HIDDEN TRENTON

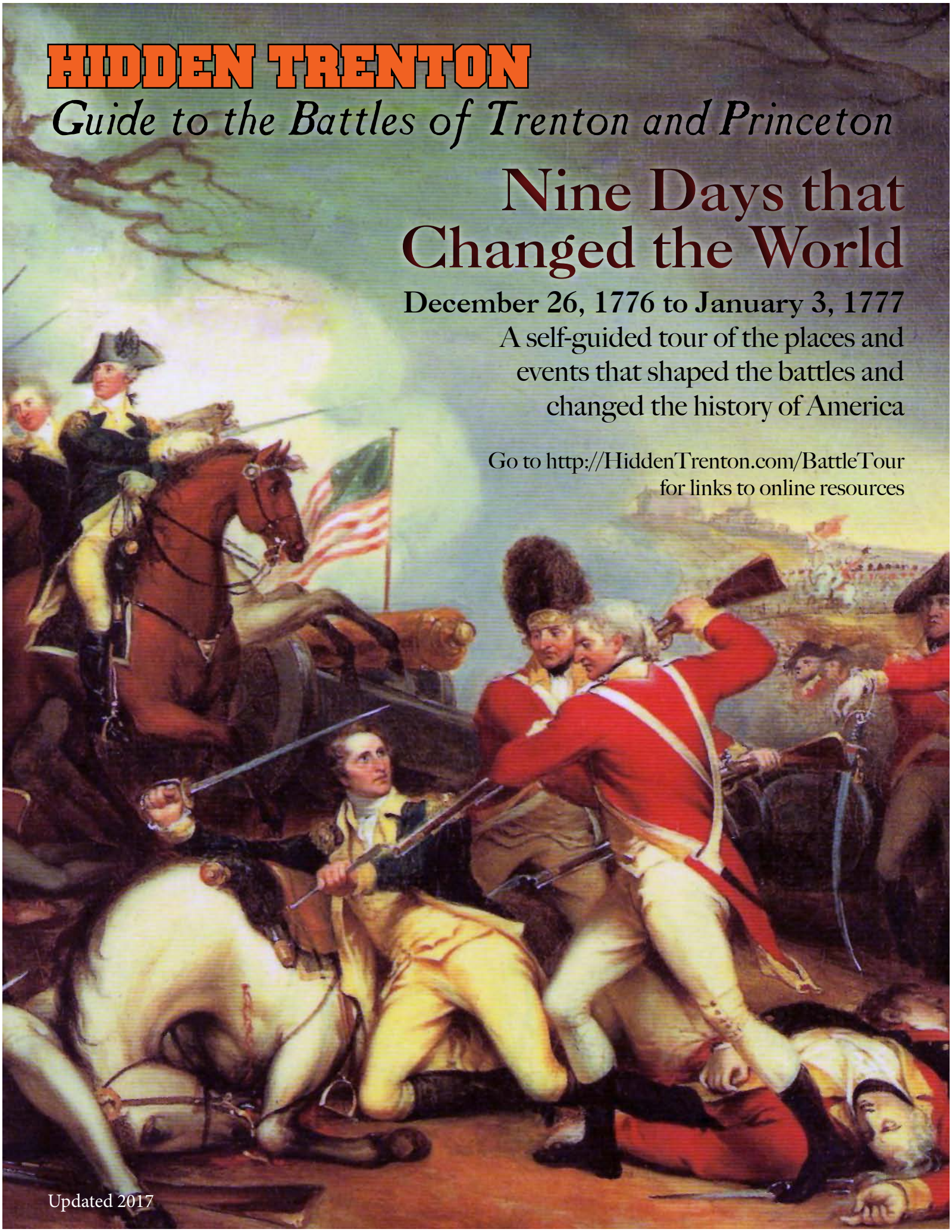
Guide to the Battles of Trenton and Princeton

Nine Days that Changed the World

December 26, 1776 to January 3, 1777

A self-guided tour of the places and events that shaped the battles and changed the history of America

Go to http://HiddenTrenton.com/BattleTour for links to online resources



Updated 2017

Forward

I grew up in NJ, and the state's 1964 Tricentennial celebration made a powerful impression on me as a curious 4th grader. Leutez' heroic portrait of Washington Crossing the Delaware was one of the iconic images of that celebration. My only memory of a class trip to the park a year or two later, is peering up at the mural of Washington's Crossing, the image I'd revered for so long, not realizing this was a 1930s reproduction.

I also, certainly, had some experience of Trenton. One of the most indelible memories of my childhood was participating in the Civil Rights March on Trenton in 1963.

But if you asked me, "Where was Washington headed when he crossed the Delaware?", I'm not sure I could have come up with the correct answer, "Trenton". Today, I suspect even fewer fifth graders could come up with the correct answer than in my era. In general, the lustre of America's colonial history seems to have faded for today's generations.

It wasn't until I moved back to New Jersey in the mid-1990s that I was reminded of these events, but even then in only the most general way. And really, it was only when I read David Hackett Fischer's Pulitzer-prize winning history, ***Washington's Crossing***, did I begin to understand the significance of the battle in the larger history of the United States.

Growing up in New Jersey, we seemed always to suffer an inferiority complex relative to New York and Pennsylvania. My teachers were always trying to promote NJ history in compensation. Part of me wondered if the crossing story was really just NJ boosterism at work. I never doubted it happened, but I wondered if it mattered. It wasn't until I finished Fischer's book that I could embrace the history as something truly important and relevant.

In recent years I've watched Trenton's "Patriot's Week" celebrations. They're wonderful in that they seem to be one of the few events that will draw into Trenton the soccer moms and their kids. But they're disappointing if you're looking to understand the history in any serious way.

Recently, John Hatch, my friend and business partner, organized a "Tour of the Battle of Trenton" as a silent auction item for Trenton's Passage Theatre. He used Fischer's book to research many of the stops, augmenting his own deep expertise concerning many of the places they visited as one of the state's top restoration architects.

My interest is in the military history, and I realized when I took a careful re-look at Fischer's book, that there's a great deal of material about the geography of the battles that isn't readily accessible as published.

In recent years I've become quite adept at using modern GIS tools, including most importantly, Google Earth. It was second nature for me to scan the excellently drawn maps by Jeffrey L. Ward in ***Washington's Crossing***, and overlay them in Google Earth. Now I could zoom in on the locations Fischer was describing, and understand exactly where they took place in today's geography. It was an easy matter to then visit the sites, even some of the more obscure ones.

What was stunning to me was how many I'd actually visited unwittingly, simply in the course of living and traveling in Mercer County for 16 years.

The history is all around us, and yet we are generally oblivious to it. Thus was the inspiration for this work.

Let me be the first to acknowledge that it draws heavily on the descriptions and accounts in Fischer's book. The events of the battle are my interpretation of Fischer's account, and virtually all of the historic quotations were originally quoted by Fischer.

If you retain an interest in this subject after reading through this material, you would be well served by reading Fischer's book, which is still in print and readily available via Amazon or other booksellers.

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Introduction: The State of the Rebellion in December 1776

The "smart money" was betting on England in December of 1776, based on events prior to the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. Almost as soon as a British expeditionary force landed in New York harbor with 24,000 British regulars and Hessian mercenaries on August 15, the Continental Army, under the command of George Washington, suffered a series of dreadful defeats.

The first was the Battle of Long Island. It started with British crossings from Staten Island on August 22. British and Hessian infantry attacked the Continental Army, and forced them to abandon Brooklyn and Queens. Washington's army (variously estimated at 9,000 to 11,000 men at the beginning of the battle) was able to escape destruction by evacuating to Manhattan on the evening of August 29-30.

British forces then landed on September 15 at Kips Bay, on the east side of Manhattan, and defeated the Continentals at Harlem Heights on September 16, driving them into defensive positions in the northern tip of Manhattan island. A series of further defeats led to the surrender of "Fort Washington", near the site of the current George Washington Bridge, on November 15. Once again, the bulk of Washington's army escaped destruction, this time by retreating to NJ.

The British Army then crossed the Hudson on November 19, and forced Washington to flee across New Jersey, fighting delaying actions at New Bridge (near Paramus) on November 22, and Brunswick on December 1. Due to casualties, expiring enlistments, and desertions, Washington estimated that he had only 3,765 men under his command on December 1.

Washington's army passed through Princeton (December 1-7), and the vanguard reached Trenton on December 2.

During the march, Washington's engineers destroyed all of the bridges along the Trenton Road. This would prove significant a month later. The army used the South Trenton Ferry (at the end of Ferry Street, from a spot a few hundred yards north of the current Rho Wa-

Top: A British infantry encampment of the period.

Left: The Battle of Long Island, on August 22, 1776, was the first major defeat in a string of defeats for Washington's Army prior to the Battle of Trenton. Direct assaults by Hessian and British regulars routed the Continental Army from what is today Brooklyn and Queens in a series of pitched battles. The survivors of the engagement escaped to Manhattan on August 29-30.

terfront night club). By working day and night, the army was able to get all of its artillery and baggage across to the Pennsylvania side by December 8.

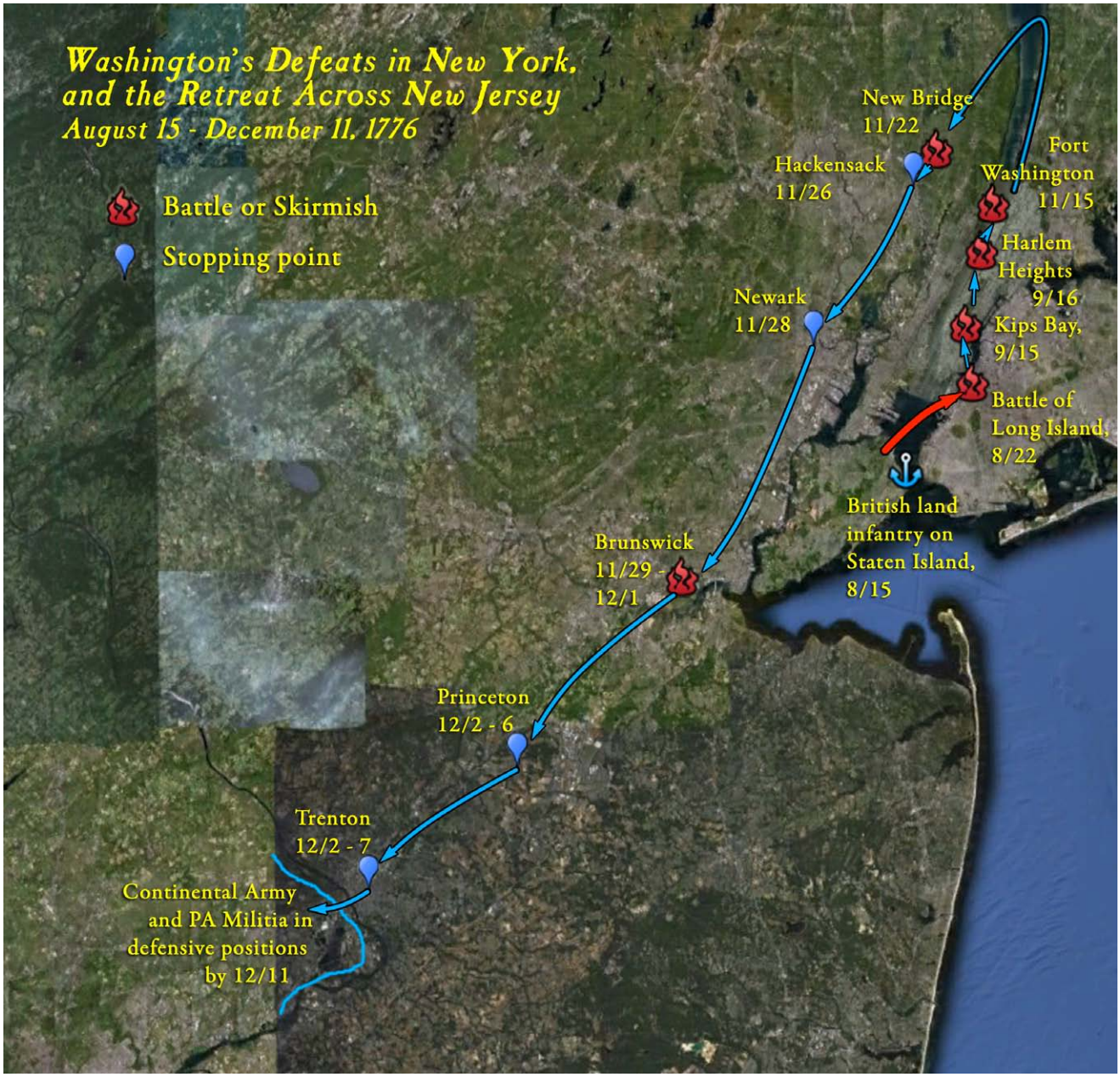
The hardship caused by this rapid flight was considerable. One contemporary witness wrote:

> A man staggered out of the line and came toward me. He had lost all his clothes, He was in an old dirty blanket jacket, his beard long and his face full of sores... which so disfigured him that he was not known to me on first sight. Only when he spoke did I recognize my brother James.

Fortunately for Washington, the British stopped their pursuit in Princeton and delayed their arrival in Trenton until late in the afternoon of the 8th. Many British and Hessian officers were unhappy with the slow pursuit. But the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's forces in America, Sir William Howe, was hopeful that a peaceful settlement might be possible, and was trying to avoid a pitched battle.

Now on the western bank of the Delaware, and reinforced by Pennsylvania militia, Washington's Army deployed along a 25 mile front, covering every crossing from below Bristol in the south, to New Hope in the north. The NJ and PA militias collected every boat within 40 miles, and removed them to the western Bank. The Pennsylvania Navy operated heavily armed gunboats along the river. The Continental Army was safe, for now.

The British decided to "enter winter camp", which in that era implied greatly reduced operations. To counter



the American deployment, the British established three mutually-supporting strong-points along the river: in the center was Bordentown, with Trenton to the north, and Burlington to the south. These were manned principally by Hessian mercenaries. Three brigades of British infantry, and 3 troops of cavalry, deployed in Princeton, occupying Nassau Hall, Morven, and many farmhouses. From Princeton, the British Army could support any of the 3 strong points within a day's march. The rest of the British expeditionary force scattered to 14 other garrisons across the state to provide support to loyalists (then estimated at 60% to 80% of the population). The main British headquarters in NJ remained back in Brunswick, near the mouth of the Raritan River, where it could receive logistical support from the Royal Navy.

Washington's Dilemma on the Eve of Battle

With the remnants of his army now safe in Pennsylvania, Washington knew he had few options. Philadelphia, the capital of the newly declared United States of America, was less than a day's ride south of his current position, and in a state of panic.

Worse, his army was about to disappear. Most of the soldiers had enlisted for the calendar year, so that their enlistments were nearly up. The British, under Sir William Howe, were offering generous amnesty terms: American soldiers only had to pledge loyalty to the Crown to return home without fear of retribution.

How could Washington motivate his troops to stay with the cause, to re-enlist for another year, when up to now they had tasted only a string of bitter defeats?

Washington needed a victory. Desperately. That he achieved victories at Trenton and Princeton over the nine days we shall describe is one of the miracles of American history.

These victories accomplished Washington's immediate purpose, which was to gain the support and re-enlistment of his troops. News of the victory reached the French court a few weeks later, and influenced France's decision to enter the war against England. French support proved decisive throughout the middle and later stages of the war: it was the French fleet, and a combined army of French and American troops, that isolated and defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown, effectively ending combat operations by the British in the United States.

Without the victories here, American history might have played out very differently: we might now be singing "God Save the Queen" instead of the "Star Spangled Banner" at the beginning of cricket matches.

But at the time, none of this would have been obvious. What could Washington do? Washington was already thinking about some sort of offensive action as early as December 1. While retreating from Brunswick, he sent orders to assemble boats capable of carrying his army back from crossings near Trenton. He ordered Col. Richard Humpton to "particularly attend to the Durham Boats, which are very proper for the purpose."

Meanwhile the countryside was in revolt. While loyalty to a distant Crown was fine in theory, the reality of the occupation was another matter altogether, and soon proved intolerable to the fiercely independent colonists. Soon after arriving, Hessian troops in particular started ransacking local farms for food and treasure, and raped several women. Between December 15 and 23, a series of skirmishes were fought between American militia and British and Hessian infantry, with the heaviest fighting around Mt. Holly. The resulting chaos meant that British and Hessian troops were exhausted by constant patrolling and skirmishing across western New Jersey.

Washington then received reinforcements from New

England. He convened a council of war on December 22, which decided to attack as soon as possible.

The First Battle of Trenton was on!

Note: Most of the historical references in this document originated in David Hackett Fischer's magnificent book, Washington's Crossing, winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize. The authors of this guidebook strongly recommended that anyone with an interest in these battles buy it and read it.

Critical Background

The battles of Trenton and Princeton can be divided into three, related events which took place over a 9-day period:

1. The First Battle of Trenton ("FBT"): December 26, 1776.
2. The Second Battle of Trenton ("SBT") (also known as the Battle of the Assunpink): January 2, 1777.
3. The Battle of Princeton ("PB"): January 3, 1777.

We've segmented this guide into 3 separate self-guided tours, each designed to take a few hours.

For each tour, we provide you an overview of the battle. We'll then suggest a series of sites to visit in a logical sequence, with driving directions and a description of the significance of each location in the context of the overall battle. Obviously, if you're short on time or wish to combine the tours, you may wish to skip some of these locations. That's the beauty of a self-guided tour.

Maps in this document were created in Google Earth. You can download KMZ files which provide numbered place-markers of each suggested stop (e.g. FBT-1) and provide overlays of the battle maps so you can view them at any scale in Google Earth. These are available for free download from:

http://HiddenTrenton.com/BattleTours

There is also a supplemental guide in pdf format which breaks out the directions from this volume and provides individual maps to make it easy to navigate.

Envisioning Trenton in 1776

One of the hardest aspects of touring the battle site is to envision the Trenton of 1776 amongst today's dense, urban development. The Trenton of 1776, to modern sensibilities, would be considered little more than a rural hamlet. Virtually all of the "town" was constructed along 4 streets:

1. King Street (today's North Warren Street), from roughly today's Lafayette Street in the south to Holland Avenue in the north. This merged with the Pen-

Right: George Washington returned through Trenton on his journey to his inauguration in New York City (then the nation's capital) for his first term as president in 1788. The bridge over the Assunpink, which was the main focus of the British assault in the Second Battle, was festooned with a triumphal arch. The event is commemorated in this painting, which can be seen in the Wells Fargo Bank on East State Street in downtown Trenton, painted by N.C. Wyeth, father of Andrew.

Left: The Town of Trenton as it existed in 1776, overlaid on an aerial image of today's city.

Yellow roads are the only ones with any significant level of development. Orange colored roads are newly built extensions of the town grid which supported little or no development at the time. Green roads were country lanes.

The Assunpink Creek is indicated by the blue, horizontal line about 3/4 down the image. It was spanned by only one bridge, at the base of Queen Street and the beginning of the Bordentown Rd (now S. Broad St). Note the 1776 banks were about 250 yards east of the current bank, which was filled-in during the 1960s to support Rt. 29.

Green shading around the periphery indicates the approximate boundary of woods. You should assume that all other areas surrounding the town were open fields.

The light orange circle illustrates the approximate range of American Artillery in the First Battle of Trenton. This was sited where King Street and Queen Street converge, at the top of the yellow triangle in the center of the image.

nington Rd, heading northwest.

2. Queen Street (today's North Broad Street), bounded by roughly the same streets north and south as King Street. This merged with the Princeton Rd. (today's Brunswick Avenue) heading NE.

3. River Road (roughly today's State Street), but only between King and Queen Streets. The road had been extended east of Queen, but contained limited development. West of King Street, the road was a country lane.

4. The Bordentown Road (today's South Broad Street). Dense construction existed through what is today the 200 block, from the bridge over the Assunpink up to the intersection with Ferry Street.

These four roads, and a couple of small connecting streets are the ones shown in yellow in the image on the previous page. The River Road (which is the most southerly road from the west above the river, is nearly undeveloped except for General Philemon Dickinson's estate (the "Hermitage"). The River Road parallels today's West State Street. The original River Road ran just slightly north, roughly along today's canal.

The sketch map below was prepared by a Hessian Artillery Lieutenant in 1778 as evidence in a Hessian court of inquiry. It shows the same main streets (not to scale) and tries to indicate all of the buildings in town. This map, and derivatives, has heavily influenced historians who have subsequently reconstructed the battle.

In recounting movements during the battle, we'll generally describe the modern road which most closely approximates the location of a movement as we understand it. At the time, however, many of these movements would have been executed over open ground.

A Word about Weapons and Tactics

Many books have been written about 18th century weapons and tactics. We're not going to bore you with a lot of detail, but a few comments will help you understand the battle a bit better. Three categories of infantry weapons played critical roles in these battles: artillery, muskets, and rifles.

Artillery

The American army in the first Battle of Trenton marched into battle with an unusually large number of big guns for the size of its force: 18. In the same battle, the Hessians countered with only 6 guns. Most of the American guns fired from the hill on the north end of town, near the current Battle Monument (two accompanied Sullivan along the River Road). Many of these field pieces were thought to be brass 6-pounders, similar to the guns shown in painting on the next page depicting "Molly Pitcher" at the Battle of Monmouth 18 months later.

The effective range of a brass 6-pounder is approximately 1,200 yards (though the fire would be exceedingly inaccurate at such extreme range). However, against a mass target, such as a cluster of troops, it could be deadly, even at extreme range. Artillery was the "shock and awe" weapon of the 18th century, and it was used effectively by the Continental Army. Artillery commanded virtually the entire city of that time.

Left: Detail of manuscript map prepared as evidence by Artillery Lt. Friedrich Fischer for the 1778 Hessian Court of Inquiry into the First battle. Buildings are shown as small, gray rectangles. The cross-shaped building towards the north end of town is St. Michael's Church. The orchards and woods are clearly marked. The location of Washington guns are marked towards the top of the image, as are the locations of all 6 Hessian guns, only 2 of which came into action.

Muskets

Most regular soldiers on all sides of the conflict were armed with smooth-bore, flint-lock muskets. These had an effective range of 75-100 yards or so for a volley against a mass target (such as a line of troops). Accurate, single shots were limited to 50 yards or even less.

The British and Hessian regulars were among the best trained infantry in the world, and could achieve a firing rate approaching 4 rounds per minute. The European art of war was to march troops in a line to close with the enemy (often as little as 30 yards), and then to sustain rapid volley fire. Well trained troops would fire more quickly and accurately; untrained troops would usually panic and flee when facing professional fire.

Flint locks depended on a spark igniting black powder placed in an open firing pan to shoot the weapon. Even in the best of circumstances "misfires" were 20-30% of shots. In wet conditions, the weapons could fail entirely.

American soldiers were not sufficiently trained to match the British or Hessian infantry in line combat: American troops much preferred to fire from cover. Given the short effective range of muskets, this greatly limited how the American troops could be used. If the European soldiers could close with the American army in anything close to equal numbers, their superior training and faster firing rate almost always led to a victory. They also possessed and were trained to use bayonets, which not every American unit had, a terrifying advantage in close fighting over soldiers without them.

Rifles

Many American soldiers brought their personal hunting rifles to war with them. Rifles were more expensive to make. They were much slower to load - even a well trained soldier could achieve only two shots per minute compared to the 3-4 which was possible with muskets. In addition, impurities in black powder would foul a rifle much more quickly than a smooth bore musket, so a rifleman might need to clean his weapon in the middle of a fire fight. For these reasons, rifles were rarely issued to European troops (except in specialist units).

Rifles had one, enormous advantage: they were accurate to several hundred yards. When American troops could find cover, and obstacles kept the enemy from closing quickly (e.g. a water barrier such as a river), rifles gave Continental soldiers a decided advantage over British and Hessian regulars armed with muskets.

American soldiers, many of who were hardened farmers, hunters, and woodsmen, could march more quickly than their enemies, and were much better marksmen. In fast moving campaigns in the right terrain, these citizen soldiers could defeat even the best professional armies in the world of that time.

Left: The most common field gun used by the Continental Army was the brass 6-pounder, similar the ones shown in this painting of the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. They had a maximum effective range of roughly 1,200 yards, which meant that virtually all of Trenton could come under fire from the heights where King and Queen Streets converged.

The First Battle of Trenton

Washington planned to attack the isolated Hessian garrison in Trenton with overwhelming force. The original battle plan called for not one crossing, but four. In addition to the main crossing by Washington's army -- 2,400 men 10 miles northwest of Trenton -- Ewing was supposed to cross at South Trenton to seal off the Bordentown Rd. (now South Broad Street south of the Assunpink bridge). This would cut off the possibility of retreat by Trenton's Hessian garrison, and provide early warning in case Trenton were reinforced from Bordentown. Cadwalader was supposed to cross near Bristol with a small force, and march on Bordentown, to draw the attention of the garrison there and keep it from coming to Trenton's aid. Finally, Putnam was supposed to cross near Camden to raise the militia around Mt. Holly, with the goal of adding to the confusion and slowing down any reaction from Princeton.

In the event, freezing weather on the night of December 25 created ice floes in the river which jammed at Trenton and Bristol, making it impossible to cross there. Further south, a few of Putnam's force did make it to Camden, but high winds kept the bulk of his force in Philadelphia.

Only Washington was able to cross that night at the upstream crossing. The weather was still awful, with a mix of snow, sleet, and strong winds, but the ice hadn't yet jammed and his boats could row across.

Washington's Approach March

The plan called for Washington's army to start the crossing at nightfall of Christmas Day and re-form on the NJ side to march on Trenton along the Bear Tavern Road. Shortly after fording Jacob's Creek, the army would split into two divisions. Sullivan's division would take the shorter, easier River Road to attack Trenton from the west. Greene's division would take a longer route to seize the high ground to the north of town. Washington stayed with Greene. To ensure surprise, the assault was supposed to begin before dawn.

In fact, the crossing started 3 or 4 hours late, and first

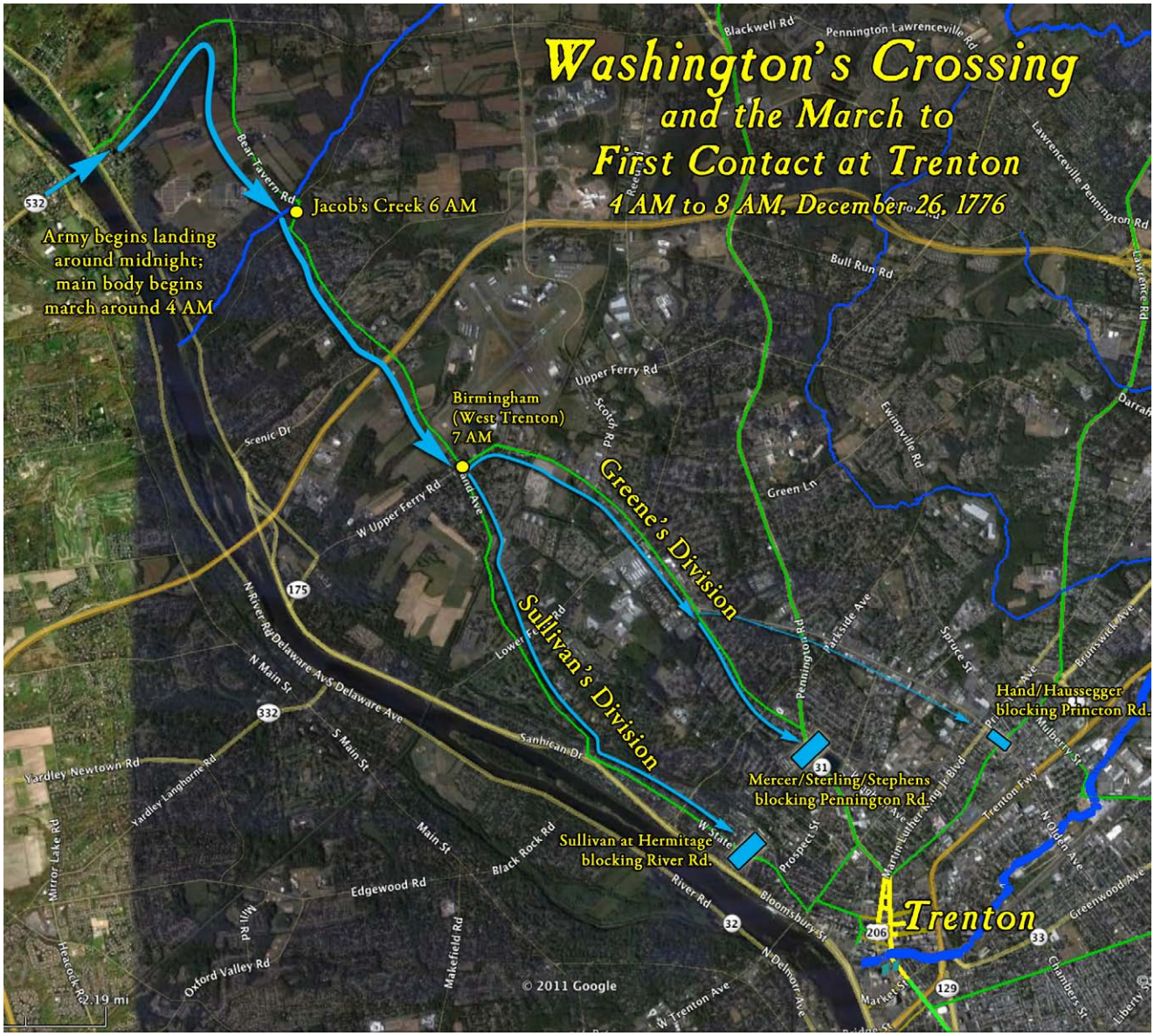
contact didn't occur until a little after 8 AM, almost an hour after sunrise (which occurred at 7:20 local time).

Paradoxically, the delay almost certainly helped Washington's cause. Hessian troops were in a high state of alert because of an unauthorized raid on Christmas Eve night by Adam Stephen's Fourth Virginia Regiment. As a result, Hessian guards had been up all night patrolling on Christmas Eve and Christmas night. They were not carousing (as many American accounts suggest). After two sleepless nights, with a blizzard howling outside, the Hessians relaxed just enough after sunrise to ensure that Washington's attack came as a complete surprise. Had Washington achieved his planned schedule, his army would undoubtedly have encountered Hessian patrols.

Remarkably, despite all of the hardships, the two wings of the Continental Army found themselves in place almost simultaneously, a few minutes after 8 AM. All of the major routes out of Trenton were now cut, except for the Bordentown Rd. heading south over the Assunpink Bridge. The first shots were fired within minutes of each other on both wings.

We will describe more details of the march and the subsequent battle in the context of the tour.

Below: Washington's army crossed the Delaware about 10 miles NE, and marched through the evening of December 25-26, 1776. The map below overlays Washington's route on a Google Earth image of today's greater Trenton. Green roads in the image below show country lanes of the time; yellow roads mark the extent of the Trenton's development as a town. Other roads didn't exist. Washington's army split into two division in West Trenton to attack the town from different directions.



Driving Directions to FBT-1

From Trenton: *Head north on Rt. 29. You will pass Washington Crossing Park. At Valley Rd (you'll see signs for "Howell Living Farm"), make a right (don't confuse Valley Rd with Pleasant Valley Rd, which you'll pass about a mile south).*

Follow Valley Rd. for about 6/10 of a mile and make the first left turn onto Goat Hill Rd. Follow Goat Hill Rd. for a little over a mile, and turn left on George Washington Rd.

From Princeton: *Take the Great Road (Elm Rd.) north to 518, and stay on 518 through Hopewell towards Lambertville. Make sure you follow 518 when it turns right out of the center of Hopewell. About 5.5 miles after you cross Rt. 31, 518 will curve right and start a gradual descent into Lambertville. You'll pass under some high tension wires. Approximately 6/10 of a mile after the wires, bear left onto Swan Street. Continue 2/10 of a mile along Swan Street, then turn left onto Standiford Street. This will turn into Goat Hill Road. George Washington Road will be a right turn, around 8/10 of a mile from Swan Street.*

Entering the Park:

The park's entrance isn't very well marked. George Washington Road makes a sharp right turn after about 2/10 of a mile, but to enter the park, you want to continue straight through the open wooden gates. There are state forest signs on the gates themselves (but if they're open, they're hard to see). There are no other signs. The parking area is a few hundred yards up on the left, and is obvious.

A trail map and additional information is available on http://hiddentrenton.com

Goat Hill (FBT-1)

Goat Hill is a wonderful place to kick off our self-guided tour, even if the historical record is a bit light. Local legend asserts that George Washington scouted the Huntterdon crossings of the Delaware from this site, a hill just south of Lambertville, that towers 400 feet above the river bed. If does offer some of the most inspiring views of the area.

That Washington visited this site is certainly plausible, if not fully documented. We do know that Washington was thinking about offensive operations as early as December 1, and was stuck in Trenton from December 2-8. It's certainly possible - even likely - that he would have used some of this time to check out the roads to the north and scout from Goat Hill..

During the Revolutionary War, Goat Hill's summit might well have been open pasture, supporting 360 degree panoramic views. Today the summit is mostly wooded, and the best views are to the north (away from Trenton and the crossing site). However if you visit in a season when the leaves are off the trees, you can see south and get some sense of the view Washington might have enjoyed.

Walking Directions: *From the parking lot, walk west along the woods road toward the river. In a few dozen yard, a second road will diverge to the left. To explore the summit and views south (when leaves are down), turn left and follow the road about half a mile to the summit. To see the views north, stay straight.*

This area was acquired by the State in 2009 and is not yet developed. Feel free to explore the area, though keep kids in sight as there are some dangerous slopes.

Driving Directions to FBT-2: *Exit Goat Hill Park and turn right when you return to Goat Hill Road. Turn right at the T onto Valley Road, and left onto Rt. 29 South. Continue south on 29 for a little more than 5 miles to a traffic light (to the left will be County Rt. 546). Turn* ***right*** *towards the river, and make the immediate right onto a road that parallels the river bank. The entrance to the parking lot is up a few dozen yards on your right.*

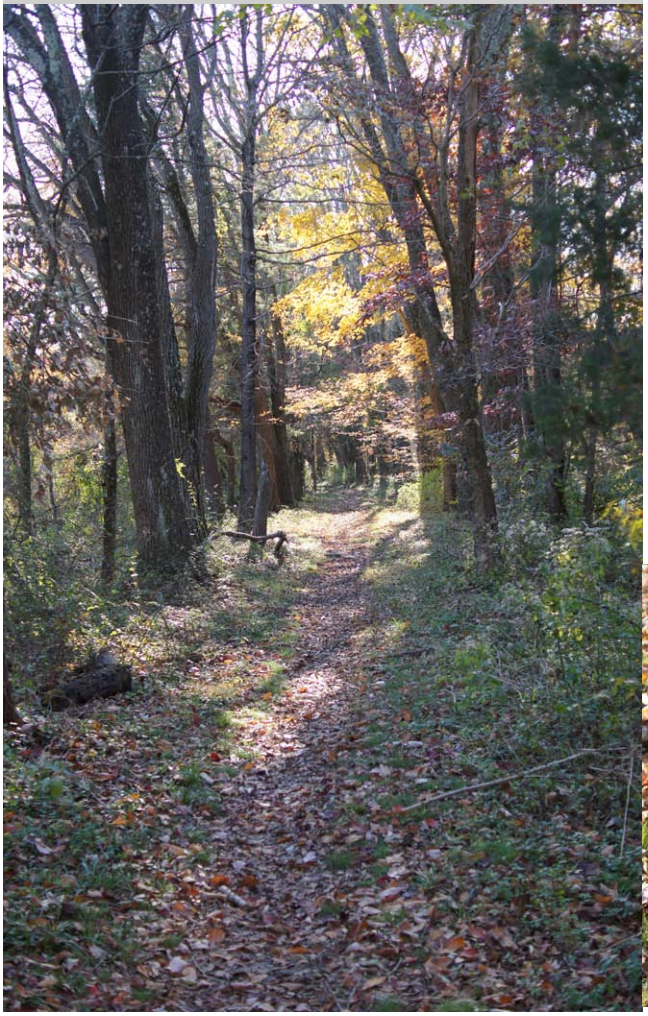
Washington Crossing Park (FBT-2)

The actual crossing site is commemorated by two parks, one on the PA side, and one on the NJ side. There's now a bridge over the Delaware here (which obviously didn't exist in 1776), so it's easy to visit both if you want. Of the two parks, I find the NJ Park to be a lot more interesting, and, so that's mostly what I'm going to describe.

The Visitor Center on the PA side is larger, and features a garish reproduction of the famous Emanuel Luetze painting of the crossing (the original hangs in the Met, and we've reproduced it on page 9), along with an exhibit of uniforms and weapons of the period. The NJ center is similar, sans fake painting, but smaller.

I recommend parking on the NJ side near the river to enjoy the crossing site, the Johnson Ferry House, and the beginnings of Continental Lane.

Walking Directions: *After enjoying the river view, walk back towards the road and walk over the canal bridge and then up the pedestrian bridge over Rte. 29. Continue walking until you enter the park proper, following the walking path to towards the Johnson Ferry house, which is the grey, wood-frame house with red trim you'll see across the lawn.*



If you look at the old engravings of Washington landing on the NJ shore (see next page), they always emphasize the steepness of the banks. Today, unless you look for it, it's easy to miss how steep the banks really would have been in Washington's day.

The bank climbs through 5 planes, each of which communicates "flatness" rather than "steepness" to your senses.

The first plane is the river itself. Because of upstream habitat degradation, frequent floods have "tamed" the Delaware to a certain extent. The river in Washington's time had a deeper channel, and the banks immediately along the stream would have been much steeper.

The second plane is the parking lot: note the steep embankment up to level of the canal. Third is the canal level, excavated in the 1830s. The fourth plane is Rt. 29, which was built in the 1920s. The fifth plane is the top of the bluffs, now a beautifully landscaped park.

As you walk up the pedestrian bridge, recognize that you're actually climbing up a fairly steep gradient, despite the fact that it's a pretty long ramp and you're climbing only 2 of the five planes. In Washington's day, it would have felt -- and been -- much steeper yet.

In these global-warming times it's rare to see the kind of ice floes which Washington encountered. Washington's soldiers had broken camp around 4 PM on Christmas Day. They were carrying heavy, ill-fitting packs containing 3-days' rations, 60 rounds of ammunition, and a blanket. Most had walked 5 miles or so to reach the crossing in the dark. Then they waited in the wind and

The Continental Lane runs through the park from the Johnson Ferry House to the intersection with Bear Tavern Rd.

Then and Now. Above: this 1819 painting by Thomas Sully emphasizes the steep banks at the landing site. When you visit today, the site is so heavily landscaped it sometimes hard to envision it. Below: Every year during "Patriot's Week", normally on December 26, the crossing is "re-enacted" (weather permitting).

sleet: 2, 3, 4 hours until it was their turn to clamber into the boats.

The crossing itself was terrifying. It was so dark that the boatmen could barely see the far shore in the little moonlight that filtered through the storm clouds. Few Continental soldiers of that era knew how to swim: falling into the freezing, swiftly flowing water meant likely death by drowning (or exposure). The boats were packed, and men stood in icy, ankle deep water that soaked through their boots (if they had them; many had bare feet).

It's remarkable, in the conditions, that every soldier, horse, and artillery piece made it safely across the water that night.

Every year during "Patriot's Week", usually on December 26, there's a re-enactment of the crossing that attracts quite a crowd. Men dressed in recreated uniforms row reproductions of Durham boats across the river. A few years ago it was sunny and nearly 70 degrees during the re-enactment, which seems very wrong. Today, if we encountered weather anything close to what Washington experienced, the re-enactment would be cancelled. I suppose that's progress.

The Johnson Ferry House is a gambrel roof farmhouse built circa 1740 by Garret Johnson, who ran a ferry service and tavern at this site (along with a 490 acre plantation). Judging from the stone barn which post-dates the crossing, his family made a pretty good go of it. The house itself was no doubt used briefly by General Washington and other officers as they waited for the army to get across. If you're visiting on a weekend, or during Patriot's Week, the house may be open to the public: the keeping room, bedchamber and textile room are furnished with local period pieces, thought to be similar to the furniture used by the Johnson family from 1740 to 1770

***Continuing the walk**: From the Johnson Ferry House walk up the hill towards the beginning of the Continental Lane. You'll note that there are two paved roads on either side of a path lined by trees. Walk along the path as far as you'd like.*

This is my favorite part of the park. The trees which line this path really do evoke the illusion of walking through an old-growth woods, even though paved roads are running parallel to this track, just a few yards on either side of you, most of the way to Bear Tavern Rd. Feel free to walk as much or as little of this path as you'd like: if you have the time it's a lovely walk. You'll pass the Visitors Center on the right. Purportedly, this tracks the original road, and follows the natural gradient most of the way. If you walk up far enough, you'll have the option to turn this into a short loop hike (print the trail map before you leave home. The visitor center is often out of them).

Of course, Washington's Army had a very different experience.

One contemporary observer noted that it was easy to see where the army had marched by following the blood trails in the snow. Many of the soldiers had boots that were worn out -- today we'd toss them long before they got so worn -- but in that pre-industrial era, a pair of boots was a major capital investment, and nearly impossible for an individual soldier to replace on a campaign. The notoriously under-funded Continental Army quartermaster corps couldn't be expected to provide soldiers anything as valuable as a pair of new boots.

Once the soldiers crossed into NJ, they had to wait an-

Top right: The Johnson Ferry House

Bottom right: If you walk out the Continental Lane for a mile or more, you can turn it into a pleasant loop hike. This shows the intersection with the "yellow dot" trail which follows Jeremy's Run back towards the parking lot.

other few hours while the rest of the army and the artillery joined them. Large bonfires were lit, so the soldiers alternately burned and froze as they tried to stay warm. It wasn't until 4 AM until they set off marching again, roughly 12 hours from when they broke camp on Christmas day. Their march was really only now starting.

As you walk along the Continental Lane, consider that for Washington's Army a howling northeast wind was directly in their faces. It was sleeting and snowing, and their heavy woolen garments would have been soaked through hours earlier.

We're very lucky.

WARNING. IF YOU ARE WITH YOUR DOG, DO NOT BRING IT TO THE VISITOR CENTER. On weekends and holidays (including Patriot's week) re-enactors fire off a black powder cannon at random intervals during the day. It's very loud, and is painful and traumatic for your dog if you happen to be close by. The Continental Lane is far enough away that it shouldn't be a problem, but closer is a bad idea.

Driving Directions to FBT-3: *From the parking lot next to the Delaware River at Washington Crossing, retrace your route towards Rt. 29, but cross the highway and continue straight on CR 546 (Washington Crossing/Pennington Rd) for about 1.3 miles. Turn right at the first traffic light onto Bear Tavern Rd.*

Jacob's Creek is about 1.3 miles ahead on Bear Tavern Rd.

Note: The bridges over Jacob's Creek were rebuilt in 2016, and interpretive signs added. For parking, cross the bridge, and pull over next to the signs where the shoulder widens (before the second bridge over the tributary).

Fording Jacob's Creek (FBT-3)

The Bear Tavern house stands on the NE corner of the intersection with Bear Tavern Rd. You'll make a right turn at the traffic light.

Altogether, it will take you approximately 5 minutes to drive from the Delaware River to Jacob's Creek. It took Washington's Army over two hours. Not that they were slow: they could sustain marching at 2-4 mph (with artillery), which was making incredible time for an Army on muddy, 18th century NJ roads (and much faster than the British could achieve).

But at that time there was no bridge over Jacob's Creek.

There's some debate about the precise location of the ford,

Above: Field artillery weighed as much as a ton. The carriages had no brakes, and had to be controlled by manpower. Previous page: The ravine at Jacob's Creek today. Right: New interpretive signs by the bridge.

but the best estimates are that it was a few hundred feet south of the current bridge crossing. You'll note that the current road jogs left shortly before the bridge, and jogs right 75 yards past the bridge. Undoubtedly the original road stayed more or less straight.

When you stand on the modern road, it's more than a little deceptive, because it was heavily excavated to reduce the gradient, and was carefully sited at one of the shallowest crossing points. You can see the high embankments on either side of the modern road which are the result of the excavation. The original road would have simply followed the original contours, cresting the ravine close to where a house now stands at the crest of the embankment. This is a substantially longer and steeper gradient than where the modern road crosses

In the 18th century, the ravine would have been even steeper than that. Today's degraded watersheds cause streams to flood more frequently. Over the years, these floods carve out a wider, shallower stream bed. In Washington's time, the road descended steeply into the ravine, crossed Jacob's Creek which was swollen by the rain, and then ascended steeply up the far bank. It was uncomfortable for the men (footing would have been icy and treacherous), but nearly impossible for the artillery pieces they were towing. The biggest of these weighed nearly a ton. They had to be unlimbered from the horses, lowered with ropes down to the stream, then dragged across the water and up the far bank, and then limbered to the horses again. The only available power was from soldiers' muscles (it was too steep for the horses).

If you feel up to walking along the bank of the river downstream from the road, you'll get a better feeling for the obstacle. The northern bank of Jacob's Creek was posted when I visited; the southern bank was not, and appears to be public land.

***Driving directions to FBT-4**: Continue SE on Bear Tavern Rd., jogging right and then left. Heading east on Bear Tavern Rd, continue another 2 miles to the intersection with West Upper Ferry Rd.*

Jacob's Creek to Birmingham (FBT-4)

From Jacob's Creek, Washington's army moved rapidly towards Trenton. While the elevation changes won't be very obvious in a car, for men on foot carrying heavy packs, they would be noticeable, and for the artillerymen who were driving teams of horses towing the big guns (especially downhill as the carriages had no brakes).

The ford over Jacob's Creek is at roughly 60 feet above sea level; the road climbs to 220 feet, cresting just after it crosses I-95. Today this stretch of road is filled with suburban sprawl, and is tree-lined. In 1776, it was mostly clear fields, and troops were exposed to the full force of the wind. Luckily the wind was mostly to their backs, and it helped propel them forward.

The little town of Birmingham was located at a crossroads, which is today called West Upper Ferry Road in the town of West Trenton (today part of Ewing township). Here Washington split his army into two divisions (some historians believe the split took place earlier, but we're following Fischer's account as documented in *Washington's Crossing*).

Birmingham to First Contact (FBT-5)

From Birmingham, Sullivan's division continued straight. The road would eventually descend towards the river (the road is named "Sullivan's Way" in his honor), and Sullivan would approach Trenton from the west along River Road (roughly where West State Street runs today). It is about 2 miles from here to the Hermitage, Gen Philemon Dickinson's house on the River Road, where Sullivan expected to run into a Hessian outpost.

Greene's division swung left here to enter Trenton from the north. This division retained the bulk of the artillery, and had the longer journey, a bit over 3 miles to a Hessian outpost at the Pennington road, and 4 miles to the bluff overlooking the town where the artillery would be set up to fire on the town (where the Battle Monument sits today). Washington accompanied Greene. Sullivan was ordered to delay his march to give time for Greene to get into position.

Like Washington, we're going to follow Greene's route into town.

***Driving Directions to FBT-6**: Make a left onto West Upper Ferry Road, and continue to the right as the road merges onto Parkway Ave. after 3/10 of a mile. Continue along Parkway Ave. until it intersects with The Pennington Road (Rt. 31), just under 3 miles further (or 3.2 miles total).*

If you decide to stop, go through the traffic light and park in the commercial strip on the far left corner. Otherwise, bear right onto Pennington Rd (Rt. 31 South).

Greene's First Contact at the Cooper Shop (FBT-6)

To follow Greene's route, you'll make the left at W Upper Ferry Rd, and follow it after it turns into Parkway Ave. The critical intersection comes where Parkway Ave intersects the Pennington Rd (Highway 31). Today this intersection is oddly angled but otherwise nondescript, supporting a struggling commercial strip. In 1776, it was also a place to shop, the location of a cooper (a maker of barrels, buckets, and pails). The Hessians had taken over the shop and established one of a series of outposts guarding every approach to Trenton, this one under the command of Lt. Andreas von Wiederholdt. Another such outpost was the Hermitage, guarding the River Road, which Sullivan would attack with his division.

The cooper shop was strategically located where the Pennington Road emerged from woods into open fields. A few minutes before 8 AM, the last of 7 Hessian night patrols returned to the shop without incident.

As it turned out, they returned just before Greene's division formed 3 attack columns a few hundred yards away, the heavy snowstorm masking the American approach.

Washington led the center column himself, which started with a "long trot" towards the shop. Lt. Wiederholdt himself emerged onto the shop's porch to stretch his legs just as the American vanguard came into range, and greeted him with a musket shot that missed. More Hessians emerged from the snow, and the Americans fired a ragged volley in their direction. Then three more, all at extreme range. No one seems to have been hit in the initial exchanges.

Wiederholdt soon realized that the 17 men in his small outpost were completely outnumbered. He organized his men quickly and began a fighting retreat towards Trenton, a little over a mile away.

As Washington passed the shop, he could hear the heavy boom of American artillery on the River Road, and the Hessian kettledrums beating an urgent call to arms. Unbelievably, the two wings had started their attacks within minutes of each other, with total surprise.

The First Battle of Trenton had begun.

***Driving Directions to FBT-7**: From the intersection with Parkway Ave and Pennington Rd (Rt. 31) bear right. Stay on Pennington Rd. until it comes to the Battle Monument, approximately 1.2 miles. There's usually plenty of parking around the Mall.*

Pennington Road to King Street (FBT-7)

Today, the Pennington Rd travels through a ragged combination of retail strips and poorly maintained housing. In 1776, it was a country lane surrounded by open fields.

The left column, consisting of Edward Hand's regiment of Pennsylvania Riflemen and Haussegger's battalion of German-speaking infantry from Pennsylvania and Maryland, were tasked with cutting-off the Princeton Road. They moved quickly east over open fields, and attacked a small Hessian garrison stationed on the Princeton Road (near the current intersection of Brunswick Avenue and Olden, close by St. Hedwig's Church).

Like Wiederholdt, these Hessians retreated in good order towards the town, and the two small units merged near where King and Queen Street came together (i.e. by the current battle monument).

Firing was difficult for both sides, because it was still snowing and powder in the firing pans of the muskets exposed to the elements would get damp and fail to ignite. The two, small Hessian units tried to make a stand, but realized that they would soon be overwhelmed by the superior numbers of the Americans, and continued their methodical retreat towards the center of town (i.e. south) using houses and outbuildings as cover.

Shortly afterwards, the American artillery arrived and started to unlimber on these "heights", deploying 16 of the 18 guns that Washington's army carried with it (compared to a total of 6 guns on the Hessian side). The other two guns were with Sullivan on the American "right" wing (as you face Trenton).

Today, as you stare out from the Battle Monument's steps towards downtown, it's hard to think of these as heights. But at the time, there was nothing but open fields between the monument and the town center, and no structures (other than a couple of churches) taller than two stories. The American 6 pounders had a range of at least 1,200 yards, which meant the entire town as far as the Assunpink, including the bridge, could be fired upon.

The only "blind spots" were behind St. Michael's Church, just a couple of blocks down King Street (today's Warren), on your right as you face south towards the city, and behind an orchard, located 500 yards SE of where you're standing, near where the current Trenton Fire Department is headquartered on Perry Street.

As the battle unfolded, the American Artillery placed

here would play a critical role. We recommend getting out of your car to enjoy the view.

Park to Walk (FBT-8)

So far we've been tracking the progress of Greene's division on the so-called "left wing" of the battle. Now we're going to shift our focus onto Sullivan's right wing and catch up with what's going on over there. We'll then describe the battle's end as the two wings converge and defeat the Hessians.

Because we're now in a compact city, we suggest you park the car in a central location and then walk to the balance of the locations. On weekends, especially Sundays, it's usually easy to park on the street in downtown Trenton. There's also a number of garages.

Should you decide to park in a garage, we suggest the Liberty Commons Garage at 16 E Front St between Warren and Broad.

Driving Directions to Parking: *From the Battle Monument, head south on Warren Street to Front Street (one block*

past State St). Turn left onto Front, and the entrance to the garage will be on the left in the middle of the block.

Walking Directions to FBT-9: *Once you're parked, walk up Warren Street to State Street and turn left (west) towards the state capitol building. Walk past the capitol and the state office building that follows. You'll then come to a wide mall that opens up to a park overlooking the Delaware on your left. For now, stay here on the sidewalk by State Street...*

Sullivan's Attack (FBT-9)

Some time during the 19th century, State Street replaced the original River Road, which paralleled the current route, a few yards north. Sullivan's Division made contact with a Hessian outpost, where expected, at the Hermitage, a farm owned by General Philemon Dickinson of the NJ Militia, who was serving as a member of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The Hessians lodged a company of Jägers at the main house, which was off the road, close to the river, and posted a smaller number of troops at a small guardhouse directly on the road.

Above: General John Sullivan was entrusted with leading the "obvious" attack down the River Road.

As did Greene's division, Sullivan surprised the Hessian defenders a few minutes after 8 AM. The Hessians tried to organize a defense, but soon realized they were vastly outnumbered and would be overwhelmed if they didn't withdraw.

As on the left wing, the Hessians resisted stubbornly.

Sullivan's two artillery pieces were kept with the lead elements and fired repeatedly at the retreating Hessians whenever they tried to make a stand. This encouraged the Hessians to retreat more quickly. Washington heard the boom of Sullivan's guns from his position about a mile north of the Hermitage, which let him know that Sullivan's attack was launched almost simultaneously with Greene's. From the Hermitage to this spot where you're standing is roughly 9/10 of a mile.[1]

Walking Directions to FBT-10: *Enter the park on your left, and walk down the mall to the railing to get a good view of the Delaware.*

PA Artillery Supports the Attack (FBT-10)

Seven batteries of artillery were positioned on the far shore and manned by PA militia, part of the defensive line established by Washington earlier in December. It's about 600 yards from where you're standing to the Pennsylvania bank and perhaps 800 yards from the River Road. Both are well within range of late 18th century artillery.

As the Jäger's came into sight, the batteries opened up a heavy fire. Solid shot smashed along the ice, and "shells" (cannonballs which carried a black-powder charge) exploded around the Hessian positions.

Between the cannonade and the American infantry attack, the Hessians fell back as quickly as possible.

Walking Directions to FBT-11*: Return to State Street, and turn right to walk east, back towards town. At Barracks St, make a right turn (make sure you read the signs on your side of the street: Barracks St is named Willow St on the other side of State Street). Walk to the middle of the block to the entrance to the "Old Barracks".*

Hessians Mobilize Out of the Barracks (FBT-11)

In 1776, the Old Barracks was the largest building in

1 The manor house for the Hermitage still survives on Colonial Avenue in Trenton, now subdivided into inexpensive flats. While in a sad state of disrepair, it's worth driving by if you have the time.

Trenton, and housed over 300 of the 1,300-odd Hessians stationed in Trenton. The barracks were built in 1758 to house English troops defending Trenton during the French and Indian War. Paradoxically, it was the cost of this kind of support which motivated the English to enact the Stamp Act and other taxes. The colonists greatly resented these taxes ("taxation without representation") which were a major contributor to the rebellion.

By the time Sullivan's vanguard reached here, the alarm had sounded over an hour earlier. The Hessian defense was being organized by Col. Johann Rall, and the bulk of the Hessian defenders were by now well east of here.

There's an admission charge to enter the barracks. The tours, while interesting, are geared towards children more than adults. If you want to see the barracks, I would suggest returning here ***after*** completing the rest of this self-guided tour.

To understand the rest of the battle, we need to understand how Col. Johann Rall, commander of the Hessians, organized the defense.

Walking Directions to FTB-12: *Walk down Front Street, which starts right in front of the main Old Barracks gate, back towards the garage. At Warren Street (originally King Street), make a left to head North, up the hill. If you peer up the street, depending on trees, you should just be able to see the top of the Battle Monument. Continue until you reach 151 North Warren St, which is St. Mary's Church, on the left side of the street.*

Rall's Headquarters and the First Counterattack (FBT-12)

At this site, Col. Johann Rall, commander of the Hessian forces in Trenton, maintained his headquarters in a wood frame house owned by Stacy Potts, a prosperous businessman. When the battle started, Rall was asleep in bed, and was roused, still in his nightshirt, by a junior officer shortly after the first shots were heard within the town.

This home is only 400 yards from the battle monument, and in the path of the two small garrisons retreating from Greene's attack, including Lt. Wiederholdt from the outpost at the Cooper's shop on the Pennington Rd.

Within minutes, Rall was dressed, on his horse, and questioning Wiederholdt for intelligence. Based on this report, Rall made a series of decisions that sealed the fate of the Hessian defenders, and quite possibly altered the history of the world as we've come to know it.

Wiederholdt reported that the enemy were attacking in strength, not only from above the town (i.e. south along King and Queen Streets) but were "already *around it* on the left and the right".

Fischer, in his book *Washington Crossing*, suggests the Weiderholdt was mistaken, and was erroneously reporting to Rall that they were surrounded. I'm not convinced. To someone who'd just retreated from the Pennington Road, a simultaneous attack down the Princeton Road was indeed an "attack from the right", and Sullivan's attack down the River Road was certainly an "attack from the left". So Weiderholdt's statement strikes me as accurate even if potentially misleading.

What Wiederholdt did not report (nor did he have any way of knowing), was that the Bordentown Road was still open, which provided a route for a fighting withdrawal for the entire Hessian garrison. Once over the bridge, Rall could have defended the high ground on the other side of the Assunpink, or simply executed a fighting retreat along the Bordentown Road until reinforced by Bordentown's larger garrison. The failure of Ewing's force to cross into South Trenton the previous night meant that this option was open, and would remain open for another hour until closed by elements of Sullivan's Division seizing the bridge.

Instead, Rall decided to counterattack within the town. Whether Rall was misled by Wiederholdt's report or simply responding to his own temperament is something we'll never know. Aggressive counterattacking was standard German tactical doctrine. Given Rall's experience with the Continental Army at Long Island, where it broke and ran under direct assault, perhaps it was a foregone conclusion that he would counterattack immediately. In any event, Rall's decision held fatal consequences to both himself and his command.

By now, Rall's Regiment had formed and marched up to join him by his headquarters. Many were quartered in St. Michael's church across the street. The American

guns were still unlimbering when the initial counterattack commenced.

Rall ordered a direct assault up King Street led by two field artillery pieces towed by 8 horses, and typically handled by 50 or so men. They moved up 150 yards beyond Rall's headquarters, to within 250 yards of the American position. This kept them out of musket range, but was close range for cannon. They unlimbered, and fired 12 quick rounds on the American position, damaging a number of American batteries which had not yet come into action. In the stormy, wet conditions, it was a remarkable achievement by superbly trained professionals.

However, American artillery started to return fire from the high ground almost immediately thereafter: first two cannon, then several more. Soon, the weight of fire from the American batteries told. Solid shot was bounding down King Street. Five of the eight horse were knocked down, grievously wounded. Eight Hessian artillerymen went down.

At such close range, the Americans batteries could deploy grapeshot, essentially turning their cannons into giant shotguns that ripped into the Hessian position. In addition, American infantry worked their way down the flanks of the Hessian artillery and started firing from houses and outbuildings. From shelter, they were protected from the sleet and snow, and their muskets could now fire reliably. The Hessians came under continuous musket fire that they later remembered as more deadly than the artillery.

In any event, it became overwhelming. The two lieutenants who commanded the batteries abandoned their field pieces in the street, and led their men back down the hill, over the bridge, to the far bank of the Assunpink.

***Walking Directions to FBT-13**: Walk across the street to the St. Michael's Churchyard.*

In the Lee of the Church (FBT-13)

With the Hessian Artillery now silenced, American artillery could focus on the mass of Rall's Regiment crowded onto King (Warren) Street, only 400 yards away.

From that range, the Americans would have been firing solid shot which rolled down the hard packed-street, slamming into the regiment, and anyone trying to join them from town. The iron shot caused horrible injuries: dismembering, decapitating, or disemboweling anyone in its path.

Now that the American artillery was in action, the Hessians needed to move. Rall led the regiment behind this stone church, one of the few structures in town that would stop a cannonball.

Above: Col Henry Knox was responsible for organizing the logistics for moving the artillery across the Delaware, and ably commanded sixteen guns on the heights above the town during the battle.

The current structure is quite different from the stone church that existed in 1776 (it was remodeled in the 1840s). Organized in 1703, St. Michael's suspended services during the war because the split between loyalist and revolutionary sentiment in the congregation disrupted worship. The vestry closed the church on Sunday, July 7, 1776, and didn't reopen it until 1783.

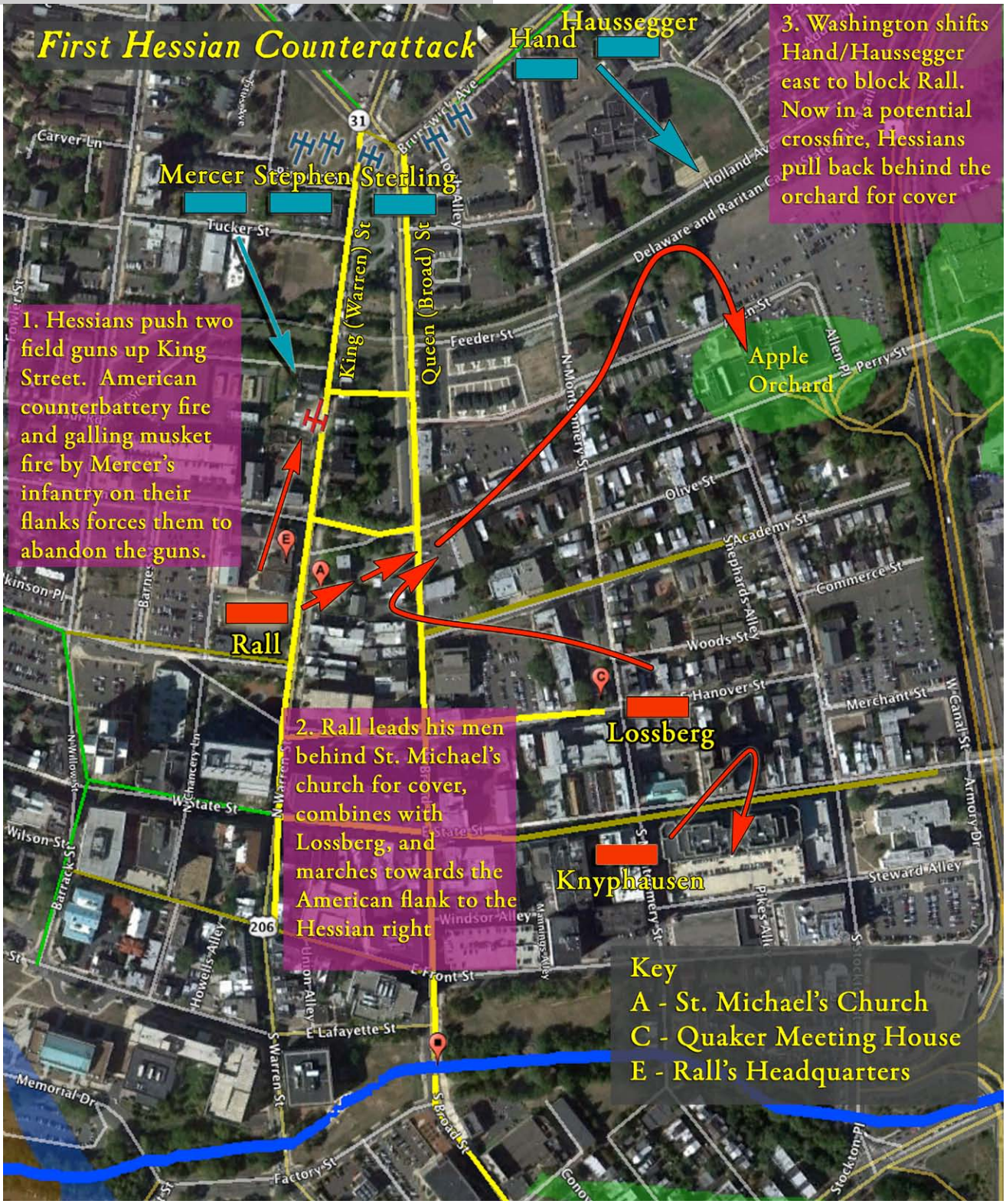
During the Hessian occupation of Trenton, the building was used as a barracks and artillery pieces were stationed in the churchyard. The two guns stranded on King Street likely came from here, and the Knyphausen regiment's two cannon sat here, unused, during the battle. See map on Page 6: cannon are marked above the letter "n".

For now, the stone walls provide Rall a brief respite. They allow Rall's regiment to survive the American cannonade while it waits to join forces with the Lossberg regiment and attempt a more powerful counterthrust.

***Walking Directions to FPT-14**: Exit St. Michael's Courtyard and head north (right) on Warren Street. Cross Perry*

Street and continue walking north until you come to a low bridge and the grassy belt of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. Turn onto the path which parallels the canal and walk east, crossing Broad Street (formerly Queen Street). Continue walking east as far as Montgomery Street (which didn't exist in 1776).

Below: Rall decided to counterattack within the town limits, and was checked by the American's superior numbers and firepower. Outside of the yellow streets, the area was open fields. The orchard was located roughly where the Trenton Fire department now has its main station on Perry St, near US-1.

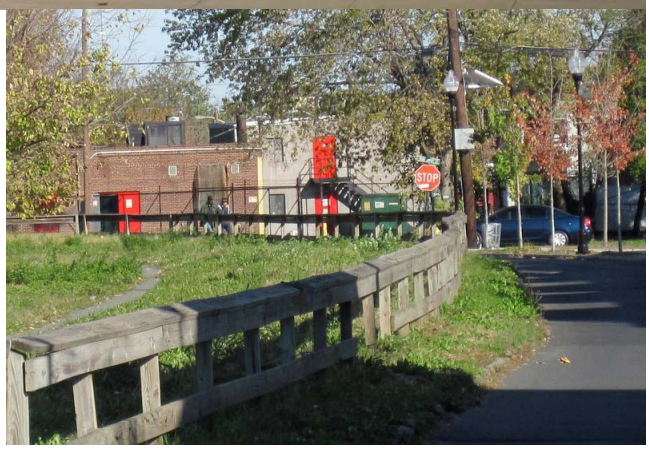


The Flanking Attack Fails (FBT-14)

The Lossberg regiment had formed in open fields east of the Quaker Meetinghouse (marker C in the map), about 300 yards SE of St. Michael's. The Meetinghouse stood by itself at the eastern edge of town, where the street (now Hanover Street) simply opened onto farmland. Following orders, Lossberg marches towards Rall. The two regiments, about 850 men combined, join forces and began to march uphill towards the American left flank (the Hessian right), presumably in a narrow column to limit the damage from American artillery firing from their left.

As you reach the bridge on Montgomery Street that crosses the canal[2], you are pretty much at spot where Rall broke off the attack. Their goal had been to take the high ground you see in front of you and to the left. Had this been successful, it would have provided an escape route towards Princeton (and British reinforcements), and even, possibly, allowed Rall to threaten Greene's position.

In any event, Washington was alert to the danger, and ordered Hand and Haussegger to shift their troops to high ground northeast of where you're standing, an order which they executed with great alacrity. For Rall to continue his advance, he would have to stop and form a line to press the attack up this hill, which was now held by more than 600 men. While Rall might have welcomed the odds of assaulting Hand and Haussegger by themselves, as his men advanced, they would be caught in a deadly enfilading fire[3] from the American artillery on his left (by the battle monument).



Rall recognized the danger, and halted his advance. By now it was obvious that the American had a decided advantage in fire power. In modern parlance, the ground he'd just vacated was a "killing zone". So he went about the only place he could and still stay in touch with the battle, withdrawing his men a few hundred feet from this spot, behind the apple orchard, which used to stand where Trenton's Fire Department is now based. The apple trees screened his troops from the American artillery to some extent.

You see the buildings with the fire-engine red doors in front of you. These are outbuildings of the Trenton Fire Headquarters. So the Orchard would have started just beyond and to the right of where you see these doors.

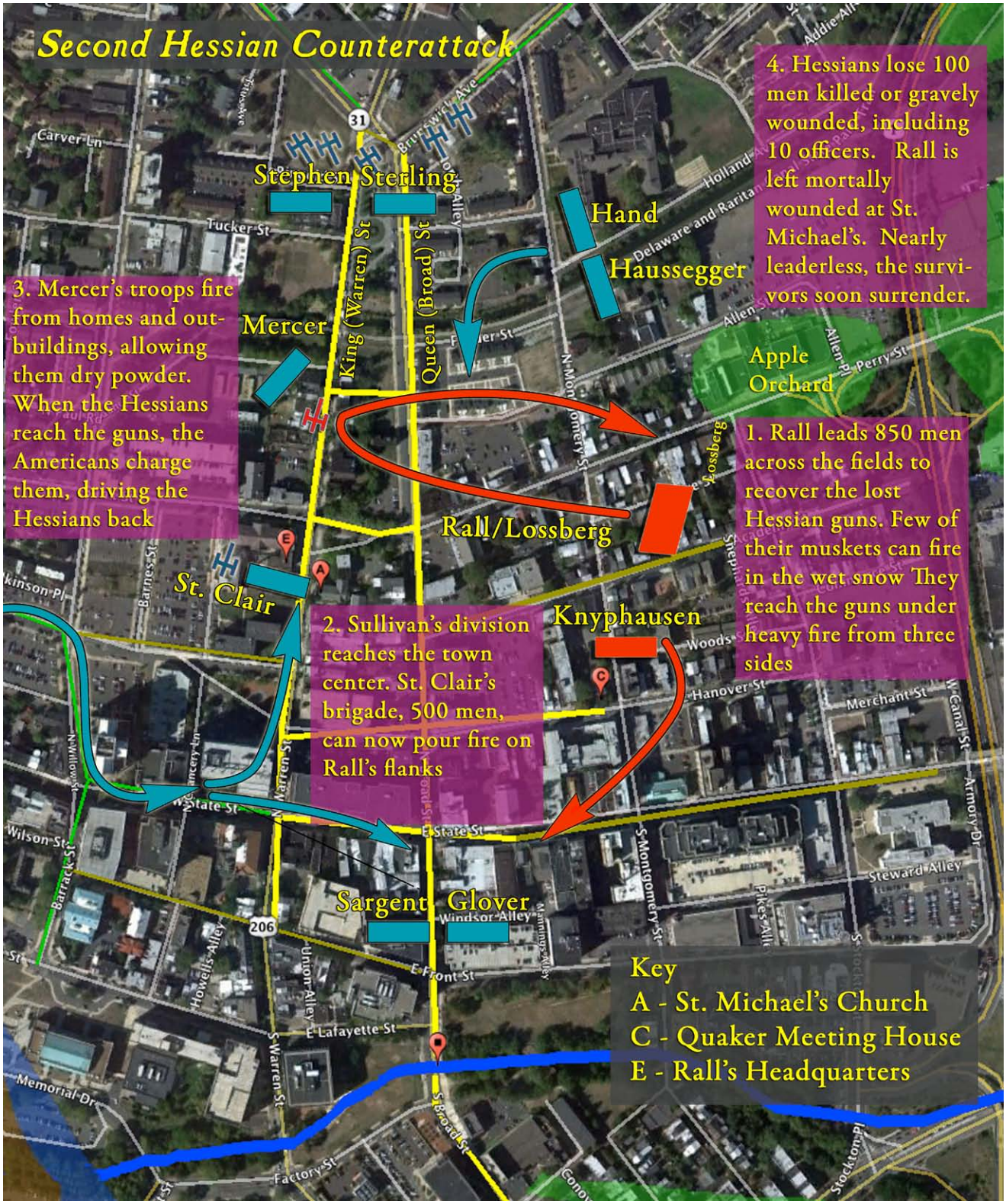
2 This canal wasn't here, of course. It was built in the 1830's.

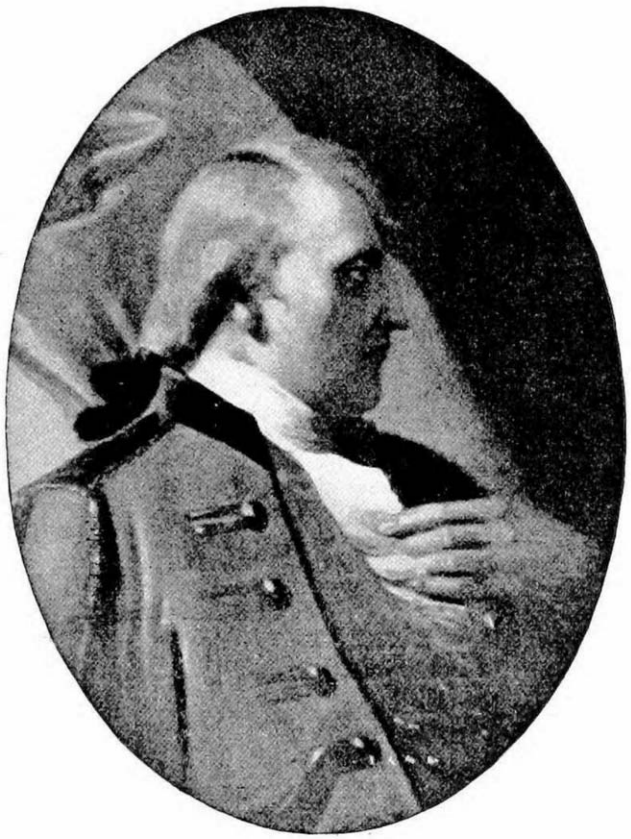
3 Iron cannonballs kill by direct contact. Attacking troops generally formed a line to face the enemy. This allowed the advancing soldiers to fire their muskets at the enemy simultaneously, and minimized the damage caused by artillery firing at them from the front. From the front, one solid shot could kill, at most, the number of troops lined up behind each other (in this attack, most likely 2 or less). *Enfilading fire* was fire from the side. A single cannonball could kill an *entire line of soldiers*. A case of 40 casualties from a single enfilading shot was recorded in a revolutionary war battle, and professional soldiers knew they had to avoid, at almost any cost, positions that allowed the enemy artillery to enfilade them.

***Walking directions to FBT-15**: Turn around, and retrace your steps back to King Street (Warren) where it intersects the canal. Before you do, read the next section.*

The Second Counterattack (BFT-15)

By now, Rall must have realized he was in a desperate situation. The American artillery must have been stronger than he expected. Still, experienced soldiers are often optimists. He surely would have harbored some hope that the Americans would break and run if he could only put them under pressure, as they had during the Battle of





COLONEL JOHANN GOTTLIEB RALL

Long Island where Rall had fought them previously.

At this juncture, Rall is informed that the regiment's two cannon are lying abandoned on King Street. He decides on a desperate course of action: he is going to march his two regiments right across the battlefield to recover them, along almost exactly the path we are now walking. He knows he's going to be marching directly back into the heart of Washington's position, and will be exposing his men to enfilading fire, something he'd decided against just a few minutes earlier. Now Rall does it anyway. Why?

In Washington's Crossing, Fischer describes Rall's motivation as "the honor of the regiment". Abandoning a field piece in the face of the enemy was a "stain" on the regiment's honor. As corny as that sounds today, it was a real motivation to 18th century officers.

But, in addition, what alternative did he have? Those two guns were a third of all the artillery the garrison possessed. If the Hessians were going to win this battle, he needed them. Moreover, he needed to do something to break the Americans. He couldn't do it by "hiding" behind the orchard, or even fleeing to Princeton.

He could only do it by marching "straight at 'em", right

Two contrasting depictions of the crisis. Above: An 1870 Ilman Brothers engraving of E. L. Henry's fanciful painting depicts George Washington himself leading the charge against the Rall's counterattack. In fact it was his cousin William, a captain in Mercer's Brigade. Courtesy of Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library, used with permission. Previous page: Military illustrator H. Charles McBarron created this "realistic" painting for his 1975 book *Soldiers of the American Revolution,* published by U.S. Army Center of Military History.

into the American killing zone. Right back to his two guns, lying on King Street, very close to where the canal now crosses Warren Street.

By now, Mercer's troops had moved forward and taken possession of the homes and outbuildings, firing out of windows and doors. Critically, the structures sheltered them from the rain and the damp. Now they could keep their powder dry as they loaded and fired. The Hessians, marching across the fields, were completely exposed to the wet snow. As a result, most were unable to return fire.

In addition, Sullivan's division had broken through via the River Road, and St. Clair's brigade marched up King street towards the fighting, supported by at least one of their own cannon. 500 more men could now fire on Rall's left wing.

The result was carnage.

Remarkably, the Hessian soldiers did reach the guns and tried to bring them into action. Soldiers from Mercer's brigade counterattacked, led by Captain William Washington, a cousin of George, and Lieutenant James Monroe, another Virginian and the future president. Monroe was wounded and nearly bled to death. His spurting artery was clamped by a NJ surgeon who had volunteered to help the Continental Army the night before.

Their desperate charge drove off the Hessian gun crew who had already loaded powder: the American turned the guns back on the fleeing Germans and fired a load of canister at them.

Overwhelmed by the American's superior firepower and numbers, taking musket fire on three sides, the Hessians started falling back towards the orchard once again.

***Walking Directions to FBT-16**: From the canal park at Warren Street, read the next sections first, and then walk south towards town. Continue past St. Michael's Church, Hanover Street, and make a left onto E State St. Cross Broad St, and stop at the First Presbyterian Church, 120 E State Street, in the middle of the next block on the left.*

(FBT-16) Victory and Surrender

The Americans were appalled by the carnage they had caused. Sergeant Joseph White, who had fired the Hessian gun at the retreating soldiers, expressed the feelings that many felt, "My blood chill'd to see such horror and distress, blood mingling together, the dying groans, and 'Garments rolled in blood.'[4] The sight was too much to bear." The Americans especially targeted the Hessian officers. Two were killed and 8 gravely wounded in the battle, mostly in this action.

Rall himself was wounded twice at the crisis of the battle on King Street. His men would carry him to St. Michael's church and leave him on a bench. He would die the next day. Other Hessian soldiers, many wounded and some not, took refuge in the church as well. The Americans posted guards on the door.

Now nearly leaderless, the remnants of the two Hessian regiments retreat slowly back towards the orchard. The Americans leave their prepared positions and surround them, 50 paces behind. American cannon are loaded with canister, prepared to fire into the mass of Hessian soldiers, who are no longer fighting but talking among themselves. Offered surrender terms, they accept and lower "their proud colors" to the ground.

The Knyphausen Regiment was not part of these surrender terms, and is still on the battlefield near the Quaker Meetinghouse. It had started to join Rall in the attack just described, but then, perhaps misunderstanding an order, countermarched to the SE of town. As the battle started, their acting commander, Major von Dechow, was not fully recovered from wounds suffered at Fort Washington six weeks previously, and this may have contributed to his lack of aggressiveness. In any event, when Rall was surrendering, Dechow was desperately trying to find a way out of Trenton. He led his regiment towards the bridge over the Assunpink (which figures importantly in the Second Battle of Trenton), but finds it blocked by Sargent's and Glover's brigades. They head east along the Assunpink looking for a ford, and take fire from American troops which have deployed on the far shore specifically to prevent such a crossing. Some of the American infantry are so aggressive that they wade out waist deep in the icy stream to get a better shot.

Other Americans pursue Knyphausen from the town, pouring fire onto their rear and flanks. Dechow is

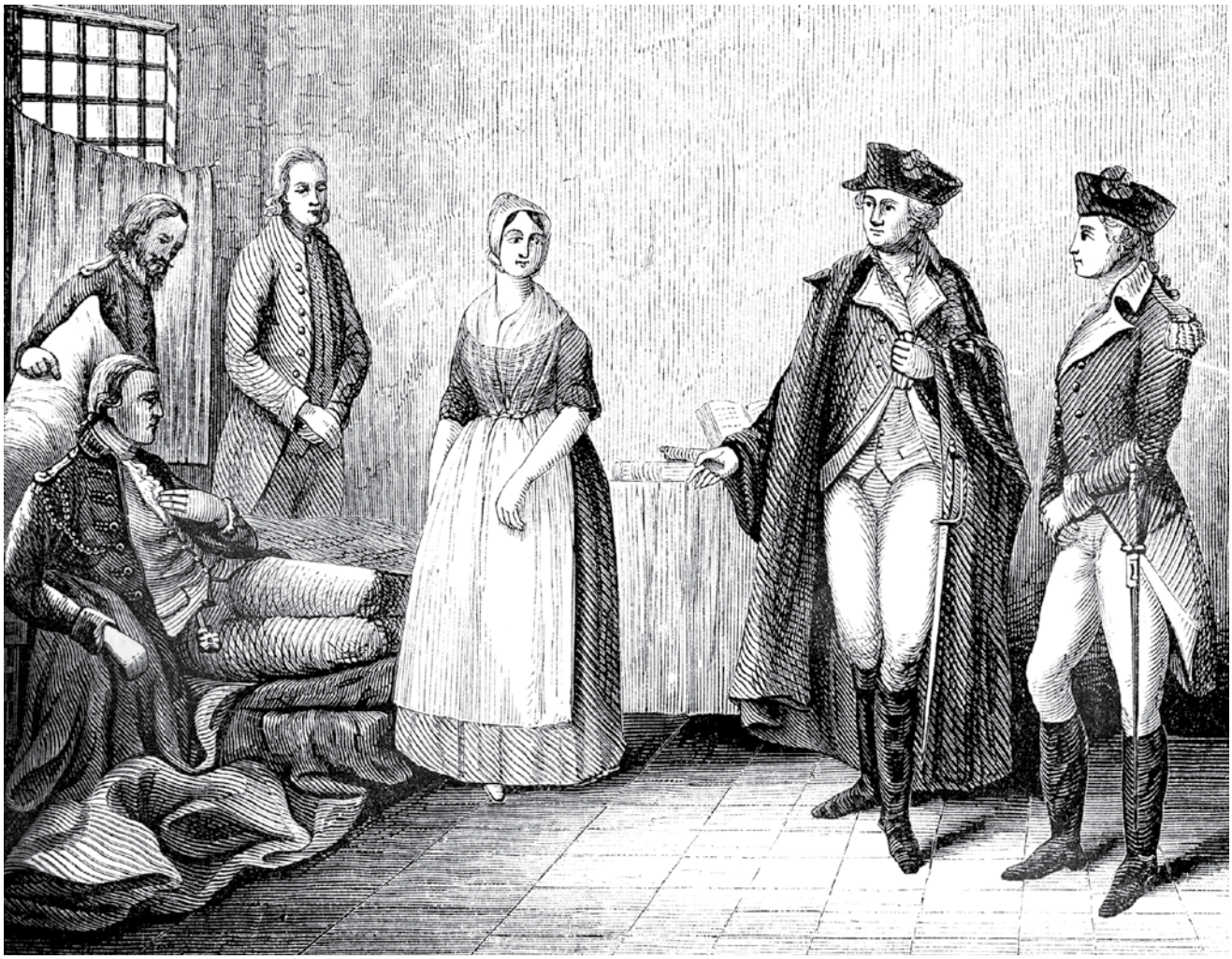
4 White is quoting from the Old Testament, Isaiah 9:5: "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire."

wounded again, and is dying. He summons his officers and proposes they surrender. One says to him, "Major, we cannot give ourselves up like this." Dechow replies, "Do as you like, I am wounded." He is carried off the field. They decide to surrender, though 50 men later escape, cross the Assunpink, and make their way to Princeton.

The First Battle of Trenton is over. 891 Hessian soldiers were taken prisoner.

Rall would die of his wounds the following day, but not before Washington visits him on his death bed. Rall and

Above: The west churchyard of the First Presbyterian Church in Trenton, where Colonel Rall and seven Hessian soldiers were buried in unmarked graves. The only obvious place in the churchyard where there would be room for 8 graves is an open row at the far end of the lot. Below: Washington respected Rall's valor, and visited him on his death bed the day after the battle. Previous page: a fanciful etching of the surrender by Rall's regiment, by Henry Hoff, published in 1850. "Smith's Mountain" in the background (today's Baldpate Mountain and Goat Hill beyond) appear Catskill-like in scale. Etching courtesy of Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library, used with permission.

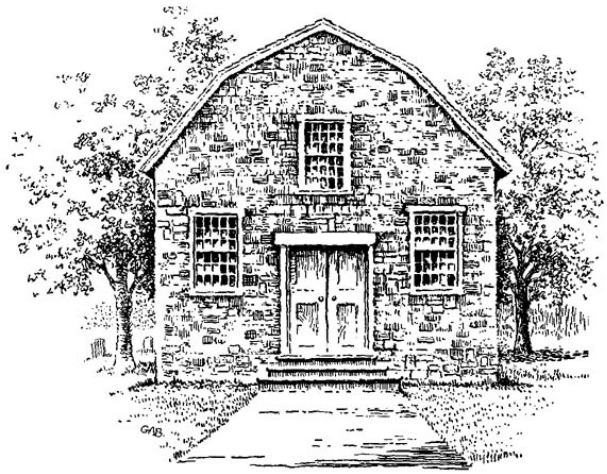


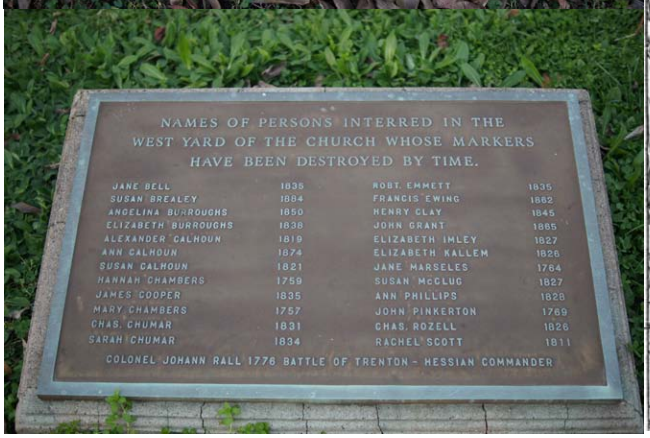
7 other Hessian soldiers are buried in this west churchyard (left, as you face the church), in an unmarked grave. Originally, the graves were unmarked for fear they might be desecrated by angry residents.

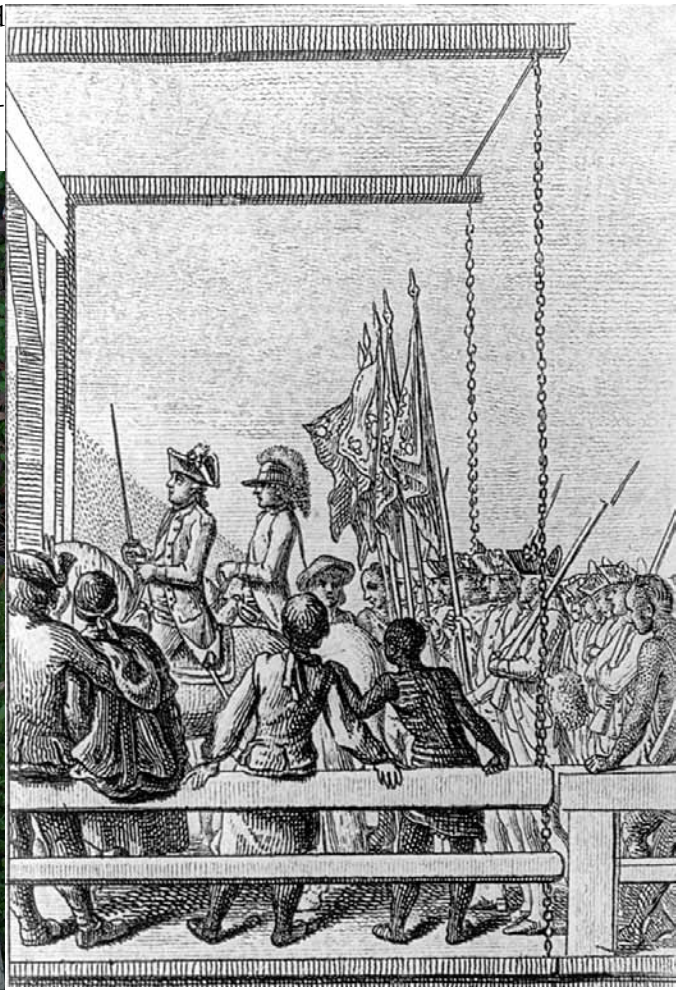
The graves in the churchyard make interesting viewing, and while the Hessians are the only combat casualties from the Battle of Trenton buried here, the graves of another dozen American veterans of the revolutionary war are listed in the graveyard registry.

The only space in the west churchyard which seems large enough to hold 7 bodies (if they were buried side-by-side), is an apparently empty row at the far western end of the churchyard. There is a modern bronze plaque commemorating Rall in the far NW corner of the lot, located at the end of this empty row.

This church building dates from 1805; the original structure was much smaller.







Top right: a much smaller church stood at this site in 1776; the current church replaced this building in 1805. Left: the only markers in the graveyard that acknowledge the Hessian's burial. The modern bronze plaque (upper) appears to be a replacement of one much older. The German inscription was written by Rall's aide and means, "Here lies Colonel Rall. All is over with him." It is located at the far NW corner of the site, on the only empty row in the churchyard, so it's quite possible it actually marks his grave. A second bronze plaque (lower) acknowledges the original Rall marker was "destroyed by time". It pre-dates the replacement plaque. There is no mention of the other Hessian soldiers that I can find. Bottom right: The Hessian prisoners were marched through the streets of Philadelphia on December 30 to confirm news of Washington's triumph. This engraving was published in a contemporary German newspaper to illustrate the news story of the defeat.

The Second Battle of Trenton

At the end of the First Battle of Trenton, the Continental Army was exhausted from the long, forced marches, the two nights' exposure to rain and snow, and the terror and horror of what they'd witnessed and done.

Casualties among American soldiers were incredibly light. "Two killed" is the official casualty figure, though this fails to acknowledge the illness and deaths which would take place in the aftermath, as well as at least two soldiers who died of exposure during the march to Trenton. Many American soldiers were ill with fever and dysentery. Most suffered from frostbitten hands and lacerated feet.

The Hessian prisoners had to be dealt with, and the wounded tended. Complicating matters further, a large quantity of rum was found in captured Hessian stores, and many American soldiers drank themselves into a stupor before the supply was secured.

Nevertheless, by December 27 virtually all of Washington's Army had returned to its camps in Pennsylvania. *What now?*

Washington was clearly concerned, and apparently had no specific plan of action in mind. Most of the men's enlistments would be ending in 4 days' time. He called a council of war late in the evening on the 27th to discuss "what future operations may be necessary".

Minutes before the council met, a courier brought Washington a dispatch from Colonel John Cadwalader, leader of the Philadelphia Associators (militia).

Cadwalader had crossed the Delaware that afternoon with 1,800 troops, mostly Associators, and marched as far as Burlington, NJ, about 20 miles northeast of Philadelphia, and a dozen miles southwest of Trenton. He reported that the enemy were in "panic" and that "another success will raise an army by next Spring." Once on the NJ shore, Cadwalader's troops demanded to stay and fight the British.

Washington reported Cadwalader's news at the Council of War without proposing a specific plan of action in response. After a heated discussion, a consensus emerged for troops to "prepare to cross the River" again.

And so they did, starting the next day. This time, the half frozen river near Trenton presented even more difficulty than on December 26. It took several days for the

Above: John Cadwalader's December 27th dispatch was a critical influence on the decision by Washington's Council of War to risk a second battle.

Americans to all cross over. Nearly the entire Continental Army would be consolidated on the NJ shore (including the units which had failed to come over on the 26th plus additional militia): altogether some 6,900 men and 40 artillery pieces.

Despite the hardship, morale was high. "Never were the men in higher spirit than our whole Army is," wrote Thomas Rodney, a lieutenant in the NJ Militia in a letter to his father on December 30. "All are determined to extirpate them from the Jerseys; but I believe the enemy's fears will do it before we get up with them."

All of the units whose enlistments were about to expire agreed to extensions so they could participate in the coming battle: most signed up for just another month, at the considerable price of $20/man. Washington was reportedly appalled at the price, but happy to keep his army intact.

Still, the plan of campaign was undecided until a second Council of War on December 30, when it was determined to fight a defensive battle in Trenton, behind the

banks of the Assunpink.

Washington planned to set up a strong defensive position and dare the British to come after him.

The British Reaction

Lord William Howe, the overall commander of the British expeditionary force in the United States had received the Knight of the Order of the Bath for his victory over Washington at Long Island. Prior to the Battle of Trenton, British opinion generally held that the rebellion was

about to collapse, and that reconciliation between the colonies and the Crown was possible. As we described, Howe appeared to avoid a decisive battle with the American army during its retreat across New Jersey in late November and early December, timing his arrival in Trenton to miss the withdrawal of Washington's rear guard by an hour.

This "kindness" had been betrayed by subsequent events. Howe was embarrassed and angry. He turned command of the army in NJ to his most capable and aggressive commander, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, with a simple order: find the rebel army and destroy it.

On December 27, Cornwallis had been onboard the HMS Bristol in New York Harbor about to sail for England when the galloper arrived with the news of the Trenton disaster. His emergency leave was cancelled. He would not return to England to join his ill wife, Jemima, for another year.

The expeditionary force had been scattered across the NY/NJ region, and Cornwallis' immediate actions were to send out orders to British and Hessian units sufficient to concentrate 10,000 soldiers in Princeton. Cornwallis waited until New Year's day to leave NY, and made the 50 mile journey down the Post Road to Princeton in one day, despite knee-deep mud and rain. One can imagine he arrived in a foul mood.

He called a council of war that evening and "announced his intention to advance toward Trenton in the morning". His plan was brutally simple: march his entire force to Trenton down the Post Road in a single thrust against the rebel army.

Washington had wanted the British to attack his Army at Trenton. Now, Cornwallis was happy to oblige.

Left: Lord William Howe, commander of the British Expeditionary Force. Below: General Charles Cornwallis, who was charged by Howe to attack and destroy the rebel army

Driving Directions to SBT-1: *We're going to start the tour in downtown Trenton to inspect the American defenses along the Assunpink. On a weekend, it's usually easy to park on the street here. On a weekday, because of the number of state workers in Trenton, you'll probably need to park in a garage. We recommend parking at the Marriott Lafayette Yard*

From US-1 South: *Take the last exit in NJ sign posted Capitol Complex. Turn right off the ramp onto New Warren Street. Cross Market Street (New Warren becomes South Warren, the original King Street). Park near Assunpink Dr (the second right turn after Market), or if street parking isn't available, pull into the hotel garage on the left, just after you pass Assunpink Drive.*

From US-1 North: *Take the second exit after you cross the bridge into NJ (Market Street/Train Stations/Rt. 33). Turn left at the light at the bottom of the ramp to go back under Rt. 1. This becomes Market Street. Follow Market across Broad St, and turn right onto S. Warren Street. Park near Assunpink Dr (the second right turn after Market), or if street parking isn't available, pull into the hotel garage on the left, just after you pass Assunpink Drive.*

From the Turnpike: *Take Exit 7-A and follow signs to I-195 West towards Trenton. Stay straight when I-195 turns into Rt. 29, and stay left to continue on 29 when Rt. 129 branches off to the left. Go through the tunnel, past Waterfront Park, and past the US-1 exit. Take the Memorial Drive exit, which will swing you past the War Memorial Auditorium. On the weekends, if there's no event at the War Memorial, you may be able to park in the lot on the right, opposite the Auditorium. If not, turn left onto Peace Street, and left onto S. Warren, and park in the hotel parking lot immediately on your left.*

Walking Directions from Parking to SBT-1: *Walk to the driveway where you entered the hotel parking lot, which is immediately next to the Assunpink, at the intersection of S. Warren, and Peace St. (it is called Assunpink Dr. on the other side of Warren). Turn right on Peace St, and walk one short block to the Memorial Drive, which bridges the Assunpink again.*

The Left Wing (SBT-1)

The Delaware River anchored the left wing of Washington's defenses. In 1777, the mouth of the Assunpink, where it dumped into the Delaware, was about 50 yards west of where you're standing now. Today the banks are more than 250 yards west, having incorporated some land that was originally islands, to support the construction of Rt. 29.

As we'll see, the American defensive line stretched more than 2 miles northeast, as far as Henry's ford, and St.

Clair's brigade was defending Philip's ford, another mile further on. In this stretch of river, between here and the bridge at the base of Queen Street there was a third ford (known as the "lower" ford).

On the day of the battle, there had been a quick thaw. Air temperatures in the 40s were melting snow that had fallen over Christmas, and raised the level of the stream.

Washington certainly expected a frontal assault on the town of Trenton from the direction of Princeton, since his troops were concentrated here. Of 6,000 men under his command on the day, roughly 2,000 were concentrated along the next 400 yards of front, from the Delaware, defending this first ford site, across the Bordentown Road, and onto the hill dominating the bridge and Stacy's Mill. We'll walk there now.

Walking Directions to SBT-2: *Backtrack along Peace Street, and cross S. Warren, following Assunpink Dr. until you reach Broad Street.*

The Bordentown Rd and Stacy's Mill (SBT-2)

Today, the Assunpink is so bridged, culvertized, and channelized that it's often hard to appreciate how valuable it was as a defensive barrier. But Washington had attacked Trenton himself, and chose this as the place he most wanted to defend.

You'll note that the stream on your left has disappeared once you cross Warren Street. To the great shame of the City of Trenton, one of the most hallowed spots in American history was covered over in the 1960s with the intention of constructing a department store on this site, between Warren and Broad Street. The store was never built, but what should have been an historic river view

became, instead, an empty eyesore for two generations. Fortunately, there is now a funded plan to remove this culvert, and perhaps as you visit this site, the Assunpink is flowing openly. But when this was written, as you ap-

proach from the west, the river is hidden below a grassy depression, and you can barely see the top of the bridge supporting Broad St peeking above the lawn.

In 1777, there was only one bridge over the Assunpink, right here, at the junction between the Bordentown Rd and Queen St. This is not that original structure, but one built in the 19th century to replace it.

If you look to your right, south, along Broad St (what was once the Bordentown Road), you'll note the road climbs significantly. This is the beginning of Mill Hill. Today's roads have been graded and flattened which reduces the apparent slope. In 1777, this was the edge of town. Structures lined both sides of the street for a few hundred yard (roughly as far as Market Street). After that, the road became a country lane running through fields and woods.

Walking directions: *Cross S. Broad and continue walking on the paved path along the south bank of the Assunpink. Pass the first iron bridge, and continue walking until you come to a lovely residential street with a statue of George Washington. Read the following information as you walk along.*

On the other side of the S. Broad, you start to see the Assunpink again. It's still channelized, but at least you can see water flowing You can also still see remains of the original mill race in the middle of the channel just on the other side of the bridge.

This is all that remains of Stacy's Grist Mill, the original industrial site in Trenton. It was built in 1679 by Mahlon Stacy. On the other side of the Assunpink, today, is Mill Hill Park. But in 1777, this was mostly a mill pond, designed to provide a more even flow of water through the mill race. No enemy troops could cross there, so the defenders could focus their efforts on the Mill and the Bridge. Washington clearly expected this to be the focus of the battle, and in this assumption he turned out to be correct.

Knox was still in command of the American artillery. He had brought with him all of the 18 guns the Continental Army had possessed on December 26, plus the 6 Hessian guns captured in the first battle, plus some additional field pieces he'd acquired in Pennsylvania. Altogether, Knox controlled about 40 guns, more than Cornwallis expected. This turned out to play an important role in both the battle here and, indirectly, in the Battle of Princeton. 18 guns were arrayed right here on this hill, one as close as 40 yards. Another 10 or so were down by the lower ford, and a dozen were positioned at the upper fords.

Three lines of defense were arrayed on this hill, all able to fire on the bridge. Hand and Haussegger's brigades, who'd served so ably on the Princeton Road in the first battle, ended up here, though not after some harrowing

adventures up the Princeton Rd, which we'll describe shortly.

As you keep walking, you'll pass a 19th century girder bridge, and see a residential neighborhood emerging on your right, on the high ground. This is Trenton's Mill Hill neighborhood. The oldest houses here date from 1825. In 1777, this area was wooded. If you keep going, you'll find yourself on a small green, with a playground next to the street by another bridge. You can cross the bridge into a lovely circle with a statue of George Washington. A path then continues east along the Assunpink along the north bank as far as Stockton Street. The Assunpink disappears into a culvert there. At Stockton, we've gone as far as we can go for now.

***Driving directions to SBT-3**: From the hotel garage, make a right turn onto Warren St, and stay straight when it crosses Market St and becomes New Warren. Continue to the last exit before the "Trenton Makes Bridge" over the Delaware, turning left onto the ramp for US-1 North. Follow US-1 North a little more than 2 miles to the Mulberry Street exit. At the bottom of the ramp, turn right on Mulberry, and follow it as it swings to the right. You'll see the river beyond a park on your left. Park here on the street.*

The Right Wing (SBT-3)

Once you passed the Olden exit, US-1 has been roughly paralleling the Assunpink, which runs anywhere from 150-350 yards off to the right. The American Army defended it the entire way.

The park here is called Mulberry Street Park. It is newly constructed, and the first phase of a long term plan to build an "Assunpink Greenway" along the entire length of the stream within the City of Trenton.

At the far end of the park, more or less where Nottingham Way crosses the Assunpink, was located Henry's ford. It was one of the two key "upper fords" of the Assunpink. As such, it was defended in strength.

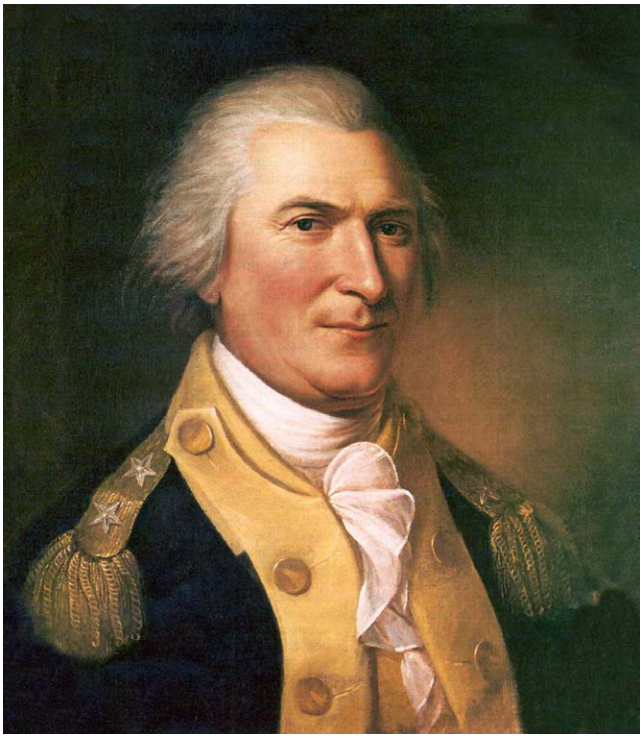
Henry's Mill is roughly two miles from the bridge at Mill Hill where we just left. The intervening two miles of front, from Stockton Street to this ford, was defended by roughly 1,700 troops. The majority of these were Cadwalader's Philadelphia Associators (i.e. militia) who, while enthusiastic, weren't considered particularly reliable in a tough fight. They did have 5 of their own guns.

Centered here was General Thomas Mifflin's brigade of 1,500 Continentals from Pennsylvania, and most of the remaining artillery. After the bridge and ford in town, this was thought the most likely place for the British to attack, and it might have been, had the battle continued for a second day along the Assunpink.

While it's hard to imagine today, in 1777 it was possible to see the heights by the Battle Monument from here.

***Driving Directions to SBT-4:** Continue on Mulberry Street which is now heading south towards town, and then bear left at the first intersection onto Nottingham Way to cross the modern bridge over the Assunpink. Approximately 3/10 of a mile after the bridge, make the left turn onto Roberts Avenue, and then the first left turn onto Whitehead Road. Continue approximately 9/10 of a mile on Whitehead, through the traffic light at Sweetbriar Road, and cross the bridge. Turn into the driveway immediately after the bridge (600 Whitehead Rd), and park immediately.*

Above: General Thomas Mifflin, who defended Henry's Mill. Below: General Arthur St. Clair, defended Philip's Mill and is credited with suggesting the attack on Princeton at Washington's war council on January 2.



Top: Panorama of the site of Henry's Mill (SBT-3), taken from the edge of Mulberry Street Park. The "ford" would have been located at the site of the current bridge (seen on the right side of the image). A slight drop in the streambed is the reason for locating the mill here, as it enables a water wheel to turn with more power. You can just see the rapids created by the drop in the left of the panorama, and a close up of the drop in the middle photo.

Below: remains of the mill dam at Philip's Mill (SBT-4). The dam itself is in the dead center of the image, covered with stones. Whitehead Road is traversing the bridge at the right side of the image, and you can see cars on Sweetbriar Road on the other side of the Assunpink, through the trees in the center/left.

The remnants of the mill pond is the smooth water which can be seen to the left. The riverbed at Philip's Mill drops a couple of feet here, greater than at Henry's Mill, creating the white water in the Assunpink to the right of the dam.

The combination of a drop in the streambed and a nearby ford created the "perfect" mill site which could sell its services to farmers on both sides of the stream.

Philip's Mill (SBT-4)

Philip's Mill was the second major ford of the Assunpink on Washington's right wing, located here, nearly 3 miles from town.

Arthur St. Clair commanded approximately 1,200-1,400 men here: his own brigade, plus remnants of Glover's and Sargent's.

In addition to their responsibilities for defending the ford, they were charged with patrolling the roads between Trenton and neighboring towns, especially including Princeton.

St. Clair is credited with suggesting that the American Army withdraw from Trenton and attack Princeton at Washington's war council on evening of January 2. This gambit is today considered the masterstroke of the battle, responsible for achieving a major victory for Washington. No doubt the experience gained by patrolling from this spot informed St. Clair's suggestion.

In this light, this obscure corner of the Trenton battlefield, which doesn't even rate a maker, is one of the most important locations in American history.

Driving Directions to SBT-5: *from the turnoff on Whitehead Rd, turn right and then the immediate left onto the ramp for US 1 North. Drive for approximately 7 miles to the Alexander Rd exit. Turn left at the top of the ramp to head north into Princeton. After approximately 1.5 miles, turn right onto University Place. You'll swing past the Princeton train station, and the University campus will be on your right. On-street parking is difficult in Princeton. As you approach the top of University Pl., feel free to park anywhere you see a meter. If you can't park here, continue to Nassau Street and turn right, and then left onto Palmer Square, which is a one-way loop, counterclockwise. There are two city-owned garages on Palmer Square as well as meters. Park either on the street, or in one of the garages.*

Walking Directions*: Wherever you park, get onto Nassau Street and head east. On the south side of the street, you'll come to the main gates of the University, opposite Witherspoon St. Enter campus through the main gates. Nassau Hall is the building in front of you.*

Nassau Hall (SBT-5)

Princeton was the center of Howe's original strategic plan for western New Jersey. Its garrison was supposed to support outposts such as Trenton and Bordentown, a strategic conceit that Washington shattered on December 26. The original garrison consisted of a brigade of light infantry, a brigade of heavy infantry, and 3 troops of dragoons (light cavalry), perhaps 3,500 men.

The British had occupied the town since the first week of December: fortifying the campus of the college, and turning Nassau Hall into a barracks and storehouse. Its stone cellar became a dungeon, and roughly 30 "country people", known or suspected American patriots, were locked up. Their farmhouses were occupied and looted.

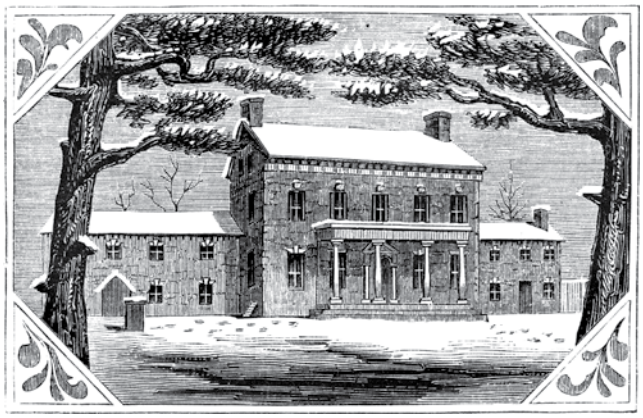
Captain Friedrich von Münchausen, Howe's Hessian aide, wrote about entering the town during the initial pursuit of Washington in early December, "Princeton is a nice little town, and has a fine college... A remarkably excellent library has 'til now been spared by the war." But not for long.

For a town of a few hundred souls, the insertion of nearly 4,000 British regulars was traumatic enough. On New Year's day of 1777, Cornwallis' emergency orders had doubled that number to something like 8,000. We can only imagine the chaos, with British troops camped as far as 5 miles from the center of town. This would play a critical role in the battle to come.

Directions to SBT-6: *Our next stop, Morven, is about 4/10 of a mile west. If it's a nice day, you can certainly walk. However, it's on our way out of town, so most tour-goers will elect to drive. Head back to Nassau Street and turn west. At Bayard La, Nassau Street will merge with 206 S, and will change its name to Stockton St. Continue straight. Morven is a stately home on the right, about 1/10 of a mile past the intersection. Turn into the driveway and drive to the home. There is an admission charge to enter the museum. You can certainly visit the home if you'd like, but it is not necessary. Morven is closed Monday and Tuesday and the gates will be closed. On those days, you might want to pull in on the driveway just prior to Morven, for the Princeton Borough municipal offices, to get a somewhat closer view through the fence.*

Morven (SBT-6)

Morven[1] is where Cornwallis held his council of war on January 1, shortly after he arrived from New York, and the place where the senior British and Hessian officers lived while in Princeton. It had been thoroughly ransacked and trashed by the time Cornwallis arrived, with one family portrait being used for fencing practice.



The difference between Cornwallis' councils of war and Washington's are instructive. Washington rarely expressed an opinion until he'd gathered input from his senior officers. He often took their advice. Cornwallis, by all reports, was much more authoritarian He didn't seek counsel this evening, he delivered the order of the day: the entire British army in Trenton would march before dawn the following morning, down the post-road, to confront and destroy Washington's army in Trenton.

Only one officer, Hessian Colonel Carl von Donop, spoke against the plan. He urged Cornwallis to march in two columns: one down the post road, as planned; the other a flanking movement through Cranberry and Crosswicks, to turn the American right.

Had Cornwallis taken the advice, the history of this battle might be very different, but he didn't. He felt the enemy were weak, and that a direct attack with concentrated force was the best way to defeat them.

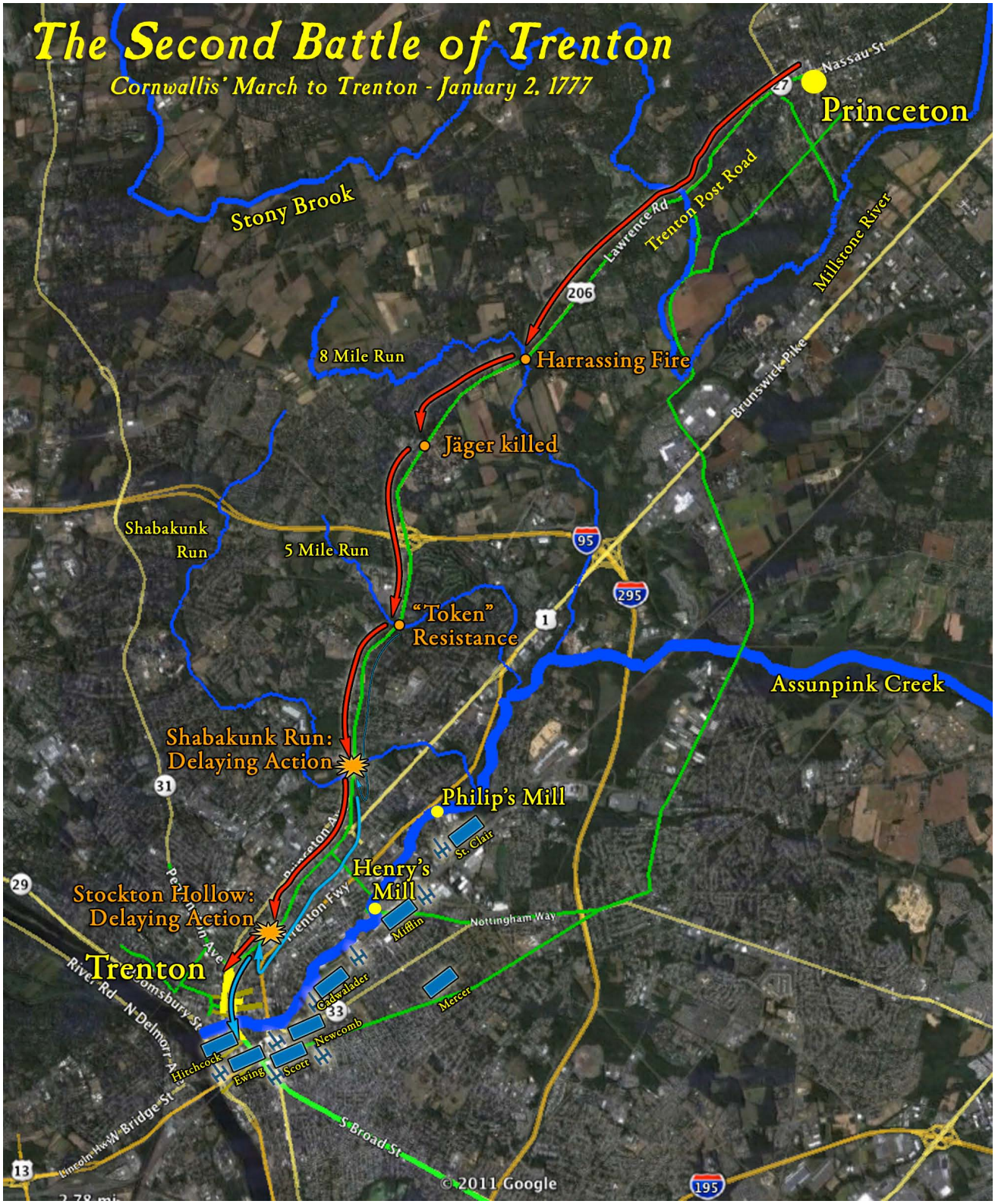
Driving Directions to SBT-7: *From the Morven driveway, make a right turn to continue towards Trenton on 206 S. Continue south for about 3½ miles to Fackler Rd. Landmarks: at a little less than 2½ miles from Morven, you'll go through the light at Province Line Rd. From there, it's about 9/10 of a mile to the Fackler Rd turnoff: bear left on this short spur road that takes you to a stop sign next to a small bridge. Make the left on Fackler and turn into the first driveway on the right which belongs to a small utility building (possibly a pumping station) next to the stream.*

The March Begins - Princeton to Eight Mile Run (SBT-7)

For Hessian troops camped as far as Rocky Hill, 5 miles east of Princeton, the march began in the middle of the night, hours before dawn of January 2, 1777.

The Hessians were angry, spoiling to avenge the humiliation visited upon them by Rall's surrender 6 days earlier.

1 Morven belonged to Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He fled Princeton when the British arrived, but was turned-in to British authorities by a Tory friend at whose home he had taken shelter. To avoid prison, Stockton swore allegiance to the Crown, earning notoriety as the only "turn-coat" signer, a distinction which would haunt him for the rest of his life.



Above: Cornwallis (red lines) marched on Trenton with his entire army down the Trenton Post Road. The march started before dawn, but was delayed by a combination of bad weather (a January thaw turned the road to mud) and effective delaying tactics by roughly 1,000 troops under Hand (cyan lines) Cornwallis didn't arrive in Trenton until 4 PM. Sunset came at 4:45, leaving time for only a few direct assaults in Trenton itself. Cornwallis intended to attack the American right wing the next morning. During the night, Cornwallis shifted troops east in preparation for assaulting Philip's Mill and Henry's Mill.

Colonel von Donop, the senior Hessian officer, ordered his men to take no American prisoners, on pain of 50 lashes.

Altogether, the British column was nearly 9,000 troops and included many of the best imperial units in North America, which were among the best infantry in the world. It included the First Battalion of Foot Guards, and two battalions of Highland Infantry, 6 heavy battalions of Grenadiers (two Hessian and four British).

British artillery included 12 pounders, the heaviest field pieces used in the British army at the time, which threw a projectile twice as heavy as the largest American guns, which were 6 pounders.

In reality, the British force was too large for the Trenton Road, which was made even worse than usual by an early-winter thaw. The ooze was so deep that men sank in places to their knees, and even thighs. The men tried walking parallel to the road in fields, but these soon became as muddy as the road. It was bad for the men at the head of the column, and even worse for those towards the end. Every mile was struggle, and it was over 11 miles from Nassau Hall to the bridge over the Assunpink where the American Army waited.

All down the Trenton Road, small parties of American troops took up positions in small patches of woodland and sniped at the British column. Today's 206 follows the original path almost exactly.

Here, at the crossing of Eight Mile Run (today called Shipetaukin Creek), a British cavalryman was shot and killed, the first recorded British casualty of the battle.

It was not to be the last.

Driving Directions to SBT-8: *From the driveway make a left onto Fackler Rd, and bear left to cross over the creek (you're taking the south fork of Fackler, not the north fork you entered on). Turn left at the stop sign to continue on 206 S. for approximately 1.2 miles. You'll see a golf course, which belongs to the Lawrenceville School, on your left, followed immediately by a white church with a simple facade. Turn left to pull into the church parking lot, which is a 50 yards before the building, in front of the graveyard. This is today called the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, at 2688 Main Street.*

Maidenhead (SBT-8)

In 1777, this was a rural hamlet known as Maidenhead (today it's Lawrenceville). The British Army had travelled roughly 5 miles from Princeton, and had more than 6 miles left in its journey.

It was nearly 11 AM when the van of the British column, a group of Hessian Jägers ("hunters" in German but, in this context, meaning light cavalry who were specialists in reconnaissance) approached this spot and saw an American on horseback. This was Elias Hunt, a civilian who lived in the village. When he saw the cavalrymen, he turned his horse and kicked it into a gallop. One of the Hessians gave chase, and was gaining rapidly.

American pickets were hiding behind this church. One shot at the Jäger and missed. Then two more shots. This time the horse and rider both fell dead. The pickets disappeared into the woods and were never seen by the Hessians.

The Jägers decided to wait for the main body of the column to reach them, which they did about noon. There were only 5 hours of daylight left.

Left: Jägers ("hunters" in German) were elite, mounted infantry who were specialists in reconnaissance. They carried short-barrelled rifles, that were more accurate than muskets.

Driving Directions to SBT-9: *Turn left out of the church parking lot and continue on 206 South for approximately 1.8 miles, to a small bridge where you'll see a small blue historic market marker. This is 5 Mile Run. We'll continue to Shabakunk Run, which is another 1.5 miles. Park in the Notre Dame High School lot: enter about 100 yards before the bridge and loop around to the exit near Shabakunk Run.*

The Action at Shabakunk Run (SBT-9)

On January 1, Washington had ordered a group of elite American infantry to cut the Trenton Road, and to stop or delay any British units that tried to pass. On New Year's day they set up a block at Eight Mile Run (SBT-7) and beat off a determined attack by British Grenadiers, inflicting over 100 casualties.

Now they'd set up a new operation. They posted a small force at Five Mile Run to provide early warning, and their main force here, on the south bank of Shabakunk Run, in the woods: Charles Scott's Virginians, Edward Hand's Maryland and Pennsylvania Riflemen, and Haussegger's Pennsylvania Germans. They were supported by Thomas Forrest's Pennsylvania company of six guns. Altogether they were about 1,000 men.

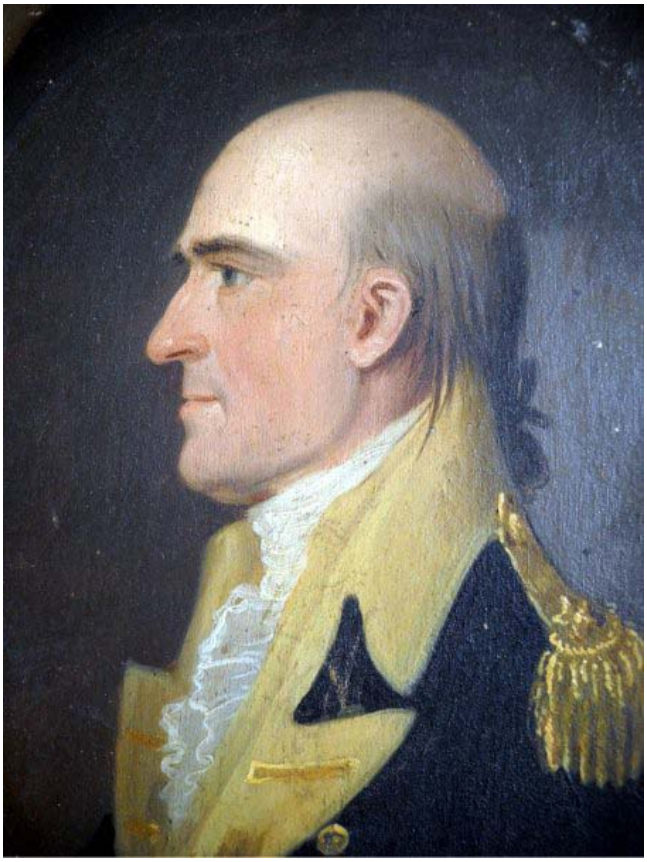
Around 1 PM, the British vanguard approached Five Mile Run. The small American force shot at them, then scampered back here to Shabakunk.

Compared to streams running through highly developed suburbs today, the 18th century stream almost certainly would have had steeper banks and a deeper channel. As today, the south side of the stream was wooded, the north side was open fields. The bridge had been destroyed.

In charge of the Americans was General Roche-Fermoy, a Frenchman who'd talked himself into a senior leadership position in the Continental Army based on claims of European experience. Whether true or not, some Americans viewed him as a "worthless drunkard". As the vanguard of the British column came into sight, he mounted his horse and galloped off towards Trenton. He was not seen again until after the battle. Luckily, Edward Hand was made of sterner stuff, and he took over command.

Hand's men waited under cover until the British advanced guard came into close range, then opened a "deadly fire from ambush" that "forced them back in great confusion on the main body".

The logic of 18th century firepower is unforgiving. An army marching along a narrow road has to march in a long "column". If they run into opposition, only the vanguard can fire on the enemy: more or less 3 ranks can



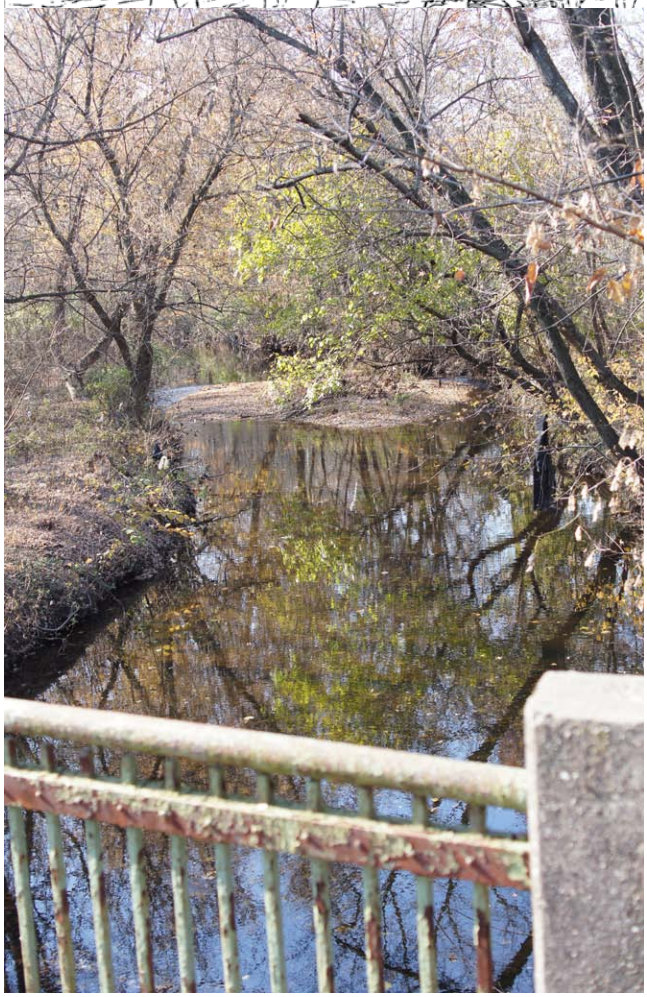
Col Edward Hand (later General) was second in command at Five Mile Run, and led an effective delaying action when his commander ran away as the British army appeared.

fire simultaneously (one kneeling, two standing), so, for example, if the army is marching 8 abreast, only about 24 muskets can fire simultaneously no matter how many troops are marching behind them. In addition, a column attacking artillery puts itself into enfilading fire: one solid shot can potentially take out dozens of troops down the column.

To bring his massive fire power to bear, Cornwallis now needed to stop and deploy his men into a line of battle. This was a complex maneuver, especially under fire. He also decided to deploy his artillery and sweep the woods before sending in his infantry. Altogether, it took more than 2 hours before Cornwallis was ready for the infantry assault.

Hand's men were now under severe pressure, outnumbered by more than 6 to 1. They retreated slowly through the woods, and managed to escape with all of their artillery intact.

But they'd won a major victory of time. It was nearly 3 o'clock and only two hours of daylight remained. The bridge over the Assunpink was still 3 miles away.



Left: Shabakunk Run today. Above: British troops were assaulting American troops sitting in cover behind the stream. This was the kind of situation which suited the brave, but poorly trained American infantry.

Driving Directions to SBT-10*: From the bridge over Shabakunk Run, head south 1/3 of a mile on 206 S to a traffic light where Princeton Ave, Princeton Pike, and Lawrence Rd all converge. Continue straight along Lawrence Rd fir another 1/4 mile to a traffic circle. Enter the circle and take the second exit (on the opposite side of the circle) which will be Brunswick Avenue (ignoring the sign to 206 S, which you will be paralleling). The first traffic light south of the circle on Brunswick is Mulberry Street (which would take you to Henry's Mill if you made the left). Our destination is another 2/10 of a mile further along Brunswick Ave, at the low point of the road, opposite a U-Haul rental store on the left side, which is probably as good as anyplace to find a parking place.*

Stockton Hollow (SBT-10)

As you approach this spot along Brunswick Avenue, sneak a look out the left side window, down any of the streets that you pass. You'll see they all descend fairly rapidly into the Assunpink valley, and you'll be able to see flashes of US-1 as you pass. The Assunpink is just east of US-1.

When you get to "Stockton Hollow", you're at another spot which has been so excavated and flattened over the

years that it's difficult to recognize from the 18th century accounts. In those days, this was a steep ravine. Today, about all you can say is that this is the saddle: Brunswick Avenue descends continuously from the Circle, and then starts to ascend again from this spot. Obviously, the Battle Monument is quite prominent here, though partially hidden by the hill in the foreground. This is the reverse side of hill that Hand and Haussegger seized in the first battle to foil Rall's flanking movement.

Washington rode out from town to confer with Hand and to plead for more time. An officer who witnessed the exchange wrote in his memoirs that Washington "thanked the detachment, particularly the artillery, for the services of the day," and "gave orders for an obstinate a stand as could be made on that ground, without hazarding the [artillery] pieces." Washington then rode back into Trenton to continue organizing defenses in town.

In 1777, this was all open country. The Assunpink was clearly visible from this spot, and the action was carefully observed with admiration by the American officers holding the upper fords.

Once again, Cornwallis was forced to deploy into line of battle, and bring up his artillery. An artillery duel began and continued for 20 or 25 minutes. Then the infantry closed, and the American gunners started taking musket fire as well. An American Major Wilkinson watched the action from his position near Philip's Mill and recalled that "the evening was so far advanced that I could distinguish the flame from the muzzles of our muskets."

There was no way that Hand's reinforced brigade could stand here any longer against the full weight of the British Army. A Hessian observer wrote that the Americans "withdrew in the most perfect order." Most of Hand's troops withdrew along the Princeton Road back into town, though a few fell back to the fords on the Assunpink.

It was after 4 PM, and sunset would occur at 4:46. Hand's troops had delivered the extra time Washington had asked for.

Driving Directions to SBT-11: *Continue south on Brunswick Avenue. As you approach the Battle Monument, Brunswick turns one-way against you, so jog left on Montgomery St and the first right on Montgomery Pl to enter the monument plaza from the side. Loop around the one way system at the top of the plaza to start heading south down Warren Street, and park next to the plaza.*

Cornwallis' Display (SBT-11)

Lead elements of the British Army were now pursuing Hand's troops back into town. Simultaneously, Cornwallis deployed the bulk of his army in a line of battle in preparation for the final assault. He formed his men in battalion order at the crest of the hill, right here, across a front of hundreds of yards, so that they'd be fully visible to Washington's men waiting at the bottom of the hill along the Assunpink.

Wilkinson, watched this sobering spectacle unfold from Philip's Ford on the far right wing. In his memoirs he recalled the "awful moment" when:

> Cornwallis displayed his column, and extended his line. If there ever was a crisis in the affairs of the Revolution, this was the moment; thirty minutes would have sufficed to bring the two armies into contact, and thirty more would have decided the combat; and covered with woe, Columbia might have wept the loss of her beloved chief and most valorous sons.

Across the entire front, the American army realized (as Cornwallis intended) that they were in a desperate situation. Ensign Robert Beale in Scott's Virginia Brigade was stationed in the center of the line by the bridge:

> This is the most awful crisis: no possible chance of crossing the River; ice as large as houses floating down, and no retreat to the mountains, the British between us and them.

Defending the lower ford, and watching the spectacle above him, Captain Stephen Olney remembered:

> It appeared to me then that our army was in the most desperate situation I had ever known it.... We had no boats to carry us across the Delaware, and if we had, so powerful an enemy would certainly destroy the better half before could embark...
>
> Not withstanding all this, the men and officers seemed cheerful, and in great spirits; I asked Lieutenant Bridges what he thought now, of our independence. He answered cheerfully, "I don't know; the Lord must help us."

Fortunately, Cornwallis didn't have time to bring his entire army into action. There were less than 30 minutes of daylight remaining.

Private John Howland also deployed with Hitchcock's Brigade defending the lower ford recognized their good fortune:

> On one hour, yes, on forty minutes, commencing at the moment when the British troops saw the bridge and the creek before them, depended the all-important, the all-absorbing question whether we should be independent States or conquered rebels.

Driving Directions to SBT-12: *Follow Warren Street south as far as Lafayette. Park on the street here, or park in the hotel garage as you did before. Walk back to the bridge over the Assunpink at Broad Street, walking across Lafayette St, to approach the bridge from the North*

Hand's Men Rejoin the Defense (SBT-12)

From here, the soldiers who had so valiantly executed the delaying actions along the Princeton Road were streaming into town, with British light infantry and Hessian Jägers in hot pursuit.

Washington saw them coming, and ordered Hitchcock's Rhode Island Continentals to cross to the northern bank of the Assunpink to slow the pursuers down. Several musket volleys and artillery fire forced them to scramble for cover.

The Assunpink was running fast and high, from the snow melt during the warm day, and few Continental soldiers would chance wading across, even to escape deadly enemy fire. The narrow bridge now became a bottleneck with a wide mass of American soldiers backing up along Queen Street as a combination of Hand's and Hitchcock's men tried to return to the relative safety of the south bank.

As the men streamed back, Washington directed them to their defensive positions. One soldier remembered his own passage over the bridge:

> The noble horse of Gen. Washington stood with his breast pressed close against the end of the west rail of the bridge, and the firm, composed, and majestic countenance of the General inspired confidence and assurance in a moment so important and critical. In this passage across the bridge it was my fortune to be next the west rail, and arriving at the end of the bridge rail, I was pressed against the shoulder of the general's horse and in contact with the general's boot. The horse stood as firm as the rider, and seemed to understand that he was not to quit his post and station.

Washington stationed his most trusted soldiers, three regiments from his own Virginia, led by Colonel Charles Scott, closest to the bridge. One member of the regiment remembered:

> General Washington came and, in the presence of us all, told Colonel Scott to defend the bridge to the last extremity. Colonel Scott answered with a "tremendous oath" and repeated, "To the last man, excellency."

Almost all of the American soldiers north of the Assunpink made it across, but not quite all. One Presbyterian chaplain was captured, tortured, and killed by Hessian troops. Col. Haussegger, who commanded the German Brigade as part of Hand's defense, along with a few members of his rear guard, didn't make it across, and was captured by British infantry. But such losses were the exception.

Walking Directions*: Walk along the path on the south bank of the Assunpink as the spirit moves you. Feel free to walk down the amphitheater, down to the nearly the level of the stream, to get a different perspective.*

Assault (SBT-13)

Cornwallis' troops were desperate to break through the American defenses before nightfall. All were veterans of the New York campaign, when American troops broke and ran away when faced with a determined attack, and most expected the same result here.

At about 5 PM, after sunset, but during the lingering twilight, a combined force of British light infantry and Jägers tested American resolve at the lower ford, closer to the Delaware. Hitchcock's Rhode Island Continentals fired repeated volleys, and the American artillery opened up. The attackers scrambled for cover.

But the main attack was coming, this time at the bridge.

The initial assault came from the Hessian Grenadiers. Grenadiers were soldiers especially trained for assault operations. Its members were selected from the largest and physically strongest recruits. Their job was to storm well defended sites and seize them.

The Hessians brought up 4 artillery pieces to support them, two on Queen Street, and two behind a house. Jägers, who were armed with short-barreled rifles, took firing positions inside buildings along the creek and began sniping at the American gunners. The Hessian guns fired at the American defenders for a dozen minutes, answered by the American artillery.

Now, preliminaries over, the Grenadiers marched steadily towards the bridge in a dense column, big men, made to look even taller by their distinctive, mitre-shaped headgear.

Colonel Charles Scott's speech to his Virginian regiments defending the bridge is recorded. He must have been quite a character (he would later be elected Governor of Kentucky). Ever since muskets were first used in battle, the most common error made in firing volleys at a closing enemy is to fire too high. These Virginians were no exception, as evidenced by Scott's speech:

> Well boys, you know the old boss has put us here to defend this bridge; and by God it must be done, let what will come. Now, I want to tell you one thing. You're all in the habit of shooting too high. You waste your powder and lead, and I have cursed you about it a hundred times. Now I tell you what it is, nothing must be wasted, every crack must count. For that reason boys, whenever you see them fellows first to put their feet upon this bridge do you shin' em. [Shoot them in the shins!]

As the Hessians came forward, every American gun, rifle, and musket within range opened up on them. All 18 or 19 artillery pieces commanded by Knox fired. Yet with great discipline, they came forward. And kept coming.

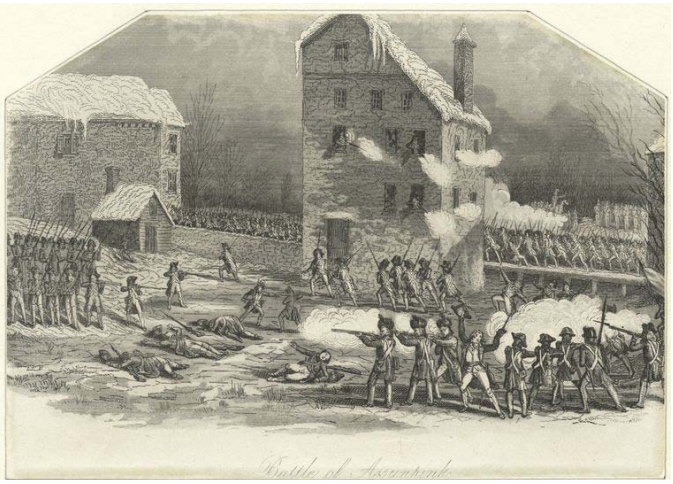
Finally, about half way over the bridge, the unrelenting American fire was too much, and they broke. 31 Hessian were dead. 29 dropped their weapons and surrendered, rather than run the gauntlet of fire in retreat.

But it wasn't over yet, despite the late hour. Now the British were coming.

Sergeant White, a member of Knox's artillery, who'd played a critical role in the first battle, was stationed at the bridge:

> The enemy came on in solid columns: we let them come on some ways. Then, by a signal given, we all fired together. The enemy retreated off the bridge and formed again, and we were ready for them. Our whole artillery was again discharged at them.

Left: Hessian Grenadiers were the shock troops of that era. They were immediately recognizable in their brass mitred hats. Below: British troops on the bridge.



Other American witnesses described the scene:

> Officers reformed the [British] ranks and again they rushed the bridge, and again was the shower of bullets pushed upon them with redoubled fury. This time the column broke before it reached the center of the bridge.
>
> It was then that our army raised a shout, and such a shout I never since heard: by what signal or word of command, I know not. The line was more than a mile in length...yet they shouted as one man.

But Cornwallis wasn't ready to give up. The British brought up reinforcements and Washington called over Cadwalader's Associators from the right flank to join the fight. Sergeant White recorded:

> They came on a third time. We loaded with canister shot[2] and let them come nearer. We fired all together again, and such destruction it made you cannot conceive. The bridge looked red as blood, with their killed and wounded and red coats.

So ended the battle that night. The Americans had held, but barely.

***Walking Directions to SBT-14**: [optional] return to Broad Street, and head south, up the hill away from the river, to 189 S. Broad street. Read the next section and return to the river. [everyone] Walk east along the south bank of the river until it runs into S. Montgomery St. Turn left to cross the river and enter a circle. The Douglass house is the small wood frame house on the far left corner, fronting E. Front Street. Walk between the house and the stone church (now the Mill Hill Playhouse, home of Trenton's Passage Theatre), to view the front facade.*

What Next? (SBT-14)

Cornwallis viewed the actions on the bridge as little more than a preliminary. If he was upset by the events of the day, he didn't reveal it. He expressed confidence that Washington was trapped and that they'd be able to finish the battle the next day.

He was surprised by the amount of artillery the Continental Army possessed, and sent messengers to Princeton requesting additional British artillery be brought up.

The narrow bridge was not the place he would choose to attack the next day. Instead he ordered 2,000 of his British regulars to move east, where they'd be in a position to attack Philip's Ford on the far right wing of American

Colonel Charles Scott led the three Virginia regiments stationed closest to the bridge. Later in life he would be elected Kentucky's third governor.

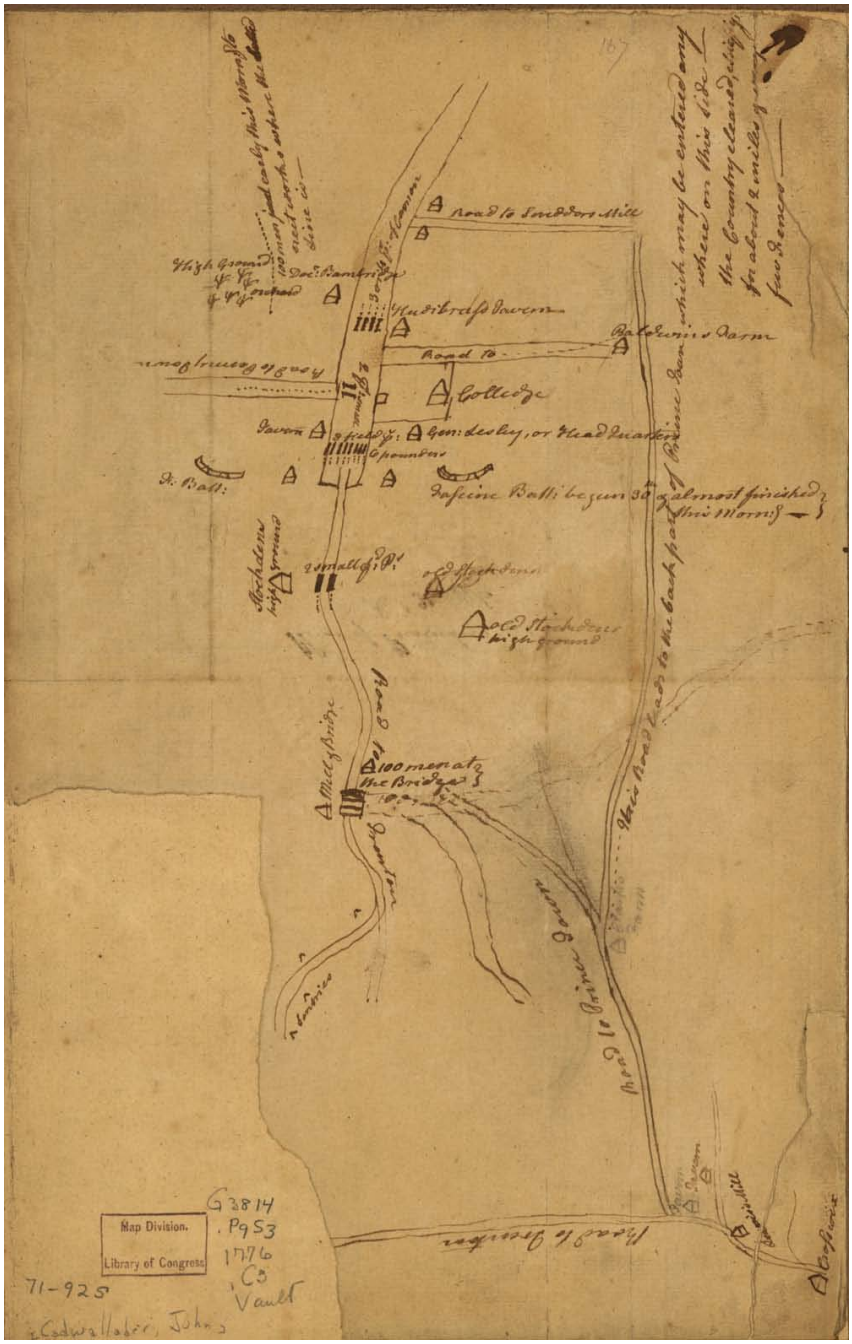
position. His intention would be to keep enough troops in town to fix Washington's left wing, and then roll it up from the east, trapping Washington's army against the Delaware.

It was a good plan. Philip's Ford would be much harder to defend than the narrow bridge in town. Cornwallis' weight of numbers would surely tell there.

Washington called a war council at a small house owned by Alexander Douglas, a short distance up the hill from the bridge on the Bordentown Rd (189 S. Broad St), where Arthur St. Clair maintained his quarters. Presumably it was one of the closest quarters available for a meeting (no doubt most officers had been staying north of the river prior to the day's events, which were now in British controlled territory).

Confusingly, the house where the meeting took place was moved in the 19th century to a new location, when it was being replaced by a Lutheran Church. The Douglas house is now located at Montgomery and E. Front Streets, *north* of the river. If you want, you can go see the original location on Broad Street, it's only 200 yards or so, and then backtrack down to visit the Douglas House; alternatively, you can skip the excursion and go straight to the house at its current location on E. Front St.

2 Canister shot loaded multiple 1 inch lead balls instead of a single cannonball and was used against massed troops at close range. Essentially it turned a cannon into a super-powerful shotgun.



Above: The "spy" map of Princeton which includes references to unguarded back roads into Princeton was prepared by Cadwalader based on an interview with "a very intelligent young gentlemen", possibly a Princeton student.

Washington made a brief speech to his assembled senior officers that night. He posed a problem: fight or flight? Both choices were deemed hazardous. Those attending the meeting felt that Washington was inclined to fight it out in Trenton, but he acknowledged that the likely outcome would be a defeat.

There was open discussion of the two alternatives: neither was palatable. Then their host, Arthur St. Clair, spoke up. He had been commanding the far right wing of the American defenses at Philip's mill, and his men had patrolled the roads beyond that flank, including a track that ran from the little hamlet of Sandtown (near today's intersection of Nottingham Way and Quakerbridge Rd) to the Friends meetinghouse in the woods, south of Princeton.

Remarkably, they had seen no British patrols on this road, and St. Clair proposed that the army could take it to out-flank the British army.[3] Once in the British rear, Washington's army could attack Princeton, and perhaps even destroy the British logistics base in Brunswick.

The Americans had become aware of these roads from information provided to Cadwalader from "a very intelligent young gentleman", possibly a Princeton student. Cadwalader had taken notes and sketched a map, which he sent to Washington on December 31.

The council warmed to St. Clair's idea. Hugh Mercer supported it immediately. Two local men, who lived near the route, were called in, confirmed the route was practical, and offered to act as guides.

Washington realized it was a way to remove his army from a perilous situation while saving face. He later wrote, "One thing I was sure of, that it would avoid the appearance of a retreat, which was of consequence."

The foundation for the Battle of Princeton was now laid.

3 Was it possible that the British simply weren't aware of this road? When Donop proposed to Cornwallis that he split his force and attack Washington's right wing, he suggested a route through Cranbury, which is much more roundabout. This route would have accomplished the same goal, but much more easily. One must presume Donop didn't know about it.

The Battle of Princeton

Above: An 1851 engraving of the Princeton battlefield. The Thomas Clarke house is in the foreground. In the distance you can see the fields cut by fences, buildings from the William Clarke farm, and even a suggestion of Nassau Hall in the distance.

Temperatures plunged the evening of January 2. Many of the men on the field hadn't eaten all day, and some scrambled to find their packs and blankets which had been tossed aside during the battle. Those who weren't on duty huddled next to bonfires to stay warm, and men on duty shivered in the deepening chill as they walked along the perimeter of their camps. A few men, no doubt, dozed by the fires, exhausted by the terror and exertions of the day. They wouldn't be allowed to sleep long.

For the soldiers in Washington's army it was going to be another all night march. But for an army on the move, the sudden freeze was a stroke of fortune, despite the chill: the mud which had plagued Cornwallis' march south from Princeton now froze, "as hard as pavement".

A rear guard of as many as 500 men was selected to make a show for the British scouts who were watching the American army. They built up the campfires and kept them lit, even as the bulk of the army stole away. In the darkness men were silently packing up, wrapping the wheels of guns and supply wagons with rags to make them more quiet.

Even so, not everyone was fooled. A British Engineer reported observing movement behind the American lines, and suggested that the American army might be moving on Princeton. Cornwallis drew a different conclusion from the report, deciding the American army was shifting forces to the upper fords, where he intended to attack the next day. He reacted by alerting his own troops facing them for a possible American attack, and shifting even more troops east.

For the American troops moving out, the journey began slowly. There was much confusion at first, from orders only half-heard at a whisper.

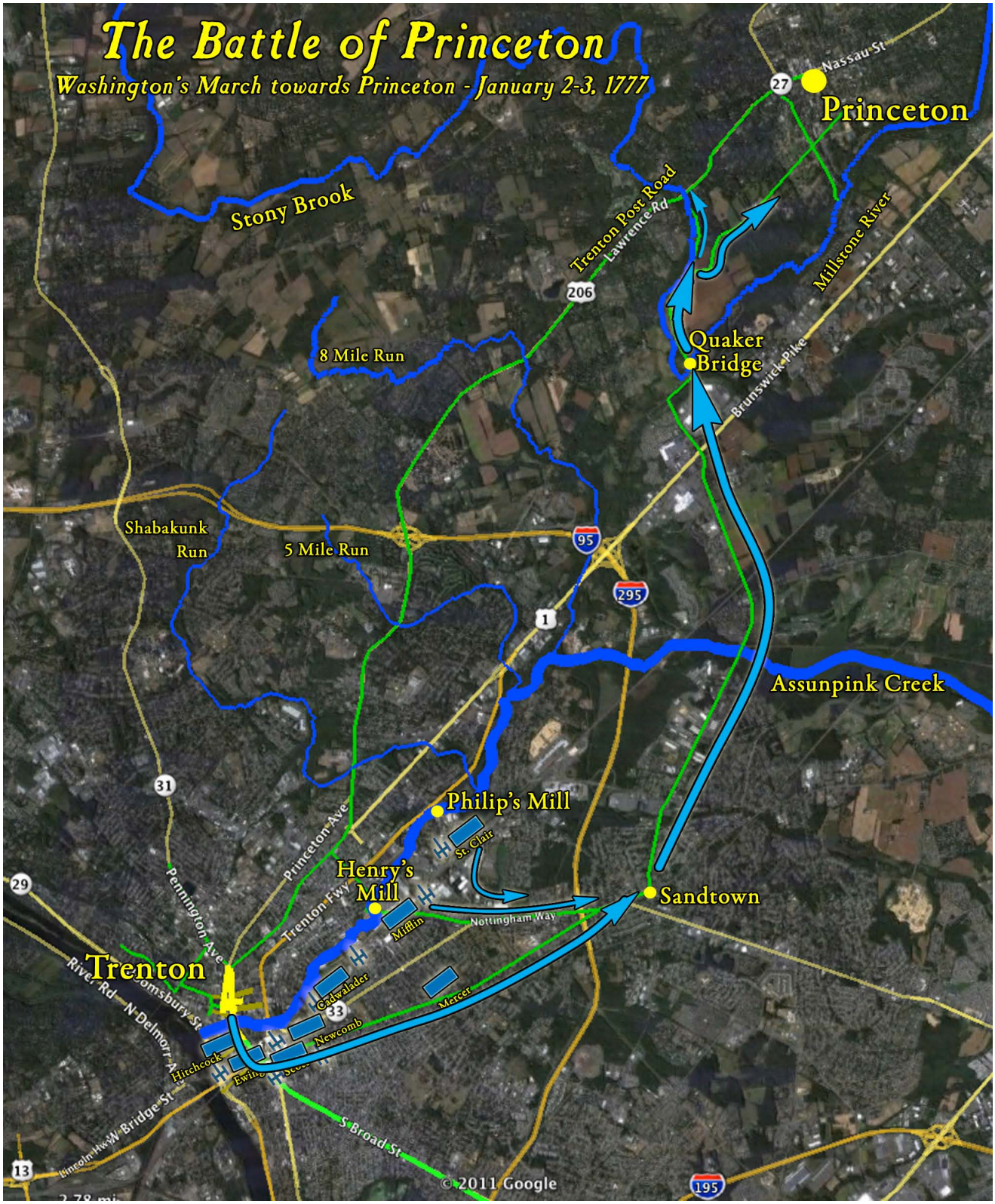
The first units started pulling out around 10 PM, but many had to wait to join the line which moved slowly at first. For most, it wasn't until midnight that they began to move. Except for the rear guard, the final units pulled out around 2 AM.

Driving Directions to the Starting Point

This tour begins at the intersection of Hamilton Ave and S. Broad St, right by the Arena.

***From the end point of the previous tour**, you'll want to drive south on Warren St to Market St. Turn left on Market, and then right on S. Broad St at the top of the rise. Head south on Broad for 1/4 mile to the left turn onto Hamilton Avenue, just in front of the Arena.*

***From US-1 S**, head into Trenton and take the exit signposted Rt. 129/Chambersburg. Turn right at the first light*



Above: Starting around 10 PM on the night of January 2, Washington's army began to withdraw secretly from their positions along the Assunpink. Once past Sandtown, they began to make good time and reached Quaker Bridge before dawn. The army paused while engineers reinforced the bridge to carry artillery, and didn't arrive at the "split" between Greene's Division (heading north along Stony Brook) and Sullivan's Division (heading NE along Saw Mill) until well after sunrise.

(Hamilton Ave), and make a U turn at the parking lot entrance closest to Broad Street.

***From US-1 N**, take the first exit after you cross the bridge into NJ. At the bottom of the ramp, cross Ferry St, and then bear right to merge onto 29 N. You will go back under the highway, and immediately after the exit for US-1 S, take the exit for Market Street. Go up the hill and turn right on S. Broad. After 1/4 mile, turn left onto Hamilton Avenue, in front of the Arena.*

***From the NJ Turnpike**, take exit 7A, and follow signs towards Trenton to get onto I-195 W. Continue straight when I-195 changes into Rt 29 N. Bear right onto 129 Turn left onto Hamilton Avenue, in front of the Arena, and make a U turn near the corner with Broad Street.*

Leaving Trenton (BP-1)

The main body of Washington's army pulled out of their positions along the Assunpink, and marched down the Bordentown road to this spot. Wanting to move as quickly as possible, Washington split off the baggage train - slow, heavy wagons filled with supplies - and sent them down the road to the relative safety of Burlington.

For the next few days, the American soldiers would need to fight with what they carried on their backs.

The fighting forces turned left onto the Sandtown Road, now Hamilton Avenue. In 1777, Hamilton Avenue was barely a farm track. It ran well east of the British positions on the other side of the Assunpink, and once on the move, the army wasn't seen again by any British scout until almost to Princeton.

Early in the march, a Pennsylvania militia unit near the rear mistook an American unit joining the line of march with the enemy. A panic ensued, and several corps of militia ran down the Bordentown Rd. Fortunately, most of the army stayed firm.

As the army moved east, the newly built road still had stubs of stumps sticking out from the ground. In the dark, men and horses tripped on them, and the artillery carriages would frequently jam, requiring the men to push along with the horses to keep them guns moving. John Howland recorded how exhausted they were:

> We moved slow on account of the artillery, frequently coming to a halt, or stand still, and ordered forward again, one, or two, or three men in each platoon would stand, with their arms supported, fast asleep; a platoon next in rear advancing on them, in walking, or attempting to move, would strike a stub and fall.

***Driving Directions to BP-2:** Continue east on Hamilton Avenue until it ends, and merges with Nottingham Way (Rt. 33), about 3.6 miles. In 1/4 mile, Rt. 33 will bear right. However, you should continue straight to stay on Nottingham Way. In another 1/4 mile you'll come to an oddly shaped intersection (known locally as "5 Corners"). Turn left onto Quakerbridge Rd, and pull over as soon as convenient.*

The March to Sandtown (BP-2)

At the same time as Washington's troops were pulling out of the lower fords and the center of the American positions, the troops at the upper fords were pulling out as well. They came out from the road now called Nottingham Way, where Hamilton Avenue merged into Rt. 33.

The tiny hamlet of Sandtown -- perhaps 10 houses in all -- was located at this "5 Corners" intersection. During the march, Washington's guides avoided the town by marching the Army through nearby fields.

Once past Sandtown, the army started to find a rhythm and make better time.

***Driving Directions to BP-3:** Continue on Quakerbridge Rd roughly 4½ miles to US-1. Continue past US-1, past the mall entrances, and past the light where Province Line Road turns off to the left. If you continue straight, the road (now called Quaker Rd) goes over a short bridge across the D&R canal, and makes a 90 degree turn to parallel the canal for about 1/3 of a mile. The road then curves to the left approximately 90 degrees. At this second bend, you will see a gravel parking lot. Park here.*

The Quaker Bridge (BP-3)

200 yards further up the road beyond this parking lot, the road crosses a small creek. This is Stony Brook, and this is the bridge crossing (though not the actual structure) which gives Quakerbridge Road its name.

Ask most Princetonians where the Quaker Bridge is located, and most will direct you to the impressive bridge over Stony Brook right by the meeting house. But that is a much later structure on a road (Mercer St, aka the Princeton Pike) that didn't exist in 1777. I'm embarrassed to say, I didn't know this was the Quaker bridge until I researched the march route for this guide, even though I've driven over it, literally, thousands of times.

In 1777, Washington came to this spot and discovered a problem: while the Quaker bridge was fine to carry a few worshippers on Sunday, it was not strong enough to support the weight of an army and its artillery. So his engineers had to frantically cut trees and build a temporary

Top left: One of a dozen markers erected by the Sons of the Revolution in 1914, marking the route of Washington's "march by night from Trenton to Princeton and victory". The first marker can be seen at BP-1, and you'll pass several throughout the tour. _Bottom left_: The Quaker original meetinghouse is still in use today, at the end of Quaker Road, next to the battlefield park. _Bottom right_: the modern bridge at the location of the original Quaker bridge. _Top right_: most drivers won't even realize they've crossed a famous bridge as they speed along Quaker Road towards Princeton.

bridge strong enough to support the artillery.

Washington used the delay to organize his army in the fields off to the side of the stream.

He split the army into two divisions, just as he'd done in the attack on Trenton. The left wing was a small division under Nathanael Greene. The right wing was Sullivan's reinforced division, which contained the main body of the Army. The attack plan was similar to Trenton's: the small force would attack down the obvious route, the main post road between Trenton and Princeton; while the main attack would arrive from an unexpected direction, in the this case, the little used Saw Mill Rd.

Both divisions contained Continental troops in the vanguard and the rear, with militia units in the middle. The idea was to surround the less reliable units with more reliable ones.

As soon as the bridge was deemed strong enough to carry the lighter guns, the army set off again. Heavy artillery would have to join when it could.

Nathanael Greene commanded the small left wing of Washington's army which comprised Mercer's and Cadwalader's battalions, about 1,000 men in all.

Washington had hoped to attack Princeton at dawn, but the sun was just rising as the first units of the army crossed the reinforced bridge. It was a beautiful, clear, crisp day. With no blizzard to cover their approach, surprise would be difficult to achieve.

Driving directions to BP-4: *Continue north on Quaker Rd for a fraction over 1 mile. You will pass a beautiful farm house, and note a gray stone obelisk on the right side of the road, a hundred yards or so past the farmhouse. Next to the obelisk is a metal gate and a gravel turnout. Park there.*

First Sightings (BP-4)

The sun rose higher on an achingly clear winter day. Major James Wilkinson recalled that "the morning was bright, serene, and extremely cold, with an hoar frost that bespangled every object."

From this spot, Greene's division headed north. In the lead was Captain John Neil's New Jersey Artillery, Hugh Mercer's Virginia Continentals (who'd borne the brunt of Rall's charge at the first battle) and some remnants of Marylanders and Delaware units, and the Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment. Altogether the Mercer's van was about 350 men.

Following these veterans, came Cadwalader's Associators: enthusiastic but largely untested militia, about 1,200 men.

Sullivan's division turned right, across this field, along a track that led directly to the meetinghouse. It incorporated the balance of the army, perhaps 5,000 men.

This is one of the few places left along the route where you can easily imagine the land through which Washington's army passed. It's surprising to many people, but there are many more trees now than there were in 1777, as then virtually all of the land was cleared for farming, and 18th century farmers didn't necessarily leave trees as windbreaks to separate their fields.

In 1777, *all* of this land would have been as open as this vista to the SE from this spot, or even more so. The farthest border, diagonally across this field is about 1,500 yards away (9/10 of a mile). You can well imagine how easy it would be to spot an army moving across these vast open spaces from a considerable distance,

Similarly, the trees directly across the fields are about 600 yards away, which is probably optimal distance for 18th century artillery (which had a maximum range of 2x that).

The Princeton-Trenton Post Road (now 206) is only 1,200 yards NW of this spot. Today, you can't see it because of the woods. In 1777, intervening hills would block the view here and there, but in general, the road was as visible then as the far border of these fields is today.

The first sighting of the enemy came from Wilkinson, riding with Sullivan's vanguard. A distant flash of light caught his attention, near the post road. He looked again and saw a long red column of British troops arrayed on the road, and he realized the flash had been sunlight reflecting off their arms. The column then disappeared behind a hill.

A few moments later, two red-coated riders appeared on a hill east of the column, in the middle distance. They jumped a fence and cantered to the summit from where they studied the American army for a minute or two, then galloped back.

Soon the van of the British column reappeared from behind the hill, still moving south towards Trenton. Then Wilkinson saw it stop, turn about, and start heading back towards Princeton in "quick time".

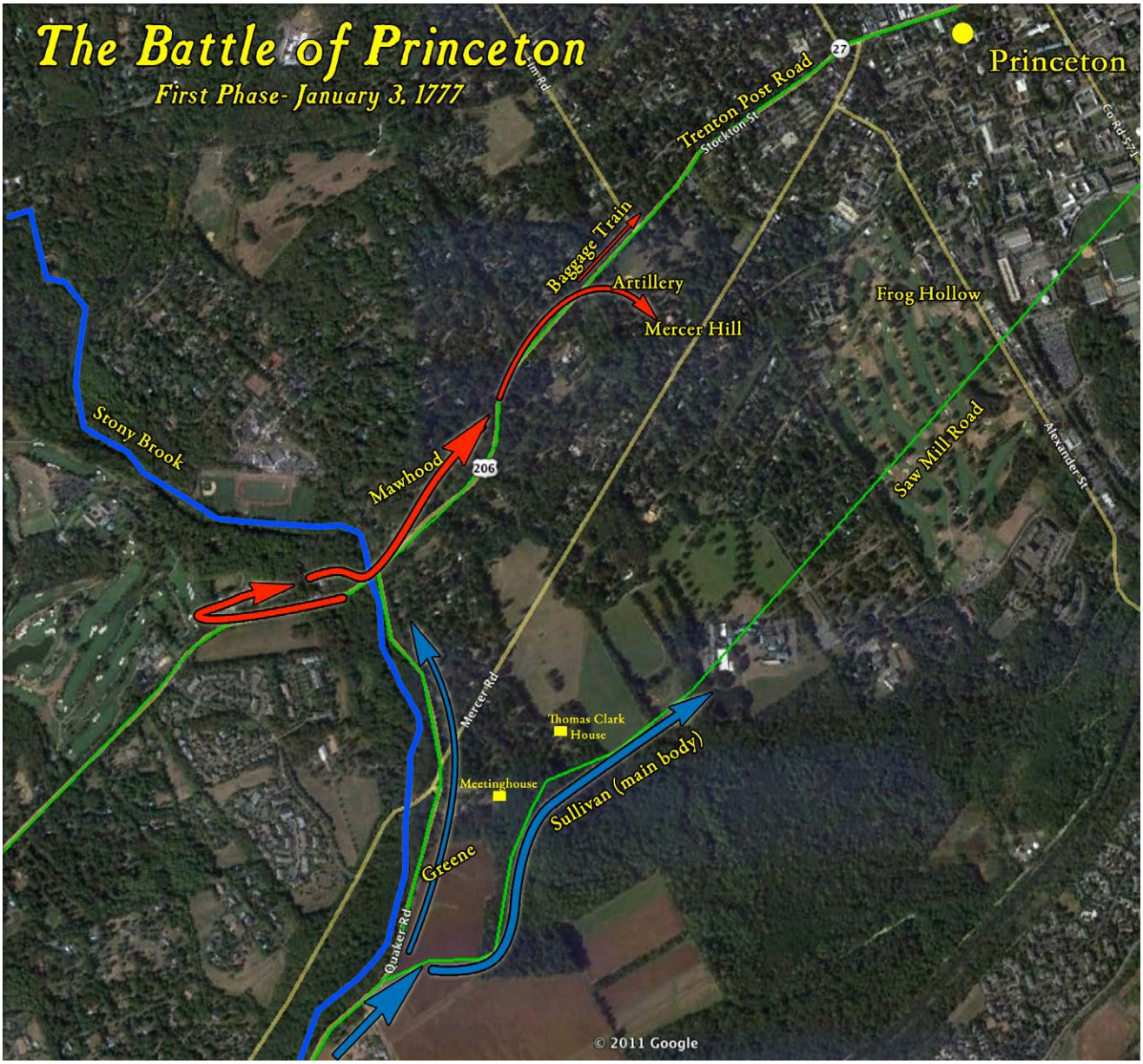
The commander of the British column, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood, was leading roughly 700 troops and 8 cannon to reinforce Cornwallis in Trenton for

what they expected to be the destruction of the American army there. One can only imagine Mawhood's shock to see that Army arrayed in front of him, 10 miles from where it was supposed to be.

But if he was shocked, he didn't let it paralyze him. Instead, he decided to attack. Whether he knew that the entire American army was in front of him, or simply a large contingent of it, isn't known.

Above: the spot where the two divisions split. Greene's small division worked north along Stony Brook, intending to enter Princeton via the Post Road. Sullivan headed east across these fields to enter via the little known and unguarded Saw Mill Road.

Below: Mawhood on his way to Trenton with infantry and artillery reinforcements for Cornwallis when he spotted the American army. Immediately, he reversed course and attacked.



He sent the baggage train back to Princeton, and ordered the artillery to take a position on the local high point (now called Mercer Hill, which is located near the intersection of Lover's La and Mercer St - neither of which existed in 1777), protected by 200 or so troops of the 55th Foot Regiment.

He started marching the rest of his men (less than 500) back towards the eastern bank of Stony Brook, from where they could advance against Washington's Army.

Greene could see none of this from his position near the vanguard of his division, as Mercer's battalion was nearing the Post Road, hidden by Stony Brook's narrow ravine. Mawhood also seemed oblivious to the American units approaching the middle of his column. Washington sent a galloper to Greene with a warning, and orders.

***Driving Directions to BP-5**: Continue north on Quaker Rd, about 4/10 of a mile, to a stop sign at Mercer Street. Jog right and then take the immediate left to stay on Quaker Rd, which continues to parallel Stony Brook on your left. About 300 yards from Mercer St, you will see the entrance to Parkside Dr. on the right, and a small gravel platform on the left shoulder big enough to hold a parked car. Park there. (BTW, this spot is often used by Princeton Police for speed traps. Speed limits are aggressively enforced in Princeton).*

First Contact (BP-5)

Even today, with the grade opened up by the wide road and the building lots, this place preserves some of the character of a narrow ravine. In 1777, it would have been much more so, with a narrower flood plain and steeper banks, and a track that followed the stream much more closely.

From your parking spot, continue walking north towards 206 along the shoulder of the road until you reach the corner and can view the bridge which is the original structure.

Washington's galloper arrived in time to warn Greene that the British occupied the Post Road. The messenger also conveyed Washington's order that Greene was to "deal with them" while the main body of the army continued down the Saw Mill Rd, across a farm owned by Thomas Clarke.

There was no information in the orders about the size of the British column, and it's likely that Washington had only a vague idea himself. Mercer, seemed to think he was dealing with a small enemy detachment and committed only part of his brigade: about 120 men.

As Mercer's men climbed out of the ravine onto the road, they confronted a mounted cavalryman staring at them in disbelief. Before they could fire at him, he wheeled his horse and galloped away. Mercer's presence was now known.

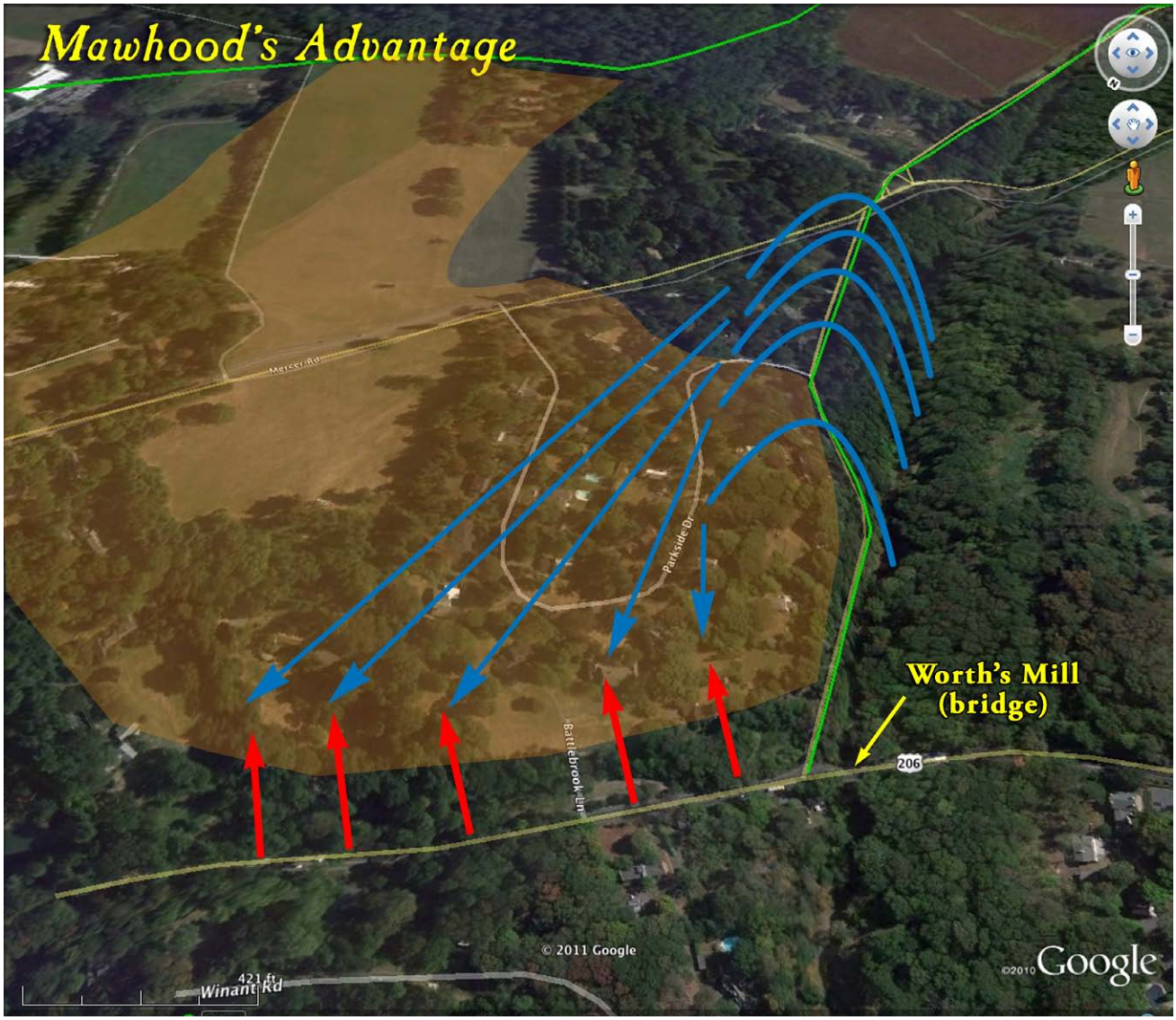
Mercer's vanguard emerged right by the 206 bridge over Stony Brook, then the location of Worth's Mill. The original bridge and part of the mill structure still survive, shown here in an 1851 etching.

What followed is a classic "meeting engagement", a battle that occurs after two armies meet where neither has intended to fight, and where no one has "prepared the ground". Such battles are always confusing, though we'll do our best to make sense of what happened. You can be sure that in this position, each side would attempt to seize the high ground to gain an advantage over the other.

Mawhood was outnumbered, even by Greene's division alone, something like 500 troops to 1,500. But Mawhood had one enormous advantage. His men were strung out in a column along the Post road, perpendicular to the American's axis of attack. To oversimplify, each man only needed to turn 90 degrees to form a line of battle that would bring all of their firepower to bear against Greene's division.

By contrast, the Americans were in a column, and even worse, they were stuck in a ravine that slowed them down even more. It would take Greene much longer to bring up his troops, and he would be forced to commit them piecemeal, making it possible for Mawhood to defeat them "in detail".

This advantage is illustrated in the image on the right, taken in Google Earth. It's looking south. The high ground, which is easier to defend, is shown shaded orange. Of course, these would have mostly open fields and orchards in 1777.

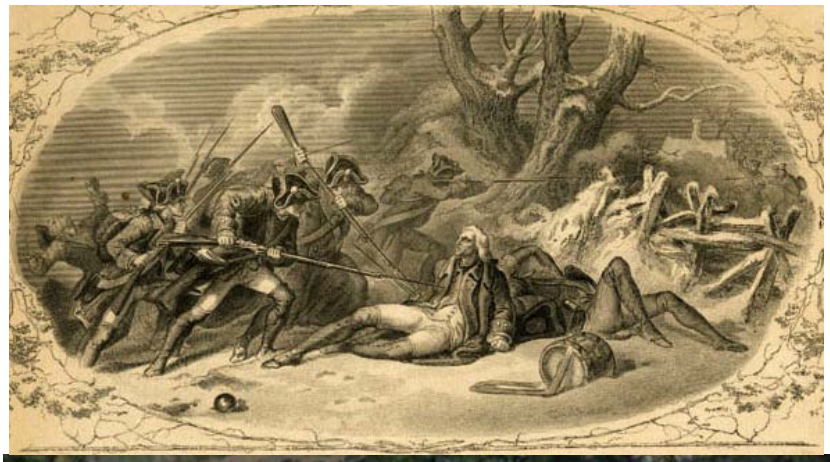


Above: Though Mawhood was greatly outnumbered at the Battle of Princeton, the terrain conferred him a huge advantage. He could form battle lines and seize the high ground quickly (red lines; high ground, elevation 100 ft or higher, is shown shaded orange). Greene's division needed to climb out of the ravine, run across the battlefield, and form battle lines piecemeal (blue lines). Not surprisingly, the British usually got there first.

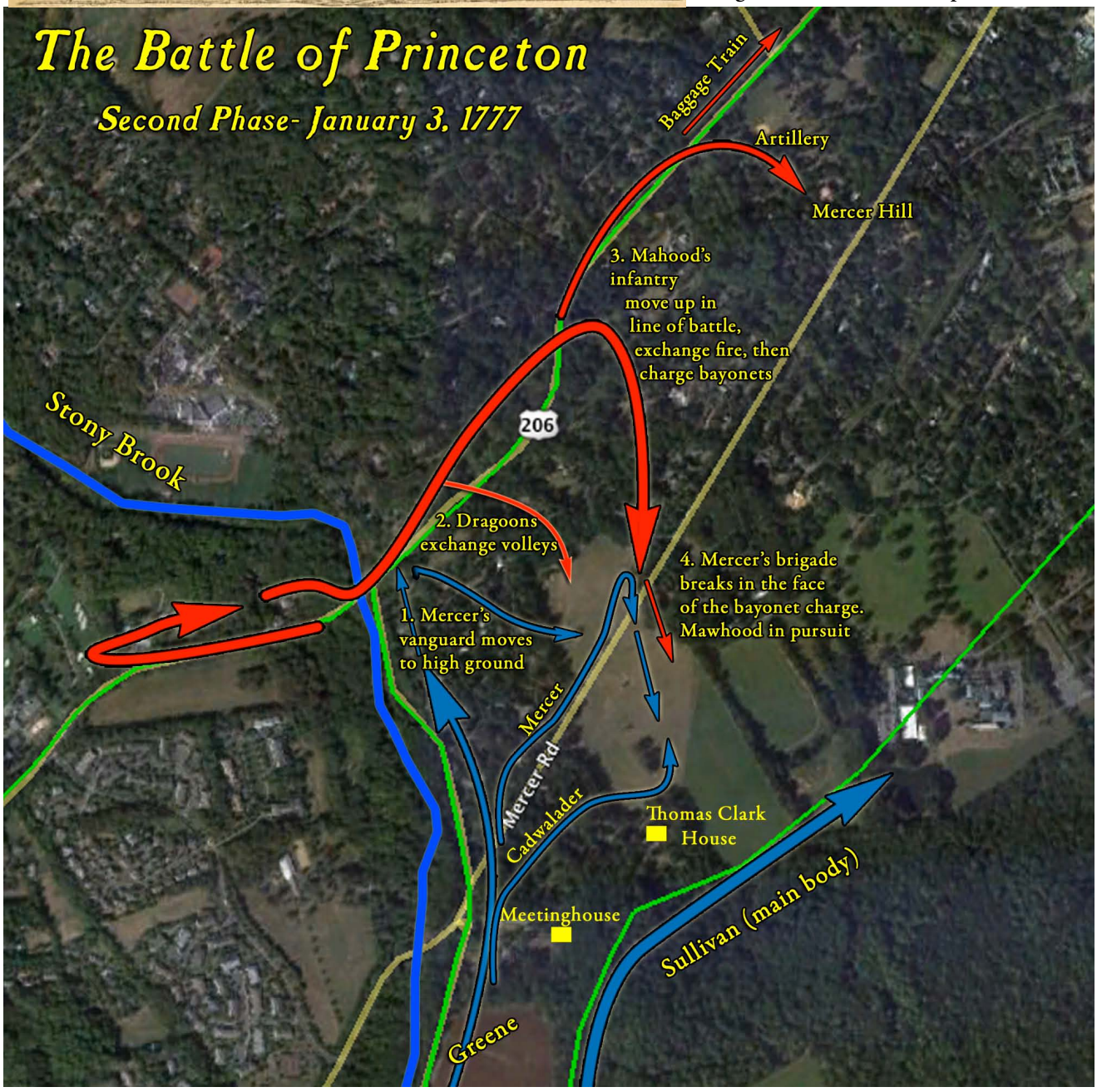
Mawhood's troops are strung out along the Post Road (206) in the foreground. They can simply turn and advance on the high ground. Their battle lines can be formed quickly (red arrows).

Greene's troops are in the deep ravine you see along the right hand border. There's no room to form a line of battle from within the ravine. In order to support Mercer's vanguard, who are coming under increasing pressure, they have to climb out, and run across the battlefield (blue arrows). To get into formation, they would either need to stop to form their battle line somewhere along the way, or else form it while in contact with the enemy. Either maneuver would have been extremely difficult, and not something the poorly drilled American troops would know how to do. Moreover, units towards the rear of the column faced increasingly longer runs if they were to meet the British on even terms. In the actual battle, of course, the Americans never made such long runs: Mawhood's troops arrived more quickly, and were better organized, than the American troops that came to support Mercer's vanguard.

Directions to BP-6: *Walk back towards your car, but if you're feeling energetic, turn left onto Parkside and climb the steep hill on foot. Then return to your car, and this time drive up Parkside Dr. The road will then loop around to Mercer Rd. at the edge of the Princeton Battlefield Park. Turn left, and park immediately on the shoulder of the road.*



Left: The death of Mercer was a popular subject for engravings and other Americana throughout the 19th century. Next page: The north end of Battlefield Park where most of the initial fighting took place. Mercer Oak is the small, fenced-in tree in the middle ground, farthest to the right. Mercer's reinforcements were joining the battle roughly along the line of today's Mercer Rd. Cadwalader's reinforcements were joining the battle along the hollow in the foreground. Below: The American reinforcements trickled in too slowly: Mercer's Brigade breaks in the face of a bayonet charge from Mawhood's troops.



The Death of Mercer (BP-6)

Parkside Drive is one of the few roads we've seen that follows the natural contour of the land.

I asked you to walk up the hill to make a point. Every American solider in Greene's division faced some version of the climb you just made, before he could even begin to get into the action against Mawhood's men.

In 1777, the track along Stony Brook followed the streambed more closely, so the climb out was even steeper. The American men were carrying their muskets and heavy packs. They'd just walked all night, some for the second night in a row. And many were barefoot, or wearing such ill fitting boots that their feet were leaving trails of blood on the snow. These were tough men.

Once we ascend to the top of the hill, Parkside Dr wraps around and brings us to the Princeton Battlefield Park. You'll note that virtually the entire park is "high ground". In this section of NJ's coastal plain, this is a relative term, but we've defined it as anything above 100 foot elevation. With such flat land all around, an elevation advantage of even a dozen feet makes a huge difference in terms of your ability to sight artillery or aim muskets. It's not an accident that the battle was fought on the high ground: soldiers in a meeting engagement would by habit and training always try to seize it.

The 120 men Mercer's vanguard who emerged onto the Post Road had the initial advantage of surprise. Mawhood's column was spread out over hundreds of yards. The closest unit was a group of 50 dismounted dragoons, raw replacements who were heading to Trenton as reinforcements. They were ordered to attack the Americans immediately.

The Americans, seeing the dragoons advancing on them, and realizing that they were looking at a major fight, decided to seize the high ground behind them, lest the British beat them to it. So up the hill they clambered, onto a farm owned by William Clarke. A house and barn were sited here, and the fields were cut by wooden fences (Original structures from the Thomas Clarke farm do survive at the other end of the park).

Once on the high ground, the two sides started a pitched fire fight in the open fields near the northwestern corner of the battlefield park, north of where we're standing on Mercer Rd, near the white columns (which have nothing to do with the battle).

At first, the Americans got the better of the exchanges, as they outnumbered the 50 dragoons more than 2:1. The dragoons fired the first volley, but their aim was high. The American return volley hit home, and 7 dropped. The surviving dragoons broke and ran, but their officer managed to rally them and lead them back into the fight.

But now, more soldiers were joining the exchange. Mawhood's infantry came up in line of battle, while the balance of Mercer's battalion dribbled in from Stony Brook in what must have seemed agonizingly slow time to the American soldiers who were now outnumbered.

The lines were now locked into a classic European-style infantry duel, which was witnessed by Washington and Sullivan's division from their positions on the Saw Mill Road, about 750 yards south.

This was the kind of warfare that the English spent their lives training for: the relentless grind of loading and fir-

ing a breech-loading, black-powder musket in the heat of combat, surrounded by screaming men, choked by smoke. Soon the weight of the British fire began to tell on Mercer's brigade, and they too, began to take heavy casualties. One American sergeant later wrote:

> My old associates were scattered about groaning, dying and dead. One officer who was shot from his horse lay in a hollow place in the ground rolling and writhing in his blood, unconscious of anything around him.

Mawhood chose this moment to order his men to charge bayonets. The British infantry were all equipped with these deadly weapons, but Mercer's brigade was not. Mercer's men were more than willing to stand fast in a musket exchange against the best infantry in the world, but a bayonet charge was a completely different matter. Without an edged weapon to counter the British bayonets, the American soldiers would be virtually helpless as soon as they fired their muskets once.

As the charge began, Mercer's gray horse was hit by a musket ball, then Mercer himself. As he went down, he cried, "Retreat!" Many of his men fell back, but Mercer himself was caught. He refused to surrender, and was bayonetted multiple times.

He fell next to a large oak tree, known thereafter as the Mercer Oak, which survived until the first decade of the 21st century. A new tree has been planted from an acorn of that tree, and is now growing at the same place, in the fenced plot just south of Mercer Rd.

In the meantime, Cadwalader was struggling to get his men out of the Stony Brook ravine and into the fight. They hurried forward in a column and started to deploy into a fighting line on the field of battle a couple of hundred yards behind Mercer's line.

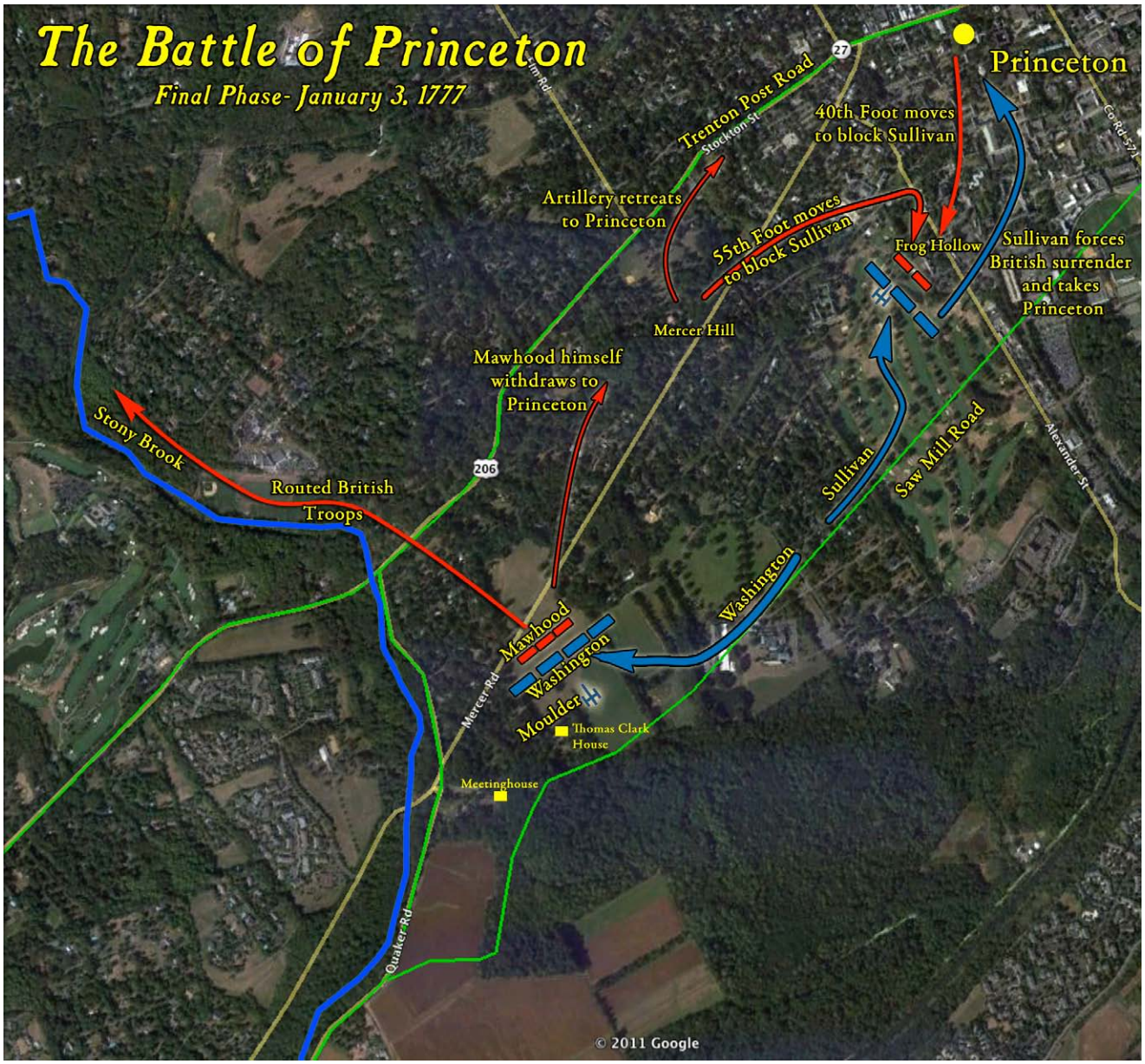
As they were in the middle of this complex maneuver, Mercer's line broke, and the survivors ran headlong into Cadwalader's brigade. Some of these men, lightly trained militia, tried to make way for Mercer's fleeing troops. Many broke and ran with them.

***Walking Directions to BP-7**: Walk south in Battlefield Park towards the Thomas Clarke House. You'll find a marker for Moulder's battery on the battlefield close to the meadow fringe to the left (west) of the house. Stop there.*

Previous page: John Trumbull's 1786 painting of the battle depicts Mercer's death in two "scenes" in the foreground of the canvas, and Washington's ride to take command of the battle in the center. Sullivan's division can be seen advancing on Princeton in the distance on the right side of the canvas. Note that Nassau Hall stands on the hill in the distance, which is devoid of trees.

Above: The view from Moulder's artillery position. By the time Moulder's guns went into action, Mawhood's battle line was pursuing Mercer's battalion, and would have been even closer than depicted here. They were stopped by grape shot, which had an effective range of 100 yards or so. Mawhood reformed his forces to face the American troops steaming on the battlefield beyond the range of grapeshot: this is about 250 yards.

Below: Saw Mill road ran across the battlefield, helping Washington organize battle lines to stop and then rout Mawhood. Mawhood always saw the battle as a delaying action, and while his attack was costly, it succeeded brilliantly.



Above: Battle of Princeton, by William Mercer after James Peale. This is a much more accurate depiction of the battle compared to Trumbull's fanciful rendering. Moulder's battery is seen firing in the foreground. Coming up with Washington are Hitchcock's New Englanders, part of Sullivan's division. The buildings and fences of William Clarke's farm, which no longer survive, are depicted accurately.

The Battle Turns (BP-7)

Although many ran, a few of Cadwalader's brigade stood and fought.

Most critical was a small battery of Philadelphia artillery commanded by Captain Joseph Moulder, who brought his guns into action right at the crisis of the battle. His two long-barrelled 4-pounders fired grape shot and canister into the charging British infantry and stopped them, even as Mercer's and Cadwalader's brigades were fleeing. Moulder stayed firm, firing continuously in the face of counter-battery fire from Mawhood, who had captured one of Mercer's guns and turned it against the American battery.

Then the Cadwalader's Associators, including many who had run away a few minutes earlier, fell back into line and advanced back into the fight.

Washington himself arrived on the scene with a large part of Sullivan's division, calling out to the Associators, "Parade with us, my brave fellows. There is but a handful of the enemy and we will have them directly."

Here, the geometry of the battlefield had helped Washington. Sullivan's division were advancing along a road perpendicular to Mawhood's axis of attack. So, unlike Greene's, it was easy for Sullivan's brigades to form into lines of battle and enter the fight as complete, cohesive fighting units.

Mawhood's line of battle had advanced during the chase of Mercer's brigade. They were now standing in the middle of the park, well on this side of Mercer Rd, along the hollow. It stretched virtually across the width of the battlefield park, but it was a thin line.

Washington's Army now advanced in a much broader and deeper line. Combining half of Sullivan's division with survivors of Greene's who rallied, Washington's line now numbered perhaps 3,000. Mawhood entered the battle with roughly 460 troops, and probably 400 or so were still fighting.

Washington led his men right into the middle of the fight, within 30 yards of the British. He was mounted on a white horse, a prominent target, yet no one shot him.

The fire on the British was murderous, and the American wings threatened to surround them.

Captain Hale, a British officer, wrote, "I expected their wings would wheel in and attack our rear, which had they done every man must have been cut to pieces".

Inevitably, the British line broke. Most of the British ran

The British made their final stand in defense of Princeton at Frog Hollow, then a narrow and steep ravine, now the main water hazard on Springdale, the Princeton University golf course. Below: Frog Hollow in a 19th century engraving.

west, and tried to escape along the Stony Brook ravine. Mawhood escaped north with a few of the surviving infantry.

About half of the men he led into the attack now lay dead or gravely wounded on the battlefield.

***Driving Directions to BP-8**: Walk back to your car, and head north on Mercer Rd. towards Princeton. Note the road climbs gently and then flattens out in a bit more than 5/10 of a mile, near the first traffic light (the intersection is called Lovers Ln on the left, and Olden Ln on the right). This is the summit of "Mercer Hill". The next right turn is Springdale Rd. Turn right, and then make the first left through the arch onto College Rd W, then right at the T with College Rd. Pull into the parking lot at the end for Princeton's Graduate College, a massive building that looks more like a Gothic cathedral than a school. It is not legal to park here without a university sticker, but you can certainly stop and get out of the car as long as you stay nearby.*

The Fall of Princeton (BP-8)

Mercer Rd did not exist in 1777, but the route you took to drive to this spot is almost exactly the path that Mawhood must have ridden over fields as he fled the Clarke farm battle site to organize the continuing defense of Princeton.

On the summit of Mercer Hill, Mawhood had stationed the artillery originally intended to augment Cornwallis in Trenton. It was protected by the 55th Foot regiment. Clearly, Mawhood never expected to defeat the massively larger American army, only to delay it. He located the artillery on the hill not play a role in the battle (it was too far away to be effective), but to facilitate its escape in the aftermath. It's clear Mawhood placed a huge value on saving the guns, since he devoted a whole regiment (more than 200 men) to their protection on Mercer Hill even as he led fewer than 500 men into the fight, just completed, with the entire American Army only a 1,000 yards south.

Mawhood ordered the artillery to pack up and head for Princeton, and then to continue marching towards Somerset and Brunswick. He ordered the 55th Foot to join with the 40th Foot to delay Sullivan's army long enough to organize the escape of as much matériel and men as possible.

Sullivan and about half of his original division, perhaps 2,500 men, had continued advancing east while Washington rallied the troops on the Clarke farm.

The two British regiments made their stand just east of where we are now standing, taking advantage of a small stream called Frog Hollow. This is the stream which now cuts through the university golf course close to the road (Alexander St) which runs along the far border of the course.

In the 18th century, the ravine was much steeper, and the slope helped anchor the left wing of the greatly outnumbered British defenders. While the area has been heavily landscaped, it remains, today, one of the favorite sledding hills for Princeton kids in wintertime. I know this because I used to take my son sledding here, and he had to roll off the sled before it went hurtling into Frog Hollow itself. I did

not know at the time that this was a Revolutionary War site. It is the only place between the Clarke farms and Princeton where the geography offers an outnumbered defender any advantage.

What occurred here was another delaying action on a smaller scale than at the Clarke farms. If anything, it demonstrates how much Greene's unfortunate deployment at the beginning of the battle favored Mawhood's attack. Here, Sullivan's forces entered the fight in battle formation, and two British regiments they faced (roughly the same number as Mawhood kept at the Clarke farms) had little chance. Not that they didn't try.

As the Americans approached, the 55th Foot detached a "heavy platoon" to attack Sullivan's left wing on the flank. Sullivan detached two regiments from his division to face them (perhaps 400 Americans vs. 40 British), and the platoon was forced to withdraw almost immediately. Part of Sullivan's force then ran into the ravine, and scrambled up the icy slope, past the right flank of the 55th's main body (the American left). Other Americans were swinging around the British left flank, threatening to completely surround them. As the Sullivan's main body pressed to within 80 yard (just outside of musket range) the 55th withdrew on command to a prepared breastwork close behind them.

Sullivan's men unlimbered their artillery. Two of their guns fired, knocking out a dam at the upper end of Frog Hollow. The rushing water undermined part of the British breastwork.

The British retreated to yet another breastwork. Sullivan's men closed to within 50 feet and made ready to storm the position when a British officer, "came through a sally port, with a white handkerchief on the point of his sword." Sullivan accepted his surrender.

Sullivan's men then advanced to Nassau Hall, where a small number of British troops were firing from the windows. Sullivan's artillery reputedly was commanded by Alexander Hamilton (later Treasury Secretary of the United States whose portrait adorns the $10 bill).

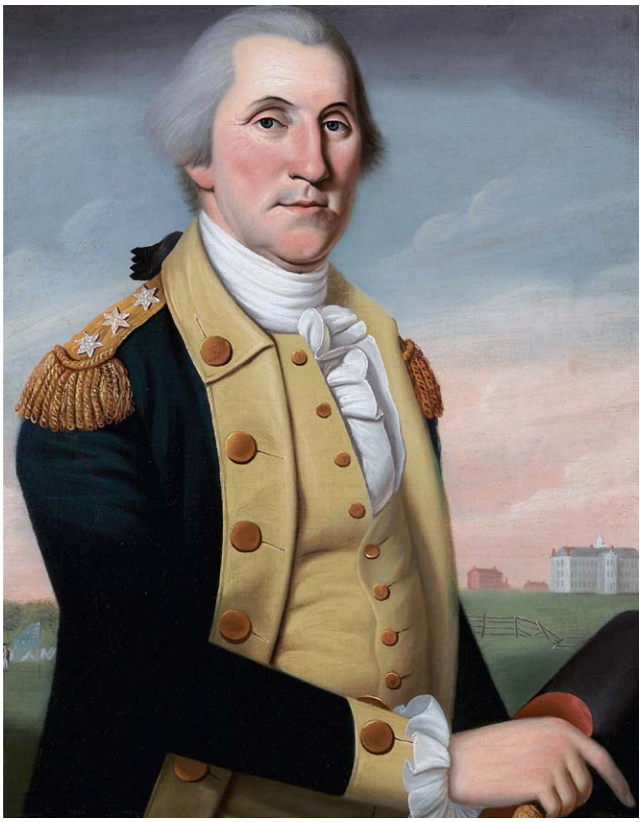
The artillery soon ended the final resistance at Nassau Hall. But the delaying action had accomplished at least some of Mawhood's goals. He rode out of town with the artillery, supply carts, and several hundred men. Elements of the American army chased Mawhood's convoy, and came within an hour of reaching him, but never caught up.

Mawhood died in 1780 of a gall stone at the Siege of Gibraltar, an unlikely end for an officer who flouted danger so cavalierly, and earned the admiration of the entire American army for his courage. Spain and France had gone to war with Britain to recover territories each had lost, part of a conscious strategy to support the American War of Independence, and arguably one of the key outcomes of these battles.

Above: George Washington at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777, painted by Charles Wilson Peale, in 1784. This portrait is one of a few for which Washington sat during his lifetime. The mortally wounded Hugh Mercer is depicted on the ground behind Washington, attended by a surgeon and a flag bearer. The portrait hangs in the Princeton University art museum.

This ends our self-guided tour. Many of you may wish to head into Princeton to check out Nassau Hall again, or to visit the Princeton University art museum, where a number of original paintings depicting the battle now hang.

Aftermath



The British were shocked to find Washington's army no longer in Trenton. Captain Johann Ewald of the Hessian Jagers remembered:

> At daybreak on the morning of the 3rd, we suddenly learned that Washington had abandoned his position. At the same time we heard a heavy cannonade in our rear, which surprised everyone. Instantly we marched back at quick step to Princeton, where we found the entire field of action from Maidenhead on to Princeton and vicinity covered with corpses.

Only two hours after Nassau Hall surrendered to Sullivan's division, Cornwallis' vanguard was reaching the bridge over Stony Brook on the Post Road. Washington posted a rear guard to contest the crossing, which engaged Cornwallis' vanguard at about the same time that the main body of Washington's army was just pulling out of town.

Two hours later, Cornwallis reached Princeton. British Captain Ewald recorded:

> In the afternoon the entire army reached Princetown, marching in and around the town like an army that is thoroughly beaten. Everyone was so frightened that it was completely forgotten even to obtain information about where the Americans had gone. Now the enemy had wings, and it was believed he had flown toward Brunswick to destroy the main depot, which was protected only by one English regiment.

Cornwallis issued 3 days rations to his soldiers, left his wounded behind, and rushed for Brunswick.

However, two nights of forced marches, and the fight at Princeton, had drained the energy out of the American army. Instead of marching on Brunswick, they burned the bridge over the Millstone River, and camped in Rocky Hill, only about 5 miles northeast of Princeton.

In this respect, Mawhood's delaying tactics succeeded well beyond the time elapsed for the battle itself. He saved the British army from an enormous crisis that would have resulted from losing their base in Brunswick.

It is indicative of how much had changed that Cornwallis gave no consideration to attacking Washington. His actions were purely defensive. He rushed past Rocky Hill and marched directly to secure Brunswick.

What's the Big Deal?

As battles go, Trenton and Princeton were tiny military events. Certainly this is true by modern standards, but even by the standards of the day, these were relatively small actions: more skirmishes than large-scale battles Only once, in the Second Battle of Trenton, did the two main armies face each other. That contest was ended by darkness, after only 45 minutes of combat.

So, from a narrow, military perspective, the battles were no big deal.

But in every respect that truly matters, they were enormously important. It is no exaggeration that they fundamentally altered the course of American history and, by extension, the history of the world as we know it.

Prior to the battles, Washington's reputation was on the ropes following the string of defeats in New York. General Horatio Gates, Washington's most senior subordinate, had abandoned the army in Pennsylvania prior to the first battle of Trenton and was lobbying Congress to replace Washington. These battles kept Washington in command.

Prior to the battles, the American army's enlistments were about to expire and, following a string of defeats, the ability to recruit replacements were virtually nil.

Following the battles, many of the units reenlisted for

another year, and the Continental Army was able to attract many more new recruits.

As important, public confidence in the struggle enabled the militias to operate against the British. That winter triggered the "forage war", which pitted mostly NJ militia against British regulars wintering in Brunswick trying to gather feed for the British Army's horses.

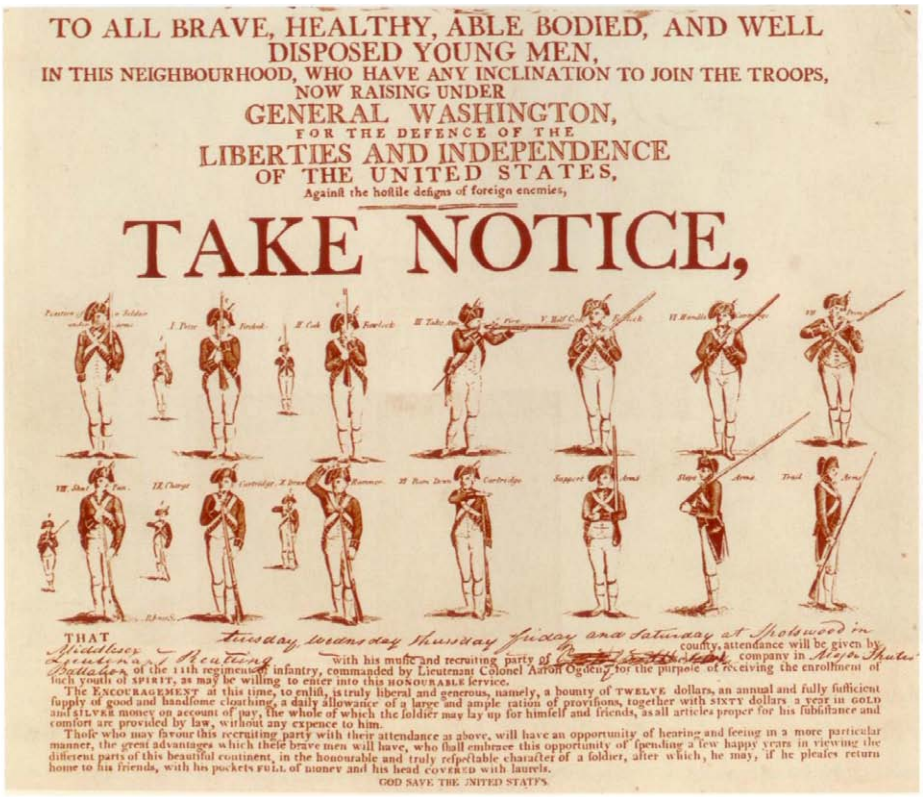
A string of skirmishes largely denied the army forage, and many of its horses had to be killed. This greatly limited the British Army's mobility in the following year's campaign, which was nevertheless quite successful. Without the "forage war", America might have lost the Revolution in 1777.

Finally, the news of the battles were one of the triggers for France to enter the war on the side of Independence. The French provided arms, troops, naval support, and military advisors to improve the training of American troops.

France and Spain declared war on England, who now need to fight on the European continent as well as North American, stretching its naval power to the limit.

Without this support, most historians believe the United States might never have defeated England, certainly not in the timeframe it achieved, and not without even greater hardship.

All of these events happened right here, in Trenton and the surrounding areas, at places we pass every day. We should remember them, and the courageous men and women who risked their lives and fortunes to make it possible.


TO ALL BRAVE, HEALTHY, ABLE BODIED, AND WELL DISPOSED YOUNG MEN,
IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD, WHO HAVE ANY INCLINATION TO JOIN THE TROOPS, NOW RAISING UNDER
GENERAL WASHINGTON,
FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE
LIBERTIES AND INDEPENDENCE
OF THE UNITED STATES,
Against the hoftile defigns of foreign enemies,

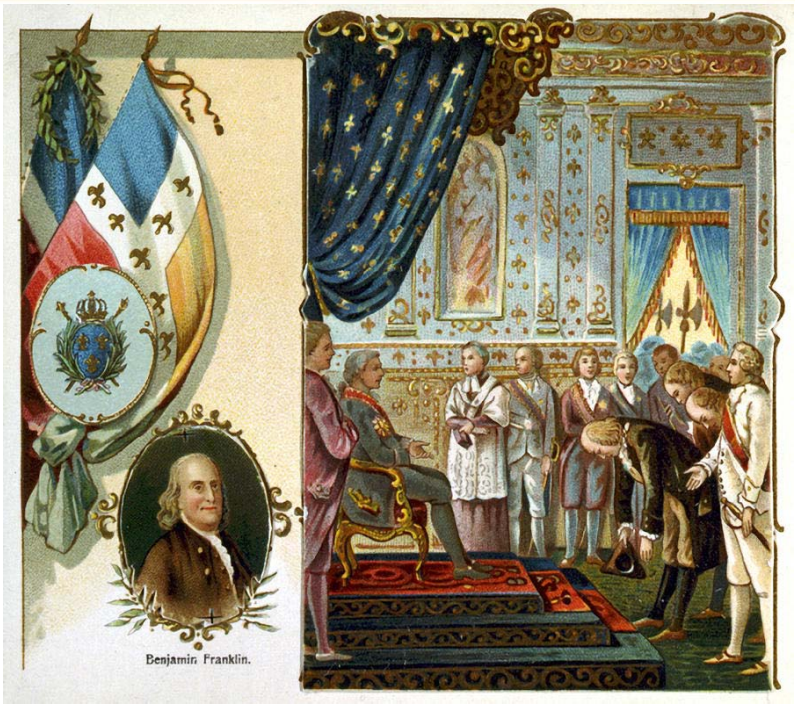
TAKE NOTICE,

THAT Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday at Sholswood in county, attendance will be given by with his music and recruiting party of company in Morris State Battalion of the 11th regiment of infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Ogden, for the purpose of receiving the enrollment of such youth of SPIRIT, as may be willing to enter into this HONOURABLE service.

The ENCOURAGEMENT at this time, to enlift, is truly liberal and generous, namely, a bounty of TWELVE dollars, an annual and fully sufficient fupply of good and handfome cloathing, a daily allowance of a large and ample ration of provifions, together with SIXTY dollars a year in GOLD and SILVER money on account of pay, the whole of which the foldier may lay up for himfelf and friends, as all articles proper for his fubfiftance and comfort are provided by law, without any expence to him.

Thofe who may favour this recruiting party with their attendance as above, will have an opportunity of hearing and feeing in a more particular manner, the great advantages which thefe brave men will have, who fhall embrace this opportunity of fpending a few happy years in viewing the different parts of this beautiful continent, in the honourable and truly refpectable character of a foldier, after which, he may, if he pleafes return home to his friends, with his pockets FULL of money and his head COVERED with laurels.

GOD SAVE THE UNITED STATES.



Above: an American recruiting poster from the Revolutionary War. Public opinion after the battles meant that the Continental Army was able to recruit enough soldiers to continue the war. Below: Benjamin Franklin presenting news of the battles of Trenton and Princeton at the French Court. Emboldened by the news, France declared war on England in support of American independence.