

IX WAR AND PEACE

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

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Trenton who had fled to Allentown were all ordered to join General Alexander Leslie in Princeton. In New York City Charles, Lord Cornwallis, abandoned his plans to return to England and hurried off to New Jersey to assume command of the 8,000-man army on January 1. Cornwallis's destination was Trenton; his objective was to defeat Washington's army. Meanwhile, Washington, faced with numerous expiring enlistments, and aware of British designs, once again took the initiative. He recrossed the Delaware, arriving in Trenton on December 30 with 5,000 men at his disposal. Advance parties were ordered out to slow the British march. The delaying action was so effective that Cornwallis did not arrive at Assunpink Creek outside Trenton until dusk on January 2; the brief but bloody second battle of Trenton erupted before the rival forces bedded down for the night. But Washington's blazing campfires were a ruse. Under the cover of darkness he slipped around Cornwallis, heading for Mawhood's rear guard at Princeton and, possibly, the lightly guarded store of supplies and the military chest of £70,000 at New Brunswick. Shortly after dawn on January 3, Mawhood thrashed an element of the American army under General Hugh Mercer, only to be routed subsequently by Washington himself. Upon learning of the deception, Cornwallis retraced his steps but arrived too late to avert a British defeat at the battle of Princeton. Washington, his men too weary to storm New Brunswick, pushed on after the battle to Morristown where he went into winter quarters on January 7; Cornwallis, with his Anspach and Hessian allies, followed suit at New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. The campaign was over for the year. The following account of the battle by an unidentified Princetonian poignantly recounts the reaction of noncombatants to the horrors of war.

[January 1-3, 1777]

The [British] Regulars Advanced gaurds were frequently fired uppon about the first of January in the night; which Alarmed them to that degre that they Increast their Gaurd upon Alentown Road with one hundred men, and lay on their Arms three nights Successively before the Battle. On the first day of January at night they made many fires¹ on the side of the Main Road that Extended from the turning at Clarks corner down to the bridge, or near it and so up on the other side on the rising ground as far as we could see it and how much farther I Know not. The next morning early the Second of the month they left their fires and marched towards Trenton and some where in their way threw Maidenhead² came upon a Parcel of Genl. Washin[g]tons men who fought them on a Retreat and more men being sent to cover their Retreat until they got to Trenton and had past over the bridge³ when the Regulars and Hessians appeared and the latter being very Eager to follow the Persuit as they called it Receiv'd a Smart Rebuke from one of our Generals field Pieces, which kild and wounded Ten or twelve of their men and at the same time Received a Volly of smal arms they only stood another fire and then Retreated. What number of the Enemy was Kild and Wounded I have not heard,⁴ though it is said that many of them was kild by the Retreating Partys getting behind trees and fences and firing upon them as they advanced along the road.

It being near night Genl. Washin[g]ton with his Army mar[c]ht up the Mill

IX WAR AND PEACE

pond and the South side of Assanpink⁵ brook, and when they came to the woods he ordered many large fires to be made on the sides of the road, and marcht on with his army up the brook to the bridge [at] Rozels mill and past over there and came to Stoney Brook near Isaac Clarks about a mile and half below the bridge on the main road, Where they were hindered some time in making a bridge over the brook for the Army to pas with the Artillery. This was done Unexpected to the Regular Army who to Annoy Washin[g]tons men as they thought now and then all night from over the brook⁶ fired a Cannon shot at the fires that was left. This bring us to the third day of January 1777.

When as soon as it was well light we saw the Regulars that was left at Princetown Marching towards Trenton,⁷ and in about half a hours time we saw them comeing back faster then they went. A Party of them came into our Field, and laid down their Packs there and formed at the corner of our Garden about 60 Yards from the door and then marcht away Immediately to the field of Battle Which was in William Clarks⁸ wheat field and Orchard Round about his house and how much further to the westard I Know not. It was plain within sight of our door at about 400 Yards distance. I can give no Account how the battle was ordered on Either side for want of Proper Information only this.

Genl. Washin[g]tons army was so hindered in makeing and passing the bridge that the Battle was begun before their field Pieces could be brought up, where upon they Retreated and Rallyed again with their Artillery. Towards the last of the battle seven Regulars was seen from our door to fall at once and in about three quarters of an hour from the begining of the battle the Regulars were put to flight with the loss of two brass field Pieces took from them in the field. The Exact Number of their men that was Slain wounded and took prisoners⁹ I Know not. There was thirty Six dead men the next day buried in a Stone Quarry among whom there was 15 of Genl. Washin[g]tons men, the Other 21 were Regulars besides three of them that lay dead in and near the main Road which Genl. Washin[g]ton seeing Ordered them to be put in the Waggon and carryed to town And desired the Country People to bury the dead. Besides these there was several others found Dead near the field of Battle and buried in other places, Which side they belonged to I do not Know, But it is said that most of them was Regulars. Genl. Washin[g]tons army took all the Regulars in town Prisoners, and discharged their Continental Prisoners that they had Confined in the Colledge¹⁰ to the number of [blank] among whom (as it said) was about 30 of our Countrypeople that were Accused Either of being Rebels or aiding and Assisting them. They took their Stores in which (it is said) was a very large number of new blankets. They took all the Enemys Cannon in town and was oblidge to leave two of them for Want of Carriage to take them off[f]. One gun they threw into a well, and then they Marcht on with their Prisoners and plunder to Sommerset Court House¹¹ that day, and left some of the prissoners, and of their own men to care of the sick and wounded men on both sides.

Genl. Washin[g]ton as soon as the battle was over Ordered some of his men to be pl[a]ced near the bridge over Stoney brook on the Main Road to hinder the Regulars passing over and to pull up the bridge¹² which was Scarcely done when the Regulars Appeared Which caused a Second firing about three quarters of an hour appart from the first in which there was no Execution done that I heard of. In a little time our men Retreated, and the Regulars were Oblidged to Cross the brook at the ford with their artillery almost middle deep in water (the back water of

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

the mill being then up) and form'd on this side the brook and towards night (when they Knew that the other Army was gone) marcht into Princetown. Thus that poor and almost Wholly Desolate town of al its late Inhabitants had change of Masters two if not three times on that day, for they had the Regulars in the Morning The Continentals at noon the regulars again at night who left them to the Continentals that night again and have not yet returned to Assume their Conquest. So Unconstant is the State of War and so Certain and sure the mischiefs and miserys attending it That it is a Wonder that Wise men should ever depend on it.

In the beginning of the forementioned Battle a Womans leg was shot off[f] at her ancle by a Cannon ball. She was in one of the houses near the bridge on the main road in the hollow on this side [of] Stoney brook. It was thought to be done by one of Genl. Washin[g]tons field Pieces. The battle was Plainly Seen from our door. Before any Gun was heard a man was seen to fall and Immediately the Report and Smoke of a Gun was Seen and heard, And the guns went off[f] so quick and many together that they could not be numbered. We Presently went down into the Cellar to keep out of the Way of the Shot. There was a Neighbour woman down in the Cellar with us that was so Affrighted that she Imagined that the field was covered with Blood, and When we came out of the Cellar She called Earnestly to us to look out and see how all the field was quit[e] red with blood When none was to be seen at that Distance. This I mention only to show into What Strange mistakes Sudden frights with the fear of Death may put us into. Almost as soon as the firing was over our house was filled and surrounded with Genl. Washington's Men, and himself on horseback at the door. They brought in with them on their Shoulders two Wounded Regulars, one of them was shot in at his hip and the bullet lodged in his groin, and the other was shot through his body Just below his short ribs. He was in very great pain and bled much out of both sides, and often desired to be removed from one place to another, which was done Accordingly and he dyed about three o'clock in the afternoon. They was both Used very tenderly by the Rebels (as they call them). The other also bled much and they put a Cloth dipt in vinegar to the wound to Stop it and three of them Stay'd with the wounded men near an hour after the Others were gone. The man that lived was left at our house above two days and one night With his Wound not drest, before the Regulars that was left to take care of the sick and wounded would take him away, though they had notice that day after the battle. . . .

As soon as the battle was over Genl. Mercer (who had his horse shot down under him, and then received several wounds by which in some days after he dyed)¹³ was carryed into Thomas Clarks house with several other wounded men, And above Twenty was carried into William Clarks house. Two of them dyed soon after they was brought in. Sixty was carryed to Princetown but how many of them were regulars I know not. By an Account that a Neighbour Gentleman sent to me there was thirty one Regulars found dead In about the field of battle and nineteen Provincials, and one hundred and Seventy five taken Prissoners of the Regulars and Hessians. This account of the Prissoners is confirm'd by what a Captain of the Millitia told me who was in the Battle and marcht with Genl. Washington to Morris-town with the Addition that they were all Privates Besides Officers and how many of them he did not know.

Immediately after the Battle (as I said before) Genl. Washingtons Men came into our house Though they were both hungry and thirsty some of them laughing out right, others smileing, and not a man among them but showed Joy in his

IX WAR AND PEACE

Countenance. It Really Animated my old blood with Love to those men that but a few minutes before had been Courageously looking Death in the face in Releiveing a part of their Country from the Barbarous Insults and Ravages of a bold and Dareing Enemy. By the Joy that I felt myself I cannot help but be of the Opinion that the most Strict of them all against bearing Arms in our own defence¹⁴ (if they have any love for their bleeding Country) but must in some degree or other Rejoice with the rest of their Neighbours and others for that days happy Relief that it Pleased God to bless us with.

1. To ward off the effective American snipers led by Colonel Edward Hand and his Pennsylvania riflemen.

2. Now Lawrenceville. The Americans—Hand's riflemen, Brigadier General Matthias Alexis Roche de Fermoy's brigade, Colonel Nicholas Hausseger's battalion of German infantrymen, Colonel Charles Scott's Virginia Continentals, and Captain Thomas Forrest's artillery battery (two guns)—were positioned at Five Mile Run on the outskirts of Maidenhead.

3. The Assunpink.

4. Casualties suffered by the British in the second battle of Trenton are unknown, but estimates run as high as 500.

5. Variouslly Assumpink, Assunpinck, and Assunpink.

6. Assunpink Creek.

7. Mawhood had left Princeton to join Cornwallis's main army at Trenton when he caught sight of Washington's army.

8. The encounter between Mawhood and Mercer took place on Clark's property.

9. American casualties were 40 killed and an undetermined number wounded; British losses were about 28 dead, 58 wounded, and 187 missing.

10. Nassau Hall, the main building of the College of New Jersey, (now Princeton University) also housed British troops.

11. Now Millstone.

12. A detachment of Pennsylvania militia was sent to destroy the main bridge over Stony Brook to slow down Cornwallis's army advancing from Trenton so that Washington's fatigued troops would have ample time to escape.

13. Mercer—Scottish immigrant, physician, Virginia militia officer, and brigadier general in the Continental army—died on January 11.

14. That is, Quakers; apparently the writer was a member of the Society of Friends.