**National Historic Landmark**

**War For Independence**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*

**NAME**

HISTORIC

Princeton Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON

Princeton Battlefield State Park

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Southern edge of Princeton on New Jersey Route 583

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

STATE

New Jersey

**CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<td>_____STRUCTURE</td>
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<td>__WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
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<td>_____SITE</td>
<td>_IN PROCESS</td>
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<td>_____OBJECT</td>
<td>_BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>YES: RESTRICTED</td>
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**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

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE

Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS</th>
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The Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1776 was fought principally within a small area of farmland one-and-a-half miles southwest of 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.
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 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 littleknown 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
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Parcel #1 2.08 acres; Parcel #2 1.8 acres

UTM REFERENCES
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<tr>
<td>D 1</td>
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
Parcel #2) Beginning at the intersection of the western curb of 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

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

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey
STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW.
CITY OR TOWN Washington
STATE D.C.

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEN:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
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.
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 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.

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.)
Standing at the junction of Quaker and Sawmill Roads, in the rear of Gen. Sullivan's division, Major Wilkinson and some officers with Gen. Washington observed Red-coat horsemen across Stony Brook. Washington, with his glass, identified a body of British infantry (16th dragoon flankers and advance troops of Col. Mawhood's 17th regiment on Bruere's Hill). Gen. Mercer with a detail to destroy highway (206) bridge, had seen only a single horseman. He was notified of Washington's sighting.
Princeton Battlefield
1777

LANDMARK Boundary
STATE PARK

Not Drawn to Scale