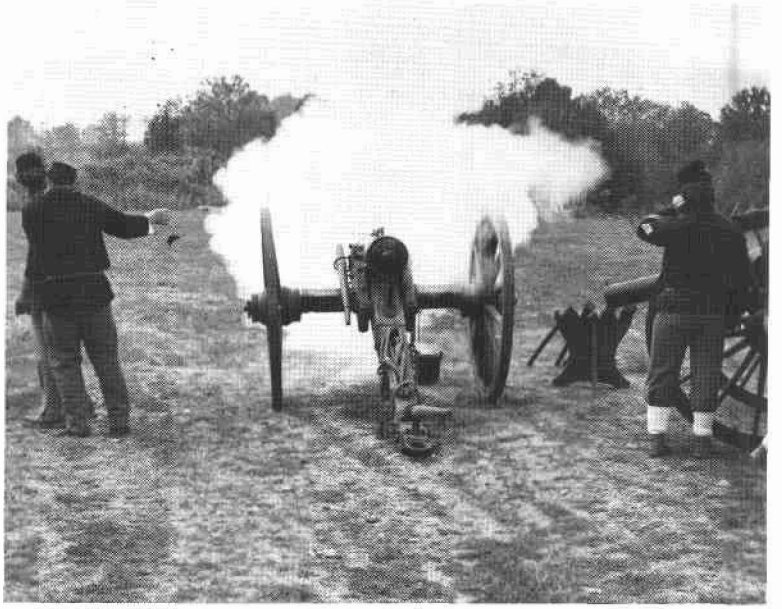
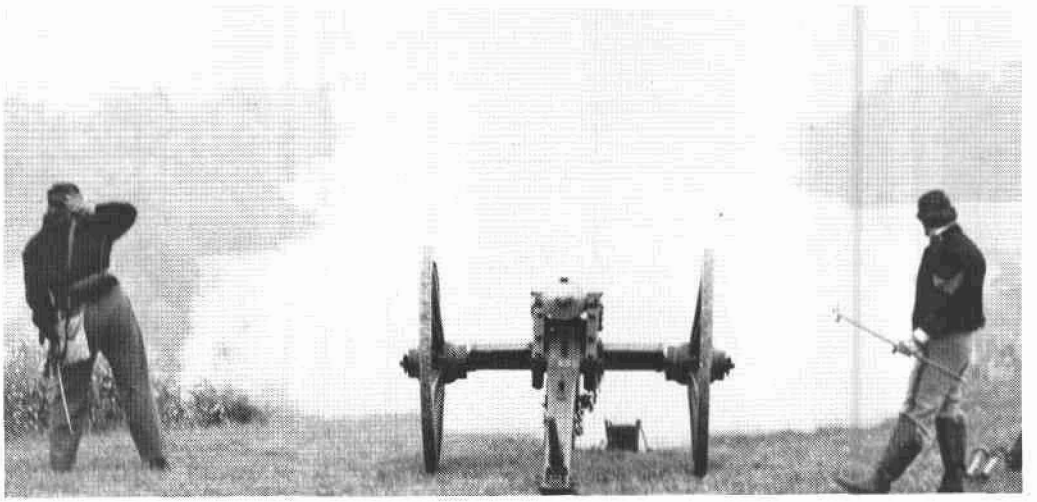
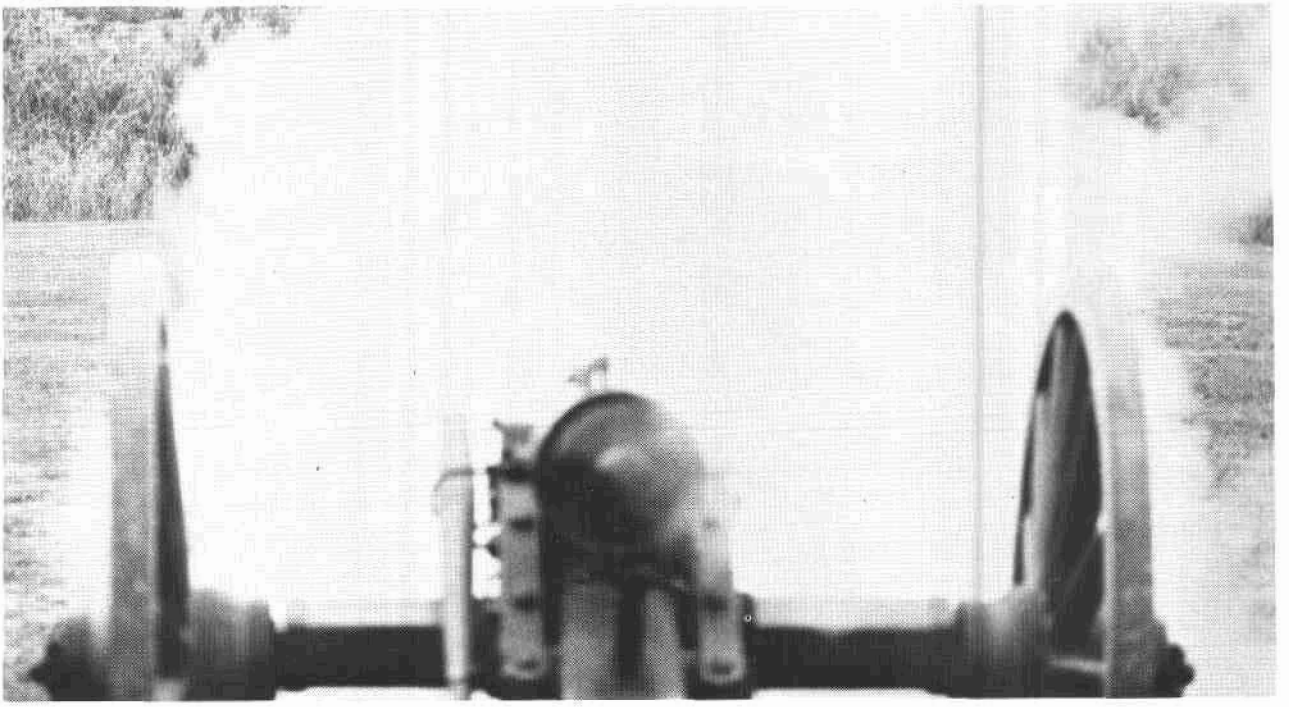






Light Artillery of the Civil War

By Valmore Forgett Jr.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

What you see before you are Civil War Artillerymen and the tools of their trade. The uniform is that of a light artilleryman, a member of Clark's Battery B, First New Jersey Light Artillery.

The original Battery B, one of five from the state of New Jersey, was commanded by Capt. John Beam, who was killed at Malvern Hill on July 2, 1862. He was succeeded by Capt. A. Judson Clark who commanded the Battery through the rest of the conflict and was breveted Major for his accomplishments as an artilleryman throughout the war. The Battery itself participated in 26 major engagements with the Army of the Potomac and missed only Antietam. Its finest hour was at Gettysburg, one year to date after Capt. Beam's death, where it fired 1342 rounds in defense of the Peach Orchard, in Sickle's now infamous salient. The Battery retired with its pieces, 10 Pdr. Parrotts, which had been fired so many times that the rifling was literally burned from the barrels and the guns could not be effectively used again. This performance stands as the greatest number of rounds fired by any Battery in a single day during the war, actually in 5 hours from 2 PM to 7 PM.

The Battery was mustered out of service in June of 1865.

My wife, Heide Forgett, is dressed as a "Vivandiere" of the Civil War. The Book *"Gone For A Soldier"* by Alfred Bellard most adequately refers to the Vivandieres as a reality. The uniform she is wearing was carefully researched from contemporary drawings and descriptions. Barbara Fish, formerly a member of this Battery, and the wife of the curator of arms at West Point, assisted with the research. Her uniform is now part of the permanent display at West Point and considered as the most authentic "Vivandiere" uniform in America.

During the American Civil War, both in the North and in the South, we relied heavily on the light artillery as the backbone of every major engagement. It is said that infantry is the queen of battle. But artillery has always been king.

Time after time, the light artillerymen, charging into the center of the battle, dropping their guns and firing, have turned the tide of the battle. Let's not forget the famous quotation that says: "God is on the side of the army with the best artillery."

The basic artillery of both of the North and the South were, first of all:

a) The Six Pounder or the Model 1841—a bronze cannon of between 800 and 900 lbs. That is what we all consider the Classic gun.
b) The Light 12 Pounder, or the Napoleon, as it is commonly called.
c) The 10 Pound Parrott.
d) The 3" Ordnance Rifle.
e) The 12 Pound Mountain Howitzer.
f) For Navy and Marine use, it was the 12 Pound Dahlgren.
g) The only mortar seeing extensive use was the 24 Pound Coehorn Mortar.

You have heard me describe the guns as either a gun, a howitzer or a mortar. A gun was designed for direct fire and fired both solid shot, spherical case shot, canister and shell. A rifled gun fired a solid

Mr. Forgett's talk was given in the open at Heather Hill Farm near Lancaster, and was interrupted by firing of his Civil War cannon. We have consolidated it somewhat for presentation here.

shot or bolt or an explosive shell. The advantage of a rifled gun was that you could use a percussion type fuse in the shell. The smoothbore guns required a time fuse that was ignited by the flash of the propelling charge. The howitzer fired primarily canister or explosive shells, designed for use mainly against troops and the mortar fired only explosive rounds and was designed primarily for use against fortifications or artillery positions, to drop an explosive round into gun pits or fortified positions.

The Six Pounder Model 1841, the first gun we are firing today, was manufactured by Cyrus Alger. It has a 3.67" smooth bore, the tube weighing approximately 880 lbs. The complete gun and carriage weigh almost 3,000 lbs., and it was used mostly with canister and spherical case shot. Towards the end of the war, it was deemed obsolete and the Confederates melted virtually all of their Six Pounders and cast light 12 pounder guns under the recommendation of General Robert E. Lee.

The second gun we are firing today, is a light 12 pounder, commonly referred to as a Napoleon, made by Ames Manufacturing Co., of Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. In 1864 on a private contract for the State of New Jersey, six of these guns were ordered and the State Legislature had planned to donate them to the Federal Government. But after the battle of Gettysburg, the State Legislature voted to retain these guns, and if invaded, turn them over to the Federal Government: they wanted to be sure that the guns came back to New Jersey for the defense of New Jersey. We know of two of these guns still in existence. Mr. Smithgall of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, owns the one being fired today, and I have its mate, complete with original carriage, the limber and tools. This was the work horse of the Civil War and the favorite of all of the troops both North and South. The artillerymen loved them, as there has never been a record of a bronze gun exploding: this was a fairly common occurrence with steel or wrought iron guns, and needless to say, rather demoralizing to the gun crew when it did happen.

The primary use of the light 12 pounder was close combat, utilizing canister, spherical case shot or the explosive shells. The time fuses were invented by Bormann and were very accurate and very safe. Several years ago, I fired two rounds of spherical case and the Bormann fuses still functioned, after almost one hundred years. The standard charge for the 12 pounder gun runs from 2 to 3 lbs. of

powder, and the velocity: 2 lbs. of powder gave 1,375 feet per second, and 3 lbs. of powder gave 1,600 feet per second.

Gun Number three is the 10 Pound Parott. This was the most effective iron gun used by the United States and Confederate Forces. The tubes were made of cast iron with a wrought iron sleeve shrunk over the back end; it is the easiest of all guns to recognize by that distinctive sleeve on the back end. It was inexpensive to make and saw service throughout the world. It fired a solid bolt or a shell with a percussion fuse. In rare instances canister was used, but was never effective from the rifled gun.

The fourth gun is the 3" Ordnance Rifle, another workhorse of the Federal Army. Both easy to manufacture and inexpensive to produce, they were used extensively, but being made of wrought iron, the years take its toll and we do not consider any 3" Ordnance Rifle safe to shoot. As Chief Artillery Officer of North-South Skirmish Association, I condemned all of these guns after extensive research. Right or wrong, the risk is not worth it. The bulk of them were manufactured by the Phoenix Iron Works, and were commonly referred to as the Ordnance Rifle. They were developed by John Griffin, a native of Mamaroneck, New York. The gun was made of strips of wrought iron about 3¼" thick and 4½" wide, wrapped around an iron core in alternate spirals until it was brought to correct thickness. The core was removed and then an iron plug driven into the breech to close it and form a "cascabel". The metal was then brought to a welding heat and up set 2" at a time in a press. Finally it was rolled out from 4.5 to 7 feet long, trunnions were welded on, the bore reamed out, and the chase reduced to proper size by turning on a lathe. In other words, we have a giant Damascus barrelled gun. Now you will understand why we do not shoot it!

The fifth piece is the 12 pound Mountain Howitzer on a standard pack carriage. Manufactured by Ames Manufacturing Co., of Chicopee Falls, Massachussetts. These guns were used primarily against troops at close range. The Mountain Howitzer fired only canister, spherical case or explosive shell. The standard service charge was a half pound of powder: it fired a round of spherical case at 640 feet per second. They were used mainly in the West and, after the war, saw extensive use against the Indians.

The next gun is the Dahlgren Boat Howitzer, used primarily by Marines for amphibious landings. These were carried on the front end of a landing barge and were designed to cover the landing of the troops and then were dragged ashore for support of the Marines. An alternate mount was a sledge mount that was mounted in the bow of small naval boats for use against other naval or marine troops that were trying to land. The barrel weighs approximately 429 lbs. and they were made at the U.S. Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. They fired mostly spherical case, canister and explosive shell, and were anti-personnel weapons. Their ball diameter was 4.62 inches; they fired .625 lbs. of powder with a shell weighing 8.4 lbs.

The last item to be fired is a 24 lb. Coehorn Mortar. These were used mainly against fixed positions and did not see extensive use in the Civil War. They were designed to fire only explosive projectiles.

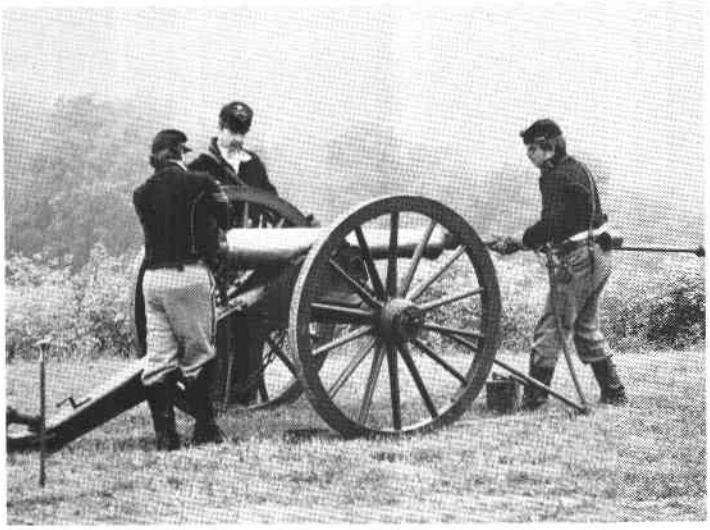
As you can see today the light artillery of the Civil War was used as an anti-personnel weapon and at battles like Gettysburg, took a tremendous toll. Every gun you see on the line today is a veteran of this conflict, and most of them saw service in Pennsylvania. When we look at these guns in this peaceful setting, I wonder what grim tales they could tell.

La Vivandiere riant

La Vivandiere serieuse

The 12-pounder Napoleon:

Now this is what they do . . .



Load

Aim!

Fire in the hole!

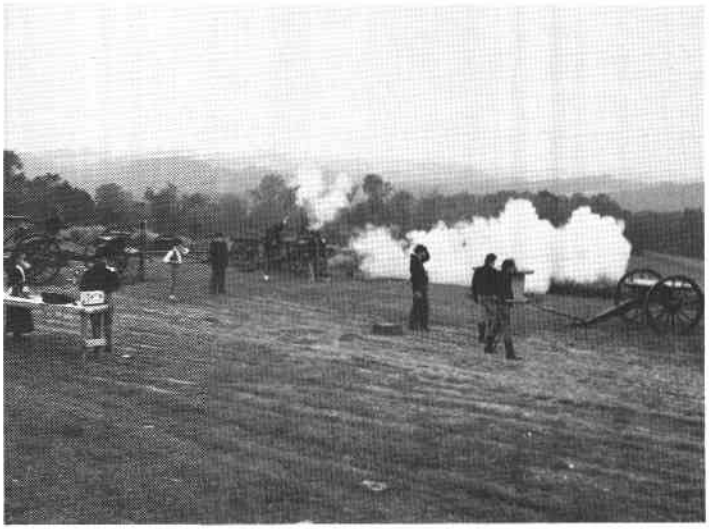
Get ready!

Scratch one tree!

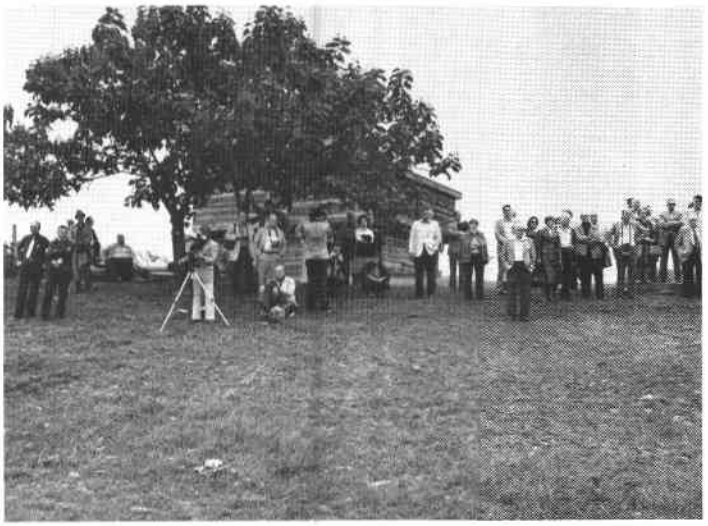
Candid (cannon) shots

Fire in the hole!

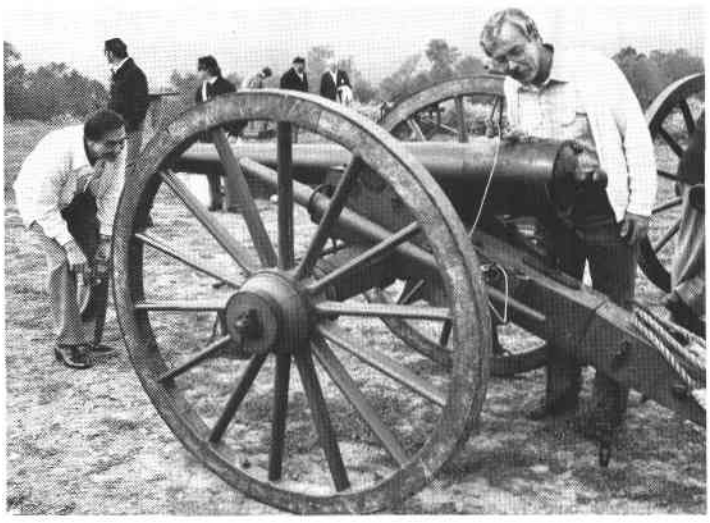
War Dance



Bang!



Dance over



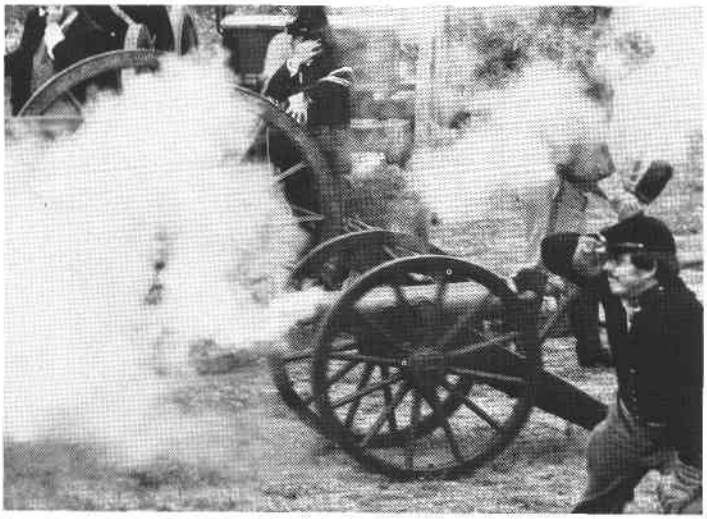
Short range!

Is it loaded?

Direct fire from the 12-pound Howitzer

Rear view

Fire in the hole!



Bang!

Wheredi'go?

Gottem! (Note the California kid)

"Bloody Colonials," (H. Ricketts)