

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 fireplace 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 of two companies, and one to every twelve non-commissioned officers and soldiers.

Cramped quarters indeed, especially since axemen would have to fell green trees and each unit would be required to construct its hut without the benefit of nails or adequate tools, but General Washington assured his men that he would "share in the hardship and partake of every inconvenience."

Washington's army arrived at Valley Forge on December 19, amid "stormy winds and piercing cold." The location nevertheless offered many advantages from a military point of view, especially since the only approaches--from the south and east--could easily be protected by entrenchments. In addition, Valley Forge had an abundance of timber and water, but the number of existing farmhouses and outbuildings in the area was minimal and the bulk of the army would have to construct their own winter quarters. By December 23 the axemen had begun bringing in logs for the construction of huts for the soldiers, but as Col. Henry B. Livingston noted the following day, "without nails or tools...I suppose we may possibly render ourselves very comfortable by the time winter is over."

Nonetheless, conditions for the American army could have been much worse had the winter been severe. The first snowfall of the season came on December 12, but between December 20 and December 26--the first few days that Washington's army was at Valley Forge--the weather was milder than usual. A four-inch snowfall occurred on December 27, but even that did not deter construction of the huts that would ultimately provide shelter, albeit dank and unhealthy, for the Americans. As Joseph Plumb