

Aide-de-Camp

This is a French officer acting as an assistant to a *général de brigade* (a rank equivalent to a brigadier general). His rank is that of *adjudant-major* (adjutant) as indicated by his epaulettes, and his role as aide-de-camp (ADC) is distinguished by the sky-blue facings on his surtout (frock coat) and the lighter blue stripe on the side seam of his trousers. According to John Elting in *Napoleonic Uniforms*, “After 1812 this [color] was officially changed to chamois, which it had been before 1803, but compliance was far from universal.” Winkler’s painting confirms Elting’s observation about variable compliance with regulations in 1813.

This dashing young officer sports a fashionable feature of the late Empire period, one that many of the original *Freiberg* illustrations repeat: a moustache and goatee. This illustration also features another popular style, that of wearing the epaulettes dangling over the breast (although there may have also been a practical reason for this — see Plate 34). The dark gray seen along the inside of the overalls’ leg and the area that appears to be the upper part of “boots” is leather reinforcement typical of the period, a protective and practical feature of clothing for men who spent long hours in the saddle.

Aides-de-camp were personal assistants to general officers. ADCs could be employed in a variety of ways. Among a host of duties, ADCs regularly attended their commander for the morning orders, conveyed messages, conducted reconnaissance and executed special missions. ADCs were much more than glorified servants or errand boys; they were individuals in whom sensitive information could be confided, and who were expected to possess good discretionary judgment. An aide-de-camp acted at all times as his general’s eyes and ears, and he was variously empowered to assume, in his superior’s name, command of entire units during a crisis.

According to Paul-Charles-François-Adrien-Henri Dieudonné Thiébault’s *General Manual of Staff Service in the Armies* (p. 432):

“...the number and ranks of the aides-de-camp vary according to the ranks of the superior officers by whom they are employed.

“Marshals of the Empire have four of them, that is to say one colonel, one major, and two captains, but when they command an army, they can have two more, taken from among the lieutenants.

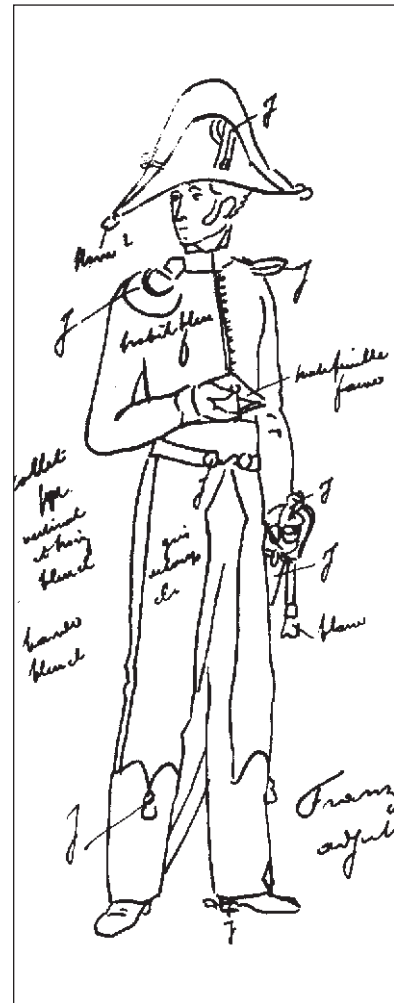
“Generals of Division commanding armies or army-corps, [may have] six, just like the marshals.

“Generals of Division [may have] three, among which one major, two captains and lieutenants.

“Generals of Brigade [may have] two, captains or lieutenants.

“Nothing specifies the functions of aides-de-camp. One must add, however, that all the missions compatible with their ranks, and which are of a such a nature as to be fulfilled by officers of the staff, can equally be so by the aides-de-camp, according to the orders of their generals, at whose exclusive disposition they are.”

Freiberg I, 16 >



Brun’s annotated tracing (above) of I, 16. Brun never completed a final illustration.



3-Franz: Adjutant