



The Tyrants' Foe

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles



Volume XXX



March 15, 2013

The Captain's Dispatch



Captain's Post

Once again, I wish to express my gratitude for being selected as Captain of the Texas Rifles for this year. We have 3 national 150th Anniversary events on our schedule, which should be memorable. Port Hudson is the immediate concern, and I look forward to seeing everyone at the event. The Louisiana State Park System really works to preserve the sites and make events on their sites enjoyable for us as well as the spectators.

Again, Jefferson has been confirmed as the first weekend in May, and we will return to Pioneer Farms the 6th of April – both events offering the venue for us to have an enjoyable time and after hours jollification. Obviously, the big push this year will be Gettysburg. It will be very likely the microcosm of the Sesquicentennial experience; the anniversary one of the key milestones in the history of our country being totally ignored by the National Park Service, and the living history community doing the best it can with its own resources to commemorate the actions of our ancestors.

We also face the challenge of attracting more members to the Texas Rifles, and making the hobby enjoyable to all. The key measure of success will be to field 20 men under arms. This is the first step to rebuilding our company, and enhancing our reputation. This means that what we do must appeal to our less senior members. We must teach those will follow in our footsteps, and be the future of the Texas Rifles. To do so, means being properly trained, and familiar with the roles and duties of the various company positions.

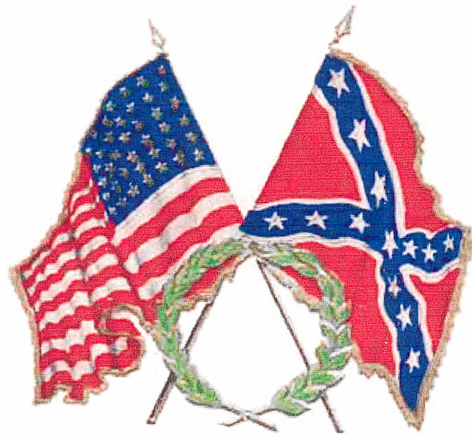
With our experience, we should be the most proficient company in the battalion. At each event we will work on this, so that as a company, we can perform whatever task may be required of us. I will try to make the drill sessions more interesting and educational, so that in a few years from now, our newer members are ready to take their place as the company leadership.

With this issue, our quarterly newsletter should be back on schedule, and serve as a vehicle for passing along to the membership interesting period trivia – especially the more domestic and social aspects of Victorian period life. The war was a key event, but not the only event in the lives of the people we portray. I ask you to pass along the knowledge that you have acquired to the rest of our membership.

I am currently working on the gallery portion of the website – so pass along your photos of past events

Lastly, the captain's role implies that I should be replaced on the Authenticity Committee, and I ask John Keahey to chair this important committee, and keep our impressions current with the most up to date research.

Your Servant,
Tommy Attaway
Captain, Texas Rifles



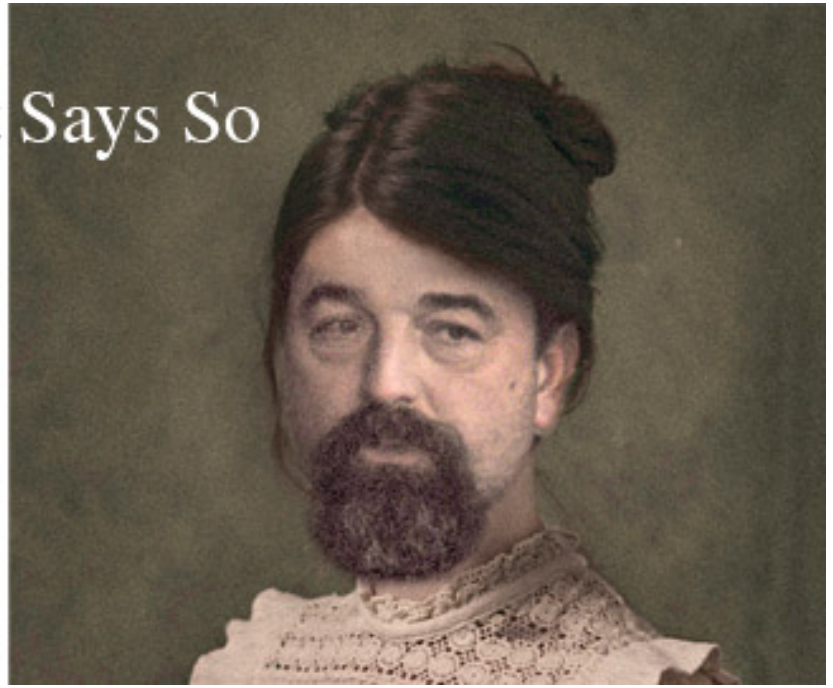
Lieutenant's Inkwell



MISSING IN ACTION



Because the Sergeant Says So



MISSING IN ACTION





BOOK REVIEW:
“The LAST SHOT”
By Lynn Schooler
Harper Perennial
2005

Where was the last shot fired in the American Civil War? Virginia? North Carolina? Texas? These standard answers from history are all incorrect! Where the last shot of the Civil War was fired will probably surprise you as it surprised me. It was fired from one of the broadside deck guns on board the C. S. S. Shenandoah at a group of Northern owned whaling ships in, of all places, the Bering Sea north of the Aleutian Island chain offshore of Alaska. The shot was fired on June 22, 1865: a full two and one half months AFTER Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox, two months AFTER Johnston surrendered his army to Sherman in North Carolina and one month AFTER the last “battle” of the war at Palmetto Ranch, Texas.

The Confederate Navy was never able to seriously challenge the United States Navy for control of Southern rivers, coastline or the high seas. The South did strike at their stronger foe using the time honored method favored by inferior naval powers since the 1500’s: commerce raiding. With the few Southern shipyards cut-off from salt water by Northern blockading ships, the best place to obtain ships was Britain.

In spite of British Neutrality Laws written to keep Britain and its citizens neutral in other people’s wars, three ships were built or purchased in Britain, armed with British cannons on the open seas, manned with largely British sailors and sent merrily on their way to destroy Northern ships with everyone smiling except the United States authorities. The three ships were the C.S.S. Florida, C.S.S. Alabama, and the C.S.S. Shenandoah. All three ships were wooden hulled sailing ships with auxiliary steam engines. The last of the British built commerce raiders to operate was the C.S.S. Shenandoah; it fired the last shot of the Civil War and is the subject of the book being reviewed.

The C.S.S. Shenandoah began life as a merchant ship named the Sea King. It was never intended to be a warship, but it was purchased by CS authorities because it was fast and had steam power. It sailed from Liverpool, England and was armed and equipped with cannon near the Madeira Islands in April 1864 by another British ship, the Laurel. The career of the Sea King/Shenandoah started out like comedy rather than warfare. Unlike previous ships like the Florida and Alabama, few of Sea King’s or Laurel’s British crew agreed to sign-on as crew for the newly re-named Shenandoah.

The British government was becoming leery of continuing to assist the South by ignoring its own Neutrality Laws. British sailors did not want to risk their lives in a lost cause. The result was that when the Shenandoah left the Madeira Islands it was critically undermanned, with Confederate Naval officers filling in as seamen. No proper gun tackle was provided so the Shenandoah could not fire any of its guns until suitable rope and blocks were captured. It scared most of the ships it captured into surrendering by firing a small ceremonial saluting cannon loaded with blanks. The engine of the Shenandoah was mounted above the water line, which meant that it was vulnerable to enemy cannon fire. Throughout the ship's career as a raider the officers and crew lived in dread of encountering any Federal warship because they knew they could never defeat a real warship with an exposed engine and not enough crew to man their guns.

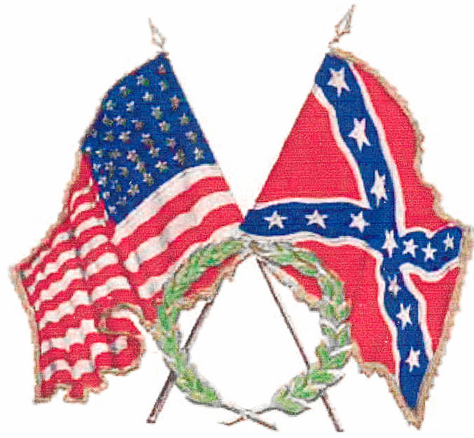
The Shenandoah was specifically tasked by Confederate authorities to attack the Northern whaling fleet. Whale oil was hugely important to the North. It provided the light, lubrication, gun oil and taxable wealth for the North. Petroleum or rock oil as it was known then, was a relatively new industry and only grew as a substitute for whale oil as the whales were gradually exterminated. Northern ships dominated the whaling and shipping trade. The voyages of the Florida and the Alabama had seriously damaged Northern shipping in the Atlantic Ocean. The oceans where Northern ships remained untouched by war were beyond the Atlantic; that is where the C.S.S. Shenandoah was sent. The Shenandoah literally circled the globe sinking Northern ships; it was the only Confederate ship to circumnavigate the world. It was the only Confederate ship to enter the Arctic Ocean. Its most destructive day was June 22, 1865 when it burned ten Northern whaling ships in one day in the cold Bering Sea. It fired one shot to compel their surrender; the last shot of the war.

The captain of the Shenandoah, James I. Waddell, knew that two Confederate Armies had surrendered and Richmond had fallen from California newspapers found in captured ships. The Northern crews informed him that the war was over, but it was not until he read a foreign newspaper that he accepted the fact that the nation he fought for had ceased to exist. He stopped destroying Northern ships. He and his men now found themselves in a desperate situation; the US Navy was in hot pursuit and knew approximately where he was off San Francisco. Federals considered the Shenandoah's crew to be pirates and they were explicitly exempted from amnesty by President Johnson; if caught they could be hung. His decision was to strike his guns into the hold and sail 17,000 miles back to Liverpool, England. Not a single life was lost from the 38 ships captured by the Shenandoah; the only deaths during the cruise were two Shenandoah crewmen who died from previous injury or disease. The views of the ex-Confederate crew about Lincoln's assassination make poignant reading.

This book is an easy read and is interesting not only about the Civil war, but about the whaling industry and its impact on whales and the native peoples such as the Eskimos who depended upon whales for food. As my wife put it, "whales were like the buffalo: slaughter them and the Native Americans dependent upon them starve".

Finally, for our civilian members I offer two additional reasons for reading this book; several of the Northern merchant ships had on board the wives of the captains. Voyages in slow sailing ships could last for years and several women were captured at sea by the Shenandoah. In addition to oil, whales were harvested for baleen (whale bone). Why? To make the hoop skirts demanded by ladies' fashion. Think about those two facts when constructing your civilian persona.

John M. Keahey, 10/15/2011



From the Home Front

Out Knitting



Meanwhile.....



...back in camp...

THE REBEL YELL

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/multimedia/videos/What-Did-the-Rebel-Yell-Sound-Like.html>



Can any of us do half a good as those who were actually there?

