

Bundling Paper Cartridges for Field Use..



It is hoped that this article will enhance the authenticity of rifle ammunition, both blank and live, used by reenactors, skirmish associations and living history enthusiasts.

Most units and individuals probably don't go beyond preparation of more than fifty or sixty rounds of ammunition before an event, and these are usually placed loosely in the cartridge tin

compartments, with the extra loose rounds either carried in the pockets or haversack. However, ammunition was not normally issued to the soldier this way.

An improved image would have twenty loose rounds in the top compartments of the cartridge box tin, with two "Arsenal wrapped" packages, including 12 separately wrapped percussion caps, labeled and tied with twine in the lower compartments of the cartridge tins.

Arsenals North and South prepared rifle and pistol 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 ten rounds of rifle balls, with twelve percussion caps enclosed in a separate tube of cartridge paper, were wrapped in a sheet of coarse paper about 6 to 7 inches wide, and about 7 to 8 inches long (see Fig 2a). The printed arsenal label was then pasted on the package side opposite to the folded side, and then tied with two loops of twine (see Fig 2). The balls (either lead or tissue wads) are at the base of the package (see Fig 2h). This is likened somewhat to that of a box of Raisin Bran, the raisins are always at the bottom of the box.

The last step is tying the package with common twine. The common grocery store kind will suffice, but colored twine was also used (see Fig. 2g).

A good cartridge wrapper material is the commercial-type paper hand towels that one usually finds at service stations and office restrooms, or use a lightweight brown wrapping paper or bags.

Fig. 1 (on the next page, shows how the twelve musket caps were rolled in a cartridge paper, twisted and folded. The folded end facilitates emptying them into the cap box.

For safety's sake, it might be wise to use a color marker to distinguish between your live round packages and your blanks. I suggest you use a red felt-tip marker and place a red line on the tops and bottoms of all live cartridge packages (lets not forget safety). Also, keep the two types separated at all times.

Finally you can reuse your cartridge wrappers and labels many times. Use two separate loops of twine; this will simplify opening--just roll the two loops off with the fingers. After

emptying the wrappers, lightly fold them, with the twine, and stuff them in a pocket or jacket front. (the average soldier probably utilized this sole source of paper for his sanitation purposes, when nothing else was available! This however, is conjecture and not to be taken as gospel.)

This do-it-yourself project should be an economic means of preparing authentic Arsenal packaging of your cartridges. The only expense will be having a rubber stamp made for the label(s) of your choice.

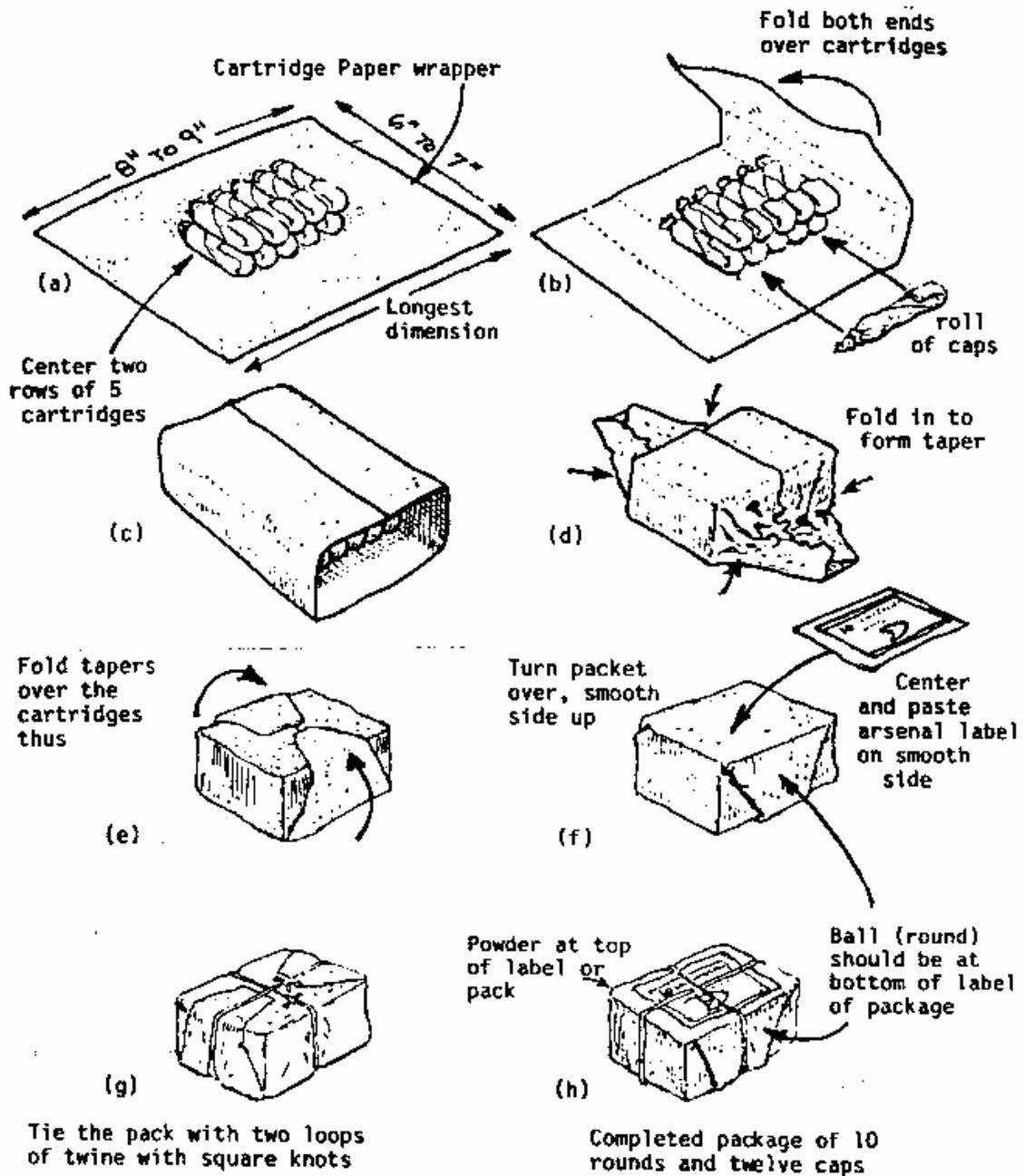


Fig. 2 - Wrapping ten cartridges and twelve percussion caps in Arsenal Configuration