

GAITER PREVALENCE AND CONFIGURATION, **ca. 1768-83 #211** by S. Rayner & W. Burke

Being the Utilization of Gaiters, of Half-Gaiters and of Spatterdashes by the Various Battalions of His Majesty' s Guards and Marching Regiments of Foot.

"GAITERS: The whole to have black linen gaiters with black buttons, and small stiff tops, black garters, and uniform buckles. " ¹

The longer soldiers soldier, the more soldiers soldier the same.

Since the advancement from the fig leaf, higher headquarters dictate; lower headquarters elaborate This was true in the 18th century army, as it is true of the military today.

In 1768, George III mandated a regulation which, among other requirements, dictated the wear of black gaiters with small stiff tops 'but no one got any more specific. Many articles of uniform were then "adopted and sealed" — obviously not the case with the gaiters. The evidence points at two paramount facts — all units complied with the regulations, or caught hell for not doing so,² and uniformity was maintained within the given regiment.³

Concomitant with the requirement for black gaiters, light dragoons were directed to have black half-gaiters. Sometime within the next several months (no record has been located to our knowledge), a regulation authorizing "spatterdashes or half-gaiters" for Marching Regiments was published; the 55th Regiment of Foot, inspected on June 1, 1769, was wearing "black spatterdashes according to order." The 57th Foot was reported equipped with spatterdashes on June 1 1769; but nearly six years later, this unit stood inspection in full gaiters (at Dublin, on 15 May, 1775).⁴

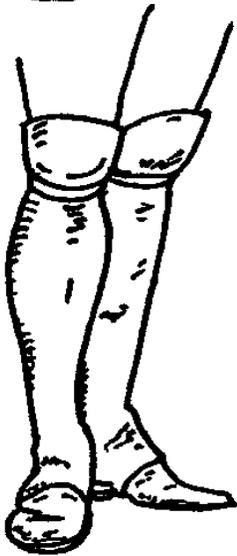
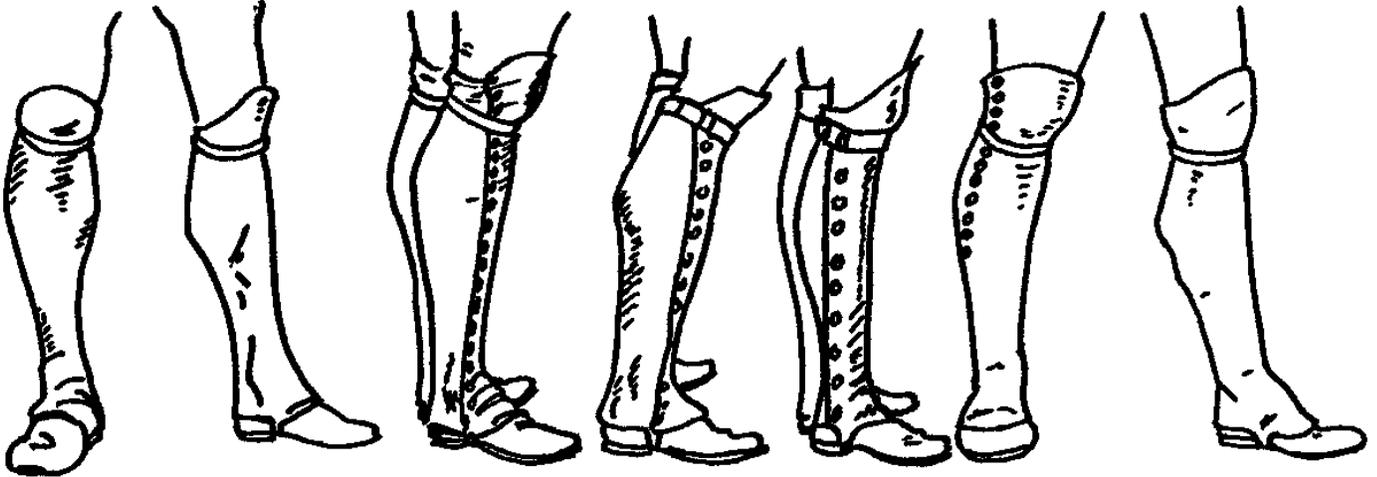
In that same year (1775) the 17th Foot stood inspection in spatterdashes. However other units were reported in some form of black linen gaiters.⁵ In 1776, Thomas Simes wrote that each soldier should be furnished "...one pair of black long gaiters, with black tops for ditto ... (and) one pair of half spatterdashes..." ⁶

It becomes obvious then, that some, if not all, marching regiments were equipped with both a form of full gaiter and of a half gaiter. Of twenty-eight regimental inspections conducted between 1769 and the war' s conclusion (the 42d Battalion excluded), and as recorded in Lefferts, the following datum is provided: ⁷

"Gaiters per regulation (no description)	2
Black gaiters	10
Gaiters with-black garters	3
Gaiters with black garters and leather tops.	1
Black gaiters with stiff tops. White garters	1
Spatterdashes	3
Inspection reports without mention reference gaiters	7"

*This inspection was conducted 16 July, 1769; the garters being issued just prior to the 1768 regulation.

A series of pencil and ink-and-pencil drawings were executed at "Warley Camp," ca. 1778. These include figures from various units, including line and militia regiments. Six of these figures wear the full gaiter; three show back and side or side views, and three show front views. No one unit shows a gaiter identical to any other.⁸



Bennett Cuthbertson makes some cogent comments about the configuration and employment of gaiters.⁹

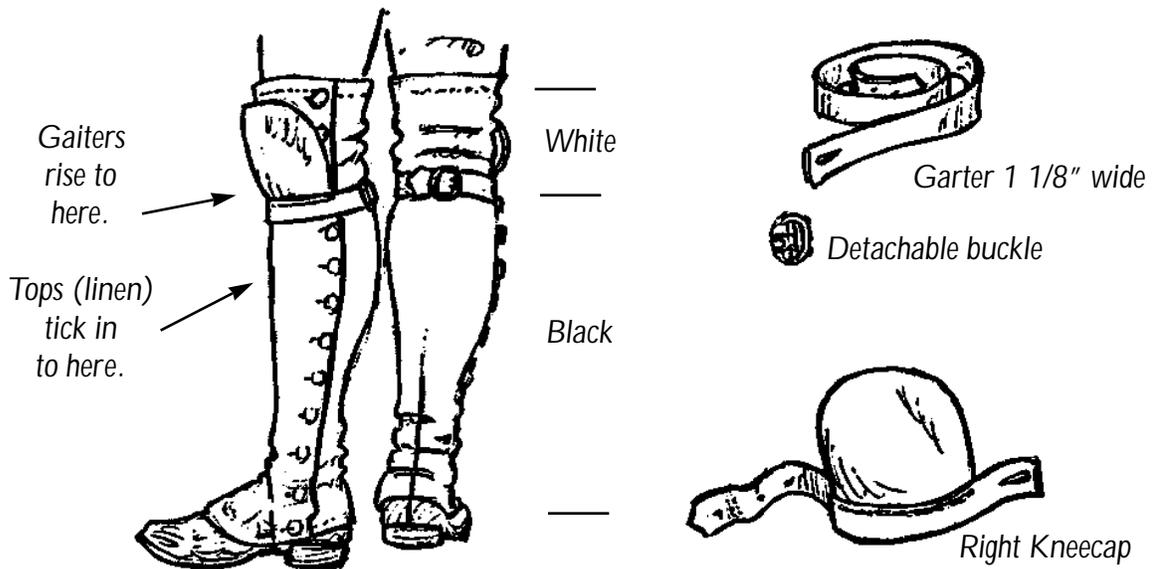
Chapter XII, Sec XXXIX, p. 60-61.: Gaiters were designed to prevent dirt and gravel from getting into the shoes. To answer this purpose, the gaiters must be shaped to the leg without wrinkles and they must come down low on the quarters of the shoe; the tongues large enough to cover the buckle — without rising at every motion of the foot.

Stout gray linen makes the best gaiters for blackening. They do not require being made longer than to meet the kneeband of the breeches, as a leather top- like those of the Huzzar-boots is added to them — which buckles above the calve, entirely covers the knee pan, defends it when kneeling in the firings, and is an addition to the good appearance of the leg: small horn or metal buttons without shanks are best as they contribute to the fit of the gaiter. There should be a double leather strap to pass under the shoe; the gaiter buttons should be set on as "thick" as possible.

Chapter XII, Sec XLI: White tops, like those of the cavalry, preserve the breeches from being soiled. They must button tight upon the knee; rise 4" above the leather tops — and sink 2" below the top of the gaiters, so as to cover the stockings.

Cuthbertson's observations were not universally adopted, as we have already seen. Still, his works are the most specific suggestions surviving from the period.

Interpretation of Cuthbertson:



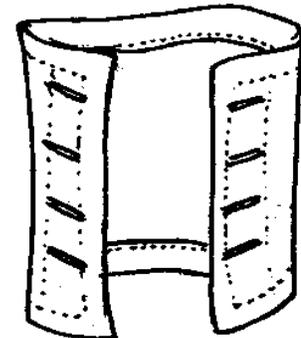
Appropriate buckle is available from: Loren W. Lillis, 60 Kullen Ave, Schenectady, N.Y. 12304 (518) 374-7200 or 869-2330. Number 9 buckle, brass or bronze. App \$4.50 ea.

Garters are made from 5 oz. Tooling Cowhide, tops from 6 to 8 oz. dyed black, polished as shoes are.

White linen tops of strong linen, bleached.

Yet another means of obtaining "small stiff tops" was achieved by painting the gaiter — full, half or spatterdashes.¹⁰ This method had some advantages in that the tendency of material to stretch was negated and the paint acted as a stiffener and a water-proofing agent. It is possible that some units wore full gaiters, painted, cut-off at the kneeband of the breeches, and supplemented with a black leather knee-guard? The recipe to paint canvas: mix equal parts of paint, linseed oil and japan dryer.

Linen Top buttons to breeches leg.



Extends 2" under gaiters

FOOTNOTES

1. Royal Warrant.
2. *Fit for Service*.
3. Royal Warrant.
4. *Inspection Returns*, Sumner; Leffert, p. 196-201.
5. Ibid.
6. Simes, *Military Guide*, Sec. I, p. 300.
7. Leffert, p. 196-201.
8. Warely Camp Drawing, 1778.
9. Cuthbertson, p. 60-61
10. *Journal of Continental Congress*, Ford, ed., V, 1945; Leffert, p.16; Providence Gazette, Jan. 30 and Feb. 6, 1779; Connecticut Gazette, Feb. 19, 1779,

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