

Rangers

The practical concerns of ranging service in the no-man's land between Fort Edward and Fort Carillon made ranger clothing a fascinating mix of styles. Legends of Rogers' Rangers, which snowballed in the 19th and 20th century, conflated the appearance of the rangers with native and frontier costume from the American Revolution and War of 1812. Extremely popular works by James Fennimore Cooper, popularized the image of, "leatherstocking," whose buckskin attire cast a large shadow over Roger's exploits. Hunting shirts, a favorite of American Riflemen in 1775, and convenient continental army uniform garment, laid a fringed mantle over the history of the Rangers.

These myths are true in their intent, describing this mix of garments necessary for year-round service in the north woods. While hunting shirts are a later fashion, 'hunting coats' are not. Far from fringed smocks, hunting coats come from English sporting traditions. Sporting or frock coats combined concealing colors; snuff, brown, drab, buff and grey with stout woolen materials. Double-breasted fronts with lapels could provide extra warmth on cold days. Around the neck, a collar, called a cape at the time, could flip up in fowl or cold weather. A staple of English hunting coats were slit pockets in the upper breast to hold a shot flask. While these coats made a powerful fashion statement for young Whigs in England, they were practical attire in the north woods.



Previous to 1758 it would be foolish to assume complete uniformity among the rangers. Inventories of Rogers' men at Halifax the previous summer show an assortment of typical New England civilian clothing. Captain John Knox described Rogers' Rangers at Halifax in the summer of 1757.

These light troops have, at present, no particular uniform, only they wear their cloaths short, and are armed with a firelock, tomahock, or small hatchet, and a scalping knife; a bullock' horn full of powder hangs under their right arm, by a belt from the left shoulder; and a leathern, or seal's skin bag, buckled round their waist, which hangs down before, contains bullets, and a smaller shot, of the size of full-grown peas: six or seven of which with a ball, they generally load; and their Officers usually carry a small compass fixed in the bottoms of their powderhorns, by which they direct them, when they happen to lose themselves in the woods.

"No particular uniform," could be interpreted as a complete lack of uniformity, or general, but not perfect uniformity. Either interpretation would still suggest a mix of different short hunting coats, potentially similar in color and detail. It seems likely that this mix was still present until the spring of 1758. In a letter from clothing agent John MacComb to his employer's dated April 22, 1758, he describes an attempt by Roger's to uniform his men for the upcoming campaign season; "The Close that Rogers had made for his people are chiefly of Green Bath Rug & low priced green Cloths with wt. Mettle Buttons, & white Silver lace Hats, some of them silver laced, cord or looping on their Jackets, all lin'd with Green Serge." However, this attempt was nullified when Rogers' wrote back in June explaining that he would not "engage for any clothing for his men." This suggests that Rogers' men may have still had no uniformed clothing by the 1758 Battle of Carillon, however they would have had access to the jackets and coats of green cloth available in Albany. Rogers' Rangers may have not been fully uniformed by the Battle of Carillon, but most likely they all would have been in green coats and jackets. Likewise, New York provincials adopted green ranger style jackets for the 1758 campaign that summer.

Knox's description of arms is corroborated elsewhere, but it is also reminiscent of the arms of native warriors and Canadians. A leather bullet pouch, knife and tomahawk held on a leather belt is a striking parallel to the assortment of edged weapons and slit pouches slung over sashes in native and Canadian use. While the buckskins of Cooper's leatherstocking character are a myth, the adoption of Native American and Canadian



articles or dress bears credence. Proposals for raising British rangers in November of 1757, included issuing, "Indian Stockings" or leggings as well as match coats, powder horns, bullet bags and tomahawks. Match coats in context with other documents appear to indicate Canadian style capotes and English blanket coats. When advanced one month's pay in January of 1758, rangers could purchase these native and Canadian style garments, as well as shortened versions of English hunting coats. Even with the influences of English hunting and native fashions, rangers were first and foremost New Englanders. The New England colonies raised ranging and snowshoe companies off and on from King William's War of the 1690s onward. By 1758, merchants in Boston and Albany stocked huge inventories of clothing and arms for provincials and rangers alike. For the winter of 1758, knit caps of various styles covered many rangers' heads. In April of 1758, Albany merchants wrote, "I believe a parcel of Scotch Bonnets would sell well, as the rangers who can get them wear nothing else." In 1759 Massachusetts provincials at Louisburg and at Fort Edward had to be ordered to stop wearing their caps, especially under their hats. The inventory of ranger Thomas Chase from the summer of 1757, includes both an, "old hat and a Cap". To stay warm, rangers also used woolen shirts, as were very popular among New Englanders. Inventories from deceased rangers in Halifax from 1757 list cotton shirts, as well as linen shirts. 'Cotton' often refers to woolens which were lightly napped or 'cottoned'. In any case, woolen shirts; cotton, flannel, drugget, & etc. were sold by merchants in Boston and Albany among other campaign clothing. Robert Rogers' rangers at the Battle of Carillon probably were not perfectly uniform, but their ranger attire was far from random. Legends of rangers' clothing are just legends, but for one grain of truth.

Hats and Caps

Best: Knit scotch-style blue flat caps, Monmouth caps, dutch mutts, or other knit caps.

Acceptable: Black wool felt-round hats or cocked hats.

Unacceptable: Fur caps, Voyageur caps, straw hats, slouch hats, Glengarry caps, green scotch caps

Shirts

Best: Hand-stitched checked, striped, Druget (or other woolen) or white 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).

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.

Discouraged: Woolen Scarves.

Unacceptable: Military horsehair or leather neck stocks.



Coats

Best: Hand finished, well-fit, military or hunting style, short coats with lapels and mariner's cuffs, made of green broadcloth, or similar heavy woolen cloth.

Acceptable: Well-fit, civilian style short coats of wool broadcloth, bearskin, or duffle in green, blue, red, light or dark colored wool with little visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Hunting shirts, Blanket shirts, Fur skins.

Jackets and Waistcoats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit waistcoats of green, drab, brown, red or blue broadcloth, kersey, or serge, made single or double breasted, with or without sleeves. Sleeved waistcoats are acceptable as the primary outer garment.

Acceptable: Well-fit, waistcoats of linen, linsey-woolsey, cotton, cotton velvet, wool plush or silk, in solid colors or simple patterns, made single or double breasted, skirted or square cut with minor visible machine stitching.

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

Breeches and Trousers

Best: Hand-finished, leather breeches, or breeches in green, black, brown, drab of kersey, linsey-woolsey, serge, cotton velvet, wool plush, or broadcloth with buckled or tied knee bands.

Acceptable: Well-fit trousers of linen or hemp canvas or checked linen. Well-fit breeches with minor visible



machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Regimental breeches, fringed trousers, baggy breeches.

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.

Legwear

Best: Well-fit wool Indian leggings of green, blue, red broadcloth, or other stout woolen cloth. Garters made of the same material, or native-produced finger-woven garters

Unacceptable: Buckskin leggings, or baggy wool leggings.

Footwear

Best: Civilian black waxed leather buckled shoe. pucker toe or vamped moccasins

Discouraged: Half-boots

Unacceptable: Officer's boots; Dyer, Arrow, Minnetonka moccasins, Shoepacks

Arms

Best: Long Land pattern muskets, Fowling pieces.

Acceptable: Dutch Muskets, Early French Muskets.

Discouraged: Short Land pattern muskets.

Unacceptable: Canoe gun, blunderbuss, long rifles.

Sidearms

Best: Sheathed knife and sheathed tomahawk, all carried on a waist belt.

Acceptable: Simple Iron Naval cutlasses, sheathed, carried in a simple leather waist belt.

Unacceptable: Pistols, daggers, dirks.

Cartridge Pouches

Best: Small leather shot bag carried on waistbelt.

Acceptable: Nine-round Government accouterment sets. Shot bag carried on a shoulder strap.

Discouraged: Quill Worked Shot Pouches, British military cartridge pouches.

Unacceptable: Possibles bags.

Powder Horns

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

Acceptable: Native styled powder horns with native-produced strap (should reflect Mohawk or Mohican influence)



Unacceptable: Black powder filled horns.

Knapsacks and Tumplines

Best: Single envelope two strap knapsacks, or drawstring canvas knapsacks carried in conjunction with hemp tumplines.

Acceptable: hair-on calfskin knapsacks or blanket rolls.

Unacceptable: British painted or goatskin knapsacks, Benjamin Warner Knapsacks.

Blankets

Best: 2-3 point check, Dutch, Rose blankets, Civilian center-seamed blankets.

Acceptable: British Army Blankets, Plain white or Hudson Bay blankets.

Unacceptable: Civil War grey blankets.

Cook-wear and eating utensils

Best: Small tin camp kettles or Brass trade kettles, wooden bowls, pewter or horn spoons.

Unacceptable: Modern cook-wear, or anything that cannot be carried on the march.

