

*New Jersey's
Revolutionary Experience*

3

*Morristown:
A Crucible of the
American Revolution*

BRUCE W. STEWART

New Jersey Historical Commission

NEW JERSEY'S REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE

Larry R. Gerlach, *Editor*

This series of publications is dedicated to the memory of Alfred E. Driscoll, governor of New Jersey from 1947 to 1954, in grateful tribute to his lifelong support of the study and teaching of the history of New Jersey and the United States. He was a member of the New Jersey Historical Commission from 1970 until his death on March 9, 1975.

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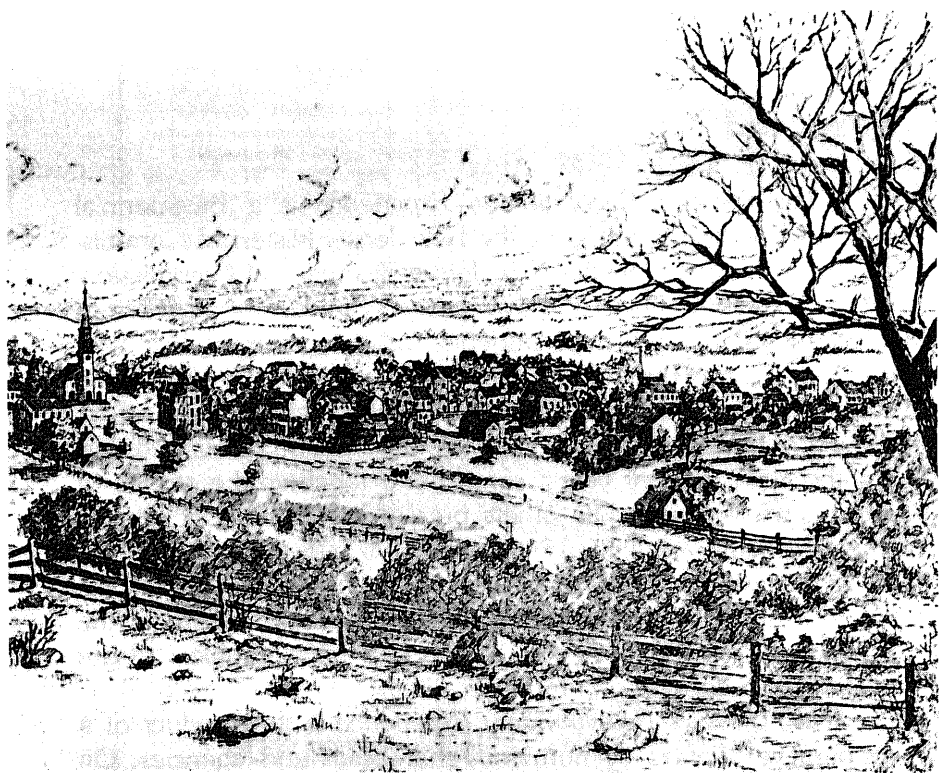
**THE NEW JERSEY AMERICAN REVOLUTION
BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMISSION**

Foreword

New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience is a Bicentennial pamphlet series published by the New Jersey Historical Commission with a grant from the New Jersey Bicentennial Commission. The twenty-six numbers and two teachers' guides are intended to acquaint secondary school students and the general public with the state's history during the era of the American Revolution. Some titles treat aspects of the Revolution in New Jersey, while others show how important themes of the colonial period developed during the revolutionary years; some bring together the results of existing scholarship, while others present the findings of original research; some are written by professional historians, and others by laymen whose investigations of Jersey history exceed avocation. Because the series is directed to a general audience, the pamphlets have no footnotes but contain bibliographical essays which offer suggestions for further reading.

New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience is the product of a cooperative venture by numerous individuals and agencies. On my behalf and that of the pamphlets' readers, I accord recognition and appreciation to the individual authors for their contributions to New Jersey history, to the New Jersey American Revolution Bicentennial Celebration Commission and the New Jersey Historical Commission for their support of the project, to Hank Simon, president, Trentypo, Inc., for his invaluable suggestions and cooperation in producing the series, and to the staff of the Historical Commission: Richard Waldron, Public Programs Coordinator, who as project director supervised the series from commencement to completion; Peggy Lewis, Chief of Publications and Information, and Lee R. Parks, Assistant Editor, who edited and designed each number; and William C. Wright, Associate Director, who contributed valuable suggestions at every stage of production.

Larry R. Gerlach
University of Utah



Morristown after the American Revolution. Courtesy Morristown National Historical Park.

The victory in the struggle for American independence resulted from many battles. At Long Island on August 27, 1776 the rebels only narrowly averted crushing defeat. The Continental army was lucky to escape to fight again. At Princeton on January 3, 1777, a portion of the British army received a stinging but inconclusive defeat that raised American hopes and kept alive the dream of final victory. At Monmouth Court House (Freehold) on June 28, 1778 the American line held in the face of heavy assault. Finally, on far distant fields such as Saratoga, in 1777, and Yorktown, in 1781, the ordeal of major battle resulted in the capture of entire British armies.

Battles such as these did not alone shape American victory, however. Other battles had to be fought and won before any would have meaning. These were battles of the mind and spirit. Through the long years of struggle hundreds of thousands of unknown individuals made and sustained a quiet decision that gave the American cause substance and reality: independence and nationhood were worth pain and suffering. The United States lived and grew with this faith and courage. The story of the Morristown encampment exemplifies the spirit that overcame the months of doubt, discouragement and despair.

Nothing in the appearance of Morristown before the revolutionary war suggested the importance of its role in winning American independence. The small rustic community clustered around a town green reflected the New England origins of most of its two hundred fifty people. Colonists in search of iron ore struck out through the wilderness and crossed the Watchung Mountains about 1710. They built crude huts in a sheltered hollow near the

Whippany River. Not far behind the first adventurers, others, seeking a permanent home, came to Morristown from New England via Long Island and Newark. Along with their meager possessions and farm implements, packed on wagons or horses, they brought a strong Puritan culture. The history of the town was closely interwoven with that of the church.

By 1776 community life centered around the town green, a large open field bisected by at least two narrow dirt roads. Grazing of sheep, cattle, and horses reflected its utilitarian purpose; local militia, and later the Continental army, found it convenient for assembly and drilling. The Presbyterian and Baptist churches dominated the surrounding scene. The courthouse and jail served the legal and law-enforcement needs of both town and surrounding farm communities. These two structures in the New England style were complete with hanging frame and stocks. Probably much of the town's social, political, and business life went on at the Jacob Arnold Tavern, a three-story building with parlors, a dining room, a barroom, a kitchen, and a commodious second-floor ballroom.

Many skills reflected the workaday world of the town's economic life. Farming and iron production brought riches to a few but offered most an uncertain existence. Frederick King made riding chairs, Daniel Smith supplied saddles. Lawyer William Dehart and Judge Samuel Tuthill served at the courthouse. What education was available to neighboring children was provided by Dorothea Cooper and Andrew Wilson. For the more prosperous, Gary Dunn and John Dickerson worked silver into ornaments, table implements and jewelry.

The land outside the town was rich with wheat, corn, rye, oats, barley, vegetables, apples, peaches, berries, and plums. Henry Wick provided some of the food upon which town life depended. A small but growing number found another economic reward in the red earth of New Jersey: furnaces such as Hibernia provided pig iron to be cast into tools, weapons, and farm implements. A prospering iron production and the land he owned enabled Jacob Ford, Jr. to build a fine home one mile from the town green.

Mrs. Martha Bland wrote to her sister-in-law:

I found Morristown a very clever little village situated in a most beautiful valley at the foot of five mountains. It has three

houses with steeples which give it a consequential look. . . .

The farms between the mountains are the most rural sweet spots in nature, their meadows of a fine luxuriant grass which looks like a bed of velvet interposed with yellow, blue, and white flowers. They represent us with just such scenes as the poets paint Arcadia.

The cycle of seasons lengthened into years, and the narrow confines of life within the small community seemed well outside the momentous pressure of events building up in Boston, Philadelphia and other urban centers. What role could a small place like Morristown play in some uncertain struggle to break free of the British Empire? The war about to erupt at Lexington and Concord would provide the answer.

The town and its people became involved almost immediately. Under the command of men like Colonel Jacob Ford, Jr., local militia units were raised, equipped, and trained. At a secluded spot along the banks of the Whippany River, this patriotic officer built a small mill to mix saltpeter, sulphur, and charcoal into gunpowder for the muskets and cannon of the Continental army.

The winter of 1776, a time of disaster for American hopes, brought the first large number of soldiers to Morristown. General Charles Lee reluctantly moved the troops under his command south from the Hudson River Highlands to join the ragged Continental army fleeing to the Delaware River. Lee ignored Washington's repeated orders to hasten his movement. After staying one night in Morristown, Lee's command proceeded on its leisurely way toward Washington's army. The British cavalry's capture of Lee in a Basking Ridge inn permitted his second in command to hasten these much-needed troops to Washington's army.

An important pattern had been established, however. The Continental army could bypass the British stronghold in New York City and the threat of British seapower by marching north or south via Morristown.

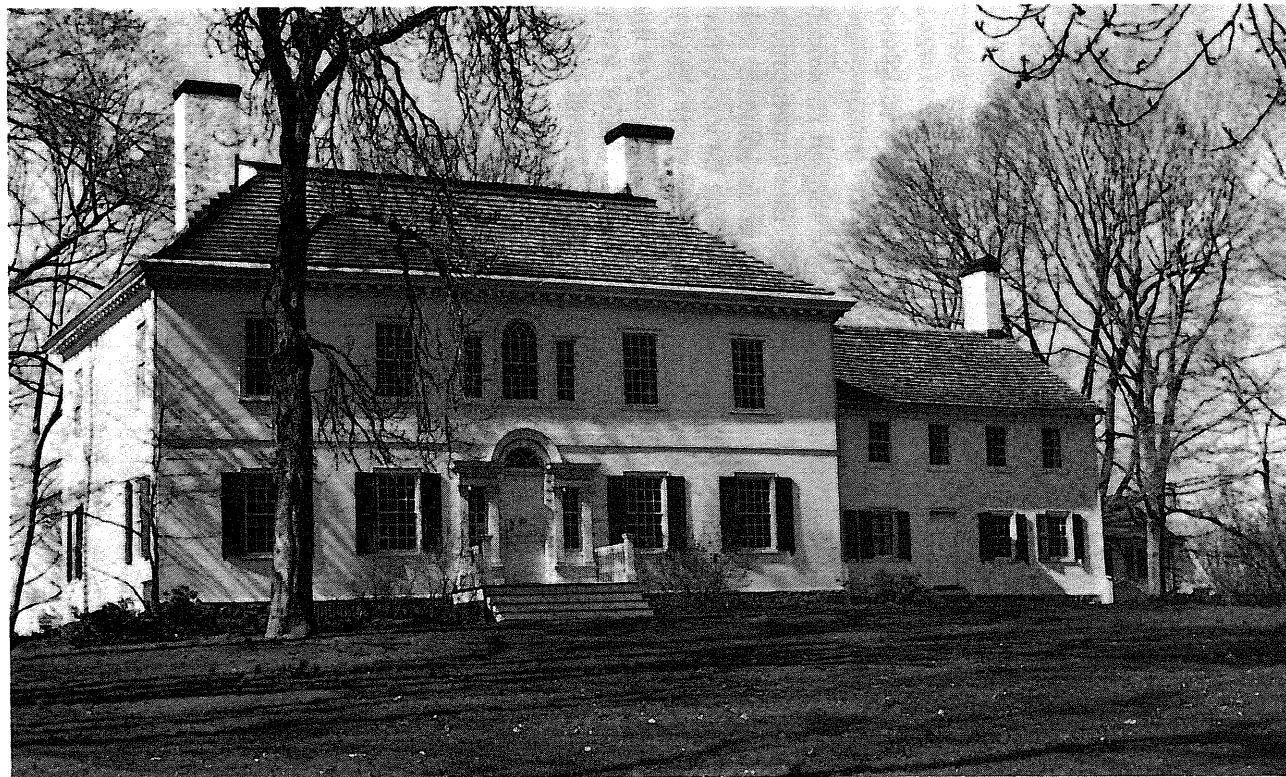
The people would not have to wait long to see the army again. The battles of Trenton and Princeton crushed British hopes for a quick end to the war and set in motion events that would lead the small American army back to Morristown. The victory at Princeton presented George Washington with an unexpected variety of possible opportunities. Should he push on to New Brunswick to

seize enemy stores and baggage? Should he follow a more conservative course and merely take steps to secure Philadelphia? The state of the army had to be considered carefully. The men were exhausted from going without rest or food for two days and two nights. Necessity demanded a temporary halting place for rest and resupply.

General Henry Knox urged that the army march up to Morristown, where it would be upon the British flank and would have access to food and the flexibility to shift and meet any enemy movement. With some reluctance, Washington accepted Knox's earnest plea. The American army followed the narrow dirt roads to Morristown. Washington established headquarters here at a time when his army was no more than five thousand strong, half of them undisciplined militia. Many left as enlistments expired, many others deserted. The British stood guard near New Brunswick. Would they make a stand, or push once more toward Pennsylvania? The moment of uncertainty and stress demanded appropriate action.

Most of New Jersey remained under the heel of British power. The Americans centered their efforts on creating an army for the coming spring and summer. Recruiting had lagged painfully, and it had to be stepped up. The local militia joined the ranks as a temporary aid. Small units waylaid British foraging parties, cut off supplies, and harassed the enemy in countless small skirmishes. American forces stationed from Princeton to Morristown, and eastward to within sight of New York City, kept the British in turmoil. One officer wrote, "For these two months, or nearly, have we been boxed about in Jersey as if we had no feelings. Our cantonments have been beaten up; our foraging parties attacked, sometimes defeated."

Food supplies vital to both American and British armies often became the focal point of struggle. Skirmishes occurred constantly, each taking its toll of English lives and further fraying the nerves of troops surrounded by hostile civilians and an active but small army. James Murray of the Fifty-seventh Regiment wrote: "We have pretty amusement known by the name of foraging or fighting for daily bread. As the rascals are skulking about the whole country, it is impossible to move with any degree of safety without a pretty large escort." Large amounts of food captured in



The home of Colonel Jacob Ford, Jr., Washington's headquarters during the 1779-1780 encampment. Photograph by Peggy Lewis.

these raids found their way back to the American camps and often made the difference between starvation and survival.

Not only the invaders suffered privations, discomfort, and discontent. The Americans at Morristown and the surrounding outposts were scarcely happier or more comfortable. Shelter from the cruel blast of winter might be public buildings, private homes, or even stables, barns, sheds, and tents. Fortunately, the Delaware troops found their quarters in Colonel Jacob Ford's fine home near the Morristown green. Mr. Urzal Kitchel, a farmer in Whippany, declined to house forty-one soldiers but agreed to accept twelve for the winter. By one means or another, the small army of three thousand found shelter in towns and farms scattered throughout northern New Jersey.

An unwelcome presence accompanied the ragged American army to Morristown. Smallpox spread among the encampment areas. A desperate situation required a dangerous solution and Washington ordered that both soldiers and civilians be inoculated — a practice almost as dangerous as the disease itself since it rendered a person immune by subjecting him to a mild case of the disease ("vaccination," a safer and more effective inoculation using cowpox virus, was not introduced to the United States until 1800). Before the immunization stilled the outbreak, the Presbyterian and Baptist churches had become hospitals filled with the sick, and many had died.

As the winter of 1777 passed into summer, major troop movements began. The British crossed in strength into New Jersey. To meet this threat, Washington ordered the army to march to Middlebrook (modern Bound Brook). From this strategic point in the first range of the Watchung Mountains, British movements toward Princeton or Trenton could be blocked. The British, having no desire to assault the steep wooded slopes of the Watchungs, tried to tempt Washington to battle. When he refused to fight they returned to New York and boarded troopships, and the war moved south to Pennsylvania and Philadelphia.

Leaving small units to guard the stores and crude fortifications overlooking Morristown, the American army moved to meet the new British threat. It seemed that the small town had seen the last of war. The army was to return in thirty-one months for a winter of unparalleled anguish, but fortunately for the townspeople none had

this foresight in May 1777.

The war shifted away. A British invasion from Canada, designed to split the new nation in two, ended in the destruction of an entire British army at Saratoga. The capital city of Philadelphia was captured, then abandoned. In June 1778 the quiet farmlands surrounding a small place called Monmouth Court House, New Jersey, roared with gunfire in the last major battle in the northern states. In the South, a joint French and American attempt to retake Savannah by siege ended in a fiasco. By 1779, in spite of some success, the outcome of the struggle for independence remained in doubt.

Late in 1779 Washington turned his attention to the approaching winter encampment of the Continental army. He needed a location where he could keep the large British forces in New York City under surveillance while sustaining his army through the difficult winter months. It was just as well the general and his men did not know that they were about to endure the severest winter of the century.

Washington recalled the small town of Morristown, separated from New York City by the Watchung Mountains, a chain of parallel ridges sweeping from the Raritan River northward to New York State. The army could easily defend passes through these mountains. Behind the mountains major roads joined New England and Pennsylvania. Supplies and men, the lifeblood of the Revolution, flowed north and south along these arteries.

Morristown had other advantages. The majority of its population supported the Revolution. Prosperous farms provided a source of food. Iron for cannon and musket was shaped at the forges at Hibernia and Mount Hope in the hills surrounding the area. Headquarters at West Point issued the necessary orders. Four Massachusetts regiments remaining at this key position would block the Hudson River. General Enoch Poor's brigade and some cavalry left for Danbury, Connecticut. Colonel Albert Pawling's New York militia and the North Carolina Brigade took up positions near Suffern, New York. Major Henry Lee's corps occupied the old battlefield near Monmouth Court House. The remainder of Washington's army marched over the familiar roads through the mountains of southern New York to Pompton and across the many streams and rivers cutting New Jersey. The army again drew near Morristown.

The troops stretched along these roads made up the backbone of Washington's army. Many had participated in the disastrous 1775-1776 campaign in Canada, bringing back two regiments of English and French volunteers to fight for America's cause. Others had been the backbone of American strength at Long Island, White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, and Monmouth. They had equally tenacious leaders. John Stark, a veteran of the French and Indian War (1756-1763), had raised and led the army that defeated the Hessians at Bennington, Vermont. Anthony Wayne had personally led the midnight assault upon the British fortifications at Stony Point. James Clinton, a brother of the governor of New York, had narrowly escaped capture by the British while defending a fort on the Hudson River. Without these leaders and their men, the cause of independence would have been hopeless. America's future marched with them.

The army would encamp a few miles south of Morristown in an area called Jockey Hollow. On December 1, 1779, General Nathanael Greene, who had inspected the site, wrote:

The ground is mountainous and uneven; and, therefore, will not be so agreeable as I could wish. There is wood I am hopes sufficient for the purpose of hutting and firing, if it is used properly. There is water in plenty. . . . The ground I think will be pretty dry.

Although the land had been used as farmland for as long as three decades, much of it was still thickly forested. Extensive stands of oak and walnut trees would serve as the raw material of hut construction. As each brigade arrived, the men made camp at a designated area where they lived in tents and commenced work on the huts that would serve as their homes.

In a severe hail- and snowstorm on December 1, 1779, George Washington arrived in Morristown, where the home of Colonel Jacob Ford, Jr., was selected as his headquarters. Other officers found quarters in a variety of private homes scattered about the community. Surgeon General John Cochran lived in the home of Dr. Jabez Campfield. General Knox, chief of artillery, found quarters in the Robertson house. While much of the army encamped on Henry Wick's farm, Major General Arthur

St. Clair found shelter in the Wick home. General William Smallwood occupied the former home of Peter Kemble, a prosperous Tory who was the father-in-law of British General Thomas Gage. A portion of Jacob Larzelaer's tavern was occupied by General John Stark.

For the rank and file and junior officers, canvas tents had to suffice until log huts were built. Dr. James Thacher of Stark's brigade reached Morristown on December 14, 1779. He wrote:

The snow on the ground was about two feet deep, and the weather extremely cold; the soldiers were actually barefoot and almost naked. . . . Our lodging last night was on the frozen ground.

Each hut was built to specific dimensions and placement, and those failing to meet the requirements were torn down. The huts were 14 feet wide, 15 or 16 feet long, and 6½ feet high at the eaves. Interior furnishings included wooden bunks, fireplace, and chimney. A door was cut into the front. Twelve men found shelter in each hut. Larger officers' cabins accommodated two to four occupants.

As work on this city of log huts began, the worst winter of the eighteenth century descended upon northern New Jersey with unrelenting fury. Repeated winter storms blasted the bleak hillsides of Jockey Hollow. The great blizzard of January 3, 1780, covered those hillsides with snow six feet deep which, during the night, buried some men "like sheep." Storm after storm blocked roads, making mere existence difficult. Twenty-eight major storms bombarded the encampment between December and April. The Hudson River froze solid and could be crossed on foot or horse. The British easily passed cannon over the ice at Staten Island.

The crude methods of land transportation broke down in the face of paralyzing snow and ice. The Continental army in Jockey Hollow faced starvation. Small food supplies disappeared. "Nothing to eat from morning to morning again" became a common diary entry. Washington appealed to the governors of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland to send whatever rations were available. In the meantime, pet dogs and tree bark often replaced regular food. Conditions pressed each man to the limit of human endurance. In February, 1780 Major General

Johann Kalb (known as "Baron de Kalb") described the winter as follows:

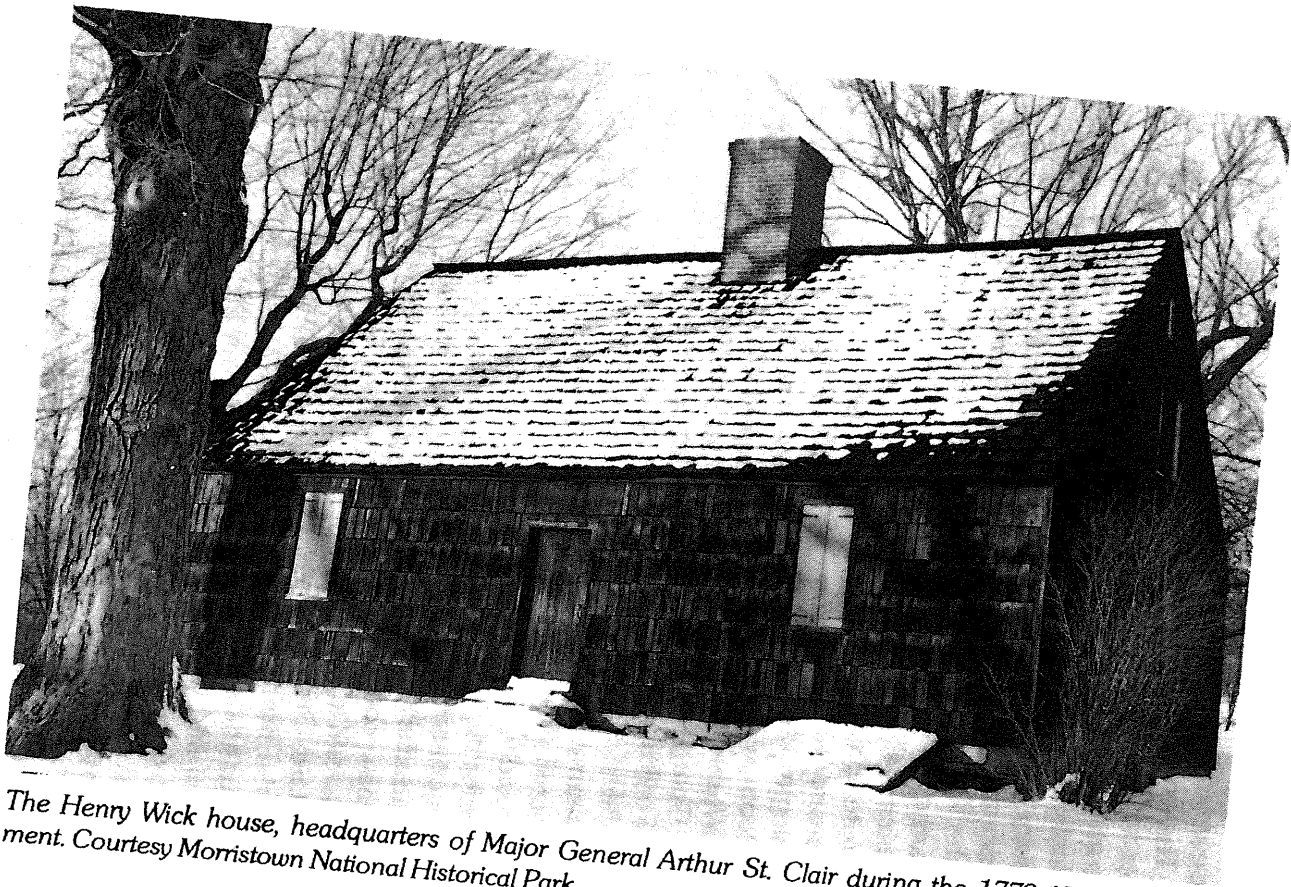
Those who have only been in Valley Forge or Middlebrook during the last two winters, but have not tasted the cruelties of this one, know not what it is to suffer.

To add to this suffering, supplies of clothing were almost nonexistent. Captain Joseph Walker, reporting that he had not more than fifty men fit for duty, added, "Many a good lad had nothing to cover him from his hips to his toes save his blanket." Erkuries Beatty wrote to his brother of "men naked as Lazarus, begging for clothing."

Ruinous inflation all but prohibited the purchase of food and clothing. Sixty dollars in paper money purchased one dollar silver or gold. Since Continental currency had so little value, the states had to provide the army with what the Congress could not. Required donations replaced the use of money to purchase supplies. The situation required Washington to impress food from New Jersey counties, depending for success on the support of local magistrates.

For the average soldier, each day at Jockey Hollow became an endless ordeal of hunger, sickness, and ever-present cold. A strict regimen of military discipline added to his woes. The day often began at sunrise when the army assembled on the parade ground for review and the assignment of details. Guard stations around camp and more distant outposts insured the security of the camp and provided a constant watch on the British army in New York City and Staten Island. Entire brigades marched to towns near enemy lines for two or three weeks of duty. New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Rahway, Westfield, Springfield, and Paramus confined the enemy to its strong fortifications around New York.

On January 14, 1780, three thousand soldiers under Major General William Alexander (known as Lord Stirling) launched a raid upon Staten Island. Five hundred sleighs carried the small army over the ice between New Jersey and Staten Island. Pre-warned of this raid, the British withdrew to their fortifications, and after twenty-four hours the Americans left the island with a few prisoners, some blankets and stores. Stung by the action, the British retaliated ten days later with raids on Newark and Elizabethtown (modern Elizabeth). Uneasy life on outpost duty be-



The Henry Wick house, headquarters of Major General Arthur St. Clair during the 1779-1780 encampment. Courtesy Morristown National Historical Park.

came even more hazardous for the American army.

The struggle for survival in camp and outpost exhausted both soldier and officer. At headquarters, in the home of Jacob Ford, Jr., the commander in chief faced a host of perplexing and crucial problems. His burdens included those now carried by president, secretary of state, and joint chiefs of staff. However, the young American nation depended solely upon this man. Robert Harrison, Tench Tilghman, Alexander Hamilton, James McHenry, and Richard Kidder Meade provided him with vital staff support. To these men fell much of the work of preparing initial and final drafts of voluminous correspondence. Other tasks varied from important diplomatic missions to serving as hosts for evening meals. Washington demanded the reliability of his aides, and their varied work occupied them from dawn to late at night.

Washington and this staff occupied all but two rooms of the large Georgian home. The remainder provided living quarters for Mrs. Ford and her four children. What a crowded house it must have been! In a letter to Nathanael Greene, quartermaster general of the army, Washington complained about the inadequate kitchen and noted that "eighteen belonging to my family and all Mrs. Fords are crowded together in her kitchen and scarce one of them able to speak for the colds they have caught." The construction of two log buildings at the rear of the house eased this problem and gave the staff much-needed working space. All through the winter, life somehow continued at headquarters. The aides bent over their desks and tables copying and drafting letters for the general's signature. Officers and distinguished visitors came and went; each time the front door opened or closed, a blast of cold air swept through the center hall. Each morning Washington met with the officers and brigade commanders to plan the next day's activities and to discuss matters of strategy for the spring.

A constant stream of visitors came to headquarters, many on matters of great importance. From the Continental Congress in Philadelphia came Philip Schuyler, John Mathews, and Nathaniel Peabody. This Continental Congress committee functioned as liaison between the civilian government in Philadelphia and the military government in Morristown. They reviewed the state of the Continental army and consulted with Washington on steps to improve the prospects of winning the war. Their report to Congress detailed at length "the almost insoluble difficulties of American

military affairs.” The report also stated plainly what Washington had been saying all along; that Congress itself would have to act quickly if the situation were to be saved. Decisive leadership in Philadelphia might stave off disaster.

On April 19, 1780, the French Minister, Chevalier de la Luzerne, with the Spanish representative, Don Juan de Miralles, arrived in the winter quarters from Philadelphia. European support was crucial to America’s success. Yet France and Spain would supply troops and equipment only if they were convinced of the probability of American success. No important nation entangled in the binds of European diplomacy wanted to lend prestige and reputation to a lost cause. A thirteen-cannon salute announced the arrival of these important visitors, and after they left their carriages a large party accompanied them to view the British lines on distant Staten Island. Five days later, when the Continental army passed in review on the Grand Parade, we can only wonder what the Chevalier de la Luzerne, minister of France, thought of the ragged, hungry men. The Spanish representative, Don Juan de Miralles, saw little of this effort to impress, however for he soon contracted a severe cold, which led to pneumonia and his untimely death. His position as a representative of the Spanish government meant a state funeral with all the pomp and spectacle the meager resources of the town and army could muster. General Edward Hand seemed unimpressed. In a letter to Jasper Yeates he wrote, “Don Juan de Miralles a Spaniard of Distinction has been sometime in America and will never leave it. We planted the old gentlemen in Morristown church yard a few days ago.”

The single most important visitor brought both official good news and personal joy to Washington. On May 6, 1780, the commander in chief received a letter from the young Marquis de Lafayette announcing his arrival in Boston. Washington was delighted to learn that he would soon see this gallant young Frenchman, both good friend and unofficial member of his family. The news Lafayette brought was momentous. King Louis XVI of France had dispatched a second major force of ships and men to aid the American cause. Six warships and six thousand well-trained French soldiers under General Rochambeau were on the high seas and would arrive in Rhode Island within a few days. It was hoped that this second expedition would lead to decisive French-American military efforts against the common enemy. The first French

expedition had returned home after failing to take Savannah.

Life at headquarters was indeed busy. Washington and his skeleton staff faced crucial problems of supply and recruitment in the face of a terrible winter and runaway inflation. The complexities of dealing with states, the Continental Congress, and foreign representatives required careful consideration. The major task, and perhaps the most painful, however, was to insure the survival of the American army until the spring of 1780, to which the maintenance of military discipline within the Jockey Hollow encampment area was essential. The task, difficult in the best of circumstances, became overwhelming that terrible winter. Yet the commander in chief never wavered in his determination to maintain discipline. He had to keep the army intact so that it could renew the battle with the return of warm weather.

Military discipline in the Continental army rested on articles of war first adopted in 1775 and subjected to later revision which brought them nearer to the British military code. Cruel and harsh by our standards, they provided an effective basis for the enforcement of discipline. The dreadful conditions of the 1779-1780 encampment placed great strain on these articles of war. Illness, shortages of food, deficiencies in uniforms, and a lack of pay dangerously lowered the soldiers' morale. Culpit after culprit — both officer and enlisted man — stood before court-martial in town or in camp, and Washington ordered a two room building erected between the New York and Pennsylvania Lines for holding courts-martial. Other trials were held in officers' huts, in taverns, and in public buildings in town.

For the enlisted man punishment was harsh. A man might be whipped with strips of knotted leather until his skin was covered with welts and blood. Some took the lash silently. Others chewed a lead bullet to keep from screaming. Soldiers were also punished with the pillory and branding iron. The worst fate a court-martial could decree was, of course, death, a sentence reserved for treason, repeated desertion, mutiny, and other atrocious crimes. Washington ordered such extreme punishment only infrequently, when it was necessary to impress would-be offenders.

While noncommissioned and commissioned officers might also be subjected to these punishments, more often they were reduced in rank, reprimanded in general orders, or cashiered out

of the army. If officers often received more mercy than enlisted men, it was because Washington knew that without them the army and the cause of independence was lost. The equipment, training, and state of the army depended upon this small group of men.

The winter almost destroyed the morale of both officer and enlisted man. Courts-martial found officers guilty of unbecoming behavior, theft, fraud, trade with the enemy, and unapproved absences from camp. Enlisted men were found guilty of plundering, neglect of weapons, gambling, drinking, riotous conduct, desertion, and mutiny. For each man the test was harsh. What suffering would they bear for the cause of independence and the fate of a nation not yet four years old?

Bad as the various individual offenses were, none created the same fear in Washington as the possibility of organized mutiny. Mutiny by all or a portion of the small army could instantly wipe out all gains and destroy the dream of independence within days. In addition, Washington knew that the British spy network constantly looked for such a possibility. Mutiny could do what the British army had been unable to do: destroy the Continental army.

In May, 1780, the threat became a reality. The First Connecticut Brigade, veterans of Germantown, Monmouth, and the Valley Forge encampment, rose in rebellion. Late in the month the brigade returned to Jockey Hollow from tense and dangerous outpost duty. They had had no meat in their diet for the past ten days and there was none in camp. They had not been paid for five months. Death sentences for eleven men further aroused their anger. May 25, the day before the scheduled execution, was tense, and thirty minutes after evening roll call an almost spontaneous rebellion of the Eighth Connecticut Regiment took place. Like wildfire it spread to the Fourth Regiment. With beating drum the mutineers began a march toward the huts of the remaining two regiments, where officers quickly formed their men without weapons. Colonel Meigs sent a plea to the Pennsylvania Line for help. Forestalled and surprised by the rapid response of the officers, the mutinous regiments lost their purposefulness and retreated to their huts. There the mutiny collapsed, though groups of armed men milled around for some time.

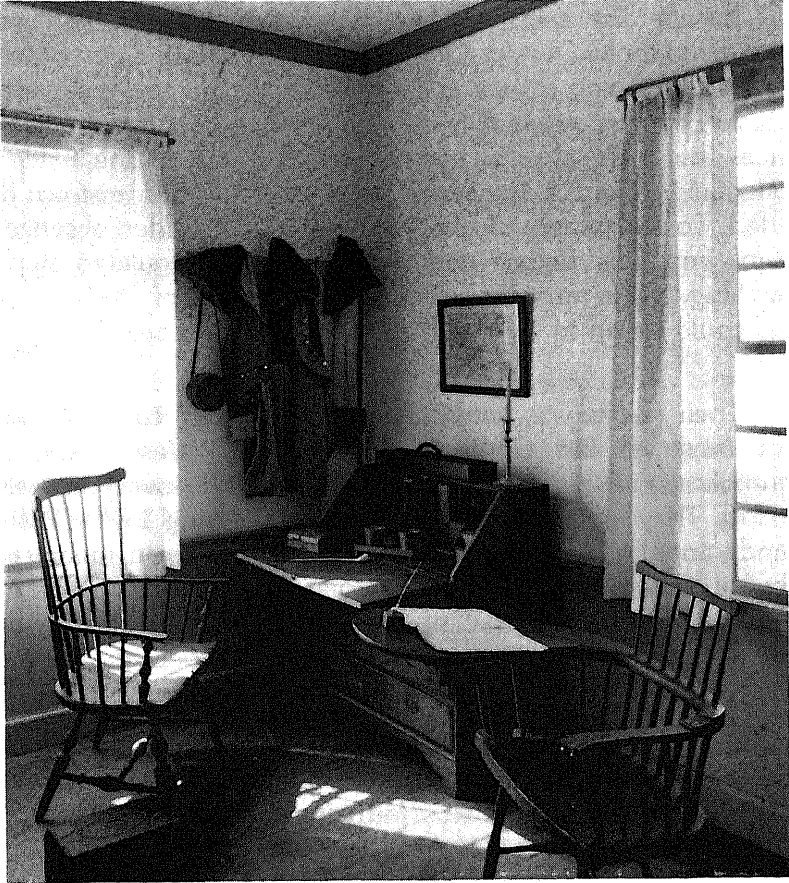
Several apparent leaders of the abortive revolt were arrested and imprisoned. An important portion of the army had been to the brink. For several frightful minutes, none were sure what the

remaining two Connecticut regiments, or indeed the Pennsylvania Line, might do. The commander in chief exhibited great anxiety over the revolt, realizing that conditions had to be improved to avoid further mutinies. He pleaded with Congress to provide desperately needed food, supplies, and money.

The average soldier, however, did not engage in mutiny or crime. Thousands of men obeyed the law and military regulations, spending their time in the endless struggle to survive. Food, shelter, and warmth occupied every waking thought. Training, inspections, guard duty, and work details filled the day with physical fatigue. The cold penetrated human flesh and froze feet and hands, and men spent their rare moments of free time huddled around the fireplaces of the crude huts.

What meager entertainment the soldiers themselves could provide infrequently relieved the Spartan monotony of camp life. Although forbidden, gambling was probably common. Music offered rare moments of diversion; each brigade had fifers and drummers whose impromptu concerts lightened dreary hours, and many men played the jew's-harp or flute. Except for Christmas, the only holiday the army celebrated was St. Patrick's Day. The Irish Parliament had endeared itself to the American patriots by significant acts of support, and Washington considered it fitting that all fatigue and working parties cease on St. Patrick's Day. The Pennsylvania brigades were indeed fortunate, for a hogshhead of rum brightened their day. A New York newspaper reported that the celebration featured Irish music and a flag-raising ceremony.

For the officers, opportunities for relaxation were more varied. To forget their miseries they formed a dancing group, to which Washington and thirty-four others subscribed \$400 each. The dances took place either in the large room above the commissary store house or at the Arnold tavern on the town green. Officers also took advantage of every opportunity to escape the camp. Furloughs enabled many to visit family and friends for at least a part of the winter, and whenever possible, wives joined their husbands at Morristown. Martha Washington arrived at the end of December, 1779, and joined her husband at the Ford home. During her stay she played hostess when Washington entertained. Kitty Greene, wife of General Greene, and Lucy Knox, wife of artillery



Office used by Washington in the Ford Mansion during the 1779-1780 encampment. Courtesy Morristown National Historical Park.

commander Henry Knox, also joined their husbands during the winter encampment.

Spring brought welcome relief to the suffering soldiers and grave news for the commander in chief. Reports reached Morristown that a British army had taken Charleston and captured General Benjamin Lincoln and his army of five thousand men, making enemy forces available for military operations in the northern states. At this moment of crisis, five thousand British and German troops crossed from Staten Island and advanced into New Jersey. Was Morristown their goal? The American army, already on the move, deployed toward Springfield.

Except for outpost skirmishing the situation remained unchanged for two weeks. On June 21, 1780, Washington ordered the few remaining troops in Morristown to join the main army. Valuable military stores concentrated in the village were taken to places less vulnerable to capture. By the time of the battle of Springfield (June 23), the second encampment at Morristown had ended. To the people of the small village the sudden absence of drums and fifes, hoarse commands, and the regulated step of marching troops must have brought welcome relief. Perhaps now they could return to the routines and confines of peaceful civilian life.

Their respite was temporary, however. Early the next winter, with most of the Continental army near West Point, ten Pennsylvania infantry regiments returned to Morristown and Jockey Hollow. They reoccupied the log huts built during 1779-1780 by Hand's and the First Connecticut Brigade. Once again, mutiny and rebellion spread like a firestorm among the troops. Men who had already seen far too much of war were embittered and angered by a year without pay, the ever-present shortage of food and clothing, and interminable enlistments in a war that seemed endless.

Major General Anthony Wayne saw the signs of impending trouble. Repeatedly, he urged the state government to provide what relief was possible. None was forthcoming. Again the American cause rushed to the brink of disaster. On the evening of January 1, 1781, the storm broke. The Pennsylvania troops revolted, seized artillery and ammunition, and prepared to carry their case directly to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Captain Adam Bettin was killed in a vain attempt to restore order, and two officers were wounded. Wayne tried to contain the revolt within Jockey Hollow, but when his effort failed he joined the mutineers and voluntarily accompanied them to Princeton. Two British spies also joined the ragged men on the march to Princeton, but they were summarily arrested and executed, for the Pennsylvania veterans wanted no part of enemy promises. Their dispute was with the Continental Congress.

At Princeton the mutineers met with representatives of both the Congress and the state of Pennsylvania. An agreement concluded on January 8, 1781, settled the main points of this dispute. Similar conditions triggered a mutiny of the New Jersey Brigade

(the collective title for New Jersey regiments of the Continental army) at Pompton on January 20.

Morristown was not to see its last soldier until after the battle of Yorktown, when troops of the New Jersey Brigade returned to encamp in the vicinity of the Wick farm in Jockey Hollow. On August 29, 1782 they left Morristown. No more would wooded slopes, farm fields and small rustic village know the pressure of men and equipment of war.

At the Morristown winter encampment of 1779-1780, the severest trial of the American Revolution took place and the men displayed courage, strength, and determination. The army, inspired and held together by Washington's leadership and ability, survived a dark time of discouragement and despair.

A private soldier named Stanton summed up the significance of the Morristown story on February 10, 1780. He wrote to his friend Thomas Noyes:

... but I am in hopes the Army will be kept together till we have gained the point we have so long been contending for. . . . I could wish I had two lives to lose in defense of so glorious a cause sooner than be overcome. I was free born and if I can. . . I will stand or fall in defense of my country.

Something had been created in these men of the Morristown encampment — a purpose and belief that would guide and sustain the young nation through the trials and tribulations of a terrible winter and into the years beyond.

For Further Reading

Morristown National Historical Park: A Military Capital of the American Revolution, by Melvin J. Weig (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service Handbook Series, 1950) is a brief account of the total Morristown encampment story. It can be ordered from the U.S. Government Printing Office, North Capital and H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20401. *Quartering, Disciplining and Supplying the Army at Morristown, 1779-1780*, by George J. Svejda, provides detailed information concerning all aspects of the 1779-1780 encampments. It is available from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia

22151. Other interesting historical studies relating to Morristown National Historical Park can be ordered from the National Technical Information Service. They include the *Historic Base Map*, by John F. Luzader; *Ford Mansion Furnishing Study*, by Lenard E. Brown; *Wick House Historic Structure Report* and *Wick House Furnishing Study* by Ricardo Torres-Reyes.

The narrative of Joseph Plumb Martin includes a unique, first-person account of the 1779-1780 Morristown encampment as seen through the eyes of the enlisted man. Originally published in 1830, it was reprinted in 1962 by Little, Brown and Co. (Boston) under the title *Private Yankee Doodle*, with George Scheer as editor. The New York Times and Arno Press (New York) also reprinted it that year as *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*. The exciting story of the *Mutiny in January*, by Carl Van Doren was published by Viking Press (New York) in 1943 and reissued by Augustus M. Kelly, (Clifton, N.J.) in 1973.

Other books containing significant chapters dealing with the Morristown story include *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by Participants*, edited by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper and Row, 1958, 1967); *George Washington in the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, by James Thomas Flexner, vol. 2 *George Washington* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967); *From Lexington to Liberty; the Story of the American Revolution*, by Bruce Lancaster (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1955); *Rebels and Redcoats* by George Scheer and Hugh Rankin (New York: World Publishing Co., 1957); and *The War of the Revolution*, by Christopher L. Ward. Edited by John Richard Alden, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan Co., 1952).

Finally, any student of the life of George Washington must refer to the monumental *George Washington, A Biography*, 7 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948-1957), by Douglas Southall Freeman.

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T.M.