



The Tyrants' Foe

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles



Volume XXXII

February 9, 2015



★ Company G ★

The Captain's Dispatch



First I should express my appreciation for the expression of your willingness to accord me the privilege of having a third year as captain of the Texas Rifles. As we conclude our commemoration of the 150 years that have passed since the conflict we portray, we look to the future of this aspect of living history. It is imperative that we appeal to and recruit the next generation of historians who will provide a window into the past that no words on paper can convey.

I am pleased that we have had more members join the Rifles, and we have continued into this year with some promising contacts. As we interpret the past for the interested spectators, let us also share our experience with the living historians who will follow us. Many of what I will refer to as the first generation of living historians, those who started the quest toward authentic portrayals of the past, have left us. We, of what I will refer to as the second generation, now prepare to pass the torch to the next generation of historians.

Our schedule this year reflects this emphasis on events where we may be able to reach out to those who may have an interest in living history. We will go to locations that we have not visited before, and may

give us something of a new twist on our impression. It will be interesting to see what the Palmito Ranch event will do for interest in the hobby in Texas.

The Reunion event at Pioneer farms offers an opportunity to bring a new twist to the civilian side of living history. Think of it as portraying a past of past people focusing on their past. Or, why the reunion grounds are called the reunion grounds.

As I remarked in my previous dispatch:

The Sesquicentennial events are now winding down, and those memories will be filed away. I'm sure there will be much discussion about what might have been, and the opportunities missed. But, like after the American Revolution Bicentennial, the hobby will keep going. It represents an opportunity to recast and think about how we approach the hobby. While I think it well recognized that large battles may not be in the immediate future, a well crafted living history program in different venues may be in the future.

If one thing can be learned from the post bicentennial of the Revolution and other time periods portrayed, it is that the groups focused on authenticity and quality interpretation of the past have the best chance of survival through the rough times. I'll see you at the next anniversary of the Texas Rifles.

Capt. Tommy Attaway



Nice Little Story I found out about our upcoming event. "Grease up your bayonets now". The attack on Fort Blakely during the late afternoon hours (5:30pm) of April 9th 1865 had no impact on the outcome of the war, yet the fighting was as viscous as any had been. In the post war years accusations of atrocities committed by black troops on white Confederates surfaced. The eye witness accounts were uneven and at times disputed. Even to this day, the degree of atrocities, if any, are still in dispute. A 1998 article in *America's Civil War* by Thomas G. Rodgers titled, "Last Stand at Fort Blakely," the author skirts, for the most part, the racial aspects of the fight. Rodgers simply noted that the black troops charged as they yelled "Remember Fort Pillow" and that the Confederates were fearful of these former slaves. Some Confederates were bayoneted the author admits, and 2 white officers killed while

trying to restrain the Negroes. But for the most part Rodgers stays away from the more controversial aspects of the fight, even at one point ending a quote prematurely. He quotes a Union officer who recalled a Confederate officer yell out, “Lay low and mow the ground...” Only Rodgers leaves out the most explosive part, as the entire quote was “Lay low and mow the ground—the damned Niggers are coming!” The battle started and ended as its own private race war/conflict.

In [Fox's Regimental Losses](#), it is meekly mentioned that “the closing battle of the war—the victorious assault on Fort Blakely, Ala., April 9, 1865—a colored division bore a conspicuous and honorable part.” Which is not a surprise, however, most accounts tend to follow suit and steer clear of the controversial and racial aspects of this fight. In a way, it was the first race conflict of the post-Civil War era. All participants involved knew the war was in its final stages, each wanting to wage its own private war. Chaos reigns supreme during any battle, but this one took on a sharper edge as Confederates began to flee from the lines in fear of capture. Chaos turned into desperation at times, both for those who fled and those who stayed and fought to the death. “Rebels in front of the colored troops rushed towards the center for surrender as the cry of Fort Pillow with a red flannel rag on the end of a musket of the colored troops was not very encouraging for the Rebel chivalry, and to the credit of the colored troops, be it said General Hawkins Division did as well as any,” thus wrote Henry Carl Ketzle of the 37th Illinois Volunteer Infantry after the “last” great charge of the Civil War at Fort Blakely, Alabama. A Confederate survivor described the fighting as the “Yankee Fort Pillow.” Reports of bayoneting and executing Confederate prisoners are not uncommon even by some Federal white troops who witnessed the events.

However, time and again the Negro troops are described by their white counterparts as having “distinguished themselves” with one going so far as to say they did the most “by capturing much of Fort Blakely.” By far most accounts by white Federal soldiers were ones praising the fighting of the black soldiers. One in particular after noting their fighting prowess and the atrocities declared, “who can blame them [the former slaves].” They were seeking to lay some deed at the alter of slavery.

But still, those positive reports cannot diminish the bloody nature of the fighting that day. After being captured a soldier with 62nd Alabama Volunteers noted years later, “We were guaraded by negro troops, most of them being from the South. They cursed us and called us by all vulgar names they could think of, even calling us — and we had to take it or be shot.” He was lucky to have survived. Many, fearful of those former slaves now armed in blue, either fought to the death, fled to the river and drowned, were shot down, or executed when captured.

The fighting was short, but intense and emotions ran high for both white and black Union soldiers. The Confederates had buried landmines in front of the fort and along the roads leading to the fort that for days before the fight randomly went off and killed dozens and caused much disgruntlement for both white and black soldier. Tensions were high and numerous white troops noted as such in their letters. When the 119th Illinois Infantry entered the fort after a hailstorm of fire and explosions from landmines, “Capt. Henry Cross, who had just seen his chum, John Myers, torn to pieces with a grape shot, greased his bayonet with the fattest of the gunners. ” [\[link\]](#). White soldier's easily lost their cool and were not immune to murdering prisoners and it is not hard to imagine the same from their black counterparts.

Just earlier this year an article in the *Alabama Heritage* magazine (Winter) by Jim Noles dealt with the “Fall of Fort Blakely.” Once again the subject of race and warfare was sidestepped for the most part. The

highly charged quotes that could have been used were ignored. Noles does do a far better job than Rodgers, however, writing that “the allegation of captured Confederate troops being murdered by vengeful Union troops, particularly USCT soldiers” would plague the battle for most of the post-war period.

It should be noted that both Rodger’s and Noles’ focus was not on the nature of the fighting, but the events that led up to the fight and the outcome of the fight.

The fighting at Fort Blakely was a fairly rare event in Civil War history as the taking of the fort was determined mainly by hand-to-hand combat. Most Civil War combat was from a distance of several hundred yards and when charged, lines often broke and soldier’s fled [See Brent Nosworthy's *The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience of the Civil War*, (2005), 587-589; Also, 95% of all wounds reported during the Civil War were from bullets, see "Effects of Battle: Wounds, Death, and Medical Care in the Civil War," by Bruce A. Evans, M.D., *Battle: The Nature and Consequences of Civil War Combat*, (University of Alabama, 2008), 68-89]. In some parts of Fort Blakely the fighting raged for 10 to 15 bloodied minutes as Yankee and Confederate troops wanted more than ever to get one last lick in before the war was over. For indeed, all involved knew the war was winding down – just earlier in the day (though unbeknownst to the participants at Blakely) Robert E. Lee had surrender to Ulysses S. Grant. The war had been 4 long and bloody years and many regiments involved like the 11th Wisconsin, had participated in all four years of fighting. That revenge was on the minds of some, both black and white, is not hard to imagine.

Lt. Dusty Lind



Another year come and gone and another muster behind us. Muster was a success in spite of a few things. We were not able to get Rob Garner to cater for us this year but LT Dusty stepped up and provided us with some delicious meals. The start of the new year finds us with two new military members, one old vet and one new recruit. Our new fella was voted in last year. Chris Tucker met us at Fredericksburg and participated with us there and is making strides to complete his impression. John House is coming to us from the 6th Texas, has served with Dusty while he was Captain there. He has

also served as an NCO so will be able to help us out in that respect. Please welcome both of these soldiers to our ranks the next time you see them.

Muster was also a success in spite of the fact that there were so few of us. Members have fallen by the wayside through the natural attrition of a hobby. This has left us with a small but close group of men in the ranks. No, we didn't do drill, but it is hard to DO drill when you have less than 2 comrades of four to fall in. Being that most of you jabbers are old vets, you were all challenged by our Captain to keep up your high standards of drill and be an inspiration to the other units that we are sure to be rolled in with. Until we get our numbers back up we can rest assured that we will be combined with other groups. Your experience makes you ALL "high privates" or damned near Corporals. Help new fellas out if they need it. Keep them straight in the ranks and attuned to orders. You don't have to bully, but guide them right. The TR has a reputation AND tradition to uphold. In camp we can have a good time and carouse, in formation, be professional.

Speaking of tradition, I want to express my personal thanks to Captain Attaway for agreeing to a third year as Captain of the Texas Rifles. He showed up at muster prepared to turn over the reins and was broadsided by the request to serve a third year by Lt. Lind and myself. Tho gracious, before he agreed, Tommy said, "I don't like to break tradition." As a Texas Rifle, that meant a LOT to me and meant even more that that he agreed. I will restate what I said at muster. Tommy, Dusty and myself all have very good reasons why we didn't want to Captain this year but we are all dedicated to keeping the Texas Rifles alive. Hell, if all we can fall in with is a comrade of four, I will be a Texas Rifle. But fellas, please recruit. Talk up the hobby. We need new men in the ranks and we damn sure need new blood to lead.

So until we fall in again, keep reading and researching. Share your research. Improve your impression where you can and recruit, recruit, recruit!

Coz the Sgt. Says So!

F.J.Marek

1st Sgt of Texas Rifles



Civilian Report

It was good to see everyone at our annual muster at Pioneer Farms. It looks like 2015 is shaping up to be a good year.

I would like to welcome Peggy House and Sara Salzman to the Texas Rifle Civilians. Both of these ladies were elected as new members over the last 12 months. We look forward to getting to know each of you better.

The next Civilian event will be the CW Reunion weekend of March 18 and 19 at Pioneer Farms. This event promises to be a fun weekend for all who attend. The event is being put on by Boz and Uncle Jimmy, contact them with any questions regarding the event.

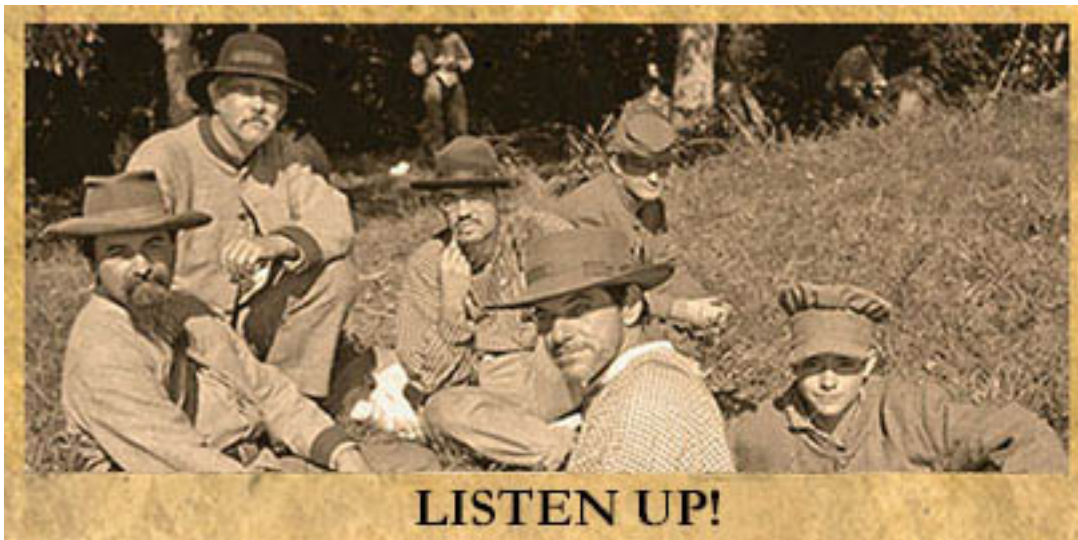
I am hoping that in our off time we can plan a "school of the civilian" for any members new and old who would like to attend. We can also have a class for any men who are interested. As we are looking to grow and improve our group at all times, if anyone has any ideas for the group please share.

September 12 and 13. As plans are firmed up the will be posted on both of the yahoo message boards. Suggestions are always welcome.

I look forward to and exciting year and spending time with good friends. No, scratch that, time with family, y'all are family.



HolliBeth Marek, aka Peach, Civilian Coordinator



About the Federal Impression

I'd like to mention a couple of often overlooked areas in the typical Federal impression – dark blue trousers and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch enlisted buttons. Although both were changed in 1861 to be eliminated in favor of sky blue trousers, and the $\frac{7}{8}$ inch button, neither disappeared immediately.

We know that the regulation changed the color of trousers to sky blue in December of 1861, viz.

General Orders 108 December 16, 1861

I-The Secretary of War directs that the following change be made in the uniform trowsers of regimental officers and enlisted men. The cloth to be sky blue mixture. The welt of officers and the stripes for non-commissioned officers of infantry to be of dark blue.

Of course, the change does not have immediate effect. It is reasonable to assume, that thousands are in some stage of production, from arrival of cloth to completed garments for delivery. Production and delivery of cloth should take some 90 to 180 days, so we can reasonably assume that sky blue trousers start to see issue to me in the Summer to Fall of 1862 at the earliest.

There is one other factor to consider in the impression of seeing sky blue trousers, the authorized issue and projected wear out of existing trousers. A soldier is supposed to be issued three pair of trousers in the first year of enlistment, and two pair per year thereafter. Thus, the “regulation soldier” of 1861 would have drawn three pair of dark blue trousers, and potentially a fourth pair in the first half of 1862. At a wear our rate of one pair every six months, this soldier would not completely transition to sky blue trousers until mid to late 1863. An early 1861 soldier could have potentially drawn a fifth pair of dark blue trousers in the fall of 1862, and thus not transitioned to all sky blue until late 1863.

That this did indeed happen is borne out by photographs showing Federal a soldier among a group of soldiers wearing a pair of dark blue trousers. If you want to do something slightly different from the

usual Federal impression, and at no extra expense, have you next purchase of Federal trousers be a dark blue pair.

General Order Number 6 of March 13, 1861 changed the size of the enlisted coat button from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $\frac{7}{8}$ inch - the same size as the officer button. With an initial issue of two sack coats, potentially a frock coat, and a greatcoat - those 1861 issues would most likely have the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch button, as the suppliers would continue production until the dies wear out. Thus, we would expect that sack coats have gone to the larger button by 1863, but here is the interesting item- the greatcoat. With one greatcoat issued for the five year enlistment, only new greatcoats issued from very late 1861 to early 1862 could be expected to have the larger coat button.

The other easy to do item for your Federal impression - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch buttons on your greatcoat.

And just for fun, let's look at some pre war Federal uniform items from the Danish Army collection.



Here we see the Greatcoat:



Sack Coat:



... And now you know



CIVIL WAR 20 YEAR REUNION

1865 - 1885



- SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2015 -



1885. IN AUSTIN TEXAS AT PIONEER FARMS.

10621 PIONEER FARMS DR, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78754

CONFEDERATE AND UNION. BRING THE FAMILY.

FOOD - DRINK - GAMES - REMINISING

REUNION!



CONTACT:

MR .STEVE. TROWBRIDGE
AT
TROWBRIDGES@UHV.EDU
FOR INFORMATION



Did Uncle Jimmy really break his ankle or was it an elaborate excuse to secretly pursue his hidden passion, Mountain Man Rendezvous that included chasing young Indian women! I'm just saying.

