

State Militia Impressions

Militia battalions, detachments, and independent companies at Bemus Heights / Saratoga in 1777 were broadly drawn from across the states of New Hampshire and Connecticut and select counties from New York and Massachusetts. Militias were established and managed by their colonies/states of origin by militia laws, which included the regulation of arms, accoutrements, and equipage (see the appendix).

Most militia laws did not define the clothing parameters for their militia, and this guide therefore addresses broad commonalities in place across New England and upstate New York in the first half of the 1770s. While militia formations were activated for different lengths of service, none which joined the Northern Army as early as late summer were expected to be in service for less than two months. Therefore, every militiaman presents with the army at Bemus Heights/Saratoga understood that they would be away from home on long-term service at least into October. This is a significant point when choosing clothing for militia living history impressions.

The armies present at Bemus Heights/Saratoga inhabited stationary encampments for multiple weeks with their baggage at hand. If one can document specific examples that occurred elsewhere which break a rule (for example, men having beards following a lengthy ranging expedition), these do not contextually fit the situation at Bemus Heights/Saratoga in 1777 and therefore do not apply. Nevertheless, there would have been exceptional examples of many things worn or used outside the norm. For example, of the nearly 10,000 militiamen who were deployed against Burgoyne at Saratoga by October 1777, it is possible that someone wore a painted silk waistcoat. This guide regulates what was typical – in living history, the aim is to portray the common, the usual, and the standard, rather than emphasizing the exceptions.

Everything worn or carried by a living history participant at Bemus Heights/Saratoga should reflect one's rank and social class. As a rule, commissioned officers wore and used finer quality clothing, arms, and accoutrements. Their appearance was sometimes enhanced with items such as silk woven sashes and leather gloves. Such documented representations are encouraged.

Each subject (such as "shirts") is subdivided into **standard**, **exceeds standard**, and **unacceptable** categories. The **standard** defines the basic terms required for any living history impression at Saratoga 250th events. While not required, elements listed under **exceeds standard** are encouraged, particularly as these offer the most legitimate interpretive value to visitors. Anything listed under the **unacceptable** category is completely disallowed. The standards outlined are applicable for the duration of the *entire* event, not just during visitor hours.

These standards cannot anticipate or cover every contingency; if you have any questions or concerns about any of the following standards, or questions regarding anything not addressed in these standards (such as light horse militia or general officer interpretations), please reach out to Dave Bernier (3rdmass@gmail.com). Thank you.

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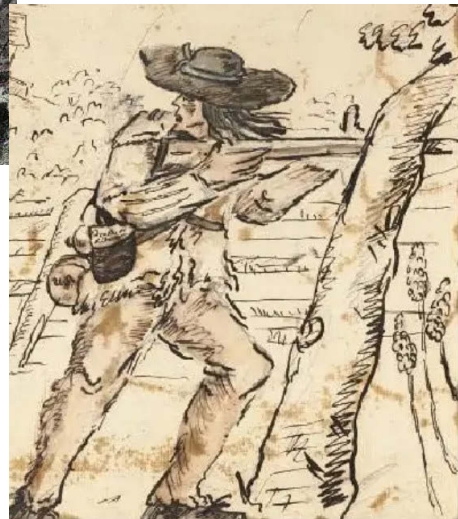
Arms: Firelocks/Guns; Bayonets; Swords; Hatchets/Tomahawks.

Accoutrements: Cartridge Pouches/Boxes, Shot Bags, and Bullet Bags; Powder and Priming

Horns. **Camp Necessaries:** Canteens; Knapsacks and Haversacks; Blankets and Tumplines.

Hygiene and Personal Effects: Hair; Glasses/Spectacles; Artistic Objects, Jewelry, and Watches; Smoking.

Appendix: Militia Law Requirements



CLOTHING

Shirts

- **Standard:** Hand or Machine-stitched plain white or natural colored, checked, or striped linen. Lightweight white or natural wool flannel, or cotton. The body is long (to lower thigh) and full. Center front slit, with or without ruffling. Collar closed with thread "Dorset" buttons or ties. Wrist bands (cuffs) closed with side-by-side sleeve links (cuff links) or a thread "Dorset" button and buttonhole. Use of non-thread buttons (bone, horn, or metal) are acceptable (because not visible) but not recommended.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance. Linen or wool flannel as detailed above. Thread "Dorset" buttons and/or sleeve links. The center front slit may be closed with a metal shirt buckle (usually round or heart-shaped). For most impressions, collar is pulled up high and worn snugly closed around the neck.
- **Unacceptable:** Synthetic fabrics. Shirts with inappropriate patterns. Modern shirts.

Neckwear

- **Standard:** Black or white linen, cotton, silk, hand or machine-hemmed handkerchiefs (30-36" square) or rollers (long narrow rectangle). Colored and patterned handkerchiefs (block-printed, yarn-dyed, resist-dyed) were popularly worn by commoners. Handkerchiefs and rollers were usually fit snugly over the collar which should be pulled straight up, with collar completely hidden or collar points extending neatly over the top of the neckwear.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-hemmed and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance. otherwise as detailed above.
- **Unacceptable:** Having no neckwear is unacceptable. Synthetic fabrics. Bright, unnatural colors. Handkerchiefs with modern pattern motifs. Paisleys. Jabots. Military stocks (horsehair, leather, or velvet).

Head Coverings

- **Standard:** Black wool or fur felt hats, cut round, and left plain or shaped or cocked on one, two, or three sides in appropriate 1770's British American non-military styles. Machine or hand-knit wool "Monmouth" or Dutch sailor caps with small brims in solid natural wool colors or striped.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-finished and trimmed, round-blocked wool or beaver felt hats, lined with linen or silk.

- **Unacceptable:** having no head covering when outdoors is unacceptable. Unfinished (unshaped and un-styled) hat blank. Stocking “Santa” caps. Synthetic knit caps. “Coonskin,” mountain man, rendezvous, trapper, or “Daniel Boone” inspired animal pelt caps. Handkerchiefs or other fabrics wrapped around the head in lieu of a hat. Civilian hats should not have cockades; colored cockades used to differentiate officer ranks pertained to the Continental Army only. Money or other papers stuffed in the head covering.

Coats and Jackets

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-stitched, well-fitted. Made of linen (flax or hemp) or wool (or various blends thereof, including cotton or silk blends), or cotton velvet or corduroy. Patterns and colors must conform to the period. Coats may be straight-bodied (older fashion) or in a cutaway style. Coats were approximately knee-length; Jackets were generally a hip-length version of a coat with shorter, pleated skirts, cuffs, and collar. Buttoned jackets do not require a waistcoat. Most coats and jackets were single-breasted; double-breasted garments should be faced in the same material as the body.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Having no coat or jacket is unacceptable. Hunting/rifle/frontier shirts. Cotton canvas, silk, or leather. Horizontal striped fabric. Military uniforms (unless portraying a militiaman wearing a specifically documented Continental Army coat from 1775-76 service). Smocks/overshirts (unless worn while resting or laboring in camp, never when under arms).

Waistcoats/Vests

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-stitched waistcoat, well-fitted (snug), made of linen or wool (or blends thereof, including cotton or silk), or cotton velvet or corduroy, or leather. Fabric patterns and colors must conform to period examples. May be short skirted or cut round (with or without belting). The waistcoat neckline should be small and well-fitted around the base of the collar. Note: sleeved waistcoats were styled as waistcoats but with sleeves, including stocking sleeves, and worn under another outer garment.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance.

- **Unacceptable:** Having no waistcoat is unacceptable when wearing a coat. Baggy or extremely long-skirted waistcoats. Cotton canvas or silk. Horizontal stripes. Waistcoats that close with large coat buttons. Collared waistcoats.

Breeches and Trousers

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-stitched, well-fitted breeches or straight-legged trousers made of linen or wool (or blends thereof, including cotton or silk), or cotton velvet or corduroy. Leather breeches. Fabric patterns and colors must conform to period examples. Breeches may close with buckles, buttons, or ties at the knees. Fly-front breeches (optional, but rare).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Military overalls (gaitered trousers). Cotton canvas. Synthetic fabrics. Horizontal striped fabric. Kilts. Leather trousers. Breeches with legs that extend to the mid-calf.

Stockings, Socks, and Garters:

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-made stockings that fit above the knee, made of densely knit wool, linen, silk, or cotton. Any patterns and colors must be of the period. Note: if using cloth or linen tape garters to keep stocking up (instead of using the breeches knee bands themselves), these should be hidden under the breeches.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Frame-knit stockings (or socks for trousers) knit flat to shape and stitched up the center back to form a visible seam. Hand-knit stockings or socks knit in the round to shape with a faux seam of purl stitches up the center back. Stockings are cut and sewn from knit fabric yardage using an accurate pattern. Gore clocks (embellishment on both sides of the ankle) are subtle and the same color. Stockings should be held up by the breeches knee band.
- **Unacceptable:** Commercially available striped or clocked stockings (neither are legitimate replicas). Diced (Highland) hose. Buckled leather garters (these were military issues).

Spatterdashes/Half-gaiters, Country Boots, and Leggings:

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-stitched, well-fitted wool or linen spatterdashes or country boots made to button or tie closed and cut round (not pointed) at the tops. Black leather spatterdashes or gaiter-boots. Wool leggings, well fit, closed with buttons or ties. Note: any of these must be worn over modern shoes (see “Shoes”)

If beginners do not otherwise have appropriately styled replica footwear. Otherwise, these are not required.

- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Baggy spatterdashes. Chaps. Leather “Indian” or “Mountain man” leggings. Leggings with overwide “flairs”. Fringed leggings. Military gaiters or half gaiters.

Shoes and Buckles

- **Standard:** Black shoes, constructed in a style consistent with 1770’s British/Irish-American men’s fashion, closed with replica buckles or tape ties (one or two holes per latchet). Black leather tied half-boots. Appropriately styled knee-high leather boots are acceptable for horse-riders only. Modern black leather shoes with a distinct heel and a smooth toe may be worn but must be covered by well-fitted spatterdashes (see “Spatterdashes”).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant garment with relevant provenance. Small original or replica buckles.
- **Unacceptable:** Shoes with no distinct heel. Modern shoes without spatterdashes. Obviously modern footwear such as hiking boots, sneakers, lug soles, etc. Moccasins. Wingtips. Fake buckles.

Commissioned Officer Appointments

- **Standard:** Buff/tan/brown or white kid leather gloves (optional). Shirt ruffling at the breast and wrist bands (optional). Woven silk sashes and American-made gorgets (optional, but rare; sashes may be worn alone, gorgets must be worn with sashes).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Replicas custom crafted according to extant examples with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** White (or any other color) cotton gloves. Fabric sashes. Black gloves. Modern leather gloves. Shoulder knots or epaulets.

ARMS

Note—All firearms must pass Saratoga 250th inspection at this Living History event. Visitors may only touch firearms when unloaded, and only when the soldier maintains physical control of the arm, i.e. while holding it. No loading occurs except within firing demonstration\Battle areas.

Visitors are not allowed to touch bladed or pointed weapons (such as bayonets, knives, tomahawks / hatchets, or swords), at any time.

Firelocks/Guns

- **Standard:** Replica British/Irish (pre 1769 short land pattern) or French (model 1728) military arms. Civilian “New England” or “Hudson Valley” fowlers. English or American-made fuzees or trade guns. 1775-77 colony/state-procured “committee of safety” guns. Leather slings are allowed but were rare.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Custom built from extant examples with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Antique (original) guns. Rifles (no militia north of Pennsylvania had rifles). Pistols. Blunderbusses. Hand mortars. Match locks. Wheel locks. Dog locks (unless it also has a functioning internal half-cock). British/Irish or French muskets other than those stipulated above. Military arms from European nations other than Britain/Ireland and France. Percussion-cap locks.

Note: all firearms must pass Saratoga 250th inspection at this event.

Bayonets

- **Standard:** the bayonet must be compatible with the associated gun. Bayonets must have scabbard secured in waist or shoulder belts. Note: New York militia law did not require bayonets (see appendix). Bayonets are not required for fowlers.
- **Exceeds Standard:** same as above.
- **Unacceptable:** Bayonets without fitted scabbards.

Swords

- **Standard:** Style must reflect those broadly wielded in North America during the first three quarters of the 18th century, and should conform to hunting swords, spadroons, short sabers, or hangers. Officers may carry smallswords. All swords must be carried via waist or shoulder belt. Note: most militia laws did not require swords (see appendix).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Custom-built or original sword secured in a scabbard and belting constructed from extant examples with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** swords without fitted scabbards. Scottish Broadwords (unless specifically documented).

Hatchets/Tomahawks

- **Standard:** Replica hatchets or tomahawks carried via waist or shoulder belt. Heads or cutting edges must be tightly secured in leather sheathings. Note: not all militia laws required hatches or tomahawks (see appendix).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand forged heads with hand-drawn hafts constructed from extant examples with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Hatchets or tomahawks without sheathing.

ACCOUTREMENTS

Cartridge Pouches/Boxes, Shot Bags, and Bullet Bags

- **Standard:** “New England” or “New York” style soft leather cartridge pouches in black or fair leather housing a wooden box (block) drilled with 15-19-21 holes, suspended by a narrow (about 2-inch wide) leather (tanned, buff, or white-painted tanned) or linen webbing shoulder belt. Cartridge box worn around the waist, suspended by a waistbelt. Bullet or shot bags may be worn with powder or priming horns (which see) in addition to cartridge pouches, but neither bullet or shot bags cannot be used to house cartridges at any time.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Hand-stitched and constructed after a pattern taken from an extant example with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** European style hard leather pouches (such as worn by most British infantry). New Model (29-hole) Continental Army pouches. Tin cartridge boxes.

Powder and Priming Horns

- **Standard:** Powder or priming horn with narrow leather or woven strap or cord. Powder or priming horns are not required at Saratoga 250th event. Horns cannot contain black powder at any time – unused cat litter can be used to achieve the desired weight effect.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Constructed from an extant example with relevant provenance.
- **Unacceptable:** Horns containing any black powder. Horns made or decorated in ways that do not conform to 18th century British/Irish American styles.

Camp Necessaries

Canteens

- **Standard:** “Cheesebox” or staved wooden canteen.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Staved wooden canteens with interlocking wooden hoops (not metal strappings). Wooden canteens should have narrow 1" wide leather keepers, slung with a narrow cord, narrow woven hemp strap, or narrow leather strap. Period-correct wooden rundlet.
- **Unacceptable:** Tin or stainless-steel canteens. Gourds. Modern flasks. Glass or ceramic bottles or jugs.

Knapsacks and Haversacks

- **Standard:** Hand or machine sewn conformable to the “David Uhl,” “Benjamin Warner,” or “Elisha Gross” knapsacks. Made of linen (painted or unpainted) or animal skin (such as calf, bear, or goat) with two shoulder straps. Knapsacks are not required at Saratoga 250th event, but they must conform to these standards if worn on a march or displayed in camp.
- **Exceeds Standard:** All hand-sewn, otherwise detailed as above.
- **Unacceptable:** Haversacks (haversacks were not issued to militia). Cotton canvas. European military knapsacks (such as the “Isaac Royall” knapsack). The Maryland “New Invented Knapsack and haversack.”

Blankets and Tumplines

- **Standard:** Hand or machine-woven wool or linsey-woolsey, preferably plain white, check, stripped, or plaid, closely resembling extant examples. 2 or 3-point blankets, rose blankets, or Dutch blankets are all appropriate. Blankets can be tied to a pack or carried in a roll via leather or woven tumpine. Blankets are not required at Saratoga 250th event, but they must conform to these standards if carried out on a march or displayed in camp.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Handloomed. Blankets may be either “imported” (a solid piece of material) or “colonial” (a seam down the middle where the two halves are joined).
- **Unacceptable:** Civil War gray blankets. Blankets are made of synthetic materials (such as polar fleece). Hudson Bay blankets.

HYGIENE and PERSONAL EFFECTS

Hair

- **Standard:** Face must be clean, shaven, or up to a maximum of 4-days even stubble. Runners (ear-length sideburns) on younger fashion-oriented men are acceptable. Note: military protocols show that the men of a regiment typically shaved and washed on the same days twice per week. It was important to have personnel operating under the same shaving regimen to maintain a uniform appearance. Long hair must be clubbed or queued (or loose, if shoulder length).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Same as described above.
- **Unacceptable:** Anything else. Hair dyed with any unnatural color. Ponytails. Long loose hair.

Glasses/Spectacles

- **Standard:** Reproduction period-appropriate metal frames with circular lenses.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Original spectacles made prior to c.1790, i.e., with both circular lenses and temple pieces.
- **Unacceptable:** Modern-framed glasses.

Artistic Objects, Jewelry, and Watches:

- **Standard:** Watches worn in fobs (the little waistband pocket). Any facial piercings must be replaced with small clear retainers/hiders. Plain metal wedding bands.
- **Exceeds Standard:** Same as above.
- **Unacceptable:** Artistic objects or insignias, medals, pins, patches, or badges (including SAR and DAR civic organization badges). Medals, badges, or patches copied from 18th century artifacts (such as the Badge of Merit). Modern jewelry (plain metal wedding bands excepted). Wrist watches. Watch chains worn across waistcoats (any exposed watch chain must be attached to a watch housed in a fob). Plastic proxy wedding bands.

Smoking

- **Standard:** Tobacco smoked from a clay pipe (allowed in camp after visitor hours only).
- **Exceeds Standard:** Same as above, using heritage tobacco.
- **Unacceptable:** Use of cigarettes, cigars, modern pipes, or vaping in camp. All smoking is prohibited near historical buildings, at any time when high fire danger warnings are in effect, when under arms, or while in the possession of black powder cartridges.

Appendix:

Militia Law Requirements

Each colony's/state's militia law defined the weaponry, accoutrements and, usually, equipage, that militia were expected to field with. Noncompliance was met with fines either deducted from the bounty money/salary paid for militia service or from proceeds gained from requisitions sold at auction. Further, any deficiencies found amongst enlisted militiamen were supplied by the government or by privately owned items temporarily taken from those who were not then activated for service. In such cases, the borrowed items were evaluated by third parties, and the borrower was liable for any damage or loss. Therefore, universal policies ensured that most militia were outfitted according to militia law even if individuals were unwilling or unable to supply every item themselves.

Items such as tentage, camp kettles, and additional ammunition were provided by towns or districts of origin, the state, or the Northern Army upon joining.

New York

(An Act for the better regulating the Militia of the Colony of New York, passed April 1, 1775):

“Every Foot Soldier...in this Colony shall be provided with a good well-fixed Musket or Fuzee, a good Sword, Belt and Cartridge Box, Six Cartridges of Gun Powder and Six sizeable Bullets”

Note: New York did not require bayonets. This is further confirmed in the colony's *Manual Exercise, Evolutions, Manœvers, &c. to be observed and followed by the Militia of the Province of New-York* (Albany, 1772), p.18, which noted “the [New York] Militia have no Bayonets.” Swords, without the option of hatchets, were required in lieu of bayonets.

Connecticut

(An Act for assembling, equipping etc. a Number of Inhabitants of this Colony for the special Defence and Safety thereof, passed April 26, 1775):

“Each inhabitant so inlisted shall be furnished with good fire-arms, and that the fire-arms belonging to this Colony, wherever they are, shall be collected and put into the hands of such inlisted inhabitants as have not arms of their own; and that each inlisted inhabitant that shall provide arms for himself, well fixed with a good bayonet and cartouch box, shall be paid a premium of ten shillings.” Additionally, “each inlisted inhabitant” was to supply themselves “with a blanket, knapsack, cloathing, &c. to the acceptance of their respective captains.”

Note: Connecticut required bayonets and no other bladed weapons. town governments provided their militia with canteens.

Massachusetts

(An Act for Forming and Regulating the Militia within the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, passed January 22, 1776):

“Each and every Officer and private Soldier of said Militia...shall equip himself, and be constantly provided with a good Fire-Arm, with a Steel or Iron Ramrod, and a Spring to retain the same, a Worm, Priming Wire and Brush, and a Bayonet fitted to his Gun, a Scabbard and Belt therefor, and a Cutting Sword, or a Tomahawk or Hatchet, a Pouch containing a Cartridge Box, that will hold fifteen Rounds of Cartridges at least, a Hundred Buck Shot, a Jack-Knife and Tow for Wadding, six Flints, one Pound of Powder, forty Leaden Balls fitted to his Gun, a Knapsack and Blanket, a Canteen or Wooden Bottle sufficient to hold one Quart.”

Note: Massachusetts required both bayonets and swords or hatchets.

New Hampshire

(An Act for forming and regulating the Militia within the State of New Hampshire in New England, and for repealing all the Laws heretofore made for that purpose, passed September 19, 1776):

“Each and every Officer and private Soldier of said Militia...shall equip himself, and be constantly provided with a good Fire Arm, good Ramrod, a Worm, Priming Wire and Brush, and a Bayonet fitted to his Gun, a Scabbard and Belt therefor, and a Cutting Sword, or a Tomahawk or Hatchet, a Pouch containing a Cartridge Box, that will hold fifteen Rounds of Cartridges at least, a Hundred Buck Shot, a Jack-Knife and Tow for Wadding, six Flints, one Pound of Powder, forty Leaden Balls fitted to his Gun, a Knapsack and Blanket, a Canteen or Wooden Bottle sufficient to hold one Quart.”

Note: excepting the demands regarding a musket's ramrod, New Hampshire's militia law was the same as Massachusetts's.