

Living in A War Zone

CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
1777-1778



Written by Garry Wheeler Stone & Paul W. Schopp

Edited by Bonny Beth Elwell

CAMDEN COUNTY'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR HISTORY

While state lawmakers did not separate Camden County from Gloucester County until 1844, the four eighteenth-century townships that form the area of present Camden County had a rich Revolutionary War history. These four townships—Waterford, Newton, Gloucester, and the Town of Gloucester—comprised the recruiting district for Gloucester County's 2nd Militia Regiment. The 2nd district included the area between Burlington County and Big Timber Creek. Colonel Joseph Ellis served as the regiment's commander. A veteran of the French and Indian Wars, Ellis was South Jersey's foremost military leader of the Revolution. The New Jersey Legislature appointed him "Colonel-Commandant" of the South Jersey militia in December 1777.

South of Big Timber Creek was the 1st Regiment Militia District. Its colonel had been Israel Shreve, but, in 1775, he resigned to join the Continental Army. Shreve's replacement was Dr. Bodo Otto, a good man, but lacking charisma and experience. (Later, in 1777-78, Shreve returned to Gloucester County as colonel of the 2nd New Jersey Regiment.) The 3rd Regiment Militia District comprised the Atlantic coast townships of Egg Harbor and Galloway. There, members of the Somers family led both the Whig ("rebel") committee and the regiment.

The most challenging militia district was the 2nd, as many of its residents held membership in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), a body of determined pacifists. The only other organized religion present were the Anglicans. They had a church in Waterford Township and a young missionary that they shared with Anglicans at Gloucester Town and in Greenwich Township. The 1st District also had a strong Friends' congregation at Woodbury and another in Greenwich, but these townships hosted more religious diversity, with Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, and Moravian congregations. While Quakers originally founded the shore communities in the 3rd District, by the Revolution, the more combative Presbyterians dominated. Colonel Richard Somers had the least trouble in filling the eight companies of his regiment and even received enlistments from several Quakers who could no longer endure British and Loyalist plundering.



Since the early nineteenth century, we have romanticized the American Revolution as a glorious struggle for freedom. All too soon, the residents of South Jersey learned that there is nothing glorious about living in a war zone. The citizens endured being foraged by both sides with little payment for cattle and crops or having homes plundered by soldiers and the criminals who trail behind armies. During winter campaigning, miles of fences disappeared to feed camp fires. Angry men torched their enemies' houses, and artillery fire punctured dwellings. This was not a happy time for the people of Gloucester County.

Gloucester County Townships and Militia Districts During the American Revolution

T.o.G. = Town of Gloucester Township

In 1837, the 3rd Militia District was severed from Gloucester County and became Atlantic County.

In 1844, the 2nd District became Camden County.

Today, with minor boundary changes, the 1st District comprises Gloucester County.



THE TOWNSHIPS THAT BECAME CAMDEN COUNTY

Before the war, the residents of Waterford, Newton, Gloucester, and the Town of Gloucester were fortunate. Across the Delaware River, Philadelphia was the largest city in English-speaking America, and its inhabitants, exporters, and merchant marine provided an almost insatiable market for the New Jerseyans' agricultural and forest products. South Jersey farmers provided butter and cheese, eggs, chickens, veal, beef, pork, vegetables, and fruit to Philadelphia. Salt pork was an important export to the West Indies. Woodland laborers and sawmill operators provided Philadelphia with firewood, charcoal, tar, pitch, fence rails, shingles, lumber, and timber—timber used by carpenters, shipwrights, wheelwrights, and furniture manufacturers. South Jersey hay and grain helped feed Philadelphia's horses and milk cows.

Haddonfield was Gloucester County's largest village, a market town of about forty families strategically sited at the intersection of the roads from Burlington to Salem and from Egg Harbor to Philadelphia. Due to its location, Haddonfield served as a rendezvous for the Gloucester County militia. At the west end of the road from Egg Harbor was Cooper's Ferry, the most convenient Delaware River crossing to Philadelphia for farmers or soldiers. Militia traveling north frequently embarked at Cooper's Ferry to sail to Burlington, Bordentown, or Trenton. Four and a half miles south of Cooper's Ferry



Hugh and Mary Creighton converted a row of three rental properties into Haddonfield's "upper tavern" after purchasing the dwellings in May 1777. During January-March, May-June, and September 1777, one of the second-floor rooms was occupied by the New Jersey Assembly. In what would become the tavern's ballroom, the members of the Assembly passed acts to further their war against a powerful enemy. The tavern was one of the buildings plundered by the British light infantry on April 5, 1777. The tavern is now the Indian King Tavern Museum State Historic Site.



When Benjamin Cooper constructed this ferry tavern in 1734, it was the largest residence at Cooper's Point, the future Camden City. In 1769, Benjamin Cooper's son, Samuel, constructed a new wharf and ferry tavern. After Benjamin's death in 1772, this became the home of son Joseph Cooper. House and farm suffered during the Revolution. During a naval action, a British cannonball smashed into the roof. March 1, 1778, as British soldiers sheltered in Cooper's Point buildings during a snow storm, Joseph Cooper's barn caught fire and burned.

was the Gloucester Town ferry—a less convenient ferry, but adjacent to the county courthouse. The courthouse hamlet of Gloucester Town was the political center of the County, but would remain economically insignificant until it became a manufacturing suburb of Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century.

Most residents of the area were descendants of English, Swedish, and Dutch settlers, but the importation of indentured servants had added a sprinkling of Irish and German inhabitants. There were more than a few African Americans scattered through the townships, especially in the Town of Gloucester where, in 1784, African Americans comprised almost 20% of the population. Many remained slaves, but the number of free African Americans increased rapidly as a result of Revolutionary ideology and pressure from the Religious Society of Friends.

THE BRITISH COERCIVE ACTS SPARK RESISTANCE

After the French and Indian War, Britain tried to defray the cost of governing and protecting her North American colonies by imposing taxes—taxes Americans resisted, since the colonists lacked representation in the British Parliament ("no taxation without representation").

Americans defeated these taxes—all except a tax on tea—by boycotting English goods. But Boston’s “Sons of Liberty” expressed outrage at the retained tea tax, and on December 16, 1773, they dumped three shiploads of tea into Boston harbor. King George III and Parliament were enraged and passed laws closing the port of Boston and stripping Massachusetts of its right to self-government.

In Gloucester County, July 18, 1774, Assemblyman Robert Friend Price presided over a public meeting at the courthouse that resolved to support the people of Massachusetts, to boycott British goods, and to appoint a Committee of Correspondence to correspond with other county committees and meet with them to choose delegates to a Continental Congress. The names of several of the committeemen will appear again in this account: Joseph Ellis, Samuel Harrison, Joseph Hugg, and John Hinchman. Another public meeting at the courthouse, December 12, 1774, resolved to implement the recommendations of the 1st Continental Congress and restyled the Committee of Correspondence as a Committee of Observation to enforce a boycott of British goods.

Like other county committees of correspondence, Gloucester’s collected funds for the relief of Massachusetts residents impoverished by the closure of the Port of Boston. In November 1774, “Captain Joseph Ellis,” committee treasurer, delivered \$534 to the Boston delegates returning home from the 1st Continental Congress. Not to be outdone, in 1775, the Quaker Haddonfield Monthly Meeting collected more than twice as much.



MOBILIZATION FOR WAR

On December 28, 1774, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* reported Massachusetts’s determination to equip and train its town militias to resist the British troops in Boston. The same edition reported similar preparations in Delaware. The April 1775 fighting at Lexington and Concord led to the revival or creation of militia companies in every township in South Jersey. In one Cumberland County township, so many men mustered that they created two companies. In June 1775, delegates to a “Provincial Congress” passed a militia act and voted to raise a £10,000 defense fund. Military issues occupied much of the delegates’ time. Delegate Captain Joseph Ellis (soon to be Colonel Ellis) was busy helping revise the militia act, purchasing arms, and mustering soldiers for the Continental Army.

The Gloucester County Whig committee members were preparing for war. In October, the Egg Harbor committee ordered 100 bayonets from a local smith. In November, they received a large shipment of munitions from the West Indies. Some was for the Egg Harbor militia, some for the militias of the Delaware River townships, and other for the Continental Congress. In January 1776, Colonel Richard Somers (of Egg Harbor) and Judge Samuel Harrison (of the western townships) gave a sloop captain £120 for more gunpowder, lead, and flints. It was delivered in June.

On March 17, 1776, threatened by Continental Army siege artillery, the British evacuated Boston. A British counterattack was certain. Continental Army commanders accurately predicted that the British would attack New York City. June 1776, the Continental Congress called on New Jersey to provide 3,300 militia to serve until December 1. From South Jersey, Colonel Silas Newcomb led a battalion of young men north. Two companies were from western Gloucester County. In reserve at the Battle of Long Island, they only had one casualty—Joseph Githins of Waterford Township, married just four months. These South Jersey men never fought, but they took casualties from contaminated water, malaria, dysentery, poor food, and inadequate shelter. In December, back in New Jersey, poorly clothed and some shoeless, they refused Washington’s plea to re-enlist.

New Jersey also recruited “State Troops”—troops serving one-year enlistments—in Gloucester County. A well-connected Town of Gloucester farmer, Samuel Hugg, offered to raise an artillery company. His brother, William, operated the ferry and courthouse tavern. His brother, Joseph, was county clerk and an army purchasing agent. Captain Hugg recruited a group of eager volunteers and in July marched north to New Brunswick. With Washington’s army, they retreated into Pennsylvania, crossed back, and fought at Trenton, Assunpink Creek, and Princeton. One of Hugg’s privates died at Princeton in April 1777—Levi Albertson of the Town of Gloucester.

Regular militia supported Washington’s planned attack on the Hessian garrison of Trenton. In December 1776, Colonel Samuel Griffin crossed from Philadelphia with a small force of Continental soldiers and Pennsylvania Militia, rendezvoused at Haddonfield with Colonel Silas Newcomb’s battalion of militia that included companies led by Colonels Joseph Ellis and Richard Somers. Marching north to Mount Holly on December 17, they threatened a brigade of Hessians and Scots. Skirmishing

on December 21-23 drew the enemy farther from Trenton, leaving the garrison there isolated—a garrison that Washington’s troops overran early on December 26.

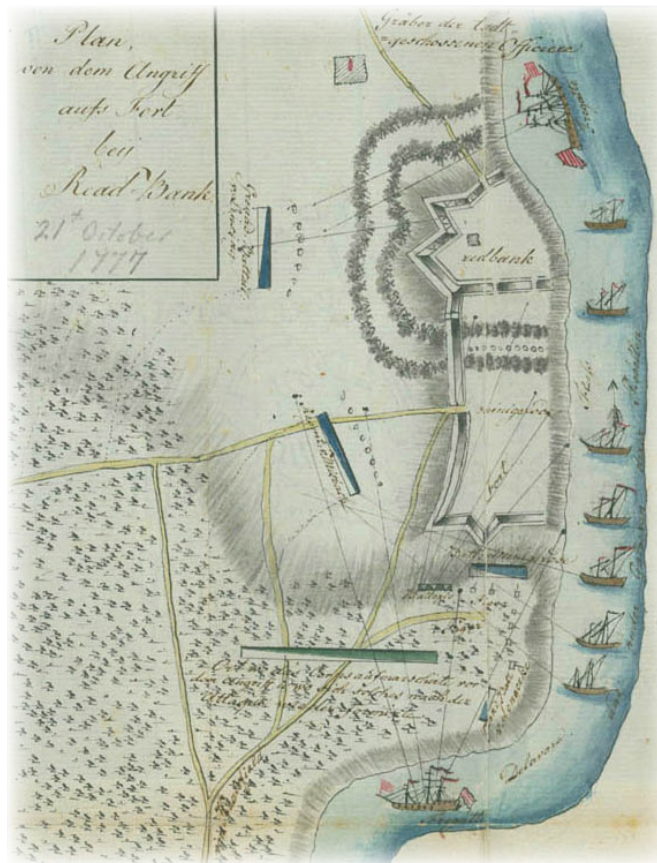
January 1777 found Colonel Ellis and Captain William Harrison, both of the Town of Gloucester, with Washington’s army at Morristown. There, in the snow, Ellis drilled the militia every day. Toward the end of January, their month up, Harrison marched his detachment home. Colonel Ellis stayed at Morristown, as new companies from Gloucester appeared for a month’s service. In March, Captain Joseph Collings of Newton Township commanded the replacement company of militiamen.

WAR COMES TO THE DELAWARE

During the summer of 1777, the British commander-in-chief, Sir William Howe, became frustrated by his inability to defeat the rebel army in North Jersey. On July 23, Howe and an army of 18,000 men sailed out of New York harbor with the goal of capturing the rebel capital of Philadelphia. August 25, this British army landed at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, brushed aside Continental skirmishers in Delaware, and marched into Pennsylvania. Howe outmaneuvered Washington at Brandywine Creek on September 11, and again at the Schuylkill River fords. On September 26, his grenadier battalions marched unopposed into Philadelphia.

While Sir William Howe had captured the rebel capital, he had not won the war. The Continental Congress merely moved to York, Pennsylvania, and Howe found his army trapped. Washington’s army and the Pennsylvania militia controlled the countryside west of Philadelphia, and rebel forts and gunboats controlled the river south of Philadelphia. To open the Port of Philadelphia to British shipping, the British laid siege to Fort Mifflin on October 5. Progress was slow, however, and impatient to break the rebel blockade, Sir William Howe decided to storm the forts. These attempts, however, led to a bloody defeat at Fort Mercer and the loss of two ships at Fort Mifflin.

After their defeats, the British reconciled themselves to a long siege. The rebel garrison at Fort Mifflin, after enduring weeks of relentless artillery fire, abandoned the ruined fort on November 15. Now only Fort Mercer at Red Bank, Gloucester County, prevented British ships from reaching Philadelphia wharves.



The failed attack on Fort Mercer at Red Bank, Gloucester County, NJ, as sketched by Hessian jäger captain Johann Ewald.

Early on October 21, a Hessian brigade of about 1,400 men crossed from Philadelphia to Cooper’s Ferry, and—after skirmishing with militia—camped at Haddonfield. The next morning, they marched for Red Bank. Learning that the militia had dismantled the bridge over Big Timber Creek, they crossed Little Timber Creek on Captain William Harrison’s mill dam and crossed Big Timber Creek at Clement’s Bridge. Late that afternoon, the Hessians launched a brave infantry assault on the fort, but its high ramparts, valiant garrison, and gunboat artillery fire resulted in almost 400 casualties. The surviving Hessians retreated back across Clement’s Bridge, rested, and the next day they met a British light infantry column sent to rescue them at Pomona Hall. Credit: Harvey Andruss Library, Bloomsburg University.

The night of November 17-18, Lord Cornwallis led over 2,000 men from Philadelphia to the river port of Chester. There they joined with 2,300 reinforcements from New York and landed across the river at Billingsport, New Jersey. After resting the troops and horses from New York, they marched for Fort Mercer. There, the Continental Army garrison panicked, set the fort on fire, and retreated to Haddonfield and then to Mount Holly. British shipping could now supply Philadelphia. November 25, after leveling the ramparts of Fort Mercer, the British marched to Gloucester Town and began shipping “foraged” (stolen) livestock to Philadelphia.



October 23, the British aborted an amphibious assault on Fort Mifflin after losing two ships. The 50-gun *Augusta* caught fire and exploded—stunning men miles away—, while the sloop of war *Merlin* grounded and was burned to prevent the Continentals from salvaging its armament and stores. Credit: John Squillace, detail from *Victory off Red Bank* (1971), Gloucester County Historical Society.

The Plundering of Woodbury

Lord Cornwallis was unconcerned that his detachment might alienate the inhabitants of Gloucester County. His quartermasters do not seem to have paid for cattle, wagons, or hay and grain, and his troops plundered unhindered. The diary of Job Whitall, Woodbury farmer, butcher, and meat packer, related the experience of one family.

Job Whitall was living on the south side of Woodbury. November 21, as the soldiers marched in, they took two of his horses and ransacked their home, taking: “Bread, pies, milk, cheese, meat, dishes, cups, spoons & then took shirts, sheets, Blankets, coverlets, stockings, Breeches, a light Broadax and drove our cattle.”

On the 22nd, the Whitalls remained alone most of the day, except for soldiers returning to take milk and potatoes, steal a pig, and a quartermaster or engineer taking the gears (wheels and undercarriage) of a wagon. The following day, Whitall visited his uncle’s home and found another ransacked house—doors broken down and desk drawers forced. In the cellar, the British soldiers had broken open a cask of sugar and taken most of its contents. While Job was still there, soldiers returned and took ten of his father’s sheep and four of a neighbor’s. Returning home, he found soldiers loading as much hay as they could on horses. On the 24th, the army left and Whitall checked his smoke house on the other side of Woodbury. Not only had the bacon disappeared, but “near a thousand feet of Boards” and all of his barrel staves.

In December, a German officer noted that another Cornwallis forage—in Chester County, Pennsylvania—had “done infinitely more to maintain the rebellion than to smother it.”

THE BATTLE OF GLOUCESTER

Washington had been desperate to maintain the Delaware River blockade, but—correctly fearing that Sir William Howe planned to attack the Continentals’ White-marsh encampment—Washington waited until learning of Cornwallis’s march to send men to relieve Fort Mercer. November 19, Washington sent Major General Nathanael Greene with three brigades to New Jersey. Greene’s force was smaller than Cornwallis’s however, and Greene had to wait at Mount Holly for an additional brigade. Greene did not arrive at Haddonfield until November 26. There, he learned that the British at Gloucester Town were too strongly positioned to attack. Disappointed, Greene wrote Washington that afternoon. However, he did have some good news. The previous afternoon, the marquis de Lafayette had attacked a Hessian outpost and driven it back to the enemy encampment at Gloucester Town.

The marquis de Lafayette, an eager 20-year-old volunteer, was only an honorary major general. He had accompanied Greene from Whitemarsh and, with his two aides-de-camp and three French officers, had ridden to Haddonfield on November 24. The next morning the young marquis, with his entourage, militia guides, and an escort of Continental riflemen, scouted the British encampment at Gloucester Town. A short distance outside of the main encampment, they learned of a “picket post” of 350 Hessian jägers (riflemen) and a British artillery company with two 6-pounder fieldpieces. The jägers were guarding the King’s Road approach to Gloucester Town. Lafayette determined to attack the picket post.



Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, 1757-1834

By Charles Willson Peale, 1779-1780

The marquis was an inexperienced, enthusiastic young man in July 1777 when he joined the Continental Army as an honorary major general. Immensely rich, he had chartered his own ship to come to America. He was desperate to distinguish himself, hinting to Washington that he would return to France if he was not given real responsibility. Lafayette’s leadership at the Battle of Gloucester provided Washington the leverage needed to convince the Continental Congress to give the young man command of a division of the Continental Army.

Back in Haddonfield, Lafayette gathered up a small force—150 Continental riflemen, at least 150 New Jersey militia, and ten Continental Light Dragoons—and marched for the picket post. Two miles west on the King’s Road, Lafayette’s men encountered the jägers advancing towards them. Most of the Hessians were green recruits. Attacked by the battle-hardened Continentals, the jäger ranks crumbled, and they fled back towards the Gloucester Town encampment. Twice the British light infantry reinforced the jägers, but by sunset, Lafayette pushed them back over two miles. Lafayette’s little victory was of no military significance, but it gave Washington the leverage he needed to persuade the Continental Congress delegates to give Lafayette command responsibility. On December 4, 1777, the young marquis became a real major general commanding a division of the Continental Army.

Detail from Michel Capitaine du Chesnoy, Carte de l’action de Gloucester (“Map of the Action at Gloucester”). Capitaine was one of Lafayette’s aides-de-camp. Courtesy Cornell University Library.



The Battle of Gloucester

As Represented in a Design for the Hilt of Lafayette’s Sword

In October 1778, as Lafayette prepared to return to France to rally support for the Revolution, the Continental Congress voted to present him with a commemorative sword. One of the four designs for the hilt was the “Battle of Gloucester.” Thus was the skirmish elevated into a battle. The sword was fabricated in Paris at the cost of 4,800 French livres. It was presented to Lafayette in August 1779.



SKIRMISH ON THE KING'S ROAD: LAFAYETTE VERSUS THE HESSIAN JÄGERS AND BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRY

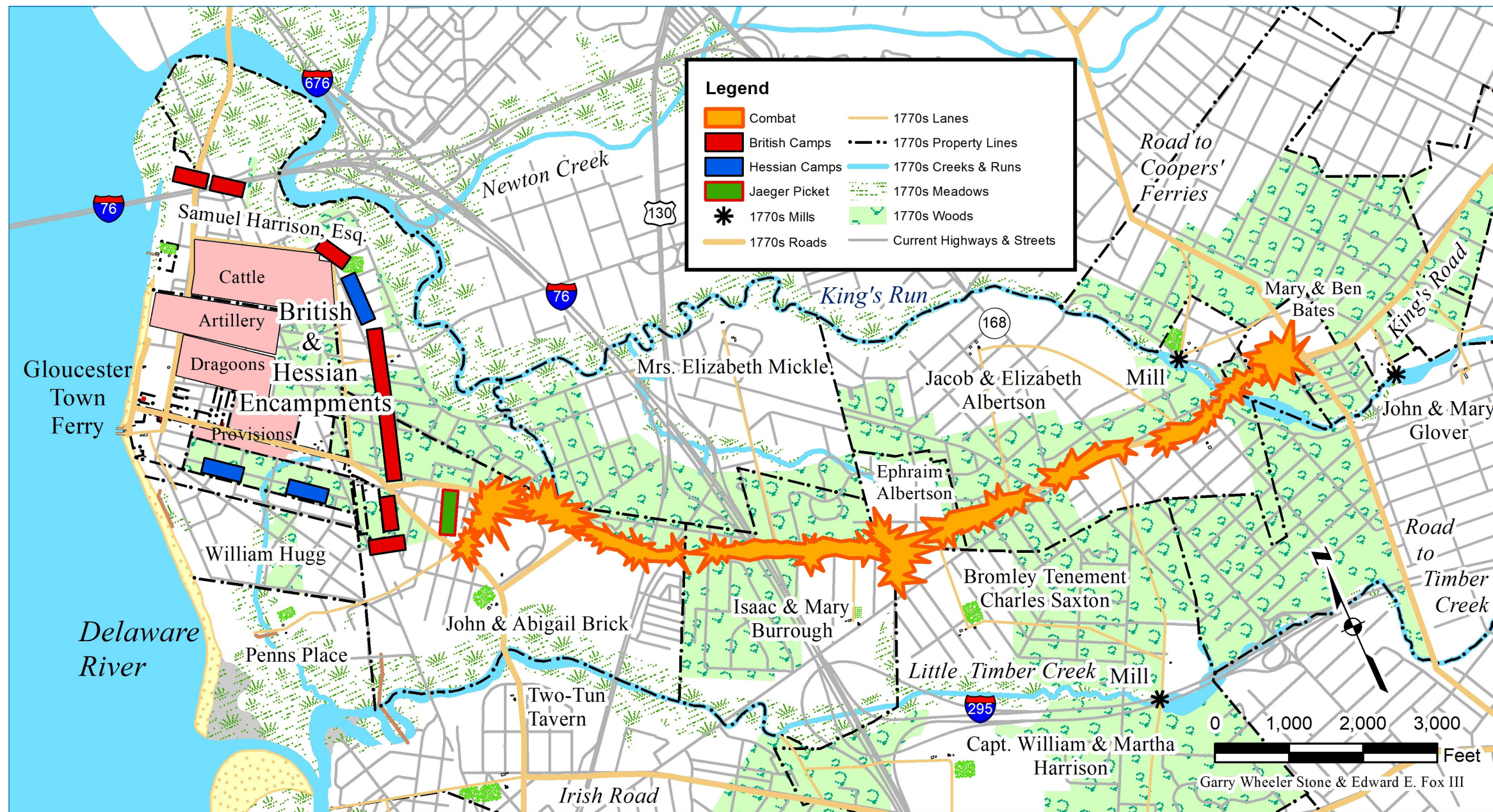


4 As the retreat neared Gloucester Town, a second light infantry company and two fieldpieces joined the fight, but since it was getting dark, Lafayette broke off and began a triumphant return to Haddonfield.

3 Hearing the gunfire, a light infantry company was sent to rescue the jägers, turning the rout into an orderly withdrawal, but Lafayette continued to push.

2 As the jäger ranks began to crumble, the militia charged with the bayonet, routing the Hessians. Only 30 of the Hessians were experienced soldiers.

1 About 4 p.m., Lafayette's troops collided with the advancing Hessian Jägers. The first to strike were the 150 tough frontiersmen from Morgan's Rifle Corps.



LIVING IN A WAR ZONE

The day after the skirmish, the battlefield residents found graves along the road where the Hessian Jägers had buried their dead. A few may have seen the almost naked body of militia lieutenant John Lucas—stripped of his valuable clothing. Now the farm families were safe, with Continental soldiers and New Jersey militia forming a protective line around the enemy encampments.

The previous day, however, everyone living near the road had been plundered. Militia and Continental light dragoons had captured 14 men looting. Enemy-occupied Gloucester Town was devastated. Families were plundered of food and clothing, fences were burned to keep soldiers warm, and barns were emptied to feed the army's horses. Some families had stayed in their homes to provide some protection for their property. After the enemy officers quartered in militia captain William Harrison's rental dwelling left for Philadelphia, British sailors burned his vacant house "for the part he took against them."

Eleven families lived along the King's Road battlefield. Four were prosperous farmers: Jacob Albertson was a miller and the township's largest pork producer; John Glover was a farmer and weaver; Isaac Burrough was marketing dairy products and pork; and John Brick was producing a variety of crops that he sold in Philadelphia's "Jersey Market." Elizabeth Mickle was the widow of a former sheriff. The Harrisons' Bromley tenant farm was being worked by Charles Saxton, a well-equipped sharecropper. The only small landowners were Ephraim Albertson and Mary and Ben Bates.

Both Euro-American and African-American farm workers lived, or had lived, on the battlefield. Three white families were "householders," living in rented homes. Two seem to have been young couples saving to purchase their own farms. The Bricks had an African indentured servant living with them, a young man who became free in 1781. The Mickles had owned several slaves and had employed other Africans, but after her husband's death, Mrs. Mickle sold or freed them. Among the estate's debts that she paid was £2.17s to "Black James." "Silas Simson, a Negro," owed the estate £25—was this the price of his freedom?



Two November 1777 Accounts of the Skirmish

Major General the marquis de Lafayette to Commander-in-Chief George Washington, 26 November 1777, extract:

Dear General

I want to acquaint your excellency of a little event of last evening which tho not very considerable in itself will certainly please you on account of the bravery and Alacrity a small party of ours showed in that occasion. . . My whole body was not three hundred. . . a scout of my men. . . found. . . a strong post of three hundred and fifty hessians with field pieces. . . and engaged immediately—as my little reconnoitring party was all in fine spirits I supported them—we pushed the hessians more than an half mile from [to] the place were was theyr main body, and we made them run very fast—british reinforcements came twice to them but very far from recovering theyr ground they Went alwaís back—the darkness of the night prevented us then to push that advantage, and after standing upon the ground we had got I ordered them to return very slow to haddonfield. . . . I understand that they have had betwen twenty five and thirty wounded, at least that number killed . . . We got yet this day fourteen prisoners. . . . I wish that this little succès of ours may please you—tho’ a very trifling one I find it very interesting on account of the behaviour of our soldiers.

lafayette

Lieutenant General Wilhelm von Knyphausen to Landgraf Friedrich II, 30 November 1777, extract. Knyphausen was the senior Hessian officer and second-in-command of the British Army.

Most gracious Sovereign. . .

The enemy detached a corps of 1,000 men under General Green to Jersey in order to harass the retreat of Lt-General Lord Cornwallis. A strong detachment of them attacked the outposts of our Jägers on the 2. Captain v. Wrede advanced at once with his companies to their assistance, but was obliged to beat a retreat with the Jägers, because the enemy charged into their ranks with the bayonet. Lieutenant Heppe was shot dead, and Lieutenant v. Hagen fatally wounded (both belonged to new companies just arrived). The loss amounts altogether to 5 dead, 17 wounded, and 9 prisoners. . . . Captain v. Wrede reports to me that the newly arrived Jägers owing to their inexperience in manoeuvres and lack of promptitude in loading were the main cause of the retreat, and that the loss would certainly been greater had not 50 men of the old stock rallied together and held the advancing enemy in check by their fire and thus gained time for the others to get into place again.



Jäger rifleman portrayed by re-enactor John Theckston of Company von Prueschenk, Hessen-Kassel Jäger Corps. “Jäger” is the German word for “hunter.” (Photo by Adin Mickle)



Pomona Hall stood as a landmark near the well-traveled Haddonfield-Coopers Ferry road. During the American Revolution, this was the elegant mansion of Marmaduke Cooper, the largest landowner in Newton Township. Throughout the war, troops marched back-and-forth past the house. In June 1778, Hessian and British regiments camped in front of the house while on retreat to New York.

FORAGES, CIVIL WAR, AND BRITISH RAIDS

New Jerseyans had been united in opposing British taxes, but when the Whig Provincial Congress voted to prepare for war with Britain, the decision divided New Jersey residents. Some wanted to remain part of the British empire. Others objected to mandatory militia service, the higher taxes needed to fund the war, and being ordered around by self-righteous rebel neighbors. While the British occupied Philadelphia, the resulting rebel blockade of the city worsened the situation. South Jersey residents could no longer export their farm produce, firewood, or lumber to Philadelphia. To make it more difficult for farmers to smuggle goods to Philadelphia, Colonel Joseph Ellis received orders to force Gloucester County residents to disable their boats or secrete them in the headwaters of the creeks. Farmers were ordered to hide their livestock in the woods, safe from British raiding parties.

In January 1778, a prominent Greenwich Township miller led a group of southern Gloucester County Loyalist families, over a hundred persons, to Philadelphia. There he asked the British to commission him to form a Loyalist military unit—a unit that evolved into the West Jersey Volunteers.

In February, George Washington learned that the British were planning to forage South Jersey for cattle, grain, and hay. To preempt the British, Washington sent Brigadier General Anthony Wayne to forage for the Continental Army. Sweeping through Salem and Gloucester Counties, Wayne collected 150 head of cattle and 25 dragoon-quality horses. He also burned 400 tons of hay stacked along the Delaware River to be sold in Philadelphia. Accompanying Wayne was Gloucester County Clerk Joseph Hugg, who gave receipts for the cattle taken and the hay burned, but these receipts were little value to farmers compared to British gold and silver.

The British were not happy that the Continentals were foraging in South Jersey. Hoping to trap Wayne, Sir William Howe sent his Light Infantry Brigade across the Delaware to Billingsport late on February 24. Late the following day, the Royal Highland Regiment and the Queen's American Rangers crossed at Cooper's Ferry and marched to Haddonfield. By then, however, Wayne and his forage were safely at Mount Holly. So the British began foraging for cattle and hay. Meanwhile, Wayne sent his foraged cattle and horses north and, with his infantry and General Casimir Pulaski's dragoons, marched back towards

Haddonfield. Their attack on an enemy picket at Kay's Mill miscarried, but the British panicked, abandoned much of their forage, and—in a snow storm—marched back to Cooper's Ferry. Wayne, Pulaski, and Colonel Ellis followed and skirmished with the enemy, hoping to lure them away from the heavy artillery of the British navy. But the British refused battle and returned to Philadelphia.

In late March 1778, when eighty Loyalist soldiers landed in Deptford Township and built a small fort at Billingsport, the 1st Militia District revolted against rebel oppression. On March 22, Colonel Ellis wrote Governor William Livingston, "Col. Otto's Battalion have chiefly revolted to the Enemy—The Market to Philadelphia is now open nor is it in my Power to stop it with about fifty men which is all I have at present." Washington sent Col. Israel Shreve with the 2nd New Jersey Regiment to help Ellis, but, upon arriving, Shreve found the situation had worsened. Not only was southwestern Gloucester County in rebellion, but the British were foraging Salem County.

On March 27, the British returned to Philadelphia with 300 tons of hay. Gradually, Colonels Shreve and Ellis began restoring Whig control. March 28, Shreve wrote Washington that at Haddonfield, he had his regiment, 170 militia infantry, 20 militia horse, and 35 militia artillery men. This alarmed the British in Philadelphia. Sir William Howe sent the Light Infantry Brigade back across the river late on April 5. Landing at Gloucester Town ferry about 1 a.m., the light infantry men captured three of the four militia sentries. The fourth escaped, rode his horse through Newton Creek, and arrived at Haddonfield about 3 a.m. Shreve and Ellis quickly evacuated the town. Ten minutes later, the light infantry arrived, broke into every house, and plundered the town. As they marched for Cooper's Ferry, the British set two houses ablaze. One belonged to Thomas Redman, Chairman of the Haddonfield Friends Meeting, a pacifist who had spent eight weeks in jail at Gloucester Town for his opposition to the war.

At Cooper's Ferry, the British attacked the rebel picket guard of Continentals and militia. The senior officer, a militia major, foolishly ordered his men to stand and fight. Overwhelmed by the light infantry, eight men were killed and 37 were captured. Some of the picket escaped by swimming across Cooper's Creek.



THE BRITISH OCCUPY COOPER'S FERRY

In Philadelphia, the British garrison and civilian population was running out of firewood. All of the woods near Philadelphia had been cut. May 3, 1778, two British regiments crossed to Cooper's Ferry and began constructing

redoubts (small forts). A few days later they were joined by two small Loyalist units. Daily, 200 men arrived from Philadelphia to cut firewood for the British. Washington responded by sending the 1st New Jersey Regiment to join Shreve and prevent the Cooper's Ferry garrison from foraging.

A Girl's Memory of the British Light Infantry Raid

Haddonfield, 5 April 1778¹

Mary Creighton was the 15-year-old daughter of Hugh and Mary Creighton, proprietors of Haddonfield's "upper tavern," now the Indian King Tavern Museum State Historic Site.

The Light Infantry Brigade entered Haddonfield about 3:30 a.m., spread out, and upon three cheers broke into every house in the village looking for rebel soldiers. They thoroughly plundered the town, having been given permission to do so by their colonel.

I was sick, and sleeping with my mother. The soldiers came so suddenly, my mother and I barely had time to half clothe ourselves when they entered our bedroom. They behaved very rudely, thrusting their bayonets through the looking-glass, and committing other outrages. Father complained to an officer, who put a guard over our room. They stole every article of clothing they could lay their hands upon, leaving us without a change.

Miles Sage, a militia dispatch rider, not knowing the British were in town, rode into the British troops. He tried to ride through them, but in front of our tavern, his mare was killed and he was bayoneted 13 times. He fell and was supposed to be dead. A Scotch officer then interfered, putting his foot upon his head, saying, 'he was a brave fellow, it was a pity.' He requested him if alive to speak; he replied he was. He was taken up and carried into the house of Nathan Zane, where his wounds were dressed. The Zanes, however, were unable to nurse him, so he was brought to our tavern where mother and I cared for him until he had recovered.

The British then marched for Cooper's Ferry. As they passed out of town they set fire to it, intending to burn it down. There were two houses burned, one belonging to Thomas Redman, the other to William Griscom. The whole town probably would have been consumed, but for the women, who carried water, there being only men enough left to man the ladders.

¹ Based on Mrs. Mary Creighton Stratton's account as recorded by Dr. Joseph Fithian, reprinted in Frank H. Stewart, *Notes on Old Gloucester County, New Jersey*, vol. 3 (Woodbury, NJ: The Constitution, 1937), 67-68.

THE FRENCH ENTER THE WAR AND THE BRITISH EVACUATE PHILADELPHIA

Encouraged by the Americans' victory at Saratoga, France and the young United States of America signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce on February 6, 1778. As the British government contemplated a looming world war, they realized that they would have to redeploy troops from North America to protect their valuable colonies in the West Indies. Philadelphia would have to be evacuated. These orders arrived in Philadelphia May 8; the same day—on another ship—a new commander-in-chief arrived, Sir Henry Clinton. Quickly, the British began packing to leave. Without enough ships available, Clinton determined to march the army to New York while shipping heavy equipment, invalids, Loyalist refugees, and some Hessian soldiers by sea.

On June 1, the British began moving wagons and provisions to Cooper's Ferry. Infantry and field artillery began crossing on June 14. By the 15th, British, Loyalist, and Hessian soldiers lined the road from Cooper's Ferry for three miles east towards Haddonfield. Their tents having been stowed on ships, some soldiers made brush shades for protection from the sun. By the end of the 17th, the column of waiting soldiers stretched almost to Haddonfield. Lieutenant General Knyphausen sent two regiments to Gloucester Town ferry to cover the arrival of the British rear guard. The British rear guard—the grenadiers, light infantry, and the 33rd Regiment—slept with their weapons in Philadelphia's fortifications, and, at daybreak, marched south of the city to Gloucester Point. There, covered by the guns of the British navy, they were rowed across the river to Gloucester Town.

On June 18, about 20,000 soldiers, teamsters, women of the army, and a few Loyalist refugees converged on Haddonfield, and an advance force marched out. The following day, the Billingsport garrison joined the troops

in Haddonfield, and Sir Henry Clinton led out the army's 1st Division. By the evening of the 20th, the last enemy soldiers had left Gloucester County.



SETTLING SCORES

If, during the first half of 1778, Gloucester County Whigs were constrained in their actions against Loyalists by the proximity of the British Army, the Whig legislature, meeting in Princeton, was not. In April and December, the legislature passed acts directing commissioners to seize the personal property and real estate of men who had joined the British army or otherwise tried to undermine the insurgent government. By July 6, Sir Henry Clinton's Army had left New Jersey for encampments around New York harbor. At Gloucester Town, in October, the commissioners returned "inquisitions" on 57 offenders. Eight gave bond for their future good behavior. At the December sitting of the county court, the justices declared the estates of the remaining 48 forfeit, and their property was seized and sold. After paying any debts owed by the forfeited estates, the remaining funds—less the commissioners' commissions—were deposited with the New Jersey treasurer.

The families left penniless were not the typical "Loyalist" of Revolutionary War mythology. None were rich merchants or Crown-appointed bureaucrats. Only four were wealthy planters and mill owners. Twenty—sons, farm laborers, and servants—had no property to seize. When wives and children stayed in Gloucester County, they were left in poverty, victims of their husbands' objections to the "tyranny of Congresses, Committees & other usurped powers."



THE WAR DRAGS ON

While no more blood would be shed in western Gloucester County, the war continued between the British and Continental Armies in northern New Jersey. Twice in June 1780, heavy fighting occurred at Connecticut Farms and Springfield. Governor William Livingston repeatedly called out "classes" (portions) of the militia. From Colonel Ellis's regiment, William Harrison, Captain of the Town of Gloucester company, commanded a detachment for a month, later replaced by Captain Jacob Browning of Waterford Township. On July 17, Livingston ordered each

New Jersey regiment to send 25 men to the Continental Army at Morristown. It was the middle of the harvest, the threat was distant, and the response was poor. Only 19 men marched north with Captain John Davis. To make failure to muster painful, Colonel Ellis ordered the delinquents court martialed.

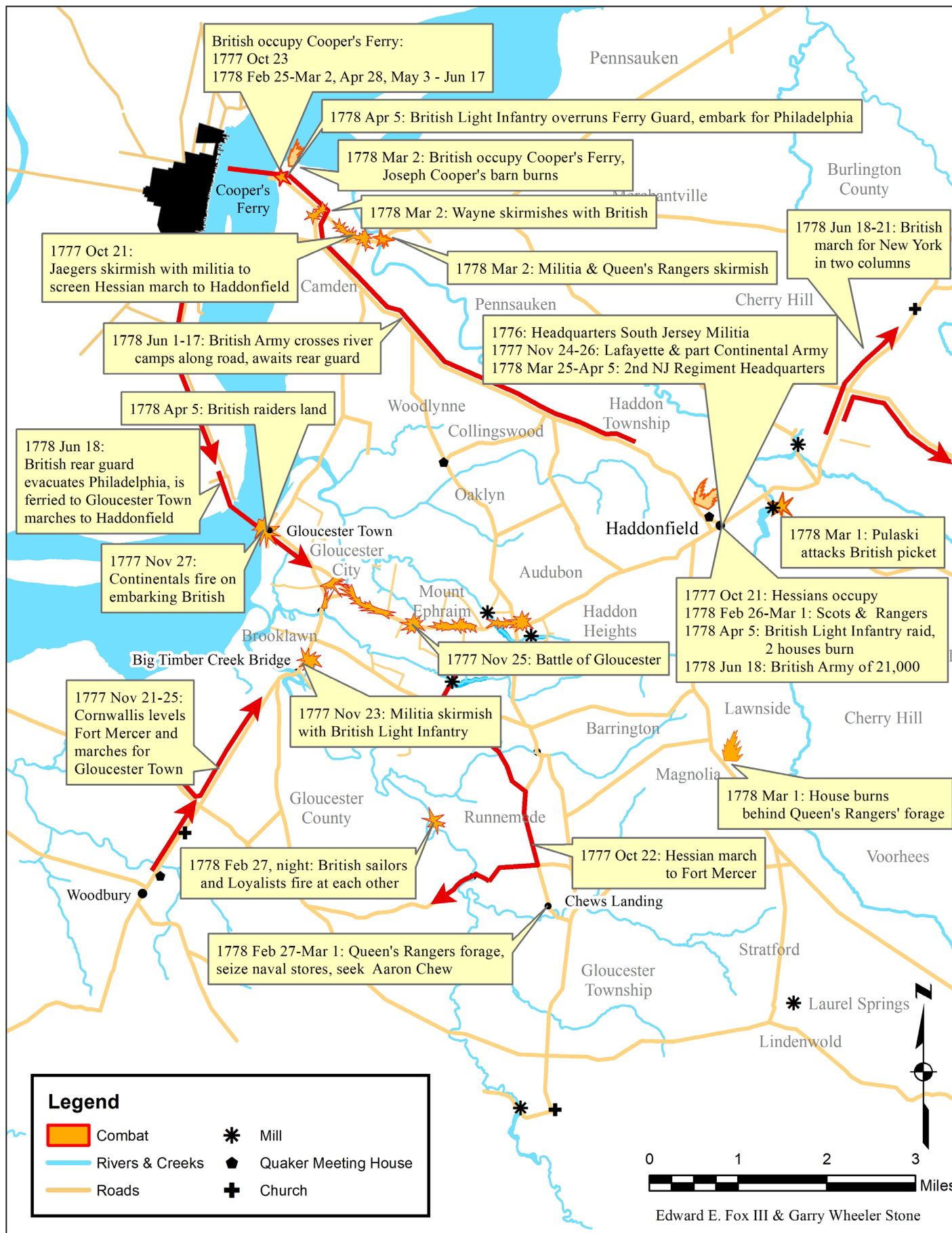
In August, Ellis ordered half of each company to muster at Haddonfield. Again, the response was poor and another court martial was held. Those militia men with valid excuses (sick, injured, wife about to give birth) were excused. Everyone else was fined—the fines adjusted to the delinquent's economic status. A poor farmer with no one else to harvest his crops was fined only \$100 paper money (about ten shillings in silver). Griffith Morgan, a Waterford planter, was fined \$800. (His stone house, named for his great-grandfather, still stands beside the Delaware River.) Conscientious objectors paid no more than others. John Glover's sons (Glover was an elder in the Haddonfield Meeting) were fined \$160 each, the same as any other single man. The August and September juries fined 393 men of Ellis's regiment. Periodic militia call-ups continued until the "cessation of Hostilities," on April 18, 1783. Peace, final peace, arrived only when the delegates to the Continental Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris on January 14, 1784.



Militia Captain William Harrison's house in Bellmawr. On October 22, 1777, when the Hessian brigade marching to attack Fort Mercer learned that militia had dismantled the King's Road bridge over Big Timber Creek, they detoured to cross Little Timber Creek on William Harrison's mill dam. Harrison was Captain of the Town of Gloucester militia company. November 26, British sailors burned Harrison's Gloucester Town rental property "for the part that he took against them." New Jersey Department of Transportation personnel refused to let Camden County Historical Society staff and consultants examine this National Register eligible building prior to its demolition, 6 March 2017. Photograph by Nathaniel R. Ewan, Historic American Building Survey, 18 March 1937.



REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN CAMDEN COUNTY



Edward E. Fox III & Garry Wheeler Stone



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was made possible by a grant (GA-2287-17-001) to the Camden County Historical Society from the American Battlefield Protection Program, National Park Service, the Department of Interior. The findings and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Interior or the Camden County Historical Society.

The information in this publication was drawn from a lengthy report to the American Battlefield Protection Program, copies of which will be filed with Camden County planning departments, libraries, and historical societies. Earlier research was partially funded by another grant (GA-2287-13-011) from the American Battlefield Protection Program to the Friends of the Indian King Tavern Museum.

The information in this publication and the report is based on documents and publications housed in numerous archives and libraries, including the Camden County Historical Society, the Collingswood Public Library, Cornell University, the David Library of the American Revolution, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Gloucester County Historical Society, the Haddon Heights Library, the Historical Society of Haddonfield, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, the New Jersey State Archives, the New Jersey State Law Library, and Rowan University's Campbell Library. We are grateful for the assistance provided by the staffs of these institutions.

Digital maps were provided by the Camden County Planning Department, the Engineering Department of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and the Bureau of Geographic Information Systems, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The Philadelphia Athenaeum digitized two maps important to our research. The software used in preparing the map illustrations was provided by the members of BRAVO, the Battlefield Restoration and Archaeological Volunteer Organization.

Four individuals made personal research available. Edward E. Fox III provided digitized map files for eighteenth-century Camden County roads; Lt. Colonel Donald M. Londahl-Smidt (USAF retired) provided copies of Hessian documents; Patrick Ward provided information on Gloucester Town and research on the Michel Capitaine maps of the Battle of Gloucester; and Jason R. Wickersty provided transcripts of Revolutionary War pension applications.

We would know much less about the eighteenth-century township, "The Town of Gloucester," except for the exceptional research by the late David C. Munn, former President of the Gloucester City and Camden County Historical societies.

Garry Wheeler Stone and Paul W. Schopp
2 September 2019

Founded in 1899, the Camden County Historical Society (CCHS) is a public, non-profit organization dedicated to the collection, preservation, study, interpretation, and cultural enrichment of life in Camden County and Southern New Jersey. CCHS is funded, in part, by the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State. CCHS is a proud partner of Crossroads of the Revolution's efforts to celebrate America's 250th in 2026.

DID YOU KNOW that in 1777 during the American Revolution, United States troops based in Haddonfield attacked a German (Hessian) outpost in Audubon and Haddon Heights and chased them—and British reinforcements—all the way to what is now Gloucester City? Led by France’s marquis de Lafayette, a small band of rebels won the day at “The Battle of Gloucester.” While the “battle” was a “trifling affair,” it gained the young Frenchman command of an American army division, thus cementing Lafayette’s commitment to American independence. Learn the full story and other exciting accounts in *Living in a War Zone, Camden County, New Jersey 1777-1778*.



**A publication of the
Camden County Historical Society**

1900 Park Boulevard
Camden, NJ 08103

856.964.3333 | www.cchsnj.org