

THE CONFEDERATE ARMY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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General

The general image of ACW armies is of long lines of blue clad Union forces clashing with long lines of grey-clad Confederates. This holds true for the Northerners, but the southern forces offer a more challenging task than reaching for a can of grey spray paint.

What is apparent is that the forces of both sides strayed considerably from the regulation uniforms adapting their dress and equipment to the conditions that faced them on campaign. Confederate forces in particular could often suffer from lack of regular supply. The rank and file of both armies too liberties with official headgear, and the only rules for officers were that the dress regulations didn't seem to apply to them.

The Union forces in particular can break up their uniform ranks by adding the odd splash of colour with the inclusion of a Zouave unit, although this is far less of an option for the Confederates.

This section is aimed directly at enabling someone to paint their 6mm army and get it on the table. It does not go into the minutiae of the subject, as this would be a huge work in itself, rather than a quick and handy reference. As we are also primarily concerned with painting small scale armies it does not consider those details that cannot easily be depicted on 6mm wargaming figures. The exact spacing of buttons, piping and variations on official practice are not considered.

Infantry

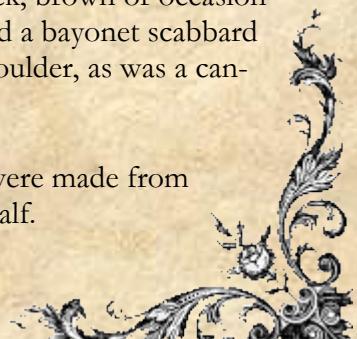
In theory all Confederate troops in the ACW were issued with regulation uniform items from their state or the government. In practice a huge amount of variation was evident. This is a large subject and the following notes are very general, but certainly good enough for the beginner.

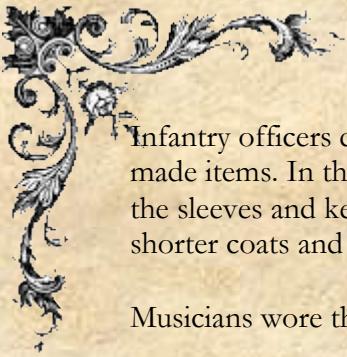
Infantrymen were issued with short grey jackets reaching to the waist. In theory they would have cuffs trimmed in light blue, but this was rare. Many chose to replace the issue items with better quality jackets sent to them by relatives. These garments were generally brown, but varied considerably in shade, as did the grey jackets. Trousers were either grey or the 'butternut' brown of the jackets, but sky blue often appeared, courtesy of captured or looted union supplies. There could therefore be a large range of individual coloured garments in any given unit.

The official headwear was a kepi made of grey wool trimmed on the side and top in light blue and completed with a black leather peak. These were not popular and most soldiers replaced the cap with a hat. These came from a variety of sources, mostly civilian and came in a range of colours.

The cartridge box and shoulder strap were of black or brown leather. A black, brown or occasionally white belt supported a percussion cap box to the right of the buckle, and a bayonet scabbard where this was worn. A white cotton haversack was slung from the right shoulder, as was a canteen, often a captured union item.

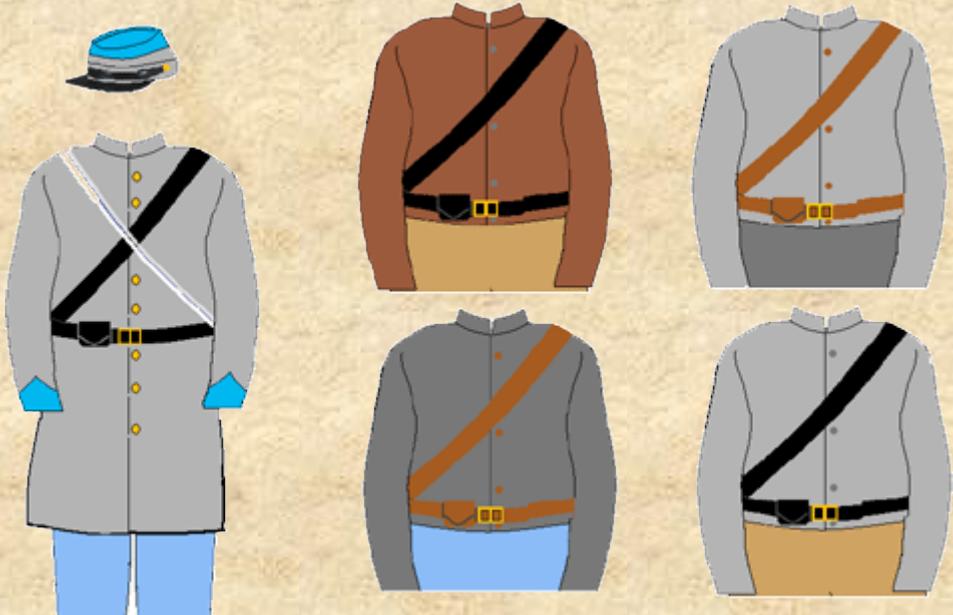
Shoulder rolls were commonly carried slung from the left shoulder. These were made from issue grey or brown wool blankets, or a black gum blanket, or grey shelter half.





Infantry officers demonstrated a wide latitude in dress often replacing official items with privately made items. In theory they wore a grey frock coat with rank markings denoted by Austrian knots on the sleeves and kepis decorated with gold braid. In practice rank markings were often ignored and shorter coats and jackets were common, as were hats.

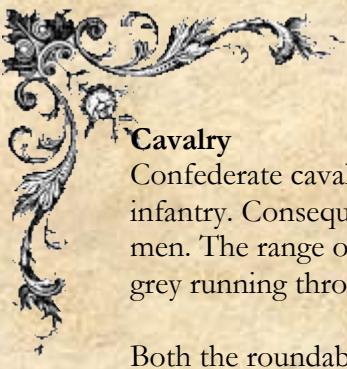
Musicians wore the same basic uniforms as the ordinary soldier. Drum straps were of white leather.



Zouaves

The flamboyant and distinctive Zouave dress was less widespread in Confederate armies than those of the North. While there were numerous companies of Zouaves, there was only one full regiment - Coppers or the Louisiana Zouaves. They wore a decorated short dark blue jacket Trousers were red, baggy and tucked into white gaiters. All belting was of black leather, with the cartridge box suspended from the waist belt rather than the shoulder strap which was dispensed with. An off-white 'bread bag' was slung by a white strap across the right shoulder. Headgear was a red fez with a yellow tassel. A waist sash completed the colourful outfit. Officers wore standard uniforms and equipment.





Cavalry

Confederate cavalry were subject to exactly the same problems of supply of clothing that afflicted the infantry. Consequently after the early months of the war there was little uniformity amongst cavalrymen. The range of colours within a unit therefore mirrors that of the infantry - shades of brown and grey running through light to dark.

Both the roundabout and sack coats were in evidence but it is suggested that there was a more concerted attempt to display the yellow arm of service colour in kepis and jackets.

The waist belt was of black or brown leather and supported the cap box on the right hip followed by a pistol holster, pistol cartridge box and a carbine cartridge box. The steel scabbard, when worn, was slung from the left hip with two black leather straps.

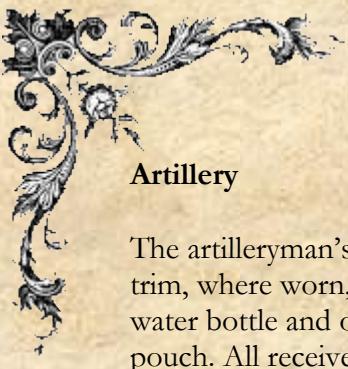
The carbine was carried on a swivel attachment from a broad leather belt slung over the left shoulder.

Officers wore similar uniforms with rank indicated by braiding as with the infantry.

Musicians wore plain coats.

The illustration shows what would have been an 'ideal' uniform for a confederate cavalryman. However, this combination would have been relatively rare with a civilian hat replacing the kepi and brown appearing as often as grey for the jacket or blue for the trousers.





Artillery

The artilleryman's uniform was generally the same as that of the infantryman, with any facings and trim, where worn, in red. However he lost most of the equipment, carrying at most a haversack and water bottle and occasionally a waist belt supporting a revolver holster, cap pouch and small cartridge pouch. All received an official issue of sword or sabre but these were generally discarded as being too cumbersome.

Kepis were to be grey with the red branch of service colour on the sides and crowns, although there were many variants on this pattern, and could be replaced by a hat

Gun carriages and limbers were an olive drab or blue-grey colour..

