

STORIES of New Jersey

victims before medical science found ways of combating it. Bravely his widow took up the task of caring for the home and the large family. The children had grown to manhood and womanhood by the time the American Revolution broke out 17 years later, and the Widow Ball was proud to have three of her sons enlist in the New Jersey Militia for the defense of the Colonies against the British troops.

The roomy old house with its large family, some of whom were now married and living here with their own children, was widely known for its hospitality, especially to the soldiers of the patriot army. During the first winter of Washington's encampment at Morristown he frequently stopped here with his men for refreshments. Finding that his hosts bore the same family name as his mother, Mary Ball, he traced the relationship and called them his cousins.

The entire neighborhood of the old homestead is rich in Revolutionary memories. It is said that at that time there was a cavalry scout stable large enough to accommodate 40 horses at the edge of the Ball estate, at what is now the corner of Cedar Road and Cedar Lane, and that in a cemetery at Claremont Avenue 15 of Washington's soldiers were buried.

At the time of the battle of Springfield, in 1780, Washington spent many hours in and about the old Ball homestead, frequently sleeping in the small room over the kitchen. From the top of the mountain at the rear of the estate he could observe the British troops at Elizabethtown and on Staten Island. At one time it was expected that the Hessians were coming along the Ridge Road, and Washington warned his cousins and their neighbors to seek safety behind the mountain. But the enemy changed their course and went on to Springfield. The signals which flashed to and from the lookout on the mountain played no small part in the victory.

The widow of Timothy Ball lived on to see the Revolution won by the Colonists, the United States made an independent nation, and Washington unanimously elected as its first President. For almost 50 years after the death of her husband she lived with her children and her children's children in the old homestead.

The reconstructed chimney still contains the stone telling that the house was built by Timothy and Esther Ball in 1743. Although it has been necessary to cover much of the old flooring with new, many of the ancient foot-wide boards still creak beneath the tread of modern visitors. The house is only two and a half stories high, but for some reason known only to its original builders it was built in five alternating levels connected by short flights of stairs. The original dangerous ladder-like steps are replaced by short flights of modern stairs. In addition to a picture of Washington, there is a portrait of his mother, Mary Ball Washington, presented to the inn by her great-great-granddaughter. The great beams which reach across the low ceiling of the present dining room, the room in which the Ball family cooked and spun, worked and worshiped, give an idea of the powerful framework of the old house. The quaint Dutch oven and enormous fireplace, 11 feet long and more than three feet deep, still stand as though only yesterday they were used to cook a meal for General Washington. The doors at the opposite sides of the hearth show