

HOW WAS FIELD ARTILLERY ORGANIZED DURING THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES?

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Loyal Train of Artillery Chapter of the United States Field Artillery Association

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The unit of organization for the field artillery was the battery. Since a battery of light artillery was worth a thousand infantrymen, the battery commander had almost the same duties and responsibilities as an infantry regiment's colonel and would often report directly to a brigadier general.

A field battery accompanied infantry and cavalry and supported their movements in the field, either to attack or to defend a designated position. Typically, a field battery had four pieces during times of peace, and six pieces in times of war. Field artillery was called "mounted artillery" if it was assigned to infantry, and "horse artillery" if it was assigned to cavalry.

There was a great deal of inconsistency with the organization of the artillery during the War Between the States (American Civil War) on both sides. Frequently, artillery firepower was assigned at the divisional level, with several batteries (usually called a battalion or a brigade) under the command of a field officer. There might also be a separate artillery reserve, commanded by a general officer (Chief of Artillery) who had supervision over the artillery forces of the entire army. The resulting chain of command led to frequent conflicts between the field command (Division) and the service command (Chief of Artillery) with the Battery Commander caught in the middle.

A battery, consisting a minimum of two pieces of artillery in the field, was under the command of a Captain. Batteries were further broken down into sections, typically consisting of two guns under the command of a lieutenant. One gun, along with a caisson and limber, was designated as a platoon and served under a sergeant and two corporals.

The following outlines the number of men and horses that comprise a Field Battery.

| | Personnel | Horses |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Per Cannon</i> | | |
| Cannon Crew: | 5 Privates, 1 Corporal, 1 Sergeant | 6 |
| Caissons: | 1 Corporal & 1 Sergeant | 6 |
| Drivers: | 4 Privates (2 each Cannon and Cason) | |
| <i>Per Section</i> | | |
| Section Chief: | 1 Lieutenant | 1 |
| <i>Per Battery</i> | | |
| Commander: | 1 Captain | 1 |
| Blacksmith: | 1 | 6 (Forge) |
| Machinist: | 1 | 6 (Battery Wagon) |

For a 6-gun Battery (3 Sections), this equates to the following:

1. Personnel: 84 Men Total (could be up to 100 with spotters and other support roles)
 - a. 1 Captain
 - b. 3 Lieutenants
 - c. 12 Sergeants
 - d. 12 Corporals
 - e. 54 Privates
 - f. 1 Blacksmith
 - g. 1 Machinist
2. Horses: 88 Horses Total (could be up to 100 with spares and additional wagons)
 - a. 36 pulling Cannons
 - b. 36 pulling Caissons
 - c. 6 pulling Forge
 - d. 6 pulling Battery Wagon
 - e. 3 ridden by Section Chiefs
 - f. 1 ridden by Battery Commander

It is interesting to note that, though only seven or eight cannoneers were necessary to serve a piece, it took 25 to 30 men to keep a single gun in

the field and in operating condition. The average life span of an artillerist in the War Between the States was about 5 months (1 battle for the two men in the front) serving on the gun, and about 9-11 months serving on the limber. A sharpshooter's primary responsibility, other than killing officers, was to kill cannon crews. During artillery duels, killing the opposing artillery was also a major focus.

Ready to learn more about operating muzzle-loading artillery? The LTAC-USFAA teaches the safe operation of canons from the War Between the States to all students who attend the Artillery Schools, and the manuals can be purchased online at <http://artillerypublications.com/>.