



250th anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill

Application Form and Proof of Insurance due by **3/4/2025** to BunkerHill250@gmail.com

Unit Name: _____.

Portrayal (please circle one):

Provincial

British

Royal Navy

Umbrella organization affiliation (please circle):

Continental Line

Boston Garrison

British Brigade

Brigade of the American Revolution

Rank and file (please give a number):

Officers: _____.

Artillery pieces: _____.

NCO's: _____.

Civilians: _____.

Private Soldiers: _____.

Tents (please list how many):

Wedges: _____.

Walls: _____.

Fly Y/N

Note: Due to limited space at this site, Marquee tents will not be permitted at this event and we are asking groups needing kitchen fly to limit themselves to a single fly

I understand that to participate my group will follow the proper material culture guidelines detailed on the event website. I also agree that our camp presentation will be as accurate to how it appeared during the Boston 1775 siege, and that my group is limited to ONE kitchen fly for the weekend if we choose to need one.

**Note: Command position in one's own unit does not necessarily mean command position at the event. Officers/NCOs may be required to serve as private soldiers*

(Initial here)_____.

I have also read and shared the FAQ attached to this form with my membership.

(Initial here)_____.

Unit Commander Name:_____.

Unit Commander Signature:_____.

1. We know that the Provincial troops who defended Breed's Hill were more organized than those who fought on April 19th, 1775. Had "Continental Regiments" been formed yet, or were the regiments set up based on county/region?

Following the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the British army found itself in a strategic quagmire encircled by a formidable force of Massachusetts Yankees.

Over the next few days, scores of Bostonians discovered they were prohibited from fleeing the town. General Thomas Gage was fearful that if the residents were permitted to leave, they would provide material assistance to the American army. As a result, he issued orders barring residents from leaving Boston. Boston resident Sarah Winslow Deming despaired "I was General Gage's prisoner -- all egress, & regress being cut off between the town & country. Here again the description fails. No words can paint my distress." According to merchant John Rowe, Boston's economy immediately collapsed. Businesses stopped operating and fresh provisions for the market stopped coming into town. "Boston is in the most distressed condition."

Meanwhile, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and the Committee of Safety faced their dilemma. Within a very short period, the provincial army surrounding Boston slowly disappeared. Regiments needed more organization, and soldiers were continuously coming and going. At first, militiamen left in small groups, and then by the hundreds, as lack of provisions and the tug of responsibilities back home weakened their sense of duty. Artemas Ward, the overall commander of the American army besieging Boston, opined that soon he would be the only one left at the siege unless something was done. To meet this problem, the Provincial Congress agreed to General Ward's requests that the men be formally enlisted for a given time. On April 23, 1775, the legislative body resolved to raise a "Massachusetts Grand Army of 13,600 men and appoint a Committee of Supplies to collect and distribute the necessary commodities."

In undertaking this venture, Massachusetts turned to the model it had followed to attract recruits for provincial regiments during the French and Indian War. When the Massachusetts government appointed a regimental colonel to serve in the French and Indian War, he was given a packet of blank commissions for officers he could dispense as he saw fit. Often, commissions would be contingent upon the prospective officers' success in recruiting men. To secure enlistments of private soldiers, junior officers often made arrangements with prospective non-commissioned officers, promising posts as sergeants or corporals in return for their assistance in recruiting drives. While many recruiters operated within the confines of their own minute man or militia regiment that fought on April 19th, recruiters were also authorized to beat their drums anywhere in the province to enlist volunteers. Local militia officers were prohibited from interfering with beating orders and were required to muster their companies and assist the colonel and his prospective officers with drafting recruits.

For example, recruiters arrived in Lexington between May 4 and May 8, 1775. Over the next four days, twenty men from Lexington enlisted in a company commanded by Woburn's John Wood. The company was to be part of Colonel Samuel Gerrish's Regiment. In exchange for his enlistment, which was to expire at the end of December 1775, each man was paid £5 and promised a bounty of a coat.

After the regiments were raised and certified, they were adopted into the Massachusetts Grand Army and assigned regimental numbers. It appears that the regiments were assigned regimental numbers based on the "rank or age of the counties" from which they were raised.

The regimental numbering of the Massachusetts Grand Army during the early months of the Siege of Boston can be viewed:

<https://historicalnerdery01.blogspot.com/2020/06/the-rank-or-age-of-counties-raising-of.html>

Following General Washington's assumption of command, the Commander in Chief made it clear that his mission was to turn the various forces assembled around Boston into a unified army.

On July 22, 1775, Washington attempted to impose a more rational organizational structure by issuing orders dividing the American army into three divisions of six brigades each. As a result, most of the Massachusetts Grand Army regiments were renumbered to reflect this change.

2. What was the material culture amongst the provincial soldiers? Would we have seen any sort of uniformity? Were the brown "bounty" coats a thing yet? Is there anything to suggest that the troops who defended Breed's hill dressed any differently from those who fought at Lexington & Concord?

In reverse order, there isn't much difference between the material culture of Massachusetts forces that fought on April 19, 1775, and those at the Battle of Bunker Hill. The troops who were part of the Massachusetts Grand Army during the Siege of Boston fielded in civilian clothing, utilized firelocks of American, French, English, or possibly Dutch origin, carried cartridge boxes or shot pouches, powder horns, edged weapons (bayonet, sword, cutlass, or hatchet), canteens, knapsacks, and blankets.

Local tradesmen would have produced much of the equipment, except canteens, locally for the soldiers of their respective communities. Hence, a local leather worker may have been making cartridge boxes, scabbards, and belting, a blacksmith may have forged edged weapons, and a woodworker was likely cutting back the stocks of fowling pieces to allow the weapon to accept socket bayonets.

Historians Joel Bohy, Christopher Fox, Rob Welch, and Samuel Forman have extensively researched the subject and determined that "cheesebox canteens" were mass-produced by various contractors and delivered to the Massachusetts forces outside Boston in late April 1775.

The result was an appearance of partial uniformity of equipment. This appearance may be best highlighted with an inspectional return of muskets, cartridge boxes, and edged weapons of Maine Province troops from Colonel Scamman's Regiment on August 1, 1775. According to the report:

- a. Captain Samuel Darby's Company (York, ME): "All men supplied themselves with firearms and equipment."
- b. Captain Tobias Fernald's Company (Kittery, ME): All men equipped with guns and cartridge boxes. Only six had bayonets, which the soldiers themselves supplied.
- c. Captain Ebenezer Sullivan's Company (Berwick, ME): The muster roll has a return of 64 men. Of the 64, 36 had cartridge boxes.
- d. Captain Samuel Leighton's Company (Kittery, York and Berwick, ME): nearly all cartridge boxes. Only eight men had bayonets.
- e. Captain Sameul Sawyer's Company (Wells, ME): All 66 men had cartridge boxes.
- f. Captain Jeremiah Hill's Company (Biddeford, ME): Total of 60 men, 44 had cartridges.

- g. Captain Joshua Bragdon's Company (Wells, ME): 57 men, all but two provided their own firelocks. 39 had bayonets.
- h. Captain Phillip Hubbard's Company (South Berwick, ME): Only 24 men had cartridge boxes and no bayonets in the ranks.
- i. Captain Jonathan Nowell's Company (York, ME): Total, 50 men. All had guns, but 34 furnished their own, and 19 had cartridge boxes.
- j. Captain Jesse Dorman's Company (Arundel, ME): Total, 60 men. 55 had guns, 7 owned bayonets which they furnished themselves, and 49 had cartridge boxes.

There is no primary evidence of uniforms being worn by troops of the Massachusetts Grand Army before or during the Battle of Bunker Hill. However, there are some limited accounts of Rhode Island and Connecticut militia and "independent" companies arriving at the siege in uniform, including an account of a Wethersfield, CT militia company arriving in blue regimental coats faced red. The unit quickly adopted smocks, possibly blue, to conceal and protect the uniform from damage.

Finally, bounty coats. In the Fall of 1775, Massachusetts troops took on a form of greater uniformity when many men were issued fawn-brown and tobacco-brown bounty coats adorned with simple pewter buttons stamped with the unit's regimental number. These coats were NOT issued during the Summer of 1775 and, as a result, would not have been worn at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

So, what were "bounty coats," and where did they come from? Henry Cooke wrote a research article on bounty coats for Minute Man National Historical Park several years ago. The article, which explains the ins and outs of bounty coats, can be viewed:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0ZA7Th2s7JVbzZza0dlc244LXc/view?usp=sharing&resourcekey=0-vfR9g86CD16BFn441_nHkA

3. Let's talk about accouterments and equipment: There are several original documents detailing lost gear amongst the Breed's Hill participants. In your opinion would we have seen rifles, canteens, or blankets with the troops? What about packs?

The New Hampshire and Massachusetts petitions for compensation for property lost at the Battle of Bunker Hill are a virtual treasure trove of information. The New Hampshire petitions can be viewed at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ypgc2i3WrqQJjcvyr6uVaZ62J3byfjdk/view?usp=sharing> , and a sampling of the Massachusetts claims can be viewed

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1trEW927W73sCQfGuvyOxg93JEwKT-IFlgb0wbiQ4GVI/edit?usp=sharing>

Based on a review of the petitions, it is clear that most American combatants carried knapsacks, tumplines, and blankets into the field. Many utilized cartridge boxes, while others utilized shot pouches and powder horns (a shot pouch carried by a New Hampshire soldier at the Battle of Bunker Hill can be viewed here). Edged weapons, including bayonets, swords and cutlasses, appear in the property loss claims. Given that canteens (described above) were issued to many of the troops surrounding Boston, they likely carried those into the field as well.

A review of the property loss claims, particularly from New Hampshire, also provides a snapshot of what was likely carried in American soldiers' packs on the day of the battle: razors, shirts, spare stockings, trousers, handkerchiefs, sleeve buttons, and possibly shoes.

Rifles are noticeably absent from these claims. Rifles were virtually non-existent in pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts, and as a result, there are no primary accounts of American troops using rifled muskets at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

4. For soldiers who fought from coastal towns (I.E. Beverly, Salem, Marblehead, Portsmouth) would those troops have been in more maritime-related clothing (sailor jackets or petticoat trousers), or would we have seen them in the same attire as those from inland towns?

Generally speaking, no. There was little to no difference in everyday male/female material culture amongst the Civilians of the coast compared to Boston or Middlesex County. Although communities along the coast, such as Newburyport, Portsmouth (NH), Ipswich, Salem, Beverly, Marblehead, and Gloucester were Boston's economic competitors, they closely mirrored the societal structures of the port town. As a result, research suggests that civilian clothing, occupations, "tools of the trade," personal belongings, and even political and religious practices of Essex County seaport communities were nearly identical to Boston's.

The image of Marblehead (or, for that matter, Massachusetts) sailors and dock workers marching off to war wearing blue jackets and white sailor's "slops" can likely be traced to an early 20th-century folk art piece currently housed at the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, New York. In the image, Colonel John Glover is shown on horseback, leading his men from Marblehead to the Siege of Boston. All the soldiers are uniformly clad in blue sailor's coats, round hats, and petticoat breeches.

The idea of sailors dressed uniformly was further promoted during the Bicentennial when various publications on the uniforms of the Continental Army depicted Glover's men wearing blue sailor's jackets and slops or brown-faced regimental coats with slops.

Despite the above, it is unlikely that maritime men from Massachusetts would have marched into the Boston camp wearing petticoat breeches, trousers, or slops. As a preliminary matter, sailors and mariners only comprised a certain percentage of occupations within many seaport communities. There was a wide array of other occupations in the town, some agricultural based, others artisan.

With that in mind, it should be noted petticoat breeches (or the everyday, modern reenactor term "slops") served a similar purpose as farmer's smocks. The item protected breeches and stockings from dirt, grime, paint, oil, and tar. Petticoat breeches were often worn by laborers while repairing ships or dockside but were rarely worn outside a work environment.

The men who responded to the Lexington Alarm from Massachusetts seaports were not uniformly clothed and likely wore a mix of civilian clothing, including wool, leather breeches, and wool trousers.

In support of this proposition, let's look at 18th-century runaway descriptions for servants and enslaved peoples from Marblehead. In Antonio Bly's work "Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves", the author identified 17 runaway newspaper advertisements for runaway enslaved servants from the seaport community. Of the 17, 16 are for male runaways, and one is for a female. Regarding the clothing descriptions of the 16, all but one describe the runaway as wearing leather, wool, linen (summer advertisement) or Kersey breeches. Only one advertisement references wool trousers. There are no references to petticoat breeches.

Similarly, there are over a dozen deserter descriptions for Glover's Regiment in 1775 and 1776, which was composed of men from Essex County seaport communities. While most descriptions are devoid of clothing descriptions, the few that do list clothing do not reference "slops" or "petticoat breeches."

For example, an advertisement for a pair of deserters from the 14th Continental appeared in a May 1776 edition of the "New England Chronicle". The advertisement listed Silas Sawen wearing "a light-cloured coat with red lapels" and "busk-skin breeches, blue stockings." In the same advertisement, Phineas Goodale was described as wearing a civilian frock coat and "trowsers". There is no reference to petticoat breeches.

5. Would any of the troops at Breed's Hill have had facial hair?

We are unaware of any accounts of Provincial or British troops having facial hair, save one. The alleged account of Daniel Farrar of Lincoln, Massachusetts, is often promoted by those who argue that beards may have been worn by militiamen at the Battle of Bunker Hill. According to Abiel Moore Cavalry, the author of *A Historical Sketch of Troy [N.H.] and Her Inhabitants, from the First Settlement of the Town in 1764, to 1855*, Farrar "fought in the battle of Bunker Hill, where a musket ball clipped a lock of his whiskers." The claim was also advanced by Charles Bemis' 1881 work *History of Marlborough, Cheshire County, NH*. Bemis said, "Farrar was one of the minute-men at Concord, and also took part in the Battle of Bunker Hill, where a musket-ball clipped a lock of his whiskers."

Unfortunately, neither claim is supported by primary documentation from the battle or a subsequent statement from Farrar himself. Furthermore, we couldn't find evidence that Daniel Farrar fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

With that said, were there beards in Colonial America? If facial hair existed, it was the exception and not the rule. For an in-depth analysis of facial hair in 18th-century America, I defer to the in-depth article written by Dr. Niels Hobbs, which can be found https://docs.google.com/document/d/14S95zPotgRwS3si8s8ANSWVT_MDvHpln9mvaFs5bkis/e/dit?usp=sharing

Links

The regimental numbering of the Massachusetts Grand Army:

<https://historicalnerdery01.blogspot.com/2020/06/the-rank-or-age-of-counties-raising-of.html>

Henry Cooke's article on the Massachusetts bounty coat:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0ZA7Th2s7JVbzZza0dlc244LXc/view?resourcekey=0-vfR9g86CD16BFn441_nHkA

New Hampshire claims for property lost at Bunker Hill:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ypgc2i3WrqQJjcvyr6uVaZ62J3byfjdk/view>

A sampling of Massachusetts claims for property lost at Bunker Hill:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1trEW927W73sCQfGuvyOxg93JEwKT-IFlgb0wbiQ4GVI/edit>

Facial hair and shaving practices by Niels Hobbs:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/14S95zPotgRwS3si8s8ANSWVT_MDvHpln9mvaFs5bkis/e/dit

