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NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
*NEW JERSEY*

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## THE COVER

Marble bust of Washington. This finely sculptured piece stands on a pedestal in the entrance hall of the Morristown Historical Museum



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

J. A. KRUG, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE · NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

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# Morristown National Historical Park

By MELVIN J. WEIG, *Historian*

DURING two winters of the Revolutionary War, 1777 and 1779-80, the rugged hill country around Morristown, N. J., sheltered the main encampments of the Continental Army. Morristown National Historical Park was established by act of Congress in 1933 to preserve the physical remains and to commemorate the men and events which were associated with this phase of American history. The area is administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

The park has three geographical units. In Morristown proper are the site of Fort Mifflin, built in 1777, and the Ford Mansion, which was Washington's Headquarters in 1779-80. On the headquarters grounds is the historical museum, which contains a valuable collection of material dealing with Colonial and Revolutionary history. The third park unit is Jockey Hollow, about 3 miles southwest of Morristown, where are located the Continental Army camp sites of 1779-80.

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### MORRISTOWN AS A MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

FROM 1776 to the end of the Revolutionary War, New York City was the principal British stronghold in America, and in its vicinity occurred the most continuous military operations of the conflict. British sea power made it impossible for the Continental Army successfully to attack New York; but through skillful maneuvering, and despite his inferior forces, Washington was generally able to confine the enemy to their lines about Manhattan and Staten Islands. This was chiefly the result of certain physical features in northern New Jersey and southeastern New York. Fifteen miles westward from the mouth of the Hudson River lay the Watchung Mountains, whose parallel ridges stretched out, like a huge earthwork, from the Raritan River on the south toward the northern boundary of New Jersey, whence they were continued by similar ridges to the Hudson Highlands and West Point. Not far west of the Watchungs rose the foothills of the main Appalachian chain. By keeping his lines of communication in the valley between these protective hills, Washington was able to remain safely near New York City and watch the British, to guard the roads which connected New England with Pennsylvania and the South, and to hold himself in readiness to move his troops with great rapidity to any point threatened by the enemy. Other factors also made the section advantageous as a base for American mili-

tary operations: Its people were actively loyal in the patriotic cause; food and clothing could generally be found for the army; and from the furnaces and forces at Hibernia, Mount Hope, Ringwood, and Charlottesville, hidden away in the mountainous country northwest of Morristown, much needed iron supplies were obtainable.

### REVOLUTIONARY MORRISTOWN AND ITS PEOPLE

BEFORE the war Morristown had been a rustic, frontier community, settled largely by immigrants of New England origin. Farming was the economic mainstay of its 250 people, although neighboring iron mines, furnaces, and forges were already enriching a few families and employing an increasing number of laborers.

The outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain changed all this. Because it was the largest town for miles around, and by reason of its location near the midpoint of the defensive arc formed by the Watchungs, with its approach from the east further guarded by large swamps on either side, Morristown became in effect "the military capital of the United States." Washington spent more continuous time there than at any other headquarters; the main body of the Continental Army was quartered nearby during two winters, and large parts of it at other times; and the "Committee at Headquarters," in which was concentrated much authority of the Continental Congress in 1780, sat



at Morristown during the greater portion of its life.

A prominent citizen, Col. Jacob Ford, Jr., was subsidized by the State of New Jersey for the maintenance of a powder mill which did good service to the Nation. The Morris County Militia was called upon three times, once in 1776 and twice in 1780, to repulse British raids into the hill country; and each time the enemy was turned back. One unit of the State beacon system for summoning the militia also was established at Morristown, probably on the crest of Fort Nonsense Hill. Its geographic situation and other factors thus kept the town free from British attack throughout the war.

#### THE LOANTAKA VALLEY ENCAMPMENT OF 1777

MORRISTOWN first reached a position of national significance early in January 1777, following Washington's brilliant victories at Trenton and Princeton, when the entire American Army took up winter quarters in the Loantaka Valley, a few miles to the southeast. The Commander in Chief established his headquarters in the Arnold Tavern on Morristown Green. The months that followed, as in every winter of the war, were filled with intense suffering for the troops, who often lacked the bare necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. Smallpox, desertion, and expiring enlistments nearly destroyed the Army; but the fact that Washington held unmolested a position less than 30 miles from the scene of his crushing defeat a few months previous bore silent testimony to the vitality of the independence movement, and to the strength of the great commander's leadership.

#### THE JOCKEY HOLLOW ENCAMPMENT OF 1779-80

THE PART which Morristown played in the next few years was less significant, although the place seems to have been continuously garrisoned by Continentals or militia, and also remained an important supply depot.

In the winter of 1779-80, however, the shifting scenes of war made the village more prominent than ever before. The new British commanders, Clinton and Cornwallis, had carried the conflict into the South, and in the fall of 1779 Washington foresaw the necessity of sending heavy reinforcements to that quarter. This made it essential to concentrate the remainder of his troops in a position strongly defensible, yet easily accessible to roads leading southward, and at the same time

covering New York City and its vicinity. Morristown met all these requirements, and in December 1779, eleven brigades of the Continental Army (Virginia, First and Second Maryland, Hand's, New Jersey, First and Second Connecticut, First and Second Pennsylvania, New York, and Stark's), were put into camp on or near Mount Kemble, about 4 miles southwest of Morristown, in Jockey Hollow. General and Mrs. Washington, together with the Commander in Chief's official family, took up their residence in the home of Mrs. Theodosia Ford, about a mile northeast from Morristown Green. Again, it was a winter of severe hardships, due largely to the scarcity of provisions and clothing, for heavy snows often blocked the roads and made it impossible for supply wagons to get through. Some observers thought it the worst winter of the century. Washington himself wrote that his soldiers occasionally went "5 and 6 days together without bread," and that at one time they "ate every kind of horse food but hay." The troops were fairly well housed, however, and relatively free from sickness.

There were no important military operations around Morristown itself, but in January the weather was so cold that the Hudson River froze over, and Washington, taking advantage of this natural bridge, sent a force under Lord Stirling to attack the British posts on Staten Island. Unfortunately, the enemy learned of this movement in time to reinforce their position, and the expedition accomplished nothing. Minor raids from both sides constituted the only active hostilities during the remainder of the winter. In June, however, the Hessian general, Knyphausen, led two strong offensive movements against Morristown, both of which were turned back at Springfield by Continentals and militia, long before they could endanger the main American position.

It was in the field of planning and organization that the winter spent at Morristown counted most. Inspector-General Baron von Steuben continued his effective efforts, begun at Valley Forge 2 years before, to whip the undisciplined American levies into a real military machine. Nathanael Greene's manful struggle to organize an efficient quartermaster's department, notwithstanding lack of resources and the failure of Congress to give proper support, should be noted. The Commander in Chief drew plans for an army that would enable him to end the war in one decisive campaign,





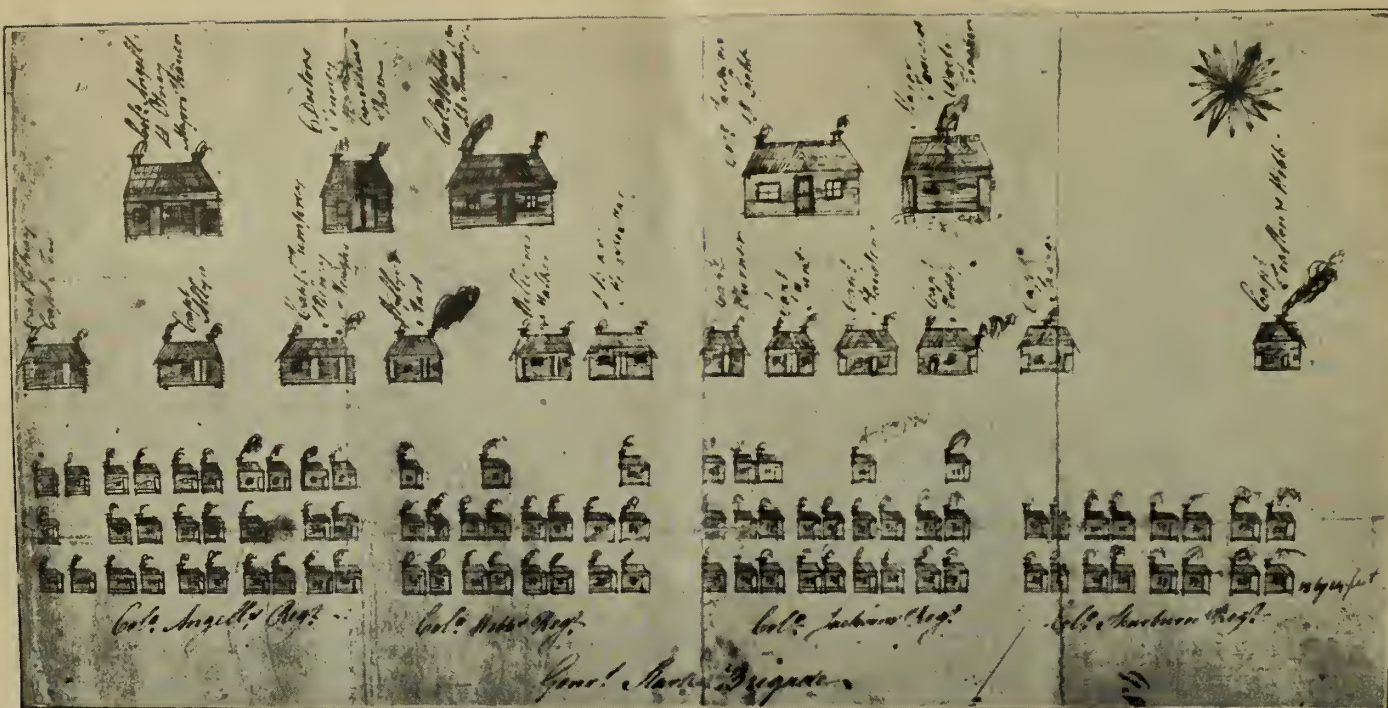
*Reconstructed officers' hut. This log building, chinked with clay, is typical of those built by the Continental troops in Jockey Hollow during the winter encampment of 1779-80. It is located on the site of the original hut in the First Pennsylvania Brigade camp, and stones from the fireplaces of the old building have been used in its construction*

*Reconstructed soldiers' hut in Jockey Hollow. About a thousand buildings of this type sheltered the Continental Army encamped near Morristown in 1779-80. The hut shown here is an approximate replica of an original structure which once stood on the same site. It is built of logs, chinked with clay, and fastened together with nails and wooden pegs. From 10 to 12 soldiers were billeted in each hut*



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*Contemporary sketch of the Stark's Brigade camp in Jockey Hollow during the winter of 1779-80. The smaller buildings, each with a single chimney, were for soldiers of the line; while the larger huts were occupied by officers of the brigade. A similar plan was followed for each of the other Continental Army brigades in the encampment of 1779-80*

plans which, though the Government's weakness prevented their complete execution, eventually resulted in greatly strengthening the American manpower.

Efforts to secure more active help from France on sea and land overshadowed all else. The minister of King Louis XVI, the Chevalier de la Luzerne, visited Morristown in April 1780, reviewed the army, and was so favorably impressed that he heartily endorsed a plan to place all French troops in the United States under Washington's command. Lafayette, returning from a journey to France, was able to report to his chief in May, at Morristown, that the Count de Rochambeau, with ships and a strong land force, was being sent across the Atlantic to his support.

#### THE MUTINY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA LINE IN 1781

IN THE following winter, 1780-81, both Pennsylvania brigades, under the command of Gen. "Mad" Anthony Wayne, returned to Jockey Hollow. Long endurance of almost intolerable hardships,

which were due in large measure to weakness and inefficiency of the central government, had by this time produced a mutinous spirit among the soldiers. A misunderstanding concerning terms of enlistment added fuel to their resentment. On New Year's Day, 1781, the Pennsylvanians revolted, killed one of their officers, Capt. Adam Bettin, and marched off toward Philadelphia to demand redress from Congress. Wayne followed, caught up with his men, and accompanied them to Princeton. There the mutineers were met by representatives of Congress and an agreement was reached under which large numbers of them eventually reenlisted. No very serious consequences resulted, but for a time the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line carried serious threats to the cause of independence.

#### THE NEW JERSEY BRIGADE ENCAMPMENT OF 1781-82

AFTER the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in October 1781, the New Jersey Brigade again returned to Morristown and occupied part of the old Jockey Hollow campground. This brigade constituted for that winter the army of observation about New York City, which was still held by a strong British force.



Relief map of north-eastern New Jersey and southeastern New York in Revolutionary times. This map shows the mountain barriers and swamps which protected Washington's troops at Morristown from the British in New York City, as well as the roads, iron works, and other geographic features that made Morristown important as a winter quarters and base of supplies for the Continental Army. The original map from which this picture was made is on display in the park's Historical Museum







## WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS [Ford Mansion]

THE HOUSE occupied by General Washington as his official headquarters during the winter of 1779-80 was apparently built between 1772 and 1774 by Col. Jacob Ford, Jr., a wealthy iron manufacturer and landholder of Morristown, and has survived the passing years as a splendid example of late Colonial architecture. Acquired by the Washington Association of New Jersey during the nineteenth century, it was preserved by that body for almost 60 years and became the repository of many valuable pieces of period furniture and Washingtoniana prior to its transfer to the National Park Service as part of Morristown National Historical Park. The mansion has been restored as nearly as possible to its condition in 1780. Some of the original furniture, including the tall bureau desk at which Washington penned several of the

*Washington's meeting with Lafayette at headquarters on May 10, 1780. Dioramas, or three-dimensional models, are used in the Historical Museum to portray the more significant events which took place at Morristown in Revolutionary times. This one shows Lafayette bringing the welcome news that France was sending land forces and a large fleet of ships to aid the United States, assistance which played an important part in the winning of American Independence*

most important documents in his career, remains in the house.

When the Continental Army first encamped near Morristown in 1777, Capt. Thomas Rodney and his regiment of light infantry were permitted to use the Ford Mansion. When in 1779 Washington again looked for an official headquarters in the village, Mrs. Theodosia Ford, the wife of Col. Jacob Ford, Jr., who with his father had died nearly 3 years before, offered the Commander in Chief and his official family the hospitality of her home. He gladly accepted and took up residence in the mansion on December 1, 1779, where Mrs. Washington joined him a few weeks later. Two rooms



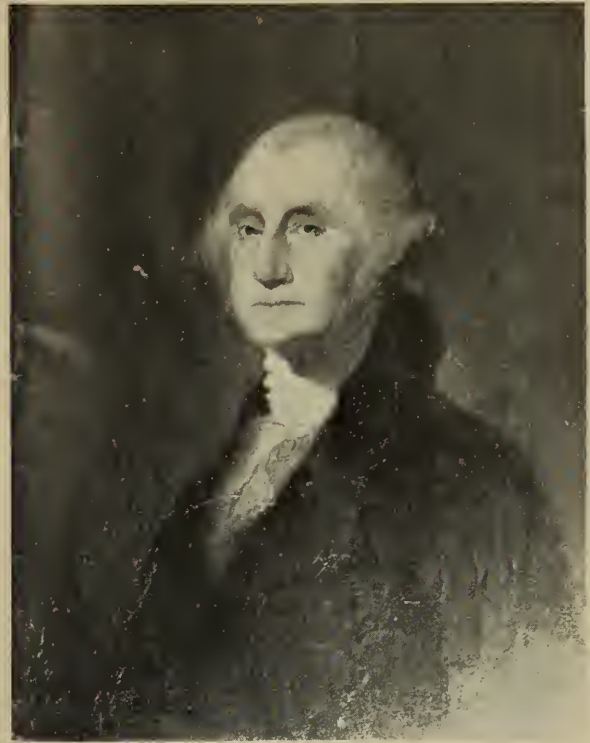
on the first floor, and all the upper floor, kitchen, cellar, and stable were given over to the General's use, Mrs. Ford and her family occupying the few remaining rooms. Even then the house was crowded. Across the road from the headquarters, near where the equestrian statue of Washington now stands, log barracks were built for the body of troops acting as the Commander in Chief's lifeguard.

Under the headquarters roof, in the short interval of a few months, were gathered many of the important men in the history of America's struggle for political separation from Great Britain. There were the brigade commanders, Knox, Hand, Clinton, St. Clair, Irvine, Stark, and others, who met with Washington on frequent occasions in his office at the Ford Mansion. Alexander Hamilton, then one of the General's aides, resided with him at headquarters. Visitors from abroad, like the Chevalier de la Luzerne from France and Don Juan de Miralles from Spain, brought hope of foreign aid. Lafayette came with word that the King of France was sending a fleet of ships and 6,000 troops to the assistance of his American ally. This was joyful news indeed. In June 1780, their spirits bolstered anew, the troops left Jockey Hollow, and on the 23d of that month Washington left the Ford Mansion to join them.

## THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

DIRECTLY behind Washington's headquarters is the Historical Museum, a modern, fireproof structure built by the National Park Service in 1935 for the display and safe storage of numerous relics, books, manuscripts, and other objects of historical interest, as well as for the development of appropriate exhibits graphically interpreting the many events which occurred at Morristown in Revolutionary times. Most of the many valuable items of Washingtoniana on display in the museum were collected by the Washington Association of New Jersey during the course of a half century and presented to the United States Government on the establishment of the park. Besides its four exhibition galleries, the building contains a fine auditorium, library, preparation and storage room, and photographic laboratory. Here also are located the administrative offices of the park.

Exhibits and displays in the Historical Museum illustrate the main Continental Army encampments



*Oil portrait of Washington by Gilbert Stuart. A place of honor has been reserved in the Historical Museum for this picture, which is one of the most valuable objects in the park's large museum collection. The painting is one among the many highly prized likenesses of Washington done by Stuart*

in the winters of 1777 and 1779-80, the great leadership displayed by Washington in those critical periods, and the relations of these two subjects to important local and national factors operating at the time. Historical relics of many kinds supplemented by paintings, photographs, and old prints, are used in this connection. Relationships are indicated by maps, diagrams, and brief labels. Highly significant events, such as Washington's meeting with Lafayette at the headquarters in May 1780, are graphically presented through the medium of three-dimensional miniature models known as dioramas.

For those interested in special fields, considerable space is devoted to the exhibition of large study collections, such as Colonial and Revolutionary arms, household furnishings, and the like. The displays are changed from time to time. Permission to use the library facilities can be obtained readily by advanced students of history and other accredited research workers.

## FORT NONSENSE

SOON after the American troops took up winter quarters near Morristown in January 1777, Washington began the herculean task of gathering wagons, grain, and other necessities for his coming spring campaign. Most of these supplies were concentrated in the village at the so-called Continental Store, and their protection became essential. On May 28, therefore, shortly before the army left its position in the Loantaka Valley, Washington issued orders for one detachment to remain at Morristown for the purpose of assisting the local militia "to guard the stores of different kinds." The commander of this detachment was further instructed "to strengthen the works already begun upon the hill near this place, and erect such others as are necessary for the better defending it, that it may become a safe retreat in case of necessity." Some evidence also indicates that one in the

*The Historical Museum. This modern fireproof structure, located directly behind Washington's headquarters, was built by the National Park Service in 1935 for the display and safe storage of numerous relics, books, manuscripts, and other objects of historical interest in the park's collections. In its four galleries have been developed exhibits interpreting the events which occurred at Morristown in Revolutionary times*

State system of beacon towers erected for alarming the militia in case of danger may have been located close by.

The hill in question probes like a spearhead almost into the center of Morristown. There is no doubt that an earthwork existed there in 1777, and that it was used then and afterwards during the war for purposes of military protection. The original design of the work gradually became obscured, however, and during the nineteenth century a legend grew up that Washington ordered his soldiers to build the redoubt merely to keep them busy, later giving public recognition to this fact by calling the place Fort Nonsense. While no historically acceptable proof of such claim has ever been found, the legend persists and gives the fort its present name.

Like the purpose for which it was built, the physical remains of Fort Nonsense eventually were erased by the elements and other factors, until very little of the original structure could be seen. Reconstruction of the work, based upon documentary data and archeological evidence, was undertaken by the National Park Service in 1937. As a result, the present redoubt is as nearly an exact reproduction of Fort Nonsense, in its original form, as can be conceived.





## JOCKEY HOLLOW AND ITS ENVIRONS

THE MAIN Continental Army encampment of 1779-80 was located in Jockey Hollow, an area of rolling fields and woodland, about 3 miles southwest of Morristown. It covered parts of two Colonial farms—those belonging to Peter Kemble and Henry Wick. About 1,000 acres of this land, including all but three units of the military camp site, are within the present park boundaries.

### THE CONTINENTAL ARMY ENCAMPMENT SITES OF 1779-80

JOCKEY HOLLOW today closely resembles its condition when the American troops arrived there in December 1779. Except for a number of formerly cultivated fields in various stages of natural reforestation, it is thickly overgrown with hardwood trees and a variety of shrubs. The Revolutionary camp communication system is evident in the remains of old roads, which have in many cases cut far down into the earth through use and erosion. While a few of the cantonment sites were plowed over in recent years, most of them have remained relatively undisturbed. Small heaps of stones from the fireplaces of huts once used as barracks for officers and men can still be seen on the ground. Where the

camp were on hill slopes there are also, in some instances, marked depressions resulting from sinking the hut foundations for greater warmth. Careful archeological and historical research by the National Park Service on a few such remains has led to the reconstruction of typical soldiers' and officers' barracks huts, as well as to the recovery of many interesting relics for museum display.

### THE CAMP HOSPITAL, REVOLUTIONARY BURYING GROUND, AND BETTIN OAK

A REPLICA of the camp hospital building has been constructed from plans and descriptions prepared by Dr. James Tilton, hospital surgeon at Morristown in 1779-80 and later Surgeon General of the United States, as published in his manual for medical military officers which appeared in 1813. Across from the reconstructed hospital is an old burying ground where, according to tradition, lie the remains of about a hundred American soldiers

*Washington's Headquarters. Built between 1772 and 1774 by Col. Jacob Ford, Jr., this fine old Colonial mansion is one of the historic buildings of America. During the winter of 1779-80, when the Continental Army encamped in Jockey Hollow, it became Washington's official headquarters and the residence of Mrs. Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and other members of the Commander in Chief's official family*





who failed to survive the severe winter of 1779–80. Capt. Adam Bettin, who was killed in the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line on January 1, 1781, is buried under or near a massive old oak tree which now bears his name. This tree is on the Jockey Hollow Road. Visitors may also see the Grand Parade, where details of troops assembled for inspection before proceeding to duty, where punishments for desertion and other offenses were imposed, and where the army was drilled and exercised under the stern disciplinary eye of Baron von Steuben.

#### THE WICK HOUSE AND FARM

OF SPECIAL interest to students of American social history is the Wick House in Jockey Hollow. It was built about 1750 by Henry Wick, a New Eng-

*This earthwork, reconstructed Fort Nonsense, which stands on a high hill overlooking the center of Morristown, was originally built during the winter of 1777, when Washington's army was encamped about 2 miles away, in the Loantaka Valley*

land emigrant, and served as quarters for Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair during the Continental Army encampment of 1779–80. The building has been restored and furnished in period by the National Park Service as part of its plan to recreate the Colonial atmosphere of the old Wick Farm, with its garden, barnyard, orchard, and cultivated fields. It was in a bedroom of the house, according to legend, that young Tempe Wick concealed her white riding horse after dramatically escaping from some of the Pennsylvania mutineers who had tried to seize the animal for their own use in January 1781.





*Visitors study the map of the park in order to orient themselves before starting out to view its points of interest. This particular map is located adjacent to the Wick House, but similar maps are found elsewhere in the park*

#### NATURAL SCENERY AND WILDLIFE

IN ADDITION to its great historical significance, Jockey Hollow is a wildlife sanctuary, and also offers unusual scenic attractions. Wooded hills, purling brooks, and flower-covered fields combine to form an arresting landscape. Here is a hillside covered with scarlet sumac; there a road leading through rows of white dogwood; there again a valley of purple ash, red maple, and



*The Bettin Oak. Near the base of this old tree, still standing on the Jockey Hollow Road, is the grave of Capt. Adam Bettin, who was killed while trying to restore order during the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line on January 1, 1781*

yellow sassafras. And last of all, the closed gentian finally puts up its head, and the fringed gentian bursts forth in a marvelous display of blue. The displays of flowering dogwood and wild azalea in May are particularly beautiful. Summer brings a strong contrast of sunlit fields with cool, deep woods, of delicate gray birch against dark cedars. In autumn comes the grand finale of the seasons, a vivid symphony of color in red, orange, and purple.





*The Wick House, in Jockey Hollow. This eighteenth century farmhouse, now restored, was built by Henry Wick, farmer and county militia officer during the Revolutionary War. Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair, of the Pennsylvania division, had his quarters here in 1779-80*



*Continental Army hospital, in Jockey Hollow, reconstructed from a description and plans prepared by Dr. James Tilton, Army hospital surgeon during the Morristown encampment of 1779-80. Supposedly acting as a disinfectant, smoke from open fires in the wards was permitted to circulate above the patients' heads, finally escaping through funnel-like openings in the roof*





*Revolutionary burying ground in Jockey Hollow. According to tradition, here lie the remains of about a hundred American soldiers who failed to survive the cold and blustery winter of 1779-80, which some observers considered the most severe of the eighteenth century, even worse than that at Valley Forge. The monumental tablet in the center was erected by the people of Morristown*

Over a hundred species of birds, some 20 species of animals, and more than 300 species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers have been observed here. Many of the latter are concentrated along the Jockey Hollow Wildflower Trail. Hardly less interesting are the many other foot and horse trails which wind about through this section of the park.

### HOW TO REACH THE PARK

ABOUT 30 miles west of New York City, the park is reached by automobile from the east via New Jersey Route 24, from the south and north via New Jersey Route 32 (U. S. Route 202), and from the west via New Jersey Routes 6, 10, 5N, and 32. Regional and transcontinental bus lines serve Morristown from all main points. The town is also located on the main line of the Lacka-

wanna Railroad, whose trains stop at Morris Street, hardly more than 5 minutes' walk from Washington's headquarters.

### ADMINISTRATION AND VISITOR USE

VISITORS are cordially welcomed to all park areas. There is a moderate admission charge for adults at Washington's Headquarters and the Historical Museum, but the Wick House and other buildings are free.

For the benefit of all, certain park rules have been adopted which the public is courteously asked to observe. These are posted at the parking grounds or other prominent locations, and visitors are urged to become familiar with them when entering the area. Thoughtful adherence to such rules means more enjoyment for everyone and helps the park administration to render better service.

Further information on any points not specifically covered by this booklet may be obtained by writing to the Superintendent, Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, N. J.

# MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

