



THE FRENCH ARMY OF THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

Bruce Nye

General

For those of you who are interested in further study of the French army of the War of Spanish Succession, good luck, there is not much. The best of what there is in French, though some have been translated.

Louis Susanes, *Histoire de l'Infanterie française* (5 vols.), *Histoire de la Cavalerie française* (3 vols.) and *Histoire de l'Artillerie française* (1 vol.), Paris, 1874-1876, reprinted 1984

André Corvisier, *L'Armée française de la fin du XVIIIe siècle au Ministère de Choiseul. Le Soldat.* (Paris, 1964, 2 vols.). _____*Louvios* (Paris, 1983).

Camille Rousset, *Histoire de Louvois* (3 vols., Paris, 1864-65) L. Dussieux, *L'Armée en France* (vol. 2, Versailles, 1884).

René Chartrand, *Louis XIV's Army: Osprey Men-at-Arms Series #203*, (London, 1988).


The limitations of web space mean that the coverage of this army is necessarily limited. We do have available for sale a much more in-depth treatment of the subject. Follow this link for more details. [>>>>click here](#)

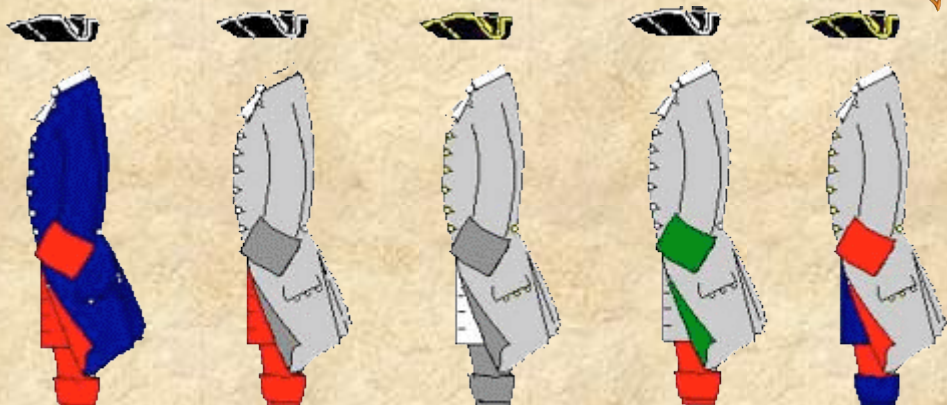
The Foot

The line infantry was composed of two types of regiments: the "French" units recruited from within France, and the Foreign regiments which were mainly Swiss, German, Irish and Italian.

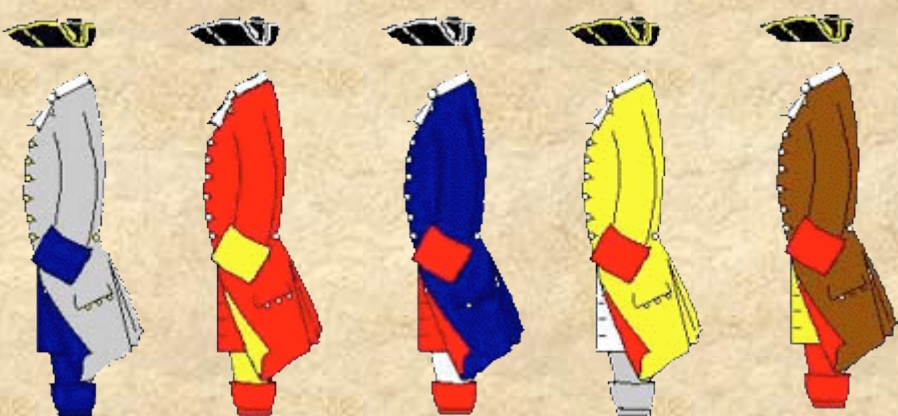
The infantry was organized in regiments having one or more battalions, the battalions having a variable number of companies, which themselves had a variable number of officers and men. The older regiments, or those which had the king as colonel usually had several battalions, but most had only one battalion. In the early 18th century the usual rule was 13 companies per battalion, including one of grenadiers, each company having about 45 to 50 men. Swiss regiments usually had 200 man companies, but fewer companies per regiment.

As with most armies of the period, uniform colors varied greatly. The basic color was a light grey, with distinctive cuff and lining in the regimental color. The sources I used in gather this information varied with each author. What was seen as light grey to one was seen as white, grey, light tan, and even an off-khaki green. The regimental facing color also varied according to source. This is accounted mainly due to the standard practice of the colonel having the option to change the color at his own prerogative, so long as the king approved. I have tried to find the regimental colors worn the longest, or mentioned the most for the ensuing plates. Finally, the breeches and stocking colors are by no means irrefutable. Again, they vary greatly in the descriptions or are not given at all so I have thus taken a few liberties here and there.

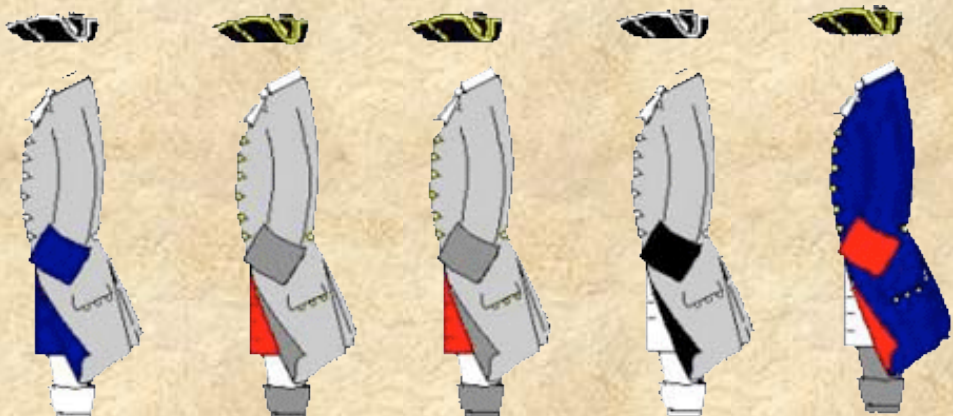




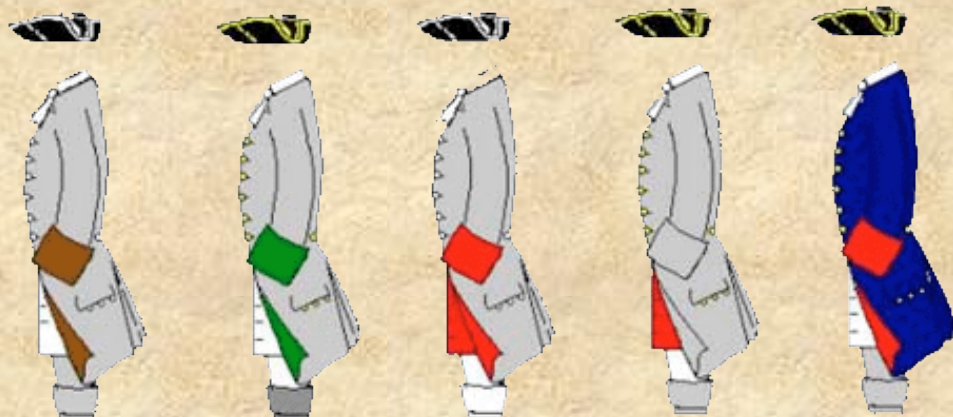
Gardes Francais Regt. Picardy Regt. Piemont Regt. Lorraine Regt. La Reine



Regt. Du Roi Regt. Clare (Irish) Regt. Zurlander (German) Regt. Surbeck (German) Regt. Royal Italien

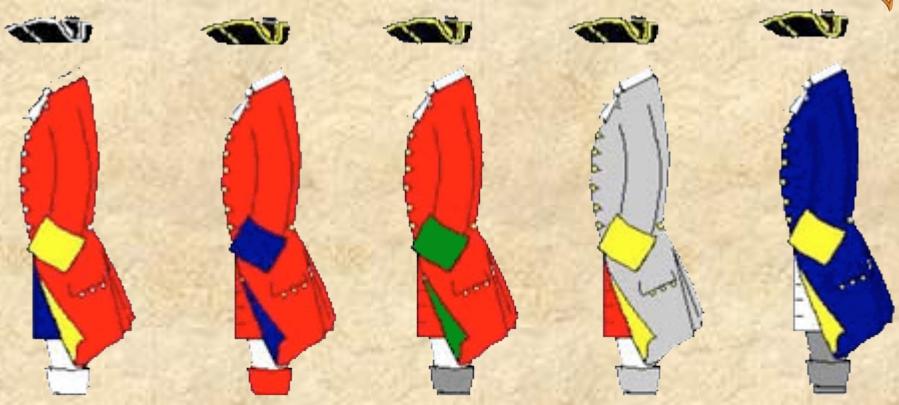


Regt. Royal Regt. Champagne Regt. Navarre Regt. Normandie Regt. Nice (Italian)

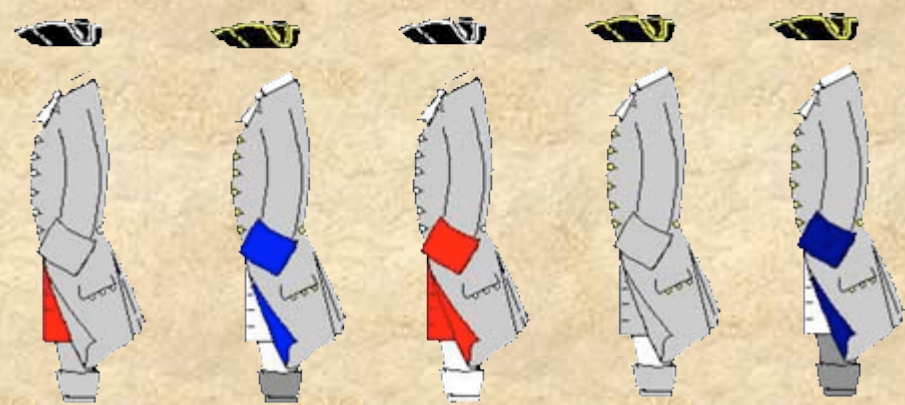


Regt. Ponthieu Regt. Solre (Walloon) Regt. Brie Regt. Provence Regt. Monnin (Swiss)

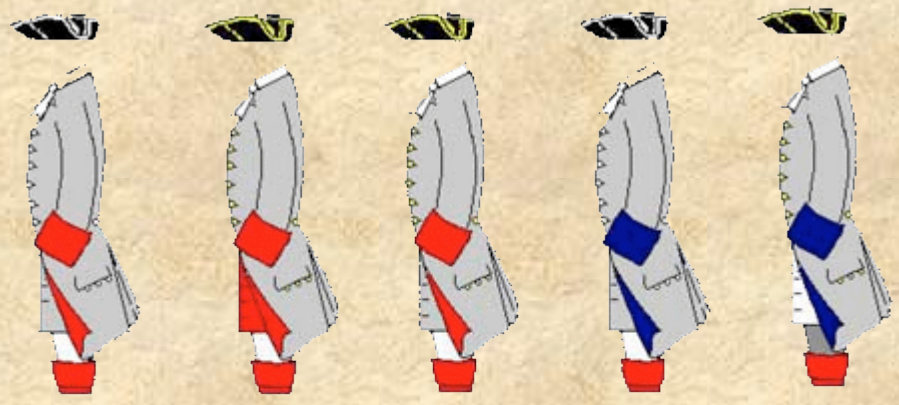




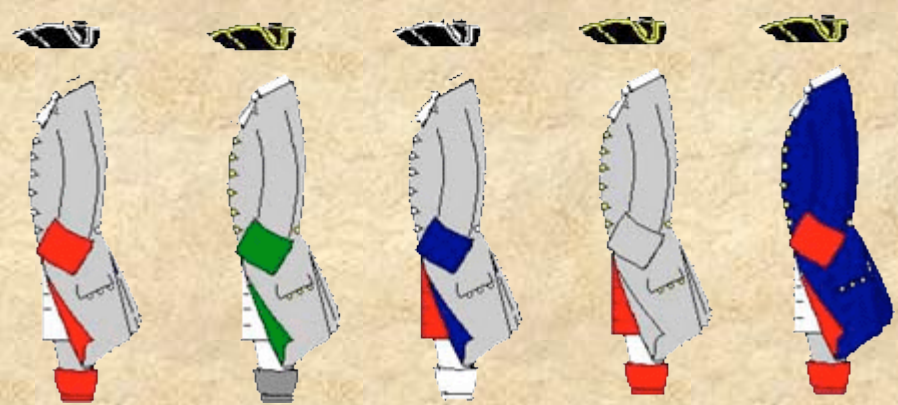
Regt. Reynold (Swiss) Regt. Lee (Irish) Regt. Salis (Swiss) Regt. Guiche Regt. Greder (German)



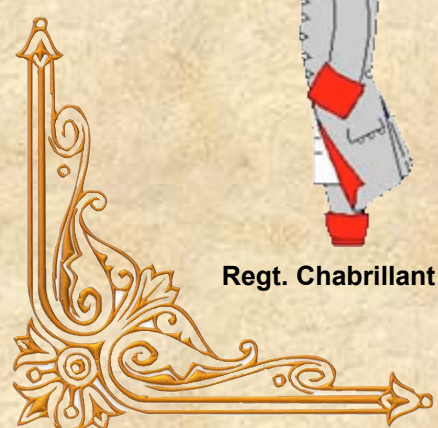
Regt. Crussol Regt. Maine Regt. Vermandois Regt. Bourbonnois Regt. Languedoc

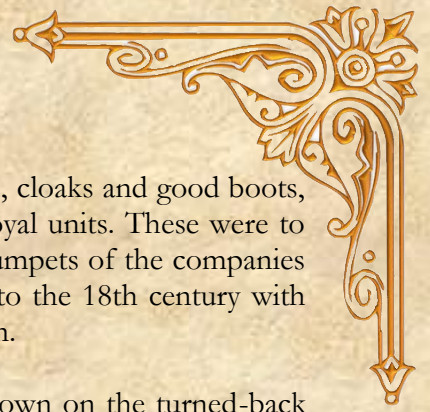


Regt. Montfort Regt. Bandevile Regt. Aunis Regt. Foix Regt. Nivernais



Regt. Chabillant Regt. Perri Regt. Dauphine Regt. La Marine Regt. Hussy (Swiss)





The Horse

In 1671, a royal order instructed that the cavalry were to have buff leather coats, cloaks and good boots, and be "dressed in good grey cloth lined in the same colour" except for the royal units. These were to "be dressed in dark blue...that all cavalymen have black hats...and that the trumpets of the companies wear the liveries" of their mestre-de-camp. This order set the standard well into the 18th century with the buff coat becoming a waistcoat by the time of the War of Spanish Succession.

The great majority of the "grey regiments" adopted red as the facing color, shown on the turned-back cuff. Regimental distinctions were provided by the color of the housings, which were of the livery of the colonels; these are now almost unknown, but a few are mentioned and make the basis for the ensuing plates



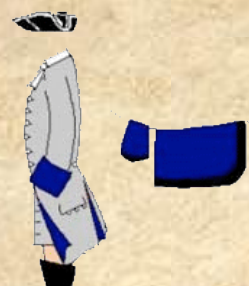
Regts Cosse & La Valliere



Regt. La Feronaye



Regts Royal, Le Roi, Royal- Etranger, Royal-Piedmont, Dauphin, Royal-Allemand, Berry, Grand Royaux



Regts Nassau, Fiennes, Souastre, Chatelot & Bissy

The Dragoons

The dragoons were the 17th-century version of mounted infantry, since dragoons were intended to fight on foot like infantry but use horses for quick movement. There were approximately 27 dragoon regiments in French service during the War of Spanish Succession. In general terms, these units were organized somewhat like the line cavalry, and usually bore their colonel's name.

The dragoons uniforms were among the most colorful in the army. None of the regiments wore grey, instead red, blue, yellow and green coats were popular. They had cloth breeches and waistcoats. They wore caps with a falling bag and a cloth or fur turn-up instead of hats.



Regt de Dragons du Roi



Regt. Hautefort



Regt La Reine



Regt Tesse

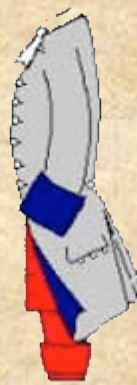




The Artillery



Regt Royal de l'Artilerie



Royal-Bombardiers



Cannonier des Cotes de l'Ocean

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