

LEATHER CAPS DURING THE FRENCH & INDIAN WAR

by
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On 25 October 1758, at Fort Edward, New York, Private Lemuel Lyon recorded that "Colonel Partridge's Regiment came down, and some of the *leather caps*, and stayed here."¹ This journal entry marked the arrival of two units at Fort Edward from the foot of Lake George as they retired southward for winter quarters. More importantly, however, he may have furnished additional information as to the type of headgear worn by a British regular regiment.

The text for MUIA plate 230 states that "a December 1757 clothing estimate listed . . . capps." Late Company Fellow John R. Cuneo also makes mention of this fact in his article entitled "Factors Behind the Raising of the 80th Foot in America."² Could Lyon be referring to Gage's Light Infantry?

Doctor Caleb Rea wrote in his journal on 24 October, at Lake George, that "orders [were] given for the whole army to march tomorrow morning. Counter orders at evening for about one half to march, our regiment with three of the Regulars."³ Gage's was a part of the army, and would definitely have marched the next day according to the orders originally issued; but, were they to be one of the three regiments mentioned in the evening orders?

Alexander Moneypenny's Orderly Books, owned by Fort Ticonderoga, answers this question. Under the date of 25 October, the morning orders read that "the Light Infantry, the 27th, 44th, and 42nd Regiments and Colonel Bagley's to get ready to march as soon as possible. The remainder of the army is not to march till tomorrow . . ."⁴ As Doctor Rea served as surgeon for Colonel Jonathan Bagley's Massachusetts Regiment, it now becomes clear as to the identity of the above mentioned regiments. It also verifies that

Gage's Light Infantry was to march on the 25th. To further verify this, there is a diagram of the march which also placed Partridge's Regiment on one of the column's flanks, while Rogers' Rangers guarded the other side. Gage's took the vanguard. As the distance between Lake George and Fort Edward is only about fourteen miles, the army easily marched the distance within a day's time.

It seems that the "leather caps" were undoubtedly Gage's Light Infantry. Clearly, the caps were made of leather, but unfortunately we know no more as to their appearance. They may have been similar to the ones depicted in MUIA plate 215 ("Captain Hezekiah Dunn's Company of Rangers") or 170 ("Gorham's Rangers"), both of which had leather caps in 1757 and 1761 respectively. A newly discovered painting of General Jeffrey Amherst's camp at the foot of Lake George in 1759 may also hold some clues. The contemporary painting was done by the British artillery officer Thomas Davies. The Fort Ticonderoga staff is presently analyzing it and will publish their findings at a later date.

NOTES

1. Lemuel Lyon, "Military Journal for 1758" published in *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers, 1758-1775*, published by Abraham Tomlinson (Poughkeepsie, NY, 1855), p. 41.
2. John R. Cuneo, "Factors Behind the Raising of the 80th Foot in America," *MC&H*, XI: 101.
3. Doctor Caleb Rea, "The Journal of Dr. Caleb Rea, Written During the Expedition Against Ticonderoga in 1758," edited by F. M. Ray, *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, pp. 81-120, & No. 7, pp. 177-205, p. 204.
4. Major Alexander Moneypenny, "Moneypenny Orderly Book," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (December 1970), pp. 89-116, p. 115.

A RECIPE FOR WATER-PROOFING LEATHER, 1808

by
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The following item was found in the (Baltimore) *American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 8 February 1808. It is an interesting footnote in the preservation of early 19th century material culture.

ECONOMY

Method for making leather impervious to water

Over a small fire, melt together an ounce of oil of bees wax, the same quantity of turpentine, half an ounce of Bureundy pitch, about a half pint of painter's drying linseed oil. Rub the shoes or boots with this mixture, when they are moderately warmed by holding them before the fire, until the pores of the leather are filled with it. This mixture makes them soft and pliable, adds to their durability, renders them impervious to wet; and by keeping the feet warm will prevent colds and chilblains.

If these materials are not at hand, moisture may be kept

from passing through the soles of shoes and boots, by warming them, and then stopping the pores, by applying as much linseed oil (that is oil boiled upon litherage), as the leather will imbibe, copal varnish has nearly the same effect. Shoes or boots intended to be prepared in this manner, ought not to have the sole rubbed or polished when made. After the boots or shoes are prepared in this manner, they ought to be suffered to be perfectly dry before they are worn; in which case the mixture will give them nearly twice the durability they would otherwise have, as it is when the fibre of the leather is rendered soft and spongy by wet that the wearing or abrasion takes place.¹

NOTE

1. (Baltimore) *American & Commercial Daily Advertiser* 8 February 1808. The words "Bureundy" and "chilblains" have been worded just as they appeared in print. No source has been found for these spellings.