

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Princeton Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON

Princeton Battlefield State Park

## 2 LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER Southern edge of Princeton on New Jersey Route 583

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

5

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Mercer

CODE

21

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

## CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

## PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, David J. Bardin,  
Commissioner and Institute for Advanced Study, 20 Nassau St., Princeton, N.J., Dr. Carl Kaysen  
STREET & NUMBER

State Capitol, State Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

\_\_ VICINITY OF

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Registry of Deeds, ETC. Mercer County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE.
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1776 was fought principally within a small area of farmland one-and-a-half miles southwest of the Princeton. The American army, having eluded the main body of the British army at Trenton, arrived just south of Princeton by early morning, and was marching up Quaker Road, which closely parallels Stony Brook, to the main road between Trenton and Princeton, the present U.S. Route 206. Just before reaching Friends Meeting House (presently the Stony Brook Church, (#1, refer to attached battle map) the army split, the main column under Washington marching across the fields to the east, and the vanguard under Mercer continuing north on Quaker Road. Meanwhile, the two British regiments marching on the main road to Trenton had reached the high ground just west of Stony Brook and suddenly spied the American army; They reversed their march, recrossed Stony Brook, and near the original location of the Olden House, left the road and cut south, in a race with Mercer's vanguard for the protection of an orchard. Mercer's troops and the British force clashed in the eastern portion of the Princeton Battlefield State Park, where Mercer Road presently runs. The American attack was repulsed and the line broke and retreated south toward the main American column which had cut behind the Thomas Clarke House (#2). Washington rallied his army on the gradual rise of land to the east of the Clarke House, and in a final attack across the fields of Clarke's farm he routed the British and pursued them in a northwesterly direction across Mercer Road to the Stony Brook Bridge, and then for a distance down the road to Trenton. Washington ordered the bridge to be destroyed, and the present bridge dates from the subsequent replacement. Two walls composing an angle of Worth's Mill, (#3) at this bridging of Stony Brook, are still standing, and reportedly date from the battle. However, the land southeast of the mill, over which the British attacked and then fled, has been developed primarily with private residences up to the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the portion of the State Park on the northern side of Mercer Road. Within that portion, which like its southern counterpart is simply landscaped with rolling lawn and a few trees, is a battle monument and the burial place of British and American casualties. Across Mercer Road to the southeast, this portion of the State Park includes a large oak tree which reportedly marks the site where General Mercer received his death wound. The Clarke House stands within the park on the crest of a slight rise. The two-story frame house is covered with white clapboards and has a gable roof. It was built in two sections: the western is divided into two bays with a simply-framed door: the eastern section is slightly shorter, and is divided into three bays. It is presently closed but scheduled for restoration. A visitors' center is also scheduled to be built near the Clarke House. With the exception of eight private residences on the southern curb of Mercer Road, west of the park, the land on the east, south and west of the park is open. The Stony Brook Church stands to the southwest, and to the east is the land of the Institute of Advanced Study. This land immediately to the east is open and contains land over which Washington led his final attack.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1777

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Washington's victory at Princeton on January 3, 1777, "like that of Trenton (one week earlier), had an effect on the American cause entirely disproportionate to the number of men engaged. It heartened the people of all the states with hopes of ultimate complete success. Moreover, it strengthened Washington's reputation at home and abroad with a consequent and of sequence increase of his authority."\* The twin victories of Trenton and Princeton came at a period when the spirits of the American people had reached a dangerously low ebb, when another defeat might have been fatal to the cause of independence. With success at the year's end, the situation brightened and from every corner militiamen flocked to the colors to fill the ranks while the new Continental Army was created. The scene of the heaviest fighting in the battle is preserved in a 40-acre State Park on the southern outskirts of Princeton, New Jersey.

## HISTORY

Leaving three regiments at Princeton at the start of 1777, Cornwallis advanced the main body of the British army to Trenton, to avenge the loss sustained there a week earlier on Christmas Eve. Arriving at the Delaware toward sunset on January 1, he found Washington's army of 5000 men occupying a precarious position along Assunpink Creek. Convinced that the Continentals had no avenue of escape, Cornwallis ignored the counsel of Sir William Erskine to attack immediately and determined to attack the next morning, after a brief and unsuccessful skirmish. That night Washington and his advisor conferred while the soldiers bolstered earthworks. Since a thaw had broken the ice sheet over which the army had crossed the Delaware, escape to Pennsylvania was impossible. However, a drop in temperature had sufficiently hardened a little-known and unpicketed backroad so that it could support the weight of the artillery, and Washington elected to elude the almost certain defeat the next morning and yet still give his army a much-needed victory. That night the army marched off to whispered orders on a semicircular route to Princeton. The artillery wheels were muffled, and a skeleton force was left to maintain campfires within a short distance of the British lines.

After sunrise, Washington struck the Princeton highway, one and a half miles south of the town. As the army proceeded to town they encountered the first of the three regiments marching to join Cornwallis at Trenton. Despite the numerical superiority of the American force, the British under the command of Colonel Mawhood prepared to attack the American vanguard

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Alfred H. Bill, The Campaign of Princeton, 1776-1777 (Princeton, 1948).  
 Benjamin Lossing, The Pictorial Fieldbook of the Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1859) II.  
 Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1952) I.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Parcel #1 208 acre ; Parcel #2 1.8 acres

UTM REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

A	1, 8	5, 2, 7, 1, 6, 0	4, 4, 6, 3, 6, 0	B	1, 8	5, 2, 7, 2, 5, 0	4, 4, 6, 3, 9, 6, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1, 8	5, 2, 7, 4, 4, 0	4, 4, 6, 4, 1, 4, 0	D	1, 8	5, 2, 7, 3, 9, 0	4, 4, 6, 4, 2, 4, 0

Parcel #2) Quaker Road with the southern curb of U.S. 206 (Lincoln Highway), proceed west along the southern curb of U.S. 206 300', thence north 250', thence east 300', thence south to the point of origin.

Parcel #1) Beginning at Point A on the USGS map, proceed north 1000' to point B, thence in a northeasterly direction for approximately 900' to point C, thence 400' in a  
 (see continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey</u>	<u>8/5/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L. Street, NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

Landmark Designated: Aug 20, 1966  
 Boundary Certified: [Signature]  
Aug 3, 1977 date

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
[Signature] DATE 8/10/77  
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST: DATE  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

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The final stage of the battle of Princeton transpired in Nassau Hall on the campus of Princeton University. This college building, (a National Historic Landmark) which has lost much of its historic appearance due to two post-historic fires, was barricaded by the remaining British regiment, but was surrendered with little resistance.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1 ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

under General Mercer.

Mercer's troops consisted in large part of unseasoned militiamen from New Jersey, and under the onslaught of the British regulars, his line broke, despite his valiant exhortations. As he attempted to rally his troops, he was fatally wounded by a bayonet thrust. Finally, the main American column under Washington bolstered the broken lines, and with a deadly rifle fire drove the British from the field, and down the road to Trenton. The Americans then forged on to Princeton, where the remaining British garrison was barricaded in Nassau Hall. After the artillery sent a couple rounds through the building, the beleaguered troops surrendered. The estimated British losses were between 400 and 600 killed, wounded and captured. The Americans lost only 30 men, but a disproportionate number were officers.

Meanwhile Cornwallis had been informed of the action at Princeton and was hurriedly sending his troops in pursuit. He just missed catching the Continentals in Princeton, and then hastened to New Brunswick to protect a ~~70,000~~ 70,000 war chest. Washington, although presented with a strong opportunity to attack New Brunswick in advance of Cornwallis, lacked the fresh troops that would be required to make the forced march. Instead he took his army north to Morristown, a naturally fortified town in the Watchung Mountains, where he made his winter cantonment.

Through the victories at Princeton and Trenton and the occupation of Morristown, Washington had undone all that the British had gained in New Jersey that fall. Furthermore, the victories went far toward establishing new confidence in Washington and his troops throughout the Colonies at one of low points of patriotic fervor.

\* Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1952), I p.316.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

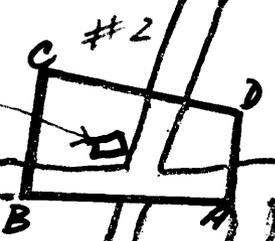
- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| J 18.527300.4464680 | Parcel #2           |
| L 18.527490.4464770 | A 18.527040.4464570 |
| M 18.527600.4464660 | B 18.526920.4464560 |
| N 18.527810.4464700 | C 18.526900.4464640 |
| O 18.527990.4463700 | D 18.527020.4464650 |

Verbal Boundary Description Continued

north westerly direction to Point D, thence 100' east to Point E, thence 100' south to point F, thence 100' east to point G, thence 200' north to point H, the southern curb of Mercer Street, thence follow the southern curb of Mercer Street(which is also the boundary of the State Park) east 350' to point I, thence follow the State Park boundary 1250' in a northern direction to point J, thence southeasterly along the boundary 200' to point K, continue along the State park boundary 500' to point L, thence southeasterly along the State Park boundary 450' to point M, thence easterly 750' to point N, thence southeasterly 3300' to point O, thence westerly 2750' to the point of origin.  
(Verbal boundary description applies to USGS map; see sketch map for finer detail of boundary.)

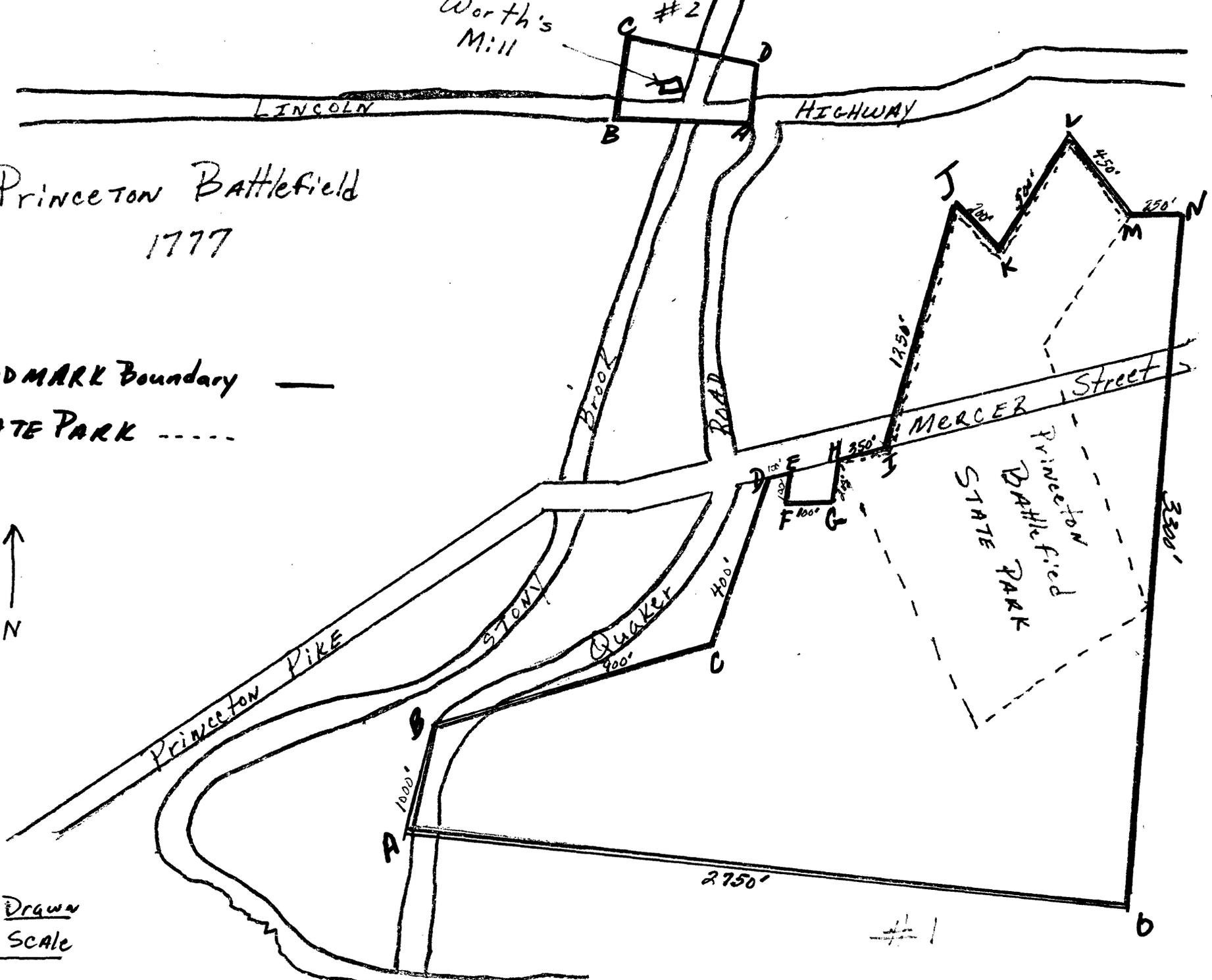


Worth's Mill



Princeton Battlefield  
1777

LANDMARK Boundary —  
STATE PARK - - - -



Not Drawn  
to Scale

#1

||||| DINSMORE (WORTH'S MILL)

/// EAST FIELD

=== WELLER

--- EXISTING PARK BOUNDARIES

--- 1976 PARK BOUNDARIES

... INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

■ WOODED AREA

STATE

DRUMTHWACKET

PROPERTY

MERCER ROAD

STOCKTON ST.

MEMORIAL COLONADE

STATE PARK

BUILT UP

OVERLOOK



Head of column

STONEY BROOK

STATE PARK

BACK ROAD USED BY WASHINGTON

FRIENDS

FLOOD PLAIN

UPDIKE FIELD

WOODS