



THE CONTINENTALS MARCHING ON TRENTON IN THE EARLY MORNING,
DECEMBER 26, 1776.

WHERE WASHINGTON ONCE LED

A HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY'S WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK

Last Update – April 21, 2012

Last Update – September 8, 2012

SLIDE – CROSSING – LEUTZE PAINTING

Thanks for having me – nice to be with old friends and new friends

BWI – ED/MVHS, CE/RMMV, Historian and Writer

A story of perseverance, dreams, hard work, at times effective leadership, and a long slog

Those who want park struggle to get it

A story of interesting people including names like Isidor Strittmatter, Dirk Van Dommelen, T.J. Walker, C.P. Wilber and many others

I wish I could tell the whole story today but there simply is not enough time and the book will be out soon

SLIDE – THE CROSSING - TITLE

Introduce Bill Farkas – Park benefactor whose vision has made this project possible

SLIDE – THE CROSSING - TITLE

The story begins with a remarkable moment not just in American history but the world's history

SLIDE – CROSSING - PAINTING

It is story of a series of crucial military defeats of the Continental Army during 1776 – Washington loses the Battle of Brooklyn, New York, Long Island, White Plains and retreats across New Jersey

Arrives in PA on December 7-8 crossing at Trenton after having gathered up all the boats on the Delaware

December 14, the Hessians move into Trenton

December 19 – American Crisis is published

Christmas – Three crossings of the Delaware planned, two fail further south at Trenton and Bristol Ferry

December 27 – Washington crosses again, on way to 2nd Battle of Trenton and Princeton

SLIDE – LINE OF MARCH

Cross the river and march to Trenton under the most difficult of circumstances, Crossing completed, Washington defeats the Hessians, captures 900 of them and returns to Pennsylvania
It is a battle of enormous significance; Cornwallis will later toast Washington's victory at Trenton as his greatest in the war

SLIDE – THE SETTING

Efforts to save Washington Headquarters at Newburgh, Mount Vernon, Virginia

Effort to save Washington Crossing will not begin until the late 19th century, and then the effort goes through rhythms of activity and inactivity

The site of the crossing has come through many physical changes since the crossing.

SLIDE – FERRIES

Ferries were first established there in the 1690s, and continued until the 1834

SLIDE – BRIDGES

The first bridge was constructed in 1834, replaced by a steel bridge in 1903 which is the current used bridge.

SLIDE – SIGNBOARD

On both sides of the covered bridge are signboards painted by the itinerant painter Edward Hicks that depict the crossing

SLIDE - D & R CANAL AND FEEDER

Canal and Feeder are constructed in 1830s and pass through crossing site and within eyesite of the Johnson Ferry House, known to history for many years as the McKonkey Ferry House Opens in 1834

SLIDE – BEL-DEL LINE

Bel-Del line, built in 1850-1855, later taken over by the PRR runs along old towing path of D & R feeder. PRR runs passengers service until 1960 and tracks were pulled up in 1979-1980.

Route 29 - 1917

Also, there is an erosion of shoreline

SLIDE – CALLS FOR A PARK

1844 – first reenactment of crossing

1876 – 2nd recreating of the crossing during centennial year

SLIDE – BCHS MEMORIAL

1895 – BCHS and SC memorials dedicated

SLIDE – JUNCKER PLAN

1901 – Effort to create national military park

1900s – Growing enthusiasm to create park

1909 – Gustave Juncker calls for a park with wide boulevards

HANDOUT - (JUNCKER PLAN)

SLIDE – TAYLOR OPERA HOUSE

1909 – K of C meeting

SLIDE – PARK'S CREATION

SLIDE 1913 MAP

1910 – 1st WCPC formed – create initial plan (HANDOUT ORIGINAL ACQUISITION PLAN), no money

Properties proposed to buy – both sides of Route 546 and Strittmatter farm

SLIDE - STRITTMATTER

1910 – Entrance of Isidor Strittmatter, has acquired the most important properties on both sides of the crossing. Doctor from Philadelphia, loves Washington, the Revolution and buys up the land in early 1900s on both sides of the river with the hopes of some kind of memorial

POSA PA memorial, second major memorial

1912 – 2nd WCPC formed – have money, make first acquisition – Blackwell farm – Leavitt Plan 1913)

1915 – DCD formed – unable to proceed forward, 1918, consider selling the Blackwell farm

SLIDE – MEMORIAL BRIDGE - LEAVITT PLAN

Central aspect of all plans for the park is a large concrete memorial bridge

1923 - Leavitt Plan (HANDOUT)

Central aspect of Leavitt Plan is a memorial bridge across the Delaware River

SLIDE - TEN ACRE PLAN

Essentially creates a memorial to the crossing at the far western end of the park only

SLIDE - FISKE PLAN

1925 Fiske Plan (HANDOUT) – creates long term vision for the park – Ten Acre Plan Approved

Called for shrine to crossing at east end of the park,
combination fields, tree plantations, a state nursery, and future
expansion

This new effort to create park begins a large inflow of money
work begins to get underway, both to open park and celebrate
sesquicentennial of the Declaration of Independence – Front
entrance, 10 acre plan,

SLIDE – JOHNSON FERRY HOUSE

JFH, stone barn, Blackwell mansion, Plaza, nursery,
plantations, memorials and donations by patriotic groups the
DR, DAR, SR, SAR all built

SLIDE – REROUTING OF CONTINENTAL LANE

What has once been a straight farm lane is changed at the
Visitor Center and begins to parallel the Steele's Run

SLIDE – DA GARDEN AND SUNDIAL

SLIDE – STATE NURSERY

SLIDE- TREE PLANTATIONS

SLIDE – STATE NURSERY BUILDING

SLIDE – FLAG POLE AT THE PLAZA

SLIDE – OFFICIAL DEDICATION

SLIDE – DAR MEMORIAL

SLIDE – HONEYMAN MEMORIAL – POSA NJ

SLIDE – GW BICENTENNIAL AND TREE PLANTINGS

1932 – GW bicentennial – Elm trees planted in the park and along Route 546, some of which still survive

SLIDE – TREE PLANTINGS

SLIDE - GW MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

SLIDE - COLONIAL GATEWAY AND MAIN ENTRANCE

SLIDE - PLAQUES

SLIDE – DEPRESSION YEARS

Might think that the Depression years might have been years of inaction, yet they build on what had been done and created the park as we essentially know it today

SLIDE - WPA DRAWING

New Deal agency built much of the current infrastructure

SLIDE HONEYMOON BRIDGE

SLIDE – STONE ARCH BRIDGE OVER THE STEELE’S RUN NEAR OPEN AIR THEATER

SLIDE – GREENE DRIVE

Culverts

SLIDE - SULLIVAN GROVE

Renovate pavilion

SLIDE GREEN GROVE

Picnic tables, fireplaces, trails, picnic groves, shelter

SLIDE - GREEN GROVER WATER SYSTEMS

SLIDE – CHESTNUT GROVE AND FOOT BRIDGES

SLIDE – STEELE’S RUN IMPROVEMENTS

OAT dam would be replace in future years after a major flood

**SLIDE – ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, PARK OFFICE,
EQUIPMENT BUILDING, GATES**

SLIDE – THE QUIET YEARS - TITLE

SLIDE – HALIFAX VISIT, PLANE CRASH, CAMPOREES

SLIDE – THE BICENTENNIAL

**SLIDE - DIRK VAN DOMMELEN AND WASHINGTON CROSSING
ASSOCIATION**

SLIDE 1960s – GREEN ACRES PURCHASES

(1960s PARK HANDOUT)

SLIDE - OPEN AIR THEATER

WCA

SLIDE - NATURE CENTER, NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

SLIDE – TRENTON KENNEL CLUB SHOW

**MAJOR PUBLIC PROGRAMS, DOG SHOWS, STEAM ENGINE
SHOWS**

SLIDE – VISITOR CENTER & PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Visitor center built -1976

Controversy

SLIDE – KNOX GROVE

SLIDE – MAIN ACCESS CROSSINGS

1970s – Bicentennial – major changes in access and expansive
plans, observatory

SLIDE - THE MODERN PARK - TITLE

SLIDE – SWAN COLLECTION

SLIDE – OBSERVATORY & NEW NATURE CENTER

Observatory

Park Expands to include more partners

SLIDE – NEW JERSEY HISTORY FAIR

NJ History Fair,

SLIDE – PARK PARTNERSHIPS

1980s-2000s – Park continues to expand upon original boundaries (PARK TODAY - HANDOUT) – partnerships with other agencies – Baldpate Mountain, Goat Hill, Friends of Hopewell Valley, Mercer County, PLHP

SLIDE – REENACTMENTS

1947 – Rider College, 1952, St. John Turrell

SLIDE - REENACTMENT

A long legacy of public service – both remembering Washington and the Army's accomplishment at both Battle of Trenton, Princeton and also expanding role of park both for the local and regional community.

SLIDE - PARK MAP

Questions