

Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry Company A

The Soldier's Life

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Newsletter of the 2nd Colorado Volunteer Infantry Living History Organization

This publication publishes 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.

145th Pea Ridge (Bentonville, AR) is coming up!

Congrats to these Pards.

- Steve Clapp and Jim Baxter have purchased their Hardee hats.
- Larry Toll and his students from Evangel University will be falling in with us at Pea Ridge.
- The First Kansas Infantry will be falling in with us at Pea Ridge.
- Welcome new member Justin Prince.

The Peel House Foundation of Bentonville Arkansas will be sponsoring a semi immersion reenactment event to commemorate the 145th anniversary of the battle of Pea Ridge. This event will be the last large function of the 2007 calendar. The proceeds from the event benefit the sponsor which maintains the historic Peel House in Bentonville as well as several other historic sites in the northwest Arkansas area.

This event is a Frontier Brigade maximum effort and as such attendance will be high. The larger numbers of reenactors will allow us to participate in Battalion and possibly even Brigade level drill. In addition it has been confirmed that Battalion drill will be coordinated by Major Gross of the 1st US which means a good quality drill practice. The site is well supplied with water and firewood and the event committee has an excellent reputation.

As the Second Colorado wasn't at the Battle of Pea Ridge our unit's impression will be based on the 37th Illinois Infantry. Standard Western Federal impression is appropriate but Forage caps are encouraged over brimmed hats. Both Bedrolls and knapsacks are fine. The Federal army was encamped, well supplied and

building breast works at Pea Ridge so camping style is as per an encamped Federal force near the small town of Leetown and Elkhorn Tavern. Participants will be charged a 5\$ fee when checking in.

Our unit's goal for the weekend is to use this large event to and the presence of larger formation to practice and learn larger evolutions. It is also nice when a strong company street structure is used with large encampments such as this to create a sense of the huge tent cities of period armies (just a couple hundred tents when ordered properly look darn impressive). Due to the wide mix of units that will be attending first person impression may be next to impossible to maintain but the event sponsors would like all participants to present as authentic camp life environment as possible. Once again it is time to "teach by example" and work to encourage authenticity in the field.

The Battle of Pea Ridge

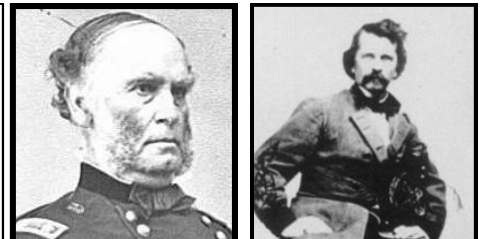
The battle of Pea Ridge was the result of Major General Samuel Curtis aggressive push into Northwest Arkansas after driving Confederates from Missouri in 1862. Determined not to allow another confederate invasion via Arkansas Curtis dug in at an excellent defensive position along Sugar creek near Pea Ridge.

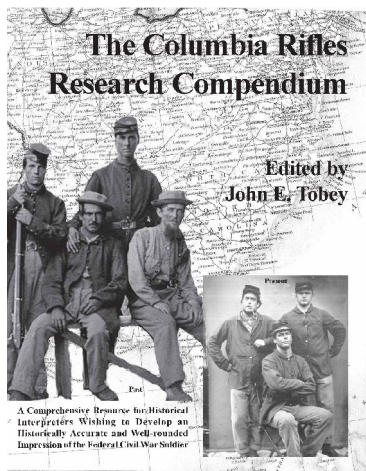
Confederate Major General Earl Van Dorn devised a plan to split his Army of the West into two large wings. One Wing under Sterling Price would attack Curtis' defensive position drawing his attention while a second force under Benjamin McCulloch (including a Brigade of Indian warriors under Albert Pike) attacked Curtis' flank via Leetown. However the poor quality of the troops and officers in the Confederate force allowed Union scouts to learn of the flanking maneuver and reposition troops to defend against the attack at Leetown.

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The principle commanders in the Battle of Pea Ridge were Samuel Curtis (US, left) and Earl Van Dorn (CS, right).





The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium is published by The Watchdog Inc.

Civil War Book Review; "Columbia Rifles Research Compendium, 2nd Edition"

For those Federal Civil War reenactors who wish to upgrade and improve their impression, the best source today, one which brings together information backed by historical sources, is The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium, 2nd Edition. This book, published in 2006, is an expanded and improved version of the 1st edition, published five years earlier by the Columbia Rifles, a campaign-oriented Civil War living history organization.

The compendium is divided into four parts. Part I: General Philosophy, introduces the work by explaining not only the best types of historical sources to consult, but what to research and study in order to improve ones impression as a federal soldier. The goal of the book is summarized by the

"Campaigner's Manifesto."

Part II: Material Culture, in 45 chapters covers everything the federal infantryman wore, used, or carried in the field from caps/hats to brogans and everything in between. How it was made, what it looked like and what color it was- everything is included.

Part III: Methods, covers in 22 chapters how soldier functioned, what they did and how the material culture was actually used. Everything from how haversacks and canteens were worn, to how to construct a bivouac or field works, to combat experience and how to prepare correct food.

Part IV: The Man Inside the Uniform, covers in 14 chapters how to do first person impression, the appearance of

soldiers on campaign, their attitudes and military discipline. The average soldier's knowledge of life on a farm or in a small village is covered, as is period speech, and how to portray Irish or German soldiers in the Union Army.

In over 437 pages covering virtually every aspect of the Union infantryman, The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium is the one book every serious Reenactor should read. Heavily illustrated, and printed on high quality glossy paper, it is well worth the \$40.00 price.

Note: Second Colorado Membership dues for the 2008 season will not be collected until the Winter Business meeting. Members are asked not to send in their dues until at this meeting or after it. The Winter Business meeting will be held in January.

Pea Ridge cont.

The purpose of McCulloch's attack was to break Curtis' line of supply and to threaten his rear flank while Price's frontal attack occupied his attention. None of those objectives were completed and the attack at Leetown was a Confederate disaster. Although the initial attack was successful and three guns were captured by Pike's Indian Territory troops General McCulloch and a good portion of the command officers were killed half way through the attack and in the resulting confusion the attack became sporadic and uncoordinated and eventually fell into retreat towards Price's position.

For his part of the battle plan

General Sterling Price and his division performed admirably successfully pushing Federal troops past Elkhorn Tavern and Telegraph Road. Although the enemy was falling back Price feared a Federal counterattack and was low on ammunition He choose to hold position around the tavern and camped his army. Had McCulloch succeeded on his wing then he need not pursue. It was not until later as the remains of McCulloch's wing came into camp that Price and Van Dorn learned of the disaster on the other side of Pea Ridge. They were forced to reorganize the remainder of their forces and hope to hold off the Federal counterattack the next day.

Having successfully stopped the Confederate flanking force at Leetown Curtis could now consolidate his forces to attack the Confederates around Elkhorn Tavern. The counter attack was led by Curtis's second in command Franz Sigel and made effective use of artillery to push back the Confederates. Running low on ammunition Van Dorn abandoned the battle and fell back down the Huntsville Road.

The battle of Pea Ridge decisively ended the Confederate threat to southern Missouri and was one of the largest battles fought west of

Improving Impressions; Brimmed Hats

One of the most important items a Reenactor can purchase is his hat. For a Civil War infantryman in the field a good hat was as important as a canteen of water especially in the southern and western theatres of the war. A good brimmed hat is a necessity under the heat of the sun or a welcome aid again a constant rain; two conditions the Civil War soldier commonly found himself enduring.

But what is a proper hat? Selecting headgear is one of the area where many beginning reenactors make mistakes and where many "farbs" don't show enough dedication to care. It is often assumed that any brimmed hat is appropriate but nothing could be further from the truth. In the 19th century hats were a regular fashion

as well as work item and great care was given to their selection. Wearing a "cowboy hat" or other such non period headgear is the equivalent of wearing a baseball cap to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Certain hat styles, no matter how basic a rudimentary they may seem to us in the modern era just were not available at the time due to either technology or fashion.

The best source for identifying authentic hat styles is period photos. Numerous examples can be found in books of period photos. The practice of asking subjects to remove hats for photograph portrait is a modern one. Period photographers often photographed a group of subject simply as he found them. Often soldiers in period photos are



seen wearing their hats especially if the photo is taken outdoors. A hat was a piece of individuality for the soldier as well as a cherished tool.

When seeking out a hat for your impression make sure to consider the target regiment of your impression of course and if there is historical leeway on hat selection for your impression choose a hat that will actually serve it's purpose and protect you in the field at events. Should you find yourself at a warmer event with constant sun exposure you'll be thanking the

**DISMANTLING FT. MCALISTER
December 1864– Note the headgear
(Library of Congress, No. B811-3503B)**

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FEDERAL PICKETS Outside Atlanta, GA - September - November, 1864 - (Library of Congress, No. 0690LC-B811-3628B) Note all the unique ways these men have formed their Hardee Hats.



Improving Impressions; Hats cont.

usefulness not the authenticity of the Hardee hat's wide brim.

Hats are an area where it's easy to get suckered into a poor quality product. Any Reenactor looking for a serious field hat is looking at spending at least one hundred dollars with a reputable hat maker. Most of the hats on Sutlers row are very generic and mass produced many of them lack hat bands or any trimming on the brim the two items that help the durability of any hat. My personal measure of hats in the Sutler's tents is to check how their stacked. If have to use two hands to separate the top hat on the stack from the one under it and when they separate I hear a "whisking" sound it tells me these hats were machine formed on an automated hat machine and stacked and crated in such uniformity that they form a vacuum when stacked. Ugh.



To be fair there are upper quality Sutlers out there and sometimes hat makers do offer hand made hats at larger events. The problem with quality hats at Sutlers row is the chance of getting the perfect fit is just that ; a chance. Often when you find a quality hat of the right make at an event it's the wrong size. When planning to buy a good

field hat with a protective brim a Reenactor should really just enjoy the merits of custom hat making with one of the better known hat makers in the field.

In addition to working with recommended hat vendors such as Tim Bender and Dirty Billy a Reenactor considering a new hat purchase should always ask a few Pards to their opinion of their new hat. Why? Well, we know from letters and memoirs that hats were topic of conversation amongst men of the period and so no doubt hat selection was influenced by one's friends in 19th century. Having a fellow hobbyist consult on your impression is a sign of a mature Reenactor. If you're a new guy , ask a vet to look at that hat with you, if you're a veteran ask your oldest Pard if he thinks you need a new one. After all these are the people who are going to have to look at you in your new field hat, better make sure your not a sore sight!

Of course a more active Reenactor laments the wide variety of head gear needing to accommodate the different impressions at different events. Forage caps, Hardees, Slouch hats the list grows if you add certain dress hats and garrison duty variants were used and some actions near fortifications. Hats it seems, like r things in reenacting

become a big ticket item if you want to buy top quality and durability for every hat you purchase. Beginning reenactors can be intimidated by their first hat choice and simply avoid it and get way more field use out of their forage cap than they should. I've often discussed the hat issue with younger reenactors to find they are intimidated by a desire to be authentic (authenticity awareness on hats is not really stressed in many units) and a general lack of knowledge about what makes a good quality hat. The later is understandable enough the modern American male works in a world of air conditioned cubicles, he doesn't use a field hat and therefore can't identify one. Best tips for new guys?

1. Look at period photos
2. Find a hat that looks useful and attractive to you and cross identify with a recommended vendor.
3. Discuss your new hat with a friend in the company.

Then order your field hat and wear it until it falls apart. Chances are more specialized hear gear will come along any way as you expand your hobby. To begin there's no better



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Next issue: Some more tips for our newer recruits on improving their impression. A new feature spotlight unit members and another CW book review.

We're on the Web!

www.secondcolorado.info

The 2nd Colorado Volunteer Infantry is a Living History /Re-enactment 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!

October 26-28th Pea Ridge Reenactment

(Bentonville , AR)

November 17th Soldier's Life, Honey Springs

November 17th SUCVW Remembrance Day (OKC,OK)

A Word from the Captain

Well, Cabin Creek has come and gone. A good outing at a large public event. Large state sponsored activities always draw considerable attention to dramatic local historic events. While the history of Big Cabin Creek isn't a large historic event in itself, it is a local connection for the people of that area to the greater history of the American Civil War itself. By bringing attention to the history folks have right in their back yards they can establish a connection and an appreciation for the nation changing history of places like Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

It is for this reason that when excellent work on

behalf of the company is put forth that I have such pride in our encampments. Everyone performed admirably at Cabin Creek; Veterans were friendly and helpful and the Fish were inquisitive and open to instruction. Everyone's attention to maintaining a good camp appearance and using period language and camp life methods made presenting the educational material to the public very interactive and therefore memorable. I was pleased to have more than one member of the public complemented our camp appearance and the authentic "feel" of our area.

This authentic feeling comes from our actions as well

as the equipment we use and the uniforms we wear. Maintaining a period demeanor and using period speech is more than just an immersion exercise it a method to help adopt a more period presentation for educating the public.

On to Pea Ridge!

Jim Trent

Captain Commanding

2nd Colorado Volunteer Infantry

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