

# MORNING REPORT

of Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers.

Being the ramblings of a Serjeant who has smelled too much of Congress's gunpowder and King George's lackeys.

## MARCH, 2007

The renderings of this Instant include—

- COMMENTARY:** Trying the newsletter in .pdf (Pretty Damn Fine) format.
- CALENDAR:** Trying to get events that will attract participation.
- ELECTIONS:** Trying to see who wants to help run things.
- DUE DUES:** Trying to get folks to pay up.
- WEBSITE SIGHT:** Trying to make the website interesting and valuable.
- TWIRLING THE DISTAFF:** Trying to clarify the terms “shift” and “chemise.”
- RANGERS:** Trying to tell you about George Aldrich.

And MUCH, MUCH more! Well, at least much more.

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### COMMENTARY

If you are reading this on your ‘puter, then you know what this comment is about. For those lacking a connection to the modern world via ether, the newsletter went out in a new format meaning Adobe Reader is needed to read it—it's free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**14 Apr: Mt. Independence Wargame; Mt. I., Orwell, VT.**

We haven't done a winter snoop ‘n’ poop on Mt. I. for quite some time so Jim Ross's suggestion came as a welcome idea. We will meet at **9:00 a.m.** in the parking lot by the church and school next to the Green in Orwell and, depending on site conditions, probably car pool from there to the Mount. **Bring a lunch** and plan to eat out on the Mount. Also, keep a close eye on the weather and **dress accordingly**—I highly recommend you do not wear period shoes but, rather, **modern hiking shoes/boots** with some water repellent properties. We usually come off the Mount between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m.

**Directions:** Orwell is just off of VT Rt. 22A about 15 miles north of Fair Haven and U.S. Rt. 4. Turn east on VT Rt. 73 at the blinking light, drive about a quarter-mile and the Green is on your left. There is a store right across the street from the Green if you need to get some food/refreshments.

## Events to Consider

**Highlighted** ones are those to consider as Unit Events for all to try to attend.

5 May: History Days; Rutland, VT.

**12 “ : To Opening Weekend.**

**2-3 “ : Rev War Encampment; Fort #4, Charlestown, NH.**

9-10 “ : Battle of Bordentown; Bordentown, NJ. (CL and BB)

23-24 “ : Vermont Historical Society Expo; Tunbridge, VT.

**7-8 “ : Hubbardton 230<sup>th</sup>; Hubbardton, VT. (LHA & CL Northern Dept.)**

**21-22 “ : Mt. Independence; Orwell, VT. (LHA)**

**18-19 “ : 230<sup>th</sup> of Battle of Bennington; Hoosick, NY. (BAR+)**

25-26 “ : Rabble in Arms; LCMM.

**8-9 Sep: Rev War Ti.**

29-30 “ : 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Continental Line; Mt. Vernon, VA. (CL)

**6-7 Oct: Saratoga 230<sup>th</sup>; Fort Edward, NY. (CL and BB)**

Wif regards to events, I repeat some of the “Take Notice” Jim sent out following last meeting:

*As I did last year, I would ask you to seriously consider the list and let me know, as soon as possible, which events that you can commit to. This really helps in planning out the year's activities. I need to know who will be at the Rutland History Days on May 5th and I would like to get a return in soon for the Bordentown event on June 9th and 10th.*

*I hope to hear from all of you soon and see many of you at Ti in May. Thanks, Jim.*

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## ELECTIONS

It's election time and here's the skinny—or plump, depending on whom you elect. We need to elect the following: lieu<sup>t.</sup>, serg<sup>t.</sup>, corp<sup>l.</sup>, treasurer, and adjutant. Get your nominations to me by phone, e-mail, postal, etc. by 31 March. I will then publish them and you will need to get your votes to me by 30 April.

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## DUE DUES

Yup, it's spring—the time of renewal. As in the past, unit dues are \$15. If you wish to join the BAR, add \$25 for that. In both/either case, please fill out and send me the membership form—you will have received one from the BAR and I have attached ours to this rag. One difference this year from the past—send the dues to me, not to Mick and Ginny. They have decided to stop dealing with the money and I have taken it on for the time being—until we elect a new treasurer.

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## MEETING NOTES

We have had a couple meetings since the last edition of this rag. Following are some of the happenings and decisions from those gatherings. Austin showed up late for the first but on time for the second. Steve showed up late for the second after trying to get to the place by driving some Class 4 roads in wintertime Vermont. Silly goose. They had better roads in the 1770s than Class 4 roads today.

Anyways, we went over the numerous invites and you've seen the list already—unless you started reading this at the back. We also spent considerable time talking about things we used to do but, for whatever reason, got away from. It has been decided to re-institute several of these activities and begin doing a couple new things at events. We will again read orders each day. Some of these will be originals taken from journals, orderly books, etc. and be rather general in nature. Others will be tailored for us and directed at the specific event. Camp duties—wood, water, etc.—will be assigned to specific people. These orders and duties will be posted in the area where we cook and eat. Christina Kohler enjoys doing calligraphy—at least according to her father—so, if she's willing, we're going to give her copies of various forms to do out by hand like many, many originals and then use them at events. That's something that would be a good demo at events as well.

There will also be some of our own additions to the event schedules. The orders and duties along with portions of the *Articles of War* will be read, rolls will be filled out, and announcements will be made at a formation (without arms) each morning—9:00 Sat. and 8:00 Sun. There will be another formation at 10:30 each day during which we will conduct a safety and equipment inspection. Following that will be a session of drill some with arms, some without depending on specific material to be covered. New members and klutzes will also receive individual instruction at a different time.

Some discussion involved helping new members get proper equipment. A “sutler tour” has proved valuable in the past so we will try that in the future. Jeff came up with the idea of expanding the “Authenticity” section of the *Ranger Manual* to include more detailed descriptions and illustrations of proper items.

In the verbal department, we are going to try to learn the use of one new period word or phrase at each event. We also talked some of having more music around the camp in the evening hours. Every time we have done this, all have enjoyed it. Period music is OK but the point here is as much to just have fun as it is to be authentic. By the way, we are looking for music more like we had at Ti than that at Mt. I.

We also spent some time discussing command of the unit at events with the result that different folks will run the unit at each event this year. Not only will this give more folks a better perspective on what goes on, but it will make the unit a better performer in the field by having more folks familiar with command.

Lastly, we decided to buy one or two decent, period-correct shovels/spades. The two or three old ones we had have pretty much gone to pieces after twenty-some-odd years.

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## WEBSITE SIGHT

The website has been re-launched after an extreme re-fit. Jeff has changed completely the look of the thing and we are working on up-dating the content. If you have any suggestions or things to add, please contact him. At least take a look at the site at <http://www.whitcombsrangers.com/>.

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## PERSONALS

Craig Russell underwent major heart surgery a few weeks back. I'm sure he would appreciate any get well notes you care to send. For those of you who don't know him very well, he has a large—and somewhat odd—sense of humor so pick your card accordingly. Address is 78 Sand Rd., Morrisonville, NY 12962.

In a similar vein, by the time you get this, Karl Crannell at Ti will have had major heart surgery and would appreciate attention from well-wishers. He's another with that odd sense of humor that seems to pervade this hobby. Probably send anything to the fort since I don't have his home address—PO Box 390, Ticonderoga, NY 12883.

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## TWIRLING THE DISTAFF

Originally published in ALHFAM *Historic Clothing Newsletter* (1995); subsequently published in *Past Masters News* (contact [Debpeterson@juno.com](mailto:Debpeterson@juno.com) for additional information).

### *Shift to Chemise; or a Tempest in a Teapot*

Karen Mullian

A controversy of sorts has been brewing in the distaff circles of the reenactment and living history community concerning the appropriate nomenclature for the undergarment worn by 18th-century women. The following information may help straighten things out by putting a timeframe to the matter.

In *The History of Underclothes*, the Cunningtons use the word “chemise” almost exclusively to describe the sole undergarment worn by women in England prior to the nineteenth century. They write that “the Normans introduced the name ‘chemise’” during the medieval period.<sup>(1)</sup> From that statement one might think “chemise” enjoyed widespread popularity among English-speaking people from that time on. However, contrary to William the Conqueror’s agenda, the Norman-French language never gained a foothold among the Anglo-Saxons; and the Normans were eventually absorbed into the populace.<sup>(2)</sup> In fact, the early English name for a woman’s undergarment was “smock,”<sup>(3)</sup> which continued in use until the early 18th century when it seems to have been finally overtaken by “shift.”

The word “shift” appears in the literature of Richardson, Defoe, and other popular 18th-century writers, as well as in the letters and diaries of the middling and better sorts<sup>(4)</sup> and chapbooks catering to the lower sorts.<sup>(5)</sup> It certainly survived transportation across the Atlantic: In Pennsylvania, as well as in other colonies, “shift” seems to be the English term applied to this garment. Both William Byrd II (1675-1744), a wealthy Virginia burgess, and Elizabeth Drinker (1735-1807), the wife of a socially and economically prominent Philadelphia Quaker, used it.<sup>(6, 7)</sup> Samuel Johnson did not include “chemise” in his exhaustive *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1756. “Chemise” does appear in a later edition “abridged from the Rev. H.J. Todd’s Corrected and Enlarged Quarto Edition by Alexander Chalmers, FSA.” While the Chalmers edition is undated, it was clearly published after 1792 as that year is included in the definition of “guillotine.”<sup>(8)</sup> [Author’s note: Subsequent research dates this publication to 1843.]

Clothing distributed by the Guardians of the Poor in Philadelphia included shifts, petticoats, short gowns, shoes, stockings, handkerchiefs, and aprons.<sup>(9)</sup> In her work on Chester County, Pennsylvania inventories, Margaret B. Schiffer gives a definition of “chemise” culled from Webster’s 1828 dictionary as “a shift or undergarment worn by females.” Two “chemises” are mentioned in Chester County inventories, but these are in the 1840s. In the previous century, shifts are more prevalent.<sup>(10)</sup>

Late in the 18th century in England, language began to undergo a subtle change. Terms previously acceptable in all strata of society were frowned upon in the last two decades by those with genteel aspirations, possibly influenced by the influx of French aristocratic emigres fleeing the Reign of Terror. Among those striving to achieve gentility, “pregnant” replaced “big with child,” “stomach” replaced “belly,” and “chemise” replaced “shift,”<sup>(11)</sup> presaging by some 60 years attitudes more commonly associated with Victorians.<sup>(12)</sup> However, Elizabeth Drinker—who often wrote in French in her diary—continued to use “shift” until the end of her life.

Apparently, not everyone appreciated the improvement in the new “polite” vocabulary, as evidenced by the 1790s London merchant who, upon learning that his wife’s new gown was called a chemise de la

Reine, said, "...what will the world come to, when an oilman's wife comes down to serve in the shop, not only in her shift but in that of a Queen."<sup>(13)</sup>

The importance of social and temporal standing in period portrayal cannot be overemphasized. Integrating appropriate terms for period clothing with the status of those women whose lives we reenact not only enhances our interpretations but enriches the public's understanding of a time that was in many ways as complex as our own.

NOTES:

1. C. Willet and Phillis Cunnington. *The History of Underclothes*, originally published by Michael Joseph, Ltd., London, 1951; Dover Edition, New York, 1991, p. 31.
2. Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil. *The Story of English*. Viking, New York, 1986, p. 75.
3. Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes*, p. 31.
4. Anne Buck. *Dress in 18th Century England*, Holmes and Meiers, New York, 1979, passim.
5. John Ashton. *Chapbooks of the 18th Century*, Skoob Books, London, Cycle on.d. (originally published by Chatto & Windus, 1882), pp. 85-87.
6. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tingling, eds. *The Great American Gentleman: William Byrd of Westover in Virginia, His Secret Diaries for the Years 1709-1712*. Capricorn Books, New York, 1963, passim.
7. Elaine Forman Crane, ed. *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life of an 18th Century Woman* Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1994, passim.
8. *Dictionary of the English Language . . .* by Samuel Johnson, LL.D., abridged from the Rev. H.T. Todd's Corrected and Enlarged Quarto Edition, by Alexander Chalmers, FSA. Reprinted by Barnes & Noble, New York, 1994.
9. Clothing Issued Ledgers 1807-1821, Guardians of the Poor, Philadelphia City Archives.
10. Margaret Schiffer. *Chester County, Pennsylvania inventories, 1681-1850*. Schiffer Publications, Ltd., Extant, Pennsylvania, 1794. "Smock" appears only once in the inventories and only in the first quarter of the 18th century.
11. Roy Porter. *English Society in the 18th Century*, Penguin, London, rev. ed. 1990, pp. 306-307.
12. Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes*, p. 111.
13. Norah Waugh. *Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600-1930*, Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1954.

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## RANGERS

Continuing with the plan to give some info each issue on the individuals who made up the original Rangers, this edition will deal with George Aldrich, captain of the second company. Oddly, this effort adds yet another bit of support to the belief that those whose story we are trying to tell are actually watching us and influencing our actions. As I began to write this section on 13 March, I discovered the day to be Aldrich's birthday—he being born in Walpole, MA, in 1738.

It appears that by 1762 he is in Westmoreland, NH, where he marries 20-year-old Azubah Howe in Sept. If her last name sounds familiar for some reason other than the Brit Howe brothers, it's 'cause she is the younger sister to Benjamin Whitcomb's wife, Lydia. They ultimately have ten children together, the first born in March, 1763—do the math. Of the children, Nathan dies on the same day as the first battle of Saratoga, 10 days before his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, Joshua dies at 3, and Horatio dies as an infant.

What George Aldrich does during the F&I War is not known right now but shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution he joins Col. James Reid's 3<sup>d</sup> NH Regt. as an ensign in Capt. Hinds Co. and takes part in the battle at Bunker Hill. By Aug., he is promoted to 2<sup>d</sup> lieut. and takes a lieutenancy in Levi Spaulding's Co. of the same regt. by the turn of the year. Being Whitcomb's brother-in-law, it is certain

he hears of the creation of the Rangers and, on 4 Nov 1776, joins at Ti for the duration as captain of the second company. He is to remain in that post for the remainder of the war.

Aldrich probably did not particularly care for his job. On 29 Aug. 1777, he and Jonas Butterfield write the following letter to General Gates,

*We the Subscribers being appointed Officers under Capt<sup>n</sup> Benjamin Whetcomb—have used our best Indevour to assiste him in Enlisting and raising two Independent Companies of Rangers, but the Eastern States give so much greater Incouragement then we was able to Give, that we had but Poor Success—*

*Capt. Whetcomb with all the Assistance of his other Officers has Inlisted Fifty Six men—Six of which are since Kill'd & taken by the Enimy, Seven more have never Joined, Six are Absent without leave & Ten Sick, there Remains Twenty Seven presente on the Ground—*

*This is a true State of Cap<sup>t</sup>. Whetcombs two Companies of Rangers. I cant think your Honor will think it Necessary to keep two set of Officers under pay to Command so few Men—as it is not likely their can be any more men Inlisted & as we have Farms & Families at home & no-body to take care of them—we think it will be of more Service to the Publick to be at home than to stay here, we beg your Honour would Consider our Circumstances & give us a Discharge from the Service & in so doing you will Oblige your hum<sup>ble</sup> Servants—*

Gates passes the letter on up the chain but nobody ever grants the request for a discharge.

In spite of wanting out of the army, Aldrich must be a reasonably competent officer. When plans for another incursion into Canada began to be implemented, Timothy Bedel receives orders to form another regiment of volunteers. He chooses Whitcomb to serve as major and Aldrich as deputy muster master, a position with some responsibility. In addition, his name appears a number of times as the bearer of letters and verbal news and orders between officers at Co'os and the main army.

Following the unit's break up in early 1781, Aldrich returns to Westmoreland where he spends the rest of his life. Mick and Ginny Repsher discovered the location of his farm which still stands. If you travel south along NH Rt. 12 headed for Westmoreland, you will have to take NH Rt. 63. Just as you turn onto 63, you will see a large farm on your right—this is Aldrich's farm.

Aldrich dies on 17 July 1815 and is buried in Westmoreland's North Cemetery. As with the farm, the Repshers found the grave and transcribed the inscription:

*Here lies the mortal part of  
Gen George Aldrich  
Who was from Walpole, Mass  
died July 17 1815  
77 years old  
He was a soldier  
He served his country in the war of 1756  
Fought at Ft. Ticonderoga and Bennington  
He assisted in Council of State  
He was a Christian and died in the hope of a  
blessed immortality  
Rest honored shade thy long career is ove[r]  
Tho' still the mortal part clings to the dust  
Thy soul we trust has reached that peaceful shore.*

**Quando Omni Flunkus Moritati  
Carpe Potus**



# Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers

A non-profit corporation established in 1975 to re-create the life style of the Rangers in the War of Independence, 1776-1781.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Please type or print)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ SOC. SEC. NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SOC. SEC. NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILDREN'S NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_ SOC. SEC. NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

(use back if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_ SOC. SEC. NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

LEVEL OF MEDICAL TRAINING: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CONTACT PERSON IN EVENT OF INJURY: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

LIST ANY MEDICAL INFORMATION WHICH WOULD AFFECT TREATMENT IN EVENT

OF INJURY (Use back if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to abide by the rules and guidelines of Whitcomb's Rangers, Inc.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If under eighteen years of age, a parent or guardian must also sign below.)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Barbieri  
662 Creek Rd.  
Wallingford, Republic of Vermont 05773



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