

OF THE DEFENSE OF VILLAGES IN GAMES



What reading history does to you...

Village fights in games are sometimes done in a sort of fantasy way. And they should not, that is there is no need, it does not even speed up things for the "pure fun types" of gamers.

Basically there would be three types of doing it in games, depending on the scale of the game. Black powder, "horse and musket era" till maybe 1870.

1 Huge things with mostly brigades as the unit.

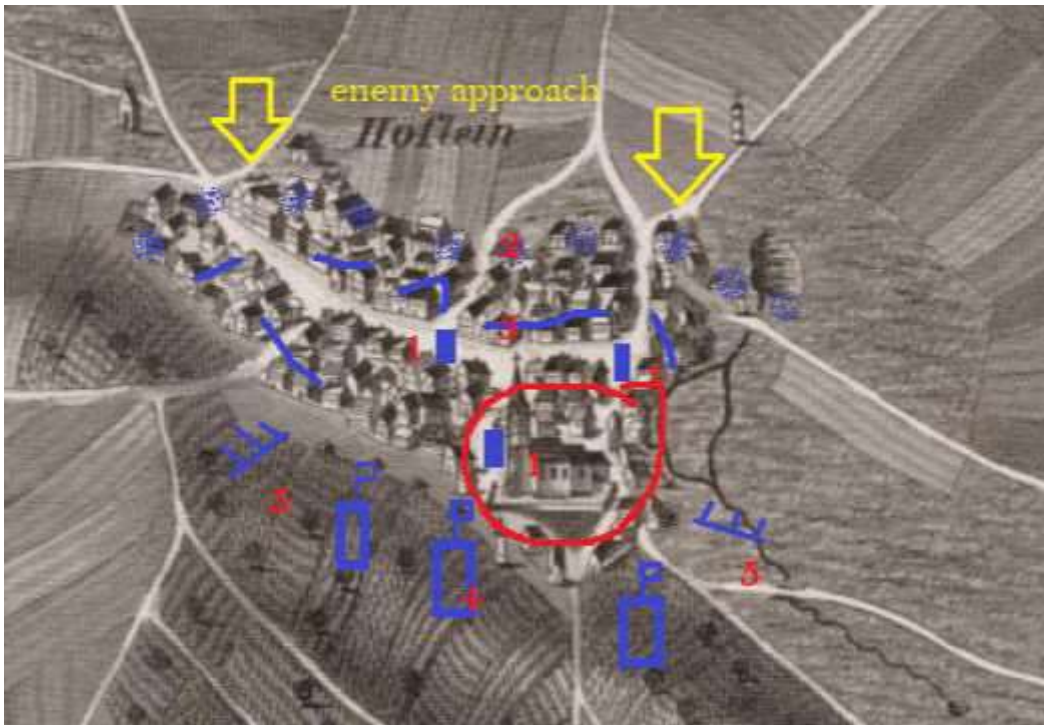
2 units as battalions, can be big game or 'divisional'

3 grand skirmish thing, lots of figures per battalion or lower level units represented (Sharp Practice type)



How would you defend such a place?

of course the place has changed, expanded, and they even planted the awful windmills. But a couple of goggle maps pics will give an idea. this village was something like 400+m long by 250 at the largest width.



theoretical French doctrine defense



from enemy approach



the rear, "sanctuary"

Obviously in practice a lot depends on the way of the village is built, the surrounding terrain up to a point. As for the terrain, villages layouts (would be different elsewhere, but short of the perched, or walled layouts of Southern Europe, the idea is valid) this Austrian gave it a lot of thoughts and has great explanations and material. <https://wargamingraft.wordpress.com/?s=1809+terrain>

So the village defense would be layered in 4 parts.

A First they would identify and enhance the "sanctuary" the strongest place, that needs be opposite (as much as possible) the expected enemy approach, and strong enough to be a final resistance point, for a while at least., wide enough to receive the wounded, the ammunition reserve and HQ. Here it is surrounded in red. #1

B The round blue blops #2, a sort of skirmish screen (using the gardens, (walls , fences hedges) outer houses, as a security element, active counter recon, disturbing advances (shooting cadres?) information pickets. This is not intended to resist close order determined attacks.

C The main resistance blocks #3. should use all possibilities, interlocking fires, ambushes, always have a way out (or in for replacements) .

The #1 blue rectangles are local reserves for limited counterattack and feeding more troops in C.

Then behind the village, sheltered from fire, battalions in support, wait to immediately counter attack, a major penetration, and feed more troops in. You would have a village commander and an overall commander who has the hand over the whole set. Ideally one can have guns on the side to discourage flanking. the idea is that the enemy will tire, disorganise and lose control from its advance inside and be ejected by the fresh counterattack which will have had less time to disorganise itself. the fights of Sokolnitz Telnitz in 18052 are great examples.

Game it..

I will evade fast the **grand skirmish game** as most of us won't be able to assemble such an amount of figures and real estate. You would need a low ratio of men per figures to do it right, something as one to ten. In fact it could be a funny thing for a show or a club with multiplayer and strict limits of talking between them plus chaos and some control rules. A big sharp Practice might work.

For other games:

First (pet) grumbling about villages in games. One simply do not go in line and shoot down the defenders with musketry. Not even nowadays (ok maybe snipers, if they show up?). It works in games, way too often, never ever seen any reference of that in books and it makes sense. You can shoot say up to 200m away? (further in 1870 but they would hardly see any details after a few shots), shoot what?

In my defense example the picket line will be mostly hidden, the best shots in a position to snipe on you and your line shooting will be mostly lost on cover. After a while you will run out of ammo, and it is quite likely that the exchange will be in your disfavour. It certainly will do no harm to people who are in houses, behind walls, if they do not need to show up. They only would if you get too close, and have "assault parties" coming in. Then yes local platoon "suppression" fire are done (can be seen in period pictures, even before, Chew House anyone?), but then all this is very close, a few dozen meters. In a game it is all relevant to our assault / melee confrontation. You did have artillery bombarding, especially if they have howitzers (and again they do talk about it relatively close and bigger guns, as on good Euro houses, black powder balls very fast lose power). I shudder still thinking about a game of Fuentes last century, with Empire rules, where my combined elite cos, in the village, where destroyed by French lines shooting them down.

So in games, except skirmishes, infantry vs villages should be restricted to assault. You could have skirmishers bickering against the occupants to tire them, the limit their ability to make a nuisance of themselves outside. Think of a properly occupied village as of a fort, it can shoot (resting musket- better) out 200m; guys can skirmish out of it and snipe at you...

Be a unit a battalion or a brigade or so, your ground imprint will be say from 10cm to 20 in line, which will give your surface scale. Often 1cm= 20 to 40 m or more! So my Höflein will be 20 x10 to 6x10 cm. It makes it quite difficult to put more than two houses inside except in 6-10mm and even. But considering that in reality the enemy would not venture inside the 200m fire zone around except to attack (Zone of control?) then your area could easily be represented as a compromise 500-600x400m area. Much better at 1cm=40 m 15cm x 10 cm and it is a small village, many are much bigger. It makes it nicer, you can have courtyards or gardens to put troops in (yes I did too have hovering bases on roofs back then..yes I confess). You also solved the problem of the zone of control/ danger from the village, anything that comes to touch will attack. If you have a figure to men scale (and then a bigger village) you might even show "sectors" and the "redan" (sanctuary) give it a better defense.

To make things simple and yet realistic, (it depends how long is your game turn/ decision segment) troops should be defined as occupying (had time to analyse the layout, spread and do the above system) or just moving in. A successful assault should disorganise the attackers for a turn or fraction, leave them moving in (so less benefits for defense) allowing for the counter strike from the rear. It should take a turn (?) to occupy. Another thing, it is very rare they do an all-around defense as said in (too) many rules. No one normally wants or plans to be encircled. Again, it all depends of the scale and time of a game turn. In 1/2 hour, games, you can probably pass over the switching defense, but maybe a die roll to see if they reorganized in time (and fully get their cover bonus) could be good.

Another thing with villages. I don't think morale rolls as in the open should be too realistic. Mostly we are talking of disconnected groups who hardly see much further than a few dozen meters (the ones who could have a better perception of what is happening be the officers, but then you could expect them not to be the first to run?) so panics and shaken results should be limited if not avoided. It is also very common to have mixtures of troops from different outfits, which in game terms can be of different "morale" grades. Hougoumont comes to mind. Bombardment can grind down numbers, but short of big spreading fires would hardly drive them out (and then the attacker can hardly go in too). It can help attacks (and they say so in books) but not as a garrison destruction method. Maybe a bit more post 1850 with shells. All this is simple to implement into existing rules. it might even make games faster;)

One can find sources for this in: (and others I can't remember ;)

The_three_arms_or_Divisional_tactics_Decker