

Cosimo Sgarlata, David Gerald Orr, Bethany A. Morrison, eds. *Historical Archaeology of the Revolutionary War Encampments of Washington's Army*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019. Illustrations, maps, tables. 290 pp. \$100.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-5640-1.

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An increased scholarly interest in battlefield archaeology has recently zeroed in on military encampments as vital to capturing the full experience of war. For example, Cosimo A. Sgarlata, David G. Orr, and Bethany A. Morrison have compiled a volume of related essays in *Historical Archaeology of the Revolutionary War Encampments of Washington's Army*. The editors make a compelling argument that by using techniques of modern archaeology with traditional historical sources, such as letters and transcribed orders, there are new things to be learned about the encampment experiences of the Continental Army. The contributors studied known and new locations for their essays, using their findings to detail camp life for the Continental soldier and to complicate the idea of encampment uniformity otherwise suggested by major pieces of documentary evidence.

Many contributors combine physical evidence with archival sources to complicate the narrative of Valley Forge as a desolate camp. In the volume's first essay, Wade P. Catts and Joseph F. Balicki describe their discovery of a previously undocumented target range. This find speaks to the "less tangible icon of the [Valley Forge] encampment ... the story of [Baron] von Steuben and his training" (p. 29). Jesse West-Rosenthal also complicates the his-

tory of Valley Forge by demonstrating that a wide array of activities took place there, including repairing arms and uniforms, doing work chores, and even gambling, despite rules against it. He argues that these findings are a testament to the fact that the images of naked and starving troops at Valley Forge are less accurate and are more "due in part to the political skill of their commander: General Washington exaggerated their condition to the Continental Congress to press the issue of supply" (pp. 72-73). In his contribution, Joseph Blondino strikes at the idea of rampant filth in camp by presenting evidence that the refuse pit for Washington's quarters was used only upon the soldiers' departure. This evidence indicates an adherence to sanitation standards, as trash heaps in close proximity to the men could cause illness.

Other contributors focus on breaking down the image of camp uniformity that is perpetuated by documentary evidence. In his manual *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, the Baron von Steuben, inspector general of the Continental Army, proposed strict regimentation and uniformity in camp. This text is popular among historians but this new collection suggests that its portrait of encampment living is perhaps incomplete. In their contribution, Julia Steele, Douglas Campana, and Orr survey the

area of Valley Forge that was used by General Anthony Wayne's troops. They point out that while such findings as the camp's layout indicate compliance with von Steuben's rules, others, like discrepancies in ground preparation techniques for hut building, speak to when "exigencies and/or idiosyncratic behavior prevailed" over uniformity (p. 77). Digging the middle and easternmost encampments in Redding, Connecticut, Morrison, Sgarlata, and Daniel Cruson also found idiosyncrasies where uniformity was mandated. Cruson's efforts show that some huts originally contained large rocks that soldiers did not bother to move while other huts did not. In Morristown, New Jersey, Mathew Grubel and his team used traditional methods to construct a historically accurate hut according to documentary evidence. In the process, tools often broke, which Grubel argues perhaps caused the differences in construction techniques noted by him and other contributors in all of the encampments.

The volume's greatest strength is the use of multiple source types by all of the contributors. For example, Blondino used documentary evidence to guide his archaeological efforts of Washington's dining cabin at Valley Forge, which survives only as a mention in a Martha Washington letter. Similarly, Grubel's team used records from the Quartermaster Department in combination with mentions of huts and construction techniques in the letters and diaries of troops in Morristown to guide their construction. Laurie Weinstein, Diane Hassan, and Samatha Mauro remind readers in their essay that an unknown number of women, Native Americans, and African descendants lived in Redding's Middle Encampment during the war, and that archaeological evidence will shed light on their experiences where documentary sources are silent. Perhaps the best example of combining sources, however, is that set by Mary Guillette Harper in her investigation of the French march from Providence to New York in 1781-82. Not only did Harper use a contemporary map, the "Plan," by General Pierre François de Beville, to guide her

team through the army's Connecticut route and encampments, but she also consulted local lore and histories to inform her work (p. 214). Further, archaeological evidence revealed sharp boundaries for each encampment, suggesting that strict order was maintained within them. The result of her efforts is not only a verified route of the French march through Connecticut but also a better understanding of how troops lived within their encampments.

Historical Archaeology of the Revolutionary War Encampments of Washington's Army offers both valuable new information and examples of effective and dynamic methodologies to historians of early America. As Sgarlata notes in his conclusion, encampments present numerous challenges as sources, since they were only occupied briefly, and upon departure, soldiers were expected to take their belongings with them. However, the artifacts that are left behind, as well as the mark left in the earth by the encampment, are vital to understanding what life was like in the breaks between battles. These times made up the bulk of most soldiers' wartime experiences, and it is well worth the historian's time to better understand them. Within this obligation, the scholar confronts another: to appreciate that volunteers, local historians, and the broader public all play vital roles in preserving the past. Much of the archaeological work detailed in this volume was done by volunteers, while local historians filled in gaps of various town histories. Further, many of the researched sites were on private property or else were protected by locals. This reminds the scholarly historian that they do not work alone and that history is done, as it ought to be, both within and beyond academia.

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