

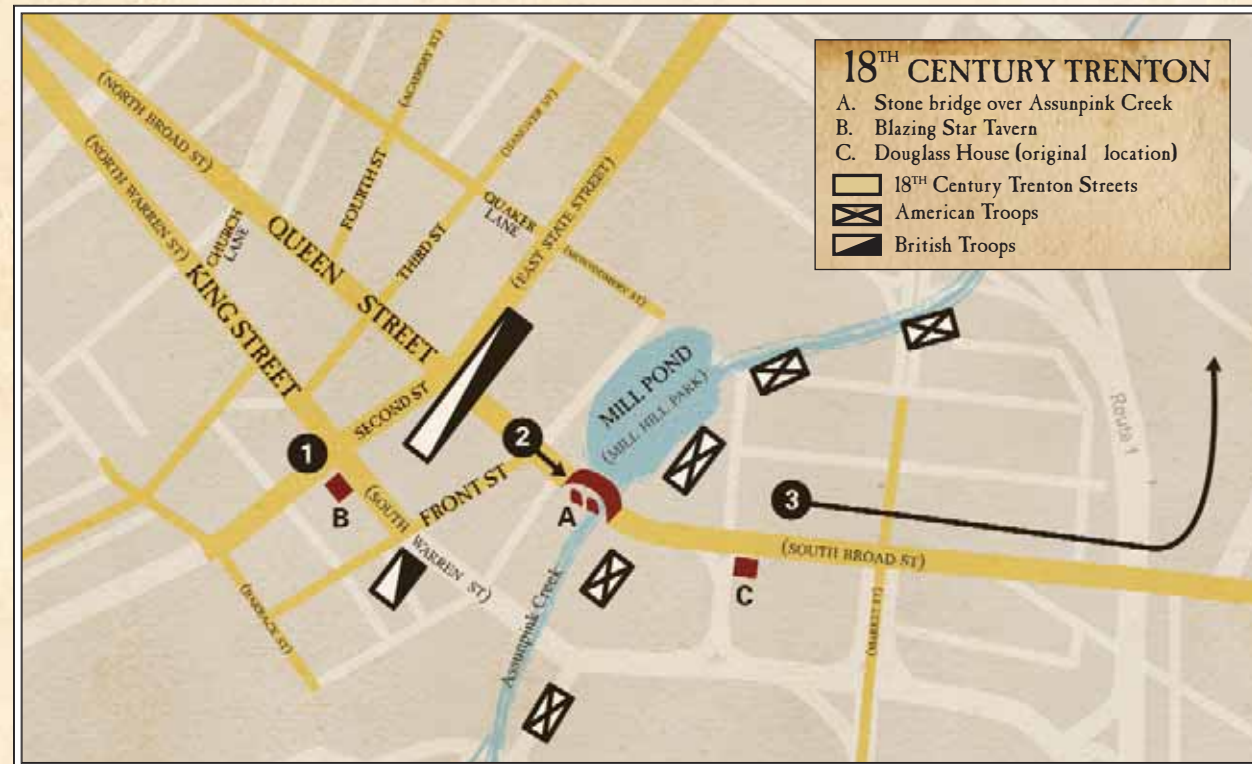
# THE SECOND BATTLE OF TRENTON *January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1777*

After the December 26 battle, George Washington took his army back over the Delaware into Pennsylvania. However, Washington and his military advisors decided to capitalize on the victory and take the army across the Delaware into Trenton once again.

Meanwhile, British forces were dispatched from New York to Princeton upon news of the defeat of the Hessians at Trenton. General Lord Charles Cornwallis arrived in Princeton on January 1 to take command.

Washington's forces numbered about 6,000 - army and militia, with a few cavalry. On January 2, they established a strong defensive position on high ground on the south bank of the Assunpink Creek, with units at the narrow stone bridge that spanned the creek, as well as at several fords above and below it. The Americans, armed with a large number of artillery pieces, planned to prevent the British forces from crossing the creek.

*The numbers indicated on the map show where the action described occurred.*



THE CROSSING OF THE DELAWARE, THE TWO BATTLES OF TRENTON AND THE BATTLE AT PRINCETON THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN DECEMBER 25 AND JANUARY 3 ARE KNOWN AS **THE 10 CRUCIAL DAYS OF THE REVOLUTION.**

Gen. Cornwallis, with a force of 9,000 men, marched south from Princeton toward Trenton on the morning of January 2.

Washington dispatched a force of about 1,000 men with a few pieces of artillery to delay the British arrival in Trenton as late as possible in the day. Col. Edward Hand assumed command of this force when its original leader, Gen. Matthias de Roche-Fermoy, abandoned his command and fled the field at the first contact with British forces.

Col. Hand's forces ambushed the British marching column from the cover of woods a mile south of the village of Maidenhead (Lawrenceville). Their "deadly fire from ambush" forced the column to stop and deploy for battle while the Americans slipped away through the woods. These actions delayed the British advance by two hours, so that they arrived in Trenton at 4pm, about an hour before sunset.

1. As the last American forces in Trenton headed for the Assunpink bridge (A), John Rosbrugh, a 63-year-old Presbyterian clergyman from Pennsylvania, was caught by a Hessian unit outside the Blazing Star Tavern (B) and bayoneted to death in the street. The first American clergyman killed in battle, he is buried in the First Presbyterian churchyard.

2. The British made three attacks on the Bridge over the Assunpink Creek and each time were driven back by massed firing from the defenders as well as artillery fire, sustaining numerous casualties. As darkness fell, Gen. Cornwallis is said to have remarked that he could "bag the fox" the next morning. He called off the attacks for the night.

3. Washington, knowing that his forces could not continue to withstand the British attack, met with his advisors at the Douglass House. (C) They decided that all but a few troops should quietly retreat, with those left behind building fires and making noise to make it appear that the army remained in its camp. Most of Washington's army left its positions on the Assunpink between midnight and 2am to set out on a march to Princeton by a series of back roads. They arrived in Princeton after dawn on January 3, and attacked the rear guard of Cornwallis' army there (the Battle of Princeton).

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*Funding for this project was provided in part through the Cooperative Marketing Sponsorship Program of the New Jersey Commerce, Economic Growth and Tourism Commission, Office of Travel & Tourism. Visitnj.org*



TRENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# December 26<sup>th</sup> 1776

# THE FIRST BATTLE OF TRENTON

In mid-December, 1776, the American Revolution was all but over. Washington had been driven out of New York and New Jersey. His troops were demoralized and ill equipped. He needed a victory desperately. He decided to risk everything in a surprise attack on Trenton, a market town of about 100 houses, where a regiment of soldiers from the German principality of Hesse-Cassel was garrisoned under the command of Colonel Johann Rall.

In spite of rain, snow and sleet, Washington's forces managed to cross the Delaware River and march nine miles south, arriving at Trenton about 8am on December 26.

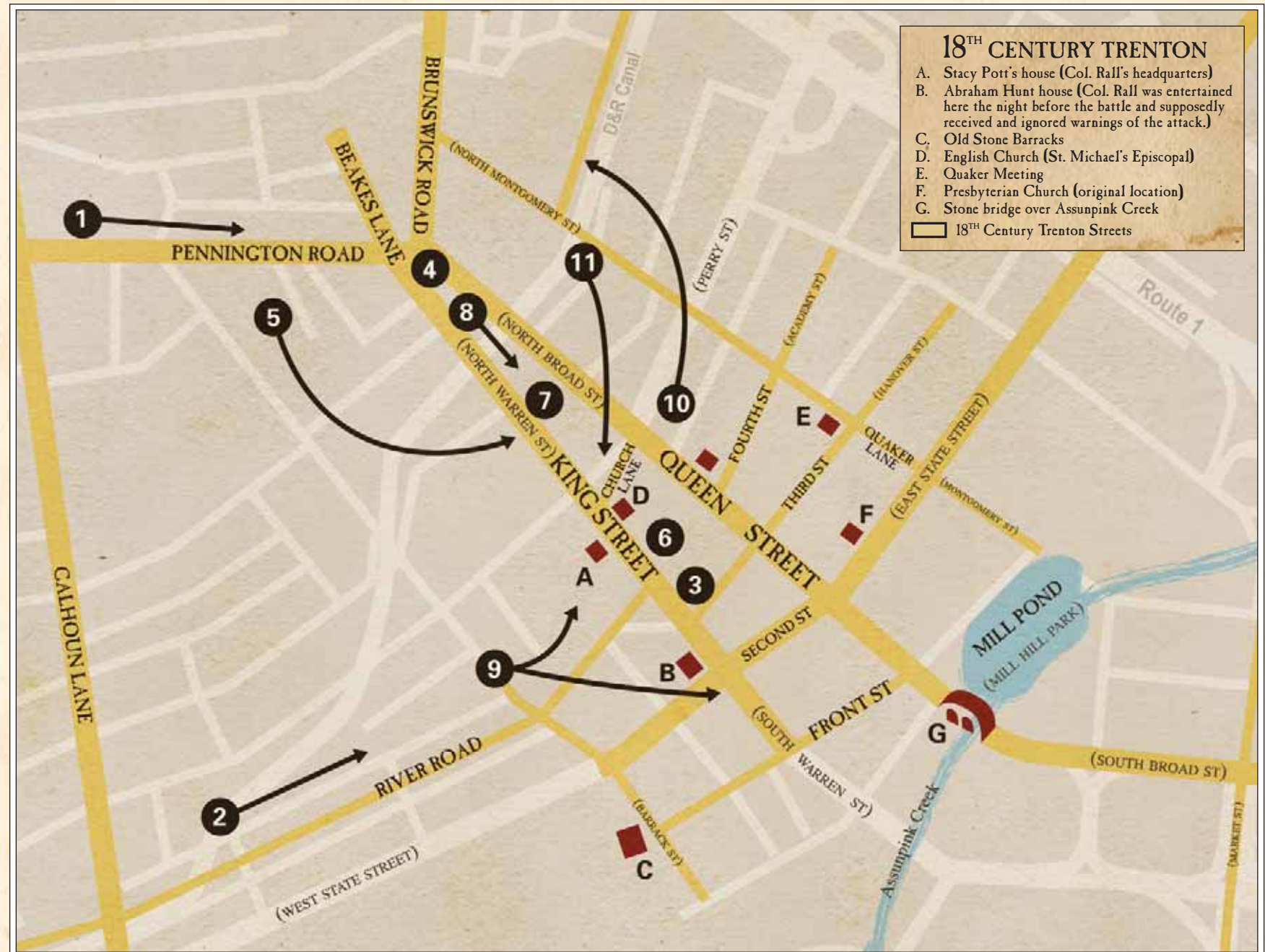
1. One prong of the American forces under General Nathaniel Greene approached Trenton from the north via the Pennington Road. Washington was with this force.
2. Another force under General John Sullivan approached Trenton by the River Road.

The two American forces encountered separate Hessian pickets about one mile from the center of town. The pickets retreated into the town and raised the alarm.

3. Col. Rall formed up his troops outside the houses where they were quartered.
4. The American artillery set up on the site of the modern Battle Monument. From this strategic location, the cannons could fire down the two main streets of the town, King and Queen Streets.
5. American troops moved down the hill on the western edge of town and entered houses and buildings from the back, enabling them to keep their powder dry as they fired their weapons.
6. Rall's troops formed up behind the English Church (D) to avoid the American cannon fire.

7. The Hessians deployed their artillery on King Street and attempted to engage the American artillery.
8. American forces rushed forward and took the Hessian artillery. Lt. James Monroe (the future president) was seriously wounded in the attack.
9. Gen. Sullivan's troops swept into the lower town from the River Road and captured the bridge over the Assunpink (G) blocking any retreat by the Hessian troops to the south.
10. Rall led his troops east out of the town to an apple orchard and sent them north up the hill toward the flank of Washington's position. Washington, seeing the danger, sent troops to block the roads on the northeast and east. When the flanking maneuver failed, Rall led his troops back into the town to try and retake his artillery.
11. In the midst of heavy fighting in the streets of Trenton, Col. Rall was shot from his horse and mortally wounded. The Hessian troops, demoralized after their commander was wounded and with no way to escape from the town, surrender.

The battle was over by 10am. The Americans suffered no fatalities (although two soldiers are reported to have frozen to death on the march from the river crossing.) After the battle, the Americans took over 900 prisoners. Col. Rall and the other Hessian dead were buried in a mass grave in the cemetery of the Presbyterian Church (F).



The numbers indicated on the map show where the action described occurred.  
*A Map of TRENTON, N.J. and the GLORIOUS VICTORY of the AMERICAN TROOPS in their attack on the HESSIAN GARRISON*