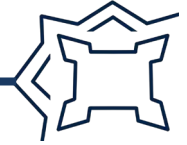


# HERITAGE, HARVEST AND HORSE FESTIVAL PHILADELPHIA LIGHT HORSE GUIDELINES



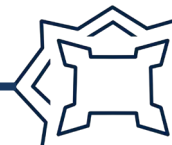
In the Revolutionary War, the Light Horse of the City of Philadelphia was among the best equipped and clothed of American cavalry units. This gentlemen's volunteer troop famously served as Commander-in-Chief, George Washington's escort during the Trenton and Princeton campaign in 1776 & 1777. This troop also served at the behest of the Continental Congress, employing these horsemen all the way to Ticonderoga. On October 10, 1775 Congress' Committee of Claims received General Philip Schuyler's accounts for the Northern Continental Army. To pay these accounts Ticonderoga, the committee discussed "On motion, Resolved, That the Money be sent to General Schuyler, under an escort of four of the Light-Horse." After an hour break the president of this committee summarized their decision: "The President reported that he had dispatched an express to General Schuyler with £6,364, Pennsylvania Currency, in Silver and Gold, (\$16,970 2-3,) with an escort of four of the Light-Horse of this City." Four members of the Philadelphia Light Horse rode all the way to Fort Ticonderoga to deliver this money to General Schuyler. The minutes of the Continental Congress from November 25, 1775 included a resolve to pay "Levi Hollingsworth, for expenses of himself and three others, to Ticonderoga and back again, who took with them a sum of money for General Schuyler, the sum of 128 Dollars." Levi Hollingsworth was a prominent Philadelphia merchant who specialized in flour, and a founding member of the Philadelphia Light Horse.

Twenty-eight gentlemen founded the Light Horse of the City of Philadelphia on November 17, 1774, unanimously electing their officers and non-commissioned officers. The troop voted Levi Hollingsworth to be Quartermaster and future Clothier General of the Continental Army, James Mease, to the rank of Cornet. The troop voted prominent Danish immigrant, Abraham Markoe to be their captain. In this founding meeting of the Philadelphia Light Horse, they agreed that each member would equip themselves at their own expense, to wit:

*"A dark brown short coat, faced and lined with white, white vest and breeches; high topped Boots; round black hat, bound with silver cord; a buck's tail; housings brown, edged with white and the letters L.H. worked on them...a carbine, a pair of pistols and holsters, with flounces of brown cloth trimmed with white; a horseman's sword; white belts for the sword and carbine."*



**Figure 1:** Detail: Washington After the Battle of Princeton, Charles Wilson Peale, 1784, Princeton University Art Museum.

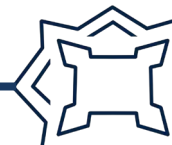


The troop equipped themselves and trained through the winter and spring of 1775. Connecticut delegate to the Continental Congress, Silas Deane, described the attire of Philadelphia's battalions of 'Associators,' including gentlemen's volunteer companies in a June 3, 1775 letter to his wife. Yet at this early date he noted, "They have a body of horse in training, but as yet I have not seen them out." The members of the troop even hired a former trooper from British Regiment of Horse to serve as their sword master. By June 23, 1775, the troop finally mustered for the first time, providing General Washington's escort from Philadelphia to New York City, as he travelled to Cambridge Massachusetts to take up his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Mary Morgan, the wife of a Philadelphia Doctor, described this grand review of the city's forces to her sister.

Mary closed her description of the June 23 review, "Lastly comes the light horse. Mr. Marko their Captain. Their is only five and twenty of them as yet but really they look exceedingly well."

Though uniform of the city troop of Light Horse matched Philadelphia's three infantry battalions, who wore, "regimentals, the first in brown and buff, the 3rd in brown turned up with white, and the 2nd brown and red..." according to Mary Morgan. The silver trimmings and buck tails of the city troop's round hats, were a more genteel version of city battalion's hats, which Silas Deane described as, "...small (as Jessie's little one, almost), with a red, white, or black ribbon, according to their battalions, closing in a rose, out of which rises a tuft of fur of deer (made to resemble the buck's tail as much as possible) six or eight inches high." Even the troop's choice of, "housings brown, edged with white and the letters L.H. worked on them," mirrored the city battalions cartridge boxes, whose large flaps featured, "the word LIBERTY and the number of their battalion written on the outside in white." The troop's vote for white belts for their sword and carbine was matched by the city battalions' "most elegant appearance, as their cartouch-boxes are hung with a broad white horse-leather strap or belt, and their bayonets, etc., on the other side, with the same," by Silas Deane's account.





Contemporary illustrations of the Philadelphia Light Horse appear frequently in Charles Wilson Peale's portraits of General Washington at the January 3, 1777 Battle of Princeton. Charles Wilson Peale was an eyewitness to the charge of the light horse with Washington as he served with the 2nd Battalion of Philadelphia Associators at the battle. Peale's renderings of the Light Horse vary in details among numerous copies he painted of Washington at the Battle of Princeton. In the copy of "Washington After the Battle of Princeton," in Colonial Williamsburg's collections Charles Wilson Peale illustrate white belting on the two city Light Horse. In a copy in the Yale Center for Fine Arts collection, Peale chose matched black carbine and sword belts. James Peale's 1782 painting, "The Battle of Princeton", in the Princeton Art Museum's collection included white belting on the three light horsemen shown with Washington. Despite these inconsistencies, illustrations of the City of Philadelphia Light Horse by Charles Wilson Peale and James Peale agree with the troop's November 17, 1774 regulations in most details, and fill in gaps about their uniform details.

## **Hats**

Charles Wilson Peale's portraits of Washington After the Battle of Princeton, consistently show a binding around the edge of the Philadelphia Light Horse hats. This was likely silver based on the troops regulations. Instead of a silver cord, James Peale showed a wider band around the crown of the troops hats, much like descriptions of the city's battalions. Both Charles Wilson Peale and James Peale illustrated the hats with the left side of the hats turned up and large tufts, likely showing the troop's buck tails.

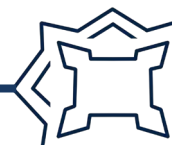
**Best:** Black castor or demi-castor round hat, round-blocked, bound in narrow silver lace, with wide silver lace around the crown. Buck tail on the left side of the crown, with the brim cocked up on the same side.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.



**Figure 2:** Detail: The Battle of Princeton, James Peale 1782, Princeton University Art Museum.





## **Shirts**

**Best:** Hand-stitched white linen shirt with collar, frills on the chest, and narrow band cuffs made for sleeve buttons (cuff links).

**Acceptable:** Machine-stitched white linen shirts.

**Discouraged:** Checked linen shirts.

**Unacceptable:** Cotton calico or plaid shirts.

## **Neck wear**

**Best:** Hand-stitched white linen neck stocks, with stock buckles.

**Acceptable:** Machine-hemmed white linen rollers, silk or cotton neckerchiefs.

**Unacceptable:** Horsehair or leather neck stocks.

## **Waistcoats**

**Best:** Hand-finished, well-fit fine white wool waistcoats, belted or with skirts, with silver buttons or white covered buttons.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit, white waistcoat with minor visible machine stitching.

**Unacceptable:** Cotton canvas, upholstery fabric waistcoats, extremely long or baggy waistcoats.

## **Breeches**

Though the troop's November 17, 1774 regulations only stated white breeches, it is quite likely that these gentlemen volunteers wore leather breeches. Leather breeches were extremely common in genteel sporting dress, especially riding. They were very available in Philadelphia and a December 1775, "List of Accoutrements, & &c., Suitable to fit out a Light Horse," from the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, specified, "Buckskin Breeches," among the needs for this service.







**Best:** Hand-finished, well-fit white or light-colored buckskin breeches, with buckled or tied knee bands.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit white cloth, drilling, corduroy or leather breeches with buckled, or tied knee bands with minor visible machine stitching.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.

## Coats

**Best:** Hand-finished, well-fit, short regimental coats of fine brown wool cloth, with white cloth facings, functional lapels and collars, square cuffs, large silver or white metal buttons, lined in white serge or twilled silk, with brown wool shoulder straps.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit, short regimental coats of brown wool cloth, white cloth facings, white metal buttons, lined in white serge or other woolen line, with brown wool shoulder straps and little visible machine stitching.

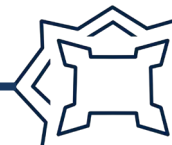
**Unacceptable:** Anything else.

## Cloak

Though cloaks were not listed among the November 17, 1774 clothing and equipment regulations for the troop, they were a standard part of cavalry equipment for generations.

The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety included, "Cloaks of Course Green Cloath," among their December 1775, "List of Accoutrements, & &c., Suitable to fit out a Light Horse." Depictions of the Philadelphia Light Horse by Charles Wilson Peale and James Peale show something cylindrical at the rear of the saddles. Charles Wilson Peale illustrated them as black or brown, but too small to discern more detail. James Peale showed pale concentric lines in a red roll, very likely a red horseman's cloak. With no regulation for the troop's cloaks there were likely variations in this essential garment for cavalry service, especially in the winter.





**Best:** Hand-Finished, long horseman's cloak of stout broadcloth or hard worsted wool, with or without lining in common colors like red, black, blue, or green.

**Acceptable:** Long wool horseman's cloak or greatcoat with minor visible stitching.

**Unacceptable:** Rolled blanket in lieu of a cloak.

## **Stockings**

**Best:** White wool yarn, worsted, silk, or thread stockings with back seams.

**Acceptable:** Machine-made or grey wool yarn, worsted, or cotton stockings.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.

## **Boots**

The, "high topped Boots," called for in the November 17, 1774 troop regulations appear in paintings by Charles Wilson Peale and James Peale as English hunt or jockeys boots with black or brown turn-down tops.

**Best:** Hand-stitched, well-fit round toed, English hunt or jockeys boots of black waxed leather, with brown or black turn-down tops.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit black leather English jockeys boots or dragoon boots with minor visible machine stitching.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.

## **Spurs**

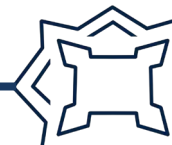
**Best:** Silver or tinned iron, 18th-century spurs with small rowels and black leather straps.

**Acceptable:** White metal spurs with small rowels and black leather straps.

**Discouraged:** No spurs.



**Figure 3:** Detail: Washington After the Battle of Princeton, Charles Wilson Peale, 1779, Yale Center for Fine Arts.



**Unacceptable:** Civil War, modern western or English spurs.

### ***Cartridge Boxes***

Though the troop did not vote to purchase cartridge boxes, they were a necessary for carrying ammunition for carbines and pistols. One troop member, Benjamin Randolph purchased a, "cartridge box," among his clothing and equipment in 1775.

**Best:** American-styled belly box with wooden block or tin tubes stitched into leather, with black leather flap.

**Acceptable:** Similar styles of belly box or no cartridge box.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.

### ***Carbine Sling***

**Best:** Whitened buff leather carbine sling, approximately 2 ½" wide, with an iron swivel and carbine clip.

**Acceptable:** Black leather carbine sling of similar style or 'T' style carbine clip. **Unacceptable:**

Civil War carbine belts or mismatched carbine and sword belt.

### ***Sword Belt***

**Best:** Whitened buff leather shoulder belt, approximately 2 ½" wide.

**Acceptable:** Black leather shoulder belt, of similar style.

**Unacceptable:** Waistbelt, brown tanned leather sword belt, mismatched carbine and sword belt.

### ***Sword***

**Best:** Fine English or American horseman's sword with 1760-70s open work guard and gently curved blade.

**Acceptable:** Pre-1784 British light dragoon swords.

**Discouraged:** Potter swords or Basket hilt heavy dragoon swords.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.





## **Pistols**

**Best:** A brace of fine 1750-1770s civilian horse pistols.

**Acceptable:** English dragoon pistols, Elliot light dragoon pistols or contemporary French pattern pistols carried in holsters. A single pistol only.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.

## **Canteens**

**Best:** Staved wooden canteen on narrow cord or leather strap.

**Acceptable:** No canteen.

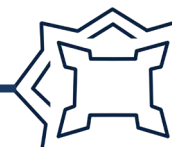
**Unacceptable:** Anything Else

## **Saddles**

Complete military saddlery could readily be purchased in Philadelphia. In the July 21, 1773 edition of the Pennsylvania Gazette, saddler and harness maker, Elias Botner, advertised,

*"GENTLEMEN English, hunting, full welted and plain hogskin, buckskin, and neatleather seated saddles; Kinghunting, and common ditto, breasted ditto, race ditto, pack or carrying ditto; Ladies hunting side saddles, demi-hunters and common ditto, fringed, laced and bound, of various fashions; buckskin seated, with foot cloths or slips; all kinds of military furniture; portmanteaus, saddle bags, housings, and saddle cloths, of all sorts; boot garters, surcingles, and all sorts of saddle furniture; jockey caps, of all sizes; holsters..."*





Being a commercial center, Philadelphia's merchants stocked saddlery and saddle hardware. A November 7, 1771 advertisement in the Pennsylvania Gazette listed a myriad of items,

*"Just imported from London, Bristol, &c." Among these were, "girth web, striped and green sircingle ditto; broad and narrow orris and livery lace, of various colours, cross bar and plush; silk whip lashes; womens stirrups, mens plain and 3 barred ditto; snaffle and Pelham bits; tooth prick irons, girth and crupper buckles; silvered, head and throat buckles; silvered staples and plates; tinned staples and rings;"*

**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.

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

**Discouraged:** French Dragoon saddles,

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

**Discouraged:** Cast-iron 19th century stirrups of similar style, polished bright.

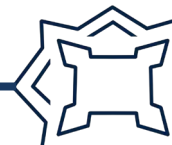
**Unacceptable:** Rusty stirrups, modern English stirrups, western stirrups, McClellan Stirrups.

## **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.





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

## ***Holsters***

The November 17, 1774 regulations for the troop proscribed, "holsters, with flounces of brown cloth trimmed with white." It appears in practice the troop used black bearskin flounces, which appear clearly in James Peale's 1782 painting of the Battle of Princeton. The cloth flounces may have actually been holster caps, as they December 1775 Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, "List of Accoutrements, & &c., Suitable to fit out a Light Horse," included, "Pistols with Caps, Holsters and Housings." If the holster caps were present, they would have covered the body and pipe of the holster, but been underneath bearskin flounces.

**Best:** 1770s Light dragoon holsters with brown cloth holster caps edged in white and bearskin flounces.

**Acceptable:** 1770s Light dragoon holsters with bearskin flounces only or 1750s English dragoon holsters with bearskin flounces.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.

## ***Carbine Bucket***

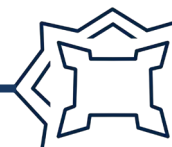
Though the troop's regulations did not call for carbine buckets, they appear among the "List of Accoutrements, & &c., Suitable to fit out a Light Horse," prepared by the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety in December 1775. This list called for, "Saddles with Buckets & Wallets." Benjamin Randolph purchased a, "gun bucket," to go with his saddle as he outfitted himself in 1775.

**Best:** Black leather light dragoon carbine bucket with wrist strap, fit to carry the carbine securely and hung from a pommel ring on the saddle.

**Acceptable:** No carbine bucket.

**Unacceptable:** Anything Else.





## ***Breastplate***

Though breastplates were a standard part of cavalry equipment at the time. Many members of the troop may not have used them. James Peale omitted breastplates in illustrating members of the Light Horse in his 1782 painting of The Battle of Princeton. While this could be a careless omission, James Peale carefully drew cruppers and even indicated a breastplate across the chest of Washington's horse. Charles Wilson Peale also frequently omitted them in his portraits of Washington after the Battle of Princeton.

**Best:** No breastplate.

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

**Unacceptable:** Modern English hunting breastplates, Western center ring breastplates, Civil War brass heart breastplates.

## ***Pillions or Pads***

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

**Acceptable:** Plain British cloak pads with fair-colored leather and serge, canvas, or linen underlining.

**Unacceptable:** None or 19th century mail pillions.

## ***Cruppers***

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

**Acceptable:** None.

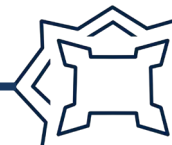
**Unacceptable:** Anything else.

## ***Housings***

**Best:** Brown cloth housing edged in white, with LH embroidered in the corner, underlined in osnaburg or ticking.

**Unacceptable:** Anything else.





## **Saddle Blankets or Saddle Cloths**

**Best:** Plain white swanskin saddle cloth, extending a few inches beyond the saddle on all sides.

**Acceptable:** 2-Point or 3-Point blankets, checked, Dutch, or Rose blankets or plain white blankets folded to an appropriate size.

**Unacceptable:** Civil War grey blankets, modern English or western saddle pads, or overly long saddle blankets.

## **Baggage**

In equipping himself to serve with the Light Horse, Benjamin Randolph did purchase, "saddle bags," in 1775. Though this has often been interpreted as paired bags hung from straps, "bags," or, "saddle bags," generally referred to valises or portamanteaus in English and American parlance. The troop of Light Horse largely travelled from tavern to tavern, when they weren't actively posted as escorts of videttes. As such their baggage appears to have been minimal.

**Best:** None or leather portmanteau carried behind the saddle.

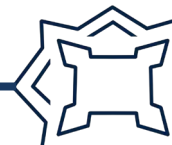
**Unacceptable:** 19th century valises, two-strap saddle bags.

## **Bits & Bridles**

Both Charles Wilson Peale and James Peale frequently painted fair colored Weymouth bridles on the Light Horse in their paintings of the Battle of Princeton. These fashionable hunting bridles, with two sets of reins stitched to a Weymouth bit, functioned like a proper military bit & bridle, but with a modern civilian appearance.

**Best:** Mid-18th century hunt bridles in fair leather with neat and plain, Weymouth bits.





**Acceptable:** Traditional military/conservative styled bridles in black leather with proper military curb bits, with or without bradoons.

**Discouraged:** Mid-18th century hunt bridles in fair leather with neat and plain with snaffles.

**Unacceptable:** 19th century civilian bridles and bits of similar style. Modern English bridles and bits, Western bridles and bits.

### ***Halters or Head Collars***

There is no evidence that the City of Philadelphia Light Horse used halters prior to the troop's June 26, 1798 By-Laws. Their function as Light Horse did not require them to fight dismounted like dragoons or light dragoons. They also did not have the need to encamp like regular cavalry, generally using stables at taverns when not mounted.

**Best:** None.

**Unacceptable:** Light Dragoon Linking collars, Civil War halters, modern English or western halters, or nylon webbing halters.