

Re-creating history

By: MARK ZIMMARO Burlington County Times

MOUNT HOLLY - The thumping of drums echoed off the historic buildings downtown as the soldiers in flashy uniforms marched through the streets.

The British were coming.

More than 230 years after the Colonial army defeated the Hessians at the Battle of Iron Works Hill in Mount Holly, history buffs and re-enactors are making sure the history of the Revolutionary War doesn't go out of style like wooden teeth.

"We do this for the kids," said Christian Klemp, a Valley Forge, Pa., resident who was one of the re-enactors on the Colonial side, which made its base in the Mill Race Village. "They don't teach the Revolutionary War all that much in schools anymore. But people, especially people from New Jersey, still have an interest in this stuff."

Klemp and his fellow Colonialists demonstrated their replica 18th century rifles by pointing them to the sky and firing blanks to the delight of onlookers. The loud bang startled 7-year-old Mount Holly resident Edward Lambert as he was observing the action with his father, also named Edward Lambert.

"It was loud," the second-grader said with a smile. "I like when they shoot the guns off."

Lambert and several other youngsters watched the Colonialists prepare for the re-enacted battle against the British Loyalist troops, which celebrates the skirmish that took place 233 years ago through the heart of Burlington County shortly before Gen. George Washington defeated the Hessians at Trenton. Re-enactors from all over the East Coast made the stop in Mount Holly for the sixth straight year. The event was organized by the township and the nonprofit Main Street Mount Holly organization.

The re-enactors, who wore authentic uniforms of the British and American troops, were happy to make the trip to South Jersey.

"It's like a reunion for us," said Chris Ward, of Annapolis, Md., who was taking part as a member of the British's 4th Battalion of Royal Artillery that camped outside the prison on High Street. "We try to make this as authentic as possible. A lot of research goes into this."

The detail in uniforms was unmistakable.

"Some guys go as far as to hand-stitch their materials that they buy from London," said Rex Hughes, a re-enactor from Stroudsburg, Pa. "It really is a passion."

Most observes got a firsthand look at how the battle of Iron Works Hill might have been fought.

"We used this as our get-away trip and the kids really seemed to love it," said Brad Shoher, assistant scout master of Ventnor Scout Pack 275. "We've been looking for something like this to go to and we found out too late last year. This was great."

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