



The Tyrants' Foe



Newsletter of the Texas Rifles

Volume XXX

Celebrating 29 Years of Excellence

March 2016



Back in the mid 90's my former job took me to the San Antonio Area. I joined up with the Texas 6th Infantry. I was sponsored by a wonderful man named Steve Balthrop. Steve is no longer in the hobby but he showed how to do things right, and get the proper "look". I must admit when I started out I needed all the help I could get. After a few years I felt good about my impression and how I did in drill with the rest of the men in the hobby and the organization.

Then a few years later I saw a group of individuals who looked like they stepped out of the pages of the Echo's of Glory Book. Who are they I asked? I was told those are the Texas Rifles. Not only did they look authentic, their drill was first rate. I was drawn like a moth to a flame and wished my impressions were as good as theirs. I chatted with a few of them and they seemed halfway decent, as well offering advice to me.

Then around 2005 I moved to the Austin Area. I had to leave my old unit and discovered to my delight the Texas Rifles were in the Austin Area and would accept me as a member. I was overjoyed to become a member of one of the finest organizations in the hobby.

The years have now passed and so has the hobby, in many respects. You as members have elected me to carry on the tradition of leading this group of men and women. The footprint left by the former commanders has been a huge one. The baton of leadership has proven to be quite heavy and can only be carried by the commander with the help of others, it seems. The hobby has also evolved and downsized in its scope and nature. The years of thousands of men at an event are now over. Plus Political Correctness has reared its ugly head and forcing changes in our hobby some may not agree with.

At the annual meeting I knew something had to be done to preserve us. I asked for your support to branch out into another time period which was closer to home, could still be supported with

what we currently have for equipment (for the most part), was politically correct and we could enjoy. Your response was overwhelming positive in supporting me. We recently had our first turn out and we drilled and had a decent turn out, at Washington On The Brazos.

The next two years are going to be a challenge for me. I have accepted the challenge but also need your input and support. We have a Civil War event coming up at Port Hudson. This in my opinion is one of the prettiest camping areas for an event. It is on the actual battlefield, and the Park Rangers have gone out of their way to make this a good event. I ask you get ready for the event, help others get ready and attend. There are no death marches here. There is maybe a half-mile of marching involved. The battlefields are pristine and well kept. In the years past we have had a Saturday morning tactical, which besides being on the actual battlefield was just a lot of fun. One final word on this event, for a Texan, its close in distance.

Again I want to thank you all for showing your support for me to lead you all. I hope I will not disappoint you.

Captain Dusty Lind



Our New Lieutenant – Frank J. Marek





In the past few months we are fortunate to have several new members join us. The following is primarily for their benefit, but should also serve as a useful reminder to our members of long standing.

At Liendo and muster we had the opportunity to do some work on school of the soldier and a small amount of school of the company. This should help add some crispness to the ability of the company to execute commands. Our next major event will be where the 165th New York served, so the RRB Zouaves will be the star of the show. Typically, we are used as a skirmish company, so we will try to work on that as time permits.

As a group, we pride ourselves on our physical impression of the time periods we portray. One of the issues with having a number of impressions or portraying many time periods is the temptation to compromise standards. How many compromises you are willing to make influences your reputation in the living history world. As we strive to authentically portray people and events of the past, our first task is to understand what is accepted as “authentic”. Generally, authenticity of impression items can be thought of in terms of materials, pattern, and construction.

Materials are the most obvious aspect of an item to the living historian. This means natural fabrics to be used in clothing, metallic items only to be of metals and alloys that existed at the time portrayed – no – stainless steel had not yet been invented. A compromise made here in order to reduce cost of the item or increase its longevity will usually be obvious to others well acquainted in history and its use will unfavorably impact the impression to be created. Sometimes a compromise is forced, as when 100% wool of the required color, weight, or weave can not be had. But for us, the rule is to obtain items from the most accurate materials available.

The pattern of the materials used to create the item will be the next most noticeable characteristic of the items you use. 16th and 19th Century sizing techniques were different from modern sizing. Some seams or button placement was “fixed” at a certain point on the body or given distance, and the pattern stretched longer or wider at certain points to fit people of different sizes. For example, on a double breasted man’s frock coat, the bottom pair of buttons are three and a half inches apart and the top pair

five inches apart. We frequently see the effects of using modern sizing techniques on modern sized people resulting in clothes that do not fit – neck openings way too large, and shoulder seams that are several inches down the arm are the result. In other items, the use of an improper pattern causes the proportions of various parts of the item to be off, and the overall appearance suffers.

Construction techniques are the most acceptable compromise. Only the most astute and knowledgeable observer might be able to correctly note that an interior seam was machine sewn instead of hand sewn. A few differences may be visible on close inspection, such as machine sewn buttonholes, but an item of proper materials and pattern will look in place even if labor saving steps were taken in its construction. This is the aspect of the hobby that differentiates the “uber-authentic” and “stitch-nazis” who are on a quest to produce and use items that would take a museum curator to distinguish reproduction from the original.

Keeping these points in mind should guide the purchase of items. Sutler supplied goods will make trade offs in each of these area to market a product at a price the re-enactor will pay. Only the most demanding will avoid the typical sutler, and have items produced from the cottage industry of craftsmen who support the quality living historian. Even the highest reputation sutlers have to compromise, in order to produce products at prices that are near affordable. This is a result in the change in society over the last 200 years. In former times, it was expensive to produce goods, and individual labor was cheap. Therefore produced goods made careful use of material and extensive use of labor. Today, the cost structures are reversed. We have a relative abundance of materials at reasonable prices, but the labor required to make the things we need is the expensive component.

Please make use of the experience and knowledge of the authenticity committee members in acquiring or improving your kit. Most items to be had from the typical sutlers seen at events will be nowhere close to a like item housed in a museum. Let the buyer beware.....

Tommy Attaway,
1st SGT



From the Home Front



The next scheduled civilian event is April 23, 2016 at Pioneer Farms, Austin, Texas.
Keep an eye out for future postings from the Texas Rifles concerning details on
this upcoming event.



**HolliBeth, aka Peach,
Civilian Coordinator**





COLONIAL TEXAS and TEXIAN

I applaud the decision of the Texas Rifles to add a Texas Revolution (Tex Rev) impression to its American Civil War effort. In case you haven't noticed, the Civil War events have been dramatically declining in the number of participants. The Texas Revolution events however, are more local and are increasing in terms of quantity and quality.

If you chose to do a Texas Revolution impression, there are a variety of kits you could assemble. How you dressed and equipped during the 1830's was not determined by military authorities as in the Civil War, but by who you were and where you were from. The goal of this article to present the conditions in colonial Texas at the beginning of the Texas Revolution, who was here and what clothing, weapons and other resources were common. Knowing that, you can then make informed decisions on what to acquire for a Tex Rev impression.

Background

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase, which for the first time brought the territory of the United States adjacent to the northern province of Mexico named Tejas. Tejas was part of the Spanish Empire until 1821, when the Mexican Revolution was successfully concluded and Mexico, following the example of the United States, separated from its colonial ruler, Spain. Spanish and then Mexican authorities understood the threat to their nation of the aggressive westward expansion of the United States. Unlike the US, Mexico had a difficult time moving people into its largely empty frontier areas such as Tejas. One solution to this problem had been tried in the former Spanish territory of Missouri and worked (sort of). Anglo immigrants were recruited to settle in Missouri by Moses Austin and the land finally had some occupants, including Daniel Boone, who were titular citizens of Spain. Moses and later his son Stephen attempted to repeat the same process in Tejas. Anglos could move into Tejas and receive huge amounts of land essentially free, but they had to become Catholics, renounce any former citizenship in another country and become citizens of Mexico. The Hispanics in Tejas were concentrated around San Antonio, the Anglos were concentrated into Land Grant

areas in the Brazos and Colorado River Valleys. No one was allowed to settle within 25 miles of the coast.

What the Mexican authorities failed to grasp was that the Anglo settlers from the US were heavily armed, did not react well to authoritarian central government, and came from a culture whose most celebrated event was the American Revolution i.e. a popular revolt against taxes and authoritarian central government. Not much has changed in Texas when you think about it.

What the new settlers failed to appreciate was that the Mexican government expected its citizens to speak Spanish, do what they were told, and that the Mexican government(s) was unstable and wobbled between dictatorships and weak elected officials.

Who Came to Tejas?

By in large nobody with wealth came to Tejas. Most of the immigrants were looking for a second chance at life having failed in the US, or fleeing prosecution there. The Groce Plantation (Liendo) was the exception. Just about everybody else was a farmer/rancher living on a subsistence level in a dirt floored log cabin. Longhorn cattle and horses ran wild, and could be rounded-up for free, and the main cash crop was cotton.

Population

The population of colonial Tejas in 1835 is unknown. The estimates range from the low of 25,000 people legally here to the high of 65,000 legals plus illegal squatters mostly in the northeast part of Tejas. The most likely number is 40,000. Or to put that number in perspective, the population of Texas in 1835 equaled the seating capacity of Minute Maid Baseball Park on the east side of downtown Houston. The biggest “city” was San Antonio with a population of 2,000 (two of whom were Anglos). Most people lived isolated lives on farm/ranches within a day’s ride of a village composed of dogtrot log cabins along a single muddy street.

Material Culture

The best book on early Texas is, “The Evolution of a State” by Noah Smithwick. Smithwick was a blacksmith/settler who came to Tejas in the 1820’s, participated in the Texas Revolution and in the Republic and statehood eras. He describes Texian clothing, weapons and culture very well. He stated that you could tell when people left the US by the style of their clothing. Even wealthy men owned deerskins for dirty work and hunting. Deerskin clothing ranged from pale yellow to black dependent upon its age. Cotton was shipped out of and necessities shipped into Tejas by boat along the rivers and bays. Roads were unmarked trails. People owned few possessions, the most important of which was an ax. Most families had a gun for every male over the age of 14. Rifles were preferred as hunting provided a significant portion of the food. Large caliber ex-military muskets were used as a cheap substitute for a shotgun. Jim Bowie was not the only man who carried a knife; most men did for protection and farm use. Bowie’s knife was only different in that it was specialized for fighting and was big. Corn was grown as food for man, woman, child and beast. The most common meat was pork. All clothing would have been hand made at home. Textiles would have been cheap brown cotton woven at home plus store bought fabrics such as printed cottons, and wools. White shirts, trousers or jackets would not have been worn by the average man; they were too hard to keep clean and generally only the military used white trousers.

Bottom Line on a Texas Revolution Militia Company

Uniformed troops on the Texian side in the Texas Revolution were known, but they came from the US, such as the New Orleans Grays or the Alabama Red Rovers. If we do a local militia impression, then it should consist of a total mix of civilian clothing, variety of weapons, deerskins, hunting bags, powder

horns, and some military style accoutrements. These were poor people living on the edge of civilization. The Texas Revolution was a come-as-you-are party held by people who looked down upon the enlisted common soldier as a dumb beast of burden good for little else but to serve as cannon fodder. They drilled because they were forced to do it, but Sam Houston and others eventually formed them into a balky team that won battles.

John Keahey, 2/22/16



AFTER ACTION REPORT: WASHINGTON-ON-THE-BRAZOS

The site of the town of Washington-on-the-Brazos is now a state park. For those of you not fully informed about Texas history, this site is where delegates on March 2, 1836 signed the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico. The document was signed in an unheated clap board building with no glass in the window frames. Following the double disasters of the Battle of the Alamo and Goliad, most Texians fled towards the United States. This mass exodus was only stopped by Houston's victory at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21st.

Several Texas Rifles members participated in the March 6-7 activities; some as boatmen awaiting the steamboat Yellowstone, or as militiamen. It was an opportunity to drill, interact with the public and experience a Texas Revolution moment on the actual site. This was not a pure living history event; the day was shared with the Texas A & M Band, chorus, various bands and vendors. Nearby was a segment of the Texas Army who did cannon and firing demonstrations. Our members voted not to fire our (mostly) new weapons because the State Parks folks only wanted shooting at assigned times in one place (with the Texas Army), and because this was primarily a drill for the Rifles. Proper cleaning of the flintlocks after firing was also an issue.

We camped near the original ferry landing on the Brazos, which was the reason for the growth of the town. The weather was near perfect and the stars visible in the clear rural sky was a welcome change from Houston. Wood was available and some delicious meals served-up by our own Jim Bosworth. Thanks Jim! We supplied a variety of tents and shelters which was perfect for the Texas Revolution. We did two drills per day and our guys are already superior in Scott's Tactics to any other group present! Visitor attendance on Saturday was 5,000 and there was little down time to relax. Jim Hill proved to be a natural at speaking with the public and our stack of arms drew tremendous interest. I can guarantee there was no stack of arms in any of the other living history camps. Significantly fewer people came on Sunday and so we packed-up and were out by 3:00 p.m.

This is a wonderful event for training, interacting with the public, recruiting and education. We fit right in and I recommend this event to any Texas Rifles member considering participation in Texas Revolution activities.

John Keahey, 3/9/2016

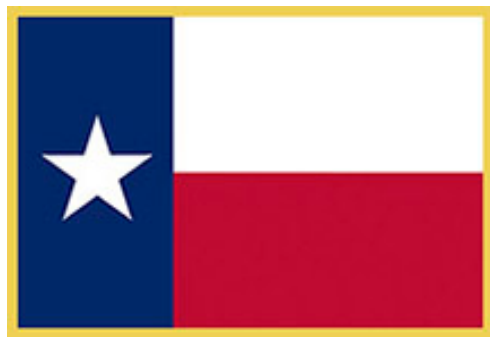






From the Editor

Thanks to everyone who helped contribute to the making of this edition of the 'Tyrants' Foe Newsletter. Deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is June 5, 2016.



To Tyrants Never Yield