

Instruments, Carriages, and Slings

Drums

Even early in the war, American drummers carried locally produced drums. Philadelphia was one of many cities with a thriving instrument production sector. Plunket Fleeson, located in Philadelphia, advertised on March 13, 1775 in the Pennsylvania Packet, "He likewise continues to make and prepare Drums and Colours, And other Military Instruments."

William Campbell was also a drum maker in Pennsylvania. On September 4, 1775, he took out an ad in the Pennsylvania Packet to offer a reward for a missing snuff box. After lamenting its loss, Campbell adds at the bottom, "Said Campbell carries on the drum-making business and has now a quantity on hand which will be sold at the low price of fifty shillings each, judged to be as good as any made elsewhere."

David Woolhaupter, an instrument maker in New York City provided a little more detail about the material of the drums he produced in an ad he took out in the New-York Journal on June 15, 1775. He writes that he had for sale "Drums made of Mahogany, curled Maple, and Beech wood.

Surviving drums show that same variety of wood like David Woolhaupter mentioned was used in production. In comparison to most British drums decorated with regimental insignias and trophies, American drums were plainer. Extant drums show some that are left plain wood, like the drum at the Georgia Historical Society which according to the post-Revolutionary War writing on the shell, was "Used at the Battles of Eutaw, Saratoga, and Cowpens." Another common design is for the shell to be painted a solid color like the Robert Crossman Drum c.1740 in the collections of the Museum of the American Revolution.

Unlike modern drums where the snares are attached via a strainer, 18th century rope tension drums simply tucked them into the hoops.

Best: Plain wooden rope tension drum with hoops painted in a documented color, calfskin head, gut snares, hemp cord, no strainer, leather tabs

Acceptable: Wooden rope tension drum with period design, calfskin head, synthetic snares, natural fiber cord, leather tabs

Unacceptable: Modern drums, drums with designs that post-date 1783, synthetic drum heads, metal snares, civil war drums, bass drums, brass drums, drums with French or German designs, drums with strainers



Fifes

Just like drums, fife manufacturing was an active business in the colonies by the Revolution. Before the war, imported woodwinds from England would have been commonplace in shops. Within America, woodwind making was active but not as prevalent as it was in England. Most makers were not solely in the market of instruments. Isaac Greenwood of Boston produced a variety of goods: artificial teeth, wooden legs and hands, umbrellas, and musical instruments like the fife.

Surviving fifes that can be dated and maker identified provide us with some more details on the materials and look of these fifes. Commonly, fifes were made out of hardwoods. Boxwood, maple, Cherrywood, and mahogany were woods used by Thomas Cahusac of London and William Callender of Boston.^[1] Ferrules were typically made of seamed brass. Finger hole distance and size as well as bore varied between makers. The most common key fifes were produced in during the 18th century was C but examples of D and Bb survive.

Best: One piece fifes based off of surviving examples in a variety of keys, seamed brass ferrules, in a variety of frequencies.

Acceptable: One piece fifes in the key of Bb, A=440 mhz, brass ferrules, in a variety of woods

Unacceptable: Two piece fifes, fifes with keys, plastic fifes



^[1] [See Cahusac and Callender models in the Fife Museum](#)

Fife Cases

Records of fife cases are absent from surviving regimental inventories, bills for purchasing equipment, and storehouse inventories in 1776, however; there are three known surviving fife cases with American provenance in private collections. Two are made of tin and painted Spanish Brown. A case in the collection of Don Troiani is tin with no markings or paint. Given the dearth of supply records for fife cases and the narrow sample set of originals, fife cases were not present with American fifers at Ticonderoga in 1776.

Best: None

Discouraged: Tin fife case, painted or unpainted, slung with hemp rope.

Unacceptable: Anything else

