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(Online library) Napoleonic Uniforms

## **Napoleonic Uniforms**

**John R. Elting : Napoleonic Uniforms** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleonic Uniforms:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy marc yablonsalso a very good book.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An excellent collection of Napoleonic UniformsBy danny boyI had purchased the original edition (all 4 volumes) when it was first released. These 4 volumes represent a sizeable and credible amount of documentation on the broad sweep of Napoleonic uniforms. The earlier reviews says it all - a must have for the Napoleonic library uniformologists. There are caveats, however, on the quality of the documentation and the drawings.

Honestly, the captions are adequate only. One should be familiar with Napoleonic uniforms in general to fully appreciate the limited captions for each drawing. There are infrequent references to modern day American forces parlance which is out of context. There are also some errors in identifying bits of items. The accuracy of the uniforms is based on usually secondary sources - generally accurate but there will be nitpickers who will spot the occasional errors, slip ups and variations. The drawings themselves are quite attractive - rough sketches done up in watercolour washes. Thus, the precision required by reenactors and model makers (number of buttons, exact shade of colour etc) is not there. Some of the drawings are obviously repeated poses done with different uniforms. I have given this set 5 stars,

based collectively on the amount of documentation versus the cost - truly a bargain.25 of 26 people found the following review helpful. Greenhill's New Edition of John Elting's "Napoleonic Uniforms"By Robert Burnham" There are three sorts of uniforms for every period of history: those described in uniform regulations; those shown by the

artists of that period; and that the soldiers really wore." Roger Forthoffer

In the early 1950s, John Elting, who was teaching at West Point, was put in touch with Herbert Kntel, the son of the famous uniformologist, Richard Kntel. Herbert was living in war-ravaged Berlin and was trying to make a living selling military art. Colonel Elting initially began ordering two watercolor pictures every month from Kntel. He was able to convince his wife that he should increase the number he ordered every month, because he needed them for his work as a professor and that they would make a nice collection. Colonel Elting decided that he wanted the collection to be representative of the Napoleon's Grande Arme and began commissioning Mr. Kntel to paint specific uniforms or units for him. Mr. Kntel died in 1963, but during the decade before he died, he had painted over 1500 watercolors of the Napoleonic Era that were purchased by Colonel Elting. Over 900 of these paintings were of La Grande Arme and they form the basis of this book.

Napoleonic Uniforms consists of two massive volumes, each with over 450 color plates. Virtually every type of unit and the different uniforms they wore is represented. Not surprisingly, the Imperial Guard has the largest number of illustrations, with 173 plates. Colonel Elting did not just include the French units. The foreigners who served with La Grande Arme are also well represented with 144 plates!

Volume I is devoted mostly to the combat arms and is broken into five parts:

Part	Topic	Number of Plates
1	The Royal Army	182
	Emigrant Troops	73
	Revolutionary Troops	394
	The Army of Egypt	465
	La Grande Arme: Command and Staff	515
	La Grande Arme: Light Infantry	375
	La Grande Arme: Line Infantry	575
	La Grande Arme: Special Infantry Units	215
	La Grande Arme: Chasseurs--Cheval	445
	La Grande Arme: Hussars	605
	La Grande Arme: Dragoons	295
	La Grande Arme: Lancers	195
	La Grande Arme: Heavy Cavalry	31

Total Plates in Volume I: 459

Volume II finishes Part 5 and ends with Part 6. Two-thirds of the plates in this volume cover either the foreign units or the Imperial Guard.

Part	Topic	Number of Plates
5	La Grande Arme: Artillery	285
	La Grande Arme: Engineers	145
	La Grande Arme: Gendarmes, Police, and Disciplinary Organizations	245
	La Grande Arme: Service Troops	225
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Foreign Regiments	195
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Swiss Units	295
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Miscellaneous German Units	125
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Italians	85
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Poles	215
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Lithuanians	65
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Balkan Troops	175
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- a Sepoy	15
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Spaniards	195
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- Portuguese	55
	La Grande Arme: Foreign Troops -- King Joseph's Spanish Units	75
	La Grande Arme: National Guard, Schools, and Guards of Honor	255
	La Grande Arme: the Navy	155
	La Grande Arme: the Imperial Guard	1736
	The Royal Army 1814 - 1830	13

Total Plates in Volume II: 458

Herbert Kntel first sketched the figure in pencil and then painted the image with watercolors. Since the paintings are one of a kind and were not meant for mass production, you can often see the pencil lines faintly in the background. You also can see faint traces where the painting was secured in a photo album. Occasionally, the corner of the plate is slightly crumpled. Below each figure would be a hand-written caption stating what the figure was. Interestingly, if you look closely you can see where the original pencil caption had been erased and someone wrote over it with ink. Unfortunately, there is no indication if this was done by the artist or later on by Colonel Elting. These are not imperfections that detract from the value of the plates. Instead they leave the reader with a sense that he has the privilege of viewing someone's much treasured, private collection.

Each plate consists of a single mounted or foot figure. There is no background scenery and there is no ground-- all there is are the figures themselves. As mentioned already, the plates cover a wide range of units and uniforms. They depict the soldier in every type of uniform - whether on parade, in the midst of a campaign, or the mundane everyday chores that are the life of a soldier on garrison duty.

Some of the choice of plates were a bit surprising - such as one of a regimental fencing master and another of a senior blacksmith. But this just adds to the charm of the collection. One of my favorites is a line infantry soldier who is foraging. He is sitting bareback on a small horse, with a pig draped over the front and a couple of geese slung over his soldier. All the plates contain incredible detail and the faces are filled with expression. Those soldiers that are on campaign are often shown to be scruffy - even with a touch of five o'clock shadow on their faces - while those on parade are spit and polish.

Below each plate is a short paragraph providing a few lines on the history of the unit and about the uniform itself - whether it is compliance with the uniform regulations or if not, how it is different.

This edition includes a functional index in each volume. It has entries for the different nationalities, different types of troops, and personalities. It does not list specific units or regiments, but instead refers the reader to the contents at the beginning of each major part.

Napoleonic Uniforms closes with a short essay on sources and a glossary. I found the essay fascinating because it compares the styles and the accuracy of numerous different artists. He closes with a bit of advice: "You will find inconsistencies in the best sources. Variations are inevitable, even for the same unit during the same year. An infantry regiment might have one battalion at its depot, handsomely uniformed according to a compromised between regulations and its colonel's whims; another battalion on the Polish frontier would be in patched field uniforms; a third in Spain would be improvising shoes from raw cowhide and cutting up the cloaks of dead Spaniards for trousers. Some of the colors in the original drawings may no longer accurate: crimson fades to a pink; pigments containing white lead will turn black. Also, officers often wore their old uniforms into the field, and the best artists sometimes made mistakes. But there are lost collections to rescue and new discoveries to be made."

The book is quite stunning! From its gold embossed red cloth covers with stitched binding to its beribboned red slip case it is destined to be a collector's item very quickly! I have both the original edition of

"Napoleonic Uniforms" and Greenhill's new release; the originals were not as nicely packaged. The originals are extremely scarce and if you can find a copy, it will be a very expensive purchase. The cheapest used copy will cost over \$700, while 'new' ones are being offered for \$1750. I strongly recommend that you do not delay in ordering your copy of this new edition. If you do not order it now, in a few years you will be looking at used copies going for four or five times of what they cost today.

In 1993 The Macmillan Publishing Company set the Napoleonic enthusiast community alight when it produced the major two volume work, Napoleonic Uniforms by John R. Elting, featuring the superb works of the famous illustrator Herbert Knotel. Now, in an unprecedented transatlantic co-operation, Greenhill Books in London and Casemate Publishing in the USA are together bringing these books back into print after some 14 years. This new edition, as before, will be sold as a two volume set. In addition, the new edition will be presented in a cloth bound slipcase. Pagination and an index have been added, significantly enhancing its reference value. Napoleonic Uniforms is the only reference work of its kind to depict accurately the entire Grande Armée in detail. It portrays the French armies as seen by their contemporaries, and combines authoritative text with lavish illustrations, enabling the reader to experience the spectacle first hand. Napoleonic Uniforms also depicts the various types of soldiers within the various regiments of the Grande Armée - officers, sergeants, color-bearers, bandsmen, drummers and trumpeters, privates and surgeons. In addition the volumes contain material on lesser-known formations such as the Army of Egypt (1798 - 1801), the pre-Revolutionary French Army, and Napoleon's police and internal security organizations. Nine hundred and eighteen original watercolors by Herbert Knotel, an internationally acclaimed authority on military uniforms, with a special talent for depicting men and horses in action, bring the nineteenth-century French soldier to life. Together with the late Colonel John R. Elting's definitive captions, they preserve a significant aspect of this famous era for historians, researchers, teachers, students, model makers, "uniformologists", and the general reader interested in this historical period.

From Library Journal This unique work illustrates French military costumes from the 1780s to 1830: infantry, cavalry, engineers, musicians, cadets, aviators (in a balloon corps!), fencing masters, Swiss Guards (and other foreign units under French command), and many other categories. All ranks are shown, as are the distinctive uniforms of many different regiments. Elting, a military historian, supplies informative comments on each plate. The nearly 2000 watercolors were painted for him by Knotel (d. 1963), a German authority on military costume whose father Richard (d. 1914) was in his time the world's leading expert in the field. The younger Knotel's *Handbuch der Uniformkunde* (Hamburg: Schulz, 1937; 7th ed.) is a classic but does not compare in beauty with the present work. Though Napoleonic Uniforms has an inadequate glossary and lacks page numbers, index, and an over-all table of contents, it is indispensable to anyone seriously interested in the subject. - Margarete Gross, Chicago P.L. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. Along with the striking artwork by Herbert Knotel, Elting's tome provides the background and history of each uniform of the various types of soldiers in the Grand Armée (who would have thought there could be so many?). Besides historians, toy soldier buffs will love this title. A stunner. (Library Journal) This edition is quite stunning! From its gold embossed red cloth covers with stitched binding to its beribboned red slip case it is destined to be a collector's item very quickly! (R. Burnham, The Napoleonic Series) A Major Upgrade of an Outstanding Work!... Anyone interested in Napoleon and/or military art in general will want a copy of this truly outstanding set. Knotel captured the soldiers in a unique and fascinating way that makes the viewer feel he is seeing them as they really were. Congratulations to Greenhill and Casemate for bringing this important work back to life. I am certain that John would be very pleased! (J. David Markham, Historian/Author, [www.NapoleonicHistory.com](http://www.NapoleonicHistory.com))