

Topics of The Times

On this day—Nov. 25—in the year 1783, General Washington and his staff rode into New York to take possession of the city that had been in the hands of the British ever since 1776.

A friend of ours says that he has seen the event portrayed in an old print. And so for fifty years he has paused near Ann Street on the Broad Way every year on Nov. 25 and looked across at St. Paul's Chapel. As he looks, the high buildings fade away, and in their place the little red brick houses and the trees of 1783 once more flank the old church that was built in 1766 and stands today just as it stood then; still stands, with the same square pew within that was later set apart for George Washington, first President of the United States. American flags fly from the windows of the little houses as our friend looks, and along the narrow sidewalks the people crowd each other, chattering, laughing, waiting—for General Washington to come riding by.

Now there is a stirring, with shouts from the men and standing so sturdily in their swallow-tail coats and best knee breeches of those days; and the women, demure in their wide skirts, are waving handkerchiefs, a snowstorm of them, toward the north. Now they see him! Our friend turns his head with the rest, and unconsciously he uncovers as he sees the stern, slender figure in the cocked hat and the blue and buff of the old Continentals come riding by at the head of

his mounted company. As the general passes the old brown church he bows gravely to right and left, then salutes, for now the shouting is a continuing roar. A little surprised, happily so, with yet a trace of weariness in his face. The long years, the perilous retreat, seven years ago, driven out of Long Island, over the East River, up through New York to Harlem Heights and beyond. Then Valley Forge, and the dark, desperate days. After it all, Yorktown, and victory.

The rest ride by, General Knox and Governor Clinton and their aides, then the mounted committee of citizens, and last come citizens on foot. They are a happy, smart company and are generously applauded. They pass. But the high moment has already passed—when General Washington rode by. The crowd dissolves. Our friend comes back to 1949, replaces his hat and walks on, with a light in his face that makes people look queerly at him. They do not know that he has seen General Washington.

And now? Must we disturb the old dream, the old print that is somewhere? The records are difficult. Certain placards and reports say that General Washington did not ride by St. Paul's Chapel, that he followed instead the route of his troops of occupation. And so, riding down the Bowery from the Bull's Head Tavern, on a little distance through Chatham Street, which is now Park Row, he turned suddenly off to the left into narrow Queen Street, which soon after was renamed Pearl Street (no more queens!); rode through Queen Street curving down to Wall Street, where he turned to the right and rode up the

hill to the Broad Way and thence north a few yards to Cape's Tavern. A round-about route, almost a circle, as though he were trying to avoid St. Paul's. Can that be?

Let us see. Listen to Lieut. Anthony Glean— for he was there. He was one of the officers invited by General Washington to ride into the city with him, and he writes, long after in 1830, that "General Washington halted the army near the old tea-water pump" (near Park Row and Pearl Street), "where the officers of the Revolution formed into a line and marched through the British army, which was then in the fields" (the fields are now City Hall Park) "and on the eve of embarking— while the American army proceeded down Pearl Street and Wall Street to Trinity Church, then burnt, and there again met those officers and fired a salute of thirteen guns."

Right behind "the fields," to the south, was the Broad Way, and was the Broad Way with old St. Paul's at the turn, just as it is today, the only building left that saw General Washington, the same brick and stone that saw him go by. The lieutenant says his general went that way, the straight way, regardless of any dilatory British rear guard that might be in his path.

We shall stand with Lieutenant Glean. He is the best witness, for he was there.

And so, some day, some 25th day of November, we shall pause near Ann Street down on the Broad Way, stand there and see General Washington as he rides past old St. Paul's. And we shall uncover as he goes by.