

Harrington Park Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 105, Harrington Park, N. J. 07640

Newsletter #5

November 2003

November Meeting

Our November meeting featured Dr. Gary Stone, the historian of Monmouth Battlefield located in Manalapan, New Jersey. Dr. Stone's presentation focused on the archeological proofs, that had been found at the battle site, of the ebb and flow of this momentous battle. He also concluded that the famous Molly Pitcher was actually Mary Hays! If you were unable to attend the meeting, or even if you did attend the meeting, here's a brief background on the Battle of Monmouth, which I believe will help to clarify the events of that important battle.

As British General Clinton prepared to evacuate Philadelphia there was strong sentiment in the Continental Army command that a cooperative effort between their army and the newly allied French naval fleet might result in winning the war. A French naval squadron consisting of 11 war ships along with transports carrying 4000 French troops sailed from France in May of 1778 and headed to America. The fleet, commanded by Comte d'Estaing, was far superior than any Admiral Howe (British) could immediately concentrate in American waters. This represented a stronghold on strategic initiative in favor of the Americans, which General Washington hoped to capitalize on.

Clinton received orders from England to detach 8000 of his roughly 10,000 man force to the West Indies and Florida and evacuate the rest of his men from Philadelphia to New York by sea. Instead, Clinton decided to move the entire army to NY before making any detachments and to move them overland. His decision was largely based on the fact that he didn't have the transports to move his 3000

horses over sea. Clinton set out from Philadelphia with his 10,000 men, to include Tories from the region, on June 18, 1778. Washington and his growing army of 12,000 men immediately occupied Philadelphia and began pursuit of Clinton towards NY.

Washington was still undecided as to whether he should risk an attack on the British column while it was on the march. He held a meeting of his command staff, the Council of War, and attempted to find some resolve in that matter. The council, however, was quite divided on the issue. The only unifying theme was that none of Washington's generals advised in favor of a general action. Brig Gen Anthony Wayne, the boldest of the staff, and Maj Gen Marquis de Lafayette, the youngest of the staff, urged for a partial attack on the British column while it was strung out on the road. Gen Lee, who had been captured and exchanged and had rejoined the army at Valley Forge, was the most cautious. He advised only guerilla action to harass the British column. On June 26, 1778, Washington sided with a more bold approach but did not go so far as issuing orders for a general action. He sent almost one-half of his army as an advance force to strike at the rear of the British when Clinton made the eminent move out of Monmouth Courthouse, which occurred on June 28, 1778.

Early in the morning on 28 June, Lee advanced upon unreconnoitered ground and made contact with the British rear guard at Monmouth Courthouse. Clinton reacted quickly and maneuvered to envelop the American right flank. Lee felt that he was then faced by a superior force and fell into a retreat that seems to have been quite confused. Washington was quite irate at the retreat and

spoke harshly at Lee. Washington then assumed a defensive position to repel a possible British counter-attack.

The ensuing battle, involving the bulk of both armies, was fought on that hot, sultry day and continued until nightfall with both sides holding their original positions.

December Meeting – Last Chance!

A private tour of the Ridgewood Historical Society Museum, and a reception following at Marcello's Ho-Ho-Kus Inn will be our December meeting. We will leave the Library parking lot at 7:00 P.M. and begin the tour at 7:30 P.M. The cost for members is \$15.00 per person, non-members \$20.00. If you are planning to attend, and have not already made your reservation, please call Lorraine Wolfangel-Hall at 201 767- 9027. Our field trips are always a lot of fun, so plan on coming, and bring a friend!

Membership

You know who you are - naughty, naughty! If you have not sent in your dues, please mail them to P.O. Box 105, Harrington Park, New Jersey, 07640, payable to the Harrington Park Historical Society. Fees are; Individual-\$10.00, Family - \$15.00, Youth - \$5.00.

H. P. Centennial Celebration

The Society will mount three exhibits to commemorate the 100th anniversary of incorporation of Harrington Park. Inge Nebel is our chair for this project, and she is busy putting together the first exhibit, "Government and the Municipal Services." We have several people who have volunteered to help, but we can always use more hands. If you would like to join this committee and work on this exciting project, please see Inge at our December meeting.

Thanksgiving

The first Thanksgiving observance in America was entirely religious and did not involve feasting. On Dec. 4, 1619, a group of 38 English settlers arrived at Berkeley Plantation, on the James River near what is now Charles City, Virginia. The group's charter required

that the day of arrival be observed yearly as a day of thanksgiving to God.

The first Thanksgiving in New England was celebrated in Plymouth less than a year after the Plymouth colonists had settled in America. The festival lasted three days. Similar harvest Thanksgivings were held in Plymouth during the next several years, but no traditional date was set.

The custom of Thanksgiving Day spread from Plymouth to other New England colonies. During the Revolutionary War, eight special days of thanks were observed for victories and for being saved from dangers. In 1789, President George Washington issued a general proclamation naming November 26 a day of national thanksgiving. In the same year, the Protestant Episcopal Church announced that the first Thursday in November would be a regular yearly day for giving thanks.

For many years, the country had no regular national Thanksgiving Day. But some states had a yearly Thanksgiving holiday. By 1830, New York had an official state Thanksgiving Day, and other Northern states soon followed its example. In 1855, Virginia became the nation's first Southern state to adopt the custom.

Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, worked many years to promote the idea of a national Thanksgiving Day. Then President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November 1863, as "a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father." Each year afterward, for 75 years, the President formally proclaimed that Thanksgiving Day should be celebrated on the last Thursday of November. But in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set it one week earlier. He wanted to help business by lengthening the shopping period before Christmas. Congress ruled that after 1941 the fourth Thursday of November would be observed as Thanksgiving Day and would be a legal federal holiday.

Your faithful servant, Gerri Gibney