

OUR CAMP JOURNAL



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"We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B

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The 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, their mascot and badge

By Bill Hart

Among the many regiments that fought in the civil war, there is one whose members wore a distinctive regimental insignia on their uniforms. This was the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

Like most American Civil War regiments, the 7th Ohio led a somewhat nomadic life. The regiment initially served in western Virginia before becoming an element of the 2nd Corps of the Army of Virginia in early 1862. This Corps was transferred to the Army of the Potomac after the Second Battle of Bull Run and redesignated as the 12th Corps. Following the Battle of Gettysburg the Corps was transferred again, this time to the Army of the Cumberland. Finally the 12th Corps was combined with the 11th Corps to form the 20th Corps at the outset of the Atlanta Campaign. The 7th Ohio was assigned to this itinerant corps throughout.

Members of the 7th Ohio were the only civil war soldiers I have found

who wore a regimental badge on their uniforms and wore them before the army initiated a formal unit identification method. The first official insignia scheme used to identify members of specific units was implemented by the Army of the Potomac on March 21, 1863. This system allowed for the unit affiliation of soldiers to be recognized down to the division level based on the shape and color of the badges they wore. At a lower organizational level, members of at least one brigade, the Irish brigade, wore a Celtic harp badge, usually on their hat. Some of the Irish brigade regiments had their regimental number affixed to the harp but the practice was not universal.

The 42nd New York "Garibaldi Guard", the various Zouave regiments, and the "bucktails" of the 42th Pennsylvania could be distinguished by their uniforms and uniform accoutrements. Only the 7th Ohio wore their own

regimental insignia.

It was not unusual for civil war regiments to become known by a nickname. The 37th Illinois were known as the greyhounds, the 79th New York as the highlanders, the 105th Pennsylvania as the wildcats and these are but a sample. The 7th Ohio was known as the rooster regiment and at some point, the soldiers of the regiment began wearing badges in the image of a rooster.

The rooster badge was not official and took a number of different forms. Some were described as "cut from any bit of cloth and sewed to the blouse." Most identified examples are metal badges, usually brass, some "silvered". I have discovered information about five that were unearthed by relic hunters in Virginia and Georgia and one from an exploratory archeology dig in Frederick County at a site associated with the 1862 Maryland campaign. I have also located more



than a dozen others listed for sale or auction although no provenance was provided for any of the badges so offered. These metal badges are highly sought after by collectors and often command high prices. One sold for \$896.25 at auction in 2010.

Photographs of members of the 7th Ohio wearing their badge include officers, NCO's and privates. They wore the unofficial rooster badge on their frock or sack coat on either the left or right side seemingly as each individual favored.

The why, how, and when the regiment acquired their rooster nickname are questions yet to be answered. Several ideas have been put forth but are either not documented or the explanations are

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Upcoming Campaigns

MAY

May 18-19: Spring Skirmish at the Daniel Lady Farm – “Fields of Fury” **(Company event)** ***(FVB Event)**

Visit:
www.GBPA.org to register online

JUNE / JULY

July 6-7: **161st Gettysburg**, Daniel Lady farm, Gettysburg, PA **(Company event)** ***(FVB Event)**

Visit: www.GBPA.org to register online.

July 19-21: **Funkstown**, MD
<http://www.funkstown.com/special-events/day-in-the-park/>
(7th MD Max Effort - Company event)
***(FVB Event)**

AUGUST

August 9-11: **160th Anniversary** Foulkes Mill, Cumberland, MD **(Individual)**

August 10-11: **Securing the Home Front**, Stroudsburg, PA **142nd Co. G** Event **(Individual)**

The 7th Ohio “Roosters”

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unsatisfactory. The earliest mention of the 7th Ohio being called roosters that I have found is in a letter dated March 25, 1862 which relates that during the March 23rd First Battle of Kernstown, “Col. Creighton led his brave “roosters” (as he calls us) slowly but surely towards the foe.”

It was reported that “Its boys were known to crow like roosters and flap their arms as they swung into battle” and “Whenever they went into a fight the Colonel would flap his arms and crow like a rooster.” It was not today’s army. The two

senior officers of the regiment, Colonel Creighton and Lieutenant Colonel Crane, were both shot dead performing this act at the Battle of Ringgold Gap in Georgia on November 27, 1863.

Several regiments tied their identity to their mascots so closely that they memorialized them on regimental monuments erected after the war. These include the 8th Wisconsin monument at Vicksburg surmounted by “Old Abe” their bald eagle mascot and the 42nd New York Tammany regiment with a bronze statue of Chief Tammany standing in front of a teepee atop their monument at Gettysburg.

The 7th Ohio also honored its mascot on monuments. The regiment’s monument on Culp’s Hill at Gettysburg has a bronze plaque bearing the image of a rooster. A rooster is carved into the granite of the monument to the Ohio regiments of Tynedale’s brigade located directly across Dunker Church Road from the Dunker Church at Antietam.

In addition to the battle-

field monuments they erected, the seal of the Seventh Regiment O.V.I. Association established after the war by its veterans prominently features a rooster, the veteran’s news-

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The 7th Ohio Monument at Culp’s Hill, Gettysburg.



Col William R Creighton, 7th OH, with the Rooster badge on his breast.

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*Civil War Re-enactors;
America's Living Historians.*

SONNET.—ABSENCE.

BY R. H. STODDARD.

DEAR friend, I often pass the
places where

WE held our happy trysts
of olden time,

Chatting, and reading, and
reciting rhyme,

And magic Memory recalls you
there;

I see you sitting in the accus-
tomed chair—

A favorite volume open on
your knee,

Read with a knitted brow;—
when skies are fair,

As was your wont, you're
roving round with me

The busy streets— I talk to you
again

Of Faith, and Hope, and Love,
and Poesy,

And all the little ways of little
men,

And question you, and waiting
for reply,

Start at the solitude and find you
flown—

And then, with saddened heart,
pursue my walk alone.



The 7th Ohio "Roosters"

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letter was titled the *Rooster Record* with the image of a rooster on its masthead, and the member ribbons worn at regimental reunions conspicuously featured images of roosters.

While others have researched and written about campaigns, battles, generals, weapons and other significant aspects of the civil war,

I have spent many hours over the past twenty or so years investigating the 7th Ohio and its rooster. I have read books, searched newspapers of the period, done searches on the web and corresponded with a number of individuals which has enabled me to amass a sizeable volume of research material and write many pages of results about this insignificant aspect of the civil war which

had no impact on the outcome of any campaign, battle, or skirmish. It has been fun, interesting, satisfying and kept me out of my wife's hair. I have yet to find the why, how, and when of the rooster so I still have many hours of work ahead of me researching the 7th Ohio, the "Rooster Regiment".



Left, the 7th Ohio's Rooster carved in granite at the Tynesdale's Brigade monument at Antietam National Military Park.

Right, Sgt. Daniel D. Owen, Co. H, 7th OH with the regimental mascot Rooster patch sewn onto his uniform.

