

80th Regiment or Gage's Lightly Armed Foot

At the close of 1757, Lord Loudoun was preparing to raise a new regiment in the colonies to serve as a hybrid between a ranger corps and a regular regiment. As early as December of 1757 several officers were given commissions to serve in the 80th Regiment of Foot, Light-Armed infantry. These "Lather caps", 500 men strong, were commanded by Colonel Thomas Gage. The 80th had five companies in all that would serve on scouting parties, and play a vital role in the attack at Ticonderoga.

The clothing and equipment of Gage's men were a mix of locally procured items as well as pieces from His Majesty's stores. On December 23rd, 1757 Lord Loudoun would propose that the 80th receive: "540 Suits of clothing Coat Westcoat, Pair of breeches leggings and making.

540 Firelocks, cutting & finishing

540 Hachets with handles

540 Knives with scabbards

540 pairs of shoes

540 pairs of stockings or 2 pair of socks

540 flannel shirts

540 shot bags

540 horns

540 caps."

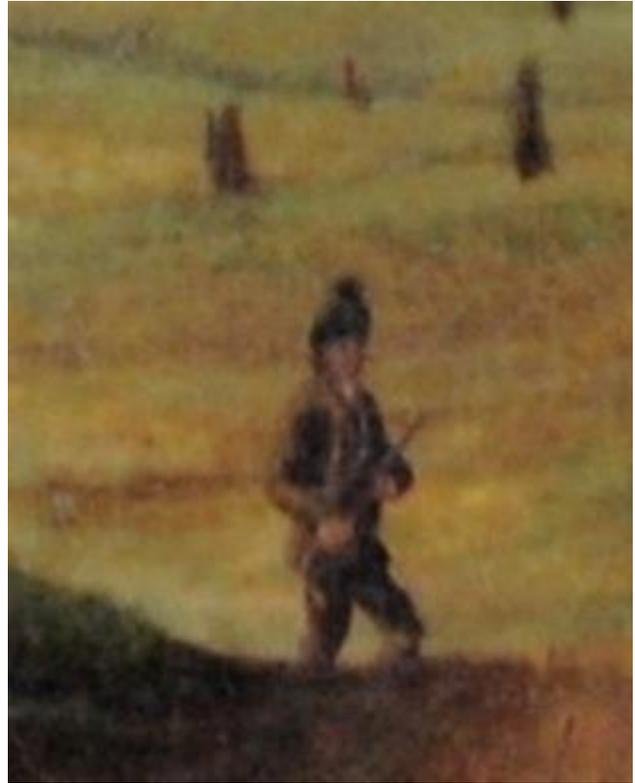


Several sources describe what these uniforms looked like:

Robert Napier in a letter on November 6, 1758 describes the clothing as “dark brown short coats” with “black buttons.”

On January 6th, 1759 Captain Allan Campbell writes to John Campbell describing the previous year of 1758: “He’s [George Campbell] now second oldest Lieut in General Gage’s Regt of light arm’d infantry...I have advanced him Twenty Guineas for which he gave me a Bill on you. I hope you’ll not Disapprove of my conduct for doing it, not blame him for running so much short, when I explain to you the cause of it; its true he came over very well Rigged out, but his changing Corps put him under the necessity of Buying new Regimentals, as these Differ in Colours from the rest of the Army, being Brown.”

January of 1759, Sir Jeffery Amherst would note that “Brigadier General Gage’s light infantry who wanted a great many men are completed, the Yankees love dearly a brown coat.”



Thomas Davies’ “a View of the Lines at Lake George” pictures an 80th soldier in the year 1759. A letter from John Hall, 80th Quartermaster, states in March 1759 he ordered 525 uniforms “such as those last Year...nigh as the same Colour as could be got.” Therefore, this image of the light infantryman is a good depiction of how one of Gage’s men would have looked in 1758. The Davies portrait also depicts the style of leather caps used by the 80th.

A deserter ad in early 1759 lists a few soldiers of the 80th in blue leggings, likely of the military style, similar to those described by Captain John Knox of the 43rd Regiment of Foot.

The proposal of equipment lacks campaign necessities like blankets, knapsacks, haversacks, and canteens. These items were likely to be pulled from King’s Stores. These issued items would consist of British Army blankets, cow-hide knapsacks, government stamped haversacks, and kidney-shaped style tin canteens.

The weapons issued to Colonel Gage's men were King's arms pulled from stores. A complete stand of arms would consist of a British pattern firelock, an accompanying bayonet, scabbard, belt, frog, and cartridge box (9 or 12 round). The weapons were not merely issued, but refined to be more manageable. While the original proposal for the 80th states "540 firelocks, cutting & finishing," the entry from the 55th Regiment of Foot's Orderly Book on May 8th, 1758 corroborates this--"all smiths & carpenters in the garrison, those employ'd in cutting the arms excepted, to be sent directly to Capt Ord." Excavations of these encampments turn up muzzle ends from 4-6 inches, indicating the firelocks were cut down to roughly 42 inches. On June 12, 1758 Alexander Moneypenny recorded "Each Regt to receive ten riffled pieces from the store, & to return the like number of firelocks for them." A combination of shorter, lighter firelocks, cartridge boxes, shot bags, and horns would allow Gage's men to detach themselves on scouting parties for extended periods of time.

The creation of the 80th set a precedent for future warfare in North America. New thinkers like Thomas Gage, Robert Rogers, and Lord Howe were able to facilitate such changes while still filling practical needs and century old traditions. The fighting style of Gage's men was more apt for the environment, and began to catch on with regulars and provincials. The uniform, arms, and equipment contained a sense of traditional style coupled with "bush fighting" functionality.



Caps

Best: Light cap styled after the Thomas Davies painting.

Acceptable: Felt cap styled like the light caps.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

Shirts

Best: Hand-stitched white or blue & white checked linen shirt with short collar (under two and a half inches) narrow band cuffs with thread Dorset buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links). Flannel shirts described in Gage's proposal.

Acceptable: Machine stitched checked, striped, or white linen shirts.

Unacceptable: Cotton calico or plaid shirts.

Neckwear

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

Acceptable: Machine hemmed neckerchiefs or linen rollers.

Unacceptable: Military horsehair or leather neck stocks.



Coats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit, brown Light Infantry coats, unlaced, short, without collar and japanned or painted black buttons.

Acceptable: Well-fit, brown Light Infantry coats, unlaced, short, without collar and japanned/painted black buttons, with little visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Hunting shirts, Blanket shirts, Fur skins.

Jackets and Waistcoats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit brown waistcoat with japanned or painted black buttons with or without sleeves.

Acceptable: Well-fit, brown waistcoat with japanned or painted black buttons with or without sleeves with minor visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Cotton canvas, upholstery fabric waistcoats, extremely long or baggy waistcoats.



Breeches

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit brown regimental breeches, with buckled knee bands.

Acceptable: Well-fit brown regimental breeches with buckled, buttoned or tied knee bands with minor visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Fringed trousers, baggy breeches.

Legwear

Best: Well-fit wool British army leggings of blue stout woolen cloth. Garters made of the same material.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

Footwear

Best: Civilian black waxed leather buckled shoe.

Acceptable: Pucker toe or vamped mocassins

Unacceptable: Officer's boots on non-officers; Dyer, Arrow, Minnetonka moccasins, Shoepacks



Cartridge Boxes

Best: Nine or Twelve round Government accoutrement set with box, belt, frog & scabbard.

Acceptable: 18-Round Government accoutrement set.

Unacceptable: Anything else

Shot Bag

Best: Plain leather small shot bag on a narrow leather shoulder strap.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

Powder Horns

Best: Plain, empty, powder horns with narrow leather or hemp straps.

Unacceptable: Anything else.



Arms

Best: Long land pattern muskets cut down to 42" browned barrel or German Contract Rifle (Maximum 2 per company).

Acceptable: Long land pattern muskets, Short Land pattern muskets.

Unacceptable: Canoe gun, blunderbuss, long rifles.

Sidearms

Best: Bayonet & British camp axe .

Acceptable: Bayonet only.

Unacceptable: Anything else.



Tumplines

Best: Hemp webbing tumpline.

Acceptable: Leather tumpline or none.

Unacceptable: Anything else.

Knapsack

Best: British Army hair-on cowhide snapsack with single leather shoulder strap.

Acceptable: None

Haversack

Best: British Stamped GR osnaburg haversack.

Acceptable: Plain osnaburg haversack.

Canteens

Best: Kidney-shaped tinned-iron British army canteen on a hemp cord or cheesebox canteen.

Acceptable: Similar tinned-iron canteens.

Blankets

Best: British Army Blankets.

Acceptable: 2-3 point check, Dutch, Rose blankets, Civilian center-seamed blankets. Plain white or Hudson Bay blankets.

Unacceptable: Civil War grey or modern olive green blankets.

