

DRILL BITS

By Sgt. Brad Ireland. 4th VA, Co. A, Stonewall Brigade

Ready: High or Low???

There has been much debate at our drill sessions on the use of the “High Ready” verses the “Low Ready”. Much of the discussion has centered around the statement “depends on if this is your first fire”. This statement is incorrect per Gilhams Manual. There are two ready positions in the book described as follows:

1. Ready from the position of prime
2. Ready from the position of shoulder arms.

Number one and number two above is all you need to know. If you are going to the ready position from the position of prime, then you will use the “Low Ready”. If you are going to ready from the position of shoulder arms, then you use the “High Ready”. It does not state in the manual nor does it matter if this is your first fire or subsequent fires. If you were ordered to shoulder arms during the course of combat, and subsequently ordered to ready, then you use the “High Ready”. If you are loading the musket after firing and have not received the command to “cease fire”, then you are going to the position of ready from the position of prime or as we call it the “Low Ready”.

Here is what the manual says word for word (which can be found free on-line at:

http://books.google.com/books?id=TPwIU_S_02YC&pg=PA29&dq=Gilham's+infantry&hl=en#v=twopage&q&f=false)

Ready: From position of Prime

One time and one motion.

Place the thumb of the right hand on the hammer (the fingers remaining under and against the guard), cock the piece, and seize the small of the stock.



READY: FROM THE POSITION OF SHOULDER ARMS

One time and four motions.

- **First motion.** Turn the piece with the left hand, the lock to the front, seize it at the small of the stock with the right hand, at the same time make a half face to the right on the left heel, bringing the left toe to the front, and placing the right foot behind, and at right angles to the left, the hollow of the foot against the left heel.
- **Second motion.** Bring the piece with the right hand to the middle of the body, place the left hand just above the lock, the thumb extended along the stock at the height of the chin, the counter (or S) plate turned toward the body, the rammer obliquely to the left and front.
- **Third motion.** Place the thumb on the hammer, the forefinger under and on the guard, the other three fingers joined to the first, the elbow at the height of the hand.
- **Fourth motion.** Close the right elbow smartly to the body in cocking, without bending the wrist, seize the piece by the small of the stock, let it descend along the body in the left hand to the tail-band, which will remain at the height of the shoulder.

