

The Good Old Mail - Red River 3

revC, D Dal Bello, May 18, 2015

“..few of us can look back to those old days, without remembering ‘ The good old mail we got at Camden.’ ”
– A.F. Sperry, 33^d Iowa.

Family and friends can send mail to members of the 77th OVI at RR3!

I have created a cancellation stamp from “Marietta, O.” dated (Monday) March 14. This gives mail about 3 weeks to get to Little Rock, a few days at Little Rock, and then forwarded on the supply train (on April 12) from Little Rock to Camden, arriving at Camden on April 20th (actual dates of campaign).

Address period envelopes to (ONLY ENVELOPES):

Soldier	<u>OR</u>	Soldier
Co. ____, 77 th O.V.I.		Co. ____, 77 th O.V.I.
1 nd Brig., 3 ^d Div., 7 th A.C.		1 nd Brig., 3 ^d Div., Dept. of Arkansas.

The 77th was in the 1st Brigade prior to the Red River Campaign, so the folks at home would use that. McKeever, in *Civil War Battle Flags of the Union Army and Order of Battle* (1887), notes that the 1st and 2d brigades changed names in March 1864 (Dyer’s *Compendium* indicates the switch was in April, which does not quite make sense since April is in the middle of the campaign). Regardless, mail should be address to the 1st Brigade.

Also, the 7th A.C. was created by G.O. on Jan. 6, 1864, so the “Dept of Arkansas” name might still be used by those writing from home.

On or before to May 27, U.S. Mail period (small) envelopes inside modern (larger) envelopes to:

Dom Dal Bello
1634 Coral Drive
Santa Maria, CA 93454

(DO NOT spend extra to overnight mail,
first class is sufficient).

Upon receipt, I will:

- place postage stamps on them (if necessary)
- stamp with the cancellation stamp (Marietta O.; March 14)

DEADLINE: postmark your mail by MAY 27 so I will get it in time (I am driving to Arkansas, so do not send mail after May 23 (else I won’t get it, and you won’t get it)).

AFTER May 27: bring mail directly to battalion HQ at the event.

NEED stationery/Envelopes?

Please email Todd Bemis (wedgee01@aol.com) and ask. Todd will send you stationery and stamped envelopes (pre-cancelled).

Please get completed mail to Dom (info/above), for inclusion in battalion mail-bag.

ALTERNATE MAIL SERVICE (via event itself)... use for PACKAGES.

I recently learned that the event has set up a modern U.S. Postal Address (no period stamp/cancel, but I imagine it will be post-marked Washington, AR. If you want to do this... Send regular modern U.S. Mail to:

Soldier’s Name
US Army
Washington, AR 71862

Plan for this mail to arrive in Arkansas by Saturday June 6, 2015.

Historic account of “The Good Old Mail” on page 2

Historically, although Steele's 7th A.C. was short on rations, it received a welcomed mail in Camden on April 20. While the 77th was on veteran furlough in February, it no doubt received some mail.

From the *History of the 33d Iowa Infantry Volunteer Regiment 1863-6*, by A.F. Sperry (1866):

On the evening of the 20th of April, the supply-train [from Little Rock] came in. We were heartily glad to welcome our colonel, and the recruits who came with him; but the greatest joy was over the "good old mail" which came with the train, and was distributed that evening. It was the first word we had heard from home or civilization, since the march began. Little could the writers of those letters imagine how eagerly the envelopes were to be open, or how dear and precious the words of love and hope, from home seemed to us, there in the enemy's country, and so long cut off from even the comforts of a camp. Welcome and prized as letters always were, they had never been so as much so as now; and few of us can look back to those old days, without remembering "The good old mail we got at Camden."

Next day came such a scratching of pens on paper as was never before known in our regiment. There was word that the train would start back to Little Rock in a day or so, and take a mail with it; and so all the long letters we had been gradually writing since the march commenced, we now closed, and new ones written, and a very large amount of mail matter was started for the dear ones at home. Alas! it never arrived. The disaster at Mark's Mill's, a few days later, resulted not only in the capture of some of our own comrades [including the 77th O.V.I.], among others, with the train, but in the loss of all that heavy mail. Doubtless the rebels "had a good time" in reading over the words of love and hope, or the expressions of our opinions as to the situation.
