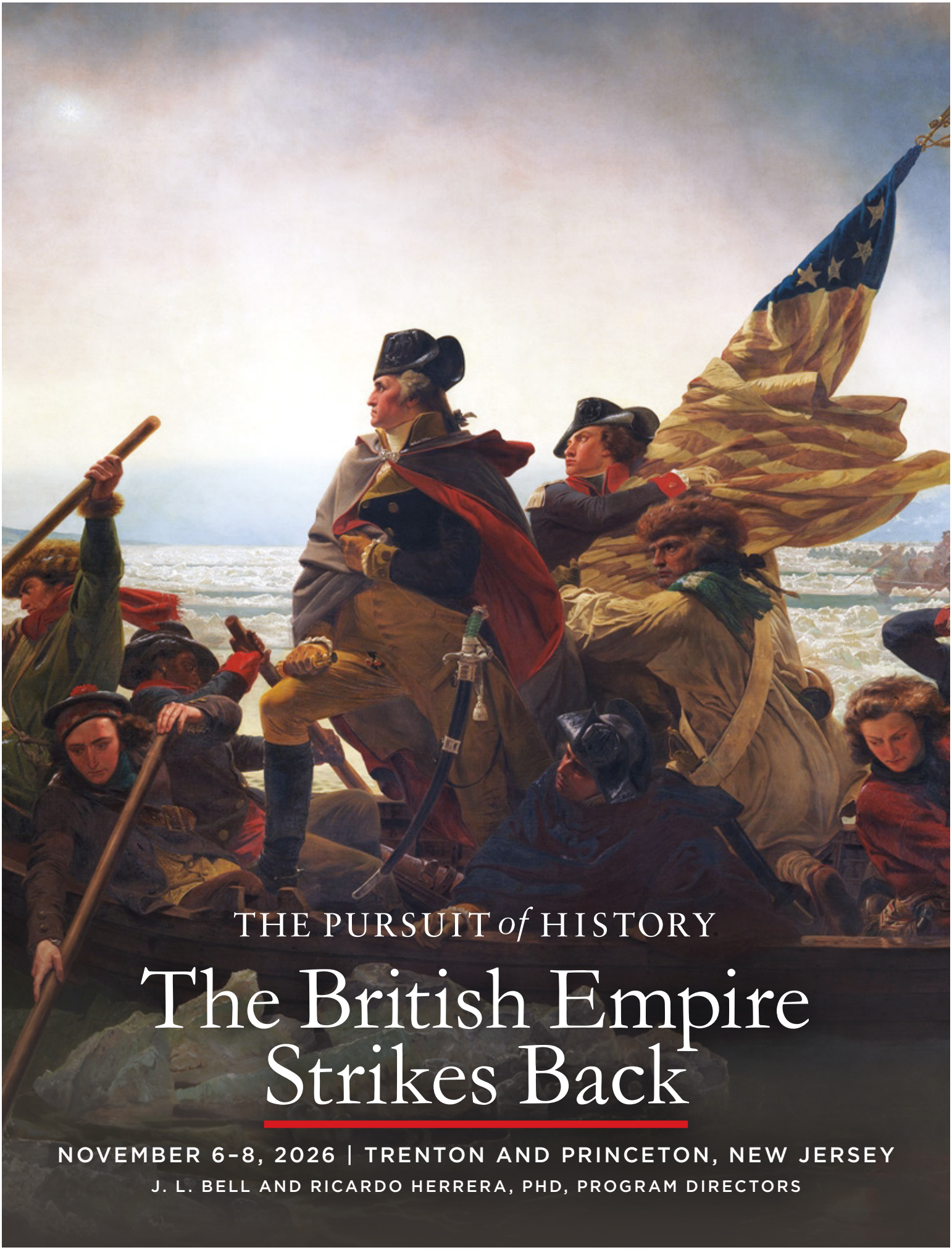


THE PURSUIT *of* HISTORY

The British Empire Strikes Back

NOVEMBER 6–8, 2026 | TRENTON AND PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

J. L. BELL AND RICARDO HERRERA, PHD, PROGRAM DIRECTORS

The Pursuit of History: *The British Empire Strikes Back* | Schedule

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Location	Old Barracks Museum, 101 Barrack Street, Trenton, NJ 08608
9:00 am	Registration and Welcomes from The Pursuit of History
9:30 am	The First Months of Independence with *J. L. Bell*
10:45 am	Campaign Overview with *Ricardo A. Herrera*
Noon	Lunch
1:00 pm	Field trip by foot to Mill Hill Park (Assunpink Creek)
2:00 pm	The Celebrated General Lee with *Phillip Papas*
3:45 pm	Two New Jersey Communities with *William L. Kidder*
5:00 pm	Bus trip
5:30 pm	Lantern Tour of Washington Crossing Historic Park, Pennsylvania
6:00 pm	Dinner at the Washington Crossing Inn

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

9:00 am	Old Barracks Museum, 101 Barrack Street, Trenton, NJ 08608
9:15 am	Hessians in America with *Friederike Baer*
10:30 am	New York on Fire with *Benjamin Carp*
11:30 am	Lunch
12:30 pm	Field trip by foot to the New Jersey State Museum
1:30 pm	Bus trip
2:00 pm	Washington Crossing State Park, New Jersey
3:00 pm	Bus trip
3:30 pm	Princeton Battlefield Walk with Ricardo A. Herrera & William L. Kidder
4:45 pm	Bus trip
5:00 pm	Walk around Nassau Hall, Princeton University
6:00 pm	Dinner at the Peacock Inn, 20 Bayard Lane, Princeton, NJ 08540

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8 (OPTIONAL)

8:30 am	Breakfast Hilton Garden Inn Lawrenceville, 1300 Lenox Drive, Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
9:00 am	The Legend of Richard Stockton with *J. L. Bell*
9:40 am	Bus trip
10:00 am	Morven Museum & Garden, 55 Stockton Street, Princeton, NJ 08540
Noon	Optional walking tour of Princeton

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The Pursuit of History: *The British Empire Strikes Back* | Speakers

PROGRAM DIRECTORS



J. L. Bell is the program director for The Pursuit of History for America's 250thexploring the events of the American Revolution., from *Rebellion in New England* (2024) through to the *Treaty of Paris* (2033). He shares daily articles on his Boston 1775 website (**boston1775.net**). He is the author of *The Road to Concord: How Four Stolen Cannon Ignited the Revolutionary War*, a National Park Service study of George Washington's first year as commander-in-chief, and articles on subjects from the signing of the Declaration to why Americans used snakes as a political emblem.

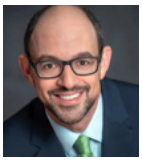


Ricardo Herrera, PhD, joins the Pursuit of History Weekends as a program director and faculty member for this event. He is Senior Historian at the George Washington Leadership Institute at George Washington's Mount Vernon, having previously served as Professor of Military History at the U.S. Army War College and as an Armor and Cavalry officer. Rick has written *Feeding Washington's Army: Surviving the Valley Forge Winter of 1778* (2021), *For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier, 1775–1861* (2015), and, for the U.S. Army Center of Military History, ***The New York Campaign 1776*** (2026), which is available as a PDF that can be downloaded. He also spoke at History Camp Boston 2025 on, ***Saving the Revolution: From New York to Princeton, 1776***.

PROGRAM ORGANIZERS + SPEAKERS



Friederike Baer, PhD, (**friederikebaer.com**) is the author of *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (2022), honored with the American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia's Annual Book Award and the Society of the Cincinnati Prize. She is a Professor of History at Penn State University Abington College.



Benjamin L. Carp, PhD, (**benjamincarp.com**) wrote *The Great New York Fire of 1776: A Lost Story of the American Revolution* (2023), *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (2007), and other award-winning studies of the American Revolution. He holds the Daniel M. Lyons Chair in American History at Brooklyn College within the City University of New York.



William L. "Larry" Kidder, MA, (**wlkidderhistorian.com**) has written several books about the Revolutionary War, including *Ten Crucial Days: Washington's Vision for Victory Unfolds*, *Crossroads of the Revolution: Trenton 1774–1783*, and *Revolutionary Princeton 1774–1783: The Biography of an American Town in the Heart of a Civil War*. He is a veteran of both the U.S. Navy and forty years of teaching high school.

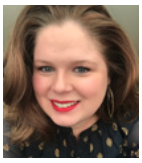


Phillip Papas, PhD, explored the life of the Continental Army's most confounding commander in *Renegade Revolutionary: The Life of General Charles Lee* (2014). Also author of *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* (2007), Papas is Senior Professor of History in the Economics, Government, and History Department at Union County College in Cranford, New Jersey.



Mary Adams has worked in public history for her entire adult life, starting as an interpreter for the National Park Service. She is currently the Homeschool Program Developer for the New Hampshire Historical Society, sharing stories of that state's notable citizens such as General John Stark. Pursuit of History Weekend attendees already know Mary for cheerily managing the logistics of all our outings.

Michelle D. Novak, MI, (m@mnd.nyc) is a communications, design, and public history professional with more than 25 years of experience. She holds a Master of Information degree from Rutgers University, specializing in Archives and Preservation. Her work combines creative communications, historical research, and collections expertise to help museums, archives, and cultural organizations tell their stories, connect with new audiences, and make history engaging, relevant, and approachable.



Jessica Rossi has worked in museums, historic homes, and other nonprofits for the past 10+ years. She received a BA in History from Colgate University and an MA in Public History from Northeastern University. In addition to her role as Public Programs Manager for The Pursuit of History Weekends and History Camp, she works in the Education Department at the New Hampshire Historical Society presenting school group programs and training teachers on the Society's social studies curriculum, "Moose on the Loose."



Lee Wright started **The History List** in 2011 and **The History List Store** in 2016. In 2014 he founded **History Camp** and in 2019 co-founded the non-profit organization **The Pursuit of History** to take over and expand History Camp. In the spring of 2020, with the pandemic limiting public events, he started interviewing authors online in the **History Camp Author Discussions**, and he hasn't stopped. Lee has spoken at the New England Museum Association conference and the annual conference of the American Association for State and Local History.

In 2023 The Pursuit of History held its first Weekend gathering. The following year, the organization began a series of **Pursuit of History Weekends** for the 250th that is mapped out to continue to the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

The board of the organization consists of **J. L. Bell**, **Dr. Sam Forman**, **Rose Doherty**, and **Michael Shire**, in addition to *Founder* and *President* Lee Wright.

ThePursuitOfHistory.org

TheHistoryList.com | Store.TheHistoryList.com

HistoryCamp.org

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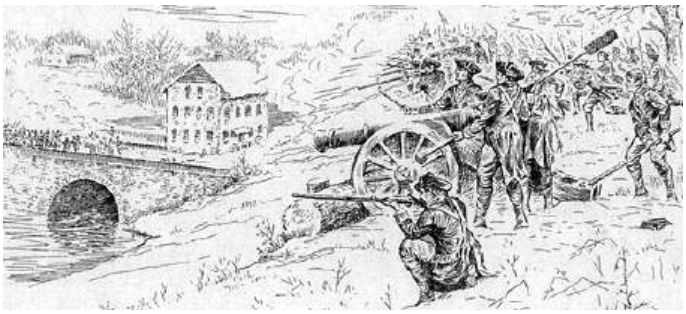
PARTICIPATING SITES



Old Barracks Museum | Trenton, New Jersey
The Old Barracks Museum in Trenton was built in 1758 by the colony of New Jersey to house British troops during the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War). During the American Revolution, the Barracks served both British and Continental forces, housed prisoners of war, and became a military hospital where Continental soldiers were inoculated against smallpox.

Saved from demolition in the early 1900s, the surviving structure was restored and opened as a museum, making it one of the few remaining colonial military barracks in North America. Recently reopened following an extensive refurbishment, the Old Barracks offers visitors a glimpse into the daily lives of eighteenth-century soldiers and the events that unfolded in Trenton during the Revolution.

barracks.org



Mill Hill Park | Trenton, New Jersey
Mill Hill Park occupies a crucial site in the Battle of the Assunpink Creek (Second Battle of Trenton), fought on January 2, 1777, when General George Washington's Continental Army held off repeated British assaults along the creek. This successful defense set the stage for Washington's audacious overnight march around British forces to Princeton and another American victory the following morning.

visitmercercountynj.gov



New Jersey State Museum | Trenton, New Jersey
The New Jersey State Museum currently features *The Power to Change: Revolutionary Stories from the New Jersey State Archives*, an exhibition exploring New Jersey's role in the struggle for American independence through the extraordinary documents held by the State Archives. These firsthand records illuminate the people, decisions, and events that shaped the Revolution and the emerging state.

statemuseum.nj.gov



Washington Crossing Historic Park | Pennsylvania
Washington Crossing Historic Park marks the Pennsylvania site where General George Washington and his Continental Army embarked on their perilous crossing of the icy Delaware River on Christmas night, December 25, 1776. In a desperate gamble to save the faltering Revolution, Washington launched a surprise attack on Hessian forces at Trenton the following morning, securing a victory that restored American morale and rekindled hope for independence.

washingtoncrossingpark.org



Washington Crossing Inn | Pennsylvania

Located beside the historic crossing site, the Washington Crossing Inn stands on land closely associated with the events of Christmas night 1776. Its oldest section, built in 1817 by Bernard Taylor, retains the character of the early riverside village that grew around McConkey's Ferry. Today, guests can enjoy dining beside the original open hearth, surrounded by nearly two centuries of history in a setting just steps from one of the Revolution's most celebrated landmarks.

washingtoncrossinginn.com



Washington Crossing State Park | New Jersey

New Jersey's Washington Crossing State Park encompasses the landscape where General George Washington's Continental Army came ashore after its perilous Christmas night crossing of the Delaware River in 1776. From the landing at Johnson's Ferry, the troops began their grueling nine-mile march through a winter storm toward Trenton, where their victory over Hessian forces would dramatically revive the American cause.

dep.nj.gov/parksandforests/state-park/washington-crossing-state-park



Princeton Battlefield State Park | Princeton, New Jersey

Princeton Battlefield State Park marks the scene of some of the fiercest fighting of January 3, 1777, when General George Washington's Continental Army engaged British forces following its overnight march around Lord Cornwallis's army at Trenton.

During the battle, Brigadier General Hugh Mercer was mortally wounded while leading an attack against British troops. As American forces began to fall back, Washington personally rallied his men and led a counterattack that forced the British to retreat. The victory at Princeton completed the remarkable Ten Crucial Days campaign, strengthening American morale and helping reverse the disastrous military setbacks of 1776.

dep.nj.gov/parksandforests/state-park/princeton-battlefield



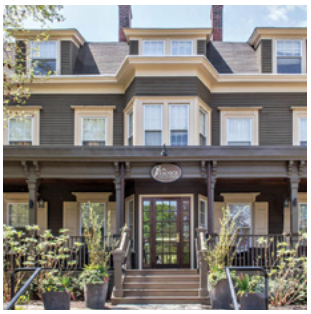
Princeton University & Nassau Hall | Princeton, New Jersey

A walking tour of Princeton University's historic campus reveals its extraordinary connections to the American Revolution and the founding of the nation. Established in 1746 as the College of New Jersey, the institution moved to Princeton in 1756 with the completion of Nassau Hall, then the largest academic building in the American colonies.

On January 3, 1777, fighting from the Battle of Princeton reached the campus, where British soldiers took refuge in Nassau Hall before surrendering following American artillery fire. The building had also hosted New Jersey's first state legislature in 1776, when William Livingston was elected the state's first governor.

From June to November 1783, the Confederation Congress convened in Nassau Hall, making Princeton the temporary capital of the newly independent United States. It was here that Congress received news of the signing of the definitive peace treaty with Great Britain, bringing the Revolutionary War to its formal conclusion.

princeton.edu



The Peacock Inn | Princeton, New Jersey

The Peacock Inn is a historic restaurant and boutique hotel in the heart of Princeton, with roots extending back to the American Revolution. Dating to the colonial era, the house originally stood on Nassau Street and was purchased in 1779 by Jonathan Deare, a New Jersey patriot and member of the Continental Congress. When Congress convened at nearby Nassau Hall in 1783, Deare provided lodging for several delegates as they conducted the business of the newly independent nation.

The house was moved to its present location on Bayard Lane in 1875 and became the Peacock Inn in 1911. Over the years, it has welcomed distinguished guests, including Albert Einstein, and its basement once housed a Prohibition-era speakeasy known as Peacock Alley.

peacockinn.com



Morven Museum & Garden | Princeton, New Jersey

Morven Museum & Garden was the estate of Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and his wife, the accomplished poet and patriot Annis (Boudinot) Stockton. In November 1776, as British forces advanced through New Jersey, the family fled Morven, which was subsequently occupied and plundered by British troops. Richard was captured by Loyalists, forcing him to make hard choices.

Annis remained a steadfast supporter of independence, contributing patriotic poetry and raising funds for the Continental Army. In 1783, Morven served as the residence of her brother, Elias Boudinot, then President of the Continental Congress, and welcomed prominent figures of the new nation. Later the official residence of five New Jersey governors, Morven is now a museum interpreting the estate's history, including the lives of the enslaved people who lived and worked there.

morven.org



"Revolutionary War Campaign, New York/New Jersey, July 2, 1776–January 6, 1777." (Prepared by Steven Stanley for the American Battlefield Trust, **battlefields.org/learn/maps/new-york-new-jersey-campaign-1776**)

New York, July 1776

On July 2, 1776, even as the Continental Congress voted for independence in Philadelphia, the British military returned to New York harbor. Over the next six months, the king's troops, their German auxiliaries, and the Royal Navy pushed the Continental Army off Long Island, off Manhattan Island, out of New York, and down through New Jersey. Only a series of battlefield victories around the turn of the year allowed the Continental forces to survive.

After a ceremonial public reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 9, the crowd pulled down the gilded equestrian statue of King George III in the Bowling Green. Most of the lead inside that statue was taken away to be melted into musket balls. On the way to the foundry in Connecticut, Loyalists seized pieces of the statue as relics of the royal order. The head arrived in London in November 1777. Other pieces were unearthed at intervals throughout the nineteenth century. A few, including the horse's tail, ended up at the New-York Historical Society.

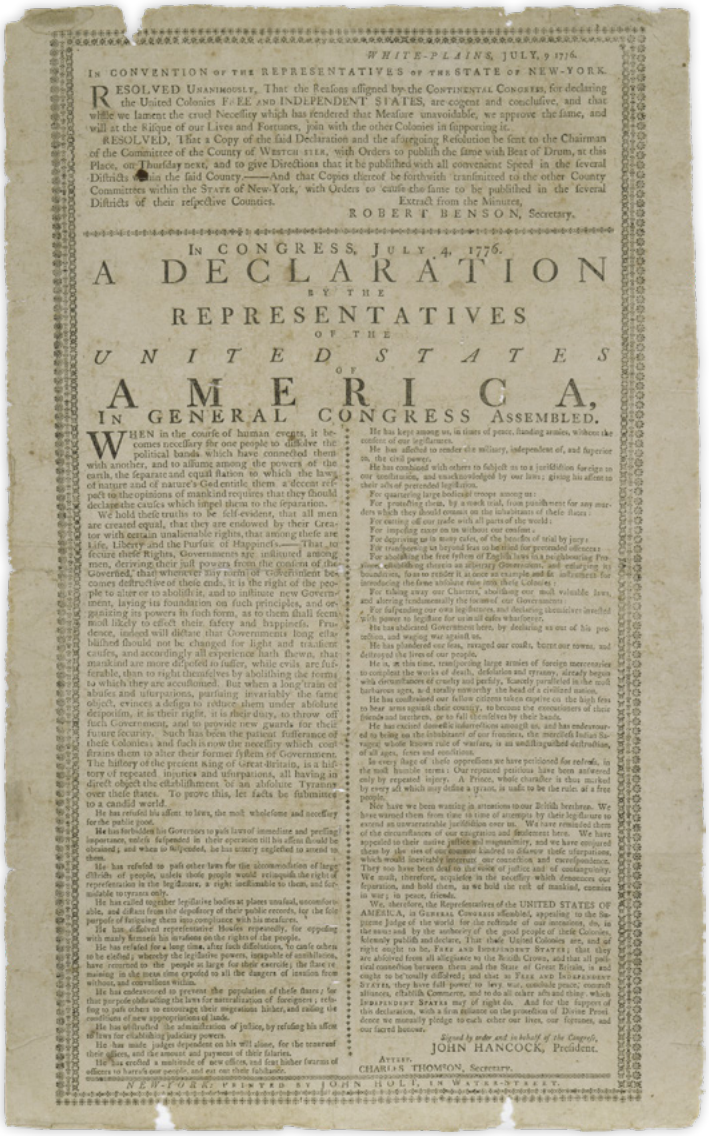
In 1991 the king's right hand resurfaced in a garden in Wilton, Connecticut, on land once owned by a Loyalist killed when he returned at the end of the war. Laboratory analysis showed that the lead alloy of this newly discovered piece matched those on display. It was auctioned for $207,000.





The horses tail, a fragment from the statue of King George III in Bowling Green, pulled down July 9, 1776. (New-York Historical)

Fragment of the left hand from the statue of George III in Bowling Green, pulled down July 9, 1776. (Skinner Auctioneers, Marlborough, Massachusetts)



WHITE-PLAINS, JULY, 9 1776.

IN CONVENTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the Reasons assigned by the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, for declaring the United Colonies FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, are cogent and conclusive, and that while we lament the cruel Necessity which has rendered that Measure unavoidable, we approve the same, and will at the Risque of our Lives and Fortunes, join with the other Colonies in supporting it.

RESOLVED, That a Copy of the said Declaration and the aforegoing Resolution be sent to the Chairman of the Committee of the County of WESTCHESTER, with Orders to publish the same with Beat of Drum, at this Place, on Thursday next; and to give Directions that it be published with all convenient Speed in the several Districts of this said County.——And that Copies thereof be forthwith transmitted to the other County Committees within the STATE of New-York, with Orders to cause the same to be published in the several Districts of their respective Counties.

Extract from the Minutes,
ROBERT BENSON, Secretary.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE

REPRESENTATIVES

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF

AMERICA,

IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.——That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the Governed, that whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes, and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of Government. The history of the present king of Great-Britain, is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the State in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the military, independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation.

For quartering large bodies of troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury:

For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his protection, and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction, of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress, in the most humble terms: Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace, friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other acts and things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.

Signed by order and in behalf of the Congress,
JOHN HANCOCK, President.

ATTEST.
CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary.

NEW-YORK: PRINTED BY JOHN HOLT, IN WATER-STREET.

"A declaration by the representatives of the United States of America, in general congress assembled...," printed July 9, 1776. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/95c4d350-0033-0130-2cdf-58d385a7bc34**)

The British Leaders



Lord George Germain (1716–1785) became Britain's Colonial Secretary overseeing North America in November 1775. He had started as an army officer but was cashiered for not obeying orders at the Battle of Minden in 1759. Germain built a new career in politics under George III. When the American War began, he convinced the king and the prime minister, Lord North, that his forceful measures would end that rebellion.

George Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville, painted in 1778 by George Romney (1734–1802). (National Portrait Gallery [UK], **commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MarshGeorge1800George_Germain.jpg**)



Lieutenant-General Leopold Philip de Heister (1716–1777) of Hesse-Kassel was the first commander of the German auxiliary forces attached to the British army in 1776. A veteran of two major European wars, he led the Hessian troops at Long Island and White Plains, but friction with the Howes led to his recall in 1777.

Philipp Leopold von Heister (1716–1777), painted in 1777 by Johann Werner Kobold (1740–1803). (Hessen Kassel Heritage, **commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philipp_Leopold_von_Heister.jpg**)



Vice-Admiral Richard Howe, Viscount Howe (1726–1799), was a career Royal Navy officer who inherited a title in the Irish Peerage in 1758 after his older brother was killed in fighting near Ticonderoga. In February 1776 Lord Howe became commander-in-chief of the navy's North American Station, with orders to support the army and blockade the rebellious colonies' ports.

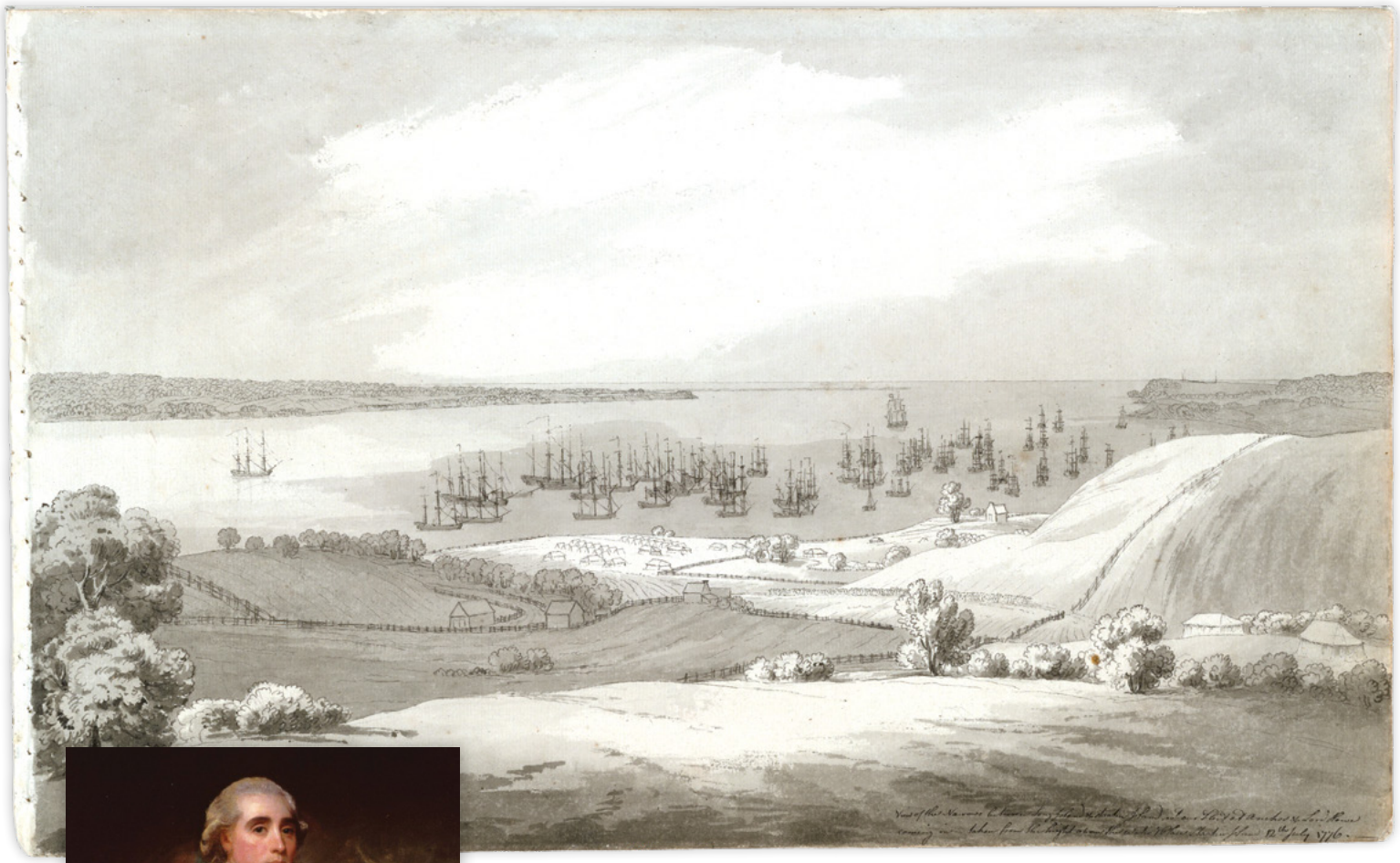
The future Vice-Admiral Richard Howe, painted in 1763 by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788).

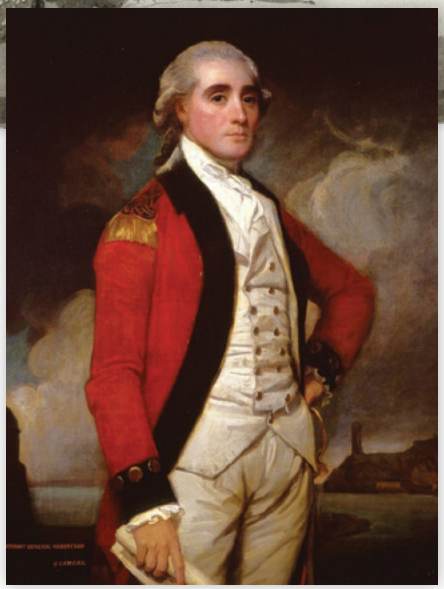


General William Howe (1729–1814) commanded the British army in North America after October 1775. Having been on the battlefield in the bloody Battle of Bunker Hill, he advised the ministry in London to pull out of Boston and move to New York. In the summer of 1776, Howe had his chance to implement that strategy. After the Battle of Brooklyn, he was made a Knight of the Order of the Bath.

A contemporary portrait of "The Hon. Sir Willm. Howe Kt. of the Bath, Commander in Chief of all his Majesty's Forces in America," 1780. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/dd372040-c606-012f-a2be-58d385a7bc34**)

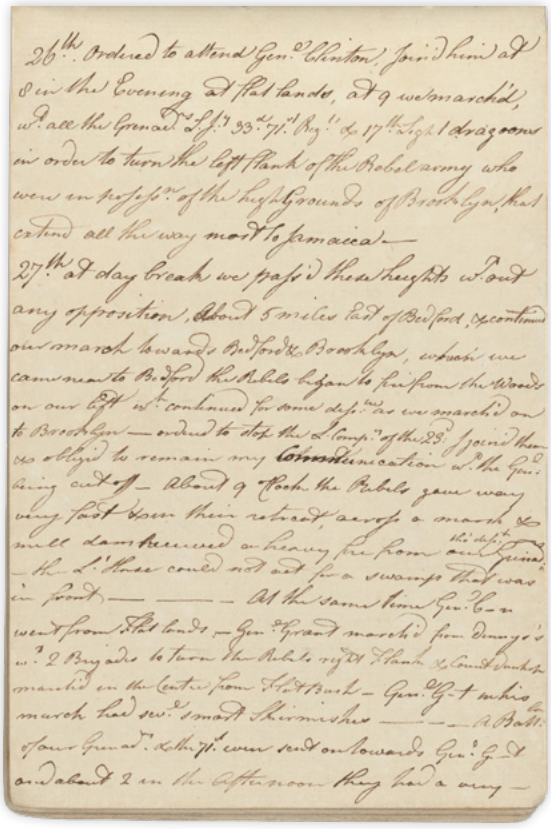
In Parliament, the Howe brothers opposed Lord North's American policy, and with their sister, the Hon. Caroline Howe, they tried to design a peaceful imperial settlement with Benjamin Franklin in 1774. As military officers, however, the Howes became responsible for quelling the rebellion in America with the largest overseas force the British Empire had yet assembled. They were also the king's peace commissioners, authorized to accept the colonists' submission—but not to recognize the Continental Congress or its army as legitimate.





On July 12, 1776, Captain-Lieutenant Archibald Robertson (c. 1745–1813) of the Royal Engineers climbed to a high point on Staten Island and drew this "View of the Narrows between Long Island & Staaten Island with our fleet at anchor & Lord Howe coming in." Robertson was an engineer in the British army from 1759 until his retirement as a lieutenant-general in 1786. A trained draftsman, Robertson made many sketches of the American War.

Robertson also kept a diary of his time in America. This page records how on August 26, 1776, he marched with General Henry Clinton "to turn the left flank of the Rebel army who were in posessn. of the high Grounds of Brooklyn."



[Above] "View of the Narrows between Long Island & Staaten Island with our fleet at anchor & Lord Howe coming in… Staaten Island. 12th July 1776," from Archibald Robertson his diaries and sketches in America, 1762–1780. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b90c8f60-c6f3-012f-f890-58d385a7bc34**)

[Portrait] "Major Archibald Robertson of Lawers," 1782, by George Romney (1734–1802) (Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida)

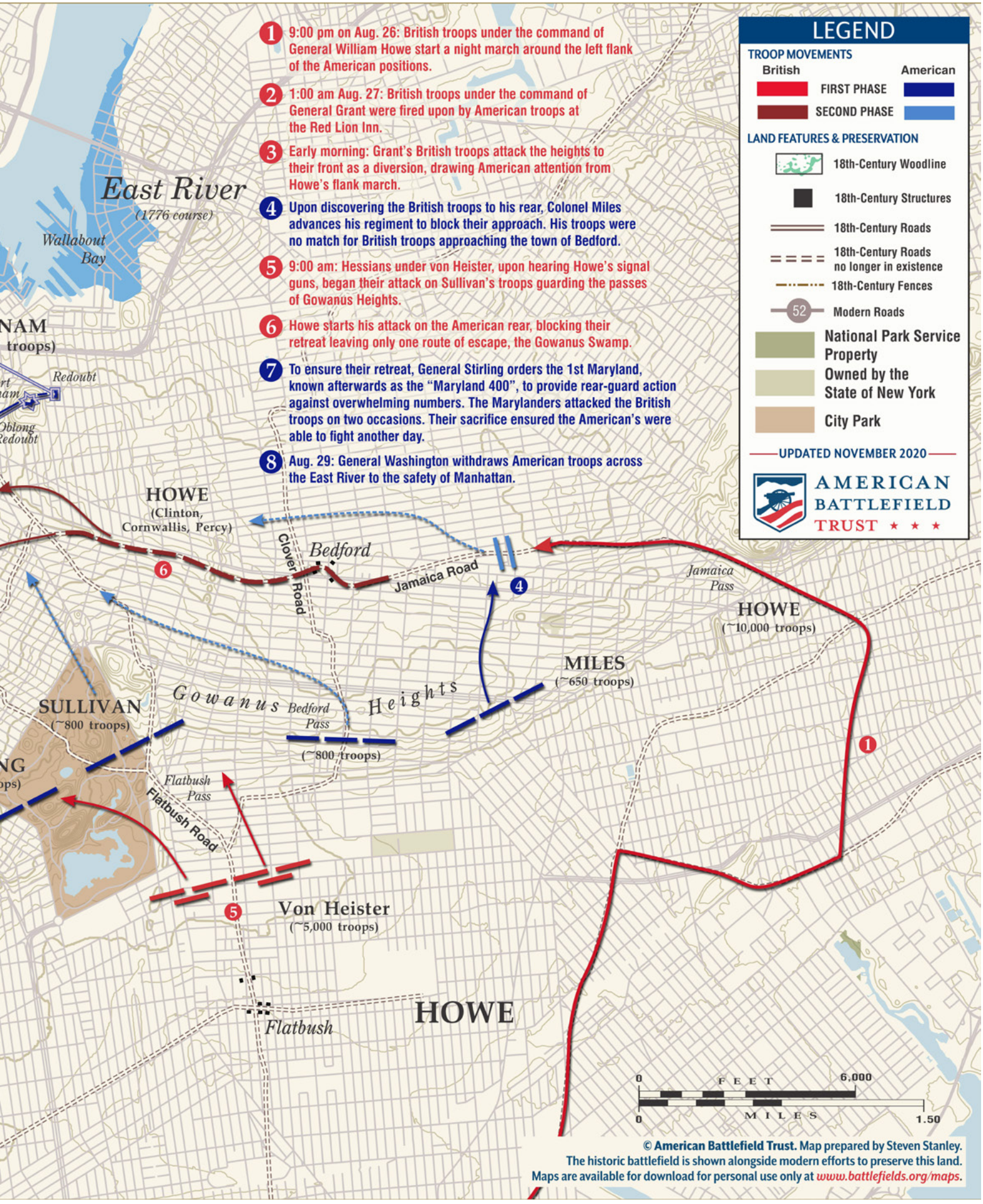
[Right] Diary entry for August 27, 1776, from Archibald Robertson his diaries and sketches in America, 1762–1780. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/dbdec430-4de7-013e-0bc5-0242ac110003**)

Battle of Brooklyn (Long Island), August 27, 1776

The fight for the western end of Long Island was the independent United States' first major battle and the first time General George Washington had faced General Howe on the field. With 20,000 Crown soldiers and 10,000 Continentals, it was by far the largest battle yet fought in the war. And it was a decisive British victory.



"Revolutionary War Battle, Brooklyn, New York, Aug 22 to 27 1776," showing the action imposed over a modern street grid map of Brooklyn. (Prepared by Steven Stanley for the American Battlefield Trust, **battlefields.org/learn/maps/brooklyn-aug-27-1776**)


1 9:00 pm on Aug. 26: British troops under the command of General William Howe start a night march around the left flank of the American positions.
2 1:00 am Aug. 27: British troops under the command of General Grant were fired upon by American troops at the Red Lion Inn.
3 Early morning: Grant's British troops attack the heights to their front as a diversion, drawing American attention from Howe's flank march.
4 Upon discovering the British troops to his rear, Colonel Miles advances his regiment to block their approach. His troops were no match for British troops approaching the town of Bedford.
5 9:00 am: Hessians under von Heister, upon hearing Howe's signal guns, began their attack on Sullivan's troops guarding the passes of Gowanus Heights.
6 Howe starts his attack on the American rear, blocking their retreat leaving only one route of escape, the Gowanus Swamp.
7 To ensure their retreat, General Stirling orders the 1st Maryland, known afterwards as the "Maryland 400", to provide rear-guard action against overwhelming numbers. The Marylanders attacked the British troops on two occasions. Their sacrifice ensured the American's were able to fight another day.
8 Aug. 29: General Washington withdraws American troops across the East River to the safety of Manhattan.
LEGEND
TROOP MOVEMENTS
British
American
FIRST PHASE
SECOND PHASE
LAND FEATURES & PRESERVATION
18th-Century Woodline
18th-Century Structures
18th-Century Roads
18th-Century Roads no longer in existence
18th-Century Fences
52 Modern Roads
National Park Service Property
Owned by the State of New York
City Park
UPDATED NOVEMBER 2020
AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST
East River
(1776 course)
Wallabout Bay
Redoubt
Oblong Redoubt
HOWE
(Clinton, Cornwallis, Percy)
Bedford
Clover Road
Jamaica Road
Jamaica Pass
HOWE
(~10,000 troops)
MILES
(~650 troops)
SULLIVAN
(~800 troops)
Gowanus Heights
Bedford Pass
(~800 troops)
Flatbush Pass
Flatbush Road
Von Heister
(~5,000 troops)
HOWE
Flatbush
0 FEET 6,000
0 MILES 1.50
© American Battlefield Trust. Map prepared by Steven Stanley.
The historic battlefield is shown alongside modern efforts to preserve this land.
Maps are available for download for personal use only at www.battlefields.org/maps.



"Plan of the attack the rebels on Long Island, by an officer of the Army," (creator 's name unrecorded). (Library of Congress, **loc.gov/resource/g3802l.ar114700**)

The British Take New York

On September 11, Admiral Howe met on Long Island with a delegation from the Continental Congress: John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge. The two sides could not even agree on a basis for negotiation.

Four days after the peace conference dissolved, General Howe moved troops across the East River onto Manhattan Island, as shown in this sketch by Captain-Lieutenant Robertson. Robertson sketched the fort that the Americans built around the house of Jacob Walton on the east side of Manhattan after Crown troops seized the area. It is now the site of Gracie Mansion, official residence of the mayor of New York City.

On September 15, when the British army landed at Kip's Bay (now site of the United Nations), General Washington ordered Continental forces to withdraw to northern Manhattan. The British pursued them but were checked at Harlem Heights. That left the Crown in control of New York, second-largest city in British North America.



Detail of "Kepp's Bay 17th Augt. 1778 where the troops landed 15th Septr. 1776. Phoenix 44 Capt. H. Parker, Roebuck 44 Hammond. Carisford 28 Fanshaw. Rose 20 Js. Wallace. 12th Augt. 1778" from Archibald Robertson his diaries and sketches in America, 1762–1780 . (**New York Public Library, digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/bd548930-c6f3-012f-7e94-58d385a7bc34**)



"View of the rebel work round Walton's House, with Hell Gate & the Island... [illegible]" from Archibald Robertson his diaries and sketches in America, 1762–1780. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/bb045070-c6f3-012f-a0a1-58d385a7bc34**)

The Great Fire, September 20–21, 1776

Just days after the Crown forces took New York, a large portion of the city burned. Lieutenant Bernard Ratzer adapted his 1767 map to show the area razed by the Great Fire.

Detail of "To His Excellency Sr. Henry Moore, Bart., captain general and governour in chief in & over the province of New York & the territories depending thereon in America… this plan of the city of New York…." an map by Lieutenant Bernard Ratzer adapted to show the extent of losses from the fire. (New York Public Library via Wikimedia Commons, **commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NYCGreatFire1776.jpg**)





Robert Raymond, a warrant officer in the Royal Navy, painted this watercolor image of the New York City skyline after the fire. (Christies)

The engraving below was based on a British officer's drawing of what was left of Trinity Church after the fire.

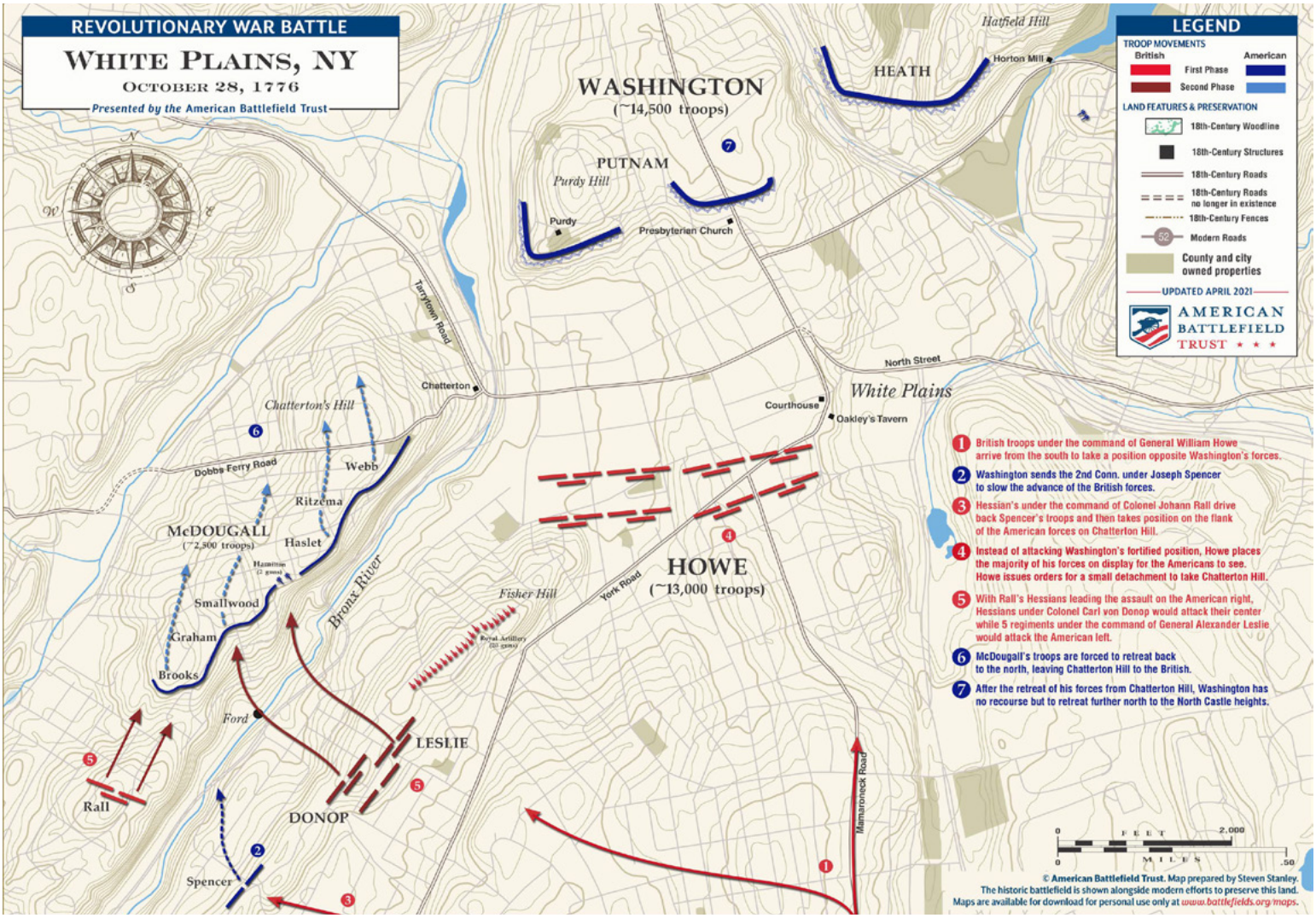
Detail of "An original sketch of the ruins of Trinity Church N. York—taken by an English officer in the Revolution," published in Mary L. Booth's *History of New York (1859–)*. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9caa3c30-c60c-012f-3d2d-58d385a7bc34**)



Around 2010, the staff at St. Paul's Church in lower Manhattan found this three-gallon leather bucket in the steeple. It is marked "St. Paul's, 1768," the year that New York City toughened its fire regulations. This bucket was probably used to fight the flames and save the church.

St. Paul's Fire Bucket dated 1768. New York (CultureNow, **culturenow.org/site/e6d744bc-1ff8-4b62-9571-51f5421a2215**)





Battle of White Plains, October 28, 1776

After fights at Pell's Point on October 18 and at White Plains ten days later, Americans spoke proudly of how their troops had withdrawn in an orderly fashion—but they were losing ground with each fight.

"Revolutionary War Battle, White Plains, New York, October 28, 1776." (Prepared by Steven Stanley for the American Battlefield Trust, **battlefields.org/learn/maps/white-plains-oct-28-1776**)

Battle of Fort Washington, November 16, 1776

Even after White Plains, the Continental Army held Fort Washington on Manhattan Island. The Crown forces attacked that high ground from three sides, capturing nearly 3,000 Americans as General Washington watched helplessly from across the river.

Three days later, the British and Hessian troops came at Fort Lee from the north, pushing the Continental Army out of its last fortified position near New York City and then southward through New Jersey.



"The Landing of the British Forces in the Jerseys on the 20th of November 1776 under the command of the Rt. Honl. Lieut. Genl. Earl Cornwallis," by British Army officer Thomas Davies, FRS, FLS (ca. 1737–1812). (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/671b36a0-0036-0130-5fad-58d385a7bc34**)



"Revolutionary War Battle, Fort Washington, New York, November 16, 1776." (Prepared by Steven Stanley for the American Battlefield Trust, **battlefields.org/learn/maps/fort-washington-nov-16-1776**)

General Charles Lee

Major-General Charles Lee (1732–1782) brought a wealth of British military experience and European learning to the Continental Army. In early 1776 he oversaw the fortification of New York and helped to keep the British from taking Charleston, South Carolina. As Washington's second-in-command, however, he became disenchanted with the commander-in-chief's leadership.

Lee was too restless to sit for a formal portrait, so the only pictures of him made from life are caricatures and sketches. Nonetheless, many observers felt that these pictures captured the strange essence of the man.

[Clockwise, from left] An 1860 engraving of "Major Genl Charles Lee," by Alexander Hay Ritchie (1822–1895), which was based on earlier etching by James Neagle (1765–1822). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, **metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/363438**)

Caricature of Major-General Charles Lee from a drawing by Kościusko [i.e., Kosciuszko]. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c6a1e750-c608-012f-2b9e-58d385a7bc34**)

Major General Charles Lee, by John Trumbull (1756–1843), a study for proposed, but never executed, painting of the "Attack on Charleston, S.C." (Yale University Art Gallery, **artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/47433**)





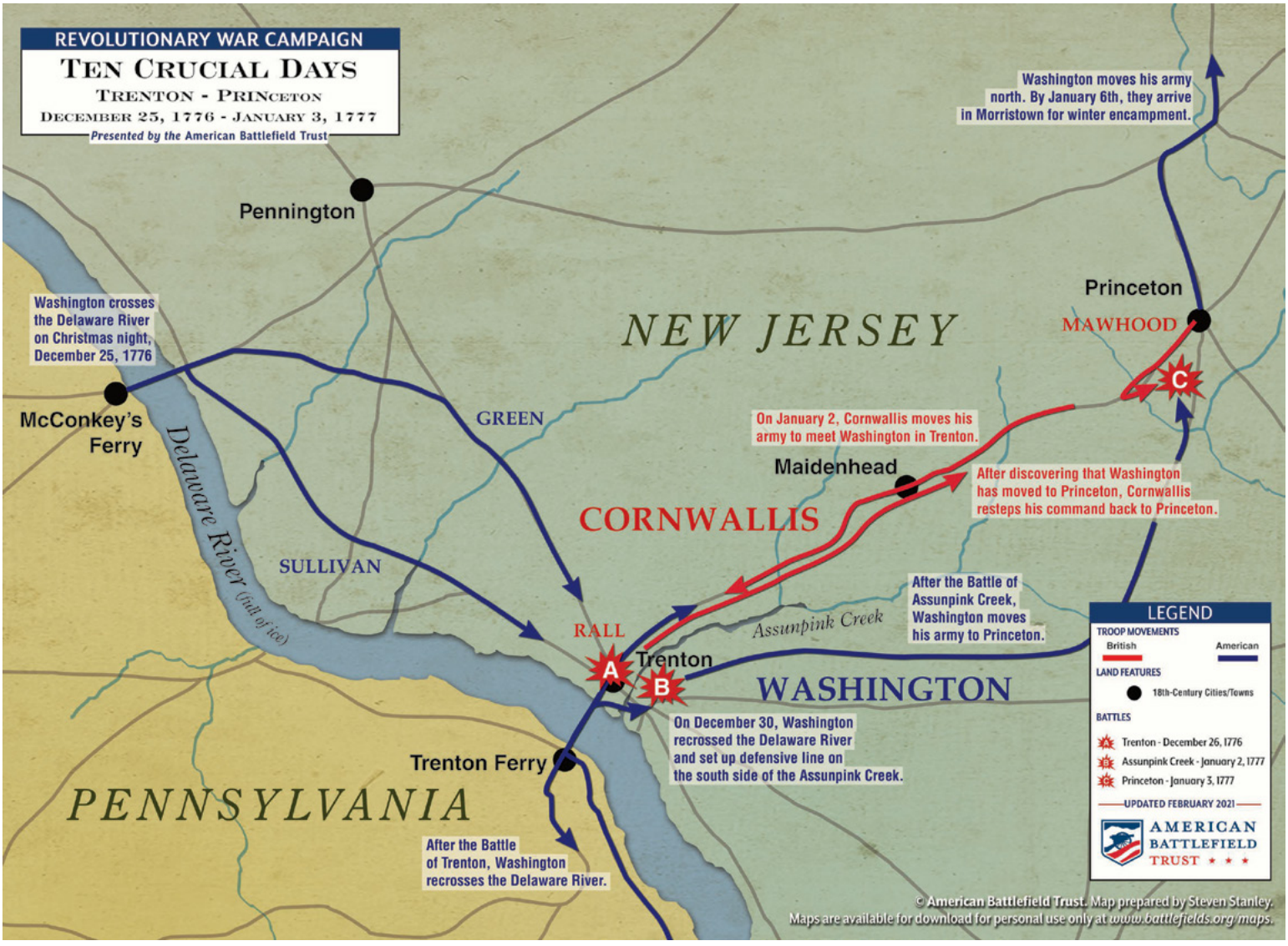


On December 12, Lee rode ahead of most of his troops to a tavern in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. The British heard about his location. Lieutenant-Colonel William Harcourt led a dragoon raid to capture Lee early in the morning of December 13. This depiction of Lee surrendering was published in London around 1782.



"The American General Lee taken prisoner by Lieutenant Colonel Harcourt of the English Army, in Morris Country *[sic]*, New Jersey, 1776," published ca. 1782. (New York Public Library, **digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/3e2a2730-c60a-012f-1fbc-58d385a7bc34**)

"Revolutionary War Campaign, Ten Crucial Days, Trenton–Princeton, December 25, 1776–January 3, 1777." (Prepared by Steven Stanley for the American Battlefield Trust, **battlefields.org/learn/maps/ten-crucial-days-campaign-dec-24-1776-jan-3-1777**)



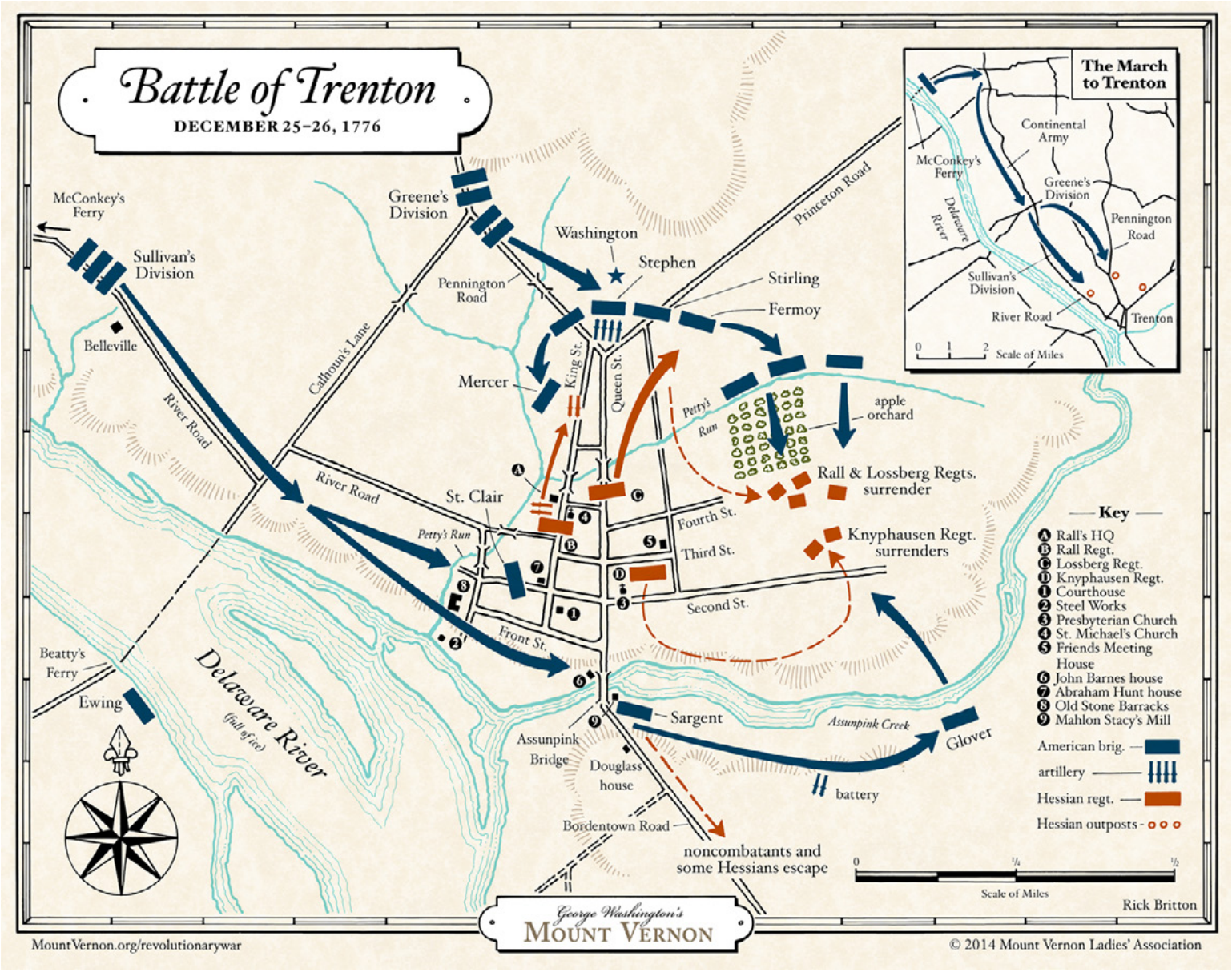
Battle of Trenton, December 26, 1776

In the last month of 1776, General Washington moved his shrinking army south to keep away from the advancing Crown forces. The Continental Congress evacuated to Baltimore. The commander devised a last-ditch effort to attack a Hessian outpost at Trenton on the day after Christmas.



[Right] Detail of "Sketch of the engagement at Trenton, given on the 26th of December 1776 betwixt the American troops under command of General Washington, and three Hessian regiments...," 1776(?), by Andreas Wiederholdt (1752?–). (Library of Congress, **loc.gov/item/gm71002184**)

[Below] "Battle of Trenton, December 25–26, 1776." (George Washington's Mount Vernon, **mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/map-battle-of-trenton**)



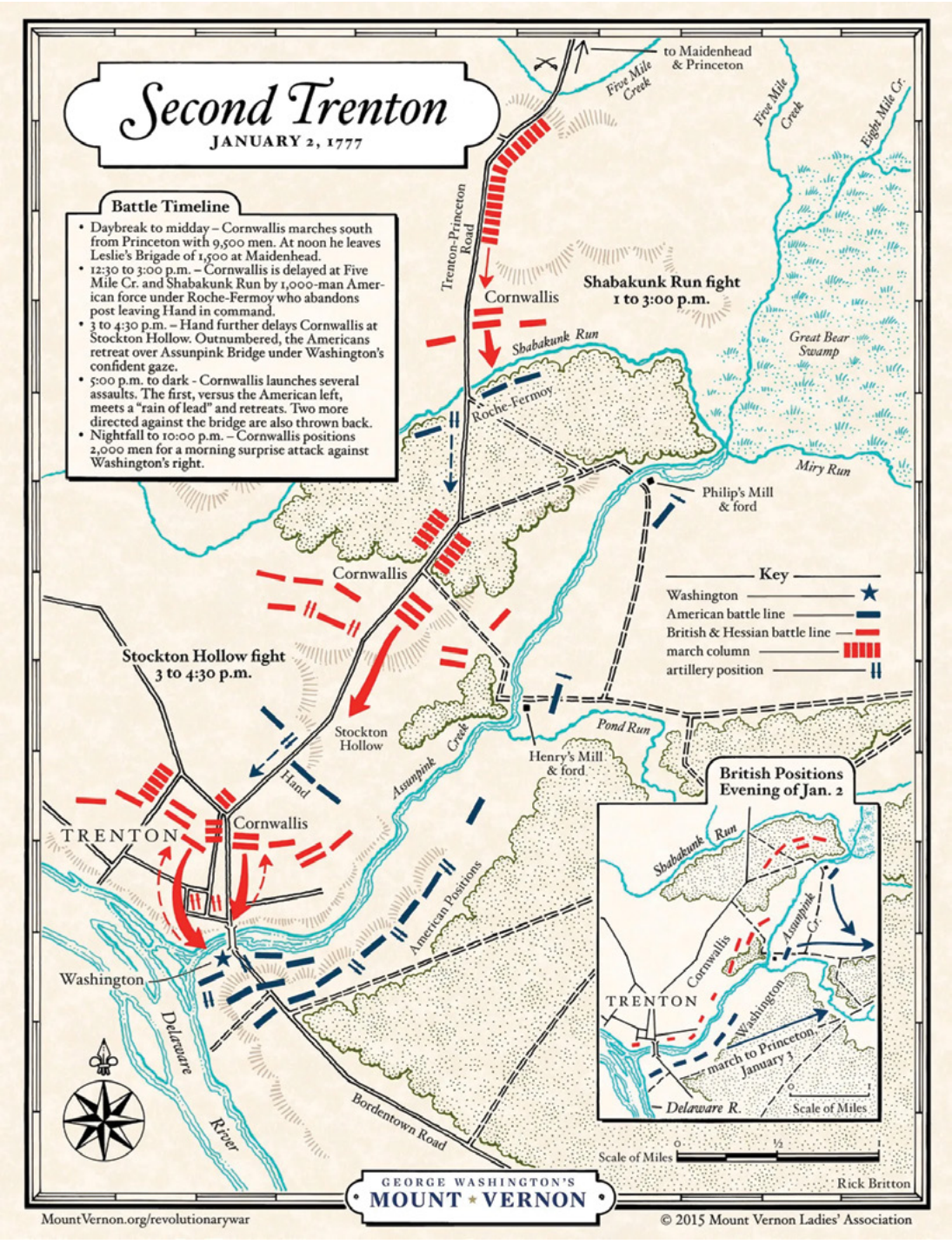


Battle of Assunpink Creek, January 2, 1777

Lieutenant-General Charles Cornwallis, Earl Cornwallis (1738–1805), returned from leave to strengthen the Crown positions in New Jersey. Though he was one of only five peers to vote against the Stamp Act in the House of Lords, Cornwallis was an aggressive commander in the American War.

Crown forces regrouped under General Cornwallis and counterattacked at Trenton, producing a larger battle that ended in a stalemate. The Americans moved—not back across the Delaware River but around toward the British-held town of Princeton.

Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquess Cornwallis, painted 1783 by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788). (National Portrait Gallery [UK], via Wikipedia)





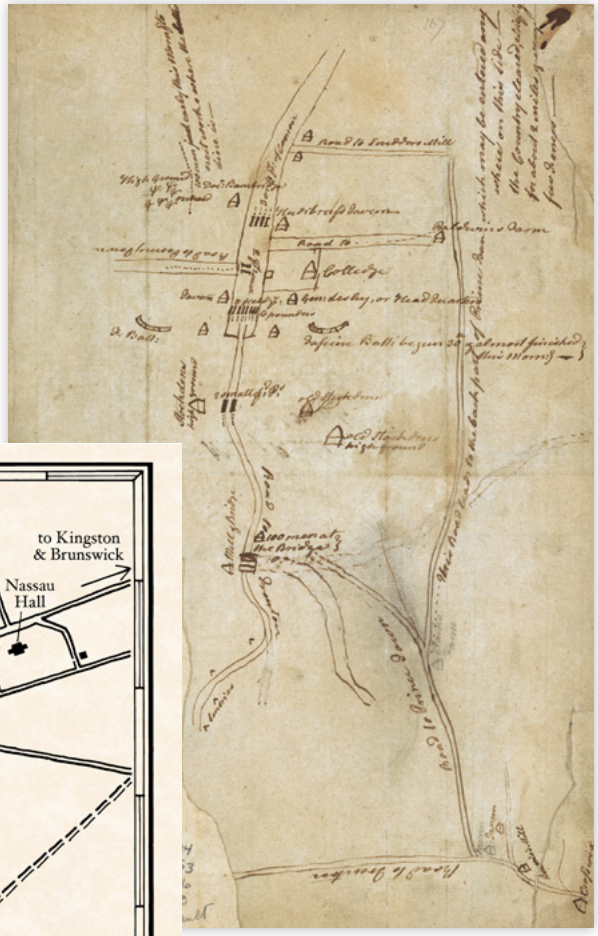
[Above] A Fusilier's cap, its brass plate stamped with the Hessian lion rampant. (National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, **collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:nmah_433169**)

[Map] "Second [Battle of] Trenton [Assunpink Creek], January 2, 1777." (George Washington's Mount Vernon, **mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/map-battle-of-second-trenton**)

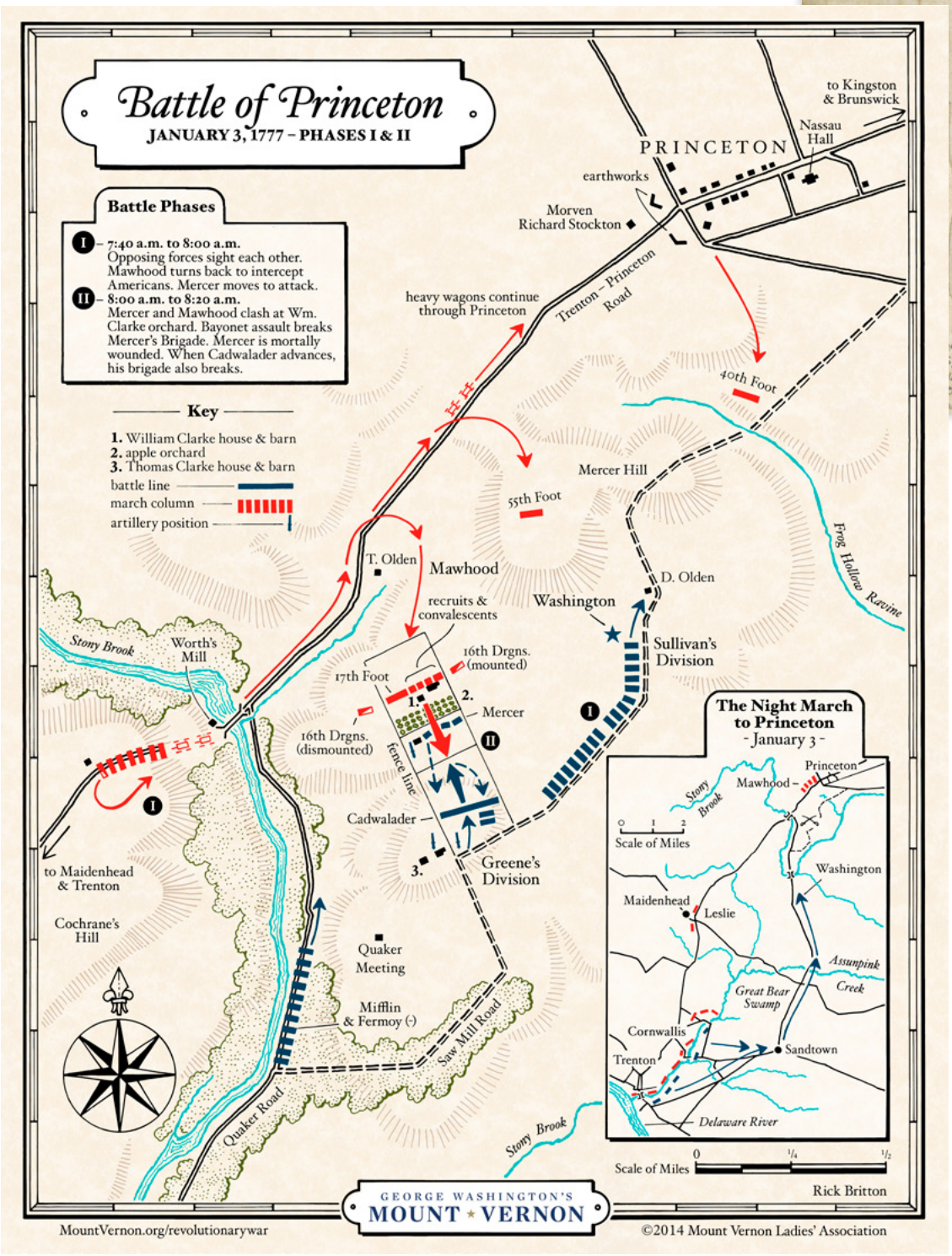
Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777

The Pennsylvania brigadier John Cadwalader (1742–1786) drew this map of British army positions around Princeton after quizzing a college student about what he had observed. Cadwalader delivered it to General Washington as he was on the march.

Continental forces met Cornwallis's rearguard outside Princeton. After seesaw action, General Washington personally led the American troops forward, breaking the British lines.

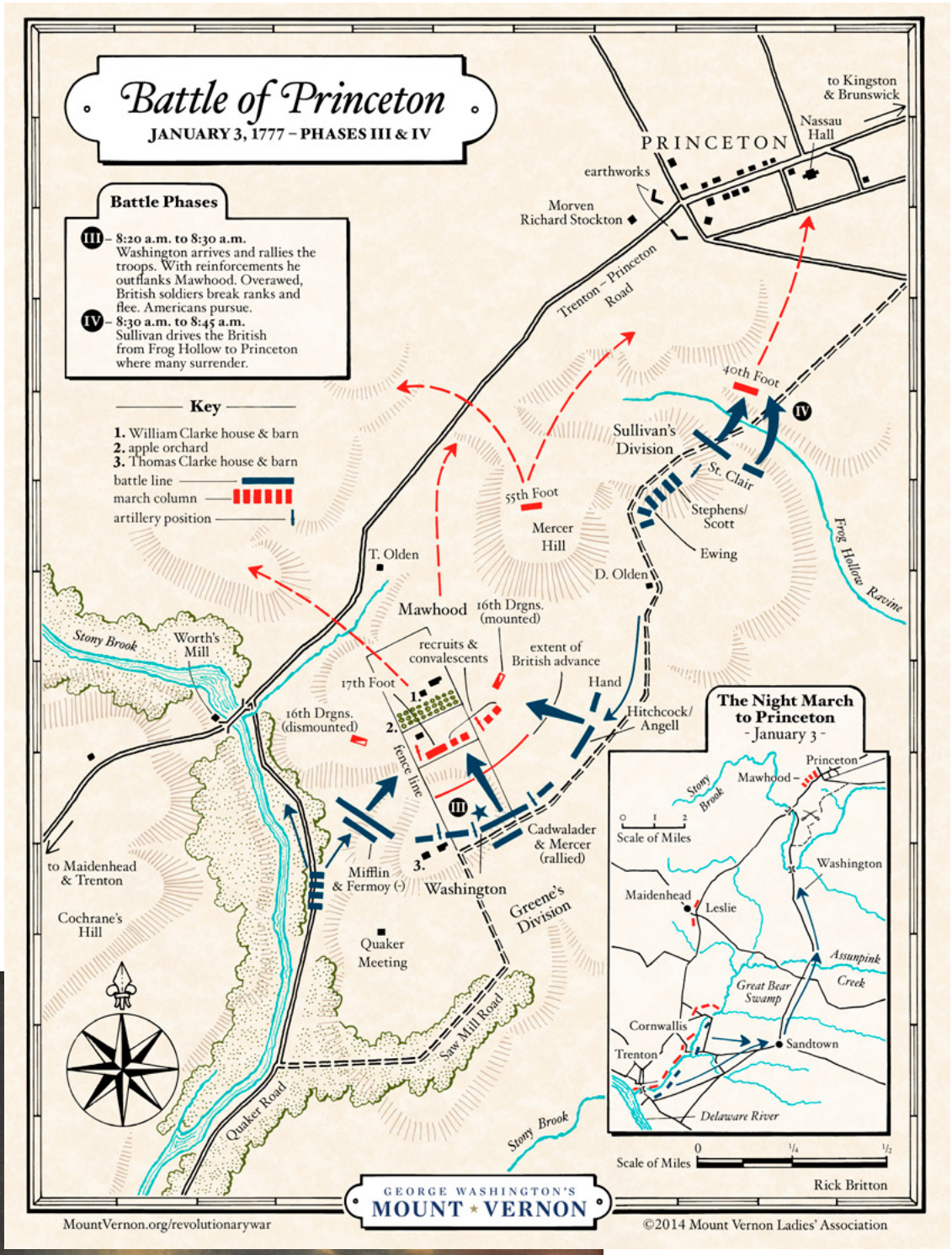


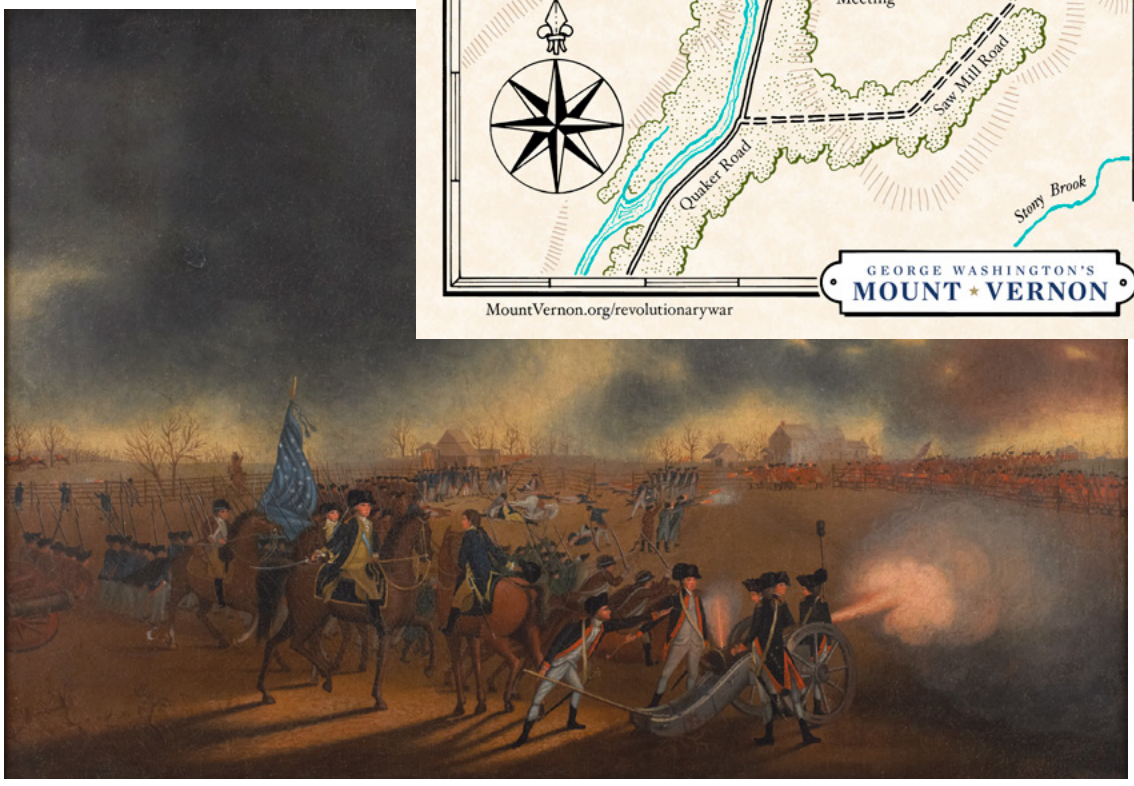
[Above] Detail of a Plan of Princeton, December 31, 1776, by John Cadwalader (1742–1786). (Library of Congress, **loc.gov/resource/g3814p.ct000076**)



"The Battle of Princeton, Phases I & II, 8:00–8:30 am." (George Washington's Mount Vernon, **mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/map-the-battle-of-princeton-phases-i-ii**)

Almost two hundred redcoats holed up in the college's Nassau Hall before surrendering. Washington moved on to Morristown while Cornwallis ordered his forces to fall back to New Brunswick for the rest of the winter.





[Above] "The Battle of Princeton, Phases III & IV, 8:30–9:15 am." (George Washington's Mount Vernon, **mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/map-battle-of-princeton-phases-iii-and-iv**)

[Left] "The Battle of Princeton," painted ca. 1783 by James Peale (1749–1831) (Princeton Art Museum, **artmuseum.princeton.edu/art/collections/objects/44709**)

General George Washington

Washington's successes in New Jersey in late 1776 and early 1777—his last undisputed battlefield victories until Yorktown—prompted Charles Willson Peale to paint multiple portraits. This one was commissioned by Princeton College in 1784. It also shows Brigadier-General Hugh Mercer (1726–1777) dying at Princeton in the arms of Dr. Benjamin Rush (1746–1813).

George Washington at the Battle of Princeton, by Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827). (Princeton University Art Museum, artmuseum.**princeton.edu/art/collections/objects/45237**)



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