

## **This weekend in Mt. Holly, 'battle raging in the streets'**

**By JASON HARRIS**

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MOUNT HOLLY — The streets will ring with musket and cannon fire Sunday during a re-enactment of a battle fought here 229 years ago.

Dennis Rizzo and Ian Johns have organized the re-enactment of the Battle of Iron Works Hill for the past two years. This year, the event has been expanded to include events on Saturday and renamed Mount Holly Historic Weekend and Battle of Iron Works Hill.

"There will be battle raging in the streets of Mount Holly," Rizzo said.

In December 1776, 600 colonial troops engaged 2,000 Hessians — German troops hired by Britain's King George to fight during the Revolutionary War — in what is now downtown Mount Holly. The Germans camped on High Street near what now is the site of the township library. Colonial troops were stationed in modern-day Mill Race Village. The two sides were only about 500 yards apart.

"Cannonballs were extremely inaccurate," Rizzo said. "They were just as likely to hit somebody's chimney or back yard as hit an individual. Muskets were only accurate within about 50 yards."

The Americans couldn't defeat the larger force of better-trained Germans but that wasn't the goal. After delaying the Hessian force for about a week, the Americans retreated to Moorestown. The Hessians, who were supposed to be supporting 1,500 Royal troops in Bordentown, stayed in Mount Holly to get drunk at a captured brewery and missed the decisive Battle of Trenton. Colonial troops captured 1,000 prisoners in what turned out to be a turning point in the war.

Four cannons and 120 men will be stationed in historical positions

to recreate the battle. The cannons will be firing blanks, but they still can be destructive.

"We broke a window last year," Rizzo said. "Luckily it was an old building."

Saturday will focus on 19th century life with encampments and displays from the Civil War era.

Rizzo said Saturday's events will focus less on local history, but Fred Minus will discuss Timbuctoo, a community of freed blacks and fugitive slaves in what is now Westampton, at the Friends Meeting House from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Minus, a re-enactor, historian and grandson of a Civil War veteran, also leads the U.S. 6th Colored Troops. That regiment will be stationed near the library.

Historical lectures and displays are scheduled both days. One of Rizzo's favorites is the 7th New Jersey Field Hospital at the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum.

"There'll be a full 1863 hospital, hopefully with amputations and bloodlettings," he said. "Really cool stuff."

Mount Holly Historic Weekend runs from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, with the Battle of Iron Works Hill taking place from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday.

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