

# BROWN'S RAID MOUNTED MILITIA GUIDELINES



Mounted militia and light horse played an important role in the supply of Brown's Raid. General Benjamin Lincoln, who commanded the three raids that included, Colonel John Brown's 500 man raid on Ticonderoga, ordered the mounted militia of Berkshire County, Massachusetts to procure sacks of flour to stockpile food prior to the raid. General Lincoln ordered mounted militia divided up to go with each of the three 500 man raiding parties to carry bags of flour. Lincoln further ordered militia light horse to go with each of the columns to carry extra cartridges and sent mounted militia to the attack on Mount Independence across Lake Champlain from Brown's Raid on Ticonderoga to resupply them with flour. By September 21<sup>st</sup>, Vermont Brigadier General and Commissary General of the Continental Army's Northern Department, Jacob Bailey wrote to the Vermont assembly reporting on the progress of Brown's Raid recommending, "I think it the Duty of every

man to turn out with his horse & one month's provisions; which will undoubtedly accomplish our design. I must call on all friends to America to turn out & come to our assistance at Ticonderoga."

The majority of the mounted militiamen associated with Brown's Raid were not cavalry; they were equipped as militia on foot, but with a horse for transport. Their weapons included the mix of muskets and fowlers found among other Massachusetts of Vermont militia men called up for service. Beyond a saddle, bridle, & horse, their only special equipment for mounted service may have been a pillion and coat straps behind the saddle to carry a market wallet and blanket roll. It is entirely possible too that these mounted militia carried knapsacks and tumplines, like their comrades on foot.

## Saddles

Saddlery in New England was English in style and often origin, with large numbers of English made saddles stocked by merchants before the war. New Englanders generally preferred conservative styles of saddlery, such as decorative housings behind the saddle. The New Hampshire Gazette listed an Advertisement on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1775 for a stolen, "new English Saddle, Hogs Skin Seat, one Seam of white Leather in the Middle and each Side of the Seat

with a green Saddle Cloth, a lift of Buff twice round, new Stirrup Irons, no Swivels." Similarly, "An English Saddle, with Ears lined with Deer's Leather, the Seat is the same; also red Plush Housing, with red Silk Fringe," was described stolen in Beverly, Massachusetts in a July 17, 1777 advertisement. Simple English snaffle and pehlam bridles were commonly available with merchants as were proper military bridles and bits.

**Best:** Ca. 1750-1770 style English Hunt saddles of fair colored leather, both single and double skirted styles, with calfskin, pigskin, doeskin, or plush seats. Modified with staples for holsters & baggage or plain.

**Acceptable:** Elliot Light Dragoon Saddles, French Dragoon saddles, Demi-peak saddles.

**Discouraged:** Modern English saddles, Spanish & Portuguese saddles.

**Unacceptable:** Western saddles, McClellan saddles.



## Stirrups & Leathers

**Best:** Polished or tinned, Ca. 1750-1770 style, hand-forged iron stirrups with or without swivels. Fair-colored stirrup leathers, with hand-forged buckles.

**Acceptable:** Cast-iron 19<sup>th</sup> century stirrups of similar style, preferably polished bright.

**Discouraged:** Modern English stirrups.

**Unacceptable:** Steam-bent wooden stirrups, Western stirrups, McClellan Stirrups.

## Girths & Surcingle/Circingle

**Best:** Two girth straps and one surcingle/circingle of white worsted webbing with hand-forged buckles.

**Acceptable:** Two girth straps and one surcingle/circingle of white cotton webbing or striped worsted webbing with similar style buckles.

**Discouraged:** Modern English leather girths.

**Unacceptable:** Western string or nylon webbing girths, McClellan Girths.

## Holsters

**Best:** None.

**Acceptable:** 1750s or 1770s style holsters with plain bearskin flounces.

**Discouraged:** Anything else.

## Breastplate

**Best:** None

**Acceptable:** Black leather 1750s dragoon style breastplate or 1770s Elliot style single strap breastplate.

**Discouraged:** Modern English hunting breastplates, Civil War brass heart breastplates.



## Pillions or Pads

**Best:** Fair-colored wood-reinforced mail-pillion with serge, canvas, or linen underlining.

**Acceptable:** None.



## Cruppers

**Best:** Black or fair colored single buckle crupper.

**Acceptable:** None.

## Baggage

**Best:** Canvas market wallet laid over the seat of the saddle over the pillion.

**Acceptable:** Painted canvas or leather portmanteau carried behind the saddle. 1770s civilian leather saddle bags.

**Also Acceptable:** None, knapsack or tumpline slung on back.

## Housings

**Best:** None

**Acceptable:** Red, drab, or other colored plush or velvet civilian housing with or without lace and/or fringe.

**Unacceptable:** Regimental saddle cloths, shabraques, or saddle blankets.

## Saddle Blankets or Saddle Cloths

**Best:** Plain white, striped or checked folded wool blankets.

**Acceptable:** None or 3-point, British issue, or Rose blankets.

**Unacceptable:** Modern English saddle pads, western saddle pads, Civil War Federal issue blankets



## Bits & Bridles

**Best:** Mid-18<sup>th</sup> century hunt bridles in fair leather with neat and plain, Snaffle, Pelham or Weymouth bits or Traditional military/conservative styled bridles in black leather with proper military curb bits, with or without bradoons.

**Acceptable:** 19<sup>th</sup> century civilian bridles and bits of similar style.

**Discouraged:** Modern English hunting or dressage bridles.

**Unacceptable:** Western bridles, 1859 US Army Bridles.

## Halters or Head Collars

**Best:** English dragoon, single-ring fair-colored leather head collar or none.

**Acceptable:** Similar 19<sup>th</sup> century single-ring style halter or hemp webbing head collar.

**Unacceptable:** Civil War Federal, modern English or Western halters, or nylon webbing halters.

## Mounted Militia Arms & Clothing

For Mounted Militia clothing, arms and equipment refer to Massachusetts and Vermont Militia. Swords carried for militia service on foot (cutlasses and hangers) are useful in the saddle as are slings for muskets and fowlers to carry weapons across the back when riding. However, the service of mounted militia was to fight on foot. Arms and accouterments likely reflected this with little to no modification for mounted service.

## Militia Light Horse

Militia Light Horse likely did have many of the items still required to fulfill the legal obligation of militia service as a horseman. The distinction in language used at the time between, "mounted militia," and, "light horse," would indicate this as well.

Militia light horse, equipped themselves as cavalryman to fulfill their legal obligation of militia service. Unlike the rest of their militia laws, Massachusetts did not update laws regarding militia horse after 1693. The, "Act for Regulating the Militia" of 1693 still required:

*"VI. THAT every Trooper shall be always provided with a good serviceable Horse of Five Pounds Value, and not less than Fourteen Hands high, (the same to be determined by the Two Chief Commission Officers) covered with a good Saddle, Bit, Bridle, Holsters, Pectoral and Crupper; and furnished with a Carbine, the Barrel not less than Two Foot and half long, with a Belt and Swivel; a Case of good Pistols; with a Sword or Cutlash; a Flask or Cartouch-box; One Pound of good Powder, Three Pounds of sizeable Bullets, Twenty Flints, and a good Pair of Boots and Spurs."*

New Hampshire did update their requirements for militia horseman in 1778. While post-dating Brown's Raid they may indicate more contemporary expectations for the equipment of militia light horse in Massachusetts as well.

Extract from the Minutes

*"CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary*

### *LIST of NECESSARIES and ACCOUTREMENTS for each HORSEMAN*

- 1. A well-tempered sword, the blade straight, and three feet long, with a back sharpened up six inches from the point; an open guard about the hilt; that will be light and yet defend the hand; with a scabbard of substantial leather without wood.*
- 2. A carbine, fuse, or short blunderbuss; the barrel of the blunderbuss not to exceed two feet in length.*
- 3. A pair of pistols and holsters.*
- 4. A sword belt—a belt for the carbine, with a running swivel that will slip to any part of the belt.*
- 5. A cartridge box to buckle round the waist, with twelve tin pipes for the cartridges.*
- 6. A helmet of jacket leather, and effectually guarded by several rows of small chain, iron, or steel hoops; or a hat with a steel or iron scull piece inside the crown.*
- 7. A saddle, saddle cloath, breast plate, crupper, saddle straps and pad.*
- 8. Saddle bags connected by two broad straps, in the common fashion, and not a*

portmanteau.

9. A double reined bridle, with a curb and snaffle bit, and a halter.

10. A cloak sufficient to cover all the arms and accoutrements, and which is to serve also in the place of a blanket.

11. Boots and spurs.

*These articles, made as near as may be according to the above directions, with a good horse, will fit each man for the field."*



## Swords

**Best:** Naval cutlass, hanger, or horseman's sword carried in a waist or shoulder belt.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else

## Pistols

**Best:** English dragoon, civilian, or old French pattern pistols, either one or a brace carried in holsters.

**Acceptable:** Elliot light dragoon pistols or contemporary French pattern pistols carried in holsters.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.



## Carbines

**Best:** Older pattern English horseman's carbines, or cut-down musket or fowler carbines with a sling bar, slung from a carbine belt with a clip.

**Acceptable:** Elliot light dragoon carbines, contemporary French pattern carbines, or similar patterns with sling bars, slung from carbine belts.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.

## Cartridge Box

**Best:** Leather tin-tube dragoon belly box on a leather belt or wooden block belly box.

**Acceptable:** Shot bag & horn.