

"We ... got ourselves cleverly settled for the night ..."
Soldiers' Shelter on Campaign During the War for Independence

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Part IV.

"We are now ... properly ... enwigwamed."
British and German Soldiers and Brush Huts, 1776-1781



British huts or "wigwams" in the background of the portrait of Lt. James Stewart, 42nd (Royal Highland) Regiment. Anonymous artist, ca 1780. National Museums Scotland.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../pain.../lieutenant-james-stewart-185072>



**Detail showing British huts. Portrait of Lt. James Stewart, 42nd Regiment.
Anonymous artist, ca 1780. National Museums Scotland.**

Contents

- 1. Overview**
 - 2. "Laying up poles and covering them with leaves ...": Building Brush Huts**
 - 3. Comparative Use of Makeshift Shelters in the French and Indian War,
and American Civil War**
- Appendix*
- 1. A Narragansett Wigwam, 1761**
 - 2. Recreated Brush Shelters**
 - 3. Additional Articles on Campaign Shelter, 1775-1865**
-

The popular mind-image of Revolutionary armies at rest is of troops camping upon a tented field. More often, campaigning soldiers "lay on their arms" without any covering or built shelters from materials at hand, because of the divestment of baggage to enhance mobility, or a lack of tentage due to supply shortages.

British soldiers began using temporary campaign shelters as early as 1776, building them more often, and relying upon their shelter for longer periods, than did their Continental Army counterparts. British troops usually resorted to "wigwams," a popular appellation that probably began as a derogatory term for any type of ad hoc structure; as the war progressed wigwams (usually some form of brush hut) became customarily adopted as a useful and acceptable alternative to tents.

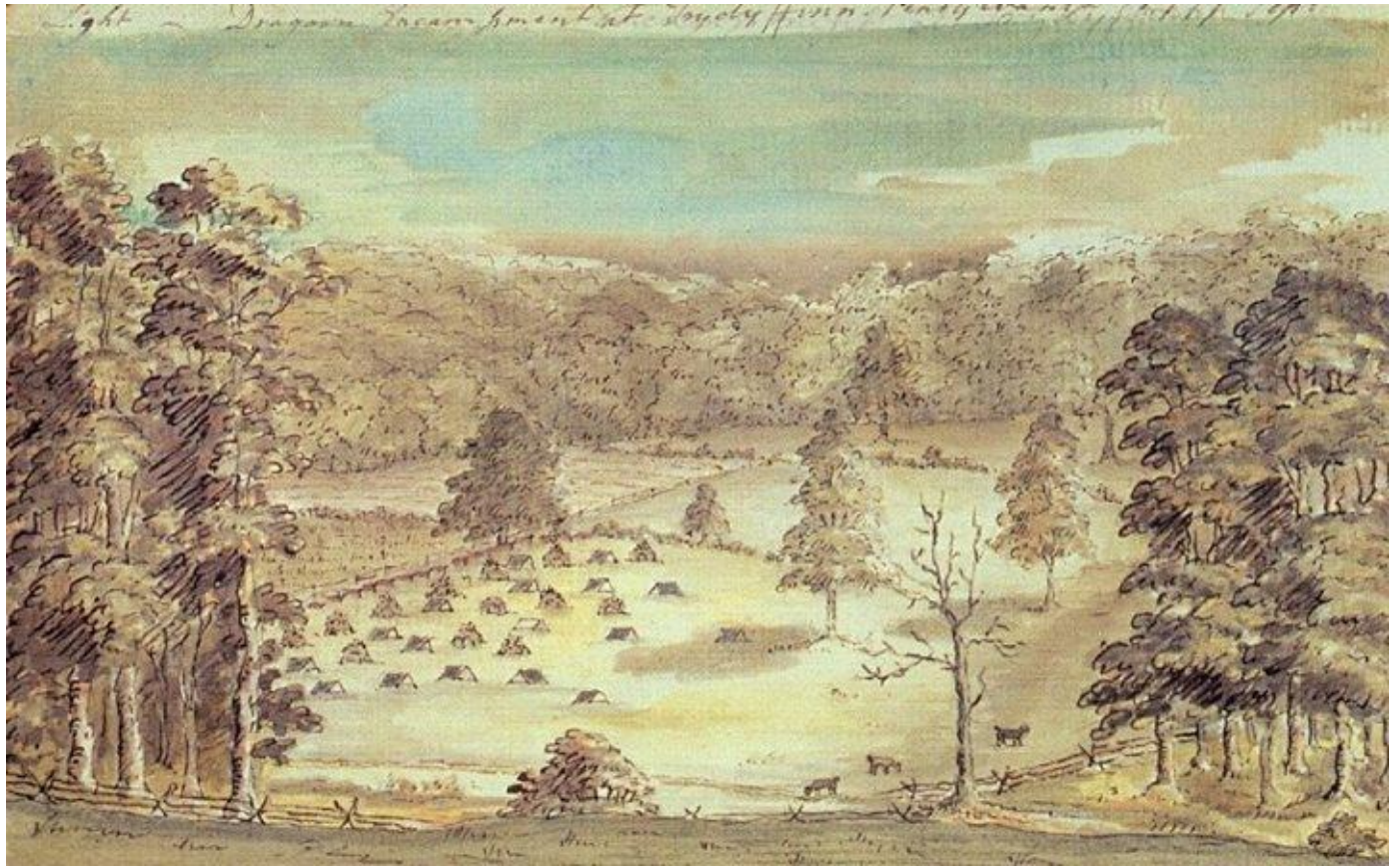
During the autumn 1776 campaigns around New York City a British officer of the 40th Regiment noted in his diary:

16 September 1776, "... no tents ... encamped near on ye Common."

17 September, " ... Very wet m[ornin]g. p.m. Cleared. **No tents, built wigwams ...**"

18 September, "... got our Tents."¹

The following year saw increasing Crown forces recourse to makeshift shelters. Initially the army's light troops made the most use of them. British 52nd Regiment officer Martin Hunter noted that in spring and summer 1777 "The Light Infantry were always in front of the army, and not allowed tents. **We generally quartered our men in farmhouses and barns, or made huts** when houses were not conveniently situated ..." Eventually all Crown units constructed makeshift shelters as an occasional alternative to tents in the field. Timothy Pickering described how, "On the 19th [June 1777], General Howe decamped with the greatest precipitation from Millstone [New Jersey], and retired to Brunswick ... **That part of his army which had advanced to Middle Bush and Millstone had no tents, but lodged in booths.**" Corporal Thomas Sullivan, 49th Regiment, wrote that on June 28th, his unit marched "to *Amboy*, and took up our former encampment, where **we built Wigwams, for we had no tents.**" On 7 August 1777 American Ebenezer Hazard noted the "Great Devastation ... made by the Enemy at Somerset Court House" including "Thatch ... torn off of Barns & Barracks, & **two Orchards ... cut down that Booths might be made for the Soldiers, of the Branches of the Trees.** The Enemy's advanced Guard was kept in an Orchard just back of the Court House; their main Body laid about half a Mile farther on a beautiful rising Ground: **their Booths still remain there.**" (The term "booth" was one of several appellations applied to makeshift campaign shelters.)²



(Previous page) Camp of the 16th Light Dragoons after the battle of Brandywine, ca September 19, 1777. Tents for the officers, brush wigwams for the soldiers. Ensign William Augustus West, Viscount Cantalupe, "Light Dragoon Encampment at Trydyffinn Pennsylvania 1777 Sepr."

During the Philadelphia campaign, lasting from late August to December 1777, wigwams almost entirely replaced tents as shelter. General George Washington's 7 September orders mentioned "the Intilligence ... that the Enemy has Disencumber'd themselves of all their Baggage even tents Reserving only their Blankets, & Such part of their Clothing as is Absolutely Necessary, this Indicates A Speedy and Rapid movement"; he then required that his own troops do the same. Major Carl Leopold Baurmeister, a Hessian staff officer with General Sir William Howe's army, confirmed this, noting that the British "army remained encamped through the 7th of September, during which time all tents and other heavy baggage and the sick were taken to Elk Town and put on transports, so that the provision train could be strengthened ..." Lieutenant William Hale, 45th Regiment Grenadier Company, later recalled how this effected the soldiers: "The fatigues of the march from the Head of the Elk River to Philadelphia ... were really great, **our best habitations being wigwams, through which the heavy rains of this climate ... easily penetrated.**"³

Soon after disembarking from transports the troops were living in brush shelters. Lieutenant Hale wrote from Head of Elk on 30 August, "**We passed three most uncomfortable nights in Wigwams, drenched to the skin by those torrents of rain common in this Southern climate ... we are now**

encamped, or more properly speaking enwigwamed, on the other side of the Town ..." He then noted his own circumstances. "By good fortune my canteen was brought this morning, for this week past we have lived like beasts, no plates, no dishes, no tableclothes, biscuits supply the place of the first but for the others no substitute can be found ... I write this under a tree, while my black is making a fire to boil my pork, and my white servant is pitching my tent."⁴

Brush huts were mentioned in several orders for the 2nd Battalion of Light Infantry in the weeks before the Battle of Germantown.

Bat[talio]n orders [19 September 1777] ... Commanding officers of Companys will not Allow their Men upon any Pretence wath [*sic*] ever to quit their Arms, **Except to make Wigwams**, without his Leave untill the Picquetts are Posted.

B.O. [26 September 1777, Germantown] **The Companies [are] to make Wigwams as fast as possible**, the Q[uarter]M[aste]r. Will attend & show [them] their Ground.⁵

Martin Hunter recounted that the advanced light infantry "had **changed our quarters two days before [the battle] from the houses in Beggarstown to wigwams outside the town ...**" At the onset of the Continental Army's Germantown attack "the battalion was out and under arms in a minute; so much had they in recollection Wayne's affair [i.e., the Battle at Paoli] that **many of them rushed out at the back part of the huts.**" Another British officer wrote, "Octr 4th This morning at 6 O'Clock, we were attack'd at several different Quarters by ye Rebel Army... **The 1st battln of Light Infantry was entirely Surrounded, their Wigwams, & provision Waggon in possession of the Enemy**, 'till they fought their way thro' and retook them."⁶



**Wigwam built by members of the 40th Regiment, 2d Battalion Light Infantry
Photograph courtesy of that organization.**

While most of Howe's army took up quarters in and around Philadelphia after the Germantown battle, a large force under Lt. Gen. Charles Earl Cornwallis was sent into New Jersey. Captain William Haslewood, 63rd Regiment, described the detachment's activities and the shelters used:

The 18th. Novemr [1777] the 63d with many other Regiments landed at Billins Port [New Jersey] ... on the 22d the Army march'd to five Mile Bridge ... **Remaind one night Here in Wigwams** and during our stay Collected 300 Head of fat Cattle and 1000 Sheep [On the] 23d We march'd to Newberry to join Ld Cornwallis, immediately on our arrival the 63d was order'd to red Bank a strong Reboubt the Rebels had abandoned the proceeding Night. **The 26th., 33d, 63d and a Company of Guards remained here three nights in Wigwams** and demolish'd the Works ...⁷

After the year's campaigning seemed at an end one final sortie was made by the British occupying Philadelphia. Stemming from the need to gather food and forage to tide his troops over for the winter months, Sir William Howe sent most of his army into the Pennsylvania countryside south of the city. Captain Haslewood noted, "20th. Decem [1777] a large [part of the British] Army crosses over the

[Schuylkill Bridge] ... and advances 7 or 8 Miles Into the Country **remains there for a Fortnigh[t] In Wigwams** ... great quantity of Forrage and Cattle were taken ..."⁸ German Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen echoed this account:

[22 December 1777] In the morning General Howe marched with ... 8,000 men in one column across the Schuylkill over the pontoon bridge which was constructed yesterday. With these troops he formed one line extending from the other side of this bridge to beyond Darby, seven miles from here, where our left wing deployed so as to cover the flank. About 500 wagons, which we had taken along, at once began foraging behind the line. **Our men constructed temporary cover as well as they could.** We did not have tents with us, as we almost never did during this whole campaign.⁹

The widespread use of purpose-built ad hoc huts by Crown forces in 1777 and 1778 was further emphasized in two post-campaign accounts. Secretary of State Lord George Germain wrote General Clinton in December 1778, "The little use that had been made of Tents during the former Campaigns led us to imagine it would have been unnecessary to send any for the next; but, upon Inquiry, it has come out that a great part of them were cut up, and applied to other Uses, a Waste which I am convinced will not be suffered to happen again."¹⁰ Former general John Burgoyne, comparing his expedition with Howe's the same year, wrote,

The idea of a rapid march will of course be exempt from all thought of personal incumbrances (provision exempted) and the soldier will stand represented in the imagination, trim and nimble as he is seen at an exercise in an English encampment – Indeed it is necessary he should be considered in that form; for nothing can be more repugnant to project of rapidity, than the soldier's load, were he to carry all the articles belonging to him in a campaign.*

But it may be said, and with truth, that troops are usually relieved from a considerable part of this burthen, and many examples of this relief may be brought from the general custom of service, and from many movements of General Howe's army in particular - nay more, it was a frequent practice of the very army in question, to march free from knapsacks and camp equipage. **The Wigwam, or hut constructed of boughs, may be made a very wholesome substitute for a tent;** and when victual can be cooked before hand, even the camp kettle for an expeditious march may be laid aside. All these examples are admitted: but they all imply conveniencies for the several articles to follow, and to be brought up in due time.

* They consist of a knapsack, containing his bodily necessaries, a blanket, a haversack with provisions, a canteen, a hatchet, and a fifth share of the general camp equipage belonging to his tent. These articles (reckoning the provision to be for four days) added to his accoutrements, arms and sixty rounds of ammunition make a bulk totally incompatible with combat, and a weight of about sixty pounds.¹¹

The next widespread use of wigwams and huts by Crown troops occurred during the Monmouth Campaign in June 1778. After General Sir Henry Clinton's forces completed the evacuation of Philadelphia, Captain John Peebles, 42nd Regiment, noted, "Thursday [June] 18th [1778] ... the Troops march'd to within 2 miles of Haddonfield where they **Encampd in the usual manner, vizt. Wigwams** ..." ¹² German Lieutenant John Charles Philip von Krafft left a detailed account of shelters used during the march across New Jersey.

[15 June 1778] It may have been 7.30 P.M. when we arrived there [at a place two and a half miles past Coopers Ferry]. As **we had no tents and it was too late to build huts, I lay down under a tree to sleep.**

[16 June] **In the morning order was given to erect huts**, because we were to remain here until all had overtaken us from Philadelphia.

[18 June] ... we passed through the little town of Hottenfelt [Haddonfield], where, at about 8 o'clock, we who were on the extreme right **camped under huts on a fallow field.**

[20 June] At 3 A.M. we marched away again ... during a heavy rain. Towards noon we **built huts in a meadow** near the town of Morristown [Moorestown] ...

[21 June] From 3 in the morning until noon I had the rear guard of our and the English regiment, again in the heavy rain. In the afternoon we marched during the terrific heat ... Our Grenadiers and the English, which were in front **got into camp about 6.30 P.M., on the right in front of the town [of Mount Holly], in bush [huts], again in the wheat ... This night there was a terrific thunderstorm and the rain poured down so hard that we in our bush-huts got very wet.**

[22 June] **About noon we again pitched our hut-camp on a meadow at Black Horse [Tavern] ...**

[23 June] At 4 A.M. we moved again, in the middle of the army, till towards evening when we again pitched our camp in a fallow field at Racklestown [Recklesstown] ... [After leaving the encampment for a short time] we hastened toward our camp and [met] ... in the woods that extend nearly up to our huts, some soldiers of our Company who were in search of wood ...

[25 June] At 7 in the evening we reached ... Frehold Township ... and **pitched our tents on a fallow field.**

[26 June] At noon we ... were near the little town of Freholdt ... at a short distance away from the place ... we pitched our camp in a fallow field ... **That evening there was a terrific thunderstorm ... I lay in my hut**, on account of the rain, leaning on my left arm, together with my orderly, when there was a fearful thunderclap, so that I could not help thinking my hut had been struck. But it struck at a distance of only 15 paces behind my hut ...

[28 June] At 8.45 P.M. we camped at Notchwarb, in the midst of woods and on an elevation in a field of beautiful wheat. We postponed building our huts until the next day on account of our fatigue.

[30 June] At 7 A.M. we broke up our camp and marched through the borough of Middletown ... until we reached, two miles further on, quite a large hill where we pitched our camp ... **Huts were built, but owing to the heat, it was almost impossible to breath underneath them.**¹³

Crown forces used wigwams only intermittently over the next year and a half, often by small detachments sent out occasionally. German private Johann Conrad Doehla of the Bayreuth Regiment described one such instance in June 1780: "We camped there [Philips' Point, New York]. Because of a shortage of tents, which were still in New York, and the great heat, **we built huts for ourselves from branches with leaves.**" In June 1780 Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Knyphausen took a large force from New York and Staten Island and landed near Elizabethtown, New Jersey. The troops took only minimal baggage and during their seventeen-day stay had to make do without tents. John Allen of the 43d Regiment was captured on 16 June, and told his captors, there were "No tents except those belonging to the Officers. **They have put up their Blankets by way of covering which appears like Tents at a distance.**" Some officers and enlisted men likely resorted to local home or outbuildings, and perhaps makeshift huts as well. Following those operations Col. Cosmo Gordon, 3d Guards Regiment, was accused of "Neglect of Duty before

the Enemy” on 23 June. The matter was first brought up while the Guards were camped on Manhattan Island the following month, “previous to the meeting of the officers of the Brigade of Guards, in his [Lt. Col. James Stewart, 1st Guards Regiment] ... **whiguham**, on the heights of Fordham, on the 2nd of August...”¹⁴



“A Rifleman of the Queen’s Rangers” (watercolor, circa 1780-83), original work by James Murray, copies of which were made by George Spencer. Original John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, copies in the collections of the British Library and City of Toronto Museum.



Detail from "A Rifleman of the Queen's Rangers" (watercolor, circa 1780-83)

Beginning in 1779 the main British war effort shifted southward, but brush shelters did not play a significant role until the following year. In summer 1780 South Carolina militia colonel Richard Winn noted brush huts being used by a mixed contingent of British regulars and provincial troops; he wrote that at the Battle of Hanging Rock, on 6 August, American forces attacked **"the British camp which we found in an open old field ... The British immediately commenced firing from behind some bush tents."** Later that same month, after the destruction of General Horatio Gates' army at Camden, South Carolina, on 16 August, Lord Cornwallis determined to move into North Carolina. On 1 October General Jethro Sumner informed Gates, "Colonel Dickerson, who was on the Enemy's Lines yesterday ... discovered 800 of them upon their march, three miles in advance from Charlotte ... on the Road leading to Bety's ford on

Catawba River, about 9 o'clock in the morning ... it was given out they were to march in ten Days from Newbern; that **they were building brush Hutts, their Lines were circumscribed close in the Town ...**" This report was repeated in the *Virginia Gazette*, "Richmond, October 11 [1780]. Our latest advices from the southward are ... that on the 26th, [September] **the enemy, from 2 to 3000 strong, advanced to Charlotte.... They brought with them to Charlotte, about 80 waggons, and 70 or 80 hogsheads of rum; they were building brush huts; their lines were circumscribed close in the town, and the roll called very often in the day; their liquors were stored.**"¹⁵



"This bad little drawing has no other purpose than to give you a representation of my ménagerie during the tour (of duty) on which I am in the south." Drawing by Capt. Carl Ludwig von Doernberg, (Hesse-Cassel Musketeer Regiment Prinz Carl), enclosed in a 10 August 1779 letter from South Carolina. Carl Ludwig von Doernberg, "Journal d'un voyage en Amérique l'an 1779," Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg 340 v. Dörnberg, H 67.

Operations continued through that winter. After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in March 1781 the British troops divested themselves of all excess baggage, including tents. A private in the 33rd

Regiment, campaigning with Cornwallis in North Carolina during 1780-81, matter-of-factly noted in an anecdote, "**one day, when myself and several of my companions had made a fire before our wigwam ...**" In the midst of operations in Virginia, an observer described a typical British camp of the period: "June 8. [1781] On the 5th the Enemy [i.e., Earl Cornwallis's army] decamped from Mrs. Nicholas's & took the road leading to Goochland Court House [Virginia] ... The day after the Enemy left Mrs. Nicholas's I went over to her house where I saw the devastation caused by the Enemy's encamping there ... all round the house. The fences pulled down & much of them burnt; Many cattle, hogs, sheep & poultry of all sorts killed; 150 barrels of corn eat up or wasted; & the offal of the cattle &c. with dead horses & pieces of flesh all in a putrefying state scattered over the plantation ... **There was not one Tent in the British army, all of them lying under temporary sheds or arbours, made with the boughs of Trees, fence rails &c.** even officers of the highest rank, for ... only Lord Cornwallis & his aids staid in the House." And an officer with the 76th Regiment later recalled of Cornwallis's 1781 Virginia campaign, "**Our encampments were always chosen on the banks of a stream, and were extremely picturesque, as we had no tents, and were obliged to construct wigwams of fresh boughs to keep off the rays of the sun during the day.**"¹⁶ Regimental orders for the 43rd Regiment confirm the use of brush shelters that summer.

[30 June 1781, Williamsburg, Virginia] The Officers Commanding Companies [are] to see [that] **the Wig Wams [are] made as secure against Sun and Rain as possible.**

[11 August] It is the Majors positive Order that **the Soldiers of the Regiment shall sleep in either their tents or Wigwams.**

[27 August, Yorktown] **Commanding Officers of Companies will inspect the Mens Wigwams and report whether they are proper or not.**

[9 September] The Major recomends it to the Soldiers to be in their Wigwams if Water-tight in preference to the tents.

[27 September] **The Regt will leave the Wigwams Standing.**¹⁷

On Gloucester Point, across the York River, German Captain Johann Ewald mentioned his shelter on 18 September: "Since the day before yesterday the southern land fever has suddenly attacked me from ten until two o'clock daily, whereby I **suffered extremely from the terrible heat in my brush hut.**"¹⁸

At the end of September American surgeon James Thatcher noted, "We were agreeably surprised this morning, to find that the enemy had, during the preceding night, abandoned three or four of their redoubts, and retired within the town [Yorktown], leaving a considerable extent of commanding ground, which might have cost us much labor and many lives to obtain by force." Early in October he mentioned one of the abandoned British huts. "A large detachment of the allied army, under command of Major-General Lincoln, were ordered out last evening for the purpose of opening intrenchments near the enemy's lines ... we were favored ... with a night of extreme darkness ... In the latter part of the night it rained severely, and being in the open field, cold and uncomfortable, **I entered a small hut made of brush, which the enemy had abandoned.** Soon after, a man came to the door, and seeing me standing in the centre, instantly drew his sword ... I called out *friend, friend*, and he as speedily, to my great joy, responded, 'Ah, Monsieur, *friend* ...'"¹⁹

With the surrender of Yorktown, large-scale field operations came to an end. Brush huts continued to be used by both sides in the ensuing months but never again in the numbers seen earlier in the war.

"Laying up poles and covering them with leaves ..."
Building Brush Huts

The first step in reconstructing a wigwam is to ascertain how soldiers' built them. Unfortunately, there are only a few illustrations or detailed descriptions to guide us. The best-documented design consists of a long ridgepole supported by two upright forked tree limbs driven into the ground. Seventeenth-century English carpenters knew these supports as "Cratchets" or "crotchets." The "English crutch" is a variation on this design. In that method the ridgepole is placed on two sets of crossed poles tied together at the top to form supports. When using this form one end of the hut needs to be secured to an upright driven into the ground; it is possible that huts built this way were secured to a still-standing tree. (Several tent-shaped booths pictured in an original print of the Thames Frost Fair, circa 1739, were built with the "English crutch" method.) Simple open-faced lean-tos or wedge-shaped shelters can both be built using these methods. Continental soldiers are known to have used the cratchet form of construction. An American officer near Valley Forge in December 1777 lodged in a brush hut "made with two forked saplings, placed in the ground, another [sapling] from one to the other. Against this, fence-rails were placed, sloping, on which leaves and snow were thrown, and thus made comfortable." This method was also used for a wooden tent pictured in the 1788 German military manual, *Was ist jedem Officier waehrend eines Feldzugs zu wissen noethig* ("What it is necessary for each officer to know during a campaign").²⁰

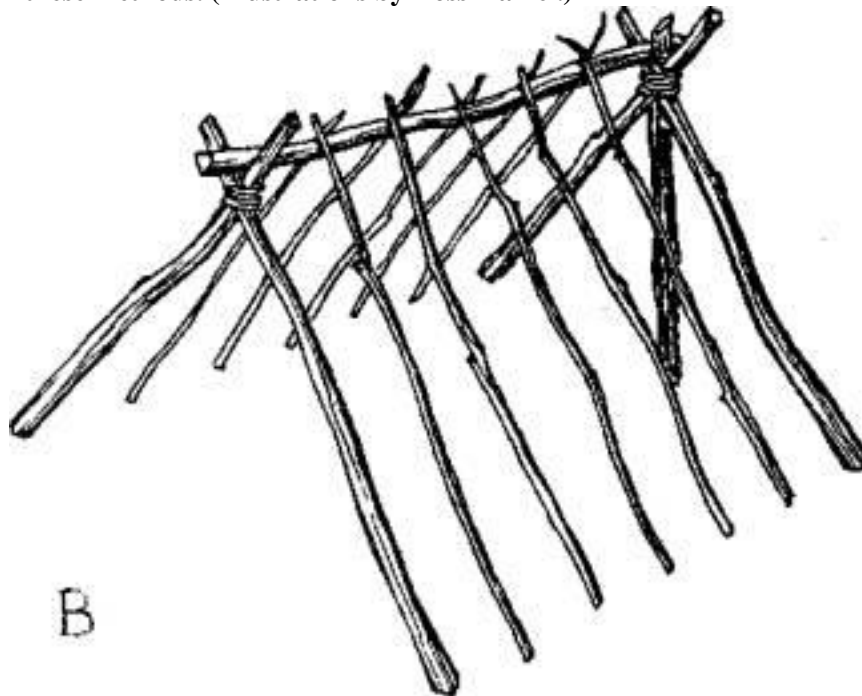


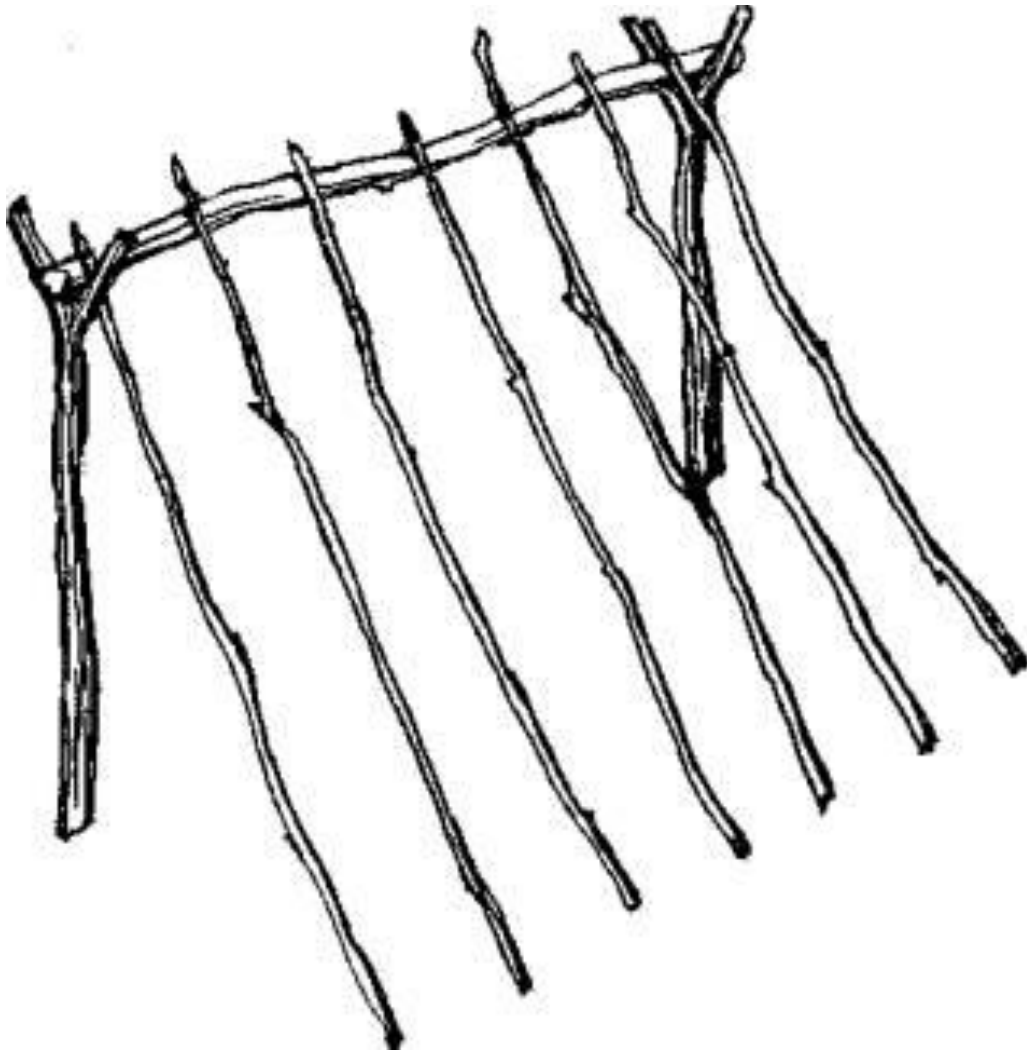
Wooden tent pictured in the German military manual, *Was ist jedem Officier waehrend eines Feldzugs zu wissen noethig. Mit zehen Kupferplatten* (Carlsruhe, 1788), authored by Heinrich Medicus.



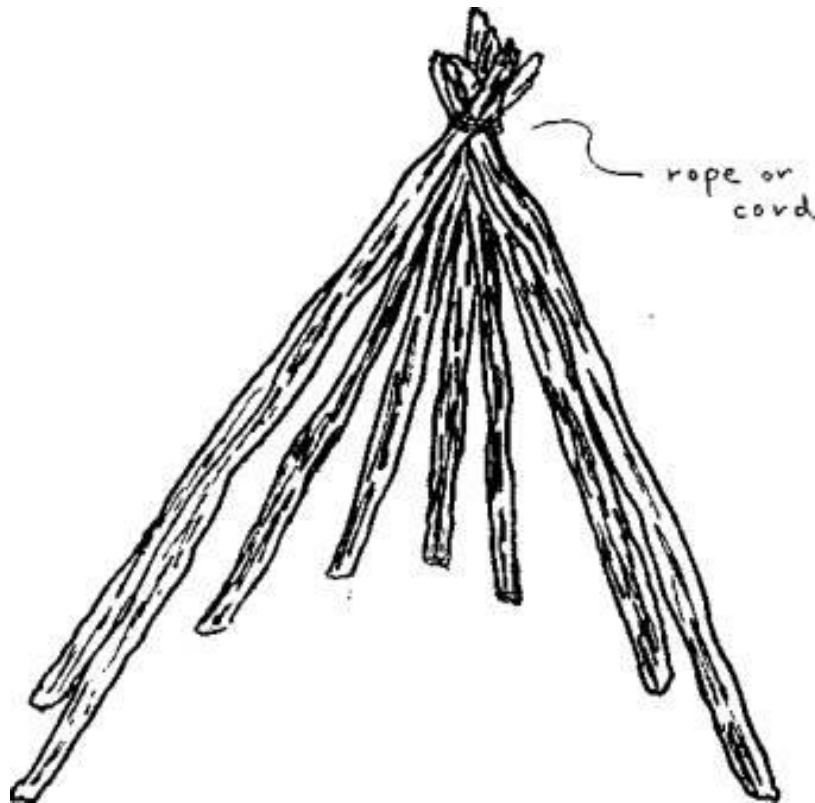
One form of form of brush hut, showing (above and below) two methods of construction.

Figure A. shows a long ridge pole supported by two upright forked sticks (called "Cratchets" or "crotchets"), driven into the ground; in Figure B. the ridge pole is placed on two crossed poles tied together at the top to form a support (an "English crutch"). When using this last method one end needs to be secured to an upright driven into the ground. Either a simple lean-to or a wedge-shaped shelter can be built with these methods. (Illustrations by Ross Hamel.)





Sheds and brush huts were also built in the form of an open-faced half-shelter. A structure of this type, covered over with branches and leaves, was built by soldiers in December 1777. The bowers constructed by Lafayette's troops in summer 1781 may have looked like this. (Illustration by Ross Hamel)



**The basic structure of a cone-shaped wigwam or brush hut before the outer covering is added.
(Illustration by John Rees.)**

Another wigwam type was cone-shaped, similar to huts built by early English colonists in America and those used as dwellings by goatherds, shepherds, and fieldworkers in England for hundreds of years prior the eighteenth century. They also resembled conical living quarters built by charcoal burners and bark-peelers, probably also predating the eighteenth century. The American brush huts shown in the 1782 painting "The Battle of Paoli," by Xavier della Gatta, look to be A-frame in form, but because of the crude way they were drawn can also be interpreted as conical structures. There are no accounts describing the construction of cone-shaped wigwams, but the form was well-known and simple to build. American Surgeon James Thacher may have alluded to conical wigwams with a low entrance and enough headroom to stand upright in the center when he referred to the abandoned British dwellings outside Yorktown: "I entered a small hut made of brush, which the enemy had abandoned. Soon after, a man came to the door, and seeing me standing in the centre, instantly drew his sword ..." ²¹ (For details from the Paoli painting see Stephen R. Gilbert, "An Analysis of the Xavier della Gatta Paintings of the Battles of Paoli and Germantown, 1777: Part I," *MC&H*, XLVI, 3 (Fall 1994), 98, 106.) <http://www.scribd.com/doc/209737868/Stephen-R-Gilbert-%E2%80%9CAn-Analysis-of-the-Xavier-della-Gatta-Paintings-of-the-Battles-of-Paoli-and-Germantown-1777-Part-I-%E2%80%9D-Military-Collector-Histo>)

The basic structure of a conical wigwam consists of three tree limbs or saplings (from eight to twelve feet long) tied together at their tops and then set up; to ensure they remain in place the bottoms of the poles can be dug slightly into the ground. More poles can then be added, and leaf-

covered branches or pine boughs placed over the completed frame.

Structures similar to conical brush huts were recommended to cover camp kitchens in cold weather. In his 1768 *System for the Compleat Interior Management and Oeconomy of a Battalion of Infantry*, Bennett Cuthbertson noted, when "a Regiment is to remain very late in the Field ... [it] will require many ... precautions to make the Soldiers comfortable ... in particular during the time of cooking, when the inclemency of the weather often renders it almost impracticable, in the open air; to obviate ... [their] distress ... young trees should be collected, about the size and length of hop-poles, and placed in a circular form round the out-side of the Kitchens, sloping upwards to a point, exactly in the same position, the poles are fixed ... leaving a sufficient opening on one side, for the men to enter, and weaving small boughs or rushes through the poles: the Kitchens being defended in this manner, the Soldiers remain no longer exposed to the inconveniences of the weather; and are enabled, not only to dress their victuals, without the smallest interruption, but by making a large fire in the center of the Kitchen, to enjoy themselves in great comfort and satisfaction ..." Cuthbertson also stated that "the allied Army in Germany last war [i.e., the Seven Years' War]" used "Kitchens of this construction." The kitchens referred to were circular, earthen constructs, dug into the ground; Humphrey Bland's 1762 *Treatise of Military Discipline* gives twenty-nine feet as their "outer diameter."²²

Among the many Continental soldiers who mentioned makeshift shelter, two left particularly interesting references. Joseph Plumb Martin's description is curious; he wrote of the Whitemarsh encampment in Pennsylvania, "we joined the grand army near Philadelphia, and the heavy baggage being sent back to the rear of the army, we were obliged to put us up huts by laying up poles and covering them with leaves, a capital shelter from winter storms." "Laying up poles" could refer to fashioning a tripod for a conical hut, or merely leaning cut limbs against a standing tree to form a crude shelter. Ensign John Markland, 6th Pennsylvania Regiment, tells of another form of makeshift shelter his soldiers built: "... from the Battle of Brandywine until their encampment near Skippack, they were constantly engaged in heavy, rapid, and severe marches, without tents or baggage. These articles having been sent far into the rear, their shelter at night being frequently nothing more than a few rails placed slantwise against a fence, with a few dry leaves, if they could be procured." Similar shelters were built by American Civil War soldiers.²³



A Civil War fence rail shelter similar to the ones described by Ensign John Markland as being built by Continental soldiers in autumn 1777. John D. Billings, *Hard Tack and Coffee* (Boston, George M. Smith & Co., 1887), 142.

It is noteworthy that only British soldiers used the term "wigwam" to denote brush huts. To date I have found only one American account of soldiers' shelter, among scores, which contains the word, and that as a derogatory reference to the winter log huts at Valley Forge. Wigwam originates from several Native American variations: Ojibwa, *wigwaum*, *wigiwam*; Algonquin, *wekuwom*, *wikiwam*; Delaware, *wiquoam*; all literally mean *their house*, *my house*, or *his house*. The term was used very early by English colonists in America; one of the first settlers of Massachusetts Bay, Edward Johnson, wrote that his compatriots "burrow themselves in the Earth for their first shelter under some Hill side, casting the Earth aloft upon Timber ... in these poor Wigwames (they sing Psalms pray, and praise their God) till they can provide them houses." In 1631 Massachusetts Bay Lieutenant-Governor Dudley noted "some English wigwams ... have taken fire in the roofs covered with thatch or boughs." For some reason the word was not generally used by American soldiers, but was retained by, and popular in, the British army during the war.²⁴

*Comparative Use of Makeshift Shelters
in the French and Indian War, and American Civil War*

All these constructs had historical antecedents; this is evidenced by a 17th century illustration of a European army's camp showing a cluster of makeshift huts at one corner, all reminiscent of shelters used by soldiers in North America. American soldier-built board or brush shelters predated the Revolution, and Continental soldiers' military descendants used very much the same constructs during the Civil War, eighty years later.²⁵



Makeshift huts used by European armies, circa 1550-1650. Note their similarity to shelters built by soldiers in America from the 1750's to the 1860's. Parker, *European Soldiers 1550-1650*, 29.

Gary S. Zaboly, in his work "A Lodging for the Night: A Brief Study of Some Types of Wilderness Shelters Used During the French and Indian War," described many different types of covering, noting that "references to brush shelters, bush tents and brush tents abound in diaries" from that conflict. Among the shelters built by British and Provincial troops were familiar A-frame constructs, open-faced half-shelters, and conical wigwams. Chaplain Robert Treat wrote of provincial soldiers' huts at Lake George in late 1755, "Their lodging is various, some using an artificial couch and others preferring the feathers the land produces, so that truly it may be said of some that their houses are fir and their bed is green."²⁶

Federal and Confederate soldiers sometimes constructed makeshift coverings when campaigning, and a number of men described or alluded to brush, plank, and other shelters. Temporary huts were commonly used by soldiers on picket duty, and several drawings or paintings picture them, notably

Edwin Forbes' "The Picket Line," "A Christmas Dinner," and "Coming into the Lines," as well as Albert Bierstadt's "Attack on a Picket Post" (1862). Forbes' huts are all freestanding lean-tos or A-frames, while Bierstadt's rendering shows a structure made of brush-covered poles leaning against a large tree. A photograph of a Federal picket at Lewinsville, Virginia, clearly shows a six foot high half-shelter built by the men; Wilbur Hinman, Civil War veteran and author, pictured such a half-shelter in his work *Corporal Si Klegg and his "Pard"*. The only pictorial southern example I have found is in a sketch by Conrad Chapman of a Confederate soldier on picket duty. In the background is a half-shelter or lean-to of poles or fence rails.²⁷



"... outpost guards ... heating a pot of morning coffee ..."; detail of Edwin Forbes' "Coming into the Lines." Dawson, *A Civil War Artist at the Front*, plate 38.

Occasionally makeshift shelters were found in large, settled camps. Winslow Homer's "Playing Old Soldier" (1865) shows a brush lean-to which seems to be a surgeon's hut, while Sanford Robinson Gifford's painting "The Evening Meal of the Seventh Regiment New York in Camp near Frederick, Maryland, 1863" (1864), portrays an encampment consisting of two large Sibley tents surrounded by at least twenty straw-covered shelters, whose basic structures are probably comprised of boards or fence rails. Most are simple open-faced lean-tos of various sizes, although several A-frame structures can also be seen (see accompanying illustrations). The shelters pictured by Gifford resemble straw huts photographed after the battle at Sharpsburg, Maryland, in 1862.²⁸



**"The Evening Meal of the Seventh Regiment New York in Camp near Frederick, Maryland, 1863"
by Sanford Robinson Gifford (1864)**

Such Civil War shelters were variously described as shanties, "houses of boughs and blankets," and "shelters of boughs"; they were also commonly called "shebangs" or "booths." The term "shebang" is hard to pin down; defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as U.S. slang, "A hut, shed; one's dwelling, quarters," in the eastern armies it seems to have meant a brush hut, half-shelter or any other hastily constructed campaign covering. In the west a shebang was usually, though not always, more substantial, and was often applied to plank shacks and winter huts. While visiting troops at Falmouth, Virginia, in late December 1862 poet Walt Whitman saw them "Sometimes at night ... around the fires, in their shebang enclosures of bushes." In January 1863 on his route home from Falmouth, Whitman encountered "soldiers guarding the [rail]road [who] came out from their tents or shebangs of bushes with rumpled hair and half-awake look." Second Lieutenant Eugene Carter, 3rd U.S. Infantry, noted during the movement towards Manassas, Virginia, in July 1861, that the day was "extremely warm ... [and] our men built booths of bushes for us, which were very comfortable." Booths or shades were also seen after the Battle of Cedar Mountain (9 August 1862) when the wounded of both armies were left on the field in the hands of Confederate forces. Although largely preoccupied with their own men, southern troops were able to afford at least some care to their suffering enemies. One Federal officer, visiting the battlefield soon after, found northern casualties "lying under booths of gum branches, each man with a canteen of water by his side." Another northern soldier wrote that "some humane Confederates had brought water, and built shelters of boughs to protect a few of the wounded from the hot sun." Booths made from poles and

blankets or tent cloth were photographed sheltering Confederate wounded near Sharpsburg in 1862.²⁹ (For more on Civil War lodgings see, John U. Rees, "'Shebangs,' 'Shades,' and Shelter Tents: An Overview of Civil War Soldiers' Campaign Shelters" two parts, *Muzzleloader*, vol. XXX, no. 1 (March/April 2003), 69-75; vol. XXX, no. 2 (May/June 2003), 63-69. Available online at <http://www.libertyrifles.org/research/campaignshelters.html>)

The final installments of this series we will examine Continental soldiers' use of booths and brush huts.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Charles Beale, Kevin Coyle, Steve Gilbert, Justin Grabowski, Kurt Hague, Don N. Hagist, Ross Hamel, Chris Hughes, Matthew Keagle, Garry W. Stone, Mark Turdo, Tim Wilson, and Fellow Marko Zlatich for contributions of information or help with brush hut and bower reconstruction. I also owe appreciation to Historic Stagville, Monmouth Battlefield State Park, the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, Yorktown Victory Center, Helms' Company, 2nd New Jersey Regiment, and the King's Own Patriots (North Carolina Volunteers) for their assistance and support. As always the David Library of the American Revolution, with their extensive collection, was an invaluable resource. Finally, this work would not have been possible without my good friend Charles LeCount who contributed material on 17th and 18th century building techniques, Native American structures, as well as other research, and provided much-needed advice and encouragement.

Addendum

1. A Narragansett Wigwam, 1761

Ezra Stiles' Drawing of a Narragansett Wigwam

Caption: "The Reverend Ezra Stiles's sketch of a wigwam at Niantic, Connecticut (1761). Stiles measured several wigwams. This one was typical, An Oval or Elipsis 17 1/2 by 12 feet. He notes: Sachems Wigwaums it is said used to be double, with Two Fire places Smoke holes atop. (Ezra Stiles Papers)"

Original source: Ezra Stiles Papers. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Publisher: Reed College

Caption, overhead view: "Like many Indian homes, this wigwam incorporated English material culture. Stiles interior view of it, labeled Phebe and Eliza Mohege's Wigwaum, includes lettered sketches of the furnishings and a key: A. Tea Table, B. Shelf with plates, C D. Chests, E F. Pots hanging, G. a Table, H. a Dresser, I. a Chair, where I took View, K. Mats for Beds, L. Fire, M. Door. Most Wigwaums have another Door at N. right opposite to M. He adds, High[t] 10 f. 5 In and notes (with somewhat hasty math) that 12 persons lodged here viz., 5 Men 8 Women Octr. 28. 1761. (Ezra Stiles Papers)"

http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=%2Fcolhist&CISOPTR=339&CISOBONUM=1&REC=4

Benáumakééh } Devil } East Haven Indian
 Hobbomaukh } Language }

James Meeh-yeeh } Sachem of the East Haven
 Indians. ^{did about 1745 of the same} }
 His son

James Mennaugh did at Darby 1758
 300 Indian Men in Arms assembled in East Haven
 at a grand Council. Eli. Mohage's



East Haven first began to be
 settled by English D 1681
 & 1682. M. Hemmaway
 began to preach here 1704;
 found into a parish 1707
 with about & not above 25
 Families. Ordained

An oval or ellipse 17 1/2 by 12 feet

Sachem's Wigwam, it is said
 used to be double, with two
 Air places & smoke holes atop.

Uncle Eleazer's Children

Ann Smith	2 ^s 1
Sarah	1
Ruth Richardson	2. 2
Reuben	0 0
Hannah	0 0
Stephen	0 0

Uncle Abel

Althea	
Abel	
Sophia	7 or 8 Child ^s

503

High 10 f 5 in
 12 ft from lodgement
 viz 5 Men & Women
 Oct. 28. 1761

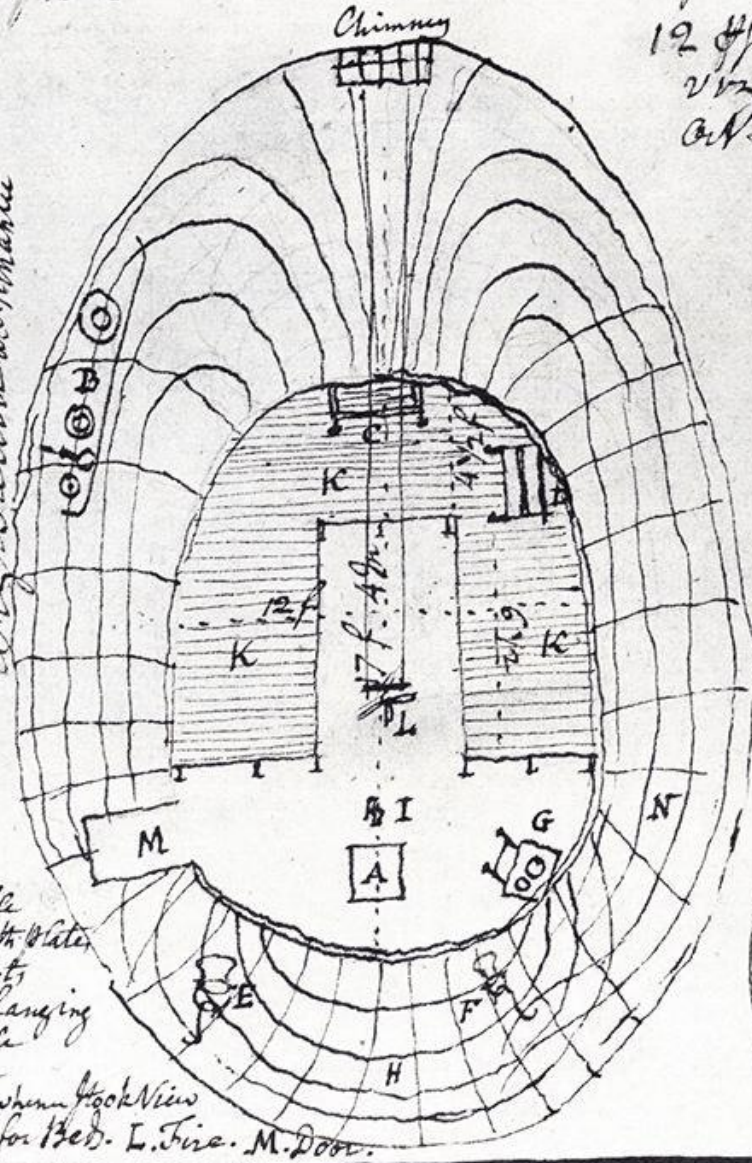
Piche & Giez a Moheegay
 Wigwamm-aldinhanstie

Quainghkeete
 Worden Hook

Tea Table
 Shelf with Plates
 2 Chests
 2 Pots hanging
 a Table
 Dresser
 Chair when Hook View
 Mats for Bed. L. Fire. M. Door.

Most Wigwams have
 another Door at N. right
 opposite to M.

Paubpygouzi
 nauzshucks
 or
 The Tramel or
 Double string



2. *Recreated Brush Shelters*



One form of brush hut (wigwam) likely constructed by British and Continental soldiers. After erecting a tripod of long poles (tied together at the top), additional poles are added to fill in the structure, and leaf-covered branches or pine boughs placed over them as a covering. (Photograph by John Rees, North Carolina Volunteers, Historic Stagville, April 1997.)



17th Regiment

https://www.facebook.com/hm17thregiment/?ref=br_rs



40th Regiment, 2d Battalion, Light Infantry

<https://www.facebook.com/HM-40th-Foot-2nd-Battalion-LI-Bloodhounds-188461437850483/>



The German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania 1776- 1781
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/462635667097068/>



40th Regiment, 2d Battalion, Light Infantry

<https://www.facebook.com/HM-40th-Foot-2nd-Battalion-LI-Bloodhounds-188461437850483/>

3. *Additional Articles on Campaign Shelter, 1775-1865*

“They had built huts of bushes and leaves.”: Analysis of Continental Army Brush Shelter Use, 1775-1782,” *The Brigade Dispatch*, vol. XXXII, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), 7-10.

Appendices

A. American Brush Huts.

B. Brush Huts and the British Army.

Addendum: List of articles and links for author’s series on soldiers’ campaign shelters (1775-1783, 1861-1865)

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/299341406/They-had-built-huts-of-bushes-and-leaves-Analysis-of-Continental-Army-Brush-Shelter-Use-1775-1782>

“We ... got ourselves cleverly settled for the night’: Soldiers’ Shelter on Campaign During the War for Independence,”

part I, “Oznabrig tabernacles’: Tents in the Armies of the Revolution”:

1. “Put our Men into barns ...”: The Vagaries of Shelter
2. “We Lay in the open world”: Troops Without Shelter on Campaign
3. “State of Marquees and Tents delivered to the Army...”: Varieties of Tentage
 - a. British Common Tents
 - b. American Common Tents
 - c. Horseman’s and Cavalry Tents
 - d. Wall Tents
 - e. Marquees
 - f. Bell Tents for Sheltering Arms
 - g. Dome, Square, and Hospital Tents
 - h. French Tents
4. “Return of Camp Equipage”: More on Tents.

Appendices

Illustrations of French Tents

The Common Tent as Illustrated in a German Treatise

How to Fold a Common Tent for Transport (from a German Treatise)

Interior Views of Common Tents: Sleeping Arrangements in Three Armies

A Melange of Marquees: Additional Images of Officers’ Tents

Encampment Plans: Continental Army, Hessian, and British

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)

“A Correct View of the Hessian Camp on Barton Farm near Winchester ... by Willm. Godson, Land Surveyor to the Right Worshipful the Corporation of Winchester occupé le 16 Juillet 1756”

Lewis Lochee, An Essay on Castrametation (London, 1778)

(British treatise on tents and encampments.)

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: B. Law and T. Caslon, 1762).

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 49, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 98-107.

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/262657282/Oznabrig-tabernacles-Tents-in-the-Armies-of-the-Revolution-part-1-of-We-got-ourselves-cleverly-settled-for-the-night-Soldiers-Shelter> or

part II, "The great [wastage] last Campaign was owing to their being wet in the Waggon." Allotment and Transporting Tents in the Armies of the Revolution

1. "The Allowance of Tents is not sufficient ...": An Overview of Tents as Shelter
 - a. Tent Allotment, 1776 to 1779
 - b. Female Followers and Tents
 - c. Tent Allotment, 1779 to 1782
 - d. Tent Supply and Shortfalls
2. "The fewer the Waggon to the Army, the better...": Transporting Tents
 - a. Wagons
 - b. Pack Horses
 - c. Soldiers as Beasts of Burden
 - d. Watercraft

Appendix: "British Army Wheeled Transport in the American War: A Primer"

Addendum

"No. 9 – Return of Drivers, Horses and Waggon furnished by Brigadr-General William Dalrymple, Quarter Master General of the Army in North America in the District of New York by order of His Excellency the Commander in Chief for the General and Staff Officers and several Corps of the Army between 1st January & 31st March 1781 inclusive being 90 days"

"Return of Drivers, Horses and Waggon belonging to the Quart. Master General's Department attached to the General and Staff Officers and Several Corps of Hessians in the District of New York. – 26th August 1781."

"Return of Drivers, Horses and Waggon attached to the several British Regiments in the District of New York 26th August 1781."

"Enclosure 2d Return of Drivers, Horses and Waggon that are with the Corps to the Southward [Virginia] New York 23d August 1781."

"Enclosure 4 Return of Conductors, Drivers, Horses and Waggon in the Quarter Master General's Department, attached to the Several Corps at and near the Six Mile Stone. 26th August 1781."

Enclosure No. 6, Johann Friedrich Cochenhausen (also Cockenhausen or Kochenhausen), colonel and quartermaster general, Hessian forces, to Board of General Officers, 14 May 1781 (regarding wagons for the German troops).

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 49, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 156-168.

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part III, "The camps ... are as different in their form as the owners are in their dress ...": Shades, Sheds, and Wooden Tents, 1775-1782":

"Not a bush to make a shade near [at] hand ...": Bush Bowers, "Arbours," and "Shades," 1776-1782

"An elegant shade ...": Officers' Bowers

"The Men employed in making Bowers before their Tents...": Shades for Common Soldiers

- a. Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 1777 to 1780
- b. Virginia Peninsula, 1781
- c. New York, 1782
- d. Bowers and British Troops, 1776 and 1781

"The troops hutted with Rails and Indian Corn Stocks ...": Sheds, Planked Huts, and Straw Tents, 1775-1777

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 53, no. 4 (Winter 2001-2002), 161-169.

<http://revwar75.com/library/rees/bowers.htm>

part IV, "We are now ... properly ... enwigwamed.": British Soldiers and Brush Huts, 1776-1781":

Overview

"Laying up poles and covering them with leaves ...": Building Brush Huts

Comparative Use of Makeshift Shelters in the French and Indian War, and American Civil War

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 55, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 89-96

<http://revwar75.com/library/rees/shelter4.htm>

part V, "We built up housan of branchis and leavs ...": Continental Army Brush Shelters, 1775-1777"

A. "This night we lay out without shelter ...": Overview of American Soldiers' Campaign Lodging

B. "We maid us some Bush huts ...": Brush Shelters, 1775 and 1776.

C. "Huts of sticks & leaves": Washington's Army in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, 1777.

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 55, no. 4 (Winter 2003-2004), 213-223.

<http://revwar75.com/library/rees/pdfs/huts5.pdf>

part VI, "We built up housan of branchis & leavs ...": Continental Army Brush Shelters, 1778-1782

A. "Found the regiment lying in bush huts ...": Continental Troops on Campaign and on the March, 1778-1780.

B. "Pine huts," "Huts of rails," and "Bush Tents": Virginia and the Carolinas, 1781-1782.

C. "Return of Camp Equipage": More on Tents.

Military Collector & Historian, vol. 56, no. 2 (2004), 98-106.

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"Soldiers are ingenious animals.": American Civil War Campaign Shelters,"

Comparative Use of Makeshift Shelters, 1755 to 1812

"More like a chicken-coop er a dog-kennel": Civil War Soldiers' Tents

A. Soldier-Built Supports and Shelter Tent Amenities.

B. Southern Tents and Substitutes.

"Ther' ain't no use lyin' 'n the mud.": Soldiers' Bedding Arrangements With and Without Shelter

"Their shebang enclosures of bushes.": The Variety of Brush and Board Huts

"It is so awful hot here to-day": Soldier-Built Shades

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(Page 35)

“Q. Did not Lieut. Col. Gordon assemble the officers of the first battalion on the heights of Fordham, and desire the person who disapproved of his conduct to stand forth and declare himself?

A. Lieut. Col. Gordon, on the 2d of August, came on the parade, just as the men were about to be dismissed, and said to Lieut. Col. Thomas, who was there amongst other officers, that he had received his letter, and was come there in person to answer it, requesting at the same time Lieut. Col. Stewart's permission to make use of his whiguham for that purpose: at this place Lieut. Col. Gordon explained to Lieut. Col. Thomas the letter he had received, but declined shewing the copy of a letter written to Gen. Matthew by him, which Lieut. Col. Thomas demanded in the one he had written that morning to Col. Gordon. After this some altercation ensued between Lieut. Col. Gordon and Lieut. Col. Thomas, but nothing, as he (the Witness) recollects, particularly, pointed on either side; which made him apprehensive

it might not come to an explanation: for which reason, he again told Col. Gordon, the expressions he had heard were absolutely necessary to be cleared up: his reply was, that he wished it, and then either did, or shewed a desire to call upon the person: that Col. Stewart, who was one of the officers present, observed, that he thought it was very right; but, as that was only a partial meeting of the brigade, he thought it would be proper to deter it till a meeting of all the officers of the brigade was called; which was agreed upon, and he (the Witness) assembled them accordingly at twelve o'clock the same day."

(Page 52)

"Q. Does he recollect to have heard Lieut. Col. Thomas speak to Lieut. Col. Gordon, on the subject of his former conduct at Springfield in general, previous to the meeting of the officers of the brigade of Guards, in his (the Witness's) whigum, on the heights of Fordham, on the 2d of August; and whether Lieut. Co). Thomas ever shewed any fear of accusing Lieut. Col. Gordon?"

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26. Gary S. Zaboly, "A Lodging for the Night: A Brief Study of Some Types of Wilderness Shelters Used During the French and Indian War", *Muzzleloader*, March/April 1989, 47-51. Fred Anderson, *A Peoples Army - Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill and London, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), 92-93.

27. William Forrest Dawson, ed., *A Civil War Artist at the Front: Edwin Forbes' Life Studies of the Great Army* (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1957), plates 7, 8, and 38. "Attack on a Picket Post," by Albert Bierstadt (1862), Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Treasury of Art and Literature* (New York, MacMillan Publishing Co., 1992), 80. William C. Davis, ed., *The Image of War: 1861-1865*, IV, *Fighting for Time* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1983), 110; original photo source,

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28. Marc Simpson, *Winslow Homer Paintings of the Civil War* (San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and Bedford Arts, Publishers, 1988), 148. Sears, *Civil War Treasury of Art and Literature*, 172-173. Davis, *Image of War: 1861-1865*, III, *The Embattled Confederacy* (1982), 58; original photo source, U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa. A three picture collage, with the aforementioned photograph in the center, shows a larger perspective of plank and straw structures among the houses and barns sheltering the wounded of General William French's division. Ronald H. Bailey, *The Civil War: The Bloodiest Day, The Battle of Antietam* (Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Va., 1984), 138-139.

29. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Glasgow, New York, and Toronto, Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), 2776. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (Louisiana State Univ. Press, Baton Rouge, 1995), 83-84. Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days & Collect* (Glasgow, Scotland, Wilson & McCormack, 1883), 28. Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue* (Austin and London, Univ. of Texas Press, 1979), 11. Robert K. Krick, *Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain* (Chapel Hill and London, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 337, 345-346. Davis, *Image of War: 1861-1865*, III, *The Embattled Confederacy* (1982), 58; original photo source, U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.