

BICENTENNIAL PLANS
WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK

INTRODUCTION

Over the years a number of plans have been presented and considered for improving and developing Washington Crossing State Park. However, to date, no significant changes or construction has occurred in the park to improve its value to the citizens of New Jersey. We as a State administrative agency (Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry) and you as citizens of Hopewell Township are now faced with the Bicentennial and the prospect of having thousands of visitors coming to view the place of Washington's historic crossing of the Delaware from Pennsylvania to New Jersey.

The Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters is reported to be proceeding with a 4 million dollar program to prepare for the onslaught of visitors on their side of the river. New Jersey, as yet, has no approved or mutually agreed upon plans to meet the impending public needs; either within the park or outside of it.

In view of this the Bureau of Parks has considered the prior proposals and public reactions on developing the park and has prepared a minimal development plan which will meet the basic visitor needs during the Bicentennial. This plan is a temporary measure for meeting the immediate public visitations which are expected to begin next Spring and Summer. If the improvements function properly and prove to be adequate, there is a real possibility that no further development of the historic area would be necessary at the park in the future.

Our primary considerations in developing this minimal plan involved public access, circulation, parking, interpretive programming, sanitary and food needs. Secondary considerations have been directed to the relocation of and provision of additional day use picnicking as well as providing an area for overnight transient campers. A more detailed presentation of all these aspects follows.

PRIMARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE
HISTORIC AREA

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Several basic plans were considered for dealing with the problems of access, circulation, and parking as they relate to providing the public with the most benefits from the park's historic area. To give better definition of the historic area and to provide an appealing atmosphere for the public visiting this area, it was felt that motor vehicles should be restricted. Access and circulation to the Memorial Overlook, Ferry House, and Flag Museum will be achieved by walking or bicycling. The existing park access roads from State Route 29 and County Route 546 are to be closed.

Primary vehicle access shall be achieved by using existing park roads; creating a one way circular loop entrance and exit road. (See map). The entrance on Brickyard Road requires some improvements, but no new points of entrance or exit would be created.

The suggested plans for parking involve the use of an existing lot located behind the maintenance building and the creation of a new lot along the lower edge of the playfield across the field from Sullivan Grove. (See map). The lot at the rear of the maintenance building would require improvement and a heavy vegetative screen between it and County Route 546 would be added. The primary lot along the playfield would be installed at a lower elevation than the major field area and with appropriate grading it would not be obtrusive or block any views. The two lots would hold approximately 275 cars and buses and on days of heavy use more vehicles could be parked on the grass fields. A connecting road would join the parking lots and be appropriately screened by vegetative plantings. By accomodating vehicles in this manner, no backup or build-up of traffic should occur on the local roads.

Interpretive Program

The interpretive program is of primary importance for orienting the park visitors, giving them the proper historical perspective of the events which occurred, and for acquainting them with the other programs and facilities within the park. A five point program is proposed which includes a slide show, rejuvenation of the Memorial Overlook, visitation to the Ferry House and Flag Museum, craft displays and military demonstrations, and the display of the 1921 George Harding Mural along with other pertinent museum displays.

The audio-visual slide presentation would be developed and shown in the proposed visitors center. It would show the early military aspects of the war, the New York defeats, the New Jersey retreat, military strategy of the river crossing and the Battle of Trenton. Automatic Carousel equipment would be used in conjunction with a timed taped narrative.

Rejuvenation of the Memorial Overlook would be achieved cooperatively with the Trenton Civitan Club. They have proposed for this area a flag grove depicting the flags and stones from the original 13 colonies. The provision of interpretive plaques, maps, or other displays at this area could also direct the visitor to the river crossing point and the events that occurred there.

The Ferry House and Flag Museum will remain open to visitors, but due to the size limitations of these structures some of the public may not be able to view their interiors on busy days. The structures will represent restored buildings of the 18th century architecture and they will be attractive to antique buffs. Visitors will receive information on the history of the buildings, but the major park historical interpretation shall be given in the proposed visitors center.

The suggested craft displays and military demonstrations would be held on weekends at appropriate locations in the historic area. Examples of these activities would include: smithing, spinning and weaving, military camp life, colonial cooking, carpentry, and gunsmithing. Various fife and drum corps groups will also be scheduled for added visitor interests.

The State has in its possession the original 1921 George Harding mural depicting Washington crossing the Delaware. This valuable art work is 14 x 21 feet in size and it needs some restorative work before it can be displayed. The ideal location for this mural would be in the proposed visitors center serving as the most prominent feature display. Self activating audio-phones would provide a short explanation of the crossing and tell the history of the mural. Other corresponding displays and artifacts would also be presented.

The above ideas represent only a small portion of the many possible interpretive programs. Other program ideas or suggestions will be considered.

Visitors Center and Food Concession

Presentation of a positive park program and the necessary historical interpretive media requires having a building to gather the public as they enter the park and relate to them the appropriate information. In addition to providing an interpretive program and exhibits, the visitors center would also house sanitary facilities and areas for a public information booth and souvenir sales.

The recommended location for the center is on a corner of the play-field across from Sullivan Grove with ready accessibility to the historic area, Continental Lane, and the picnic area. (See map). This structure, as proposed, would be a prefabricated building which would supply the stated needs, but it could be moved at some future date if necessary. Being prefabricated has the advantage of short term assembly or in time for service next Spring.

A food concession is proposed for location at the existing picnic shelter in Sullivan Grove. This facility would be large enough to meet day use visitors food needs on a year round basis. The bicycle concession which is now at this location would be moved and possibly expanded on a site near the proposed visitors center (See map).

SECONDARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE
PARK AREA

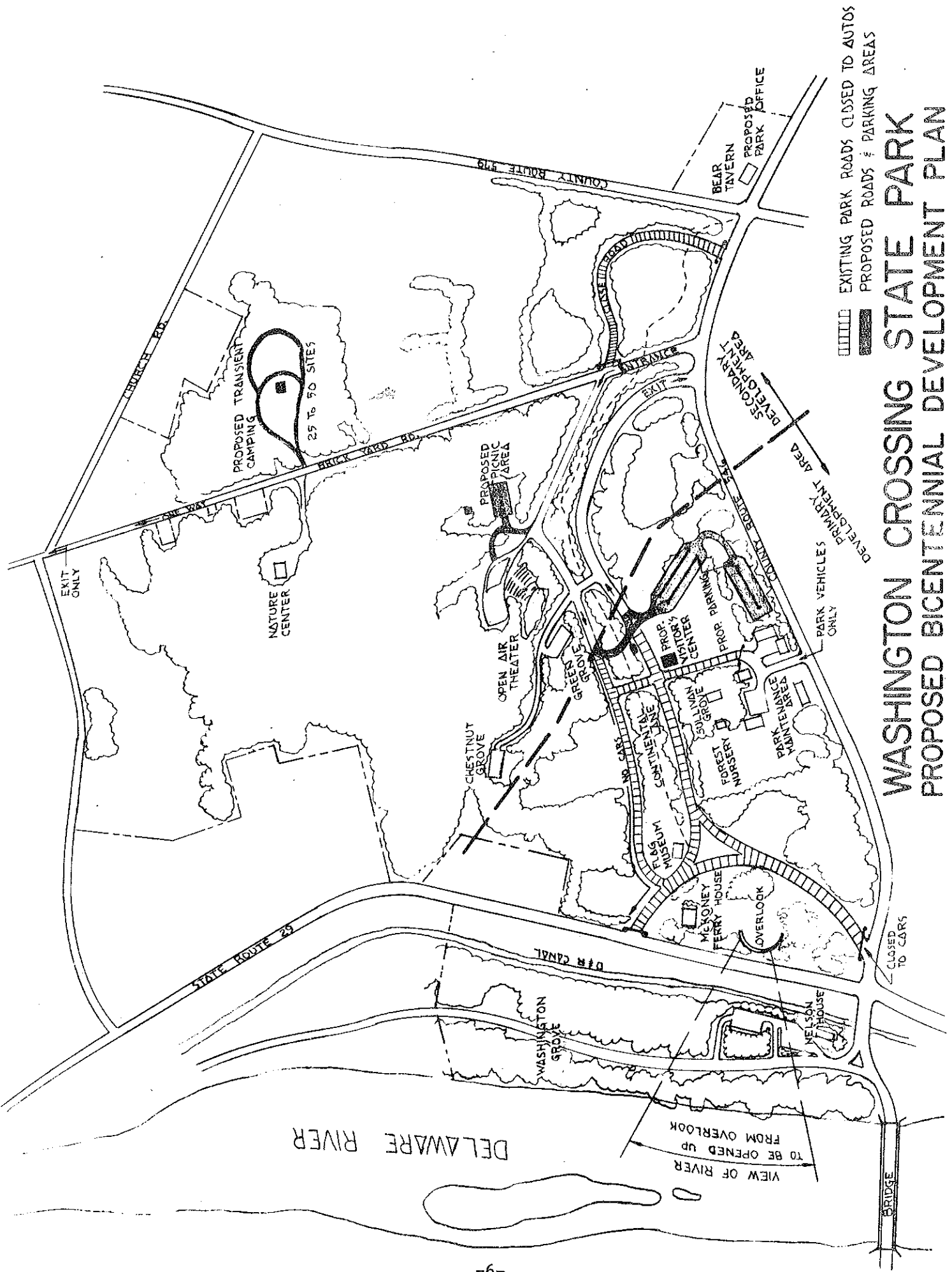
Picnicking

By centering the historic activities, visitors center, and food concession around Sullivan Grove, obvious conflicts will arise with the present day use activities. Therefore, it is proposed to relocate the family picnickers, playfields, and other current uses to a new picnic area located to the west of the Open Air Theatre. (See map). With minor modifications this site could serve all the public uses that are now located at Sullivan Grove. The development would include mowing of the weeds and low brush, defining a parking area, the addition of tables and grills, improvement of the gravel roads, installation of sanitary facilities, and the installation of play apparatus.

Camping

It is anticipated that there will be a significant demand for transient campsites. Families will be arriving to visit the historic area and be expecting to find facilities for overnight camping. Since there are no such accommodations in the immediate vicinity, it is proposed to install 25 to 50 family campsites in the area where group camping is now permitted off Phillips Farm. (See map).

The development would include the clearing of a loop road and the associated campsites and the provision of sanitary facilities. These sites would obviously be rustic with very limited facilities.

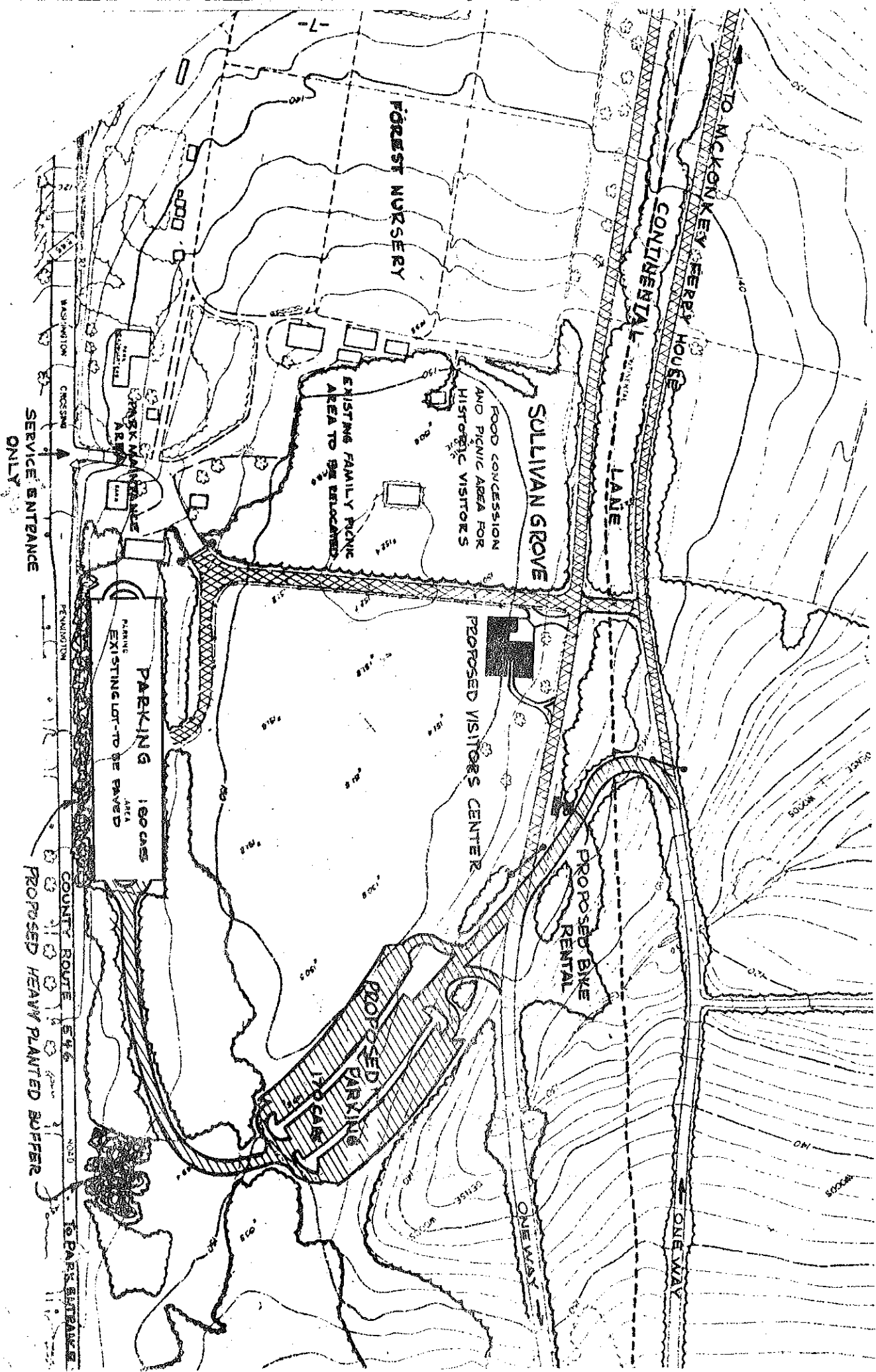


WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK PROPOSED BICENTENNIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

7-75

NO SCALE

A.P.



XXXXXXXX EXISTING ROADS TO BE CLOSED TO
 AUTO TRAFFIC-PEDESTRIANS
 AND BICYCLES ONLY
 // PROPOSED ROADS & PARKING LOT

WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK
PROPOSED BICENTENNIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DETAILED SITE PLAN OF PROPOSED VISITORS CENTER AREA

SCALE 1"=200'
 7-75 1.0.

DELAWARE RIVER

BRIDGE

NELSON HOUSE

WASHINGTON GROVE

STATE ROUTE 29

OVERLOOK

MELONKEY FERRY HOUSE

FLAG MUSEUM

COTTAGE

CHESTNUT GROVE

GREEN GROVE

OPEN-AIR THEATER

NATURE CENTER

WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK

ALTERNATE PROPOSAL

BICENTENNIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NO SCALE

7-75

10.

COUNTY ROUTE 546

PARK VEHICLES ONLY

PROPOSED ENTRANCE & EXIT FOR HISTORIC AREA

PROPOSED PARKING

PROPOSED PICNIC AREA

PROPOSED VISITORS CENTER

PROPOSED NURSERY

PROPOSED MAIN ENCLAVE AREA

GROUP USE AREA

PROPOSED TRANSIENT CAMPING AREA

EXIT ONLY

COURT RD

COUNTY ROUTE 579

BEAR HAVEN

PROPOSED PARK OFFICE

PROPOSED ENTRANCE FOR CAMPING, GROUP USE, & NATURE CENTER

EXISTING & PROPOSED PARK ROADS CLOSED TO AUTOS

PROPOSED ROADS & PARKING AREAS

