

# “Cheesebox Canteen” Construction



Captain David Brown's Company  
Concord, Massachusetts, April 18-20, 2014  
Material Culture Standards

# The “Cheesebox Canteen”

The Term, “Cheesebox Canteen”, is not, as far as we know, a period reference. It is a guide that describes a particular style of wooden canteen that was popular from the mid 18th to the early 19th Century that bears a close resemblance to boxes from that era that were used in the processing of cheese.

While there is open debate regarding what region(s) of North America they were actually used, most researchers agree that “Cheesebox Canteens” were common in New England when hostilities broke out in Massachusetts on April 19th, 1775.

Examination of Extant “Cheesebox Canteens” from the 18th and 19th centuries reveal they are all similarly constructed, but varied by the means in which they secured a carrying Strap or Cord. Those that survive show either:

1. Narrow Iron Staples to secure a Cord or Narrow Strap
2. Nailed Narrow Leather Keepers to secure a Cord or Narrow Strap
3. Nailed Wide Leather Keepers to secure a Cord or Strap. Given the nature of leather, this allowed a Narrow Carrying Strap or Cord to be used



Militia Canteen in Red Paint with Narrow Iron Staples  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Skinner Auctions)



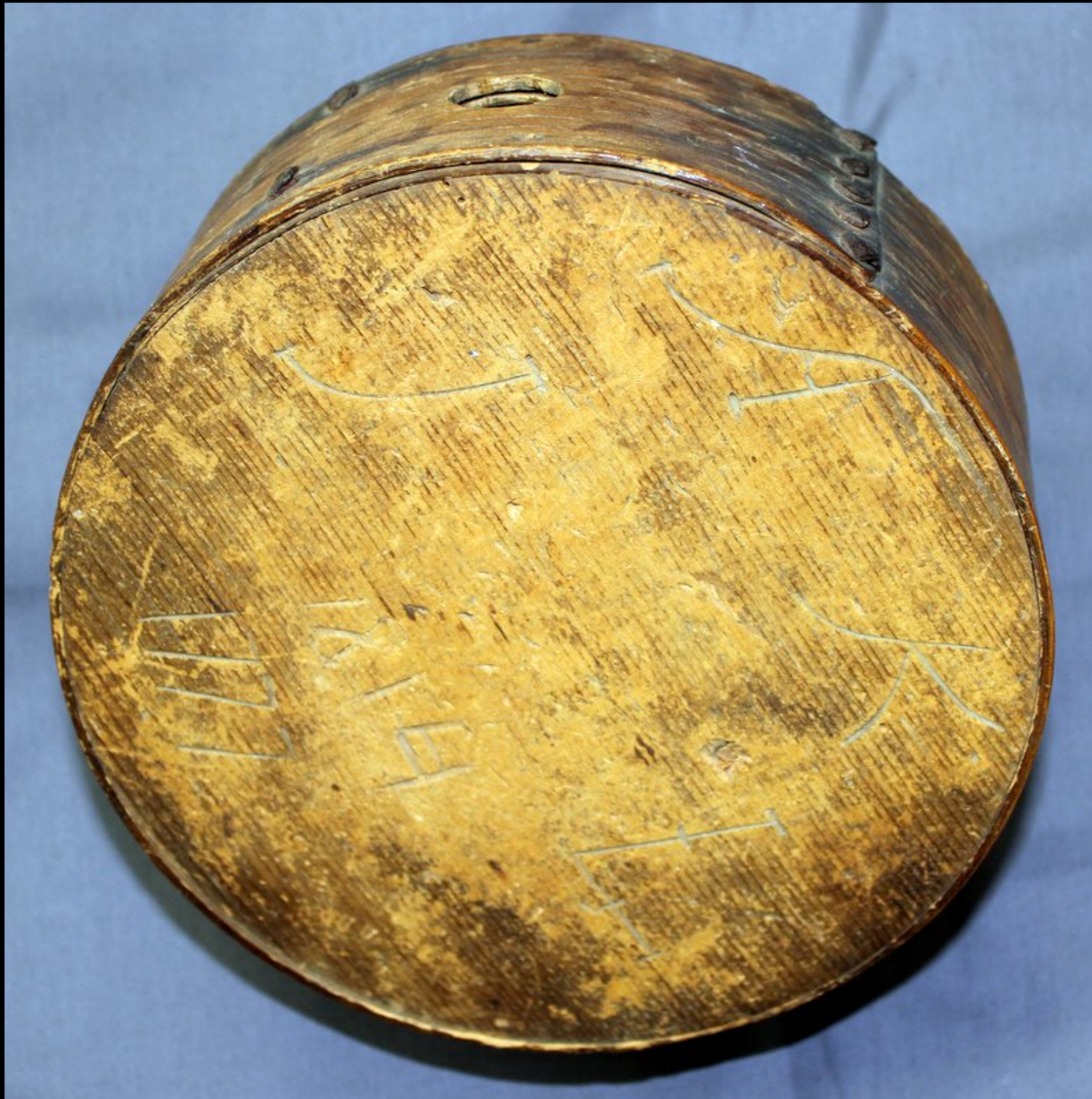
Wood Canteen with Leather Straps Secured by Small Iron Staples  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen with Small Iron Strap Staples marked "December the 10 day 1776 AD"  
Carried by Joseph Ames of the 2nd Continental Artillery during the Revolution  
(Don Troiani)



*Wood Canteen with Small Iron Strap Staples marked "December the 10 day 1776 AD"  
Carried by Joseph Ames of the 2nd Continental Artillery during the Revolution  
(Don Troiani)*



Wood Canteen that Held Narrow Leather Keepers (Based on Remaining Nails)  
Marked "AK" "JL" 1777/1814  
(Don Troiani)



Wood Canteen that Held Narrow Leather Keepers (Based on Remaining Nails)  
Marked "AK" "JL" 1777 / 1814  
(Don Troiani)



Wood Canteen that Held Narrow Leather Keepers (Based on Remaining Nails)  
Marked "AK" "JL" 1777 / 1814  
(Don Troiani)



Copyright Fort Ticonderoga Museum

Wood Canteen with Narrow Leather Keepers and Cord  
Carried by Noah Allen of the 1st Massachusetts Regiment 1780  
(Fort Ticonderoga Museum)



Wood Canteen with Narrow Leather Keepers  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen with Narrow Leather Keepers  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen with Narrow Leather Keepers Marked "E A"  
18th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen with Narrow Leather Keepers Marked "E A"  
18th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen Marked "4TH C - 3R - 1B" with Leather Keepers secured with Brass Tacks  
Possible 4TH Connecticut Regiment but probably Post - Revolution



Wood Canteen of Tobias Oakman 1777 - 1778  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen of Tobias Oakman 1777 - 1778  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteens  
Marked "NH 1771"  
(Estate of Tom Wnuck)



Wood Canteen with Wide Leather Keeps  
18th - Early 19th Century  
(Private Collection)



Wood Canteen found in North Carolina with Leather Keepers  
c. 1750 - 1820  
(North Carolina Museum of History)



Wood Canteen with Pewter Spout & Leather Keepers Secured with Brass Tacks in Blue Paint  
(Estate of Tom Wnuck)



Wood Canteen with Leather Keepers  
c. 1770 - 1800  
(Colonial Williamsburg, Gift of William H. Guthman)



Wood Canteen in Green Paint & Leather Keepers  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Green Valley Auctions)



Wood Canteen with Leather Keepers in Green Paint  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Cowan Auction House)



Wood Canteen with Leather Keepers in Green Paint  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Cowan Auction House)



Wood Canteen with Leather Keepers in Green Paint  
Late 18th - Early 19th Century  
(Cowan Auction House)

# Reproduction “Cheesebox Canteens”

Many members of the living history community carry reproduction “Cheesebox Canteens.” Others carry Staved Wooden Canteens which are equally correct.

A common characteristic featured on many of these recreated “Cheesebox Canteens”, however, is the use of Large Iron Staples to secure a carrying strap. To the best of our knowledge, these large staples cannot be found on any extant artifacts. If anyone has a source for an original canteen that features this style of staple, PLEASE bring it to our attention so that we may document it, and approve its design for use in Captain David Brown’s Minute Company.

The issue with these types of staples is as follows:

1. We can’t, as of yet, document them. Until we do, we must consider them incorrect
2. They require the use of a strap that is as wide as one used for a Cartridge Pouch or Sidearm
3. If a more appropriate Narrow Strap is to be used, the fit is loose & sloppy

# The “Cheesebox” Canteen



Common Reproduction Canteen with Wide Iron Strap Keepers or Staples  
Requires a Wide Strap or Poor Fit to Thin Strap

# Reproduction “Cheesebox Canteens”

Correct “Cheesebox Canteens” based on the study of extant artifacts have been recreated and can be made for purchase.

If anyone needs a correct “Cheesebox” or Staved Canteen, they can contact fellow Brown’s Company member, Eric Swanson.

Eric can be reached at [Calfpasture@cox.net](mailto:Calfpasture@cox.net)

If we have a list of people who need a properly fabricated canteen, Greg Theberge can contact Eric and place a bulk order in as Eric can sometimes be difficult to reach.

# “Cheesebox” Canteens By Eric Swanson



# “Cheesebox” Canteens By Eric Swanson



# “Cheesebox” Canteens By Eric Swanson



# Staved Canteens By Eric Swanson

