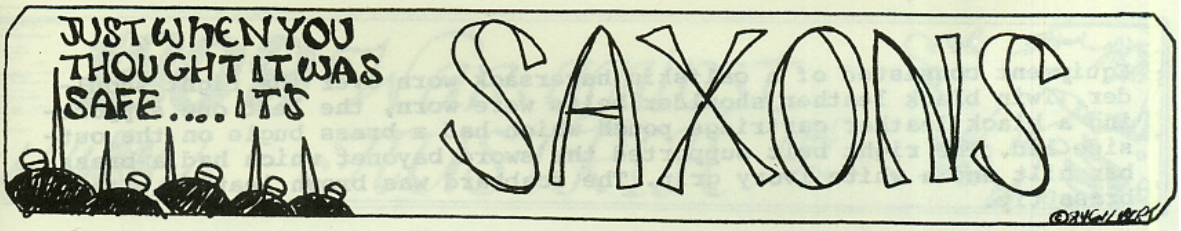

The Saxon Jäger Corps by Thomas E. DeVoe

On August 31st, 1809, a Jäger Corps was established with a strength of 126 men including 3 officers. The formation of this Corps was the result of an appeal by the First Court Master Huntsman von Preuss for all trained hunters to volunteer for service. Each was expected to furnish their own rifle, sword and knapsack and after they had been discharged following their faithful service, each was assured of a post in the Royal Forestry and Hunting Service. The commander of this unit was Captain, later Major von Carlowitz, which formed in Dresden. The Jägers remained in Saxony for the duration of the campaign. With the army reorganization of 1810 their base was changed to Eckarsberg.

When first organized, each member of the Corps was supposed to bring his own rifle, though some may have in fact brought old fowling pieces. Saxony at that time lacked the ability to manufacture rifled weapons. Documented information regarding their first uniform is scarce, but in all probability the unit received the regular line musketeer uniform, but without the color facings, though the rest of the uniform resembled that of a line regiment. It should again be remembered that this Corps was raised in the middle of a campaign and drew its original equipment from the depot battalions of the line regiments.

During the 1812 Campaign the Corps remained in Saxony, but did take the field in the 1813 Campaign as part of the 24th Division of the VII Corps, though in the latter campaign it numbered only 77 all ranks. The Corps continued in service after the 1813 reorganization.

Following the 1810 Army Reorganization, the Jäger Corps received a new uniform very similar to that of the new light infantry uniform. This has caused some confusion between the two units. The shako was identical to that of the light infantry, but instead of a shako plate it carried a brass bugle. For full dress, a dark green plume, green cords (*) and flounders were added. (*Both Otto von Pivka and the Knötels state a white cord. Other contemporary artists state dark green). When on campaign, it was covered with a black oilskin cover which was decorated with a white bugle.

The regimental jacket was dark green with dark green lapels with scarlet piping, black cuffs and squared shoulder straps with scarlet piping. The collar was black with scarlet piping, buttons were brass. The back of the collar was green. On the light green turnbacks were brass bugle horns.

When on campaign grey trousers were worn. One source stated there was a black stripe on the outer seam, but none of the contemporary sources checked showed this. For full dress, dark grey breeches were worn with half-calf, black gaiters based on the light infantry model, closed with brass buttons.

The greatcoats were pepper-grey as for the light infantry with the same arrangement on the collar as on the regimental jacket.

Officers and Non-commissioned officers and musicians had the same uniform distinctions as the light infantry.

Equipment consisted of a calfskin haversack worn over the right shoulder. Twin black leather shoulder belts were worn, the left one supporting a black leather cartridge pouch which had a brass bugle on the outside lid. The right belt supported the sword bayonet which had a brass bar hilt and a white ivory grip. The scabbard was brown leather with a brass tip.

The short-barreled rifles were privately owned and could have been of various designs depending upon the local manufacturer, though most would have had brass fittings and a black leather military sling. All other equipment would have been the same as the line infantry. Additionally, enlisted men wore shoes while officers wore black leather boots.

When deployed on the firing line, only one quarter of the unit was placed in skirmish formation, almost always in pairs. These were supported by a second group representing another quarter of the unit's strength, with a full 50% in reserve

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XX      XX      XX      XX      XX      XX
   XX      XX      XX      XX      XX      XX

            XXXXXXXXXXXX
            XXXXXXXXXXXX    1st Reserve to Support
                            Skirmish Line.

        XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
        XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    2nd Reserve or Support.
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Thus the maximum number of Jägers firing against an enemy formation was 12 riflemen. Their partners would not fire until the first group had reloaded. All combat commands were issued by instruments.

Like the Saxon light infantry and hussars, the Jägers carried no standards.

Musicians: Drummers. Same uniform as the men with the addition of dark green swallow nest epaulettes which were piped scarlet. The plumes were white over green. Each musician wore a light green armband above the left elbow, again piped scarlet. The drum itself possessed a black leather carriage and the drum brass with drum rims as for the light infantry. Buglers carried a brass horn worn slung on a black leather strap.

Sutleress: The painter Opitz shows this unofficial member of the unit in one of his drawing. Like most such individuals of the period, her outfit is a combination of military and civilian dress. Her jacket would have been green with a white apron and violet sash, the shirt was light blue with white stockings and black civilian shoes. Her bonnet was black with violet trimmings, a white plume, white cockade with a brass button in the center. White lace appears under the bonnet. A personal touch may have been the violet scarf. She also carries a green barrel containing some sort of liquid refreshment, which was suspended from her shoulder on a brown leather belt. She might also have had a haversack or pack of some sorts.