

5th Michigan Uniform guidelines

Every Civil War Re-enacting unit has a culture to it. The most important part of that culture is it's personalities. The friends we make are the ties that bind us to a group, or to a hobby. Another part of a culture is material culture. When used to discuss historical interpretation, material culture means the things we wear and use to portray the soldiers of the Civil War. These guidelines will direct you in building your Enlisted Impression. Officer's equipment is a completely different matter and is not covered here.

The 5th Michigan, by virtue of it's name, is focused on the Army of the Potomac which operated in Virginia between Washington DC and Richmond during the war. However, since we are often required to portray troops other than the 5th, we must take on a generic appearance that allows us to do so. With only this change of a hat and bedroll, we can easily portray an infantryman from any theater of the war. These guidelines are presented to help you understand what you are expected to obtain to participate in the hobby. There are several schools of thought to the hobby, from "Mainstream" to "Progressive" to "Hardcore." We believe these labels cause more heartache than they are worth. Our guidelines give you an affordable way into an admittedly expensive hobby but also show you how to improve your kit as you progress.

If you have any questions about the quality of a certain item you're looking at or which order to buy in, please talk to a member of the guidance council. We've all been around for many years and most of us have made mistakes in purchasing. Most often, that mistake was either buying "knee-jerk" style at sutlers or trying to save money by buying the cheapest option available. This inevitably became expensive because we either bought something we didn't need or it wasn't good enough and we had to buy it again. The recommendation of the veterans is if the next best item is in reach with little savings, wait, save your pennies and buy the better gear. You will be much happier for it.

As the hobby has progressed forward, it has been noted that three items really stick out in showing quality in a uniform. They are the cap or hat, sack coat or jacket and blanket. The hat or cap makes the man by providing character and the other two items are the largest pieces you'll carry. We'll start with them and move to other parts of the kit. If you are a veteran jumping in with the 5th, you'll notice the baseline for these three pieces is higher than the others. We believe this will give us the look that will go along with the leading attitude we believe in showing as a unit.

As you look through the guidelines, you'll see a description of the item, then up to four categories. "5th approved" items are the base in quality you need to march with us. "Better" items are the next step. "Best" items are the top of the line, if there is something beyond better. They'll most often be quite expensive. "Avoid" items should be self-explanatory.

All members of the 5th have gone through the process of buying their gear and most have had at least one round of upgrades. We understand this is an expensive hobby. Please don't expect to be fully equipped overnight. We ask that you have the minimum kit

listed in the bylaws within three years of joining the group. These standards are important to our group portrayal as US infantrymen, however don't let not having an item keep you from attending an event. There are many guys with large kits who can loan you what you need to participate. If you're a vet jumping in from another unit and have upgrades to make, the three-year timeline also applies to you.

In these guidelines you will find the tip of the ice burg in terms of our knowledge of who made the original items and how they were made. We encourage you to do further research, if it interests you. The "Material Culture" section of our Recommended Reading list is an excellent place to start.

Be sure to put your knowledge to great use by sharing with your buddies. Just be careful to do it at the right time. You will see members of other groups spending lots of time talking about their cool kits made like a certain original by a certain vendor (i.e. a JT Martin Sack Coat from W. W. & Co.). Please refrain from this in camp after Friday night. Friday night is a time to reacquaint with friends and celebrate any new gains in your gear. Starting Saturday morning, it's time to live the life of Civil War Infantrymen.

To a Union soldier, his gear came from the government, often didn't fit well and most likely needed augmentation from home or a charitable society like the Sanitary Commission or Christian Commission. All he knew or cared was that clothing was replaced as it wore out. Our research shows that soldiers DID NOT compare who made the clothing they wore. Just as we ask smokers to leave camp with their modern cigarettes to give their pards a better experience, **please take conversations about uniform construction out of camp.**

Union Issue Forage Cap: The Forage Cap was the piece of headgear most favored by members of the Army of the Potomac. It is seen, though less frequently, in images from the Western Theater. Re-enactors have grouped them broadly into two groups, dividing them by the shape of their bill. The "Type I" has a rectangular brim while the "Type II" or "McDowell" style has a rounded brim. Though there was thought that one was more early war or late war, this hasn't proven out in either text or photo research.

From "The ANTIETAM Project" impression flyer: The Federal army generally wore a rich and perceptibly dark blue forage cap. The color is known as "indigo" and is not as dark as "navy" blue or blue/black seen on the majority of reproduced federal cloth. The body of the forage cap was made of lightweight, tightly woven wool, with little nap (soft or fuzzy surface on fabric). This fabric was better than the fatigue blouse flannel, but not quite as good as the officer's grade broadcloth. These caps had no true form or shape, therefore making the "fit" and "appearance" substantially different from many reproductions made with heavy kersey or blanket weight wool. The forage caps had thin leather bills and chinstraps that had a smooth finish. Because of the shellac or lacquer used with the dye, the leather had a "sheen" or "glossy" appearance.

*Photographs of soldiers, both in the field and in studio setting, show the vast majority of forage caps to have nearly flat brims or brims turned upward. **There is no known photographic evidence of a forage cap brim folded downward like a modern baseball cap** (this should not be confused with the 1858 “McDowell-Style” forage cap that has a small rounded brim that follow the curvature of the forehead).*

The cap is an item that makes the man. The way you wear it shows your personality. It is Will’s first suggestion when asked what to upgrade on an existing kit.

5th Approved: “Type I” or “Type II” forage cap

Approved Makers: W, W & Company - Dirty Billy is another choice but get help from Will when buying from him. Quality varies from time to time.

M1858 Dress Hat: The proper name for what re-enactors often call the Hardee hat. This is the hat that, when new “looked like a Pilgrim Hat” and also made the Iron Brigade famous.

From “The ANTIETAM Project” impression flyer: *Some Federal units, especially the Iron Brigade, wore the 1858 Hardee Hat. These black hats were made of a thin (.082 inch), shellac-stiffened felt. The brims were about three inches wide with the height of the crown approximately 5 7/8”. Nearly all Hardee Hats had a 5/16”-3/8” black ribbon around the base of the crown. They had a knot, either tied or false, on the left side. The sweatband should be 2-1/2” – 3” maroon or black Moroccan leather whipstitched to the interior.*

We recommend this be a second purchase to your forage cap. These hats showed up regularly in the Army of the Potomac but we feel the forage cap is more common and a better representation. This will do good service when we portray Western troops. There are photographs of entire companies wearing all M1858 Dress hats.

5th Approved: 1858 Hardee or Dress Hat by Tim Bender. Dirty Billy is another choice but get help from Will when buying from him. Quality varies from time to time.

Hat and Cap Decorations: Early in the war, it was common for soldiers to be issued brass items to designate their units on the hats and caps. Each piece of brass was a separate issue item. They didn’t come with the cap. Photo research overwhelmingly shows that most soldiers weren’t using insignia on their caps. To achieve the generic look we strive for, no enlisted 5th Michigan member is to wear insignia or other decoration on their hat unless we do it as a unit for a specific scenario. Some units take club pride in having all members wear all insignia for their particular unit. We take pride in being able to easily portray any infantryman in any theater of the war.

5th Approved: No hat decoration or insignia is to be worn unless authorized for a scenario.

Civilian Hats - Sometimes called Slouch hats by re-enactors. We recommend avoiding this for your impression. They are WAY too over represented for an Army of the Potomac impression; they are also almost always very poor quality reproductions. When we portray western troops, there are too few M1858 Dress Hats and forage caps are also correct. As with either piece of issue headgear, expect to pay \$80-\$100 for a good civilian hat. If you must have one, please look at original photos. Hats are most often turned up and the brims are fairly stiff. Floppy hat with little to no shape or form are inappropriate to portraying the common soldier. Remember, your hat tells a lot about who you are. Use it to show honor to the men who we portray.

5th approved: Because of the inappropriateness of this for an Army of the Potomac impression generally, we don't list an approved vendor.

Better sources: To buy a civilian hat for civilian or western theater use, we recommend Tim Bender or Dirty Billy. Make sure your hat has a lining in it.

Kepis - Kepis are not appropriate for a common portrayal of members of the Army of the Potomac. If we find specific documentation of the 5th Michigan be issued them, we'll release recommendations for vendors at that time. For now, **DO NOT BUY A KEPI.**

5th Approved: None.

Fatigue Blouse – Commonly called a sack coat, this is the next most important piece of gear as far as looking the part. It covers your torso and is most visible. Poor reproductions are often unlined (most jackets issued were lined) and made of nappy, heavy wool. Correctly made, lined reproduction often weigh less and breathe better than poorly made, unlined reproductions.

*From John Wedeward's Sack Coat Website: (all emphasis is added by John) **Contrary to general and even authentic reenacting belief, the overwhelming majority of Civil War uniforms were not tailored to perfection. The majority (which surprisingly includes uniform ("frock") coats as well as shell jackets and great coats) were made in such a rush that the general construction of them left something to be desired in the workmanship at the very least. The original Civil War Federal uniforms in my collection, which include a sack coat, two uniform (frock) coats, two cavalry shell jackets, two artillery shell jackets and a great coat all show this lack of sewing "perfection".***

From "The ANTIETAM Project" impression flyer: The four-button sack coat was the basic jacket used by the Federal Army. The fatigue blouse was made with a light weight (5.5 oz/yd), 100% wool flannel, tightly woven with a pronounced diagonal weave. The wool, like the caps, was a rich and perceptible blue. The collars should be NARROW (2 1/2" at center of the back tapering to 1-1/2" at the ends). The facing stitch was not

parallel to the center front. Topstitching on front facing tapers form approximately 3-1/2" at the collar to approximately 3/4" at the bottom edge. ...All buttonholes were hand worked. Linings were lightweight and were brown/tan, gray, dark and medium blue, or blue-green.

We recommend making or purchasing a fatigue blouse made either off the Schuylkill Arsenal or JT Martin contract patterns. Properly made, Schuylkill's are hand sewn entirely while Martin contracts copies have mostly machine stitching with hand worked buttonholes.

5th Approved: For the \$145.00 (including sales tax and shipping) W. W. and Co. is charging for their standard grade fatigue blouse, we just can't find a better deal!

Other vendors: Gloria Kirschensteiner, CJ Daley

Avoid – Poorly made copies from “sutlers.” Rule of thumb – If you paid less than \$145.00 for a new, completed coat, it is not a good copy.

Trousers – Trousers, or pants, are obviously a part of the Federal Army impression.

From “The ANTIETAM Project” impression flyer: *There were a few different styles of federal issue trousers, but all had back yokes that extend the back waistband several inches higher than the front. They were “sky blue” in color, made of heavy, coarse, woolen kersey that produced a diagonal twill or wale. Button holes were hand worked with logwood dyed thread. ... All trousers had a watch pocket on the right side. Trousers should be worn at the natural waistline near the navel. Waistbands were narrow and tapered toward the center back.*

Again we recommend that you secure a pair of trousers made from either a Schuylkill Arsenal or JT Martin contract pattern. However, we recognize the cost to initially starting this hobby and the “5th approved” item runs significantly less expensive.

5th Approved: Stoney Brook Company has a standard grade trouser. It is an excellent value for the money. Select the Schuylkill Arsenal, JT Martin contract or Deering Contract pattern.

Best: W. W. and Co., Gloria Kirschensteiner

ANOTHER GREAT VALUE – W. W. and Co. offer a uniform package deal of their standard grade fatigue blouse and a pair of trousers for \$300.00. It's an excellent way to get into great gear at a very reasonable price!

Frock Coat – The sack coat was the fatigue jacket, the Frock is the dress coat. These lines regularly blurred due to combat necessity. Soldiers wore whichever garment they had. Frock coats were regularly issues to soldiers in the Army of the Potomac. However, since they are hotter to wear and significantly more expensive to produce or purchase,

buy a fatigue blouse as your first purchase. It will also give our unit a better look since jackets were generally issued in bales of 100.

From “The ANTIETAM Project” impression flyer: *Federal issue frock coats were made of tightly woven, medium weight (21 ounces/yard), wool with little or no nap. The wool was a higher quality than the fatigue blouse, but similar in color. Following male fashion trends, the Frock would have a padded chest, tight waist, high collar and tight cuffs. The sleeves were ballooned, nearly 14” at the elbow. Cloth covered cording or twister cord, in the color of the branch of service, trimmed the collar and cuffs. The color of the light blues is not “baby blue” but rather Saxony blue. Nine buttons close the front. The center front is not a straight cut but curved to achieve a fitted look when all nine buttons are employed (Will’s note: This will not be possible if your waist is nearly as large or larger than your chest, like mine.) Button holes were hand done with black silk thread. These were key hold shaped and neatly done.*

Since the jacket is again very visible, we recommend buying the best the first time around.

5th Approved: work with RD Tailoring or buy from CJ Daley, Historic Clothiers

Infantry Jacket or Roundabout – Very popular in an earlier unit the founders belonged to, we currently recommend not using one. They seem to show up in photos of the Army of the Potomac, however they are often state jackets. The regulations only recognize fatigue blouses and frock coats so these coats were non-regulation. We are doing research to find out if there were Michigan jackets and how often they were issued. Until then, the fatigue blouse is recommended as cooler, less expensive, better researched and will work in all theaters of the war. If it’s a jacket you want, we recommend the Frock coat.

5th approved: Until the results of specific research are received, we don’t list an approved vendor.

US Issue shirt - This is one of the most under-represented items in all of re-enacting. Once described by a soldier in a letter home as “rather coarse and scratchy,” these shirts were issued by the millions to Federal troops. The shirt was made of domet flannel. Despite the different size of humans, the government only issued them in one size. There was only one button at the neck and one on each cuff. These shirts were completely hand-sewn.

Besides making the shirts out of domet at the arsenals, the army also had contractors make wool flannel shirts to issue to the troops. These came in a variety of colors such as dark blue, grey, tan and one contract was even given for red!

Members of the 5th Michigan are strongly encouraged to have an issue shirt in their kit and use it.

5th Approved: Contract issue shirt from W. W. and Co., When domet becomes easily available again, veterans will guide you in sewing you own issue shirt for a much better price.

Other vendors: CJ Daley, Historic Clothiers

Civilian Shirt - A cooler, more comfortable way to live. Often sent from home, soldiers secured shirts not of government- issue. This is a great choice for the second shirt in your kit.

From “The ANTIETAM Project” impression flyer: *Civilian work shirts by the 1860’s were made of cotton and woven into small checks and stripes in a variety of blues, browns, and greens. (Avoid bright, solid colors and wide floppy collars). Buttons were typically small (like dress shirt buttons today) and made of milk glass, mother of pearl, bone, or hard rubber. Button holes were hand worked. Seams were usually felled and the cuffs were large so they could fold back upon themselves. Cuff buttons allowed the sleeves to be folded back.*

Shirts can be either completely hand sewn or, to save time and/or cost, the hidden seams can be machine worked. If the shirt is to represent one purchased from a tailor, you can have everything machine stitched except the buttonholes.

5th Approved: make your own off one of many patterns with the help of a vet in the group

Other vendors: W. W. and Co., CJ Daley, Corner Clothiers

Bandanas and Handkerchiefs: A handkerchief is a VERY useful tool. It will be a towel, potholder and cooking aid or any of a million other uses. For ease of acquiring, some people use the red or blue printed “railroad” bandana. There are incorrect and not allowed. Period handkerchiefs are made of the same styles as civilian shirts. The sides were often tucked under and stitched down. Make a handkerchief out of a square of fabric about 20” to 24” square.

Ties and Cravats: A tie or cravat was an integral part of a civilian man’s daywear. Inevitably, some found their way into service. They were non-regulation, non-issue items. Use care when choosing one for your kit. We don’t recommend them for a campaign impression of any theater. Do not wear one with an issue shirt. Think about how hot you’ll be on a march in wool uniform then add fabric around your neck. If you wear a tie or cravat, do so only for formal occasions like a ball or maybe parade.

5th Approved: Fall Creek Sutlery for buckle behind the neck cravats. Old Sew-n-Sew for ties. Be sure to get Sew-n-Sew’s all silk ties. Don’t buy the less expensive synthetic blend.

Better: Corner Clothiers and Justin Runyon make excellent cravats or ties.

Socks: - In the past, the hobby had to make do with rag wool sports socks. Further research has proved them not to be correct. Period socks were made of wool yarn, and usually came up to around mid-calf. While there were socks made of cotton, the material wasn't as durable so it didn't last as long in the field. For that reason, we recommend wool as the first choice.

Socks can make all the difference in your enjoyment of an event. We walk (march) a lot at a re-enactment. Many of us get more walking in during a weekend than all week. We recommend having change of socks in your knapsack so you can have clean and dry socks available. It will reduce the chance of getting blisters, which you will take home with you at the end of the weekend. Socks may be either machine or hand knit.

5th Approved: W. W. and Co. has excellent cotton socks as well as hand-knit wool socks.

Best: Hand knit socks of a period pattern. Violet Fleishman.

Avoid: Socks of bright colors, patterns, with elastic tops, of "oatmeal" rag wool, socks with low tops. Generally avoid anything you could buy at sutler's row.

Bootees (shoes): The Jefferson bootee or "brogan" was the basic footgear issued to Federal infantry. There are various qualities available. In this case, the degree of comfort and satisfaction is very closely related to quality and price. The boots should be of black leather. The most common construction method was using wood pegs to attach the soles although there were variants where the sole was sewn. Either is acceptable.

Brogans had blunt or squared toes; avoid extremes (blocky "Frankenstein" bootees or pointed-toe designs. If you stick with approved sources, there is no way to fail). Laces are rawhide; if you have natural finish (brown/yellow laces) apply dye or polish to make them black.

5th Approved: Brogans from J. Lammers & Company. C&D Jarnagin is also acceptable.

Best: Brogans from Robert Land, Missouri Boot & Shoe Co. or Mattimore.

Avoid: Sutlers not on the list.

Boots: Avoid boots for your enlisted impression. Yes, there are pictures of infantrymen wearing them but they are an exception. Ask any veteran who has had to march any distance in high boots how uncomfortable it is. Brogans were issued to the infantry for a reason.

5th Approved: None.

Spats, Gaiters and other leggings: These items are very popular in many re-enacting groups. They are not allowed here. Any gaiters that were worn by US troops were issued through the state with their initial issue. Because of the heat and weight, they were quickly “lost.” There is not mention of any leggings in the regulations. Hence, they do not lend to the “generic” impression. Because of this and the fact that most reproductions are improperly made, we do not allow the use of gaiters or spats.

5th Approved: None.

Overcoat (Greatcoat): The overcoat is the item you’ll use least in your regular kit, but you’ll be thankful when you need it. This is the winter jacket of the infantryman. Properly constructed, it is a long jacket with an attached cape, both made of the same sky-blue kersey your trousers come from. The foot pattern (for infantry) had a single row of five buttons on the jacket and the cape is shorter than the mounted version.

Top-notch overcoats are VERY expensive. RD Tailoring is looking at getting a pattern to make them. Because you won’t use this as much, we aren’t approving the top quality garment here to make it financially possible for all to acquire their overcoat. It is a highly recommended item, particularly for spring and fall events. Look for an overcoat with a wool body lining, hand sewn buttonholes 5/8” buttons on the body (not 1” which is often seen). If you come to the 5th with an overcoat already, we can most likely help you with these upgrades so you don’t have to replace it.

5th Approved: Foot pattern overcoat from C&D Jarnagin or The Quartermaster Shop. If ordering new, be sure to specify the wool body lining. Request that the buttons be included but not attached.

Best: Purchase an Overcoat from a top quality vendor like CJ Daley or Historic Clothiers.

Avoid: Avoid, in most cases, “off the rack” coats from general sutlers – these are usually of poor material and very seldom have the correct wool lining.

Vest: A few years ago, everyone had a vest. Next to Civilian hats, they are the most over represented item in the Federal enlisted infantry kit. There was NO vest to be issued to Union enlisted men. What was once called the “Military Vest” is now more correctly called the “military Style vest.” Through private purchase, some men bought vests made of dark blue with US buttons them. They typically had nine buttons on the vest front and a buckle holding a two straps together on the back. Civilian styles are also seen in pictures. Overwhelmingly, civilian vests had lapels.

Etiquette of the time did dictate that men wear something over his shirt, but we see many images of soldiers in the field in their shirtsleeves. These men were busy surviving, not keeping up the etiquette necessarily. We don't recommend a vest for use in the field. If you grow cold, put your second shirt on over the first.

If you want a vest (for balls or other reasons), be sure to get one of a good period pattern.

5th Approved: We recommend no vest in your field kit and will most often insist you don't wear one on the march.

Source: Gloria Kirschensteiner, Past Reflections (Jackie Wakeling).

Avoid: Sometimes you will see vests that have been converted from modern garments. Do not do this.

Drawers (underwear): These were issued to all soldiers in a crude form using Canton flannel and stamped tin buttons. Issue versions have tie-strings at the ankles. Civilian style drawers were made of lighter cloth and came to the knees. Either style is acceptable. We strongly recommend you avoid the run of the mill, sutler row version. They are often made of muslin (incorrect) and have a habit of ripping out easily.

5th Approved: Drawers from a proper pattern, either civilian or issue. W. W. and Co., Gloria Kirschensteiner, N.J. Sekala or CJ Daley.

Avoid: Muslin drawers from Sutlers row. If you're paying \$25.00 or less for a pair of drawers, you've made a mistake and they most likely won't last long.

Rifle Musket: The weapon of the infantryman. The 5th Michigan spent the first two and a half years of the war carrying Austrian Rifle Muskets, in caliber .54 and .55. On account of bravery at Gettysburg, General David Birney ordered the regiment armed with Spencer Rifles. They were never issued enough for every man to have one. At the same time as the 5th received the Spencers (4th Quarter 1863) they also received a large shipment of Springfield rifle Muskets, Models 1855, 1861 and 1863. Finally in the 2nd quarter of 1864, they received only a few Enfield muskets. Late in 1864, a few Sharps rifles were also issued.

Since we often are portraying members of other regiments, we do not allow the Spencer or Sharps rifle to be the first purchase of any of our members. Austrians are not reproduced and we don't recommend carrying original firearms in the field. Enfields didn't show up in our regiment in great numbers. We recommend our members carry the 1855, 1861 or 1863 Springfield Rifled Musket, with the 1861 being preferred. Either Armi-Sport or Euroarms brands are acceptable. Both have incorrect marking and are missing other markings, but you can upgrade your weapon by having a gunsmith who knows the marks fix the problem.

5th Approved: 1855, 1861 or 1863 Springfield muskets from Armi-Sport, Navy Arms or Euroarms.

Better: Have the period correct markings put on your weapon by a gunsmith like James River Armory or Lodgewood Mfg.

Accepted: If you come from another unit and have an Enfield, it will be accepted. The majority of Enfields in Federal service had their bluing removed. Please consider doing this.

Avoid: Enfield muskets, if you are buying new. Also, we strongly discourage the use of original weapons in the field. They are relics and should be treated as such, we believe.

Bayonet: Buy the proper socket bayonet for the musket you purchase.

5th Approved: Reproduction bayonet for your musket.

Best: Find and purchase an original for your weapon. It is made of stronger metal so it won't bend and is properly stamped.

Bayonet Scabbard: We carry the Springfield style scabbard with diagonal frog. The two-rievet early war version is strongly preferred, since it is correct for any impression. The Seven-rievet frog, a late war variant, is an acceptable alternative. Enfield (straight) scabbard and frog; these were not used by Federal regiments.

5th Approved: 2 rievet Springfield scabbard from J. Lammers & Company.

Best: 2 rievet Springfield scabbard from LD Haning, Missouri Boot and Shoe or Butch Myers.

Avoid: 7 rievet variant or any sutler's scabbard where the leather feels like cardboard. Most likely, if the scabbard comes with the bayonet, you don't want it.

Waist belt: The waist-belt should be of leather, smooth side dyed black, with oval "US" waist plate. Belt must have either a brass keeper or a leather loop. The leather loop is preferred as it is the early war style. Cedar Creek Supply Depot doesn't currently make an early war belt, so the 5th approved is the mid-war style with the brass keeper.

5th Approved: Black US military belt with brass keeper from J. Lammers & Company.

Best: Early war variant belt from L. D. Haning, or Butch Myers.

Avoid: Brown or white leather, any belt buckle other than regulation oval US, belt without keeper or loop.

Cartridge box and belt: There are two good choices for cartridge boxes. The first is the Pattern of 1857 cartridge box. The other is the Pattern of 1861. Both are constructed of black, smooth leather, and should have an oval “US” plate on it. The cartridge box belt (also called the “sling” by re-enactors) should have a circular eagle plate attached so that it is over the sternum when worn. Whichever Pattern you buy, be sure to get your box for the .58 caliber ammunition. Both were made for both .58 and .69. We all carry .58 caliber weapons, so that is the correct box.

5th Approved: Pattern of 1861 Cartridge box with belt and both plates from J. Lammers & Company.

Avoid: Brown or white slings, missing brass; we do not use the box with embossed US in the leather flap.

Canteen, strap and cover: In the 5th Michigan, we carry the US Model 1858 smoothside canteen. The Model 1862 “bull’s-eye” canteen with concentric corrugation is appropriate for mid to late war impressions only. We recommend purchasing one that is covered using gray or brown jean cloth or federal issue blanket wool. We recommend proper leather canteen straps for early and mid-war impressions and cotton straps for mid to late war scenarios. Do not use leather straps with bulls-eye canteens. Your canteen will be your most important piece of equipment as a living historian. You won’t be used to the wool you’ll wear and it will provide you hydration. Talk with a veteran about how to care for your canteen and it will give you many years of excellent service.

Your canteen will need fitting to you to hang right on your body. Many re-enactors leave their canteen straps the way they bought them. This makes them way too long for the person wearing them. It looks bad historically and will cause your canteen (which is relatively heavy when full) to bang into your leg in a very annoying manner while on the march. A veteran will help you shorten your strap to take away these problems.

5th Approved: “The Best 1858 Canteen Anywhere” from Blockade Runner. We’ve held this on to originals and they look right! Also, it’s an excellent value!

Avoid: Confederate or Mexican War canteens. Avoid wooden canteens.

Haversack: As always, the early war style is most practical since it will carry your impression through the entire war. A correct haversack is approximately 11.5 inches by 12 inches, with black waterproof coating. The simple roller buckle should be black, not shiny brass or chrome modern hardware. The muslin pouch should be attached by bone or stamped tin buttons. We ask you avoid the state issued non-tarred haversacks. Soldiers had trouble with them as the tarring was meant to keep spoiling food from

rotting the uniform. The black haversack is also more standard as we strive to have a generic impression.

The haversack strap, like the canteen strap, is made quite long. For comfortable and authentic wear, the strap will have to be shortened. Again, ask any veteran in the unit and we'll be glad to help you.

5th Approved: US haversack from Missouri Boot and Shoe.

Best: US haversack from The Haversack Depot. This one has more hand work in it and is exactly like the original it is taken from. This will make a good step as you improve your kit.

Avoid: White or blue-line ticking, leather, or any other item than the standard haversacks described above.

Knapsack: We carry the model of 1855 Federal issue two-bag knapsack of black-tarred canvas. It comes with straps in case you want to roll you blanket and put it on top. You may also choose to carry your blanket in the lower section and use the upper for extra clothing and personal items. Talk with the veterans of the group and you'll see many different ways to pack the knapsack. It is a job that must be done to suit your comfort.

5th approved: Knapsack from Missouri Boot and Shoe

Gum blanket: The gum blanket is preferred over the mounted service poncho for general authenticity. This item will be very useful to you. It will keep you dry in rain as well as form the floor of your tent.

5th Approved: C&D Jarnagin's gum blankets are among the best available and reasonably priced.

Blanket: The blanket is one of the three most important pieces of equipment you will buy with regards to an excellent looking impression. If you wear it as a blanket roll, it is directly across your chest and in camp it will be laid out and take up a lot of space. There are numerous good reproductions available. If you can find one used, the Woodburn-Mount blanket is Will's favorite. It was one of the first really good reproductions to be made and is excellent at keeping your warm. The two blankets listed below are well known for their high authenticity but have not been slept in by any of the members of the 5th. Still, they are wool blankets and should be great at keeping your warm.

5th approved: The Julius Jones Blanket from Matt Woodburn or Keagly Noble Blanket from Orchard Hill Sutlery.

Avoid: If you are purchasing a blanket, avoid the gray wool blankets often available at the sutlers with the black stripes and US stitching. They aren't very good copies of originals and aren't as warm!

Shelter tent: From mid-1862, infantry soldiers were issued one shelter half, which they attached to their pard's to make a complete "dog tent." Correct shelter halves are made with either bone or stamped tin buttons; both are correct. Hand-stitched grommets are preferred, machine-stitched are acceptable.

The hobby has been experiencing a revolution in shelter tents, moving from heavy, inauthentic versions of waterproofed canvas to authentic versions made of cotton drill. We cannot emphasize strongly enough the need to have a correct shelter half – it is much easier to carry and looks better. It's also a trick to mate an old, less correct reproduction with the correct ones.

Some prefer to carry two shelter halves so they can sleep alone. The more authentic (and lighter) approach is to choose a pard to share the tent with.

5th Approved: shelter half from Haversack Depot or W. W and Company

Avoid: If you do not have a shelter half, do not purchase a heavy one with brass grommets - if you already have one of these, it should be a priority to replace it.

Braces: Known in the modern world as suspenders, these items are important to help hold your trousers up. They also were not an issue item in the army. Any properly made civilian pattern will work well.

5th approved: S. G. Marinos Co. or Trans Mississippi depot

Better: Corner Clothiers

Avoid: Inexpensive, white canvas, modern suspenders available at sutler's row

Other items: There are a host of other small items and knick-knacks that a person can acquire to round out their kit as an infantryman. As with all of the items listed above, these small items will come in varying levels of historic quality. We highly recommend that you talk with a veteran before you buy. Most of us have made poor choices in the past and will be able to show you some of the pit-falls we hit building our impressions. Besides, taking several guys to sutler's row at one time is one of the true joys of being at a Civil War event. It's a great time to spend with your friends.

We hope you find this set of guidelines clear and helpful. Welcome to the 5th Michigan Infantry and good luck building your kit!!!