

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE FRENCH UNIFORMS DURING THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE # 204

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French uniforms of this period followed two regulations: the 1776-77 and 1779 Ordonnance du Roi. All of the French units at Savannah would have followed the 1776-776 ordonnance (or possibly earlier ones). This would be due to the fact that the French forces that took part in that operation were stationed in the West Indies, and it would have been impossible for them to have received new uniforms.

In 1780 the French force that arrived with the Comte de Rochambeau was dressed and equipped as regulated by the 1779 ordonnance. However, the troops that came with Saint Simon from the West Indies were probably still wearing the previous regulation uniforms. In addition, not all of Rochambeau's force was uniformed following the 1779 ordonnance, in particular a part of the Soissonais Regiment came up from the West Indies to join Rochambeau and were uniformed as mentioned previously.

Because of the different ordonnances involved and combination of personal preference of the regiments, each French regiment should be inspected on it's own research. A perfect example of this is Lauzun's Legion which had it's own ordonnance.

Refer to Page 5 for a list of the French regiments that participated in the American War for Independence.

### HEADGEAR/COIFFURE



Infantry wore a black felt cocked hat, cocked with hooks and eyes. Trimmed with white or black tape (depending upon the regulations). The standard French cockade was white, however specific units wore black instead. The French added a small black cockade on top of the white in deference to the American Alliance. According to some sources, they also added a smaller red cockade for the Alliance with Spain.

Bearskins, although officially abolished by the 1779 regulations, were still worn by some regiments. The bearskins had a



front plate, white cords and a white plume with red top. There was a patch on the back of the bearskin of the facing color of the regiment.

Pokalems were the fatigue hat and worn for fatigue duty and drill.

### **SHIRT/CHEMISE & NECKSTOCK/COL**

All men were issued a white shirt or good material and a black neckstock.



### **WAISTCOAT/VESTS**

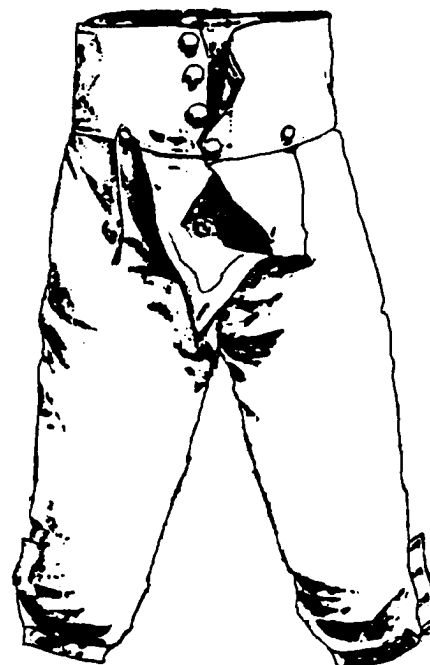
All infantry were issued white sleeved waistcoats, with the underarm left open. The collars and cuffs were of the same color as the regimental facings.

### **BREECHES/CULOTTES**

All infantry wore white breeches with buttons covered with the same material. The waist band of the breeches is wider than those of other armies. There are four large buttons on the front. The rest of the buttons are small, two at each corner of the front flaps and four at each knee.

### **GAITERS/GUETRES**

Each soldier was issued one pair of white toile and one pair of black gaiters. Each gaiter had twenty five buttons. There were one pair of white knee straps for the white gaiters and one pair of black knee straps for the black gaiters.



### **SHOES/SOULIERS**

All infantry were issued two pair of black leather shoes and one pair of buckles.

## REGIMENTAL COAT/HABIT

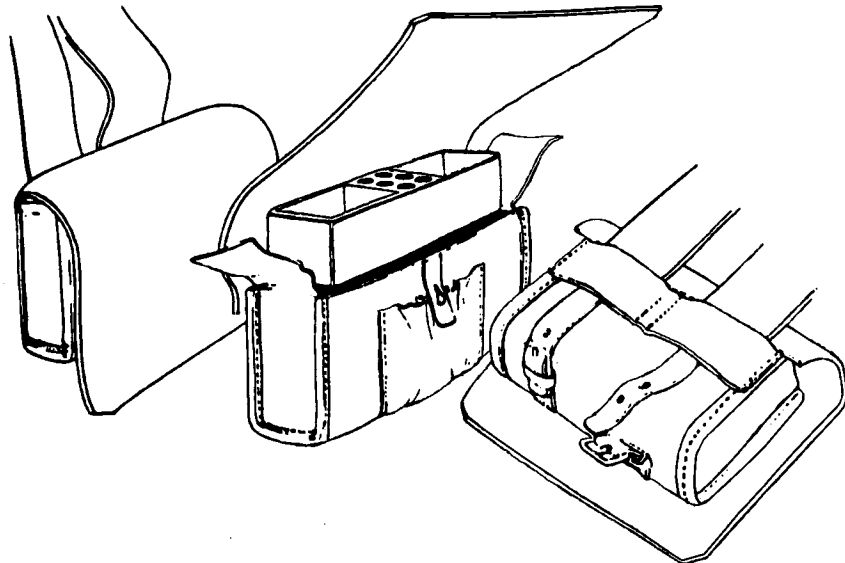
The French Infantry coat was of white wool for French Regiments, red wool for Swiss and Irish Regiments, and blue wool for German, Italian and Corsican Regiments. The coats were lined with white toile. The facing colors of the coats differed per regiment. Stand up collars varied in color according to regiment and were not always the facing color. The epaulettes for the grenadiers were of red wool lined with white; the chassuers had green. On the turnbacks the fusiliers wore the Fleur-de-lis, the Grenadiers a grenade and the Chassuers a hunting horn.

*(Missing)*

## ARMS & ACCOUTREMENTS/ARMES & EQUIPMENT

### CARTRIDGE BOX/GIBERNE

The cartridge box in use by the French of this period was the 1775 Pattern.



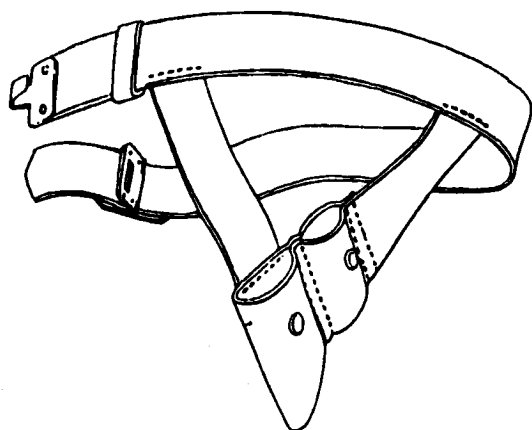
### SWORD/SABRE

All infantry and musicians were armed with the French Infantry saber. Scabbard of black leather and brass fittings and black leather sword know.

### MUSKET/FUSIL & BAYONET/BAIONETTE

Most of the French Infantry would probably have been issued the 1777 Pattern Charleville musket.

## SHOULDER BELT/BANDOULIERE or WAIST BELT/CEINTURON



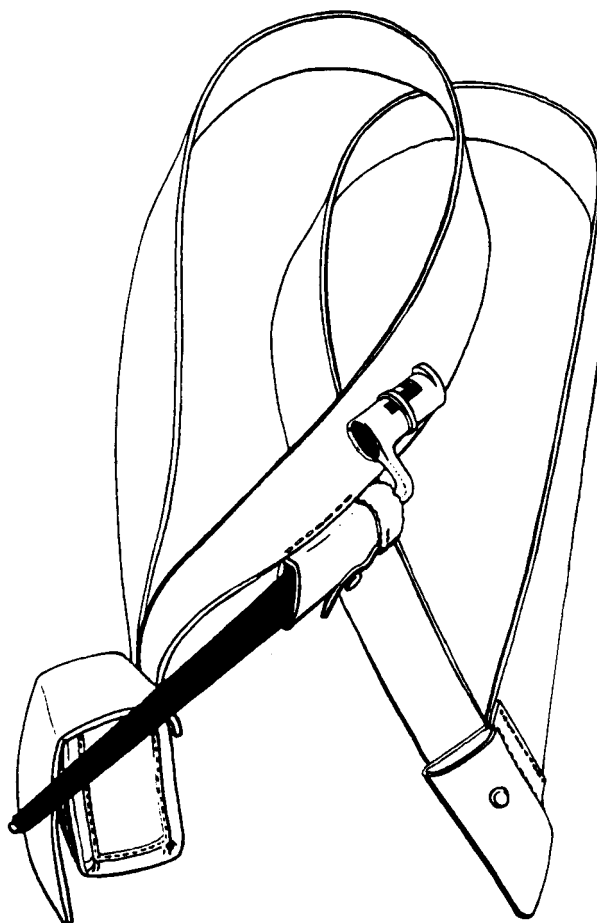
In the 1767 Infantry Uniform Regulations the waist belt was abolished. For fusiliers the bayonet was suspended from the cartridge box shoulder strap. For Grenadiers and Chassuers the bayonet as well as the short saber were carried on a shoulder belt over the right shoulder. There were a few regiments and corps which were issued waist belts, Lauzun's Legion was among them.

## CANTEEN/BIDON

The canteen of the French infantry consisted of a Chinese Gourd. It has a hole drilled in the top with a stopper in it and was suspended from the shoulder by a cord.

## SOURCES

- Ordonnance du Roi, 2 February 1779
- Ordonnance du Roi, 5 March 1780  
(Lauzun's)
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- Era of the American Revolution, Company  
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- The Wilde Geese: Irish Brigades, Mark  
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- Equipement Militaires 1750 a 1780, Michel  
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- Soidat du Roi, Marcel Dugue MacCarthy
- Les Regiment Coloniaux, Rene Chartrand &  
Michel Petard



## **LIST OF FRENCH REGIMENTS IN THE WAR**

### **D'ESTAING'S FORCES:**

Regiment

Armagnac  
Auxerrois  
Belzunce Dragoons  
Champagne  
Dillon  
DuCap (Naval)  
Foix  
Fontanges  
Gatinais  
Guadeloupe  
Hainault  
La Martinique  
Port-au-Prince  
Viennois  
Walsh (partial)

### **ROCHAMBEAU'S FORCES:**

Regiment

Auxonne  
Bourbonnais  
Lauzun's Legion  
Metz  
Royal Deux-Ponts  
Saintogne  
Soissonais

### **SAINT-SIMON'S FORCES:**

Regiment

Agenois  
Gatinais  
Touraine

### **TROOPS AT GLOUCESTER (SERVING AS MARINES):**

Regiment

Picardie  
Foix  
Beaujolais  
Angoumois