



The American Soldier, 1786

The whole U.S. Army in the fall of 1784 was one infantry regiment; consisting of eight infantry and two artillery companies. Four states -- Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania -- were called upon to furnish the troops, but only two, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, responded. The missions of the Army were to occupy the forts along the frontier and protect the U.S. commissioners making treaties with the Indians. The uniform, adopted by the Secretary of War and approved by General Washington in General Orders in December 1782, consisted of a blue coat with red facing, white lining and buttons for the infantry, and red lining and yellow buttons for the artillery.

In the left foreground is a captain of artillery, an epaulette on his right shoulder, wearing the red lined coat with yellow buttons.

In the right foreground is an infantry private in the fatigue vest made of blue cloth with a red collar used for daily duties to spare the uniform coats. Sometimes the fatigue vests were made by company tailors (as in the one shown); sometimes they were merely last year's coats cut down, in which case they might retain the red cuffs.

In the background is a field grade officer, distinguished by his silver epaulettes, inspecting a detachment of infantrymen in blue coats faced with red and lined with white. The infantrymen are headed by their musicians in reversed colors -- red coats with blue facings. The Army of 1784 was not always able to furnish uniforms even for the small number of troops in the service. The New Jersey detachment in 1784, for example, was issued some blue coats with white facings, the old uniform of the New England line. The detachment's captain was forced to stop the men's rum ration in order to use the money to buy red cloth so that the company tailor could make all the coats uniform.