



Canine Mascots of the Civil War



Constant Companions

Dogs are man's best friend. For Civil War soldiers, dogs were also their mascots, messmates, and companions. Dogs provided at least one friendly face after battle and a comfortable reminder of home for soldiers living in squalid camp conditions. The soldiers of the Civil War did not feel any differently about their canine companions than people feel about their pets today - and dogs then, as now, were just as devoted to their people. Fiercely loyal dogs followed their northern and southern owners to war. Both men and dogs were unprepared for the war's duration and the ugliness it entailed. While soldiers were trained for battle, their furry friends were not, often paying the ultimate price. Civil War dogs were not as well-trained and equipped as soldier-canines are today, but they were no less valued. Indeed, they were the beloved mascots, friends, and symbols of honor of 1860s fighting men.

A Soldiers' Best Friend



Dog staying with his fallen master, Frank Leslie's Illustrated

In 1861, men marched off to war carrying a menagerie of creatures: regiments and companies were represented by cats, bears, goats, pigs, and birds, including a patriotic bald eagle. However, the most popular mascots were dogs. Even though the Ninth Connecticut Infantry's pig, "Jeff Davis," could stand on its hind legs and fall into line during inspections, and the 43rd Mississippi's camel would watch over his men and never stray, dogs remained the most common and beloved mascots of the Civil War.

Perhaps it is because dogs and man have always been close companions that dogs followed their masters into battle, running straight from the front porch into the front lines.

A Long Military History

Canines joined humans in military conflicts long before the Civil War. King Hammurabi, who reigned from 1792 B.C. to 1750 B.C. sent his soldiers into battle with large fighting dogs to protect and defend them. Ancient Egyptians went further by commemorating the devotion and fighting spirit of their soldier-dogs, depicting them in murals as fierce warriors unleashing their fury upon those who dared attack their masters.

During the Middle Ages, dogs' roles expanded further, and their many talents were now acknow-

leged; no longer were they merely used as fighters, but as sentries, messengers, guards, and, of course, as companions. Medieval knights often requested that images of their dogs, who had been their friends and defenders in battle, be inscribed on their tombs after death. In 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte wrote about the indelible link between warrior and dog-soldier after the Battle of Marengo: "I walked over the battlefield and saw among the slain, a poodle killed bestowing a last lick upon his dead friend's face. Never had anything on any of my battlefields caused me a like emotion."

After the Battle of Shiloh in 1862, similar devotion was displayed by Union lieutenant Louis Pfeiff's dog who had followed his master to war. Lieutenant Pfeiff was killed during the battle and buried in an unmarked grave. His widow traveled to the battlefield from Chicago, Illinois to claim his body. Once there, Mrs. Pfeiff spotted her husband's dog sitting on the battlefield. Only the dog knew where his master lay. He led her to the spot where the lieutenant had been buried. Soldiers told her that the dog had sat there for twelve days, not leaving his departed friend's side except to get food and water. This dog, whose name is lost to history, exemplifies the strong bond between warrior pets and their soldier-masters.



Peterson's Magazine, October 1863

Harvey Stearns: Canine Soldier, USA



Harvey depicted on a 104th Ohio Infantry reunion keepsake button

Lieutenant Daniel Stearns of Company F, 104th Ohio Infantry, participated in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864 accompanied by his constant companion: a small white bull terrier named Harvey. A welcomed and cherished member of the entire unit, Harvey brought a sense of home and joy to the miserable camp life of the Civil War.

Stearns had attached a brass plate to Harvey's leather collar which read: "I am Lieutenant D.M. Stearns' dog. Whose dog are you?" Because the little mascot kept troops' morale and spirits high, he was well cared for and fiercely protected by the soldiers of Company F. Harvey stood like a sentinel on guard and protected another company pet, a squirrel friend of Lieutenant Oscar Sterl, while it nibbled on Harvey's ears. Harvey also attended the officers' meetings with his lieutenant, slept in any tent he wanted, and appeared on the battlefield alongside his men, barking loud "commands." He loved listening to the regimental band's music with the soldiers, even posing with the band for pictures. Harvey also liked to bark and sway to the campfire sing-alongs at night. Of these occurrences, Private Adam Weaver wrote to

his brother, "My idea is that the noise hurts his ears, as it does mine!"

"A Courageous Little Dog"

Harvey was described as a veteran soldier and a courageous little dog who found himself nose to nose with the Confederate Army on numerous occasions, fearlessly barking and intimidating his enemies. But Harvey did not always emerge from battle unscathed. He was wounded in Virginia during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 and suffered an injury in Resaca, Georgia. In 1864, Harvey was captured at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain. Upon discovering his dog had become a P.O.W., Stearns was distraught - until Confederate captors returned Harvey to his master. Harvey continued to march with the 104th, accompanying the regiment at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville.

The 104th, which acquired many more dogs along the way, became known as "The Barking Dog Regiment." Although the regiment captured more Confederate battle flags in a single fight than any other Union regiment, the unit received the majority of its recognition from its canine mascots.

Harvey was discharged in 1865 with the rest of his men at Camp Taylor, Cleveland, Ohio. He followed Stearns home. Unfortunately, Stearns lived out his last years in an insane asylum, but veterans of the regiment continued to care for Harvey. The dog remained their mascot, appearing at reunions until his death. Veterans commissioned an oil painting of their mascot and distributed keepsake badges emblazoned with Harvey's likeness. Many photographs of Harvey can be viewed in the archives of the U.S. Army Military History Institute.



Harvey (on the left) with the 104th Ohio regimental band

Charlie the Confederate Canine Cannoneer

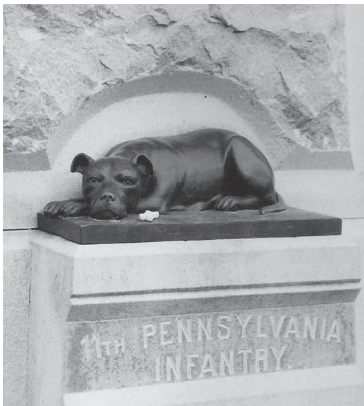


Limber from the Civil War era

A little dog named Charlie accompanied a battery from Athens, Georgia. The Troup Artillery, named after one of Georgia's governors, was assigned to General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Charlie wasn't very pretty, nor did he possess any illustrious pedigree, but he was loved by the soldiers. Courageous under fire, Charlie would follow his men into battle, running up and down the line of cannon while wagging his tail as shells flew over his head. He could always be found at the front lines at the points where lead filled the air. An official member of the Troup Artillery, Charlie sat atop the box of an artillery limber as the guns rolled down the road to the next battle. He was even saluted by General Lee himself during a review of the army in June 1863. (Charlie barked and wiggled in response.)

Members of Longstreet's Corps, rivals of the Troup Artillery, would occasionally steal Charlie for fun, but he would always manage to escape and return to his men. Charlie would sneak onto enemy soil to steal chickens, bringing them back for dinner. Atkinson, a newspaper writer who followed the battery, wrote that Charlie "seemed not to know fear, and as the battle grew fiercer so did his joy." Unfortunately, like so many of his fellow soldiers, the courageous Charlie did not survive the war. While standing under a tree at Petersburg, Virginia in 1864, Charlie was killed by shrapnel from an exploding shell. His body was laid to rest near the tree. On that day the entire battery, filled with a sense of commitment to their fallen mascot, fell in line for Charlie's funeral.

The Ultimate Sacrifice: Sallie at Gettysburg



Statue of Sallie on the Eleventh Pennsylvania Infantry monument, Gettysburg National Military Park

Men died by the thousands during the American Civil War; many more mourned their losses and cried out for the erection of memorials, parks, and monuments so that no one would ever forget them. What few did at the time was cry for those who died beside brave soldiers, those who did not ask why America fought itself, but instead, eagerly stepped forward, tail wagging, to march beside their masters.

Most canine soldiers' names, stories of heroism, and acts of devotion are lost, having faded in the minds of old soldiers, but a few legends have survived. Of these is Sallie, the mascot of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Infantry. Sallie was their dog from puppyhood, growing up among the troops. Sallie met President Lincoln and would have had many stories to tell if she had had a voice with which to tell them. She licked the wounds of her fallen comrades and remained one of its most beloved members. Sallie died on the front line two months before the end of

the Civil War when a bullet pierced her brain. She was buried where she fell, under heavy enemy fire. Sallie was gone but not forgotten. In 1890 the Eleventh Pennsylvania Regimental Association erected a monument at Gettysburg National Military Park. At its base, peaceful in her repose and ever watchful, lay Sallie cast in life-size bronze.

Sallie is the most well-known Civil War dog and her statue at Gettysburg represents many more dogs who lack such honors of their own. Dogs like Sallie, Harvey, and Charlie were a little piece of "normal" for Civil War soldiers - a friendly face and a fierce fighting buddy when needed. The contributions of these canines have not been completely lost. As long as the poems, songs, and letters home about them survive, so will they.

Bulletin created by Alaina Ebert, Kennesaw State University history student, in cooperation with Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.