

READINGS FOR WASHWOMEN “ON THE STRENGTH”

Primary Source Material

“It was the Opinion of the Officers of the 2d Brigdr G. Lincolns Division that 20 lb of good Soap would not be More than Sufficient to wash 100 Soldiers Linnen &c Pr week” (DLC:GW).¹

“The commanding officers of regiments are to consult with the other field officers, and captains of companies belonging to their regiments, on what allowance of soap is absolutely necessary, with proper œconomy, to keep the soldiery clean; a report of their opinion, to be made immediately, to the board of General Officers, to sit to day agreeable to yesterday’s orders; who are to take the matter into consideration, and report their opinion of the same.”²

“For the future the Commissaries are to Issue 5 Ounces of Soap for each Man pr Week and if it should ever happen that they have not soap to Issue they are by no means to give money in lieu of the Soap allowed and not drawn but to reimburse Commg Officers of Regts & Corps such sums as they shall have expended for that Article for the use of their Regt & Corps when not to be had at the Commissaries Stores, but in such Cases the Officers will Confine themselves to the above allowance, and no Soldier on any pretence shall be permitted to sell his Soap, and if detected in doing it shall be severely punished. This Ample allowance of Soap being made, The Commg Officers of Regts & Corps will be answerable hence forward the Men appear decent and Clean.”³

“I conceive that if proper Persons were appointed to gather the dirty Tallow of the Beef Cattle slaughtered for our Army, which at present is carelessly thrown away, & of the Ashes which might be collected from the Hutts, and furnished with large Kettles for Boiling Soft Soap, that the noncommissioned Officers & Privates of the whole Army might, soon be supplied with a sufficient Quantity to wash their Linnen, and a great quantity of Salt which must be used, for making Hard Soap saved to the United States. And if proper persons were appointed to Boil out the oil which the feet of the Cattle would produce, that a sufficient Quantity might be procured for Oiling the Arms, Accountments & Harness belonging to this Army.

[...]

These suggestions were included in the general orders of 12 Jan. 1778, but Maj. Gen. John Sullivan informed GW on 24 Jan. that a dearth of kettles made it difficult to boil the soap and oil properly.”⁴

“The following hints are humbly submitted to the consideration of your Excellency. [...] The Commissaries also ought by all means, to provide a sufficiency of soap, and Vinegar, for on these, in a great degree depend the health of the Army.”⁵

¹ “To George Washington from a Board of General Officers, 7 August 1777,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0542>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 10, 11 June 1777–18 August 1777, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000, pp. 543–545.]

² “General Orders, 7 August 1777,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0540>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 10, 11 June 1777–18 August 1777, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000, pp. 539–542.]

³ John Peter Gabriel Muhlenburgh, Tim N. Greene, Pickering, Frs. Swain, Colo. Parker, and Colo. Matthews, “Orderly Book of Gen. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, March 26–December, 1777 (continued),” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 34, no. 3 (1910): 343–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20085516>.

⁴ “Colonel Daniel Brodhead to Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman, 30 December 1777,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0057>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 13, 26 December 1777–28 February 1778, ed. Edward G. Lengel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003, pp. 59–63.]

⁵ “To George Washington from Brigadier General Henry Knox, 3 January 1778,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0108>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 13, 26 December 1777–28 February 1778, ed. Edward G. Lengel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003, pp. 128–130.]

“General Orders, 12 January 1778,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0172>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 13, 26 December 1777–28 February 1778, ed. Edward G. Lengel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003, pp. 204–205.]

“To George Washington from Major General John Sullivan, 24 January 1778,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0296>. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 13, 26 December 1777–28 February 1778, ed. Edward G. Lengel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003, p. 337.]

“As it often happens, that the women who wash for the Soldiers are not punctually paid, by which means, they are unable to provide that quantity of soap the linen must require, and thereby sooner rub it out, the Pay-Serjeants should be directed to stop for washing from those, who are so idle to neglect a punctual Payment, and every week clear off the Women, who, by this method, can have no excuse for not doing justice to the linen.”⁶

“The 18th Century Material Culture Resource Center: Laundry & Laundresses,” Scribd, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/200525232/Cleaning-Laundry>.

“The 18th Century Material Culture Resource Center: Military Hygiene, Grooming & Laundry,” Scribd, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/260315949/Military-Soldier-Hygiene-Grooming-Laundry>.

Read Also (prioritize those in red):

“Laundering Clothing in the 18th Century,” 18th Century Notebook, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.larsdatter.com/18c/laundry.html>.

“Laundry,” 18th Century Material Culture Resource Center, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://www.scribd.com/document/200525232/Laundry>.

Jane Ashelford, *Care of Clothes* (Chicago: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1997).

Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution* (New York: Ayer Company Publishers, 1974).

Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009)—skim this for significance.

Sharon Ann Burnston, “Monogramming a Shift,” The Cognitive Shift, or 18th Century Shifts, What I Know and How I Learned It, accessed December 6, 2016, www.sharonburnston.com/shifts_monogram.html.

Captain Bennet Cuthbertson, *Cuthbertson’s System for the Complete Interior Management and Oeconomy of a Battalion of Infantry* (Bristol, Great Britain: Rouths and Nelson, 1776), <https://books.google.com/books?id=1SxEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=intitle%3Abattalion%20intitle%3Aof%20intitle%3AInfantry%20inauthor%3Acuthbertson&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewihhuqK1K3MAhXMtYMKHU4UApgQ6AEIHTAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

John C. Dann, *The Revolution Remembered – Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago, IL: 1980) 243-246.

⁶ Bennett Cuthbertson, “Of the Stoppages necessary to be made in a Regiment,” A System for the Compleat Interior Management and Oeconomy of a Battalion of Infantry, (Dublin: Boulter Grierson, 1768), 21,

Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982).

Ruth Goodman, "Getting Clean, the Tudor Way," *New Republic*, last modified February 15, 2016. <https://newrepublic.com/article/129828/getting-clean-tudor-way>, (different period, but good insights applicable to eighteenth century).

Don N. Hagist, "Apparel Worn by and Goods Issued to Female Followers of American Troops;" Don N. Hagist, "She was very fond of soldiers," *The Brigade Dispatch*, vol. XXIX, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 15-16; Don N. Hagist, "The Women of Fort Jefferson" (goods issued to individuals at a Kentucky fort, 1780-1781), *The Brigade Dispatch*, vol. XXX, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 21-23," ed. John U. Rees, Scribd, accessed October 14, 2018, www.scribd.com/document/214790248/Apparel-Worn-by-and-Goods-Issued-to-Female-Followers-of-American-Troops-Don-N-Hagist-She-was-very-fond-of-soldiers-The-Brigade-Dispatch-vol-XXI.

Anna Elizabeth Kiefer, "Laundry Methods During the American Revolution: The Really, Really Quick Version," *17th Regiment of Infantry in America*, last modified August 10, 2017, <https://www.17thregiment.com/laundry-methods-during-the-american-revolution-the-really-really-quick-version/>.

Nancy K. Loane, *Following the Drum: Women at the Valley Forge Encampment* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009).

Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

Michael Olmert, "Laundries: Largest Buildings in the Eighteenth-century Backyard," *The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/autumn09/laundries.cfm>.

John U. Rees, "The proportion of Women which ought to be allowed...': An Overview of Continental Army Female Camp Followers." Scribd Inc., accessed October 14, 2018, www.scribd.com/document/255868431/The-proportion-of-Women-which-ought-to-be-allowed-An-Overview-of-Continental-Army-Female-Camp-Followers.

Pamela Sambrook, *Laundry Bygones* (London, Shire Publications, 2008).

Vic Sanborn, "Every Day Chores of Laundry and Scullery Maids, and Washer Women," *Jane Austen's World*, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2007/07/24/every-day-chores-of-laundry-and-scully-maids-and-washer-women/>.

Cat Tannenbaum Schirf, "Ways to Wash Your Linens: 18th Century Laundry" *18th Century Laundry: The Wash*, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1E4jtM0yyFUfhDJiMCG8UKmxMxvjk9MyUoAxMPUIU/edit#slide=id.p>.

RW, "The Complexities of Wash Day in the 18th century- "a thousand *little occurrences...never foreseen*," *Woodville Plantation*, accessed December 6, 2016, http://www.woodvilleplantation.org/Schedule/laundry_day_18th_century1.pdf.

Susanna Whatman, *The Housekeeping Book of Susanna Whatman, 1776-1800* ed., Christina Hardyment et al. (London: Century Hutchinson, 1988).