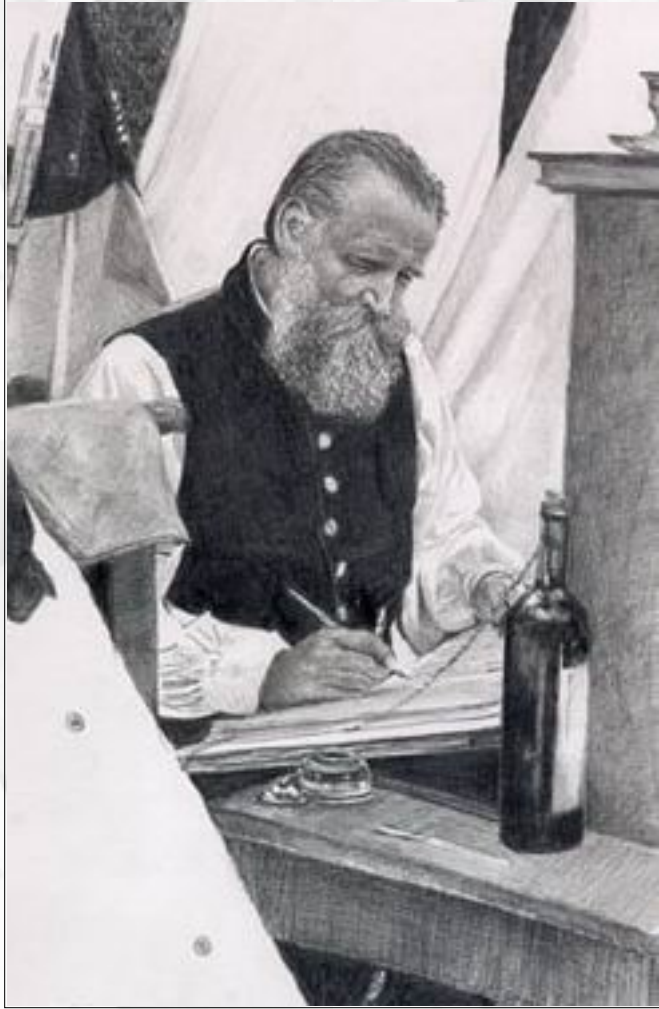




From the Desk of the First Sergeant

Wearing your Gear

The Blanket Roll

Rolling the Blanket for
the Top of the Knapsack

Blanket Inspection

Folding the Greatcoat

WEARING YOUR GEAR

Stephen P. Hanson

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Rule #1:

Nothing on your body should interfere with anything else on your body or with any Manual of Arms evolution.

Rule #2:

Nothing on your body should interfere with anyone else in ranks in front, back, or beside you in any company evolutions.

General

When looking front-on at a fully accoutred soldier standing at attention, the only items of equipment that should be seen, aside from the straps for all his accoutrements crossing his chest, are his weapon, waist belt, cap box, bayonet, and the blanket, either behind his head on his knapsack or across his body if he is wearing a blanket roll. All other items are behind him and out of sight.

Waist belt

Around the waist, the buckle over the navel. It should not ride low on the hips.

Cap Box

On the right side of the waist belt buckle about half way between the hip and the navel. The straps held in place between the belt and the overlap of the belt extending from the buckle to the brass keepers so it will not slide along the belt. The nipple pick, when not being used, should be inside the cap box in the small loop on the left back corner of the box.

Cartridge Box

Behind the right hip and above the buttock. The top of the box about one finger-width below the bottom of the waist belt. With a load of blank cartridges, the cartridge box barely weighs more than its unloaded weight and it is never a problem for the reenactor. However, loaded with live rounds (2-1/4 pounds of lead), it is very heavy. If it rides too low, the resulting bouncing on the buttock during a full-day's march causes a great deal of fatigue.

Cartridge Box Sling

Over the left shoulder, the bottom under the waist belt behind the right hip. The belt plate centered on the chest.

Bayonet and Scabbard

Whether using a Springfield or Enfield scabbard, the general rules for position apply.

Hanging from the waist belt in front of the left hip. Far enough forward so the shaft or handle of the bayonet is within easy reach. Far enough forward so it doesn't obstruct the weapon at Support Arms or get tangled in the haversack or canteen straps. Back enough so that the shaft of the Springfield bayonet does not clink on the belt buckle or the tip does not protrude to the left poking the next man in ranks. The Enfield scabbard should be back far enough so that, when the wearer is sitting, the scabbard hangs outside the leg, not resting on top of the thigh or hanging between the legs.

Haversack

Hanging from the right shoulder, behind the left hip with the "bulk" of the full bag resting on top of the left buttock, but not high enough to obstruct the knapsack when worn. Worn over all leather gear but under the knapsack straps. Far enough to the rear so it does not obstruct the left arm from hanging naturally against the body or get in the way of Support Arms.

A Haversack full of food, even dried food, is bulky and heavy. If it hangs too low, the resulting swing and bounce on the left buttock or thigh will cause fatigue on a long march. Also, a bulky haversack hanging too low (protruding from the bulkiest part of the buttock), and with the cup attached to the strap, will get in the way of the soldier next in line to the left when turning, even half-turning to prime the weapon.

Cup

Whenever possible, inside the haversack, not hanging from it. A bulky haversack with a cup hanging on the outside gets in the way of the man next to the left when turning, gets in the way of the canteen, and clanks when marching. Put some food item in the cup and it doesn't take up any more room than the item placed in it, and also protects some delicate food items from being crushed.

Canteen

Over the right shoulder and resting on top of the haversack behind the left hip. It should sit on top of the haversack flap with the canteen center about even with the haversack buckle. If the knapsack is worn, it should be worn over the knapsack straps so it can be used without taking the knapsack off.

Knapsack

On the back, packed so that soft items act as a cushion, and high and tight enough so it doesn't bounce or sag and pull on the shoulders. Straps cinched only tight enough so the entire bundle is compact and nothing inside can move or fall out, but not so tight that it is bulky and inflexible. The chest straps crossed across the chest and hooked onto the opposite shoulder strap. The blanket tied to the top should ride high and close to the back of the head, not sag over the back of the pack so it pulls on the shoulders and gets in the way of others in ranks.

Blanket Roll

Preferably on the right shoulder so it doesn't get in the way of Shoulder or Support Arms, and does not obstruct the cartridge box. If rolled correctly, there should be no bulk on the top of the right shoulder that will get in the way of firing. Tied behind the left hip, loose enough not to be restrictive, but tight enough not to fall loose or swing when moving. Of the two halves, the larger or heavier "bag" should be in the back.



THE BLANKET ROLL

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It must not be assumed that full knapsacks were always necessary every time soldiers set out on a march. Naturally, if an army was moving from one place to another, it was necessary. But, if some elements of the army were marching out and back again on a patrol or a scouting mission, or if the army was making a limited march into enemy territory where resistance (a battle) was expected, but leaving its main camp intact, only a limited amount of supplies were needed. This is an ideal scenario for most battle reenactments, because, in fact, the camp remains intact.

In such cases, men were issued extra food, which they carried in their haversacks, and extra ammunition, which they carried in their pockets or knapsacks in wet weather. The men would only carry enough equipment for field camping (an extra shirt, extra underwear and socks, toiletries, cleaning equipment, shelter halves, and maybe gum blankets, depending on the expected duration of the march and expected weather based on time of the year. As soldiers became veterans, they often went without shelter halves and gum blankets, and even the extra clothing, preferring to sleep rolled up only in their blankets. Many times they were too tired to care about even those amenities and slept anywhere, under any conditions, along the sides of the road in bivouac.

A means of carrying these few necessities for short duration is as old as armies themselves - roll everything up in a blanket and sling it over the shoulder.

Most attempts of reenactors to depict this practice result in either of two extremes. On the one hand, the blanket is obviously empty and worn merely for decoration. On the other hand, it results in a bundle of so many items that the blanket roll is absurd in its bulk and impossible to wear. A reenactor's primary concern is usually the problem of how to fire his musket with this monster coiled around him. The main concern of a real veteran is the comfort and convenience of being able to carry his load over a long march.

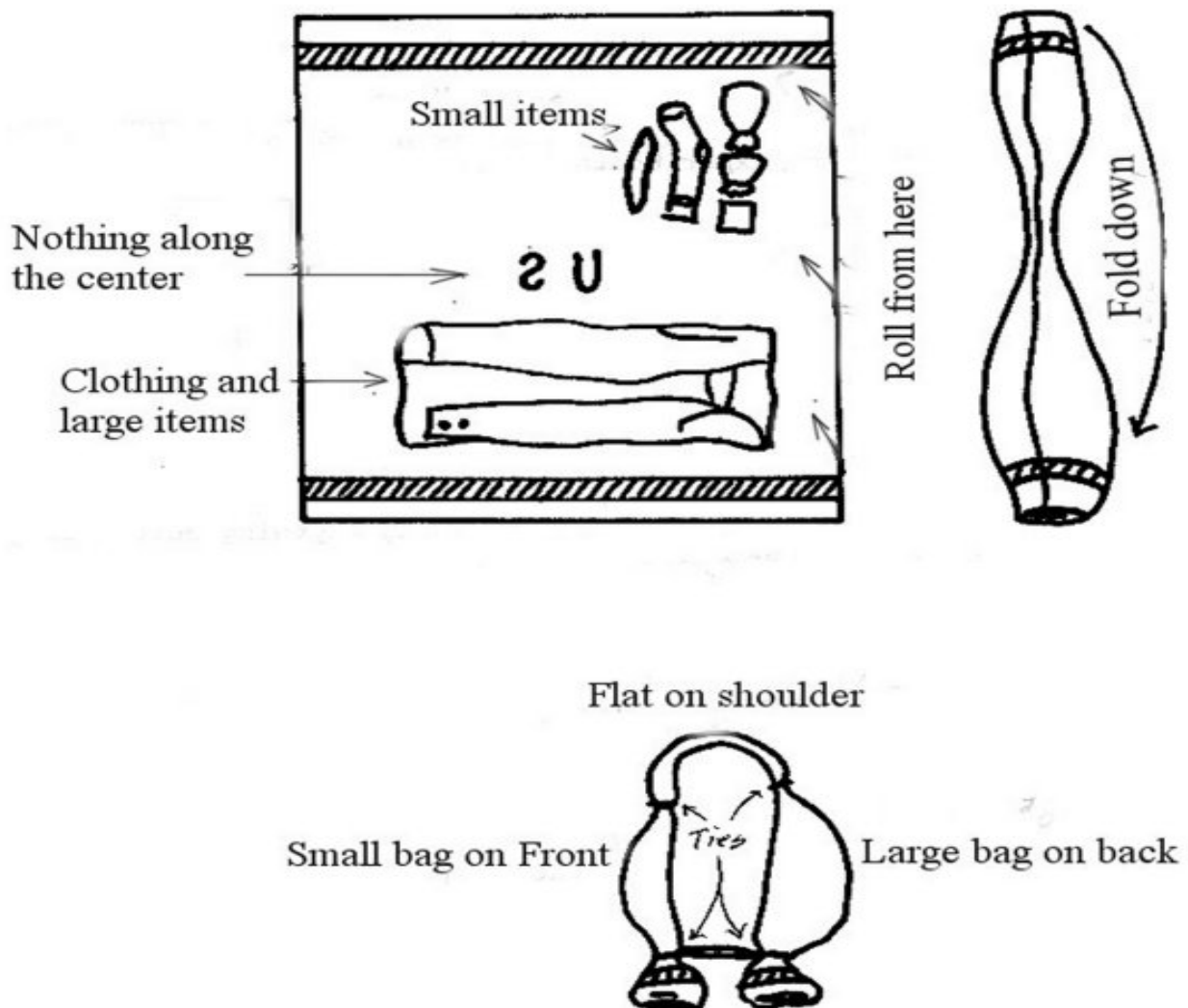
The most convenient solution reenactors use to this problem is to wear the blanket over the left shoulder. Yes, it allows the weapon to be fired without obstruction, but it causes many more problems to the veteran: the ends of the blanket tied at the right hip obstruct access to the cartridge box and get in the way of the "prime" position; "shoulder arms" is difficult because the same bulk at the right hip make it difficult to hold the weapon in close to the body; and "support arms" is impossible because of the bulk on the left shoulder. Another consideration not taken into account by the reenactor whose cartridge box is full of blanks, is that a full cartridge box is very heavy and pulls on the left shoulder. To balance the overall weight of the soldier's load, as little else as possible should be carried on the left shoulder. Consider for a moment carrying the blanket roll on the right shoulder. If the bulk does not exist, the musket can still be fired, and, not only are all arms carries unobstructed, but the extra padding on the right shoulder making "right shoulder shift" a much more comfortable, even preferred, position for long periods of time. Also, when at "support arms" the left hand can be placed on or under the blanket roll for support; access to the cartridge box is not obstructed; the weight of a full cartridge box is all the left shoulder need carry; and the canteen full of water and the haversack full of food is in the shadow of the ends of the blanket on the left hip where the sun cannot get at them, keeping both

cooler. Doesn't this sound like a veteran who has been doing it for a long time and who has found the most sensible, comfortable and utilitarian way of carrying a blanket roll?

Now, how do you accomplish such a miracle of military science? You simply create what amounts to two "bags" out of your blanket. One bag hangs in the front, the other hangs in the back, and the center, which rests on your shoulder is only as thick as 5 or 6 layers of wool and becomes a very wide strap that can carry a heavy load without cutting into the shoulder. There is no great bulk at the shoulder to obstruct firing.

1. Lay your blanket open on the ground.
2. Fold any clothing to be carried flat and lay them on the blanket, side by side, on one half of the blanket, between the end stripe and 5 or 6 inches from the center of the length of the blanket.
3. Place small items on the other half of the blanket near the end stripe, making a long, thin, evenly distributed pile with the largest, heaviest and bulkiest items nearer to the end stripe, and the smaller, lighter items toward the center. Remember that the ends of the blanket will be "down" and the center of the blanket will be "up", so any containers should have their tops facing the center of the blanket. Making little packages or draw-string bags to put things in will make this packing, as well as knapsack packing, a lot easier. You will not have a large number of loose, small items falling about.
4. If the shelter half is to be carried, fold it so that it fits on the blanket between the end stripe and 5 or 6 inches from the center, and is as wide as the blanket. Place it down first with the clothing on top (some clothing may be put on the small-items side of the blanket to reduce the bulk of the shelter half/clothing side when the blanket is rolled up).
5. If the gum blanket is also to be carried, it can be placed on the small-items side folded in the same manner as the shelter half. If rain is a possibility, it can be rolled over the blanket AFTER the blanket is rolled up but not tied to or with the blanket. This makes it easy to take off and place over the shoulders as a rain coat if necessary. At any rate, your blanket and its contents will stay dry. Don't spread the shelter half or gum blanket flat on the blanket and roll them with the blanket, because the bulk at the shoulder will be too much to handle.
6. The shelter half and gum blanket should not extend beyond the far edge of the blanket so when it is rolled up they will stick out.
7. Try to make the loads on both sides as even as possible, but it is not necessary. If the loads are of different sizes, the larger "bag" will be carried in back to keep it out of the way. It may even be more convenient for you to make one side larger than the other so the bag in front is not so bulky that it gets in your way. Some experimentation may be necessary that is more comfortable for you. It needs to be tried several times, learning new lessons from each experiment.
8. Roll up your blanket from the edge where the items are stored.
9. Fold the blanket in half bringing the two ends with the stripes together with the raw edge on the inside to keep it from fraying and snagging any movements.

10. Tie the ends together at the stripe. Tie one end tightly, then run the cord to the other end and tie it tightly also. The tie should be high enough and tight enough that it will not slip out when carried. The two ends need not be held tightly together. The larger the loads within the blanket, or the greater the bulk the blanket has to get around, the more space you will have to leave between the ends. Your extra shoe laces are excellent for this job, and will not require obtaining anything more than you already have on hand.



11. Do not tie the center where the blanket will rest on your shoulder. It will cause a bulging at exactly the spot where it should be flat. Other ties may be made at the tops of each "bag" if desired, but remember that the more ties, the more difficult it will be to get inside.

12. During rest stops, the blanket roll can be thrown against a tree or placed under the head as a pillow.

Remember that the more "veteran" a soldier became, the less he felt he needed to sustain himself in the field. Blanket rolls are meant to be convenient and should never be so bulky as to obstruct movement or be a burden.

Rolling the Blanket for the Top of the Knapsack

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This is merely a suggestion to make a neat blanket roll for the top of the knapsack. On the practical side, it keeps the blanket from catching or snagging on anything that will cause its edges to fray, and it puts the extra weight of the shelter half (probably the heaviest piece of your kit, next to your rifle) up high on your back for a more comfortable load.

1. Spread the blanket on the ground with the US down; remember which way is "down" for the US cypher.
2. Fold both long edges inward to meet in the center.
3. Fold the shelter half in half along the center seam, and in half again.
4. Place the shelter half in the center of the blanket.

5. Fold both long edges of the blanket inward to meet in the center with the shelter half inside.

- 6. Fold the "down" edge of the blanket up to meet the stripe on the "up" half of the blanket.

7. Fold the "up" half of the blanket down to meet the top of the "down" edge, this puts all raw edges of the blanket inside so they won't fray, and puts folded edges on the outside.

8. Roll the blanket from the "up" edge.

9. This will leave the US centered on the blanket roll, with the fold seam just below the US (it will sit ON the top of the knapsack this way, leaving no seams visible).

10. Buckle the straps.

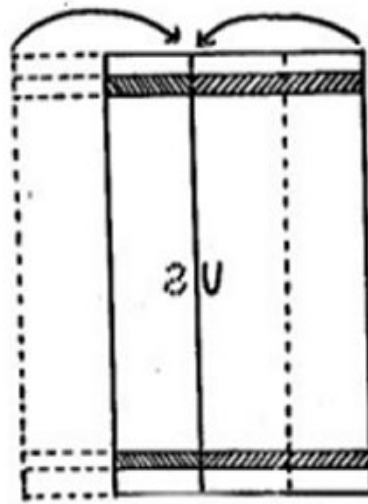


Figure 1

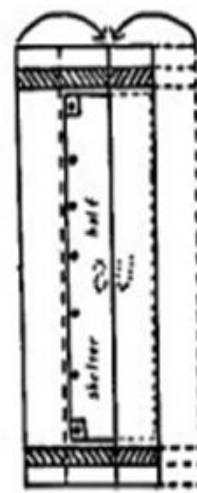


Figure 2

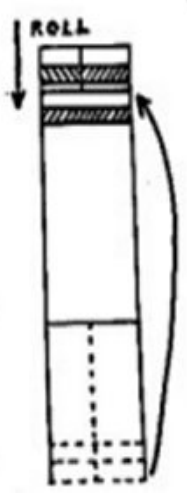
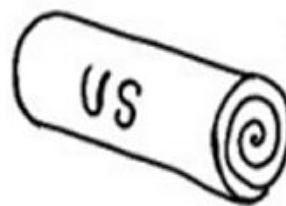


Figure 3



Blanket Inspection

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CLOTHING

1. shelter half
2. rain cover
3. knapsack with overcoat inside
4. stockings

EATING

5. plate
6. cup or boiler
7. utensils

TOILETRIES

8. soap and shoelaces
9. towel with toothbrush, shaving brush, razor, and comb

CLEANING AND POLISHING

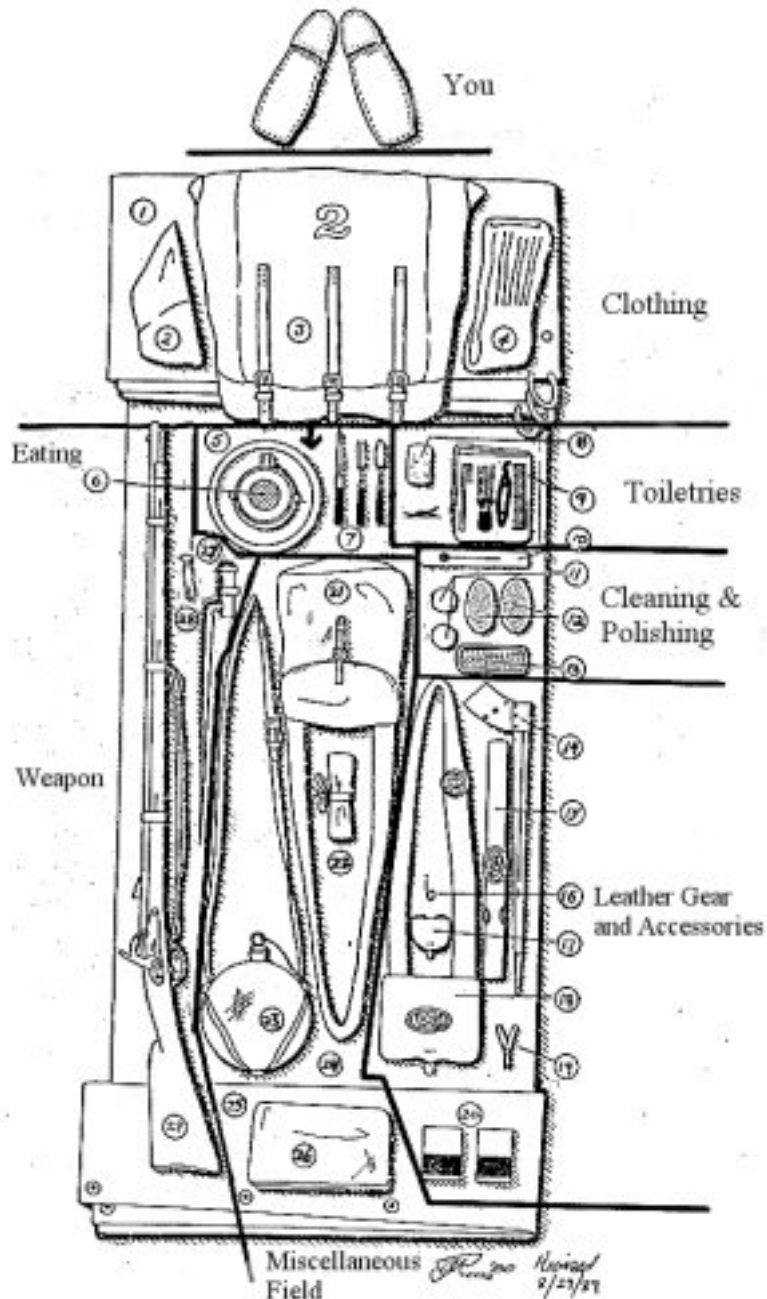
10. button stick
11. tins of metal and shoe polish
12. shoe brushes
13. clothing brush

MISCELLANEOUS FIELD

21. haversack
22. housewife
23. canteen
24. blanket
25. gum blanket
26. cleaning rags

LEATHERS AND ACCESSORIES

14. bayonet scabbard
15. waist belt
16. nipple pick
17. cap box
18. cartridge box
19. musket tool



20. cartridge box tins

WEAPON

27. tampion

28. bayonet

29. musket



Folding an Overcoat

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"Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861", Article LI, para. 1576, states "... the great-coat, when carried, to be neatly folded, not rolled, and covered by the outer flap of the knapsack."

In Article XXX, para 316, describing knapsack inspections, it states "... The knapsacks will be placed at the feet of the men, the flaps from them, with the great-coats on the flaps, and the knapsacks leaning on the great-coats."

However, in Article XIII, para 96, describing company quarters, it also states "The knapsack of each man will be placed on the lower shelf of his bunk, at its foot, packed with his effects, and ready to be slung; the great-coat on the same shelf, rolled and strapped; ..." This is a barracks situation, with bunks and shelves.

Many people have stated that, because the knapsack straps are called "overcoat straps" it means they are used to tie the overcoat on top of the knapsack. This is the tradition of the European armies of the time, because many were not issued blankets. As can be seen from the above, the straps are used to tie the rolled overcoat in barracks, and on the cavalry saddle. But the regulations concerning the placement of the overcoat inside the knapsack for infantry are clear.

During a march, the army halted, as a rule, ten minutes out of every hour. This gave men enough time to see that rain was coming, and, if it was not already done, roll his blanket in his gum blanket to keep it dry, or take his gum blanket out and tie it around his neck to keep himself AND his pack, with its blanket, dry. These men lived outdoors, and could tell if rain was imminent and prepare for it. The argument about a wet blanket does not "hold water".

Bob Mulligan, formerly of Co H, 4th US, Sykes' Regulars submitted instructions he found on how to roll the overcoat issued to Cavalry ("The Regular", Vol. 2 No. 5, May 1991). The instructions can be followed to the last step. Where the cavalry would roll the overcoat so they could be tied to the saddle, the infantry would fold it to fit inside the knapsack.

Pull the cuffs down off the sleeves. Lay the coat out, back down, with the cape spread out at the top like a fan. Be sure the seam of the cape is straight up along the line of the back seam of the coat. Pull the center vent together at the bottom. **(Fig 1)**

Fold one side of the coat over the center seam all the way to the opposite side seam (1/3 of the total width of the opened coat). Fold the cape 1/3 of its entire width.

Fold the sleeve across the top to the opposite shoulder, and double back any overhang. **(Fig. 2)**

Fold the other side of the coat the same way. The coat is now folded in thirds lengthwise, the width of the shoulders (also the width of the knapsack). **(Fig. 3)**

Go to the bottom, and fold the outer edges of the skirts inward, starting from the waist or above, and down to the hem. The width of the skirt is now the width of the shoulders. Likewise, fold the corners of the cape inward to the width of this shoulders. Now the entire garment is one long rectangle the width of the shoulders. **(Fig. 4)**

Fold the cape downward over the collar, and the skirt upward to the bottom the cape. If your coat is long, it may have to be folded higher. At this point the coat can be rolled if necessary for cavalry or for garrison display. **(Fig. 5)**

For packing in the knapsack, fold the coat again at the middle. The coat should now be the same depth, as well as the same width, as the folded knapsack. **(Fig. 6)**

You may need some practice to get the overcoat folded correctly. Large coats need to be folded closer.

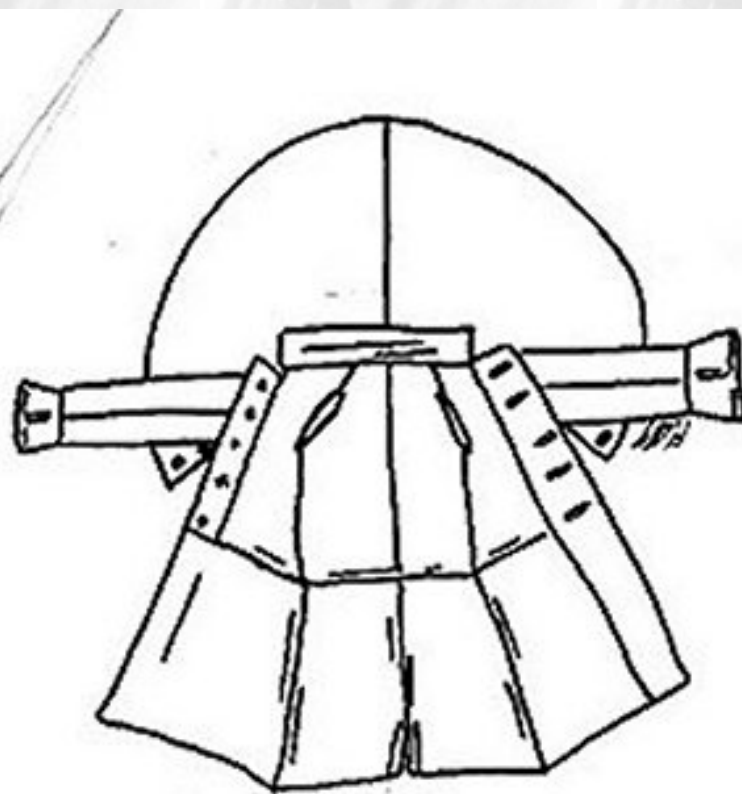


Figure 1

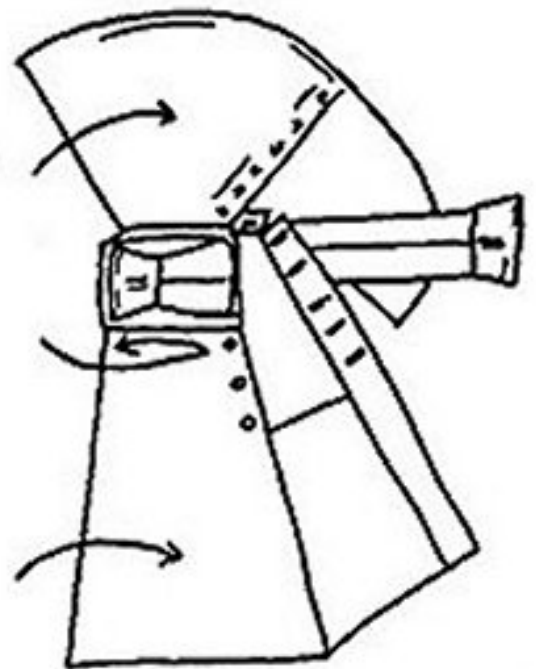


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

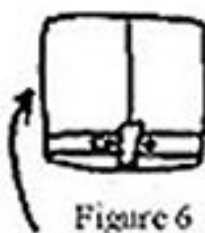


Figure 6



Figure 7

The overcoat should not hang out so far that it droops on either side. If it is loose, you will lose it on the march.

