

## A View of Veteran Soldiers

By Bob Braun @ 1995

No matter how many times we've poured over images in Civil War photo collections, there always seems to be an opportunity to discover something new and exciting in those images. Enter member Bill Brewster, who re-introduced me to an image that I had seen (and glossed over) for years. His insights are worthy of presentation.

In The Image of War series, Volume 6, page 145, there is an image of a line of soldiers drawn up in front of a

public house owned by a Mr. Lawrence. It is obvious from even a casual inspection of the image that these men are clothed for the campaign, and not "preening" or otherwise dressed in their martial "Sunday best" for the camera. There are at least 45 of them, but only about twenty are clear enough to discern uniform details beyond hats.

And speaking of hats, the majority of the 45 wear a

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blend of civilian and issue felt hats: some with "beehive" crowns, others are the "pork pie" fashion. Some are clearly light, in color. About nine (not counting one soldier standing singly behind the rank of men) wear the standard forage cap, or about 20% of those pictured. Many hats are worn down low, over the eyes; a few have the brims pushed up in front. One has pushed up the visor of his forage cap.

Of the twenty soldiers we can clearly view, some uniform details are iconoclastic to today's popularly-held notions of

how common soldiers should look. Most wear the sack coat, apparently unaltered and "as issued;" a few wear the frock coat. Several wear their coats open, buttoned at the top button, and with their accoutrement worn under

not "over!") their coats—a warm-weather practice seen in other images as well. Almost no-one was wearing a cartridge box sling; all are wearing waist belts, some complete with cap boxes. This presumes the overwhelming majority of soldiers pictured were wearing their cartridge box on their waist belts—a known practice among soldiers in the latter portion of the war (and, frankly, suggested throughout the "School of the Soldier" in Hardee's *Infantry Tactics*, and elsewhere).

At least eight can be seen wearing either a canteen or haversack and canteen. One wears just a canteen on the left side, the position prescribed by *Army Regulations*. Two others clearly wear their canteens on the right side! Two of these appear to be Pattern of 1858 smoothside canteens; one is dented and without a cover. Upon further examination, six of the eight are wearing their haversack and canteen straps crossed in front, meaning the haversack and canteen were worn on the left AND righthip! This obvious divergence from *Army Regulations* has a reason based in plain practicality. Seasoned campaigners, reasoned Bill Brewster, would know that this arrangement best balanced the weight of quipage filled with water and three or more days rations. The preferred arrangement in this small sampling was the canteen on the right; haversack on the left.

also seen in officers of the 105th Ohio in Larry Strayer's excellent article "Soldiers Three" (*Company Wag*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 1). Two of the officers wear their canteens on the right, haversacks on the left; none wear both on the prescribed "left hip." Also examine that oft-printed image of a company from the Twenty-second New York State Militia at Harper's Ferry, in Summer, 1862.

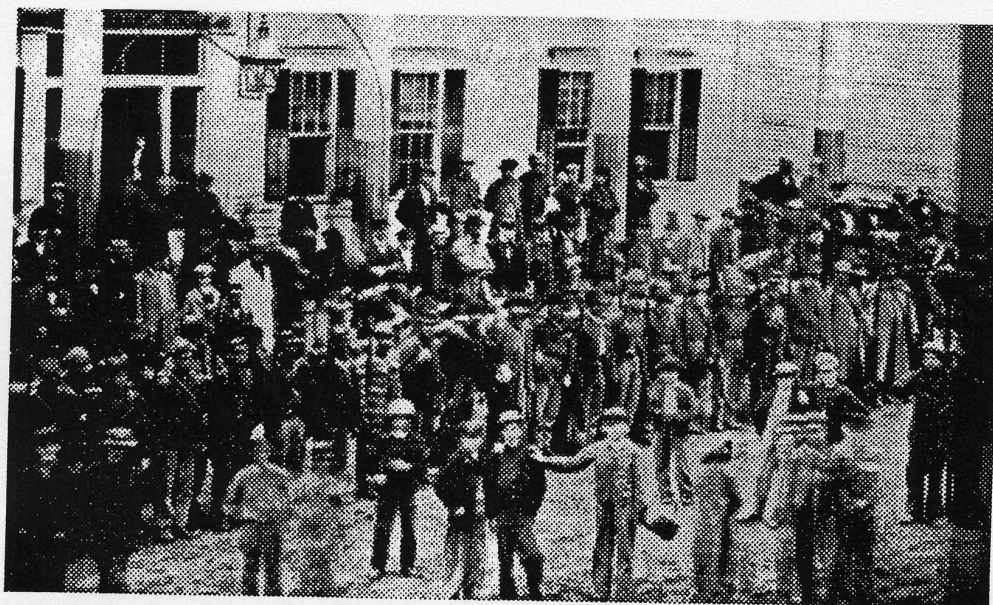
They wear knapsacks with blankets folded within the bags of the knapsack; overcoats rolled and strapped to the top of the knapsacks, AND canteens

and full haversacks worn with straps crossed in front—canteens on the right side and haversacks on the left side! (See *They Who Fought Here*, p. 24, or a much better view in Time-Life's *Civil War* series "Tenting Tonight," pp. 18-19).]

Returning to our veterans, many wear the knapsack; no-one is seen wearing a roll of blankets. One man has a light colored blanket rolled and strapped to the top of his knapsacks, while at least a couple have smaller rolls similarly strapped. The rest have nothing strapped to the top of their knapsack (again, a commonly seen warm-weather practice, when the overcoats and overcoat straps were either turned in or cast aside.)

Nearly all are holding muskets (a mix of Enfields and Springfields) at the "Soulder, Arms" position common to the period, bayonets fixed. Only a few rifle slings are seen; most do not have rifle slings.

So... who WERE these rough, stoic veterans in soft felt hats and un-buttoned blouses, who wore cartridge boxes on their waist belts, and canteens and haversacks crossed



[Interestingly enough, this arrangement was

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and over both hips? Western troops of "Uncle Billy" Sherman? Members of "Pap" Thomas' army near Nashville in late 1864?

Nope. They were members of the Army of the Potomac: the Fourth Vermont Regiment, of Second Brigade, Second Division, Sixth Army Corps! The image was made in

Brattleboro, Vermont after the Fourth Vermont's muster-out in mid-July, 1865.

We are indebted to Bill Brewster for bringing this important image, and all its wonderful details, to our attention!