



The Irish Volunteer

*Official newsletter for the
116th Pennsylvania/
4th California and
54th Massachusetts Infantry*

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BOARD MEETING

The next board meeting will be held on May 3rd at 6:30 pm at John Baker's office, 2339 State St., Salem.

NEW LIVING HISTORY EVENT

The staff of the High Desert Museum near Bend has invited members of the NCWC to conduct a "living history" entitled "Civil War on the High Desert (1865)."

1. Date: June 3rd & 4th with setup on the afternoon of June 2nd.

2. Impression: The Museum Coordinator, Bill Armstrong, would like us to portray a "generic Federal impression" on campaign from the year 1865. He wants 20 - 30 "hardcore - authentic" historians. All unit markings must be removed from the uniforms.

3. This group may include a small number of either generic Federal cavalry or militia if we can demonstrate properly researched uniforms and accoutrements. One small field piece may also be used (probably a mountain howitzer). A small contingent of children and civilians may attend as long as they are period correct in their clothing and the children are well behaved.

4. Procedures: We are asked to conduct ourselves through a typical "military day" of the period. The event will run from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM on Saturday and 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM on Sunday. As part of this typical day we are to have two period drill sessions and firing for the public.

The public will be allowed to handle "unloaded" firearms but not edged weapons. Bill plans to

have some wooden muskets available for us to get the public involved in our activities. We are asked to do as many period correct scenarios as possible (e.g., recruitment, ration disbursement and cooking, sick call, church call, mail call, fatigue duties, grand march, bayonet drill and whatever else we can think up).

We will need at least two functioning field musicians (bugler & drummer) to sound appropriate signals. We also need a medical orderly or steward with a firm background of Civil War medicine.

We will be allowed a maximum of two fire pits in the camp but probably have to burn mesquite charcoal rather than wood because of the fire hazard at this time of year. Only period correct rations will be used. Water, toilet facilities and straw will also be provided.

It will be necessary to designate several "interpreters" from among our ranks to speak with the public as they come into our camp. This will allow the remainder of the living historians to stay in "first period as much as possible. These interpreters must have an excellent general knowledge of the war but also have done research regarding military activities in the Pacific Northwest. Sources such as William Hillary's book "Webfoot Volunteer" and the Spring (1999) edition of the Oregon Historical Quarterly are recommended reading in addition to other references.

Let me be clear about this event... it is open to any member of the Northwest Civil War Council as long as they can meet the requirements. This is a great opportunity for us to form a strong relationship with this excellent facility. In order to attend you must contact Colonel Betschart at 503.623.2102 or yankeebugler@hotmail.com I am the event coordinator but not the Commanding Officer. We need a younger person to portray a Lieutenant. Please contact me ASAP with any questions etc. that you might have.

-Colonel Steve Betschart

REPORT: SCHOOL OF THE REENACTOR

The School of the Reenactor was held April 1st and 2nd at Ft. Vancouver, hosted by the 20th Maine/1st Oregon. There were between two and four presentations happening at all times, with a wide variety of subjects from "Kamping With Kids" to religion to pop culture and, of course, drill!

Our own Captain Mark Stevens presented a talk on rations entitled "The Mess We Are In". It showed the exact ration issue per soldier in the army (right down to a day's candle ration) and brought out some interesting but little known facts about the army's handling of rations. The accompanying handout included a large reference list of period and non-period foods as well as a number of first-person quotes about rations. The 20th Maine's Randy Fletcher gave a powerpoint presentation that outlined the politics and popular culture of the day. Pop culture included hot new technology of the day, a "who's who" list, common reading items and much more. Fletcher then did a wonderful job of simplifying the complex political climate leading up to the war, and also summarized some major state feelings (did you know that Louisiana voted 3 to 1 to stay in the union, and that Texas's Governor Houston was removed for being pro-union?). Three roundtable discussions brought up controversial topics, including the much anticipated "Was Slavery the Primary Cause of the American Civil War". There were also classes specifically geared for military or civilian members. Civilian presentations included "A Fit Bodice", "Exploration of Quilted Clothing" and "Fashion Foundations". Kristal Yoakum gave a very helpful and fun presentation of tips for reenacting with small children. Specific military topics included "American Military Swords", "African Americans in the Civil War", "History of Light Infantry" and "U.S. Military Muskets 1775-1870". There were daily infantry drill sessions with Colonel Steve Betschart and Silas Tackitt, cavalry and cannon drill as well as musket demos and speed-loading competitions.

The School of the Reenactor was fairly well attended but more reenactors could have benefited from the experience. The presentations were incredibly well researched, and I believe it is safe to say that even very experienced reenactors learned from the presentations they attended. The presenters brought forward newly researched and important information to help improve our impressions by increasing our knowledge of the war. The 20th hopes to host another School of the Reenactor next year, and those who attended are excited to see this event grow.