

# THE WHITE COCAK DE



The Official Newsletter of the Lexington Training Band

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Volume 1

Issue 4

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*“We, Levi Mead and Levi Harrington, both of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex, and Colony of the Massachusetts bay, in New England, and of lawfull age, do Testify and Declare, that on the morning of the Nineteenth of April, being on Lexington Common, as spectators, we saw a Large body of Regular Troops marching up towards the Lexington Company, and some of the Regulars, on Horses, whom we took to be officers, Fired a Pistol or two on the Lexington Company, which were then dispersing: These were the First Guns that were Fired, and they were immediately followed by several volleys from the Regulars, by which Eight men, belonging to said Company, were killed, and several wounded.”*

~Depositions of Levi Mead and Levi Harrington, April 25, 1775

## UPCOMING SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

3/22/03	Militia Muster, Buckman Tavern, Lexington, MA
4/19/03	Battle Road
5/2/03 - 5/3/03	Lexington Green Tattoo, Lexington, MA
6/7/03 - 6/8/03	Strawberry Bank, Portsmouth, NH (CL event)
6/15/03	Bunker Hill Day Parade, Charlestown, MA (\$\$\$)
6/28/03 - 6/29/03	Battle of Monmouth, Monmouth, NJ (CL event)
7/12/03 - 7/13/03	Garrison of Fort Sewall, Marblehead, MA
8/30/03 - 8/31/03	Battle of Rhode Island, Newport, RI (CL Event)

## **Message from the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant**

Greetings from Essex County! 2003 is promising to be another successful year for the LTB. As a result of our accomplishments at Bourne Farm, Crown Point and Saratoga, the Band is now being called upon to defend New England from the onslaught of His Majesty's Forces from the south. Rumors are now surfacing that an army composed of British, Hessians and Tories has taken up residence in the neighboring colony of Rhode Island. It is likely that the government of Massachusetts Bay will be asking us to join our brethren and volunteer to meet this army. Rest assured, your 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant will take the necessary steps to procure proper reimbursement, including goats, sheep and horses (for Carlo), before we disembark southward on this venture.

We are always looking for article submissions, event reviews and comments. Please feel free to send your articles to [alex.cain@state.ma.us](mailto:alex.cain@state.ma.us) and [mass1775@aol.com](mailto:mass1775@aol.com).

Your Servant,

Alex Cain

## **Songs of the Period**

Three Jolly Rogues of Lynne

In the good old colony days  
When we lived under the king  
Lived a miller and a weaver and a little tailor  
Three jolly rogues of Lynne

Chorus:  
Three jolly rogues of Lynne  
Three jolly rogues of Lynne  
Lived a miller and a weaver and a little tailor  
Three jolly rogues of Lynne

The miller, he stole corn  
The weaver, he stole yarn  
And the little tailor, he stole broadcloth  
For to keep those three rogues warm

The miller was drowned in his dam  
The weaver was hung in his yarn  
And the Devil laid his claw on the little tailor  
With the broadcloth under his arm

The miller still floats in his dam  
The weaver still hangs in his yarn  
And the little tailor goes skipping through Hell  
With the broadcloth under his arm

## **Subscriptions**

As you may know, the Lexington Training Band belongs to the Continental Line. As a result, each of you may wish to subscribe to the Continental Line's quarterly newsletter, "The Continental Soldier." If interested, send a check for \$15 (one year) or \$30 (two years), made out to "The Continental Line", to:

William Myers, Treasurer  
1610 South Second Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19148

Include with the check your name, mailing address, unit affiliation and (optional) phone number & email address. Please do not mail cash.

Each issue of "The Continental Soldier" contains messages from the CL department heads and the Board officers, as well as scholarly articles written by Line members and information/invitations to CL events. All money from subscriptions goes to helping to produce & mail the newsletter.

## **Massachusetts Militia History (Part Two)**

Over the years, efforts had been made to establish what the minimum requirements of arms and accoutrements should be when fielding with the militia. Early in the colony's history, Massachusetts required "Every listed souldier ... shall be always provided with a well fixt firelock musket, of musket or bastard musket bore, the barrel not less then three foot and a half long, or other good firearms to the satisfaction of the commission officers of the company, a snapsack, a collar with twelve bandealers or cartouch-box, one pound of good powder, twenty bullets fit for his gun, and twelve flints, a good sword or cutlace, a worm and priming wire fit

for his gun.”<sup>1</sup> Another early militia law required a militiaman to keep “his firelock in good repair, four pounds of lead in bullets, fitted to the bore of his piece, four flints, a cutlass or tomahawk, a good belt round his body, a canvas knapsack to hold a bushel, with a good matumpline, fitting easy across the breast and shoulders, good clothing, etc.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as tensions increased between the army in Boston and Massachusetts colonists, the surrounding towns instinctively began to issue resolves setting forth guidelines for its militia and minute companies. On December 26, 1774, Roxbury ordered "Militia minutemen [to] hold themselves in readiness at a minutes warning, compleat in arms and ammunition; that is to say a good and sufficient firelock, bayonet, thirty rounds of powder and ball, pouch and knapsack."<sup>3</sup> The following month, Braintree required each soldier furnish himself with “a good fire lock, bayonett, cartouch box, one pound of powder, twenty-four balls to fitt their guns, twelve flints and a knapsack.”<sup>4</sup>

In Bridgewater, it was expected "each soldier to provide himself with a good fire arm, a steel or iron ram rod and a spring for same, a worm, a priming wire and brush, a bayonet fitted to his gun, a scabbard and belt thereof, a cutting sword or tomahawk or hatchet, a . . . cartridge box holding fifteen rounds . . . at least, a hundred buckshot, six flints, one pound of powder, forty leaden balls fitted to the gun, a knapsack and blanket, [and] a canteen or wooden bottle to hold one quart [of water]."<sup>5</sup>

Despite such efforts, militia and minuteman companies continued to lack a uniform supply of weapons and equipment.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Militia Laws, Nov. 22, 1693.

<sup>2</sup> Source undated and unknown, but original shown to Henry Cooke by Peter Oakley in 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Town of Roxbury Resolves, December 26, 1774.

<sup>4</sup> Town of Braintree Resolves, January 23, 1775.

<sup>5</sup> Journal of Arthur Harris of the Bridgewater Coy of Militia.

<sup>6</sup> After the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts continued to set down basic militia guidelines. In 1776, under the guidance of Colonel Timothy Pickering of Salem, Massachusetts attempted to again establish a uniform equipment system by requiring each

Militiamen obtained their weapons from a variety of sources: inheritance, the French and Indian War, the Siege of Louisbourg and from willing British soldiers stationed in Boston. The result was a variety of weapons of different caliber, origin and value. It was not uncommon to observe within the same militia company, 20 gauge fowlers, 12 gauge fowlers, Brown Bess muskets,<sup>7</sup> English doglock muskets from the era of King William’s War era, New England doglock muskets, Dutch muskets, American muskets with parts obtained from several sources and French Tulle muskets within the same militia company. In Lexington, militiaman Benjamin Locke’s musket was of French origin;<sup>8</sup> Captain John Parker’s musket was a combination of English, American and French parts<sup>9</sup> and

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soldier to own "a firelock, bayonet, waistbelt, a cartridge box, cartridges, and a knapsack." Timothy Pickering, An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia, (Salem, 1775) p. 1-4. In 1778, the Third Bristol County Militia Regiment wanted their men to have the following at muster: "a good firearm with steel or iron ramrod, and spring to retain the same, a worm, priming wire and brush, and a bayonet fitted to his gun, a tomahawk or hatchet, a pouch containing a cartridge box that will hold fifteen rounds of cartridges at least, a hundred of buckshot, a jack knife, and tow for wadding, six flints, one pound of powder, forty leaden balls fitted to his gun, a knapsack and blanket, a canteen or wooden bottle sufficient to hold one quart." Continental Journal and Weekly Adviser, January 22, 1778. Another early company document mentions “a powderhorn, a bullet pouch to contain 40 leaden balls, a knapsack, a canteen, a firearm of good worth, a haversack, a belt, a good pair of overalls.” Boston Gazette, May 26, 1777.

<sup>7</sup> The Brown Bess Musket was the basic standard combat weapon of the British infantry. It was four feet ten inches in length, weighed fifteen pounds, fired a .75 caliber ball and had an effective range of seventy-five yards. The lock was over five inches in length, straight edged along the bottom, possessed a flash pan-frizzen bridge and had the inscriptions of “Tower” for the Royal Arsenal in the Tower of London, the royal cipher and the letters “GR” for Georgius Rex.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Locke’s musket is currently in the possession of the Lexington Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup> John Parker’s musket is currently on display in the senate chambers of the Massachusetts

several other militiamen fielded with fowling muskets. As militiamen from the village of Lynn marched off to war on April 19, 1775, an observer noted

[one man with] a long fowling piece, without a bayonet, a horn of powder, and a seal-skin pouch, filled with bullets and buckshot. . . Here an old soldier carried a heavy Queen's arm with which he had done service at the conquest of Canada twenty years previous, while by his side walked a stripling boy with a Spanish fusee not half its weight or calibre, which his grandfather may have taken at the Havana, while not a few had old French pieces, that dated back to the reduction of Louisbourg.<sup>10</sup>

The militiamen and minutemen of Massachusetts carried their bullets and powder in various ways. Frequently, a militiaman would obtain a horn from a slaughtered cow, boil out the inner material, fill it with gunpowder and insert wooden stoppers on both ends to prevent the powder from falling out. They might personalize it by engraving it with maps, slogans or pictures. A leather or woven strap was attached then attached to the horn, and slung over the left shoulder. A hunting pouch usually accompanied the powder horn. These leather bags usually held bullets, buckshot, flints and other necessary supplies. Like the horn, the hunting bag was suspended over the left shoulder. A percentage of the American forces also used cartridge boxes.

A list of men and accouterments from a militia regiment from Bristol County included "Firearms - 446, Ramrods - 129, Springs - 9, Worms - 160, Priming wires - 193, . . . Cartridge box and powder - 274."<sup>11</sup> Almost half of the regiment's 678 soldiers were using cartridge boxes. But unlike the British version, the typical militia cartridge boxes were poorly made and did little to protect ammunition. The most common type of cartridge box excavated within the Boston area consisted merely of a wooden block

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Statehouse.

<sup>10</sup> Alonzo Lewis, History of Lynn, Essex County, Massachusetts, p. 338.

<sup>11</sup> "List of Men & accouterments of Each man [illegible words] Regiment in Bristol County [Massachusetts]" from private collection. Dated 1776.

with leather tightly nailed to it.<sup>12</sup> The box lacked side flaps and would not have kept powder dry during inclement weather.

Bayonets were scarce in Massachusetts, and the colony's militiamen were not as well equipped with weapon as were the British regulars. An April 1775 return to the Provincial Congress indicated that only 10,108 bayonets existed for 21,549 muskets. In short, one bayonet existed for every two soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The overwhelming majority of these were socket bayonets of French, British or American origin. A few provincials possibly owned outdated plug bayonets relics from much earlier wars. Yet, most militiamen countered this deficiency in bayonets by using other edged weapons, such as tomahawks, cutlasses, hangars or hatchets.

Militia and minutemen varied in other equipment as well. Some carried tin canteens dating back to the French and Indian War. Others carried leather or wood canteens, or glass bottles held in place by a leather pouch, and many used a simple, hollowed out gourd. Styles in knapsacks varied as well. Many militiamen, as is evident from the claims for lost property following the Battle of Bunker Hill, used a single pouch, double strap knapsack constructed of heavy linen or canvas.<sup>14</sup> Some utilized a single strap knapsack traceable to the French and Indian War. Others relied on a tubular bag known as a snapsack, while some preferred the use of blanket rolls and tumplines, a style popular both before and after Lexington and Concord.<sup>15</sup>

## **Biscuits and Cake**

*By Mark Tully, 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot*

Thomas Simes suggests "biscuit" as part of the menu for feeding British soldiers,<sup>1</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup> An example of such a box is on display at Minute Man National Historical Park in Concord, Massachusetts.

<sup>13</sup> Galvin, 65.

<sup>14</sup> Sundry Petitions to the General Court, 1775 - 1778, Massachusetts Archives, vols 180 -183; Henry M. Cooke IV, Knapsacks, Snapsacks, Tumplines: Systems for Carrying Food and Clothing Used by Citizens and Soldeirs in 1775, (Randolph, \_ ), 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Captain Johann Ewald of the Jägers talks of eating biscuit on campaign several times in his diary.<sup>2</sup>

These biscuits were not the light, fluffy, baking soda-type that Hardee's makes for breakfast -- no. In England, even today, a biscuit is what we would call either a cracker or a cookie, depending on whether you are having it with cheese or with tea. In the case of the 18th-century soldiers, biscuit was definitely of the "with cheese" variety -- or more specifically, a thick, hard cracker more commonly known today as "hardtack".

Hardtack, a form of unleavened bread, is perhaps the oldest known prepared food and has been a staple in the foot soldier's diet for centuries.<sup>3</sup> And why not? It keeps well on campaign, is durable, and making it is a breeze. Hmmm, maybe it should be called "easy-tack"?!

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 cups of flour, 1/2 tablespoon salt, 1/2 cup of water.

**DIRECTIONS:** Mix all ingredients well to make a very stiff (not sticky) dough. Roll the dough out until it is about 3/8 inch thick and deeply score into 4" square pieces. Punch 12-16 holes into each square to help let the moisture escape. Put onto a cookie sheet and bake in a 350-degree oven for 1/2 hour or until it begins to brown and all the moisture is out of it. Break into squares. Serve cold.<sup>4</sup>

Don't try to make your hardtack biscuits more palatable by adding sugar, shortening, or any special flavorings. Adding any sugars or fats to the cracker will shorten its haversack life dramatically and it will soon turn moldy (icky). Biscuits are great items to have in your haversack for "show and tell"

with the public (I wouldn't hand them out as souvenirs though, as you can never be sure of the quality of other people's dental work). Biscuit can also be made-up on the spot as a camp food demonstration! In the period these were called "ash cakes", and an early field recipe for them comes from the Journal of Captain Knox: "Both officers and men mixed their own meal with a little water, and baked it in cakes, by putting it on a flat stone under the ashes ...".<sup>5</sup>

In camp, try placing a flat rock into your fire pit first thing in the morning and start your fire on top of it.<sup>6</sup> By the time your coffee is done and the fire has burned down, the rock should be at perfect ash-cake temperature! There were also other types of "cakes". James Boswell mentions having "oatcakes" on March 23, 1776: "I drank here for the first time oat ale, and saw oatcakes, soft like Yorkshire ones of wheat flour, at breakfast. It was pleasant to find the food of the horses so much used in Dr. Johnson's own town [Lichtfield]."<sup>7</sup>

Boswell's oatcakes were most likely of the "with tea" variety, so any oatmeal cookie recipe would probably do, or you could try simply substituting oats for flour in the ash cake recipe (I have not tried this, so I can't say if it will work). British soldiers were issued a lot of oatmeal -- it was often substituted for the regular rations when items were scarce.

Why not make up a big batch of biscuit this winter? Try experimenting with different flours, proportions and baking times -- what else do you have to do over the long winter months? Oh, and don't worry about your biscuits getting stale, they will keep forever -- I am still working on a large batch I made last January!

#### NOTES

1. Simes, Thomas, *A Military Course for the Government and Conduct of a Battalion*, London, 1777, page 39.
2. Captain Johann Ewald, *Field Jäger Corps, Diary of the American War, A Hessian Journal*, edited by Joseph P. Tustin, Yale University Press,

- New Haven and London, 1979 (also see October issue).
3. Hard tack was issued during the Civil War and several recipes using hardtack as a primary ingredient appear in the 1917 U.S. Infantry manual.
  4. This recipe came from the internet: <http://soar.berkeley.edu/recipes/snacks/hardtack1.html>  
My personal experience has been that it takes a LOT longer than 1/2 hour to bake hardtack -- 45 minutes to an hour is probably better. There are HUNDREDS of recipes for hardtack on the internet but, in my opinion, this one is the best.  
"Reproduction" Civil War hardtack can be bought for around 65c each from The Mechanical Baking Company, P.O. Box 513, Pekin, Ill 61554-0513.
  5. Knox, Captain John, An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America For the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760, edited by Arthur G. Doughty, Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1914.
  6. Don't count on finding a flat stone at an event, start looking for one this spring and bring it with you to events. If nothing else buy yourself a nice cooking rock from a landscaping service!
  7. Boswell, The Ominous Years, 1774-1776, edited by Charles Ryskamp and Frederick A. Pottle, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1963, page 291 (23 March 1776). The "food of horses" is a reference to an entry in Dr. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary: "OATS; A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people."