

## Construction of Cartridge Packages

Federal arsenals prepared ammunition in self-contained, paper-wrapped packages, which made for ease of storage and transportation as well as convenience for the soldier in the field. The packages contained ten rounds of cartridges and twelve percussion caps enclosed in a separate tube of cartridge paper. The package sheets were about 6" to 7" wide and about 7" to 8" long. Most paper was sized (water-proofed) before being cut into sheets.

From 1856 to early 1861, ammunition was wrapped in whitish-brown paper with a label that was either printed on the sheet itself, or on a separate sheet and then glued over the package string. (Parcel post mailing paper works very well for the package paper.) Evidence exists that only the arsenal at St. Louis continued marking individual bundles throughout the war. The package was tied with 0.03" thick twine. (Don't use kite string or glue.)

The most important tool when making cartridge packages is the bundling or folding box. Three pieces of 1" x 4" pine may be screwed together to form a folding box.

When packaging cartridges, place a piece of twine across the folding box. Next, center the wrapping paper in the box over the twine. Place five cartridges on top of the wrapper and push these down into the bottom of the box. These should all be "pointing" in the same direction. Place five more cartridges in the box on top of the first five, pointing in the opposite direction for better balance. (The manuals say "the balls alternating" and originals show this to be the method used.) Take the two ends and fold over. Pull these two sides as tight as possible over each other and fold them as crisply as possible. The remainder of the wrapping is almost identical to wrapping a box for a present. First fold one side over (and in) the excess with folds as wide as the bundle is thick. Crease all folds tightly. Finally, before folding the last opening, place the cap tube perpendicular to the cartridges. Then fold this remaining side in the same fashion as the other, making sure the resulting paper "box" is square and tight, and that all the creases are as close to right angles as possible. The pack is now ready for tying.

Cross the twine over the top of the pack to the opposite sides and give a half-twist of 90 degrees up and down. Pull the twine as tightly as possible without making a deep crease. Tie the twine in a square knot on the other side and the cartridge package is finished. The knot should be at or near the left corner if the pack is bow side up and the percussion caps toward you.

Sources:

1840 Ordinance Manual

1861 Ordinance Manual

Edwards, William B. Civil War Guns. The Stackpole Co., 1962.

Lewis, Col. Berkeley. Small Arms and Ammunition in the United States Service, the Smithsonian Institution, 1956.

U.S. Ordnance Department. The Ordnance Manual for the Use of Officers of the United States Army. Philadelphia: Lippincott and Co., 1861.

