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Articifer and Merchant of Revolutionary War Reproductions

Shoe Care

Drying wet shoes: Don't dry soaked shoes by the campfire, or in the oven, as the intense heat will dry out the leather and cause it to become brittle. Do allow the shoes to dry in a sunny window, with a blow dryer (low heat), or near a baseboard heating vent. Stuffing the shoes with old newspaper helps to draw out moisture and retain the shoes shape. Don't ever allow the leather to become more than warm to the touch. Store the shoes with a wooden shoe tree, which will help the shoe keeps its shape.

Cleaning leather: Don't use saddle soap, which is alkaline and will weaken the leather. After scraping off the dirt and wax, wipe the leather with a water-dampend sponge, and then use a pH-neutral cleanser such as Lexol®-pH Leather Cleaner or Leather Therapy® Wash. Lexol® and Leather Therapy® products can be found at tack shops.

Conditioning leather: When raw cow hides are tanned the chemicals that would cause the hide to decompose are removed and replaced with special oils and emulsions in a process called "fat-liquoring". These lubricating oils bind to the leather fibers, which under magnification look like a steel wool mesh, and cause the leather to become supple. When leather gets wet from water or sweat, and then dries, some lubricating oils are drawn out with the moisture. Over time the leather fiber matrix becomes dry and this causes the leather to crack when it is flexed. So after the leather has been cleaned then apply a conditioner to the leather that will restore lubricating oils and keep the leather pliable. Two good conditioners are Lexol® Leather Conditioner and Preservative, and Leather Therapy® Restorer & Conditioner.

Protecting leather: Once the leather has been cleaned and conditioned, then apply a beeswax based protectant such as blackball or Sno-Seal® to help make the shoes water repellent. Be sure to apply the wax to the seams and where the soles meet the uppers. Sno-Seal® is available at sporting goods shops. Beware that some products such as mink oil, neatsfoot oil, bear fats, etc... may repel water but over time their chemistry will soften and weaken the leather and stitching.

Wearing the shoes: Unbuckle your shoes before taking them off or putting them on. Forcing your foot in a buckled shoe, as if it was a slipper, will cause the uppers to collapse, especially in the heel area. Just as with modern shoes, using a shoe horn when putting on buckle shoes will help prolong their life.

Because these shoes have very thick soles and steel heel rims they should last years without resoling. They are machine made to replicate the look of more expensive hand stitched 18th C. shoes, but a machine-made stitch is not as strong as a hand-stitch. Thus a stitch may come loose on the uppers, but you can often repair this with a sewing needle and carpet thread. Sometimes the upper leather comes loose from the sole. Inadvertently when stitching the uppers to the sole the needle may not grab enough upper leather. This is hard to detect while making the shoe, but if a stitch or two misses the upper leather will soon come loose while wearing the shoe. If this happens to you Robert Land advises that you return the shoe directly to him for repair or replacement. Be sure you mention the shoe size and width in case he needs to replace the shoe. Robert Land, 3909 Witmer Rd, PMB 139, Niagara Falls NY 14305

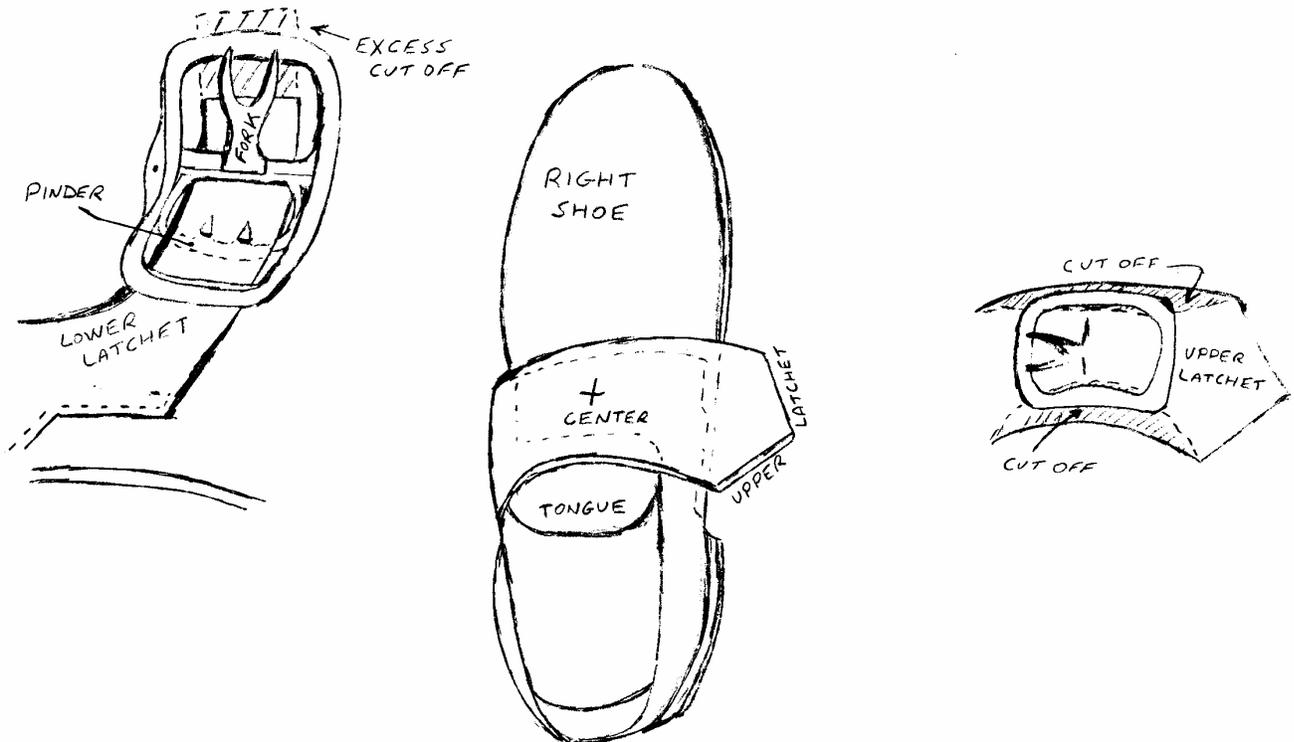
Attaching Shoe Buckles

The two straps that hold the buckle to the shoe are called “latches”. Usually they both must be trimmed in width and length to fit your buckle.

On the right shoe the lower latchet begins on the right and ends on the left, under the upper latchet. The upper latchet, which begins on the left side, has a pointed end which shows on the outside of the shoe.

The pinder of shoe buckle usually has two widely spaced prongs which hold the buckle to the lower latchet. The fork of the shoe buckle usually has two closer spaced prongs which hold the buckle to the upper latchet.

- 1) Trim the width of the lower latchet so the pinder can slide onto the latchet. Also trim the length of this latchet so it does not interfere with buckling the shoe, generally this means cutting off any leather about two inches beyond the center of the latchet. While wearing the shoe, place the buckle on the latchet and center it on your foot. Mark the points where the pinder prongs need to poke through the latchets so the buckle will be centered. When marking the points allow for the latchets to be pulled tight and the leather to travel down the prongs. On the right foot shoe this means making the marks about $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the right of indentations made by the prong tips. Make the holes with a small awl.
- 2) With the shoe and buckle on your foot, note how much leather needs to be trimmed from the upper latchet so the buckle frame will fit snugly on that latchet. Generally this means cutting an arc shaped piece of leather from the top and bottom edge. Trim a bit more from the top edge than the bottom edge. The tip of the latchet can and should remain wider than the buckle frame. This will help keep the buckle on the shoe even when unbuckled.
- 3) Pull the upper latchet taut through the buckle and note where the holes need to be for the buckle forks. Make the holes with a small awl and the task is complete.



Hi-Lo's / Half Boots

These are held closed by a single spiral leather lace or thong. One end is secured or knotted at the bottom, and the lace spirals up the front opening. At the top of the front opening the free end of the lace/thong is half-hitched (an overhand knot) and tucked into the boot. There isn't use for the modern shoe knot with this footwear.

These Hi-Lo's were made with high tongues and pointed calf. But not all Hi-Lo's had these features, the type seen on portraits of jockeys were without tongues or they were cut down equal to the height of the boot front and the pointed calf is missing. If desired, these alterations can be made with scissors or a utility knife.