

TACTICS

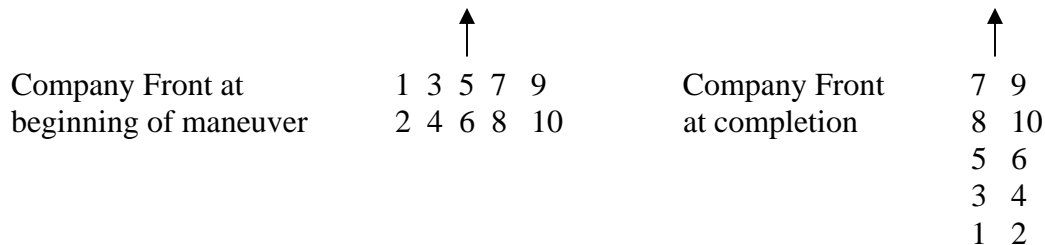
MARCH BY FILES

There are numerous occasions, especially during non-scripted tactical actions, where it becomes necessary to move rapidly from a company front to a narrower front to pass an obstruction on a narrow front. This can be a bridge, fence, causeway or some other limiting terrain. This sometimes must be accomplished under fire. One solution is to disperse the company, instructing them first to fall in again on the other side of the obstacle. This "Abe Lincoln method" usually is not practical and certainly is not very professional. A more serious alternative is to **form a column of twos by marching by files**. The following instructions describe advancing and retreating by files only from the right because it is better to know a few things well than a lot of things poorly and in ninety percent of these situations our unit is small enough to be able to march by the right files without causing problems. We may wish to also practice these maneuvers by the left and can do this by simply substituting "left" for "right" in the following instructions. We should not choose to advance by files from the center. (A unit in two ranks advancing by files from the right forms a column of twos, when advancing by files from the center it forms a column of fours and will only serve to confuse the men.)

COMPANY, QUICK - - - MARCH! -- The company is in two ranks, in company front, marching forward when it approaches a narrow opening, which could be some trees, a bridge, fence or even two other units already in place.

HALT-

COMPANY BY THE RIGHT, ADVANCE BY FILES, MARCH-- When the preparative **BY THE RIGHT, ADVANCE BY FILES** is given, all the men do a right face except the two files on the extreme right of the line This means that the four men on the right are facing to the front and the rest of the company is facing to the right. When this happens (which should be instantaneous), the command of execution, **MARCH**, is given The four men on the right march straight to the front and the rest of the company marches to the right and wheels in behind them The company will now be marching to the front in a Column of twos.

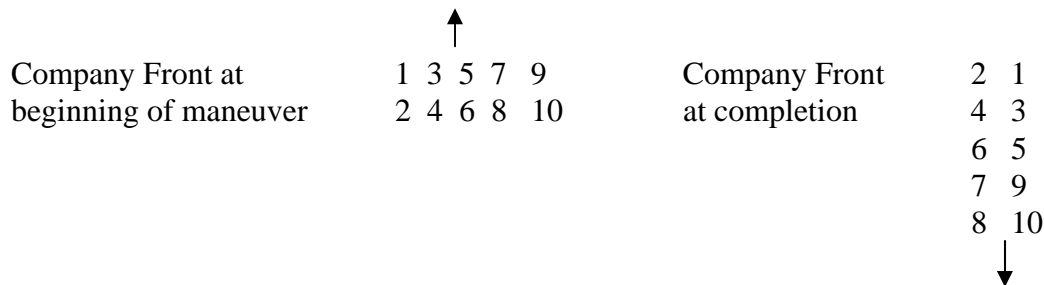


HALT-

FORM THE COMPANY, MARCH-- When the preparative **FORM THE COMPANY** is given, the four leading men stand fast while the rest of the company faces to the left. At the command **MARCH**, those men faced to the left wheel to the right and form the company front.

The above system, described by Steven Eames in his interpretation of the *Manual Exercise of 1764* is the best way to learn advancing by files, however, in the original *Manual* this maneuver is performed as one fluid motion without halting. Experience has shown this is the best practical method of employing this command. When advancing across the field of battle, considerable time is saved by not having to halt to pass through a narrow opening. As the company is marching forward, and the command **COMPANY, BY THE RIGHT (Left), ADVANCE BY FILES, MARCH** is given, the two files on the right (left) continue marching to the front while the rest of the company **turns** to the right and **wheels** in behind the lead files. When the obstruction is passed (or whatever), and the command **FORM THE COMPANY, MARCH** is given, the four lead men halt and the rest of the company turns left and immediately wheels to the right to form the company front, at which time they halt and dress before continuing.

COMPANY, BY THE RIGHT, RETREAT BY FILES, MARCH-- When the preparative **BY THE RIGHT, RETREAT BY FILES** is given, the two right hand files do an about face and the rest of the company faces to the right. When the command **MARCH** is given, the right hand files march to the rear while the rest of the company wheels to the right, in succession, behind them.



HALT-

FORM THE COMPANY, MARCH-- When the preparative is given, the four men in the front stay as they are, the rest of the company faces to the right. On the command **MARCH**, they do a left wheel to form two ranks faced to the rear. **TO THE RIGHT-ABOUT, FACE**-- The company is now faced to its proper front.

Retreating by files can also be accomplished as one fluid motion, but the right hand files will have to turn about on the march, something that is even more complicated than the simple turn. As the circumstances which would cause an advancing company front to suddenly retreat by files is rare, we will halt before retreating by files (in most instances the companies will be at the halt anyway when given the order to retire).

DIVISIONS (or PLATOONS), BY THE RIGHT, ADVANCE BY FILES, MARCH-- If two companies are amalgamated for an event, or a larger one organized in two platoons, they can advance separately by files with this order. In this case the two right hand files of each unit stands fast while everyone else faces to the right. On the command **MARCH**, the company will be advancing in two columns. Obviously, the spacing of these two columns should be maintained when the company is reformed, the right platoon does not wheel into the left platoon. Also, this command can be achieved without halting by using the turning method described earlier.

An alternative, and older, method of advancing and retreating by files was to have all the men face and then wheel by files to the front or rear. This method is contained in the manuals and works of Pickering and Simes, to name a couple. It should be noted that with this method it is always necessary to halt and face (the more fluid turning method does not work), and advancing (or retreating) by files with platoons is awkward because the right file of the left platoon has to wait until the right platoon is out of the way before it wheels. However, this method is authentic and popular among some recreated units and will be encountered in the field.

Some other movements, like forming a hollow square are not documented to have been used by the British Army in America - or were only employed rarely due to the lack of large formations of cavalry on either side. Forming the hollow square is well described in the Brigade of the American Revolution's Soldier's Manual and Vincent J.R.R. Kehoe's Military Guide together with full battalion and brigade reviews. They are only rarely employed and the execution varies due to the size and composition of the troops involved, terrain constraints and experience level of the people in charge. In such a situation, listen to the commands of the officer's/NCOs in charge and perform to the best of your ability.



STREET FIRING

Although it is rare, we are occasionally asked to fight through the streets of towns or in narrow passages. The battalion or company will be in a column formation, by files, platoons or companies. Care must be taken that space is left on each side "*through which those who have fired, may have room to march by files to form in the rear.*" The officer commanding will give the command:

TAKE CARE TO PERFORM THE STREET FIRING, MARCH - The commander of the first company gives the following sequence of commands. This could be a platoon, a company or even a file, depending on the size and composition of the units involved.

HALT, MAKE READY, PRESENT, FIRE -- When they have fired, and should be at the priming position, they are given:

RECOVER ARMS -- The men bring their muskets to the **RECOVER**.

OUTWARD FACE, QUICK MARCH-- With the preparative, **OUTWARD FACE**, the right side of the line faces right and the left side faces left (if there is an uneven number, the middle file should turn right). On the command, **MARCH**, they then march to the outside, wheeling by file to the rear, and march down either side of the column. When they have cleared the column, they halt, face to the inside, wheel around to reform, and face to the front. At this point they reload.

The process then continues with the next unit in the column. This unit can be marched forward to where the first unit was (to maintain position), marched forward even more (to advance), or remain where they are (which will cause a gradual retreat as each unit fires and moves to the rear).

If space is restrictive, or small units with only a single rank are involved, or if a more rapid rate of fire is desired, the firing can be done by rank. The commanding officer of each individual company involved will handle the fire of each of his ranks (this is assuming several amalgamated units are involved), retiring with his last rank to fire. In this case each rank should have experienced NCOs with each rank so the men do not get lost going to the rear. Reforming can also be done differently when a single rank marches to the rear. After the command **OUTWARD FACE, FORWARD MARCH**, the divided rank marches to the rear, the outside files leading, the middle files at the rear. When they reach the rear of the column the first, or outside, file men do a quick **ABOUT TURN** and take their position on the outside, the others follow by passing behind the man to their front and coming into their place on the line.

COMMANDS AND PROCEDURES FOR POSTING SENTINELS

The Officer or NCO takes charge of his section after inspection by the Officer of the Guard, and marches it to the guard camp. The first guard mount is formed in a single rank. If there are more than six men, the guard should form in two ranks.



The Officer or NCO in command orders: **FIX YOUR - BAYONETS !**

The Officer or NCO then marches the guard (with firelocks supported) to the first post (each post should be numbered and the guards posted in their numerical order) and halts. (The Officer or NCO should carry his firelock at the **ADVANCE** .)

The Officer or NCO then commands the first man on the right: **PRIVATE THISTLEWAITE, ADVANCE AND RECEIVE YOUR ORDERS.**

The designated soldier advances one pace and brings his musket to **RECOVER**. (An NCO is given the same courtesy as an Officer when in command of a guard). The Officer or NCO then passes on the instructions concerning that post. He then commands: **SENTRY(s) - POST !** The sentinel(s) **SHOULDERS** his firelock and assumes his post.

The Officer or NCO then proceeds to the next post and so on until all sentries are placed. He then returns to camp.

RELIEVING SENTRIES

The Corporal of the Guard traditionally commands the **Relief** which he forms in camp in the same manner as the original guard. He orders the **Relief** to **FIX YOUR - BAYONETS !** and marches the troops to their respective posts - again, in numerical order. The Corporal should be at the **ADVANCE** and the men, according to Cuthbertson, may be at the **SUPPORT** unless passing an Officer, at which time the Corporal will order the detachment to the **SHOULDER**. Once they have passed the Officer, they may return to the **SUPPORT**.

The **Relief** is marched to within three or four paces of the sentinel(s) and halted. At the approach of the **Relief** the sentinel(s) should halt and come to the **SHOULDER**. They do **NOT** challenge the Relief!

The Corporal of the Guard then orders the first man on the right: **Private Jones, ADVANCE AND RECEIVE YOUR ORDERS !** The designated soldier(s) advance one pace directly in front of the sentinel(s) and both automatically **REST - FIRELOCKS**.

The sentinel on duty passes the instructions concerning that post on to the relieving sentry as well as reporting anything out of the ordinary that has occurred. The Corporal should listen carefully to insure that he gets it right. He may even ask the relieving sentry to repeat the instructions.

The Corporal then commands: **SENTRY(s) - POST !** Both soldiers **SHOULDER THEIR FIRELOCKS** and pass each other by the **RIGHT** side, the new sentinel taking his post, the relieved sentinel marching to the rear of the **Relief**, beginning a new rank in the rear. He should automatically **UNFIX HIS BAYONET** at the same time.

The Corporal then proceeds with the **Relief** to the remaining posts which are relieved in the same manner. When the last post is relieved, the Corporal should command a detachment of troops with bayonets unfixed. He marches them back to camp and dismisses them. (They will remain in camp until their tour of duty is over.)

DUTIES OF SENTRIES AT THEIR POSTS

Sentries are to stand **SHOULDERED** to all officers of any service passing by their posts. To any general and field officers, they are to **REST** their arms. However, when a sentry is posted on a general officer's quarters, he is only to **REST** to him and those of superior rank. To any of equal or inferior rank, he is only to **HANDLE his ARMS** or **stand at the SHOULDER**. Sentries are also to **REST** to the commanding officer - regardless of rank, and to all parties with arms marching by with the beat of drum (or NCO calling cadence). They also **REST** to any party carrying Colours - whether cased or flying. Artillerymen hauling cannons are also entitled to this honour. (Colours, drums and cannon are all considered "trophies of war.") These compliments are to be paid only from the time of reveille-beating in the morning until retreat-beating in the evening; after which sentries are to take no notice whatever of officers.

When an officer addresses himself to a soldier at his sentry post, instead of recovering his firelock, he simply stands shouldered. After posting, the sentry may support his firelock or, if on a long duty, may order it. He must take care on the approach of an officer to shoulder in time to be perfectly steady when the officer comes up to him or passes immediately in front of him.

Once planted, a sentry is to receive no orders from any person except the officer or NCOs of the guard. He may not be relieved by any person but the corporal. Should an officer have a need to give orders to a sentry, he should do so through the corporal of the guard.



THE METHOD OF GIVING AND RECEIVING ROUNDS

(Ed. Note: This is a method of Making and Receiving Rounds as written by General, the Lord Percey and issued as a **General Order** during the Occupation of Boston. These are taken directly from the **General Orders**. Spelling and punctuation are as in the original.)

Head Quarters at Boston 12th July 1774

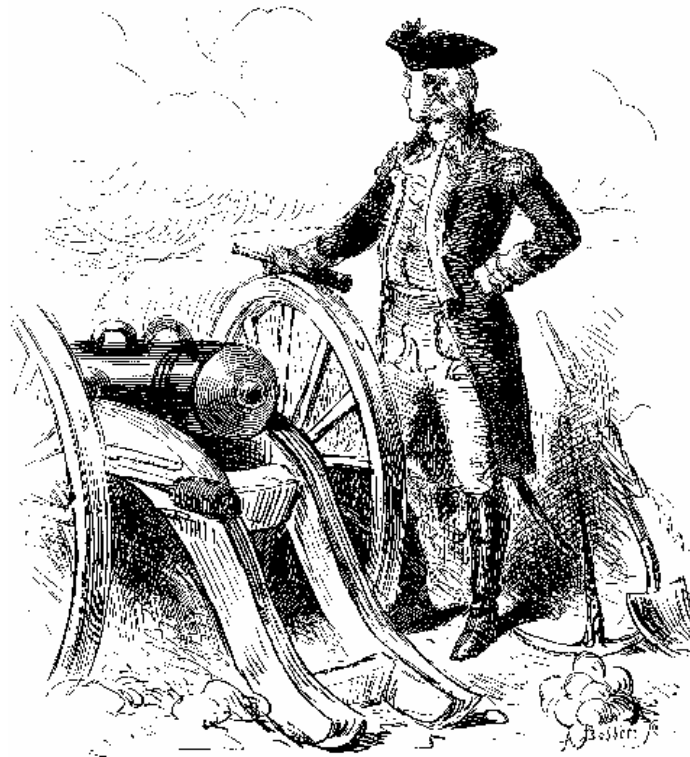
A Guard consisting of 1 Subaltern, 1 Serjeant, 2 Corporals, 1 Drummer and 20 privates, to be mounted to morrow in the rear of the encampment, as near as possible to the Center. This Guard will post Centinels [sic] in such manner, as with the Centinels [sic] of the present Camp Guards, shall form a chain round the whole encampment.

The Field Officer of the Picquet will see Centeniels [sic] properly posted for the purpose, and so as to prevent people coming into the Camp who have no business there; and prevent boats landing in the rear at nights.

As the Regiments in Camp differ in the manner of going their rounds, and receiving them [and] giving out the Countersign etc., in order they may be uniform in these respects, they will pursue the following directions 1st The Centinels to have the Countersign given them after Picquet mounting, and to demand it from all rounds, and other parties with arms. They are to challenge distinctly, and with spirit, but not too loud, and being answered what the party is, they will call out "**Stand, Grand or visiting Rounds, or Patroles** [sic] *(as the Party shall happen to be)* **advance Serjeant with the Countersign;**" on the Serjeant's advancing within six yards of them, the Centinels [sic] will charge their bayonets till the Countersign is given, and then call out, "**Pass Grand, or visiting Rounds, or Patroles**" [sic] at the same time resting his arms as the party passes his post. 2nd The Centinels [sic] posted at the several Guards, are only to order the Rounds to stand, and then call out to the guard to turn out. 3rd The Field officer of the Picquet will go The Grand Rounds through the whole Camp: the Captains and Subalterns will go the visiting Rounds, through their respective Regiments; but the Captains only; (and not the Subalterns) are to visit their Quarter Guards. The field [sic] Officer will settle the hours that he would have the Captains and Subalterns go the visiting Rounds, and go the Grand rounds at the hour he thinks best; but fix so, that the rounds may not go at the hours of relief; he will take his party from what Picquet he chuses [sic]; the Captains and Subalterns from their own Picquets. 4th upon the approach of the Grand rounds the Centinel [sic] at the Quarter Guard challenges, "**who comes there ?**" The Serjeant of the rounds answers, "**Grand rounds,**" the Sentry replies, "**Stand Grand rounds, Serjeant turn out the Guard**" which being done, the Officer of the Guard detaches his Serjeant and four men, who again challenges, "**who comes there ?**," the rounds answer him, "**Grand rounds,**" the Serjeant then replies "**Stand Grand rounds, advance Serjeant with the Countersign:**" upon which the Serjeant of the rounds, with the right hand file of the Escort advances and gives the word to the other, who returns with it to the officer (leaving his four men behind Him) and giving him the countersign, immediately returns to his 4 men, orders them to open outwards to the right and left; on which the Officer of the Guard calls "**Advance Grand rounds,**" and orders his men to rest their firelocks; passing thro the Serjeants Escort which likewise rest to

them as they pass the officer of the Grand rounds, receives the Parole from the Officer of the Guard, and asks him such other questions as he thinks proper. The same rules (are) to be observed by the Serjeants Guards, with the difference, that the Corporal is detached with two men to receive the Countersign, and that the officer of the rounds receives the Countersign from the Serjeant instead of the Parole. 5th: The Corporals on Guard are carefully to explain all orders to the sentries when they post them, particularly to young Soldiers. 6th: Sentries are on no account to enter into conversation with the inhabitants that come near their posts: such only in the night, the challenge and on being answered order them to pass. 7th: Officers Commanding companies, will see that their men be properly instructed in the above duties.

(Ed. Note: If the Grand Rounds detachment is too small to allow a full compliment, the Officer may perform the Serjeant's role.)



SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES ON FORMATIONS

BATTALION FORMATIONS:

All battalion formations will be done at the place where the drum signals are being beat. In the absence of musick, the troops will form where the officer or non-commissioned officer calling for the formation is standing. There will be no forming as separate companies and marching to the battalion formation. This generally wastes time.

FORMATION DISMISSAL:

Upon being dismissed from formation, one corporal is to be posted to each camp area to insure that all troops clean and properly maintain their firelocks. This does not mean a thorough, detailed cleaning, but a good swabbing of the bore, wiping down of the barrel and lock, lubrication of all metal parts and repair of any deficiency noted during the day's activities. Particular care is to be taken to check the condition of flints. The corporal will then post at the bell of arms to insure that the arms are placed in it properly. This will prevent any damage to the tent and will make removal of the arms much easier. The corporal should also ensure that the locks have been lowered from half-cock to relieve pressure on the main-spring. Those corporals are to be chosen by the company serjeants. Experienced privates may be designated in the absence of corporals or serjeants.

There are many other evolutions and maneuvers with which the officers and NCOs must become familiar.



SOUNDS of the DRUM

It is necessary that all troops know the sounds and beating of the drum since that instrument regulates a soldier's day. Some of the beats and their meanings are:

The General: All troops make ready to march. Strike and pack tents.

The Assemble: Fall in at the colours or other designated formation site.

The March: Commands them to move.

The Reveille: Warns the soldiers to rise; the sentries may cease challenging

The Troop: Assembles the men together. (This one is to assemble wherever the musick is located, usually at the end of the company street. This call is used for "routine" assembly for such things as roll call and inspection. That is the difference from the Assemble, which is usually meant to be under arms.)

The Retreat: Beat at sunset, this call also used for roll call as well as reading of orders of the day and to warn the men for duty.

The Taptoo: Literally, it was a signal for tavern owners and sutlers to turn the "taps too" or shut of the sale of alcoholic beverages to the troops. It was normally beat at nine o'clock pm in the winter and ten pm in the summer as a signal for the soldiers to repair to their quarters. Non-commissioned officers were to call the rolls of their sub-divisions and every man was to remain in quarters until Reveille.

To Arms!: Also referred to as "the long roll" was beat to alarm the camp. At its sound, all soldiers were to "stand to" their arms or to repair to their alarm posts.

The Parley: Also referred to as the "Chamade" was the beating of Church Call during an action to signal the enemy that a conference was desired.

SOME SPECIFIC DRUM SIGNALS

Turn or face to the RIGHT	1 single stroke and a flam
Turn of face to the LEFT	2 single strokes and a flam
To the RIGHT About	3 single strokes and a flam
To the LEFT About	4 single strokes and a flam
WHEEL to the RIGHT	Roll, 1 single stroke and a flam
WHEEL to the LEFT	Roll, 2 single strokes and a flam
WHEEL to the RIGHT About	Roll, 3 single strokes and a flam
WHEEL to the LEFT About	Roll, 4 single strokes and a flam
To FRONT	Strong double flam
Make READY	Preparative
Cease FIRING	General
MARCH	March
Quick Pace	Quick March
Charge BAYONETS	Point of War
Form Battalion	To Arms
Ease your ARMS	Tow row-dow
Secure your ARMS	First part of Tap-too
Shoulder your ARMS	Last part of the Tap-too
To call the Adjutant	First part of the Troop
To call a serjeant or corporal of each company	3 rolls, 6 flams
To call ALL serjeants and corporals	3 rolls, 9 flams
To assemble the pioneers	Pioneer's March
To assemble drummers and fifers	Drummer's Call



*Drummer of the 3d (Scots) Foot
Guards. Drawing by Eric Schnitzer.*