

THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH UNITED STATES INFANTRY, COMPANY A

Commanders Column—Capt Poltenson



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As mentioned in the last newsletter we need to focus more on a proper portrayal of a Regular. The following article was written in 2004 and is still relevant. Take a gander and think upon your portrayal, and the brave souls we represent. Do you see yourself in this description?"

The new seasons is just about upon us, and many of us long to be again in camp and on the field of glory. Thoughts glide to the camaraderie about the campfire and the chance to put down the rebellion once and for all. But just what are we about and why are we doing this? With snow still on the ground I thought it would be appropriate to share a sense of what it is we really need to do.

First, a word about Regimental Pride. Esprit de corps and unit cohesion are essential characteristics of an effective fighting organization. Military history has demonstrated that units with high esprit, a sense of tradition and pride in past achievements perform well in combat. It develops in soldiers a sense of loyalty and commitment, which comes from long-term identification with a unit, and the opportunity to highlight the history, cus-

oms and traditions behind the regiments.

The regiment as a clearly defined military unit emerged in the late Middle Ages. During this period the regiment came to be a basic building block of many state's military machines, very much as the legion had performed the same function for Imperial Rome. The word "regiment" is derived from the Latin word regimen, meaning a rule or a system of order. In most armies it denoted a body of troops headed by a colonel and organized into companies, battalions or squadrons.

While the battalion became the basic tactical unit in most armies, its parent unit, the regiment became the principal instrument of garrison administration: recruiting, training and centralizing wartime command (such as the 12th's home base of Fort Hamilton, NY). As armies became permanent royal (later national) organizations and professional in character, regiments (especially those with an il-

lustrious history of achievements in combat) increasingly became objects of institutional loyalty, pride and esprit, particularly among their leaders. Both state and the army consciously promoted cohesiveness by endowing each regiment with a distinctive name, number, colors, uniform and insignia. Excellent examples of these include the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment (The Black Watch), which has a tradition going back 250 years.

In the American Civil War, regiments of both sides recruited regionally, enormously enhancing unit cohesion. Such temporary regiments usually combined with other regiments when losses compromised their combat effectiveness. Yet the glue that held the Union Army together was the Regular regiment. Major Allen and 1st Sgt. MacMillan have provided essays in other newsletters (and hopefully will do more) on our noble Regimental history. Read it, learn it and you will better understand what we portray and the heritage we continue. But the purpose of this article is to focus on the more basic principals of looking like a cohesive unit. Appearance is important.

(Continued on page 4)

12th US Infantry 2nd Annual Harvest Dinner and Unit Meeting

On Saturday, October 23, 2010 the 12th US will have their 2nd Annual Harvest Dinner. The dinner will be preceded by a Unit

meeting. The unit meeting will start at 3:00 pm with the dinner at approximately 5:30 pm. The dinner and meeting will be held at the William H. Cain

American legion at 707 Mohawk Street, Chittenango, NY. Please bring a dish to pass and your own mess gear.

Bylaws Revision–James Hurd

The bylaws committee was established and instructed to review the bylaws and propose revisions. Bill Mayers chaired the committee, which included Neil MacMillan and Jim Hurd. Issues that were specifically to be addressed were Communications, Dual Memberships, Rank and Elections. The committee presented the proposed revisions to President Carol Mayers and Captain Charles Poltenson in late June, 2010. The Board of Directors voted on July 9, 2010 to present the proposed revisions to the General Membership for ratification. The complete bylaws, including proposals can be downloaded in the Member section of the website. The proposed revisions are below designated by underline or strike-out in the following excerpts with comments italicized:

ARTICLE III - MEMBERS

Comment - This section is added to clarify the disposition to the 12th US regarding dual and multiple memberships.

Section 7. Dual / Multiple Memberships:

Dual or multiple unit memberships will be tolerated in so far as they do not conflict with the interests of the 12th Regiment U. S. Infantry Co. A, Inc. The Board of Directors will evaluate such memberships as needed.

ARTICLE IV - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 2. Military Officers:

Comment – This and following revisions establish that all rank is by yearly election and that candidates must be members in good standing as defined elsewhere in the bylaws.

The Military Officers shall be the Unit Commander and other military Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers according to Civil War era military rank. Any member who holds an honorary rank shall not be considered to be a Military Officer. Election by ballot for all Military Officers by Full Members in good standing shall be held in February; commencement of duties shall start the following March. Term of office shall be 12 months.

a. Unit Commander:

Comment – The following is revised to establish a clear responsibility for maintaining communication within the unit.

The Unit Commander presides at meetings; oversees all unit activities; and is responsible for all correspondence regarding any event. The Unit Commander will, in cooperation with the President and the Board of Directors, insure that there is sufficient and appropriate communications with and between all Members.

In the desire to maintain the authenticity of the 1860s time period, the Unit Commander must be a male Full Member. A vote of confidence will be held annually for the Unit Commander with each member of the Board of Directors having one vote subject to Article 3, Section 3 of these bylaws. The Unit Commander shall be determined annually by general election.

b. Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers:

Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers are persons functioning with military rank according

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Bylaws Revision–James Hurd contd.

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to Civil War era military structure. The number and ranks of these officers must be reasonably consistent with historic ratios in accordance with Article IV, Section 2, Part d. A vote of confidence will be held annually for all Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers with only Military Officers on the Board of Directors having one vote each subject to Article 3, Section 3 of these bylaws.

Comment – The following establishes that candidates for rank must take and pass an exam that insures knowledge of the rank being sought.

Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers shall be determined annually by general election. The Board of Directors will establish and maintain a certification process for the purpose of determining that individuals are qualified to perform the required duties of each rank. All candidates for positions of rank must have been certified for the position being sought.

Comment – The following allows the field commander to fill vacancies and to make temporary promotions as functionally required.

The Unit Commander or Acting Commander may make brevet promotions when needed to meet functional requirements at an event. Such a promotion shall remain in effect only for the duration of that event. A vacancy may be filled by brevet promotion for the unexpired term. The Unit Commander shall nominate a candidate to be promoted and present said candidate to the Board of Directors for approval. All Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers must retain the uniform and equipment necessary to return to the rank of Private.

Comment – The following establishes authorized numbers and ranks in proportion to the unit strength.

d. Authorized Strength of Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers:

The numbers and Ranks of military Officers and Non-Commissioned Officer shall be set prior to elections at the annual meeting as follows:

Rank	< 10 Pvts	10 Pvts	14 Pvts	16 Pvts	20 Pvts	28 Pvts	32+ Pvts
Capt	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1st Lt	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2nd Lt	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
1st Sgt	1	1	1	1	1/1*	1	1
SGT	0/1*	1	1	2	2	3	4
CPL	2	3	4	4	4	5	8

The number of authorized NCO's for the Musician section will be consistent with the above table except as noted by asterisk. Ranks above Sgt are Company level ranks and are not authorized specifically for the musician section, except that a 1st Sgt may be authorized for 20 or more Musician Privates due to administrative requirements.

Commanders Column—Capt Poltenson—contd.

(Continued from page 1)

We linger about the company street and on the field with a myriad array of uniforms and styles. Some look good in their frocks, others wander about in sacks and sky blues. What is proper and what is not. Some have Hardee's that look like something out of a cowboy movie. Others look like their weapons have been buried in the

sod since the Great Famine (when our beloved 1st Sgt. came over and found a career guiding us through thick and thin).

Should we be wearing Frocks?

Yes. In the early war period we wore frocks and dark blues. Later in the war we wore Sack coats and sky blue trousers. That is conventional wisdom. However, if one reads the Army Regulations as it

pertains to the uniform there are a couple of surprises. For example. The forage cap (never a kepi) by regulation only had the company letter on the front. No other brass was attached. The Hardee hat also had specific directions for wearing of brass (most of us have it right) and the number of feathers. The following was copied from an excellent web site (linked off of the 12th's site) for the Civil War

Regular Army (<http://www.usregulars.com/library.htm>). The following note only those sections that are noted for infantry, but I would encourage anyone who can to check out the resources on this site.

REGULATIONS FOR THE UNIFORM AND DRESS OF THE
ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES 1861.
BY AUTHORITY OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT WASHINGTON:
GEORGE W. BOWMAN, PUBLIC PRINTER. 1861.

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 6.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, March 13, 1861.

For Enlisted Men.

12...The uniform coat for all enlisted foot men, shall be a single - breasted frock of dark blue cloth, made without plaits, with a skirt extending one - half the distance from the top of the hip to the bend of the knee; one row of nine buttons on the breast placed at equal distances ; stand - up collar to rise no higher than to permit the chin to turn freely over it, to hook in front at the bottom and then to slope up and backward at an angle of thirty degrees on each side ; cuffs pointed according to pattern, and to button with two small buttons at the under seam ; collar and cuffs edged with a cord or welt of cloth as follows, to wit: Scarlet for Artillery; sky blue for Infantry; yellow for Engineers; crimson for Ordnance and Hospital stewards. On each shoulder a metallic scale according to pattern ; narrow lining for skirt of the coat of the same color and material as the coat ; pockets in the folds of the skirts with one button at each hip to range with the lowest buttons on the breast ; no buttons at the ends of the pockets.



14...For all Musicians - the same as for other enlisted men of their. respective corps, with the addition of a facing of lace three - eighths of an inch wide on the front of the coat or jacket, made in the following manner: bars of three - eighths of an inch worsted lace placed on a line with each button six and - one - half inches wide at the bottom, and thence gradually expanding upwards to the last button, counting from - the waist up, and contracting from thence to the bottom of the collar, where it will be six and one - half inches wide, with a strip of the same lace following the bars at their outer extremity - the whole presenting something of what is called the herring - bone form; the color of the lace* facing to correspond with the color of the trimming of the corps.

15...For Fatigue Purposes - a sack coat of dark blue flannel extending half way down the thigh, and made loose, without sleeve or body lining, falling - collar, inside pocket on the left side, four coat buttons down the front.

16...For Recruits - the sack coat will be made with sleeve and body lining, the latter of flannel.

17...On all occasions of duty, except fatigue, and when out of quarters, the coat or jacket shall be buttoned and hooked at the collar.

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REGULATIONS FOR THE UNIFORM AND DRESS OF THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES 1861.

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Note: This might help answer the questions as to what recruits need to buy.

TROUSERS.

28...For Enlisted Men, except companies of Light Artillery - dark blue cloth; sergeants with a stripe one and one - half inch wide; corporals with a stripe one - half inch wide, of worsted lace, down and over the outer seam, of the color of the facings of the respective corps.

29...Ordnance Sergeants and Hospital Stewards - stripe of crimson lace one and one - half inch wide.

30...Privates - plain, without stripe or welt.

All trousers to be made loose, without plaits, and to spread well over the boot; to be re - enforced for all enlisted mounted men.

HAT.

32...For Officers. Of best black felt. The dimensions of medium size to be as follows:

Width of brim, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches,
Height of crown, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches,
Oval of tip, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch,
Taper of crown, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch,
Curve of head, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch.
Tire binding to be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, of best black ribbed silk.

33...For Enlisted Men: Of black felt, same shape and size as for officers, with double row of stitching, instead of binding, around the edge. To agree in quality with the pattern deposited in the clothing arsenal.

Trimmings.

45...For Enlisted Men, except companies of Light Artillery: The same as for Officers of the respective corps, except that there will be but one feather, the cord will be of worsted, of the same color as that of the facing of the corps, three - sixteenths of an inch in diameter, running three times through a slide of the same material, and terminating with two tassels, not less than two inches long, on the side of the hat opposite the feather. For Hospital Stewards the cord will be of buff and green mixed. The insignia of corps, in brass, in front of the hat, corresponding with those prescribed for Officers, with the number of regiment, five - eighths of an inch long, in brass, and letter of company, one inch, in brass, arranged over insignia. Brim to be looped up to side of hat with a brass eagle, having a hook attached to the bottom to secure the brim - on the right side for mounted men and left side for foot men. The feather to be worn on the side opposite the loop.

46...All the trimmings of the hat are to be made so that they can be detached; but the eagle, badge of corps, and letter of company, are to be always worn.

FORAGE CAPS.

49...For fatigue purposes, forage caps, of pattern in the Quartermaster General's Office: Dark blue cloth, with a welt of the same around the crown, and yellow metal letters in front to designate companies.

This should give folks a passable idea of what a soldier should look like based on published Army Regulations (which to the 12th would be the Bible). We do not have the distinction of being a "local" unit from anywhere, so we do not have that regional or local flavor sought by some reenactors. Yet the pride, dedication and the tradition of the Regular Army lies not only in the hearts and minds of those who serve today, but on hallowed ground such as Malvern Hill, Gaines Mills, Gettysburg and Bull Run. It should rest as well...in our hearts. I remember at the 140th Gettysburg we formed up with the 4th US for the presentation of their colors. Captain Child's put all of those who had the proper uniform in front and we took station on the right of the line. One witness testified to me what a grand sight, to see the Regulars...sharp, tall, proud and distinctive. That, my friends and comrades, is what we should continue to strive for.

Cleanliness is Next to Godliness: Cleaning Your Musket

You don't think much about a musket while you're shooting. Either it works or it doesn't. If it is not working you, fix it quick or pick up one that will work. As a re-enactor, you have a choice and time. Back in the day, especially in the middle of brevet Hell^[1] that wasn't the case. The Springfield 1861 and 1863 models were the pinnacle of single-shot muzzle loading technology and along with the British Enfield Model 1853 were the weaponry choice for infantry on both sides of the Civil War.^[2] The Model 1855 Springfield was the first musket manufactured with rifling and designed to take the .58 caliber Minie ball. Several variants of muskets were rifled after the fact including the venerable 1842 Springfield, the main infantry arm during the Mexican War but these still used spherical balls and required patches to seal properly. The Minie ball revolutionized weapons technology. The ball is the precursor of today's modern bullets. The base expanded to fit in the rifling for a better gas seal giving the weapon far better range and accuracy.

The 1855 Springfield featured a Maynard primer system, which was basically a roll of caps like a toy cap pistol would use. It was an interim choice and the primer system was plagued with operational problems and prone to misfires from moisture. With the 1861 Springfield the percussion system consisted of a brass percussion cap that was far more reliable than either flintlocks or the Maynard primer.

The 1863 Springfield featured stronger barrel bands and did away with the bolster clean out screw. Many 1863 Springfields

were refitted to become the "trap-door" Springfield of Indian War vintage.^[3]

There are usually three reasons a musket won't fire: A bad or missing percussion cap, wet powder or the weapon is fouled. (Dirty to modern ears.) Fortunately, I'm here to tell you how to take care of the last problem.

You return from a hot fight with maybe three of the forty cartridges left you started the skirmish with. Sweat pours down your back and your muslin shirt clings to your back. The last thing you want to think about is cleaning your musket, which after 37 rounds desperately needs a thorough cleaning. You know your duty and shoulder the resolve to do what you must.

The grass isn't very tall here but small musket parts have a nasty habit of going walk-about in grass. You put down your combination poncho and ground cloth laying the rubber side down.

After all, the off-white canvas makes it much easier to see the small parts. You dig out your cleaning gear; tools, a nipple pick, funnel, leather gloves, patches, a small bottle of peroxide, oil and rags. Then you take the guest of honor for this little party. The musket you didn't think about, worked as it was supposed to and is still warm from the fight.

The polished steel of the barrel can get too hot to handle. The stock is walnut stained and sealed to a medium luster. The grain of the wood tells the story of the tree if you pay close atten-

tion. Over the campfire, water boils in a tin coffee pot. While you wait you field strip your weapon. You already know it's unloaded. You cleared weapons before you returned. Draw the hammer back to half cock. Half-cock safeties the weapon and if the weapon fires while in half cock it is unsafe. That is the origin of the phrase "Don't go off half-cocked." Remove the spent percussion cap and set it aside to use later to keep moisture and dirt from entering the percussion nipple. If you're like me, you keep your smaller cleaning tools in an old cap tin. I use this to place screws and small parts in as an added precaution against them disappearing. Then you remove the ramrod. If you have a worm, you use the ramrod as a cleaning rod. I have a break down rod with slotted cleaning jags and brushes that I use. A worm screws on to the threaded end of the ramrod and has two curved, sharpened prongs to put a cleaning patch on

You take your Springfield tool from your haversack. This is a combination screwdriver and wrench and is designed to fit all the stock and band screws and the nipple of the Springfield. In the field, meaning at a re-enactment most riflemen don't fully field strip the weapon but it is useful to know how to and you will, of course being a diligent person fully clean the weapon when you get home.

Remove the nipple using the wrench end of the Springfield tool. Once you have the nipple removed, take the nipple pick and scrape the solid matter from inside the hole in the middle. "Store bought" Nipple picks look like the safety pins on grenades. I have a tendency to lose them during a fight so I make

mine from paper clips. The size is right and a standard paper clip will make two nipple picks. Mine don't look like grenade pins. Once you clean the solid matter, which is, mostly wax from inside the nipple, pour a bit of peroxide in the bottle cap and let the nipple soak in it.

Remove the three bands and tang screw and place them in the cap tin. You can remove the barrel now. If you sport an 1855 or 1861 Springfield remove the bolster screw and thoroughly clean the bolster. Usually a pipe cleaner will work well for this. If you have been in a rainy environment or you're doing a full cleaning on the weapon you'll also want to remove the lock plate screws on the left side of the weapon. This allows you to take out the lock and wipe any moisture away and lubricate it. A few drops of oil will suffice in the field. At home or if there has been moisture in the lock you may want to use gun grease. Unless you're a masochist and like looking for small parts that you will not get back together do not take the lock apart without using a lock vise. Even then, I advise the people that I re-enact with not to dismantle the lock in the field and not to do so if they have no experience in doing so.

Using a brass brush on your cleaning rod vigorously scour the bore of the barrel and dump the powder out. If you use a solvent, do so before you rinse the bore. I use a concoction that is one part Murphy's ® Wood oil soap, one part rubbing alcohol and one part peroxide. Let your solvent soak for a few minutes to loosen up the burnt powder residue.

By this time, if you have some-

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Cleanliness is Next to Godliness: Cleaning Your Musket Contd.

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one in your unit like "Dutch", the water you were waiting for is boiling. Using the leather gloves, you take the coffee pot and your barrel and pour water down it ensuring you wash the entire residue out. You'll know if you are successful. Your first rinse will be black and each subsequent rinse should be lighter. When the water runs out clear, you've finished rinsing. You're not done.

Using a worm or cleaning jag and gun cleaning patches you dry the bore. Note the plural. Not all that water you poured down the barrel got every thing.

If you used a solvent, you'll go through fewer patches than you will otherwise. Swab the bore until your patches come out white and dry. Oil the bore with good weapons grade oil such as

Hoppe's, 3 in one, Rem Oil ® or Bore butter, which most sutlers (Civil War vendors) carry. I do this with a clean gun patch liberally coated with oil. Save this patch.

At this point you wipe the stock down with a rag and possibly some furniture polish or wood oil. Reassemble the piece. I usually lay out everything in the order I removed it. If you removed the lock, carefully reinstall it. Make sure the barrel is snugly returned to the same position you removed it from. As you install the barrel retaining bands, you notice that they are a different size. It is almost impossible to put them on in the wrong order you muse. You can however, put them on upside down. If you study the bands, you'll notice a "u". If you put band on so the top of the letter "u" faces the muzzle then you have installed them correctly. Make sure all the screws are securely tightened.

You take the nipple from the peroxide and rinse it copiously with clean water. Dry it and put a light coat of oil on the threads. Make sure the nipple is snug and tight. You remember the oily patch and the spent percussion cap? You may have questioned my sanity about saving them. Place the oily patch over the nipple and cover it with the percussion cap. Now gently lower the hammer onto the cap. This will keep both moisture and foreign objects from the nipple. I use a tom-pion to keep dust and such out of the bore.

You wipe the weapon with a lightly oiled rag and it is ready for tomorrow's festivities.

Author Biography

The author reenacts with the 12th US infantry Co. A. He is the unit's 1st Sgt. He has been reenacting for 12 years. He is actively pursuing a bachelor's degree in creative writing and history. He resides in Syracuse New York with his wife Peggy.

[1] Brevet Hell was a Civil War slang term for battle. A brevet in military parlance is a temporary promotion that was awarded usually for bravery in combat.

[2] All weaponry information from Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union © 1998 Time-Life Books.

Marching by the Flank

When a company is formed and facing to front, the right side is the right flank and the left side is the left flank. Thus, when given the command "Right, Face - Forward, March", the company is marching by the right flank and the opposite holds true for the left flank. This is all very basic but there may be a few points here that should be pointed out as they are not necessarily obvious.

Draw an imaginary line along the front rank of a company facing to the front and extend that line to the right to the left of the company. When the company is given the command to "Right, Face", notice that the number two men step up and to the right of the number one men. The leftmost man in each file remains positioned along the

imaginary line and the 1st Sergeant in along that same line. When the company then marches by the right flank, the left side of each file remains aligned with that same imaginary line behind the 1st Sergeant. Each rank will guide on that leftmost man, who will establish the proper interval behind the preceding file.

The same principals apply when marching by the left flank. The number one men step up to the left of the number two men so that the same imaginary line is maintained at the right of the files. The 2nd Sergeant will take up the guide position at the left of the company and along the same imaginary line. Thus, the right side of each file is aligned with the 2nd Sergeant and all other ranks guide to the right.

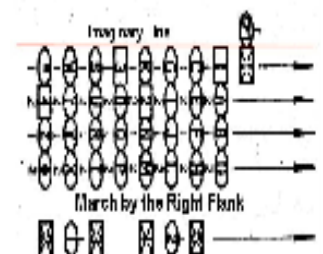
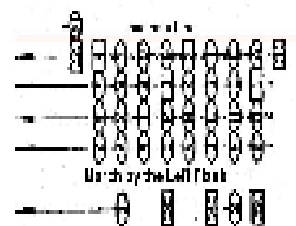
In essence, when marching by the right flank, the guide is left. When marching by the left flank, the guide is right.

We may now extend these principals to marching a battalion by the flank in column of companies. The imaginary line that establishes the front will always be the line of reference and the guide will be in that direction. In that case, the Captain should actually command "Guide, Left" or "Right" as the case may be. If you do not hear that command then you know what to do anyway, and why.

When marching to the front, the guide may be left or right as commanded by the Captain. Assume right, towards the 1st Sergeant unless com-

manded otherwise or there are colors being flown. In that case, the guide will be towards the colors.

Private Jim Hurd
Chief of Staff
12th US



12th US Infantry
10085 Carousel Center
Syracuse, NY 13290-0061

Upcoming Events

- Oct 2—3, 2010 Old Mill Village, New Milford, PA
- Oct 15—15, 2010 146th Cedar Creek Reenactment, Middletown, VA
- Oct 23, 2010—2nd Annual Harvest Dinner and Unit meeting—Chittenango Legion
- Nov 11, 2010—Veterans Day
- Nov 20, 2010—Remembrance Day, Gettysburg, PA
- Jan 22, 2011—USV meeting, Harrisburg, PA
- Feb ?, 2011—12th US Annual meeting
- June 10—12, 2010 19th Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend
- July 22 –24, 2011—150th Anniversary 1st Manassas, Manassas, VA

Mr., Mrs. or Miss - addressing each other as they did in the 1860's

Public addresses during the 19th century were significantly more formal than the current 21st century way of addressing people. “In our living history activities we need to be aware of the differences between how we greet each other today and the prescribed way of greeting each other in the mid-19th century. All too often we attempt to formalize our greetings but fall short by fully understanding the rules.”

For men mister is the title used with his last name unless he has achieved another title through occupation or election. In Civilian situations military titles of rank were not used as frequently unless the man was a higher ranking officer. Some of the occupation and election titles may be Doctor, Reverend, Professor, Senator and Governor. For boys the first name would be added between mister and his last name.

Married women are addressed by Mrs. and her last name. Unmarried women of any are addressed as Miss. If she is the oldest daughter her last name would follow miss. Her younger sisters would be addressed Miss, her first name and then last name. When the oldest daughter marries the next would have the first name dropped when she was being addressed. Mrs. Armstrong, Miss Armstrong and Miss Susan Armstrong would be the appropriate addresses for the females in the Armstrong household.

Source: Who are you? Who am I? Or, Greetings on the Church Steps – Anna Worden Bauersmith, Citizens Companion, Sept – Oct 2010. Mrs. Mayers