

BROWN'S RAID MASSACHUSETTS AND VERMONT MILITIA GUIDELINES



Of the five-hundred men who followed Colonel John Brown to Ticonderoga, the majority were Massachusetts and Vermont militia men. Colonel Brown's Massachusetts militia men were companies of men from Hampshire, Berkshire, Worcester, and Essex County, who were drafted or volunteered August 9th for three months of service. In addition, Brown chose a company of Colonel Marsh's Vermont militia, who were called out from eastern Vermont as of August 11th. Although there is little specific information as to what those soldiers were wearing, Massachusetts militia regulations and contemporary accounts indicate that they wore their own civilian clothes. Militia laws were rigidly enforced in New England during the early years of the Revolutionary War. These town and state laws specified what every man subject to militia duty was to have in case of service. Militia laws generally only referenced equipment, omitting mention of clothing. However, one 1777 Boston Gazette advertisement described that militia men should have, "a powder horn, a bullet pouch to contain 40 leaden balls, a knapsack, a canteen, a firearm of good worth, a haversack, a belt, [and] a good pair of overalls". After two years of war, this advertisement may indicate the use of gaiter-trousers amongst other civilian clothing for militia service.



Diarists and Brunswick army surgeon, J. F. Wasmus, left an account of General John Stark's militia from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and the New Hampshire grants at Bennington. Wasmus' account of them described their informal dress that summer.

"Putting all of it in a bag, I wanted to take it along, but my guide took it away from me and urged me to drink some strong rum with him. All the enemy were very well provided with it and I noticed that almost all of them were drunk. Each one had a wooden flask filled with rum hanging from his neck; they all were in shirt-sleeves, had nothing [to cover] their bodies but shirts, vests and long linen trousers, which reached down to their shoes; no stockings; [in addition] a powder horn, bullet bag, a flask of rum and a gun - that was all they had on them. They all were well-shaped men of very healthy appearance and well-grown; better than the Canadians."

Private Ezra Tylden, who enlisted in the summer of 1776, joined the regular service with his militia clothing and equipment. A veteran of two tours of service, Tylden brought extra items along with him realizing the potential to sell items to other soldiers during his service. Despite his lucrative business venture, he sent much of his belongings back home after several months

at Ticonderoga. His diary entry from, August 5th, 1776 describes his belongings, giving us a window not only into his personal clothing, but items that were potentially in demand on campaign along Lake Champlain. This crafty Yankee, who sold off his leather breeches and buckles, may well have preferred merely his trousers, as J. F Wasmus described among militia at Bennington. Tilden wrote:

"An Account of some things I carried into the Army in my Pack: A woolen Shirt with a snuffbottle full of ground coffee in it, and one and a half of chocolate in it too, wrapt up in a piece of brown paper and a new cotton and linen shirt and a new milk cheese wrapt up in it which weighed five pounds, a pair of white stockings, a pair of blue stockings, a bag of plumbs, a bag with three pounds and half of sugar in it, a pair of boots, a cap, a powder horn, four sheets o/paper wrapt up in a piece of brown paper and four quills" in it, a brown paper with two pieces of soap in it, one great pin, four small ones, one brown thread needle, and one worsted darning needle, one ball of white yarn, one ball of blue yarn, some strings, some thread, some sealing wax, a snuffbox Jull of snuff a pewter bason, a wooden plate, a spoon, a fork, a Jack-knife, a pen-knife, a pair of knee buckles, a pocket book and case to it, a small toothed comb, a pocket looking glass, an under-jacket, a short coat, a great coat, a pair of grey stockings, two pair, shoes, a striped shirt, a pair of long trowsers, a hat, two handkerchiefs, a pair of shoe buckles, a pair of garters, a pack to carry my things in, some bread, a pair of arm strings, a pair of leather breeches, a pair of cloth breeches, a leather strap, a cod line, a frock, some tow."

General Benjamin Lincoln, a well respected Massachusetts militia Colonel in his own right, issued orders to all his raiders, including Brown's, to pack light. The General was brief, ordering them, "to leave behind all our heavy Baggage and take one Shift of cloaths only".

Shirts

Best: Hand-stitched checked, striped, or white linen shirt 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.

Unacceptable: Military horsehair or leather neck stocks.



Socks and Stockings

Best: White or grey wool yarn or worsted stockings or socks, when worn with trousers.

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

Unacceptable: Red, yellow, or polyester stockings.

Hats and Caps

Best: Hand-finished, round-blocked, hats made of black wool or beaver felt, cut round, and left plain or cocked in appropriate civilian styles.

Acceptable: Knit-wool Monmouth, Dutch mutt, or Kilmarnock caps, oval-blocked hats made of black or white felt in cocked or round styles.

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

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



Shoes

Best: Hand-finished, short or long quartered shoes with round toes, made of black-waxed calf leather, 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.

Discouraged: Moccasins.

Unacceptable: Modern Footwear, modern moccasins, civil war bootees, or riding boots(except for field officers).

Coats

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

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

Discouraged: Regimental coats, hunting shirts, smocks, or over-shirts.

Unacceptable: Baggy coats, coats and jackets made of cotton canvas or damask upholstery fabric.

Jackets and Waistcoats

Best: Hand-finished, well-fit waistcoats of drab, brown, white, green, red or blue broadcloth, kersey, or serge, made single or double breasted, skirted or square cut, with or without sleeves.

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. Sleeved waistcoats are acceptable as the primary outer garment.

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

Breeches and Trousers

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

Acceptable: Well-fit breeches, overalls, or trousers with minor visible machine stitching.

Unacceptable: Regimental breeches, fringed trousers, baggy breeches.

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.

Discouraged: Wool leggings. Indian Leggings

Unacceptable: Military gaiters, baggy spatterdashers.



Cartridge Pouches

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

