



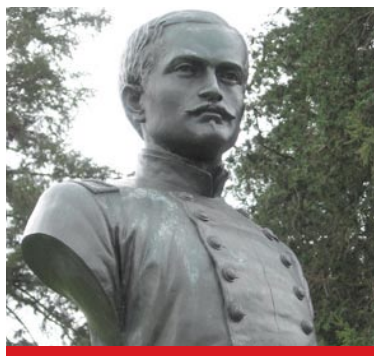
"The Red Legs"

James H. Hillestad, Member No. 6, profiles the 114th Pennsylvania Volunteers, popularly known as The Collis' Zouaves.

The American Zouave units that blossomed in the Civil War were modeled on the elite troops that evolved from French campaigns in Africa.

The French Zouaves deployed in the Crimean War enjoyed a reputation for being recklessly brave on the battlefield. They regarded themselves as elite units with an esprit de corps which bound them

Monument to Charles Collis, National Cemetery, Gettysburg



together as a family, to the extent that Zouaves referred to the regimental commander as "Father."

Such was the case with the 114th Pennsylvania Volunteers, organized by Charles Henry Tuckey Collis. Born in Cork, Ireland, in 1838, he immigrated with his father to Philadelphia in 1853. Collis was swept up in the patriotic rush to defend the colors in 1861. He

set about raising a company of Zouaves to be modeled on the French military units that had so recently captured the fancy of many Americans. They were outfitted with red trousers, a short blue jacket laced in red trim with light blue cuffs, and white gaiters, topped off by a red fez.

By 1862, the size of Collis' command had evolved to a full regiment of 866 men. The average age was 25. Most were born in Philadelphia and were classified as skilled or semi-skilled workers, as opposed to farmers.

*They are coming from their
firesides,
From the hallowed light of home,
Looking back with tearful vision
On the blessings they have known.
"Our Volunteers,"
— undated newspaper clipping*

The men of the 114th saw active service from the fall of 1862 until the end of the war in the spring of 1865. They directly participated in four major battles: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the final assault on Petersburg. At Chancellorsville, they marched into battle with 400 men, of whom 181 became casualties.

At Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, the 114th were deployed on the left of the Union line, near the

114th Pennsylvania Zouaves make their way through a farmyard.



Original sculpt of No.31114 Union 114th Pennsylvania Kneeling Firing, No.1



Original sculpt of No.31109 Union 114th Pennsylvania Vivandiere Mary Tebe

"French Mary"



Mary Tebe

The 114th Regiment adopted an "accessory" peculiar to the French forces: a vivandiere or canteen manager by the name of Mary Tebe or "French Mary." In their original capacity, vivandieres functioned much like sutlers, following the armies in the field while providing food and supplies to the soldiers.

They were distinguished from cantinieres or canteen keepers who remained in camp. French vivandieres came to be recognized as legitimate military figures and were permitted to wear uniforms. This well-established French tradition was carried over to Zouave organizations in the United States, where it made a significant impact on women's clothing styles during the 1860s, popularizing pantaloon skirts and short, collarless jackets.

Mary was born in Brest, France, in 1834. She arrived in America in 1849 and married a Philadelphia tailor in 1854. In 1861, her husband enlisted in the 27th Pennsylvania Volunteers, and she signed on to his regiment as a vivandiere. She eventually left the regiment (and her husband as well), and joined The Collis' Zouaves -- a colorful addition in the already flamboyant regiment.

Mary cooked, washed, and mended for the men. She was the only enlisted woman at Gettysburg, where she carried water and treated the wounded. She was in 13 battles and carried a .44 caliber pistol.

In 1893, she appeared at a reunion of Zouave veterans in Philadelphia, where she had her photograph taken with the wooden keg that she carried over her shoulder throughout the war.



"Collis' Zouave" by Keith Rocco. ©Keith Rocco 1996 www.keithrocco.com

celebrated Peach Orchard and Wheatfield. There they faced vastly superior numbers of General William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade. Pushed back to Cemetery Ridge, the Red Legs managed to save their colors but lost nearly a hundred killed and wounded out of 312 engaged. With such depleted numbers, the unit would act as provost guard of the Army of the Potomac headquarters, for the remainder of the war.

By the end of the war in 1865, the Army of the Potomac alone contained at least seven regiments which prided themselves as Zouaves. The South, too, had Zouave regiments, though not to the extent that the North had. Noteworthy were Major General C.R. Wheat's Louisiana Tigers and G.A.C. Coppens's Louisiana Zouaves.

Collis was promoted to the rank of Brevet Brigadier General in 1864 and later Major General. In 1893, he received the nation's most prestigious military decoration, the Medal of Honor, for his actions at the battle of Fredericks-

burg. He died in 1902, and was buried in the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, fulfilling his wish that he be buried with the men of his regiment.

Collis left an enduring legacy in that he was instrumental in securing land that became part of Gettysburg National Military Park. He even built a summer home there on West Confederate Avenue, not far from the site where General Barksdale's Mississippians would have formed on the afternoon of July 2, 1863. Collis named his residence "Red Patch" after the corps insignia he and his men had faithfully followed into the smoke of battle. ■

Jim Hillestad operates under the name The Toy Soldier Museum. His museum, containing more than 35,000 figures and a large collection of militaria, is located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. For directions and hours, call him at 570/629-7227, or visit his new website: www.the-toy-soldier.com





"Union Zouaves Marching Down Pennsylvania Avenue," Artist unknown, courtesy of The West Point Museum Collection, USMA