

Princeton Battlefield State Park



*Designed to help you explore
and learn some things about
the site of the January 3, 1777
battle and the battle itself.*

History "Scavenger Hunt"



In Their Footsteps... An Historic Adventure

The Battle of Princeton January 3rd, 1777



General Mercer of the Continental Army knew his men were tired. They had fought a hard battle the day before and marched all night to surprise the

British garrison in **Princeton**, still a little more than a mile away from his position on **Thomas Clarke's Farm**. But something stopped his march. In the distance, he saw British light cavalry marching ahead of a column of troops. He halted his own column and sent a message ahead to **General Washington**. There weren't supposed to be enemy troops this far outside of Princeton....



British **Lt. Colonel Mahwood** had just crossed the Stony Brook Bridge, about a quarter mile from the Clarke Farm, when he turned back to look toward the town of

Princeton. In the early dawn, he saw sunlight glinting off of bayonets in the distance. He was confused. He was unaware of any British or Hessian patrols in that part of **Stonybrook**. He halted his column and sent a scout down to the Clarke Farm to investigate...

You're going to get to do some investigating of your own! Princeton Battlefield State Park covers more than 80 acres of historic ground and is home to all kinds of trees, plants, and wildlife! Follow the clues on these pages and take a journey back in time as you discover the history of The Battle of Princeton!



Stop 1: The Thomas Clarke House

Your journey begins here, at the **Thomas Clarke House**. On a cold morning in early January, Thomas Clarke, his sisters **Sara** and **Hannah**, and their slave **Susannah**, were busy at work on their farm when they heard the sound of an army marching past the small farm house. They knew there were British troops nearby, but when they looked outside they were surprised to see the Continental Army instead! They quickly cleaned up their breakfast and hid in the root cellar, knowing that trouble was coming.

CLUE 1 :

Mmm, smells like breakfast is cooking! Where's the bacon??? Better find the smokehouse!

Hint!

You can see the smokehouse from the front door of the Thomas Clarke House! It's a small brick structure with a square hole above the door!

Question 1: What is a smokehouse?



Stop 2: The Smokehouse

You found the smokehouse! Nice Job! The smokehouse is a small brick structure near the main house, which the family would use for cooking and storing meat. On the morning of January 3rd, 1777 the smells of breakfast would have made the passing American troops hungry, but they knew they had a job to do first!

Parts of the Continental Army marched right past this smokehouse on their way up the backroad to Princeton. Follow their lead and march along the treeline to your right. (see the picture --->)

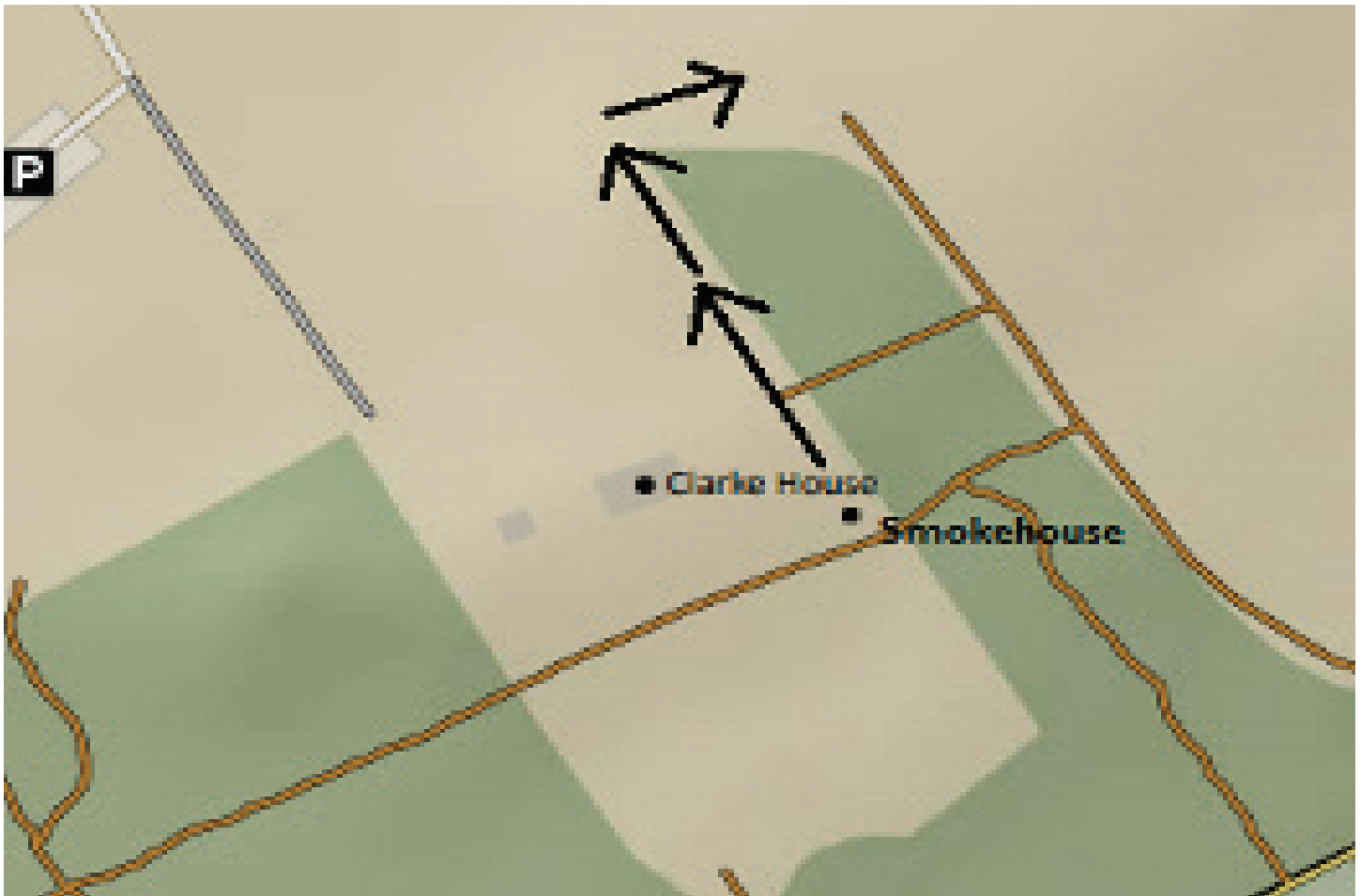
CLUE 2 :

The army goes rolling along...and so do you! Follow their footsteps along the treeline to the highest point of ground on Thomas Clarke Hill.

Hint!

Look for the wayside marker labeled "Site of Moulder's Battery". It's about 100 feet from the flagpole on the high ground!

Question 2: Question 2: What do you think a BATTERY is?



Stop 3: Captain Joseph Moulder's Battery



From this position, overlooking the valley between Thomas and William Clarke's Farm, **Mercer's Brigade** got their

first glimpse of British soldiers. Mercer realized that control of the hill on the other side of the gully before you was critical to keeping the British away from the main body of American troops still marching toward Princeton. He decided that the best thing to do was to cross this field and take a defensive position in **William Clarke's Apple Orchard** to catch the British off guard.

CLUE 3 :

Follow General Mercer! It's a long way to walk, but the view is worth it. Luckily there is a place to sit and take in the sites!

Hint!

Look for the park bench on the hill! It's the only one in the park!

Question 3: Why do you think Mercer chose the Apple Orchard to defend?



Stop 4:

William Clarke's Apple Orchard (Park Bench) Battery



Lt. Col. Mawhood saw Mercer advancing on the hill and quickly moved his own troops to intercept him here. At 8am,

Mercers Brigade reached the top of this hill at the same time as Col. Mawhood's **17th Regiment of Foot** and **55th Regiment of Foot**. The fighting took place all around you at close range, with both sides taking terrible losses. The high ground you stand on is one of the most hard fought pieces of ground in the entire American Revolution. Take a look around you and you'll see why. Command of this ground would mean total control of William and Thomas Clarke's Farm. Both sides fought ferociously to hold on to it.

The hill you're standing on is where the Battle of Princeton begins. It is 8 o'clock in the morning.

The fighting here will last barely fifteen minutes before American reinforcement arrive on the hill where you came from. **But was it already too late?**

CLUE 4:

The British have turned up the heat! Better find somewhere to cool down. Perhaps the shade of that nearby oak tree will do?

Hint!

The tree you're looking for is in plain sight and surrounded by a wooden fence!

Question 4: What is so important about holding high ground?



Stop 5: The Mercer Oak



You're currently standing at the far right of the British line. Turn back toward Moulder's Battery.

On this ridge more and more

American Soldiers began to appear, and Col. Mawhood was worried. Fearing that he would soon be overrun, he ordered his men to **"FIX YOUR BAYONETS"**, and charged at Mercer and his men.



Mercer's men were not prepared to handle a bayonet charge and were pushed off of the hill in a violent wave. General Mercer was knocked from his horse and surrounded by British troops. They ordered him to surrender, but he refused. He was bayoneted **SEVEN** times and beaten over the head with the butt

of a musket. He was left for dead behind enemy lines. Legend has it that he fell near this tree.

CLUE 5:

Looks like the Americans are on the run, so we'd better leave too! Look for something flying that's RED, WHITE, and BLUE!

Hint!

Look up! It's attached to one of the tallest objects in the park!

Question 5: What is a bayonet?

Question 6: What kind of tree is this?



Stop 6: Washington's Counter Attack! (The Flag Pole)



General Washington arrives on the field at about 8:20 am. He rides through the retreating American forces as musket balls and cannon shells fly all

around him. His men are so inspired that they turn around and face the enemy once again. This time, Washington has brought more reinforcements onto the field. Now, it's the British who find themselves outnumbered!

Washington orders a **CHARGE!** across Thomas Clarke's Farm and pushes the British off of the field! Washington chases the British back toward Princeton and beyond. **Victory at last!**

HUZZAH!

Washington and the Continental Army have won the day...and so have you! March on back to the Thomas Clarke House to complete your adventure!



Last Stop Back to the Thomas Clarke House

Victory comes at a heavy price in war, and the Battle of Princeton was no different. Inside you'll learn about the fate of General Mercer, who was badly wounded during the fight. You'll also learn more about the Clarke Family, who take it upon themselves to help care for the wounded and the dead in the aftermath of the battle.

Question 7: Why was The Battle of Princeton so Important?

We hope you've learned a lot on your adventure today! If you have any questions please feel free to ask Park Ranger Will!

We hope you've learned a lot on your adventure today! If you have any questions please feel free to ask Park Ranger Will!



Questions

Question 1: What is a smokehouse?

Question 2: What do you think a BATTERY is?

Question 3: Why do you think Mercer chose the Apple Orchard to defend?

Question 4: What is so important about holding high ground?

Question 5: What is a bayonet?

Question 6: What kind of tree is this?

Question 7: Why was The Battle of Princeton so Important?
