

STORIES of New Jersey

ing a spring campaign, the commander sent Mrs. Washington back to Virginia. But no campaign followed. Clinton was having trouble getting supplies and reinforcements from England because of the partial blockade of the British Isles by the superior French fleet. The Revolution had become one phase of a larger struggle which was being waged by two great European powers on the high seas.

On June 1 Clinton sent a raiding expedition up the Hudson with the aim of enticing Washington from the excellent defensive position at Middlebrook. When Washington did depart from Middlebrook on June 3, Clinton decided the British were too weak to risk any fierce fighting. Washington, passing through Ringwood on June 6, continued north to West Point and the Hudson fortifications. Here he remained through the summer and most of the fall, oblivious to Clinton's attempt in July to draw him toward Connecticut. Later in that month Washington sent "Mad Anthony Wayne" to capture the British fort at Stony Point on the Hudson, and in August he ordered "Light Horse Harry" Lee to take the British post at Powles Hook, now Jersey City. Major Lee accomplished this task with great skill and daring, sending the captured flag to his commander. Finally, during the first week in December, with the French fleet still unavailable for a joint attack on New York City and with Clinton gone south with some of his regiments to campaign in the Carolinas, Washington returned with his army to Morristown, where he had first found refuge in January 1777.

Valley Forge has come to symbolize the suffering and hardship which Washington and his men endured to achieve independence. But Morristown during the winter of 1779-80 was the scene of greater agony. It was the coldest winter in a generation. Two feet of snow lay on the ground in the middle of December. There were no huts, few tents, not even blankets. Men were barefoot and half naked. Washington wrote: "We have never experienced a like extremity at any period of the war...Unless some extraordinary and immediate exertions be made by the states from which we draw our supplies, there is every appearance that the army will infallibly disband in a fortnight." At the beginning of January 1780 a blizzard brought as much as 6 feet of snow, burying some of the troops during the night. Men and horses were starving or freezing to death. As soon as possible, the troops were put to building huts in Jockey Holly.

So serious was the situation that the commander, for the first time, found it necessary to overlook the plundering of the men. After an appeal by Washington to the people of New Jersey, conditions were somewhat relieved. No longer was the conduct of the Jerseys "infamous." Now the commander acknowledged: "...owing to their exertions in a great measure the Army has been kept together."

Washington made his headquarters at the home of Mrs. Jacob Ford. The house, built in 1774 and now a national shrine, was sorely strained to hold the General's entire military "family" of 18. Log cabins were built on both sides of the house: one for an office; the other, the kitchen. Mrs. Washington came to stay at the Ford Mansion, and here were centered the social activities of the



The
Hermitage



Dey
Mansion