

Amos and Jedediah Scudder



and the Miracle of the Battle of Trenton

by
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*These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will,
in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now,
deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.*³

The American army was in precarious condition in Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware River from New Jersey. Its numbers were estimated to have dwindled from 30,000 in the summer to 3,000. Washington's soldiers were not well furnished, having had to leave supplies as they fled New York. Plenty of accounts, usually not well sourced, refer to bloody footprints, soldiers without coats, and some with rags tied about their feet instead of shoes, or shoes so full of holes they hardly sufficed. More authoritatively David Hackett Fischer states that in the winter of 1776–1777 the army had ample weapons and ammunition, but “In other ways it was miserably supplied. The worst shortages were of clothing, blankets, stockings and shoes.”⁴ Fischer quotes Washington’s description of his army, and then summarizes,

...many of ‘em [were] entirely naked and more so thinly clad as to be unfit for service.’ American leaders had no idea of the requirements for a long campaign in cold weather and little conception of how rapidly a marching army could destroy its shoes and clothing.⁵

In the fall of 1776 Congress began ordering supplies, but how soon they actually arrived is unclear.

¹ Adapted from Margery Boyden, unpublished manuscript, *From Conscience to Liberty*, v. 2, 1660–1796. This is an introductory article for the next issue of *Scudder Family Historical & Biographical Journal*.

² Emanuel Leutze, “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Washington_Crossing_the_Delaware_by_Emanuel_Leutze,_MMA-NYC,_1851.jpg. Public Domain.

³ Thomas Paine, “The American Crisis,” *The Pennsylvania Journal*, published December 19, 1776, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/summer-soldiers-and-sunshine-patriots-american-crisis>.

⁴ David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 155.

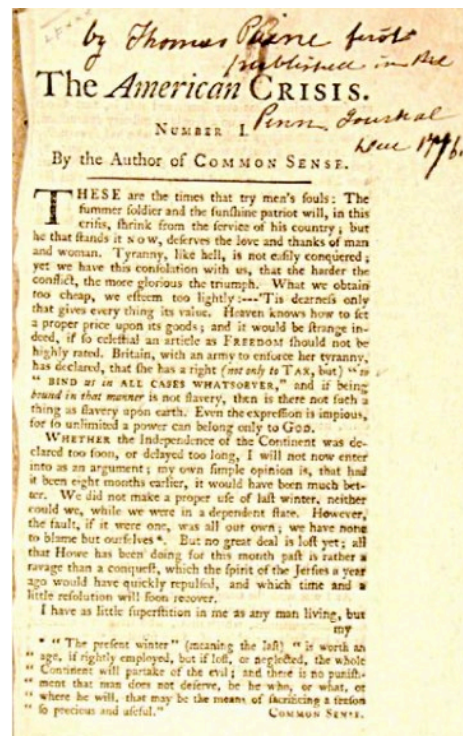
⁵ Ibid.

Many of the American fighting men with Washington's army now on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River were at the end of their enlistments or had already left. The American populace, demoralized at their prior defeats and the dire predicament of their army and the sufferings of fellow countrymen in New York and New Jersey and their soldiers, saw little future hope for their ragged army. Almost immediately after the army made it in their retreat to the Pennsylvania side, the enlistments of another 500 men expired and they too departed Washington's camp.⁶

Elkanah Watson later wrote of this discouraging experience,

We looked upon the contest as near its close and considered ourselves a vanquished people. The young men present determined to emigrate and seek some spot where liberty dwelt and where the arm of British tyranny could not reach us.⁷

It was at this discouraging low point that Thomas Paine, perhaps encamped with Major-General Greene as a volunteer, wrote his famous words in "The American Crisis," published in the *Pennsylvania Journal* on 19 December 1776. Paine says:



These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.⁸

Read to the suffering soldiers, Paine's stirring words once again lifted the spirits of the men to remember the cause of LIBERTY.

Elkanah Watson is quoted as saying,

Major Thomas animated our desponding spirits with the assurance that Washington was not dismayed, but evinced the same serenity and confidence as ever. Upon him rested all our hopes.—*Men and Times of the Revolution, or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, p. 24.⁹

As Adj. Gen. Stryker states in his history, “Yet between liberty and defeat stood a little army of desperate men devoted to their chief, soldiers who still stood by him, who still hoped that his master mind would devise some plan by which he might snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.”¹⁰

Historian George Bancroft records:

The sharp tribulation which assayed [Washington's] fortitude carried with it a divine and an animating virtue. Hope and zeal illuminated his grief. His emotions come to us across the century like strains from an eternity which repairs all losses and rights all wrongs; in his untold sorrows his trust in Providence kept up in his heart an under-song of wonderful sweetness. *The spirit of the Most High dwells among the afflicted, rather than the prosperous; and he who has never broken his bread in tears knows not the heavenly powers.* The trials of Washington are the dark, solemn ground on which the beautiful work of the country's salvation was embroidered.¹¹

To inspire such awe, General Washington had tapped into the power of divine help and the well of faith that supplies those with noble character. Washington was worthy of the trust of his men, and of His Maker. Too many things were coming together to explain by mere chance or luck the

⁸ Stryker, 80–81.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ George Bancroft, *The American Revolution*, v. 3 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1866), 217–218. (Italics added.)

results of what would soon happen. Shivering and intensely suffering men, mere mortals, would have to tap into something greater than themselves in order to accomplish the impossible.

In faith, Washington, not having been yet duly authorized, offered extra pay if the men would remain. This offer was enough to entice many to stay whose release was imminent. Fortunately, the authorization soon came. Urgent efforts were made to recruit others in Pennsylvania, and elsewhere nearby, to quickly join the badly depleted army, and miraculously his numbers began to increase.

Meanwhile Washington remained serene and confident as he and his staff began to hatch a bold plan, so bold that his enemies could not take rumors of it seriously, or even take counsel from their superiors to guard against it. The week of December 22 was not without reports of potential American action. Dr. William Bryant, a loyalist sympathizer from the area, warned of intelligence he had received, stating, "...rebels had drawn rations for several days, and were about to attack Trenton." 'This is all idle! it is old woman's talk,' said the Hessian Colonel Rall, commander at Trenton.¹²

British officers who were blinded by a taste for comforts and the society of women, rather than a greater cause, made other mistakes in judgment that became costly tactical errors. For example, the British commander Gen. Howe concluded to spend the winter with his Loyalist mistress and other interesting society at New York City.¹³ And, on December 23rd, Col. von Dolop found pleasant quarters at Mt. Holly, New Jersey at a widow's home, she being perhaps the only woman who remained in the village after British intrusion. Col. von Dolop's lapse was costly to the British cause as he spent December 23, 24 and 25 at the widow's house rather than being at Bordentown as directed, where he would have been within easy distance of Trenton and Col. Rall in case of an attack.¹⁴

Even the highly regarded Hessian Col. Rall, charged with the Trenton command, was not immune to succumbing to costly entertainments. On Christmas night, as the Americans prepared on the Pennsylvania side for their surprise attack, a loyalist farmer from Bucks County, Pennsylvania found a way to get to Trenton to warn the Hessian commander. Rall was at Abraham Hunt's enjoying a holiday party. Unwilling to interrupt the revelry, Hunt's servant barred admittance to the Loyalist informant who was thus forced to leave his warning only on paper with instructions to the servant to deliver it to Col. Rall. Although the note was delivered, Rall was too occupied with his fun to *read* the message. As Stryker reports,

¹² Stryker, 110–111.

¹³ David McCullough, *1776*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 267.

¹⁴ Fischer, 199–200.

[Rall] quite carelessly put it into his vest pocket without a thought that his life must pay the penalty for this apparently trivial act. And the shuffling of the cards went on, dealing out golden moments of his life.¹⁵

WILLIAM SCUDDER STRYKER, a Scudder descendant who became Adj. General of New Jersey in the 1800s, wrote *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton* in great detail from a broad historical as well as a local history and family perspective.¹⁶ As a young man Stryker acquired his passion for the story of the Battle of Trenton, having “[taken] notes from the conversations of my mother and her aged friends” and others who reminisced about those who fought and those who witnessed events. In his Preface Stryker states, “In my youth I spent many pleasant hours in listening to the residents of Trenton as they related the brave deeds of their fathers in the old war, and told the story of the trials and sufferings of the heroic men and women of the Revolutionary period, which they had heard directly from the lips of those who had taken a part in the struggle for independence.” One character of special fascination for him was his *mother's grandfather*, AMOS SCUDDER, “who had been one of the guides of the American army to the surprise at Trenton.”¹⁷

Because Stryker's 485-page account of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton is much more detailed than most, and is written with his valuable military, local history and Scudder family perspectives, it is more frequently included in this brief recounting of events than other sources. The Battle of Trenton included several members of Stryker's family, including his own great-grandfather AMOS⁶ SCUDDER.

¹⁵ Stryker, 125.

¹⁶ ADJ. GEN. WILLIAM SCUDDER STRYKER of N. J., acquired his interest in the battles of Trenton and Princeton while in his youth. In his ‘early manhood’ Stryker began taking notes, and thereafter continued to study the town that produced a pamphlet, “Trenton, One Hundred Years Ago.” He then went to manuscript records of the soldiers and “authentic military rolls” from which he published *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*. In that effort he found “new facts and unpublished documents relating to the battles of Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth.” In 1877 Stryker went to Cassel, Germany to initiate “a most exhaustive search...in the State Archives at Marburg, Germany” and acquired 1100 pages of certified manuscript that gave the German perspective to the war. With his local history and broader military interests and his dedicated efforts to manuscripts, his account of the *Battles of Trenton and Princeton* is worth the read, and included previously unpublished material.

ADJ. GEN. WILLIAM SCUDDER STRYKER was the son of THOMAS J. STRYKER, b. 1800 and HANNAH⁸ SCUDDER, born 1804. Hannah⁸ was the dau. of John⁷ Scudder of Scudder Falls, Mercer County, (Amos⁶, John⁵, Richard⁴ Betts, John³, John², Thomas¹). See *Scudder Association Bulletin*, volume 22, (December 1964): 15, 18. See also William Scudder Stryker, *Genealogical Record of the Strycker Family*, 8, 42, 72. The Stryker family descended from Jan Strycker, b. 1615 in Holland, who arrived at New Amersterdam in 1652. Jan helped found Midwout, now Flatbush, L. I. For more Scudder details see also Henry Langdon Butler, *Tales of Our Kinsfolk, Past and Present*, (New York: Printed for Private Distribution, 1919), 315–316.

¹⁷ Stryker, iii.

The First Battle of Trenton

Adj. Gen. Stryker describes how high the stakes were for America and the Patriot cause:

It was a dark hour in our country's history, a crisis which had to be met with unflinching courage. The situation was a grave one, and unless some decisive blow were struck, regardless of the consequences of possible defeat, the cause of national freedom would be irretrievably lost.... A general depression hung over the country like a dark and foreboding cloud.¹⁸

In as guarded secrecy as possible, at the American camp a bold strike at Trenton was carefully planned and would entail another risky crossing back across the Delaware River. Without a victory at this point in the conflict, it would be very difficult to maintain any further support for the cause. It appeared that Washington and his men would either have to be victorious or die in the attempt!¹⁹ Washington chose Christmas night to make his move. It is estimated that he had about 6000 "effective" men fit enough for the campaign, and "effective" probably did not describe their scant provisions. Stryker details the situation of their various units:

The New England brigade at Bristol was poorly provided with camp equipage and blankets, and had meagre stores of any kind. The Philadelphia battalions, so near their homes, were in good condition for a winter campaign. The detachments of militia at Trenton Ferry were not furnished with the necessities for encamping, marching, or fighting in an inclement season; but it is generally understood that they were expected to serve only for a short period. The Continental regiments on the river above the ferry were greatly in want of clothing and supplies. Many of the men were barefooted, as the commander of the First Pennsylvania rifle regiment said his organization certainly was, and General Washington was obliged to send men about the country to beg and buy old clothing and blankets for his freezing soldiers.

The prospects were gloomy indeed for the little army which rallied around the standard of freedom.²⁰

Early on December 25th Washington gave his detailed orders and the men began to assemble on the Pennsylvania side. According to Hamilton Cochran, there may have been one Scudder among

¹⁸ Stryker, 78–79.

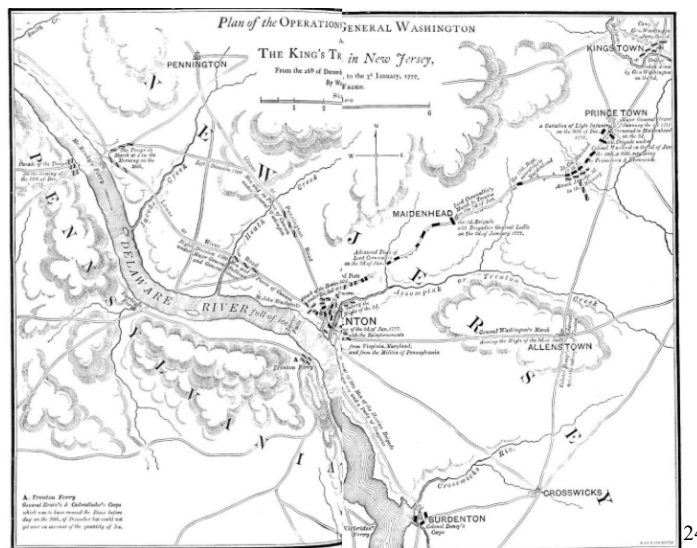
¹⁹ Stryker, 138.

²⁰ Stryker, 86.

them, the twenty-two-year-old JOHN⁶ ANDERSON SCUDDER,²¹ the eldest son of Lt. Col. NATHANIEL⁵ SCUDDER. Young John was at the time serving as a Surgeon's mate in the Bucks County, Pennsylvania militia.²² While Hamilton Cochran was a bit uncertain whether John A. Scudder's participation was family lore or not, it is a fact that other Scudders would soon become involved. Washington anticipated that he would need local guides on the New Jersey side and would have to place considerable trust in them even though he did not know them. Washington instructed,

General Fermoy's next, who will march into the rear of the second division and file off from the Pennington to the Princeton road in such direction that he can with the greatest ease and safety secure the passes between Princeton and Trenton. *The guides will be the best judges of this....*

The commanding officers of regiments to observe that the divisions be equal and that proper officers be appointed to each. *A profound silence to be enjoined, and no man to quit his ranks on the pain of death.*²³ (Italics added.)



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Col. Henry Knox was tasked with overseeing the crossing. With their motto of “victory or death” the American army began to cross the river after dark in their large Durham boats, used to “carry heavy cargoes for the Durham Iron Works” and other kinds of boats. Most of the men would

²¹ From the spring of 1777 until June of 1778, JOHN A. SCUDDER served in the Monmouth County Militia, 1st regiment under COL. ASHER HOLMES.

Hamilton Cochran, *Scudders in the American Revolution*, (Peterborough, N. H.: Scudder Association, 1976), 82.

²² Cochran, 82.

²³ Stryker, 114.

²⁴ Stryker, between pages 84–85.

cross standing up for most boats were ferries or freight boats with no seats with pools of icy water in the bottom.²⁵ A severe nor'easter storm struck by 11:00 p.m.²⁶ Their crossing became even more difficult in this weather and took hours longer than planned. Although it provided some camouflage for the army's movements, the weather also severely taxed the men and threatened the project.

The jagged ice floated swiftly by, and struck the boats so severely that they could be handled only with the greatest difficulty. About eleven o'clock a severe storm of mingled snow and hail set in, and the high wind rendered it a dark, cold and dismal night....²⁷

It was expected that before midnight the force would be over the river, not a thousand feet wide at that place; but for nine weary hours they toiled and struggled resolutely with the floating ice cakes, and it was after three o'clock before the last man reached the shore of New Jersey.²⁸



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In an address to the Massachusetts legislature, then General Knox later credited Col. John Glover's men, experienced fishermen of Marblehead, with having saved the campaign by their grit, strength and seafaring skill that enabled the river crossing to succeed.

²⁵ Fischer, 216.

²⁶ McCullough, 275.

²⁷ Stryker, 133.

²⁸ Stryker, 138.

²⁹ ²⁹ "Washington Crossing the Delaware," cropped,

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/28/Washington Crossing the Delaware by Emanuel Leutze%2C MMA-NYC%2C 1851_%28cropped%29_III.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/28/Washington_Crossing_the_Delaware_by_Emanuel_Leutze%2C_MMA-NYC%2C_1851_%28cropped%29_III.jpg). Public domain.

Sir, I wish the members of this body knew the people of Marblehead as well as I do. I could wish they had stood on the banks of the Delaware river in 1776 in that bitter night when the Commander-in-Chief had drawn up his little army to cross it, and had seen the powerful current bearing onward the floating masses of ice, which threatened destruction to whosoever should venture upon its bosom. I wish that when this occurrence threatened to defeat the enterprise they could have heard that distinguished warrior demand, ‘Who will lead us on?’ and seen the men of Marblehead and Marblehead alone, stand forward to lead the army along the perilous path to unfading glories and honours in the achievements of Trenton.³⁰

With the storm and additional soaking from the crossing, the men were wet and thus unspeakably cold. As difficult as it was, the howling wind and miserable hail and snow may have provided providential cover for the American activities, as the British mostly preferred to spend Christmas night more comfortably indoors.

Scudder Involvement in the First Battle of Trenton

Once the American army was back on the New Jersey side and three to four hours behind schedule, it was obvious that a surprise successful attack on Trenton would require assistance from trustworthy locals to guide them on the safest quickest routes to avoid discovery. Washington split his army into two prongs according to plan. The route of one column took them near the Scudder homestead inherited by grandchildren of Richard⁴ Betts Scudder (John³, John², Thomas¹ (T)).



The property now served AMOS⁶ SCUDDER, and his brother JEDEDIAH⁶ SCUDDER and their families. In that early morning time of the army’s regrouping, the Scudder family “provided shelter, warmth and

³⁰ Stryker, 134.

food for as many as they could accommodate”³¹ for many of the men “were half naked and most of them barefooted.”³² Washington let it be known that he needed men who “knew every bypath and shortcut to Trenton.”³³ In his *Scudders in the American Revolution*, Cochran states,

It was at this point that AMOS [SCUDDER] and his brother JEDEDIAH volunteered to guide the advance units of the army to their destination. This offer was quickly accepted and the march continued.³⁴



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By his willingness to answer the call to assist Washington in the cause of liberty, Amos⁶ Scudder was one of eleven men who served as local guides for Washington’s march bound for Trenton. His younger brother Jedediah⁶ Scudder was also enlisted into this service.³⁶

...when Washington’s army approached the property Jedediah and his brother and the entire Scudder household took in many of the storm-harried troops, fed, warmed and tended those who were sick, and others who were just cold, hungry and tired. Like his brother, Jedediah knew the countryside like the palm of his hand and acted as a guide to the troops on their way to victory at Trenton.³⁷

This assignment was not without risk if the enemy were to discover them. Washington wanted twelve others of their neighbors to be sent in advance on horseback “without arms or uniforms, and in plain farmer's dress...to...gain such intelligence as they could of the position of the enemy's outposts.” Only John Guild, John Muirhead and David Lanning volunteered for this unarmed dangerous duty.³⁸

³¹ Cochran, 65.

³² See Henry Langdon Butler, *Tales of Our Kinsfolk, Past and Present*, (New York: Printed for Private Distribution, 1919), 301; see also Jas P. Snell, *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties*.

³³ Cochran, 65.

³⁴ Cochran, 65.

³⁵ Silhouette of Amos⁶ Scudder found in Stryker, 139.

³⁶ Cochran, 79.

³⁷ Cochran, 78–79.

³⁸ Butler, 298–300.

According to Cochran,

...There is no question but that Amos and Jedediah took part in the battle, for there were four Hunterdon County militia regiments fighting that day. Amos was attached to a company of troops commanded by Captain Hoops.³⁹

As Cochran writes, “an old handwritten obituary [for Amos]...relates that prior to the battle:”

...A detachment of men was needed, the company was assembled, the call of their country was stated to them and [AMOS] was the first man who stepped from the ranks. Many others immediately followed his patriotic example. He outlived all his fellow volunteers and was the survivor of that little band which evinced the early and ardent devotion of the Township of Trenton to the cause of Independence. Until the close of the war he was actively engaged in the military service.⁴⁰

The harsh conditions of the march to and from Trenton prepared Amos⁶ for the following miserable winter which he spent with Washington at Valley Forge. According to Cochran, Amos⁶ Scudder was “the only Scudder *we are sure of* who suffered with Washington’s troops that bitter winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge,” for his name appears on the bronze tablet in the Bell Tower at Valley Forge Park, “AMOS SCUDDER, ENS. New Jersey.”⁴¹ There is also a record that Amos⁶’s brother Jedediah⁶ Scudder joined Captain Mott’s Company, First Regiment, Hunterdon in 1777,⁴² but less is known of the details of his service.

The March and the Fight

In the early morning of December 26th, the miserable but brave men marched on towards Trenton in silence. Gen. Greene’s division met Capt. William Washington’s company on the Scotch Road where they “entered the Pennington road about a mile beyond the village.” Daylight appeared presenting a hazard that they had hoped to avoid, but Washington encouraged them, “Press on, press on, boys!”⁴³

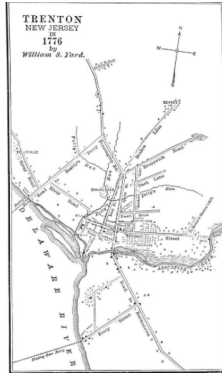
³⁹ Cochran, 65.

⁴⁰ Cochran, 67.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² William S. Stryker, *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*, (Trenton, N. J.: Wm. T. Nicholson & Co., 1872), 747.

⁴³ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 143.



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As soon as the town of Trenton was in sight, Gen. Washington said to his troops,

‘There, my brave fellows, are the enemies of your country. Remember now what you are about to fight for.’⁴⁵

It was the unarmed miller David Lanning in advance of his column who was the first meet the enemy. This occurred at the Hessians Pennington Rd. picket post on the outskirts of town that was under the command of Lt. Wiederhold. Washington’s plan had been to arrive unobserved and reach Trenton before dawn. But daylight was upon them as a result of delays in crossing the ice-clogged river and Wiederhold’s sentinels spotted a small group of American soldiers about 200 yards away. When challenged, perhaps with some German version of “who goes there?” Lanning replied that he was a friend of Washington. The sentinels sounded the alarm, “Der Feind! Der Feind! heraus! heraus!” (“The enemy! The enemy! Turn out Turn out!”).⁴⁶ Turn out they did in an unprepared and chaotic manner for their Hessian commander Col. Rall had ignored all prior warnings, he choosing rather to enjoy his game of cards and the ample Christmas spirits being provided.



RALL'S HEADQUARTERS

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⁴⁴ Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 93.

⁴⁵ Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 144.

⁴⁶ Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 147.

⁴⁷ Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 92.

Rall was still in his night-clothes as the attack began, but he soon mounted his horse and began to command the Hessian fighters.⁴⁸

When the Americans reached the intersection of King and Queen streets at the north of the town, “their artillery was placed in position to rake the two principal streets of the town.” Under orders from Washington, Col. Knox ordered the under aged Capt. Alexander Hamilton of the New York State company of artillery to position his two large guns and “to open fire down King Street.”⁴⁹

Even after Rall was engaged in battle, the previously highly regarded Rall seemed unable to comprehend the confusion. When advised that there was still time to save the cannon, the “colonel seemed greatly bewildered, for by this time he heard the sharp reports of the rifles of General Sullivan’s men on his left.” Rall “only said in German, ‘Lord, Lord, what is it, what it?’ And when again informed about the cannon said, ‘Never mind, we will soon have them back,’ and ‘Forward, men, forward.’ This order Rall’s men “did not obey.”⁵⁰ After ordering a retreat into an orchard, Rall was hit by fire, receiving wounds from which he would not recover.⁵¹



THE CAPTURE OF THE HESSIANS AT TRENTON, DECEMBER 26, 1776

⁴⁸ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 154–155.

⁴⁹ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 158.

⁵⁰ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton* 162.

⁵¹ McCullough, 281.

⁵² “The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton December 26, 1776,” Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

A more detailed account of the battle exceeds the purpose of this work, except to say that the Americans quickly carried the day. Stryker thought that the whole affair took one to two hours, with actual fighting for maybe as little as only 30–45 minutes. The Americans were the clear victors, taking out key Hessian officers in battle, including mortally wounding Col. Rall. Some Hessians escaped through a hole in the American line. This weakness in the American line was due to the inability of Brig. Gen. Ewing to make the lower river crossing at Trenton Ferry timely due to the river's conditions at that location.⁵³ Barber describes, "...there was so much ice on the shores of the river, that it was impossible to get the artillery over."⁵⁴

It was Washington's opinion that his enemies "did not make any regular stand."⁵⁵ Because of this, few casualties occurred on the American side while the Hessians suffered serious losses with a great many being taken prisoner. Some accounts claim a brave effort and that the Hessians "fought bravely to the end, even knowing that they could not win." Fischer writes that "Here was a remarkable testament to their creed of obedience and service. Not until the battle was lost did some of these men try to escape."⁵⁶ Stryker reports on the final condition of Col. Rall:

Soon after the surrender he was placed on a bench in the Methodist Church on Queen street, and carried through Church alley to his own headquarters on King street.... In disrobing the wounded commander, the note of... [the] Bucks County Tory, came to light, and Rall, when he understood its contents, simply remarked, 'Hätte ich dies zu Herrn Hunt gelesen, so wäre ich jezt nicht hier.' ('If I had read this at Mr. Hunt's I would not be here.')

After the situation was secured, Gen. Washington and Gen. Greene visited Col. Rall and, through an interpreter, "took his parole of honor." Says Stryker,

Rall begged General Washington for kind treatment to his men, and his petition was readily granted. General Washington also spoke a few words of consolation to the dying soldier. Colonel Rall lingered in pain during the night, and died on the evening of December 27.⁵⁸

⁵³ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 185–188.

⁵⁴ John W. Barber, Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey...with geographical descriptions of every township in the state*, (New York: S. Tuttle, 1844), 298.

⁵⁵ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 187.

⁵⁶ Fischer, 254.

⁵⁷ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 192.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Stryker comments that,

Some historians, referring to this time, make the statement that after the attack had commenced an attempt was made by some German soldiers to harness up horses for the purpose of carrying off their ill-gotten spoils. There is no doubt that the Hessian soldiery at Trenton, foremost in rapine and plunder as they had been on their march through New Jersey, were well supplied with articles which they did not care to leave in the hands of the Americans.⁵⁹

Offering his negative opinion of Hessian performance, James Galloway, a Loyalist, reported,

It is a fact, that Colonel Raille, although he had sufficient notice of the enemy's approach, could not form his men, who, more attentive to the safety of their plunder than their duty, and engaged in putting horses to and loading their waggons, became deaf to all orders. In this state they were surrounded and taken.⁶⁰

Galloway had once served as Speaker of Pennsylvania's Assembly and offered testimony before the House of Commons in 1779 in which he stated that the loss was ultimately Gen. Howe's responsibility for not at first pursuing the Americans across the Delaware River about the 8th of December. Galloway's opinion shows how dire things might have been for the Americans, that if Howe had quartered his men at Philadelphia at that time that "the Congress would not have been able to raise another army of any consequence, not 5000 men...and that the success of the rebels in defeating and making prisoners of the Hessians at Trenton had a mischievous effect on the British service."⁶¹

The First Battle of Trenton had indeed reinvigorated the Patriot cause. To at least some of the cold and suffering soldiery the outcome must have been evidence that God had not forsaken them and had strengthened them in their extremity to bring to pass His miracle. With gratitude. they would continue the fight.

Washington's early assessment of Hessian losses was 918 men. Of these, "22 were killed and 83 were seriously wounded," while others had wounds that were "not incapacitating." Perhaps 400 to 500 Hessians escaped, leaving almost 900 prisoners for the Americans to convey to Pennsylvania.⁶² McCullough's figures compared closely with Fischer's, with 21 Hessians killed, 90 wounded,

⁵⁹ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 191.

⁶⁰ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 191–192.

⁶¹ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 223.

⁶² Fischer, 254.

approximately 900 prisoners and 500 escaped and stated, “It had all happened in forty-five minutes or less.”⁶³

Styker made a detailed study from the records of the numbers of men in each of the Hessian regiments involved that he published in *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*. Stryker’s list of casualties for the Hessians was:

5 officers killed and 6 officers wounded, a total of 106 killed and wounded, as appears by official records. Twenty-four of these soldiers--and some of the severely wounded must, of course, have died very soon--were all buried, so tradition tells us in one place in the Presbyterian churchyard. If his is correct, their common grave must have been in ground now covered by the First Presbyterian Church.⁶⁴

Even Gen. Washington’s figures for American casualties were not wholly accurate when he stated “only two officers and one or two privates wounded.... No more than a private or two killed, one or two wounded and Captain Washington.”⁶⁵ Apparently Washington was unaware of injuries to Lt. JAMES MONROE, and unaware of some who were cared for and who died at the Scudder home after the battle. The Scudder home was located two miles below McKonkey’s Ferry. Dwyer notes,

One casualty report would come from RICHARD SCUDDER, whose home was situated near the Delaware a few miles above Trenton. According to him, several fatigued and all-but frozen soldiers took refuge at his home during the night of December 26–27. Some of them were ‘very sick in the night...and two or three died.’⁶⁶

This Richard⁷ Scudder⁶⁷ was apparently the young son of Jedediah⁶ Scudder (John⁵, Richard⁴ Betts, John³, John², Thomas¹) and it was historian John Warner Barber who may have been the first to record Scudder’s statement:

The late MR. RICHARD SCUDDER informed the writer, that the night after the taking of the Hessians, several of the American soldiers, worn down and poorly clad, and having suffered much from the cold, stayed at his father's house, which is about 2 miles below the ferry; that several of them were very sick in the night, and that two or

⁶³ McCullough, 281.

⁶⁴ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 195.

⁶⁵ William M. Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998; first published in 1983 by Viking Press.), 271.

⁶⁶ Dwyer, 271. See also Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 255, 406.

⁶⁷ RICHARD⁷ SCUDDER, b. 1766; d. 1838; was son of JEDEDIAH⁶ SCUDDER and ANNA ROBERTS. See *Scudder Association Bulletin*, volume 22, (December 1964), 19.

three died. Might not these have been the persons referred to in history as having frozen to death?⁶⁸

Richard⁷ Scudder, the informant was a ten-year-old boy at the time of the Battle of Trenton, and his father Jedediah⁵ Scudder was a grandson of Richard⁴ Betts Scudder who named Jedediah⁶ in his will. Jedediah⁶ Scudder's home apparently became an impromptu sort of hospital for American soldiers sick or wounded during the Battle of Trenton. Like many other children of his generation, young Richard⁷ Scudder would carry to his death in 1838, images of the price paid for liberty indelibly etched into his memory.

Washington estimated Hessian casualties at 918. Of these 868 were prisoners of war "taken over the Delaware River on December 26...." Of these 56 had in some way been wounded. The list made by Hessian officers with the prisoners in Philadelphia on 5 January 1777 numbered them at "a total force of 868 officers and men."⁶⁹ Others were found and taken prisoner so that by December 29th Washington stated, "the prisoners now numbered about 1000."⁷⁰ Having been treated well by the Americans, in contrast to what Hessian soldiers had seen of Hessian and British treatment of American prisoners, many of the Hessian prisoners "returned to Pennsylvania when the war was over, and joined the many large and flourishing settlements of Germans in that commonwealth."⁷¹

With British troops "in strength at Princeton and at Bordentown," the council of American officers discussed and then agreed that the Americans had best quickly cross back to Pennsylvania, lest they lose the advantage that had in many hopeful American minds changed the course of the war.⁷²

Of his own men, Washington gave this report to the Continental Congress at Baltimore,

In justice to the officers and men, I must add, that their behaviour upon this occasion reflects the highest honor upon them. The difficulty of passing the river in a very severe night, and their march through a violent storm of snow and hail, did not in the least abate their ardor; but, when they came to the charge, each seemed to vie with

⁶⁸ Barber and Howe, 299,

⁶⁹ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 196.

⁷⁰ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 201.

⁷¹ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 216.

⁷² Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 206.

the other in pressing forward and were I to give a preference to any particular corps, I should do great injustice to the others.⁷³

Indeed, the Cause of Liberty was too great and the value of New Jersey, especially its human capital, was much too vital to give up without a fight. And what a miraculous first round of that fight it was, especially in light of the exceedingly humble physical condition of many of the victors.

The men were worn out. They had marched and fought for sixty hours through snow, rain, sleet, and hail. Most were suffering from frozen faces, frostbitten hands, and lacerated feet. All were utterly exhausted.⁷⁴

How did this extraordinary event look to those dog-tired men who were schooled in stories of similar miracles from the *Old Testament*? Had they drawn their almost incomprehensible moral and physical courage from wells of faith dug by their ancestors who too had prevailed over many hardships? And did *obedience* play a role with the success this time of Washington's men? Sir George Trevelyan, a British statesman used the word *miracle* in his history of *The American Revolution*,

That was a long and a severe ordeal; and yet it may be doubted whether so small a number of men ever employed so short a space of time with greater and more lasting results upon the history of the world.

One circumstance in the affair was strange almost to a *miracle*.⁷⁵

Trevelyan then refers to all of the German military writers who faithfully recorded all of the militarily correct responses by the Hessians that should have yielded a different result but did not. Trevelyan continues, "And in the end we learn that, as the net result of all those prolonged and complicated operations, not a single American was killed in the course of the whole engagement." He continues,

The rain, (it was further alleged,) fell so heavily that the German muskets would not go off. It cannot, however, be forgotten that Washington's men, and their firelocks likewise, had for nine consecutive hours been exposed to a constant downpour without any protection whatsoever; while Rall's troops came forth to battle from weathertight quarters, as warm as rooms are kept by soldiers when they are burning fuel which belongs to other people.

⁷³ Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 219.

⁷⁴ Fischer, 263.

⁷⁵ Sir George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, v. 2, (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 113–114.

The explanation, of what otherwise is inexplicable, rests not on military or material, but on moral, grounds.⁷⁶

In past engagements Washington had “perceived some misbehaviour in some individuals. At Trenton, however, *he had seen none....* Americans were fierce for battle because they understood what the battle was about.” A grateful Washington could hardly find words of praise for the men strong enough to match his feelings.⁷⁷ As McCullough states about the conclusion of the year 1776,

Especially for those who had been with Washington and who knew what a close call it was at the beginning—how often circumstance, storms, contrary winds, the oddities or strengths of individual character had made the difference—the outcome seemed little short of a *miracle*.⁷⁸

Although it is nowadays, in the minds of some, in John Adams’s words not so “fashionable”⁷⁹ to speak of *miracles* and *faith* and of *God*, it is hard to explain what happened at Trenton without them. For most of Washington’s soldiers fortunate enough to be able to read, the Bible had been their primer. Many had learned Bible stories at their mother and father’s knee, and/or from local clergy. First immigrants to New England and subsequent American preachers had likened the early Americans to the children of Israel escaping the oppressions of their “Pharoah,” the British government. When the soldiers had first faced the Delaware River on December 7th and 8th with their pursuing enemies upon their heels, might they have seen some similarities in their plight to the ancient children of Israel as they had miraculously escaped through the Red Sea from Pharoah’s Egyptian troops?⁸⁰ As the beleaguered American army regrouped on the Pennsylvania side and watched their numbers dwindle even more, might they have remembered Gideon’s ancient army of a mere three hundred that the Lord winnowed down for battle to subdue the Midianites?⁸¹ Then there was the miracle of “the ram in the thicket”⁸² when the CONGRESS so quickly resupplied their numbers, and that by the time of the battle a few days hence, so many new men had been willing to enlist in a cause that had looked so bleak. Had Washington’s freezing army, especially the ragged core that had

⁷⁶ Trevelyan, v. 2, 113–115.

⁷⁷ Trevelyan, v. 2, 115.

⁷⁸ McCullough, 294. Italics added.

⁷⁹ Abigail Adams, John Adams, *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams During the Revolution*, (New York, Hurd and Houghton, 1876), 191–192. (Italics added.)

⁸⁰ Exodus 14, Old Testament, Holy Bible.

⁸¹ Judges 7, Old Testament, Holy Bible.

⁸² Genesis 22:13, Old Testament, Holy Bible.

been with him for months, been sufficiently humbled by their extremities that they too, like David of old could only go forth in the Lord's strength to meet their Goliath?⁸³ As they trudged silently through the snow and hail to meet the enemy, might they had resonated with David, recalling their army's prior escapes from Long Island, and then over the Hudson, and then across the Delaware River,

Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.... The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.⁸⁴



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And none the least of the miracles, there was a leader at the head of their army whose character and dedication truly inspired his men to a cause greater than themselves. There were enough elements of the miraculous during the First Battle of Trenton that its story rivals many found in the Bible.

These might seem overstatements to those who do not believe in miracles or know the power of the words of the Bible to give courage and comfort to the hearts of men. These soldiers were not removed so many generations from the first immigrants to America whose lives were motivated by THE BOOK. Many of the earliest immigrants to America had learned its value from their grandparents, whose joy it was to be the first generation of Britons or Continental Europeans to succeed in the struggle to own a Bible in their very own language.⁸⁶ Historian John Richard Green credits the power

⁸³ 1 Samuel 17, Old Testament, Holy Bible.

⁸⁴ 1 Samuel 17:32, 37, Old Testament, Holy Bible.

⁸⁵ Gebhard Fugel, "David gegen Goliath," (about 1900), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fugel_David_gegen_Goliath.jpg.

⁸⁶ Margery Boyden, *From Conscience to Liberty, Diverse Long Island Families in a Crucible that Gave Rise to Religious Freedom, 1526–1664*, v. 1, Part A, 3–4, Chapter One, 27–38, Chapter Two, 46–47, 51–52 and Chapter Ten.

of God's *word* to the rise of Puritanism in England, (and hence the motivating force behind the Puritan migration of the ancestors of many of these soldiers). Green says,

No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman; it was read at churches and read at home, and *everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm.*⁸⁷

Like many others involved in the victory at Trenton, AMOS⁶ and JEDEDIAH⁶ Scudder were the *grandsons* of a *grandson* of JOHN² SCUDDER (Thomas¹ (T)) who came in the Puritan migration to New England in 1637.⁸⁸ This migration brought thousands motivated by hopes for rights to worship according to their religious conscience and religious denomination of choice. Others involved in the American army were from a number of nationalities, products of early Dutch and other more recent immigrants. Many of these immigrants from New York and the mid-Atlantic colonies and other locales came to America seeking religious freedom.

It is not overblown to suggest that the victory at Trenton was essential to the salvation of the American cause of Independence. Of inexplicable outcomes of December 25–26, 1776, of which Maj. General William Scudder Stryker, Sir Otto Trevelyan and historian David McCullough all remind us, it seems a strong case may be made that a kind Providence made up for many deficiencies in the physical welfare of the American soldiers and their lack of provisions, and for all of the things that did or could have gone wrong.

One additional noteworthy fact is that two of the first five presidents of the United States of America were fully engaged in this first Battle of Trenton: WASHINGTON and MONROE, with Monroe being one of the two officers injured in the fight. ALEXANDER HAMILTON, was also there. But there was little time to savor the victory, for it was now time to prepare for the second battle of Trenton.

⁸⁷ John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People*, (New York: American Book Company, 1916), 460. Italics added. Green was an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. Green's detailed 836-page history ended with the War with France 1793 to 1815. The 1916 revision included an Epilogue by Alice Stopford Green, extending the history to 1914.

⁸⁸ *From Conscience to Liberty*, v. 1, Part A, 54–55, 147–148, and Chapter Seven; Part B, Chapter Twenty, and 606, and Appendix I, and Index, civ-cvi.

On future Christmas nights, as you enjoy hearth and home and family, and parties with friends, may you pause for a moment to give a grateful thought to the freezing men in 1776 who gave up their warm and comfortable Christmas night with their families and friends, risking their lives to deliver you the present of freedom.