

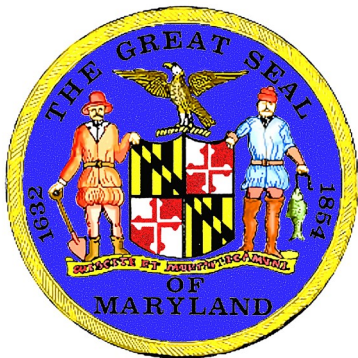
OUR CAMP JOURNAL



Volume 27, Issue 2

"We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B

September 2023



THE WHITE VIOLET.

BY LEONORE

I FOUND, within a sheltered dell,

A lowly little flower;
Yet loved it more than proudest rose

That blooms in garden bower.

As if to guard it from all harm,
Its tiny cup was set

Within a bed of softest moss—
'Twas the sweet white violet.

And freely forth on every breeze

Its rich perfume was cast,
As, nestled in its little cell,

It blessed me as I passed.

I would my lot might be like thine,

O sweet and gentle flower!
In such a home of peace and love

To wait my life's last hour.

A mind too lowly for storms to move,

I'd have, bright flower!
from thee;

And pure as thine own stainless cup

I would my heart might be,
And that my soul might then be filled,

In Remembrance, Cpl. Ronald Riotto

July 28, 1951 - August 15, 2023

Ronald (Ron) Riotto of Gaithersburg, Maryland, passed away peacefully on August 15, 2023 at the age of 72. A descendant of Italian immigrants, he was son to Thomas Riotto and Nancy Yuppa.

Born the youngest of three children, Ron grew up in Clifton, New Jersey. He moved to the Gaithersburg area in 1988 where he enjoyed raising his family. He

worked as a sales associate at the Home Depot for 28 years. In his free time, he enjoyed model ship, plane, and train building. He donated one of his model ships, the USS Arizona, to the American Legion Post 238 in Hughesville, MD as a thank you for their service. He had a passion for history and enjoyed the hobby of



Cpl. Ron Riotto,
7th Maryland Vice President
2012

civil war reenacting for many

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Should by my last rich boon,

With holy love, as thy pure bell

Is filled with sweet perfume.

A love that freely upon all

Should pour its glad-denying ray,

And leave a memory fond and dear

When life had passed away.

Said I "my LAST rich boon"? O no!

Another one I'd crave,
With a violet's love, and a violet's life,

I'd ask a violet's grave.
In thy mossy bank, where rest the last

Fond rays of the setting sun,

To sleep my last and dreamless sleep,

When life's long day is done.

GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK



Upcoming Campaigns

SEPTEMBER

Sept 22-24: Heritage Weekend 70th Anniversary Moorefield, Hardy County, WV (INDIVIDUAL)

OCTOBER

October 7-8: Battle of Perryville, Perryville, NC (INDIVIDUAL)

October 13-15: Battle of Bristoe Station Anniversary (Bristoe Station) (INDIVIDUAL)

October 20-22: 159th Battle of Cedar Creek, Middletown, VA (COMPANY)

October TBA: Droop Mountain, WV (INDIVIDUAL)

NOVEMBER

***November 17-18:** FVB Annual Meeting & Remembrance Day Parade * (COMPANY)

DECEMBER

Early December: Fort Ward Christmas in Camp (INDIVIDUAL)

[REGISTER NOW!](#) « Click on the link

For the 159th Cedar Creek, October 20-22 at Middletown, VA

Insignia of The Common Union Soldier

By Kurt Holman

(Originally Published in the *Camp Chase Gazette*; March, 1991)

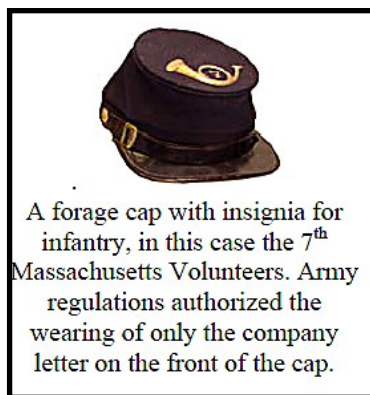
When a person looks at a photo of a Civil War soldier, somehow they can always tell if he is a real 19th century soldier or a Reenactor. How? The answer is easy: look at the hat. If the man is wearing a brass bugle on his kepi or forage cap, chances are that it is a photo of a Reenactor. If the kepi or forage cap has a corps badge, a company letter, a regimental number, and a brass bugle, it is surely a Reenactor.

What did the common Union Infantryman look like? One would expect to find the most insignia on the "Band Box" Army of the Potomac. In Philip Katcher's article in the September-October (1984) issue of *Military Images*, he studied photos of Eastern soldiers with six or more field soldiers in each image. His sources were: *Military Images*, *Divided We Fought*, *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, *They Who Fought Here*, and Hunt & Embleton's *The American Civil War*. Of a total of 156 enlisted men Katcher examined, 93 men were photographed in such a way that their headgear could be clearly seen. His results were: 63.4% plain caps. (NO INSIGNIA AT ALL!) Insignia was worn by only 19.3% and of

that, only 18.2% wore corps badges. Mr. Katcher's conclusions were: "Based on the photographs studied, we can describe the "typical" infantryman of the Army of the Potomac from 1863 to 1865. He wears an unadorned issue-type forage cap. His coat is either a frockcoat or a fatigue blouse, but it covers only a shirt and not a vest. His accoutrements are complete and worn as issued. It is a very plain but serviceable garb". In the west, I looked at 404 western hats and caps out of the *Image of War* in 6 volumes.

82.7% of the men wore plain unadorned. "slouch" or civilian hats. 7.4% of the men wore plain forage caps or kepis. The ONLY insignia I found on western head gear was on the "Hardee" hats which comprised 9.4%. The average western company would have looked much the same as Mr. Katcher's description of Easterners except that there would be many more hats in a company formation. Even photos of

Regular army troops fit the above patterns. They wore no more insignia than the volunteers. A serious study of photographs also quickly dispels the "early war vs. late war" myth. A soldier's length of time away from his quartermaster had more to do with a soldier's appearance than any other consideration: no matter if it was 1861 or 1865.



A forage cap with insignia for infantry, in this case the 7th Massachusetts Volunteers. Army regulations authorized the wearing of only the company letter on the front of the cap.

The common, average, Union soldier wore NO insignia. If anyone would feel uncomfortable with the above figures, I would ask them not to take my word for it. I would ask them to look it up for themselves. The facts are there and the pictures don't lie.

Why, then, almost without exception, do Reenactors insist on wearing insignia? The 1861 U.S. Army Regulations state that the brass bugle, regimental number, and company letter are only to be worn on the Hardee hat. For forage caps, enlisted men are only to have "... yellow metal letters in front to designated companies". If a brass bugle on a forage cap is non-regulation and it shows up in

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Insignia of The Common Union Soldier

(Continued from page 2)

less than 1% of available photographs, why do Reenactors insist on wearing them? Maybe the answer lies in the exceptions. Maybe everyone is trying to portray the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment or the 4th U.S.C.T.s. The photos of these troops almost could be taken for photos of Reenactors. (Except for the fact that they aren't wearing gaiters.) It is hard to believe that most Reenactors are looking at these few pictures and ignoring the rest of the Union Army.



The Model 1858 Army Hat with insignia for Company B, 5th Infantry Regiment

Another photograph that comes to mind is the image of the 110th Pennsylvania at Falmouth Virginia in 1863. This is the one image of original soldiers that looks the most like an image of Reenactors. The corporal on the left of the front rank is not wearing chevrons and the man on his left is wearing black gaiters. In fact 5 of 13 of them are wearing gaiters (mostly white). They have a mixture of Enfields and Springfields and they are almost all wearing corps badges. The only thing that gives them away as real Civil War soldiers is the fact that they are not wearing brass bugles on their caps.

If you were to look at volume 5, page 440 of the Image of War, you would find a portrait of a Confederate captain named Richardson. He is wearing leopard skin trousers and pistol holders. If everyone chose that impression it may be historically correct, but would it be ethical? When John Q. Public sees a Reenactor, he thinks that the Reenactor represents EVERY Civil War soldier (as well he should!). This is why it is the duty of every living historian to be average. If you chose Captain Richardson as an impression, then you are implying to everyone who sees you that every Civil War soldier wore leopard skin! This is a drastic example of any impression that isn't "normal" but the same concept applies to any impression that doesn't fit a picture of the average, normal, generic 19th century soldier. I'm surely not dis-

couraging anyone who wants to do a special impression as long as it is secondary. Every living historian should at least be able to be average, no matter how many impressions he does.

Then what force is it that possesses Reenactors to put corps badges, brass bugles, regimental numbers AND a company letter on their caps? Since it can't be for historical reasons, it must be modern vanity; an "esprit de corps" of a MODERN reenactment organization. It seems that many units are so caught up in their modern vanity that they seem to be unknowingly saying, "to hell with history". The idea of the "plain hats" approach is very beneficial to the hobby itself. Not only is it a more accurate impression for each unit, but when small units band together, it makes a more realistic battalion. What can be more ridiculous than 50 men in a line of battle wearing 25 different arrangements of multicolored corps badges, brass bugles, company letters, and regimental numbers? On the other hand, picture a line of 200 or so average infantrymen that look as if they could belong to the same regiment. That's what I'd like to see; and more importantly, that's what I would like the public to see.

***Behind the byline:** Kurt started reenacting at Perryville on October 11, 1981 and has been at it ever since. He is a member of the 7th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U.S. (reactivated) and the Mudsills, Inc. Kurt was formerly of the 5th New York Zouaves and is still somewhat active in the Camp Chase Fife and Drums. He is currently the Manager of the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site.*

Survey of U.S. Army Insignia, Weapons and Accoutrements

David Cole; November 2007

Regulations regarding insignia adopted in 1858 for the [Model 1858 Army (Hardee)] hat included the national eagle used to hold up the brim and branch insignia for Artillery, Infantry, Cavalry, Engi-

neers, and the Ordnance Department, with numbers and letters to indicate the soldier's regiment and company. Although not authorized, many soldiers wore these insignia on the forage cap as well. Army regulations authorized the wearing of only the company letter on the front of the [forage] cap.
https://history.army.mil/html/museums/uniforms/survey_uwa.pdf
 of 1/11/2020

There was a wide variation in the insignia worn by individual soldiers on their headgear, ranging from none at all to all possible ones: infantry horn, corps badge, state abbreviation, regimental number and company letter. The American army has always been an army of individuals and regulations were not strictly enforced by these citizen soldiers. The following description, written by Federal Col. Charles E. Sprague and quoted from Capt. E. A. Nash's History of the 44th New York Volunteer Infantry (Morningside, 1988), provides some interesting enlightenment in this regard:

"As we stood in line in marching order [prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville], we were a fair specimen of an American regiment. We stood about three hundred rank and file. Few regiments had anything like the nominal strength which a regiment should have. We were a sunburned, hearty set of fellows; we looked as if we could eat a square meal whenever we got one . . . We were not punctilious about regulations as to dress. Our regulation uniforms of semi-zouave pattern had been turned in, and we had frock coats, blouses, or jackets, just as it happened – anything blue would do. In hats and caps there was also much variety; the hideous regular army cloth cap, with slanting peak, which some turned up and some turned down – each way it looked worse; or the more knobby French shape, with straight visor or the McClellan cap, with top falling forward – these had been sent on from home

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Remembering Cpl. Ronald Riotta

July 28, 1951 - August 15, 2023

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years, serving as a Corporal and association Vice President in the 7th Maryland Vol. Infantry Regiment, a Union reenacting unit.

He also had a love for Italian food and cooking, saying he would "leave the tissues on the table" for people to wipe the tears from their eyes when they tasted his famous spaghetti sauce.

Ron is survived by his loving wife Karen, his three children Avonlea Riotta, Bradley (Natalie) Lugo, Anthony (Corinne) Lugo, and his three grandchildren Hugh Lugo, Riley Schwartz, and Bodhi Schwartz.

Interment was held at Trinity Memorial Gardens in Waldorf, MD.

Right, Ron takes a break between battles during a Cedar Creek event in 2008.

Below right, Pvt. Dan Hart stands with Cpl. Ron Riotta following dismissal at the 2011 Remembrance Day parade in Gettysburg.

Left, Cpl. Riotta during a drill day at Marietta Mansion in 2013.



OUR CAMP JOURNAL

Summer Beverages



*Civil War Re-enactors;
America's Living Historians.*

Carbonated Syrup Water
Put into a tumbler lemon, raspberry, strawberry, pine-apple, or any other acid syrup, sufficient in quantity to flavor the beverage very highly. Then pour in very cold ice-water till the glass is half full. Add half a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda (to be obtained at the druggist's), and stir it well in with a teaspoon. It will foam up to the top immediately, and must be drank during the effervescence.
Godey's Lady's Book, July, 1862

other lemons; and two pounds of powdered loaf-sugar. Put into a porcelain preserving-kettle two gallons of water. Set it over the fire, and boil it half an hour; then, while the water is boiling hard, put in the raisins, lemons, and sugar, and continue the boiling for ten minutes. Pour the mixture into a vessel with a close cover, and let it stand four days, stirring it twice a day. Then strain it through a linen bag, and bottle it. It will be fit for use in a fortnight. Drink it from wineglasses, with a small bit of ice in each.
Godey's Lady's Book, July, 1862

Nectar.

Take a pound of the best raisins, seeded and chopped; four lemons, sliced thin; and the yellow rind pared off from two

(Reprinted from Our Camp Journal, September 2005)

Insignia of The Common Union Soldier

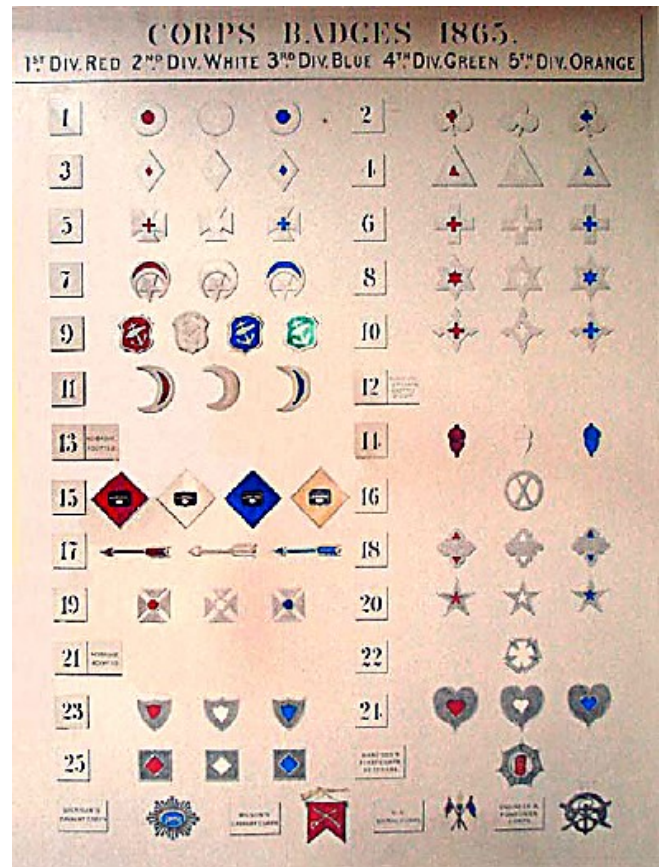
(Continued from page 3)

or purchased when on furlough; or the army black felt, which was generally worn with the crown depressed in the center; or other varieties of black soft hats, which were worn in spite of regulations. But every one had on his cap or hat the red Maltese cross, the badge of our division [1st Division, 5th Corps, Army of the Potomac]. Some had leggings, some had not; some old hands were in favor of stuffing the trousers into the stockings and tying them with strings. The broad shoes furnished by the government and usually called "gunboats" were the most fashionable foot wear; this was apart of the uniform which private enterprise did not much improve on. Only one thing about

our get up would have pleased a military critic – our guns were clean and bright."

As [one of our cavalry] passed by, the general halted him and inquired "what part of the army he belonged to." "I don't belong to the army, I belong to the cavalry." "That's a fact," says [the general], "you can pass on."

*Silas Grisamore,
18th Louisiana*



Above; Corps badges used in 1865.



Left; Brass branch insignias and company numbers and letters.