

Fire at Valley Forge

On a windy day in March 1997, a father and son came to Valley Forge National Historical Park, where George Washington stationed the Revolutionary Army during the difficult winter of 1777-1778.

The father and son had something much less historic in mind: they wanted to launch a model rocket. At first, they tried using electric ignition wires to light the fuse, but to no avail. So, they tried lighting the fuse with a common sparkler, the kind seen on the Fourth of July.

That's when the trouble began. Sparks ignited a grass fire, and the winds quickly spread the blaze, burning one field where Revolutionary War soldiers had trained, and coming within a half mile of George Washington's headquarters. That brought 30 units from 12 fire departments to fight the fire for an hour before bringing it under control. In the end, more than 30 acres were charred.

The man with the sparkler was charged with destruction of government property and use of fireworks.

There is another treacherous activity that – while many see it as harmless – can get out of control and spread rapidly, leaving destruction in its path. It is called gossip.

Like that sparkler, gossip never seems as dangerous as it really is.

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles. (James 3:5)

– Beecher Hunter