



# The Tyrants' Foe



Volume XXXX

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles  
Celebrating 31 Years of Excellence

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## Captain's Post

We had a sparse turnout for Texian Market Days. I suggest we reconsider the idea of using TMD for our TexRev impression. At best we would be more of a sideshow to what is already transpiring in that area with the shootout and Mexican Army arriving to restore order. TMD may be a better venue for a Red River Battalion muster with RRB units doing the Confederate and Federal impressions on Saturday with battalion doings on Sunday morning. It would improve the 1860s action and let us have a bit of fun with our friends in the RRB.

Next up is Liendo. Registration is in progress and members are requested to be registered by the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. Camping will be in the same area as last year, and an opportunity to go mainstream and enjoy all the comforts you care to bring as long as you can keep it hidden. The battle scenarios will be different this year. There will be an effort into portraying an actual battle, rather than up and down the field a few times until the clock runs out and one side surrenders. As usual we will combine with the 13<sup>th</sup> US and should have a company of 20+

A few of us have signed up for Prairie Grove. For me, the main motivation is to be in the company commanded by Cal Kinzer, a long time reenactor and someone who has done great service to the hobby. In the 1980s, there were a number of history themed television mini-series, and Kinzer was active with one titled The Blue and the Gray. Kinzer got a copy of Hardee's into the hands of one of the stars of the series, and it took

root. As this actor portrayed a federal sergeant teaching volunteers, it was a boon to see the school of the soldier conducted properly on the screen. His efforts made it a better production that it otherwise would have been.

Unfortunately, that was also the period in time when quality living history people were being pushed out of productions in favor of amateurs who could convince reenactors to appear in the movies and be paid as extras instead of skilled professionals. But that is another story....

In January, we will return to Winedale for our annual muster on the 19<sup>th</sup>, or at least until they figure out that we might be celebrating Robert E. Lee's birthday ... As you may remember, part of the deal is the center provides the meals – Breakfast at \$6. Lunch at \$10, Dinner at \$14. Thus, \$36 for the entire weekend of meals, and we will need to have an approximate headcount in January.

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



## **The New Orleans Grays; an Interpretive Challenge**

Portraying a specific group of people at a designated point on time can present several challenges to the living historian. One such example is the two companies of volunteers raised in October 1835 at New Orleans who fought in the Texas Revolution. Much has been written about them, and there is disagreement on what they looked like in appearance and the equipage they used. This will be a short exposition of why some of

the disagreements exist and an example of the decisions that have to be made in deciding to do a particular impression.

In theory, we should have good source material to aid us in creating the impression. One of the members wrote a book about his experiences. The organization of the Grays was covered in New Orleans papers, and several people who encountered the Grays made note of the event. Just as eyewitness accounts of the same event differ, so to when different researchers read the same material.

Accounts agree that the Grays were organized and formed into companies at the building that housed the Washington Guards militia. Money was raised at the meeting and clothing and equipment purchased to outfit the Grays. One version of events has the money being used to buy uniforms, arms, and equipment from the Guards – with the uniforms being the old 1821 fatigue uniform of the US Army. The basis for this conclusion is that the survivor's book mentions being equipped with the military furnishings from the arsenal, and we know that the Guards were in the same militia battalion as the Washington Artillery, which used the same uniform as the US Army, substituting their own buttons. Thus the reasonable conjecture that the premier militia units of New Orleans would appear similar to appearance to the US Army of the time. We know that the Washington Artillery changed uniforms in 1834 to sky blue because the US Army changed in 1833. The assumption is that the Guards would have done the same thing, leaving their gray uniforms stored as no longer needed, and thus an opportunity to raise funds by selling them the following year.

The critics of this theory note the wording in the English translation of the book as being equipped from a warehouse and accounts of clothing being made and rifles purchased for the Grays. At one point the idea was raised that the uniforms were Army surplus, and a critic pointed out that the Army did not sell of old uniforms, but issued them until the supply was exhausted. How to reconcile the differences?

The Gray survivor was German and he wrote his book in German, published in Germany, The English translation is very poor. He mentions that they were equipped using the German word Magazin which is a military storage facility, and not using the word Lager which would be like a civilian warehouse. Thus, it is important to be able to read the book in German to glean appropriate detail. Another detail affected by the poor translation is the claim that he does not use the word uniform in the English translation to describe their dress, but clothing suitable for life on the prairie. German readers would not know that the US Army had two types of uniforms – one for dress and one for campaign. European armies still only had one uniform for all occasions and the fatigue uniform would not be a uniform in the sense that a German reader would understand it as such. Again, the importance of being able to read original accounts in the language written and the culture of the writer are critical to proper understanding of meaning.

It is reasonable to assume, the military equipment available did not meet the needs of two companies, and thus additional clothing and weaponry was needed to get both companies ready for the deployment to Texas. We don't have to choose which account to believe, all of the accounts contain part of the whole picture.

As the first company traveled over land toward San Antonio, they encountered an Indian tribe, and the chief asked if they were "Jackson's men" which implies that Indians who had encountered the US Army previously saw in the Grays an appearance close enough to the Regulars to be assumed to be US Army. This ties back to the conjecture that the uniforms may have been purchased by the Guards from Schuylkill Arsenal as many militias did for their outfitting. The uniforms were not surplus – they were regular production. There may have been some modifications made such as changing buttons from US to Louisiana, but that is even more speculative.

Finally, we have a mention of Grays wearing sealskin caps. This is the hardest to pin down as the observer may be mistaken, or we have to wonder where such headgear may have been procured. But such oddities are in the realm of trying to document what was the dress of a particular unit at a given time.

Capt. T. Attaway



**A SMALL TOWN IN NEW YORK**

My wife and I recently took a vacation touring historical sites in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. As I come from the east coast it was a homecoming of sorts for me. I always feel more comfortable back amongst verdant vegetation and rolling hills than on the flatlands of Texas. You would think after 42 years of exile I would adapt, but each trip back tells me I have not done so.

On this trip we targeted a tiny New York village currently named Leicester, pronounced “Lester”, formerly called Moscow. Leicester is just down the road from Warsaw, so you can get an idea of where the first European settlers originated. Leicester is a small village created in 1810 with a classic central green, bandstand and monuments to the soldiers from various wars. A white board church faces the green. The current population is around 2,200, but it peaked in the 1840 Census at 2,409 during its hay day as a farming center. The population in the 1860 Census was about the same as the current population. This would imply that the number of men capable of military service would be approximately 600 during the Civil War.

The reason we traveled to Leicester, which is squarely positioned away from any beaten path, was in the village cemetery. The cemetery is located in rolling farmland next to a cornfield. Mountains lie in the distance. In said cemetery was the Wilmerding Plot containing the remains of the first two Wilmerdings who came to the New World. My mother was a Wilmerding. Christian Wilhelm Wilmerding was the first born son of a business family with an ancestral home in what is now Brunswick, Germany, but which had been part of various dukedoms, Great Britain and France, depending upon which country won the last war. He came to New York City in 1783 on business. While here he met Catherine Von Falkenhahn. He had to return to Europe, but he came back to marry Catherine. Catherine must have been some girl, because first born sons of established business families; 1) stayed in Europe to inherit the family business, 2) did not cross the Atlantic Ocean in a small sailing ship without a sound business reason, and 3) did NOT marry unless the marriage advanced the family fortune in Brunswick. Christian Wilhelm must have sensed that America offered not only a new way of life, but a path to the woman he loved. He and Katerina stayed in the new United States. Several children and years later, the Wilmerdings moved to (then) Moscow, New York; probably to be near their children and grandchildren. Catherine died in 1839 and Christian Wilhelm, now William in 1832. They are the earliest internments in the nine space Wilmerding Plot in Leicester. Their tombstones are now broken and nearly illegible, but they are buried next to several of their children.

My family’s genealogy is not the point of this article; the Leicester Cemetery is. As Joan gathered wild flowers to lay upon the graves I wandered through the older sections of the cemetery looking at the stones and their inscriptions. Many tombstones in Leicester had a death date of 1858 when the area was swept by Cholera and Smallpox epidemics. I was stunned by what I found for another reason. Here, in this isolated village in central New York State, was the impact of the Civil War. The small cemetery is still in use and the American Legion (thank-you American Legion) made sure that every service persons’ grave was marked by an American flag in a metal flag holder. There were dozens and dozens of them. Near the Wilmerding Plot was a grave of an American Revolution veteran. His stone was illegible and broken, but his grave was marked with a flag and bronze plaque. In a brief scan of nearby graves I found four men who

died in the Civil War. One was particularly poignant; a soldier named Perkins was captured in Plymouth, North Carolina, in 1864. His family's stone records that he "died of starvation at Andersonville Prison in 1865." How his family retrieved his body after the war is a mystery, if his body is actually interred there. Unmarked mass graves at Andersonville were the norm.

When confronted with such human loss and tragedy it does no good intellectually to recall that the highest Civil War prison death rate was at the Confederate Andersonville Prison, but the Elmira and Camp Douglas Federal prisoner-of-war camps were close seconds. They were run by a country with the resources to feed, clothe, shelter and provide heat to men incarcerated in winter in New York and Illinois. How our country was able to reunite after "the recent unpleasantness" says good things about us as a people. Maybe Americans don't study history enough, but neither do they bear inter-generational grudges. The deaths of the other Civil War soldiers interred at Leicester were not specified, but one man died in the "1<sup>st</sup> New York Dragoons" in 1863; a regiment of which I had never heard. They were apparently the home town heroes in the Civil War and their regimental history was unique.

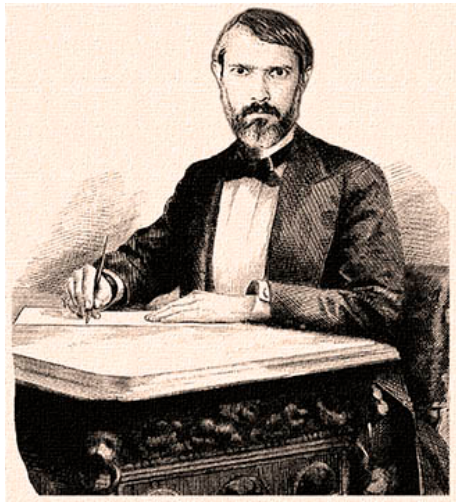
Local men from three counties enlisted in the 130<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Infantry in 1862. Keep in mind that the most populous state in the Confederacy was Virginia, which fielded approximately 54 regiments of infantry plus 25 or more cavalry and 6 artillery regiments. These numbers are not exact and probably inflated due to the confusing military organization in Virginia; there were Volunteer, Militia and Provisional Army regiments that came and went. For example, there were at least four 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Regiments. The State of New York alone with 227+ regiments of infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineers could have given the entire South a fair fight. The first battles of the 130<sup>th</sup> N.Y.V.I. was the Battle of Deserted House (I did not make that up) and the Siege of Suffolk (?). Finding life as infantry rather undemanding, the 130<sup>th</sup> used its influence to be converted to a cavalry regiment; the 19<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry. Yet, that name was rather undistinguished, so the now 19<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry petitioned their governor to be re-named the 1<sup>st</sup> New York Dragoons. So, in the midst of the country's worst war the 130<sup>th</sup> infantry took a couple of months off to be retrained as mounted troops with breech-loading carbines, swords and revolvers.

The 130<sup>th</sup> New York was the only Federal regiment in the Civil War to permanently convert from infantry to cavalry. They served in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign under Sheridan and with Grant's Army of the Potomac in the Appomattox Campaign. Their regimental monument in Letchworth State Park tells of four battle flags taken, 1,533 prisoners and nineteen cannons captured, and sixty-five engagements fought against the collapsing Confederate forces. Apparently there is no local movement to take this monument down in the dark of night (sorry, I could not resist saying that). It also states that 515 men were killed, wounded or died of disease out of a total enrollment of 1,414. Those numbers don't include men lost to regiment due to disabilities or desertion. So, these men, like the Perkins family and the town of Leicester, paid a heavy price for victory.

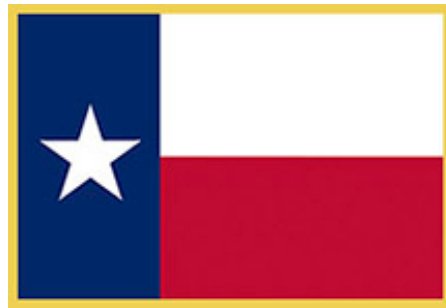
Jmk, 9/23/2018



*Texas Rifles, January 2009*



**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 scheduled for January 5, 2019.**



**To Tyrants Never Yield**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Impression</b>
November 17/18	Plantation Liendo	Hempstead, TX	MAX	US
January 19, 2019	Annual Muster	Winedale, TX	MAX	CS

