

Battle Training Manual For The British Brigade

Forming the Army & Battle Tactics



Thanks to the following people for their contributions:

Brigadier Michael Grenier, GOIC, The British Brigade
Col (Ret) Vincent J-R Kehoe, HM 10th Regiment of Foot
Sgt of Artillery Jeff Messenger, 1st Virginia Regiment
Charles T Kamps, Jr, Burke, Virginia

May 2007

**Col Richard E Amsterdam
Adjutant-General**

Preface

In 1775 every British Regiment up to the 70th Foot had only one Battalion except for the 60th Foot (Royal Americans) that had two with each organized separately with a full Regimental complement. The appellation *Battalion* was in many respects, therefore, synonymous with the word *Regiment* with the latter being the administrative term, while the former was employed for exercise and commands. For example the caution command was given as *Battalion* rather than *Regiment* before a following command of execution.

In the divisions of the Battalion in the field, some confusion may exist as many writers of the 18th century employed the same terms to denote different entities. However, in most cases, a *Wing* meant a division of half the Battalion on the field. That is, each had a left and a right wing. Two companies made up a *Grand Division*, and counting only the hat-men or Battalion Companies in these latter divisions, there were then four *Grand Divisions* per Battalion (the flank companies were an entity unto themselves).

A *Company* was often referred to as a *Sub-Division*, which simply meant a subdividing of the *Grand Division* into two parts. The term *Company* was also an administrative term. As well, a *Company* might be referred to as a *Firing Platoon* in the *Platoon* exercises.

When a *Company* was divided, again it might make up two *Sub-Divisions*, or these might be called *Platoons* too, while a *Section* might refer to half a *Sub-Division* or a sectioning off of the *Company* into three or four parts.

The key to tactical success will be mastery of open order maneuvers. Open order was adopted as the preferred mode of the British Brigade in 1792 for the same reason that Howe insisted upon it for his army in 1776—it confers advantages in mobility, firepower, and flank attacks that can not be withstood by the rebels.

General Howe's orders of February 29th, 1776 (Boston): "Regiments, when formed by Companies in Battalion, or when on the General parade, are always to have their files Eighteen Inches Distant from each other, which they will take care to practice for the future, being the order in which they are to engage the enemy."

These orders were repeated in Halifax, and the army practiced daily on the plains outside the city. They arrived at New York in 1776 fully adept in open order maneuvers.

First, let us consider whether 18" is the proper distance between files. Why that distance and not some other? It may be because that is the distance that allows a man to pass between two files at that spacing. Or at least it would have in Howe's army given the build of the average soldier. Many of our lads are a bit better fed, so we may allow more space. In fact, the spacing will be defined by trial on the field, and set at that distance that allows files to pass between each other.

The basis for the spacing under this premise is on the light infantry's motions in "firing, advancing." In this, the men are in two ranks at open order. The front rank fires, and the rear rank then passes between front rank men, to the *right* of their file leader, kneeling and firing in turn when the front rank is *ready*. The front rank then advances between the rear rank men, to the *left* of their file follower, kneeling and firing in turn when the rear rank is *ready*. This can be continued as long as necessary.

The Brigades of the Crown Forces army will be subdivided into two wings or demi-brigades. The brigades will field at all times in loose (open) order (18 inches) between files, and in two ranks unless otherwise ordered.

The Manner of Giving Orders

All orders will be given in a clear, loud voice.

Brigade level orders will have three stages;

1. Brigade preparatory, from the Brigade Officer in Command, or his voice, the Sergeant-Major.
 2. Unit level preparatory. Preparatories to be echoed only by Grand Division commanders. Until training is complete, it is fine for a Grand Division commander (or his sergeant) to remind the men by offering some explanation. (e.g., "We are wheeling as a Grand Division. Everyone remembers who is in my Grand Division?")
 3. Brigade level order of execution. Orders of execution to be given only by the Brigade Officer in Command, or the Sergeant-Major. Anyone who preempts or echoes the order of execution will be chastised.
- All orders to be issued in the Howe (1772, reiterated Halifax 1776) format, viz.

UNIT will **COMMAND** by **COMMANDED SUB-UNIT** from **DIRECTION** to **DIRECTION**

e.g.,

Platoon!	advance	Indian File	The Center	The Front
Company!	retire firing	File	The Right	The Right
Wing!	Right About Face!	Platoon	The Left	The Left
Battalion!	Advance	Company	The Rear	The Rear

Ending with the Order of Execution (MARCH! Or WHEEL! Or BAYONETS!)

Note that most orders contain only the first two parts; Unit and Command, and the last, Execution.

Examples:

COMPANY! Fix your BAYONETS!

BATTALION! Advance by FILES from the CENTER OF PLATOONS to the FRONT! MARCH!

GRAND DIVISION! Advance by PLATOONS from the RIGHT to the FRONT! MARCH

BATTALION! Wheel by COMPANIES to the RIGHT! MARCH

Contents

FORMING THE BRIGADE

- Preparing the Ranks and Files 6
- From Line into Column of Sub-Divisions by Wheeling 7
- Advancing From the Right by Sub-Divisions 8
- Advancing From the Right by Wheeling to the Left 9
- From Column into Line by Wheeling 10
- From Column into Line by Inclining 11

BATTLEFIELD MANEUVERS

- Artillery & Infantry on the Field 12
- Covering the Front 13
- Firing, Advancing by Passage of Wings 14
- Advancing by Files from the Center of the Brigade 16
- Forming front from Two Columns 17
- Alternate Firing 18
- Forming Three Ranks 19
- Return to Two Ranks from Three Ranks 20
- Flank Co'ys to Refuse the Flank 21
- Flank Co'ys to Threaten Enemy's Flanks 22

Forming the Brigade by Opening Files

- 1 BRIGADE: WILL OPEN FILES...**
 - 2 DRESS TO THE RIGHT AT OPEN ORDER!**
 - 3 DRESS!**
- 3 Each man sides steps to his left, and holds up his right arm just touching the left shoulder of the man on his right. Right arms are then returned to the side.

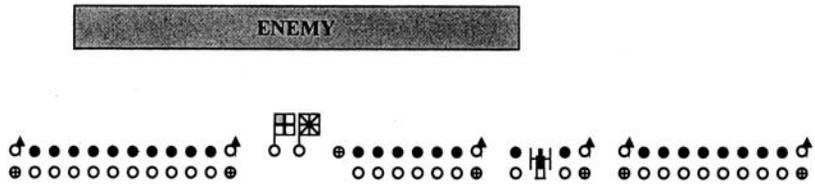
Re-forming the Brigade by Closing Files

- 1 BRIGADE: AT CLOSE FILES...**
 - 2 DRESS!**
- 2 Each man moves to this right until he has found his proper distance. This can be obtained by placing his hand on his hip and extending the elbow to the man on his right.

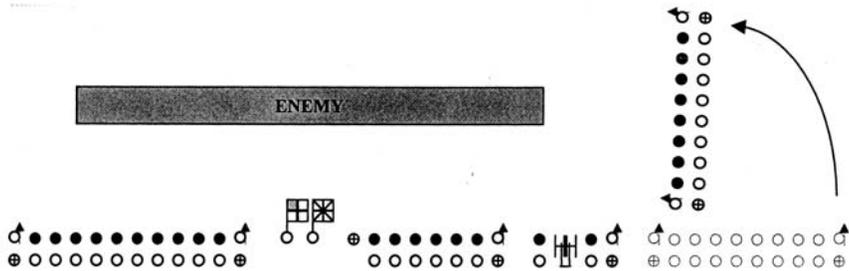
F flank Companies to Threaten the Enemy's Flanks

More typically, we will create situations where we overlap the enemy, and can perform "The hammer and the anvil."

Here our open order formation enables us to overlap an enemy force that is actually the same size as us, but all bunched up in close order.

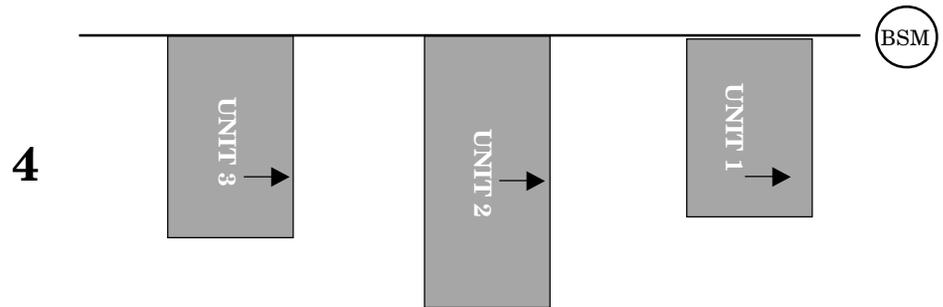
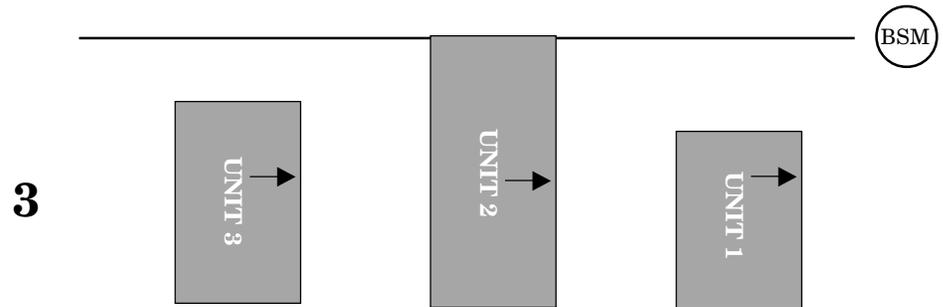
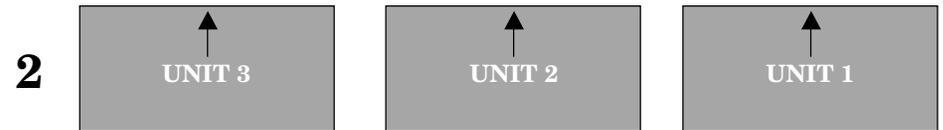


The center of the Brigade stands fast and engages the enemy, delivering superior fire power. They are the anvil. The picquet company becomes a moving force to turn the enemy's flank (the hammer.)



Forming a Brigade into a Column of Sub-Divisions

- 1 BRIGADE WILL FORM COLUMN FROM LINE BY SUBDIVISIONS.
- 2 TO THE RIGHT WHEEL...
- 3 QUICK MARCH!
- 4 BY SUBDIVISIONS... TO THE LEFT DRESS
-
- 2 All units stand fast.
- 3 Units will wheel to the right and then halt and dress (on command of unit commanders.)
- 4 Subdivisions will dress on the Brigade Serj-Major

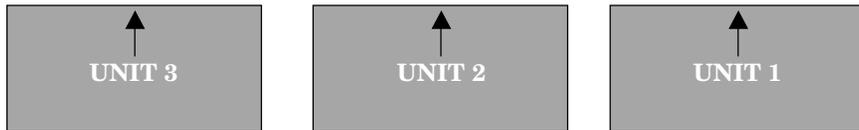


Advancing from the Right by Sub-Divisions

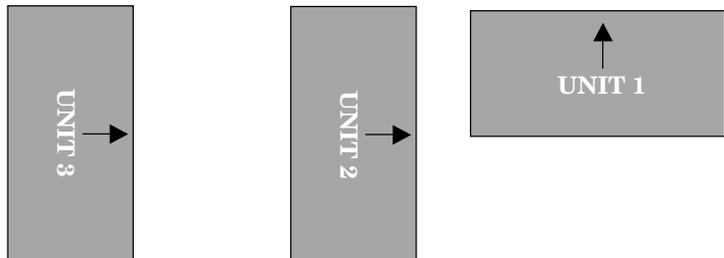
- 1 BRIGADE WILL ADVANCE FROM THE RIGHT BY SUBDIVISIONS.
- 2 TO THE RIGHT WHEEL...
- 3 QUICK MARCH!

- 2 All units stand fast.
- 3 Right hand subdivision advances. All other companies will wheel to the right march forward and then wheel to the left as they reach the first unit's ground (on order of their unit commander.)

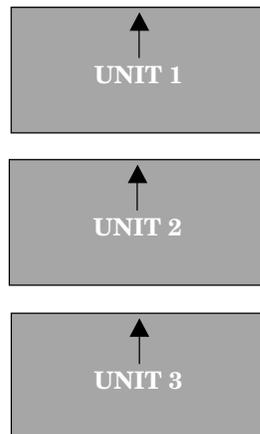
2



3

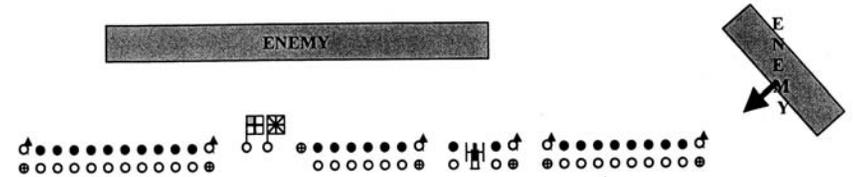


4

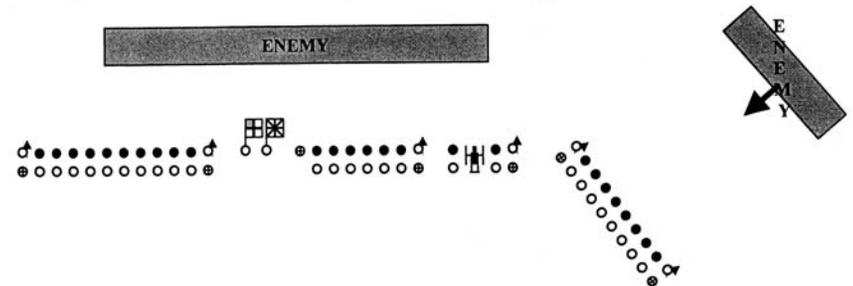


F flank Companies to Refuse the Flank

If the enemy threatens to outflank a Brigade its flank companies will be prepared to "refuse the flank." The circumstances may be like that shown below:



To refuse the flank the picquet company will wheel backwards to the right, or if necessary disperse and fall in on a new position, such that it faces the enemy and prevents further attempts to get around the flank.



If attacked in force, additional companies, or even an entire wing, can refuse the flank.

From Three Ranks Return to Two Ranks

This enables us to expand our frontage for tight spots without yielding open order. In Simes, the order is **From Three Deep Form Two Deep, Quick March**. He continues, “Every second and third file, being told off from the right, opens an interval sufficient for a file to march into. The men in the rear rank of each file face to the left and come up with a quick pace into the interval—they are then formed two deep.”

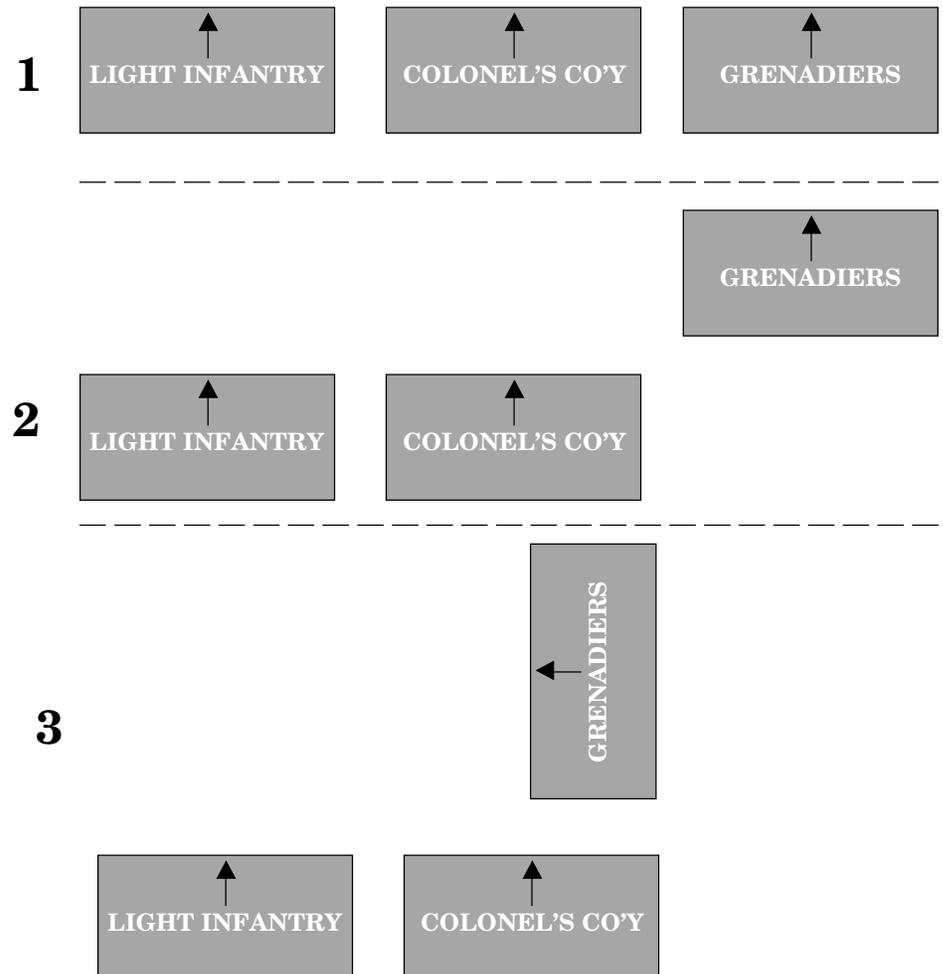
- 1 **BRIGADE: TAKE CARE TO FORM TWO RANKS!**
- 2 **AT OPEN ORDER...DRESS!**
- 3 **REAR RANK TO THE RIGHT (LEFT) FACE! QUICK MARCH!**

- 1 The Grand Divisions that are not immediately to each side of the Colours are faced to the flanks by their commanders.
- 2 The men of each Grand Division dress to the left (if to the right of the Colours) or right (if to the left of the Colours), and open up space for a file between each #2 and #1 file.
- 3 Each file pair in the rear rank marches around and through the open files and fills its previous position in the Grand Division, thereby forming two ranks exactly as they were on the parade ground. Commanders will dress their troops.

Advancing from the Right by Sub-Divisions by Wheeling to the Left

- 1 **BRIGADE WILL ADVANCE FROM THE RIGHT BY SUBDIVISION BY WHEELING TO THE LEFT.**
- 2 **TO THE RIGHT WHEEL...**
- 3 **QUICK MARCH!**

- 2 All units stand fast.
- 3 Right hand subdivisions advances then wheels to the left and marches in front of the brigade. As it passes the second subdivisions that unit marches forward then will wheels to the left behind the first unit, etc.

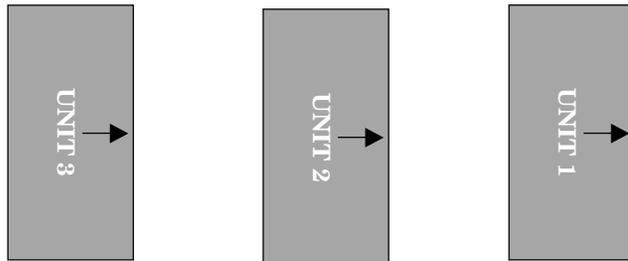


Re-Forming the Brigade into Line by Wheeling

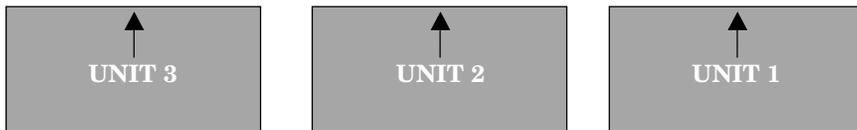
- 1 **BRIGADE: FROM COLUMN INTO LINE**
- 2 **TO THE LEFT WHEEL...**
- 3 **QUICK MARCH!**

- 2 All units stand fast.
- 3 Units will wheel to the left and then halt and dress (on order of their unit commanders.)

2



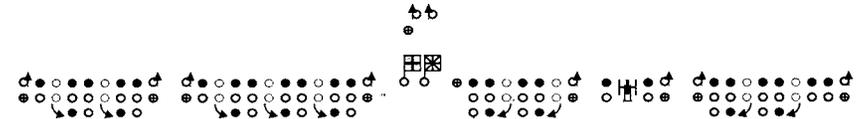
3



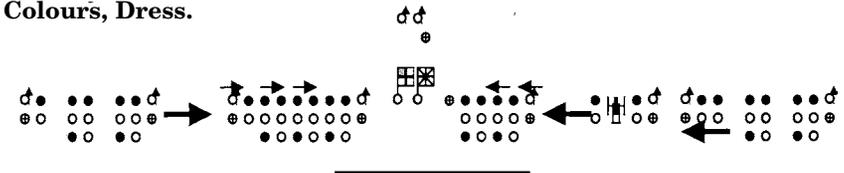
Forming Three Ranks

- 1 **BRIGADE: FORM THREE RANKS!**
- 2 **THIRD FILES TO THE RIGHT ABOUT FACE!**
- 3 **QUICK MARCH!**

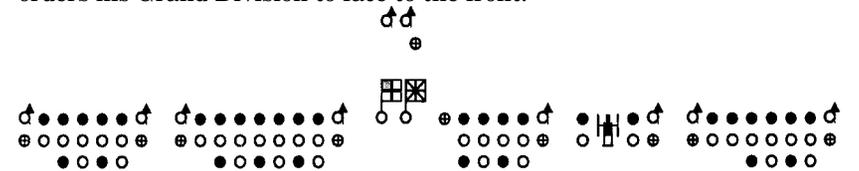
- 2 Each of the third files (#3) faces to the right about
- 3 Third files, led by the file follower into position behind the #1 and #2 files of their group—by marching to the rear and executing a turn when clear of the rear rank by one pace. The new #3 rank then faces to the front.



The Grand Divisions closest to the Colours are immediately dressed on the Colours to close up the files, on order of their unit commanders. **On the Colours, Dress.**



Those away from the Colours will be ordered by their commanders to right or left face (towards the Colours), then **March!** then **Halt!** The lead file halts and the rest close up to open order distance. Each commander then orders his Grand Division to face to the front.



The Brigade can also advance in column of wings and perform the **Advance by Passage of Lines** when in three deep formation, permitting operation even under the most constricted conditions.

Alternate Firing

The objective of alternate firing is to keep up a continuous fire upon the enemy, while always having one or more Grand Divisions loaded and able to respond to surprising moves by the enemy, and while maximizing the amount of fire brought to bear on the enemy. Each wing of a Brigade will have three or four Grand Divisions of battalion troops, a gun (which is treated by as a Grand Division in firing), and a picquet company. A running fire can be maintained successfully by three firings (Grand Divisions).

- The Grenadiers and Light Infantry will hold their fire and serve as reserves, firing only on the commander's order. (They will have plenty of firing when serving as the advanced guard and in a skirmish line.)
- Each wing will conduct its own platoon firing under the orders of its wing commanders.
- Firing will be from the outside to the center of each wing, beginning with the guns. The two wings will not attempt to synchronize their firing.
- No Grand Division, when loaded, will stand and wait for its turn. When ready it shall fire to maximize the amount of volleys on the enemy. Officers of Grand Divisions that fire more rapidly than their peers can expect to be "mentioned in despatches."
- Firefights will be kept brief and will be resolved by maneuver if the enemy attempts to withstand our volleys.

Re-Forming the Brigade into Line by Inclining to the Left

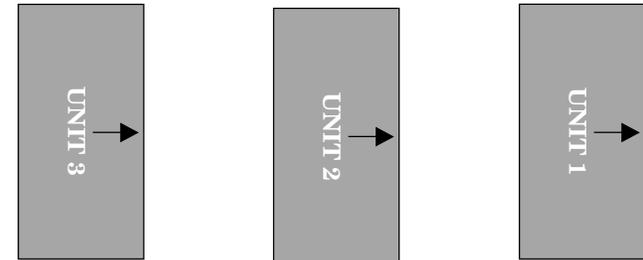
1 BRIGADE: FORM FRONT TO THE LEFT

2 QUICK MARCH!

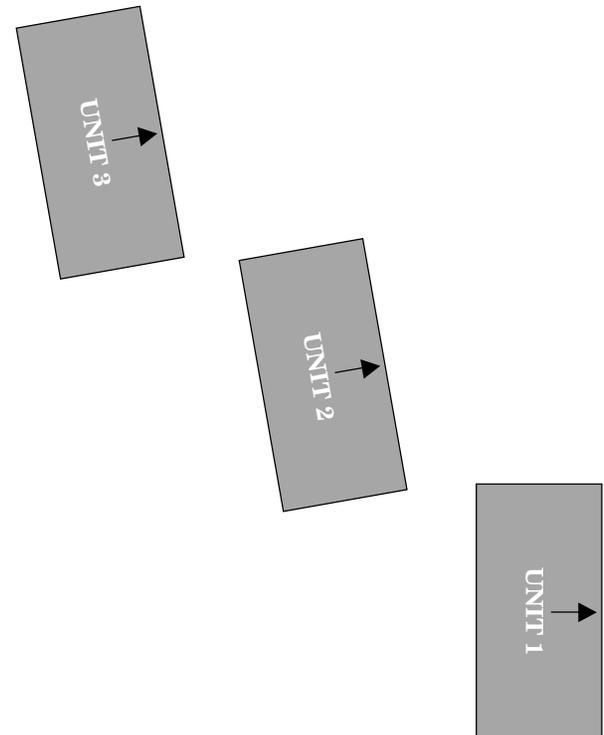
2 All units stand fast.

3 Units will advance by inclining to the left and then halt and dress (on order of there unit commanders.)

2



3



Artillery & Infantry on the Field

Battalion guns were attached, typically, in pairs, to the infantry battalion. They were manned by artilleryists and commanded by an Artillery Officer, often with a number of selected infantrymen to fill out the crew. In battle the battery would most often be placed between two companies of the battalion and begin firing while the lines were displaying. The guns would be moved forward of the battalion in an attempt to fire at a greater angle into the enemy lines, and to prevent their interfering with the forming up of their own troops. Once the line was formed, the guns would fall back into line, and advance right along with the Line, using the guns' quicker fire to support the lines' volleys.

First, and most important, in any battle involving mixed forces (Line, Artillery, Rifles, Horse), there must be close cooperation and planning between the various offices.

It must be the duty of every member of the gun crews to be alert for stray infantry wandering in front of the cannon, and to warn them off. The line officers, must watch where they are marching.

When the guns are moving and firing with the Line many problems are eliminated. The Line and Artillery can work together, rather than just watching out for each other. For the move and fire drill to work, the Artillery Officer and Line Officer must work very closely. The gun can get off a few rounds while both sides form up, then fire either when the infantry loads or in volley with them. Both officers must always be sure the "Make Ready" and "Fire" commands are given loudly enough for the other to hear.

The front rank of the infantry line must always stay in line with the axles of the cannon, both to stay behind the muzzle blast, and be far enough forward that they are not shooting into the gun crew's ears. The Artillery Officer will never fire if the piece is not properly on line. On the advance, to keep the line and the gun firing together, let the gun run up to the new line, then march up the line. The gun crew needs about 2 files on either side to work easily. The Line Officer should always let the Artillery Officer know when he wants to advance or withdraw. This way the gun crew will have time to get ready to move and will not slow you down.

When the time comes for the Lines to close, the gun crew simply waits behind. If the charge is repulsed the guns will then act as a rallying point for the returning troops.

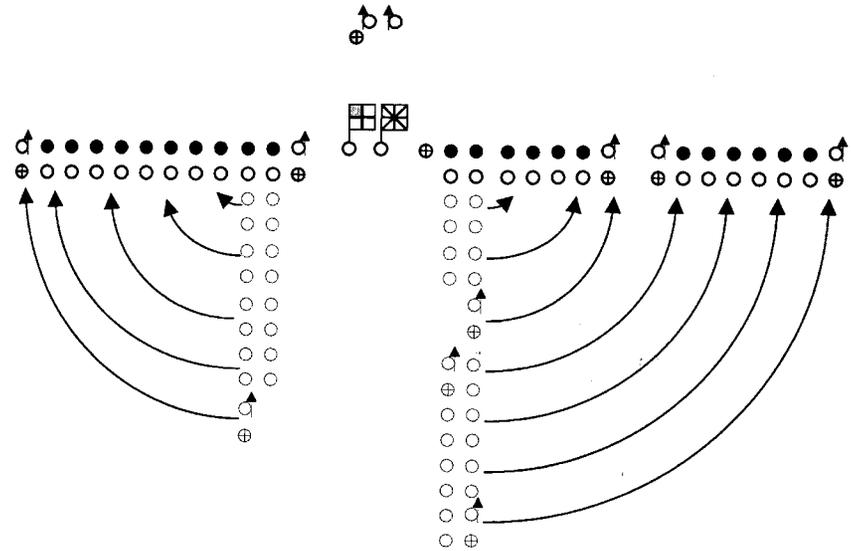
Forming Front by Files from the Center of the Brigade

When the Brigade is marching forward in two parallel columns of files and has reached the ground where it is to form front again the command is given:

1 BRIGADE: BY FILES FORM THE BATTALION

2 QUICK MARCH!

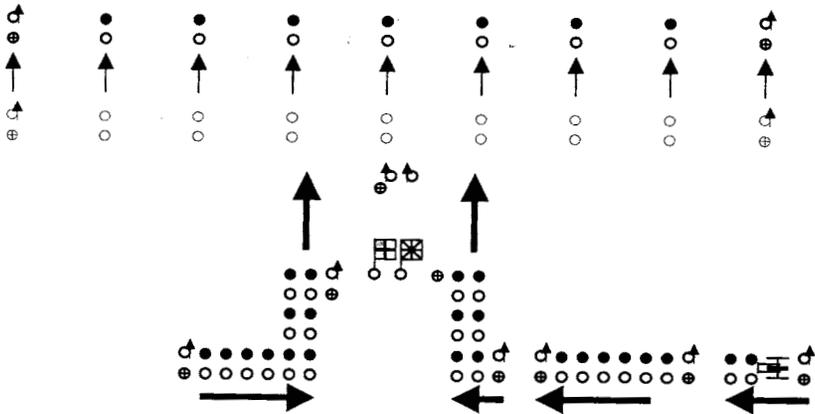
2 The front pairs of files and the ensigns halt and each other pair of files moves quickly to the outside of the column, moving up on line with the leading files, and forming the front, with each Grand Division back to its proper place, and behind the safety of the Brigade's skirmish line.



Advancing by Files from the Center of the Brigade

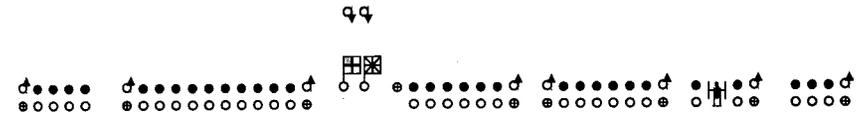
1 BRIGADE: ADVANCE BY FILES FROM THE CENTER, 2 TO THE FRONT...QUICK MARCH!

- 1 The Colours define the center, and the two files on either side of them lead the march. The Colour ensigns and the two files on either side step forward two paces. All other troops face to the center (right wing to the left, left wing to the right.)
- 2 The whole step off. As each pair of files comes behind those leading the column, they turn so that file followers remain behind their file leaders. This continues until the entire Brigade is moving forward in two parallel columns of files.

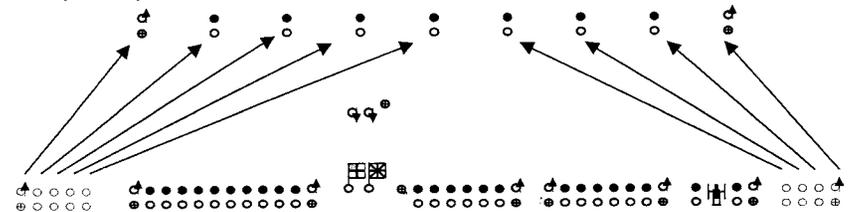


Cover the Front

All advances and other maneuvers performed by the Brigades when not in contact with the enemy will be done under the cover of a skirmish line to the front and sides of the Brigade.



The Light Infantry and Grenadiers are ordered to cover the front. They move out as file pairs, at extended order covering the front and sides of the Brigade as a distance of 25 to 50 yards (or more), depending upon local conditions. Picquet companies will maneuver according to Light Infantry Tactics [see Roy Najecki].

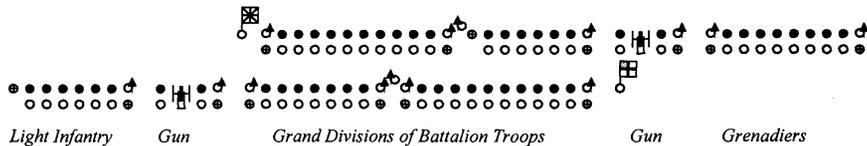


The picquet companies will encounter and engage the enemy ahead of the Brigade, causing the enemy to consume ammunition and giving the Brigade time to form for engagement.

Firing, Advancing by Passage of Wings

With a brigade divided into two wings, we begin with the right wing in advance with the left wing directly behind. The right wing fires, then the left wing advances with its files passing between the files of the right wing until it clears the front. When the right wing is reloaded, the left wing fires, and then the right wing passes through it.

Below we have the right wing in front, the left wing to the rear. The battalion troops overlap, with the guns to the outside, and the picquet companies on the flanks. The right wing fires.



The commander of the left wing orders it to advance:
LEFT WING! WILL ADVANCE by PASSAGE of LINES

The Grand Division commanders then order (if their Grand Division is behind another)

**GRAND DIVISION! ADVANCE by FILES, from the RIGHT!
QUICK MARCH!**

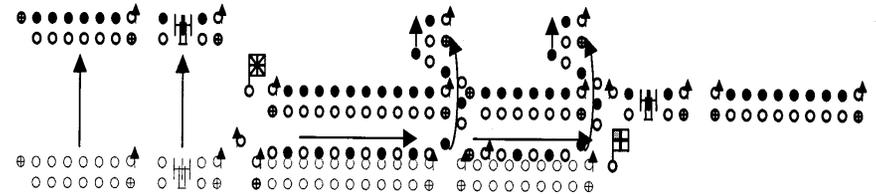
If their Grand Division is **not** behind another, then the Grand Division commander orders,

**GRAND DIVISION! TO THE FRONT!
QUICK MARCH!**

(Note: If the wings are well-balanced, this should be artillery and picquet companies only.)

Firing, Advancing by Passage of Wings (continued)

The Grand Divisions advancing by files pass between the Grand Divisions of the right wing, each file passing to the *right* of the Grand Division most nearly to its front, and then covering down again.



When the wing passing from the rear to the front is re-formed, it may fire or perform whatever other tactical maneuver is required. In firing by wing, the picquet companies will typically be held in reserve, such that there is always a Grand Division loaded and able to respond to an enemy surprise.

