



The Tyrants' Foe

Volume 52 **Newsletter of the Texas Rifles**
Celebrating 34 Years of Excellence

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by reiterating my email from a few weeks back that I will be moving to Ashland, Virginia the 3rd week of December. It is with great regret and some trepidation that I'll be leaving my Texas Rifles/13th US family. I've been lucky enough to be a member of the Texas Rifles for 20 years with two of those years united with the 13th US. In the twenty years I've been a member, I've held every rank in the unit, from Private to Captain, and I've been very honored to be allowed to lead the company not once, but twice. It has been one of the great honors of my life to be a member of the company and to have had people I respect so much allow me to lead them.

When I say I have some trepidation about leaving, I really mean it. Not only are the members of the company my very close friends, you have become my family. You have seen me at my best and my worst, and without fail, you have been there when I needed you. I can't tell you how much that means to me. You've seen me through multiple jobs, a very painful divorce, a girlfriend, a fiancé and of all things, a gunshot wound. I can say with pain and experience, don't play with or get near dismantled calvary. Bad things happen.

I would be remiss if I didn't single out a few of you that have seen me through my worst days and made them bearable. I of course have to begin with the Unholy Trinity of Frank Marek, Kevin Traxler. and myself. The moniker was bestowed upon us many years back by John Tyler after a very late night of the three of us drinking next to his tent. He did not mean it as a compliment, but knowing us, he should have realized we

would latch on to that name and claim it as our own. I have noticed that John did learn not to set up near the campfire if the Trinity is there.

After my separation, many of you reached out to me, but Frank, Kevin & Straz (& his lovely wife Holly) were really there for me. They listened to me bemoaning my situation and saw me through many holiday seasons, making sure I wasn't alone and that I knew I had someone who cared. I also have to give a shout out to Bos (Jim Bosworth.) for spending an entire day of a campaigner event with me in the emergency room after I was stupid enough to get myself shot (as mentioned above, don't go near dismounted cavalry). These gentlemen and all of you really are my friends and family and, honestly, it was easier leaving home for college than leaving all of you. Rest assured, I will return for an event or two each year and I will definitely meet up with the unit and individuals that make it to the east coast for events. This unit will always be my home unit, regardless of the other units out east that I join and I will fall in with you whenever I can.

Now I'll go on with the less sappy stuff. We have had two very successful events since the last newsletter and I am very happy with the participation and professionalism of all those that attended. Numbers could always be better, but with the current world, attendance is what it is. We hosted a great event at Fort McKavett in late September with 15 attending (including 3 guys from the 1st TX). Thanks to all that made it. As usual it was warm, but we had fun and I hope everyone that made the trip enjoyed the experience. Again, special thanks to our cook, Kerry Manning, and his assistant, Steven Silva, for keeping us fed and to Lt. Attaway and Cpl. Tyler for the pay call. Also thanks to Frank & Kevin in scabtown for some interesting experiences. We also need to thank Cody Mobley for allowing us to hold the event at the site and also for the period photos which turned out great. Thanks also to Rhett Kearns, the site interpreter, for helping us so much during the event, making so much of the site available and for going with me to pick up John Tyler after he went deer hunting with his car. Fortunately, John fared better than the deer or car.

Our second successful event occurred this last weekend and was the annual Texian Market Days event at the George Ranch. We had 9 members attend. We were Federal for the event and the 1st TX was Confederate. With ourselves and the 1st TX leading the two sides, we managed to have two successful battles that actually closely followed the script, which is almost unheard of. Thanks goes to the members of both units who are always professional (at least on the field ☺). Also of note, both artillery units, the US Marines, and the Confederate Dismounts all followed orders and did as asked. Having been a company commander and also a battalion adjutant, I can tell you, that doesn't happen very often.

Upcoming events:

- 1) This coming weekend, a memorial ceremony is going to be held for Bill Pollard. Bill was an active member of the Sons of Union Veterans and assisted the 13th

US on many occasions. Anyone that can attend is encouraged to do so to show our respects. The ceremony is at Hayes Grace Memorial Park at 10708 Highway 6 in Santa Fe on Saturday October 30th. Assembly time is 08:30am. The uniform is Federal sack coat with forage cap. Leathers: cartridge box with sling; cap pouch; belt with US plate; bayonet and scabbard. No canteen (water will be provided) or haversack. 3 musket rounds will be fired in salute. Please contact Howard Rose at bevhowrose@yahoo.com if you can make it.

2) The Port Hudson, LA event is fast approaching (Nov. 6-7). Those listed below indicated they wanted to be registered for the event. Even if you didn't register, we can probably still get you in. Let me know if you would like to go. We will be going as Federals and falling in with our pards from the 1st Texas to create a decent size company for the event. Currently we have 1 carpool from Houston, but we have other members driving in to Houston or needing a ride, so a caravan may be in order.

- a. Don Tucker
- b. Tommy Attaway
- c. Doug Davis (maybe)
- d. John Tyler
- e. Joe Akers
- f. Joey Alamia
- g. Chris Strzelecki
- h. Jim Richardson
- i. John Hasek
- j. Joe Raffles
- k. Howard Rose
- l. Kerry Manning

3) The Houston Veterans Day Memorial at city hall and following Parade are being held Thursday November 11th in downtown Houston. This is a memorial that has been supported by the 13th US for many years and is very rewarding to attend. I fell in with them a couple of times before we united and always enjoyed the day. We will of course be Federal and serve by firing a salute at the memorial event and then as a color guard during the parade. I realize this is a workday, but anyone that can attend would be appreciated. We did vote this as a Max Effort and need to have decent numbers to make a good showing in appreciation of our veterans. Howard Rose is working with those in charge of the ceremony and parade and he will be posting instructions for us for the day. Please watch for his emails.

4) Finally, our annual muster/meeting will be held January 15-16, 2022. I am working to get the use of the conference center at the George Ranch again, but haven't yet heard back from Megan on whether the powers that be will allow us to use the facility. If that doesn't work out, things will get more complicated, but I will keep you updated on our progress. On the plus side, Megan was very happy with both battles at TMD, so we have that in our favor.

I'm not sure if this is my last Captain's newsletter article or if I'll have one more. Just to be safe, I want to tell all of you again how much you mean to me and how honored I am at the trust you've shown me. I'll miss everyone, but will come back or fall in with you whenever I can. These two combined units, which have long and storied histories, are now united and are stronger from the unification. I look forward to watching the progress of the unit as it weathers these dog days and comes out stronger from the adversity.

Your Servant,
Capt. Don L. Tucker
The Texas Rifles/13th U.S. Combined Company

Editor's Note: Don, you will be greatly missed, your dedication to the Texas Rifles and all you have done to make it one of the best units in reenacting is a testament to the quality of your leadership and friendship. I'm sure I speak for everyone. Looking forward to seeing you when the Rifles make it to the east coast for future events.

-The Crow



At long last, we have again taken to the field. Those who have felt comfortable resuming in person living history have had two opportunities to contribute to the reputation we have of providing the experience sites wish to give their guests. Our next opportunity will be at Port Hudson on the 6th and 7th of November. That event will end our schedule for the year, and we can look forward to 2022 and our annual Muster.

The situation with national politics has had an adverse impact on local events we have become accustomed to attending. Jesse Jones and Spring Creek have become victims of an attempt to erase history and do not anticipate holding war related activities at those

venues. Combined with the loss of the Liendo event, the scene in Texas has altered considerably. Combines with the anticipated loss of the Goex powder mill, battle re-enactments are looking to be sparse.

This presents an opportunity to focus our efforts in a direction we have undertaken at the recent Ft. McKavett events. Rather than focus on the conflict of 1861 to 1865, a focus on military life of the frontier allows us to use the resources we have to bring a more person oriented view of the past. We can show a different aspect of the 1860s in the lead up to the conflict, and its immediate aftermath. These events will also be less physically taxing as they will feature less marching about and the strains of battle.

Keeping History Alive
Lt. Tommy Attaway



Money

To fight the War from 1861 to 1865, the United States spent some \$14 Billion. It didn't have the cash, and that sum was more money than could be borrowed. The solution to this problem was the same solution that governments have used for thousands of years, more money was created in order to pay for conducting the war. This solution was devised as banks demanded as much as 36% interest per year for US debt, expressing doubt about the outcome of the war.

Before the war, banks and organizations printed and issued currency themselves. The notes could usually be redeemed for silver coin locally, but this presented a problem for travelers. How could one know if an out of region or out of state note was genuine? Because of this, acceptance of the note was voluntary, and if in doubt, the amount had to be paid in coin.

The issue of currency by the national government was the solution to this problem of paying for the war and establishing what became a nation wide currency, initially due to the volume of notes issued. Although this currency was not redeemable in coin, Congress declared it to be legal tender – meaning it must be accepted for payment by force of law.

These notes became known as “greenbacks” because the reverse side was printed predominantly in green ink. Initially, \$50 Million in notes were approved by Congress in 1861.



The duration of the war, and the increased expense, required additional printings in subsequent years. To prevent the currency from declining in value to nothing, Secretary of the Treasury Chase, approved the paying of interest on notes redeemed at the Treasury. This first issue was the “demand notes” meaning that the holder could demand payment from the Treasury, or use them to pay money owed the national government



Acceptance of the greenback, the value of paper currency fluctuated substantially relative to gold, reaching a low of \$258 in greenbacks to \$100 in gold. After the fall of Atlanta and the march As the principle had been established, the next issue was called “United States Notes” and had nothing behind them but the faith of the US government. They are easily recognizable by the red seal of the US Treasury printed on the note. The initial issue was of \$150 Million.

California and Oregon defied the Legal Tender Act and allowed the demand for gold and silver payments to continue. The national government paid soldiers and contracts in greenbacks, which put them in circulation throughout the country. While the government forced to the sea, greenbacks started to rise in value. Eventually, the amount of greenbacks in circulation declined to \$450 Million, and with the western silver mines producing great quantities of silver to be coined, the greenback reached parity in 1878, and greenbacks were “as good as gold”.



The greenbacks were then retired in favor of what became the national currency. This was a scheme by which the notes were printed by the Treasury Department, but issued by banks. A bank would buy US Treasury bonds, and be given national currency notes for 90% of the value of the bonds purchased, and the bank would have the name of the bank printed on the notes as the issuing bank. The notes were legal tender, redeemable by individuals at any bank issuing national currency, and ultimately by the US Treasury. We have done pay day for the soldiers at Ft. McKavett, which has become a nice portrayal of one aspect of soldier life. This article should give some additional background to conducting this vignette. This is how we got to a single nationwide currency, with the current size and types of notes established in 1928.

Lt. Tommy Attaway





FALL IN! ATTENTION COMPANY! QUIET IN THE RANKS!

The day after Virginia seceded from the Union in 1861, three enslaved men – Frank Baker, James Townsend and Shepard Mallory – commandeered a boat and rowed across the James River from Hampton to Fortress Monroe. There they asked Federal troops manning the fort to grant them asylum.

What seemed like a straightforward request was anything but. Should these refugees be treated as freemen who had emancipated themselves? Or did the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which remained the law, require that they be returned to their so-called owners? Complicating matters was the fact that enslavers in loyal border states such as Maryland and Kentucky had been assured that the right to keep their human property was secure. Granting asylum to the three runaways would contravene this guarantee.

That was the dilemma confronting Fort Monroe's commander, Major General Benjamin F. Butler. Butler was no abolitionist, but he realised that he could hardly order his troops – many of whom were antislavery New Englanders – to detain, shackle and return three runaways to secessionists who were aiming guns at them from batteries across the river.

As Butler considered the dilemma, a soldier of the 115th Virginia Militia approached the fort, beneath a white flag of truce. The soldier, Major John Baytop Cary, told Butler that the three runaways belonged to his commander.

As they debated the legal issue involved, Butler declared: 'But you say you have seceded, so you cannot consistently claim them. I shall hold these negroes as contraband of war, since they are ... claimed as your property.'

After being reported in the press, the exchange became a popular topic of conversation. 'Within a few days', noted Lincoln's biographers John Nicolay and John Hay (at the time

his secretaries), 'a new phrase was on every one's lips, and the newspapers were full of editorials chuckling over the happy conception of treating fugitive slaves of rebel masters as contraband of war.'

Northern commentators marveled at how quickly the key word of Butler's phrase – *contraband* – became a part of national discourse. *Contraband*, wrote Charles C. Nott, a lawyer serving in the Union army, pushed aside 'the circumlocution "colored people", the extra-judicial "persons of African descent", the scientific "negro" ... and the debasing "slave"'. Nott concluded that 'those who love to ponder over the changes of language and watch its new uses and unconscious growth, must find in it a rare phenomenon of philological vegetation'.

This was not just a matter of philology, however. As news spread about Butler's so-called Fort Monroe Doctrine, it quickly became clear that the doctrine provided a perfect rationale for not returning those who had escaped from slavery without rekindling arguments about the peculiar institution that had convulsed America for decades. While having the desired result of providing sanctuary to runaways, calling them *contraband* sidestepped the larger issues involved. Butler's term, concluded the historian James McPherson, 'turned out to be the thin edge of a wedge driven into the heart of slavery'.

Before this, *contraband* had been an obscure term relating primarily to maritime law. Butler did not intend to recast that word the way he did, let alone suggest a concept that would affect the course of the Civil War. His reference to 'contraband of war' was almost facetious; he did not even consider the phrase worth mentioning in his official account of the meeting. Nor did Cary, in his own report. Long after the press had adopted Butler's casual re-coinage, the Union general himself continued to refer to 'slaves', not 'contrabands'.

Although abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass considered this term demeaning (Douglass thought it was more suited to a pistol than a person), northerners in general used *contrabands* synonymously with *runaways* throughout the Civil War. 'Several contrabands came into the camp of the First Connecticut Regiment today', reported a northern newspaper soon after Butler declared his doctrine. The thousands who followed were housed in 'contraband camps'.

Characterizing runaways as confiscated enemy property was far more palatable politically than treating them as emancipated men and women. North of the Mason-Dixon line, support for preserving the Union far outweighed any passion for freeing the enslaved. 'Confiscating' those who escaped was an acceptable alternative. 'The venerable gentleman who wears gold spectacles and reads a conservative daily, prefers confiscation to emancipation', noted the abolitionist journalist Edward L. Pierce. 'He is reluctant to have slaves declared freemen, but has no objection to their being declared contraband.'

Regarding runaways as contraband, therefore, proved to be an invaluable way to

consign them to a verbal purgatory: neither enslaved nor free. (Those fleeing enslavement might rather have been called *freemen*, but *contraband* was certainly better than *slave*.) Throughout the war, songs were composed about 'contrabands', poems written, paintings painted. Louisa May Alcott wrote a story titled 'My Contraband'. Winslow Homer published drawings of life in contraband camps (and after the war a watercolor titled *Contraband* that portrayed a Union soldier sitting beside a Black boy).

The historian Kate Masur has concluded that *contraband* was a 'placeholder', a way to characterize runaway slaves pending their actual emancipation. However, by overemphasizing Butler's role in highlighting the ambivalence northerners felt about those who escaped from enslavement, Masur argues that her fellow historians underestimated their enthusiasm for the term itself. In the stories, songs and pictures they produced about contrabands, 'Northerners sought to fill with meaning a term that was, by definition, transitional and unstable'.

In his 1892 memoir, Butler acknowledged the rationale that this phrase had provided for giving asylum to runaways, but said its reception astonished him. Despite the admiration it brought to this man of considerable ego, Butler took no pride for adding *contraband of war* to public discourse. 'It was a poor phrase', Butler wrote. 'The truth is, as a lawyer I was never very proud of it, but as an executive officer I was very much comforted with it as a means of doing my duty.'

Best regards,
First Sergeant Frenchy



To Tyrants Never Yield!



Thanks to everyone who contributed to the making of this edition of the Tyrants' Foe Newsletter. Without you it could not exist. Deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is scheduled for midnight January 9, 2021. – The Editor

