

**Valley Forge: Would You Have Quit?**

The first two years of the American Revolution had not gone well for the **Continental Army**. Since the summer of 1775 when he had taken command, George Washington and his troops had withdrawn from Boston and retreated from New York City. Most recently, in October 1777, he had been unable to stop the British when General Howe marched his army into the national capital of Philadelphia. True, there had been a victory at Trenton and a success at Princeton, but on the whole Washington's army had seen hard times.

Not surprisingly, Washington was having trouble keeping his soldiers in the army. Some of his men had signed on for one or two years. However, the most frequent time of enlistment was nine months. Nine-month men were sent home and

to build a winter camp at **Valley Forge** about 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

It was not big enough to be called a village, with only a few fieldstone houses and a mill for forging iron. The **Quaker** farms in the area offered the promise of food for his men, and the camp would be close enough to Philadelphia to keep an eye on the British.

It was the week before Christmas, 1777. The first job of the men was to build log "**huts**." Each hut was 16' by 14' with a door at one end, a stick and clay fireplace at the other, and no windows. Each hut slept twelve men. There were no beds, just straw on the mud floor. Cold was one problem; smoke was another. The huts would be home for the next six months.

Some of the conditions experienced by the soldiers at



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