

INTRODUCTION

Princeton Battlefield State Park is the site of one of the fiercest battles of the American Revolutionary War. Here, on January 3, 1777, General George Washington gained his first field victory over British troops.

Today, the 85-acre park preserves the open fields of the Clarke farms, the battlefield, the Thomas Clarke House and the common grave of British and American dead.

HISTORY

Stone tools and arrowheads found in the park and surrounding area provide evidence that Native Americans used the land for thousands of years before European settlement. In 1696, Benjamin Clarke II purchased 1,200 acres, settling here with the families of two of his brothers-in-law. The area became known as Stony Brook Village and was then part of West Windsor, Middlesex County.

The Battle of Princeton - Following a series of American defeats in the summer and fall of 1776, British and German troops pursued the Continental Army, led by General George Washington, through New Jersey and forced them across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. The British stationed troops in towns along the main roads in New Jersey between the Raritan and Delaware Rivers just north of Philadelphia in an attempt to establish control of the region. Their hope was to use New Jersey as a staging ground for an attack on Philadelphia the following spring.

Washington was desperate for a victory. With desertions rising and enlistment periods ending, he needed to make a bold strike if the Revolution was to continue. On the evening of December 25, 1776, Washington and the Continental Army made the perilous crossing of the fast-flowing and icy Delaware River during a terrible storm. They marched south through foul weather and the following morning, December 26th, attacked and defeated the British forces at Trenton.

The British Army pulled back to Princeton, fortifying the town. Additional men were deployed to strengthen the troops here to 8,000. Among them was Lt. General (Lord) Charles Cornwallis who arrived on January 1.

On January 2, Cornwallis ordered his army to march along the King's Highway (Route 206) to Trenton. Twelve hundred men were left at Princeton and another 1,000 men were sent to Maidenhead (Lawrenceville). Despite heavy engagements, British attempts to defeat the Continental Army failed.

That evening, Washington moved around the British towards Princeton, leaving a small group of men at Trenton as a decoy. The American forces reached Princeton just after dawn. The plan was to attack the British rear guard from several sides, but Washington's men were detected just beyond the Thomas Clarke House, forcing a change in strategy.



A fierce battle ensued with casualties occurring on both sides. Among the wounded was American General Hugh Mercer. The Americans prevailed and the British retreated to New Brunswick.

After the battle, the Clarke House was used as a hospital for both American and British soldiers. It was here that General Hugh Mercer, attended by Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, died.

The victory at Princeton concluded the military campaign known as the Ten Crucial Days. In 1944, the State of New Jersey purchased the Clarke house and the surrounding land for a state park.



FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

The Thomas Clarke House - Thomas Clarke, a Quaker farmer, acquired 200 acres in 1772 from his older brother William. He subsequently built a house and lived there with his sisters Hannah and Sarah and a black woman named Susanna, who was enslaved by the family. Susannah was freed from enslavement on her thirtieth birthday, February 1779, two years after the battle. Upon Thomas' death in 1802, the house passed to his younger brother Ezekiel and soon thereafter to his sister Sarah who died in 1840.



The Clarke farm includes the original two-story half-Georgian frame house and enlarged wing, the carriage barn and smokehouse. The house, consisting of seven rooms, is furnished in the period of the Revolution (1775-1783). Much of the original flooring, moldings and windows remain. The wing contains exhibits related to the Battle of Princeton and the Revolutionary War.

Domestic chores of cooking, textile production and other daily tasks are represented in the household furnishings and occasionally demonstrated during special events held in the park.



The Mercer Oak - The historic Mercer Oak, a white oak, believed to have been present during the Battle of Princeton, once

stood on the battlefield near what is now Mercer Road. It collapsed from old age in March 2000. An offspring grown from an acorn of the Mercer Oak in 1981 now thrives next to the large stump of the original tree. The Mercer Oak has been adopted as the symbol for Princeton Township, Mercer County and New Jersey Green Acres program among others.

The Colonnade and Gravesite-

The iconic Colonnade was originally the façade of a Philadelphia home designed by Thomas U. Walter, (later architect of the U.S. Capitol) in 1836. It was re-erected in the park in 1959 as the entrance to the common grave of 21 British and 16 American soldiers killed in the Battle of Princeton. A poem written for the grave by Alfred Noyes in 1916, then a visiting Princeton professor and later Poet Laureate of England, is inscribed in the bronze over the grave.



The Princeton Battle Monument - The Princeton Battle Monument is located on state park property at the corner of Stockton Road (Route 206) and Nassau Street in Princeton Borough. Built on the site of British defensive works it was designed by renowned sculptor Frederick MacMonnies and dedicated in 1922 by President Warren G. Harding.

The Stony Brook Friends Meetinghouse - Adjacent to the park is the still active Friends Meetinghouse. Originally built in 1726, it was rebuilt in 1760 following a fire. Used as a barracks during part of the British occupation of Princeton in 1776, it also sheltered the wounded after the battle. The graveyard contains many unmarked graves of local members of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, as well as soldiers killed in the battle and the grave of Richard Stockton, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Group/School Programs

Group programs are available by reservation.



Access For People With Disabilities

The park and Thomas Clarke House are partially accessible for persons with disabilities. Please contact the park at 609-921-0074 for further information regarding disability access needs. Text telephone (TTY) users, call the NJ Relay & CapTel Service at 711 or 1-800-852-7897 for English or 1-866-658-7714 for Spanish.



Pets

Pets must always be on a leash no longer than six feet in length and under the control of the owner at all times. Please clean up after your pets.



Keep It Clean and Green

Bring a bag or two and carry your trash out with you. Trash cans are not provided. Don't forget to recycle!

Restrooms are located in the carriage barn. Smoking, food or beverages are not permitted in the Clarke House. Handling of artifacts and interior photography, videotaping or audiotaping are not permitted. Your cooperation will help ensure the survival of the museum collections for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

NOT PERMITTED

Alcoholic beverages, metal detecting, smoking and vaping* are NOT permitted in this park.



*Smoking and vaping permitted only inside your personal vehicle.

To report an emergency or suspicious activity, call 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337) or 911.



PRINCETON BATTLEFIELD STATE PARK
500 Mercer Road
Princeton, NJ 08540-4810
609-921-0074

Location: Mercer Road (Princeton Pike),
1.5 miles south of Princeton University
and 3.8 miles north of Interstate 295/95.



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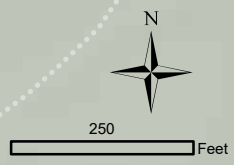
Princeton Battlefield State Park



State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
State Park Service



PRINCETON BATTLEFIELD State Park



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| Open Field or Grass | Developed Area | Paved Path | Institute Woods Trail | Historic Site | Restrooms |
| Forest | Water | Unmarked Trail | Parking Lot | Interpretive Wayside | |