



By Robert J. Trout

The officers and men of Shoemaker's Battery sat around their guns, which were parked in the fields beside the Valley Turnpike, contemplating what might lie ahead of them. Unable to catch up with their brethren from Thomson's, Johnston's, and Griffin's batteries, the Lynchburg boys had plodded along with the supply train in the rear of the advancing Confederate cavalry, an ignominious position for one of the Stuart Horse Artillery's premier batteries. Nothing could be done about it, however, so the men made good use of the time, resting and catching up on the latest news.

Farther down the Valley there was little time for rest or conversation. The advance elements of Jubal Early's cavalry under Lunsford Lomax and Tom Rosser had been nipping at the heels of Phil Sheridan's retreating army for the past few days. The Federal cavalry led by generals George A. Custer and Wesley Merritt, had been told *to attack and whip the enemy*.¹ As the sun rose on the morning of October 9, 1864, they did just that. Crossing Tom's Brook and slashing into Rosser's flank, Custer's regiments routed the gray cavalry and rushed at Johnston's and Thomson's guns. Outflanked and left to fight alone, the horse artillery never had a chance. By ones and twos the guns fell to the enemy. The officers and crews scattered, seeking safety in flight.

Griffin's battery too fell victim to the onslaught. As support for Lomax, Lieutenant John R. McNulty, who commanded in Griffin's absence, watched as Merritt's troopers broke the Confederate mounted regiments and sent them flying.² McNulty made a

¹ The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (hereafter cited as O.R.), (Harrisburg, Pa.: 1971), Series 1, Vol. 43, Part 1, p. 520.

² Capt. Wiley Hunter Griffin had been captured at Yellow Tavern on May 11, 1864. The battery had continued to use his name since no other officer had been promoted to captain to replace him.

gallant fight of it. As he retreated down the Valley Pike his guns halted one by one as the horses gave out. Firing until the blue wave swept over them or cut off their escape, the gunners of the Baltimore Light added a final page to their battery's noble history. Just outside Woodstock the last piece was taken.³ McNulty, with those of his crews who were mounted, whirled away and galloped south. Ten guns had been lost in a matter of minutes. Custer and Merritt were triumphant, and Shoemaker's battery still lay before them.

Shoemaker's first indication that something was amiss came as individual cavalymen from Lomax's and Rosser's commands thundered by on lathered mounts. They were quickly followed by small knots of troopers. One or two were halted and questioned. What became evident was that all had been lost, and the battery and wagon train were in great danger. Try as he might Shoemaker could not persuade any of the cavalry to remain and protect his guns until they could be limbered. Time was dwindling. The Federals were almost upon them. Calling his officers together Shoemaker explained that the battery was on its own and would have to fight its way out.⁴

Lieutenant Edmund H. Moorman was ordered to limber his guns and fall back to the next rise of ground.⁵ Lieutenant Charles R. Phelps' gunners wheeled their pieces into the road, rammed home charges of canister, stared over the muzzles, and waited. Custer's and Merritt's troopers had encountered little resistance from the gray cavalry and only brief stands by the consistently outflanked Confederate horse artillery. Now as the Federals galloped up the Valley Pike they came at Shoemaker and Phelps head on. A blast from the guns shattered the head of the column. A second catapulted it backward. Shoemaker did not wait for the bluecoats to come on a second time. The guns were limbered, and the race began.

Seeing their antagonists retreating, the blue cavalry charged again. Rapidly they drew closer, only to be brought up short by shells exploding in their front ranks. Moorman had reached his goal, unlimbered, and opened fire to safeguard Shoemaker and Phelps, who dashed past their comrades and thundered toward the next eminence where they began to unlimber and prepared to cover Moorman's retreat.⁶ The enemy swept after Moorman and for five miles up the Valley Pike the four guns of Shoemaker's battery demonstrated the firepower and rapidity of movement that was horse artillery at its finest. From hill to hill they galloped and fought. Unsupported, horses wheezing with exhaustion, men begrimed and near collapse from fatigue, the battery finally convinced Custer and Merritt that here were four guns of the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion they would not be able to count among their trophies. The blue tide receded, leaving Shoemaker victorious. Custer bragged that he had taken every gun of the horse artillery at Tom's Brook. He said nothing of the four on the Valley Pike.⁷ The fighting prowess displayed by Capt. John J. "Bird" Shoemaker and his battery on that October clay illustrated in microcosm what the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion brought to the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia for almost four years of the war: mobile firepower.

Though the Civil War saw many innovations, horse artillery was not among them. The melding of rapidity of movement with the potency of artillery is credited to Frederick the Great.⁸ Following the Prussian king, the innovations of Jean-Baptiste

³ Washington Hands, *Washington Hands' Civil War Notebook*, Maryland Historical Society, p. 111.

⁴ Lewis T. Nunnelee, *History of a Famous Company of the War of Rebellion (So Called) Between the States*, Museum of the Confederacy, pp. 165-166.

⁵ John J. Shoemaker, *Shoemaker's Battery* (Gaithersburg: no date), p. 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷ *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol 2, p. 521

⁸ Albert Manucy, *Artillery Through the Ages* (Washington D.C. : 1962), pp. 10-11.

Vaquette de Gribeauval - the standardization of artillery pieces and carriages - were of great importance to the development of field artillery especially horse artillery. His lighter guns led to the establishment of French horse artillery in 1792.⁹

Later, in the American colonies' struggle for independence, the artillery arm of the fledgling country's armies made some significant contributions to the war effort, especially at Yorktown. Once the new country was founded, it set about creating a permanent army, albeit a small one. The Act of March 3, 1799, created the "Corps of Artillerists and Engineers" as part of the army. From this organization grew the artillery arm of the United States Army and eventually the horse artillery. At the outbreak of the Civil War the United States had no horse artillery, having dismantled Captain Braxton Bragg's battery after the Mexican War.¹⁰

But what exactly is horse artillery and how does it compare with light artillery, field artillery, heavy artillery, foot artillery, flying artillery, and mounted artillery? During the war these terms were flung about like cannonballs on a battlefield and as a result require some explanation.

At this time artillery was divided into two kinds. The first of these was foot artillery or heavy artillery as it was sometimes called. This type of artillery was used in a siege, in coastal batteries, and in garrison batteries. It also included mountain artillery and rocket batteries.¹¹ The second kind was light artillery or field artillery, which maneuvered with the troops in the field. This included two types: the mounted artillery and the horse artillery. The mounted artillery fought with the infantry. The cannoners walked beside the pieces but when necessary "mounted" the ammunition chests and rode from one position to another. Horse artillery on the other hand, generally was attached to the cavalry. Because it was designed to accompany the cavalry it had to be even more maneuverable than a mounted battery. In order to achieve this, all the cannoners who did not ride the limbers, caissons and the horses pulling them rode their own mounts.¹² The ideal situation would be to have the entire crew mounted on horses to lighten the load on those pulling the guns, but the Confederacy's limited supply of horseflesh made this impracticable. The term "flying artillery" was not synonymous with horse artillery but referred to the practice of keeping the guns moving from position to position to confuse the enemy. A mounted battery as well as horse artillery could accomplish this. By 1860 the role of artillery was well understood. That year's edition of *The Artillerist's Manual* by First Lieutenant John Gibbon of the 4th U. S. Artillery, who would later rise to the rank of major general in the Union army defined artillery's contribution on the battlefield quite succinctly: *The principle objective of artillery is, to sustain the troops in attack and defense; to facilitate their movements and oppose the enemy's; to destroy his forces as well as the obstacles which protect them; and to keep up the combat until an opportunity is offered for a decisive blow. Our mounted batteries have been so much perfected and increased in mobility that they can move almost with as much celerity as horse artillery; and the latter has been practically abandoned in the United States. The men should be mounted on the boxes only when it is absolutely necessary, to avoid breaking down the horses. This rapid gait cannot, however, be kept up any length of time, as it can in horse artillery.*¹³

⁹ Russel F. Wigley, *The Ages of Battles* (Bloomington, Indiana: 1991), p. 272; Patrick Griffith, *French Artillery* (London: 1976), p.10.

¹⁰ Jennings Cropper Wise, *The Long Arm of Lee* (New York: 1959), pp. 163-164.

¹¹ Col. Thomas E. Gries and Jay Luvas, Eds., *Instruction for Field Artillery* (New York: 1968), p. 1; M.C. Switlik, *The Complete Cannoneer* (Rochester, MI: 1979), p. 9.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ John Gibbon, *The Artillerist's Manual* (Glendale: 1970), p.389.

Gibbon's conclusion that mounted artillery compared with horse artillery in mobility over reasonably short distances was true. His observation concerning the length of time a mounted battery could sustain such movement was critical, especially for the cavalry. However, Gibbon did not dismiss the horse artillery with this curt analysis but elaborated further: *Horse artillery is, in France, considered indispensably necessary for service with cavalry which having but little or no fire of its own, and acting simply by the shock of its charge, requires that the enemy should be kept at a distance, and first broken by the fire of artillery in order that the charges made may result in any practical good. Instances might be cited where the absence of its co-operation resulted in inflicting upon the enemy simply a few sabre cuts, when he ought to have been annihilated. This kind of artillery is, however, very costly, consuming a large number of horses, and should therefore be proportionally small in quantity. It should, however be excellent in quality, bold, well maneuvered, ever venturesome, appearing at and disappearing from different points, and multiplying, as it were, its action, which should be short and decisive.*¹⁴

While Gibbon could not have visualized what cavalry would become during the coming war, he did define how horse artillery should be fought. "Bold" and "venturesome" would be some of the milder adjectives applied to what horse artillery commanders did with their guns.

Just how was Civil War horse artillery utilized? In battle it provided the offensive punch for the cavalry, which more and more meant being in the thick of the fight - not just standing off and throwing shells. How it delivered that punch was up to its commander. The more aggressive the officer the more likely that the artillery would be pushed to the front lines or beyond to deliver its fire. The fine line between rashness and boldness often became blurred in the use of horse artillery. Captain Roger P. Chew's charge at Middletown, Lieutenant Edwin L. Halsey's advance at James City, Major Jim Breathed's gallant stand at Spotsylvania, and Captain William M. McGregor's dash to the front at Reams' Station are but a few of the instances where the men and guns of the Confederate horse artillery were placed in harm's way by their aggressive commanders. In truth, it was the only way to fight horse artillery.

The guns also could create a rallying point for the cavalry when the mounted arm was repulsed or, if need be, cover the withdrawal. With the guns attached to the prolong ropes a crew did not have to unlimber every time the guns were put into position. Captain James E. Hart's gun which supported the rear guard during the fighting retreat to White's Ford on Stuart's Chambersburg Raid and Shoemaker's defiant withdrawal along the Valley Pike illustrate the horse artillery's ability to combine determined resistance to an advancing enemy with rapidity of movement. Officers and crews had to be trained to a high level of competence in order to execute such maneuvers successfully. The least mistake could lead to disaster.

Stuart's Horse Artillery did not escape the drudgery of picket duty, often being placed just in the rear of the most advanced positions. Frequent exposure to such duty along the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers as well as other locations throughout the war conditioned the officers and men to be vigilant and prepared for anything. Such preparation stood them in good stead on June 9, 1863, when their camp, which was located about a mile from the Rappahannock River, was attacked in the opening phase of the Battle of Brandy Station. Panic could have ensued. Instead, accustomed to such surprises from hours on picket duty, the horse artillery lost only a few tents and some

¹⁴ Ibid.

baggage. All of the guns were saved and later played a crucial role in the battle's outcome.

The batteries should accompany the cavalry on raids or reconnaissance. In this role, at least for the Confederate batteries which were reduced to four horses per gun rather than six as in the Federal batteries, the horse artillery failed more than it succeeded simply because of its inability to keep up. The Confederate horse artillery's greatest success was the Chambersburg Raid when exhausted teams were replaced continuously with captured animals. During the entire raid the batteries managed to maintain their place in the column and contributed significantly to the raid's outcome.

What eventually became the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion had its origin in the mind of three men: Colonel J. E. B. Stuart and Virginia Military Institute cadets Roger Preston Chew and Milton Rouss.¹⁵ Chew and Rouss appear to have been the first to act on the idea of forming a horse battery. On September 5, 1861, they took their leave of the Lee Battery in which they had been acting as officers, made their way to Richmond, where they demanded and received pay as lieutenants of artillery, and then headed back to the Valley. The pair immediately approached Turner Ashby and presented their plan to form a battery of horse artillery to serve with his cavalry. Ashby liked the idea and sent them on to General Joseph E. Johnston at Manassas to secure his permission to raise the battery from militia in the valley.¹⁶

Johnston had been in command of the Valley forces but now informed Chew and Rouss that newly christened "Stonewall" Jackson was to be the Valley commander. They would have to seek permission from him. This presented the pair with a serious problem. When Jackson was in command at Harpers Ferry, Chew and Rouss were transferred from training camp duty in Richmond to join the little force holding the strategic point. Delighted to be stationed so close to their homes, visions of furloughs and visits to loved ones tantalized their imaginations. Jackson rendered all such notions so much wishful thinking by refusing their petition for leave. Undaunted and convinced that their former instructor would see their need to get home, the two went anyway. Jackson was not amused and sent them packing back to VMI. Rouss recalled the day as *one of the very saddest of all my life*.¹⁷ However, there was nothing else to do but beard the lion in his den. Off to *Old Jack* they went.

Professor Jackson was well aware of the talent that imbued his former students. He had not only watched their performance on the drill field but had instructed them in artillery. Jackson listened to their proposal and thought it worthwhile. Their youthful nature had led them to err once. Their courage and enthusiasm had led them back to face him again. Jackson was willing to take a second chance on them and granted their request on November 11, 1861. The battery was formally organized on November 13 at Flowing Spring, Jefferson County, Virginia, as a horse battery, the first in the Confederacy. A total of 33 enlisted men and 4 officers: Captain Roger Preston Chew, First Lieutenant Milton Rouss, and Second Lieutenants James William McCarty and James Walton Thomson made up the roster. The battery's initial armament was a Blakely and a three-inch iron rifle.¹⁸

Chew and Rouss reported their successful organization to Jackson. The proud young captain recalled Jackson as saying: *Young men, now that you have your company what*

¹⁵ Chew entered VMI on July 30, 1859, Rouss on September 5, 1859. Roger Preston Chew File and Milton Rouss File, *The Virginia Military Institute Archives*, Lexington, Virginia.

¹⁶ Milton Rouss File, *The Virginia Military Institute Archives*, Lexington, Virginia; hereafter cited VMIA.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ One source stated that the battery's armament consisted of the Blakely, a howitzer and a 6-inch gun. Avis Mary Custis Cauley, *The Confederacy in the Lower Shenandoah Valley as Illustrated by the career of Colonel Roger Preston Chew* (unpublished thesis, 1937), pp.22-23.

*are you going to do with it?*¹⁹ Neither could offer a reply at that moment. Subsequent events would prove the horse artillery's worth not only to Jackson and Ashby but also to Stuart, Hampton, and many other officers and troopers of the cavalry. Chew would rise to command the battalion and hold the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Had Jackson lived he would have had his question answered many times over.

At almost the same time Chew and Rouss approached Ashby, Col. J.E.B. Stuart attempted to form his own section of horse artillery. On September 18 he wrote to Virginia governor John Letcher: *I have the honor to apply for 2 pieces of artillery, preferably 1 howitzer and 1 rifled piece, to be assigned to my Reg't (1st Cavalry) as horse artillery, the cannoneers to be detailed from the Reg't, and mount themselves, and the horses and harness furnished by the State with the pieces. As it is entirely in your power to supply this important element of war, of which we have none, I beg of you, as a personal friend and as a patriotic Executive, to let me have it; it can be done through Col. Pendleton, who is, or soon will be, in Richmond.*²⁰

Instead of his guns Stuart received a promotion to brigadier general, but the matter of his horse artillery was not entirely set aside.

The months from September to December 1861 witnessed a move by Colonel William N. Pendleton, Johnston's chief of artillery that eventually led to the establishment of the Stuart Horse Artillery. Pendleton took a young lieutenant named John Pelham away from the Alburdis Battery in which he had served at 1st Manassas and assigned him to Captain George A. Grove's Culpeper Battery. The young Alabamian reported for duty in early September. What Pelham saw when he arrived can only be surmised, but the condition of the battery could not have been very good. Pelham's first return, dated October 31, showed only 24 officers and men present for duty, 16 others were marked as having deserted, and 6 were on sick leave. He had a difficult job ahead of him. The records for the next several weeks are hazy, but on November 29, 1861, Pelham and his battery were ordered to report to Brigadier General J.E.B. Stuart for service as horse artillery.²¹

Despite the assignment to duty with the cavalry, Pelham's battery was far from operational and would not have sufficient manpower until it received a significant influx of recruits in the form of a contingent of men from Floyd County, Virginia, who were assigned to the battery in mid-April of 1862.²² Chew's battery fired its first shot and took its first casualties on December 8-9, 1861, during an attack on Dam No. 5 along the Potomac River.²³ In contrast, Pelham's boys would not receive their baptism of fire until May 4, 1862.²⁴ Nevertheless, with the organization of Chew's and Pelham's batteries in November 1861, what eventually became the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion was born. Its growth from that date mirrored that of the cavalry under Stuart.

On July 25, 1862, Stuart was promoted to major general and given a division of cavalry consisting of two brigades commanded by Fitzhugh Lee and Wade Hampton. Pelham's eight gun battery would have been the only horse artillery attached to the

¹⁹ R. P. Chew, *Stonewall Jackson: Address of R. P. Chew delivered at the Virginia Military Institute*, Lexington, Virginia, on the unveiling of Ezekiel's statue of General T. J. Jackson, June 12, 1912, p. 15, Roger Preston Chew Papers, Charles Town, WV.

²⁰ William P. Palmer, H. W. Floumoy and Sherwin McRae, Eds, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers: January 1, 1836 - April 15, 1869* (Richmond, Virginia 1893), Vol. XI pp. 197-198.

²¹ The original order is in the Manuscript Department, William R. Perlins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

²² *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Virginia*, (Washington D.C.: 1961), Microcopy M324, Rolls 267, 336 and 337.

²³ James H. Williams to Cora DeMouvelle (Pritchatt) Williams, December 14, 1861, Williams Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁴ *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Part 1, p. 574.

division had not Hampton petitioned Secretary of War George W. Randolph to be allowed to convert the Hampton Legion's Washington Artillery to horse artillery. His request was granted, and the battery began the conversion process. Captain James Franklin Hart reported to Hampton on August 10 with six guns: two 6-pound brass howitzers and four 12-pound howitzers. Six horses pulled each gun and caisson, but only half of the cannoneers were mounted due to a lack of horses. The battery did not take the field until September 2.²⁵

Prior to the 2nd Manassas Campaign, Brigadier General Beverly H. Robertson's brigade was added to Stuart's command. This had been Turner Ashby's command, and when it reported to Stuart, Chew's battery fell under Lee's cavalry chief for the first time. Pelham took command of all the horse artillery, though it was not officially designated a battalion. With his own, Chew's and Hart's batteries, Pelham passed through the 2nd Manassas and Sharpsburg campaigns. For the most part the batteries fought independently with their brigades, and Pelham exercised only nominal control.

In the followings days of the Battle of Sharpsburg, the number of horse artillery batteries was increased. On September 22, Pelham finally was promoted to major to rank from August 9. His battery of eight guns was divided into two batteries of four guns each. Lieutenants James Breathed and Mathis W. Henry were made captains and given command of the 1st Stuart Horse Artillery and the 2nd Stuart Horse Artillery, respectively. The reason for this was the organization of another cavalry Brigade under Brigadier General William H.F. "Rooney" Lee. By splitting the Stuart Horse Artillery into two batteries each cavalry brigade could have its own horse artillery. While the number of batteries in Pelham's command increased, the number of guns remained the same. However, in November Captain Marcellus N. Moorman's Lynchburg Battery was converted to horse artillery and attached to Stuart's headquarters under Pelham's direct control. The five batteries should have been formed into a battalion, but no steps were taken to do so. With winter coming on, the cavalry and horse artillery may have looked forward to a period of relative calm, but there was one more battle to fight. It would prove to be a memorable one for the horse artillery.

What became Pelham's most celebrated moment took place at the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. Taking a section of Henry's Battery, consisting of a Napoleon and a Blakely, forward from its position on "Stonewall" Jackson's right flank, the gallant Alabamian managed to bring an attack by a Federal division to a halt and drew the fire of at least five enemy batteries. Pelham continued to blast the infantry and every so often answered the enemy's artillery with a shot or two. His position was later described by Colonel Charles S. Wainwright of the 1st New York Light Artillery as being sheltered by cedar trees and a hedge.²⁶ This did help conceal Pelham's guns, but not for very long once he opened fire. He soon began to jump from position to position to avoid the storm of shot and shell. The Blakely was bowled over, putting it out of action.²⁷ With the Napoleon alone Pelham continued the fight.

At one point Pelham dismounted and aided in serving the gun. For over an hour the unequal contest continued until 20 to 30 Federal guns were pitted against Pelham's single piece. Stuart became concerned that Pelham and his men might be wiped out and

²⁵ Maj. James F. Hart, Dr. L. C. Stephens, Louis Sherfese and Charles H. Sching, *History of Hart's Battery* (Unpublished Manuscript) The South Carolina Library, The University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, 20.

²⁶ *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Part 1, p. 458.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

dispatched Major Heros von Borcke, his towering Prussian staff officer, with orders to withdraw. The “Boy Major” responded: *Tell the General I can hold my ground.*²⁸

For a second time Stuart sent orders for Pelham to withdraw. Again, the messenger returned alone. Pelham did not comply until he had nothing left to hurl at the enemy. Only then did the young Alabamian limber his lone gun and gallop rearward. Little did anyone realize that they had witnessed Pelham’s grand finale.

Spring came and so did the enemy. On March 17, 1863, the battle of Kelly’s Ford was fought. Its most significant casualty was Major John Pelham. His death has been seen as a great blow to the army in general and rightly so. However, it did not materially affect the organization and performance of the horse artillery at the battery level. Though it is true that none of Pelham’s successors commanded the respect of Stuart, Jackson, Lee, and others as did Pelham, the “Boy Major’s” impact on the horse artillery was most significant in the 1st and 2nd Stuart Horse Artillery, those units formed from his original battery. The officers and men of these batteries profited greatly from Pelham’s training and battlefield savvy but Chew’s, Hart’s and Moorman’s batteries had little opportunity to work with Pelham on a training level. His influence over them was more by example and reputation than by personal contact. As Shoemaker wrote: *We had learned to love him for his own sake and to respect him for his invincible courage and gallantry in battle.*²⁹ This was the view of Pelham held by most of the battalion. That Pelham was instrumental in laying the foundation of the battalion’s reputation, which his successors upheld, is indisputable, but to credit him for molding and training the officers and men of the entire battalion or to assert that without him the battalion’s fighting capabilities were seriously diminished is erroneous. There were others who played major roles.

The architects of the Ashby Battery were Chew, Rouss, Thomson, and McCarty, all from the Virginia Military Institute. Strongly influenced by the training they received under the hand of “Professor” Jackson, the young officers forged a battery equal to Pelham’s. The same could be said for Hart’s battery, which had Stephen D. Lee, a West Pointer like Pelham, as its first captain. Hart was no slouch either, having received training at the South Carolina Military Academy. Like Chew’s, Hart’s battery was battle proven prior to joining Pelham. Moorman’s battery was almost destroyed at Sharpsburg and required a considerable amount of attention to bring it to the level of the other horse batteries. Its captain, Marcellus N. Moorman, who also attended the Virginia Military Institute, knew his way around an artillery piece. Though his abilities were not suited to the command of a horse battery in battle, Moorman could and did train his men well. The battery would improve and become one of the best in the battalion under the leadership of Shoemaker. Pelham cannot be given credit for forging these batteries as he had forged his, and to state that they were somehow inferior is to ignore their record. Moorman’s certainly demonstrated its mettle during the five-mile retreat before Custer. Not even Pelham in his prime could have performed better.

The loose organization of the horse artillery prior to Pelham’s death also limited Pelham’s impact on the batteries under his command. Each battery was assigned to a particular brigade and did not operate through a central command structure. The batteries drew their supplies through the cavalry brigades’ quartermasters and subsistence officers, having no supply organization or officers of their own since they were not organized as a battalion. Pelham’s influence was relegated to the battery he was with at the time. He did order inspections and drills for all the individual batteries,

²⁸ Heros von Borcke, *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence* (Dayton, Ohio: 1985), p. 118.

²⁹ *Shoemaker’s Battery*, p. 29.

but Chew's, Hart's, and Moorman's batteries were built and led by their captains and lieutenants. The personalities and training of these men had a greater impact on how the batteries performed than did Pelham. He simply was unable to be everywhere at once.

With Pelham gone Stuart faced the task of replacing one whose loss was "irreparable".³⁰ Within days he made his section, going outside the horse artillery to request Major Robert Franklin Beckham:

Headquarters Cavalry Division,

April 8, 1863.

General Orders, No. 11.

In compliance with instructions from the commanding general, the Horse Artillery will cease to belong to brigade organizations, but will constitute a separate corps to operate with cavalry. Maj. R. F. Beckham, Provisional Army, C. S., is assigned to the command of the Horse Artillery of this army. Batteries will continue on duty with the brigades where now serving, subject to such change as may be hereafter thought advisable; and whenever a battery is so attached, it will be subject to the orders of the commanding officer, who will be responsible for it as for the time being part of his command.

*By command of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart:
R. Channing Price, Major,
and Assistant Adjutant.³¹*

Before this order the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion did not exist as a military unit. Pelham had commanded the batteries as part of the brigades to which they were attached. Now the batteries were to be assigned to the various brigades as necessity dictated, but they would be under a central command and organization. This would allow for greater flexibility both on and off the battlefield.

Shortly after Beckham took command the battalion was engulfed in the Chancellorsville Campaign. For the horse artillery the high point was Jim Breathed's performance as he accompanied Jackson's troops during their headlong charge on Major General "Fighting Joe" Hooker's flank. Under Beckham's watchful eye the 1st Stuart Horse Artillery leap frogged its guns ahead by sections to keep pace with the infantry. For two hours the horse artillery fought in the tangled Wilderness until at 8 p.m. Beckham called a halt. Stonewall Jackson rode out of the gathering darkness and reined in his horse next to Beckham. Leaning forward, the General took the young major's hand and said: *Young man, I congratulate you.*³² As had Pelham before him, Beckham earned Jackson's praise by performing brilliantly under difficult circumstances.

In the weeks prior to the Gettysburg Campaign, Beckham worked feverishly to bring his command up to combat readiness. His five batteries, Breathed's, McGregor's (Captain William Morrell McGregor had replaced Henry, who had been promoted), Chew's, Hart's and Moorman's, were in top condition just in time for the Battle of Brandy Station. Perhaps no other battle fought by the battalion so well illustrated the importance of the horse artillery to the cavalry. Utilizing their mobility and firepower to

³⁰ *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 25, Part 1, p. 60.

³¹ *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 25, Part 2, p. 858.

³² H. B. McClellan, *I rode with Jeb Stuart* (Bloomington, Indiana: 1958), p. 234.

the utmost, Beckham's batteries galloped here and there across the rolling countryside and contributed significantly to the day's outcome. The chances are that Stuart could not have held the field if it had not been for his artillery.

In the following weeks Lee's invasion of the North commenced and was thrown back. During that time three other batteries of horse artillery came under Stuart's command, though there is no evidence that they officially became part of the battalion at this time. Captain John H. McClanahan's Staunton Battery had been formed in February 1863 to serve with Brigadier General John D. Imboden's cavalry brigade. About two months later, Captain Wiley Hunter Griffin's Baltimore Light Artillery was converted to horse artillery in order to accompany elements of the Maryland Line of Brigadier General William E. "Grumble" Jones' raid into West-Virginia which began on April 21, 1863. The last horse artillery battery organized prior to the Gettysburg Campaign was Captain Thomas Edwin Jackson's Charlottesville Battery, which was formally organized on May 2 and attached to Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins' cavalry brigade. These batteries only fought with Stuart during the Battle of Gettysburg and on the retreat.

In the aftermath of Lee's repulse, Beckham struggled to strengthen his batteries. Not a dynamic battlefield leader of Pelham's caliber, Beckham could and did ride with his command into battle but remained more in the background than Pelham and allowed his talented battery commanders to do the fighting. He was much more the administrator, recognizing his role as one of keeping his command in fighting trim. This became more and more difficult as the Confederacy's resources dwindled, but Beckham always managed to field enough guns to garner praise from Stuart. It was praise well earned. Increasingly the cavalry was finding itself matched and at times outclassed by their opponent's horsemen. Beckham's batteries frequently found themselves fighting with little or no support. Losses in guns and men rose. The closing months of 1863 saw a number of close calls and one disaster inflicted upon the battalion due to the cavalry's inability to stand and fight as of old. There was little Beckham and his captains could do other than close ranks and stand by their guns. The value of the horse artillery was seen by the high command. Even with the frustrations of insufficient horses, inferior guns, and increasing losses in men and material, the contributions of horse batteries could not be overlooked. Those contributions were a strong factor in the formation of the ninth Confederate horse artillery battery in the eastern theater. Captain Warren Seymour Lurty's Roanoke Battery was organized on October 8, 1863, for service with Colonel William L. "Mudwall" Jackson's cavalry brigade in the Valley. The cavalry left in the Valley when Lee moved east had three batteries of horse artillery: McClanahan's, Jackson's and Lurty's. Stuart would have six, adding Griffin's to Beckham's battalion of Breathed's, Chew's, Hart's, McGregor's, and Moorman's batteries.

During the winter of 1863-1864 a number of changes swept through the battalion. The first of these removed Griffin's battery from Beckham's command and attached it to the newly organized Maryland Line under Colonel Bradley T. Johnson. The second was the promotion and transfer of Beckham, leaving Stuart once more to find a new commander for his artillery. The problem confronting Stuart was that Moorman was the senior officer of the battalion but ill-suited to succeed Beckham. Fortunately, Moorman also received a promotion and transferred out of the horse artillery. This left the door open for Roger Chew. However, he was not Stuart's first choice. James Dearing, newly promoted from his majority in the artillery to a colonelcy in the cavalry, was offered the position. He refused unless he could keep his rank, which was impossible. Stuart next chose Chew, who was promoted to major. Breathed also received a majority and became the battalion's second in command. Captaincies were given to Lt. James W. Thomson

(to succeed Chew), Lt. Philip Preston Johnston (to succeed Breathed), and Lt. John J. Shoemaker (to succeed Moorman).

The Chew-Breathed combination had proven its potential even before the two men received their promotions. A Federal cavalry raid under George A. Custer surprised the horse artillery's winter camp at Rio Hill near Charlottesville on February 29, 1864. Custer's target was Charlottesville and the battalion, temporarily under the command of Moorman in Beckham's absence, was all that stood in the way. While Moorman took a number of guns rearward to safety, Chew and Breathed formed a ragged line of men and several guns to oppose the invader. What followed was one of the battalion's finest moments. Armed with a few pistols and fence rails, which did duty as sabers, the gallant band of officers and cannoneers sent a few rounds from their cannon into the advancing bluecoats and then charged. The audacity of the Confederates proved too much for Custer's men, who were busy burning and looting the horse artillery's camp, and the Federals retreated. The grateful people of Charlottesville passed a resolution on March 7, 1864, thanking the men of the Stuart Horse Artillery for their actions in saving the town:

Whereas, The recently attempted raid of the Yankees on this place was undoubtedly checked and finally repulsed by unequalled coolness and courage of the gallant officers and men of the artillery battalion, encamped a few miles north of Charlottesville, wholly unsupported as they were by either infantry or cavalry; and, Whereas, Our town was thus unquestionably saved from pillage, and the public stores and the railroad bridges from destruction; therefore, be it Resolved, That on behalf of the citizens of Charlottesville we, the council of the town, do hereby return our thanks to the officers and men of the said artillery battalion for their gallant and heroic conduct on the occasion above mentioned, with the assurance of our lasting and grateful appreciation of the service thus rendered us. Resolved, That the above preamble and resolutions be handed to the commander of the battalion, in order that he may communicate the same to the officers and men of his command in the manner he may deem most appropriate.

*By order of the Council, March 7, 1864.
A. Robert McKee, Clerk. To Maj. M. N. Moorman
Commanding Battalion Stuart Horse Artillery.³³*

In addition the ladies of the town presented a flag to the battalion which flew over the guns for the remainder of the war.

As spring approached Chew made every effort to have the battalion ready for what many expected to be a difficult campaign. The number of batteries would be increased over the next few months. Griffin's battery would rejoin the battalion after the Battle of Yellow Tavern, where it suffered the loss of two guns and its captain who was captured. New guns and transfers brought it back up to full strength. The tenth and final battery of horse artillery to be formed was organized in April 1864 when Captain Edward Graham's Petersburg Artillery was converted to horse artillery for service with Brigadier General James Dearing's cavalry brigade. It would join the battalion when Lee led the Army of Northern Virginia south of the James River. Before that move occurred the battery proved its worth when on June 9, 1864, it played a major role in saving

³³ Wise, *The Long Arm of Lee*, pp. 728-729.

Petersburg from an overwhelming Federal force under the command of Brigadier General August V. Kautz. Graham's battery was a welcome addition to the battalion.

The battalion had another test of its dependability and resiliency on June 11-12 at the Battle of Trevilian Station. Wade Hampton with his own and Fitz Lee's division took off after Phil Sheridan's cavalry, which was on a raid toward Charlottesville. Hart's, Johnston's, Shoemaker's, and Thomson's batteries under Chew and Breathed rode with the column. In the battle that followed, the horse artillery played a significant role in stopping Sheridan from reaching his goal. When Hampton's plan to entrap Sheridan unraveled and the Confederates' entire wagon train was captured by Custer, Chew and a half dozen guns held their ground, enabling Fitz Lee and Hampton to turn the tables on the Federals. With Chew pounding him from one side and Breathed from another, Custer barely managed to save his command from destruction. The fighting cost the horse artillery two of its finest lieutenants when William T. Adams of Hart's battery and William Hoxton of Johnston's battery were seriously wounded. A second day of fighting followed, in which the batteries helped hold the line, preventing Sheridan from advancing any farther toward Charlottesville. Through all the hard marching and fighting the horse artillery lived up to its well-deserved reputation.

Over the next several months the struggle for Petersburg and the Valley slowly consumed the last of the Army of Northern Virginia's strength and resources. The Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion fought on both fronts, the batteries shifting back and forth as the situation demanded. Jubal Early's advance on Washington brought the guns of Jackson's battery closer to the Federal capital than any other Confederate artillery. This battery also had the distinction of being the battery that advanced the farthest north when it participated in Alfred Jenkins's thrust toward Harrisburg during the Gettysburg Campaign. Early's limited success was somewhat offset by the disaster at Moorefield which resulted in the loss of four horse artillery pieces - two from Griffin's and two from Jackson's - along with thirty-one men.

The deteriorating situation in the Valley prompted Robert E. Lee to send additional troops, including Breathed with Johnston's and Shoemaker's batteries.³⁴ Thomson's Ashby battery soon followed. Hart's battery moved toward the Valley but was stationed at Barnett's Ford on the Rapidan River until mid-September 1864 when it returned to Lee. Chew was left with two batteries - Graham's and McGregor's - to face the enemy near Petersburg. Nevertheless, Chew remained busy. With a section each from Graham's and McGregor's batteries he accompanied Hampton on his famous cattle raid and aided materially in the escape back to Confederate lines. This success and a few others were offset by Grant's ever-tightening grip on Robert E. Lee's lifelines. In almost all of the battles to save the railroads that fed into Petersburg and Richmond, the horse artillery played its part and suffered its losses. Time was running out for the battalion.

Tom's Brook and a couple of disasters that followed devastated the horse artillery in the Valley. Three of the Valley batteries - Griffin's, Jackson's and Lurty's - were reduced to paper organizations after losing their guns. Thomson's and Johnston's batteries were rebuilt but did no fighting before they were disbanded for the winter. McClanahan's battery continued to be active and along with Shoemaker's remained the only effective horse artillery with the Valley army.

Chew's command in the Petersburg area suffered its own losses. Graham's battery lost two guns at the Battle of Peeble's Farm. Thankfully, winter brought a halt to operations, and Chew had the opportunity to step back and survey the situation. It

³⁴ Report of Major James Breathed, Edwin L. Hasley Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

wasn't pretty. The battalion needed a complete overhaul, a fact not unknown to the higher authorities. Even as this was being contemplated events were transpiring that would reduce Chew's command even more.

Hart's battery was transferred to the Carolinas with Wade Hampton's cavalry, sent to reinforce Joseph Johnston who was facing the Union army of William T. Sherman. Jubal Early's last stand at Waynesboro on March 2, 1865, saw all of McClanahan's and Johnston's guns captured. At this time half of the battalions, Griffin's, Jackson's, Lurty's, McClanahan's, and Johnston's batteries was without guns. Despite this, Pendleton forged ahead with his plans to reorganize the battalion. Chew became a lieutenant colonel, and James Hart, Philip Johnston, William McGregor, and James Thomson joined Breathed as majors. Five "battalions" of two batteries each were to be organized, with a major in charge of each. The individual battalions were to serve with one of the five cavalry divisions. Orders to this effect reached Chew on March 20:

*Hdqrs. Artillery
Army of Northern Virginia,*

*March 20, 1865.
Col. R. P. Chew,
Commanding Horse Artillery:*

COLONEL: The following is the arrangement of horse artillery battalions sanctioned by General Lee:

Hart's battalion: Hart's battery, Graham's battery to serve with General Butler's division.³⁵ McGregor's battalion: McGregor's battery, McClanahan's battery to serve with General W.H.F. Lee's division.³⁶ Breathed's battalion: Shoemaker's battery, Griffin's battery to serve with General Fitz Lee's division.³⁷ Johnston's battalion: Johnston's battery, Jackson's battery to serve with General Lomax's division.³⁸ Thomson's battalion: Thomson's battery, Lurty's battery to serve with General Rosser's division.³⁹ You will cause the several commanders to direct their energies to the thorough preparation of their respective commands for efficient service in the campaign soon to open and apply your own efforts to the same end. There is no time to be lost. Although horses cannot yet be called in because of insufficient forage, there are many elements of equipment and organization to be attended to at once. It is essential to get each command ready for service, so that however early or unexpectedly the enemy may advance the horse artillery battalion may on short notice repair to operate with their proper divisions.

*Very respectfully,
your obedient servant,
W. N. Pendleton, Brigadier- General
and Chief of Artillery⁴⁰*

³⁵ Hart's battery would be commanded by Lt. Edwin L. Hasley who was promoted captain.

³⁶ McGregor's battery would be commanded by Lt. George Wilmer Brown who was promoted captain. At this time, Pendleton was unaware that Capt. McClanahan had resigned and had been captured, and that the battery had lost its guns.

³⁷ Griffin's battery would be commanded by Lt. John W. Goodman.

³⁸ Johnson's battery would be commanded by Lt. Daniel Shanks who was promoted captain.

³⁹ Thomson's battery would be commanded by Lt. John W. Carter who was promoted captain. Lurty's battery would be commanded by Lt. Breathed's former adjutant, William R. Lyman, promoted captain.

⁴⁰ *O.R.*, Series 1 Vol. 46, Part 3, pp. 1327-1328.

All of this amounted to so much paper shuffling. The promotions were made but the only batteries that were ready to enter the final campaign of the Army of Northern Virginia were Graham's and McGregor's (now commanded by Captain George Wilmer Brown) with Lee's army and Shoemaker's which was regrouping at Lynchburg, having been disbanded for the winter.

In those last fateful days Graham lost two guns at Five Forks and Brown lost one at Namozine Church. These two batteries along with Shoemaker's were surrendered at Appomattox, but they did not leave their guns on the field, instead escaping with them to Lynchburg where the crews spiked all but seven of them and headed south to join Joe Johnston. The last few guns were buried along the Roanoke River south of Lynchburg. The batteries left in the Valley were never reformed. Their officers and men eventually disbanded. Only one battery remained as an effective fighting force: Hart's. When at last Joe Johnston was brought to bay and surrendered, Hart's battery rode westward, hoping to continue the fight. Wade Hampton had to go and order them back. The war was over. The four years of conflict saw the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion grow from two to ten batteries. While not all of the batteries were of the same quality, each in its own way made a contribution to the cause for which they fought. Certainly the Ashby Battery (the Chew-Johnson-Carter battery), the 1st Stuart Horse Artillery (Pelham-Breathed-Johnston-Shanks), the 2nd Stuart Horse Artillery (Pelham-Henry-McGregor-Brown), the Washington South Carolina Battery (Hart-Halsey), and the Lynchburg Battery (Moorman-Shoemaker) were the premier batteries. They saw more hard service and performed at a more consistently high level than the other batteries. Ranking just behind them were the Petersburg Battery (Graham), the 2nd Maryland Artillery or the Baltimore Light Artillery (Griffin), and the Staunton Battery (McClanahan). The remaining two batteries, the Charlottesville Battery (Jackson) and the Roanoke Battery (Lurty) performed well on a number of occasions but were often hampered by inferior guns and, in the case of the latter, a shortage of men.

Unfortunately historians have long overlooked the battalion's efforts on behalf of the Confederacy. Except for John Pelham and George M. Neese of the Ashby Battery, its officers and men are virtually unknown to many readers and students of the war. How great was the battalion's contribution? Lieutenant Theodore S. Garnett, aide-de-camp to J.E.B. Stuart, once stated: *The honor of firing the first gun at Fort Sumter is no longer in doubt. The proud distinction of firing the last gun at Appomattox is claimed by many, but the command that fired the most shot and shell, first, last, and all the time, is perhaps, without doubt, the ever-glorious and gallant Stuart Horse Artillery.*⁴¹ Even if this were not true, and there is a distinct possibility' that it is true, the record of the Stuart Horse Artillery Battalion can stand with that of any artillery organization in any army, Northern or Southern. This is not to say that the batteries of the battalion were never driven from the field, never lost guns to the enemy, or never failed to silence an opposing battery, but it does say that they carved for themselves a reputation other batteries or artillery battalions would have been proud to claim as their own.

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⁴¹ Theodore Stanford Garnett (Robert J. Trout, Ed.), *Riding With Stuart: Reminiscences of an Aide-de-Camp* (Shippensburg, Pa.: 1994), p. 106