



# BIVOUAC

KENT CIVIL WAR SOCIETY \* P.O. Box 3671 KENT, OH 44240

**WHAT: ANNUAL SOCIETY PICNIC**

**WHERE: SHELTER HOUSE, FRED FULLER PARK, KENT**

**WHEN: TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2018 AT 6:30 P.M.**

**COST: FREE TO MEMBERS AND A GUEST**

You and a guest are invited to share good food, fine fellowship and some interesting Civil War conversation. The Society will provide beverages and a delicious variety of sliced sandwich meats and cheeses. These will usually include roast beef, turkey, ham and salami with Swiss, American and provolone cheeses. Buns and condiments are included.

In return, we ask that you bring your own table service...AND we ask each individual to bring a LARGE SIZE serving to share with fellow members. For this particular menu, if your last name begins with:

**A through G, bring a dessert**

**H through O, bring a main dish**

**P through Z, bring a salad or hors d'oeuvres**

A main dish could include a casserole, potatoes, beans or vegetables. Please mark your container with your name and provide a large spoon or fork for serving (also marked, if possible – Mark STILL, even a year or two later, is carrying around several utensils from previous potlucks). We ask you to ARRIVE A FEW MINUTES BEFORE 6:30, so that we can begin serving on time. No reservations are needed.



## "Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more!"

By far, the food soldiers received has been the source of more stories than any other aspect of army life. The Union soldier received a variety of edibles. The food issue, or ration, was usually meant to last three days while on active campaign and was based on the general staples of meat and bread. Meat usually came in the form of salted pork or, on rare occasions, fresh beef. Rations of pork or beef were boiled, broiled or fried over open campfires. Army bread was a flour biscuit called hardtack, re-named "tooth-dullers", "worm castles", and "sheet iron crackers" by the soldiers who ate them. Hardtack could be eaten plain though most men preferred to toast them over a fire, crumble them into soups, or crumble and fry them with their pork and bacon fat in a dish called Skillygalee. Other food items included rice, peas, beans, dried fruit, potatoes, molasses, vinegar, and salt. Baked beans were a northern favorite when the time could be taken to prepare them and a cooking pot with a lid could be obtained. Coffee was a most desirable staple and some soldiers considered the issue of coffee and accompanying sugar more important than anything else. Coffee beans were distributed green so it was up to the soldiers to roast and grind them. The task for this most desirable of beverages was worth every second as former soldier John Billings (10th Massachusetts Volunteer Light Artillery Battery) recalled: "What a Godsend it seemed to us at times! How often after being completely jaded by a night march... have I had a wash, if there was water to be had, made and drunk my pint or so of coffee and felt as fresh and invigorated as if just arisen from a night's sound sleep!"

Soldiers often grouped themselves into a "mess" to combine and share rations, often with one soldier selected as cook. But while on active campaign, rations were usually prepared by each man to the individual's taste. It was considered important for the men to cook the meat ration as soon as it was issued, for it could be eaten cold if activity prevented cook fires. A common campaign dinner was salted pork sliced over hardtack with coffee boiled in tin cups that each man carried.

The southern soldier's diet was considerably different from his northern counterpart and usually in much less quantity. The average Confederate subsisted on bacon, cornmeal, molasses, peas, tobacco, vegetables and rice. They also received a coffee substitute (usually roasted chicory) which was not as desirable as the real coffee northerners had. Trades of tobacco for coffee were quite common throughout the war when fighting was not underway. Other items for trade or barter included newspapers, sewing needles, buttons, and currency.



Army of the Potomac – Union soldiers cooking dinner in camp (Library of Congress)