

STORIES of New Jersey



Continental Soldier

the fall of Fort Washington on November 16. If Washington had disregarded Congress' insistence that he defend the post, and if he had listened to General Charles Lee instead of General Greene, the fort would have been abandoned, 2,600 men would not have been captured and invaluable ammunition and equipment would have been saved. With the surrender of Fort Washington, the American army retreated across the Hudson River to Fort Lee on the New Jersey Palisades. But this post, named by Washington to honor Charles Lee, had become dangerous, for the British fleet was entirely free to move northward from the bay, and the superior British land force could easily cross the river and attack the fort from the north or south. By this time Howe had been reinforced by thousands of Hessian as well as British troops. Sir Henry Clinton and 2,000 men, unable to pierce Lee's defense of Charleston, had also joined Howe. All told, the strongest military nation in the world had 32,000 soldiers in America and great quantities of guns and equipment.

Anticipating that Howe would invade the Jerseys to strike at Philadelphia, Washington set up headquarters at Hackensack, and on November 17, hampered by lack of boats and too few wagons, he started the removal of precious military stores from Fort Lee to the west side of the Passaic River. Winter was beginning and the army was disintegrating. Officers thought only of their personal ambitions; men were continually deserting; enlistments expired, and breakdown of civilian morale deprived Washington of fresh recruits promised by the newly created states. There was a great lack of hospital equipment and no medicines: the sick rarely got well. Many half-hearted rebels were becoming traitorous Tories. It was no wonder that Washington wrote to his brother: "I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things..."

At dawn on November 20, the British, having crossed the Hudson, were on the march, and Washington ordered an instant retreat. Leaving their kettles burning on the campfires and abandoning tents, baggage and cannon, the Americans

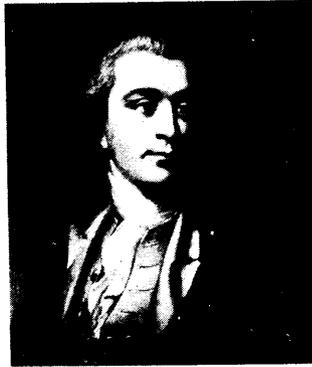
degree of self-government. Not until early in 1776 did he come to believe that only independence from England could ease the oppression. Two things convinced him: George III's attitude of "vengeance and indignation" and Tom Paine's revolutionary pamphlet, *Common Sense*.

Through the winter of 1775-76, Washington kept Sir William Howe's British troops locked in Boston and struggled to train an army out of hardheaded, undisciplined farmers and militiamen. At last in March, Howe, accompanied by hundreds of Tories, was driven from Boston, and at the beginning of April, the American commander left for New York, where he expected Howe would eventually come. On July 2, the day the British transports arrived off Staten Island, the Continental Congress voted for independence from England; and Washington informed his men: "We have therefore to resolve to conquer or die..."

They died--at the disastrous Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776; on Manhattan Island; in Westchester; and at

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fled down into the valley of the Hackensack River by three different routes. Washington, realizing he had no chance of making a stand in the low-lying open country, abandoned his headquarters at Hackensack and on November 21 marched his sorry-looking soldiers down the muddy road that followed the shore of the Passaic River. He crossed the river by a bridge at Belleville and reached Newark. Here he called the guards stationed at Elizabethtown and Perth Amboy and waited in vain for the New Jersey militia to come to his aid. In a few days Cornwallis, slowed by the weather, was at his heels, and Washington, with his ragged troops, took to the road again. The redcoats were in Newark before the Americans had all started on the road to New Brunswick.



Joseph Reed



Charles Lee

Washington probably knew by this time that influential men in Congress and in political circles were conspiring to remove him from full command, but he had yet to learn that his most trusted officers had lost confidence in him. Colonel Joseph Reed, his adjutant-general and close friend, had written to General Charles Lee after the retreat from Fort Lee condemning Washington's "indecisive mind." Reed suggested that Lee should be commander of the American army.

Lee's reply reached Washington's camp at New Brunswick while Reed was at Burlington pleading with Governor Livingston for desperately-needed assistance. Washington, thinking it official correspondence, opened the letter. Lee had written: "I...lament with you that fatal indecision of mind which in war is a much greater disqualification than stupidity or even want of personal courage..."

Washington knew all that Reed had written from what Lee had answered. He forwarded the letter to Reed, explaining that he had "no idea of its being a private letter, much less suspecting the tendency of the correspondence..." Although deeply hurt by the criticism, his official relations with Reed and Lee continued free of resentment or spite, for he rarely allowed his personal feelings to prejudice him against anyone fighting for American victory. When, several months later, friendship between Reed and the commander was patched, Washington admitted: "I was hurt...because I thought...myself...entitled...to your advice upon any point in which I appeared to be wanting."

On November 28, after destroying the bridge over the Raritan River, Washington entered New Brunswick and united his force with Lord Stirling's. Again he waited vainly for reinforcements of New Jersey Militia. Desertions increased. The troops were half-naked and hungry. As it happened, the British were hungry, too, and greatly retarded by their enormous caravan which carried wartime luxuries as well as necessities.

The British were firing their cannon across the Raritan as Washington hastily withdrew from New Brunswick with less than 4,000 men on December 1. Next day found the remnant of the American army moving grimly through Princeton where Stirling remained with 1,200 men, while the others pushed on to Trenton to join 2,000 militiamen from Pennsylvania waiting there. Washington wasted no time at Trenton. He sent 1,200 men under Greene back to reinforce Stirling at Princeton and began at once to ship across the Delaware whatever military equipment and stores he could lay hands on. Several days previous he had decided that the enemy were aiming for Philadelphia and sent word that all craft on the Delaware be collected at Trenton--especially the large Durham boats used for transporting produce.

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Lord Cornwallis



Sir Wm. Howe

Cornwallis and his chief, General Howe, were drawing closer with their powerful force. Washington immediately ordered the American army across the river. As the last men were being rowed over, the bright red coats of the British soldiers appeared on the bank. But in Trenton they found scarcely a row boat to pursue the Continental Army. General Howe sent Cornwallis with several regiments north to Lambertville, and south to Burlington he dispatched a Hessian force, but no boats were to be found. The Americans had done a good job.

Howe garrisoned his troops in the vulnerable chain of posts he had established across New Jersey from Jersey City to Bordentown. This accomplished, he and Cornwallis, who originally intended to return to England, departed for a gay winter in New York. Meanwhile, General Charles Lee, who had ignored Washington's orders to join the main force heretofore, decided to win back New Jersey from the King's army. In the vicinity of Bernardsville, quartered in a house some distance from his troops, he was captured by the British on December 13. The enemy had done Washington a favor, for Lee's men, without their leader to stop them, hurried on to strengthen the skeleton army in Pennsylvania.

The American army needed a victory, for as Washington wrote to his brother on December 18:

...our affairs are in a very bad condition...the conduct of the Jerseys has been most infamous. Instead of turning out to defend their country...they are making their submissions as fast as they can...If every nerve is not strained to recruit the new army...the game is pretty near up...

But if Washington wrote or spoke of defeat, he would never break under it. However weary and discouraged, he pushed forward. It was characteristic that while he wrote with his heart that the game was "pretty near up," he was at about the same time working out with his head one of the most audacious military tactics in history and writing a brilliant political letter to the President of the Congress. In this message, the obedient, and almost powerless servant of Congress, confessing that he had promised his artillery a raise in pay, dared ask for discretionary powers. He wrote:

If...every matter...is to be referred to Congress, so much time must necessarily elapse, as to defeat the end in view... Can anything...be more destructive...than...militia who... consume your provisions, exhaust your stores, and leave you at last at a critical moment?...In my judgment this is not a time to stand upon expense...It may be thought that I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty...to advise thus freely. A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessings of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse.

The commander in chief went on to request better army organization, an efficient communications system, more commissaries and quartermasters and a clothier-general who "should be a man of business and abilities." He again asked Congress not to interfere in the regular promotion of officers and warned of the immediate need for casting cannon and providing small arms, without which "men will be of little use." He complained that he was "obliged to attend to

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the business of so many different departments" that his chief duty of leading the army necessarily suffered. "I have labored, ever since I have been in the service," his letter went on, "to discourage all kinds of local attachments and distinctions of country, denominating the whole by the greater name of American..."

Warr - But action was the burning need of the moment if the "greater name of American" were to be more than a dream. Continental money was practically worthless; the army was held in contempt; and the people, losing faith in ultimate victory, were returning in great numbers to the King's protection. The American Revolution and the future of a nation were at stake.

In the morning darkness of December 26, 1776, the commander launched his half-naked, wretched army against the Hessian garrison that Howe had left at Trenton. In a fury of snow, sleet and floating ice, 2,400 men fought strong winds and the river's fierce current to reach the New Jersey shore at what is now Washington Crossing State Park. At the Johnson House in the present village of Washington Crossing, the commander waited for the troops, horses and cannon to be brought over.

Dividing his command with General Sullivan, whom he ordered to march by the river road, Washington, together with Greene and Stirling, started along the Pennington road on the grueling nine-mile march to Trenton. Many of the men walked in the snow with rags wrapped round their feet or went barefoot. At eight o'clock in the morning, three hours behind schedule, but spurred on by the password "Victory or Death," Washington's men attacked the outposts from the north, and Sullivan's, from the south.

The main Hessian force and its commander, Colonel Rall, surprised out of a drunken sleep after their exuberant celebration of Christmas day, were too demoralized to make any effective resistance. More than a hundred of the enemy were killed or wounded in the short struggle, almost a thousand were captured, and only about four hundred escaped. Colonel Rall died of wounds received in the brief battle. The Americans suffered only a few casualties.

But victorious though they were, the Americans dared not remain in Trenton. Reinforcements that Washington expected did not arrive, and there was danger of an immediate attack from a strong British force at Princeton. Washington hurried his little army, with prisoners and booty, back to Pennsylvania.

On January 1, 1777, Washington was again in New Jersey. His force of 5,000 included the reinforcements of raw militiamen brought by Colonel Cadwalader and General Mifflin. The more experienced New England soldiers of the Continental Army had agreed to remain six weeks beyond their enlistment period only after their practical commander had promised them a \$10 bonus. Washington had also ordered General Heath, then in Bergen County, to move westward through Hackensack to the main army; and to the commanding officers of the militia at Morristown, he had sent instructions to keep the enemy on edge by constant guerilla attacks on their rear and flank.

On the morning of January 2, Cornwallis with 5,000 trained soldiers, set out from Princeton to win back Trenton.



Cornwallis' Headquarters--Alpine

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Gen. Hugh Mercer

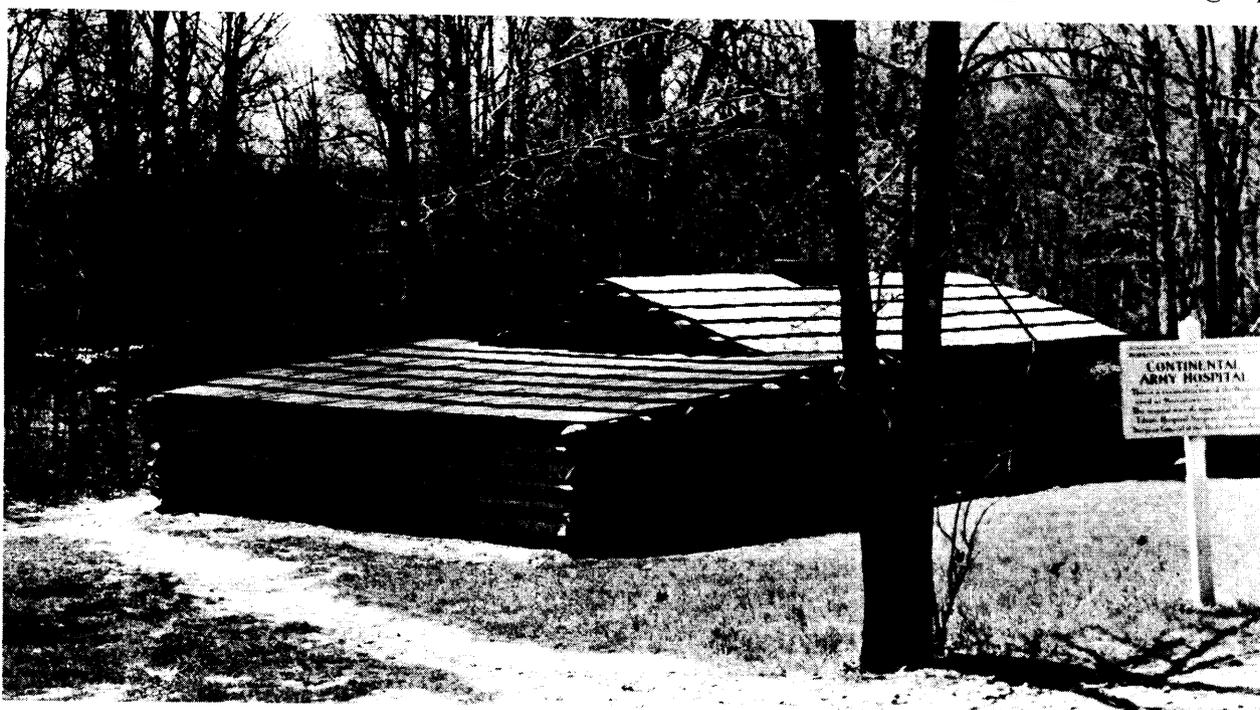
From Shabakunk Creek to Trenton American snipers attacked and retreated, attacked and retreated until they had crossed Assunpink Creek and ranged along the fortified hillside that Washington had prepared. Three times the Englishmen charged the bridge over the Assunpink, and three times they were repulsed. At nightfall the tired British decided to rest in Trenton for the night and finish off the entire American army in the morning.

But Washington had learned from the disaster of Long Island to avoid pitched battles with the superior British army. After conferring with his officers at the Alexander Douglass house on Greene Street, he determined to elude Cornwallis by moving secretly on the British garrison at Princeton by a back road. Perhaps he would even go on to strike at New Brunswick where the enemy held Charles Lee captive and kept their stores and a military chest of \$350,000. It was a very risky enterprise. The "Old Fox" was beginning to earn his nickname.

Before dawn of January 3 the American troops started on the march. To speed the movement, **baggage, stores and heavy guns were dispatched south to Burlington.** Some regiments even stored away their overcoats so that they might walk faster. Leaving 400 men to throw up earthworks noisily and keep the campfires flaming high to deceive enemy eyes and ears, Washington led his men along the narrow, icy road to Princeton. The thawing snow and mire had hardened again with the night cold, and the wheels of the wagons carrying the cannon were muffled with rags and rope.

Daylight brought the weary and sleepless American army to the Quaker meeting house near Stony Brook, about two miles south of Princeton. Here Washington divided his troops, sending General Mercer to cut the bridge over the stream so that Cornwallis could not attack from the rear. But Mercer was surprised by two British regiments under Colonel Mawhood which were leaving Princeton to join Cornwallis at Trenton. Superior British cannon and bayonets routed the Americans, and General Mercer, resisting surrender, was stabbed to death.

Meanwhile, hearing of Mercer's plight, Washington struggled to bring up



Reconstructed Continental Hospital--Morristown

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the raw Pennsylvania militiamen, but caught in the swirl of Mercer's fleeing band, the Pennsylvanians would not stand. Everywhere was confusion. The reinforced Americans, outnumbering the enemy ten to one, were yet in danger of being utterly destroyed. Furiously spurring his huge, white horse, the commander in chief raced madly from regiment to regiment, shouting to his men that they were confronted by "but a handful of the enemy," that they could yet achieve victory. He shamed them, cursed them, swinging a column here, a column there and even exposed himself purposely to the direct volley of the enemy in order to revive the courage of his troops. He succeeded at last in rallying a sufficient force to continue the fight, and when his experienced troops finally arrived he broke the British line and sent it fleeing in disorder. In Princeton other British soldiers put up a fight, but were soon subdued.

Though the British called the move on Princeton a great military accomplishment, Washington was disappointed. His hungry, exhausted men were dropping to the ground, overcome by sleep, and Cornwallis was swiftly drawing near. Marching on New Brunswick was out of the question. He ordered a small detail to destroy the strategic bridge still standing over Stony Brook. When someone commented on how few men were chosen for this important job, Washington is said to have answered with quiet bitterness: "Enough to be cut to pieces." And they almost were, for Cornwallis' men opened fire on the detachment as it was completing its task. Hastily now Washington snatched a supply of much-needed blankets, exchanged two of his cannon for superior British types, burned a hay depot and, leaving behind his wounded, marched his men quickly across the Millstone River. Here, too, the bridge was destroyed and the army went on through Kingston to Millstone, about 15 miles from Princeton. The Americans had just managed to escape from royal troops at their rear, while in front of them, another British contingent fled out of Millstone with 20 wagons of baggage just before the Americans arrived in the town at nightfall.

The British were in a panic. Cornwallis hurried his tired army to New Brunswick, expecting to find Washington there. But Washington, continuing north after stopping at Pluckemin on January 5, arrived at Morristown on the 6th and there set up winter quarters.

In the days that followed the commander discovered what a splendid retreat Morristown afforded. Here he could observe the enemy and still be protected by the wooded Watchung hills which rose like gigantic stairs from the valley of the Raritan River. And from the mountain town, he could send down raiding parties to make life miserable for the comfort-loving British garrisons, now for the most part confined worriedly to crowded quarters at New Brunswick and Perth Amboy.

Difficulties were not vanquished with the victories at Trenton and Princeton. Though the Delaware was free of the enemy, and the spirit of the army and its sympathizers had soared, it was yet a mammoth task to keep that army intact and reasonably comfortable. And New Jersey itself was far from supporting the rebellion completely. On Washington's side were the rabble, the under-privileged who had suffered greatly in the depression immediately preceding the war, a few philosophical idealists and an increasing proportion of plain farmers; opposing them and loyal to the king were many of the wealthy slave-holding landowners and rich merchant



Replica of Soldiers' Hut

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families. British victories brought avenging Tories plundering through the countryside, and with American recovery of the territory, revolutionary Whigs rose up to rob, destroy and murder in turn. Spies were everywhere.

This was the war-torn New Jersey with which George Washington had to contend when he settled down for the winter at Morristown in January 1777. Congress, fleeing from Philadelphia to Baltimore in December, fearful of disaster in New Jersey, had finally entrusted the commander in chief with dictatorial powers for six months. Accepting the new responsibilities from a weak central government that was extremely jealous of its few powers, Washington wrote:

Instead of thinking myself freed from all civil obligations, by this mark of their confidence, I shall constantly bear in mind that as the sword was the last resort for the preservation of our liberties so it ought to be the first thing laid aside when those liberties are firmly established.

Almost immediately, and in the face of opposition from patriots and Tories alike, Washington commanded all who had had any connection with the enemy to swear allegiance to the United States within 30 days or "withdraw themselves and their families within the enemy's lines." Those refusing to obey the order would be "treated as common enemies of these United States."

More serious than the Tory situation was the old struggle to maintain an army that would not break at the moment of crisis. From headquarters in the old Freeman Tavern in Morristown Washington directed construction of the fortification which later became known as Fort Mifflin. The fort, not of any military value, was important in keeping the idle troops occupied. The people were against long-term enlistments, and the states, jealous of their independent status, encouraged desertions by paying better wages for service in the local militia than the moneyless congress could afford for the country's army. Too, it was the end of the enlistment period for many of the men, and they hastened home to their families and the neglected soil which soon would have to be plowed for spring planting. Washington was helpless to stop this exodus. He could only remark ironically: "We shall be obliged to detach one half the army to bring back the other."

British bribery, poor living conditions and lack of provisions also contributed to increase desertions. At Princeton on February 9, the entire artillery force attached to the outpost garrison there took French leave, because they had been denied an extra ration of rum. Along the Delaware sentries in charge of the ferries charged exorbitant fares to make some spending money. The private soldier stole and plundered where he could, and the officers were often no better than the men under them. They embezzled funds intended for the army; went off on a good time when sent to round up deserters; and resigned or deserted when they had accumulated a few dollars. Corruption penetrated practically every single agency of the Continental Army.

Washington, who had long been aware that many officers were "not fit to be shoeblacks," now angrily wrote to Governor Livingston concerning the New Jersey militia: "Their officers are generally of the lowest class of people; and instead of setting a good example to their men, are leading them into every kind of mischief, one species of which is plundering the inhabitants, under the pretense of their being Tories." An aristocratic Virginian, Washington never had patience with the lower classes. This attitude was reflected in his statement: "Take none but gentlemen" to be officers.

Even his own staff officers were a headache. From



Gov. Livingston

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captivity, Charles Lee whined for the company of his dogs and, according to Rupert Hughes, wrote to Washington suggesting that Congress make peace with the enemy. Benedict Arnold, with a splendid record for bravery in action, had been denied promotion by the politically-minded Congress, and it was the commander's task to sooth his pride so that he would not resign. Others who were part of Washington's so-called "family"--young, ambitious men like Alexander Hamilton--found the commander too sensitive to criticism and too dull. Foreign sympathizers and adventurers who had begun to arrive expected to become generals at once, outranking native officers. Washington's diplomatic talents were exercised to exhaustion.

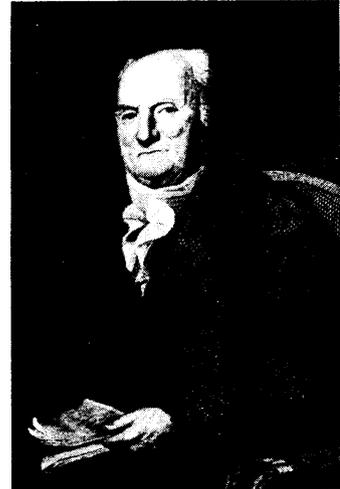
The additional burden of supervising the care of prisoners was finally taken from Washington's shoulders by Elias Boudinot of Elizabethtown who for a year and a half devoted his entire time and much of his personal fortune to the work. Other Jerseymen like Boudinot--Governor Livingston, Francis Hopkinson, Dr. John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey, and John Honeyman, the clever, daring spy of Griggstown whose information made possible the Trenton victory--made up for their neighbors' lack of patriotism during the war years.

Leading Puritan citizens, and even the Congress, spoke out against the gambling and swearing among the soldiers at Morristown until Washington, quite a card player himself, forbade these indulgences. In order to curb desertion, theft and other crimes, the general requested permission to inflict 500 lashes on culprits. Congress, however, would allow only 100. Another severe punishment forced a man to straddle a narrow tree branch with his feet off the ground for hours at a time. The British, during the last world war, were still using this torture to punish their men.

Strong measures were also needed to check epidemics of smallpox and dysentery, an infection still common among armies living under unsanitary conditions. Washington, in his youth, had suffered both diseases, and the marks of the pox were still on his face. Mrs. Washington had been inoculated against smallpox the year before. In February, over the protest of the citizenry, he ordered the encampment at Morristown and all the civil population of that part of the State to be inoculated by army physicians.

With disease and desertion the army shrank during February and March. Washington himself became ill with a dangerous fever early in March and assigned General Greene to succeed him. By March 15 he was well enough to travel to Pluckemin to meet Mrs. Washington, who had come to be with him till the opening of the spring campaign. Though his wife made it more comfortable for him at Morristown, Washington was plagued by the weakness of his army. In April there were still no recruits, and the opening of the British offensive was drawing dangerously close. "How I am to oppose them, God knows!" he exclaimed. At last in May the recruits, mostly from Morris County, began to come in, and on May 28, with 8,000 men, he moved 20 miles southward from Morristown to Middlebrook valley, between the first and second Watchung mountains, just north of Bound Brook and the valley of the Raritan River. From this natural rampart, virtually immune from attack and only eight miles from British headquarters at New Brunswick, Washington could immediately throw his force across the enemy's path should they once more attempt to march on Philadelphia.

The winter had not been entirely quiet. On January 20, while combing the neighborhood of Millstone for food and horses, a British detachment was put to



Elias Boudinot

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flight by New Jersey and Pennsylvania militiamen. On April 13 the Americans ran when Cornwallis attempted to trap the small force stationed at Bound Brook. Guerilla warfare kept British foraging parties on edge throughout the winter. Even General Howe and his escort, returning to Perth Amboy from a visit at New Brunswick, were surprised by an attack, which, however, they turned back. Washington encouraged the guerilla attacks, even suggesting on occasion that companies dress in Indian style to frighten the enemy. To rouse public opinion against the redcoats he shrewdly condemned them for hiring Hessians and savages who "lay waste your Country...adding murder to desolation." On the other hand, Washington used Indians whenever possible.

June and July were months of waiting and watching for a decisive British move. While the commander expected a plunge across New Jersey to Philadelphia or an attack on the Hudson River forts, Howe decided to move against Philadelphia by sea. First however, the British tried to lure Washington down from the protecting Watchung hills to the vulnerable open valley. On the morning of June 14 Howe began stretching out his 10,000 men on a nine-mile front which offered Washington apparently excellent opportunity for a full attack. Five days later, realizing that his ruse had failed, Howe marched his troops back through New Brunswick, harried constantly by American guerilla attacks.

As the British withdrew to Perth Amboy and Staten Island, Washington, still suspecting a trick, came down from the Watchungs. Cautiously he kept his main force at New Market, just south of Dunellen, though his staff officers recommended an all-out attack. Stirling was sent with a detachment closer to the British.

General Howe, learning that Washington had at last come down to the lowlands, prepared at once to launch a lightning attack. After midnight on June 28, he hurried from Perth Amboy through Bonhamton and Metuchen, striking north to join the column under Cornwallis which had proceeded through Woodbridge. Stirling's outposts, surprised for the moment, sent out a warning and retreated, slowing up the British with relentless fire from the woods. Near Scotch Plains, Stirling's main force held up the enemy until supplies had been removed and then hastily returned up the Watchung slopes, where Washington, warned, had already regained his strategic position at Middlebrook. Once more, Howe had failed to catch the cautious "Old Fox." During the last four days of June, the British moved back from Westfield, northernmost point of their drive, to Perth Amboy and there boarded transports which carried them away from New Jersey. General Howe never returned here.

As Washington marched the Continental Army northward out of New Jersey to the Hudson Highlands of New York State to head off a possible British assault in that region, the English fleet put out to sea, destination unknown. Then a British spy was captured. He was carrying a message to Burgoyne stating that Howe was moving on Boston to aid in the northern campaign. Washington realized that the spy had permitted himself to be captured purposely so as to throw the Americans off the trail. In reality Howe was bound for Philadelphia. Washington hastened his army back across New Jersey. On July 30, he was in Lambertville. The following day he was informed that the British armada was rounding Cape May, and that night he was riding swiftly into Philadelphia, his army not far behind. New Jersey was not to see him again until the summer of the next year, 1778.

The intervening months were marked by defeats for Washington and his army in Pennsylvania and by a great victory for the American forces under General Gates at Saratoga in New York State. During the winter, the commander and his men experienced the terrible ordeal of Valley Forge. With the spring came General Lee's release from captivity and the treaty of alliance with France.

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On June 17, 1778 the British, who had decided to abandon Philadelphia and concentrate their forces at New York, crossed the Delaware under their new chief, Sir Henry Clinton, and started across New Jersey. Washington followed, arriving at Lambertville on the 21st, where he again stopped at the Holcombe house, which is still standing. In nearby Hopewell during an eclipse of the sun three days later Washington decided to risk a major attack on the British, though a majority of his staff voted against it. At Kingston, where he arrived June 25, he found awaiting him a magnificent white battle steed, a gift from Governor Livingston.

The campaign that was to end at the Battle of Monmouth was on. Small detachments were sent out to make rapier attacks on the enemy's flanks, and an advance force of 5,000 men was sent ahead to make the first contact, as second in command General Lee demanded that he and not Lafayette lead the advance troops in spite of the fact that he had been opposed to the action originally. Lee's intrusion, like the villain's appearance on the screen, was a signal for trouble ahead.

Washington stopped over at Cranbury in Middlesex County on the 26th, and on the same day, because of unbearably hot weather, Clinton rested at Monmouth Court House, now Freehold. His wagon-train, 11 miles long, had taken 9 days to travel 60 miles. On the 27th Washington moved to a point three miles west of Englishtown and here instructed Lee to be ready to attack Clinton's army the following day, before the British should reach a safer position in the Navesink Highlands. After midnight on the 28th Alexander Hamilton rode to Lee's headquarters with written orders to attack. Zero hour was the moment the British caravan got under way. The plan was to have Lee distract Clinton so that Washington with his main force of about 8,000 men could crush the enemy's entire resistance.

But erratic Lee never began the action. About eight o'clock on Sunday morning, June 28, 1778, after several delays, he made contact with the enemy, only to fall back at once without even attempting to put up a fight. Washington, after breakfast at the home of Dr. English in Englishtown, rode toward Freehold. Word of Lee's retreat reached him at the outskirts of the village. Spurring his horse along the sandy road in the broiling sun, he sent two of Lee's retreating regiments into the woods, where they would not be seen by his oncoming troops, and immediately dispatched two of his own regiments to check the British until he could arrange the main army in battle formation.

At this hectic moment General Lee, proud of his retreat over difficult terrain and believing that his splendid military judgment had saved his force from destruction, rode directly up to Washington. Rarely known to utter a profane word, Washington cursed Lee roundly that day. One general claimed that the commander "swore till the leaves shook on the trees...like an angel from Heaven." Lee himself later wrote: "I was disconcerted, astonished and confounded by the words and manner in which his Excellency accosted me."

But Washington had no time to argue with Lee. He ordered Lee's weary regiments to retire to Englishtown and threw the main army against Clinton's advancing troops. All day the fighting raged, with Anthony Wayne, Baron von Steuben and the legendary lady known as Molly Pitcher acquitting themselves nobly. The heat was infernal: soldiers on both sides died of sunstroke. Washington's beautiful white horse, worn out from the heat and constant running, sank beneath the weight of his master and never rose again. Leaping to another horse brought by his Negro servant, the commander dashed on to direct events in another part of the field. In late afternoon Clinton withdrew, and Washington formed new lines to continue the attack. But night made it impossible to press the advan-

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*Tennent Church, Hospital
during Battle of Monmouth*

nearby, and reached Paramus July 11. On the same day the French fleet arrived at Sandy Hook. Washington's greetings to the French commander, Count D'Estaing, were dispatched from his headquarters at the Hermitage, home of Mrs. Theodosia Prevost, later to be Aaron Burr's wife. The Hermitage is still standing in Ho-Ho-Kus.

His next plan, to attack New York with the cooperation of the French fleet, failed. The American army on July 15 was sent across the Hudson to White Plains, but the warships, because of shallow water, could not sail up the river. Four months of inactivity followed.

The first week in December found the Americans back in New Jersey at Elizabethtown, where on the 4th, Washington attended a celebration in his honor. Next morning he was headed north to Paramus again, having received word that Clinton had moved up the Hudson. By December 12, however, he had returned his men to the Middlebrook Camp in the Watchung hills, for Clinton's maneuver had accomplished nothing and, as Washington put it, involved little more than the destruction of "nine barrels of spoiled herrings." With his army settled for the winter in the Middlebrook valley, the commander made his headquarters in the Wallace home in what is now Somerville. Although the physical condition of his men was better than it had been in the previous winter at Valley Forge, Washington was much concerned about the money situation and the attitude of the states. Paid with worthless currency, the men hinted at mutiny. Desertions increased. The general, in a letter written at Middlebrook, complained that the states were "too much engaged in their local concerns" and had "very inadequate ideas of the present danger."

On December 21 he left for Philadelphia to consult with Congress. Mrs. Washington was there, too, and returned with him to Middlebrook six weeks later.

Two important social events occurred in February: a banquet and ball at General Knox's headquarters in Pluckemin, on the 18th, to mark the anniversary of the alliance with France; and on February 22 the celebration of the commander in chief's 47th birthday at Middlebrook. At these affairs, Washington danced for hours at a time with the wives of his staff officers--particularly Mrs. Greene. Mrs. Washington was either too stout for graceful dancing or disliked strenuous action.

A quiet spring came early to New Jersey in 1779. Late in May, anticipat-

tage, and by daylight the British were well on their way to Sandy Hook, where they embarked for New York City.

The Battle of Monmouth, longest engagement of the entire war, demonstrated that the Continental Army could drive back the British regulars, raised Washington's prestige, and defeated the secret attempts of General Gates and his Congressional supporters to have the commander removed. On July 4 at New Brunswick while the second anniversary of the Declaration of independence was being celebrated, Lee's court martial began.

Suspecting the British of designs on the Hudson River forts, Washington three days later moved his troops northward through Newark, stopped to view the falls of the Passaic River at Paterson and to enjoy a picnic lunch at a spring

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ing a spring campaign, the commander sent Mrs. Washington back to Virginia. But no campaign followed. Clinton was having trouble getting supplies and reinforcements from England because of the partial blockade of the British Isles by the superior French fleet. The Revolution had become one phase of a larger struggle which was being waged by two great European powers on the high seas.

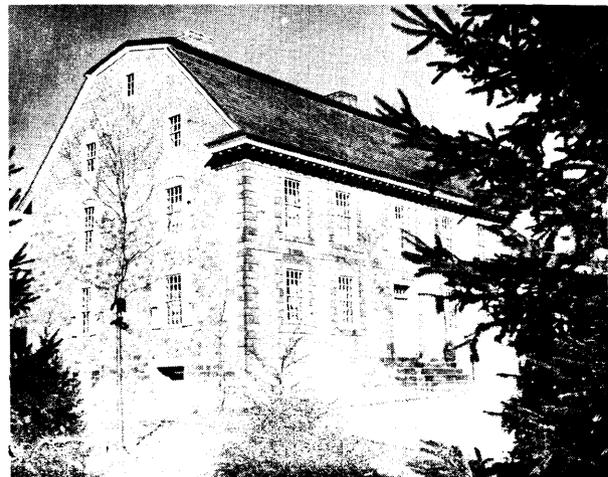
On June 1 Clinton sent a raiding expedition up the Hudson with the aim of enticing Washington from the excellent defensive position at Middlebrook. When Washington did depart from Middlebrook on June 3, Clinton decided the British were too weak to risk any fierce fighting. Washington, passing through Ringwood on June 6, continued north to West Point and the Hudson fortifications. Here he remained through the summer and most of the fall, oblivious to Clinton's attempt in July to draw him toward Connecticut. Later in that month Washington sent "Mad Anthony Wayne" to capture the British fort at Stony Point on the Hudson, and in August he ordered "Light Horse Harry" Lee to take the British post at Powles Hook, now Jersey City. Major Lee accomplished this task with great skill and daring, sending the captured flag to his commander. Finally, during the first week in December, with the French fleet still unavailable for a joint attack on New York City and with Clinton gone south with some of his regiments to campaign in the Carolinas, Washington returned with his army to Morristown, where he had first found refuge in January 1777.

Valley Forge has come to symbolize the suffering and hardship which Washington and his men endured to achieve independence. But Morristown during the winter of 1779-80 was the scene of greater agony. It was the coldest winter in a generation. Two feet of snow lay on the ground in the middle of December. There were no huts, few tents, not even blankets. Men were barefoot and half naked. Washington wrote: "We have never experienced a like extremity at any period of the war...Unless some extraordinary and immediate exertions be made by the states from which we draw our supplies, there is every appearance that the army will infallibly disband in a fortnight." At the beginning of January 1780 a blizzard brought as much as 6 feet of snow, burying some of the troops during the night. Men and horses were starving or freezing to death. As soon as possible, the troops were put to building huts in Jockey Holly.

So serious was the situation that the commander, for the first time, found it necessary to overlook the plundering of the men. After an appeal by Washington to the people of New Jersey, conditions were somewhat relieved. No longer was the conduct of the Jerseys "infamous." Now the commander acknowledged: "...owing to their exertions in a great measure the Army has been kept together."

Washington made his headquarters at the home of Mrs. Jacob Ford. The house, built in 1774 and now a national shrine, was sorely strained to hold the General's entire military "family" of 18. Log cabins were built on both sides of the house: one for an office; the other, the kitchen. Mrs. Washington came to stay at the Ford Mansion, and here were centered the social activities of the

The
Hermitage



Dey
Mansion

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commander and his staff. Dancing, inexpensive and warming, was the most popular activity, and the general himself was the leading spirit.

Of military activity there was very little. In January, Lord Stirling, with 2,500 men in 500 sleighs, hastened across the frozen waters of Arthur Kill to attack the British garrison on Staten Island. The raid accomplished nothing except to provoke retaliation several days later, when the redcoats entered Newark and Elizabethtown, burning the courthouse and meeting house in the latter community and the Academy at Newark. Otherwise the troops were kept busy only by a rigorous course in tactics directed by Inspector-general von Steuben.

Warmer weather brought no hope, however, of victory. Everything appeared to be at a standstill. Business conditions were bad; the poor were suffering; finances were still chaotic; the various departments of the army were more than ever in a wretched condition; and no recruits were coming in. The troops raised in 1780 were 8,000 less than the number recruited two years before. Finally there was the news early in June that Clinton had captured Charleston on May 12. Not only was the southern American army dispersed, but half the navy was lost. Washington, after four years of fighting, saw the future just as black as it had been at the close of 1776, and bitterly he wrote to his brother: "...in the anguish of Soul I do lament that our fatal and accursed policy should bring the 3th of June upon us and not a single recruit to the army... Thus it is, one year rolls over another--and without some changes--we are hastening to our ruin." The only happy event of that spring, and one that helped the commander to weather the cares of war, was the return of his faithful young friend, Marquis de Lafayette. Reaching Morristown in May after a year's absence in France, the Marquis, who had been Washington's close companion at the Battle of Monmouth, brought the encouraging promise of more aid; a great fleet and 6,000 troops.

In the following month, June 1780, occurred the last two military engagements of any importance in New Jersey. On the night of June 6 the Hessian general, Knyphausen, crossed from Staten Island and struck through Elizabethtown, driving an American detachment from its post there. British, Hessian and Loyalist troops, targets for constant sniping by the Continentals, destroyed the small settlement of Connecticut Farms and murdered the wife of the Rev. James Caldwell, chaplain of the New Jersey regiment. The advance continued all morning but by afternoon American reinforcements arrived from Morristown to halt the British drive as it approached Springfield. Hearing that Washington was moving to surround him, Knyphausen withdrew his troops to Elizabethtown during the night.



*Interior
of
Ford Mansion
at
Morristown,
One of the Outstanding
Washington Museums*

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For almost two weeks all was quiet. Then on June 18 lookouts, whom Washington had posted along 50 miles of the Jersey coast, brought word that the British fleet was moving up the Hudson. Immediately the American troops set out to defend the vital Hudson River forts. Clinton was irked: he had expected to overpower the weak West Point garrison easily. To divert Washington's army the British commander ordered his redcoats to march on Springfield on June 23. The Americans under Greene, who had been left to guard the Watchung passes, were driven back, the village was burned, but the British troops ventured no farther. Back to Elizabethtown and across their pontoon bridge to Staten Island they went, the last large British force to appear in New Jersey.



Martha Washington

Sir Henry Clinton

Washington, having readily discerned Clinton's strategy, hovered about the northern boundary of the State through the summer and fall, prepared to leap toward Morristown or the river forts. In July he made his headquarters in Lower Preakness at Colonel Dey's home, now a Revolutionary museum. Toward the end of August he was at Englewood, and in September he spent several days at Hackensack and at the Hopper house in Hohokus, a few miles from the State line. Though the army remained idle, Washington himself was on the constant move until early October when he returned to Colonel Dey's colonial mansion. Here he made plans for an attack on New York City, but again the intervention of the British fleet forced him to abandon the assault. Annoyed by the blocking of his scheme and terribly weary of the general stagnation, he moved down to Morristown for a few days and then, on December 6, left for winter quarters in the neighborhood of West Point.

Behind him he left the Pennsylvania troops at Morristown and the New Jersey troops at Pompton and Chatham. Dissatisfaction in the ranks, which had resulted in the mutiny of the Connecticut militia at Morristown the previous winter, now became widespread. On January 1, 1781, disgusted with the conditions of their enlistment, their pay, their lack of clothing and liquor, the Pennsylvania Line mutinied. They killed and wounded several officers and marched to Princeton where they were met by a committee of Congress. Upon promise that their demands would be satisfied, the soldiers returned to duty. On January 20th, without violence, the New Jersey Line at Pompton marched to Chatham to make similar demands. They, too, were promised a pardon and a hearing for their grievances, but after their return to Pompton that promise was broken. Washington, fearful that leniency would encourage further revolt, dispatched a contingent of New England troops from his headquarters at New Windsor, New York, to restore order in New Jersey. Three leaders of the Pompton mutiny were given a brief trial outside their huts, and two of them were executed upon order by their own companions. The third was pardoned at the last moment. There had never been a question of any of the mutineers' going over to the enemy.

Washington did not see New Jersey from December 1780 until August 1781 when he passed through Chatham, New Brunswick and Trenton on his way south to cooperate with the French land and sea forces in the victory at Yorktown.

The final battle of the Revolution had been fought, but until the peace treaty was signed, the commander kept his troops under arms at Newburgh, New York. Twice he passed through New Jersey on his way between headquarters and the meetings of Congress in Philadelphia. In March 1782 he inspected the ar-

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tillery corps at Burlington and spent several days at Morristown to discuss with his staff the exchange of prisoners. On his trip back from Philadelphia in July he stayed the night at Newton after dining in Hope.

On August 18, 1783, Washington left Newburgh for Rocky Hill, four miles from Princeton. Here, in the Berrien house overlooking the Millstone River, he set up the last headquarters of the Revolution on August 23. Two days later, before the Congress at Princeton, President Elias Boudinot said to him: "Your services have been essential in acquiring and establishing the freedom and independence of your country."

The weeks that Washington spent at Rocky Hill were very pleasant and relaxing. About him were his wife and friends. Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton and John Paul Jones visited him, and Tom Paine came from Bordentown for a few days. Washington had invited him in the hope that Congress would be reminded of the debt they owed the man whose writings had stirred the fire of revolution.

Waiting for the peace treaty to be signed at Paris, so that he might retire to private life, Washington had his portrait painted by Peale and crayoned by young William Dunlap. The Peale portrait still hangs at Princeton University.

At the end of October Washington attended the reception in Princeton for the first minister from a foreign nation to the United States: the Netherlands had recognized the 13 States across the sea.

At the Berrienhouse on November 2 the commander in chief composed his farewell message to the Continental Army. He asked them to be good citizens, just as they had been loyal soldiers, and to protect the union. In the third person, to avoid over-sentimentality, he wrote:

...to bid a final adieu to the armies he has so long had the honor to command, he can only again offer in their behalf his recommendations to their grateful country, and his prayers to the God of armies. May ample justice be done them here, and may the choicest of Heaven's favors...attend those, who...have secured innumerable blessings for others. With these wishes and this benediction, the commander in chief is about to retire from service. The curtain of separation will soon be drawn, and the military scene to him will be closed forever.

Two days after his farewell the troops were discharged, and on November 9, Washington left for the Hudson River forts. From here he proceeded to New York City, and on December 4 crossed to Jersey City with Baron von Steuben. He was now on his way home to Mount Vernon. At Trenton, on December 6, 1783, New Jersey bade good-bye to General George Washington. Here in her beautiful hills and quiet river valleys the Father of his country had fought and suffered and prayed and had grown to wise maturity and lasting greatness.

Berrien House--the Last Headquarters

