

Justification for Our Cap-Hats and the Front Visors



Many of you recognize that our design of cap-hat was quite speculative and based on two sources unrelated to Burgoyne's and St. Leger's expeditions. First, was a cap-hat worn by detachments from the Brigade of Guards, which served in the Central and Southern Departments? Second, was an interpretation of a cap-hat worn by the 18th Royal Irish Regiment when they were serving in the Illinois Country just as the Revolution started? Many 'experts' have criticized that interpretation because of the visor or bill on the hat.

Then of course, there's the von Germann drawings of Burgoyne's British Regulars with their weird cap-hat that owes much to the appearance of Roman Legionaries' helmets. All the soldiers in von Germann's drawings wear the exact same, strange pattern of cap-hat, and noteworthy, that pattern does not have a visor or bill. This is the pattern than Don Troiani chose to adopt for his now famous portrayal of a Yorker at the Battle of Oriskany, which he painted for the Oneida Nation about three years ago. This same portrayal now graces the front of Rene Chartrand's new book on Provincial infantry during the Revolution. With this weight of exposure, it wouldn't be hard for us recreated Royal Yorkers to conclude that we've made a big mistake and our pattern of cap-hat is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Well, take heart me maties. A very learned expert, Professor of History, Gregory J.W. Urwin at Temple University, has shared his study of James Hunter's "A View of Ticonderoga from a Point on the North Shore of Lake Champlain" with Brigadier Cameron of the Company of Select Marksmen. Urwin has done a minute analysis of the painting and made a discovery that quite justifies what we've chosen. Here's a quotation from the article which appears in its entirety on the CSM website at: <http://www.csmid.com/files/hunter.html>.

"Behind the officer stand three enlisted Redcoats in uniforms adapted to campaign conditions. Instead of cocked hats, the Redcoats wear caps with black plumes. The caps have front peaks cut in the light-infantry style. The two foremost Redcoats have narrow visors on their caps, but the third one does not."

So, from this description and an examination of the detail from Hunter's painting, you can see that the general style of our cap-hat matches two of those being worn. Of particular note is the presence of visors. I think it's also important to note that the cap of one man had no visor at all. This indicates that not every soldier made exactly the same pattern of cap-hat; whereas the von Germann cap-hats are 'cookie-cutter' the same. Our use of black silk turbans and shock of red horsehair is not borne by this study; however, there is no doubt that coloured horse- or cowhair appeared on the caps of many regiments judging from the outrage

of Quebec farmers over the cutting of tails and manes off their livestock and by the fact that the 29th regiment still had "red manes" on their caps in 1781. And, of course, von Germann showed dyed hair as a crest on all of his cap-hats.

Bottom line - I feel that we're vindicated. That our silk turbans and black horsehair cockades could be an overstatement is without doubt, but by no means were unusual features on various British cap-hats of the period.

I encourage everyone to log onto the CSM website to read all of Urwin's analysis and why he identifies these three soldiers specifically as Marksmen, or as is often preferred, British Rangers. Also, you won't go wrong browsing through the site and reading about coinage during our period and food preparation. Some really great stuff there.

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