

WHITE SMOKE SUN / COURIER

VOLUME 4 - ISSUE 7 - AUGUST 2008

3rd Corporal Michael Bazzo
8th Louisiana, Co. E

Alone at Camp Moore - Whilst you boys was all heading up to Gettysburg, my fate took me south to Louisiana on a business trip for three days. I didn't have much time, but was determined to see as much as possible in the short time available.

Destination: Camp Moore, where thousands of brave young southern boys enlisted to fight again the invading Yankee hordes, most of which died of disease and remain buried on the Camp grounds, never making it to the war and glory. It is to those sad souls that the Camp is dedicated. I got out of my meeting at 1:15 p.m. in Baton Rouge and called the Camp Moore Museum to get directions. I was dismayed to learn that Camp Moore is located in Tangiapoha near the Mississippi boarder some 70 miles away and closes is doors at 3:00 p.m. Undaunted, I was determined to get there before closing and see whatever I could. I raced along the highway that is cut like a swath through tall pine forests, keeping a sharp eye out for State Troopers who I was sure would just love to have fun with a city boy from Californy. I thought

that I would see a lot of the countryside but the visibility to either side of the freeway is nil because of the forest. Who knew Louisiana had so many trees? I came to find out that Georgia-Pacific Paper Company is big out there and must be there for a reason. Louisiana is basically flat as a pancake, and covered with trees. It is so humid that the pines are all

covered in moss. It was 98 degrees and 92% humidity. As soon as I stepped out of the air conditioned rental car, my eye glasses instantly fogged up! But I digress. I pulled in to Camp Moore at 2:30 p.m. with 30 minutes to spare. I was the only one there. In fact, I think I was the only one within about ten miles of the place, as it's out in the middle of no

CAMP MOORE PHOTOS

Top - Cemetery at Camp Moore. It should be noted that the statue is not of a CW Soldier, but one from the Spanish-American War, he has a bolt action rifle.

Bottom - Main entry to Camp. This is an old photo as the bricks discussed in Mike's Column are not shown.



where! For those of you who haven't been there, the Camp is made up of beautiful arched entrance gates in front of a restored main house that is the museum. To one side are the parade grounds where some four to five thousand troops drilled. Beyond the tree line is the edge of Camp Tracy, the eastern part of the Camp where the troops camped. To the south, a tree line marks Beaver Creek, from which the troops obtained water and bathed. This is also the location of the Sutlers. One poor Sutler, an enterprising woman and photographer from New Orleans, decided that there was money to be made from the soldiers so she set up shop at Camp Moore near beaver Creek. She was successful, capturing images of those headed off to war. Unfortunately, she never left Camp Moore because she succumbed to measles like so many others in the Camp. According to Mike, the curator, there were two major outbreaks of measles that took the lives of many soldiers. Mike agreed to stay overtime for a while so that I could look around the museum. I tried to drink it all in but there just wasn't much time. He even showed me a room called the research room. There was a large filed cabinet to one side, a copy machine and lots of books. He noticed my 8th Louisiana T-shirt and motioned for me to check something out. Out of the file cabinet, he pulled a thick file marked 8th Louisiana that was crammed full of historical documents pertaining only to the 8th; letters from soldiers, company rosters, etc. I think I actually drooled at the site of it! But one look at my watch almost made me whimper because I knew there wasn't time to sit and look through it all. Fortunately, he said that if I ever came back I was welcome to Xerox the entire file. Then I heard the words that were music to my ears. Mike said, "I'll tell you what, I have to leave but you stay as long as you want, just close the gate behind you when you go." I thought I died and went to heaven right then and there! Imagine, having all of Camp Moore to myself for as long as I wanted, or at least for as long as I could stand the humidity, which had by now

turned into a drizzle. The Museum had many interesting artifacts, including original uniforms, musical instruments, a surgeon's box, and thousands of bullets, buttons, buckles, and trinkets that have been dug up on the property. But it was the chance to wander the grounds in absolute silence that I will never forget. Behind the museum is a confederate cemetery where some 400 soldier are buried. I walked along the headstones while the breeze gently blew through the trees and the drizzle turned into a light rain. It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. I sat on a stone bench looking at stones that marked the graves of so many young boys that were likely filled with adventure, dreams of glory, and the hopes of their loved ones back home who never left Camp Moore. To the south of the large monument, there are believed to be another 800 bodies that have never been identified. I sat there for a long time listening to the breeze and pondering the fates of these poor fellows who never had the chance to accomplish what they so bravely set out to do. No, I didn't see any ghosts (though I did have a weird thing happen with my camera that I'll tell you about at another time)! The rain increased in intensity and I decided to call it a day. I walked the cemetery grounds one more time and only found two headstones from the 8th. They appear to have been brothers; same last name and sadly, died the same day. I made my way back to the front of the main house where a large confederate battle flag is laid out in red bricks with inscriptions. You can purchase a red brick and have it inscribed with a dedication to the 8th or even to a particular soldier. The money goes to the museum. By now I was soaked and it was getting dark. Sadly, it was time to leave, but I thoroughly enjoyed what turned out to be several hours at Camp Moore. I was stuck in the rain and traffic all the way back to Baton Rouge but passed the time listening to a cd of the 2nd South Carolina String band that I bought at the Museum. That night, at dinner, over catfish, hush puppies, dirty rice, sea food gumbo soup and a nice cold beer, I pondered

what it must have been like to be at Camp Moore as a soldier. I was glad I made the effort to see it, if only for a short time.

For more photos on Camp Moore, go to <http://www.civilwaralbum.com/louisiana/campmoore.htm>