

REVOLUTIONARY WAR INITIATIVES FOCUS ON PRESERVING NEW JERSEY'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

By Amy Cradic

FROM 1775 TO 1783, New Jersey played center stage to a series of events crucial to the nation's struggle for independence. Pivotal battles were fought at Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth. Policy was made and speeches, including General George Washington's farewell orders, were written.

Although few may be aware of it, more Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes took place in New Jersey than in any other state and, more remarkably, much of the state's landscape over which Washington's Army traveled en route from battle to battle remains open space.

Realizing the opportunity and potential to preserve and interpret this unusual wealth of history and natural resources, Congress recently authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the feasibility of establishing New Jersey's first National Heritage Area – Crossroads of the American Revolution. Morristown National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service, is spearheading the study through a cooperative agreement with the Delaware & Raritan Greenway, a private nonprofit organization operating in central New Jersey.

Since 1984, Congress has designated 23 national heritage areas.



Each area is organized through voluntary partnerships between the National Park Service and local governments, organizations and individuals aimed at maximizing resource protection, public appreciation, education and recreational opportunities, and citizen involvement.

A heritage area is defined as an identifiable region with a strong sense of place, where the settled landscape tells a story about the generations of people who have lived there. It is a living landscape recognized for its important history, natural processes, cultural traditions, and economic and social forces that have influenced the area's human settlement and shaped its landscape.

The proposed National Heritage Area will be defined, in part, by a series of connecting trails between Revolutionary War sites, including major sites at Morristown National Historical Park, Washington Crossing State Park, the Old Barracks of Trenton, Princeton Battlefield and Monmouth Battlefield State Parks. Along all trail routes, efforts will be made to identify and interpret the integration of open space, farming and Revolutionary War strategy through interpretive signs and educational materials available to trail users. Historic events and remaining structures will be incorporated into the main trail system, helping to bring the Revolutionary War story to life.

Although Green Acres is targeting significant Revolutionary War sites for acquisition and New Jersey's heritage area will include several public parks, many areas within its boundaries would remain in private ownership. Designation of a national heritage area does not involve federal regulation of private

property. A "management entity" is named by Congress to coordinate the partners' voluntary actions.

The National Park Service views each heritage area as a unique and ambitious experiment in conservation and tourism, providing a venue to celebrate an area's cultural and natural resources. As the main benefactor from this federal initiative, New Jersey has a two-fold interest in supporting and helping to establish the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. A heritage area would elevate public awareness about the state's role in the American Revolutionary War while preserving a remarkable era of history, and through establishing its boundaries, it would provide further opportunity to preserve and acquire the state's culturally significant open space. Not only would New Jersey be ensuring the continued existence and care of its historic resources, but also the Revolutionary War landscape on which they still stand.

Over the next 18 months, public meetings are being organized by the Delaware and Raritan Greenway to seek public input and support for the heritage area initiative. For more information about the initiative or the public meetings and dates, contact Denise at 973-539-2016 ext. 201 or linda_mead@nps.gov.



REVOLUTIONARY WAR INITIATIVES IN NEW JERSEY



◆ **A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY AND FEASIBILITY STUDY TO DETERMINE THE ELIGIBILITY OF A CROSSROADS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN NEW JERSEY** has been authorized by Congress under the direction of the National Park Service. A National Heritage Area designation could benefit New Jersey by providing federal assistance toward protection of open space and historic sites and landscapes associated with the American Revolution.

◆ **THE AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD PROTECTION PROGRAM (ABPP)** is a Federally funded program with the intent goals of identifying and assessing threats to Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 battle locations and associated historic properties. The ABPP has been designed to focus the attention of battlefield researchers to a standard methodology that will provide local planners, preservationists, and others with credible information.

◆ **THE 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, A COMMEMORATIVE INITIATIVE** of the National Park Service to use the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution to enhance public understanding of the various meanings and enduring legacy of the Revolution. Goals include interpretation and education; communication; research; and resource protection.

◆ **THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU NATIONAL HERITAGE TRAIL** was authorized by Congress in January 24, 2001. The intent of the Act is to conduct a National Historic trail feasibility study of the Washington-Rochambeau Route. The 600 mile route extends from Rhode Island to Virginia and will connect to the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage study area in New Jersey.

◆ **THE NEW JERSEY DEP, DIVISION OF PARKS AND FORESTRY'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR CAMPAIGN** is designed to promote public protection and appreciation for the rich historical resources associated with the time period. The campaign includes initiatives such as: a driving tour brochure and other promotional materials; special events, including a lecture series; and a statewide Revolutionary War orientation/ wayside exhibit program.

www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parknj/revwar.html

◆ **THE NEW JERSEY DEP, GREEN ACRES PROGRAM, CROSSROAD OF THE REVOLUTION PROJECT AREA** is a landscape preservation/trail corridor project that will protect and link Revolutionary War sites including the major sites of Morristown National Historic Park, Washington's Crossing State Park, the Trenton Barracks, Princeton Battlefield State Park and Monmouth Battlefield State Park. In partnership with local government and non-profit groups, Green Acres mission is to create an interconnected system of open spaces to protect the sites and landscapes of the American Revolution in New Jersey.

www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/currentstate.html

◆ **THE GARDEN STATE PRESERVATION TRUST (GSPT)** was established in 1999 to oversee expenditures of funds generated for open space and farmland acquisition and historic preservation. Through the Green Acres Program, GSPT funding is being used to acquire significant Revolutionary War properties statewide.

◆ **THE 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION CELEBRATION COMMISSION** was established by Executive Order from the Governor for the purpose to plan, promote and coordinate commemorative programs and activities to celebrate the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution from 2001 to 2008.

◆ **THE BATTLE OF TRENTON AND TEN CRUCIAL DAYS EVENTS** and Promotions planning is underway for the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Trenton, Washington Crossing the Delaware and the Battle of Princeton. Cultural Affairs and the NJHC are working with the City of Trenton, the Old Barracks, DEP's Division of Parks and Forestry, Office of Travel and Tourism, the Princeton Historic Society, the Pennsylvania Washington Crossing Historic Park and the National Park Service to promote the event and prepare a proposal for the 225th Commission.

◆ **THE WASHINGTON VICTORY TRAIL** was created by a resolution by New Jersey legislators requiring the Historical Commission and the NJ Department of Transportation to place signage along the 11-mile route that General George Washington and his troops walked from Washington's Crossing State Park to Trenton. A second resolution was introduced on Jan 22, 2001 to extend the route from Trenton to Princeton Battlefield.

