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### Winfield Scott

Winfield Scott enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a military officer in the United States Army. A veteran of the War of 1812, Seminole War, Black Hawk War, Mexican-American War, and Civil War, Scott made significant contributions to military planning, strategy, and organization during his 60 years of service. He was responsible for a complete overhaul of the infantry tactics of the United States Army as well as the primary containment policy implemented in the Civil War, named the Anaconda Plan.

General Scott assumed a position to reorganize the infantry corps. Following the War of 1812 Scott “supervised the preparation of the Army's first standard drill regulation.”<sup>1</sup> Scott also found himself heading the Board of Tactics on four separate occasions: 1815, 1821, 1824, and 1826.<sup>2</sup> Referencing the referral as a “technocrat” by historian Allan Peskin, historian Daniel Walker Howe described Scott’s character as stressing the “importance of logistics, training and staff work, his meticulous attention to detail.”<sup>3</sup> Allan R Millet and Peter Maslowski describe Scott as a man “who loved fancy uniforms and had considerable strategic and tactical abilities” as well as “a meticulous planner” and someone who “insisted upon a thorough military reconnaissance before maneuvering or fighting.”<sup>4</sup> Understanding these aspects of Scott’s character it is easy to comprehend his attention to detail and formality.

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<sup>1</sup> William Gardner Bell, *Commanding Generals and Chiefs of Staff 1775-2005* (Washington, Center of Military History, 2005) 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms* (Ohio: Kent state University Press, 2003) 59. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007) 779.

<sup>4</sup> Millet, *For the Common Defense*, 148.

Much of what Scott recorded in his tactics book stemmed from his own personal philosophy on how an army trains and operates. General Scott relied heavily on French tactics, much of which he followed from *Regulations for the Field Exercises of the French Infantry*.<sup>5</sup> The need for transformative overhauls in infantry tactics, training, and the actual waging of war within the United States Army stemmed from problems that occurred during the War of 1812 against Great Britain. A major change implemented by Scott in order to combat the habit of political appointees to infiltrate the army was a strong reliance on West Point to be “the most obvious route to high rank.”<sup>6</sup> Scott possessed strong feelings about the institution, believing the “Academy stood as the symbol of military professionalism.”<sup>7</sup> According to Timothy Johnson, “West Point provided the necessary education by delivering to young officers a base of required knowledge.”<sup>8</sup> This new system did receive some opposition, particularly from those who felt West Point “promoted aristocracy and elitism in the officer corp.”<sup>9</sup>

After spending some time in Paris following the war, Scott returned to the states to work on a new infantry manual.<sup>10</sup> The new regulations, implemented in 1821, went “minutely into every detail of the soldier’s life, including the ingredients of his soup.”<sup>11</sup> General Scott later published a book titled *Abstract of Infantry Tactics, Including Exercises and Maneuvers of Light-Infantry and Riflemen, for the Use of the Militia of the United States* that unveiled new infantry reforms for the United States Army in 1830. Within this publication, Scott outlined new infantry

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<sup>5</sup> David W. Hogan Jr, Arnold G. Fisch Jr., Robert K. Wright Jr, *The Story of the Noncommissioned Officers Corps* (Washington: Center of Military History, 2007) 73.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory*, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998) 78.

<sup>7</sup> John S. D Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) 124.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, Richard, *American Military History Volume I: The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation* (Washington: Center of Military History, 2004) 165.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, 165.

tactics he sought implemented by breaking them down into chapters such as soldier, company and battalion. Scott did not make exceptions with his training tactics, subjecting both regulars and volunteer militia units.<sup>12</sup> He also emphasized “proficiency in the tricky technique of firing muskets while in three ranks”, “forming a composite unit at full strength,” and impressing “upon the officers and NCO’s the importance of enforcing division policies.”<sup>13</sup> Scott stressed discipline amongst troops by requiring them to bathe three times a week and “keep his weapons, equipment, and uniforms in the best condition possible.”<sup>14</sup>

Scott’s contribution to the American Civil War dealt with the containment strategy implemented by Union forces at the onset of hostilities. Dubbed the “Anaconda Plan”, the land and naval blockade extended down from the state of Virginia into the Gulf Mexico and then upwards through the Mississippi River, severing the Confederacy from naval aid as well as the trans-Mississippi West.<sup>15</sup> The Anaconda Plan culminated a new military thought of waging war that revolved around “a war for limited goals” requiring “a strategy of limited means.”<sup>16</sup> His strategy avoided a direct invasion of the South but instead relied on enveloping the Confederacy.<sup>17</sup> Scott also opposed the idea of dispersing members of the regular United States Army into the volunteer army.<sup>18</sup> McPherson finds fault in this decision since he felt that the “hundreds of officers and non-coms in the regular army could have provided drill instructors and tactical leadership to the volunteer regiments.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hogan, 74.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-75.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>15</sup> Allan R. Millet, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1984) 170.

<sup>16</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 333.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>18</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 327.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

Scott's years of service allowed him to implement necessary and beneficial changes to the United States Army. The Mexican-American War and the Civil War provided trial and error for his revamping of Army tactics. Upon his death in 1861, Scott had transformed the preparation and drill patterns of the United States Army, as well as, prepared a containment plan for Union forces to implement against the Confederacy.

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