

1759 SIEGE OF CARILLON FRENCH WOMEN GUIDELINES



Though accounts of women with the French army at Carillon are scant, there are good indications of their presence in 1759. Embarkation records for the six battalions of army regulars leaving Brest on May 4, 1755, included only twenty-one soldiers' wives and children with 3,597 soldiers. Yet marriages to Canadian women were allowed, if not encouraged as the war progressed. In a letter from Montreal to the Ministre de Guerre, Comte d'Argenson, on April 24, 1757, the Marquis de Montcalm wrote of his approval of French soldiers' marriages to Canadians.

"If I have opposed, in any way, the marriages of officers, I believed I could do nothing better for the interest of the Colony and kingdom, than to encourage those of the soldiers. Accordingly, in the winter of 1755, 1756, there had been only seven marriages of soldiers, and this year, eighty."

By 1759, among the three regular battalions with the French Army battalions at Carillon, the two battalions of Berry had twenty-seven married soldiers, and the single battalion of La Reyne had thirty-three married soldiers. Women, including officers' and soldiers' wives, did end up close to the front lines at Carillon and at other sieges. Connecticut Provincial soldier, Abel Spicer noted, shortly after he landed at the north end of Lake George on July 6, 1758, that "just as we landed here was 3 Frenchmen and a woman taken by our regulars..." In Volume II of *Memoirs On The Late War in North America, Between France and England*, published 1781, Bearn Captain Pierre Pouchot included women in his detailed account of the 1759 Siege of Niagara. Of his command he wrote:

"This number was increased by M. Pouchot to 100, drawn from picked troops and militiamen, in all 486 men & 39 employees, five of them women or children. The women acted as nurses together with two ladies called Douville & also sewed cartridge bags & made sac a terre."



The two ladies were the wife and family of Captain Alexander Dagneu Douville, a Canadian born officer of the Troupe de la Marine. His wife was Canadian Marie Coulon de Villiers. These women were captured along with the rest of the French defenders of Fort Niagara, marching to captivity on Long Island before being exchanged. Twelve women were exchanged, staying briefly at the sawmill on the LaChute river in November 1759,



during their passage back to Canada. Another nine women were among those captured in the 1760 Siege of Fort Levis in the last days before capitulation at Montreal.

Within his memoirs, Languedoc Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste D'Aleynac observed the dress of French Canadian women in his "A Brief Description of Canada..." Of average Canadians, D'Aleynac noted, "They are peasants who do not wear dressing gowns or caps of silk, as with lace caps & damask shoes, which makes them envious of all things." In attire, D'Aleynac also observed that, "They wear skirts that scarcely go down to the calves." A 1759 image of a "Canadienne" and a "Canadien," depicted the Canadian women with a green petticoat trimmed with ruffles above the hem, a striped jacket with draping cuffs, and a black kerchief crisscrossing her front. A large crucifix upon a black ribbon and a tall cap trimmed with orange-red ribbon completed the look. Her French shoes with buckles contrasted with her male counterpart's moccasins. Up until the war, French Canadian women enjoyed access a wide variety of textiles. A September 1719 cloth receipt from Montreal merchant Moniere included, "Montbeiliard striped linen...black Taffeta for coifs..." and "black bunting..." among other course linens. A May 31, 1758 auction of goods captured on route to French Canada, "By Order of his Majesty's Commissioners for Prizes..." included a variety of textiles and accessories intended for the Canadian market. Whole bolts or "pieces" of cloth applicable to women's dress included:

*"106 Clear Lawns, 92 Demy flowered Lawns, 144 Demy Cambricks, 13 Piec-es Muslins and Calicoes, * Pieces Tap-estry, 23 Pieces Camblets, 32 Ps. Calimancoes, 7 Ps. Lustrings, 2 Ps. Serge de Soye, 3 Ps. Gorgorous, 3 Ps. Druguets, 96 Ps. Romal Handkerchiefs, 20 Ps. Gingams, 14 Ps. Camderries(?) 15 Ps. Chintz, 1 Piece Cergal(?) Taffety..."*

Among clothing accessories were:

"691 Pair Mens, Womens, and Childrens Leather Shoes, 68 Pair Women's Silk Shoes, 64 Pair Silk Stockings, 124 Dozen Pair thread Stockings, 16 Dozen Pair Worsted Stockings, 95 Dozen Pair milled Stockings...28 Dozen Womens Leather Gloves...99 Umbrelloes, 24 Silk Purses..."

Ironically, though these items were intercepted before reached Canada, they indicate the breadth of materials and accessories desired in the attire of French Canadian women.

Shift

Best: Hand-stitched white linen shift with sleeves gathered into narrow cuffs at the elbows. Cuffs should close with sleeve buttons, or ties threaded through buttonholes. Neck opening should be large; with a gown or jacket on, the shift should only barely be visible around the neckline.

Acceptable: Machine-stitched white linen shift with hand-finished elbow length sleeves.

Unacceptable: Long sleeves, obvious machine sewing, gathered neckline, neck ruffles longer than 1.25 inches.

Stays

Best: Hand-sewn, fully boned stays with worsted or linen exterior fabric, the most common colors being dark green, blue or white. Stays should create a proper 1750's silhouette, which is to say a smooth conical torso. Most stays in this period are back lacing.

Acceptable: Machine-sewn stays which produce the correct silhouette. Partially boned stays, leather stays. French corset blanc, or women's waistcoats worn in undress.

Unacceptable: Unboned bodices.

Upper Body Garment

Best: Hand-sewn, center-front closing French-style jacket in worsted, stuff, linen, or printed cotton. Striped worsteds, linens and cottons appear most commonly among imports to French Canada.

Acceptable: *Manteau de lit*, bedgown, or shortgown in worsted, stuff, linen, or printed cotton, with minor machine stitching. *Corset blanc* alone is also acceptable.

Unacceptable: Sleeveless bodices. Fitted gowns or jackets worn without stays. Garments made of printed cottons with designs not documented to the period, such as modern calicos, and cabbage roses.





Petticoats

Best: Multiple layers of hand-sewn petticoats of striped or plain worsted, linsey-woolsey, linen, or cotton. Length should be between lower and mid-calf with a circumference between 2.5 to 3 yards. Petticoats should be pleated to waistbands and have pocket slits at the sides with small bottom hems or wool tape binding. Under petticoats can be shorter, or less decorative, as their function is to provide warmth and fill out the silhouette.

Acceptable: Two or more petticoats of the proper length with minor visible machine stitching & hand finishing.

Unacceptable: Modern skirts, petticoats without sufficient fullness or excessive length.

Pockets

Best: Hand-stitched, large worsted, linen, or cotton pockets with ties worn under petticoats.

Acceptable: Large worsted, linen, or cotton pockets with minor visible machine stitching worn under petticoats.

Unacceptable: Paniers or Pockets worn over petticoats or modern pattern fabrics.

Apron

Best: Hand-stitched, white or striped linen apron, mostly covering the front of the petticoat, with ties and a small pinner front.

Acceptable: White or striped linen apron, with ties, with or without pinner front and minor visible stitching. No apron.

Unacceptable: Very short or very narrow aprons. Wildly colored aprons. Aprons longer than the petticoats they accompany. Decorative aprons with ruffles or lace (unless portraying an officer's wife).

Kerchief

Best: Large kerchief of black silk, wool crepe, or white cotton folded into a triangle and crossed in front of the body.

Acceptable: Printed cotton kerchief properly worn covering the neck opening of the jacket.

Unacceptable: Modern scarves.

Cap or Coif

Best: Hand-sewn caps of fine white linen or cotton with a gathered or pleated ruffle around the face. Caps may be trimmed with silk ribbon. Caps should be starched if possible. *Coifs* loosely encompassing the head, made of light weight white linen, black silk, wool crepe, or white cotton.

Unacceptable: Mob caps (circular caps consisting of one piece of material gathered to create both caul and ruffle). Caps worn down over the forehead. No cap.

Hair

Best: Hair should be put up under a cap some hair showing above the forehead.

Acceptable: Hair pulled back or pinned up on top of the head and covered with a cap.

Unacceptable: Hair worn in a bun at the back of the head. Hair down, or left completely undressed. Large, elaborate high fashion styles.



Hat and Head Covering

Best: Just cap and coif.

Acceptable: Flat, shallow-crowned straw, felt, or fabric covered hat with a diameter no more than 18". Black silk mantlet.

Unacceptable: Hats folded down over the ears. Straw hats with rounded modern crowns.

Outerwear

Best: Wool cloak, most commonly red, closed with ties. Most images of cloaks show them being mid-calf- to waist-length. Wool, silk, linen, or leather mitts for forearms.

Unacceptable: Celtic-style or fantasy cloaks. Cloaks closing with decorative metal clasps.

Stockings

Best: White, blue, or natural wool yarn or worsted stockings with back seams, ending above the knee. Stockings should be held up with worsted tape garters tied above or below the knee.

Acceptable: White, natural, or colored stockings of wool yarn, worsted, linen or cotton.

Unacceptable: Striped stockings, polyester stockings, athletic socks, modern tights. Though stockings with decorative “clocks” were occasionally worn in the period, few modern reproductions are accurate.



Shoes

Best: Wooden heeled women’s shoes with buckles, with fabric exterior, especially hard wearing worsteds.

Acceptable: Black, brown or red leather heeled shoes with buckles or low heeled shoes with buckles, or men’s shoes. Vamp or pucker-toe styled *soulier savage* or mocassins.

Unacceptable: Modern shoes.

Jewelry

Best: Small crucifix or saints medals.

Acceptable: No jewelry. Small period earrings, non-obtrusive studs in non-earlobe piercings.

Unacceptable: Obvious modern jewelry, especially in any non-earlobe piercings.

Transporting Goods and Personal Items

Best: Appropriate baskets, market wallets.

Acceptable: Leather or hemp tumplines with blankets.

Unacceptable: Haversacks, modern baskets.