

## Setting Up Camp

### **Activity location: Muhlenberg Brigade (Encampment Tour Stop #2)**

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1777 an army of about 12,000 men marched into Valley Forge. They had just walked over 8 miles on only a meal of rice and vinegar. Due to months of walking and fighting, many soldiers had worn through their only set of clothing or pair of shoes. They arrive at Valley Forge tired and hungry but need to set up camp. Those who had tents quickly pitched them with their brigade. Those without tents gathered wood to construct a brush hut or lean-to.

Although Washington knew this was the location of the winter encampment, he was unsure how long their stay would last. What he did know was that many of the tents needed to be repaired. The farmers that lived in the area were also uncertain of how long an army would be camped in their yard and fields. While Washington was very careful to make sure that military staff that chose to rent a house, did so with permission of the owner, he did not acquire permission for troops to camp on their property.

As a local farmer how would you feel about an army of 12,000 men setting up camp on your fields?

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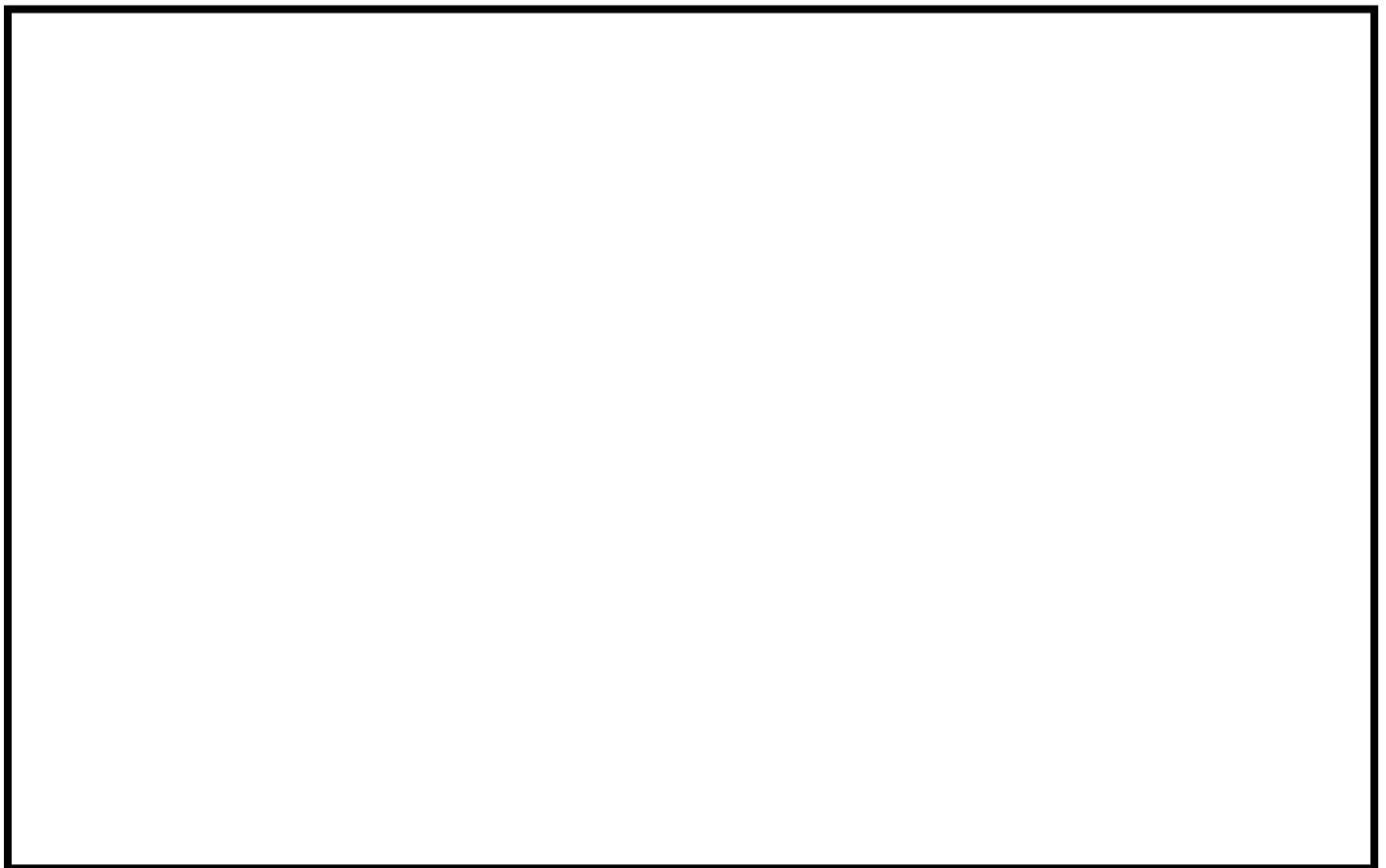
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Washington quickly realized soldiers needed to get out of their tents and into a more semi-permanent structure to survive the winter. Cooking areas and latrines (long ditches used as bathrooms) areas needed to be established.

If you were a soldier that had just walked into the open farmland of Valley Forge, how would you set up your camp? In the space below draw a picture of how you would lay out sleeping quarters, cooking areas, and latrines. Use squares to represent sleeping quarters, circles for cooking areas, and triangles for latrines.



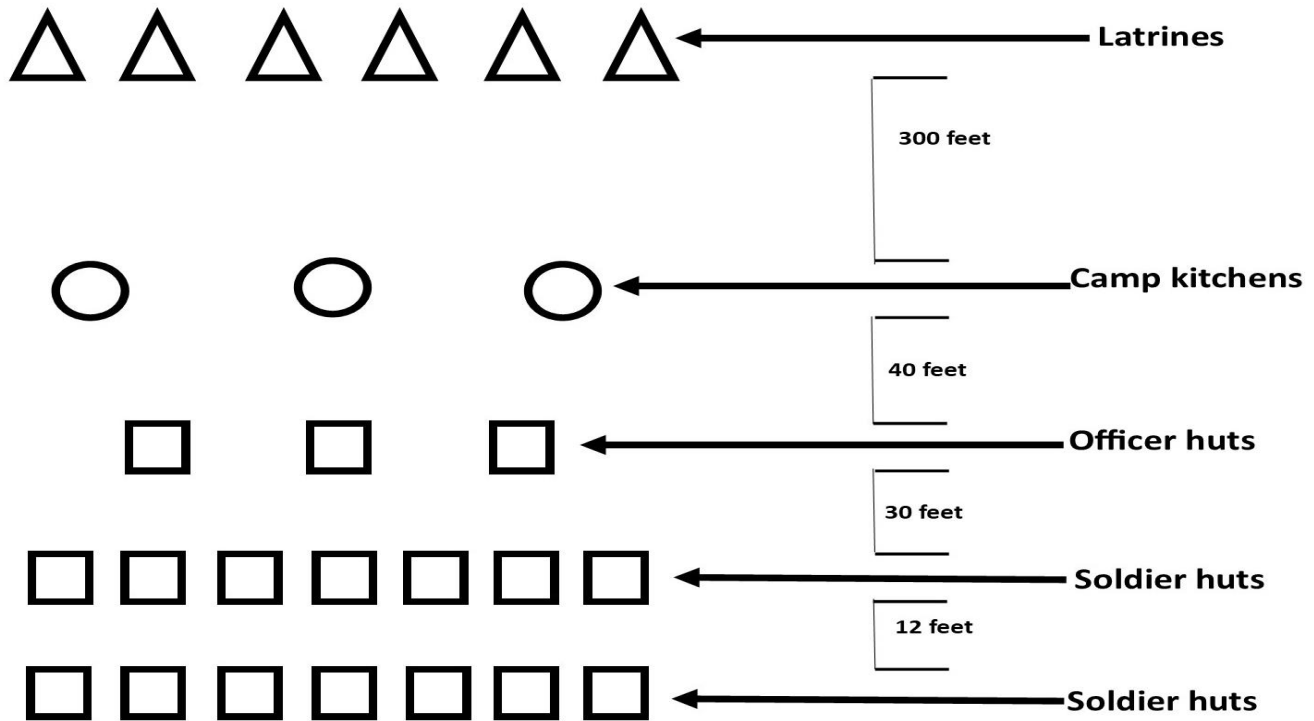
Below is a very generalized version of how a brigade may have set up their camp at Valley Forge. Notice how the latrines are quite a distance from the sleeping and cooking areas.

Why would it be that way?

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Washington gave the troops very specific directions on how to build a hut.

*The Colonels, or commanding officers of regiments, with their Captains, are immediately to cause their men to be divided into squads of twelve, and see that each squad have their proportion of tools, and set about a hut for themselves: And as an encouragement to industry and art, the General promises to reward the party in each regiment, which finishes their hut in the quickest, and most workmanlike manner, with twelve dollars—And as there is reason to believe, that boards, for covering, may be found scarce and difficult to be got—He offers One hundred dollars to any officer or soldier, who in the opinion of three Gentlemen, he shall appoint as judges, shall substitute some other covering, that may be cheaper and quicker made, and will in every respect answer the end.*

*The Soldier's huts are to be of the following dimensions—viz.—fourteen by sixteen each—sides, ends and roofs made with logs, and the roof made tight with split slabs—or in some other way—the sides made tight with clay—fire-place made of wood and secured with clay on the inside eighteen inches thick, this fire-place to be in the rear of the hut—the door to be in the end next the street—the doors to be made of split oak-slabs, unless boards can be procured—Side-walls to be six and a half-feet high—The officers huts to form a line in the rear of the troops, one hut to be allowed to each General Officer—one to the Staff of each brigade—one to the field officers of each regiment—one to the staff of each regiment—one to the commissioned officers of two companies—and one to every twelve non-commissioned officers and soldiers.*

*-General Orders, December 17, 1777*

Choose a hut and count the number of logs needed to build a single hut. Remember to count all 4 sides and the chimney. \_\_\_\_\_

Twelve enlisted men were ordered to live in one hut. How many huts were needed to house the 12,000 men who walked into Valley Forge on December 19<sup>th</sup>?  
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Multiply the two numbers (number of logs x number of huts) together to find out how many trees were needed to build shelter for all the troops at Valley Forge.  
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Go inside the hut that has sleeping bunks. As a soldier who would otherwise be sleeping in a tent, how would you feel about sleeping in a hut with 11 other men? Do you have any concerns about the conditions?  
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Women and children were also at Valley Forge. Typically, they were the poor family of an enlisted soldier who had no where else to live. They followed the army hoping to find shelter and a means to make money to purchase food. It is estimated that 300-500 women were here at Valley Forge. It is believed that most women and their children would have been staying in a hut with their loved one.

As a kid, how would you feel about living in a hut with your family and 11 other soldiers?  
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Everyone in camp had a job. Soldiers were busy building shelters and defenses, chopping firewood, patrolling the surrounding area, and training. Women often were paid to wash and mend soldiers' uniforms. They also were nurses paid by the army for their services. As a kid, what do you think you could do to help out in camp?  
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