



*“What sad havoc will this dreadful war make in our land!”*

## A Quaker Woman in Burlington, New Jersey, during the American Revolution

Selections from the Journal of Margaret Hill Morris, December 1776-January 1777

A Quaker widow with four children in Burlington, New Jersey, Margaret Morris found herself in the center of war in late 1776. Washington’s army was retreating across the state, pursued by the victorious British army. Because heavy winter approached, the British opted to return to New York for the winter, with their Hessian (German) troops encamped in New Jersey—one regiment in Morris’s town. Nearby too were Pennsylvania militia troops and, in the icy river, a flotilla of small American warships ready to fire on any Hessians in view. Margaret Morris’s life intersected with them all during the tumultuous two months encompassed in these selections from her wartime journal. She tried to remain neutral while aiding those who needed food, medical help, protection, and solace. And through her journal she sought solace for herself as war arrived, literally, at her front door.

*December 6, 1776.* [Word arrives of the approaching British army.]

Being on a visit to my friend M. S. at Haddonfield, I was preparing to return to my family when a person from Philadelphia told me that the people there were in great commotion, that the English fleet was in the [lower Delaware] River & hourly expected to sail up to the city; that the inhabitants were removing into the country, and that several persons of considerable repute had been discovered to have formed a design [plan] of setting fire to the city<sup>1</sup> and were summoned before the [Continental] Congress and strictly enjoined to drop the horrid purpose. When I heard the above report, my heart almost died within me and I cried, surely the Lord will not punish the innocent with the guilty, and I wished there might be found some interceding Lots & Abrahams<sup>2</sup> amongst *our People*.

On my journey home I was told the inhabitants of our little town were going in haste into the country and that my nearest neighbors were already removed. When I heard this, I felt myself quite sick. I was ready to faint. I thought of my S. D.,\* the beloved companion of my widowed state — her husband at the distance of some hundred miles from her; I thought of my own lonely situation, no husband to cheer, with the voice of love, my sinking spirits. My little flock, too, without a father to direct them how to steer. All these things crowded into my mind at once and I felt like one forsaken. A flood of friendly tears came to my relief, and I felt an humble confidence that He who had been

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., to destroy it before the British could occupy the strategically important city, a tactic occasionally employed in warfare.

<sup>2</sup> *Lots and Abrahams*, i.e., men like Abraham and his nephew Lot in Canaan, who agreed to live in separate regions when their cattle herdsman engaged in constant strife. [Genesis 13:8]

\* Sarah Hill Dillwyn, Margaret Morris’s sister, with whom she lived in Burlington.

with me in six troubles would not forsake me now.<sup>3</sup> While I cherished this hope my tranquility was restored and I felt no sensations but of humble acquiescence to the divine will, and was favored to find my family in good health on my arrival and my dear companion not greatly discomposed, for which favor I desire to be truly thankful.

*December 7, 1776.* A letter from my next neighbor's husband at the [Philadelphia militia] camp warned her to be gone in haste, and many persons coming into town today brought intelligence [news] that the British army were advancing towards us.

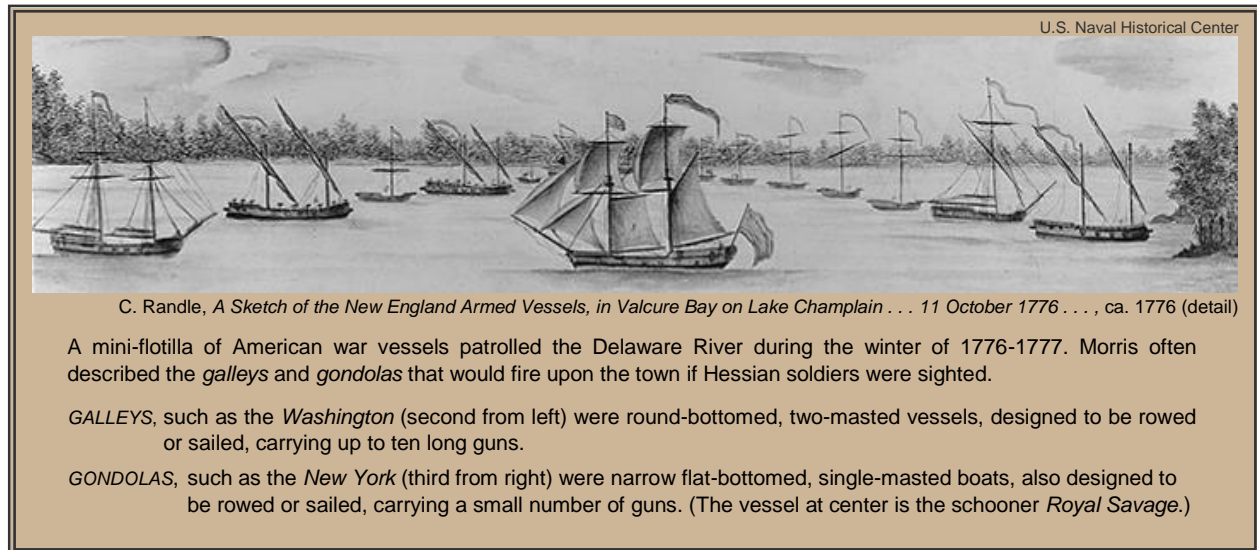
*December 8, 1776.* Every day begins and ends with the same accounts, and we hear today the Regulars [British soldiers] are at Trenton. Some of our neighbors gone, and others going, makes our little bank<sup>4</sup> look lonesome; but our trust in Providence still firm, and we dare not even talk of removing our family [out of the city].

...

*December 10, 1776.* Today our amiable friend E. C.<sup>\*</sup> and her family bade us adieu [goodbye]. My brother also left us but returned in less than an hour, telling he could not go away just as the Hessians were entering the town; but no troops coming in, we urged him to leave us next morning, which he concluded to do after preparing us to expect the Hessians in a few hours. A number of [American] galleys have been lying in the river before the town for two days past.

*December 11, 1776.* [Hessian soldiers enter Burlington. American war vessels fire upon the town.]

After various reports from one hour to another of light-horse<sup>5</sup> approaching, the people in town had certain intelligence that a large body of Hessians were come to Bordentown,<sup>6</sup> and we might expect to see them in a few hours. About 10 o'clock in the morning of this day, a party of about 600 [militia] men marched down the main street. As they passed along, they told our doctor<sup>†</sup> and some other persons in the town that a large number of Hessians were advancing and would be in town in less than an hour. . . . On the first certainty of their approach, J. L.<sup>\*\*</sup> and two or three others thought best, for the safety of the town, to go out and meet the troops. He communicated his intention to one of the [American] gondola captains, who approved of it and desired to be informed of the result.



<sup>3</sup> I.e., that God who had given her strength in previous crises would again support her.

<sup>4</sup> Green Bank, Morris's residence on the Delaware River, so named by its previous owner Gov. William Franklin, the Loyalist son of Benjamin Franklin.

<sup>\*</sup> Esther (Hetty) Cox.

<sup>5</sup> *Light horse*: lightly armed soldiers on horseback.

<sup>6</sup> See "BordenT: between Trenton and Burlington, New Jersey (map details, pp. 1, 4).

<sup>†</sup> Dr. Jonathan Odell. He was an Episcopal clergyman, and as such had taken the oath of allegiance to the crown. He was true to his oath, and so was reckoned as a Tory [Loyalist]. Before he became a clergyman he had been a physician, and continued to practice to eke out his small salary.

<sup>\*\*</sup> John Lawrence.

The gentlemen went out, and though the Hessian colonel spoke but little English, yet they found that, upon being thus met in a peaceable manner on behalf of the inhabitants, he was ready to promise them safety and security, to exchange any messages that might be proper with the

*The Commandant:* Hessian colonel, Count Carl Von Donop, in command of a Hessian regiment in the British army encamped near Burlington for the winter.

*The Commodore:* American officer (unnamed) of a galley patrolling the Delaware River.

*Captain Moore:* Officer in command of state militia troops.

gentlemen of the galleys [commanders of the American naval vessels]. In the meantime he ordered his troops to halt. They remained in their ranks between the bridge and the corner of Main Street, waiting an answer from on board. J. L. and T. H.<sup>††</sup> went down to report what had passed, and told Captain Moore that the colonel had orders to quarter his troops in Burlington that night, and that if the inhabitants were quiet and peaceable and would furnish him with quarters and refreshment, he would pledge his honor that no manner of disorder should happen to disturb or alarm the people. Captain Moore replied that, in his opinion, it would be wrong in such a case to fire on the town, but that he would go down and consult with the [American] commodore and return an answer as soon as might be.

The Hessian colonel accepts the offer of Loyalist Jonathan Odell to act as an interpreter, as both men speak French.

He desired the doctor to tell the gentlemen of the town to the same purport as above, with this addition: that he expected there would be found no persons in the town in arms; nor any arms, ammunition, or effects, belonging to persons that were in arms against the king, concealed by any of the inhabitants; that if any such effects were thus secreted, the house in which they were found would be given up to pillage;<sup>7</sup> to prevent which it would be necessary to give him a just and fair account of such effects, which account he would forward to the general, and that if we acted openly and in good faith in these respects, he repeated his assurances, upon the honor of a soldier, that he would be answerable for every kind of disorder on the part of his troops. They remained in profound silence in their ranks, and the [Hessian] commandant with some of his officers came into town as far as J. L.'s, where they dined, waiting the [American] commodore's answer.

. . . [T]he commodore had received intelligence of a party of Hessians having entered Burlington — before Captain Moore got down to him — and had ordered up four galleys to fire on the town wherever any two or three persons should be seen together. Captain Moore met and hailed them one after another, but the wind was so high that he was not heard or not understood. The four gondolas came up, and the first of them appearing before the main street, J. L., T. H., and W. D.<sup>\*</sup> went down upon the wharf and waved a hat — the signal agreed on with Captain Moore for the boat to come ashore and give the commodore's answer in peace. To the astonishment of these gentlemen, all the answer they received was first a swivel shot. Not believing it possible this could be designedly done, they stood still, and J. L. again waved his hat and was answered with an 18 pounder [cannonball]. Both these fires, as the gondola people have since told us, were made with as good aim as could be taken, as they took it for granted it was at Hessians they fired. However, as it was impossible to conjecture that such conduct could have happened or to suspect such a mistake, 'tis no wonder the town was exceedingly alarmed, looking upon it in the light of a cruel as well as unprovoked piece of treachery.<sup>8</sup>

Upon this news, the [Hessian] commandant rose calmly from table, and his officers with him went out to eight or ten men who had come to the door as a small bodyguard. He turned to the doctor as he went into the street and said he could easily dispose of his people out of the possibility of danger, but that much mischief might be done to the town and that he would take a view of the gondolas and see what measures might be necessary on his part, but that he should be sorry to be the occasion of any

<sup>††</sup> John Lawrence and T. Hulings.

<sup>7</sup> I.e., the British soldiers would be allowed to pillage the houses for personal gain.

<sup>\*</sup> William Dillwyn of Burlington, Morris's brother-in-law.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., the town men could not convey to the American vessel commander that they had reached an agreement with the Hessian colonel before a gondola fired on them as suspected Hessians. Morris appears to question the sailors' justification for what is today termed "friendly fire."

damage or distress to the inhabitants. He walked down the street and sent different ways three sentinels in Indian file together to view and report to him what they saw.

These being now and then seen at different times induced the people on board [the naval vessels] to believe that the houses were full of Hessians, and a cannonade was continued till almost dark in different directions, sometimes along the street, sometimes across it. Several houses were struck and a little damaged, but not one living creature, either man or beast, killed or wounded. About dark the gondolas fell down a little way below the town, and the night was passed in quiet.

While all this tumult was in town, we, on our peaceful bank, ignorant of the occasion of the firing, were wondering what it could mean, and unsuspecting of danger, were quietly pursuing our business in the family, when a kind neighbor informed us of the occasion and urged us to go into the cellar as a place of safety. We were prevailed on by him to do so, and remained there till it ceased.



L. Evans, *A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America*, 1771, detail with Philadelphia and Burlington on the Delaware River. Note the towns of Trenton, Mount Holly, Bristol, and "Bordent" (Bordentown).

*December 12, 1776.* [American sailors search Burlington houses for Hessians and Loyalists.]

. . . Many have gone in haste and great distress into the country, but we still hope no mischief is seriously intended. A number of [American] men landed on our bank this morning and told us it was their settled purpose to set fire to the town. I begged them not to set my house afire. They asked which was my house, and they said they knew not what hindered them from firing on it last night, for seeing a light in the chambers they thought there were Hessians in it, and they pointed their guns at it several times. I told them my children were sick, which obliged me to burn a light all night. Though they did not know what hindered them from firing on us, I did; it was the guardian of the widow and the orphan<sup>9</sup> who took us into his safekeeping and preserved us from danger; oh that I may keep humble and be thankful for this as other favors vouchsafed to my little flock.

*December 13, 1776.* This day we began to look a little like ourselves again. The [Hessian] troops were removed some miles from town, as we heard, and our friends began to venture out to see us, but the suspicions of the [American] gondola men still continued, and search was made in and about the town for men distinguished by the name of Tories [Loyalists]. About noon of this day, my dear R. W. popped in upon us. He had heard the firing yesterday and, being anxious for our safety, he ran the risk of venturing amongst us to see how we had fared. Surely this proof of his love will never be forgotten by me while my memory lasts. He left us after dinner.

Dec. 13. British General Howe ceased the pursuit of Washington's army and directed his army back to New York for the winter. Hessian soldiers remained camped in New Jersey.

*December 14 (16?), 1776.* [House searches continue by Hessians for Patriots and by Patriots for Loyalists. American sailors search Morris's house while she is hiding a Loyalist in a secret room.]

This day we began to feel a little like ourselves again.<sup>10</sup> There was no appearance of the formidable Hessians. Several [of our friends] called to see us; amongst the number was one [Dr. Odell], esteemed by the whole family and very intimate in it, but the spirit of the devil still continued to rove through

<sup>9</sup> i.e., God.

<sup>10</sup> The repetition of the first sentence in the previous entry appears in the *Bulletin* copy.

the town the shape of Tory-hunters. A message was delivered to our intimate friend informing him a party of armed men were on the search for him. His horse was brought, and he retired to a place of safety. Some of the gentlemen who entertained the foreigners were pointed out to the gondola men. Two worthy inhabitants were seized upon and dragged on board.

From the 13th to the 16th we had various reports of the advancing and retiring of the enemy. Parties of armed men rudely entered the houses in town and diligent search was made for Tories. The two last taken released and sent on shore, some of the gondola gentry broke into and pillaged Rd. Smith's house on the bank. . . .

About noon this day [16th] a very terrible account of thousands [of Hessians] coming into town and now actually to be seen on Gallows Hill. My incautious son<sup>11</sup> caught up the spyglass and was running toward the mill to look at them. I told him it would be liable to misconstruction,<sup>12</sup> but he prevailed on me to allow him to gratify his curiosity. He went but returned much dissatisfied, for no troops could he see. As he came back, poor Dick took the glass and, resting it against a tree, took a view of the fleet. Both of these were observed by the people on board, who suspected it was an enemy that was watching their motions. They manned a boat and sent her on shore. A loud knocking at my door brought me to it. I was a little fluttered and kept locking and unlocking that I might get my ruffled face a little composed. At last I opened it, and half a dozen men, all armed, demanded the key of the empty house. I asked them what they wanted there; they said to search for a d—d Tory who had been spying at them from the mill. The name of a Tory, so near *my own door*, seriously alarmed me, for a poor *refugee* [Odell] dignified by that name had claimed the shelter of my roof and was at that very time concealed, like a thief, in an auger-hole. I rung the bell violently, the signal agreed on if they came to search, and when I thought he had crept into the hole, I put on a very simple look and cried out,

“Bless me, I hope you are not Hessians.”

“Do we look like Hessians?” asked one of them rudely.


“Indeed, I don't know.”

“Did you ever see a Hessian?”

“No, never in my life, but they are *men*, and you are men and may be Hessians for anything I know, but I'll go with you into Col. Cox's house, though indeed [the person you saw with a spyglass] was my son at the mill; he is but a boy and meant no harm. He wanted to see the troops.”

So I marched at the head of them, opened the door and searched every place, but we could find no Tory (strange where he could be). We returned — they greatly disappointed — I, pleased to think my house was not suspected. The captain, a smart little fellow named Shippen said he wished he could see the spy-glass. S. D.\* produced it and very civilly desired his acceptance of it, which I was sorry for, as I often amused myself in looking through it. They left us and searched J. V.'s<sup>†</sup>

New York Public Library



The “poor refugee” was Dr. Jonathan Odell. The auger-hole was a secret chamber entered from a room at the end of a long entry, through a closet whose shelves had to be removed and the back pried open with a knife. Admission was then given into a chamber having no light save what crept through the chinks in roof and walls.

The bell was hung in the room outside near the closet, communicating by means of wires through the winding hall, with a knob just inside the front door. This bell, therefore, might be rung “violently” before opening the door without alarming outsiders, giving the “refugee” time to conceal himself before the long entry could be traversed.

Jonathan Odell finally escaped to England where he remained a number of years before he dared return to his family.

*Bulletin*, quoting A. M. Gummere, *Pennsylvania Magazine*, 8, 164.

<sup>11</sup> 17-year-old John Morris. Her other son, Dick, is mentioned later in the entry.

<sup>12</sup> I.e., could be misconstrued that he was an enemy.

\* Sarah Dillwyn, Morris's sister.

† James Verree.

and the two next houses, but no Tory could they find. [News of] this transaction reached the town, and Colonel Cox was very angry and ordered the men on board. In the evening I went to town with my refugee and placed him in other lodgings. I was told today of a design [plan] to seize upon a young man in town, as he was deemed a Tory. I thought a hint would be kindly received, and as I came back, called upon a friend of his and told him. Next day he was out of reach of the gondolas.

*December 17, 1776.* More news! great news! very great news (J. V.'s). The British troops actually at Mount Holly!<sup>13</sup> Guards of [Patriot] militia placed at London and York bridges, gondola men in arms patrolling the streets, and diligent search making for firearms, ammunition and Tories. Another attempt last night to enter into R. Smith's house. . . . This evening every gondola man sent on board with strict orders not to set a foot on the Jersey shore again. So far so good.

. . .

*December 22, 1776.* It is said that [American general Israel] Putnam with 1000 men are at Mount Holly. All the women [have] removed from the town except one widow of our acquaintance. This evening we hear the sound of much hammering at Bristol, and it is conjectured that a fortification is carrying on there — more cannon said to be planted on the island.

We hear this afternoon that the gentlemen who went last night to the Count de Nope [Hessian commandant] with a request that our town might be allowed to remain a neutral one, are returned and report that he had too many affairs of greater consequence in hand to attend to them or give an answer. I think we don't like the Count quite so well today as we did yesterday. . . . Today (22d) we hear [American] General Howe is at Trenton, and it is thought there will be an engagement soon. A man who was at Mount Holly the other day tells us he saw a great many of the British troops — that some of them went to the magazine there (a small room over the courthouse) and took out about 100 wooden canteens and the same number of broken firearms, and, calling for a guard of 100 men, piled them up in the street and ordered the men in derision to take charge of them. This afternoon we hear of our refugee [Odell] again and that he has got a protection, as it is called. The rage of Tory-hunting a little subsided. We now hear only of the Hessian hunters, but they make a poor hand of it — not one brought in that we know of. We hear this afternoon that our officers are afraid their men will not fight and wish may all run home again. . . .

Several of the families who left the town on the day of the cannonading are returned to their houses. The intelligence brought in this evening is seriously affecting [disturbing]. A party of our men, about 200, marched out of Mount Holly and, meeting with a party of Hessians near a place called Petticoat Bridge, an engagement ensued—the Hessians retreating rather advancing—a heavy firing of musketry and some cannon heard. We are informed that twenty-one of our men were killed in the engagement, and that they returned at night to their headquarters at Mount Holly, the Hessians to theirs at the Black Horse.

*December 23, 1776.* This day twelve gondolas came up the river again, but we know not as yet the occasion of their coming. The troops at Mount Holly went out again today and engaged the Hessians near the same place where they met yesterday. It is reported we lost ten men and that our troops are totally routed and the Hessians in possession of Mount Holly. This evening a little alarm in our neighborhood — a report reaching us that 3000 troops now at Bristol are to cross over [the Delaware River] in the night (and to land on our bank) in order to join the routed party of yesterday. My dear S. D.'s spirits for the first time forsook her hearing this, and my heart grieved that I could offer nothing to compose her. We conjecture the gondolas are to lie here in readiness to receive our men should they be put to flight. Be that as it may, we don't like to see them so near us and wish for another snowstorm to drive them away.

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<sup>13</sup> Morris's apparent pro-British sentiment reflects more complex religious and situational realities. She was an "ambivalent neutral" Quaker, according to the French scholar of American history Élise Marienstras, who writes that "although most Quakers [during the Revolution] were genuine pacifists in action, emotionally many were pro-British and some were pro-rebel. . . . Margaret Morris was ambivalent, her original sympathy for the British changed to a feeling of allegiance to the American cause." *L'Amérique et la France: Deux Révolutions* (Pub. de la Sorbonne, 1990), pp. 213, 215. Morris may also be expressing relief that the proximity of more British and Hessian troops appeared to calm the daily anxieties of wartime Burlington.

*December 24, 1776.* The gondolas all gone out of sight, but whether up or down the river we know not. This morning we are told of a fearful alarm which was spread through the town last night — that the gondolas had orders to fire on it in the night, as it was said the Hessians were expected to come in after the rout of yesterday<sup>14</sup> and take possession here as they had done at Mount Holly. Happily, this account did not reach us till it was proved to be false. . . .<sup>15</sup>

We hear the Hessians are still at Holly, and our troops in possession of Church Hill a little beyond. The account of twenty-one killed the first day of the engagement and ten the next is not to be depended on, as the Hessians say our men run so fast they had not the opportunity of killing any of them. Several Hessians in town today. They went to Daniel Smith's and inquired for several articles in the shop, which they offered to pay for. Two were observed to be in liquor in the street; they went to the tavern and, calling for rum, ordered the man to charge it to the king. We hear that two houses in the skirts of the town were broke open by the Hessians and pillaged. The gondolas have been lying down at Dunk's Ferry all this day. A pretty heavy firing heard up the river today, but no account yet received of the occasion, or where it was.

. . .

*December 27, 1776.* A letter from General [Joseph] Reed to his brother, informing him that Washington with the regulars on the 25th, early in the morning, taking them by surprise. Killed 50 and took 900 prisoners.<sup>16</sup> The loss on our side not known, or if known, not suffered [permitted] to be public. It seems this heavy loss to the regulars [Hessian soldiers] was owing to the prevailing custom among the Hessians of getting drunk on the eve of that great day which brought peace on earth and good-will to men; but oh! how unlike Christians is the manner in which they celebrate it. Can we call ourselves Christians while we act so contrary to our Master's rules? He set the example which we profess to follow, and here is a recent instance that we only profess it — instead of good-will, envy and hatred seem to be the ruling passions in the breasts of thousands.

This evening, the 27th, about 3000 of the Pennsylvania militia and other troops landed in the neck and marched into town with artillery, baggage, &c, and are quartered on the inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> One company was lodged at J. V.'s and a guard placed between his house and ours. We were so favored as not to have any sent to our house. An officer spent the evening with us and appeared to be in high spirits, and talked of engaging the English as a very trifling affair — nothing so easy as to drive them over the North River, &c. — not considering there is a God of battle, as well as a God of Peace, who may have given them the late advantage in order to draw them out to meet the chastisement that is reserved for them.



German print, 1784, depicting Hessian soldiers captured in the Battle of Trenton en route to Philadelphia

<sup>14</sup> One of several skirmishes known as the Battle of Mount Holly (or Iron Works Hill) in which British and Hessian troops pushed back Patriot militiamen. The consequence of British victory, however, was that Count von Dolop remained in Mount Holly for several days, leaving the Hessians in Trenton vulnerable to surprise attack.

<sup>15</sup> I.e., that the British and Hessians would occupy Burlington.

<sup>16</sup> Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware River late Christmas night, 1776, and surprise attack on the encamped Hessian soldiers the next morning (Battle of Trenton, New Jersey).

<sup>17</sup> Encamped in residents' houses for the night.

*December 28, 1776.* Early this morning the troops marched out of town in high spirits. A flight of snow this morning drove the gondolas again down the river. My heart sinks when I think of the numbers unprepared for death who will probably be sent in a few days to appear before the Judge of heaven. The weather clearing up this afternoon, we observed several boats with soldiers and their baggage making up to our wharf; as I looked at them I thought I saw a face that was not strange to me, and taking a nearer view, found it was the well-known face of my beloved brother and friend, G. D.\* When I saw the companions he was among, I thought of what Solomon said of his beloved, that she was like an apple tree amongst the trees of the wood. When he came into the house, my kindred heart bade him welcome to the hospitable roof — for so must I ever deem that roof which has sheltered me and my little flock — though our joy at meeting him was checked by the prospect before us and around. A man, who seemed to have command over the soldiers just landed, civilly asked for the keys of Colonel Cox's house, in which they stowed their baggage, and took up their quarters for the night, and were very quiet.

*December 29, 1776.* This morning the soldiers at the next house prepared to depart, and, as they passed my door, they stopped to bless and thank me for the food I sent them which I received, not as my due, but as belonging to my *Master* who had reached a morsel to them by my hand. A great number of soldiers in town today; another took possession of the next house when the first left it. The inhabitants much straightened for bread to supply the soldiers and firewood to keep them warm. This seems to be only one of the many calamities of war.

*December 30, 1776.* A number of poor soldiers sick and wounded brought into town today and lodged in the courthouse, some of them in private houses. Today, I hear, several of our townsmen have agreed to procure wood for the soldiers, but they found it was attended with considerable difficulty as most of the wagons usually employed to bring in wood were pressed to take the soldiers' baggage.

*December 31, 1776.* We have been told of an engagement [battle] between the two armies, in which it was said the English had 400 taken prisoners and 300 killed and wounded. The report of the evening contradicts the above intelligence, and there is no certain account of a battle.

## 1777 \_\_\_

*January 1, 1777.* This New Year's Day has not been ushered in with the usual rejoicings, etc., and I believe it will be the beginning of a sorrowful year to very many people. Yet the flatterer — hope — bids me look forward with confidence to Him who can bring out of this confusion the greatest order. I do not hear that any messengers have been in town from the camp.

*January 3, 1777.* This morning we heard very distinctly a heavy firing of cannon. The sound came from about Trenton, and at noon a number of [British and Hessian] soldiers, upwards of one thousand, came into town in great confusion with baggage and some cannon. From these soldiers we learn there was a smart engagement yesterday at Trenton, and that they left them engaged near Trenton mill, but were not able to say which side was victorious.<sup>18</sup> They were again quartered on the inhabitants, and we again exempt from the cumber of having them lodged in our house. Several of those who lodged in Colonel Cox's house last week returned tonight and asked for the key, which I gave them. About bedtime, I went into the next house to see if the fires were safe, and my heart was melted to see such a number of my fellow-creatures lying like swine on the floor, fast asleep, and many of them without even a blanket to cover them. It seems very strange to me that such a number should be allowed to come from the camp at the very time of the engagements, and I shrewdly suspect they have run away, for they can give no account why they came or where they are to march next.

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\* George Dillwyn, who was the husband of her sister Sarah with whom she was making her home.

<sup>18</sup> The Battle of Assunpink Creek (Second Battle of Trenton, Jan. 2) and the Battle of Princeton (Jan. 3), hardwon victories for Washington's army, after which he established winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey, until May 1777.



*January 4, 1777.* The accounts hourly coming in are so contradictory and various that we know not which to give credit to. We have heard our people have gained another victory, that the English are fleeing before them, some at Brunswick, some at Princeton. We hear today that Sharp Delany and A. Morris, and others of the Pennsylvania militia are killed, and that the [Hessian] Count de Nope is numbered with the dead; if so, the Hessians have lost a brave and humane commander. The prisoners taken by our troops are sent to Lancaster jail [Pennsylvania]. A number of sick and wounded brought into town calls upon us to extend a hand of charity towards them. Several of *my* soldiers left the next house and returned to the place whence they came. Upon my questioning them pretty close, I brought several to confess they had run away, being scared at the heavy firing on the 3rd. There were several pretty, innocent-looking lads among them, and I sympathized with their mothers, when I saw them preparing to return to the army.

*January 5, 1777.* I heard today that Capt. Shippen, who threatened to shoot my son for spying at the gondolas, is killed. I forgave him long ago for the fright he occasioned me, and felt sorry when I heard he was dead. We are told today that Gen. [Hugh] Mercer is killed and [Thomas] Mifflin is wounded. What sad havoc will this dreadful war make in our land!

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*January 7, 1777.* This evening all the gondolas which have been for several days past lying before Bristol sailed down the river except one, which is stationed there for the winter, I suppose. An order arrived about five this evening for the remainder of the soldiers to march. They hurried away but returned in less than an hour, the officers thinking it too late for them to reach Bordentown tonight.

*January 8, 1777.* All the soldiers gone from the next house; only one of the number stopped to bid me farewell, but I did not resent it, remembering that only one of the ten lepers cleansed by our Lord returned to give thanks;<sup>19</sup> not that I would compare the trifling services I was enabled to render these poor creatures to that great miracle, but it rose in my mind at the time, perhaps as a check to any little resentment that I might have felt for being neglected. I went into the house after they had left it and was grieved to see such loads of provisions wastefully lying on the floor. I sent my son to desire [request] an officer in town to order it away, and he returned his compliments and desired me “to keep it from spoiling” — that was, to make use of it; but as it was not his to give, and I had no stomach to keep it from spoiling, I sent it to another person who had it taken to the sick soldiers.

*January 9, 1777.* We hear today that our troops have driven the English to Brunswick, and some say there has been another battle. All the officers went out of town today. The report of poor A. Morris being killed is confirmed by an officer who was in the battle. I feel sorry for everyone that falls in battle. We hear that Washington has sent to buy up a number of stores [provisions], from which it is concluded he is going into winter quarters. The weather very cold; some snow falling has also filled the river with ice, and we expect it will be strong enough to walk over in a day or two and give an opportunity to those inclined to escape of crossing over, which, for several weeks past, has been attended with some difficulty, all the boats belonging to the town being seized upon by the gentlemen of the galleys and either borne away or broken to pieces, which they said was done to prevent the Hessians from crossing the river; and, on the same pretense, a number of bridges have been taken up, and others so much damaged as to make it difficult for travellers to pass from hence to Philadelphia. Several of the soldiers who were brought to town sick have died, and it is feared the disorder by which they were afflicted is infectious.

*January 11, 1777.* Weather very cold and the river quite shut. I pity the poor soldiers now on their march, many of whom will probably lay out in the fields this cold night. What cause have I for gratitude, that I and my household are sheltered from the storm! Oh, that the hearts of my offspring may learn to trust in the God of their mother. He who has condescended to preserve us in great danger, and kept our feet from wandering from the habitation his goodness has allotted to us. \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>19</sup> Luke 17:11-17. [New Testament]