A TREATISE ON THE CLOTHES

AND UNIFORMS OF THE 18TH

CENTURY

or

A GUIDE TO THE USE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE REPRODUCTION
CLOTHING AT GUILFORD COURTHOUSE
NATIONAL MILITARY PARK FOR
THE GENERAL USE OF THE NPS
INTERPRETER INVOLVED IN THE
PARK'S LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT D. LONG

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GUILFORD COURTHOUSE NAT. MIL. PARK
MCMLXXVIII

LIVING HISTORY MANUAL

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FOREWORD

One of the most important parts of any effective "living history" type program is the clothing worn by the interpreter. It is the clothing that first catches the attention of the visitor and properly stages the entire presentation. The strangeness and the color hold the attention and provokes their questioning. By being in historical dress the interpreter is in an unique position to effectively address the visitor and interpret the park's theme.

It is the purpose of this brief paper to acquaint the interpreter at this park with a basic amount of information on the clothing of the period in which the battle of Guilford Courthouse was fought. Since most of the interpretation centers on the military aspects of the battle the main emphasis in this work will be on the clothes of the soldier and his civilian counterpart who served in the militia.

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Armed with an understanding and background knowledge of the clothing of the period, interpreters will be able to answer most of the questions in their own minds and those of the visitor about their clothing and be able, at random, to go through the park's living history wardrobe and assemble a complete and correct outfit.

It is hoped that the information contained within this meager work will serve as an introduction to the great amount of information contained in other, more scholarly works. I encourage the interpreter to seek out these sources and use them to their greatest advantage. There is much to learn about the clothing of the eighteenth century.

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Submitted this the last day of

April in the year of our Lord

one thousand nine hundred and

seventy-eight and of the United

States the two hundred and second.

Your most humble and obt. Servant,

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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For no other reason than my own the word "costume" has not been used in this work. With many years of experience in reproducing and studying early garments, I have, by exposure, seen the word applied so many times to articles of inferior quality, both in materials and research. Although costume may be a totally acceptable and appropriate title, I prefer "period clothing".

PERIOD CLOTHING AS AN INTERPRETIVE TOOL

Period clothing, in an interpretive program, is, in a sense, a "silent interpreter". Clothed in a regimental coat and cocked hat, the interpreter, without telling anyone, lets every visitor know that he represents the theme of an eightcenth century related area. There will be some visitors who cannot distinguish between the period of 1781 and that of the War Between the States as far as the history of each is concerned, but there is a very small number who cannot look at a cocked hat or a blue- faced red surtout and not know that it is of "George Washington's time". Therefore, despite modern visitor centers, sophisicated audio- visual presentations and rangers in modern clothes, the only thing, or maybe the first thing the visitor sees to establish the period of the park's most historic event is the park interpreter in period clothing. Once established, the visitor is prepared to learn more of the park story. In a large sense the clothes the interpreter wears is part of the message he is to convey. The clothes and story are one.

In another sense, perhaps incidental, the clothes are intertaining. Many visitors seem to enjoy seeing a soldier dressed in such a colorful and unusual looking uniform. They love to have their pictures taken with the interpreter to show the folks back home. Most often they are more attentive to the interpreter in period clothes than the same interpreter dressed in Class

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A's. Quite possibly they might just learn more from a continental soldier speaking of his hardships prior to and after the battle than a ranger speaking as a historian. I am not attempting to diminish the ability or the image of the NPS uniform, but rather I am pointing out that the living history interpreter has a place in the interpretive program of this or any other park. It can be equally entertaining as it is informative.

involved in the park's interpretive programs wearing the same clothing. When cases allow, proper fitting of uniforms and civilian clothes should be done to achieve proper fit and above all, proper appearance.

Cut of the clothes is the most important feature to make them look correct. Often times, the look can only be duplicated by cutting the garment in eighteenth century patterning. The basic cut can overcome even the use of some modern fabrics as we are forced use sometimes.

Wearing the garments properly is the next important step in achieving the proper appearance. Ill fitting breeches or a loose waist-coat is as ludicrous today as it was them. Often, improper wear is a result of poor cut.

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Since the purpose of this treatise is to acquaint new interpreters with the essentials of clothing themselves in the mode of dress of the eighteenth century here follows as a description of construction and types of garments known to the soldier and militiaman of the eighteenth century. As a suppliment to this work, the types of garments in use at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park are described and collated as a helpful source for putting together a particular uniform.

AUTHENTICITY

It is essential that the period clothing worn in any interpretive program be as close to authentic as effort, money and time allows. An interpreter who fails to have the correct attire misses the whole point. An out of place item or wrong cut garment is not only an anachronism, but a falsehood as well. Few visitors will catch the error, but if the same excuse is applied to the interpretive talk then few may not catch the mistaken date or the wrong general. Both the talk and the clothes need plenty of research to make them accurate and effective in their purpose. As interpreters we guard what we say so we must be aware of what we show. This is especially critical in "living history" where the visual impression is one of the assets of the program.

Most "experts" in living history clothing strive to great lengths to obtain the correct type of cloth or the right buttons only to destroy their whole purpose by using a modern or poorly made pattern. Even if a good pattern is used it is often times not adapted to the person it is to fit resulting in a poorly fitted garment. Sizes as we know them today were virtually unknown in the eighteenth century. Military uniforms were probably in about three sizes, small, medium and large and then tailored by the regimental tailor to fit. At this and probably many other parks this fitting is usually not accomplished due to the numbers

Fronts of coats, edges of lappels and collars, and the bottom edges of the skirts were left raw. Wool cloth was simply known as cloth and is referred to as such in contemporary sources.

Linen was equally enjoyed as wool in clothes. It was quite durable and coolin summer. Made from the stem of the flax plant it was a very useful fabric. It was used as linings for coats and breeches, shirts, stockings, small clothes, and hundreds of other uses such as tents, sheets, etc. Linen was used for whole garments as well as wool. Hunting shirts and smocks, comprising the only uniform of many of the early American soldiers were made of linen.

Cotton, though not as abundant as it was to be in the nineteenth century, was used to some extent. Mainly used as a substitute
for linen it enjoyed some success in the south. The frustrating
job of picking out the many seeds in the cotton boll prevented it from replacing linen. Not until the invention of the
cotton seed separator or gin in the late 1790's did it become
a practical and inexpensive cloth.

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Silk was the most elegant of the types of fabrics known. Spun by the silkworm as its cacoon, it was processed into cloth. France was the leader in western society in the production of silk.

Silk was used in the best of clothes for the wealthy. Clothes made from silk were expensive and its use was curtailed except for

MATERIALS

There were only four fabrics known to the world in the eighteenth century- wool, linen, cotton and silk. While these were the
only fabrics known, additional fabrics could be obtained by mixing these, such as wool and linen (linsey- woolsey) or silk
and wool. Wool, linen and cotton were the fabrics of the
lower classes as these were relatively inexpensive, thereas
higher grade wool and silk were reserved for the elegant
clothing of the rich and influential. In the military wool
and linen predominated for both officers and men.

Much of the cloth of the late eighteenth century was spun, woven and finished by hand. Only in Europe where the Industrial Revolution had already started was there an abundance of machine- made cloth. Machine goods were virtually unknown in the colonies except by import.

Wool, sheared from sheep, was the most used fabric. It was abundantly used by civilian and soldier alike. For military purposes wool was the best choice because of its durability and warmth, even when wet. It served as the material for coats, overcoats, capes, breeches, caps, stockings, small clothes and hundreds of other items. Linsey- woolsey was frequently substituted and served as a most comfortable and durable fabric. For most coats the wool used in their construction was heavily milled and when cut would not ravel.

dress clothes and linings. Silk also made the best of stockings for wear with the knee breeches of the period. Their use by the lower class soldier or civilian was nil, unless some lucky soul was able to acquire a pair of handme-downs.

Fabrics of all sorts were dyed in a variety of colors. Natural dyes were applied to the cloth before, as yarn, or after manufacture. Yarn dyed cloth was known as "dyed in the wool". Drab was the predominent color of the lower classes. Uniforms were purposely made of bright, often contrasting colors to make them appealling to the soldiers who wore them. Dyes were not color fast and easily faded in the sun. Modern aniline dyes were unheard of in the period concerned. People of the eighteenth century enjoyed bright colors such as red, purple, blue, yellow and green. For lower classes of civilians browns, made from walnut hulls and tree bark were much in vogue. Colors for the military were already established by 1781. England had its red and scarlet, France its white, Germany its prussian blue, and America, blue. In addition to the colors of the prescribed uniforms, facing colors were used to indicate regiments and battalions, forming quite a contrast of colors in an army.

It is very important that the correct material is used in the costruction of any reproduction clothing. Modern polyester fabrics are definitely not appropriate from the standpoint that they are historically inaccurate. Furthermore, they are made to have no wrinkles. Wrinkles were a sad part of period clothing since all natural fabrics were in use. Without them, no period garment is accurate. The best advice is to stay away from modern fabrics. When, and the time is coming, all wool and all linen fabrics disappear from the market, then substitutes can be tolerated. Until that day, stick to the natural fiber fabrics.

Care of natural fabrics is essential. Wool needs to be protected from the ravages of the moth larvae, so proper storage during idle months is essential. Clean them often and brush all dirt and food particles out of the fibers after use. Linen absorbs perspiration readily and must be washed frequently. In the living history wardrobe at Guilford Courthouse NMP there is no silk clothing so no steps to their care are given. Cleanlinest in clothing is important, not only for the preservation of the clothes, but to prevent offending the public, a modern concern often overlooked by our eighteenth century forebears.

CONSTRUCTION

The proper cut and tailoring of a reproduction garment is essential for the achievement of the desired look of a garment.

For a regimental coat of 1781 to look like a regimental coat of 1781 it must be cut just as one was originally. Most desirable is a good pattern followed by period tailoring. It should be made to fit the person it was intended to fit. As stated earlier, this is often impossible due to the numbers using the same uniform at the park. To achieve a knowledge of fit and construction a few facts are necessary.

All sewing prior to the development of the sewing machine, circa 1835, was done by hand. Quite literally everything the soldier or civilian wore from head to foot was handmade. For anyone who has made anything by hand quickly knows that it takes a long time and a great deal of patience. This is hard to believe by those who live in an age of machines and fast food. Extant examples of pre-sewing machine garments show fine and delicate work rivaling the best I have ever seen made on machines. This is not to say that all garments were of excellent quality. Many, especially military uniforms were poorly made, at least according to documentation. Corrupt officials existed then who would sell, at inflated prices, poorly made items. One just did not go to war one day and expect his army to be clothed the next, but Even by hand, garments could be mass-produced.

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Practically all coats of the period were of four- piece con-

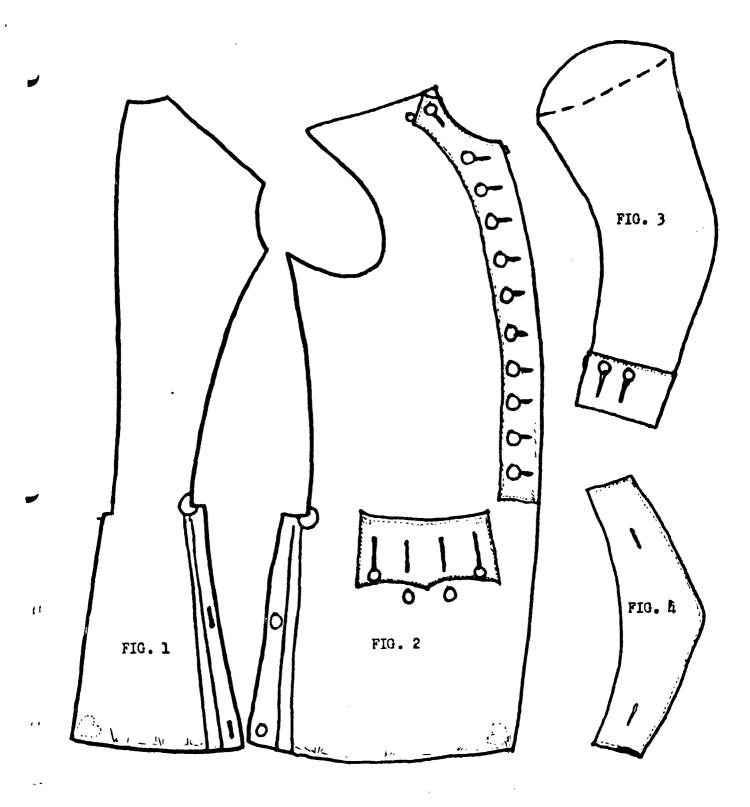


Plate I CONSTRUCTION

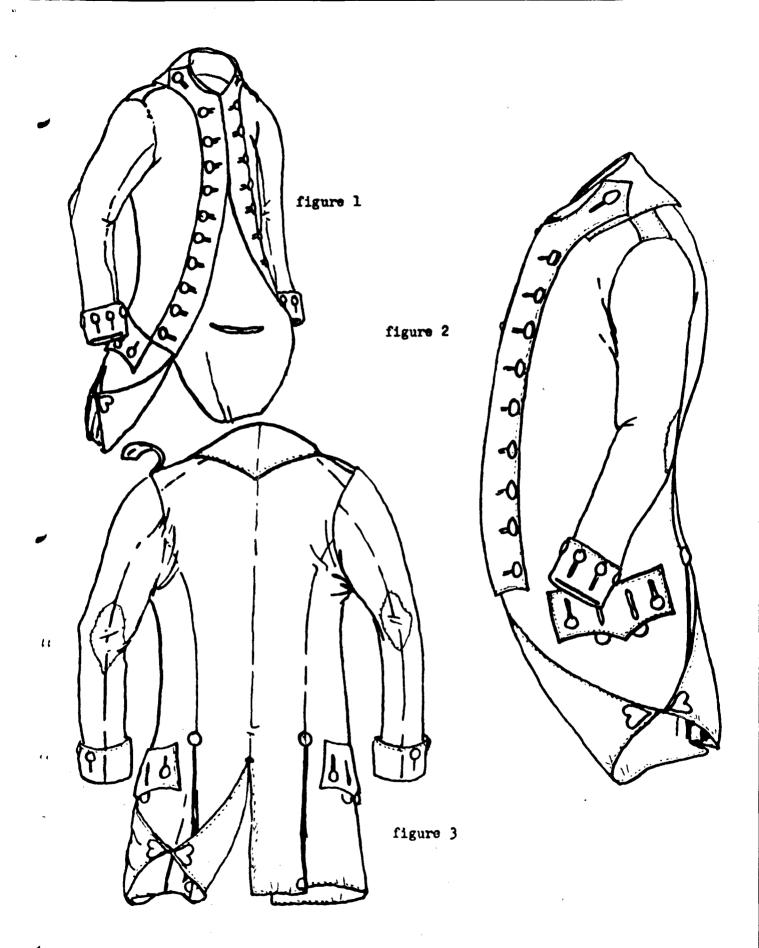


Plate II

struction (see plate 1, figures 1 & 2), that is two front panels and two rear panels. The side seams sloped to the rear and at about hip level ended at a button. From there it was open or closed to the skirt. These vents were pleated and earlier were stiffened as a pannier. The center back was vented from the point between the two hip buttons and in some civilian versions overlapped, right over left. The majority of civilian coats were single- breasted with any number of pewter, brass, steel or covered button down the front. Military coats, beginning about 1700 were double- breasted buttoning back to form "facings". These facings were usually of a contrasting color designating regiments. The number of buttons on the facings averaged ten arranged singly or in pairs or in threes. The french style of facing featured a tab attached to and forming the upper part of the facing. This tab was secured to the collar by a button near the shoulder seam (see Plate 1, figure 2). A large pocket flap on a line with the hip button and the lower edge of the facing concealed a pocket on civilian coats. On the military version this flap was false, the pocket being cut into the coat lining and accessible from the inside (Plate II, FIGURE 1). The sleeves were tight, being snug on the arm and reaching to center-hand. As part of the sleeve the cuff folded back up over it forming a large cuff. Earlier cuffs were very large reaching almost to the elbow and by the end of the century had disappeared altogether. In 1781 the cuffs were about 3 to 32 inches wide. Some coats, such as the frock, had no cuffs. All cuffs button-

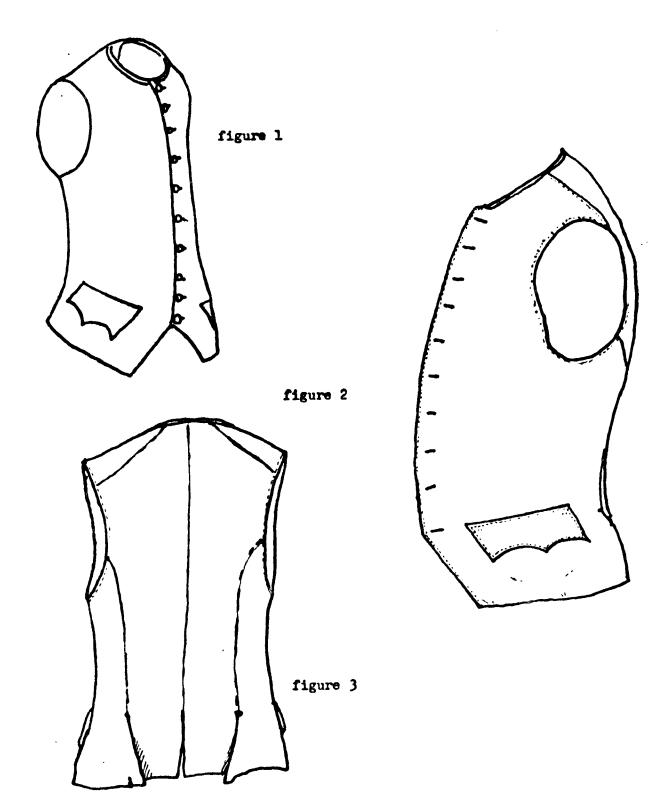


Plate III

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up the sleeves with three or four buttons each. The sleeve was cut to fit the arm tightly and was set deeply into the arm opening of the body of the coat. Since there was no padding as there is in today's coats, the shoulders sloped down from the neck, following the natural slope of the shoulders presenting a rounded effect that is awkward to modern design (Plate II, figure 1, 2, 3). Some coats had a triangular gusset inserted into the sleeve at the armpit to add fullness at the armhole while achieving the necessary tightness in the arm.

The collar was almost always flat as they fitted the coat.

Short standing collars were frequently encountered on civilian coats. On military coats the collars buttoned over the facings at the top, the top button of the facing buttoning through the collar. On french-style coats the tab at the top of the facings buttoned through the collar to the coat.

Coats were also fitted with elbow guards (Plate II, figure 3) which gave an extra amount of cloth in an area where wear would occur. These were of the same cloth as the coat. Shoulder straps were also used to hold the wide buff leather belts in place.

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Hooks and eyes were placed at the center front of the coat to hold the two front panels together. In the french style coats, one was placed at the throat and another at the level of the

eyes were placed at the level of the third facing button and between the level of the fourth and fifth button. Hooks and eyes also joined the skirts of the coat together forming the turnbacks. Reinforements in the shape of hearts, diamonds, grenades, fleur de lyes, etc. were attached to the corners of the skirts at the hooks and eyes to strenghten that area and provide decoration. Originally, they concealed weights to hold down the full skirts of the coats of the early part of the century.

The waistcoat was a close fitting garment worn immediately under the coat. Made without or with sleeves it, like the coat, had pockets and flaps at waist level. In the British service, battalion companies had ten buttons down center front and grenadier and light companies had twelve buttons. As stated, the waistcoat (pronounced wes-kit) was very tight fitting and could be made more so by the addition of laces in the back. They were made of white or buff- colored wool, linen in military uniforms and a multitude of colors and patterns and materials in civilian models. Frequently, they were highly embroidered or trimed with gold or silver lace. A man or soldier was considered "undressed" without his waistcoat. (see Plate IX).

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Stockings were essential to a time when knee breeches were in style. Stockings were cut or knitted from wool, linen or silk. They were made long enough to rise above the knee and were held in place by the bottom band of the knee breeches. If cut from

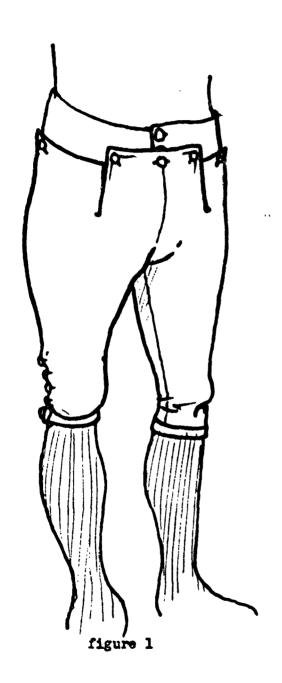




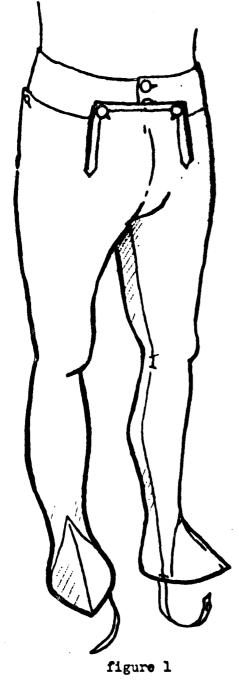
Plate IV

cloth, they were sewn together from two pieces, a seam running up the back and around the foot. Military colors were usually white or grey while civilian patterns were of every color and patterns. Embroidery or "clocking" decorated the sides of civilian stockings (plate II, figure 2).

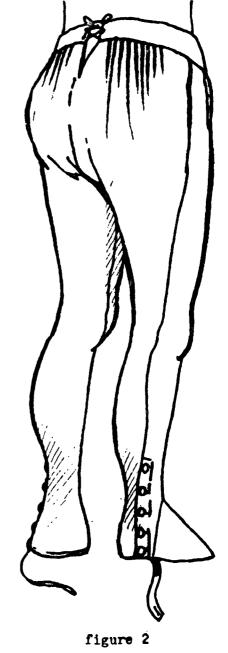
Knee breeches were very much in style in the eighteenth century. Made of linen, wool or silk of a multitude of colors, they prevailed to the end of the century and even into the nineteenth century when trousers or pantaloons became the fashion. Knee breeches had a wide waistband that rested on or below the hip bones. To hold them up, tight laces in the back were used. A broad fall in front served the purpose of the modern zipper. Around the knee five buttons or four buttons and a buckle closed the opening and band. The seat was very full, gathered into the waistband at the back (PlateIV). This was done to prevent the tight fitting breeches from rising at the knee when the we arer sat down. Pockets were cut into the breeches at the side segm. often having "ears" secured at the waistband by buttons. Since breeches were everyday wear for soldier and civilian they made for comfort. Some of the most durable and most comfortable ones were made of chamois. Dragoons were generally issued breeches made of leather.

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An innovative product of the war was the combination of breeches, trousers and gaiters into one garment known as overalls or in some cases, gaiter trousers. (Plate VI). These garments were



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Pritish troops. Constructed basically like the breeches they featured a spat covering for the shoe. A strap under the shoe held them in place. To prevent sagging a leather garter was worn around the leg just below the knee. This measure kept the lower leg tight and the upper leg loose for comfort. Materials were wool, linen and ticking. White was the predominate color with brown, yellow, and stripes also in use.

Trousers were also used to some extent. Their use was mainly for extra protection and warmth. For the southern campaign, the Foot Guards were issued trousers to be worn with their black gaiters. These garments were similar to overalls except they did fit as tightly and lacked the spat and bottom opening.

Plates VIE and VIIE show the soldier, in this case a continental soldier of the First Maryland Regiment, dressed properly in his newly issued regimental coat from France. Note that the low-waisted coat is buttoned back to form turnbacks and that the lower edge of the waistcoat is on a line level with the lower edge of the facings. A well-dressed soldier!

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Shirts were items of issue to soldiers and no civilian went without one. They were made most frequently of linen with wool being used for winter. They were roomy with a collar. Sleeves were full and were gathered into the arm hole. Ruffles or flounces were used on civilian and officer shirts, but were probably not



Plate VI



Plate VII

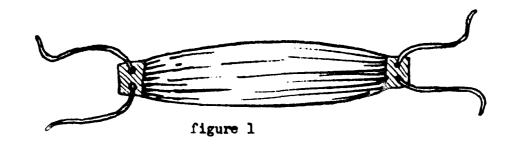


Plate VIII

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Plate IX





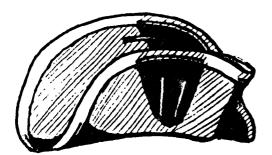
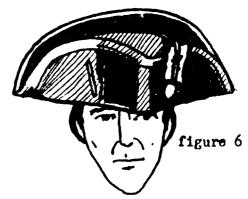


figure 5





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figure 7

Plate X

seen on those of the enlisted man. White was the preferred color, but checks were also used. For the soldier the collar was wide so that it could be folded down over the neck stock, as seen in Plate X, figure 2.

A well-dressed civilian is seen in Plate THE He is wearing a home spun cloth coat and knee breeches. This is typical of the many militiamen who served in the Revolution. In style the clothes are identical, the only difference sometimes being in the military's use of brighter colors and lace.

A stock is shown in Plate X... This device of stiffened cloth or leather was designed to keep the soldier's head erect.

In the British service these were made of horsehair cloth for campaign and velvet for dress. Sometimes a welt of red or facing cloth was attached for show. For infantry and dragoon troops they were primarily black, but the Royal Artillery preferred white. They could be tied with laces or buckled depending on the army or status of soldier. Figure 2 shows how the collar of the shirt was folded down over the stock.

Figure 3 and 4 show the two preferred methods of fastening.

RELATED ITEMS OF WEAR

Throughout history the hat has always been an item of wear. During the Revoution the military cocked hat or the civilian tricorn was the preferred headgear. The cocked hat came into being in the military when the wide brimmed hats of the early part of the century interferred with the manual exercise of the musket. By turning up, or cocking, the brim they were out of the way and presented a rather rakish appearance. By 1781 the three sides of the hat had started to become two, the front being pushed back. Laces held the sides to the short round crown. The edges of the brim were usually bound either with black or white linen or wool tape. The artillery of all the belligerents worn yellow bound hats. A linen sweatband or lining was stitched into the crown. Cockades were worn on military hats. England favored black, France white and the Americans black. After the French Alliance of 1778 the Americans adopted the "alliance cockade" of white on black (Plate X: figure 7. The cockade was worn on the left side and was secured to the hat by a loop of lace and a button. The cocked hat was properly worn with the front point over the left eye thus throwing the right point forward and the left point back. When the musket was shouldered it did not knock the hat askew. Laces, dyed the color of the wearer's hair, were sometimes attached to the lining to tie the hat on. These passed under the queue and tied in the back. Material for hats was black fur felt. Styles varied and methods for wearing them. One British

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Regiment wore their's backward! Hats could also be uncocked and worn with the brim down to protect the wearer from rain and sun.

There were hundreds of variations of hats and headgear used by the eighteenth century civilian and soldier. These include bearskin caps, fatigue caps, workman's caps, leather dragoon caps, light infantry caps, etc. It would be beyond the scope of this work to even consider discussing each. They are, however, covered in the suppliment to this work only if they are part of the Guilford Courthouse clothing wardrobe.

Another item of wear that bears consideration is the gaiter. These items were of linen, dyed black and waxed to be worn around the shoe to keep out dirt and water (PlateXI, figures 12.2). They were of two principle varieties, the half-gaiter which rose as high as the calf of the leg, and the whole gaiter or spatterdash which cause up above the knee. Gaiters were essential to the soldier dressed in breeches and stockings, but a soldier dressed in overalls did not need them. On both types the button oponing was on the outside. On the spatterdash, a leather garter kept them from sagging. In the British service white spatterdashes were dress wear for grenadiers.





figure 1

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figure 2

Plate XI

TYPES OF CLOTHING AND UNIFORMS IN USE AT GUILFORD COURTHOUSE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

The following uniforms and clothing may be assembled from items in the living history wardrobe at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park. Please refer to the suppliment to the treatise for compiling a particular uniform. All clothing is of the period of the battle (1781).

- a. First Maryland Regiment, private.
- b. Royal Artillery. gunner
- c. Royal Artillery, matross
- d. American Continental Artillery, gunner
- e. Third Continental Dragoon Regiment, trooper
- f. Royal Artillery, Officer
- g. American militia, private
- h. American militia. NCO
- i. British 33d Regiment of Foot, private
- j. American rifleman, backwoodsman
- k. Civilian

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In putting together a particular uniform please pay attention to fit and size. Although the clothing is not made to any certain modern size, it can be simply determined by first trying it on. Some components of one uniform may be applied to another. This is true also to certain items for which one is available and can be applied to one uniform at a time.

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Author's note: Period paintings reveal much information on clothing cut, style and accessories.

Appendix

The following lists show what articles of clothing and equipment are needed to recreate as accurately as possible the appearance of those soldiers who participated in the Southern Campaign.

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Uniform of the American Continental (1st Maryland Regiment)

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes

including white overalls with leather garters

Regimental Coat

blue with red facings (as ordered for the Continentals from Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) and regimental or USA buttons

Cocked Hat

black wool-felt with white linen binding, Alliance Cockade, and regimental or USA button

Neck Stock

either black cloth or leather

Shoes

EQUIPMENT:

Cartridge box

perferably Maryland pattern

Bayonet scabbard

with cloth shoulder sling

Knapsack-Haversack combination

Maryland pattern

Haversack

optional

Canteen

preferably cloth-covered metal canteen, although wooden canteen is acceptable

ARMS:

11.

French model Charleville musket Bayonet

OPTIONAL FATIGUE UNIFORM:

Same as above except with hunting shirt and knit cap

Uniform of the British Regular (33rd Regiment of Foot)

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes

white

Trousers

brown, woolen

Half-gaiters

worn under trouser leg

Regimental coat

red with red facings

Cooked Hat

with white binding and black cockade

Neck Stock

black cloth

Shoes

EQUIPMENT:

Cartridge Box

British style

Bayonet scabbard

with white buff leather shoulder sling

Knapsack

British style, optional

Haversack

preferably white

Canteen

cloth covered metal

ARMS:

11.

2nd Pattern Short Land musket

Bayonet

Clothing of the American Rifle Units (Command of Lynch or Campbell)

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes
any color
Breechcloth and leggings
leggings fastened with a strip of cloth
or leather garter
Hunting shirt
Slouch hat or knit cap
Moccasins

EQUIPMENT:

Shot pouch and powder horn Knapsack or blanket roll optional Haversack Canteen wooden

ARMS:

11:

Long rifle

Uniform of the Royal Artillery

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes

white

Overalls

either brown or white

Neck stock

white cloth

Regimental coat

blue wool with red facings, yellow tape, and

RA buttons

Cocked hat

yellow binding, black cockade, and RA button

Shoes

EQUIPMENT:

Belly style cartridge box

Bayonet scabbard

with white buff leather shoulder sling

Haversack

Canteen

metal

Additional equipment depending on position in cannon

crew

ARMS:

11.

2nd Pattern Short Land musket

Bayonet

3-pounder cannon with grasshopper carriage

Uniform of the American Light Dragoon (Washington's Command)

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes Riding Boots Regimental Coat

white wool with blue facings and USA buttons Leather Helmet

EQUIPMENT:

Haversack Canteen

Leather scabbard and black buff leather shoulder sling for saber

Belly box for carbine

Black buff leather shoulder sling for carbine

ARMS:

11.

Saber

Carbine

British manufacture

Pistol

American manufacture

Clothing of the American Militia (North Carolina or Virginia)

CLOTHING:

Smallclothes
any color
Knee Breeches
Frock or Hunting Shirt
Slouch or Tricorn Hat
Shoes

EQUIPMENT:

Cartridge Box
any style that was worn on the hip
Bayonet scabbard
any style
Knapsack
optional
Haversack
Canteen
preferably wooden

ARMS:

11.

Either Long or Short Land British musket Bayonet