

*Part I*

## ACQUISITION



If on a spring morning in May 1778 following that hard winter at Valley Forge, we could approach a soldier warming himself by a fire and ask him his opinion of the great Roman orator Cato, he probably would not find the inquiry odd. Rather, he might respond with great enthusiasm that he had in fact seen a play about Cato just the previous evening, when it was staged, by some accounts, in the camp's bakery. He might even have played a role in it. Joseph Addison's *Cato* was, after all, one of the most popular plays in pre-Revolutionary America, and indeed the favorite dramatic work of the camp's commander, General George Washington. This was a time when live drama was one of the few forms of public art. Our soldier might even be able to quote from the play—maybe that striking line about choosing between liberty or death, or perhaps the passage in which a character regrets that he has only one life to give for his country.