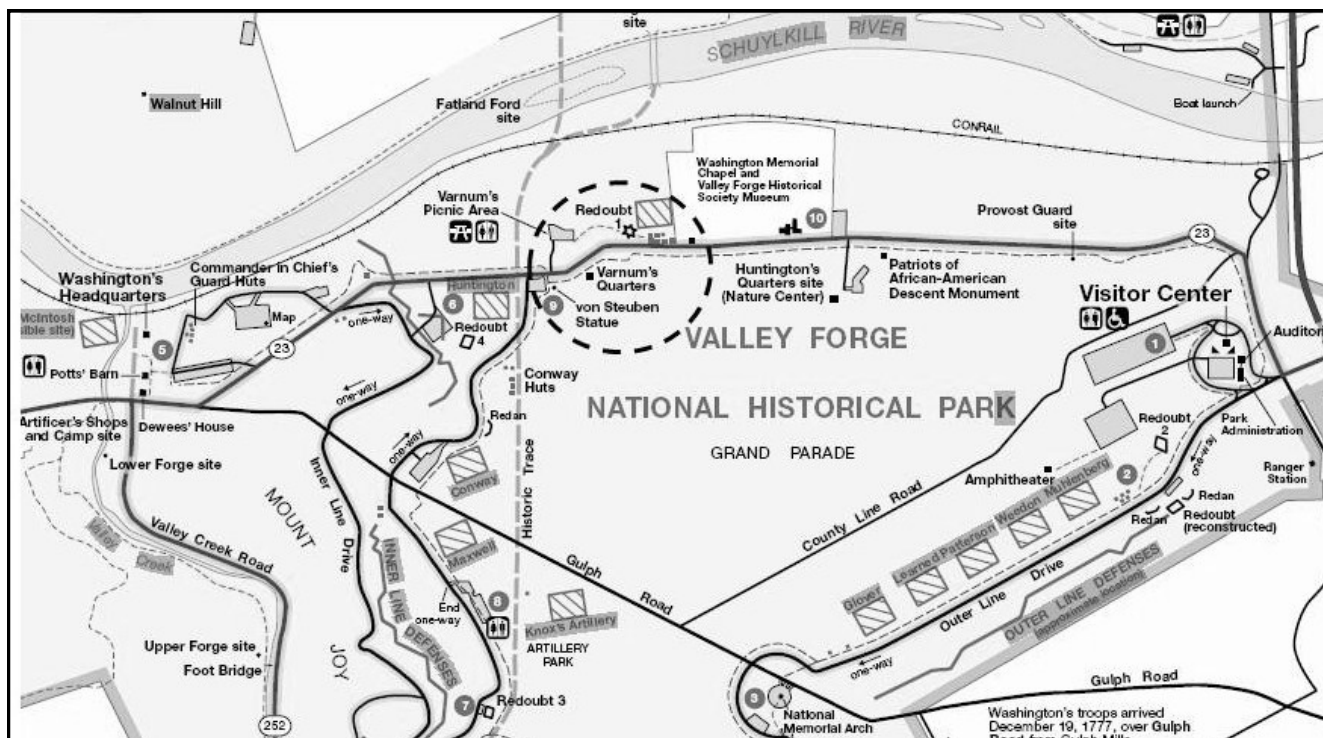


# General Varnum's Quarters Valley Forge National Historical Park

Mike Bertram

James Mitchell Varnum, a lawyer of Rhode Island, was a general during part of the Revolutionary War. While at the Valley Forge encampment he lived with the David Stephens family in their farmhouse. The Stephens' ancestor, Stephen Evans, was one of the original partners in the forge on Valley Creek (the "valley forge"). In 1918, the state used eminent domain to acquire the property, which at that time included a more recent farmhouse as well as the old Varnum house. The Stephens family fought the sale and were not evicted until 1929. The purchase was then appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, which delayed the demolition of the newer farmhouse until 1935.

*Photo source: Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey Collection.*



Varnum's Quarters is on Rt. 23, west of the Washington Memorial Chapel.

*Map Source: National Park Service*



*Photographer: William Burrell*

*Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society*

The original Stephens farmhouse was expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the family lived in it until 1898 before moving to their newer house on the site of the current Varnum's Picnic Area. This photograph is of the northern side of the old farmhouse, taken around 1900.



This photograph was taken around 1920 looking west. The original roofline can be faintly seen on the side of the building. The large building in the right background was a barn.

*Courtesy of Valley Forge National Historical Park.*



*Photo courtesy of Valley Forge National Historical Park.*

Valley Forge State Park acquired the property in 1918.<sup>1</sup> The Philadelphia Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution renovated the property, and demolished the eastern (left in the photograph) end of the house, giving it the appearance shown above.

This 1928 photograph was extracted from one of the Dallin aerial photographs and shows Varnum's Quarters in the left center. At the top of the picture is a second Stephens farmhouse built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which the Park removed after purchasing the farm.



*Photo by Dallin Aerial Survey Company, courtesy Hagley Museum.*

<sup>1</sup> Valley Forge: Making and Remaking a National Symbol by Lorette Treese, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.





*Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society*

During a violent storm in 1933 a tree fell on Varnum's Quarters and damaged it. The next year the farmhouse was radically restored by the Park to what was thought to be its appearance during the encampment, above.



*Photographer: Mike Bertram, 2009*

The building was further altered for the bicentennial celebration of 1976 including changing windows, floors and a stairway, to give its present appearance.



First floor interior of Varnum's Quarters.

*Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey Collection*



Restored spring house.

*Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey Collection*



General James Mitchell Varnum, painted posthumously in 1804 by Charles Willson Peale. Varnum died in 1789 in Ohio, where he was serving on the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territory.



*Ohiohistorycentral.org*



Varnum's sleeping quarters and office as it might have appeared during the encampment.

*Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey Collection*