

U.S. Army Correspondence Book-Keeping in the 1860s

Source:

Col. Henry Lee Scott (Inspector-General, U.S.A.), *Military Dictionary: Comprising Technical definitions; Information on Raising and Keeping Troops; Actual Service, Makeshifts and Improved Materiel; Law, Government, Regulation, and Administration Relating to Land Forces* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1861), pages 90-96.

Images of this book's pages can be seen at Google Books website:

http://books.google.com/books?id=Q_rMEANrIa4C&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_summary_r&cad=0

[Text from pages 90 through 96]

BOOKS. *Regimental* books to be kept, are: 1. General order book; 2. Regimental order book; 3. Letter book; 4. Index of Letters; 5. Size or descriptive book; 6. Monthly returns. *Company* books required are: 1. Descriptive book; 2. Clothing book; and 3. Order book.

The following rules for keeping books at the head-quarters of the army and in the adjutant-general's office may, with modifications that will readily occur, be used with armies in the field, at the head-quarters of divisions, departments, regiments, &c.:

I. LETTERS RECEIVED.—(7 quires, demy-Russia, with spring back.) 1. All official communications received will be entered in this book, excepting only such letters of mere transmittal of orders, returns, certificates of disability, requisitions, &c., as need not be preserved. The orders, returns, certificates, requisitions, &c., themselves, will be appropriately entered in other books specially provided for the purpose.

2. Preliminary to being entered every letter will be folded and endorsed. Letter paper will be folded in three equal folds—*Cap* paper in four. The endorsement will give the place and date of letter, name, and rank of writer, and a summary of its contents, and if other papers accompany the letter, the number transmitted will also be noted on the back, in red ink. Each enclosure will be numbered and bear the same *office marks* as the letter transmitting it. Figures A, b, c, exemplify the manner of endorsing.

3. Every letter required to be preserved will be entered *alphabetically* and numbered—the series of numbers beginning and terminating with the year, and including all letters *dated* (whether received or not) within the year. Only one number will be given to each letter received with its enclosures, so that the sum of the numbers under each alphabetical entry in the book of “Letters Received,” during any year, will show the number of letters received in that year.

4. As a general rule, every letter will be entered in the name of its writer; but there are cases where it is preferable, for convenience of reference, to enter it in the name of the person who forms the subject of the letter and not in that of the writer. Applications from citizens for the discharge of soldiers, &c., are of this nature. Usually, a single entry of each letter and its enclosures will suffice, but it may sometimes be necessary, in addition, to make entries in the names of one or more of the individuals to whom it relates. Such entries, however, will not be *numbered*, but merely contain the date of receipt, name of individual, place and date of the letter concerning him, with a reference, in red ink, to the number of that letter. Fig. E is an illustration of an entry of this kind.

S.

1849.

Fig. E.
LETTERS RECEIVED.

When received.	Name.	Date and purport of letter.
May 11th.	[Surgeon ——.]	Fort Adams, R. I., May 8, 1849. See No. 1, Letter <i>G</i> .

Fig. D.

LETTERS RECEIVED.

G.

1849.

When received.	Name.	Date and purport of letter.
May 11th. 1	Col. ——, 3d Artillery, command'g.	FORT ADAMS, R. I., <i>May 8, 1849.</i> Relative to unhealthiness of quarters at the Post, and enclosing Surgeon ——'s report on the subject, dated April 30, 1849; forwards also copy of a report, dated Aug. 16, 1840, of a Board of Officers assembled to examine into the condition of the quarters.

6. Each entry will be separated from the one preceding it by a red ink line ; and where two or more letters relate to the same subject they will be either filed together, or made to refer to each other by their *numbers*, and the filing or reference be noted in the book as well as on the letters themselves.

7. Letters from the Executive and Staff Departments and other public offices in Washington, will be entered alphabetically in the names of the *departments* or *offices* themselves, but the entry will always exhibit the writers' names likewise;—thus, communications from the War Department would be entered in the letter *W*, as follows : “*War*, Secretary of, (Hon. ———,) &c.”

8. Communications from the President will be entered in the letter *P*—from State Department, in *S*—Treasury, *T*—War, *W*—Navy, and its bureaux, *N*—Post Office and its bureaux, *P*—Interior, *I*—Attorney-general, *A*—Adjutant-general's office, *A*—Quartermaster-general, *Q*—Subsistence, *S*—Surgeon-general, *S*—Paymaster-general, *P*—Engineer Department, *E*—Topographical Engineers, *E*—Ordnance, *O*—Recruiting service, Superintendent of, *R*—Pension Office, *P*—Comptrollers, (1st and 2d,) *C*—The several Auditors, *A*—Treasurer U. S., *T*—Commissioner Indian Affairs, *I*—General Land Office, *L*—Solicitor's Office, *S*—and Patent Office, *P*.

9. Communications from Governors of States will be entered in the names of the States, the entry showing likewise the Governors' names; —thus a letter from the Governor of New York would be entered in the letter *N*, as follows : “New York, Governor of, (His Excellency ———,)” &c.

10. Letters from *Staff Officers*, written by direction of their generals, will be entered in the names of the *Generals* themselves;—thus a communication from General K———'s Staff Officer would be entered in the letter *K*, as follows:

“Bvt. Major Gen'l ———, comd'g West'n Div'n,”
“(by Assist. Adj. Gen'l ———.)”

11. Communications addressed to the War Department or Adjutant-general's office, and thence referred, without an accompanying letter, to head-quarters for report, or to be disposed of, will be entered, in the ordinary way, in the names of their writers, a note (in red ink) being simply made in the second column of the book, to show the fact of reference, thus—“(from A. G. O.)”

12. Where letters are referred from the office for report, &c., a note of the fact must be made (in red ink) in this book with a citation of the page, (or number of the letter,) in the “Endorsement” or “Letter Book” where the reference is recorded, thus—Ref'd for report to Comd'g Offi'r Fort T., May 11—see Book of “Endorsements,” p. 3, —(or, “see Letter No. 7, vol. 1st.”) When the communication is returned, a memorandum to this effect will be made in the book—“Returned with report, May 25th.”

13. Should the portion of this book appropriated to any particular letter of the alphabet prove insufficient for entries under that letter, they will be transferred to a few of the *last* leaves allotted to some other letter of the alphabet, where there is more space than will probably be required. The fact of transfer will be noted in large characters, (in red ink,) at the bottom of the page from which transferred, and at the top of the page to which carried, as follows:

“TRANSFERRED TO PAGE 250,” and “BROUGHT FROM PAGE 60.”

II. LETTER BOOK.—(7 quires, demy-Russia, with spring back.) 1. Every letter recorded in this book is numbered, (in red ink,) the numbers commencing and terminating with the year, and each letter is separated from the one which follows it by a red line.

2. The address of all letters should be at the top, the surname being written conspicuously in the margin, followed by the official title (if any) and Christian name, thus:

Bvt. Maj. Gen'l ———.
Comd'g, &c., &c., &c., or
Esq. Samuel H.

3. Each letter should be *signed* in the record book by its *writer*.

4. Whenever copies of letters are furnished, the names of the persons to whom they are sent should be noted in red ink in the margin with the *date*, when the last differs from the date of the letter itself. In like manner, when a letter is addressed to one officer, under cover to his commander, &c., this fact should also be noted in red ink in the margin.

5. The name of every person to whom a letter is addressed is indexed alphabetically, in black ink, and the names of the individuals whom it principally concerns are indexed in red ink. A red ink line is drawn in the body of the letter under the names so indexed, to facilitate a reference to them. In the margin, immediately under the name of the person to whom a letter is addressed, there are two references, above and below a short red line, the one above (in red) indicates the last preceding letter to the same individual, and the one below (in black) the next following. A *detached* index is used until the record book is full, when the names are arranged under each letter as in City Directories, and thus classified they are transferred to the permanent index attached to the record book.

III. GENERAL ORDERS.—(7 quires, demy-Russia, with spring back.) 1. Every order recorded in this book should be *signed* by the staff officer whose signature was attached to the originals sent from the office, and each order should be separated from the one following by a red line.

2. The mode of numbering, distribution, and general form of orders are prescribed by the Regulations—(see paragraphs 904, 905, and 908, edition of 1847;) but the distribution in each particular case should be noted in red ink in the margin to show that the “Regulations have been complied with; and where orders are sent to one officer, under cover to his commander, (which course ought always to be pursued,) or furnished at a date subsequent to that of their issue—these facts should likewise be added: where the order has been *printed*, it will be sufficient to write the word “*printed*” in red ink in the margin, to indicate that the widest circulation has been given to it.

3. There are *two* indexes attached to the book—one of *names*, the other of *subjects*—every order will be indexed in the *latter* immediately after being copied.

For *names*, a *detached* index will first be used until the record book is full, when they will be arranged under each letter as in City Directories, and thus classified, transferred to the *permanent* alphabetical index attached to the record book. Every proper name will be indexed and a red line drawn in the body of the order under it, to facilitate a reference to it.

IV. SPECIAL ORDERS.—(7 quires, demy-Russia, with spring back.) 1. Every order recorded in this book should be *signed* by the staff officer whose signature was attached to the originals sent from the office, and each order should be separated from the one following by a red line.

2. The mode of numbering, distribution, and general form of orders are prescribed by the Regulations—(see paragraphs 904, 905, and 908, edition of 1847;) but the distribution in each particular case should be noted in red ink in the margin, to show that the Regulations have been complied with; and where orders are sent to one officer, under cover to his commander, (which course ought always to be pursued,) or furnished at a date subsequent to that of their issue—these facts should likewise be added.

3. There are *two* indexes attached to the book—one of *names*, the other of *subjects*—every order will be indexed in the *latter* immediately after being copied.

For *names*, a *detached* index will first be used until the record book is full, when they will be arranged under each letter as in City Directories, and thus classified, transferred to the *permanent* alphabetical index attached to the record book. Every proper name will be indexed and a red line drawn in the body of the order under it, to facilitate a reference to it.

V. ENDORSEMENTS AND MEMORANDA.—(5 quires, Cap—Russia, with spring back.) 1. Every endorsement made on letters or other communications sent from the office will be copied in this book, and be *signed* by the staff officer whose signature was attached to the endorsement itself. A brief description of the communication sent out (the name of its writer, date, subject, and *office marks*) should precede the record of the endorsement, to render the latter intelligible ; and where such communication has been entered in the book of “letters received,” the disposition made of it should also be noted in that book, with a citation of the *page* where the endorsement is recorded. Should the communication be returned to head-quarters, a memorandum will be made to that effect, with the date when received back, in all the books where the fact of the reference from the office may have been noted.

2. In the case of such papers as proceedings of general courts-martial, certificates of disability for the discharge of soldiers, requisitions for ordnance, &c., which are not filed at head-quarters, but forwarded thence for deposit in other offices, it will generally suffice to make a brief memorandum of the general-in-chief’s action upon them, instead of copying the endorsements. Where the endorsement, however, settles any rule or principle, it ought, of course, to be copied in full.

3. The name and address of every officer to whom a communication is referred will be written in the margin, and all *proper* names, no matter in what connection employed, must be indexed.

4. The name of the person to whom a communication is sent will be indexed in black ink, and the names mentioned in the description prefixed to the endorsement on the communication, as well as in the endorsement itself, will be indexed in red ink. To facilitate a reference to these last names, a red line will be drawn under them. In the margin, immediately under the name of the person to whom a communication is addressed, there are two references, above and below a short red line; the one above (in red) indicates the last preceding reference to the same individual, and the one below (in black) the next following.