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Winter Patriots

Scott Stephenson: On September 26th, 1777, the British Army marched down Chestnut Street, right past the spot where the Museum stands, to capture Philadelphia, the headquarters of the American Revolution. British troops would occupy this city for nine months. And just a few weeks later, those British soldiers turned the Pennsylvania State House, now called Independence Hall, into a barracks and a prison to hold captured American soldiers. You can see a life-size tableau in this Gallery, which shows a group of Quaker women touring the Hall with a British officer and observing an American prisoner-of-war being brought in. Think about this the next time you visit Independence Hall or imagine the historic events that took place there.

While the British occupied Philadelphia, Washington's Continental Army created a log city about a day-and-a-half's march west of here at Valley Forge, a site that you can still visit today. You probably recognize the framed painting on the wall to the left of the Independence Hall tableau. It depicts General Washington and his bedraggled troops marching through the snow. This is one of the most recognizable and iconic paintings connected to the Valley Forge encampment. This is the original painting. It was completed by William Trego, an artist born just north of Philadelphia, who completed the work in 1883, just about a century after the end of the Revolutionary War.

Before you move on, make sure you explore the objects in the large case to the left, on the opposite side of the Gallery. These include items owned and used by George and Martha Washington during the Valley Forge encampment and information about the "military family" of staff officers, enslaved people, servants, and soldiers who travelled with Washington during the war.