



The American Soldier, 1855

Experience in the Seminole and Mexican Wars had demonstrated that campaigns in the swamps, forests, prairies, and lonely highlands of North America had to be waged in undress or fatigue uniforms. After the Mexican War many Army officers felt that the full dress uniform adopted in the early 1830's and retained without modifications was too expensive, complicated, and old-fashioned and requested a change. Their requests were heeded, and in 1851 radical changes were made in the style of the dress uniform. The uniform coat with sloping skirts and turnbacks worn since 1810 was replaced by a frock coat, and the tall, stiff dress cap by a cloth "gig" cap; also, some of the arms lost their established distinguishing colors. The infantry received light blue for the white worn since the Revolution, the dragoons orange instead of yellow, while the mounted rifles, over their strong protests, were given green to replace their black and gold.

In the scene depicting a battery of light artillery in 1855, a first sergeant of the light artillery is shown in the left foreground in the new jacket issued for the mounted troops in 1854, with the red piping denoting the light artillery. His grade is indicated by the three bars and lozenge of red worsted on his sleeve and by the red sergeant's sash. The red pompon on his cap and the red stripe at the base of the crown show his arm -- artillery -- and the letter on his cap, his battery.

In the right foreground is a quartermaster officer in the blue frock coat prescribed in 1851 for all officers. The buff welting on his trousers and the ornament on the front of his cap (U.S.) identify him as a general staff officer, and his pompon-- the lower two-thirds buff and the upper third light or Saxony blue -- indicates he is an officer of the Quartermaster Corps.

In the background is a battery of light artillery.