



LA MILICE CANADIENNE



Milice de la Belle Riviere



Milice de Ste. Famille

Objective:

In accordance with the New York Company policy of being able to contribute positively and correctly at events, this document was created to establish the proper clothing for portraying the la Milice Canadienne (Canadian Militiamen or Milice) during the French and Indian War.

This impression could be quite interesting in that one would have to learn to drill with commands given in French. Also the tactics used by the Milice was the same as used by the Native Americans. These tactics were also used by Robert Rogers and his Rangers whom we represent.

This page (above) contains several photos of Milice that will give the reader an idea of the clothing worn.

Background Information:

At the beginning of French colonization in America, the colonists of New France had to face the threat posed by the Iroquois tribes, especially near Montreal and Trois-Rivières. Since the colonists could not be adequately protected by the French military, it became

necessary to train a group of armed men to provide defense. This group would be formed locally with people from the colony.

Thus in 1669, King Louis of France, officially established the militia in New France. Each resident (male usually) aged between 16 and 60 years had an obligation to do military service. There was a company of militia located in each parish, each with 50 to 80 men. Each company was led by a captain of militia, elected by the members of his militia company. In addition to his military duties, the captain of the militia was also responsible for maintaining justice and maintenance of roads. He also held the power to enforce the directives of the central authorities (governor of New France).

In peacetime, members of militia companies trained once a month, Sunday and holidays. Once or twice a year, all companies in a region, met to practice major exercises. They had to supply their own weapons.

In wartime, however, weapons were loaned to those who did not a weapon for the duration of the conflict.

The militia companies borrowed many of their tactics and woodland skills from the Native Americans. Like the Native Americans, the militia excelled in a war of skirmishing in the woods. The effectiveness of the militia quickly became legendary among their enemies. They would usually serve alongside the Native Americans that were loyal to French and the Compagnies Franches de la Marine.

EQUIPMENT ISSUED TO MILICIENS:

This list is from the **Bourlamaque Papers**, National Archives of Canada (1757).

During Summer:

1 blanket; 1 capot or bougrine (capot or a loose blouse or cape?); 2 cotton shirts; 1 breech cloth; 1 pair of leggings (mitasses); 2 skeins of thread; 6 needles; 1 awl; 1 firesteel; 6 gunflints; 1 butcher knife; 1 comb; 1 gunworm; 1 tomahawk; 1 pair moccasins every month.

For Winter in addition to Summer :

2 pairs of short stockings (socks); 1 pair of mittens; 1 vest; 2 folding knives; 1/2 aune of blanket to make leggings (mitasses); 2 pair of deerskin shoes; 1 greased deerskin; 2 portage collars; 1 toboggan; 1 pair of snowshoes; 1 bearskin.

Augmentation for every MILITIAMAN:

1/2 pound (livre) of gunpowder; 1 pound (livre) of balls; 1 pound (livre) of tobacco; 1 axe for 2 men; 1 tarpaulin and 1 cooking boiler for every 4 men.

This list of clothing and equipment issued to the Miliciens is from **Bouganville** -aide de camp to General Montcalm:

During Summer:

1 capot; 1 wool stocking cap; 2 cotton Shirts; 1 breech cloth; 1 pair leggings; 2 pairs shoes; 1 blanket; 2 skeins of thread; 6 needles; 1 awl; 1 firesteel; 1 comb; 1 worm; 6 gunflints; 2 siamois knife, 1 boucheron knife; 1 tomahawk; 1 oilcloth for every 4 soldiers

For Winter in addition to Summer :

2 tumplines; 1 toboggan; 1 pair snowshoes; 1 bearskin; 1 pair of mittens; 1 gilet; 2 pairs deerskin moccasins; 1 dressed deerskin

Both of the lists are found in Steve Delisle' book "*The Equipment of the New France militia, 1740-1760*"

DESCRIPTION OF CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Headwear

Scarf (Foulard) - Scarf (Foulard) – is a piece of cloth, about 36 to 42 inches square which would be made of silk, linen or cotton. The scarf would be a solid dark color; black, brown, blue or red. It would be folded into a triangle and placed over the head and tied in back.

“ about sixty militiamen with a kerchief on their heads and wearing shirts and their backsides bare in the Canadian style.” Pierre Pouchot (1755-60)

Cap (Tuque) - is a knitted cap without tassel which folds down upon itself. The most common color was red (The color of red is well documented the books, journals as well as images from the 18th century).

NOTE: The tuque does not flop over or has any trade silver on it nor does it have a shaggy ball of yarn attached to its top

Tricorne (Le Chapeau) - The French tricorne hat was made of black felt and was cocked up evenly on all three sides. Tricornes were rarely worn by milice.

Other appropriate head cover can be worn. The participant may have gotten the item as part of booty taken from the enemy. One should check with the Commander of the unit before wearing any unusual apparel.

Breechclout (*Brayet*) –A strip of wool about 10 inches wide that was worn between the legs and brought up front and back to cover the groin are in place of breeches. Average length of this cloth is about 60 to 70 inches depending on the height of the wearer. Breech cloth was used by the majority of the Milice.

Breeches (*La Culottes*) –Made of tanned deer hide, linen, or canvas cut in the French style (buttoning up the front without the fall). These came below the knee where they were either buttoned or tied, fitting snug in the leg but full in the seat for movement. Breeches were not widely accepted by the Milice. However, a few did wear them and if you do not have a breechclout, this would be acceptable.

Shirt (*La Chemise*) –Natural white cotton cut in the French style. Linen may also be used in lieu of cotton. Long to the knee or often below the knee with full body and sleeves. They were large, loose and generally one size with narrow cuffs and the back longer than the front. No ruffles or lace on the common shirt. The collar is short and will be covered by the stock. Buttons should be made of bone or shell.

“Shirts issued during the Seven Years War were cotton, white or blue. Blue could mean a solid color or striped or checkered fabric, i.e. blue against a white background.”

(From Steve Delise’s book, see Reference Books)

Since we as rangers wear the same type of shirt but in other colors than white, these shirts are maybe acceptable.

Waist Sash –Woven wool belt worn around the waist to hold the capot closed in winter months and around the shirt in warmer weather to hold the belt knife and ax. The sash should be about three inches wide and the length of the sash is your waist measurement plus about 16 to 18 inches, beyond which there is a fringe of about 10 to 11 inches on each end of the sash. These may also be of a solid colored center with an edge of another color about $\frac{3}{8}$ ^{ths} of an inch on each side of the center color. The fringe is taken into pieces of three or multiples of three and braided to strengthen it from damage in the woods. Common colors were red, scarlet red, gray, black, and brown. When worn, they would be knotted in the back.

Waistcoat (*La Veste*) – The French waistcoat was always sleeved which made it a very useful and versatile garment. Other waist coats were made without sleeves. You will need to talk with the commander of the groups you are joining to find out which is acceptable.

Coat (*Capot*) –A wrap around coat made with the cut of the French style Justaucorps, having large boot cuffs. These cuffs often had wool covered buttons on them. This coat has a single wool covered button on the right shoulder to close the front of the coat. This coat extended to the knee or below.

Gaiters & Leggings - Used to protect the lower legs from thorns, brush, and general wear in the field.

Gaiters (*Le Guetres*) were generally made of heavy canvas duck with ten to twelve black horn buttons. The top of the gaiters should come to mid-thigh and the top five button spaces should have buttonholes through both sides to allow buttoning to the five buttons on the breeches legs. At the bottom should be a leather or canvas stirrup to hold the gaiter under the foot. Gaiters were worn by regulars (*Troupe de Terre* or *Troupe de la Marine*). The gaiters were white in color. The Milice did not wear gaiters.

Leggings (*Mitasses*) – Center seam Indian style leggings are also acceptable when worn with moccasins "on duty." The dimensions of the wool leg coverings go from the ankle to about a hands width above the knee. These were some times made of deer hide too. Common colors were black, red, dark blue, brown, and gray. These leggings had a side seam sewn with a double flap of excess material about three fingers in width.

Leg Ties –Garters to hold up the leggings, they were woven the same color scheme as the waist sash. They were the diameter of your leg just above the knee and about two inches wide with an additional eight to nine inches of fringe at each end of the leg ties. Just like the sash, this fringe is braided to strength. These garters are tied on the outside of the leg just below the knee. Leg ties were not always the same color as the sash. You used what you had.

Footwear

Stockings (*La Bas*) – These were woolen worsted. After 1722, the stockings were not knitted but made from cut cloth leaving a seam up the back of the leg. Stockings were not worn with mitasses. If switching from British (Ranger) to Milice, you can remove your stockings and wear your mocs.

Shoes (*les Souliers*) – Black leather shoes of the period with or without period style buckles. Buckle shoes are rare on the field (Milice).

Indian Moccasins (*Souliers des Sauvages*) – Leather foot coverings made in the Natives Fashion from deer or cow hide.

Shoes, ox-hide (*Soulier de boeuf*) - were made from thick oak-tanned cattle hides, formed on lasts and made by a cordwainer.

“Beef shoes are made in a completely different manner than the French leather shoes, they have a sole as thin as the top which envelops all the foot at the height of the quarters; then, on this piece of leather, one sews a smaller piece of leather covering the top of the foot...” Jean Baptisted’Aleyrac, 1755

Arms and Accoutrements:

The most common firearm of the Miliciens was the Tulle Fusil which was a hunting smoothbore firearm of the period. There has been no documentation of French Milice carrying rifles of any kind.

Militiamen reporting without a musket were subject for up to three years forced military duty in a fort in exchange for a musket. Colonial authorities would sometimes pay for repair or replacement of defective militiamen’s musket

Since the New York Company does basically British Rangers and Light infantry, it could be argued that the Milice picked up British firearms from the dead on a battlefield or traded for it. The King’s Arms (Model 1 or 2) would not be desired by the Milice but I am sure that some of them carried them just as some of the Rangers carried fusils. Your present musket will be considered acceptable for this impression.

“Certain English officers & soldiers took some hunting muskets from our officers & militiamen, but buy stealth rather than force.” Pouchot, Pierre. Memoirs on the Late War in North America between France and England pg.244

The long arm ranges in caliber from the .62 of the Tulle hunting musket to the .69 of the army issue weapons, to the .75 of the captured British Brown Bess.

Also many times if a better weapon was found on the field, the enterprising Canadienne would leave his behind and take the better, or take the better home.

Pistols were not generally carried.

Musket (*le Fusil*): From the 1690s to the 1740s the musket carried was predominantly the Marine model made in Tulle. During the 1740s the Ministry of Marine bought the 1728

style muskets from St. Etienne. There is conflicting information on the type of finish that was used on the weapons. Acceptable muskets include:

- Charleville Model 1763 altered to Model 1728 (*bright*)
- Tulle Marine (*bright*)
- Fusil de Chasse (*browned or blued*)
- Fusil Grenadier (*bright*)
- Fusil Fin (*browned or blued*)
- Type C or D French trade fusil (*bright*)
- British Trade gun
- Firelocks of the era that were found on the battlefield.

Knives (*Couteaux*) were commonly carried, one hanging around the neck, one at the waist in the sash, and one attached on the outside of the leg in the leg tie. J. C. Bonin in his memoirs describes a Milice with this configuration and everyone seems to use it. These should all have a sturdy leather sheath, and for extra precaution we suggest having a leather thong attached to your belt and sheath.

A **belt ax** or a **tomahawk (*Casse-tête*)** was also a common tool carried by the Milice. This too should be in a sturdy leather sheath for safety.

Milice wore a **powder horn** and **shooting pouch**, not a cartridge box. The horn was commonly 12 to 14 inches long in this period and the pouch was made of a sturdy hide such as cow or pig. These were hand sewn, and not laced and had a good flap for protection.

Vent pick (*l'épinglette*): Militiamen probably used a simple piece of wire secured by a cord.

Worm (*tire-bourre*): Militiamen probably received a friction-fit, tapered spiral worm for use on their wooden ramrod. Military muskets used a forged worm screwed onto the iron ramrod. (From Steve Delise's book, see Reference Books)

Cartridge boxes were issued. Generally, these were in the form of a belly box. Powder and ball were also carried in a horn and pouch and those members of the Compagnie Franche (*Troupe de la Marine*) that had been over here a while tended to carry both, as well.

Blanket rolls, ball bags, may be carried, as part of field/campaign impression

Other Items:



French Haversack (See picture). A sack approximately 35 inches by 22 inches with leather strap attached to both sides of the bag allowing the top to become a flap and naturally draping over the bag. The strap was buckled across the front and the worn under the left arm

A **canteen** was commonly carried. These were often made from a dried gourd and hung around the neck and shoulder with a leather thong. A leather covered bottle with a cork stopper is also fine, as is the period tin canteens. The canteens are best covered with leather or wool. They also might carry a British canteens that were found on the battlefield or procured through trading.

Tumpline (collier): - were usually woven of birch fiber cord about 5'-4" long. The middle 17" to 19" is 3" to 4" wide. Tumplines are multipurpose tools used to pull the toboggan and for portaging.

Blanket (couverte): Wool 3 and 4 point blankets were issued (about 46" x 70"). A blanket was carried even in the summer months, generally tied using a tumpline.

Other items included an
awl, needles and thread

- **Awl (alene):** Awls were double-tapered, diamond shaped in cross-section. Some had a kink in the middle to stop the hand when pushing the awl through leather.
- **Thread:** A French skein of linen thread measured 62' - 5".

Also they had extra flints, a cleaning worm for their gun. A comb, small cloth or leather pouches with dried meat, fruits, corn, and nuts.

Adornments

The wearing of trade silver, feathers and paint are not documented. However some Milice were at one time traders and may have had some tattoos about the wrist, arm, and leg areas. These would be of a period Indian nature.

A **rosary (Chapelet)** or a beaded necklace was also sometimes worn about the neck. One must keep in mind that all soldiers for Louis XV (Regular or otherwise) were Catholic. These soldiers would carry a rosary, as well as some form of religious medallion (saint, etc.) and/or a crucifix.

Beaded knife sheaths were in existence, but were only lightly beaded such as along the edge of the sheath. Ribbon and beads on breechclouts, moccasins, and leggings were very minimal and not common.

Hair was often long and tied in a queue with a strip of leather or ribbon. French men of this period were clean shaven.

In the warmer months when snakes were common, a small leather pouch with a linen lining was filled with salt and worn about the neck or carried by a leather thong attached at the sash. Mixed with saliva to form a thick paste, then the salt was applied to the wound to draw out the poison.

Winter Equipment:

Mittens/mitaines: Mittens were made of wool cloth rather than knit.

Snowshoes/raquettes: Snowshoes were used with deerskin moccasins. One does not go without the other during winter. Regional styles vary based on the environment, e.g. open country vs. wooded; dry snow vs. wet snow, etc.

Ice creepers/grappins: Blacksmiths made ice creepers from a sheet of iron. They cut and turned up a tab and turned down two points at each end. A hole in each tab allows the ice creeper to be tied to the sole of the shoe in the arch area to improve grip on ice.

Toboggan/traine: Toboggans were made from a thin plank 12 ¾" wide by 6'-5" to 9'-7" long. The front is steam-bent up into a half circle (chaperon) to which the tumpline is attached.

Oilcloth/prelart: During the Seven Years War one oilcloth was issued to every four men for tentage. Each oilcloth was 46 ¾" wide x 20 to 29' long. In winter militiamen dug holes in the snow down to the ground, spread evergreen branches on the ground then covered the branches with bearskins. The oilcloth was used to cover this bed from snow or rain.

Nippes: In winter additional pieces of blanket material were issued to make liners for moccasins.

During winter campaigns deerskin moccasins with wool slipper liners were used for snow shoeing. **Wool slippers (chausson)** were made from molleton wool and acted as liners for moccasins. They were made from one piece of wool, similar to a moccasin, with an extra layer on the sole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

In this section, the reader will find all the locations / people who helped in preparing this small document. It is my intention that this document is only a starting point and that it might interest some in participating at events fighting for the other side (if you are British).

At this point, I would like to thank both Thomas Pray and Steven Perkins for the information, help and insight of creating this document.

- Steven Perkins (AKA: Capitaine Etienne A. Perkins dit la Grosse Corne) does the French impression. He is an officer of artillerie and grenadier d'artillerie. He commands a Partisan unit as would have operated from Fort de la Presentation and

the neighboring Native village of Oswegatchie. Steve is quite knowledgeable and has been a wealth of information for the creation of this document.

- Thomas Pray (Ensign, New York Company of Rangers) does several impressions. On the British side, he does the 46th Regiment of Foot (light Infantry) and Rogers Rangers. On the French side, he is the commanding officer of Milice of Ste. Jeans and a group of French Regulars (artillery). From the French side is where Thomas gave me a great deal of information.
- Also thanks to all the following for the information.

The Clothing description is derived from descriptions provided by the following:

- The Donegal Township Riflemen, Inc.
 - Geographic Location: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
 - Web Location: <http://www.donegaltownshpriflemen.org/> (January 2012)
 - Clothing description of the **Milice de la Belle Riviere**
 - Photo of the **Milice de la Belle Riviere**
- Ensign Thomas Pray (New York Company)
 - Geographic Location: Peru, New York
 - Information on the Milice (**Milice St. Jeans**)
- Capitaine Etienne A. Perkins dit la Grosse Corne
 - Geographic Location: Watertown, New York
 - **Compagnie Franche des Guerriers d'Oswegatchie**
 - Information on the Milice and reviewing this document.
- Standards for the **Milice de Nouveau Bordeaux**
 - Web Location: <http://fitzhughwilliams.org/newbord/nbord.html> (January 2012)
 - Description of clothing
- Journal of the **Milice de Sainte Famille** (The Holy Family Militia)
 - Geographic Location: Cahokia, Illinois (Southern Illinois)
 - Web Location: Facebook (January 2012)
 - Description of Milice clothing and equipment by Ray Naughton. Mr. Naughton's descriptions of the clothing form the framework for this document.
- **Habitants Du Theatiki**
 - Geographic Location: Bourbonnais, IL
 - Web Location: <http://69.64.51.43/theatiki/info.php> (January 2012)
 - Clothing description of the Milice.

REFERENCES :

- Book Title: ***The Equipment of the New France militia, 1740-1760***
Author: Delisle, Steve
Publisher: Bel Air, MD : Kebeca Liber Ata Co., 1999
ISBN 0967108500
NOTE: - May be hard to find, out of print.

- Book Title: ***Memoir upon the late war in North America, between the French and English, 1755-60***
Author: Pouchot, Pierre, Brian Dunnigan (Editor), Michael Cardy (Translator)
Publisher: Old Fort Niagara Association, Incorporated
Publication Date: 1994
ISBN-10: 111316204X
ISBN-13: 9780941967143

- Book Title: ***The Fusil de Tulle in New France 1691-1741***
Author: Russel Bouchard
Publisher: Museum Restoration Service
Publication Date: 1998
ISBN-10: 2910761630
ISBN-13: 978-2910761639

- Book Title: ***The French Trade Gun in North America 1662-1759***
Author: Kevin Gladysz
Publisher: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, Inc.
Publication Date: February 23, 2011
ISBN-10: 1931464472
ISBN-13: 978-1931464475

- Books written by :Bob Bearor
Publisher: Heritage Books, Bowie Maryland
 - Book Title: ***Battle on Snowshoes***
Publication Date: 1997
ISBN 0-7884-0619-1
 - Clothing description of the Milice, pgs 21 -23

 - Book Title: ***Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters & Leaders of New France, 1660-1760, Volume One***
Publication Date: May 1, 2002
ISBN-10: 0788420682
ISBN-13: 978-0788420689

Description: Volume one tells the stories of two great partisans, Jaques LeMoyne de Ste. Helene and Charles –Michel de Langlade. Ste. Helen led the grueling winter attack on Schenectady and battled brilliantly in the siege and battle of Quebec in 1690. The 9 other

LeMoyne brothers, who some of the greatest leaders in New France's history, are also discussed in the St. Helene chapter.

- Book Title: **Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters & Leaders of New France, 1660-1760, Volume Two**
Publication Date: March 1, 2003
ISBN-10: 0788423487
ISBN-13: 978-0788423482

Description: Volume Two covers Daniel Greysolon DuLuth, Madeleine Vercheres, St. Luc de la Corne, Daniel Beaujeu and Jean-Daniel Dumas, with a brief chapter on native foods for wilderness survival.

- Book Title: **Leading by Example: Partisan Fighters & Leaders of New France, 1660-1760, Volume Three**
Publication Date: 2004
ISBN-10: 0788425145
ISBN-13: 978-0788425141

Description: In this Bob Bearor's third and final book in the 'Leading by Example' trilogy we learn of the exploits of Nicolas D'Allieboust de Manthet, Joseph-Francois Hertel de La Fresniere, the partisan named Wolff (not to be confused with General Wolff, British), Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Lery, Joseph Marin de La Malue and last but not least Jean-Baptiste Levreault de Lngis de Montegron (Langy). This volume has several Native Americans that were outstanding. This series of books is a good starting point for one to learn about the New France.

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Revision:	Date	Author
Original Issue	25 January 2012	Jerry Knitis, Capt. Lt. New York Company of Rangers (Jaeger's Battalion)