

individuals as did the cause of American liberty. Yet Congress hoped that Washington could launch a winter offensive as he had in 1776 when he successfully attacked Trenton and Princeton. The general and his commanding officers knew better.

Undisciplined, unclothed, underfed, and disheartened, Washington's men could not be expected to reduce the heavily fortified British position at Philadelphia. The campaign to secure American independence regrettably would have to be postponed for another year. Despite criticisms of his leadership, General Washington decided to encamp his men at Valley Forge, with a detachment of troops under Maryland's General Smallwood stationed at Wilmington, Delaware. There they were to await more favorable weather while Washington attempted to prepare his troops for a more auspicious military campaign the forthcoming year.

WASHINGTON'S ARMY

On December 29, General Washington addressed a letter to the governor of Maryland in which he reported the grim fact that on the 23rd "we had in camp...not less than 2,890 men unfit for duty, by reason of their being barefooted and otherwise naked. Besides this number, there are many others detained in hospitals and crowded in farmers' houses for the same cause." The enormity of Washington's problem was manifested on December 22, when the general was informed that a large British foraging party had left Philadelphia for Derby, Pennsylvania. After issuing a command for the army to march to meet the enemy, Washington received an unprecedented reply: so many of his soldiers were barefoot or naked and those who were satisfactorily clothed could not be provided with provisions, that he could not place a man in the field to oppose the British. As a result, Washington dispatched the following letter to Congress: "...unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place...this army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these things. Starve, dissolve, or disperse, in order to obtain sustenance in the best manner they can...." Amplifying General Washington's pleas to Congress was a letter from Col. Henry B. Livingston of New York State to R. R. Livingston dated December 24, in which he stated: "All my men except eighteen are unfit for duty for want of shoes, stockings and shirts, breeches and coats. Hats they can do without, though its disagreeable, and to add to this miserable tale, we are becoming exceedingly lousy; I am not myself excepted from this misfortune; the few shirts I had with me are quite worn out--what I shall do for a new stock I am at a loss to find out."