

the business of so many different departments" that his chief duty of leading the army necessarily suffered. "I have labored, ever since I have been in the service," his letter went on, "to discourage all kinds of local attachments and distinctions of country, denominating the whole by the greater name of American..."

But action was the burning need of the moment if the "greater name of American" were to be more than a dream. Continental money was practically worthless; the army was held in contempt; and the people, losing faith in ultimate victory, were returning in great numbers to the King's protection. The American Revolution and the future of a nation were at stake.

In the morning darkness of December 26, 1776, the commander launched his half-naked, wretched army against the Hessian garrison that Howe had left at Trenton. In a fury of snow, sleet and floating ice, 2,400 men fought strong winds and the river's fierce current to reach the New Jersey shore at what is now Washington Crossing State Park. At the Johnson House in the present village of Washington Crossing, the commander waited for the troops, horses and cannon to be brought over.

Dividing his command with General Sullivan, whom he ordered to march by the river road, Washington, together with Greene and Stirling, started along the Pennington road on the grueling nine-mile march to Trenton. Many of the men walked in the snow with rags wrapped round their feet or went barefoot. At eight o'clock in the morning, three hours behind schedule, but spurred on by the password "Victory or Death," Washington's men attacked the outposts from the north, and Sullivan's, from the south.

The main Hessian force and its commander, Colonel Rall, surprised out of a drunken sleep after their exuberant celebration of Christmas day, were too demoralized to make any effective resistance. More than a hundred of the enemy were killed or wounded in the short struggle, almost a thousand were captured, and only about four hundred escaped. Colonel Rall died of wounds received in the brief battle. The Americans suffered only a few casualties.

But victorious though they were, the Americans dared not remain in Trenton. Reinforcements that Washington expected did not arrive, and there was danger of an immediate attack from a strong British force at Princeton. Washington hurried his little army, with prisoners and booty, back to Pennsylvania.

On January 1, 1777, Washington was again in New Jersey. His force of 5,000 included the reinforcements of raw militiamen brought by Colonel Cadwalader and General Mifflin. The more experienced New England soldiers of the Continental Army had agreed to remain six weeks beyond their enlistment period only after their practical commander had promised them a \$10 bonus. Washington had also ordered General Heath, then in Bergen County, to move westward through Hackensack to the main army; and to the commanding officers of the militia at Morristown, he had sent instructions to keep the enemy on edge by constant guerilla attacks on their rear and flank.

On the morning of January 2, Cornwallis with 5,000 trained soldiers, set out from Princeton to win back Trenton.



Cornwallis' Headquarters--Alpine