

Saved by the cavalry!

An army of knowledge for BOOT HILL[®] players

by Carl Smith

The sergeant shaded his eyes, hunched over in the saddle, and squinted against the glare of the desert sun. The air he sucked into his lungs was hot. His shirt was stained with salt streaks under the armpits and from his shoulders down to his waist. The barrel of the carbine resting across his lap was almost too hot to touch.

Suddenly a searing pain shot through his left leg. An arrow! And now he saw the Indian, kneeling by a patch of sagebrush where he would have bet a week's pay that there wasn't enough room for a rabbit to hide. His Sharps carbine came around, and he made its big .52 caliber barrel boom while he wheeled his horse around to head for the troop. Behind him, the air filled with war cries. . . .

That scene is not one that often occurs in a BOOT HILL[®] campaign — but it could. With a little patience, some basic know-how, and a dab of creativity, you can turn your BOOT HILL campaign into part of the epic battle for the Old West. To do this, first you need some background information about American Indians and the United States Army.

In the 1870's, the United States was recovering from the Civil War. A large army was considered unnecessary; as soon after the war as 1875, the Army had shrunk to less than 24,000 men. For comparison, the Confederacy alone fielded more than 20,000 men at the Battle of Shiloh. In the Battle of Antietam, around 23,000 men were killed. Yet, the entire United States was now to be protected by this small force.

The U. S. Army circa 1875 consisted of five artillery regiments, twelve cavalry regiments, and nineteen infantry regiments. Artillery and cavalry regiments were composed of twelve companies each. Of the nineteen infantry regiments, ten were "old style" regiments of ten companies each, and nine were "new" regiments of twenty-four companies (divided into eight battalions of three companies apiece). This totalled 2,444 men per new regiment, about 305 men to a battalion, or 101 men to a company. Old regiments had 582 men per regiment.

Regiments were commanded by colonels, and each regimental commander had a lieutenant colonel as his second in command. Most battalions were commanded by majors, and consisted of a headquarters company and two other companies. Although colonels commanded on paper, the members of many

regiments never saw their commanding officers in the field.

Cavalry companies were called squadrons, and majors commanded them. Cavalry squadrons were composed of a headquarters troop and two other troops. Infantry companies and cavalry troops were usually commanded by captains, or sometimes a senior first lieutenant. Most troops/companies were composed of platoons (about 50 men in size) commanded by a first lieutenant. Many of the first lieutenants who commanded companies received the command so the captain could be free to perform his time-consuming administrative duties.

The platoon was subdivided into two 25-man sections, and each section was split into two squads, sometimes three. The squad was the smallest military unit.

In the army of 1875, the command structure was headed, of course, by the President as Commander-in-Chief, followed by the General of the Army, a Lieutenant General, three Major Generals, 14 Brigadier Generals, and 67 men holding the rank of colonel. The approximate distribution of men in the primary ranks for each branch of the service was as follows:

	Inf.	Cav.	Art.
Colonel	25	10	5
Lieutenant Colonel	25	20	5
Major	25	30	15
Captain	250	120	60
First Lieutenant	250	120	120
Second Lieutenant	250	120	65
Sergeant Major	19	12	5
First Sergeant	250	120	60
Sergeant	1,000	600	250
Corporal	1,000	480	240
Private	8,460	8,540	2,600

The army of the 1870's was a great melting pot. After the Civil War, many ex-Confederates enlisted out of desperation. There was nothing for them to return home to, and joblessness was rampant in the pre-industrial South. Irish, Scots, ex-Confederates, blacks, and a small cadre of professional soldiers formed the army that was supposed to keep peace and protect the frontiers.

Of particular interest are the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments, which were formed entirely of black soldiers and black non-commissioned officers. (Their officers were white.) These soldiers fought so well that the Indians gave them a special name, "buffalo soldiers." The

name derived from their hair, which reminded the Indians of the pelt of the buffalo, and the naming was also a tribute to the soldiers' tenacity and courage. By an Indian, no higher compliment could be paid. At one time or another in their units' histories, all of the "buffalo soldiers" saw duty at Fort Davis, Texas.

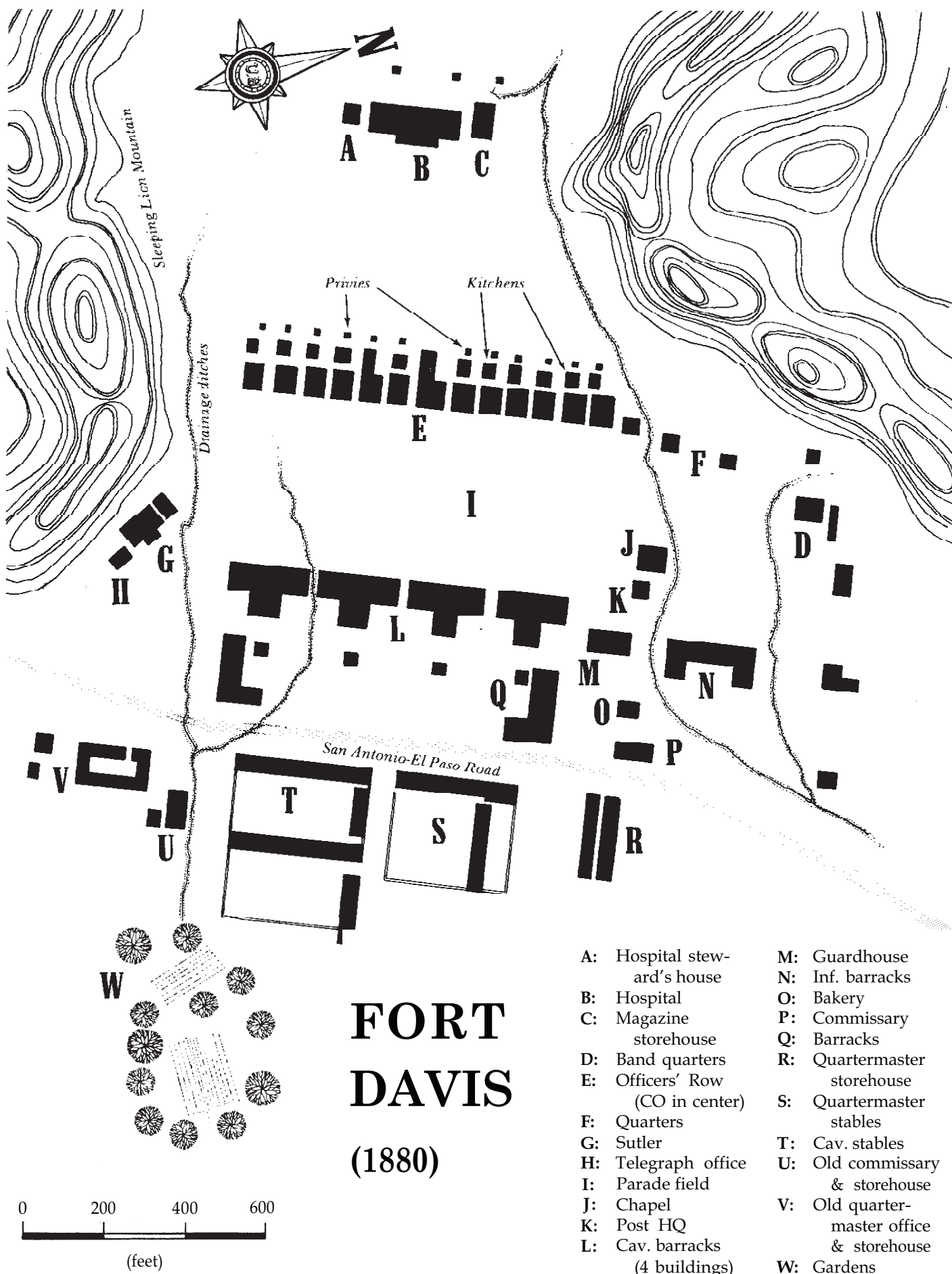
Each of the branches of the army had its own distinctive color. This color appeared on its guidons, on its epaulette backgrounds, as the color for its NCO's stripes, and as the color of the stripe that ran down the trouser leg of the dress uniform. The infantry used oyster white or light blue, the cavalry yellow, artillery scarlet, and the medical corps green.

Unlike today's chevrons, the army's chevrons in 1875 had their point towards the wrist. In addition, if an NCO had a specialty (bugler, cook, stable sergeant, etc.), the symbol for that specialty (a bugle, a cook's hat, a horse's head) was embossed above the stripe in the regimental color. As such, there were no shoulder patches to designate units.

Although the dress uniform was fancy, we need concern ourselves only with the campaign uniform. The soldier wore a dark blue shirt, trousers of a lighter blue, and a blue or tan slouch hat. The infantry was issued shoes and leggings (which were often discarded), and the cavalry was issued boots.

For armament, the soldier carried a .45 caliber Colt New Model Army single-action revolver in a leather-flap holster. The holster was suspended from a leather belt on which was slung a cartridge box with 30 spare pistol rounds. Soldiers were also issued a 100-round bandolier or cartridge belt. Often, wearing their bandolier as a belt, they hung their holsters directly from it. This cartridge belt was filled with ammunition for their .52 caliber Sharps rifles. The infantry carried the rifle, and the cavalry carried the lighter carbine version until the army adopted the Krag-Jorgensen in the late 1890's. The calibre of the Sharps is often given as .52, .54, or .56, because different bullets measured differently from tip to base. Early in the Indian campaigns, the cavalry was issued the famous 7-shot Spencer repeating carbine. These were the firearms used at the famous Battle of Beecher's Island. Another standard piece of weaponry was the sabre issued to cavalry soldiers. Most of these were the 1860 model, and were almost always left to decorate the barracks wall while their owners campaigned.

(Continued on page 58)



Both cavalry and infantry were issued a canteen and a pair of blankets. The infantry was issued a backpack which was often discarded in favor of the blanket roll. The canteen was worn over the right shoulder on the left hip. If a pistol was worn, it was carried butt forward in a holster on the right hip. The cavalry wore their carbine slings so the carbine hung on the right side of the rider.

Two common pieces of "unofficial" gear, the large hunting knife and the canvas pouch (kit bag), were integral pieces of campaigning equipment. When troops used the Spencer carbine, they carried a box of spare, loaded ammunition tubes to insert into the butt of the rifle.

The army was often criticized for using a single-shot rifle when so many repeating rifles were available. The reason they did not change was twofold: One, the range of the Sharps was such that it easily outdistanced many of the Indians' weapons and kept them at bay; two, the Sharps did not often jam, as did the repeating rifles.

The army was trained to fight. The infantry dug rifle pits for protection, and the cavalry fought dismounted. Cavalrymen were trained to make their mounts lie down during a gunfight, so the horse's body could serve as a shield if no other cover was available. When large groups of cavalry fought on foot, one of every five men was designated as a horse-

handler. He was left to watch the mounts of all five while the others were freed for offensive actions.

The mission of the U. S. Army in the Southwest was one of varied purposes and means, but primarily — from the army's viewpoint, anyway — the soldiers were a peacekeeping force. They escorted civilians, scouted unknown territory, chased Indians who "jumped" the reservation, recovered stolen livestock, and performed routine military duties in addition to keeping the frontier safe from Indians.

Today, many people have an inaccurate idea of how the "standard" military outpost looked. We of the 20th century envision some sort of "Fort Apache" fortress, with a stockade of pointed logs and wooden, rough log outbuildings. And indeed, a few forts — but only relatively few — were like that.

On the plains, there was little building wood. Most forts were "open," having no outer wall. (Among its other disadvantages, a high wall around a fort cut off any possibility of a cooling breeze.) Most forts put their buildings facing a central parade ground. If an attack occurred on such a fort, the low adobe buildings provided excellent opportunities for intersecting lines of fire against the intruders. Because army forts were so difficult to take by force, most attacks on groups of soldiers took place at some location well

out of sight of a fort. A fairly representative fort of this era was Fort Davis, Texas. (See the map on the previous page.)

In the context of a BOOT HILL campaign, few soldiers in their right minds will engage in quick-draw gunfights. The soldier's flap-holster deters that sort of thing — but once his pistol is drawn, the soldier stands as good a chance as anyone else. With a full bandolier of ammunition, the soldier is well stocked and can hold off the enemy for a long time.

Most forts had a sutler's store, a combination of general store and saloon, where troops congregated on most evenings. Or, if they could get passes, they went into town. When "let loose" on a nearby town, some soldiers could be as high-spirited as Texas cowpunchers just coming off a long trail drive. Wild Bill Hickok had a feud with Capt. Tom Custer (yes, *that* Custer's brother) of the 7th Cavalry that started when he shot two members of that unit in Hays City, killing one.

Generating soldier characters

To start a BOOT HILL game involving characters serving in the U. S. Army, roll dice for each member of a mixed party of soldiers to determine the ranks they hold. (Approximate pay rates for each rank are also given in the table below.) In some situations, duplicate rank results may have to be re-rolled or manipulated in some way. For instance, in a small group of soldiers there would be virtually no chance of two men holding the rank of captain; although the dice do allow for this possibility, the referee should only permit such a result to stand if it is sensible and playable in the context of the adventure or the campaign. Note that under the circumstances described here, no one with the rank of major or above will be found as part of a mixed group of soldiers.

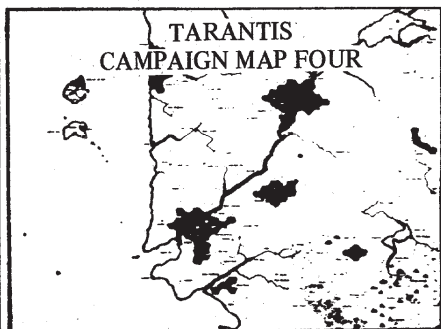
Dice roll	Rank	Pay
01-60	Private	\$13-16
61-75	Corporal	\$16-20
76-80	Sergeant	\$21-25
81-85	First Sergeant	\$24-36
86-88	Second Lieutenant	\$24-32
89-95	First Lieutenant	\$25-35
96-99	Captain	\$36-44
00	Civilian Scout	\$1-2 ¹
----	Major	\$42-50

¹ — Wages per day; other figures are monthly pay.

Men were paid by their actual rank, and not according to any brevet rank they might have acquired in the Civil War. A brevet rank was a temporary command rank, allowing the bearer to be called by that rank and to command troops, but not giving him the actual pay grade. At Little Big Horn, General Custer (brevet rank) was actually Lieutenant Colonel Custer.

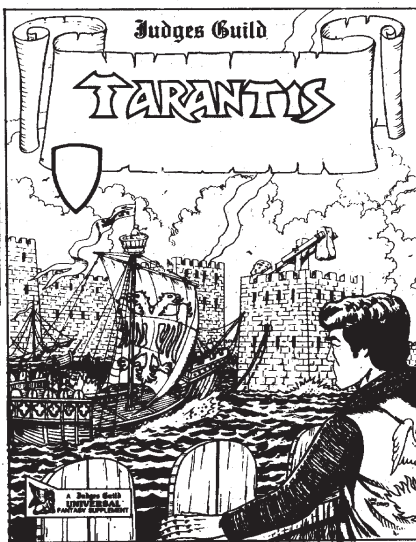
Soldiers receive experience points while

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on campaign. They gain one experience point for every week they campaign, and likewise one point for every enemy they kill. Half of their experience points must be put into raising their bravery through experiencing the rigors of the campaign.

When brawling, soldiers receive a 5% bonus on their hitting and chances to do damage, since they have been trained in melee combat. When firing from any supported, kneeling, standing, or prone position with a rifle, a soldier receives an additional 5% bonus to hit, since soldiers trained on the rifle range in all of these firing positions.

When soldiers gain certain amounts of experience points, they may advance to the next highest level (rank):

Points needed to reach	Rank
30	Private Second Class
45	Private First Class
60	Corporal
75	Sergeant
100	Sergeant Major
150	Second Lieutenant
175	First Lieutenant
200	Captain
250	Major

Because of the style of holsters they wear, soldiers receive no bonus when attempting to draw quickly. And, soldiers cannot "call" their shots, since they train

by shooting at targets and silhouettes. Furthermore, soldiers firing a military-issue weapon do not suffer the -5% penalty for firing while walking.

In terms of the BOOT HILL game, soldiers may improve their Gun Accuracy for either rifle or pistol, but they must be improved separately. Strength and Bravery may be improved by campaigning, as may Experience. Soldiers may have any initial Speed ability score. However, if it starts out as less than 60% it can never be improved to higher than that number.

To equate the soldier's weapons with the BOOT HILL system, treat the military-issue weapons as follows: The Colt NMA is a 6-shot SAR; the .52 calibre Sharps rifle is a one-shot Army rifle. There is no carbine analogous with the single-shot .52 calibre, so use the statistics for the Civil War carbine, except that the weapon holds one shot instead of seven. Additionally, the following adaptations are suggested:

All army rifles are treated as buffalo guns in terms of stunning chances. Army carbines are not. Military rifles have a lessened chance of jamming (only a 1 in 100 chance), since breech loaders are not too difficult to clear.

For game purposes, all crew-served weapons require a crew of four, commanded by an NCO or an officer. Cannons may not function with less than two gunners. Gatling guns may fire with two

gunners or less, but still have a basic crew of five (including the commander) to start.

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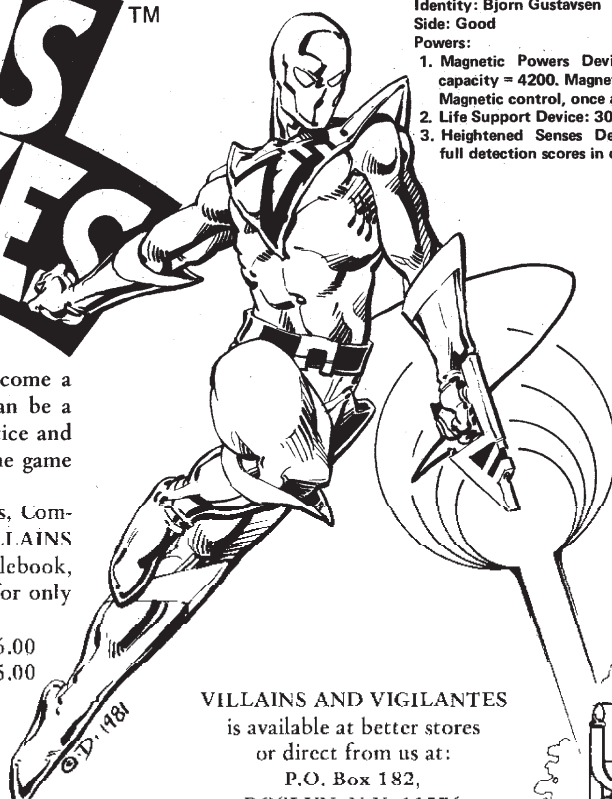
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 Identity: Bjorn Gustavsen Age: 20
 Side: Good Level: 1
 Powers:

1. Magnetic Powers Device: 10 charges. Magnetic capacity = 4200. Magnetic blast range = 21' Magnetic control, once achieved, lasts 12 turns.
2. Life Support Device: 30 charges; PR = 1 per hour.
3. Heightened Senses Device: Nightvision goggles, full detection scores in darkness.

Wt.: 160 lbs.
 Str.: 14
 End.: 13
 Agil.: 12
 Int.: 14
 Char.: 11
 Dam. Mod.: +1
 Acc.: +1
 Hit Pts.: 9
 Heal: 1.2
 Car. Cap.: 320
 Basic HTH: 1d6
 Power: 53
 Movement: 39"
 Det. Hidden: 10%
 Det. Danger: 14%
 Invent Pts.: 1.4
 Inventing: 42%

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