

TAC NEWS

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KIT BASHIN': YANKEES INTO REBELS!

Converting Micro Force 10mm® American Civil War Figures

Over the last year, GHQ has added a great number of new figures to their line. Amongst the most useful are the Infantry Advancing in Frock Coats and Forage Caps (ACW64) released in April of 2010. They look excellent in the role of early war US Regulars such as Syke's Brigade at Manassas. They will also serve well as late war heavy artillery crew such as the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, which served at Cold Harbor during Grant's 1864 overland campaign. (This can be achieved by adding red trim to their coats and trousers.)

However, this article is about converting these troops to serve on the other side of the conflict. With a very simple conversion, these small fellows can be recruited to serve the Confederate cause. With some simple filing and slight modification, they will easily serve as Confederate Infantry Advancing in Frock Coats and Kepis. This uniform was quite common in the early war battles such as Manassas and Shiloh and even Wilson's Creek. In fact, the frock coat saw continuous service in the Confederate Army throughout the conflict and was far more common than one would initially suspect.

An excellent example of this may be found in the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment, Company F at Manassas. The painting "Up Alabamians" by the famed Don Troiani depicts the moment that this famous regiment rose to move forward on Matthew's Hill at a critical juncture in the battle. They moved forward to support Thomas J. Jackson's Virginia men in an effort to quell the growing Federal advance. In the painting, Company F

(known as the Huntsville Guards, as they were recruited from the Huntsville, Alabama area), are depicted wearing their pre-war militia uniforms. These were simple medium-gray wool frock coats with black trim on the sleeves, pants, and kepis. A few of these men are shown wearing havelocks and militia hard packs with the letters "HG" on the back for "Huntsville Guards". This unit was chosen for this project, as they are typical of any early war Confederate units wearing a pre-war militia uniform. Another factor was that they simply looked sharp in this uniform!

MAKING KEPIS FROM FORAGE CAPS



The first thing to do with any figures is to remove any flash. Fortunately for those buying GHQ figures, there is usually only a bit on the tip of the bayonet on a few figures and a tiny raised area on the bottom of the base of the figure. Once these are cleaned, one may begin the modification process. Using a flat edged micro file, hold each figure on a flat surface. Hold on to the figure by the base. Run the metal file in a quick motion over the forage cap in order to lower the profile of the hat.

The Confederate style kepi is lower in profile than a Federal forage cap, or "bummer", as it was affectionately known.

Use only about three quick strokes using a very small amount of pressure. Turn the figure 180 degrees and give another quick two stroke motion from the back of the hat. Voila, you now have a Confederate soldier in a frock coat and kepi. Although the crown of the hat is actually concave on a kepi, it will not be noticeable at this scale once it is primed and painted. Simply by adding a small highlight we can give this appearance later. This one modification is the easiest and quickest of those contained in this article.

WHAT IS A HAVELOCK?

In order to get the full effect of early war Confederate troops some should be wearing a havelock. These were in prominent use during the early stages of the war. The havelock is a simple cloth device that fits over top of the kepi and hangs over the neck and shoulders. Most Confederate havelocks were of white canvas or cotton material. These were designed to prevent the sun shining on the neck and to lower the effects of the heat. The actual effect is quite the opposite and actually raises body temperature by trapping heat and moisture. However, they hadn't yet figured that out in July of 1861.



Detail from painting by Don Troiani

Two materials may be used to a tiny 10mm scale havelock. Although aluminum tape may be used, I have found that it does not adhere well to the figures. I recommend using simple masking tape. Use a thin strip of masking tape about 1/8th of an inch wide and about 10 inches long. Exact measurements are not needed, as this is hardly an exact science.

Lightly affix the tape to a rigid cutting surface (the back of a clip board works well). Use a hobby knife to slice the tape into strips a little over 1/16th of an inch long. On about a third of the figures, simply place a strip of tape on the back of the hat and over

the upper shoulders of the figures. You should also cover the hats of a couple of the officer figures as they also wore the havelock at this point in the war.



Pour about a thimble full of yellow carpenter's glue into a beer bottle cap. If you're like most gamers, you should have hundreds of these bottle caps lying around, especially after a game. Using the head of a pin, touch the glue to the area where the tape meets the back of your recently created kepi. This is the end of this simple conversion. A few more of your troops may now receive a more thorough conversion.

MAKING MILITIA HARD PACKS AND BLANKET ROLLS

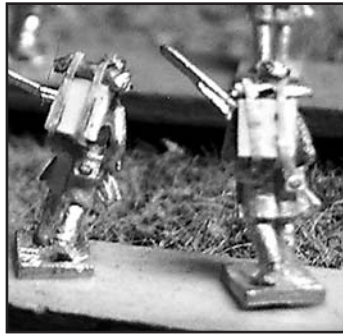
About ten of the infantry figures you're using in this project will acquire a militia hard pack with a blanket roll affixed to the top. Take a strip of simple plastic card and slice off ten pieces about the length of the distance between from the neck to just above the waist line of the figure. These should be glued to the backs of the figures.



Cut a length of masking tape about six inches long. The width must be extremely small to represent the leather strapping which holds the hard packs in place. After cutting the tape to a length just wide enough to cover the front of a 10mm figure from shoulder to shoulder, affix one strip to across the chest of each of the figures. You should also save a small portion of this tape for a later step.

Cut a strip of aluminum tape about as wide as the top of the hard pack. Simply roll tape up until it looks the right thickness to represent a blanket roll.

Be sure to leave the tacky side of the tape facing outward to aide in holding paint and to keep the blanket roll in place. Glue these rolls to the top of the hard packs with super glue. Once primed, they will stay in place very well.



Finally, using the masking tape you saved from the earlier step, place two strips over the blanket roll and hard pack to represent leather strapping. With your hobby knife, press the tape inward where the blankets meet the top of the packs. This detail makes the blanket and pack look as if each is held by a separate set of straps.

OFFICER TYPES

You may use the standard infantry officers from the pack. However, on about half of them, file off the shoulder bars. Most officers in the Confederate Army at Manassas wore their pre-war uniforms. Bee, Bartow, Jackson and Stuart all had these blue coats at Manassas, as well as many of the field grade and line officers. You can also put havelocks on about half of the officers using the same method as above. The officers included in these packs are already in kepis, so no conversion is necessary.

PREPARING TO PAINT

Using white school glue, mount all your infantry figures on tongue depressors. Take care to mount all your officers on a separate stick, as they will be primed differently. Once the glue dries, prime your line infantry figures in Army Painter Uniform Gray

Spray Primer or something similar. Use flat black primer on the officers, as they will be wearing blue coats. If you choose to paint some of them in gray as well, this will give the desirable look of inconsistency which so typifies the Confederate Armies throughout the war. Once the primer dries you can paint as follows.

PAINTING THE 4TH ALABAMA OR ANY PRE-WAR CONFEDERATE MILITIA

The uniform gray primer will act as your base-coat for the line infantry figures. Simply paint the leather gear and brogans flat black. The blanket rolls can be a mix of home-spun and gray wool items. The trousers should be given a black stripe. There should be a black band on the base of each kepi. Paint a black trim on the collar if you are so inclined. If not, a later blackwash will give the same look. A black triangle should be painted on each cuff with the point of the triangle facing up.

The base line of the triangle should be followed around the sleeve but this will not be necessary except on the figures with their whole sleeves showing. Most are holding their weapons at port arms so the back of the sleeve cannot be seen. Be sure to put sergeant's and corporal's chevrons on a few of the men. These should be in black with the point of the chevron facing down.



Detail from painting by Don Troiani

On those figures with a havelock, paint this off white to include the top of the kepi itself. The havelock covered the entire hat save for the leather peak, which is black. Officers should be painted in the dark blue identical to the standard US regulations. Many officers continued to wear pre-war US regulation rank insignia well into the early-war period.

Blanket rolls, which are depicted as home-spun will require a little more work. Paint them a base of off-white or egg shell. Give them either a patchwork quilt look or a striped ticking finish as desired.

The remaining little detail that will make these look as if they are early war Confederates are the

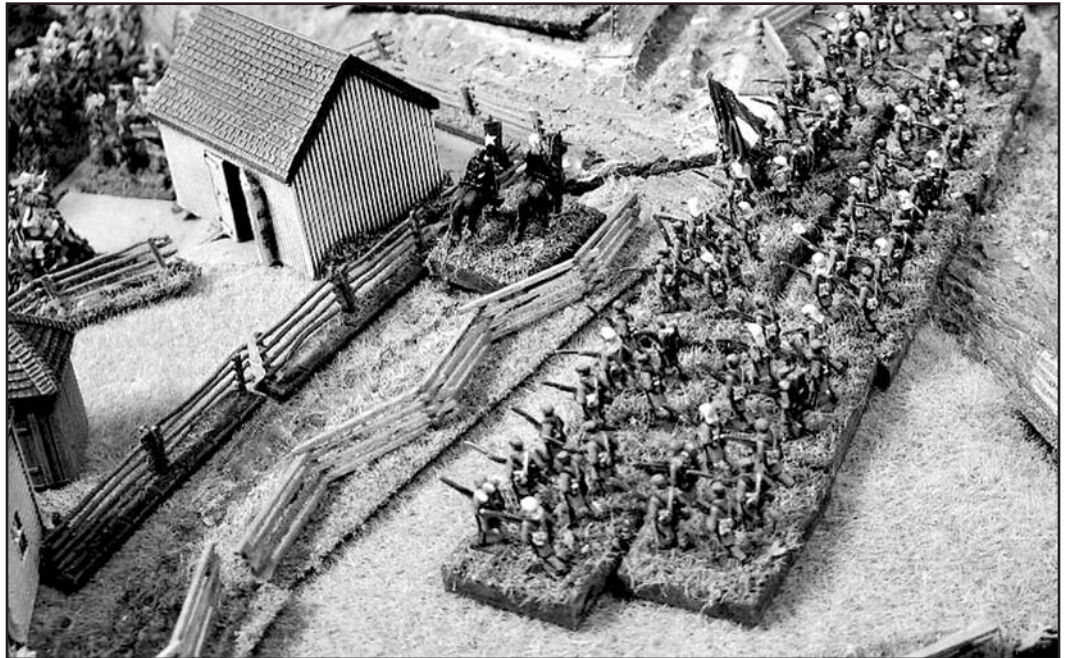


muskets they carried. The 4th Alabama, as well as many of the other Confederate units at Manassas and Shiloh, carried Model 1842 US Springfield Smoothbore .69 caliber muskets. These muskets can be identified by an enlarged white metal muzzle band. Touch the end of each musket with the steel color used on the musket itself.

BRIGADIER GENERAL BARNARD BEE



Paint some of your mounted officers in their pre-war US Army Regulation Coats. In the painting by Don Troiani, General Barnard Bee is riding conspicuously in front of the 4th Alabama on his dark brown horse. He may be used as a model for the appearance of many Confederate General Officers during this period. Use a Federal Mounted officer in double-breasted coat to make this conversion. One of the best figures for this conversion is that of Irvin McDowell. He is contained in one of GHQ's US High Command packs. Simply add a havelock to the figure.



Paint General Bee in pre-War U.S. regulation officer's uniform to give the appropriate look and feel to your new early-war regiment.

UP ALABAMIANS!

With the addition of a 13-star first national flag, your early war Confederate Regiment is now ready for combat. Look closely at the Troiani painting and you will see the color-sergeant's chevrons as he proudly raises the First National Confederate Flags to inspire the men to rise and fight again. Hopefully this article will similarly inspire you to experiment with all the new GHQ figures in frock coats. They are highly adaptable to the various periods of this sprawling conflict. These converted little soldiers will give your 10mm Army a unique appearance to which few others can claim to match.

- Article and photos by Bill Moreno

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