

Washington Crossing Historic Trail



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Washington Crossing Council

In partnership with



TABLE of CONTENTS

Page 3: Letter to Unit Leaders

Page 4: Patch and Medal Requirements

Page 5: Planning Information

Page 6: Precautions

Page 7: General Trail and Park Information

Page 8: Medical Facilities

Page 9: Local Places of Worship

Page 10: Hiking through Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

Page 11: Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve Trail Map

Pages 12-13: Washington Crossing Historic Trail Questions

Pages 14-17: Washington Crossing Historic Trail Answer Key

Page 18: Partnering Agencies

Letter to Unit Leaders

Dear Unit Leader:

Washington Crossing Council sponsors the Washington Crossing Historic Trail as part of Scouting America's Historic Trails Program. At this celebrated location on the Delaware River, Scouts and Scouters can find an inspiring and educational experience exploring the national significance of the Continental Army's crossing of the Delaware and the "Ten Crucial Days" of military operations that followed. Additionally, when you and your Scouts become familiar with the historic displays in the park, the conservation efforts in Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, and the preservation of the Delaware Canal, you will appreciate other facets of conservation, national heritage, and the historic treasures located along this trail.

A commemorative patch and medal are available for purchase. Your unit may also qualify for the Scouting America Historic Trails Award, when you incorporate camping and a service project into your outing.

Future plans for the Washington Crossing Historic Trail include expanding the trail to include sites in New Jersey.

We would love to improve our program service for Scout units. Please contact us at info@wccscouting.org to provide feedback on how we can adjust this trail guide to support your unit program.

Yours in Scouting,

Scouting America, Washington Crossing Council

Patch and Medal Requirements

NOTE: Your Scouts may use information boards, film facts, park brochures, monument engravings, history books, or the internet to find answers to the questionnaires. Park staff are also an excellent resource.

For the Washington Crossing Historic Trail Patch: Unit leaders approve the award of the commemorative patch. To earn the patch, participants must view the film in the Visitor Center and visit any one of four areas of the park: Lower Park, Upper Park, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, or Bowman's Hill Tower.

For the Washington Crossing Historic Trail Medal: Unit leaders approve the award of the trail medal. Participants must complete the requirements below.

1. Answer the questionnaire for the Visitor Center and Historic Village section while completing the following:

- a. View the film at the Visitor Center.
- b. Visit the monument to General Washington in front of the Visitor Center and walk the colony / state flags display.
- c. Visit the crossing monument between the Visitor Center and the Delaware River.
- d. Visit the Durham Boat Barn in the Historic Village.
- e. Read the information board between the Boat Barn and McConkey's Ferry Inn.

2. Answer the questionnaire for the Delaware Canal Towpath to Thompson Neely House section while completing the following:

- a. Travel the full distance on the Delaware Canal (canal or towpath) between the Lower and Upper Park sections.
- b. Visit the Soldiers' Graves.
- c. Visit the grounds of Thompson Neely Farmstead.
- d. Visit the grounds of Thompson Neely Grist Mill.

NOTE: Units need not visit Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve or Bowman's Hill Tower to complete the Washington Crossing Historic Trail Medal. Visiting these sites will qualify for the trail patch only.

For the Scouting America Historic Trails Award: Unit leaders must certify requirements at <https://www.scouting.org/awards/awards-central/historic-trails>

All awards are available for purchase at the Washington Crossing Council Scout Shop.

Planning Information

There are many ways to conduct an outing for this trail. Units may conduct a day-long event, complete the trail requirements over several visits, or may camp at nearby campgrounds and complete the trail requirements in a weekend outing.

Washington Crossing Historic Park (WCHP) is a PA State Park under the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Bureau of State Parks, which works in a close partnership with the Friends of Washington Crossing Park.

WCHP has sole authority over access in the park. If there is a conflict between information here and WCHP policies, the park's policies override this document. Please check online or with the Visitor Center for the most current information.

WCHP has two different sections: the Lower Park area includes the Visitor Center, Historic Village, and site of the crossing; the Upper Park includes the Thompson-Neely Farmstead, Thompson Neely Grist Mill, Soldiers' Graves, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, and Bowman's Hill Tower. These two parts of WCHP are connected by the Delaware Canal State Park (DECA) towpath.

To start your planning, please review the current information on the park websites, including alerts and advisories:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/recreation/where-to-go/state-parks/find-a-park/washington-crossing-historic-park>

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/recreation/where-to-go/state-parks/find-a-park/delaware-canal-state-park>

The links below are to each park's map. You should obtain physical copies of these maps at the WCHP Visitor Center upon arrival, or print them at home before your trip.

https://elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=1743395&DocName=WASH_ParkMap.pdf

https://elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=1737688&DocName=DECA_ParkMap.pdf

The WCHP Visitor Center is located at
1112 River Rd.
Washington Crossing, PA 18977

Trail Mileage: The Lower Park section hike to the Upper Park – Route 32 underpass at the Thompson-Neely House is about 5 miles. The hike through the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve to Bowman's Hill Tower and back to the underpass is 3 miles. From the underpass to the Scout camping area is an additional ½ mile.

Precautions

1. Do not hike along River Road (PA Route 32). The road has little or no shoulder, and traffic is often heavy. Use the Delaware Canal, the Delaware Canal Towpath, or travel by automobile.
2. If starting from the Visitor Center, walk to McConkey's Ferry Inn, then travel by sidewalk / walking path west along PA Route 532 to the Delaware Canal Towpath, then by the towpath or canal to the Thompson Neely Farmstead. Do not cut across the playing fields to access the towpath.
3. If starting at the Thompson Neely House, travel the canal towpath until you reach PA Route 532, then use the sidewalk / walking path to travel east until you reach McConkey's Ferry Inn. From there, proceed to the Visitor Center. Do not cut across the playing fields to access the Visitor Center.
4. Check conditions for the Pidcock Creek overflow crossing before you begin. This towpath crossing is between the Soldiers' Graves and the Thompson Neely Farmstead. After heavy rains, this section of the trail may be impassable. Plan accordingly and be prepared to transport Scouts by road between Upper and Lower Park sections if trail conditions are not favorable.
5. Do not cross River Road (PA Route 32) between the Thompson Neely Farmstead and the Grist Mill / Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve area. Use the pedestrian underpass along Pidcock Creek to walk between the two sites and avoid the road.

General Trail and Park Information

Restrooms are available at the Visitor Center and Thompson Neely Farmstead.

There is a campground in the Upper Park, with reservations required by Washington Crossing Historic Park (215-493-4079).

Another campground is located across the river from the Visitors Center in New Jersey's Washington Crossing State Park. Reservations are required (609-737-0623).

Reservations to camp at Ockanickon Scout Reservation (approximately 17 miles from the Visitors Center) are made with Washington Crossing Council at 215-348-7205.

No in-park purchases are required to complete the requirements for the Washington Crossing Trail Patch or Medal. There are several tours available, for a fee, to access more of the Historic Village, the Thompson-Neely Farmstead and Grist Mill, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, and Bowman's Hill Tower

As of this revision, tours of the Lower Park and the Thompson-Neely House and Grist Mill are available Monday - Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm for \$7 each per site. Bowman's Hill Tower is open Monday through Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm for \$7. Tickets may be purchased online or at the Lower Park, Tower or Thompson Neely House. Check the park website for current times and fees, or inquire at the Visitor Center.

Scout units who wish to hike from the Thompson Neely Farmstead to Bowman's Tower and back are allowed to hike through Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve according to the access instructions on page 11. Arrangements for the hiking through the Preserve must be made in advance. If you wish to tour the Wildflower Preserve, there is an additional fee, with tickets available at the Visitor Center.

For guided tours larger than 15 people, call 215-493-4076 to make a reservation; prices for Scout group tours are \$7 per person for one site or \$12 per person for all four. Please note group tours allow for one free adult per ten scouts. Complimentary tickets are provided to active duty military personnel, and museum personnel with proper ID.

For individuals who need special assistance or accommodations, call 215-493-4076.

Unit leaders are responsible for the conduct and behavior of ALL unit participants on Park property. Please observe good sanitation and safety practices, dispose of trash properly and observe all Park regulations. After handling emergencies beyond basic first aid, please report circumstances to the Park Office or on-duty Park Ranger, and to the Washington Crossing Council, relating incidents, dates, times and actions taken.

Medical Facilities

EMERGENCIES: Dial 911

Urgent Care Facilities (Open Weekends):

Live Urgent Care, 6 miles

- 800 Denow Road, Pennington, NJ
- 609-775-9545

InFocus Urgent Care, 9 miles

- 100 Campus Town Cir, Ewing, NJ
- 609-799-7009

Doylestown Health, 16 miles

- 4259 West Swamp Road, Suite 108 Doylestown, PA
- 215-863-8363

Local Places of Worship (from WCHP Campground)

There are many places of worship in the local area. Please conduct an internet search in your trip planning to find a place suited to your unit's needs. Here are a few:

Thompson Memorial, Presbyterian, 1 mile

- 1680 Aquetong Rd, New Hope, PA
- 215-862-2440

Kehilat HaNahar, Reconstructionist Judaism, 3 miles

- 85 W Mechanic St, New Hope, PA
- 215-862-1912

St Andrews, Episcopal, 3 miles

- 50 York St, Lambertville, NJ
- 609-397-2425

St Martin of Tours, Roman Catholic, 3.5 miles

- 1 Riverstone Cir, New Hope, PA
- 215-862-2833

Washington Crossing, United Methodist, 5 miles

- 1895 Wrightstown Rd, Washington Crossing, PA
- 215-493-5080

Ascension, Lutheran, 6 miles

- 900 Washington Crossing Rd, Newtown, PA
- 215-497-0447

Temple Judea, Reform Judaism, 10 miles

- 38 Rogers Rd, Furlong, PA 18925
- 215-348-5022

Radha Krishna, Hindu, 18 miles

- 357 Lawrence Station Road, Lawrenceville, NJ
- 609-549-9155

Islamic Cultural Center, Islam, 19 miles

- 502 Easton Rd, Willow Grove, PA
- 215-659-1123

Hiking through Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

Scout units must make arrangements prior to hiking through the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve to Bowman's Hill Tower and back. Please follow these instructions:

1. Contact the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve Volunteer & Visitor Services Coordinator at 215-862-2924, extension 103, to provide the date, time, and number of participants for the hike. Leave a voicemail with your contact info, if necessary.
2. The Coordinator will give a lock combination to the rear gate of the Preserve to access the road to the Tower.
3. The combination will only to be given to an adult leader. Do not give the combination to youth or anyone outside the unit. (Gate use is not for the general public or families.)
4. Scout units will enter the Preserve through the main gate, and must stay on the path indicated in the map below to hike to the rear gate. Do not take other hiking trails unless you have paid the entrance fee for the Preserve.
5. Units will check in at Preserve Visitor Center. You may obtain additional maps there, if needed.
6. Do not allow access through the rear gate to anyone other than members of your Scout unit. Lock the gate after each use to ensure the general public cannot gain access to the Preserve.
7. If you must change the date and time of your hike, please advise the Coordinator at the number above.

NOTE: The staff will change the gate combination within 48 hours after a unit completes the hike. Units will need a new combination for subsequent hikes.

NOTE: Units wishing to perform a service project at the Preserve should make these arrangements with the Coordinator well in advance (at least two weeks) to allow for proper planning and materials.

NOTE: Units need not visit Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve or Bowman's Hill Tower to complete the Washington Crossing Historic Trail Medal. Visiting these sites will qualify for the trail patch only.

<https://bhwp.org/>

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve Trail Map



Washington Crossing Historic Trail Questions

SECTION 1 – VISITOR CENTER and HISTORIC VILLAGE

1. List two reasons the colonies declared independence from Great Britain.
2. The Continental Army had units from every colony. List these 13 colonies.
3. How did the Continental Army wind up here in December 1776?
4. How old was George Washington when he camped here in 1776?
5. The bulk of the British army was in New Brunswick, NJ, going into “winter quarters”. Why did armies of that time do this?
6. Once Washington realized the British were not going to chase him across the river, he could have ordered his troops into Philadelphia for “winter quarters.” Why did he fortify and defend the river from New Hope to Bristol instead?
7. Why did Washington believe he needed to attempt a counterstrike?
8. General Howe left about 1,400 Hessian soldiers in Trenton, under the command of Colonel Rall. Who were these soldiers and why were they involved?
9. How many men did Washington have under his command in December 1776 for the crossing? How many made the crossing?
10. What kind of boat was primarily used for crossing and what was it normally used for?
11. When did the actual crossing take place, and under what conditions?
12. A) After crossing, how far did the army march to fight the Hessians in Trenton?
B) How fast do you hike?
C) If you took a ferry across the river, how long would it take you to walk to Trenton?
13. What was the outcome of the attack on Trenton?

SECTION 2 – DELAWARE CANAL TOWPATH to THOMPSON-NEELY FARMHOUSE

- 1. When was construction of the Delaware Canal started and finished?**
- 2. Why was the canal constructed?**
- 3. What two cities are at the endpoints of the canal?**
- 4. How long is the canal from start to end?**
- 5. What kinds of products were floated on this canal?**
- 6. How did the boats move on the canal?**
- 7. Why did we stop using the canal to transport goods?**
- 8. When did Captain Moore die?**
- 9. What was the primary of death to soldiers during the American Revolution?**
- 10. Why were soldiers here instead of with Washington at McConkey's Ferry?**
- 11. Who built the oldest part of the Thompson-Neely House, and when?**
- 12. Why was the mill built here?**
- 13. What was produced in the mill?**

Washington Crossing Historic Trail Answer Key

SECTION 1 – VISITOR CENTER and HISTORIC VILLAGE

1. List two reasons the colonies declared independence from Great Britain.

- Parliament imposed excessive taxes on the colonies to pay England's debts. And, they imposed these taxes without any colonial representation in Parliament.
- When colonists protested the taxes, Great Britain imposed punitive laws and sent troops to the colonies to enforce them. Colonists believed this violated their rights.
- Britain restricted the colonists' ability to self-govern. King George III dissolved colonial legislatures, and placed officials under his direct control.

NOTE: You can also read reasons for revolt listed in the Declaration of Independence!

2. The Continental Army had units from every colony. List these 13 colonies.

New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

3. How did the Continental Army wind up here in December 1776?

After defeating the Continental Army in several battles in New York starting in August, the British occupied New York and chased the Continental Army in retreat through New Jersey. Washington crossed into PA on 08 Dec 1776, trying to escape the British.

4. How old was George Washington when he encamped here in 1776?

He was 44. (Washington was born 22 Feb 1732. So, he was almost 45 in Dec 1776.)

5. The bulk of the British army was in New Brunswick, NJ, going into "winter quarters." Why did armies of that time do this?

Winter weather caused poor road conditions. Armies could not move well; wagons and cannons would get bogged down. They did not have equipment to help them endure the cold while in the field. Food supplies for men and animals were difficult to obtain. So, armies would usually camp in "winter quarters" until conditions and supplies improved in the following spring. Once the British had chased Washington's army into PA, General Howe decided to enter winter quarters, thinking the fighting season was done.

6. Once Washington realized the British were not going to chase him across the river, he could have ordered his troops into Philadelphia for "winter quarters." Why did he fortify and defend the river from New Hope to Bristol instead?

British forces in NJ were close to Philadelphia (the capital), and therefore a threat. The Delaware River was a natural barrier to movement, with only a few places to cross, and those could be watched and defended by a small force. (Congress evacuated Philadelphia on 12 Dec, as the British Army was approaching through NJ.)

7. Why did Washington believe he needed to attempt a counterstrike?

The army was dwindling due to desertion and enlistments expiring on 31 Dec 1776. Supplies and morale were low. Winter weather was setting in, and support for the revolt was declining. Washington thought he needed a victory to keep the cause of independence alive.

8. General Howe left about 1,400 Hessian soldiers in Trenton, under the command of Colonel Rall. Who were these soldiers and why were they involved?

Hessians were professional, disciplined troops who were “rented” to the British Crown by different German states. Great Britain did not have enough troops to conduct military operations around the world, so they hired these units to help in the colonies.

9. How many men did Washington have under his command in December 1776 for the crossing? How many made the crossing?

General Washington had about 5,000 total, but only 2,400 made the crossing. Washington had around 2,400 men near McConkey’s Ferry. All crossed. Colonel Cadwalader had about 1,800 men who were supposed to cross near Bordentown. About 600 men crossed, but, due to bad conditions, the rest could not, so they had to come back. His total force was unable to cross. Brigadier General Ewing had about 800 men who were to cross near Trenton. His men were also unable to cross.

10. What kind of boat was primarily used for crossing and what was it normally used for? Durham boats, normally used for heavy cargo and bulk goods.

11. When did the actual crossing take place, and under what conditions?

Christmas night, 25 Dec 1776. The river was icy, currents were swift, and there was a snowstorm!

12. A) After crossing, how far did the army march to fight the Hessians in Trenton? About 10 miles

B) How fast do you hike? About 2-3 miles per hour under good conditions.

C) If you took a ferry across the river, how long would it take you to walk to Trenton? About four to five hours.

13. What was the outcome of the attack on Trenton?

General Washington’s forces achieved complete surprise. They captured the Hessian garrison and supplies, and suffered few casualties. The victory boosted morale and gave the army supplies needed to keep fighting in the battles over the rest of the “Ten Crucial Days.” The Continental Army victory also convinced people they could win. Many soldiers re-enlisted, and the people continued to support the revolution.

SECTION 2 – DELAWARE CANAL TOWPATH to THOMPSON-NEELY FARMHOUSE

1. When was construction of the Delaware Canal started and finished?

Started in 1827, finished in 1832. (Some sections used starting in 1831.)

2. Why was the canal constructed?

The canal was constructed to provide a more efficient means of transporting goods, particularly coal, from the Pennsylvania coalfields to the markets in Philadelphia and other eastern cities. It was part of a broader effort to improve transportation infrastructure during the early 1800's.

3. What two cities are at the endpoints of the canal?

Easton, PA and Bristol, PA

4. How long is the canal from start to end?

About 60 miles (58.9 to be more precise.)

5. What kinds of products were floated on this canal?

The primary product transported on the Delaware Canal was coal, but it also carried other goods such as iron, lumber, and agricultural products.

6. How did the boats move on the canal?

Boats on the Delaware Canal were typically pulled by mules or horses that walked along a towpath parallel to the canal, pulling the boats with a rope. This method was efficient and cost-effective for moving goods over long distances.

7. Why did we stop using the canal to transport goods?

The last commercial barge moved in October of 1931. Steam powered engines and railroads, and trucks on improved roads, had made movement of goods faster and cheaper than using the canal.

8. When did Captain Moore die?

His current marker says Dec 1776. His original marker noted he died on 25 December 1776, the day of the crossing.

9. What was the primary of death to soldiers during the American Revolution?

The major cause of death was disease, particularly dysentery, typhus, and smallpox, rather than battle injuries.

10. Why were soldiers here instead of with Washington at McConkey's Ferry?

The large property provided space for troops to camp, the nearby mill supplied flour, and the farmstead's location facilitated military operations near the river crossing point. The house also served as a makeshift hospital for sick and injured soldiers.

11. Who built the oldest part of the Thompson-Neely House, and when?

John Simpson, a local miller and farmer, built the first section in about 1740.

12. Why was the mill built here?

Pidcock Creek provided the water power necessary to operate the mill, and the river provided a means to move products to the local markets.

13. What was produced in the mill?

Ground flour and cornmeal were packed into waterproof barrels, a key part of the milling business. These barrels would then be transported to local markets with wagons and carriages on local roads, and barges on the Delaware River.

Partnering Agencies

Scouting America
Washington Crossing Council
One Scout Way
Doylestown, PA 18901
Phone: 215-348-7205
<https://www.wccscouting.org>

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of State Parks
400 Market St, Harrisburg, PA 17101
<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/Pages/default.aspx>

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
1635 River Rd
New Hope, PA 18938
(215) 862-2924
<https://bhwp.org/>

Friends of Washington Crossing Park
1112 River Road
Washington Crossing, PA 18977
215-493-4076
<https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/about/>

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