

CIVIL WAR TRAVELING TRUNK INVENTORY LIST

“ARTIFAKE” DESCRIPTIONS

What are “artifakes”?

The items in this traveling trunk are not really from the 1860s. Those valuable items are kept safely in museums around the world and are called “artifacts.” They are very fragile and people are usually not allowed to touch them. The items we have assembled for you are reproductions of those artifacts. Since they are made today, anyone can touch and examine them! Given that they are not artifacts, we call them “artifakes.”



Federal Uniform

The “blue suit” issued to Union soldiers was made primarily of wool, which made the uniform very durable. However, this also made it heavy and itchy, which could be unbearable in the spring and summer heat. The four-button “sack coat” was simple to make and issued to thousands of Federal troops. The sky-blue trousers were worn with suspenders. The “kepi” hat was based on a French design and was used extensively throughout the army. Brass numbers and letters were placed on the top of the hat to show the regiment with which the soldier was serving.

Confederate Uniform

Though commonly associated with the color grey, Southern uniforms also came in shades of tan or brown, which was partially the result of crude attempts to remove blue dye from captured Northern uniforms. Confederate uniforms were much more ad hoc than Federal uniforms, combining Union pieces, items brought from home, supplies purchased from England, and items made in the Confederacy. The trousers of this uniform are made from “jean cloth”, a combination of wool and cotton fibers that gave clothing the durability of wool with the breathability of cotton. Jean cloth is the precursor to modern blue jeans.





Brogans

Soldiers wore these leather shoes called brogans as part of their uniforms. Brogans were “straight” shoes, meaning that there is no right or left foot. As soldiers wore and marched in their shoes, the leather would mold to their feet, forming a right and a left shoe. Heel plates resembling small horseshoes were frequently attached to the shoes, helping the soldiers’ shoes last a bit longer. Sturdy brogans were an absolute necessity for the armies, and were highly sought after in the South.

Leather Equipment

The leather belts and boxes soldiers carried were essential for firing a musket. Over one shoulder would be a cartridge box, where a soldier carried his ammunition. Since black- powder will not shoot if it becomes wet, the cartridge box has two leather flaps to cover and protect the ammunition. Attached to the soldier’s waist belt is a cap box, which held the percussion caps necessary to fire Civil War rifles. The waist belt itself has a brass belt buckle with the letters “US”. Should this belt be captured by a Confederate, it could be work upside-down so that the letters read “SN”, meaning “Southern Nation.”



Haversack and Eating Supplies

A haversack was a cotton bag that soldiers used to carry food and eating supplies. Haversacks issued by the Union army were frequently coated in tar, as is this example. Tarring the haversack made it waterproof, allowing the food inside to remain safe and dry should the haversack get wet. Confederate haversacks were not always weather treated, and could become filthy after a period of time. As a result, haversacks are some of the hardest artifacts to find today.

Also carried in the haversack were a tin cup, tin plate, and eating utensils. These particular utensils lock together, making them easier to carry.

Canteen

For soldiers on long marches, canteens were an absolute necessity. They were usually made of tin and covered with a piece of wool cloth. The wool would be wetted when the canteen was filled and, as the soldier marched on his way, the sun would cause the water soaked into the wool to evaporate. The evaporation would help to insulate the canteen, keeping the water inside cold for a longer period of time.





Keeping Clean

Despite what were often primitive conditions in the field, soldiers did what they could to keep themselves clean. The pocket mirror was a necessity for shaving. Much like today, soldiers used toothbrushes for brushing their teeth. This particular one is wooden with horse mane for bristles. Wooden combs not only kept one's hair neat, but also combed out any lice living on the soldier's scalp. Besides keeping clean, soldiers were also eager to impress the ladies they were sure to pass as they marched from place to place.

Gum Blanket

At night, soldiers slept in pairs in small, canvas tents. On the ground, they might place a gum blanket. One side of the blanket is rubberized, designed to keep out moisture from the ground. The soldier would sleep on the other side, which was a canvas-like material. This particular gum blanket doubles as a poncho. Soldiers would sometimes cut holes into the center of gum blankets, wearing them to keep dry during rain storms.



Surgeon's Kit

Civil War surgeons had a difficult and unenviable task. Responsible for caring for thousands of wounded men, doctors would amputate wounded arms and legs rather than spend precious time trying to save them. Much of their work was done in field hospitals, where long hours of work was conducted in unsanitary conditions. Tools such as these were often not properly cleaned, resulting in rampant spreading of disease. These particular tools are from a surgeon's "pocket kit," allowing the surgeon to do his work on the battlefield if necessary.



Playing Cards

When not drilling or fighting battles, soldiers needed something to do to pass the time. One of the more popular activities was playing cards. Civil War-era playing cards are almost exactly the same as playing cards of today, except for one major difference: there are no numbers in the corners of the cards. It was required to count each individual spot on the card in order to play your hand properly (numbers were not commonly seen on playing cards in the U.S. until the 1870s). Given the Victorian culture of the day, soldiers would frequently throw their cards and dice away before battles, lest they be killed and have these immoral items sent home to their families.





Money

Union soldiers during the Civil War were paid \$13 per month; Confederate soldiers were paid \$11 per month. During the war, paper money entered wide circulation in the North and South, with both governments running low on the gold and silver coins that had traditionally been used in the past. Southerners did not wish to use “Yankee” currency, and so they printed their own. However, as the war dragged on and the Southern economy drained, Confederate money became increasingly worthless.

Fife

The fife is a high-pitched musical instrument that was widely used by both the Confederate and Union armies. Drummers and fifers were mainstays of the armies as they marched, playing music to lift the spirits of the soldiers. The music of fifers and drummers also assisted in giving orders to soldiers during battle, as their sound could be heard above the noise of gunfire and cannons. Musicians, in many cases, were young boys serving in the army to bring money home to their families.



Minié Ball

Named after its inventor, Claude Minié, this was the primarily bullet used during the American Civil War. It came packaged in a paper cartridge that soldiers would tear open with their teeth, dumping gunpowder down the gun barrel and then loading the bullet.

The Minié ball was revolutionary because of its cone-shaped design which, unlike the round musket balls that preceded it, gripped the inside of a musket barrel when it was fired and flew with great speed and accuracy. Unfortunately, Civil War soldiers were using this new technology with old military tactics: standing in long, straight lines and firing just yards away from each other.

Housewife

Civil War soldiers wore their uniforms extensively. Marching from place to place, fighting in fierce battles, and camping in rough locations could take a toll on uniform pieces. At home, if their clothing became torn, men would look to their wives to mend their coats and trousers. In the army, soldiers were expected to repair their clothing themselves. As a result, soldiers often carried what they called a “housewife” - a small cloth roll that contained needles, thread, and a thimble that could be folded up and carried in their backpacks.





Women's Clothing

Both fashion and Victorian culture led to women wearing multiple layers of clothing, covering them from their necks to their feet. Several skirts and under-skirts were commonly worn by ladies, among them the hoop skirt, which ballooned from a woman's waist and gave her dress a very full appearance. Shawls were worn as a means of keeping warm when traveling. Nearly every woman of every class wore some type of hat or bonnet. It was scandalous to be seen without one, and some considered it a religious obligation.

Baseball

The game that would become “the nation’s pastime” exploded in popularity during the Civil War. Known by a number of names (including “townball” and “bases”) baseball became nationally known as men from across the country learned the game and taught it to others. The ball was usually handmade from leather and, as a result, it was rare to find two that were exactly alike in size and weight. Bats were used if they were available but in some cases, a sturdy stick or tree branch would work just as well.



Hardtack

Hardtack was a biscuit made from three main ingredients: flour, salt, and water. When mixed together and baked at high temperatures, they produce a cracker that hardens to a near rock-like state. It turns out that this was the desired effect. Hardtack could be stored and transported for months or years at a time without “technically” going stale. Civil War soldiers were not very fond of hardtack, and often complained that it needed to be dipped in coffee or soup in order to make it soft enough to eat. Soaking the hardtack also caused any insects nesting inside the biscuit to float to the surface, where they could be scooped out. The soldier would then continue eating the hardtack as if nothing had happened.



DVD's

The Civil War comes to the screen in these three legendary films. *Gettysburg* (rated PG) relates the story of the Battle of Gettysburg, widely considered to be the turning point of the Civil War. *Glory* (rated R) recounts the legendary 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the first African-American regiment raised by the North during the Civil War. *Gone with the Wind* (rated G) presents Margaret Mitchell's story of life in the “Old South” before, during, and after the Civil War.

