

# STORIES of New Jersey

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IRENE FUHLBRUEGGE, *State Director*  
472 Orange Street, Newark, N. J.

WILLIAM H. J. ELY  
*State Administrator*

SCOTCH PLAINS

No. \_\_\_\_\_

## THE POMPTON MUTINY

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During the winter of 1781, Washington was encamped at Morristown and had spread detachments of his army along the Jersey hills to watch for a possible attack from the British. Part of the New Jersey Brigade was stationed at what was then called the Pompton Federal Hill Encampment.

Most of the fighting was then taking place in the south, while the men stationed in New Jersey were merely watch dogs. Long months of idleness had been spent in the crude huts, only partly warmed by wood fires. One uneventful day followed another through the monotonous winter, as lookouts scanned the bleak country for any sign of the redcoats.

Rations had been cut to the minimum, uniforms were worn and tattered, rags and twine were substitutes for shoes. Many of the soldiers were sick and worried about their families, since their pay had been delayed for months.

Evidence there was in plenty that the congress and many of the citizens were not wholeheartedly supporting the Army. It was no secret that out of the private fortunes of Washington, Robert Morris and a few others had come funds for wages and supplies. And, while loyalty to a worthwhile cause had prompted most of their enlistments, there were others whose feelings were not so buoyant over the ultimate success of the struggle. Was it then any wonder that the brigade became demoralized?

Many enlistments were for a term of 3 years, or for duration of the war; but the soldiers had expected that the war would end before the 3-year term expired. Now that the conflict looked interminable, some of the more disgruntled ones wished to be released at the end of the 3-year term. The officers to whom they complained insisted that "duration of the war" meant exactly that, regardless of its length.

On January 1, about 1,300 of the Pennsylvania Line troops stationed at Morristown mutinied and marched under arms toward Princeton. On the way they were met by General Anthony Wayne. The soldiers loved and admired the brilliant general, but they were grimly determined to have their rights. All they asked was their pay and the discharge to which they felt they were entitled.

"Do not mistake us, General," they said, "we are not going to the enemy. On the contrary, were they to come out, you should see us fight under you with as much resolution as ever but we wish a redress of our grievances."