

AMERICAN DESERTER NOTICES IN THE NORTHERN THEATER, 1813 to 1815

by
Anthony F. Gero

During the War of 1812, newspapers in the United States published deserter notices as had been done during the 18th century. Unfortunately, the details concerning uniform clothing worn when the deserter "went off" seem to be less than those described in the 18th century ads. This may be in part due to the fact that a more standardized dress had evolved for the US Army by the War of 1812.

In any case, this article contains reports found in the *Albany Argus* of 1813-1815. The year 1812 is not included since the New York State Museum does not have a surviving run of the *Argus* for that year. These 1813-1815 issues of the *Argus* are on microfilm and are available from the New York State Library.

Several items are of note. First, the *Argus* was not the only paper published in Albany from 1812-1815. According to an article from the *Argus* of 26 December 1815, the city of Albany had publishing the following papers: the *Albany Daily Advertiser*, the *Albany Gazette* and the *Albany Register*. Whether or not surviving issues or runs of these papers are available is unknown at present; however, if they do exist, they could turn up other deserter reports. If any CMH members know of the existence of these papers, the author would appreciate knowing.

Second, the reports listed represent only those ads which contained descriptions of military clothing worn when the individual deserted. The *Argus* contains other notices which offered rewards in which the person's physical description was given but no mention was made of his military clothing. If he deserted in civilian clothing, the notices usually described his civilian dress. Since many of the notices were like this, it could be concluded that most of the deserters went off after having received their bounty but before they had gotten military clothing. It would also appear that many individuals deserted before they reached their units when the advantages of an urban situation offered them that last chance to desert.

For ease of classification, the notices have been divided into three categories: infantry, mounted and naval.

Infantry

Ten Dollar Reward — Deserted from the Camp in Buffalo — Henry Toslen, a private in Capt. Maher's company of volunteers-by trade a carpenter, about 5 feet 3 inches high, sandy hair, fair complexion: took away with him his arms and accoutrements. Whoever will return said deserter to Lt. Dawson, Court-Street Albany, or lodge him in jail (will receive a reward) . . .

J. Maher, Capt., Albany, Feb. 5, 1813.

From the *Argus* of 5 Feb. 1813

A reward was offered in the *Argus* of 11 Jan. 1814, for a William Howard a private in the 19th Regt. of Infantry who deserted on 30 December 1813. Howard was described as having gone off ". . . In addition to

his military clothing he generally wore a light drab colored surtcoat, and an old hat. It is expected he has gone to Battavia. . ."

80 Dollars Reward — Deserted from rendezvous at Albany, under my command, the following soldiers, enlisted in the service of the United States.

John Smith, 31. . .Went away in citizen clothes — grey pantaloons, long straight bodies black coat. . .

Michael Thompson, born in England, 23 years. . .wore citizen clothes — dark brown short coat, an old hat.

William Ricketts, born in Burlington, Pa., 26 years old, 5 feet 11 inches, . . .wore the uniform of a private, having had a discharge of the 2nd regiment artillery, wore boots. . .

Thomas Myers, born in Ireland, 27 years old, 5 feet 7 inches. . .wore a soldier's coat and grey pantaloons. . .

Adam Keyser, born in the state of Ohio, 26. . .has once had a discharge from 2nd regt. of dragoons;

William Clarke, Capt., 23 Regt. U.S. Infantry, Albany, March 1, 1814.

From the *Argus* of 4 March 1814.

200 Dollar Reward — Deserted from Captain Leroy Opie's Company, 5th Regt. U.S. Infantry, the following soldiers:

Simon Ford — . . .He is about 24 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches. . . He took with him when he eloped, a new Regimental Coat, a new blue Surtcoat, a pair of blue Sherevalies (sic), with a variety of clothing. . .

Leroy Opie, Capt. 5th Inf.

Citazy (print of which is very unreadable), Aug. 25, 1814.

From the *Argus* of 9 Sept. 1814.

Mounted

(Deserted), Henry Green, born in Weschester county, aged 21, 5 feet 10 inches, black eyes, brown hair, dark complexion, by profession a laborer, wore the uniform of a Dragoon Regiment. . .

Lambert Morton, Lt., Rifle Regiment.

From the *Argus* of 22 Feb. 1814.

Deserted, Michael M. Mahon, born in Ireland, age 23 years, 5 feet 7 inches, blue eyes, dark brown hair, dark complexion, by profession a Shoemaker, wore the Light Dragoon uniform. . .

L. Morton, Lt. Rifle Regiment — Albany/Feb. 24, 1814.

From the *Argus* of 25 Feb. 1814.

As the reader will note, this Lt. Morton is the same officer who ran an ad on 22 Feb. for a dragoon deserter. Why he chose to use the words he did to describe the uniforms of Green and Mahon differently cannot be determined.

Naval

Twenty Dollars Reward — Deserted from the service of the United States naval force, Lake Champlain, December 28, 1813. Christian Sugars ordinary seaman. . . Also at the same time, John Nefus, landsman, blacksmith . . . The above deserters carried away with them sundry sailor clothing, which had been furnished for their comfort. . .

Wm. M. Robins, U.S. Navy-Vergennes, Dec. 30, 1813.

From the *Argus* of 11 Jan. 1814.

Also from that same issue of the *Argus* this notice appeared:

Ten Dollar Reward. Deserted from the United States flotilla on Lake Champlain, on 28 December 1813,

William Fisher, a black man, aged about 27 years, 5 feet 5 inches high with a good set of teeth, high cheek bones, wore his wool platted before and cued behind, rather a pleasing countenance but rather insolent when spoken to. Had on when he went away a blue jacket and trousers, and a pea jacket of brown color with horn buttons. . .

Charles A. Budd, Lt. U.S. Navy, Lake Champlain, December 30, 1813.

20 Dollar Reward! Deserted from a Division of Seaman, on its way through Albany. . . Samuel Smith, a seaman . . . Also Francis Corier, another seaman, a Portuguese, about 5 feet 5 inches, wore a black straw hat, blue jacket, dark colored trousers and laced boots.

J. Walton and Co. — April 2, 1814.

From the *Argus* of 12 April 1814.

Just who or what was the firm of J. Walton and Company is also unknown.

A MINNESOTA ARTILLERY OFFICER'S INVENTORY, 1863

by
Stephen E. Osman

Albert Woodbury, commissioned in March 1862 as junior first lieutenant of the Second Battery of Minnesota Light Artillery, served with his battery in the Siege of Corinth and the Battle of Perryville. Commanding the Parrot rifles of the battery on the campaigns of the next summer, the 26 year old Woodbury was to gain distinction and a mortal wound at Chickamauga. Wrote his captain "Just after the battery was got into position on the new line, a rebel sharpshooter sent a musket ball into Lieutenant Woodbury's left arm, just above the elbow, and broke the bone. From this wound he died in a private hospital in Chatanooga, Oct. 29, 1863. Thus terminated the life of an accomplished young officer, much beloved by his commander and the men of the battery."¹

Back home in Anoka, Minnesota, probate court ordered appraisal of the estate and effects of Albert Woodbury, deceased. Second Lieutenant Charles Earl of the Second Battery provided the following list of Woodbury's effects left at Chatanooga. Prices have been eliminated for brevity, though many items are noted as being used in "settlement of claims during the last illness."²

Inventory of effects of Albert Woodbury left at Chatanooga, Tennessee and accounted for by Lieutenant C. W. Earl:

2 Uniform Caps	1 Uniform Coat with Straps — Lt. Arty. — 1 Lieuts.
1 Uniform Cap Cover	1 Sack Coat with Straps — Lt. Arty. — 1 Lieuts.
1 Uniform Great Coat Infy. given to Mose, Colored Servant	
1 Linen Coat. Citizens	3 prs. Uniform Trousers Lt. Arty.
1 pr. gray Trousers Citizens	1 Uniform Vest Lt. Arty.
1 Marseilles Vest Citizens	1 pr. Calf Boots, Sewed
3 prs. Cotton Socks, Colored	3 prs. Cotton Socks, White
1 Woolen Shirt, Gray	3 Linen Shirts, White
1 Wool undershirt, white	1 Wool undershirt, colored
2 prs. Linen drawers	27 Collars
3 Towels, brown crash	4 Towels, white Diaper
2 pocket Kerchiefs, silk	11 pocket Kerchiefs, linen
1 pr. Gauntlets Buck	2 prs. gloves, Kid
1 pr. gloves Lisle thread	1 pr. gloves, India rubber
1 box Military Buttons	1 pr. shoulder straps Lt. Arty. 1st Lieuts
1 needle book	1 toilet comb
1 toilet brush, hair	1 toilet brush, tooth
1 toilet brush, shaving	1 cake toilet soap
1 bottle Jockey club	1 pocket mirror