

“The Garrison At Ticonderoga Is So Weak,” Connecticut Soldiers at Ticonderoga

Colonel Henry Knox wrote to General Washington of the challenges in gathering up vital cannons and ammunition from Fort Ticonderoga, as he prepared to leave Fort George at the head of Lake George on December 5th.

The garrison at *Ticonderoga* is so weak, the conveyance from the fort to the landing is so difficult, the passage across the lake so precarious, that I am afraid it will be ten days at least before I can get them on this side.

The garrison of Fort Ticonderoga when Henry Knox finally entered the Fort on the sixth was indeed quite weak. Much like the northern army as a whole, the garrison comprised New York soldiers, raised in July of 1775 specifically for the Canadian campaign and Connecticut soldiers raised in April and May for defensive service following Lexington and Concord. The clothing, equipment, and disposition of the Connecticut troops at Ticonderoga have had significant research, beginning with their portrayal in 2012



The Connecticut troops at Ticonderoga consisted of individual platoons and companies from General David Wooster's, Colonel David Waterbury's, and Colonel Benjamin Hinman's Connecticut regiments. Having served in the successful sieges of St. Johns, Chambly and Montreal, these soldiers' seven month terms of service were nearing expiration. Most of these Connecticut soldiers had stayed to garrison Montreal under General Wooster while General Richard Montgomery pressed on towards Quebec City. Wooster, sympathetic to the expiration of the enlistment of his soldiers and their eagerness to leave Canada before the worst of the weather, allowed officers to take their men to posts in the rear of the Northern Army, like Ticonderoga. Defending his orders to General Phillip Schuyler in a December 18th letter General Wooster wrote, "I would inform you that I did not discharge any men, but only gave them a furlough-and that to the *Connecticut* troops only-to pass to *New-England*, as the term of their enlistments were not expired, and I imagined they might be very serviceable there..." Writing from Fort Ticonderoga on November 20th, General Phillip Schuyler described their eagerness to depart the Northern Army in a letter to the Continental Congress.

Our Army in *Canada* is daily reducing; about three hundred of the troops, raised in *Connecticut*, having passed here within a few days; so that I believe not more than six hundred and fifty or seven hundred, from that Colony, are left. From the different *New-York* Regiments,



about forty are also come away. An unhappy homesickness prevails. Those mentioned above all came down invalids; not one willing to re-engage for the winter service, and unable to get any work done by them, I discharged them, *en groupe*. Of all the specificks ever invented for any, there is none so efficacious as a discharge for this prevailing disorder. No sooner was it administered, but it perfected the cure of nine out of ten, who, refusing to wait for boats to go by the way of Fort George, slung their heavy packs, crossed the lake at this place, and undertook a march of two hundred miles with the greatest good-will and alacrity.

A month later, a special committee appointed by the Continental Congress investigated Ticonderoga, elaborating on General Schuyler's concerns as well as those of these soldiers. On December 23rd they wrote, "that of the troops from the several *New-England* Governments who went into *Canada*, all had returned before your Committee arrived at *Ticonderoga*, except about two hundred, who had reinlisted. Their departure, before the expiration of their term, was occasioned by their fear of being detained in *Canada* by the severity of the weather, and the reasonableness of allowing them to return to their respective homes before they were discharged." The committee described their principle complaint adding, "few of them will enter into the Army again, at least not immediately, and express a disgust at the service; which arises chiefly from their having been employed rather as labourers than soldiers."

Civilian Clothing for Regular Service

The Resolutions of April 26th, 1775 drafted a levee of one man per every four from the militia to create six Connecticut regiments for service at Boston or wherever the colony's defense required. Enlistment terms in 1775 were short, seven months only from the day of enlistment. This term of their enlistment contract was a detail that these soldiers were keenly aware of in the late months of 1775. Service for the Colony of Connecticut in 1775 was not voluntary, and each soldier was required to provide much of his own clothing and equipment as the assembly resolutions stated:

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That a premium of Fifty-Two Shillings per man shall be advanced and paid to each non-commissioned Officer and inhabitant upon their enlistment, they supplying themselves with a blanket, knapsack, clothing, &c., to the acceptance of their respective Captains, and that one month's pay shall be advanced and paid to each of said Officers and enlisted inhabitants. And it is further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that the establishment of pay and wages shall be as follows, viz: the pay for their whole services:

The Colonial assembly resolved to provide much of the camp equipage and supplies, but left the responsibility of each soldier's



clothing, accoutrements and arms, to the soldiers themselves. Looking at descriptions of deserters from the Connecticut regiments of 1775 its quite clear that the men wore their own civilian clothing brought from home. Indeed, the details listed about this clothing barely differ from any runaway advertisements in newspapers from the colony in the mid 1770s. A soldier from Colonel Hinman's regiment deserted en-route to Fort Ticonderoga wearing, "a gray outside jacket, lapelled, green plush breeches, streaked trousers and a caster hat," as described in the, Connecticut Courant on June 5th, 1775. Colonel Samuel Parson's Regiment marched for Boston when it mustered, excepting the company of Captain Edward Mott who marched his company to Ticonderoga. A deserter from this regiment was described wearing "a light colored fustian coat, calico waistcoat, drab breeches and white stockings," in a Connecticut Courant advertisement from June 19th, 1775.

Colonel Charles Burrall's Connecticut regiment, raised in January of 1776 for service in the Northern Army, was similarly equipped with civilian clothing. Some the regiment's officers, like Ensign Bayze Wells, and enlisted soldiers served in Colonel Hinman's regiment that summer. Deserters from Burrall's Regiment may indicate the civilian clothing worn by these Connecticut soldiers as winter weather began in the fall of 1775.

Deserted, from Capt. Downe's company, in Col. Burrall's regiment, in the Continental Army, one Thomas Stilwell, about 47 years of age, near six feet high, black hair; had on when he went away a brown surtout coat, blue duffil trowsers,

[*ConnecticutCourant*, March 18, 1776.]
Albany, April 2, 1776.

Deserted from my company, in Col. Burrell's regiment, at Albany, on the evening of the 31st of March ult. two Irishmen, John Hawley and John Fitzgerald, both of them considerable of their native brogue, they are each about five feet and half high; Hawley is about 40 years old, of a redish complexion, black short hair, with a small mixture of grey; had on when he deserted, a blue bearskin surtout, striped woollen jacket, black breeches and a new felt hat; Fitzgerald is about 24 years old, has a light complexion, black short hair; had on a brown homespun coat, with large plated buttons, old cloth breeches and a newish felt hat.

Parmelee, Captain.

[*ConnecticutCourant*, May 6, 1776.]

Oliver



Winter Clothing

Chaplain Ammi Robbins, from Colonel Burrall's regiment, wrote a detailed inventory of the clothing and belongings which accompanied him in his service in Canada and the retreat of the Northern Army to Ticonderoga in 1776. Along with changes of shirts, stockings and a couple suits, Robbins brought a, "Cloak, Great Coat...Gloves, mitts," and also, "One pair Indian stockings." Chaplain Robbins served all the way through the Canadian campaign into 1776, so his Indian stockings may reflect a whole winter's experience in Canada. General Schuyler, in a December 8th letter to the Continental Congress recommended that soldiers, "should therefore be provided with *Canadian* moccasins, which, I believe, will cost about four shillings, or four and six pence a pair; a thick woollen cap to cover their ears; a pair of *Indian* stockings; and a good pair of mittens." This recommendation post-dated the arrival of all the Connecticut troops passing through Ticonderoga, but elements of this protective clothing may have been acquired in and around Montreal. Trousers, particularly heavy woollen trousers worn in addition to breeches show up in many deserter and runaway descriptions from New England in the winter months of the year in the period as well. Trousers like the "Blue duffil trowsers," like those cited in the deserter's description from Burrall's regiment in March of 1776, may have been another common approach to the cold.

Captured Clothing

At least some Connecticut soldiers took British soldiers' blanket coats after Fort Saint John and Fort Chambly were successfully captured. A letter from Whitehead Hicks, Esq; Mayor of the City of New York, published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, records on October 28th, "He [General Montgomery] met General Wooster near Ticonderoga; our people had taken from the Regulars some blanket coats, stockings and shoes, four hogsheads of rum and some wine." Blanket coats were available in the civilian dress among Canadians, and may well have been purchased or procured by Connecticut soldiers. Brunswick General Baron Riedesel described blanket coats as part of the normal dress of Canadians.

Over this, again, they wear a long jacket of white woolen cloth reaching down to their knees. This is ornamented with all kinds of colored ribbons, which serve the place of buttons. Around the waist they wear scarfs, which keeps the waistcoat or capote (as they style it), close together. This scarf is made of different colored yarn, and makes quite a display. In the winter they wear longer capotes of cloth, or the skins of the porpoise, which they understand perfectly how to prepare for this purpose, having learned it from the Indians.

Captured or purchased blanket coats were available early enough in the Canadian campaign to be worn by Connecticut soldiers before they departed Montreal for Ticonderoga. At least one Connecticut soldier was described in an April 29th, 1776



advertisement, taking with him, “an old blanket coat.”

Despite being captured in Montreal, British regimental clothing from the 7th and 26th Regiments of Foot was forwarded onto Quebec. General Montgomery, writing from near the Heights of Abraham, confirmed the arrival and issuance of these captured British uniforms to General Schuyler on December 5th, the day before Knox arrived at Ticonderoga.

With a year's clothing of the 7th and 26th, I have relieved the distresses of Arnold's corps, and forwarded the clothing of some other corps. The greatest part of that clothing is a fair prize, except such as immediately belonged to the prisoners taken on board; they must be paid for theirs, as it was their own property.

While this clothing appears among various American soldiers at Ticonderoga in 1776, it was sent away from the Connecticut soldiers who were at Ticonderoga when they worked for Henry Knox loading cannons in 1775.

John Trumbull in his post-war painting of the Death of General Montgomery at Quebec, took the time to render fur-trimmed Canadian caps on many soldiers. Trumbull served with the Northern American army in 1776 as Aide du Camp to General Gates at Ticonderoga, so this may represent some of his experience with American soldiers retreating from Canada. This style of cap was noted by General Riedesel, “The scarcity of hats causes most every one to wear red woolen caps. Nor, if the Canadian wishes to be dressed up will he wear any other color. The aristocracy dress...casquets of the most beautiful fur instead of hats.” Fur trimmed Canadian caps are described in the winter dress of British soldiers and even rendered in copies of Watercolors made by the Hesse-Hanau officer Friedrich von Germann. Some of these caps, like civilian blanket coats, may have been picked up by Connecticut soldiers in Montreal. They were likely more common on those soldiers continued on Quebec City and should be a minority of hats.



Shirts

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

Acceptable: Machine stitched checked, striped, or white linen or wool 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: Horsehair or leather neck stocks.

Hats and Caps

Best: Hand-finished, round blocked, black wool or beaver felt, cocked hats round hats, or fan tail hats.

Acceptable: Knit wool Monmouth, Dutch mutt, or Kilmarnock caps, oval blocked, white felt cocked or round hats.

Acceptable (but in limited numbers): Red knit tuques, or fur-trimmed Canadian caps.

Discouraged: Grey or brown wool felt hats, cut down felt caps.

Unacceptable: Slouch hats from unfinished blanks, straw hats, fur caps.



Coats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit, wool broadcloth coats of drab, brown, green, red, or blue straight bodied or cutaway. Broadcloth short coats or sailor's jackets with short skirts and mariner's cuffs in the same colors.

Acceptable: Well-fit linen or linsey-woolsey coats of similar colors, broad cloth coats and sailors jackets with minor visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Regimental coats, hunting shirts, smocks, over-shirts, baggy coats, coats and jackets made of cotton canvas or damask upholstery fabric.

Jackets and Waistcoats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit, single or double breasted, skirted or square cut, with or without sleeves, waistcoats 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, wool plush or silk, in solid colors or simple patterns. Sleeved waistcoats are acceptable as the primary outer garment.

Unacceptable: Regimental waistcoats, cotton canvas, 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.

Acceptable: Well-fit breeches or with minor visible machine stitching. No breeches, just trousers.

Unacceptable: Regimental breeches, baggy breeches.

Trousers

Best: Hand-finished trousers of striped, checked or plain, linen or hemp ticking, sheeting, or canvas, wool trousers of white, drab, blue or red duffle, bearskin, or other woolens.

Acceptable: Well-fit trousers with minor visible machine stitching. No trousers, just breeches.

Unacceptable: Fringed trousers, overall trousers.



Socks and Stockings

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

Acceptable: White, grey, black, brown, blue, or green stockings or socks of wool yarn, worsted, linen or cotton.

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. Shoe boots, half-boots high-lows, of black waxed-calf.

Acceptable: Machine made, black leather, shoes with buckles or ties, high-lows. *Acceptable (but in limited numbers):* Moccasins and *soulier de beouf*.

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



Leg wear:

Best: Just stockings or well-fit, hand-finished spatterdashers or half-gaiters of black, brown, or drab wool, or black leather.

Acceptable: Well-fit canvas spatterdashers, or spatterdashers with minor machine finishing.

Acceptable (but in limited numbers): Red, blue or green wool Indian leggings

Unacceptable: Military gaiters, buckskin leggings, baggy spatterdashers.

Overcoats:

Best: Hand finished, well-fit, Watchcoats, greatcoats, surtouts of broadcloth, or similar heavy woolen cloth. Blanket coats, made from white British or Dutch blankets, with red or blue woolen ties.

Acceptable: Well-fit, Watchcoats, greatcoats, surtouts of broadcloth, or similar heavy woolen cloth. Blanket coats, made from white British or Dutch blankets, with red or blue woolen ties with little visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Fur Coats, Blanket shirts, 19th-century blanket coats.

Mittens

Best: Knit-wool mitts or sewn wool cloth mitts.

Unacceptable: Modern gloves or trigger finger mittens.

**Connecticut Soldiers' Arms**

Prior to the General Assembly resolutions of April 26th, 1775, that mobilized Connecticut for war, the colony seems to have had a large number of arms in the hands of the citizens enrolled in the militia. The militia laws required every male citizen of the colony between the ages of sixteen to forty-five to bear arms. Excepting civil and church magistrates, all male citizens in this age bracket were required to attend four training days every year. By law, at each of these town train-band days their arms were to be inspected to ensure that they were maintained in serviceable condition. Lacking a serviceable stand of arms, including a firelock, fitted for a bayonet, and a cartridge pouch was punishable by substantial fines.

The exact types of the arms carried by the militia men of Connecticut have not survived recorded in inspection returns. However, the single most common civilian arm in New England as a whole was the fowler. These simple smoothbore firelocks were optimized for hunting waterfowl and barnyard pests. English makers shipped large numbers of fowlers over for sale in the colonies. There also seems to have been a small, albeit fairly healthy local gun industry in Connecticut prior to the war. Locally made fowlers followed a mix of English, French, and local features made with many local woods such as maple and cherry. While these guns were not made to be military arms, fowlers modified to accept a bayonet survive from this time period and region. In the mix among the arms that passed muster for the



town militia training days were some of the myriad of military arms available. British, Dutch, French, and commercially made muskets left over from the French and Indian war seemed to have also been in the hands of the Connecticut militia.

Whatever the exact proportions of the divers firelocks carried in the CT militia, the General Assembly was confident enough in the militia to make the personal arms of men drafted for regular service the primary equipment for the new CT Regiments.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That each inhabitant so enlisted shall be furnished with good fire-arms; and that the fire-arms belonging to this Colony, wherever they are, shall be collected and put into the hands of such enlisted inhabitants as have not arms of their own; and that each enlisted inhabitant that shall provide arms for himself, well fixed with a good bayonet and cartouch box, shall be paid a premium of Ten Shillings; and in case such arms are lost by inevitable casualty, such inhabitant, providing himself as aforesaid, shall be allowed and paid the just value of such arms and implements so lost, deducting only said sum of Ten Shillings allowed as aforesaid, said premium of Ten Shillings to be paid as soon as such inhabitant shall provide such arms as aforesaid.

Much in the way that Provincial soldiers had been paid for bringing their own arms in the French and Indian war, the colony of Connecticut would pay each private soldier for the use of their arms and the replacement of arms damaged in service to the colony in 1775. Given the crisis that the Battle of Lexington and Concord created, the General Assembly was prepared to go further paying for additional stands of arms and, impressing arms from those men who could not serve in the Militia or these new regular regiments. The New York Congress also adopted this measure by August of that year and began to inform their commanding officers to be on the lookout for useable civilian arms as they began mobilizing regular soldiers. This strategy for arming soldiers in the colony of Connecticut continued on. The updated militia law issued in October of 1775, made it clear that all militia men were to keep their arms and equipment ready for three months service in case the militia were called up or individual men were drafted into additional regular regiments



Right from the beginning on April 26th, the General Assembly agreed that the personal arms carried in the militia simply would not be an adequate solution to maintaining a regular army for the defense of the Colony. In the same resolution that raised six regiments of soldiers the assembly resolved, ...That the three thousand stand of Arms to be procured for the use of this Colony be of the following dimensions, to wit: the length of the barrel three feet ten inches, the diameter of the bore from inside to inside three quarters of an inch, the length of the blade of the bayonet fourteen inches, the length of the socket four inches and one-quarter; that the barrel be of a suitable thickness, with iron ramrod, and a spring in the lowest loop to secure the ramrod; a good substantial lock, and a good stock well mounted with brass, marked with the name (initial letters) of the maker's name. And

Resolved, That all the Arms that shall be made and completed according to the above regulations in this Colony by the first day of July next, shall be purchased and taken up by this Colony at a reasonable price...

These specifications largely followed prevailing patterns of British military firelocks and indeed surviving examples bear this interpretation out. A surviving firelock made by the gun maker Isaac Curtis, a Connecticut gunsmith and soldier alike, largely copy British military styles. Typical of these rapidly made Connecticut guns, this firelock is identified by 'I C' stamped into the side of the Dutch made lock recycled into the original gun. Indeed remnants of these quickly made Connecticut guns survive in the myriad of hastily finished American musket parts dug out of Fort Ticonderoga.

The expectation of this arms purchase was too optimistic right from the start. By May 11, the colony was willing to offer bounties of five schillings per complete stand of arms and one shilling and six pence for just the completed lock mechanism. At the same time the General Assembly pushed back the delivery date to the end of October that year, and lengthened the bayonet specification out to a sixteen inch blade. This Act for encouraging the manufacturing of Fire-Arms and Military Stores within the Colony also authorized members of Connecticut's new Committee of War to pay in cash to secure contracts with gun makers to fill the colony's need. One of these committee members, William Williams printed one of many advertisements for gunsmiths to produce arms for the Connecticut.

Actual service appears to have taken a heavy toll on this mix of arms, especially for those Connecticut soldiers serving at Fort Ticonderoga. By October 12th, 1775 General Phillip Schuyler, the Commander of the Northern Department, wrote to Governor



Trumbull of Connecticut from Ticonderoga saying,

...I do not know that any of the troops from Connecticut came without arms, if guns, in whatever condition they may be, can be called arms; but, to speak like a military man, great numbers of every corps in the Army under my command wanted arms. Witness the order of the New-York Provincial Congress, for all the gunsmiths in that large City to quit all other work, and immediately repair the arms of General Wooster' s and Colonel Waterbury' s Regiments. These had then been on little or no service. Witness, also, my order above, for the exchange of arms, so late as the 31st of August. And however great the solecism may be, for the soldier to go to war without arms, Mr. Lynch was perfectly right when he said that many were without arms; for I am well informed, when he was at Crown Point, and the troops turned out, that many had no arms. I have two Companies here, of the troops raised in this Colony, a greater part of which have no arms at all. Another Company is repairing the roads between this and Albany, of which none but the officers have arms; and I suppose I have been obliged to furnish or exchange arms for upwards of one hundred more.

General Schuyler certainly was not idle in trying to remedy this situation among the Connecticut soldiers, as he explained to Governor Trumbull in the same letter,

...Witness, also, the several armourers that have been constantly employed, both at this place and Crown Point, in repairing the arms of Colonel Hinman' s Regiment and Colonel Easton' s small corps, from the beginning of the campaign to the 12th of August, with other troops being on the ground until then.

Indeed Schuyler had worked all summer long to keep the arms of the Connecticut soldiers in workable condition. General Schuyler informed the New York Congress of these efforts in August. Using his considerable influence in the Hudson Valley he procured, "... an hundred gun-barrels to New-York, and as many as the gunsmiths at Albany and Schenectady can repair, to those places, of those that were found at Crown Point." in order to keep the guns in repair.

Damage to arms in the field continued to be a problem for these Connecticut soldiers in the Northern Theatre through the end of 1775. After the successful capture of Fort St. Jean, British arms were eagerly picked up to replace worn out Connecticut arms. Likewise the capture of Montreal would yield more British arms to supply the Connecticut men in the Canadian campaign. For most Connecticut soldiers, as their seven month terms of service ended, they happily left the army for home. Some, but not



many, carrying their arms back home.

Cartridge Pouches

Best: New England style soft cartridge pouches black leather with approximately 19 round cartridge blocks, narrow black or buff leather straps, or linen webbing shoulder straps.

Acceptable: Small, simple leather shot pouches with narrow leather shoulder straps, or belt loops.

Discouraged: Belly boxes or shoulder converted belly boxes.

Unacceptable: British 36 or 29-hole cartridge pouches, New Model American pouches.

Powder Horns:

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

Acceptable: No powder horn to go with a cartridge pouch.

Unacceptable: Native styled powder horns, or black powder filled horns.



Arms

Best: New England style fowlers, English fowlers, either plain or modified for a bayonet.

Acceptable: Old pattern Dutch, French, British, commercial or American made muskets.

Unacceptable: Virginia or Pennsylvania styled long rifles, later French model muskets.

Side Arms

Best: Waist or shoulder belt mounted bayonet, hunting sword or cutlass.

Acceptable: None, small axes carried in a knapsack.

Discouraged: Sheathed tomahawks, belt axes, carried in a belt.

Unacceptable: Horse pistols, naval pistols, unsheathed bayonets, tomahawks, or belt axes.



Knapsacks and Tumplines

Best: Plain single envelope knapsacks, drawstring canvas snapsacks, or hemp tumplines.

Acceptable: Painted canvas Benjamin Warner or similar pattern knapsacks, blanket rolls.

Unacceptable: British painted or goatskin knapsacks.

Blankets

Best: 2-3 point check, Dutch, or rose blankets.

Acceptable: Plain white or 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.

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

Discouraged: Jacked leather canteens, covered glass bottles, and gourd canteens.

Unacceptable: Wool canteen covers, copper canteens, stainless steel canteens, and Petite Bidon.

