



The Tyrant's Foe

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles

Volume 56

Celebrating 37 Years of Excellence

June 2024



Captain's Post

We have concluded the Spring campaign season. Event attendance ranged from seven to three. Nothing says how much we need to attract more people into the unit and living history than this fact. It is also a fact that we are in a change of generations. Few of us are still active in living history that went to events in the 1980s or before, and as I look at those who arrived on the living history scene in the following decades, we are now seeing those who entered the hobby post 2000 also taking their leave from the field.

I certainly can see the reasons for the retirements. The ravages of time prey on all of us, and there are yet other factors. At some point, most of the events stop

being new and exciting experiences. It is just another weekend of camping while wearing different clothes and the same 150 Rebels engage the same 40 Union troops. Why bother?

As I have said previously, I see three reasons to do an event. (A) The event will give me additional experience and perspective of that time in history. This is the attraction for many of us as to why we started to do this. We wanted to come as close as we could to experiencing the past and thereby gain a greater understanding of it. To paraphrase one of my profs in grad school – the past never changes, only our view of it does. (B) We have an opportunity to share the knowledge we have gained with others who also have an interest in the past. This may not be as exciting as (A), but doing so is a very worthwhile endeavor, especially if you think of your ancestors and how we each may relate to those who have gone this way before us, and those who will follow behind us. (C) The activity will enhance the reputation of our unit. In this category I place appearances in local commemorative activities or theatrical productions. We become part of the show in order to provide a historical context that will potentially spark an interest by others in history by making the past appear in the present.

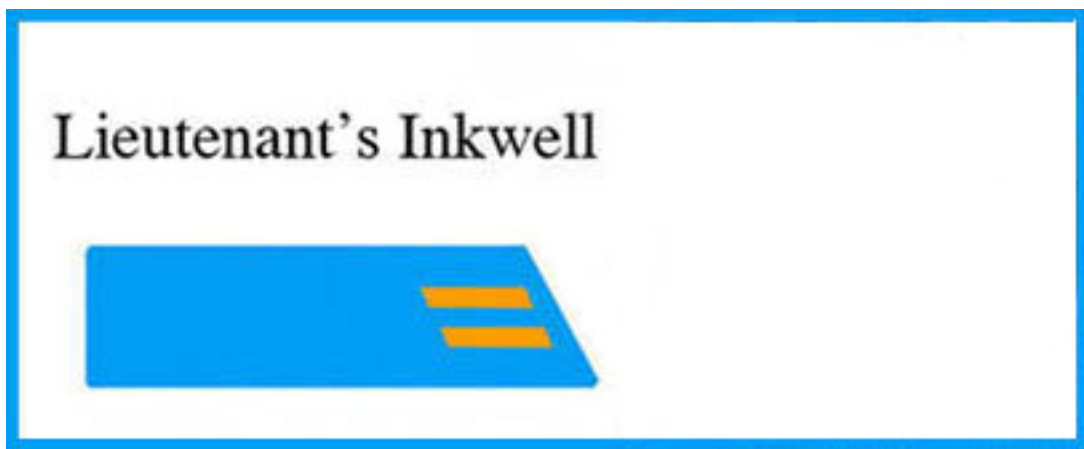
This brings me back full circle in thinking about our future as an organization. This organization has 37 years of its own history, thus lasting much longer than many other living history groups. In fact I can think of perhaps a dozen which have had our longevity. One of the reasons such groups can continue to exist is that they had the ability to continue after their founders had retired from living history. Most groups end shortly after the founder is no longer the group leader. As I look back, at the end of this year, I will have been on the board for 14 years, or over one third of our existence as an organization – while it has been a pleasure (mostly), it can't go on forever. As noted previously, we have two open positions. There has been interest in filling those positions, but those interested are not current members.

Dues are very reasonable, and are actually a very nominal amount of money because this hobby is expensive. Maintain your membership, please make a couple of events, enjoy the friendships you have made, and thereby ensure we have a future, so that others can connect to the past as we have done.

For my part, I am working to have us do things that can hopefully provide worthy experiences, and this is going to mean that we have to create the types of activities that that are worth the effort of attending. Let me hear from you.

Please check if you are on the newsletter mailing list by checking here <https://www.texasrifles.org/lists/> this page will let you update your email address as well as manage your subscription to the list.

Keeping History Alive



Lieutenant's Inkwell

Pending assignment





1SG's Rants

Greetings all. While it has been a relatively slow first half of the year, we've had members out doing a couple of events. A handful made the trip to Pleasant Hill and worked as a combined company with our pards in the 1st Texas and the 9th Texas. Overall, and I may be biased, our company looked and performed the best out there. We had the usual couple of battles for the spectators but the best part was just being in the field and reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones. All in all I think we out 35 men in the field for the events. Thanks to all who came out.

The following month we did our Memorial Day ceremony and again, we did great. One minor medical emergency was had by a member but thankfully EMS and other folks were on hand to assist and he was able to make the drive home after a quick visit to the hospital. We are now well into our summer lull, so everyone stay cool and safe. Hope the recent hurricane had minimal impacts to you and your friends and family. Stay tuned for updates for our fall events. Hope to see you all out there as you're able.

**Best regards,
Joey Alamia 1st Sergeant**



Recruiting Duty

If anyone has a referral interested in the Texas Rifles, contact:
Jim Richardson @ 832-673-8393, Houston



Pleasant Hill – April 2024

We returned to the annual battle of Pleasant Hill this year with three attending. Traditionally, this has not been a big event for us as the event is considered more “mainstream re-enacting” meaning that the level of portraying the past is not what it could be and the event organizers are OK with that. What the event has going for it and why it is worthy of notice is that it is now one of the larger regional events (I made it as about 250 on the CS side and about 100 on the US side) which means that the field in front of the spectators is filled with re-enactors, there is at least some scale to do more than company battle, and we are on part of the actual battlefield.

All of the Red River Battalion attendees combined into one company. We almost had enough for two companies – and this would have given a boost to the quality of Federal command by having a more powerful presence with people in command positions who know how to do this. Capable unit leaders can make

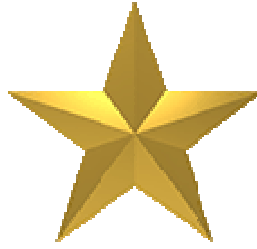
the force give a more credible presence to the spectators and a higher quality experience on the field for the participants as well.



Our friends from the 9th Texas were there as the 165th NY, as that unit was actually present at the battle, and that impression adds to the quality of the event. The rest of the RRB was in Federal impression. The respective commanders are doing a better job of sticking to the scenario, so we didn't have the "independent" activities from units that don't follow the plan, so the event is getting better and more tolerable from the point of view of the authentic. The camp area got too crowded, so the plan is to move the Federal force to its own camp (away from the CS and sutlers, but not too far to walk for the provided meals).

For next year, to encourage the RRB to attend, they intend to have the RRB portray CS. I'm of the opinion that I'd rather stay Federal for this event, but we

will see what the future holds. In summary, the event is improving and worth going back to it in the overall scheme of things.

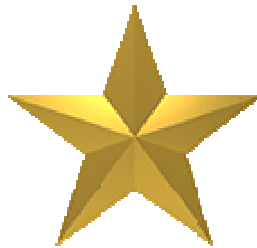


First at Vicksburg May 2024

Unfortunately, this event was cancelled as the 1-13 IN had a real world mission that prevented them from attending on May 19th. In a way, I considered this fortunate for us as we were not going to have the level of attendance I thought we needed in order to give a good account of ourselves to the National Park and the Regular Army.

On the other hand, we have a good reputation with the National Park, and we were asked to do a living history weekend without the 1-13 IN, just us. We have not been able to get dates that work all the way around, and the Park is asking us to look at early next year. I think March and April would have too many likely date conflicts, but want to hear from the membership as to desire to do a living history at the Visitor's Center and what dates you would find acceptable.

At a minimum, I hope we can make May 19th at the Park and the 1-13 IN can attend – this is really an opportunity to do something unique. But, don't be surprised when the Park wants us to do a living history in addition to May 19th. That speaks well for us as a group.



Memorial Day Houston National Cemetery

We returned to the Cemetery for Memorial Day. The change for us being that we only did firing of the opening of the event, and no longer plan to do the 21 guns at the end. That is a concession to modern sensibilities, as the pause between volleys as we reload is perceived to be too long. The good from that is that we no longer have to stay to the end of the event and listened to speeches by people who don't know how to pronounce the names of the battles fought by those who now rest in a place of honor.

Our seven participants left us two short of our desired number, so we were short on having a full strength color party. Something to work on for next year, and hopefully the weather is not quite as humid and oppressive. Recovery from the storm that had hit Houston a week previously probably didn't help matters either.



Editorial – What I Don't Like About Events – Tommy Attaway

As mentioned previously in this newsletter, attendance at events is down. I think we have two factors driving this – one being the physical hardship for those who no longer have the body of a 20 year old, and the other is the nature of the events themselves. I go to a reenactment weekend for one particular battle that should have occurred at or near that spot. Not to do the 1862 valley campaign in 36 hours, or have a tactical where we freewheel “playing army”. I had enough of the real deal. I'm also not there for a fashion show – the spectators are not going to see the level of detail they might if standing three feet away from you when that would matter.

The point used to be to try to replicate what happened many years ago. It might then be better able to understand what happened and why when trying to do the same thing they did on the same ground and like distances. If we are not trying to do the same thing they did, we could just put on a demonstration at the

city park. In my view, the goal should be to come away from that event with a better understanding of the battle.

And another thing – campaigning should mean that. Three days rations already cooked, just warm up (maybe) over the camp fire and eat. We eat far too well at events – both in quantity and variety. Let's try some period fare, after all, we are going to raid Cracker Barrel on the way back



Book Review – The Story of the Confederacy by Robert S. Henry

I (and others) consider this the best one volume book on the war ever written. The foreword to the 1943 edition is written by Douglas Southall Freeman, author of the prize winning definitive four volume biography of Robert E. Lee, and Lee's Lieutenants' A Study in Command. "the one book with which to begin one's study of the period it covers and the book to which to return when everything else on the subject has been read." Equal praise has been given by historians with a Northern view of the war as objective even if somewhat sympathetic toward southerners. "Henry's *Story of the Confederacy* is a remarkably clear, sympathetic, accurate, and inclusive account of the rise and fall of the Confederate states. The story is told with zest and understanding and a clarity that is not always to be found in the description of battles and campaigns."—Henry Steele Commager

Most importantly, is that the reasons for why the war occurs has perhaps its best understandable narrative laid out early in this work. First, is the view of the United States held by the different regions. Northerners tended to agree with the Joseph Story view that the Revolution had made the United States one people and one nation. Southerners viewed the United States as a collection of sovereign political entities. Henry illustrates this point via a contemporary account of interaction with department heads in the Buchanan administration. In response to what are you as a question, Northerners would reply they were Americans and further inquiry was necessary to find out their state of residence, which to them merely indicated where in the United States they

resided. Southerners would reply, “I am a Virginian” or “I am a Georgian”. Their allegiance to the United States was via their state.

Secondly, as is a habit in Henry’s books, he refers to correspondence between two Army officers who are friends, one of the North, and the other of the South. The officer from the North writes to his friend about the potential conflict, reminding his friend that given the economic disparity, population disparity, even if the Southern states armed the slaves, that as a professional soldier, he knew there could only be one possible outcome. The Southern officer replies that everything his friend said was true, but it didn’t matter because it was a matter of honor, and that insult could not be tolerated by the Southern people.

This brings us to the role of slavery in the causes of the war, which is not ignored. What merits attention here is the abolitionist notion that not only is slavery a moral evil, that those who practice it are themselves evil, as well as those who tolerate it. This undercuts the efforts of Southern abolitionists, and leads to the Southern fear, bordering on paranoia, that the North want to destroy the South economically, politically, and socially. Thus, when Lincoln is elected, his assurances that he will not interfere with slavery in the states that permit it, is not considered to be credible. Events then happen from there.

This book was written and researched in the late 1920s and then published as one of the first complete narratives trying to incorporate as many of the original sources as possible. I suggest to the candid observer that this book has stood the test of time. Plenty of used copies abound at a reasonable price – the book has been in print for about 90 years.



Let's try for a September 15th deadline for the next newsletter's articles so we can get one published for September 30th.

Please email me at joseph.a.alamia@gmail.com with any and all articles. I'd love to start a book review/recommendation section if someone would like to contribute (preferably Civil War or Texas Revolution related).

Joey

