

A SCARCE WEST VIRGINIA CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES MEDAL FOR BATTERY 'G' WEST VIRGINIA LIGHT ARTILLERY, LATE SECOND VIRGINIA INFANTRY WHO HAD HIS LEG SHOT OFF AND WAS TAKEN PRISONER AT THE CAVALRY BATTLE OF ROCKY GAP 26 AUGUST 1863, A BATTLE IN WHICH 'G' BATTERY WERE CONSPICUOUS FOR THEIR GALLANTRY



WEST VIRGINIA CIVIL WAR MEDAL 'HONORABLY DISCHARGED' TYPE 'JOHN N TAGGART BATY G 1ST REG LT ARTLY VOLS'

John N. Taggart a 21 year old teacher was born in Allegheny, PA and enlisted into the Union Army on 15 May 1861. Mustering into Company 'G' (Capt Ewing), Second Virginia Infantry on 13 June 1861, 'G' Company was permanently detached from the Regiment from May 1862, becoming Battery 'G' West Virginia Light Artillery, of 'Ewing's Battery'. From 1863 'G' battery was serving in West Virginia as part of General W. W. Averell's Cavalry Division, and under that gallant leader did grand service at Rocky Gap, Droop Mountain and Salem raid, not to mention numerous other engagements and expeditions. The Rocky Gap fighting by this battery has few parallels in the history of the Rebellion. The history of the Second Virginia and Averell's cavalry is the history of Battery 'G.'

Private Taggart was severely wounded and taken prisoner at the battle of Rocky Gap, VA on 26 August 1863. The entry in his musters noting:

"Absent prisoner leg shot off Aug 26/63. Sept 1863 – absent without leave, taken prisoner. Oct 1863 absent wounded & left in the hands of the Rebels at Rocky Gap Aug 26 63.."

It also notes: *"He has been engaged in the following battles & skirmishes: Allegheny Mt, VA Dec 13/61, Beverly July 2/63, Rocky Gap, VA Aug 26/63 where he lost his left leg"*

Towards the end of 1863, he was released by the Confederates in and sent to General Hospital, Pittsburgh where he remained until discharged due to his wounds on 14 June 1864

The battle of Rocky Gap, better known as the battle of White Sulphur Springs, fought on the 26-27 August 1863 was fought in West Virginia between a Confederate Brigade under Colonel George S Patton and a smaller Union Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier General William W Averell. 'G' battery were the only Union artillery unit present and were conspicuous for their gallantry during the action, loosing heavily in killed, wounded and captured.

The battle itself was a confederate victory:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_White_Sulphur_Springs

THE BATTLE OF ROCKY GAP FROM 'G' BATTERIES HISTORY

"...The march was a hard, dangerous and severe one, but on rejoining their brigade the gallant boys forgot their fatigue and were anxious to meet the enemy now massing in their front under Gen. W. L. Jackson. The command resumed the march on the 24th, reaching Warm Springs shortly after dark, a distance of twenty-five miles. During the day the front of the column was severely bushwhacked, wounding a number of the command. We punished the enemy slightly in the same manner and captured on the march over one hundred saddles and bridles, which we burned, and at Warm Springs we captured a number of sabres, guns, etc. The next day we went about twenty-five miles in the direction of Lewisburg, having considerable skirmishing and making some unimportant captures. On the 26th we advanced thirteen miles, to within three miles of White Sulphur Springs, and at about 8 o'clock found our advance opposed by Gen. Jones at a place called Rocky Gap.

The enemy were strongly entrenched, with a clearing and corn field in their front. The Third and Eighth Virginia were dismounted and thrown out to the left of the road, and our regiment and a portion of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania cavalry, dismounted, moved to the right of the road. Ewing's battery was ordered to take position on a slight elevation to the right of the road. Lieut. Shearer's section dashed into position quickly, followed by Lieut. Howard Morton with the remaining guns. A severe fire of canister greeted them from the enemy's guns, which were unmasked at point blank range, and in the few seconds required to get into action, a number of the battery were disabled, and a few of the horses were killed or disabled. Capt. Ewing, while seeking a better position for the battery was wounded, and carried from the field, leaving the battery in command of Lieut. Morton. Notwithstanding the terrible odds against them, the battery was worked with such telling effect, that the enemy's guns were soon rendered comparatively harmless for the rest of the action. Battery G had an accident happen to one of their pieces, that was out of the usual order. After the fight had begun, the battery was ordered into position, and went on a trot to the place designated. One of the pieces ran off the road alongside another one, and just then the confederates fired vigorously, frightening the horses, which were new to the work. They reared and broke the pole and the limber got fast on a stump, so the men could not unlimber the gun. Sergeant Evans then ordered the drivers to turn and pull the piece down on the road, so as to be on the level. Just as they did this, Charles Arbogast, the middle driver, was shot through the breast and fell from his horse. His brother, George Arbogast, who drove the wheel team, jumped off and caught his brother Charles, pulling him out of the way. As soon as the horses found they were not controlled, they made a jump and landed on the road, with the piece upside down. The lead driver, David R. Yingst, held on to the horses, and they lay in the middle of the road in full view of the enemy. The horses were then raised to their feet, after great difficulty, by the efforts of Sergt. Evans, Yingst and Billy Gibson, while one of their own pieces was firing

grape right over them and a confederate battery was firing close to them. There was a rail fence near and the shots from the enemy struck the rails, throwing the pieces all over the men. After they got the horses up, a new pole was put in and the gun was put to work trying to make up for lost time. Gen. Averell was near by and complimented the men on their good work in righting the gun under such difficult conditions. The battery lost heavily in this battle. Capt. Ewing was severely wounded and left in the hands of the enemy, together with the killed and other wounded of the battery. The captain relates that when he found himself outside the protection of the old flag, he could not keep back the unbidden tear, and all the prisoners shared in the feeling. Samuel Lessig and Charles Arbogast were killed and Serg'ts. H. A. Evans, Adam Brown, and S.J. Osborne; W. F. McClure, Lawrence Marshall, John N. Taggart, Fred Rowe, George Hart, Phillip Zeigler, John Fife and James Metcalf were severely wounded. Sergt. Evans was struck on the right side of his head by a piece of shell, which exploded just over him, and all that saved him was it striking the hat band, which turned it out. He was knocked senseless and the bone badly shattered, seventeen pieces being taken out and it now troubles him severely.



While the battery was doing such effective work, the rest of the brigade were gallantly charging all along the line. Our regiment, supported on the left flank by one-half of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, advanced through the cornfield, meeting with a murderous fire from the enemy, safely posted behind their breastworks. We pressed onward, however, almost up to the fortifications, but were there met with such a withering fire that human endurance could stand it no longer, and we fell back a short distance, taking position in a gully, or dry creek bed, where we were partially sheltered. In that severe charge some of our bravest officers and men fell. Among the rest, the brave McNally, of our regiment, foremost in the line, waving his sword and cheering his men. The major had taken hold of one of the confederates and captured him, when they both fell at once, the confederate being instantly killed by his own men. The position of our regiment in the gully was a very exposed one now, being far in advance of our line. Gen. Averell, who was directing movements from the center of the line, near Ewing's battery, ordered the part of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry that was mounted, to make a diversion by charging down the road toward the enemy's fortifications. This brave body of men made one of the most daring charges of the war, not only facing a murderous storm of leaden hail from the front but also, to their surprise,

received an enfilading fire along their flank from a large body of infantry concealed in a cornfield to the left of the road. On they dashed, regardless of death and danger, and reached the breastworks of felled trees and fence rails thrown across the road. While endeavouring to force their way through, they were surrounded by the force upon their flanks and were nearly all killed, wounded or captured. During the excitement of this heroic charge, the survivors of the Second were withdrawn from their exposed position in the gulley to a safer position on the ridge in their rear. The Third and Eighth Virginia had also met a largely superior force of the enemy posted in their front, and although they struggled gallantly, were unable to dislodge them. After the heroic charge of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania down the road, had disclosed the presence of the enemy hid in the cornfield to the left of the road, Lieut. Morton, of battery G, changed front with four guns and swept the cornfield with canister, causing the enemy who were massed there, a greater loss in men than from any other source during the battle. Night put an end to the conflict, and both armies rested during the night.

Upon the approach of daylight the battle was resumed, and General Averell tried his best to break the enemy's line, but in vain. About 10:30 A. M. he discovered that the ammunition of both the battery and other troops was almost exhausted, and he reluctantly gave the order to withdraw, retiring in good order, travelling all day, that night, and the next day until 3 p. m., when we arrived at Huntersville, a distance of fifty miles. It was a fearful march, without rest, and constantly harassed by the bushwhackers, who seemed to be in every wooded place, whence they sent into our columns the death dealing bullets. There was not the slightest opportunity to defend ourselves, and it was warfare that was devoid of the excitement of the battle field, hence the harder to bear. The same evening we marched to Marian's Bottoms, where we rested for the night..."



Condition EF. Sold with copy musters for Taggart and a 'History of the Fifth West Virginia Cavalry, formerly the Second Virginia Infantry, and of Battery G, First West Va. Light Artillery' on CD

A very scarce medal artilleryman casualty.