

Reasonable Authenticity: A philosophical approach to the re-enacting hobby.

An personal opinion piece by Calvin Arnt. Updated January 3, 2009.

Establishing and maintaining standards of authenticity is important for anyone involved in historical re-enacting. Everyone shares some responsibility for these standards including umbrella organizations, site hosts, unit commanders, and individuals. At the end of the day, standards must be upheld otherwise people naturally get lazy and our living history events can turn into more of a costume party than an accurate picture of what was going on with these particular armies at a particular moment in time. We do not honour the people we portray when we grossly interpret their lives incorrectly.

When one considers how high standards of authenticity should be, one cannot consider this question in a vacuum. To consider *only* high standards of authenticity when deciding how to run an event or enforce standards within your unit, will mean that fewer and fewer people will meet those high standards and/or would be interested in joining a unit like that. It has been said that the only two acceptable compromises in the hobby are (a) safety and (b) health. Therefore, to respect safety issues, we do not fire real bullets from our firearms and we use flash guards and hammerstalls on our locks. To show concern for people's health, we allow port-a-johns at events, often with a washing area with soap and/or sanitation gel nearby. Other than these, the typical hard-core hobbyist would argue there should be no other compromises at an event and to do so is an unacceptable concession. To do so, you are not merely a "mainstreamer," but are attached with the ugly label of "farb" by some. Often, no matter how sincerely you may be on improving your impression or regardless that you may have a fundamental difference of philosophy than these people, your contribution to living history events is considered a detriment by these people. Hence, they prefer to have their own "immersion" events whereby they can control the standards that they want to maintain. "FUBU," meaning For Us By Us, is their mantra.

I am going to suggest to you that these people in our hobby take high standards to an extreme. There are more items that should be considered for loosening rules, and which will still allow us to maintain an authentic camp and not simply relegate us to being "mainstreamers" or "farbs." Were we to allow only the two compromises aforementioned, that would likely exclude all older re-enactors, virtually all children save drummers, and we'd have to tell most of our ladies to stay at home and not come. Were we to follow these high standards precisely, people should be pulling their teeth out in order to match the dental work of a typical person in the period. Obviously, one can still be an authentic re-enactor without going to such extremes.

Likewise, extremes can be taken the other direction as well. An attitude of "it's good enough," or "we can hide it" can easily creep into a unit with low authenticity standards and this easily rubs off on other groups who grow envious of others who are more 'laid back.' Then pressure grows within that group to relax standards and soon the general population at an event shows little concern for authenticity. With just a little more effort

or a little more financial investment, one can do it right instead of trying to mask all of one's mistakes around camp.

This brings me to the central issue that should be considered, I think, when trying to establish one's standards of authenticity. Most people are involved in this hobby for pleasure; they like it, it is fun. Few people would honestly say that driving six hours to set up in the dark, running around sweaty all weekend in wool or corsets, sleeping on the ground, being bitten alive, cooking over an open fire, sitting around in rain - that any of this is fun in and of itself. There are other reasons brought into the mix and which all works together to produce a very enjoyable past time. There are relationships involved in this hobby; study and sharing information, enjoyable tactics. If this hobby were not fun, few would actually do it. So an important consideration here is to keep the hobby pleasurable. Pleasure and authenticity do not necessarily have to be in opposition to each other. This essay will argue how pleasure can still be present within a unit's standards, all the while high levels of authenticity are enforced. *Pleasure should always be the first priority, with authenticity a close second.* When that is agreed upon, it creates a unit or a camp where just about any type of person can be involved and would want to be part of a unit like that. Essentially what I am alluding to is, *if it can reasonably be done in an authentic way so that people still enjoy themselves - do it that authentically! When there is an issue that cannot reasonably be replicated without alienating a wide range of people in your unit - do not do it.* Any commander's goal for his unit should be to grow it and get the number of armed soldiers as close as possible to the true numbers deployed in the real war. In the hobby today we have a gross amount of smaller units peppering the field, most of whom are commanded by an officer. If we want to be accurate in our unit strength and ratio of officers vs. enlisted men, we need to be mindful of growing our unit membership. So once again, enforce authenticity on things that matter and which can easily be done authentically, but do not worry about it for things that are hard to change. Move forward with the goals of growing unit size and making this hobby pleasurable for your unit members and doing things authentically. If standards are too high, this will rub some people the wrong way and all of a sudden there will be a plethora of reasons to get out of the hobby, and the unit suffers. Some people may think that I am therefore arguing for mainstream standards in the hobby and this is not the case. I would like to go through several issues related to authenticity standards to show you how we can enforce a reasonable level of authenticity while still making the hobby appealing to the masses.

Scope of Impressions. In general, a hobbyist should endeavour to portray the life and times of the common soldier to the best of their ability with the highest degree of the historical accuracy based on the best in research. One who cares about historical accuracy is willing to consider new and even contrary evidence to current conclusions, where that new evidence is solid and persuasive. One limitation with this is when research has been exhausted and there is no new information due to the loss of primary sources over time. Nonetheless, the prudent hobbyist keeps a mind open to any new research and even to new interpretations of old research. S/he works in concert with other historians to create an accurate portrayal of a persona. Anyone who elevates him/herself as the sole, or leading "expert" in an area of study is often not that which they claim to be. At the same time, an authentic re-enactor recognizes that there were deviations to the standard

impression, depending what kind of impression you are doing. In other words, a prudent historian and re-enactor will not fall into the trap of only endorsing cookie-cutter images of a “typical” soldier. When someone can make a strong case for a non-standard impression of someone in the era, using primary evidence and/or likelihood of probabilities, then the historical community should endorse that impression. Furthermore, some impressions may, and should, reflect influence from certain ethnic backgrounds that some people may have come from. There is a difference between a French and English gown; what the Palatine Germans wore compared to the Hudson valley Dutch. Reflecting these differences in clothing shows good research and a high respect for the people who are being portrayed.

Impression Locale. In general, re-enacting events portray armies and soldiers who are on the move. Camp is a temporary resting place for them. As such, soldiers are generally most accurate when they bring very little with them to an event, because the real life soldier would have done the same. At the few events that are attended where they are in garrison or a fort is besieged, those who are garrisoned there would likely have had more luxuries during their stay. They would have time to collect them, purchase items locally in town etc., but once the army moved, most of that would have been left behind. Therefore, as much as it is possible, modern re-enactors should try to bring as little as they need to match the kind of event s/he is going to. Try living out of a backpack for a weekend and see how it goes! After doing it a few times, it will not seem so hard.

Unit Strength. There are plenty of small units out there, many of whom are still commanded by an officer. It does a disservice to history and to the units we portray when an officer marches on to the field commanding four men. None of our ranks are real, and we should not be so beholden to them that they prevent us from making an event work. Getting group members to events can be a science of frustration, as any commander knows. A conscientious group leader will be willing to drop his own personal rank for the purpose of the battle when unit numbers are so low. Whether a unit uses the “sliding scale” or “top card to the bottom of the deck” model, all members should be prepared to make adjustments depending on their actual attendance numbers at events. Another reasonable alternative is to combine with another unit present that has low numbers, and determine one officer for the consolidated unit. Some brigades have precise numbers laid out as to how many men warrants a certain rank commanding the unit, and there is some criticism of these decisions as one may expect. My personal feeling is that ‘fours is a fair number to play by. When a unit has only four men, the highest rank is Corporal. When there are eight, have a Corporal and a Sergeant. When there are nine or more, have an officer of some type. When numbers get beyond twelve showing up consistently, then units should be thinking of having more than one Corporal, possibly another Sergeant, and perhaps an Ensign, Lieutenant and Captain. Only when there are three separate but similar units of 12-18 men each, should any unit be thinking of having a Senior officer such as a Major or Colonel. Even *that* is stretching the numbers compared to what the matching ratios were during the period.

Physical Requirements. Since soldiers were required to perform heavy physical activity, those portraying these soldiers should be capable of the same. A good entry level test for

oneself is being able to march one mile wearing full kit and a backpack weighted at thirty pounds. A reasonable limitation on this idea is for a unit to present this as a goal for each individual, rather than a requirement. If units enforce this as a rule, it closes the door on certain types of people who might otherwise join the unit. Older people interested in the hobby may not be able to join. Does the rule apply equally to all so that when the group leader cannot meet the physical demands, will he retire as well? Do we exclude a prospective member because they are moderately overweight? I am not so certain this helps the re-enacting hobby by being so exclusionary. At the same time new members should not be lulled into thinking that the unit exists solely for the sake of going “Bang! Bang!” with your guns, and then going back to camp to drink beer all night.

Ethnicity. Units are perfectly within their legal rights to exclude certain types of people from their ranks as soldiers. However, given the more important goal of growing units up to full strength, I’m not certain it is reasonable to enforce authenticity to such a high standard here. If we did so, to be truly accurate one would have to conduct research as to what ethnic backgrounds the common soldiers came from in the unit we portray, and try to replicate that in the modern unit. This would exclude most non-Caucasian people who wish to participate in the hobby as a combatant, and in our modern times, living in countries dramatically affected by immigration, this seems like a morally unreasonable tenant to enforce. Most units who do enforce this think that as long as all their soldiers are Caucasian, that they are enforcing authenticity. They are really not though! If they are trying to replicate the unit completely accurately with the only legitimate compromises being health and safety, then this decision does not meet the high standards of a ‘progressive’ re-enactor. If this unit has a Greek-American member, in a unit supposedly portraying a Scottish unit of the British army, they have compromised. Often (though not exclusively), soldiers were recruited from certain counties or areas of countries, so to replicate this in modern times totally accurately, a unit commander should only accept soldiers who come from the same area as well. Just having white skin does not go far enough. If they do not go this extra step, authenticity is compromised for reasons other than health and safety and this should be unacceptable for the über-authentic campaigner. Obviously I feel that this is taking authenticity too far and feel this tends to shrink the hobby rather than grow it. A reasonable level of authenticity can still be maintained by allowing soldiers to field who have varying ethnic backgrounds.

Relationships & Ethnic Backgrounds. We know that marriage relationships during these times were very rigid not just along class lines, but also ethnic origin. Strictly speaking, an authentic re-enactor’s mindset could not endorse a relationship of people with mixed skin colour and ethnic background. This couple could do everything else in the hobby to an extremely progressive level, but if their marriage was to someone with a different skin colour, über-progressives would condemn and dismiss both people as farbs. In our modern world, is it not reasonable to allow people to marry others with different skin colours, and still embrace them as progressive provided they follow other things authentically? I believe it is, and to not do so, is to build a social wall against these people. Dismissing them as valueless to the progressive community does a great disservice to the hobby. This couple, and its unit commander can simply relate to anyone who enquires that their relationship would not have been typical of the period, but that

enforcing division between people of different skin colours is another thing that cannot or should not be recreated in our modern hobby.

Disabilities. Within reason, people with disabilities should be allowed to be part of units and use devices to help their disabilities. Whenever possible, an authentic equivalent should be used such as a wooden walking cane or period-correct wheel-chair. To enforce authenticity on other things would only enforce a negative self-image these people have and have probably been battling for many years. Examples like this include hearing aids. They are hardly visible, and to force someone to carry around an ear drum or leave the unit seems extremely cold to me.

Authenticity & Participant Activity. Strict progressives would also have to endorse the idea that typical behaviour of the period should also be part of the living history event. This is true to a point, but there is certainly a line. Yes, period games such as shinty, graces or card games are a welcome addition in the camps at events and greatly enrich the image we give to the public. Where it becomes a problem however, is recreating roles to an extreme. Indians were known to steal during the period, so does that mean we should endorse an Indian re-enactor who is able to successfully steal a powder horn from a merchant? If a member of our unit has a drinking problem that is starting to affect the group, should we just look the other way because that was part of army life? Or for any kind of ill performance of duty, should we apply military law to that unit member because of his/her actions? Would that promote unit cohesion and growth? I hope you can see the point I am making here. Strict progressives would probably answer “yes” to those questions, however I would submit that we are only *pretending* to live in an older time period and that we should still think with our modern brains when it comes to those sorts of issues.

Women in Ranks. Much is debated every now and again about how to get more women involved in the hobby and it has been suggested that allowing women to field as soldiers is one way. Some women do not desire to come to an event and be expected to sew or wash laundry the whole time. They see the excitement that goes on with battles and naturally some wish to take part. However, women were not allowed to be in the army during this time; plain and simple. When they were clever enough to sneak in, evidence clearly shows that women in ranks were routinely kicked out of the army. Since we are trying to emulate an army, the solution is simple; **do not allow female soldiers.** That ends the problems before they begin. Litigation has already gone before the courts and supported the right of units to prevent female soldiers if that is their desire. The issue is not about whether females *could* make a fine soldier; they could! The issue is *did* they make fine soldiers. And since standards of authenticity are one of personal and/or unit pride, that pride should dictate a “no female soldier” policy. There are plenty of other enriching things for females to do attached to the army, and they need only to explore some of those options, including cooking, babysitting, sewing, washing, trading, spying, and even prostitution (though I don’t mean this last one in a literal sense).

Hair Styles. Appropriating one’s hairstyle to the period is something that should be encouraged but not mandated. It is true that having the correct hairstyle can greatly add to

the overall impression of one's appearance at an event. There are, however, legitimate reasons for people having to say no to certain hairstyles. One's job is the biggest reason. One must bear in mind that this really is just a hobby at the end of it all, and we have to live, work, and pay our mortgages from the real world. If the real world prevents us from walking in our historic roles during the week, units must respect that. Therefore, hair styling should be an optional issue.

Facial Hair. There is nary a legitimate reason why people portraying soldiers cannot be clean shaven. We know this was regulated by the army in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and this is something that can easily be done and improves one's personal impression greatly. Not shaving just because you do not want to is not a valid excuse. If beards are important to you, there is still half a year every year, in which you can wear it. Since we are trying to accurately portray these soldiers, our facial appearance should also comply with the regulations they had to live under.

Choice of Cloth. There is not much to say here because most people recognize that cotton was not common for the armies to use during this time period. It was not common for civilians to have a lot of it because of its greater expense than other fabrics. Therefore, all clothing should be made from any of: linen, hemp, linsey-woolsey, wool, silk, broadcloth, fustian or leather, with few exceptions that are clearly documented. Cotton, for the most part, is not correct to use.

Construction. Garments should be constructed according to how true garments actually fit the body during the period. For example, some men cheat with their shirts by bringing them only to the hip area, similar to modern shirt length. Shirts of this period, also called night shirts, came down to a man's knee area. Furthermore, the tailoring of garments should not follow the standards of our modern times, but conform instead to the period we are recreating. "Tight without constraint" is the way regimental coats are described and the way they appear in period paintings. They should fit closely to the body, but still give movement. Breeches, overalls, and military trousers were tightly fitting to the leg as well. Check out period paintings and you will see the evidence for yourself. The common style was to be tight fitting and there is no legitimate reason why we cannot also construct our clothing to be tight as well. A properly fitted coat will have very high shoulder seams and a rather drastic curve to the sleeve. This forces the wearer's shoulders down and back to achieve the rounded torso fashionable during the period. This is often initially uncomfortable to the 21st-century person, but it is the look that participants should strive to achieve. Coats should not fit loosely and be baggy, particularly around the shoulders. If it fits like a modern blazer or sport coat, it is cut improperly. Waistcoats should also fit closely, enhancing the sleek, trim look that was desirable. Using correct patterns of the period is in itself not enough. Each garment should be tailored to meet the needs of each person's individual body shape. A pattern is a guideline, not a precise instruction manual. Lastly, one's garments should reflect one's station in life. Few people should be prancing around as high class gentlemen or refined ladies in flowing gowns.

Sewing Methods. Everything in our period was done by hand since the sewing machine was not invented until 1858. It is true that hand sewing was so common at the time, and

could be done so well that it rivals things that can be put together today with a machine. But that is not the point. If they sewed things by hand, then we can as well; certainly on any outside seams that are visible. Yes it is true that this will take more time or cost more money than if it was all done by machine, but you can see the difference between the two. You can have a sense of pride knowing that people can see the hand stitching in your clothing and that you've put a lot of care into its construction. If money is an issue, then learn to hand sew. There really is not a legitimate reason not having at least one's outside seams done by hand with, I suppose, the inside seams done on machine. Furthermore, edges should be English for British units, and not French seams.

Hats. Should be constructed out of heavy fur or wool felt, or leather. Trim should be wool tape and silk or horse hair for cockades.

Shoes. Ideally hand made, straight lasted shoes would be the thing to wear but it is unreasonable to ask a new recruit to spend \$500 on such a pair of these shoes. Modern reproductions are available that still use correct materials and are a pretty good likeness to originals, and can be had for around \$100 from Robert Land Footwear. I'd rather have a new recruit use his/her money on getting a firearm initially, and worry about switching over to hand-made shoes later on in his/her hobby life.

Eyewear. It is important to care about the fine details, and getting correct eyewear is one thing a re-enactor can add to greatly enhance his/her impression. Modern eyeglasses are not correct and should be avoided whenever possible. Some people in the hobby have an extended benefits plan from their workplace, so upon joining the unit this recruit should plan on having his/her next eyeglass prescription filled with period spectacles. Frames can be purchased from various merchants but the best on the market right now are from Colonial Williamsburg, also sold by Avalon Forge. Other merchants have modern finishes on the arms that should be sanded down. For unit members who do not have a benefit plan and struggle financially, it is reasonable for the unit to give that person more time to conform, yet still with the goal of eventually conforming. Units can help this member by donating some proceeds from blanket sales or other fundraising efforts toward the purchase of frames and the cost of filling the prescription for this member. Correct frames for this period are all round; not oval, but round. There are large and smaller round frames, and both are acceptable. The arms on these differ slightly. Prior to the 1790's, arms were one solid piece and had a round hoop at the ends to which ribbon was tied on to, and then the ribbon tied around one's head to hold them in place (since nose guards are unauthentic). After the 1790's, the arms became a hinged, two piece item and instead of a rounded loop at the end, it was a tear drop shape.

Smoking. Correct smoking for the period should mostly be from a clay pipe, using pipe tobacco. There are other pipe types that are correct, however the rounded "Sherlock Holmes" type is not one of them. (Rock or bone bowls with reed stems are perfectly fine). Cigars are OK regionally, depending where you are (southern colonies for example) although the safest avenue for this remains pipes. Cigarette smoking is not authentic and should not be done, at least during the public hours. As a side note, I've

personally found breaking people off of cigarettes and using pipes can be a very hard thing.

Tents & Tent Pins. No one yet is producing a good tent made out of linen canvas, so unfortunately for now we must use the cotton canvas kind. That is not to say that one cannot de-farb one's tent. Ties around the door of a tent can be taken off and replaced with hook and eyes, as that is how they closed in the period. Canvas loopings at the bottom where the tent pins go in can be replaced over a winter with hemp rope, as was used during the period. Tent material can be purchased and hand-sewn together. Tent pins (pegs, or stakes) should be wood because there is little documented evidence of soldiers using metal for these purposes, and there is a lot of evidence that wood was used. Wall tents are not documented as being used in North America, though they did exist and were used in Europe. Therefore, there is no reason why a unit in North America should have wall tents. Though it is true that most tents housed around five men in them, it is unreasonable to expect a recreated unit to do the same when many people may be personally uncomfortable with the arrangement. Though it is not accurate, every person or couple or family, should be allowed their own tent that is their home for the weekend. If individuals freely choose to combine their sleeping arrangements, all the better but mandating so would put a unit in a precarious position.

Inside Tents. It is reasonable to have a policy that one's tent is your home for the weekend and so long as the tent flaps are shut, what you have in there is your own business. So if a person insists on using a modern ground sheet, so long as it doesn't stick out, it can be allowed. If someone else wants to use a cot, or a sleeping bag, that is their own business. I truly believe that we cross a line that we shouldn't when we start insisting that what is covered, inside someone's personal tent, is subject to unit regulation. The only exception I might say to this would be a person playing music inside the tent, and it can be heard out on the street.

Tent Fly. Never, was a fly placed in the front of a tent, so it should never be allowed.

Cooking Fly. Though the ideal would be to construct a brush arbor, this is impractical and unreasonable. With the amount of time it can take to get to an event, eat and set up – to have an extra chore of setting up a brush arbor seems unnecessary. It can take a long time to set one of these up and make it safe and stable for anyone sitting under it. Therefore a canvas cooking fly can be used. This seems like a legitimate compromise to me, and a necessary one to give group members a shelter to get out of the sun from.

Cooking Apparatus. There is no reason in the world why units cannot use wooden tree limbs to cook over at events. Either the tripod or the upright and crossbar combination are both easy to use and cook over. They can easily be located and cut down from the forests of many of the events we attend. If you are at an event with rules about removing items from the forest, all it takes is an afternoon of foraging in the woods closest to you once you are home. It is easy to hold on to these wood pieces for future use. There is no need for metal cooking irons and there is no documentation that soldiers used them during the real war, nor would it make sense to drag around all that extra metal. Soldiers would not

have carried it in their backpacks, and it would not have been included on the baggage train that followed armies. Metal irons were common at the home in the hearth, however we are portraying a mobile army and metal is too heavy an item, an extra and unnecessary item, to bring along with them when they know that there are limbs to use wherever they set up camp.

Cooking & Eating Utensils. There are plenty of reproduction spoons, spatulas and forks around that no one should need to bring a modern item into camp. The shape of the handle and head area of these utensils is different than modern versions, so consult with someone who knows before you buy. Merchants do not always know or care about accuracy; they just want to sell. The biggest compromise right now is using a four pronged fork. They did not exist until the late Victorian period! Proper forks should be two or three pronged forks; preferably two. Pots should be correct to the period with proper hinges and handles. Carl Giordano is probably making the best reproductions on these today. There really is no legitimate reason why authentic reproduction items cannot be used when there are a lot of merchants selling good wares in this regard.

What Items are Made Of. While no authentic hobbyist would question that the shape of an item is important, there is also the question of what the reproduction is made of. This question often surfaces in regard to pine vs. oak for tent poles, and tin vs. stainless steel for metallic items. We know that most of what was used for cooking was tin, and we all know that tin rusts fairly easily. There are merchants who sell items in stainless steel and look exactly like an original. I submit that it is not an unacceptable compromise to use a reproduction that is made out of stainless steel so long as the shape of it is correct to an original. No one really knows what the content of the item is made from anyhow, at least after it is used for the first time over a fire. The benefit of course is that unit members do not have rust mixed in with their food, spoiling the taste. The item lasts longer too since it is not being rusted out. This enhances unit members' experience at the event and only serves to grow the hobby. Regarding wood, pine is less authentic and authentic oak poles can be had for only slightly more cost than purchasing pine. Yours truly (the author) sells such oak for a fair price.

How Items are Made. We know from history that prior to the Industrial Revolution, everything was either hand-made by self, or hand-made with slave and/or child labour. If one cares to construct his/her own kit completely by him/herself by hand, I will tip my hat to that person. At the same time, I will not refuse to purchase an item because the merchant could not find any child labourers and had to resort to using electrical machines to create the reproduction. The most important consideration with a reproduction is its finished look compared to an original, rather than the content it was created with or how it was created.

Food choices. There are two extremes of food choices I believe are necessary to avoid and that by doing so, will still greatly respect authenticity while making your meals wholesome and welcoming to a great number of people. The first extreme to avoid is that which soldiers actually would have been issued by the army. That means most commonly hardtack (or occasionally rice or potato), salt pork or beef that may or may not be going

rancid, and any vegetable or fruit they can purchase or forage in the area that they are camped in. It is unreasonable to ask unit members to attend an event and consume this. That does not promote unit growth or love of the hobby. This does not make the experience fun for members and only serves to hurt the hobby in the end. Though this would technically be the most accurate thing to do for meals, it is not the most wise decision. The other extreme is to attend an event and not change anything about your eating habits than you would if you were eating at home. There are some units who have been seen with KFC chicken buckets, modern macaroni and potato salad in plastic containers, all on display under their dining fly. I think it goes without saying that in general we should not be consuming modern food when we are at events. Our purpose is to step back in time, and we violate that when we see Wonder Bread bags around. Since soldiers cooked their food in camp, most of the food we consume should also be created and cooked in camp. We should use correct recipes of the period, and eat food that these pioneers did. In general, this translates into hearth meals; what these people would have eaten in their own homes, cooked over the hearth fire. Though this is not a true interpretation of food consumed in a military camp, it is a reasonable solution and ensures that good and healthy food is being consumed and which keeps unit members happy and promotes unit stability and growth.

Meal cleanup. There are period-correct clean up utensils including steel wool and corn husk brushes that should be used instead of anything modern. Period correct soap can be purchased so that modern dish soap and containers need not be seen around camp.

Camp chairs. There are not a lot of chairs documented as having been in military camps, aside from those brought for officers. There were a few, but mostly benches were the only sort of furniture that was available for the common soldier. Most recreated units allow wooden chairs or stools in their camps but there is no way any unit can argue intelligently that there would be such a great number of chairs in an encampment. Nonetheless, they are there and I will suggest that this is a reasonable compromise. Sitting on the ground the whole weekend, or sitting on devices without a back to them can really wear down the body, especially a body that gets to middle age and beyond. If a unit wants to retain members of all ages in their unit, this is a small compromise to make in order to grow the hobby. While re-enactors do not need to be 'comfortable' per se, it is not unreasonable to allow them this convenience, one that will at least keep them from being in pain. There are chairs that are correct and many that are incorrect. The slat-back chairs are farby and originate as a 1960's California beach chair. The 'tombstone' chairs that slide together are incorrect. The 'director's' chairs are incorrect. Every re-enactor wants a small chair that has a back and can fold up easily and there is one (and only one) that is correct to the period. We have a pattern for it. Essentially, it has a wooden back to it, and a canvas seat to it. It is hardly unreasonable to ask unit members, that if they get a chair, that they should construct one such as what I have described. Do it right the first time and don't waste your money on incorrect items.

Hatchets, axes and shovels. They have a different head on them than modern equivalents, and one can usually find them in a short time by looking at farmer's auctions and the like.

They are readily available and thus leave no reason why a modern versions should be in any camp.

Drinking containers. There is absolutely no need for a unit to have modern plastic drinking containers in their camp, “hidden” by canvas even though everyone knows what is underneath the canvas. It is easy to get oak barrels for one’s unit, and use that in camp with a spigot to provide water to your group members. There are some merchants who sell these barrels, however they are usually lined on the inside with wax. That is less desirable. The best is to get straight oak, coopered properly, and use that. Once the wood swells it will not leak. The metal hoops can either be replaced with hardwood sapling wrapped around it, or keep the metal. If you keep the metal bands, spray them with vinegar and let them sit overnight and the colour will change to a darker, “iron” appearance. Prices range in price from \$150 - \$300 depending on the size you want, and can sometimes be purchased through winery supply stores.

Tables. Few tables would have been found in the real camps of which we try to recreate. Unless you were an officer, this is a luxury you do not get. You would have sat on the ground and ate your meal, or sometimes on the march from your haversack. Regardless, the ladies in units often find tables very useful – almost necessary, for preparing meals and setting food on. I personally feel that this is a reasonable compromise to have in camp, provided that everyone knows – especially the public, that it is not an accurate furniture piece for the camp. If units did not allow these items, very easily people would become frustrated and the work would seem more fatiguing, and lead to group instability and shrinkage. I submit that one table per camp is a reasonable compromise to make and in the end makes the weekend more enjoyable and enhances the hobby. Furthermore, it can be explained as part of the “officer’s kitchen,” and therefore the table is his.

Streets. We all know from military regulations that the streets in an encampment were to remain clear of clutter. There is no reason today why we cannot do that as well. I’ve already commented about the farbiness of tent flies, but I’ll add a bit more concerning other anachronisms sometimes found in streets. Lantern stands did not exist in a military camp, in fact few soldiers would have had or needed lanterns since they were expected to be in bed at sundown and up at sunrise ready to work, drill or fight. Lantern stands should therefore not be in any military encampment. Baled hay is unacceptable as well. Modern baled hay is exactly that; modern. Hay in the camp is fine; soldiers can use it in their tents if they desire, but unbroken bales of hay should not be allowed to remain anywhere in a camp.

Only during Public Hours? It has been said by some that we should be vigilant with authenticity during the public hours of an event, but once they are over, all bets are off. Though I am not an immersionist re-enactor (and I have a lot of problem with their philosophy), I do think that we should always be respectful of the site, of the people we portray, and of history in general and not let our ‘relaxed standards’ morph into complete disregard. Re-enactors should not change into modern clothing once the public is gone. If chips are brought out, put them in a bowl rather than just passing the bag around in the open freely. Many of us attend events because we want to step back in time and get away

from the modern world and when others bring out all their junk, this spoils it for many others. So frankly, I do think it is reasonable to relax authenticity standards slightly after the public hours are complete, but only slightly; not grossly.

Saving money in other areas to compensate for doing things accurately. A common excuse from people who choose not to pursue this hobby accurately is that doing things authentically costs a lot more money than to do it 'kind-of-correct' and then later on through the years, correct the farby mistakes made. The excuse does garner a lot of sympathy from me. It tries to legitimize inaccuracy and I do not think it has to. I sympathize that people may have to enter the hobby with less than others when starting out, however they should still begin on the right foot, and this saves them money in the long run. Moreover, I do not agree with the premise that doing it accurately costs so much more. Yes, linen may be a dollar or two a yard more expensive than cotton, however if people packed a supper meal with them for the Friday and Sunday nights of an event instead of going to a fast food restaurant, then they would save money that way which would pay the difference on the correct garment material. You do not need to buy a lantern stand, or metal cooking irons since they are inaccurate; you can use tree limbs for free anyhow! No, I am sorry but the excuse of extra cost is just not true for anyone who truly wants to be accurate. There are economical ways to do it. Often people who commit gross inaccuracies do so because they are lazy and just do not want to put in the effort. But this hobby is about effort; research, education, mastering drill, attending events. If you are not willing to put in an effort, why did you choose this hobby?

Finally. I've come to realize a golden truth about this wonderful hobby; **Less is More.** It is actually more educational to people when you do not have all the knick knacks that people bring to make them comfortable. At the end of it all, authenticity is a personal thing that we strive for, and which everyone is further up or down the journey on. We should respect and encourage everyone on that journey rather than criticizing them for what they have not done yet. Authenticity is not a god; it is a good priority, but unit growth and cohesion are more important. If members are not reasonably happy, they will leave and the hobby suffers. Units can still have high authenticity standards as have been outlined here, and keep the hobby enjoyable enough that it is still appealing to a wide range of people.