

The Soldiers

Both the Northern and Southern armies were composed predominantly of very young men. Almost all the generals were highly bewhiskered, but the enlisted men were almost all too young to grow whiskers.

Union troops wore light blue pants and dark blue coats; Confederates wore gray—when they could get it, for the Confederate supply system was very creaky. Many Southerners wore butternut, a homespun yellowish-brown cloth dyed with homemade dyes. Often they wore captured Yankee uniforms. The extent to which they went clad in rags and tatters has been overstated, but few Confederate divisions, after the first year or so of the war, presented a very trim appearance.

Both sides carried a muzzle-loading rifle, cumbersome by modern standards, but nevertheless a highly effective weapon. It would kill at more than half a mile, and was deadly when used by veterans.

Basic rations on each side were hardtack, salt pork and coffee; the Confederates were very short on coffee late in the war, and were delighted when they could pilfer some from dead Yankees.

Medical services for both armies were primitive. Disease killed at least twice as many men as were killed by bullets. Prison camps were miserable, and thousands died of disease in such places.



Union soldier Confederate soldier