

*“There are lost collections to rescue and new discoveries to be made.  
Recreating an army is hard work—but worth it!”*

— John Elting, *Napoleonic Uniforms*

In 2000, noted French uniformologist and private collector Yves Martin gave his expert opinion to a buyer for a folio volume containing *gouaches* (a special type of watercolor illustration) of French Napoleonic soldiers. The figures he saw he recognized at once, for a small selection of the *gouaches* had been previously published in a French periodical without attribution to the artist. Martin recognized that the figures he was looking at were copied, in part, from the *Freiberg Manuscript* tracings in the Brunon collection.

Further research revealed that the *gouaches* Martin was evaluating were nothing less than some of the magnificent artwork commissioned by the well-known French collector and historian Gabriel Cottreau and executed in the early 1900s by a famous French illustrator and one of the foremost uniform artists of his era, Charles Brun. (To the best of my knowledge, the Brun illustrations shown in this book are the complete portfolio owned by Cottreau. That portfolio featured 63 works drawn directly from the *Freiberg Manuscript* as well as 35 additional renderings by Brun derived from another 1813 eyewitness source known as the *Camp de Dresde* or “Camp of Dresden” Manuscript — see page 8; these 35 uniform plates start on page 249.) Comparison of Brun’s *gouaches* with photocopies of the tracings found at the *Musée de l’Empire* revealed that Brun was in all probability the author of the tracings. This assumption was supported by Commandant Carles in the French publication *Sabretache* that showed a tracing of the Neapolitan officer in *Freiberg* I, 62 attributing the sketch to Charles Brun.



Contemporary print of *Freiberg*.

#### THE “LOST” MANUSCRIPT IS FOUND

The last part of this story is perhaps the most improbable. In November 2000 I received some black and white photocopies of drawings of Napoleonic soldiers. They were sent to me from a museum to which these portraits had been offered for sale. The museum’s curator requested an evaluation. The moment I saw them I was electrified — the original *Freiberg Manuscript* had finally reappeared!

Due to a lack of funds the museum was unable to purchase the set. In order to preserve and protect the collection, Robin Bates (aka The Red Lancer), a militaria and fine art dealer who had already purchased Cottreau’s 98 *Freiberg* and *Dresden* French uniform illustrations rendered by Charles Brun, acquired these 30 *Freiberg* originals.

While the work to create a book of these uniform plates was underway, Yves Martin and Gérard Madelin provided 17 additional original *Freiberg* paintings to include in the final volume. Over the past two years experts on two continents have contributed to this project that presents 113 historically important *Freiberg* uniform plates — either the original plate or the Brun copy.

The mystery had one final twist. The owner of the initial 30 Winkler portraits, described above, was a German antiquarian dealer who, after purchasing the manuscript at an auction in 1966, filed it and forgot about the drawings only to rediscover them in the fall of 2000. It turns out that the lost *Freiberg Manuscript*, one of the most important and influential sources concerning Napoleonic uniforms, had simply languished in a drawer for almost thirty-five years!

As *Napoleon’s Last Grande Armée* was almost ready to go to print, another three Winkler originals appeared at an auction in Germany — the *only* known original Winkler illustrations of French and French-allied troops from Part Three of the *Freiberg Manuscript* (for the remainder, we must rely on Knötel’s notes and Brun’s renderings). They were purchased by one of the most renowned French collectors who, aware of the preparation of this study, made them available for this collection. This generosity by Vincent Bourgeot merits particular appreciation because for one of the illustrations there was no surviving Brun tracing or other record than that of Richard Knötel’s written description.

With the addition of these last three plates, this collection is able to present all known French and French-allied figures of the *Freiberg Manuscript*, either as Winkler’s original illustrations (50 plates), or as Brun’s color copies (78 figures on 63 plates), or as Brun’s tracings (91 tracings) of Winkler’s originals. Thus, 190 years after its creation, the *Freiberg Manuscript* may finally celebrate a rebirth, adding to the record of Napoleon’s last *Grande Armée*.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE ORIGINAL FREIBERG MANUSCRIPT

Unfortunately, the newly found *Freiberg Manuscript* — however authentic and exciting — was not complete. Twenty-seven original Winkler drawings are shown in this collection with matching Brun illustrations that are based on those originals. Another 23 Winkler paintings that do not have matching Brun plates are also presented in *Napoleon’s Last Grande Armée*. These 50 original *Freiberg Manuscript* watercolors are critical eyewitness source material on the uniforms worn by the French army and its allies in 1813, but most of Winkler’s 166 original *Freiberg* illustrations still remain scattered, lost, or inaccessible.

To help understand what is published here, Richard Knötel’s description of the original *Freiberg Manuscript*, which he explained as being composed of three parts, is summarized below.

**PART ONE:** *A softbound book (height 21.5 cm, width 16 cm; cover approximately .5 cm larger.) This part contained 69 single figures of the French and French-allied troops of the Grande Armée each on its own page.*

Of the 50 original Winkler watercolors reproduced in this book, 47 came from Part One of the *Freiberg Manuscript*. Of Charles Brun’s 63 plates based on the *Freiberg Manuscript*, 42 are copies of Winkler watercolors from Part One. Richard Knötel identified Winkler’s plates from Part One with a Roman numeral (I), followed by the Arabic numeral of that plate (which appears at the top of Winkler’s illustration). For example, Winkler’s plate 37 shown below is identified as I, 37 by Knötel and in this book.

Of Brun’s 91 tracings of the original *Freiberg* paintings, 45 were made of Winkler drawings in Part One. All 45 of these tracings are presented in this book on the page opposite either the Brun final color plate (42 total), or opposite the *Freiberg* original if Brun did not make a final plate (3 tracings).

This softbound manuscript does not exist anymore as it was cut into single sheets. The whereabouts of some of the original watercolor illustrations from Part One (such as those of Westphalians, Italians, and Neapolitans) are unknown.

**PART TWO:** *Seven booklets (in the style of a student’s exercise book) in a flexible light green cover (height 21.5 cm, width 16.5 cm). Part Two of the Freiberg Manuscript portrayed 61 Russian, Prussian, and Austrian soldiers of the Coalition forces opposing Napoleon, in the same manner as the preceding part.*

These paintings are not reproduced in this collection as the subject of *Napoleon’s Last Grande Armée* focuses on the soldiers who served in Napoleon’s last great imperial army.

**PART THREE:** *Similar to Part Two, but slightly larger booklets (height 24 cm, width 19 cm) containing 35 pages of group portraits totaling 155 soldiers. Figures from parts one and two are often repeated in this part of the manuscript.*

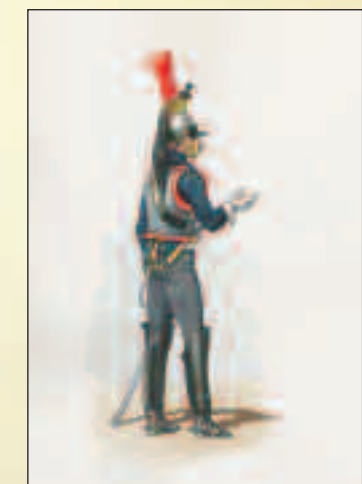
Three original plates from Part Three are presented in this book. Unfortunately, except for these three plates and one illustration showing an Austrian camp scene, the rest of Part Three of the *Freiberg Manuscript* has not been found. Charles Brun created 21 color illustrations for the collector Gabriel Cottreau from figures in Part Three and these are reproduced as color plates in *Napoleon’s Last Grande Armée*.

Richard Knötel identified Winkler’s plates from Part Three with a Roman numeral (III), followed by a letter (A, B, or C) denoting the section of Part Three in which the plate appeared. An Arabic numeral identified the specific plate, while numbers in parenthesis denoted each individual figure on the plate, from left to right. For example, this book’s Plate 66 is *Freiberg* IIIA, 131 (1–4).

Of Brun’s 91 tracings of the original *Freiberg* paintings, 46 were made of Winkler drawings in Part Three. All but nine of these tracings are presented in this book on the page opposite either the Brun final color plate (35 figures for 21 plates), or opposite the *Freiberg* original if Brun did not make a final plate (one tracing). The nine additional Brun tracings from Part Three are presented on pages 244–247.



*Freiberg* I, 37



Brun N° 46

Above are examples of a Winkler original watercolor (Winkler’s plate 37 from Part One, left) and a Brun copy of that original (Brun’s plate Number 46, right). Variations in colors, equipment and uniforms between Winkler’s original and Brun’s copies are noted in this book’s text on the facing page opposite that plate (in this case, Plates 50 and 51, respectively).