PRIMARY SOURCES FOR CLOTHING THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

DYEING CAPTURED UNIFORMS

Please read carefully, as some of these records predate Valley Forge.

“It was now proposed to the Consideration of the Members what will be the best Method of providing Cloathing for the Troops which are to compose the new Army.

Agreed that the Cloathing be provided by the Continent and paid for by Stoppages out of the Soldiers Wages at 10s. per Month, that as much as possible of the Cloth for this Purpose be dyed brown and the Distinctions of Regiments made in the Facings.

Also that a Man who brings a good new Blanket into the Camp should be allowed two Dollars therefor and take it away with him at the End of the Campaign.”

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“Being more and more convinced, of the impolicy of any part of our Troops being Clothed in Red and that many injurious and fatal consequences are to be apprehended from it, I think it necessary to repeat my request, mentioned in my last,1 that you will have all the Clothes in your hands, of that Colour, dyed of some other, as soon as you can. Yesterday an Escort to money from Colo. Moylan’s Regiment dressed in that Uniform, alarmed the Country, and had they passed where the Enemy’s Horse could possibly have been, they certainly would have suffered. Unless the matter is immediately remedied, by changing the Colour, our people will be destroying themselves.”


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“I am informed, that Colo. Moylan has provided Frock for his men, with which they can cover their Red Coats occasionally; if so, it takes off the objection which I had to their Uniform. But this cannot be done by the Foot, as they cannot carry a coat and Frock, you must therefore contrive to have their Coats dyed, as quick as possible. Colo: Mason’s Regiment must have the Brown and Buff Clothing. I imagine the Troops from North Carolina will want every kind of necessary, you will therefore be making preparation for them. I am informed there are about two thousand of them. I beg you will, every now and then, call upon the secret Committee and know what accounts they have from abroad: if they are not frequently put in mind of our wants, they will perhaps forget or ever look at them.”

“<January 31, 1778, in French: We are determined to emigrate to the colonies, either as a teacher or director of dyeing or as a master dyer, provided that we can find support on arrival. That is what we hoped to put to you yesterday at your hotel, but your absence deprived us of the pleasure. Please reply.>”

REGIMENTAL TAILORS
Please read carefully, as some correspondence concerns clothing the Northern Army


“<January 31, 1778, in French: We are determined to emigrate to the colonies, either as a teacher or director of dyeing or as a master dyer, provided that we can find support on arrival. That is what we hoped to put to you yesterday at your hotel, but your absence deprived us of the pleasure. Please reply.>”


“The Cloathier General is ordered to send spare shoes, shirts &c. to camp, to furnish such men as are destitute—The commanding officers therefore of corps are to delay no time, in supplying the absolute wants of their men.”


“Noncommissioned Officers have not sufficient respect shewn them, and their authority over the privates is not supported as it ought to be—Their clothing ought to be far superior in quality to the privates, and should have sufficient to enable them always, to appear clean before the men. And as they are the active officers, they ought, (especially the deserving among them) to be carest. All officers sent on publick business, ought to be allowed forage for their horses, & reasonable expences. […] The clothing of the army being generally too small, I apprehend it would be best to have the patterns cut larger, and leave it to the regimental tailors (of whom there is commonly a sufficient number) to fit the clothing to the men.

Colonels of regiments, ought to be permitted to employ agents, at such towns or places as they might judge proper, to provide clothing for their own regiments, especially as it appears that the cloathier genl & his deputies fall greatly short of supplying the army: and that department, on the present plan, has too great a monopoly of publick contract for a few individuals, daily complained of, to retain.”


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