

U.S. Infantry Drill
FOR
SWADDIES

A Reference for Bloody Backs

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14 April 2018

So you want to portray Brother Jonathan, eh?

An overview of differences between British and US drill during the War of 1812, for those familiar with British drill.

- US manuals during the War of 1812
- Handling the musket
- Company movement
- Battalion manoeuvres

For sources and additional material see the articles "*US Drill for Newfies*", "*Smyth Manual of Arms Table*" and "*Appendix: Which drill manual did the US Army use during the War of 1812?*" in the School materials.

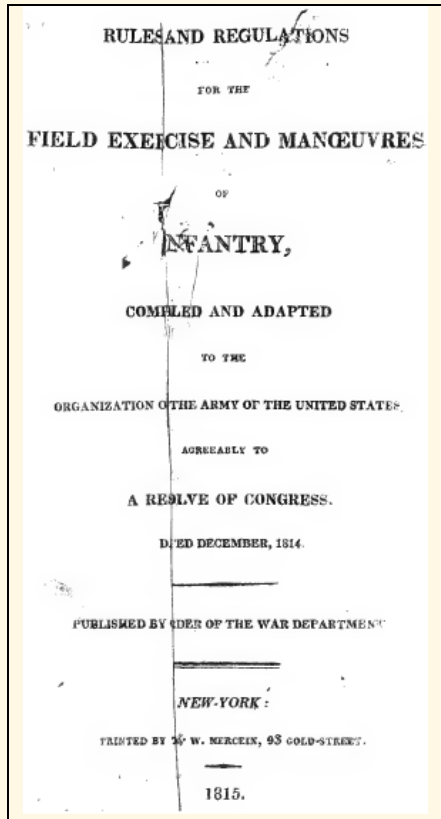
(1) Which drill manual did the US Army use during the War of 1812?

Answer: **Well...it depends on several factors** (who, where, when portrayed)

There were at least **five** manuals in use during the war:

- Steuben (1778-1814)
- Smyth (1812?)
- Duane (1813?)
- British (to 1814)
- Scott (1814)

Steuben (1778-1814)

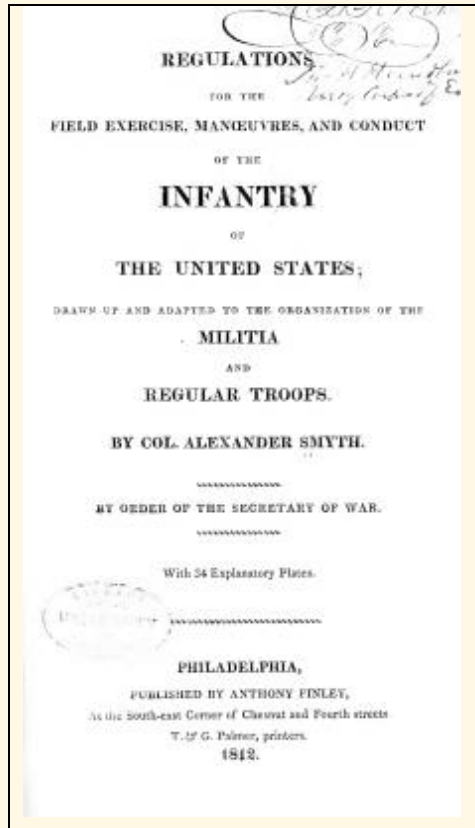


- Fredrick Steuben served Prussian and French armies; Fredrick's staff
- Inspector General, Continental Army
- Systematic training program 1778
- Standardized drill
- Adapted British drill (1764 M&PE)
- "Blue Book" 1779-1812 (1820 for militia)

Some units retained Steuben's manual through the war:

- US Marines
- Right Division (George Izard, 1814)

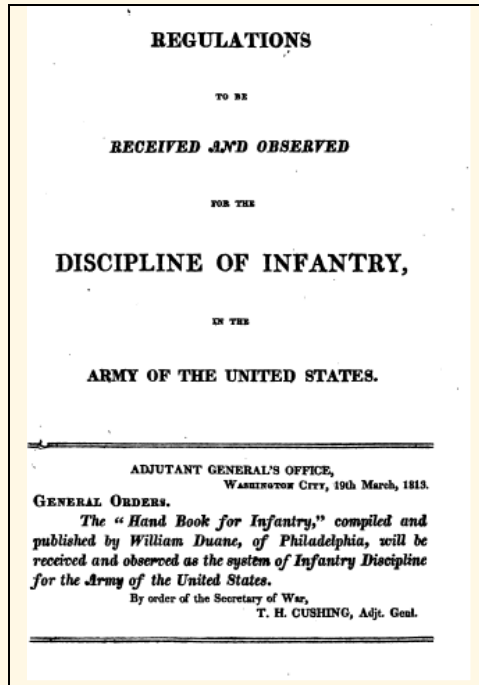
Smyth (1812-13?)



- Alexander Smyth, Inspector General under Secretary of War William Eustis
- Adaptation of French 1791 manual
- Used French system for *unit movement*
- Retained Steuben's *manual of arms* and *military regulations*
- April and June 1812 editions, slight differences

Not clear how much this manual was used. Smyth sacked following inept performance on Niagara 1812.

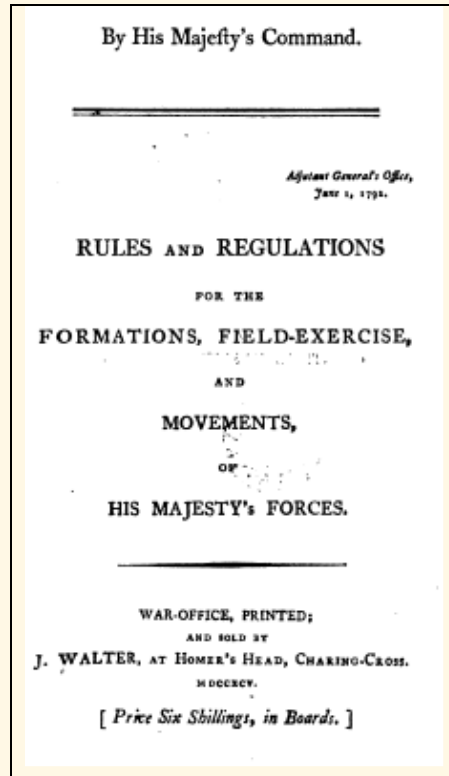
Duane (1813?)



- New Secretary of War, John Armstrong; new Adjutant General, William Duane; influential partisan publisher, no military experience
- Second adaptation of French manual
- Complicated company-level adaptation

Hard to say if this manual ever saw use. Widely detested; many officers flatly refused to use it.

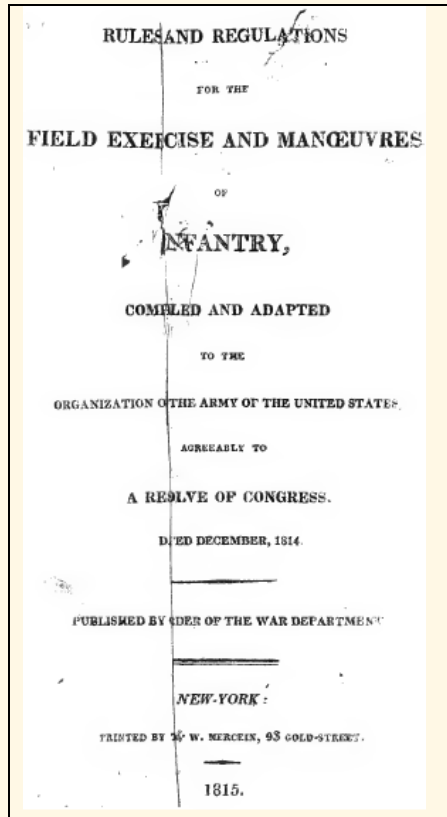
British (?-1814)



- Based on David Dundas' Prussian-influenced 1788 treatise *Principles of Military Movements*
- Linear system of movement, *Rules and Regulations* (1792-1824)
- Manual of arms & firing drill, *Manual and Platoon Exercises* (1804)
- Combined and abridged for NCOs, *Rules and Regulations for the Manual and Platoon Exercise* (1807)

Frustrated by confusion caused by repeated change of manuals, some US units used the British manual for movement. Scott states the regular 21st Regiment was using it when they arrived at his Left Division camp in 1814.

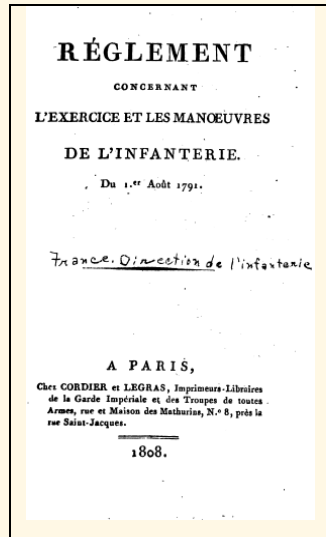
Scott (1813-1824)



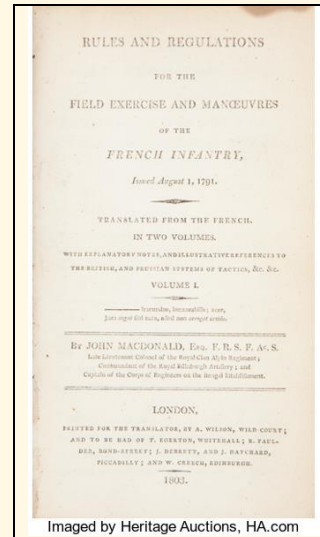
- Winfield Scott used the French *Reglement* of 1791 to drill the brigades of the Left Division, winter 1813-14
- Yet another new Secretary of War, James Monroe, authorized Scott's translation of the French manual for the US Army in 1814

This manual likely represents the drill used by the Left Division in the 1814 Niagara campaign.

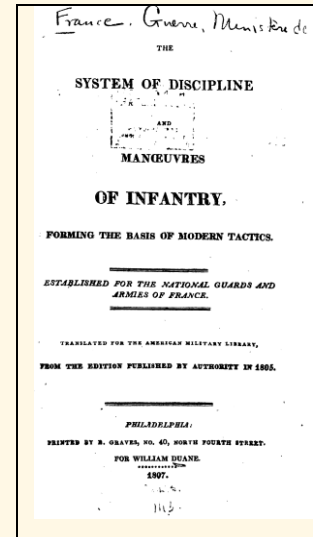
Sidebar I: French influence on US tactics



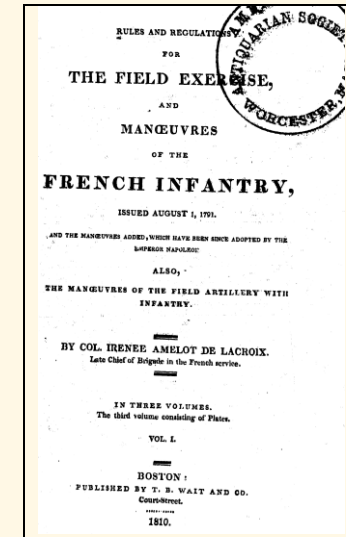
1791 *Reglement*



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com
Macdonald 1803

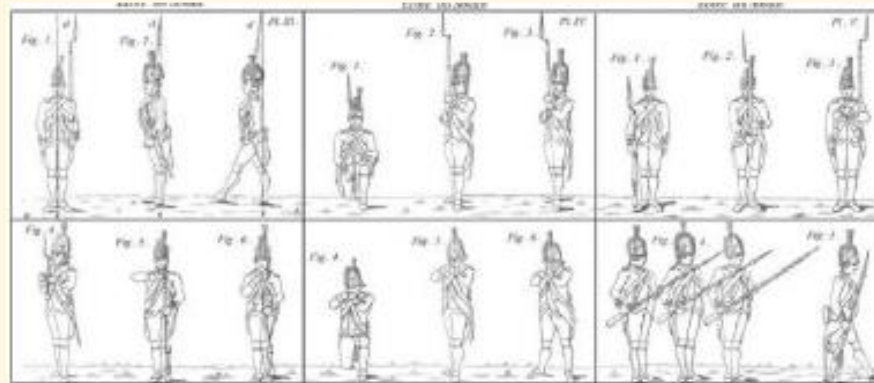


Duane 1808

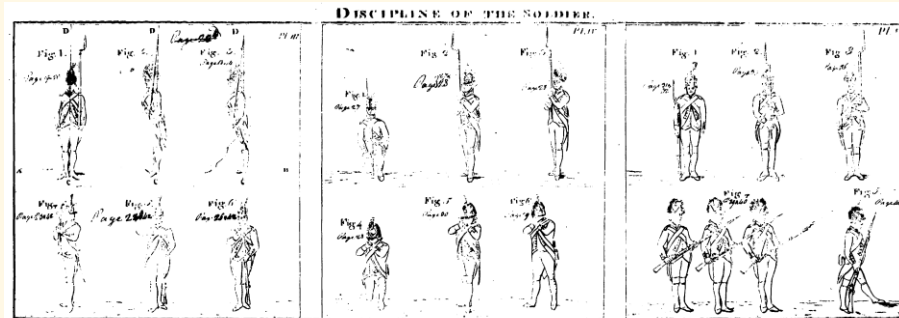


Lacroix 1810

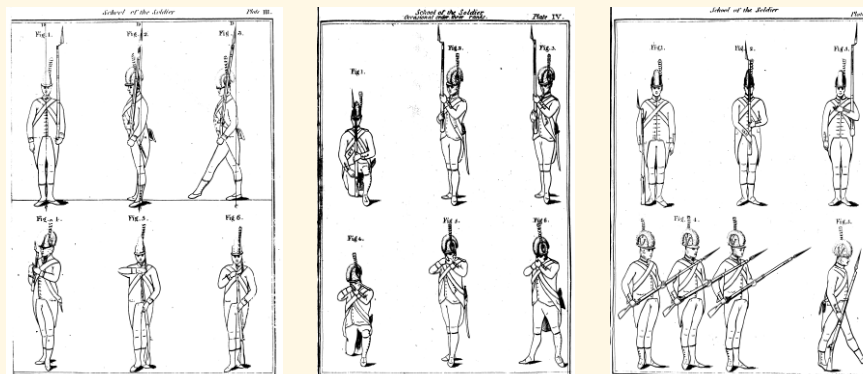
- 1791 *Reglement* synthesized column/line debate
- 1803 John Macdonald, English translation with commentary
- 1808 Secretary of War Henry Dearborn commissions translation and plate copies by Duane
- 1809 Winfield Scott tours Europe to collect tactical manuals
- 1810 Lacroix prints US Macdonald translation
- 1810 Smyth adaptation tested in training camp, adopted by War Department



1791 *Reglement* (1805 edn.)

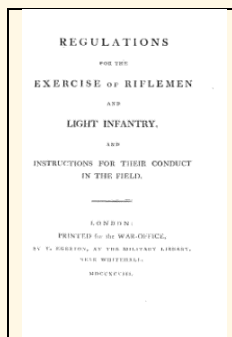


Duane plates (1808) in Lacroix (1810)

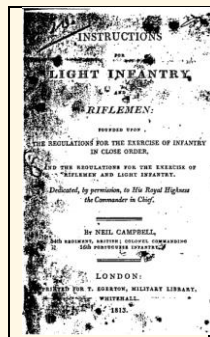


Scott (1815)

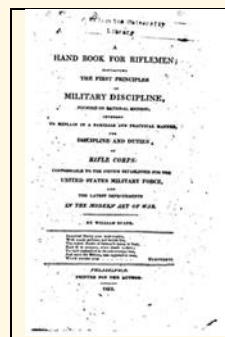
Sidebar II: British influence on US Light Infantry



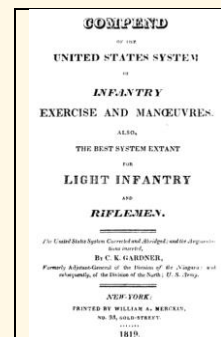
**Rottenburg
1798**



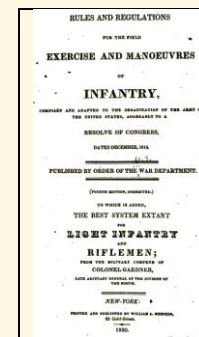
**Campbell
1812**



Duane 1812



**Gardiner
1819**

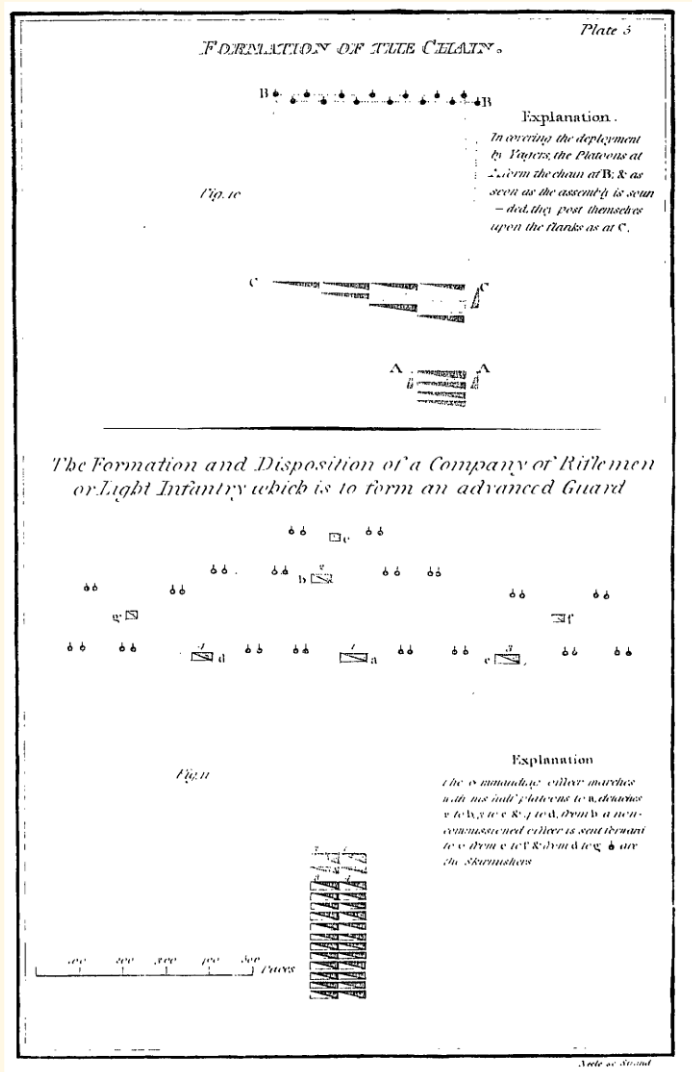


Scott 1820

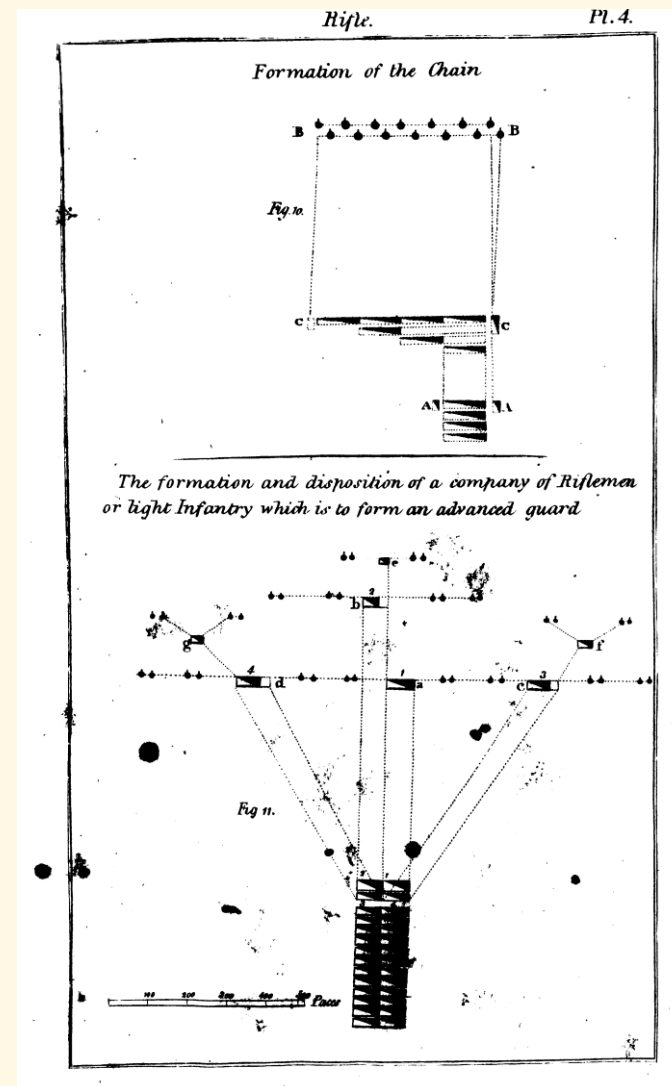
- Duke of York's army reforms significantly increase LI capability; Rottenburg's adaptation of French LI practice authorized 1798
- 1806, Neil Campbell documents current practice of Light Infantry Brigade in Peninsula (2nd edition 1812); in use to 1824
- 1812, Duane adapts British practice for US rifles
- Campbell's manual included in Charles Gardiner's 1819 drill compendium, and the 4th edition (1820) of Scott's 1815 manual
- Gardiner former Adjutant General for Division of Niagara/Division of the North

Campbell's manual was likely used by US light infantry

[Rottenburg], *Regulations, for the Exercise of Riflemen & Light Infantry*, 1798



Duane, *Handbook for Riflemen*, 1812



Which manual used depends on **which unit, when, and where** portrayed.

- Early war, US Marines, militia, or Right Division (Sackett's Harbor), likely used **Steuben**
- Left Division 1814, likely used **Scott**
- British system unlikely, unless you portray the 21st
- Rifles and light infantry likely used **Campbell**
- Others: **Smyth's** adaptation of Steuben's manual of arms and adaptation of French movement may be the best compromise for a generic impression

The following sections primarily refer to **Smyth's** manual

(2) Handling the Musket: Manual of Arms

- British 1764 *Manual Exercise* adapted by Steuben
- Steuben's manual of arms adapted by Smyth

1764

Return your Rammers!
Return the Rammer, bringing up the Piece with the left hand to the shoulder, seizing it with the right Hand under the cock, keeping the left hand fast at the swell, turning the Body square to the Front.

Steuben

Return—Rammer!
Thrust the rammer home, and instantly bring up the piece with the left hand to the shoulder, seizing it at the same time with right hand under the cock, keeping the left hand at the swell, and turning the body square to the front.

Smyth

Return, RAMMER.
Force the rammer home, raising the piece with the left hand to the shouldering position, placing the right hand against the piece at the small, and bringing the right heel back beside the left.

The majority of US forces in the War of 1812 used these adaptations of the outmoded 1764 British manual of arms. (Scott used the 1791 French manual.)

Differences, US Manual of Arms

No pauses between motions. Time for each motion is same as one step of common time.

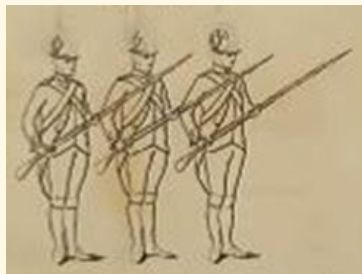
Musket returns to **Shoulder Arms** between each position.

- **Support Arms.** Right hand remains grasping the small of the stock. Left hand grasps right arm. Optional to drop the R hand when marching.
- **Shoulder Arms from Order/Trail.** Shift musket upwards in R hand before bringing across to the left shoulder.
- **Order Arms.** Right hand grasps the musket instead of lying flat on the sling.

- **Shoulder Arms from Advance Arms.** Come to the Poise before returning the musket to the left shoulder.
- **Fix/unfix bayonet.** No instructions provided for this in Smyth. Steuben, Duane, Scott generally agree:
 - *From order arms:* half-face to the right.
 - *From shoulder arms:* lower musket on left side; return to shoulder.

Note: The bayonet is always grasped by the ***right*** hand to fix or unfix.

- **Charge Bayonet.** Tip of bayonet at **eye** level.



- **Inspection of arms.** No specific procedure given in Smyth.
 - Per 1810 amendment to Steuben: open pans from shoulder; spring rammers from ramming position.
 - Per Scott: fix bayonet and spring rammer from the order (on right side). Return to attention. Present musket to inspecting officer at eye level, held in left hand, lock out.
- **Pile Arms.** Mentioned but not described in Smyth.
 - Per 1810 amendment to Steuben: group of three lock bayonets.
 - Per Scott: Done at open order, front rank faced to the rear, in groups of four. Arms are piled with fixed bayonets, and the piles are made by locking the bayonet shanks.

Handling the Musket: Loading and Firing

Similar motions to British drill, but the steps are organized differently.

1804 *M&PE*

Load [priming position + open pan]

Handle Cartridge

Prime [+ shut pan]

Cast About [+ charge cartridge]

Draw Ramrods

Ram Cartridge

Return Ramrods

Shoulder Arms

Smyth

Open Pan [priming position]

Handle Cartridge

Prime

Shut Pan [+ cast about]

Charge Cartridge

Draw Rammer

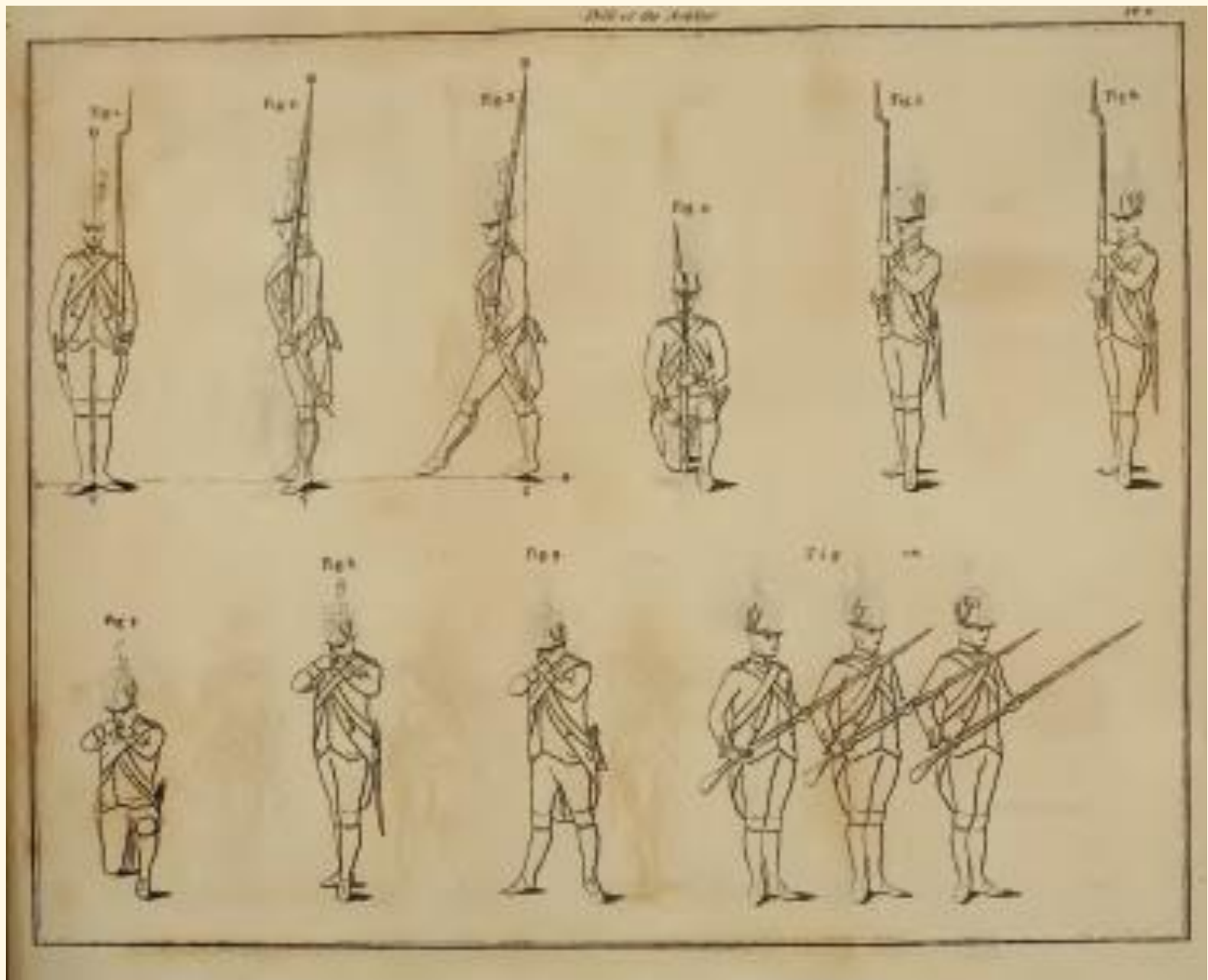
Ram Cartridge

Return Rammer

Shoulder Arms

Differences, US Loading & Firing

- **Shut pan.** Includes 1st motion of Cast About: half-face to the left; cast about with musket vertical against forearm (2nd motion of secure arms). [Cf. 1792 *M&PE*]
- **Return rammer.** Ends with the 1st motion of Shoulder Arms.
- **Make Ready/Take Aim.** At Ready musket held centre of chest, lock plate out. Feet 90° at Ready for both ranks; at Aim rear rank steps to the right.
- **All firings begin with muskets shouldered.** There is no equivalent to Firing by Platoons in US drill.



(3) Company Movement

- When **dress**ing, “Steady” is the command used to return eyes front.

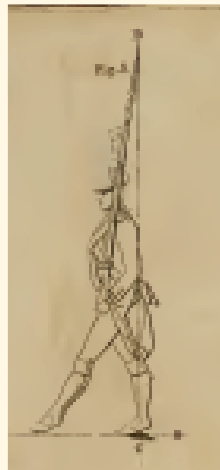
Facings

- **Right/left face.** Done as one motion, no placing of right foot before the move.
- **Right about face.** Right foot placed behind left at “Right about”. *Palm of right hand secures cartridge pouch.*

Marching

- Any change of motion commences on the executive command *MARCH*.
- Touch shoulders towards the guide.
- US drill does not use the backwards wheel.
- The pace does not change when wheeling.
- Wheels on the march are always done with a moveable pivot. Fixed pivot wheels are used only when halted.
- US drill uses the TURN to change direction on the side of the guide (files come up sequentially to align on new direction); pace increases to quick time.

- Changes of direction and formation (British drill uses the term “turn” for this) are indicated by stating the new direction, eg “by the right flank” or “to the front.”
- Open ranks 4 paces to the rear.
- At Route Step ranks open to 3 paces.
- Do not form 4s when file marching.



(4) US battalion drill

- Principles of ***alignment***
- The ***positions*** of company guides and commanding officer in close-order formations
 - column
 - line
 - firing
 - file marching
 - successive formations
- The three ways that a company in line or column can ***change direction***.
- Forming ***column*** and ***line***
 - Wheeling forward
 - Filing to the rear
 - Form line forward of column
 - Attack column

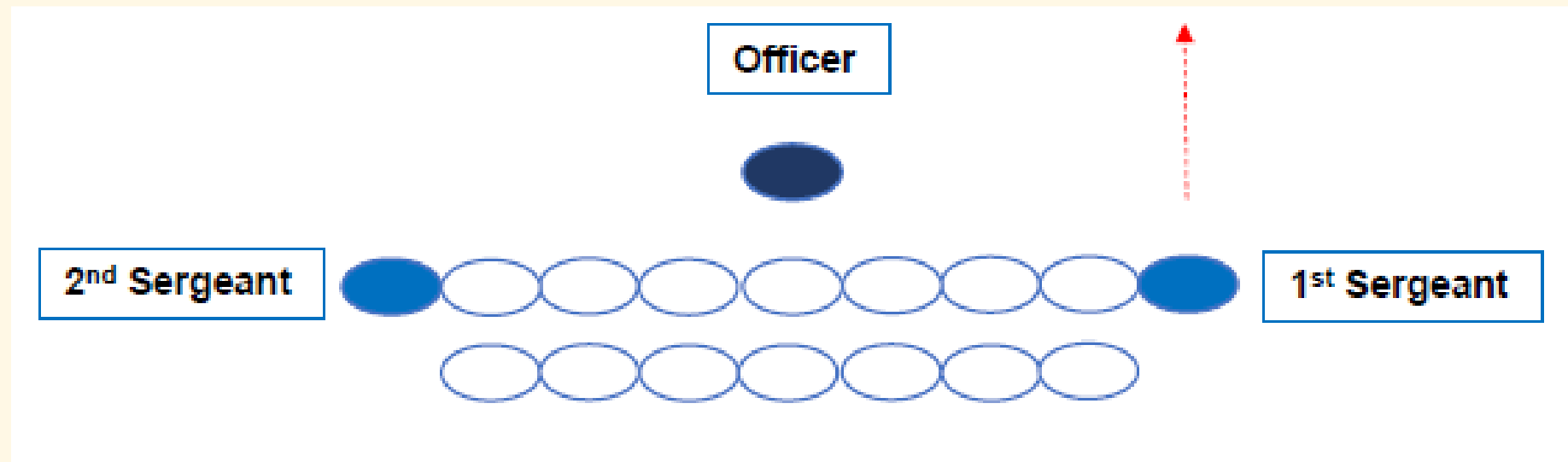
Alignment

- **Guides** serve to align the companies on the battalion line-of-battle, and are the constant reference point for the company. The guide will always be on the side toward the battalion's "front".
- ***Dressing is always towards the guide.***
- When in ***line*** formation, company guides are the 1st Sergeant for the right of the company, and 2nd Sergeant for the left of the company.
- Guides are posted outside the company line, next to the corporals at the left and right of the line.

- It is possible to have the same person act as both L & R guide if they shuttle from one side of the company to the other when their role changes. (This occurs during platoon drill.)
- When ***file marching***, the guide is always on the side of the front rank.
- When in ***column*** the guide is always on the flank that would be the *pivot* when the companies wheel from column into line (that is, guide is left when the column is right in front, and guide is right when the column is left in front).
- Officers are rarely used for alignment. The exceptions are:
 - when a halted battalion forms column from line
 - during file marching

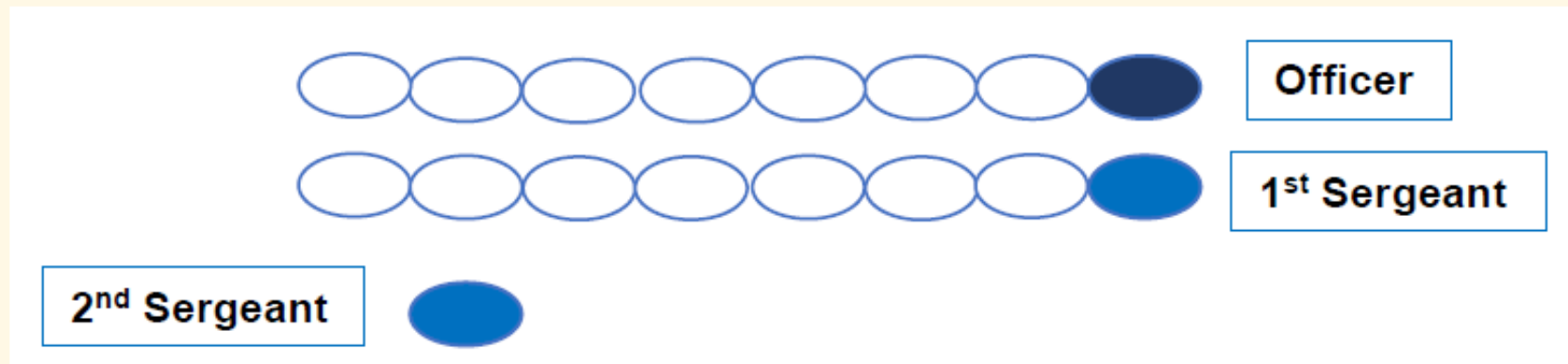
Positions of officers and guides

Column: When the company is part of a battalion column the officer is 2 paces in front of the company's centre. The two guides step up to the front rank, 1st Sergeant on the right of the company, 2nd Sergeant on the left.



Positions of company guides and officer when company is in column.

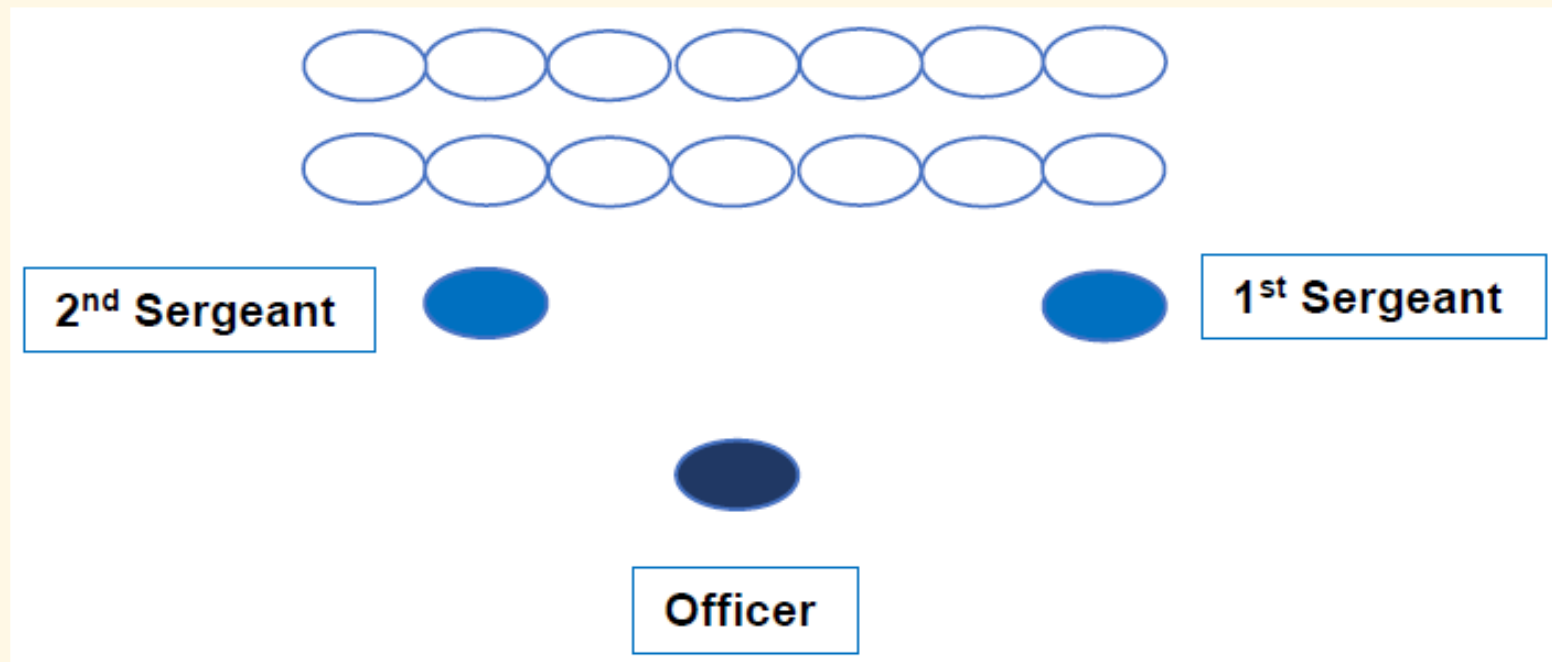
Line: When the company is formed in the battalion line, the officer is at the right of his company in the front rank. 1st Sergeant covers the officer, in the rear rank; 2nd Sergeant is in the rank of file closers, at the left of the company.



Positions of company guides and officer when company is in line.

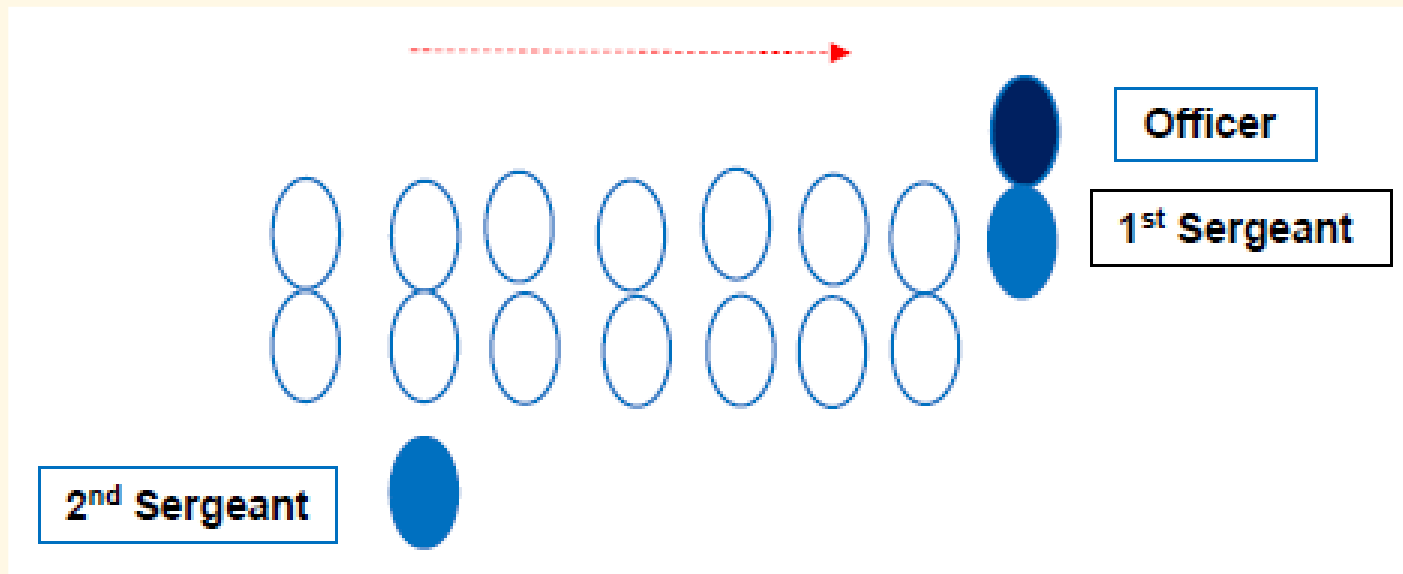
Firing:

- 1st Sergeant moves to rank of file closers
- Officer moves to centre-rear of company, four paces behind file-closer rank



Positions of company guides and officer when company is firing

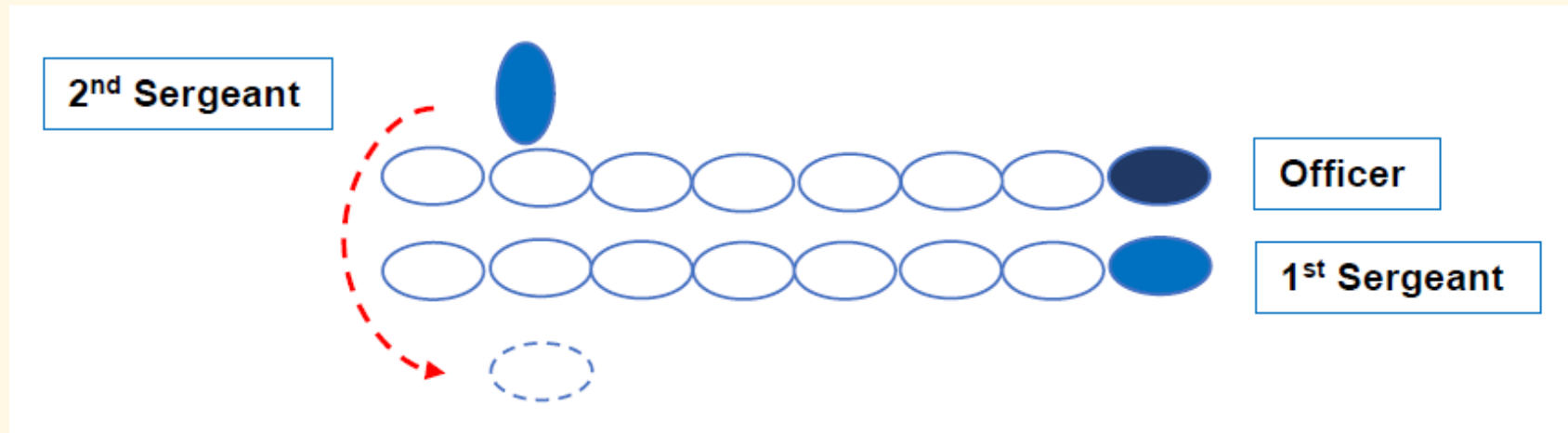
File marching: When the company is marching by files, by the right or left flank, the sergeant acting as guide will be leading the front rank, the officer alongside the sergeant. When marching by the right flank the 1st sergeant is the guide; when marching by the left flank the 2nd sergeant is the guide.



Positions of company guides and officer when company is file marching by the right flank.

Successive formations: When companies arrive in succession on the battalion line:

- The **left guide** of each company moves in front of the company, faces to the right of the line, and aligns on the preceding guides
- The company wheels or turns up to the guide's shoulder
- The guides return to the file closer rank at "*Guides to your posts*"



Position of left guide when companies form line successively.

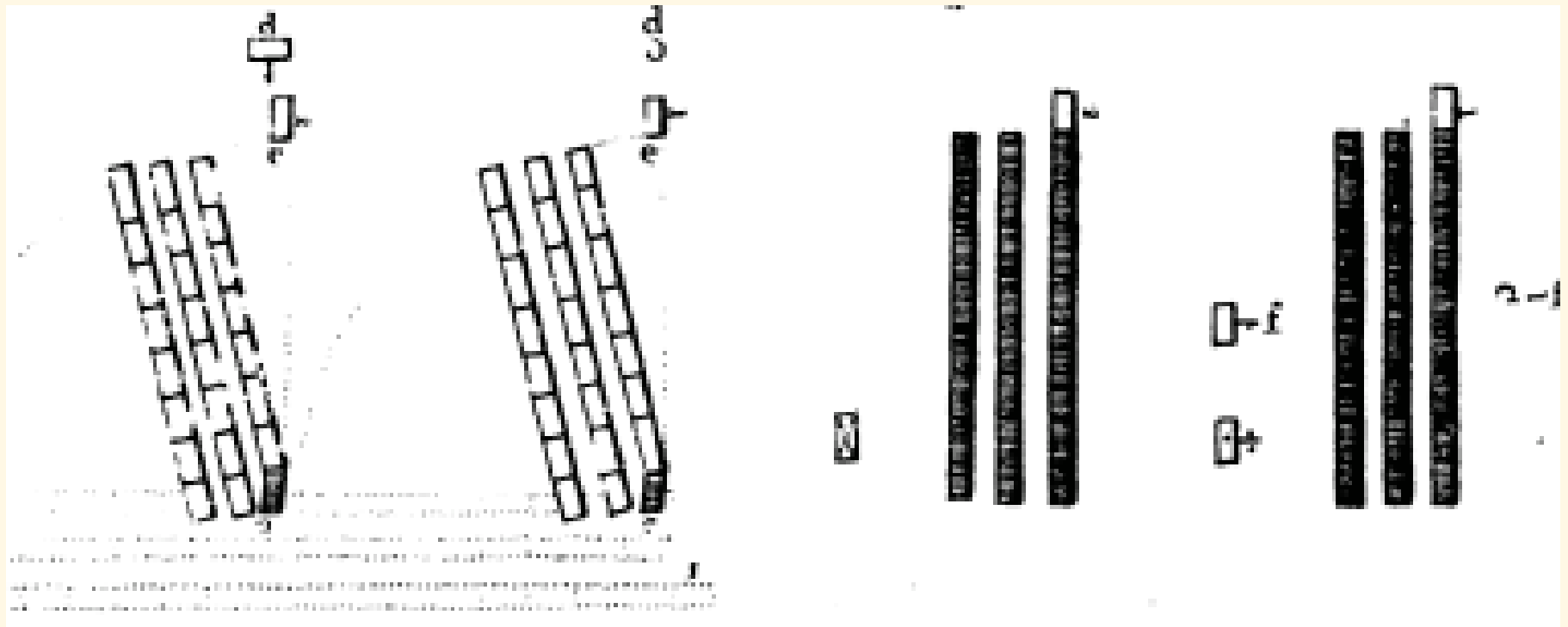
Changing position when in line formation

There are three different ways to do this:

- wheel from a **fixed pivot**
- wheel from a **moveable pivot**
- the **turn**

Wheel from a fixed pivot

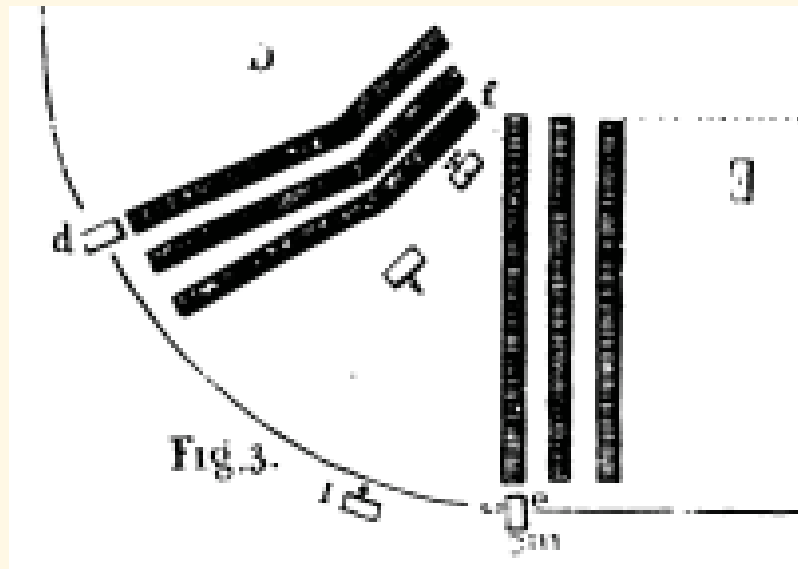
- Used in battalion evolutions to change from line to column, or from column to line
- Always done from the halt, to the halt
- performed at common time
- Dressing is always **towards the pivot** (“look out, touch in”).



Right wheel with fixed pivot (line into column)

Wheel on a moveable pivot

- Used to change direction when in marching in column, *when the change occurs on the side **opposite** the guide.* (Eg, a right-in front column, with guide left, changes direction to the right.)
- Dressing is **towards the guide**, who is on the outside of the wheel (“look out, touch out”)
- The marching pace does not increase for wheels

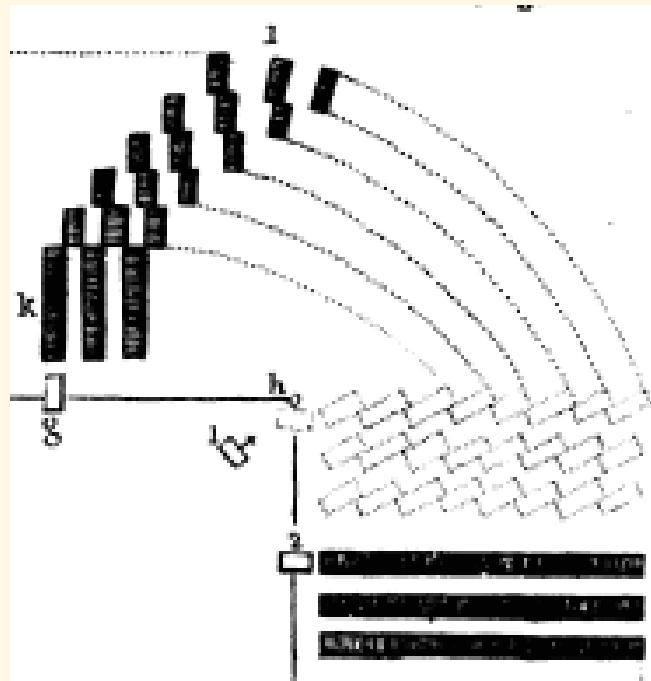


Right wheel with moving pivot

Column is right in front; guide is left.

Turn

- Used to change direction when in marching in column, *when the change is on the **same** side as the guide*
- The guide turns 90-degrees and continues marching in common time; company files come up sequentially (in echelon) at **quick** time to dress on the guide and resume marching in common time
- Turns are also used when a battalion column deploys forward into line, or deploys on the right into line



Left turn

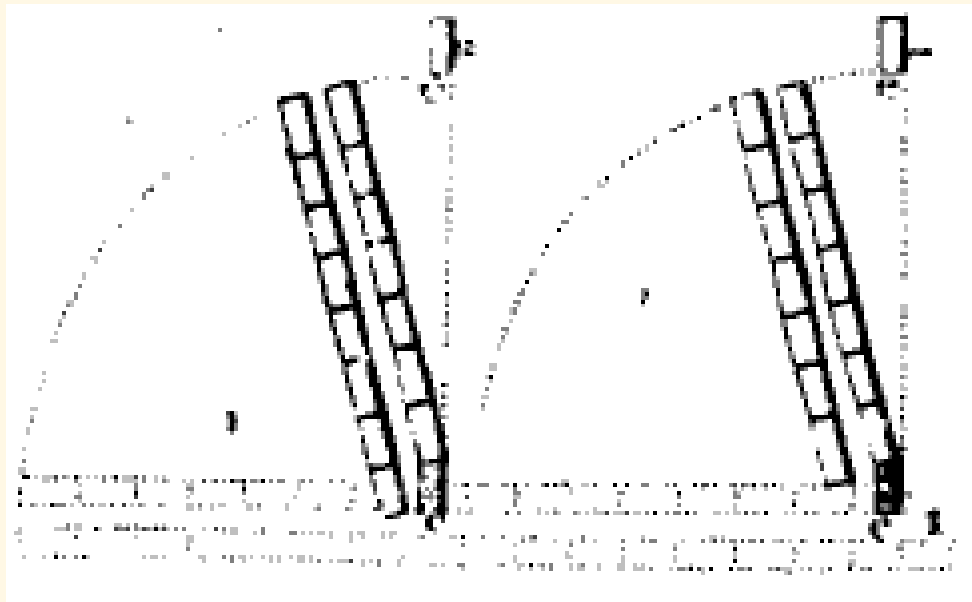
Four Battalion Movements

1. Form column from line (wheel forward)
2. Form column from line (file to the rear)
3. Form line forward from column
4. Form attack column

1. Column formed forward of line of battle

“Form column of companies by wheeling to the right; by companies right wheel;”

- Officers march out wheeling distance, face about (towards their company), and take alignment from their left



“MARCH”

- Left guides (2nd sergeants) guide company as it wheels left
- Officer halts wheel short of 90; officers align; left guides put left shoulder against officer's chest

“Left DRESS; FRONT”

- Officer moves to centre-front of company



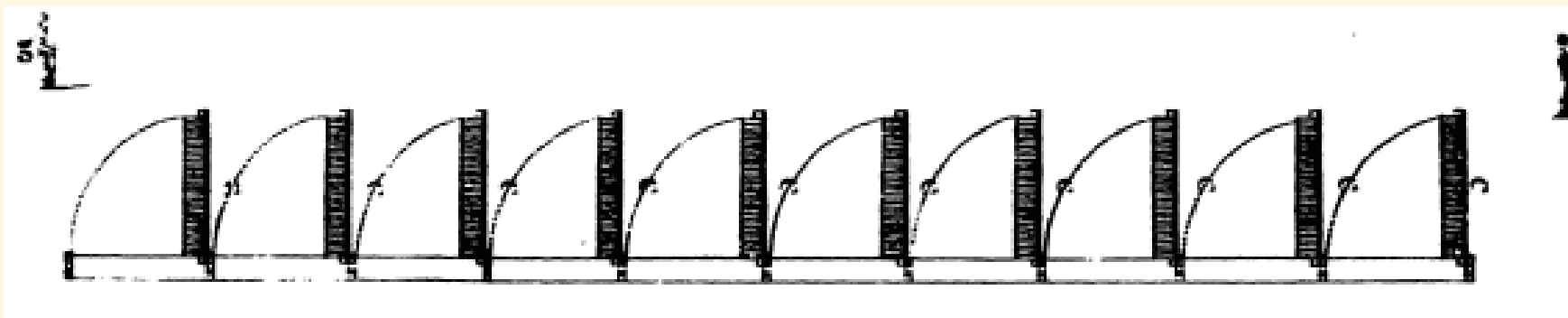


Fig. 1. Represents a battalion in line, wheeling forward by companies from line into open column, the right in front. The letters (a), (f), and (g), show the positions of the commandant, major, and adjutant.

2. Column formed to the rear of line of battle

“Form column of Companies by filing to the rear. Bttn, by the R flank; to the R, FACE.”

- Battalion faces right; 2 right files partially wheel to the rear; company officers take one right oblique step forward, and face about

“By companies, file to the R; MARCH”

- Companies file right to the rear, led by 1st Sergeant; company commanders halt & front units as last file passes
- 2nd Sergeant places left shoulder against officer's chest

“Left DRESS; STEADY”

- Officer moves to centre-front of company

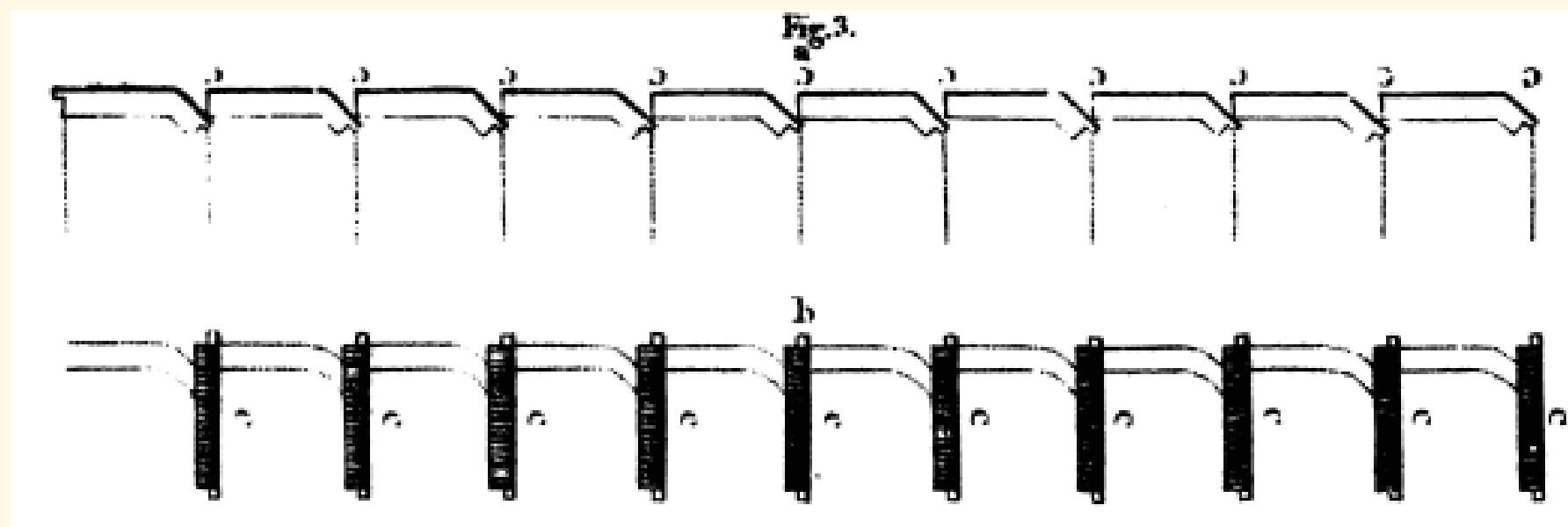


Fig. 3. Represents a battalion in line, filing into column from the right of companies to the rear.

The figure (a) shows the battalion after it has faced to the right, and the heads of companies have been disengaged to the rear. The figure (b) shows the open column formed. The two lines are laid down to represent the movement distinctly; but the left guides of the column, when formed, are on the original line.

3. Forming Battalion Line Forward from Column

Forms line to the front of column by echelon movement

Battalion commands:

*“Form the line to the front
Battalion, guide to the right.
By companies, half wheel to the left.
MARCH”*

When companies have made a quarter wheel:

“Forward, MARCH”

Officers guide company to place in line:

“To the right turn, MARCH”

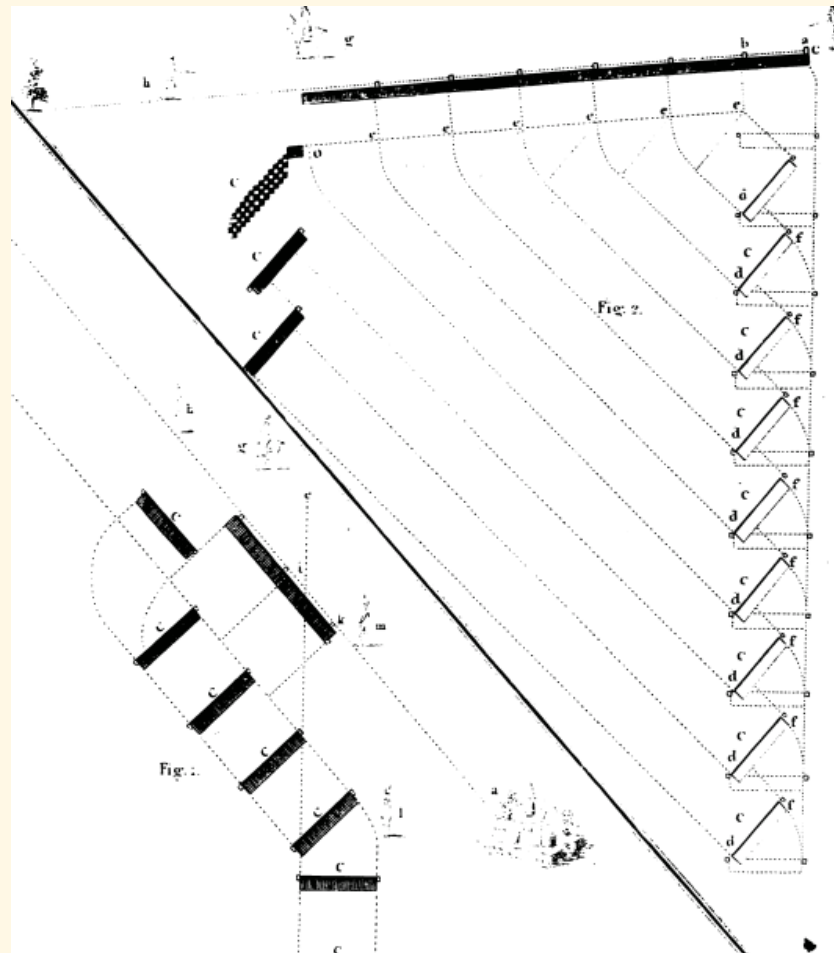


Fig. 2. Represents a battalion open column at full distance, with the right in front, forming forward to the front of the march into line, on the leading company, by an echelon movement.

4. Forming Attack Column

Forms a double column in rear of the two centre companies.

Battalion commands:

“Form column of attack.

By company on the centre in column

Battalion, right and left face.

Quick time, MARCH”

- Officers guide their company into column
- Dressing is on guides in centre of column
- Officers post on outer flanks of column

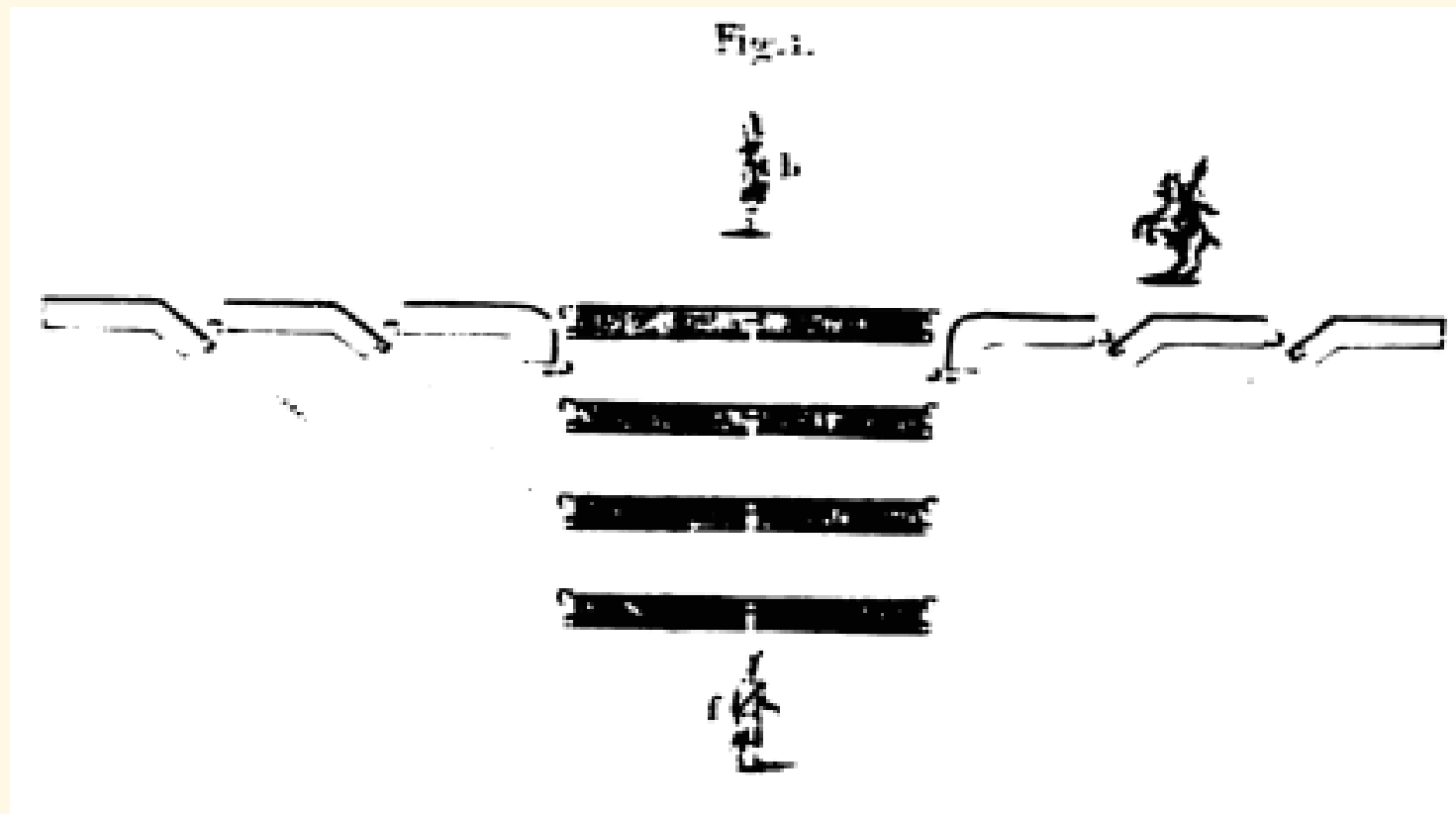
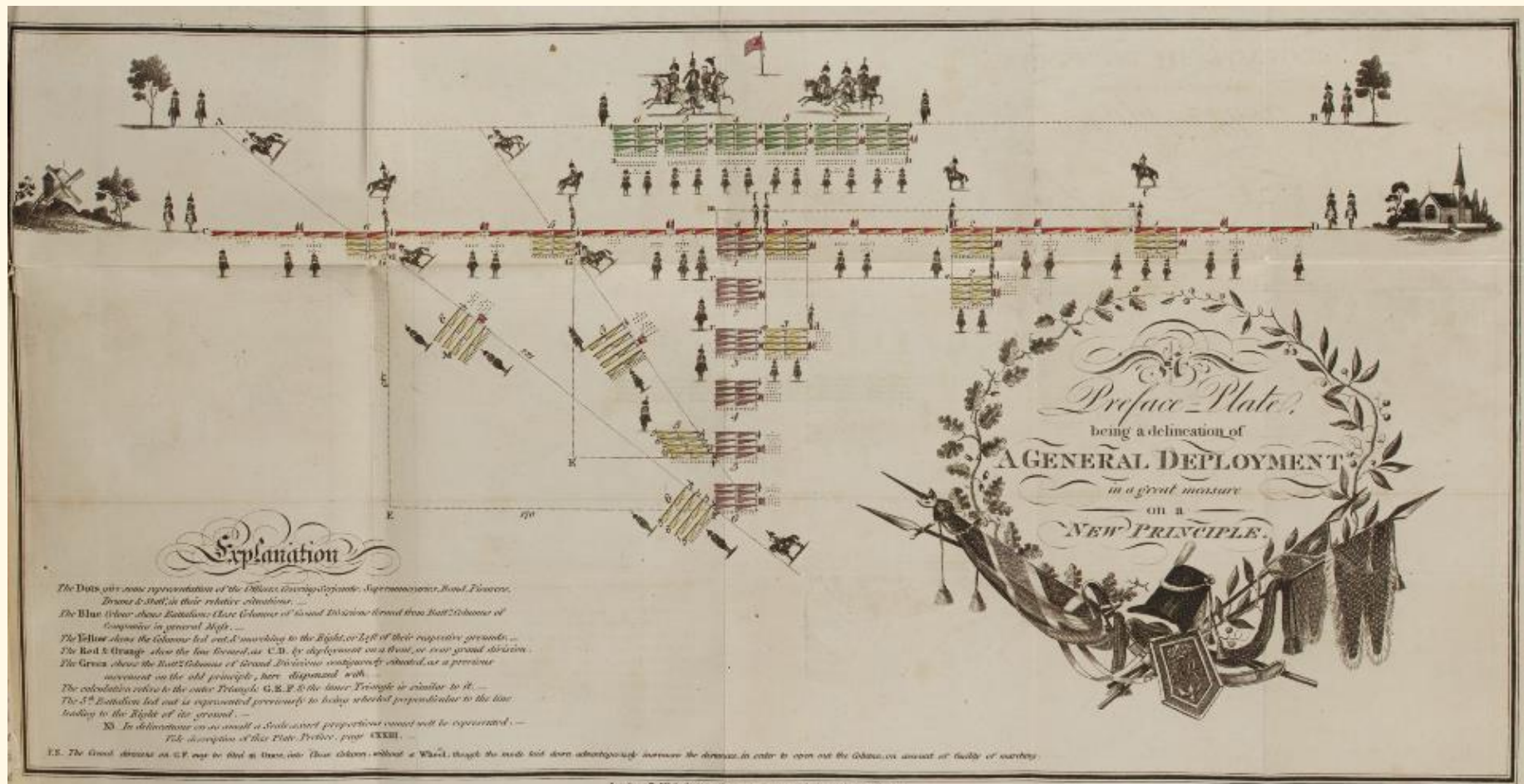


Fig. 1. Represents a battalion forming from the line a column of attack. The figure shows that the companies on the right and left of the two centre companies disengaged their inner flanks to the rear, and formed column at platoon distance, on the fourth and fifth companies.



John MacDonald's British adaptation, preface plate, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry* (1807 translation of 1792 *Reglement*)

Ready for a US impression!

