

INTRODUCTION TO “DAYS”

Prelude—December 14-25, 1776: The bulk of the Continental Army under George Washington is encamped on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, where it is regrouping from a disastrous New York campaign against the British and Hessian forces and a long retreat across New Jersey. In New Jersey, Continental soldiers and militiamen engage Hessian troops in the area of Mount Holly while other militia units continually harass the Hessian brigade occupying Trenton. Thomas Paine’s *The American Crisis* inspires the weary Continentals to fight on. *Approximate temperature at beginning the crossing 29°*

Day 1—December 25, 1776: A Continental Army force of 2,400 soldiers (*organized into seven brigades*) crosses the Delaware River to New Jersey and marches almost 10 miles to Trenton in a raging blizzard to assault the 1,500 Hessian troops occupying the town. *Temperatures at dawn 33°, 35° by the afternoon.*

Day 2—December 26, 1776: First Battle of Trenton - The Continental Army defeats the Hessians at Trenton to win its first significant victory of the war, then returns to Pennsylvania with its prisoners and captured arms, ammunition, horses, and wagons. *Temperature remains around 32° all day.*

Days 3 and 4—December 27-28, 1776: Washington and his generals decide to cross the Delaware back to New Jersey and join up with Pennsylvania and New England militia who have already crossed over from Pennsylvania and discovered that Hessian forces in the area near Trenton (in Bordentown and Burlington) have withdrawn. *It snows up to six inches in the morning 28°, drops into the 20’s that night*

Days 5 and 6—December 29-30, 1776: The Continental Army crosses the river (for the fourth time that month) and returns to Trenton, where Washington’s troops combine with militia to form a consolidated force of 6,000 soldiers that entrenches itself below the Assunpink Creek. Washington persuades a bare majority of his soldiers whose enlistments are to expire on the 31st to remain with the army for another six weeks, based on a promise to pay each of these soldiers \$10 in hard coin. *Remains below freezing both days.*

Days 7 and 8—December 31, 1776-January 1, 1777: Several Continental Army regiments advance from Trenton towards enemy-occupied Princeton and take up positions at Eight Mile Run in Maidenhead. There they skirmish with British and Hessian troops on New Year's Day. *Remains in the 30's all day on the 31st, On the 1st Temperatures moderate at 50° by late afternoon.*

Day 9—January 2, 1777: Battle of Assunpink Creek (Second Trenton) - Continental units deploy first at Five Mile Run, then at the Shabbakunk Creek in a delaying action against 8,000 British and Hessian troops under Gen. Charles Cornwallis in Maidenhead and slow Cornwallis's march from Princeton to Trenton long enough to prevent a full-scale, coordinated assault in daylight against Washington's army arrayed on the east bank of the Assunpink Creek below Trenton. The Continentals and militia beat three assaults on the Queen Street bridge by British and Hessian forces. As darkness falls, Cornwallis disengages intending a full assault the next morning. *The temperatures dropped all day into the 30's and further into the 20's that night.*

Day 10—January 3, 1777: Battle of Princeton - Overnight, the Continental Army marches around Cornwallis's left flank, from behind the Assunpink Creek to Princeton (12 miles in five hours) and defeats 1,500 strong British 4th Brigade; the capstone American victory of the "Ten Crucial Days." *Temperatures remained in the twenties all day.*

Postscript—January 3-6, 1777: The Continental Army makes its way from Princeton to Morristown, NJ, where it establishes its winter quarters and thereby ends the Trenton and Princeton military campaigns associated with the "Ten Crucial Days."