

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Washington Crossing State Park! This is a self-guided walking tour of the historic section of the park; if completed the entire tour covers seventeen sites, beginning at the Nelson House and ending at Bear Tavern Road. Since it is self-guided, please feel free to tailor it to your own liking---tour the historic buildings, wander through the arboretum, view the slide presentation in the Visitors' Center, and most of all ENJOY!!!!

Basic Information about the Park

- Established in 1912 to commemorate the first turning point in the American Revolution
- Located eight miles north of Trenton, New Jersey's state capital
- Contains a total of 807 acres of land
- Equiped with five picnic grove areas

*Special features of the park include:

- Open Air Theater
- Nature Center
- Group Campsites
- Physical Fitness Trail
- Historic Buildings
- Cross Country Ski Trails
- Visitors' Center

prepared by
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1981, revised 1982

*SITE 1

1

NELSON HOUSE: The Nelson House is located along the Delaware River near the site where George Washington and his Revolutionary army crossed the Delaware River on that bleak December evening in 1776. The original portion of the house was built prior to the American Revolution and was used as a ferry boat terminal, yet with the completion of the Delaware and Raritan Feeder Canal (located just beyond the Nelson House) the building was then purchased by a man named Nelson. Between the years 1835 and 1840 he proceeded to transform it into a hotel to accommodate the great amount of travellers to the area. Unfortunately the eighteenth century portion of the house was destroyed, so all that remains today is the addition that was completed in the 1800s.

DIRECTIONS: To reach sites 2, 3, and 4 walk out the front door of the Nelson House and walk across the street to the river bank.

*SITE 2

FERRY BOAT: Resting on the bank of the Delaware River, approximately at the site of the crossing, is a full scale reproduction of a ferry boat (also commonly referred to as a flat boat) like that employed by the ferry boat keeper during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These boats were originally used by both farmers and travellers to cross the river. It is made of White Oak planks held together by wooden pins and the entire boat was then tarred in order to prevent any leakage of water. The boats were significant in the crossing of the Delaware River because two of them were used by Washington and his men to transport the ammunition carts, the cannons, and the officers' horses from the Pennsylvania shore to the New Jersey shore. Twenty-two Durham boats were used to transport the 2000 men across the river.

*SITE 3

RIVER AND LANDING SITE: When standing on the bank of the Delaware River just in front of the Nelson House, one is able to view the area of the river that General George Washington and his soldiers crossed in December of 1776. At the time of the crossing the river was 200 feet wider than it is today; today the river is 800 feet across. The Delaware River originates in the Western Catskill Mountains of New York where the East Branch and West Branch Rivers meet at Hancock, New York and flows southwardly 280 miles to the Delaware Bay. This area of the river, adjacent to the park, is used for recreational purposes such as boating, fishing, water skiing, and tubing, whereas the stretch just south of the park, from Trenton, New Jersey to Wilmington, Delaware, is largely employed for industrial commerce.

*SITE 4

BRIDGE: When the canal (that is located behind the Nelson House) was completely built in 1834, the ferry boat systems in this immediate area were discontinued. The bridge to the left of the Nelson House was constructed in the late 1930s and replaced the ferry boat system. However, this bridge was completely destroyed during a storm on January 8, 1941. A covered bridge was soon erected, but

was swept away when the river flooded on October 10, 1903. In 1904 a six span steel bridge, which remains today, was built. It is only fifteen feet wide and can hold vehicles that weight no more than six tons gross weight.

DIRECTIONS: To reach sites 5 and 6 walk to the right-hand side of the Nelson House yard and proceed up the gravel path to the bridge which crosses over the canal.

*SITE 5

DELAWARE AND RARITAN FEEDER CANAL: Located immediately behind the Nelson House is the Delaware and Raritan Feeder Canal. The Feeder Canal is twenty-two miles long, beginning at Raven Rock and continuing southwardly to Trenton where it connects into the Delaware and Raritan Canal. Historically, the Feeder Canal had two main purposes: first, it was employed in the transportation of coal and other goods and second, the Feeder Canal supplied water into the main portion of the canal system that runs from the Raritan River to the Delaware River and therefore connects New York and Philadelphia. The entire canal system, which spans over sixty miles, was completed in 1834 and was continuously used until 1932 when the state of New Jersey took charge of it. In 1974 the system was proclaimed a state park, afterwhich it has been used for recreational purposes such as fishing, and canoeing.

*SITE 6

RAILROAD SYSTEM: Up until 1979 railroad tracks could be found immediately next to the canal hut, today all that remains is a path which is now part of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. These tracks were part of the Belvidre-Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad System that began in Belvidre, New Jersey, the county seat of Warren County and ended at the New Jersey state capital, Trenton. The railroad system was completed in 1850, from which time it was a transportation supplement to the canal system and was used to transport both passengers and freight. In 1975 the use of a large majority of the tracks was halted and the land on which the train ran was taken charge of by the state of New Jersey.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 7 walk to the pedestrian bridge.

*SITE 7

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE: The pedestrian bridge was built in 1976. It crosses over highway 29 and connects the two portions of the park, the lower portion where Washington Grove, the Nelson House, and the ferry boat reproduction are all located and the upper portion where all of the other facilities and points of interest can be found.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 8, walk across the pedestrian bridge to the overlook area. Be sure to walk over to the will section located between the two brown information boards for a beautiful view of the river.

*SITE 8

OVERLOOK: From the overlook a magnificent view of the Delaware River

can be seen. On the far side of the river is the state of Pennsylvania and on the near side of the river is Washington Grove, a beautiful picnic area. It was at this point of the river that Washington and his troops crossed on December 26, 1776 from Pennsylvania to New Jersey on their way to attack the Hessian troops that were stationed in Trenton. Malta Island is located in the river at this point. It was on this island that Washington and his troops hid their boats prior to the crossing.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 9, walk back to where the pedestrian bridge meets the overlook area. At this point take the gravel path to the asphalt drive and turn right. A short distance down the road on the left is the George Washington Memorial Arboretum.

*SITE 9

ARBORETUM: The George Washington Memorial Arboretum was a gift to the state of New Jersey in 1932. It was presented by Charles Lathrop Pack and his son, Arthur Newton Pack in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Washington. It contains a large variety of plants, trees, and shrubs all native to the state of New Jersey and is open for your enjoyment. Pamphlets of this site may be obtained at either the Park Office or the Visitors' Center.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 10, walk back to the asphalt drive and retrace your steps to the gravel path. Continue down the asphalt drive and at the fork in the road bear to the left. The Ferry House is located a little ways down the road on the left and the entrance to the building faces Highway Route 29.

*SITE 110

FERRY HOUSE: The Johnson Ferry House is an historic landmark from the American Revolutionary period. The original portion of the house was constructed in 1740 by Garrett Johnson and consisted of the two downstairs front rooms and the upstairs loft. When the Johnson family grew in size an addition was placed onto the house and included the backrooms of both the first and second floors. At the time of the crossing, the house was the homestead for the James Slack family who were the ferry operators. This fact is significant because it was James Slack who loaned one of his flat boats to Washington in an attempt to aid in the historic crossing. The house has been renovated by the state and is furnished as it would have been at the time of the crossing. Public tours of the building are available as scheduled.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 11 (which is optional), walk down the front path of the Ferry House, cross Route 29 and walk down the stone steps. The next site is located to the left of the base of the steps.

*SITE 11

JOHN HONEYMAN WELL (OPTIONAL): Located directly across highway Route 29, near the canal, is the John Honeyman Memorial Fountain. This

fountain was a donation to the park in December of 1930 by the New Jersey division of the Sons of the American Revolution in commemoration of John Honeyman, a spy who had been operating in Trenton for the Continental Army. It has been reported that he was a butcher working in Trenton during the mid-seventeen hundreds and was therefore able to report information concerning the Hessian troops stationed there to the Continental soldiers. It was due to these reports that Washington was so well informed about the enemy troops.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 12, retrace your steps from the well to the Ferry House and then back to the asphalt drive. The barn is located immediately across the street.

*SITE 12

FIELDSTONE BARN: The barn, which was a part of the Ferry House homestead, was built entirely out of fieldstone in 1793. This beautiful sturdy structure would have been used for housing various farm animals along with providing the farmer with storage space for his crops. In 1960, the Washington Crossing Historic Association of New Jersey converted this building into a Flag Museum which contained visual displays pertaining to the evolution of the American flag. In 1981 it was closed for interior renovations.

DIRECTIONS: Site 13 is located next to the barn.

*SITE 13

CONTINENTAL LANE: This is approximately the path that Washington and the Revolutionary soldiers took on their way to Trenton after crossing the Delaware River. The path begins here and extends throughout the park for about one and a half miles, it then intersects with Bear Tavern Road (also known as County Route 579) at the outer edge of the park.

DIRECTIONS: To reach any of the other sites of this tour, begin to walk on Continental Lane. At an easy pace the next site will be seen in about five minutes.

*SITE 14

MEMORIAL MARKERS: Located at the base of some of the trees on the right-hand side of the paved driveway (which is to the right of Continental Lane) are memorial markers. They indicate the trees that were donated to the park by various patriotic and service organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the 4-H Club. The majority of the donations were made in 1932 to commemorate George Washington's bicentennial birthday.

DIRECTIONS: To reach site 15, continue to walk down Continental Lane. Where the asphalt drive intersects the lane make a right hand turn and walk up the road towards the Visitors' Center. To your right will be site 15.

*SITE 15

*SITE 15

5

SULLIVAN GROVE: This grove was named after General Sullivan, one of George Washington's subordinate generals who crossed the Delaware River on December 26, 1776 and helped to lead an attack on the Hessian troops located in Trenton. Sullivan Grove is one of five groves in the park. Within this grove is a playground plus a covered pavilion (for those rainy day picnics!), a payphone, and restrooms.

DIRECTIONS: The Visitors' Center is site 16 so continue your walk to that building.

*SITE 16

VISITORS' CENTER: The Visitors' Center was opened to the public in September of 1976 for the Bicentennial celebration of the United States. Designed to accommodate the needs of tourists to the park, the building contains an information desk, an auditorium for audio-visual shows, restroom facilities, a collection of over 850 eighteenth century weapons and artifacts from the American Revolution, and displays pertaining to other aspects of the park.

DIRECTIONS: If you wish to take the CONTINUED WALK then leave the Visitors' Center and continue the walk on Continental Lane. Otherwise, this concludes the Walking Tour. Thank-you for coming to Washington Crossing State Park and please come again!

Hope you have a wonderful day!!!!

*SITE 17

CONTINUED WALK: Approximately one mile down Continental Lane is the intersection of Washington Crossing-Pennington Road (County Route 546) and Bear Tavern Road (County Route 579) where the Park Office is located. Washington and his troops marched down Continental Lane onto Bear Tavern Road which they followed until they arrived in Birmingham (known today as West Trenton). At this point the army divided into two groups: General Sullivan lead one group of men and proceeded to travel southwardly along the river to Trenton, whereas General Green and General Washington took charge of the second group of soldiers that marched to Trenton following a route southeast of Sullivan's division. Both groups arrived in Trenton at eight o'clock in the morning after the four-hour march the previous day!

That concludes the walking tour. We do hope you enjoyed it!!

Have a great day!!!!

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