

# The Colonial Chronicle

A Newsletter of 18th & Early 19th Century North American Living History

Special Issue

March 2014

## Notes for BAR NCO School

### My Dear Phil

I am coming to the end of my first term as my unit's commander and I am faced with a dilemma. Since I joined the unit back in 1988 until I took office two years ago, the best word to describe us was stagnant ... it did not shrink, nor did it grow. My two goals were: 1) Further our goal of continual research and applying that research to our portrayal and 2) Increase the roster while not compromising our standards.

Goal #1 is still ongoing, as it should be, but no matter what I tried, I could not expand the membership. I designed fancy brochures to distribute at events, put up a webpage, produced posters to hang at libraries and historic sites, and anytime ANYONE expressed interest, I went out of my way to be accommodating (at Monmouth [1996], I missed the battle on Sunday because I was talking to a so-called "interested" person. For all my efforts, I have one recruit to show for it while I see other "local" units of (*in my opinion based on authenticity levels*) lesser quality growing. What is a small unit (*about 10 men-at-arms*) to do?

**Todd Post**  
Ridgewood, NJ

*This is a great topic for discussion in a future issue. Meanwhile, here are some rules I used when commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> New York:*

**Rule #1:** *Big units get bigger. You have to concentrate your troops together. Bring them to events you can honestly expect them to attend. Limit your schedule to reduce burnout of active members.*

**Rule #2:** *Good units get better because better units get bigger. Create a positive attitude, but be tough. Let everybody inside and out know your unit only wants quality driven people. Nothing less will be tolerated.*

**Rule #3:** *New members stay with units that help out. Have sources, patterns, instructions, helpers, et cetera to ease your newest members into the quality attitude.*

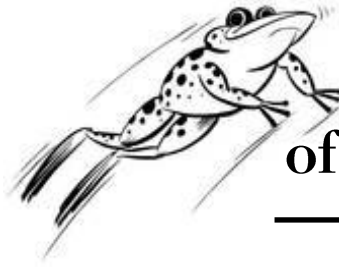
**Rule #4:** *Back your practice with solid rhetoric. The other way around is nothing more than hot air and BS. Write your internal and external literature to reflect your unit's direction, goals, and rules. Truth in advertising draws the kind of recruits you want and can assure repeat invites to great sites. The latter also leads to increased honoraria over time.*

**Rule #5:** *Less is more. Think small. A tight program with a couple of enlisted men's tents and a small cook fire sells better than a show with dining flies, wall tents, and a big feast. It also puts less stress on current members of your unit. (see Rule #1) — Phil]*

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# Successful Soldiers

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# Leaping Frog of Living History

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by Philip D.  
Weaver

I spent five consecutive years as commander of the recreated 2<sup>nd</sup> New York Provincial Battalion (ca. 1775). Near the end of my tour, I began telling some of our *less-seasoned* members they only needed to do seven things to be a successful *Yorker*. Today, I just wish I had thought of them sooner. Perhaps they can help your unit:

- ◆ Be Safe
- ◆ Maintain Your Kit
- ◆ Know the Drill
- ◆ Be on Time
- ◆ Fulfill Obligations
- ◆ Communicate
- ◆ Follow Orders



Remember the analogy from high school math class about a frog that always leaps half the distance to a fixed wall? The question was, “If the frog keeps jumping that way, does it ever reach the wall?”

Carrying this forward to the field of living history, you can apply it to two specific areas.

The first is the obvious approach to such things as authenticity or military bearing. No matter how much you do, you can always get better, even if it is only in ever-decreasing small ways.

The second is looking at how you, as a living historian, personally answered the frog question. If you discount the small distances and think the frog essentially reaches the wall. You should be associating yourself with like-minded individuals. It is not a lot of fun to be with a bunch of “button-counters,” if you are the type who just wants to put together a basic kit and shoot your flintlock once in a while. ☞

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# My Dear Phil

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I go to the bank and ask for Sacagawea gold-colored dollars to use, as modern legal tender, at events instead of modern bills for small purchases. I have gone so often, that the bank actually saves them for me!

Tom Linskey  
Portland, CT

This is a terrific idea, Tom. It is a perfect example of adapting modern life to the world of recreating history. We may not all be perfect, but let us all try and be.

Issued four per year, beginning in 2007, another option would be the presidential dollar coins. They are the same size and color as the Sacagawea gold dollar coin.



You can find the same use for the Susan B, Anthony silver dollar, but as we all know, it is too easy to mistake them for a modern quarter.

The Canadian dollar coin, known as the “Loonie,” with its image of Queen Elizabeth of England, is a far better choice, though not that easy to acquire by United States citizens. Looking more like period money than the American dollar, this coin is a great prop when staging camp-life scenarios. Issues with the conversion rate can make them impractical legal tender. Naturally, once you cross the border, and visa versa, the situation reverses. — Phil

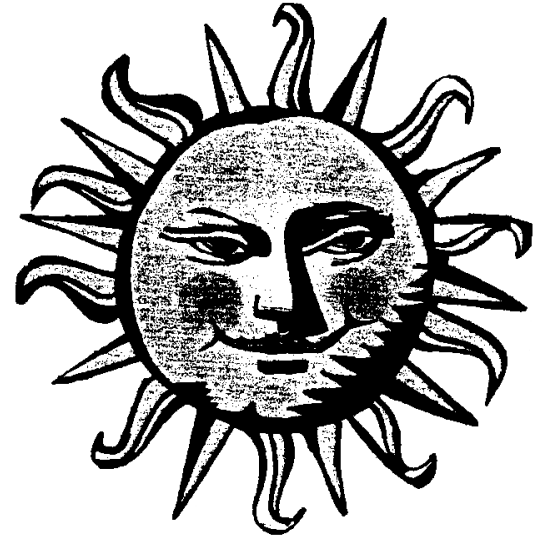
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# Why Be As Authentic As Possible?

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by Jay Callaham

1. Because it's the right thing to do.
2. It really does not cost any more to do it right. (*I have known people to spend much more on a really tacky and totally incorrect outfit than I have spent on a complete Fusilier kit.*)
3. We owe it to the viewing public. They actually think we know what we are doing!
4. We owe it to the people we represent.
5. We owe it to ourselves - by constantly striving for authenticity, we learn and grow thereby. The 23<sup>rd</sup> [Royal Welsh Fusiliers] is on its way back to wearing cap cords because of some thorough documentation by one member. We are still in the learning curve - and may we never stop! ♪



**USE AN HOUR A WEEK FOR UNIFORM UPKEEP!**

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## A Stitch in Time

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From the collection of the Virginia War Museum, Newport News, VA, this U.S. Government Printing Office poster (*right*) by Ronald McLeod, circa 1942, encourages soldiers to take care of their equipment.

This little thought is something nearly all living historians depicting soldiers should heed between events. Even if their impression requires them to wear battered clothing, this should not give them the excuse to let it fall into a state of disrepair. ♪