

Johnson (McConkey) Ferry House and Continental Lane

Bill – The following are my comments and thoughts about the location of the road Washington took to Trenton and the design and renovations to the Johnson Ferry House.

Continental Lane

Traditional use would lead one to believe that Route 546 was the road Washington used to march his troop from Pennsylvania to Trenton. Roads throughout the Delaware River Valley follow a stream because that is the lowest slope. Route 546 follows a stream; the Continental Lane is on high ground and could have been an orchard lane.

The first Ferry was probably poled or rowed across the Delaware with an upriver and down river landing. I would assume the Johnson Ferry House would have been located near the upstream landing as most traffic was from the local farms going to the Newtown Market (PA Route 532) as described by Nancy. When the cable ferry was introduced, it would have gone straight across following the current bridge and terminating at the Nelson House.

Perhaps Washington returned down the Orchard path to the Ferry House.

Johnson (McConkey) Ferry House

I looked up “Dutch Colonial House” (circa 1625-1840) in the Field Guide to American Houses. An “Early rural traditional house” (before 1750) had side gable roofs with no eave overhang and they were typically one story. The gambrel design originated after 1750 in the Hudson Valley region and probably would not have reached this area. The Dutch Revival movement occurred around 1895 to 1915.

The original 1740 house would have been one story with a gable roof. The addition in 1760 to its current size would probably have had a low sloped shed roof. If the roof was raised on the addition in 1760, the photo (probably 1890 or later) would not have reflected the roof over the original house.

I would surmise the Gambrel Roof was constructed during the Dutch Revival era (1895-1915) and may have been added when Strittmatter renovated the property in 1907(?). I believe it was mentioned he was a historical buff and would have been looking to make the Ferry House historic as a Dutch Colonial.

When the State took over the property in 1922 they kept the Gambrel Roof design but replaced the entire roof finishing off the second floor and adding the spiral staircase for access by the Public. Because of the deteriorated sill plate from dampness coming up from the stone foundation, I speculate they raised the foundation (as evident in the added panel to the cellar door) using the stone from the barn’s demolished upper floor. I also speculate they used the beams from the barn for the gambrel roof.

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