

## Homework lesson #1

3<sup>rd</sup> USV

### Remarks on *Casey's Infantry Tactics, Vol. 1*

At the beginning of the war, there were a seemingly innumerable amount of drill texts used by the regular and volunteer regiments. Some states adopted their own manuals that were versions of older texts. This poses some problems for us, the reenactors, in choosing which manual to use.

In 1861, the official infantry manual was a work translated by Hardee. This was intended for use by light infantry and the short model (two-banded) M1858 rifle, with the sabre bayonet. This manual was the first to be reprinted for reenactor use. However, the manual posed problems for many regiments not armed with short rifles and left great holes in general instruction that greatly hindered understanding of general drill. The French manual was written for *light infantry* as a supplement to the regular infantry tactics. Hardee's manual was presented as "the" manual. It was understood that officers already had a certain grasp of the earlier manuals for line infantry and would utilize Hardee's translation to use for light troops. It lost popularity due to the fact that William J. Hardee defected to the south. The other manuals in use were specifically written for the smooth-bored musket. Some still contained instruction for loading flintlock muskets. The army clearly needed an updated manual for use with rifled muskets, with socket bayonets, that could march and act as light infantry.

Silas Casey's works sought to combine the drill for heavy and light infantry to a more uniform manual. The following doctrines were emphasized in Casey's revisions.

- The formations were fixed at two ranks. It was common knowledge that the two-rank formation was just as effective as three, following the British employment on the Plains of Abraham at the Battle of Quebec (F&I war).
- The gait or length of the step (for all infantry) was fixed as that of the light infantry. Troops needed to move quicker to cover greater distances because of the greater accuracy of small arms.
- The intervals were increased between regiments and brigades. This allowed the same number of troops to exponentially cover the same front without fear of the exploitation of a flank.
- Casey wished to hold troops in the presence of the enemy *closed in mass* and deploy them by the flank instead of being at *full distance* and thrown forward into line. This saved time, and

allowed a greater number of infantry to be concentrated into a smaller area. This essentially increased the force ratio on the battlefield.

-Casey increased the tactical unit, *de jure* from the regiment to the brigade. The Confederacy labored to organize brigades by state with commanders from that state. This political policy, as well as the *esprit d' corps* generated, meant that the Confederacy was able to employ the brigade as the *de facto* tactical unit. This was only incidental, and not reactionary on the part of Casey's assertions. For when Casey sent his tome for approval, the war was still very young (1 January, 1862). A single brigade was then able to be commanded by a single person and in theory had as much maneuverability as a single regiment. This marked in increased concentration of force.

-Casey tried to assert that two companies be held in reserve, to be comprised of picked men, and to be well-trained in skirmishing. He was obviously a fan of the idea of the French *chasseurs a pied*, who were kept in reserve and utilized for skirmishing and for following up an attack. However, the War Department under Stanton disapproved this provision. The "two reserve companies in each regiment" notion was not tactically sound if the brigade was to be the tactical unit. In theory and practice, this meant that one-fifth of available troops would be held in reserve at most times- not on the line, in a day when concentration of fire was paramount. Stanton nixed this idea. In later practice *all infantry* was well to be well-trained and practiced at skirmishing, with whole regiments at times being deployed to cover the advance, retreat, or maneuvers of the brigades.

Casey readily admitted that his version contained flaws. His work was meant to increase the efficiency of infantry troops.

We have chosen Casey's manual for our (reenactor) use as it was written for the arms which most of us carry, and it covers a large time frame of the war. It is reprinted in many forms today, either in the separate 3-volume (green) set or the larger blue covered book. It is my wish to periodically present to you, the officers and men of this regiment, various subjects from period manuals for your study, debate, and consideration. It is my hope that we continue to progress in our understanding and practice of the various evolutions, for our own efficiency, impression, and enjoyment of the hobby.

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