

SPRINGDALE IN THE REVOLUTION

For a number of years I have attempted to understand the tactics of the Battle of Princeton. The descriptions of events as related are unclear and confusing. Historians usually described the "Saw Mill" road by which General Washington's army approached Prince Town as a diagonal road that they report "has long since disappeared", and there is the problem.

Until a lost map relating to this matter was discovered in The Peter Force map collection in the Library of Congress around 1913, the tactics of both sides were approximated around the imaginary road.

Gen. Alfred A. Woodhull in 1913 and Professor Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker in 1922, both of Princeton, used this lost map in correctly identifying the course of the Saw Mill road. Woodhull's work was called a preliminary study while Professor Wertebaker's excellent book expanded the subject. He was able to logically explain the tactics and timing using the correct course of the Saw Mill road. This book was published in 1922 at the time the Battle Monument was dedicated. The Professor's superior history is concise in proving his interpretations of events. That brevity invites detailing, through research, of such items as the full course of the Saw Mill road.

^{In 1979}
~~Last year~~ I requested membership at Springdale Golf Club because I have enjoyed trying to play the game since about 1920. A secondary purpose was to attempt to find the traces of that road as it crossed the present golf course, the old Stockton farm of Springdale.

Research so far indicates that road crossed or bridged the

Frog Hollow ravine about where the ^{9th} ~~first~~ fairway crosses the now landscaped stream. Research also indicates that the third phase of the Battle of Princeton occurred here in the area in front of our Club House. More on that confrontation later.

To accurately establish the course of that road I found it necessary to go back to the time of the original quaker settlement of Stony Brook, 1696; a community that was to be named Prince Town around 1724 after William of Orange.

Land grants, patents, and early purchases of large tracts by the original five quaker families established the street pattern of our present town. The purpose and use of the earliest roads also explains that pattern of "North by Northwest".

The first road in this settlement was, of course, the old Indian Trail between the Hudson and Delaware River valleys. Known by many names over the past 300 years, the towns of Elizabeth, Rahway, New Brunswick, Kingston, Princeton, Lawrenceville, and Trenton owe their location to that trail. The course of that trail was changed but little. In Princeton it is known as Kingston Road - Nassau-Stockton, or as Route 27.

The probable second road was one established by those early quakers to reach the nearest meeting house at Crosswicks, now called Quaker Road; a necessary route from 1696 until 1726 when the present Stony Brook Meeting House was established.

Another road required by these quakers, as they cleared the land, was a course to haul their logs to a saw mill on the Millstone River to provide timbers and lumber with which to build their farm structures; the Saw Mill road from the quaker settlement of Stony Brook to the Mill.

Another early road, now Witherspoon - Mt. Lucas, along a property line, reached the Rocky Hill ^{Grist Mill} area and the back reaches of the first Richard Stockton's immense plantation of 5,500 acres, purchased in 1701 from Wm. Penn. The center of the Stony Brook ^{community} commenced to form around the junction of this road with the Indian Trail about 1710 and by 1754 Nassau Hall of the College of New Jersey was building exactly at the head of this road.

Now to anchor the Saw Mill Road. Its purpose, as we have noted, was to reach a large saw mill located on the Millstone river just above the junction of the Stony Brook creek. The site, now submerged by Lake Carnegie, was several hundred yards south of the present canal aqueduct. The exact date the dam and mill were built is not established but it was early since three of the first six quaker settlers chose to build their residences along this road.

Known as Scudder's Mills during the revolution the deed of purchase by Scudder in the seventeen forties describes the mills as a saw mill, a grist mill and a fulling mill.

On that lost map previously mentioned and sometimes referred to as the "Cadwalader Spy Map", a footnote describes the ~~Saw~~ Mill road as: "this road leads to the back part of Prince Town which may be entered any where on this side - the country cleared for about 2 miles of (everything? blotted)-few fences -".

The map was obviously hurriedly sketched by Gen. Cadwalader at Crosswicks from information given to him by a young spy the General had previously sent into the garrisoned and fortified village. Understandably it lacks scale and has some minor errors but much revealing information.

Three days before the battle of Princeton Cadwalader sent this map to General Washington then at Trenton with a lengthy

report. (It would appear that the map and letter became separated ~~at~~ some time after the conflict.) Forwarding this information to Washington at that time would indicate that he contemplated, even then, reaching the British stores at New Brunswick.

While the course of the Saw Mill road ^{on this map} is approximated, not showing turns etc., it shows the turn off the Quaker road at the marker in the field south west of the Quaker Meeting. ^{Also} It is shown as just south of the Baldwin Farm residence. It became known as Prospect and present Prospect is on that site. The road is then shown as terminating ~~at~~ joining a north-south road labeled " road to Sudders Mills" and that road became today's Harrison with the course of Western Way and Ivy Lane on the line of the Saw Mill road.

We have several other anchor point but not noted on this map. The Thomas Clarke house on the battle field, built just before the Revolution, faced south. Traces of that road are still evident sixty paces to the south. Second is the Wm. Clarke house (site of the original Benj. Clarke plantation mansion) is shown, in a painting by a Peale who was ~~in~~ the battle, as facing south and this road. Third is the Col. Olden ~~stone~~ house on Olden Lane. The original part of that house faced south and this road. This is further confirmed by Maj. James Wilkinson's description of the battle.

A fourth anchor point is, as indicated, Prospect. Another quite probable is the prior location of our club house near the second tee and behind the sixth green. More on that later.

While we have established the course of most of the Saw Mill road, and its function, the middle section is as yet unclear. How far south of the Wm. Clarke and Col. Olden houses was its course? Possible traces, not conclusive, might bring the course about parallel to our 7th and 8th fairways, depending on where that road

crossed the present Springdale Road. We need more convincing evidence on this part of the course.

The events, circumstances and timing of the Battle of Princeton fit logically into place when related to this road course; the events become confusing and contradictory when related to that imaginary diagonal course used by early historians.

Note: When the present Mercer St.- Princeton Pike was layed out 30 years after the Revolution, 1807, the need for the Saw Mill road diminished. We find no maps of early Princeton showing it or many traces.

Before we describe the confrontation ^{in front of the location of} before our club house, the third phase of the Battle of Princeton, we might briefly review the beginnings of the Springdale property.

omit? Richard Stockton, grandfather of Richard the signer, was one of the six original Quaker families to form the Stony Brook Settlement, starting in 1696, as a place of "non molestation". They came not from Pennsylvania as we might assume but from Piscataway Twp. and Woodbridge having previously owned property on Long Island. With Stockton came The Benj. Clarkes, Wm. Oldens, Joseph Worths, Wm. Horners, and a few years later Benj. Fitz Randolphs. All were seeking release from religeous persecution.

From Propritors and others they purchased the farm areas that would later become Princeton except the areas to the east, the Danial Brinson and the Dr. Henry Greenland (Castle Howard) tracts.

These Quaker properties were acquired from 1696 to 1701. In 1696 Richard Stockton's first purchase was 440 acres, the area between the present Washington St. and Springdale Rd. and from the Indian Trail to Stony Brook, from which Springdale developed. His second purchase was from the proprior Wm. Penn of 5,500 acres (one half the size of Manhattan Island). This is the area north of the Indian Trail reaching the Sonman tract at about the Bedens Brook road and west

from the Division Line (Province Line) east to Kingston except the Danial Brinson tract.

In 1704 Benj. Fitz Randolph, Quaker, bought 100 acres of Richard Stockton's first purchase, the eastern boundry being the present Washington Rd. From this property Fitz Randolph provided four and one half acres in 1753 and on which Nassau Hall was built in 1754 - 1756.

Much of the remaining 340 acres were to remain in the Stockton family for about two centuries. Richard Stockton's first residence was probably what is known as the Barracks on Edgehill St. His son John built Morven on the northern property. The farmer's house and buildings on the Springdale tract were located on the Saw Mill road more central to the operation but date of building is not determined. *Probably just after 1709.* Of interest is the origin of many of the North-South thoroughfares of Princeton today. Province Line (Division Line), dividing East and West Jersey, was surveyed in 1686 as North by Northwest, 22 1/2 degrees west of true North. Later most property lines were surveyed parallel to that line. Thus the following streets, on property lines, are approximately North by Northwest: Elm Road, Library Place, Bayard Lane, Witherspoon, and Harrison while south of the Indian Trail we have Olden-Lover's Lane, Springdale, Alexander, Washington, and Harrison. All run North by Northwest as well as the east and west boundaries of the Boro.

Springdale's part in the Battle of Princeton occurred in this manner. The first phase, on that morning of Jan. 3, 1777, was manoeuvres after the marching British and Americans forces sighted each other just after sunrise. The second phase was the battle on

the Wm. Clarke farm involving the British 17th regiment, plus some of 55th, with Gen. Mercer's Continentals and Cadwalader's Militia.

The third phase developed after the British 17th was driven from the field. The British 55th, from their position on the wooded crown of Mercer Heights (now Mercer and Olden Lane) saw their valiant companion regiment, the 17th, beated and pursued. Below them to the south were 2,500 American continentals and 1,000 militia in column on the Saw Mill road; about in front of the present Advanced Studies structures and straddling ^{present} Olden Lane.

Earlier~~y~~ when the sound of the battle to the west reached the third British regiment, the 40th assigned to remain in Princeton and quartered in Nassau Hall, moved out to block that Saw Mill road. They deployed along the east bank of the Frog Hollow ravine and bridge(assumed). The 55th, withdrawing from Mercer Heights, moved quickly to support the ~~40~~th in confronting Sullivan's column on the Saw Mill road. They took up a position on the left (south) of the 40th. These moves took place at about 9:10 AM.

General Sullivan had his column moving forward on the Saw Mill road over our golf course (avoiding the greens we are sure). We still seek traces of that road. This may explain why we are constantly looking up on our shots.

With the British regiments already in position Sullivan deployed along the west bank of Frog Hollow described as having steep banks. The extent of gun firing is not determined. Undoubtedly there was some. Sullivan then sent a detachment to flank (move around) the British left(south possibly as far as your favorite 15th hole). This detachment was climbing up the steep incline, even as we do today, when the British broke. They retired hurriedly toward Nassau Hall.

Several hundred of the 40th reentered Nassau Hall probably to retrieve their packs but were surrounded by the closely pursuing Continentals. In this last phase the 55th and the remainder of the 40th, now in ^a route, hurried down Witherspoon ^{and Mt Lucas Rd} toward Somerset Court House ^(Millstone) where they had left their baggage train the day before. Others rushed out toward Kingston. Thus three of the best regiments of the King's army in the Colonies were ignobly driven from the village.

At about 9:40 the 200 King's troops ^(approximately) in Nassau Hall surrendered. They were described by a witness as, " ~~a~~naughty crabbed set of men"; understandable with their pride so crushed.

As you tee off on number one or as you sit on the veranda try to imagine what that confrontation might have been like had you been there 205 years ago. There on the left are the handsome crimson uniforms drawn up in perfect formation. Bayonets fixed they face the determined Continentals over that Frog Hollow ravine. Imagine cannon being wheeled into position while commands sound out above the shouts and murmurs of the men as they anticipate conflict. It happened here on this ground.

Six years later, in 1783 General Washington, on arriving at Rockingham, addressed these remarks to: "the inhabitants of Princeton and neighborhood together with the President and Faculty of the College" saying "--the pleasure I feel in visiting the scene of our important Military transactions and in recollecting the period when the tide of adversity began to turn, and better fortune to smile upon us." It happened here! May we be proud of this heritage.

Harold H. Heins Sr.

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