

Western Federal Uniform and Equipment Guidelines

Purpose: The purpose of the following guidelines is to assist the reenactor in selecting uniforms and equipment for a more authentic portrayal of a western federal soldier. Reenacting is not inexpensive, but it is not necessary to buy everything at once. Prepare a budget, and buy a few items each year. The road to a more authentic kit is a journey and not a destination. Enjoy the journey, but buyers beware. Do your research. Always when in doubt consult someone in the Unit.

Jackets

Color

Deep Blue Indigo wool flannel.

1. US Fatigue Blouse - The US government contracted with dozens of private companies to produce fatigue blouses, dramatically expanded their production capacity at the Schuylkill arsenal, and created several new arsenals in locations such as Stubenville and Cincinnati, Ohio, and St. Louis
2. US enlisted frock coat
3. State Jacket- (Ohio and Illinois) They were worn by early war volunteers, they were often worn out then replaced by Federal issue fatigue blouses or frock coats.

Note 1: Beware of sutler row jackets.

Trousers

Color

Sky blue (enlisted) Dark blue (officer)

1. US Contract military trousers - JT Martin, W. Deering widely produced for New York, Cincinnati, and St. Louis depots.
2. US Schuylkill Arsenal - The Federal government's original military goods manufactory and contractor, Schuylkill Arsenal in Philadelphia continued operating during and well after the Civil War.

Note 1: Civilian trousers should not be used.

Note 2: Gaudy plaids should not be used.

Note 3: Beware of sutler row trousers.

Shirt - Wool flannel shirts were manufactured by contractors from the start to the end of the war but quartermaster records show that an incredibly high number of issue shirts purchased by government arsenals and depots were made of gray cloth.

Color

Gray, natural, or white.

1. Wool flannel shirts
2. Domet Flannel
3. Muslin

Note 1: The use of civilian shirts should be avoided, but is acceptable.

Note 2: Beware of shirts sold on sutlers row.

Under drawers – They are highly recommended for comfort and protection. A light weight cotton/muslin pair of drawers would be accurate. They should have a button fly.

Hats – Hats were important in projecting a soldier's individuality. With this in mind, take great care in selecting your hat.

1. 1855 US Hardee Dress hat
2. US Forage Cap type I or II

Note 1: Hat brass was rarely used. Save your money.

Note 2: Animal parts, such as feathers and coon tails are not accurate and should be avoided.

Note 3: Beware of sutler (skimmers row) hats.

Note 4: Hillbilly, and Cowboy type slouches are not authentic.

Suspenders (Braces)

1. Cotton braces with adjustable buckles and button holes were common.
2. Cotton braces with leather button downs were common.
3. Cotton braces without adjustable buckles were common.

Note 1: Beware of sutler row suspenders. Most are incorrect.

Note 2: Elastic and clip on suspenders should be avoided.

Socks – Military issue and civilian socks made of cotton or hand knitted wool were widely used.

1. Military issue cotton socks.
2. Military issue hand knitted wool socks.

Note 1: Wool socks are more durable.

Note 2: Wool socks will keep your feet warm when wet.

Note 3: Socks should have flat seams to reduce blisters.

Note 4: The extra thickness of wool socks may require a larger (about 1/2) size brogan than with cotton socks.

Note 5: Federal socks were similar to CS socks.

Note 6: Modern hunting socks and socks with elastic should be avoided.

Shoes – Federal Jefferson brogan.

1. Jefferson brogans - This brogan became the standard shoe for US troops in 1851. This brogan was made of black leather, rough side out with wood pegs in the soles, and made on right and left lasts.

Note 1: Boots were rare for infantry troops and should not be seen in large numbers; however, pictorial

references do show the occasional pair of boots.

Note 2: Proper shoe fit is critical for comfort and injury prevention.

Note 3: Beware of sutler row shoe. A lot of marching and standing = buy a good shoe.

Canteens

1. Federal Smooth Side - These canteens should be made of tin with a cork stopper and covered with gray or brown jeans. The cork stopper should be attached with jute twine. The canteen sling can be cotton or leather.

Note 1: Stainless steel is not authentic.

Note 2: Canteens lined with beeswax can be a mess if the wax melts.

Note 3: Beware of sutler row wooden canteens most are not accurate.

Note 4: Shorten canteen slings so the canteen rides about right below the elbow level. Don't tie a cotton knot to shorten sling. Cut the sling and sew it back together.

Note 5: Don't buy a canteen with a Blue or sky blue cover.

Waist Belt

1. Oval US puppy paw.

Note 1: Belts should be worn around the waist near the navel and not on the hips.

Note 2: Beware of skinner row belts and buckles.

Note 3: Good quality leather will last.

Haversack – "If ye've got's good a appetite's I think ye hev f'm yer looks, ye can't git 'long 'thout that nohow. Ye may see the time 't ye'll wish ye had more to put in it; but jest let me tell ye ter hang onter yer haversack through thick 'n' thin. It'll be the best friend ye'll find in the army." Corporal Si Klegg

1. US issue painted haversack
2. Plain contract haversack

Note 1: The top of the haversack should be worn below the elbow on the hip not the butt. To shorten, cut the sling and re - sew where it attaches to the sack.

Note 2: Poke sacks should be used to separate rations.

Note 3: The haversack should hang freely and not be secured under the waist belt.

Note 4: A good pattern would be the Harrison Wiley.

Long arms – The Springfield 1861 .58 caliber rifle was the most produced long arm during the war. The Springfield 1842 .69 caliber smoothbore musket was used throughout the war up til 1863. The Springfield 1842 would be an outstanding .69 caliber musket choice. This weapon represents one of the most authentically reproduced out - of - the - box Civil War muskets available to reenactors today. It is also good for the CS side as well.

1. Springfield 1861.
2. Springfield 1842.

Note 1: Todd Watts at Blockade runner will remove modern markings and remark with period markings for a small fee.

Note 2: Two band muskets should be avoided. Some events prohibit them.

Cap Box

1. US Federal issue pattern 1861
2. US Federal issue pattern 1857

Note 1: Bridle Leather (smooth out): Leather which is blackened and finished on the smooth or grain side of a hide of leather. Was most common

Note 2: Waxed Flesh (rough out): Leather which has been blackened and waxed smooth on the flesh side of a hide.

Cartridge Box

1. US Federal issue pattern 1861
2. US Federal issue pattern 1857

Note 1: Breast plates and cartridge box plates should be used.

Note 2: Wear the cartridge box high on the right hip just under the waist belt for comfort.

Note 3: Cartridge boxes must have tins.

Note 4: Cartridge box should match the Long arm, but not required.

Bayonet Scabbard – Federal scabbards were riveted to the frog and had a pinned brass tip.

1. US Federal issue pattern 2 rivet.

Bayonets – Most bayonets used during the war were socket style. Many bayonets used in reenacting are of poor quality and not accurate, i.e., made in India. Armisport makes an authentic reproduction bayonet for their 1842 Springfield and 1861 Springfield muskets. The risk in buying an original is that it may not fit your musket, so be careful.

1. 1842 Springfield Bayonet.
2. 1861 Springfield Bayonet

Note 1: Remove the India marks.

Note 2: Invest in a quality bayonet.

Note 3: If you buy the gun and bayonet together most places make sure it fits.

Blankets – The best choice for a US reenactor would be a period military blanket made of 100% wool. Wool is preferred by far. It is more durable and will keep you warmer, especially when wet.

1. US lettered wool blanket Color: deep tan with brown stripes.

Note 1: Wool is more practical than cotton.

Note 2: Modern military blankets should be avoided.

Note 3: Blankets should be of 100% natural fiber.

Knapsacks – Knapsack are widely over looked in reenacting. They really add to the impression and are

recommended.

1. US Double Bag

Note 1: The total weight of the knapsack, blanket, ground cloth and other contents should be no more than 15 pounds.

Note 2: Carry an extra shirt and pair of socks in a poke sack. It makes a nice pillow also.

Mess Equipment – A tin cup and spoon are basic items that every soldier should possess. The tin cup can be used for drinking and to boil rations. Quality made tin cups have the top lip rolled around a wire, and the bottom of the handle is riveted to the cup. A bail handle is sometimes attached to the cup to facilitate use as a boiler. Period knives and forks having wooden handles are available at antique stores. US soldiers formed messes of about 4 soldiers and shared rations and cooking utensils such as frying pans and boilers. Reenactors commonly cook for themselves and carry their own rations, sheet iron frying pan and/or boiler. A period tin can with a bail makes an outstanding boiler. Some reenactors carry a tin plate. A canteen half from a Federal smooth side canteen makes an excellent frying pan. A handle for the canteen half can be made from a stick. Most soldiers also carried a pocket knife.

1. Tin cup.
2. Knife.
3. Fork.
4. Spoon.
5. Boiler.
6. Sheet steel frying pan. one to every 3-4 men
7. 1858 canteen half.
8. Plate.
9. Pocket knife.

Note 1: Don't get weighed down with mess gear.

Note 2: Cast iron skillets should be avoided.

Note 3: Leave the Bowie knife at home. A pocket knife will do just fine.

Eyewear Period frames with untinted glass.

Note 1: Contacts may be used.

Hygiene Kit – A poke sack can be used to carry a period tooth brush, comb, soap and tin of baking soda for toothpaste. A large cotton handkerchief can be used for a towel.

Housewife – Soldiers carried a small cloth wallet that contained sewing needles, buttons, thread and cloth to make field repairs to clothing.

Ground Cloth – Ground clothes were very important to Civil War soldiers.

1. Black Painted canvas ground cloth.

2. Federal issued gum blankets.