

## FOUNDING OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

The Continental Congress passed a resolution that laid the foundations for the United States Army on June 14, 1775, by adding southern companies to the New England militias. This was while militias were engaged in the siege of Boston to restrict the British Army from harassing the surrounding area. The next day, George Washington was appointed the first Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

*Resolved, That six companies of expert riflemen, be immediately raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia;... [and] that each company, as soon as completed, shall march and join the army near Boston, to be there employed as light infantry, under the command of the chief Officer in that army.*<sup>3</sup>

## STATE REGIMENTS AT VALLEY FORGE

When the Army moved into Valley Forge in December 1777, there were about 12,000 men from all 13 states organized in regiments from 11 states. There was significant diversity in the culture, customs, and background from the states spread over thousands of miles in a time of limited travel. While the soldiers were battle hardened and had achieved some success, they still had difficulty executing maneuvers together.<sup>4</sup>

## GRAND FORAGE

As soon as the Army entered Valley Forge in December 1777, General Washington was concerned with having adequate supplies – both equipment and food. He wrote to Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress, “I am now convinced beyond a doubt, that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place in that line this Army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things. Starve—dissolve—or disperse, in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can.”<sup>5</sup>

## SITES TO VISIT IN VALLEY FORGE

- **Visitor Center** | exhibits on history and soldiers' equipment at Valley Forge
- **Muhlenberg's Brigade** | reproduction soldiers' huts and exhibits on soldiers' life at Valley Forge
- **Grand Parade** | visible from Muhlenberg's Brigade and Knox Brigade
- **Von Steuben Statue and Grand Parade trails**
- **Washington's Headquarters**
- **Washington Memorial Chapel** | stained glass windows and stonework memorials to Major Generals, states



*This brochure was prepared by the Valley Forge NHP staff and the Valley Forge Park Alliance.*

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VALLEY FORGE  
PARK ALLIANCE

1777 – 1778

1. Samuel J. Watson, Ty Seidule, and Clifford J. Rogers, eds., *The West Point History of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 127-128
2. Jack Giblin, Chief of Visitor and Education Services at the Army Heritage and Education Center. **War Room Podcast - BUILDING THE CONTINENTAL ARMY: VON STEUBEN'S "BLUE BOOK" (DUSTY SHELVES)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3zHQaPgJqW>
3. <https://history.army.mil/Research/Series-and-Collections/June-14th-The-Birthday-of-the-US-Army/>
4. <https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/historyculture/valley-forge-history-and-significance.htm>
5. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0628>
6. Ricardo A. Herrera, *Feeding Washington's Army: Surviving the Valley Forge Winter of 1778* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 159-160.
7. [https://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/history/vstory\\_improve.html](https://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/history/vstory_improve.html)
8. [www.valleyforagemusterroll.org](http://www.valleyforagemusterroll.org)
9. <https://history.army.mil/Research/Reference-Topics/Army-Campaigns/Brief-Summaries/Revolutionary-War-Campaigns/>

## 250<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

*“Conceived in Philadelphia, Born at Valley Forge”*



*“The Continental Army did not crawl worn out from the brutal encampment at Valley Forge, but rather emerged better supplied, better disciplined, more effectively led, and with higher morale than ever before”<sup>1</sup>*

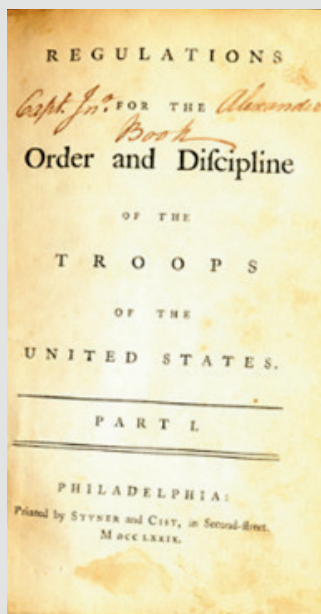
-The West Point History of the American Revolution

General Washington charged Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene to obtain the necessary supplies from the surrounding countryside in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. The successful execution of the Grand Forage demonstrated both the General Washington's foresight and the growth of the leadership in the command structure of the Continental Army. <sup>6</sup>

### GENERAL VON STEUBEN AT VALLEY FORGE

Von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge in February 1778 with an appointment from the Continental Congress and was assigned by General Washington as Acting Inspector General. He prepared detailed reports on the camp defenses, troop morale, and military readiness of the Army. He then turned to training the men. Based on his experience with armies in Europe, he created a manual of arms and drill, particularly designed for the American Army. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds and separate state training, equipment, and procedures, he focused on simplicity. <sup>7</sup>

The drill manual was later published in 1779 as the *Regulation for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. In March of 1779, Congress adopted this for use throughout the Army. The original printing was on blue paper, the only paper available to the printer at the time, and became known as the "Blue Book." The Blue Book is still in use by the US Army today. <sup>4</sup>



### SOLDIER TRAINING AT VALLEY FORGE

Von Steuben requested a select group of 100 soldiers from across the regiments represented at Valley Forge. With them, he implemented the manual of arms and the disciplinary practices that he had seen in use in Europe. These soldiers were then returned to train their regiments and brigades in the same drill. Thus, he created an army that was all following the same drill. <sup>2</sup>



Baron Steuben Drilling Continental Soldiers at Valley Forge

### UNIFIED ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

As the Army became a unified force, the button with the USA cypher became widely used among units at Valley Forge. Prior to this, individual units had buttons on their uniforms that indicated their regiment or state. This button had been commissioned by General Washington for his Commander-in-Chief's Guard. <sup>8</sup>

Reproductions of this button as a lapel pin are available for purchase from [valleyforgemusterroll.org](http://valleyforgemusterroll.org), a volunteer operation of the Valley Forge Park Alliance that documents all soldiers and camp followers who were at Valley Forge during the winter encampment.



### DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR SKILL

In May of 1778, news of the Treaty of Alliance with the French reached Washington at Valley Forge. On May 6, 1778, the entire camp gathered at the Grand Parade to celebrate the alliance between France and the United States with a *feu de joie*, or "fire of joy."

The *feu de joie* was a musket salute fired by soldiers one after the other in succession along the ranks. This was repeated three times. Without the training and uniform drill, the Army would not have been able to perform this ceremony.



### DEMONSTRATION OF SUCCESS

The Army remained camped at Valley Forge until June 1778, watching to see the next move of the British Army, occupying Philadelphia. Upon abandoning Philadelphia, the British Army made its move through New Jersey to return to New York City. General Washington mobilized the Army and pursued them. The two armies met on June 28, 1778, at the Battle of Monmouth. The battle continued until nightfall, so neither army had a clear victory. But, during the night, the British Army left the battlefield to move into New York City. <sup>9</sup>

*"Now the Continental Army was ready to fight. Professionalism, confidence and pride marked those who had survived the ordeal of Valley Forge... And it was clear to everyone that those ragged Continentals — who had suffered so much at Valley Forge — were now a fair match for the British."* <sup>7</sup>