

## FAMOUS POEM INSPIRED CREATION OF WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK IN TITUSVILLE, NEW JERSEY

On January 25, 2012 Washington Crossing State Park will begin celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the first land purchase that allowed for its creation and ultimately its designation as a state park in 1927. The process to create the park was a long and arduous one, sometimes stalling for lack of interest or money and then at other times undertaking grand plans including the one originally designed by Charles Leavitt, a well known landscape architect in the early twentieth century. The park was created to commemorate the famed 1776 crossing of the Delaware River by General George Washington and 2,400 men of the Continental Army.

Just as a proposed bill was being introduced in the New Jersey State Legislature to appropriate money to purchase the first piece of land for the park, a poem by T. J. Walker, of Lambertville, New Jersey, was published in the Trenton Evening Times on January 25, 1912. The poem, entitled Washington's Crossing, lamented that the land that had been scene of the epic crossing still had not been publically acquired and that the country had not recognized the site of national importance. In the poem Walker describes the Society of the Cincinnati's monument, the only memorial on the site at the time, as "a moss-clad stone" along with the name of the hamlet. (The memorial now stands near the corner of Route 29 and the Washington Crossing and Pennington Road.

A witness to the effort, N.K Halteman, later acknowledged that the poem had come at a time of "divine guidance." After being read at a meeting of a patriotic organization, the poem was sent to New Jersey's Senators and Assemblymen. Halteman said "No one but a true, patriotic citizen, whose patriotism has been wounded by the long neglect of his countrymen, could have expressed such noble sentiments." The organization had several thousand copies printed and distributed.

The haunting poem that spurred so many to action follows:

### WASHINGTON'S CROSSING

By T.J. Walker

Why leave unmarked the famous place

Where Washington once led  
His little band of unclothed men,  
Unclothed, unshod, unfed,  
To brave the water's icy snares  
That this great nation live;  
And yet in memory of that deed,  
No honor give?

Save for the name, a moss-clad stone,  
No shaft, nor columns rise;  
And yet no spot in this far land  
Is more immortalized!  
Is not the greatness of the past,  
The Crossing's cherished fame,  
Enough to build a monument  
All worthy of the name?

Our country's mighty wealth grows on,  
The millions mount apace;  
Yet not a copper, not a flag,  
To designate the place.  
Oh, countrymen this long neglect  
Is dead, I hope for aye.  
Buy up the land, lay out the walks,  
Our country's own alway.

Several weeks later the legislation was passed and signed by the governor and the first land acquisition was made late in 1912. From that poem came today's memorial to honor Washington and his brave Continental soldiers and a park that has expanded far beyond its original mission to provide recreation for thousands each year. In the coming year, the park will be sponsoring a series of events to commemorate its creation. Contact Gail Kennedy, Customer Service Representative at Washington Crossing State Park in Titusville, New Jersey for further information at 609-737-0617.

