Recreating 1776 - Guidelines to Encourage Units in Creating a 1776 Impression

For use by American Forces of the Brigade of the American Revolution during the 250th Campaign Commemorations in 2026

BAR Inspector Department

Throughout 2026, events commemorating the Campaigns of 1776 will be observed through living history programs and battle reenactments hosted by the Brigade of the American Revolution. In order to portray those who participated in the campaign 250 years ago accurately, respectfully, and authentically, the Brigade has published these historical uniform recommendations to assist membership in meeting such an objective. These recommendations are not intended to serve as mandatory clothing standards or requirements, but rather as guidance to assist members enhancing the historical accuracy of their portrayals of the men involved in the New York Campaign and beyond.

It is challenging to create a set of standards that encompasses all the varied uniforms, accoutrements, and equipment used by each regiment or militia company throughout the campaign. Therefore, these recommendations are not unit or portrayal-specific, but instead are overall suggestions based on the most common articles of clothing, accoutrements, and camp equipage used and documented for 1776.

You will find the following categories defining the recommendations of each piece of kit:

Encouraged- The highest and best recommendations to adhere to the material culture of 1776. Encouraged clothing and equipment will adhere to the most recent research on material culture and made in a proper period- manner.

Accepted - The minimum recommendation to adhere in some way to the material culture of 1776. Accepted clothing and equipment allows machine stitching but hand-finishing and stitching is always preferred.

Not Acceptable- Items in this category do not generally adhere to research of the material culture of 1776 and are not recommended, accepted, or encouraged to be worn during the New York campaign 250th commemorations.

Why have 1776 Campaign recommendations?

As living historians, it is essential that we consistently put our best foot forward when portraying the historical events we interpret. Through public interpretation, we serve as educators and are recognized as such by our audiences. Interpretation is not only verbal- it is equally visual. A living history event functions as an open-air classroom, where much of the learning occurs through what we wear, cook, and use at each event rather than just what we say. When discouraged items are used, we, as living history educators, risk doing a disservice to interested spectators who attend these events to learn about that specific event of the American Revolution.

Additionally, many historic sites and event organizers want to create events that replicate the people of the time period of their site or event as closely as practicable. The BAR's current standards of authenticity do not require this, and indeed allow units to appear at events in their core impression. However, the nature of living history and the knowledge base that guides us has evolved over the past fifty years. More knowledgeable visitors and the desire of our event organizers for greater engagement is the impetus for these guidelines to encourage us to strive to be our most authentic selves that we can be. Further, as an organization, we cannot fully uphold our educational mission if we present outdated or inaccurate interpretive visuals.

Clothing Recommendations

Firstly, it is recommended that all items used and worn at Brigade of the American Revolution Living History events in 2026 are documented to your unit's impression for that event and are of proper patterns of the period. Please see the standards outlined in the BAR Soldier's Manual which forms the basis for every unit's core and secondary impressions.

Shirts

Encouraged- Hand-stitched Natural bleached linen, Unbleached linen, checked linen, or striped linen shirt with narrow band (<1”) cuffs closed with small thread, horn, or metal buttons or made for cuff links.

Accepted - Machine stitched natural, white, checked, or striped linen shirts. With narrow cuffs closed with small thread, horn, or metal buttons or made for cuff links.

Not Acceptable- Cotton muslin calico shirts or 19th century plain or plaid checkered shirts. Modern dress shirts or visible t-shirts, shirts of synthetic fabrics.

Neckwear

Encouraged- Hand-hemmed White or Black cotton, silk, or linen square or rectangular neckcloths; tied tight around the neck.

Accepted - Machine hemmed neckerchiefs, square or rectangular patterned neckcloths or colored neckcloths with checked or period patterns tied tight around the neck. Military horsehair or leather neck stocks.

Not Acceptable - absurd patterns or modern paisley handkerchiefs, neckcloths of synthetic cloth, no neckcloth.

Headwear

Encouraged- handmade black wool or fur felt cocked or round hat of a proper military or civilian style with proper linings.

Accepted - machined black wool or fur felt cocked or round hats of a proper military or civilian style. Canadian caps or knit caps worn as primary cap. Proper linen caps worn during downtime in camp.

Not Acceptable - slouch hats or unfinished blanks, 19th century round hats or bi-corne hats, grey or brown felt hats, animal fur caps, straw hats. Excessive accessories held in hats (feathers, pipes, money, tools, etc.). No headwear. Linen caps with embroidery.

Waistcoats

Encouraged- properly handsewn or hand finished single- or double-breasted waistcoats in various colors and cuts of wool or linen fit snug to the body.

Accepted - properly handsewn, hand finished, or machine sewn single- or double-breasted waistcoats in various colors and cuts of wool or linen fit snug to the body. Sleeved waistcoats meeting the standard worn as waistcoats, not outer garments.

Not Acceptable - British Regimental waistcoats, cotton canvas waistcoats, upholstery fabric waistcoats, extremely long or baggy waistcoats, 1750's F&I styled waistcoats.

Military Coats

Encouraged– Contract-made handsewn and hand finished regimental short-coatees or longer length coats, made with slanted vertical or horizontal sewn-down or functional pockets, sewn-down or functional pointed or round cuffs, sewn-down or functional lapels of broadcloth or kersey, made half-lined in serge, bay, or flannel or unlined dependent upon unit being portrayed. Coats or Coatees must be properly documented to the unit being portrayed.

Accepted- Contract-made machine sewn and finished regimental short-coatees or longer length coats, made with slanted vertical or horizontal sewn-down or functional pockets, sewn-down or functional pointed or round cuffs, sewn-down or functional lapels of broadcloth or kersey, made half-lined in serge, bay, or flannel or unlined. Length and color combination dependent upon unit being portrayed. Lottery Coats. Coats or Coatees must be properly documented to the unit being portrayed.

Not Acceptable - Visible machine-made regimental coats in undocumented colors or lengths for 1776. Cotton canvas or nylon-lined coats. Mid-to-Late War styled coats or short coats.

Civilian Coats/Jackets

Encouraged- Handsewn and finished Wool broadcloth or linen short or long civilian coats of drab, brown, red, or blue, or other muted colors, made either straight-bodied or with a front curve.

Accepted – Machined and hand finished Wool broadcloth or linen short or long civilian coats of drab, brown, red, or blue, or other muted colors, made either straight-bodied or with a front curve

Not Acceptable - 1790's and later civilian wear, coats in cotton canvas, unfinished coats, extremely oversized or baggy coats

Hunting Shirts

*note- a hunting shirt is not widely documented for many units in 1776. Some units may have been issued hunting shirts, but many more were not - they were still largely limited to some riflemen and some mid-Atlantic or Southern militiamen, and just beginning to be introduced to some Continental units. A wearing a hunting shirt at a 1776 event is dependent upon the unit in which you are portraying. Additionally, these recommendations are based on the hunting shirts documented to the colonies as of 2025, the new European variant hunting shirts are exceptions to these recommendations.

Encouraged- Well-fit Linen, split-front hunting shirts, with single short capes and fringe, handsewn and finished in natural linen or documented dyed colored shirts of thigh length.

Accepted- Well-fit Linen, split-front hunting shirts, with single short capes and fringe, machined in natural linen or documented dyed colored shirts of thigh length.

Not Acceptable - Cotton canvas or upholstery fabric made hunting shirts, elongated hunting shirts to the knee or further, farmer's smocks passing as hunting shirts. Rendezvous "frocks". Excessive fringe for privates, undocumented dye colors or embroidery.

Please see Neal Hurst's "*"kind of armour, being peculiar to America" The American Hunting Shirt*"

Stockings/ Socks

Encouraged- hand-knit, dense wool stockings of natural, grey, black, or brown with a visible seam running up the back.

Accepted – machine-knit, dense wool, linen, cotton, or silk stockings of natural, grey, black, deep blue, green or brown with or without a visible seam running up the back. No stockings or socks.

Not Acceptable - stockings of colors not stated above. Vertical or Horizontally Striped patterns or polyester/ nylon stockings. Highland stockings or embroidered stockings.

*note, stockings may be held up with linen, cotton, or wool tape just under or below the breeches kneeband. Leather military garters are acceptable not exceeding 1".

Breeches/Trousers

Encouraged- handmade and finished breeches in wool, linen, velvet, or corduroy of drab, white, black, green, brown or other muted colors. Snug-fit and well-constructed with buckled knee bands. Brain-tanned buckskin breeches. Handmade and finished well-fit trousers in natural or muted linen or wool colors or properly documented stripes or check'd materials.

Accepted – machined and hand finished breeches in wool, linen, velvet, or corduroy of drab, white, black, green, red, brown or other muted colors. Snug-fit and well-constructed with buckled, tied, or buttoned knee bands. Leather breeches. Machined and hand finished well-fit trousers in natural or muted linen or wool colors or properly documented stripes or check'd materials.

Not Acceptable - canvas or upholstery fabric breeches or trousers. Baggy breeches or trousers. Breeches which extend far below the knee. Improperly patterned fabric for trousers- plaid or large striped. Overalls/ gaitered trousers. British Regimental Breeches.

Legwear

Encouraged- handsewn and finished gaiters (spatterdashes) in drab, black, brown, or muted colored wool, linen, or leather. Well-fit extending no further than mid-calf. Handsewn and finished "Indian Leggings" in documented colors of wool that extend just above the knee for properly documented impressions.

Accepted -machined and hand finished gaiters (spatterdashes) in drab, black, brown, or muted colored wool, linen, or leather. Well-fit extending no further than mid-calf. Machined and hand finished "Indian Leggings" in documented colors of wool that extend just above the knee for properly documented impressions. No gaiters or leggings.

Not Acceptable - baggy or ill-fit gaiters. Gaiters of cotton canvas or upholstery fabric. Gaiters of bright colors. British military-styled gaiters or regimental gaiters. Above-the-knee buttoned military leggings. Latex or spray painted or rubberized gaiters.

Shoes

Encouraged- handmade, black, waxed-calf, round-toe buckle shoes of proper construction.

Accepted - machined, black, waxed-calf, round-toe buckle shoes of proper construction. Tied black, waxed-calf, round-toe shoes of proper construction. "High-Low"/ "Shoe Boots" of proper construction in black waxed-calf.

Not Acceptable - 19th century brogans, modern work boots or oxford shoes. Moccasins for Continental portrayals. Boots worn by enlisted or unmounted personnel.

Cold Weather Clothing

Encouraged- Properly patterned, handsewn and finished, blanket coats or capotes. Civilian great coats in limited numbers. Blankets worn over one's shoulders held in place by their accoutrements. Monmouth, Dutch, or other knit wool caps. Knit or woolen mittens. Layered clothing.

Accepted- see above. No cold weather gear. Capes for limited field-grade officers.

Not Acceptable - Modern cold weather gear. Modern knit caps or "beanies." Fingerless ragwool mitts. Civil War 3-fingered mitts. Capes worn by enlisted soldiers.

Arms*

**Dependent upon unit's impression.*

Firelocks

Encouraged- Commercially available or hand finished British, Dutch, Prussian, and French made military firelocks that accept a bayonet manufactured historically between 1717-1776. Civilian Fowlers or Fussees with limited ornamentation, Military Fusils for proper Officer Impressions. Properly patterned rifles with limited ornamentation carried by rifle regiments or in limited numbers of civilian portrayals.

Accepted – In addition to above, Third Model British "Indian Pattern" muskets, 1777 French Charleville muskets.

Not Acceptable - Blunderbusses or hand mortars, pistols carried by enlisted soldiers, percussion or 19th century weapons. Hawken or other half-stock rifles. Irish, French, Prussian, or British patterned rifles. Original firelocks.

Musket Slings- Handsewn or machined properly patterned in natural, black, or buff leather are all acceptable, no sling is encouraged.

All firelocks must pass safety inspection during event formation. Properly patterned hammerstalls and flashguards are to be in place.

Bayonets

Encouraged- Bayonet paired to your respective firelock carried in a scabbard attached to a shoulder or waist belt, or no bayonet at all.

Accepted – see above.

Not Acceptable - unsheathed bayonets of any kind. Plug bayonets.

Sidearms

Encouraged- Documented hatchets or belt axe in place of a bayonet, properly sheathed carried in a shoulder or waist belt.

Accepted- Militia with documented patterned swords in addition to bayonets or axes. Small patch knives in proper sheaths.

Not Acceptable - large fighting knives or Native-styled tomahawks or hatches. Unsheathed blades of any kind.

Accoutrements*

* *Dependent upon unit's impression.*

Cartridge Pouches

Encouraged- handsewn soft cartridge pouches of black leather with approximately 17 – 24 round blocks, narrow black or buff leather straps, or linen webbing shoulder straps.

Accepted- machined soft cartridge pouches of black leather with approximately 17 – 24 round blocks, narrow black or buff leather straps, or linen webbing shoulder straps or converted belly boxes.

Not Acceptable - tin canister boxes, British military 29 or 36 hole boxes, new model American 29 hole boxes. No box or pouch.

Hunting/ Shot Pouches (not required)

Encouraged- Handsewn, properly patterned small shot pouches made of natural, black dyed, or hairskin leather dependent upon portrayal carried by a thin leather or webbed strap.

Accepted-See above

Not Acceptable - 19th century or rendezvous shot pouches or bullet bags. Visibly machined shot pouches. Whole shot pouches of varied leather colors.

Powder Horns (not required)

Encouraged- Unfilled plain horns or horns with limited ornamentation with a narrow leather strap or hemp cord or webbing carried just above the cartridge or shot pouch. No powder horn.

Accepted- see above.

Not Acceptable - Powder-filled horns. Powder-filled pocket priming horns. 19th century or rendezvous horns. Native styled horns. Horns with brass valves carried by enlisted soldiers.

Canteens

Encouraged- Wooden cheese box, or wooden staved canteens of a documented period pattern with narrow leather, linen webbing, or waxed hemp cord strap. Straps may be attached through iron staples or leather keepers.

Accepted- Tin or stainless steel canteens of kidney or half-moon shape. Limited gourd canteens. No canteen.

Not Acceptable - Wool canteen covers, leather canteens, covered glass bottles. Plastic canteens or Military-surplus canteens.

Knapsacks

Encouraged- Handsewn and finished plain envelope-styled linen or hemp canvas knapsacks such as the "Uhl" pack. The "New-Invented" styled knapsack-haversack for documented units. Painted knapsacks such as the "Warner" knapsack.

Accepted-Machined and hand finished knapsacks mentioned above. Market Wallets, drawstring linen packs. Limited hairskin packs in the "Gross" style. Hemp tumplines and blanket rolls.

Not Acceptable - British or Hessian military or goatskin packs. 19th century knapsacks. Canvas or upholstery fabric packs. Knapsacks with unit identification for units which were not present historically at the event being portrayed.

Blankets

Encouraged- Hand-finished wool, 2-3 Point, checked, Dutch, or rose blankets. White wool blankets with single colored stripes or check'd wool. All carried atop, below, or in knapsacks, on a tumpline, or collared around body, or blanket worn over clothing as protection from the weather. 18th century patterned coverlets and bed rugs. Or, no blanket.

Accepted-White wool blanket with machined edges. Limited British blankets with blue stripe or broadhead markings. Or no blanket

Not Acceptable - Civil War grey or issued blankets, "Candy Striped" Hudson Bay blankets, bright-colored, polyester or fleece blankets. Surplus blankets with 20th century military markings.

Haversacks

Encouraged- no haversack, or limited numbers of haversacks as they were not frequently used as an item on campaign. Haversacks kept in knapsacks.

Accepted- See above. Haversacks of natural, white, or oatmeal linen of a proper pattern with a single shoulder strap. Approx. 16x13" with or without 3 buttons.

Not Acceptable - Cotton Canvas or upholstery haversacks. “Carpetbagger” patterned haversacks. Oversized haversacks.

Camp Equipage

**must be documentable to the time of year, the campaign, and other details dependent upon a unit’s impression*

Tents/shelters

Encouraged- No tents. Period constructed brush huts. Handsewn and finished tents of natural linen and hemp canvas of a proper pattern. Wooden tent stakes.

Accepted-Machined and hand finished tents of natural linen and hemp canvas of a proper pattern. White canvas tents of an 18th century style. Limited sailcloth shelters and lean-to linen shelters. Units are encouraged to limit their use of “flys” and camp furniture.

Not Acceptable - 19th century soldier’s tents, “dog tents,” shelter halves. Rendezvous-styled large tents. Wall tents and Marquees unless specifically requested by event organizers.

Cooking Items

Encouraged- Tin or brass kettles and small tin or brass pots. Small tin or forged metal frying pans/skillets. Wooden serving utensils. Simple wooden cutting boards. Spices in linen backs or small tins. Cooking equipment should easily be packed up between a mess of soldiers and carried.

Accepted- limited cast-iron kettles, pots, and pans. Metal serving utensils. Spices in cloth bags or small glass jars. Redware mixing bowls and pitchers.

Not Acceptable - 19th century cast-iron and modern cooking equipment. Cutting boards with “slats”. Spices in plastic containers. Glass cooking equipment. Modern utensils. Excessive cooking supplies.

Foodstuffs and Rations

Encouraged- Rations dependent upon time of year, campaign, and region. Period rations of salted or unsalted pork or beef, hard sausage. Hard bread or soft bread in round or cylindrical loaves. Hard cheeses. Seasonal and regional appropriate fruit and vegetables. Rations wrapped in brown paper or period cloth.

Accepted-see above. Pre-cooked rations or stews in period-appropriate containers to be cooked onsite.

Not Acceptable - modern foods. Period foods in plastic or aluminum wrap or plastic containers. Plastic, modern glass, or aluminum bottled drinks. Any food not appropriate to the region or season. Excessive fruits, vegetables, and meats laid out.

Utensils

Encouraged-Wooden, pewter, or tin bowl or plate. Tin, pewter, or redware mug. Horn or pewter eating utensils.

Accepted- see above.

Not Acceptable - 19th century or modern utensils.

Camp Tools

Encouraged- properly patterned shovels, spades, camp and felling axes properly sheathed. Belt axes and fascine knives also sheathed. Properly patterned hammers or wooden mallets.

Accepted- limited Saws with sheaths available. Not required.

Not Acceptable - Civil War or modern tools and camp equipment. Modern hammers or mallets.

Lighting

Encouraged- Beeswax candles with a simple folding candle holder or box carried in a knapsack, no lighting

Accepted-Paraffin wax candles, glass or tin lanterns of period styles. No lighting.

Not Acceptable - modern camp lanterns or lights. Solar powered lights. Large cylindrical scented candles.

Personal Affects

Jewelry and Timepieces

Encouraged- No jewelry. Simple metal wedding bands. Period appropriate time pieces for officers or ncos. Properly patterned shirt buckles.

Accepted-see above.

Not Acceptable - Modern jewelry along with piercings. Plastic, rubberized, or epoxy wedding bands. Modern wrist watches or pocket watches.

Tobacco/ smoking

Encouraged- Not smoking. Tobacco smoked from a clay pipe. Snuff in small porcelain, brass, glass, or tin containers. Pipes lit by candles, flint and steel, or coals.

Accepted-see above.

Not Acceptable - Use of cigarettes, cigars, or vaping in camp. Smoking is prohibited at the discretion of the site and event organizers and when in formation or during tactical demonstrations.

Glasses

Encouraged- No eyewear. Original or Reproduction 18th century frames with round lenses.

Accepted-See above.

Not Acceptable - Modern or 19th century eyewear. Sunglasses of "18th century" prominence or modern sunglasses.

Rank

*Please note, unless you have been designated as an officer by event organizers and can comport yourself accordingly, plan to carry a musket as a soldier or NCO.

Military and Militia Officers are expected to adhere to the above encouraged recommendations and understand the material culture of commissioned officers of the day. Uniforms are to be constructed of a finer cloth with fine details. Equipment is to be of an upscaled design compared to enlisted issued equipment. Military officers are encouraged to use a fusil or fowler rather than a spontoon. Officers that are not mounted should not wear riding boots.

Properly patterned mid 1770s military epaulettes are encouraged- Lieutenants wearing a single epaulette on their left shoulder and Captains with one on their right. Field grade officers may wear two epaulettes. Cockades are also recommended to be worn- LTs. Green, Capts. Yellow, white, or buff, Field Officers red or pink.

On July 23rd, 1775 Washington wrote *"...Field Officers may have red or pink colour'd Cockades in their Hatts: the Captains yellow or buff; and the Subalterns green."* Then on August 20, 1776 he wrote again *"...Field Officers wear a pink or red cockade—Captains white or buff—Subalterns green—."*

Brass neck gorgets and silk red sashes are acceptable but not required.

Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) must also adhere to the standards outlined in the above encouraged categories. Corporals are to be identified by a proper green epaulette on their right shoulder and sergeants by a red. NCOs are expected to carry a bayonet if applicable.

Language

Language in the field cannot be controlled. But throughout the 250th there will be much more public with eyes and ears on reenactors more so than usual. Keep language clean and professional. Period language and dialect is not required, however, using modern terms during tactical or living history demonstrations is discouraged.

For instance, do not call out for “ammo” or “ammunition” in the field. Say “ball”, “shot”, “powder”; and in a pinch “round” is acceptable. Saying “ammo” came from WW1 and “ammunition” was a French term for all sorts of military supplies in the 16-18th centuries with it later being defined as propellant. “Round” was used in the 19th century, and it referred to the round ball- so it is likely acceptable for late 18th century but we know ball, shot, and powder are the best terms.