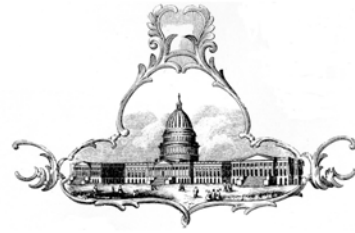




Gen. Philip Kearney

The Light
NEWSLETTER OF COMPANY K
Fifth Michigan Infantry
"Saginaw City Light Infantry"
Proud Member of the Cumberland Guard



March/April 2010 Edition

From The Chairman

Lads of the Fighting Fifth,

I hope that this newsletter finds you as excited as I am about the coming season. I received in the mail our group membership card for The Historic Fort Wayne Coalition. I am hoping myself to be able to make some more work days this year. Perhaps as a group we could make one of the workdays a max. effort for the 5th? In the past some of us have been able to arrive early in the day on the Friday before the Combined Arms Drill to work on special projects. Maybe we can find a way again this year to help the Fort or prepare for the event on that Friday. Please continue to think of ideas for recruiting.

We saw several new recruits at the Company Drill in Leslie, MI hosted by the 7th Michigan. Its great to see eager young faces starting out in the hobby. Mark Heath, Dan Conklin and I were in attendance. Of course Leslie is pretty close-by for us over on the Central/ West side of the state. Mark taught a lesson on Bugle calls. It's great to see so many people benefit from Mark's talent. By the way, Mark your new Tim Bender Dress hat looked great.

Speaking of new hats, Scott sported his new Tim Bender Pork Pie at the Backwaters 1865 event. We had 6 from our group make it down to this Progressive event: Eric Berger, Jeremy Buschlen, Scott Cummings, Will Eichler, Ernest Simmons and Zach Schatzer. Through the cold and rain, the muddy marches, the short spurts of sleep, pulling picket duty around the clock, spending every moment with the same small section of men, eating the same rations as every other man in the company we really learned what it was like to live the life of a Civil War Soldier. These type events really are different and intense. As busy as we were, there really was no reason or need to come out of character. This type event isn't for everybody, but I will definitely attend more in the future.

Coming up next is the Combined Arms Drill at Historic Fort Wayne. Hosted by our group and the Sally Port Mess. It is April 23rd, 24th, and 25th. Let's see if we can **all** make it there. It would be great to see all of your smiling faces in attendance. Please communicate whether you will or will not be able to make it.

Your pard,
Jeremy Buschlen home-(269)565-2393 cell-(269)788-7719 e-mail- bfijeremy@att.net

Commander's Column

March 6 Company Drill with the 7th Michigan

Jeremy Buschlen, Dan Conklin and Mark Heath attended from the 5th Michigan. I had planned to attend and bring Ernest, Beau and Mack with me, however, Laurisa's grandmother had some health issues earlier in the week and it threw my week off completely off. Sorry boys for cancelling at the last minute. Jeremy reported that the drill was great and informative.

Backwaters 1865

This past weekend (March 13-14), 5th Michigan members; Jeremy Buschlen, Zach Schatzer, Ernest Simmons, Eric Berger, Will Eichler and I attended this progressive event in Tennessee.

Where do I start? What a great experience. From the very start of being dropped off at the start point Friday afternoon through Noon on Sunday this event showed us all what a soldier back then endured. While the weather was mild in comparison to up here in Michigan it was still "see your breath" weather at night along with some occasional drizzle of rain.

I know many of the new lads in our company had some apprehension concerning the first person aspect of the event; it was very natural for me. The first person from 4 pm Friday until Noon on Sunday didn't seem like a struggle for any of us. I for one had some really great conversations with several of the boys in our company. While a campaign march isn't anything new for me, having been on two previous ones at Saylor's Creek in years past, the event had a different feel then those other ones. It helped that our very own Will Eichler was our company commander, Jeremy Bevard (Sally Port Mess) our Lt, Andy Roscoe (24th Mich) was 1st Sgt and Tom Steele (Sally Port) our 2nd Sgt. Certainly all familiar to me and all did an excellent job. I served as 3rd Sgt. (Sgt Isaac Myer to be exact). Most of us took on names of the actual 63rd Indiana Infantry men that we were portraying. I also served as commissary Sgt, which was what helped make this event more unique for me.

Friday night I issued rations to the boys with the help of Eric, Zach, Jeremy. Issuing four pieces of hardtack, coffee, rice and salt pork by candle and fire light and then burning the hardtack box afterward was something I had never done before in 27 years of reenacting. Then getting up on Saturday at 4 in the morning to divide and issue three days rations of soft-bread, pork, cheese, coffee and sugar was again a treat...although my mind was hard pressed to do the math to divide the rations equally amongst 28 men. Bust up the boxes again and burn them...too cool.

Then we packed up our knapsacks, formed up and headed out on the march. Through small roads, over hill and dale, wooded areas and meadows... We marched until about 9 a.m. which seemed like it must be noon already. While already being the Sgt taking care of the 1st Platoon, I was also given the task of guarding a soldier accused of rape. He was shackled for a part of our journey but then I was told to take them off and then I had to carry the shackles (how is that fair?). It made for some great first person...you know me...give me a prop and I can stretch lots out of it. I got a brief respite by paying Tom Steele to take the prisoner from me for a little while...but then was ordered out on patrol...so much for a break.

Going down a road for what was only supposed to be 400 yards...seemed more like a half mile. On the way back to the main body...I had to poop...holding up our patrol...I grabbed my Stansfield rags and headed into the woods to do just that. I no more than finished my business and the main body of our battalion was attacked...my psychic bowel is always a predictor of things like that. Needless to say, I felt bad that my poop held up our return to help our comrades under attack. By the time we arrived the attack was over.

We occupied a wooded hill and through out pickets...of which, I occupied the left end and had the opportunity to fire some shots at the enemy skirmishers that were probing our lines. Then when they left, I started building some hasty works. Others followed my lead and then I was told to stop and then told again to continue. The company to my left actually brought out an ax someone carried and they started chopping and before we knew it they had a real good redoubt. We were attacked at that point later by the rebels and we took two prisoners. Later another surrendered to one of the pickets. We occupied the hill the rest of that day and most of the remainder of the day was spent improving the works. By the time we were done, our two companies in our battalion, had built a huge fort. As darkness fell we were poised and ready for another attack that never came. Many of us wondered why we were hunkered down on this hill when the Johnny was almost beat...but orders were orders.

My platoon had first picket duty. As Sgt of the guard it was easy to place and change pickets...that is until night fell. I never saw a woods more dark than those woods that night. Had the pickets been placed further out, I know I would have assuredly gotten lost...maybe even captured. It made me remember about reading an account of a Zouave officer in the Valley of death at Gettysburg posting and changing pickets on the evening of July 2nd. He got lost and disoriented in the darkness and had to wait until morning to find his way back to his lines. Many times that night I ended up in places in those woods that were nowhere near the picket post. It got so bad that we were ordered to abandon the furthest posts. Finally, my shift was done and my two sections of 1st platoon, which performed excellently, were able to take our spots on the wall for a much-needed night's sleep. Of course it rained off and on.

Sunday morning we awoke early, packed, formed and hit the confederates at daybreak. We were street-fighting down the main road with our company while at times Company B was deployed as skirmishers on either side of us. It gave me great pleasure to know that something I had taught Will Eichler (street fighting is an obscure tactic found in the Secretary of War 1861 Military Tactics Manual and actually we used it in the St Pats parade years ago [like 1993] when the 5th Texas were in front of us). While I had used it several times in the past at Hastings, Crossroads Village and our battalion had used it at Saylor's Creek 1995, seeing it being used by another commander that I had helped teach, was a great pleasure to me...

We took a break for water, one canteen for the next six miles. The previous fight had taken its toll. Ernest was down... feeling shaky, as was Eric. (They were taken somewhere to be cared for). It felt like enemy bullets had hit them as we continued our march. Then we started the forced mud march. The mud from the few days of rain made it hard to march to begin with. When it was mud on a hill...it made it twice as hard. The pace, as we chased the Johnnies was the fastest I can every remember marching in 27 years. We would overcome a hill to rest for only a minute then continue on. Our commander slowed the pace at my request but the Captain of the battalion had a pace he wanted us to follow. One hill...then another...each one getting harder to traverse. Finally, the lack of sleep, the pace and the rigors of the march were just too much for me and I became a straggler...Jeremy Buschlen joined me, God love his loyalty. Although, Will had sent Sean back from the Sally Ports to check on me because he is an EMT. (Thanks Will and Sean). I think Jeremy could have kept up but he joined me only to make sure I would remain safe. Hoping that the cavalry wouldn't come upon us to round us up as deserters or get captured somehow by the enemy, we gradually we made our way...at a much slower pace until we reached Frank Perkin who had fallen back as well. We finished the march about a half hour behind the rest of the battalion. The event was over...I had made it. Sore, tired, remarkably no blisters. As exhausted as I could ever remember ever being.

What an awesome experience. Will I do it again...you bet. While I trained for this, I should have done much more to ready myself. I would also not drive all night to get there with little or no sleep and doing the same to drive that way back again certainly only added to the overall exhaustion. Other progressive veterans told me that this was the most aggressive march they had been too. The company C soldiers were remarkable lads...all great guys that I hope to march with again sometime. I would highly recommend these progressive events for all in our group that are interested in a most "real" experience. I know I will be going to many others in the future. I have more stories to tell about the event, I will leave those for around the campfire. I have written volumes here already. But it was truly awesome.

April 23 - 25 Combined Arms Drill (Historic Fort Wayne)

Please make plans to attend, as this is our event co-hosted with the Sally Port Mess. Let me know **NOW** if you plan to attend. Besides garrisoning the fort, as always, we will focus on drills using three branches of military and how they interact with each other on the field. With an occasional segway into classes on reenacting, we will also cover dress Parade, Guard Mounting, School of the Battalion, School of the Soldier, Skirmish Exercises and the ever-popular large School of the Company drill. Everything any “drill head” like me would want...well maybe Evolutions of a Brigade would be a great addition but then we would have to get a brigade to attend...hmmmm...perhaps next years lofty goal. We will need 110% turnout from everyone. More info? Check out www.fortwaynebattaliondrill.com

Cartridge Parties

I am going to schedule some cartridge parties at my house in April & in May but those dates have not yet been determined. More info to follow as soon as it is determined...

Recruiting

We need to actively recruit. I have been formulating some ideas and making notes on a marketing plan on how we as a group can effectively and collectively do some recruiting. I will share those in our next newsletter. We do need to grow this group. I know it is tough in this economy but there are people out there that we can find. Until then...if you have anyone wanting to try this out...let me know and we will get loaner equipment so that they can do it for Fort Wayne in April. Get them out to the Fort and we will hook them.

That is about it for now. See all of you at the Fort in April.

Your servant,
Scott Cummings
989-415-8592
scottyhomeseller@charter.net

From Will

Schedule

We've set our schedule for 2010. It looks very exciting to me! Scott has elaborated on the early events in his article so I'll only give you dates for those.

All registration (except where individual registration is noted) will be done for us by Scott Cummings. Please help him and tell him what events you plan to go to!!!!

March 6 – Company Drill in Leslie, MI hosted by the 7th MI (see commander's article).

April 23-25 – Combined Arms drill at Historic Fort Wayne. We are partnering with the Sally Port Mess to host this event this year. Let's get a great turnout for the weekend!

May – Niles, MI. We voted to support our pard in the 1st MI on the west side of the state. Dates are still coming. Check the website for further updates.

Memorial Day weekend – Our newest member, Robert May, is Camp Commander of his SUVCW camp. We are talking with him about supporting their Memorial Day observances. More info will be passed on via email and the March/April newsletter as we get it.

June 11-13 – “Disaffected in Canada” is an immersion event designed by our pards in the Sally Port Mess to represent life in the 30th Michigan, Company G at Fort Wayne just before they were mustered out in June, 1865. Individual pre-registration is required. The website has a link to the event page.

July 9-11 – Civil War Days at Historic Fort Wayne. It's been great to bring the old fort to life in the past and this year will be no different.

August 27-29 – Jackson Muster. It will be the 26th anniversary of the event. I'm not sure if a scenario has been selected.

September 25-26 – River of Time. We are waiting for official dates. The event's website hasn't been updated yet. We voted to go to this event and set up and recruit! The 150s are coming and we want to grow.

October 10-11 – Wolcott Mill – The 4th Texas has thrown a great party for the past several years. It's my (Will's) goal to improve our camp this year. We have a good space but hardly anyone was filling it last year. Let's get some boys out to stay the weekend and have a grand time!

October 23-24 – Antietam National Battlefield Living History. Pard, what an opportunity! We will get to camp in the actual West Woods near the Dunker Church. We will portray the 6th Wisconsin of the Iron Brigade. This is hosted by the 24th Michigan and is an opportunity not to be missed. The hosts ask that all men possible come with a Hardee hat. Second choice will be a black civilian hat and the forage cap last as we are portraying the Iron Brigade.

Dues are Due!

Boys, we did a good thing by throwing our groups support officially behind the HFWC this year. We did an excellent thing last year by starting the website. The year before, we bought the flag holder and baldrics to support our colors. These cool projects all come directly from you paying your dues. Membership is \$15.00 per man. As treasurer, I have a separate account in my savings account for the group. However, it is in my name so we don't get taxed as a group.

Please either pay me at the next drill or mail me a check. Make it out to Will Eichler and put “5th MI” in the memo line.

Send it to me at:

Will Eichler
57431 Junction Ct.
Washington, MI 48094