

THE BATTLE OF TRENTON

By the end of 1776, the outlook for Americans' independence seemed grim. Their army led by General George Washington was suffering from both cold and disappointment. The English were in winter quarters awaiting spring when they expected to crush any remaining American forces. But the Patriots' war was not yet lost!

A major turning point came on December 26th, when Washington led his troops across the Delaware River to surprise and soundly defeat three regiments of Hessian forces in Trenton, New Jersey. Puppets of their British allies, the German fighters had celebrated too much the night before to defend themselves against the 2,400 cold and wet but very determined American troops.

Under the cloak of darkness Washington's forces braved a terrible snowstorm to claim their victory. With the help of a spy enlisted by Washington to mislead the Hessians, and despite the difficult conditions that slowed their progress, the Patriots were able to cross the Delaware and launch their attack on the sleeping Hessians by dawn.

Despite the noise of the attack, the Hessians had trouble waking their commander, Colonel Johann Rall. When he finally joined the battle, it was too late; the Americans already had the upper hand. By 9:30 that morning, victory was theirs.

In less than two hours, the Patriots had killed 22 of the 1,400 Hessians in and around Trenton and had captured almost 1,000 more. They had also seized 1,000 weapons, ammunition, and several cannons. Washington shipped the prisoners and supplies back across the Delaware River to Pennsylvania and then followed with his troops. He had succeeded in lifting the spirits of the soldiers and boosted enlistments for 1777 to continue the war effort.

When the so-called Patriots began their open rebellion against king and country in 1775, their forces greatly outnumbered those of the British and Loyalists. This allowed the traitors some early successes, so when King George called upon his allies from the Seven Years War, soldiers in Germany and elsewhere heeded his call.

The addition of thousands of well-trained troops from Ireland, Scotland, and Germany to the skilled Royal forces in 1776 allowed it to put the rebels on the run. By the end of the year, a victory seemed all but certain when the troops settled in for the winter. Then a most unfortunate setback occurred at Trenton on the morning of December 26th.

After enjoying a lovely Christmas dinner, Hessian soldiers there bedded down for the night. A deserter by the name of John Honeyman had told them of the rebels' poor condition, so although they had heard from Loyalists in the area that Washington was nearby and planning an attack, it seemed unlikely that such an attack would come that evening.

Snow had already begun to fall and the storm was gaining strength. There was every cause to believe it would continue through the night and even into the next day. It was for that reason the Hessian commander, Colonel Johann Rall, decided to allow the usual nightly guard to rest.

That decision was one that would cost the brave German soldier his life, along with the battle that took place at dawn. Before the Hessians awoke in the morning, the rebel forces sneaked into their camp and attacked the sleeping troops. Confusion reigned for a time, as soldiers were startled awake to find their muskets useless in the freezing conditions. So it was that in less than two hours time, the battle was lost.

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Name:

Period:

What is the point of view of the first account? (SD)

[illegible]

What is the point of view of the second account? (SD)

[illegible]

Explain how and why the two accounts are different. (KR)

[illegible]