

## *Battles of Princeton and Princeton*



*Figure 1: A painting shows George Washington crossing the Delaware River on the evening of December 25, 1776, before the Battle of Trenton.*

The battles of Trenton and Princeton in what is now New Jersey took place in 1776–77 during the American Revolution. They are notable as the first successes won by the Revolutionary general George Washington in the open field. These victories followed shortly after a series of defeats. They put new life into the American cause. They also renewed confidence in Washington as commander.

In November 1776 the British general William Howe captured Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River. This forced the Americans to retreat through New Jersey and across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. Howe then went into winter quarters, leaving about 1,400 Hessians (German soldiers fighting for the British) at Trenton.

Meanwhile, Washington's Continental Army was discouraged by the year's disasters. However, its morale was not crushed. At the time Washington had about 2,400 men under his command. When Washington discovered that the Hessians at Trenton were unsupported, he decided to try to capture them. Despite the ice floes in the Delaware, Washington crossed the river on December 25. He surprised the Hessians and captured more than 900 of them on December 26. The Continental Army then retreated, and Washington bolstered his ranks. Four days later they reoccupied Trenton.



*Figure 2: A painting depicts the Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776.*

About that time British commander Lord Cornwallis and his troops began to march to Trenton. On January 2, 1777, they confronted the Continental Army and drove them back. Washington's army was unable to find boats for an escape. Cornwallis thought that he had them trapped and ended his attacks for the day. However, that night Washington decided to break camp quietly and escape to Princeton. The troops got away without alerting the British.

On January 3, three British regiments met Washington at Princeton. The Continental Army forced them all to retreat. As a result, Washington continued his

march to Morristown, New Jersey. There, he interrupted British communications with New York. Cornwallis retired to New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Washington had thus succeeded in breaking through Howe's lines. He had also placed himself in a good position for recruiting his army. Moreover, he had maintained a strong defensive for the next campaign.

**Cite (MLA Format)**

"Battles of Trenton and Princeton." *Britannica School*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 2 Jan. 2019.  
[school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/battles-of-Trenton-and-Princeton/631463](https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/battles-of-Trenton-and-Princeton/631463). Accessed 22 Apr. 2019.

**Cite (APA Format)**

Battles of Trenton and Princeton. (2019). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from  
<https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/battles-of-Trenton-and-Princeton/631463>