

Civil War Do-It-Yourselfers

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The Confederacy ran out of salt, shoes and medicine in 1863.

Salt was a precious commodity in Civil War days. Without refrigeration, meat could be preserved only with salt. No salt, no meat. And meat was the staple article of diet along with corn meal and sweet potatoes. Not only did the Confederate army need meat — it never had enough from war's start to end — but the plantations where the food was produced needed a big supply to feed the slaves who did the work.

Before the war the South consumed about six million bushels of salt every year. Most of it came from Europe and the West Indies, some from the North. The Federal blockade cut off all this supply early in the war and by 1863 the salt situation was critical.

At the start of the war salt sold for 75 cents a bushel. Later it went to \$12.50 and at war's end black marketeers were asking and getting \$40 to \$50 a bushel.

Luxury Profits Higher

Salt was too bulky for blockade runners to bring in and, anyway, profits on luxuries were higher and ship captains crammed in champagne and pate de fois gras among the munition cargoes. The profits on these were fantastic and often patriotism ran a bad second to money.

Salt boiling soon became a profitable industry and Florida, with its easy access to the sea and comparative freedom from war ravages, offered the best facilities. By 1863 the coasts on both sides of Florida were dotted with salt boilers.

Besides these commercial salt works, many families camped on the beach and boiled a season's supply as they vacationed.

Susan Bradford, teen-age daughter of a plantation owner near Tallahassee and a keen observer of wartime life, recorded in her diary one such salt boiling expedition in 1863.

"The great big sugar kettles were filled full of water and fires made beneath the kettles. They are a long time heating up and then they boil merrily. . . . A white foam comes at first and then the dirtiest scum you ever saw bubbles and dances over the surface; as the water boils away it seems to get thicker and thicker, at last only a wet

mass of what looks like sand remains. This they spread on smooth oaken planks to dry. In bright weather the sun does the rest of the work of evaporation, but if the weather is bad, fires are made just outside of a long, low shelter where the planks are placed on blocks of wood. The shelter keeps off the rain and the fires give out heat enough to carry on the evaporation.

"The salt finished in fair weather is much whiter and nicer in every way than that dried in bad weather, but this dark salt is used to salt meat or to pickle pork."

Squirrel Skins Tanned

Susan also ran out of shoes in 1863.

"I had no shoes," she wrote, "except some terribly rough ones. . . . and Cousin Rob tanned some squirrel skins and made me a pair of really beautiful shoes, nice enough to wear with my one and only silk dress (made from one of her mother's old ones)."

Later when the squirrel shoes wore out Susan improvised another pair.

"Today I have on railroad stockings and slippers," she wrote. "Guess what these slippers are made of? Whenever I go to Uncle Richard's I see an old black uncle hard at work plaiting shucks and weaving the plaits into doormats. It seemed to me a lighter braid might be sewed into something resembling shoes, so I picked out the softest shucks and soon had enough to make one slipper. So pleased was I that I soon had a pair of shoes ready to wear. They are a little rough so I have pasted inside a lining of velvet. Everybody laughed but I feel quite proud."

Mary Boykin Chestnut, whose diary has become a Civil War classic, was visiting her ill mother in Alabama in 1863. Her uncle gave her a pair of shoes.

"What a gift!" she recorded. "For more than a year I have had none but some dreadful things that Armistead makes for me, and they hurt my feet so. These do not fit, but that is nothing; they are large enough and do not pinch anywhere. I have absolutely a respectable pair of shoes!"

Makeshift shoes were fashioned differently in southern Alabama. Miss Parthenia Antoinette Hague, a school teacher, left an account of improvised shoes as made on a plantation.

"Our shoes, particularly those of women and children, were made of cloth or knit," she wrote. "Some one had learned to knit slippers, and it was not long before most of the women of our settlement had a pair of slippers on knitting needles. They were knit of homespun thread, either cotton or wool. . . . the slippers or shoes were lined with cloth of suitable texture."

"Sometimes we put on the soles ourselves. . . . ripping the soles off (of old shoes), placing them in warm water. . . . then stitching (on) our knit slippers or shoes. . . ."

Homemade Remedies
Medicine was barred by the blockade. What little there was went to the army. Women who remained at home to run the plantations reverted to pioneer days for their homemade remedies.

"The woods were our drug stores," Miss Hague recorded. "The berries of the dog-wood tree were taken for quinine. . . . A soothing and efficacious cordial for dysentery and similar ailments was made from blackberry roots; but ripe persimmons, when made into a cordial, were thought to be far superior to blackberry roots. An extract of the barks of the wild cherry, dogwood, poplar, and wahoo trees were used for chills and agues. For coughs and all lung diseases a syrup made with the leaves and roots of the mullein plant, globe flower, and wild cherry bark was thought to be infallible. Of course the castor-bean plant was gathered in the wild state in the forest, for making castor oil.

"Many also cultivated a few rows of poppies in their gardens to make opium, from which our laudanum was created; and at this time was very useful. The manner of extracting opium from poppies was of necessity crude.

The heads of bulbs of the poppies were plucked when ripe, the capsules pierced with a large-sized sewing needle, and the bulbs placed in some small vessel for the opium gum to exude and to become inspissated (thickened) by evaporation. The soporific influence of this drug was not excelled by that of the imported articles."

Southern housewives also took to the woods for their blue dye.

'Mud' Extracted

They gathered indigo plants and extracted "indigo mud," a brilliant blue coloring.

Miss Hague described an "indigo churning":

"When the weed had matured sufficiently. . . . the plants were cut close to the ground, our steeping vats were closely packed with the weed, and water enough to cover the plant was poured in. The vat was then left eight or nine days. . . . Then the plant was rinsed out, so to speak, and the water in the vat was churned up and down with a basket for quite a while; weak lye was added as a precipitate, which caused the indigo particles held in solution to fall to the bottom of the vat; the water was poured off, and the 'mud' was placed in a sack and hung up to drip and dry."



PEOPLE IMPROVISED — In early 1863 the South began to run out of things such as salt, shoes and medicine, and the people of the Confederacy began to improvise. Salt was boiled out of sea water, shoes were made from hides and corn shucks and the woods became drug stores. Other items had to be fashioned in the homes, too. There was no

Pan-American Notes Increase in Earnings

New York — Pan-American World Airways reported last week that 1962 earnings rose 62.6 per cent and revenues reached the half-billion-dollar mark for the first time last year.

History Is Repeated In Roman Gravel Pit

New York — Several years ago Trans World Airlines workmen in Rome were under instructions to dig gravel for ballast for piston-engine Constellations from one central pit in an effort to stop spoiling the site with a multitude of holes.

While digging they discovered an ancient plaque in Latin which, loosely translated, was an admonition to Roman workmen from their supervisor instructing them to dig gravel for ballast for Roman ships from one central pit rather than the area with a multitude of holes.

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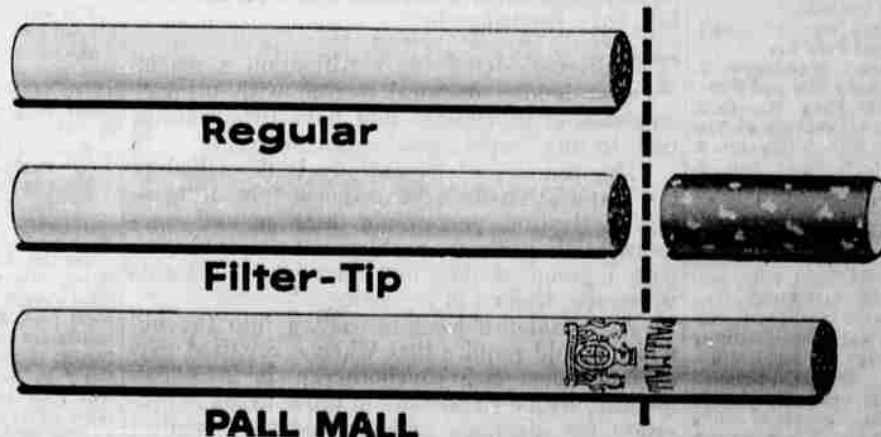
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Joint Boardman Briefing Talked

Salem — A joint session of the legislature may be called Friday for a briefing on progress in the Boardman space age development project.

The possibility of a special joint session merged after four-way talks between Gov. Mark Hatfield, Sen. Wayne Morse, Senate President Ben Musa, and House Speaker Clarence Barton.

It was revealed Saturday that Morse had accepted Hatfield's invitation to join him here Friday afternoon for a discussion of the Boardman project with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Musa and Barton indicated they would invite Hatfield and Morse to address a joint session if they felt progress had reached a point where details of the negotiations should be aired before the full legislature.

Local Insurance Men Are Awarded Trophies

Wayne H. Saffley, Medford, was awarded the "Man of the Year" trophy for 1962 by the Portland Agency of the Aetna Life Insurance company for writing more than \$1,000,000 worth of life, group and accident and health insurance, according to George C. Fraser, general agent.

Curt Hopkins of the Medford agency was awarded the "Man of the Year" award for the highest group production. He wrote in excess of \$4,000,000 of group insurance business for 1962.

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