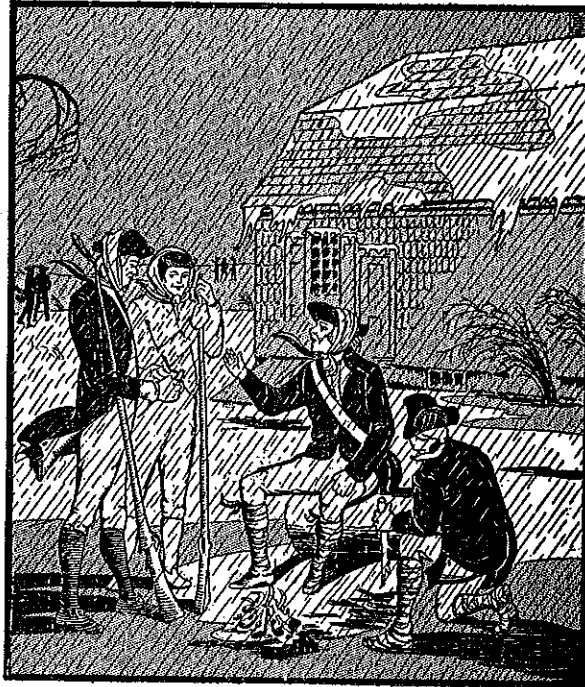


WASHINGTON CROSSING

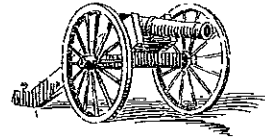
STATE PARK

NEW JERSEY



DIVISION OF FORESTS AND PARKS
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
STATE OF NEW JERSEY

1931



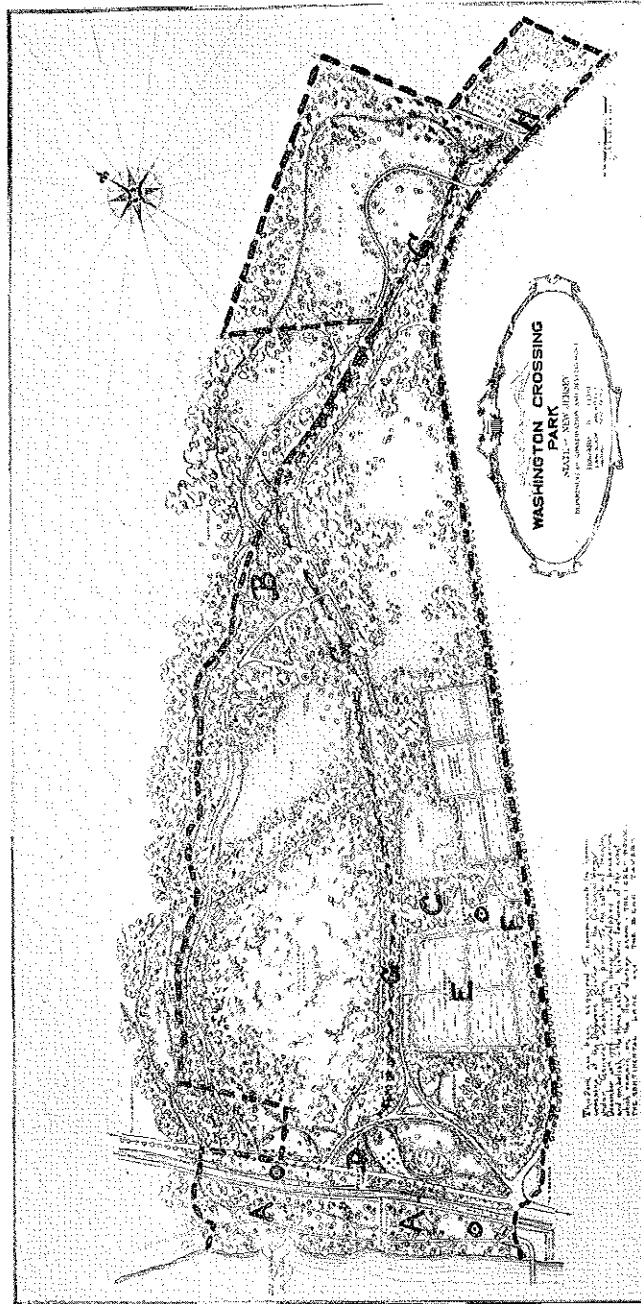
WASHINGTON CROSSING
STATE PARK

A Brief History of the crossing of the Delaware River by the Continental Troops on Dec. 25, 1776 with a description of the New Jersey Park commemorating the event

compiled by

C.P. WILBER State Forester
Division of Forests and Parks
Department of
Conservation & Development
State of New Jersey

1931



ARCHITECT'S PLAN FOR THE NEW JERSEY PARK
Showing the Principal Features Now Completed and the Adopted Program for Future Development.

- A. WASHINGTON GROVE.
- B. GREEN GROVE.
- C. SULLIVAN GROVE.
- — PRESENT PARK BOUNDARY.
- D. MCKONKEY FERRY HOUSE.
- E. STATE FOREST NURSERY.
- ⊙ AUTO PARKING SPACES.
- F. PARK HEADQUARTERS.
- G. CONTINENTAL LANE.
- H. BEAR TAVERN.

WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK
NEW JERSEY

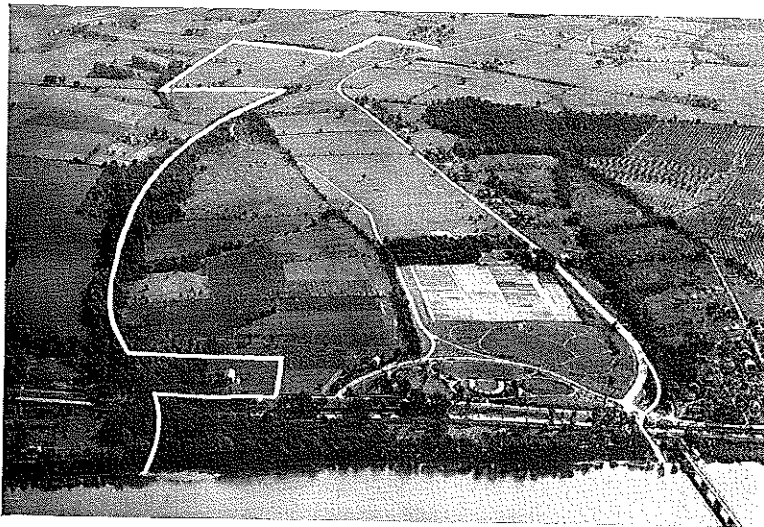
at the site of

"THE TURNING POINT OF THE REVOLUTION"
DECEMBER 25, 1776

The Significance of "The Crossing"

THE fact that Washington and his army crossed the Delaware in a heroic manner prior to the Battle of Trenton is known to all. The significance of this event in American history is not always so well understood.

The opening campaign of the Revolution had been a discouraging failure. The British had taken New York and Washington's Army, decisively defeated on Long Island and driven across New Jersey by the army of Lord Cornwallis, arrived at Trenton on December 3, 1776. To avoid further contact with the enemy at that time, the Continental Army was moved across the Delaware



THE PARK FROM THE AIR

River into Pennsylvania and lay there in temporary safety. Desertions had thinned the ranks appallingly. The enlistment of many more of the troops would shortly expire, with every stimulus for them to join the increasing number who were accepting the British offer of amnesty for all who would lay down their arms.

Here then was the whole American Army of from 2,400 to 2,700 men,—“the whole hope of liberty in America,”—defeated, disorganized, demoralized. It was indeed the “darkest hour of American Independence” in which Washington wrote to his cousin “I fear the game is nearly up.” Such was the situation in which the desperate move on Trenton was conceived and undertaken.



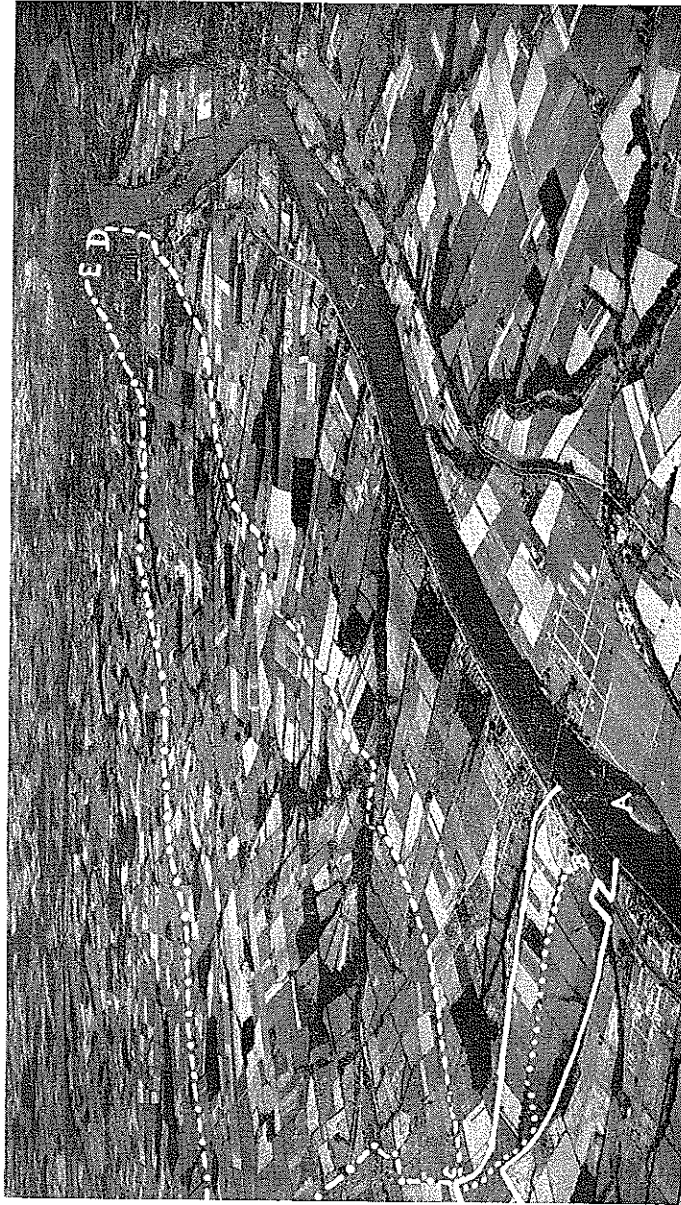
CONTINENTAL LANE
*The old Colonial road over
which the army started
for Trenton.*

This was the condition which the successful blow at Trenton remedied in large measure. This was the tide of discouragement and defeat, which the victory at Trenton turned to renewed determination and encouragement, which finally carried the American army to success. The full meaning of the event is forcibly brought out in the following quotations:

FREDERICK THE GREAT, referring to the Crossing of the Delaware by Washington and his army and the subsequent battles, declared,—“the achievements of Washington and his little band of compatriots between the 25th of December and the 4th of January, a space of ten days, were the most brilliant of any recorded in the annals of military achievements.”

LORD GERMAINE, the English Foreign Secretary at the time of the Revolution, speaking of the battles of Trenton which the “Crossing” made possible said,—“All our hopes were blasted by that unhappy affair at Trenton.”

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, who took part in the battle of Trenton said,—“After escaping the grasp of a disciplined and victorious enemy, this little band of patriots were seen skillfully avoiding an engagement until they could contend with advantage and

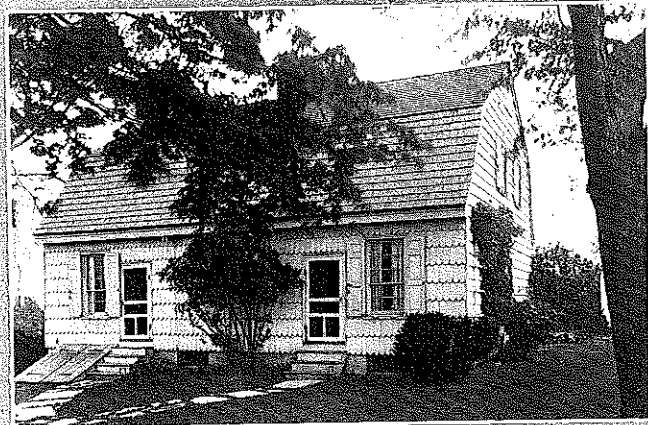


AIR VIEW OF THE CROSSING AND MARCH ON TRENTON

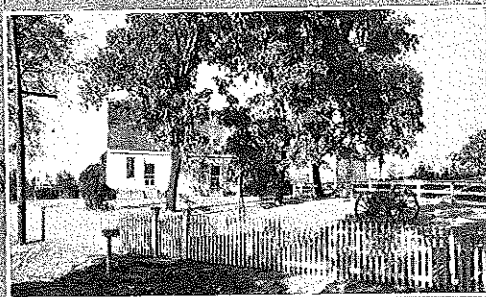
- = PARK BOUNDARY.
- · · = ROUTE OF ENTIRE ARMY (NOW CONTINENTAL LANE.)
- - - = ROUTE OF GEN. SULLIVAN'S DIVISION.
- · · = ROUTE OF GEN. GREEN'S DIVISION.
- A = ISLAND BEHIND WHICH BOATS ASSEMBLED.
- B = MCKONKEY FERRY HOUSE, N. J.
- C = BEAR TAVERN.
- D = BARRACKS, TRENTON.
- E = TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT.



EAST END GARDEN



THE FERRY HOUSE

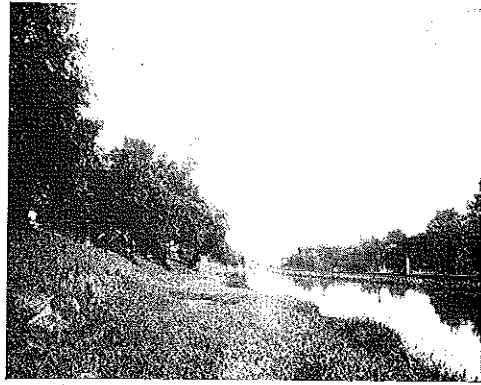


HOUSE AND YARD

THE HISTORIC MCKONKEY FERRY HOUSE

then by the masterly enterprises of Trenton and Princeton, cutting them up in detachments, rallying the scattered energies of the country, infusing terror into the breasts of their invaders and changing the whole tide and fortune of the war."

LORD CORNWALLIS, the British Commander, himself, responding



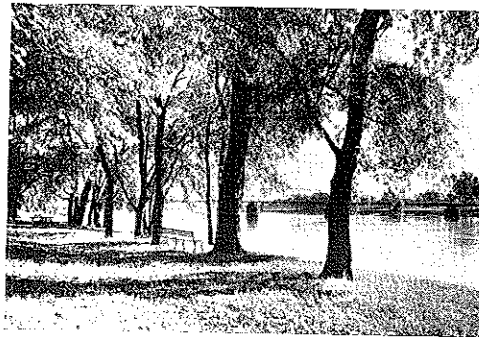
TOWPATH RAMBLE

ing to a toast at the grand dinner given at the headquarters of General Washington, to the officers of the British, French and American armies, the day after the surrender of Yorktown, said,—
"And when the illustrious part that your excellency, General Washington has borne in this long and arduous contest becomes a

matter of history, fame will gather your brightest laurels rather from the banks of the Delaware than from those of the Chesapeake."

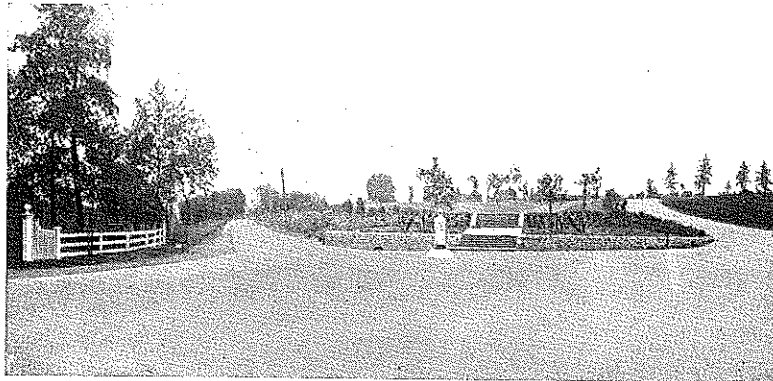
THE STORY OF "THE CROSSING"

*From the Diary of an Officer on General Washington's Staff
Christmas (1776) 6 P. M.*



RIVERSIDE PICNIC SPOT

"The regiments have had their evening parade, but instead of returning to their quarters are marching toward the ferry. It is fearfully cold, and raw and a snow storm setting in. The wind is northeast and beats in the face of the men. It will



MAIN ENTRANCE TO PARK

be a terrible night for the soldiers who have no shoes. Some of them have tied old rags around their feet; others are barefoot, but I have not heard a man complain. They are ready to suffer any hardships and die rather than give up their liberty. I have just copied the order for marching. Both divisions are to go from the ferry, (McKonkey's Ferry, N. J.) to Bear Tavern, two miles. They will separate there; Washington will accompany Greene's Division with a part of the artillery down the Pennington Road;



ROADSIDE PICNIC SPOT



ALONG THE JERSEY SHORE

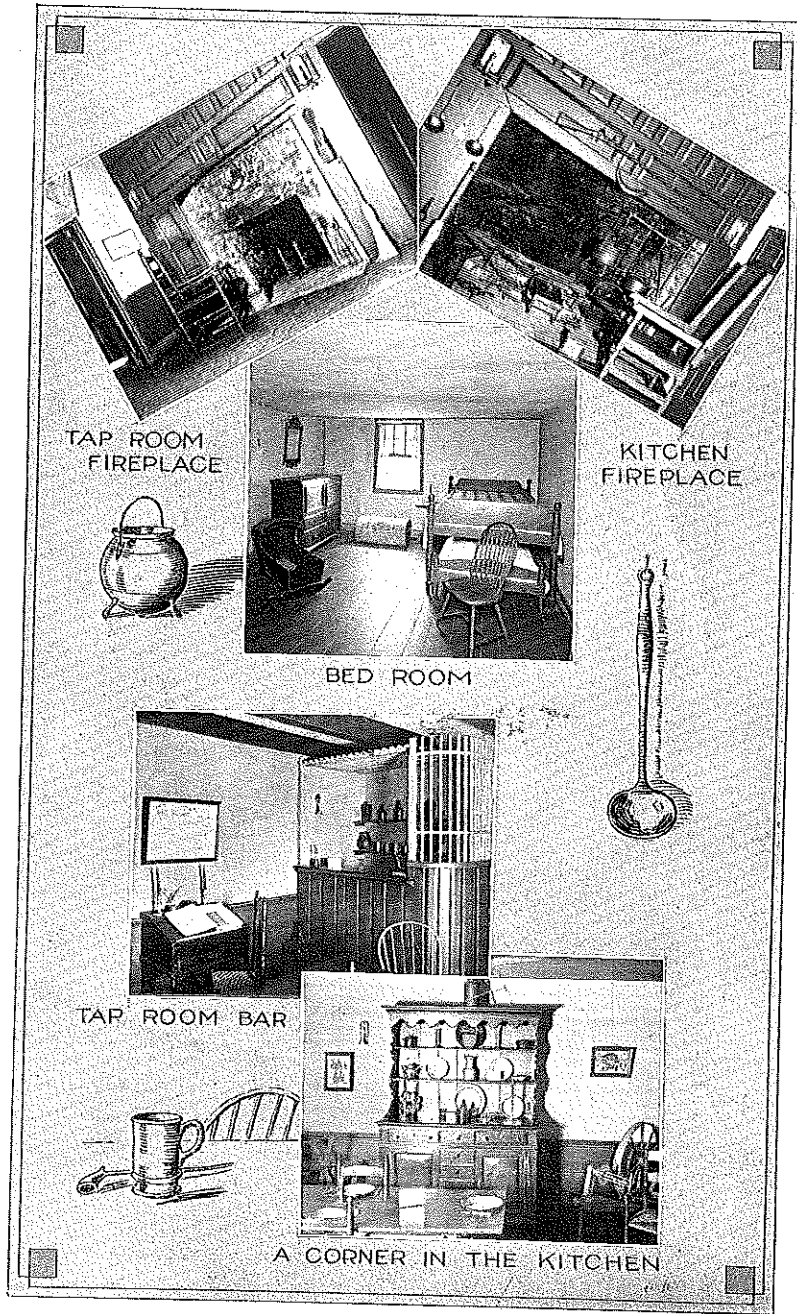


SWIFT MOVING ICE FLOES AND FORBIDDING BANKS



FROM THE JERSEY SHORE

WINTER CONDITIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE THE ARMY MET AT THE CROSSING

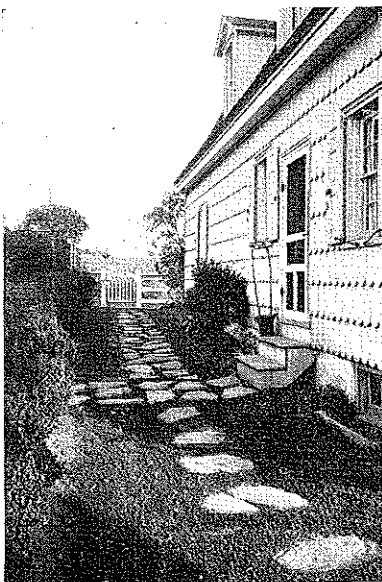


THE INTERIOR OF THE MCKONKEY FERRY HOUSE

Sullivan and the rest of the artillery will take the River Road."
(See page 5).

December 26 (1776) 3 A. M.

"I am writing in the ferry house. The troops are all over, and the boats have gone back for the artillery. We are three hours behind the set time. Glover's men have had a hard time to force the boats through the floating ice with the snow drifting in their faces. I never have seen Washington so determined as he is now. He stands on the bank of the river wrapped in his cloak, superintending the landing of his troops. He is calm and collected, but very determined. The storm is changing to sleet, and cuts like a knife. The last cannon is being landed."

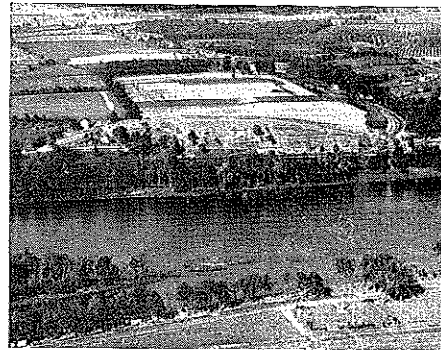


REAR OF THE FERRY HOUSE

*Letter of General Washington to the President of Congress
Read in Congress December 31, 1776*

"I have the pleasure of congratulating you upon the success of an enterprise which I had formed against a detachment of the enemy lying in Trenton, and which was executed yesterday morning. The evening of the 25th, I ordered the troops intended for this service to parade back of McKonkey's Ferry (Penna.) that they might begin to pass as soon as it grew dark, imagining we should be able to throw them all over, with the necessary artillery, by 12 o'clock, and that we might easily arrive at Trenton by five in the morning, the distance being about nine miles. But the quantity of the ice, made that night, impeded the passage of the boats so much that it was three o'clock before the artillery could be got over; and near four before the troops took up their line of march. This made me despair of surprising the town, as I well

knew we could not reach it before the day was fairly broke. But as I was certain there was no making a retreat without being discovered and harassed on repassing the river, I determined to push on at all events. I formed my detachment into two divisions, one to march by the lower river road, the other by the upper Pennington Road. As the divisions had nearly the same distance to march, I ordered each of them, immediately upon forcing the out-guards, to push directly into the town, that they might charge the enemy before they had time to form. The upper division (*Gen. Greene, see page 5*) arrived at the enemy's advanced posts exactly at 8 o'clock; and in three minutes after, I found, from the fire on the lower road, that the other division (*Gen. Sullivan, see page 5*) had also got up. The out-guards made but small opposition,



THE PARK FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA SIDE,
SHOWING THE ISLAND BEHIND WHICH THE
BOATS WERE COLLECTED AND HIDDEN

though, for their numbers, they behaved very well, keeping up a constant retreating fire from behind houses. We presently saw their main body formed; but, from their movements, they seemed undertermined how to act. Being hard-pressed by our troops, who had already got possession of their artillery, they attempted to file off by a road on their right leading to Princeton. But, perceiving their intention, I threw a body of troops in their way, which immediately checked them. Finding from our disposition, that they must inevitably be cut to pieces if they made any further resistance, they agreed to lay down their arms. The number that submitted in this manner was twenty-three officers and eight hundred and sixty men. Colonel Rahl, commanding officer, and seven others were found wounded in the town.

In justice to our officers and our men, I must add their behaviour on this occasion reflects the highest honor upon them, the difficulty of passing the river in a very severe night and their march through a violent storm of snow and hail, did not in the

least abate their ardour, but when they came to the charge, each seemed to vie with the other in pressing forward; and were I to give a preference to any particular corps I should do a great injustice to the others.

I have the honor to be, your most obedient servant.

GEORGE WASHINGTON."

THE NEW JERSEY PARK

Washington Crossing State Park lies seven miles above Trenton on the main highway from Trenton to Lambertville. The park embraces 292 acres of land, extending along the Delaware River bank for more than a quarter of a mile and running back from the river nearly a mile. The movement for the establishment of such a memorial to the significant and heroic crossing of the river by the Continental army in 1776 was first officially begun in 1910 by the appointment of a commission for this purpose. Two years later a subsequent commission purchased the first 100 acres of land. In 1915 the functions of this commission were merged into the Department of Conservation and Development, which has enlarged and developed the project.



RIVER BANK PICNIC SPOT

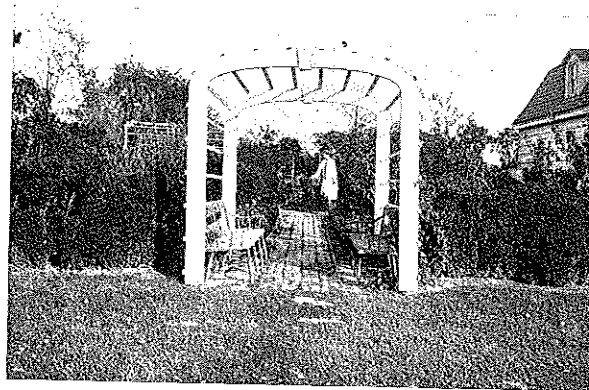
Prior to the formal dedication and opening of the park, the State expended approximately \$160,000 on it. A great part of this sum has been the purchase price for the properties now included in the park.

The fundamental policy of the Department in planning and developing the park is to establish and maintain a suitable memorial to the historic event which the park commemorates. Every effort has been made to preserve its historic features unaltered as far as possible and to create a natural and Colonial atmosphere. Recreation facilities, such as picnic conveniences, for those who visit the park, are provided and will be further developed as the

need for them arises, but the area is not conceived as a public playground in the way that purely recreational areas are established. The historic and other special features (*see frontispiece*) are as follows:

1. **CONTINENTAL LANE:** The most significant feature of the park is the old lane, which was the original road over which the Colonial army marched in starting on its way to the Battle of Trenton, after having crossed the river. At the time of the Revolution there were no roads or other facilities for getting to and from the river or for traveling up and down the river near to the river. All of the troops had to pass up this road from the ferry to Bear Tavern. (*See page 5*). This lane will be maintained in its original condition without any attempt at improvement. It is now flanked on the south side by a one-way driveway and it is hoped and expected that a similar drive for west bound vehicular traffic may shortly be established on its north side both for public convenience and to provide a suitable setting for the historic lane.

2. **McKONKEY FERRY HOUSE:** The old ferry house, which



stood at the time of the crossing, has been renovated and is maintained as a combination shrine and museum. It is open to the public daily, except Mondays, from 9 A. M. till 5 P. M.

DAUGHTERS OF THE REVOLUTION
MEMORIAL GARDEN

3. **WASHINGTON GROVE:** Along the river bank, where the landing of the Revolutionary army actually took place, the park is being developed as a picnic grove with comfort stations and other conveniences.

4. **SULLIVAN'S GROVE:** About the center of the park, is another very attractive picnic grove which is maintained for this

use with the necessary public conveniences.

5. GREEN'S GROVE: At the back end of the park is a beautiful stretch of woodland running along Steel's Creek ravine, which is being developed as a third very attractive and usable picnic spot.

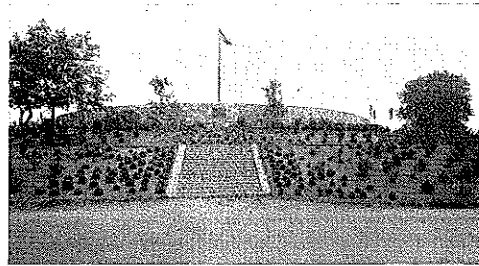
6. FORMAL PARK: About twenty-five acres of land immediately adjoining the main River Road have been developed as a formal park, to set off and emphasize the State's memorial of the site of "The Crossing."

7. FOREST NURSERY: Immediately back of this formal area and lying adjacent to Continental Lane, a State Forest Nursery has been established in which tree seedlings are grown for reforestation work throughout the State. This feature is both attractive, instructive and useful. The nursery now has an annual capacity of two million and a half seedlings and will ultimately produce from three to five million seedlings a year for use by the State on the State Forests and by private owners on their idle land in bringing back productive forests to New Jersey's two million acres of woodland.

8. FOREST PLANTATIONS: Between Continental Lane and Steel's Creek, nearly half of the open land in the park, has been planted with forest tree seedlings. There are about 100,000 trees started in this area which as time goes on will develop into a wonderfully attractive grove of evergreens about 100 acres in area. The planting immediately along the lane comprises sample blocks of about one



A GLIMPSE OF THE GARDEN

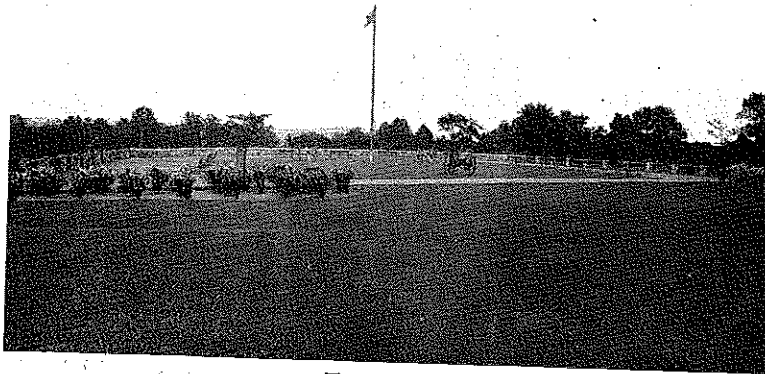


PLAZA ENTRANCE

acre each, of each of the evergreens used for forest planting in the State.

The balance of the property is being developed as greensward, plantations, and groves with further provision of recreational facilities intended.

9. MEMORIALS: Already a number of organizations have been granted the privilege of establishing memorials in the park. The Department in accepting gifts to be used for memorials is avoiding in every way the commonplace and formal note, in an endeavor to have the entire environment at the park in keeping with its natural treatment and the Colonial atmosphere. The Daughters of the Revolution have installed a handsome and extremely attractive old fashioned garden, immediately in the rear of the restored ferry house. The Daughters of the American Revolution have provided a historic marker along the river bank. The Sons of the Revolution have furnished a flag pole on the main Plaza. The Sons of the American Revolution have placed an old fashioned Colonial pump on one of the public water-supply wells near the Plaza. The Patriotic Order Sons of America have built an attractive fountain in memory of John Honeyman. The American Tree Association has made a planting of 13 American elms, one tree dedicated to each of the original 13 colonies. Another historic marker, placed at the site of the Crossing before the park project was begun, by the Society of the Cincinnati, has been given a place along the main highway.



THE PLAZA

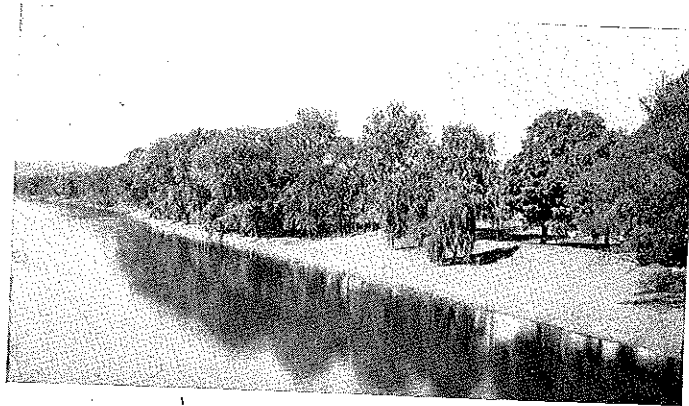
THE PARK A NATIONAL SHRINE

The significance of the Park is rooted deep in the heart of Americanism. Its site is honored ground to every true American. Its development is a patriotic privilege and duty and has been so undertaken. Washington Crossing Park is a fitting tribute to the heroism of those whose travail on behalf of human liberty it commemorates. It takes its place naturally amongst our national shrines.



STATE FOREST TREE NURSERY





THE NEW JERSEY SHORE OF THE DELAWARE ON WHICH
WASHINGTON'S ARMY LANDED

MEMORANDA

