

Rahl, comprised three regiments of Hessians numbering about 1,500 men, together with a troop of British light horse numbering about sixty.

On Christmas Day, 1776, Washington and army which did not exceed 2,500 men and twenty pieces of artillery were encamped on the west bank of the Delaware near Taylorsville, then called McConkey's Ferry. The troops were scattered along the river and some of the detachments extended as far up to Coryell's Ferry, now New Hope, while others under General Dickinson were encamped as far down as Trenton Falls. The Pennsylvania troops raised by General Mifflin were posted at Bristol, or Donk's Ferry under General Cadwalader. Others under General Ewing were stationed at Morrisville.

A bold venture had been determined upon by the leader of the American forces. Secretly and carefully he made his preparations to cross the Delaware, capture the British posts along the river and then prosecute his successes further in New Jersey. Washington, with the main body, under Sullivan and Greene, was to cross at McConkey's Ferry and move south upon Trenton. Ewing was to prevent the escape of the enemy to the south by crossing at the lower ferry, near the present railroad bridge. Cadwalader was directed to cross near Bristol and surprise the enemy at Burlington and Mount Holly. All were to move after dark of Christmas night and attack the enemy before daylight of the 26th.

In Trenton the Hessians, feeling perfectly secure, had spent the Christmas Day in pleasure and carousing. The regiment of Lossberg occupied the Friend's Meeting House. Colonel Rahl, the Hessian commander had his headquarters at the house of Stacey Potts on what is now Warren street and opposite Perry, and his regiment was quartered near by in St. Michael's Church. The regiment under Kuyphausen occupied the old Hessian barracks, still standing on Front street, and had pickets out as far as the Dickinson mansion, now "The Hermitage," the Atterbury estate. General Dickinson of the American Army and the owner of this estate was encamped directly opposite on the Pennsylvania shore.

Colonel Rahl, recently promoted to the command of the Hessian forces at Trenton, had been directed to throw up entrenchments, but boastingly put aside the suggestion, and instead of placing his cannon in position, used them to increase the pomp and show of his daily parades. With contempt he dismissed a friendly caution to beware of an attack, and spent the latter part of Christmas night in playing cards at a house on the north east corner of State and Warren streets with an unread note of warning in his pocket. In the early evening his outposts had been attacked