



# The Papers of George Washington: January-March 1777 (Revolutionary War Series)

*George Washington*

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Volume 8 documents Washington's first winter at Morristown. Situated in the hills of north central New Jersey, Morristown offered protection against the British army headquarters in New York City yet enabled Washington to annoy the principal enemy outposts at Newark, Perth Amboy, and New Brunswick. To discover Howe's intentions for the next campaign, Washington refined his intelligence-gathering network in New Jersey and New York during the winter months and kept a watchful, if distant, eye on the British armies in Rhode Island and Canada.

Most of the remainder of Washington's time and efforts were directed toward the reorganization of the continental army, which dwindled away rapidly following the victories at Trenton and Princeton. Unwilling to face the usual hardships of winter or the dangers of a new outbreak of smallpox, many men returned home when their enlistments expired. Desertion also rose dramatically, and Washington was reluctantly forced to depend upon militia. By mid-March Washington's army in New Jersey numbered only about 4,000 troops, nearly two-thirds of which were militia enlisted only to the end of the month.

Other important matters demanding Washington's attention included the reorganization of the hospital department and the creation of new hospitals, the reorganization of the commissary and clothier generals departments, the appointment of a wagonmaster, the establishment and placement of a new "Magazine, Laboratories, & Foundry for casting Cannon &c.," and continuing negotiations with the British on prisoner exchanges. The volume closes in late March with the good news that a much-anticipated shipment of arms, ammunition, and cloth had arrived from France for the Continental army.

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