

Oliver Hazard Payne's Civil War Service

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When the Civil War began, Oliver Hazard Payne was a student at Yale, class of 1863. He left Yale in October 1861 to join the Union Army as a volunteer for a three year term. His family finances would have made it simple for Oliver to avoid military service with a compensating payment of \$300, as did his later partners John D. Rockefeller and Henry Flagler. But Oliver came from a family with a proud military background; his mother was a Perry. He was named for Oliver Hazard Perry, the victor of the battle of Lake Erie in 1812. This hero's brother, Commodore Matthew Perry, was instrumental in opening up Japan to commerce with the United States (1954-1958). Additionally, Ohio strongly supported the Union cause. The settlers were mainly of yeoman type, and strongly disapproved of slavery. Ohio had a history of being the leading route of the Underground Railroad . Oliver's father had secured a First Lieutenant position for him in the First Battalion of Yates, Illinois Sharpshooters.

In the organization of the Civil War armies, the basic unit was the regiment, commanded by a colonel, with an authorized strength of about a thousand men, divided into ten companies, each officered by a captain and two lieutenants. Regiments were themselves organized into larger units-- in ascending order, brigades, divisions, corps and armies, each commanded by a brigadier or major-general. Union armies were normally named after rivers in their areas of their command -- for example the Army of the Potomac or the group to which the 124th Ohio Infantry was assigned: the Army of the Cumberland. A fairly typical arrangement would have been five regiments to a brigade, three brigades to a division, three divisions to a corps, two, three, four or more corps to an army.

As the war progressed these numbers dwindled through casualties and desertion, as there was not system of replenishment of individual soldiers.

While Payne was with the First Battalion of Yates, Illinois Sharpshooters, there is little mention of him in the official records, as citations in these documents did not reach below the Colonel level. It is known that he participated in the engagements of New Madrid & Island No 10 in Missouri, and Farmington, Boonesville and Corinth in Mississippi..

New Madrid -- 13 March 1862 under General Pope

Island # 10 -- 8 April 1862 under General Pope

Farmington south of Corinth
engagement May 9, 1862 -- I 10,52
skirmishes May 3,10,12, 19,22 -- I, 10

Boonesville south of Farmingham, 20 miles south of Corinth, 30 north of Tupelo

Expeditions May 30, 1862 I 10,17
March - April 1, 1862 I 24
Skirmishes May 29, 1862 -- I, 10
June 11, 1862 I 17

Action July 1, 1862 -- I 16,17

Iuka on 19 September 1862

Corinth on 3-4 October 1862

Near the end of 1862, the 124th Ohio Volunteer Army was organized. In September 1862 Payne became a lieutenant colonel in the 124th, and was promoted to colonel in January 1863. From all written reports, he served with distinction. At war's end he won the brevet of brigadier general. Brevet was

an honor which did not change pay or responsibilities; essentially it was a reward. During his life, Payne preferred the title Colonel.

The first half of 1963 was taken up with organizing the regiment. At the commencement of the war, there were only 400 officers with military training (meaning West Point) in the Union group, with about 300 with similar training in the Rebel army. The Union tended to keep these officers together in the same army, so most of the regiments were volunteers led by volunteers. In Payne's case, he at least had some prior battle experience with the First Illinois.

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Strategy. West Point academics were not strong on strategy which could be applied to a war as extensive as the Civil War. At the beginning of the Civil War, the North held the simplistic notion that a single victory would convince the South to concede; the Southern strategy was to convince the North that it could not win militarily. After the battle of Bull Run, the North developed a longer range strategy. The warring groups had the Appalachian mountain range as a dividing spine running north to south. The North decided to secure control of the Mississippi, which would separate the western rebellious states from the eastern, and then to split the confederacy from north to south by moving towards Chattanooga and from there either eastward towards Savannah and the Atlantic or southward towards Mobile and the Caribbean. The South continued its program of trying to convince the North that it could not win; General Lee added the possibility of an invasion of the North to show that no place was secure, but this ended at Gettysburg. Many Rebel soldiers refused to fight outside the Confederate States.

Tactics. Both Confederate and Union West Point alumni had been exposed to the writings of Henri Jomini, the military theorist of the Napoleonic age, whose *Précis de l'art de guerre*

was the sacred text on the subject. This text was used for many years, to be replaced by future General Halleck's *Elements of Military Art and Science* in 1846, practically a literal translation. Jominian principles survived the discontinuance of the textbook, in the teaching of Mahan and other professors at West Point. Jomini urged the importance of concentration at the decisive point, stressed the advantages of the offensive and belittled the need for fortifications. He gave high priority to the occupation of enemy territory and capture of the enemy capital. With every passing month, the gap between Jominian theories and the Civil War realities grew wider. The war taught the advantage of the defensive side of the field of battle. Defenders overcame their traditional contempt for trenches and earthworks to such an extent that the space became the infantryman's best friend.

For both attackers and defenders, the organization of troops was similar. Most of the brigade was arranged in two straight lines, one perhaps 100 yards behind the other. A smaller number of troopers, called skirmishers, were deployed in front of the first line. These were used as scouts and probes, to determine the enemy's position and report back to the commanding officers. The battle lines were held close together so that the officers could control the action immediately on the scene. Persistence in the old infantry tactics of advancing in close formation, joined with the use of the rifled musket, led to the piles of Union and Confederate dead at famous battles. For our purpose, it helps us understand that Colonel Payne was with, immediately behind, or even in front of his regiment during battle.

The Yates Illinois Sharpshooters (64th regiment) saw action under General Pope, and were most often used as skirmishers, or front line scouts, to engage the enemy and locate the enemy positions. Payne's time with Yates introduced him to the tactics and the horrors of the war which would touch him more closely when he moved to the 124th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. His

promotion to first lieutenant and then captain indicates that his performance with Yates was admired by both his superiors and the men he led.

In early 1963, Payne worked to train the newly formed 124th Ohio, and save for a small battle in March, the group saw little action until it reached Chattanooga

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Chickamauga is in the extreme northwest section of Georgia, less than 10 miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Chattanooga was the main target, standing on the Tennessee River where it carved a gap through the formidable mountain barrier. Its capture would finally break that barrier, deliver one more blow at the east-west communications of the Confederacy, open the way into Georgia, and encourage the Unionists of eastern Tennessee. As the Union forces approached, Confederate General Bragg left Chattanooga and retired towards Chickamauga Creek. The battle of Chickamauga on 19-20 September 1863 was one of those chaotic, scrappy, disjointed (but non the less savage) Civil War encounters, in tangled, difficult country, in which the army commanders, and even corps and divisions commanders, often lost their grip on exactly what their men were doing or how they were fighting. ... Chickamauga was among the bloodiest of Civil War battles, and the Confederates lost the greater numbers: 18,400 to 16,100 ." --(Peter Parish, p. 297)

The outcome was a defeat for the Union forces, but Union General Thomas earned the nickname "The Rock of Chickamauga" for his heroic defense of his position on September 20. Oliver Payne fought under the Thomas group, and was seriously wounded on September 19. Thus he missed the Battle of Chattanooga, after which both armies settled into a winter stay. He rejoined his regiment in early 1964, and participated in the campaign led by Sherman against Johnston

and then Hood on the 100 mile stretch between Chattanooga and Atlanta.

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Revised strategy. By 1964 General Grant had concluded that occupation of territory was not as important as defeating the enemy armies, particularly since the Union had a great advantage in numbers. For his part, Sherman convinced Grant that the best way to defend vulnerable communication was to abandon them altogether. He was convinced that the best way for the North to win the war was to convince the people of the South that they could not win. "If we can march a well-appointed army right through his territory, it is a demonstration that we have a power which Davis cannot resist. This may not be war but rather statesmanship. " Sherman's blend of imagination and tough-minded realism had carried him beyond Grant's thinking to the point where it was as important to break the civilian will to fight as the military capacity to fight.

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Chattanooga to Atlanta. General Grant had been moved to Washington, leaving the Chattanooga group in the command of Sherman. When Sherman's campaign began in early May, his orders were to break up Johnston's army, penetrate into the interior of the Confederacy, and damage its war-making capacity. Atlanta was some eighty miles from his starting-point of Chattanooga, across difficult, rugged hill country, with ridge after ridge offering natural defensive strongholds to his Confederate opponents. Their commander, Joseph E. Johnston, thought in terms of a campaign of flexible defensive maneuver,

moving back from one position to the next, drawing Sherman deeper into difficulty and danger, and preparing to strike back when Sherman made a false move or was betrayed into a rash, frontal assault. Sherman had a healthy respect for Johnston's strategy and realized only too well that every step forward would increase his supply problems; he would have to commit more of his own men to defense of the railroad which was his lifeline. Sherman's solid core was the Army of the Cumberland, led by General Thomas, with two smaller components, the Armies of the Tennessee and of the Ohio.

When he moved against Johnston's army early in May 1864, he had no intention of making a direct challenge to the impressive Confederate position on Rocky Face Ridge; instead Thomas was merely to demonstrate against that position, while the other groups moved round its flanks. This led to a series of flanking movements with occasional battles, at Resaca, Snake Creek Gap, Cassville, Allatoona Pass and New Hope Church. This brought Sherman to Marietta and the siege of Atlanta began. Johnston had been replaced by Hood, who eventually abandoned Atlanta and led his troops toward Decatur with the intention to move on Nashville. During the siege, the 124th was stationed at Jonesboro, south of Atlanta.

After Sherman took Atlanta, he decided to move to either Mobile or Savannah. He developed what is now considered the "total war" concept. Believing that the war would not be won without demonstrating to the people who supported the Confederate Army their indirect responsibility, he kept about 60,000 battle-tested troops, sending the others back towards Chattanooga under General Thomas. The 124th Ohio went back with Thomas. Sherman sent the bulk of his supplies back to Chattanooga in early November, and burned the warehouses of Atlanta on 15 November. His army marched out of Atlanta on 15-16 November in four columns, which spread out over a front twenty miles or more in width. The army traveled light, living off the land, and burning or destroying any food or

supplies in its wake. He received only cursory opposition, as Confederate General Hood had moved westward towards Decatur with the plan to attack Nashville and then perhaps join Lee for one final glorious battle. Sherman's army took Savannah on 21 December, and by cable he presented the city to Lincoln on 24 December as a Christmas gift.

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When the 124th reached Rossville near Chattanooga, Payne told his fellow officers that he would be resigning, which he which he did on 2 November 1864. "I remember the last day our Colonel Payne was with us, near Rossville. He said to me 'We can never conquer the south, and if we do children yet unborn will fight in this war'" (quote from an officer who served under Payne.) The speaker opined that Payne was discouraged at being returned towards Chattanooga. However, Payne's three-year enlistment was up, and Payne thought that he had done enough for the war. The cited officer agreed, noting that Payne had nearly died at Chickamauga.

The 124th moved from Chattanooga towards Nashville, where it experienced its last engagement on December 15-16, 1864. En route, it fought the Confederates at Brown's Ferry, Tennessee on October 27, 1864 and Franklin, Tennessee on November 30, 1864.

Payne's cousin, Lieutenant Samuel B Payne of Company C of the 124th was killed in battle before Nashville on 16 December. Colonel Payne brought his body to Dayton for burial.

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Quotations from Lewis, Campaigns of 124th Regiment:

"On January 1, 1863, our regiment was furnished transportation toward the seat of war "

14 May 1864 - Resaca "In this charge our young Colonel Payne, then in command of the regiment, just being returned recovered from a very dangerous wound received at Chickamauga that nearly cost him his life, showed consummate bravery, riding his horse in the charge across an open field in a perfect storm of bullets" "our regiment lost quite severely"

Pumpkinvine creek -- "Colonel Payne sent me an order to force the skirmish line well to the front and word was sent back that we were fighting the main line of the enemy not one hundred feet away"

New Hope Church -- "It was now quite dark and the firing had ceased all along the line. The few men that came out of the battle together gathered around Colonel Payne. "

Picketts Mills -- "I was up to my neck in Picket's mill pond ... this battle under the different names of Picket's Mills, Pumpkinvine creek and New Hope Church, was the last engagement in which our brigade took part on the rebel position known as Dallas ... the brigade lost 500 men ... our regiment lost very heavily in officers and men."

"I remember the last day our Colonel Payne was with us near Rossville. He said to me 'We can never conquer the south, and if we do children yet unborn will fight in this war.'"

Samuel Brooks Payne (b 1 Jan 1843 at Seneca Falls, killed in battle before Nashville 16 Dec 1864) "Samuel was a 'squirrel hunter' from Ohio who received a commission as 2nd Lieutenant in the regiment commanded by his cousin, Colonel Oliver H Payne of Cleveland, the 124th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He was sent to Tennessee during the severe winter of 1862-1863 with a squad of men. They suffered severely with cold and from smallpox breaking out among them. Mr. Payne served two years and was promoted to a first lieutenancy. When killed, he was gallantly leading his men in the last charge at Nashville. His body was brought to Dayton for burial by Colonel Oliver Payne.

From communiqués listed in the Official Record of the War of the Rebellion: v 20, p 289

organization of the Department of the Ohio at December 1862	
Department of the Ohio	Maj Gen H G Wright
District of Western Kentucky at Henderson, Kentucky	Brig Gen J T Boyle
124th Ohio	Col O H Payne

v 23, p 78 Franklin, Tenn, March 3, 1863 - "Special orders from George K Speed. Colonel Payne, one hundred and twenty-fourth Ohio, with his regiment, will report to Colonel Coburn to accompany this command ... proceed along the Columbia pike as far as Spring Hill, send out a party toward Columbia and one to Raleigh Springs, where a cavalry force from Murfreesborough will communicate with it on the ensuing day.

v. 23 p 105 "By order of Col. O H Payne, commanding the brigade to which my regiment is attached, I report to you with my regiment, about 400 strong"

v 23, p 415 & vol 30, p 44

Organization of the Army of the Cumberland at the battle of Chickamauga, September 19 & 20, 1863	
Army of the Cumberland	Maj Gen William S Rosencrans
Twenty First Army Corps	Maj Gen Thomas Crittenden
Second Division	Maj Gen John M Palmer
Second brigade	Brig Gen William Hazen

124th Ohio Volunteer
Infantry

Colonel Oliver H Payne;
Major James B Hampson

v 23, p 530 Brig Gen W B Hazen report July 10, 1863 from Manchester Tenn. "left Readyville, where they had been camped since Jan 10...reached Bradyville at 2 pm ...column from Cripple Creek arrived same time ... next day to Hollow springs at foot of hills known as 'the Barrens' ... next day marched forward within 4 miles of Manchester"

v 30, p 763 "The 124th Ohio Volunteer, though in its maiden engagement bore itself gallantly and efficiently"

Report of Brig. Gen. William B. Hazen of operations May 3 - August 17, 1864

near Resaca "Colonel Payne, One hundred and twenty-fourth Ohio Volunteers, commanding his own regiment and the Ninety-third Volunteers, pushed forward, vigorously driving the enemy from their advanced position, and seizing a hill within 100 yards of a salient in his works, containing a battery and overlooking a portion of his line containing two other batteries ... and the guns were kept silent the remainder of the time he occupied this position."

"the entire fire of the enemy was concentrated upon my command, which was staggered, and as I could see no support ordered them back. The losses of the brigade in this unassisted and honest effort in the space of thirty seconds was 120"

"I would call attention to ... the meritorious conduct of Colonel Payne in seizing the position already occupied by the enemy.

near Dallas "The first line was composed of two battalions; the one on the left commanded by Col. O. H. Payne, One hundred and twenty-fourth Ohio Volunteers, composed of his own regiment and the Ninety-third Ohio Volunteers ... The whole, under my own personal supervision, moved up within ten yards of the position in which the enemy was found in force. A slight irregularity in the ground gave a partial cover for our men. ... My command had now lost 500 men in the attack and was

powerless to push farther, although the enemy himself was partially broken."

"Colonel Payne, with a portion of his command, held his position, quite at the front, until after dark, when they were withdrawn. It is due the brave brigade which I have commanded during the entire war until within the past few days, and which has been in the front of every battle of the Army of the Cumberland, to say that this battle of the 27th of May is its first and only unsuccessful effort during the war. ... I shall ever believe its part bravely and well done. To Colonels Berry and Payne and Lieutenant-Colonels Kimberly and Foy, since killed, and their brave commands my sincere thanks are due."

"On the 17th of August, I turned the command of the brigade over to Col. O. H. Payne ... Colonels Payne, Berry, and Lieutenant-Colonel Kimberly have at all times shown such intelligence and zeal in the execution of duty as to deserve the highest consideration of the Government. ... I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant, W. B. HAZEN, Brigadier-General. "

Battles listed in official history of 124th Ohio Regiment	
Thompson's Station, Tennessee	March 4-5, 1863
Chickamauga, Georgia	September 19-20, 1863
Lookout Mountain, Tennessee	November 24, 1863
Mission Ridge, Tennessee	November 25, 1863
Rocky Face Ridge, Georgia	May 5 - 9, 1864
Resaca, Georgia	May 12-16, 1864
Pickett's Mills, Georgia	May 27, 1864
Brown's Ferry, Tennessee	October 27, 1864
Franklin, Tennessee	November 30, 1864
Nashville, Tennessee	December 15-16, 1864

Sources:

George W Lewis, The Campaigns of the 124th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, 1912 (Available in New York Public Library)

T. Harry Williams, The History of American Wars from colonial times to World War I, from 1745 to 1918, New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1981, .435 pp (available in Chappaqua library)

Henry Steele Commager, The Blue and the Gray, 2 vols, Indianapolis & New York, The Bobbs-Merril Company, Inc., 1950 (available in Chappaqua library)

Peter J. Parish, The American Civil War, New York, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc, 1975, 750 pp. (available in Chappaqua library)

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For further research:

Information about New Madrid & Island No 10

Determine whether Yates Sharpshooters participated in Iuka battle

Discover nature of Payne's injuries

Did Payne participate in battle of Brown's Ferry?

original version November 2001

reformatted and revised 17 August 2010