

AFTER ACTION REPORT LIVING HISTORY EVENT

6-18-12

Members Present

Larry Auld, Mike Bilbo, Ken Davis, Dan Judy, Matt Midgett and Larry Pope. We were also joined by new members Brent Harty and his son Thomas and Luther Morton.

Event Overview

This event will probably stand out as one of the most memorable we will have. The top story will undoubtedly be the Little Bear Fire. In less than a week, it consumed over 38,000 acres, 242 homes and threatened Fort Stanton with destruction. Fortune and hard work by fire fighters, allowed Fort Stanton and its surrounding area to remain untouched. With the abatement of danger by mid-week, we were able to hold our regularly scheduled encampment on June 16.

Many members were unable to show up early, so the flag ceremony was delayed until after 10:30. Drill was short. Following this, a ration issue was conducted which consisted of soft bread, cheese, apples, corned beef and cabbage. Everyone ate heartily and prepared for a scout into the territory. Seven members were able to make the march to the old fort cemetery. Along the way, we noticed a large amount of ash, soot and charcoal, all of which were lifted from the center of the fire miles away and deposited near Fort Stanton. This was evidence of the extreme danger Fort Stanton experienced. Strangely enough, while visiting the cemetery on the hill, we were driven off by nothing less than rain and lightning. Making it back to the safety of the fort in short order, we spent most of the afternoon under the shelter of a tent fly.

An outdoor wedding had been scheduled for the afternoon on the parade ground; however the participants, expecting the normal short New Mexico rains, agreed to delay the ceremony for some time. The garrison was asked, in this interim, to provide an honor guard for the bride and groom. We accepted and took the opportunity to practice our parts, and then we waited on the rain..... and waited and waited. The wedding party finally decided to 'press on' and hold the ceremony in the rain. Members of the garrison formed up and provided the honor guard for the wedding becoming thoroughly soaked. At the conclusion of the wedding, we slogged over to the flag pole and retrieved the colors. The event broke early and most members headed for home. Mike and Larry remained in camp over night.

Sunday dawned cold with the previous day's rain and no activity took place on the parade. It was decided that the camp would be packed up as soon as everything was dry. About 9:00, however, a crowd of people began descending upon the fort. These were parishners of the Nazarene Church of Nogal, who's facilities were inaccessible due to the fire and they were to hold church service on the fort grounds. Nearly 200 people showed up for service, fellowship and picnic, many of whom had lost houses only days before. This was a sobering thought amongst the joy of our own site being spared. With all the visitors at the fort, Matt, who had come for the service, hosted a tour of the fort for a large group. Numerous visitors enjoyed the camp, which remained open due to the sudden influx of people. Out of the blue, so to say, came an important visitor no one had expected. New Mexico Governor Martinez appeared to visit with people who had experienced the fire. Mike, Matt and Larry were fortunate enough to engage the Governor in a short conversation and photo session. Hopefully, we represented ourselves and the fort well. As the crowd waned, the Governor made her exit and it was decided to finally break camp. The fort grounds were once again quiet by about 3:30. The camp area

was cleaned as well as the nurse's quarters and its bathrooms which had been opened for the large amount of visitors. With all that had happened over the week, it all lent to a very good living history event.

Conclusion

Because of external activities, very little drill was done and no class time has had. This was balanced by the extreme dedication of the volunteers to participate in impromptu activities with adverse conditions. Many thanks to all of our garrison members for this dedication.

With the advent of Fort Stanton Live, there will be NO Garrison encampment for July. We will once again hold a living history event on August 18. Suggested activities may include a discussion on military head gear, the Army supply system for Fort Stanton and a short march down the Rio Bonito in search of a lime kiln.



Line for ration issue.



Garrison on the field march.



Waiting out the rain with visitors.



Meeting with the Governor.