

X CITIZEN SOLDIERS

notwithstanding, two days' pay would purchase a quart of rum, and with us a month's pay would not more than do it.['']

In the year 1776 the pay of the officers and soldiers afforded no more than a scanty subsistence. Since that period the currency has depreciated in most articles of life more than two thousand per cent. Are we then to risk our lives in the field of battle, to submit to all the inconveniences of a camp life, to be deprived of the sweets of domestic happiness, and subsist upon one twentieth part of a sufficiency?

Congress, seeing the enormous rise of the necessaries of life, so long ago as December, 1777, recommended to the several states to provide all necessary clothing for their officers and soldiers at prices proportioned to their pay. We had examples of the states both of the southward and eastward complying with this resolution, and in many instances exceeding it.

That your troops are less brave, or have done less duty than any troops in the union, is a position that none have been hardy enough to advance, and why they should be so long neglected is a problem in politics hard to be explained.

Pennsylvania has lately passed some resolves in favor of her troops. Maryland has adopted the same;—some other states have done more, but none of them have done enough.

The families of officers and soldiers should some way be provided for. If our pay was in Spanish milled dollars³ (and that was the contract between Congress and us) we could provide for them; we therefore neither ask nor wish for more than a compliance with the original contract.

Pay us in Spanish milled dollars or give us an equivalent, and our complaints shall instantly cease.

[Signed by twenty-two officers of the First Regiment;
thirteen of the Second Regiment; and fifteen of the Third Regiment.]

1. A private in the infantry was paid \$6.66 per month.
2. A colonel in the infantry was paid \$7.50 per month.
3. The Spanish milled dollar (the old piece of eight) was in general use in America and was adopted as the basic unit for Continental currency because the various states had issued paper money of conflicting valuation.

12 Dr. James Thacher, Describes the Hardships of the Winter Encampment at Morristown

[James Thacher, *Military Journal of the American Revolution . . .* (Hartford, 1862), pp. 180-91.]

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In December 1779 General Washington and his Continental army returned to Morristown for a second season, but the winter encampment of 1779-1780 proved even more disastrous than the famous sojourn at Valley Forge in 1778-1779. In the most severe winter in more than a decade, an acute shortage of clothing and provisions tested the mettle of the men at Morristown. Dr. James Thacher, Continental army surgeon from Massachusetts, poignantly described these conditions, in which some soldiers deserted or committed depredations against civilians though most demonstrated their tenacious dedication to the cause for which they fought.

[December 1779-March 1780]

We marched to Pompton¹ on [December 9, 1779] and on the 14th reached this wilderness,² about three miles from Morristown, where we are to build log-huts for winter-quarters. Our baggage is left in the rear, for want of wagons to transport it. The snow on the ground is about two feet deep, and the weather extremely cold; the soldiers are destitute of both tents and blankets, and some of them are actually barefooted and almost naked. Our only defence against the inclemency of the weather, consists of brush-wood thrown together. Our Lodging the last night was on the frozen ground. Those officers who have the privilege of a horse, can always have a blanket at hand. Having removed the snow, we wrapped ourselves in greatcoats, spread our blankets on the ground, and lay down by the side of each other five or six together, with large fires at our feet, leaving orders with the waiters³ to keep it well supplied with fuel during the night. We could procure neither shelter nor forage for our horses, and the poor animals were tied to trees in the woods for twenty-four hours without food, except the bark which they peeled from the trees. Lieutenant W. and myself rode to Morristown, where we dined, and fed our starving horses at a tavern. General Washington has taken his head-quarters at Morristown,⁴ and the whole army in this department are to be employed in building log huts for winter-quarters. The ground is marked out, and the soldiers have commenced cutting down the timber of oak and walnut, of which we have a great abundance. Our baggage has at length arrived, the men find it very difficult to pitch their tents on the frozen ground, and notwithstanding large fires, we can scarcely keep from freezing. In addition to other sufferings, the whole army has been for seven or eight days entirely destitute of the staff of life; our only food is miserable fresh beef, without bread, salt, or vegetables. . . .

Besides the evils above mentioned, we experience another, in the rapid depreciation of the continental money, which we receive for our pay; it is now estimated at about thirty for one. It is from this cause, according to report, that our commissary-general is unable to furnish the army with a proper supply of provisions. The people in the country are unwilling to sell the produce of their farms for this depreciated currency, and both the resources and the credit of our Congress appear to be almost exhausted. The year is now closed, and with it expires the term of enlistment of a considerable number of our soldiers; new conditions are offered them to encourage their reenlistment during the war; but such are the numerous evils which they have hitherto experienced, that it is feared but a small proportion of them will re-enlist. Should these apprehensions be realized, the fate of our country, and

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the destiny of its present rulers and friends, will soon be decided. . . .

January 1st, 1780.—A new year commences, but brings no relief to the sufferings and privations of our army. Our canvas covering affords but a miserable security from storms of rain and snow, and a great scarcity of provisions still prevails, and its effects are felt even at headquarters. . . .

The weather for several days has been remarkably cold and stormy. On the 3d instant, we experienced one of the most tremendous snow-storms ever remembered; no man could endure its violence many minutes without danger of his life. . . . But the sufferings of the poor soldiers can scarcely be described, while on duty they are unavoidably exposed to all the inclemency of storms and severe cold; at night they now have a bed of straw on the ground, and a single blanket to each man; they are badly clad, and some are destitute of shoes. We have contrived a kind of stone chimney outside, and an opening at one end of our tents gives us the benefit of the fire within. The snow is now from four to six feet deep, which so obstructs the roads as to prevent our receiving a supply of provisions. For the last ten days we have received but two pounds of meat a man, and we are frequently for six or eight days entirely destitute of meat, and then as long without bread. The consequence is, the soldiers are so enfeebled from hunger and cold, as to be almost unable to perform their military duty, or labor in constructing their huts. It is well known that General Washington experiences the greatest solicitude for the sufferings of his army, and is sensible that they in general conduct with heroic patience and fortitude. His excellency, it is understood, despairing of supplies from the commissary-general, has made application to the magistrates of the state of New Jersey for assistance in procuring provisions. This expedient has been attended with the happiest success. It is honorable to the magistrates and people of Jersey, that they have cheerfully complied with the requisition, and furnished for the present an ample supply, and have thus probably saved the army from destruction.

As if to make up the full measure of grief and embarrassment to the commander-in-chief, repeated complaints have been made to him that some of the soldiers are in the practice of pilfering and plundering the inhabitants of their poultry, sheep, pigs, and even their cattle, from their farms. This marauding practice has often been prohibited in general orders, under the severest penalties, and some exemplary punishments have been inflicted. General Washington possesses an inflexible firmness of purpose, and is determined that discipline and subordination in camp shall be rigidly enforced and maintained. The whole army has been sufficiently warned, and cautioned against robbing the inhabitants on any pretence whatever, and no soldier is subjected to punishment without a fair trial, and conviction by a court-martial. Death has been inflicted in a few instances of an atrocious nature; but in general, the punishment consists in a public whipping, and the number of stripes is proportioned to the degree of offence. . . .

[February] 14th.—Having continued to this late season in our tents, experiencing the greatest inconvenience, we have now the satisfaction of taking possession of the log huts, just completed by our soldiers, where we shall have more comfortable accommodations. . . .

March.—The present winter is the most severe and distressing which we have ever experienced. An immense body of snow remains on the ground. Our soldiers are in a wretched condition for the want of clothes, blankets and shoes; and these calamitous circumstances are accompanied by a want of provisions. It has several

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times happened that the troops were reduced to one-half, or to one-quarter allowance, and some days have passed without any meat or bread being delivered out. The causes assigned for these extraordinary deficiencies, are the very low state of the public finances, in consequence of the rapid depreciation of the continental currency, and some irregularity in the commissary's department. Our soldiers, in general, support their sufferings with commendable firmness, but it is feared that their patience will be exhausted, and very serious consequences ensue. . . .

1. Now Riverdale.
2. Jockey Hollow, site of a modern reconstruction of the encampment.
3. The term "waiter" was used variously to describe a watchman, servant, or attendant.
4. The Jacob Ford House, now preserved as part of the Morristown National Historical Park.

13 Formation of a Women's Relief Society

[New Jersey Broadside Collection, Alexander Library, Rutgers University; also published in the *New-Jersey Gazette*, July 12, 1780.]

Virtually nothing is known about the New Jersey women's relief society described below. No records of the organization exist, nor are there accounts of actual donations. It is certain only that women in all counties of the state launched a campaign to provide financial assistance to the men of the Continental army. As the roster of committeewomen shows, some of the most prominent ladies in New Jersey lent their time and talent to the cause.

Trenton, July 4, 1780

The Ladies of Trenton, in New-Jersey, emulating the noble example of their Patriotic Sisters of Pennsylvania, and being desirous of manifesting their zeal in the glorious cause of American Liberty, having this day assembled for the purpose of promoting a subscription for the relief and encouragement of those brave Men in the Continental Army, who, stimulated by example, and regardless of danger, have so repeatedly suffered, fought and bled in the cause of virtue and their oppressed country:¹ And taking into consideration the scattered situation of the well-disposed