

Accoutrements Description – 1858

By Major William A. Thornton

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In Paul D. Johnson's book "Civil War Cartridge Boxes of the Union Infantryman" he references the 1858 draft by Major Thornton's of what was intended to be a revision of Small Arms and Accoutrements chapter of the Ordnance Manual. This draft however was never published. What follows is the Infantry Accoutrements section of Major Thornton's draft.

Infantry Accoutrements

Cartridge Box

Cartridge Box (.69 inch caliber round ball) of bridle leather blacked; length 7.2 inches, width 1.6 inches, depth in front 5.8 inches. Inner cover (light upper leather) 4 inches wide with end pieces sewed to it so as to cover the end of the box. Flap 8.5 inches wide at the bottom, 8 inches at the top, with a buttonhole stamp sewn to it near the bottom. Brass button riveted to the bottom of the box. Implement packet (light upper leather) sewed to the front of the box; 6 inches long, 3.5 inches deep with a flap, strap and loop. Two loops on the back of the box near the top for the cartridge box belt to pass through. Two roller buckles (japanned) for the tongue of the belt are sewed to the bottom of the box. Two tins each with one lower division, 3 inches by 3.3 inches, open in front to contain a bundle of 10 cartridges and two upper divisions, 2.7 inches deep, of 2 inches by 1.35 inches for 6 cartridges; the other 1.35 inches square for four cartridges. The edges of the tins are turned over and soldered down to prevent them from cutting the cartridges. All the tin linings should be made to slide firmly in the box.

Cartridge Box (.69 inch caliber elongated ball)

Cartridge Box (.58 inch caliber expanding ball)

Cartridge Box Plate

Cartridge Box Plate (sheet brass filling of lead and tin) Oval 3.5 inches by 2.2 inches with the letters "U.S." embossed. Two eyes (of iron wire No. 13 well tined) 2.5 inches apart, height or length each 0.35 inch, width 0.2 inch, embedded in the lead filling, for fastening the plate to the flap of the box.

Cartridge Box Belt

Cartridge Box Belt (buff or buff leather blacked) Length 55.5 inches, width 2.25 inches; terminating at end in billets for buckles each 4.25 inches long and 0.875 inch wide.

Cartridge Box Belt Plat

Cartridge Box Belt Plat (sheet brass filling of lead and tin) circular 2.5 inches diameter. Embossed "Eagle". Two eyes (of iron wire No. 13 well tined) 2 inches apart, height or length 0.4 inch, width 0.2 inch, embedded in the lead filling for attaching the plate to the belt.

Waist Belt

Waist Belt (buff or buff leather blacked) length 38.5 inches, width 1.9 inches; a standing loop at one end two hole and slots at the other end for receipt of the plate stud. Two holes 9 and 10 inches from the loop end of the belt for the receipt of the plate hook.

Waist Belt length 38.5 inches, width 1.5 inches; hole and slots at one end for plate studs. Hole 8 inches from opposite end for plate hook. In all other respects the same as the belt before described. Usually supplied to the militias.

Waist Belt Plate

Waist Belt Plate (sheet brass, tin and lead filling) Oval 3.4 inches long by 2.3 inches wide; embossed with the letters "U.S." curvature 0.25 inch – 2 studs and hook (brass) deeply embedded in the lead filling. Strip of sheet brass (no. 14 wire gauge) bent at one end to form hook. Forked at the other end into which branches the stems of the studs (no. 4 gauge) are firmly riveted before they are set in the filling of the plate. Studs (copper with sheet brass No. 14 gauge heads) are set one inch apart and 2 inches from the elbow of the hook. The lead filling is covered by dressed sheepskin, glued to the filling.

Waist Belt Plate (sheet brass, tin and lead filling) Oval 2.8 inches long by 1.6 inches wide; formed from a strip of sheet brass (no. 14 wire gauge). Bent at one end to form the hook, and at the other end to form the studs, which are arrow shaped. No covering to the lead filling, but in all other respects made as the plate before specified. These belts are supplied with the last named waist belt.

Bayonet Scabbard

Bayonet Scabbard (sole leather blackened) length including the tip for bayonet of the model 1822 – eighteen inches, and for bayonets of the model 1840 – nineteen and a half inches. Tips (sheet brass) length 2.4 inches. Brazen to knob point, 0.8 inch long. Frog (buff or buff leather blackened) two inches wide. Sewed to a socket of black leather by two seams 0.8 inch apart. Also secured between the seams by two shoe rivets (copper no. 7 – 3/8 inch) long heads and brass.

Socket length sewed to the top of the scabbard. The frog receives and slides on the top waist belt.

Cap Pouch

Cap pouch: (bridle leather blacked) length and depth 3 inches, width 1.25 inches, inner cover 2.8 inches by 3.3 inches with end pieces. Flop made of the same piece as the

back with a buttonhole strap at the bottom. Brass button (riveted) under the bottom of the pouch. Two loops sewed to the back 2.5 inches long by 0.5 inch wide to admit the waist belt of 1.9 inches. Lining - a strip of sheepskin with the wool on, 2.7 inches wide glued with fish glue and sewed to the back at the mouth of the pouch.

Cone Pick

Cone Pick (steel wire No. 18) 1.5 inches long, with a single handle 0.5-inch diameter. It is carried in a loop in the inner left-hand corner of the cap pouch.

Gun Sling

Gun Sling (russet bag leather) width 1.25 inches, length 46 inches. One standing and one sliding loop. Hooks (brass No. 13) length 0.6-inch stem, 2 inches long of which one inch is embedded in the doubled end of the sling, and firmly fastened by two brass rivets. The doubled end is also fastened by two seams sewn lengthwise of the sling.

To Manufacture Buff Leathers

The best of grain leather should be selected. They are first immersed in weak lime water to remove the hair, then for thirty days they are immersed in strong lime water, then they are shaven and grained to remove excess excrescencies from the flesh side of the hide. Then they are brought under a pounding beam to soft them. They are next seared or filled with the best of liver oil, which unites with the gluten, formed by the actions of the lime. Then the hide is scoured in strong potash water. The potash with the oil forming soap, which frees the leather from the glutinous matter it contains. The hides are then exposed on frames, for about ten days, to the direct actions of the sun, by which means they are bleached. After which they are whitened with Paris-Whiting for white accoutrements.

If the leather is to be blackened, the coloring is applied without the use of whiting.

Blackening for Buff Leather

Take 5 parts of extract of [Logwood](#)
Take 4 parts of Pulverized Nutgall
Take 3 parts of [Copperas](#) (ferrous sulphate)

Enclose the Nutgall and Copperas in a course bag and put it with the extract of Logwood in a vessel with 32 parts of rain water, over a moderate fire, so that it may boil slowly until the copperas is entirely dissolved. Then remove the vessel from the fire and let it stand undisturbed until the liquid had settled and become cold. After which decant it into bottles and the dye is ready for use. If its colour is found too blue add copperas, if on the contrary too black, add the extract of logwood.

To Blacken Buff Leather

Apply the die with a sponge or soft brush. And when the application has become dry, brush with leather gently with a clean soft shoe or clothes brush. Then with a sponge, apply a very slight coat of sweet oil to the surface of the belt and again brush quickly and lightly as in cleaning cloth. The oil is to give beauty and brilliance to the blacking; but care must be taken in its application, for if too much is applied, it will lay the nap of the leather and thereby the surface of the belt will be smooth and shining like old woolen cloth, when filled with grease.

Water should not be used in cleaning buff leather belts. They should be cleaned with a hard dry brush, and so softened.

As cloths, in the grain, can hardly be died an enduring black; it surely cannot be expected that buff leather can be perfectly and permanently blacked. The die must be applied as often as circumstances may render necessary to keep the belts in good military conditions.