

Morristown, New Jersey – Driven to Teach 2014

The first winter encampment at Morristown came after Washington's successful 1776 Christmas attack on the Hessians at Trenton and victory at Princeton in January 1777. The Continental army had high morale and faith in Washington the winter of 1776 – 1777. Washington chose Morristown, New Jersey, for its strategic location: 31 miles from New York City and 84 miles from Philadelphia, making it a vantage point to watch the British; with swamps to the east, mountains and hills to the south and north, dense woodlands, and few roads made it a defensible position. As winter set in and Washington chose Jacob Arnold's Tavern for his headquarters, some of his troops chose to return home rather than face a winter without supplies; to attract more troops, any man enlisting was promised a cash bonus and a land bounty which gave Washington 11,000 men under his command.

*2,000-3,000 soldiers first encampment brought small pox hurt the town

Morristown was chosen for the Continental Army 1779-80 winter camp for the same reasons as 1777, but the men were not settling in with loyal and hopeful thoughts as in 1776. The second winter encampment at Morristown came during one of the worst winters ever recorded 1779-1780. Morristown was a village of 250 when Washington's dirty and hungry 10,000+ soldiers entered December 1, 1779, and built their 1,000 huts at Jockey Hollow. Massachusetts surgeon Dr. James Thacher observed: *...snow on the ground was two feet deep, weather extremely cold...the soldiers are destitute of both tents and blankets...some barefooted and nearly naked.* The winter of 1779-80 recorded 28 separate snow storms and the rivers froze so solidly that sleighs could be taken from Trenton to Philadelphia on the Delaware and from New York City to Jersey City on the Hudson. Seaports along the Virginia and North Carolina coast were closed for weeks by ice. Furthermore, Benedict Arnold's court martial for profiting from his Philadelphia command was held in Morristown that December. The honored warrior of Saratoga was now reduced to a profiteer. Add the loss Arnold's reputation with the weather and soldiers became melancholy; add the lack of food and they became desperate.

January 8, 1780, Washington ordered armed detachments to visit county officials and request wheat/ bread and take provisions with as "much tenderness as possible" or at gun point if necessary. Worried the residents of the county who made extra efforts to protect their stores and livestock from improper procurement were able to blame Washington directly for their financial losses.

January 9, 1780, Washington, aware of the demoralizing and paralyzing hunger wrote to the New Jersey legislature: *The present state 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.*

Not all of the soldiers stayed; the army rolls fell steadily with an average of 153 men absent without leave per month. Some believed a larger number of soldiers wandered in and out of the camp as they saw fit. However the death toll at the camp was about 305 compared to Valley Forge's 2000. The reason for this was the sickest men had been sent out of the camp and died elsewhere. Many of

the Jockey Hollow residents suffered from frozen fingers, feet, and infirmities for the rest of their lives that were attributed to that winter.

We are absolutely, literally starved. I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except for a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood. I saw several men roast their old shoes and eat them...I was informed...some of the officers killed a favorite little dog that belonged to one of them.. Private Joseph Plumb Martin

Morale was low and the inflation rate of supplies was incredibly high making it impossible for the army to get the barest of supplies when Washington chose the Ford Mansion as his headquarters. The inflation rate in 1780 was one silver dollar was equal to 30 paper dollars, (an ordinary horse was valued at \$20,000 Continental dollar). **Strange as it may seem, Washington and 33 other officers paid \$400 each for a dancing assembly while their men suffered at Jockey Hollow. The separation of classes hurt** Washington's popularity during this second encampment; **officers had warm quarters, uniforms and dances, whereas the privates and sergeants went without food, pay, and coats;** If Morristown was worse than and less known than Valley Forge, is it because the leaders, the commander, put dancing above his soldiers?

May 1780 Pennsylvania Line refused to drill – 2 leaders hanged for mutiny.

The Connecticut Continental line mutiny was put in order with a Regiment of Pennsylvania Line. Major Ebenezer Huntington, July 7, 1780: *I despise my countrymen...I am in rags...received no pay since last December...my cowardly countrymen who flinch at the very time their exertions are wanted and hold their purse strings as tho they would damn the world, rather than part with a dollar for the army.*

January 1781 – Washington waiting to meet French in Rhode Island, stayed at Ford Mansion while Anthony Wayne's soldiers were camped 15miles away began to mutiny. No pay, no supplies, they marched to Princeton after killing 2 officers. The British heard and offered mutineers pay and supplies if they moved over to loyalists' side; the British were taken captive and turned over to Wayne at Princeton when he and the Governor met and resolved the problem. Washington took the two main mutineers and had them shot by the men who followed along with their mutiny.

Conditions were worse at Morristown, mutiny occurred, citizens were unsupportive.

<http://www.revolutionarywararchives.org/coldwinter.html>

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/washington-sets-up-winter-quarters-in-morristown>

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2010/07/washingtons-headquarters-morristown-national-historical-park-reopens6195>

activity: Topit

skill: Last is First

