

# 1759 SIEGE OF CARILLON FRENCH CANADIAN MILICE GUIDELINES



General Francois-Charles de Bourlemaque took up the defense of Carillon in the spring 1759 as French Canada faced British attacks from three sides. By his November 1, 1759 report to Marshall Belle Isle, his force at the outset of the campaign of 2,300 included, "eight hundred of the *Milice*..." On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, Bourlemaque retreated down Lake Champlain to Crown Point, leaving Captain de Hebecourt of the La Reine Regiment, commanding Fort Carillon with a 400-man rear guard drawn from this larger force. This guard held 11,000 British & American provincial soldiers at bay for four days with, "the most active fire from the artillery..." As of August 6, 1759 Bourlemaque reported having, "10 *Cannoniers* from the *milice*," under the command of Royal Artillerie Captain Paul de Louvicour. Bourlemaque also reported, "25 *Miliciens* attached to the companies of volunteers," of French Army Piquets drawn from the five battalions then at Quebec. It is quite likely that both of these detachments of *milice* had served at the siege of Carillon eleven days prior.

Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste d'Aleyrac of the Languedoc regiment described Canadian clothing in his memoirs of his service with the French Army in the defense of Canada.

*"It is true that the Canadians are obliged to go to war to defend the country when it is attacked. Meanwhile, those who remain in the parishes must cultivate the fields of those who are at war for free. Moreover, those who go to war receive a capote,*



*two cotton shirts, a breechcloth, a pair of leggings, a blanket, souleirs d' boeuf, a wooden handled knife, a gun worm, and when they don't have a gun they are given one. The breechcloth is a strap of wool that is passed between the legs in the manner of the Indians and whose two ends are attached to a belt; it is put on without breeches to march more freely in the woods. The leggings are a type of very broad gaiters whose two sides are sewn together, about four fingers from the edge without buttons or buttonholes. This is another native invention. The souliers d' boeuf are made entirely different than those in France, they have a sole as thin as the uppers that surrounds the entire foot, to the height of the quarters; then, we sew another smaller a strip of leather upon them which covers the top of the foot; this fashion allows marching more conveniently in the woods and mountains."*

Jean Baptiste d' Aleyrac left a more detailed description of the Canadian *capote*.

*"The average Canadian hardly wears French clothing, but one species of, capots overlapping in front with lapels. The buttons and collars are of another color. A sash around the capot: simple and impractical clothing."*

The *milice* serving at Carillon in 1759 served with few personal comforts beyond the bare essentials. Travelling light, in the manner of Native Americans, they put the Native American derived clothing issued by the Colony of Canada to hard use. Individual Canadians may have brought a *gilet*, *veste*, and *capote* from home, yet summer dress for *milice* was frequently just their shirts, breechcloths and leggings. In Volume I of his 1781, "Memoirs on The Late War in North America, Between France and England," Captain Pierre Pouchot described the rapid response of Canadian *milice* at Fort Duquesne in September, 1758. He explained, "Since the Indians & Canadians wear nothing more than a shirt in fine weather, they were very soon ready for action."

## Shirts

**Best:** Hand-stitched white or blue coarse cotton or linen shirt with narrow band cuffs with thread buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links).

**Acceptable:** White or blue coarse cotton or linen shirt with narrow band cuffs with thread buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links) with minor visible machine-stitchin.

**Discouraged:** Checked, striped linen, or wool shirts

**Unacceptable:** Cotton calico or plaid shirts

## Neckwear

**Best:** Silk, linen, or cotton neckerchief

**Unacceptable:** Leather neck-stocks

## Hats and Caps

**Best:** Knit red yarn *bonnet* or *toque*.

**Unacceptable:** Fur cap, voyageur cap

## Vestes

**Best:** Hand-finished and well-fit, sleeved *veste* made of blue, red, grey, brown, drab, or light colored woolen cloth

**Acceptable:** No *veste*. Well fitted sleeved *veste* made of blue, red, grey, brown, drab, or light-colored woolen cloth with minor visible machine stitching

**Unacceptable:** Extremely long or baggy *veste* or modern upholstery materials



## Gilets

**Best:** Hand-finished well-fit, square-cut *gilet* made of white, red, purple or blue cloth or similar material, made with or without sleeves

**Acceptable:** No *gilet*. Well-fit Square-cut *gilet* made of white, red, purple or blue cloth or similar material, with minor visible machine stitching

**Unacceptable:** Extremely long or baggy *gilet* or modern upholstery materials

## Breechcloth

**Best:** Undecorated wool breechcloth or *brayet* of white, red, purple or blue cloth.

**Discouraged:** breeches

**Unacceptable:** trousers

## Capote

**Best:** Hand-finished well-fit white, blue, grey, purple, or brown wool cloth *capote* with or without a contrasting color hood and buttons

**Acceptable:** Well-fit white, blue, grey, purple, or brown wool *capote* with minor visible machine stitching

**Discouraged:** Blanket coat or *capote* from a white-bodied, blue or red striped blanket

**Unacceptable:** 19<sup>th</sup> century trapper blanket coat; Blanket shirt



## Legwear

**Best:** Hand-finished, well-fit, unadorned white, red, purple or blue wool cloth *mitasse* with plain wool or Native garters

**Acceptable:** Well-fit, unadorned white, red, purple or blue wool cloth *mitasse* with plain wool or Native garters, with minor visible machine stitching

**Unacceptable:** Buckskin leggings, gaiters, or baggy wool leggings

## Footwear

**Best:** *Soulier du beouf*

**Acceptable:** Vamp or pucker-toe styled *soulier savage* or moccasins

**Discouraged:** Half boots or buckled shoes

**Unacceptable:** Modern shoes, boots, or Dyer, Arrow, Minnetonka moccasins, Shoepacks

## Arms

**Best:** *Fusil de chasse* or *fusil de traite*

**Acceptable:** French Military Muskets of 1728 or earlier pattern

**Discouraged:** British arms, Anglo-American fowlers

**Unacceptable:** Canoe guns, Blunderbusses, rifles

## Side Arms

**Best:** Sheathed trade knife or *Couteau Boucheron*; Sheathed *casse-tête* or hatchet, all carried on a simple leather belt or a sash

**Acceptable:** trade knives carried in a neck sheath

**Discouraged:** Bayonets, swords

## Shot bag

**Best:** Leather slit pouch, simple drawstring leather pouch

**Acceptable:** shoulder slung shot bag

**Discouraged:** Cartridge pouches and boxes, belly boxes

## Powder Horn

**Best:** Empty, plain white powder horn slung on a small leather strap

**Acceptable:** Native influenced horns reflecting Abenaki or Nippissing culture

**Unacceptable:** Filled powder horns



## Canteen

**Best:** Gourd, ceramic, glass canteen, slung over the shoulder on a hemp cord or leather thong.

**Acceptable:** Leather or tin kidney shaped style canteen

**Discouraged:** Wooden cheese-box canteens



## Knapsacks and Tumplines

**Best:** Hemp tumpline or single strap snapsack

**Acceptable:** Jute or leather tumplines

**Unacceptable:** two-strap knapsacks

## Blanket

**Best:** 2 or 3-Point Blanket, check, Dutch, or rose blankets. Bear skin hides may also be used

**Acceptable:** Plain white or Hudson Bay blankets

**Unacceptable:** Civil War grey blankets