

Combined Units - SAR Color Guard Inspection

As with Valley Forge, 1777-1778, von Steuben was given the task of standardizing the army and making one efficient combined force by streamlining all drill manuals into one. The concept of an "inspection arms" is more than a formal presentation but it's also providing a higher possibility of each musket fires in every musket salute.

During such inspections, more than an overall visual inspection of each weapon will be made. Questions may asked about each muskets performance and possible solutions given to habitual misfiring issues. Inspections will note the condition of the hammer (frizzen) and its pattern of wear, also checking the weapon and its ability to hold a half cock. The flint edge also would be noted besides the overall cleanliness of each piece together with its bayonet (when applicable). This inspection would occur for each firing line before any musket salute and recommendations could be made to solve problems. Special note: Black powder is a class A explosive and its use in firing salutes should be under continued inspection. It's not enough each individual musket user is safe in a firing line, each salute member on either side should be safe as well.

Therefore: as with the von Steuben blue book standardization, all SAR color guard units coming together to participate in larger presentations will use a standard inspection arms drill for:

1. Safety
2. Efficiency of performance. This inspection would help insure each musket salute would be a more respectful presentation and maintain safety within established guidelines. It would be highly recommended all SAR units use this inspection drill in their own individual color guard events to insure standardization and cohesion of effort and to eliminate frustration in combined unit presentations.

Although I've heard that *Search Arms!* was a modern command, there is a reference for this command in A Revolutionary People at War by Charles Royster on page 239. The following is written by an officer with the light-infantry company of the Eighth Massachusetts Regt:

*"The general inspector, Baron Steuben, came on upon the right and as I was paying him the salute, remarks 'Captain, I am glad to see you at the head of so fine a company.' He passed in front of the officers and received their salutes, then marched back in rear of the regiment to the right. **Tells me to order my company to search arms.** At the word, the soldiers open pans and draw ramrods, let them down the barrels with a little force; they rebound pretty well. The baron lifts up both hands and exclaims, 'My God! Is it all silver?' He then looks round to the officers, who were standing about, and says, 'Come here, officers; all you officers come here and help me to admire this company.' The officers drew near. He made some handsome remarks in favor of the company. He then turns to me and says, 'You need not take off your packs, you need not show me your book, I will not inspect your company, I will admire it.'"*

Shoulder, Firelock! 2 motions.

- 1st. Bring the firelock to the left shoulder, throwing it up a little, and catching it below the tail-pipe, and instantly seize it with the left hand at the butt.
- 2d. With a quick motion bring the right hand down by your side.

Secure, Firelock! 3 motions.

1st. Bring up the right hand briskly, and place it under the cock.

2d. Quit the butt with the left hand, and seize the firelock at the swell, bringing the arm close down upon the lock, the right hand being kept fast in this motion, and the piece upright.

3d. Quitting the piece with your right hand, bring it down by your side, at the same time with your left hand throw the muzzle directly forward, bringing it within about one foot of the ground, and the butt close up behind the left shoulder, holding the left hand in a line with the waist belt, and with that arm covering the lock.

Search, Firelock! Three motions

1st. Bring up the right hand briskly, and place it under the cock.

2d. Quit the butt with the left hand, and seize the firelock at the swell, bringing the arm close down upon the lock, the right hand being kept fast in this motion, and the piece upright.

3rd. Quitting the piece with your right hand, sink it with your left down the left side, as far as may be without constraint, at the same time with your right hand drawing the rammer, turning it, and entering it into the muzzle.

As the inspecting officer passes in front of you, release the rammer with a slight downward thrust so that the rammer falls to the breech of the barrel, showing whether or not the barrel is clear.

After the inspecting officer has passed, seize the rammer back-handed by the middle, draw it quite out, turn it, and enter it as far as the lower pipe, placing at the same time the edge of the hand on the butt-end of the rammer, with the fingers extended.

Return, Rammer ! One motion.

Thrust the rammer home, and instantly bring up the piece with the left hand to the shoulder, seizing it at the same time with the right hand under the cock, keeping the left hand at the swell, and turning the body square to the front.