

VALLEY FORGE



THE MUSTER ROLL PROJECT

Legacy



Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

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products

Valley Forge Images

Join the Honorary
Muster RollHistory OF THE
Muster Roll

credits

links

contact us

THE ENCAMPMENT

Ask someone to think of Valley Forge and they will nearly always envision an anonymous group of soldiers struggling against winter's fury and clothed in nothing but rags. Certainly hardship did occur at Valley Forge, but the encampment experience could be characterized as "suffering as usual," for privation was the continental soldier's constant companion.

The reason many Americans picture Valley Forge as the pinnacle of misery is that this early and romanticized version of the encampment story became an important parable to teach us about American perseverance. The portrayal of starving troops, however, has kept us from getting to know the people of the Continental Army — who they were, why they joined the army, and what they accomplished at Valley Forge.

To better understand and appreciate what happened at Valley Forge it is helpful to know how the encampment fits into the context of the American Revolution (1775-1783).

In 1777 British strategy included a plan to capture Philadelphia, the patriot capital. To accomplish this, the British commander in chief, Sir William Howe, landed nearly 17,000 of His Majesty's finest troops at the head of Chesapeake Bay. To oppose them, General George Washington marched his 12,000-man army from New Jersey. People often picture the Continental Army of 1777 as a ragtag bunch of inexperienced fighters. But Washington's men fought with skill and were often on the offensive while campaigning against superior numbers of professional soldiers.

Although they lost two key battles, as well as Philadelphia, to the British, Washington's soldiers emerged from these experiences with a renewed confidence in their fighting abilities. They only needed a little more training to reach their full potential.

As wintry weather approached, armies often withdrew to fixed camps. Transportation problems made large-scale winter operations infeasible. In choosing a site for quarters, Washington had to balance the Continental Congress's wish for some type of winter campaign aimed at dislodging the British from the capital against the needs of his weary and poorly supplied army. By mid-December he had decided to encamp at Valley Forge.

From this location, twenty miles northwest of Philadelphia, the army was close enough to maintain pressure on the British yet far enough away to prevent a surprise attack. While the soldiers who entered camp on December 19, 1777, were not well-supplied, they were not downtrodden. This is attested to by an anonymous observer who recounted his visit to Valley Forge in the New Jersey Gazette on December 25:

"I have just returned from spending a few days with the army. I found them employed in building little huts for their winter quarters. It was natural to expect that they wished for more comfortable accommodations, after the hardships of a most severe campaign; but I could discover nothing like a sigh of discontent at their situation... On the contrary, my ears were agreeably struck every evening, in riding through the camp, with a variety of military and patriotic songs and every countenance I saw, wore the appearance of cheerfulness or satisfaction."



Army records and eyewitness accounts speak of a skilled and capable force in charge of its own destiny. Rather than wait for deliverance, the army located supplies, built log cabins to stay in, constructed makeshift clothing and gear, and cooked subsistence meals of their own concoction. Provisions, though never abundant in the early months of the encampment, were available.

Shortages of clothing did cause severe hardship for a number of men, but many soldiers had a full uniform, and the well-equipped units patrolled, foraged, and defended the camp. The sound that would have reached your ears on approaching the camp was not that of a forlorn howling wind, but rather that of hammers, axes, saws, and shovels at work.



Under the direction of military engineers, the men built a city of 2,000-odd huts laid out in parallel lines along planned military avenues. The troops also constructed miles of trenches, five earthen forts (redoubts), and a state-of-the-art bridge over the Schuylkill River.

Disease, not cold or starvation, was the true scourge of the camp. Army returns reveal that two-thirds of the nearly 2,000 men who perished died during the warmer months of March, April, and May, when supplies were more abundant. The most common killers were influenza, typhus, typhoid, and dysentery. Dedicated surgeons, capable nurses, a smallpox

inoculation program, and camp sanitation regulations limited the death tolls.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the encampment was the army's maturation into a more professional force. The Continental Army was primed and ready to move on to the next level just as a charismatic former Prussian army officer, Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus von Steuben, arrived in camp in February 1778.

Von Steuben's hands-on training program helped the army become a more proficient marching machine. The Baron inspired a "relish for the trade of soldiering" that gave the troops a new sense of purpose and helped sustain them through many trials as they stuck to the task of securing independence.

On May 6, 1778, the army joyously celebrated France's alliance with and formal recognition of the United States as a sovereign power. The expected arrival of the French greatly altered British war plans and triggered their evacuation of Philadelphia in June.

Washington rapidly set troops in motion to bring on a general engagement with the enemy. On June 28, at the Battle of Monmouth, N.J., Washington's men demonstrated their improved battle prowess when they forced the British from the field.



By summer Washington could claim that the war effort was going well. Valley Forge was not the darkest hour of the Revolutionary War; it is a place where an already accomplished group of professionals stood their ground, honed their craft, and thwarted one of the major British offensives of the war.

Common Ground

The troops who came to camp included men from all thirteen of the original states. The encampment brought together men, women, and children of nearly all ages, from all walks of life, from different ethnic backgrounds, and from various religions. While statistically most were of English descent, the ranks also included persons of African, American Indian, Austrian, Dutch, French, German, Irish, Polish, Portuguese, Prussian, Scottish, Spanish, and Swedish descent. Motivation for enlistment varied, but many who joined in the fight sought to secure their own blessings of liberty while they fought to gain their country's independence from Britain. Many recent European arrivals sought fortune and honor by enlisting in the regiments of the states they now called home.

Women followed the army to be with their husbands and contributed actively to the cause. The women present at Valley Forge included hundreds of enlisted men's wives who followed the army year round, and some officers' wives on extended visits. The army compensated full-time women followers for rendering such valuable services as laundering and nursing.

Promises of freedom motivated thousands of enslaved African Americans to join Continental and British forces. In the Continental Army, bound individuals yearning for liberty and wages served alongside freemen in search of

a better life. The Continental Army was integrated and included many patriots of African descent.



In order to preserve their culture and prevent encroachment upon their rich western domain, most American Indians sided with the British. Political, religious, and personal ties, however, led some tribes to support the patriots. Hundreds of Indians enlisted in the Continental Army and many others, engaged as scouts in specialized units. One of the most notable contributions came from the Oneida, who sent aid and a contingent of warriors to Valley Forge.



The successful conclusion of the Revolution marked only the beginning of the struggle for some individuals for personal liberty. As the sound of combat grew fainter, the battle for individual rights began.

Paintings courtesy of Don Troiani, www.historicalimagebank.com



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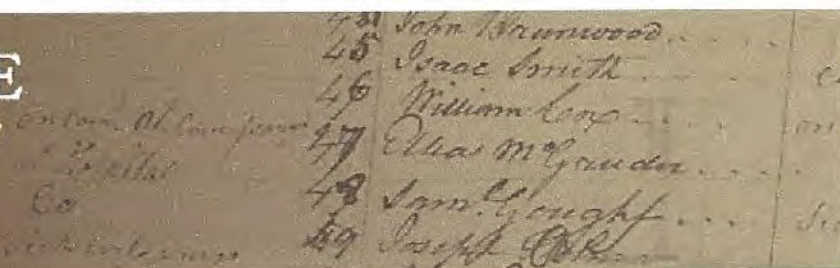
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VALLEY FORGE



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Legacy



Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

SEARCH THE
Muster Roll

products

Valley Forge Images

Join the Honorary
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History OF THE
Muster Roll

credits

Links

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CONTINENTAL ARMY STAFF — VALLEY FORGE

Commander-in-Chief

General George Washington

Aides de Camp to the Commander-In-Chief

Lieutenant Colonel John Fitzgerald
Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton
Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison
Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens
Lieutenant Colonel Richard Meade
Dr. James McHenry
Tench Tilghman

Adjutant General

Colonel Timothy Pickering *(also served on Board of War)*
Colonel Alexander Scammell *(appointed January 5, 1778)*

Inspector General

Major General Thomas Conway
Major General Friedrich von Steuben *(appointed March 28, 1778)*

Commander, Corps of Engineers

Brigadier General Louis Lebeque Duportail

Quartermaster General

Major General Nathanael Greene *(appointed March 1778)*

Assistant Quartermaster Generals

Charles Pettit
John Cox

Commissary General of Purchases

William Buchanan *(August 1777 – April 1778)*
Jeremiah Wadsworth *(appointed April 1778)*

Commissary General of Issues

Colonel Charles Stewart

Commissary General of Forage

Clement Biddle

Commissary General of Musters

Joseph Ward

Deputy Muster Master General

William Bradford

Assistant Director, General Hospital Department at Valley Forge

Dr. James Craik

Judge Advocate General

John Laurance

Paymaster General

William Palfrey

Baker General

Christopher Ludwick

Collection photographs courtesy of Michael Ticeino, www.mjticeinoinages.com
George C. Neumann Collection, Valley Forge National Historical Park

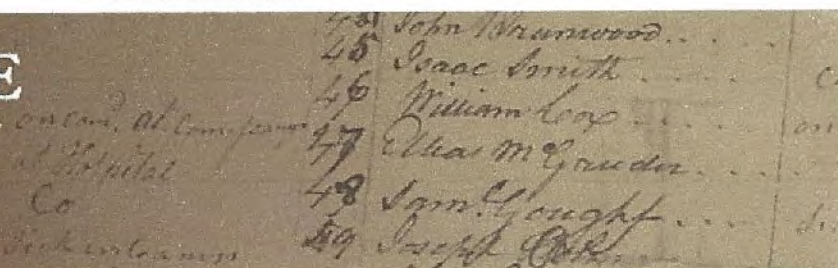


VALLEY FORGE



THE MUSTER ROLL PROJECT

Legacy



Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

SEARCH THE
Muster Roll

products

Valley Forge images

Join the Honorary
Muster RollHistory OF THE
Muster Roll

credits

Links

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LAFAYETTE'S DIVISION



Commander: Major General Marquis de Lafayette

Brigades

[North Carolina Brigade](#)[Scott's Brigade](#)[Woodford's Brigade](#)

Notes

Some January alteration figures not available.

Monthly Strength Reports

Month	Fit for Duty	Assigned	Died	Deserted	Discharged	Enlisted
DEC	1706	4081	10	15	10	2
JAN	1138	3695	0	0	0	0
FEB	1038	3258	54	35	429	126
MAR	997	2973	111	17	138	31
APR	1682	3322	90	25	45	482
MAY	2091	3766	113	30	29	246
JUN	1891	3595	62	32	13	166
Totals			440	154	664	1053

Ref: C.M. Lesser - *The Sinews of Independence, Monthly Strength Returns of the Continental Army*

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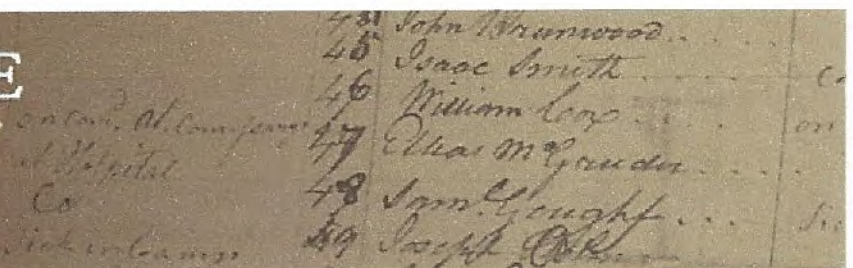
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VALLEY FORGE



THE MUSTER ROLL PROJECT

Legacy



Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

SEARCH THE
Muster Roll

products

Valley Forge images

Join the Honorary
Muster RollHistory OF THE
Muster Roll

credits

Links

contact us

SCOTT'S BRIGADE

[Lafayette's Division](#) | Scott's Brigade

Commander: Brigadier General Charles Scott

Regiments

[4th Virginia Regiment](#)[8th Virginia Regiment](#)[12th Virginia Regiment](#)[Patton's Regiment](#)[Grayson's Regiment](#)

History

Left Valley Forge in June 1778 as part of [Lafayette's Division](#).

Notes

Some January alteration figures not available.

Monthly Strength Reports

Month	Fit for Duty	Assigned	Died	Deserted	Discharged	Enlisted
DEC	535	1300	4	9	5	1
JAN	406	1220	0	0	0	0
FEB	172	989	10	26	153	24
MAR	222	941	21	7	52	30
APR	668	1144	21	17	39	230
MAY	634	1156	37	18	15	62
JUN	627	1095	16	6	5	16
Totals			109	83	269	363

Ref: C.M. Lesser - *The Sinews of Independence, Monthly Strength Returns of the Continental Army*

Encampment Map



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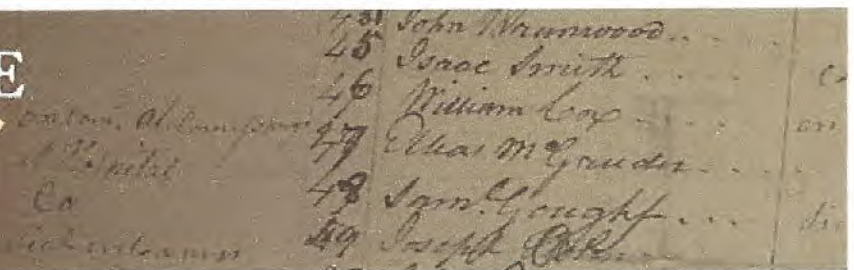
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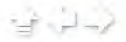
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Legacy



Overview

4TH VIRGINIA REGIMENT



The Encampment

[Lafayette's Division](#) | [Scott's Brigade](#) | 4th Virginia Regiment

Continental Army

History

Divisions

Organized February 1776 at Suffolk Courthouse from Berkley, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Sussex, Southampton, Nanseamouth, Brunswick, Isle Of Wright, Surry, and Princess Anne Counties and Boro of Norfolk.

Brigades

Entered Valley Forge with 283 assigned, 74 fit for duty.

Regiments

Left Valley Forge with [8th Virginia Regiment](#) and the [12th Virginia Regiment](#). 752 assigned 400 fit for duty.

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Previous engagements: Chesapeake Bay, Northern New Jersey, Trenton-Princeton, Defense Of Philadelphia, Philadelphia-Monmouth

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Field Officers

Colonel Isaac Read
Lt. Colonel Thomas Gaskins
Lt. Colonel William Talaferro
Major Isaac Beall
Major John Brent

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Company Commanders

Captain John Stith
Captain Jason Reddick
Captain James Lucas
Captain William Cherry
Captain John Holcombe
Captain Thomas Ridley
Captain Arthur Smith
Captain George Walls
Captain John Grogan
Captain Jonathan Clark

History OF THE
Muster Roll

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Regimental Staff

Quartermaster David Jackson
Adjutant William Kelley
Paymaster Benjamin Lawson
Surgeon William McMolui
Surgeon's Mate Charles Grier
Quartermaster Sergeant Martin Carney
Quartermaster Sergeant Samuel Henry
Sergeant Major Tristram King
Sergeant Major Richard Morgan
Fife Major William Lipscomb



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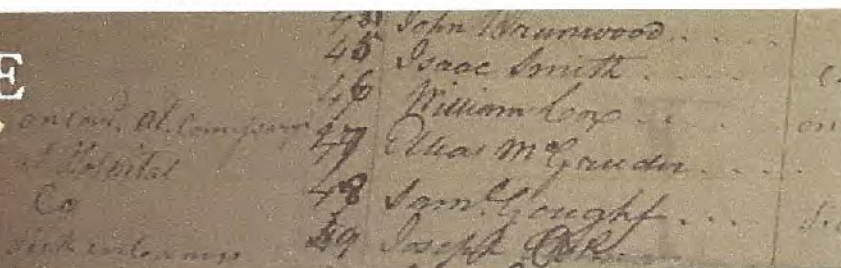
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VALLEY FORGE



THE MUSTER ROLL PROJECT

Legacy



Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

SEARCH THE
Muster Roll

products

Valley Forge Images

Join the Honorary
Muster RollHistory OF THE
Muster Roll

credits

Links

contact us

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SEARCH: Last Name: State: Regiment:

ID	Last Name	First Name	Rank	State	Regiment
VA07614	Cochran	David	Private	Virginia	4th Virginia

Private David Cochran

Rank and File

State: Virginia

Ethnicity:

ID: [VA07614](#)

Division: 3rd

Regiment: [4th Virginia](#)Brigade: [Scott's](#)

Company: Capt John Stith

NOTES: Drafted 6 Mar 1778 May: On Fatigue

DEC 1777
JAN 1778
FEB 1778
MAR 1778
APR 1778
MAY 1778 On Fatigue
JUN 1778

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Support the Muster Roll Project: This project, a fully volunteer operation, needs your support so that all of the soldiers that encamped at Valley Forge will be remembered well into our shared future. We welcome your support to maintain the Muster Roll as a free service so that everyone can discover or add to the legacy of the brave Americans at Valley Forge.

Yours in Service to our Shared Heritage,
The Friends of Valley Forge Park



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