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## Park Receives Donation of an Oath of Allegiance

Descendents of a Continental Army officer have donated to the park a United States Oath of Allegiance that was issued from the Valley Forge encampment. The oath was issued to First Lieutenant Lawrence Allman, a Pennsylvania native and member of the Continental 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery. On it is hand-written "*Sworn before me at the Artillery Park, Valley Forge this 15<sup>th</sup> day of May 1778,*" and is signed "*HKnox B.G. Artillery.*"

### The Oath of Allegiance

On February 3, 1778, the Continental Congress passed a resolution requiring all officers of the Continental Army to sign an oath acknowledging their support of national independence for the new United States of America. The resolution was an effort to weed Loyalist sympathizers out of the Continental Army.

General Washington was faced with a monumental task in complying with this resolution. Morale among officers was low. Pay was either nonexistent or in arrear, and officers' appointments lacked security as reorganization of the army threatened an officer's position of authority. Resignations became a daily occurrence among officers. The problems became epidemic at Valley Forge.

Understanding the temper and displacement of his officers, Washington choose to deliberately delay the oath of allegiance effort until officers became more receptive to its requirements of loyalty to the United States of America. By early May of 1778 Washington felt the time was right.

On May 7, Washington issued a General Order from headquarters urging that the oaths be administered promptly to officers of the 3d and 4<sup>th</sup> New Jersey regiments. Many of these officers had now overcome their indignation and were ready to sign their allegiance to the new nation. Washington hoped others would follow the New Jersey example. The process began on May 12, 1778. Even then, the oath process was delayed by a shortage of blank certificates. According to John B. B. Trussell, author of the work, *Birthplace of an Army: A study of the Valley Forge Encampment*, this shortage continued until late May.

To accomplish the work, Washington selected high-ranking generals to administer the oaths to the officer staff. Among those selected was Brigadier General Henry Knox, who would administer oaths to officers of the Artillery and Military Stores. The site chosen to administer the oaths was Artillery Park. Apparently, General Knox served as

witness to many oaths taken by officers of the Continental Army. His signature appears on a similar Oath of Allegiance administered to Major General Benedict Arnold on May 30, 1778, at the Artillery Park. The exact number of oaths taken at Valley Forge remains unknown.

Lieutenant Allman's oath, carefully protected for more than two centuries by his family, now has returned to Valley Forge. The certificate is a valuable addition to the park's archival collection, which includes four similar Oath of Allegiances certified at Valley Forge.

*About Valley Forge National Historical Park*

Valley Forge National Historical Park is a national icon of the American Revolution that serves as a place where visitors enjoy, understand, care for, and preserve America's history and natural heritage. The Park offers an engaging, complete educational and recreational experience, providing an important piece of the American story in a beautiful, historical, preserved landscape.

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