Combat Experiences of South Ward Locals During the Revolutionary War 1775-1783

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Howard Pyle (1853-1911), The Nation Makers (detail), ca. 1902, oil on canvas, 40 ¼ x 26 in. Brandywine Museum of Art

SOUTH BRUNSWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Benjamin Applegate was one of fewer than a hundred volunteers involved in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. This was considered the first American victory in the long war for independence. Late at night, Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold led a small force of Green Mountain Boys and others across Lake Champlain to capture the British garrison at the fort on May 10, 1775. Valuable artillery pieces were seized. Applegate spent long hours on guard duty at the fort, as well as performing various menial tasks. He probably had some role in moving the cannon over the snow-covered Berkshire Mountains as directed by Henry Knox. The guns from Fort Ticonderoga were used to force the British to evacuate Boston in March of 1776.

Early in 1776, Col. Nathaniel Heard led 500 to 1,000 militiamen from their encampment in the city of New York to various locations in Long Island. Following Heard were many members of his 1% Regiment from Middlesex County and some from the 2" Regiment. Each man sported a green branch in his hat. The mission was to disarm and arrest loyalists led by Richard Hewlett, a former Ranger Captain during the French and Indian War. His band of refugees was hiding in the swampy woods of southern Queens. Hewlett had his arms and supplies stored there. From this vantage point, he was able to contact British ships offshore. Hewlett's mission, besides raiding patriot stores and homes, was to carry out a plan to capture General George Washington. Heard was determined to spoil Hewlett's game, seize the arms and supplies, and neutralize the Tory followers. Heard and his militiamen, which included Daniel and Robert Applegate, William Bastedo, John Dean, Jonathan Deare, Jeremiah Dey, Lewis Egbert, and possibly other locals, were able to confiscate a thousand muskets as well as many other supplies. They arrested 19 of 26 known Tory leaders. 800 Tories were administered the loyalty oath. However, Heard failed to capture Captain Hewlett and the other top Tory leaders.

William Bastedo, John Dey, Andrew McDowell, Jr., Vincent Wetherill, and a few others from the local area were among the survivors of the ill-fated Battle of Long Island on August 26-27, 1776. The enemy force, led by General William Howe, numbered 24,000 Regulars. Some 3,000+ rebels, led by General John Sullivan and General William Alexander, assumed the enemy force would carry out a frontal assault. Howe had been informed that Sullivan's left flank was weakly guarded; thus, he led his main force in an arcing direction to his right in the dark of night, while General James Grant led his men in the other direction to serve as a diversionary attack. Hessian forces were left to carry out a frontal assault. This distracted Sullivan enough so that he did not send support for his weak left flank. Sullivan's line fell apart. Alexander (aka Lord Stirling) ordered a retreat. Two rebel regiments covered the retreat and managed to stall the British advance. Over 300 men were killed. More than 1,000 were wounded. Over 1,000 were

captured. For most of the locals who participated in this battle, it was their first taste of _ defeat.

Andrew McDowell, Jr., Vincent Wetherill, and a number of other locals participated in the Battle of Harlem Heights on September 16, 1776. George Washington's force of 9,000 men tried to hold the highest elevation on the island. On the heels of the British attack, the American General ordered a counterattack in which companies of men made an encircling move to the left and hid in the woods. The plan was to entrap the overconfident redcoats located in a place called the Hollow Way. The strategy failed when the rebels fired too soon. Meanwhile, the main British force of 5,000 marched forward and challenged Washington's main force. After a few hours of battle, the Americans still held their ground. They actually advanced. The British line gave way and fell back. Rebels gave chase, but Washington, fearing a trap, ordered his men back. Estimates of enemy casualties were probably around 90 killed and 300 wounded. American casualties were 30 killed and 100 wounded. This effort has been considered a victory for the American side by some, but, more importantly, a sorely needed morale booster for the rebel soldiers. McDowell and Wetherill may not have seen action in this battle; instead, they probably participated in the raising of double palisades, digging trenches, building redoubts and star forts before and after the battle.

Andrew McDowell, Jr., and a number of other locals saw action at the Battle of White Plains on October 28, 1776. British General Howe's force of Regulars and Hessians advanced on George Washington's position on Chatterton's Hill. Spencer's thousand men were charged with slowing the advance of the more powerful and more numerous enemy force. The ensuing musket fire did not repel or deter the enemy soldiers on foot. The British cavalry struck on the right flank of the American line, which was probably where McDowell and many other militiamen were positioned. The cavalry caused the rebels to retreat in disarray. The enemy gained a decisive victory, but, in the process, lost 300-400 men. The Americans lost 150. McDowell lived to fight another day while Vincent Wetherill was taken prisoner in late November/early December.

On December 25/6, George Washington's remaining forces surprised the Hessian outpost at Trenton. Col. Johan Gottlieb Rall was in command there. He had 1,500 men at his disposal. Most were in the midst of celebrating Christmas when they were attacked. Washington led a force of 2,400 men across the Delaware River during the night. There were probably a few locals among the militiamen who marched on Trenton, but they have not been definitely identified. Washington divided his men into two main wings in order to reach the city from different sides. He also sent a small force to block the road to Princeton and New Brunswick. The Hessians were late in organizing. They were met with deadly canister fire from rebel artillery positioned at the end of the two

main streets. Rall and his second-in-command were mortally wounded. Many Hessians surrendered. 22 had been killed, and 84 were wounded. However, 500 escaped across the Assunpink Bridge to the south. This was because General Cadwalader had been unable to cross the ice-choked river at Bristol, Pennsylvania.

After the first battle of Trenton, Washington's victorious army re-crossed the Delaware River to safety in Pennsylvania. A week later, he and his men returned to find Trenton virtually abandoned. This time, such locals as John Caywood, Coert Voorhees, and Aaron Longstreet accompanied the rebel Commander-in-Chief. Upon learning that General Cornwallis himself was marching down the King's Highway to do battle, Washington moved his men to the far bank of Assunpink Creek. An account of the Second Battle of Trenton was given by an unidentified local: "The troops were placed one above the other, so that they appeared to cover the whole slope from bottom to top, which brought a great many muskets within shot of the bridge. Within 70 or 80 yards of the bridge, as many pieces of artillery as could be managed were stationed. The British did not delay the attack. They were formed in two columns, the one marching down Green Street to carry the bridge, and the other down Main Street to ford the creek. The latter was repelled. The creek was nearly filled with the dead. The other column moved slowly down the street, with their choicest troops in front. When within 60 yards of the bridge they raised a shout, and rushed to the charge. It was then that our men poured upon them from musketry and artillery a shower of bullets, under which, however, they continued to advance, though their speed was diminished; and as the column reached the bridge, it moved slower and slower until the head of it was gradually pressed nearly over, when our fire became so destructive that they broke their ranks and fled. It was then that our army raised a shout, and such a shout | have never since heard; by what signal or word of command, | know not. The British column halted instantly; the officers restored the ranks, and again they rushed to the bridge; and again was the shower of bullets poured upon them with redoubled fury. This time the column broke before it reached the center of the bridge, and their retreat was again followed by the same hearty shout from our line. They returned the third time to charge, but it was in vain. . ." The local militiamen who witnessed this battle were probably among those, like John Cadwalader's volunteers, who were held in reserve to be used if needed.

Local hero, Coert Voorhees, and a few other militiamen from the South Ward area accompanied George Washington on his night march from Trenton to Princeton on January 3, 1777. On that morning, Lt. Col. Charles Mahood was leading his troops out of Princeton in order to join Cornwallis in Trenton. He chose the King's Highway for his route. However, a few of his alert subordinates caught sight of Washington's main force marching on the Mill Road that led to Princeton. Mahood turned back and engaged the American rebels in battle on fields south of Princeton. General Hugh Mercer, who had

been charged with leading a small force to destroy the bridge on the Upper Road, sought to shift his men into position to protect the left flank of Washington's column. He was able to delay the British attack, but, in the process, fell mortally wounded in an orchard. British Regulars advanced on American soldiers who were unable to hold their ground. General Washington was able to rally his troops while Captain Joseph Moulder's artillery stalled the enemy advance. After a 45-minute battle, the British fell back and fled along the Upper Road . . . most of them heading for Trenton. The enemy lost close to 90 killed or wounded. Over 200 were captured or went missing. 40 Americans were killed or wounded. Washington entered Princeton, faced little resistance, and stayed only a short time. He led his victorious army along the Upper Road and crossed over the Millstone Bridge in order to reach Kingston. A few locals stayed behind to cart away and bury the dead.

Coert Voorhees and probably several other local militiamen witnessed the council of generals held by George Washington at the top of the hill in Kingston overlooking the Millstone River on January 3, 1777. The leaders of the weary army that had just pulled off a victory at Princeton were meeting to decide their next move. Major General Nathaniel Greene, Major General John Sullivan, Brigadier General Arthur St. Clair, Brigadier General Thomas Mifflin, General John Cadwalader, Adjutant General Joseph Reed, and the Chief of Artillery, Henry Knox, were in attendance. While the council members debated what to do next, Washington's carpenters and engineers sought to sunder the Millstone Bridge in order to impede British General Cornwallis's main force, which had reached Princeton and was heading toward Kingston. Some generals were in favor of marching on to New Brunswick in order to capture the enemy's war chest. Others maintained that their men were exhausted and in no condition to march to New Brunswick. They needed to get to a safe place to rest. Most agreed that a thousand fresh troops were needed to march on the city to the north. But the only fresh troops nearby were a few hundred Somerset County militiamen who were untested in battle. Consensus was reached, and the decisive move was carried out successfully—the Americans took roads through Rocky Hill and Griggstown, crossed the Millstone River, and spent the night at Somerset Courthouse before moving on to Pluckemin. From there, they managed to get to Morristown. Meanwhile, Cornwallis pushed his men to make haste to New Brunswick after struggling to cross the Millstone River at Kingston. He was afraid that Washington would make a move on New Brunswick. He gave up on the idea of chasing the elusive general. Both commanders had made wise decisions.

On the night of January 3-4, 1777, Captain John Stryker led 20 men in his Somerset County Light Horse Troop against a British force of 200 (wagoneers and soldiers) attempting to repair a few supply wagons that had broken down at Ten-Mile-Run along the King's Highway. This road served as the border between Middlesex County and

Somerset County. Stryker's men had dismounted, crept through the woods, and formed a half-circle around the site where the crippled wagons sat. They were possibly joined by locals who were of the patriot persuasion. Those with muskets and rifles fired a volley at the enemy and scared off their intended targets. The wagons were captured and repaired. Horses that had also been captured were hitched to the wagons and taken to Morristown. Each wagon contained valuable supplies for the men wintering in the Watchungs. No casualties were reported on either side. The Somerset men in Stryker's troop included Lt. John Bennett, Sgt. David Nevius, Michael Blue, John Voorhees, William Wilson, Abraham Golder, Henry Kennedy, Jacob Van Dike, John Van Dike, Cornelius Van Arsdalen, Conrad Van Wagoner, Red Kettle Skillman, Peter Stryker, James Stryker, Garret Terhune, and Johnny Van Dine. Several of these men had relatives living across the border in the neighboring county. Their Middlesex County neighbors and relatives may have helped to repair the wagons as well as fire on the Redcoats. Their last names may have been DeHart, Hagaman, Lake, and Gulick.

The skirmishes at Millstone, New Jersey, where the Somerset Courthouse and Van Nest's Mill were located, occurred on January 20, 1777; June 14, 17, and 19 of the same year; and, once again, on October 28, 1779. Local militiaman John Dey appeared in at least one of these incidents. In the first event, a British foraging party of 500-600 Regulars supported by three field pieces on a hill near the Millstone Bridge took a stand against approaching patriot militia forces. General Philemon Dickinson was informed by scouts of the British force waiting for them. He led 400 militiamen and 50 Pennsylvania riflemen downriver away from the bridge in order to flank the enemy rather than charge at them head-on. His men waded across the ice-choked river at a fording spot and surprised the enemy foraging party. Most of the Regulars were driven off. Close to a dozen enemy soldiers were captured. 25 were killed. 40+ wagons and 100+ horses were seized. 60-70 sheep and 115-118 cattle were retrieved. Dickinson and his men had overcome great odds to pull out a victory.

Early expeditions to Sandy Hook by rebel militia units proved mostly unsuccessful in February and March of 1777. This New Jersey shore location was where the British stationed in New York were taking on needed supplies provided by loyalist farmers and foragers in Monmouth County and beyond. Local militiaman Andrew McDowell, Jr., was present for at least one of these forays. In the first skirmish, a cargo of rum and sugar was seized, but a Private, John Bruce, was killed. On February 17, 1777, British Major Gordon and his troops from Staten Island landed at Sandy Hook and marched to the Cedars where they surprised a contingent of militia rebels. Many Americans were killed, and several were captured. The British lost one man. 50 rebels managed to escape capture. On March 8, 1777, a band of rebels attacked a British-occupied lighthouse. They were repulsed and failed in their mission.

Andrew McDowell, Jr., and other local militiamen participated in a raid on Bennett's Island in the Raritan River on February 18, 1777. Major Richard V. Stockton and more than 60 British Regulars and loyalist volunteers were stationed there. Colonel John Neilson led a contingent of Middlesex County militiamen in an attack against the British stockade on the island. Stockton was captured, as were some of the Regulars and most of the loyalist volunteers. This outpost was raided again in April of the same year, but the outcome was not as successful as the first raid. Private William Sodin was killed.

After the victory by American forces at Princeton, a long stretch of sporadic fighting (known as the “forage war”) occurred in New Jersey. One such skirmish took place on March 12, 1777, north of Cranbury on the outskirts of Cross Roads (Ika—Dayton) in the South Ward of Middlesex County. This was the second incident of actual fighting that took place in what would become South Brunswick Township. A band of foragers, labeled “cowboys” because they were mainly interested in stealing livestock, were reported to have been in the area south of Cross Roads. These foragers were either “refugees” (British loyalists) from Monmouth County or, possibly, enemy soldiers from New Brunswick in search of meat to get through the winter. They had successfully stolen cattle and other livestock from John Wetherill’s plantation and from neighboring farms. They were in search of more. Captain Robert Nixon and his Troop of Light Horse, stationed in Cranbury, were alerted to the presence of enemy foragers nearby. Nixon and his men galloped north on Georges Road, dismounted a safe distance away from the cowboys, and crept up on them. They fired their muskets and scattered the foragers. All the stolen livestock was rescued. No fatalities were reported. The locals who lived to brag about their participation in this skirmish included Simon Addis, William Barkalo, Rescarrick Moore, James Segand, William Williamson, William Whitlock, John Van Arsdale, John Vanderveer, Daniel Dey, and Ezekial Dey.

British General William Howe hoped to lure George Washington out of his defensive position in the Watchung Mountains in the spring of 1777. Early attempts, going as far back as February of that year, had failed. One such militia outpost at Ash Swamp discouraged the British on February 23, 1777. Locals William Perrine and William Bastedo saw action there. In mid-June, Howe marched most of his army into central New Jersey, but still Washington refused to come out and do battle. Howe returned to Perth Amboy disgusted. Washington immediately sent Lord Stirling and a continental force accompanied by units of militia out to shadow the enemy’s movements. Howe took this ploy to mean that Washington would soon be coming down from his lair. On June 26, 1777, the British General marched two columns of Regulars inland, skirmished with Lord Stirling's troops, then engaged in a pitched battle. Stirling retreated. Washington kept to the Watchungs. He closed off all five mountain gaps, thereby stifling

Howe's goal to use the gaps in order to get to Washington. The British fell back to Rahway. A number of local militiamen may have seen action in the Short Hills area, but it is not clear exactly who they were.

There were many militia raids on Elizabethtown ever since the British occupation began there in December of 1776. Aaron Longstreet, Jr., William Williamson, and William Bastedo were among the local militiamen who participated in one or more of these raids. Elizabethtown was poorly guarded by the enemy and, thus, a ripe target for harassment. Militia raids started in early January of 1777. Raids continued through the fall of that year, which eventually caused the British to withdraw to Staten Island. The British attempted to return several times, but, by then, Americans were able to defend the town. Much later, on January 25, 1780, Col. Abraham Van Buskirk led 300 Regulars, 60 Dragoons, and some 400 loyalist militia from Staten Island to Elizabethtown. Around 50 colonial soldiers were captured. A church, the courthouse, and a few dwellings were burned to the ground. But the British attackers were forced to retreat back to Staten Island when the American garrison fought back successfully.

Several local militiamen participated in raids and skirmishes in the Cheesequake/South Amboy (fka— Radford's Landing) area from the fall of 1777 to the start of 1781. These stalwarts included Samuel Bayles, Joseph Brown, Robert Campbell, Jonathan Combs, Samuel Grove(s), James Morgan, Sr., James Morgan, Jr., James H. Perrine, John Van Dyke, and William Davison. The Second Regiment of Middlesex County was charged with patrolling the Raritan Bay beachfront from Cheesequake Creek to Whale Creek. Guard positions and a communications network were set up to monitor the movement of enemy forces on and across the bay. Often the British would attempt a raid of these positions, then slip away. At the end of 1777, one such raid ended in the capture of a number of militiamen, which included the Morgans—James and James, Jr. The last raid ended in a skirmish on January 16, 1781. The enemy was repulsed. The number of casualties remains unknown.

A few days before the Battle of Monmouth, George Washington and his army left Valley Forge and crossed over into New Jersey. They had been alerted that the occupying British force in Philadelphia was on the move. The enemy had crossed over into New Jersey, but much farther south, and apparently was heading to Monmouth County. Washington led his men in a parallel direction through Hopewell and Rocky Hill to get to Kingston on June 25, 1778. The Commander-in-Chief was playing cautious. He decided to send a few thousand men on ahead to support the militiamen and riflemen who had already started harassing the rear of the 12-mile-long enemy train led by General Henry Clinton. Several local militiamen were among those sent ahead to harass the train. They were charged with the tasks of felling trees across roads, sundering bridges, poisoning

wells, and picking off enemy soldiers whenever possible. General Lafayette was charged with leading the advance force after General Charles Lee declined to do so. Lafayette, accompanied by Alexander Hamilton, headed for Dr. Hezekiah Stites' house in Cranberry (aka—Cranbury). They used the Mapleton/Plainsboro Road to get to Cranberry, even though it was a miry and difficult path to take. They set up their headquarters at Stites' place. Washington was advised by locals to take a safer, though longer, way to get to Cranberry—take Ridge Road to Georges Road, go through Cross Roads (aka—Dayton), and then head south to reach the Stites house. Local guides volunteered to lead the Continental line of over 6,000 men. The soldiers were ordered to leave behind heavy gear, including tents, when they left Kingston in the evening. They stopped at Long Bridge Farm (the summer residence of the Lawrence family, but managed by Thomas Wetherill in their absence). Here they spent a hot, humid night in barns, outbuildings, under wagons, or under the stars. On the morning of the 26, the Americans reached Cross Roads. Washington stopped at the Wetherill Tavern to pay Thomas Wetherill 14 dollars for services and supplies rendered at Long Bridge Farm and/or the tavern. From there, Washington took Georges Road to reach his destination safely.

General Henry Clinton had led a 12-mile train, consisting of 20,000 soldiers and loyalists out of Philadelphia and into New Jersey under stifling conditions, all the way to Monmouth Courthouse where his army paused to rest. General George Washington decided to engage the enemy here on June 28, 1778. At this time, the American force had swelled to nearly 15,000 Continentals and militiamen. General Charles Lee was ordered to attack the rear of the British force, which was led by General Charles Cornwallis. Quite unexpectedly, Lee pulled his men back, and Cornwallis took advantage of Lee's error. Washington saw Lee's men retreating in a panic and sped to confront Lee. Washington dismissed the subordinate general from his command, and then rallied his remaining troops. He sent General Nathanael Green's division to the right and Lord Stirling’s division to the left. He replaced Lee with General Lafayette and kept what was left of this unit in reserve. Artillery was positioned on both flanks. Cannon commenced a withering fire against the enemy. Americans on the left counterattacked and forced the British to fall back. Cornwallis rallied his men and attacked Green's division. But the combination of artillery fire and stiff musket fire forced the British general to fall back. The battle raged back and forth under a hot sun until after six in the evening, when the British started pulling away. Washington, seeing that his men were exhausted, decided not to pursue the enemy. The British slipped away in the darkness and eventually were able to cross over to New York City. They had suffered almost three times the number of casualties as the Americans had. This battle was considered by those who fought in it to have been a major triumph and a great morale booster. Among those who were proud to have participated in this fray were such locals as

Jonathan Combs, James Gulick, John Johnson, William Scudder, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, William Perrine, William Van Tilburgh, Jr., William Williamson, Henry Van Dyke, and Peter Wickoff. William Bastedo also claimed that he participated, but that has not been confirmed.

On June 6, 1780, General Wilhelm Von Knyphausen led 5,000 British and Hessian troops from Staten Island over to Elizabethtown and then advanced inland to Connecticut Farms (aka—Union Township). His goal was to eventually reach Washington's encampment at Morristown. The next day, New Jersey militiamen spoiled his plans and put up a stiff resistance. This surprised the Hessian general and angered him. He ordered that houses and barns be burned. In doing so, his soldiers committed other atrocities. This enraged the citizenry in the area. People from miles around came to fight alongside the militiamen. Thus, the battle of Connecticut Farms raged on until the Americans had no choice but to withdraw. Knyphausen, having been delayed in carrying out his plan, decided to spend the night there and continue his march in the morning. Word of the Hessian general's goal got to Washington at Morristown. He decided to let General Greene lead a force against Knyphausen. However, such a move proved unnecessary because a hard rain fell, and this caused the enemy to head back to Elizabethtown the next day. A good number of men from the South Ward probably participated in this battle. Those documented included Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., and Jonathan Combs.

After being discouraged with the outcome of the Battle of Connecticut Farms on June 7, 1780, Lt. General Wilhelm Knyphausen decided to try again. He joined forces with Lt. General Henry Clinton and attempted to carry out a two-pronged attack through Connecticut Farms and Springfield in order to get to Hobart Gap, by which they hoped to make their way through the Watchung Mountains in order to reach Morristown, where Washington’s main encampment was located. Before dawn on June 23, 1780, Knyphausen’s 6,000 men advanced to Elizabethtown and overwhelmed the American outpost there. Then, the enemy advanced to Connecticut Farms. Confronting them were Major General Nathanael Greene's 1,500 Continentals and 500 New Jersey militiamen organized into four lines of defense. Among the militiamen were the following locals: Simon Addis, John Caywood, John Dey, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, Abraham Terhune, Coert Voorhees, William Van Tilburgh, Jr., Williand Williamson, and Robert Campbell. These men followed Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson and were positioned behind Colonel Israel Shreve at the bridge over the west branch of the Rahway River. The enemy had much difficulty taking Connecticut Farms this time. Eventually they progressed to Springfield and drove the Americans back to Short Hills. Knyphausen decided to concentrate on capturing territory northwest of Springfield. This gave time for the militia to regroup at Short Hills.

They were able to shore up defenses and block the enemy from getting to Hobart Gap. Knyphausen had no option but to call off the attack. He gave orders to burn down Springfield. The enemy then withdrew under heavy sniper fire from the Jersey militiamen. By midnight, Knyphausen's men were aboard boats headed back to Staten Island. This was the last time the British and Hessians engaged in a major battle in New Jersey. The enemy suffered more than 200 casualties and the Americans, more than 100. George Washington praised the Jersey militia for their heroism: "They flew to arms universally and acted with a spirit equal to anything | have seen in the course of the war." This was, indeed, the finest moment for the local militiamen from the South Ward.

Eleven regiments, numbering 2,400 soldiers from the Pennsylvania Line under General Anthony Wayne's command, insisted that their three-year enlistments had expired as of January 1, 1781, and that clothing and provisions promised to them were not forthcoming. Conditions at Morristown were, indeed, deplorable. They had demanded better housing conditions and heard nothing on the matter. They demanded the pay that was owed to them. Again, they gained no response. They demanded better pay if they were to remain in the military. After slaying at least one officer in a drunken brawl during a New Year's celebration, most of the angry soldiers abandoned their winter camp at Morristown. When George Washington and Joseph Reed, the Pennsylvania Council's President and Chief Negotiator, heard of the situation, they feared that the angry men might defect to the British side. British General Clinton had actually sent agents to make them an offer to defect. By January 4TM, the mutineers reached Princeton. Reed was at Maidenhead (aka—Lawrenceville) preparing to negotiate with the leaders of the mutineers. Local militiamen were summoned to Princeton to restore order. Among them were Jonathan Combs, Cornelius Gulick, Samuel Grove(s), Aaron Longstreet, Jr., Andrew McDowell, Rescarrick Moore, Coert Voorhees, and William Davison. Negotiations were held, and the issues were resolved. Many soldiers were discharged. 1,150 men re-enlisted. Two British agents who had been captured were summarily hanged.

On October 16, 1781, C Col. Nathaniel Scudder was killed defending against a refugee raid at Shrewsbury. There was an indirect connection between the South Ward of Middlesex County and Rockingham of Somerset County. This occurred after Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown in 1781 and hostilities had ended in New Jersey by April of 1783. It occurred shortly after Congress was moved from Philadelphia to Princeton as a precautionary measure against revolt by idle, unpaid troops. A number of local militiamen were called upon to join others in maintaining peace in the college town. Just south of "the South Ward, Princeton had become the capital of the new United States. Congress, twenty-two members strong, convened on June 30, 1783. One of the first matters to attend to was to summon General Washington to Princeton. Colonel George

Morgan, a farmer in the Princeton area, was appointed to find suitable lodging for the Commander-in-Chief. He found that Rockingham, the estate of the late Supreme Court Justice John Berrien, was up for sale. The widow Berrien was approached by the Colonel, and she agreed to rent her house for as long as Washington wished to stay in the area. The honored guest and his entourage—Martha Washington, several servants, three aides, and a company of — arrived on the 23TM of August. They most likely had taken the Upper Road (aka— Route 27) to get to Rockingham. No doubt, folks in the South Ward hailed the hero of the Revolution as he passed by. While peace negotiations dragged on for three months in Paris, the Washingtons enjoyed their stay in Rocky Hill. The General had to ride his horse to Princeton on August 26, 1783, to attend a Congressional ceremony thanking him for his service to the new country. No doubt, he took the road from Rockingham into Kingston in order to get to Princeton. Probably, many folks from the South Ward also ventured to the college town to celebrate their hero's accomplishments. Washington most likely took the same route from Rockingham into Princeton on all the other occasions he had to do Congress's bidding. He did invite several dignitaries to Rockingham during his stay there, and they also used the roads on or near the Middlesex County border. General Nathanael Greene, Thomas Paine, and several others paid a visit. Artists also came to paint portraits of Washington. These included William Dunlap and Joseph Wright. In the middle of the stay at Rockingham, an illness spread among the soldiers stationed there. Those taken ill were transported to John Vantilburgh's Inn, the Sign of the Mermaid, in Kingston—a place visited often by Washington himself. A room was set aside for the sick soldiers to recuperate. Mrs. Washington also came down with the fever and left Rockingham in the fall. Congress pulled out of Princeton and headed for Annapolis. On October 31, 1783, news reached Rockingham that the peace treaty had been signed between Great Britain and the United States. Again, the Upper Road served as the way in which Colonel Matthias Ogden, from Elizabeth, delivered the good news. Washington gave his farewell orders to all the military under his command, attended various celebrations, and left Rockingham for further celebrations in New York, no doubt using the Upper Road to get there. George Washington reached his beloved home in Virginia by Christmas Eve.

Compiled and updated in 2026 by Kelan Amme, Local History Librarian. Some details and original sources may be unconfirmed. If you have questions, please email **kamme@sbpl.info**.