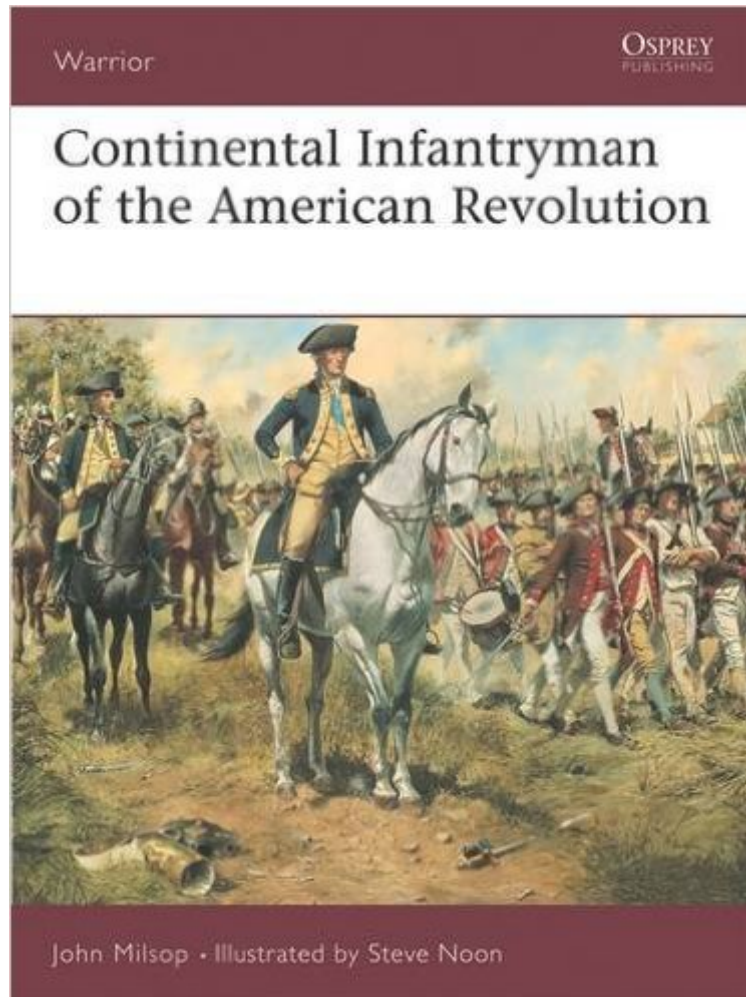


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# Continental Infantryman Of The American Revolution (Warrior)



## Synopsis

America raised three distinct forces to win its revolution: untrained, short-service militiamen; state troops; and the regular Continentals. The latter were the backbone of the army, providing a disciplined and effective fighting force. Some infantrymen served with Arnold's Lake Champlain fleet as marines, while others fought conventionally in sieges and field battles. This book takes a close look at the Continental infantryman of the period examining all facets of their daily life including recruitment, training, service conditions and combat experiences. Many armies have saved their nation: the Continentals helped build theirs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is highly readable, well illustrated, and best of all, tells the REAL story about the Continental Army. Popular histories and school texts simply do not convey the harsh realities faced by this army: constant nagging hunger, inadequate clothing and supplies, severe discipline, and the general disdain of the American people toward these brave souls who won our freedom so long ago. To quote author John Milsop "it remains impossible to understand how men would willingly accept such conditions month after month and still risk death on the battlefield." By far the best artwork is Don Troiani's painting on the front cover, but Steve Noon's illustrations are adequate and historically accurate. Osprey's books are always way too brief in length, but this volume is definitely one of the better texts they have published. I'm so glad that they sought out an American author, rather than draw from their stock of British historians -- all of whom tend to betray all of the biases of

their own country - especially the other American Revolution texts.

As John Milsop notes in *Osprey Warrior #68, Continental Infantryman of the American Revolution*, the Americans raised three distinct armies during the War for Independence: militia, state troops and the Continentals. It was George Washington's dream to raise and equip an all-volunteer and professional army that could best the British redcoats on the battlefield, but circumstances continually frustrated the realization of that aspiration. The Continental Army that did emerge, as described by Milsop, was often dressed in ragged uniforms and poorly fed, but willing to soldier on. Indeed, Milsop concludes that "the willingness of the Continental infantry to endure privation may have contributed as much to final victory as did their skill on the battlefield." Although much of this volume covers fairly familiar material for anyone familiar with the American soldier in the Revolution, Milsop is able to retain the reader's interest by carefully weaving first-person accounts into a coherent narrative. *Continental Infantryman of the American Revolution* begins with 5-6 page sections on the enlistment, training and equipment of the American regulars. Milsop's comment that "the absence of field sanitation and basic cleanliness promoted sickness, weakening the fighting power of the army" highlights an under-appreciated vulnerability of the American forces (oftentimes, historians attach too much significance to alleged American tactical clumsiness or skill, rather than basic meat-and-potato soldier skills). Most readers familiar with the American Revolution will be aware of Von Steuben's drill instruction at Valley Forge, but few will be aware - as Milsop details - his efforts to reform American camp procedures, including latrine digging. Apparently, about the only equipment that the American soldier had a decent supply of was muskets or rifles, but the Continentals were desperately short of uniforms and footwear. Camp life was tough on the Continentals, who were usually hungry and paid with almost worthless paper currency. Mutiny was fairly common and Milsop notes that one particularly large mutiny in 1781 cost the Continentals more men than any single battle of the war. The remainder of Milsop's narrative includes sections on campaigning, belief and belonging, the experience of battle and notes on museums. The color plates in the volume are: a private from the Commander-in-Chief's Guard, 1778; Von Steuben drilling at Valley Forge; the night attack at Stony Point; the New Windsor cantonment; four starving Continentals; the charge of the Delaware-Maryland Battalion at Cowpens; Aftermath of the Battle of Trenton; and a Continental infantryman with equipment in 1781. Compared to other Osprey volumes, these color plates tend toward mediocre, but are acceptable. Most of the other illustrations are very commonplace examples. Despite triumphs at Saratoga and Yorktown, the Continental soldier's main contribution was his ability to remain in the field despite crippling logistical shortfalls.

Quite frankly, it was beyond the ability of the cash-strapped colonies to maintain 20-25,000 regular soldiers in 1775-1783 and the only way that it was managed was that the army put up with gross shortages because enough troops believed in the worthiness of sacrifice for the cause (Confederate troops would be in the same situation in 1864-1865). Thus, the ultimate success of the American Continental would seem to be a good example of Napoleon's dictum that in war, the moral is to the material as three is to one.

The men who served in General Washington's Continental Army had a tough existence, poorly paid, often half-starved, and always seemingly living just beyond the end of the supply line. The Continental Infantrymen were the tough heart of the Revolutionary Army, who persevered through years of privation and loss, and who ultimately made good on the promises of the Declaration of Independence. This is their story, in brief. "Continental Infantryman of the American Revolution" is an Osprey Warrior Series book, authored by John Milsop with illustrations by Steve Noon. The book opens with a brief chronology of the war before stepping through a variety of topics of interest, including enlistment, training and equipment. Later chapters discuss the experience of battle. The narrative is very nicely supported by lots of period and modern illustrations, a few photographs, and a nice set of color plates of uniforms. At 64 pages including an index, this is a very concise but very readable account. This reviewer wishes more of the illustrations had been in color. Recommended as a good introduction to the topic.

This is a good book for military reenactors, history buffs, wargammers. For each of these, this book will fill their interest. One of the interesting points I found was the insistence that the Continental Infantryman was always in shabby condition as trying to supply them with uniforms through the whole war was difficult. This contrasts with previous books on the period which presents the uniformed soldiers as crisp and clean and ready for the parade ground. This book shows them how they must have been on campaign.

Overall this book is a good introduction to the colonial troops of the American Revolution. The most valuable section is that on the uniforms, and the color plates are great.

Informative, well-written and to the point. The book made several points about the Revolution that I didn't previously realize. Will read it again.

Other than reminding us of women camp followers, this book really doesn't do that much of a job informing us of the men who served in America's founding. Just as he fails to truly remind us of his ability to improvise. Often wearing the simple much better suited Hunting Shirt when European uniforms were available. Often bringing a modified fowling piece used for hunting when muskets were not to be had, along with powder horn and shot bag when cartridge boxes were not available. And I thought it rather boring. Osprey usually produces better.

I had high hopes, which were dashed by this less than middle school level book.

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