

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>New Jersey</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Gloucester</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Red Bank Battlefield and Fort Mercer**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Red Bank Battlefield**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**east bank of the Delaware River and at the west end of Hessian Avenue.**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**National Park**

STATE <b>New Jersey</b>	CODE	COUNTY: <b>Gloucester</b>	CODE
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Mr. Paul W. Budd, Director of Public Affairs, administered by Board of Chosen Freeholders, County of Gloucester**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Gloucester**

**Broad and Delaware Streets**

CITY OR TOWN: <b>Woodbury</b>	STATE: <b>New Jersey</b>	CODE
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**County Clerk's Office Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Broad and Delaware Streets**

CITY OR TOWN: <b>Woodbury</b>	STATE: <b>New Jersey</b>	CODE
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Historic American Buildings Survey (Whitall House, NJ-79) (18 sheets, 7 photos)**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1934, 1936-37**     Federal    State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress**

CITY OR TOWN: <b>Washington</b>	STATE: <b>D.C.</b>	CODE
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <sup>(House)</sup> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Mercer, named after General Hugh Mercer, who was killed in the battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777, was built during the spring and summer of 1777 on the east bank of the Delaware on a bluff about 20 feet above the river. The fort was a large earthen work designed to be defended by 1,500 men. In October 1777, Captain Mauduit du Plessis, a French engineer, decided that Fort Mercer was too large for its 500-man garrison and reduced the size of the post by building a wall across an extension along the river (west) side, which transformed Fort Mercer into a large redoubt nearly of a pentagonal form. The walls were of earth, guarded without by a dry moat and a abatis, and topped by a wooden palisade. The fort mounted 14 cannons. In the center was a powder magazine and a sallyport with drawbridge stood at the south end. A larger abandoned outwork to the north consisted of an irregular bastion with a sallyport on the east (land) side.

Extensive remains of Fort Mercer's dry ditch and earth ramparts, now grass-covered, are extant. The fort is about 320 yards long north-south, and about 50 yards wide at its widest point. The remains are marked by a battle monument comprised of a tall stone column surmounted by a figure of a Revolutionary soldier. Erected in 1906 this monument is located within the walls and has six iron cannon standing around its base. A short distance further north stands the small stone battle monument that was erected in 1829.

About 700 feet south of Fort Mercer and also located in the 20-acre park, is the James Whitall Sr. House, which was used as a hospital for the Hessians, including their commanding officer, Colonel Carl von Donop, who were wounded in the Battle of Red Bank. Fifteen iron cannon balls are enbeded in the north (end) wall of the dwelling.

In a display shed adjacent to the Whithall House are portions of the original Revolutionary chevaux-de-frise which were sunk across the Delaware River between Forts Mercer and Mifflin in 1777. These timber structures, salvaged from the river in the early 20th century. are the only surviving examples of this type of river defense and are therefore unique.

The James Whitall House, erected in 1748, is a two-story Georgian brick dwelling with gable roof and an end chimney at either end. The farmhouse is 40 feet or five-bays wide and 35 feet deep. The east and west (front and rear) brick walls are laid in Flemish bond and the end walls in common bond. There are three rooms on each floor.

An earlier and lower two-story stone wing with gable roof adjoins the main house on the south end. This wing, which contains the kitchen and three chambers above, is 26 feet long and about 22 feet deep. Most of the original fabric of the Whitall House is

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**6. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century            |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **October 22, 1777**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Mercer, on October 22, 1777, was the scene of the successful and heroic American defense of this post in the action known as the Battle of Red Bank. An earthen fort erected in 1777 to guard the Delaware River approach to Philadelphia, Fort Mercer, together with its companion works, Fort Mifflin on the opposite Pennsylvania side and the timber chevaux-de-frise barrier across the river, played a major and successful role in the Philadelphia campaign of 1777. First, their very existence caused the British Commander-in-Chief General William Howe, to change his intended Delaware River approach to Philadelphia to the Chesapeake Bay route. This decision, assisted by contrary winds, caused Howe to waste 32 critical days during the summer of 1777 in moving his army from New York City the 90-land-miles to Philadelphia. The time thus lost and the Chesapeake route utilized, made it extremely difficult for Howe to return to New York City and move up the Hudson River in time to support Burgoyne's army coming south from Canada, as British war plans for 1777 specified.

Second, the gallent and obstinate American defense of Forts Mercer and Mifflin in October and November 1777, even after the British capture of Philadelphia, September 26 and their victory at Germantown, October 4 continued to cause Howe serious difficulties by blocking his direct water route to the sea. General Howe was forced to divert considerable forces to the project of clearing his supply lines.

History

Fort Mercer, an earthen fort, was built during the spring and summer of 1777 by Pennsylvania militiamen on the New Jersey bank of the Delaware River, acting under orders from General George Washington. Forty-seven chevaux-de-frise in a triple line extended from Fort Mercer at Red Bank across the Delaware River to Fort Mifflin on Mud Island in Pennsylvania. The chevaux-de-frise were crated structures made of heavy timbers, loaded with stone and sunk in the water. They were mounted with wooden beams, shod at the upper end with iron points, standing upwards to within four feet of the surface of the river at low tides and pointing downstream. They were capable of

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

William S. Stryker, The Forts on the Delaware in the Revolutionary War (Trenton, New Jersey, 1901) 5-22.

Frank H. Stewart, History of the Battle of Red Bank (Woodbury, New Jersey, 1927).

Samuel S. Smith, Fight for the Delaware (Monmouth Beach, New Jersey, 1970), 14- 24.

Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution (2 vols., New York, 1952), Vol. I, 372-383.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	39°	52'	22"	75°	11'	25"
NE	39°	52'	20"	75°	11'	15"
SE	39°	52'	02"	75°	11'	28"
SW	39°	52'	03"	75°	11'	33"

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 20 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Charles W. Snell, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service

DATE: 5/12/72

STREET AND NUMBER: 801 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D.C.

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), 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 at the recommended level of significance of the nomination:

National [ ] State [ ] Local [ ]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Red Bank Battlefield  
(Fort Mercer)

(Continuation Sheet)

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7. Description (Continued)

preserved, including the corner fireplaces, the wide board floors,  
and handsome wood panelling and trim.

The park, including the Whitall House, are open to visitors.

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8. Significance (Continued)

ripping open the bottom of any ship that tried to pass over them. Above this line and the two flanking forts lay a small American fleet, the "Delaware fleet," comprised of a frigate, brig, schooner, 13 row galleys, two floating batteries, and 14 fire ships. The purpose of these works was to block the Delaware River so that the stream could not be utilized by the British in an attack on Philadelphia.

On July 23, 1777, General Howe, with an army of 18,000 men and a fleet of 260 ships, sailed from New York City bound for Philadelphia, then the seat of the Continental Congress. Arriving at the mouth of the Delaware River on July 29, Howe learned of the American river defenses at Red Bank and changed his original plan, which called for sailing up the Delaware River to Philadelphia, to the Chesapeake Bay approach. Leaving the Delaware Capes on July 31, the British fleet fought adverse winds and endured calms until August 14, when it sighted Cape Charles and the army did not land at the Head of the Elk until August 25, 32 days after leaving New York and still 50 miles distant from Philadelphia. Howe's course of action during his approach to Philadelphia materially assisted the Continental Army of the Northern Department in defeating and capturing General John Burgoyne's army at Saratoga, New York, on October 17, 1777.

On September 11, 1777, Howe defeated Washington's army at Brandywine, Pennsylvania; he captured Philadelphia on September 26, and again defeated Washington at Germantown on October 4. Despite these defeats Washington's army still encircled Philadelphia, denying the British supplies from the interior, and Forts Mifflin and Mercer also blockaded the river route to the sea. Philadelphia was soon feeling the pinch and as British survival depended upon supply by sea, it became vital to Howe that the Delaware River be opened speedily to British ships. For the same reasons Washington decided to retain control of the two forts as long as possible.

The British began clearing the river on October 2 when they captured a small redoubt and a double line of chevaux-de-frise at Billingsford, New Jersey. On October 21 they began their operations against the more powerful defensive works at Red Bank. Fort Mercer was defended by two Rhode Island Regiments, about 550 Continental soldiers, and 14 cannons, under the command of Colonel Christopher Greene. His engineer was Chevalier Thomas Antoine Mauduit du Plessis, a French captain. The original earthwork, designed to be defended by 1,500 men, was too large for Greene's force so du Plessis reduced the work into a smaller fort by building a wall to cut of the northern section. The smaller fort was an irregular pentagonal redoubt with earth walls,

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Red Bank Battlefield  
(Fort Mercer) (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

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8. Significance (Continued)

an abatis, dry ditch, and a palisades. On October 22 four regiments of Hessians, about 1,200 men, led by Colonel Carl von Donop, marched from Haddonfield, New Jersey, and arrived at Fort Mercer about noon. About 4:30 p.m. they called upon the American garrison to surrender and Greene rejected their demand. Von Donop made the attack in two columns, one against the north wing of the fort, which had been cut off and abandoned, and the other, led by himself, against the southern section of the fort. As they penetrated the abatis and crossed the moat, the Hessians were mowed down and von Donop fell mortally wounded. A second assault on the southern side of the fort, conducted under fire from the American row-galleys, also failed and the Germans retreated, their loss totaled 371 men and included 22 officers. Greene had 14 killed and 23 wounded.

While the German attack was being made six British warships anchored near the forts and on October 23 these ships opened fire with 300 cannons on Fort Mifflin. But that fort, supported by fire from Fort Mercer and the "Delaware fleet", drove the enemy vessels off. As the British finally gave up the effort and dropped down river the 64-gun ship Augusta ran ground and went up in flames and the 18-gun frigate Merlin, also aground, was blown to pieces by a powder explosion.

The two forts continued to block the Delaware during late October to mid-November 1777. On November 16, after a devastating six-day bombardment during which half of its 450-man garrison had been killed or wounded, Fort Mifflin was abandoned and its survivors withdrew across the river at night to Fort Mercer. Cornwallis then took 2,000 British troops across the Delaware to storm Mercer, but on the night of November 20-21, 1777, the American defenders evacuated Fort Mercer and thereby evaded capture by the British force. After three and one-half months operations, the Delaware River was finally open to the British from Philadelphia to the sea.

In 1829 a marble shaft was erected by members of the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Volunteers to commemorate the battle. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt created a 20-acre U.S. reservation and here in 1906 the State of New Jersey erected a second battle monument. In the late 1960's the 20 acre reservation, including the Red Bank Battlefield and ruins of Fort Mercer, were acquired by Gloucester County as a public park.

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Red Bank Battlefield (Continuation Sheet)

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Boundaries of Red Bank Battlefield (and Fort Mercer)

Approximately 20 acres of land, including the remains of Fort Mercer, beginning at the northwest corner on the east bank of the Delaware River at Latitude 39° 52' 22" - longitude 75° 11' 25", then going southeast about 700 feet to the northeast corner at latitude 39° 52' 20" longitude 75° 11' 15", hence southwest about 2,100 feet to the southeast corner at latitude 39° 52' 02" - longitude 75° 11' 28", then continuing to the northwest about 450 feet to the southwest corner at latitude 39° 52' 03" - longitude 75° 11' 33", then going northeast about 2,200 feet following the east bank of the Delaware River to the point of beginning, the northwest corner.

Precise boundaries, as described above, are on record on a copy of U.S. Geological Survey Map: Woodbury Quadrangle, New Jersey-Pennsylvania, 1967, 7.5 Minute Series, on file with the Historic Sites Survey, Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service.