

8TH REGIMENT, NEW YORK STATE MILITIA (WASHINGTON GRAYS) CIRCA 1850 - 1870

(Plate No. 79)

Among the oldest of the New York City regiments of the 19th century was the Eighth. It originated as two separate battalions in 1808; these being consolidated the next year to form the 4th Regiment of New York Artillery. Along with all other City commands it was redesignated in 1812, becoming the 3d Artillery; again, in 1847, it was renumbered the 8th Regiment of Infantry. Throughout much of its life and even today it is called the Washington Grays. Early in the present century it went back to its original branch of service and is now the 258th Field Artillery Battalion.

The Eighth served during the War of 1812 in the forts of New York Harbor. In the Civil War it earned early publicity by capturing the celebrated Winan's Steam Gun in Baltimore, and later a lightship. The regiment was severely mauled at First Bull Run, but the worst blow it suffered came just before the battle. The men of its elite Washington Gray Troop, serving as light artillery with six 6-pounders, refused to go into action due to expiration of their term of enlistment and left their guns at Centreville to be manned by volunteers.

Our best source of information on the dress of the Eighth on the eve of the Civil War is a large, colored lithograph by Otto Botticher showing the regiment "on special duty at Camp Washington, Quarantine [Staten Island], Sept. 11th to 28th, 1858." Portrayed are the Field and Staff, eight infantry companies, the Troop under Captain Varian (already serving as artillerymen),

and the Band. The companies are wheeling into line for inspection by the Governor of New York. There is a wealth of detail: the company guides forming on the Right General Guide with his marker, the field officers checking the maneuver, the hand-drawn howitzers, the guard detail in overcoats, and so forth.

The Officer of the Day in the picture is distinguished by his sash worn diagonally across the breast, a device introduced, apparently, by the Regular Army dress regulations of 1851. Strangely, both these regulations and the *General Regulations for the Military Forces of the State of New York* for 1858 call for the sash to be worn over the right shoulder, whereas the 8th Regiment Officer of the Day has his over the left.

It will be noticed that the sergeant in the plate carries a musket and a sword, but wears no sash. He is a company guide. First sergeants wore the same, plus a sash; whereas the two general guides wore swords and sashes but had no muskets or cross belts. This matter of sergeants' accoutrements was of considerable moment just then; the Seventh Regiment was in the throes of the notorious "Hall Controversy" which resulted from the objection of its own Right General Guide to wearing a knapsack.

A photograph of some officers and men of the Eighth, at about this period, can be found in the *Photographic History of the Civil War*, volume VIII, page 181.

Frederick P. Todd

5th COMPANY, WASHINGTON ARTILLERY OF NEW ORLEANS, C.S.A., 1862

(Plate No. 80)

The history of this illustrious artillery unit begins with the organization of a volunteer militia company in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1838. The unit first saw service in Texas in 1845 as a battery of Major Gally's Louisiana Light Artillery Battalion. In the Mexican War it was mustered into Federal service on 5 May 1846, at New Orleans, as Company A, the Washington Regiment, and served as infantry; the Company was mustered out 4 August 1846, also at New Orleans. It has two modern battalions, the 141st and 935th Field Artillery (Washington Artillery), Louisiana National Guard.

On 26 May 1861, four companies (batteries) were

mustered into the Confederate States Army for service in Virginia. On the next day the 5th Company was organized as a reserve and, like its predecessors, was completely uniformed, armed and equipped at the expense of the members and fellow citizens of New Orleans.

On 6 March 1862 the 5th Company was mustered into Confederate service under command of Captain W. Irving Hodgson. At Corinth, Mississippi, the Company was issued sufficient gray horses to mobilize the complete six-gun battery,¹ and, by 27 March, it had been assigned to

¹ Initially these guns of the 5th Company were bronze Napoleons.

General J. Patton Anderson's brigade, Ruggles' division of Bragg's corps. Ten days later the 5th distinguished itself in the battle of Shiloh, 6-7 April 1862.³

The 5th Company has been selected to introduce this famous unit to the series because, although it was the last company organized for Confederate service, it is the first one of the five about which enough detailed information has been gathered to permit an authentic presentation.⁴ With the exception of the captain's kepi and sash, the details of uniforms shown in this plate are based on photographs of the 5th Company appearing in Miller's *Photographic History of the Civil War*.⁵

The caps of all ranks had scarlet crowns with dark blue bands. Those for enlisted men were piped with single yellow braiding and those for officers with gilt braiding according to C.S.A. uniform regulations.⁶ The cap insignia for enlisted ranks consisted of crossed cannon with block letters "W A" beneath. The officers' cap insignia, which was also worn on each side of the tunic collar, had the letters "W" and "A" on either side of the crossed cannon.⁷

A careful examination of the photographs also indicates piping, in all probability red, on the cuffs, shoulder straps and belt loops of the dark blue shell jackets worn by enlisted ranks. The braiding on the sleeves of the officers' tunics was according to paragraph 51 of the C.S.A. uniform regulations.⁸ The buff saber belts of the enlisted men followed the pattern referred to in foot-

³ *Photographic History of the Civil War*, vol. 2, 164-65.

⁴ Member Lee A. Wallace, Jr., Petersburg, Va., initiated the search for details in New Orleans and elsewhere. His initial efforts were enthusiastically followed up by two veterans of many years service with the Washington Artillery, Colonel Henry B. Curtis and Lt. Col. Numa Avendano, both of New Orleans. Further efforts to obtain details on the other companies are being made by Thos. Harrison, Historian, Dept. of Military Affairs, State of Louisiana.

⁵ *Photo. History, loc. cit.* Of the eleven photographs of personnel of the Washington Artillery, six have been identified as being 5th Company members. These six are: I, 95, top and bottom; I, 199, top and bottom; II, 164-65; VIII, 119. The caption for the top photograph on I, 199 is apparently in error by stating that the men shown are officers. These men are wearing light artillery saber belts of white buff leather patterned after the earlier U.S. model issued to enlisted men. There is no evidence of commissioned rank on their caps, uniforms or insignia. Comparison with the unquestionable photograph of the 5th Company officers on VIII, 119 will serve to clarify this point.

⁶ GO 4, A and IGO, C.S.A., 24 Jan. 1862 as reproduced in *Uniform and Dress, Army and Navy of the Confederate States of America*, facsimile reproduction by Ray Riling and Robert Halter, New Hope, Pa., 1952, following p. 5.

⁷ This placing of the letters for officers insignia may well have been dictated by the relatively low collars and the decreased width of the cap bands due to the gilt braiding for commissioned ranks.

⁸ *Uniform and Dress, op. cit.*

note 4 except that a rectangular buckle with the Louisiana pelican device replaced the circular U.S. buckle. In one photograph of four officers of the 5th Company, three, including the Captain, have similar rectangular buckles on their black morocco saber belts. All ranks appear to have been armed with the model 1840 light artillery saber.

The majority of enlisted men in the photographs appear to be wearing dark blue jean trousers, some tucked into medium length boots and others worn with a wide cuff turned up on the outside. The trousers of the officers were of lighter blue cloth and were trimmed with wide red stripes, having approximately one half inch of gilt braiding down the center.

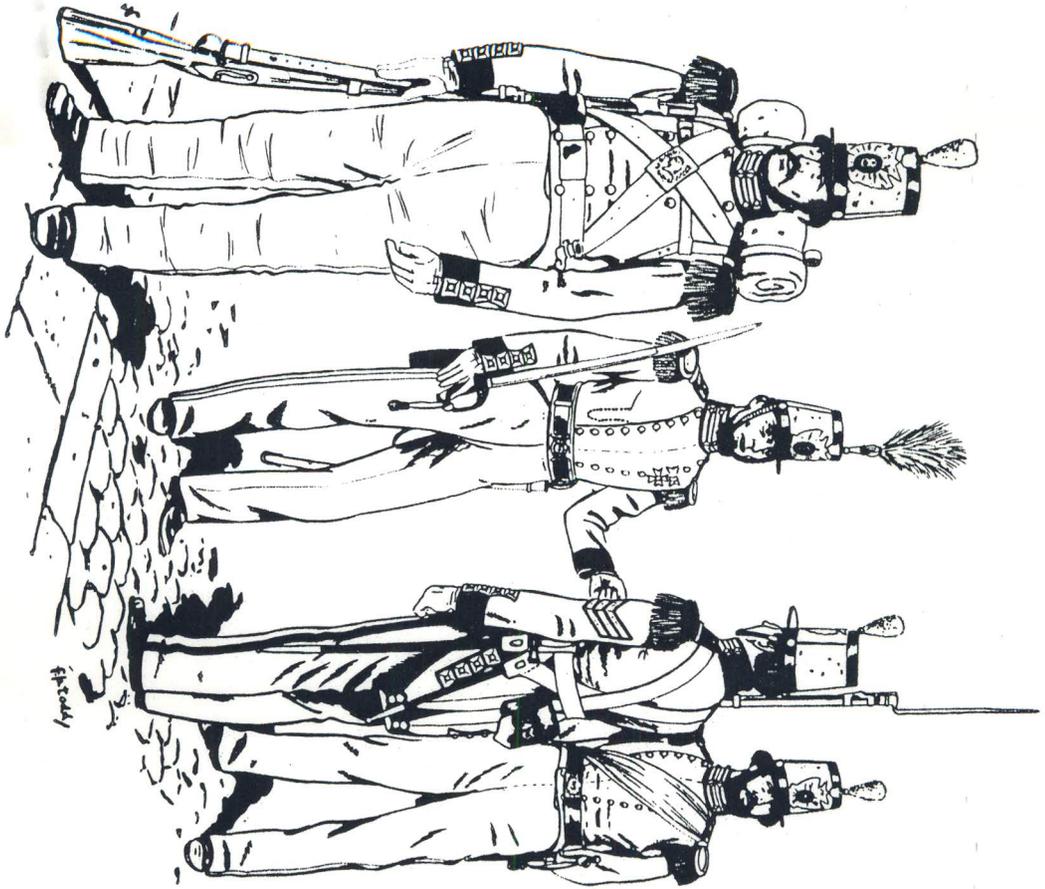
The artillery battle flag of fringed silk measured 3 x 3 feet is based on the original 5th Company battle flag as it was prior to the addition of embroidered battle honors.⁹ The Saint Andrew's Cross and all borders are appliqued, the stars are gilt paint, and the fringe, cords and tassels are of gilt cord and thread.

The pair of gray leaders are shown in artillery harness, U.S. pattern of 1861,¹⁰ which differed from that of 1841 and 1851 (Plate 68) mainly as follows: side pipes no longer necessary as rope traces had been replaced by leather with chain ends, here shown looped up by the trussing straps in the rings at the tops of the hames; bridle and saddle fittings were brass and the bit was brass plated steel; saddles were patterned after the Grimsley and had quilted seat covers of morocco and relatively high pommel and cantle arches; the end of the limber pole was padded and the fittings had been modified so as to replace the pole chains with straps. Finally, the artillery saddle blanket shown here is the U.S. pattern of 1856, scarlet dyed wool with 3 inch dark blue border and 6 inch "US" in the center. It is safe to wager that the Confederate drivers enjoyed sitting on the latter.

Harry Larter

⁹ This beautiful flag is on display with other flags and relics of the Washington Artillery in Confederate Memorial Hall, New Orleans.

¹⁰ Much of the artillery harness obtained for Confederate forces came from stocks confiscated from Federal arsenals at the outbreak of hostilities (notably the one in San Antonio, Texas) or by purchase of supplies in the hands of manufacturers engaged in filling U.S. government contracts, as occurred in St. Louis, Mo. (S. G. French, *Two Wars, An Autobiography*, Nashville, Tenn., 1901, pp. 136 ff). The photograph of destroyed gun teams and limbers at Marye's Heights, reproduced on II, 125 of *Photo. History*, is evidence that some of the harness used by the self-equipped Washington Artillery batteries was made according to U.S. government patterns of 1861. One of the few authenticated pieces of Confederate artillery harness in existence is Accession No. 88635 in the National Museum. This is a valise saddle (for the off horse) built according to U.S. specifications of 1851 except that the brass pommel post and hook have been omitted.

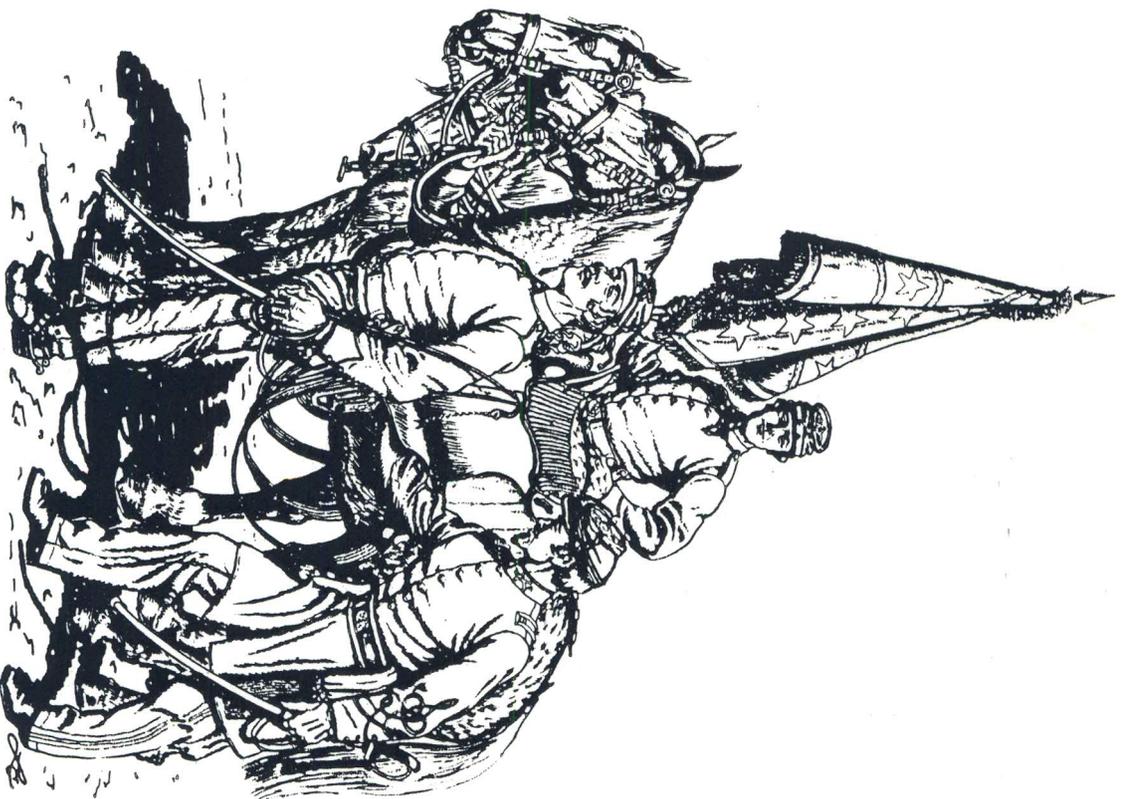


Private, summer full dress

Company and Company officer (as officer of the day), summer full dress

8th Regiment, New York State Militia (Washington Grays) circa 1850-1870

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Lead Driver and Pair

Battle flag

5th Company, Washington Artillery of New Orleans, 1862-1864

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