holding of Fort De Russy as the principal object, but you will also endeavor, as far as possible, to keep the banks of the river free from the enemy. This might be done by sending detachments on gun-boats to such points as may be infested. You will endeavor to obtain as much information as possible regarding the enemy, and report fully and direct to these headquarters.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant, W. Dwight, Brigadier-General and Chief of Staff."

[The War of the Rebellion: Formal reports, both Union and Confederate, of the first seizures of United States property in the Southern States (53 v. in 111), 1891.. Page 412.]

"Headquarters Defenses of New Orleans, New Orleans, May 6, 1864 -- 10 p. m.

Adjutant-General of the army, Washington, D. C.:

....News by telegram to-day from Port Hudson and Baton Rouge is to the effect that we have lost three steamers (transports) on Red River, within the past few days, viz, Emma, laden with stores; City Belle, from Baton Rouge for Alexandria, with One hundred and twentieth Ohio on board, 700 strong. About half this regiment escaped and were reported near Alexandria, on left bank of river.

John Warner left Alexandria May 4, 9.30 a. m., with Fifty-sixth Ohio, 250 strong, for furlough, with two gunboats in company. About 215 of this regiment have reached Port Hudson. Two gun-boats also reported destroyed. These boats were destroyed by a battery some 20 miles above Fort De Russy, on right bank of river, supported by an infantry force estimated at from 1,000 to 5,000.

**Telegram says Colonel Bassett, Seventy-third Infantry (colored), Colonel Mudd, Second Illinois Cavalry, and Colonel Spiegel, One hundred and twentieth Ohio, known to be killed."**

[The War of the Rebellion: Formal reports, both Union and Confederate, of the first seizures of United States property in the Southern States (53 v. in 111), 1891, page 478.]

Daily Ohio Statesman [Columbus OH], 18 May 1864, page 2, available at GenealogyBank.

"Five Transports Sunk.

The most reliable rumor is, that the transport steamboats Ohio Belle, Laurel Hill, City Belle, Bella Donna, and Mittie Stephens, have all been sunk by the confederate batteries at Snaggy Point,

between Alexandria and Fort de Russey, where they some days before had destroyed the steamer Emma, of which you already have advices. This report comes from the gunboats at the mouth of Red river, as well as from secession sources. It is known that the Mittie Stephens had her cargo on board at Alexandria a week ago, bound down, and her non-arrival had for the last four days annoyed her captain, who is here, severely. He now believes her lost.

There is a further report that the two Belles had on board a regiment of Ohio troops. It is not believed that the boats were destroyed; but that they were compelled to make a landing and that the troops have surrendered. It is more than likely that the boats have since been destroyed if taken, for gunboats have gone up the river to drive off this snag battery and open the blockade."



*John M. Baer*

The National Tribune [Washington DC], 5 Feb 1885, page 3:

**John M. Baer**, First Lieut., Co. H, 120th Ohio, Ninth Div., Thirteenth Corps, Binghamton, Wis.

"Snaggy Point Slaughter

Capture of City Belle, John Warner and Three Gunboats.

To the Editor: I have just read in a late issue of your valuable paper what Frank H. Mason and John W. Fry have to say, in their article 'On the Teche,' about the slaughter at Snaggy Point. I think I am able to add something to the account of the attack and capture of the City Belle and John Warner, as I was on both those boats and have a lively reminder of that terrible fight in an ugly wound received in the back while making my escape from the City Belle. I feel myself incompetent for this self-imposed task, but as myself and two others were the only ones that went through the whole of that terrible experience, it seems to devolve on one of us to write it up; and as I am in hopes of calling out a statement from one or both of those comrades, if living, I will, if the boys will look over all imperfections, do the best I can. Going into the army when but 15, I did not have any great amount of grammar or rhetoric stowed in my

cranium; but in the almost four-years' service with the 86th, 120th, 114th and 48th Ohio (**having been consolidated with the two last-named regiments, the 120th being reduced below a regimental organization**) I got a sight of experience that has served me perhaps just as well in the knocks I have had to take in this world. But to return to the object of this letter:

On May 2, 1864, the 120th Ohio embarked on the steamer City Belle at Baton Rouge, La., bound for Alexandria, La. I cannot tell what was the object of this expedition, unless to patrol the river, and that don't look reasonable to me now, as we had no protection whatever, with the exception of the pilot-house, which had boiler iron set up each side of the wheel, as all Mississippi boats had in those days. If my memory serves me right, we arrived at the mouth of Red River some time that day, lay there a few hours, and then went up to the mouth of the Atchafalaya and lay over night.

There was a gunboat stationed there. The next day (the 3d) we proceeded up the river, companies of the regiment being detailed alternately for lookout and to return fire if fired upon by guerillas. At noon of that day my company [*Co H*] was detailed for such duty. We donned our accouterments, with 40 rounds, and 60 more in our knapsacks, or haversacks, as knapsacks those days had almost gone out of style in our regiment. Gun in hand, we awaited developments. About 3 o'clock **a negro hailed us and reported rebels not far up the river. He seemed greatly excited, and not gleaning much that seemed reliable, the boat continued on its way.**

Snaggy Point forms an elbow in the Red River and, the water being low, the channel is narrow.

We had arrived in this elbow when we saw the Johnnies rise from behind the levee. We were stationed on the second deck from the wheel-house, forward, on the side facing the enemy. Now to explain what happened afterward. You must understand that the officers and soldiers (except the men on detail) were not anticipating such an attack. Soldiers were lounging over the boat, officers in the cabin or other places, at different diversions, just as would be expected in such a place. As soon as we saw the rebs I gave the command, 'Fire! Lie down!' We scarcely were down when such a shower of minie balls struck the boat, followed by the report of cannon, it seemed hardly possible that a man could be living on board. We returned fire at once. Every soldier and officer, as far as I could see, rushed to the rescue and sent a bullet where it was possible for them to do so; but the second round from the artillery pierced the boiler, which caused an explosion,

blowing off a part of the boat, and then a dense cloud of steam enveloped us. Imagine, if you can, 460 men crowded on a small boat unprotected, with 1,200 cavalry, 2,000 infantry, eight pieces of artillery (two 32-pound Parrotts, a six gun 12-pound field battery) firing on them. This I do not think an exaggerated account, as I got the report from the rebels themselves. After the second volley I ordered my men below. Some went over the railing and let themselves drop, the others went down the stairs, some few had jumped into the river before we went down. Companies K and G suffered severely, being stationed on the hurricane deck aft the wheel house, the part of the boat that was blown off. We tried to keep all on board until we drifted near the shore; but new recruits had lately added to the regiment, and this was the first fire for them, and it was impossible to control them. The attack was so sudden and overwhelming, that few of the officers reached their commands. Col. Marcus M. Spiegel, of the 120th, and Col. Mudd, of the 2d Ill. Cav., were killed in the cabin, the pilot was killed at the wheel, and the Assistant Pilot wounded while going to his relief. This was reported to us before leaving the boat. I only know that in a very short time after the explosion of the boilers it was **every man for himself** and God help us all! As the boat neared the shore we shoved the staging into the river and jumped on. I stood on the boat until I saw several men fall and roll back down the bank, it being almost perpendicular and about 30 feet high. They kept up a constant fire on us all the time. I jumped on the staging and got to shore without getting wet. I think the boat was about 12 feet from the opposite shore from where the enemy were. I had got nearly to the top of the bank and took hold of an overhanging shrub to assist myself, as it was about four feet perpendicular, when I was stuck in the center of the back by a minie ball, the ball cutting part of the strap to the pants buckle. When I came to I was lying on the top of the bank, where I sprang when shot. How long I lay unconscious I do not know, but think not longer than 10 minutes. Men were rushing past me. The first man I recognized was Col. Slocum. I called to him, 'For God's sake get me out of this.' The rebs were firing shrapnel into us, and as I could not move I expected to be killed. In a few minutes some of the men came back and took me a short distance into the woods, behind a log. I cannot now remember who those comrades were, but they were brave, self-sacrificing heroes, who risked their lives many times in taking me back. We remained there but a few minutes when the shot commenced coming through under the log. By this time I felt better, and with their assistance I got behind a tree. The sufferers on the City Belle had run up a flag of truce, and the rebs were on the shore preparing to swim across to tow the boat over. The boys that had escaped were scattered through the timber, and the sight of the rebs **so enraged them** that they couldn't resist the temptation to fire on them. Soon a man came out waving a white handkerchief and begged of the boys for God's sake to stop firing, as they were drawing fire on the boat, which was strewn with killed and wounded.

Lieut.-Col. Willard Slocum organized the fragment, preparatory for retreat toward Alexandria -- 126 in all. Poor fellows, they had lost everything save their colors, their guns and grit -- **all except Uriah Larue [Co H], the oldest man in the regiment, who had everything complete as if he had just stepped out for inspection;** he had the only knapsack there was in the regiment. My comrades took turns helping me along. The first plantation arrived at they procured a negro as guide and a mule for my accommodation; but I could not stand to ride. We had gone about seven miles --it was very dark--and, finding that I was unable to go further, I begged of them to leave me. We could then hear the clash of the sabers of the rebel cavalry, who had crossed the river and were pursuing us. Ike S. Miller [actually **Ike S. Mylar** - see below] and **Andrew Manhart**, of my company, volunteered to stay with me. **A hasty good-by** to all the boys, and they were off. I was then very weak; my boots and pantaloons were nearly filled with clotted blood, and the pain seemed unendurable. The boys soon found a place of concealment, and we bivouacked in a swamp, without a blanket or a mouthful of food, and those brave comrades took off their blouses for me to lay on, and tore up their shirts to dress my wound--expecting every minute to hear the bay of the hounds, to be captured and driven off to a rebel prison-pen.

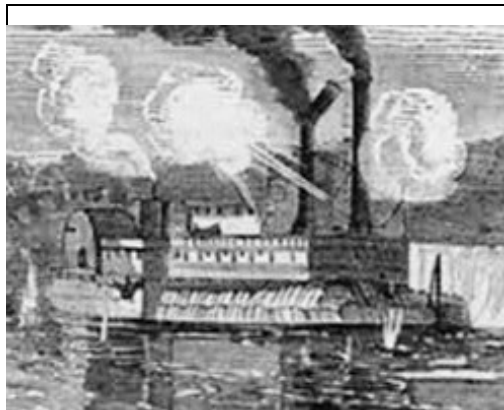
**It is a brave man that will fight well in battle, but a far braver one who voluntarily does what Ike and Andy did for me.** That was the loneliest night and longest I ever spent -- it seemed as if the morning would never dawn; such pain and fever, with not a drop of water: for they dare not expose themselves. We heard the enemy passing several times through the night.

Morning came at last. After reconnoitering, the boys reported a house, not far off, on the bank of the river. After consulting, we concluded to go there and throw ourselves on the generosity of the

occupants, and if they refused relief, demand what we wanted. We got to the house without being seen by any of the negroes, and found the man and his wife to be rebels, but with humane hearts. They stowed us away up stairs. The man, his wife, and a colored servant girl were all that knew of our being there. They gave me a bed and Ike and Andy some comfortables on the floor, and the colored girl brought us bacon, corn-bread, molasses, and milk -- the best there was in the house.

One of the boys kept a constant lookout. The rebel cavalry came up in the yard and talked to the old man twice during the day, and went away again. About 4 o'clock a. m. we heard a boat; the boys fixed a flag on a stick, and when the boats neared us, Andy ran for the river, waving the flag.

He was fired upon, but kept straight ahead until he reached the shore. **Talk about the dinner-bell** being a welcome sound, that is nothing to compare with the Engineer's bell when the Pilot rang him to 'stop her.' We could hear it plainly in the garret. It was **the steamer John Warner**, with the 56th Ohio on board, bound for home on veteran furlough. Nos. 8, 24, and 27 (Musquito



*Steamer John Warner*

Fleet), and an ironclad with the irons left above the falls. I am not positive about the numbers on the gunboats. They lowered a yawl and sent it ashore with 8 or 10 men, who talked to the boys, and the John Warner rounded to, and Col. Raynor, of the 56th Ohio, inquired into matters. The boat landed, and four men came up with the barberchair and carried me aboard. The gunboats had passed, and stopped from a signal-whistle from the John Warner. The Surgeon of the 56th probed my wound and dressed it -- the ball being lodged in the body nothing could be done then.

Some of the officers from the gunboats came aboard the John Warner, and we described as well as we could the situation of the rebels, and the number of men and guns that we estimated were at Snaggy Point. The Marines 'smiled a smile that was bland,' and evidently thought us not capable of judging the strength of the enemy. They

intimated **we were scared**, and didn't know how quick they (the Marines) could shell the Johnnies out: besides, they had heard so often that the rebs were just ahead in force, and with a battery, that they took not much stock in it. Of course, we resented the accusation that 'we were scared,' and swore we could stand it if the Marines could, and go ahead if they thought best. They decided to drop down the river a few miles and lie-to over night; that on the following morning one of the gunboats would run down the river, followed by the other boats (the John Warner in the rear), the gunboats to engage the batteries, while the John Warner ran the blockade; which plan they attempted to carry out. About 8 o'clock the next morning one of the gunboats blew the signal, and we all steamed down the river. We were then about five miles above Snaggy Point. As soon as we started, Ike and Andy took me out of the cabin to the same position we occupied on the City Belle, only we were on the opposite side of the boat, as we were now going down the river, and we were well protected by bales of cotton piled two deep all around the boat. The boys had procured guns and full supply of cartridges of the 56th. There we waited to see the 'Marines shell them Johnnies out.' As the first gunboat came within range of the two 32-pound guns the rebs opened fire on it, and then the gunboat gave them a broadside, which was answered by all the rebel guns. As fast as our boats came in position they drifted with the current, and an incessant fire was kept up, pieces of timber flying from the gunboats every time they were struck; it being at short range, not more than one-fourth mile, very few shots missed. **The infantry go in.** Now the time had come for the John Warner to run the blockade. Every preparation had been made, and, with the timbers quivering under her immense power of steam, the gallant steamer shot by the first gunboat. Then the 56th opened fire. There they stood, the brave Col Raynor and his war-scarred veterans, looking as if they could conquer fate itself; and that they fought desperately need not be told, for who ever knew them to flinch in the hour of danger? The Colonel rushed back and forth waving his sword; the officers, with sword in one hand and shooting from revolvers with the other, cheered and urged on their men -- which was useless, as every man was doing his level best to down a Johnny. Then came a yell from the rebs, and they mounted the levee. We looked back and saw the boat we had passed all ablaze. Then came the explosion of her magazine. We passed another

boat which was firing very slowly, the rebel infantry and cavalry filling its portholes, when open, so full of shot that they could not use their guns. Then came another yell from the rebels, and looking ahead we saw another boat floating disabled down the stream. It had swung crossways in the river, and they were shooting through her lengthwise. This was a sternwheel boat. Then came a crash, and a solid shot went through the wheel-house of the John Warner, disabling her engines and causing her to drift with the current. The noble Captain was then heard calling, 'Help! Tow me out!' We had not reached the point of the bend, consequently our boat almost ran ashore on the rebel side. Cheer after cheer went up from them, that I suppose sounded to us as our cheers did to them at Arkansas Post, Magnolia Hill, Champion's Hill, Black River and Vicksburg, and I was just beginning to appreciate **how demoniacal** and loud a victorious shout sounded to a defeated soldier. By this time we had passed the bend and were nearing the opposite shore, the Captain all the time calling to the gunboat, 'Tow me out.' Our cotton bales had proved a good protection until now. The boat swinging around, they got an enfilading fire on us, and then the boys carried me below and laid me by the pumps, aft of the boiler. The boat struck the shore, and the 56th made their escape, as we had done from the City Belle. Not so many were shot, as they made their escape under cover of the boat, the cotton furnishing good protection to them in going up the bank. Col. Raynor received a severe wound through the thigh, and was unable to make his escape. All the gunboats were disabled. Some were set on fire by shells and burnt. The others were compelled to surrender to the rebels with all on board. The men were leaving the boat, and here I gave my good-bye to Ike and Andy. I had been urging them to go, but they refused to leave me. I knew I would be sent to a hospital, and they would be driven off to Tyler. [Prison camp at Tyler TX] Seeing they could do no good by remaining they consented. They carried me to the edge of the boat to see if they got safely up the bank. Then came the handshaking. The tears rolled down their cheeks, and I know mine were no better. They said, 'Don't lose your courage, Johnnie, and you will be all right.' I can't forget those words. They leaped ashore and ran the gauntlet again. I heard the thud of the bullets in the dirt as they ascended and saw them raise their hands to me as they disappeared over the bank, and then what **a feeling of loneliness and desolation** came over me! No one was near me, nor a soul on board I had known till the day before. My wound pained me, and I little cared at that moment what my fate might be. A white flag was run up on the John Warner, and the firing ceased. Some of the men that belonged to the boat carried me into the cabin again. By the way, the John Warner had the bravest civilian for a Captain I saw while in the army. As we went up the stairs he was standing by the Captain, cursing the rebels to the fullest extent of a boatman's vocabulary, and swore he wouldn't leave the boat until every man wounded was cared for; but little they cared for what he intended to do. The rebel soldiers swam across the river, made a line fast to the boat, threw the coil into a yawl, and rowed to the opposite shore. The line was seized, and amid cheers and shouts the boat was landed to the opposite shore. The plucky Captain was one of the first to be taken off. Then the rebels swarmed over the boat, drank all the whisky, ransacked the boat, and plundered the wounded and dead. I had some money, and to secure it tucked it under the leather lining in my hat, and that was the first thing they took. They searched my pockets, took my watch, then a brute pulled off the boot I had on and swore he would knock my brains out with it if I didn't get him the other. Some of the better ones interfered, and by giving my shirt compromised with him, after telling him a dozen times the other boot was aft of the boiler. Another took my pants off and left me with drawers, sweat-shirt and socks. Soon a humane fellow came along and got me a drink of water and gave me a swallow of wine out of a bottle he had taken from the bar, asked about my wound, and gathered up some old clothes they had thrown off. My blouse happened to be under my head, so I was fitted up with a pair of wool socks, gray pants, blue blouse and a wide-rimmed Texas hat, accompanied with any amount of body servants. [Notez: ?lice] **Burning the boat.** The boat soon after took fire, and the rebel officers had hard work to get the men to carry off ammunition that was stowed in the hold, and I was taken forward on the lower deck near the capstan [Note: device for moving rope or cable], and there left till I feared they would not get me off at all. The heat had blistered my face, when a soldier dragged me a little ways out of the heat, and another took hold of my feet, and they carried me off. I think I was the last man off the boat. **A Desperate Negro.** There is one incident I wish to relate here. **While lying on the boat near the capstan, a negro soldier (a Sergeant) came rushing by from the hull, ran down the staging, drew his revolver and**

**snapped it three times in the face of the Colonel in charge of the detail getting off the ammunition. The revolver failed to go off, the Sergeant was seized by the soldiers, dragged off, tied to a tree and shot. [Note: Could have been a member of Seventy-third Infantry (colored).]** The wounded were taken to a cotton shed near by; from there in wagons to Cheneyville, La. Here I met many of my regiment who were wounded and taken on the City Belle -- amongst them Surg. Stanton, Ass't Surg. J. C. Gill; also, a Surgeon from one of the gunboats; Col. Raynor, of the 56th Ohio; a First Lieutenant from a New York regiment, and a Major and Adjutant from some colored regiment. The Doctors herein named had performed all surgical operations, and had done all for the wounded that was possible, but when we arrived they had no surgical instruments -- not even pocket cases, they having been taken away by the rebel Surgeons; so they could do nothing for us, except give us the kind of care which they untiringly bestowed on all the wounded. An old negro woman who was captured with us was boss cook; the assistants were the slightly wounded soldiers. All the prisoners that were not wounded were taken to Camp Ford, Tyler, Texas. The Confederates left two barrels of flour, several boxes of crackers, and some other commissaries captured from the boat, which lasted about two weeks, and then we subsisted on unsifted cornmeal made into bread, with no salt and nothing to leaven it but ashes.

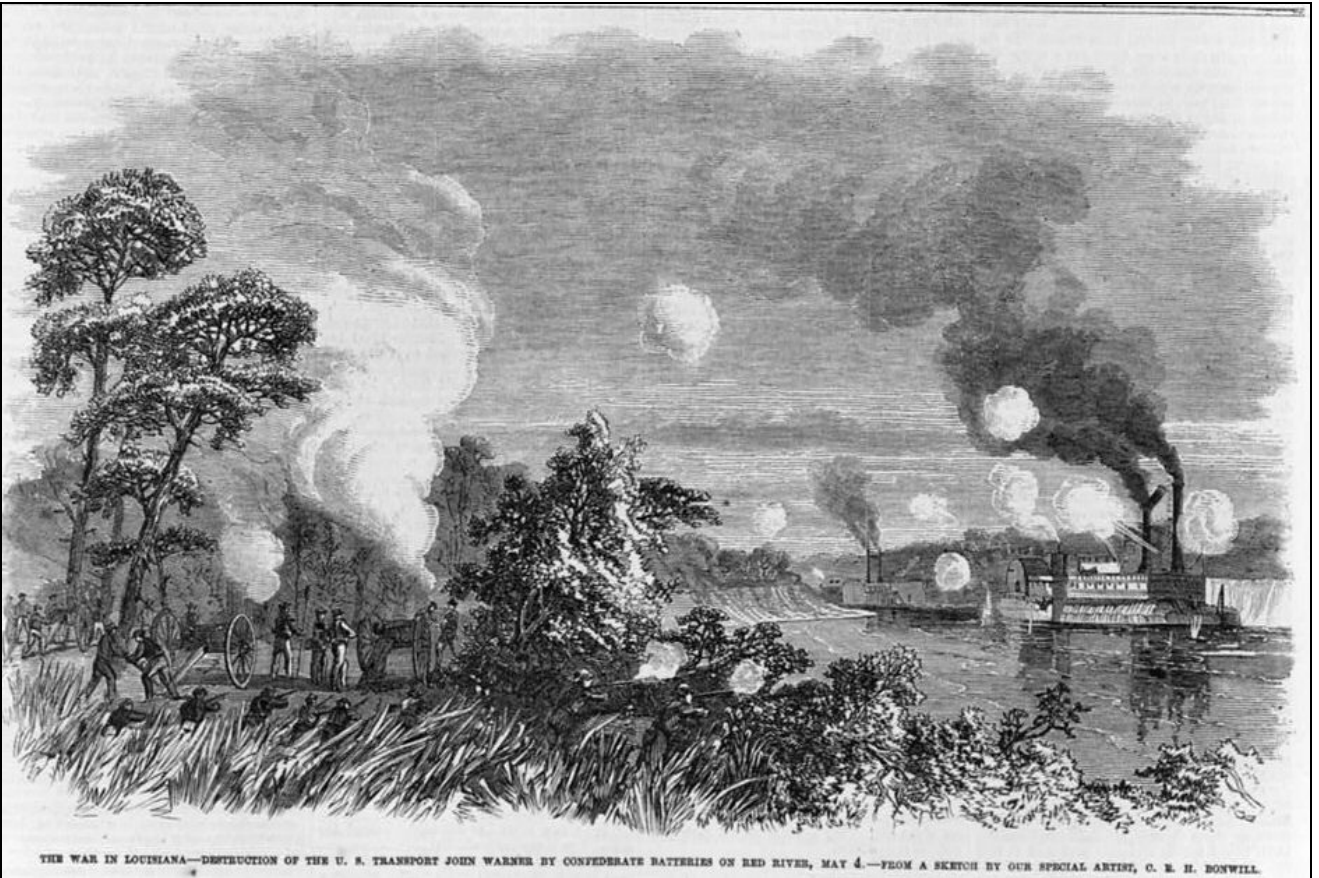
This, with molasses, was all the Confederacy furnished. The citizens kindly donated many delicacies for the badly wounded, but there were so many of us that the few inhabitants could not keep the poor fellows from suffering and dying for want of proper nourishment. The major and Adjutant made their escape from the hospital soon after we were taken. The condition of the wounded became so deplorable and so many died that **Corp. John Null and myself concluded to attempt an escape**, in hopes of reaching our lines, and, under flag of truce, bring rations to our dying comrades. **Null was shot through the hand, and I could now go on crutches. But our escape from the hospital, the hardships endured to the Atchafalaya, our recapture when within two miles of the Union lines, and our return to prison, would fill several columns;** and not knowing how this will be received, I will close by saying I would be glad to hear from some of the survivors of Snaggy Point. -- John M. Baer, First Lieut., Co. H, 120th Ohio, Ninth Div., Thirteenth Corps, Binghamton, Wis."

[Note: Straight line distance from Cheneyville LA to Simmesport LA on the Atchafalaya River is almost 29 miles.]

The National Tribune [Washington DC], 26 Mar 1885, page 3:

In a section titled Condensed Letters:

"In Comrade J. M. Baer's article on Snaggy Point, published Feb. 5, the name 'Ike S. Miller' should have been 'Ike S. Mylar.' " [That would be Isaac S. Mylar, Co H, 120th Ohio.]



[Destruction of the John Warner on Red River, 4 May 1864: From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 18 June 1864, drawn by C. E. H. Bonwill, available at [Library of Congress](#).]

[The National Tribune [Washington DC] 1 May 1884, page 7] Joseph P. Van Nest, Co F, 120th. From **J. P. Van Nest's** account:

"...At 4 o'clock p. m., while the transport bearing the 120th was turning a bend on Red River a short distance above Snaggy Point, a body of the enemy -- at least 5,000 in number -- suddenly arose from a concealed position behind the levee, on the south bank of the river, and poured a murderous volley into the boat. The enemy's batteries also opened on the ill-fated boat, and it was almost instantly rendered unmanageable by a shell puncturing the steam-chest and letting off the steam, when the boat drifted to the opposite shore from which the rebels were entrenched [sic]. Colonel M. M. Speigel, of the 120th, in command, determined to hold the boat until the arrival of the gunboat Monarch, which had conveyed the City Belle from the mouth of Red River to Snaggy Point. But the odds were too great, and, after a gallant resistance for half an hour, the white flag was displayed. Two or three companies on the lower deck, not seeing the emblem of surrender, kept on firing, which so incensed the enemy that he also renewed the fire from both artillery and infantry. The boat, now totally unmanageable, on account of the pilot having both legs shot off, as we said before, drifted to the opposite shore, and a large portion of the regiment jumped ashore and escaped into the woods. Others remained on the boat, prevented from ascending the steep bank by the rapid firing of the enemy covering the only spot at which the bank could be scaled on account of the thick underbrush. To prevent further effusion of blood, the white flag was again displayed and a formal surrender effected. Colonel Speigel, Surgeon B. Stanton, Assistant Surgeon John C. Gill, Captains J. P. Rummell, B. F. Miller, E. Fraunfelter and B. F. Jones, Lieutenants Applegate and Roach [Rouch], and two wounded men fell into the hands of the rebels, besides the bodies of the killed. The gallant Colonel Marcus M. Speigel was mortally wounded, and died the following morning. The prisoners were at once marched to Camp Ford, near Tyler, Texas. After a terrible march, enduring the intense heat, the pangs of hunger, and heartless treatment, the wretched captives reached Camp Ford on the 21st of May. In this miserable prison



they remained over a year, and until the final cessation of hostilities in 1865.

### **The Boys Who Escaped.**

The few who were fortunate enough to escape armed themselves into a battalion of three companies, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. Slocum, coming together for that purpose about one mile from the scene of the disaster. Recognizing at once the folly of attempting to rescue their comrades from captivity, the battalion resolved to husband the remaining ammunition and use it to defend themselves against the guerilla bands infesting the country between them and Alexandria.

We then started and marched to a plantation through a pathless woods, about four miles, carrying our wounded with us, until we struck the river, upon the bank of which was a fine mansion. Here we left Lieutenant John Baer and the rest of our wounded, concealing them in the garret of the mansion, with positive instructions to the owner of the same, who, by the way, was a rank rebel, to hail the first boat that came down the river and put them aboard; and the penalty for not following out our instructions was to have his house burned upon our return back. He followed the instructions by hailing the steamer Black Hawk the following day and placed them aboard; but before the boat had proceeded far down the river was fired into by the enemy, and the boat and men on board were captured.

At this plantation we pressed into service a mulatto guide, owned by the proprietor, who piloted us through the pine woods by cow paths a distance of about twelve miles, when we again struck the river. At this point, it being late in the night, we halted and quartered for the remainder of the night in a large cotton-gin and other outbuildings. About daylight the following morning we took up the line of march again, and marched about one mile farther up the river to a boat landing, where we got ferried across the river in a small skiff by a Union man living on the opposite bank.

Here we procured four small slap-jacks, which was divided up among the regiment, it being the first food we had tasted for thirty-six hours. After refreshing the inner man, we again took up the line of march and proceeded direct to Alexandria, a distance of about eight miles, arriving there about dark, and quartered in a large stone building for the night. The regiment then reported to General Banks, and we were kindly cared for by that general and his staff, and furnished with rations, clothing, camp equipage, and comfortable quarters. This remnant of the 120th was assigned to duty on the 12th of May in the division commanded by General Lawler. On the 13th of May General Banks began his memorable retreat. The 120th having shared its hardships and privations, reached the Mississippi River on the 21st of May, and went into camp at Morganzia Bend, La., where it remained until the 23d of August of the same year...."

Yours, in F., C. and L., J. P. Van Nest, Lieut, 120th O. V. I., Wooster O."

On the 1st of May [1864], the 120th was ordered to join Banks, then operating in the direction of Shreveport. The regiment embarked on the transport City Belle, for Alexandria, Louisiana, and when passing up Red River it was ambuscaded at Snaggy Point, by 5,000 of the Confederates concealed behind the levee. A murderous artillery and infantry fire was opened on the crowded boat, and the deck was soon slippery with blood. After a short but ineffectual struggle against overwhelming odds, the 120th was compelled to display the white flag. During the conflict the City Belle drifted to the opposite side of the river, where quite a number of the 120th escaped. Colonel Spiegel, Surgeon Stanton, Assistant-Surgeon Gill, Captains J.R. Rummel, Miller, Fraunfelder and Jones, Lieutenants Applegate, Baer and Rouch, and two hundred men, fell into the hands of the Confederates, besides the bodies of the killed. Colonel Spiegel was mortally wounded, and died next day. He was one of the noblest of men, and "bravest of the brave." The prisoners were at once marched off to Camp Ford, near Tyler, Texas, where they were confined until the close of the war."

[From the History of Wayne County, Ohio by Ben Douglas, c. 1878]

The Highland Weekly News, 19 May 1864, page 3:

"Red River Blockaded by the Rebels.

Cairo [IL], May 16 - Late advices received from Red River, confirm the former report of the blockade of that river, and state that the rebels have two formidable batteries, one at Wilsons Plantation, mounting twenty-eight guns, and one at Snaggy Point, eighteen guns."

History of the Civil war in America by The Comte de Paris, Volume IV, 1888, page 563

"On the 30th of April [the Confederate troops] had taken position on the right bank of Red River a little above Fort de Russy and within reach of Marksville.....On the next day the steamboat City Belle, with three hundred Ohio soldiers who were on their way to join Banks, arrived in front of the point where [Confederate troops were] posted with the battery. No one on board had a suspicion of the enemy's presence, who had not yet been observed. Accordingly, the boat, which was without either escort or armament, was disabled at the very first fire, and obliged to surrender with all on board."

**Pvt. Benjamin Payne, Co I. He is the only man of color in the 120th OVI. Injury to left hip May 1864 at Snaggy Point La but was not captured. Ben's family had been in Ohio for a long time. He was the son of a slave and the slave owner in Virginia who had released the family to come to Ohio by 1850. Then in his will, he freed them.]**

[Benjamin Payne's pension papers, National Archives:] James Manley [Company I], of Springfield, Clark Co OH gave description of the attack on the steamer at Snaggy Point, LA. in the pension papers of his comrade Benjamin PAYNE [Company I]: "... 2nd day of May 1864. On that day our Regt was on the Ohio Belle going up the Red River on the Banks Expedition. There were 25 of us up on the Hurricane Deck as pickets. We did not think there was anything there but guerillas in the woods, but the first thing we knew they opened on us with cannon and then the Infantry fired into us. Claimant [PAYNE] jumped off of the boat into the water and as he fell struck the side of the boat. I ran down the stairway and **there were a couple of Kentucky soldiers swam with a line and pulled the boat to the shore and 154 of us got away.** The rebs were on the other side of the river and they captured the balance of the Regt and burned the boat. Our party took to the woods and marched 20 miles and we went into a cotton field and stayed all night. The next day we went to the River and went to Alexandria. It was about 4 weeks after that before Payne

joined us. He and one or two more men lay in a swamp awhile. ??? first gun boat that came along they got on it. When he came to us he was all stiffened up and kind of limped when he walked and he was that way when I left the Regt in Oct or Nov 1864. I just saw him as he was on the way to be mustered out and I never saw him again until about 4 years ago. He was near? lame when he was in the army and he complained of rheumatism.... in ?? places. He might have struck the lower deck when he jumped but he ?arrived to jump in the river."

In Payne's own words from his pension papers dated 9 Aug 1890: "It occurred as follows. We were proceeding up the Red river to re-enforce Genl. Banks and we were on the steamer Ohio Bell and when we get to Snaggy Point, the enemy fired on the Boat with shell, and our Colonel Spiegle was killed, and we all un???? to escape, and while I was on the Cabin? deck, I jumped on to the boiler deck, and struck my left hip against what I thought was a wagon bed, and just bruised the joint of my left hip. I did not feel it much until I stopped in the swamp. There was only one comrade then with me. I do not know his name. James MANLEY saw me when I jumped and he knew I was hurt when I stopped in the swamp. My hip was very painful. I was there in the swamp about one day. I suppose I then got with a small squad and went to Baton Rouge. James Wallace was one of the squad, and I think I told him I was hurt. He was my bunk mate. When we got to Baton Rouge I got some linement for it. I did not go to the hospital and was not treated by any surgeon in the service."

**Franklin Holmes, Corporal, Co E**

[Hardesty's Encyclopedia, Wayne co, page 502]

"When on Banks' Red River expedition he was captured with the City Belle, at Snaggy Point. He had nearly effected his escape, having, when the steamer was disabled, jumped into the water and waded down about a mile, and with some others seized a small skiff, which they were just pushing off when captured. Three rebel cavalymen, heavily armed, rode up and demanded their surrender, and as they had no arms they were forced to give themselves up."

[Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia. *Wayne County version* published in 1885 page 508, Canaan township section] "**Mr. Bott** was one of the men who shoved out the plank for the men to go ashore on. At this time he lost everything except courage." [Pvt. **Simon Bott, Co E**]

[History of Richland County, Ohio, from 1808 to 1908: Also Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens of the County, Vol 2, S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1908. Page 1003-1004]

**William B. Millikin**, 1st Lieut., Co I

"While a part of the command was down the river on the steamboat City Bell, about forty miles below Alexandria, they were attacked by General Taylor and the vessel was captured, the troops being made prisoners of war. Mr. Millikin was among this number. The prisoners were taken to Alexandria and hence marched overland, a distance of one hundred and ten miles, to Camp Ford near Tyler, Texas, where Mr. Millikin was incarcerated from May 23, 1864, until May 27, 1865, when the war was ended, and he was set free, being released on that date at the mouth of the Red river, and for the first time learned of the surrender of Lee, and the assassination of President Lincoln -- events which had occurred in the middle of April, but no news thereof had been allowed to reach the Union soldiers."

Friday, 20 May, 1864 New York Herald-Tribune Vol. 24 Issue 7215 page 8 Available at Genealogy Bank

"Latest from Red River."

"A Rebel Blockade Established -- Three Transports and Two Gunboats Sunk From Our Special Correspondent Port Hudson, La., **May 6, 1864**"

"We have had news from the Red River. A battery of six guns has been established at a bend in the river about twenty-five miles above Fort De Russy, and in attempting to pass the blockaded point, we have lost in four days three transports and two gunboats (of the tin-clads.)"

"The transport Emma, coming down with detachments of sick and furloughed soldiers, was fired into and destroyed on the 3d inst. Loss unknown."

"On the next day [actually 3 May] the transport City Belle, with the 120th Regiment Ohio on board, about 720 strong, was on its way up the river to join the Army at Alexandria. In attempting to pass the battery the transport was set on fire, and about one-third of the Ohio troops escaped to the banks. It is said that these troops escaped, and have joined Gen. Banks."

"Col. Spiegel of the 120th Ohio, Col. Mudd, 2d Missouri Cavalry, and Col. Basset of the 1st Native Guards (colored) were known to be killed. The latter officer was killed while gallantly urging the men to keep up the fight."

"The John Warner, accompanied by two gunboats as convoy, attempted to pass the batteries on the 5th at daylight. The Rebels opened with six guns, four above and two below the fleet, and, after a few hours' fight, the three vessels were abandoned. The transport was disabled by the first fire, and was run into shore on the left bank, opposite the batteries. The 56th Ohio Regiment, about 250 strong, reenlisted, and on their way home, on furlough, were on board the Warner, and kept up a hot fire of musketry with some effect on the batteries and the Rebel infantry supports.

The regiment lost 34 killed and wounded. The wounded were left on shore, near the boat, in charge of two men and the surgeon. Col. Raynor of the 56th was wounded in the leg. Lieut. Roberts, Lieut. Shunk, and Lieut. Vanderburgh were also slightly wounded. The remainder of the force, about 200, marched ten miles down the river, and then, hailing a transport, were taken on board and brought to this port. The two gunboats are said by a number of escaped sailors from their crews, to have been destroyed. One was blown up and the other was burned."

"The Rebel blockading force is said to number 10,000."

"Unless routed, the river will be completely closed."

Saturday, 28 May 1864, Daily Ohio Statesman (Columbus, OH) Vol XXXI, Issue 287, pg2

Letter from **Horace Hill**, Co D, 120th OVI, who apparently had to stay behind in Louisiana when the 120th went down the Red River.

"Baton Rouge, La., May 6

Dear Mother - Sad! sad! is the tale I have to tell you this time. I hope I may never have such a horrid thing to relate again while in the army. Last Sunday our boys received orders to move on board transports for Red River. **The steamer was a very large one and took on board the whole regiment and some of the 22d Ky.** They left here Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock in high glee. Everything went right until Monday about 2 P.M. They were then about twenty miles from Alexandria. But, alas! for them then. The cursed rebels lay in ambush [Note: at Snaggy Point] with six pieces of artillery, and as they rounded a bend they raked the boat from stem to stern, nearly every shell bursting in the cabin where all our gallant officers were. The boiler was

struck by a shell and scalding water flew in every direction. The boat was disabled by one of the first shots, and was unable to run either backward or forward. So there they lay floating in the river and exposed to the fire of six guns, the fiends and devils on shore crying out all the time 'no quarter,' while our poor men were being slaughtered by the dozen, the boat all the time flying the white flag. Lucky for the few who escaped, the boat drifted to the opposite shore from the rebels.

Now comes the saddest part of my story. **Nine of the boys came down this evening, they have succeeded in getting through to the Mississippi by swimming Red river, lying in swamps by day and marching at night.** The report they bring is horrid. Our brave and gallant Colonel is killed. He stood on the hurricane deck, cheering the men until the fatal ball struck him. Col. Slocum and Major McKinley succeeded in making their escape, and have gone to Alexandria.

Our regiment numbered over four hundred, and all the boys say that only seventy-five men escaped. The rest jumped into the river and were shot or drowned or taken prisoners. Capt. Ben. Miller and Capt. Rummell are said to be killed. One of the boys tells me he saw Al. Smyzer shot. [Note: Those 3 were taken prisoner.]

"Our wounded were carried ashore and some of the boys left with them. The John Warner soon came along, under the escort of two tinclads or mosquito boats, and took them on board. This boat had not proceeded far, before the ambushed curses, devils or demons, opened on them the second time, setting the John Warner on fire. The wounded were moved on board the tinclads, but they were also disabled and destroyed. So that all our poor fellows who were wounded are gone.

"The 59th Ohio veterans were also on the John Warner, on their way home on furlough. They, poor fellows, suffered like our regiment, all being killed, or wounded or prisoners. Twenty-nine of their men were killed and wounded by one shell. I can hear nothing from Billy Bixler, or any of the rest of the boys from Wooster, but the supposition is they are either killed or prisoners. Oh! I forgot, poor old Captain Moffit was on board going up Red river to finish up his business before returning home. What became of him I cannot say as many poor fellows lie in the bottom of Red river that will never be heard from again, while others are prisoners.

"Two other colonels who were on the boat were killed. The rest of the men that escaped to Alexandria, will be down as soon as the river is cleared. **Everything belonging to the regiment was on board and is a total loss.**

"Lieutenant Spear also remained here, on Colonel Sheldon's Staff, so he is safe. Several are here in the Convalescent Camp sick, but only a few, so our regiment, once so happy, is now a mere nothing. I cannot describe these things this evening, I feel too bad. I will write more as soon as I can gain the full particulars, although you may see them all in the daily papers, long before this reaches you. The rebels got a big mail of ours, also on the boat, which I think contained some letters for me, as I have not had any lately. I can assure you, that Col. Speigle is killed. He is the only one we can gain any correct information about at present. One thing though is certain, over two-thirds of our gallant regiment is either killed, wounded or prisoners.

From Your Affectionate Son, H. D. Hill"

[Note: Captain Valentine Moffitt, Co D, had resigned 19 Jan 1864, and he did make it home.

Albert Smyser, Co D, was captured taken prisoner at Snaggy Point.]

Thursday, 30 June 1864 Plain Dealer [Cleveland OH] Page 3

Dr. John Gill Not Dead ---Letter from Him---The Bloody Attack and Capture

"It will gratify the many friends of Dr. John Gill, who was reported killed on the Red River, to read a letter from him to Dr. Capener, of this city, which we publish entire, as it is too interesting to omit in any part:

Morganzia, La., June 21st, 1864

Dear Friend: --

As I am once again in God's country, I will devote a few moments in writing a few lines to some of my friends. I must say that I feel like a new being to get inside our lines once more, although my captivity was not in any way confining, as **I was paroled**, and given the liberty to go about at pleasure within the limits of the village, (Cheneyville, [Louisiana]). I was treated very kindly by the Confederate officers that captured us; they were Texans. You have no doubt read of the capture of the boat and our regiment; but a few remarks may not be uninteresting. At some future time I will give particulars more fully. Our regiment, the 120th, received orders on the morning of May 1st, to strike tents and embark at once on the transport 'City Belle,' for Alexandria.

Everything went on smoothly till about two o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, May 3d, when without a moment's warning we were surprised by the report of cannon from the enemy. They were concealed behind the levee. The Red River being low at the time, they had every advantage, as we were in full view, and were unable to see them.

They allowed us to pass one battery and to approach to about 100 yards of another one that was planted nearly half a mile above, when it opened on us with shell, and at the same time, volley after volley of musketry was poured upon us like hail. The first shell was directed at the wheel house. It carried away a portion of the roof. The second shot was at the boiler. This shot was effectual, having struck the boiler and allowing the steam to escape, killing many horses, mules, and I have no doubt, several men, as many jumped into the river at that time. Now both batteries opened on us, and a constant fire of musketry. The scene on the boat was terrible, the balls passing through the boat as if it were paper. The wheel was shattered to pieces while the pilot was at it. He, poor man, was shot three times, once with shell and twice with minnie balls, which caused mortal wounds. I was standing by my state-room door when we were first fired into; a shell came through the cabin and passed through my state-room about a foot over my head, completely covering me with feathers and bedding; the only injury it did me was a slight scare.

Just at this time Col Spiegel, of our regiment, came through the cabin, ordering all the men who had concealed themselves to go in the hurricane deck and return the fire. When he (the Colonel), came to where I was standing, he received a mortal wound, in the bowels. He fell, exclaiming, 'My God! I'm done for this time, my military career is ended!' I went to him and examined his wound, and found nearly two hands full of intestines protruding through the wound. These I immediately returned, and remained with him during the whole engagement.

Col. Mudd, of the 2d Illinois cavalry, was shot about the same time our Colonel was. He was killed instantly, being shot through the head. Both colonels lay within three feet of each other.

The engagement lasted forty minutes. Our men returned their fire, but could do but little execution, as the enemy were completely hidden from view behind the levee. Many made their escape on the opposite bank of the river, but as the bank was very steep several were wounded in scaling it. Col. Bassett, of the Corps d'Afrique, was mortally wounded while rallying the men on the opposite bank. Lieut. Col. Slocum and Major McKinley, of our regiment, succeeded in making their escape with 164 men. There are some 190 men yet to be accounted for. All that fell into our hands, belonging to our regiment, were eleven wounded and three killed. The rest were taken prisoners or missing, a great many, no doubt, were killed and fell into the river, as we were told that several bodies were seen floating down the river several days after the disaster.

There were many wounded belonging to other regiments, besides citizens. After our boat surrendered the rebels rushed on board the boat and made for the bar the first thing, then after drinking all the liquor, they came tearing through the cabin like devils, rifling the pockets of the dead and wounded, and carrying off all the baggage and everything moveable. We saved nothing but what was on our backs. All our medicines and instruments were taken; even a pocket case that I had by my side while dressing one of our wounded men was taken from me. Before the wounded were dressed a gunboat was reported to be coming up the river. **Orders were given by Gen. Major, commanding the brigade of the enemy** to leave the boat and fire it immediately. [Note: James Patrick Major, Brigadier General, Confederacy] I then went to see Colonel Hardeman, commanding one of the regiments, and begged him to have the fire extinguished, and allow us to remove our dead and wounded on shore. [William Polk Hardeman] He kindly consented and ordered his men to assist us. We managed to get all the wounded off, but I fear that some of the dead were burned, as the boat was fired in several places ere we got the last wounded man on shore. The officers had no control over the men as they were maddened with whisky and acted more like devils than human beings. The wounded were taken to a log house close by. -- We were allowed to retain three men as nurses. Dr. Stanton and myself were allowed to remain with the wounded. We were kept in this house till Thursday following, and such a scene may I never again witness. The wounded were stretched out on the bare floor, many without covering of any kind, their clothes and blankets being taken from them, and we had not a grain of medicine of any kind to give the wounded, and it was heartrending to hear the moaning and see the suffering without being able to relieve them. Toward evening of the second day a Surgeon of one of the regiments of the enemy, came to see us. From him we received a small quantity of morphine, for

which we were indebted to the efforts of an officer in Col. Bailey's regiment, who did his utmost to make things comfortable for us. Thursday morning, May 5th, we were informed that two gunboats and a transport were coming down the river from Alexandria. About 9 o'clock A. M., the boats made their appearance at a bend of the river, nearly a mile distant from where our boat was captured. When the boats came within range of the enemy's batteries they opened upon them.

The transport was pretty well protected with bales of cotton, (Gen. Banks' veterans, one bale of cotton is equivalent to two veteran soldiers,) but the cotton was but little protection from the shell from the batteries. The 56th Ohio Volunteers, Col. Raynor commanding, was on board on their way home, having re-enlisted. The transport was so disabled and the gun boats did but little execution. They were also disabled in a short time; one of the gun boats, the 'Covington,' our men destroyed by fire before leaving her, but the other, the gun boat 'Signal,' fell into the enemy's hands, they taking off her guns and then sunk her in the channel of the river. -- Col. Raynor was wounded, but is recovering from his wounds rapidly. He was taken prisoner. Thursday afternoon we were all removed to Cheneyville, a small village some nine miles back from the river. The wounded were furnished transportation; the others, nurses, surgeons and slightly wounded, allowed to go on foot. The day was very warm and the dust some three inches deep. I will not soon forget that little tramp. We were nearly starved. -- When on the road, some 5 miles from the river, we passed a rebel camp, and they, no doubt, knowing our rations were cut down some, kindly threw out in the road quite a large supply of corn bread and boiled corn beef for our benefit.

You can't imagine how rapidly the 'fodder' was 'gobbled up' by us. Our pockets and hands were well filled, and we ate with a relish that was quite amusing to the rebs. We reached Cheneyville at dark and were quartered in negro shanties. Here we remained a week, then were taken to a large building used as a school house and Masonic Hall. We could not wish a better place for the wounded. The citizens treated us kindly, especially the ladies, who called nearly every day, bringing many delicacies for the sick and wounded. We remained at Cheneyville till a week ago last Saturday, when we were taken to Alexandria, there to be **placed on transports and paroled, and sent down the river to our lines. There were some 840 wounded brought down, some from Mansfield, Pleasant Hill and Cheneyville.**

We arrived at the mouth of Red river last Friday morning, when we were put on board the steamer Iberville, the wounded taken to hospitals at New Orleans and the Surgeons sent to their different regiments. I will write again and give some more particulars. I write this in great haste, as a friend is waiting to take it to Cincinnati.

Ever Your Friend,  
John Gill"

### **The Colors were not lost!**

Reunion article from Summit County Beacon, Vol 51, Issue 2654, Section 2, pg 6, Wednesday 12 Jun 1889. Available at Genealogy Bank.

"The steamer was soon disabled and the regiment was at the mercy of the enemy. About 140 were captured while 160 made good their escape, the remainder being killed, including Col Spiegel and two other colonels who were on the way to join their commands. The fact that every man save one, 160 in number, carried [?] his gun and ammunition off the steamer with him, although some were barebacked[?], some bare-footed and all had lost haversacks, knapsacks and canteens, is sufficient evidence that at least 160 were not whipped. During this terrible onslaught

**William[?] A. Jones, now one of Akron's contractors and builders, distinguished himself by climbing up the guards to the cabin dock and getting possession of the colors and bringing them triumphantly to the shore** while the Rebels opened anew a terrific fire upon seeing the colors carried off the ill-fated steamer." [Note: Corporal William H. Jones of Company E, 120th OVI. He did live in Summit County and was a contractor.]

Wednesday, 1 June 1864 Daily National Intelligencer [Washington DC] Vol 52 Issue 16156 Page 2

"About the 4th instant, the steamer John Warner, from New Orleans to Alexandria, with her convoys, the gunboats Nos. 8 and 25, were attacked by guerrillas about twenty-five miles from the above place. The John Warner was taken and burned; No. 25 exploded, and No. 8 surrendered.

The rebels then sunk the three boats across the channel in order to obstruct the passage, but it did not prevent the transports and monitors from passing by."

"The steamers Laurel Hill and Rob Roy and convoy No. 27 were likewise attacked at the same place

on their way up the river on the 21 instant; but the well-directed fire from the first named boat, from her two howitzers, a field piece, and some musketry, caused the rebels to take the woods without doing but little damage to the boat. There was one man killed and one wounded on the Rob Roy."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Richland Co OH [*Richland County OH version*]...original available at the Ohio Historical Society. There is also a version of the soldier's biographies extracted from the above Hardesty's that has been published by the Richland County Genealogical Society, 1998 called Richland County, Ohio Civil War Veterans. Account given in this book in the bio of **Erastus B. Wilson** of Company B:

"The enemy fired into their transport, completely demolishing the boiler and the pilot house, which so disabled the boat that she drifted to the bank of the river, and several hundred men were taken by the rebels. Mr. Wilson climbed the steep bank of the river under fire from the artillery and infantry, and, with one hundred and fifty others, succeeded in making his escape to the woods.

Here they hired a negro to pilot them across the river above the enemy, and they reached Alexandria, Louisiana, safely. The distance they had traveled was short, but it had taken them from noon until four o'clock the following afternoon to reach their lines....."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Richland Co OH [*Richland County OH version*] 1885...original available at the Ohio Historical Society. There is also a version of the soldier's biographies extracted from the above Hardesty's that has been published by the Richland County Genealogical Society, 1998 called Richland County, Ohio Civil War Veterans. Account given in this book in the bio of **Alexander J. Swanger**, Private, of Company K: "He was on the gunboat 'Star City Belle,' on its way up the Red river to carry re-enforcements to General Banks, when a masked battery and about nine thousand rebel soldiers opened fire upon them. The third shot struck the boiler, causing it to explode. The boat now drifted to the opposite side of the river. Here the brave boys made a breastwork of knapsacks and tried in vain to protect themselves, but the heavy artillery made short work of such frail defences, and they were compelled to raise the flag of surrender.....Mr. Swanger, seeing that the boat had struck land, determined to make his escape if possible, jumped into the water and succeeded in gaining the top of the bank, which was twenty feet high and almost perpendicular.

**The space between the boat and the bank was filled full of comrades less fortunate than himself, who had been shot while trying to climb the bank and had fallen back into the water. The enemy now began throwing shell, grape and canister into the woods upon the bank.** In order to escape these he was obliged to lie flat upon the ground until **captured by some horsemen who crossed the river.** As soon as captured, the Union soldiers were placed again upon the boat, which was drawn across the river by ropes. When near the shore the boys were commanded to jump into the water and wade to the shore. Mr. Swanger saw many of his comrades shot while in the water trying to get to the shore. **Fifteen colored men were killed at once; one of them grasped the muzzle of the revolver thrust in his face and tried to use it against his foe, but missed fire and fell dead before he could fire again. [Note: Must have been part of Seventy-third Infantry (colored)]** The survivors were ordered immediately to begin their march, which was kept up continuously for twenty-two days, only stopping long enough to cook a little corn meal."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Richland Co OH [*Richland County OH version*]...original available at the Ohio Historical Society. There is also a version of the soldier's biographies extracted from the above Hardesty's that has been published by the Richland County Genealogical Society, 1998 called Richland County, Ohio Civil War Veterans. Account given in the book in the bio of **Levi Ritter**, Private, of Company I: "After a march of twelve hours Mr. Ritter, like the rest of his unfortunate comrades, was given a biscuit, which was divided into two rations. For a number of days he marched, watching always for a chance to escape, but was so heavily guarded that no opportunity came. Any whose strength failed, so that they could not keep up, were immediately shot. The rebels took the shoes from our men, so that many with bleeding feet were tramping over the iron ore. At last they reached Tyler, Texas. The prison was an open space of ten acres; the rations given the men were one pint of corn

meal and one-half pound of beef - poor beef - when they had it, and sometimes not receiving any for three days; almost starved, often shot and wounded as a pastime to the guards, without any hope of escape, it seemed more than could be endured, and many died. Some attempted escape, but with such barriers as a brutal soldiery, bloodhounds, and six hundred miles in an enemy's country without food, it is not strange that but one person succeeded in getting away."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Richland Co OH: (**Robert W. Bell** biography page 482) "Mr. Bell with a few others made their escape and marched all that night, and the next day reached Alexandria, where they were employed in building dams for the passing of our gunboats."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Richland Co OH: (**Moses Andrews** biography p. 482) "On the Red River expedition the enemy fired into their transport, the men made a barricade of their knapsacks and returned the fire, but the boat soon became disabled. Lieutenant John Beer [Bair] and a comrade swam ashore with a rope and succeeded in pulling the boat to the bank of the river where Mr. Andrews among many others, under a heavy fire from the rebels, made his escape into the woods and returned to Alexandria. Colonel Speigle of his regiment was killed."

Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, New York, H. H. Hardesty & Co, 1885, for Wayne Co OH: (bio of **Francis Kidd** of Company D, p. 510) Red River expedition: "Those of the regiment who were not captured were aided in making their way to Alexandria by a negro, who showed them a 'back road'."

The National Tribune [Washington DC], 25 Jan 1906, pg 3:

"Comrade J. Bear, Co. H, 120th Ohio, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, would like to know what became of the remains of Col. M. M. Speigel, 120th Ohio, after he was killed on the boat City Bell, May 2, 1864, at a bend in Red River, known as Snaggy Point. The rebels captured the boat with its large mail and cargo and took as prisoners of war nearly all the men of the 120th Ohio. 'Some of us gave them the slip,' says Comrade Bear, and thereby avoided being driven to a rebel prison pen to eat musty Southern corncob meal.' "

Holmes County Farmer, 2 June 1864 [Millersburg, OH], page 3:

"Colonel Spiegel.--After our paper was printed last week, word came that Colonel Spiegel was not dead; but this good news proved to be untrue. It is now settled that the lamented Colonel and his brother Joseph are both dead and buried in the same grave." [Note: Brother Joseph survived in prison camp at Tyler, TX.]

Holmes County Farmer [OH], 26 May 1864, page 3:

"More particulars. -- Since a notice of the death of Col Speigel, published elsewhere, was placed in type, we have received a copy of an extra issued from the office of the Wooster Republican, containing letters from M. D. Hill [might be Horace D. Hill, Co D, ] and W. W. Spear [Wesley W. Spear, then of Co E]. [I believe Hill was not with the regiment but was left behind at Baton Rouge because of illness. Spear was with the regiment on the City Belle.]

Mr. Hill writes:

'Nine of the boys came down this evening, they having succeeded in getting thro' to the Mississippi by swimming red river, lying in swamps by day and marching at night. The report they bring is horrid. -- Our brave and gallant Colonel is killed. He stood on the hurricane deck, cheering the men until the fatal ball struck him. Col. Slocum and major McKinley succeeded in making their escape, and have gone to Alexandria. Our regiment numbered over 400, and all the boys say that only 75 men escaped. The rest jumped into the river and were shot or drowned or taken prisoners. ,,,,,,

Lieut. Spear says:

'Colonel Speigel was killed, being shot twice, one Minie ball going through his bowels and a solid shot or shell striking him about the hips.' "

Evening Star [Washington DC], 30 July 1905, page 6, Sunday Magazine:

"Among other Jews who distinguished themselves in the war for the Union may be named Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel of the One Hundred and Twentieth Ohio Infantry, who died before he could



receive the promotion to the brigadier-generalship for which his superior officers recommended him....."

The National Tribune, 29 Jan 1885, page 3:

W. Simpson, A. A. D. C., Gen. Banks's Staff, New Orleans, La.

"Marching around our army at Alexandria, we were placed on a steamboat and sailed up to Shreveport, whence we marched to the stockade (Camp Ford) near Tyler, Tex. -- a distance of 110 miles."

News from the enemy.

Published in Daily Constitutionalist [Augusta, Georgia], **14 May 1864**, page 3.

It is reported that **Polignac's infantry captured the transport Emma** with a valuable cargo of Commissary stores, and 100 prisoners. Also the City Belle, with the 120th Ohio regiment, killing Cols. Mudd and Barrett of the corps d'Afrique, and Col. Ogriell, and one Lieut. Colonel."

[Note: Camille Armand Jules Marie, Prince de Polignac. Confederate Brigadier General, Texas Infantry Brigade, in Red River Campaign.]

News from the enemy. They are celebrating the capture of the City Belle:

Published in Daily Constitutionalist [Augusta, Georgia], **29 May 1864**, page 4.

"The state of affairs since our last, has been as flattering as could be desired. From Arkansas we have intelligence of the defeat of Steele on the Saline bottom. **From below we have information that General Majors, captured a transportation on the 3th [May] instant, between Alexandria and Fort DeRussey, having on board the 120th Ohio regiment, consisting of 270 men, exclusive of officers.**"

From the obituary of 1st Lieut. **John Mackey**:

"In the disastrous affair of last May, **owing to the bad management of the commander of the Gulf Department**, when the boat was attacked, by the rebels, his Company was ordered to the hurricane deck of the vessel, a place of extreme danger. The consternation was frightful, as may well be imagined, and while there was running to and fro, some leaping overboard, &c., the Lieutenant staid [sic] at his post until he had an opportunity of getting out on the opposite shore, which he accomplished by means of a plank from the boat. And here we believe to be the secret of his sickness and subsequent death. After abandoning the vessel, he tarried with one of his wounded comrades until he lost sight of his fleeing and panic stricken companions, when he began pursuit, exerting himself too violently to over take those who were struggling to escape. Losing his blankets, having to sleep on the cold ground, with no covering but the broad, cheerless canopy of the sky, overtaking his energies that he might avoid the *living death of the prisoner*, he contracted a cold which settled on his lungs and resulted fatally."

**John Morton**, Co I, wounded at Snaggy Point [gunshot wound right leg... very much disabled.]

In a letter he wrote to help William Richie of his company to get a pension, he mentioned that the regimental papers were destroyed by the enemy when they burned the "City Belle" at Snaggy Point.

William Higgins of Company I was severely wounded in the wrist as he fended off a blow from the sword of a Confederate captain as he attempted escape after the City Belle was captured at Snaggy Point. [Note: Higgins was captured and sent to Camp Ford, Tyler TX.]

**Samuel Etzwiler**, Private Co I, was **wounded** at the time of the capture of the City Belle, but was able to march to the prison.

**William Carmichael**, Private Co K, "It was at Snaggy Point that he was wounded in the left side.

The 'missile' entered at the lower ribs and passed down into his groin where it lodged and remained."

[The National Tribune [Washington DC], 20 Nov 1902, page 7]

"While attending the National Encampment, Lieut. J. P. Van Nest, 120th Ohio, Wooster, O., unexpectedly met Capt. Alexander Parker Morse, Aid-de-Camp of Major's Division, Green's Cavalry Corps, Army of the Trans-Mississippi, C. S. A. The meeting occurred in the headquarters tent, Thirteenth Corps, Camp Roosevelt. Capt. Morse is the Confederate officer to whom the ill-fated

steamer 'City Belle' was surrendered while en route up the Red River to Alexandria, LA., May 3, 1864. At the time the 'City Belle' had on board the 120th Ohio, including Lieut. Van Nest and a few soldiers of other Union regiments."

A day not forgotten:

[Wooster Daily Republican, 3 May 1917, page 3, available at GenealogyBank.]

An Anniversary Day

"Thursday marked the 54th anniversary of the disaster which overtook the 120th O. V. I. on Red river when over half of the men of the command were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. A number in Wooster are survivors of that well-remembered event. Three colonels were lost in the engagement."

Deaths Snaggy Point, LA



#Col. Marcus Spiegel, killed 3 May 1864 at Snaggy Point, LA  
#Gillis, James, Co C, killed 3 May 1864 at Snaggy Point, LA  
#Seibert, Joseph D., Co C, killed 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point, on the Red River, LA  
#Erwin, Thomas R., Co D, died 3 May 1864 at Alexandria, Louisiana of wounds received the same day near Snaggy Point on the Red River, Louisiana. Hardesty's Encyclopedia says that "he was shot through the thigh, removed to a shanty near the river, where he bled to death and was buried with several companions under the alien sod."  
#McClain, James, Co D, died 23 May 1864 near Alexandria, Louisiana of wounds received on 3 May 1864 in action near Snaggy Point, on the Red River, LA  
#Campbell, John P., Co E, killed 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point, on the Red River, LA  
#Clinger, Andrew, Co F, killed or drowned 3 May 1864 in action

near Snaggy Point on the Red River, Louisiana.

#Wallet [Hollet], Daniel, Co F, shot and killed 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point on the Red River, LA

#Miller, Philip, Co K, wounded in pelvis and thigh and captured 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point, on the Red River, LA; was paroled and sent north probably from Cheneyville to a hospital; he died 16 July 1864 at Jefferson Barracks hospital

Deaths from **1 May 1864** to consolidation with the 114th OVI on **27th of November 1864**.  
**120th OVI Deaths from disease unless otherwise noted.**

Mackey, John D., Field & Staff/Co A/B, died 21 Sept, 1864

Parker, William, Private, Co B, died 27 Sep 1864 in Rebel Prison, Tyler TX.

Gray, William L., Co C, died 4 Sept 1864 on the steamer Diana

Harlan, James, Co C, died 2 Dec 1864, in the hospital at Mound City IL

Sarn, John E., Co D, died 4 May 1864 at home in Plain Township, Wayne Co OH

Martz, Franklin W., Co D, died 29 July 1864 in Rebel Prison at Tyler, TX

Johnson, Silas, Co D, died 19 May 1863 on hospital steamer "D A January".

Hamlin, Rozelous [Rezeland]. Co D, died 1 Aug 1864, of disease at Regimental Hospital

Myers, William, Co E, died 1 May 1864 at Baton Rouge [Buried at Baton Rouge, LA]

Burns, Thomas S., Co E, died 22 June 1864 at Baton Rouge, LA

Miller, Jacob, Co E, died 27 July 1864 at Morganzia Bend, LA

Van Dorsta, Cornelius, Co E, died 10 Aug 1864 in hospital at Morganzia, LA

Kepner, Amos B, Co F, captured 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point on the Red River, LA; he died 30 Sept 1864 in Rebel Prison at Tyler, TX

Lautermilch [Londerwitch], Co F, died 15 Aug 1864 at Morganzia, LA

Reed, Jacob S., Co I, captured 3 May 1864 near Snaggy Point; died 24 Aug 1864 at Camp Ford prison

Mondorff, Henry, Co K, died 30 July 1864 at New Orleans, LA, 30 Jul 1864 at US Barracks hospital.

Research by Susie Holderfield, 2001-2018

[120researcher@gmail.com](mailto:120researcher@gmail.com)

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