Reenacting / Living History How-Tos: Methods

LEADERSHIP IN REENACTING

Part 1 – Basic Pointers on the Roles of Commissioned and Non-commissioned Officers of Infantry in the Field

by Kevin O'Beirne

Author's Note: This article focuses on Federal infantry portrayals. While a number of points herein apply to leadership in other branches, Confederate, and civilian portrayals, this article does not address aspects specific to such portrayals.

Since the late 1990s the number of participants at Civil War reenactments has declined and it seems that a lot of folks who still come to events just don't care as much anymore. What's the cause?

Over the years I have heard—around campfires, during pre-event site-walks, in meeting rooms during the off-season, and on the Internet—that various things are to blame: stale events, participants who are either not authentic enough or "too hardcore", the encroachment of for-profit interests, blah blah blah. I think the chief cause of the problem is ***leadership***—specifically, that we need more of it.

It is easy to *say* that we need better leadership, but pinning down and solving this problem is rather elusive. Reenacting's problem with leadership occurs at all levels, from the "high private" to mess leaders, sergeants, and company commanders, to battalion commanders and folks still higher up. Throughout the hobby many leaders are unapproachable or unavailable to their constituents, possess poor communication skills, are rooted in outdated and/or unhistorical ideas, are lackadaisical, and/or lack knowledge essential for effective leadership of reenactors.

Reenacting's leaders need to embrace self-education and reach out to their men. There are a lot of ideas in reenacting that have not yet been implemented and there is plenty of first-rate living history that has not yet been experienced. Our leaders *can* take us to these places and, hopefully, stimulate enthusiasm for the hobby.

If the reader looks for his own unit leader's faults while reading this article, keep in mind that reenacting is an all-volunteer endeavor and *each of us is a leader* of sorts, or a future leader. *This article applies to everyone*.

While no one person has all the answers, the basics of effective management are similar for most human endeavors and, while Civil War reenacting has some special leadership needs, the majority of this art and science are similar to leadership requirements in business and other hobbies.

Leadership in Civil War reenacting can be divided into two general areas: 1) Leadership **in the field at events**, and, 2) Leadership **off the field outside of events**. Because the qualities for effective off-field leadership are different from commanding and leading in the field, each is the subject of a separate article. Organizing and implementing a reenactment or living history event is a specialized topic not covered here.

Effective *off-field* leadership keeps living history organizations healthy, sees the conceptualization and communication of new ideas, disseminates the results of research, sets a group's calendar of events, handles the group's day-to-day business, and sets and corrects the overall course of the group and hobby.

Because most reenactors probably tend to focus their idea of leadership on the guy who waves a sword or wear chevrons during events, this article attempts to provide basic pointers for leaders with Federal infantry portrayals in the field.

Leadership and Commanding

The optimum field-leader possesses abilities in both *leadership* and *command*. Leadership is the art of looking after your men and being an inspiring example that they want to follow, while command is largely an aspect of military science—or portraying it. There are a lot of officer impressionists who have a good command presence (barking orders, etc.) who are not very good leaders.

A commander issues military orders while a leader says, "Follow me!" and leads well. Both are important but, in reenacting, it's possible that leadership is the more critical of the two. As a comrade recently said to me, "A *leader* has the respect of the men. A fellow can't lead properly if the men don't respect him." While this is most applicable to commissioned and non-commissioned officer portrayals, it applies to everyone in reenacting.

Effective field leadership and command start with projecting a leader's proper demeanor—in other words, *act like a leader*, not a martinet, moron, poltroon, or *Animal House* cast member, and do not show favoritism. A Union army periodical offered the following excellent advice in 1863:

> "It is of the utmost importance that Captains and subalterns[1] should become thoroughly acquainted with the character, disposition, temper and habits of every non-commissioned officer[2] and private of their respective companies. This knowledge can only be attained by unremitted attention to every detail of duty, and by close observation. The service at large and officers individually will derive great advantages, by the more general adoption towards non-commissioned officers and soldiers of a system of command and treatment which shall be free from the coarse and offensive language too often used, in reproving them for trifling irregularities, or for accidental omissions.
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> "Gross language and offensive terms upon any occasion, are not only unbecoming an officer's station, and his character as a gentleman, but are degrading to the soldier; whereas, it is very desirable that in all ranks of our Army, a proper feeling and high sense of honor should be induced, as the best means for securing the correct discharge of duty. If reproof be necessary, it should be conveyed in such a manner, and in such terms, as will make a lasting impression, without hurting the feelings of the individual and lowering him in his own estimation. Officers should, not only themselves observe this injunction, but they should require it to be observed by the non-commissioned officers. If acts of intentional neglect and of insubordination should take place, the means of correction

[1] "Subaltern" is a military term for a subordinate, typically a commissioned officer below the rank of captain.

[2] The abbreviation "NCOs" appears extremely rarely in Civil War-era reports and letters. Much more common was the fully written out version, "non-commissioned officers". The term "non-com" appears in some correspondence and as soldier slang of the period.

and punishment which are authorized by the regulations of the service must be resorted to, and they will be found to have double effect, if not preceded by coarse and offensive language; indeed, it will probably be found that they will become comparatively rare, as the duty will be done more cheerfully and zealously when this injunction is observed."[3]

Of course, officers of the Civil War did not always live up to this high standard, and certainly many reenactor officers do not, but it is nevertheless a good ideal toward which to strive.

The Authenticity Triad

In addition to basic leadership skills, a good field leader recognizes that his responsibility to the men requires knowledge and leadership in multiple areas. One philosophy on this is "the authenticity triad", consisting of:

Winfield Scott Hancock – one of the best leaders of the Union Army

- *Materials* – Uniforms, equipment, and other material items. A good field leader has a working knowledge of material items and how they are used, and structures his personal portrayal accordingly.
- *Methods* – How things were done in the Civil War, including drill, bivouacs, guard, military procedures, rations, and other areas.
- *The Man* – This is the most difficult facet of a portrayal and involves knowledge of Nineteenth Century people and society. This portion of the triad also includes first-person portrayals.

Not only does a good field leader understand that each corner of the triad should have equal weight, he encourages this belief in others and—perhaps most important—practices it himself. In other words, there is a lot more to portraying a commissioned officer than buying insignia and a sword and learning a few drill commands.

Components of Good Field Leadership at Events

The balance of this article focuses on the following areas that are applicable to all ranks—particularly anyone above the coveted rank of private soldier:

1. *Technical Knowledge* ("Methods") – This includes things a leader can learn largely from books, such as drill, military procedures, etc.
2. *Practical Knowledge* ("Methods") – This includes safety, bivouacs/camping, how to stay warm and dry, how to prepare rations, and other matters that are "Methods" that typically cannot be learned strictly from a book.
3. *Selflessness* – The men come first.
4. *Motivation* – A leader sees jobs that need doing and does it without being told.
5. *First-person* ("The Man") – This quality enhances the experience for the men and can be affected by field-leaders.
6. *Materials and Kit Appropriate for the Portrayal* ("Materials").

Each of these is presented below in greater detail.

Technical Knowledge

This section presents an outline of "technical knowledge" essential for portraying a Civil War-era field leader, but is not intended as a comprehensive "how-to" manual; rather, it is a guide for further learning through other sources. Most of the material presented below is premised on *functional* military portrayals.[4]

A basic tenant of training, both the real military and reenactors, is **"promotability"**—in other words, each rank should be proficient in the job of at least the next higher rank. For example, a company commander should be capable of serving as a field officer or battalion commander, a sergeant should be capable of leading a company, a corporal should thoroughly know the sergeant's role, and each private should be able to step up to serve as a functional corporal. In the real military this is necessary because casualties are incurred in battle; in reenacting it is necessary because last-minute absenteeism is rampant, and because a man's ability to "change jobs" in reenacting helps keep the hobby fresh and interesting for him.

Phil Sheridan – another great battlefield leader of the Union Army

Hand-in-hand with this are the very small companies often used in reenacting. Small companies means consolidation of rank at events due to insufficient numbers of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, to which increased responsibility for lower ranks is attendant; for example, a corporal may have to serve as Sergeant of the Guard, and now and then one sees a company commanded by a sergeant.

Knowledge of basic military honors—which is a fairly complex topic and involves a lot more than knowing how to just salute—should be possessed by all ranks[5]. Knowing how, when, and to whom basic military honors are to be rendered is important for projecting a period military atmosphere and being able to teach others further down in the ranks. Failure to render military honors appropriate for the portrayal can make a reenactment appear and feel more like a costumed campsite than a place with military organization. Field leaders not only know this topic, but *practice it* as an example to others.

Who did what job in 1860s American armies? Many reenactors do not know the basic jobs of the infantry company and battalion rank structure they see at each event. Below is a brief primer[6].

Infantry Company Jobs:

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[3] "Hints to Company Officers", *United States Army and Navy Journal* (courtesy of Mark Jaeger), September 26, 1863.

[4] Also see, "'Mechanics' of Civil War Unit Organization: How Infantry Regiments Actually Functioned", by Garr Gast, *The Columbia Examiner* newsletter, Vol. 4 Nos. 4-5-6, December 2003.

[5] Refer to "Basic Honors to be Paid by the Troops: Notes on Saluting for Reenactors" by Kevin O'Beirne, *Camp Chase Gazette* magazine, December 2003 issue.

[6] Principal references for this section are the *United States Army Regulations*, August Kautz's two seminal handbooks, *Customs of Service for Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers* and *Customs of Service for Officers of the Army*, and the *Official Records*. Works by William Craighill, Daniel Butterfield, Dominic Dal Bello, and others were also consulted. Citations for each are presented at the end of this article.

1. *Private Soldier* – It is necessary to possess a good deal of knowledge to portray a private, including knowledge of the School of the Soldier, the private's duties relative to guard duty, and how to portray a soldier on the march and in garrison. Privates must also be capable to succeeding to the job of Corporal. Reports to the corporals and sergeant who are his section leaders.[7]

2. *Corporal* – His principal duties are in guard details and leading small fatigue details, assists his Sergeant in leading a section, and to be able to succeed to the duties of the Sergeant when necessary. The Corporal is a leader among the men, and is often the first line of "discipline" and the first fellow to receive "how-to" questions from the men. Corporals should set a good example by their knowledge, demeanor, and ability.

3. *Sergeant* – The Sergeant's principal duties are to serve as a file closer (keeping the ranks aligned and, for reenactors, watching for safety concerns), helping to lead guard details and pickets, leading fatigue details, leading a section (i.e., half of a platoon), and as assigned to provide assistance to the Orderly Sergeant with company commissary and ordnance duties. (Officially, there is no such thing as a "company commissary", "company quartermaster", or "company ordnance sergeant"; these duties are handled by the Orderly Sergeant or, at his discretion, assigned to the company's complement of "regular" sergeants. While an infantry company has need of commissary and ordnance-type duties, because companies rarely had many assets that are not the property of the army, regiment, or the individual soldier, the need for company quartermaster duties is very small in most situations—particularly in reenacting.) Sergeants must be able to succeed to the duties of the Orderly Sergeant and platoon leader.

Columbia Rifles field leaders at McDowell, Virginia in May 2001

4. *Orderly Sergeant/First Sergeant* (Note: Both terms were used in Civil War; the term "First Sergeant" appears to have seen increased use after the Civil War) – Responsible for running the company's day-to-day operations and supervising the company's non-commissioned officers. Keeps duty rosters and other paperwork, assisted by the Company Clerk. A very responsible position. Must be capable of serving as a platoon leader and Company Commander. Orderly Sergeants are often exempt from many battalion details such as serving as Sergeant of the Guard. That the Orderly Sergeant "really runs the company and lets the Company Commander 'borrow it' now and then" is a truism in the real military and should be likewise in reenacting. The "Marine Corps drill sergeant" mentality is probably overplayed in reenacting, and the optimal Orderly Sergeant leads by his knowledge, organization, demeanor, and charisma—not by screaming.

5. *Lieutenant* – A commissioned officer who serves as a platoon leader, assists the Company Commander, leads larger fatigue details, and serves as a file closer. As platoon leaders, Lieutenants have a large role in skirmish drill. The "1st Lieutenant" should be ready and able to take command of the company in the absence of the Company Commander. Lieutenants serve as Officer of the Guard, Officer of the Police, and may be called upon to serve as Officer of the Day, or on the battalion staff. There is no material difference in the duties of 1st and 2nd Lieutenants.

6. *Company Commander* – Typically a commissioned officer, usually a captain. The Company Commander is responsible for the conduct of the company, its training, its paperwork, the company fund, maneuvering the company in the field, and all other affairs of the company. A very responsible position.

7. *Company Clerk* – A private or non-commissioned officers who assists the Company Commander and Orderly Sergeant with paperwork and the company books. The clerk must have good penmanship and a capacity for keeping records, and is excused from all other duty.

8. *Cooks* – Each company of volunteer and regular infantry was allowed to enlist up to four colored "under-cooks". In addition, men of the company would be detailed on rotations (ten days, per Kautz) to serve as the "head-cook". If the company numbers thirty men or less, one head cook is used and, if more than thirty men, two head cooks could be detailed.

9. *Musicians* – Each company was allowed two musicians: one drummer and one fifer, each receiving pay of $12 per month. Musicians did not carry firearms. Musicians were not liable for most ordinary soldiers' duty but were used on fatigue details, as orderlies, and served on guard details as Musicians of the Guard. Musicians from all companies in the battalion were instructed, drilled, paraded, and marched as a body (i.e., "the field music"), although they bivouacked with their company. If the company was detached from the battalion, its musicians went with the company. When united with the battalion, company musicians were typically under the orders of the Principal Musician instead of their own Orderly Sergeant.

The relationship between the men, the non-commissioned officers, and the commissioned officers is crucial for the proper functioning of an infantry company, both in the 1860s and in reenacting. These relationships should be professional and should avoid extremes (i.e., fraternization and favoritism on one hand, and undue harshness and

[7] Infantry companies were typically divided into two platoons, each of which was in turn divided into two sections, led by a sergeant, who was assisted by one or two corporals.

ego on the other). This was a problem in the Civil War army just as much as in reenacting, and in 1863 a military periodical offered the following sage advice:

"Upon no class of men is the army more dependent for its discipline and efficiency than non-commissioned officers. And yet every officer knows how often this instrument is so used as to become a chief source of demoralization. Non-commissioned officers stand between the company officers and the men as the representatives of authority, and it is only by giving them their proper position that they are able to exert the necessary controlling influence in the company.

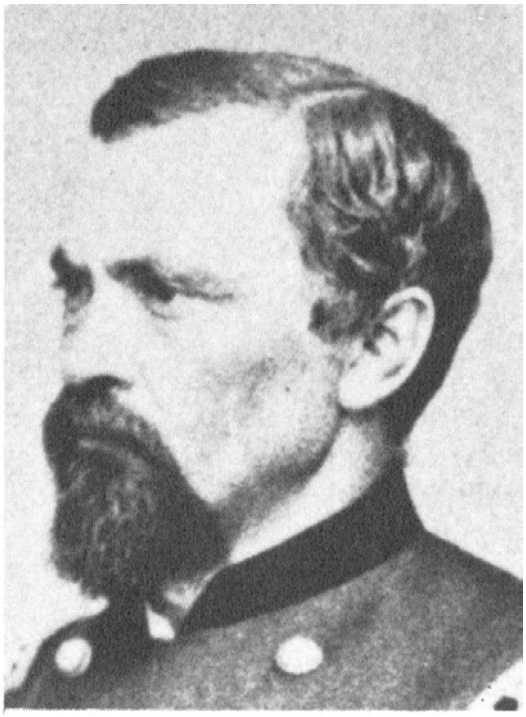
"It is well known that intimate association is subversive of authority. It is therefore essential that non-commissioned officers should hold themselves aloof from the men, and maintain the dignity and self-respect due to their position. It is impossible for them to do this unless they are properly treated by their officers. By proper treatment is not meant association—for that always tends to bring the officer in contempt, and to weaken his authority, without elevating the non-commissioned officer whom he desires to favor.

"But he may be treated with respect. He must never be reprimanded in the presence of the men; and when ordered to do anything he should be made to feel that the responsibility of execution rests with him alone. Such a course will teach self-respect, and when that state of felling exists, there is little doubt but that he will make the men respect him, cheerfully obey his orders, and shun his reproof.

"The position of a non-commissioned officer is an arduous one when its duties are fully and faithfully performed. He is in immediate contact with the men, and yet is not one of them. He is to check, by his presence, tendencies to infractions of discipline, which, if not properly suppressed, would soon lead to demoralization. He is, in fact, the only representative of authority who can take cognizance of the details of discipline, and mould the company as he may be inclined.

"It is a well-known fact that a good company cannot exist where the non-commissioned officers are not efficient; and yet how few officers are there who bestow the necessary thought upon the way to make them so. In many cases the men and officers of a company come from the same locality, and were socially associated in civil life. It thus becomes a difficult matter for officers and men to fall into the parts imposed on them by the army regulations.

"In doing this the example must be set by the officers, and it will quickly be followed by the non-commissioned officers and men. If an officer does not set the example of maintaining his official dignity, and treating his non-commissioned officers with official respect not akin to intimacy, how can he expect that the latter will be able to sunder the more intimate relations existing between himself and the men with whom he is in contact? In a word, the making of good non-commissioned officers rests alone with the commissioned officers of a company."[8]



August Kautz – author of *Customs of Service* and other works (*Generals in Blue*)

Reenacting is not the real military, of course, and common sense can be used to establish reasonable modes of conduct that allow the officers of a reenactor company to get their jobs done properly without coming off as hard-cases.

Finally, field leadership qualities are identified and allowed to develop more fully in companies that *delegate* ***real*** *authority to non-commissioned officers and subalterns*—something that is often neglected in reenacting.

<u>"Battalion Level" Positions That Are Not Part of the Field & Staff</u>:

1. *Regimental Clerk* – Usually a private or non-commissioned officer who assists the Adjutant, Sergeant Major, and other members of the field and staff with battalion paperwork. Taken from and officially borne on the roles of one of the companies, he is typically excused from other duty.

2. *Officer of the Day* – Usually a captain, but may be a lieutenant; often drawn from the roll of the Company Commanders. The Officer of the Day is on duty for 24 hours (he is allowed to sleep during this time but must always be ready for duty). He is the Battalion Commander's verbal communications link with his subordinates and reports to the Battalion Commander. He has general charge of the camp, and generally superintends the Guard and, if used, the Police. He communicates the countersign and parole to the Officer of the Guard. With the Sergeant Major, he is the regimental timekeeper and ensures that duty calls are beaten throughout the day by the musicians at the guardhouse. The Officer of the Day wears his sash across his chest.[9]

3. *Officer of the Guard* – Usually a lieutenant, the Officer of the Guard supervises the camp police Guard detail (i.e., camp security) and serves for 24 hours or other period specified for the Guard's tour of duty. Analogous duty includes commanding an outpost on picket in the face of the enemy, and leading skirmishers, patrols, and advanced and rear guards on the march.

4. *Officer of the Police* – Usually a lieutenant. When used, the Officer of the Police is responsible for the details that maintain or "police" the camp and its environs.

5. *Sergeant of the Guard* – A sergeant from one of the companies, (typically *not* an Orderly Sergeant) detailed to the Guard to assist the Officer of the Guard and provide general supervision to the soldiers and Corporals of the Guard. Analogous duty includes the Sergeant of the Police, if used.

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[8] "Treatment of Non-commissioned Officers", *United States Army and Navy Journal* (courtesy of Mark Jaeger), September 5, 1863.

[9] Period photographs support the Officer of the Day wearing his sash either: 1) Over the right shoulder and around the waist simultaneously, or 2) Over the right shoulder only (without wrapping around the waist). This writer's experience is that the first method results in a more-securely tied sash.

6. *Corporal of the Guard* – A corporal from one of the companies assigned to the Guard to lead one of its three reliefs; each Guard detail optimally had three corporals. He inspects his relief before posting it as sentinels, makes rounds to check on the men of his relief and, when another relief is posted, he "fills in" for the active relief corporal while he is away from the guardhouse making rounds or attending to calls from the sentinels.

7. *Musicians of the Guard* – One or two company musicians were part of each Guard detail to perform music-related duties of the Guard. Camp calls were not sounded at the volition of the field music, but rather were the responsibility of the Musicians of the Guard, beaten per the direction of the Officer of the Day and Sergeant Major.

8. *Color Sergeant and Color Guard* – Non-commissioned officers initially selected from the various companies of the battalion and *assigned to the color company*, responsible for keeping the colors when not stored on the stacks or in the Battalion Commander's tent. Exempt from other duty. Battalions of less than five companies typically did not have a color guard or display colors except when on review.

Field, staff, and line officers of the 164th and 170th New York

9. *Wagon-Master/Wagoner* – Each battalion was allowed to detail one man as its Wagon-master, and one man from each company could be further detailed as a wagoner, depending on how many vehicles the battalion maintained. The wagoners looked after the battalion's vehicles and their animals but were borne on the rolls of their respective companies. Wagoners were soldiers but were paid as a corporal of cavalry ($14 per month). The Wagon-master reported to the Quartermaster Sergeant.

Battalion Field and Staff Jobs:

Field officers hold the rank of colonel, lieutenant colonel, or major. Staff officers—commissioned or non-commissioned—are assigned to "headquarters" and are responsible for a certain aspect of battalion, brigade, etc. functions. Companies do not have their own "staff officers". Field officers who lead a battalion are not "staff officers" and, hence, a proper term for a battalion headquarters is "field and staff".

1. *Commissary Sergeant* – Assists the Commissary Officer with the procurement and distribution of rations, and assists the Regimental Clerk with commissary-related paperwork. He has direct charge of the commissary stores and directly superintends their issuance. If his duties are heavy, other men may be assigned to assist him. Sources do not state whether the Commissary Sergeant was mounted, and arguments can be made either way. On the march it is unclear whether the he was supposed to be with the battalion or its wagons.

2. *Commissary* – Commissioned officer (lieutenant) responsible for the procurement and distribution of rations to the companies. He supervises the Commissary Sergeant and is responsible for the battalion's commissary stores. He may be responsible for purchasing food for the battalion. His duties may be merged with those of the Quartermaster. Sources do not state whether the Commissary was mounted, and arguments can be made either way; on the march it is unclear whether the he was with the battalion or its wagons.

3. *Quartermaster Sergeant* – Assists the Quartermaster Officer by taking direct charge of the battalion property, and assists the Regimental Clerk with quartermaster-related paperwork. He directs the details sent to work for the Quartermaster. He usually has a Wagon-master under him to look after the battalion's vehicles and animals. He obtains forage for regimental animals and fuel for the men in garrison. Regarded as having greater responsibility than the Commissary Sergeant. Sources do not state whether the Quartermaster Sergeant was mounted but, because he assisted the Quartermaster, an argument can be made that the Quartermaster Sergeant required mobility.

4. *Quartermaster* – A commissioned officer (a lieutenant) responsible the battalion's ordnance stores, baggage and wagons, and other military and public equipage, and camp selection and layout. He superintends the Quartermaster Sergeant, coordinates with Company Commanders regarding the needs of the men and, with the Quartermaster Sergeant, obtains and issues the necessary equipment. He may also have the duties of the battalion Commissary Officer. He is responsible for all public monies received by the battalion. A very responsible position. While it appears to make a good deal of sense that he was probably mounted, sources are unspecific on this topic.

5. *Sergeant Major* – The ranking non-commissioned officer of the battalion, he assists the Adjutant in general. The Sergeant Major assists the Adjutant at parade and guard mounting, supervises the Regimental Clerk, keeps the duty roster of battalion sergeants, assists the Officer of the Day with keeping time at battalion headquarters, supervises the Orderly Sergeants, and assists the Drum Major and Principal Musician (and supervises the musicians in their absence). Sources do not state whether the Sergeant Major was mounted, but he most likely campaigned on foot.

6. *Adjutant* – A lieutenant (typically 1st Lieutenant) who serves as the Battalion Commander's official communication organ with the battalion, particularly relative to written communications. He has charge of the battalion's records and is responsible for keeping its books and filing necessary reports; with the Sergeant Major, he superintends the Regimental Clerk. The Adjutant superintends the Sergeant Major and Drum Major. He keeps the duty roster for the battalion's commissioned officers, superintends dress parade and guard mounting, and keeps the regimental fund. The Adjutant receives morning reports from the Orderly Sergeants unless he details the Sergeant Major (or even the Regimental Clerk) to this task. The Adjutant could be mounted during marches but was typically on foot during battalion maneuvers.

7. *"Major"* – Assists the battalion commander in running the battalion and is responsible for handling effects of deceased

officers. He is a wing commander and may command detachments from the battalion that are larger than one company, and must be prepared to take command of the battalion should the need arise. He may be detailed to other duty by the brigade, including Field Officer of the Day and commanding Grand Guards. The "Major", regardless of whether he held the rank of major or was a "senior captain" acting as the Major, was typically mounted during marches and maneuvers.

CR members Jeff Sherry (left, portraying a line officer) and Mike Peterson (right, portraying a chaplain) at Gettysburg 2003 (photo by Teresa Piering)

8. *"Lieutenant Colonel"* – Assists the battalion commander in running the regiment, and is ready to take command should the Battalion Commander be unavailable. He is a wing commander and may command detachments from the battalion that are larger than one company. May be detailed to other duty by the brigade including Field Officer of the Day and commanding Grand Guards. The "Lieutenant Colonel" was typically mounted during marches and maneuvers.

9. *Battalion Commander* – Typically a colonel (if the regiment has the necessary complement of companies) but may be a lower rank; when a "regiment" had less than ten companies it was referred to as a battalion and was often commanded by less than a full colonel. The Battalion Commander is responsible for the overall fitness and functioning of the battalion, including its training, gear, conduct, movements, and other matters. An extremely important and responsible position. The Battalion Commander was mounted on a horse during marches and maneuvers.

10. *Drum Major/Leader of the Band*[10] – One Drum Major was assigned to the non-commissioned staff of each infantry regiment. Enabling laws were unclear on his pay, stating that it was both that of a 2nd Lieutenant of infantry and that of a sergeant of cavalry. The Drum Major was the leader of the battalion's band, and selected and arranged its music. He is the band's "orderly sergeant" (i.e., performs roll calls, inspects their quarters, superintends the drawing of rations by the band, is responsible for their equipment and instruments, etc.). He is also in charge of

CR members John Tobey (left, portraying a company commander) and Kevin O'Beirne (right, portraying a Lt. Col.)

and responsible for the instruction of the company musicians. The Drum Major reported to the Adjutant, and campaigned on foot. Based on the scarcity with which they are mentioned in the *Official Records*, Drum Majors do not appear to have been common in the Federal army after the discontinuation of regimental bands in August 1862 (see the entry for "Bands", below).

11. *Principal Musician* – Up to two Principal Musicians were allowed per volunteer infantry regiment[11], with the pay of a sergeant. When the Drum Major is present the duties of the Principal Musician are unclear per the authorizing laws[12]. However, it appears that the Principal Musician served as the Drum Major's assistant and, because the Principal Musician kept the duty roster for the field music (company musicians), may have had direct charge of the field music. In the absence of the Drum Major, the Principal Musician serves as the leader of the band and performs the Drum Major's duties. He reports to the Drum Major (presumably, he reports to the Adjutant when the Drum Major was absent) and campaigns on foot.

[10] Some infantry regiments had a non-commissioned staff member known as a Fife Major. Fife Majors seem to have been fairly rare and their duties are not well documented for 1860s American armies. Fife Majors may have been similar to Drum Majors in some respects. Fife Majors appear to have been more common in the War of 1812 and Eighteenth Century armies, and bear only one mention in the *Official Records*, in the April 16, 1861 specification of how three-month militia regiments should be organized for Federal service. However Fife Majors were present in some three-year regiments.

[11] The *Official Records, Series 3, Vol. 1*, pg. 961 implies that one of the two Principal Musicians served as the regimental bugler.

[12] See Kautz's *Customs of Service for Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers*, paras. 223-225, and the *Official Records, Series 3, Vol. 1*, pg. 373 for the exact language authorizing Drum Majors and Principal Musicians.

12. *Bugler* – Each battalion had a Bugler whose job was to stick near the Battalion Commander to relay orders.[13] Because the Battalion Commander was mounted during marches and maneuvers, it is likely that the Bugler was likewise mounted on a horse provided by the Battalion Commander.

13. *Band* – Until midsummer of 1862 Federal infantry regiments were entitled to have a band of up to 24 musicians, in addition to the Drum Major, Principal Musicians, and company musicians. A band of 16 musicians plus a band-leader was allowed for each brigade of volunteers. During battle, band members often served as stretcher-bearers. In the Union army, regimental bands were discontinued on August 9, 1862; the order read in part:

> "Have all volunteer regimental bands in your command mustered out of service at once. Enlisted men detached from companies to serve in said bands will not be mustered out. They will return to their companies…. Each brigade is now allowed a band of sixteen musicians."[14]

John Tobey drilling the CR at Gettysburg 2001
(photo by Irene Henion)

14. *Chaplain* – "Equivalent" to a commissioned officer who serves the spiritual needs of the battalion and was appointed by the Battalion Commander; he also often served as a battalion postmaster of sorts. In the Civil War-era Federal army, chaplains were eventually allowed to wear captain's insignia.[15] The chaplain was typically mounted on a horse and often had at least one hired servant.

15. M*edical Personnel (Surgeon, Assistant Surgeon, Hospital Steward)* – Each volunteer regiment was allowed one Surgeon, one Assistant Surgeon, and one Steward who oversaw the regimental hospital and provided medical treatment. The Steward (a non-commissioned officer) also served as a dentist and pharmacist. First-person accounts appear to support the theory that Surgeons and Assistant Surgeons, being commissioned officers, were mounted at their own expense. It unclear, however, whether the Steward was mounted but, because he probably looked after the battalion's medical stores, it is possible he rode on or with the wagons.

Commonly seen in reenacting but absent from Civil War-era Federal battalions is the *ordnance sergeant*. In the 1860s, the United States Army maintained an Ordnance Department that included ordnance sergeants who worked at production arsenals and were not assigned to military subdivisions such as a regiment or brigade. Certain physical installations, such as permanent forts, had a post ordnance sergeant, but this person was assigned to the post, not the military unit(s) therein. The Confederate army, however, did allow one ordnance sergeant per regiment. In summary, ordnance sergeant impressionists are incorrect for Civil War-era Federal infantry battalions.[16]

Other personnel occasionally seen on the staff of a reenactor battalion but without correlation in 1860s American armies include things such as "engineering officers" and "signal officers". Both of these were separate departments of the Union and Confederate armies, and engineering *staff officers* were typically present only above the regimental level.

The forgoing is the "official line" on the duties of the jobs within an infantry battalion. Of course, the method of executing these jobs varied from regiment to regiment and occasionally differed from the "official line". Not all positions existed in each regiment; for example, the duties of the Commissary Officer and Commissary Sergeant were frequently amalgamated with those of the Quartermaster and Quartermaster Sergeant. At reenactments and living history events, the historical record for the regiment portrayed should set the standard for the jobs filled and method of execution. Consideration should also be given to the utility of each "job" for the event; for instance, if a reenactor battalion is not issuing rations, there is no need for the positions of Commissary and Commissary Sergeant.

Other Jobs:

1. *Commander of Pickets/Grand Guard* – Grand Guards are guard details mounted and supervised at the brigade level. The rank of the commissioned officer selected to command a picket detail or the Grand Guard depended on the degree of responsibility and the number of men placed under his command, but will typically be a captain or field officer. The picket or Grand Guard may also include other commissioned officers to command supports or outposts along the line of sentinels.

2. *Brigade and Higher "Staff": Provost Marshal* – The "head of military police" charged with the security of a given town or military command. Provost Marshals were used *at the brigade level and above* and were usually junior field officers, although sometimes line officers were used.

3. *Brigade Staff: (Acting) Assistant Adjutant General (AAAG)* – The brigade equivalent of the battalion Adjutant. The AAAG was undoubtedly mounted.

4. *Brigade Staff and General Staff: Aide-de-Camp* – Staff officer detailed as an aide to a brigadier or higher rank. *Not used below the brigade level*. The number and rank of aides depended on the general officer to whom they were assigned. Typically a brigade commander may have had one to three lieutenants, whereas an

[13] If a regiment had two Principal Musicians, one would likely have served as the Bugler, but not all Buglers were Principal Musicians.

[14] *Official Records, Series 3, Vol. 2*, pg. 336. The order was addressed to the Army of the Potomac and copied to the commanders of all other Union armies. Regimental bands did not fully disappear, because June 20, 1864 Congressional legislation on soldier pay referred to regimental bands (Public Resolution No. 56, *O.R., Series 3, Vol., 4*, pg. 512). Post-1862 bands included soldiers and musicians occasionally detailed as band members (Fox, William, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War*, pg. 122).

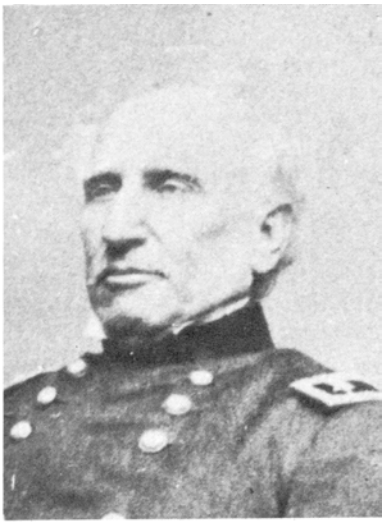
[15] Refer to, "Our Holy John: Understanding the Chaplain's Role in a Federal Regiment – A Guide for Military Reenactors", by Michael Peterson, *Camp Chase Gazette* magazine, August 2004.

[16] Refer to the *U.S. Army Regulations*, paras. 131-144, Kautz, *Customs of Service for Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers*, paras. 190-196, and "The Ordnance Sergeant (Revisited)" by Thomas Czekanski, *Camp Chase Gazette* magazine (mid-1990s; article reprinted in the T*hird Mississippi Camp of Instruction Handbook*, 1998).

army commander would likely have considerably more aides, some with the rank of full colonel. Because their job required them to travel distances at speed, aides were always mounted.

5. *Brigade: Field Officer of the Day* – Usually a junior field officer (major or lieutenant colonel) but may be a captain. Duties are analogous to those of the battalion Officer of the Day, except at the brigade level. Because he was a field officer, the Field Officer of the Day should have a mount.

6. *General Staff* – The staff of a general officer could include, in addition to an Adjutant General, aides-de-camp, and a provost marshal, the following: inspector general, quartermaster, commissary, judge advocate, engineer, ordnance officer, and mustering officer. Because general staff officers are rare in reenacting (or should be), these staff positions are not covered here but can be reviewed by the reader in Kautz's *Customs of Service for Officers of the Army*, pp. 188-207 (paras. 305-367).



Drill Manual Authors.
Above: Silas Casey
Below Right: William Hardee

7. *Others Not Listed Here!*

There are **many other important areas of "technical knowledge"** that all commissioned officers and most non-commissioned officers should know, but whose details are beyond the scope of this article. In summary, these include:

- Drill, including School of the Soldier, School of the Company, and School of the Battalion, and skirmishing. Numerous reprints or period drill manuals are available, together with reenactor drill guides, including: 1) Dominic Dal Bello's *Parade, Inspection, and Basic Evolutions of the Infantry Battalion*; 2) Mark Tackitt's *Guides Posts,* which presents the School of the Soldier, School of the Company, Instructions for Skirmishers, and other aspects of drill below the School of the Battalion, largely drawing from Hardee's manual.

- Basic bugle calls, including camp calls, marching calls, and skirmish calls. Several compact discs and cassette tapes with bugle calls and related instructions are available, particularly those by George Rabbai and R.J. Samp.

- The basics of field music. If the Principal Musician is absent, someone has to be able to direct the musicians. While this would be the Sergeant Major's responsibility, optimally all field leaders should have a basic, working knowledge of field music.

- Basics of 1860s army paperwork. The best sources are the *U.S. Army Regulations* and August Kautz's handbooks *The Company Clerk* and *Customs of Service for Officers of the Army* (in the latter, particularly in the sections on Adjutants and Company Commanders).[17]

- Basics of daily military routine, both in camp and on the march.[18]

- Guard duty, picket duty, and guard mounting ceremony. The best sources for this are the *U.S. Army Regulations,* August Kautz's two *Customs of Service* books, and Butterfield's *Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry*. An excellent reenactor reference for this is Dominic Dal Bello's *Instructions for Guards and Pickets*.

- Familiarity with the Army Regulations and the Articles of War contained therein.

Practical Knowledge

This article defines "practical knowledge" as those items essential for effective field leadership that are less easy or impossible to learn from a book, and are typically be gleaned through experience or inherently known by the leader. Commissioned and non-commissioned officers are responsible for the welfare of their men and, as such, must know and be able to teach both 1860s methods and modern practicalities of the following:

- How to patiently instruct, how to communicate, and how to give commands. Commissioned and non-commissioned officers are teachers—an extremely critical component often neglected in reenacting.

- Safety Considerations: weapons safety and safety in mock battles, marching safety (foot injuries, fatigue), cold-related injuries, heat exhaustion and worse, fire safety, safety relative to food and sanitation, pest safety (ticks, rodents, animals), and other safety basics.

- How to establish shelter and make fire, how to keep dry, and how to dry out when wet.[19]

- How to keep warm in cold weather.

- How to prepare, cook, and carry rations appropriate for the event and portrayal.[20]

[17] A very good summary of the clerk's duties is presented in Michael Schaffner's 62-page monograph, "School of the Clerk", privately published, 2005 edition, available from several reenactor "sutlers".

[18] For excellent summaries of these topics, see John Tobey's articles, "Day Planner… Army of the Potomac-style" in *The Columbia Examiner* newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 3, June 2001, and "'A Pilgrimage of Flies': Federal Soldiers on the March", *Camp Chase Gazette* magazine, April 2003.

[19] Refer to "Hints to Campaigners" by Mark Jaeger, *Civil War Historian* magazine, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan/Feb 2005, and "Constructing an Authentic Bivouac" by J. E. Tobey, Article III.1 in *The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium*, 1st Edition (John Tobey, et. al., eds.), April 2001.

[20] Refer to "Campaign Cuisine for the Culinarily Challenged: Marching Rations for Federal Soldiers", by Kevin O'Beirne, Article III.6 in *The Columbia Rifles Research Compendium*, 1st Edition, also published in *Camp Chase Gazette*, magazine, May 2002.

- The basics of sanitation (potable water and waste disposal).
- Basic first-aid.
- How to lead effective interaction with spectators.

Another aspect of practical knowledge is that of **pre- and post-event communication** with the men. Theoretically, field leaders could leave this to their off-field leaders, but because events typically start on Friday evening—and usually men continue to arrive after the event gets underway—it is important for field leaders to get squared away before the event and be able to "hit the ground running" on Friday evening. Pre-event e-mails and telephone calls are great ways to make sure subordinates are playing from the same sheet of music, and convey an idea of what subordinates should know to effectively perform their "job" during the event. After an event, it is a good idea for field leaders to provide thanks and constructive feedback to their men.

Selflessness

Regardless of what rank a reenactor field leader wears, *the men come first*; their safety, comfort, and "good time" (e.g., positive experience from the event) are all more important than the leader's ego, status, and good time. Being a leader means working before, during, and even after the event…for the men.

It is the duty of commissioned and non-commissioned officer portrayals to help create an environment that assists the men in achieving a positive living history experience. Men have differing needs: some need a den mother, some are capable of looking after themselves, and many desire that history be injected into their weekend. All of them are looking for effective leadership. Essentially, leaders are the *servants* of the men in reenacting.

NCOs: CR Mike Ryan (left) and Scott Schotz (151st NY) in 2004

Those who hold rank for the sake of their ego should strongly consider finding another hobby. An officer impressionist's need to win "glory" in a mock battle or achieve higher rank should never rest on the backs of his men. The men come first, and the leader's personal needs, wants, and desires come last.

A well-spoken old axiom bears repetition: "A good field-leader never asks a man to do a job that he considers beneath him, or that is too 'dirty' to do himself."

Leaders who plan to be absent—whether from camp for an hour, or missing from an entire event—*must* advise both their superior officer and their next-in-line as early as possible. Leaders do not let their friends wonder where they are, particularly when the leader is supposed to be doing a job. This axiom is often neglected by many in reenacting; think of the number of events you have attended where the men stood around on Friday evening wondering if their officer would arrive, and the bewilderment of a subordinate suddenly thrust into a job for which he was not prepared or forewarned.[21]

An American colonel in the Vietnam War aptly said that a leader is the first on the ground and the last one to leave. Officer impressionists who show up very late or leave early should re-consider whether they should hold rank for that event. Leaders do not abandon their men in foul weather; instead, they look after them until all have departed the site, regardless of whether it is raining, cold, or too hot. For events with static camps, it is a good idea for the field-leader to police his group's camp after his last man has left..

Holding rank means you are agreeing to do a ***job*** for the weekend—a job that may not be much fun or entertaining. The enjoyment leaders derive from the event will likely mostly arise from 1) Learning new things and teaching new things to those under you, 2) Satisfaction from a job (hopefully) well done; in other words, knowing you led the men well, 3) Camaraderie with others in the same "rank boat" as you.

A long-running problem in reenacting is officers with an insufficient number of men to justify their rank; such portrayals should have no place in the hobby.[22] It is highly advisable for all commissioned and non-commissioned officer impressionists to bring to each event a uniform and equipment (to reside in the car until needed) for reducing their rank "just in case". In other words, if you portray a commissioned officer, consider bringing a private's uniform, kit, and musket. Battalion commanders should not tolerate an officer in command of an exceedingly small company if it is not supported by the historical record for the scenario portrayed, and should not hesitate to amalgamate companies, if necessary, both prior to and during the event, as required.

Finally, those who frequently hold rank in the field may wish to consider attending a couple events per year as a musket-toting private. This provides some useful perspective and, because this is a volunteer hobby and not the real military, shows the men that the "higher-ups" do not consider themselves too lofty in status or above being a private for a weekend. In addition, it can be beneficial to "de-rank" for a couple of relatively stress-free days with the boys, and "de-ranking" allows others the opportunity to step up to field-leadership roles to further develop their skills.

Motivation

All commissioned and non-commissioned officer impressionists must be *self-motivated*. Unless he is very new to the role, someone should not have to look after a leader to tell him to do his "job" for the event—learn the functional aspects of the job before you accept the role.[23] *Leaders do not have to be told what to do; rather, they see what needs doing and then, **with concurrence from their superior**, either issue the orders for it to be done, or do it themselves*. **Leaders use the chain of command**, even though reenacting is not "the real military".

Certain tasks that seemingly always need to be done are: establishing kitchens (campfires), gathering firewood, making the men aware of water supplies and sanitary facilities, looking to the next thing on the day's schedule and anticipating it (for example, Sergeants should have all their men ready to go before "Assembly" is sounded, Company Commanders and Orderly Sergeants should be kitted up and have the company dressed and counted off before "To the Color" is sounded, etc.), and countless other things.

Commissioned and non-commissioned officers who sit on their hindquarters until a superior tells them to attend to their duties are not worthy of the chevrons or straps they wear. Unmotivated commissioned and non-commissioned officers are one of the aspects of reenacting that most needs improvement.

To summarize, leaders keep their eyes open for the next job that needs doing, identify the best way to tackle the job, confirm that their superior wants the job done, and then get it done… all without being told. Few subordinates in the field are more valued than those who got the job done with little or no coaching.

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[21] Learning the job(s) at least one and optimally two ranks above your typical rank helps ease the problems when this situation arises.

[22] This includes both officers literally without men, and those in groups that field two commissioned officers, five non-commissioned officers, and six privates.

[23] In general, a man with the gumption to learn the job before he holds it is probably motivated enough to perform the job well.

First-person

It is important that leaders recognize both the need for first-person impressions, and when use of first-person can improve the men's living history experience. While first-person impressions are not done or even favored by all, use of an appropriate level of it at "the right time" is recognized as beneficial by most reenactors known by this writer.

On occasion it is necessary for field leaders to request the men under them—be it a mess, company, or battalion—to remain in first-person. Often the men will make a good effort to adhere to such a request, thus improving the experience for all. I have observed at numerous events how, if left to their own devices, the men will often fall into modern talk, but if a leader encourages them to engage in first-person now and again, there is increased chance of it happening. Leaders should also be able to quietly coach and encourage first-person impressions in those who are less experienced with it.

Leaders, particularly commissioned and non-commissioned officers, should be capable of engaging in first-person to some extent as part of their own reenacting skill set. While it is desirable for officers to be "good" at first-person, they need not be expert in it. At minimum, they need to be willing and able to assist in the first-person experience of the men under their command, and to "act" the part of an officer.

Materials and Kit

Portrayal of a commissioned or non-commissioned officer beyond the loaner-gear stage means that the impressionist must devote a certain amount of financial resources to his portrayal.

Non-commissioned officer's kit typically costs considerably less than commissioned officer portrayals. At minimum non-commissioned officers require a period-type notebook and, typically, chevrons. Other kit may include non-commissioned officer belts and, for certain ranks such as Orderly Sergeant and Principal Musician, a sash and sword.

Commissioned officer portrayals require a significant financial investment to reach an acceptable minimum standard (jacket, sword, sword belt, etc.). The quality and type of kit required varies with the reenactor and portrayal, and the array of available reproductions of "officer stuff" is impressive, and expensive. Additional items recommended by this writer include an officer sash, officer haversack, and appropriate headwear. Other, optional items include officer trousers; side arm, holster, and appurtenances; boots, false boots, or other privately purchased footwear; gauntlets; officer overcoat (either tailored for officers or, as was most common after 1862 in the Federal army, cavalry overcoats on infantry officers); and, for mounted officers such as field officers and certain staff, a saddle, tack, and related saddle furniture.[24]

Leaders should also be familiar with the reproduction equipment typically used within their own group and the vendors frequented by their members. Leaders are often called upon to accompany newer members to "sutler row" at some events to provide advice on new purchases; it is therefore incumbent upon those leaders to know what constitutes acceptable reproduction kit, and keep somewhat abreast of changes in the market.

Conclusions

Being a field leader in reenacting is not easy and requires a tremendous amount of knowledge to do correctly; further, higher rank typically requires greater knowledge, ability, investment of time, and financial expense.

This article outlines general areas toward which all field leaders should strive relative to "technical" and practical knowledge, selflessness, motivation, first-person, and materials/kit. While there is no "perfect officer" in reenacting (at least not that I've met—including me), continuous learning and improvement are part of the fun of reenacting at any rank. This article can be used as a checklist of sorts for field leaders to improve their "job performance" and portrayal, and perhaps as a yardstick against which the rank and file are better able to see if their leaders measure up to expectations.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Mark Jaeger of Purdue University, and a reenactor with the 32nd Indiana Co. G/32nd Tennessee Co. G, for reviewing a draft of this article and providing many useful comments.

Suggested Reading[25]

Kautz, August V., *Customs of Service for Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1864 – vital information for all reenactors.

Kautz, August V., *Customs of Service for Officers of the Army*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1865 – a useful reference for all reenactors, not just officers.

Kautz, August V., *The Company Clerk*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1863 – important info for not just the Clerk, but also the Company Commander and Orderly Sergeant.

United States War Department, *Revised Unites States Army Regulations of 1861, with an Appendix Containing the Changes and Laws Affecting Army Regulations and Articles of War of June 25, 1863*, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1863.

Period drill manual(s) of your choice (Hardee's, Casey's, Gilham's, Scott's, etc.) – enough cannot be said about the importance of knowing this well.

Dal Bello, Dominic, *Instructions for Guards and Pickets*, 3rd Edition, San Jose CA: Army of the Pacific Press, 2002 – if you're going to portray guard duty or pickets, get this book.

Dal Bello, Dominic, *Parade, Inspection, and Basic Evolutions of the Infantry Battalion*, 4th Edition, San Jose CA: Army of the Pacific Press, 1998 – the best pocket reference available on battalion drill, parade, and other matters

Tackitt, Mark, *Guides Posts*, Seattle WA: privately published, 2004 – at last, a reenactor reference for drill below the School of the Battalion!

Butterfield, Daniel, *Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry*, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1862.

Craighill, William, *Army Officer's Pocket Companion. A Guide for Staff Officers in the Field*, New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1862 – how an army and its subdivisions were staffed and how campaigns were to be conducted.

United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols.; referred to as Official Records or O.R.), Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901 – with affordable editions of the O.R.s available on compact disc, the O.R.s have become an essential reenactor reference

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[24] Refer to, "A Cheese Knife and Shoulder Straps: Uniforms and Equipment of Eastern Federal Line Officers", by John Tobey, *The Columbia Examiner* newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 3, June 2003.

[25] Selected works and reprints available as of January 2005. Other useful handbooks of the period are not listed here because they are not currently readily available to reenactors.