Guarding your interests...

Guard Duty is one of the most important duties of a soldier. The security of a camp, and in turn of an army, and ultimately a nation depends upon the steady vigilance of the Guard. The inferred importance can be found in particular in Article 46 of the “articles of war” in the 1861 United States Army Regulations:

Any sentinel who shall be found sleeping upon his post, or shall leave it before being regularly relieved shall suffer death, or other such punishment as may be inflicted by a sentence of a court martial.

It is a noble duty, though often seeming to be a monotonous one -- watching over comrades as they rest or go about other duties. Captain Christopher Columbus Andrews in his 1863 Hints for Company Officers on Their Military Duties states:

Guard duty is the most honorable and responsible which the private soldier is required to perform.

Brigadier General August V. Kautz in his Customs of Service for Non-Commissioned Officers (published in 1864) reminds us of the importance of a sentinel:

Sometimes, when popular violence is threatened, the courage and firmness of a single sentinel may intimidate and keep back a mob, whilst timidity and doubt might encourage them.

It is with the same serious thought just described and a sense of gratitude for the Nicky and Susan Hughes’ efforts for the past five years that I have formed the Relief Guard of The Watchdog. Reading the numerous letters of concern and support during the transition period I was impressed and inspired with the need for this quarterly to continue.

As with a military Relief Guard the orders have been passed. The editorial policy remains the same; up-to-date research on the civilian and military material culture of the 1860s, objective reviews of goods and services provided to and purchased by the Civil War reenacting community. We accept no advertising, and contributors are paid nothing more than a free copy of the issue in which their material appears.

At the end of each year The Watchdog will continue to make a contribution to battlefield preservation. We will also keep you informed of certain preservation issues that may affect your time, money, and access to research facilities.

Your contribution of articles and product reviews is always welcome. Merchants and suppliers likewise are welcome to submit products for review by the Watchdog staff. Products will be returned unless other arrangements have been made for “field” tests.

New areas of interest being considered are: a gathering place for consumer comments. We will not be your lawyer or hitman, but we gladly provide a file cabinet for copies of letters of complaint or praise. Merchants and suppliers are an integral part of the reenacting community (friends of some and sources of tribal knowledge...not just accepting your money for their goods or services).

Any changes in format of The Watchdog are minor in nature allowing for the taste of this particular relief.

The New Relief

The new Relief Guard, or current staff of The Watchdog, was selected from a wide circle of associates within the reenacting community. The circle embraces some of the most knowledgeable folks in the area of historical research and material culture of mid-19th century America.

Before considering taking over the “Dog” I talked to many of these folks whom I consider peers, fellow reenactors, friends, and people I look to for the “right stuff.” I asked three of them to join me in this enterprise. I know they will provide you with the information that will promote the use of the B.I.R.D. [1] philosophy of recreating the past. They are Lynn Kalil (production assistant and civilian associate editor), Robert Braun and Rick Simmons (military associate editors). Here are their bios:

Lynn Kalil has been active in Civil War living history since 1972. She and her family have been members of the Mudsills for many years. She is also a member of the Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society and the Michigan Soldier’s Aid Society.

For twelve years Lynn worked at a 19th century living history farmstead connected with a midwest museum. She has
conducted workshops and seminars as a member of the Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM). She is an active member of the Midwest Open-Air Museum Coordinating Council (MOMCC). She has been a speaker at Old Sturbridge and Old Salem villages, as well as appearing in educational videos and public service promotions.

Lynn has an extensive background in 19th century foodways including dairying, butchering and food preservation, along with arts such as soap making, pressed flower arrangements, gardening and ethnic-American holiday customs. For the re-creation of The Great Western Sanitary Fair held in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1990 Lynn provided the documentation used in setting up the pressed flower booth as it appeared in the 1860s. She collaborated with the National Park Service to provide documentary material regarding the staffing of a booth by the Daughters of Temperance. As the founder of the Daughters of Temperance Living History Society in the present day, Lynn has spent many hours researching the group’s activities focusing on the Civil War years.

The clothing of the 1860s has also been a longtime passion. She has diligently researched and documented appropriate attire for male and female. This research includes examining clothing collections of many private and public institutions. Lynn remembers well the days when there were few resources available; when ladies drew patterns on brown paper based on a few pictures. However, with the abundance of available research Lynn feels strongly that there is no longer a need to make or purchase inaccurate clothing.

She has appeared as an extra in several movies recently: "The Love Letter" (Hallmark Hall of Fame), and "The Day Lincoln Was Shot" (TNT).

Anyone who has ever seen Lynn at an event knows that she does a superb impression and meticulously maintains a first-person persona throughout the event.

Robert A. (Bob) Braun has been an American Civil War historian, author, lecturer and reenactor since 1978. He has researched and written dozens of articles for publications like Military Images, Living History Magazine, The Company Wag, and numerous journals and newsletters. He specializes in the experience of the common soldier — his uniform, accouterments, weapons, tactics, rations, and his stories.

Bob has worked closely with park historians at Antietam and Gettysburg on a variety of projects, including a study of the action around Devil’s Den which was published in 1982. He also provided research, images, and historical critique to Mr. Don Troiani for his painting "The Men Must See Us Today," now a desirable work as part of Troiani’s early three-painting set on Gettysburg. He has done extensive research within the holdings of numerous private collections and public museums including the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

A sought-after lecturer, Bob has presented topics of Civil War and other historical interest to the Company of Military Historians, United States Naval Academy, Marquette University, Carroll College, and several Civil War Round Tables, libraries, historical societies, school groups, civic organizations and clubs. Proud to present America’s heritage to the public, he founded the 124th NYSV reenactment group in 1982. In 1985, Bob co-founded the Thirty-third Wisconsin Volunteers, and joined the Mudsills that same year. He has actively portrayed other periods of history, including the American Revolution, War of 1812, Black Hawk War and World War I.

Currently, Bob is a faculty member of the Institute for Civil War Studies at Carroll College, Waukesha Wisconsin. He is Secretary-Editor for the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, and a past member of the Company of Military Historians. He is employed as Human Resources Manager for Fort Atkinson Memorial Health Services, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

Rick Simmons has been a Civil War reenactor since 1981. He is currently a member of the Southern Guard, the Mudsill’s and the North-South Skirmish Association. He also on occasion does 1812, Mexican War, and World War I impressions. Rick has even done a Roman Legionnaire impression that he made at the age of 10.

He spends much of his free time restoring and reproducing military firearms as well as making uniforms and equipment for his personal use. He has a very well-rounded knowledge of the Civil War (i.e., he reads the many books in his library, but Killer Angels only once).

Rick prefers to do hands on studying of 19th century material culture and manufacturing techniques. He has produced a number of one-of-a-kind items for his use. He has been inspired to do this as he pursues his personal goal of seeking out and studying as many original Civil War uniforms, equipment, weapons, and personal items as he can. According to Rick, nothing can replace viewing existing evidence when judging reproductions. Rick is a winner of the N-SSA’s Robert L. Miller for uniform authenticity. As a winner, he is now one of the current judges.

You now have a good picture of the current staff. I have been reenacting for over 20 years with the Seventeenth Michigan, First Minnesota, and Thirty-sixth Virginia infantry units. I have gone from private to colonel and back again. Now I have returned for the most part to the ranks of private citizen in the reenacting community. I belong to the Living History Society of Minnesota, The Michigan Soldier’s Aid Society, and the Ladies’ Soldier’s Friend Society.

An automotive engineer by training (keeps me working to support my CW obsession), I prefer to study history and material culture. I am a member of the Company of Military Historians and the Costume Society of America. Training in art and design has helped me cultivate an appreciation for how things look as well as work. I don’t have all the answers, but know good places to find them and people that might know.

Articles written by staff members will have their initials after the article (BC, or LK, or RB, or RS). All other contributors will have their names and brief bios at the end of their articles.

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Notes
[1] Because It’s Right Darn-it
Notes on Personal Hygiene of Civil War Soldiers

Cleanliness of soldiers has been considered of primary importance to their health and well-being since ancient times. In America accounts clearly point to the improvements made in the army led by George Washington when he paid strict attention to his soldier's hygiene. The story of Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott's resurrection of the famed "Left Division" during early 1814 was due primarily to his insistence that strict attention to sanitary conditions be attended to by his soldiers.

A comparison of societal customs of ante-bellum America verses modern American's penchant for personal cleanliness would indicate that our Civil War ancestors were not "clean and decent." In an age before modern residential indoor plumbing and hot-water heaters, most agrarian Americans managed to wash their face and hands once a day, in cold water, and without soap. Soap was often reserved for laundering clothes.

In cities and towns personal washing equipment consisting of a washstand, basin, and ewer (or large-mouth pitcher). These items and the practice of full-body bathing were appearing in the bed chambers and hostelries in the upper levels of society by the 1830's. By the 1840's middle class families were beginning to acquire matched "chamber sets" consisting of a basin, ewer, a cup for brushing the teeth, and a chamber pot with cover. Major cities like New York and Philadelphia constructed public water systems, and the wealthy soon boasted indoor water taps, even "water closets" as early as the 1830's. At the time of the Civil War performing one's "toilet" i.e., washing one's face and hands, brushing or combing one's hair, coupled with an occasional full-body bath at a washstand (with or without soap) had become generally acceptable as a societal practice. These were often contingent on circumstances and the season of the year for much of the population. However, for the poorer segments of society, dirt was an everyday fact of life.

Military requirements also emphasized American society's move toward improved cleanliness. Revised U. S. Army Regulations, Article XIII, Paragraph 100 stated:

Where conveniences for bathing are to be had, the men should bathe once or twice a week. The feet to be washed at least twice a week. The hair to be kept short, and beards neatly trimmed... [emphasis original]. [3]

The immediate responsibility for overseeing the cleanliness of the men rested with the non-commissioned officers in charge of squads. Paragraph 101 of Revised U.S. Army Regulations, prescribe that the non-commissioned officers made sure their soldiers "wash[ed] their hands and faces daily; that they brush[ed] or comb[ed] their heads..." Bathing did not necessarily imply the use of soap, although soap was part of the soldier's ration. Very nearly two ounces was the authorized three-day allowance per man.

It is more likely that issued soap was generally intended for washing clothing. In 1864, August V. Kautz' Customs of Service for Non-Commissioned Officers devoted approximately thirteen pages to the qualities necessary for the proper instruction and discipline of the infantry, cavalry and artillery soldier. A soldierly appearance, meaning his uniform and accouterment being clean and in good repair, was frequently emphasized. That the soldier should regularly care for himself by regular washing or grooming was not mentioned.

No wonder, during the campaign for Atlanta, Sergeant Rice C. Bull, 123rd New York Volunteers recalled:

One of the hardest conditions we had to face in the service, when in the field, was the lack of an opportunity to keep clean. When near a small stream we could not bathe or wash in it as the troops along its banks were using the water for drinking and cooking. To wash our face and hands a comrade poured it for us from a canteen. When we could get it we carried a piece of soap but none was issued to us when in active field service. Usually in the field there was little chance to wash or clean our clothes. [4]

Artillerist John D. Billings echoed Bull's recollection:

A common mode of washing was for one man to pour water from a canteen into the hands of his messmate, and thus take turns; but this was this method was practiced most on the march. In settled camp some men had a short log scooped out for a wash-basin.

Perhaps Lieutenant Arthur Goodloe, Company D, Thirty-fifth Alabama best summed up the field conditions that soldiers faced:

To do full duty in the ranks, especially in the infantry, it was simply impossible for us to be altogether free from dirt and vermin, with the best pains we could take. To be sure there were some soldiers who were not as careful of cleanliness, in person and clothing, as they might have been; and yet, when we consider that there were thousands...who were without a change of garments, and remember that we constantly marched through dust and mud, or were transported in dirty cars, and slept almost constantly on the ground, the utter futility of their undertaking to be free from dirt and vermin, in any effectual sense, is but too obvious. With all the washing that could be done (and we were frequently where we could scarcely get a sufficient supply of drinking water) and all the care that could otherwise be taken of garments and persons, there was the barest possibility oftentimes of an approach to cleanliness. [6]

While soap was issued as part of a soldier's allowance, other toiletry items were, as a rule, not issued. Such items that could be brought or sent from home included a comb or hairbrush, handkerchiefs, a towel (although a handkerchief could perform "double-duty" as a towel), small mirrors, a razor, pocket mirror or other looking glass, toothbrush, commercially prepared or home-made soap or tooth powder, and the like. A small sample of such items may be found in Francis A. Lord's

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Civil War Collector's Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, p. 201; Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union, pp. 222-3; Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Confederacy, p. 213. Evidence of soldier effects from mortuary inventories indicate that few if any soldiers carried all of these items at one time. Many such items would appear in lists from soldiers who died early in their regiment's service, or in a fixed camp.

Soldiers on active campaign apparently carried only the essentials. Samuel Weaver's oft-quoted inventory list of personal items found on the bodies of Federal dead at Gettysburg is illustrative of the "bare essentials" assertion. The list includes items recovered from some 270 Federal dead. From this tiny, yet remarkable body of evidence, about sixty-two soldiers were found with some sort of personal "toilet" item on his actual person: at least one comb, handkerchief, looking glass, toothbrush, razor, or a hair-brush. This represents about 23% of this sample, or not even one in four soldiers. Thirty-nine were recorded as carrying at least one comb (three had more than one comb), nine carried a handkerchief, four carried some sort of looking glass, four carried a toothbrush; one was found with a razor, and one with a hair-brush. Only two bodies were discovered to have both a handkerchief and a comb. While this sampling cannot account for those toilet articles that were carried in one's knapsack or blanket roll, or were dropped or lost on the field and never accounted for, it is an indication of the wide disparity between our modern assumptions and the realities of soldier hygiene articles in the Civil War. [7]

While the tender topic of "evacuatory" hygiene is beyond the intended scope of this article, a few remarks are in order. Sinks, or latrines, were required to be located between 200 and 300 feet from a regimental encampment, per Army Regulations. An order issued during the summer of 1863 to the Federal XIII Army Corps encamped at Hebron Plantation (near Vicksburg) Mississippi is revealing of the nature of camp hygiene during the heat of summer, as well as some of the less than savory "evacuatory" practices of a few soldiers. On July 25, 1863, Maj. Gen. E. O. C. Ord issued General Order No 17:

Division Provost Marshals will be in charge of the Police of Division Camps, and will promptly punish any violation of cleanliness or good order. They will see that:

I. Every Regiment and Battery will be immediately provided with a sufficient number of sinks for the use of the men and officers, and that cesspools are made convenient to each Company and officers' mess cook fire, into which all the offal of the Kitchens must be thrown. These sinks and cesspools will be filled in every two (2) days with at least three (3) inches of earth and will be entirely filled when within two feet of the surface and new ones dug.

II. Any soldier or [officer's] servant failing to use these sinks and cesspools will be arrested and placed on fatigue duty for one day.

III. After the sinks are built and this order published any man who is caught committing a nuisance within one hundred yards of camp will be armed with a stick and placed sentinel over it for two hours to warn persons that way of the danger, after which he may be permitted to bury it.

Personal hygiene is certainly a timeless function of daily life. How often do we include this in our impressions using the correct material culture (the "special" guard duty excepted)? In future articles The Watchdog staff will review products useful to an accurate interpretation of this part of a soldier's impression.

Notes:

[1] General Scott's General Order issued June 13, 1814 stated that his officers were to march their troops to Lake Erie and bathe three times per week and "...to cause the men to wash themselves from head to foot but not to remain immersed in the water more than five minutes." See Donald Graves' "I Have a Handsome Little Army..." A Re-examination of Winfield Scott's Camp At Buffalo in 1814," in R. Arthur Bowler's War on the Niagara: Essays on the War of 1812 and Its Legacy, p. 46.


[7] William F. Howard, The Gettysburg Death Roster, pp. 199-203. Toothbrushes dated from the mid seventeenth century (some authors contend even earlier), commercial preparations of toothpaste or powder were available in America since the mid-1830's. Toothbrush handles are an occasional find in archaeological digs of Civil War camps.


CONFERENCE NOTICE

MOMCC Spring 1998 Conference at Usher's Ferry

The Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council's spring conference and annual meeting will be held March 12-14, 1998 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It is hosted by Ushers Ferry Historic Village. The theme of the conference is "Into the Melting Pot, Evolution of Old World Culture. It is open to anyone. Cost is approximately $70 and includes conference, meals, and one year MOMCC membership.

MOMCC is the Midwest regional chapter of the Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums. Contact Ann Cejka at (319) 398-5104 or Usher's Ferry Historic Village, 400 4th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
Piecing it Together - Quilts for Civil War Reenacting

Whether your ladies’ aid society is making a quilt for a raffle, or you are looking in an antique store for a old quilt to make into a blanket roll for the next campaign, sooner or later you will begin looking at quilts — those ancient home idols which were the expression of women’s handiwork so beloved by so many soldiers far from home. Is just any “old” quilt okay to use? What quilt is right for your Civil War impression?

This is the kind of article I most hate to read or to write — one that can only barely scratch the surface of a subject and which does not give Watchdog readers precise information on where to find the right item. The subject of quilts during the mid-19th century is so complex, and the scholarship on the subject so vast, that the following can only provide a starting point for discussions on finding quilts that are appropriate to use for Civil War reenacting. This article is not the definitive discussion of appropriate patterns and textiles of Civil War era quilts. It offers some rather broad generalizations and is more of a “what NOT to buy” rather than naming sources for where to find good quilts. Nevertheless, there are so many bad examples of quilts being taken to events that it seems as if some guidance is necessary.

The most important advice on selecting an appropriate quilt for use in Civil War reenacting is to read some of the numerous books on the subject. Some of the most comprehensive are listed below. Another good source for learning about quilts is your local or state museum, many of which have quilts among their textile collections. The Museum of the American Quilter’s Society, located in Paducah, Kentucky, is a national level quilt museum. It routinely offers major exhibitions of quilts, formal education programs, workshops, as well as TV and radio programs. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. April through October. For more information call the Museum at (502) 442-8856. They have an extensive library on the subject of textile arts.

Broadly speaking there were three types of quilts which were most in use during the Civil War period. Pieced or patchwork quilts, appliquéd quilts and a combination of pieced and appliquéd were the most commonly available styles of quilts during our period of interest. Appliqué quilts gained prominence during the 1850s. Many were made by cutting out large designs from printed fabric and sewing the pieces onto a background. Appliquéd quilts showed the most intricate quilting, but many of the elaborate designs used on quilts today evolved after the Civil War. “Outline” quilting, in which the pieces were quilted around the edges of the pieces, was probably the most prevalent form of quilting, especially in pieced or patchwork quilts.

A great deal of research is required before choosing a pattern to make or obtain a pieced quilt to use for a Civil War impression. Among the most common patterns of pieced quilts were the nine-patch, hexagonal or honey-comb patchwork, “pot of flowers” design and a large central star motif, or variations on these designs. Most of the patterns of “pieced” quilts with which we are familiar today post-date the Civil War, including “Underground Railroad,” “Log Cabin,” “Grandmother’s Fan,” “Double Wedding Ring,” and others. Commemorative or album quilts were popular on the home front, especially during the Civil War, but you should be careful in using these for Civil War impressions. These commemorative quilts were “one of a kind,” and were not the quilts which Johnny Reb rolled into a blanket roll and took to war. “Crazy” quilts and tied quilts post-date the Civil War, and should not be used in a Civil War context. While embroidering in crewelwork along the edges of the pieces was done during the mid-century, it is much more commonly found on post-war quilts.

The choice of fabrics for a quilt is equally complex. The best way to “date” a particular quilt involves analysis of the textiles or fabric used within a quilt. This requires a good deal of technical expertise which most of us don’t have. Again, we can make some broad generalizations. Most quilts from the Civil War period are made of some serviceable fabric, usually cotton, though sometimes of wool, and, in the case of pieced quilts, usually of fabric that has seen some other use in a garment. Rarely was a housewife so extravagant as to purchase fabric just to use in constructing a quilt, and rarely would she use a luxury fabric that would not hold up well during extensive use. The presence of satin, silk, or velvet in an otherwise “old” quilt should tell you that it probably post-dates the Civil War period. While most quilts used cotton or wool batting, some actually used another blanket quilted between the quilt top and the backing.

We have recently seen an increase in the use of “Amish” quilts at reenactments. These very distinctive designs not only post-date the Civil War (immigration to this country on a large scale of the Amish and Mennonites occurred only after the war), but it is unlikely that many of these would have been sold or given to the “world’s people.” Most date from the 1920s or later.

So, what do you do if you want a quilt for your impression? Spend some time in museums or antique stores learning about quilt patterns and period textiles. Read some of the books listed below. Don’t assume that every “old-timey” quilt pattern is appropriate for use in Civil War reenacting.

Susan Lyons Hughes

Susan Lyons Hughes, a museum educator for twenty years, currently is the Education Specialist and Coordinator of Interpretation at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.

Suggested Reading


EXERCISE CAUTION IN USING THIS SOURCE! While there is good information on common Civil War era quilts; some of the illustrations are of very modern “interpretations” of original and unique quilts that may not be appropriate for use in a Civil War impression.


Reproduction Nuckolls Patent CS Wooden Canteen

Laula Middleton of Haleyville Alabama, has perfected a reproduction of the Nuckolls Patent Canteen. An original is shown on page 209 of the Time Life Series, *Echoes of Glory, Arms and Equipment of the Confederate States*. Unlike the well known CS barrel style canteen which is made of 12 or more wooden slats and two wooden face plates, this canteen is constructed of only two pieces of wood and the spout. The two sides are turned to a bowl shape on a lathe and then fitted together much like the two sections of a Federal tin canteen. The sections are held together by square headed iron brads as were the originals. (see FIG 2) [1]

Like all wooden canteens, the Nuckoll’s Patent Canteen does not hold as much water as the Federal tin versions. The canteen I examined holds approximately 25 oz., as compared to the 32 oz. in a US canteen. The canteen has the advantage, however, of a wide spout that allows quick filling and easy pouring of its contents. The canteen is offered without a sling or stopper. (The original illustrated in *Echoes of Glory* has a simple ticking strap and corn-cob stopper.)

I found the Nuckoll’s Patent Canteen reproduction to be well made and a faithful replica of those I have seen illustrated is several collectors guides. It offers a new option for those who choose to carry a wooden canteen for their Confederate impression. The price of the canteen is competitive with other correctly produced wooden canteens at $50.00 plus postage. Mr. Middleton can be reached at 1015 R.R. 1, Haleyville, AL 35565-9744 and 205-486-2687.

Mark Hubbs

Mark Hubbs works as a historic preservationist and environmental analyst for an engineering firm. (a primary customer being the U.S. Army). He has been reenacting since 1972. He is a member of the 45th Alabama/18th Missouri (U.S.), and is beginning a new impression of the U.S. Christian Commission. Original U.S. military weapons (1795-WW II) are his collection specialty. He enjoys reproducing period clothing and leather gear for his impression.

Notes
[1] A proprietary redundant backup system is also used. It is unknown if the original was glued, then tacked.
[2] Probably cypress or poplar, pine being too light, and cedar often turns very red. The MOC was unable to determine the type of wood.
VIDEO REVIEW

Antietam, 135th Anniversary Commemorative Reenactment Video

Last September witnessed what was by most accounts the largest Civil War reenactment ever held. While the figure of 16,000 participants (including civilians) may be a tad inflated, the event commemorating the 135th anniversary of the battle of Antietam does indeed seem to have surpassed even Gettysburg 1988 in the numbers of living history enthusiasts present. With a considerable share of the proceeds destined for the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, the event took on an added significance. That mammoth gathering on the fields of Washington County, Maryland is the subject of Video Vision’s documentary.

There are essentially two ways for video production companies to tape a Civil War reenactment. By far the most common is to present the reenactment as a literal replication of historical events -- juxtaposing troops maps, 19th century photographs and voice-over quotes with modern-day recreations of the key players and pivotal events -- edited into footage of the reenactment. Only in a tightly controlled situation can this approach hope to be convincing, which is why for the most part even the best of these documentaries still look like a video of a reenactment. Civil War mega-events might be grand and sprawling and awe-inspiring, but film sets they are not When it comes to period clothing, uniforms, flags, maneuvers and physical appearance, at a big reenactment what you see is what you get. And, authenticity-wise it runs the gamut from the sacred to the profane.

The alternate approach to documenting a reenactment is to present it as just that -- a documentary about a reenactment. The folks at Video Vision wisely chose this method for their Antietam video. Narrated in a low-key, amiable fashion by the commanders of the opposing forces -- Dana Heim and Chuck Hillsman -- the video traces the planning and logistical efforts that go into such a huge affair. Most of the familiar experiences of the event are recorded. The arrival of the thousands of reenactors and tens of thousands of spectators, the pitching of the canvas city, the endless throng trudging down “sutler’s row,” pards singing by a campfire, capering reenactor children and curious spectators, and of course the battles that transpired over those three September days.

It is no easy thing, in the medium of video, to capture the sprawling panorama and massive scale of such a large event. In that regard the most effective of the three battles was the last -- the Federal assault on the Sunken Road -- where a sense of the numbers engaged, the chaos and carnage, comes across even on videotape. The earlier Ninth Corps/A.P. Hill fight was not quite as stirring to watch, though it had its moments, and while the Cornfield battle was eerie in the smoke and fog of early morning half-light -- those elements obviously presented the camera crews with a considerable challenge. There are some artful atmospheric shots of the landscape -- sunset, a flock of birds swirling across the sky -- and the production values are generally quite good. It is not a history of the battle of Antietam and does not delve too deeply into the reenactor subculture -- but those who took part will certainly find much to interest them.

As at any large-scale reenactment, historical purists will not fail to note the contrasting level of impressions, ranging from the “hardcore” or “authentic” to what one might call the “semi-authentic” and (perhaps charitably) the “not so authentic.” While abject “farbs” may be less prevalent today than once were, the event witnessed, and the video documents many familiar foibles. More tentage than most soldiers ever saw outside of winter camp, lots of “period” eyewear, excessive hat brass, the occasional pony-tail, a tendency to avoid becoming a “casualty” too early in the fight (even when the opposing battle lines are at murderously close range) and of course the somewhat less-than-lean figures of many of the “soldiers.” But after all folks, that’s reenacting -- and Video Vision’s “Antietam” provides a visual record of the biggest one yet.

Antietam, 135th Anniversary Commemorative Reenactment, by Video Vision, 37 E. Washington St., Hagerstown, MD 21740, cost $20 + $5 shipping/ales tax (a portion of the sales price goes to APCWS)

Brian Pohanka

Brian Pohanka is a well-know military historian, collector, and veteran reenactor (5th New York Zouaves). He has written much on the CW and is a contributor to Time-Life series of CW books. He is a featured commentator in the Civil War Journal television series. The Indian Wars, especially the fight along the Little Big Horn River, is another passion. The Watchdog appreciates Brian’s contribution to our efforts.

Editor’s Notes:

Mike Wicklein of Video Vision has contacted The Watchdog about distribution issues. The Dog received its copy on 2 February. Mike asks that anyone who has not received a copy ordered before February to contact him (collect) at (301) 791-3496. Please have a copy of your order receipt handy when you call. There have been some shipping problems. He is working to get all orders processed as soon as possible.

The dog’s view of the video...

The video content was disappointing. We were hoping that the video would have told a complete story of the weekend. Focusing on the military commanders was a fresh approach, but as a remembrance of the weekend it was lacking in substance. The civilians, merchants and camps were sparsely covered. We suggest one reason for a purchase is to look at the best and worst impressions in the community today.

BC
Associate Editor Rick Simmons tackles a product review of a shelter half manufactured by Phil Cavanaugh of New Braunfels, Texas. Overall, the Watchdog has no problem being sheltered by this tent. It joins the ranks of the Rademacher version as far as The Watchdog is concerned:

We have all seen, and perhaps experienced, the myriad options for sleeping at events. These range from those that do not sleep out (car sleeping and motel militia) to those who use the sky alone. The Watchdog continues its pursuit of the simplest form of shelter beside the sky, the shelter half. Refer to Tim Shaw’s article in The Watchdog, Volume 3, No. 2 for background information and source material on shelter tents. Patrick McDermott’s article, originally published in the Mudsill’s Company Wag -- September 1988, is an other excellent source. It has be reprinted in newsletters around the reenacting community.

This quote by Federal soldier, Alfred Bellard: “In the morning we pitched our shelter tents and got under cover. ‘A’ tents had been sent for our use, but as yet had not been unloaded.” tells an interesting story. [1] Apparently Ballard spent the night before lying around a fire spoon fashion. The night after the common tents came up with the wagons. This quote describes the use of three common methods of shelter within a three day period. Gee, you could possibly do that in one weekend at a three day event...naw, too much to carry. For you company officers from orders found in the Official Records:

S.O. No. 55, HQTRS, DEPT. OF WASHINGTON, April 11,1863: “...to each company officer, one shelter tent...” and G.O. No. 160, WAR DEPT., ADJT. GEN.'S OFFICE, Washington, October 16, 1862: “...for every other commissioned officer one shelter-tent each.”

At 65.5in. long x 61.5in. wide it is small for the 1864 specifications [G.O. No. 60 at the end of this article] of 66.5in. long x 63.0in. wide. When compared with physical evidence of eight existing shelter halves this tent falls within their range in regard to overall dimensions. (63.5in. to 64.6in. in width). The ideal dimensions of the G.O. were not achieved by any of the existing originals. This is only eight shelters, but with this much variance you can only expect more of the same from other original examples as they are discovered. The specifications are what the government wanted, but they did not specify that the fabric was to be pre-shrunk. Neglecting the theory of shrinkage may have led the reenacting community to believe that there was an early shelter half that was smaller than the 1864 specifications. [2]

The Cavanaugh shelter half is nicely constructed of a light drilling probably about 8oz. or less. The weight of the material is close to the original and makes for a lighter package in or on your knapsack. Selvage edges are used on both side edges. It is constructed of two panels (per the 1864 specifications). I believe that the 3 panel shelter half type (Gettysburg NBP examples) gradually evolved into the 2 panel during 1863 through the summer of 1864 when it was officially adopted (G.O. No. 60).

The button holes on the sample are neatly handsewn with cotton thread. The buttons (23) are bone. The specifications called for metallic buttons (sturdier than bone). It is thought that prior to the 1864 specifications contractors were using the cheaper bone buttons.

Grommets are hand-worked with very thin twine as per the regulations. Corner reinforcements on are 4.5in. square and of the same material as the tent. A 1/4in. manila (hemp) rope is used for the tent peg loops and the guy line. The guy line is the required 6ft. 10in. in length. The rope ends are bound to keep them from fraying. This conforms to features on some of the existing samples.

The half is marked “D. CAVANAUGH, MAKER -- JEFFERSONVILLE, IND.” in an oval frame. The mark is located near one corner as on an original [3]. This is Mr. Cavanaugh’s mark, but is done in period fashion.

Mr. Cavanaugh’s shelter half is a very nicely made product. It compares very favorably with the originals as described in the earlier issue of The Watchdog, and one other reproduction currently on the market. That is the Artifakes (Rademacher) shelter half.

The Cavanaugh shelter half is available from The Haversack Depot, 1236 River Acres Dr., New Braunfels, TX 78130. The cost is $75. Mr. Cavanaugh has assured The Watchdog that adequate supplies of the tent half are on hand. His phone number is (830) 620-5192.

A future article will be looking at tent pegs, tent poles, and rope for shelter tents. I hope that Fred Gaede publishes his long awaited article on shelter tents in the Journal of the Company of Military Historians. It should add considerably to our knowledge of a common item of which there are few examples.

RS

(with thanks to Bob Coch, an old bummer)

Notes
[2] The Watchdog leans toward the theory of one size, and is waiting for the discovery of documentation dated prior to 1864 to make a line in the sand.
[3] Some folks may take issue with not copying a period maker’s stamp. I asked a well-known manufacturer of period goods why he does not mark his Federal items with a period stamp. He replied. “Cause they aren’t.” You decide. The Watchdog would like to know if you think reproductions should carry a maker’s mark identifying it as a reproduction, or an exact duplicate of a specific mark. This is not to be confused with government inspection stamps...these often appeared on samples of lots delivered by contractors and not on every original.

see next page for G.O. No. 60
SHELTER TENT HALF (continued)

General Order No. 60, Quartermaster General’s Office, December 12, 1864, corrected February 1, 1865.

Description of Shelter Tent Dimensions of each half tent when finished:

- Length (measuring along foot or top): 5 feet 6 inches
- Width (measured along seam): 5 feet 5 inches

To be made of cotton duck 33 1/2 inches wide, clear of all imperfections, and weighing eight ounces to the linear yard.

To be made in a workmanlike manner in every respect, with strong, well-worked button holes, made with waxed thread of sufficient size and strength to make them durable. All other holes to have good strong grommets well-worked in them with waxed thread or twine.

Top Buttons -- Nine metallic (tinned, galvanized or zinc) buttons, in a line parallel to and four inches from, the upper edge or head of each tent, at intervals of eight inches from centre to centre, the extreme buttons being one inch from the side edges or ends of each half tent.

End Buttons -- Seven metallic (tinned, galvanized or zinc) buttons, in a line parallel to, and four inches from, each side edge or end of the half tent, at intervals of eight inches from centre to centre, the first button of the row being three inches from the lower edge or foot of half tent.

Button holes on each tent, twenty-three in number, along the upper and side edges, at a distance of a half inch therefrom, opposite the buttons of their own half, and corresponding imposition to the buttons on the other half tent.

Three loops to each half tent, at lower corners and foot of seam, of six-thread Manila line, small, soft, and pliable.

Guylines, one with each half tent, six feet ten inches long, of six-thread Manila line, small, soft, and pliable.

The pole and rope holes must be placed so as to correspond when the half tents are put together.

The corner and stay pieces to be made of same material as the tent, and to be four inches square.

If the tent is sewed by machine, it must be a lock-stitch machine.

No force should be used to bring the tent to its required measurements.

VIDEO REVIEW


Pat Narkun

Pat Narkun is an experienced collector of Victorian Jewelry, mourning objects, and 19th century photography. She lives in Troy, Michigan

The dog’s view of the video...

It presents a broad overview of jewelry items of the 19th century. A cautionary note: the clothing in individual segments of the video does not always correspond to the particular piece of jewelry being discussed. There is a lack of continuity in the way the time periods are presented. Focusing on the jewelry alone, it can be an informative addition to a beginner’s resources.

IN THE FIELD

The Gettysburg 135th Anniversary Event Gettysburg: From Start To Finish

The Gettysburg 135th Anniversary event is being planned and coordinated by a dedicated team of people who are committed to bringing the civilian and military reenactor an event that will be organized, safe, and memorable. This will probably be the largest gathering of “the tribe” on record. You could get lost and we want to prevent that. The Watchdog will be there guarding your interests. We want our readers to have the best information.

In the next issue of The Watchdog we will have some specific suggestions from the civilian coordinator to help you prepare for the event before you leave home. We will have the latest military information. However, we suggest that those doing military impressions rely on your unit commanders for specific details. There are a few points you need to know at this time:

#1 Register soon! Walk-ons are discouraged. The walk-on registration will be $15.00. Register by sending a double-stamped, self-addressed envelope to CW Heritage, PO Box 1292, Ft. Washington, PA 19034-1292

#2 There will be separate camps for the Federal civilians and the Confederate civilians. There will also be a special impressions camp for those who are representing a specific organization. If you wish to be in this camp, contact the Civilian Coordinator, Karen Rae Mehaffey at (313)945-9160, or e-mail at: mehaffek@mlc.lib.mi.us or Lynn Kaill at (248) 549-5137, or e-mail at: Glytsbryzek@aol.com or Jan Romanovich at (614) 276-4009, or e-mail at: jpr@netwalk.com

#3 Perfect your impression! First person impressions are encouraged. However, impersonations of famous figures such as John Burns, Jenny Wade, or Abraham Lincoln are prohibited without a written invitation from the organizers.

THE WATCHDOG.
SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The Watchdog (ISSN 1067-2729) is published quarterly by The Watchdog Quarterly, Inc., a non-profit corporation in the State of Michigan. Subscriptions are $7.00 annually, $6.00 for each additional year. (Foreign subscribers add $3.00 for additional postage). Back issues are $2.00 each (index available upon request). Subscription requests, inquiries, and submissions to:

PO BOX 1675
WARREN, MI 48090-1675

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On your address label there is a number that looks like X.Y (X=year Y = quarter, example: the Winter 1998 issue is 6.1). The number on the label indicates your last issue...unless you renew your subscription to The Watchdog.

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The Watchdog will have his own web page soon!

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