

## 1st Pennsylvania Battalion

The Continental Congress ordered the First Pennsylvania Battalion to be raised for service in Canada by a resolution on December 21, 1775. The Regiment's first commander, Colonel Bull, resigned his commission and left the task to the new Colonel Philip De Haas. The First Pennsylvania Battalion raised upwards of 500 men that marched from Philadelphia all the way up to Isle Aux Noix at the north end of Lake Champlain. By February 15<sup>th</sup> of 1776 companies of the First Battalion had reached Albany in New York. The Battalion continued up to Quebec and Montreal where they reinforced Colonel Benedict Arnold. Under General John Thomas and subsequently General Horatio Gates, the First Pennsylvania followed the retreat of the American Army all the way back down to Ticonderoga by July of 1776. The First Pennsylvania Battalion took up the Heights of Carillon with other Pennsylvania Battalions. Here the First Pennsylvania Battalion dug in and defended until sent home in December of that year. Although small in number, Drummers and Fifers of the First Pennsylvania Battalion played an important role in the regulation of daily life in the army. Whether retreating back up Lake Champlain in July of 1776 or manning the alarm posts to defend against a British attack, all such orders were sent out through the sounds of drums and fifes.

The Congress resolved on January 11<sup>th</sup> on the equipment for the First Pennsylvania Battalion:

The following article to be provided for the First Pennsylvania Battalion, under command on Colonel Bull, now under orders to march for Canada, viz: 688 Caps; 688 pairs Mittens; 688 pair stockings; 688 pairs leggings; 688 pairs shoes; 1200 shirts; 300 pairs blankets; 688 Haversacks; 688 slings for firelocks; 688 waistcoats; 500 pair breeches; 64 pitching-axes. And nine Baggage-wagons

Colonel De Haas wrote on November 13<sup>th</sup> 1776 of the state of clothing & Equipment for his Battalion:

The arms are in tolerable order, but of different caliber. The accoutrements bad, many bayonets wanting. The men almost naked, and have been so two thirds of the campaign. Their clothing, when they marched from Philadelphia, being very scanty, and not a second shirt to their backs.

The rapid raising of the battalion and hasty march into Canada led to the major gaps within their clothing and other supplies. A mix of uniform regimental clothing and civilian clothing brought from home created a semi-uniformed appearance of the First Pennsylvania Battalion throughout their service in 1776.



## Coats

Coats appear to be one of the few consistent issued items amongst men of the First Battalion. The Pennsylvania Evening Post recorded on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1777 one deserter from the First Pennsylvania Battalion who re-enlisted in Moses Hazen's Regiment wearing his old clothes:

Patrick Ferrel, about twenty-two years of age, five feet four inches high, short black hair, and dark complexion. He had on when he went away, a brown coat faced with green, the buttons marked 1. B. P. blue jacket, and light coloured velvet breeches.

Again on March 8, 1777 three deserters lately from the First Pennsylvania Battalion were recorded:

Francis Galaher, born in Ireland, about five feet six inches high, and did belong to the First Pennsylvania battalion, lately from Ticonderoga. He had on, when he went away, a brown uniform coat faced with green, the letters 1 P B on the buttons, his other clothes unknown.

James Williams, alias WHITE, did belong to Capt. Dorsey, is lately from Ticonderoga, a well made fellow, about five feet eight inches high, and black curly hair. He had on, when he went away, a brown uniform coat turned up with green, the letters 1 P B on the buttons, and a cocked hat; his other clothes unknown

At least one bill for coats survives for Captain Allen Williams Company. Mease & Caldwell, commissaries, supplied Captain Williams Company with enough coats for everyone in 1776:

Serjeants Coats	4	2.9.0
Drum &fife	1	2.2.6
Privates Coats	80	1.19.0

Just one drummers coat of this company was purchased. It was valued above that of a private, but below that of a sergeant. An "Invoice of sundry packages of clothing" supplied by Mease & Caldwell to North Carolina Troops on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1776 indicates reversed



colored coats for drummers:

Per Peter Nye's wagon

No. 1 A case containing 320 Privates coats mixt cloth faced with red.

No. 2 A case containing 320 Privates coats drab faced with blue

No. 4 A case containing 264 Privates coats brown faced with white

32 Sergeants coats brown  
faced with white

16 Drums and Fifes white faced  
with brown

Per Michael Truby's Wagon

No. 3 A case containing 240 Privates coats drab cloth faced with blue

32 sergeants coats drab faced  
with blue

16 Drums and Fifes blue faced  
with drab

Supplied by the same contractor as North Carolina troops, drummers and fifers of the First Pennsylvania Battalion were clothed in colors reverse of the privates' coats, green faced with brown. The buttons of the First Pennsylvania Battalion are both described in deserter reports and recovered at Ticonderoga archeologically. The pewter buttons read "1BP" in the center surrounded by "Continental Army."

The painting "A Dreadful scene of havock" by Xavier della Gatta in 1782 depicts the Battle of Paoli in 1777. The painting shows several Pennsylvania soldiers under attack. Della Gatta depicted the ambushed Pennsylvania troops in short coats, turned back at the front, and dragoon cuffs upon their sleeves. This contemporary depiction of Pennsylvania troops brings light to the style and construction of early Pennsylvania troop's clothing.

Best: Hand finished, well-fit, green broadcloth short coat with brown cloth cuffs, collar, lapels, and lining (partial or fully lined) with dragoon cuff and pocket detail worked in



mohair or linen thread, with 1st Pennsylvania Battalion buttons.

Acceptable: Hand finished, well-fit, green broadcloth short coat with brown cloth cuffs, collar, lapels, and lining (partial or fully lined) with dragoon cuff and pocket detail with soutache in lieu of buttonholes, with 1st Pennsylvania Battalion buttons.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

### Coat Instructions Found Here

#### **Smallclothes**

Congress' January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1776 resolve for *Articles to be provided for the first Pennsylvania Batt'n, under the Command of Colo. Bull, now under orders to March for Canada*, included 688 waistcoat and 500 Pair Breeches. The clothing bill for Captain Allen Williams Company charged by Mease & Caldwell in 1776 includes:  
60 Privates Vest

46 Pair of breeches

Eight pair of Leather Breeches

Deserter Patrick Ferrel was mentioned in the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1777 evening post wearing his "brown coat faced with green, the buttons marked 1. B.P. blue jacket, and light coloured velvet breeches." This description suggests that military small clothes for the First Pennsylvania Battalion were assembled with whatever cloth was on hand in Philadelphia. While at Ticonderoga Quartermaster John Harper of Fourth Pennsylvania Battalion drew pieces of cloth in a wide assortment of colors and weaves, for waistcoats, mittens and other missing garments. Such detailed records for First Battalion have not been found, but it is likely they drew a similar assortment of cloth from Ticonderoga stores too.

#### **Waistcoats**

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit, single or double-breasted, skirted, square cut or belted waistcoats with or without sleeves made of drab, brown, green, red or blue broadcloth, kersey, or serge.  
Acceptable: Well-fit, single or double breasted, skirted or square cut waistcoats of linen, linsey-woolsey, cotton, cotton velvet, or wool plush in solid colors or simple patterns.

Unacceptable: Upholstery fabric waistcoats, extremely long or baggy waistcoats.

#### **Breeches**

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit, leather breeches, breeches with buckled knee bands in black, brown, drab, kersey, linsey-woolsey, serge, cotton velvet, wool plush, broadcloth or trousers of linen or hemp canvas or checked linen.

Acceptable: Well-fit white wool British Army breeches.



Unacceptable: Anything else.

### **Spatterdashes**

The Regiment was resolved to draw “688 pairs of leggings” in January of 1776. Captain Allen Williams drew out of stores “86 pairs of Leggings” for his company. Reports from Pennsylvania Committee of Safety member Owen Biddle, from the fall of 1776 for supplying their battalions include hundreds of, “Drilling leggings”, which were occasionally alternately labeled, “Drilling Spatterdashes.” This indicates that leggings drawn for the regiment were similar calf-length leggings.

Best: Hand finished, well-fit russia drilling spatterdashes painted black with horn or leather buttons.

Acceptable: Hand finished, well-fit black wool cloth spatterdashes with horn or leather buttons.

Discouraged: Nothing at all.

Unacceptable: Native leggings or anything else.

### **Socks and Stockings**

Best: White or grey wool yarn or worsted stockings or socks seamed with back seams.

Acceptable: No Socks worn with trousers.

Unacceptable: Red, yellow, or polyester stockings.

### **Shoes**

Best: Hand-finished, short or long-quartered, round-toe, shoes with black waxed calf uppers, fitted for buckles.

Acceptable: Machine made, black leather, shoes with buckles or ties or high-lows.

Unacceptable: Modern Footwear, modern moccasins, civil war bootees, or riding boots.



### **Hats & Caps**

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1776 when Congress resolved the forming of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Battalion they requested 688 caps. Captain Williams was charged against his account for drawing 86 Hatts valued at 0.7.6 and 86 Caps valued higher at 0.9.6. The price difference indicates the caps are leathern caps, and the Continental Congress' October 8, 1776 resolution for the clothing bounty within the Continental Army specified, “a hat or leather cap,” per man. Images and surviving examples leather caps from the early years of the Revolutionary War, indicate fairly simple caps. The example in the New Hampshire Historical society, with a plain front and back appears to be a common style for this period.

Best: Hand-made leather cap based off the example at the New Hampshire Historical society.

Discouraged: Hand-made, round-block wool felt cocked hat or round hat, wool monmouth cap.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

### **Neckwear**

Best: Silk, linen, or cotton neckerchiefs; linen neck stocks, or linen rollers, well-tied around the neck

Discouraged: Military horsehair or leather neck stocks.



Unacceptable: Nothing at all.

### **Shirts**

Best: Hand-stitched shirts made of osnaburg, checked, striped, or white linen with narrow band cuffs and thread Dorset buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links).

Unacceptable: Cotton calico or plaid shirts.

### **Knapsacks and Tumpines**

Best: Hand-made David Uhl style knapsack.

Unacceptable: British painted or goatskin knapsacks.

### **Blankets**

Best: 2-3 Point checked, Dutch, or Rose blankets.

Acceptable: No Blanket

Discouraged: Hudson Bay blankets.

Unacceptable: Civil War grey blankets.

### **Canteens**

Best: Wood cheese box, or staved canteens of documented period pattern with narrow leather or linen webbing strap. Cheese box canteens should have narrow leather keepers or narrow iron staples to retain the strap.

Discouraged: Tin canteens of kidney or half-moon shape.

Unacceptable: Wool canteen covers, jacked leather canteens, covered glass bottles, copper canteens, stainless steel canteens, gourd canteens, and Petite Bidon.

