

IX WAR AND PEACE

10. Richard Hill Morris.
11. The Reverend Jonathan Odell, rector of St. Mary's Church in Burlington, a prominent Loyalist (see Sec. VIII, Doc. 4).
12. A secret chamber which was actually a windowless attic in the rear of the house.
13. The opulent home of Colonel Daniel Coxe, who died in 1739.
14. Physician Charles Moore of Montgomery Square, Pennsylvania, the husband of Margaret Morris's youngest sister, Milcah Martha.
15. George Dillwyn, husband of Sarah, who was then in England.
16. James Verree.
17. William Dillwyn, brother of Sarah's husband George.
18. "Wie geht's": literally, "how are things going?"
19. Germans were frequently called "Dutch," a corruption of "Deutsch."
20. Colonel Joseph Reed (see Sec. I, Doc. 10).
21. Bowes Reed, colonel of the First Regiment, Burlington County Militia.
22. The battle of Trenton, which took place on December 26 (see Doc. 2).
23. The second battle of Trenton, which featured a strong cannonade by Washington's artillery (see Doc. 2).
24. The battle of Princeton (see Doc. 3).

2 An Aide-de-camp To General Washington Recounts the Battle of Trenton

[Printed in William S. Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton* (Boston, 1898), pp. 360-64.]

Though dilatory in pursuing the Americans through New Jersey, the British arrived on the east bank of the Delaware only hours after the last of Washington's army had crossed the river on December 8. Unable to continue pursuit because Washington had swept the region clear of boats, they considered the campaign at an end. General William Howe returned to New York City, and Lord Cornwallis went into winter encampment in New Jersey with garrisons strung across the state from Bergen to Burlington Counties. Two Hessian brigades, one under divisional commander Colonel Karl Emil von Donop at Bordentown and the other under Colonel Johann Gottlieb Rall at Trenton, manned the front line along the Delaware. But Washington decided to seize the initiative. Given considerations of time and weather, the plan devised on the twenty-fourth was ambitious: Washington and his main force of some 2,400 men would attack Rall at Trenton from the north, while Colonel John Cadwalader would cross the river at Bristol for a diversionary assault on Bordentown and General James Ewing would land at Trenton Ferry pursuant to preventing escape southward over the Assunpink Creek. On Christmas Day, the

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Americans moved out; with great skill Colonel John Glover and his mariners from Marblehead, Massachusetts, transported Washington's force across the ice-choked Delaware at McKonkey's Ferry (now Washington Crossing) under the cover of darkness. The bold maneuver caught the Hessians completely by surprise; more in a festive than fighting mood, the Germans did not expect an attack at Christmas. Shooting startled the sleepy garrison about 8 o'clock the morning of December 26 and by 9:30 the battle was over. American losses were amazingly light—none killed and four wounded. Of the 1,400 Hessians, 106 were killed (including Rall) or wounded and about 900 taken prisoner. Despite the victory, Washington was forced to abandon his plan of continuing the offensive to Princeton and New Brunswick. Encumbered by prisoners and hampered because Cadwalader and Ewing could not get across the river to carry out their missions, Washington had no choice but to withdraw back to camp in Pennsylvania. However, the withdrawal was to be short lived; the Continentals would be back in New Jersey within the week (see Doc. 3). The following account, the most detailed firsthand description of the American expedition, is taken from a diary kept by an unidentified member of Washington's staff.

[December 22-27, 1776]

[Dec. 22]—Washington's headquarters are here in this little village of New Town, back from the river northwest of Trenton. General Greene and General Sullivan,¹ with their divisions, numbering 2500 men and sixteen cannon, are ten miles up stream at McConkey's Ferry. A portion of the boats are there. General Ewing, with 2000 men, is on this side of the river a little below Trenton, and General Cadwallader and General Putnam² are at Bristol, ten miles further down, with as many more.

I rode along the river yesterday morning and could see the Hessians in Trenton. It is a pretty village, containing about 130 houses and a Presbyterian meeting-house. A stone bridge spans the Assinpink creek on the road leading south to Bordentown. There are apple orchards and gardens. Rall has his own regiment and Knyphausen³ a few dragoons and fifty rifle-men. The Hessians call them Yagers.⁴ He has six cannon. Knyphausen has two of them, two stand in front of Rall's headquarters, and two up by the Pennington road. A scout just in says that General Howe has issued a proclamation,⁵ offering pardon to everybody in New Jersey who will lay down their arms and take the oath of allegiance. He says that Howe and Cornwallis are well satisfied with what they have accomplished. Cornwallis is going to England to tell the King that the rebellion is about over. Howe is going to have a good time in New York attending dinner parties. From what I see I am quite certain Washington intends to make some movement soon. He keeps his own counsel, but is very much determined.

Dec. 23—Orders have been issued to cook rations for three days. Washington has just given the counter sign, "Victory or Death." He has written a letter to General Cadwallader at Bristol, which he has intrusted to me to copy. He intends to cross the river, make a ten-mile march to Trenton, and attack Rall just before daybreak. Ewing is to cross and seize the bridge crossing the Assanpink. Putnam and Cadwallader are to cross and make a feint of attacking Donop so that he can not hasten to Rall's assistance.

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Dec. 24—A scout just in says that the Hessians have a picket on the Pennington road half a mile out from Trenton, and another at Dickenson's house, on the river road.⁶

Dec. 25—Christmas morning. They make a great deal of Christmas in Germany, and no doubt the Hessians will drink a great deal of beer and have a dance to-night. They will be sleepy to-morrow morning. Washington will set the tune for them about daybreak. The rations are cooked. New flints and ammunition have been distributed. Colonel Glover's fishermen from Marblehead, Mass., are to manage the boats just as they did in the retreat from Long Island.

Christmas, 6 p.m.—The regiments have had their evening parade, but instead of returning to their quarters are marching toward the ferry. It is fearfully cold and raw and a snow-storm setting in. The wind is northeast and beats in the faces of the men. It will be a terrible night for the soldiers who have no shoes. Some of them have tied old rags around their feet; others are barefoot, but I have not heard a man complain. They are ready to suffer any hardship and die rather than give up their liberty. I have just copied the order for marching. Both divisions are to go from the ferry to Bear Tavern,⁷ two miles. They will separate there; Washington will accompany Greene's division with a part of the artillery down the Pennington Road; Sullivan and the rest of the artillery will take the river road.

Dec. 26, 3 a.m.—I am writing in the ferry house.⁸ The troops are all over, and the boats have gone back for the artillery. We are three hours behind the set time. Glover's men have had a hard time to force the boats⁹ through the floating ice with the snow drifting in their faces. I never have seen Washington so determined as he is now. He stands on the bank of the river, wrapped in his cloak, superintending the landing of his troops. He is calm and collected, but very determined. The storm is changing to sleet, and cuts like a knife. The last cannon is being landed, and we are ready to mount our horses.

Dec. 26, Noon—It was nearly 4 o'clock when we started. The two divisions divided at Bear Tavern. . . .

It was just 8 o'clock. Looking down the road I saw a Hessian running out from the house. He yelled in Dutch¹⁰ and swung his arms. Three or four others came out with their guns. Two of them fired at us, but the bullets whistled over our heads. Some of General Stephen's¹¹ men rushed forward and captured two. The others took to their heels, running toward Mr. Calhoun's house,¹² where the picket guard was stationed, about twenty men under Captain Altenbrockum.¹³ They came running out of the house. The Captain flourished his sword and tried to form his men. Some of them fired at us, others ran toward the village. The next moment we heard drums beat and a bugle sound, and then from the west came the boom of a cannon. General Washington's face lighted up instantly, for he knew that it was one of Sullivan's guns. We could see a great commotion down toward the meeting-house, men running here and there, officers swinging their swords, artillerymen harnessing their horses. Captain Forrest¹⁴ unlimbered his guns. Washington gave the order to advance, and we rushed on to the junction of King and Queen streets. Forrest wheeled six of his cannon into position to sweep both streets. The riflemen under Colonel Hand¹⁵ and Scott's¹⁶ and Lawson's¹⁷ battalions went upon the run through the fields on the left to gain possession of the Princeton road. The Hessians were just ready to open fire with two of their cannon when Captain Washington¹⁸ and Lieutenant Monroe¹⁹ with their men rushed

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forward and captured them. We saw Rall come riding up the street from his headquarters, which were at Stacy Potts'²⁰ house. We could hear him shouting in Dutch, "My brave soldiers, advance." His men were frightened and confused, for our men were firing upon them from fences and houses and they were falling fast. Instead of advancing they ran into an apple orchard. The officers tried to rally them, but our men kept advancing and picking off the officers. It was not long before Rall tumbled from his horse and his soldiers threw down their guns and gave themselves up as prisoners.

While this was taking place on the Pennington road Colonel John Stark, from New Hampshire, in the advance on the river road was driving Knyphausen's men pell mell through the town. Sullivan sent a portion of his troops under St. Clair²¹ to seize the bridge and cut off the retreat of the Hessians toward Bordentown. Sullivan's men shot the artillery horses and captured two cannon attached to Knyphausen's regiment.

Dec. 26, 3 p.m.—I have been talking with Rall's Adjutant, Lieutenant Piel.²² He says that Rall sat down to a grand dinner at the Trenton Tavern Christmas Day, that he drank a great deal of wine and sat up nearly all night playing cards. He had been in bed but a short time when the battle began and was sound asleep. Piel shook him, but found it hard work to wake him up. Supposing he was wide awake Piel went out to help rally the men, but Rall not appearing, he went back and found him in his night shirt. "What's the matter?" Rall asked. Piel informed him that a battle was going on. That seemed to bring him to his senses. He dressed himself, rushed out and mounted his horse to be mortally wounded a few minutes later.

We have taken nearly 1000 prisoners, six cannon, more than 1000 muskets, twelve drums, and four colors. About forty Hessians were killed or wounded. Our loss is only two killed²³ and three wounded. Two of the latter are Captain Washington and Lieutenant Monore, who rushed forward very bravely to seize the cannon.

I have just been with General Washington and Greene to see Rall. He will not live through the night. He asked that his men might be kindly treated. Washington promised that he would see they were well cared for.

Dec. 27, 1776.—Here we are back in our camp with the prisoners and trophies. Washington is keeping his promise; the soldiers are in the New Town Meeting-house and other buildings. He has just given directions for to-morrow's dinner. All the captured Hessian officers are to dine with him. He bears the Hessians no malice, but says they have been sold by their Grand Duke to King George and sent to America, when if they could have their own way they would be peaceably living in their own country.

It is a glorious victory. It will rejoice the hearts of our friends everywhere and give new life to our hitherto waning fortunes. Washington has baffled the enemy in his retreat from New York. He has pounced upon the Hessians like an eagle upon a hen and is safe once more on this side the river. If he does nothing more he will live in history as a great military commander.

1. Nathanael Greene and John Sullivan.
2. "Old Put," Major General Israel Putnam.

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3. Lieutenant General Wilhelm von Knyphausen.
4. Dragoons ("Jägers" in German) were infantrymen who often rode on horseback but always fought on foot; cavalry, on the other hand, fought while mounted.
5. The proclamation was issued on November 30. See Doc. 4, note 4.
6. "The Hermitage," country estate of Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson, commander of the New Jersey militia.
7. Now in Hopewell Township, New Jersey.
8. The home of William McKonkey, owner and operator of the ferry.
9. Glover's men had difficulty handling the unfamiliar Durham boats, flat-bottomed vessels capable of carrying fifty men.
10. Actually, German ("Deutsch").
11. Brigadier General Adam Stephen.
12. Alexander Calhoun, merchant.
13. Captain Ernst Ebenhardt von Altenbockum.
14. Captain Thomas Forrest.
15. Colonel Edward Hand of Pennsylvania.
16. Colonel Charles Scott, Fifth Virginia Continentals.
17. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Lawson, Fourth Virginia Continentals.
18. Captain William Washington.
19. Lieutenant James Monroe, future president of the United States.
20. Stacy Potts, wealthy Quaker businessman, in whose house Rall later died.
21. Scottish-born Brigadier General Arthur St. Clair.
22. Lieutenant Jacob Piel.
23. Most military historians agree that no Americans died of battle wounds at Trenton; however, two soldiers did die of exposure en route to Trenton, and they may be the casualties mentioned here.

3 An Octogenarian Jerseyman Recalls the Battle of Princeton

[Varnum Lansing Collins, ed., *A Brief Narrative of the Ravages of the British and Hessians at Princeton in 1776-1777; A Contemporary Account of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton* (Princeton, 1906), pp. 31-39.]

The December 26 debacle at Trenton taught the British a painful lesson about the dangers of overextended garrisons. As a prelude to seeking revenge, the British consolidated forces; Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood and his Hillsborough command, General James Grant and most of the New Brunswick garrison, and Colonel Karl Emil von Donop and the Hessian survivors of