

The Old Cavalry Jacket's Story

I have to start my story by saying how proud I am of being part of the old time Horse Soldiers. I'll try to describe myself as we as an ancient piece of cloth can. Despite being nearly one hundred and fifty years old I'm yet in remarkably good condition. My existence goes back to the conflict called the great rebellion or the Civil War, in 1861 – 1865. Since I have now scratched the surface of my history I'll further give details of my physical makeup. I'm made of dark blue wool with trim of bright yellow. The twelve small brass eagle buttons down my front are nearly as bright as when I was made.



I and my hundreds of companions were packed in wooden boxes chests. My container would have been marked "Small" for that was my size. That possibly could be one reason I escaped use in that terrible conflict. Many used cavalry jackets were subjected to dirt, grime and blood, saber cuts and projectile holes. I missed that fate having been made to late in the war. I can trace my existence from that long ago time.

A man's name now enters my history. In 1854 the Scottish family of Francis Bannerman came to America. He served in the Union army and in 1865 he with his young son started what may be America's first military surplus company. It was that Bannerman Company that purchased this old cavalry jacket at government auction along with a vast assortment of other no longer needed military goods. Bannerman's large catalogs became a valuable information source for collectors for the next 100 years. The January 1938 issue had 287 pages. On page 178 cavalry jackets like me along with red trimmed artillery jackets were for sale for \$2.50.



This old jacket attests to the fact that it and its companions lay for years in chests in dark storage areas. In the ensuing years veterans organizations, costume companies and occasional collectors made purchases of them. As the 100th anniversary of the Civil War approached the historic jackets became valuable collector's items. Then all that remained was a memory that once they were part of the famous Francis Bannerman's inventory and even the company drifted from existence.



This old cavalry jacket now concludes its story. I remained in the original case with hundreds of others until 1948. Two teenage boys from Marshville, NY went on their senior trip in May 1948. The destination was New York City. The two country boys had different interests than many of the other seniors. The old Bannerman's store, although rickety and packed overfull, was still in business at 501 Broadway. On May 28, 1948 the two boys stopped at Bannerman's. The writer who is helping the old cavalry jacket tell its story was one of those boys and came home from his senior trip with a \$2.50 piece of history that he still possesses yet today.

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, November 16, 2013