

“kind of armour, being peculiar to America:” The American Hunting Shirt

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Figure 1. A watercolor image of a Virginia Rifleman during the Philadelphia Campaign wearing a fringed hunting shirt (Richard St. George Collection, Harlen Crown Library.)

Part I
Introduction



Figure 2. *Middle right*, Watercolor by Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger of a riflemen clothed in a hunting shirt at the Siege of Yorktown in 1781 (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.)

In the fall of 1775, Norfolk, the largest and most populated of Virginia's colonial cities, became a theater of operation for suppressing the American rebellion against English authority. Virginians rapidly mobilized thousands of men to form a professional army to defend American liberties. Home to both rebels and those loyal to the crown, also known as Tories, Norfolk became embroiled in conflict as rebels enforced laws and governed the city through an extra legal Committee of Safety. During the last week in August, the Norfolk committee summoned a man named John Schaw, a merchant and commissary agent to Virginia, for examination of supposed Tory sympathies. Earlier in the week, Schaw informed British forces about a rebel fifer in an independent or volunteer company named Alexander Main and suggested they arrest him for "his impudence in wearing a hunting shirt in their presence."¹ The soldiers immediately

¹ Norfolk Borough Committee, 28 August 1775, American Archives: Documents of the American Revolution, 1774-76, accessed 3 March 2013, <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/amarch> (hereafter American Archives).

arrested Main and imprisoned him aboard the sloop of war *Otter* for further investigation. At the completion of their examination, Norfolk's committee ruled Schaw "an enemy to *American liberty*" and warned "every friend to his Country to have no further dealing or connection with him."² John Schaw easily identified the rebel through the choice of his clothing.

Schaw labeled Alexander Main as a rebel, not from his personal knowledge, but his choice of wearing a politically charged garment known as a hunting shirt. Prior to the American Revolution, hunting shirts remained limited only to the counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, an area known in British North America as the backcountry; however, when Royal authority threatened American liberties, rebels in Virginia and Pennsylvania quickly adopted and wore these shirts to show their outward defiance against the British. This thesis, divided into two parts, examines the origin of the hunting shirt as the first true form of dress developed in British North America. The shirt traces its sparse history beginning in the 1750s along the Great Wagon Road through the Shenandoah Valley and spread from the backcountry to New England in response to the need for a cheap and quickly produced uniform for the Continental Army. After the Revolution, hunting shirts quickly fell from popular usage and faded rapidly from American memory. The second part of the thesis marries the history of the garment with the four known extant hunting shirts from collections around the United States. An in-depth study of the hunting shirts' textiles and colors, fringe, and patterns reveals pertinent information for a holistic understanding of this garment. Like the "*cocarde tricolore*" and the Phrygian cap worn during the French Revolution, the hunting shirt became the emblem of the American War for Independence.

² Ibid.

Chapter I
1750-1774
The Origins of the Hunting Shirt

Stretching from Pennsylvania through North Carolina, the Blue Ridge Mountains created a geological border isolating what British North Americans called the backcountry. This region, separated from the populated eastern counties, fostered a unique blend of cultures and economy. A mix of English, Scots-Irish, Germanic, African, and Native inhabitants called this expansive territory home. While many farmed the land, others took advantage of large mercantile businesses that employed hunters to harvest “red” or summer deerskins, which supplied the enormous demand around the world for leather breeches.³ Hunters, who supplied the deerskins from Augusta County Virginia, developed a cheap and uniquely American garment during the mid-eighteenth century known as a hunting shirt.

Throughout the 1730s, leather or buckskin breeches became popular in both England and the American colonies for their longevity and durability. Leather breeches makers produced buckskin breeches from middling to high qualities and supplied them to all classes within society, but the hardwearing properties made it a favorite material for the working class and slaves. The fad reached its height in the early 19th century with hundreds of English magazines reporting on the fashion of young men dressing like country squires. In 1803, one book entitled *Beauties of Dr. John Moore* detailed the

³ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 86-89.

latest men's fashion and stated "Boots and buckskin breeches are essential articles in a British fop's wardrobe," and "he is profusely provided with both."⁴

The raw material for buckskin breeches came primarily from England's North American colonies. Large mercantile businesses conducted trade in the backcountry with Native Americans who sought manufactured imported goods in exchange for the raw deerskins and furs they trapped and killed, while other companies hired professional hunters to hunt just for skins. Once collected, merchants typically moved the skins to South Carolina, where they commonly sold for higher prices compared to other colonies. Merchants then repackaged the skins into hogsheads and shipped them to England. During the 1750s, Savannah, on the coast of Georgia, emerged as the leading city to export deerskins, averaging through the America Revolution, over 200,000 pounds of skins a year.⁵

Hired hunters needed a cheap and light summer garment to wear while hunting and this led to the development of the hunting shirt. Many descriptions of hunting shirts compared the garment to a smock, a garment constructed like a shirt with sturdy linens that extended below the knees and worn to protect the wearer's clothing from abrasion. English, German, and Scots-Irish cultures maintained a long tradition of wearing protective over garments, particularly by farmers and wagoners. Visually, hunting shirts retained many attributes of a smock with its shirt like construction and often long length; however, many writers qualified their descriptions with curious statements saying that hunting shirts only "somewhat resemble" a smock.⁶ Although both garments resembled

⁴John Moore, *Beauties of Dr. John Moore* (London: J.G. Barnard, 1803), 416.

⁵Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 97-98.

⁶Jonathan Trumbull to The National Portrait Gallery, *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans, Vol. III* (New York: Hermon Bancroft, 1836), 134.

one another, other obvious features of a hunting shirt such as the split down the front, the cape, and fringe placed the newly developed garment in a class of its own. Hunting shirts borrowed features, such as the cape, from other utilitarian garments within the English, German, and the Scots-Irish cultures.



Figure 3. The farmer wearing his long smock fends off his daughter's suitor. (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Museum Purchase.)

For centuries, men's wardrobes included a diversity of garments for both hot and cold climates and specialty clothing, such as greatcoats, for foul weather. Like the smock, the English, German, and the Scots-Irish increasingly favored greatcoats as an

exterior garment. As early as the 1720s, colonial merchants imported greatcoats ready made and sold them very inexpensively.⁷ Besides the often heavy woolen materials used to shed rain or snow, hunting shirts bear a striking resemblance to greatcoats, with both garments employing capes and a center front opening. The cape on a greatcoat functioned as layer of protection over the shoulders to keep rain from soaking through to the interior; however, hunting shirts, typically made of cheap linens, did not offer the same protection. Rain easily soaked through linen textiles. The center front opening on both garments allowed the wearer to easily take on or off the garment. The wearer of hunting shirts often crossed over the sides of the garment and belted it closed, creating pockets. Joseph Doddridge who grew up in Western Pennsylvania noted this practice and stated, “The bosom of this dress served as a wallet to hold a chunk of bread, cakes, jerk, tow for wiping the barrel of the rifle, or any other necessary for the hunter or warrior.”⁸ The usage of a center front opening created a practical method of storage and wearability; however, the cape may only serve as esthetic appeal, borrowed from a practical garment.

⁷ *American Weekly Mercury*, 2 January 1727-28.

⁸ Joseph Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: John S. Ritenour and Wm. T. Lindsey, 1912), 91.



Figure 4. A man dressed in a greatcoat returning to an alehouse with a hare. Note the multiple capes around the neck and shoulders. (© Trustees of the British Museum.)

Native interaction with white settlers in the backcountry allowed for the exchange of their own taste and culture upon the hunting shirt. Eastern Woodland Natives among other tribes often finished seamed areas and edges with various adornments including small fringes.⁹ This interest in embellishment may explain the fringes on the seams and edges of hunting shirts. Although seams of clothing earlier in English history often employed decorations with various trims, that fashion disappeared after the adoption of the coat in the 1660s. The combination of cultures, economic specialty, and differing clothing fashions played key roles in the development of the hunting shirt during the mid-

⁹ Michael Galban. Interview by Neal Hurst. Phone Interview, 22 March 2013. Mr. Galban, a Washoe-Paiute Native and public historian at Ganondagan State Historic Site in New York, researches all aspects of early native culture. Michael provided me with a more holistic understanding of changing Native fashions.

eighteenth century. The mixing of these cultures would result in the birth of the hunting shirt in Virginia's backcountry.



Harvard University, Houghton Library, modbm_eng509_2_06

Figure 5. A Jibboway man wearing a coat with fringe trimmed seams. Henry Hamilton drawings, ca. 1776 – 1778. (Houghton Library, Harvard University.)

During the early years of the hunting shirt, the garment remained highly regional, blocked from the east by the Blue Ridge Mountains. Recorded in a will book from Augusta County at the death of one man named John Smith established the first written reference of the term hunting shirt in the eighteenth-century.¹⁰ At the death of Smith in 1759 without a will or heirs, the county clerk recorded an inventory of Smith's

¹⁰ Located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Augusta County formed from Orange County in 1738 as Virginia's largest county without a western border until the American Revolution.

possessions in order to pay his debts. The small inventory received an appraisal of twenty pounds, with his horse as the single most expensive item.¹¹ Clothing constituted the majority of the recorded items and these garments included a jacket, coat, leather britches, leggings, shirts, and most importantly a hunting shirt. The will also listed a credit of thirty-one shillings owed to the estate from Captain William Preston.

Born on Christmas day in 1729, William Preston spent much of his childhood in a small Irish town named Newton-Limavady.¹² Under the persuasion of his brother-in-law, John Patton, John Preston moved his entire family to the valley of Virginia in 1735. Patton helped the Preston family establish strong rooted connections amongst the planter elite in what would soon become Augusta County, Virginia.¹³ Patton, a vestryman and member of the House of Burgesses from Augusta County, found a tutor for young William Preston and also helped him to gain key positions with the county government. In 1750, Preston worked as clerk in the Augusta County vestry, which established a lifetime of public service. At the outbreak of the French and Indian War, Preston received his first commission from Governor Robert Dinwiddie, as Captain of a ranging company. Maintaining his captaincy and his company of rangers, he achieved the rank of Major in 1758 and later the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in Augusta County's militia.¹⁴ At some point during the French and Indian War, John Smith, whose will recorded the first hunting shirt, decided to take up arms to defend his home, his county, and the colony of Virginia, under the command of William Preston.

¹¹ Inventory of John Smith, 18 October 1759, probated May 20, 1760, Augusta County Court Records, Will Book #2, 381, microfilm.

¹² Joseph A. Waddell, *Supplment, Annals of Augusta County, Virginia* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English, 1888), 402-410.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Augusta's county clerk recorded Smith's inventory into the county will book on May 20, 1760 and promptly a day later, William Preston paid Smith's estate in full, recording in his receipt book that "Recd of Wm Preston 31/ in full of John Smiths pay as a soldier in his company & in full of all accounts."¹⁵ Smith soldiered in Augusta County under Preston during the year 1759, making it also the first military usage of a hunting shirt in the eighteenth-century. Unfortunately, not the most unique of names, John Smith appeared on several other official military documents from both the county militia and ranging companies.

Beginning in 1755, Governor Robert Dinwiddie ordered backcountry counties, including Augusta, under a constant state of readiness for military action. After the death of General Braddock and defeat of the British and provincial forces at the Battle of Monongahela, east of present-day Pittsburgh, the county feared hostile Indian attack and potential invasion from the French. Under the militia law of 1755, men between the ages of eighteen and sixty fulfilled their civic duty and mustered monthly under their appointed captains; however, this did not create and maintain an army in the field. Colonel George Washington wrote to House of Burgesses Speaker and Treasurer John Robinson and commented on the poor discipline of Augusta County militia and that "The want of order, regulation and obedience, prevent any good effects, their assistance and force might have."¹⁶ In order to keep a more constant local body of troops in the field, the Virginia House of Burgesses allowed for the establishment of ranging companies.¹⁷

¹⁵ *The Preston and Virginia Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1915), 54.

¹⁶ George Washington to John Robinson, 9 November 1756, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 2 Letter books, accessed 23 March 2013 <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html>.

¹⁷ 7 July 1775, H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1753-1755, 1756-1758* (Richmond: Colonial Press, 1909), 290.

Unlike the county militia system that kept their troops in the field for no longer than a month, ranging companies remained authorized and in the field for a year. Ideally these troops ranged or marched between certain designated fortifications in the backcountry, keeping a watchful eye over the frontier to bolster Virginia's defenses.

Beyond the thirty-one shillings paid to Smith's estate in 1760, William Preston paid a man named John Smith 7£ 10s for 150 days (twenty-one weeks) service as a soldier in his company signed only with a mark in November 1757.¹⁸ The long service time suggested enlistment as a ranger. Preston paid a John Smith again in August for service prior to May 1757 and compensated for his twelve days work at Fort George in present-day Highland County along the Bullpasture River.¹⁹ In both cases the receipts were signed only with a mark. A surviving muster list from Colonel James Buchanan, another commander of Augusta County militia, listed a John Smith as serving 94 days in his company, again signed with a mark.²⁰ Twenty years after the death of John Smith, an "heir-at-law," Thomas Smith, petitioned Augusta County for land never provided to John for his service. Thomas claimed that John served as sergeant in Captain William Preston's company of rangers. Proper documentation provided to the county clerk allowed Thomas Smith to lay claim to 200 acres of land in late 1779.²¹ John Smith, whether a multiple or single person, performed his civic duty as a ranger or militia man, defending his colony, making it certain that the hunting shirt saw its first military usage

¹⁸ 12 August 1757, Draper manuscript collection Series QQ, Preston papers, University of Chicago Libraries, Dept. of Photographic Reproduction, 1960, M125.1, Reel 1, microfilm (hereafter cited as Preston Papers).

¹⁹ Waddell, *Supplment, Annals of Augusta County*, 16.

²⁰ Preston Papers, James Buchanan Muster List, April 1758.

²¹ 18 November 1779, Order Book 18, Augusta County Court Records, Reel 67, microfilm.

within a company of rangers in Augusta County militia during the French and Indian War.

From this point forward, an eight-year void exists in the documentation relating to early hunting shirts. The executors of John Smith's estate lived in Augusta County and certainly knew the parlances for the garments they listed. The hunting shirt differed from the four other shirts listed and was worth a shilling more. Unfortunately, why those men chose to record the garment in that manner may be lost to history. The term hunting shirt would next appear not in a private context, but publically in a newspaper in 1768.

Sometime during the early summer of 1768, two convict servant men sent to Virginia as punishment for stealing, decided to break their indenture and run away from their masters Robert Whitley and John Maxwell at the forks of the James River in Augusta County.²² Their owners paid for an advertisement in William Rind's newspaper, *The Virginia Gazette*, and it appeared in print on June 23, 1768. Like most runaway advertisements, the authors provided excellent descriptions of the two men's clothing in order to identify them. The one servant, Israel Cowen, was twenty-seven years old "about 5 feet 7 inches high, of a dark complexion, his head bald and blind of his left eye. He had on when he went away, a new felt hat, on old thickset coat, with tortoise-shell buttons, a blue broadcloth jacket, trowsers, and old shoes."²³ The other man named George Wilkinson, "stood about 5 feet 6 inches high, of a sandy complexion, and red hair. Had on when he went away, a new felt hat, a hunting shirt and calico waistcoat, with old buckskin breeches, blue leggings, and old shoes."²⁴ The owners of these men offered

²² 3 June 1767, *Old Baily Proceedings*, Reference No. s17670603-1, accessed 23 March 2013 <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>.

²³ William Rind, *The Virginia Gazette*, 23 June 1768.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

“five pounds reward, and if but one of them, fifty shillings, besides what the law allows.”²⁵

The description given of George Wilkinson established the first printed reference to a hunting shirt in North America. William Rind’s newspaper, *The Virginia Gazette*, published in Virginia’s capital of Williamsburg, maintained a large circulation, not only in Virginia but throughout the eastern seaboard. The authors paying for the advertisement certainly took into consideration the broad circulation, but continued to employ regional terminology only known to those in the backcountry areas. In 1770 and 1771, *The Virginia Gazette* published two other runaways from Augusta County, wearing hunting shirts, while at the same time the *Pennsylvania Gazette* published its first hunting shirt reference.²⁶ All four of the Pennsylvanian advertisements centered around Lancaster County, a major stopping point for those traveling along the Great Wagon Road that connected Philadelphia with Virginia’s backcountry counties and the Shenandoah Valley.

The development of the hunting shirt started in the backcountry counties of Virginia sometime in the mid eighteenth-century. The distinctive blend of cultures and the unusual need of cheap clothing for economic purposes allowed for the creation of the hunting shirt. The garment first saw limited service in the French and Indian War by members of Virginia’s ranging companies. Finally, the garment began moving out of the backcountry and entered the vernacular along the eastern counties within Virginia and Pennsylvania within widely circulated colonial newspapers. In their first twenty-five years, the hunting shirt endured a lackluster existence, however with the outbreak of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ William Rind, *The Virginia Gazette*, 18 October 1770 and 15 August 1771.

American Revolution in 1775, the garment became the symbol of American liberty and independence.

Chapter II
1775-1783
The Emblem of the Revolution

The year 1775 marked the beginning of hostilities of the American Revolution. For nearly a decade, colonists dealt with what they deemed a tyrannical British government, with no actual representation from North America in England. Finally, during the third week in April tensions came to a head. These tensions grew out of a circular letter sent on October 19, 1774 from the Earl of Dartmouth, Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, giving authority to Royal Governors in the American colonies to “take the most effectual measures for arresting, detaining, and securing any Gunpowder, or any sort of Arms or Ammunition” in the hands of the colonists.¹ On the morning of April 19, 1775, the actions of General Thomas Gage in Boston that removed the gunpowder and arms from Lexington and Concord led to open revolt in the American colonies. With the establishment of the Continental Army to defend the newly formed United States, the Continental Congress adopted the hunting shirt as the first uniform of the American Army. Hunting shirts soon moved rapidly out of the backcountry of Virginia and became the emblem for American liberty and independence. The garment, only known in British North America, created a unique revolutionary identity.

A month before the outbreak of war, leaders from the colony of Virginia met at Saint John’s Church in Richmond to convene the Second Virginia Convention. Opening on March 20, 1775, over 120 men met and represented Virginia’s colonists. The first several days the delegates discussed who would represent the colony in Philadelphia at

¹ American Archives, 19 October 1774, Circular Letter from the Earl of Dartmouth to the Governors of the Colonies.

the Second Continental Congress and considered the proper steps to protect and ensure their British rights and liberties. On March 23, Patrick Henry from Hanover County gave his fiery ‘Liberty or Death’ speech and exclaimed “three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us.”² William Wirt, the biographer of Patrick Henry, claimed that after his speech, the delegates “heard in every pause, the cry of liberty or death. They became impatient of speech – their souls were on fire for action.”³ That afternoon, the convention passed a resolution to place the colony in posture of defense.⁴

In order to defend the colony, Virginians needed to develop a plan for arming and clothing their militia. Delegates to the Virginia Convention formed a committee of twelve consisting of Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Robert Carter Nicholas, Benjamin Harrison, Lemuel Riddick, George Washington, Adam Stephen, Andrew Lewis, William Christian, Edmund Pendleton, Thomas Jefferson, and Issac Zane to address this issue.⁵ These men came from varied backgrounds, but almost half served as provincial officers in the French and Indian War. Lt. Colonel George Washington assumed command of the Virginia Regiment between 1754 and his resignation in 1758 after the fall of Fort Duquesne. Adam Stephen served under Washington as a Lieutenant and took command of the Virginia Regiment after Washington’s resignation. Andrew Lewis initially commanded a company within the Virginia Regiment but soon earned the

² William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1878), 141.

³ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴ William J. Van Schreeven and Robert L. Scribner, *Revolutionary Virginia The Road To Independence*, Vol. III, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), 266.

⁵ *Ibid.*

rank of Major. William Christian became an experienced “Indian Fighter” in the backcountry after the French and Indian War and later fought during Dunmore’s War. These five men witnessed the usage of hunting shirts in the backcountry, which influenced discussion and decisions amongst the committee.

Two days after the convention decided to move the colony into a state of military readiness, the defense committee reported its suggestions. They recommended “the Colony diligently to put in Execution the Militia Law passed in the year 1738” and that “they pay a more particular Attention to the forming of a good Infantry.” They stated “that every man to be provided with a good rifle” or “common firelock” and “to be clothed in a hunting shirt by way of Uniform.”⁶ A full month before the outbreak of war, Virginians adopted the hunting shirt as the uniform for their infantry, establishing a symbolic garment not only for American liberty, but a garment worn in outward defiance against the Crown. The suggestion passed the convention and each county immediately started training their militia.

Preparations from the Second Virginia Convention paid off on the morning of April 21st when the town watch found the powder missing from the powder magazine in Williamsburg. Alarm riders left the city and, in hours, the eastern and western counties mobilized thousands of troops. Under the encouragement of Colonel Samuel Meredith, Patrick Henry took command of the Hanover County Volunteers. A gift of a hunting shirt from the men of Hanover made Henry “forcibly invested” in the cause.⁷ Thousands of men organized in backcountry militia companies streamed into Fredericksburg,

⁶ Ibid., 275.

⁷ George Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1907), 201.

mustering nearly five thousand men marched on Williamsburg.⁸ When Henry, in command of the entire response force, reached Doncastle's Ordinary in New Kent County, he and his men heard that the Governor would pay for the powder. Once again cooler minds prevailed and Henry dismissed the militia to return home. However, unbeknownst to them, war started in New England.

Within days, Virginians heard the news about Lexington and Concord from their northern brothers in arms. Fallow fields across the countryside of Virginia turned into parade grounds where thousands of men wearing hunting shirts transformed into a fighting force. Phillip Vickers Fithian, a tutor for Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, noted in his diary on June 6, 1775, in Stevensburg, Virginia, that

Mars, the great God of Battle is now honoured in every part of this spacious Colony, but here every Presence is warlike, every sound is Martial! Drums beating, fifes & Bag-Pipes playing, & only sonorous & heroic tunes – Every Man has a hunting shirt, which is the uniform for each company. Almost all have a cockade & Bucks Tale in their Hats to represent that they are hardy, resolute, & invincible Natives of the Woods of America.⁹

Minute battalions or quick responding troops formed as well. The Culpeper Minute Battalion included of men from Culpeper, Fauquier, and Orange counties. This battalion adopted “strong brown linen hunting shirts” with “the words Liberty or Death worked in large white letters on breast.”¹⁰ Other companys also embraced Patrick Henry's slogan, as a writer from Middlesex County noted: “The sound of war echoes from north to south. Every plain is full of armed men, who all wear a hunting shirt, on the left breast of which

⁸ Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 154.

⁹ Robert Greenhalgh Albion and Leonidas Dodson, ed., *Phillip Vickers Fithian: Journal, 1775 – 1776, Written on the Virginia Pennsylvania Frontier and in the Army around New York* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934), 24.

¹⁰ Phillip Slaughter, *Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpeper County, Virginia* (Culpeper: Raleigh Travers Green, 1900), 47.

are sewed, in very legible letters, Liberty *or* Death."¹¹ Michael Wallace of Falmouth reported the massing of troops in Fredericksburg again in May and claimed "Occasioned upwards of 1,000 men to assemble together at Fredericksburge, among which was 600 good rifle men...if we had continued there one or two days longer we should have had upwards of 10,000 men as all the frontier Countys of Virginia were in motion, and that Fredericksburg never was honord with so many brave hearty men since it was a town, every Man rich and poor with their hunting shirts, belts, tomahawks fixed in the best manner."¹² These trained companies quickly moved into the City of Williamsburg where they guarded critical infrastructure.

The presence of an armed force in the capital city placed Lord Dunmore in a state of trepidation. Rebel guards wearing hunting shirts watched over the Capitol, powder magazine, Peyton Randolph's house, and the treasury. After Randolph's heroic return from the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, which included an escort into town under guard of the Williamsburg Independent Company, Dunmore wrote of the appearance of citizens in Williamsburg and claimed, "This spirit received additional vigor from the appearance of members of the Burgesses in the Habits of the New Institutionalized American Troops, in wearing a shirt of course linen or canvas [sic] over their clothes and a tomahawk by their sides...."¹³ Lord Dunmore, uncertain of his future in Virginia, sent his wife and children aboard the HMS *Fowey*, a 24-gun warship lying in the York River, for safety. Loyalist James Parker living in Norfolk commented on the Governors actions and stated, "I do not think his Lady will return to Williamsburg. Tis said he [Lord

¹¹ American Archives, 1 September 1775, Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Virginia to his Friend in Edinburgh, Scotland, dated Middlesex.

¹² Michael Brown Wallace to Gustavus Brown Wallace, 14 May 1775, Wallace family papers, 1750-1781, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

¹³ Dunmore to Dartmouth, 25 June 1775, C.O. 5/1373, fol. 72-84, microfilm.

Dunmore] will, provided the shirt men are sent away. These shirt men or Virginia uniform are dressed with Ozanburg shirt over their clothes, a belt round them with a tommyhawk or scalping knife. They look like a band of Assassins and it's my opinion if they fight at all, it will be in that way."¹⁴ Fearing an uncontrollable situation, Lord Dunmore fled the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg on June 8 to the HMS *Fowey*, where he attempted to govern Virginia until he sailed for New York in July 1776.

As Virginia slowly separated from royal governance without major armed conflict, New England faced a grave situation. In the days that followed the clashes at Lexington and Concord, New Englanders rushed to Boston with a call to war and started to lay siege to the city. Military stores, equipment, tools, food, and clothing needed transportation to Boston to logistically support the new army. During the second week in May, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety ordered defenses built around the city, including Charlestown at Bunker's and Breed's Hills.¹⁵ The Continental Congress needed to act quickly to organize an army and to support the troops already in action around Boston.

Realizing the dire situation, the Continental Congress on June 14, 1775, authorized the raising of "six companies of expert riflemen," two companies each from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.¹⁶ The Congress sent letters of encouragement to the delegates in those States and asked, "if possible get experienced officers, and the very best men that can be procured" and "the companies, as soon as formed, will march

¹⁴ James Parker to Charles Steuart, 12 June 1775, in *The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries*, Vol. III, Jan-Jun 1906 (New York: William Abbatt, 1905), 159.

¹⁵ James L. Nelson, *With Fire and Sword, The Battle of Bunker Hill and the Beginnings of the American Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 200 -232.

¹⁶ 14 June 1775, Papers of the Continental Congress, compiled 1774 – 1789, Rough Journals, 1774-89, RG 360, Vol. 1, Roll 8, 85, microfilm.

forward to Boston with all expedition.”¹⁷ Frederick County, Virginia elected Daniel Morgan to command their rifle company while Berkeley County elected Hugh Stephenson. With military experience from the French and Indian and later Indian Wars, both Morgan and Stephenson understood the usefulness of the rifle against an enemy. Recruitment started in late June with each company completely filled in a matter of days. On July 18, *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* reported, “a Virginia paper of the 7th instant, says Captain Morgan and Stinson marched from our frontiers for Boston, the 29th of June, with two hundred riflemen.”¹⁸ The hunting shirt began its journey for the first time towards New England.

¹⁷ John Jeremiah Jacob, *A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap* (Bedford: Applewoodbooks, 1866), 119.

¹⁸ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 18 July 1775.

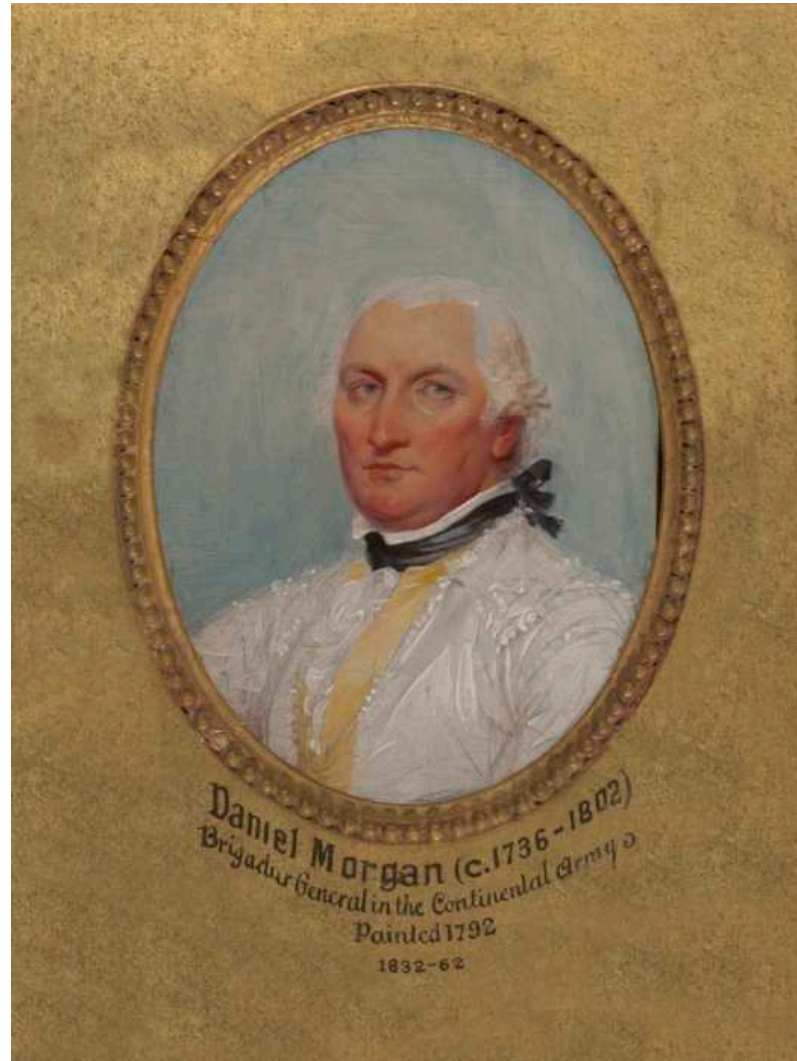


Figure 6. General Daniel Morgan wearing his white fringed hunting shirt. (Yale University Art Gallery.)

Morgan and his rifle company faced a march of nearly 600 miles to Boston. An eyewitness to another rifle battalion following Morgan's, under the command of Captain Michael Cresap from Maryland, described the men as being "from the mountains and backwoods, painted like Indians, armed with tomahawks and rifles, dressed in hunting shirts and moccasins, and though some of them travelled near eight hundred miles from the banks of the Ohio, they seemed to walk light and easy, and not with less spirit then the first hour of their march."¹⁹ Beginning in July, riflemen including Morgan's men,

¹⁹ Jacob, *A Biographical Sketch of the Life of the Late Captain Michael Cresap*, 120-121.

passed through Philadelphia where many of the delegates to the Continental Congress witnessed the hunting shirt for the first time. Silas Deane, a delegate from Connecticut, wrote to his wife on July 1 after he saw a column of riflemen bound for Boston and wished “that our (New England) troops would imitate their uniform, as it is cheap and light.”²⁰ Deane wrote his wife again in July and he explained, “I send on what is called the Shirt Uniform or rifle dress, as a sample or pattern, and wish it may be adopted.”²¹ Interest increased in the garment as expert riflemen dressed in hunting shirts poured into Cambridge Camp.

Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge Camp in early July 1775 and faced a disorganized army in desperate need of clothing. As regiments arrived to support the siege, some wore fine woolen coats, others short practical jackets, and others went without any uniforms at all. Washington quickly understood the growing social dissention amongst the ranks due to the differences in needs and wants of clothing. Washington called for “a number of hunting shirts, not less than 10,000” in order to cloth the army and that the garment “would have a happier Tendency to unite the Men, & abolish those Provincial Distinctions which lead to Jealousy & Dissatisfaction.”²² Morgan and his men clad in hunting shirts arrived in Cambridge Camp on August 2, giving the New Englanders the first look at their new uniform. Simeon Alexander remembered Morgan’s arrival when he applied for his pension in 1832 and recounted, “Morgan came with his regiment of riflemen either with Washington or soon after his

²⁰ J. Hammond Trumbull, *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, Vol. 2, (Hartford: The Connecticut Historical Society, 1870), 275.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 292.

²² George Washington to Continental Congress, 10-11 July 1775 *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition*, ed. Theodore J. Crackel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008, (hereafter The George Washington Papers).

arrival. The uniform of Morgan's regiment was a short frock made of pepper and salt colored cotton cloth like a common working frock worn by our people, except that it was short and open before, to be tied with strings."²³ Washington hastily continued to take steps in order to start the production of this garment for the American army.

Until August of 1775, the majority of New Englanders did not know of the backcountry hunting shirt from Virginia. Congress informed Washington that a quantity of tow cloth for making hunting shirts "may be obtained in Rhode Island and Connecticut."²⁴ After Washington sent agents to purchase the cheap linens, he wrote to Nicholas Cooke, the Governor of Rhode Island and explained the dire situation of the army. Washington informed Cooke that the Congress gave him permission to obtain tow cloth from his state "for the purpose of making Indian Shirts (hunting shirts) for the Men."²⁵ Realizing that Cooke did not know how to make these shirts, Washington sent him a pattern and stated, "As soon as any Number is made worth the Conveyance you will please to direct them to be forwarded. It is designed as a Species of Uniform both cheap & convenient."²⁶ Washington sent a near identical letter to Jonathan Trumbull, Governor of Connecticut, with the same instructions and also a pattern for tailors and seamstresses to follow.

Each of these Governors possessed everything needed to make hunting shirts, but construction continued extremely slowly and supplies quickly dwindled. Washington wrote letters to Cooke and Trumbull on August 23 and 31 to check progress, but received no reply until early September when Trumbull confirmed that he ordered "Commissaries

²³ John C. Dan, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 104-106.

²⁴ The George Washington Papers, John Hancock to George Washington, 24 July 1775.

²⁵ Ibid., George Washington to Nicholas Cooke, 4 August 1775.

²⁶ Ibid.

in the Several Counties to send to your Camp all the Hunting Shirts they can procure.”²⁷ Although this provided some slight relief for Washington, he realized that his army remained entrenched around Boston with a New England winter soon bear down upon them. Washington wrote the Continental Congress on September 21 and told them that many of the enlistments of the New England troops ran out in January 1776 and the majority of his army would return home. Washington also informed the Congress that the army “may be deemed in a State of Nakedness” and that there became a “great Scarcity of Tow Cloth in this Country...our Expectations of procuring Hunting Shirts. Govr Cooke informs me, few or none are to be had in Rhode Island, & Govr Trumbull gives me little Encouragement to expect many from Connecticut.”²⁸

Clothing a new army remained a major task throughout the Revolution, but the autumn of 1775 marked the first offensive action of the Continental Army. In September 1775, a two-pronged offensive movement started against the British held provinces of Canada. Brigadier General Richard Montgomery led one column up Lake Champlain, successfully capturing the city of Montreal on November 13, while General Benedict Arnold cut through the wilderness of Maine on a direct path to Quebec. American media quickly found out about the invasion and the *Pennsylvania Magazine* published one of the first maps of the Lake Champlain area. The map provided details of geography, fortifications, and areas of settlement, but most importantly it included a cartouche with the first printed image of a hunting shirt.

²⁷ Ibid., Jonathan Trumbull Sr. to George Washington, 5 September 1775.

²⁸ Ibid., George Washington to John Hancock, 21 September 1775.



Figure 7. A map cartouche from the October 1775 issue of *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, showing the first published image of a hunting shirt. (Tucker-Coleman Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.)

The map's cartouche provided readers with a visual representation of the troops fighting on the side of the American army. In the center, a panoply of arms and laurels framed the map's title. To the left of the image stands one of the American Native allies dressed in leggings and breechclout while grasping a symbolic peace pipe in one hand. To the right stands an American rifleman, dressed in a long hunting shirt with a small narrow cape and fringes on all of its edges. Knowledge of the hunting shirt spread rapidly once soldiers started to wear the garment around Boston. A young Aaron Burr marching to Quebec under Benedict Arnold wrote to his sister to describe his appearance and claimed, "I must give you a sketch -- but let me promise that I am about the colour of otter Indians." He continued "To begin at the foot -- over a pair of boots I draw a pair of woolen trousers of course coating. A short double breasted jacket of the same, over this

come a present from a Southern Gentlemen -- a short shirt after the rifle fashion -- curiously fringed, with a belt as curious."²⁹ Burr referenced the hunting shirt and not only its unusual attributes, but also the fact that it came from the South. Burr, a native of New Jersey, never knew of the garment before his time in the Continental Army. The invasion of Canada ended in complete failure with an American army fighting a retreating action. In his journal, Surgeon Isaac Senter described the campaign as "a hetero-geneal concatenation of the most peculiar and unparalleled rebuffs and sufferings that are perhaps to be found in the annals of any nation."³⁰ Back in Boston, after an 11-month siege, on March 17, 1776, British troops evacuated the City of Boston. Washington prepared to move.

Leaving only a skeletal force in the entrenchments around Boston, Washington moved his army south into New York. Still facing an army destitute of clothing, he wrote a General Order that established the precedence for the hunting shirt as the uniform for the Continental Army and stated, "being sensible of the difficulty, and expence of providing Cloaths, of almost any kind, for the Troops...he (George Washington) earnestly encourages the use of Hunting Shirts....No Dress can be had cheaper, nor more convenient, as the Wearer may be cool in warm weather, and warm in cool weather by putting on under-Cloaths which will not change the outward dress, Winter or Summer— Besides which it is a dress justly supposed to carry no small terror to the enemy, who think every such person a complete marksman."³¹ Riflemen wearing hunting shirts

²⁹ Aaron Burr to Sally Burr Reeve, 24 September 1775, The Papers of Aaron Burr, Series 1, Reel #1, microfilm.

³⁰ William Abbatt, ed., *The Journal of Isaac Senter, Physician and Surgeon to the Troops detached from the American Army Encamped at Cambridge, Mass, on a Secrete Expedition Against Quebec* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1846), 144.

³¹ The George Washington Papers, General Orders, 24 July 1776.

around Boston killed many soldiers and officers at long ranges, creating a sense of fear amongst the English army. Washington needed and used any tactic possible, in this case psychological, to overcome the enemy in the field.

While Washington commanded the army in the field, great thinkers at the Continental Congress pondered antiquity. For some, hunting shirts brought to mind images of ancient Rome, comparing this garment to the Roman soldier's dress or *paludamentum*. In a letter to Abigail Adams, John Adams wrote of a golden medal to be struck to celebrate the American victory at Boston. When Pierre Eugene du Simitiere shared his drawing of the medal that included a rendering of the 1st seal of the United States with Adams, he commented, "On one side...Liberty with her pileus; on the other, a Rifler in his uniform, with his rifle-gun in one hand, and his tomahawk in the other: this dress, and these troops, with this kind of armour, being peculiar to *America*, unless the dress was known to the *Romans*." Adams explained to his wife that Dr. Franklin shared with him a book that contained images of Roman soldiers, "one of which appeared exactly like" the uniform of an American hunting shirt.³² The loose flowing capes and fringes harkened back to the draperies worn in ancient Rome.

³² American Archives, John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 August 1776.



Figure 8. Plate 16 from Nathaniel Hooke's *The Roman History, from the Building of Rome to the ruin of the Commonwealth*, showing a Roman soldier and General wearing a paludamentum or cloak. It is unknown if Franklin showed this image to Adams, but Hooke's history became widely reprinted and distributed throughout the England Empire. (Illustration from Nathaniel Hooke, *The Roman History, from the Building of Rome to the Ruin of the Commonwealth*, (London, 1738), facing p. 479.)

While the Roman soldiers created perfect imagery for American thinkers, Europeans wanted to see for themselves this unusual uniform. A German engraver named Johann Martin Will from Augsburg printed two images of American soldiers in 1776. Both images portray the soldiers as hardy men with beards, heavily stocked muskets, with extremely long bayonets. Each man wears a pointed cap with a red plume marked with "Congress." Attired in hunting shirts, each figure shows multiple capes and rows of fringes. Although Will claimed this as an accurate drawing of an American soldier, it seemed overly embellished compared to the reality that George Washington faced. The English and Europeans continued their interest in hunting shirts through the

rest of the war. As early as February 1776, “American Riflemen” began attending London masquerade balls regularly; with his companion of an “American Indian.”³³



Figure 9. Two German prints of American soldiers wearing hunting shirts printed in 1776. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.)

While the English gallivanted and tried to imitate American dress, Washington still needed to fight in the field. The Revolution raged on after major defeats during the New York/New Jersey Campaigns. Washington lost the capital of Philadelphia in 1777 and retired his army to Valley Forge, in order to keep a watchful eye on the British during the winter. On June 19, 1778, his army left Valley Forge well trained under the direction of Prussian General Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben. Through the rest of the Revolution, American soldiers continued to wear hunting shirts as the uniform of choice due to poor supply of woolen coats. Small tactical victories and chance from 1778 through 1781, brought Washington to Yorktown, where French Naval

³³ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 21 February 1776.

and Infantry support led to the surrender of Lord Cornwallis on October 19, 1781 in the last major action of the American Revolution. On September 3, 1783, emissaries from Britain, the United States, and France met in Paris and signed the Treaty of Paris, officially ending America's War for Independence.

The hunting shirt rapidly came to fashion in order to fill a void in military uniforms. Prior to the war, Virginians adopted this garment as a uniform for their militia and wore the shirt to show visual outward defiance against the Crown. Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania rifle companies brought the shirt to New England as Washington quickly sent patterns to tailors in order to put into immediate production to clothe the destitute army around Boston. Riflemen in Boston and their accurate shooting abilities developed a psychological fear on the part of the British of the hunting shirt, thus Washington adopted the garment as the standard uniform for the Continental Army. Magazines and engravers created images of American soldiers that contributed to the print culture of this unusual dress. The hunting shirt created an American symbol that lasted through the revolutionary generation.

Chapter III
1784 and beyond
The Legacy

As the American Revolution came to a close, the Continental Congress rapidly demobilized its military force. The new nation feared a regular standing army and placed the defense of the new republic within the hands of the citizen militia. In a letter to Thomas Cooper, Thomas Jefferson compared the American citizen soldier to antiquity and proclaimed, "The Greeks and Romans had no standing armies, yet they defended themselves. The Greeks by their laws, and the Romans by the spirit of their people, took care to put into the hands of their rulers no such engine of oppression as a standing army. Their system was to make every man a soldier and oblige him to repair to the standard of his country whenever that was reared. This made them invincible; and the same remedy will make us so."¹ Militia units within the new republic carried on the tradition of wearing hunting shirts. After the Revolution, the garment took on new symbolism of republicanism and the success of American arms, but as the Revolutionary War generation passed away, so did the icon of the hunting shirt.

Soon after the end of the Revolution, state governments and local communities began to establish uniformed militia companies, with the majority mustered in New England. In this period, a change in etymology also took place replacing the term hunting shirt with hunting frock. With fabric in abundance and wartime conservatism over, hunting shirts grew in length and appeared more like a coat. In 1787, the New Hampshire Militia turned out in review for Commander in Chief, Major General Cilley.

¹ Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, 10 September 1814, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series, Vol. 7: November 1813 to September 1814*, Edited by J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 652.

After watching the parade he thanked the “regiments, companies, and individuals, who have uniformed themselves with rifle frocks and overalls, trimmed with binding or fringe of the same colours with the facings of that brigade.”² Cilley proposed that all regiments in New Hampshire should adopt the hunting shirt as their mode of dress due to their cheapness and serviceability. Employing domestic made linens allowed for an economic boost and further independence from foreign powers. He claimed that they “made an appearance so far superior to those who were not in uniform.”³ New York issued a similar General Order thanking “the company of brigade artillery, the battalion of grenadiers and light infantry, and the battalion formed of companies in rifle dress, or frock companies” for their “soldierly appearance, the uniformity of their appointments, and their good conduct in the review and evolutions.”⁴

While militia companies drilled in town squares, international conflict sat on the horizon of the new American republic. With the formation of the new French Republic in 1792, England, along with many European countries, declared war on France. The wars in Europe restricted trade to and from the United States and Britain began capturing American merchant vessels, seizing their cargo, and impressing their sailors. If the United States went to war, it needed a facility for manufacturing and storing military supplies. The United States established the Office of Public Purveyor in 1795.⁵ This office acquired the needed materials, arms, clothing, and naval stores for the army and navy in times of peace and war. Four years later, in 1799, the American Congress purchased a parcel of property totaling eight acres, two rods, and sixteen perches,

² *New Hampshire Spy*, 11 November 1787.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The New York Journal*, 6 September 1787,

⁵ John F. Callen, *Military Laws of the United States*, (Philadelphia: Printed by George W. Childs, 1863), 107.

bordered by the Schuylkill River to the east and Grey's Ferry Road to the west in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for \$2,293.33, to establish The United States Arsenal.⁶ In 1800, construction of the arsenal began. Two years into the project, contractors reported to Congress the cost of construction to date totaled \$152,608.02 and that it would take another four years to finish the complex.⁷ Once completed in 1805, the four brick buildings, each three stories in height used chiefly as storage, formed a hollow square. The facility maintained and manufactured all the textile necessities of a soldier. As tensions grew between the United States and Britain, the American public understood the situation and sought the security of the garment that helped them to gain their independence. The people of Williamsburg, Virginia, toasted on July 4, 1807 that "Domestic Manufacture, and Hunting Shirts" offered "the best correctives to British insolence."⁸

In response to the British attack on the American frigate *Chesapeake* on June 22, 1807, President Thomas Jefferson authorized the establishment of the United States Rifle Regiments.⁹ Once again these regiments adopted the hunting shirt, but this time it was a garment made of a durable linen duck called Russia sheeting, dyed green with yellow applied fringe. Immediately, the Office of Public Purveyor went into action and established contracts for materials, buttons, and fringe for the men's clothing. With war

⁶ 6 July 1799, Payment for Purchase of Lots, Voucher No. 56, Papers of the Department of War 1784-1800, Record Group 94, "*Payment for Purchase of Lots, Voucher No. 56*," (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building), accessed 14 March 2013, <http://wardepartmentpapers.org/>.

⁷ Congress, House, Select Committee on the State of the Treasury Department and the Accountability of Persons Entrusted with Public Moneys, *Application of public money. Communicated to the House of Representatives*, 7th Congress., 1st Sess., 29 April 1802, 818.

⁸ *The Public Advertiser*, 21 August 1807.

⁹ John C. Fredricksen, *The United States Army: A Chronology, 1775 to the Present* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 63.

declared against Great Britain on June 18, 1812, the Public Purveyor maintained open contracts for 50,000 yards of Russia sheeting and over 91,000 yards of fringe.¹⁰

A surviving tailor's blotter from the United States Arsenal listed materials withdrawn for the construction of hunting shirts (rifle frocks). In 1812, Ezekiel Howell, a Philadelphia tailor, produced 900 rifle frocks in March and 900 more in May. Howell withdrew 5,400 yards of green sheeting and 9,400 yards of yellow fringe for these garments.¹¹ Another tailor under contract through the arsenal, Jonathan Carson, withdrew 6,000 yards of green sheeting and 18,000 yards of yellow fringe for the making for 2,000 rifle frocks that same year.¹² After the War of 1812, the hunting shirt quickly saw its demise as a viable uniform for the American army. A garment made chiefly from linen does not withstand heavy military service. From 1815 onward, the United States Army clothed its troops, including riflemen, in durable woolens.

As the decades passed, the memory of the once prolific symbol of American independence faded from memory. Several instances brought the garment back into the public eye. On April 13, 1826, *The Boston Commercial Gazette* reported that Senator John Randolph of Roanoke, a cousin to Thomas Jefferson, arrived in the United States Senate Chamber with a "red flannel hunting shirt on his arm." The paper stated "he made a motion to adjourn...on the account of it being Good Friday" and while the Senators considered the motion, he put on his hunting shirt and wore it throughout the chamber.

¹⁰ Abstract of materials issued to the under mentioned Tailors for the purpose of making Clothing for the US Army for the year 1812, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Vouchers and Associated Papers and Receipts of Clothing establishment, , Box 21, Entry 2118, Record Group 92, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building), 262.

¹¹ Tailors Blotter 1810-1813, Records of the Office of the Quarter Master General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Vol. 14, Entry 2117, Record Group 92, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building), 91.

¹² Order May 7th 1812 Material Jonathan Carson for Rifle Frocks, Abstracts of Expenditures, Orders for Clothing and Supplies, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Record Group 92, Entry 2118, Box 181 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building).

The editor further explained “his attachment to this garment proceeds, I suppose, from the fact, that his father raised a hunting shirt company, at the commencement of the revolutionary war.”¹³ The eccentric Randolph, who loved the ideals of the Revolution and was an ardent supporter of the Anti-Federalists, used the symbolism to show his rebelliousness against his fellow Senators.

As veterans of the Revolution passed away, memorials of artwork commemorated and preserved the people and momentous events of the era. During the fiftieth year of American independence, Jonathan Trumbull, a Connecticut artist who witnessed the Revolution, installed his final two pieces of art memorializing the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga within the Capitol Rotunda in Washington D.C. In 1836, the National Portrait Gallery opened its first exhibit. The galleries displayed portraits of important Americans since the Revolution, including Daniel Morgan dressed in a hunting shirt. The curators feared that visitors would not understand the garment and called upon Trumbull who provided a description printed in their exhibit catalog. In the interest of preserving the American relic Trumbull wrote

You expressed apprehension that the rifle-dress of General Morgan may be mistaken hereafter for a wagoner’s frock, which he, perhaps wore when on expedition with General Braddock; there is no more resemblance between the two dresses, than between a cloak and a coat; the wagoner’s frock was intended, as a present cartman’s, to cover and protect their other clothes, and is merely a long coarse shirt reaching below the knee; the Dress of the Virginia rifle-men who came to Cambridge in 1775, (among whom was Morgan,) was an elegant loose dress reaching to the middle of the thigh, ornamented with fringes in various parts, and meeting the pantaloons of the same material and color, fringed in a corresponding style...It cost a trifle; the soldier could wash it in any brook he

¹³ *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 13 April 1826.

passed; and however worn and ragged and dirty his clothing might be, when this was thrown over it, he was in elegant uniform.¹⁴

Trumbull hoped to dispel any misinterpretations of the garment and to inform the younger generations of the importance of this distinctive American uniform. In spite of his efforts, the knowledge and image of the hunting shirt would soon vanish from American memory.

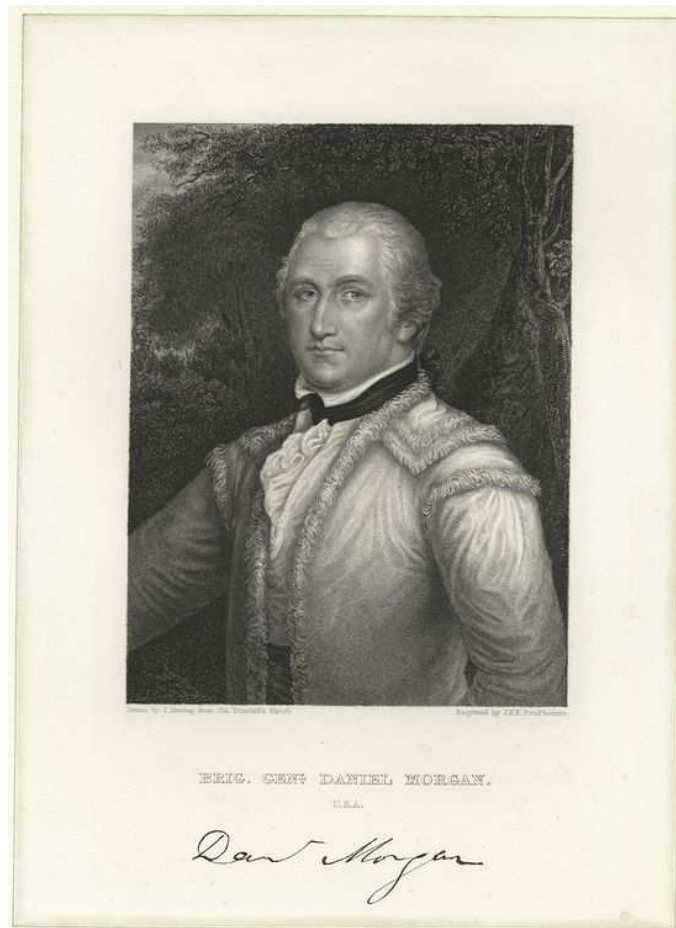


Figure 10. Lithograph copy of the image that hung in the National Portrait Gallery of Brigadier General Daniel Morgan. (Author's collection.)

In October 1857, George Washington Parke Custis, the adopted grandson of former President George Washington, passed away. Posthumously published, Custis

¹⁴ *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans, Vol. III* (New York: Hermon Bancroft, 1836), 134.

compiled a book at the end of his life that detailed Washington both publically and privately. The book's editors collected essays published by Custis and included an entire chapter dedicated to hunting shirts. In chapter eight, Custis exclaimed, "The hunting-shirt, the emblem of the Revolution, is banished from national military, but still lingers among the hunters and pioneers of the Far West."¹⁵ Like Trumbull and the needed description of Morgan wearing a hunting shirt, Custis provided a detailed history of the adoption of the garment through its disappearance from America. In the final paragraph of the chapter, referring to hunting shirts, he wrote "And should not Americans feel proud of the garb, and hail it as national, in which their fathers endured such toil and privation, in the mighty struggle for Independence...the hunting shirt, the venerable emblem of the Revolution, will have disappeared from among the Americans, and only to be found in museums, like ancient armor, exposed to the gaze of the curious."¹⁶ With the Revolutionary generation gone, Custis's chapter bookmarked the end of the hunting shirt as an American icon.

The *rage militaire* continued after the close of the American Revolution with the establishment of a civilian defense force, carrying on the tradition of wearing hunting shirts. The newly formed United States built infrastructure to support its fledgling army and the American Rifle Regiments adopted the hunting shirt once in again in 1808. The hunting shirt saw its last military usage during the War of 1812. Without the wearing of the garment as a national military uniform, the hunting shirt quickly fell from popular culture and understanding. The younger generations carrying the torch of American

¹⁵ George Washington Parke Custis, Mary Randolph Custis Lee and Benson John Lossing, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860), 266.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

liberty would only find images of their forefathers who fought in the War for American Independence wearing the curiously fringed and caped hunting shirt.

Part II Material Culture

Archeologist James Deetz defined material culture as “that segment of a man’s physical environment which is purposely shaped by him according to culturally dictated plans.”¹ Although academia often associates material culture with the field of archeology, it also refers to any surviving object from man’s material past, including, but not limited to furniture, ceramics, numismatics, and textiles. Studying objects within the field of material culture allows researchers to extract information about the past, which scholars cannot find within the written record. Careful examination reveals methods in manufacturing, technological processes, and the skills of tradesmen. This section utilizes the four extant hunting shirts to study in-depth the garments’ textiles, fringe, and pattern, which provides a more holistic approach in gaining a full understanding of the garments’ history.

Captain Abraham Duryea Hunting Shirt, 1776

The Duryea hunting shirt endures a long history and remains the only documented hunting shirt from the American Revolution. Captain Abraham Duryea of the Dutchess County militia purportedly wore the shirt during the Battle of Long Island, New York in 1776. The shirt re-surfaced in 1855 when Mr. Charles Robinson, Esq. of Fishkill, New York, donated it to the Poughkeepsie's Tomlinson Museum in Poughkeepsie, New York.² Over the next decade, Enoch Carter, curator of the Washington’s Headquarters Museum

¹ James Deetz, “Material Culture and Archaeology- What’s the Difference?” *Historical Archaeology and the Importance of Material Things: Papers of the Thematic Symposium, Eighth Annual Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology, Charleston, South Carolina, 7-11 January 1975*, ed. Society for Historical Archaeology and Leland G. Ferguson, (Lansing, Michigan: The Society, 1975) 10.

² Abraham Tomlinson, *Military Journal of Two Private Soldiers, 1758 – 1775* (New York: Poughkeepsie Museum, 1855), 125.

in Newburgh, New York, purchased and acquired from the Poughkeepsie's Tomlinson Museum a large collection of revolutionary “curiosities” including the Duryea hunting shirt.³ For much of the 20th century, the shirt remained on view in case number one within the small museum, but resurgence in patriotism and interest of the colonial period on the eve of the American Bicentennial placed a spotlight upon the aging garment.⁴ In 1967, Robert Klinger and Richard Wilder included a pattern and drawings of the shirt in their timeless classic, *Sketchbook '76*. George Neumann published the shirt in his Revolutionary War material culture reference book entitled *The Collectors Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* in 1975 and lastly, in 1983, a complete study of the garment took place under the direction of historic tailor, Henry M. Cooke IV. Today, the shirt remains in the collection of Washington's Headquarters in fair condition, however, at some point within the shirt's history, for an unknown reason, someone removed the left sleeve. The right sleeve remains intact from the eighteenth-century.

Linen Hunting Shirt, circa 1780

In December 2001, Gary Hendershott Auctions published a catalog entitled *The Patriots: A Price List Of American History 1776 – 1945*. Lot number sixty-three pictured a hunting shirt and trousers made of white linen. Hendershott claimed that a man named Jack Pinard purchased the garments from a small New Hampshire museum with the story that they were worn at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania during the winter of 1777, but offered no other sources to support that claim. Whether or not a Continental soldier wore this garment at Valley Forge, the object survives in excellent condition. That same year, The

³ E. M. Ruttenber, *Catalogue of Manuscripts and Relics in Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh, New York* (Newburgh: E.M. Ruttenber & Son, Book and Job Printers, 1879), 5.

⁴ E. M. Ruttenber, *Catalogue of Manuscripts and Relics in Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh, New York* (Newburgh: E.M. Ruttenber & Son, Book and Job Printers, 1879), 65.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts purchased a portrait painted by Jonathan Trumbull of Captain Samuel Blodgett in Rifle Dress in 1786. Blodgett commanded a company of the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment in 1777 and the hunting shirt he wears in the portrait bears a striking resemblance to this surviving example. In 2006, Blodgett's silver hilted small sword also came to the auction block, perhaps suggesting all the pieces remained together at one point and then were dispersed to sell over time.

Linen Hunting Shirt, circa 1790

In 2010, a hunting shirt found in a barn in Haverhill, New Hampshire resurfaced as the newest extant example. Held in a private collection, no information survives about the garment, but its existence makes two hunting shirts with provenance to New Hampshire.

Michael Crow Hunting Shirt, 1799

In the collection of the Greene Country Historical Society, Greene County, Pennsylvania, the Michael Crow hunting shirt provides a true example of backcountry craftsmanship. Constructed from domestically manufactured red and natural colored linsey-woolsey, Nancy Crow completed the garment for her husband to wear on their wedding day in 1799. The unique "A" line shape differs from the other surviving examples and closely relates to the cutting patterns found for women's bed gowns.

I personally examined, patterned, photographed, and compiled notes on all but the Duryea shirt, which my colleague Henry Cooke studied in 1983.⁵

⁵ Dozens of hunting shirts made from leather survive from the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. The purpose of this paper studies only textile examples. Hunting shirts made from leather use construction and patterning techniques completely different than those constructed of textiles and are worthy of their own separate study.

Chapter IV Textiles and Color

During the eighteenth-century, tailors and seamstresses manufactured thousands of hunting shirts for the inhabitants of the colonial backcountry region and later the United States. North American colonists, like their English counterparts, possessed an extensive knowledge of textiles, which allowed them to purchase and provide fabrics to tradesmen and women who cut and sewed the yardage into specific garments. Florence Montgomery's seminal work, *Textiles in America: 1650-1870*, attested to the vast array of fabric choices available to eighteenth-century Americans; in spite of the variety of textiles, people who constructed hunting shirts chose to use linen, linsey-woolsey, and worsted wools for their durability for these garments. The written and extant objects show linen as the primary choice for hunting shirts.

Montgomery defined linen as a "cloth of many grades and weaves made from the flax fibers."¹ Since the Stone Age, humans have cultivated flax for both its oil and textile properties. During the eighteenth-century, inhabitants of large flax producing countries such as Germany and Ireland took great pride in the quality of the textiles they produced. Farmers sowed flax seeds evenly and thickly in smooth flat beds where it grew rapidly and bloomed with small blue flowers. After reaching maturity, the plant stood roughly three feet tall and farmers pulled it up from the root, ensuring the longest fibers as possible when preparing it for cloth production. Farmers then processed the flax through five distinct steps in order to produce the plant into a usable fiber.²

¹ Florence Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), 277.

² Linda Heinrich, *Linen From Flax Seed to Woven Cloth* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2010), 8-18.

#1 Rippling: During this process, farmers pulled the flax plant through large iron or wooden rippling combs with widely spaced teeth which removed the seed bolls off the stalk.³

#2 Retting: Retting separated the fibrous core of the plant from its woody exterior. This process took one of two forms, dew retting or water retting. Dew retting required large fields to neatly lay the flax stalks into rows, while water retting utilized shallow ponds. This form of controlled rotting allowed the thick exterior to soften as the water soaked through the stalks.

#3 Breaking: Farmers gathered the stalks after retting and placed them into a flax break, a wooden device the size of a sawhorse with a hinged top corresponding with dull wooden blades. The blades crushed the stalk through the fixed opening below, exposing the fibrous core.⁴

#4 Scutching: After breaking, farmers employed large smooth knife shaped wooden boards to beat away and to remove the lasting bits of the exterior stalk.⁵

#5 Hackling: Farmers bundled the fibers and pulled them through hackles, large boards of nails that ranged in size quantity, which divided the fiber into tow, the shorter curly fibers, and line, the long fibers produced into linens.⁶

This lengthy process only created the fiber used in the manufacture of linen. Farmers sold the fiber to spinners, who spun the fiber into warp and weft threads. The spinners then sold those threads to weavers, who wove them into hundreds of different types of linen.

³ Ibid., 19-20.

⁴ Ibid., 27-29.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

Once spun and woven, linen made up the backbone of textiles in an eighteenth-century household due to its hardwearing nature. Men's shirts and women's shifts, summer clothing, table clothes, napkins, aprons, and infants' clothing all utilized the hardwearing and serviceable textile. British merchants and factors working in the American colonies imported thousands of yards of shirting material, typically woven to specific widths measured in quarters of a yard.⁷ Commonly merchants advertised "3/4s, 7/8s, and yard wide linens" for shirting translating into 27", 31 1/2", and 36" widths, respectively. These widths allowed for economic cutting and little waste on the part of the manufacturer. Early references to hunting shirts immediately showed the predominance in the choice of linen. On June 7, 1770, Samuel Holiday from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania wrote a runaway ad in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* trying to find an Irish servant man named John Stokes. The runaway "took with him a coarse sheet" and Holiday suspected that he would make it into a hunting shirt.⁸

As tensions grew between the British and Americans, descriptions of the strange uniform and its textile became commonplace. During the early summer of 1775 in Virginia, outright hostilities from rebelling colonists raged against John Murray, the 4th Earl of Dunmore and Governor of Virginia. James Parker, a Scots-Irish born merchant who resided in Norfolk, described the Virginians in the capital city as wearing an "Ozanburg shirt over their clothes,"⁹ while Dunmore wrote the Earl of Dartmouth providing a similar description and claimed, "the appearance of members of the

⁷ For modern Americans, we typically divide the yard into thirds (12 inches). This was known as carpenters measure during the 18th century. Cloth merchants divided the yard into quarters, or 9-inch increments, hence the modern term of 'fat quarter' measuring 9 inches square. Four quarters equaled a yard. Add another quarter to the yard and it equals 45 inches, or a standard cloth width for English textiles during the 18th century. Another quarter, 54 inches, creates the standard modern cloth width.

⁸ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 June 1770.

⁹ James Parker to Charles Steuart, 12 June 1775 in *The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries*, vol. 3, January-June 1906, 159.

Burgesses in the Habits of the New Institutionalized American Troops, in wearing a shirt of course linen or canvass over there clothes and a tomahawk by their sides....”¹⁰

English newspapers also provided detailed descriptions of the rebels and stated, “The General uniforms are made of brown Holland and Osnaburgs, something like a shirt, doubled caped over the shoulder.”¹¹

On April 19, 1775, war started between England and the North American colonies; immediately colonial officials began to stockpile plain linens. Cheaper linens such as osnaburg, holland, canvas, dowlas, and garlix became highly desirable when Americans needed cheap serviceable uniforms. Although these textiles differ in name and weights, the weave structure did not change. Weavers in the eighteenth-century referred to these simply woven types of linens as plain woven, with a defining characteristic where the intersection of each thread formed a ninety-degree angle. Osnaburg, a medium weight, unbleached linen originating from Osnabrück, Germany, dominated as the most desirable fabric for a hunting shirt due to its availability, cheapness, and long lasting properties.

In October 1775 in Williamsburg, Virginia, under the approval of the Third Virginia Convention, the Williamsburg Public Store House opened. The Convention ordered the enlisting of men and the raising of at least two regiments to defend the colony. With troops in the field, the Public Store became the central supply point, providing for all the needs of a soldier, from tents to uniforms. Immediately, William Aylett, the storekeeper, went to work looking for proper materials. He published a series of advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* requesting quantities of “DUCKING, or

¹⁰ Lord Dunmore to Earl of Dartmouth, 25 June 1775, PRO, C.O. 5/1353, fol. 160-172, microfilm.

¹¹ *The St. James Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 9 September 1775.

RUSSIA DRAB for tents, OSNABRUGS, for hunting-shirts, CHECKS, coarse white LINEN, or country made LINEN, for under Shirts...”¹² He received an immediate response with thousands of yards brought to the capital city. For example, a November 11, 1775 shipment from Northumberland County provided the store with over 3,000 yards of osnaburg.¹³ Six days later, the Elizabeth City District shipped 999 yards of osnaburg for Aylett’s distribution.¹⁴ In early January of 1776, William Aylett paid for the shipping of thirty pieces of osnaburg and another forty-four pieces of linen of an unknown yardage.¹⁵ As quickly as Aylett procured the material, company commanders withdrew it so it could be made into hunting shirts for their men. Regiments outside of Virginia also faced the immediate need of supplying uniforms to their men.

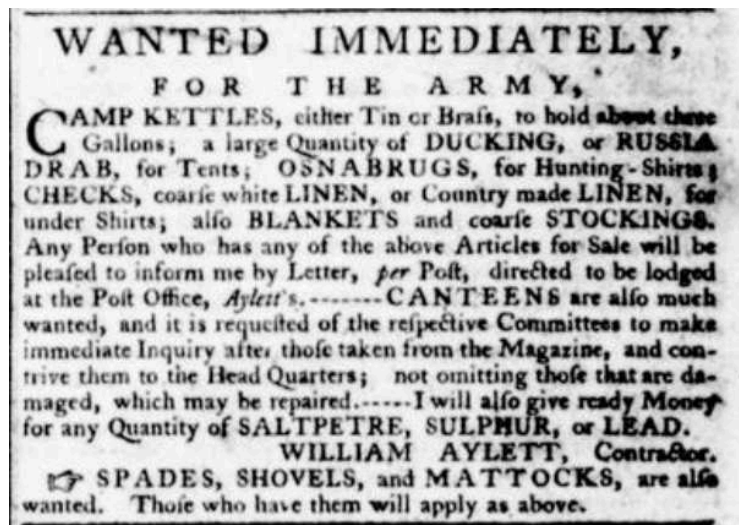


Figure 11. Advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette*, placed by William Aylett, looking for materials and supplies for the army. (Dixon and Hunter, *Virginia Gazette*, 7 October 1775.)

Hundreds of miles away from Virginia stood an army destitute of uniforms, besieging the City of Boston under the command of the newly elected General George Washington. Washington and the Continental Congress immediately sought action and

¹² Dixon and Hunter, *Virginia Gazette*, 7 October 1775.

¹³ 11 November 1775, Daybooks 1775-1780: Williamsburg Public Store, Vol. 1, Library of Virginia.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 November 1775.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 January 1775.

recommended “procuring from the Colonies of Rhode Island and Connecticut, a Quantity of Tow Cloth, for the Purpose of making of Indian or Hunting Shirts for the Men.”¹⁶

Tow, a cheap and lesser quality of linen, acted as a stopgap material until the army could procure better quality linens. Like the historical descriptions, the surviving hunting shirts show the popularity and usage of linen.

Three out of the four extant hunting shirts utilized plain-woven whitish linens. The Duryea shirt made from true white linen with a thread count of about 100 to 102 threads per inch provides a great example of finer quality linens available in the eighteenth-century. The shirt owned by the Mayor’s Office of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, uses a half bleach or yellowy linen with a thread count substantially coarser than the Duryea, ranging about 48-50 threads per inch. The shirt in the private collection made from a white linen ranges from 42-44 threads per inch.

The abundance of linen and its serviceability made an excellent choice for a hunting shirt; however, eighteenth-century Americans could choose from other options. Backcountry settlers of the North American colonies also used linsey-woolsey when making hunting shirts. In 1824, Joseph Doddridge from the western parts of Pennsylvania, published a book entitled *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania*. The book explored all facets of life living in the backcountry, including dress. Doddridge claimed, “The hunting shirt was universally worn...” and “...generally made of linsey, sometimes of course linen, and a

¹⁶ The George Washington Papers, George Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, 4 August 1775.

few of dressed deer skins.”¹⁷ Insects, such as certain moths, eat woolen fibers, which may explain why to date only one garment survives made from this blended textile.

A plain-woven blended fabric, linsey-woolsey used a natural linen warp wrapped onto the beam of the loom, while the weaver filled the weft with wool. The Michael Crow hunting shirt from Green County, Pennsylvania is the only extant shirt made of this blended textile. Dyed red, the filled wool in the weft gives the shirt a mottled red hue.¹⁸ Woven in Pennsylvania, the shirt interestingly used two different widths of fabric, one undetermined width for the shirt body and a narrow three-inch width for the fringe. The blend of the two fibers provided the wearer with an extremely durable, hardwearing fabric along with some warmth.



Figure 12. Detail of the linsey-woolsey on the Michael Crow hunting shirt. (Photo taken by Neal Hurst, Courtesy of the Green County Historical Society.)

While some hunting shirts used linens and blended linsey-woolseys, others used worsted wools. Located in Southwestern Virginia, two miles south of Ingles Ferry along Mill Creek, near present-day Pulaski, James McCorkle operated a large storehouse and provisioning center for those headed south and west. On May 26, 1775, Joseph Barclay

¹⁷ Joseph Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: John S. Ritenour and Wm. T. Lindsey, 1912), 91.

¹⁸ Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870*, 279.

entered the store and purchased seven yards of Cambleteen and one ounce of colored thread among other items. Three days later, on Joseph Barclay's behalf, a Mrs. Thompson bought "1/2 yd Cambleteen to finish his hunting shirt" and "1 ounce colored thread."¹⁹ During the eighteenth-century, consumers often utilized Cambleteen, a worsted wool or worsted wool/goat hair blend, for not only upholstery but also for men's suiting. Unlike woolens, worsted wool used the long wooly fibers from sheep, and manufacturers combed the wool, aligning the fibers, instead of carding. Once spun, the fibers become very tough and similar to those found in linen. Certainly the choice of wool would keep the wearer warm, but would provide longevity to the garment. Barclay's purchase and subsequent additional purchases by Mrs. Thompson remains the only known references to a worsted wool hunting shirt from the eighteenth-century.

As the textiles varied in eighteenth-century hunting shirts, so did the color of these garments. The vast majority of runaway and deserter descriptions found in newspapers show a predominance of white or "brown" linens, meaning the natural color of linen which took on a grey/brown tone. In 1776, a German officer who faced American soldiers at the Battle of Long Island, described them wearing "black, white, and purple linen blouses"²⁰ American artist Charles Willson Peale also described a multitude of colors worn on hunting shirts in the Philadelphia area and claimed that "very often these shirts were dyed brown – yellow, pink, and blue black, any colour according to the fancy of the companies."²¹ The backcountry traveler John Smyth also claimed that

¹⁹27 May and 29 May 1775, James McCorkle Day Book, New Dublin, Virginia, Private Collection.

²⁰ Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 38.

²¹ Jules David Prown, *Art as Evidence: Writing on Art and Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 170.

its inhabitants chose a wide variety of color and said “Their hunting, or rifle shirts, they have also died in a variety of colours, some yellow, others red, some brown, and many wear them quite white.”²² The only true backcountry extant example; the Michael Crow hunting shirt, takes on a reddish hue with its mixed linen and wool fabric. In the end, eighteenth-century North Americans could choose from a huge selection of textiles and colors for their hunting shirts.

In spite of the variety of available fabrics, eighteenth-century Americans tended to select hardwearing and serviceable textiles for hunting shirts. The vast array of linens proved the most common for these garments, while blended linsey-woolseys and worsteds provided readily available and inexpensive textiles with the addition of some warmth for the wearer. Likewise, color choices often stayed within the neutral tones of whites through grey/browns; however, period sources document an enormous range of other colors. Eighteenth-century North American colonists fully understood each of the different materials and made choices based on their personal needs. Understanding these facets helps to place hunting shirts within the greater context of material consumption and textile production within the eighteenth-century.

²² John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart, *A Tour of the United States of America* (Dublin: Printed by G. Perrin, 1784), 116.

Chapter V Fringe

Undoubtedly, the fringe applied to the edge of the hunting shirts sparks interest amongst many scholars. Usually applied to bed hangings and upholstery, fringe rarely finds any application on either men's or women's eighteenth-century clothing. Although seemingly simple, the techniques for creating the fringe varied over time, place, and region and may show a blend of western and Native cultures. The fringe on the hunting shirt does not function, but, without it, the shirt loses one of its distinctive features.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, the hunting shirt started to radiate out of its regional existence in the backcountry of the southern colonies. The widespread usage of the shirt during the war allowed fringe to become a descriptor when looking for runaways or military deserters. In July 1775, Alexander Crage ran away from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania wearing "a brown hunting shirt with a large cape, and long fringe."¹ Captain Abraham Duryea's hunting shirt, that he wore at the Battle of White Plains on October 26, 1776, used an excessive amount of fringe. Details of Duryea's fringe included a zig-zag pattern down the front and hem with rosette tufts and intertwining hearts of fringe on the cape.²

The majority of hunting shirts made during the eighteenth-century, including three out of the four extant garments, used plain-woven linen, a textile manufactured from the fibrous core of the flax plant.³ The defining characteristic of a plain-woven

¹ *The Pennsylvania Packet* published as *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, 24 July 1775.

² Henry M. Cooke IV, "Research Notes on the Design and Construction of the Hunting Frock Worn by Captain Abraham Duryea, Ca. 1776" (Washington's Headquarters Historic Site, Newburgh, New York, photocopy), 1-10.

³ Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870*, 277-278.

textile used the simplest method of weaving, where the intersection of each thread formed a ninety-degree angle. Plain-woven textiles make the manufacture of fringe quick and easy. Lengths of scraps or “cabbage” created the fringe on the Duryea shirt. The tailor or seamstress pulled a single thread out of the scrap to create the desired width, which also made a perfect straight line to cut. Once cut and pressed in half with an iron, the manufacturer sewed the fold onto all of the of hemmed edges of the shirt and picked out the raw end to make the fringe. Joseph Doddridge, a writer in the 1820s mentioned this technique and stated “the cape was large, and sometimes handsomely fringed with a raveled piece of cloth.” Although a simple technique, it consumed extra fabric, which increased the expense of clothing during the eighteenth-century.



Figure 13. Image of pulled fringe on a reproduction hunting shirt made by the author. (Photo Courtesy of Neal Hurst.)

Two surviving hunting shirts, one owned by the City of Harrisburg in Pennsylvania dated circa 1780 and another in a private collection dated circa 1790, showed a very different method of fringing. Evolving away from raveled pieces of fabric, these two extant examples used a type of fringe woven as a tape or lace on a narrow loom. Imported from England and later produced domestically in America, upholsters used this type fringe on bed hangings, curtains, and interiors of coaches. Extra

fabric and time eliminated from the mass production of hunting shirts during the Revolution saved money. A streamlined assembly facilitated the change from raveled fabric to woven fringe.



Figure 14. Detail of woven fringe from a hunting shirt in a private collection. (Photo Courtesy of Neal Hurst.)

With rapid increase of hunting shirt production during the Revolution, manufacturers of small and narrow goods located in large economic centers took advantage of the war. Fringe and lace manufactory blossomed in Philadelphia prior to the American Revolution allowing tradesmen such as James Butland, a “fringe and laceman,” to establish businesses in the city. Butland frequently advertised in Philadelphia newspapers the trimmings he produced and later the furnishings he made for the army. In February 1776 he announced “...may be had all kinds of uniforms for officers, in gold and silver, and all kinds of laces and trimmings for drummers, and

Butland never specifically stated that he made fringe for hunting shirts; however, he claimed the skill of fringe manufacturing and definitely produced trims and “bindings” for the Continental Army. A later account from a 1787 issue of the *Pennsylvania Mercury* included a letter thanking the regiments on parade or review in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Commander in Chief, General Cilley, wrote “...to return his particular thanks to such regiments, companies, and individuals, who have uniformed themselves with rifle frocks and overalls, trimmed with binding or fringe of the same color with the facings of the brigade.”⁶ Bindings may refer to yet another type of fringing material or may be another name for the woven tape found on the hunting shirt in Harrisburg and the one owned in a private collection. In other cases, merchants specially listed “fringe for hunting shirts,” such as can be found in John Ross’s 1777 advertisement in Philadelphia.⁷ The use of woven fringe on Continental Army hunting shirts remains uncertain. Nearing the close of the conflict, former Assistant Clothier General Samuel Caldwell recommended that the uniform for 1783 would include a hunting shirt consisting of “2 yards of Russia sheeting, thread and fringe.”⁸ Including the thread and fringe as separate items typically meant discrete material purchases.

⁶ *New-Hampshire Gazette*, published as *New-Hampshire Gazette, and General Advertiser*, 21 November 1787.

⁷ *The Pennsylvania Packet* published as *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, 28 June 1777.

⁸ Marko Zlatich, *Washington's Army 1779-1783: Volume 2* (London: Reed International Books Ltd, 1995), 10.



Figure 16. Detail of woven fringe on the hunting shirt from the City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. (Permission to use photograph courtesy of Mayor Stephan R. Reed, City of Harrisburg, at The National Civil War Museum.)

Despite the widespread adoption of this American fashion, backcountry inhabitants continued to wear the garment throughout the eighteenth century, not as military dress, but as daily clothing. When John Ferdinand Smyth completed his tour through the newly formed United States in 1784, he remarked on the use of fringe on hunting shirts. Smyth noted “the whole dress is very singular...being a hunting shirt, somewhat resembling a wagoner’s frock, ornamented with a great many fringes.”⁹ He also commented on the apparent importance of the fringe and that “according to the number and variety of the fringes on his hunting shirt...he estimates his finery, and absolutely conceives himself of equal consequence, more civilized, polite, and more elegantly dressed than the most brilliant peer at St. James.”¹⁰ Only a single backcountry hunting shirt survives from the eighteenth-century.

⁹John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart, *A Tour of the United States of America* (Dublin: Printed by G. Perrin, 1784), 137.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

Another unique hunting shirt from the late eighteenth-century survives at the Green County Historical Society in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Nancy, the future wife of Michael Crow, sewed the shirt out of red lisney-woolsey for their 1799 wedding. Domestically woven in Pennsylvania, the shirt used two different widths of fabric, one undetermined wide width for the shirt body and a narrow three-inch width for the fringe. Nancy Crow cut the narrow width in half, seamed it onto the shirt with the selvage or finished ends of the textile facing outward, and then turned and hemmed the raw edges. The maker carefully pulled the natural linen warp threads from the single layered selvage edge leaving only the twisted loops of wool as the fringe. Quite the opposite of wartime production, the fringe found on the Crow shirt took time and careful execution. The tradition of raveling pieces of fabric for fringe remained well established in the backcountry of the newly formed United States, but the new nation would soon call upon the hunting shirt to go to war again in the early nineteenth-century.



Figure 17. Detail of the woolen loops that create the fringe on the Crow Hunting Shirt (Photo taken by Neal Hurst, Courtesy of the Green County Historical Society.)

Two decades after the end of the American War for Independence, the United States Department of War began preparations for a second war with England. The United States established the Office of Public Purveyor in 1795.¹¹ This office acquired the needed materials, arms, clothing, and naval stores for the army and navy in times of peace and war. During the 1790s, the American army remained small in number, but with war imminent, recruitment began to fill out the ranks. With the success of riflemen during the Revolution, the United States Congress authorized four regiments of riflemen for the War of 1812, adopting a green hunting shirt with yellow fringe as their uniform. Early in the nineteenth century, the Department of War decided to exclusively use woven fringe for hunting shirts. The Office of the Public Purveyor created an abstract of the materials issued to tailors in the year 1812, and this list included 91,000 yards of fringe for both hunting shirts or rifle frocks (the nineteenth-century term) and trousers.¹²

A surviving tailor's blotter from the United States Arsenal in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, located on the Schuylkill River, listed materials withdrawn for the construction of military clothing. In 1812, Ezekiel Howell, a Philadelphia tailor, produced 900 rifle frocks in March and 900 more in May. For the first 900 garments, Howell withdrew 6,000 yards of yellow fringe and two months later he requested another 2,400 yards.¹³ Another tailor under contract through the arsenal, Jonathan Carson, withdrew 18,000 yards of yellow fringe for the making for 2,000 rifle frocks that same

¹¹ John F. Callen, *Military Laws of the United States*, (Philadelphia: Printed by George W. Childs, 1863), 107.

¹² Abstract of materials issued to the under mentioned Tailors for the purpose of making Clothing for the US Army for the year 1812, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Vouchers and Associated Papers and Receipts of Clothing establishment, Box 21, Entry 2118, Record Group 92, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building), 262.

¹³ Tailors Blotter 1810-1813, Records of the Office of the Quarter Master General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Vol. 14, Entry 2117, Record Group 92, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building), 91.

year.¹⁴ After the War of 1812, the hunting shirt quickly saw its demise as a viable uniform for the American army. A garment made chiefly from linen does not withstand heavy military service. From 1815 onward, the United States Army clothed its troops, including riflemen, in durable woolens.

While traditions remained unaltered in the backcountry, the change from raveled to woven fringe in the mid 1770s enabled tailors to produce hunting shirts rapidly and to keep a constant flow of uniforms to Washington's army in the field. All four surviving hunting shirts show a distinct separate application of fringe sewn directly to the body of the garment, not an unhemmed raveling shirt body. Each shirt differs in amount of fringe and application technique showing regional variances. Although no known reasons survive explaining the usage of the fringe, it indisputably remains a signature feature of the hunting shirt.

¹⁴ Order 7 May 1812 Material Jonathan Carson for Rifle Frocks, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Philadelphia Supply Agencies 1795-1858, Abstracts of Expenditures, Orders for Clothing and Supplies, Record Group 92, Entry 2118, Box 181, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Building).

Chapter VI
Patterns

Two pattern characteristics defined American hunting shirts, the center front opening and the cape. Eighteenth-century tailors and seamstresses used geometric patterning to create the pieces of these garments. Unlike the curvilinear patterns used for coats and breeches, the square and rectangular pieces that make a shirt all terminate in ninety-degree angles. The patterning and narrow woven widths of fabric allowed for the best economy when cutting and nothing went to waste. Like the fringe on all of the shirts edges, without the center front opening and the cape, the hunting shirt's identity becomes lost.

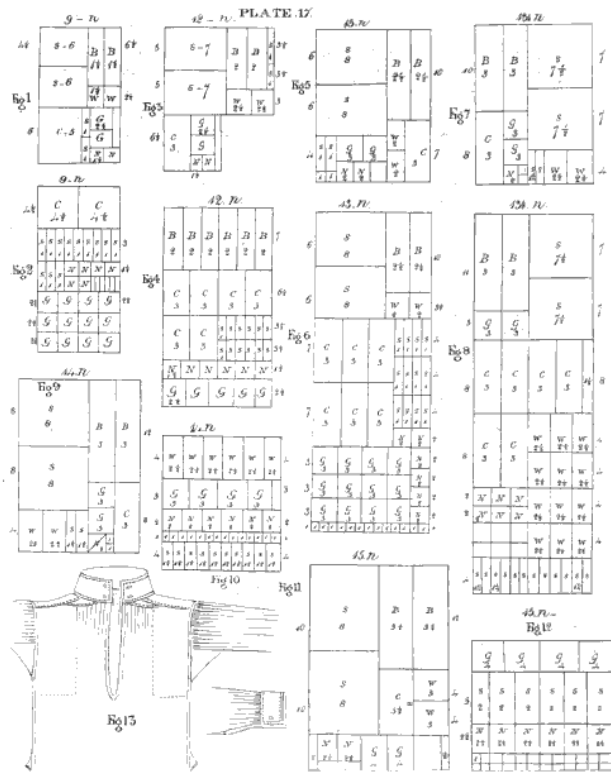


Figure 18. The layout of dozens of shirts using the best economy of the fabric (Illustration in *The Workwoman's Guide, Containing Instructions in Cutting Out and Completing Articles of Wearing Apparel* (Birmingham: Thomas Evans, 1840, p. 345.)

Many eighteenth-century persons described hunting shirts as resembling smocks or frocks. When John Ferdinand Smyth completed his tour through the newly formed United States in 1784, he commented on the appearance of hunting shirts worn in the backcountry and stated, “the whole dress is very singular...being a hunting shirt, somewhat resembling a wagoner’s frock, ornamented with a great many fringes.”¹

Typically made from course linens and constructed in the same method as a shirt, smocks or frocks extended from the wearer’s neck to often below the knees. Unlike a hunting shirt, smocks did not open from neck to hem down center front of the garment, but in every other manner they mimicked typical shirt construction. This additional layer protected the garments beneath the smock or frock from excessive wear. Occupations particularly in New England, such as farmers, sawyers, wagoners, and carters commonly adopted this durable dress, but a smock only resembled a hunting shirt.

¹ John Ferdinand Smyth Stuart, *A Tour of the United States of America* (Dublin: Printed by G. Perrin, 1784), 137.



Figure 19. The enraged farmer (*above left*) wears his protective smock while fending off a suitor from his daughter. Note the smock does not split entirely down the center front. (*The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase.*)

In 1775, upon the arrival of Daniel Morgan's riflemen in Boston from Virginia, New Englanders received their first physical view of a hunting shirt. For many like Simeon Alexander it created a lasting memory. Alexander lived his entire life in Northfield, Massachusetts where he served in the militia and witnessed the American army during the Siege of Boston. When filing for a pension in 1832, he commented on the riflemen's uniform and stated "Morgan came with his regiment of riflemen either with Washington or soon after his arrival. The uniform of Morgan's regiment was a short

frock made of pepper and salt colored cotton cloth like a common working frock worn by our people, except that it was short and open before, to be tied with strings.”² Clearly, the garment differed not only in material but how it closed from typical smocks or frocks worn in New England.

While the New Englanders adopted the term hunting shirt or hunting frock for the garment, South Carolinians used a more revealing term when describing hunting shirts. Familiar with hunting shirts worn by settlers moving down backcountry on the Great Wagon Road, South Carolinians typically used the regional term of split shirt, referring to the center front opening of the garment, when talking about hunting shirts. In the spring of 1774, a young slave boy robbed of his master’s horse and personal letters along Goose Creek, South Carolina, described his three accosters in the earliest known reference to wearing split shirts.³ While writing to his son John from Charleston, South Carolina, on August 21, 1776, Henry Laurens commented on the appearance of the South Carolina regiments and stated, “If I had your Pencil I would draw you the Portrait of a Group of our Warriors in Split Shirts...the Dress is light, convenient & cheap.”⁴ Trying to improve soldierly appearance, South Carolinian commander Francis Marion also used the term in his orderly book in 1776 and stated “No soldier to mount guard or appear on the parade without his split shirt & Regimental leggins.”⁵ Newspaper editors in both America and England reprinted a Charleston, South Carolina poem entitled *A Familiar Epistle From America*. A stanza in this 1778 poem read “...late of Tories the prince, and his country’s

² John C. Dan, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 104-106.

³ *The South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, 26 April 1774.

⁴ Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 21 August 1776 in David R. Chesnutt, ed., *The Papers of Henry Laurens, 6 January 1776 to 1 November 1776* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 280.

⁵ Orders 20 October 1776 in Patrick O’Kelley, *Unwaried Patience and Fortitude: Francis Marion’s Orderly Book* (West Conshohocken: Infinity Publishing, 2007), 111.

great foe, Now the Congress's Chairman, a split shirted beau....” The split shirted beau referred to Henry Laurens who served as President of the Continental Congress from November 1, 1777 to December 9, 1778, but to make sure the readers understood the reference, the editors included a printed (†) that referred to a note at the bottom of the poem with a corresponding (†) that stated, “The Uniform of the South Carolina Rebels is a hunting-shirt, such as the farmers servants in England.”⁶ The note compared hunting shirts to the smocks worn in England and provided a visual reference to foreign readers, but also clarified to Americans outside of South Carolina the unique regional terminology for the garment. Other than written references, surviving garments help create a holistic understanding of the patterning techniques used in hunting shirts.

In 1902, the author Charles Knowles Bolton published a landmark book entitled, *A Private Soldier Under Washington*. Unlike authors before him, Bolton explored the common soldier in Washington's army using primary sources and material objects. In chapter 6, Bolton included the first image of a hunting shirt in material form, purportedly copied from an extant piece dating from the American Revolution. For decades, the image in Bolton's book set the benchmark for further reproductions of the garment even though the pattern and cut does not show the typical characteristics of extant pieces. Bolton attributed the hunting shirt from the collection of James Edward Kelly.

⁶ *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 14 February 1778.



Figure 20. The image of a hunting shirt in the collection of James E. Kelly, purportedly copied from an original dated to the American Revolution. (Photograph in Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902, p. 162.)

Born in New York City in 1855, Kelly witnessed the American Civil War, which established his lifelong interest in American history. He studied at the National Academy of Design and later worked as an engraver and illustrator for Scribner's and Harper's Monthly magazines.⁷ In 1884, Kelly received his first major commission to create bronze tablets commemorating the Revolutionary War Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey. Known for his accuracy and detail, Kelly "spared no labor or expense to obtain originals of the arms, accouterments, furniture, uniforms, etc. of the period."⁸ The Monmouth commission started a series of historical bronze sculptures to commemorate officers and events both from the Revolution and the American Civil War. Kelly used his collections to reproduce objects within his sculpture.

⁷ James E. Kelly and William B. Styple, ed., *Tell me of Lincoln: Memories of Abraham Lincoln, The Civil War, & Life in Old New York* (Kearny: Belle Grove Publishing Company, 2009), 10-12.

⁸ J. C. Pumpelly, "Some of the Women who Skillfully Planned and Heroically Suffered in the Revolution for the Cause of American Independence," in I.M. Green, ed., *Americana* (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1912), 810.

For centuries, artists acquired props to replicate historic scenes within their own work. After the American Revolution, painter Benjamin West wrote from England on August 4, 1783 to a former student, Charles Willson Peale in Philadelphia, requesting him to “send what ever you thought would give me the most exact knowledge of the costumes of the American Army.”⁹ Peale responded quickly and stated

...remembering an acquaintance who possessed a hunting shirt & leggins I have obtained and sent them by Mr. Wister, such our riflemen used to wear with Powder Horn & shot pouch of the Indian fashion, with Wampum Belts, small Round hat of bucks tails and some times Feathers. Very often these shirts were dyed brown – yellow, pink, and blue black colour according to the fancy of the companies.¹⁰

Peale later noted in the letter “A bit of fringe instead of the ruffles on the shirt would be better.”¹¹ In 1786, West painted that hunting shirt in *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec*.

The hunting shirt pictured that Kelly owned did not have the typical characteristics of a true eighteenth-century example. The shirt splits only several inches from the neck while all other surviving examples and documentation have the garment split completely down the front. Close examination of the image also reveals a yoke sewn into the back of Kelly’s shirt. This method of construction began in the mid nineteenth-century and continues to the present day, making the attribution of a true copy to the American Revolution very suspect. The shirt, unfortunately, remains missing to this day.

⁹ Benjamin West to Charles Willson Peale, 4 August 1783, in Jules David Prown, *Art as Evidence: Writing on Art and Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 170.

¹⁰ Prown, *Art as Evidence: Writing on Art and Material Culture*, Charles Willson Peale to Benjamin West, 25 August 1783.

¹¹ *Ibid.*



Figure 21. Detail of the hunting shirt in the collection of James E. Kelly, showing the yoke on the center back panel. (Photograph in Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902, p. 162.)

Bolton assured his readers that the garment pictured in the book was “made from a model of the Revolutionary period.”¹² In 1909, Washington’s Headquarters in Newburgh, New York displayed the Duryea Hunting Shirt, but knowledge of the garment remained scarce. Other information survived only in written historic text and in period paintings. As an artist with an obsession for accuracy, Kelly potentially modeled his shirt after John Trumbull’s *Surrender of General Burgoyne*. In 1785, Trumbull returned to his studies with Benjamin West and “began to meditate seriously the subjects of national history, of events of the Revolution.”¹³ On February 6, 1817, American Congress authorized Trumbull to paint four pivotal events from the American Revolution for display in the Capitol. Trumbull finished the eighteen by twelve foot paintings and installed them in the Capitol rotunda in 1824.¹⁴ As a historical artist, Kelly undoubtedly

¹² Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 163.

¹³ John Trumbull, *Autobiography, reminiscences and letters of John Trumbull, from 1756-1841* (New Haven: B. L. Hamlen, 1841) 93.

¹⁴ Martin J. Manning and Clarence R. Wyatt, ed., *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 111.

knew Trumbull's work and his accuracy, as Trumbull lived through the events he attempted to capture in his own art.

The central figure of *American General Daniel Morgan accepting Burgoyne's Surrender* wears a hunting shirt that bares a striking resemblance to the copied garment in Kelly's collection. Both shirts show two parallel rows of fringe on the on the cape along with fringe at the wrist and hem. Trumbull also painted Morgan with a sash around his waist closing the hunting shirt, leaving the top several inches open exposing his buff colored waistcoat. Kelly's garment imitates the small slit seen in the portrait, but left off one of the defining features of a hunting shirt, the split front. Since 1902, two additional hunting shirts found in private collections helped to expand the body knowledge of period patterning.



Figure 22. The image of a hunting shirt (*above left*) in the collection of James E. Kelly and detail (*above right*) from Jonathan Trumbull's *The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, October 16, 1777*. Note the similarities with the incorrect interpretation of the narrow bosom slit, double row of fringe at the cape, and fringe at the hem and wrist. (Photograph in Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902, p. 162 and detail from *The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, October 16, 1777*, Yale University Art Gallery.)

Since 1855, the Duryea hunting shirt remained on view at Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh, New York, as a relic from the Revolution. In 1983, the State of New York asked Henry Cooke, a trained historic tailor and conservator, to complete a full study and examination of the surviving garment that revealed an unusual pattern layout. Depending on the width of the textile, eighteenth-century shirts either folded over the shoulder or folded down one length of the body. If the shirt folded over the shoulder, it placed the selvages running down both lengths of the body which the tailor or seamstress joined leaving space for the armseyes, making the body one large tube that the sleeves would set into. As figure 25.2 shows, the hunting shirt from Harrisburg used this method of construction. If it folded in half from left to right, it placed one fold down one

length and selvages meeting on the other, the tailor or seamstress then cuts down the one fold twelve inches to create the armscye or sleeve opening. As figure 24.2 shows, the Duryea shirt left off this traditional method and placed the selvage edge at the hem and folded the ends of the fabric into the middle, creating the defining center front opening. With folds down each side, the tailor or seamstress cuts down the twelve inches on both folds to allow for the armscyees. This unique patterning style became overlooked due to its peculiarity.

Found in a private collection in 2011, another hunting shirt that dated to the late 1780s used the same patterning technique found in the Duryea shirt. As shown in figure 26.2, the ends folded into the center to create the center front opening. Out of the four extant examples, two now show this trend in manufacturing. The makers of these shirts always intended them to open down the center front, reinforcing that defining feature along with the cape on the shoulders.

Unlike a body shirt that most eighteenth-century men wore, hunting shirts added a cape around the neck. When cutting the cape, extant examples placed the pattern on the fold of the fabric. Once cut, the cape opened to a single layer, leaving the edge raw or turning and finishing before applying the fringe to the exterior. The term cape varied when referencing hunting shirts. Eighteenth-century tailors interchangeably used the term cape and collar to refer to what modern twenty-first century Americans call a “collar”. This confusing terminology made the March 15, 1776 references from the Virginia Committee of Safety perplexing to interpret. The clerk wrote “the Committee allow cuffs and capes to be added to the hunting shirts of the regulars at the expense of

the country.”¹⁵ In this instance, the hunting shirts already possessed the wide shoulder cape, but to help with identification of the regiments, the Committee ordered colored cuffs and “capcs” (meaning a falling collar) be added to the shirts.

Pictorial evidence illustrates the capes finishing with both rounded and squared corners during the American Revolution. German Adjutant General Carl Leopold Baurmeister arrived in America as a seasoned and experienced soldier and officer from the Seven Years War. Baurmeister’s received his first close confrontation with the American army at the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776. He described the rebels’ uniforms and stated, “they wear black, white, and purple linen blouses with fringe on their sleeves and collars in the Spanish fashion.”¹⁶ Spain maintained a long tradition within their army to use collars with rounded corners and with Baurmeister’s service on the continent they made an easy comparison. An English newspaper columnist also noted the large capes around the neck of the garment. One article read “The people all over America are determined to die or be free, and as they have taken up Arms are determined never to lay them down till the late acts are repealed. The General uniforms are made of brown Holland and Osnaburgs, something like a shirt, doubled caped over the shoulder, in imitation of the Indians....”¹⁷ Pictorial evidence from the eighteenth-century suggested the usage of multiple capes on hunting shirts, but this may stem from the confusion of the term cape and collar. Only single layer capes with or without collars survive on extant hunting shirts.

¹⁵ Virginia Committee of Safety, 15 March 1775, in Robert L. Scribner and Brent Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence*, Vol. 6 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973 – 1983), 213.

¹⁶ Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957) 38.

¹⁷ *St. James’s Chronicle or The British Evening Post*, Sept. 9, 1775 – Sept. 12, 1775.



Figure 23. Detail of the Spanish officers collar. (Detail of Benjamin West, *Two Officers and a Groom in a Landscape*. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton.)

The cape on the hunting shirt did not serve any purpose other than esthetics. Other eighteenth-century caped garments such as cloaks, great coats, and roquelares¹⁸ utilized heavily napped or fulled woolens known as broadcloth. Primarily made in the North and West of England, these wide textiles became the pride of the English wool economy.¹⁹ In 1759, George Washington wrote to his London factor, Robert Cary & Company, to send him “a New Market Great Coat with a loose hood to it made of Blew Drab or broad Cloth with Straps before according to the present taste, let it be made of such Cloth as will turn a good Shower of Rain....”²⁰ The thin, typically linen unlined cape around the neck would not turn a shower of rain. As discussed earlier in section one

¹⁸ A cloak that resembles a great coat with buttons down the front, no sleeves, and a unique “bat wing” collar arrangement

¹⁹ Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870*, 177-179.

²⁰ The George Washington Papers, George Washington to Robert Cary & Company, 30 November 1759.

of this thesis, the origin of the cape may come from the cheap ready to wear greatcoats, but serve only an esthetic rather than practical function.

The two pattern features of the center front opening and the cape around the neck defined the American hunting shirt. For decades researchers turned to Charles Knowles Bolton's book, *The Private Soldier Under Washington*, to explain the curious eighteenth-century shirt while ignoring not only extant examples but the written primary source record. Bolton's shirt from artist James Edward Kelly's collection does not show the typical characteristics of an eighteenth-century hunting shirt and appeared copied from Jonathan Trumbull's portrait of Daniel Morgan accepting the surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga. Eighteenth-century written references and terminology along with two extant pieces showed a trend in patterning techniques that helped to reinforce the center front opening. The cape around the shoulder, although seemingly practical, seems only a lasting vestige from the garments past generation. The thin light textiles provided little to no protection from the elements. Like the fringe applied the garments edges, the distinctive cape helped to define the hunting shirt.

Conclusion

The hunting shirt enjoys a long legacy within American history. Its roots firmly established the garment in the backcountry areas of the North American colonies in the mid eighteenth-century, creating the first true American style of dress. The distinctive mix of cultures and economy helped to create the hunting shirt, but geological landscapes kept it from spreading to the eastern seaboard. As tensions grew between the English and American colonies, Virginians adopted the hunting shirt as a symbol of defiance against royal authority. Upon the outbreak of war with the British Empire, the generation that fought the American Revolution adopted the hunting shirt from the Virginia backwoodsmen as a cheap, light, and convenient uniform for the fledgling Continental Army. Americans continued to wear the hunting shirt in militia companies after the Revolution and the garment saw its last usage in a military context during the War of 1812. The American Army desired a more durable uniform and abandoned the linen garment in favor of woolens. The hunting shirt rapidly left the memory of Americans and future generations would come to know the garment only through museum exhibits and art from the Revolutionary era.

Of the thousands of hunting shirts manufactured throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, only four examples survive to date in museums and private collections across the United States. Studying these garments allowed for the combining of the historic record with period manufacturing techniques that developed a holistic methodology. The materials used for the construction of hunting shirts employed cheap, hard wearing, and readily available linens, linen and wool blends, and worsted wools. The fringes that adorned the edges and cape differed depending on the location of

manufacture and the usage of the garment. Understanding the patterning techniques shed light on the center front opening of the hunting shirt, making it a signature feature of the garment.

Although George Washington Parke Custis claimed that hunting shirts “disappeared from among the Americans...only to be found in museums, like ancient armor”¹ in 1860, they continue to resonate through the modern American society. Through the 1950’s, Walt Disney developed television and motion pictures based on great American heroes. Fess Parker’s portrayal of Davy Crockett and later Daniel Boone, brought the fringed garment back into the public eye. In the 1960s through 1970s, the University of Tennessee and West Virginia University adopted hardy, resolute, and fierce mascots clad in hunting shirts known as “*The Volunteer*” and “*The Mountaineer*.” With a garment tied to American principles of independence, freedom, and liberty, Americans continue to connect with the hunting shirt and identify with the garment’s legacy.

¹ George Washington Parke Custis, Mary Randolph Custis Lee and Benson John Lossing, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860), 272.

Appendix

For this thesis, I studied three out of the four extant hunting shirts in both public and private collections across the United States. I photographed, collected construction information, documented textiles, and patterned each shirt. This appendix includes overall photos and patterns for each garment. Each part of the pattern is labeled alphabetically to explain each shape and listed below are descriptions for those parts. Each example does not contain every element listed below.

Band collar: A narrow band of fabric finishing off the neck edge of the hunting shirt.

Cape: Cape going around the neck.

Cuff: Large coat like cuff at the end of the sleeve.

Divided neck gusset: A square piece of fabric cut through the middle to make triangles. These gussets splay out and round the neck opening

Shirt body: Main body of the hunting shirt.

Shoulder strap: Piece of fabric used to reinforce the shoulder.

Sleeve: Sleeve of the shirt. Patterns marked (cut two) mean the sleeves were cut out in two separate pieces.

Standing collar: Much larger standing collar used to finish off the neck edge of the hunting shirt.

Underarm gusset: This square gusset set into the sleeve, helps to widen the sleeve and round out the armseye.

Wristband: Narrow band that finishes the end of the sleeves at the wrist.

Wristband facing: Narrow band that finishes the end of the sleeves on the interior wrist.



Figure 24.1. Reproduction of the Abraham Duryea hunting shirt, 1776. (*The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase.*)

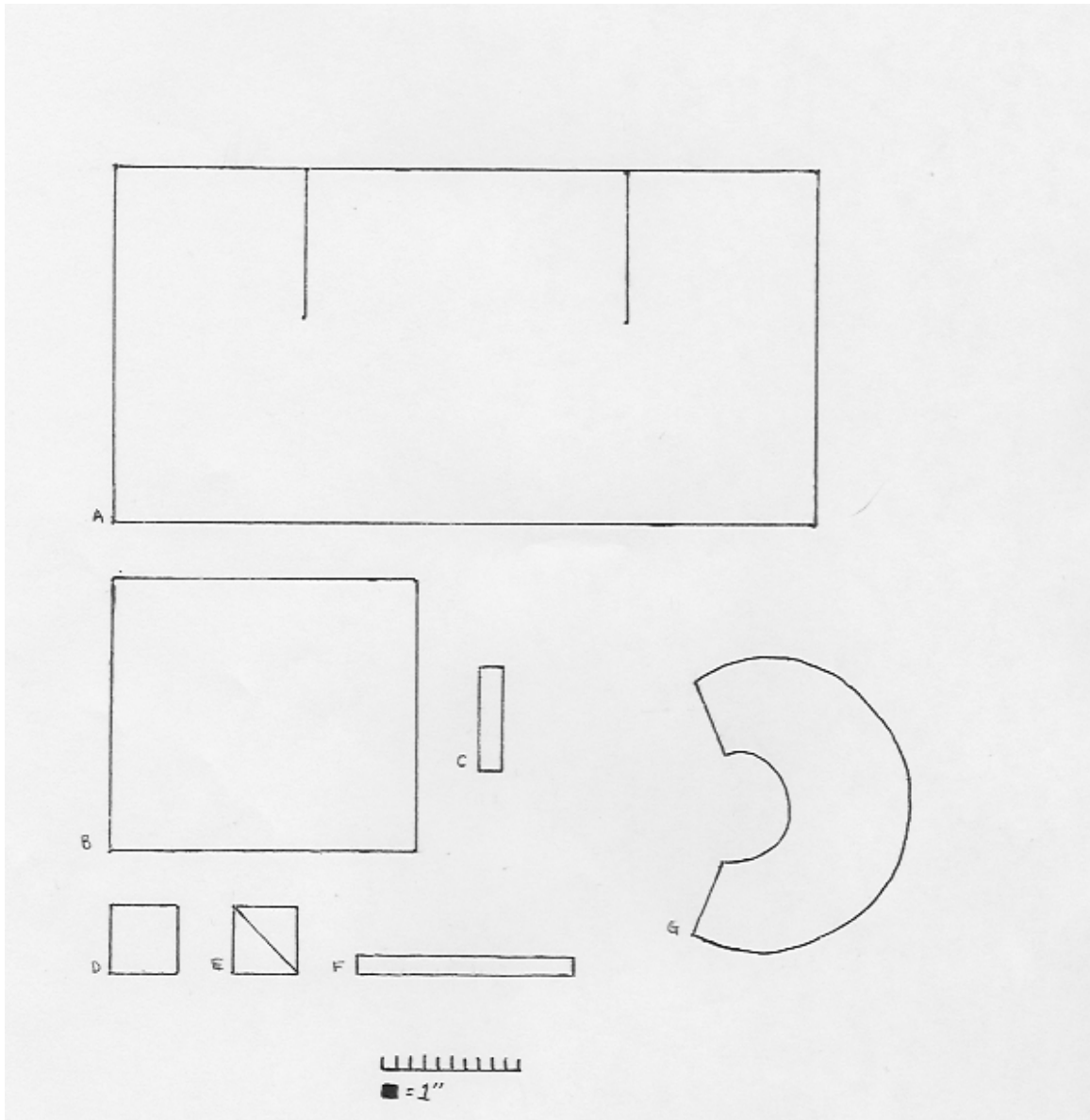


Figure 24.2. *A* Shirt body, *B* Sleeve, *C* Wristband, *D* Underarm gusset, *E* Divided neck gusset, *F* Band collar, *G* Cape. (Pattern originally drawn by Henry M Cooke IV and redrawn by Neal Hurst.)



Figure 25.1. Hunting shirt owned by the Mayor's Office, City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, ca. 1785. (Photo taken by Neal Hurst, permission to use photograph courtesy of Mayor Stephan R. Reed, City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.)

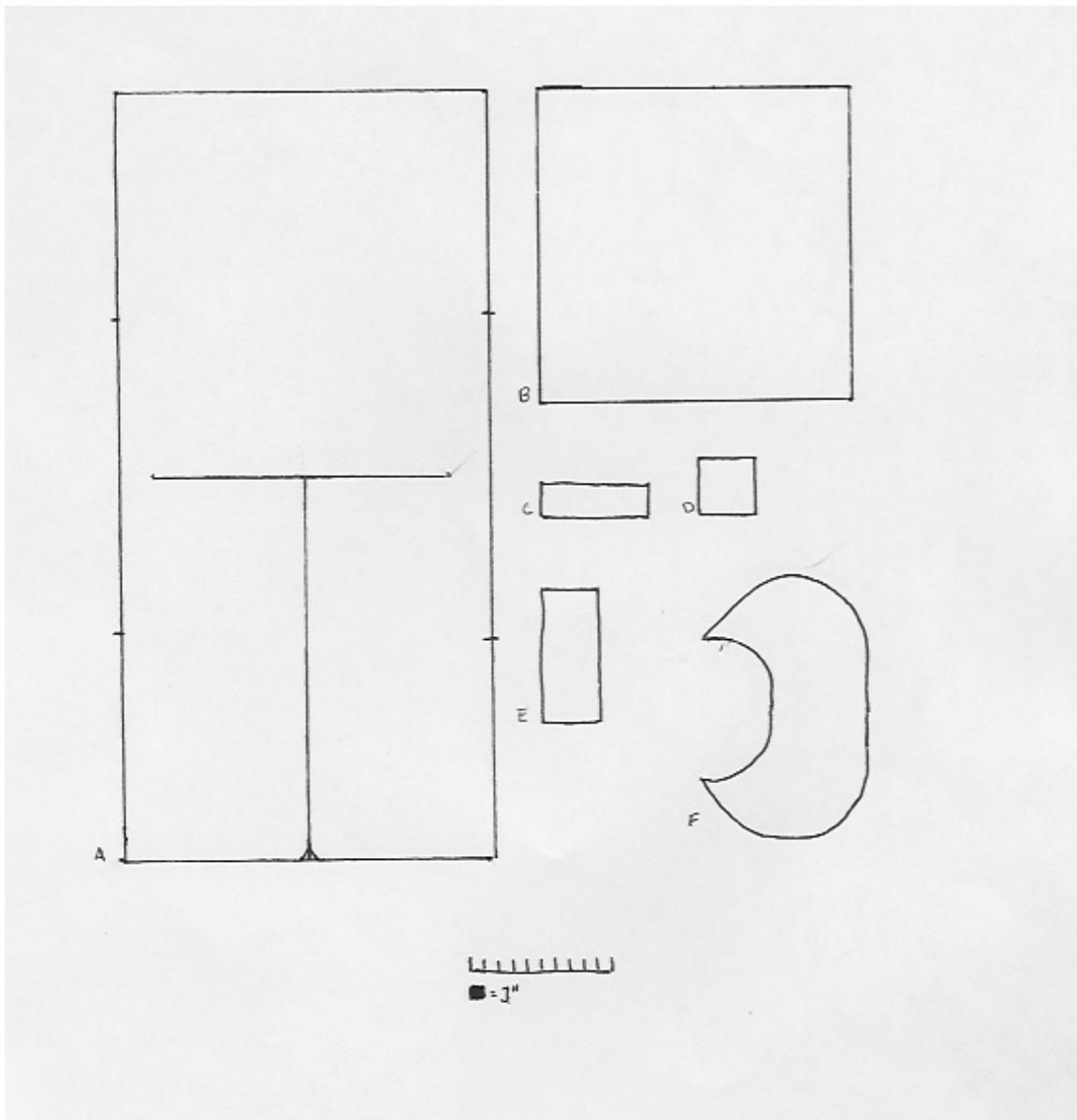


Figure 25.2. *A* Body, *B* Sleeve, *C* Wristband, *D* Underarm gusset, *E* Shoulder strap, *F* Cape. (Pattern drawn by Neal Hurst.)



Figure 26.1. Hunting shirt in a private collection, ca. 1795. (Private Collection.)

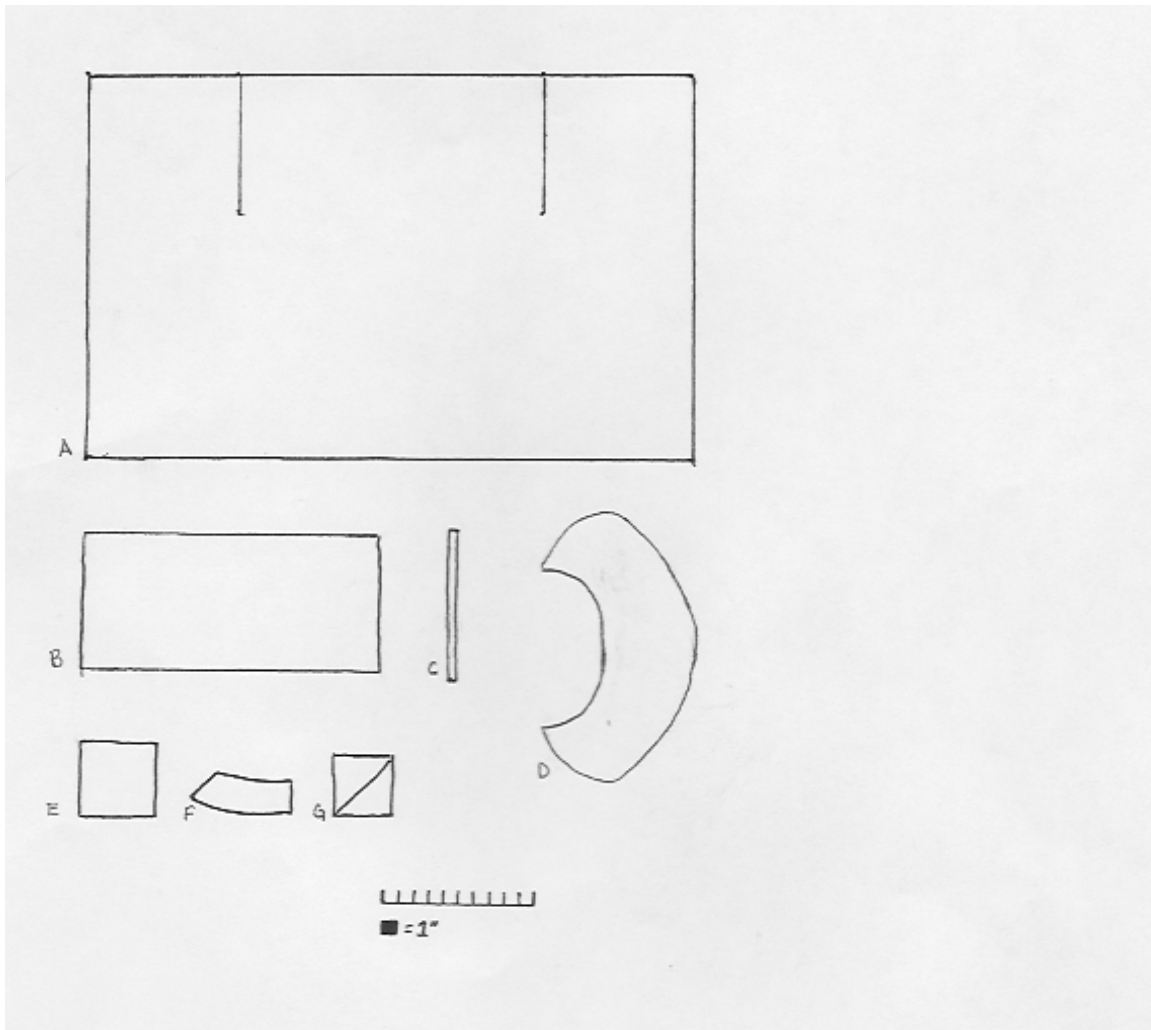


Figure 26.2. *A* Shirt body, *B* Sleeve (cut two), *C* Wristband facing, *D* Cape, *E* Underarm gusset, *F* Standing collar, *G* Shoulder gusset. (Pattern drawn by Neal Hurst.)



Figure 27.1. Michael Crow Hunting Shirt, 1799. (Green County Historical Society.)

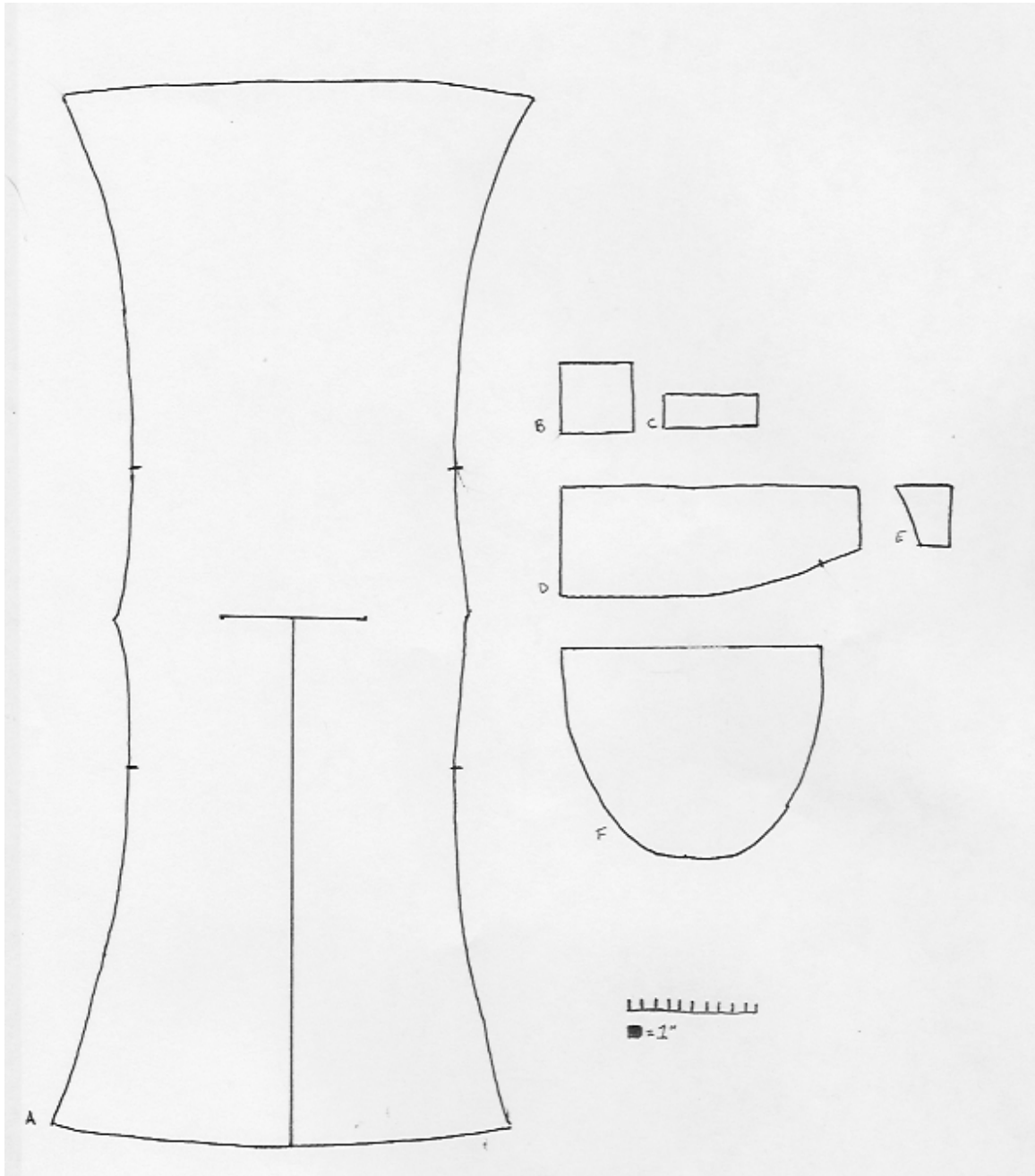


Figure 27.2. *A* Shirt body, *B* Underarm gusset, *C* Shoulder Strap, *D* Sleeve (cut two), *E* Cuff, *F* Cape.
(Pattern drawn by Neal Hurst.)

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This thesis utilized a variety of different primary and secondary sources along with many images to help illustrate the hunting shirt and its usage overtime. Primary sources from newspapers, will books, magazines, personal correspondence, eyewitness accounts, and account books helped to trace the garments history through the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. The secondary sources helped to contextualize the unique economic environment and textile manufacturing techniques that surrounded the development and usage of the hunting shirt. Images play a very important role within this thesis illustrating the hunting shirt along with other contemporary garments and provided a visual resource for the reader. Examining extant garments, including the four known hunting shirts within collections across the United States, provided key imagery and a tactile sense of the different parts of the shirts.

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