

Revolutionary War Trails

Winter Quarters at Jockey Hollow

The Hockey Hollow unit of Morristown National Historical Park is on Tempe Wick Road in **Harding Township**, about two miles west of Route 202. Start at the Visitors Center, to pay the admission fee and pick up a trail map then drive to the Trail Center parking lot. This 1 ¼ mile walk begins on Patriots' Path, behind the directory, on the trail that does *not* have yellow or blue blazes.

This trail section is also part of the Aqueduct Trail, and there are remnants here of a system that once provided water for Morristown. The depression to the left was once a collection pond. Where the trail turns right there is an iron pipe in the ground, and further down the trail there's a ditch along the trail. The Aqueduct Trail guide has more information, and is usually available at the Trail Center directory. After 2/10 of a mile you reach the tour road again. Turn right to follow the yellow trail up the hill to the soldier hut replicas.

A log house of the 1700's was held together almost entirely by gravity, and the huts here are being renovated to show how this worked. On the farthest hut, an upper log on each side has been extended, and pegs in the extensions hold a smaller log across the bottom of the roof, which supports the lower shingle course. Boards running up on the roof support another horizontal roof log, which supports the bottom of the next course, and holds down the top of the first course. It's not terribly waterproof, but this is as good as it gets when all you have are hand tools and some trees. Further up the trail is an officer's hut; this is the only replica that has been built over the site of an original hut.

Continue up the yellow trail to a sign that shows the location of some of the original soldier huts. Excavations here reveal the actual hearthstones that were placed on the ground by Washington's soldiers. In the winter of 1779-1780 there were about a hundred huts on this hillside, and hundreds more on other hillsides. If you can superimpose your recent memory of the replica huts over these actual hut sites and hearth stones, this place can take you back in time.

Follow the yellow trail back to your parking lot. You will pass a sign describing the Parade Ground and its function. The original Parade Ground site is now thought to be further from the road, and is much larger than the cleared area you see today.

Difficulty: *Easy*, with one steep hill.

Washington's Powder Mill

A short section of Patriots' Path in **Morristown** leads to the site of a Revolutionary War gunpowder mill. Park at Acorn Hall, east of Washington's Headquarters, at 68 Morris Avenue. (This walk works best as part of a visit to Acorn Hall on a Sunday afternoon.)

Walk to the back of the garden behind the house, and follow the trail markers down to the Whippany River.

The British had outlawed the manufacturer of gunpowder in America, and a small mill hidden here along the river was a crucial part of the American war effort. A sign identifies the approximate mill site. About 20 feet beyond the sign is an excavation area that reveals a crude stone floor which was part of the mill.

The river flows around two sides of a small island here, and an undershot water wheel was built over the nearest channel to power the mill. Even with the highways and parking lots nearby, you can still get a sense that this would have been a good place to hide a powder mill.

Local historians identified the site in the 1970's, after some inspired detective work that is still admired by professionals. Patriots' path continues on to the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, although the nearby interstate highway can make for a very noisy walk. For more about the mill and its rediscovery, see *New Jersey's Revolutionary War Powder Mill*, by Fred and Isabel Bartenstein, published by the Morris County Historical Society.

Difficulty: *Easy*

Defending the Revolution

In the eight years of the American Revolution, Washington's army spent more time in New Jersey's Morris County than any other single place, and a 2 ½ mile-walk around Mount Kemble is one of the best ways to see why. The main entrance to the Hockey Hollow unit of Morristown National Historical Park is on the Tempe Wick Road in **Harding Township** about two mile west of Route 202. Stop at the Visitor Center to pay your admission fee and pick up a trail map.

Park at the Trail Center parking lot, just off the tour road. Cross the tour road and follow the blue blazes on the Old Camp Road Trail, which was built by Washington's army. Turn left before the ranger house, staying with the blue blazes, and make a sharp right when the blue trail turns again.

When you get to the place where you can look out over a meadow, with the Watchung Ridge in the distance, you can see exactly why this was a great place for a defending army. Any attack on the American position would have been across exposed ground and up this hill. But the British never made it this far; they were stopped by American forces at the battle of Springfield on June 23, 1780 in defense of the main army in Morristown. The British burned all but four houses in Springfield, and the smoke would have been seen from here, near the edge of the tall ridge.

When facing this view, the area right behind you is where Starks' Brigade from New England built 103 log huts in the winter of 1779-1780. It was the worst winter in over

100 years, and the ground was already covered by two feet of snow when they arrived. They slept on the snow until the tents showed up a few days later.

Continue on the Blue Trail, which turns left just after passing a very nice back yard. Further down the hill, the blue and white trails come together; when they separate, follow the white trail down along the brook. You will pass a small pond with a bench. If you are walking with children, it's a good place to sit while the children run around the pond. The pond and the cast iron pipe on the opposite bank are remnants of the old Morristown water system, as are the ditches further down the trail. At the next trail intersection, turn right, to return back to the blue-blazed Camp Road Trail to your car.

Difficulty: *Moderate*

Calling up the Reserves

The Beacon Hill Trail is a 1.1 mile loop on Watnong Mountain, in the Powder Mill section of **Parsippany**. From route 10, about 3 miles west of 202, go south on Powder Mill Road, then turn left at the stop sign onto Mountain Way. The trail entrance is at the top of the hill, across the street from the parking lot for Mountain Way Park.

Washington needed to know about British troop movements, and to call out to the local militia if the British advanced, and a series of fire beacons were constructed on the hills in northern New Jersey to serve both functions. These were tall log pyramids filled with brush that could be seen from a distance when set on fire. The beacon on this hill is thought to have been used at least once, when the British army was advancing towards Morristown in 1780.

This trail is marked with red blazes, and it's a bit easier if you turn right at the first intersection and walk a counter-clockwise loop. There are lots of small rocks, and you may be more comfortable in hiking shoes, or at least in shoes with firm soles.

This trail is a textbook example of how a good trail builder can turn an otherwise unused woodlot into a first class recreational facility with a minimum of fuss. The trail design process is to locate the most interesting scenic features and then connect them. Whenever you see an intriguing pile of rocks ahead, you can be certain your trail will travel right through it. There is some climbing down over rocks on the northern end of the trail.

Difficulty: Marked as *Difficult* because of the rocks, but most of the trail is *Moderate*.