The Civil War Artifact Forum.

Anyone interested in the "real stuff" should heed W.C. Fields and, frankly, be in Philadelphia at the end of October. Why? Because the Civil War Artifact Forum take place at the city’s beautiful Union League facilities during the weekend of 26-28 October 2000.

The conference is for collectors, curators and historical interpreters interested in civilian and military items. The list of scheduled presentations and topics is impressive...some of the best and most knowledgeable experts in their respective fields of interest. You will learn more in two days than you could research in two decades. We are supporting the Artifacts Forum and urge you to attend if at all possible. Watchdog subscribers who register for the conference before 1 September 2000 get an early registration discount. ARF! ARF!

A thorough bill of particulars can be found at The Civil War Artifact Forum web site:

http://www.artifactforum.com

or by e-mail at info@artifactforum.com and by mail at The Artifact Forum, 95 Briarwood Drive, Holland, PA 18966.

The presentations include the following speakers and topics:

Jon Isaacson — Popular Music and Musical Instruments
Fred Gaede — A Typology of the Federal Shelter Half
Ross Kelbaugh — Studio Photography
Les Jensen — Confederate Officer’s Uniforms
Suzanne Carter Isaacson — Broaches, Buckles and Combs
Paul Johnson — Bayonet Scabbards in the Union Army
Juanita Leisch — Contributors and Inhibitors: The Road to being a Fashionable Woman
Greg Biggs — Sewing Circle to Supply System: Flagmakers of the Confederacy
Mike Woshner — From Buttons to Water Beds: India-Rubber and Gutta-Percha in the Civil War
Ross Kimmel — Material Culture of Maryland Confederates: “Clothing a Band of Brothers in Exile: Uniforms of the Maryland Confederates”
Linda Duffy — Fashion Plates and Periodicals
Gil Hocker — Fashionable Clothing for Men
Dean Nelson — Winter Huts in Federal Camps
Jim Mundy — History and Tour of the Union League Collection

New Staff Additions and a New Watchdog Web Site.

I am pleased to announce two additions. Jomarie Soszynski will be using her knowledge of textiles, sewing methods and nineteenth-century clothing to increase our coverage of civilian matters. Her educational experience includes a degree in Home Economics and certification in consumer’s education. She is a member of the Costume Society of America, and has practical experience in nineteenth-century garment design and construction. Jomarie and her husband, Dennis, have been enacting for over ten years with the Mid-Michigan Civil War Reenactors and the Citizens of Wheeling. One of her primary interests is in pattern design and construction.

Larry See is joining the staff as the editor of the Watchdog’s web site...the brand new one! By the time this issue is on your table, you should be able to find the site nearly complete at:

http://www.watchdogreview.com

Larry, an experienced journalist and administrator, has again come to my aid. During my stint as a Western Brigade battalion commander, Larry was a valuable asset to that organization and my staff. Larry has been part of the community for over fifteen years as a member of several Michigan units and the Western Brigade. He is a modern newspaperman so we now have an “authentic” journalist on our staff.

In the wake of increased time demands that computers have provided for on us, Larry has agreed to help keep the “e” part of our business fresh and timely. Andrew MacFarlane at Leelanau Communications redesigned the site. He did a fabulous job creating new features, including links to other sites consistent with our mission. Larry will make sure images from printed articles get posted (something I never got quite right).

Your suggestions for web site improvements and features will complete the redesign efforts. Let Larry know what you think. He and all the editors can be contacted through links on the web site (as well as by land mail).

We’re Late.

Usual and important real world issues have put this number on your reading table late. As a small token we have added four extra pages. For extra “real stuff” on a regular basis we need more articles and feedback, along with more subscribers. Your help and continued encouragement is appreciated.

Mr. Christen
A “MUST” FOR YOUR LIBRARY

The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium

The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium (CRRC) is a must for the military enactor's reference bookshelf. It joins the ranks of the classics we have recommended over the years. The focus of the CRRC is the Federal Infantryman's material and social culture. However, either military impression (US or CS) can benefit from the wealth of information included in this compilation. It contains the latest research on uniforms and equipment, notes on how to be a vigilant soldier and observations on the current movement toward increased accuracy of impressions in the enacting community. There are even some tidbits for male civilian impression (i.e., clothing, hair and beard styles, first-person tips and contemporary life-style).

The CRRC has evolved from the early efforts of Nicky and Susan Hughes who started The Watchdog in 1993, Cal Kinzer who put together The Hardcracker Handbook: A Guide for Re-creating the Western Federal Infantryman around 1995 and the Third Mississippi Camp of Instruction Handbook compiled by Thomas Czekanski in 1998. Recently, Robert Braun (one of our esteemed editors) and other members of the 33rd Wisconsin, Company E, have placed another outstanding body of work on-line: http://www.amtma.com/33dwise

This also served as inspiration for the CRRC.

The CRRC is not a typical unit organizational handbook. Those handbooks usually provide only a list of required equipment purchases and information on the unit's actual military history. In these little is provided in the way of detailed, documented information. Unfortunately, the majority of enactors at the present time do not take time to look closely at the material culture or the historical background of the roles they are enacting. There are places to get this information...museums, private scholarship and the Company of Military Historians, other publications, etc. This research possibly requires more energy and effort than the mainstream is willing to expend. Now, for those folks (and the rest of us) who have been looking for a source where it is (at least for the Federal infantry impression) complete in one format it exists. This is the CRRC from the Columbia Rifles.

The Columbia Rifles was formed in April 2000 as a campaign based organization. The membership base is primarily in the northeastern United States. The Rifles are affiliated with the Potomac Legion battalion. Their goals are “accuracy” and a “constantly improving portrayal.”

The research and information contained in the CRRC is virtually priceless. It is being made available to the entire Civil War historical and enacting community. There are fifty-one articles in the first edition of the CRRC. Members of the Columbia Rifles wrote all but two articles. Those are “The Campagnier’s Manifesto” by Nicky Hughes of the Breckinridge Battalion and “Accurate Impressions: More than Money can Buy” by John Stitelter of the Western Brigade/Black Hats Battalion. The CRRC provides documentation and research that backs up the “Columbia Rifles Standards of Authenticity,” with an emphasis on an Eastern Federal (generally, Army of the Potomac) infantry impression. The CRRC is approximately 280 pages in length and is cleverly illustrated.

The content, which sets the CRRC apart, is broken into five sections:

General Philosophy: Four articles titled “Introduction,” “Campaigner’s Manifesto,” “Why Do Hardcore?” and “Accurate Impressions: More than Money can Buy”

Minutia: Twenty-eight articles on clothing and equipment used by the soldier (illustrated and fully documented).

Methods: Seven articles on using a soldier’s equipment.

The Man Inside the Uniform: Ten articles on doing an effective impression.

Columbia Rifles References: Authenticity Standards and Recommended Vendor List.

The CRRC is printed on loose-leaf paper and is provided in a three-ring binder. Updates and new information can easily be added in the future on a more-or-less annual basis. Future editions will include new articles and the latest editions of revised articles. The updated material will be available for a nominal copying and mailing fee to individuals who have previous editions of the book. The availability of subsequent editions will be advertised on the Columbia Rifles’ web site and various Internet forums. Registered holders of authorized copies will be notified by e-mail when updates become available. The cost of each update will depend on its page count.

To obtain a copy send a check or money order for $26 (US) payable to “Andy Metheny.” Include your name, mailing address and e-mail address. The cost of the book includes the binder and shipping within the continental United States. For each copy, five dollars will be donated to Civil War preservation projects. At this time proceeds from the first edition will be used to conserve New York State’s Civil War battle flags.

The Columbia Rifles makes no profit from sales of the CRRC. The cost you pay is their production cost, plus a donation for preservation. All labor required for researching, writing and producing the book is donated by Columbia Rifles members.

As for a Confederate version, we are still searching for one that compares to the CRRC. Greg Schultz’s illustrated “owner’s manual” for Company E of the Seventeenth Virginia Infantry is a strong candidate. Any others out there?

The staff of the CRRC’s first edition includes Managing Editor, John Eric Tobey; Associate Editor, Kevin O’Beirne and Production Editor, Andy Metheny. All the members of the Columbia Rifles are to be congratulated on this outstanding effort. ARF! ARF! ARF!

The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium, Andy Metheny, 367 Burroughs Road, Boxborough, Massachusetts 01719 and (978) 263-1753 and e-mail: aimetheny@aol.com. The CRRC web site is: http://mars.wnec.edu/~dwilliam/history/crhome

Mr. Christen
Why Field Merchants?

Several years ago Mr. Bill Watson (social architect, dreamer and troublemaker from Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania and member of the governing board of the Eastern Campaigner’s Alliance) wondered during an on-line discussion about the merchant specie:

Why do so many events have sutlers? Most of the top quality equipment and clothing suppliers do not attend anyway and of the others there are only a handful like Bob Sullivan [of Sullivan Press, the source of accurate paper good, books and official forms] who offer accurate reproductions or useful things. But modern sutlers [hereafter known as “field merchants"] are a feature of almost every event that comes down the pike. I know some field merchants are trying to dictate scheduling and such. I have overheard them complaining of too many soldier activities at events... drill, tacticals, afternoon battle, a morning battle and when are you going to let them spend money? etc. In addition, it is always such a logistical problem to find a place for the field merchants. Then we sit around and complain when one of our new members ends up with the wrong stuff on an impulse buy on the merchant’s row.

They seem to be a big part of our scene, but I wonder why. Their presence seems to be a complicating factor out of all proportion to the registration fees they pay to be on-site.

In response Mr. Sullivan, a wise and practical man, offered these thoughts:

Mr. Watson raises a good point. I do know that at some events, the organizers can get some early (and much needed) cash through field merchant fees. There is no such thing as late registration for field merchants; you either register early or skip the event. I pay fees sometimes as much as six or seven months in advance, sometimes more. Anyway, at Gettysburg98 there were over a hundred of us at one hundred dollars a pop [The DOG paid this fee to set up among ‘em. We’ll do it again as Manassas.] So there’s a quick $10,000 for the organizers right there. It doesn’t begin to underwrite the cost of putting on an event the size of that one, but it sure helps the down payments.

Another thing is that, believe it or not, the field merchants enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the participants. I know that some of the progressives swear off field merchants, but for many folks, the “sutlers” are actually a draw. If an event promises to have “lots of sutlers” it generally will have lots of participants as well. If you don’t believe that, look through some of the ads for events and see how they advertise for participants by stating that many of them will be there. If you don’t have many participants, you generally won’t get many merchants. And if you don’t have many merchants, you generally won’t get many participants. I know that many of you are shying your heads out there, but it’s true.

The progressive movement is throwing a scare into merchants and suppliers who have invested time and money into, well, let’s say, less than museum quality stuff. Nobody likes to have their product line condemned by others, and I am sure it is damaging to some businesses. Merchants need suppliers, and many of the suppliers right now are still supplying junk. But with a growing number of people who refuse to buy it, some field merchants are running scared or figuring out how to change their suppliers.

So, Mr. Watson, there’s an easy way to limit the field merchant participation at events... just tell them that the event is a campaign-style, progressives-only event limited to three hundred participants and the tent merchant class will stay away in droves [please note a sarcastic smile in the background].

Field merchants carry what they can sell. If they can sell authentic stuff, they will. If they have found profit through selling junk, they’ll sell that. People are creatures of habit, and it is difficult to change something that, from a profit standpoint, isn’t broken. Please do not forget that many merchants are not there to sell to participants, their business depends on spectators.

I believe that in the near future, you will see “sutler” areas divided up. There will be the modern food tents and the like, there will be an area near the viewing area for those who like to sell to spectators, and there will be an area near the camps for those who like to sell to participants. If you proposed an event in which there would be two merchant areas, one near the crowds and one near the camps, I would be willing to bet that most merchants would give you an honest answer about in which area they would like to be placed.

Personally, I would much rather be nearer the camps. About ninety percent of my business at a given event comes from participants. I could care less if the spectators show up or not. Some merchants absolutely depend on the spectators, and would starve without them. Me, if the schedule does not permit the soldiers and civilians to wander over to my tent, I am in for a bad weekend. I get requests to attend events all the time. The immediate deal-breaker for me is when I hear, “And they’ll be 10,000 spectators at the event!” with no mention of the number of participants. If events are not put on for participants, I won’t attend.

I will state here and now believe that I would get more business if the merchants were split into two camps. Actually, by not patronizing the field merchants the progressives are driving away the very kinds of merchants that they would like to see at events. For example, let’s pick on County Cloth (Charlie Childs) for a moment. If Charlie Childs sells to progressives, and progressives don’t patronize merchant areas, why should Charlie attend any events at all? The answer is, he attends darned few. Now, let’s talk about The Acme Trash Emporium [name changed to protect those who do not know what “accurate” is, or could care less]. Mr. Damn, Mrs. Damn and the whole Damn family (proprietors of The Acme Trash Emporium) sell bumper stickers, felt kepis with flags on them, plastic swords, popguns, and all kinds of souvenir stuff that you and I wouldn’t be caught dead with. Now, the whole Damn family sells almost exclusively to spectators. And since there are thousands of them at events, (drawn from their homes by the lure of authentic Civil War soldiers like you), they buy like crazy at The Acme Trash Emporium (“Marge, we just gotta buy this hat for little Edgar, and that cute pop gun for Edwina.”). As a result, Mr. Damn takes early retirement and spends every week on the road at some reenactment. So, at every event you attend, there stands The Acme Trash Emporium, not County Cloth. See my point?

Personally, I would also like to see events schedule some downtime so that people really can go to the merchants. Hey, I came all that way; I would like to see as many of you as possible face to face. It is one of the reasons I like the smaller events, because it is not so darned far to everything. It does not help when there is an hour break if the merchants are more than a half-mile from camp. You cannot get there and back in the time allotted. Someone said that Friday nights were for that. Well, on merchants’ row, Friday
night is "I forgot" night. As in, "I forgot to roll cartridges," or "I forgot caps," or "Oh. I forgot my canteen strap broke at the last event." Darned few people forget paperwork, and I do not really hurry to an event so that I will be set up for Friday much anymore.

Hank Trent [another ECA board member, progressive thinker and sometime Whig] wonders why field merchants are not held to some sort of authenticity standards as well. AMEN, Hank, AMEN! I go to a great deal of time and effort to make my setup what it is. And it grates on me just as much when I set up next to a hurry to an event so that I will be set up for Friday much anymore. Hank Trent [another ECA board member, progressive thinker and sometime Whig] wonders why field merchants are not held to some sort of authenticity standards as well. AMEN, Hank, AMEN! I go to a great deal of time and effort to make my setup what it is. And it grates on me just as much when I set up next to a 

Mr. Watson, here is another method of limiting the number of merchants at an event: Simply tell them up front that no modern selling display material or items will be allowed. Tell them before they show up that you mean what you say, and their current setup is not satisfactory (if it is not). Oh, the moaning and complaining you will get, but if you want change, sometimes you have to derail the train. I will state categorically that I believe I am one of the few, if not the only merchant that uses reproduction wooden, rather than metal tables. (Oh, I know there is probably another, but I just wanted to invite an argument). [Insert another sarcastic smile]

As some of you know, I sell eighteenth-century stuff at Rev War events also. While not perfect, the Rev War merchants are held to a much higher standard of accuracy than their Civil War cousins are. No artificial light (which actually means no selling at night), no modern display racks (like wire bookshelves), etc. Since I started as a Rev War field merchant, my setup and furniture reflect this heightened level of accuracy. Many Rev War events ban visible plastic of any kind, and some ban modern price tags. Some ban modern books or music cassettes during event hours also.

So, I do not think the answer is to ban the "sutlers." Just like you, I would like to see an event where the field merchants and the participants were held to high standards. Try this when organizing your next event: Tell them no metal tables or metal display racks of any kind, covered or uncovered, no plastic bags or wrappings, no artificial light allowed except when taking down or setting up. When the registrations come in, call these people and tell them "Gee, I would like to have you at my event, but your current setup is not within the rules. If your setup is not going to differ radically from what I have seen in the past, I am going to shut you down for violating the rules." Mean it, stick to your guns and see how many come.

Bob Sullivan
(with help Bill Watson and Hank Trent)

And Why Not Sutlers (as in the 1860s version)?

Recently Bob Sullivan sent the DOG a proposal that meshes with his statements above. Hank Trent also offers a few comments.

I am thinking of suggesting a change in the way field merchants do business at events. Of course, this would have to be voluntary, and it would involve some work, but I think it would be a new slant on authenticity, and add another facet to an event.

I am planning on changing my merchant setup (based on time and money) to an "authentic" merchant setup. However, this setup will not be just for show. I still plan on selling and making a profit. Here's my idea:

I am going to sell (exchange) sutler tokens, a penny token equals a twenty-first century dollar. You get your tokens, and then you make purchases with the tokens or, "On account" (charge sales). This exchange system would work pretty well for me, and would make my prices fall reasonably in line with nineteenth-century prices. Dime books would be sold for eight cents (eight dollars in real life), stationery would be five cents for a set of paper and envelopes, pens would be six cents, pencils would be two for a penny, and so on.

I would probably end up selling apples and things like that also, at two for a penny or whatever is reasonable. I would not take modern currency, and therefore wouldn't be selling food items to tourists or spectators. At the end of the event, people can exchange their tokens back for twenty-first century money, or keep the tokens (Hey, free money for me).

This idea could be expanded to include several merchants, and if that ever happened we could then setup a "Bank" where participants could exchange their modern money for tokens, and make purchases all along a real sutler row.

I am going to try this out at a local event here in August, and hopefully take this setup (if they will let me) to Burkittsville in September. I am also going to put my marquee tent on the market, and switch to a hospital-sized wall tent.

Tim Ertel of Baltimore, who does an accurate sutler setup demonstration, showed me a picture of the Second Maryland sutler in 1864. In the picture the guy had what looked like an eleven foot wide wall tent with a nine foot peak. His counter was setup just inside the opening. Suggestions, comments?

Bob Sullivan

I think what you are going to do is an "excellent" idea, and will be well received. ("At the end of the event, people can exchange their tokens back for twenty-first century money...").

Years ago when I baby-sat the sutler's store set up by Nicky Hughes at Shaker Village, something similar was going on. At least, I was told to only accept period money or tokens that seemed to have started their circulation with the Hughes. That is, the money was not just reproduction bills that individual soldiers had brought from home; there was some sort of circulation going on, but I do not know whether soldiers were issued a flat amount at a pay call (reimbursed by their registration fee) or whether they could actually purchase tokens. You might want to get in touch with Mr. Hughes to see how it worked and what problems, if any, he encountered.

The only potential problem I can see ("...we could then setup a Bank") is counterfeiting. That should not be a problem for low-cost items. It could be circumvented just the way it is in real life, by making the tokens difficult to copy or changing the slightly for each event, so no one could take one home, get it copied, and bring a bunch of counterfeits to the next event.

I think it is a wonderful psychological tool to give people a sense of being part of a different time period, when their modern money is not good anymore. It is something they take so much for granted. Having tokens with real value would add so much to period interaction, way beyond just merchant's row. For instance, gambling would seem more real because it would be a gain or loss of real money; soldiers could buy or sell items from each other, etc.

I am definitely pleased to see you introducing this concept to event scenarios.
FOR YOUR LIBRARY

Writing and Fighting the Civil War

While on the subject of the army sutler I note the following from a compilation of soldier’s correspondence sent to a New York newspaper during the war:

THE ARMY SUTLER AND HIS PROFITS.—The sutler’s tent is the same in all camps we ever visited. Be it understood, for the benefit of those who are uninformed, that the sutler is the merchant of the Regiment. He sells lemonade, tobacco (in papers and plugs), cigars (of cabbage, oak leaves, or tobacco), red herrings, crackers, and molasses-cake. He would sell whiskey if he dared. His tent is always lumbered up with barrels and boxes, and at the customers’ end of it a board across two pork barrels does duty for a counter. Here the men come in crowds every hour in the day, to get some little delicacy (after salt fat pork and no vegetables, with the sun at ninety-eight degrees, even molasses-cake is a delicacy) to eat, or for a glass of cool lemonade to drink and make much of.

As the regiments are mostly supplied with water from muddy springs of their own digging (to prevent poisoning by our amiable Virginia neighbors); and as the sutler generally has the only ice in camp, a glass of even the sutler’s lemonade is a grateful beverage under the torrid circumstances.

All sutler’s stores or tents are alike—are always thronged, and always make money. There is usually a rear entrance for the officers, who are thus admitted behind the counter; and occasionally a sportive major takes a fancy to ride a frolicsome horse in at the back door, and a smashing sensation is the result.

These excerpts are just a portion of comments on the subject from the New York Sunday Mercury of 29 September 1861. They are taken from a book we heartily recommend as a great source of contemporary accounts of soldier life during the war. It is Writing and Fighting the Civil War: Soldier Correspondence to the New York Sunday Mercury, edited by William B. Styple (Belle Grove Publishing, Kearny, New Jersey, 2000, $27). The Sunday Mercury published scores of letters from soldiers during the course of the war. This is an excellent source of military social and material culture information. Contemporary newspaper accounts are an excellent resource for getting the “feel” of the times.

The Federal Civil War Shelter Tent

Our readers will note previous mention here and interest in a monograph on shelter tents. Fred Gaede, a subscriber and true friend of The Watchdog, has completed his massive and all-inclusive study of that small piece of canvas issued to thousands of soldiers.

Mr. Gaede has spent years studying thirty-three existing shelter tents (out of two and one-half million issued), combed through the US Quartermaster Department records, and searched the National Archives for every scrap of "canvas" related material. His monograph includes a detailed database describing the characteristics of all the examined surviving samples. He discusses the truths and myths of shelter tent size, poles, pins and end-pieces, as well as including contemporary soldier’s accounts of shelter tent usage. He has developed a typology and description of all key shelter tent characteristics so that we can all talk intelligently about the shelter tent, its construction and usage.

The Federal Civil War Shelter Tent is a full-size reference book with 144 pages and includes 128 illustrations. The book’s cost is $19.95 plus $2 shipping (one of the best bargains the DOG has seen in quite a while). The book is available from the publisher, O’Donnell Publications (7217 Popkins Farm Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22306). The book is available June 2001.

I have ordered my copy and the feel that not one more word on original shelter tents need be printed by us, Mr. Gaede’s book says it all. ARF!

We hope that those merchants selling less than accurate versions of the Federal shelter tent will add a copy of this book to their libraries. Here at last is a book that will point out what make the difference in an accurate reproduction.

The Annotated Casey’s, A Drill Manual for Reenactors

We are all aware, or should be by now, of Dom Dal Bello’s Parade, Inspection and Basic Evolutions of the Infantry Battalion and Instructions for Guard and Pickets. They are the essential modern works helping us understand some of the original manuals. Those portraying commissioned and noncommissioned officers need to have a thorough understanding of these texts to present an accurate portrayal of their 1860s counterparts. But what of the private in the ranks?

Nearly all period drill manuals contain some “school of the soldier.” There should be some guide for the basics. I have come across a handy guide that is just the ticket. It is The Annotated Casey’s, A Drill Manual for Reenactors. It has been compiled by Steve Hanson, drill Instructor of Sykes’ Regulars (reconstituted). The cost of the pamphlet is $5.50 (postpaid).

This book deals strictly with the School of the Soldier and as Mr. Hanson states: “This manual is provided so each new member...can study and practice the movements at home in spare time. At events, when there is little time for such basic instruction, the recruit can refine those skills...”

The paragraphs from Casey’s are not presented in their original order, but are grouped in sections of similar evolutions. There is a reference key back to the original presentation order. Annotations and commentary are included for clarification. Mr. Hanson has obviously spent a great deal of time “drilling the boys” and has put his experience into this book. Bully job!

To obtain The Annotated Casey’s, send a check to Steve Hanson at 740 Hollow Rd., Oella, MD 21043. He can also be contacted at shanson2us@yahoo.com

The Sykes’ Regulars have a web site at:
http://www.cwreenactors.com/~sykes/

Mr. Christen
US Army Hospital Department Bottles

One of the more intriguing areas of Civil War medical antiquities involves the collecting of US Army Hospital Department bottles. These bottles, simple in shape and often unappealing in color, have been popular with collectors for decades. Their popularity springs from the fact that these bottles were produced during a very narrow period of time (circa 1862-1865). Additionally, they remained in use well into the post-war years causing their survival rate to be quite low.

Much of the history of the bottles simply marked “U.S.A. Hosp Dept” is clouded in time. We do know something of their origin. Following the Federal defeat at First Manassas and the grim realization that the war might last years and not months, the US Army Medical Department (under the auspices of the Quartermaster Department, the agency responsible for procuring supplies) began purchasing standard medicines for the army. These medicines were packaged in several ways: bottles, tin, papers and boxes. Army officers seemed to prefer packaging in tins and bottles, as these were more robust. They held up to the rigors of the field better than papers or flimsy boxes.

As an example, E.R. Squibb, a New York contractor, provided a medical pannier for field use with fifty-two standard medicines all packaged in japanned tin containers. The Army was charged one hundred dollars per pannier. This item allowed the field surgeon access to necessary medications protected in a bound chest and packaged in unbreakable tins. Large numbers of surviving tins illustrate the popularity of this type packaging.

Bottles remained a popular form of medicine container throughout the war. The Army used both plain civilian bottles and the rarer Hospital Department bottles.

According to Mike Russell, Civil War bottle authority, research indicates that the Hospital Department bottles were manufactured at factories in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Baltimore, Maryland. Some archaeological evidence may point to a third manufacturing plant at St. Louis, Missouri. The principal manufacturer was at Pittsburgh with fewer bottles from the Baltimore Glass Works.

Examples of bottles blown at the Pittsburgh factory exhibit concave, slightly recessed, bases with a star design, initials or a simple dot. Occasionally, some bottles from this firm are seen with an iron pontil scar (a result of an older glass-making technique that used a rod dipped in iron oxide to hold the bottle base during the manufacturing process). Baltimore Glass Works examples are flat based and exhibit weak embossing.

Civil War bottle embossing styles fall into several types:
(1) Two straight lines: the top line is “U.S.A.” in raised letters, and the bottom line is “Hosp. Dept.”
(3) “United States Army Hospital Department” in a straight line.
(4) “U.S.A.” arching over “Med’l Dept.” (This is the only style incorporating the abbreviation for the US Army Medical Department dating to the Civil War era)

Numerous examples of bottle colors exist. The most common being clear and then followed by aqua. Rarer colors include cobalt (the most popular color with collectors), emerald green, apricot and dense purple or puce. Hospital Department bottles range in size from a 2 1/2 inch high oval-shaped vial to a quart size cylinder 9 1/4 inches tall. Neck styles vary from narrow openings to a wide mouth. Whether the coloring or shape had any relation to contents is a matter of conjecture. Bottles have surfaced with paper labels indicating their original contents. Wide mouth bottles were probably used for pills.

Regardless of the color, all original bottles contain flaws in the glass, the result of the manufacturing process in the middle of the century. Bottles often contain numerous bubbles and sand. Some examples even show a primitive whittled look. Lips are often crude and appear hand-tooled.

The Hospital Department bottle was slowly replaced by one of similar design in the post-war years. The more modern bottle employs various abbreviations of the US Army Medical Department. Medical department bottles remained an issue item until World War II. They are easily distinguished from their Civil War cousins by the quality of the glass, a more refined lip and a bottle capacity designation on the base. The colors of post-war bottles are a standardized with dark amber/brown seen most frequently on the market.

Archaeological finds confirm that Hospital Department bottles were commonly used in the field after 1863. They remained in use on the frontier until the 1870s.

Robert J. Dalessandro

PRODUCT REVIEW

US Army Hospital Bottle

Along with the above information on hospital bottles, we received a reproduction bottle from the Dog River Glassworks. It is based on early bottle produced at the Pittsburgh factory. The original bottle is in Rob’s collection.

The quart-sized bottle is blown in a mold made from the original. It has a snap pontil base. The lip is applied and more crudely formed than the original. In this way the bottle cannot be mistaken for an original. The difference is slight. Mr. Dalessandro states: “Original Hospital Department bottles like this retail for $600, so I had a lot of pressure from the antique bottle collecting community.” The Dog River understands the reason for this small deviation, which is probably only noticeable to an antique bottle collector.

These bottles are excellent for a medical impression and could work with a common soldier’s impression. They were used throughout the war and almost everywhere. The National Park Service recovered hospital bottles at Petersburg NBP that were used as candle holders by the soldiers digging the tunnel for “the mine.” Original bottles held medicinal brandy and other spirits...useful in camp no doubt; dare we mention it, Mrs. Kalil?

The Dog River bottle sells for $35 (postpaid). They are available in olive amber, cobalt blue and clear. Our sample was securely packaged and arrived in good shape. It is quite beautiful sitting in the sunlight in the office.

Dog River Glassworks, PO Box 3037, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-3027 and (913) 682-1082 and e-mail wrosecrans@aol.com and web site at: http://www.dogriverglassworks.com

Mr. Christen
Our image for study is a CdV (ca. 1861-65) of a scene in a Federal (based on the uniform coats) camp. Those of you who recently visited auctions on Ebay™ may have seen it. The image is currently owned by Sam Vinegar of Grosse Point, Michigan, and is used here with his permission. There was no backmark or other indication of provenance on the image.

A Scene in Camp
A Scene in Camp

What Does this Image Say to Us?

Simply four men around a tent or...

...a man (soldier) seated on bench wearing a Federal issue sack coat (bottom button hidden behind his left arm) and trowsers. His shoes appear to be Federal issue booties. His civilian shirt appears to have a darker trim on the collar and placket. His hat is a civilian style with a round crown. He may have been a cordwainer (shoemaker) or cobbler (shoe repairer) in civilian life. He is using a leather strap and his own legs as a pegging jack. [Thanks to Peter Oakly, shoemaker at Old Sturbridge Village, for advice on the soldier’s possible activity.] He is using a small hammer and a dowel-like tool for driving in the pegs. It was common for the army and the soldiers to make use of the civilian talents of the men in the ranks. He has covered his trowsers with a striped cloth to protect them from shoe blacking. He has a medium length chin beard, no other facial hair and almost no sideburns.

...a man (soldier) seated behind bench and partially inside tent.

He is wearing issue trowsers, possibly an issue flannel shirt (note button at neck and shirt material texture) and booties. His cloth braces have buckles and suspenders attached to the trower front. His fatigue cap is somewhat battered and the brim is turned up in a rakish manner. He has a full, close-cut beard.

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP


First, let me thank you immensely for your kind review of our Catalogue of Uniforms. A lot of people put a lot of work into it, and it’s nice to know that someone has taken the time to notice. I have gotten quite a few orders in the mail from your readers (some of whom simply clipped-out the review, and wrote on it “please send me [1# copies…”). Clearly, your article has generated a lot of business for our shop, so I feel kind of bad for mentioning this, but the price you quoted, $15.80, is incorrect. It should be $16.90 for most residents of the United States, and, with the unfortunate necessity of Sales Tax, $17.39 for Virginia residents, including shipping. Members of the Museum of the Confederacy are entitled to a ten percent discount on merchandise, so $15.80 is correct for out-of-state members. We have to go in and manually adjust everyone else’s order, and it’s confusing my poor computer. Charles Bizzell, Haversack Store Manager, Museum and White House of the Confederacy, 1201 E. Clay Street, Richmond, VA 23219 and (804) 644-4936.

Buckets.

In Lee Rainey’s article on “Dining Out in Wartime Virginia” [WINTER 2001] he says: “Two key elements of the period mess equipage pose difficulties. As noted above, wooden buckets were surprisingly common in wartime accounts…A review of period pictures reveal that virtually all woodenware in use in the field incorporated split-sapling half-round hoops…Can anyone suggest another source of such items?”

Have you considered Five Rivers Chapmanny? The web page for their e-store is http://www.5rivers.org/estore/ [no land mail or phone contact provided]. They have buckets and pails with lathe, rope, steel and withe (flexible branch or twig) hoops. Their pails or buckets with steel or rope hoops are $130, and with lathe or withe hoops are $170. I think Mr. Rainey is looking for the withe hoops. I have two pails from them and they are very nice. I did have a problem with a larvae of some sort that was under the bark of the withe hoop. I don’t know for sure if it came with the pail or whether I had some sort of infestation here. You must keep the bucket damp for better watertightness, or be willing to soak it for a day or two before widely spaced events. That’s just the nature of wooden buckets. They include instructions on the care of cooperation.

Vicki Betts

Canned Food.

I just finished Lee Rainey’s article “Dining Out in Wartime Virginia.” I keep reading about canned food but I never hear anything mentioned about a can opener. Other than a bayonet, was there a can opener in the 1860s? I don’t think the average housewife of the time used a bayonet, maybe an axe. I’ve never seen one being offered by any of the sutlers. It seems strange to me to produce a food storage container but no way of opening it. Ronald Bednarczyk

Mr. Murley: The large “hook” type can openers often seen in antique stores appear to be period, from what I remember. And a big knife works too.

Mr. Simmons: The old type with the pointed blade can be used just remove the cork screw. If you find one that is plated you can burn the plating off with a Propane torch. Also look around antique shops for a wood handle version of the same style.

Hemp Rope.

I found a great source for hemp rope at Pan World Traders. They can be contacted at PO Box 697, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 and...
known shoulder belt arrangement. Possibly the same double-buckle Mexican War style knapsack with the double bag, but with an un-
US Army knapsack. The “trials” of 1851 replaced the single bag
might figure it’s worthwhile to start making Roman stencils again.

helpful. The stencils were shipped the same day I placed my order.

Gaede (the

FEEDBACK ON LOOKING AT ORIGINALS

Federal Knapsacks

Correction: Pattern of 1855 Knapsack.

In regard to Mr. Simmons’ “LOOKING AT ORIGINALS”
knapsack article in the last issue we received this note from Fred
Gaede (the DOG’s respected expert on things military from the
Quartermaster Department):

Please don’t use the term “Pattern of 1853” designation for the
US Army knapsack. The “trials” of 1851 replaced the single bag
Mexican War style knapsack with the double bag, but with an un-
known shoulder belt arrangement. Possibly the same double-buckle
arrangements used in Mexican War. But in 1855 the French belting
was put on the double bag knapsack and what was used throughout
the CW was adopted [then, not in 1853]. So it is correctly the Pat-
tern of 1855 Knapsack, not “1853.” Fred Gaede

Federal Knapsack.

I wanted to comment on your article in the last issue. When I
first started to use the Federal double bag I felt it was rather
uncomfortable. The belt hooks do seem to be pretty useless. They
will not hold on to your belt very well. They do not help with the
weight distribution if you strap them across you chest. I have found
a method that works for me. I have not seen this in any image nor
have I heard of it mentioned in any soldier’s writings, but it’s simple
and any soldier in the field could easily do it. I punch a hole in the
belt about three inches from the buckle. Then I put a “J” hook in the
hole and another “J” hook in one of the sizing holes on the other
side of the buckle. Then I fasten the “J” hooks on the belt to the “J”
hooks on the belt hooks. David Bushmole

Knapsack Paint and Other Observations.

It was with great interest that I read Mr. Simmons’ article, in
the WINTER 2001 issue, concerning his study and reproduction of
a Federal knapsack. Being the owner of two originals, and having
made more reproductions than I care to count, I think that I might
be able to add a few things to his observations.

In examining my originals, as well as several in the collection
of a friend, I was struck by the sloppy way the leather parts were
applied to the bag. When identical parts were applied to the same
bag, such as strips to hold the pack closed variation in spacing of
½ inch or more were common. Likewise, the stitching was not done
in the neatest manner. Based on this, I finally learned not to worry if
the parts were not within ½ inch of where I thought they should be.

While making the bag for one of these is pretty straightforward,
painting it can be a real pain. I have to use a wooden frame to keep
the parts from sticking together. Also, the bag must be laid out neatly
for drying, otherwise it comes out deformed.

For several years I have experimented with different paints. In
1986 I spoke with a member of my unit who had made several
reproduction knapsacks. He had sent several paint scrapings from
an original knapsack to a lab at the University of Maryland. The
resulting report indicated the substance was almost pure latex! Based
on that information he started using latex paint with excellent results.
I followed his lead and have also been pleased.

Recently, more information has surfaced regarding paint. During
research in the Quartermaster General records in the National
Archives, Stephen Osman came across an 1864 letter regarding an
inspection of the painting facility of contractor Evans and Hassell in
Philadelphia (see “Potter’s Patented Haversack and Knapsack Paint,
1864,” Military Collector & Historian, Vol. XLVI, No. 2, Summer,
1994). In his report of this inspection, Chief Inspector Neal Campbell
of Schuykill Arsenal gives the formula used by Mr. Potter, chief
painter for the firm. At least one person, who is a chemist, has seen
this and stated that it is basically a receipt for latex paint!

As far as sizing the fabric before painting, at least Mr. Potter at
Evans and Hassel was using starch. Based on my own experience,
I think this may be due to using unwashed linen. I have used washed
linen on most of the knapsacks I have made. I found that sizing is
not needed. On my originals the paint had soaked through in places
and using washed linen, I get the same result.

In his article, Mr. Simmons mentions that the thread used to
sew the leather parts was coated with cobbler’s wax to make it lock
in place when sewn. This is only partially correct. While the wax
does help with that process, the primary reason is to make the strands
or “cords” of the thread stick together. In the 1860s linen thread
came in single strands as used for sewing fabric. For sewing leather,
you had to cut off four or five strands or “cords” in the trade, wax
them and twist them together to make one thread for sewing leather.

I am sure Mr. Simmons will agree that, until recently, hardware
has proved to be one of the toughest challenges for anyone making
knapsacks. Most merchants carry the reproduction brass parts
produced by the Naugatuck Novelty Company. Buckles are still a
problem though, and there are only a few sources that have the proper
size. Unless you can find a retailer who carries them, you will need
to buy a large amount to meet the wholesaler’s minimum order. All
steel buckles on the market are nickel-plated, and require heating
over a flame to remove the plating.

Last, the dye receipt quoted in the article is accurate. However,
it is not intended for the oak tanned leather used for knapsack straps.
It was to be used on buff leather (an oiled tanned leather) used for
waistbelts and cartridge box belts early in the war. For more
information consult the Ordnance Manual for the use of the Officers
of the United States Army, third edition, 1861, pages 175 and 227.
The 1850 Ordnance Manual is in the Making of America project at:
http://moa.umdl.umich.edu/
Also included in the manual is a receipt for Kit, or Cobbler’s wax.

James Owens
William Gilham’s Manual of Instruction for the Volunteers and Militia of the United States

The authoring of William Gilham’s manual was in response to abolitionist John Brown’s 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. When the Virginia militia gathered at Charles Town during Brown’s trial, the various companies were seen to be using various manuals, often at the whim of their officers. Virginia officials and militia leaders recognized the need for a unified drill manual for the state forces. On December 23, 1895, Governor Wise ordered the Virginia Military Institute to prepare a military manual that would be used by all of its militia companies and batteries. This duty fell upon the shoulders of Major William Gilham, a professor at the Institute.

William Gilham was born in Indiana. He had graduated fifth in the class of 1840 at West Point and then saw service in the artillery during the Second Seminole Campaign and in the war with Mexico. In 1846 he resigned his commission to take on duties at the Virginia Military Institute, where he taught various courses including Infantry tactics, and was the Commandant of Cadets. In writing the state’s drill manual Gilham used a manual that was already in print, Samuel Cooper and Alexander Macomb’s A Concise System of Instructions and Regulations for the Militia and Volunteers of the United States, as a template. Borrowing from Winfield Scott and William Hardee’s manuals, Gilham fleshed out a volume that when finished in December 1860, was 559 pages in length. In April of that year, even before the manual was completed, William H. Richardson, Virginia’s Adjutant General, officially ordered that Gilham’s manual, upon completion, was to be used by the state militia.

When printed in January 1861 Gilham’s publisher sent copies to some of the country’s leading military figures, soliciting their opinions on the work. Published in an advertising flyer, some of their responses were extremely flattering. [1] But when the South seceded, the ability to get copies of Gilham’s work was terminated, as the publisher was in Philadelphia. The large publishing house of West and Johnson in Richmond, Virginia took up the call for the manual and by the end of July 1861, had ten thousand copies available. Amazingly enough, this supply dried up within a year and in 1862 West and Johnson went into a second printing. Due to the lack of copyright laws in the Confederacy, Gilham’s treatise, in various forms, was also published in South Carolina and Texas. In Texas, the manual was officially sanctioned by the state. Gilham meanwhile was promoted to colonel and went on to command the Twenty-first Virginia Infantry during the Cheat Mountain and Romney Campaigns. In the midst of the latter, he resigned and returned to teaching at VMI. Regardless of his short career on the field, Gilham’s manual saw widespread use throughout the Confederate Army and limited use by Union forces.

Kenneth S. Mink

NOTE:
[1] Expert testimonial published in an advertising flyer for Gilham’s manual: “Nothing contrary to the tenor of this manual will be enjoyed, or permitted, in any part of the forces of the State of Georgia by any commander, be his rank what it may.” Henry Wayne, Adjutant General, 1 February 1861
“I have examined Major Gilham’s Manual, and think it an excellent work to be placed in the hands of the Volunteers.” Maj. Gen. George MeClellan, 23 May 1861
“It is useful for all, but particularly for our Volunteer forces. It is comprehensive, complete, and reliable. I regard it the best Military Work that exists. There is no duty...that is not thoroughly explained.” Brig. Gen. Phillip Kearny, 3 August 1861
“I consider it the very best work of the kind that has yet been published, and in testimony of my appreciation of its value, I have ordered it to be adopted as the textbook for my Battalion—the Washington Artillery.” Major J.B. Walton, Washington Artillery, 28 January 1861

Kenneth Mink has been enacting for twenty years with the Fourth Virginia, Company A (“Stonewall” Brigade) and Seventh Wisconsin, Company I (National Regiment).

PRODUCT REVIEW

Reprints of Gilham’s and Casey’s Manuals

When I opened the copy of an original Gilham’s Manual of Instruction in an Oklahoma City antique shop I noted that it was once owned by Captain A.B. Andrews, Company B, First North Carolina Cavalry. Even without that provenance the book I would have purchased it. (I won’t spoil your lunch by mentioning the bargain price.) Later when reading the manual, I realized for the first time that it was not just an infantry manual, but a system for all branches and a soldier’s complete guide and manual.

Now you can own a hardcover copy of this manual for about the same bargain price I paid for the original ($40 plus $4 shipping with payment by check or money order). It is also available from S.G. Marinos and S&S Sutler (both in Gettysburg), as well as Fair Oaks Sutler, the NPS bookstores at the Fredericksburg and Petersburg NBPs and Sharrock Hill Books “the Book Guy” on the Internet. Leather bound copies in limited quantities are $50.

Ken Mink has been reprinting Gilham’s manual since 1992 when many enacting units started to adopt it. His reprint is a copy of the 1861 edition published by Charles Desilver. My original is also a Desilver with a different title page (a drawing of artillerymen and a mounted officer as well as Gilham’s name followed by “of Indiana.”) The copy is a direct reprint of the United States edition as it was the only edition available to the South until after the summer of 1861. That way it is appropriate in either army. All foldouts in the original are included.

Here is another book for your military reference library, and for someone doing an officer’s impression; your trunk or company desk. I want to emphasize that Gilham’s manual was more than a drill manual. It contains “how to” information for soldier’s duties and life. Absorption of this type book knowledge is just as important to your impression as an accurate uniform or accoutrement item. ARF!

Mr. Mink also offers a reprint (from an original set) of Casey’s Infantry Tactics in three pocket-sized volumes including foldouts. This is how they would have been found in an officer’s library. The price of the set is $50 plus $4 shipping. If you need a fine steel reproduction of a “Y” combination tool (nipple wrench, screwdriver and punch) or cleaning wiper for the Model 1854 Austrian Lorenz rifle-musket, he also has them at $12 each plus $3 shipping.

Ken Mink, 299 Friendship Lane, Gettysburg, PA 17325 and (717) 337-1559 and rmink@cvn.net

Mr. Christen

10

THE WATCHDOG. SPRING 2001
“Pardessus Danois” Pattern Designed by the Octagon Ladies’ Repository

The pattern envelope has the name of the pattern, “Pardessus Danois,” and the designer. There is an period print of a woman in a hat and coat. There is also the price of ten dollars. My first question: What is “Pardessus Danois”? The envelope is large enough to accommodate a short historical note about the design. I would have appreciated a translation of “Pardessus Danois.” Pardessus, a French word, meaning outercoat or greatcoat; from A Dictionary of Costume and Fashion by Mary Brooks Picken (Dover Publications, Inc.).

I would have also found it helpful to know when this design first appeared and in what publication. Of further interest would have been the fabrics and design elements originally used. One might want to reproduce it as it appears in the print.

While the above suggestions would have been of interest to most, they certainly are not a requirement for a good pattern. However, what is required for a good pattern is a size chart with fabric amounts and list of notions required. They do not appear on the envelope. As it turns out the fabric requirements are listed on the directions that are inside the sealed envelope. There was no size chart. The pattern itself had to be completely unfolded to see that it was a Size 10 and a Size 14. Without a size chart I have no idea if either of these sizes will fit me. Multi-sized patterns are usually the norm. At this point I have serious doubts about purchasing this pattern. Of course, those doubts do not become apparent until after you have purchased the pattern.

The fabric requirements are inside. Four yards of outer fabric wool, velveteen, heavy flannel, etc. and four yards of lining taffeta, flannel, quilted satin or cotton, etc. is suggested. There is no note saying that velveteen or any napped fabric will require more fabric because the pattern pieces must be laid out in the same direction. Also there is no recommendation as to fabric width. This omission and the four-yard fabric recommendation will become a very big problem when the pattern is laid out. Notions are listed, but no amounts are indicated. How many fasteners and how many yards of ribbon and braid are required?

There are directions for increasing the circumference of the coat to fit over a larger hoop. They call for the addition of gores at the side seams. By just reading them they appear adequate, but possibly confusing for the novice sewer. Directions for adding the gores could be more specific. It should be recommended that the gores be integrated into the side seam before the armpit as to not disturb the original opening. Increasing the opening might create difficulty in setting in the sleeve later in the construction process.

Pattern Lay Out.

The pattern pieces are not numbered. There is one straight of grain indicator on the back piece, but none on the front piece or sleeves. The front piece does say center front opening (most coats do open in the front), but the center front is not marked which would tell you what the overlap of the coat is, or even where you are to put the buttons or fasteners. Cutting amounts are listed in the directions, but not on the pattern pieces.

The pattern size I am reproducing is a Size 14. I am using forty-five inch wide fabric in what I would call a traditional fold; meaning folded down the length the folded edge paralleling the selvage edge. I find out that four yards is not enough. I refold the fabric so that fold is in the middle and the selvage edges are parallel. There is still not enough fabric for the Size 14 coat and sleeves, not to mention gores or even piping for around the armpit or to finish the sleeve edge. Strangely there are no recommendations for the use of this technique. I used about three yards of sixty inch wide material. If I would have needed gores or chose to make piping I would have needed another yard of material. My lining material was fifty inches wide and I used about three yards.

So far this has been an exercise in total frustration. When I lay out the pattern, several problems became apparent. The bottom edge of the coat body curves so dramatically that it crosses the fabric in such a way that it becomes bias cut. Thus, the side seams when joined will have a tendency to stretch. The fullness of the coat is concentrated at the sides and not evenly distributed throughout the body of the garment. It is not going to lay right.

Pattern Construction.

The directions call for sewing all seams of each side of the coat with the lining pieces. Letting the fabric and lining be assembled at the back, joining the sleeves into the armhole edges. Starting at the cuff edge, stitch up to the underarm edge. This becomes even more apparent due to the way the fashion fabric and lining is joined. There is a hodgepodge of lining techniques with some seams hidden as in flat lining and some showing as in interlining. The top seam of the sleeve does not lay along the outside edge of the arm over the elbow in the proper manner of a coat sleeve.

Conclusion.

The finished product is not satisfying. The sleeves lay at odd angles to the body of the coat. The neckline opening is an astounding 3½ inches. The fullness of the coat is concentrated at the sides resulting in an unattractive drape. The body continues to stretch because it crossed the bias. This becomes even more apparent due to the way the fashion fabric and lining is joined. There is a hodgepodge of lining techniques with some seams hidden as in interlining and some showing as in flat lining.

Sorry ladies, there is nothing I can recommend about this pattern.

The Octagon Ladies Repository, Lynne Bury and Beth Rock, 10095 Wadsworth Rd., Marshallville, Ohio 44645

Mrs. Soszynski
The Godey’s Crocheted Zouave Jacket Project

Introduction.

A number of years ago I purchased a sweater for my daughter to wear with her nineteenth-century clothing. The pattern for the sweater had been taken from an illustration and directions in Godey’s Ladies’ Book, September 1862. It had pagoda style sleeves and was called a “Zouave Jacket.” My daughter, Sarah, loved the sweater and wore it often. Subsequently, I was able to purchase another sweater for myself from the same maker. Whenever Sarah and I wore these sweaters to a living history event they were a topic of much conversation among the ladies. Many ladies were familiar with the illustration from Godey’s and had tried the pattern. However, no one we spoke with was ever able to complete the project. The pattern’s instructions were both difficult and confusing. Discussing this problem with a good friend, Mary Azzariti, I encouraged her to try the pattern to see if she could decipher it. Mary is a weaver, knitter, dyer and traditional arts instructor (also a contributor to The Watchdog). She has worked as an interpreter at living history sites and is deeply committed to historical accuracy. Mary agreed to try on the project that subsequently has consumed much of her time over the last several years. After much reading, research and many experiments, she was able to reproduce the jacket. Using her extensive library of period books, textile manuals and supply sources, she obtained yarns, trims and buttons that are exceedingly close to the original requirements. Below is Mary’s outline of the project.

Mrs. Kalil

The Project Outline

Background.

This project began in earnest the winter of 1999 when my husband and I moved from Michigan, our home of fifteen years, to Missouri. Not being able to transport my loom or dye kettles I needed a suitable, challenging and portable project while we lived for several months in a small apartment waiting for our home to be built.

Procedure.

Being a knitter for many years, crochet was something I used primarily for finishing work. As a refresher for my less frequently used crochet skills, I found Maggie Righett’s, Crocheting in Plain English, enormously helpful. For period advice, I turned to Victorian Crochet by Weldon, and Caulfield’s Encyclopedia of Victorian Needlework. At times the directions from Godey’s were both unclear and periodically incorrect. Sometimes, I could determine from the illustration provided in Godey’s, the written word did not always agree with what was pictured. Many hours were spent determining the period manner of working the pattern that often quite differed dramatically from modern techniques.

As with the majority of period needlework patterns, the author makes a myriad of presumptions regarding the skills and knowledge of the “gentle reader.” It is presumed that all subscribers have a general knowledge of crochet, garment construction techniques, garment fitting and finishing techniques. This pattern, like others of the period, gives neither needle size “the needle must not be too large” nor gauge “care must be taken not to crochet too loosely, but yet sufficiently loose to be very elastic,” two essential ingredients to producing a garment of known size. Yarn weight, another critical ingredient, needed consideration. Extensive sampling using eight to ten different yarns in three or four needle sizes was required before selecting the yarn for this project. It is the absence of just such critical details which make the recreation of workbasket projects such as the Godey Jacket so very challenging. It was my goal that I would not only accurately reproduce this lovely jacket but further would develop a pattern that might be more easily understood by needlewomen today.

Method.

Once the basic design was evidenced via careful calculation and numerous trials, several questions needed to be addressed. Probably the foremost one being...how to make a thirty-six inch sleeve edge ease into a sixteen inch armseye without puckering. Other areas requiring answers included how to incorporate the metallic trim and how to make the garment curves lay properly. The earliest attempts did not produce the same profile found in the drawing in Godey’s. I questioned was this a problem with the crochet or the result of liberties taken by the pattern illustrator? Ultimately these questions found solutions through continued experimentation. With patience, perseverance and trial and error...success prevailed.

Conclusion.

The first sweaters, or crocheted jackets, brought rave reviews from my Michigan friends. Almost immediately, however, there was issue of “a jacket worked like this will usually be found to be quite large enough”...large enough for apparently Sizes 8 to 10. So began the quest to extend the sizes of the pattern. The original Godey’s Crocheted Zouave Jacket pattern is being developed into a multi-sized pattern (Sizes 6 to 20), which will include instruction with translation for today’s needlewomen, photograph illustrations, suggested materials and supply sources. Workshops for hands-on instruction are being considered. Although current demand far exceeds my capacity for production, a very limited number of jackets will be made available for sale throughout the year. The cost will be $300 to $350 plus materials.

It is also my plan to publish this pattern, although no date has been set for publication at this time and a considerable amount of work remains to be done. I am not a production knitter or crocheter, but more an experimenter in these crafts, along with spinning, weaving and natural dyeing. Anyone wanting to order a sweater or if you are interested in more information, can e-mail me at: GODEYMA@aol.com

Mary Azzariti

A Preliminary Review.

I have been fascinated with the reproduction of nineteenth-century needlework since having seen an exceptionally well reproduced miser’s purse years ago. Period fashion periodicals included “work basket” projects with instruction for the recreation of a plethora of knitted and crocheted clothing items as well as household adornments. Here, however, lies the rub. The...
interpretation, translation and execution of both English and American patterns is a tedious process. Before executing the often times sketchy or ever so general instruction, it is required that one begin with an existing knowledge of the needlework to be replicated, a working vocabulary of nineteenth-century needlework terms, and sources for the acquisition of appropriate reproduction materials. Patience and a zeal for problem solving are critical ingredients to this process. It is no wonder that so few of these wonderful garments are observed being currently worn by those within the living history community. This being said, help appears to be on the horizon.

Upon reviewing Mary Azzariti's soon to be published instructions for the Godey's Crocheted Zouave Jacket as originally presented in Godey's Lady's Book, October, 1862, and examining the beautiful finished product, I am humbled. Mrs. Azzariti has taken that which would overwhelm the preponderance of us and translated this pattern into a format familiar to today's needlewoman. Her line by line needle notes and the photographic illustrations throughout her text significantly aid in examining one's progress and checking for accuracy all along the way. Her diligent search for historically accurate materials produced a resource list of suppliers for the materials needed to complete this project. Most often she incorporates period buttons as the final finishing touch, however, in the absence of these, manufacturers of appropriate reproductions are included.

In the absence of having an opportunity to examine a Crocheted Zouave Jacket produced in the 1860s as a measure for comparison, I can with confidence report that Mrs. Azzariti's translation of the original pattern and the reproduction produced from same presents exactly as the illustration of the original.

Projects such as this are indeed labors of love. Mrs. Azzariti is to be commended for her perseverance in bringing to us, who have a passion for the nineteenth century, a means of reproducing this beautiful garment. To Mrs. Azzariti I would report, do please continue.

Ruthann Davis Bell

Ruthann Davis Bell received her Doctorate in Education from the University of Michigan in 1980. Her lifelong love of history and volunteer work as a living history interpreter facilitated a career move, in 1996, from counseling psychologist to farm mistress, savonnier and creator of Forest Farm Academy for Nineteenth-Century Traditional Arts. Inspired by a passion for the nineteenth century, her love of traditional arts motivated her extensive research and her desire to facilitate their renaissance. You may contact her at Forest Farm@cac.net.

FIG 1. Crocheted Zouave Jacket Plate from Godey's Ladies' Book and Magazine (September 1862, page 327, from a copy in Mrs. Kalil's collection)
A QUERY ABOUT THE ARTS

Artist Watercolors and Paper.
Do use pursue artistic endeavors as part of your impression? We have received several queries in this regard. Subscriber and contributor, Virginia Mescher has found the following is taken from Mackenzie's 5000 Receipts (1857):

Water Colours Used in Drawing. Those necessary for drawing are a drawing board, a ruler, compasses, charcoal, black lead pencils, penknife, porte-crayons, black, white and red chalks, Indian ink, crow-quill pens, camel's hair brushes, boxes of colours, paper of several sorts, and portfolios.

The article goes on to describe different materials.

Drawing paper. That which is made without any wire marks, and called wove paper, is the best: it is made of various sizes and thicknesses. Middle tint paper is of a brownish or of a grey colour, and is used for drawing upon with black and white chalk.

There are explanations of from what each color is made, and how to make each color on your own. Watercolors were also available in round or rectangular tablets; somewhat similar to those we use today. The pigments were a combination of mineral and plant origin. The recipes (or receipts) were for both oil and water colors. Windsor Newton began making artist's supplies and you may be able to get some information from them. Andrew Ure's book, Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures and Mines (1864) also had an extensive section on artist's colors.

A source for watercolor sets is Ken Scott, 739 Fletcher Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46203 and at

http://www.kenscottpouches.com

Virginia Mescher
A Cincinnati Depot Federal Issue Canteen

Recently your correspondent was given the opportunity to review one of the hot-dipped tin Pattern of 1858 canteen reproductions offered by a relatively new vendor, Joe Hofmann, doing business as The Jersey Skillet Licker.

The canteen is a result of Mr. Hofmann's relationship with the Tinsmith (George McGillis). It is based on a previous reproduction, which like most modern reproductions, was lacking in some of the finer points of the original.

First, there is a lack of knowledge among many of us in reference to the Pattern of 1858 canteen. Most vendor offerings reflect this, though there have been a few areas of change in the past few years.

One of the best primers on the Federal canteen is Earl J. Coates' article "The Civil War Canteens: Patterns of 1858 and 1862" as published in Military Collector & Historian (Vol. XLVII, No. 3, Fall 1995). [1] Other canteen related articles have appeared in the Watchdog, principally Chris Daley's "We Drank From the Same [Federal] Canteen?" (Vol. 2, No. 2). [2] These articles arm the living historian with a good basic knowledge of the Pattern of 1858 canteen, and until recently, the knowledgeable living historian found available offerings wanting in accuracy.

The Pattern of 1858 canteen was a tin plated, sheet iron, "oblate spheroid" canteen constructed of two "semi-spherical" plates soldered together. This design is both uniquely American and a distinct departure from the previous pattern of tin drum canteen. While collectors have always called it the "Pattern of 1858", there is a strong case, based on Quartermaster correspondence and early contracts, [3] that it is more properly the Pattern of 1857.

Following the idea that the common, everyday it is the norm of what should be represented in living history's recreation of 1860s material culture, the average vendors' offerings were a poor choice. These were restricted to Pattern of 1858 canteen of New York Depot models (as evidenced by the jack chain keeper and the hole for the same punched in one of the upper strap loops, which is a feature found only on New York Depot canteens). Often grossly oversized and made of inappropriate materials, these reproductions range from poor to marginal. Even available reproductions of the minority Pattern of 1862 "bullseye" canteens were neither fish nor fowl, as they exhibited these traits of New York Depot canteens on a canteen only contracted for by the Philadelphia Depot.

Recently the available offerings began to change. C&D Jarnagin began to offer their reproduction canteens with the option of having no jack chain hole in the upper sling loop and S&S Sutler began to offer the Tinsmith's early efforts at more accurate Pattern of 1858 canteens. Enter Mr. Hofman.

Mr. Hofmann's efforts have resulted in having the Tinsmith produce for him an excellent reproduction of a typical, unmarked "white metal" spout, tin plated, Pattern of 1858 canteen as it would have been accepted at the Philadelphia Depot between 1857 and 1862, or at the Cincinnati Depot between May 1861 [4] and April 1863.

The example canteen received for review was made of accurate gauge stock, tin plated by the appropriate dipping process and its dimensions compared extremely favorably in all respects with a rather bashed up original in a local collection. [5] As Mr. Hofmann himself pointed out, the spout of this prototype was incorrect. His current offerings have been corrected.

It should be noted that there are no contractor's marks on the spout. It is not uncommon to find original canteens that are missing these marks, as many canteens were received at the Cincinnati Depot covered and strapped, with the contractor's mark stamped on the strap and others (such as those received at Philadelphia) were so lightly marked as to wear off.

We can not expect Mr. Hofmann to offer canteens with every possible contractor's marks. He does offer a separate canteen sling of plain cotton duck stamped Cincinnati contractor Geo. Winchell [6] for $6.50 and the enterprising living historian could have other contractor's marks engraved on the spout. Mr. Hoffman's Pattern of 1858 canteen kits are $76 (plus $10 shipping and handling) with a marked spout, and tin plated (dipped) cartridge box tins, in both .58 and .69 caliber versions.

Mr. Hofmann's offering is a significant step forward in the evolution of the reproduction Pattern of 1858 canteen and is an excellent purchase. By using his alternate strap choices and other resources, a living historian can custom build his Pattern of 1858 to suit a variety of time periods and impressions.

Mr. Hofmann informs us he hopes to have a Pattern of 1862 'bullseye' canteen available soon, with a marked spout, and tin plated (dipped) cartridge box tins, in both .58 and .69 caliber versions.

NOTES:
[2] See also LOOKING AT ORIGINALS [Vol. 8, No. 1]
[3] The first may have been let in "late" 1857. [4] The Cincinnati Depot also contracted for a significant number of tin spouted canteens between 13 April 1863 and "as late as the summer of 1864." See Gaede & Coates, cited above. [5] I was unable to examine a relic canteen in the same general condition as the example, but did have several pictorial resources. Unfortunately, I cannot tell how much the example canteen resembles an original in new condition, as that is an oxymoron.
[6] Geo. D. Winchell, Marsh & Co. was one of two Cincinnati contractors. The firm produced 570,000 canteens from 1 September 1862 to 20 June 1864. Twenty-five thousand of these were made with tin spouts and the rest were probably white metal spouts. See Gaede & Coates.
[7] O. Holden delivered 211,000 canteens at Cincinnati under three contracts (1 Sep 1862, 11 Aug 1863, and 17 Sep 1863, of which 31,000 under the 11 Aug 1863 contract may have been tin spouted. There is a relic tin spouted canteen attributed to this company. See Gaede & Coates.

Mr. Murley
A New York City Depot Federal Issue Canteen

As mentioned in the FALL 2000 issue we had received a New York City Depot style canteen from Daniel Houde at Orchard Hill Sutlery. While we again were on the subject of canteens I wanted to bring it back to light. They label it as the “Ultimate Campaigner Canteen” (Item # E-073).

Four major US Quartermaster depots, Cincinnati, New York City, Philadelphia (Schuykill) and St. Louis, were the main army supply army centers. The New York Depot was the only one of the four depots where private contractors made all the goods. The other depots had their own manufacturing capabilities as well as contracting out work. A unique feature of New York City Depot canteens was the chain used to attach the cork stopper assembly. The chain was attached to one of the two upper keepers through a punched hole.

The body of the Orchard Hill canteen is the correct size (diameter and width). It is constructed of the correct gauge stock and is plated. Measurements were obtained from originals for the components. The canteen bodies are made in this country. Lead free solder is used (and does not have to be excused). You will note per the query below that Mr. Houde is committed to keeping his canteens as accurate as possible. The spout is cast pewter and unmarked. Most markings on originals are on those manufactured in late 1864 or early 1865 as per QM regulations.

Orchard Hill plans on (or may now have in stock) offering other depot versions (cotton or tine twine cork string). I have not received word of tin spouts being available. All versions are priced the same ($65.00 plus $8.25 S&H). This includes your choice of either hot dipped tin or regular tin, as well as with or without the beeswax lining. All canteens come with a linen sling, available either with or without a contractor stamp. All feature a correct size cork stopper. All canteen covers are made with Ben Tart jean cloth. They are machine sewn on the lower half and hand finished (as per the original specifications). Unless replaced in the field with hand sewing.

Orchard Hill is offers a mid-1862 Philadelphia Depot “bullseye” version (Item # E-074). As the “bullseye” style was never officially adopted and set into QM regulations, the number of rings per half vary from five to seven. Originals vary, and we have not seen this item for a check with an original. We look forward to reviewing an Orchard Hill sample in the future.

I am familiar with all the references stated by Mr. Murley. I am not always sharp enough to remember which characteristics go with what depot. I was pleased to find them very handily (even more effectively than the DOG does sometimes) summarized in an article in The Columbia Rifle Research Compendium (see page 2 of this issue). This illustrates the utility of the document as one selects equipment for an impression.

Orchard Hill Sutlery, Daniel Houde, PO Box 207, Bridgeport, NY 13030 and (315) 656-9153 and info@orchardhillsutlery.com and http://www.orchardhillsutlery.com

Mr. Christen

Canteen Keeper Query.

I am in search of definitive information in regard to the size of the keeper for Federal issue canteens. I know you reviewed a canteen sent from Orchard Hill. I am in receipt of one of these. I am nearly sure the keeper is the wrong size, at ½ inch at the point away from the body of the canteen. Keepers on originals (2) that I measured were ¾ inch at this point. The manufacturer is willing to change the size on authoritative documentation. Chris Piering

Mr. Simmons: I am not sure which dimension you are referring but here are the measurements for my original:
The top two keepers are ¾ inches wide by ⅞ inches high by ¾ inch long. The other side is ½ inch wide by ½ inch high by ¾ inch long. The bottom is ¾ inch by ¾ inch high by ¾ inch long. The loops are attached ¾ inch from the spout on one side and ¾ inch from the spout on the other. I am not sure if there is a “definitive” measurement. Someone may be able to find it in the Quartermaster records.

Gardner-Pattern Confederate Canteens

If you look on page 209 of Echoes of Glory, Arms and Equipment of The Confederacy (Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, 1991), you will see two Gardner-Pattern (hereafter referred to as a Gardner canteen) Confederate canteens (right hand and lower center). When I opened a package sent to the DOG from Sam Doolin of Lakewood, Colorado, I thought it first contained an original canteen of this type. It was an accurate replica of a Gardner canteen. The sample reproduction is based on inspection and measurement of one carried by J.E. Fielder, private in Company D, Texas State Troops, First Regiment Cavalry (from the collection of Bob Moulder). The Mr. Doolin reproduction does not have the provenance carved on the side like the original, or similar to the one in EOG.

The canteen is made of willow. It is 7 ¼ inches in diameter and 2¼ inches wide. It has the proper metal bands and a turned wooden stopper (not on the original). He has made other versions out of cherry and cedar. The canteen is lined with beeswax. The exterior is finished with linseed oil. No glue of any kind is used in the construction process. There was no sling, but Mr. Doolin does offer a cotton sling. The sample submitted by Mr. Doolin will be field-tested by the staff during the year.

This is an excellent piece of craftsmanship and it is made with passionate concern for “doing it right.” This is certainly the feeling I picked up during a conversation with Sam recently. He started making them after seeing the original and being mortified by the abundance of plastic-lined imitations on merchant’s row. The starting price for the canteen is $55. Final price depends on the sling and type of wood. Mr. Doolin is a member of the First Texas Cavalry.

Samuel C. Doolin, 1670 Lewis St., Lakewood, CO 80215 and SAMRAM@aol.com

Mr. Christen

NOTE:
Please refer to the Winter 2000 issue (8.1) in which Mr. McCulloh examined Gardner and other CS canteens in the Alabama Department of History and Archives collection.
Bill Rodman’s Gardner-Pattern Canteen.

Bill Rodman has been studying and building “Gardner-Pattern” CS canteens for at least ten years. I have not yet received samples of his Gardner-Pattern (hereafter referred to as a Gardner canteen) or British import canteen, but I did receive photographs along with a discussion of the spout issue in regard to the Gardner style. I have had numerous recommendations about his work, and have no fear in recommending his canteens.

His Gardner canteen is 7½ inches in diameter and 2½ inches wide. They are made of cherry and have eleven staves. The staves and faces are all machine cut. The canteen appears slightly thicker, but is (according to Bill) within the range of widths of the originals he has examined. The stopper is turned wood with a string attachment of his design (as few originals have been found with their stoppers).

I’ll provide more information in regard to prices and other details in the next issue. I believe his workmanship is excellent and that his canteens are very accurate copies of originals. In the meantime Mr. Rodman may be contacted at 405 Brandywine Lane, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Here are his thoughts on spouts for this style canteen. Hopefully, it will lead to an article for a future issue.

Gardner-Pattern Canteen Spouts.

Most, if not all, of these canteens were manufactured with spouts. There are several reasons for this. First, the only surviving example of a Confederate Ordnance sample Gardner canteen comes with a spout. Second, some of the canteens I have examined with missing spouts show marks where the spout was attached to the canteen stave. Last, a number of canteens shown in Silvia and O’Donnel’s book have threads in the spout hole.

It is also my guess that many of the spouts were lost or broken off very early in the life of the canteen. I am basing this on the canteens that I have examined where damage around the hole in the stave suggests that the canteen was used without a spout. Second, during my experience building reproductions, I have found that the spout is really the weak link in the canteen construction. Because of expansion and contraction, these spouts crack rather quickly. There are originals have string wrapped around a cracked spout to hold it together. Since many of the spouts were only a force-fit into the stave, they tend to come loose when the canteen dries out. The last reason is that experience shows the canteens to be difficult to fill with a spout in place.

The hole in the spout is only about a half inch in diameter, while the hole in the stave that holds the spout is usually ⅝ inch to one inch in diameter. If you are trying to fill the canteen by submerging it in a stream, the spout really slows up the process. I figure that Confederate soldiers (who did not have to pay for their equipment) probably had no qualms about breaking off the spouts. I am looking for documentation to backup my theory.

One last comment on stoppers...after years of research I still have no idea of what a proper stopper should be. There are very few originals that have stoppers. They may have been field replacements. I have not seen two that were alike. They were made of corks, sticks, carved wood and corncobs. The best one that I have seen was a cork attached to a small porcelain cabinet knob. Bill Rodman

FIG 2. Rodman’s British Canteen.

Photographs were provided by Bill Rodman and are used with his permission.

PRODUCT UPDATE

Men’s Trowser Pattern

Past Patterns Historical Pattern Company has updated their “Summer Trousers of the Mid-19th Century” patterns (their item numbers 014 and 015). Saundra Altman’s continued dedication to accuracy is maintained in these patterns. We thought it important to remind you that they are available as references have been made to using her Federal issue trowser pattern for civilian pants. The price of the patterns is $14 (No. 014) and $17 (No. 015).

Past Patterns, PO Box 2446, Richmond, IN 47375-2446 and (765) 962-333 and pastpat@thepoint.net and http://www.pastpatterns.com

Mr. Christen
MR. YINGLING’S MEMORANDA OF INTELLIGENCE

Early in May I ran into Mark Mason who was previously on the Dogcatcher’s list. He said that as of the first of May he had refunded the money or supplied the goods to everyone he had owed. Thanks, Mark, for squaring up the accounts.

Charlie Childs, one who always gets high marks from the DOG, has entered the computer age. He has put up a web site offering his goods. You can check him out at:

http://www.bright.net/~crchilds/
The DOG also received a note from Chris Daley about the County Cloth site, and we would be negligent if we did not mention Mr. Daley’s Historical Reproductions web site at:

http://users.erols.com/chrisdaley/

Several other new supplier web sites have popped up touting "accurate goods." Check these out:

“Farb-No- More” Historical Clothiers:
http://farbnomore.tripod.com/farbnomore/

“Tuckahoe Trading Company (pottery, blown glass, utensils and an array of other goods):
http://www.tuckahoetradingco.com/

Tom Pallas’s “The Schuylkill Arsenal” (US, CS and civilian items):
http://members.aol.com/panzergrenadier2/myhomepage/

Paul Calloway’s Authentic Campaigner web site at:
http://www.authentic-campaigner.com

Paul states: “If you...consider yourself a [progressive/ authentic/hardcore] campaigner — this may be the web site for you. If you are not in one of these camps, I encourage you to stay and look around nonetheless. The information here should prove to be of great assistance to all reenactors in developing their impressions.” That information includes over one hundred-fifty, archived or linked articles on improving one’s impression, a Bully Buy of the month, contacts for the most progressive campaign groups, discussions, event listings, images of campaigners, primary source material, resource listings and links to the best suppliers of accurate gear and recruitment information.

Dan Wambaugh of the Columbia Rifles is offering a Schuylkill Arsenal blouse that is based on an original at the Smithsonian. It has received high marks from Smithsonian staff members. Look for a review of Dan’s coats in a future issue. The following was received from Christopher Wilson (of the Liberty Rifles):

My friend Dan Wambaugh is now producing Schuylkill Arsenal sack coats based on an original in the Smithsonian. I work there and have just done a major survey of a SA sack coat complete with some very detailed photos, a measurement sheet and drawing that is incredibly detailed. I am working with Dan Wambaugh on a sample coat. His work is exceptional. Jodi Nolan made the pattern. They will be sold only through the Skillet Licker and S&S Sutler of Gettysburg. I am working now on producing a commercial pattern. This particular coat is unusual in that it is a two piece body with squared end collar, but Dan has captured numerous details that make this a very distinctive and accurate reproduction. Offered in both all hand sewn and hand topstitched versions. I hope he gets one to you soon for inspection.

The Merchant and Supplier list on disk is being updated. Owners will get an update during the summer. The disks are available at $5.

Mr. Yingling

MISCELLANEOUS CARDS

A Loss in the Merchant Community.

“Old Sutler John” Ferry died on 16 May 2001. He had been hospitalized due to illness. Cards of condolence can be sent to Nancy Ferry at 1254 Conklin Rd, Conklin, NY 13748. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends.

A New Steamboat Museum.

According to a recent Associated Press story another steamboat and its contents have been extracted from the Mississippi River. In 1865 the steamboat Twilight sank in the Missouri River after leaving Kansas City, Missouri. It sank after striking a submerged tree. The boat and its payload, including tobacco and gin, remained in a muddy river bank in a remote part of Ray County until seven years ago. Over the last four months, the owners had teams working on reclaiming the steamboat and its contents. A paddle wheel and two steam engines were recovered.

The owners of the wreck have been talking for years with the city of St. Charles, a historic river town near St. Louis, about reconstructing the steamboat and building a museum to house it. This would be similar to Kansas City’s Arabia Museum. Both the Twilight and the Arabia are important because they reveal much of the daily life of the Civil War period. As quoted in the AP story, Gary Walters, an archaeologist for the Twilight who also worked on the Arabia: “There also are subtle but significant differences between the artifacts discovered on the steamboats. Those differences mark time before and after the war. Shoes before the war, like those found on the Arabia, which sank in 1856, were pegged, and made to fit either left or right feet. Those on the Twilight were stitched and designed specifically for each foot.

The Twilight’s treasure trove includes more than one thousand artifacts. Again according to the AP article: “Some of the Twilight’s cargo also included supplies for everyday pioneer living: scissors, skillets, soup ladles, shovels, oil lamps, cases of mustard, bottled raspberries, barrels of whiskey and several brands of “bitters,” or alcohol-based medicine...”

The DOG would appreciate any further details.

In the Field.

The DOG will have a shebang at the big Manassas event at the beginning of August. We will be out and about hoping to meet with our subscribers and preaching the gospel of accuracy. Stop by. The staff will also make the rounds at regional events throughout the season.

The Aurora Clothing Collection (original men’s civilian clothing) will be at Kennesaw Mountain NBP on 30 June-1 July. The collection belongs to Mr. Christen and Phillip Whiteinan.
PRODUCT REVIEW

It Takes Pluck...Putting Together a Bob Flesher Minstrel Banjo Kit

Music was one of the most favorite pastimes for the men in blue and gray. Any soldier who could play or sing was recruited by his comrades as an entertainer. During the war the premier instrument was the banjo. Accordions, guitars, fiddles and other instruments were present but the banjo was king. Just as the banjo was king so was minstrel music. Parlor music, hymns and war songs were popular, but not as much as the minstrel music of Stephen Foster, Dan Emmett and others. Minstrelsy was the “pop” music of the mid-nineteenth century.

The banjo before and during the Civil War is quite different than the banjo of today. They are easily discernible in both appearance and sound. A correct banjo for the period would be fretless. A fret is a mark or raised ridge to help position your left hand on the neck. The neck would be wide and long and the rim would be twelve inches or greater in diameter. The strings would be plant, waxed horsehair or gut. Gut strings for musical instruments are usually made from the intestines of a ruminant such as a cow or sheep and not cats. However, the head can be made from cat skin or most any animal, but cow skin would be preferable. Because of the low tension from these natural strings the banjos were tuned much lower. This combined with the large rim/head creates an almost bass sound compared to the tinny sound of a modern banjo. Frets became more common after the 1870s and steel strings in the 1900s.

Not only is the banjo different but how it is played is different. After the War “guitar” picking slowly took over the minstrel or “stroke” style of playing the banjo. In the stroke style, sometimes called the strike or banjo style, the strings are hit with the back of the index fingernail. A modern version of this style is called “clawhammer.” When watching a banjo player use his right hand you should see his hand almost in a fist and not see his fingers uncurl to touch the strings. His thumb will touch the strings though. If you see the fingers picking the strings, he is not playing correctly for period. A few banjo players might have “picked” during the war, but it would be rare.

Almost every banjo at living history events is incorrect. The problem is lack of knowledge. A correct banjo is usually less expensive. A great way to get started is by assembling a banjo kit from Bob Flesher Banjos (a.k.a. Dr. Horsehair). The kit evaluated is the thirteen-inch Tackhead Banjo Kit. A twelve inch tackhead banjo kit and a twelve-inch tension hoop banjo kit are also available. All the parts necessary to build the banjo are included, but a few tools are needed. It took me approximately six hours to complete it. That time doesn’t include the overnight waiting for certain steps. I had no experience in woodworking, but found it moderately easy to assemble and finish. As far as tools, a file, some sandpaper, a drill, screwdriver and pliers were used. I had to buy a No. 65 wire drill bit and hand drill from a hobby store for nine dollars.

The banjo is a tackhead, which means the banjo skin head is attached to the rim with brass tacks. On a thirteen-inch rim that requires the use of eighty-one tacks. The instructions say that seventy-two tacks are needed, but I believe that is for the twelve-inch rim. Fortunately, more than enough tacks are included. I recommend the larger rim since thirteen to fourteen-inch rims were more common. The larger tackhead is easier to assemble, less expensive and lighter in weight. The kit was $375 plus $10 shipping. Nylon strings are included, but have no place on a minstrel banjo of the 1860s. Bob sells a five gut string set for $25. The completed banjo is very light, weighing less than three pounds. The disadvantage of the tackhead is that there is no adjustment for head tension. Moisture in any form (dew, high humidity or rain) will cause the head and strings to become slack. However, a few minutes over a campfire tightens everything back.

Detailed instructions are provided, but a few vague portions required one telephone call and a few e-mails to Bob for help. He was very helpful and always available. The neck and the rim are made of maple and a dark stain is included. I chose to use boiled linseed oil for the finish since I had plenty around from finishing the stocks of my rifles. The most time consuming part of the construction is shaping and fitting the nut. The nut is a piece of ebony that guides the strings near the peg head. Fine shaping, smoothing and assembly comprises the majority of the kit. I spent more time on the nut than the rest of the kit. The piece of ebony supplied is enough to make two. I found it best to use a Dremel Moto Tool™ for the gross reduction and shaping and a small hobby file and Exacto™ knife for the final shaping. You could also have a local string instrument store technician make the nut.

The drilling of the guide holes for the tacks is the second most time consuming part. A No. 65 wire drill bit is very fine. I broke a few before I completed the holes. The instructions fail to explain that the tack holes need to be placed closer to the top of the rim where the neck attaches to the rim. Place the neck on the rim when marking the hole placement and it will be obvious.

The instructions describing the use of a C-clamp to hold a board to a table are a little confusing. The clamp is needed to hold the rim steady while you stretch the head onto the rim. I simply had someone hold the rim and it seemed to work well. The bridge and tailpiece were already finished. Installing the pegs and strings are easy.

I appreciated a comment in the introduction to the instructions alluding to the fact that it that “homemade” in the nineteenth century (or any century) does not mean lack of quality. The sound of the finished banjo is beautiful, deep and full. I had absolutely no experience with playing any string instrument. I played around with a harmonica for a season, but did not really think I would start playing the banjo until after I completed the kit. A booklet is included with the kit on how to play the banjo the minstrel way. I thought it would be easier to have a few lessons to start me off and I found a “clawhammer” instructor at a local string music store. A minstrel banjo instructor was not to be found. I try to learn a few new songs every month and now realize that minstrel music was the rage among soldiers.

Tuning the banjo is hard for me since I have a poor ear and an even worse voice. I bought a battery powered chromatic tuner to use at home and make a feeble attempt to use a tuning fork at events. With time that I will get better at it. Most modern banjos are tuned to “G” but the minstrel banjos were tuned low to “D” because of the weaker strings. The booklet discusses tuning.

In the nineteenth century an aspiring minstrel banjo player either learned from listening and watching or learned to read music. Today one way to learn to play is by using tablature or tab. That means you
FIG 1. Banjo Layout.

FIG 2. Ed Sims and His Completed Banjo. (Ferrotype by William Dunnaway)

and I can learn to play this style banjo much easier than those before us did. No musical knowledge is necessary. Just don't bring the tab sheets to the event. Memorize the songs. Again, this is in the kit's booklet along with twenty-five minstrel songs.

I have carried the banjo using a canvas sling tied around the neck near the nut and slipped around the stick inside the rim. Even in full marching order it was not really in the way. It is not appropriate for every event but the ones that are will be greatly improved with a correct banjo and music.

Bob Flesher Banjos, PO Box 9950 Moreno Valley, CA 92552 and (909) 924-9888 and at: http://www.flesherbanjo.com

Dr. Horsehair's recorded minstrel music by Bob Flesher at the address above and at: http://www.DrHorsehair.com

Comments from the Author.
On the image above (FIG 2) credit my favorite collodion artist, William Dunnaway of Mt. Hermon, California. His web site is: http://www.collodian-artist.com

On my uniform in the image: The cap and coat are from Trans-Mississippi Depot. I had Eileen Herr, The Civil War Seamstress, work on the coat. It was a little on the “cobby” side. Don Smith (Trans-Mississippi Depot) felt it was correct with bunched up sleeves and really poor topstitching. It is supposed to be the Federal “Mystery” coat at the Atlanta History Center. A few of us participating at Pickett’s Mill have a day with Myers Brown at the center. I hope to see the coat and check how close mine is. My trousers are a County Cloth Schuylkill mounted kit assembled by Eileen. Shoes are Missouri Boot & Shoe, JB-2, Jefferson booties with pegged half-double soles. Not easily seen are my inaccurate spurs and correct Heartland House spur straps. One of my long-term projects is making a correct Federal enlisted spur.

Ed Sims

Ed Sims is a general dentist in Sacramento, California, and a fledgling minstrel banjo player. He reenacts as a mounted Confederate soldier with the Bad Boys Mess, a mounted Federal with the Mule Meat Mess, a foot Confederate with the Texas Invincibles and a foot Federal with the Army of the Pacific. His wife complains that Ed has one of the largest kits of any enactor.
Pocket Knife from the CSS Jackson

This is one of the recovered items from the CSS Jackson. I have always been interested in the lowly pocketknife. Although ordinary and mundane it is truly one of the most universally carried items by soldiers, sailors and civilians. The basic structure has not varied since its inception. The large display of recovered pocketknives at the 1850s steamboat Arabia museum show knives that look remarkably like what we carry today. As you will see in the photos the knife is of standard construction, looking very similar to merchant G.G. Godwin's eighteenth-century pocket knife. The overall length is about ten inches when extended. At one time it had wooden handle facings attached with three brads. Most of the wooden handle material is gone. The handle appears to be approximately 3/4 inch wide and has metal facing caps at both ends. Construction is standard with the one blade encasement. Due to deterioration I could not tell if the blade was originally locking. The overall look of the item is of simple construction designed for utility use. Considering the age and the fact that this was recovered from a wreck site, I would consider this an excellent specimen of what a Confederate sailor (or soldier or civilian) would carry in his pocket.

Mr. McCulloh

Photographs by Charles McCulloh and Glenn Milner used with permission of the National Civil War Naval Museum.
.69 Caliber Ammunition Box at the Civil War Naval Museum

6. End lettering in white paint:

FIG 3. End View Showing Lettering.
(Twelve inch scale shown at bottom for reference)

7. Side lettering in a dark paint (not visible in photographs), the same size as the end lettering (lettering on one side only):

FABRICATED
CS LABORATORIES
COLUMBUS GA
SEPTEMBER
1863

8. Color of the box appears to be Pantone 19-0608 TP, Black Olive, Olive Noire

FIG 4. Interior View of Box.

This is just one of the many fine items in the collection of the Civil War Naval Museum. [1] Again, we strongly urge you to visit this beautiful new facility if you have not done so.

Mr. McCulloh & Glenn Milner
NOTE:
[1] The Port Columbus National Civil War Museum in Columbus, Georgia, opened the doors of its new facilities on 9 March 2001. Visitors can board a replica of Admiral Farragut's ship USS Hartford and explore the crew's quarters and the officers' wardroom. On board the replica of the ironclad CSS Albemarle guests can experience naval combat through a battle simulator experience.

Along with the many fascinating artifacts and exhibits, Port Columbus is home to two Civil War ships, the gunboat CSS Chattahoochee and the CSS Jackson, the largest surviving scratch-made Civil War Ironclad. The Jackson was built less than a mile from the museum. Both ships were salvaged from the Chattahoochee River in the early 1960s.

The Museum is located in Columbus, Georgia. The mailing address is PO Box 1022, Columbus, GA 31902, the telephone number is (706) 324-7334 and the museum web site is at http://www.portcolumbus.org/

We wish to thank Greg Starbuck, Education and Program Director, for ongoing assistance to our editors in looking at the original items in the museum's collection.

Photographs and drawing by Charles McCullogh and Glenn Milner. They are used with permission of the National Civil War Naval Museum.

A copy of this drawing is available from The Watchdog. Simply send us a business size, self-addressed, stamped (34 cents) envelope.
THE WATCHDOG.
PO BOX 1675
WARREN, MI 48090-1675

Guarding your interests...

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION
The Watchdog, (ISSN 1067-2729) is published quarterly by The Watchdog Quarterly, Inc., a nonprofit corporation in the State of Michigan. Subscriptions (US and Canadian) are $15 annually, with $13 for each additional year. Foreign subscriptions are $20 (US) per year. Back issues are $2 (before 1999) and $4 (1999 and beyond). An index is available upon request. Send subscription requests, inquiries and submissions to the address above.

The Watchdog accepts no paid advertising. Contributors and writers receive no compensation for their articles other than a free copies of the issue with their article. All net profits are donated annually to battlefield and historical preservation organizations. Contributors are solely responsible for the accuracy of their research and for the opinions expressed in their articles.

Bill Christen, Publisher & Editor-at-fault
Lynn Kalil, Assistant Editor
Bob Braun, Associate Editor
Rick Simmons, Associate Editor
Mike Murley, Associate Editor
John Yingling, Associate Editor
Charlie McCullogh, Associate Editor
Jomarie Szyzynski, Associate Editor
Larry See, Web Site Editor

HAS YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED?
There is a number after your name on your address label that looks like X.Y (X = volume, Y = issue, for example: the SPRING 2001 issue is (9.2). This number indicates the last issue of your subscription...unless you renew. If the box on the left is checked, your subscription has expired and you have received this issue as a courtesy.

CONTACT BY TELEGRAPH
e-mail: watchdog@rust.net
web site URL: http://www.watchdogreview.com
web site design by Leelanau Communications, Inc., Andrew MacFarlane, Pres.

SPRING 2001 [9.2]
IN THIS ISSUE...
The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium review
Why Field Merchants? and Why Not Sutlers?
The Federal Civil War Shelter Tent review
"Pardessus Danois" ladies' coat pattern review
Godey's crocheted Zouave jacket project update
more US and CS canteen product reviews
Bob Flesher minstrel banjo kit
original pocket knife and ammo box at the CW Naval Museum
...and a lot more

Expertly printed by John Chmelko of Eastown Printing Service, Centerline, Michigan Copyright © 2001 All rights reserved