



The Tyrants' Foe



Newsletter of the Texas Rifles

Volume XXII, Number 3 ***** October, 2006



Next Event

Henkel Square Civilian Living History

November 3-4th, 2006 Roundtop, TX



Captain's Dispatch

Perryville, to me, was well worth the long trip to get there. The weather was good, the countryside beautiful and we got to do what for us is rather usual; reenact a battle on the actual site. Perryville has always had the reputation as “authentic only” event. The Texas Rifles showed the hobby that we can soldier with the best of the nation. I submit that the Texas Rifles should consider this event in the future as a Maximum Effort Event. I understand that while the Perryville Event is held annually, it is only attended in large numbers every other year. Look forward to Perryville in 2008.

Texian Market Days 2006 will take place, this year on the last weekend in October (10/28-29). This new date puts TMD on the weekend before Henkel Square. Without rehashing the painful details, let’s just say that the George Ranch Historical Park (GRHP) has given the Texas Rifles little reason to continue supporting their event as a unit. TMD 2006 is not a scheduled Texas Rifles event and attendance will be as individuals only.

Our next event is the Henkel Square Event in Roundtop, Texas on November 4 and 5. Roundtop is just down the road from Winedale. Not only is this a Texas Rifles sponsored event, it is also a civilian oriented event. We as an organization have not done one of those in a long time and it deserves our support. Only a tiny percentage of Civil War soldiers were in the military when the war started; the vast majority were civilians. The typical Civil War soldier considered himself to be a citizen serving a short time in the armed forces before returning to his real life as a civilian. He wanted nothing more than to return to that life as soon as possible with his country secure and his body intact. You can not successfully portray a Civil War soldier without understanding the background from which he came. That is why events like Henkel Square make us better at portraying Civil War era Americans.

After Henkel Square comes the Liendo Plantation Event over the weekend of November 18 and 19, where we will again portray Federal soldiers. I have not received much information from the Red River Battalion on this event, but little is really needed. We do need to man a recruiting booth again. Plan on that. I also would prefer that the Texas Rifles stay with the Red River Battalion and not attempt to maintain an isolated, more campaign

style camp. While a campaign style camp is more typical for us, being apart inhibits our recruiting effort and sets us up to be a target for every drunk with a musket on Saturday night. The Liendo Event seems to be plentifully supplied with such types. Why bother?

Beyond Liendo lies Thanksgiving, Christmas and Winedale 2007. Winedale will be especially important and enjoyable this year. Not only will we elect a new set of Texas Rifles officers, but we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Texas Rifles. In a hobby in which most units break apart within seven years, this is a notable accomplishment. Good times lie ahead, strive to be a part of them!

Captain John M. Keahey

Lieutenant's Inkwell



Perryville sure turned out to be a swell event. It was great to see everyone in the field again and traveling through Kentucky was certainly a treat! One of the best things about Perryville is that it was the kick-off event for our fall season. We now have Henkel Square and Liendo to look forward to. Hopefully we can plan a get-together or two in between now and Winedale too. With our 20th anniversary coming up, I would really like to get some drill time in so that we look our best for all of the former Rifles who might show up. Even an hour or so of drill followed by some BBQ and beer is better than no drill at all. I believe in mixing this type of fun and business. Have no doubt that we DO have a reputation for good drill. That is why we find ourselves as First Company a lot and why we are the company called for skirmish duty. We KNOW our stuff and can back it up with action. What is important to me is that we keep up that reputation. It is easy to say we are the best but it is quite another to MAINTAIN that rep. Even if only four of us can get together, those four can practice skirmish drill, stacking and the Manual of Arms. Mixing an hour or so of drill time with a cartridge party, movie or picnic will help keep or skills sharp and keep our camaraderie up. No reason not to mix business with pleasure!

I want to close by reminding everyone to RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT!!! We all have a responsibility to build our company. Being a hobby, we see a lot of people come and go while maintaining a core group of members. Without our efforts to build constantly, we soon find ourselves wondering where all our friends have gone. Talk up the hobby, let your friends know what a good time you have with the Rifles. Stress how easy it is to get started since we have an outstanding Quartermaster Dept. that can completely outfit them in blue or gray until they can buy their own gear. If I could conscript some fellers I would, but we all need to do our best to build the Rifles so that we do not simply survive to 20 years, but we THRIVE into our third decade!

That's the bottom line.

Frank J Marek
LT of Texas Rifles

From the Home Front

Summer is winding down and the reenactment season has started; I, for one, am ready for the fun to begin. The civilians have been keeping busy in the off-season with a few projects.

The seat covers for the civilians' camp stools are just about done. The necessary hardware for the civilian fly has yet to be purchased but is high on the "to do" list and will be ready by the first event for which it will be needed in November.

Henkel Square is coming along nicely; more information about this event is included later in this newsletter. A new civilian recruit guide has been developed and is currently being reviewed by the Civilian Authenticity Committee. This guide will be available to all members, civilian and military.

We are also discussing ideas for the Winedale auction; items that will be contributed by the civilian corps so far include a Texas Rifles' handmade quilt and homemade cookies with milk.

Some informal discussion has occurred about how to develop civilian activities at the events we attend and to be more interactive with the public and other participants. We are hoping to have a plan for civilian activities for Liendo. There is currently a carry over from Henkel Square planned; other ideas have included developing scenarios such as a temperance meeting, and providing informal workshops. We would also like to become more familiar with the other civilian groups and include them in our activities. More on these ideas as they are developed.

Another event some of you may be interested in attending is a period ball scheduled for February 10, 2007 at the Menger in San Antonio. Even though it is in 2007, I bring this to your attention now as the deadline for reservations is December 1. In addition to the ball, Twiggs Surrender will also take place at the Alamo that same weekend. I realize that traditionally, Jesse Jones has conflicted with Twiggs; at this time I do not know if this will be the case this year. I have included the invitation to the event in this newsletter for those of you interested in attending.

Remember, if you wish to explore a civilian impression, incorporate more civilian information into your military impression or have questions about civilian life in Texas during the Civil War you can contact any of the civilian members or me and we will be more than happy to help you.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Bethke, Civilian Coordinator

Henkel Square Event

Henkel Square, to be held November 4-5 in Round Top, is a new event for the Texas Rifles. Intended as a first person, civilian heavy event, the aim is to provide military and civilian participants the experience of a semi-immersion Civil War event in Texas. Participants will portray citizens of Fayette County, Texas in November 1862 and Henkel Square will become a generic Fayette County community.

Rather than keep the event a Texas Rifles only event, registration was opened up to other groups and we have had a wonderful response. We have a total of 30 people pre-registered, which includes men, who actually outnumber the women, and a good number of children. We have registrants from central, north and south Texas and one participant coming from Michigan. All the households have been established and impressions are being developed. Several of the participants are staying on site in the structures. It also appears that at least one of the activities at the event will carry over to Liendo.

Even though the deadline to be assigned to a household has passed, you can still attend as a walk-on and portray a visitor to the area, an itinerant tradesman or worker, or in the case of male participants, arriving to enlist in the militia or other appropriate impressions. A registration fee of \$5.00 per person is being charged by Henkel Square and will go to the Texas Pioneer Arts Foundation for the support of Henkel Square. All participants must pay the fee and be listed on a registration form. Arrival at the site may begin at 3:00 pm on Friday. Walk-on registration will be accepted up to 10:00 p.m. on Friday, November 3rd unless prior arrangements have been made.

Information about the event and the registration form are available on the Texas Rifles' Yahoo! group under files/Henkel Square.

If you have any questions regarding the event, please feel free to contact me.

Annette Bethke, Civilian Coordinator

netnet81@yahoo.com

Military Authenticity Committee

Perryville provided the opportunity to make our first appearance as an AOT unit after making the CD style jacket the TR standard. The sutler area was among the best, and several new sources can be added to the supply matrix. Some observations:

- 1) E. J. Thomas - www.ejtsutler.com has excellent accoutrements on a standard second to none, if a bit expensive compared to Serio. Also some smaller items for impressions, such as hand sewn pre tied cravats....
- 2) Village Tinsmith - www.csa-dixie.com/village_tinsmith has an excellent selection of mess ware and other metal items.
- 3) 96 District Storehouse - www.96storehouse.com has an excellent selection of fabrics for making clothing, haversacks, etc.
- 4) C. J. Daley - my first look at this supplier. The cut and materiel used in construction of uniforms is first rate, however only buttonholes are hand sewn.
- 5) W&W (Waugh) - rough hand sewn visible finishing, but fit not of the best quality, suggesting that they have some work to do in patterns.

Tommy Attaway

Frontier Region

Additional powder and caps obtained to increase ammunition supply. Tommy Attaway

Molding Bullets

Shooting a black powder weapon at a target (and hitting it) is one of the greatest challenges available to the modern shooter. Hunting with a black powder weapon is even more challenging, if you really hunt. By that I mean that the hunter stalks animals in the field, not kills them by appointment at a timed game feeder. What makes black powder shooting such a challenge is the multiple variables with which the shooter must deal. For the black powder weapon to shoot with the greatest accuracy and consistency it must be loaded the exact same way each time with the same size bullet, same lead purity and the same powder charged rammed into the breech with the same pressure. Impact on target is also affected by weather, wind, patch (if used), bullet lubricate, powder moisture, powder granulation, real versus imitation black powder, condition of the bore and casting imperfections in the bullet. There is a lot to control and take into account.

Did you know that shooting a black powder weapon is cheaper per shot than shooting a modern firearm, including a .22 caliber? Shooters can purchase traditional black powder or "Pyrodex" type synthetic black powder. Some shooters also purchase their bullets from commercial sources, but this adds to the expense. It adds to the challenge to cast your own bullets as was done by shooters for centuries. You can also achieve greater accuracy because you can eliminate some of the variables in target shooting by controlling the design, diameter and reducing casting imperfections.

PRECAUTIONS IN CASTING BULLETS

Number one is that **LEAD IS TOXIC**. It is poisonous. Don't drink it, eat it, smoke it, snort it, give it your kids to play with, use cooking/eating utensils for casting lead, or store it in food containers. When casting cover nearby areas with old towels or cloths to catch invisible lead dust. Wash all clothing worn during the casting session immediately afterward plus all the old towels/cloths. Wipe the casting area to remove any lead dust.

Number two is that molten LEAD IS HOT. Lead melts at 686 degrees Fahrenheit. By comparison water boils at 212 degrees so we are working with a liquid three times hotter than boiling water. Lead is a relatively low melting temperature metal and can be melted over a campfire, kitchen stove, outdoor grill, Coleman stove or other commonly available heat source. This is one reason why it was and is used for bullets, but it is still very HOT when liquid. While casting with lead wear leather gloves, long sleeve shirt, pants, socks, shoes, and eye glasses or other eye protection. In spite of all precautions the molten lead will spatter and splash around the melting pot. The bullets emerge from the bullet mold solid, but STILL HOT. Fresh bullets and splashed lead can burn unprotected skin. When I was high school age, fearless and stupid; as opposed to older and stupid, I was casting bullets on the kitchen stove when one of my sisters came into the room fresh from sunbathing beneath the warm Virginia sun in a bikini. She insisted on trying to mold a bullet and I was dumb enough to let her try without wearing clothing more protective than a bikini. Of course, being the smarter younger brother, I might have been wearing a T shirt at the time. Her particular bullet turned out to have imperfections so, on my instruction, she dropped it back into the molten lead. She plopped it in from high above the lead surface and the lead splashed. She received a superficial burn from a small lead splash on the central upper chest in an area generally considered to be quite sensitive by most women. She has expressed no desire to cast another bullet since. The lesson here is plain enough; you guys should not be wearing your bikini tops when casting bullets!

The lead and lead pot can remain hot enough to burn skin for HOURS after the heat source is turned off and the lead has re-solidified. Do not attempt to move the lead pot unprotected until you have verified that it is cool to the touch. I did that once and when the pot became too hot to hold I set it down briefly on the living room carpet to change my hand position. This melted a brown hole in my mother's carpet and was the main topic of several intense conversations with her afterward. Don't mix moisture and molten lead. The water will flash to steam with explosive force.

CASTING

Now that you are sufficiently scared, let's mold bullets. I cast my bullets from a cast iron frying pan dedicated to that purpose only. It was purchased at the local hardware store. It is sturdy and holds enough lead to maintain a relatively constant temperature even as lead is removed by molding or added back into pot as rejected bullets, splashes, sprue cuttings, or new lead. I use a LYMAN brand lead molding ladle. This iron tool has a wooden handle and a pouring spout. It holds enough lead to mold a large bullet such as a .575 or .685 cylindro-conical hollow base bullet (minie ball). These are huge bullets by modern standards and the pouring tool needs to hold a consequently large amount of lead to successfully form such a bullet. There are commercially sold electric smelters that pour lead from a spout on the bottom, but I have never owned one. Several people I know have and these seem to have a short lifespan as their spouts plug-up with slag.

Most mold directions call for the lead to be fluxed by adding a small piece of wax to the molten lead before casting begins. Don't do it for bullets intended for black powder weapons! Fluxing remixes into the lead any other metals present such as tin and antimony. These elements make the lead harder and are necessary for modern bullets traveling at higher velocity. Black powder bullets, either round, solid or minie balls depend for accuracy on the lead being as soft and as pure as possible. Fluxing therefore is counterproductive for black powder shooters.

When the lead is completely melted a thin grey scum will form on its surface composed of harder metals and impurities. Skim this slag material off with a cheap steel spoon **THAT WILL NEVER BE USED FOR FOOD**. I keep an old lidless soup can with an inch of water in the bottom next to my lead pot. Put the slag in the can and throw the slag away after the molding process is complete.

Bullet molds can be made of steel, iron, brass or aluminum. They can be simple without sprue cutters, or more complex types such as are necessary to mold minie balls. Molds have moving parts, but should not be oiled. The temperatures of molten lead will reduce any oil to a hard residue that will freeze mold parts and make irregular bullets. If ever oiled, the oil must be cleaned off with soap and water and the mold dried before

molding. Molds can be lubricated with candle soot by holding a burning candle beneath the parts and coating them with the carbon from the candle flame.

Now you are ready to cast bullets. Bullet quality will be affected by the lead temperature and mold temperature. To heat a mold place a corner of the mold blocks into the lead for around eight (8) seconds. Bullet molds typically resemble a large pair of pliers. Attached to each arm of the pliers is a mold block with a cavity shaped to form one half of the bullet. With the blocks closed and aligned the complete bullet shape is obtained, along with a hole to the top of the mold blocks so that the molten lead can enter. Pour the lead into the closed mold blocks with the ladle until the blocks are filled and the lead stops flowing into the mold. Wait until you observe the lead solidify in the top of the mold. This will only take a second or two. Tap the sprue cutter, if the mold is equipped with one, with a thick stick to cut the sprue from the top of the bullet. I usually turn the mold upside down at this point and drop the cut sprue into the pot, but this could be done later. Open the mold blocks over a damp cloth folded to provide a soft landing pad for the hot bullets. Dropping a new lead bullet onto a hard surface will deform it. With some brands of minie ball molds, such as steel LYMAN molds, the base former must be separately removed before opening the mold. LEE brand molds have the base former attached to the bottom of the aluminum blocks, but the mold must be opened upside down for the bullet to be removed from the mold. Sometimes the bullet will drop out onto the damp cloth, but with a cold mold they often stick. To remove a stuck bullet from the open mold, strike the hinge of the mold a sharp blow with the stick. Do not strike the mold blocks themselves as they may be damaged. In an extreme case a stuck bullet could be grasped and removed with pliers, but attempt this only if nothing else works. Do not touch the mold blocks with the pliers, and any bullet so removed is by definition deformed and can be placed directly back into the melting pot.

As soon as a bullet drops out visually check it for irregularities. Close the mold blocks and reset the sprue cutter, if present. Pour another bullet. It is important to keep your mold properly heated by working at a regular pace. With a new mold the first dozen or so bullets are often defective, particularly with the complicated minie ball design. Keep trying until completely formed, unwrinkled bullets of bright lead emerge from the mold. Now the mold and lead are the correct temperature and you are “in the zone.” Continue to mold until you have the number of bullets you need. Make a few more than you want because some of the bullets may not be useable upon closer examination. Bullets that are not completely formed, wrinkled, or with air cavities will not be accurate! If the surface of the molten lead changes color, or if the bullets emerge from the mold with a dull, frosted look, the lead is too hot and the heat must be lowered. Depending upon the lead you use, the pot may have to be periodically skimmed to remove slag. Occasionally tap the empty ladle on the edge of the pot to knock-off slag in the bowl and clear the pouring spout. Make an extra bullet to store in the mold cavity to prevent moisture and dirt from accumulating in it.

When done set the mold aside to cool on a metal or ceramic surface; it will remain hot for some time. Gently place rejected bullets back into the molten lead. Also put in any splashed lead and sprue. Molds without sprue cutters will leave each bullet with a neck of lead where the fill hole for the mold blocks was located. This should be cut-off with snips and the sprue lead returned to the pot. Remove the protective cloth around the casting site and wash it with the clothing you wore. Wipe the area with a damp cloth to remove lead dust.

You have now made bullets in the traditional manner. Of course, most soldiers had their ammunition issued to them with the bullets made beforehand and rolled into paper wrapped cartridges. However, government arms contracts with private gun makers often specified that the weapons be supplied with a bullet mold, so the government anticipated that the soldiers might need to do some molding. Army Ordnance Manuals also have complete instruction for making cartridges and mention molded bullets. Southern bullets may have been cast, but most English and Northern bullets were swaged; stamped into shape under hydraulic pressure from a lead bar.

Minie balls and most modern bullets have “grease rings” around the base. These are to hold bullet lubricant to help prevent barrel leading and overheating during prolonged firing. Most Civil War era bullets were lubricated with a beeswax/tallow mixture before being rolled into cartridges.

Many colonial cities had “shot towers” resembling tall brick smoke stacks, where molten lead was poured into the air at the top of the hollow tower and fell into water filled vats in the bottom. The lead solidified during the fall into perfectly round spheres which were recovered from the water and then sorted by size. An original shot tower has been preserved in Baltimore, Maryland.

Jmk, 5/1/2006

Book Review:

“Don Troiani’s American Battles”

I am a Don Troiani fan. For those of you who may not recognize the name, Troiani is a living artist who specializes in highly researched, historically accurate paintings of military subjects. Most glossy publications feature his prints and it is difficult not to find his painting of a particular subject on a book jacket covering the same topic. His work is considered by many to be definitive. Before Troiani there was only H. Charles McBarron who dared to paint military subjects, but his ego got in the way; every man in a McBarron painting has the artist’s face! While not a print collector, I own most of Troiani’s books. They offer not only a glimpse into the past through the art work, but the text has been equally informative as well... until now.

Troiani’s new book is, “Don Troiani’s American Battles: The Art of the Nation at War, 1754-1865,” by Stackpole Books, 2006. The usual art work is there, but this book suffers from two major flaws. The first major flaw is that 95% of the paintings have been published in previous Troiani books. There is very little here that is new. Most of the few new paintings are of individual or small groups of soldiers, and are apparently there to showcase some of the items in Troiani’s personal collection of military artifacts, which must be fabulous. One example is a painting of a group of Native Americans crouched as if worshipping the broadsword of a Highland officer in the British Army of the 1750’s. No action, no information, just a nice painting of Don’s sword. I name him Don not to be over familiar, but because we are acquainted and served together in the same Revolutionary Unit during the Bicentennial.

That brings up the second flaw in this book; the research information is not there. The text is almost entirely about the artist’s feelings, emotions and compositional judgments while the painting was being created. That might be important to Don, but is not really interesting to me. I expect research grade information when I purchase a \$49.95 glossy format book authored by people formerly renowned for their attention to detail. This book has very little of that. To put it bluntly, I do not care if the artist was in his Red Period when he painting the sky behind a Civil War battle scene. Future art historians may be dazzled with that sort of information, but I am looking for facts.

Does this book have value? Yes. Will I retain my copy? Yes. Do I recommend that you, gentle reader, buy this book? No! As per pattern, I suspect that all the paintings in this book will re-appear in future Troiani publications; hopefully accompanied by a more informative text. So don’t feel like you may miss something by not buying it. Troiani has released what they called in the 19th century a “pot boiler”. That is a book quickly written with trivial content to sell books and generate income for the author/publisher. Troiani is playing off his name recognition to sell a book which is beneath what he formerly stood for. Perhaps that is the sign of success, but we do not have to like that marketing concept or support it by purchasing this book.

Jmk

You are cordially invited to attend the 10th
Annual

Lace and Sabers Magnolia Ball
February 10th, 2007
The Menger Hotel Ballroom
San Antonio, Texas

Period 1860's attire a must

Music by The Perfect Fifth

Danced Called by Miss Barb Smith

Ladies High Tea, Gentlemen's Bar, Seated

Dinner, Gala Ball

Tickets: \$75.00 per person seating is limited

Make Checks payable to: Rebecca Noone

R.S.V.P. by December 1st, 2006

Rooms blocked at The Menger \$135.00 single/double
as for room rate.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

—

Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

No. of tickets: _____ Amount enclosed:

\$ _____

Mail to: Rebecca Noone

49 Greenvale Ct.

Lake Jackson, Texas 77566

Phone: 979-480-0538 home

979-709-7601 cell

Newsletter Deadline

The next newsletter deadline will be announced on the TR Yahoo group. Thanks, Don

Survey



Texas Rifles

2005 Membership ID

Name

Emergency Contact:

Name
Phone # (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Medical Information:

Allergies: none
Other: none

If lost, please mail to :

Texas Rifles
2810 W. Pebble Beach Dr.
Missouri City, TX 77459

This ID is to be presented at the first company formation at each Texas Rifles event, and should be carried on you throughout the event. Please keep a copy of your medical insurance information with this card. ID card replacement fee is \$5.00.

Company Recruiting

Hotline:
281-261-0665

Company Website:

<http://www.texasrifles.org/>

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IMPORTANT: All members (military and civilian) who haven't passed along the ID info., please send me the following information so we can get the remaining TR ID cards made! Thanks, Don.

Name:

Emergency Contacts:

Contact Numbers:

Medical Info:

Allergies: (especially to medications)

Other: (i.e. heart, asthma, etc.)

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