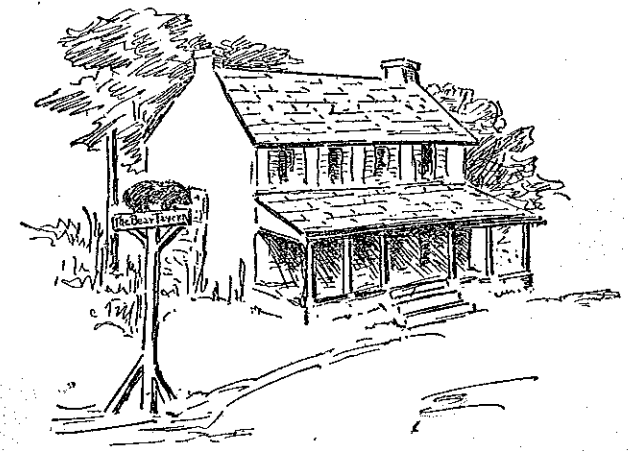


# The Washington's Crossing



## Sketch Book

THE  
WASHINGTON'S CROSSING  
SKETCH BOOK

BY

CHARLES BURR TODD

AUTHOR OF

"THE TRUE AARON BURR"  
"STORY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK"  
ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

THE RIVER SCHOOL OF ART

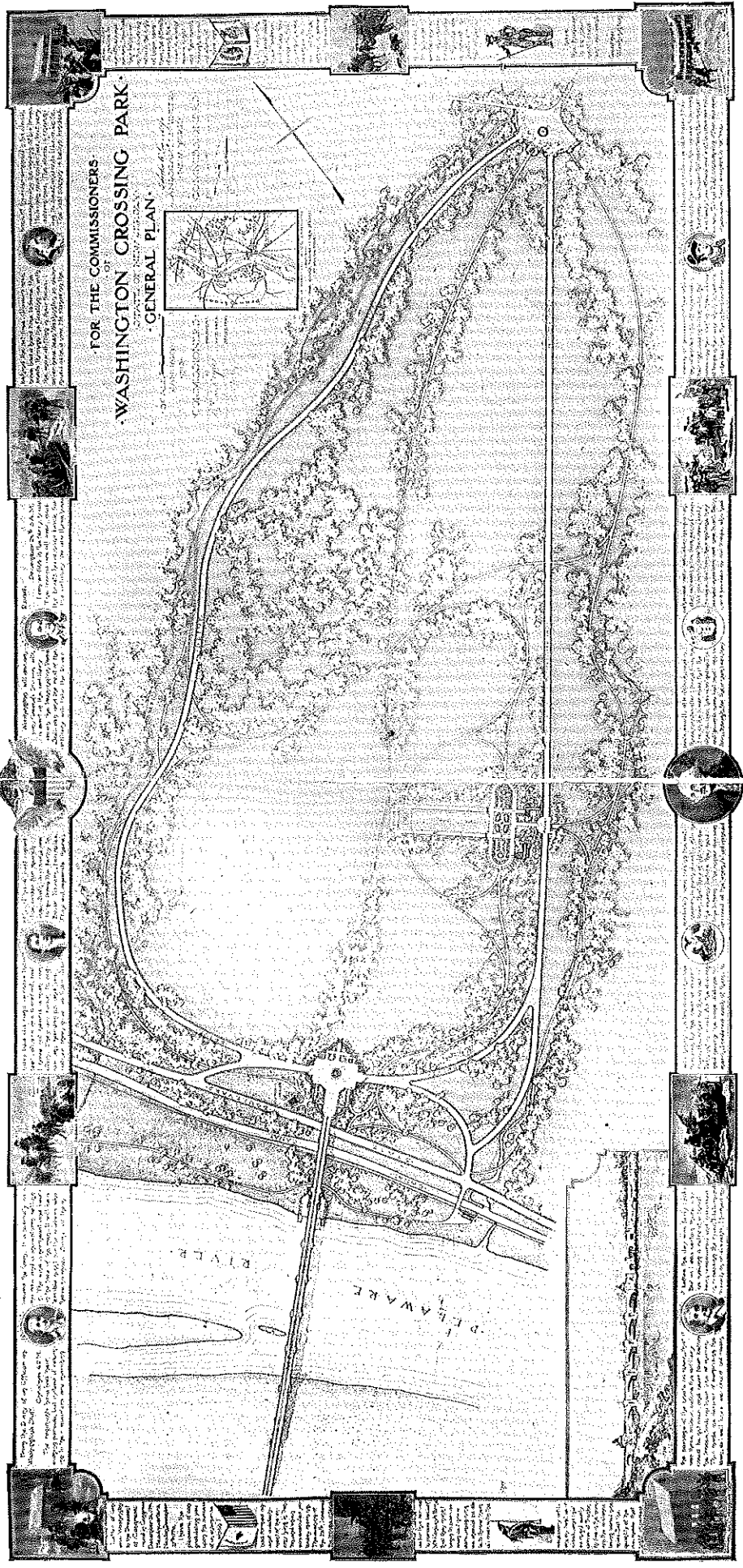
WASHINGTON'S CROSSING  
NEW JERSEY

1914

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1914  
By  
CHARLES BURR TODD  

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FOR THE COMMISSIONERS  
OF  
**WASHINGTON CROSSING PARK**  
GENERAL PLAN.



*[Vertical text on the left side of the plan, partially obscured by the decorative border.]*

*[Vertical text on the right side of the plan, partially obscured by the decorative border.]*

*[Text blocks at the bottom of the plan, likely providing details about the bridge and river crossing.]*

## A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF WASHINGTON CROSSING PARK

BY

CHAS. W. LEAVITT, JR.

In planning for the improvement of the historic grounds traversed by George Washington and the Continental Troops at the critical turning point in the efforts of the United States to obtain freedom, it seemed best to arrange Washington Crossing Park so that it would recall as many of these stirring events as possible.

The plan for this park contemplates a memorial bridge over the Delaware River at a point where the crossing of the troops from the Pennsylvania to the New Jersey shore took place. This bridge will link the two states and form a part of a direct route from New York City to Philadelphia, for which reason it will be greatly appreciated.

From the New Jersey end of this bridge, it is proposed to re-establish the line of march, leading from the old house, which Washington occupied during the transfer of troops across the river, to Bear Tavern, where he stopped for refreshment. At this latter point, the army was divided, one detachment going, under Greene, via Pennington, and the other, under Sullivan, via the River Road, to Trenton.

Along the line of march, through the property which has been acquired by the Washington Crossing Park Commission, will be placed various mementoes of this event. Among others will be a wall and terrace extending out from

the old homestead to a point overlooking the line of march, at which latter place there will be a flag-pole and a plaza, since there is a most beautiful view from here, over the whole park. Where the line of march passes out of the park property, it is proposed to create a plaza, with a statue in the center, surrounded by some high walls, in which will be ornamental gateways. In the sides of these walls will be bas-reliefs, depicting some of the scenes of the march and the various generals engaged in it. The central statue will, of course, be Washington. Similar treatments will be at either end of the bridge.

It is further planned to reforest much of this park land and bring the park into its original condition, retaining only such cultivated portions as may seem wise for the landscape treatment. The old farm- or manor-house on the property will be retained, with rooms for the various historical societies. In connection with this building will be some ornamental flower gardens, in which the Colonial flowers will be cultivated.

## FOREWORD.

Washington's Crossing, brought into prominence of late by the project to erect there a National Park, is situated in Mercer county, New Jersey, nine miles above Trenton by the river road, about sixty miles from New York and forty from Philadelphia.

The project of making here a Memorial Park to commemorate the spot where Washington and his Continentals crossed the Delaware on Christmas night, 1776, to surprise the Hessians and gain the splendid victory of Trenton, had its birth at a meeting held in Taylor Opera House, Trenton, in observance of the first Columbus Day as a legal holiday in New Jersey.

At this meeting were present Governor Fort of New Jersey, the Mayor of Trenton, the Hon. F. O. Briggs, United States Senator from New Jersey, the Hon. Jno. W. Wood, Representative in Congress of the Trenton district, and a great body of representative citizens of the city and state. Near its close a resolution was offered and passed with unanimity requesting Governor Fort to appoint a commission to bring the matter to the attention of the people of New Jersey and of the nation. Governor Fort gave the measure his unqualified approval and appointed twenty-five men and women of prominence throughout the state. This commission, however, did not seem to develop sufficient energy to initiate the movement and carry it to a successful conclusion, and the Legislature of 1912 passed a bill which superseded it by creating a much smaller commission, consisting of the Governor, Comptroller, Treasurer and five citizens of New Jersey, to carry out the object of

the bill. They were to serve without pay, and twenty-five thousand dollars were voted to carry out the purposes of the act. President Woodrow Wilson, then Governor of New Jersey, heartily approved of the bill, and appointed as members Colonel William Libby of Princeton, the Rev. Jesse Joralemon of Jersey City, L. V. Silver of Trenton, Charles Blackman of Atlantic City, and William L. Doyle of Trenton. When the commission met and organized Governor Wilson, as chairman, stated that while the work would have his hearty support he was far too busy to give it his personal attention, and suggested that the commission choose one of its number vice-chairman to act in his place. This was done, Mr. William L. Doyle being appointed to that position. At the same time Mr. L. V. Silver was elected secretary, while the treasurer and comptroller jointly filled the office of treasurer. This commission at once took action. It procured a plan for the erection of a monument that has met with hearty approval. It purchased the Blackwell farm of one hundred acres on the road upon which the patriots marched from the landing to Bear Tavern, and later engaged a prominent landscape engineer, Charles W. Leavitt, Jr., of New York City, to prepare a plan for the proposed park and environment. It has also made proposals for other lands lying between the Blackwell farm and the landing needed in the proper development of the plan, and applied to the Legislature of 1912 for an appropriation sufficient to purchase the same, but while the bill passed the Assembly it failed in the Senate. The commission is therefore now resting hoping for better success with the Legislature of 1914.



## II.

### THE DESCENT ON TRENTON.

The event that gave Washington's Crossing its name and importance was but a minor move on the military chess board, and but little more than a skirmish compared to the great battles of history, but there was a certain initiative about it, a courage, energy, endurance typical of the American spirit that has given it larger space in the popular imagination than any other battle of the Revolution, save perhaps Lexington and Bunker Hill. We are thrilled by Thermopylæ and Horatio's Holding of the Bridge, but here was cold, darkness, tempest, snow and sleet, a wide river filled with floating ice, a nine miles' march, and a seasoned enemy to fight at the end, with an almost impassable river in the rear. Besides, consider what was at stake—the desperate necessity for the stroke.

The August before Washington had suffered defeat on Long Island, had retreated to New York City, to Harlem Heights, across the Hudson into northern New Jersey, and across the state to the Delaware River, always with the victorious forces of Howe and Cornwallis so near in pursuit that every night their camp-fires lighted up his eastern horizon while they whitened the country with proclamations offering free pardon to all "rebels" who would come in, lay down their arms and submit. Always beaten, always retreating, naked, half-starved, unpaid, hopeless, what wonder that his soldiers deserted by hundreds, or that those whose terms of enlistment expired refused

to re-enlist. Finally, early in December, he had been forced to put the Delaware between him and his foes.

Brooding in his camp near Newtown among the Pennsylvania hills, Washington saw that he must strike a blow that would redeem his lost prestige and demoralize the enemy, or, to use his own words in a letter to his brother, "the game was pretty nearly up." Fortunately the overweening confidence of his enemy soon gave him an opportunity.

A band of Hessian mercenaries had led the British advance through New Jersey. They were subjects of six petty princes of Germany who had been torn from their fields, workshops and even churches, and sold to King George for £7, 4s, 4d per head, to aid him in subduing his American colonies. Three regiments of them—the Rall, von Knyphausen and von Lossberg, with a detachment of artillery, fifty Hessian yagers and twenty light dragoons, about 1400 men in all—had gone into winter quarters at Trenton, across the river from Newtown, with other detachments at Bordentown, six miles below, and at other places on the east bank of the Delaware. Washington determined to capture the Trenton contingent. But first he must learn all about them—their number, where the officers were quartered, the position of the men, the outposts, sentinels, etc. He had had with him since leaving the Hudson a veteran of Arnold's march to Quebec who possessed marked qualifications for the post of scout and spy, John Honeyman of Griggstown, New Jersey. A Scotch-Irishman by descent he possessed all the wit and resourcefulness of his race, and a rare power of disguising his personality so as to appear the opposite of his real self. Washington now sent for him and asking his officers to leave the room made known his wants. Honeyman accepted with alacrity, and donning his butcher's frock, with whip in hand went boldly to the Hessian camp, and while bargaining with the commissaries for beef on the hoof gained all the information

his chief desired; he even brought in a few small lots to disarm suspicion. On the afternoon of December 22d, he strolled leisurely out the Trenton road, as if going for more cattle, until three miles outside the Hessian line, he saw two American scouts and attracted their attention by snapping his whip. They pounced upon him instantly and haled him before the Commander-in-Chief.

"Gentlemen," said Washington to his officers, "you may leave the room. I will examine this man in private." They did so, and the Commander was given the intelligence he had asked for to the most minute detail. "You have done well," said he, "and shall be rewarded. Now listen: Spies and traitors swarm my camp and I can trust no one. You will, therefore, be placed in the guard-house for the night, and a court-martial ordered for your trial tomorrow, but I will see that you have a chance to escape during the night. Go, then, to Rall's camp, tell him of your imprisonment here, and give the most gloomy account of our condition possible to lull him to security." These instructions Honeyman carried out\*to the letter.

The Germans feast and drink deep at Christmas, and generally end the day with a dance. Washington, therefore, chose the morning after Christmas for his attack, surmising that the enemy would be in no condition for defence. Preparations were at once begun. Three days' rations were cooked, the Durham boats on the river were commandeered\* and his plan of battle formed. The latter was simple but judicious. General Ewing, at Bristol,

\*These boats played so important a part in the movement that a brief description is in order. They were a sort of canoe from thirty to forty feet long, usually painted black, and carried a crew of four or five men. A steering oar that could be placed at either end and could be wielded by one man guided the craft on the down trip; going up stream she was poled. These boats carried merchandise and even iron ore up and down the Delaware from as far up as Oxford-Furnace, in Sussex county, to Philadelphia for years before canals came into vogue.

nearly opposite Trenton, was to cross the river and seize the bridge over Assumpink Creek thus cutting off Rall's supports at the south; Putnam and Cadwallader were to cross farther south and attack Donop at Bordentown, while Washington, with the main army some 2400 strong, was to cross at McKonkey's Ferry, nine miles above Trenton, and strike Rall from the north.

Early on Christmas morning the latter issued his order for the movement as follows:

"Each brigade to be furnished with two good guides. General Stephen's brigade to form the advance party and to have with them a detachment of the artillery without cannon provided with spikes and hammers to spike up the enemies' cannon in case of necessity, or to bring them off if it can be effected; the party to be provided with drag ropes for the purpose of dragging off the cannon. General Stephen is to attack and force the enemies' guards and seize such posts as may prevent them forming in the streets, and in case they are annoyed from the houses to set them on fire. The brigades of Mercer and Lord Sterling, under the command of Major General Greene, to support General Stephen. This is the second division or left wing of the army and to march by way of the Pennington road.

"St. Clair's, Glover's and Sargent's brigades, under Major General Sullivan, to march by the river road. This is the first division of the army and is to form the right wing. Lord Sterling's brigade to form the reserve of the left wing, and General St. Clair's brigade the reserve of the right wing. These reserves to form a second line in conjunction or a second line to each division as circumstances may require. Each brigadier to make the colonels acquainted with the posts of their respective regiments in the brigade, and the major generals will inform them of the posts of the brigades in the line. Four pieces of artillery

to march at the head of each column; three pieces at the head of the second brigade of each division, and two pieces with each of the reserves. The troops to be assembled one mile back of McKonkey's Ferry, and embark on board the boats in the following order under the direction of Colonel Knox:

"General Stephen's brigade with the detachment of artillery to embark first; General Mercer's next, Lord Sterling's next, General Fernoy's next, who will march into the rear of the second division and file off from the Pennington to the Princeton road in such direction that he can, with the greatest ease and safety, secure the passes between Princeton and Trenton—the guides will be best judges of this. He is to take two pieces of artillery with him. St. Clair's, Glover's and Sargent's brigades to embark in order. Immediately upon their debarkation the whole to form in line and march in subdivisions from the right. The commanding officers of regiments to observe that the divisions be equal, and that proper officers be appointed for each. A profound silence to be enjoined and no man to quit his ranks under pain of death. Each brigadier to appoint flanking parties; the reserve brigades to appoint the rear guards of the columns; the heads of the columns to be appointed to arrive at Trenton at five o'clock. Captain Washington and Captain Flahaven with a party of forty men each to march before the divisions and post themselves on the road about three miles from Trenton and make prisoners of all going or coming out of town. General Stephen will appoint a guard to form a chain of sentries around the landing-place at a sufficient distance from the river to permit the troops to form, this guard not to suffer any person to go in or come out, but to detain all persons who attempt either; this guard to join their brigade when the troops are all over."

The instructions of the brigade commanders to their

colonels may be learned from the following to Colonel Durkee from General Mercer, dated Christmas day! ✓

"Sir—you are to see that your men have three days' provisions ready cooked before 12 o'clock this forenoon, the whole fit for duty except a Sergeant and six men to be left with the baggage, and to parade precisely at four in the afternoon with their arms, accouterments and ammunition in the best order, with their provisions and blankets. You will have them told off in divisions in which order they are to march; eight men abreast, with the officers fixed to their divisions from which they are on no account to separate. No man is to quit his division under pain of instant punishment; each officer is to provide himself with a piece of white paper stuck in his hat for a field mark. You will order your men to assemble and parade them in the valley immediately over the hill on the back of McKonkey's Ferry, to remain there for further orders. A profound silence is to be observed both by officers and men, and a strict and ready attention paid to whatever orders may be given."

There was on Washington's staff at this time a young officer who possessed a happy flow of words with some literary style, and who in his diary wrote a graphic and striking account of the movement which we copy, as on the whole the most satisfactory narrative.

"Dec. 25, Christmas morning.—They make a great deal of Christmas in Germany and no doubt the Hessians will drink a great deal of beer and have a dance tonight. They will be sleepy tomorrow morning. Washington will set the tune for them about daybreak. The rations are cooked. New flints and ammunition have been distributed. Colonel Glover's fishermen are to manage the boats just as they did in the retreat from Long Island.

"Christmas, 6 p.m.—The regiments have had their evening parade but instead of returning to their quarters are

marching toward the ferry. It is fearfully cold and raw and a snow-storm setting in. The wind is northeast and beats in the faces of the men. It will be a terrible night for the men who have no shoes. Some of them have tied old rags around their feet, others are barefoot; but I have not heard a man complain. They are ready to suffer any hardship and die rather than give up their liberty. I have just copied the order for marching. Both divisions are to go from the Ferry to Bear Tavern, two miles. They will separate there. Washington will accompany Greene's division with a part of the artillery down the Pennington road; Sullivan and the rest of the artillery will take the river road.

"Dec. 26, 3 a.m.—I am writing in the ferry house. The troops are all over and the boats have gone back for the artillery. We are three hours behind the set time. Glover's men have had a hard time to force the boats through the floating ice with the snow drifting in their faces. I never have seen Washington so determined as he is now. He stands on the bank of the river wrapped in his cloak, superintending the landing of his troops. He is calm and collected, but very determined. The storm is changing to sleet and cuts like a knife. The last cannon is being landed and we are ready to mount our horses.

"Dec. 26, Noon.—It was nearly 4 o'clock when we started. The two divisions divided at Bear Tavern.\* At Birmingham, three miles and a half south of the tavern, a man came with a message from General Sullivan that the storm was wetting their muskets and rendering them unfit for service. "Tell General Sullivan," said Washington, "to use the bayonet. I am resolved to take Trenton." It was broad daylight when we came to a house where a man was chopping wood. He was very much surprised when he saw

\*General Stryker says, in his "Battles of Trenton and Princeton," that they separated at Birmingham.



The Landing Place of the Troops in 1776 a Few Yards Northwest of the Nelson House



us. 'Can you tell me where the Hessian picket is?' Washington asked. The man hesitated, but I said 'You need not be frightened. It is General Washington who asks the question.' His face brightened, and he pointed toward the house of Mr. Howell. It was just 8 o'clock. Looking down the road I saw a Hessian running out from the house. He yelled in Dutch and swung his arms. Three or four others came out with their guns. Two of them fired at us but their bullets whistled over our heads. Some of General Stephen's men rushed forward and captured two. The others took to their heels, running toward Mr. Calhoun's house, where the picket guard was stationed, about twenty men under Captain Altenbrockum. They came running out of the house. The captain flourished his sword and tried to form his men. Some of them fired at us, others ran toward the village. The next moment we heard drums beat and a bugle sound, and then from the west came the boom of a cannon. General Washington's face lighted up instantly, for he knew that it was one of Sullivan's guns. We could see a great commotion down toward the meeting house, men running here and there, officers swinging their swords, artillerymen harnessing their horses. Captain Forrest unlimbered his guns. Washington gave the order to advance and we rushed on to the junction of King and Queen streets. Forrest wheeled six of his guns into position to sweep both streets. The riflemen under Colonel Hand, and Scott's and Lawson's battalions went upon the run through the fields on the left to gain possession of the Princeton road. The Hessians were just ready to open fire with two of their cannon when Captain Washington and Lieutenant Monroe with their men rushed forward and captured them. We saw Rall come riding up the street from his headquarters which were at Stacy Pott's house. We could hear him shouting in Dutch 'My brave soldiers, advance!' His men were fright-

ened and confused, for our men were firing upon them from fences and houses and they were falling fast. Instead of advancing they ran into an apple orchard. The officers tried to rally them, but our men kept advancing and picking off the officers. It was not long before Rall tumbled from his horse, and his soldiers threw down their guns and gave themselves up as prisoners. While this was taking place on the Pennington road Colonel John Stark from New Hampshire, in the advance on the river road, was driving Knyphausen's men pell mell through the town. Sullivan sent a portion of his troops under St. Clair to seize the bridge and cut off the retreat of the Hessians toward Bordentown. Sullivan's men shot the artillery horses and captured two cannon attached to Knyphausen's regiment.

"Dec. 26, 3 p.m.—I have been talking with Rall's adjutant, Lieutenant Piel. He says that Rall sat down to a grand dinner at the Trenton Tavern Christmas day, that he drank a great deal of wine and sat up nearly all night playing cards. He had been in bed but a short time when the battle began, and was sound asleep. Piel shook him but found it hard work to wake him up. Supposing he was wide awake Piel went out to help rally the men, but Rall not appearing he went back and found him in his night shirt. 'What's the matter?' Rall asked. Piel informed him that a battle was going on. This seemed to bring him to his senses. He dressed himself, rushed out and mounted his horse to be mortally wounded a few moments later.

"We have taken nearly 1000 prisoners, six cannon, more than 1000 muskets, twelve drums and four colors. About forty Hessians were killed or wounded. Our loss is only two killed and three wounded. Two of the latter are Captain Washington and Lieutenant Monroe who rushed forward very bravely to seize the cannon. I have just been with Generals Washington and Greene to see Rall. He will not live through the night. He asked that his men might

be kindly treated. Washington promised that he would see they were well cared for.

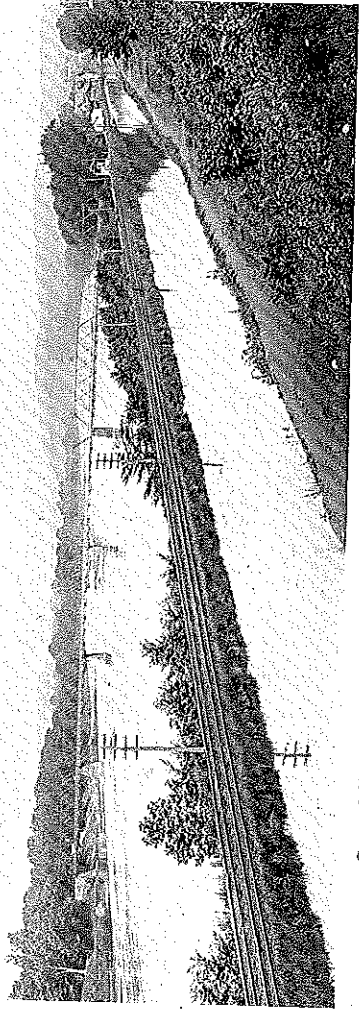
"Dec. 27, 1776.—Here we are back in our camp with the prisoners and trophies."

Thus was the victory won. Washington, however, did not succeed in capturing the Hessian posts below Trenton as he had planned, Cadwallader and Putnam not being able to get their cannon across the river because of the inclemency of the night.

### III.

#### THE CROSSING AS IT IS TODAY.

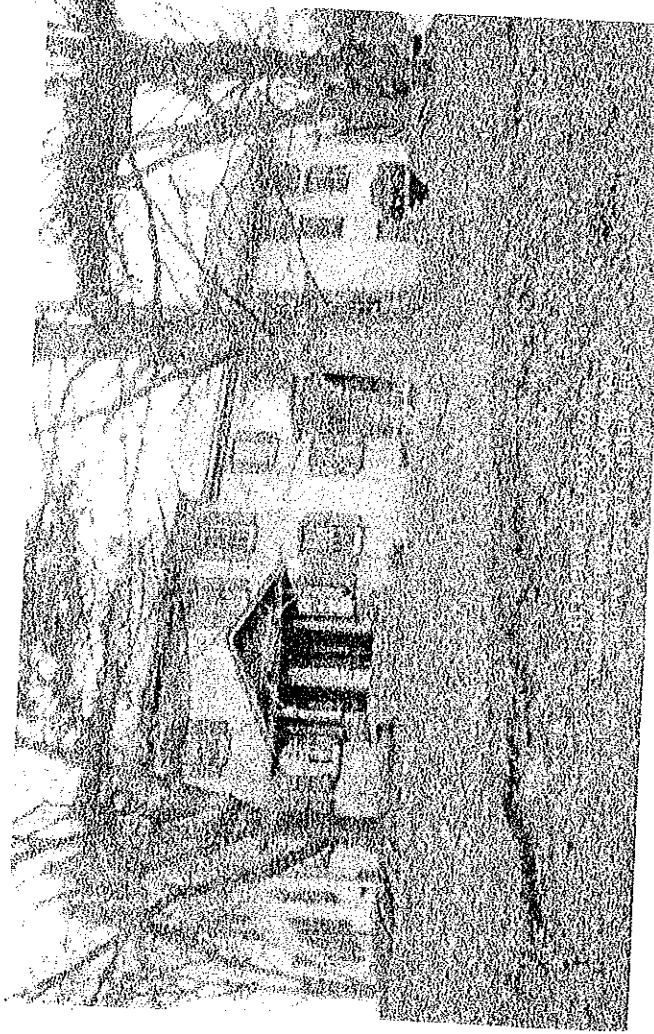
Many will no doubt read these pages who have never seen the Crossing nor ever will see it. To them it is my purpose in this chapter to present as real and graphic a picture of it as it is possible to make with pen, pencil and camera. Its salient and most interesting physical feature is, of course, the Delaware—here a noble stream, fully a thousand feet in width, and so deep that its waters never brawl or babble, but flow sedately on in spirals and upspringing eddies. I have myself traced it to its topmost spring in the western Catskills near the village of Roxbury in the State of New York. While still a brook it flows through the grounds of a famous philanthropist and then southwest between mountains until reaching Deposit, and when but a few miles from the Susquehanna, it turns sharply southeast and flows between the two great states of New York and Pennsylvania until reaching Port Jervis, N. Y., when it turns sharply south and holds that general direction to its mouth in Delaware bay, forming the boundary line of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. All the way, quite down to the Crossing, it has leaped and babbled and glided between mountains receiving from them thousands of brooks, creeks and rivers, but at the Crossing the mountains sink down into broad ridges, a rolling country. Opposite, on the Pennsylvania side, are wide meadows stretching back half a mile to high ground, but on the Jersey side the hills impinge sharply on the river; these are cut by numerous watercourses into ravines, the most romantic and picturesque imaginable, for



General View Washington's Crossing. Nelson House and Station in the Distance

their beds being formed of old red sandstone disintegrate by strata forming walls across the stream, over which the waters dash in ripples or foaming cascades. Nowhere is there a country that would more readily lend itself to the art of the landscape engineer. On the left, as you face the river, is the new steel bridge replacing the old covered wooden structure, swept away by the flood of 1903, and connecting the Crossing with the village of Taylorsville on the Pennsylvania shore. Back of you is the Nelson house, covering the old ferry house, where the young subaltern stopped in 1776 to record Washington's crossing, well knowing that he and his comrades were making history. The owners show one the old walls now forming part of their basement and cellar. The McAdam road from Trenton to Lambertville passes between this house and the river, and continues on up the bank of the stream. Just back of the Nelson house—almost touching a corner—are the tracks of the Trenton division of the Pennsylvania Railroad—Delaware Valley Line—giving access to the Allegheny coal fields, and connecting with lines for Buffalo and the west. They are laid on the west bank of the Delaware and Raritan canal, not the main stem, but a feeder constructed from Trenton to Bull's Island, a short distance above Lambertville, where its boats are locked into the river, towed across and locked into the canal on the Pennsylvania side, which has direct connection with the Lehigh coal fields. It was also intended to supply water to the main stem.

The road up which the troops marched that fateful morning is not the present macadamized Pennington road leading across the railroad and canal and thence nearly due east to the Bear Tavern, which still stands about a mile from the river. This old road was blotted out by the canal and railroad. It left the ferry landing a short distance north of the Nelson house and wound up through the fields to the old McKonkey house, still standing, and at which



The Blackwell Mansion recently bought by the State of New Jersey with the adjoining farm of one hundred acres for the proposed Memorial Park. Will serve as a rest house for visitors, a museum of relics, and will contain the offices of the Commission.

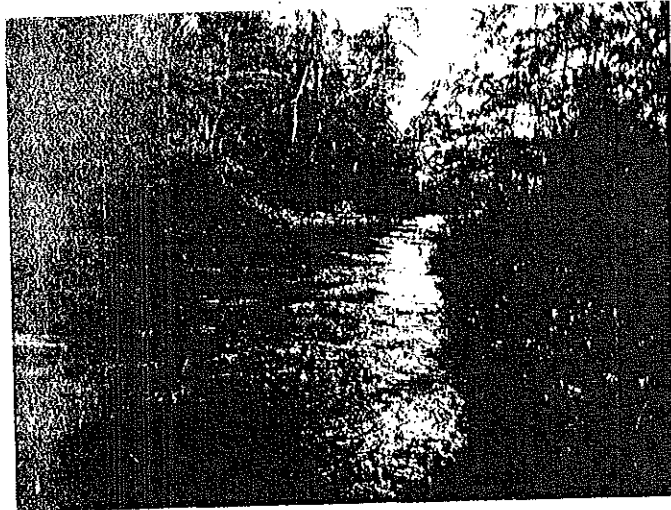
Photo by C. B. Todd.

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Washington and his officers are said to have stopped for refreshments. From the McKonkey house the old road may easily be traced as a farm lane, bounded on the south side by the wire fence dividing the Blackwell and McKonkey farms and on the north by a line of trees and an occasional fence post standing where the old fence used to be. It is one field north of the present Pennington road. The large brick mansion on top of the hill as you go east toward Bear Tavern is the Blackwell house, with its farm of one hundred acres adjoining, recently acquired by the State of New Jersey. The purchase of the adjoining McKonkey and Nelson farms will bring the state's holdings to the river bank and it is then proposed to erect the whole into a memorial park in honor of the men who suffered here and as an object lesson in patriotism and self-sacrifice to the living. A half mile farther east, at the four corners formed by the crossing of the Trenton and Harbourton and Pennington and Washington's Crossing roads, stands the famous Bear Tavern mentioned in all the general orders, diaries and letters of the army as the first objective after crossing the river and as the point where the column divided, the first division taking the Trenton road, which here runs nearly due south, and the second, which Washington accompanied, marching farther on and taking the Scotch road which ran into the road from Pennington to Trenton.\* It should be understood that in Revolutionary times the present excellent river road did not exist. On account of the many deep ravines and watercourses on the immediate bank of the river the Trenton road ran about a mile back, where it crossed the ravines nearer their heads. Bear Tavern stands today very much as it was in 1776, and with its huge fireplace, paneled walls, heavy beams, low

\*General Stryker, an authority, says the column did not divide until it reached Birmingham, 3½ miles south of the Tavern, but does not give his source of information.





Top—Jacob's Creek a Few Rods Above Where the Continentals Crossed  
On Their Way to Trenton in 1776

Bottom—Steele's Creek Near Its Entrance into the Delaware  
Photos by Chas. B. Todd

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ceilings and deep cupboards is an interesting specimen of the old time country tavern.

The region round about abounds in delightful walks and drives. The main road, for instance, from the Crossing to the village of Titusville a mile north along the river bank, crossing beautiful Steele's creek by the way; or, keeping on above Titusville one takes the first road after crossing the canal which winds along the bed of a babbling brook, under the mountains, ascending steadily by well-kept farms and farmhouses until it comes out on the Titusville and Pennsylvania road, a mile east of the former. Here, if like the writer you have a constitutional dislike of returning by the same route, take a cross road which leads over wide uplands and down into two ravines for a mile to the macadam road a short distance west of Bear Tavern, whence, turning west three-quarters of a mile, brings one to the Crossing. Again, after leaving the main Lambertville road under the mountain take the first path to the left which winds up the mountain to the summit where are situated the farmhouse and breeding pens of the Delaware Valley Pheasantry, devoted to the raising of the beautiful and useful Asiatic bird for market. The view from the summit is grand, the whole valley of the Delaware for twenty miles being spread out before one with the river like a ribbon of light unrolled in the centre. This road is a private one leading to private property, but it is understood that the well disposed public may use it so long as they do not trespass on the preserves.

If you are a pedestrian, thank Heaven, cross the toll bridge to Taylorsville and there take the trolley cars of the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Transportation Company to Lambertville, nine miles north, thence walk back to the Crossing by the canal towpath. On a dreamy autumn day the journey is one long to be remembered; at times road, canal, railroad and river are crowded together under the dark, wooded mountain; again you are out in the

open with the meadows all about you and canal and railroad are alone. At times you meet a canal boat drawn by two, sometimes three, mules walking tandem. There is little traffic on the canal now, but trains half a mile long grind by bringing hard coal and crushed stone from the mountains and carrying soft coal back. Another very pretty walk or drive is the Jacob's Creek valley road from Somerset station, a mile below the Crossing, to Pennington five miles up the valley of Jacob's Creek. When a mile up, if you take the road turning sharply to the left and crossing the creek, a mile will bring you to Bear Tavern whence you can return to the Crossing by the macadam road.



The "Old Bridge" just before it was lifted by the flood of 1903

#### IV.

### THE OLD BRIDGE AT THE "CROSSING" AND ITS GHOST.

Through autumn days at the Crossing we lingered on the bridge watching the swirling eddies of the Delaware below, sometimes speculating as to the number of black-birds in the great flocks that stretched from shore to shore, anon scolding back at a saucy little kingfisher who, perched on the topmost chord of the bridge, eyed the waters as intently as did we, but for a very different purpose, hoping to extract therefrom a dinner in the shape of an unwary chub or minnow.

One day, Hallowe'en drawing near, when, as all know earth and air are full of ghosts, we became conscious of another presence on the bridge and looking up there stood the queerest little old man, and clad in the strangest costume. His hair was long, scanty, and bleached by age; his face was thin and wizened and wrinkled and tanned; his eyes had sunken so far into their sockets that one could scarcely catch their expression; each individual hair of his whiskers stood on end like a Persian cat's, and his hands and fingers were like claws, so thin and contracted by age were they. He had a tattered old three-cornered hat on his head and wore the tow frock anciently worn by farmers, and the overalls of an artisan.

"Who are you?" we asked at length when we had mastered all these details.

"I am a composite," he replied, "the ghost of the old bridge, the refined and sublimated essence of all the men

and women who crossed it during its span of seventy-five years. No one ever saw me before; you see me because you are in tune with spiritual harmonics, and because at Hallowe'en we spirits have power to draw nearer mortals than at any other time. That teamster there approaching will pass and see me not."

Sure enough the man, half hidden in his little box in the middle of his load of hay, greeted me with a curt nod but seemed to have no perception of the strange figure at my side.

"I was born away back in 1831," he continued, "almost a century ago. My father, as I was told and believe, was a young man living on the Pennsylvania shore, very much in love with a pretty damsel on the Jersey side, who in times of storm or floating ice was prevented for days together from reaching his inamorata's side.

"Why can't we have a bridge across this old river?" he exclaimed one day, when for a week he had been unable to cross. Now, all the world loves a lover and everybody sympathized with the poor young man. So the Idea, that is I, myself, was born. A bridge? Why not? All up and down both shores the question was repeated, discussed at store, church, blacksmith shop, wherever men met. It was plain that no one man could build it alone, but that one hundred could. So they combined, near a hundred of them, formed a joint stock company, and went to both state legislatures for a charter giving them power to levy tolls on those using it. In the big house yonder on the Jersey shore they have the very first record book of the corporation, and it is recorded therein that the first meeting of the stockholders was held on June 6, 1833, and that by 1834 the bridge was finished, and a 'toll-gatherer' was appointed to collect tolls. Really, there was no opposition except from Sandy McConkey, the old ferry man, who feared his occupation would be gone; but he had to go, as

so many other men comfortably placed have since had to go before the march of improvement. When the new toll-gatherer was appointed there was quite a discussion as to the tolls; but they were finally fixed upon as follows, just as you will find them written in the old book:

“To every wagon, coach or carriage drawn by four horses or mules, or sled or sleigh so drawn, 30 cts.

“To every wagon, coach or carriage drawn by three horses or mules, or sled or sleigh so drawn, 30 cts.

“To every pleasure carriage drawn by two horses or mules, 25 cts.

“To every farm wagon or sled drawn by two horses or mules, 20 cts.

“Wagon, carriage, sled or sleigh, drawn by one horse or mule, 10 cts.

“Horse or mule and rider, 10 cts.

“Lead or drove horse or mule, 6 cts.

“Cattle of all kinds, 3 cts.

“Sheep or swine, 1 ct.

“Wheelbarrow or hand-cart, 4 cts.

“Foot person, 2 cts.”

“At a later meeting held Feb. 13, 1854, they ordained that carriages and wagons taking passengers to the railroad should pass at half rates. Tradition says that the first man to cross the new bridge, and on his wedding day at that, was the young man who had been the father of the Idea.

“You should know that this is a very aristocrat among bridges, sir; for only a few yards up yonder Washington and his patriots crossed on that Christmas night of 1776, when they made history and brought a nation to the birth.

“But I don't like this new steel bridge,” he continued. “Against the skyline it looks like a huge spider's web drawn across the river; and the steel girders rust and have to be painted often and there is no cover for the floor

planks, and being wet by every storm they quickly decay. The old bridge, now, was solid and substantial, with a roof over it and covered sides; a little dark and smelly inside, I grant, but a solid, black mass that could be seen for miles up or down the river; while the storm-buffeted traveler, once he got inside, was sure of a shelter until he reached the other shore.

"I never was troubled with the blues while the old bridge stood. There was constant warfare between the Spirit of the River and myself. He resented being placed in bondage by me, as it were. My five great stone piers chafed his proud current, and very early he swore to be freed from them. Three times he bowed his mighty form and jumped from his mountain lair to sweep me away, and twice he got me. Every spring I would watch the waters rise and rise to within a few inches of my floor beams and rush in solid tons of swirling battalions against my piers, but old Simeon Baldwin had done his work well and never one budged from its rocky bed. Then every winter massive cakes of ice came charging down and struck them with the force of a thousand trip hammers, but never a pier was moved an inch from its foundation. At length in January, 1841, wearying of these tactics he tried another method. For days and days it rained steadily, melting six feet of snow in the mountains. Inch by inch, foot by foot, I saw the waters rise against my piers.

"Ha, ha!" cried he, "I'll have you now!"

"Don't you believe it," said I, but I had misgivings. Higher and higher ran the water. The river ice broke up and huge cakes grinding and thrashing came against me, while the air was full of powdered ice and splinters. Up to the highest watermark ever known came the waves, lapped it out, rose a foot over that, then two feet, with the ice pack clamoring against me like hungry wolves, until at length creaking and groaning in all my timbers I went



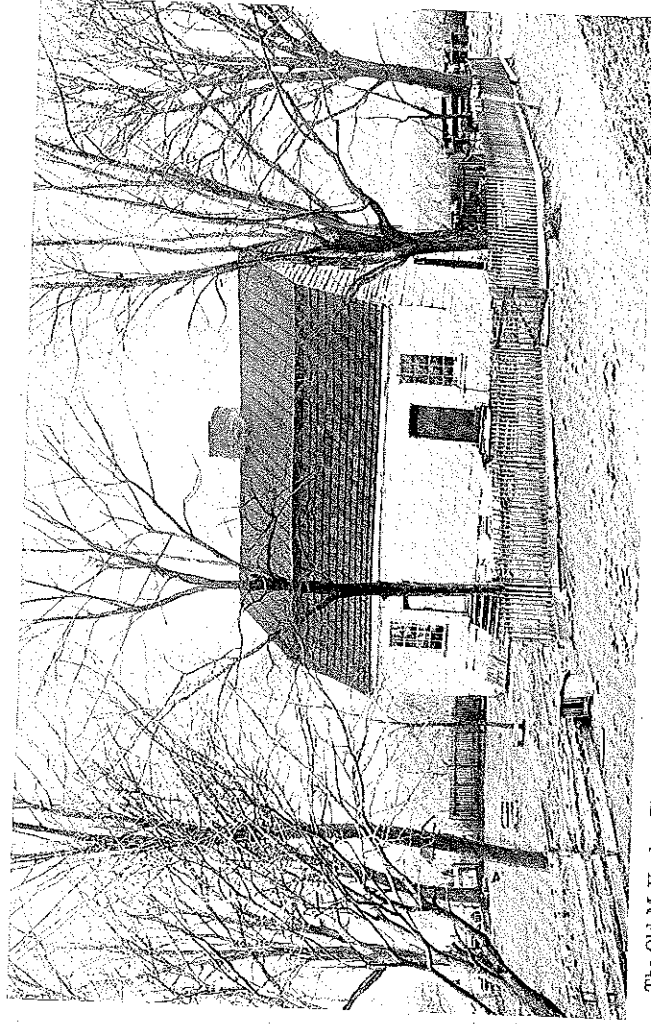
out and down, filling the meadows with fragments, while the great river sang pæans of victory.

"But I, the Idea, was not dead. So useful had been the old bridge that men set to work at once to replace it. My piers were little damaged. They raised them two feet higher than before and in a year's time the toll gatherer was again at work and the farm wagons and coaches and all the rest were rattling and trundling across the bridge, while the Spirit of the River sulked in his lair and made ready for another foray. However, it was sixty-two years before he got me again, and then only by taking me at a mean disadvantage. It was in October that he succeeded, and who ever heard before of a freshet in October, the month of repose, when the haze is on the hills, the valleys like dreamland, the harvest moon in the sky, and great nature, wearied with the growing pains of summer, relaxes her virile body in the very quintessence of repose? But the freshet came and I went—though my piers were two feet above the previous high-water mark, I went. On October 10th it happened, in 1903. In the big house yonder there was then living a comely youth whom I loved because he was so fond of the river and the bridge, spending many of his leisure hours upon it, sometimes with a rod and reel in hand, more often watching the eddies appear and disappear between the piers. Now a business man in Trenton—he was then going to school daily in that city. He kept a diary, as some schoolboys do, and under date of October 10th wrote:

"Got up at five-thirty a.m. River very high. Went to Trenton on eight-thirty train. Came out at twelve m. and went to Warren St. station. Mr. Goddard said no trains would run so I walked from Yardley up the tow-path. Arrived at Taylorsville at 4.30 p.m. Got across the bridge just in time because the water was then touching the floor. I was the last person to cross from Taylorsville

to this side. River continued rising all night. First part of bridge went at 10.35 p.m. Second part near the Jersey shore at 12.30."

The thin, piping voice ceased. I looked up but no form was visible. I rushed to the Jersey shore and swept the river road with my eye, but nothing was to be seen. Then to the Pennsylvania side, but he was not in sight. Nor have I caught a glimpse of him from that day to this, though I have haunted the bridge day in and day out, hoping that he might reveal himself.



The Old McKonkey House, owned by the ferry master at the time of the descent and no doubt kept as a publichouse, altho we have no documentary proof of this. In the land transfers, wills, tavern licenses and ferry commissions in the office of the Secretary of State at Trenton the name McKonkey does not appear.

"The man who ferried Washington across the Delaware on Christmas night, 1776, was William McKonkey. His daughter's name was Mary McKonkey, who was then a girl of eleven years and lived to be 97 years old, and she never tired of telling the story of that eventful night."—*Letter of James T. Keith, Esq., to the author.*

V.

NOW BUT A COUNTRY LANE.

Just after crossing the canal going east a wide road opens on the left leading up to a fine old Colonial dwelling set in spacious grounds, which in 1776 is said to have been the home of the old ferry-master, William McKonkey. On the left as one goes toward it is a large stone slab with a bronze tablet set in it bearing this inscription:

"This tablet is erected by the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey to commemorate the crossing of the Delaware River by General Washington and the Continental Army on Christmas night of 1776."

This tablet was erected on land donated by the Misses Nelson, and was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on Oct. 15, 1895. There is a similar tablet across the river on the Pennsylvania shore.

Continuing on we come, in a hundred yards more, to the McKonkey house itself which is shaded by giant trees, some of them rare species as the black walnut, the Kentucky coffee tree, and the mammoth willow back of the spring house. From the latter a walled in spring sends a rivulet of clear cold water down the hillside to the canal. Few houses so old are so well preserved as this. On its front are the long, scalloped, original shingles, split from blocks of wood and shaved to the thin edge with a drawing knife. Within are the low ceilings, the paneled walls, the huge fireplace, the narrow stairs, wooden hinges on cupboard doors, closets tucked away under the stairways and in nooks and corners that marked the middle class Colonial dwelling. The ladies

in charge show one the deep cupboard in which the liquid refreshments were kept of which, tradition says, Washington and his officers partook before the column began its march.

The road from the ferry landing in 1776 wound up through the meadows yonder to this old house, through its yard, by the barn, and followed the course of the farm lane yonder as is stated in another part of this work. This lane is a pleasant place in which to linger through autumn days and prolific of fancies. It is open to sun and sky and the views of mountain, valley and river from it are a revelation of the powers of the Infinite in planning a landscape. It does not seem to belong to any one. It has not been mowed this year; the thick grass that clothed it is withered and dry, the birds that nested here—the song sparrow, sweet-voiced thrush and wild canary—have raised their broods and flown to warmer climes; the goldenrod and purple aster that one is sure bloomed here in their day are but memories; there is nothing to remind one of war, yet war once was here; for up this road marched the ragged column of 1776 with the ridiculous little six and twelve pounders, and howitzers jolting and bounding along the uneven ground, a veritable Falstaffian army, yet marching on to victory.

It is a satisfaction to note that in the plan of the proposed Memorial Park the commissioners have restored this lane to its former dignity and made of it a road.

## VI.

There were not many makers of ballads in the Revolutionary armies or camps. The times were far too stern and grim for the "flower of pœsie and song" to bloom. Trumbull, Barlow, Alsop, Dr. Dwight, Freneau, Paine and a few others are known to us. One of them wrote a ballad called the "Battle of Trenton," but anonymously, and Frank Forrester (H. W. Herbert) at a later day gave us his "Surprise at Trenton." These are the only songs in honor of the event that we have been able, after thorough search, to discover. Forrester's ballad occurs in a thin volume of his verse privately printed by Wiley in 1888 at six dollars the copy and now exceedingly rare. This poem we reproduce:

## THE SURPRISE AT TRENTON

BY

HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT.

Eighteen hundred years had passed  
Lacking only twenty-four,  
Since the Savior one-begotten  
Meek the Virgin Mother bore.  
Shepherds on that very night  
In the fields their watch did keep  
While the busy world around  
Silent lay all bathed in sleep.

Lowly in his cradle-manger  
There the infant Savior slept,  
While the Maiden Mother o'er him  
Tears of humble gladness wept;  
And the Magi found him there  
Who had followed from afar,  
When they saw it in the East  
The Redeemer's holy star.

For the star it went before them  
And the Wise Ones followed on  
'Till it stood above the spot  
And their joyous goal was won.  
Humbly there they bowed the knee,  
Humbly did their gifts unfold,  
Gifts of ivory and aloes,  
Myrrh, and frankincense and gold.

Eighteen hundred years had passed;  
Eighteen hundred years and eight  
Since the Savior one begotten  
Bowed Him to a felon's fate.  
Nailed upon the cursed tree  
Suffered there our God and Lord.  
Peace to man He came to give,  
Peace He left not, but a sword.

Noon it was of Christmas night  
On the wintry Delaware,  
Sullenly the fallen snow  
Floated through the murky air,  
Sullenly the flooded river  
Moaned the whitening shores along,  
Sullenly the drifting ice  
Ground and tost in the current strong.

Not a star was in the sky,  
Not a sound was on the breeze,  
Not a voice or stir was there  
In the thickly feathered trees.  
Only through the heavy gloom  
Muttered low the mournful rushing  
Of the deep and dismal stream,  
Through its icy fetters gushing.

Lonely were the streets of Trenton,  
Trenton town by the Delaware.  
Quartered there was the British Horse,  
Quartered the bearded Hessians there.  
Deep the snow on the roofs above,  
Deep the trackless roads below.  
Hark to the bell! 'Twas midnight chime.  
Oh, but the strokes were stern and slow.



Not a guard was on his post,  
Not a round its circuit made;  
What the risk in such a storm  
Where the foe that should invade?  
Far beyond the flooded stream  
Pennsylvania wilds among,  
Far the Patriot army lay  
Frail, disjointed and unstrung.

Washington, who, late so glorious,  
Braved in equal arms his King,  
Sees the boasted bird victorious  
Sadly droop its baffled wing.  
"Soldiers, speed the Christmas feast,  
Soldiers, fill the bumpers fair.  
Pass the bottle, pile the hearth;  
Cutting cold the wintry air.

"Let the toast our country be  
From whatever country we;  
Some of German Fatherland,  
Britons ever bold and free,  
Comrades troll the jolly stave;  
Pass the bottle, fear no wrong,  
For the rebel hosts are weak  
And the wintry river strong."

Tush! they dare not. We who drove them  
Weak and weary, faint and few,  
Tracked them weaponless and wounded  
O'er the roads by their bloody dew,  
Which to every painful print  
Trickled from their shoeless feet.  
Tush! The craven dove as soon  
Shall the fearless falcon meet.

Madly raged the jovial rout,  
Loud the bursts of loyal song  
Rang amid the drifting storm,  
Rang the snowy fields along.  
Little deemed the roistering crew  
As their revelry they plied  
What avengers stern and sure  
Gathered on the icy tide.

Gathered soon their glee to mar,  
Hearts afire and hands on hilt.  
Redder liquor far than wine  
Long ere morning shall be spilt.  
Hark! The deep and solemn hum  
Louder than the river's flow  
Rising heavier through the night  
Nearer through the drifting snow.

'Tis the hum of mustered men,  
Barges with their burthen brave,  
Painfully and long are tossing  
On the fierce and freezing wave.  
Horse and foot and guns are there  
Struggling through the awful gloom;  
Soon their din shall rouse the foe,  
Rouse him like the trump of doom.

Firm as some gigantic oak  
Stood their chief on the hither shore,  
Marking how his comrades true  
Prospered with the laboring oar,  
Marking how each barge and boat  
Slowly battled to the strand,  
Marking how the serried lines  
Mustered as they came to land.

Calm his high and noble port,  
Calm his mighty face severe.  
None had seen it change with doubt  
None had seen it pale with fear,  
And it showed as grandly now  
In that wild and perilous hour  
Fraught with wisdom half divine  
Fraught with more than mortal power.

Steadily he stood and gazed  
Not a cloud upon his brow,  
Calmer in the banquet hall  
Never had he been than now.  
Yet his fate was on the cast—  
Life and fame and country, all.  
Sternest game was never played  
Death or Freedom, win or fall.

Fall he and his country's hope  
Sets, a sun to rise no more.  
Win he and her dawning light  
Yet may fill the unfathomed skies.  
Fall he, and his name must wane,  
Rebel chief of rebel band.  
Win he, it shall live forever  
Father of his native land.

Silent stood he, grave and mute,  
Listening now the distant roar  
From the half heard town, and now  
Gazing on the crowded shore,  
Crowded with his Patriot host  
Burning for the vengeful fray,  
Ear and eye and heart erect  
Waiting for the trumpet's bray.

Silent 'till the latest boat  
Safe had stemmed the whirling tide,  
'Till the latest troop was landed  
Heart to heart and side by side.  
Then he turned his eyes aloft  
Moved his lips for a little space.  
Mighty though he was he bowed him  
Meekly to the throne of grace.

"God of battles, Lord of might,  
Let my country but be free,  
To Thy mercies I commend me  
Glory to thy Son and Thee."  
Then he waved his arm aloft  
With a martial gesture proud  
"Let your march" he said, "be silent  
"Till your cannon speak aloud."

Silent was their rapid march  
Through the mist of rain and sleet,  
For the deep and drifted snow  
Gave no sound beneath their feet.  
Clashed no musket, beat no drum  
As they flitted through the gloom  
Liker far than living men  
To the phantoms of the tomb.

Morn was near, but overcast  
In the dim and rayless sky  
Not a gleam foreshowed his coming  
Yet the pallid sun was nigh.  
Morn was near, but not a guard  
Heard their march or saw them come.  
Lo, they form—the very dogs  
In the fated town are dumb.

Hark! The bell—the bugle's blast;  
Hark! The long and loud alarms.  
Beat the drums—but all too late—  
All too late they call to arms.  
Forth they rush in disarray  
Forming fast with fearful din.  
Open now ye mouths of flame,  
Pour your crashing volleys in.

See the sharp and running flash  
Hark! The long and rattling roll—  
There the western muskets blaze  
Every shot a mortal soul.  
Vain was then the Hessian yager,  
Vain the English horseman's steel,  
Vain the German's hardihood,  
Vain the Briton's loyal zeal.

Fast they fall the best and bravest,  
Unavenged and helpless fall.  
Rallying their men dismayed  
Campbell bold and gallant Rall.  
Then before that murderous hail  
Thick, incessant, sure as death  
Reel the shattered columns back,  
Gasp the dying chiefs for breath.

Lo, 'tis o'er. Their arms they ground.  
All that brave men can did they,  
Fought while fight they could, then yielded.  
What avails the hopeless fray?  
What avails the horse's might  
Though his neck be clothed in thunder,  
What the cannon's fiery breath  
Riving rock-built forts asunder.

What avails the speed of navies,  
Rocking on the subject tide?  
Nothing when the Lord of Hosts  
Battles on the righteous side.  
He who giveth not the race  
To the swift nor to the strong  
War's red honor, but always  
Strengthens them who suffer long.

Surely He on Trenton's night  
Steeled our mighty champion's heart,  
Gave him wisdom, gave him power,  
So to play his destined part.  
Brought the fiercest down before him,  
Turned the bravest back to fly;  
Covered aye, his head in battle  
That no hair of it should die.

Held him steadfast in the right  
'Till his glorious task was o'er  
And no hostile banner waved  
On Columbia's hallowed shore.  
'Till his name was spread abroad  
For a nation's freedom won  
All honored from the setting  
To the rising of the sun.