



Volume 26, Issue 1 **The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance**

Winter 2022

Rev War Events Returning with Super Attendance

By: George Dawson

Revolutionary War events and activities are returning to the Raritan-Millstone guidebook region and its environs in the 22nd and 23rd months of the global coronavirus pandemic, sometimes attracting large crowds.

An estimated 500 people plus, judged by the counting of parked cars, three persons to a car, watched George Washington cross the Delaware three times on Saturday, Christmas Day 2021 from Washington's Crossing Historic Park in Pennsylvania to Washington's Crossing State Park in New Jersey. This long traditional event, begun 68 years ago in 1953 by St. John "Sinjin" Terrill, a local tent theater-in-the-round operator, was continued every year until 2020, when it was canceled by COVID-19.

More than 300 people, again judged by parked cars, attended a re-enactment of the January 3, 1777, one-hour Battle of Princeton, on Sunday, January 2, 2022. This event is new, organized by the Princeton Battlefield Society, a State Park Friends group, and by State Park staff, although an abbreviated re-enactment was held in 2020, before the pandemic struck. The January 2022 event, celebrating the 245th anniversary of the battle, included an added fillip – visits by American and British Army officers, organized by retired book publishing executive Roger Williams, New Jersey Historian in the Sons of the American Revolution.

On the same day, Sunday, January 2, several dozen people, including a large contingent from the New Jersey Sierra Club took a mile-long walk to Molly Pitcher's Spring led by John Lasko of the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield. New Year's Day hikes have been a traditional feature at many New Jersey State Parks for about 10 years, including this park in Manalapan and Freehold townships in Monmouth County. In 2021, these walks were canceled statewide because of COVID. In 2020, the New Year's Monmouth Battlefield walk had been canceled as well, not because of COVID but because of snow on the ground. (Remember the old days of White Christmases!)

The New Year's Day hike at Monmouth was also canceled this year as well, not because of snow or COVID, but because of rain. It was re-scheduled for Sunday, January 2, under cloudy (but acceptably dry) skies.



The Visitors Center-Museum at Monmouth Battlefield State Park, long closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, is now open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday (35 hours a week). It had been shut down with the start of the New Jersey pandemic lockdown in March 2020, but has been gradually re-opened since July 4, 2021. The 1746-1770 John Craig farmhouse on the eastern end of the battlefield park, held by the British during the 13-hour Battle of Monmouth, was also closed for the first 18 months of the COVID pandemic in 2020-21, but re-opened in August 2021. The house, which is staffed by Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, is open on Sundays, April through November.

Princeton Battlefield State Park does not have a Visitor's Center. But Will Krakower, Park's new historical interpreter, says the Thomas Clarke farmhouse on the park grounds is now open on an appointment basis, and a regular opening schedule is planned. (Continued page. 3)

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Saturday, March 19, 2022
At 10:00 a.m.

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The Board of Directors meets on the third or fourth Saturday of March, May, September, November at designated historic and museum member sites in the region.

The Executive Committee meets in January and June

YOUR LINK TO THE PUBLIC:

The Link is on a quarterly publication schedule. News of major upcoming events for possible placement in the newsletter may be mailed, emailed, or faxed to the following address. Any questions, please contact:

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George Washington's Christmas Day crossing of the Delaware River from Pennsylvania on December 25, 1776, ended a long series of losses and retreats for the Continental Army, which endured the loss of Long Island, the capture of Fort Mifflin and a large number of troops in New York City, and a long retreat across New Jersey into Pennsylvania. His Delaware crossing was followed by the 1st and 2nd Battles of Trenton, and then, on January 3, 1777, the Battle of Princeton, re-booting American Patriot morale in a war which shortly before had appeared lost.

This period is known as the Ten Crucial Days in Revolutionary War and New Jersey history and is traditionally filled with lectures, guided tours, historic-building visits and lectures;- and several such events had been scheduled this time as well. All, were canceled under weight of a rapidly rising COVID case-load fueled by the super-transmissible Omicron variant. Trenton was as dead as a Christmas doornail in the days of Jacob Marley, although the downtown colonial Trent House remained open for visits and tours during its regular (post-lockdown) hours.

....Then occurred the explosion of visitors for the Battle of Princeton re-enactment and the American and British military visits on Jan. 2, 2022.

Soldiers from six American military units and four British units, representing troops that had fought on the Continental and British sides at the battles of Trenton and Princeton attended wreath-laying ceremonies at the "Colonnade" structure, on the northwest edge of Princeton Battlefield State Park, near a site where soldiers of both sides had been buried. A round, ground-level memorial plaque marks the site, bearing the first four lines of a poem written by British poet laureate Alfred Noyes in 1917, while he was teaching classical literature at nearby Princeton University. (Presumably the war dead buried there, to some extent, were buried by the British, since the Americans were marching quickly from the battlefield to the refuge of the Watchung Mountains and Morristown.)

Each of the ten visiting soldiers identified the troop units (British or American) that had fought in the Battle of Princeton from which they claimed legacy and said a few words about them.

Later on January 2, they performed the same duties at Mill Hill Park in downtown Trenton, site of the Second Battle of Trenton, fought January 2, 1777, along Assunpink Creek. (The visiting soldiers had earlier appeared, on Sunday, December 26, 2021, at wreath-laying ceremonies at Washington Crossing State Park up-river, where George Washington and the Continental Army had reached the New Jersey side of the Delaware River, and at the Trenton Battle Monument, site of the First Battle of Trenton, fought December 26, 1776.)

The wreaths at these ceremonies were laid by the Sons of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Society of the Cincinnati.

The appearance of representatives of British and Hessian soldiers who had fought the Americans at these battles is a legacy of the 1939-1941 American-British Franklin Roosevelt – Winston Churchill partnership which forged the Atlantic Charter alliance at Argentia Bay, Newfoundland, in August 1941 President Joseph R. Biden renewed the alliance with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson last year.

The wreath ceremonies occurred at or the day before the 245th anniversaries of all three battles.

Monmouth Battlefield State Park, which had canceled plans for re-enactment of its 13-hour Battle of Monmouth of June 28, 1778 in both 2020 and 2021 because of the covid pandemic, is now planning re-enactment of the battle near its 244th anniversary in mid-June. Michael Tinpanaro, the park historic interpreter, said there has been talk of inviting British and American soldiers as legatees of troop units who had fought in the 13-hour battle at its 245th anniversary next year, although no decision has been made.



"Colonnade" structure, on the northwest edge of Princeton Battlefield State Park

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