

THE PITTSBURGH BLUES

BY

CAPTAIN JOHN H. NIEBAUM*

PART I**The Battle of Mississineway.**

War was declared on June 18th, 1812, by the Congress of the United States against Great Britain.

President Madison sanctioned the same, and next day made public proclamation. The quota of men assigned to Pennsylvania by the national government was 14,000. Governor Snyder of Pennsylvania stated in his call for troops: "The cup of humiliation and long-suffering has been filled to overflowing, and the indignant arm of an injured people must be raised to dash it to the earth and grasp the avenging sword.

"If ever a nation had motives to fight, we are that people. It would give the Governor inexpressible satisfaction if Pennsylvania would volunteer her quota."

The quota of the state was more than filled. Great Britain had assumed many privileges over the United States, such as numerous unwarranted demands, (through orders in Council), and exercising the "right to search" of American ships for alleged suspected British naval deserters, under cover of which the grossest outrages were committed.

At a large public meeting held in Pittsburgh on August 12th, 1812, resolutions were adopted endorsing the action of the government, and that the appeal to arms was consistent with the maintenance of honor and dignity, and in defense of our sacred rights; and that the letting loose by the British Government of the Indians on the American border deserved the execration of the civilized world; and that the citizens of Pittsburgh, irrespective of party, would obey the laws, and submit to any system of taxation to carry on the struggle; and that the action of Governor

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Snyder be approved. The population of Pittsburgh in 1812 was about 5,000.

Previous to this declaration of war, the Pittsburgh Blues were organized under the military laws of the state. Immediately upon commencement of hostilities, filled with becoming zeal and patriotism, they unanimously tendered their services to the general government, which were accepted, and they were ordered into active service and directed to join the Northwestern troops, commanded by Gen. William Henry Harrison.

The company having been previously thoroughly drilled in the science of military movements, by officers well qualified by experience and education, was fully prepared to take the field at a moment's notice. Preparatory to their departure for the seat of war they were mustered into United States service on September 1, 1812, the officers having been sworn in August 14, 1812. They went into camp on the 10th day of September, 1812, on Grant's Hill, near where the Court House now stands. On the 20th they were ordered to the north side of the Allegheny River, and there went into camp on the commons, on the ground afterwards occupied by the Western Penitentiary. On the 21st they again struck their tents and went into camp on the bank of the Ohio River, their white tents extending westerly from Belmont Street to a beautiful grove of sugar-trees where Ferry Lane, (now Beaver Avenue), enters the Ohio River. All this territory hallowed by the memory of the past, was embraced in the old Fifth Ward of the former city of Allegheny. Under the shadow of these magnificent trees the officers' headquarters were established.

The *Pittsburgh Mercury* of August 27, 1812, said: "Capt. Butler's Company, the Pittsburgh Blues, has received orders from the Secretary of War to march. The Blues are a very handsome body of men, completely uniformed, disciplined and equipped, and we have no doubt they will acquit themselves honorably in whatever difficulties await them. The best wishes of their fellow townsmen and their county will accompany them."

The militia laws of the time required the enrollment of every able-bodied man between specified ages, and provided for certain training during each year. These were rather crude performances, but some patriotic spirits organized themselves into volunteer companies, usually adopting a

name. They were armed, uniformed and equipped, at their own expense. In 1807 the State Legislature passed a law recognizing these separate companies as a part of the state militia. The Pittsburgh Blues was one of these volunteer companies.

The following list of the officers and men composing the Pittsburgh Blues was copied from the official roll of the company in the War Department, at Washington, D. C.

OFFICERS

Sworn in August 14, 1812

James R. Butler, Captain	George Haven, 4th Sergeant
Matthew Magee, 1st Lieut.	Nathaniel Patterson, 1st Corporal
James Irwin, Ensign	John W. Benny, 2nd Corporal
Elijah Trovillo, 1st Sergeant	Samuel Elliott, 3rd Corporal
Isaac Williams, 2nd Sergeant	Wounded at Mississinewa, Dec. 18, 1812.
Wounded at Fort Meigs, May 5, 1813.	Israel B. Reed, 4th Corporal,
John Willock, 3rd Sergeant,	Wounded at Mississinewa, Dec. 18, 1812.
Wounded at Fort Meigs, May 9, 1813.	

PRIVATEES

Mustered in September 1, 1812

Robert Allison	John Marcy, discharged for disobedience.
Daniel C. Boss, Wounded at Ft. Meigs, May 5, 1813.	Nathaniel McGiffen, discharged for disability.
Isaac Chess, Wounded at Mississinewa, Dec. 18, 1812.	Moses Morse
Andrew Clark	Joseph McMasters
John Deal	Pressly J. Neville, Promoted to Sergeant.
John Davis	James Newman, Promoted to Sergeant, killed at Ft. Meigs, May 5, 1813.
John D. Davis	William Richardson, killed at Ft. Meigs, May 5, 1813.
Andrew Deemer	John Park, Wounded at Ft. Meigs May 5, 1813.
Joseph Dodd, Wounded at Mississinewa, Dec. 18, 1812.	Mathew Parker
Died June 16, 1813 at Ft. Meigs	John Pollard
Thomas Dobbins, Wounded at Ft. Meigs, May 5, 1813.	Charles Pentland
John Elliott	Edward F. Pratt
Oliver English	George V. Robinson
Enoch Fairfield	Samuel Swift
Samuel Graham	Thomas Sample
Nathaniel Hull	Henry Thompson
Samuel Jones	Nathaniel Vernon
John Francis, Killed at Mississinewa, Dec. 18, 1812.	David Watt
Jesse Lewis	Charles Weidner
Peter S. Orton	Charles Wahrendorf, promoted to Q. M. Sergt., Wounded at Ft. Meigs, May 5, 1813.
George McFall	George S. Wilkins, Promoted on May , 1813.
Thomas McClarnin	
Robert McNeal	
Norris Mathews	
John Maxwell	
Oliver McKee, Wounded May 28, 1813. Died May 29, 1813.	

Two colored men, Frank Richards and William Sidney, went with the Blues in the capacity of servants to the officers; and, when necessity required it, they handled muskets and gained reputations for coolness under fire and unflinching bravery in time of danger.

CASUALTIES

MISSISSINEWAY

John Francis, killed Dec. 18, 1812
 Corp. Samuel Elliott, Wounded
 Dec. 18, 1812.
 Corp. Israel B. Reed, Wounded
 Dec. 18, 1812.
 Corp. Isaac Chess, Wounded
 Dec. 18, 1812.
 Corp. Jos. Dodd, Wounded, Dec.
 18, 1812.

FORT MEIGS

Sergt. Jas. Newman, killed May
 5, 1813.
 Wm. Richardson, killed May 5,
 1813.

Oliver McKee, wounded May 28;
 died May 29, 1813.
 Jos. Dodd, died June 16, 1813.
 Sergt. Isaac Williams, wounded
 May 5, 1813.
 Daniel C. Boss, wounded May 5,
 1813.
 Thomas Dobbins, wounded May
 5, 1813.
 John Park, wounded May 5, 1813.
 Sergt. Chas. Wahrendorf, wound-
 ed May 5, 1813.
 Sergt. John Willock, wounded
 May 9, 1813.

At first it was intended to send the Blues, under Capt. Butler, and the Greensburg Rifle Company, under Capt. Alexander, to the Niagara Department, but the perilous situation of the Northwestern frontier caused the authorities to change their plan, whereupon the two companies were ordered to take boats on September 23rd and move down the Ohio River nearly to Cincinnati, there to join General W. H. Harrison, who had been placed in command of the Army of the Northwest and was preparing to march northward. In fact, General Harrison was then well advanced across Ohio with about 5,000 men to the relief of Fort Wayne. The Westmoreland troop of cavalry, under Capt. Markle, left Pittsburgh for Urbana, Ohio, on September 22nd, 1812, overland.

The call of the Governor for Pennsylvania's quota was for six months' service, but the Pittsburgh Blues, the Greensburg Rifles, and two troops of light dragoons, Capt. Markle's and Capt. McClelland's, all from Western Pennsylvania, volunteered and were enrolled and mustered in for twelve months' service.

Following is a copy of a communication which was procured from a photostat of the original, on file in the War Department in Washington. It is an interesting document and shows the spirit of the Pittsburgh Blues:

"Pittsburgh, September 24, 1812.

Sir:—In conformity of your order I transmit a muster

roll of my company, (The Pittsburgh Blues). I hope my company will be paid off immediately on their joining the Northwest Army. I have promised them their pay at that time, and if they are not, I cannot be answerable for the consequences. They consider the government obliged to do so, and I wish they may not be disappointed. They have left homes where they lived in affluence, and are willing to risk everything in defence of their country—they only receive necessary supplies and money to furnish themselves with winter clothing (and pay for the clothing which they have already furnished). Your humble servant.

James R. Butler,
Capt. Pittsburgh Blues.

Honorable Secretary of War, Wm. Eustis.
P. S.—We join the army by the way of Cincinnati.”

General Richard Butler was one of the conspicuous figures in the early history of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. First as major of the Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment, and finally as colonel of the Ninth, he served continuously in the Revolution from July, 1776, to the end of the war.

He served also for some time as lieutenant colonel in Morgan's command. General Henry Lee, author of "Memoirs of the War," etc., speaks of him as "the renowned second and rival of Morgan in the Saratoga encounters." For the five or six years preceding his death he had been Indian Agent at Pittsburgh.

His home was at the corner of Liberty Street and Marbury, now Third Street. He was shot down, tomahawked and scalped, during General Arthur St. Clair's expedition against the Indians in 1791.

Capt. James R. Butler, who commanded the Pittsburgh Blues was the son of General Richard Butler.

The Pittsburgh Blues, and the Greensburg Rifles, embarked on September 23rd, 1812, on keel boats and proceeded down the Ohio river, arriving on successive days at Beaver, Steubenville and Wheeling, reaching Marietta, on October 1st, and Galipolis, on October 6th, and landed two miles above Cincinnati on October 13th. On October 14th, they marched into and through Cincinnati, and encamped below the town until October 28th, when they started their march across the country to join the Northwestern Army, arriving at

Franklinton, Ohio, the headquarters, and remaining there until November 25th, 1812.

Upon their arrival they were assigned with the other Pennsylvania troops to the right wing, under Brigadier General Crooks.

The army moved from Franklinton to Fort Greenville, November 25th. On the 17th of December occurred the preliminary skirmish of Mississineway, and on the 18th the battle of that name. The movement consisted of an expedition under Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. Campbell against the Mississineway villages. Early on the morning of the 18th the troops were furiously attacked by the Indians. The Pittsburgh Blues were employed to reinforce the angle of the camp against which the enemy was thrown, and they fought gallantly for about an hour. Two corporals of the company, Elliott and Read, were wounded; one private, Francis, was killed, and two privates, Chess and Dodd, were wounded. The company was specifically noticed for its gallant conduct in the official report.

The *Pittsburgh Gazette* of January 22, 1813, published the appended story:

“Dayton, O., December 31, 1812.

On the 25th of November a detachment under the command of Lt. Col. Campbell left Franklinton on a tour which was then a secret. This detachment consisted of a regiment of Light Horse (6 mos. Vols.) of Kentucky, Col. Simeral, U. S. Regulars, and U. S. Volunteers, commanded by Major Ball, a company of regular infantry, the Pittsburgh Blues and Capt. Alexander's Riflemen, amounting in the whole to upwards of 600 men. We proceeded to this place. We here left all our tents and all our baggage. From this we marched to Greenville, the extreme frontier settlement. Previous to our arrival here the object of our expedition was made known to us. We were informed in general orders that it was against the Miami Indians whose towns and settlements lay on the Mississineway River.

“The whole of the ‘foot’ being mounted on pack horses at Dayton, in order to expedite our march, we proceeded with considerable rapidity. Our march after we left Greenville lay through a dreary wilderness, and never saw a house nor the trace of a human being, except savages, for the distance of 85 miles, the whole of our march from Franklinton being about 200 miles. Every man carried his

own provisions on his horse, which consisted of nothing but biscuit and pork. As we had no camp equipage of any kind, our only means of cooking was by broiling our meat on the coals, or roasting it on a stock before the fire.

“On the morning of the third day’s march from the settlement, we were within 40 miles of the Indians towns. We proceeded that day, and the whole of the next night, and halted at about 4 o’clock in the morning a few miles from the town. After refreshing ourselves for about an hour, we took up our line of march, which was in ten columns of single file, the order observed during the whole expedition, and moved with the greatest silence, our object being to take them by surprise. When we were within half a mile of the town our guides gave direction to move up as briskly as possible. Here a scene of tumult and confusion ensued. Every man put spurs to his horse, the yell was raised by the whole army, the ranks were broken, and we entered the town in the utmost confusion and disorder.

“The infantry and riflemen, who were mounted on pack horses, and were left in the rear when the race began, dismounted and entered the town regularly formed. There were not more than 12 or 15 warriors in the town. These, on the approach of our men, fled across the river without making any resistance. We fired on them and killed 6 or 7. Between 30 and 40 prisoners were taken, men, women and children, and the town burnt. Had we entered the town in regular order, every Indian might have been taken without firing a gun. The prisoners were left in the care of the infantry and riflemen, and the light horse proceeded to destroy another town a few miles lower down the river, which they accomplished, there being only two or three old men and a squaw in it. The light horse returned in the afternoon.

“Our loss in the attack consisted of two men—one killed by accident by our own men in the general confusion; the other had strolled some distance from the town and was shot by an Indian who was lurking about. We were informed by the Indian prisoners that there were 500 warriors at a town 15 miles below, at the junction of the Mississineway and Wabash. From this information we had every reason to apprehend an attack next morning. The result justified our suspicions.

"The object of the expedition being accomplished, which was to take prisoners and destroy the Indian towns, we had received orders to prepare for our return next morning. We encamped that night in our usual order, which was a hollow square.

"After reveille in the morning and about half an hour before daylight, just as the moon had set, and while we were cooking our breakfast and preparing for our march, we were assailed by the yells of the savages.

"The attack commenced on the right rear angle of the camp with greatest fury, and was sustained by part of Major Ball's Squadron of horse who were on that quarter. The guards were immediately driven in—every man was under arms in a minute. Our company, together with the rest of the infantry and riflemen, formed the front side of the square, instantly formed on our ground where we waited for orders. In a short time, and while the battle raged with great fury on the quarter where it commenced, Col. Campbell rode to Captain Butler and ordered him to reinforce that quarter or we should be cut off. The company immediately marched to the spot directed and poured in so furious and well directed a fire that in a short time the fire of the enemy was almost totally silenced.

"Soon after this daylight began to appear, and our party proving too powerful the savages began to retreat. They were pursued some distance by a troop of horse and routed with considerable slaughter. The action continued about an hour. Our loss was eight killed and about 45 wounded. Of the wounded, two died on our return and one at this place. These, together with the two killed the day of the attack on the town, makes our loss in killed 12.

"The greatest part of the battle being fought in the dark, renders it impossible to form a correct idea of the number of the enemy. It is the general opinion, however, that their force was about 300. Neither are we able to ascertain correctly their loss, but from the number we found dead on the field, from the trails in the snow of those who had been dragged off, and from the reports of the Indians who have since come in, we calculate their loss to be about 100 killed and wounded.

"In the action our Pittsburgh boys behaved with the greatest courage. It is impossible to say too much in their

praise. On the first alarm they were formed with the utmost alacrity and marched to the ground in the best order, where they fought with the coolness and intrepidity of veterans, and although two of the men were wounded in the commencement of the action they refused to leave the ranks but fought until the action was over. In short, our company contributed more than any other to decide the fate of the day. They were in the hottest of the action for a considerable time, yet there was not the smallest indication of fear discernible in a single man. We had one killed, one dangerously wounded, but who is now recovering, one severely and two slightly wounded.

“No less can be said in praise of Captain Markle’s troop. His loss in killed and wounded was considerable. Among the killed was his second lieutenant, Waltz. He was wounded in the arm at the commencement of the action, but fought until near its close, when he received a ball through his forehead, which terminated his life in about five hours. Of the whole detachment, not more than four companies can properly be said to have been engaged. These were Markle’s, Garrard’s and Hopkins’ troops of horse and Butler’s company of infantry—the Pittsburgh Blues.

“The attack was made on the three first mentioned troops, who sustained the shock until they were reinforced by our company. Other parts of the army had some slight skirmishing but were not drawn into the regular line of battle. All the cavalry were armed with rifles and muskets and fought on foot until daylight.

“Burying the dead and making preparation for transporting our wounded procrastinated our departure till late in the afternoon. The dead were buried in one of the houses, which was torn down and burned over the graves to prevent any trace of their deposit being discovered by the Indians. All the wounded, who were not able to ride, were carried on litters by horses. This necessarily retarded our movements greatly, and we were every night under the continual apprehension of an attack from the savages. We every night fortified ourselves by throwing up a strong breast-work around our encampment. The men slept on their arms. One-third of the detachment was detailed every night for guard. Fortunately, however, the reception we gave them at Mississineway deterred them from again attacking us.

“After a tedious march of seven days we arrived at Greenville. From that place we sent the prisoners under a militia guard to Piqua. Fortune favored us with respect to weather, which was extremely cold. Had it been otherwise, the difficulties from the number of creeks and the great swamps we had to cross would have rendered it almost impossible. The detachment is very much broken down from the severity of the weather. Nearly one half have their feet frost bitten, which renders them incapable of doing duty.

“To add to our misfortunes, when within two days march of Greenville our provisions were exhausted. This, to troops so much reduced by fatigue and hardships, as we were, was sufficient to damp the spirits of any men. The second night before our arrival at the settlement we encamped on the same ground we had occupied on our march out. Here our men were glad to gather the grains of corn from the ground where the horses had fed, and parch and boil it for their sustenance. The next day we met a reinforcement of militia from Greenville. They brought six pack-horse loads of provisions, which afforded about half a ration a man. This kept us from starving till we arrived at the settlement, where we got everything necessary for our relief.

“I can scarcely believe any men suffered more than we did from fatigue and hunger. Indeed, the result proves it, as there is not more than one-fourth of the detachment fit for duty. Notwithstanding all this, I scarcely ever heard a man complain.”

The following items are from the *Pittsburgh Gazette* of February 12, 1813.

“We have the pleasing information from Franklinton that the Pittsburgh Blues had perfectly recovered from the effects of the frost, and the fatigue and hardships they underwent in the late expedition to the Mississineway; that they were to march in a few days to join General Harrison. May honor and victory attend them.”

“Greensburg, January 7th, 1813.

The following letter was received in town by Monday evening's mail from Capt. Alexander, of the Greensburg volunteers. Though written in haste, and not intended for publication, we have requested and procured a copy for insertion. We like the generous and handsome manner in which the

Captain speaks of his brother officers. The letter is dated Munceytown, four miles from Mississineway town, 18th December.

'We arrived here yesterday morning, attacked and took this town. This morning we were attacked before day, had hard fighting, were victorious. Markle has distinguished himself; his company has suffered. Waltz is killed, also two or three others—about 13 of his men wounded; some severely. Captain Butler's men fought bravely. Their fire was destructive; so of Captain Hopkins and every other that fought. Captain Butler had one man killed and four wounded. My men had little share in the fight, owing to our station—but they will fight. We have 37 prisoners. I think the enemy suffered greatly. Behind almost every tree blood is seen. I think they have lost 50 or 60. We will march on our return this morning. We have no forage for our horses, and are scarce of provisions. I think we will be able to make good our way.

'At night the camp was fortified with logs and brush, and fires were kept burning because of the bitter cold weather. 130 of the men were frost bitten. They were 96 miles from a settlement. The 27 wounded were carried on litters. They arrived at Dayton, on December 24th, after a two weeks hard campaign.'

OFFICIAL DISPATCH TO GENERAL HARRISON

Camp Mississineway, two miles above Silver Heels,
December 12, 1812

Dear General—After a fatiguing march of 3 days and one night from Greenville, O., I arrived with the detachment under my command at a town on the Mississineway, thought by the spies to be Silver Heels town; but proved to be a town settled by a mixture of Delaware and Miami Indians.

About 8 o'clock in the morning of the 17th, undiscovered, a charge was made upon the town, when many fled over the river. Thirty-seven prisoners are taken, whom I shall bring in with me, including men, women, and children. Seven warriors were killed. After disposing of the prisoners I marched a part of the detachment down the river and burned three villages without resistance. I then returned and encamped on the ground where stood the first village attacked.

This morning about daylight, or a little before, my camp was attacked by a party of Indians (the number unknown, but supposed to be between 2 and 3 hundred), on my right line, occupied by Maj. Ball's squadron, who gallantly resisted them for about an hour, when the Indians retreated, after being most gallantly charged by Captain Trotter at the head of his troop of cavalry.

We lost in the action one killed and one wounded, (by accident the last.) In the action this morning we have 8 killed, and about 25 or 30 wounded. Not having yet gotten a report, I am unable to state the number exactly. The Indians have lost about 40 killed, from the discoveries now made. The spies are out at present ascertaining the number.

I have sent to Greenville for reinforcements and send you this hasty sketch. A detailed report shall hereafter be made known to you, noticing particularly those companies and individuals who have distinguished themselves signally.

I anticipate another attack before I reach Greenville, but rest assured, my dear General, they shall be warmly received. I have a detachment composed of the bravest fellows, both officers and soldiers, in the world. Our return will be commenced this morning. Among the killed I have to deplore the loss of brave Captain Pierce. Lieut. Waltz, of Captain Markle's troop of cavalry, is also mortally wounded. Their gallant conduct shall be noticed hereafter.

Yours with the greatest respect and esteem,

John B. Campbell, Lt. Col. 19th Regt.,

United States Infantry

General W. H. Harrison,

Commanding N. W. Army

It may be proper to note here that Col. Campbell died July 5, 1814, of wounds received in the battle of Chippewa.

Gen. Harrison in transmitting Col. Campbell's report to the War Department expressed the following sentiment respecting the observance of humanity in this expedition:

"The character of this gallant detachment, exhibiting as it did perseverance, patience, fortitude and bravery, would however, have been incomplete if in the midst of victory they had forgotten the feelings of humanity. It is with the sincerest pleasure that the General has heard that the most punctual obedience was paid to his orders; not only in saving the women and children but in sparing all the warriors who ceased to resist; and that even when vigorously attacked

by the enemy, the claims of mercy prevailed over every sense of their own danger; and this heroic band respected the lives of their prisoners. The General believes that humanity and true bravery are inseparable."

The *Pittsburgh Gazette* of January 29, 1813 contained the following note:

"Capt. Jno. B. Alexander has been promoted to rank of Major. His command is composed of Pittsburgh Blues, Greensburg Rifles, and Capt. McCray's company of U. S. Volunteers of Virginia."

(To be continued)