

ASSEMBLY OF THE BATTALION

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This subject being of basic importance and essentially "one maneuver," we step away from the numbered paragraph system and present the Assembly as an "article" unto itself.

184. Despite its fundamental importance, the assembly of the Battalion is not explicitly covered in the standard *Tactics* manuals; they simply state that:

1. EVERY colonel will labor to habituate his battalion to form line of battle, by night as well as by day, with the greatest possible promptitude.
2. The color-company will generally be designated as the directing company. That, as soon as formed, will be placed on the direction the colonel may have determined for the line of battle. The other companies will form on it, to the right and left, on the principles of successive formations which will be herein prescribed.³⁸

As noted in **Para. 79**, *successive formations* are movements in which the Battalion line forms one company at a time. It is up to the reader to extract the method for forming the Battalion from the principles "herein prescribed."

SIGNALS (by the Bugle or the Drum)³⁹

In the instructions for musicians given in the standard manuals, we find that:

When the whole of the troops, in the same camp or garrison, are to depart, *the general, the assembly, and to the color*, will be sounded, at the proper intervals, in the order here mentioned. At the first, the troops will prepare for the movement; at the second, they will form by company, at the third unite by battalion.⁴⁰

The General is actually the signal to break camp (i.e., to take down tents an hour before departing). More often, the Battalion is formed without breaking camp. In this case, the *Drummers' Call* (beaten on the drum), or *Assembly of the Buglers or Attention* (sounded on the bugle), are reasonable substitutes. Bruce and Emmett, in their instructions for Guard Mount, specify that the

³⁸ Scott, Winfield., *Infantry Tactics*, Vol. II, Paras. 1-2.
Herdon, Vol. II, P. 16.

39 Hardee, Vol. I, pg. 221: bugle calls. Casey, Vol. I, pg. 234,
40 Scott, Vol. I, end pages: bugle calls and drum beats.

40 Scott, Vol. I, pg. 170. Hardee, Vol. I, pg. 219. Casey, Vol. I, pg. 230.

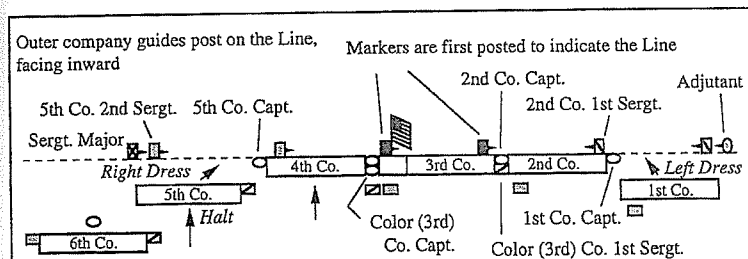


Figure 57a: Forming a 6-company Battalion. At *The Assembly*, the Adjutant posts two markers on which the Color Company (here the 3rd) forms. At *To the Color*, the other companies march to the Battalion Parade. Each company halts 3 paces before it comes into line, its outer guide posting on the line of markers (facing them), its Captain moving to the flank of the preceding company - towards the center of the Battalion (see 1st, 2nd & 5th Cos.). As each guide comes onto line, the Adjutant (or Sergt. Major) assures that the guide is on the line of markers, and then his Captain dresses the company; the Adjutant (Sergt. Major) moves towards the flank to direct the next guide. Each company comes to *Support Arms* when the next company into line has dressed and fronted.

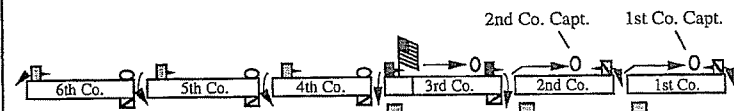


Figure 57b: Posting the Guides. After the line is formed, the guides remain in front until the Adjutant is satisfied with the alignment; he then orders, “Guides - POSTS.” (when maneuvering, it is the Colonel who orders “Guides - POSTS.”). At “Guides - POSTS,” the Captains and the guides return to their regular posts, the guides through the nearest company interval, formed by each Captain and 1st Sergt. moving in front of, and in rear of, their rightmost files.

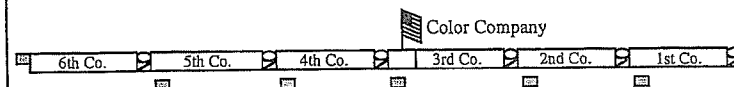
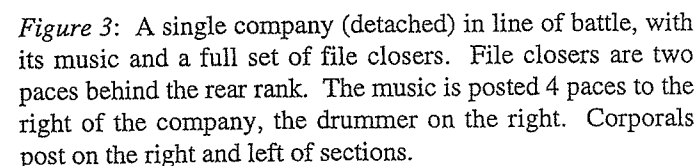
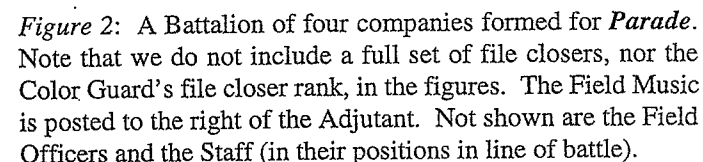


Figure 57c: A Battalion in line of battle. Note that the leftmost 2nd Sergt. closes the Battalion, and there is no space between companies. If there is a file closer rank to the Color Guard, the 2nd Sergt. of the Color Company is to their left, behind the 1st Sergt. of the next company to the left.

9. For simplicity, the Battalion discussed hereafter will consist of four companies (**Figure 2**), unless noted. The same methods are used for larger or smaller Battalions. Battalion commands are numbered (1, 2, 3, &c), while company commands are lettered (a, b, c, &c). The Battalion Commander ("Colonel") is capitalized, company commanders are in lower case. As a full compliment of officers and NCOs is often lacking, we generally neglect stating ranks, or place them in quotation marks (*e.g.*, "1st Sergt."). The positions of absent officers and sergeants (**Figure 3**) are filled by those next in seniority (*e.g.*, a lieutenant or a sergeant may be the company commander; a regular sergeant, or even a corporal, may act as the "1st Sergt.>"). As the number of files decreases, the number of file closers is generally reduced.

No. of Cos.	<i>Left</i>			Ordering				<i>Right</i>		
3							2	3	*1	
4						2	4	*3	1	
5					2	4	5	*3	1	
6				2	5	6	*3	4	1	
7			2	4	7	6	*3	5	1	
8			2	6	8	4	*3	7	5	
9		2	4	8	9	5	*3	7	6	
10	2	7	10	5	8	*3	9	4	6	

This table implies that the *right center* company - the Color Company, usually commanded by the 3rd "captain," - is just that: the company to the right of center. In an odd-company Battalion, the right wing has one less company, and the 4th "captain" commands the company second from the left; the Color Company is not the center company. Note, also, that except in a five-company Battalion, all of the seniormost "captains" command the divisions. Ideally, a Battalion must field at least five companies to display its Color (except on *Review* and other ceremonies).



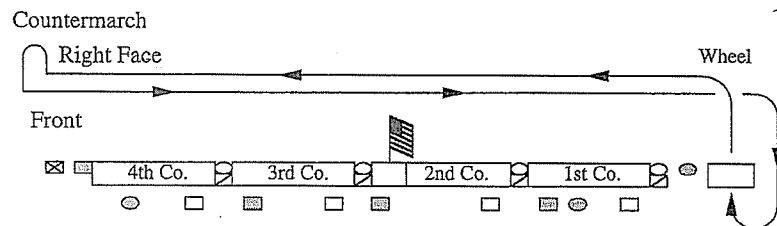


Figure 4: Path of Field Music in front of the Battalion on Parade. Field Officers and Staff, not shown, are in their places in line of battle.

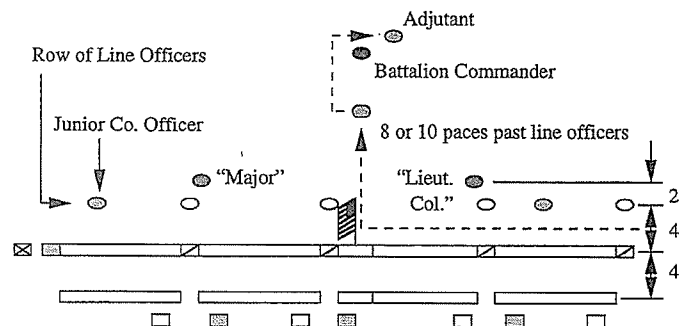


Figure 5: Battalion on Parade, with ranks opened, all company officers 4 paces in front of their companies. Note the path of the Adjutant - always around the right of the Battalion Commander. Field officers post 6 paces in front of the centers of their respective wings; when the ranks are opened, they move from their places in line of battle around the nearest flank. The Staff stays in their places in line of battle.

DRESS PARADE

10. By the *Regulations*, there shall be a *Dress Parade* at least once per day, unless circumstances prohibit it, at *Troop* or *Retreat* (morning or evening *Parade*). All field and company officers and men of the Battalion must attend the *Parade* unless specifically excused.

The details of assembling the Battalion are given in *Para. 184*, et seq.

11. When the Music sounds *The Assembly*, one-half hour before *Troop* or *Retreat* (per the *Regulations*), each company commander will form his command and have the roll called. The Adjutant positions two markers in front of where the right and left files of the Color Company are to lie. At *Adjutant's Call* (10 minutes after *The Assembly*), each company will march to the parade ground, bayonets fixed (being on ceremony), the Color Company preceding the others and the band (music) playing. Note that the times may need to be adjusted as a practical matter.

12. After the companies take their places in line (Figure 2), the Adjutant posts two paces to the right of the 1st company, the Field Music on his right; the Sergt. Major posts two paces to the left of the line. The "Lieut. Col.," "Major" and Staff post in their positions in line of battle (Figure 1). The senior officer present (Battalion Commander, i.e., the "Colonel") takes charge of the *Parade*, and posts in the front center of the Battalion, at a practical distance to oversee it. All officers are on foot.

13. The Adjutant, having verified or corrected the alignment of the companies, orders "*Guides-POSTS*" (*Para. 184*). He then indicates to the 1st company commander that he may bring his men to *Order Arms* and *Parade Rest*. Each company will then *Order Arms* and *Parade Rest* from right to left. The Adjutant then orders the Field Music, "*Music, beat off*" (about 10 minutes after *Adjutant's Call*). Here, the Music, led by the principal musician, will play *Three Cheers*, and then

march to the left, playing the 'Troop,' ... to the left of the line, there they will face to the right [the Battalion's front], and countermarch to the left; when at the proper signal [from its chief], they again face to the front [the Battalion's right], and march back to their proper place on the right of the line,²

playing a quickstep (Figure 4).

² Bruce, George B. and Emmett, Daniel D., *The Drummers' and Fifers' Guide*, 1861, pg. 38.

Marching by the Flank

38. From a halted line of battle, to march *by the right flank*, the Battalion Commander will order:

1. Battalion. 2. Right-FACE. 3. Forward.
4. MARCH.

or, if moving:

1. Battalion. 2. By the right flank. 3. MARCH.

(Figure 10) As in company drill, the ranks "double" upon facing or moving by a flank (unless the men are ordered not to double). The guide is left - on the side of the front rank. The left guide of the leftmost company moves to the left of the last file of his company, in line behind the company commanders.⁹ Not shown are the "Lieut. Col.," "Major," Adjutant and Sergt. Major, whose posts are prescribed in Para. 165. To change the direction of march, the Battalion Commander will order:

1. By file right (left). 2. MARCH.

and the Battalion changes its line of march as in company drill. Only the Battalion Commander gives the command; company commanders do not (nor are any sword movements prescribed in the manuals).

39. To return to line of battle, the Commander simply orders:

1. Battalion. 2. HALT. 3. FRONT.

or, to continue marching,

1. By the left flank. 2. MARCH.

and the column *by the flank* undoubles to the front into line.

40. Facing or marching *by the left flank* (Figure 11) is performed by the same principles, substituting "*left*" for "*right*." When moving *by the left flank*, the guide is right (to the side of the front rank) and each company commander

⁹ When the Battalion is at *route step*, the company commander generally falls back to the rear of his company to observe that the men remain in ranks. See Notes "On Route Marches by the Flank," pg. 73.

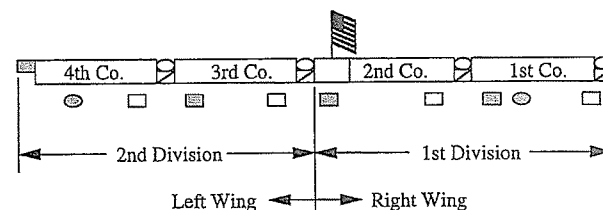


Figure 9: Battalion of four companies in line of battle. The Field and Staff are not shown (see Figure 1).

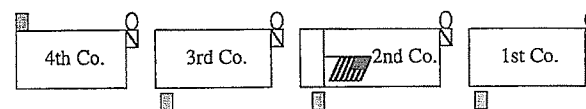


Figure 10: Battalion faced by the right flank (doubled). The leftmost "2nd Sergt." is in the line of company commanders.

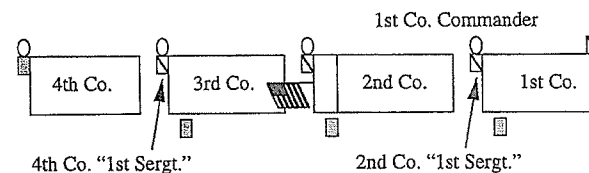


Figure 11: Battalion faced by the left flank (doubled). The commander of each company moves to the right of the "1st Sergt." of the company to the left; the leftmost company commander moves to the right of his own "2nd Sergt."

83. To deploy to the RIGHT, without markers,

1. On the right into line.
2. Battalion, guide right. 3. MARCH.

(Figure 31) At the second command, the guide of the Battalion changes from left to right, and the lead company commander cautions "**Right turn.**" At "**MARCH,**" the lead company *turns* right and will halt where the Commander indicates the new line is to rest. Assuming no markers, the lead company should then post its right and left guides (faced to the right) in front of its outer files to indicate the line for the other companies. The following companies *turn* in succession as each clears the left flank of the preceding company by the commands:

- a. Right turn. b. MARCH. c. Guide right.

The company then moves towards the line.

84. Ideally, however, the Battalion Commander will have the "Lieut. Col." post two markers (one may be a *general guide*, if practicable) off the right flank ahead of the column to indicate where the right file and where one of the three left files of the 1st company are to lie, the markers facing towards the new right flank. The 1st company turns at its commander's order when it comes opposite the first marker, and halts when it comes up to the markers, dressing on them (the Battalion Commander does not order "**3. MARCH**"). As each of the other companies approaches the line, its commander halts it three paces behind the line, its left guide moving onto the line of markers, facing them, in front of where one of his three leftmost files will rest. The commander takes his post (to the left of the leftmost front rank man of the company to the right), and assured of his guide's direction by the "Lieut. Col.," dresses his company onto the line. The company commander orders "**Support Arms**" when the company to the left (the next into line) has dressed. When the Battalion is properly formed, the Commander posts the guides (Para. 81).

85. If deployment to the RIGHT is urgent, the Commander will order:

1. By inversion, right into line, wheel.
2. Battalion, guide right. 3. MARCH.

(Figure 32) At "*guide right*," the left guide of the leading company moves onto the line of "1st Sergts." who are now guiding right. At "**MARCH,**" the "1st Sergts." halt (if

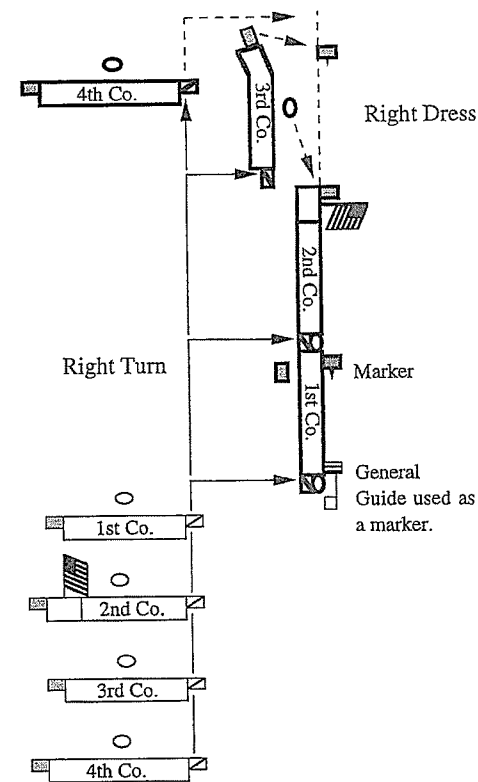


Figure 31: "On the right into line." A column of companies (here at half distance) deploying to the right. The column's guide first shifts to the right. The lead company turns right when it comes opposite the right marker, and its rightmost file guides on the right marker as it enters the line.

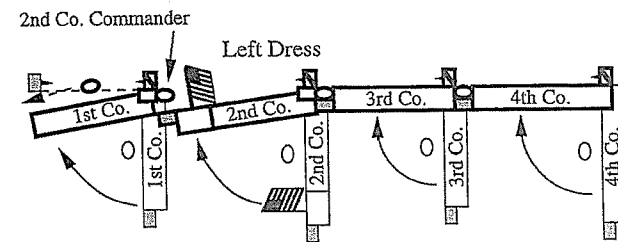


Figure 32: "By inversion, right into line." A column of companies deploying to the right by inversion. The column's guide is shifted right before the companies wheel (on fixed pivots) to the right. The companies dress on line to the left.

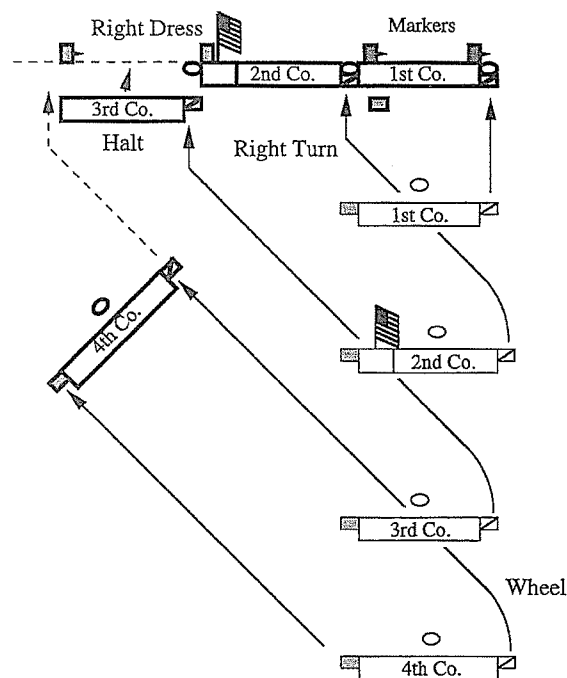


Figure 33: "Forward into line." The lead company advances to the new line, here indicated by markers; this is useful in providing space for the following companies. The other companies wheel to the left (on fixed pivots), and at the Battalion Commander's word, march forward. Each company turns right when it clears the left flank of the company to its right in line. The company halts 3 paces behind the line, its left guide posting on the line of markers, and its commander moving to his post in line; the company is then dressed to the right.

moving), the rightmost front rank man faces right to the left arm of his "1st Sergt.," the companies wheel into line, and then dress to the left, executing the mirror image of **Para. 80**. At "**Guides-POST**," the company commanders return to the right of their companies. The Battalion is now inverted (the 1st company on the left, 4th company on the right). To get out, the companies can wheel left back into a column, *right in front*.

86. If the Commander wishes to deploy the column and immediately move forward in line, he will command, instead:

1. *By inversion, by companies, right wheel.*
2. **MARCH.**

The Battalion will essentially execute the mirror of **Para. 82**. This will be the only section in which *inversions* will be discussed.

87. To deploy **FORWARD** from a halt, the Battalion Commander has the "Lieut. Col." establish markers, if available, faced to the right in front of where the 1st company will lie, and command:

1. *Forward into line.*
2. *By company, left half wheel.*
3. **MARCH.**

(Figure 33) At "**line**," the 1st company commander orders "**Guide right**" and advances (if necessary) his company to the new line indicated by the Commander, dressing up to the right elbows of the markers. At "**MARCH**," quickly repeated by the company commanders, the remaining companies wheel on fixed pivots until ordered by the Battalion Commander:

4. *Forward.*
5. **MARCH.**
6. *Guide right.*

The companies cease to wheel and march forward, *en echelon*. When the right of the 2nd company clears the left flank of the 1st company, its commander orders:

- a. *2nd company.*
- b. *Right turn.*
- c. **MARCH.**

and moves up to the line. The 2nd company is halted three paces behind the line, its left guide moves onto the line of markers facing them, and the company commander moves to his post at the left of the 1st company. The 2nd company, assured of its guide's position by the "Lieut. Col.," then dresses on the 1st company. The other companies move onto line in the same manner. When all the companies are in line and at *Support Arms*, the guides are posted (**Para. 81**).