Spatterdashes, or Half Gaiters - #214

Adapted from Making a Continental Marine Uniform, US Marine Corps, Washington, DC, 1975, pp. 67-76.

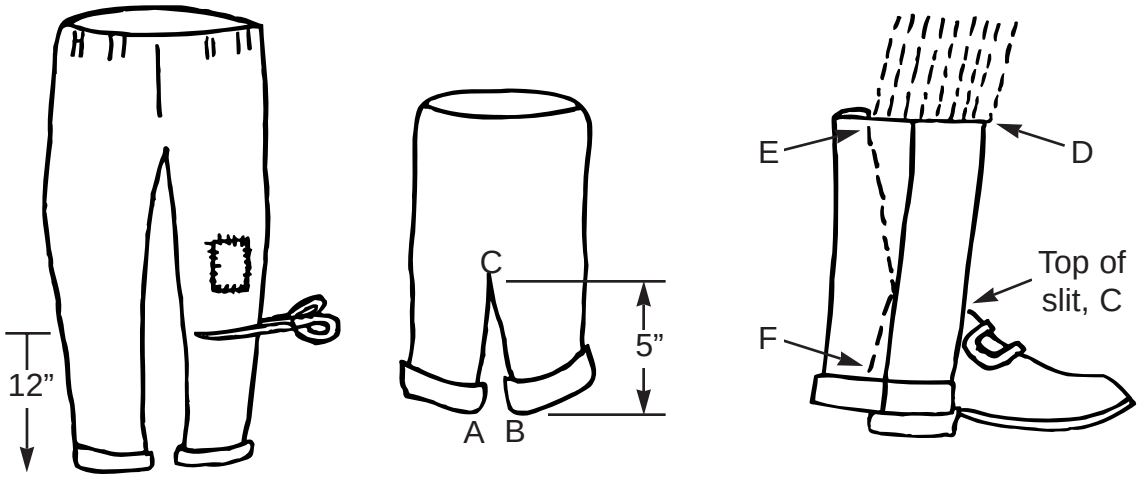
Gaiters are supposed to fit tightly and consequently must be tailored. Back of spatterdashes is about 11" from bottom edge to point. Front is 2" lower.

Bill of Materials

2 yards of medium weight linen or cotton canvas
14 black horn buttons, 5/8" in diameter, for British
2 strips 8-10 oz leather, 1" wide by approx. 8" long, dyed black
Black acrylic high-gloss latex paint or period waterproofing (see Step 10)

Making the Pattern

First, take a pair of old trousers and cut off one foot or so from the leg. Cut a slit up the center of the front panel as far as the spot where the wearer's shin bone starts to straighten out. Put on the socks and/or stockings plus the shoes it is planned to wear with the uniform. Slip the pants leg on over these and position the slit over the instep.

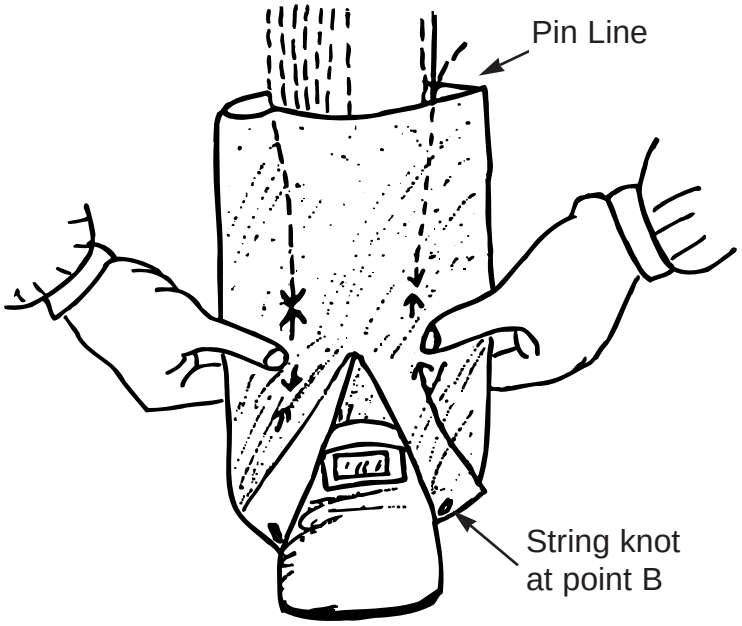


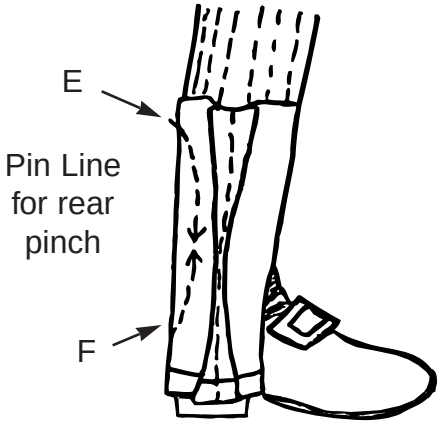
Take care to note that the profile of the shin is not straight up and down. If the top of the slit in the front of the pants leg is too low, say around the joint between shin and instep, the gaiter material must bridge the curve of the shin from points 'C' to 'D'. Wrinkles will form in the shin area unless point 'C' is cut high enough to allow the material to lie flat against the shin from 'C' to 'D'.

The bottom of the pants leg must line up with the top of the heel. If it is allowed to creep any higher the final result will be that shrinkage due to wettings and tightenings during construction will cause the rear of the gaiter to catch on the top edge of the shoe at the heel when walking.

Secure points 'A' and 'B' in proper position by sewing a piece of stout string from one corner to the other, passing under the instep. This will help when working on seams.

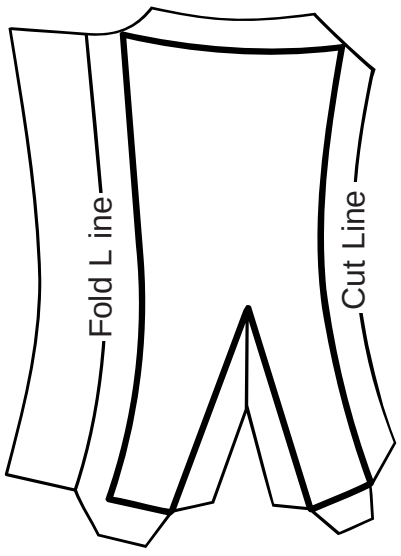
Grasp the seams of the pants leg with both hands at the same time. Pinch up the material until a tight fit is obtained at that point. Secure this fit with pins above and below the thumbs and fingers. This first pinching should be at the thinnest part of the ankle. Take up and pin a pinch at the Achilles tendon to get rid of wrinkles caused by the material bridging the curve of the leg between the calf (point 'E') and heel (point 'F').



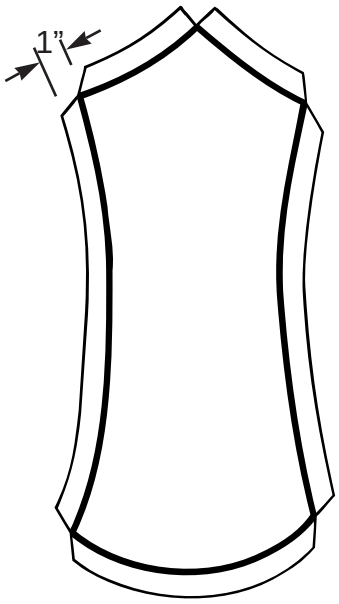


Continue pinching and pinning until a snug fit is established along entire inseam and outseam. At the same time, pinch and pin slack between points 'E' and 'F'.

Mark a line from pin to pin on both sides of all three pinched up areas. Use white tailor's chalk or a thin piece of hard soap on dark pants leg, or ball point pen on light colored material. Pull out pins, slip off the pants leg and cut along lines to make a front and rear pattern. Glue each pattern piece in the center of an 18" by 12" piece of heavy paper, cardstock or cardboard. Make sure material lies flat and straight on each card. Draw a line on the card all around the fabric pattern ONE INCH from the edge. From OUTSIDE EDGE of the FRONT PANEL draw a second line 2%" away. Cut new, full-size patterns from cards including a long tear-drop shaped cutout where material was pinched up at Achilles tendon. Clip corners as shown to prevent bulky overlaps when edges are hemmed.



Right Front



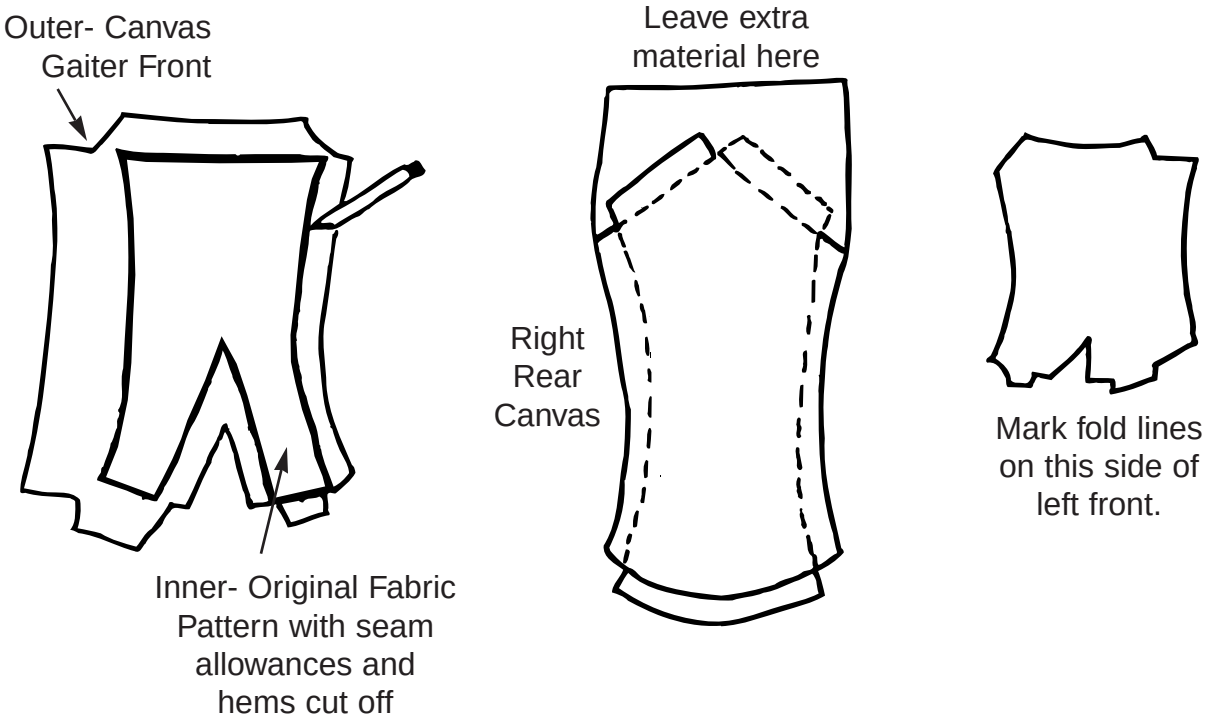
Rear

Lay patterns on canvas as close together and near the edge as possible so a minimum of waste will result. Position the patterns i lengthwise on the canvas so that they correspond to the direction of the strength-of-the-material, in other words, the longest threads in the fabric part of the pattern lie in the same direction as the longest (warp) threads.

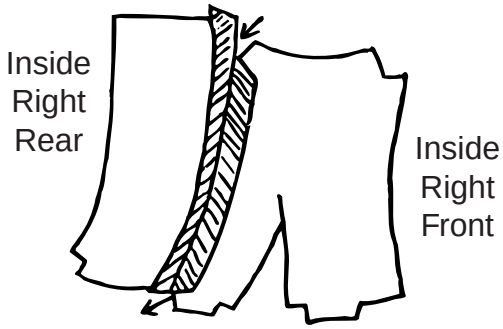
Sequence of Cutting and Sewing Operations

Step 1. **Making the pattern**. Mark around patterns with ball point pen orequiraiment marker to produce two (2) fronts and two (2) rear pieces. Cut all four pieces out and scribe fold lines on right side of both sets of panels.

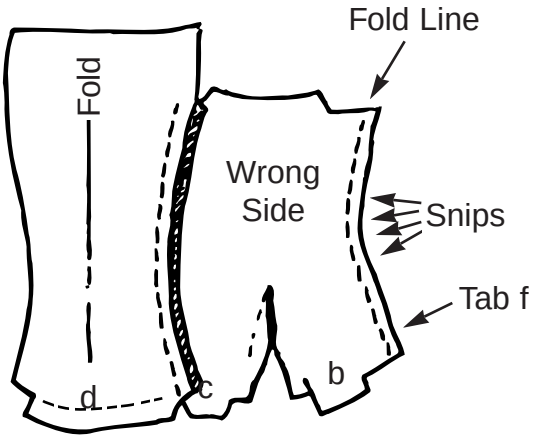
Cut off the paper tabs from the full size patterns. Follow the edge of the original fabric pattern to produce a pattern for laying out the fold lines on the gaiter parts. Save these fold line patterns with the full size patterns.

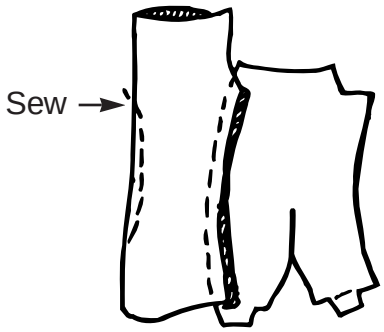


Step 2. Sewing the halves. Pin front and rear panel of right gaiter along fold lines on inseams and sew. Use backstitch or reinforced stitch for strength.

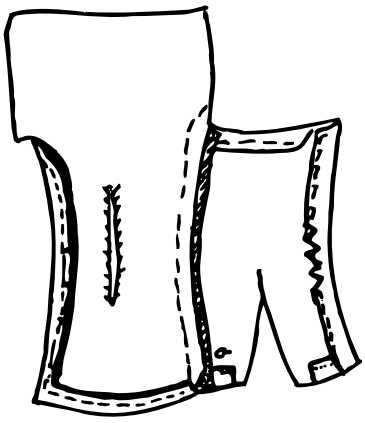


Step 3. Locate fabric-faced pattern in true position on WRONG side (inside) of rear panel and mark teardrop shaped Achilles tendon pinch outline with pen or pencil. Fold this outline on center long ways and sew together.

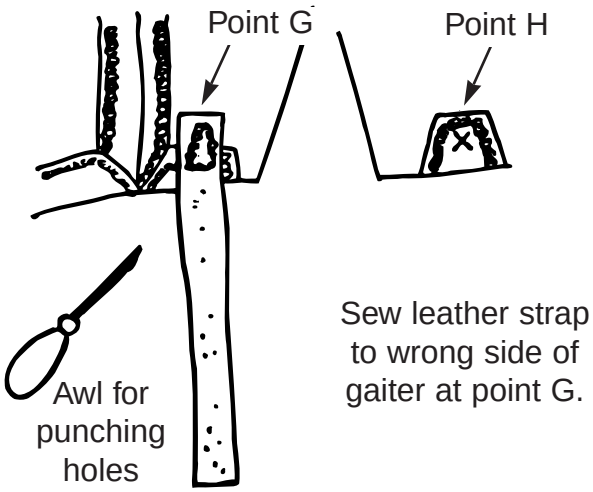




Step 4. Turning the hems. Turn hem tabs; a, b, c, d, and e. Sew down flat. Fold button hole tab (f) in half, lengthwise, and snip the edge in about three or four places at the curve in the edge. Each snip should be about 7/8" in depth. These snips allow folding this tab perfectly flat for sewing.

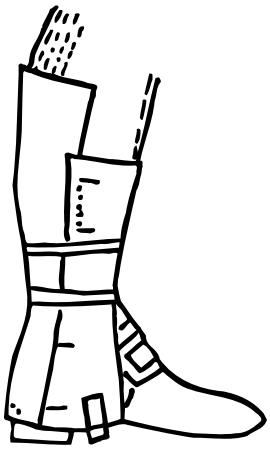


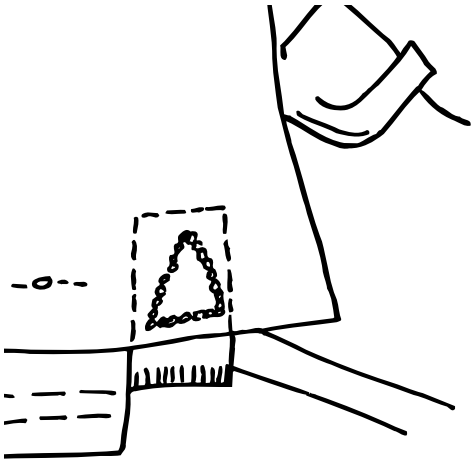
Sew tabs down



Sew leather strap to wrong side of gaiter at point G.

Step 5. Fitting the strap. Put the gaiter on the proper leg and secure it in correct position with heavy rubber bands or string. Bring strap down to point 'G' under the instep. Insert free end of strap under gaiter at point 'H'. Pull strap rather snugly into position but not so tightly that the gaiter is drawn out of shape or placement. Mark the leather where it meets the canvas and remove gaiter from leg. Lay leather strap on top of the canvas and stab a triangular pattern of holes through the leather and the canvas. It often helps to soak the area of leather with water before punching. Replace strap inside gaiter and line up punched holes. Sew securely with waxed linen thread as before.



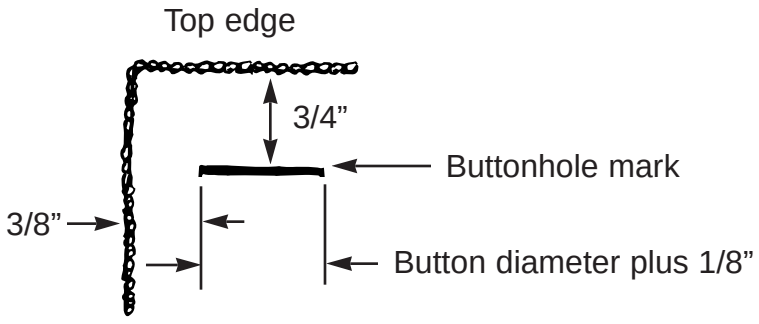


Dotted line shows position of strap under point H

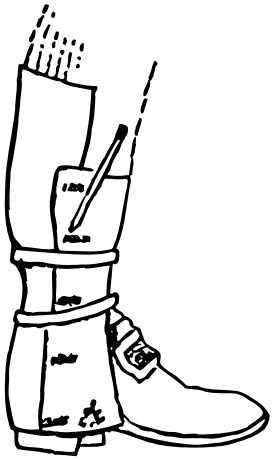
Step 6. Making the button holes. Note: Experts seem to indicate that between five and seven buttons were used on each gaiter. One might expect such variations during the Revolutionary War when lack of communication, standardization, and supply prevented uniformity to a marked degree.

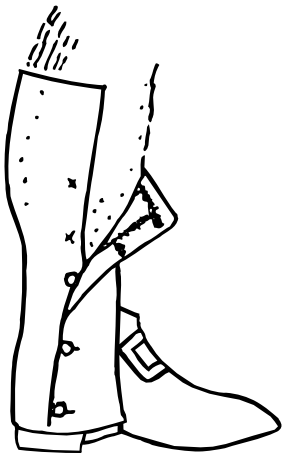
The topmost buttonhole is located 3/4" below the upper edge of the gaiter. The lowest buttonhole is 3/4" above the lower edge of the gaiter. The remaining three to five buttonholes are equally spaced in between. For more on sewing buttonholes, see Suggested Method for Making Worked Button Holes at the end of this paper.

Mark the location of each buttonhole with a slit line about 1/8" longer than the diameter of the button to be used. Buttons usually ranged from 9/16" to 1/2" in diameter. Buttonholes end about 3/8" from the edge of the panel. Bind the buttonholes.

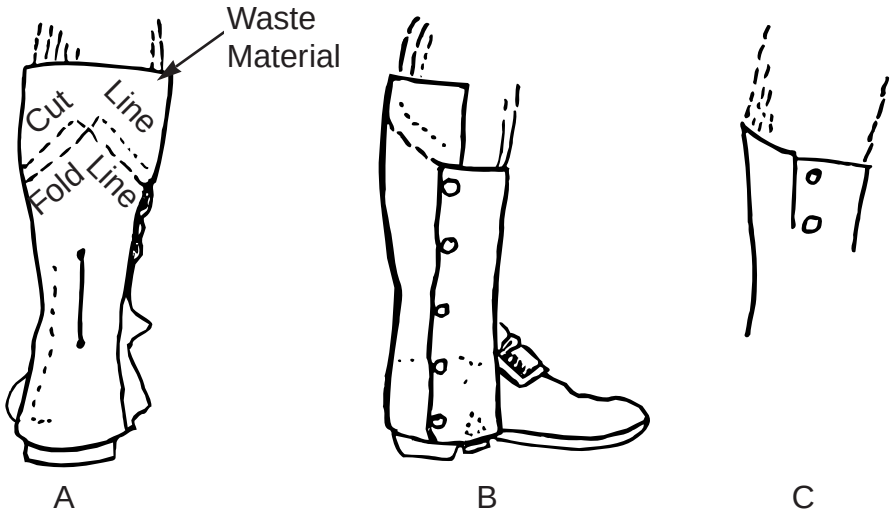


Step 7. Sewing on the Buttons. Put on the gaiter again and fit it to the leg as it should be worn when finished. Secure the leg of the gaiter with strong rubber bands, as before in Step 5. Insert point of pen or pencil through each button hole at the rear end of the slot and mark a button location point on the canvas beneath. Remove gaiter and sew a button to each mark. Use strong waxed linen thread to bind each button.





Step 8. Finishing top of rear panel. Mark a point on the top of the rear panel about 11" from the bottom of the gaiter. This mark must be made at dead center or the middle of the lower end of the calf. Note: Men with extra long or short legs may adjust the 11" dimension to maintain a reasonable appearance in their gaiters. Any change in the rear height requires an alteration in the front dimension. The difference in these two heights is 2". Connect this rear point with two top corners of the front panel using a gently curving line.



Sketch A - Rear view of right gaiter showing point 'X' at mid point, 11" from bottom of gaiter with fold line drawn in and a cutting line 1/2" to 1" away. Note 'V' shaped cutout at 'X' to eliminate bulky overlap when raw edges are turned under and sewn flat.

Sketch B - Side view of same.

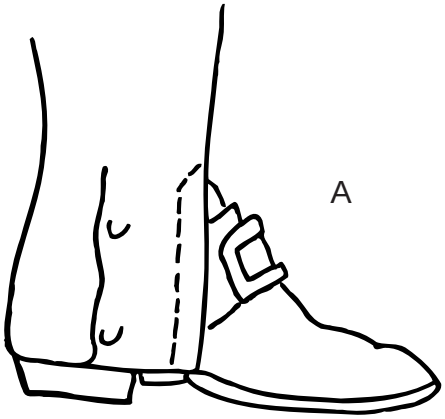
Sketch C - Side appearance of gaiter when Step 8 is complete.

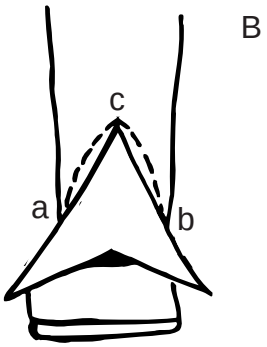
Step 9. Making the Gaiter tongue. Turn under seam allowance from 'a' to 'c' and from 'b' to 'c.' Pin or baste flat so folded edge is straight up and down.

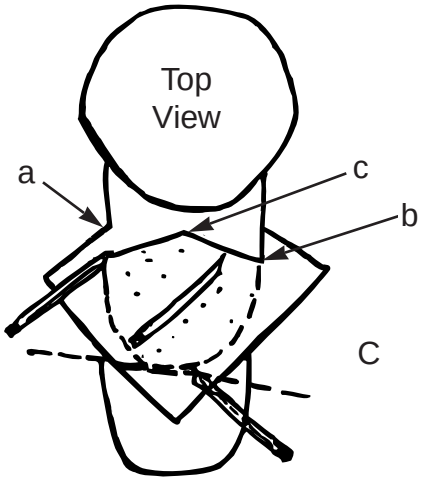
Insert a 6" x 6" canvas square under edges from 'a' to 'c' to 'b' with one corner of square located at 'c.' Continue to tuck edges of square under gaiter until remainder of canvas lies flat against the shoe, covering the buckle.

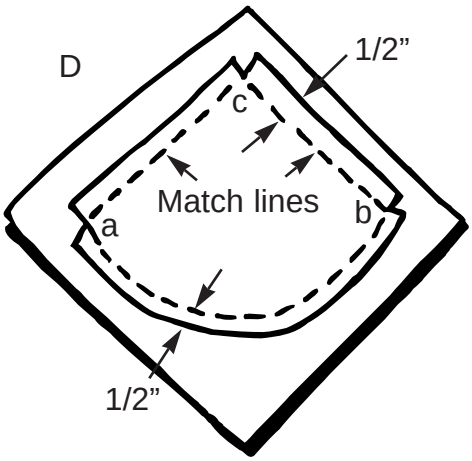
Mark a match line using sides 'a-c' and 'b-c' as guide. Mark a point on the tongue where the foot bends when walking. Mark corners on tongue where they match 'a' and 'b.'

Remove canvas and mark a curved, symmetrical line from 'a' through the toe bend point to 'b.' Mark 1/2" seam allowance all around and clip all three corners. Tongue must cover laces or buckle on shoe. Cut out tongue, turn curved edge under and sew flat.

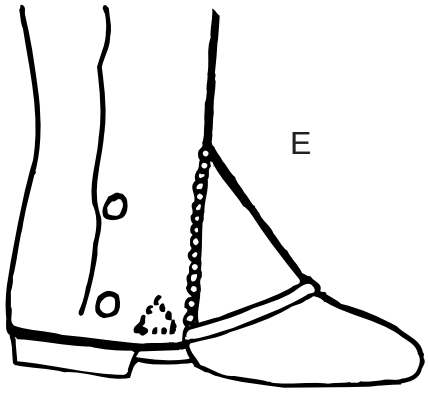








Remove gaiter and match lines a-c and b-c on tongue with edges a-c and b-c on gaiter. Sew together.



Step 10. Treating the Gaiter. Once the tongue is secured in place, paint the entire gaiter with black acrylic paint. Use two light coats. Do not paint leather strap or buttons. Make sure to paint all visible folded edges and inside button hole edge as far in as the button holes go.

OR

Dye the canvas gaiters with the same leather dye as the straps. Allow to dye thouroughly. Using a double boiler for safety, mix together equal parts of neets foot oil, tallow, and beeswax. Dip the entire gaiters into the mixture, allowing complete penetration. Remove them with tongs and allow to cool only to the point where they can be handled, then put them on your feet like you are wearing them normally and allow to finish cooling. They will fit better, and be quite weather resistant. Buff the outside for a natural shine. Skip Step 11.

Step 11. Shrinking the Gaiter. Dampen the gaiter thoroughly from the inside and wear it until dry. The same results can be obtained by wearing the gaiters all day during rainy weather or marching through dewy grass. When the gaiters are dry they will have shrunk to form an even better fit than that which was obtained by careful tailoring.

Care of Gaiters

Paint leather straps with neatsfoot oil from time to time Lexol is also good for preserving leather. Polish buttons with 00 grade steel wool, or equivalent (if pewter). Repaint gaiters as required. Frayed edges must be reinforced by sewing, using a blanket binding stitch, or equivalent.

Suggested Method for Making Worked Button Holes

A thread button hole is also called a worked button hole. In 18th Century sewing, a hand worked button hole is a must; and when properly done, the button hole is a great source of satisfaction and will last longer than a machine button hole.

1. Mark each button hole with pencil.
2. Using #40 or #50 mercerized cotton thread, baste around each button hole, before you cut.
3. After you have marked the button hole, basted around the place to be cut, and made the cut, your next step is to overcast the cut edges so they will not ravel. Overcasting also provides “body” for your button hole stitch.
4. The needle is inserted under the edge of the button hole to whatever depth seems desirable and the thread brought under the point of the needle a-s shown.
5. Button hole stitches are taken close together, so that you cannot see the fabric showing between the stitches, but they do not overlap. The depth, or bit, of the stitches is determined by the size of the button hole and the type of fabric used. Naturally, a large button hole on a heavy fabric will have stitches which go deeper into the material than those in a tiny button hole on a lightweight fabric.