

Purpose

“The purpose of inspection is to support the mission statement of the NWTa by maintaining participants' accountability to an educational presentation of history” (NWTa Operations Manual, #02-03).

To explain more thoroughly, the NWTa makes a promise to sponsors, to the public, and to you, the membership, that we will “present, as accurately as possible, a realistic portrait of military and civilian life during The American Revolution” (NWTa Mission Statement). In order to uphold this promise, we inspect our membership on a regular basis. The NWTa is committed to education and, as such, to research. Each unit and individual is inspected **against their own research** as a form of accountability to our mission.

What Happens During Inspection?

The goal of the inspection process is not for an inspector to tell members what clothing is “right” and what is “wrong.” Instead, it’s a chance to have someone else check your documentation and provide feedback as to whether the pieces you wear are adequately supported by documentation. Your unit’s GIRF (General Impression Reference Form) and your IIF (Individual Inspection Form) are to provide an inspector with sufficient information to evaluate your research and the reproduction clothing and accoutrements it supports.

The method of evaluation is a comparison between your garment/accoutrement and the research you present to support the item. You might think of this as “reconciliation”—your garment/accoutrement must sufficiently match your documentation to pass inspection.

What does this look like? Basically, the inspector will look at your item, look at the documentation you provide, and assess whether your item matches/is supported by your documentation. Our Operations Manual regulations state that any discrepancy not visible/noticeable at ten feet is NOT subject to this assessment. What does this mean in practice? Let’s say you’re having a floral print gown inspected. Your inspector will note if, for example, your gown is cut substantively differently than the extant you provided as documentation, if there are obvious machine-sewn sections or modern construction, or if the print is of a drastically different type (such as a blue background on your gown when your documentation is white, or marked differences in the flowers). Your inspector will NOT, however, note minute details of hem finishing, hand-sewing vs unobtrusive machine-sewing, or print details too small to be seen except up close.

What Forms Do I Use?

General Impression Reference Form

Each unit is required to complete a GIRF. If this is your unit’s first inspection, please use the form on the NWTa website. If you have been inspected previously using earlier forms, you are free to continue to use them. Please remember, however, that each item is being inspected, regardless of whether the item passed or failed a previous inspection.

Please make sure your source use is clearly notated throughout the document. You may list your sources on the last page of the GIRF, use footnotes, or include them under each individual numbered paragraph.

If your unit has been inspected previously, double check to make sure that your unit's impression still conforms to your unit's GIRF. If it does not (because of subsequent research or changes in the unit's impression), please make sure that your GIRF reflects those changes and resubmit it prior to inspection (ideally, two weeks or more so that your inspector may become familiar with it). Your unit will be inspected against the GIRF that your unit has on file. Therefore, it is advisable to make sure the GIRF is complete and current.

You may either write in the boxes of a printed version of the form, or you may type directly into the computer form.

Your GIRF must be submitted digitally to the IG to be kept on file and made available to the inspector during the inspection.

The Individual Inspection Form

All individuals aged fourteen and up, whether military, militia, civilians with the army or civilians independent of the army, must have an IIF including a biography. If this is your first inspection, please use the form provided on the NWTa website. If you have been previously inspected using the earlier forms, you may continue to use them if you wish. However, as with the GIRF, each item is being inspected, regardless of whether the item passed or failed previous inspections. Therefore, it is advisable to revisit your work prior to each inspection.

List **all** items in your kit on the IIF. You may use the unit's GIRF as your reference for any standardized clothing or gear. If your unit wishes to include civilian items in this document, you may, but **items must match completely** to reference the GIRF. For example, if all soldiers in your unit wear the same shirt and the shirt is adequately documented in the GIRF, you may list the GIRF as your source. If you have any additional or personal items, such as pipes, knives, musket tools, etc., you must list them separately on the IIF.

Your Biography

New forms have a biography section. If you are using an old form that does not include a section in the form, please attach your biography to your form. Your biography is necessary for your inspector to evaluate the sources used for your documentation. The goal of the biography is to help your inspector understand your impression, and should be compatible with your unit's history and your role in your unit.

Civilians portraying followers or others associated with military units should consider their reasons for being with the unit as part of their biography. Consult your unit history when creating your impression. Ideally, your biography should be documented or should reference documented sections of the GIRF.

You may wish to include: (1) your place and date of birth, (2) your residence and occupation prior to the war (and, if applicable, your spouse's), (3) class or social status, (4) nationality, ethnicity, or other identifiers, and (5) length of time and occupation with your unit. Length is entirely up to you – take as much space as you need to fulfill the goals of the biography.

How Do I Document My Items?

Documenting your Items

Use the form to describe and document your clothing and accoutrements. All clothing and accessories that you regularly wear should be included (including hats, jewelry, canes, and other personal effects), along with all personal items and display items (any items you use in demonstrations with the public, such as a sewing kit, medical equipment, horse tack, or other items crucial to your impression).

List each item (unless two or more are exactly identical) separately on the form. Remember to document both the material and the construction of items. **Fabric patterns, such as printed florals, must be documented in addition to the garment's construction.**

Sources

Use the “sources” space for your documentation. Preferably, all documentation should be based on a primary source. Secondary sources may be used, but should be well-cited research materials utilizing primary sources. A primary source “trumps” a secondary one, and you will be encouraged to find primary source documentation for any items documented with secondary sources. Primary sources can include extant garments, original paintings, cartoons, or other drawings created during (not after) the period you are portraying, and written descriptions such as in diaries or runaway ads. Primary sources may be found within secondary sources! A reprinted runaway ad on a website or image of an extant garment in a book, for example, is a primary source.

Make sure that your documentation provides a complete explanation for your item. For example, you may have one source that describes a person of your status/location wearing that item, another source that describes the item's construction, and a third that describes the fabric or material of which the item is made. Your item does not need to be a reproduction of ONLY one item.

How Do I Cite My Sources?

Using any standard citation method (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual) will yield a complete citation (and are easy to access on websites like easybib.com)—but you do not need to adhere to any academic method. Essentially, the point of citation is to clearly name your source in a way that shows where another person could find it. If a primary source such as a painting is reproduced in a book or article, you need to show both the original source (the painting) and its location (the

book or article) in your citation. Both the original source and its location must be shown in order to allow your peers access to this information. Showing only the book your extant garment is shown in is not sufficient as it shows only the location; stating only the original runaway ad is not sufficient as another person could not reasonably track this down without the book or URL the ad was reproduced in. For instance:

Original Author. "Title of work or description of garment" in Book, author (City, State of publishing co: Publishing Company) Year published, page number/s.

Artist. *Painting*, Year Created. Reproduced on Name of Website: URL

What about camp gear, canvas, furniture and dishes?

The IG department inspection DOES NOT INCLUDE camp gear. Inspections of camp gear and canvas are at the discretion of the Quartermaster General. These items do not need to appear on the GIRF or IIF; however, you may include them and are encouraged to archive your documentation in this or another easy-to-access manner.

Even though camp inspections are not part of the IG inspection process, camp items should be documented in the same manner as clothing and personal items—each piece should reflect your impression to the best of your ability, based upon primary source material. Camp items that do not meet these requirements should not be used at all, or may, per NWTa policy, be utilized after hours at most events.

Please note, due to our organization's encampment policy, if your unit is not encamped during your period of portrayal and therefore does not have documented encampment equipment, you will not be restricted from using such items provided they are documented for the period. For example, if historically your unit was garrisoned during your period of portrayal and did not use tents, the tents you use should be documented for the period even if they are not documented for your unit. Likewise, tables, chairs, cookware, fire irons, and other camp equipment should be documented for the period if they are going to be visible to the public.

If you customarily provide open packs or gear for the public to come and see or handle in a direct public display or presentation, the items that will be proactively displayed should be individually documented on your IIF, as noted above.

How does the inspector compare my sources with my item?

You are required to have all of your reference materials available to the inspector at the time of your inspection. The format is entirely up to you as long as **originals of all cited materials can be accessed during the inspection**. You may choose to bring entire books with you, you can create a binder of photocopies, or you can bring a laptop or tablet loaded with your materials. If you do photocopy or scan sections of articles or books, please photocopy the title page (making sure the author, title of the work, publishing company, and year published is visible) for clarity.

Inspection Instructions

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If you have multiple sources for the same item, you may choose to not to copy all of them, provided that those you do have available give complete documentation. Feel free to list the other sources for future reference.