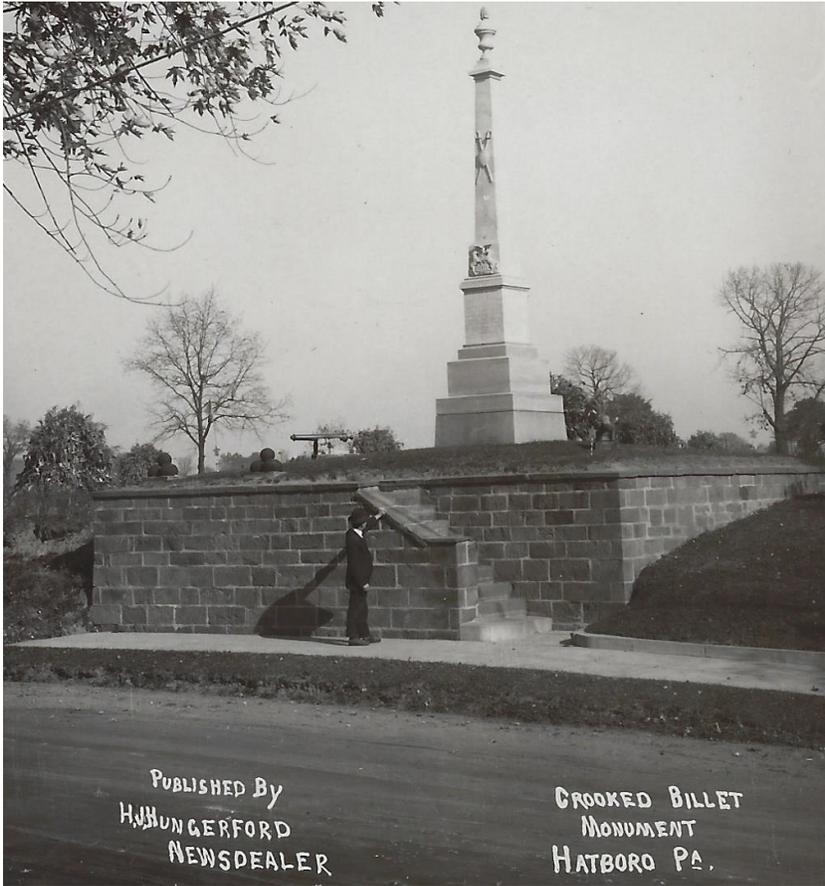


THE HISTORIC CROOKED BILLET MONUMENT



Four score and two years had passed since the Battle of Crooked Billet, when a group of Hatboro residents in 1860 formed the Hatboro Monument Association to begin plans for a monument recognizing the most momentous event in borough history. This proposed marble memorial would commemorate the Revolutionary War battle that scarred the soil and citizens of the local community on May 1st, 1778, and honor the brave local patriots who fought and died there.

But, something else was pressing on the minds and hearts of the Association's members, an equally compelling motivation to pursue this noble work: this monument also would signify their patriotism for our country and their fervent hope for its preservation. Remember, the United States in 1860 was on the brink of the American Civil War, and ominous signs prevailed that another war of brothers and against brothers was imminent. Dedicating this monument would serve as a pledge to and a hope for our country that was born in 1776 and during the War for Independence and later galvanized during the War of 1812.

A year later, December 5th, 1861, on a bright, calm and clear winter day, yet under the dark shroud of a war that now was nine-months underway, the Crooked Billet Monument stood proudly near the center of Hatboro as a symbol of honor, patriotism and hope.

The dedication ceremony was held around the base of the monument's first home at the northeast side of York Road at Monument Avenue, where the monument "...stands upon a high bank overlooking the road...surrounded by a wall and an iron railing."



This site selected on York Road was a high point of elevation in Hatboro, and also marked the southwest corner of the encampment for Bucks County's General John Lacey, the leader of the Pennsylvania militia, and his troops.

On the morning of dedication day, distinguished citizens, government officials, religious and military leaders, orators, family members and local citizens gathered around the Crooked Billet Monument for the ceremony which began "as soon as the column was capped and the urn being raised to its position."

Relatives and decedents of General Lacey attended the dedication. General Lacey's son-in-law, Dr. William Darlington of West Chester, gave a welcoming address and "thanked the people of the neighborhood for the patriotism they had shown by the erection of a beautiful monument..."

Veterans of the War of 1812 also honored this auspicious event. Colonel W.W.H. Davis of the 104th Ringgold Regiment, PA Volunteers and his friends were instrumental in raising the monument. The ladies of Hatborough and vicinity were particularly recognized for their labors that enabled the Borough managers to complete this project.

At the dedication, December 5th, 1861, the monument was described as follows:



"The monument is beautiful, large and imposing... It consists of a plinth, five feet square and one foot thick, and a double base, all of Montgomery county marble; upon this rests a die, enriched with a projecting moulding, on which is the Latin motto, "Defensores Liberi acis per Insidias Abrupti;" on the square below is engraved the inscription; above this is another die, bearing the coat of arms of the "Old Keystone State," in alto relievo; this is exquisitely beautiful and an admirably executed piece of workmanship — the horses are well proportioned and seem instinct with life, the head of the eagle has a beautiful curve, and all the parts are well

worked out; rising from this second die is a well proportioned shaft or obelisk, nine feet high, on which is sculptured full sized cross swords and a shield, in bold relief; upon the obelisk is a neat capitol, and the whole is surmounted with an urn, from which issues a flame. It stands some twenty-four feet high and is of the finest Italian marble from the base up.”



York Road, since Hatboro’s founding in 1715 when it was known as Crooked Billet, has been the borough’s main thoroughfare. Countless people, therefore, have looked upon this obelisk of honor, maybe stopped and visited, or perhaps just silently reflected as they passed by on its mark and meaning in annals of history.



The cross street near the monument was renamed Monument Avenue in recognition of this most prominent and historic town feature.

Today, a historic marker stands nearby to the spot where the Crooked Billet monument first stood and was dedicated.

On May 1st 1965, the monument was moved from its home on York Road for over 100 years and re-dedicated on the grounds of Crooked Billet Elementary school. Although now resting quietly away from Hatboro’s main thoroughfare, its new home was part of the same grounds where General Lacey and his troops encamped on that fateful 1st day of May in 1778, and which witnessed their movements before and during the Battle of Crooked Billet.



Each May, Crooked Billet Elementary students, faculty and staff celebrate Crooked Billet Day. The community gathers, dignitaries speak, children parade and sing and lay a wreath at the monument; all commemorating one the borough's most historic events and those men who fought and died in the Battle of Crooked Billet.



In June 2018, the monument was removed from these Hatboro hallowed grounds prior to old school's razing, clearing the way for building a new, state-of-the-art Crooked Billet Elementary School on the same grounds.



During construction, the monument will be refurbished, protected, returned to its position of honor and rededicated in 2020 in conjunction with the reopening of the new school.

The Battle of Crooked Billet, May 1st, 1778

After the British captured Philadelphia in 1777, General John Lacey of Bucks County and his brigade of PA militia, were tasked by General Washington, who was encamped at Valley Forge, to thwart movement of food and supplies from local farmers and merchants to Philadelphia and to protect patriots from British raiding parties. On May 1st, British forces led by Abercrombie and Simcoe, surprised Lacey and his brigade in an early morning attack. Lacey's surprised and overmatched troops mounted brief resistance, but were disorganized, outnumbered 2 to 1, were in turn routed by the British. Lacey's troops retreated across Hatboro borders into Warminster and beyond, leaving behind wounded and dead troops as well as supplies and equipment from their encampment. In the aftermath of the battle, Lacey, his troops and local residents witnessed atrocities committed by British loyalist troops, specifically the local Queen's Rangers units, upon Lacey's wounded and captured prisoners. Official reports cite that a number of wounded and captured were slashed, bayoneted, and burned, some burned alive.

INSCRIPTION ON THE MONUMENT

Defensores Libertatis per Insidias Abrupti.

[The Defenders of Liberty slain by surprise.]

ON THE WEST FRONT.

CROOKED BILLET BATTLE, MAY 1, 1778.

GENERAL JOHN LACEY,

commanding the American patriots who were here engaged in conflict
FOR INDEPENDENCE.

SOUTH SIDE.

The Patriots of 1776

ACHIEVED OUR INDEPENDENCE.

Their Successors

ESTABLISHED IT IN 1812.

We are now struggling

FOR ITS PERPETUATION IN 1861.

"The Union must and shall be Preserved."

EAST SIDE.

A GRATEFUL TRIBUTE

by the

HATBOROUGH MONUMENT ASSOCIATION,

CHARTERED AND ERECTED

A. D. 1861.

NORTH SIDE.

IN MEMORY OF PATRIOTIC

JOHN DOWNEY,

And others who were cruelly slain on this ground, in the struggle for
AMERICAN LIBERTY.