

PERIOD CLOTHING

By Calvin Nicholson

The term “farby” may or may not be familiar to you. It means, in the re-enacting community “far be it from me to say you are not period correct”. “Period correct” is what most re-enactors strive for. In appearance, in beards, in haircuts and styles, clothing, accessories, even through terms of speech and accents. The true living history re-enactor tries to paint a historic or “period correct” experience for his or her self as well as spectators who may be in attendance at an event. The right uniform would depend on the period, branch of service and the theater of the war you wish to portray. Most infantry units for two periods 1861-62 and 1863-65. In the early war period they would go two ways, one would be a nice uniform such as those worn by state troops or local city units. These would all be matched and would tend to be colorful. The second would be the later stages of the war that saw clothing stores hard to get and many southern troops wore what clothing they piece together, and most of what they did have was well worn.

The uniform of the “**Val Verde Battery**” is 1861-62 consisting of a Tuscaloosa gray shell jacket trimmed in red to designate artillery, sky blue trousers, in either the infantry or cavalry styles, red kepi trimmed in dark blue or black or a black slouch hat that goes back to the origins of the capture of the original cannons at Val Verde, New Mexico. The rest of the outfit would include a canteen, white haversack, white or natural suspenders, black belt with a Texas buckle, brogans, and gaiters. Also worn were knee high boots due to the artillery being considered part of the cavalry. Shirts for the soldiers almost never matched in any unit due to most of them being sent from home more than being supplied by the state or government.

Shirts, for the most part, are called “battle shirts” were of the pullover design with long tails and full sleeves, they may or may not have had collars and either way is correct.

Accoutrements for infantry goes a little farther, you would have in addition to the haversack and canteen a cartridge box, cap box, bayonet and rifle and a bayonet frog, bed roll or backpack.

Period clothing can either be bought or made, as it was in the past. Patterns are available online or at most sutlers’ who handle clothing at re-enactments. Many re-enactors, especially women prefer to make their own clothes.

Some of the sutlers where period clothing may be obtained are: Mercury Supply Company Sutler (this is where Valverde battery uniforms come from, you may order by telephone or online); C&D Jarnagin Company (you can order by telephone or online or they have a store that is in Corinth, Mississippi). Some other sutlers that are available online are: Fall Creek FTHA Civil War Sutlers, Regimental Quartermaster, Thickety Creek or Blockade Runner. There are many others, some that specialize in certain things like period tin ware, ladies’ apparel, saddles, guns, cannons and cannon supplies, etcetera. I have gone online and looked up rifles and guns at Gunbroker.com and found that you can probably buy a gun as cheap from a sutler or somebody that is getting out of re-enacting. As you can probably see by now, if it has to do with re-enacting or living history, regardless of the time period, there is someone that will supply what you need. You can even find period correct items on Ebay and online there are books, magazines, catalogues, and patterns for men, women and children. Also, if you are looking for old-timey pots and pans, my wife and I have bought several old ladles, iron cookware and even a porcelain “slop jar” at Canton.

The key to re-enacting is don’t buy everything you need before you actually attend a re-enactment. Most units have extra items and you can piece together a uniform over time.

Give it a try and have some fun! It is not for everybody, but if it is for you, be forewarned, it gets into your blood.

The Val Verde Battery Uniform. The Val Verde Battery was part of the 12th Texas Artillery (See brass cannon and the number 12 on top of the kepis as well as the brass Texas Star on the front of the kepis below).

