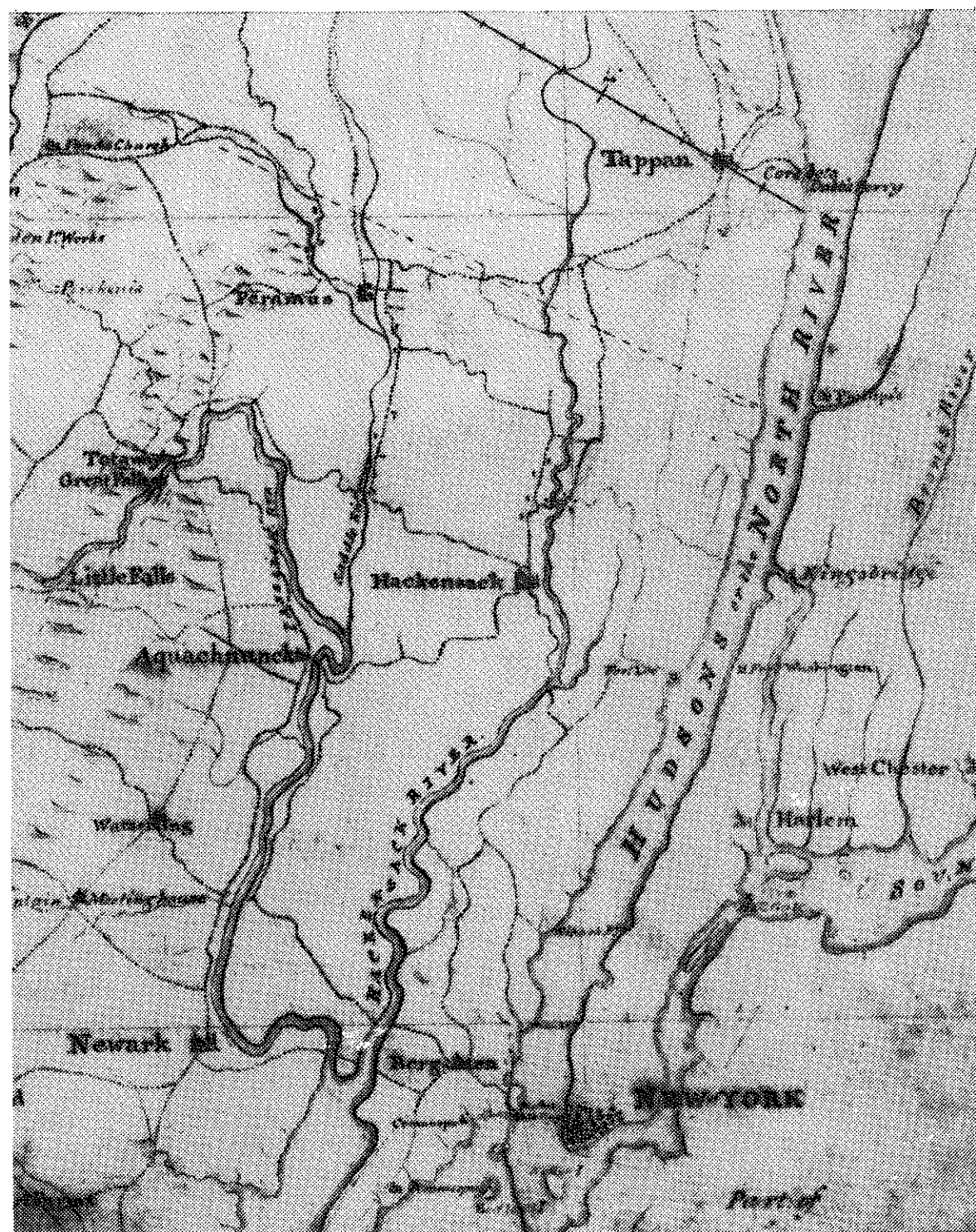


1776 – 1976



*The Chaos, the Crisis and the
Escape To Victory...*



As Once It Was — 200 Years Ago

(Washington's official chorographer, Survey General Robert Erskine prepared this map from his 1776-77 surveys. It is the first Erskine map. Original in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New Library, New York — Courtesy The Morgan Library 1776 Collection)

PROLOGUE TO CRISIS

The Thirteen Historic Steps to November 20, 1776



Thirteen Historic Steps To November 20, 1776
— The Chaos, the Crisis and the Escape To Victory: — In the Birth of This Nation, All the Rest Was Epilogue

FRIDAY, JULY 12

To crush the American rebellion, hundreds of British ships, "a sea of masts", carrying some 35,000 British and Hessian troops and seamen converge into New York Bay and anchor off Staten Island. American batteries duel with the enemy men-of-war ascending the Hudson. The war comes to New York and New Jersey.

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, AUGUST, 27, 28, 29

The Battle of Long Island proves disastrous for the overwhelmed American forces. Their backs pushed to the heights of Brooklyn on the East River, they narrowly escape the British net in a dead of night miraculous crossing of the East River, returning to their New York City bases.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER, 15

Invading Manhattan at Kip's Bay (East 36th Street, N.Y.C.) the British forces drive in the American, untried militia recruits, scattering them. The action accelerates the evacuation of New York City, leaves the town in enemy control and forces the Americans' withdrawal to the heights of Harlem and on Mount Washington (Fort Washington Heights today).

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

The Battle of Harlem Heights becomes the first repulse for the King's army. Taken by surprise, Redcoats and Hessians turn and run through the cornfields (Morningside Heights and 125th Street area adjacent to Barnard College). Seeing their enemies' backs for the first time convinces the Continentals that the Crown's soldiers are not invincible.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

New York City is torched. Panic seizes the people as the city goes up in flames, destroying hundreds of homes and buildings which were to have billeted many of the British soldiers.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

A popular, daring Continental Army Ranger, Captain Nathan Hale, is captured as a spy and hanged without a trial at the British headquarters in Battery Park (Vicinity of Grand Central Station, New York City).

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

The American Paulus Hook Post and Battery at the foot of Hudson's river is evacuated. But this is unknown to the enemy. They launch a massive attack upon a deserted post. However, the rebels lose their last guardian fortress at the "North", or Hudson River's mouth. Only Fort Lee (Jersey side) and Fort Washington (New York side) keep the enemy from their main objective — control of the Hudson, key to New England and the American supply route. Daily the British costs of war drain the King's exchequer.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

American guns repulse British warships attempting to run through the twin forts' (Fort Lee and Fort Washington) river blockade, called "The Chevaux de Frise".

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9

British men-of-war bravely fight their way through the twin forts' blockade at great cost in lives to the seamen and to the ships' riggings. (They will try again October 27th and, repulsed, they will descend downriver in their final and unsuccessful attempt to run the American river blockade.)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

Stalemated south under the Mount Washington and the Harlem Heights, the British plan a surprise circumvention of Fort Washington and make an amphibious landing on Throg's Neck in Westchester. There Americans burn the bridge and isolate the enemy forces on an island. They withdraw and five days later begin emptying the force on Pell's Point. Their surprise element lost, they strike out for New Rochelle and the Bedford Pass to New England above White Plains. The Americans, fully alerted, move on a parallel line in the same direction out of Fort Washington's defenses and fortify their lines along the Bronx River all the way to White Plains, prepared for combat.

PROLOGUE *-continued*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18

Credited with the successful defense of Charleston, S.C., the American army's second in command, General Charles Lee, joins the forces under General George Washington. Heralded as a "savior", he not Washington, become's the American idol. The Jersey fort on the Hudson, called "Fort Constitution" is renamed "Fort Lee" in Charles Lee's honor. [Lee is destined to be captured, exchanged and later court martialed in disgrace out of the army.]

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

The Battle of White Plains sees General Sir William Howe again frustrated after taking Chatterton Hill at a great loss in Redcoat and Hessian lives but without any comparable gain. The Americans hold the well-defended hills where on Friday, November 1, the second British attack is easily repulsed and the King's men sullenly withdraw. Surprisingly, on Monday, November 4, the entire British force packs up and moves westward toward the Hudson. The Americans, leaving Lee's forces behind to guard the Bedford Pass to New England, also march westward, expecting Howe to cross the Hudson to strike at Jersey. Washington crosses at King's Ferry (above Peekskill) but Howe veers south and heads for Fort Washington instead of New Jersey.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

The Battle of Fort Washington becomes the most tragic engagement of the Revolutionary War. After a traitor turned over the detailed plans of the "impregnable" fortress to the British com-

mand, the assault was made possible, ending with the capture of over 2,800 Continentals. Most of them were to die in the rat-infested New York prisons. All Manhattan and the control of the Hudson was now in the enemy's hands. General Howe could choose to complete his objective — seal off the Hudson and close all communications with America's supply lines — or chase "The Fox". He erroneously chooses to chase "The Fox" and take the now useless Fort Lee post. It was that decision and that blunder which, more than any other single factor, contributed to the loss of Great Britain's thirteen American colonies. However:

"The American cause was declining by the hour, and many observers — some of them staunch patriots — thought the war would be over with Britain the winner, before the next spring." — Woodward quoting Thomas Paine

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Under orders to pursue "The Fox" and to seize Fort Lee, General Lord Charles Cornwallis, Earl of Cornwall, leads an army of over 5,000 British and Hessian soldiers in the invasion of New Jersey (East Jersey in 1776). Cornwallis crosses at "Phillips's" (Yonkers). He lands his forces at the foot of the Closter Dock Road (Alpine marina site today) under the Palisades. According to British Library, Colonel C.E. Casolani of London, England:

"Alpine was the Cornwallis landing place; and if two landing places were used, then Alpine was the main body landing place."



THE CRISIS

Enemy Lands Invasion Army At Closter

Acquackanonk, (Passaic) November 21, 1776 — It is 86 days since the Battle of Long Island and the miraculous escape from Brooklyn Heights.

It is over two months since the American militia's flight out of New York town to the defenses at Mount Washington when a day later, the Continentals turned and chased the Redcoats back into the cornfields (Barnard College, New York City) in the Battle of Harlem Heights.

And it is only three weeks ago that the Grand Army brought the British Juggernaut to a halt in the Battle of the White Plains.

Then, five days later, came the tragic surrender of Fort Washington on the New York side of the Hudson River, opposite Fort Lee in the Battle of Fort Washington that left Fort Lee's usefulness ended.

Yesterday General Charles Lord Cornwallis with over 5,000 British and Hessian troops in a massive amphibious operation landed at the foot of the Closter Dock Road. It is the first large scale enemy invasion of New Jersey.

A Remarkable Feat

The nocturnal, amazing crossing, the scaling of the Palisades with a vast army of armament, supplies, horses and baggage have taken General George Washington, General Nathanael Greene and the forces that have been evacuating Fort Lee completely by surprise. Fort Lee is seven miles south of the invasion site as the crow flies. It was General Sir William Howe's plan to have Cornwallis sweep over the towering Palisades and march down upon Fort Lee, encircling it in conjunction with a British landing from Admiral Richard Howe's ships south of Fort Lee at Bull's Ferry.

A "Closter Countryman"

It is believed that the Fort Lee garrison was alerted in the nick of time by a countryman who is said to have ridden from Closter upon seeing the glittering Hessian and British bayonets pouring down the road in front of him. The still unknown patriot (farmer, soldier or woman?) brought the news to Fort Lee. In moments the garrison was alerted and prepared for battle.

Summoned from his headquarters at the Zabriskie House in Hackensack, General Washington and his guards swiftly rode over to Fort Lee and with Greene led the troops down from the fort and onto the King's Highway through the English Neighborhood (Leonia, Palisades Park, Ridgefield, north to Englewood).

March To the New Bridge

The main Continental corps marched directly north toward the enemy expecting a brush at the Liberty Pole (Englewood). Fortunately the main American fighting force escaped by marching west up to the heights of the Tee-Neck ridge without a sight of the King's men who, fortunately, seemed to have bogged down somewhere between Closter and Liberty Pole. Some say that a brush with the local militia may have caused Cornwallis's delay and prevented what might have been the decisive "Battle of Bergen". Some give other possible explanations.

Meanwhile, the women of the fort, the sick, the untried militia, and the weak crossed in two other divisions, one through the Impassable Swamp and the lower southern division with the wagons across at the Little Ferry.

The main division, once out of the grasp of the Lion's paw at the Liberty Pole struggled up on the Tee-Neck ridge, then again turned north toward the New Bridge Road (Bergenfield). Then, marching west once again the ragged Continentals, cold, rain-soaked and hungry, moved down the New Bridge Road toward the Hackensack River crossing (New Milford, River Edge). By dusk every man was safely crossed over the bridge and the boats along the river were stove in all along the west bank. The bridge was destroyed, further slowing the enemy's pursuit.

Was This General Howe's Greatest Mistake?

It is now said that Cornwallis missed his quarry by about thirty minutes at the Liberty Pole. However, the Earl pushed his men up to the evacuated Fort Lee garrison. Such was his objective for the day. Though he found an abandoned post with breakfasts and porridge untouched and fires still burning, the British consider the taking of the much-evacuated Fort Lee post a great victory. Was it Britain's most costly mistake in the Empire's history?

THE CRISIS *-continued*

Puzzling Question

The puzzling questions everyone is asking are: What delayed Cornwallis? What prevented the big battle of Bergen? How did the American Continentals manage to escape? What really happened yesterday? Says General Greene's adjutant:

"... I was with the troops at Fort Lee, and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania... I am well acquainted with many circumstances... Our situation there (at Fort Lee) was exceedingly cramped, the place being a narrow neck of land between the North River (Hudson River) and the Hackensack. Our force was inconsiderable, being not one-fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on the defense..."

"Such was our situation and condition at Fort Lee on the morning of the twentieth of November, when an officer arrived with information that the enemy with two hundred boats had landed about seven or eight miles above. Major General Greene, who commanded the garrison, immediately ordered them under arms and sent express to His Excellency, General Washington, at the town of Hackensack, distant by the way of the ferry (Little Ferry) six miles."

— Thomas Paine

Yesterday, November 20

There was little dawn. It rained a cold, chilling rain. A low gray mist enveloped the Fort Lee bastion and its powerful Bluff Rock Battery atop the precipice overlooking the river

How often had those guns, in concert with those on the New York side and the blockade below, brought death and destruction to the enemy's fleet!

How often had they struck fear in the hearts of the British seamen during these last chaotic months! How often had they frustrated General William Howe and his Admiral brother, Richard!

'Tis no wonder he sent Lord Cornwallis in a surprise attempt to finish off the Revolution hopefully with the capture of General Washington and his Continentals at Fort Lee!

The rest of that raining, sleeting, terrifying Wednesday is now aching in the bones and the minds of the soldiers bivouacking here tonight on the east bank of the still waters of the Passaic River. It is 141 days since the Congress conceived a new nation, fertilizing the eaglet egg with a declaration of independence and making the army a midwife.

For yesterday that eaglet was literally born out of crisis, placed in a cradle of defiance and swathed in the tattered, torn blanket, called "The Will To Win", and then it was carried across the Hackensack River on the Continentals' long, 80-mile trek to the Delaware.

The Escape

It was a three-pronged march out of Fort Lee. The strongest of all Fort Lee's Continental divisions struggled with heavy loads and fixed bayonets down Fort Lee Road. They headed north into the path of the advancing Redcoat forces from Closter. Through a steady rain, over muddy, rut-filled roads, few boots and shoes, cloth-wrapped and bare feet carried the newly born nation toward the crucial Liberty Pole (Englewood).

Crisis Crossroads

That was the intersection where the main division expected at any moment to brush with the expected British and Hessian advance. There The General and Chief of The Grand Army sitting huddled in his cape astride his faithful mare, Magnolia, watched as the line of march turned west, out of the enemy's path and up toward the Tee-neck ridge. One by one they plodded past the Liberty Pole and its well-known stage stop and inn, The Liberty Pole Tavern. It was the crisis crossroads.

Every eye that came upon that crucial corner expected to see the first of the Redcoats marching south down upon them from the Closter road through Tinevlay (Tenaflly). Yet none appeared. When the last of the first division Continentals safely ascended the ridge and made their way north again on the Tee-Neck road to turn west once more on the road to the New Bridge, General Lord Cornwallis lost his surprise, his objective and possibly his dream of a triumphant victory that could have ended the war in favor of the Crown. History might otherwise have recorded here The Battle of Bergen — the unfought battle that saved the return of the Colonies under the rule of monarchy.

THE CRISIS *-continued*

First Division To Liberty Pole

The first division, their heavy loads lightened by discarded knapsacks, canteens and even old muskets in the hope of getting new German-made rifles from Pennsylvania, crossed the New Bridge, destroying it behind them.

The Second Division

A second division of Continentals and militia, separating from the first at the King's Highway outer gate two miles down the mountain's western slope, took a direct westerly route toward the Tee-Neck under General Reazin Beall.

This is the treacherous route through the lowlands — the swampy trail through the marshes of the upper Overpeck Creek. It saves much time by crossing to the Tee-Neck by way of Van Horn's Mill. In weather such as yesterday's a man could easily miss his step and drop up to his waist in muck, for the trail is not named "The Impassable Swamp" without good reason.

Beall held his force on the east bank of the Hackensack River as a reserve for the main division to the north in the event a brush and battle materialized at the Liberty Pole intersection. When Washington and Greene led the last of the front line Continentals over the New Bridge and safely on the Hackensack's west bank, Beall crossed his men at the mill, the bridge and on boats. These were quickly staved in, or toted far inland by the river's fishermen-owners and the frightened Dutch and Huguenot farmers, assuring the American officers they would never be used by the enemy.

The Third Division

The entire withdrawal from Fort Lee was in accordance with an emergency evacuation plan General Greene and his Commander-in-Chief had previously devised in the event of an overwhelming frontal attack by way of the Hudson. So the third division, comprising the sick, the disabled and the newest militia recruits, the "untried" soldiers of the contingent, turned south on the King's highway at the Western slope's mountain base, heading through English Neighborhood toward the Little Ferry across the Hackensack River.

With Their Men, The Wives, Widows And Children Of '76

This division escorted the camp women of the almost 3,000-man evacuation force. In their lumbering carts and wagons, rumbling over the gushing, muddy, unbridged streams through the cold, sleet and mist, these women, comprising many wives, widows, sweethearts and children, made their way over the rough, water-soaked red clay terrain.

Often the Pennsylvania team wagons, echoing the ringing clashes of iron pots and pans, thrown together and loaded hurriedly only hours before, become mired in mud. Quickly the division's commander, Colonel Edward Hand, would order a militia party to aid the straining, whinnying horses in hauling the mired wheels out of the deep ruts.

This was the weakest of the three escape-route divisions. In the event of a battle, it would become the rear of the about-facing Continentals, and it would have been the first to escape across the Hackensack to the safety of the river's west bank and onto the Green in Hackensack town.

In the gloom, in the mist, in the sleeting snow of November 20, 1776, the extraordinary evacuation of Fort Lee on the Palisades has been successfully and orderly executed. To the amazement of all the American forces, General Cornwallis' main battalions arrived at the Liberty Pole intersection after the last of the Continentals had cleared the corners and were well on their way along the Tee-Neck ridge.

From there the British commander headed for his objective, Fort Lee. Meanwhile the American officers directed their troops safely across the Hackensack River.

And, thus, the "Battle of Bergen" never took place. For centuries to come historians and strategists will, with little success, attempt to explain Lord Cornwallis's inexplicable delay, a delay which, some say, cost England its thirteen colonies.

The Rev. Theodore B. Romeyn, recounting an eyewitness's account, will write a discourse in 1869, stating:

THE CRISIS *-continued*

"It was about dusk when the head of the troops entered Hackensack. It was dark, cold, raining. They came down the street two abreast. They looked ragged. Most were wrapped in blankets. They limped and after they had passed there was blood on the earth."

— The Rev. Theodore B. Romeyn

The "Retreat Through the Jerseys" it will be called. General Washington refuses to call it so, referring to it as "The Fall Down" (To the Delaware). Regardless, it will stand two centuries later as a classic among "withdrawals", even though Tories will try to picture it "a wild flight of scared jack rabbits". This will become the erroneous impression many will attempt to attach to it in the years to come.

Careful historians, however, will agree with William C. Armstrong, Historian to be of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, who in his *The Battles In the Jerseys* in 1916, will write:

"The retreat through the Jerseys was not a fight; the movement was deliberate and orderly."

All the Rest . . .

While historians will give various descriptions to the remarkable feat that, indeed, will save this nation, Prussian militarists will assess it more accurately from afar than those who will later walk over its grounds. Using the 1776 American military maneuver as an illustration of military genius in the face of an overwhelming enemy, the Prussian military school will call it:

"The greatest military retreat in all the annals of strategic warfare."

[illegible]

*...As It Really Was...
Voices From The Past*

In Ten Days. . .

"In ten days from this date there will not be above two thousand men, if that number, of the fixed established regiments on this side of Hudson's river to oppose Howe's whole army . . . in short it is impossible for me, in the compass of a letter, to give you any idea of our situation, of my difficulties, and of constant perplexities and mortifications I meet with . . ." — Correspondence, Washington to his brother from Hackensack, November 19, 1776

The Crossing

"On the night of November 19th, 1776, Earl Cornwallis, a brave and capable officer and a bosom friend of General Howe, the British Commander-in-Chief, acting under direct orders that we can never know, crossed the Hudson River and scaled the Palisade cliff by means of the Old Closter Dock Landing Road. Before daybreak he was on the heights and was marching towards Fort Fort Lee." — T. N. Glover in an address before the Bergen County Historical Society in 1905

The Invasion and a "Countryman" Who Spoiled It

" . . . Fort Lee being the next object for the entire command of the North River (Hudson River), and a ready road to penetrate into Jersey, an addition of boats under the command of Captain Phipps was sent by the Admiral (Admiral Lord Richard Howe) to Kingsbridge on the night of the 17th without being discovered by the enemy (The American army): The 1st Division for embarkation landed next day at 8 o'clock in the morning about seven miles above the fort (Fort Lee), while the Second Division marched up the east side of the river, by which movement the whole corps, as per margin, were landed with their cannon by 10 o'clock, under the command of Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis.

"The soldiers distinguished themselves remarkably upon this occasion by their readiness to drag the cannon up a rocky narrow road, for near half a mile, to the top of the precipice which bounded the shore for some miles on the west side.

"Lord Cornwallis immediately began his march, and had not the enemy at Fort Lee been

Voices From The Past –continued

apprised of his moving towards them by a countryman, after he had proceeded some distance, he would have surrounded two thousand men at the fort, who escaped in the utmost confusion; leaving all their artillery and a large quantity of stores and provisions, their tents standing, and kettles upon the fire.

"His Lordship encamped that night near the fort, making use of the enemy's tents.

"The next day Major General Vaughan with the light infantry and British grenadiers was detached to the New Bridge upon the Hackinsac River, and a detachment of the 16th Dragoons under the command of Colonel Harcourt, was sent over to Fort Lee" — Report of General Howe to Lord Germain, New York, November 30, 1776

The Landing

"They (the enemy) landed this morning between Dobbs' Ferry and Fort Lee, as it was imagined at a place called Closter Dock, nearly opposite to Philip's house." — Adrian C. Leiby, citing Robertson Diary and Colonel William Grayson, aid to Charles Lee, 1962

The Warning

"... and had not the enemy at Fort Lee been apprised by a countryman, . . . he (Cornwallis) would have surrounded two thousand men at the fort." — General Sir William Howe, Report to London, 1776

The Alarm

"Some of the enemy have landed below Dobb's Ferry . . . a smart firing is also heard below Fort Lee, towards Bergen (Jersey City). It is probable the immediate object they have in view is to shut in our troops between Hackensack and Hudson's River. Their advanced party is said to be within five or six miles of this place (Hackensack). His Excellency (George Washington) has gone over since the advice came." — From correspondence, Harrison to Schuyler, at Hackensack HDQ., November 20, 1776

Action

"I immediately went over and directed the troops consisting of Beal's, Heard's, the remainder of Erving's brigades and some other parts of broken regiments." — Washington in a letter to Lee recounting some of the events of November 20, 1776

Dispatches

“ . . . His Excellency (George Washington) has directed me to write you . . . they (The enemy) landed this morning between Dobb's Ferry and Fort Lee, as it is imagined at a place called Closter Dock, nearly opposite to Philip's house and (as the General has been informed) in great numbers.

and an advanced party of them have proceeded as far as a hill two miles above the Liberty Pole, about a mile and a half above General Greene's quarters, where I left His Excellency . . ." — From correspondence Colonel William Grayson to General Lee, at Hackensack HDQ., November 20, 1776

Enemy Northward

"The vanguard of the British troops did not reach the Liberty Pole until the whole American garrison had passed that point . . ." — Adrian C. Leyby, 1962

11 A.M.

"At that hour, about eleven o'clock in the morning, a British advance party had reached a point two miles north of Liberty Pole (Englewood), but the road from Fort Lee to New Bridge was still in American hands." — A.C. Leiby, 1962

Approach to the Crossroads

"Neither of the two armies was aware of how near they were to an encounter." — Peter Henderson, 1975

Gaining the Bridge

“... However, we were lucky enough to have gained the bridge at Hackensack before them (The Enemy) by which means we saved all our men.” — Correspondence, George Washington to his brother, December 18, 1776 (Note: In this letter Washington recounts events and calls Howe's withdrawal from White Plains a “retreat”, stating: “The retreat of the enemy from White Plains.”)

Tatterdemalions

"I believe no nation ever saw such a set of tatterdemalions . . . few coats and what there were out at the elbows. In a whole regiment there is scarcely a pair of breeches." — Regiment Major John Andre's description of the American troops later on in the war

close to Annihilation

"Never has an army been closer to annihilation." — Arthur J. O'Dea, 1957

"The ammunition had been happily got away. Our present situation between Hackensack and Passaic River being exactly similar to our late one, and our force here by no means adequate to an opposition, that will promise the smallest possibility of success, we are taking measure to retire over the water of the latter taking the best disposition will be formed that circumstances will admit of" — From Washington to Congress report at Hackensack, November 21, 1776

Voices From The Past—continued

Here once

"Here certainly a nation caught its second breath. Here certainly a handful of tired, beaten, bleeding men, representing a new country throughout all its tremendous future, were provided an avenue of escape to victory. Here certainly was forestalled the death clutch of one of the most powerful armies of the old world. Here certainly some of the greatest minds of that world hungered, wondered, dreamed and prayed." — Peter Henderson, 1959

"I am weary almost to death with the retrograde motion of things, and I solemnly protest that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do; and after all, to lose my character, as it is impossible, under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation." — Washington to his brother

Thursday, November 21, 1776

"In the morning, before the General left he rode down to the dock, where the Court Street Bridge now is, viewed the enemy's encampment about ten or fifteen minutes and then returned to Mr. Campbell's door and called for some wine and water. After he drank and Mr. Campbell had taken the glass from him, the latter, with tears streaming down his face said, 'General, what shall I do? I have a family of small children and a little property here; shall I leave them?'"

"Washington kindly took his hand, and replied: 'Mr. Campbell, stay by your family and keep neutral.' Then bidding him good-bye, rode off." — Commonly told account repeated by historians relating the departure of Washington from Hackensack, Thursday morning, November 21, 1776



Robert Herb, Coordinator-Director,
The Bergen County 1776 Retreat Committee

... An Army Near Extinction

"The details of the retreat through the other counties of New Jersey to the Delaware is an interesting and important chronicle, but in no other county was the army and the cause of liberty as near extinction as on the fatal first day of the retreat to victory in Bergen County, November 20th" — Arthur J. O'Dea, 1959

On to the Delaware

"As this country is almost a dead flatt, we have not an entrenching tool and not above 3,000 men and they march broken and dispirited not only with our ill success but the loss of their tents and baggage. I have resolved to avoid any attack, though by doing so, I must leave a very fine country open to their ravages" — Washington to Lee correspondence of November 21

Black Was the Day For Patriots

"Whatever the grand strategy, and whether the British or the Americans were right in thinking that they had come off best in all of the marching and countermarching on the 20th, the day was certainly black beyond description for Hackensack valley patriots. . . . To all appearances the tragic drama was over, the end of the dream of a new Zion on these western shores; the end, not in a great Armageddon, but in sodden troops marching silently through the rain-swept darkness of a Jersey Dutch village street." — Adrian C. Leiby, 1962

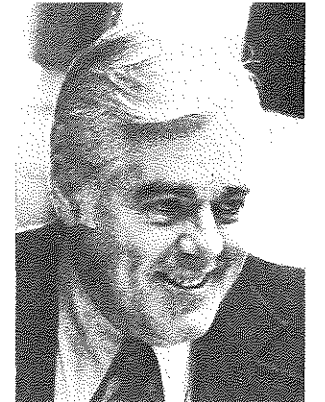
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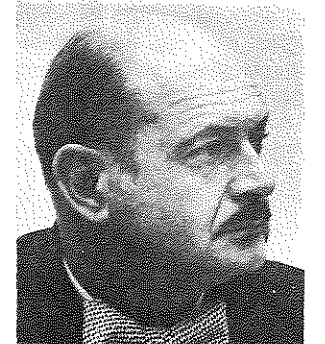
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The Director's Address

The Board of Chosen Freeholders is pleased to be able to participate in and to serve as a sponsor of the work of the Washington's '76 Retreat Committee. The re-creation of the events of November, 1776 will serve as a tribute to the Spirit of '76 and to the sons and daughters of liberty whose gallant struggle for freedom led to the development of the United States as an independent nation, home to more than two hundred million independent Americans.

Ours is the oldest republic on earth. Our form of government and the constitution the warriors made possible has been resilient enough to accommodate the incredible changes that have taken place over the past two centuries without the need for another rebellion against authoritarian rulers. Bergen was governed by a board of freeholders during the War of Independence, and the custom continues because our system of self-government is able to adapt itself to the dynamics of change that are experienced by every generation.

The flight of Washington's army made it possible for him and his troops to fight another day and to win the eventual victory at Yorktown. We recreate that retreat today not only in tribute to the soldiers of the rebellion but also as a reminder to ourselves of the sacrifices needed today if we are to protect the liberties that were won for us in the revolutionary struggle. The retreat re-creation gives us the opportunity, symbolically, to put on the well-worn shoes of the revolution and to remember that the American Revolution was an experiment in liberty that continues to this day.

Jeremiah F. O'Connor
Freeholder-director



A Message From The Chairman

Those men and women who retreated across Bergen County in that grim November two hundred years ago came from all walks and turns of life. They were united by a common cause — a thirst for freedom from oppression. In order to win, they endured the worst physical and mental hardships that any American military force could endure. But they fought through against freezing cold, inadequate clothing and shelter, poor rations and the very ultimate in despair — the prospect of imminent defeat. They fought through to win smashing victories at Trenton and Princeton five weeks after their ignominious and humiliating retreat.

Dominating the whole operation was the great presence and commanding character of George Washington. We tend, through the veil of years, to regard Washington as a plaster saint, a cardboard hero. When we commemorate this event, we realize how wrong we are. He was a man capable of rage, frustration and despair. Most of all, however, he was master of his own character and emotions. His example of courage in adversity, forbearance in hardship, and doggedness in difficulty shines like a beacon of pure light to exemplify the best in our national spirit. Like the Americans of two hundred years ago, the people marking the route of Washington's retreat come from many stations and interests of life. By memorializing the retreat which saved our country, they bring to mind the purposes of our national commitments and the greatness of our national purpose. We are as proud of them as we are of those ragged soldiers whom we honor today.

Francis X. Herbert

Re-enactment With Purpose

As you leave the Palisades, pass Liberty Pole, and cross over New Bridge; as you observe the displays and artifacts, and attend the concerts and ceremonies, attempt to discern what is taking place about you and unmask the spectacle of its pageantry. There before you, in the light of a cold November day, stark naked, completely solemn, ominously still — the re-enactment of a damnable retreat!

You are bearing witness to, even taking part in, a very special — yes, unique — project, for you are commemorating a retreat. You are reliving, consciously or not, those great sacrifices our ancestors had to endure: the thousands dead, thousands maimed, even more dying as prisoners, the financial hardships, the indignation suffered, and families divided forever more. And all of this was to be shared with the American rebel by his

American counterpart and Britain alike. Truly the wrath of hell was upon us, for that infamous horseman of Apocalypse stalked our countryside.

All of this must, however, be relived, for it is in that retreat that we find the real embodiment of the American Spirit, that which is more than the glitter and glory of victory. It is the noble determination and perseverance to rise up in the face of all adversity, rally, and ultimately prevail.

We must once again seek to identify our true character as each of our previous generations have done. We must peer through the gray area, seek out, and draw ever so close to that kinsman of our misty past and drink of him those precious ideals that make us Americans.

Where better to find that Spirit than in this Retreat — not only chronologically, but in so many ways — the Darkest Moment in American History.

Timothy John Van Orden
Program Chairman

The Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee



Francis X. Herbert
Robert Herb, Coord.
Tim Van Orden
Ronald Lockwood
Gino A. Travali
Lorraine M. Giordano
Rose Anne Lasher
Elaine Berg
Eleanor Harvey
Terry Lark
Carolyn Kiefer
Alfred Thomas
Margaret Pentifallo
Richard Santasiero
Carl Buscher
Thomas Moran
Raymond Weiss
Gerald Ollendorf
Andrew Woerner
Dr. Peter L. Henderson
Virginia Mosley
Beatrice James
Carl Hartmann
Charles Pappas
Isaac McNatt
Victor Scozzaro
Mary Louise Beattie
William Gruver
Joseph Hnat
Anthony Pentifallo
Bonnie McDonald
James Surphen

The Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee is an ad hoc committee of the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders, acting under the direction of Francis X. Herbert, Freeholder. The Committee, in addition to the responsibilities involved with the activities of the Re-enactment, has also sponsored or participated in various programs since its inception as a separate county committee in late April, 1976. Included in these activities were: the Memorial Day services held at the Church on the Green (First Reformed Church, Hackensack), the marking of the graves at the Church cemetery, the ceremonies marking the dedication of the Mansion House, and the memori-

al tribute to the Unknown Revolutionary War Dead, Hudson Street Cemetery (Co-sponsored by the Hackensack Bicentennial Committee, Bergen County Bar Association); the placement of the first Retreat Route marker, Fort Lee Historic Park, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, June 12, 1976; the commemoration of the construction of the Fort (Lee) and the Gun Battery, Fort Lee, on July 17, 1976. The '76 Retreat Committee, as it has come to be known, also participated in the Memorial Day parades in Bergenfield, Lodi, and South Hackensack, as well as in the Bicentennial parades of Hackensack, Bergenfield-Dumont, and Carlstadt.

The Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee

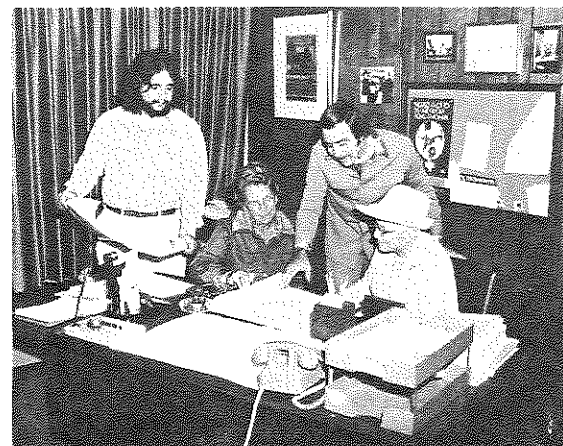


Executive Committee: reading left to right, Tim Van Orden, Ronald Lockwood, Robert Herb, Coordinator, Lorraine Giordano, and Gino Travali.



Vanguard Sub-Committee: responsible for establishing the route of march; communications with the various police departments; registration of participants, staging areas; coordinating the march route with public utilities and transportation lines for traffic control; coordination of participating militia units.

Pictured left to right: Elaine Berg, Victor Scozzaro, and Bob Herb, Chairman. Not pictured: Margaret Pentifallo, Anthony Pentifallo, James Sutphen, and Carl Buscher.



Program Sub-Committee: responsible for preparation of program and schedule of events, art exhibits, craft displays, speakers for opening and closing ceremonies, staging and sound systems, transportation of military units, entertainment.

Pictured left to right: Richard Santasiero, Beatrice James, Tim Van Orden, Chairman, and Virginia Mosley. Not pictured: Joseph Hnat.

The Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee



Public Relations Sub-Committee: concerned with developing lines of communication with the news media that covers Bergen County, including radio and television coverage; responsible for construction of parade float and for a photo history of the Re-enactment.

Pictured left to right: Ronald Lockwood, Chairman, Alfred Thomas. Not pictured: Charles Pappas, William Gruver, and Carl Hartmann.



Hospitality Sub-Committee: responsible for preparation of meals for militia units, coordination of local rest facilities for Vanguard, provide for overnight encampment for military units.

Pictured left to right: Isaac McNatt, Carolyn Kiefer, Gino Travali, Chairman, Terry Lark, and Bonnie McDonald.



Communications Sub-Committee: responsible for obtaining sponsor of commemorative journal; compiling contents, arranging for printing and distribution of journal, for correspondence and acknowledgements, for maintaining open lines of communication within the committee, the Freeholders, and the public.

Pictured left to right: Lorraine Giordano, chairman, Eleanor Harvey, Mary Louise Beattie, and Dr. Peter Henderson. Not pictured: Rose Anne Lasher.

Acknowledgements

A debt of gratitude is extended to the members of the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Administration, and staff, for having patience and understanding in our purpose of re-enacting this Retreat.

To the following persons goes a special thank you for contributing unselfishly of their talents, time, and support to this publication of a page in American History: Mary Louise Beattie, Eleanor Harvey, Dr. Peter Henderson, Lorraine Giordano, Rose Anne Lasher, and T.J. Van Orden.

The '76 Retreat Committee wishes to acknowledge the following County Agencies for their assistance: County Clerk, County Counsel, Cultural and Heritage Commission, General Services Department, Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Information, Park Commission, County Police Department, Public Works Department, and the Sheriff's Department.

The Committee also wishes to recognize the achievements of the Bicentennial Committees of the seventy municipalities of Bergen County, as well as extend its deepest appreciation to the Mayors and Governing Bodies, the Police Departments, and Departments of Public Works of the thirteen towns along the Retreat Route: Fort Lee, Leonia, Englewood, Teaneck, Bergenfield, New Milford, River Edge, Hackensack, Hasbrouck Heights, Lodi, Wood-Ridge, South Hackensack, and Wallington.

And to the following who volunteered their services, equipment, and materials to the various projects undertaken by the Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee:

All American Emblem Corporation	Gene Gouss
A and J Sheet Metal Company	Max A. Haase, Jr.
Anthony Alessio	Hackensack Chamber of Commerce
Margaret Allen	Hackensack High School Band
Associated Florist Supply Company	Dr. D. Stanton Hammond
Tony Aulita	Charles Hanna
Guy Baehr	Congressman Henry Helstoski, Staff Members
Bergen County Vocational-Technical High School	William Hromyk
Commercial Art, Commercial Food, Auto Body	Terry Holtje
Shop, Print Shop	Hunts Funeral Home
Bill Barry	James Hurst
Bond Float Company	Ijsselband Rheden, Netherlands
Box 54, Teaneck	Immaculate Conception High School
Robert Bruno	Jan Igoe
Bright Star Battery Company	Jack Kohn
Pete Buhlinger	Dr. Cornelius Kraissl
John Buzzoni	Shirley Kutzner
Roger Conant	Dorothy Langseder
Cub Pack 86, Tenafly	Robert S. Lewis and Son, Trucking Co.
Janet Dunton	William Linton
Mary Ellen Davison	Madonna Cemetery
Richard Dame	Marine Band
Dobrow Photoengraving Company	Mike Marino
Al Eagleson	Minolta Corporation
East Artillery Company	Stanley Morrone
Englewood Cliffs Junior Fife and Drum Corps	Hal Morse
Erskine Colonial Brigade	John Muller
Felician College	Muller Brothers, Paint Supply Company
Fort Lee Chamber of Commerce	New Jersey National Guard
Fort Lee Fire Dept., Firehouse #1	Paul Nickerson
Fort Lee Historic Park	Vincent Nunno
Fort Lee Parks Department	Paul Ortlip
Frank Furbacher	Packard's
Al Galorenzo	Palisades Interstate Park Commission

Acknowledgements

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Ed Saleck
John Santasiero
Schraalenburg Fife and Drum Corps
Diane Scibetta
Jan Shannon
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Barbara Swan
Taranto Transportation Company
Tech-Repro, Incorporated
James Tedesco
Joan Thomas
Carmen Trimarchi
Ben Trzeciak
U.S. Army, 19th Army Band

Josephine Van Orden
Vision Cable TV, Fort Lee
Eugene E. Walsh
Maj. Waterhouse
Charlotte Woolson
The members of the Chestnut Ridge
Radio Club WR2AFR
George Apfel W2GHV
Jule Casey WA2UZQ
Richard Colten WA2GAW
Donald Dombrowsky WB2ZXE
James Ewings WB2GCC
Gustavo Flores WB2URK
Robert Greenquist K2GHV
Victor Jurkovic WB2PYE
Roy King K2BNQ
Mark Kirschner WA2HLE
Peter Larro K2ZKA
Alan Martin WA2NQL
John Meagher W2EHD
Paul Mowat WA2KYW
Gerald Ollendorf WB2AXT
Stephen Pappas WB2IKP
Wendell Tietsworth W2SUE
Andrew Woerner K2ETN
Ruth Woerner WA2ULM

Raymond Weiss WB2YSD

To the Following Individuals Who Participated as Guest Speakers

Mayor Richard Nest
Miss Sally M. Krahmer
Assemblyman Albert Burstein
Brigadier General Herman Tenkin
Mayor Michael D'Arminio
Freeholder Myra Elliott
Dr. Peter Henderson
State Senator John M. Skevin
Freeholder Director Jeremiah O'Connor
Congressman Henry Helstoski
Father Joseph Cevetello
Dr. Peter Sammartino
Consulate General Gerard Caussen

Consulate General Alberto Lopez Herce
Deputy Consul General C.A. Lovitt
Freeholder Francis X. Herbert
John W. Warner, Administrator ARBA
Governor Brendan T. Byrne
Reverend Forrest R. Prindle
Robert R. Herb
Mayor Walter Slominski, Jr.
Congressman Robert A. Roe
Dr. Jean L. Willis
Assemblyman Robert Hollenbeck
Freeholder Deputy Director Doris Mahalick

The members of the Bergen County '76 Retreat Committee wish to express their deepest appreciation to The Bergen Record, and its staff, for providing the technical assistance in the design, layout and printing of this commemorative journal.

Heartfelt thanks is extended to the husbands and wives, families and friends of the members of the '76 Retreat Committee, without whose assistance and encouragement this Program would have been nearly impossible to undertake.

And perhaps, most of all, we would like to thank our fellow citizens of Bergen County, who, in reality, made all of this possible.

Program of Events—Nov. 20, 21



NOVEMBER 20

8:15 a.m.	Fort Lee Historic Park (Beginning of Retreat) Mayor Richard Nest-Welcome Address, Miss Sally M. Krahmer, Assemblyman Henry Helstoski, Welcome Address, Miss Sally M. Krahmer, Assemblyman Albert Burstein, Brig. Gen. Herman Tenkin.	Highlight:	Direction of history as determined by moments; success of first leg of retreat; foreign involvement.
Highlight:	Fort and gun batteries; role of the citizen soldier, then and now. Englewood Cliffs Jr. Fife and Drum Corps.	3:30 p.m.	Hackensack Band Concert: 19th Army Band
12:00 p.m.	Hackensack Opening of indoor art exhibit at County Administration Building and Courthouse; opening of crafts display and exhibits on surrounding ground. Colonial theme.	5:00 p.m.	Dinner*
12:45 p.m.	Hackensack Mayor Michael D'Arminio-Welcome Address, Freeholder Myra Elliott, Dr. Peter Henderson, State Senator John M. Skevin	7:00 p.m.	Immaculate Conception High School, Lodi Cocktail Party*
Highlight:	Welcome to the safe harbor.	8:00 p.m.	Immaculate Conception High School, Lodi* Freeholder Francis X. Herbert-Welcome Address Congressman Henry Helstoski, John W. Warner, Administrator, ARBA, Governor Brendan T. Byrne
1:30 p.m.	Hackensack Band Concert: Hackensack High School Band	Highlight:	Role of the volunteer worker in American government.
3:00 p.m.	Hackensack (Arrival of Marchers) Freeholder Jeremiah O'Connor-Welcome Address, Congressman Henry Helstoski, Father Joseph Cevetello, Dr. Peter Sammartino New Jersey Bicentennial Commission.	8:30 p.m.	Immaculate Conception High School, Lodi Band Concert*: U. S. Marine Corps Band
		10:00 p.m.	Hackensack Closing. Overnight bivouac for marchers.



NOVEMBER 21

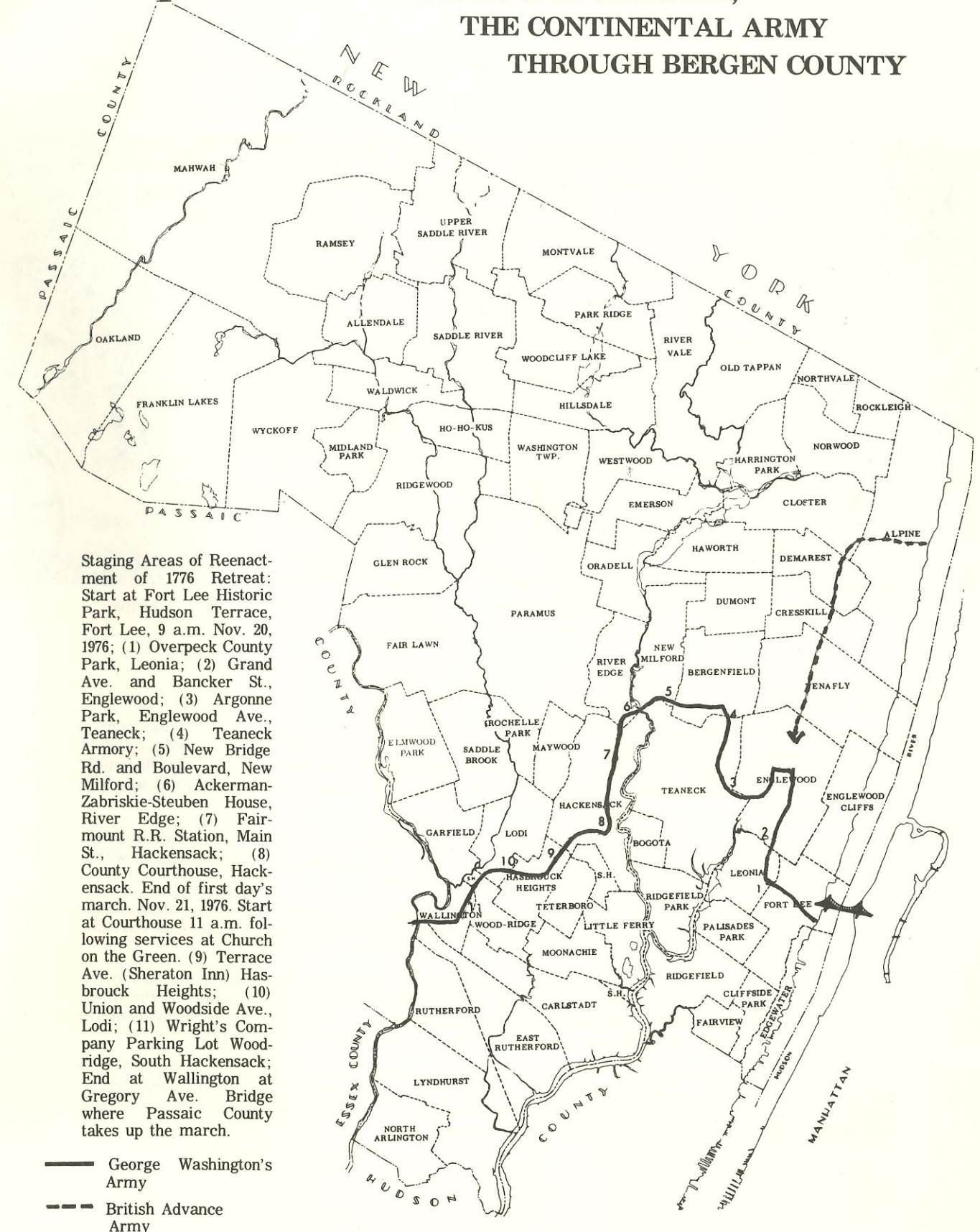
10:00 a.m.	Hackensack First Reformed Church—"The Old Church on the Green"—Reverend Prindle. Colonial interdenominational service. Robert Herb, Prayer for a safe pilgrimage.	Highlight:	Address, Congressman Robert A. Roe, Dr. Jean L. Willis, Assemblyman Robert Hollenbeck, Freeholder Doris Mahalick
1:30 p.m.	Wallington Mayor Walter Slomieski, Jr.-Welcome		A salute to those who passed this way in crisis and returned in victory. -Schraalenburgh Fife and Drum Corps



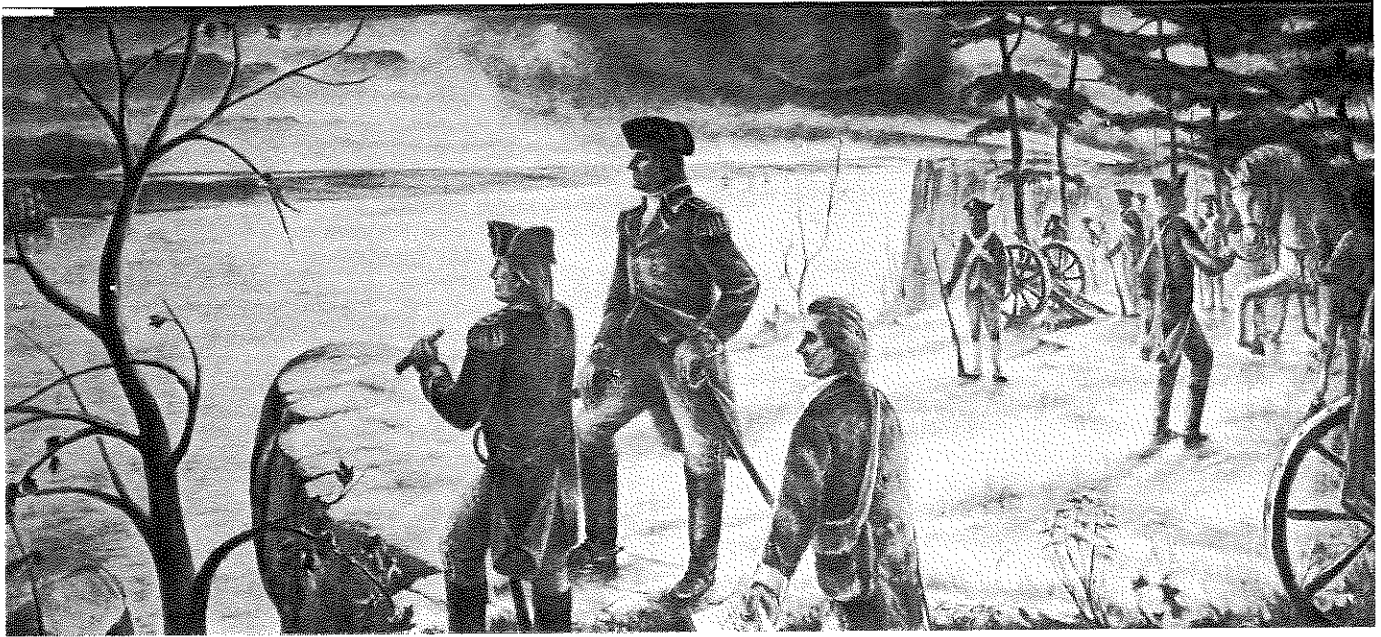
*Denotes limited attendance
Should you need more details, please call T. J. VanOrden, Project Chairman, at 471-5365.

Map 1976

1776 LINE OF RETREAT, THE CONTINENTAL ARMY THROUGH BERGEN COUNTY



Beginning of The Crisis



Mural Painting by Paul D. Ortlip in the Fort Lee, New Jersey Historic Park, Courtesy of the Fort Lee, New Jersey, Chamber of Commerce.

Crisis In Genesis

On New Jersey's Fort Lee Bluff Rock, the 1776 Continental Army Battery site atop Bergen County's Palisades, General George Washington is shown flanked by General Nathanael Greene and Post Adjutant Thomas Paine, observing the fall and capitulation of Fort Washington, New York, on Saturday, November 16, 1776. The tragic moment depicted here began the great American crisis out of which a nation was born 200 years ago.

Though the loss of Fort Washington was a catastrophe and ended Fort Lee's military value, it turned out to be — in the final analysis — General Sir William Howe's undoing. Both forts in conjunction with a blockade below them had prevented British control of the Hudson.

Thus, the battle on the mount — one of the most horrendous in the chaotic 1776 campaign and the entire war — precipitated the British invasion of the continent at the Closter Dock in Alpine, seven miles north upriver from Fort Lee. This in turn precipitated the evacuation of Fort Lee.

Called "The Great Retreat", "Fall Down To the Delaware", or merely "Withdrawal Across the Jerseys", the strategic maneuver so over-extended the British lines in their fruitless pursuit that the King's men became easily vulnerable for the successful American attacks at Trenton and Princeton. Without The Great Crisis there would have been no others, no Delaware, no Yorktown and no U.S.A.

So it was that the great strategic "retreat" spelled the beginning of the end of monarchical rule for the thirteen united and independent states of North America. So it was that this remarkable military achievement in the face of tremendous obstacles carried its newborn nation out of its fiery birth into an unimaginable world destiny . . . for after it, *all the rest is epilogue.*