

**Was there a battle here?**

No. Valley Forge was not a battleground. It was the site of an American army encampment during the winter of 1777-1778.

**What is an encampment?**

Each winter during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), weather conditions made fighting impossible, so both sides would seek shelter. In December 1777, the British had captured Philadelphia and settled there for the winter. General Washington's army encamped in what is now Valley Forge Park.

**Why is this place called Valley Forge Park?**

From colonial times, metalworking facilities called forges were located along nearby Valley Creek. The nearby town and general area became known as Valley Forge.

**How many people were encamped here with General Washington?**

The best estimate is around 12,000. This includes combat troops, support and supply workers, and patrol scouts.

**Who were they?**

The encampment included Americans of varied descent: English, Scottish, African, Dutch, French, Swedish, German and native American. There were many women here contributing to the war effort as well.

**Where did they live?**

Shelter was an urgent need, so the men quickly built between 1100 and 1200 cabins. Reproductions of these can be seen at various places in the Park. At first, commanders occupied private homes nearby, but Washington ordered them to live among the troops in order to strengthen morale.

**What did they do all winter?**

The American army was in disarray at the start of the encampment. The War was in its third year, and recent battles had not gone well. Food was running low, many soldiers were sick and lacked warm clothing. Though skilled, our fighters had little training to take on the British troops. Morale was low. But with fighting paused for the winter, General Washington and his commanders addressed these problems and by spring, the American army was stronger, better supplied, better trained and more professional.

**Didn't a lot of soldiers starve to death?**

No, this is a myth. The winter was hard, living quarters were crowded, and supplies were low. As a result, disease spread rapidly and took close to 1700 lives by the time spring arrived. But there is no record of even one death by starvation.

**Who was Henry Knox?**

General Henry Knox was in charge of the American artillery, or cannons, at Valley Forge. These were strategically positioned for maximum effect defending American positions. Reproductions can be seen throughout the park.

### **Who was Frederick von Steuben?**

Baron von Steuben, a Prussian war veteran serving the cause of freedom under General Washington, instituted the American army's first standardized training program. Though perhaps over-romanticized as a military magician, he was an organizational and tactical genius whose ideas about training and combat turned a merely capable fighting force into a strong, powerful one, able to take on the mighty British Army. His work had a large impact on the troops' morale and confidence.

### **Who was Nathanael Greene?**

At the army's most disorganized time, George Washington put Major General Nathanael Greene of Rhode Island in charge of the quartermaster department, which handled all supplies: food, clothing, ammunition, everything the army needed to do its job. Under his command huge improvements were made, and in a matter of months the troops had all the support they needed – first to survive, then to become a much stronger fighting force.

### **When did the encampment end and what happened next?**

In June 1778, the better-trained, much stronger corps of nearly 15,000 American troops departed Valley Forge in pursuit of the British army, who had left Philadelphia and were marching across New Jersey to attack New York.