

# Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry Company A

# The Soldier's Life

March, 2008

Volume 2, Issue 3

*Newsletter of the 2nd Colorado Living History Association*

This publication contains material of interest to American Civil War Living Historians and enthusiasts. If you're not a member and you're interested in our organization check out our contact information on the back of this newsletter.

## Round Mountain in Review

### Congrats to these Pards.

- Welcome new members Jason Kennedy and Daniel Schultze !
- Justin Prince is preparing to enter graduate school

The City of Yale presented the annual Round Mountain Winter Encampment again this February.

The event is a Civil War themed weekend festival held each year in February and draws it's namesake from the Battle of Round Mountain; an early war battle in Indian Territory between Confederate allied Indian tribes and Texas cavalry and Union sympathetic Indian Tribes, mostly Creeks. The event does not even attempt to portray the Battle of Round Mountain as the difficulty of impression plus the fact that the battle was fought almost entire in the dark right after dusk makes

it a difficult scenario to manage.

The Second Colorado voted Round Mountain an "optional effort" for this year's Round Mountain event but ended up fielding a company anyway. The close proximity of the event to Stillwater means local recruits are easy to draw to the Yale, OK location. It was a good thing we had a good turn out because there was a shortage of officers! Traditionally Capt. Griffin is asked to command at Round Mountain but work obligations kept him from arriving until mid afternoon on Saturday and Capt. Trent was asked to command the Fed-

eral Encampment until his arrival. This meant Capt.. Trent had extra duties in respect to drill and event planning. Luckily Capt. Birket of the 1st Kansas was available to help out with our company as Capt. Trent had field command at the Saturday scenario and was considerably busy.

As the event is more of a "festival" and campout than an actual "living history event" the site promotes much of a walk through atmosphere in respect to camps and drill areas so it is very much a "greet the public" type event and it is also considered the unofficial "season opener"

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Our men at Round Mountain including some new recruits. Capt. Trent was asked to command the Federal effort in scenario on Saturday at the event.



### Round Mountain cont.



for reenactors in the Oklahoma area. As such recruiting opportunities are frequent and it is a good time for area units to touch base with each other as the season opens.



Despite cold temperatures and occasional rain attendance was excellent as usual. Both Federal and Confederate encampments numbers in the 40-50 range each and there were 6 pieces of artillery present (A large number for such a small local event!). The close proximity to Oklahoma State University yielded another interesting facet to this year's event. A starting digi-



tal film student shot high definition footage of the battle scenarios and has produced a commemorative video with sound effects and soundtrack as a cooperative effort with the event sponsors. The Round Mountain event never fails to surprise each year and this year even sponsored a sit down meeting of the four most recognized companies in the Oklahoma area; *2nd Colorado & 77th Pennsylvania (US) & the 16th Arkansas and 22nd Arkansas (CS)*. At this meeting these four groups agreed to cooperate to find transportation, equipment, and recruiting solutions for the

reenacting hobby in Oklahoma and to assist each other in those respects whenever possible. Saturday's events were topped off by a trip into Stillwater for a social at a local restaurant with our friends from the *77th PA* and the *22nd AR*.

Although all agreed the weekend could have had a few more degrees of warmth the opportunity the Second Colorado had to educate hundreds of young people while recruiting prospective new members and getting connected with the other units in the area was invaluable.



Round Mountain never fails to bring out the Oklahoma area faithful and bring a lot of new faces into the hobby.

## Special Feature: Book Synopsis *Bloody Trails along the Rio Grande cont.*

A couple of weeks after the battle, Alonzo and several of his comrades visited the battlefield. After crossing the river at the ford opposite the fort, they climbed Table Mountain and hiked north to the high ground occupied by the Rebel forces during the engagement. "Here we enjoyed a splendid view of the battleground ... and now have a vivid impression of the great disadvantage we fought under on that day." Descending the mesa, they walked along the river and saw... "a great many dead horses, and the cottonwood [trees] were badly cut up by cannon. [We] visited the 'pits' where Sibley's killed were buried and, from the size of them, I think there are 400 men in them. [The] enemy burnt a great many wagons, harness, saddles and other property. They burnt their lances. I guess they found they were not the things to fight Colorado Volunteers with!"

On March 13th, the artillery fired their guns in honor of the news of General Grant's great victory at Fort Donelson, which had occurred on February 16th, five days before Valverde. Alonzo, who had been critical of the fact that Canby had left over 600 of his men at the fort during the latter battle, said he was... "glad to know that the

North has got sense enough to beat into them [the military leadership] to make them bring their forces together and fight to win."

The troops wiled away their time, occasionally having brushes with parties of Texans who tried to steal horses and mules, as well as their small supply of beef cattle. Fatigue parties that left the fort had to take their guns in order to keep the local Navajo Indians at a respectable distance. In a skirmish with the latter, Alonzo and his comrades chased the natives some distance, he stopping to help a wounded soldier from the 10th U.S. who was lying in the sagebrush. One of the Colorado men returned to the fort with an Indian scalp.

Meanwhile, events in the northern part of New Mexico Territory had turned the tide of the campaign. On March 26-28, the First Colorado Infantry, commanded by Colonel John P. Slough met the advance elements of Sibley's army at the Glorieta Pass, on the main road between Fort Union and Santa Fe. Attached to the First was Captain Ford's Independent Company - what would later become Company B of the Second Colorado. After blunting the Rebel attack at Apache Canyon on the 26th, the outnumbered

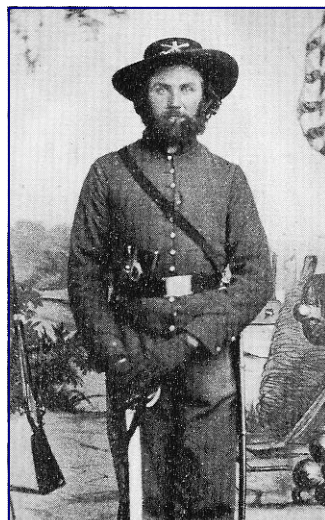
Federals fell back to Pigeon's Ranch, where the fighting resumed in the narrow canyon on the 28th. While this was going on, Lieutenant Colonel John M. Chivington led about 400 men, including Ford's company, on a long trek through the mountains beyond the Confederates' right flank. Emerging several miles behind the enemy lines, they discovered the Rebel supply train at Johnson's Ranch. Descending a steep bluff, the Coloradoans crept up on the unsuspecting guards and routed them, then proceeded to destroy several hundred wagons and teams of horses and mules.

Even though his more numerous and experienced troops had won the battle at Pigeon's Ranch, General Sibley knew his army could not survive for long in this wilderness without its supplies of food, medical supplies, clothing and extra ammunition. So he ordered his men to begin a retreat that would eventually turn into a disastrous defeat. Sometimes called the "Gettysburg" of the Far West," the Battle of Glorieta Pass was the decisive turning point of the war in the New Mexico Territory, just as that at Honey Springs would be a little over a year later in the Indian Territory. In both of these victo-

ries, the men of the Second Colorado would play important roles.

On April 1st, almost six weeks after the Battle of Valverde, Colonel Canby began marching his army north from Fort Craig to join forces with Slough's force and other troops from Fort Union in an attempt to trap Sibley's retreating army between them. Not included in his column were the two regiments of mostly-Hispanic New Mexico volunteers which were left to hold Fort Craig - Kit Carson's First, which was a fairly well disciplined unit, and Miguel Pino's Second. Many men of the latter had deserted during and after Valverde. Two companies, as Alonzo put it, had later been... "disbanded as they were not worth their rations."

By the 8th, Canby's 750 troops had reached Albuquerque, which they found to be strongly held by a rearguard of 400 men from Sibley's army. Many of the Northern soldiers had left families in the town, and Canby refused to bombard it for fear of endangering them. Alonzo said that the old general... "would rather let them [the Rebels] keep possession of the town than kill one woman or child. He sent a man in under a flag [of truce] to see if the Texans would not allow the women and children to leave. [The] Texans



This fascinating memoir was recently discovered by our friends out in Colorado. Board President Cal Kinzer (right) has procured a copy and discovered it to a limited printing collector's item (less than 1,000 printed). Those interested in securing their own copy should search under the following publishing information:

Bloody Trails along the Rio Grande

The Diary of Alonzo F. Ickis

Co. A, Second Colorado Infantry

Edited by Nolie Mumej

Denver: Old West Publishing Company, 1958



## Special Feature: Book Synopsis *Bloody Trails along the Rio Grande* cont.

would not let them go. G- D-- such men and the cause for which they are fighting!"

The Union troops waited all day on the 9th, expecting to assault the town after nightfall. They were not looking forward to this, because the Confederates were well entrenched, and the attackers would undoubtedly have suffered heavy losses. Captain Dodd and Captain Peter Plympton of the regu- lars both volunteered to lead the storming parties. Colonel Canby... "came out and told the men he expected them to do their duty, and drew the attention to the invincible bayonet in making night attacks." Alonzo recorded that the boys were all anxious for the fight; but apparently the colonel had second thoughts. At 9:00 p.m., he gave the order to bypass the stronghold and continue on north towards Santa Fe.

On April 10th, the campaign resumed, the troops marching hard to try to intercept Sibley's main force. They trekked through mountains all day in the rain, then camped in snow on a range of hills that night. The next day, the mules were giving out, so the men were ordered to lighten the wagon loads. They burned 2,000 blankets and all the clothing except what they were wearing. By the 13th, they had reached Devil's Canyon, where they were joined by the First Colorado. Colonel Slough had resigned, and the regiment was now under the command of the combative Lieutenant Colonel Chivington, who Alonzo described as... "a brave man and a preacher. When in the fight at Pigeon Ranch, he would tell the boys when the shells were flying over them, 'look out, my boys, there goes the gospel!' The boys go their

bottom dollar on Chivington." Also still with the First Colorado were the "Denver boys" of Captain Ford's company. Alonzo found several among them who he knew from his days... "in the mines." The new arrivals brought with them a good train of supplies, including rations. "It is a good thing for us," Alonzo remembered... "for we had but one day's grub with us."

Sibley's army (which was all cavalry) had, by this time, slipped around Canby's forces, and reached Albuquerque. From there, they planned to move back south and try again to take Fort Craig. The hard-marching Union infantry rushed to cut them off and, on April 15th, caught up with the rearguard at the village of Peralta. This battle would have a lot of similarities to another such action engaged in by the Second Colorado at Perryville, Indian Territory, about a month after the battle of Honey Springs. Like that later battle, it was mostly a long-range artillery duel. The Coloradoans came under fire with round shot, which again did little damage. The bombardment went on all day, from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. The Federals lost only two killed and seven wounded, while the Confederate casualties totaled around 200.

The next day, the Rebels retreated and the Union troops resumed their pursuit. That night, one of the Company A boys, a private named Henry Mateson, was accidentally killed. He was acting as commissary sergeant when he went to sleep by a burning candle in a wagon. The wagon caught on fire and he was burned to death. Alonzo said... "I expect he was tight when he went to sleep. This makes the fourth man we went up 'soap' since we left Fort Craig from the effects of rot."

The Coloradoans pursued the retreating Rebels, who were within sight on the 18th. However, the travel was hard due to blowing sand, and Alonzo said they were... "scratching de grab-

ble" all day. By the 19th, the enemy had disappeared into the mountains west of the Rio Grande and, by the time they reached Socorro on the 22nd, the Union forces had given up the chase and decided to return to Fort Craig. At San Antonio, the boys all got tobacco. Alonzo reported that... "The Colorado First are death on chickens and sheep or beef. They steal all they see along the road. They stole an *entire* store in Los Notres. There was \$1,000 worth of goods in it. They say, if the Mexicans will not fight for their country, they must support those who will."

Canby's army arrived back at Fort Craig on April 23rd, and the men of Dodd's company were reunited with about fifteen of their comrades who had been left behind because they were wounded or unable to walk. They had been subsisting on a ration of... "8 oz. of flour and very little of anything else." After re-establishing their old camp at Valverde, Alonzo and some of his comrades visited the fort, whose works they found much improved since they had last been there. Kit Carson ... "has kept his Mexicans at work. They dug a trench inside the walls and have strengthened the walls some, but the plaza is full of rags and dirt. Canby will soon have this cleaned off. There is too much 'Injin' in Kit to keep anything clean." On May 11th, Dodd's company was given the first issue of *full rations* they had received since the Battle of Valverde on February 21st!

The rest of May was taken up by the monotony of garrison duty in and around the fort. On the 31st, word arrived of the official formation of the Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry, designating Dodd's company as Company A and Ford's as Company B. Eight other companies were then forming in Colorado, and the entire regiment would be reunited there later. The territorial governor, William Gilpin, had appointed Jesse H. Leavenworth, a West

Point Graduate and son of famed Colonel Henry Leavenworth, to be the regiment's colonel. Captains Dodd and Ford, obviously in recognition of their valor and service at Valverde and Glorieta Pass, became lieutenant colonel and major respectively. Lieutenant J.C.W. Hall was promoted to captain of Company A, and would continue in that position throughout the remainder of their service.

That same day, Alonzo almost lost his life. Apparently another soldier, George Elder, was swimming in the Rio Grande when he was caught in an undertow. Alonzo went in to help, but was also caught in the deadly whirlpool. Both were drawn to the bottom of twenty feet of water. George Simpson came in to assist, and all three came very near to drowning. Several hundred soldiers gathered on the bank, but were too far away to help. Finally... "by keeping a 'stiff upper lip' and good swimming," they were able to make it back to shore. The next day, another man from the First Colorado was drowned in the river. Alonzo said that he... "was a good swimmer, but swimming did not save him."

*Cal's great synopsis of an actual Second Colorado soldier's memoir will continue next issue.*



## Second Colorado 2008 Schedule

### April

April 19-20 — Olathe, KS Civil War on the Boarder Living History Festival.

### May

May 16-18— Kansas City (area), MO. The Battle of Westport. **North-South Alliance Recognized event. MAX EFFORT**

### June

No events for June

### July

July 19th-20th Ft. Union, NM Living History.

### August

August 15th-17th McAlester, OK Battle of Perryville, Indian Territory Living History Day and Memorial Service

### September

September 27th & 28th- Battle of Honey Springs Checotah, OK

### **MAX EFFORT**

### October

No events for October

### November

November 17th- Soldiers Life Program at Honey Springs

November 17th- Remembrance Day Ceremony in OKC, OK

### December

December 6-7- Prairie Grove, AR. Biennial battle reenactment.

## Other events of note

### March

March 28th –30th – Port Hudson, LA; 145 anniversary.

### **Cal Kinzer & Jim Trent are attending**

March 28th-30th Dayton, MO, Burning of Dayton event

### **The 77th PA is attending**

### April

April 26-27 - Defiance, MO. Boonesfield Village living history.

### **Some members have shown interest**

### May

May 3rd-5th Reenactor, Boy Scout Camp out at Honey Springs.

May 19th—Soldiers Life Program at Honey Springs

### June

June 28-29 - Gettysburg, PA ("Andersburg") Large-scale regional battle reenactment,

### July

July 19th Anniversary Program at Honey Springs Battlefield. Usual Ceremonial program for the public.

### August

August 15th-17th McAlester, OK Battle of Perryville, Indian Territory Living History Day and Memorial Service

### September

September 27th & 28th— Southeast Missouri Marmaduke's Raid

### October

October 4th & 5th Battle of Huzzah Valley. MCWRA event



Pvt. Kinzer demonstrates "Eat in 9 Times." from Scott's Light Infantry Tactics for Three Banded Salad Fork. By the book gentlemen! (above)

The Coloradoans pose for a picture while at garrison. (below)



October ?– Elmore City Shootout, Tactical event Elmore City, OK

**As non calendar events pop up during the year they will be featured here along with information on any area reenactors that may be attending. Interested members are encouraged to attend any extra events that pique their interest and work with other area reenactors to cut travel expense.**

## Improving Impressions: Converting your cartridge box mount

### Changing your sling mounted cartridge Box to a belt mounted one

Chances are your sling mounted cartridge box can be belt mounted you just haven't done it before. In reenacting it's fairly common for "old hands" to just assume everyone knows how to do this stuff and not pass on what they consider "common knowledge". That being said here's a guide on how to change over your cartridge box from sling mounted to belt mounted for all you "new guys".

Take a look at the back of your cartridge box. The one in the picture is rigged for a sling. You can see the sling buckled into the bottom of the box in an X pattern. Under your sling's straps you should see two vertical straps attached to the back of the box. Note: not all cartridge boxes have these two straps and some are made for sling mounting only. If you don't see two vertical straps then stop reading these instructions you are going to have to buy a new cartridge box to accomplish belt mounting.



Now it's time to remove the sling from your cartridge box. Simply unbuckle the sling from the buckles on the bottom then pull the sling out of the angled securing straps at the top. Take a good long look at how it's all strapped and buckled together before taking it apart, you'll need that sling again some day.

.Now inspect the straps on the back of your cartridge box. They are tight but should have a little give when you shove a finger in between them and the back of the box. Slide the belt end that you removed the buckle from into both vertical straps and out the other side.



Now return your cap pouch and the belt buckle.



When you are finished you should have something like the picture here. When the cartridge belt is lying on its face the cap pouch should be on the left and the bayonet scabbard on the right. Wearing this rig may require you to cinch up your belt an extra notch as the weight of the box along with the cap pouch and bayonet can cause your belt to drop during wear .



Take a look at the back of your accoutrement belt. You'll notice two spikes or puppy paw protrusions holding the buckle on the belt. By working these out of their holes you'll be able to remove the belt buckle which will make the mounting of pouches and boxes on your belt that much easier



Now slide your cap pouch over and off the belt so you can slide the cartridge box on. Don't bother with removing your bayonet scabbard as it will be in the proper place on the belt already and shouldn't get in the way while mounting your cartridge box on the belt.

## "Jeremiah Johnson" Was in the Second Colorado By Cal Kinzer

Did you know that the famous Western mountain man, "Jeremiah" Johnson, was a member of the Second Colorado? Well, he was; and here are the details as best we can know about this enigmatic and controversial historical figure.

Of Scottish descent, it is believed that "Johnson" was born in Little York, New Jersey around 1824 under the name *John Garrison*. He was described as a large man, standing around six feet tall and weighing over two hundred pounds. During the Mexican War in 1846, he joined the navy, but deserted after striking an officer. Changing his name to *John Johnston*, he traveled west to trap and hunt in Wyoming. He also became a "woodhawk," supplying cord wood to steamboats. Shortly after arriving there, he married a Flathead Indian woman.

In 1847, his wife was killed by members of the Crow tribe, and "Johnson" set out to take revenge, his personal war on the Crows lasting more than twenty years. The legend says that he would cut out and eat the liver of each man he killed, thus earning the nickname, "Liver-Eatin' Johnson." Eating the liver of a victim is a symbolic way of completing a revenge slaying. However, it's possible that this only happened once, and that that he only pretended to eat the liver. In reality, he probably killed only a few Crows, not the 300 the tall tales report.

One of the best-known stories is that "Johnson" was once ambushed by a group of Blackfoot warriors in the dead of winter on a foray to

visit his Flathead relatives, a trip that would have been over five hundred miles. The Blackfoot plan was to sell him to the Crow, his mortal enemies, for a handsome price. He was stripped to the waist, tied with leather thongs and put in a teepee with an inexperienced guard outside. "Johnson" managed to chew through the straps, then knocked out his young guard with a two-finger jab between the eyes, took his knife and scalped him with it, and then quickly cut off one of his legs. Making his escape into the woods, he survived on the Blackfoot's severed limb until he arrived, more dead than alive, at the cabin of Del Gue, his trapping partner, after a journey of some two hundred miles.

For some reason, "Johnson" traveled to St. Louis in 1864 where he enlisted as a private in Co. H, Second Colorado Volunteer Cavalry. This was a new regiment that had just been formed by the consolidation of the Second and Third Colorado Infantry regiments. The roster of Co. H lists him as "John Johnston." One source says that he served as a sharpshooter with the regiment. As such, he would have been involved in the guerilla fighting in western Missouri, and around the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Fort Leavenworth areas that occupied the regiment throughout most of that year. He would also have been present for the series of battles at Westport, Trading Post, Mine Creek, 2nd Newtonia (Missouri) and Fayetteville (Arkansas) that occurred during the Price Raid and its aftermath. One obituary says that he was wounded at Newtonia.

After the war, "Johnson" returned to the mountains, and eventually made peace with the Crow, who became "his brothers." His personal vendetta against them finally ended after twenty-five years. However, the post-Civil War West was still a very violent place, particularly during the Plains Indian Wars of the 1870's. Many Indians of other tribes, especially the Sioux and Blackfoot, would come to know the wrath of "Dapieks Absaroka," the Crow killer and his fellow mountain men.

During the 1880's, "Johnson" served as a deputy sheriff in Coulson, Montana, and town marshal in Red Lodge, Montana. In December 1899, he was admitted to a veteran's hospital in Sawtelle (now a part of Los Angeles), and died there on January 21, 1900, at the age of about 76. He was buried in the nearby Sawtelle National Cemetery. In the early-1980's, his body was disinterred and moved to Cody, Wyoming, where it is now buried along with several other local old West characters at Old Trail Town, near the entrance to Yellowstone National Park, a collection of authentic period buildings that includes a cabin once used by the Wild Bunch which included Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.



The popular and well known film "Jeremiah Johnson" starring Robert Redford (left) has immortalized the actual mountain man and Second Colorado veteran. His grave and memorial in Cody, Wyoming (right)



## The Soldier's Life

Newsletter of the 2nd Colorado Living  
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**Next issue: The next installment of the Ickis memoir synopsis, more impression improving tips for our newer reenactors and event reviews of Olathe!**

We're on the Web!

[www.secondcolorado.info](http://www.secondcolorado.info)

The 2nd Colorado Living History Association is a Living History /Reenactment organization based in the Oklahoma area with members across the country. We offer a wide variety of services to the public including:

Living History programs for Classroom or Public Festivities

Ceremonial Services for Patriotic days of observance

Battle Reenactment and Civil War themed events to educate the public.

In addition we strive to provide a fun and authenticity driven 19th century experience to our members.

We chose the Second because six companies of the regiment served in the Indian Territory during the summer and fall of 1863 and played an important role in the battles of Cabin Creek and Honey Springs. They were also stationed for a time at Fort Gibson and participated in skirmishes at Perryville (McAlester) and Webber's Falls. This makes the regiment one of the most significant Union infantry units in our state's Civil War history. If you are looking for Civil War Living Historians for your Event, Patriotic Ceremony, or Educational program please [email us](mailto:jtrent@suddenlink.net).

**Dates to Remember!**

**April 19th & 20th Civil War on the Border, Olathe, KS**

**May 16th– 18th Stand of Colors NATIONAL MAX EFFORT, Kansas City, MO**

**<http://standofcolors.com>**

## A Word from the Captain

Friends!

The warm season is finally just upon us. This is the time of year when our long time veterans and our possible recruits look out the window and say "Hey, I can camp out in this!" In other words it's big event season. Boy do we have some nice ones too. If there was ever a year to try out the hobby this is it.

This April we have Olathe with our friends from the Kansas and Missouri units. This will be a heavy encampment event with full Sibley camp impression, expect camp tours and docent duties much like what we did at Cabin Creek

In respect to the public. The event will see heavy attendance from the Ellen Williams Society and will offer a company mess with our own Miz Laurie.

After that is of course the STAND OF COLORS event in Kansas City. This event offers a campaigner /outpost area as well as an unscripted tactical and set battles in reenactment of the actions around Westport in Price's Missouri Invasion of 1864. This event is a Maximum effort event and everyone can expect regular communication for me in the coming weeks on this event.

We're going to need everyone's help on the Kansas City event. Stand of Colors is

very much considered a legitimacy test for having large events on this side of the Mississippi River. If we can manage a large good quality turnout we could enjoy more national effort events in the future. So if you have a friend or relative you've been trying to drag to an event this is the one to take them to.

On to Olathe!

Jim Trent

Captain Commanding

2nd Colorado Volunteer Infantry

Comp A

