

FIELD MANUAL
OF THE
U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS, WESTERN DETACHMENT
OKLAHOMA CITY, O.T.

Presented for the instruction and uniformity of members of the OKC Signal Corps in the duties, customs, and practices of the United States Army Signal Corps during the Civil War (1861–1865).

Developed by Dale Myszewski

OKC Signal Corps Living History Detachment

Based upon the 1862 Manual of Signals by Major Albert J. Myer, U.S.A. with reference to the Army Regulations of 1861, and contemporary field orders and other records.

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OKC Signal Corps — Field Manual

This manual provides operational guidance for members of the OKC Signal Corps reenactment unit. It serves as both a field reference and a curriculum for the School of Instruction.

History of the Signal Corps

The United States Army Signal Corps traces its origins to the vision and ingenuity of Major Albert J. Myer, a surgeon who developed a system of visual signaling using flags, torches, and telegraphy to communicate across great distances. Initially established on June 21, 1860 and confirmed by Congress in 1863, the Signal Corps became an indispensable part of the Union Army during the Civil War, providing commanders with the ability to coordinate movements, relay battlefield intelligence, and manage the expanding network of military telegraphs.



As the war progressed, the Signal Corps became an increasingly professional and essential organization. During the **Battle of Fredericksburg** (December 1862) and later at **Chancellorsville**, Union signal stations—often perched atop church steeples or high hills—provided critical reconnaissance, reporting enemy movements and relaying orders even amid chaos. One of the Corps' most famous contributions came during the **Battle of Gettysburg** in July 1863. Signal officers under Captain Lemuel B. Norton manned **Little Round Top**, maintaining communication with General Meade's headquarters while simultaneously spotting and reporting Confederate troop movements. Their signal flags could be seen across the lines, and their timely reports helped the Union anticipate and counter Confederate attacks. Some historians credit these observations with contributing to the Union's successful defense of its left flank.

While the visual signaling system was invaluable in the field, it was the **United States Military Telegraph (USMT)**—a separate organization staffed mainly by civilian operators—that handled much of the long-distance communication between Washington and the armies. Nonetheless, the Signal Corps worked alongside and often overlapped with the USMT, particularly in the Western Theater. During the **Vicksburg Campaign** in 1863, Signal Corps detachments provided General Ulysses S. Grant with a steady flow of

communication across the Mississippi River and between scattered army units. Despite harsh terrain and Confederate resistance, Union signalmen relayed orders and reconnaissance reports that allowed for the careful coordination of naval and land forces, contributing to the eventual siege and surrender of the city.

By 1864, the Signal Corps had become indispensable to the Union war machine. Its officers and enlisted men were attached to nearly every major army and department, serving from the Gulf of Mexico to the Potomac. As **General William T. Sherman** launched his **Atlanta Campaign and the subsequent March to the Sea**, his forces relied heavily on signal communication to maintain control over vast, moving columns of troops. During the march, **signal detachments operated telegraph wagons and field stations**, relaying reports to Sherman's headquarters and maintaining contact with Washington through relays that stretched back hundreds of miles. Sherman himself often expressed greater trust in his **Signal Corps officers than in the civilian USMT telegraphers**, as the former were under military discipline and could be counted on to act with discretion and mobility.

Signal officers also served a vital role in **intelligence and observation**. From mountain tops, church steeples, and observation towers, they watched enemy movements, corrected artillery fire, and even intercepted Confederate wig-wag messages. Some detachments engaged in counter-signal work—decoding or disrupting Confederate communications. At times, they operated under fire, as at Spotsylvania, Petersburg, and Atlanta, where flags waved through smoke and bullets to keep Union commanders informed. These acts of courage and technical skill earned the Corps a reputation for ingenuity and discipline.

By the end of the Civil War, the Signal Corps had established itself as an indispensable part of the modern army. Its innovations in **visual signaling, field telegraphy, and communications intelligence** laid the groundwork for the future of military communication. From the first tentative flag wig-wags on the Virginia Peninsula to the organized networks of telegraph lines and signal towers stretching across the South, the Corps had evolved into a professional and respected branch of service. In total, more than **2,500 officers and men** served in the Signal Corps during the conflict, many of whom went on to shape the development of the Corps in the decades to come after the conflict.

In retrospect, the Civil War proved to be the proving ground for the Signal Corps' core mission—to **connect the Army**. Whether high on Little Round Top, watching the Mississippi from a signal tower at Vicksburg, or relaying Sherman's orders across the scorched fields of Georgia, the Signal Corps demonstrated the power of communication as

a weapon of war. It transformed command and control from guesswork to science, setting the stage for the communication networks that would define modern warfare.

Part I — Purpose and Scope

- To train members in the history, practices, and field duties of the U.S. Signal Corps during the American Civil War.
 - To provide a consistent standard for camp operations, signaling practices, uniforms, and conduct.
 - To serve as the foundation of the unit's **School of Instruction**, ensuring all members achieve proficiency in historical skills and decorum.
-

Part II — Organizational Roles

- **Captain of Signals (President):** Commanding officer of the unit organizationally and in the field.
 - **1st Lieutenant/Senior Sergeant (Vice President):** Executive officer; assists the Captain, assumes command when absent.
 - **2nd Lieutenant:** Assists in the operation of field posts and telegraph stations.
 - **Sergeants:** Senior enlisted reenactors; supervises enlisted members and ensures discipline. Assists or directs if detached the operation of a signal post.
 - **Privates:** Perform signaling, camp duties, and assist officers and NCOs as directed.
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Part III — Impression & Essential Standards

A Word on Impressions

OKC Signal Corps is a Union unit dedicated to providing living history and education on early long-distance communications methods developed by the Union Army before and during the Civil War. This includes both flag communications and the later military deployment of the telegraph.

In re-enacting you will typically hear about two extremes of reenactors – the “hardcore” and the “farb”.

The hardcore reenactor begrudges any sense of modern convenience or practicality. It does not matter if the hidden ice chest is there to safely store food to avoid food poisoning or sleeping in a tent provides a mild amount of comfort. They are quick to judge the wool weight of uniforms and the level of dye. The only food good enough for them is the unsoftened hard tack. If they are not dirty they are not in character (you will find out why this is bad later).

The Farb/farby/"far be it for me to criticize...but" is essentially the reenactor who just does not care about the impression that they present. This comes in varying degrees but at the most extreme they have no regard for their impression even to the public. These units and individuals tend to be highly disrespectful to officers and event staff and have a bad tendency of ruining the impression for the attendees. In their minds the best Civil War military impression that can be given is one that portrays a disorganized rabble.

Our goal is to practically straddle the line between these two extremes. We want to provide the most authentic experience possible to anyone attending an event because that is why we and they are there. But at the same time that must be balanced with modern practicality to ensure a safe and fun experience for everyone in the unit.

You will be expected to conduct yourself as a soldier in the Union Army of the 1860s in terms of dress, presentation and outward discipline but know at the same time you will still have an enjoyable experience doing it. More on this in the Military Decorum section.

Uniform & Equipment Standards

Enlisted Basic Kit

- Forage cap ("Bummer") or slouch hat. Kepis could be worn but this was less common for enlisted.
- Sack coat, period undershirt.
 - Note 10-12oz wool was the most common during the war and is much lighter. Most reproduction sack coats use 16oz which is much warmer.
- Sky-blue trousers with suspenders.
- Brogans or Black footwear that mimics the look of brogans (actual brogans strongly preferred, but all modern-looking shoes are prohibited).
- Canteen, Mess kit, haversack, shelter tent or A-frame tent.
- (Optional) Enfield or Springfield rifle or sharps carbine.
- (Optional) Sky Blue Single Breasted Great Coat.
- No modern wrist watches or other like devices.

Officer Kit

- Slouch hat for field; kepi for dress.
- Officer frock coat (preferred) or sack coat with proper shoulder straps.
 - For late war impressions a custom sack coat with subdued rank is also permissible. Note that this may not be allowed depending on the event.
- Dark-blue officer trousers, (preferred) with or without thin gold piping with suspenders. Sky blue trousers can be worn if you do not yet have dark blue trousers. These were not regulation for staff officers but were seen fielded.
- Map case or haversack, sidearm, and saber was appropriate for parade or inspection.
- Period writing materials and equipment.
- (Optional) Dark Blue Double Breasted Great Coat
- No modern wrist watches or other like devices.

Note for Officer Hat Badges

For certain period impressions there are different period correct hat badges. For a very early (60 - early 61') impression the kepi or slouch would just be plain or with a "US" wreathed staff hat badge.

For 1861 to mid-1864 the adopted symbol was the crossed flags (like our logo). This began to appear quickly on correspondence, documents, tents and so forth as well as a privately purchased hat badges. Well not sanctioned for officers of the Signal Corps, it was certainly not uncommon.

With General Order No. 36 (Aug 22nd, 1864) the crossed flags with torch with the "US" was made the official badge for Signal Corps. There was still sometimes some variation as these were tailor made, sometimes they included the "US", sometimes they did not and in other surviving examples the "US" was so faint it could hardly be seen.

My recommendation for officers is that when able purchase multiple hats with multiple badge forms. This allows you to be flexible with your impression at events where the impression is more closely scrutinized. Make sure to note that the crossed flags, torch and wreath represents the latest part of the Civil War.

USMT Kit

- Slouch hat
- Vest (preferred) or simple civilian frock coat
- Period appropriate trousers with suspenders (no military colors)
- Period appropriate footwear
- Haversack (cloth or tarred) and canteen strongly recommended.
- No modern wrist watches or other like devices.

Women's Clothing

TBA

Signaling Equipment

- 4x4 signal flags (standard field size). Smaller 2x2 flags were rarely used except in special circumstances and are optional for demonstration only.
- Sectional staffs with ferrules (8 ft assembled).
- Torches or lanterns for night signaling (if planned).
- Kit bag for staff and flag transport.
- Field glass (binoculars).
- Telegraph instruments (keys, sounders) for demonstration stations when appropriate.

Prohibited Items

To preserve historical accuracy and the professional appearance of the detachment, the following items are **prohibited** during events unless specifically approved by the Detachment Commander. Certain modern conveniences may be discreetly kept **out of sight within tents** for personal use after hours, but they must never be visible to the public or interfere with the authenticity of camp life.

The following items are not permitted in camp or during public hours:

- Modern electronic or gaming devices (phones, tablets, handheld consoles, etc.). Phones may be used after hours with discretion.

- Modern camping chairs, coolers, or plastic containers visible in camp.
- Modern clothing, personal items, footwear, or hats not concealed by appropriate period garments.
- Alcoholic beverages and controlled substances are always prohibited.
- Loudspeakers, Bluetooth speakers, or visible power banks.
- Modern weapons or non-period replica arms.

Note: Items not listed may still be deemed inappropriate at the **discretion of the Detachment Commander**, whose decision is final for the duration of the event.

Ranks & Advancement

Historic Note

The OKC Signal Corps system of rank and advancement mostly conforms to the Signal Corps Association Reenactors Division (SCARD) rank structure for the sake of consistency. These do not necessarily reflect general historical precedent as the Signal Corps took a unique approach to indicating rank and that is not particularly well documented historically. This is despite their being several examples of it. (see photo to right).



While no wartime regulation prescribed the wearing of the crossed-flags insignia, the emblem has long represented the skill, proficiency and the fellowship of the Signal Corps.

In line with this, within the OKC Signal Corps Detachment the flag patch is used as a mark of training and proficiency — as it was by many of the Signal Corps detachments during the Civil War.

Military Ranks & Advancement

- Recruit
 - An individual who has expressed in joining the unit but is not prepared and/or properly equipped to join the unit for a re-enactment or living history event.
- Private

- A member fully able to participate in events with the unit but who has not yet attended a school of instruction.
- Private (Signalman/First Class)
 - A member who has successfully completed the Camp of Instruction and is a certified Signalman.
 - Wears the crossed flags on the left shoulder.
- Sergeant
 - Appointed by the Commanding Officer of the unit.
 - Wears the crossed flags on both shoulders along with Sergeant chevrons.
 - Assists in the training of and re-training of current members.
- Senior Sergeant
 - Alternative rank held by the Vice President/Executive Officer of the Detachment.
 - Wears the same insignia configuration as a regular Sergeant.
 - Effectively acts as the First Sergeant of the unit.
- 2nd Lieutenant
 - Highest achievable rank within the unit. 2nd Lieutenants will be appointed to lead segments of posts as the unit continues to grow.
 - Leads signal and telegraph posts. Assists the command officers in their duties.
- 1st Lieutenant
 - Rank held by the Vice President/Executive Officer of the unit. Senior Sergeant is the rank which will be held by Executive Officer until such a time that the organizational size warrants appointing other officers.
- Captain
 - Rank held by the President/Commanding Officer of the unit.

Conduct Standards for the Detachment

Detachment & Military Decorum

(Field Manual Summary, ca. 1861)

1. Cleanliness and Care of Men and Equipment

Ref: Reg. 86–87

Company commanders shall ensure the cleanliness of their men — including their persons, clothing, arms, accoutrements, and equipment — as well as the order and condition of their tents and quarters.

2. Bathing and Personal Grooming

Ref: Reg. 87

Where facilities allow, soldiers should bathe once or twice each week. Feet are to be washed at least twice weekly, hair kept short, and beards neatly trimmed.

3. Duties of Non-Commissioned Officers Regarding Cleanliness

Ref: Reg. 88

Non-commissioned officers in charge of squads [posts] are directly responsible that their men follow these hygiene rules — washing hands and faces daily, brushing or combing their hair, and keeping their arms, clothing, and accoutrements in the best order.

4. Proper Dress in and out of Quarters

Ref: Reg. 94

Except when on fatigue duty or within quarters, coats, vests, or jackets shall always be buttoned or hooked at the collar.

5. Wearing of Uniform

Ref: Reg. 95

Officers and enlisted men shall wear the proper uniform of their corps or regiment while at their stations, in camp, or in garrison.

6. Obedience to Orders

Ref: Reg. 68; A.W. Art. 9–10

All subordinates must strictly obey the lawful commands of their superiors and execute them promptly, faithfully, and with good spirit.

7. Exercise of Authority and Punishment

Ref: Reg. 68; A.W. Art. 9–10

Authority shall be exercised firmly but with kindness and justice toward inferiors. All punishments must conform to the Articles of War.

8. Forbidding Tyranny or Abuse

Ref: Reg. 69

Superiors of every grade are strictly forbidden to injure or abuse those under their command through tyranny, capriciousness, or offensive language.

9. Respect Toward Non-Commissioned Officers

Ref: Reg. 70

Officers will refrain from reprimanding non-commissioned officers in the presence or hearing of enlisted men, to avoid weakening the NCO's authority.

10. Courtesy Among Soldiers

Ref: Reg. 71–72

Courtesy is essential to discipline. Respect to superiors extends beyond duty hours. It is the subordinate's duty to offer the first salutation, and the superior's to return it. Soldiers under the command of the detachment will refrain from the use of profanity while performing their duties.

11. Salute with Arms

Ref: Reg. 73–74

Sergeants carrying muskets salute by bringing the left hand across the body to strike the musket near the right shoulder. Corporals and privates out of ranks or not on post will salute in the same manner.

12. Salute without Arms

Ref: Reg. 75

When meeting an officer while unarmed (or armed only with a side-arm), the soldier raises the right hand smartly to the visor of the cap, palm forward, elbow level with the shoulder, and looks respectfully toward the officer, who returns the salute.

13. Saluting when Seated or Occupied

Ref: Reg. 76

A soldier seated and not engaged in duty will rise on the approach of an officer and render the customary salute. If standing, he will turn toward the officer to salute. Repeated compliments are unnecessary when remaining in the same place.

14. Compliments to Officers of Other Services

Ref: Reg. 77

Soldiers shall render proper compliments to officers of other regiments and corps when in uniform, as they would to their own superiors.

15. Courtesy to Women

Ref: Post-War Custom (ca. 1880s)

While not prescribed in the 1861 regulations, soldiers and officers are encouraged to display gentlemanly respect toward women by touching the brim of the cap or removing the hat when passing in public. Any women attached to the detachment are under its full gentlemanly protection at all times.

16. Cohesion and Mutual Support in Camp and Field

Ref: Reg. 84–85; General Duties of Companies

The strength of the service rests in the cooperation of all ranks. Each man shall contribute to the order, cleanliness, and readiness of the camp — assisting one another in pitching and striking tents, maintaining the company street, and securing the stores and equipage. No soldier shall consider his duty complete while a comrade's task remains undone.

17. Absence Only by Leave

Ref: Reg. 129–132; A.W. Art. 21–22

No officer or enlisted man will leave camp, quarters, or post without permission from his commanding officer. When orders are given to strike camp or retire from post, all personnel will remain until released. The company moves, serves, and departs as one body; no man will depart until leave is granted and his duties are complete.

Appropriate Dress

Both due to culture and military protocol there was a minimum that one had to adhere to be considered *dressed*. These standards are higher than people may imagine but not too dis-similar to the modern military.

To be “**in uniform**” meant being:

Dressed in the prescribed clothing for your station and duty, arranged properly, and ready for inspection or command.

Situation	Enlisted Minimum	Officer Minimum
Parade / Inspection	Frock or sack coat fully buttoned, cap on, accoutrements complete	Frock coat fully buttoned, sword belt, hat, gloves
Camp Duty (Roll, Guard, Drill, On Post)	Pants, suspenders up, shirt, coat at least top button fastened, hat on	Pants, coat at least half-buttoned, hat on
Fatigue / Work Detail	Shirt and trousers, sleeves may be rolled, hat optional	Sack coat or shirt, hat optional if working
Off Duty / Rest	Shirt and trousers minimum within tent	Same, but coat nearby if called suddenly

1. Engagements (Combat or Field Operations)

In the field, practicality always outweighed formality. Soldiers and officers alike wore **fatigue or campaign dress** — the serviceable uniform suited for movement, dirt, and weather.

For a Signal Corps detachment specifically:

- **Fatigue (sack) coat or frock coat if available**, worn with at least **top buttons fastened** — the coat should hang correctly and not flap open in wind.
- **Shirt** (usually flannel), **trousers**, and **suspenders up**.
- **Hat or cap on at all times** — essential for sun and identification.
- **Boots or brogans on**.
- **Accoutrements or sidearms** as ordered (e.g., revolver belt, field glass case, haversack with signal kit).

While on post or under fire, loosened buttons or rolled sleeves might be tolerated, but when approached by an officer or performing a signal exchange, they were expected to be **“in uniform”** — coat buttoned, hat on, and orderly in appearance.

The rule of thumb in period writings: *“A soldier on duty should be ready to stand inspection at any moment, however rough his duty.”*

2. Signal Posts (Observation, Relay, or Line Station)

These were **duty posts**, so the men were *on watch* — that placed them under the same standard as **camp duty / guard mount** rather than fatigue.

Minimum standard:

- **Trousers on and buttoned**
- **Suspenders up**
- **Shirt buttoned to the neck or near it**
- **Coat on** (at least top button fastened)
- **Hat or cap on head**
- **Shoes/boots on**
- **Sidearms and field glass/signal kit present**

A man without his coat or hat was *not in uniform* and would have been reprimanded if found so while the station was active.

That said, **practical leeway** was allowed for heat or isolation. For example, in warm weather a signal officer might allow sleeves rolled and coat open *while on station*, but the coat would be put in order immediately if a superior approached or if signals were exchanged with another post.

3. Officers at Signal Posts

Officers generally matched the enlisted standard for readiness but with slightly higher expectations of appearance:

- **Frock coat or sack coat** — *at least half buttoned*; worn even in heat.
- **Hat or cap** always on.
- **Field sword belt or pistol belt** when in command or inspection.

An officer without his coat on post would be “undressed” unless off duty or in his tent.

No man should appear out of his tent without his cap or hat when out of quarters.

Indoors & At-Arms

4.Caps While Indoors & At-Arms

From the *1861 Army Regulations*, etiquette sections and general orders:

“No officer or soldier will remain covered in quarters, or in any place where uncovered by the custom of society, unless under arms or on duty.”

In the mid-19th century Army, the phrase **“at arms”** (or “under arms”) meant that a soldier was:

- **On duty**, in an official capacity,
- **Armed or equipped for service**, and
- **Subject to military discipline and decorum.**

It did **not** always mean *literally holding a musket* — it meant the soldier was in a state of readiness and formality, even if his weapon was slung or stacked nearby.

Being **“under arms”** changed how the soldier behaved: posture, bearing, salute, and even how he wore his uniform.

Even officers followed this rule: an officer seated at table or writing correspondence in his tent might remove his hat, but when an enlisted man entered or orders were being issued, he would replace it — re-entering the “on duty” posture.

Situation	Headgear	Status	Reason
Inside tent, resting	Off	Off duty	Courtesy, social setting
Inside tent, on watch or giving orders	On	On duty / at arms	Military bearing
In quarters, armed or on guard	On	Under arms	Remain covered
In quarters, unarmed or at ease	Off	Not at arms	Customary respect

When entering a dwelling, quarters or sutler’s tent remove your cap and place it under your left arm or in your haversack.

Please note that these customs were both normal to military and civilian military contractors (USMT) of that era.

Commands

Two Basic Two-Part Command

Nearly all commands in Civil War–era drill were delivered in **two parts**:

1. **The Preparatory Command** — tells the men *what they are about to do*.
2. **The Command of Execution** — tells them *when to do it*.

Example: “**Shoulder—ARMS!**”

- “**Shoulder**” → *Preparatory command*
 - Alerts the soldier to the action (prepare to shoulder arms).
- “**ARMS**” → *Command of execution*
 - Spoken sharply and louder; triggers the movement itself.

Element	How It’s Spoken	Purpose
Preparatory Command	Clear, deliberate, slightly prolonged	Gives the men time to prepare
Command of Execution	Short, loud, and sharp (final syllable accented)	Triggers the action instantly
Combined Command	Given as one word for very simple movements (e.g., “Halt!” or “Rest!”)	Immediate response

Most commands fit into one of these three structures:

Type	Example	Notes
Two-Part Command	“Present—ARMS!” / “Right—FACE!”	The standard for all formal drill movements.
One-Part	“HALT!” / “REST!” /	Used for simple or urgent actions. One

Command	“ATTENTION!”	part, may be separated into two. Example “Atten-ti’on”
Supplementary Command	“By the right flank— MARCH!”	Combines direction or method with the movement.

Officer or NCOs Conduct when Giving Commands

- The officer **faces the troops** when commanding.
- The preparatory command is given in a **firm, measured tone**.
- The command of execution is **snapped sharply**, often accompanied by a distinct hand or saber gesture.
- Movements should occur **instantly on the final syllable** of the command.

Commands are given in **two parts** — first *what*, then *when*.

Spoken **clearly, distinctly, and with rhythm** — precision of speech produces precision of movement.

Special Standing Commands

Certain commands will have the appearance of a single command and are directly related to decorum in formation.

Command	Feet	Hands / Arms	Bearing	Speech / Movement	Common Use
Atten-ti’on (Two-Part)	Heels together, feet at 60°	Hands at sides, fingers straight, thumbs along trouser seams	Body erect, shoulders square, eyes front	Silent , no movement	Drill, roll call, inspection
At – Ea’sse (Two-Part)	Right foot fixed , left may move	Hands clasped in front , elbows relaxed	Body easy but upright	May speak quietly , minimal	Waiting in ranks, parade prep

	slightly			movement	
Rest	Right foot fixed , left free	Hands may move or rest freely	Relaxed posture, still in place	Free to talk , adjust gear	Long halts, informal formation

Basic Formations

For drill marching and deployment there are two basic formations that the detachment will utilize.

Formation Type	Structure	Purpose	Command Example
Line of Battle	One rank	Drill, inspection, instruction	“Fall in!”
Column (Two Ranks)	Two ranks, rear rank 13" behind	Marching, maneuver	“Count off by twos!” / “Form ranks!”

In U.S. Army drill manuals of the 1860s (notably *Hardee’s Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* and *Casey’s Infantry Tactics*), there are two primary formations for a small unit:

1. Line of Battle (Single Line)

- Men stand **shoulder to shoulder**, all facing the same direction.
- Each soldier is one **rank** deep — a *single line*.
- Used for **drill instruction, inspection, or battle deployment**.
- Alignment is taken on the **guide** (usually right or left).
- Spacing: roughly **13 inches** from elbow to elbow, **3 inches** between ranks if double.

Example: *A signal detachment forming up for roll call, inspection, or basic drill.*

2. Column (Two-Rank Line or Marching Formation)

- The men form **two ranks** (front rank and rear rank).
- The rear rank stands **13 inches behind** the front rank, directly behind their file partner.

- This formation allows the unit to **march, wheel, and maneuver.**
- It's the standard for **marching in company or by detachment.**

***Example:** When the detachment marches to post or moves out on parade.*

“Counting Off” or Forming into Two Lines

When forming a **two-rank line (for marching)**, the process went like this:

1. Fall In

- The commanding NCO calls:

“Fall in!”

- Men take position on the company line in a single rank (line of battle).

2. Count Off

- The command: **“Count off by twos!”**
- Starting from the **right**, each man calls his number: **“One! ... Two! ... One! ... Two!”**
- This identifies **pairs (files)** — each *No. 1* man is front rank, each *No. 2* man rear rank.

3. Form Ranks

- Command: **“Twos right—face!”**, **“March!”**
- The “two” men step **behind** their corresponding “one” men, forming **two ranks** (front and rear).
- Alignment is then dressed (straightened).

In smaller detachments (like a Signal Corps section), this could just be called: “Form in two ranks!” without a full count-off if everyone knows their place.

Basic Marching Commands

Below are a set of basic commands which command march and movement.

Command	Type	Purpose / Action	Notes on Execution
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Attention—Company!	Two-part	Brings men to attention, halting any talk or movement	Foundation command before any other order
Forward—March!	Two-part	Step off with the left foot ; begin marching	Default command for movement in line or column
Halt!	One-part	Stops the march instantly	Given as left foot strikes the ground
Right—Face!	Two-part	Turns the man 90° to the right	Used when forming column or changing facing
Left—Face!	Two-part	Turns the man 90° to the left	
About—Face!	Two-part	Turns 180° to face opposite direction	Done by pivoting on left heel/right toe
Right—Dress!	Two-part	Aligns the ranks on the right guide	After forming line
Front!	One-part	Ends alignment (“eyes front”)	Follows “Right—Dress”
By the right flank—March!	Supplementary	Turns column 90° right and marches that way	“By the left flank” works likewise
Right (or Left) wheel—March!	Two-part	Pivots the formation on the named flank	Used for changing direction on the move
Guide right!	One-part	Specifies which flank sets alignment and pace	Default guide is right unless otherwise

			ordered
Mark time— March!	Two-part	March in place, raising feet alternately	Keeps timing without advancing
Half step— March!	Two-part	Reduces pace to half normal step	Used for closing intervals
Double-quick— March!	Two-part	Accelerates pace to roughly 165 steps/min	Used when speed is required
To the rear— March!	Two-part	Turns the man 180° and marches to rear	Executed on left foot
Oblique—March!	Two-part	March diagonally at 45°	Used for small directional adjustments

General Marching Notes

- **Step off always with the left foot.**
- **Guide right** unless otherwise stated.
- All commands are given while the unit is **at attention**.
- The **preparatory command** is given first, **command of execution** timed to allow one beat between.
- Movements are **snapped, not rushed** — precision over speed at all times.

Manual of Arms Command

When at arms the following commands are used:

Command	Type	Purpose / Action	Notes on Execution
Attention—	Two-	Brings men to attention, heels together, musket at the	Starting position for all manual

Company!	part	right side	movements
Shoulder—ARMS!	Two-part	Brings the musket to the right shoulder	Standard carry position; default when at the halt or marching
Order—ARMS!	Two-part	Returns musket to ground by right side	Used when halting for inspection or rest
Rest!	One-part	Allows men to relax right foot and hands (musket remains at order)	Informal rest while retaining posture
Parade—Rest!	Two-part	Moves left foot 8 inches left, musket held in front, left hand grasping barrel	Used for ceremonies and inspections
Present—ARMS!	Two-part	Brings musket vertically before face, right hand near trigger guard	Salute position for officers or colors
Support—ARMS!	Two-part	Places musket against left shoulder, left hand grasping it	Used for ease during long standing periods
Port—ARMS!	Two-part	Brings musket diagonally across chest, barrel up, butt near right hip	Transitional position between movements or while marching in restricted areas
Trail—ARMS!	Two-part	Raises musket a few inches from ground, barrel forward	For short movements when marching in close order
Carry—ARMS!	Two-part	Returns musket to upright position at the right side	Often synonymous with “Shoulder Arms” depending on context
Fix—	Two-	Attaches bayonet to muzzle	Usually performed from

BAYONET!	part		Shoulder Arms
Unfix— BAYONET!	Two-part	Removes bayonet from muzzle and returns it to scabbard	Reverse of Fix Bayonet
Inspect— ARMS!	Two-part	Opens hammer and exposes bore for inspection	Command used by officer or NCO during arms check
Secure— ARMS!	Two-part	Crosses left hand over right, musket laid across body	Used when crossing obstacles or for ease at rest

Customs & Courtesies

The Salute

Saluting is a courtesy which is rendered from a lower rank to a higher rank officer. In a real world or reenacting setting it is a sign of respect, and it should be appropriately given when due. **Please note: Under no circumstance shall enlisted personnel salute other enlisted personnel.** This is only reserved for officers.

Practically in a re-enacting context when sensible a salute should be rendered to any officer at the event in the prescribed manner below. Often the officers involved in an event put in a very large amount of effort to make the event happen. Rendering them the simple respect and courtesy of a salute helps to make the weekend for them better.

- How to salute:
 - “A soldier, when without arms, salutes by touching his cap with the right hand, palm to the front [facing out not down], fingers extended and joined.”
– Army Regulations, 1861 – Paragraph 746
- When to salute:
 - If an officer is within 6 paces of you.
 - When in camp, guard duty or in drill.
 - Not during an assembly of the unit (first call, etc), only the senior NCO or senior officer would salute and greet the incoming officer.
 - Once again everyone does not salute only the senior enlisted or most senior officer.
 - Not during field duties or signal detachment work, unless you are approaching a non-signal officer as a runner.
 - The salute should only be rendered one time for that encounter with the officer.
- Process to salute:
 - If walking → halt, face the officer, and salute.
 - If seated → stand, then salute.
 - If already standing still → senior enlisted person just salutes.

Courtesies for Women

Though not expressly prescribed by the Army Regulations, the observance of proper respect and decorum toward women is expected of all soldiers of the United States, and particularly of those belonging to the Signal Corps. Such courtesies are a reflection of the honor, discipline, and gentlemanly bearing of the detachment, and shall be upheld as a standing custom of this command.

Forms of Address

All women, whether of mature or youthful age, shall be respectfully addressed as “*Ma’am*” or “*Miss*,” as may be appropriate. In conversation, soldiers will comport themselves with civility, restraint, and propriety of language.

Rendering of Courtesies

When encountering women in or about the camp, or upon the march, the following courtesies shall be rendered:

- **With Cap:** The right hand shall be brought smartly to the brim of the cap.
 - If a senior non-commissioned officer or commissioned officer be present, that senior shall render the courtesy and respectfully address the woman or group as “*Ma’am*” or “*Ladies*,” as the case may be.
 - In the presence of multiple privates only, each shall silently render the same motion in unison.
- **Without Cap:** The right hand shall be brought smartly to the breast, fingers extended and joined, palm inward, accompanied by a slight inclination of the head.
- Such courtesies shall be rendered only when conditions permit, and when not inconsistent with duty, formation, or the presence of arms.

Women Attached to the Detachment

Any female laundress, cook, nurse, or other person officially or customarily attached to the detachment shall be regarded as under its direct protection. All members will, upon every encounter, render the prescribed courtesy and afford them due respect, remembering that their service contributes to the welfare and efficiency of the command.

Enforcement

Commanders of detachments and non-commissioned officers in charge shall ensure that these courtesies are faithfully observed, and that the conduct of the men toward women be such as to reflect credit upon the service.

Note

There existed no official regulation in the United States Army of 1861–1865 prescribing courtesies toward women. Such conduct was, however, universally expected of soldiers of breeding and discipline, being derived from the prevailing standards of gentlemanly deportment and reinforced by the example of well-commanded companies. The inclusion of these customs in detachment standing orders is therefore consistent with the period character of the service and the customs of the time.

Insignia

Enlisted

There was no formal adopted wartime insignia for the Signal Corps during the Civil War. The crossed flags motif by the mid and later part of the war had become more or less common among officers and occasionally among enlisted as well in several surviving examples of uniform components.

For our unit the crossed flags patch is issued as a symbol of you completing any required training to become a Signaller. According to surviving pieces when placing the patch on your uniform the following should be adhered to:

The crossed-flags insignia (for enlisted or sergeants) belongs on the **outer lower sleeve of the left arm, 2–3 inches above the cuff seam, and below or beneath the chevrons if present** — *not* up on the bicep or shoulder.

Officers

Officers shall wear the insignia befitting their rank on their shoulders in accordance with Army Regulations of 1861. Shoulder straps shall display the proper color and device for the Signal Corps, being a field of dark blue with gold embroidery and appropriate border for rank — second lieutenants and first lieutenants with a plain gold border, captains with a double embroidered border, and field officers with additional embellishment as appropriate.

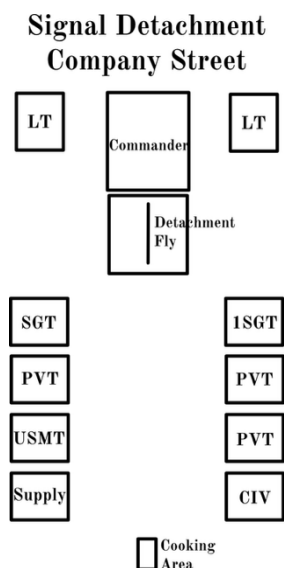
The rank device should be centered on the officers shoulder evenly and not be canted to the front or rear.

For service or fatigue dress, particularly in late-war impressions, officers may wear subdued or bullion-embroidered rank directly upon the sack coat or shoulder, in place of full-dress straps, reflecting field practicality.

Part IV — Camp Operations

Camp Formation

- The Detachment Commander determines the camp layout for a given event. The camp will be arranged into a “company street”. With command tent at the head of the street and other tents forming a “street” leading up to the command tent. See diagram for example.
- All personnel assist with erecting the command tent and common area before erecting personal quarters. This defines the location and direction of the company street. All detachment members will assist all other members with tents until they are all raised.
- All tents must have a period appropriate appearance and composition.
- Senior Sergeant assigns enlisted duties as directed by Captain or his designee.
- A Quartermaster Sergeant or camp cook may be designated. For certain events if a camp cook is not designated you will be responsible for ensuring that you have adequate food for the event. The unit will always endeavor to supply rations for the event.



Standard Detachment Schedule

This is the standard schedule that will be used, this schedule is similar but does not precisely follow the standard prescribed schedule. Any deviations to this schedule will be given during Roll Call and/or Tattoo. The Detachments schedule will conform to the general camp regulations of the command to which we are attached.

For example, at many events the battles/skirmishes occur around 1pm. This would override any drill call. After a battle Recall will be made as quickly as possible and the standard schedule will resume.

Appox. Time	Call	Detachment Activities & Notes
6:00 AM	Reveille	Men rise, police tents, dress, and prepare for roll call. Weather and visibility conditions noted for the morning report. Fire duty report as soon as possible.
6:30 AM	Roll Call	Initial roll call for the day. Condition of troops reviewed. Daily duty assignments given.
7:00 AM	Breakfast Call	Detachment eats first meal and collectively works to clean up items used in the meal.
8:00 AM	Fatigue Call	Prep of all equipment to be used in the day. Check flag kits, message pads, field glasses, lantern fuel, minor repairs, etc
9:00 AM	Orders or Drill	Commence detachment drills or station setup and operation as directed.
11:30 AM	Recall	Drill and maintenance duties cease.
12:00 PM	Dinner Call	Midday meal. May be taken at post in the field. Will be taken from provided rations or items individually “foraged”.
1:00 PM	First Call/Drill Call	Work details or field duties as assigned: testing or deploying stations, relaying messages, or observation posts established. Often living history event battles occur during this period.
5:00 PM	Recall	Post, drill and/or maintenance duties cease.

6:00 PM	Retreat	Formal evening roll call with HQ (if attached); flag lowered at camp. Detachment reports to commanding officer.
6:15 PM	Supper Call	Evening meal. Men at liberty within company street or greater liberty as directed by Detachment Commander.
8:00 PM	Officers Call	Compile Daily Signal Report: stations manned, messages sent/received, equipment status, anticipated weather conditions.
9:00 PM	Tattoo	Final roll call of the day.
10:00 PM	Taps	All lanterns and torches are extinguished. Quiet in camp.

Cooldown

After any prolonged exposure in hot weather conditions on or during a post, battle, skirmish etc. Recall will be made as quickly as sensible.

After returning to camp members will:

- Remove all accruements (Belts, swords, weapons, haversacks, etc)
- Strip jackets (frock, sack)
- Strip shoes (Discretion of Detachment Commander)

Members will be required to consume a minimum of **one full canteen of water** and remain **in shade (not in tents)** for the **entire duration** of the cooldown. Members after consuming the canteen of water must also consume at least a single portion of a salt rich food.

The institution and length of the Cooldown will be determined by the Detachment Commander and Senior Sergeant.

Camp Regulations

- Food and wood costs are shared equally by members at camping events.
- Quiet hours: 10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m., in line with the traditional military schedule.
- Fires only in designated pits with water bucket or extinguisher nearby.
- Cleanliness, respect, and authenticity required at all times while in camp and especially in the presence of the public.
- Any non-period items should be kept to a minimum.
- Any non-period items should be stowed in your tent. If certain items are inherently and unavoidably visible in your tent it should be tied shut.

Camp Duties

- Fire Duty – responsible for the maintenance of the fire and preparation of cooking fires. Assists the camp cook in initial preparation of cooking implements.
- Cook's Assistant – assists the camp cook in any requested aspects of cooking and meal preparation.
- Meal Cleanup – all enlisted personnel are required to assist with meal cleanup.

Camping Tips

- Always keep your area and quarters clean and free of trash, especially modern trash.
- You are welcome to use an air mattress or camping mat to sleep on at night. If it is visible it must be stowed in a way where it is not visible to the public or your tent must be tied.
- Ensure that nothing is touching the tops or side walls of your tent. If it starts to rain this can cause your tent to leak.
- Ensure that any ice chests, water coolers, etc are hidden within your tent.
- Do not use bug spray on your tent canvas, this can remove the waterproofing.

Fire Pit Procedure for Fire Duty

Starting a fire is something that seems simple but is mostly a lost art. Our goal is to create a hot cooking fire and then if possible and required we maintain that throughout the day or restart it in time for supper.

Preparing a Fire Pit

If the site does not have prepared pits, follow these steps to create a fire pit:

1. Using a spade (pointy shovel), cut an approximately 2x3 rectangle.
2. Using the spade or by hand, carefully lift the loose dirt leaving the grass as intact as possible and place it next to the firepit

Ignition

1. Construct a short log cabin style fire
 - a. Create a two-layer log cabin fire with small pieces of wood. Firewood may need to be cut down smaller.
2. Fill the center with a fire starter, followed by twigs and other small flammable fuel.
3. Ignites the fire starter and smaller fuel
4. Carefully attend the fire, because of the log cabin you should not have to add an extensive amount of fuel as long as the center gets hot.

Under no circumstance should rocks, plastic, or styrofoam be added to the fire for any reason. These can cause explosions and the release of nasty gasses. Lighter fluid should not be used to start a cooking fire.

Maintenance

1. The goal of this fire is cooking coals and warmth, not to make a flickering inferno.
2. Wood should only be added for the purpose of creating more warmth or cooking medium.

Nightly

- Ensure that the fire is burned to low embers, no fuel should be added to the fire after Tattoo Call.
- In the case of windy conditions, the fire should be fully extinguished using the least amount of water possible.

Final Fire Cleanup

1. Ensure that the fire is completely out by pouring water on the fire until it is completely extinguished.
2. (Final) Remove any large debris and throw away properly.

3. (Final) Place the removed sod back into the fire pit and gently compress it back into the space.

Cooked Meal Procedure

1. Fire is prepared or continued. If wet or not ideal conditions exist hard wood charcoal should be used to create effective cooking heat.
2. Initial pot of coffee is prepared (if desired), along with a second pot for cleaning water.
3. Quartermaster Sergeant or Camp Cook prepares food with help from detailed assistant.
4. Detachment eats.
5. All enlisted detachment members assist with cleanup of meal items, cooking implements and utensils. Officers will assist unless they are engaged with event related activities (many events have an early officers call).

Meal Cleanup Procedure

1. Two bowls will be prepared from hot water prepared during the meal cook. One will be mixed with soap and the other will be kept as cleanse rinse water.
2. Any iron ware should have the hot water added to it and they should be placed back near the fire. Any food debris iron ware should be scrubbed out without soap.
3. No person should directly clean anything in either of the prepared bowls.
4. Add soapy water to the plate or item being cleaned.
5. Once cleaned dip the item in the rinse water.
6. Return all kitchen implements to the supply tent once cleaned.
7. All cleanup must be completed before Fatigue Call.

Post Event Cleanup

Similar to the setup of an event and the camp. The entire detachment will work to ensure that the entire camp and all members are packed into their vehicles and ready to leave before *anyone* leaves an event.

The detachment commander for the event will determine the appropriate time to change for cleanup into civilian clothes.

Special dispensation can be given to those who need to leave individually, but this will be the exception to the rule. Part of attending events and fundamentally to this unit is functioning as a unit.

Camp Decorum

General Camp Behavior

The general behavior of unit will at all times conform to the Conduct Standards for the Detachment.

Modern Items

Any modern items should be stowed away completely out of sight during all public and primary hours of an event.

Other Company Streets

Be respectful of all other units on site.

Do not cut through other unit's company streets or camps, make sure you take the long way around.

Always ask permission to enter the company street of another unit, regardless of whether or not the same courtesy is returned.

Part V — Training and School of Instruction

Curriculum

1. **Introduction to the Signal Corps** — history, mission, and organization.
2. **Uniform and Equipment Standards** — inspections and issue.
3. **Camp Life** — setup, cooking, and conduct.
4. **Flag Signaling** — Myer's General Service Code, flag motions, relays.
5. **Drill and Discipline** — commands, ranks, and soldierly bearing.

Certification

- Completion of the School of Instruction is required for Full Membership.
- Tests include: flag signaling drills, uniform inspection, and basic camp duties.

Part VI — Signal Operations

Deployment

- Signal detachments move with HQ staff, not in infantry lines while maintaining proper military decorum.
- Flag stations are established on high ground for maximum visibility and telegraph stations are established at or near an HQ.
- Stations remain static unless ordered to change position by the Captain of Signals.
- Posts consist of an officer, a sergeant, and 2–3 privates.
- Infantry pickets may guard stations near the front.

Communication

- Messages relayed between stations in sequence.
- Daytime: flags on staffs.
- Night: torches or lanterns.
- Telegraph: where wire and equipment can be set up.

Logging

All messages being sent or received will be logged by officer or senior NCO in command of a signal post.

A logging journal will be provided for each signal post and checked out to the officer or senior NCO in charge of that post. The issued log book will include any daily ciphers.

The log should include:

- Whether the message was sent or received
- Date,
- Time
- Station
- Original encoding and transcribed message

Especially in receiving messages this makes the message easier to review and prevents errors. It also provides a valuable training tool to ensure that messages are understood correctly.

Wigwag

This will be further detailed in Appendix A, but the essential need-to-know is as follows. Wigwag is the system by which a single flag is moved in a specific manner as to transmit a message.

There is a two-code system and a five-code system. For this unit we will most always use the two-code system because for both daytime and nighttime operations because it is the simplest to learn and relay. The two-code system is a three-motion system.

To make the first motion, or "one" or "1," the flag, being at the first position, is waved to the ground to the right, and instantly returned to the first position.

To make the second motion, or "two" or "2," the flag, being at the first position, is waved to the ground to the left, and instantly returned to the first position.

To make the third motion, or "three" or "3," the flag being at the first position, is waved to the ground directly in front of the flagman, and instantly returned to the first position.

The "first motion" is known for the signal "one," and is indicated by the numeral "1." The "second motion" is known for the signal "two" and is indicated by the numeral "2." The "third motion" is known for the pause-signal "front," or signal "three," and is indicated by the numeral "3."

(Myers, pg 70-71)

See subsequent appendix for signal code charts and further information.

Decoding Wigwag

Decoding Wigwag is a fairly straight-forward for the signal post officer or sergeant.

First and foremost, do not attempt to decode the message as it is being received. Write down the message in a journal or log scrap first. Once you have completely received a message signal the acknowledgement then translate it.

The recommended method is to break the numbers up into groups of four numbers. Scan for the 4 numbers for the letter in the Myers code which mostly sensibly

corresponds to the numbers. If nothing sensibly corresponds to the numbers, reduce the set to three numbers and so on. Pay special attention to any known code from your code book sheet when translating.

Eventually you will identify the codes from memory the more you learn and absorb the process through repetition.

If you encounter an error as you are translating, request a re-transmit and return an error if the error continues to exist.

It is important that the decoding process is done as quickly as possible.

Telegraph – USMT Impression

To be added for 2026 season.

Ciphers and Codes

While often spoken of together, the *Cipher* and the *Code* are distinct instruments of communication within the Signal Corps.

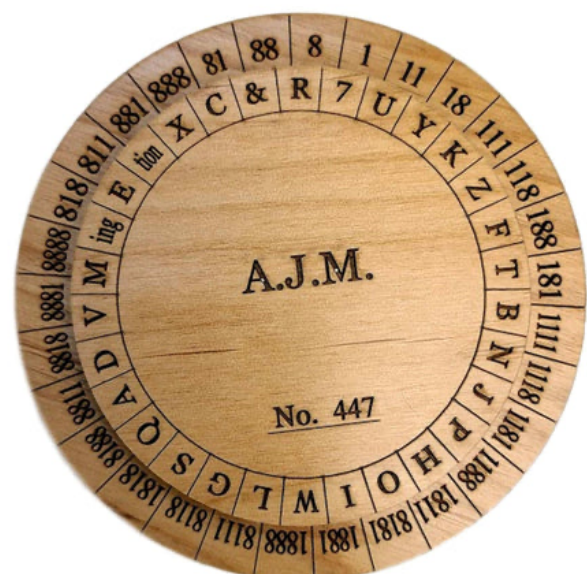
The Cipher Disk

The *Cipher Disk* is an instrument of secrecy. It enables the Signal Officer to change an ordinary message into a series of number groups which, when transmitted by flag, torch, or telegraph, are meaningless to the untrained observer. Each disk consists of two concentric circles—one bearing the letters of the alphabet and common syllables, the other bearing groups of figures composed of *1s* and *8s* (which represent the first and second flag motions).

To employ the disk, both stations must first agree upon a *key*. This key determines how the disks are to be set—such as “A opposite 88.” Daily cipher information will be included on the disseminated code book sheet.

The operator then proceeds as follows:

1. **Set the Key:** Turn the inner (lettered) disk until the letter *A* stands opposite



the number 88 (or whatever key has been ordered).

2. **Encipher the Message:** For each letter in the message, find it upon the inner disk and note the group of numbers opposite it on the outer disk. Those number groups are written down and become the cipher text.
3. **Transmit:** Send those numbers by the regular system of flag motions—remembering that 1 signifies a wave to the **right**, 8 (for 2) signifies a wave to the **left**, and the front motion (3) closes each character.
4. **Decipher:** The receiving station, with its disk set to the same key, finds each number group on the outer ring and reads the corresponding letter from the inner ring to restore the message.

By daily change of the key, the secrecy of communication is maintained, even should the disk itself be captured.

Code Book

The *Cipher Book*, sometimes called the *Code Book*, is not primarily a secret but a shorthand. It contains predetermined words or number groups signifying entire phrases or orders, such as “*The enemy is advancing*” or “*Send rations to the front.*” Its purpose is to reduce the number of flag motions and to promote uniformity in expression among distant stations. The meaning of each code word is known only to officers furnished with the book.

“Stutter” Codes

Sutter codes are re-enacting version of ciphers and codes and are promoted by the National Signal Corps Association. Historically there are no references to “Stutter” codes they are essentially extremely short versions of what you should see in a code book/code sheet. An example of stutter code would be something like “AA”, “BB”, etc. The idea is that they are extremely short and easier to transmit. These were used very commonly during the 160th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg to direct the flow of the very large-scale living history battle.

Generally speaking, we will use whole words or at a minimum three letter codes. If the event direction requires us to conform to the associations stutter codes then we will do so.

Part VII – Weapons

Weapons, the Signal Corps and our Detachment

Signal Corps detachments were non-combatant technical units, tasked with maintaining communication lines, not holding ground. Their training emphasized observation, signaling, and rapid relocation rather than battlefield maneuver. When danger approached, their standing order was generally to protect their equipment if possible and withdraw to safety, not to engage.

“Signal parties will not engage the enemy except in their own defense; their arms, if any, are for protection only.”

— *Circular, Headquarters Army of the Potomac, March 14, 1864, in Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 3, p. 420.*

“The officers and men of the Signal Corps are not combatants; their duties are the observation and transmission of intelligence. Their instruments are not arms, but the means of communication.”

— *Report of the Chief Signal Officer, 1864, in OR, Series III, Vol. IV, p. 716.*

How common were arms in the Signal Corps?

Year	Context	Common Armament
1861–62	Early war, HQ duty	None / maybe sidearm / maybe retained enlisted rifle
1863	Field detachments forming	Pistols, few personal carbines
1864–65	Heavy field operations	Mixed — pistols common, some carbines issued
Post-war	Permanent Signal Corps (Regular Army)	None (back to peacetime unarmed status)

That said, many detachments were positioned at or near the front lines, so when encounters did occur especially later in the war, the detachments would:

- Employ skirmish tactics—spreading out, using available cover, and firing defensively—were the most practical means of buying time to escape.
- The goal was delay and disengagement, not to defeat an enemy force.
- Officers and enlisted men were expected to avoid unnecessary loss of life or equipment but could defend their position long enough to save signal property or allow the supported headquarters to withdraw.

While officially unarmed, the real world was rarely that tidy:

- Early war: most enlisted signalmen were detailed from infantry, artillery, or cavalry regiments. They sometimes retained their sidearms (revolvers) or even carbines when first detached.
- Mid war: as the Signal Corps became more formalized, those weapons were typically turned in — the men functioned entirely unarmed near HQ or observation posts.
- Late war: in exposed positions (like during Sherman's Atlanta Campaign or Grant's operations around Petersburg), some detachments were armed locally for self-defense — usually with Spencer or Sharps carbines temporarily drawn from ordnance stores.

But again, being armed was the exception, not the rule.

For this reason, unlike many other units, we do not require you to purchase a weapon to participate. You are encouraged to purchase an era weapon if you desire, consistent with your role, when you are able to do (we encourage carbines consistent with a late war impression) but again this is not required. Your weapon is your *flag, lantern* and *torch*.

Sabers, Swords & Bayonets

Sabers and swords are worn by officers and by (optionally) NCOs only. Blade and scabbard should be well maintained and reasonably polished. Bayonets should **not** be carried by Signal Corps personnel.

Pistols

Pistols are only standard to officers and are part of their station. There are several examples of sergeants and others in the Signal Corps personally purchasing firearms for use in their duties.

Pistols should be well maintained and free of rust. The permitted shot load for OKC Signal Corps is ~20 grains of powder packed in by Cream of Wheat.

Pistols should never be aimed directly at another person and should not be fired at close range.

Rifles & Carbines

Early in the war Enfield and Springfield rifles were commonly brought with privates on detached service to the Signal Corps. But as discussed earlier, those weapons would have been turned back in for distribution back to combat units.

By 1864, *if* the Signal Corps soldiers were armed typically in eastern campaigns with Grant and Sherman, they were primarily equipped with breach loaded weapons like Spencer or Sharps Carbines.

How armed a detachment was again depended purely on the detachment commander, the commanding General and what they were doing on the field.

Historically if you plan to purchase a weapon a Spencer or Sharps carbine will make the most sense. But again, for most impressions only the officers and possibly sergeants would be armed. If you have a question on a weapon, please ask before you buy the cost of reproduction firearms is quite high especially for Sharps and Spencers at the time of writing.

Carbines should never be aimed directly at another person and should not be fired at close range.

Inspections

All weapons will be inspected by the detachment commander or his designee prior to employment at a given event. Please note that some events may require weapons to be inspected by the event organizer or association. Weapons may be deemed unfit by any of the above and that decision is final. If a weapon is deemed unfit it cannot be used until that weapon is brought into proper order.

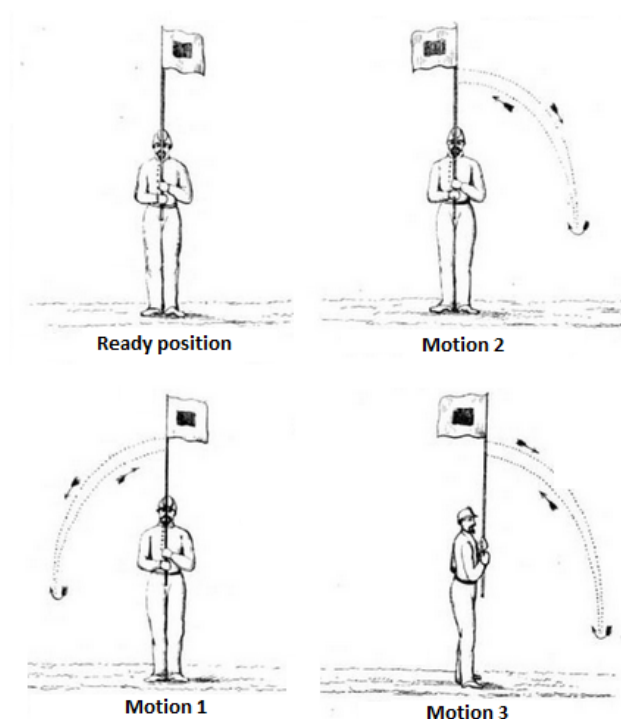
General Firearm Safety

TBA

Appendix A — Myer's General Service Code (Simplified)

- Numbers 1, 2, 3 correspond to flag motions: right, left, dip.
- Letters and numerals transmitted by combinations of these motions.
- Roman numerals used for numbers historically.
- A period “.” In a code indicates a pause that is a return to high ready. Messages are made continuously without pause unless required for a specific code. See Appendix D.

Number	Motion (as seen by the Signaler)	Description (See note at end of appendix)
1	Flag waved to the right	“Right” signal
2	Flag waved to the left	“Left” signal
3	Flag waved to the front	“Front” signal (pause or separator)



* Some postwar and reenactor guides mistakenly reverse 1 and 2 — this is incorrect. Both the 1862 and 1864 manuals use 1 = right, 2 = left, 3 = front for the flag motions.

*If required by an event, we will reverse the left and right signals. But it will be the **strongest** insistence of this detachment's command that proper period signals be used.*

Appendix B — Sample Messages

Sample Messages

Text Message	Myer's General Service Code
HALT	122 22 221 2 (3)
ADVANCE	22 222 1222 22 11 121 12 (3)
ENEMY	12 11 12 1221 111 (3)
READY	211 12 22 222 111 (3)
ATTACK	22 2 2 22 121 2121 (3)
FALL BACK	2211 22 221 221 3 2112 22 121 2121 3
SUPPORT	212 112 1212 1212 21 211 2 (3)

Messages should be logged with sender, recipient, and time for authenticity in demonstrations.

Example Full Message Exchange

Message: "ENEMY NEAR"

Procedure:

- **Station Ready / Open:** 1212
- **Call Up Receiving Station:** (assigned digits) (If required, Signal Officer will advise)
- **Start of Message:** 1212
- **Message Content:** - ENEMY → 12 11 12 1221 111 (End of Word: 3) - NEAR → 11 12 22 211 (End of Word: 3)
- **End of Message:** 333
- **Acknowledgment:** 22.22.22.3 (I understand)
- **Close / Cease Signaling:** 22.22.22.333

This example demonstrates use of start, end, spacing, and acknowledgment signals in Myer's General Service Code.

Appendix C — Signal Flag Sizes and Usage

- **2x2 ft Flags:** Rarely used in the field. Primarily for close-range demonstrations, training, or indoor interpretation. Typically mounted on 4–5 ft staffs.
 - **4x4 ft Flags:** Standard size for field operations. Most commonly depicted in period photographs and regulations. Mounted on 8–9 ft sectional staffs.
 - **6x6 ft Flags:** Used for long-distance communication or when visibility was poor (fog, smoke, extended lines of sight). Required taller staffs, usually 12–15 ft assembled, and were heavier, making them less common but historically part of the Signal Corps kit.
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Appendix D — Wigwag Code Chart

1862 Myer “General Service Code” (Manual of Signals, p. 68)

Letter	Code	Letter	Code
A	1 3	N	3 1
B	3 1 3	O	3 1 2
C	3 1 2	P	2 3 1
D	3 2	Q	1 3 1
E	1	R	1 3 2
F	2 3 1	S	2 1 2
G	1 2 3	T	2
H	1 2 2	U	2 3 2
I	1	V	3 2 3
J	3 2 2	W	1 2 3
K	1 3 3	X	2 3 3
L	3 2 1	Y	1 2 1
M	3 3	Z	3 2 2

1864 “Revised General Service Code”

By 1864, the Signal Corps introduced a new arrangement of letter groups to improve clarity and reduce confusion, but the flag motions remained the same.

The letters were **reassigned** to different groups of 1s, 2s, and 3s — meaning **the same flag motions** still worked, but the meaning changed.

Letter	1862 Code	1864 Code
H	1-2-2	1-2
I	1	2-1-3
T	2	1-3
E	1	3-2-1

Please note that for consistency we will use the 1862 Myers code unless the event or other Signal Corps compel the use of the 1864 code for cohesion.

Special Procedural Signals

Function	Myer's General Service Code
End of Word	3
End of Word	3
End of Sentence	33
End of Message	333
Station Ready / Open	1212 (repeated until acknowledged)
Acknowledgment / I Copy	22.22.22.3
Cease Signaling / Close	22.22.22.333
Error / Cancel	212121
Repeat Requested	121.121.121
Station Call Signs	Assigned 2–3 digit numbers

*These procedural signals, controlled traffic and ensured clarity between stations.
Including them in training is essential for realistic demonstrations.*

Appendix E — Morse Tables & Explanations

TBA planned for 2026.

Appendix F — Training Exercises

Myer's Code (Flag/Torch) Drills

- **Basic Motion Drill:** Instructor calls numbers (1, 2, 3), students execute motions with flags. Builds muscle memory.
- **Alphabet Drill:** Students spell out short words (e.g., CAMP, FLAG) in sequence, correcting with **212121** (error) if needed.
- **Relay Practice:** One group sends a message to a second group, which relays to a third. Emphasizes clarity and endurance.
- **Night Drill:** Use torches or lanterns in low light to simulate real wartime conditions.

American Morse Code (Telegraph) Drills

- **Dot and Dash Recognition:** Instructor taps out dots and dashes with consistent timing; students call out “dot” or “dash.”
- **Timing Drill:** Students practice spacing—1 unit between elements, 3 between letters, 7 between words—by tapping on a table or key.
- **Word Copying:** Instructor sends short words (e.g., ENEMY, CAMP). Students write them down, reinforcing rhythm recognition.
- **Fist Recognition (Advanced):** Different operators send the same word. Students identify which operator by rhythm, demonstrating how telegraphers recognized one another.

Combined Demonstration Exercises

- **Signal-to-Telegraph Relay:** One team sends a message via flags; another transmits the same message on a telegraph key. Shows visitors how both systems worked together.
- **Speed Challenge:** Teams compete to send and receive a short message correctly using either system.

These exercises are designed for both training authenticity and providing engaging demonstrations for the public.

Appendix G — Signal Station Duty Roster

A typical Signal Corps station during the Civil War consisted of 3–4 men under the supervision of an officer. Each role ensured smooth and accurate communication.

Roles

- **Officer in Charge:** Receives orders, drafts outgoing messages, supervises signals, and maintains the official message log.
- **Flagman (Sergeant or Private):** Executes flag or torch motions to transmit messages as directed by the officer.
- **Reader/Recorder:** Watches incoming signals, reads them aloud or notes them, and enters them into the log.
- **Assistant/Relief (optional):** Provides rest rotation for the flagman or assists with equipment setup.

Rotation in Training

- Members should rotate through each role (Officer, Flagman, Reader/Recorder) during School of Instruction exercises.
- This ensures every reenactor understands both the supervisory and physical aspects of station work.

Including this duty roster in training helps reenactors authentically portray how a Civil War signal station operated in the field.

Appendix H — Station Identifier Example

Signal stations were commonly identified by assigned numbers (e.g., 01, 02, 03) or letter-number combinations. These identifiers were exchanged at the beginning of communication to ensure clarity.

Sample Call-and-Response (Myer's Code)

- **Station 01 (Sender):** Calls Station 02 with identifiers and readiness: 0-1, 0-2, followed by 1212 (Station Ready).
- **Station 02 (Receiver):** Responds with its identifier and 1212 (Station Ready) to confirm it is prepared to receive.

- **Station 01:** Transmits the message content, using 3 to mark end of words and 33 or 333 at the end of sentences or the full message.
- **Station 02:** Sends 22.22.22.3 (Acknowledgment: “I understand / message received”).
- **Both Stations:** Conclude with 22.22.22.333 (Cease Signaling).

This process reflects the use of Myer’s prescribed procedural signals, ensuring accuracy and consistency as laid down in the original *Manual of Signals*.
