

THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH UNITED STATES INFANTRY, COMPANY A

Volume 4 Issue 1

Spring 2014

Special points of interest:

- Peterboro -no registration fee, mess \$15.00 per person due 6/1.
- Massena, registration \$5.00, mess \$10.00 per person due 7/5
- Erie Canal registration \$5.00, mess fee \$18,00 per person due 8/16
- If you register for events on your own please let 1st Sgt MacMillan and Mrs. Mayers know.

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First Call 1st Sgt Neil K. MacMillan Leadership as a Re-enactor

Most of you at one time or another have heard me say, “When it stops being fun, it’s time to pull chocks”. Quit sweating. It’s still fun for me. (Did I have you scared, Shane?) My point is rather different. Yes, reenacting is a recreational pursuit. I seriously doubt most of us will get called up for military service any time soon unless things go horribly and dramatically wrong. But while it is a hobby, it is also a hobby where people can be maimed or killed. What generally keeps that from happening far less frequently than it could is leadership.

First off: leaders are not born, they’re made. It was one of the first things I learned in my military career. We have all seen units where someone bought a uniform and officer’s bars and took the field. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it is a fiasco. We elect our officers and non-commissioned officers,

and honestly, I was initially against the idea. There were two reasons: one historical and one observation. I have stated the observation above and the historical reason is simple. In the Civil War as in wars before, volunteer units elected officers and non-coms. It generally turned into a popularity contest. The officer or non-com that was seen as a disciplinarian was ousted in favor of someone more palatable and pliable. Needless to say, it worked as well as a rotten fire hose.

Leadership takes training and a lot of common sense. Fortunately in our unit, the latter is in abundance and the former is strongly advocated. So I have changed my view on electing officers and NCOs in this unit. It is also said that to be a good leader, first you have to be a good follower. Again, the military was correct. Here in the 12th

we have a cadre that is adept at that. Yes, there are some who tend to shirk their duties, but on the whole our privates (not those privates, Garrett!) are the best in the hobby. So what does it take to be a good NCO or Officer?

- 1- Be a team player. There are times when your idea may be better than what the “Old Man” or I put out and we’ll listen. If, however your idea is overridden, suck it up and take one for the team. Usually there is a reason, or at a big event, the powers that be override us. When we’re setting up or taking down, pitch in! Everyone runs into a situation where we have to pull chocks and bolt and I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about the people who gain the power of

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Dear Mrs. Hurd,

It was very nice seeing you again. Though I do say I wish it had been under better circumstances than the brigade meeting. This war has gone on to long and there been way to many deaths and injuries. I know my husband is tired of putting the soldiers back together and frustrated that he cannot do more to help the seriously injured soldiers.

Thank you for volunteering to take care of gathering provisions and coordinating the meals for the ladies annual visit to the unit's encampment in Peterboro, New York on June 13 – 15, 1864. Please let me know if any of the other ladies or myself can be of assistance with the provisions. Of course we are willing to assist with the preparation and serving. I do hope that the First Sgt can be persuaded to provide us with some able young men to assist with the meals, firewood, fetching water and dishes. I know they welcome our visit and the home cooked food they enjoy while we are there. I may have a chance to make a cake or some cookies to bring with.

I do hope we will have a chance to sit and visit during the weekend, a cup of tea with you is always a pleasant way to spend an couple of hours.. Have you had any time to work on the quilt you are making for your husband? I have been working on an embroidery project for the local county fair. This winter has been long and cold. I am looking forward to spring.

Sincerely,
Mrs. William Mayers

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invisibility when it comes time to deal with the less fun aspects of our time travels. I'm not pointing fingers here, just making an observation.

2- Embrace safety! Look after the people around you! The unsafe condition you mention may not only save them it may keep you from harm's way as well. It's only a fun event if everyone goes home in the same or better condition than when they arrived. If you see something, say something so it can be corrected.

3- Exercise the stripes with

care. You all hear me bellow. What you don't generally hear is me reprimand some one in public. I have rarely enforced my will on people. I'll ask a task be done rather than demand it. If you're keeping score, by the way, there is very little I have asked of you that I have not done. Praise in public! If someone does a good job or something extra, they deserve to have it known in front of their comrades. If the opposite is true, they deserve not

to be embarrassed in front of their file mates.

4- Know your job! Learn the drill and what your duties are also learn the jobs above and below your grade. How else will you know if you want to take that next step up the ladder?

It is that simple. These are basics for leadership. I'm sure Kautz puts it into a more flowery form and takes a lot more paper to do so, but space is limited in this venue. Until next time stay safe and keep your powder dry. Union and Liberty now and forever!

Farby or not?



We've all heard the term; to some it inspires anger, to some the term hurts... 'FARBY'. Some in the Civil War Reenacting community throw this term around very freely and sometimes viciously. And many of those who do forget where they started in this hobby. While I'm in complete agreement that we should be putting on the best and most authentic impersonation as possible, I also believe that not everyone is capable or is interested in doing 'Campaigner' style reenacting. The truth is nobody...NOBODY is 100% Authentic. It's impossible since it's 150+ later. We have modern medications, many 'soldiers' today are too tall, to overweight, etc. Yes they may pack their gear in and pack it back out, but they pack it from their cars from the parking lots most of the time. There are many, many, many more differences also between our ancestors and us. All we can do is honor them as best we can, as authentically as we can, and remember that this is a Hobby, we do this for various reasons, but we all return to our normal lives on Monday morning.

So back to the term 'Farby' Many of us in the 12th US are 'Farby' to our campaigner comrades because we have A-Frame tents, Cots, coolers, other modern wares with us. If it's in the tent out of sight from the public, is it hurting anyone? If Camp and the Soldiers and Civilians in camp are as authentic as possible this is ok...right? Well, NO it's actually not. We all should be striving to better our impersonation at every event we do. There seems to be a lot of confusion out there about the definition of a 'FARB', if you're DOING it right, THINK you're doing it right but can improve, TRYING to do it right, or just WANT to do it right--as long as you are doing all that you can to up-grade your impression--YOU'RE NOT A 'FARB'. However, if you have items you KNOW are wrong but don't care to ask, seek info about, or attempt to improve these items, or worse, when a better reproduction IS widely available and you won't upgrade to it, (despite a universe of peer pressure), then my friend you could be considered a 'FARB'

A 'Farb' will never utter these words: "that's very authentic looking, where did you get that?" "How do I make one of those?" "Can you help me do that?" Or... "well, if we can't do it right, lets not do it at all." Rather, 'Farbs' are proponents of that old standard of 'Farbiness', "If they would have had it they'd have used it," "Ahhh, it's close enough," "Does it really matter?" is their mantra.

On the other hand, I have met quite a few hard-core authentic campaigners in this hobby, some who would not even try to help to improve a newbie's impression, just telling them to quit until they can do it right with no constructive help, and I've met others that would bend over backwards to help someone who asked for it.

Bottom line: If you're not a 'FARB' (and don't want to be known as one) when you see someone doing it better than you...ASK! As long as someone is TRYING, they're no 'Farb'. No matter how authentic someone is trying to be, they'll never be 100%, but the effort is what's important. And remember where you started in this hobby. Help those that are new to get it right and don't criticize them if they have gear they bought at mediocre sutlers instead of top of the line gear. Just because you are doing it correctly does not mean you are doing it right.

I personally want to thank all the units that I've had the pleasure of working with at event who have shown me the complete gamete of 'what to do' and what not to do' at events.

Respectively submitted;
Corporal Shane Camp
12th US

2014 Event Menus—Mrs. Hurd

We wanted to give you a menu for the summer. Don't worry if you look at something and say "yuck". We can always find something for you to eat. Notice that we are providing dinner on Friday night at Erie Canal for the first time.

Peterboro

Friday	dinner	potato and ham soup, bread, pickles
Saturday	breakfast	creamed chipped beef, toast, fruit, oatmeal
	lunch	sandwiches, vegetables, pickles, fruit
Sunday	dinner	sauerbraten, mashed potatoes, green beans, coleslaw, strawberry shortcake
	breakfast	pancake breakfast at the Community Center. We will have oatmeal and fruit in camp if you don't want to.
	lunch	sandwiches, vegetables, pickles, fruit

Massena

Friday	dinner	eat out
Saturday	breakfast	French toast, bacon or sausage
	lunch	BLT's on potato bread
Sunday	dinner	beef stew, corn bread, dessert
	breakfast	breakfast casserole

Erie Canal

Friday	dinner	tomato and sausage soup, bread
Saturday	breakfast	sausage gravy and biscuits, fruit, oatmeal
	lunch	sandwiches, vegetables, pickles, fruit
Sunday	dinner	meatballs in three different sauces, tossed salad, bread, peach cobbler
	breakfast	pancakes, bacon or ham
	lunch	feeding the troops in the field – ham and cheese sandwiches, apples, cookies

Which brings me to some other questions.

1. We tried to updated allergies last year and I did hear from one or two people, but not everyone. Let me know if you allergic to any foods, whatever it is. Also, let me know if you can't eat certain foods (sugar, wheat, salt, milk, etc.) for dietary reasons.
2. Let us know if you have any good ideas for meals.
3. Let me know if you are going to eat Friday dinner at Peterboro and/or Erie Canal. I know a lot of you don't get in on time.
4. Please pay for mess ahead of time if you are going to eat. It's where we get our head count. It is very difficult to shop without a head count. If you decide to eat at the last minute, call or email me. I don't go shopping until Friday morning, and it's better to find out at the last minute than to be short on food.
5. My email is: lhurd@twcny.rr.com, or you can leave me a message on Facebook.

Three other important things:

1. Don't go near the fire in a hoop! I can not stress this enough.
2. Eat something, even if you're not hungry. We don't want you to pass out in the middle of the battle.
3. DRINK LOTS OF WATER! If you are not going to the bathroom, you are dehydrating. Tell someone fast, you may not be thinking straight at this point. This is very dangerous!

Linda Hurd

Mother Nature and the American Civil War—Capt Mayers

It's particularly interesting when we can relate situations and events from the Civil War to current events. Whether intended or not, Kathryn Shively Meier's new book *Nature's Civil War* (UNC Press 2013) does that for me.

We've all heard that two thirds of all deaths during the war were due to illness. As related by Ms. Meier, the greatest number of deaths from disease happened within the first few weeks of a new recruit's enlistment, and a great percentage of those occurred within the first year and a half of the war.

A lack of understanding of the unique challenges, combined with a lack of proper preparation, inadequate provisions, preposterous (male) ego and lack of medical knowledge allowed tens of thousands of deaths that should not have been. Previous experience should have, but did not, warn the officer corps of both sides. Many of the older ones had "seen the elephant" during the Mexican-American war; others had witnessed nature's ravages upon armies while observing the Crimean War.

It appears that military commanders are somehow mysteriously infected with a unique level of hard-headedness, if not outright stupidity - some of the same (insert appropriate four-letter word) continues to happen today. Civil War soldiers off to battle without proper gear, reflected in the Gulf War, when American warfighters - my son among them - arrived in "the sandbox" lacking such essentials as ammunition, proper protective gear, reliable machinery (Hum-vees that couldn't stand up to the desert environment, for instance).

A great many misconceptions regarding individual health as well as that of entire armies needed to be overcome during the Civil War. The common theme was that men raised in remote areas, breathing the clear air, enjoying pure water, and engaging in plenty of exercise, were far better equipped than city boys to deal with the vagaries of Army life. Much to the astonishment of all concerned, that was wrong. Country boys arriving in camps and surrounded by hundreds, and even thousands, of other men living in conditions as crowded and unsanitary as the big city's worst slums, actually suffered and died more quickly from communicable disease. City boys, on the other hand, suffered greatly due to exposure to the elements, wholly inadequate food and indifference and ignorance on the part of the officer corps. The medical corps was equally unprepared and ill-informed. This is compounded both by a general mistrust of medical authorities and by said authorities encouraging self-care, to the point that individual soldiers turned to each other in search of common remedies, or even writing home for such information.

The prevailing attitude towards hospitals was that they were for the indigent, the lower classes of people (including people of color and Native Americans) and that proper health care - read nursing - was the province of home and family. Indeed, many a soldier availed himself of "French leave" to go home and recover from illness before returning to his unit ready to take up Army life once more. And naturally, this course of action proved very unsettling to the officer corps...how does one explain to one's Colonel a high rate of absence among one's own company when the Colonel considers it a dereliction of duty on the part of the lieutenant or captain?

It wasn't all ignorance and negligence - there was some understanding of the vectors of illness, resulting in attempts to drain swamps, relocate latrines well away from sources of potable water and (sometimes desperate) hunts for decent food and proper food preparation. The armies of both sides did attempt to adequately clothe their soldiers and provide for some semblance of shelter from wind, rain and snow, and to provide adequate rations. And as we all know, those attempts failed about as often as they succeeded. It's worth noting that entire campaigns - most notably the early efforts on the Peninsula intended to capture Richmond - failed largely due to environmental difficulties...that failure wasn't entirely due to General McClellan's inadequate efforts.

This is but a fraction of Ms. Meier's work - a book I'd highly recommend for those looking for a deeper understanding of the horrors of war - whether the Civil War or more recent military endeavors.

Yr. Ob't Serv't
Surgeon, Capt. Bill Mayers
aka Surgeon Will Nickel

Tent for Sale

10 by 12 wall tent with poles, stakes, sod cloth, two doors. Carrying bag included. Used seven years, always kept clean and dry. \$425.00 Cash or bank check only.

Bill or Carol Mayers
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Upcoming Events



Please check the website, and Facebook page for updates and information.

Friday, April 11, Drill—New Life Assembly of God, Oneida, NY, 7:00 pm

May 1—4, 150th Spotsylvania & Wilderness

May 3 -, 4, —150th Anniversary—Elmira Prison Camp

Friday, May 9, Drill—New Life Assembly of God, Oneida, NY, 7:00 pm

May 17—18, NEMDA school of the soldier

May 24, North Syracuse Family Festival

May 26, North Syracuse Memorial Day Parade

June 14—15 Peterboro Civil War Weekend

July 26—27 Massena Civil War Weekend

Aug 16—17 Fort Ontario

Aug 23—24 Erie Canal Village Civil War Weekend

Sept 19—21 Angelica Civil War reenactment

Oct 12 Wolfe Mountain

Oct 18—19 150th Cedar Creek

Nov 8 Syracuse Veterans Day Parade and Expo

Nov 15 Remembrance Day Parade—Gettysburg