

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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During the American Revolution, the Continental Army regularly went into winter encampments and in the years 1779-1780 the encampment was located in Morristown, New Jersey, which was approximately thirty miles west of New York City. This winter hibernation took place from December until the following June. This particular winter was referred to as the "Hard Winter" due to the severity of the weather, which included twenty-two major snowstorms. The colonial troops arrived amidst two feet of snow and immediately set upon construction of the camp. The camp was not fully completed until February, 1780.

Morristown was a small, rustic village which the army had used previously for an encampment. It was selected again for numerous reasons: food, water, geographical location to New York City, and an area large enough for ten thousand troops. Morristown's approaches were guarded by a

ridge of mountains and a swamp. Therefore, the Jockey Hollow area, the location of the troops' encampment, was more than satisfactory to General George Washington.

Camp life was dull, tedious, but necessary in order to prepare for the upcoming campaign. The daily routine consisted of drill work, guard duty and other camp duties. The actual number of men who occupied the winter encampment was lower than the records indicate. Enlistments were up and along with desertions and deaths the Army was never sure of its true strength. Washington was quite concerned over the number of officers who were on leave during the winter months because it became a contributing factor to the laxity in discipline throughout the Army. During the encampment the lack of provisions forced the soldiers in many instances to set out in small bands to plunder the local populace of its foodstuffs. The early months of 1780 brought near starvation to the Army when it was known the local farmers had more than an ample supply. Washington was eventually forced to confiscate the needed supplies and pay the farmers in worthless currency.

Morristown's role in the American Revolution was an important one; however, history has not given it the recognition it so richly deserves. A large part of the military action was centered in the New Jersey region and the winter encampment of 1779-1780 has been virtually ignored while the Valley Forge winter has received the largest attention.

THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT
MORRISTOWN, N.J., 1779-80

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Revolutionary War was long, arduous and expensive. The history books record all the famous battles and the winter encampment at Vally Forge; however, the Morristown encampment is seldom mentioned in historical annals. Except for brief raids, foraging expeditions and chance encounters, armies of the time of the American Revolution spent their winters in military inactivity. Washington and his army endured a miserable and depressing winter at Valley Forge. At Morristown, the Continental Army survived two hard winters under equally or perhaps more wretched conditions. The Morristown area was a strategic and vital center for George Washington and his military plans. The Continental Army spent a considerable part of the Revolution in and around the Morristown region. This study showed the importance of Morristown in its geographical setting and the hardships endured by the Continental Army during the seven-month winter encampment, 1779-80. In my early years of educational training I was afforded numerous opportunities, elementary school and cub scout trips, to visit Washington's Headquarters in Morristown, New Jersey. Thus began a fascination with the Ford Mansion, the adjacent museum, Jockey Hollow, and the Wick House.

It became evident after three years of teaching American history that Morristown was not mentioned in American history textbooks. This posed a problem: either Morristown's role in the Revolution was unimportant or it had been neglected by historians. After initial research it was determined that neglect was not the issue, Morristown had been simply overlooked

The Bi-centennial celebration instigated a complete renovation of the Morristown National Park by the Department of Interior. The Park museum was completely refurbished and now offers exciting, meaningful exhibits and displays for young and old alike. The Jockey Hollow area has a new visitor's center with a full-sized replica of a soldier's hut.

Hopefully, the reader will have a keener insight into the Morristown region and the hardships suffered by the army during the winter encampment of 1779-80.

The main bulk of research was conducted at the National Park Service Library, Morristown, New Jersey. This library contains an extensive manuscript collection including diaries, papers, memoirs, and Orderly books of the brigades quartered at Morristown. The library also contained an outstanding collection of photostatic copies of material found in other libraries notably the Arthur L. Clements Library, at the University of Michigan. Additional work was carried on at the Morris County Library, Morristown, New Jersey.

This study is limited to the strategic importance

of the Morristown position, the circumstances leading up to the encampment, the numerical strength of the army, the construction of the camp, daily life in winter quarters, social activities, discipline, and supply problems. Each of these areas were researched and further reduced in order to conform to the length of the paper. The health services are dealt with lightly due to the enormous amount of material available.

Several of the buildings and places used in this study need to be defined. These places were selected because of their importance to this study.

The Ford Mansion, constructed by Col. Jacob Ford, Jr., in 1774 was the finest structure in the region and served as the headquarters for General George Washington, his wife, and staff during the winter encampment, 1779-80.

The Wick House was built in 1750 and was part of the Henry Wick farm. It is located in Jockey Hollow and maintained by the National Park Service. Major General Arthur St. Clair and his staff occupied the Wick House during the 1779-80 encampment.

Jockey Hollow is a mountainous area located three and a half miles southwest of Morristown, New Jersey. It was the winter home for ten thousand troops in 1779-80. Morristown, New Jersey was a farming community located thirty miles west of New York City. It served as the military capital for Washington in 1777 and 1779-80.

Chapter II

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE MORRISTOWN ENCAMPMENT

The main body of the American Army arrived in Morristown for the second time in early December, 1779, and would spend approximately seven months in winter encampment. Upon their arrival, the soldiers' first task was to provide themselves with shelter. When under difficult weather conditions, they had completed their log city, they settled into a daily, monotonous routine camp life characterized by a complex of difficulties which possibly never existed to an equal degree at any other time during the entire war. Snow not only covered the soldiers but also blocked the roads, preventing the organized military drill and disrupting the supply system. Soldiers were often without meat and other staple foods for two or three days. Many were without shoes or stockings, others without pants or blankets. In some cases the soldiers boiled their shoes and ate them. The tragedy of Morristown in 1779-80 reflects the weakness of the Continental Congress, the lack of finances, and the inefficiency of auxiliary services. It is remarkable that the army, poorly and inadequately fed and clothed and miserably sheltered from the severe and prolonged winter, held together during those seven months. Much credit goes to

General George Washington, whose perserverance and determination kept the Revolution alive.

Armies of the time of the Revolution were forced to spend their winters in relative inactivity. However, the winter encampment played an important role in the comparatively slow-paced warfare of the 18th century. Skill in choosing a suitable winter campsite was considered to be of paramount importance. It involved the search for sufficient space, good transportation facilities, water and wood supplies, to mention only a few essentials. These were many of the problems facing General Washington in November, 1779.

The geographical location of the province of New Jersey played a pivotal role in the Revolutionary War. New Jersey was adjacent to New York, which in essence became the central focus of activity for Great Britain throughout the Revolution. A map of the thirteen colonies clearly shows three distinct geographical regions: a northern zone consisting of New England, sharply divided by the Hudson River and the northern lakes region; a southern zone separated by the Delaware River and Chesapeake Bay; and finally the central zone consisting of the region between New York and Maryland. British military strategy saw as its goal the separation of the three zones. From New York City there was quick access to Newport, Rhode Island, by sea and within easy striking distance of Boston. Control of the sea lanes would cut off trade between the northern and southern sea ports. General William Howe, the British commander, had decided upon control

of New York and a few southern sea ports. After the British evacuation from Boston, General George Washington recognized New York City as the key to British strategy and moved his forces accordingly. General Henry B. Carrington, a military historian, wrote, "New Jersey . . . practically linked the three zones and indicated the strategic battle-center of the war."¹ In reference to the British attack on New York in 1776, Carrington noted:

Ever mindful of Howe's true policy, and the vital value of New York to the British Crown, he [Washington] conceived and wrought out that counter policy, which treated New Jersey as the hub of a wheel, with such radiations as would alike threaten the Hudson, keep New York and Staten Island . . . under alarm, and so clasp within his immediate control, all the essential factors of Howe's position, that he could not successfully attack the American Army without risk to his base . . . but Howe held fast to his main purpose, to seize the central zone and thwart all efforts of Washington to concentrate his troops for aggressive work.²

New Jersey was the most accessible colony to the British forces and the citizens depended upon the American army for protection from British raids. The province presented difficulties in organizing and maintaining a strong military force. In no other area was a force needed more to bolster confidence in the patriot cause.

General William Heath, a member of Washington's staff, also recognized the problem of providing troops in the New York region by stating:

I think the service cannot, under present circumstances, be better promoted than by posting a respectable body of troops in West-Chester County, and another in the Jerseys, extending from Tappan

to Morris-Town. This will produce a diversion . . . and at the same time secure our own communication.³

The major highway network across New Jersey also influenced military strategy. The province was considered to have the finest stage routes next to Virginia. Between New York and Philadelphia were three major routes of travel. The Lower Post Road ran from Elizabethtown through New Brunswick and on to Trenton; the Kings Highway ran from Perth Amboy to Burlington; and finally an old Indian trail crossed to the Delaware near Trenton.⁴ Another route followed an arc from West Point to Pompton Plains on to Morristown passing through Princeton to Trenton. This is modern day Route 202. Communication between the colonies was of vital importance and the stage roads were the only source of news. In addition, supplies to Washington were crucial throughout the Revolutionary War. The Lower Post Road and Kings Highway were impossible to defend and the burden fell on Route 202. These roads were nothing more than worn down paths with tree stumps. Although it is not documented one can only surmise that General Washington considered this point in his overall strategy concerning Morristown.

The Continental Army spent two winter encampments in the Morristown region, first in 1777 and again in 1779. General Nathanael Greene after the battles of Trenton and Princeton wrote:

The patriot army wound its slow way through the rough mountain passes which lead from the banks of the Raritan to the little village of Morristown. Their new cantonment itself was on high table-land, with steep slopes on two of its sides . . . no enemy could reach them without forcing his way through difficult passes.⁵

The strategic nature of the Morristown position was recognized by numerous American officers. General James Wilkinson, in his memoirs wrote:

We reached Morristown the sixth . . . This position, little understood at the time, was afterwards discovered to be a most safe one for the winter quarters of an army of observation, and such was General Washington's; the approach to it from the sea-board is rendered difficult and dangerous by a chain of sharp hills, which extend from Pluckemin by Bound Brook and Springfield to the vicinity of the Passaic river . . . is nearly equidistant from New York and Amboy, and also from Newark and New Brunswick.⁶

Wilkinson's description is one of the best illustrations of the Morristown area. Finally, Sir George Trevelyan stated "that northern corner of New Jersey was a land of plenty; and Morristown stood high, safe and pleasant . . . which commanded a wide prospect over a beautiful, rolling country."⁷

Certain physical features in northern New Jersey were a dominant force in Morristown's choice as a military capital. Fifteen miles westward from the mouth of the Hudson were located the Watchung Mountains, whose parallel ridges stretched out, like a natural defensive position, from the Raritan River on the south toward the northern boundary of the colony, where similar ridges continued to the Hudson and West Point. There were few passes through the Watchungs

and the chief entrance to Morristown was further strengthened by two large swamps flanking the roadway.

In conclusion, the physical elements played a crucial role in the selection of Morristown as a winter encampment in both 1777 and 1779.

The direct circumstances which lead to the establishment of the military headquarters at Morristown in 1779 were based on the events in the South, where during September-October, that year, Vice Admiral Count Charles d'Estaing's squadron was cooperating jointly with the forces of General Benjamin Lincoln against Savannah, Georgia.⁸ Before another winter would set in, Washington hoped to mount an offensive operation against Sir Henry Clinton's forces in New York City with the aid of the French fleet.⁹ However, on October 9, 1779, the joint attack against Savannah failed, and on October 20, the French fleet departed for France via the West Indies.¹⁰ With no alternative, General Washington was forced to consider a winter campsite for his troops.¹¹

It was the Quartermaster General, Major General Nathanael Greene, who in early November 1779 was entrusted by Washington with the task of selecting the quarters for the winter encampment of 1779-80. On November 3, 1779, Colonel Clement Biddle, detached from Washington's staff, found a favorable location under the mountain back of Quibbletown and Scotch Plains, New Jersey.¹² Shortly afterward General William Alexander, the so-called Lord Stirling expressed his belief that this position was too exposed to enemy attack,

expressing his preference for a site near Quibbletown Gap.¹³ On November 6, 1779 Biddle reaffirmed the need for hay and provisions and mentioned Morristown as a possible site although there appeared to be a scarcity of supplies east and north of Morristown.¹⁴ Colonel James Abeel, another member of General Greene's staff, wrote to Greene on November 7 that he and Lord Stirling would reinspect the Morristown region.¹⁵ Lord Stirling and Colonel Abeel continued to check out possible campsites on November 8 and 9.¹⁶ On November 10, 1779, Colonel Abeel reported to General Greene that, although he saw no possibilities between First and Second Mountains a "most Beautiful Place for an Incampment";¹⁷ however, when General Greene visited the area, he found both sites unsatisfactory.

General Washington was looking primarily for a location which would serve the "double purposes of security and subsistence."¹⁸ He had initially considered the West Point region but the lack of forage ruled out this idea. He added that forage would be a problem "wherever the Bulk of the Army shall sit down."¹⁹ Washington determined that the cavalry would have to be sent elsewhere so as not to be a burden on the main garrison. Washington was of the opinion that the choice of a location should be free "from the insults of the collected force of the enemy" but also near other American outposts in order to give the location security.²⁰ General Greene wrote to Washington on November 14, 1779 stating: "it is not always in the power of a

General to take a position most favorable to his wishes, on account of Provision and forage, or to place himself in the most advantageous point of view for covering the country and securing his capital posts."²¹ At this point Washington was still uncertain concerning the final campsite for the winter. General Greene in his letter of November 14 concluded: "I find your Excellency will be obliged to quarter the army as far westward as Morristown or Basking-ridge."²² General Greene's recommendations did not reach Washington for several days and he continued to search out all the possible places for the army. In a letter of November 16, 1779, to Clement Biddle, Washington indicated that the army should move from Connecticut and New York toward Morristown.²³ This letter states a contradiction with future correspondence concerning the choice of a winter encampment. General Washington must have decided that the Army would settle in New Jersey and at some point near the village of Morristown. However, General Greene and his staff continued to evaluate sites far and near to Morristown. There seems to be no further explanation in any of the participants correspondence. General Washington noted in a letter to Major General Horatio Gates that the circumstances and "the abilities of the Quarter Master, Forage Master, and Commy, to support us in provision, forage, and the transportation of them . . . should be considered."²⁴

In two letters to General Washington of November 17

and 20, 1779, General Greene pointed out that he had found the sites described by Lord Stirling and Colonel Abeel so different from his expectation as to be unsatisfactory. In his reply to General Greene of November 23, 1779, Washington expressed his regret that both areas fell short of expectations and pointed out that if the whole army could not be encamped together it could winter in a chain of encampments if necessary.²⁵ About November 22, 1779, General Greene must have found another location for the winter encampment at Acquaquenack, but on November 23, Washington rejected it as "too much exposed," and too far from a source of hay forage.²⁶ However, on November 25, 1779, Washington wrote to General Greene that the stores between Trenton and the proposed encampment at Acquaquenack were just too few to tempt the enemy, and consequently the site at Acquaquenack could be tentatively accepted.²⁷ Prior to that, on November 23, 1779, Colonel Abeel, who had been checking the terrain around Morristown, reported that "the ground back of Mr. Kemble's . . . a pretty large spot . . . well covered with Timber and pretty well watered . . . I believe will be the best I have as yet seen." On the following day he again expressed his belief that this was the most suitable place for the winter encampment of all the grounds he had viewed.²⁸

General Greene, writing to a fellow officer on November 30, 1779, stated his opinion that there were only three suitable grounds for the winter quartering in New Jersey,

of which two were a short distance from Morristown. The third, at Acquaquenack, was the best place, but close to New York City.²⁹ On the same day Washington informed Greene in a letter that "From a consideration of all circumstances I am led to decide upon the position back of Mr. Kembles . . . You will therefore proceed to laying off the Ground. I shall be at Morristown tomorrow and shall be obliged by your ordering me a late dinner. I understand my Quarters are to be Mrs. Fords."³⁰

General Washington's decision on Morristown as a site for his winter encampment was based on his realization that a diminution of his forces was imminent due to "the expiration of enlistment," together with "an immediate necessity of sending a further reinforcement to South Carolina." Therefore, he was forced "to seek a more remote position than we would otherwise have done."³¹ Washington probably remembered the November 14th letter from Greene concerning the decline in the number of available troops, because General Greene wrote, "it will be necessary, therefore, to endeavour to remedy, by the strength of ground, the deficiency of force."³² Later, writing to the President of the Continental Congress on December 4, 1779, Washington informed him and the Congress that Morristown could afford better security than Scotch Plains. In addition, Morristown could "supply water and wood for covering and fuel."³³ On November 29, 1779, several British newspapers, the New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury revealed the location of

the winter encampment of Washington's army at Morristown, stating that "We are told that General Washington is to cantoon his Army this Winter in the County of Morris, in New Jersey, between the Town of Morris, and that of Mendham."³⁴ Thus the final decision on winter quarters was made and publicly revealed.

Chapter III

THE RETURN TO MORRISTOWN, 1779-80

Writing from his headquarters in Morristown on December 4, 1779, General Washington reported to the President of the Continental Congress:

I arrived here on Wednesday the 1st Instant, and am exerting myself to get the Troops huttet in the Country lying between Morris Town and Mendam, about three miles from the former.¹

General Washington's arrival in Morristown on December 1, 1779, was amidst a "very severe storm of hail & snow all day."² The Ford Mansion, which had sheltered the Delaware troops during the 1777 encampment, was occupied as Washington's headquarters during the winter encampment of 1779-80.³ From this base of the Army, as it lay on high ground, Washington could keep an eye on possible British moves from New York.

Morristown itself was situated in a strategically advantageous position, surrounded by hills from which it could easily be defended. Furthermore, it was located in a rich agricultural part of the province, whose produce could easily supply sustenance to Washington's army, while iron supplies could be provided from numerous furnaces and forges in Morris County. Brigadier General Louis Lebeque Duportail, Commandant of the Corps of Engineers, in his letter of January 16, 1780, to General Greene, stated that "a chain of hills, have the advantage, that we never can be brought to a general action; the hills being divided by deep valleys, which form each, in

a manner, a distinct post."⁴

Prior to the war Morristown Village had been a rustic, frontier community, settled mainly by immigrants of New England origin. Farming was the main occupation of its 250 people, but the increasing number of mines, furnaces, and forges changed the source of income for many families.⁵

The Marquis de Chastellux, visiting Morristown in 1780, noted that "there were sixty or eighty houses besides the Meeting, all pretty and well built."⁶ A more detailed and eloquent description was given by Mrs. Martha Daingerfield Bland, a visitor to Morristown, in May of 1777, "I found Morris [town] a very clever little village, situated in a most beautiful valley at the foot of five mountains. It has three houses with steeples which give it consequential look . . . is inhabited by the errentest rusticks you ever beheld."⁷ Further information concerning the agricultural aspects of the region are found in a letter from Mr. Lucas Van Beverhoudt to John Regiers, Esq., of St. Croix, in November of 1779 in which he stated, " . . . Morris County is a new settled Country & yett it has supported the whole Armie of America for 3 years in poultry, Mutton, Vegitables, Butter, Milk &, & yett plenty left for the inhabitants."⁸ The large encampment, the severe winter, and a reluctance on the part of the local inhabitants to sell their food products would not bear out Mr. Van Beverhoudt's eloquent description.

In his letter of December 7, 1779, to Governor William Livingston, General Washington wrote from Morristown: "We have taken up our quarters at this place for the winter. The main army lies three or four miles from the Town."⁹

While the Ford Mansion became General Washington's headquarters, the site selected for the winter encampment of the army troops was three or four miles south of Morristown, in a mountainous tract of land known as Jockey Hollow, which also included portions of the plantation of Peter Kemble, Esq., and the farms of Joshua Guerin and Henry Wick.

Washington's troops arrived in Morristown between the first and last week of December of 1779, and encamped in two lines below the crest of the mountainous tract of about two thousand acres. Eight infantry brigades occupied a position on the Jockey Hollow site; these included the 1st and 2nd Maryland Brigades, the 1st and 2nd Connecticut Brigades, Hand's Brigade, the New York Brigade, and the 1st and 2nd Pennsylvania Brigades. Two additional infantry brigades were assigned to nearby campgrounds, Stark's Brigade on the southeastern slope of Kemble's Mountain, and the New Jersey Brigade near the mouth of Indian Graves Creek, more than a mile from "Eyre's Forge."¹⁰

The following is illustrative of the composition and strength of the army at Morristown. The first Maryland Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Williams Smallwood, was ordered to Morristown via Windsor on November 20, 1779."¹¹

"Upon reaching there, the Brigade occupied ground on a hill along the Jockey Hollow Road near Primrose Brook, referred to locally as the Maryland field.¹² In December of 1779 the brigade had a total strength of 1,425 men.¹³

The Second Maryland Brigade was ordered to Morristown on November 20, 1779,¹⁴ where upon its arrival it was assigned to a camping ground paralleling the opposite side of the Jockey Hollow Road and extending up a hill toward the "Harvey Loree Place."¹⁵ The total strength in December of 1779 was 1,451 men.¹⁶ On the morning of April 17, 1780, the Maryland troops left Morristown for the South.¹⁷

The First and Second Connecticut Brigades were situated along the south and east slopes at Fort Hill, approximately 600 feet northeast of the Tempe Wick Road.¹⁸ The First Connecticut Brigade was ordered to proceed from New Windsor to Morristown on November 28, 1779.¹⁹ Its total enlistment, in December of 1779 was 1,688 men.²⁰ The First Connecticut Brigade did not remain long in the Morristown area; on February 2, 1780, it left the encampment to guard the country from Newark to Perth Amboy approximately twenty-five miles from Morristown,²¹ together with other troops of the Connecticut Line, spending the winter and spring of 1780 on out-post duty. The First Connecticut Brigade finally left the New Jersey area June 7, 1780, to become a part of Major General The Marquis de LaFayette's Connecticut Division.²²

The Second Connecticut Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington and included a total

enlistment in December of 1779 of 1,458 men.²³ Part of this brigade was sent to bolster the defenses near Springfield, New Jersey.²⁴ On May 13, 1780, the New Jersey Brigade was dispatched to relieve the Second Connecticut Brigade troops, and they returned to Morristown and occupied the empty huts of the Maryland Line who had departed for the south.²⁵

The campsite of Hand's Brigade was north of the Tempe Wick Road, approximately 300 feet southeast of the point where it joins the Jockey Hollow Road.²⁶ The Brigade consisted of the First Canadian Regiment, the Second Canadian Regiment, the Fourth Pennsylvania Regiment and the Eleventh Pennsylvania Regiment with a total enlistment of 1,147 men.²⁷ On November 21, 1779 General Hand was ordered to proceed with his men from Pompton to Morristown.²⁸ During the entire winter the Brigade stayed in the encampment, leaving Morristown on June 7, 1780, to become part of the Division commanded by Major General Baron von Steuben. During the encampment its commanding officer, General Hand, also served as President of the General Court Martial.²⁹

The New York Brigade was situated on the east side of the Jockey Hollow Road, "A little more than half way [or about two and a half miles] from the Morristown Green."³⁰ Their march to Morristown began at Pompton, New Jersey, on November 25, 1779. After seven days' delay at Rockaway Bridge, the Brigade arrived in Morristown on Sunday, December 5, 1779.³¹ The New York Brigade included the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Regiments with a combined total of 1,226

men.³² The entire brigade stayed in Morristown until May 30, 1780, when it departed north for Kings Ferry, New York.³³

The campsite of the two Pennsylvania Brigades was still farther down the Jockey Hollow Road, on the west slope of Sugar Loaf Hill.³⁴ The First Pennsylvania Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General William Irvine and included the First, Second, Seventh, and Tenth Regiments with a total enlistment of 1,290 men.³⁵ On December 26, 1779, General Irvine and a detachment of his First Pennsylvania Brigade were ordered to Westfield, New Jersey, and an order of December 28, 1779, instructed him to replace guards heretofore kept by General Anthony Wayne.³⁶ However, most of the troops in this brigade remained in Morristown. The Second Pennsylvania Brigade which included the Third, Sixth, and Ninth Regiments had a total complement of 1,112 men.³⁷

Brigadier General John Stark's Brigade occupied the southeastern slope of Kemble's Mountain.³⁸ The Brigade arrived from Rhode Island on December 14, 1779 and contained troops from Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts.³⁹ It had a total number of 1,270 men.⁴⁰ Stark's Brigade left Morristown on June 7, 1780 and became part of General von Steuben's command.⁴¹

The New Jersey Brigade came to Morristown around mid December 1779, and was encamped near the mouth of Indian

Graves Creek, more than a mile from "Eyre's Forge."⁴² The Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General William Maxwell and included the First, Second, Third, and the independent Spencer's Regiment. The total enlistment was 1,313 men.⁴³ The Brigade stayed in the winter encampment until May 11, 1780, when it left to reinforce the Second Connecticut Brigade. When the army departed from Morristown in June, 1780, the New Jersey Brigade formed the Advance Corps.⁴⁴

The strength of each brigade differed from month to month during the entire winter encampment as the previous pages can attest. The following table present the numerical strength of the various brigades between December 1779 and June 1780, by month, with figures of each brigade tabulated under the following headings:

Officers Present Fit for Duty - Including Field,
Commissioned and Staff Officers.

Noncommissioned Officers - including Sergeants Major,
Quartermaster Sergeants, Drum Majors, Fife
Majors, Sergeants, and Drummers and Fifers.

Rank and File Total - including the number of privates
present fit for duty, sick present, sick absent,
on command, and on furlough.

STRENGTH OF BRIGADES AT MORRISTOWN IN JUNE 1780⁴⁵

<u>Brigade:</u>	<u>Officers Present Fit for Duty:</u>	<u>Noncommissioned Officers:</u>	<u>Rank and File Total:</u>
1st Connecticut	45	102	806
2nd Connecticut	36	64	455
Hand's	66	135	821
New York	50	102	757
1st Pennsylvania	58	118	807
2nd Pennsylvania	61	129	916
Stark's	35	95	658
New Jersey	69	132	888
	420	877	6,108

Total of officers and men: 7,405

The following table gives a month-by-month record of the total full strength of the brigades at Morristown:⁴⁶

December 1779:	13,380
January 1780:	11,697
February 1780:	11,361
March 1780:	10,882
April 1780:	7,775
May 1780:	7,607
June 1780:	7,405

In December of 1779 General Washington's forces at Morristown included 521 officers, 1,321 noncommissioned officers and

11,538 enlisted men, giving a total of 13,380 soldiers.⁴⁷

It is obvious that all these men were not present at Morristown. Washington himself said that "the amount of an army on Paper, will greatly exceed its real strength."⁴⁸

It should be recalled that the troops were arriving at the Morristown encampment between the first and last week of December of 1779, and that all but two of the ten brigades occupied positions on the Jockey Hollow site. Stark's Brigade and the New Jersey Brigade were located just outside Jockey Hollow. The actual number of troops probably were between 10,000 and 11,000.

The Monthly Return of the Continental Army for June 1780 shows the 1st and 2nd Connecticut, Hand's, New York, 1st and 2nd Pennsylvania, Stark's, and the New Jersey brigades listed at Morristown with a total strength of 7,405 officers and men.⁴⁹ All these brigades are listed in spite of the fact that many of them had departed for other assignments.

Upon his arrival at Morristown, General Washington was confronted with the problem of providing winter shelter for his exhausted troops and the establishment of a practical camp routine. The troops arrived in the Morristown region in terrible condition. John Barr, an ensign in the New York Brigade, recorded in his diary that his unit arrived in Jockey Hollow on December 5, 1779, and "encamped on the Ground of our Winter Quarters three Miles West of Morris Town." He also stated that "it began to snow about nine

o'clock and the wind rising gradually until it blew up a violent storm . . . snow fell about Six Inches deep."⁵⁰

Lt. Robert Parker, a member of the Second Continental Artillery, wrote that the weather was quite severe on December 5-6. "The snow as knee deep and the weather very cold."⁵¹

Another vivid description was given by a surgeon from a Massachusetts regiment, Dr. James Thacher, who noted on his arrival to Morristown on December 14, 1779, "The snow on the ground [was] about two feet deep, and the weather extremely cold; the soldiers [were] actually barefoot and almost naked . . . Our lodging last night was on the frozen ground."⁵²

In December of 1779, Major General Johann De Kalb wrote the following passage:

It may truly be said that a foreign officer, who has served in America as long as I have under such adversities, must be either inspired with boundless enthusiasm for the liberties of the country, or possessed by the demons of fame and ambition . . . I knew before I came, that I should have to put up with more than usual toils and privations, but I had no idea of their true extent. An iron constitution like mine is required to bear up under this sort of usage.⁵³

Washington assigned General Nathanael Greene to prepare the campsite for each regiment and the initial construction on the hutting. The hut design conformed to the previous winter encampment on the Raritan River. The dimensions of the huts were strictly followed and those not meeting the original design were destroyed. The construction of the huts were supervised by the officers. Were all officers to live with the men or only some? If all, who were to live in the camp with the enlisted men? Washington sent orders that all

enlisted men were to be hutted before any officer's quarters were constructed. In addition, the soldiers were instructed not to destroy or waste any fences while building the huts; potential offenders were warned of "the most certain and rigorous punishment."⁵⁴ Each hut was designed for twelve men. It was to be about 14 feet wide and 15 or 16 feet long in floor dimensions, about 6-1/2 feet high at the eaves, with wooden bunks, to have a fireplace and chimney at one end and a door in the front side. The officers' cabins were larger and accommodated two to four officers; these had two fireplaces and chimneys each and frequently two or more windows and doors.⁵⁵ Several models are currently displayed in Jockey Hollow National Park. An excellent account of the laying out of the huts was given by Joseph Plumb Martin, a private in the First Connecticut Brigade, who wrote:

We built the huts in the following manner: Four huts, two in front and two in the rear, then a space of six or eight feet, when four more huts were placed in the same order, and so on to the end of the regiment, with a parade in front and a street through the whole, between the front and rear, the whole length, twelve or fifteen feet wide. Next in order . . . the officers of the companies built theirs . . . Next, the field officers in the same order: Every two huts, that is, one in front and one in the rear . . . No one was allowed to transgress these bounds on any account.⁵⁶

In the construction of the huts, officers and men of each regiment worked together, starting usually at 8 a.m. and continued "if weather will permit Untill the whole is Finished."⁵⁷

Until the permanent quarters were built the ill-clothed

army was sheltered in tents. In his diary John Barr noted that two days after the arrival of the New York Brigade, they began on Tuesday, December 7, 1779, to build their huts.⁵⁸ Work on the huts was very difficult because of the inclement weather. Writing from the winter encampment in December of 1779, Baron De Kalb remarked:

We are here going into winter-quarters in the woods, as usual. Since the beginning of this month we have been busy putting up our shanties. But the severe frost greatly retards our work, and does not even permit us to complete our chimneys.⁵⁹

In spite of frost and snow, however, the work on the huts moved steadily forward. The regimental officers together with regimental and brigade staff, were to hut with their respective units.⁶⁰ The reluctant civilians of the Morristown area were at first unwilling to provide quarters for the higher ranking officers, whose situation required lodging near the Ford Mansion; and General Greene complained about this problem in a letter to General Washington on December 21, 1779.⁶¹ The situation was not solved until Washington personally requisitioned rooms for his officers. The first soldiers moved into their huts around Christmas of 1779. Major Ebenezer Huntington of Stark's Brigade, in a letter of December 24, 1779, described the urgency and delay in these words:

You will by date perceive that we are in camp, tho' expect, if good weather, to have the men's Hutts so far completed that they may go into them on Sunday or Monday . . . The severity of the weather hath been such that the men suffer'd much without shoes, and stockings, and working half leg deep in snow.⁶²

Shortly after the completion of the huts it was revealed that there was a shortage of bedding straw.⁶³ Despite the snow, severe cold and every other obstacle possible the men worked diligently, and on February 14, 1780, Dr. Thacher recorded:

Having continued to this late season in our tents, experiencing the greatest inconvenience, we have now the satisfaction of taking possession of the log hut, just completed by our soldiers, where we shall have more comfortable accommodations. Major Trescott, Lieutenant Williams, our pay master, and myself, occupy a hut with one room, furnished with our lodging cabins, and crowded with our baggage.⁶⁴

Although the hutting for the officers was completed by mid-February 1780, the construction of the winter encampment was still far from finished. The construction was hampered not only by the severe winter but also by the lack of lumber and experienced carpenters. The log city constructed by the colonial troops consumed approximately seven hundred acres of woodlands around the Wick and Guerin farms. Even Washington was unable for over a month to get a new log kitchen for his headquarters and "had to put up with makeshift meals."⁶⁵ In addition, life itself in the huts was hazardous. A General Order was issued on February 16, 1780 confronting the problem:

Where huts have been built on the declivity of Hills and are sunk into the ground, particular care is to be taken to have the snow removed and trenches dug round to carry off the water, without which the soldiers will sleep amidst continual damps, and their health will consequently be injured.⁶⁶

Even with the completion of the huts the soldiers still

suffered from exposure to cold weather; as late as June 5, 1780, the cold forced General Hand to build a fire in his quarters.⁶⁷ With the completion of the soldiers and officers quarters, other construction was undertaken, including the completion of the orderly hut, parade grounds, and storehouses, etc.⁶⁸

The military units stationed at Morristown occupied sloping, well drained land areas approximately 320 yards long and 100 yards in depth, including a parade ground which was about 40 yards deep in front. As early as December 25, 1779, Washington ordered that as soon as the hutting was finished "each brigade is to have a good parade [ground] cleared in front of its huts and is to join in opening proper communications between one brigade and another."⁶⁹ The completed camp seems to have included between 1,000 and 1,200 log structures.⁷⁰

The huts were welcome additions after sleeping in tents on the open ground. With the army secure for the winter it entered upon a daily routine.

Chapter IV

THE HARD WINTER OF 1779-80

The winter of 1779-80 set in with unusual severity. It was described emphatically as the "cold winter." The roads were deep in snow, bloodstained from the shoeless feet of the colonial troops. While the snow and frost were quite severe at Morristown during December of 1779, they were even more severe during the following month. A vivid description of the period was given by Dr. Thacher in his Military Journal. On January 1, 1780, he wrote:

A new year commences, but brings no relief to the sufferings and privations of our army. Our canvass covering affords but a miserable security from storms of rain and snow, and a great scarcity of provisions still prevails, and its effects are felt even at head quarters, as appears by the following anecdote. 'We have nothing but the rations to cook, Sir,' said Mrs. Thompson, a very worthy Irish woman and house keeper to General Washington. 'Well, Mrs. Thompson, you must then cook the rations, for I have not a farthing to give you.'¹

The winter encampment at Morristown suffered through twenty-eight snow storms and extensive periods of below freezing weather. The diaries of Sylvanus Seely and Ebenezer Parkman, who were local citizens, provide a day by day description of the weather from December to early June. During the month of December Seely indicated that it snowed on December 5 and 29. The storm on the 5th was particularly fierce, "it snowed hard all Day."²

The great blizzard which came on January 2-3, 1780, brought snow between four and six feet deep, which buried some of the soldiers during the night of the 3rd, "like sheep."³ Baron De Kalb commented on the conditions:

The roads are piled with snow until they are elevated twelve feet above their ordinary level. The present winter is especially remarkable for its uninterrupted and unvarying cold. The ice in the rivers is six feet thick . . . the North River at New York., where it is a mile and a half wide near its mouth, . . . has not been frozen over so fast as to be passable by wagons.⁴

General Washington himself, requisitioning supplies from the New Jersey Magistrates in a letter dated January 8, 1780, also described the seriousness of the situation when he wrote:

For a Fortnight now the Troops both Officers and Men, have been almost perishing for want. They have been alternately without Bread or Meat, the whole time, with a very scanty allowance of either and frequently destitute of both . . . The distress we feel is chiefly owing to the early commencement and uncommon vigor of the Winter, which have greatly obstructed the transportation of our supplies.⁵

The winter around New York also received attention in the Pennsylvania Packet for January 27, 1780:

January 10 - The very remarkable and long-continued severity of the weather at New York, [the like not having been known, as we are informed, by the oldest man living,] has stopped all the avenues of intelligence, and almost cut off all social intercourse between people of the same neighborhood. The incessant intenseness of the cold, the great depth and quantity of the snows, following in quick succession one on the back of another, attended with violent tempests of wind, which for several days made the roads utterly impassable, has put a stop to business of all kinds except such as each family could do within itself.⁶

General Greene in his memoirs commented, "such weather as we have had, never did I feel so cold, the snow is also very deep, and much drifted; it is so much so, that we drive over the tops of the fences."⁷

The height of the crisis came when hungry and desperate soldiers openly plundered the local inhabitants. It seems that the reason for this attitude rested in the fact that the local residents were selling food to the troops at extremely high prices. By the application of severe punitive measures, General Washington was able to restore discipline to normality within several weeks.⁸ Another strong snow storm hit the encampment on February 8, 1780, dumping over ten inches of snow.⁹ The weather continued cold, and on February 9, 1780, the New Jersey Gazette, published at Trenton, stated that:

The weather has been so extremely cold for nearly two months past that sleighs and other carriages now pass from this place [Trenton] to Philadelphia on the Delaware, a circumstance not remembered by the oldest person among us.¹⁰

In Jockey Hollow the soldiers sought protective cover for their survival. What has been reputed to be the most severe winter of the 18th century pressed the soldiers to the limits of human endurance. In February 1780, Major General Baron De Kalb described the winter as follows: "Those who have only been in Valley Forge or Middlebrook during the last two winters, but have not tasted the cruelties of this one, know not what it is to suffer."¹¹ De Kalb's comparison of the winter encampments places the Morristown

winter of 1779-80 in its proper perspective.

The duration of the cold resulted in the Hudson River becoming frozen. The month of March, 1780 proved to be just as harsh as the previous three months of the encampment. Sylvanus Seely in his diary noted, a snowfall fell March 16 with 9 inches and again on March 31 with an additional 3 inches.¹² Ebenezer Parkman Jr. also wrote, April 1st. . . . about 9 or 10 inches deep upon a level . . . pretty good sleighing in the forenoon."¹³

It is indeed remarkable that the brigades stationed at Morristown were able to endure the harshness of the winter of 1779-80. The winter played havoc not only with the Continental Army but with the British troops in New York City. Those troops had enormous supply problems with the Hudson being frozen for long periods and the snow hindering their movements to obtain provisions. The sheltering of the two armies was a totally different story. The British were satisfactorily housed but the colonial troops plight was beyond comprehension. The weather and lack of clothing and food only served to strengthen the men's determination to overcome all the obstacles that were thrust in their way.

The soldier in the Morristown encampment was caught up in the usual camp routine, involving guard mount, drill, inspection, and other military duties. The purpose of the winter encampment was not only to shelter the soldier during the winter months but also to keep him in good physical

condition so that he would be ready for the spring and summer campaigns. During the course of the war each of the winter encampments was more severe than the previous one. In a sense, the winter encampments served to test the Continental Army's desire and fortitude on an annual basis. To achieve their goal with each new campaign a strong military discipline was necessary. Most probably the day in camp began at sunrise;¹⁴ the morning call came at 7 o'clock in the spring,¹⁵ but most probably at a later hour during late fall and winter. For the soldiers this was the signal to assemble on the parade ground for review and to receive their assignments.

Guard mounting and outpost duty were the two principal tasks of the soldiers at the Morristown encampment. The guard mount was necessary to the security of the camp, and the manning of distant outposts was considered vital to serve as a deterrent to possible British moves. Guard duty was an integral part of camp life. While the huts were being constructed, the guard was naturally reduced to a minimum. General Orders issued by General Washington on December 4, 1779, emphasized that "The ordinary guards [were] to be reduced as much as practicable for the present, that the least possible interruption may be given to hutting."¹⁶ As soon as the hutting was completed, a more organized system was introduced. The Main Guard, centered in and about Morristown proper, usually consisted of two divisions; it

was relieved every couple of days until March 11, 1780,¹⁷ and from then on either every other day or daily,¹⁸ and from May 6, 1780, on, every week.¹⁹

The outposts were detachments from the units at the Morristown camp which were assigned to duty at important positions strategically located at different distances from the camp. Outposts were located at Trenton, New Brunswick, Princeton, Westfield, Rahway, Springfield, Paramus, Elizabethtown, Pluckemin, Baskingridge, Newark, Cranes's Mills, Ringwood Iron Works, and Burlington.²⁰ These detachments varied in strength from 200 to 2,000 men, and were numerically strongest in the vicinity of Westfield and Springfield.

The camp guard was chosen on the basis of 27 men from every two battalions, and as a rule it was posted in the front and rear of the camp, with sentinels spreading out to the right and left. In this manner, the entire camp was surrounded by a chain of sentinels about 300 paces from the camp.²¹ A picket guard, which was assembled daily, consisted of two officers and fifty men, who were to "lay on their arms" and be prepared for immediate orders from the brigadier general of the day.²² In addition to this number there was Washington's Life Guard, a special contingent consisting of about 250 men whose duty was to protect the Ford Mansion.²³ Several sources indicated, "A system of beacons and signal guns was arranged which at the first boom brought the

Lifeguard inside to barricade the doors and take posts at the open windows with their muskets until the regular brigades would arrive from Jockey Hollow.²⁴ One beacon post was set high on Mt. Kemble in Jockey Hollow and was clearly visible at the Ford Mansion. False alarms, which there were many, must have affected Martha Washington and Mrs. Theodosia Ford and her family. With the windows open and the severe cold penetrating the headquarters it is with wonder that members staying in the mansion did not contract any serious illnesses. With these protective measures the security of the winter encampment was supposedly assured, and this security made it possible for the remaining soldiers to carry out their daily routine duties.

Life at the Jockey Hollow encampment was centered on the "guard parade," a level piece of ground situated between the New York and Pennsylvania encampments. It was here that the camp guards, as well as the detachments assigned for outpost duty, reported for inspection, where military executions usually took place and where drill and ceremonial parades were held.²⁵ The "New Orderly Room" was near the grand parade, and there Washington's daily orders were communicated to the army, and court martials frequently held.²⁶

At specific times the soldiers were required to present themselves either on their brigade parades or on the grand parade ground. One such order, issued on April 12, 1780,

advised the soldiers of their next day's duties and requested that they be closely shaved, their hands and faces clean, their clothing clean and neat, and their arms in order.²⁷ Evidently the soldiers were advised nightly of their next day's duties and they were required to follow them under penalty of severe punishment. Roll call was held every morning and evening and every soldier was expected to attend.

The camp guards were required to assemble for inspection and orders on the grand parade, usually at 9 o'clock.²⁸ An hour prior to this they were to have been inspected by a noncommissioned officer, who was to see that the men had "their faces and hands washed, their Beards close shaven, their hair combed and tied if Long enough, their shoes clean, and Clothes brushed, their Arms and Accountrements clean and in good order, their flints well fixed, and the proper Quantity of Ammunition in their Pouches."²⁹ With the deterioration of clothing the standard of neatness was probably more relaxed for the soldiers. The Brigade-Major of the day together with a fife and drum major, gave assistance in the formation, inspection and manœuvre of the guards.³⁰ Following the inspection and short drill, the daily parole and countersign were imparted. General Orders issued on Wednesday, March 29, 1780, specifically stated: "The General or other officer of the day is to give the Parole and Countersigns to all guards or cause it to be done by the Brigade Major, that the omissions and mistakes which

have happened of late may be avoided in future."³¹ The main Guard would then relieve that in Morristown, who were to march back to camp and "be dismissed on brigade parade."³² The picket guard, following inspection on the grand parade by the officers of the day, was retired to its huts where it awaited further orders.³³ By and large the officers were kept fully occupied in their duties. There was a scarcity of general officers in the army, and for this reason the colonels commanding the brigades, instead of the brigadiers, were ordered to commence the duties of the day. General Orders issued on January 31, 1780, stipulated that "the old and new officers of the day will attend Head Quarters daily at one o'clock; the former to make report of the transactions of the preceding day and the latter to receive any new orders the Commander in Chief may have to give."³⁴ These new orders were issued through the Adjutant General's Office in Morristown.³⁵ A subaltern, a drummer, and two noncommissioned officers were appointed to police each regiment and to insure "the Cleanliness of the Camp, and to cause all dirt and Filth to be removed from the Huts, and the Utensils to be kept perfectly clean, and in good order."³⁶ A brigadier and a field officer of the day usually controlled the policing of the camp and the service of the guards, and saw to it that the regulations for both functions were carefully observed.³⁷

Brigade Orders issued on April 14, 1780, for the soldiers of Colonel Hand's Brigade had the following to say to this respect:

As the weather is now good, and the Ground dry, the whole of the Brigade not on Duty will Exercise and Manoeuvre every Day, from Eleven to one o'clock, Except on Sundays and Mondays, by Regiments. It is expected that officers of every denomination will attend strictly to this very necessary order.³⁸

Another brigade exercised between 6 and 7 a.m. and between 4 and 5 p.m.³⁹ According to General Orders issued on Friday, May 12, 1780, the troops, as of Monday, May 15, 1780, were to begin and to continue to exercise every day except Friday and Saturday at 6 a.m. by companies and at 5 p.m. "in the same manner but without Arms." Three times weekly, every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, the Inspector General, Baron von Steuben, or in his absence one of the inspectors, was to "exercise on the Green near Morristown two Battalions detached from the Line with four Field pieces; [sic;] each Battalion to consist of one Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel, one Major, six Captains, seven Lieutenants, Eight Drums, Eight Fifers, Two hundred and fifty six rank and File."⁴⁰

Those men who were not involved either in guard duty or in drill were assigned to the numerous fatigue tasks of the camp. Among these was construction work, such as the building of a hospital, supply rooms, orderly rooms, guard huts, sinks and vaults, all indispensable to the health of the army.⁴¹ The most common duties, however, were giving assistance to the Quartermaster and Commissary, and tasks

such as driving wagons to places where provisions and forage were available, bringing these supplies back to the camp and storing and distributing them.⁴² Provisions also had to be repacked and often barrels repaired, cattle killed and prepared for the use of the army, tallow made into candles and soap, and wood cut, not only for the camp use but also for the hospitals at Pluckemin and Baskingridge.⁴³

Through General Orders issued on Wednesday, March 8, 1780, Washington ordered that "All the great roads leading thro' camp are to be cleared and repaired immediately by the brigades thro' or near which they pass; and care is to be taken to have free communications opened from one brigade to another thro'out both lines of the army."⁴⁴ By General Orders issued on April 15, 1780, the Quartermaster General was ordered to repair immediately the public roads between Morristown and Somerset Court House.⁴⁵ Other miscellaneous tasks were the escort of prisoners of war to the jails at Easton and Philadelphia⁴⁶ and the driving of horses to outlying areas such as Lancaster.⁴⁷

Among the more unpleasant duties the soldiers faced were the digging of graves, compulsory attendance at executions, and the burying of the dead.⁴⁸ General Orders issued on Sunday of February 20, 1780, specifically emphasized that "Dead carcasses in and about camp are to be buried by fatigue parties from the brigades near which they lie."⁴⁹ Curiously enough, in spite of the severe winter, the death

rate among the soldiers was rather low. The following table gives the total deaths among the soldiers at Morristown, by month:⁵⁰

December 1779	21
January 1780	19
February 1780	11
March 1780	12
April 1780	17
May 1780	9
June 1780	24

The statistic for June, 1780 is the most puzzling. The weather pattern had improved considerably in the late Spring but twenty four deaths were recorded for June as opposed to only nine in May. Unfortunately the hospital records are not available to shed light on this peculiarity.

There was thus a total of 113 deaths in the army during the Morristown encampment, or an average of sixteen per month. Of this total the New York Brigade had the highest rate: eighteen soldiers dead, followed by Hand's, the 2nd Pennsylvania, and the New Jersey brigades, each having sixteen dead during the period of the encampment. Possibly the rather low death rate can be attributed to the very sick soldiers being sent elsewhere for treatment to avoid any epidemics spreading in the encampment.

Other duties at the Morristown encampment included the making of tents, the building of ovens, and general repair jobs.⁵¹ Bread for the soldiers was provided from

the ovens at Morristown, under the supervision of Mr. Christopher Ludwig, the Baker-General; otherwise the soldiers cooked their own meals.⁵²

In general, a day in the life of a soldier at Morristown was a full one. It ended with tattoo in the evening and the final drum roll-off. A quarter of an hour after tattoo, the noncommissioned officers visited the men in their respective companies."⁵³

The monotony of camp life was somewhat relieved by occasions such as the dinners which Washington frequently gave, with officers and often distinguished civilians as guests, by executions of spies and prisoners, funerals, visitors to the camp, and others. Music undoubtedly was a popular diversion at the Morristown camp. In the Continental Army each company included two drummers and fifers. The drums were particularly important, as they were used not only to pace the march, but also to give signals. The bugle was also used for giving commands for the cavalry, and in certain instances for the light infantry.⁵⁴ The Marquis de Chastellux, who visited the Morristown encampment in 1780, recorded that "Each Brigade had a band of music."⁵⁵

The soldiers amused themselves by listening to music and also by playing on various instruments. Simeon De Wit, a member of the New York Brigade, in his letter to John Bogart of January 10, 1780, noted that the men amused themselves by "playing on the flute."⁵⁶

A factor which undoubtedly influenced morale was the presence of women in the camp. Indeed, as soon as the army had established the daily routine, women began to appear in spite of an official warning on the part of Washington issued on January 2, 1780, which stated that "No provision is to be issued to any Woman or Women whatever, but such as may be ordered by the Commanding Officer of the Regiment; nor is any Woman whatever to be admitted or Harboured in Camp, except by Leave obtained from the Commanding Officer of the Regiment, for which the Commanding Officers of Companies will be Responsible.⁵⁷

Martha Washington arrived in Morristown from Philadelphia at the end of December 1779 and joined her husband at the Ford mansion.⁵⁸ During her stay there she comforted her husband and assisted him in entertaining their guests. Another officer who was fortunate to have his wife lodge with him was General Greene, whose wife Kitty and their son George joined him around the time the army arrived in Morristown for the winter encampment. They stayed in a farmhouse overlooking the artillery camp of General Henry Knox, and on January 29, 1780, their second son Nathanael Ray was born there.⁵⁹ Martha Washington, Kitty Greene, and Mrs. Knox thus shared with their husbands the difficult times of the harsh Morristown winter.

Catherine Schuyler, who visited General and Mrs. Washington at Morristown during that winter,⁶⁰ has left a

vivid picture of the social life at the winter quarters. According to her, General Washington intended to have "concerts once a week at his house"⁶¹ but she did not leave any documentation to verify these activities.

Dancing was also a popular diversion in camp life. To forget their problems the officers formed a dancing group, to which Washington and thirty-four other officers subscribed \$400 each.⁶² The first of these gatherings was held on February 23, 1780, the second on March 3, 1780, and the third on the evening of April 24, 1780, in honor of the French Minister, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, who was visiting Washington's headquarters.⁶³

The dances were usually held either in the large room above the commissary's store house in the "Continental House," or at the Arnold Tavern, both of which bordered on the Green.⁶⁴ Lt. Erkuries Beatty, in his letter of March 13, 1780, to his brother Dr. Reading Beatty, mentioned that he had been "at two or three Dances in Morristown" and "at a Couple of Dances at my Brother John's Quarters at Battle Hill."⁶⁵ There was no doubt that outings of this kind were good for the morale of the officers; Beatty himself admitted that he found "the evenings very agreeable."⁶⁶ Another letter from Lt. Beatty to his brother on May 1, 1780, stated that, If I had Paper I would tell you about a sort of a . . . dance I was at two Nights ago when we kicked up a Hell of a Dust."⁶⁷ These comments help us to appreciate

the good natured fun experienced by many of the officers.

To relieve the burden on the lack of provisions, General Washington let many of the soldiers be dismissed before their enlistments and terms of service had expired.⁶⁸ Because of rank and privilege the officers obtained more leaves and participated in a wider variety of social activities than the enlisted men. The majority of officers received short leaves or furloughs and thus were able to visit their families and friends for at least part of the severe winter. They were asked to establish a system of priority for furloughs and advised to leave their regiments in capable hands. This privilege was to expire by April 1, 1780, "at which time the General expects all officers to be present in their corps."⁶⁹

Opportunities to escape the camp environment have been recorded by some officers. Lieutenant Erkuries Beatty, in a letter of March 13, 1780 stated:

I got leave of absence for three Days to go see Aunt Mills and Uncle Read who lives about 12 Miles from here . . . that night Cousin Polly and me set off a Slaying with a number more young People and had a pretty Clever-Kick-up, the next Day Polly and I went to Uncle Reads who lives about 4 Miles from Aunts, here I found Aunt Read and two great Bouncing female cousins and a house full of smaller ones, here we spent the Day very agreeably Romping with the girls who was exceeding Clever & Sociable.⁷⁰

According to the records of the First Morristown Presbyterian Church there were eleven marriages between "camp folks" during the period of the Morristown winter encampment.⁷¹ Naturally the romance between General Washington's handsome and dashing aide-de-camp, Lieutenant

Colonel Alexander Hamilton, and the charming Betsy Schuyler, which resulted in a marriage before the end of the year, was the social highlight of the encampment.

Maintaining a social life was not easy for many of the officers at Morristown. They were expected to clothe and support themselves largely from their own pay and other private means, and that they "pay for recreation out of their own pockets."⁷² In many cases clothing was so deficient that they were unable to "enjoy visits with the ladies."⁷³ Despite such hindrances, the romantic element thus played an important role in the lives of some officers.

Recreation during the winter of 1779-80 was provided for the soldiers by the Masonic order. Four Masonic meetings are known to have been held in Morristown during the winter encampment, of which the most important was the festival of St. John the Evangelist, observed on December 27, 1779, at the Arnold Tavern. Some of the most important men of the day were there, including Washington, Schuyler, Hamilton, Gist, Van Rensselaer, Livingston, Butler, and Lewis. The Lodge which sponsored this festival was the American Union Lodge, of the Connecticut Line.⁷⁴ The participants in the festival proceeded to the Presbyterian Church for services, where they heard a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Abraham Baldwin of the Connecticut Line and then returned to the Arnond Tavern.

The American Union Lodge was not the only one active in the American Revolutionary Army. Of the nine other military lodges, a few were Scottish and a few Irish, but the largest number had been warranted by the Antient Grand Lodge of England or its subsidiaries.⁷⁵ The Masons, aware of difficulties caused by the existence on the American continent of thirteen separate colonies, and of the schism in Masonry between "Antient" and "Modern," met at the Arnold Tavern where a petition was presented to the assembled Brethren asking the establishment of a Grand Lodge for all the United States. The 1779 Morristown "Petition to the Most Worshipful, the Present Provincial Grand Masters in Each of the Respective United States of America" was approved by Washington and the others present at Arnold's Tavern.⁷⁶

Except for Christmas the only holiday celebrated by the army was St. Patrick's Day, observed on Friday, March 17, 1780. The Irish Parliament had endeared itself to the American patriots by petitioning against trade restrictions, and General Washington considered it fitting that his soldiers be given this holiday. He directed that "all fatigue and working parties: cease on St. Patrick's Day and that the officers see that the troops of each state line were kept within their own encampment."⁷⁷ According to Pennsylvania Division Orders, signed by Colonel Francis Johnston, on March 17, 1780:

The Commanding Officer desirous that the Celebration of this [St. Patrick's] day should not pass by without having a little Rum issued to the Troops has thought Proper to direct Commissary Night to send for a Hogshead which the Colonel has purchased for this Express purpose in the Vicinity of Camp . . . The Colonel expects the Troops will conduct themselves with the greatest sobriety and good Order.⁷⁸

One soldier wrote that St. Patrick's Day was observed "by Some of Our Officers to a very high Degree and in a notorious Manner."⁷⁹ On the other hand, the New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury described the St. Patrick's Day celebration as having been observed with Irish music and a flag-raising ceremony, but chided General Washington for making the revelry so dry.⁸⁰

Among the more interesting events which took place in the spring of 1780 were the visits of dignitaries and notables to the encampment. On April 19, 1780, the French Minister, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, together with the Spanish agent, Don Juan de Miralles, arrived at the winter quarters from Philadelphia, their arrival being announced by the discharge of thirteen cannon. After leaving their carriages the distinguished visitors:

Were mounted on elegant horses, which with General Washington, the general officers of our army, with their aids and servants, formed a most splendid cavalcade, which attracted the attention of a vast concourse of spectators.⁸¹

A field parade was prepared under the direction of Baron von Steuben, and on April 24, 1780, to general admiration, the four army battalions paraded before the

distinguished guests. Following the review, there was a grand ball in the evening "at which were present a numerous collection of ladies and gentlemen, of distinguished character." The occasion was topped off with a display of fireworks by the officers of the artillery.⁸² During the visit Don Juan de Miralles, due to exposure to the rigorous weather, contracted a severe cold, and on April 28, 1780, died of pneumonia.⁸³ He was given a state funeral which provided Morristown with quite a fine spectacle. Describing this event, Dr. Thacher said:

I accompanied Doctor Schuyler to head quarters, to attend the Funeral of M.de Miralles, The deceased was a gentleman of high rank in Spain, and had been about one year a resident with our Congress, from the Spanish Court. The corpse was dressed in rich state, and exposed to public view, as is customary in Europe . . . His Excellency General Washington, with several other general officers, and new members of Congress, attended the funeral solemnities and walked as chief mourners. The other officers of the army, and numerous respectable citizens, formed a splendid procession, extending about one mile . . . A Spanish priest performed service at the grave, in the Roman Catholic form. The coffin was enclosed in a box of plank, and all the profusion of pomp and grandeur was deposited in the silent grave, in the common burying ground near the church at Morristown. A guard is placed at the grave, lest our soldiers should be tempted to dig for hidden treasure. It is understood that the corpse is to be removed to Philadelphia.⁸⁴

General Edward Hand described the ceremony more simply:

"Don Juan de Miralles a Spaniard of Distinction has been sometime in America & will never leave it. We planted the old General in Morristown Church a few days ago."⁸⁵

Another important event at the Morristown headquarters was the visit of three members of the Continental Congress Committee, Philip Schuyler, John Mathews and Nathaniel Peabody, who arrived in the camp at the end of April 1780 for the purpose of examining the state of the Continental Army and consulting with General Washington on steps to improve the prospects of winning the war.⁸⁶ The Committee became a liaison body between the Congress and Headquarters, thus rendering a valuable service. In its first report the Committee presented revealing facts: "Before we had an opportunity closely to view and examine into the real state of things, we had no conception of the almost inextricable difficulties in which we found them involved."⁸⁷ The report also pointed out the variety of hardships under which the soldiers were suffering, and warned that "Their patience is exhausted."⁸⁸ In a more complete report, issued on May 25, 1780, the Committee criticized the Congress and this speedy action if the situation were to be saved, repeating its contention the "patience of the soldiery who have endured every large degree of conceivable hardship, and borne it with fortitude and perserverence beyond the expectation of the most sanguine, is on the point of being exhausted."⁸⁹

While Schuyler and his colleagues were preparing their report, good news arrived at headquarters in the

midst of despair: the Marquis de Lafayette was coming, On May 10, 1780, after more than a year's stay in his native France since his previous visit to the United States, Lafayette arrived in Morristown and announced to Washington, and later to Congress, that King Louis XVI had decided to dispatch a second major force of ships and men to aid the American cause. This contingent of six ships and six thousand well-trained French soldiers, under the command of General Jean B.D. de Vimeur Rochambeau was to arrive in early June of 1780 at Rhode Island.⁹⁰ It was hoped that this assistance would prove more beneficial than the first French expedition, under the Vice Admiral the Count d'Estaing, which after failing to take Savannah had sailed on October 9, 1779, for the West Indies and France.⁹¹

General Washington was delighted to see this gallant young Frenchman who brought such welcome news, and the troops shared their Commander's feelings.⁹² Lafayette remained Washington's guest until May 14, 1780, when he departed for Philadelphia to inform the members of Congress of his activities in France. About six days later Lafayette returned to Morristown, and from this time "until the end of 1780 he continued with the Continental Army in New Jersey and New York State."⁹³

Chapter V

DISCIPLINE AT MORRISTOWN

During the Morristown encampment a general laxity and flagrant disregard for regulations and assignments existed not only among soldiers but among officers as well, and numerous disciplinary violations occurred. General Washington encountered great difficulty in getting his officers to enforce regulations and as a consequence, discipline was never strict. The shortage of officers undoubtedly contributed to the lack of discipline, and the officers themselves were not always conscientious in the performance of their duty. The methods employed in selecting officers during the Revolutionary War were inefficient, and as a result many incompetent persons easily became officers.

In a letter of January 22, 1780, to Major Generals and officers commanding brigades, General Washington discussed various faults which had turned up in the course of an inspection by the Inspector General of the Army, Baron von Steuben. According to Washington the rolls were in poor order, and a large number of the Pennsylvania troops and many Maryland officers were absent. Washington also wanted to know the reasons for the long absence of Colonel Zebulon Butler from his Connecticut Brigade. He also

pointed out the deplorable condition of the New York and New Jersey Brigades. He was especially upset over the New Jersey Brigade because it had been one of his finest. In conclusion Washington had determined that instead of progress the army had actually regressed.¹ Toward the end of January of 1780, by order of Washington, Baron von Steuben journeyed to Philadelphia to propose to the Congress the adoption of new laws for the reformation of the Army. His mission:

involved the vital question of the real existence of the army which, on account of the insufficient recruiting system, and the expiration of the term of a large portion of the soldiers, was about to lose almost one third of its strength, when not even one man could be spared on the eve of a new campaign.²

By General Orders issued on January 31, 1780, Washington emphasized that not only men, but officers as well, were guilty of wandering from camp. Some of these had strayed too near the enemy lines on various excursions and had been captured. Washington warned that officers so captured would not be exchanged but would be left captive as long as possible in order to be taught a lesson. Furthermore, he ordered that the Officer of the Day was to police the camp more closely and the activities of the guards.³ Orders issued thereafter indicate that inspections and maneuvers of the Brigades subsequently took place almost every day. Beginning on Monday, May 15, 1780,

regimental drill began every day at 6 a.m., except Friday and Saturday and included both officers and men. At 5 p.m., the companies exercised "in the same manner but without Arms."⁴

The first major personnel problem Washington faced at Morristown was the relations between the local inhabitants and his troops. The farmers neighboring the camp were continually harassed by soldiers and Washington admitted that he was almost helpless under the circumstances. The hardships under which the men labored were so great that they were reduced to repeat stealing. In the words of General Washington, their plundering could only be "lamented as the effect of an unfortunate necessity."⁵ It was during this early period of the encampment that the men were going four or five days without meat and were continually short of bread, the only remedy for the situation being better provision for their food and clothing. As the stealing increased and the local citizenry became increasingly angry, Washington ordered his officers "to visit the men in their huts at different hours of the night, to report all absentees, who are without fail to be brought to immediate trial and punished as they deserve."⁶ But in spite of his order the marauding and robbing increased. Washington's position was that he did not have the power to repress or punish the crimes committed by his soldiers

against the local inhabitants as his men were compelled to resort to plunder by the instinct of self-preservation.⁷ Many officers who sought out more comfortable housing in the local area were often welcome because they served as a deterrent to marauding soldiers.⁸ Despite his feelings, Washington was forced to administer penalties. In one case a soldier who broke into a store in Morristown received eighty lashes. For abetting an accomplice in robbing a store and taking a bucket of rum while on sentry duty another soldier was punished by one hundred lashes.⁹ On January 27, 1780, General Washington wrote in reply to a remonstrance from the Justices of Morris County, that he would try to restrain the soldiers and promised to punish those pointed out by the inhabitants as guilty of stealing. Even detachments returning to the camp from patrol would rob and plunder the local inhabitants. Washington took note of this fact, stating:

A night scarcely passes without gangs of soldiers going out of camp and committing every species of robbery . . . This conduct is intolerable and a disgrace to the army, and if any thing can aggravate it, it is that these violences are committed on the property and persons of those who on a very late and alarming occasion, for the want of provisions, manifested the warmest attachment to the army by affording it the most generous and plantiful relief.¹⁰

An order was issued stipulating that if any soldiers were found straggling out of the chain of sentinels after

retreat beating, they would receive "one hundred lashes upon the spot."¹¹ If any soldier was caught in the act of "penetrating robberies, 'he would receive', from one hundred to five hundred lashes at the discretion of the officer."¹²

At this time whipping was widely practiced as a military punishment. According to Thacher, whipping with knotted cords on the bare back, which often cut through the flesh at every blow, was the most common punishment. The drummers and fifers were made the executioners, and it was the duty of the drum major to see that the chastisement was well performed. The soldiers adopted a method which they said mitigated the anguish of the lash. They put a leaded bullet between their teeth, and bit it while the punishment was in progress. They would thus often receive fifty lashes without uttering a groan or hardly wincing.¹³

One of the reasons for poor discipline in the camp was that the soldiers were not properly supervised by their officers, who were frequently absent. When the greater part of the officers received long furloughs, which in many cases were prolonged even further, the officers remaining in the camp became increasingly overworked. If one considered the fact that some of these officers also

became ill and in some instances were lax in their duties, one cannot wonder at the resultant neglect and disorder.¹⁴

On January 24, 1780, General Washington informed General James Clinton that there were only "two Brigadiers of the line in Camp, and one of them, General Irvine has pressing calls to see his family and waits the return of you or General Huntington."¹⁵ In many cases several regiments were without commissioned officers though others had their correct number. Discipline deteriorated to such a level that it was reported that the soldiers brought their arms to the parade ground "so rusty, dirty, and otherwise out of order as to be unfit for service."¹⁶

Washington was also handicapped by the fact that some of his top officers suffered misfortunes. Because of ill health, General John Sullivan resigned on November 30, 1779.¹⁷ Another officer, Major General Alexander McDougall, developed gallstones,¹⁸ and Major General Israel Putnam was seized early in January "by a fit of the Palsy."¹⁹ In addition, General Greene was despondent over the conditions in his Quartermaster General Department.

During 1779-80 desertions from the Morristown encampment were frequent. General Washington realized that the physical hardships his troops were enduring might be a factor in the number of desertions. In his letter of

January 30, 1780, to Philip Schuyler, he pointed out that:

They bore it with a most heroic patience; but sufferings like these accompanied by the want of Cloathes, Blankets, &c. will produce frequent desertions in all Armies and so it happened with us tho' it did not excite a single mutiny.²⁰

The following table gives the total desertion rate among the soldiers of the brigades stationed at Morristown:²¹

December 1779:	102
January 1780:	188
February 1780:	218
March 1780:	117
April 1780:	185
May 1780:	132
June 1780:	124

From the above statistics it emerges that there was an average desertion rate of 152 soldiers per month during the encampment. The highest month, February, represents the height of the bad weather and lack of provisions due to supply and transportation problems.

The numerous violations of the military code, including desertions, resulted in frequent courts martial, which were held in empty huts in the camp, the homes of staff Officers in Morristown, or even at local taverns.²² The crime of desertion was usually punished by one hundred lashes or death.²³ On March 19, 1780, William Miller, a soldier in

Captain Cummings' Company of the 2nd New Jersey Regiment was charged with desertion, and because he was found to have been "an old and atrocious offender"²⁴ the court sentenced him to receive 300 lashes and also to "be sent on board a Continental Frigate, with his Crime, there to serve during the war."²⁵ Some soldiers were more fortunate, however, as in the case of George Foster of the 11th Pennsylvania Regiment and John Solsbury of the New Jersey Brigade, who received 50 lashes each for desertion.²⁶ A sentence given to Jessee Peirce of Colonel Jackson's Regiment was to "run the Gantelop through the Brigade to which he belongs and Be Confined in a Dungeon for the Space of one Month on Bread and water."²⁷ December 28, 1779, two soldiers of the 4th New York Regiment were tried by the Division Court Martial at Morristown for desertion and being absent for over twelve months. The first soldier, John McLean, was sentenced to "one hundred lashes on his naked back to be inflicted at four several times."²⁸ The second soldier, William Harper, received a lighter sentence, having to merely run the gauntlet of his brigade.²⁹ There were also desertions from General Washington's personal Life Guard; it is recorded that at least eight members deserted from this body.³⁰

Inconsistency seems to have existed in the handing

down of punishments for the various offenses, particularly robbery, as evidenced by the court martial proceedings. Thomas Warren, a soldier of the Invalid Corps who was tried on January 5, 1780, for leaving his post when centinel and for theft," was sentenced to death,³¹ but on February 5, 1780, was pardoned.³² A soldier in the Artillery, Jesse Peck, received 15 lashes for theft,³³ but a fellow soldier, Rubin Packer, was punished with 100 lashes for the same crime.³⁴ Two soldiers of the 5th Pennsylvania Regiment, James Hammell and Samuel Crawford, were sentenced to death on February 18, 1780, for suspected robbery.³⁵ Crawford was pardoned,³⁶ while Hammell was executed on February 20, 1780.³⁷

The playing of cards was prohibited by order of General Washington of January 8, 1778.³⁸ Despite this prohibition, the evidence of court martial procedures indicated that gambling was widely practiced.³⁹ Drunkenness was fairly prevalent in the Morristown encampment, and many crimes were committed when the soldiers were in that condition. Being intoxicated while on duty was cause for court martial; nevertheless the most popular pastime during the Morristown encampment was drinking.⁴⁰ One orderly book dating from Morristown, declared, "The Col. Observing that the open and Abominable practice of Drunkenness prevails in his Regiment without the least Shame or Restraint to

the Prejudice of Good Order and Discipline-he hereby Strictly forbids any Liquer to Sold in the Hutts,"⁴¹ ordered that "the Offenders . . . be Confined and punished for Disobedience of orders."⁴² Drunkenness was a particular problem in the New York Brigade, whose Colonel, on January 13, 1780, issued the following regimental order forbidding sale of liquors in his soldiers' huts:

The Colonel Observing that the -pen and Abominable practice of Drunkness prevails in his Reg' without the least Shame or Restraint to the Bejudging of Good order and Discipline he hearby Strictly forbids any Liqueur to be Sold in the Hutts Belonging to the Regt by any Body whatsoever and order the Offenders to be Confined and punished for Disobedience of Orders the officers are Requested to pay Strict attention that the Increasing Disorder may be prevented. It is not known how strictly this and other regulations were enforced during the encampment.⁴³

John Lesis, a soldier in Colonel H. Jackson's Regiment, was sentenced to receive 100 lashes for stealing and being drunk while on guard duty.⁴⁴ Edmund Burke, a soldier of the 3rd New York Regiment, was court martialed on December 13, 1779, for attacking Fife Major Andrew Gardner with an unlawful weapon and for disobeying Ensign Josiah Bagley, and sentenced to be shot.⁴⁵ Washington, however, on February 20, 1780, remitted the sentence against Burke. In pardoning this offender, Washington wrote, "The case of Burke ought to be a striking example to the soldiery of the dangerous excesses and fatal consequences into

which the pernicious crime of drunkenness will frequently betray them."⁴⁶

Another facet of the disciplinary problem was the irresponsibility which both soldiers and officers frequently displayed in their attitude to their duties. Although Washington attempted in every way to keep his troops occupied, he failed. At a division General Court Martial held by order of General Gist on March 27, 1780, James Stinson, of the Delaware Regiment received the death penalty for "Promoting and encouraging discontent among the men, and making use of language that tended to countenance desertion."⁴⁷ On April 28, 1780, James Coleman, a soldier of the 11th Pennsylvania Regiment, was tried and also received the death penalty for repeated desertion, forgery and disposing of his arms and accoutrements.⁴⁸ The records indicate that very few executions were actually carried out. Sergeant Logan, of Captain Mitchell's Company in the New Jersey Brigade, was found guilty of absenting himself without leave and denying his enlistment. On May 25, 1780, Lieutenant Hunt, of the 4th New York Regiment, was tried on a charge of "Marching the old Main Guard to camp in a disorderly manner and permitting the men to straggle contrary to the ordinance of the Army."⁴⁹ Washington reprimanded him in General Orders and declared that "The Conduct of Lieutenant Hunt was highly unmilitary and

blameable."⁵⁰

Another offense was trading with the enemy, which was prohibited by a Congressional Resolution of October 8, 1777.⁵¹ In addition, General Washington on December 12, 1779, issued General Orders banning all trade with the enemy. Washington had heard that some officers were trading with the British in New York and he called on the officers on out-post duty to halt this "most pernicious intercourse of traffic."⁵² On February 5, 1780, a prominent officer, John Beatty, Commissary General of Prisoners, was charged with violating the Commander in Chief's order December 12, 1779, and received a reprimand. Washington called Beatty's conduct "extremely reprehensible" and pointed out that Beatty had broken a State law but it was "certainly very blamable in any officer to contravene the views of a State."⁵³

These are only two known cases in which violations of General Washington's orders have been recorded. Apparently Washington's rebuke, particularly of Colonel John Beatty, induced both officers and men to restrain themselves from trading with the enemy in New York for the duration of the Morristown encampment.

Cases of assault were quite frequent during the encampment, and it can be said that almost half of these were fights between officers or assaults of officers on soldiers. Cases of one officer striking another with a cane, throwing a brother officer out of a public house,

stabbing another officer with a "hanger," and assaulting a common soldier were rather common. On January 27, 1780, Captain William Price of the 2nd Maryland Regiment was reprimanded for striking Lieutenant Eduard Duval with a cane and for disorderly and mutinous conduct in the presence of the soldiers of the regiment.⁵⁴ Ensign John Spoor of the 3rd New York Regiment was court-martialed for scandalous and ungentlemanlike behavior in forcibly putting Captain Samuel Treadwell Pell of the Second New York Regiment on the evening of January 29, 1780, "out of the room of a public house in which he had passed the evening." The court found him guilty and he was discharged from the service.⁵⁵ When the court martial acquitted Captain Alexander Mitchell of the 1st New Jersey Regiment for stabbing Lieutenant Eden Burroughs with a hanger, General Washington disapproved the court's action.⁵⁶ There was one case of an assault which resulted in death. William Loudon, a drum major in the Artillery, was indicted for stabbing another artilleryman, Richard Savage, twice with a knife. For some unknown reason, Washington turned Loudon over to the civil authorities. Upon trial by the jury, Loudon was acquitted of murder and found guilty of manslaughter and then was "allowed his Clergy, and burned in the hand pursuant to his judgment."⁵⁷ Subsequently the civil authorities returned Loudon to the military.

There is no record that he was actually punished for his crime, and most probably he entirely escaped further punishment.

At the end of May, 1780, the Morristown winter quarters experienced its worst trouble. Before the time arrived for the summer campaign it was necessary to prepare the soldiers for it through strict discipline and frequent punishment. On May 25, 1780, General Orders announced the "Criminals now under Sentence of death are to be executed tomorrow morning Eleven o'clock near the Grand parade: Fifty men properly officered from each brigade to attend. The Camp colour men from the Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New York Lines under the direction of a sergeant from each to dig the Graves this afternoon."⁵⁸ There were eleven of these criminals, and with one exception they were deserters. Three came from New Jersey regiments, three from New York, and five from Pennsylvania. Eight had been sentenced to be hanged and three to be shot. On the following day, May 26, 1780, the eleven were brought in carts from their prison to the gallows. The Reverend William Rogers, a Baptist chaplain of one of the Pennsylvania brigades, addressed them at the scaffold "in a very pathetic manner" but loudly so that the soldiers and spectators could hear it, thus "impressing on their minds the heinousness of their crimes, the justice of their sentence, and the high

importance of a preparation for death."⁵⁹ While the men sentenced to be shot stood by to see the others hanged, the eight were put side by side on ladders leaning against the crossbar on the tall scaffold, "With halters round their necks, their coffins before their eyes, their graves open to their view, and thousands of spectators bemoaning their awful doom."⁶⁰

"At this awful moment," recorded Dr. James Thacher, "while their fervent prayers are ascending the Heaven, an officer comes forward and reads a reprieve for seven of them, by the Commander in Chief"⁶¹ as well as for the three on the ground waiting to be shot. According to Thacher:

The trembling criminals are now divested of the implements of death, and their bleeding hearts leap for joy. How exquisitely rapturous must be the transition when snatched from the agonizing horrors of a cruel death, and mercifully restored to the enjoyment of a life that had been forfeited! No pen can describe the emotions which must have agitated their souls. They were scarcely able to remove from the scaffold without assistance. The chaplain reminded them of the gratitude they owed the Commander in Chief, for his clemency towards them, and that the only return in their power to make, was a life devoted to the faithful discharge of their duty.⁶²

James Coleman of the 11th Pennsylvania Regiment was the eighth man sentenced to be hanged because he had forged "a number of discharges, by which he and more than a hundred soldiers had left the army. He appeared to be penitent,

and behaved with uncommon fortitude and resolution."⁶³

On the scaffold Coleman "addressed the soldiers, desired them to be faithful to their country and obedient to their officers to be punctual in all their engagements to the soldiers, and give them no cause to desert. He examined the halter, and told the hangman the knot was not made right, and that the rope was not strong enough, as he was a heavy man. Having adjusted the knot and fixed it round his own neck, he was swung off instantly. The rope broke, and he fell to the ground, by which he was very much bruised. He calmly reascended the ladder and said, 'I told you the rope was not strong enough, do get a stronger one.' Another being procured, he was launched into eternity."⁶⁴

The danger of mutiny had hung over the Continental Army for some time. There had been a mutinous unrest during the winter encampment at Valley Forge in 1777-78.⁶⁵ General Washington could not "enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity" of his soldiers in spite of their privations. However, he realized that there were "strong symptoms . . . of discontent."⁶⁶ These symptoms finally culminated in a mutiny of two Connecticut regiments on May 25, 1780. When Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs, Commander of the 1st Connecticut Brigade, tried to restore order he "received a blow from one of the mutineers." The mutiny

was quickly suppressed by a brigade of Pennsylvanians and "The leaders were secured, and the two regiments were returned to their duty."⁶⁷ It seems probably that the execution described above of eleven soldiers, scheduled for the morning of May 26, 1780, could have roused the Connecticut soldiers and thus, given the poor state of the army in general, resulted in their mutiny. In his letter of May 28, 1780, to President Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, General Washington wrote that there was "such a combination of circumstances to exhaust the patience of the soldiery that it begins at length to be worn out and we see in every line of the army, the most serious features of mutiny and sedition."⁶⁸ On May 30, 1780, Washington ordered the release of all prisoners, except "those of the Connecticut Brigade who were confined for Mutiny" and the "Prisoners of War."⁶⁹

An unusual case was that of Captain Lieutenant Theophilus Parke, of Flower's Artillery Artificer Regiment, who on January 24, 1780, was tried for "Defrauding his men of their pay and bounty." The court found him guilty not only of defrauding his men of their pay and bounty, but also for repeatedly forging their names without their knowledge or consent. He was sentenced to be "cashiered with infamy, by having his sword broke over his head on

the public parade in the front of the regiment," declared unworthy of "ever holding any post civil or military in the United States", and was to suffer the indignity of having "The charge and sentence . . . published in the News Papers of the State of Pennsylvania."⁷⁰

Of the numerous courts-martial which took place during the winter encampment of 1779-80 at Morristown, two call for special mention. The first concerned Major General Benedict Arnold, who during the court-martial held at Morristown between December 23, 1779, and January 26, 1780, was tried on four counts. Despite the fact that Arnold was exonerated on two of these counts, he was found guilty of allowing a Tory-owned vessel to enter the Philadelphia harbor "without the knowledge of the authority of the State or of the Commander in Chief tho' then present", and of using State wagons for the purpose of transporting private property.⁷¹ Despite the fact that Washington recognized Arnold's "distinguished services to his country," he nevertheless was reluctantly compelled to reprimand Arnold, stating that "he considers his conduct in the instance of the permit as peculiarly reprehensible, both in a civil and military view, and in the affair of the wagons as 'Imprudent and improper.'"⁷² There is no doubt that the results of Arnold's court-martial added to the disaffection of this able general, which finally led to the

tragic betrayal of his country.

The second famous court-martial concerned Dr. William Shippen, Jr., who was charged with mismanagement in the affairs of the hospital department. These charges were pressed against him by Dr. Benjamin Rush. Following a long and bitter trial which started on March 14, 1780, Dr. Shippen was finally acquitted on August 18, 1780.⁷³

It is difficult to judge the leniency aspect of discipline during the Morristown winter encampment. Washington attempted in every way to keep the soldiers within the sphere of discipline, but he encountered great difficulty in getting his officers to enforce regulations and as a result discipline was never consistently enforced. Perhaps part of the fault lay with the Congress, which could have introduced and authorized more severe penalties for violations of military regulations. Perhaps Washington might be blamed for having failed to enforce more rigorous discipline in his army. Soldiers who dared to violate military regulations could never be certain of their punishments because the military regulations were interpreted broadly and inconsistently. The punishments meted out for the various crimes were apparently not imposed in accordance with the seriousness of the offense. Washington's reluctance in some cases to punish severely and his general extreme leniency can be interpreted in many ways. It has been

stated that:

One is tempted to say that Washington exhibited too great a leniency and that perhaps better discipline would have resulted if more death sentences had been carried out. But in considering the nature of his soldiers, the constant shortages that beset the army and the character of the Continental Congress and state governments, Washington undoubtedly followed a judicious path. Moreover, in the end he won while the strictly disciplined British lost.⁷⁴

Chapter VI

AUXILIARY SERVICES AT MORRISTOWN

The Continental Congress in its organization of the Army on June 16, 1775, included provision for the establishment of the office of the Quartermaster General and his deputy¹ and for the office of Commissary General of Stores and Provisions.² At the same time the daily ration of the private soldier was set at: 1 lb. beef or 3/4 lb. pork, or 1 lb. salt fish per day; 1 lb. bread or flour per day; 3 pints of pease or beans per week; 1 pint of milk per man per day; 1/2 pint rice or 1 pint of Indian meal per man per week; 1 quart of spruce beer or cider per man per day; or nine gallons of molasses per company of 100 men per week.³ This ration, however, was seldom if ever maintained.

While the Quartermaster General was responsible for transportation and delivery of supplies, establishment of order of battle, regulation of march and arrangement of camps, the Commissary General of Stores and Provisions was responsible for procurement of food. When the army returned to Morristown in December of 1779, the Commissary Department had grown into an inefficient bureaucratic structure. During the period between the first (January - May 1777), and the second Morristown encampment (December 1779 - June 1780),

the changes in the Commissary Department also included the personnel on the lower levels.⁴ It was during this period that a conflict of authority between Congress and the States came to light, particularly in regard to control of the food supply of the army. From the very beginning Congress had felt confident that it could shoulder the entire burden, but on the eve of the second Morristown encampment it started shifting partial control to the States.⁵ The shortage of provisions was a reality, but the lack of cooperation between the Continental Congress and individual States served to only make matters worse.

The Quartermaster Department was created by Congress on the same day as the Commissary Department.⁶ In its organization it followed the pattern of the Commissary Department, with a Quartermaster General in control. The problems which beset the Quartermaster Department were similar to those which beset the Commissary Department, and caused a partial failure in its function during both winter encampments at Morristown.

The most critical department in the food supply system of the Continental Army was the Baking Department. Congress had made no provision for cooking the food which was procured by the Commissary Department. Even though the soldiers could have been expected to prepare certain types of meals from their daily rations, they were unable to transform their daily ration of one pound of flour into

bread, because the baking of bread required a skill which they lacked. Bread was the mainstay of the army, and its lack was a severe blow to the soldiers, who would rather have done without their beef, vegetables, or rum instead.⁷ At first the soldiers received daily one pound of flour with which they could bake their own pound of bread. With the increased difficulties in baking, the practice developed of baking bread by companies; the soldiers pooled their individual rations and assigned one or two men to prepare and bake for all of them. Although this system had certain advantages, it led to corruption when certain soldiers tried to profiteer from it. The remedy came only during the time of the first Morristown encampment, when on May 3, 1777, Congress appointed a Superintendent of Bakers and Director of Baking in the Grand Army of the United States.⁸ The primary purpose of this newly established office was to eliminate profiteering by the company bakers and to guarantee the proper bread supply of the Continental Army. The Baker General was given authority to license anyone to be employed as a baker, and nobody was to be allowed to work as a baker without a license. Christopher Ludwig, a German immigrant, was fifty-seven years old when he was appointed Baker General. He had learned the trade of baker from his father in Hesse, Germany.⁹

As a Congressional appointee, Ludwig stands out in sharp contrast to other officials of the Commissary Department. He brought to his position long practical experience as a baker, and above all he maintained his reputation for honesty during the entire period of the War. The department of the Baker General did not undergo any radical changes and carried out its task with very few complaints.

At the time of the second Morristown encampment the food supply system of the Continental Army depended on three self-governing departments, whose aid was ineffective and often misguided. The Commissary Department procured the food, the Quartermaster Department transported the food and the Baking Department converted flour into bread for distribution. In addition there were the thirteen States, which collected provisions for the requisitions in 1779-80, Because the States were fearful of encroachments on their authority, there was never a single coordinating head for all these enterprises. Furthermore, a distrust of central authority, and even of the army, seems to have caused many of the breakdowns.

Although most of the States contributed in some degree to the supply of the army, the troops at Morristown came to rely for their supplies primarily on three States. The location of the Morristown encampment in New Jersey resulted

in constant demands on this State for assistance. Pennsylvania was the source of many supplies, especially flour, while the major part of the meat supply came from Connecticut.¹⁰ While these three States had successfully carried the burden during the first Morristown encampment in 1777, internal shortages were reported at the time of the second encampment.

If the campaigns of '76 and '78 were "times to try men's souls," the winter of '80 was a time to try their tempers and endurance. The winter of 1779-80 began with scarcity of provisions. Washington realized the effect of the supply shortages on his soldiers' morale. Writing from Morristown, on December 16, 1779, in his "Circular to Governors of the Middle States" which included Governor George Clinton of New York, Governor William Livingston of New Jersey, President Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, President Caesar Rodney of Delaware, and Governor Thomas Sim Lee of Maryland, he stated:

The situation of the army with respect to supplies is beyond description alarming. It has been five or six weeks past on half allowance, and we have not more than three days bread at a third allowance on hand, nor any where within reach. When this is exhausted, we must depend on the precarious gleanings of the neighboring country. Our magazines are absolutely empty everywhere, and our commissaries entirely destitute of money or credit to replenish them. We have never experienced a like extremity at any period of the war . . . Unless some extraordinary and immediate exertions are made by the States, from which we draw our supplies, there

is every appearance that the army will infallibly disband in a fortnight. I think it my duty to lay this candid view of our situation before your Excellency.¹¹

The army at Morristown was indeed badly fed. There were constant complaints regarding the meat, food, and other provisions. The soldiers lived from hand to mouth, often upon partial rations and sometimes they went without rations entirely, and numerous diary entries such as "very short provisions," "no provisions for the troops," "nothing to eat from morning to morning again" testify to the hardships.¹²

In a letter from General Henry Knox to General Lamb on January 6, 1780, he commented, "This army at this place, has been miserably in want of provision: five days without beef, and a many at another time, without flour . . . her veteran soldiers bear it with a degree of fortitude, and patience."¹³ Anxiety for bread was evident everywhere, particularly in early January of 1780. On January 3, 1780, Royal Flint, Assistant Commissary, informed General Washington that "I have no more bread at present in Camp than will serve the troops tomorrow."¹⁴ When the soldiers began to rob the inhabitants of the area, Washington decided to take drastic measures. In a circular of January 8, 1780, directed to the Magistrates of New Jersey, Washington urged immediate apportionment of aid among the counties of the

State:

The present situation of the Army with respect to provisions is the most distressing of any we have experienced since the beginning of the War. For a Fortnight past the Troops both Officers and Men, have been almost perishing for want. They have been alternately without Bread or Meat, the whole time, with a very scanty allowance of either and frequently destitute of both. They have borne their sufferings with a patience that merits the approbation and ought to excite the sympathy of their Countrymen. But they are now reduced to an extremity no longer to be supported. Their distress has in some instances prompted the Men to commit depredation on the property of the Inhabitants which at any other period would be punished with exemplary severity, but which can now be only lamented as the effect of an unfortunate necessity.

The distress we feel is chiefly owing to the early commencement and uncommon vigor of the Winter, which have greatly obstructed the transportation of our supplies. These causes have obliged us to exhaust all the Magazines in the vicinity of Camp. From present appearances it must be more than five weeks before we can have the benefit of any material supplies beyond the limits of this State; so that unless an extraordinary exertion be made within the State to supply the wants of the Army during that space, fatal consequences must unavoidably ensue. Your₁₅ own discernment makes it needless to particularise.

By and large the response to his appeal was satisfactory, and on January 27, 1780, in a letter to the President of Congress, he was able to report:

The situation of the Army for the present is, and it has been for some days past, comfortable and easy on the score of provision . . . at last to such extremity and without any prospect of being relieved in the ordinary way, I was obliged to call upon the Magistrates of every County in the State for specific quantities to be supplied in a limited number of days . . . they gave the earliest and most cheerful attention to my requisitions, and exerted themselves for the Army's relief in a manner that did them the highest honor.¹⁶

Snow, freezing, and cold hindered the collection of food from the already depleted region, and chronic food shortages continued to plague the soldiers at the Morristown encampment. In addition various States, including New Jersey, were lax in forwarding supplies to the camp, and money was not available or acceptable to procure supplies or teams to transport them. Winter storms provided an additional handicap.

When bread was not available Washington ordered wheat to be delivered to the soldiers "who by beating and husking it, may boil it, and make a tolerable substitute for Bread."¹⁷ General Washington frankly admitted that "at one time the Soldiers eat every kind of horse food but Hay; Buck Wheat, common wheat, Rye, and Indian Corn was the composition of the Meal which made their bread."¹⁸ Rum, the favorite drink of the soldiers, was also scarce. According to General Orders of January 20, 1780, it was "to be issued only to detachments or fatigue parties unless directed particularly by a general order."¹⁹ In an effort to make the soldiers more conscious of the profound importance of their cause, Congress declared certain days, "fast days." Thursday, December 9, 1779²⁰ and Wednesday, April 22, 1780,²¹ were set apart as days of fasting, humiliation and prayer; all unnecessary labor and recreation were to cease and the

chaplains were to prepare suitable discourses on the subjects enjoined by the proclamation. While these days perhaps were of spiritual benefit to the soldiers, from the physical point of view, they were still hungry. One soldier ironically called the fast "A Continental Thanksgiving."²² The desperate conditions at Morristown were described by a soldier Joseph Plumb Martin, who after a four days' snowstorm wrote that"

Here was the keystone of the arch of starvation. We were absolutely, literally starved; I do solemnly swear that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals. I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them, and I was afterwards informed by one of the officer's waiters, that some of the officers killed and ate a favourite little dog that belonged to one of them.²³

The situation was indeed desperate. Writing from Philadelphia on April 3, 1780, General Greene reported to General Washington that "At present things are in the most disagreeable train; and I am much afraid there will be great difficulty in supporting the Army in the most favorable position and utterly impracticable to put them in motion."²⁴

Although the crisis was temporarily solved when Washington resorted to impressment of supplies from the New Jersey counties and enlistment of the support of the local magistrates, the Army continued to live from hand to mouth

for the rest of the winter and spring. On April 24, 1780, it was reported that there were on hand in Morristown supplies of meat for only two days and of flour for a week.²⁵

The people who were in charge of supply were often sluggish and incompetent, and army supply was always at the mercy of the State governments, which hesitated to impose taxes on their people for the needed amounts. In his despondency over the situation, Washington confided to his brother John Augustine:

We have no system, and seem determined not to profit by experience. We are, during the winter, dreaming of Independence and Peace, without using the means to become so. In the Spring, when our Recruits should be with the Army and in training, we have just discovered the necessity of calling for them. And by the Fall, after a distressed, and inglorious campaign for want of them, we begin to get a few men, which come in just time enough to eat our Provisions, and consume our Stores without rendering any service; thus it is, one year Rolls over another, and with out some change, we are hastening to our Ruin.²⁶

The condition of the army in regard to clothing during the Morristown encampment was pitiful. In a letter of November 4, 1779, to Assistant Clothier General John Moylan, General Washington stressed that "Blankets should be delivered before the general distribution of other Clothing."²⁷ On November 18, 1779, Washington reported that there were only 4,900 blankets to distribute to the whole army and he called this situation "injurious and discouraging." The situation in regard to other articles was "in but little

better proportion."²⁸ Distribution of clothing to the troops was a difficult task; Washington described it as a "a work of great difficulty from the scantiness of the supply."²⁹

On November 18, 1779, General Washington reported that he was "again reduced to the necessity of acting the part of Clothier General, and . . . forming estimates to make a delivery duly proportioned to the wants of the army and the scanty stock on hand."³⁰ What little clothing there was, often arrived late and was inferior in quality. Washington suggested that distribution of articles of clothing should be according "to the length of service of the troops" and proposed that "those who have longest to serve should have the preference."³¹ There was a particular scarcity of shoes, and those which were available were defective. Washington complained about the extensive deficiency of shoes to the Board of War on December 6, 1779, stating:

I will take the liberty to add, that I think it may not be amiss for the Board to enjoin it on the part of the Commissaries of Hides and other contractors for Shoes, to pay particular attention to the quality and to the making of them. It is found that great abuses both with respect to the Public and the Soldiery have been practiced in many cases and especially in the latter instance, by putting in small scraps and parings of Leather and giving the Shoes the appearance of strength and substance, while the Soals were worth nothing and would not last more than a day or two's march.³²

There was a particular lack of shoes among the Virginia

troops, who were unable to march to the South in December 10, 1779, "for want of Shoes, none of which are yet come on from New Windsor."³³ The soldiers were urged to protect their clothing, particularly during the construction of their huts. While clothes were constantly wearing out, Washington described the condition of his soldiers as wretched and miserable, pointing out that "Many of them are absolutely naked."³⁴

General von Steuben, who prepared a report on the New York Brigade in December 1779, stated that "they exhibited the most shocking picture of misery I have ever seen, scarce a man having wherewithal to cover his nakedness in this severe season and a great number very bad with the Itch." He also declared that the clothing of the officers was in such pitiful condition that they were ashamed to appear in the camp.³⁵ In March of 1780, Dr. Thacher recorded that:

An immense body of snow remains on the ground. Our soldiers are in a wretched condition for the want of clothes, blankets and shoes; and these calamitous circumstances are accompanied by a want of provisions The causes assigned for these extraordinary deficiencies, are the very low state of the public finances, in consequence of the rapid depreciation of the continental currency, and some irregularity in the commissary's department. Our soldiers, in general, support their sufferings with commendable firmness, but it is feared that their patience will be exhausted, and very serious consequences ensue.³⁶

The need for particular items of clothing depended on how well a particular State supported its own regiment. Some

States provided sufficiently, others less so. Governor Reed of Pennsylvania was informed on April 16, 1780, that his troops urgently needed hats, shirts, and blankets.³⁷ On the other hand, Governor Caesar Rodney of Delaware was informed that the soldiers of his State's regiment were the best clothed in the army.³⁸

While the shortage of clothing was not as chronic as that of provisions during the Morristown encampment, both, occurring simultaneously, created a very serious situation. The lack of adequate provisions and supplies, together with the effects of the cold winter, swelled the numbers of those who deserted and resigned.³⁹ Those who remained faced their miseries courageously throughout the period of the winter encampment.

During the period between 1777 and the Morristown encampment of 1779-80, there was a rapid decline of the Continental currency to the extent that it became almost worthless. Congress had printed too much paper money without gold to back it up, and as a result the value of the currency fell drastically. The depreciation of the value of the currency caused a rapid rise in prices. On the eve of Washington's return to Morristown, Congress stopped the printing presses in the hope that the downward trend could be halted and the currency stabilized. But this hope was disappointed, and throughout the winter of 1779-80 the

value of the paper money continued to fall steadily.⁴⁰

It was this serious depreciation of the currency that led Congress to shift its reliance for food for the Army onto the States.

In his letter of December 21, 1779, to George Clinton, Governor of New York, William Floyd lamented:

But alas [sic] what is our Situation! Our Treasury nearly Exhausted Every Department out of Cash, no Magazines or Provision laid up, our army Starving for want of Bread, on the Brink of a General Mutiny, and the prospect of a speedy [sic] Supply is very Small.⁴¹

Samuel Huntington, the President of Congress, in his letter of December 21, 1779, to Caesar Rodney, Governor of Delaware, stated that, "The enormous prices to which the necessary Supplies for the Army have been raised have drained the public treasury, and the sole dependence of Congress for the Support of an Army & defence of our liberties must rest on the exertion of the States."⁴² While this letter makes it evident that the financial problems were at the root of the Commissary Department's reduced role, it also tends to explain why Congress levied requisitions in kind, rather than monetary taxes, which would have proven less valuable in the face of increasing prices.

An unwillingness of farmers to sell became another major problem of the second Morristown encampment. That there were provisions to be had in the country was known to the army and that the depreciating currency was preventing this food from reaching the army was also known. Dr.

Thacher blamed the currency problem for the suffering of the army:

It is from this cause, according to report, that our Commissary General is unable to furnish the army with a proper supply of provisions. The people in the country are unwilling to sell the produce of their farms for this depreciated currency, and both the resources and the credit of our Congress, appear to be almost exhausted.⁴³

On December 11, 1779, Congress called upon the several States to provide specific supplies as of the first of April 1780, or "as soon as possible."⁴⁴ A barter-like system went into effect when, on December 14, 1779, the requisition was made more general with the promise that such supplies should be credited in lieu of States' money quotas with all accounts compared and adjusted so as to do equity to all the States.⁴⁵ Requisitions for specific food provisions were, as usual, ineffective, as the States did not go far beyond reassessing their counties and communities.

The financial difficulties continued throughout the winter, and even as late as April 28, 1780, General Washington, in a letter to Major General Robert Howe, stressed:

It is lamentable that we should be obliged to experience such distresses as we do every where. Those we feel here are not inferior to yours; we are constantly on the point of starving for want of provisions and forage. A deficiency of money is the cause and a cause for which the present situation of affairs renders it infinitely difficult to provide a remedy. We are at a most delicate crisis; I dread with you the consequences.⁴⁶

The inability to purchase flour affected particularly the operations of Baker General Ludwig. But here the fault lay not with Ludwig, but primarily with the supply procurement system. Having been called on to help supply the Baker General with flour from Connecticut, Robert Hoops wrote to the new Commissary General:

You may be assured of every exertion in my power to relieve this distress and was I properly supplied with Cash believe I could furnish a good quantity of Flour, but the Rapid depreciation of money has been such that no Farmer will sell without the Cash in hand.⁴⁷

By 1779 the problem of finances had deteriorated to such an extent that it caused a radical change in the system of food supply. The country had lost faith in the leadership of Congress as well as in its financial management, as the depreciation went from twenty-to-one in mid-November 1779 to sixty-to-one by the middle of March 1780.⁴⁸ In a letter of May 29, 1780, to his friend Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig Kasimir von Holtzendorff, in Petersburg, Virginia, General De Kalb complained about the situation:

Provisions and other articles are growing dearer and dearer, being now double what they were a year ago, even if paid in gold, one dollar of which is now equal to sixty dollars in paper . . . Not long since I was compelled to take a night's lodging at a private house. For a bad supper and grog for myself, my three companions, and three servants, I was charged, on going off without a breakfast next day, the sum of eight hundred and fifty dollars.⁴⁹

When Congress found that it could no longer supply money for the increasingly expensive food provisions, it turned the process over to the States, neglecting either to utilize the personnel of the Commissary Department in the new system or to disband the entire Department. The States in turn delegated the responsibility to the counties, with resulting inefficiency and irregularity, and the Army, deserted by the authorities, was left to suffer.

Because of their very nature, the States should have been able to support an army, but it is evident that they were unable to do so. Therefore the problem must have lain, as Greene suggests, in the lack of a workable system for the procurement of supplies for the Army. He discussed the question in his letter to Washington of January 1780:

There is no deficiency in the resources of the country. On the contrary, I have authentic reasons to conclude the country is more plentifully stored with every material necessary for the provision and support of an army, than it has been for three years past.⁵⁰

From the beginning of the Revolution, the transportation system was under the jurisdiction of the Quartermaster Department. This department never did function properly throughout the war. Lack of reliable personnel, funds, and equipment were always a major drawback. A great obstacle to transportation was the weather. The winter of 1779-80 only compounded the transportation problems.

Between the purchasing of supplies and the means of transporting them the army was caught in the middle.

In 1779, the people in the Commissary Department and Quartermaster Department were dedicated and reliable, but they became frustrated and incapable of solving the financial problems facing the Army. Even though transportation was not the responsibility of the Commissary Department, it nevertheless presented an additional set of problems in the overall supply system for Washington's men.

The health of the soldiers was another important consideration at the Morristown encampment. Revolutionary war medical procedures were in the extremely primitive stage. Medical practice was characterized not only by limited knowledge but also by crude instruments and quackery. Blood-letting and superstition were prevalent. Medical services were expanded during the war and a great deal of knowledge was learned and eventually implemented during the Morristown encampment. Dr. James Tilton, the camp physician, had carefully prepared plans for a hospital modeled after an Indian hut. These plans were used in constructing the hospital, which was situated near the camping grounds of the Pennsylvania Brigade. The rough log hospital included three wards, and Dr. Tilton described it as the best he had ever contrived. This description is as follows:

But in cold climates and winter seasons, some better protection than tents afford may be necessary. In such cases, the best hospital I have ever contrived was upon the plan of an Indian hut. The fire was built in the midst of the ward, without any chimney, and the smoke circulating round about, passed off thro' an opening about four inches wide in the ridge of the roof. The common surface of the earth served for the floor. The patients laid with their heads to the wall round about, and their feet were all turned to the fire. The wards were thus completely ventilated. The smoke contributed to combat infection, without giving the least offence to the patients; for it always rose above their heads, before it spread abroad in the ward. And more patients could be crowded with impunity in such wards, than in any others I have seen tried. This was the expedient I employed in the hard winter of 79, 80, when the army was huttet near Morris Town, and I was well satisfied with the experiment.⁵¹

Dr. Tilton's hospital has been reconstructed at Jockey Hollow Military Park.

During the Morristown encampment, Washington was greatly concerned about the health of his soldiers. He realized that every soldier should have a strong physical body and did what he could to insure their well-being. Drainage trenches and sinks were dug and the campsite was policed and cleaned regularly.⁵² With the approach of warmer weather, the soldiers were assigned cleaning duties in the camp. General Orders of March 8, 1780, informed them that:

The Hot Season of the Year approaching all possible attention is to be paid to Cleanliness in the Interior and environs of Camp, Sinks and due to be Dug without Delay; every fair day the Windows & Doors of all the Hutts should be kept open the greatest part of the Day, and Beding and Straw and Bunks frequently Aired.⁵³

According to General Orders of May 6, 1780, the Commanding Officers were instructed to put the sick of the respective regiments in huts by themselves, and to provide openings for proper ventilation "in all their soldiers huts to admit a free circulation of fresh air."⁵⁴

The extent of sickness at the Morristown encampment is difficult to ascertain mainly because of inadequate records. A return of all hospitals dated December 31, 1779, shows that there were 266 men sick in the flying hospitals at camp, Pluckemin and Baskingridge combined.⁵⁵ According to Baron Von Steuben's remarks on Colonel Spencer's Regiment for December of 1779, there were 166 fit present, 13 sick present, 12 sick absent, 46 on command and 12 on furlough.⁵⁶ The list of those reported sick was carefully examined, as soldiers often feigned sickness.

Discussing the poor condition of the corps, Washington stated in his letter of January 22, 1780, to the Major Generals and Officers Commanding Brigades,

In all our returns there is a greater disproportion between the total number, and the men fit for duty, or who could really be employed in action than in any other army in the world. This of late is not to be attributed to the sickness of the troops, for they have enjoyed very good health for a long time past. The column of sick present is moderate, but the column of sick absent, and on command are excessive. The former far exceeds the Hospital returns, and a very small part of the latter is employed on military duty. A great many of both are probably not to be found any where, only serving to swell the pay-rolls, and deceive the government with an idea of its having a larger

army on foot than it really has, and perhaps excite expectations which it is not in our power to fulfill. The ill consequences of this in a variety of respects are obvious.⁵⁷

In a broad sense then, the disastrous lack of provisions and the inadequate supply of clothing during the Morristown winter encampment of 1779-80 resulted from the financial problems of the Congress, which rendered its administrative departments practically useless, and forced an insecure reliance on the States. In retrospect, it seems that what was needed was a strong central authority to carry on the war. The main cause of the supply failure was the refusal of the thirteen States either to make the necessary sacrifice of their sovereignty or to work together under the guidance of Congress so that it could function as an efficient central government.

Why then did leaders in Congress and the States neglect the army fighting for their independence? Perhaps it was from distrust of the Army, or perhaps the State and Congressional leaders simply were not convinced that the army at Morristown could be suffering as badly as Washington claimed. And the Congressmen and Governors, isolated from the Army, probably were unable to appreciate the conditions under which the troops were living.

A letter dated January 4, 1780, to Moore Furman, Deputy Quartermaster General in Pittstown, from General Nathanael Greene, Quartermaster General, deplors the

state of the soldiery, the country and the legislatures:

Poor Fellows! They exhibit a picture truly distressing. More than half naked, and above two thirds starved. A Country, once overflowing with plenty, are now suffering an Army, employed for the defence of every thing that is dear and valuable, to perish for want of food. A people too, whose political existence entirely depends upon this Army, and the future enjoyment of what they now profess.⁵⁸

It must be concluded that because of its inexperience, Congress never seemed to have the right people, at the right times, in the right places, but blundered again and again, while the army suffered in its Morristown winter quarters. It is truly remarkable that the army, poorly and inadequately fed and clothed, but at least sheltered from the severe and prolonged winter, did not dissolve altogether.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

By the end of 1779, over four and one-half years of conflict with Great Britain had passed and the final question concerning American independence was still in doubt. At that time Washington was greatly concerned over the organization of the winter encampment for his troops, and the choice of Morristown as the site for the winter quarters of the Continental Army was made only after careful consideration. In early December 1779, the soldiers marched through snow and severe cold to Morristown, where the majority of them were to spend the next seven months.

Upon their arrival, the soldiers' first task was to provide themselves with shelter. When they had completed their hutting, under adverse weather conditions, they settled into a daily routine of camp life which proved to be hard and monotonous, marked by endless rounds of fatigue duty, inspection, drill and guard mounting. Life at the Morristown encampment was unexciting, uninspiring, and characterized by a complex of difficulties which possibly never existed to an equal degree at any other time during the war for American independence.

Social activities were very limited. Although drinking and gambling may have exerted some favorable influences, at the end they proved unfavorable to good discipline.

ent aspects of the food supply system; the Commissary Department to procure the food, the Baking Department to convert flour into bread for distribution, and the Quartermaster Department to transport the food. It was the responsibility of the thirteen States to collect provisions to fill the military requisitions during 1779-80. There was, however, no single coordinating head for all these functions, as the States feared encroachments on their sovereignty. Apparently, distrust of the central authority, and perhaps even of the Army itself, was one of the major causes of the breakdown in food administration.

Shortages of food supplies existed even though there was not a real scarcity of food in the thirteen States. Analysis of the food sources leads to the conclusion that the soldiers were going hungry in the midst of plenty. New Jersey was the so-called "breadbasket of the American Revolution" and the question remains why the Army suffered so in the presence of large food supplies.

Because of their very nature, the States should have been able to support an army, but it is evident that they were unable to do so. Therefore the problem must have lain, as Greene suggests, in the lack of a workable system for the procurement of supplies for the Army.

In 1777 the commissary organization was faulty because lines of authority were not clearly drawn and functions were not defined. Flagrant neglect and corruption in

the Commissary Department also hindered the procurement effort. Negligence in the transportation department caused delays in that segment of the system. By 1779-80 the commissary system had become more sophisticated and was served by more competent personnel. But as a result of the depleted financial resources at the disposal of Congress, payment could no longer be made to the Commissary and Quartermaster officials to allow them to carry out their obligations. Finding itself in the position of being unable to supply the army, Congress called on the States to supply food as a tax. However, the States were not always willing to follow what could only be suggestions by Congress, and the change brought no relief to the army at Morristown. Only the Baking Department functioned smoothly, mainly because of the ability of Christopher Ludwig who knew his job, and required little money to operate.

At the Morristown winter encampment of 1779-80, the severest trial of the American Revolution took place, and the highest and noblest ideals of the new nation were forged. The Continental Army consisted of soldiers who were raw, undisciplined, and sometimes mutinous. There were jealousies and libels, forgeries and slanders almost beyond our comprehension. Washington remained calm in the midst of exasperating annoyances, his unselfish integrity when surrounded by jealousy and hatred, his faith that put courage into the hearts of men who marched hungry and left bloody footprints in the snow, one begins to realize his

greatness. He suffered along with them at the Morristown encampment.

The army, inspired and held together by Washington's leadership and by the ideals of the Revolution, emerged at the end of the encampment prepared to resume the battle against the British.

FOOTNOTES

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