

WARFARE IN THE 1860s

The North

- The Anaconda Plan
- Devised by Winfield Scott to minimize bloodshed
- Called first for a blockade of Southern ports
 - The battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac – though a draw –demonstrated that the Confederacy could not break the blockade
 - While the Union built many ironclads, the Confederacy did not have the resources to respond in kind
- Called next for taking of the Mississippi to cut the Confederacy in two

The South

- Based on that of the colonists in the American Revolution or Washingtonian Plan
 - Retreat when necessary to gain time
 - Aim counterattacks at isolated outposts
 - Avoid battles that might result in annihilation of the army
- Hindered by politics and military matters
 - Popular demand to defend every portion of the Confederacy from penetration by "Lincoln's abolition hordes" resulted in the deployment of small armies around the Confederate perimeter
 - Popular insistence that they could not just sit and wait
- Final strategy
 - Use interior lines of communication defensively to concentrate dispersed forces against an invading army
 - When opportunities arose, take the offensive, even to the extent of invading the North

Tactics

- Because almost all the generals in the Civil War – both Union and Confederate – had graduated from West Point, their tactics exhibited little variation.
- Napoleonic tactics were not appropriate to the realities of the American Civil War
 - Army commanders concentrated on strategy
 - Corps commanders concentrated on tactics

 - Largest practical units of tactical maneuver were divisions
 - Brigades and regiments were more practical units, with brigades doing the real fighting
- **Infantry**



- The long "line of battle," 2 ranks deep
- The "column," varying from 1 to 10 or more companies wide and from 8 to 20 or more ranks deep
- The "open-order" deployment: a strung-out, irregular single line (used more by Lee)

- Because attackers had to charge, deeper massed columns consisting of 1 to 10 companies in width and 8 to 20 ranks deep were preferable to battle lines for making frontal assaults
- Tacticians tried to coordinate all troops to deliver maximum force and firepower and to avoid being beaten in small units
- Open-order deployment covered their front and flanks with skirmishers, who developed the enemy position and screened their own troops

▪ **Trench warfare**

- By 1864, infantry customarily erect light field fortifications to strengthen their defensive battlefield positions and protect itself from enemy rifle power
- When attacking, whether against battle lines or fortifications, infantry continued suffering heavy casualties through clinging to tactical formations outmoded by weapons technology

▪ **Cavalry**



- Terrain reduced cavalry to a lesser tactical role than in Napoleonic warfare
- Greatest offensive value came from long-range rifled shoulder arms
- Cavalry functioned best in scouting for tactical intelligence and in screening such intelligence from the enemy
- Cavalry offered mobility to seize key spots, where it dismounted and fought afoot
- Pursuit of routed troops by mounted cavalry occurred rarely because few routs occurred
- Armed with breech-loading carbines, including Federal repeaters by 1864-65, these foot cavalry fought well even against infantry

▪ **Artillery**



- Artillery were relegated to enhancing defensive support
 - Sometimes with 1 battery assigned to each infantry brigade
 - More often with 1 battalion assigned to a Confederate infantry division and 1 brigade to a Federal infantry corps
- Long-range shells and close-in canisters made artillery crucial to repulsing enemy attacks
- Long-range shelling to support offensive attack had minimal effect
- Artillery assaults were soon abandoned as suicidal
- Artillery depended almost entirely on direct fire against visible targets

▪ **Guerilla Warfare**

- Atrocities committed against ordinary citizens – including women, children, and the elderly – by Federal Occupational Troops at the beginning of the war turned Missouri into a battleground of its own

- They became known as Red Legs and were supported by anti-slavery Jayhawkers – Kansan guerillas
- To counter the Red Legs and Jayhawkers, the Missouri Partisan Rangers arose, including
 - William Quantrill
 - Frank James
 - Cole Younger
 - William "Bloody Bill" Anderson
- The Partisan Rangers resorted to innovative subterfuge such as dressing in Union uniforms or disguising themselves as women

Camp Life

Indeed, life in the army camps of the Civil War was fraught with boredom, mischief, fear, disease, and death.

▪ Design

- Fixed grid pattern – analogous to the lines of battle, each company displaying its colors
- Officers' quarters at the front end of each street
- Enlisted men's quarters aligned to the rear
- Locations of mess tents, medical cabins, and baggage trains determined more by practicality and terrain than regulations
- Alternately, mud and dust complicated encampment

▪ Sleeping Quarters



- The Sibley tent
 - Named for its inventor, Henry H. Sibley, later a Confederate brigadier general
 - A canvas cone, 18 feet in diameter by 12 feet tall when supported by a center pole
 - Circular opening at the top for ventilation
 - Cone-shaped stove for heat
 - Designed to fit 12 men, but regulations assigned about 20 men to each tent
 - When ventilation flaps were closed, the air inside grew



- The Union wedge tent
 - Six-foot length of canvas draped over a horizontal ridgepole
 - Staked to the ground at the sides
 - Flaps closed off one end
- Confederate make-shifts
 - Forced – due to a canvas shortage – to resort to open-air beds of heaping straw or leaves between two logs
 - In autumn and winter, built crude huts, made of split logs on the earth floor
 - Bunks with mattresses of pine needles
- **Routine**
 - 5 A.M. in summer (6 A.M. in winter) - reveille
 - Roll call
 - Breakfast
 - Five two-hour drill sessions a day
 - Learn to shoot weapons
 - Practice various maneuvers
 - Generally regarded as exercises in tedium
 - Between drill sessions
 - Cleaned the camp
 - Built roads
 - Dug latrines
 - Gathered wood for cooking and heating
- **Hygiene and Nutrition**
 - Lack of drinking water resulted in widespread disease on both sides
 - At the outset of the war, the soldiers on both sides were relatively well-fed
 - 20 ounces of fresh or salt beef or 12 ounces of salt pork
 - More than a pound of flour
 - A vegetable, usually beans
 - Coffee, salt, vinegar, and sugar



- When in the field, soldiers saw little beef and few vegetables
 - Salt pork
 - Dried beans
 - Corn bread
 - Hardtack, often infested with maggots and weevils
 - Lack of fresh fruit and vegetables commonly led to outbreaks of scurvy
- Coffee – most important staple
 - Men pounded the beans between rocks or crushed them with the butts of their rifles to obtain grounds with which to brew the strong drink
 - Most Union soldiers were well-supplied with coffee
 - Confederates were often forced to make do with substitutes made from peanuts, potatoes, peas, and chicory
- **The Sutler**
 - Seller of goods not issued by the army: tobacco, candy, tinned meats, shoelaces, patent medicines, fried pies, and newspapers
 - Charged high prices for mediocre or poor goods
- **Recreation**
 - Pervasive boredom – between battles – led soldiers to seek relief
 - Reading
 - Writing letters home
 - Playing baseball
 - Boxing matches
 - Cockfights
 - Racing lice or cockroaches across a strip of canvas
 - Gambling
 - Drunkenness
 - Fighting
 - Furloughs were rare

Medicine

- **Medical supplies**
 - Bulk of supplies carried in wagons at rear of supply train
 - Surgeon's carried what supplies they could
 - Panniers containing the more necessary dressings medicines, and appliances were devised to be carried along into action by pack-mules
 - Usually reached the front in ambulances
 - Special wagons for medical supplies were eventually devised
 - Surgical instruments came in four cases
 - one for major operations
 - one for minor operations
 - one a pocket-case
 - one a field-case to be carried by the surgeon on his person into action
 - Instruments were well assorted but used indiscriminately and without more than superficial cleansing upon both flesh and festering wounds
 - They habitually conveyed infection
- **Treating wounds**

- Wounds were encouraged to produce pus with no expectation of healing infection
 - No antiseptics
 - Cleanliness of wounds not a priority
 - Dressings rare, typically a dirty handkerchief or sweat-drenched cloth torn from a dirty shirt
 - Wounds packed with astringents, coagulants, and generally harmful chemicals
 - Often insoluble pills provided medicines of uncertain efficacy
- **Surgical practice**
- Opium was typically substituted for morphine
 - Surgical anesthesia still a relatively new procedure
 - Several hundred major operations reported in which no anesthetic was employed
 - Blood poison, gangrene, and lockjaw were conveyed into the body
 - Surgeons undertook the most severe operations at the front, often under fire

