

# WHITESMOKE SUN / COURIER

VOLUME 2 - ISSUE 1 - FEBRUARY 2006

## To Splatter or Not To Splatter Pvt. Mike Bazzo

During the ten minutes of free time allotted to us between battles at Moorpark (literally), I had the chance to glance around at some of the other camps in search of a good period coffee pot. With the idea that I want to get a tent this year and spend the night now and then at an event, the all-important cup of Joe has taken center stage. The longer in the tooth I become, the more I seem to depend on overcoming that little hitch in my get-along! What I noticed at Moorpark was several examples of what I call cowboy coffee pots, better known as enamel ware or splatter ware. You know, the typical blue speckled pot and mugs you use when camping. I already had one of those at home so, end of search, right? Well, not exactly.

It seems that enamel ware was

invented around the time of the revolutionary war. By some accounts, the process was known to the Chinese a thousand years ago, by other accounts it is product from Sweden or by others, invented in England before the American Civil War. In what I could discover, it certainly seems to have been "available" during the civil war and thus, would be "period" but the catch is that it appears to not have been "widely available" during the civil war. In fact, the process of enameling metal apparently wasn't perfected modernly until about 1870 in England. By historical accounts, enamel ware wasn't marketed in the U.S. until 1874 and didn't become "all that and then some" until later that century. So, cowboy coffee pots, enamel ware or splatter ware would not really be "period."

After perusing numerous web sites of re-enactor units, both Union and Confederate, it seems as though enamel ware is hotly discussed and either generally frowned upon or forbidden. Some units argued that since enamel ware was available, it could be used in the camp, albeit, sparingly. Some offered that the enamel ware could be used but should be thoroughly blackened by fire so as to disguise it and some even suggest painting the pot with black engine paint or some other heat resistant paint to conceal its true nature, though others would argue that the period shape of the pot remains at issue.

So my search continues. Mucket or peach can boiler? Were muckets period issue? Can I find a modern peach can without rings on the sides? Once I find the right pot, how can I make the best tasting period coffee? So many questions! My wife says I spend entirely too much time thinking

about this civil war stuff. But isn't that what it's all about?!!