

UNIFORMS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Confederate Soldiers

Confederate soldiers often were forced to outfit themselves. They wore various uniforms, although gray jackets became common, often with felt slouch hats. Many had no knapsacks; instead they looped their bedrolls across their chests when they marched. Tents were scarce. Men kept tobacco and pipes, a bit of soap, maybe foraged apples in their haversacks. Many immediately cooked and ate their three-day ration of fatback and cornbread, rather than packing it. They filled their canteens with buttermilk or cider, and kept a cup to dip water from streams. They carried their muskets, but most had no cartridge boxes, so they stuffed ammunition into their pockets.

COLONEL SANTOS BENAVIDES

Colonel Santos Benavides became the highest-ranking Tejano to serve the Confederacy. Born in Laredo, Texas on November 1, 1823, he was a descendant of Tomas Sanchez de la Barrera y Garza, the founder of the small community.

His greatest triumph came on March 19, 1864 when he drove back more than 200 Union soldiers from Laredo when they attempted to destroy 500 bales of cotton stacked in St. Agustin Plaza.

Ruben Cordova, right, is wearing dark grey wool coat with black piping. His frock coat and the three stars on his collar and four rows of gold braid filigree design on the sleeves is meant to represent Col. Santos Benavides. The black trim on the sleeves indicates a Texas regiment. Confederate forces used various designs to distinguish themselves from other states. Matching dark grey wool pants were also worn.

However, this particular coat was used for marching in parades and other special functions. The gold vest indicates the soldier was part of the cavalry and the red flower on the sleeve of the jacket represents Texas Secession.



CONFEDERATE SERGEANT MAJOR

Ruben Cordova's uniform on the right is that of a Confederate Sergeant Major indicted by the stripes on his jean wool jacket. The black trims on the collar and cuffs were worn by Texan soldiers. British supplies made their way to Confederate soldier's hands as is seen with the British snake belt. He is carrying a 12-gauge double barrel shotgun.

BUTTONS



Unpolished buttons were the sign of an undisciplined regiment. Pictured, top left, is a button that belonged to an imperial Mexican soldier found in the RGV. During the Civil War, Mexico was overrun with French troops under the control of Maximilian. Several regiments made it to northern Mexico close to the border with Texas. Bottom left & top right: Buttons that belonged to soldiers in infantry regiments during the Civil War in the Rio Grande Valley.



TEXAS CAVALRY CAPTAIN

On the right, is a uniform that represents a Texas Cavalry Captain indicated by the crossed sabers on his hat along with the yellow captain bars with two stripes on his collar. He is wearing a snake belt holstering a Remington pistol with a cap box.

BOOT



Pictured left is a high cavalry black knee high boot with Mexican spurs that would have been worn by soldiers serving in South Texas during the Civil War. Regiments would hand out a limited amount of shoes and boots to soldiers so families would often have to send soldiers new pairs.



CAP POUCH



Various designs were developed during the war, but the cap pouches' basic purpose remained unchanged: to store items which all percussion muskets required in order to fire—the caps. Constructed of leather, each such had an outer flap that closed with a brass button riveted to the bottom. Inside was a lining of sheepskin with wool to prevent the caps from falling out. Not all Confederate troops were fortunate enough to carry their ammunition in cap pouches; especially towards the end of the war when resources were scarce among rebel ranks.

CARTRIDGE BOX



The cartridge box was sling across the chest and rested on the right hip within easy grasp during battle. Inside the leather box were two tines that held loose cartridges on top and bundles of ten in the lower compartments. These metal containers and two leather flaps effectively protected the paper cartridges from moisture in inclement weather. For much of the war, the outer flap was punched with two holes to secure the "CS" box plate made of lead stamped with brass.

TRUMPET



Of all the memories veterans recalled of their Civil War experience, countless reminiscences of music can be found in thousands of letters and journals of soldiers who fought on both sides. Music played a large part in the war and the field music of buglers was not only necessary for the telling of time and duties in camp but also guided the actions of troops in battle.

CANTEENS



The most common type of military canteen held about a quart of water. It was made from lightweight tinned iron sheeting stamped out on presses and formed into halves that were soldered together. They were inexpensive and easily manufactured in large quantities. Many other types and styles of canteens were issued as well, including some made from wood and even leather.

1ST LIEUTENANT CAVALRYMAN

Bruce Kidd's uniform represents a 1st Lieutenant Cavalryman in the Confederate army. The jean wool jacket became very common late in the war. The standard frock coat pattern featured colored facings denoting the branch of service: red for artillery, yellow for cavalry, and black for state militias.

Almost all were made from what was known as jean cloth, a blend of roughly half wool and half cotton. Frock coats were lined with whatever wool flannel or cotton muslin fabric was available.

Sometimes they were only half-lined or not lined at all. The gold braid on the hat represents his ranking. The object hung around his neck is a percussion cap on a leather strap which would contain a cartridge with black powder. Bruce is carrying a .50 caliber Zoave Rifle.



BAYONET

When properly locked onto the end of a musket barrel, the 18"-long socket bayonet was a fearsome weapon designed to inspire dread in the enemy. In camp bayonets were often used as skewers to roast meat over the fire, or as candleholders.

KNAPSACK

On the march, each soldier lived out of his pack, in which he carried a blanket, ground cloth, spare clothing, and personal effects. On occasion, the knapsack also held extra rations and ammunition. With extra weight, however, it soon became uncomfortable, putting too much strain on the shoulders. The knapsack was often one of the items that a soldier chose to discard, preferring to carry his supplies in a blanket roll instead.

CONFEDERATE ARTILLERY SOLDIER

Christopher Brush represents a Confederate Artillery soldier. Artillery soldiers wore a red forage hat and rep piping on their coats. They needed to be mobile so artillerymen usually only carried a pistol and a knife.

The pistol pictured at the right is a Remington reproduction. Confederate soldiers were given a cotton shirt to wear under the jacket which soldiers found particularly uncomfortable. As a result, often shirts were sent from home and were anything but standard.



CAPS & HATS



The Model 1858 forage cap was by far the most common kind of headgear provided to troops. Soldiers often found ways to keep cool during the summer months. As a result, some caps were fitted with circular metal ventilators. In the field many soldiers proudly wore brass numbers and letters on their caps to indicate their regiment and company.

Left: Confederate Texas Cavalry; Right: Confederate Cavalry - 1st Lieutenant, gold braid represents rank; Bottom: Confederate Artillery.

VOICES OF THE CIVIL WAR

Palmeto (Palmito) rancho
Jan 28 1865

"Dear Sister.....we are incampt about 8 or 10 miles frome the Yanks our Pickets is 2 or 3 miles aparte we expecte to have a fighte with them before longe or that is the talk in campe at this time on the night of the 22 about 10 oclock a courier came in-haste an reported the Yanks was comin on if we was orded to Mount our horses and fall in line of battle which we abade in hast.....I will tell you something about How we air Clothred thear is not one man out of ten that has got a bole paire of Pants to put on an scursley a Coat in the Battalion an it is rainy now we have a beepe of hard duty to do beave.

F.N. Wousely (copied from a letter belonging to Mrs. George Miller, Harlingen, TX with original spelling and punctuation)"

"Instead of growling and deserting, they laughed at their own bare feet [and] ragged clothes.... Weak, hungry, cold, wet, worried with vermin and itch, dirty, with no hope of reward or rest, [they] marched cheerfully to meet the well fed and warmly clad hosts of the enemy."

—Carlton McCarthy
Army of North Virginia

"Pa, I want you to have me a pair of boots made. Those shoes you had made for me ripped all to pieces. Our regiment used everything we had. I have no blanket nor any clothes but what I have got. I have got the suit on that you sent me. They came in a good time. I like them very well. If I had a good pair of shoes I would be the best clothed man in the regiment."

—4th N.C. Volunteers
September 30th, 1862
Camp near Bunker Hill

"...Since we left Richmond we've crossed the Potomac three or four times. You can imagine how pleasant it was marching at night with wet clothes on, many, many times. I do hope we will not be compelled to cross it again. I'm perfectly willing to remain on this side, for a while at least. There is no telling, though, what may happen, we may cross it again tomorrow. At the battle of Sharpsburg (the first fought in Maryland) my knapsack was stolen from me. I was thereby relieved of everything I had, now I have nothing."

—Alva Benjamin Spencer,
September 29, 1862

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