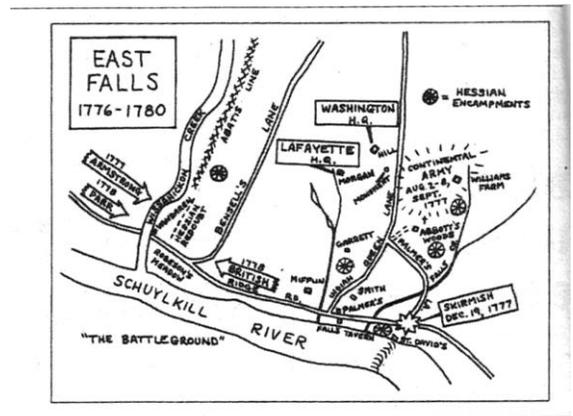


East Falls Past--Falls of Schuylkill 1777

The Fallser, July 2009, by Ellen Sheehan

The story of the Revolutionary War contains the names of American heroes and events which stand out in the history of the Falls.

Before and after the Battle of Brandywine, in 1777, Washington's Army occupied the high plateau above the Falls Creek. This hill, on which the Queen Lane Reservoir and Falls Center (formerly Medical College Hospital) now stand, was once seriously proposed as the site for the permanent federal capitol. On Monday, August 4, 1777, Washington joined his army in the camp at the Falls, making his headquarters at the farmhouse on Henry Hill, near the present Midvale Avenue and Stokley Street.



While the British invading force was groping its way up the Chesapeake, some of the staff lodged with Washington at the Hill house. Lafayette, just arrived in Philadelphia after his long journey from South Carolina, rode out for a visit. The Marquis saw the American army for the first time here at Falls of Schuylkill.

It was in a house owned by Benjamin Morgan near what is now Henry Avenue and Coulter Street, that General Lafayette had his headquarters when the Continental soldiers were encamped at the Queen Lane site.

“Abbott’s Woods” was the scene of the encampment for the Hessian troops under General Knyphausen. The Abbottsford house was at one time temporarily occupied by Colonel Chew of Howe's Army. During that time, the British and Hessians also used a portion of the Williams estate as a smithy and a veterinary hospital.

A swampland known as “Robeson's Meadow” was involved in the Battle of Germantown when a body of Hessian troops under the command of Count Von Donop, was stationed to defend the Mouth of the Wissahickon from the attacks of General John Armstrong's Colonial Forces. Von Donop's headquarters was in the old Garrett house near Vaux and Ainslie Streets.

Some of Washington's Division Headquarters were also in the Falls, including that of General Stephens of Virginia who occupied the Smith mansion on Indian Queen Lane (“Plush Hill”), now the site of the “Schuylkill View” homes.

On the bluff above Vandaren's Mills, the Hessians built a redoubt, to check the Continental Army should it attempt to enter the city.

The Williams farm served as the headquarters of the British Cavalry during the Battle of Germantown, and claims to have once harbored General Washington as he passed. This house, also known as the Griffith Evans house, stood at the corner of what is now Fox Street and Abbottsford Avenue.

Wissahickon (Ridge) Road saw much of both the American and British armies from the Robin Hood Ford northward, particularly around the Falls and the Wissahickon Creek. Because of the events associated with the Revolution, that section was known as the “Battleground.”