

**“Knowledge necessary to a soldier ...”**  
**The Continental Officer’s Military Reading List, 1775-1778**

John U. Rees

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*General George Washington to Colonel Alexander Spotswood, 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Regiment, 8 April 1777, “Embrace every opportunity to be drilling your men. Attend more to the manoeuvres, than the manual exercise. To march well; wheel in order; and go through the Platoon Exercise, are essential. The other parts of the Manual Exercise tho well enough to be known (if time would admit of it) is more useful on a parade than in actual service.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Training essentials from a subordinate officer’s point of view: Ensign Thomas Anburey, 24th Regiment of Foot, noted on 12 July 1777, “In this action [near Fort Ticonderoga] I found all manual exercise is but an ornament, and the only object of importance it can boast of was that of loading, firing, and charging with bayonets ...”<sup>2</sup>*

*Doggerel jotted on a letter home from Surgeon’s Mate Jonathan Todd, 7<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Regiment, “Valley Forge one Mile West [of the] SchuylKill ... Decr. 20th 1777”:<sup>3</sup>*

*Your heads up! Your Peices Dressed! ...  
Close Your Ranks!  
From the right & Left wings  
form Battallion! March!  
Grenadiers Front!  
Light Infantry form!*

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The newly established American army began the War for Independence woefully ill-prepared for field operations against the British, with an officer corps comprising a few retired Crown officers, many more with French and Indian War experience, and a majority of military amateurs of varying ability. Only time, coupled with experience and study of suitable military manuals, would effect any change for the better. With that situation in mind, this monograph is intended to show some of the military manuals read by, or recommended to, interested Continental Army officers long before the spring 1779 publication of Maj. Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm de Steuben’s standardized manual of discipline.<sup>3</sup>

Gen. George Washington sent the following martial advice to 2<sup>d</sup> Virginia Regiment Col. William Woodford in November 1775:

... I do not mean to flatter, when I assure you, that I highly approve of your appointment. The inexperience you complain of is a common case, and only to be remedied by practice and close attention. The best general advice I can give, and which I am sure you stand in no need of, is to be strict in your discipline; that is, to/require nothing unreasonable of your officers and men, but see that whatever is required be punctually complied with. Reward and punish every man according to his merit, without partiality or prejudice; hear

his complaints; if well founded, redress them; if otherwise, discourage them, in order to prevent frivolous ones. Discourage vice in every shape, and impress upon the mind of every man, from the first to the lowest, the importance of the cause, and what it is they are contending for. For ever keep in view the necessity of guarding against surprises. In all your marches, at times, at least, even when there is no possible danger, move with front, rear, and flank guards, that they may be familiarized to the use; and be regular in your encampments, appointing necessary guards for the security of your camp. In short, whether you expect an enemy or not, this should be practised; otherwise your attempts will be confused and awkward, when necessary: Be plain and precise in your orders, and keep copies of them to refer to, that no mistakes may happen. Be easy and condescending in your deportment to your officers, but not too familiar, lest you subject yourself to a want of that respect, which is necessary to support a proper command. These, Sir, not because I think you need the advice, but because you have been condescending enough to ask it, I have presumed to give as the great outlines of your conduct.

As to the manual exercise, the evolutions and manoeuvres of a regiment, with other knowledge necessary to a soldier, you will acquire them from those authors, who have treated upon these subjects, among whom Bland (the newest edition) stands foremost; also an Essay on the Art of War; Instructions for Officers, lately published at Philadelphia; the Partisan; Young; and others.<sup>4</sup>

Charles Knowles Bolton discusses American military manuals in *The Private Soldier Under Washington*, referring to works from Washington's private library. Here are some excerpts:

... the Norfolk Discipline ... was in favor in New England as early as 1768, when an abstract was published in Boston ... Timothy Pickering's simplification of the Norfolk was much used at the North early in the war. Colonel Bland's Treatise, published first in 1727, was more or less in use in the South; a copy had been in Washington's library for many years [prior to the Revolution].

The Massachusetts Provincial Congress, however, had in 1774 adopted the British army manual of 1764 ... which, at the time the New Haven edition appeared, was in general use in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts Bay. [Bolton states in a page note: "Washington's own copies of Pickering and the Norfolk show no sign of wear; of the 'Sixty-fourth' he had six copies, but the one in his library is fresh. His copy of the later work by Steuben bears annotations in MS. (probably his own), some of which were incorporated into succeeding editions."]<sup>5</sup>

T H E  
**MANUAL EXERCISE,**  
 AS ORDERED BY HIS  
**M A J E S T Y,**  
 IN 1764.  
 TOGETHER WITH  
**PLANS and EXPLANATIONS**  
 OF THE METHOD GENERALLY PRACTIS'D  
 A T  
**REVIEWS and FIELD-DAYS, &c.**



N E W - Y O R K :

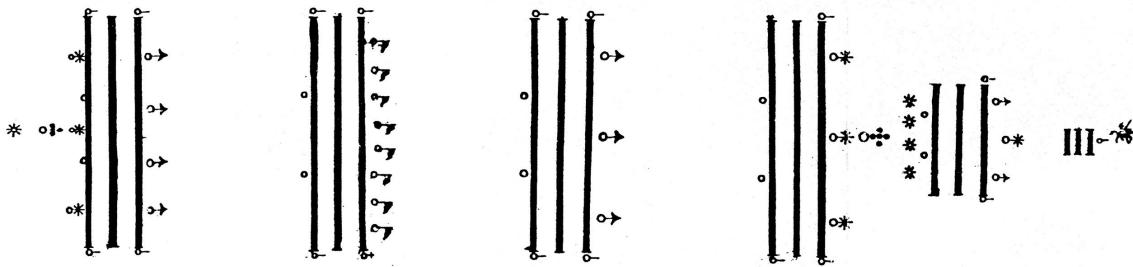
Printed by H. G A I N E, at his Printing-Office at the BRIDE and CROWN, in  
*Hanover-Square, M,DCC,LXXV.*

**Edward Harvey's *Manual Exercise As Ordered by His Majesty in 1764. Together with plans and explanations of the method generally practis'd at reviews and field-days, the discipline used in the British Army, and by most 1775 to 1777 Continental Army regiments.***

Washington's advice to Woodford does not mention Pickering, the Norfolk Discipline, or the 1764 manual, referring only to "Bland (the newest edition) ... an Essay on the Art of War; Instructions for Officers, lately published at Philadelphia; the Partisan; [and] Young ..."6 Full titles (or likely titles) are as follows:

Humphrey Bland, *A treatise of military discipline: in which is laid down and explained the duty of the officer and soldier, through the several branches of the service. The 8th edition revised, corrected, and altered to the present practice of the army* (London: R. Baldwin, 1759).

[?] de Jeney, *The partisan: or, The art of making war in detachment. With proper plans to facilitate the understanding of the several dispositions and movements necessary to light troops, in order to accomplish their marches, ambuscades, attacks and retreats with success*, Translated from the French of Mr. de Jeney. By an officer in the army (London: R. Griffiths, 1760; French edition, The Hague, 1759).



♣ Colonel  
 ○ L. Colonel  
 ♣ Major  
 ♣ Captain  
 ○ Lieutenant  
 ○ Ensign  
 ○ Sergeant  
 \* Staff officers  
 ○ Drummers

**Regiment formed in marching column of four Grand Divisions, with Grenadier company at the head. The light infantry company, added in 1771, is not shown. Edward Harvey's *Manual Exercise As Ordered by His Majesty in 1764*. (1775 edition, New York), 13-14, plate 1, figure 2. Wallace Richardson, "Townsend's *Rules and Orders for the Discipline of the Light Infantry Companies*," *The Brigade Dispatch*, XXXV, 1 (Spring 2005), 21-23.**

The remaining three titles/authors are uncertain due to similar titles by different authors or one author publishing several works. "Instructions for Officers" has two alternatives, "Essay on the Art of War" two, and Young, six:

Roger Stevenson, *Military Instructions for officers detached in the field: containing a scheme for forming a corps of the partisan ...*, Hugh Henry Ferguson, ed. (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, printer, 1775) ("Believed to be the earliest work dedicated to George Washington.")

James Wolfe, *Instructions to young officers*, William Young, ed. (London: J. Millan, 1768)

Comte Lancelot Turpin de Crisse, *An Essay on the Art of War. Translated from the French ... by Captain Joseph Otway*, 2 vols., 1761. (Turpin de Crisse, comte de, *Essai sur l'art de la guerre*, 2 vols., Paris, 1754.)

(Possibly another citation of Otway's translation of Turpin de Crisse)  
*Essay on the art of war: in which the general principles of all the operations of war in the field are fully explained. The whole collected from the opinions of the best authors* (London: A. Millar, 1761).

Sir William Young, *An essay on the command of small detachments. With eight copper plates* (London: J. Millan, 1766) Comments: Issued with *Manoeuvres for a battalion of infantry*, London, 1766.

Sir William Young [attributed author], *Manoeuvres for a battalion of infantry, upon fixed principles. With seventeen copper plates. Including the late General Wolfe's. By a German officer* (London: J. Millan, 1766). Comments: Bound with *An essay on the command of small detachments*, [by Sir William Young], London, 1766; and *The manual exercise, with explanations, as ordered by His Majesty*, London, 1766.

Sir William Young, *Manoeuvres, or practical observations on the art of war*, 2 vols. (London: J. Millan, [1770?]). Comments: Each part has a special title-page and separate pagination. Title-pages dated 1766-70. Contents.--Vol. 1. The manual exercise. An essay on the command of small detachments. A new system of fortification. General Wolfe's Instruction to young officers.--Vol. 2. Manoeuvres for battalion of infantry. Manoeuvres for a battalion, and brigade of infantry. This work is a compilation of separate works, gathered together under a general title. By Major William Young. Pamphlets issued separately, 1766-1771, brought together with collective title [and author's preface].

Sir William Young, *Manoeuvres, or practical observations on the art of war: containing*, Vol. I. 1. The manual exercise. 2. An essay on the command of small detachments. 3. A new system of fortification, by making use of standing timber, &c. and General Wolfe's instructions to young officers. Vol. II. 1. Manoeuvres for a battalion of infantry. 2. Manoeuvres for a battalion, and brigade of infantry. 3. Manoeuvres in general, with a short table, containing above two hundred and forty different movements. With 62 copperplates. 7 parts, bound in one volume (London: J. Millan, 1771).

Sir William Young, *The manual exercise, with explanations, as ordered by His Majesty* (London: J. Millan, 1770).

Sir William Young, *The practice of manoeuvring a battalion of infantry. By William Young, late major of brigade to the corps of Grenadiers and Highlanders who served in Germany, and now in the service of Brunswick* (London: Printed for J. Millan, near Whitehall, 1771). Comments: 33 pages. This is No. 3 in Vol. 2 of his *Manoeuvres, or Practical observations on the art of war...*, London, [1776?].

Hessian Jaeger Capt. Johann Ewald admitted to being impressed by the military works found in American officers' captured knapsacks, writing in December 1777,

During these two years [1776 and 1777] the Americans have trained a great many excellent officers who very often shame and excell our experienced officers who consider it sinful to read a book or to think of learning anything during the war ... I must admit that when we examined the haversack of the enemy, which contained only two shirts, we also found the most excellent military books translated into their language. For example, Turpin, Jenny, Grandmaison, La Croix, Tielke's *Field Engineer*, and the *Instructions* of the great Frederick

to his generals I have found more than one hundred times. Moreover, several of their officers had designed excellent small handbooks and distributed them in the army. Upon finding these books, I have exhorted our gentlemen many times to read and emulate these people, who only two years before were hunters, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, tradesmen, innkeepers, shoemakers, and tailors. [Ewald also wrote, “the Continental officer scorns his former calling completely, putting it aside to devote himself to the soldier’s profession by reading military books (from which he can learn but little) and proudly wears his uniform ...”]<sup>7</sup>

Ewald was more specific in his book list, “For example, Turpin, Jenny, Grandmaison, La Croix, Tielke’s *Field Engineer*, and the *Instructions* of the great Frederick to his generals ...” Turpin de Crisse and de Jeney are already listed above. The others are,

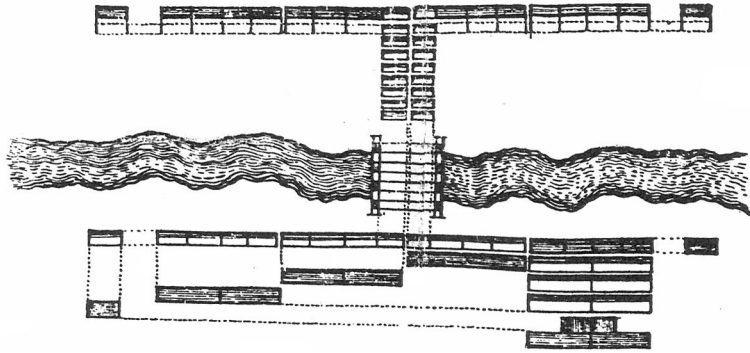
M. de La Croix, *Traite de la petite guerre pour les compagnies franches dans lequel on voit leur utilite, la difference de leur service d’avec delui des autres corps, la maniere la plus avantageuse de les conduire, de les equiper, de les commander & de les discipliner & les ruses de guerre qui leur sont propres* (A Paris: Chez Antoine Boudet, Imprimeur du roi, 1759). (Translation: *Treatise on the Little War/Partisan Warfare/Irregular Warfare for irregular/free companies (who may well be more than company strength) in which one can see their usefulness, the difference between their service and that of other corps, the most advantageous manner of organizing them, of equipping them, of commanding them and of disciplining them, and of the ruses of war which are appropriate for them.* Historian Robert Selig notes “Croix died in 1743. A German translation of his book, originally published in Paris in 1752, was published in 1755.”)<sup>8</sup>

Friedrich II, der Grosse, King of Prussia, *Military instructions, written by the King of Prussia, for the generals of his army: being His Majesty’s own commentaries on his former campaigns. Together with short instructions for the use of his light troops, translated by an officer* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1762).

Major General de Grandmaison, *A Treatise, on the Military Service of Light Horse, and Light Infantry, in the field, and in fortified places*, translated by Major Lewis Nicola (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1777).

Johann Gottlieb Tielke, *Beyträge zur Kriegs-Kunst und Geschichte des Krieges von 1756 bis 1763*, 6 vols. (Freiburg: Barthel, 1775-86). “Tielke’s *Field Engineer*”: Capt. J.G. Tielke, *The Field Engineer: or Instructions upon Every Branch of Field Fortification: Demonstrated by Examples ... in the Seven Years War ... Translated ...*, 2 vols. (1789). It is possible Ewald was mistaking Tielke’s book for another popular work, Louis André de la Mamie de Clairac’s, *L’Ingenier de campagne: or the field engineer, Written in French ... and translated by Major Lewis Nicola. To which is added, by way of appendix, a short treatise on sea batteries ... Likewise, and explanation of all the technical terms used in the work, by the translator* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, Printer, 1776.)

Ensign John Barr, 4<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment, noted in his 25 December 1779 diary entry, “CHRISTMAS DAY ... went to Cap<sup>t</sup> Greens ... borrowed of Cap<sup>t</sup> Green Count D’Saxes *Memoirs on the Art of War*.” The mentioned volume was Comte Maurice de Saxe’s *Reveries, or Memoirs upon the art of war ...* (London: J. Nourse, 1757); Captain Green’s book must have been imported, as no American edition is known.<sup>9</sup>



**Regiment “Passing a Defile or Bridge by half Companies from the Center.”  
Edward Harvey’s *Manual Exercise As Ordered by His Majesty in 1764*. (1775  
edition, New York), 32, plate 2, figure 10.**

An unpublished monograph by Joshua McKaughan, titled “Training the North Carolina Troops, 1775-1786: An Essay on the Manuals Used” is invaluable in pointing out other works used by Continental troops. Mr. McKaughan writes,

On 7 July 1776 the North Carolina Committee of Safety wrote to the North Carolina delegates [in Philadelphia] ... and requested ‘twelve dozen of Sym’s [Simes’] Military guide for our Young Officers’ ... the books were procured and on their way to North Carolina by the end of August ... On the twentieth of that month [the delegates] ... sent ‘144 Setts of Sime’s Military Guide, 2 Vol. Each’ to the North Carolina Committee of Safety ... on 25 October [1776] the Provincial Congress directed ‘Captain Dudley’ ... to ‘deliver to the Colonel of each Battalion of Continental Forces in this State Eleven Setts of Simms’s Military Guide.’<sup>10</sup>

The Simes volumes sent to North Carolina would have been the June 1776 edition published in Philadelphia by James Humphreys, Robert Bell, and Robert Aitken cited below:

Thomas Simes, *The military guide for young officers, by Thomas Simes, esq. author of the Military medley* (In two volumes ... Philadelphia: J. Humphreys, R. Bell, and R. Aitken, 1776). Volume 2 consists of “A new military, historical, and explanatory dictionary: including Warrior’s gazetteer of places remarkable for sieges or battles. By Thomas Simes, esq. ...”; “Extract from a military essay, containing reflections on the raising, arming, cloathing and discipline of the British infantry and cavalry. By Campbell Dalrymple, esq.; lieut. colonel to the King’s own regiment of dragoons” (Philadelphia: Humphreys, Bell, and Aitken, 1776); and, “The manual exercise, as ordered by His Majesty, in the year 1764 ...” (Philadelphia: J. Humphreys, R. Bell, and R. Aitken, 1776).

McKaughan continues,

Three other military works were purchased by [the delegates] and sent to North Carolina along with *The Military Guide* ... Richard Lambart’s [Earl of Cavan] *A New System of*

*Military Discipline, Founded upon Principle* [printed in Philadelphia in 1776, “describes how to form, move and maneuver a battalion of infantry”], ‘Van Sweeten’s & Jones Cures for Armies,’ and L.A. Mamie de Clairac’s *The Field Engineer*. The thirty-two copies of ‘Van Sweeten’s & Jones Cures for Armies’ purchased for the Committee of Safety probably were two separate works, John Jones’s *Plain Concise Practical Remarks on the Treatment of Wounds and Fractures* and Geraard L.B. van Swieten’s *The Diseases Incident to Armies*. Robert Bell, who had joined Humphreys and Aitken in printing Simes’s *The Military Guide*, offered both van Swieten’s and Jones’s works for sale at his print shop on Philadelphia’s Third Street. His edition of van Swieten’s *The Diseases Incident to Armies* also included John Ranby’s *The Nature and Treatment of Gunshot Wounds* and William Northcote’s *Some Brief Directions to be Observed by Sea Surgeons in Engagements and Preventatives of Scurvy at Sea*. Like [those works] ... Clairac’s had also been recently printed in Philadelphia in 1776 and was being sold by ... Aitken. Thirty-two copies of this edition were sent to North Carolina around the latter half of September ... Originally published in 1749, two English editions of Clairac had been printed by 1776, the first in 1760 and the second in 1773. Clairac’s work has been referred to as ‘a practical guide’ which was ‘sophisticated enough to be of use to engineer officers as well as officers of the line regiments.’ Dealing with the construction of fortifications and the use of impediments such as abates and chevaux de fries, *The Field Engineer* was considered a ‘performance of great merit’ which enjoyed a popularity ‘among Gentlemen in the military line’ in Philadelphia that summer of 1776. Clairac’s book had been selected by [North Carolina delegates] William Hooper and John Penn in part because of its popularity and because the two men felt that ‘Engineering is but little understood amongst us and it is a science both in theory and practice essentially necessary in the conducting this war with success.’<sup>11</sup>

Among the works cited above are,

Louis André de la Mamie de Clairac, *L’Ingenier de campagne: or the field engineer, Written in French ... and translated by Major Lewis Nicola. To which is added, by way of appendix, a short treatise on sea batteries ... Likewise, and explanation of all the technical terms used in the work, by the translator* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, Printer, 1776.)

Richard Lambart, Earl of Cavan's, *A New System of Military Discipline, Founded upon Principle* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, Printer, 1776); describes how to form, move and maneuver a battalion of infantry.

Several noteworthy treatises not previously mentioned are,

Edward Harvey, adjutant general, *The manual exercise as ordered by His Majesty in 1764. Together with plans and explanations of the method generally practis’d at reviews and field-days* (Boston: Printed by T. and J. Fleet, 1774). Also published in Newburyport, Mass., 1774.

Timothy Pickering, Jr., *An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia* (Salem, Massachusetts: Samuel and Ebenezer Hall, 1775).



A  
P L A N  
O F  
D I S C I P L I N E,  
Composed for the USE of the  
M I L I T I A  
O F T H E  
C O U N T Y of N O R F O L K.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. SHUCKBURGH, at the *Sun*, next *Richard's Coffee-House*,  
*Fleet-Street*. MDCCLIX.

**William Windham's treatise, also known as the Norfolk Manual, was popular in New England. Timothy Pickering's *Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia* was a simplified and expanded variant of Windham's work.**

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New Hampshire early on authorized a version of Windham's Norfolk manual, this based on a publication titled, *For promoting military discipline, this plan of exercise, extracted from the plan practiced by the Norfolk militia, is presented to ----- of the regiment of militia, by the province of New-Hampshire* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1771). It is not known if that manual was used by New Hampshire Continental regiments.<sup>12</sup>

Joshua McKaughan notes the 1764 manual was adopted for North Carolina troops in September 1775, though at that time only the provincial militia is specifically mentioned. While no official adoption of the 1764 exercise has been substantiated for North Carolina Continental regiments, the September 1775 implementation was likely taken as a fait accompli. This assumption is bolstered by a series of advertisements in the *North Carolina Gazette* (published in New Bern). The notices appear five times, the first instance in the 4 July 1777 issue, the last dated 6 March 1778. In every issue the text is the same:

To be sold in said office [“the Printing Office in Newbern”], The Manual Exercise, as ordered by the British King in the Year 1764. With the Manner of Priming and Loading, and the Position of Each Rank in Firings, Evolutions, &c. at Reviews & Field Days. To which is added, the Articles of War of the Continental Army.<sup>13</sup>

As for the other states who used the manual early on, a 1774 edition printed in Norwich, Connecticut was titled *The Manual Exercise as Ordered by His Majesty in 1764, and now generally adopted in Connecticut, Rhode-Island, Massachusetts-Bay and New York ...*”; a 1775 edition, titled *The Manual Exercise as Ordered by His Majesty in MDCCLXIV. Now Adopted in Connecticut, Rhode-Island, Massachusetts-Bay and New-York* was printed at both Norwich and Albany New York. Other 1775 copies were published in Baltimore, Lancaster, Pa., New York, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and Wilmington (Delaware or North Carolina). Massachusetts authorized use of Pickering’s *Easy Plan* for its militia in May 1776, though whether that extended to Continental regiments is unknown. Whatever the case, it is likely most, if not all, states that contributed regiments to Washington’s main army were using Harvey’s ‘64 manual by 1777. No certain information has been found on pre-1778 drill manuals used by Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, or South Carolina. One caveat concerning training of Continental troops needs to be emphasized. Both legislative and publication citations sometimes refer to adoption of a certain discipline by provincial or state militias; additional confirmation is needed to determine whether the state’s Continental forces followed suit.<sup>13</sup>

In July 1775 the Virginia Convention ordered “That the exercise to be performed throughout the several battalions and companies shall be that recommended by his majesty in the year 1764.”<sup>14</sup> This directive covered both regular troops and the state militia. Instigation of Harvey’s treatise by Virginia Continentals is verified by general orders at Williamsburg,

College Camp Octr. 12 1775

Parole Petersburg

The Ajutant [sic] to proceed with Exorcise [sic] & Decipline [sic] of 1764, & for the present to Continue, that & Bring on the men in every part of it & Teach the Woods Exorcise [sic] one Day in a Week --<sup>15</sup>

Only a single military mention of the 1764 manual has been found for 1777, in this case for either Brig. Gen. Alexander McDougall’s brigade or the Rhode Island brigade (Webb’s Regiment was transferred from one to the other in July). July 18<sup>th</sup> orders for Col. Samuel Webb’s Additional Regiment state,

The Brigade will practise the Manual & Manoeuvres ordered by the King of Great Britain in 1764, for his Army till it shall be otherwise ordered by the Commander in Chief. Such Officers as have not practised in Exercise & Manoeuvres will be industrious in perfecting themselves; as the Brigadier intends calling on every Commissioned Officer of the Brigade to exercise & manoeuvre the respective Regts. to which they belong. Those Officers who are practised in those particulars will drill the awkward Sergts. to qualify them to drill the Rank & File. The Sergeants, Rank & File of every Regiment will provide themselves with a hard

stick of the size and form of a Cartridge & keep them in their pouches to go thro' the firing motions.<sup>16</sup>

These orders are particularly interesting if they were issued by General McDougall, who had written Washington on 21 May 1777,

Many of the Regiments from the different states last campaign maneuvered differently. I find the same practice still prevails. This may be attended with fatal Consequences to the Army, at least to a Brigade. Is it not therefore necessary that one system of Discipline and maneuvers be practised in the Continental Army, and that without Delay.<sup>17</sup>

The commander-in-chief replied two days later,

I perfectly agree with you in the impropriety of that diversity in the modes of training our Regiments which has prevailed hitherto. I have it in contemplation, very soon to digest and establish a regular system of discipline, manoeuvres, evolutions, regulations for guards &ca. to be observed throughout the Army; in the mean time, I should be glad you would introduce an uniformity among those under your command; and I would recommend it to you, to be particular attentive to having them instructed in the proper use of their feet, so as to enable them to perform the necessary movements in marching and forming, with ease, order, agility and expedition. Good consequences would undoubtedly result from accustoming the men to the noise of firing, and to the habit of taking aim at an object. You may therefore bestow a little ammunition on this purpose ...<sup>18</sup>

It seems Gen. Washington was unwilling to institute any single published manual of discipline until his Valley Forge army orders heralding Steuben's work,

Sunday, March 22, 1778 ... As a System of easy Manoeuvres and Exercise is to be introduced with a view of establishing Uniformity in these points throughout the Army the Commanding Officers of Brigades and Regiments are desired to discontinue exercising and manoeuvring their men by way of instruction until new regulations shall be distributed. Such Evolutions and Exercise as are indispensibly necessary in the ordinary Camp duties may in the mean time be performed according to the accustomed methods.<sup>19</sup>

Capt. Paul Brigham, 4th Connecticut Regiment, noted some of the early training sessions that spring:

on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> [April 1778] Clear and Cold / went on the Grand Parade and Saw the Barron [de Steuben] meneuver the Guards

Sunday also went to head Quarters and Saw the Ge[eneral]s Life Guard Exercise / [Maj.] Gl [Charles] Lee arived at Head Quarters this Day {Lee had been captured in December 1776, and held in New York by the British since.}<sup>20</sup>

Ens. George Ewing, 3rd New Jersey Regiment, documented the introduction of Steuben's new manual of drill in Brig. Gen. William Maxwell's Brigade.

7 [April 1778] This forenoon the Brigade went thro the Manouvers under the direction of Baron Stubun | the step is about half way betwixt Slow and Quick time an easy and natural step and I think much better than the former | the Manual also is altered by his direction there are but ten words of command which are as follows

- 1 Poise Firelock
- 2 Shoulder Firelock
- 3 Present Arms
- 4 Fix Bayonet
- 5 Unfix Bayonet
- 6 Load Firelock
- 7 Make Ready
- 8 Present
- 9 Fire
- 10 Order Firelock <sup>21</sup>

On 15 May Capt. Ezra Selden, 1st Connecticut Regiment, gave his impression of the new discipline:

Our Army is at present very busy and intent upon a New mode of Exercise Pointed by Major General Baron Stuben from Poland. His knowledge in Discipline is very great, his method of maneuvering is very Difficult; but mostly satisfactory, he never informs what is to be Done in future; but gives Lessons and we Practice untill he gives new Directions; he allows no musick while we are manuevering, or does he ever allow us to be stepping upon our Posts, but at the word march to step right off and allways with the left foot. Our manuel Exercise as yet continues the same - excepting in the Charging the Bayonet.<sup>22</sup>

Some units not present in camp received their initial instruction in the new discipline much later. The 2nd Regiment of Maxwell's New Jersey brigade had been serving in their home state since mid-March. Maj. Joseph Bloomfield, 3rd New Jersey, noted that the 1st Jersey Regiment and Forman's Additional Regiment joined the 2nd Regiment early in the month of June at Mount Holly. Bloomfield wrote that while the British still held Philadelphia "We kept large commands on the lines below Haddenfield, Moores-Town &c. which were relieved weekly." Throughout this time, in his position as Brigade Inspector, he was "Engaged ... in Exercising the Brigade & introducing the Baron de Steubens Instructions." Major Bloomfield called the new discipline "the Prussian Exercise." This new system may have been taught to the New Jersey militia at the same time the major was training the reunited Jersey Brigade in early June of 1778. Brig. Gen. Philemon Dickinson's Jersey militia order book on June 1st directed, "The Officers commanding Battalions will appoint their regimental Parades, on which they will exercise their Men, Morning & Afternoon & practice them in Wheeling, marching, advancing in Columns, & quick fireings

...<sup>23</sup>

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A



B



C



**William Windham's *Plan of Discipline Composed for the Use of the Militia of the County of Norfolk* (1759) was one of the few drill books containing figures picturing the manual of arms.**

**A. "Take care to perform the Manual Exercise." A soldier at shoulder arms. (plate 2)**

**B. "Prime & Load. 7<sup>th</sup> Motion ended." The ramrod is seated upon the loaded cartridge before driving it home. (plate 27)**

**C. "As Rear-rank make ready. 3d Motion." The last motion before leveling the firelock, prior to firing. (plate 34)**

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Other organizations further afield likely had to wait longer to learn the new manual, but units at West Point were possibly the exception to the rule. On 14 May 1778, Congress appointed the Chevalier Noirmont de la Neuville, Sr., brigadier general and inspector of the Northern army under Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates, with his son of the same name being made assistant inspector. Neuville headed north immediately, likely with a manuscript copy of the new manual, Q.M. Sgt. Simon Giffin, Webb's Additional Regiment, noting from West Point,

Friday 5th June [1778] This morning turned out by gun fier went down to the store after Flower & back to the Back [bake] house after Bread When I came back I had to turn out the featigue Parteyes and the Quarter Gard / at 3 in the after newn turned out the Regt to Exercise the New way Taught by the French Fuseleear ...

Munday 15 [June 1778] ... this after newen we had all the men that had been larning the French E xercise form a line of Battel and Fierd by Platones and sub Devisions and by Grand Devisions and by the whol Battalion & I think I never heard a beater fier in my life they fierd 19 Rounds Pr man and had at each end of the Betalion thear was a Grase hopper as they caled for they are s small brass feld pece that a man may tack on his back and Ceary aney whare but they Run a pon a Caregege - - -<sup>24</sup>

Col. Angell's 2<sup>nd</sup> Rhode Island Regiment was present at Valley Forge when Steuben's manual was introduced, but Sgt. Jeremiah Greenman still wrote in spring 1779,

S[unday] 4 [April 1779] to T[hursday] 22. Continuing in Warren [Rhode Island] / we hear the enemy is defeated at Carrolina we soon expect to have the campa'n open / we exercise the prusan way left of[f] the 64<sup>th</sup>. [manual] intirely ...<sup>25</sup>

The single most important American military manual of the war, Steuben's treatise did not appreciably simplify the largely ornamental manual of arms, but did introduce standard marching rates, uniform tactical formations, and identical methods of changing from column to line (and vice versa) that improved army cohesion and simplified command and control. All these innovations were set within a closely monitored training program that ensured a minimum of variation in interpreting and instilling the new instructions. Training began on a small scale in late March 1778 and continued through early June. The efficacy of the new system was made evident at Barren Hill (20 May 1778) and again at the Battle of Monmouth, 28 June 1778, where the newly trained troops performed well. The fact that much of the burden in the latter action was successfully borne by mixed provisional formations of picked men, often operating under unfamiliar officers, is a tribute to the efficacy of Steuben's work.<sup>26</sup>

(For an excellent study of the introduction of Maj. Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm de Steuben's manual, see Fellow Ernest W. Peterkin's *The Exercise of Arms in the Continental Infantry*.<sup>27</sup>)

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**Special thanks to Donald E. Graves, whose series of articles examining early 19<sup>th</sup> century American military manuals inspired this work. (See, Graves, "'Dry Books of Tactics': US Infantry Manuals of the War of 1812 and After," MC&H, part I, vol. 38, no. 2 (1986), 50; part II, vol. 38, no. 4, 173; "Dry Books of Tactics" Re-read: An Additional Note on U.S. Infantry Manuals of the War of 1812, MC&H, vol. 39, no. 2 (1987), 64.)**

## Endnotes

1. George Washington to Alexander Spotswood, 8 April 1777, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799*, 7 (Washington, DC.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 371.
2. Thomas Anburey, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America* (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1969), letter XXXI, camp at Skenesborough, 12 July 1777, 333-334.
3. Friedrich Wilhelm de Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States Part I*. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Styner and Cist, 1779)
4. Washington to William Woodford, 10 November 1775, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 4 (1931), 80-81.
5. Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington* (Williamstown, Ma.: Corner House Publishers, 1976), 109-110 (World Wide Web)  
<http://americanrevolution.org/soldier.html> Bolton cites the “Catalogue of Washington Collection in Boston Athenaeum, pp. 135, 163,” and Joseph Sabin, *Biblioteca Americana: A Dictionary of Books Relating to America from Its Discovery to the Present Time*, VIII (29 vols.: 1868-1936), 30771.
6. Washington to Woodford, 10 November 1775, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 4 (1931), 80-81.
7. Johann Ewald (captain), *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, Joseph P. Tustin, ed. and trans. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 108, 341. For a slightly different translation, see Edward J. Lovell, *The Hessians and the Other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884), 226-227.
8. La Croix biographical sketch, Robert A. Selig and David Curtis Skaggs, *A Treatise on Partisan Warfare by Johann von Ewald*, Contributions in Military Studies, No. 116 (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1991), 137-138;
9. Almon W. Lauber, ed., *Orderly Books of The Fourth New York Regiment, 1778-1780; the Second New York Regiment, 1780-1783, by Samuel Tallmadge and Others with Diaries of Samuel Tallmadge, 1780-1782, and John Barr, 1779-1782* (Albany, The Univ. of the State of New York, 1932), 816.
10. Joshua McKaughan, “Training the North Carolina Troops, 1775-1786: An Essay on the Manuals Used” (Unpublished Mss.: author’s collection), 3.
11. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
12. William Windham and Viscount George Townshend, *A plan of discipline for the use of the Norfolk militia ...*, Part I. Containing the manual exercise ... Part II. The method of teaching the exercise ... Part III. Reviewing, forming the battalion, firings... With an introduction from Aelian, Vegetius, Folard, K. of Prussia, M. Saxe, Wolfe, and the most celebrated ancient and modern authors ... By William Windham ... and the Right Hon. George lord visc. Townshend ... The 2d ed., greatly improved. To which is now added, the present manual exercise for the army, as ordered by His Majesty and the Adjutant general. With encampments for infantry and cavalry (London: Printed for J. Millan, 1768). Comments: “Widely used in England and generally adopted by the American colonies.” Spaulding. Simes, Thomas. A military guide for young officers, containing a system of the art of war, “A military, historical, and explanatory dictionary” (London,

1772). Also published in New Hampshire as *For promoting military discipline, this plan of exercise, extracted from the plan practiced by the Norfolk militia, is presented to ----- of the regiment of militia, by the province of New-Hampshire* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1771).

13. McKaughan, "Training the North Carolina Troops," 2-3. The adoption by North Carolina of the 1764 Discipline at least by 1777 is supported by a series of newspaper advertisements from July 1777 to March 1778:

4 July 1777 issue *North Carolina Gazette* (New Bern)

(<http://ncecho.cdmhost.com/u/?p15016coll1,15057> )

"To be sold in said office [“the Printing Office in Newbern”], The Manual Exercise, as ordered by the British King in the Year 1764. With the Manner of Priming and Loading, and the Position of Each Rank in Firings, Evolutions, &c. at Reviews & Field Days. To which is added, the Articles of War of the Continental Army.”

1 August 1777 issue *North Carolina Gazette*

( <http://ncecho.cdmhost.com/u/?p15016coll1,15077> )

Same advertisement text as 4 July 1777.

10 October 1777 *North Carolina Gazette*

(<http://ncecho.cdmhost.com/u/?p15016coll1,15127> )

Same advertisement text as 4 July 1777.

24 October 1777 *North Carolina Gazette*

(<http://ncecho.cdmhost.com/u/?p15016coll1,15135> )

Same advertisement text as 4 July 1777.

6 March 1778 *North Carolina Gazette*

(<http://ncecho.cdmhost.com/u/?p15016coll1,15181> )

Same advertisement text as 4 July 1777.

<http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/Newspaper/search.html> ; Joseph R. Riling, *The Art and Science of War in America: A Bibliography of American Military Imprints, 1690-1800* (Bloomfield, Ontario: Museum Restoration Service, 1990), 8, 9, 36-37; Ernest W. Peterkin, *The Exercise of Arms in the Continental Infantry* (Alexandria Bay, NY: Museum Restoration Service, 1989), 4. Joseph Riling incorrectly notes in his work that by “October 1774, it [the 1764 Manual] had largely replaced the ‘Norfolk Plan,’ having been adopted by the Provincial Congress as the manual to be used in the provinces.” In fact, this directive applied only to that Massachusetts, not the other colonies, the 1774 Salem Congress being a Massachusetts body. “Spurred by the 1774 ‘Intolerable Acts,’ the General Court resolved itself into the first Provincial Congress on October 7, 1774, in Salem. Despite its provisional nature and lack of executive function, the Provincial Congress came to be seen as the legitimate government for all of Massachusetts except the area around Boston, which was still controlled by the British governor. Three distinct Congresses, meeting primarily in Watertown, were elected during this period.” From Commonwealth Museum, Introduction to “George Washington in Massachusetts” (Introduction) (World Wide Web),

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mus/musexe/muswash/washtext.htm>

14. “An ordinance for raising and embodying a sufficient force, for the defense and protection of this colony,” “Ordinances of Convention, July 1775 – Interregnum,” William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, vol. IX (Richmond: J&G Cochran, Printers, 1821), 9, 23-24; the preamble stated, “Whereas it is found



- necessary, in the present time of danger, that a number of forces should be immediately raised, and that the militia should be settled under proper arrangements, and be thoroughly disciplined, for the better protection and defence of the country against invasions and insurrections.” (Worldwide Web), <http://vagenweb.org/hening/index.htm>
15. Brent Tarter, ed., "The Orderly Book of the Second Virginia Regiment, September 27, 1775-April 15, 1776," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 85, no. 2 (April 1977), 166.
16. Brigade orders, 18 July 1777, Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, vol. I (New York: Privately Printed, 1893), 247. Webb's Additional Regiment was raised in Connecticut. Webb's Regiment had been transferred to the Rhode Island brigade on 10 July 1777; Robert K. Wright, Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington: GPO, 1984), 238.
17. Alexander McDougall to George Washington, 21 May 1777, George Washington Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm (Washington: Library of Congress, 1961), series 4, reel 39.
18. Washington to Alexander McDougall. 23 May 1777, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 8 (1933), 107.
19. General orders, 22 March 1778, *ibid.*, 11 (1934), 132.
20. Edward A. Hoyt, ed., "A Revolutionary Diary of Captain Paul Brigham November 19, 1777-September 4, 1778," *Vermont History*, vol. 34 (1966), 3-30.
21. George Ewing, *The Military Journal of George Ewing (1754-1824) a Soldier of Valley Forge*, (Privately Printed by Thomas Ewing, Yonkers, N.Y., 1928)
22. Ezra Selden, Adjutant and Captain in the First Connecticut Regiment, to Doctor Samuel Mather, Lyme, Connecticut, "Valley Forge, May 15, 1778." (World Wide Web), <http://americanrevolution.org.html>.
23. Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., *Citizen Soldier - The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield* (Newark, N.J., 1982), 135; General orders, "Trenton June 1, 1778", copy of Order Book Major-General Philemon Dickenson ... New Jersey Militia 1777-1778 (Public Record Office, Trenton 1929), New Jersey State Archives, Department of Defense, Military Records, Revolutionary War, box 28, item 27.)
24. Simon Giffin, "Diary of Quartermaster Sergt. Simon Giffin," Merle Sheffield, ed., Connecticut State Library, Hartford. Transcribed from the Diary of Quartermaster Sergeant Simon Griffin of Colonel Samuel B. Webb's Regiment, May 20, 1777-March 2, 1780, microfilm edition, *ibid.* (Courtesy of Bob McDonald)
25. "S[unday] 4 [April 1779] to T[hursday] 22. Continuing in Warren [Rhode Island] / we hear the enemy is defeated at Carrolina we soon expect to have the campa'n open / we exercise the prusan way left of[f] the 64<sup>th</sup>. [manual] intirely ..." Robert C. Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, eds., *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution: An Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman* (DeKalb, Il.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), 134.
26. A detailed study of the 28 June 1778 Monmouth Battle, titled "'What is this you have been about to day?': The New Jersey Brigade at the Battle of Monmouth," is available at (World Wide Web), <http://revwar75.com/library/rees/monmouth/MonmouthToc.htm>
27. Peterkin, *Exercise of Arms in the Continental Infantry*, 7-14.

**Sources of specific information on 18<sup>th</sup> century military publications in Europe and North America:**

“Eighteenth-Century Military Treatises, 1700 to 1789,” The Department of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (World Wide Web),  
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J.A. Houlding, *Fit For Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), Chapter III, “The Drillbooks: Regulations by Authority and Private Publications,” 152-256, and bibliography of official manuals, private military publications, and translated works, 426-434.

Ernest W. Peterkin, *The Exercise of Arms in the Continental Infantry* (Alexandria Bay, NY: Museum Restoration Service, 1989)

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