

MORNING REPORT

of Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers.

Being the ramblings of a Soldier who has smelled too much of Congress's Gunpowder
and king George's Lackeys.

MARCH, 2009

The renderings of this Instant include—

CALENDAR: 28 Mar: Unit Meeting; Middletown Springs.

JIM'S JAWINGS: Concerning the above gathering.

DUE DUES: It's that time again.

BAR: Who's interested?

CL: Keep your shirt on.

TWIRLING THE DISTAFF: More of the petticoat.

RESEARCH: Get ready for a trip to Canada

And MUCH, MUCH more! Well, at least much more.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Following are the events we voted at the last meeting to attend.

28 Mar: Unit Meeting; Middletown Springs. Details below

2 May: School of the Soldier; Nurse Homestead, Danvers, MA. (CL Northern Dept.)

16-17 May: Jerusalem Mill; Kingsville, MD. (CL/BB National Event)

Details at <http://www.jerusalemill.org/redcoats.htm>.

23 May: Opening Weekend; Fort Ti.

20-21 Jun: Ethan Allen Days; Bennington, VT.

11-12 Jul: Hubbardton.

25-26 Jul: Mt. I.

31 Jul-2 Aug: Redcoats to Rebels; Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA.

8-9 Aug: Encampment; Fort Lennox, Canada.

The fort has asked our friends in Warner's to organize an educational weekend and they, in turn, have asked us to participate.

12-13 Sep: Ti.

2-4 Oct: Battle of Crane Brook; Rebecca Nurse Homestead, Danvers, MA. (Northern Dept.)

10-11 Oct: Stone Fort; Schoharie, NY.

Comin' Up

28 Mar: Unit Meeting; same place as last time— St. Anne's church.

At the last meeting, we had some discussion concerning the direction for the unit to take in the

coming campaign(s). In short, the group seems lately to have become somewhat stagnant, complacent, whatever and it would benefit the unit and each of us members if we took a look at where we are and where we want to go. The first step will be to take stock of our clothing and equipment. As a result, we are asking that folks wear and/or bring said gear to this meeting and we will spend some time assessing where we stand and how we can improve. You certainly don't need to bring it all but do include those items you use most of the time. In addition, we will take some time to take a close look at the weapons to try to catch potential problems before the season starts.

In addition to the equipment discussion, we will be doing some drill. It would be quite profitable if everyone took a few minutes and reviewed what you know/think you know about Norfolk and Howe's so that we can spend time addressing any questions.

Lastly, bring your best guess as to which events you think you will attend – note that I said which ones YOU will attend, not which ones you think the unit should attend (see Jim's comments below). Jeff needs to get returns sent in and needs numbers of participants.

Recent Invites

23-24 May: Military Timeline; Plattsburgh, NY.

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JIM'S JAWINGS

I'd like to thank those of you who came to our February meeting. There weren't many of us but we got our calendar laid out and got to meet a couple of new members. At our next meeting (same place, day, date, time, different month) the plan is to work on kit and drill. I'd also like to spend a little time refining the calendar to select a few events for maximum participation out of the dozen that we chose.

When working on our kit, I'd like us to go beyond clothing and weapon. One of the primary jobs of the original unit was to gather information between Ti and Canada. How did they do this? Well, not by aerial reconnaissance. They walked. I'd like us each to put together what we would need to take such a walk. Now I don't expect us to have this done by the end of March, but rather something we can work on throughout the season. As part of that, I would like to throw out a challenge to each of us. Notice I said "us", myself included. I would like each of us to research and produce just one item, activity, usable historical fact, or anything new to that person. If each of us shared one thing, then we would all gain knowledge and would be better able to represent those that we portray.

I hope to see many of you in Middletown at the end of the month. Jim

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DUE DUES

Speaking of dues, your monies for Whitcomb's (\$15) are due the end of March. Get 'em to Maria Beuerlein, 30 Abercrombie St., Ticonderoga, NY 12883. You can make out one check if you are also joining the BAR.

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BAR

Anyone interested in belonging to the BAR should contact Jim right away. Remember, dues (\$25) are made out and sent to Whitcomb's – not the BAR – and the unit sends one check. DO NOT send your dues to the BAR!!! And, do not send your membership form to the BAR – send it with your check to Whitcomb's. For whatever reason, individuals sending things to the BAR screws 'em up.

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CL

The Line is offering 100% cotton t-shirts for sale. They will be dark blue (just can't bring myself to call 'em "navy") with the logo in white across the front. Prices each: S, M, L, & XL = \$8.00; 2XL = \$9.00; 3XL = \$10.00; 4XL = \$11.00; and 5XL = \$13.00. Orders will be taken BY UNIT with a single check rather than a herd of individuals so, figure how many you want and send Maria a check with the sizes. Order deadline is 3 Apr. so get your order in right away. The shirts will be available for pick-up at the Jerusalem Mill event in May – some of us will be going down. If you don't get 'em then, arrangements can be made for mailing but it will cost extra. Depending on reception/sales, there may be a second run but that's still up in the air.

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PERSONALS

While not a member of our group, most of you know Karl Crannell and his recent trials and tribulations. On a positive note – and this is positively a note – I received a message that he and his consort, Amy, have bought a house in Ticonderoga. Good for them.

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TWIRLING THE DISTAFF

This is part 2 of the monograph on the petticoat that comes from Rhonda McConnon's website, <http://www.18newenglandlife.org/>. Remember, the first section appeared last next issue?

The Petticoat Construction

For the average sized women a petticoat width of about 120 inches is a good rule of thumb. That's usually two widths of 54-60" fabric and is pretty standard for both wool and linen. To begin, measure from your waist to the length you'd like to have and add a half inch for a hem. No need to add the half inch if you're going to leave the edge raw or bind. Cut two lengths of 54"-60" fabric and three of anything narrower. If using narrower fabric decide how full you'd like to have your petticoat and adjust width by narrowing the width our your 3 panels or

make one small panel and two full width panels. Sew each together, right sides to right sides, using ¼" seams *and* leaving the upper 9"-12" open if using the wider width. If using narrower fabric, stitch one of the seams leaving the 9-12" open on the upper end. Measure half way around and cut an opening in the fabric the same length, and bind. Press this 9"-12" to the inside and stitch. This to be known as the pocket opening.

Gathered waistband

Gather the front and back onto two separate waistbands, with each band cut about 1-1/2 to two inches larger than **half of your waist measurement**. The fullness of this fabric should be spaced around the waist in such a way as to have a smooth, un-gathered space of approximately six to eight inches over the stomach area. To do this begin in the center of one of the panels between the pocket openings. Box pleat three to four inches each side of center. Make small pleats with the remaining length. This panel should, when complete, measure half the waist measurement plus 1-1/2-2". Pleat the back without the box pleat, starting at the center and pleating out toward the outer edge. This too should measure half the waist measurement plus 1-1/2-2". Re-adjusting your pleat width to get this measurement is often necessary. Baste if you'd like.

Attach a waistband. The band should measure *about* ¾" wide when finished. Tapes or hooks and eyes may be used to secure the waist, with the hooks & eyes or tapes sewn to the waistband edges. Original waistbands on existing 18th century petticoats are sadly seldom found as they have somewhere along the line been replaced often using 19th century methods. The tape method is one used today by re-enactors, although not documentable in a true sense, it is readily endorsed for its practical use and ease. To do this, sew tapes, appx. 15" in length onto each end of the waistband – that's 4 tapes in all. Use a thin tape to reduce bulk.

The drawstring method can be done quickly by simply forming a casing and slipping a tape through it. For lighter weight fabrics this is a fine choice. Both methods will have pocket slits on either side of about 9-12 inches in length to let you get in and out of the petticoat, as well as to give you access to your pockets.

To tie

Tie the back of the petticoat on first by pulling the 'petticoat back' into place and bringing the tapes around to your front and tying them. Then place the 'petticoat front' in place, and bring the tapes around behind you and tie in the back. The waistband will overlap at the sides for about one-two inches, leaving easy access to your pockets and this will keep your undergarments from showing. If you're using a drawstring through a casing, cut two lengths of tape, half your waist measurement plus 30". Draw each string/tape through the casing and tie as above. Then adjust most of the gathers to be over your hips, smoothing out the middle front.

The length of the petticoat

A country women's petticoat should represent her working class status. Think of what length it must be in order to carry a child or an arm load of laundry and step up into the house or to walk up a hill or stairs and *not have to pick up* the petticoat. This length is generally accepted as practical at a few inches above the ankle or at ankle length. A narrow hem should then be turned up. Some wools can be left raw edged. It is a Victorian attitude that ankles should not be exposed, not an 18th century one. For our period being able to work in a comfortable length is important as well as showing off one's 'clocked' stockings and those pretty metal buckles, when dressed finely, was much more important!

For children's petticoats, where extra length would be needed as they grow, the hem is still narrow. The extra length would be taken up with a series of tucks above the hem.

Details, details

Often petticoats are found with bound hems. In general, woolen tape for wool coats, and linen on linen coats was stitched to bind the edge. Stitch half the width of the tape to one side of the coat fabric, fold the remaining half to the other side and stitch again. Great for a hand sewing project, but best left without if machine stitching is considered. *Wooded Hamlet* is a great source for such tapes. The bound hem is often seen on **quilted petticoats**. Quilted coats are an under utilized garment by the re-enactor with the skills of a quilter being required. Examples of such original pieces can be found among other places, in *Costume Close-Up* and *Fitting & Proper*. This item is found frequently in New England inventories with its obvious quality for warmth.

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RESEARCH

During his comments concerning the unit's direction, Lieut. Jim opined that since the original unit commonly went out on patrols and scouts of extended distance and duration, it would be nice if each member developed a kit that portrays said activity. Keep in mind that such a kit has two main components – (1) clothing worn and (2) items carried. Think about what you would wear and carry on a mission covering 100 miles one-way over two to three weeks – all of it in no-man's land or behind enemy lines. With that in mind, herein follows in the next couple issues some primary source material and thoughts to serve as guidance for putting together said kit.

What better way to begin such a discussion than with the description of Benjamin Whitcomb given out in Brit general orders when he shot BG Patrick Gordon in July, 1776:

He wears a kind of under Jacket, without Sleeves, slash Pockets, leather Breeches, grey woolen or yarn Stockings, and shows [shoes], Hat flopped, with a Gold Cord round it. He had a firelock, Blanket, Pouch, and Powder Horn. [Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books, p.237]

According to General Horatio Gates, on one of the many scouting missions into Canada in 1776, Whitcomb and the two men with him had

designedly dressed in such Manner that they could not be supposed Military Men. [The Horatio Gates Papers, 1726-1828, reel 3, frame 1035]

You will note that in these two comments, the common element is an effort to maintain a civilian look. When in Canada, the Rangers apparently didn't make much effort to remain hidden, regularly walking around in public. That far behind enemy lines, you don't want to be wearing anything – cartridge box, bayonet, haversack, bicorn, regimental, etc. – that advertises you as a soldier. In addition, the antagonism extended toward Whitcomb for ambushing Gordon extended to anyone with him and, while Whitcomb did not yet have his own unit when he shot Gordon, the reward and nasty feelings continued in effect for many years to come. Therefore, you didn't want to be wearing/carrying anything that advertised you as a member of Whitcomb's group.

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Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers

A non-profit corporation established in 1975 to re-create the life style of the Rangers in the War of Independence, 1776-1781.