

sarcastic account of the thanksgiving observance at the Gulph that December 18 came from the pen of the indefatigable chronicler of the sufferings of the private soldiers during the War for Independence, Joseph Plumb Martin. According to Martin:

While we lay [at the Gulph] there was a Continental Thanksgiving ordered by Congress; and as the army had all the cause in the world to be particularly thankful, if not for being well off, at least that it was not worse, were ordered to participate in it. We had nothing to eat for two or three days previous, except what the trees of the fields and forests afforded us. But we must now have what Congress said, a sumptuous Thanksgiving to close the year of high living we had now nearly seen brought to a close. Well, to add something extraordinary to our present stock of provisions, our country, ever mindful of its suffering army, opened her sympathizing heart so wide, upon this occasion, as to give us something to make the world stare. And what do you think it was reader? Guess. You cannot guess, be you as much of a Yankee as you will. I will tell you; it gave each and ever man half a gill of rice and a tablespoon of vinegar!!

While his men ridiculed the miserly allotments of food intended to celebrate the day of thanksgiving, Washington was drafting general orders to the commanders of each regiment setting forth the method by which he anticipated quartering his men for the winter at Valley Forge. Each regiment was to be divided into groups of twelve men, with "each squad [to] have their proportion of tools, and set about a hut for themselves." As an encouragement "to industry and art," Washington promised a reward of twelve dollars to the party in each regiment that finished its hut most quickly, and since he apprehended that there would be a shortage of boards for covering the huts he offered an additional hundred dollar reward "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." Washington continued with detailed instructions of how the huts were to be constructed:

The Soldier's huts are to be of the following dimensions, viz: fourteen by