

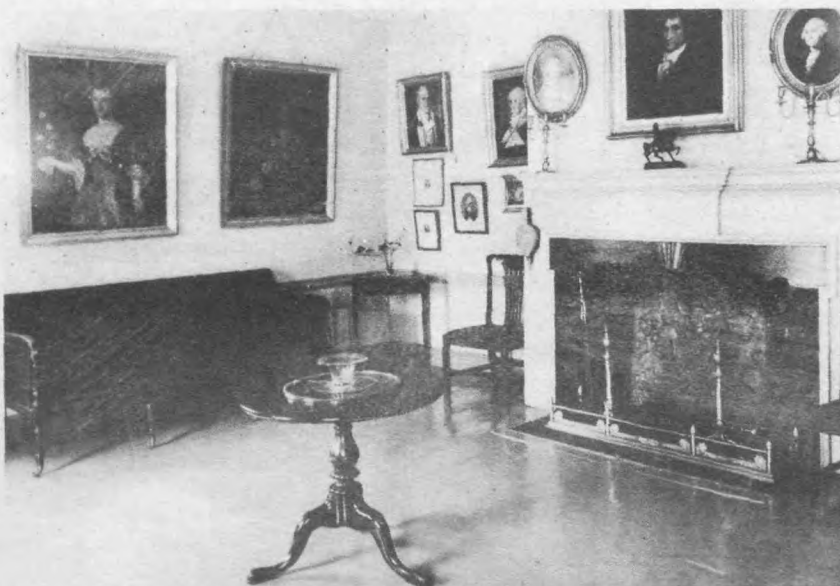
STORIES of New Jersey

commander and his staff. Dancing, inexpensive and warming, was the most popular activity, and the general himself was the leading spirit.

Of military activity there was very little. In January, Lord Stirling, with 2,500 men in 500 sleighs, hastened across the frozen waters of Arthur Kill to attack the British garrison on Staten Island. The raid accomplished nothing except to provoke retaliation several days later, when the redcoats entered Newark and Elizabethtown, burning the courthouse and meeting house in the latter community and the Academy at Newark. Otherwise the troops were kept busy only by a rigorous course in tactics directed by Inspector-general von Steuben.

Warmer weather brought no hope, however, of victory. Everything appeared to be at a standstill. Business conditions were bad; the poor were suffering; finances were still chaotic; the various departments of the army were more than ever in a wretched condition; and no recruits were coming in. The troops raised in 1780 were 8,000 less than the number recruited two years before. Finally there was the news early in June that Clinton had captured Charleston on May 12. Not only was the southern American army dispersed, but half the navy was lost. Washington, after four years of fighting, saw the future just as black as it had been at the close of 1776, and bitterly he wrote to his brother: "...in the anguish of Soul I do lament that our fatal and accursed policy should bring the 6th of June upon us and not a single recruit to the army... Thus it is, one year rolls over another--and without some changes--we are hastening to our ruin." The only happy event of that spring, and one that helped the commander to weather the cares of war, was the return of his faithful young friend, Marquis de Lafayette. Reaching Morristown in May after a year's absence in France, the Marquis, who had been Washington's close companion at the Battle of Monmouth, brought the encouraging promise of more aid; a great fleet and 6,000 troops.

In the following month, June 1780, occurred the last two military engagements of any importance in New Jersey. On the night of June 6 the Hessian general, Knyphausen, crossed from Staten Island and struck through Elizabethtown, driving an American detachment from its post there. British, Hessian and Loyalist troops, targets for constant sniping by the Continentals, destroyed the small settlement of Connecticut Farms and murdered the wife of the Rev. James Caldwell, chaplain of the New Jersey regiment. The advance continued all morning but by afternoon American reinforcements arrived from Morristown to halt the British drive as it approached Springfield. Hearing that Washington was moving to surround him, Knyphausen withdrew his troops to Elizabethtown during the night.



*Interior
of
Ford Mansion
at
Morristown,
One of the Outstanding
Washington Museums*