

August 22, 2007

Hart's Engineers Artificer Program

By definition an Artificer is, "a skilled worker."¹ During the American Civil War, Privates of the First Class, also known as Artificers, were among the ranks of engineer and ordinance soldiers. Artificers were paid \$18 per month, the same as an infantry, artillery and cavalry Corporal.²

At the 20th century inception of the Hart's Engineers unit of Civil War reenactors, the Artificer program was included among the ranks for members for historical accuracy. Prior to being promoted beyond Private (of the second class), a member had certain requirements to fulfill to be promoted to Artificer. The potential Artificer selected an engineer specialty to further research and master. Topics included field fortifications, reconnaissance, bridge building, wheelwright, woodwright, blacksmith, gunsmith, surveying, and signal corps. At the conclusion of the research, the member submitted a thorough written report to the company commander for consideration. Upon receiving feedback from the commander, and conducting further research if necessary, the member provided a lecture to either the unit or to the public on his engineer specialty. If the member successfully completed the presentation in written and lecture format, was a full member in good standing, current in dues, and approved by the company commander; he was promoted to the rank of Artificer, or Private (of the first class).

During the summer of 2006, the officers and NCOs of Hart's Engineers restructured the Artificer program in an effort to facilitate the broadening of knowledge for each unit member. The research paper and lecture was replaced by an engineer certification program. The staff devised a list of four critical skills that are important for the 21st century engineer reenactor. The list includes, map making/reconnaissance, field fortifications, signal corps, and infantry drill. Each critical skill has certain criteria for members to demonstrate a basic understanding for certification, versus requiring a prospective Artificer to become a master of just one area. For instance, to become certified in infantry drill, the member is asked several basic questions and is required to demonstrate basic proficiency of school of the soldier, manual of arms, and aspects of safety. The same is true for field fortifications, signal corps, and map making.

This new certification program was kicked off at Fort Tejon in August, 2006. I provided a lecture on the requirements for the drill certification, demonstrated each aspect of the practical application portion, then exercised the unit in each maneuver. In November, 2006 at Moorpark, I led the staff in certifying the first group of 14 members under the new certification program. In February, 2007, Lt French provided a lecture and practical demonstration on signal corps at the annual Engineer Camp of Instruction. Signal corps certifications were led by Lt French at the July, 2007, Vista event where six individuals received their certification. At Fort Tejon in August, 2007, Capt Settle provided the lecture on map making/reconnaissance to the unit. The certification process will take place at one of the upcoming events, as will the lecture on field fortifications. Also at Fort Tejon in August, 2007, First Sergeant Blackson and I conducted drill certifications where 9 additional members received their drill certification.

Once each of the four critical skills are presented to the unit, those wishing to be certified who may not have been through the particular lecture may request a lecture be conducted for that skill. The particular officer or NCO may present the material on an individual basis, or may wait for additional members who express a desire for the lecture/certification before proceeding.

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Springfield, MA, 1997

² Kautz, A. Customs of Service for Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers, 1865. Stackpole Books, 2001.

When a Private (of the Second Class) has been certified in each of the four critical skills, has been voted in as a full member, is current in dues and is in good standing, and has been approved by the company commander; he will be promoted to Artificer and be entitled to the privileges of that rank. In Hart's Engineers, Artificers are entitled to wear the German script "E" buttons designating them as an Engineer. Artificers are the backbone of the unit in terms of basic Engineering knowledge within the rank and file. Artificers may be placed in charge of an engineering function such as a signal corps party chief, construction detail leader, reconnaissance party chief, or other duties commensurate with their rank and experience. At times, an Artificer may be appointed to fill in for an NCO in their absence. While they are not NCOs, they have seniority over Privates when it comes to guard or other camp details.

It is the hope of the unit leadership that the restructuring of our Artificer program will enable each unit member to become more versatile in their engineering impression. By learning these four critical skills, members will become "skilled workers" in their impression which is historically accurate to the engineer soldiers of the Civil War. This leaves mastery of a particular engineering skill to a Sergeant, also known as a Master Workman.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lt Ryan Settle
Co E, 3rd Regiment, Engineers
CSAEB