

# Camp Followers Digital Experience Script

## Part One: Overview

### *Video 1: Camp Followers Introduction. 3 minutes 30 seconds*

- Welcome to Washington Crossing Historic Park. Today, we're going to be talking about camp followers. You can watch these videos, click on the stories below, and download our activity packet to learn more.
- During the Revolutionary War, soldiers in both armies were responsible for fighting the battles, but who made sure the soldiers' uniforms were clean? Who took care of them if they were injured in battle? Someone had to do these jobs, right? Such duties would be the jobs of the men and women known as camp followers.
- Who were the camp followers? These people often had a personal tie to the army as family members of the soldiers, but weren't officially part of the army. They were *with* the army. These followers were usually lower-class women. Camp followers included anyone who did a specific job for the Continental, British, or Hessian armies, but they weren't soldiers. They often did laundry and nursing.
- Women of all races could follow. We know that free African Americans served in the Continental Army, including here at the Crossing. Free enlisted African Americans could have a wife, mother, or daughter that followed the army, just as white soldiers did.
- Do you think that men followed the army as well? Or were men only soldiers?
- Sometimes men followed, too, as domestic servants and sutlers, which were like grocery stores on the go. You can learn more about the jobs followers did in this program.
- How many camp followers do you think followed the British and Continental Armies?
- Over the course of the war, there were always more camp followers with the British and Hessian Armies than there were with the Continental Army.
- In the British Army, the ratio of women to men typically hovered around 1 to 8. So, if there were 40,000 British soldiers, there would be about 5,000 women. However, in the Continental Army, the average ratio of women to men was about 1 to 33.
- That's quite a significant difference in the number of followers. What could have led to this difference?
- Part of the reason could be that the army just didn't keep track of every woman who followed. A woman could be following the army unofficially. In that case, she wouldn't be included in army records.
- Part of the reason could also be how many women were *allowed* to follow each army.
- The British set quotas, or limits, on the number of women who were allowed to follow each unit. However, these quotas were not always enforced.
- On the other hand, Washington struggled with several class issues. He had no problem socializing with upper-class women such as officers' wives. But he did not have a high opinion of the lower-class followers, fearing they would distract the troops.
- In fact, in his August 1777 General Orders, Washington remarked that (voiceover) "the multitude of women in particular, especially those who are pregnant, or have children, are a clog upon every movement"
- That's not a very encouraging message to send to any women who might be thinking of following the Continental Army.
- Follow along with this program to learn more!

***Video 2: Military Policies for Camp Followers – 2 minutes 30 seconds:***

- Thousands of camp followers followed each army. But how did each army treat these followers?
- The biggest difference was that the British already had policies for camp followers. Neither Washington nor Congress had any clear policies on followers.
- For example, the British had guidelines for women serving as nurses. The Continental Army often made things up about followers as they went. This makes sense. The British Army had been around for centuries. It had the time to figure out these details. On the other hand, the Continental Army was a new organization.
- However, there was one distinct similarity between both armies. Just like the soldiers and officers serving in each army, camp followers were also subject to military discipline and regulation.
- Sometimes, the women did disobey the orders they were given, or they got in trouble. They would plunder or ride on the army's baggage wagons even though they were told not to. Or, they'd buy a shirt from a soldier without permission. If that happened, a woman could be drummed out of camp, meaning they were no longer allowed to follow the army.
- What sorts of orders did the women have to follow?
- For one thing, the women were often told to stay with the army's baggage and not to engage in direct combat. It would be important for them to follow this order for their own safety. But that doesn't mean the women were always safe, or that they always chose to stay with the baggage.
- In order to explore this idea, let's look at the story of Margaret Corbin.
- Margaret Corbin was at the Battle of Fort Mifflin. This was the last major battle before the Continental Army retreated to Bucks County, Pennsylvania and Washington crossed the Delaware, our main focus here at the park.
- When her husband was killed manning a cannon, Margaret bravely took his place and was seriously wounded.
- The soldiers who saw her do this nicknamed her "Captain Molly". Margaret is also one of the two main inspirations for the legend we know today as "Molly Pitcher".
- Margaret may not have chosen to fight before her husband was killed, but she certainly earned her place in history.
- Thanks for watching! Keep watching this program to learn more about the jobs and lives of followers.

## Part Two: Camp Followers' Jobs

This section can be combined with our virtual lesson “The Role of Camp Followers”.

Learn more here - <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/education/digital-resources/virtual-lessons/>

### Laundry<sup>1</sup>:



- Dirty clothing could mean disease, and sick soldiers aren't effective fighters. Many camp followers served as laundresses. Laundresses were paid for their work as long as soldiers actually had the money to pay the laundress.

- Laundry in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was a multi-step process. First, laundresses would soak the garment using hot or cold lye. The laundress would then use her hands to rub soap onto dirty spots. After that, the laundry would be separated, beaten, and boiled.

- Finally, the water would be squeezed out and the

laundry hung on a line, laid out flat, or hung over a tent to dry.

### Nurses:

- Nurses were important to Revolutionary armies as front-line fighters against disease. But, nursing was a very different profession in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.
- On both sides, nurses learned a variety of duties on the job:
  - Caring for sick and wounded soldiers while they recovered at places like Thompson-Neely House
  - Emptying and cleaning out patients' chamber pots
  - Bathing newly-admitted patients with warm water
- Nurses were expected to be clean, have a good temperament, and not leave camp without permission

### *Video 3: Nursing Demonstration – 4 minutes:*

- To make a poultice for a bayonet wound:
  1. Take a muslin strip from the glass apothecary jar. Bandages would have come from sewing scraps, old bed sheets, old clothes, etc.
  2. Place approximately a teaspoon of the following herbs into the bandage center
    - a. **Comfrey** ROOT – the Greek derivative of its botanical name means “to knit together”. Herbalists of this time found it very effective for “knitting” the bone together, so this is ideal for the fractured bone.
    - b. **Calendula** FLOWER – Amazing when modern science and historic medicine collide to show that this plant is highly antibacterial (this is a great opportunity to discuss what colonial understanding was of bacterial infections. Without modern antibiotics like penicillin many colonists succumbed to bacterial infections,

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<sup>1</sup> Image: *A Perspective View of an Encampment*. Brown University Library

especially soldiers and gangrene) a colonist would have been very fortunate indeed if their herbalist knew of and used calendula.

- c. **Chamomile FLOWER** – chamomile is a wonderful anti-inflammatory and can be used externally to soothe inflammation, sunburn, and rashes. This would be included in a poultice to reduce swelling and therefore pain.
  - d. **Yarrow LEAVES AND FLOWER**. This Yarrow is from our garden at Washington Crossing Historic Park. Yarrow has long been known as a battlefield herb. Its scientific name, *Achillea millefolium* reflects this. It's said that Achilles was particularly fond of yarrow and always carried it into battle. The leaves of this herb are a powerful styptic, meaning they cause blood clotting. Applied to open wounds, it is effective in minimizing blood loss and speeding healing.
  - e. **St. John's Wort LEAVES AND FLOWER**. St. John's Wort is a vulnerary which means it helps wounds heal. It is assumed to have an inhibiting effect on bacterial growth and may have some skin cell stimulating effects for increased recovery. Traditionally, without the scientific knowledge or understanding of bacteria that we have today, St. John's Wort was used to help wounds heal.
3. Fold poultice like a little pocket
  4. Boiling water is then poured over the poultice
    - a. The boiling water helps to extract/activate the chemicals in the plants
    - b. Leaving the poultice in the water means the whole fabric bandage is soaking up the medicinal "tea"
  5. This poultice would be applied to the wound and then wrapped and held in place. This bandage would be changed daily, if he's lucky!
    - The poultice has been applied, but the soldier may still be in pain. Today, you could use Advil or Tylenol to treat pain. Neither of those existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. To treat pain:
      - a. Using the small delft tea cup and silver strainer, place the **White Willow Bark** into the strainer. The most effective chemical from this bark is called Salicin and is converted to Salicylic Acid in the body. This is the ingredient in modern Aspirin, so without this plant you wouldn't have this medicine.
      - b. Making a tea from the Willow Bark will address the soldier's pain, adding a little **Lavender** to it will help him fall asleep, because as we all know, "sleep is the best medicine".

### **Sutlers –**

- Sutlers were licensed to sell provisions to the troops, like mobile grocery stores. If a sutler did not have a license, they would face military discipline. Without sutlers following the army, soldiers' would have to make do almost solely with their rations, unless they were close to a city with a market or a soldier traded with or plundered (stole) from local citizens. Although sutlers were often men,

women could also be employed as sutlers. In many cases, soldier's wives and soldiers' themselves were not allowed to be sutlers.

***Video 4 – Sutlery Demonstration – 2 minutes 15 seconds:***

- This is an example of a sutlery. A lot of what sutlers were able to sell depended on what season it was. Not all of the items here would be available year-round. For example, apples and peaches are seasonal. You would find peaches in the summer, whereas apple season is in the fall.
- One particular item not shown here often sold at a sutlery was alcohol. In fact, alcohol was continually mentioned whenever Washington's general orders mentioned the sutlers.
- You had to have a license to be a sutler and, specifically, to sell alcohol.
- So, where would you get a license?
- That actually depended on what type of sutlery you were setting up. You could set up a grand sutlery. To do so, you would need to get your license from a high-ranking military officer such as a colonel. A grand sutlery almost always had alcohol.
- On the other hand, you could set up a petite sutlery. Petite sutlers were any sutlers other than grand sutlers who set up sutleries. Just like grand sutlers, petite sutlers still needed a license to sell to the army, particularly if they were selling alcohol. However, that license didn't have to come from a high-ranking military officer. Usually, petite sutleries were smaller than the larger and more official grand sutleries.

**Part 3: Life in Camp**

**Food and Rations –**

- Cooking was one of the most important parts of camp life for followers and soldiers.

***Video 5: Food and Rations – 1 minute 48 seconds:***

- Imagine this. The army has given you rations. You've gone to the sutlery to buy some extra things. Who's going to cook the food?
- You're probably thinking "oh, it's the women who are cooking the food". Well, actually, they weren't.
- The soldiers actually cooked and ate together in mess groups of six. The women, for the most part, cooked for themselves and their children and ate together.
- What are rations?
- Rations were the fixed amount of food that the army would supply to its soldiers and to its followers on a daily basis.
- A full ration in the Continental Army included a pound of bread or flour; a pound of meat, likely beef; a pint of milk; 3 pints of vegetables; a half pint of rice or a pint of corn meal; and a quart of spruce beer or cider.
- In the British Army, women were usually entitled to half-rations while their children were entitled to quarter-rations. The only exception was women who served as nurses. They were entitled to full rations.
- In the Continental Army, camp followers' rations ranged from full rations to no rations.
- Often, as in December 1776, both armies struggled to provide for their soldiers. If that was the case, then the first people taken off the provisions list were followers.
- What did followers actually eat when following the army? Well, they generally had to make do with what they had. Often, that meant throwing whatever food you had in a pot, cooking it, and hoping it would taste good.

## **Clothing -**

- Female camp followers typically dressed in their own clothes. Some women wore cast-off military clothing, though the Army would not provide it to followers. If a follower was caught selling military issued clothing, she could face military discipline.

### ***Video 6: Clothing – 5 minutes 16 seconds:***

- Cap -
  - Women wore a cap almost always outside the house, unless their hair was fixed/dressed. It's important both for modesty and to keep your hair clean and free of lice
- Shift/Chemise –
  - A shift or chemise is the foundation garment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Women rarely took it off except to wash it. They wore it to sleep in, under their stays, and as undergarments.
- Stays –
  - Stays are the 18<sup>th</sup> century corset. They were designed to shape a woman's body into a cone/V/Upside down triangle shape. Both boys and girls wore stays for posture when they were little. When boys reached the age they can button their breeches, they stop wearing stays. Women wore stays their entire life. Gowns will not fit a woman properly without stays. Stays could lace in the front or the back.
- Shoes and Stockings –
  - Shoes would be handmade by a shoemaker out of leather. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century was the first time left and right shoes began to be made. Shoes would be made specifically to the wearer's foot, rather than buying general shoes in a size.
  - Stockings or socks would be knit, often very fine. Stockings could be made out of 3 types of fiber – cotton, wool, and linen. Cotton was the most expensive fiber or fabric of the 3. Silk could be used as well, but it had to be imported, making it even more expensive.
- Petticoat –
  - A petticoat is essentially a skirt. Petticoats tie around a woman's waist. One reason stays are helpful is that women had multiple things tied around their waist. With the stays, you can have more ties/more layers.
  - Women wore at least 1 petticoat at all times, usually 2 or more. Wearing multiple petticoats served as a form of modesty as well as a source of warmth. Multiple petticoats would also help shape a woman's body into the favored cone shape with a full-figured bottom.
  - The slits on the side allowed women to reach in to their pocket as well.
- Pocket –
  - Pockets tied around a woman's waist. They were worn between the stays and the petticoat, sitting right at the slit of the petticoat so a woman could easily reach them. Pockets were not sewn into clothes as they are today, but were a separate piece. They could hold anything a woman needed.
- Kerchief –
  - A kerchief serves as a piece of modesty as well as to keep the sun off a woman's shoulders. A kerchief could also be called a fichu.

- Gown –
  - A gown is a woman’s dress. It could be made by a mantua maker. The top of the gown is pinned closed with straight pins. A woman could also wear a stomacher, which is a v-shaped piece that goes in the front of the gown. Stomacher’s could be switched out to offer variety to a woman’s gown as well as change for different occasions. The bottom of the gown was open to show the petticoats.
- Apron –
  - The apron is a very hard-working piece of clothing. It could be used as a hot pad/oven mitt, a basket to carry items, a cloth to keep your clothes clean, or as a face rag. Women almost always wore an apron. They could be linen or silk, plain or fancy and embroidered depending on a woman’s class and duties.
- Accessories –
  - Memorial necklaces and locket with pieces of hair from a loved one were very popular.
  - Straw hats would keep the sun away from your face. A hat was worn on top of the cap and tied behind the neck, with the front brim a little lower than the back. Bonnets could be worn as well.
  - If it’s cold out, a cape or cloak could be worn
  - Mittens or mitts (fingerless gloves) could also be added for warmth

**Packing for Campaign and Carrying Children –**

- Soldiers and camp followers often used a “market wallet”. It’s the equivalent of the modern duffle bag, suitcase, purse, backpack, grocery bag, etc. Market wallets are a long tube with a slit in the center. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, they were known just as “wallets”. Sometimes, soldier’s wives also had to carry infants with them on campaign. Learn more about packing and carrying children in our activity packet.

***Video 7: Packing and Carrying Kids – 4 minutes:***

- If I were going on vacation or a business trip, I’d probably pack several sets of clothes, my passport if I’m leaving the country, my toiletries, money, and some snacks and drinks for the trip. Just about everything I need should likely fit in my suitcase. If I don’t have enough space, I can buy it at a local store.
- But, that wasn’t the case for camp followers. Camp followers walked the same distance as the soldiers on foot, carrying all their items.
- What did they bring with them and how did they pack it?
- Well, camp followers used what were known as market wallets.
- Originally, these were just known as wallets, but, in modern times, the word “market” has been added to the name. A market wallet was basically the 18th century suitcase, backpack, duffel bag, purse, etc. Soldiers also used market wallets.
- A market wallet is essentially a long tube with a slit in the center. On one side, a camp follower could bring an extra shift and petticoats or an extra pair of shoes. On the other side, a follower could pack some extra food in case the army could not provide her with rations. Bowls and spoons could be important as well.
- The market wallet would be twisted in the middle and tossed over a followers shoulder.

- Along with wallets, camp followers would also have a basket to carry any additional supplies that wouldn't fit in a market wallet.
- If a woman was following the army and she had children, then those children would come with her. Yes, that includes infants. So, women had to figure out a way to carry their infants safely while also carrying everything else they would need.
- I invite you to see if you can figure out how a camp woman might have carried her infant. All you'll need is a long piece of fabric (yard and half-2 yards or a fitted sheet and a doll or stuffed animal. Pause the video to see if you can get it, and, once you think you've got it, play the video again.
- Did you get it? It might actually be easier to do than you think.
  - First, fold the fabric in half long ways (like a hotdog).
  - Wrap that fabric or sheet around your back so one half is over a shoulder while the other half is under the other arm. Make sure the open end is facing up so your infant does not accidentally fall out.
  - Use the two ends to tie a knot in front, then move the knot up to your shoulder
  - Carefully take the baby and place the infant inside the opening, with their back against the fold.
- I am dressed, my wallet is packed, and my infant is secured against my body. I am now ready to march with the army.

### **Children on Campaign –**

- The British usually had at least as many children with the army as there were women. Children came with their parents, or were born on the road. In camp, the children would be put to work. In the British Army, they might even go to school. Children also had time to enjoy toys and games. For example, toys might be used to entertain a child while the army marches for miles. You can learn more about the toys children played with on campaign in our activity packet.

#### ***Video 8: Toys and Games – 5 minutes***

- Toys and games may seem like playthings, but they're actually an important part of human development. Toys have been around since before recorded history. Dolls have been found that are more than 4,000 years old, a puzzle from before the time of Christ, and many other toys at archeological digs.
- Toys were important for colonial kids. They lived very hard lives. They had a lot of chores important for survival. Because of this, they didn't have a lot of extra time.
- Colonial children also didn't always go to school. Schools were usually located in larger towns and cities, but most of Colonial America was rural. Kids in rural areas usually learned at home if one of their parents was educated to teach them. For camp followers, the British Army organized schools for children. The Continental Army did not, so children learned on campaign as best they could.
- There was no electricity, so any electronic devices we use today like computers, video games, cell phones, and tablets did not exist yet. There were also no batteries, meaning no battery-operated toys.
- Stores were limited in rural Colonial America. Stores tended to be in towns and cities.
- Most toys were handmade at home or on campaign. They had to be made out of natural materials that were on hand. One of the chief materials was wood, as it was plentiful.



- Even so, many of the toys that Colonial children played with are similar to toys kids play with today.
- Dolls -
  - The most common toy would be a doll. The first doll shown is made of wood. The dress is likely made from a scrap left over from a gown or other piece of clothing. Everything was saved and used as much as possible in the Colonial era.
  - The other doll shown is made out of wood and exhibits the craftsmanship Colonists employed. It also shows that adults sometimes played with toys as well. Adults wanted a way to express their creativity. Soldiers could play with whirligigs, cup and ball games, or other toys while marching on campaign.
- Cup and Ball game –
  - This game was popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and is still popular today. You would swing the ball and try to catch it in the cup. This would teach hand-eye coordination as well as strategy.
- Jacob’s Ladder –
  - Jacob’s Ladders were one of the most popular games and another one that could be played while marching. Jacob’s Ladder particularly shows how well made and creative toys could be. Blocks of wood are held together by ribbon. When one block is turned down, the ribbon sends the other blocks to fall down in sequence. By flipping your hand back and forth, you can create a continual stream of motion like a waterfall.
- 9 Pins –
  - 9 Pins is a form of bowling. Bowling is still popular today. 9 pins is a tabletop game with miniature pins. It involves a small ball rolled towards 9 pins, instead of 10 pins in modern bowling.
- Three Graces –
  - This partner game is originally from Ancient Greece. It’s called Three Graces after the goddesses of Joy, Beauty, and Charm. It was originally developed to teach young women graceful movements. But it was so much fun that boys wanted to play too, so everyone played. Graces is a partner game. You put the wooden hoop on two wooden sticks. You cross the sticks, then uncross them and launch the hoop to your partner. The partner has to try and catch the wooden hoop on their two wooden sticks.

#### **Part 4: Why People Followed the Army**

##### **1. Money—Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson<sup>2</sup>**

- Money might have been a strong reason for many to choose to follow the army. For wives of Continental soldiers, there was no guarantee that Congress could pay their husband. For Hessian and British soldiers’ wives, if they received the pay, the money would have to cross the ocean. Women could face homelessness or starvation if left behind with no family to turn to.

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<sup>2</sup> Silhouette from 1700s fashion history blog. <http://1700sfashionhistory.weebly.com/trends-popular-colors-textiles-silhouette.html>

- Money might have motivated people to follow even without a family tie to the army.



- Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson was Washington's housekeeper at his various Revolutionary War headquarters. As housekeeper, she was responsible for tasks such as supervising the female servants and overseeing meal preparation. Hired on July 9, 1776, she was let go after nine months but was reinstated later on as she was present at Valley Forge. She retired December 1781 after having served for five years.
- Mrs. Thompson would have been with Washington during the New York and New Jersey campaigns as well as during the 10 Crucial Days. That means Mrs. Thompson was probably here when Washington crossed the Delaware. Given her position as housekeeper, she was likely left behind at camp.

## 2. Practicality and the desire to be near loved ones—Lucy Flucker Knox<sup>3</sup>



- Lucy Flucker was from a wealthy and prominent Massachusetts Loyalist family. She fell in love with bookseller and Patriot Henry Knox and married him in June 1774. Her parents disowned her and eventually fled to England.
- During the Revolutionary War, Henry Knox became a Colonel and eventually a General in Washington's army. He served as the head of the artillery during the New York and New Jersey Campaigns of 1776. He crossed the river with Washington and served during the 10 Crucial Days.
- While he fought in New York and New Jersey, Lucy was left alone. War surrounded her and she was unable to turn to her Loyalist family for help. While fighting in 1776, Henry was often unable to write Lucy, adding to her worries. Lucy wrote an undated letter to Henry during the 1776 New York and New Jersey campaigns:
  - "Had I no friends I suppose I should not take it so hard, but when I reflect that I have Had A father and a mother often and yet a brother and yet one this poor new tested thing I cannot bear it. So for you I love you; I underwent almost every distress for the sake of Being yours, and you forsake me"
  - "My poor dear Father I must never see again when I reflect upon...the thousand times he has helped me and prayed god to make me the comfort of his age"
  - "I...would do it again to live to be with you"<sup>4</sup>
- After the Valley Forge encampment in 1777-1778, Lucy chose to follow the army. She may have followed because she had no family she could stay with.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Flucker Knox. Silhouette, circa 1790. Alternate Title: Mrs. Henry Knox. From Massachusetts Historical Society. <https://www.masshist.org/database/764>

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Knox's undated letter, Henry Knox Papers, David Library/Gilder Lehman (transcription from Washington Crossing Historic Park)

Following might have been her best option, despite her being an officer's wife, socializing with people like Martha Washington.

- Lucy may also have wanted to be near her husband. Being separated from a spouse is an extremely hard experience, both in 1776 and for modern military spouses.
- Many camp followers were the wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers of the soldiers serving in the army. They may have also had other reasons for following, but a chance to be close to their family may have also been a strong motivator.

### **3. Safety—Mrs. Reed of Trenton<sup>5</sup>**



- Mrs. Reed was the wife of a Continental Lieutenant when the Hessians took over Trenton. In December 1776, she was home with her ten-year-old daughter and eight-year-old son when the Hessians entered her home, claiming it as the headquarters for the British commander. Mrs. Reed tried to make them leave, but they refused.
- One of the Hessian followers noticed the large silver buckles on Mrs. Reed's shoes and insisted she hand it over. When Mrs. Reed hesitated, the woman snatched for the buckle, took off the entire shoe, and smacked Mrs. Reed in the face with the heel.
- Soldiers' families could be in danger when an area was occupied by their opposing army. Mrs. Reed made it through without losing her life and livelihood, despite her fear when a Hessian follower discovered the small Continental Army coat she'd made for her son. Many other families weren't as lucky. This was true for both sides.

### **4. No Choice/Lack of Agency—Sarah Osborn Benjamin<sup>6</sup>**



- Sarah Osborn (later Sarah Osborn Benjamin) was going about her day in 1780 when her husband Aaron announced he had enlisted in the Continental Army. He insisted she come with him. Sarah would follow Aaron throughout the war, including at Yorktown in October 1781 and the West Point encampment in 1782.
- Married women had little agency to make their own decisions. Many camp followers might have faced a similar situation to Sarah's.

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<sup>5</sup> David Morier. *Grenadiers, 31<sup>st</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, and 33<sup>rd</sup> Regiments of Foot, 1751*. C. 1751-1760. Royal Collection Trust. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405590/grenadiers-31st-32nd-and-33rd-regiments-of-foot-1751>. While this image shows Grenadiers from the British army, the Hessians wore similar uniforms. It also shows a grenadier with a civilian woman and child, similar to Mrs. Reed's situation.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Charles L'Enfant. *Panoramic View of West Point, New York showing American Encampments on the Hudson River*. August 1782. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004678934/>. This image features the only known depiction of an American camp follower from the time period.

- She didn't choose to follow of her own free will, but Sarah Osborn Benjamin had the opportunity to be paid for working for the army. She applied for a pension for her service as a follower November 12, 1837.

### **5. No Choice/Lack of Agency – William Lee<sup>7</sup>**



- Whereas Mrs. Thompson was paid and had free choice, enslaved domestic servants, like George Washington's enslaved valet William Lee, did not. Washington decided that William Lee would follow him. It is possible that, given the choice, Lee would have chosen to follow Washington. But, by the nature of slavery, Lee could not refuse.
  - As Washington's enslaved valet, Lee was responsible for assisting the general with a variety of tasks. He might need to tie a silk ribbon around Washington's hair, or be responsible for organizing Washington's personal affairs. It's debatable whether William Lee is truly a "follower". He did a different job from most, and wasn't paid due to being enslaved.
  - William Lee was certainly here during the 3-week encampment in December 1776. He might have crossed with Washington or might have been left back at camp.
- Washington and William Lee developed a close relationship throughout the war. When Washington died, the only enslaved person he freed in his will was William Lee.

### **Section 4 – Conclusion**

#### ***Video 9: Conclusion – 40 seconds***

- Followers made a big sacrifice when they followed the army. Often, they faced the same hardships that the soldiers faced.
- Today, we look at their lives and think "Wow, how did they do it?" But to them, it was often what they had to do to survive. Their time period is very different from ours. This was their way of life.
- Whether they followed by choice or not, camp followers were important to making sure the army would be able to fight another day.
- Thank you for watching.

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<sup>7</sup> Close up of William Lee. *George Washington*. John Trumbull, c. 1780. Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art.