

John Fenner House  
Pluckemin, Somerset County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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John Fenner House  
Pluckemin, Somerset County, New Jersey

Owner: Hugh Gaston

Date of Erection: About 1750

Architect:

Builder:

Present Condition: Poor

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame  
construction

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch, wood  
shingles

Historical Data:

This house was erected about 1750; by whom is not known. There is a stone marker in front of the house erected by the Morristown D.A.R. Chapter to mark the route that Washington took on his way from Princeton to Morristown. Washington and his troops arrived at Pluckemin on Saturday, January 4, 1777. He halted there

over Sunday. The wounded were quartered in the village; the prisoners were housed in the Lutheran Church; and the army camped on a hill to the south of the village. Washington used the Fenner House as his headquarters. It was here that he wrote his official report of the Battle of Princeton. Among the notables with Washington were Dr. Benjamin Rush and Generals Greene, Knox, and Sullivan.

There is a story current that Washington rode his charger up the stairs to the second story and out again. Indentations are visible on the steps which are said to have been made by the horse's shoes. However, if the feat was done, it is not probable that Washington had anything to do with it. ?

While the army was encamped here Captain William Leslie, son of the Earl of Leven, who had been wounded at Princeton, died and was buried with military honors in the Lutheran Cemetery. Dr. Rush, who was a friend of his family, attended him and several years later erected a headstone over his grave. This has since been replaced by a marker which is identical to the original.

During the encampment of 1779 General Knox had his headquarters at Bedminster. The artillery was at Fluckemin. A grand supper and ball was given on February 18, 1779, to celebrate the first anniversary of the signing of the treaty of alliance between France and the United States. Reviews and maneuvers were directed by Baron von Steuben. After the festivities Washington, it is said, held several conferences in the front parlor of the Fenner House. He and his wife are supposed to have passed two nights here at that time.

After the Revolution, Matthew Lane kept a store in one part of the house. The property passed to Teeple in 1836. He was the grandson of one of the first settlers in the region. Later on it came into the possession of Jacob Cornell. Mr. and Mrs. John Fenner owned the house after this and it is known as the Fenner House because of an idiosyncrasy of Mr. Fenner. For more than twenty years, Mr. Fenner never allowed the doors of the house to be locked either by day or night. He always kept a room, a meal, and a bed ready for any wayfarer; there was no distinction made as to color, country, or creed.

After Mr. Fenner's death, he bequeathed the property to the Pluckemin Presbyterian Church. The trustees sold it to Hugh Gaston of Somerville with the proviso that it be torn down. It is still standing, and whether it will be torn down or whether it will become part of the National Parks, is still undecided.

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Rev. Jan. 28. '37 TRO