

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume I

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Notice on the Uniforms of Troops of Frankfurt (1807-1814)

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE FRANKFURT

NOTICE

ON THE

UNIFORMS OF TROOPS OF FRANKFURT

(1807-1814)

At the time of the establishment of the Confederation of the Rhine, the troops of Frankfurt wore uniforms which still recalled those of the old "troops of the circles".

The infantry included grenadiers, fusiliers and chasseurs. The grenadiers and fusiliers had white breeches and coats, and were distinguished only by the headwear, which consisted of a furred cap for the grenadiers, while the fusiliers kept the ancient bicorn cap, placed "en bataille" and decorated with a black cockade. The breeches were held in black gaiters rising to below the knee. The coat, of Austrian cut and without lapels, had red collar, cuffs and reverses, with white buttons and red epaulettes. The leatherwork, crossing on the chest, was white. Knötel, in his "*Uniformenkunde*", shows us a fusilier officer from Frankfurt, in 1807, wearing a gray coat, with red distinctions, with silver epaulettes, a white plume, and the sword supported by a white belt passing through the right epaulette (2nd volume, PL no. 39).

The chasseurs had, at that time, a very different outfit: we see them dressed all in green, analogous, in their cut, to the dress of our chasseurs à cheval, with collar, lapel, cuffs and facings also green, and piped with red; white buttons; yellow vest; green pants, taken in half-gaiters edged with red and adorned, on the front, with an acorn of the same color. Black leatherwork crossing the chest; wrist strap and tassel green; and finally, shako of green cloth, with black hat band, decorated with a high black plume, surmounting the white and red cockade, and decorated with a cord half-part red and white.

Weiland, in the first edition of his documentary on the *Troops of the Confederation of the Rhine*, gave the chasseurs of Frankfurt, in 1807, red pointed cuffs, as well as lapels and a red collar.

These uniforms, carried to Spain by the Prince Primate's battalion, gradually underwent many transformations: the difficulties of supply, the exhaustion of the stores, and finally the necessities of the war, soon gave a very different aspect to the troops of Frankfurt. After the battle of Medellin (28 March 1809), the Frankfurters made their own breeches with brown cloth coats taken from the Spanish dead; the blue cloth which was requisitioned at that time served to make new clothes, breeches, trousers, so that the old white clothes disappeared forever and that the battalion was little by little dressed blue. The French influence was also felt in a sensible way: the insignia of the ranks were the same as in the Imperial army; the grenadiers took the red epaulets, the plume and cord of the shako, the voltigeurs (who had replaced the chasseurs) and the fusiliers, also equipped with the French shako, had, first, the plumet, the shako cord and the epaulets of green color, with a yellow turn with epaulettes; the fusiliers, with the white shako cord, kept the simple blue cloth leg of the bottom of the coat, with red piping.

The blue coat with blue collar was replaced among the grenadiers and fusiliers by red cuffs and patches, pointed, and piped with white. The buttons remained white, like the leatherwork; and the shako, besides the red and white cockade, bore a white metal plaque, shaped like a half-moon, decorated with the "Wheel" of the Arms of Mainz. The company of voltigeurs was distinguished from the others by green reverses and cuffs; these distinctive parts, as well as the dark blue collar, were lined with a red piping; the vest remained yellow, like the one previously worn by the chasseurs.

A print of the time, part of the valuable collection published by Herzberg in Augsburg (*K. K. priv. Kunsthandlung*), shows us a Frankfurt hussar, in blue uniform trimmed with yellow braids, quietly smoking his pipe in the middle of a group of infantrymen of his nation, one of whom, on his knees, buckles his bag in front of an officer. (This is the plate whose reproduction appears in the frontispiece of this work.) This print is all the more interesting because it gives, to our knowledge, the only published representation of the dress of the Hussars of the Grand Duchy; we do not find, in fact, Frankfurt hussars in Weiland's sheets, any more than in the astonishing drawings of the Album by the "Bourgeois de Hamburg."

A Garde Bourgeoise, with a force of 90 horsemen, existed in Frankfurt since the year 1692: this body, organized in three companies, each commanded by a captain, a lieutenant and a cornet, remained until 1813. It had a blue coat, with black collar and cuffs and broad Brandenburgs on the reverses; these Brandenburgs, white for simple cavalry, were of gold for the officers; crimson waistcoat, trimmed with the color of the Brandenburgs, like the collar, the cuffs, the pockets and the hat; crouching pouch and crumpled leather pouch; white pants, strong boots; blue sabretache lined with white for the cavalymen, and crimson with gold lace for the officers.

Only for service of honor and escort, this mounted militia ended its existence rather poorly. Participating in a show of arms in honor of the Emperor of Austria and the Grand Duke Constantine of Prussia, it could not arrive, despite the evolutions and the most incoherent maneuvers, to its place at the head of the procession. The Grand Duke, to whom the object of these disordered movements escaped, exclaimed: "Frankfurt..., Furt...! Furt...!" A play of words which the Garde Bourgeoise on horseback did not recover.

The troops of Frankfurt, after the attachment of the Grand Duchy to the cause of the Allies, preserved the blue uniform adopted in Spain, and carried it, in the ranks of our enemies, with some slight modifications of details: the reverses disappeared; the collar turned red for grenadiers and fusiliers, with white piping, and white shako cord; white pompon and red plume. The skirmishers (successors of the famous voltigeurs) took the collar, the cuffs and the green shoulders, with red piping, and the shako cord and the green pompon. The leatherwork remained black for the only skirmishers whose headdress bore a yellow metal hunting horn, while the grenadiers and fusiliers retained the half-moon plate, but of yellow color. The buttons remained white.

As in the rest of Germany, volunteer corps were also raised in the Grand Duchy to take part in the war against France in 1813 and 1814.

A detachment of "volunteer mounted Jäger" received the following dress: green coat with black collar and cuffs, with two rows of yellow buttons; piping and amaranth reverses; counter-epaulets with green body and half-moon in yellow metal; gray-iron pants in "charivari", closed on the sides by copper buttons; black shako decorated with green cord and plume; red pompon and copper trim; green sabretache with black border, piped red; green coat rack.

The "volunteer foot Jäger" of Frankfurt had an entirely green uniform, with black collar and cuffs, piped red and decorated with red buttonholes; green breeches, piped red, with pockets decorated with a Hungarian knot in red braid; half-boots; black shako with red pompom and white plume, with green cord. Equipment black, yellow buttons.

(KNÖTEL, "*Uniformenkunde*" and "*Handbuch*".)
