

## **Guidelines for Basic Equipment used in Native Portrayals**

The basic requirements for an accurate portrayal of the camps of a mid-18th century southeastern native are listed here. Also included are some basic ideas and suggestions for some items that are less essential but effective to add to your "kit" to improve your portrayal. This is **not** intended to be a complete analysis of the material goods of Southeastern Natives during the era, nor an analysis of differences between the native cultures of the Southeast. It is merely a starting point for you to build your "kit" from. If you have good period documentation for other equipment and accoutrements, appropriate for your portrayal, please use that as a guideline as well. We welcome documented suggestions for additions to this page.

In selecting what equipment to bring to a reenactment for your camp you need to begin by thinking about what the native camp at this reenactment represents. Is it the camp of a fast-moving war party; an established hunting camp; a native village? This is not an individual decision but should be based upon the scenario of the reenactment. It makes little sense to the public for the majority of the native camp to reflect a war party's camp and one native's camp to look like they must have a pack-train the size of a colonial army's in order to move their stuff.

Generally speaking, even if natives were mounted, unless they were moving to/from their hunting camps, returning from raids, or going to a major "Indian Congress" with the whites, there is little evidence that the common native used many (if any) packhorses in this period. Once again, the guidelines we suggest are to keep it "simple, common, everyday, and in line with the event scenario". Remember, that a convoluted excuse or rationale for using an object, including "spoils of war" should be avoided.

### **Food & Cooking Gear**

**Fire starting kit:** flint, steel, tinder, and something to transport it in such as a leather bag.

**Kettle(s)** tin or brass - various sizes appear on trade lists, but not small "corn boilers" or "muckets". Generally speaking, cast iron should be avoided as this does not appear on trade/gift lists of the period.

**Personal eating utensils:** There are a number of items that you will need for your camp.

- Bowls, plates or trenchers made of wood, tin, or period pottery.
- A spoon made of wood, pewter, or silver.
- A knife to prepare food or to eat with. (You may already be wearing one).
- Note that forks were not a native implement and do not appear very often on trade/gift lists. If you must use one try to stick with one of the twisted-wire ones sold by various vendors or a proper 18<sup>th</sup> C. 2-tine fork.
- A drinking vessel or noggin made of wood, period pottery, tin, pewter, copper or brass.

**Canteen, jug, or water gourd.** While many accounts suggest that water wasn't carried, modern requirements win out in this case. Period bottles are more fragile, but acceptable, as are small kegs for group water storage. A large water gourd can be shared by an entire camp, and is relatively easy to make, if a little fragile to transport.

**Ad-hoc cooking utensils:** Natives made use of stone and other natural items to assist in food preparation. You may want to bring some of these along with you to ensure they are clean and useful. Cooking stones, river cane skewers for meat, wooden tripods for using over the fire, etc. are all important to have to make camp look lived in. Note that for almost all scenarios that you find at a reenactment, wrought iron tripods/fire sets are not appropriate. They are heavy and bulky and not something that natives would be carrying with them for any sort of mobile camp. Also they just don't appear on the trade/gift lists of the period! Learn how to lash together 3 saplings to form a tripod and use this in your cooking and your camp will look much more realistic as well as 'lived in'.

## **Pack and Bedding**

The most basic pack method is a bed/blanket roll using a tumpline. Twined pack bags are also very well documented. For permanent camps, baskets and large gourd containers are good options.

**Blanket:** 100% wool only. White with blue or red end stripes were common, as well as with stripes running the width of the entire blanket. Blue is acceptable, as is red and various "natural" white or grey shades.

**Sleeping hide(s)** (optional) a buffalo, bear or elk hide or a couple of deer hides are good to have to sit and sleep on. They can be expensive or time consuming to tan yourself, so save them for after you've gotten most of your other material together.

**Storage and Carrying Devices:** Baskets, large pottery, gourds, and open-twined or leather bags were common for storing food and other goods. Period glass and ceramic bottles are acceptable for liquid storage.

**Tumpline** (Burden Strap) Twined tumplines, burden straps or hoppus were commonly used. Leather straps with either cordage or leather ties appear in collections and accounts from the period.

**Groundcloth/shelter:** Period accounts indicate that native war parties did not carry shelters with them but instead used overhanging rocks for shelters, constructed shelters from brush/bark, or just slept out in the open rolled up in their blankets around the fire. Brush shelters are encouraged at Fort Dobbs. Hides, blankets, period tarps, or canvas may also be draped over sticks as part of a lean-to. Actual canvas tents are not appropriate for native portrayals at Fort Dobbs.

## **Personal items:**

Personal items such as pipes and tobacco, combs, small trade items, etc. appear regularly in accounts and lists from the period. These small, usually low cost items can be the added "bang" for little buck. Do research before you buy, even if inexpensive.

**Sewing kit:** needles, thread, scissors, awl, leather, various materials

**Mirror, comb, paint kit**

**Period pipe and tobacco** (No modern cigarettes or cigars, please.) A small pipe is fine, please use one rather than cigarettes/cigars.

**Period gaming pieces** such as gambling sticks or “peach pits & bowl” can help to pass the time. For non-war party scenarios, sticks for playing “*anetsa*” the Cherokee word for the ball game are good for interpretive purposes as well as to get up a game if enough natives bring their sticks. “Double Ball” is another option which allows you to include the women in the game.

**Eyewear:** There are very few documented instances of SE native people acquiring eyeglasses during this period. Please wear contacts or do without if you can. No modern eyeglasses are permitted.

## **Weapons and Accoutrements**

These are necessary for battle reenactment and hunting scenarios, but not needed for daily life sort of events, though a knife or hawk are useful if eating or demonstrating many skills.

**Gun:** The trade gun produced for the deerskin trade was the most common gun used by natives. Without getting into a lot of detail, the .58-62 caliber English and French smoothbore trade guns had walnut stocks and either brass or iron fittings, and are an excellent choice for a native portrayal. Rifled guns show up in some accounts, but were likely not very common. This is a very expensive item; possibly the most expensive item in your kit, so do your research first and remember that you can have an early gun at a late century event, but not a late century gun at an early century event. Military issued French and British muskets of a pattern pre-1760 are acceptable, but not encouraged.

**Bow and accoutrements:** Archery was still alive among native people during this time, but it is difficult to use a bow in a battle reenactment. If you have a period bow, arrows, and other gear, please feel free to bring it to discuss with the public or to private trekking type events.

**Knives:** the "scalping knife" was the most common knife on trade lists. This would have been a simple belt or neck knife with a half or full tang and a wooden handle, in what was commonly called "French" or "British" style blades. Many sutlers sell these knives. The sheath for a belt knife can be very simple, consisting of deer hide lined with rawhide. Knives may be worn on the neck or belt. Quillwork decorated sheaths are not appropriate for SE portrayals.

Folding knives with brass and bone or horn handles, along with wooden handled "penny" knives show up regularly on trade lists, and are handy to have in your shooting bag or for the use of women.

**Axes** The round poll "tomahawk" and pipe hawk are most commonly found, though spike hawks appear in some images and descriptions. An inexpensive forged throwing hawk is a good starter that will last you for years. For safety reasons, you should make a simple blade cover before tucking it in your belt or sash.

Larger felling axes are appropriate for using to collect firewood.

**Shooting bag:** Simple leather or twined pouch with a leather strap. Quillwork is not acceptable for a SE portrayal.

**Horn:** Even though you'll be required to use cartridges during battle reenactments, a horn is a necessity. Simple deerskin straps are encouraged, but twined or fingerwoven sashes are appropriate as well.

**Shooting supplies:** cleaning supplies, forged screwdriver and vent pick, wire worm, tow linen, cleaning/shooting patches, small container of grease. The basic equipment necessary to keep your firearm safe and efficient.

### **Craft-related items:**

There is much more to 18th century native life than warfare. Tools and materials to use for making native goods are a great idea; please think of the context the event is set when deciding what to bring to work with. Examples include period finger weaving and twining; basket weaving/making; native pottery making; hide tanning; bone tool making and flint knapping; bowmaking/arrowsmithing; etc. Please keep in mind to use period tools/materials/methods appropriate for natives when demonstrating these skills for the public. It is really a good idea to develop at least one native skill/craft that you can demonstrate at appropriate reenactments as this helps to more fully engage the public as well as make the event more exciting.

### **Modern Items**

There are some things needed for events that may or may not have analogs in the 18th century. Medications, shaving kits, personal hygiene items, etc., unless they are documentable to the people and the period, should be stored in period containers whenever possible, and kept out of sight.

### **Acknowledgement:**

**These guidelines are based in part on material prepared by His Majesty's Southern Indian Department and work by David Hobbs and Ginger Jones.**