

A Modern War

In many ways the Civil War was the first modern war that Americans participated in. It saw vast armies equipped with standard mass manufactured items from uniform buttons to rifles. While muskets were still in use during the war, the Civil War saw widespread use of rifled muskets, which were much more accurate. A rifled musket contained grooves in the barrel that would spin the projectile and make it much more accurate. These weapons fired Minié balls, or Minnie balls, samples of which are shown here (a). Along with rifling, many weapons were also fixed with percussion caps (as opposed to the old flintlock firing system) which allowed soldiers to use their weapons in wet weather and with more dependable firing. Here is a sample of a Union Army percussion cap pouch and percussion caps (b). Here are uniform buttons (c) from 1) standard Union Army; 2) Connecticut National Guard; 3) Vermont artillery and 4) the standard Confederate Army. In addition, a Union cartridge box plate (d), a Confederate belt buckle (e) and a Union Army canteen (f) are included as a representation of manufactured metal goods.

