

Swiss Regiment in French Service, Soldier

Winkler's "Swiss Private in French Service" depicts a *fusilier* private of the 1st Swiss Regiment, his unit indicated by the yellow collar, lapels, cuffs, and turnbacks (invisible here) and yellow-piped three-pointed cuff flaps, and shoulder straps. Beneath his shako cover, the shako cords (if present) would normally be white.

Neither the rank nor elite company distinctions are visible that would qualify him to wear a sidearm as a noncommissioned officer, *voltigeur*, or *grenadier*. The presence of the second shoulder belt (supporting an unseen *sabre-briquet* on the left hip) is peculiar, as according to French regulations, a private should have only one shoulder belt to support his cartridge pouch. It is difficult to account for the red pompom, usually reserved for the *grenadier* company, other than to presume that it was a regimental variant for one of the center *fusilier* companies; a *grenadier* would have white-fringed epaulettes.

He wears the old *habit* with open lapels and triple-pointed cuff flaps. The position in which he carries his musket was a common one called *armes au bras* ("supported arms"), which was more convenient than the *portez armes* ("shoulder arms"), the usual way to march with a firearm. The "shoulder arms" position essentially balanced the weapon on the shoulder, with the stock resting in the hand, and was wearying (and needed practice for recruits) if the weapon was to be vertical and not slanted rearward. Thus, soldiers were often ordered to change the weapon's position from time to time on the march, and the "supported arms" position was a welcome relief. The black band seen here (and often in other plates) above his collar is a "stock."

Research indicates that this regiment did not serve in the Saxon theater of war in 1813 (nor did any other Swiss infantry), but was posted in northern France and the Netherlands. How did this figure come to be a subject for Winkler? A small depot of two officers and 63 men were left in Küstrin, but they disappeared from the garrison list by early May. The *Pegau Chronicle*¹ (a diary of a citizen) recorded the passage of convalescent red-uniformed Swiss soldiers in February, and this date coincides with the sojourn of the depot unit in the area. Heinrich Aster in his *Schilderung der Kriegereignisse in und vor Dresden* ("History of the Events around Dresden", p. 60) mentions the presence of Swiss troops on 11 May 1813. Winkler probably saw members of the former garrison in transit, either as convalescents or during their relocation from Küstrin. Once again, the eyewitness artist captured something conventional research has overlooked.

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Brun's copy (above) from Plate 81.



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¹ Knötel, R., "Die Stadt Pegau" in *Mitteilungen*, Vol. XV, page 13.