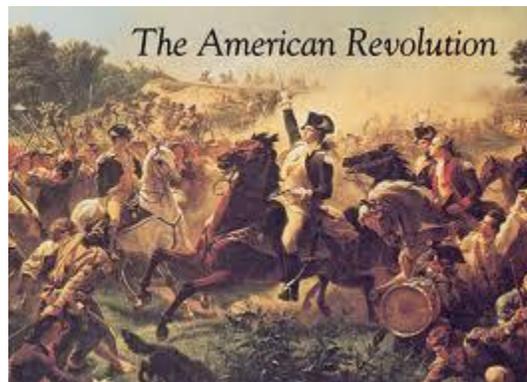


"WAR HORSES"

The American Revolution

The American Revolution, otherwise known as the Revolutionary War, occurred between 1775 and 1783 between Great Britain and the original thirteen colonies in the Americas. The colonists overthrew British rule and claimed their independence under the leadership of General George Washington who became the first President of the United States of America.



It was under leadership of General George Washington that the American cavalry was born. Washington realized that cavalymen were needed to patrol the Atlantic Coast Line for British landings and to serve as messengers and couriers. As battles were lost to the British who had cavalry horsemen, Washington wrote the following message to congress on December 11, 1776:

"From the experience I have had in this campaign of the utility of Horse, I am convinced there is no carrying on the war without them (horses) and I would therefore recommend the establishment of one or more Cavalry Corps . . . In addition to those already raised in Virginia."

By the following June, Washington had 260 cavalry men at his side. The various brigades led raids on British hay storage and destroyed their ability to maintain their horses. This caused the British army to be paralyzed without the means to move artillery and supplies

as well as their cavalry. Sergeant Elijah Churchill was awarded one of three “Badges of Military Merit”, now called the “medal of Honor” for destroying 300 tons of British hay.

The cavalry proved useful and drew the fine line toward American success against Britain. When the war ended, all of the cavalry regiments were disbanded.

The Civil War

The Civil War between 1861 and 1865 was caused by a number of things, including different attitudes toward free labor versus paid labor, ways of life in factories versus plantations, and whether or not a state had the right to leave the Union. After Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, his views on slavery tipped an already unbalanced Union and war was inevitable.

One of the major turning points for winning various battles throughout this war was the use of cavalry. The South had the advantage of horsemanship since they did not have developed roads and still used horses on a daily basis as a way of life while the Northerners were more mobile with wheeled vehicles and factory labor. The South also had previously developed a militia who trained in social groups but already knew how to drill, charge, and ride with sabers. The North believed that a cavalryman must train for two years before he was fit and seasoned for battle which left them even further behind in training and numbers of cavalry regiments early in the war. After a few years however, this turned around and the cavalry became a huge part of the Union army.



Horses were commonly seen carrying military officers and became important assets for both armies in many ways. They were hooked up to artillery and proved useful for hauling cannons and other various heavy loads of weapons and ammunition. They were also used to pull wagons and medical units and aided soldiers in delivering vital messages between units and through enemy lines.



Confederate General Robert E. Lee was forced to surrender to the Union General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865 as the Union cavalry cut off his attempts to join surviving Confederate forces in North Carolina. Grant rode several horses. One in particular is noted in the American Quarter Horse Museum and is known as Little Jeff Davis.



Union Gen. Grant's Horses Egypt, Cincinatti, and Jeff Davis

Image courtesy of Library of Congress

After the surrender of the Confederate Army, many of the war horses went back to their earlier life routines of working in fields or carrying their owners from one place to another. Other horses were honored in military banquets and given awards or had streets named after them. One particular horse that received honors and is still honored today with his own exhibit at the Virginia Military Institute is Stonewall Jackson's Morgan horse named Little Sorrel.

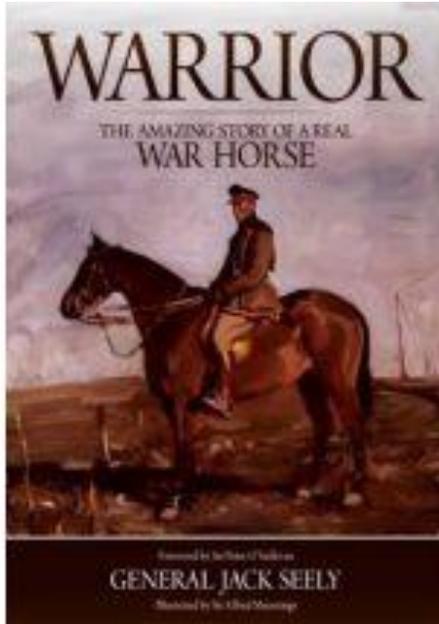
World War I

There were over 1 million horses used in World War I. They were used as cavalry mounts on the front line and transportation. They also pulled heavy wagons with food and ammunition and carried individual packs holding large artillery shells. The war would not have been won without them.



There were few motor vehicles during World War I, so horses made the war effort effective. The British Army actually recruited 140,000 horses in a two week time period to fight. Many soldiers were forced to learn horsemanship if they lived in cities and caring for the horses boosted moral and gave soldiers something to focus on. The relationships built between

man and horse made the war bearable for many men. The most famous World War I war horse was named 'Warrior'. He was owned by Jack Seely and became the mascot for the cavalry. The movie "War Horse" was created in honor of this true hero in 2011.



World War I introduced many soldiers to biological warfare, or the use of chemical agents as weapons. Soldiers wore protective gear and gas masks to ward off the effects of the gases like chlorine and phosgene that were used. They protected their horses as well with specially designed horse gas masks.



World War II

During World War II, tanks and aircraft were seen more regularly than in earlier wars. However, horses were still used in difficult terrain in areas of Oahu, Hawaii, and were used in large scale operations with the 10th Mountain Division in Italy and Operation Mars in Burma. Horses were also used for aiding medical personnel by carting wounded soldiers to safety.



224th Airborne Medical Company personnel use local carts and horses for transportation of patients and supplies in World War II - 1945.

Present Day War Horses

Today, Special Forces teams are still trained in horsemanship and basic veterinary care. The military still finds that horses are a valuable asset to war efforts. Today's soldiers are able to carry laptop computers and communication gear to remote locations via horseback where they can easily transmit coordinates or other valuable information. An example of this was done when soldiers were trained at Fort Bragg before being deployed to Afghanistan following 9/11. The soldiers rode their horses into the mountains and called in valuable air strikes that played important roles in operations success.

