

HISTORICAL MARKER  
FOR THE CAMP GROUND  
OF THE GEORGIA  
CONTINENTALS



DURING  
THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
THE GEORGIA CONTINENTALS  
COMMANDED BY  
GEN. LACHLIN MCINTOSH  
TOOK PART IN THE CAMPAIGN  
ABOUT PHILADELPHIA  
THE FOURTH BATTALION  
UNDER COLONEL JOHN WHITE  
ENCAMPED UPON THIS  
AND ADJACENT GROUND,  
IN AUGUST, 1777.

TABLET ERECTED BY  
MERTON CHAPTER  
DAUGHTERS OF  
THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION  
1919



# PREFACE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2015

**H**istorical Markers stand like sentries all over America. Chunks of granite. Plaques of bronze. Busy traffic and the demands of everyday modern life often leave the words on the monuments unnoticed. In some locations it is actually dangerous for a pedestrian or motorist to slow down and scan the historical information about some important event in America's history which happened in that place.

A long-missing historical plaque was recently discovered in an old house here in Lower Merion. The information on the damaged and deteriorated marker dated its installation to 1919. This lost artifact was a Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) marker that was placed on a hill that overlooked the main approach from Philadelphia along the road to Lancaster. The marker memorialized the encampment of a battalion of Georgia Continental soldiers under the command of General Lachlan McIntosh, of St. Andrews Parrish, Colony of Georgia, at the time of the American Revolution.

We have assembled today at Saint John's Episcopal Church to re-dedicate the Georgia Continental marker that tells part of the story of the events which occurred in this immediate area in 1777. The focus of our story centers around Milestone 7, which is located just two short blocks south-east. Today, this marker sits along Montgomery Avenue, which is a busy intersection with cars and trucks passing by without any clue of its history. Let us look back and re-discover the historical events that took place here.

# OUR STORY

**I**t is 1777 and you are standing along a dirt road at Milestone 7 (today at the intersection of Old Lancaster Road & Montgomery Avenue close to Ford Road). This road began as a widening of an old and prominent Indian trail that had been used by the Lenape and by the Swedes. It goes by several names, including the King's Highway, the Great Conestoga Road, or simply The Lancaster Road. To serve travelers, there were many wayside inns along the way. In the immediate area was the Tunis Ordinary, later renamed the General Wayne Inn, which is nestled next to the Merion Meetinghouse. This well-traveled road aims west to the frontier town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania and beyond into the Appalachian wilderness. It accommodated Conestoga wagons, stages, pack horses and private conveyances of all sorts.

The countryside around Milestone 7 was forest and farmland and the area was predominately a Quaker enclave. Local farmers produced a variety of crops that were consumed locally and marketed in nearby Philadelphia.

These were unsettling times. The American Colonies were at war with England, and 1777 continued to be a year of conflict for the Continental and British military forces. Philadelphia was an important asset for the rebels because their Second Continental Congress, a convention of delegates from the thirteen colonies, was meeting at the State House debating the future direction of their separatist activities.

**Milestone 7** as it appeared in the mid-20th century. Installed as a reference point for travelers, these granite milestones marked the distance from the old Philadelphia Courthouse which stood on Market and Second Street.

(Lower Merion Historical Society)



There was much apprehension that the British might send their large army to Philadelphia, the capital city of the colonies, to end resistance to their authority.

In August of 1777, the Continental Army occupied both banks of the Schuylkill River from the Middle Ferry (today's Market Street Bridge) to the Falls of the Schuylkill. The main body of troops, under the command of General George Washington, were encamped near Germantown at Queen Lane. To protect Philadelphia's western flank, Washington issued an order to General Lachlan McIntosh to re-position Colonel John White's Georgia Fourth Battalion to set up an encampment in the open fields above Milestone 7. It was the site of Abraham Tunis' property and was a strategic location to monitor the busy traffic that was traveling along The Lancaster Road and Ford Road going in and out of Philadelphia. This high ground had proximity to Vine Creek which provided a fresh supply of water for the Georgia infantrymen. The local orchards were tempting.



**Portion of a map** by Scull & Heap of the Philadelphia region, showing the location of Abraham Tunis' property in today's Lower Merion (around the vicinity of "Merrion [sic] Meeting").

(Lower Merion Historical Society)

The situation quickly turned tense for the local inhabitants and for the Georgia Fourth Battalion. These two groups were of opposite persuasions, both religiously and politically. A majority of the local population were Quaker or Quaker sympathizers who preferred to remain neutral and not trade with the revolutionaries and disrupt their economic ties with London and King George III. They certainly did not want to acquire any Continental Congress paper money, preferring gold and British Letters of Credit.



**General Lachlan McIntosh**, who commanded the Georgia Continental battalion while stationed in Merion.

(Library of Congress)

The young men of the Georgia militia were positioned at Milestone 7 to protect the city of Philadelphia regardless of the cost or their popularity.

These Georgia troops were not well provisioned and had a limited supply of food. It was harvest time and to cover this shortage, the soldiers of Colonel White's Battalion took from surrounding farms the provisions they needed. There was "apprehension that as the Indian corn, which is a principal support of the farmer and his cattle, is drawing to maturity, in a few days, we may be deprived thereof." Some local farmers drew up a petition complaining about the Georgia boys and sent it off to Governor Thomas Wharton. To avoid any further embarrassment, Washington directed the so-called "bad boys" of the Georgia Fourth Battalion to move west to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



**General Sir William Howe,**  
Commander-in-Chief of British  
forces during the American War  
of Independence.

(Library of Congress)



**General George Washington,**  
commander of American troops  
who ordered the George Fourth  
Battalion to camp near Milepost 7.

(Portrait by Rembrandt Peale)

Word reached General Washington that the Royal Navy fleet consisting of more than 260 ships carrying some 17,000 British troops under the command of General Sir William Howe had sailed south from New York City and moved up the Chesapeake Bay landing at Head of Elk (near today's Elkton, Maryland) on August 25th. The British advanced northward with the intent to capture Philadelphia. Washington consolidated his forces, about 20,300 strong, and headed south toward Brandywine Valley. On September 11th, the cannon and musket shot echoed over woods and fields at the Battle of Brandywine, where the Continental army withdrew in defeat. Subsequent skirmishes left Philadelphia vulnerable.

On September 18th the Second Continental Congress abandoned Philadelphia and traveled on Lancaster Road first to Lancaster, for one day, and then to York, Pennsylvania, taking with them all official documents. There was an exodus from the city of military supplies, people and belongings that traveled by wagon, stagecoach, on horseback and on foot passing by our Milestone 7. A week later, on September 26th General Howe and his forces marched into Philadelphia unopposed.

For the next 9 months, British Expeditionary forces freely maneuvered in and around the area. Just up the road from here, at the Tunis Ordinary, British and Hessian soldiers set up an outpost. They were using the Tunis Ordinary as headquarters to spy on Washington and the Centennial army, who by then were encamped at nearby Valley Forge.

The citizens of the Welsh Tract, situated as it was between two enemy armies during the American War for Independence, did not escape the forced requirements of both the British and the Americans. Each side helped themselves freely to food for men, as well as horses and mules.

The area now known as Lower Merion became a no-man's land that neither side controlled and was repeatedly raided by foraging parties. Some said the British were more welcome to the goods because they paid in cash, whereas the colonials, if not pillaging, paid only in notes or orders, which were usually worthless.

It is true that the American forces were more demanding of the Quakers as several severe orders came from Valley Forge aimed at the farmers who refused to fight and were accused of being Tories. Although many did join the revolution, these Americans of Welsh ancestry were not people who went out and publicly defended or fought for causes. In quiet and dignified manner, many favored the patriots, but their Religious Society of Friends preached non-violence and the elders, at least, opposed any active part in the war.



The colonial infantrymen from Georgia searching for water for their canteens that August of 1777 would have found the cold fresh water of Vine Creek infinitely refreshing.

As the British began pulling out of Philadelphia in June of 1778, action moved away from Milestone 7 and east into New Jersey. Military events shifted southward climaxing at Yorktown in October 1781.

We have reconstructed here a single snap shot of those Georgia Continentals in that greater chronology. Let this Historical Marker represent from this day forward the unified force of all of the Original Thirteen marching in the chaos of war toward the birth of America.



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