



THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR – INFANTRY – WORM TOOL

The armies that fought against each other in the American Civil War were basically organized in the same manner. At the start of the war, most units were made up of volunteers. The primary unit was the regiment. It was made up of 10 companies of 100 men. Men from the same town or county often were in the same company. The Civil War infantry regiment rarely consisted of 1000 men. Death, injury and men running away thinned the ranks. It was hard to find men to take the place of soldiers after the first year of the war.

Civil War armies had three branches of service. There was the infantry, the artillery and the cavalry. The infantry were the “foot soldiers.” They were the largest part of the army. In the Northern army foot soldiers carried a weapon, a percussion cap box, a cartridge box, a canteen, a tent shelter, haversack, bedroll and extra powder and lead.

Bullets as we know them today were not available in the Civil War. Most soldiers used paper cartridges for their muskets and rifles. Paper cartridges were issued in a packet of ten. To fire a round, a Civil War soldier needed both a paper cartridge and a percussion cap. These caps looked very much like the caps for toy cap guns sold today. The percussion cap was inserted into the firing chamber. The paper cartridge was then torn open, emptied into the barrel of the gun and firmly packed with a ramming rod. When the soldier pulled the trigger, the hammer came down on the percussion cap. Pop! This ignited the paper cartridge. The musket ball or bullet was propelled down the barrel of the gun. Boom! The bullet sailed through the air toward its target.

During a battle the soldier fired his rifle many times. This made the rifle barrel heat up. The overheated barrel made the musket ball or bullet jam in the barrel. The soldier used a tool made out of steel to get the bullet out of the barrel. It was called a “WormTool.” It had a screw on both ends of it. One end screwed onto the soldier’s ram rod. The ram rod with the worm tool on it was put into the barrel of the rifle. The other end of the worm tool had a sharp tip on it that could be screwed into the jammed bullet. The bullet was then pulled out of the barrel.