

BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD

Preserve - Educate - Explore

160th Anniversary Union Uniform Guidelines

Welcome

The union scenarios for the 160th Bentonville Reenactment focus almost exclusively on the XIV (Saturday scenario) and XVII Army Corps (Sunday scenario). We thank you in advance for the time effort spent in ensuring your look and appearance mirror those men of 1865. Please keep in mind these are suggestions, best used as a guide when building or enhancing your Bentonville impression. We look forward to seeing you all in March!

Historical Background

Sherman's army had been on the march since leaving Savannah in late January 1865. Their appearance reflected nearly two months of life on campaign. Upon reaching Fayetteville on March 10, 1865, Sherman's columns had been relying upon foraging parties for sustenance and clothing. Colonel Charles Kerr of the 16th Illinois wrote:

"A gunboat had visited us at Fayetteville, but no clothing or equipment came, and the men went through in the same clothes in which they started from Savannah, except where supplemented from rebel wardrobes. Officers as well as men were ragged, half shod or shoeless, and smeared from head to foot with the pitch of the North Carolina pine."

Gone were the days of pristine blue uniforms newly arrived from northern quartermaster warehouses. As uniforms and equipment succumbed to life on campaign, they were abruptly replaced by homespun clothing or supplemented by confederate uniforms. A XIV Corps soldier who fought in the 75th Indiana, David Floyd, wrote:

"Some-of our men wore a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other, trousers with one leg of blue and the other of gray material; others wore caps, wool and straw hats. The habiliments of this writer, at this time, consisted in butternut trousers, and a linen shirt from a clothes-line in the yard of a farm house. Doubtless we were the most ragged soldiers in the United States Army."

Another XIV Corps soldier with the 12th WI, Alonzo Miller of the 12th Wisconsin adds to this description when he scribed, "...Some of the boys are pretty shabby and a good many dress in citizen's clothes and Reb's uniforms, some bare feet, but all have the best courage."

The appearance of Sherman's army during the Carolinas Campaign is both humbling and inspiring - feelings we hope you emulate during this event. Hasen Reed of the 12th Wisconsin, XVII Corps, best sums up the spirit of those men when he wrote:

"I have said that our army was in splendid condition. So it was, but it is to be doubted whether there was ever a raggeder or a dirtier one. Our clothing was tattered, and our

faces begrimed with smoke; and I suspect our manners corresponded somewhat with our appearance; we neither used elegant language nor ate our bean soup with a fork..."

Jackets

- Federal sack coat
- Civilian sack coat
 - ❖ XIV Corps Badge (Saturday Scenario) - encouraged, worn on hat or jacket breast

Shirts

- US regulation shirt
- Civilian plain, plaid, or period printed cotton

Pants

- Federal sky blue trousers
- Civilian jeans trousers

Headwear

- Hardee Hat or federal kepi
- Civilian slouch, preferably black
 - ❖ Hats should be undressed

Canteens

- US smooth side
- Confederate issued (in limited numbers)

Haversack

- Painted cloth or oil cloth haversack
- Plain cotton duck or heavy cotton

Waistbelts

- US issued waistbelt
- Civilian roller buckle or forked tongue

Knapsacks

- Best Option – Blanket rolls/slings
- Better Option – double bag softpack
- Discouraged – Hardpacks

Leathers

- Cartridge box **MUST HAVE TINS**
- Bayonet scabbard **MUST HAVE TIP**
 - ❖ Per NC Historic Sites Policy – these two items are REQUIRED to pass inspection.

Firearms

- 3 band musket – rifled or smoothbore
- Henry rifles (union only)

Blankets

- US issued blanket
- Civilian wool blanket/coverlets

Canvas

- Best Option – no canvas/blanket roll
- Better Option – shelter half
- Strongly Discouraged - A-Frames

Uniform questions or comments should be directed to:

Colby Stevens

Site Manager

Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site

Phone: (910) 594-0789

colby.stevens@dncr.nc.gov