



18th century Armies and Their Weaponry

18th Century Armies

The armies of the 18th century were all small and professional. Each consisted of three separate units. These were the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Each used weapons that best suited their needs. The weapons of this era were crude, as compared with today's, but effective.

Infantry



The standard issue weapon of the infantryman was the flintlock musket with bayonet. The soldiers at Ft. Frederica used the Long Land Pattern, later known as the 1st model Brown Bess.

The infantry was the main fighting unit of the army. Lining up in two or three rows, armies fired their muskets en masse to create a wall of lead in order to devastate a target. Emphasis was on discipline under fire and speed of firing. A well-trained infantryman could get off three or four shots a minute.

Cavalry



In the 18th century, the cavalry was the eyes and ears of the army. They provided the commanders with information on where and how strong the opposing force was. During combat, the cavalry pinned the enemy flanks down so that the infantry and artillery could destroy them.

The main weapon of this fighting unit was the straight single edged sabre. They also used carbine muskets. Carabines were short-barreled muskets that were easier to carry and fire while on horseback.

Artillery



Artillery units used horse drawn cannons, siege guns, howitzers and mortars. The main artillery piece used at Ft. Frederica was the garrison cannon on truck carriages for use against enemy ships.

Cannon fired a variety of ammo, from smooth lead balls for long-range targets, grapeshot (a cluster of small cannon balls tied together) used for medium range, and canister shot (like a huge shotgun shell) for close range targets. Howitzers and mortars were designed to fire explosive “bombs” over entrenchment and fortress walls to destroy the enemy.
