

Marching Along

President - Mike Gillett
Secretary/Website - Jim Cary
Treasurer - Jennifer Schmidt

Mil. Commander - JR Schroeder
Civ. Coordinator- Ken Giorlando
Newsletter – Angie White

21st Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Co. H

"Of Bayonets and Bonnets" from the President, Mike Gillett

When we were planning our move to Michigan from Ohio, now six years ago, we knew we'd be leaving much behind. Not the least of which was our much loved Civil War Reenacting unit, the *2nd Federal Battalion* (Reinforced); made up in large part by the 4th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 1st Ohio Cavalry.

I can remember Karen asking if I thought we'd have any problems finding a new reenacting unit in Michigan. I told her that I was sure that there *must* be good units there too.

As soon as we made the move and the utilities were all switched over and the girls were enrolled in school (but before we finished unpacking and hanging pictures!), I set off to find a Michigan unit. I found several on the Internet, contacted a few and we settled on the 21st. And, in spite (or because?) of a rough patch sometime ago, the 21st is - and always will be - our "home" unit.

That said, if you were to happen to look at my "*signature*" at the bottom of my emails you will certainly not help but notice that, *besides* the **21st**, I am *also* a member (in no particular order) of: the **4th** Michigan, the **3rd** Michigan, the **17th** Michigan, the **24th** Michigan *...and* the Michigan Soliders Aid Society. If I could, I'd join *all* the units in Michigan (and some in Ohio and Indiana as well!). That isn't feasible (or affordable)... or even necessary. We *all* tend to get along well and play well together. That is part of why reenacting is such a grand hobby!

I chose to join these other units because on many occasions I've fallen in with them at different events that the 21st haven't attended (i.e., the 4th at Angola, the 3rd and their annual "*Near Death March*", the 24th and their Living History Event at Gettysburg, the 17th on the two "off nights" at Holiday Nights at GFV, etc., et al.) and they've always treated me as one of their own from day one and I've enjoyed their company and their *Company*!

Admittedly, my position *is* unique, as I portray a Chaplain - a non-combatant; in that I have the freedom that a musket-toting soldier or a commissioned or non-commissioned officer does not have. My duty is in that freedom. And my freedom is in that duty.

And while, yes, I am most *certainly* military, the 21st Michigan Volunteer Infantry, *Company H* would *not* have had a Chaplain during the Civil War. Chaplains were assigned to *Regiments* (...or to Posts or Hospitals). And if we are honest, there are very few (if any) reenacting units that can field a full company (100 men). And, certainly here in the Tri-State Area, we've never fielded a full Regiment (1000 men; ten companies).

So it would (and does) make sense for me, as a Chaplain, to be involved with other units at events (say, at Jackson). Besides, that is my personality! I could not *possibly* go to an event and plant my arse on my

camp stool and talk to only my two or three pards. I enjoy visiting (and I think my visits are appreciated) in both Military and Civilian Camps. Again, in the unique position of a Chaplain, I have that freedom - and *duty* - to go back and forth between the two camps. That is my ministry (portrayed and actual).

And, to be honest, I have gotten to know so many of the Confederates, that I go and visit them (and I am *welcomed!*) in *their* camps as well!

As I conclude my fourth (- and yes, *final* -) year as president of the 21st, I have been reflective. If I had to say what has positively changed during my term in office (both in our unit and in Michigan reenacting) is that *we* - as I said at the beginning - all play well together, more so now than ever before. I'd like to think I had something to do with that... both in our unit and in others as well!

I can remember when I first joined the 21st, being told; "***We don't like - or associate with - the _____th Michigan, because THEY are too _____!***"

This was said of many different units and for many different reasons and on multiple occasions. I don't like that kind of talk now - and I didn't like it then. I thought that **I** should have the freedom to come to my *own* opinion. And to be honest, it's certainly prejudicial. You cannot paint a race or culture - or a reenacting unit - with a broad brush! Yes, some have a particular flavor - or strength or emphasis - and might offer something different.

And yes, some might have, too, a weakness. But guess what? *So do we!* There are no perfect reenacting units! Do you know *why*? Because it's **not** 1861 (- or 1862 or 1863 or 1864 or 1865)!!! All we can do is to try to do our best. And it's a progression. It's something we have to work towards. Not coast. Or sit.

We all can learn something - and we all can teach something. We (the 21st) do so many things right. And as I've often said, we've come a *long way in six years*. But we need other units. And *they* need *us*. We need to play well *together*. Militarily, we fall in with other companies and as Civilians, we set up camp next to others. The public doesn't see a separation or segregation and neither should we. We are all on the same side, the same team (yes, even our Confederate brethren!). In church, the concept of "the Holy Huddle" irks me to no end; the cloisters, the competition and the criticism.

I am afraid that I am ecumenical both in my pastoring and in my reenacting!

Thank you all for your love, support and encouragement over these last four years. It's been an honor and a pleasure to be your president!

Be blessed to be a blessing,

-Mike

As I close (this letter as well as my time as president), please remember this one statement I posted on *facebook* sometime back: 'I've ***never*** had an event - or a "moment" - spoiled by a ***Stitch-Nazi***. But I ***have*** had an event - or a "moment" - spoiled by ***farbiness!***"

So please be respectful of others around you *at all times!*

21st's Annual Business Meeting

Plymouth Historical Museum

155 South Main Street

Sunday, January 23 beginning at 1 PM

In addition to voting on events for the 2011 calendar year, we will also be electing officers! Send your nominations for any and all to 21stmichigan@gmail.com or to yankeechaplain@gmail.com. You can nominate yourself, and we will accept nominations as well at the meeting (and write-in candidates), but you are encouraged to check with your nominee beforehand to be sure they are interested! A copy of the ballot with those nominated (and have accepted the nomination and are willing to run and, if elected, serve) to date follows.

- **President**
- **Secretary**
- **Treasurer**
- **Military Commander**
- **Civilian Coordinator**

Also, it makes a great deal of sense that the Military Commander and the Civilian Coordinator would be Board positions (currently, only the President, Secretary and Treasurer make up the Board). That will be discussed and voted along with the implementation of a sponsor/mentor program and approval process for applicants to the unit (as discussed in the last newsletter).

Pizza (and paper plates, cups and napkins) will be provided by the unit (following the meeting), so feel free bring snacks to share and then drinks for you and your family!

The Ballot for Unit Officers for 2011

(we will continue to accept nominations and allow write-in candidates at the meeting)

***Reminder; only those active members (having attended a minimum of 4 events during the previous year) are allowed to vote for officers!**

President: Tom Giorlando
Guy Purdue

Secretary: Carrie Graber

Treasurer: Jim Cary

Military Commander: J.R. Schroeder

Civilian Coordinator: Ken Giorlando

Here is the Event Offering Available to us for 2011

(we will discuss in detail at the meeting, of course); we might have some additions at the meeting:

January

Sat., Jan. 8 - **Unit Christmas Party** in Eastpointe
Sun., Jan. 23 - **Unit Business Meeting** in Plymouth
(Maybe a "**Winter Drill**" like last year, on a Sat. at the Fort?)

February

Sat., Feb. 19 - **NCO's and Officers' School**, Leslie
Sat., Feb. 26 - **Lansing Swap Meet and Winter Ball**

March

Sat., Mar. 12 - **Drill** in Leslie
Sat. & Sun., Mar. 19 & 20 - **Kalamazoo County Fair**

April

Sat. & Sun., Apr. 9 & 10 - **Civil War Muster** in Plymouth
Sat. & Sun., Apr. 30 & May 1 - **Combined Arms Drill** at Historic Ft. Wayne
Sat., Apr. 30 - **Candlelight Tour** at Troy Historical Village
Sat., Apr. 30 - **Coldwater Ball**

May

Sat. & Sun., May 14 & 15 - **Walker Tavern**
Sat. & Sun., May 14 & 15 - **Niles**
Sat., May 21 - **Middle School Event at Historic Ft. Wayne**
Sat. & Sun., May 21 & 22 - **Gaines Area Lion's Club 2nd Annual Military Salute**
Sat., Sun. & Mon., May 28 - 30 - **Greenfield Village**
Sat., Sun. & Mon., May 28 - 30 - **Coldwater**

June

Sat. & Sun., June 4 & 5 - **Lapeer**
Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12 - **20 Mile March**
Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12 - **Lexington**
Sat. & Sun., June 11 & 12 - **Crossroads**
Sat. & Sun., June 18 & 19 - **Fayette, OH**
Sat. & Sun., June 18 & 19 - **Carlton's Poor House**, Hillsdale
Sat. & Sun., June 18 & 19 - **Novi Heritage Festival**
Fri. - Sun., June 24 - 26 - **River Platz Timeline Event**, Frankenmuth
Sat. & Sun., June 25 & 26 - **Waterloo Farm**

July

Sat. & Sun., July 9 & 10 - **Civil War Days at Historic Ft. Wayne**
Sat. & Sun., July 16 & 17 - **Hastings**
Thur. - Sun., July 21 - 24 - **150th Bull Rull/Manassas** <http://www.manassasbullrun.com/>

August

Sat. & Sun., Aug. 6 & 7 - **Port Sanilac**

Sat. & Sun Aug. 13 & 14 - **Milford Memories**

Sat. & Sun., Aug. 27 & 28 - **Jackson**

September

Sat., Sept 10 - **South Lyon Depot Day** (?)

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 17 & 18 - **Mill Race Village** in Northville (?)

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 17 & 18 - **Zoar, OH** <http://www.zoarcivilwar.com/index.html>

Sat. & Sun., Sept 24 & 25 - **Angola, IN**

Sat. & Sun., Sept 24 & 25 - **New Baltimore**

Sat. & Sun., Sept 24 & 25 - **River of Time**

October

Sat. & Sun., Oct. 1 & 2 - **Hayes**

Sat. & Sun., Oct. 8 - 9 - **Wolcott Mill**

Sun., Oct. 10 - **Waterloo Farm** (?)

Sat. & Sun., Oct. 15 - 16, **Hartford, IN**

Sat., Oct. 22 - **Lansing Ball**

November

Sat. & Sun., Nov. 5 & 6 - **Drill at Historic Ft. Wayne** (w/Detroit Veterans Day Parade on Sat.)

Fri., Nov. 11 - **Veterans Day Parade**, Royal Oak, MI

Civil War Roundtable, Lansing (date?)

December

Christmas at Crossroads, Christmas at the Fort, Christmas at Waterloo Farm, Holiday Nights at GFV, etc.

Civilian Corner

By Ken Giorlando

I don't know if I can describe just how awesome this Christmas Season has been for me...but I'll try! As stated in last month's issue of *Marching Along*, a few of us began our **journey through Christmas past** by visiting Crossroads and Greenfield Villages over the Thanksgiving weekend - dressed, of course, in our period finest. Since then we have taken part in numerous other Christmas time-travel activities. A truly wonderful excursion took place the first weekend in December when a few of us had the good fortune to celebrate Christmas at Waterloo Farm. This was, perhaps, the highlight of my entire season! For two days Jean Cook, Carrie Graber, Larissa Fleishman and her mother Violet, Amanda Johnson, my lovely wife Patty, and our two youngest children portrayed a 'family and friends' on a Michigan farm in 1861. This authentically decorated farm house became **our home** for both Saturday and Sunday, and we treated it as such: Violet and Larissa took turns playing Christmas hymns on the antique pump organ - to hear the sounds our ancestors heard sends chills! We spoke to the visitors of the way we were celebrating Christmas during that first year of the war, and how the ladies were knitting socks, scarves, and mittens to send to our sons off fighting the rebellion.



For our presentation, we stayed in a combination 1st / 3rd person nearly the entire time, and the visitors, I've been told, loved what we did and expressed this to the Waterloo Historical Society board members. In fact, the president of the historical society sent Patty and I a note that stated (in part): *"Please pass (our appreciation) on to all who participated in Christmas on the Farm and brought the house to life. We are so pleased you have made the farm your home."*

What added a sort of *realism* to our experience was how we had to venture off a couple hundred feet to where the **necessary** was situated near the barn. It was no different than what our ancestors had to do when they needed to...ahem...go, and I'm here to let you know that, yes, we, just like our ancestors, froze our buns off!

We who portray civilians were not the only ones this season who spent Christmas in the 1860's; President Gillett, Guy Purdue, and my son, Robbie (and sometimes others from the 21st), have also donned their Union blues and devoted many of these December evenings at the McGuffey School House during the Greenfield Village 'Holiday Nights' presentation, showing winter quarters during the Civil War to the thousands of visitors.

All of this December reenacting got me to thinking...there was a time when local living historians and reenactors stored away their period clothing and accessories after the Wolcott Mill event in October (or sometimes as early as the Jackson event in August) and didn't bring them back out until Greenfield Village at the end of May.

Not necessarily any more!

Many of us have taken opportunities to journey to the past during what used to be the 'off-season,' and have found ourselves to be quite busy indeed – maybe even busier than during the so-called *reenacting season* itself! Jean Cook made a very true statement as she was speaking to new 21st member Amanda Johnson when she said, “We *used* to have a reenacting season...”

For those of you who are entertaining the idea of experiencing the Civil War at Christmastime or any other cold weather month, all that you need to do is pay attention to your newsletter, your e-mails, or just ask any of us who hold an office in the 21st Michigan. Make sure, however, that you have period correct overcoats.

The Upcoming Year in Reenacting: As I have stated recently, this year of 2011 is the first BIG commemoration year of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and we are in a prime position to show the visitors, to the best of our knowledge, just how the civilians of the 1860's maintained the home front. Never before have civilians played such a prominent role in the reenacting community (much to the delight of the majority and to the chagrin of a very few!), and here is our moment to shine. Do you plan to just 'half-at-it,' or do you aim to dive in headfirst and try to make the past come alive? Do you plan to do clothing and social history research and show the public an **as-accurate-as-you-can** account of lives lived 150 years ago, or do you just want to get by with a “this'll do” attitude?

More will be expected out of each of us this anniversary year (and the 4 years following) and I hope you are 'beyond ready' and plan to really make an effort like you've never done before. I plan to have at least one meeting for **newer members only** sometime over the winter to help guide them on their journey to the past and to hopefully steer them in the right direction. It's my goal that *everyone* in the 21st Michigan civilian contingency will have their authenticity level raised even higher than any year previous. We are not out to show any other unit that we are better – that has never been my goal. We are out to only be the finest *we* can be...to know that we are trying to give our absolute best all around impression to honor those we are emulating.

And what fun we'll have while doing it!

Fun Information: For Christmas, Patty and I make the attempt to have as close to a 19th century immersion holiday experience as we can, lighting our back gathering room with nothing but oil and candle light. With our antique furniture set up in a way very reminiscent of a 19th century parlor, one could very likely have an immersion experience. One evening, a visiting friend wondered how could people - in the days before electric lights - sew, crochet, knit, or even read in such low light. I mentioned to her that, yes, people did all the things she mentioned and much more in the darkness of winter. I explained that folks during that era had much better nocturnal vision than those of today. We here in the 21st century have constant light flashing brightly in our eyes, whether it's our bright reading lamps, ceiling lights, computer or TV screens, outside street lights, car lights, neon signs...Most of us don't have true darkness anymore. Now, if you place yourself in the time of the mid-19th century, you would soon find that once the sun went down, being the modern person that you are, you may have trouble seeing at night while your 19th century counter-parts can see just fine. As social historian, Eric Sloane, wrote in his book *Diary of an Early American Boy*: "...farmers used to work in what we call darkness. Many present day scientists insist that the early countrymen had extraordinary eyesight, keener than the average eyesight of today. Farmers did their haying at night, using the moon or stars for illumination, and taking advantage of the coolness of the summer night."

So, as we spoke of this, one of my kids, suddenly and without warning turned on the overhead electric lights, and it nearly blinded us! We were so used to the soft glow of the flames from our oil lamps and candles that the 'normal' modern lighting was way too bright. I turned to our guest and said, "I prove my point!"

Welcome!

Please make sure you meet and greet our newest civilian member, Amanda Johnson. Amanda is a real history enthusiast and works part time as a period dressed docent at Waterloo Farm.

This and That:

I am planning to run again as Civilian Coordinator this year and would be honored to receive your vote of confidence at our annual business meeting on January 23. I like to think that we are on the right track in our time-travel venture and hope that we can continue to head down that path in the same vein.

Speaking of our business meeting – it is very important that you attend. Your input is needed for numerous suggestions and ideas that may be put forth. To keep the 21st Michigan

as top notch as we can, it is imperative to show and make your voice heard. See you there!!



Also, see you at the Christmas Party January 8th!!

The 21st Michigan Christmas Party **Saturday January 8th, 2011**

The annual 21st Michigan Christmas party does its best to replicate an early 1860's Christmas, with food, greenery, live music with singing (and sometimes dancing), and, of course, period dress – all taking place in an authentic 19th century structure. To top it off, Mrs. Rock has a gift-exchange game that we played last year (and enjoyed immensely, I might add). As she explains it: *“Everyone over the age of 12 brings a ‘white elephant’ gift. Then, at the party, names are drawn for gift selection. Each person that brings a gift has their name entered into the drawing. If you don't bring a gift you don't get a gift.”*

And part of the fun in this gift exchange is that another person who has a higher number can steal your unopened gift from you – all in good fun, however.

These gifts, as stated above, are ‘white elephants’ – something from your home you don't want anymore. But, not broken junk, please. It is also asked that you do not go out and purchase anything new to put into the exchange. Something from your home.

Mrs. Rock, however, will purchase gifts for all children under the age of 12. She personally picks the gifts for the little ones by age and gender.

Everything together helps make for a fine and fun evening spent in the past with your pards and pardettes from the 21st Michigan.

The date for this season's affair will be on Saturday January 8th, 2011. The festivities will begin at 4 pm (guests can begin arriving anytime after 3:30) **and go on until everyone feels like leaving** – since the East Detroit Historical Society (of which I am a board member) graciously allows us to use the historic 1872 schoolhouse here in Eastpointe, we can stay as late as we'd like.

We are asking, once again, to have the members of the 21st Michigan dress in their period finest, be it military or civilian. This in itself has created a very unique atmosphere in past years. Spouses, significant others, etc., do not have to dress in the style of the 1860's, of course, but are encouraged to do so if they'd like. (I don't know about the rest of you but I sure think the ladies all look beautiful in their period-finest Christmas dresses!).

What would a period Christmas party be without period food? In the last couple of years, for instance, we've had venison stew (thanks Doc!), ham, turkey, stuffing, baked beans, wassail, desserts galore, and so much more - all very period correct for "our" time. So, once again, we are asking members to all pitch in and bring a plate to pass. Maybe some eggnog this year - definitely a period-correct Christmas drink! *Please look for the e-mail that was sent to all members to sign up to contribute to the feast.* It has a list of the various foods we are hoping to have. If you didn't receive it, please let me know and I'll get it to you.

And a big thank you to everyone who brings **their own period cups, plates, and silverware**. Not only does it look authentic, but we usually only have one small bag of garbage instead of multiple large bags to put at the curb. If possible, let's please continue doing so again this year.

Just as in past years, it has been asked of all of us with young children to please supervise them closely and to not allow them 'free reign.' Remember that in the 1860's, children would not have been out of control and running about without a care. Also, the building in which we are having this party is a restored historic structure built in 1872 and deserves the same respect as given to any home at Greenfield Village. Maybe bring some period appropriate games to help keep the little ones busy.

We would like to have you to please RSVP for this festive affair as soon as you can: my e-mail address is (historicalken@giorlando.net) or phone me (cell 586-863-6346).

For those of you who have never been to the schoolhouse, it is located in Eastpointe on 9 Mile Road, just about a quarter mile west of Gratiot. From I-94, get off at 9 Mile and head west a couple of miles until you pass Gratiot. And, from I-75, take I-696 east exit to I-94 west and then exit at 9 Mile and head west.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me.