

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

George Washington's Army

Text by PETER YOUNG

Color plates by MICHAEL ROFFE



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المنارة للاستشارات

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Hippocrene Books, Inc.
171 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

First published in the United States 1973

ISBN 0 88254 161 7

First published in Great Britain in 1972 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd, P.O. Box 25,
707 Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire

Chronology of the American War of Independence

1775

- 19 April Fighting at Lexington and Concord.
- 10 May The rebels capture Ticonderoga.
- 12 May Capture of Crown Point by the rebels.
- 15 June The 2nd Continental Congress promotes Colonel George Washington of Virginia to major-general and gives him command of the Continental Army.
- 17 June Battle of Bunker Hill.
- 3 July Washington assumes command of the 'armed rabble' assembled on Cambridge Common. Blockade of Boston.
- 31 Dec. Assault on Quebec repulsed.

1776

- 17 Mar. The British evacuate Boston and sail to Halifax.
- 6 June Trois Rivieres; the rebels completely dispersed.
- 4 July The Declaration of Independence.
- 27 Aug. Battle of Long Island; Howe outmanoeuvres Putnam.
- 12 Sept. The Americans abandon New York.
- 16 Sept. Battle of Haarlem Heights. Washington fights a delaying action against Howe.
- 28 Oct. Battle of Valcour Island; American vessels destroyed or crippled.
Battle of White Plains; the British regulars, though stubbornly resisted, drive the Americans from the field.
- 26 Dec. Raid on Trenton; Washington surprises a Hessian detachment.

1777

- 3 Jan. Battle of Princeton; victory of Washington.
- 5 July Burgoyne captures Ticonderoga.
- 7 July Battle of Hubbardton; Burgoyne defeats the American rearguard.
- 8 Aug. Battle of Oriskany; Joseph Brant with the Iroquois and Tories ambushes General Nicholas Herkimer, who is mortally wounded, and destroys half the column endeavouring to relieve Fort Stanwix on the River Mohawk.
- 16 Aug. Battle of Bennington; Hessians from Burgoyne's army heavily defeated.
- 11 Sept. Battle of Brandywine Creek; Howe defeats Washington.
- 19 Sept. Battle of Freeman's Farm; Burgoyne repulsed.
- 21 Sept. Action at Paoli; the British rout General Anthony Wayne's brigade.
- 26 Sept. Howe occupies Philadelphia.
- 4 Oct. Battle of Germantown; Washington repulsed by Howe.
- 7 Oct. Battle of Bemis Heights; Burgoyne again repulsed.
- 17 Oct. Surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga.

1778

- 6 Feb. Franco-American Alliance signed.
- 17 June Outbreak of war between France and England.
- 18 June British evacuate Philadelphia.

- 28 June Battle of Monmouth; a drawn battle between Washington and Clinton, but the latter withdraws to New York and is blockaded.
- 29 Dec. The British capture Savannah.

1779

- 29 Jan. The British take Augusta, Georgia.
- 21 June Spain declares war against Britain, but declines to recognize American Independence.
- 21 June Siege of Gibraltar begun. (Ended 6 Feb., 1783.)
- 3 Sept.- Franco-American siege of Savannah;
- 28 Oct. successful British defence under General Augustine Prevost.

1780

- 11 Feb. General Clinton besieges Charleston.
- 12 May Charleston captured - the worst American disaster of the war.
- 16 Aug. Cornwallis routs Gates at the Battle of Camden.
- 7 Oct. Battle of King's Mountain; defeat of the Tories by American militia.
- 20 Dec. Great Britain declares war on the Netherlands.

1781

- 17 Jan. Brigadier-General Daniel Morgan defeats Colonel Banastre Tarleton at the Battle of Cowpens.
- 15 Mar. Cornwallis defeats Greene at the Battle of Guilford Court House, but the Americans retreat in good order.
- 19 Apr. Battle of Hobkirk's Hill; Colonel Francis Rawdon repulses Greene.
- 8 Sept. Battle of Eutaw Springs; Lieutenant-colonel Alexander Stewart repulses Greene.
- Sept.- Siege of Yorktown; Washington and
- 19 Oct. Rochambeau compel Cornwallis to surrender.

1782

- 30 Nov. The Treaty of Paris.

General Outline



'A mixed multitude of people'

GEORGE WASHINGTON

George Washington (1732-99) was elected Commander-in-chief of the Congressional Continental Armies on 15 June 1775, and took over from General Artemas Ward on Cambridge Common, Massachusetts, on 3 July.

After the two skirmishes at Lexington and Concord (19 April 1775) the main bodies of troops of both sides were assembled in the Boston area - perhaps 15,000 armed New Englanders confronted 3,500 British troops. Then came Bunker Hill (17 June 1775) - a British victory, albeit a bloody one - following which they evacuated Boston, which saw no further action apart from occasional patrols and some artillery fire.

When it met in 1775 the Second Congress had not visualized a complete break with Britain; some of the troops raised -for example, the Rhode Islanders - were enlisted in 'His Majesty's Service and in the pay of the colony of Rhode Island for the preservation of the Liberties of America'. But events strengthened the hand of the radicals who advocated 'adopting' the Boston 'army', intending to supply, regulate and pay it.

When he took over, Washington found that his soldiers were all men of the old militias of New England, organized in a variety of ways and mostly in pretty good spirits. Some were in tents, some in log huts, some in private houses and some in the dormitories of Harvard University. There were a few guns with their crews, but no trained engineers. Washington saw one thing about this force very clearly; it represented the revolution -



General George Washington; a portrait by Gilbert Stuart.
(National Portrait Gallery)

as long as he could hold it together as an army, British authority was defied, and a British force would have to seek him out to destroy him.

To begin with, the men of Washington's Army were clad in their farm or other working clothes, with a few in various styles and mixtures of old militia dress, festooned with ammunition belts and sword slings. For identification purposes the practice was to wear a sprig of laurel in the hat by day and a piece of white paper by night. Occasionally a regiment was supplied with military dress of the generally accepted military style of the period but in their own colour combination. But it was the long, pullover style of hunting shirt of linen, buckskin or wool which was eventually found to be the most practical battle dress and in which the American revolutionary soldier is often depicted.

The best of the men so attired were in many ways seasoned fighters, experienced in Indian warfare in the use of cover, movement by night and in firing individually with careful aim. From this type of fighting they had learned to show no mercy, nor give quarter. The European military code of war was unknown or just considered 'plumb crazy'; any means of winning was legitimate because war was not seen as a game to be won on points but a life-and-death struggle. On the battlefield, therefore, the American was less of an automaton, more the resourceful antagonist, the hunter, the stalker. At the same time he lacked the ability to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with trained comrades, and run calmly through the manual exercise: 'Load! Present! Fire!' Going forward as individuals, American fighting men tended to retreat the same way - and, like the Indian, with no sense of shame - so that sometimes withdrawals became routs.

To the militia man, fighting was a seasonal business (as it had been long ago with the fyrd of Anglo-Saxon Britain); he went home to plant or harvest or ply his trade, and returned to fight when action was imminent. Discipline as known in the British Army hardly existed, courts-martial and punishments were rare, and leave-of-absence long and frequent. The officers were elected by their men (not unlike those of the South African commandos in the Boer War), and fraternized freely with them. Some, but by no means all, had

experience of command as militia officers or in the army during the campaigns of the Seven Years War.

This 'mixed multitude of people', as Washington described them, were all due to be disbanded on 31 December 1775, so his main task was to form a Continental Army under Congress out of the forces originally organized by the separate States. As well as forming the units he had to get them drilled, replace the many unsuitable officers, tighten up discipline and institute a system of daily orders for their general military education. And he had also to organize and secure supplies. His tasks, though on a lesser scale, were as comprehensive as those that Kitchener attempted to tackle at the British War Office in World War I.

Fortunately British inactivity gave Washington what he most needed - time. The existing 40 regiments of varying strengths were reduced to 28, each formed of 8 companies of 90 men. Many officers, some incompetent, some lazy, some timorous, were weeded out, and the commanders of the new corps were appointed from the top down. The men were enlisted for one year and each had to furnish his own musket, though the regiment undertook to pay, clothe and feed him. Only some 10,000 became 'Continental soldiers', no more than half the number Washington had hoped for; the States' militia had to be relied on to make up the rest, but only provided a further 7,000 men.

With this improvised force Washington took on the British Army with its German and American auxiliaries.



Washington's headquarters at Cambridge, where he assumed command of the 'armed rabble'

In 1776 the main military efforts were concentrated on the northern states and Canada, where Washington in person opposed Lieutenant-General Sir William Howe, K.B. (1729-1814). The Americans recovered Boston, which the British evacuated on 17 March, and held most of the south except Pensacola. They lost New York (August), most of New Jersey, and had to withdraw from Canada after an abortive assault on Quebec (31 December 1775). By mid-December Washington had been compelled to retreat across the Delaware with his army reduced to less than 5,000, and the Continental Congress had fled from Philadelphia to Baltimore. The year ended with a morale-raising victory, when Washington surprised 1,400 Hessians at Trenton, taking 1,000 prisoners and much booty at a cost of 7 casualties.

The next year saw the situation reversed. Washington opened the campaign in May endeavouring to head off a British advance on Philadelphia, and at first cleverly avoided any set-piece battle. But brought to bay at Brandywine Creek (11 September) he was outmanoeuvred and soundly beaten by Howe, who now occupied Philadelphia (26 September). The British success was more apparent than real - Washington's Army was still in existence and the loss of 'Philly' had surprisingly little effect on American morale. What did most to raise it was the astonishing surrender (17 October) of Lieutenant-General ('Gentleman Johnny') Burgoyne, together with some 6,000 men, the remains of his army which had been badly mauled at Freeman's Farm (19 September) and Bemis Heights (7 October). In December, everyone else having left the field, Washington also withdrew, taking his main army into winter quarters at Valley Forge, 20 miles north-east of Philadelphia.

But, as Washington himself realized, though he had staved off defeat and foiled the British generals, his delaying tactics did not look like winning the war. To a great extent these tactics were conditioned by the structure of his army. One of these was the policy of short enlistments: it was not until 1776 that Congress approved longer terms of three years or duration-of-war engagements. The Continental Army also found itself competing for men with the States which offered much better general conditions, especially rates of

pay (though regularity of its issue was quite another matter!). Further, the Founding Fathers' puritanical antipathy to a large professional army continually inhibited Washington's attempts to increase the establishment of the Continental Army and forced him to rely to some extent on States militia. It is never easy to command a formation consisting of separate bodies of troops with different conditions of service.

A continually pressing problem was supply. During the winter of 1777-8, 3,000 men were reported as unfit for duty, 'naked and bare-footed'. Soap was unobtainable and often there was no meat ration for days at a time. Shortage of weapons was such that Benjamin Franklin in all seriousness proposed the army be equipped with pikes and bows and arrows. In fact this was not only to meet the deficiency but for various well-argued tactical reasons. A bow was as accurate as a musket, its 'rate of fire' was four times greater, it did not obscure the field of fire with smoke, and 'an arrow sticking in any part of a man puts him *hors de combat* till it is extracted'.

Smallpox and typhus raged despite the efforts of the meagre medical services. The comparative isolation of American towns had tended to prevent epidemics, but the concentration in unhygienic camps of large numbers of men from all thirteen States led to widespread infection. The early hospitals were hothouses for breeding disease, with sick men crowded into small rooms, head to toe, on unchanged straw, with the typhus-carrying lice spreading 'jail' or 'hospital' fever. In 1776, when Washington lost 1,000 killed in action, 1,200 wounded and 6,000 taken prisoner, 10,000 died from sickness. Vaccination became routine in 1777 in the Continental Army and reduced the deaths from smallpox from 150 per thousand to just over 2 per thousand.

Because anaesthetics were unknown, wounded men made the best of their pain by 'biting on the bullet'. Amputations were numerous, and after severance the stump was washed with hot tar, a very painful process intended to cauterize the bleeding and sterilize the wound. The need for field latrines was appreciated as the war went on, and orders about these, referred to as 'sinks' or 'necessaries', were embodied in most camp orders.

To offset the material shortcomings, Washing-

ton emphasized the value of a 'rich spiritual life'. Prayers by troops were an important part of camp routine, following the daily orders and roll call. On Sundays the ministers gave a service embodying a long harangue in which 'patriotic thoughts' were interwoven with religious uplift. When these parades were large, drums would be stacked high, surmounted by a plank or table-top on which the preacher could be seen by all. But the well-meaning efforts of Washington and his senior officers were to a great extent rendered unavailing by the mismanagement, graft, speculation and selfishness of legislators, contractors and traders. By the spring of 1778, however, the army was - although smaller - in some ways stronger. This had been achieved by sensible training, the deaths of many sick, and large-scale desertions of the weaker brethren: the faint-hearted had gone home, while hundreds more had gone over to the British.

In February 1778 the French, who had been clandestinely sending money and *materiel* to the rebels, formally entered the war against their old enemy, and Britain was faced with almost a world war. The main armies were inactive until May when, after some skirmishing and reconnaissance, the British moved rapidly from Philadelphia to New York. Washington's Army pursued, and the two fought an indecisive battle at Monmouth Court House, New Jersey (28 June). The British under Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Clinton, K.B. (1738?-95), continued on to New York where Washington blockaded them. This was the last major engagement in the north, thereafter the main activity shifted to the south. Before the campaign ended there were savage clashes between loyalists with Indian allies and revolutionaries on the New York and Pennsylvania borderlands.

During 1779 the main armies in the north remained almost static, but there were a number of small expeditions such as that which Washington (who had moved his headquarters to West Point) sent under Wayne to Stony Point (31 May) to surprise and capture a British garrison recently installed there. Some weeks later Major Henry ('Light Horse Harry') Lee repeated this success at Paulus Hook (18 August) demonstrating that the American was getting, if not more professional, at least more enterprising. The American General



Washington's adversaries: 'Gentleman Johnny' Burgoyne, who marched slowly and majestically down the Champlain-Hudson Valley to eventual surrender at Saratoga; Lord Cornwallis, commander of all the British forces in America; Admiral Richard Howe, brother of General Sir William Howe, who was supreme at sea. (National Portrait Gallery)

Sullivan led a punitive expedition against the Six-Nation Indians, destroying their crops and villages and driving them out to their loyalist protectors at Niagara. But a number of 'un-authorized' expeditions and raids by over-enthusiastic junior commanders, such as the attempt to oust the British from Penobscot Bay, were failures.

The paper strength of Washington's Army during this year (1779) was 27,000, but in real terms it was just over 10,000 due to the three-year engagements beginning to run out. The British strength was some 29,000 of which 4,000 were loyalists and 11,000 Germans. The effects of inflation and the sore subject of taxation began to cause disaffection. Civilians rioted and there were strikes over shortages and high prices. There was a decline in the revolutionaries' morals with gambling, heavy drinking and duelling among the new rich as the symptoms.

In Washington's Army inflation also affected rations. 'A waggon-load of money couldn't buy a waggon-load of provisions. ... A captain couldn't

buy a pair of shoes with a year's pay.' Many officers resigned and there were four mutinies due to deficient supplies and the depreciation in the Continental currency. In the new year (1780) the men of Wayne's Pennsylvania Continentals made a mutinous march on Philadelphia to force Congressional action on their grievances. Their success led to further outbreaks which Washington quickly suppressed by force. Two N.C.O.s were executed. The real culprits, however, were the State governments which had repeatedly broken their contracts with the men. The four mutinies were at Morristown (23 May 1780, January and May 1781); and Pompton (20 January 1781). The army fared better after the mutinies because their employers had taken alarm.

The year 1780 was, on the whole, a year of American setbacks. The fighting was mainly in the south where the British under Lieutenant-General Earl Cornwallis (1738-1805) routed Gates at Camden in South Carolina (16 August). The situation was improved when Washington insisted on having his own nominee appointed to

command there. This was General Nathaniel Greene, who employed guerrilla tactics with success.

The new year opened badly for Washington. Congress reduced the army to 58 regiments, but even so the States were not subscribing their quotas. Food and clothing was as scarce as ever, transport was lacking and currency further devalued. With no French success at sea Washington wrote gloomily to Congress that he would be unable to plan any campaign. But soon after came news of French reinforcements and Washington agreed to a joint attack on New York. But the French again changed their plan; and, leaving 4,000 men to watch New York, Washington began to assemble a force for the South.

There the British commander, Cornwallis, had begun a three-pronged advance into Virginia, but when the French fleet defeated the British off the Virginia Capes (5-9 September) Cornwallis's force found itself trapped in Yorktown, 7,500 men besieged by 16,000. Short of ammunition and rations, after a month Cornwallis was compelled to surrender (19 October 1781).

There were no significant military actions in 1782, during which year peace talks took place in Paris. Washington's biggest problem was to keep his army together, in an atmosphere of victory and complacency. He managed to keep two forces in the field - Greene's in South Carolina watching Charleston, and his own covering New York whose British commander had given out that he 'had suspended all hostilities'. Arrears of pay induced one unit to make a mutinous march on Philadelphia.

In February 1783 Britain formally announced a cessation of hostilities and in April a similar announcement was made on behalf of Congress at Washington's H.Q. near New York. The peace treaty was signed in Paris on 3 September and the last British troops left New York on 4 December. On 23 December Washington resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief in a simple ceremony in the Congress chamber at Philadelphia.

It was calculated that throughout the revolutionary war there had been some 400,000 enlistments in the Continental Army and the States militias. Many men enlisted and re-enlisted

several times. But there were never more than 30,000 men in arms at any one time. Figures for dead have never been accurately compiled and assessments range from 10,000 to 70,000.

Washington was far from being one of the great generals of all time. But he was a practical administrator, and an officer whose prestige rested not only upon his social standing but his very respectable fighting record in the Seven Years War. He was a man of sterling character and unquestioned courage, whose patience must have equalled his almost proverbial integrity. That he won a war with such an army is not the least proof of his military talent.

Personalities



The military leaders of the Revolutionary War were men of very varied talent. Washington himself stood head and shoulders above his generals, not only in strategic and administrative skill but in character.

The remarks of an intelligent French observer, le Chevalier de Pontgibaud, A.D.C. to Lafayette, may serve as an introduction to some of the American generals. He writes:

'Washington was intended by nature for a great position; his appearance alone gave confidence to the timid, and imposed respect on the bold. He possessed also those external advantages which a man born to command should have; tall stature, a noble face, gentleness in his glance, amenity in his language, simplicity in his gestures and expressions. A calm, firm bearing harmonized perfectly with these attributes. . . . General Washington was the proprietor of a splendid estate in Virginia, and he brought with him when he joined the army, a number of fine

horses. He dressed in the most simple manner, without any of the marks distinctive of a commanding officer, and he gave away large sums to the soldiers, by whom he was adored. But all that he gave was from his own purse, for he had refused to receive any emoluments from the Government.'

De Pontgibaud tells us that his own chief, Lafayette, also 'incurred great expense, purchasing with his own money all that was necessary to clothe, equip, and arm his men' - and this from no other motive than the love of glory.

De Pontgibaud describes Gates, the victor of Saratoga, as 'a small man, about fifty years of age' who two years before was merely a rich farmer. When the chevalier first saw him he 'was wearing on his head a woollen cap surmounted by a farmer's hat'. Arnold, he goes on to tell us, 'was lamed for life by a bullet he had received at Saratoga'. Before the war he had been 'nothing more than a horse-dealer'. General Lee was one of the few who had been a soldier before the revolution. 'General Sullivan was a lawyer, and when peace was declared he returned, not to his plough but to his office. Colonel Hamilton, the friend of Washington, when the war was over also became a lawyer, and pleaded at Philadelphia. General Stark was the proprietor of a large and well-managed estate. General Knox who commanded the artillery had, before the war, kept a bookstore.'

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON. A Virginian aristocrat, he became a military surveyor at the age of 16 and Adjutant-General of Virginian militia with the rank of major before he was 21. He saw some fighting in the Seven Years War and was on Braddock's staff when he was defeated and killed on the Monongahela in 1755. When in June 1775 Washington took over command of his host of 15,000 armed civilians he had not led troops for twenty years. When selected he said: 'I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with.' For six years he laboured through hardships, shortages, discouragement, treachery, minor victories and some severe defeats to keep his army in being. Not unlike General Eisenhower in World War II he had the personal courage and

quiet determination to bring the best out of a team - a balance of qualities rather than any specialized genius. It is said that he personally stopped the rout of Charles Lee's men at Monmouth, one of the few occasions when the calm and steady voice gave way to 'foolish and profane cursing and swearing'.

Washington had his detractors. It was put about that despite his apparently model family life he was really a libertine with an Irish mistress; General de Kalb thought he was 'easily led', and General Charles Lee said 'his understanding was so low as to be useless to the infatuated who have raised him up . . . but he has cunning to work (mainly indirectly) to ruin every man who has excited his jealousy or offended his pride'. Be that as it may, he led the American revolutionary forces to victory and guided the destinies of the United States of America during its first twenty years. At the end of the war it was actually proposed that he should be made king! Washington regarded the suggestion 'with abhorrence' and, when in 1783 he was able to retire, told Congress: 'I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with diffidence.'

GENERAL ANTHONY WAYNE. Known as 'Mad Anthony' because of his violent nature, he was in fact very cool in battle. On the outbreak of the war he organized a regiment and was commissioned as a colonel in the Continental Army. He covered the American retreat from Quebec and commanded a brigade at Brandywine. He was court-martialled after Paoli but acquitted, and saw action at Germantown, Stony Point and Monmouth. He became Commander-in-Chief of the American Army in 1792.

GENERAL BENEDICT ARNOLD. An imaginative and dashing man who was co-leader of the brilliant bloodless raid on Fort Ticonderoga, 10 May 1775, in which the Americans acquired invaluable cannon and ammunition. Among other exploits he helped to secure victory at Bemis Heights by counter-attacking Burgoyne who had driven in on General Gates's left. But his ambitious egoism and lack of tact caused a lot of friction with his brother generals and he began secretly parleying with the British to hand over the key post of West Point.



Anthony Wayne
(New York Historical Society)



Benedict Arnold



Horatio Gates

When this was discovered he fled to the British lines and was employed in command of loyalist troops. After defecting he advised the British that they could possibly buy Washington with a dukedom!

GENERAL HORATIO GATES. A former British Army officer with experience in the French and Indian Wars, Gates had settled in America in 1772. Because of his known revolutionary outlook he was commissioned as a general in the American Army at the outset of the revolution, and at one time was seriously considered as a replacement for Washington, but was made President of the War Board instead. In 1780 he was sent to the south against Cornwallis with a poorly trained and equipped force of 4,000 men. In a night action at Camden this was routed by a British force of 2,300. Gates fled the battlefield and lost his reputation, won at Saratoga in 1777.

GENERAL NATHANIEL GREENE. He took part in the fighting at Boston in 1775 and after the siege became the military governor. He was with Washington at Trenton and fought at Brandywine and Germantown. In 1780 he was made commander of the Southern Army and lost the Battle of Guilford Court House. He was president of the court-martial that condemned the British major, John Andre, to death for his part in Arnold's defection, and pronounced the latter a traitor.

MAJOR-GENERAL MARIE-JOSEPH-PAUL-YVES-ROCH-GILBERT DU MOTIER, MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE. His father was slain by a cannon-ball at Minden (1759) and he came into an enormous fortune from his maternal grandfather (1770). He was only a captain when in 1776 he became friendly with Benjamin Franklin, bought a ship and began enlisting officers. He reached America in 1777 from France and was given a major-general's commission by the Continental Congress. Shot through the leg at Brandywine, he was in the winter camp at Valley Forge with Washington. He did not conduct any important military operations and went back to France in 1778 for a year to obtain more assistance but returned to America in time to be present at Yorktown. His



Nathaniel Greene



The Marquis de Lafayette



Henry Lee

reputation as America's chief French partisan has become somewhat inflated, though his republican sentiments are not in doubt, and he had a long and interesting career before him.

COLONEL HENRY LEE. His mounted raids, including that on Paulus Hook, won him the name of 'Light Horse Harry'. He was the father of the famous Confederate General Robert E. Lee. He also had a brother, Charles, who commanded a brigade and lost his reputation through his conduct at Monmouth Court House . . . and was captured in bed!

GENERAL WILLIAM MOULTRIE. He joined the Continental Army at the outbreak of war. Organized the erection of the fortifications on Sullivan's Island, made of spongy wood log walls lined with earth which successfully withstood a prolonged British naval bombardment. Moultrie's defences, including 100 guns pointing out to sea, and 6,000 men, prevented the British taking Charleston in 1776. But he was attacked in 1780 by General Clinton and forced to surrender - one of the great British successes of the war.

TOM PAINE. An Englishman, the son of a corset-maker, Paine went to America in 1774 where his pamphlet 'Common Sense' (1776), which outlined the events leading to the revolt of the colonists, established his reputation. His chief service, as a volunteer A.D.C. to General Greene, was working up the morale of the troops by his revolutionary writings. The most famous of these, *The Rights of Man*, was published in answer to Burke's *Reflexions on the Revolution*, 1790. His part in the American and French Revolutions, and his writings, made him a kind of apostle of extreme radicalism. He dabbled in many things - he invented an iron bridge (c. 1786) - but though he served in Washington's Army it cannot be said that he was any great soldier.

CAPTAIN JOHN PARKER. Said to have been in command of the 'Minutemen' on Lexington Green, 19 April 1775, and to have given the famous order, 'Don't fire unless fired upon. If they mean to have a war let it start here.'

COLONEL WILLIAM PRESCOTT. A farmer who joined the military and successfully organized the defences of Breed's Hill; he controlled the fire of the defenders until their ammunition ran out. His holding of a superior body of trained soldiers by an *ad hoc* group is one of the classics of revolutionary warfare.

PAUL REVERE. He is chiefly famous for his night ride from Cambridge to Lexington which enabled Hancock and Adams to evade capture. He later served as an artillery officer and in 1779 participated in the disastrous American expedition to Penobscot.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL JEAN-BAPTISTE DONATIEN DE VIMEUR, COMTE DE ROCHAMBEAU. Though not strictly speaking a general in the American service, he played a significant part in their final victory. A French nobleman and a professional soldier of great experience, he was sent over to America in July 1780 in command of 6,000 troops. He held his force on Rhode Island for nearly a year and then, when Cornwallis made his fatal move into the Yorktown peninsula, made a plan with Washington to trap him. A French fleet was brought up from the West Indies and landed 3,000 marines; Lafayette had a force south of Yorktown, and Rochambeau and Washington by-passed New York in a surprise move on Yorktown. For three weeks they battered the outnumbered and cornered British whilst the French fleet successfully prevented its relief by the Royal Navy. Finally on 19 October 1781 Cornwallis, the best of the British generals, surrendered and the struggle for American independence was over.

Rochambeau has been quite unjustifiably overshadowed by the youthful Lafayette in the American mythology of the war.

He was made Marshal of France in 1791 and, escaping the guillotine, lived to see the marshalate revived by Napoleon in 1804, and to receive a pension from the Emperor.

GENERAL THOMAS SUMTER. The leader of a band of South Carolina guerrilla fighters which became active after Camden, Sumter made great use of the skills he had learned in frontier fighting before



Thomas Paine



Artemas Ward



von Steuben

the revolution. Chief among his exploits were a series of minor operations against the redoubtable British leader Banastre Tarleton.

GENERAL ARTEMAS WARD. Appointed in April 1775 to command the newly authorized army, he was a veteran of the French and Indian small wars. Portly, aloof, and in poor health, he understood little of high command. Despite this he brought together 15,000 colonials to besiege the regular British garrison of Boston and was in nominal command of Prescott's force at Bunker (Breed's) Hill. When Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief he accepted duty as his second-in-command until resigning in 1776.

COLONEL DANIEL MORGAN. He served as a wagoner in General Braddock's disastrous expedition of 1755. He had an impediment in his speech due to being wounded in the jaw by an Indian arrow. Five hundred lashes for striking a British officer had left their mark on mind and body. Taken at Quebec in 1775, he had been exchanged. Morgan's 'Virginians' (many of whom came from Pennsylvania), not being immobilized by any transport, could do 40 miles in a day. They dressed Indian fashion. His men boasted that they could shoot a squirrel's tail off at 100 yards 'without damaging the critter in the slightest'. They played their part in Burgoyne's discomfiture. After a period in retirement he defeated the redoubtable Tarleton at Cowpens.

GENERAL WILLIAM HEATH. In his *Memoirs* which were published in 1798 he invariably refers to himself as 'Our General'. 'Our General is of middling stature, light complexion, very corpulent and bald-headed, which led the French officers who served in America to compare him to the Marquis of Granby.' Writing of Captain Porter's action at Lexington, he displays a disarming if unheroic frankness:

'This company continuing to stand so near to the road, after they had certain notice of the advancing of the British in force, was but a too much braving of danger, for they were sure to meet with insult or injury, which they could not repel. Bravery, when called to action, should always take the strong ground on the basis of reason.'

COLONEL JOHN STARK. As a boy he fell into the hands of the Red Indians and was compelled to run the gauntlet. He disapproved so strongly of this entertainment that he snatched a club from the first of his tormentors and proceeded to belt his captors until they were sufficiently impressed to make him one of their chiefs. It was Stark who severed Burgoyne's communications with Canada in 1777.

MAJOR-GENERAL BARON FRIEDRICH WILHELM AUGUST HEINRICH FERDINAND VON STEUBEN. Von Steuben had fought under Frederick the Great at Prague, Rossbach and Kunersdorf. Taken prisoner by the Russians, he was employed to train their soldiers! He had an estate in Swabia and was Grand Marshal of the Court of the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen.

His services were sought by the Emperor of Austria and the King of Sardinia, but the French Minister of War, the Comte de Saint-Germain, persuaded him instead to go to America to train Washington's Army. And so he provided himself with an interpreter, one Pierre Duponceau, and sailed the Atlantic. On landing at Portsmouth, New Hampshire (1 December 1777) Duponceau distinguished himself by stopping the first demure Puritan damsel he met and demanding a kiss - which he won, and with it a wager. With the aid of Duponceau the Baron, who knew no English, was able to curse Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge until they mastered the rudiments of drill.

The Baron, with truly Prussian diligence, was in the habit of rising at three so as to start work at sunrise. He paid especial attention to teaching the officers to look after their men; and to instructing the men in care of arms. Before his arrival the American Army is said to have lost between 5,000 and 8,000 muskets a year, while the only use known for bayonets was to grill beefsteaks.

Washington wrote of him to Congress: 'He appears to be much of a gentleman, and, as far as I have had an opportunity of judging, a man of military knowledge and acquainted with the world.' He persuaded Congress of von Steuben's 'intelligence, zeal and indefatigable industry' and had him made Inspector-General.

Unlike so many martinets von Steuben was a very good-hearted man: he would 'even visit the

sick in their cabins', which was hardly a common practice among the generals of his day, and after Yorktown he is said to have sold his horse in order to have the means to entertain some captured British officers.

When the war ended, Congress gave von Steuben a sword with a gold hilt; the State of New Jersey a small farm, and that of New York 16,000 acres of wilderness in Oneida County. Seven years later Congress gave him a pension of 2,500 dollars.

Infantry



'Soon I came in sight of the camp. My imagination had pictured an army with uniforms, the glitter of arms, standards, etc., in short, military pomp of all sorts. Instead of the imposing spectacle I expected, I saw, grouped together or standing alone, a few militia men, poorly clad, and for the most part without shoes, many of them badly armed, but all well supplied with provisions, and I noticed that tea and sugar formed part of their rations. I did not then know that this was not unusual, and I laughed, for it made me think of the recruiting sergeants on the Quai de la Ferraille at Paris, who say to the yokels, "You will want for nothing when you are in the regiment, but if bread should run short you must not mind eating cakes." Here the soldiers had tea and sugar. In passing through the camp I also noticed soldiers wearing cotton night-caps under their hats, and some having for cloaks or great-coats, coarse woollen blankets, exactly like those provided for the patients in our French hospitals. I learned afterwards that these were the officers and generals.'

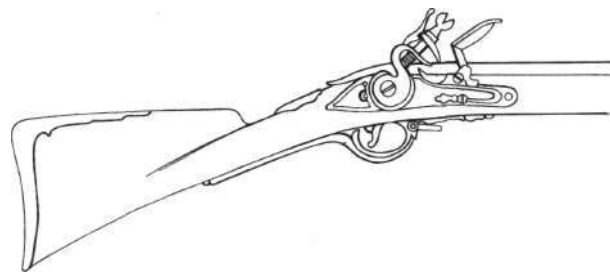
Such were the first impressions of an intelligent Frenchman who saw Washington's Army for the first time not long after the victory of Saratoga.

On 14 June 1775 the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia authorized the formation of a number of regiments of riflemen - the first formal beginning of the American Continental Army. But the foot soldiers enshrined in American mythology as the first to take up arms against British rule were the Minutemen, picked members of the rebellious colonial militia organized with the blessing of the 1st Provincial Congress.

The riflemen came chiefly from the frontier areas of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland. Fiercely independent, and attracted by the call for liberty, they came in by the hundred, and were selected by competitive shooting at targets at a range of 150 yards. Resenting any form of discipline they became bored and unsettled in the Boston camp of 1775 and there was desertion and disobedience. Their attitude called forth this reprimand from Washington:

'It is the general's express orders, that, if any man attempt to skulk, lie down, or retreat without orders, he be instantly shot down as an example. He hopes, no such will be found in this army, but, on the contrary, that every one, for himself resolving to conquer or die and trusting in the smiles of Heaven upon so just a cause, will behave with bravery and resolution.'

Whilst valued as skirmishers, snipers and scouts, riflemen had certain disadvantages. Their weapon was very slow to load and had no bayonet with which its owner might defend himself against a charge of British infantry. The loading process required priming with fine powder, followed by a charge of coarser powder down the barrel, a greased patch placed over the centre of the bore



The flintlock of a musket. Despite the reputation of the rifle in the revolutionary war, the musket was far more important. The vast bulk of the American troops were infantry, and the musket was their weapon

and a ball put on it and rammed home. This patch of greased linen which had been evolved by some anonymous frontiersman helped the bullet to fit snugly and engage in the grooves when the charge was set off. The British developed a great respect for the elusive riflemen, even sending a captive one to England to demonstrate the efficiency of his weapon.

But the main firearm of the infantryman was the musket of which there were several types. From the colonialist days every militiaman had been required to provide his own musket. This was often little more than a fowling piece, sometimes rebuilt from worn-out parts and incapable of having a bayonet attached. The type most favoured by the Continental Army was the British 'Brown Bess', fairly accurate at 50-60 yards. When hostilities began all local gunsmiths in the thirteen States were contracted to reproduce this weapon. Further supplies were obtained by raids on forts and posts and occasions such as the surrenders at Ticonderoga and Saratoga. As the war went on French muskets became popular for two reasons. The barrel was secured to the stock by iron bands instead of pins and brass 'furniture'; this enabled the barrel to be removed for easier cleaning, a process von Steuben and his assistants were assiduously pressing on the free-and-easy American soldiers. Another feature was that the frizzen was better protected by a reinforced lock from damage when the flint struck. The following description of the French musket of the period is given in *French Military Weapons 1717-1938* by James Hicks:

'Gun, Model 1776, Marked 1777 (TL 1520 m/m). Barrel has five short faces. Length of barrel 1137 m/m. Calibre 17.5 m/m. Cylindrical touch hole inclined downward. Tenon welded to underside of barrel for upper band retaining screw. Face of breech plug notched. Rear end of lockplate terminates in a rounded point. Brass pan, no fence, inclining forward. Frizzen had a curl at the top and lower branches. Top of frizzen rounded. The face of the frizzen is narrow with a strong inclination, larger at the top than at the bottom. The head of the hammer is straight. Upper band carries a brass front sight and also a ramrod retaining spring. It is held to the barrel by a screw. The middle band is held to the stock

by a screw. Lower band has a square beak and held in place by a band spring in front.

'Trigger plate is prolonged in the front and the rear and ramrod stop attached to the escutcheon. Separate trigger bow. Lower sling swivel stud passes through the escutcheon. Buttplate is flat and has a right angle bend. Bayonet has three slots and a locking ring, narrow blade longer, length 379 m/m. All the screws are flat except the wood screws and the breech plug screw, which are half round. Slight camber to the butt.'

The normal load for American muskets was a round ball plus two buckshot, expelled by exploded powder measured into a paper cartridge. In the emergency of battle, with the perpetual shortage of everything on the American side, anything that could be projected was used. At Bunker Hill the Americans resorted to 'old nails and angular pieces of iron'. This improvisation was accepted as necessary by both sides but its premeditated use was frowned upon.



A British caricature of an American rifleman. (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Speed of firing was the object of all the training drills for the infantryman, with the aim of achieving a rate of fire of one round every fifteen seconds in the heat of battle. In close combat the great thing was a hail of balls into the opposing massed ranks, and careful aiming was considered secondary.

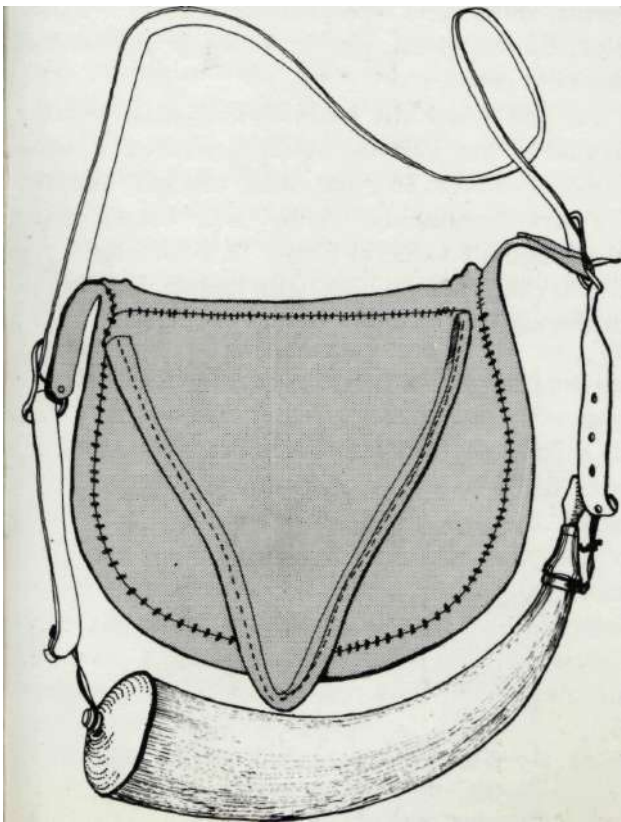
As the infantry became better disciplined and organized, the pre-preparation of cartridges was done in camps or bivouacs. This in fact became a minor out-of-battle industry on a do-it-yourself style as follows. The company armourer or handyman cast the bullets (or balls) in a hand mould, and after cutting off the sprues these were distributed to the men. Each man then wrapped a ball with a 6-inch cylinder of cartridge paper, using a wood former to position the ball and prepare the space inside into which the black powder was poured from the powder measure. Both ends of the cartridge paper were closed by twisting and the ready-made cartridges lodged in a

black leather cartridge box. Great care had to be taken to ensure that these boxes were weather-proof and they usually had a large flap over the top. Inside there was often a block of wood with 20-30 holes drilled through it to take the cartridges and further protect them. This cartridge box was carried on a long leather or linen shoulder strap over the left shoulder, the box itself being positioned on the right buttock. In the light infantry and other special corps this cartridge box was worn at the front on a waist-belt. In course of time, owing to the scarcity of good waterproof materials, tin canisters which were also fireproof and rather less easily crushed began to supersede the leather boxes.

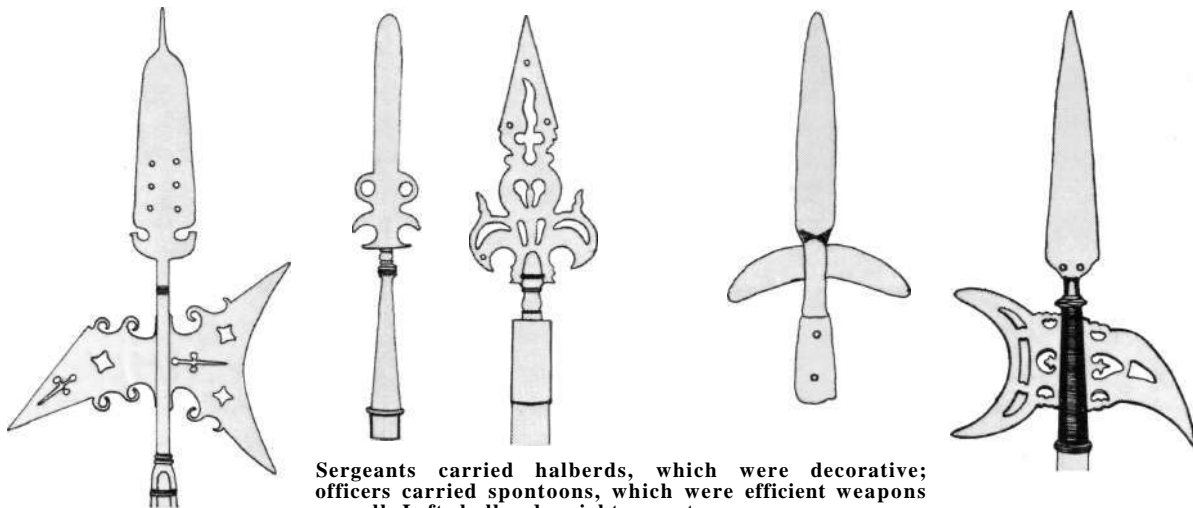
The other two items of personal equipment carried by the infantryman were the knapsack and the haversack or war bag. The former was worn on the back and held in place by buff leather straps passing over the shoulders and under the armpits. The knapsack, of linen, was intended to hold personal clothing. The linen haversack slung from a linen sling over the right shoulder held whatever food the wearer was fortunate enough to be given or acquire.

The tomahawk was widely used. It was hung from a loop on the waist-belt, or alternatively with an extra shoulder sling. Its use as a missile was frequent at short distances, when it could be lethal especially in the hands of the riflemen. It was also a useful camp tool, for wood gathering or hut building. Another ubiquitous weapon was the knife. Knives ranged from those for hunting, fighting and scalping - arts at which the American frontiersman was as adept as his Indian adversary - to the jack type. A few officers carried daggers of various ornamental designs, mostly double-edged with a small cross-guard. The handles were of antler, cowhorn or wood, and the blades ranged in length from 6 to 10 inches. They were carried in leather sheaths affixed to the waist-belts.

Clothing the troops was a continual problem throughout the war. After some hesitation the rebellious militia realized in 1775 that they could not continue to wear their scarlet military coats, so these were discarded at first for any civilian alternative (providing it was not red!). The tricorne hat, breeches, waistcoat and gaiters or hose and shoes were retained. One or two corps



A hunting bag with attached powder horn. Used for preference by riflemen, only in the absence of cartridges by musketeers, owing to the different loading techniques



Sergeants carried halberds, which were decorative; officers carried spontoons, which were efficient weapons as well. Left: halberds; right: spontoons

such as the New Jersey, the 'Jersey Blues' and Washington's Virginian units wore coats of blue, and this may well have influenced the rest to adopt blue as the colour of the Continental Army, though the day when *all* would be so uniformed was a long way off, not in fact until 1781! A further exception to the red coat was the garb of the independent companies of Rangers - elite units who on campaign wore fringed buckskin shirts and leggings, but who (eventually) for parade occasions were dressed in short green jackets. The most famous of all the Rangers units - Rogers's - was to remain loyalist, though some of the men went over to the rebel cause in their greenjackets.

Shortages and lack of uniformity were solved to some extent by Washington's decision to clothe his army in a type of hunting shirt. In his General Order of 24 July 1776 he stated: 'No dress can be cheaper nor more convenient, as the wearer may be cool in warm weather and warm in cold weather by putting on under-cloaths [*sic*] which will not change the outward dress, Winter or Summer. Besides which it is a dress justly supposed to carry no small terror to the enemy who think every such person is a complete marksman.' Even after uniform coats became plentiful it was the infantryman's favoured garment both for wear in camp and for battle. These shirts were of a basically simple design which could be cut out and made up by the men themselves if necessary. Materials varied, buckskin (deer leather) being the

most favoured, but homespun and linen were also used. Fringed seams and edges were usually left to individual taste though some units attempted to achieve uniformity. To distinguish between regiments, shirts were dyed various, colours - black, blue, brown, green, purple, white or yellow (but *not*, be it noted, red!).

As and when the more formal coats became available the various States produced a wide range of colours. The first colour officially adopted for the Continental Army was brown until Washington's General Order of 2 October 1779 which changed it to blue, with facings differing to distinguish the States:

New Hampshire	}	White
Massachusetts		
Rhode Island		
Connecticut		
New York and New Jersey	}	Buff
Pennsylvania		
Delaware	}	Red
Maryland		
Virginia		
Georgia	}	Blue with white-edged button-holes
North and South Carolinas		

Breeches and stockings were eventually replaced by the long 'overalls' and leggings. They were

made from deerskin, undyed linen or duck, shaped to the leg and done up at the ankle with four buttons. Footwear, apart from the moccasin, was in the main a stout simple shoe, the uppers of which were made of two parts held at the front by a large buckle which was definitely functional and not merely ornamental. The Americans of this period did not bother to 'pair' their shoes; both were exactly the same and changed over from one foot to the other daily to reduce undue wear. There were many orders issued regarding the blacking and waxing of footwear.

Infantry organization was by no means standard in Washington's Army and designations such as companies and regiments must not be taken to mean exactly calculated and uniform establishments of personnel. Even when attempts to regulate the size of units were made, the personalities of their commanders and their reputations caused all sorts of differences. At Ticonderoga Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys numbered 300; State militias, being recruited from all able-bodied men between 16 and 60, depended more on the male population of the State than any set establishment. Captain Daniel Morgan's company of riflemen from Virginia numbered 96 in July 1775, whilst Campbell's unit in 1781 numbered 600. When Morgan raised a corps of rangers, 'sharpshooters', in 1777 it was 330 strong.

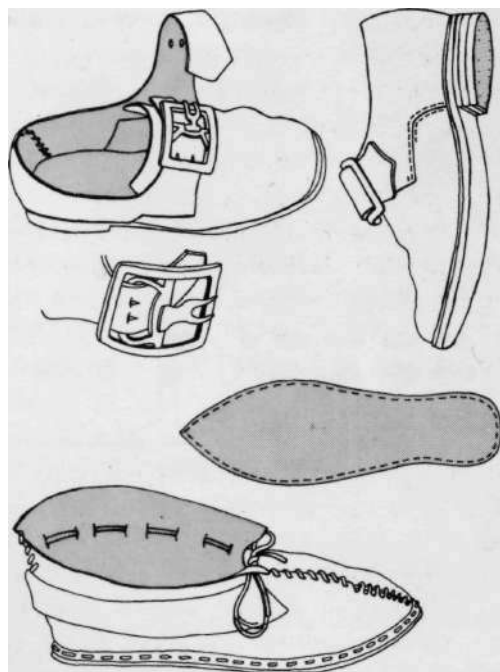
As a general rule, companies (or platoons, the names being more or less interchangeable at this period) consisted of 25 to 50 men and a battalion of several companies would total some 200. The platoon, generally speaking, was the fire unit, and the company the administrative unit. The basic infantry unit of the Continental Army after the 1776 reorganization was a regiment of eight companies of 90 men each, i.e. some 720. When brigades were formed these comprised two or more regiments. The normal regimental officer strength would consist of a colonel (or lieutenant-colonel), a major, an adjutant, a quartermaster, a surgeon, and a paymaster; and one captain and two subalterns per company.

In addition to distinguishing epaulettes, as referred to in the following chapter, officers carried other signs of authority. A few officers who had served in the British Army affected the crescent-shaped 'gorget' of gilt or silver round their necks,

but the practice never caught on in the reformed Continental Army and gradually died out. The British practice of wearing a long sash of cloth (silk) wrapped round the waist continued. Swords were carried by all officers, their scabbards being suspended by black or white waist- or shoulder-belts.

Pole arms were carried by junior officers and N.C.O.s. There were many variations but the two most common were the spontoon and the halberd. Both were as much badges of authority as combat weapons. They were preferred to muskets as there was no loading and firing to distract the leader's attention from control of his men. Spontoons also served as 'At Home' signs stuck in the ground outside an officer's tent or billet, and at night were used to hang lanterns on.

Saluting of officers was ordered in the regulations very much on the lines of the British method. Men bearing arms faced the officer and 'shouldered arms'. If the officer was carrying a weapon he replied by removing his hat with the left hand in a sweeping movement. Soldiers not under arms



Shoes were of the buckle type, crudely fashioned and making no distinction between right and left foot - they were worn alternately to save wear. When shoes were not available the Indian-type moccasin was easily made of skin, laced with a leather thong around the ankle

wearing tricorne hats saluted as described for officers above but with the right hand. If wearing a 'light infantry' type of head-dress he saluted with the right hand in the fashion of today. The officer replied as above, but if unarmed removed his hat with the right hand.

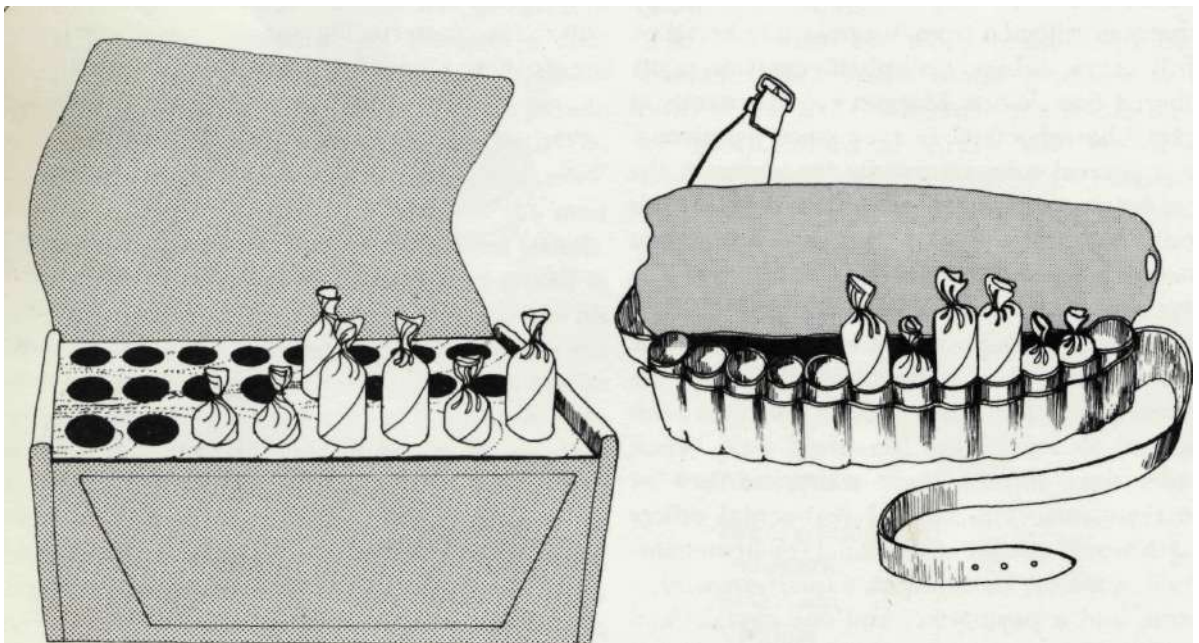
A large number of Negroes were inevitably caught up in the war on the American side. Many were slaves brought into the service as servants and grooms by their white masters. Others fought as substitutes for owners who declined to do their own fighting. Slaves from every colony joined the army on the promise that it would give them their freedom. Washington is said to have welcomed the enlistment of Negroes in the army, but his position on the promise is ambiguous.

A Negro regiment under Colonel Greene distinguished itself in the American repulse of the British attack at Rhode Island in August 1778, and there are many recorded incidents of individual gallantry. A slave called Saul Mathews served as an infantryman for six years, acted as an agent behind the British lines, and conducted

raiding parties. He had to wait until 1792 before being cited for bravery and obtaining his freedom. A Negro called Shurtliff who enlisted towards the end of the war received no pay and when, after petitioning for it for nine years, it came out that he was in fact a woman, one Deborah Gannett, it is said that upon this being discovered 'she was paid without interest, and for her well-disguised secret she received a citation for gallantry'.

Among a unit of 500 free Negroes from Haiti which were landed at Savannah in 1779 was a black sergeant called Henri Christophe. The landing was beaten off and he was among the rear-guard, thus being cited for bravery. Christophe played a leading part in overthrowing French rule in Haiti, becoming President of the northern part in 1807, and King in 1811, but he was a tyrant, and eventually the people rebelled and Christophe, who was ill, killed himself.

The Red Indians were another matter. The colonists regarded the indigenous people as bitter enemies to be extirpated relentlessly. The Indians for their part resented the persistent intrusion into



Two types of cartridge containers. The one on the left, a wooden box to hold twenty-four cartridges, with a leather cover, was worn on the soldier's right hip. On the right is a cavalryman's cartridge box with twelve pipes, designed to be worn across the stomach. Both of these boxes have only one flap, so there is the hazard of damp; later models had two flaps

their lands by the colonists, and in spite of injustices had a pathetic faith in the British and their 'father' King George III. To them the revolt in the colonies meant an attack on the only authority they recognized and on which they depended. But British policy towards the Indians was, fortunately for the Americans, a stupid one. If the British generals had concerted a strategy of combining attacks along the seaboard with simultaneous drives on the frontiers, organizing the tribes under knowledgeable officers, the Indians could have been a decisive factor. The overwhelming majority allied themselves with the British and were a terror to the Americans on the frontiers but, lacking organization, they were not much help to the British in the long run. The Americans decided to strike terror into the Indians, and in 1779 Washington instructed General Sullivan to devastate their settlements and round up survivors as hostages. Forty-one townships and their crops were ruthlessly burned in one sweep, and many of the mobile Indians who evaded capture starved to death during the winter. The Iroquois were compelled to fall back on the British forts for support, as did the Munsees and Senecas; while the Delawares were forced to agree to unconditional surrender. When the war ended and the British went, the Indians were left to face the naked power of a new nation whose wisest and ablest leaders had advocated their extermination.

The estimated population of the 13 colonies (exclusive of Indians) in 1775 was 2-3 millions. The most thickly populated States were Virginia, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. An estimated two-thirds of the population opposed the Revolution and remained loyal; of these some 40,000 served in the British forces. Without the aid of France, and especially of her navy, the Continental infantryman might have striven in vain to reverse the verdict of Brandywine and Charleston.

Cavalry



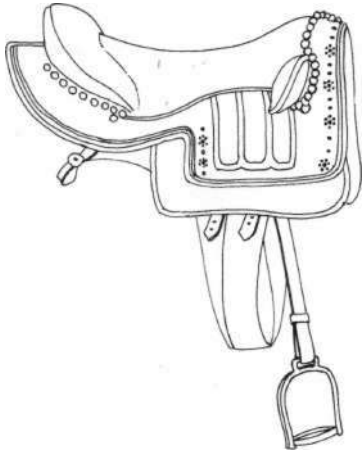
'Hardly had the troops disembarked [to besiege Newport, Rhode Island, 1778] before the militia - to the number, I believe, of about ten thousand men, horse and foot - arrived. I have never seen a more laughable spectacle; all the tailors and apothecaries in the country must have been called out, I should think - one could recognize them by their round wigs. They were mounted on bad nags, and looked like a flock of ducks in cross-belts. The infantry were no better than the cavalry, and appeared to be cut after the same pattern. I guessed that these warriors were more anxious to eat up our supplies than to make a close acquaintance with the enemy, and I was not mistaken - they soon disappeared.'

LE CHEVALIER DE PONTGIBAUD

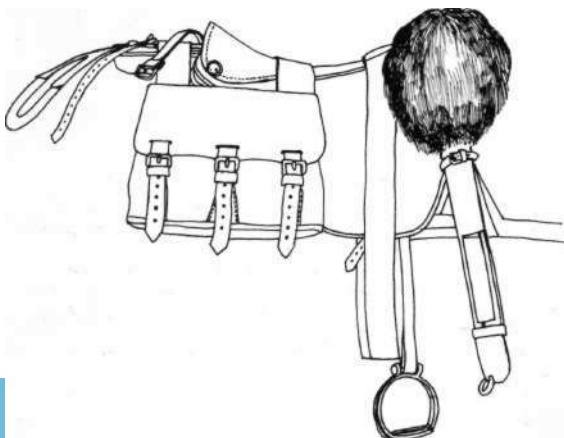
Washington saw little use for cavalry in the operations he was conducting, and it is small wonder that a man, who was himself the proud owner of many fine horses, should have looked askance at such raw material as de Pontgibaud describes.

Cavalry was not used in large numbers by either side, the only type of horse soldier employed being the dragoon or light dragoon, trained to serve either mounted or dismounted. Heavy cavalry, cuirassiers and so on, were not employed.

The duties included scouting, raiding, patrolling, outpost and escort duties and rounding up deserters. On the march it was the practice for the cavalry to join the light infantry as part of the advance guard; in battle they were often posted in the classic position on the wings of the line, and



Saddles of the Revolution period. Top, British officer's with padded cantle and leg rolls; centre, flat saddle; bottom, American saddle: note placing of saddlebag suspension straps, pistol holster with bearskin cover, and carbine bucket hanging below the holster



William Washington, brother of the Republican leader and commander of one of the best cavalry troops in the war

in retreat covered the rearguard. Due to shortage of weapons, equipment and above all horses, the new-raised American cavalry proved less mobile and far-ranging than regular horse should be, and in 1780 von Steuben tried to overcome this by mixing dragoons with special infantry to guard the dismounted forward posts from which the horsemen operated; this combination became known as a 'legion'. The lack of cavalry made it difficult to follow up a defeated enemy, as Howe found after his victory at Brandywine.

In theory American dragoons were issued with a carbine, one or two pistols, and a sword (sabre). In practice there was a great variety of weapons ranging from hunting patterns to those captured from the British or acquired from the French and the Spanish. In 1778 Washington told the CO. of Moylan's Dragoons that swords, pistols and carbines were unobtainable. Not until 1779 did the supply position on clothing permit the issue of a General Order authorizing 'Light Dragoons to wear blue coats faced and lined with white and with white buttons'. As late as 1782 Southern cavalry were very deficient of cartridge boxes, had few pistols, and one-third of the men had not even scabbards for their swords! The general poverty

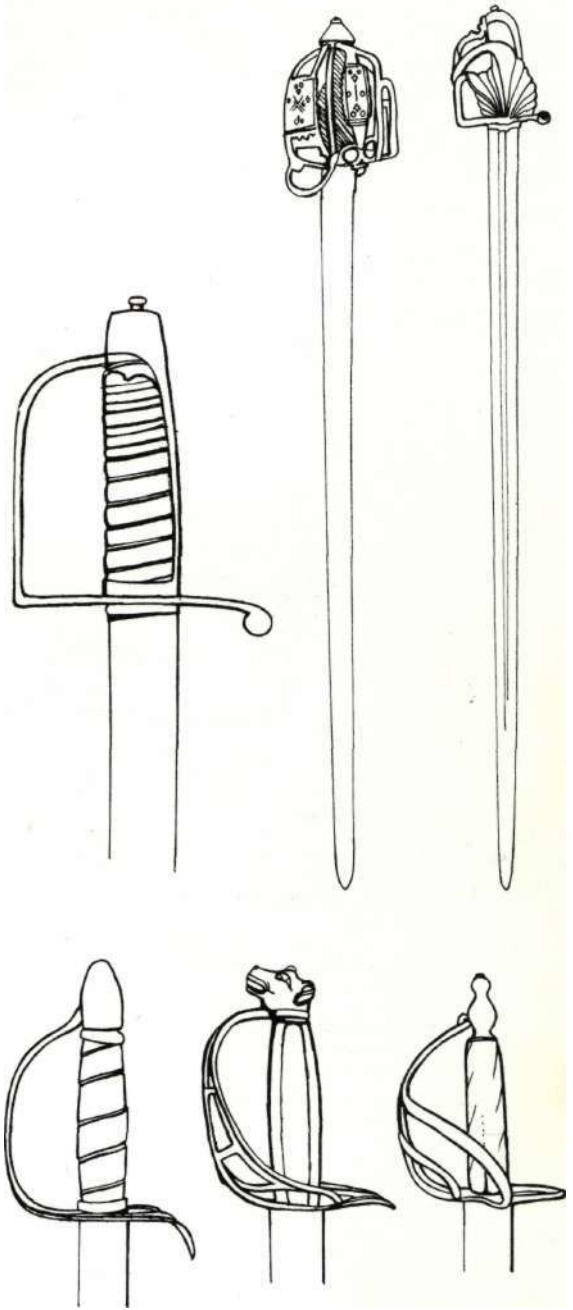


Francis Marion, the 'Swamp Fox', whose cavalry captured Georgetown

of the Continental Army led to a shortage of the basic requirement: good horses. These were costly and scarce and were often in poor condition for lack of proper forage.

As and when stocks were available, cavalry were issued with several types of head-dress. The ubiquitous tricorne hat with black cockade was the standard article, but there were various black japanned, boiled leather helmets. These had peaks and were crested and trimmed with fur and horse-hair tails which, whilst decorative, served also to ward off blows at the top of the head or at the back of the neck. On the British side Tarleton's Legion wore a similar head-dress, the forerunner of the handsome helmet worn by British Light Dragoons in the Peninsula before 1812, and by the Royal Horse Artillery. Towards the end of the war a French type of brass helmet of 'Roman' design was being worn.

Each mounted man was issued, stocks permitting, with one head-dress, one coat, one pair of breeches (of white or buff linen), two pairs of stockings or gaiters, and three pairs of shoes. The equipment included a saddle, saddlebags, harness, halter and picket rope, with cross-belts, holsters and slings for his weapons.



There was little uniformity of sabres and swords among the mounted regiments of Washington's army. Civilian and military models, village-made models by the local smithy, family heirlooms, and imported and captured blades - all were used. The selection illustrated shows: American stirrup-hilted sabre; other sabre hilts including one with a dog's-head pommel; two broad-swords, one basket-hilted, the other a French model

Officers were distinguished, in all three arms, artillery and infantry as well as cavalry, by a system of gold and silver epaulettes of lace and wire as follows:

Subaltern - an epaulette on the left shoulder

Captain - an epaulette on the right shoulder

Major - two epaulettes

Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel - two epaulettes of greater design

Brigadier-General - a star on both epaulettes

Major-General - two stars on both epaulettes

Commands were passed by sounds on the trumpet, or bugle, as was the common practice in most European mounted arms of the service. Unit standards and the State and 'national' flags were carried on parade and in the field in great variety.

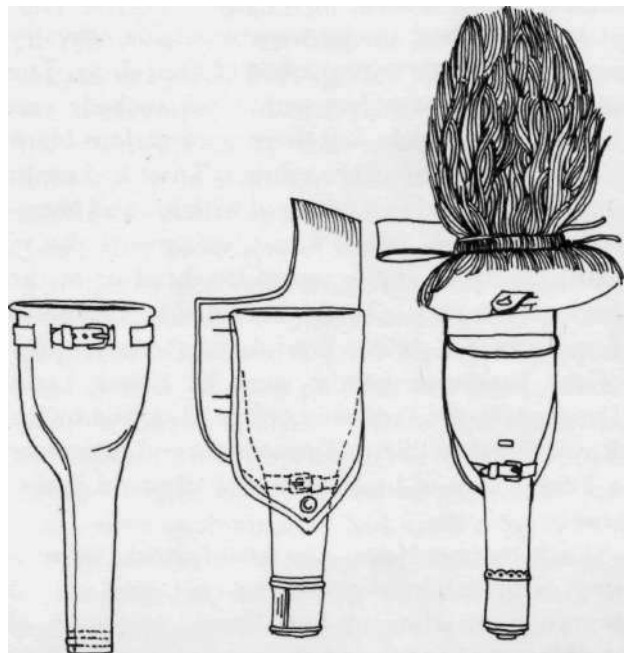
Two of the best-known mounted units were Henry Lee's and William Washington's. 'Light Horse Harry' Lee became famous for exploits such as the capture of Paulus Hook opposite New York in August 1779. Whilst this was not of great tactical value it served to boost American morale, as well as showing the improving skill of the mounted arm. In December 1780 Lee's Legion was nearly 300 strong, fully uniformed and equipped, and reported to be 'thoroughly disciplined scouts and raiders'.

Lieutenant-Colonel William Washington's Cavalry Troop, when in Greene's Army of the South in December 1780, numbered 90 out of a total field force of 1,600! Only half of them were equipped and a report said that their appearance was wretched beyond description. Despite this their spirit was good; a month later the troop collaborated at Hannah's Cowpen to defeat the famous Tarleton in a classic charge - and that after being checked by infantry fire.

At Guilford Court House, 14 March 1781, General Greene had both bodies, Lee's and Washington's, in the classic position - one on each wing of a curved line in a large clearing. Unwilling to risk everything on a single battle, Greene withheld most of the cavalry during the confused fighting. The British then saved their infantry by an indiscriminate bombardment of grape which hit friend and foe alike. In the confusion the American cavalry helped to cover Greene's successful withdrawal.



'Light Horse Harry' Lee commanded a mounted unit which became famous for several dashing exploits. Here are some of his troopers at an encounter during the Battle of Guilford Court House



Holsters of the late eighteenth century. Left, one of the earliest types with a simple strap to attach to the pommel; centre, American holster with metal tip and broad suspension strap; right, the commonest form of holster with saddle thongs, bearskin cover, and brass tip



General George Washington, 1780



I



2



3

- 1 Trooper, Washington's Mounted Life Guard, 1776
- 2 Private, 6th South Carolina Regiment, 1777
- 3 Brigadier-General, 1780



1



2



3

1 Corporal, 3rd Pennsylvania Battalion, 1776
2 Private, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1781
3 Officer, Washington's Independent Company, 1782



Officer, Philadelphia Light Horse, 1779



Trooper, 1st Continental Light Dragoons, 1777



1 Private, Light Infantry, 1780
 2 Lieutenant-Colonel, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1777
 3 Lieutenant, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1779

- 1 Rifleman, 1st Pennsylvania Rifle Battalion, 1775
- 2 Private, 13th Albany Militia, 1777
- 3 Musketeer, Pennsylvania State Regiment, 1778



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3



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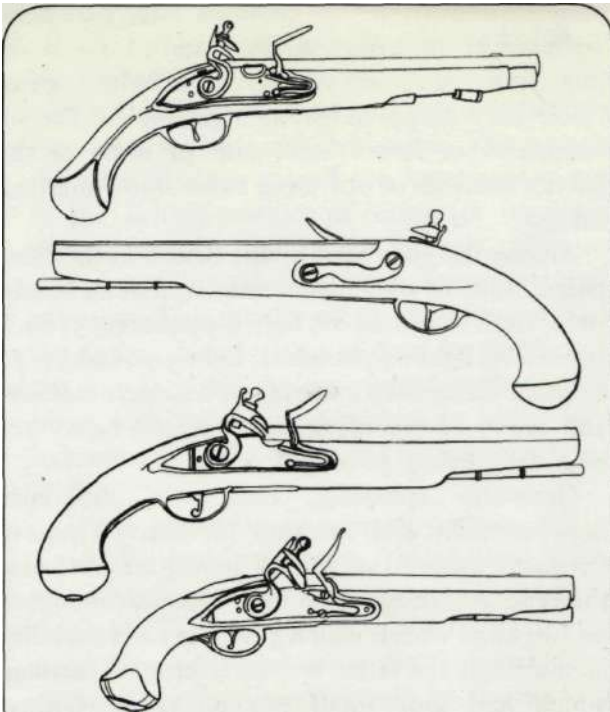


2



3

- 1 Artilleryman, 1779
2 Fifer, Virginia Militia, 1778
3 Drummer, 3rd New Jersey Battalion, 1779



Cavalry pistols of the Continental Army: from top to bottom, American-made pistol with brass mounts; two Committee of Safety models; Rappahanock Forge pistol

At Hobkirk's Hill, Washington's Troop made an attack, sweeping round to fall on Rawdon's rear, but was held up by thick undergrowth and fallen trees. Swinging too wide to clear these, they rounded up some British stragglers. Later they were able to put in a charge and save Greene's guns from capture.

Up to 1782 in the Charleston area both corps, then organized on the 'legion' basis, were in skirmishes with British foraging parties.

Few though they were, and odd though many looked, the ancestors of the U.S. Cavalry proved that they were not quite as useless as their Commander-in-Chief expected them to be.

Artillery



Before 1775 there was little in the way of artillery in the Colonial forces; and the heavily wooded country and the guerrilla nature of the frontier fighting made it relatively ineffective. In the larger engagements of the Seven Years War the guns were usually provided by the Royal Artillery of the British Regular Army.

One of the few non-regular artillery units in the thirteen colonies was the famous Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company of Massachusetts. Its beginnings lay 150 years in the past when the early planters had been compelled to devise their own defence from Red Indian attacks. Some of the early settlers, members of the Honourable Artillery Company of London, formed a new military association on the same lines in Boston. Down the years leading local figures served in and supported it, providing funds for the purchase of arms, an armoury, and the construction of 'gun-firing' platforms. Moreover for many years the Company emulated its London parent by providing most of the officers of the New England militia regiments.

In September 1774, during the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities, the meeting now known as the First Continental Congress had been held in Philadelphia. It included such men as John Hancock, Samuel Adams and Paul Revere, who with other Massachusetts 'patriots' began to plan and organize the collection of military stores, including a few guns, at the town of Concord. This was the first attempt by the revolutionary colonists to organize artillery, and British efforts to seize these guns frustrated it then, but also led to the outbreak of war.

The next attempt was more successful. On 10 May 1775 a scratch force of colonists from two different States, one the Green Mountain Boys from Vermont under Ethan Allen, the other from Connecticut under Benedict Arnold, surprised and took the old fort of Ticonderoga at the southern end of Lake Champlain. Quite apart from its strategic importance the capture of the fort with its stores of powder, ammunition, and 60 good cannon of various calibres can be seen as the start of the American Army artillery.

One of its first officers was an erstwhile Boston bookseller, a young man called Henry Knox, later a colonel of artillery, but now known to countless millions on account of the fort called after him which holds the Federal reserves of gold bullion. Paul Revere was another personality to serve in the artillery and was in charge of the guns in the Penobscot adventure.

One of the heroines of the war is associated with the artillery - Mary Ludwig Hays, who was a camp-follower in her husband's battery. After sharing the hardships of the Valley Forge winter of 1777-8 she was with him at the Battle of Monmouth. In the heat of the day she carried pitchers of water to the thirst-crazed gunners and when her husband collapsed under the heat she took his place and fought in the battle as a rammer in the gun crew.

Of the many unsung Negro heroes of the war two achieved belated recognition through service in the artillery. In the retreat after the Battle of Brandywine Edward Hector, a volunteer in the Third Pennsylvanian Artillery, was ordered to abandon his ammunition wagon; but he refused and instead, amid all the confusion, drove his precious cargo to the rear. What was more, he stopped several times to pick up abandoned muskets. His deed was not recognized until 1832 when he was given 40 dollars for his part in the struggle for independence. Another Negro, Austin Dabney, distinguished himself in the engagement at Kettle Creek after the loss of Savannah. Injured at his gun, he fought on; but forty-two years were to pass before his bravery was recognized by a grant of 100 acres of land and a Federal pension.

For want of anything better, the artillery was organized on the European model, at first mainly on British lines - since whatever experience or

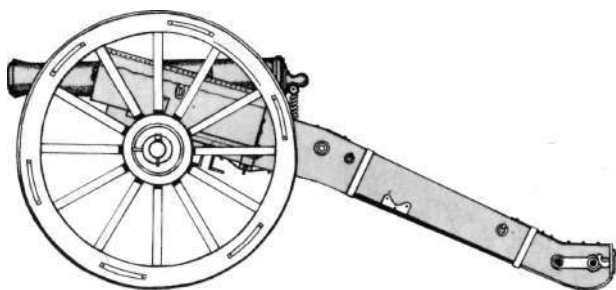
body of knowledge the colonists had, had been acquired in the British Army - and at the outset they were equipped mainly with British guns. Later they acquired French guns with French volunteers to serve them, and so some of the latter's methods of operating came into American usage.

Among the guns used by the British in the campaign, some of which came into American hands, were: light 12-pounders; light 6-pounders; 5½-inch howitzers; light 24-pounders; light 3-pounders (on Captain Congreave's carriage); mortars; medium and heavy 12-pounders; medium and heavy 18-pounders; heavy 32-pounders.

Generally speaking, the main difference between 'light' and 'medium' (or 'heavy') guns of the same calibre (i.e. size of barrel interior) was the type of carriage. The light type was mounted on two large wheels which gave it greater mobility in the field; the latter was on a heavier carriage which had four small wheels, giving limited mobility in a fort. (These were the same type of mountings as used on board ship in that period.)

The howitzer - the high-trajectory weapon - was, in effect, the field version of the mortar of the period. Like the light gun, the howitzer had large wheels, but the mortar was usually mounted on a solid wooden bed without wheels. The normal projectile for the flat-trajectory guns was solid roundshot for long range, sometimes heated red-hot for firing at ships or wooden fortifications. When the range closed to 350 yards, grape or canister shot would be used if available. Exploding bombs were fired from the howitzers and mortars.

The generally bad roads and rough open ground made the movement of a train of artillery a slow and laborious business. Up to twelve horses would



A 6-pounder gun on a field carriage. Such cannon could throw a 6-pound ball over 2,000 yards, though accurate firing was hardly possible at more than one-third of that distance

be required to draw a light 12-pounder gun, attached to a wagon (to which the trail of the gun was lashed) or to the evolving 'travelling wheels' which finally emerged under French development into what we now call the limber. The perpetual shortage of horses caused the Americans to resort to the British practice of hiring (or impressing) civilian drivers and their animals, who were understandably reluctant to get too near the scene of action. This usually meant that the last part of the approach to action was done by manhandling the guns forward, the crew members hauling their piece with drag-ropes attached to hooks on the axle outside, and a handspike for manoeuvring the trail.

If the position was a prepared one, the guns would be sited in redoubts, the size and strength of which depended on the time and labour force available. The American artillery used to call upon Negro slave labour to dig their redoubts for them. These earthworks would be chosen to protect an inlet from the sea, or the approach to a ford or bridge, or the heights above a town. If the action was what could be described as eyeball-to-eyeball between field forces, the cannon were usually positioned in pairs between regiments in the line. Sometimes, if the ground dictated it, they might be placed in advance of the line.

The firing sequence was lengthy. A bag of powder was rammed down the barrel, followed by a ball or bag of 'grape' or a shot. A brass pick was then thrust down the vent to break the powder bag, and this vent hole was then primed from the measured powder-horn. When the order to fire was given, the 'slow match' on the pole linstock was put to the vent and the powder ignited. The resultant combustion propelled the shot out of the cannon's mouth in the general direction of the enemy. Although there was a quadrant to check on elevation, and the matross could adjust the line of fire by moving the trail, the aim can only be described as random. After firing, members of the gun crew had to run to the front of the gun, insert a metal worm, on a pole, to scrape away any embers; and then insert a wet sponge, also on a pole, down the barrel to mop up any sparks or small pieces.

The uniform devised for the artillery did not come into general use much before 1779. It

included the tricorne hat and the normal single-breasted coat of blue, faced and lined with scarlet. The coat edging and button-holes were bound with tape or lace according to rank. White overalls were prescribed with buttons down the sides, and black shoes. The general appearance was much the same as that of the Royal Regiment of Artillery in the British service.

Among the actions in which American artillery played a prominent part was the action at Fort Sullivan near Charleston in June 1776. Here, thanks to Moultrie's fortifications, already mentioned, the 100 or so guns defending the entrance not only withstood the fire of some 300 ships' guns but returned it with deadly effect. The gun duel lasted ten hours and most of the British ships were severely damaged. The flagship suffered most, one American writer recording that 'the admiral experienced the climactic indignity of having his breeches blown off'. Though this was probably an invention it argues a certain amount of imagination.

When Manhattan Island had to be abandoned, the batteries erected to guard the Hudson River were skilfully evacuated in boats manned by the Massachusetts Regiment of fishermen. Those installed at Fort Lee were lost, however, when the inexperienced Lee escaped with his men. A little later, three of the guns from Manhattan Island were used to repel British troops landing at New Rochelle.

In October the aggressive Benedict Arnold launched a home-made armada of river craft on Lake Champlain. They carried cannon on their rough unpainted decks, and slugged it out with General Carleton's flotilla which included three warships brought overland in sections. At the end of the second day's battle the Americans had to abandon their 'greenwood navy', which they either set on fire or scuttled, but Carleton called off his proposed junction with Howe at New York and returned to Canada.

In the attack on Trenton, Knox was in charge of the shipping of cannon across the blizzard-torn River Delaware, and then of dragging them along the rutted roads covered in frost and snow. In the dawn Knox's guns raked the streets and prevented the Hessians (who had been celebrating Christmas) from forming up to defend the town.



Artillery played a great part in the Battle of Trenton, after being shipped across the Delaware, giving cover for Washington's spectacularly successful advance. Casual-

ties and captives were over 1,000 on the Hessians' side, four wounded on the Americans'

Losses and wear of guns and carriages were more than made good by the booty acquired when Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga in October 1777.

In the South, especially in 1779, there was not much scope for use of artillery. The loyalists' strength in the area turned the fighting into a series of small local actions and raids between rival bands of rebels and 'Tories'. Likewise the frontier fighting of that year saw little opportunity for the use of guns except in occasional attacks on British-held posts.

In August Paul Revere was in charge of the artillery shipped out on the Massachusetts State fleet for the attack on the British-held town of Castine in Penobscot Bay. The expedition was ignominiously routed by a superior British fleet which suddenly appeared from New York, though the militia and guns had already been

landed. Paul Revere was among those court-martialled by the Americans for the defeat.

The British revenge for Saratoga came at Charleston in 1780. After the British failure of four years earlier the forts on Sullivan's and James's Islands had been allowed to crumble. In April the British ran a squadron of ships past them into the bay and their land forces began bombarding the city from batteries set up across the river and on the Charleston peninsula. The investing troops included a curious unit called the 'Volunteers of Ireland', a corps made up of Irish deserters from American units, commanded by an English peer, Lord Rawdon, known (most unjustly) as 'the ugliest man in England'. To a total of 10,000 British the city was called on to surrender. Whilst the American general, Lincoln, temporized, British horsemen rode around to the north and cut off the one escape route. Deciding to fight on, Charleston

held out for a month during which the American defending artillery more than held its own under the British bombardment. But on 12 May Lincoln capitulated, and in their biggest victory of the war the British took over 300 cannon.

Sixteen months later came the astonishing reversal of fortune at Yorktown which Cornwallis had occupied after failing to overtake Lafayette. About to attack New York, Washington suddenly decided that he was better placed to deal with Cornwallis. The Franco-American force of over 15,000 included a large train of artillery brought down overland from the Hudson, and a number of guns landed from their fleet. Washington personally supervised the building of redoubts, and the bombardment of Yorktown began on 9 October in the classic style of an eighteenth-century siege. After five days the British outworks were assaulted and taken. Some of the American guns were temporarily spiked in a British sortie on the 16th, but in a few hours they were recovered and in action again in the 100-gun bombardment which pounded the British force into surrender. Although they did not know it then, this was to be the last big action of the war in which the American artillery was to play a major part.

Engineers



A lack of engineers was among the first things noted by George Washington when in July 1775 he became Commander-in-Chief and visited the main force at Cambridge. Among the natural engineers to emerge was William Moultrie whose construction of fortifications on Sullivan's Island was to make all the difference, accounting for the British failure to take Charleston in 1776. These

fortifications were made of earth revetted with palmetto - a spongy wood which just absorbed cannon-balls.

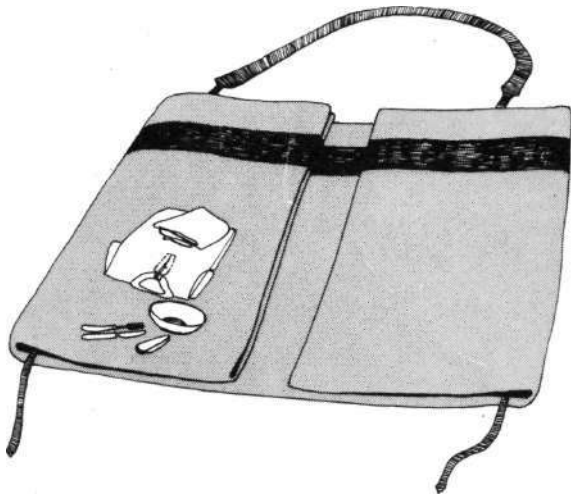
Among the first of the foreign volunteers to come to America's assistance was a young Polish engineer, Colonel Thaddeus Kosciuszko. In 1777 he was responsible for strengthening, with a lot of stone, the defences of Fort Ticonderoga, as well as making earthen outworks around it and on nearby Mount Independence. This able foreigner served in the Saratoga campaign and throughout the rest of the war. His name is remembered in towns and counties across the country.

When the French entered the war they provided a group of their engineers, then among the most scientific in the military world, grounded in the traditions of Vauban. They were led by Colonel Louis Duportail, who so impressed Washington that he recommended him for early promotion to major-general. These talented men did much for the American Army thanks to their expert knowledge in defence works, sapping and mining.

Defences such as breastworks were constructed to a recognized pattern. Brushwood was first cut by the troops with billhooks or tomahawks and then made up into fascines - bundles bound together varying in lengths up to 10 feet. Another preliminary move was the making of gabions, cylinders of woven brush up to 3 feet in diameter, in which the newly cut brushwood was interwoven to form a circular basket.

Entrenchments were begun by spitlocking, i.e. digging a trace of the outline, or by staking it out on the ground. As a rule these works were angular, although more sophisticated designs were introduced by the French. The first lines of gabion baskets were placed along the outlines and more rows added according to the width of the defences. The trench would then be dug behind and the soil thrown into the gabions. When these were filled and covered over with earth, the fascines were laid on the sloping sides and secured by long stakes driven through them into the earth-packed gabions. When time permitted these breastworks would be covered with sods.

In winter quarters areas such as Valley Forge, a great deal of hut construction was carried out under engineer supervision. The log house 'city' at



When there was no knapsack or haversack there was always the tumpline. All a soldier's possessions were rolled into a blanket with the line fitted into its folds. When tightly rolled the loose ends were tied to hold the roll and the wider part of the strap passed across the chest

Morristown had over 1,000 buildings, whilst Valley Forge had 900 for which Washington himself supervised the plans and layout. Log hut construction followed a uniform pattern. The officers' type usually had two or more doors and windows and a chimney and fireplace at each end. The standard size usually accommodated a maximum of four officers. The men's huts were smaller in size and were built to hold twelve men sleeping in elevated two-tier bunks. Ventilation was always a problem in these overcrowded one-room huts; windows were rarely cut in the construction, and those provided were never opened.

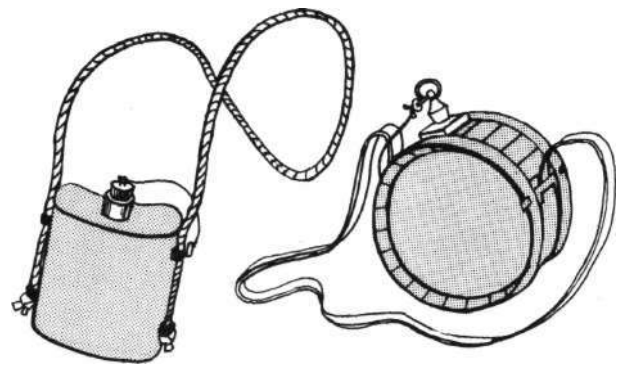
Oak, chestnut and walnut were extensively used for hut construction. Suitable trees were felled by axe and pulled by sledge to the sites. The men's huts were 14 feet long and 16 feet wide. When the walls were up to 6¹/₂ feet the ends were progressively narrowed to form gables. Between these were extended the lengths to hold the notched eave logs. Some roofs were covered with boarding if the right kind of trees and tools for planking were available; others were thatched with straw. Spaces between the log walls and roofs were filled in with clay or mud.

These log houses were usually arranged in enclaves to hold a battalion, and where possible were sited on sloping ground to ensure drainage. Laid out in rows, the men's huts came first, then

the officers', then the kitchens and the supply and ammunition lines. The hospital huts were in the rear.

Field trench latrines were dug, usually in sites downwind and 100 yards from the nearest tent or hut. When it became necessary to change them they would be covered in by the soil of their successor dug close by.

By the standards of today, or indeed by those of the more sophisticated European powers of 1775, the army of George Washington was administered in a fashion so haphazard as to be almost reckless. The French and Prussian generals of the period would have been shocked indeed to find themselves at the head of such poorly found troops. But we must remember that very few of the Continentals had ever been soldiers before the revolution. They were far from being dismayed at the lack of administrative conveniences whose existence they had never suspected. The best of them were frontiersmen, rugged, hardy individuals, used to living rough and travelling light. Men such as these did not expect to be issued with tents and camp kettles. They were well able to live off the forests in which they lurked. Even the less self-sufficient of Washington's troops belonged to a pioneering generation in a new country. Only the Bostonians and New Yorkers lived in cities which could be compared with those of the comfort-loving Old World. In any case an army can be over-administered, as was Burgoyne's in the Saratoga campaign. One could make out a case for attributing the American victory in 1777 not to their good organization but to their truly horrible



Two types of water-bottle. An upright tin canteen and a round one made of oak hoops; one with a cord, the other with a strap

administration. With no quartermaster's delights to look for, they just got on with their fighting, while Burgoyne lumbered with a great train of artillery, came to a foundering halt, and could not pluck up the energy to attempt a retreat.

Tactics



The tactics of the American War of Independence were not quite those of the Europe of 1775. The European armies of the day were considerably larger and better balanced than Washington's or the contingents of his French and Spanish allies, or indeed of the British armies that opposed him. In Europe the French considered themselves the leaders of military thought, and though the dead hand of the aristocracy lay heavy on the upper echelons of the army, its officers numbered among them some of the foremost military thinkers of the age. It suffices to name the Duc de Broglie, de Gribeauval, the Chevalier du Teil, the Comte de Guibert and Pierre de Bourcet. Whether in strategy, tactics or weapons development, the French led the field.

Yet the most efficient European army was still that of King Frederick of Prussia, which had not as yet sunk into the complacent torpor which was to be its undoing at Jena and Auerstadt (1806).

A properly found European army of the period comprised (apart from its staff, engineers and commissariat): heavy cavalry; light cavalry, including hussars; foot, including both grenadiers and regular or irregular light infantry; and field and siege artillery.

It was seldom that the cavalry did not amount to a quarter of the whole, its number being made up more or less equally of heavy and light cavalry.

The former were generally intended for great strokes upon the field of battle, whilst the latter were particularly necessary for raids and for out-post, patrol and escort duties.

Of the foot, the 'grenadiers made up about one-tenth of the whole. These old-established *corps d'élite* no longer, as in Marlborough's day, led the assaulting columns in a siege, but they were the old and bold of their regiment, chosen for their height and bearing. There were rather more light infantry since Jäger, Grassins, Pandours, and other such gentry forming separate units, were becoming ever more common, in addition to the light companies that were beginning to appear in every battalion.

In Europe armies of 50,000 were by no means uncommon. As long ago as Malplaquet (1709) Marlborough had led 110,000 men with 100 guns. At Rocourt (1746) and Lauffeld (1747) Saxe had 120,000 men at his command. In the Seven Years War armies were not generally so strong but the proportion of field artillery was going up. At Minden (1759) Ferdinand of Brunswick with 42,500 men and 187 guns had defeated Contades with 54,000 men and 170 guns. The armies of the American war could be compared more appropriately with those that fought at Culloden (1746). There the Duke of Cumberland with 9,000 men and 16 guns routed Prince Charles Edward with 5,400 men and 12 guns. Cumberland's army included four regiments of dragoons. The Highland army had no more than 400 horse, of somewhat dubious quality. But if the proportion of cavalry was on the low side, both were well provided with artillery: Cumberland had only just under 1 gun per 1,000 men - very briskly served too - while the Prince had 1 gun to every 450



The Congress hat

men. Napoleon once delivered himself of the opinion that: 'It is necessary to have as much artillery as the enemy. Experience shows that it is necessary to have 4 guns to every 1,000 men. . . . The better the infantry, the more one must husband and support it with good batteries.'

Burgoyne's army was exceptionally well provided with artillery. When he first went into action (September 1777) he had very few foot: only 4,646, of whom 2,011 were Germans. But he had no less than 45 guns - about 1 to every 100 men! In Europe such a train might have served him well. In New England his opponent, Major-General Gates with 7,000 men, including 2,700 of the Continental Line, and but 22 guns - many of lower calibre than Burgoyne's - was probably better off. Poor roads and defective means of traction made the light infantry army a better fighting machine than the artillery army.

At Brandywine (1777), one of the biggest battles of the war, Washington's Army did not exceed 10,500. At Camden (1780), Gates with 3,000 was driven from the field by Cornwallis with 2,400, yet by the standards of this war it was a major battle.

By European standards the field armies of the revolutionary war were, if not under-gunned, extremely poorly provided with cavalry. They had no heavy cavalry at all and a very small proportion of light cavalry. In truth there was only one respect in which unquestionably they outclassed the European armies of their day: that was in their light infantry. Few indeed of the light infantry to be found on the battlefields of Europe were as efficient as those trained in the hard school of American frontier warfare. Pandours and Grassins were not to be mentioned in the same breath as Rogers's Rangers or the victors of King's Mountain. The light companies in the British service were themselves far superior to their European counterparts, but they had the disadvantage that their red coats and white cross-belts - though not all wore these - were unsuitable for their role. Moreover the American rifleman was certainly better armed than the British light infantryman with his smooth-bore musket. And, of course, troops whose uniform was the hunting shirt were in that respect far ahead of their time, for their dress was almost as well adapted to modern warfare as the parachutist's smock of World War II.

The rougher the country the greater the advantage enjoyed by the American rifleman. The officers and gunners of Burgoyne's army suffered heavy losses from these 'snipers'. The French armies of Napoleon never scored so heavily off Wellington's army in the Peninsula. Forty years passed and at Bussaco and elsewhere the British were up against an army that believed in covering its front with a mass of *tirailleurs*. But, learning as much from the experience of America as from the Duke of York's campaigns in Flanders, they could protect themselves effectively from the French *voltigeur* with a musket that was no better than the Brown Bess. Up against the militia of the east coast towns the English light infantryman could hold his own: up against the Continental line, redcoat or Hessian could blast off his volleys with confidence. Only the rifleman, the ranger - the commando soldier of the day - was truly formidable.

As we have seen, the British generals of 1775 were not over-blessed with talent. It would have



General Charles Lee being arrested in a New Jersey tavern by men of the regiment he had commanded during the Seven Years War. (Fort Ticonderoga Museum)

taken a Wellington or a Slim to solve the problems of the American war. But it is probably not going too far to assert that the British gave Washington and his men a better run for their money than the French, Austrians, or even the Prussians of the day could have done. The fact is that the experienced soldiers on either side had derived their experience from the Monongahela, Ticonderoga and Quebec. Washington and his generals, whose best asset was their ill-disciplined frontiersmen with their unquestioned skill at arms, nevertheless - and rather unintelligently - still hankered for the discipline of the Potsdam parade-ground. It is very boring to command undisciplined soldiers, for however apt they may be in combat, they are always unpredictable, and never entirely to be trusted. To strike the happy medium between iron discipline and determined initiative is the better part of the art of leadership. So in fact we find the warriors of 1775 fighting their rather Vietnam-style war upon the lines of Wolfe and Montcalm whilst wishing all the time to emulate the methods of Frederick the Great.

Tactics is a great art. The essence of tactical skill is effective use of ground and weapons. Success usually depends on a plan that contains an element of surprise; upon preparing the way for movement by effective fire and upon developing attacks against the enemy's flank or flanks or even his rear. Plans which contain no element of surprise or deception are bad plans. Frontal attacks, even in 1775 when the effective range of the musket was about 60 yards, were unattractive. The so-called Kentucky rifle (actually developed by Swiss and German craftsmen in Pennsylvania) was so much superior to the British .75 smooth-bore musket, Brown Bess, that Burgoyne, thinking his men very indifferent musketeers, actually encouraged them to go in with the bayonet. It might have been worth his while to pay a little more attention to instruction in musketry. But the Americans, many of whom were not provided with bayonets, were not unnaturally averse to hand-to-hand fighting, which perhaps encouraged the British to depend upon cold steel, both in and out of season. Certainly it could work wonders upon occasion, as Colonel Charles Mawhood and the 17th Foot proved at Princeton (1777). Cut off by a vastly superior force they dis-

carded their packs and simply carved their way out with the bayonet.

Not the least of the difficulties of any officer in those days when commanding foot or guns was the risk that his men would run out of ammunition. In a fight on Port Royal Island in February 1779, the American general Moultrie with 300 militia men took on a landing party of about 150 regulars. The American force consisted of:

Horse - 15 mounted dragoons under Captain John Barnwell

Foot - Virginia riflemen; 2nd and 3rd Companies of Charleston militia, the 'Silk Stocking' Company ... all gentlemen

Guns - Two 6-pounders of the Charleston Artillery under Captain Thomas Hayward; one brass 2-pounder under Captain de Treville.

Hayward's two guns had about 40 rounds apiece, de Treville's only 15. Some of the rounds were grape. By the end of the fight the artillery ammunition had nearly run out. The British also had a gun, a coehorn mortar, manned by two gunners and six sailors, but since the sailor who carried the match ran off after the first shot, it cannot be said to have played any great part.

It was a strange fight for, as General Moultrie himself relates, 'this action was reversed from the usual way of fighting, between the British and Americans; they taking to the bushes and we remaining upon the open ground . . .'. Moultrie had drawn up his little army astride 'the road to the entry of Rhodes's Swamp . . .' on the crest of the Pina Barren beyond the swamp where the trees were felled but not cleared. The British could see his line distinctly, for they had halted only 200 yards away. Moultrie's position seemed formidable to them, but it was not in fact the one he had intended to occupy for they had arrived sooner than expected. He had his two 6-pounders in his centre where they could cover the road; and the Charleston militia, perhaps 200 strong, drawn up probably in a two-deep line on his left where he expected a British flanking movement. Presumably the Virginians were on the right of the road, while the dragoons were evidently the only reserve. De Treville's gun was in a wood on the right.



A selection of hats worn in the Continental Army. Top row, left to right: the regulation tricorne with rosette; the round hat as worn by riflemen (see plate G1); light infantry cap; bottom: back view of tricorne, with turned-up brim 5 inches high as against about 31 inches in front; Canadian cap of wool, usually red, trimmed with fox or raccoon fur, and an added tail

Major Gardiner, the British commander, opened the proceedings by galloping along the causeway between the two armies with a white handkerchief on the point of his sword, ordering the Americans to lay down their arms. Moultrie's A.D.C., Lieutenant Kinloch, replied that they had too much British blood in their veins to yield their post without dispute. On this the Americans raised a cheer; and the British loosed off their coehorn, mortally wounding Lieutenant Benjamin Wilkins of the Charleston Artillery.

The fight began at 4.00 p.m., with the range about 120 yards. The British advanced in open order, organized in nine small platoons each about 16 strong. Gardiner kept nothing back in reserve. He simply advanced with his three light companies strung out: from right to left they were those of the 16th Foot under Major Colin Graham, the 3rd/60th under Captain Bruère, and the 4th/60th under Captain Murray. They were all redcoats, but they fought extended at a few paces interval and using ground and cover, the men taking aim and firing individually and the

officers controlling their platoons from the centre.

Moultrie ordered Captain Hayward to open fire with the 6-pounders and advanced his two wings nearer to the swamp. The firing became pretty general as Gardiner also strove to find his opponents' flanks. Moultrie's left was assailed by Lieutenant William Calderwood and 40 men of the 16th Foot who 'behaved with great intrepidity'. Moultrie with his superior numbers managed to check them, however, because he was able to extend and prevent their outflanking him. Things must have seemed to the American general to be going well. The British were having great difficulty crossing the broken ground and the felled trees. The American guns, firing grape and roundshot, were making good practice and the single British gun had ceased fire after its first round. The British in a desperate attempt to charge home actually tried to push up the causeway, but Hayward's guns scoured it with grape and brought that attack to a halt. The British commander's horse was shot under him, and, though Moultrie was not to know it, by this time

half the British officers had been hit. The surviving redcoats could now be seen in two groups, separated by the area along the causeway which the American 6-pounders had cleared.

Perhaps a determined counterattack would now have clinched the deal in Moultrie's favour, for Gardiner had actually ordered a retreat - which his subordinates declined to execute.

In fact the Americans did make some attempt at a forward movement. But on their left they were repulsed by Lieutenant John Skinner and the 16th Foot, whilst in the centre Hayward's guns had been silenced by British marksmen. (They were Captain Bruere's men of the 3rd/60th.) This was very serious for Moultrie as it enabled the British left to advance, driving in his right wing. Whether at the general's command or on his own initiative, Captain Barnwell now led his 15 dragoons to the charge, but though he galloped through the British skirmish line, his stroke seems to have come too late. He reached a log house and captured Bruère who had been hit, and 14 other British wounded. But by this time Drummer Hynes (16th Foot) was beating the advance and the British, skirmishing by platoons, were pressing forward, picking off the Charleston militia as they came. Moultrie's silk-stocking gentlemen were apparently still deployed in the sort of two-deep line formation with which Wolfe had won his one-volley victory at Quebec (1759). Seeing them too much exposed to the British fire, the American general now ordered them to take cover behind trees. This they did and since they still outnumbered their assailants by two to one, they managed to hold out for a bit. But after about three-quarters of an hour a cry of 'No more cartridges!' began to be heard; they had probably not had more than 40 per man at the outset, and these they had now managed to blaze away - hardly surprising since it was easily possible to fire two rounds per minute. The artillery ammunition, too, was nearly exhausted, and Moultrie decided that it was time to withdraw. He gave orders that the 6-pounders should be drawn off very slowly whilst the two wings of infantry kept pace with them, protecting their flanks. This 'was done in tolerable order for undisciplined troops'. The 2-pounder Moultrie sent to support the riflemen on his right, but it came too late. De Treville

found the Virginians being pushed back fast and he did not manage to get a single round off.

The British pressed forward in two groups, still with a considerable gap in their centre, and still striving to gain the flanks of the American line. After a while the British left paused momentarily, giving de Treville a chance to bring up his team of horses and get his gun away.

This delay was in fact due to Captain Murray's being hit - for the second time. The respite was not long. Suddenly the 60th fixed bayonets and charged. The riflemen on Moultrie's right - who, of course, had no bayonets - flung down their rifles and took off. On the American left the 16th Foot more or less simultaneously drove the Charleston militia back to their start line, and, with both flanks threatened, the surviving Americans departed in confusion.

The British themselves were not all that well off. Half their number had been hit, and when Skinner, the senior unwounded officer, checked the ammunition he found that the 70 men left had only 93 cartridges left between them. A diligent search of the pouches of the fallen of both sides revealed 300 more. It was something in those days that one could generally make use of the enemy's ammunition. The British fired a volley to compliment the retreating Americans and gave them three cheers 'which they did not return'. Then collecting their wounded, save five who, being unable to walk, were left at the log house in the care of the captured American doctor, whose horse Gardiner had been riding, they retreated to their ships. Barnwell's dragoons attempted to harass their withdrawal, but the only result of this enterprise was that Captain Bruère and 16 other prisoners managed to give them the slip!

It is pleasant to be able to record that the Americans buried Lieutenant Calderwood and the other British dead with the honours of war. As Moultrie pointed out, his Charleston militia were gentlemen.

This spirited little action tells us a good deal about the minor tactics of the day; more perhaps than the annals of some better-known pitched battle. We see the relative uselessness of a small handful of half-trained cavalry; the limitations imposed by ammunition supply - or the lack of it; the psychological value of the bayonet; above all

we see the superiority of trained infantry fighting in open order to rather raw troops - though good material - operating in line. Gardiner, who got cut off from his men at the time of Barnwell's charge, played no great part in the victory, though he may be credited with the effective if unusual formation in nine small, handy platoons. He had incredible bad luck when that accursed sailor departed with the match for the coehorn mortar, which could otherwise have covered the unfortunate frontal attack up the causeway. General Augustin Prevost, Governor of Savannah, considered that Gardiner had been imprudent, 'in quitting his Boats to go to a place seven Miles from them . . .' and one must agree with his opinion that 'but for the great Bravery of the Troops, they must have been taken'. Certainly Moultrie with his superior numbers and his artillery had the dice loaded in his favour. He clearly had no very high opinion of his men, keeping the Charleston militia in close order in the open ground, one supposes, because he thought them less likely to run if formed up as on a parade-ground with officers and sergeants to keep their eyes on them from flank and rear. When eventually he found this too costly and let them take cover, they showed that they could be trusted in open order. Upon reflection it seems that Moultrie would have done better had he deployed his infantry differently.

Had he manned the crest with the Virginians and one company of the Charleston militia in open order, keeping the other company in close order in reserve, things might have gone very differently. Although it is easy to be wise after the event, it may be added that such a deployment was not by any means unusual at this period. How can a general influence a battle if he keeps no reserve? Moultrie had only Barnwell's dragoons.

In conclusion one may perhaps say without exaggeration that the infantry, American, British and German, that fought on either side in the revolutionary war would have been capable of useful work on any of the battlefields of Europe, and at any period up to the introduction of the Minie rifle. Tactically their ideas were scarcely inferior to those of Napoleon's day, and especially in skirmishing work they paved the way for the famous British light infantry formed by Sir John

Moore and employed with such effect by Wellington in the Peninsula. The tactical importance of the American war is mainly due to its place in the development of light infantry.

Conclusion



'We should on all occasions avoid a general action, or put[ting] anything to the risk, unless compelled by a necessity into which we ought never to be drawn.'

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington did not like pitched battles against the redcoats and their German allies. And no wonder! These regulars, drilled to the standards of Malplaquet, Dettingen and Minden, were formidable when it came to a fire-fight on a piece of terrain that resembled a European parade-ground. It is no reflection upon the newly formed Continentals to say that in the conditions prevailing at Long Island, Brandywine or Camden, it is not a matter for wonderment that they were beaten, but that they stayed as long as they did. Even when things were not going so well at Bunker Hill, Monmouth or Cowpens, the British at unit level fought always with tenacity, often with real dash - though not always with intelligence. Here one of Lafayette's A.D.C.s, Major le Chevalier de Pontgibaud, gives us a glimpse of them at the Battle of Monmouth (28 June 1778):

'The English had a deep ravine to cross before they could reach us: their brave infantry did not hesitate an instant, but charged us with the bayonet, and was crushed by our artillery. The fine regiment of the guards lost half its men, and its colonel was fatally wounded.'

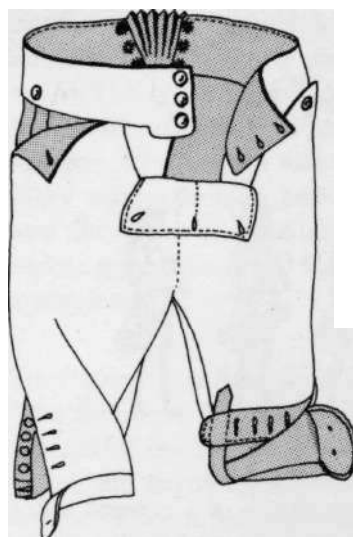
An army such as we have described is essentially a tactical machine. It was not at the tactical level that the British lost the American war.

In the field of grand strategy it must be remembered that after 1778, when in consequence of Saratoga the French came in, Great Britain was not merely fighting to put down a colonial rebellion, but was engaged in one more in her long series of wars with France. When Spain and Holland were added to the hostile array she was practically engaged in a world war.

At the level of campaign strategy it is no use trying to conceal the shortcomings of the British commanders behind the alleged incompetence of the much-maligned Lord George Germain. This is not the place to discuss the merits of Burgoyne, Cornwallis, Clinton and Howe. Suffice it to say that, with the exception of the second, they were a mediocre lot. As strategists the realistic and practical George Washington had them out-classed. And though some of his generals, notably Greene, showed talent he really had no rival who was a credible alternative as Commander-in-Chief. Indeed the best American officers were the guerrillas, Marion 'the Swamp Fox', Ethan Allen and the rest. Which leads one to wonder whether dear old Baron Steuben was not really rather counter-productive. By instilling the rudiments of a Frederician style of discipline he was trying to meet the British on their own ground - the drill-ground. The finest hours of the American revolutionary army were at King's Mountain, Freeman's Farm, and Bemis Heights. But these were not victories of the Continental line so much as of the frontiersman in his deerskin 'battle-dress' and the homespun New England farmer, fighting for hearth and home. As General Sir Frederick Haldimand said in 1782, when explaining the impossibility of invading New England from Canada:

'It is not the number of troops Mr Washington can spare from his army that is to be apprehended, it is the multitude of militia and men in arms ready to turn out at an hour's notice at the shew of a single regiment of Continental Troops that will oppose this attempt.'

Ironically enough, the British in the American war were facing much the same problem that the colonists' successors were to meet in the Vietnam of today. An enemy, unwilling to slug it out,



Breeches were an uncomfortable garment, which soon gave way to full-length 'overalls'. Made of linen or wool broadcloth, usually white or buff. They were tight in front and at the knee, cut very full at the back to facilitate bending without the knee pulling up

resorted to guerrilla warfare and it was not easy to find anything he would come out and fight for. Burning plantations and so on did not give Mr Washington 'a jealousy' to expose his Steuben-trained Continentals to the 'Load! Present! Fire!' of the British line. Let the Duke of Wellington, doubtless the most sensible officer to comment on the problems that Howe and Clinton had to face, have the last word:

'In such a country as America, very extensive, thinly peopled, and producing but little food in proportion to their extent, military operations by large bodies are impracticable, unless the party carrying them on has the uninterrupted use of a navigable river, or very extensive means of land transport, which such a country can rarely supply.'

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The Plates



A General George Washington, 1780

He wears the parade uniform of a general officer of the style prescribed by a General Order of June 1780. It is rather surprising that the Republican leader wears the ribbon of an order. Sheer ignorance forbids us to name the order, but this detail is supported by more than one portrait; it may well be a French one.

B1 Trooper, Washington's Mounted Life Guard, 1776

White coat with blue facings, and white metal buttons; buff breeches, tight in front and loose-fitting behind. The helmet is ornamented with a fox-tail and a red turban. The sabre is suspended from a waist-belt; he carries saddlebags of the type described on page 22.

B2 Private, 6th South Carolina Regiment, 1777

The uniform issued to the 6th in late 1777 - blue coat, red facings, pewter buttons, white waistcoat, white equipment and he wears an early version of the 'overalls' (see plate D). At his left side he carries a water-canteen, cartouche pouch and bayonet, and on his back a brown knapsack containing rolled blanket and all personal possessions.

B3 Brigadier-General, 1780

Blue coat, gold lace, buff facings and linings, yellow buttons and buff breeches and waistcoat. The close-fitting breeches are probably of buckskin. The rank of brigadier-general is denoted by the gold epaulettes and the white hat-plume.

C1 Corporal, 3rd Pennsylvania Battalion, 1776

Brown coat with white facings and silver lace. The green epaulette on his right shoulder is his badge of rank; a sergeant would be distinguished by an

epaulette of red. His breeches and stockings are probably not prescribed uniform at this early stage of the war. The knapsack is of white linen, and the canteen is made of wood - see full descriptions on pages 17 and 30.

C2 Private, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1781

The famous hunting shirt of the revolution. Made of linen or any other homespun cloth, it was loose and comfortable, easily mended and maintained. It could be dyed almost any colour according to regimental requirements. Some hunting shirts were pulled over the head; others, like this, opened down the front. Originally worn only by rifle units, their popularity caused them to spread throughout the Continental Army.

C3 Officer, Washington's Independent Company, 1782

Blue coat, white facings and overalls, gold lace. The cocked hat is edged with yellow and bears the standard black rosette on the left side. This man follows the convention among some officers of wearing the turned-up brim almost flat across at the front instead of bent around the crown.

D Officer, Philadelphia Light Horse, 1779

Brown coat and housings, with white facings and waistcoat. He has discarded the tight-fitting breeches for overalls, a garment covering the entire leg and lower torso, adopted by most regiments after 1778; they were woollen in winter, linen in summer. Like the British officers of the day he wears a scarlet sash around his waist. The dragoon helmet is of hard black leather with a fox-tail; his hair is tied in a queue. The lack of saddlebags or pistol holsters shows that he is not on campaign.

E Trooper, 1st Continental Light Dragoons, 1777

Regimental orders of April 1777 prescribed brown coats with green lapels, cuffs and collar, and leather breeches; so far the man is properly dressed. But few men were correctly dressed so early in the war: his waistcoat should be green, the buttons gilt or yellow instead of pewter; and one can only guess where he acquired that helmet, which should be of black leather with a green turban. The pair of large pistols are standard issue, probably of British pattern.

F1 Private, Light Infantry, 1780

Blue coat, white facings and smallclothes, pewter buttons and black spatterdashes; black leather helmet trimmed with fur. A very smart soldier by the standards of the army at the time. With his musket at half-cock, and pan open, he is biting off the top of the cartridge to release the powder. He will pour a little into the pan, the rest down the barrel, drop the bullet after it and ram the ball down firmly against the powder with his ramrod. The musket is 4½ feet long with a calibre of between .69 and .80.

F2 Lieutenant-Colonel, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1777

His campaign trunk is made of leather, bound with iron and studded with brass tacks. The only observable differences between his uniform and that of other senior officers illustrated are the half-boots and the silver bullion epaulettes.

F3 Lieutenant, 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1779

The original uniform was blue with white facings, but by February 1778 suitable white cloth was unobtainable in Philadelphia and the facings were changed to red. The regiment's first commanding officer wrote: 'I thought on an expedient of reducing the heterogeneous old, new, cock'd & floped hats & pieces of hats, to Infantry Caps, in which we succeeded very well - by making three decent caps out of one tolerable and two very

ordinary hats, to which we added by way of embellishment a white plume and a comb of red hair.' The spontoon is not only a badge of rank but, unlike the sergeant's halberd, also an efficient weapon. Washington was very keen on spontoons. They were generally between 6 feet and 6½ feet, and the styles of head varied considerably. The simple shape illustrated is the one standardized by a regulation of 1778.

G1 Rifleman, 1st Pennsylvania Rifle Battalion, 1775

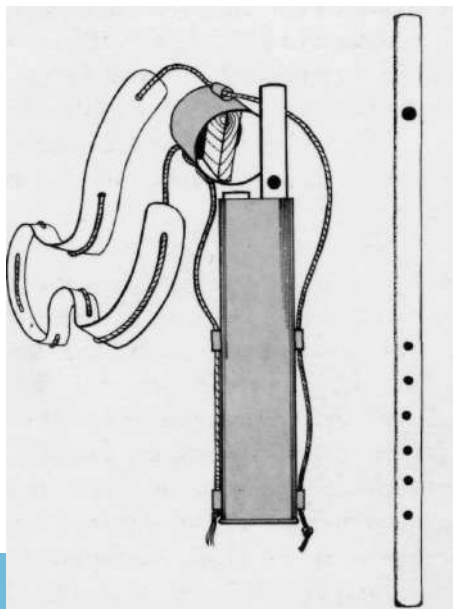
The favoured hunting shirt of the rifleman. A journal of the time describes the 1st Battalion as 'stout and hardy men, many exceeding six feet in height. They are dressed in white frocks, or rifle shirts, and round hats. These men are remarkable for the accuracy of their aim.' Clearly shown here are the powder horn and the tomahawk; often there would be a large hunting knife as well. The rifle was spectacularly more accurate than the musket, and the men who used them acquired a special glamour which has, however, caused historians to overrate its importance. Its disadvantages were its slowness of loading and its lack of a bayonet, leaving the men defenceless against the sort of charge at which the British excelled.

G2 Private, 13th Albany Militia, 1777

Like any other militia unit, the 13th Albany were not professional soldiers; they wore civilian clothing, and were normally as badly equipped as they were trained. They turned out at moments of crisis (and did particularly well against Burgoyne's advance), then returned to their farms, shops and lumber-camps. The only 'uniform' shown here is musket, cross belt, cartridge pouch and knapsack.

G3 Musketman, Pennsylvania State Regiment, 1778

The musket battalion had blue coats with red facings, white waistcoats and stockings, and buckskin breeches. The bicorne hats were bound with yellow. The regiment suffered more than most from the shortages common in the army. In August 1776 their colonel reported that his men were without shirts, breeches or stockings; and in 1778 the commander was compelled to write to the President of Pennsylvania: 'My hopes of



getting the Regiment genteelly and well cloathed this campagne are vanished unless your Excellency and the Council will assist me in it.' The uniform was very like that of some of the Hessians in British pay which led to their being fired upon by their own side on at least two occasions.

H1 Artilleryman, 1779

Until 1779 the coat was black, faced with red, and with plain yellow buttons. Washington's regulation of 1779 changed this to the style illustrated - blue coat faced and lined scarlet, yellow buttons and bindings, coats and button-holes edged with yellow tape or lace.

H2 Fifer, Virginia Militia, 1778

Typical of many Virginia militia units except that he has adopted the brown coat, with green facings and pewter buttons, of the 9th Virginia Regiment. There are few other concessions to uniformity,

except for the buff equipment and the short hanger. The fife and case is well illustrated on page 39.

H3 Drummer, 3rd Mew Jersey Battalion, 1779

Blue coat and breeches, red facings and pewter buttons, of the 'Jersey Blues'. Like the fifer, he is enough to break the heart of any respectable drum-major. His colonel has not even managed to have any regimental device painted on the drum.



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