

If you were a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

What if you were soldier in the Revolutionary War? The clothes you wore, the food you ate, the places where you stayed, the way you lived would all be very different from the way you live today.

Maybe you enlisted (joined) in the war when it first began. It started on April 19, 1775 when the first shots were fired at Lexington, Massachusetts. Maybe you were one of Washington's soldiers defeated at the Battle of Long Island that began a series of setbacks for the Americans. Maybe you fought at the Battle of White Plains, then retreated across New Jersey finally to gain a victory at the Battle of Trenton on Christmas Day. Maybe you remember the Thanksgiving when 2 ounces of rice and a tablespoon of vinegar were served to the troops at Valley Forge because there wasn't any other food. Maybe you fought the British at Saratoga in 1777 and cheered the American victory that years later were called the turning point of the war. And maybe you were at New Windsor Cantonment where the fighting stopped on April 19, 1783 when the "Cessation of Hostilities" cease-fire order was posted, and you celebrated with three "huzzas." The Treaty of Paris officially ended the war and gave America independence and land all the way west to the Mississippi River. Congress approved it on September 3, 1783.

What Would you Wear?

The army gave the soldiers the clothes and equipment they needed. But there weren't always enough of these items. A shipment of shirts arrived, but there weren't enough for all the soldiers, so many men would have to go without. Sometimes it was shoes in short supply, or coats, breeches, bayonets and other equipment. It was not uncommon to see soldiers near naked, wrapped in blankets and rags. The clothes a soldier was to receive were:

- A shirt, usually of heavy linen.
- Breeches or overalls, pants of linen or wool;
- Weskit, (another name for waistcoat or vest);
- Woolen socks, which would have been hand-knit;
- Common shoes which fit either foot because they were made without a left and right;
- A three cornered hat called "cocked-hats", and made of black felt.

A soldier was also supposed to receive a heavy woolen coat called a REGIMENTAL COAT. They were of different colors, depending on which regiment the soldier belonged to. A soldier had to wear his regimental coat during battles even if it was very hot. This was because there was a lot of smoke on the battlefields from the guns and cannons. The colors of the coats helped identify regiments and armies. In some battles many troops who could not be issued a regimental coat wore linen "HUNTING FROCKS". These were homespun and worn on the frontier. Hundreds of soldiers wearing hunting frocks, dyed various colors, presented a uniformed appearance. Frock coats were also worn to do fatigue duties to save wear and tear on a man's regimental coat.

The equipment a soldier received was:

- a flintlock musket, which fired round lead balls and was not very accurate;
- a bayonet, which was like a long knife that fit onto the end of a musket;
- a cartridge box, to carry ammunition;
- a canteen, to carry water often round and made of wood or tin;
- a haversack to carry food and small items (it was made of linen with a three button flap);

- a knapsack, also made of linen or canvas, painted to be waterproof. Extra clothes, shoes, playing cards, candles and other personal items were carried in it.

What would you eat in the Army?

The food a soldier was given, or issued, each day by the Army was called a ration. The ration for a soldier a day was,

- a pound of bread
- a pound of meat
- a gill of dry beans or peas
- a gill of rum

A soldier was very lucky indeed if he received $\frac{1}{2}$ of that!

The bread was very hard - so hard that the soldiers soaked it in warm water until it was soft enough to chew. The bread was hard because it was made with only flour and water. The Army made the bread this way so it would last for a very long time before spoiling.

The meat was usually salted beef or pork cut into strips or chunks and soaked in salt water so it wouldn't spoil. The Army issued salted and dried foods because that was the only way to keep food preserved.

Usually, the soldiers boiled the dry beans or peas with their meat. After cooking a long time, the beans and peas became soft and the meat less salty. The result was a tasty stew.

The soldiers were supposed to mix their rum with water before they drank it. Sometimes they were issued extra rum for doing extra work, or because it was a special day such as New Year's or to celebrate a victory or comfort a defeat.

Life in the Army

The drum controlled a soldier's day. The drummers in each regiment played different beats to tell the soldiers where they should be and what they should be doing. Here are some typical drumbeats and what they meant.

Reveille (REV-a-lee)

Reveille was beat at sun-up. It meant that it was time for the soldiers to get up and get ready for their day. Sometimes the GENERAL was beat instead of REVEILLE. That means soldiers should take down their tents and get ready to march from camp.

Troop or Assembly

Troop was beat at 8:00 a.m. in the summer and 9:00 a.m. in the winter. It meant that soldiers should gather or assemble so the officer could call the roll and inspect the men for duty.

After INSPECTION, the soldiers were sent off to do their work for the day. They marched and drilled often so they would be ready in case there was a battle. If they had to cut firewood or haul water, there were signals that the drummer would play.

Retreat

Retreat was beat at sunset. The roll was called again, and orders were given about the work to be done the next day. Then the soldiers had free time. They would have their supper. Then they might clean their equipment, and they might patch or mend their clothing. They also played games like dice and pitch penny, even though they weren't

supposed to gamble. Card playing and draughts (checkers) were also popular.

Battle

If it was an unlucky day, the soldiers might fight in a battle. The drum signaled the army where to March, which way to face and fire, to advance or fall back, and lots of other things. Why was a drum used? It was louder than the human voice and could be heard above the noise of battle.

Tattoo

Tattoo was beat at about 9:00 p.m. in the summer when the days are longer, and 8:00 p.m. in the winter when the days are shorter. It was the signal for the soldiers to go into their huts or tents and stay there until REVEILLE the next morning.

Is your day a little like a soldier's day?