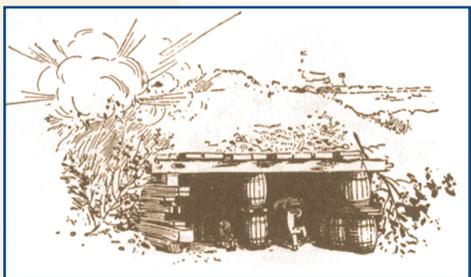


Oh, the Joy of Soldiering: Camp Shelter

In warm weather or when on a march, soldiers often slept out in the open. Canvas tents were also used in the summer, especially if there was bad weather. Union soldiers constructed *dog tents*, which were made by buttoning the half shelters together, stretching them over a horizontal pole held in place by two sticks or muskets. Soldiers got sick of these tents; one wished that *the man who invented them had been hung before the invention was complete* (Museum of the Confederacy, 7).



The Dog or Shelter Tent. Illustration from *Hardtack and Coffee*, 52



A Common Bombproof.
Illustration from *Hardtack and Coffee*, 57

Most Confederate soldiers didn't even have a tent to complain about because canvas was in short supply. They built *shebangs*, which were four-posted shelters covered with bushes, oilcloths, or overcoats. During winter, armies constructed and lived in bombproofs, which were excavations with roofs built a foot or two above ground level, or log huts.

If these options were not available, tents were winterized by placing the tent on a log foundation and digging several feet into the ground to increase the warmth. Fireplaces and chimneys were added to provide heat.

There was also the Sibley tent, which was cone shaped and held upright by a center pole. Twenty men could sleep in one – so long as they all slept with their feet in the middle and their heads to the outside.



Spooning. Illustration from *Hardtack and Coffee*, 49

✓ SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

What problems would there be with sleeping so many people in one tent? Imagine sharing a tent with twenty of your classmates. (Do we need to say more?)

What problems would there be with sleeping so many people in one tent? Imagine sharing a tent with twenty of your classmates. (Again, do we need to say more?)

Oh, the Joy of Soldiering, Part 2: Drilling and Waiting (And Drilling. And Waiting. And Drilling.)



17th New York
Infantry on parade.
Courtesy of the
National Archives,
NWDNS-111-B-487

Soldiers got up at 5 a.m. and went to bed around 9 p.m.; most of the time in between was spent drilling. Pennsylvania private, Oliver Norton, described a usual day: *The first thing in the morning is drill, then drill, then drill again. Then drill, drill, a little more drill. Then drill and lastly drill. Between drills we drill and sometimes stop to eat a little and have role-call* (Museum of the Confederacy, 5). Drilling helped to build an esprit de corps (the feeling of pride in belonging to a group), while teaching soldiers how to march in ranks, obey orders, and use their weapons. Although the bayonet was rarely used in battle (less than one half of one percent of all battle

wounds were from weapons with blades), soldiers often drilled with bayonets (*Common Soldier*, 15). A New Hampshire soldier described the troops as they drilled with bayonets, saying they looked *like a line of beings made up about equally of the frog, the sand-hill crane, the sentinel crab, and the grasshopper; all of them rapidly jumping, thrusting, swinging, striking, jerking every which way, and all gone stark mad* (*Common Soldier*, 15).

Many new recruits were uneducated farm boys who couldn't tell the difference between right and left. This made drilling difficult at first! John Billings remembered that *at a "shoulder" their muskets pointed at all angles, from forty-five degrees to a vertical. In the attempt to change to a "carry," a part of them would drop their muskets. At an "order," no two of the butts reached the ground together, and if a man could not always drop his musket on his own toe he was a pretty correct shot with it on the toe of his neighbor* (*Hardtack and Coffee*, 209).



Drilling the Awkward Squad. Illustration from *Hardtack and Coffee*, 208.