

Civil War Glossary

- Aide de Camp:** a military assistant.
- Ambulance:** a wagon used to transport wounded or sick soldiers.
- Battalion:** several companies, four to eight, led by a major or lieutenant colonel.
- Carbine:** a breach-loading rifle used by cavalry – shorter than a rifled musket.
- Company:** 50-100 men led by a captain.
- Brevet:** a nominal rank given for merit or gallantry, which has not been confirmed, and for which the officer is not paid.
- Brigade:** circa 4,000 soldiers, organized in three to six regiments led by a brigadier general.
- Greenbacks:** name for US currency in the North after 1862 – green in color.
- No quarter:** showing no mercy or allowing persons to surrender.
- Parole:** both union and Confederate Armies at the start of the war lacked the means to guard, feed, and house large numbers of captured prisoners. Parolees were supposed to give their word that they would not take up arms again though this does not seem to have been adhered to. Some Rangers were captured and paroled several times.
- Picket:** an advance outpost or guard normally commanded by a lieutenant with up to 40 men.
- Prisoner exchange:** separate from paroles there were prisoner exchanges on both sides again because they lacked the means to guard, house, and feed the large numbers of prisoners.
- Provost Marshal:** an officer with a military police function.
- Quartermaster:** a military officer responsible for providing food and supplies.
- Rebel Yell:** a high-pitched yell. For a recording of surviving Southern soldiers giving the yell at a gathering in the 1930's see: www.smithsonianmag.com/videos
- Regiment:** approximately 1,000 to 1,500 soldiers led by a colonel.
- Sutler:** someone who sells provisions to the Army and soldiers, such as food, tobacco, newspapers, spare clothing, cutlery, coffee, etc. Sutlers followed or accompanied the Army on campaign in wagons.
- Torpedo:** Civil war term for a mine.
- Vedette:** a mounted sentry who patrols forward of an outpost or picket.