

STORIES of New Jersey

In the early morning of December 26 the town was invaded by the American forces, who had crossed the river a few miles north. A number of Hessians made a stand near the barracks, fired one volley at the advancing Continentals and fled. This Battle of Trenton, coming so soon after a precipitate retreat, encouraged the Colonies to further efforts for freedom.

When informed of the loot left in the building by the fleeing Hessians Washington ordered it all returned to the proper owners, whether patriots or Tories. A tablet near the barracks now commends this deed.

When peace came in 1783 the Trenton Barracks was once more closed. With no further use for the building the State Legislature, unwilling to go into the real estate business as did its predecessor, passed a bill on June 1, 1786, to sell the property.

Trenton citizens seemingly lost interest in the old building, for there was no protest when it was decided to tear part of it down in 1813 to permit the extension of Front Street to the State House.

About 40 feet of the north end of the main section was demolished for the roadway and narrow sidewalks. The stone walls of the north wing were replaced by brick and the wooden balcony was removed. The interior was remodeled into apartments.

The south portion, also used in part for dwellings, retained its stone exteriors, but the wooden balcony was removed. Probably because it was white-washed, this section got the name White Hall, and that name stuck even after the building was taken over by the Widows' and Single Women's Home Society in the early 1850's.

In 1889 the Daughters of the American Revolution passed a motion to have the barracks purchased and maintained as an historic landmark. Fortunately, at the same time, the Widows' and Single Women's Society was seeking new quarters, and White Hall was put up for sale. A group of women organized as the Purchase Fund Committee, collected \$6,314.20 and bought the old, L-shaped portion of the barracks. Reorganized as The Old Barracks Association, this same group of women opened the building to the public in 1902.

Gradually the plan for the Old Barracks was expanded to include not only the maintenance of the existing buildings but the reconstruction of the historic structure to its original form. The late Chancellor Edwin Robert Walker searched for drawings, descriptions, bills, records--anything that would give a clue to how the Barracks looked originally. In a letter which received a wide circulation he detailed all the facts he had unearthed from dusty documents.

On April 27, 1911, the State Legislature provided

Officers' Quarters

