

Rock County Volunteer

The Newsletter of the 33rd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry

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RECON II UPDATE

November 26, 2001

Editor, *The Rock County Volunteer*:

Thanks for sending along another fine issue of *The Rock County Volunteer*. It is refreshing to receive a living history unit newsletter that is produced on a regular schedule, is informative, and includes "how-to" articles. Such publications are depressingly rare in reenacting, so keep up the good work.

I am writing in reference to the article entitled, "Recon II" in your November, 2001 issue. The article stated, in part, "A telephone call between our member Dave May and Kevin O'Beirne of the Columbia Rifles, a moving and shaking organization out East, reveals that the Recon II event may be canceled. There have been ongoing problems in securing the use of an appropriate site for the event, and it also sounds as if there has been some eastern reenacting politics in the background making the event less viable." Through this letter I would like to clarify several of the items mentioned above.

1. That I am aware, *there are presently no plans by the sponsors to cancel the Recon II event*. All indications from the sponsors, from private e-mails, to Internet forum posts, to the event website, to listserver posts, indicate that the Recon II event *will* be held in early May, 2002 as scheduled.
2. Based on information provided by current and former members of the

Recon II event committee, the sponsors have had a difficult time "nailing down" a site for the event. That I am aware, as of this date a suitable site has not been secured, but in Internet forum posts the sponsors maintain that they are close to reaching an agreement with a landowner at an unspecified location. An excellent account of the sponsors' efforts through October, 2001 to secure a site were posted on the "Authentic Events" discussion forum at <http://www.authentic-campaigner.com> by Charles Heath in mid-November.

3. I am not aware that Eastern reenacting politics has played a role in the Recon II event to date. The only decision relative to Recon II that I can write about in an informed manner was that made by the Potomac Legion. The Potomac Legion is a battalion of which my "home" reenacting organization, The Columbia Rifles, is a member. At its annual meeting, held on November 10, 2001, the Potomac Legion adopted its 2002 schedule; Recon II was considered and debated but was not nominated for consideration as a battalion event. The reasons for this were: 1) Despite several requests by Legion members made over a period of months prior to the Legion's meeting, the Recon II sponsors provided no event information to assist the Legion in deciding whether to support the event. In essence the Legion was indirectly "asked" to support the event in an information vacuum. In contrast, the sponsors of other quality living

Inside this Issue

- 1 Recon II Update
- 2 Braxton Bragg Forever!
- 3 Recon II, anyone?
- 3 Sauerkraut and scurvy
- 4 Winter Meeting Minutes
- 5 Dewey Songster

Rock County Volunteer
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history events planned for 2002 provided to the Potomac Legion impressive, detailed information packets, including two presentations at the Legion's meeting. In the end, the Legion voted to support these "other" events. 2) The Potomac Legion was concerned about supporting an event that does not have a site less than six months prior to the event. The Recon 2000 event, which included most of the current Recon II sponsorship committee, changed sites twice in the final month prior to the event. 3) The Potomac Legion was concerned that, at the time of the meeting, the event did not have established guidelines or standards; various rumors about standards circulated but they are not worth recounting here. However, on November 23, the Recon II sponsors published a draft partial set of Federal equipment standards. 4) At the annual meeting, Potomac Legion members expressed concern that the Recon II event *could potentially* degenerate into a "tactical". Meeting attendees unanimously agreed that the Legion was not interested in "shoot-'em-up" style events. However, Recon II sponsors have maintained that the event will be tightly controlled.

4. During the week of November 12, Charles Heath, who was serving as the very able Logistics Coordinator for the Recon II event, resigned from the event committee.
5. During the week of November 12, David "Duke" Culberson resigned from the Recon II event committee. Mr. Culberson was to serve as the commander of a Federal battalion that was to be comprised largely of "campaigners". I believe that Mr. Culberson's resignation was a blow to the event because he is a very capable man who has demonstrated considerable ability while commanding campaigner battalions at Sailor's Creek 2000 and McDowell 2001.

6. As an individual, I endorse what the Recon II event is attempting to provide (i.e., a more-realistic tactics experience for reenactors in a campaign-style setting).

Finally, thanks for the reference to The Columbia Rifles as "a moving and shaking organization out East". I'm not



*Oh I hear that out East, our boys
they have it tough;
Bobby Lee and Early like to play
with them real rough.
But down here we just yawn a bit
when we see that Rebel flag,
Because we know those poor devils
are led by Braxton Bragg!*

sure if that moniker is true or not but, like other living history organizations—such as the 33rd Wisconsin—that endeavor to portray Civil War history in a more period-correct manner, we continue to work on improving our impressions and performing research. We look forward to working with other like-minded units, including the 33rd, at future events.

For the information of your readers, the Potomac Legion battalion adopted the following 2002 event schedule:

- **"Camp Curtain 1861": Potomac Legion/National Civil War Museum Living History, June 15-16, 2002 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania:** This event will recreate a portion of Camp Curtain—Pennsylvania's main recruit training camp—during September, 1861. Troops will be quartered in Sibley tents and

possibly some common ("A") tents. A strict, garrison-camp schedule by the bugle will be maintained throughout the weekend. Rations will be provided for a nominal registration fee. The weekend will include a good deal of drill and first-person, including significant interaction with quality civilian reenactors. A period sutler *impression* will participate in the event. Planned scenarios include: induction physicals, ration issue, townball, races, a blanket toss, period worship service on Sunday, and others. Drill and firing demonstrations for the public will be held each day. Troops will portray the newly mustered 53rd Pennsylvania; historical background information is available online at <http://hometown.aol.com/c53rdpvi/main.html>. The event sponsors are making a prodigious effort to make this one of the best high-quality Civil War living history events of 2002. The Event Coordinator is Marc Riddell of the 83rd Penn. Co. K, (570) 743-8135, Marc73@aol.com.

- **Berkley Plantation Living History, July 19-20. Harrison Landing, York-James Peninsula, Virginia:** Potomac Legion members The Rowdy Pards are sponsoring a high-quality living history event at Harrison Landing, where participants will portray troops of the Army of the Potomac in the aftermath of the Seven Days battles. Berkley Plantation was General McClellan's headquarters in the summer of 1862. Event Coordinator Don Harrelson of the RPs provided the following information: "There are many opportunities for varied living history scenarios not usually found at either campaign or garrison events as well as a plethora of drawings, photographs, and first person narratives from which to draw historical information. The plantation staff will assist in building several brush arbors for our shelters at the campsite, which

overlooks the James River just south of the main plantation house. The arbors are seen in nearly every drawing and photo of Berkley Plantation during the summer of 1862. Time and material permitting, we may also have a signal tower on the grounds. This will, of course be an 'invitation only' event limited to approximately 100 military and a few civilian reenactors. If there is any registration fee, it will be used to assist some of the anticipated scenarios, which will include a ration issue of fresh beef, soft bread, &c., payroll (the army was paid for the first time in two months on July 16, 1862) and the like. Please feel free to e-mail me at PVTMUDFLAP@msn.com or call at (757) 463-7626 for further details. The REAL ground at the actual time..." An event website will be up by mid-December.

- 140th Anniversary Antietam, September 14-15, near Hagerstown, Maryland:** The Potomac Legion will field a Federal campaigner battalion at "140th mega-reenactment", which will be held on the Artz Farm near Hagerstown (site of the 135th Antietam reenactment). The battalion will camp "campaign style", post pickets, and endeavor to "do it as correctly as possible". Impression and uniform standards will be published in the near future. Interested Federal units should contact Potomac Legion President Marc Riddell, (570) 743-8135, Marc73@aol.com.
- 140th Perryville Reenactment, October 5-6, 2002, Perryville Battlefield, Eastern Kentucky:** Perryville looks to be one of "the" campaigner events for the second half of 2002. The Army of the Pacific, the Wool Hat Boys, and the Western Independent Grays are organizing a Federal campaigner battalion or brigade to be commanded by Dom Dal Bello. The brigade will make a one-day preservation march to the event

while skirmishing with Confederate cavalry and, upon its arrival on-site, participate in the "general event". Portrayal-correct rations will be issued to the brigade. Saturday evening will include "serious" candlelight tours on a portion of the original battlefield. The Potomac Legion will participate in this event as part of the Army of the Pacific.

To summarize, that I know of, the Recon II event is "on". I advise reenactors who are considering attending the event to disregard rumors and "what other units are doing" and obtain their event information directly from the sponsors. The event chairman is Tim O'Neill of the 28th Massachusetts Co. B, who can be reached online at TRO28th@aol.com. The event website is <http://www.recon2.org>.

Keep up the good work. I look forward to future issues of *The Rock County Volunteer* and to seeing the 33rd Wisconsin at the 140th Perryville event, if not sooner.

Yours truly,

Kevin O'Beirne
The Columbia Rifles
Potomac Legion Battalion
ColumbiaRifles@aol.com



Recon II, May 3-5, 2002

The organizing of this event is underway and the Cedar Creek

Battlefield in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley has been picked for the site. The event is just for reenactors and is run by the registration fee \$35. The event is described as a "training exercise designed to improve the hobby's understanding of military operations from brigade commander down to the privates in the ranks." The scenario will be an adaptation of a historical situation. Two brigades are expected 250 to 350 men plus supporting elements.

Along with marching the event will focus on bread-and-butter camp and comfort skills of shelter and sustenance. The goal is to go beyond what has become known as "campaigning." Each side will have wagons and pack horses/mules to carry limited resupply for the 32 hour tactical period. Kautz can be consulted for basic standards.

The Hard Head mess plans to attend this event and would fall in with the 33d members attending. More information can be found at www.recon2.org
POC Dave Gerow
(414) 766-0531

An Uncertain Cure

By Rick Koch

Throughout the Civil War scurvy was as much a part of warfare as battle wounds. The symptoms of scurvy were easy to spot according to Byron Stinson, a medical doctor who wrote on the topic for the August 1966 issue of the *Civil War Times*¹: "...swollen gums, loose teeth, enlarged [aching] joints and a general lassitude. The cure was uncertain and in some cases accidental."

Treatments for scurvy had been known as early as 1593 with the rational dispensation of lemon juice. The Royal Navy, in the late eighteenth century, provided a mandatory lime ration based on research from surgeon James Lind in 1847.

Though statistics show the medical field was zeroing in on viable treatments of scurvy at the time of the Civil War, the ailment still maintained much of its mystery in terms of solid cures. As noted by Dr. Stinson, the Union Army typically suffered 5 cases of scurvy per 1,000 soldiers while the Union Navy enjoyed a rate of .22 per 1,000 sailors. The incidence at Andersonville Prison was altogether different at being 1,000 out of 1,000 who suffered the wrath of scurvy there.

Army Surgeon Thomas Lawson (1855-1860) noted in his findings that cases of scurvy were unusually high at remote postings. Based on his research and recommendations, by 1862 "Congress passed a bill authorizing the addition of a pound of potatoes to the daily ration of beef, flour, yeast powder, dry beans, green coffee, sugar, black pepper, and vinegar. A pound of potatoes provides about twice the minimum daily requirement (MDR) of Vitamin C." And Vitamin C, of course, is the scourge of scurvy. In addition, Thomas Lawson also recommended other Vitamin C enriched food items such as, desiccated vegetables, artichokes, cactus juice, and onions. His one mistake was to eliminate a ration of lemon juice, "...because he felt it to be without value."

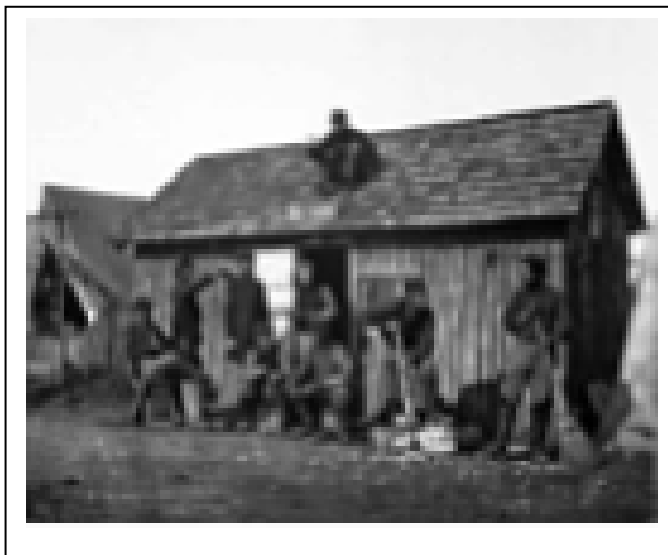
Interestingly, the tradition of a vinegar ration as an antiscorbutic – proved false as a cure for scurvy by the James Lind as early as 1747 – continued on as a tradition in the American Army through 1900 (and many a man suffered through that!).

At the time of the war, however, Vitamin C enriched foods were sometimes hard to come by. A daily ration at Andersonville in the summer of 1864, for instance, was "...a chunk of cornbread the size of a brick made from 'unbolted meal.' This meal contained the fragments of husk and cob because of lack of screening sieves in the wartime Confederacy. One pound of this bread contains about one-third of the calories, one-tenth of the Vitamin A, and all of the B Vitamins and iron necessary for the MDR of an adult

male. There is no Vitamin C in cornbread. Since the body does not store ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), scurvy is the first of the deficiency diseases to appear during famine."

Of further note, during the battle for Atlanta, Sherman's men began suffering from some scurvy due to the fact that hard marching and long supply lines precluded foraging for and receiving rations rich in Vitamin C. Hardtack and bacon were typically the only rations delivered to the troops during that period of time. In all actuality "...hardtack is worse than cornbread nutritionally since it supplies neither Vitamin A nor Vitamin C."

Often times the cure for scurvy was right at the fingertips of the various Union Armies all along. It was discovered the "...sutlers of the XI corps were consigned pickles and sauerkraut in huge quantities." The



comparison of the health of 22 "predominantly German regiments" verses that of 22 "matched Indiana regiments" [i.e., the regiments endured similar geographic campaigns, battle casualties, etc.] showed the total death rate among the Germans to be about half – a significant statistic.

Dr. Stinson notes that, "Pickles aren't much for nutrition but three cups of sauerkraut contain the MDR of Vitamin C. Since ascorbic acid is necessary in the healing of wounds and resistance to

disease, it seems reasonable that sauerkraut was the critical element in protecting the health of the German troops. The extreme acidity of sauerkraut juice tends to preserve Vitamin C. Sauerkraut was the *only* [emphasis added] way ascorbic acid could be stored and shipped in the 1860's."

All in all, though the search for a cure for scurvy was hit an miss throughout the war, the then War Department's efforts to track it down were admirable because, as Dr. Stinson suggests, the literate and intelligent men struggling with the issue "...entered the war with little more insight medically than the Romans and emerged with a nucleus of modern ideas. While they didn't solve the problem with a flourish, they did pry into every corner and as a result fielded the healthiest army in history to their time."

Author's note: even though I'm the descendant of an XI Corps German soldier who suffered and survived a grievous wound at Gettysburg, I'm afraid I would have been more susceptible to the wrath of scurvy or other ascorbic acid deficiencies than most of his comrades for one simple reason – you see, I hate sauerkraut.

End Note:

1. Civil War Times Illustrated, "Scurvy in the Civil War – A Medical Report," By Byron Stinson, M.D., August 1966, pgs. 20-25, Historical Times Inc., Gettysburg, PA.

33rd Winter Meeting

The 33rd Wisconsin held its Winter Meeting on January 26, 2001. Twenty-

one members attended. We were pleased to see some old faces and some new ones. We welcome all to the 33rd Wisconsin. The meeting commenced promptly at 11:00 am, and Michael Binder was selected to chair the meeting. Mark Reitz acted as secretary to maintain notes.

The Financial Report of the company was given by Mark Reitz. We are in very good shape financially. A motion was made by Peter Shrake and seconded by Scott Meeker to approve a budget of \$300 for the 2002 North Freedom event. Motion approved. A motion was made by Peter Shrake and seconded by Bob Pagel to allocate up to \$200 for the purchase of 25 lbs. of black powder for use by the members without charge to those who use it. The motion was approved. It was noted that a previous motion was approved to buy cooking equipment for the civilians, but that no money has been allocated for this purpose as yet. Paula Pagel reported that the equipment has been purchased, but that the request for reimbursement has not yet been made. She will forward her request as soon as possible.

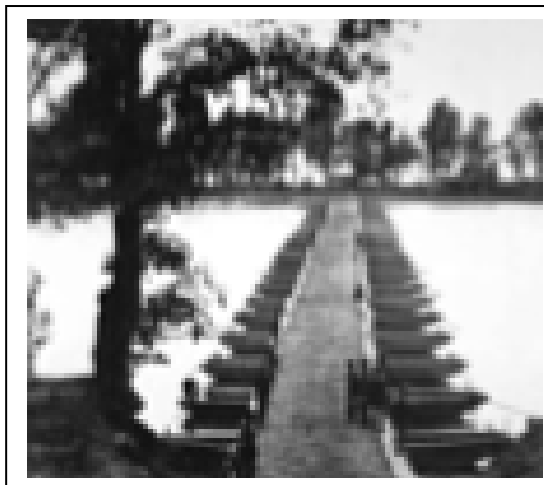
The newsletter report was given by Mark Reitz. Forty-three copies of the newsletter are presently being sent out. Six full issues were published in 2001, with 40 pages of articles in those issues. All recipients of this newsletter are reminded that articles are encouraged welcome.

No website report was given due to the absence of Mike Thorson, but Mike was recognized by the members present for his continuing work in keeping our website up and having it look professional. Thanks Mike!

The Year in Review 2001 was discussed by the members. Various topics were discussed, most being very positive. It was suggested that we should attempt to support both Fulton and Stoughton on alternating years for Memorial Day. The civilians suggested that hand bills for spectators would be useful at North Freedom. Thanks were given to Betsy Urven and Kres

Peckham for their efforts in organizing the school events, and to Jeff Saeger for the Wauwatosa parade.

The present sources list is being maintained by John Wedeward. People



with questions or needs should be in touch with John.

A civilian's report was given by Ann Danko.

The unit decided to appoint liaisons to coordinate efforts with other reenacting groups. Mike Binder will work with the 3rd Wisconsin. Dave Gerow will work with the Hardhead Mess. Mark Reitz will work with the 29th USCT.

Upcoming events for 2002 were discussed. These included:

- April 19 Spring Muster : TBA
- April 26 Whitewater School Event
- May 3-5 Recon II : Maryland
- May 24 Appleton School Event
- May 27 Memorial Day : Fulton
- June 7-9 Ft. Snelling : RIP?
- July 4 Wauwatosa Parade
- July 12-14 North Freedom
- July 19-21 Hastings, Michigan
- August 3 Crabill House, Ohio
- August 10 Shrake Wedding
- August 31 Old World Wisconsin
- September 28 Wade House
- October 5-6 Perryville : AoP
- October ? Norskedalen
- December 7, 14 Old World Christmas

Please note that not all events are 33rd Wisconsin events. Further information and POC's will be set forth in future issues of the *Rock County Volunteer*.

A discussion was had as to company property, and all present property is accounted for. Jim Hulbert and Bob Pagel agreed to work together to try and assemble the water cart and bring it out to an event. Mark Reitz and Peter Shrake are acquiring (at no cost to the company) telegraph equipment for use in setting up a working telegraph station in LaRue this year for the event.

Finally, the members discussed the location of the meeting, and decided that Emigail's Roadhouse was convenient to all, and a nice spot for the meeting. We will plan to meet here again in 2003.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Dewey Songster to be Reprinted!

Back by popular demand, *and* because our chum John Dewey will be rejoining the ranks after a prolonged illness, the *Dewey Songster* will be reprinted. Once again you can possess the paragon of all songsters, with those unique songs we have all come to enjoy. To reserve a copy please let Mark Reitz know that you want a copy by March 1. After that date the order will be taken for copying and compiling. Cost per booklet will be \$3.00, will net proceeds being paid as royalty to John.

FLASH – FORT SNELLING RIP?

A post upon the website forum by Steve Sullivan reports that on January 30, 2002, Governor Jesse Ventura announced Fort Snelling Historic site will be closed immediately for "six to eight years" due to operating costs and all 63 of the forts employees have lost their jobs. Continued reports and rumors to follow in future *RCV's*.

