

New Michigan Civil War Interpretive Sign at Sailor's Creek Battlefield

In February 2010, the [Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee](#) contacted Chris Calkins, park manager of Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park in Rice, Virginia. Calkins, a native Detroit, has served with the National Park Service for 34 years with previous assignments at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park and Petersburg National Battlefield. He is the author of 12 publications and numerous articles, many of which focus on Gen. Robert E. Lee's April 1865 retreat. In October 2012, discussions were held regarding recent additions to the park in March that were fought over by Col. Peter Stagg's Michigan cavalry brigade. In July 2013, the parties engaged in serious plans for a marker/sign regarding Michigan's involvement in the battle. Beginning in March 2014, the sign text became the subject of e-mail exchanges. Calkins also involved noted Civil War cavalry historian Eric J. Wittenberg in ensuring accuracy of the text and images. The sign went into production in August 2014; by the end of September, Calkins sent photographs of the erected marker. "The Michigan Cavalry Brigade at Sailor's Creek" sign is a short walk from the park visitor center. The Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial Fund paid for the cost of the sign.





Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park



The Michigan Cavalry Brigade at Sailor's Creek

The Michigan Cavalry Brigade was created on December 12, 1862, and was famously commanded by Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer. By April, 1865, it was now placed in Brigadier General Thomas C. Devin's First Division and led by Colonel Peter Stagg. The First Brigade consisted of the 1st Michigan Cavalry, 5th Michigan Cavalry, 6th Michigan Cavalry and 7th Michigan Cavalry, and was assigned duty with Captain Marcus P. Miller's 4th United States Artillery, Batteries C and E, at Sailor's Creek on April 6, 1865.



Colonel Peter Stagg

First seeing action in the battle as support to Major General George Crook's attack on the Confederate wagon train at Holt's Corner, it then moved to the south of the creek and, acting independently, would

charge across the field in front of you to attack General Richard S. Ewell's right flank held by Major General Joseph B. Kershaw's troops.



John A. Clark of the 7th cavalry, wrote-

"April 6th we marched hurriedly + soon came in sight of his [Lee's] wagon train. The artillery commenced shelling it + we went for it. [We] were repulsed; found it strongly guard with infantry. But while we could not capture, we could retard their progress, very much, giving the infantry an

opportunity to come up. When they reached the ground, we joined them, and my squadron being the advance of the brigade, [we] were next to the 6th Corps...." "The 6th Corps advanced down the hill + across the stream [Sailor's Creek] + commenced ascending the other, the artillery shelling the enemy...." "We were on their left and advanced with them, mounted." General Devin noted in his report of the battle -

"The First brigade and a section of battery had remained upon the extreme right and rendered efficient service. Colonel Stagg, in a brilliant charge on the flank of Sixth Corps, captured 300 prisoners. Miller, with Fuger's section, made great havoc in the train by his splendid practice."

