



The Tyrant's Foe

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles

Volume 57

Celebrating 38 Years of Excellence

September 2025



Captain's Post

The Fall campaign season has started and I was at a school presentation on October 10th, while John Tyler represented us at the New Braunfels site where we plan to have our annual muster in January of 2026. We need to be at the site on their next scheduled living history day (November 8th) to maintain our good relationship with the site and ensure we can use the site as our muster location.

I had to take the unpleasant step of canceling or September Ft. McKavett event as we would not have sufficient attendance to put on the quality of event our reputation as an organization requires. The park has requested that we reschedule, and suggestions for dates will be solicited with the email that

notifies everyone of this edition of the newsletter. Given the number of sites now willing to host events, it is vital that we make use of the opportunities we have been given.

We have two events now scheduled for November. Living History in New Braunfels which was originally scheduled for October 11th. And our annual Veterans Day in Houston on November 11th. More about these events elsewhere in the newsletter.

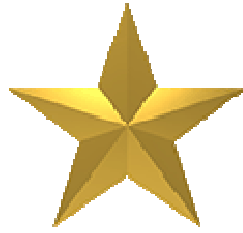
We have also been invited to other events not on our schedule, and they are also covered elsewhere in the newsletter.

Keeping History Alive



Lieutenant's Inkwell

Pending assignment



Because the
Sergeant
Says So



1SG's Rants



Recruiting Duty

If anyone has a referral interested in the Texas Rifles, contact:



I have my haversack! Now what?

by: Arthur Porras

One of the great dilemmas faced by new, and many veteran reenactors is how to eat authentically at Civil war events. The short answer is... not well by modern standards. There is well documented evidence of what the soldiers ate. This article will be a broad stroke at getting new recruits on the right path as diet varied by time of year, region, in camp or on campaign, and whether you were Confederate or Federal. The purpose of this article will be to provide some basic ideas for food that are both authentic, and do not require any modern storage. I will be giving instructions in broad descriptions like "handful" as you will not have measuring cups in the field or camp. PRACTICE at home works best so you can be better acquainted as to your taste. This will also cater more to "In the Field" cooking than garrison events as usually you will be fed at those events. That said, let's get started. Tools and equipment needed: several poke bags to store your food in. Tin plate, set of period utensils, Tin Cup and/or Tin boiler, Sheet iron skillet, and... A rag!! - this will turn out to be your best friend!! You can wipe your face with it, grab stuff off the fire with it, its a washcloth, a strainer, impromptu bandaid, you can wrap it around your hand when your barrel is too damn hot from firing or you just poured boiling water down the barrel to clean.

Federal Impression: In the field

Breakfast.

Coffee - it is well documented that the federal army had ample access and

supply for coffee to the troops in the field. Coffee was issued whole bean - either green or roasted. Why whole? The Federal govt. found that contractors were adding sawdust and other ingredients to pre-ground coffee and then charging more for the grinding. This stopped that.

First -Put your cup on or near the fire to get it boiling. If you are using green unroasted beans take one handful (or more if you like it strong) and spread them out in a skillet over the fire. Stir occasionally until it browns. This makes a really good cup of coffee but be mindful if you are about to break camp this adds about 10 minutes of time. Then, depending on how strong you like your coffee take 1 handful of coffee beans or more, and put them in your tin cup or boiler- use the socket end of your bayonet to grind up your beans. Don't expect a fine grind - you'll be in camp all day! You actually WANT a coarse ground for better flavor. OR: wrap up the beans in a spare rag and crush them with something round(ish) i.e a nearby rock, piece of firewood -without bark -(found that out the hard way), again, your bayonet, the butt of your rifle. They were resourceful with using what they had available- think like they did! Once you get your water bubbling add your coffee grounds and stir the grounds in. Then take the cup OFF the fire and let set for 7-10 minutes. Pour the grounds into another cup using a knife to strain or place another rag into that cup to make a strainer. You can reuse the same "coffee rag" throughout the weekend by just tossing out the used grounds and storing it in your cup to carry. A soggy coffee rag in your haversack is no fun. Another old trick is to add a SMALL amount of cold water to the cup and the grounds will drop to the bottom. Add sugar and if you want you can add condensed milk which was first invented in 1822, patented in 1835. Use the business end of your bayonet to punch a hole in the top. This would be available through sutlers. On the march its appearance would be a welcome delight.

With hard tack - see below

Eggs - Eggs don't HAVE to be refrigerated! Fresh eggs just came out of a warm chicken. What I do is either boiled some up beforehand and put in a cooler while making the haul to an event. Then when I get there i put them in my cup or covered boiler and eat the next morning. Or I have done the same thing with raw eggs. Note: fresh eggs would have been a luxury for soldiers

Bacon - Period rations called for 1/2 to 1lb of pork or beef. The Pork was issued by a slab and was salted cured. You can cheat by keeping them in a cooler till you get there and then wrap it up in brown paper or another rag. I do NOT recommend trying to keep it more than one night. Or you can cook it up in advance - freeze it and when you get to the event take it out of your cooler and put in your haversack. Fry up your bacon and use the grease to either cook your eggs and/or potatoes. The original soldiers even used the grease to oil weapons. Note: bacon as we know it would have been a luxury. If you want to really experience how they ate I have included instructions on salt curing meat.

Hard Tack - the bread staple for the Federal army on campaign. Stupid easy to make. bake this at home before the event.

Makes 10- 12 hardtack biscuits

2 cups all purpose flour (not self rising flour) or wheat flour

3/4 cup cold water

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Place flour in a mixing bowl and add water and salt - mix by hand. The mixture should be fairly dry - barely sticking to itself and your fingers. Add tiny bit of flour or water as needed.

Lightly dust a cutting board and use a floured roller to roll out the mixture about 1/2 inch thick.

Cut the dough in squares approx. 3"X3". Fold the leftovers from the cuts and reroll till all used up. Poke holes in the dough - I use the fat end of a chopstick. The pattern varies from what I have seen most on existing examples. I assume it depended on the manufacturer. But usually it is 4 across and 4 down.

Pre-heat your oven to 375F. Bake the biscuits for 30 minutes, then flip and bake another 30 minutes. Take out and let cool.

Federal rations were specified by weight - this comes out to 9-10 hardtack biscuits per ration. So figure on 20-30 for a weekend if your teeth can take it. Don't bother wrapping - just toss in your haversack.

How to eat these? Soak them in your morning coffee. Enjoy the fact that yours are not moldy or infested with critters.

Lunch or dinner - crumble them up using your bayonet - add water and any grease you got and make mush. Add molasses for flavor if ya got it.

Corn cakes/ dodgers - take about two handfuls of cornmeal and add very little water - just enough to wet. You are looking for a damp paste. You can add salt, pepper. a little bacon or fat grease to it for flavor. Form patties about the size of your palm and fry with a little grease in your skillet. These can be surprisingly filling and quick to make. Make extra for lunch! You can also make these at home and wrap em in brown paper or a poke sack and toss in you haversack.

Flour - you can do basically the same thing as above with flour. I have also instead of patties made a thick rope about the size of your thumb and about 6 inches long. Twist this over your ramrod like a corkscrew and cook over the fire till brown. Don't forget to rotate. Again make extra for lunch. See above about premaking and storage.

Potatoes- Lots of things you can do here. You can cut em up and fry them with bacon grease. You can throw them in the coils and bake, make sure to cover completely the potato - be aware this takes about 1/2 an hour to cook. Fish out the potato with your bayonet and scrape off the burnt and eat.

Corn in the husk - pull the husk down and soak with water - throw on the coals and cover. Or use in a stew - see below

Lunch: I have found that less is more here as they generally don't give you a lot of time to start a fire and cook a meal. Eating out of your haversack corn cakes or flour dough rolls is a great way to get in to the mindset of a Civil war soldier. A hunk of cheese you can say was from home or "liberated" is a nice addition. In season local fruits is also nice - research what was available for the area and time of the event you are portraying. If apples are in season - well ok then. Peanuts if in season etc. Canned items if in a period container are a welcome treat to share with your pard.

Dinner: Let's start with your meat. Salt cured pork or beef was the norm for meat rations. A pound of meat per day will take care of you. There are two methods: dry cure and Brine cure. I use the dry cure for two reasons, time and less mess. The dry cure is just how it sounds - rub the salt on the meat and let it cure - usually overnight, whereas the brine cure requires soaking the meat for 5-6 days. The advantage to the brine cure is the meat will last much longer (think months!) compared to the dry cure method (I have eaten dry cured meat for up to a week in the summer heat with no ill effects so it is fine for a weekend event).

To cure your meat you will need the proper salt cure - normal salt will not be as effective. I use **MORTONS TENDER QUICK** - home meat cure -you can find it in the Salt area of your store - look for the pickling salt and its usually there - Kroger, Walmart, and HEB's usually carry it. You can also order it thru Amazon. It runs about \$20.00 for a 2lb bag which will cure about 40LBs of meat. The following is a **CHEAT** but makes for a better meal - I season the meat with pepper and garlic or even a steak rub - don't tell anyone!! **THEN**, Follow the easy directions on the bag. For dry cure I coat the meat and let it soak in at **LEAST** overnight in a refrigerator. Then remove note: the meat will be a disconcerting **RED** color - this is normal.

I used to take my raw uncooked meat and cook it up at the event until the infamous Shiloh Biblical flood event when I found you cannot light a fire on flowing water and I went hungry for the whole event. Hence the pre cooked corn dodgers advice above. So now I cook the meat after curing - take your cooked meat and place on a paper towel - get any excess grease off. Repeat till the paper towel is pretty dry. Grease gets rancid so the idea is as dry as possible. Recoat the meat again with the salt cure and then wrap in a piece of extra cloth - muslin, left over gingham shirting. Don't get too fancy on the packaging- remember rations were handed out in raw materials - they did not individually wrap the meat ration. For brine cure: again follow the directions on the bag. The salt to water ratio will remain the same for 1 lb or 40 lbs. Again - personally I would cook the meat before the event.

STEW - This is my fav. Cut up your meat into 3/4 inch squares and toss in to your boiler or cup and place on the fire to boil. Throw in some of your army beans now if you want. While that's going - cut up a small potato into about 1/2 inch cubes. Take a small onion and cut in half - cut that half into 1/2 inch cubes.

A carrot cut up into 1/4 inch slices if you want. String beans or even a half a corn if in season. Let the meat simmer boil for about 15 minutes. Hint - taste a spoonful of the water before continuing. Remember this is SALT cured meat. If it is wayyy too salty toss some of the water and add fresh water. Now add your potatoes and carrots. Simmer boil another 10 minutes and then add your onions. If you want you can also throw in a palm full of rice, hominy , or oats for filler. Let it all cook for another 15-20 minutes till the potatoes and carrots are cooked but firm.

Beans - Army beans - if you got the time and will be stationary and very satisfying meal of beans can be made by digging a hole about 1 1/2 to two inches wider all around than a lidded coffee boiler and about 5-6 inches deeper then the height. Save the sod. Put in about two handfuls of beans and some salt cured pork (or beef) cubed up in and fill with cold water and close the lid. If you don't have any salt cured meat put in some salt and pepper - an little onion would hurt either. Put coals in the bottom about 1-2 inches thick and place the boiler in the hole. Then place coals evenly around the boiler and on top. Cover with sod and slight pat it down. Do this the night before and it will be done in the morning for a great breakfast. Or do in the morning and it will be ready for dinner!

Or you can concoct combinations of the above corn and flour recipes and throw in meat to add flavor. Or just boil up that meat to get some of that salt out, boil up some coffee and gnaw on your meat and coffee softened hardtack.

Federal Campaign Rations:

16 ounces hard bread or

12 ounces salt pork or beef

For every 100 rations there would be:

15 lbs of beans or peas

10lbs of rice or hominy

10 lbs of green coffee or 8 lbs of roasted coffee

15 lbs of sugar (not our modern white refined sugar - use the brown granulated

stuff) about 3 oz per man

3lbs and 12 oz salt (about 3 oz per man)

4 qt vinegar

4 oz pepper,

1/2 bushel potatoes

1 qt molasses

IF available - desiccated vegetables, dried fruit, pickles might be issued.

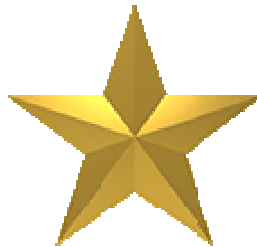
Final comments - Doing it right means you won't starve but you're not gonna get fat either. The diet was monotonous and not terribly conducive to good health and nutrition. Embrace that what you are experiencing is much fresher and only for a few days while this is what a Civil War soldier endured daily. Again - HIGHLY recommend trying out these recipes at home first to get an idea of how long it takes and your personal taste buds. In your kitchen is good - over a fire is best. Your outdoor grill or a local park that allows grilling are good options. Don't wait till a day or two before the event! Also - get all the ingredients and supplies you think you will need and see if they will even all fit in your haversack. Adjust as necessary. I once tried to put a full 3 days Official ration in my haversack and found that the hardtack issue alone took up a lot of the space.

I highly recommend reading Hardtack and Coffee by John D. Billings, and The Life of Billy Yank, and The Life of Johnny Reb by Bell Wiley for great research material.

"But hardtack was not so bad an article of food, even when traversed by insects ,as may be supposed. eaten in the dark, no one could tell the difference between it and hardtack that was untenanted. It was no uncommon occurrence for a man to find the surface of his pot of coffee swimming with weevils, after breaking up hardtack in it, which had come out of the fragments only to drown; but they were easily skimmed off, and left no distinct flavor behind. If a soldier cared to do so, he could expel the weevils by heating the bread at the fire. The maggots did not budge in that way." from : Hardtack and Coffee

"We grab our plates and cups, and wait for no second invitation. We each get a piece of meat and a potato, a chunk of bread and a cup of coffee with a spoonful of brown sugar in it. Milk and butter we buy, or go without. We settle down, usually in groups, and the meal is soon over. ..We save a piece of bread for the last, with which we wipe up everything, and then eat the dish rag. Dinner and breakfast are alike, only sometimes the meat and potatoes are cut up and cooked together, which makes a really delicious stew. Supper is the same, minus the meat and potatoes" Lawrence VanAlstyne, 128th NY Infantry

Reference for Federal rations: Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861: with an Appendix Containing the Changes and Laws affecting Army Regulations and Articles of War to June 25, 1863



Living History – Heritage Village New Braunfels

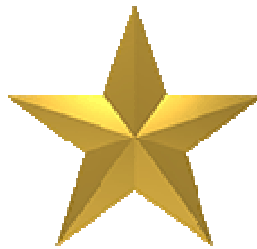
The site location is Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture, 1370 Church Hill Drive, New Braunfels, TX 78130

The site coordinator is fine with folks bunking in there Friday as long as kit is covered during the day Saturday. There are restrooms at the front of the property. There is an open area for drill with a lightly wooded area for shady operations. The site director is a Gulf War veteran who is very friendly towards

living history and reenactors. The living history program is Saturday from 10 AM to 2 PM. You are free to leave and return home and the end of the program.

The site Director allowed our use of the site as our 2025 Muster location, so I hope we continue to make the best possible impression as to who we are and what we can do, so this will be our 2026 muster location.



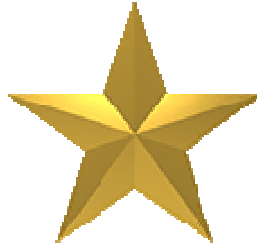


Veterans Day - Houston

We have participating for some years in Houston's Veterans Day ceremony and parade We should assemble at around 08:45 near the pool before City Hall. Email me at tommy_attaway@yahoo.com to get your parking pass for the City Hall Annex Parking as we get to park close to the main ceremony. We are combining efforts this year with the SUV. As usual. we have been asked to fire the rifle salute and the conclusion of the ceremony.

Then we participate in the parade, which makes a 10 city block loop, and brings us back near the parking garage. We need eight men in order to parade the colors of the 13th Infantry. The SUV contingent is working on a vehicle which would follow the color guard and accomplish multiple purposes: allow participation for those who are not able to walk the route, show more reenactors, and call attention to the SUV in the hope of recruiting more members.

We are done around noon, and then on our way back to our homes.



Invitation to Prairie D'Ane

This is an update on the information on the Prairie D'Ane event the weekend of October 31 through November 2, 2025. So far, none of our members have signed up - so I'm not planning to attend.

The link for the event registration is at <https://www.thedepotmuseum.org/2025civilwarweekend>. The registration form is very simple and easy. For Affiliated Unit, I suppose put your home unit. We will portray the 12th Arkansas Battalion of Sharpshooters so let them know that upon arrival so they can direct you to the proper location.

Early set up starts Thursday, Oct 30th but I expect most of us will arrive during the day Friday, October 31st.

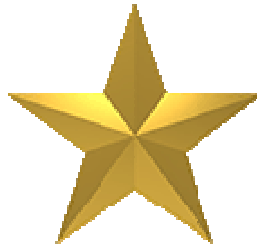
This information was received from Paul Ridgell, 3rd Arkansas.

"There will be no registration fee this year for reenactors. We are gauging attendance of reenactor participation and reaction of reenactors and spectators to determine what events are scheduled for future reenactments to be scheduled. We have to determine a desire and estimated commitments from units and if this date will be acceptable to be able to plan for the future of Prairie D'Ane as a reenactment destination.

We will have porta potty's available, firewood will be available and water will be furnished. We may or may not have some food vendors on location, expecting at least 2 sutlers.

A charge of \$10. a car for spectators on November 1st.

Upon your arrival we will have to escort you to your campsite, you will be able to park your vehicles closer to your camp after unloading. A lot of changes have been made on the Prairie and it may be a little different than before, I need to let you know what could be dangerous driving.”



Event Information - Pea Ridge

Many of us have attended this event in the past for the 150th anniversary. Here are the additional details for this year:

So far combined company registration is at 36. A couple dozen more, and if all attend, we might make the grade for two companies.

Per the RRB 2025 Campaign Event Schedule, we are to called Muster our forces, for a maximum effort, the weekend of December 5-7, 2025 in the vicinity of Pea Ridge Arkansas.

We will be combining our numbers with that of the Red River Battalion for the Pea Ridge event and will attend in Federal impression as the 36th Illinois.

“This event will be the main Red River Battalion event for 2025 and will be a battalion maximum effort event. We will be joining Christian Schuster and multiple other units, and forming the U.S. campaigner battalion, as the 36th Illinois. These are the same units we worked with in forming the federal battalion at Prairie Grove in 2024. Company size requirements are for 25 man companies. At this time, the Red River Battalion will form one combined company to achieve this number. We will consider forming a second company, should we warrant the numbers. This will be a regional event with reenactor participation approximately the same size as Prairie Grove.

The location of the event is 1717 Buzzard Glory Rd., Washburn, MO 65772. This is the second time the event is being held at this location. The land owner has been incredibly enthusiastic and helpful in making this event happen, and additional land has been recently acquired to expand the event site. The land owner has also allowed construction of period buildings on the site to add to the Battle of Pea Ridge experience (see below).

The event website is now up and running. The site address is <https://www.battleofpearidge.com/home>. The event's Facebook page is https://www.facebook.com/events/672308578517236/?active_tab=discussion.

As was done at Prairie Grove, the battalion will once again be issuing rations. And as before, the ration issue will be optional. However, everyone is highly encouraged to partake in the ration issue. Battalion commissary is still working on the details and will have ration fee and payment info in the near future.

From Pea Ridge Battalion Commander Christian Shuster:

****RATIONS AT ALMOST PEA RIDGE 2025 ****

Gentlemen, the group providing rations for the Battalion is the same group who did rations for us last year at Prairie Grove. They do an amazing job and really add to our Battalion and individuals immersion experience at the event.

For "ALMOST PEA RIDGE 2025" they will again be doing rations for the Battalion (provided we get enough participation from all men of the Battalion). Participation is NOT mandatory, but is HIGHLY encouraged and every man in the Battalion is asked to participate.

Cost per man is \$25 for rations for the entire weekend. This includes rations of,

Salt pork or beef

Rice or cornmeal

Hardtack or bread

Dry beans

Coffee

Sugar

Salt

Vinegar

Candles

A Main meal will be prepared and served by the commissary on Saturday night.

ALL men wishing to participate need to send payment of \$25 to your company commander which will be collected and sent to the commissary with list of those participating.

DEADLINE for payment to company commander and participating in rations issue is FRIDAY OCTOBER 17.

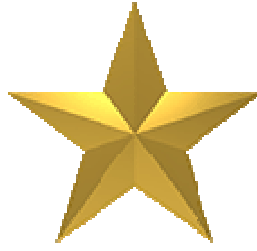
We do not have a Company commander selected to date but Jeremy LeCrone, with the RRB, has offered to take payments for the ration fee and turn them in to Mr. Shuster for our unit.

Please send your ration fee of \$25 to Jeremy's PayPal as a payment to "Friends and Family" at jaeger38@gmail.com

If you have not registered for the event yet, do so now per these directions!

Registration is open and located on the event website at <https://www.battleofpearidge.com/registration>. Please start registering as soon as possible. The registration fee is \$15 and payable only through PayPal as Friends and Family. **** IMPORTANT **** When registering for our combined company, under Unit Affiliation, please enter the following: **Mary Todd's Rifles / Red River Battalion. DO NOT ENTER ANYTHING ELSE!** Those serving on the 36th Illinois battalion staff will need to enter the following: **Mary Todd's Rifles Staff.**

As a campaigner event, we will be living in the field with minimal comforts. Strongly suggest having greatcoat and blanket for this one as you will probably need them.



Let's try for a December 15th deadline for the next newsletter's articles so we can get one published for December 31st.

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

