



The Tyrants' Foe



Volume XXXIX

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles
Celebrating 31 Years of Excellence

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Our next event at Ft. McKavett will allow us to do something we have not done in quite some time. We will conduct a pure living history event, with no drill planned or ammunition to be fired. This will be pure garrison life of the immediate post war Army. We will portray a company of the 35th Infantry that has recently arrived to resume the operation of Ft. McKavett after the war.

Ft. McKavett is located near an older Spanish fort on the trail leading to El Paso. It was originally constructed by the 8th Infantry, and named for an officer of the Regiment killed in the war with Mexico. In the Spring of 1968, the 35th Infantry and 4th Cavalry returned to Ft. McKavett to find "one mass of ruins". As we are portraying an 1868 date, late war Federal gear is the impression for the event. The next change in Army uniforms and equipment did not take place until the early 1870s.

As a pure living history event, we will have the possibility of portraying various scenarios to illustrate various points about life on an early Indian wars military installation. A few of the ideas I have in mind follow:

Post Civil War Regular Army Post

Scenario: Post Headquarters

Activities: Portray the daily routine in the HQ building such as receiving reports, preparing reports for department of Texas, dispatch of messages. Guardmount.

Participants:

1. Officer of the Day
2. Sergeant of the Guard
3. Corporal of the Guard
4. Orderly
5. Post Commander (Optional)
6. Regimental Adjutant (Optional)
7. Regimental Sergeant Major (optional)

Interpretive Points:

- A. Show the role of the fort system of frontier defense for western settlement and expansion
- B. Explain the staffing of an Army installation – regiment and company assigned number of soldiers assigned, and civil establishment

Items Required:

1. Desk
2. Chairs
3. Paper
4. Forms
5. Writing materials

Scenario: Officer Quarters

Activities: Meal Preparation, sewing, writing letters, social interaction with other officer families

Participants:

1. Lady
2. Children (Optional)
3. Laundress (Optional)
4. Striker (Optional)

Interpretive Points:

- A. Show space allocation for families – Lieutenant has one room, Captain has two rooms in a quarters, etc.
- B. Social stratification of regular Army between ranks – officer class as ladies and gentlemen, NCOs, and the private soldiers
- C. Isolation of families from a lifestyle to which ladies married to officers were accustomed

Items Required:

1. Furniture such as bed, table & chairs, table ware, clothing, trunks

Scenario: Raise National Standard

Activities: Flag is raised to begin the day's activities

Participants:

1. Corporal
2. 4 Soldiers

Interpretive Points:

2. Show daily activity in an established military post
3. Time required 15 minutes

Scenario: Retreat Ceremony

Activities: Lower the national standard at the end of the day, with company parade

Participants:

1. Company Commander
2. 1st Sgt.
3. 2 Corporals
4. 14 Privates

Interpretive Points:

- A. Demonstrate the end of the day activity – respect shown to the flag
- B. Time duration of less than 30 minutes

Items Required:

1. Music playing "To the Color"

Scenario: Soldier's Mess

Activities: Cooking of Rations

Participants:

1. Soldier designated as company cook

Interpretive Points:

- A. Show what soldiers ate
- B. Illustrate the mess concept

Scenario: Laundry

Activities: scrubbing, hanging, returning laundry

Participants:

1. Laundress
2. Soldier (optional)

Interpretive Points:

2. Laundress authorized for 20 soldiers
3. Provided official sanction for a soldier to have a wife, being officially discouraged for soldiers to be married

Items Required:

1. Wash tub
2. Soap
3. Water pail
4. Scrub board

5. Stick
6. twine
7. line
8. clothes pins

Scenario: School

Activities: lessons, recitation, older ones helping younger ones

Participants:

1. Teacher
2. Any number of children

Interpretive Points:

4. Illustrate community aspect of a military post
5. One hour sessions interspersed by play

Items Required

1. Readers
2. Slates
3. Chalk
4. tables
5. chairs
6. books

Scenario: Fatigue Detail

Activities: Contruuction

Participants:

1. NCO (could be park personnel)
2. as many as 8 soldiers

Interpretive Points:

- A. Forts were built by the soldiers themselves
- B. NCO in charge of work detail does not do labor
- C. Soldiers wear jackets inside out to protect them for service

Items Required:

1. hand tools
2. lumber
3. nails
4. whitewash
5. brushes

Scenario: Forage Party

Activities: Gather Firewood

Participants:

1. Corporal
2. as many as 4 soldiers

Interpretive Points:

- D. Firewood was source of heat for warmth, cooking, and washing

- E. NCO in charge of work detail does not do labor
- F. Soldiers wear jackets inside out to protect them for service

Items Required:

- 6. axes
- 7. chopping block

Scenario: Company Tailor

Activities: Repair and alteration of uniforms

Participants:

- 1. Private as tailor
- 2. soldiers as customers (optional)

Interpretive Points:

- A. Uniforms were a source of pride for NCOs
- B. Uniforms were patched consistently for longest possible use on campaign
- C. Soldiers provided much of their labor and talent for the necessities of life
- D. Tailor used his skill to trade for services (excused from other duties)
- E. NCOs had their uniforms custom fit for best appearance

Items Required:

- 1. Uniforms in need of repair
- 2. needle & thread
- 3. Scissors
- 4. pins
- 5. chalk

Scenario: Baseball

Activities: Sunday afternoon entertainment

Participants:

- 1. 18 players
- 2. Spectators

Interpretive Points:

- A. Sunday was the only non work day on post
- B. Demonstrate popular recreation
- C. Similarity between baseball of the 1860s to today's game

Items Required:

- 1. Bat
- 2. Baseballs
- 3. Bases (sack with dirt)

Scenario: Croquet

Activities: Game played in "officer's country"

Participants:

- 1. Up to 6 ladies and gentlemen or children
- 2. Spectators

Interpretive Points:

- A. Show class differences
- B. Ladies did not engage in many “strenuous activities”
- C. Family recreation

Items Required:

- 1. Croquet Set
- 2. Rule book

Scenario: Saturday Social

Activities: NCO social to which selected post personnel are invited

Participants:

- 1. All NCOs
- 2. Post Commander
- 3. Selected Officers
- 4. Privates as serving personnel (officially)

Interpretive Points:

- A. Learn social customs such as dance steps
- B. Illustrate the social aspects of post life

Items Required:

- 1. Recorded music
- 2. Dance guide (instruction)
- 3. Area
- 4. Lighting

Scenario: Sutler

Activity: Outlet for non government issued items

Participants:

- 1. Sutler
- 2. Customers (any number)

Interpretive Points:

- A. Method to obtain items needed by soldiers and families not provided by Army
- B. Only official source for alcohol
- C. Relationship between sutler and post commander very important factor
- D. Only source of credit for soldiers

Items Required:

- 1. Can goods
- 2. Dry goods
- 3. Beverages
- 4. Barrels
- 5. Tin ware
- 6. Glass ware
- 7. Ready made clothing

Scenario: Music

Activities: Play musical instruments and sing

Participants:

1. Musicians
2. Audience

Interpretive points:

- A. Self made music as an integral part of lifestyle
- B. Period popular music

Items Required:

1. Instruments
2. Sheet music

Scenario: Games of Chance

Activities: Card and Dice games at sutlers

Participants:

1. Soldiers
2. Civil Card Shark (optional)

Interpretive Points

- A. Common activity for soldier was gambling and card play
- B. Gambling taking place in barracks was subject to punishment "maintaining gaming tables"
- C. Soldiers were frequently in debt due to low pay and forms of entertainment enjoyed

Items Required:

1. Card decks
2. Dice
3. Various games
4. Certain beverages
5. Sutler area

Scenario: Pay Call

Activities: Monthly Pay for enlisted men

Participants:

1. Pay officer
2. 1st Sergeant
3. NCOs
4. Privates

Interpretive Points:

- A. Illustrate pay scale for soldiers
- B. Show effects of various deductions for sutler, uniform overdraw, laundress
- C. Show "purchasing power" of 1860s economy

Items Required:

1. Pay book for the company
2. Accounts for Sutler and laundress
3. Currency

Scenario: Court Martial

Activities: Conduct military trial

Participants:

1. Judge (officer senior to accused)
2. Jury (2 other officers senior to the accused)
3. Defendant
4. Defense Counsel (officer)
5. Prosecution (junior Lieutenant)
6. Witnesses
7. NCO as court reporter
8. NCO as bailiff

Interpretative Points

- A. Isolation tended to exacerbate perceived slights into official incidents
- B. Military justice system different from the civil system

Items Required:

1. Pen and paper for transcript
2. Gavel
3. Bible for oath
4. Table and chairs

Scenario: Civil complaint

Activity: Civilian complains about conduct of one of the members of the post

Participants:

1. Officer of the Day
2. Merchant or
3. Farmer

Interpretative Points

- A. Military members on post subject to military law, not civil law
- B. Complaints depended on will of post commander to be resolved

Items Required:

1. Officer of the Day refers complaint to individual's commanding officer

The Texas Rifles – keeping history alive.
Capt. T. Attaway





I hope everyone is enjoying the dog days of summer, which at least in Houston lasts from late April until late October. While temperatures prevent attempting any kind of drill, that doesn't preclude having regional get-togethers. I'm not sure if we need to have a cartridge roll, but at least in Houston, we could hit a movie, ballgame or do another early morning at the range. I'll post something on Yahoo to see if we have any interest. Other regions should do the same. I don't know about the rest of you, but I miss my pards.

Our esteemed Captain has addressed the upcoming Fort McKavett event on September 22-23. Start dusting off your gear and thinking about small personal scenarios for the event. I'll be bringing a baseball and will request anyone with a period baseball or bat to also bring them along. Also of importance is getting the word out about this event to our other reenacting buddies. I'll contact the CO's of the Red River Battalion, the 1st TX and the 13th U.S. to let them know we are holding the event and that they are welcome to join us. Please let anyone else not covered by these groups know about McKavett.

We have recently celebrated Memorial Day and the 4th of July. I just wanted to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation for all those who have served in our armed forces. I know I'm preaching to the choir, but we all need to remember the reasons for these holidays other than a day off. I know we remember and think about the purpose of these days, but unfortunately, way too many people don't. That's why our opportunities to interact with and teach the public is so important.

Finally, I leave you with a poem for your consideration. I'm not much on poetry, but Kipling wrote some interesting military inspired poetry in which Gunga Din is my personal favorite. Most poetry is too abstract for me to comprehend, but my experiences reenacting allow for an understanding of Gunga Din and I'm sure this is even truer for our Veterans. The 1939 RKO film with Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. is also a must see.

Your Servant,
Lt. Don L. Tucker

Gunga Din

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

You may talk o' gin and beer
When you're quartered safe out 'ere,
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it;
But when it comes to slaughter
You will do your work on water,
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.
Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them blackfaced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din,
 He was 'Din! Din! Din!
 'You limp in' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!
 'Hi! Slippy *hitherao*
 'Water, get it! *Panee lao*,
 'You squidgy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din.'

The uniform 'e wore
Was nothin' much before,
An' rather less than 'arf o' that be'ind,
For a piece o' twisty rag
An' a goatskin water-bag
Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.
When the sweatin' troop-train lay
In a sidin' through the day,
Where the 'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl,
We shouted 'Harry By!'
Till our throats were bricky-dry,
Then we wopped 'im 'cause 'e couldn't serve us all.
 It was 'Din! Din! Din!
 'You 'eathen, where the mischief 'ave you been?
 'You put some *juldee* in it
 'Or I'll *marrow* you this minute
 'If you don't fill up my helmet, Gunga Din!'

'E would dot an' carry one

Till the longest day was done;
An' 'e didn't seem to know the use o' fear.
If we charged or broke or cut,
You could bet your bloomin' nut,
'E'd be waitin' fifty paces right flank rear.
With 'is mussick on 'is back,
'E would skip with our attack,
An' watch us till the bugles made 'Retire,'
An' for all 'is dirty 'ide
'E was white, clear white, inside
When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire!
 It was 'Din! Din! Din!
 With the bullets kickin' dust-spots on the green.
 When the cartridges ran out,
 You could hear the front-ranks shout,
 'Hi! ammunition-mules an' Gunga Din!

I shan't forgit the night
When I dropped be'ind the fight
With a bullet where my belt-plate should 'a' been.
I was chokin' mad with thirst,
An' the man that spied me first
Was our good old grinnin', gruntin' Gunga Din.
'E lifted up my 'ead,
An' he plugged me where I bled,
An' 'e guv me 'arf-a-pint o' water green.
It was crawlin' and it stunk,
But of all the drinks I've drunk,
I'm gratefulest to one from Gunga Din.
 It was 'Din! Din! Din!
 'Ere's a beggar with a bullet through 'is spleen;
 'E's chawin' up the ground,
 'An' 'e's kickin' all around:
 'For Gawd's sake git the water, Gunga Din!

'E carried me away
To where a dooli lay,
An' a bullet come an' drilled the beggar clean.
'E put me safe inside,
An' just before 'e died,
'I 'ope you liked your drink,' sez Gunga Din.
So I'll meet 'im later on
At the place where 'e is gone—
Where it's always double drill and no canteen.

'E'll be squattin' on the coals
Givin' drink to poor damned souls,
An' I'll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!
Yes, Din! Din! Din!
You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!
Though I've belted you and flayed you,
By the livin' Gawd that made you,
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!



Who am I? Why am I here? What the hell do I do? See for yourself. And don't mess with the First Sergeant!

The First Sergeant was also known as the "Orderly Sergeant". As the senior NCO in the company he was responsible for a lot of company paperwork and he was in charge of all the other NCOs. He would assign fatigue duty and punishments and was generally not very popular with the men. (This is the main point you should get out of this article!) He would form the company, take the roll call and get it in ranks and organized before turning the company over to the officer in command.

During drill or in battle the First Sergeant was also the company's Right Guide. In line of battle his post was on the right of the company, in the rear rank, immediately behind the captain who was in the front rank. If the battalion went into a column, however the captain would have to step out in front of the middle of the company so the First Sergeant would step up into the front rank "Covering" the captain, so the First Sergeant

was also referred to as the "Covering Sergeant". During certain maneuvers, the First Sergeant would have specific positions and responsibilities.

Civil War companies were divided into two platoons, but these were tactical formations, not administrative ones so there really weren't any administrative duties below the company level. Except for the First Sergeant, most other sergeants were, for the most part, file closers, standing behind the company line to make sure the men stayed in ranks. If the company were deployed as skirmishers then the other sergeants would have important duties in keeping the extended line under control.

Theoretically, one of the other sergeants had the duty of bringing up ammunition from the rear during battle. There is some debate about whether this really happened very much.

The Union and Confederate armies used regulations that were virtually identical so this would all be true for both armies.

The "First Shirt" basically runs the outfit. Even the officers know that!



*

Editor's Note: Respect, fear and obey the First Sergeant!



Men of Low Character and Generally Irish

The title serves as a description of the majority of the men who composed the Army during the Indian Wars period. During most of the peacetime 19th Century, men who

joined the Army were considered to be among the worst elements of society, as almost everyone accepted the maxim that “standing Armies are the bane of liberty” and employment as a soldier was not the occupation of an upstanding citizen. At the end of the war in 1865, most of the volunteers had been discharged by the end of the year, and the occupation of the South, Reconstruction, and protecting of the frontier would be done by the six regiments of cavalry and the 42 regiments of infantry of the then regular army.

Typically, three types of men composed the soldiers of the Indian Wars army. There were some veterans of the 1861 to 1865 war who found civil life not to their liking, joined by the younger brothers of veterans who “missed their chance” in the war that changed the United States. But by a large margin, most of the regulars consisted of immigrants primarily from Ireland, who found employment opportunities particularly on the east coast rather limited for them (“no Irish need apply”).

These men found that the informal discipline of the volunteers was a thing unknown in the regulars. There was a gap between the men and the NCOs, who were to be obeyed unquestioned. And there was an even wider gulf between the men and the officers. The NCOs were career soldiers who considered themselves professional, and took considerable pride in their rank, usually having their uniforms custom fitted by the company tailor. The officers were for the most part graduates of the Military Academy, or had a distinguished record in the war. The chain of command was strict, and seldom would an officer or NCO speak to a soldier in another company.

The isolation of military posts and the small number of women in the military environment led to a number of emotional stresses that could manifest themselves in various ways. The desertion rate was usually over 20% per year – about one soldier per month per company sized unit. Some men spent all the money they had and some they didn’t have on drink. Competition for the attention of socially acceptable women was fierce, particularly among the single lieutenants.

Punishment for minor offences could be severe, while branding and flogging had been prohibited, a soldier could still be tied to a wagon wheel, and other physical restraints were common. The monotony of garrison life was broken by going on campaign, where the native Americans and soldiers competed with each other for the most brutal and imaginable to administer to their opponents. Such men won the west, and it will be an interesting challenge to portray them as the Indian Wars get started in earnest.

Capt. T. Attaway





WHERE DID THAT COME FROM? Paper Cartridges in Tins

All of our military members have attended a “cartridge roll” at some point in their reenacting careers. This should be an inclusive activity for all our organization members both military and civilian. Most Civil War era paper cartridges were rolled and filled by women and children employed in government ammunition factories. Not a good job! First of all, such places had a tendency to blow-up if a spark found its way to black powder. This happened a couple of times during the war and resulted in the death or burning of the people working there; men women and children. My copy of the 1863 version of the U.S. Army’s “Ordnance Manual” specifies that a “boy” should be able to cut out approximately 800 cartridge papers to pattern in a day’s worth of labor. Child Labor Laws were decades in the future in the 1860’s. Although brass cartridges had been in use for centuries, they split with the heavier loads used in most period military weapons and could only be used in more expensive breech-loading weapons. Military weapons were generally loaded with bullet and powder at the muzzle from a rolled paper tube. But why paper cartridges?

According to historians the Chinese were the first to invent black powder, a mixture of sulfur and saltpeter. They had it by the 1200’s A.D. At first they used it as an amusement, launching silk fabrics into the air from metal jars; the silk fabric pieces making a colorful display as they floated to the ground. Soon the Chinese developed fireworks, and it was a short step from that to military cannons.

Black powder was discovered in western civilization by a medieval English monk/teacher named Francis Bacon. As with the Chinese, soon followed cannons made of metal or iron banded wood (they were cheap, but didn’t last long and their crews were poor

insurance risks). Eventually firearms were developed of a weight and size that they could be held by a man. These “hand cannons” were muzzle loading with a touch hole near the breech. Powder and stone projectiles may have been simply carried loose in a pocket. These were short range, smoothbore affairs and probably (given the metallurgy of the time) equally dangerous to the operator as the intended target. Ignition was by a flame or red hot iron wire. Rain reduced their military utility to that of a club. By the 1300’s they were in use in Europe and present in equal numbers with long bows by the late 1500’s. Charcoal was added to the chemical mixture for black powder to reduce its tendency to absorb water.

When the Spanish arrived in the New World they brought state-of-the-art European weapons with them, including crossbows and guns. The guns were matchlocks, loaded at the muzzle and primed from a flask. One of the commandments of modern black powder safety is that you never load a weapon directly from a flask or horn. There is considerable danger if a spark remaining from the last shot ignites the new powder charge being poured down the barrel; if the resulting powder flare ignites the powder in the flask, there will be an explosion. When you consider that the flask is being held in your right hand near your chest, the potential for a significantly reduced lifespan is obvious. That is why you will see reenactors carry powder horns and hunting bags, but they are still required to load with paper cartridges. Many original hunting bags are found with an attached powder measure; this was filled from the powder container rather than pouring from the container directly into the barrel. It provided for a more consistent powder charge and reduced the risk of explosion.

The next step in loading technology was the Bandolier, a.k.a. the Apostle Set. This was a set of wooden or leather bottles suspended from a leather strap worn across the chest. Each bottle held one pre-measured powder charge for the weapon. By tradition there were twelve bottles, nine in front and three in the back, hence the sacrilegious nickname of the “apostle set.” Projectiles and wads were carried in a small pouch on the bottom of the strap and the weapons at this point were still ignited by burning match (cord soaked in potassium nitrate). A flask held priming powder. Loading took up to thirty (30) steps and was a long process lasting minutes. The drawbacks were that you only had twelve pre-measured shots, the match was kept burning on both ends so it REALLY needed to be held away from the apostle bottles or the wearer could be set-off like a string of firecrackers, and rain still reduced the weapon to a now more expensive club.

Towards the end of the English Civil War of 1642-46 two innovations came together; first, matchlocks were being replaced by wheellocks and doglocks which required no burning match and second, paper cartridges carrying both a bullet and pre-measured powder charge began to be carried loose in a leather bag replacing the bandolier. Coincidentally paper, like black powder, was also invented by the Chinese. Paper was at this time 100% rag content paper; it was expensive, relatively tough and made from used fabric. Scrap fabric (rags) were an internationally traded commodity. In 1843 a paper making process was invented using wood pulp rather than more expensive rags.

As cartridges tended to be damaged when carried loose in a bag, wooden blocks drilled with holes to hold the cartridges appeared in the 1700's. Increasingly, tin trays began to be used below the wood blocks to hold additional cartridges, flints and tools. By 1803 the British were issuing a cartridge box with a single divided tin tray interior. In the US Army, the first cartridge box with two cartridge tins in lieu of a wood block was issued in 1839; in essence the technology in use during the American Civil War.

Jmk, 7/1/2018



Feeding the Soldier

"The cooking is everything. If not well done it is positively injurious; if well done it is wholesome."
General Silas Casey, USA – 1862



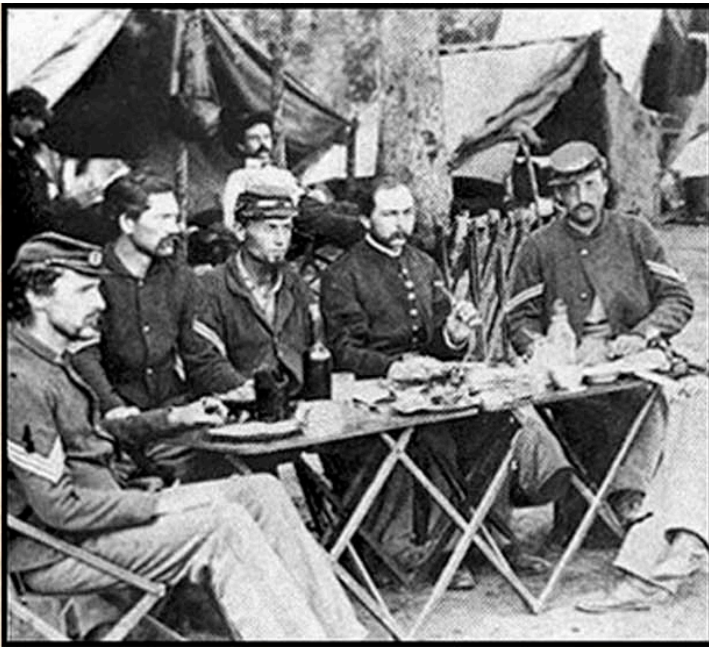
For generations, military men had banded about the maxim that an army "marched on its stomach," but few thought beyond the expression. Governments and commanders largely assumed that their culinary responsibility ended with the obtaining of "basic" supplies and distributing them in the field. After that, how these men supplemented their rations, and even the basic nutritional requirements of a soldier, were very much up to the individual, or to the officers and non-commissioned officers immediately above

(left) Preparing the meat for the next meal.

Consequently, neither Union nor Confederate forces went into the field with standard manuals of cookery, nor with anything like an idea of proper food sanitation and handling. The whole science of nutrition had not yet been born. Manuals for quartermasters and commissaries were adopted by the respective war departments, but again, these extended only so far as to the proper ration to be issued to the man in uniform, and that ration had not changed materially since the days of the Revolution. Fruit, fresh vegetables, dairy products (especially milk) were entirely absent. It did not mean that the commissaries didn't believe that the soldiers did not need such essentials, only that the governments could not undertake to provide them on a regular basis. It was up to the men themselves, or their officers, to find such things in their locality. One of the first issues (other than preparing for battle) when any army arrived at its destination, was to search for food in the local area. In the beginning of the War in the southern states, for example, Confederate troops were often resupplied with food by local farmers willingly, due to the abundance available. When these same troops ventured to northern states, however, food was less likely to be found.

The diet of the average Southerner, however, quickly went from a pre-war variety of adequate foods to a near-starvation sustenance. Those at home suffered as well, and the enlisted men perhaps even more so. Parched corn, wormy hardtack, "blue" beef and "sowbelly" jerky, goober peas, and perhaps beans and corn bread were typical soldier fare. At Port Hudson and Vicksburg the beleaguered troops ate the meat of rats, dogs, mules, horses, and cane roots, and even grass. It took months for the North to hobble the food supply system of the largely self-sufficient agricultural South, and years to weaken and ensnare the Southern army.

~ Food at Home in 1860 ~



(above) Non-commissioned officers Company D, 93rd New York Infantry.

Flour (bread) and rice provided the grain in the diet, with bread being always available on every table. Milk, butter, eggs, and cheeses rounded out the basic foodstuffs in the larders of virtually every American family of the time. Cooking techniques of the period were basic, and had changed little (if at all) from the age-old methods brought to the New World from the Old. Meat was fried, roasted, or most often boiled, frequently in stews with the vegetables. Vegetables themselves, if cooked, were almost invariably laced with with pork or bacon fat for flavor, while seasoning on all dishes usually extended little farther than salt and pepper and a few fresh herbs like bay leaf.

Fruit pies, especially apple and cherry (peach and pumpkin in the south), were universally popular.

Beyond this, regional differences and variations were already making their mark on American tables. The distinctive Creole cooking of southern Louisiana was well established. The stews and barbecues of the backwoods of Tennessee and Kentucky excited the palates of native sons, while Virginia ham, Boston beans, New England chowders, and Indiana fresh corn, all stood out in the fare of their localities.

~ Technology Arrives ~

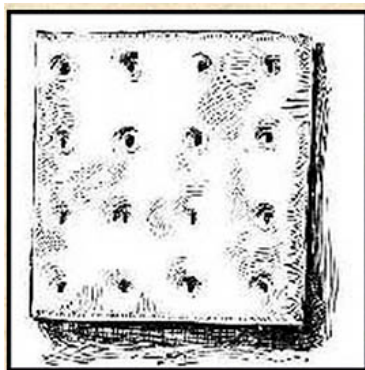
Recent technological developments made it possible by 1860 for some of these regional specialties to be enjoyed elsewhere. Smoking, pickling, and drying were preservation techniques older than human memory. But within this century men had discovered the art of vacuum packing meats and vegetables in tin cans (Hormel - tinned meats), glass jars (Ball Mason jars - canning vegetables), and Gail Borden had recently developed a process for "condensing" milk, putting it into tins that could keep it for months (a product available to us to this day).



(right) Well-equipped regiments had a number of camp stoves for the use of the soldiers, but these were often little more than an iron box with a stove pipe.

So, when war erupted in April of 1861 and thousands of men flocked to the colors, means were at least available to get food to them, while their own experience at home had taught them a few rudimentary cookery skills to convert the raw rations into something edible, although not always either nourishing or healthful. There was still a lot to learn, however, for in a regiment of 1,000 men, each might have his own idea of what to eat and how to make it.. Thus a uniformity quickly spread throughout the camp kitchens, imposed in part by the limitations and availability of what was provided, and how the officers passed on their instructions. "Army food" was army food, then as later, and the officials did not go to any great lengths to explain or prescribe exactly how to make it.

~ Food in the Field ~



Hardtack was a simple flour biscuit issued to Union soldiers throughout the war. Hardtack crackers made up a large portion of a soldier's daily ration. It was square or sometimes rectangular in shape with small holes baked into it, and similar to a large soda cracker and baked in northern factories.

If the hardtack was received soon after leaving the factory, they were quite tasty and satisfying. Usually, the hardtack did not get to the soldiers until months after it had been made. By that time, they were very hard, so hard that soldiers called them "tooth dullers" and "sheet iron crackers". Sometimes they were infested with small bugs the soldiers called weevils, so they referred to the hardtack as "worm castles" because of the many holes bored through the crackers by these pests. Packed into large wooden crates, the boxes were stacked outside of tents and warehouses until it was time to issue them. Soldiers were usually allowed six to eight crackers for a three-day ration. There were a number of ways to eat them- plain or prepared with other ration items. Soldiers would crumble them into coffee or soften them in water and fry the hardtack with some bacon grease. One favorite soldier dish was salted pork fried with hardtack crumbled into the mixture. Soldiers called this "skillygallee", and it was a common and easily prepared meal.

Coffee was the most important part of a soldier's ration. Whenever Union armies halted on the march, even if only for an hour or so, rail fences in the area soon became firewood for brewing a large, Stout cup of coffee. Excess coffee was also used as a trade item on those rare occasions when Confederate and Federal soldiers met between the picket lines. Southern tobacco, not on the Union ration, was traded for Northern coffee, an increasing rarity in the Rebel ranks as the war continued. The beverage was in such demand that the Army developed something commissaries called "essence of coffee."

Camp cooks prepare another meal in the endless struggle to feed the men (right).



It came packed in tin cans and looked like axle grease. Apparently, it tasted like the same. Before long it was removed from the ration and replaced by the genuine article.



Before secession, a typical Southern family's grocery bill was \$6.65 per month. By 1864, it was \$400 per month. In fact, Confederate dollars were so devalued that many families could not afford to buy food staples. As produce became more and more scarce or expensive, people had to find substitutes for common foods. Many residents were quite creative, and although most of the substitutes did not survive until modern times, satisfied southern appetites to some degree.

(left) Officers are waited on as they prepare to dine out at camp.

Here are some examples:

Meat (at least \$20 for one meal): Domestic animals, crows, frogs, locusts, snails, snakes and worms

Coffee: Okra seeds that were browned, dried sweet potatoes or carrots, roasted acorns, wheat berries

Tea: Herbs, sumac berries, sassafras roots, raspberry, blackberry, huckleberry and holly leaves

Champagne: Water and corn and molasses, fermented in an old barrel

Milk or cream: Beat an egg white to a froth and add a small lump of butter, mix well

Sugar: Molasses, sorghum, dried, ground figs, honey, watermelon syrup

Vinegar (apple): molasses, honey, beets, figs, persimmon, may-apples and sorghum

Flour: Rice, rice flour, cornmeal, and rye flour

Salt: Boiled sea water, or taking dirt from the smokehouse, adding water and boiling it. Skim off the scum on the top and drop in cold water, and the salt sinks to the bottom. The impurities could be boiled off. Wood ashes or gunpowder could substitute for salt as a seasoning.

In the end, the fighting men ate what they could get, and cooked it in whatever means was most convenient, or most tasty. The ingredients suggested by the respective commissaries and others may have predominated, but when men were left so much to their own devices, innovations and improvisation, especially in the confederacy, it became a way of life. A group of Confederates in South Carolina made a meal of rats, finding that "rat tasted like young squirrel." Another recounted how "I overcame prejudice against the bull frog and found him very nice." Dogs, cats, even mules, went into stew pots. At Vicksburg, Mississippi, for years after the war, it was said that the city was rat free. The starving Confederate garrison during the 1863 siege had caught and eaten them all.

Those hardships were often shared by soldier and civilian alike in a war that frequently blurred the distinctions of people in and out of uniform. Their experiences were no culinary lark, and were not so intended. Men ate to live, and lived to fight, and if their fare was not extravagant, still the heavy diet gave them protein, starch, and animal fats, to provide the energy needed for days of endless marching and the feverish heat of battle.

(See Bibliography below)

The American Civil War

Photos: (2) O'Sullivan, Timothy H., 1840-1882, photographer, Bealeton, Va.; Noncommissioned Officers' Mess of Co. D, 93d New York Infantry

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Thanks to everyone who contributed to the making of this edition of the Tyrants' Foe Newsletter. Without you it would be nothing. Deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is tentatively scheduled for November 1, 2018.



To Tyrants Never Yield

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Location	Rating	Impression
September 22/23	Ft. McKavett	Ft. McKavett, TX	MAX	US
October 20	Texian Market Days	Richmond, TX	Company	Tex Rev
November 17/18	Plantation Liendo	Hempstead, TX	MAX	US
January 19, 2019	Annual Muster	Winedale, TX	MAX	CS