

II. WEAPONS of the 1st North Carolina Cavalry



Early war photo of a 1st NC trooper with M1833 dragoon saber and single shot pistol.
(From Mast, *State Troops and Volunteers*, 1995)

The original arms distributed to the First North Carolina Cavalry had been seized from the North Carolina Arsenal at Fayetteville. A report issued at the State Convention, June 1861, reported that the following arms were on hand or distributed to the state troops:

- Received from the N.C. Arsenal at Fayetteville, after supplying Virginia, Muskets and Rifles, 27,500 (The muskets were “of the best pattern and quality.” About 3,700 of these were “Mississippi” rifles.)
- Flint muskets, State Arsenal, at Fayetteville, 2,000
- At all other places, 2,000
- Rifles purchased and received from U. States, 700
- Pistols (distributed and on hand), 500

Reference: STATE CONVENTION. JUNE 1861. STATE TROOPS. Ordered to be printed. Syme & Hall, Printers to the Convention. Copyright 2004 by the University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, all rights reserved. URL: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/ims/troops/troops.html>

Which of these were distributed to the cavalry were not noted. The 1st NC’s ordnance reports for 1861 were also vague about arms, simply noting “carbines,” “pistols,” and “sabers.” However, photographic evidence and period letters indicate that much if not most of the arms originally issued were antiquated: M1833 dragoon sabers, single shot “horse pistols” and (for some companies at least) Colt’s revolving rifles. On February 7, 1862 troopers of the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry, captured nine 1st N.C. pickets. Their commander reported that the prisoners were armed with rather unusual weapons: “Colts repeating rifles, old fashioned horse pistols and sabers.” A Jan 1, 1863 report for Company H noted both “Colts Rifle,” Enfield Carbines, and “others” among its long arms.

Ordnance reports from early 1864 showed that the Regiment had made significant advances in the quality of its arms during 1863 and was continuing to “upgrade” through both resupply and capture of Federal arms. A 2nd quarter 1864 “Report of Ordnance Lost” included 3 Springfield rifles, 19 Long Enfield rifles (“9 exchanged for 7 Spencers and 2 Burnsidess”), 7 Austrian Rifles (“6 exchanged for Richmond Carbines”), 26 Sharps Carbines, 5 Richmond Carbines, 3 Navy pistols, and 3 Army pistols. A “Report of Ammunition Expended” noted that 22,374 Sharp’s cartridges had been expended, compared to a total of about 7,000 rounds from all other long arms combined (.58 cal rifles, make not noted but probably Enfields; Smiths, and Spencers.) Reports of “Ordnance Stores Turned Over” by the NC Cavalry Brigade included numerous .58 cal Enfield Rifles—both short and long—and an assortment of other weapons, including 49 Austrian rifles. This suggests that over time the North Carolina cavalry regiments were upgrading to more modern breechloading carbines. In July 1864, after an action at Black’s and White’s Station, where the Federal raiding party under Kautz and Wilson was “utterly destroyed,” the regimental historian noted that “more than half of this regiment (1st NC Cav) were armed and equipped from the enemy. One company (F) boasted that its entire outfit had been taken from the foe.”

An inspection report for the 1st NC Cavalry dated Jan 30, 1865 notes the following long arms in the regiment: “Smiths Rifle, Richmond Rifle, Enfield Rifle, Merrills Rifle, Sharps Rifle, Spencers Rifle, Caliber .52, .54, .58.”

III. Uniforms and Equipments of the 1st North Carolina Cavalry



Pvt. Colvard, 1st NC Cav in early war uniform, a NC Issue Coat shortened for cavalry use, reinforced trousers, M1833 dragoon saber, and a buff leather belt with US plate (probably seized from the Fayetteville Arsenal).

General Orders, No.1, "REGULATIONS FOR THE UNIFORM DRESS AND EQUIPMENTS, OF THE VOLUNTEERS AND STATE TROOPS OF NORTH CAROLINA" (May 27, 1861) specified the following uniform for enlisted men:

COAT. 10. *For Enlisted Men.*--The uniform coat for all enlisted men shall be a sack coat of gray cloth (of North Carolina Manufacture) extending half way down the thigh, and made loose, with falling collar, and an inside pocket on each breast, six coat buttons down the front, commencing at the throat; a strip of cloth sewed on each shoulder, extending from the base of the collar to the shoulder seam, an inch and a half wide at the base of the collar, and two inches wide at the shoulder; this strip will be of black cloth for Infantry, red for Artillery and yellow for Cavalry.

TROUSERS. 15. *For Enlisted Men.*--The uniform trowsers for enlisted men will be of North Carolina gray cloth, made loose, reinforced for mounted men, with a stripe of cloth down and over the outer seams. The stripe will be black for Infantry, red for Artillery and yellow for Cavalry, one inch wide for non-commissioned staff of regiments; and sergeants--three-fourths of an inch wide for corporals and one half inch wide for privates.

HAT. 16. *For Commissioned Officers.*--For General Officers, and officers of the General Staff, a black felt hat of light material; the body of the hat one and one half inch less in circumference at the crown than at the base, to be looped at the right side, with a large gilt button of the North Carolina pattern, and a gilt ornament in front, representing the Coat of Arms of North Carolina, according to pattern in Quarter Master General's Office.

21. *For Enlisted Men.*--A gray hat of the same pattern as for officers, looped in like manner, with the letter of the Company and number of Regiment of brass in front. The hat band being red for Artillery, yellow for Cavalry and black for Infantry.

22. Officers, when off duty or on fatigue duty may wear the French forage cap, according to pattern in Quarter Master General's office.

23. *Enlisted Men.*--Gray, according to pattern.



A Sgt. of the 1st NC wearing a gray frock coat and buff saber belt. Single breasted gray frock coats were “regulation” for junior officers as well. (Mast, *State Troops and Volunteers*, 1995).

This early pattern uniform was not in use long in the cavalry regiments. Since the coat lacked a vent in back, some troopers modified it by cutting off the skirt, converting it into a shell jacket of sorts. Some early war photographs show 1st NC troopers in gray frock coats, with 9 buttons. By 1862, the entire production of North Carolina's woolen mills was diverted to military production. In an effort to conserve material, the more economical North Carolina Depot jacket was being made. Since the 1st NC served with the Army of Northern Virginia, they received Richmond Depot jackets as well. A few surviving photographs of North Carolina cavalymen show them in the "shortened" version of the 1861 North Carolina Issue coat (but with dark, not yellow epaulets), but most show them in North Carolina Depot jackets and Richmond Depot jackets.

Early war photos show troopers in a mix of buff leather "dragoon" belts with US buckles and black belts with simple frame buckles, while later photos show black belts, with a variety of buckles, including frame and unadorned square buckles, but occasionally US cavalry belt plates.



Above: North Carolina infantryman with North Carolina Depot jacket. The same jacket was commonly worn by NC cavalymen from 1862 on. The original color of this vegetable dyed material was grey, but it faded to the dirty tan shown here. (Photo courtesy North State Rifles, northstaterifles.com)

Horse Equipments

Early ordnance reports for the 1st North Carolina note “Nashville Pattern” saddles and “halter bridles.” The Nashville Arsenal made saddles and horse equipments for a brief period, October 1861 through February 1862. On December 23, 1861, the ordnance depot warehouse was completely destroyed by an arson fire. After the fire, contracts were let for large numbers of new horse equipments, many of which were quickly delivered. With the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson on February 15th, the Nashville Arsenal was ordered closed and its machinery, stores and personnel evacuated to Atlanta, Georgia. Saddles manufactured at the Atlanta Arsenal include the following:

McClellan: Spring 1862 - Feb 1863

McClellan/Texas: Feb - Aug 1863

McClellan Only: Aug 1863-Jan. 1864

Texas Only: Jan. 1864 -End War

Over the course of the War, many Federal horses—and their equipments—were captured by the 1st North Carolina. Therefore, by mid war, the Regiment was most likely mounted on a mixture of Nashville/Atlanta Arsenal McClellans, Atlanta Arsenal Texas saddles, Federal M1859 McClellans, and at least on occasion, civilian saddles.

Nashville Arsenal / Depot Pattern Cavalry Saddle & Horse Equipments

Oct 19th, 2008 | By [Ken R. Knopp](#), Confederate Saddles & Horse Equipment 2012.

URL: <http://confederatesaddles.com/cswp/?cat=10>

In spite of the loss of many records in the Depot fire there is ample documentation surviving or available from contractor’s files which describe the horse equipment made under contract at Nashville during its brief existence. In a letter from Lt. Wright to Col. Gorgas on Jan. 31, 1862, Wright writes, “I get an excellent cavalry saddle with bridle, valise, crupper and breast strap complete on McClellan tree for \$22.50. Saddles finished as required of Ordnance Manual.”

A study of related letters and contracts describes this equipment as of the McClellan Pattern saddle with fenders, covered wood stirrups, crupper, breast strap, valise, halter-bridle and moss saddle blanket and no doubt very similar to those detailed in the Federal 1861 Ordnance Manual.

Additional notes on Nashville equipments: Bits were of unknown configuration but some brass plated bits appear in the records. The moss blanket appears to be the most common, if not the only, issue blanket. Saddle bags were of leather construction. Nose bags were provided with each set made of good duck material, leather bottom well sewn with saddle makers or cord thread. Some saddle holsters were issued. Canteen straps are described as of 7/8 inches wide and infantry shoulder belts (One and three quarters inches wide) of the same cotton webb material.

** It is worthy of note that detailed descriptions for similarly contracted cavalry equipment were found for the Atlanta Arsenal after its removal from Nashville. These are found in the same “Contract Record Book” and written by the very same Ordnance officers as those from Nashville. This record and others indicates that both the Nashville and Atlanta Arsenals produced nearly identical horse equipment. The lone exceptions being the adaptation of the McClellan saddle pattern (but no manufacture of the Texas saddle) by the Nashville Arsenal, and prevalence of saddle bags as opposed to valises from the Atlanta Arsenal.

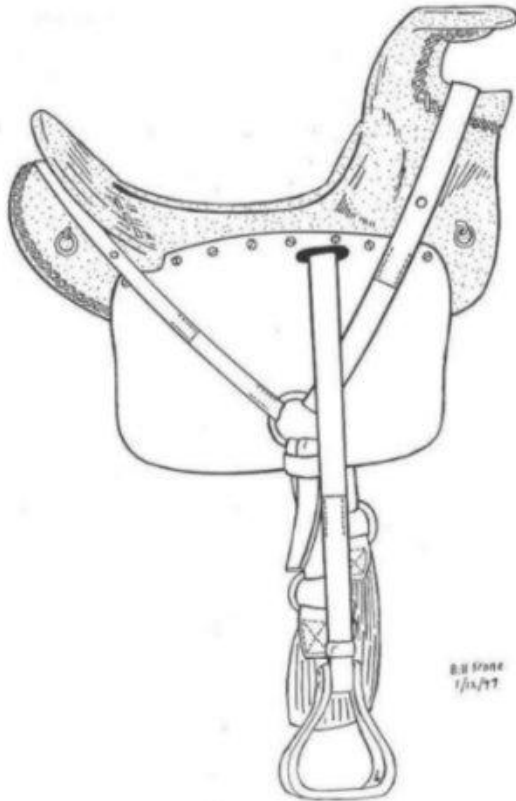
The Atlanta Arsenal Pattern Saddle & Horse Equipment

Oct 19th, 2008 | By [Ken R. Knopp](#), Confederate Saddles & Horse Equipment 2012. URL: <http://confederatesaddles.com/cswp/?cat=4>

A “set” of troopers cavalry equipment remained essentially the same from the Atlanta Arsenal’s earliest days until its evacuation in the summer of 1864. These consisted of either a McClellan or Texas saddle, with crupper, breast strap, stirrup leathers with fenders, covered wood stirrups, webb girth, valise or saddle bags, a halter-bridle and a saddle blanket- most often made of woven Spanish moss. Additional equipments often included a nose bag.

Saddle: Both the McClellan and Texas pattern saddles for troopers were skeleton rigged. For example, its Texas saddle was a rawhide covered tree “to be ironed according to the manner of cavalry trees...fork to be made of black gum and the bars and cantle of ash all the wood well seasoned and free from imperfections” with “slings”(quarter straps), stirrup leathers, fenders and covered wood stirrups. Some double ironed, cloth covered saddle trees, probably made at the Columbus Arsenal, were issued as early as February 1863 and later.

The arsenal appears to have manufactured a large number of McClellan saddles until February 1863 when, due to the demand, Texas saddles were also manufactured. In August, the new but as yet unofficial C.S. McClellan pattern (Transition Saddle) was sent from Richmond for a prototype. Wright apparently re-adopted the McClellan until January 1864 when the Texas saddle was officially adopted for the Army of Tennessee. In May, Gorgas requested a sample of the Texas Tree to be sent to Richmond for inspection, “I am anxious that these saddles should prove strong and serviceable.”



Above: Atlanta pattern Texas saddle.

Girth: Cotton webb possibly cut as per Ordnance Manual but with iron rings.

Stirrups: “of good hickory, 3 inches wide and made in a workman-like manner.” Also, some iron stirrups were issued but comparatively few.

Crupper: Likely as per Ordnance Manual

Breast strap: Issued with all “sets” of equipments but of unknown configuration

Saddle Bags: Leather but of unknown configuration. (Many were made of enameled cloth after February 1864). Some valises were made and issued also.

Halter-bridle: Leather, probably of the common configuration with stitching at “least six stitches sewn to the inch, and all laps to be twice as long as the strap is wide” complete with enameled cotton reins.

Bit: Likely hand forged iron of unknown configuration with reins of “Enameled, stitched cotton webb containing at least 500 threads.”

Saddle Blankets: From early 1863 to Atlanta’s evacuation, the Spanish moss saddle blanket appears to be the most common, if not routinely the only, issue blanket. In fact, little mention is made of any other type. More than a few records indicate large numbers of moss saddle blankets in the form of “bales” were shipped from the Columbus Arsenal which likely served as a large manufacturing center for that article. One letter dated Oct. 1, 1863 shows 5,461 moss blankets were received from the Columbus Arsenal. By early 1864 even moss blankets appear to be scarce.