

Big battle brewing in Mount Holly

By Rose Krebs Staff writer | Posted: Thursday, December 8, 2011 12:00 am

MOUNT HOLLY — A battle will be breaking out downtown on Saturday.

But don't be alarmed by the sound of cannon fire. The township simply will be marking the 235th anniversary of the Battle of Iron Works Hill, a key skirmish during the Revolutionary War.

Various events are planned around town from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., including a re-enactment. Admission to all the activities is free.

Two-thousand Hessian troops stationed themselves on the mount off High Street by Dec. 24, 1776, according to a historical account posted on the Battle of Iron Works Hill website. They exchanged cannon fire with Col. Samuel Griffin's 600 Continental forces encamped at the hill across the Rancocas Creek.

Hessian Col. Kurt Von Donop mistakenly thought the Colonists had more troops gathered in town and left his position near Bordentown to wage battle with them, the account said. His decision left those 2,000 troops too far away to assist the British and other Hessian forces when the Battle of Trenton raged on Dec. 26.

Each year, Mount Holly marks the anniversary as a way to "get people here to understand that something really important happened in town," event organizer Ian Johns said.

Although the Battle of Trenton still may have been won, Gen. George Washington's safe passage back across the Delaware River to Pennsylvania possibly could have been influenced if the Hessian troops hadn't been lured down to Mount Holly, Johns said.

The Burlington County Prison Museum will host the crown forces' encampment; the Colonists will gather in Mill Race Village. Both sites will host historical demonstrations.

A military surgeon, 18th-century cooking, blacksmithing, artillery firing, and recruit drilling for children will be featured at the museum.

Mill Race Village will offer a description of camp life and a demonstration of a 100-caliber wall gun.

Cannon fire will commence at 2:15 p.m. at the prison museum.

From 3 to 3:45, Colonial troops will battle the crown forces near the Olde Courthouse and move down High Street. County historian Joe Laufer will narrate the progression of each side.

At noon, at the Historic Brainerd Street Schoolhouse, re-enactor Noah Lewis will present Edward "Ned" Hector, a free black man from Conshohocken, Pa., who became a soldier, wagoner and war hero.

Lewis will lead a "dancing with the stars and stripes" at Red, White and Brew on High Street at 4 p.m.

"Anyone who knows their left from their right can participate," Johns said.

Business and historic sites also will get in on the action with special deals and tours.

The High Street Grill will offer a four-course Colonial meal at noon, matched with a historical brew. Red, White and Brew will host beer tastings. Discounts will be offered at several businesses.

Other special events include a holiday train show at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on High Street from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and a historical presentation about the Hessians at the Mount Holly Library and Lyceum on High Street at 10:30.

New this year will be a demonstration by blacksmith re-enactors Toby and Kate Kroll of Bridgeton, who operate under the name Three Cedar Forge. They will set up at the prison museum.

For more information and a complete schedule of events, visit www.ironworkshill.org.