Some folks who have purchased Enfield slings from T. Czekanski Leatherworks upon our recommendation were disappointed to find that the slings were too wide to fit their reproduction Enfields. Mr. Czekanski makes his slings 1½ inches wide, which is the width of original slings examined, and fits original Enfield sling swivels. The sling swivels of many reproduction Enfields are only 1¼ inches wide, but, as noted by Editor Geoff Walden in an earlier edition of The Watchdog, these can be very easily switched by purchasing correctly sized swivels from Lodgewood Manufacturing, 494 Ventura Ln., Whitewater, WI 53190. We have been informed of another source for accurate reproduction slings. Don Rademacher (c/o Artifakes, 1608 W. Pearl St., Stevens Point, WI 5448) offers high quality reproduction Enfield slings.

Female living history interpreters looking for a quality learning experience will do no better than to attend the “Ladies of the 1860s Seminar” in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on March 1, 2, and 3. Sponsored by Mrs. Martin’s Mercantile and Millinery, this conference will focus on “Perfecting the 1860s Woman’s Impression.” Speakers include Linda Duffy, Juanita Leisch, Carolann Schmitt, and Maryanne Greketis. For more information about this seminar, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Martin’s Mercantile, 4566 Oakhurst Dr., Sylvania, OH 43560-1736.

During the winter and spring, The Genteel Arts Academy of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania will be sponsoring hands-on classes teaching construction techniques of various garments, including corsets, gentlemen’s vests, undersleeves, and bodices. Participants leave these one- or two-day workshops with a completed garment, workbook, reading list and sewing instructions. Contact the Genteel Arts Academy about registration at P.O. Box 3014, Gettysburg, PA 17325; (717) 337-0283.

Several issues of The Watchdog back, we found ourselves unable to recommend a maker for Union enlisted frock coats. Now we can recommend the work of Greta Cunningham, 402 East Main Street, Madison, Indiana 47250; phone (812) 273-4193. Contact her for a custom-made frock, and for many other types of 19th century garments. But don’t bother contacting her if you are not interested in pursuing exacting standards of research, tailoring, workmanship, and selection of materials. Also, the old adage about getting what one pays for comes into play with Ms. Cunningham. Her garments are expensive, but are peerless. Those of you who visited our display at Spring Hill may have seen a frock coat copied from an original example by Ms. Cunningham.
Looking Under The Cape of Reproduction Federal Greatcoats

Michael R. Cunningham, Ph.D.

In September of 1995, The Watchdog wrote to 25 Civil War merchants and offered them the opportunity to have their Federal greatcoats discussed in a forthcoming article. Ten merchants responded, and nine reproduction coats were available for examination. Several of the reproduction coats were produced by the same manufacturer, and are grouped together in the discussion below. The reproduction coats were compared to 4 originals greatcoats, plus dozens of pictures of originals gathered over twenty years of study.

Merchants often explained points about their reproduction products by mentioning that there was a great deal of variation in originals from contractor to contractor. That is true, but only up to a point. The 1865 Quartermaster Regulations specified that the height of the collar on the great coat for footmen was to be 3.5 inches. Measurement of existing originals indicate that actual collar height ranged from 2 5/8 inches to 3 1/2 inches, with an average a fraction under 3 inches. Similarly, three, four and five lines of horizontal quilting have been seen on the collar of the dismounted coat. Further demonstrating the variation that exists across original greatcoats, the edge of the cape is even with the edge of the collar on some originals, and on other originals the edge of the cape extends another inch (and therefore does not bunch at the neck when buttoned). Original overcoats also vary greatly in terms of which pieces were hand stitched and which pieces were machine stitched.

Given such variations, we are not inclined to be critical about small deviations from original dimensions. But not all variations are authentic or legitimate. All greatcoats that we examined had sleeve linings made of 6 oz. cotton drilling. We have never seen an original lined in brown polished cotton. Nor have we seen an original with a cape made in three pieces, a cuff made in one piece, or a body lined with white muslin. It is impossible for The Watchdog to prove that the features that we question on reproduction coats were never seen in the millions of greatcoats produced during the Civil War. But we feel that the burden of proof rests with the modern manufacturers and merchants. The Watchdog recommends that each Civil War reproduction item offered for sale be accompanied by a tag that states on which original item in which specific location the reproduction is based (i.e. based on original identified to George Bartow, 15th New Jersey Infantry, in Cunningham collection, Louisville, KY)

The Watchdog is a stickler for accuracy, but we also recognize the modern realities. When one is chilled to the bone at Mudfreezeboro, and the budget will barely cover the cost of gas to return home, accuracy may not be the number one priority when buying a greatcoat on Merchants’ Row. And this reality causes problems for manufacturers. The Federal government was willing to pay to manufacturers $20 for a M1861 rifled musket, $13.17 for a dismounted and $16.11 for a mounted greatcoat. That roughly translates into $400, $263 and $322, respectively in today’s inflated dollars. Reenactors have been willing to pay that for their weapons, but have been a bit less willing to spend serious money on quality uniforms. If a reproduction coat is sold at retail for only half as much as it should realistically cost, it must be expected that corners have been cut, and some accuracy will have been sacrificed.

The quality of goods that are available on Merchants’ Row will be determined by the demand of reenactors. If reenactors demand more accurate uniforms, and ready-made accurately reproduced uniforms fly off the racks while less accurate uniforms gather dust, Civil War merchants will carry more of the former and less of the latter. Ultimately, demand will determine supply. What is available now is discussed below:

Goldberg Textile Co.  
2495 South Alden Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84106

Dismounted Greatcoat : Medium (to 38) $299, Large to 44) $325; Extra Large (46+) $385 (Buttons are extra)

Strong Points:
The specimen coat was based on a Schuykill Arsenal dismounted coat in the Ft. Bridger Historical Society. All major pieces were correctly proportioned. Blue kersy is locally produced and looks good. Cape hem, cape facing, coat facings and collar facings were all nicely hand-stitched. Button holes also were hand stitched. Buttons were correctly set along the coat facing line for the proper tapered appearance. Collar stitching was correct. Belt in the rear was properly tapered. Body lining was a nice wool-linen blend. Sleeve size markings were appropriate for the original.

Suggestions for improvement:  
Belt in rear is set too low. It is 20" from the hem compared to 27" on the original.
The cuffs are made of one piece of wool; they should be made of two pieces, with seams parallel to sleeves.

This specimen contains an inspector mark dated 1862. Federal regulations called for contractors to display the contract date starting in 1864. I prefer that merchants use a contemporary date (i.e. Manufactured by/Patrick Brown/1996), so as not to confuse collectors in the future.

Hooks show three wires, should show two wires.

The sleeve linings are bleached cotton and look a bit too bright. Extensive use of hand stitching caused a few lines to be a bit wavy, such as vertical edge of cape and upper edge of belt.

Schuylkill Arsenal products were extensively hand stitched. Many originals produced by other manufacturers have cuffs, cape, coat facings and belt done with machine stitching. This option could be offered to lower the price.

A brown polished cotton pocket was added to the lining. This was installed by the soldier, rather than being a feature of an issue coat. It might be better to list this as an option, rather than a production feature.

Reproduction coats sold by these retailers are produced by the same manufacturer, Regimental Quartermaster:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regimental Quartermaster</th>
<th>Quartermaster Shop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 553</td>
<td>5565 Griswold Rd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatboro, PA 19040</td>
<td>Kimball, MI 48074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frazer Bros.</th>
<th>Fall Creek Sutlery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5641 Yale Blvd. #125</td>
<td>P.O. Box 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX 75206</td>
<td>Whitestown, IN 46075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dismounted Greatcoat - $159

Strong Points:
The dismounted overcoat is made of thick, strong wool.
The seams are very straight, and tightly sewn.
The collar, cape, sleeve, cuffs and skirt are all cut to the proper length.
The pieces hang evenly, and are symmetrical.
The buttons are sewn on tightly.
The sleeve lining is correct muslin.
The coat was delivered promptly, was carefully wrapped and securely boxed. An overcoat that arrives quickly is worth a lot to a reenactor who must stand on picket during a cold night. An overcoat that does not arrive until April is less desirable, no matter how accurate.

Suggestions for improvement:
The wool is a light slate blue, and seems to lack a diagonal weave; it should be a deep sky blue with a slight greenish cast, and have a kersey weave.
The top stitching for the front buttons follows a straight line; it should follow an increasing curve.

Mounted Greatcoat - $169

All of the strong points noted above still apply. In addition:
The stand-and-fall collar is nicely shaped.
The vent is the proper length and is reinforced.
But, the cape measures 1" short, and does not cover the lowest waist button.
The top stitching on the body of the coat below the buttons is set in 3" rather than the proper 1" from the edge.
The collar inner facing is stitched in a diagonal pattern, rather than the correct three vertical lines.

Servant & Co.
237 Steinwehr Ave,
Gettysburg, PA 17325

Dismounted Greatcoat - $149; Mounted Greatcoat - $159

Strong Points:
Available on the rack, year round.
The coat was made of sky blue kersey of medium weight
The overall appearance was minimally acceptable.

Suggestions for improvements:
Coats were evaluated in the store, so notes were less detailed.
The coat conveyed a droopy appearance.
The capes were exceptionally long, dismounted 21 inches, mounted 32 inches.
The collar on the mounted collar was unusually long, 8 inches.
Body lining was white cotton.
The belt in back lacked taper.
The buttonholes were machine stitched in fine sky blue thread.
Strong points:
The coat is made of sturdy sky blue kersey.  
The sleeves are cut amply.  
The top stitching on the collar is nicely executed.  
The collar hooks are of the proper type and strongly fastened.  
The width of the top stitching around the cape buttons is correct.

Suggestions for improvement:
The top stitching in the front of the coat is the wrong shape.  
On this specimen, the top stitching is 5" from the collar at the shoulder, 9.5" from the vertical edge at the top button, 6" from the edge at the fifth button, and 3.5" from the edge at the hem.  On originals, the top stitching resembles a “4”, on the right side of the coat; it begins immediately under the edge of the collar, 1-3" from the edge at the top button, expanding to 4-5" at the fifth button, sharply angling in from 4" below the fifth button to just 1.5" (see Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union, page 129).

The seams on the back of the coat taper too much, like a frock coat.  
The distance from the outer seam to the center seam is only 5" at the point of the belt on this specimen, it is 8-9" on originals.

The belt is the same width from the edge inset into the seam to the rounded tip.  It should taper at a continuous angle.  The loop should be attached to the coat, not to the right side of the belt.

The cape is made in 3 pieces; it should be 2 pieces, with a seam in the middle of the back.

The cape is too short.  13" on this specimen, instead of 18-20 inches on the originals.

The cuffs should be two pieces, with seams following those of the sleeves.

The sleeve lining should be white cotton, not brown.

The body lining in the specimen was brown cotton, although a wool flannel is available.

Mounted Greatcoat - $165  
All of the positive points noted above apply to the dismounted coat.

The mounted cape is the proper length of 22 inches.

Suggestions for improvement:
The distance from the top button to the bottom button is too long; it is 24 inches on the specimen, and extends below the cape.  The distance is 16.5 inches on an original of the same size.

The collar is too long; it is 7.5" on this specimen vs. 5.75 inches on the original.  On this specimen, the stand and fall portions of the collar are made of two pieces of wool; on the originals, it is a single piece.

The top stitching surrounding the buttons on the mounted specimen is similar to that described above for the dismounted specimen.  On the original, by contrast, the top stitching on the left side forms a rectangle 5.25 inches from the vertical edge; the lower line juts back in 1.5" below the bottom button.  The row of decorative buttons that form the double-breast appearance is set .5" in from this line.

Comments noted above pertaining to the three-piece cape, standing loop on the rear belt, and excessive taper in the cut of the pieces that form the rear of the coat are applicable.

The following vendors responded in their own way:

**Michael the Tailor**  
PO Box 2241  
Darien GA 31305  
Sent a letter indicating intention to supply a specimen if they could meet the deadline.  They were given a month extension on the deadline, but they did not supply a specimen.

**Crescent City Sutler**  
17810 Highway 57  
Evansville, IN 47711  
Sent a postcard indicating intention to supply a specimen if they could meet the deadline.  They were given a month extension on the deadline, but they did not supply a specimen.

**County Cloth**  
13797-C, Georgetown St. NE.  
Paris, OH 44669  
Sent a letter indicating that they can supply kit for sewing a Federal dismounted overcoat.  The kit costs $153.00  They did not supply a specimen of their kit.

_The Watchdog_ will be happy to accept review samples from other manufacturers in the future.  We will also provide to readers a list of those manufacturers whom we initially contacted about providing samples for this review and who did not respond.
Confederate “Columbus Depot” Jackets — An Update

Geoff Walden

Since the first review of these jackets in The Watchdog (Vol. 2, No. 3, Summer 1994), I have found several other makers of high quality reproductions, hence this update.

First, a note of clarification on the earlier article. The use of the terms “machine-woven” and “hand-loomed” was an attempt to differentiate between some manufacturers’ “denim-looking” jean, and correctly woven reproductions. This was an unfortunate choice of wording, and this discussion ended up being misleading. I am (and was) aware that most modern reproduction jean is woven on a machine loom, just as was most period jean used in uniforms. Hand-woven jean was used mostly for low volume uniforms produced at home. While you can still get hand-woven jean, machine-woven fabrics are correct for the uniforms discussed here.

This article will review the products of three makers. Each of these makes high quality reproductions, based on examination of original examples. In most cases, these makers drew up their own patterns from the originals (their products are reproductions of original items, not of someone else’s repro). They are all very interested in the accuracy of their items, and are continually striving to improve them, particularly in the weave and color of the jean and wool trim. For this reason, their products will differ from time to time. As with any maker, request a sample of the jean and trim material before you order, and specify just what you want. Also, delivery times can vary by demand and material availability; those given here are based on recent conditions.

There will be no “grading” system this time, due to the high quality of all of these products. The makers are listed here in alphabetical order, not in any order of preference. I’d like to note that it has been a sincere pleasure to work with each of these suppliers. These guys really are concerned with “doing it right!”

Charles A. Cantrell
933 Westedge Dr.
Tipp City, OH 45371
(513) 667-3379

Finished jacket - $155 plus shipping (buttons not included). Kits not available. Three different styles available, based on original examples. Other variants, based on originals, available upon request. All visible stitching is by hand. All products feature small variances in stitching, &c., from piece-to-piece, to simulate the non-mass produced look of originals. Delivery time 4-5 weeks. Other products include Atlanta Depot jackets, Georgia State jackets, trousers, and shirts.

2. The Goldberg Textile Co.
Patrick Brown
2495 South Alden St.
Salt Lake City, UT 84106
(801) 467-2343

Finished jacket - $95-$120, based on size, plus shipping (buttons not included, but available). Types I and II available, plus variations based on several originals. All visible stitching is by hand. Kits available for $75 plus shipping. Delivery time 5-6 weeks (2 weeks for kits). Other products include Richmond, Tait, Atlanta, Demopolis, Charleston, and North Carolina jackets, trousers, and a full line of Federal uniform items.

3. D. L. Roder, Clothier
Don Roder
3607 Hwy. 48 N
Nunnely, TN 37137
(615) 729-5597

Finished jacket - $155, shipping included (buttons not included, but available). Several variations based on original jackets are available. All top-stitching and buttonholes are by hand. Kits available for $90 (shipping included). Delivery times vary based on backlog and material supply, but are comparable to other makers (2 weeks for kits). Other products include Atlanta Depot jackets, and trousers.
“Topping Off” Your Impression: Military Headgear
Geoff Walden

Whether you prefer a cap or the ever-popular slouch hat, good authentic choices are readily available. Most readers are familiar with Bill Wickham’s (Dirty Billy’s Emporium, 7574 Middleburg Rd., Detour, MD 21757; phone (410) 775-1865) hats, and we can particularly recommend his styles that are custom made from hat blanks. These usually feature correct linings and hat bands, along with proper exterior trim. He offers Union forage caps of good materials with accurate linings and markings as well. On the other hand, some of his off-the-shelf models show too many modern features (“leatherette” sweat bands, modern writing on the interior, &c.). We’ve heard that he intends to go entirely with the custom made models in the near future.

Another manufacturer of custom-made slouch hats is Tim Allen (1429 Becket Rd., Eldersburg, MD 21784; phone (410) 549-5145). We can recommend Mr. Allen’s hats without reservation - they are the cream of the crop. These Confederate hats feature hand-sewn crown ribbons, painted cloth sweat bands, and authentic period manufacturers’ stamps in the liner. Styles include the “Flat Top” and “Beegeum/Beehive.” Prices run about $70, including shipping.

Union reenactors looking for a dress (“Hardee”) hat may want to contact Don Rademacher (c/o Artifakes, 1608 W. Pearl Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481). Of materials and dimensions close to those of surviving originals, his hats feature period-style ribbons, red leather sweatbands, and convincingly reproduced gold-on-black makers’ labels with size numbers. Beware of most dress hats sold on merchants’ row — their felt is too thick and their sweatbands are of clearly modern appearance.

For kepis and other caps we recommend Greg Starbuck (1581 Gen. Booth Blvd., Suite 107, Virginia Beach, VA 23454; phone (804) 583-2012). Mr. Starbuck’s products are also custom made, based mainly on examination of several original caps. He offers Confederate and Federal kepis and forage caps, both officer and enlisted styles, made out of a variety of appropriate materials, and showing considerable hand stitching. Linings carry correct period labels, where appropriate. The gold braid trim on his officers’ kepis is by far the best we’ve seen, and we’re particularly pleased with the painted cloth-over-cardboard visors on some of his Confederate styles. Basic caps start at $65 and go up, depending on custom detailing. Mr. Starbuck’s off-the-shelf caps are carried by Levi Ledbetter and Tuckahoe Trading Co. Mr. Starbuck can also produce accurate reproductions of an original cap of your choice, given a detailed description and photos of the original.

Another excellent source for Union caps is Uriah Cap (220 Old Route 30, P.O. Box 93, McKnightstown, PA 17343; phone (717) 337-3929). The workmanship on these caps is superior. Contact the maker directly for currently available styles, prices, and delivery times - which may be lengthy but certainly worthwhile.

Alas, we cannot recommend the mass-produced hat products seen on Merchants’ Row. Here is what you should look out for: most period caps and hats were lined with cotton or polished cotton. Sweat bands should be thin leather, pigskin, or painted cloth - not artificial
leather, and originals were invariably attached by hand. Cap chin straps were generally rather thin, and stitching in the leather pieces was generally done by hand. Federal chin strap buckles were very simple thin stamped brass affairs, not the curved style seen on many reproductions. Hats should be trimmed with a polished cotton or silk crown ribbon and brim edging. “Derby” style hats were extremely uncommon in the 1860s. Officers’ braid should not be the very shiny type commonly seen.

While on the subject of hats, we would like to remind our readers of the excellent beaver top hats made by L & H Hats, John William McMicking, 179 Melville St., Dundas, Ontario, L9H 2A9 CANADA; phone (416) 627-7492. These are without exception the best choice of the top hats currently on the market.

Forage caps and kepis ruin too many reenactors’ impressions. These should be the “crowning touches” of impressions — headwear uniquely evocative of the American Civil War. Sadly, most of the commonly available such caps look like piles of heavy rags with leather slabs for bills. Take care in selecting your headwear — look for a product made with precision that a real soldier would have been proud to wear.

... FROM HEAD TO TOE
Sock It To Me
Nicky Hughes

All right, you have shelled out a zillion bucks for a pair of the ugliest shoes you ever wore, but which are as accurate-as-humanly possible reproductions of Civil War era soldier brogans. Now, what do you wear between the flesh of your delicate footsies and those leather clodhoppers? This seems to be an area of little interest to many reenactors, a place where corners can be cut (not that we writers for The Watchdog spend all that much time studying the feet of our reenacting pards, mind you!). If you are fortunate enough to have a spouse, friend, or significant other who knits in the style of the mid-19th century, you may be able to get some home-made “stockings” like those so treasured by Civil War soldiers. More likely, you will buy some rag socks or other woolies from a sporting goods store or a merchant at an event. Heaven forbid, you might even turn out in athletic socks with brightly colored rings around the top (Yes, we know, you will turn them down so that the orange or red stripes don’t show, but sooner or later that will get disarranged and the offending, farby colors will be visible to the whole world). Fortunately, this is an area of your impression that can be improved with historical accuracy at an affordable price.

Order a pair of “Confederate socks” (Union reenactors can wear them, too) from Michael Black, 6378 U.S. 601, Salisbury, NC 28147. Based on examination of several surviving original examples, these socks are off-white in color and made entirely of cotton. One size fits most all (even this writer’s size 13 gunboats). If you are accustomed to wearing wool socks with your living history garb, you may find these socks surprisingly thin and lightweight -- which can be both advantage and disadvantage, depending upon the weather and your need for cushioning. These socks are surprisingly sophisticated in their weave -- even as surviving mid-19th century socks surprised this writer with their “modernity.” You can add a nice detail to your impression for just $9 a pair. Get more than one pair -- they would look nice freshly washed and hanging around camp to dry!
"Gone for a Soldier: Transformed by War" Exhibit at the Atlanta History Center

Without doubt, this is one of the best museum Civil War exhibits I've had the pleasure of viewing. Originally scheduled to run through December 1995, the display will be expanded and incorporated into a much larger exhibit on the Civil War, opening in the Spring of 1996.

This exhibit tells the story of the common soldier, all the way from enlistment through post-war veterans' activities, using photos, artifacts, dioramas, and printed quotes. The strongest point of the exhibit is its use of period quotes. These let the soldiers speak for themselves on such mundane topics as drill, food, and camp life. The photo selection is excellent, but most are not identified as to soldier and unit. The displays feature a very good selection of common weapons, uniforms, accoutrements, and camp life items. Unfortunately, at least one item displayed as an original is in fact a reproduction (the Enfield nipple protector), and some reproduction books and forms are shown in a staff officer display, but not specifically identified as reproductions. However, these are very minor, entirely negligible faults, when compared to the entire display.

The display has a little bit of hands-on: visitors are encouraged to lift a reproduction Springfield to test its weight, and one may browse a notebook with original letters and their transcripts.

The real war that the soldiers experienced was often very different from the popular conception, and this message is very powerfully told through images of wounded soldiers and invalids, and open graves waiting to be filled. A multimedia presentation ties the Civil War experience into modern times. Films demonstrate how the boys of 1917 went off to war full of glorious visions, forgetting everything the Civil War soldier had learned, much to their later regret. This theme is carried through World War II and Vietnam to the present. This is certainly not an anti-war display, but it makes the visitor confront the question, "when is the horror of war really worth it?" We are left to ponder that for ourselves.

For more information, contact the Atlanta History Center at (404) 814-4000.

-- Geoff Walden