

Sandy Hollow Heritage Park Commemorating the Battle of Brandywine

September 11, 1777

The location of the most concentrated fighting of the Battle of the Brandywine took place from Street Road to Dilworth with the center of intensity in Sandy Hollow.

This Battle involved the largest number of fighting troops (22,000 to 30,000) of the Revolutionary War and a rare encounter between General Washington and British Generals William Howe and Charles Cornwallis.

General Howe's intent was to capture the "rebel" capital, Philadelphia, and put an end to the uprising.

Follow the numbered posts and envision the battle taking place.



1. The Battle of the Brandywine took place within a ten-square mile area with the primary points being:

- ◆ To the west, Chadds Ford, where Howe led Washington to believe the primary battle would be waged. However, the wily Howe marched his major forces from 4:30 a.m. under the cover of darkness and fog up the west bank of the Brandywine crossing to the north at Trimble and Jefferis Fords.
- ◆ In a field three miles to the northwest, Osborne Hill, where the opposing forces broke for tea and strategy review.
- ◆ To the southwest, the woods and hills through which Washington, once convinced of Howe's circling strategy, sent Generals Sullivan, Stirling, and Stephens, and troops "double time" from Chadds and Brinton's Fords to Birmingham Meeting, 3/4 of a mile to the north.

Skirmishes broke out between British forward troops and Colonists below the Meeting House at 2 p.m.

The first line of Colonial defense formed along Renwick Run to the Meeting House and east. This line broke in confusion under heavy fire to reform from "Skirmish Hill" to high ground on the east in a wavering but often amazingly courageous defense. Five times the Colonials lost and regained their position under heavy fire.



This cannon is a Civil War siege cannon. Its line of sight marks the old cart road known as Sandy Hollow.

2. Although this cannon is a Civil War siege cannon, rather than a Revolutionary armament, its intent is clear. The line of sight marks the old cart road known as Sandy Hollow. Just above the hollow, the Colonials reformed to make their third stand with Virginia's Lutheran minister, Brig. General Peter Muhlenberg (known as devil Pete by his adversaries) and Brig. General George Weedon. They drew up 1,800 men to oppose 2,200 elite British and Hessian forces. Stephens, Stirling, Nash, and General Greene's forces took part. Washington and Lafayette galloped up from Chadds Ford in the waning moments. The fight became a hand-to-hand battle in which Lafayette was struck by a musket ball and retired from the field.

3. Nineteen year old Marquis de Lafayette represented the French support for Colonial Independence from Britain. A "man of two worlds", Major Lafayette rode beside General Washington. Near this point, he engaged with honor in his first battle. To the west of this marker is the Lafayette memorial dedicated on September 11, 1895. Five thousand people traveled to witness the dedication.

In 1900, Colonel F. C. Hooten, Congressman Thomas Butler and the Post G.A.R. of West Chester arranged for the two 6,000 pound siege cannons to be erected upon the "high ground" (marker 2) and on the corner of Wylie and Birmingham Roads in recognition of the second line of resistance by the Colonial forces. Thirty thousand people attended this remembrance.

A thirteen star Colonial Flag was raised during this ceremony to remind all that the newly created flag first flew over a field of battle during the "Battle of the Brandywine."

4. To the north is the present Spackman property, then known as Wistar's Woods, upon which the Colonists made a strong second stand with its line stretching from "Birmingham Hill" (O'Dell's) and east through the woodlands. Five times, the "rebels" were pushed back by the troops of Howe and Cornwallis and five times, they regained their position.

According to a British journal of that time, "There was a most infernal fire of cannon and musket, most incessant shouting....the balls ploughed up the field. The leaves falling as in autumn by grapeshot."

5. This marks the east side of the Sandy Hollow cart way where Weedon and Muhlenberg's forces held the ground allowing a somewhat orderly withdrawal of troops from "Wistar's Woods."

A lieutenant in the 13th Pennsylvania Division wrote:

"We took the front...and we were at first obliged to retreat a few yards and formed in an open field, where we fought without give way on either side until dusk."

To the east of this point is the "Federal House" and directly to its east are the remains of the stone building (1750) that looked down upon the battle field.

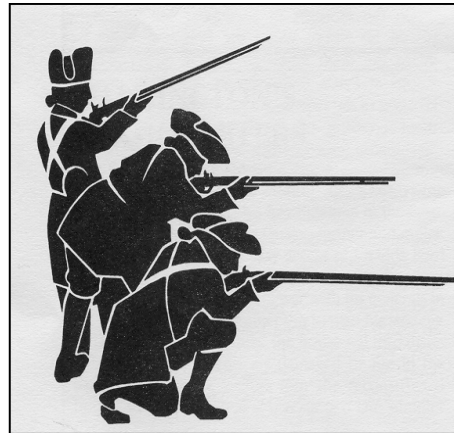


The Birmingham Meeting House served as a hospital for both British and American wounded.

6. This is the high ground of Sandy Hollow Heritage Park and marks the "Sunset Stand" as slowly the Colonials were driven back by overwhelming forces and firepower. Dusk was closing in, ammunition was low, and many of the three and four pounder cannons had been lost. Both sides were exhausted by long marches and a four to five hour battle. It was here, as the Colonials retreated, that Count Casimir Pulaski gained Washington's approval to form an instant cavalry unit which then made a stunning charge against the astonished British forces.

Near here too, Greene's division, under Weedon and Nash, came in behind the pursuing British and inflicted heavy casualties on their 64th and 44th regiments.

According to records by British Jaeger Captain Ewald, "There was a terrible firing and half of the Englishmen and nearly all of the officers were slain."



For more information, visit the Brandywine Battlefield Park
U.S. Route 1, Chadds Ford, PA
610-459-3342
www.brandywinebattlefield.com

7. Pulaski's dragoons brought up the rear for the retreating Continentals as they marched through Dilworth and began the long trek to Chester.

This American stand convinced Howe that the enemy was still a coherent and dangerous force. He had taken heavy casualties and the Americans, although surprised and outnumbered, had not been routed.

The losses on both sides were tremendous and General Weedon wrote that the British casualties were so heavy "that such another victory would establish the Rights of America."

The present Dilworthtown Inn was first built in 1758 and served during the battle as both a hospital for British wounded and a prison for captured rebels.

Birmingham Meeting, 1763, served as a second hospital for both American and British wounded. The Friends or Quakers, a large percentage of the residents of that period, sought only peace...with a few exceptions. General Greene was a "fighting Quaker" and Squire Thomas Cheyney, a strong patriot, alerted Washington to Howe's troop movements down upon Birmingham Meeting House.

Michele Ridge, wife of former Governor Tom Ridge, dedicated Sandy Hollow Heritage Park as a Commonwealth National Treasure in 2001 during Governor Ridge's tenure in office.

This brochure is courtesy of the Recreation, Parks & Open Space Committee
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