

Review of *Battle of Princeton Mapping Project: Report of Military Terrain Analysis and Battle Narrative, Princeton, New Jersey*, Prepared for the Princeton Battlefield Society by John Milner Associates, Inc., September, 2010.

Mark Peterson

Professor of History

University of California, Berkeley

The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, has asked me to review the quality of historical argumentation and evidence used in the *Report of Military Terrain Analysis and Battle Narrative* produced by John Milner Associates, Inc., in September, 2010 (hereafter, the Milner Report), especially with regard to its relevance to the Institute's long-standing plan to build faculty housing on land that lies adjacent to the Princeton Battlefield Park.

By training and experience, I am a historian of colonial and revolutionary America, and of the New England area in particular. I earned my Ph.D. in history at Harvard University in 1993, under the direction of Professor Bernard Bailyn, and have since then taught the American Revolution and other courses in early American history at Harvard, Boston University, the University of Iowa, and now Berkeley. I have a special interest in the relationship between the written and physical artifacts remaining from the distant past, and the varying ways that individuals and communities have chosen to use these materials to remember or preserve their past. Some of my publications that focus on artifacts, landscapes, texts, and historical memory include a prize-winning article, "Puritanism and Refinement in Early New England: Reflections on Communion Silver," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 58 (April, 2001), an essay called "Siege Amnesia: The Siege of Boston and the Loss of Historical Memory" in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Cities Under Siege*, (2002) and a forthcoming essay in *Commemoration in America*, ed. Gobel and Rossell, (University of Virginia Press, 2012) titled "Stone Witnesses, Dumb Pictures, and Voices from the Grave: Objects, Images, and Collective Memory in Early Boston." I

have recently written a new article, "The War in the Cities," for the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*.

In 1970, Professor David Hackett Fischer of Brandeis University published a well-known book, *Historians' Fallacies*, in which he surveyed in systematic fashion the many ways that historical scholarship, even the work of renowned experts, can go awry, often through faulty logic or through the use of evidence in ways that fail to support the logic of an argument. The first chapter of Fischer's book was given over to "Fallacies of Question Framing," because all historical scholarship begins, explicitly or implicitly, with some kind of question about the past, and therefore framing good questions constitutes the first hurdle that good history must clear.

Among the numerous fallacies of question-framing that Fischer describes is one he calls "the fallacy of declarative questions," which "consists in confusing an interrogative with a declarative statement." According to Fischer, the problem of the "declarative question" is that

It violates a fundamental rule of empirical question-framing, which requires that a question must have an open end, which will allow a free and honest choice, with minimal bias and maximal flexibility. If a historian goes to his sources with a simple affirmative proposition that "X was the case," then he is predisposed to prove it. He will probably be able to find "evidence" sufficient to illustrate his expectations, if not actually to sustain them If he substitutes a declarative for an interrogative statement, then the result is literally a foregone conclusion. The best will in the world won't suffice to keep him honest.¹

It may be that the "fallacy of declarative questions" lurks as the endemic problem of most, if not all, commissioned works of historical scholarship, because more often than not, such works are produced because their sponsors have a strong interest in reaching a particular outcome, a declarative statement that will support their cause.

The Milner Report has a number of strengths as a revisionist account of the Battle of Princeton. It seems

¹ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 24-25.

to have produced the most thorough survey to date of all the sources, primary and secondary, relevant to the military events in and around Princeton on 3 January 1777, and to have read them with care. It takes seriously the accounts of both British and American forces at Princeton in an even-handed way. It does not hesitate to criticize the actions of American officers, including George Washington, and is not committed to creating an unduly "patriotic" account, a fault one might expect to find in a study commissioned by the supporters of efforts to commemorate an important battlefield in American Revolutionary history. It is not overly wedded to pre-existing or conventional accounts of the battle, but approaches the sequence of events and the roles of the various actors with an open mind. As a result, it produces a significant revision of the order of battle and chronology of events that took place on 3 January 1777.² It claims to use the most up-to-date geographical and spatial technology and analytical techniques to test the validity of written reports against the evidence of the physical landscape. This is a laudable goal in the abstract, but given our inability to know and correct for all the changes in topography, vegetation, and the built environment that the landscape has experienced over the 233 years since the battle, it is difficult to assess how useful these technologies actually were. Still, all these strengths are elements in the Milner Report's favor, and in these areas, the report is at its best.

But in the end, these relative strong points at best serve to mask the fundamental weakness of the report, which lies in the fact that its ultimate aim is to demonstrate a declarative statement, not to answer an open-ended question. To borrow Professor Fischer's terminology, the "X was the case" that the Milner Report wants to prove is that a greater proportion of the Battle of Princeton took place on the property which the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) has planned to develop, and which the Princeton Battlefield Society, the report's sponsors, oppose, than previous accounts of the battle would indicate.

The essential claim that the Milner Report hopes to substantiate in order to argue that the IAS property should

² The major change it documents involves the placement of General Mercer and his forces behind the main column led by Sullivan and Washington heading toward Princeton, rather than on the Quaker Road toward Stony Brook bridge where earlier accounts, notably Wilkinson's and those who followed Wilkinson, had placed them.

not be developed is that the Saw Mill Road or "back road" to Princeton, one of the principal avenues of approach that the Continental Army took on its way to Princeton, crossed directly over the IAS property, a claim that none of the earlier accounts of the battle has made. But this is exactly the issue where the Milner Report is least convincing, where the open-ended questions and inquisitive logic of its other sections fail to materialize, where conjectures are asserted as fact and then repeated again and again as though they were definitely true, both in the text and in maps, begging the question in exactly the way that Fischer's *Historians' Fallacies* warns against.

The most important statement in the Milner Report regarding the Saw Mill Road reads as follows:

To date, additional research by the project team at the New Jersey State Archives has not been able to locate the original metes-and-bounds written description of the establishment of Saw Mill Road. No record of the road's establishment or vacation has been found, its precise beginning point of Quaker Road (Figures 11 and 12) is not known with certainty, its route from Quaker Road towards the Clarke farm is conjectural, and portions beyond the Institute for Advanced Study property are equally problematic (23).

This statement offers a clear and honest assessment of the state of the evidence about the location of Saw Mill Road — it forms the conclusion to the Milner Report's discussion of this "Defining Feature" of the battlefield. Similarly, in the illustrated photographs included in the report, the route marked for Saw Mill Road is described as "hypothesized." These statements admit the fact that we do not really know the exact location of Saw Mill Road. And yet, in every map produced by the Milner Report to support and illustrate its revised account of the battle, the conjectures it makes about the location and route of Saw Mill Road are depicted as the only possible alternative (see Figures 2, 3, and 24-31). No other locations for Saw Mill Road are suggested or depicted for the sake of analysis, despite the fact that the report's conjectural location for Saw Mill Road differs from every other extant map or plan of the battle ever made, either by contemporary witnesses or subsequent historians, particularly with

respect to the present location of the IAS.³ Nor is the report's conjectural location of Saw Mill Road put through the same kind of rigorous testing for plausibility that every other geographical feature, decision, or event of the battle receives.

As a case in point, consider the best-known contemporary historical map of the battle site, the so-called "Spy Map," drawn or described by an unknown local informant for the benefit of Colonel John Cadwalader several days before the battle, and reproduced by nearly every subsequent historical account, including Figure 4 of the Milner Report. On this map, Saw Mill Road is depicted as branching off from the Quaker Road and heading in a roughly northeasterly direction toward and past the south side of the town of Princeton. This map depicts the course of the road itself as meandering gently in the typical fashion of country roads – it's not a Euclidean straight line laid out by a trained surveyor – but nonetheless heading more or less parallel to the Post Road, with little deviation, directly toward the back side of Princeton.

On this map, Saw Mill Road clearly avoids a spot to its west, midway between Saw Mill Road and the Post Road, which the map marks as "old Stockdens high-ground." Either Cadwalader or his informant was mistaken about the name of the owner of this farm, which is likely the Thomas Clarke farm. The William Clarke farm is also depicted nearby, in its roughly correct location just to the north, but labeled "old Stockdens" as well.⁴ Given the prominence of the

³ To be precise, there are two extant maps, both from the 19th century, which suggest a shape for the Saw Mill Road vaguely similar to that conjectured by the Milner Report. But both of these maps show the road's outline remaining far removed from the high ground at the Thomas Clarke house where the Milner Report places it, and consequently both of them also lack the sharp right turn at the Thomas Clarke house the Milner Report requires to place the road across the IAS land. See "19th-Century Hale Plan of Troop Positions at Battle of Princeton," and "1879 Depiction of Troop Positions at the Battle of Princeton," Berger Report, Figures 28 and 29, pp. 57-58.

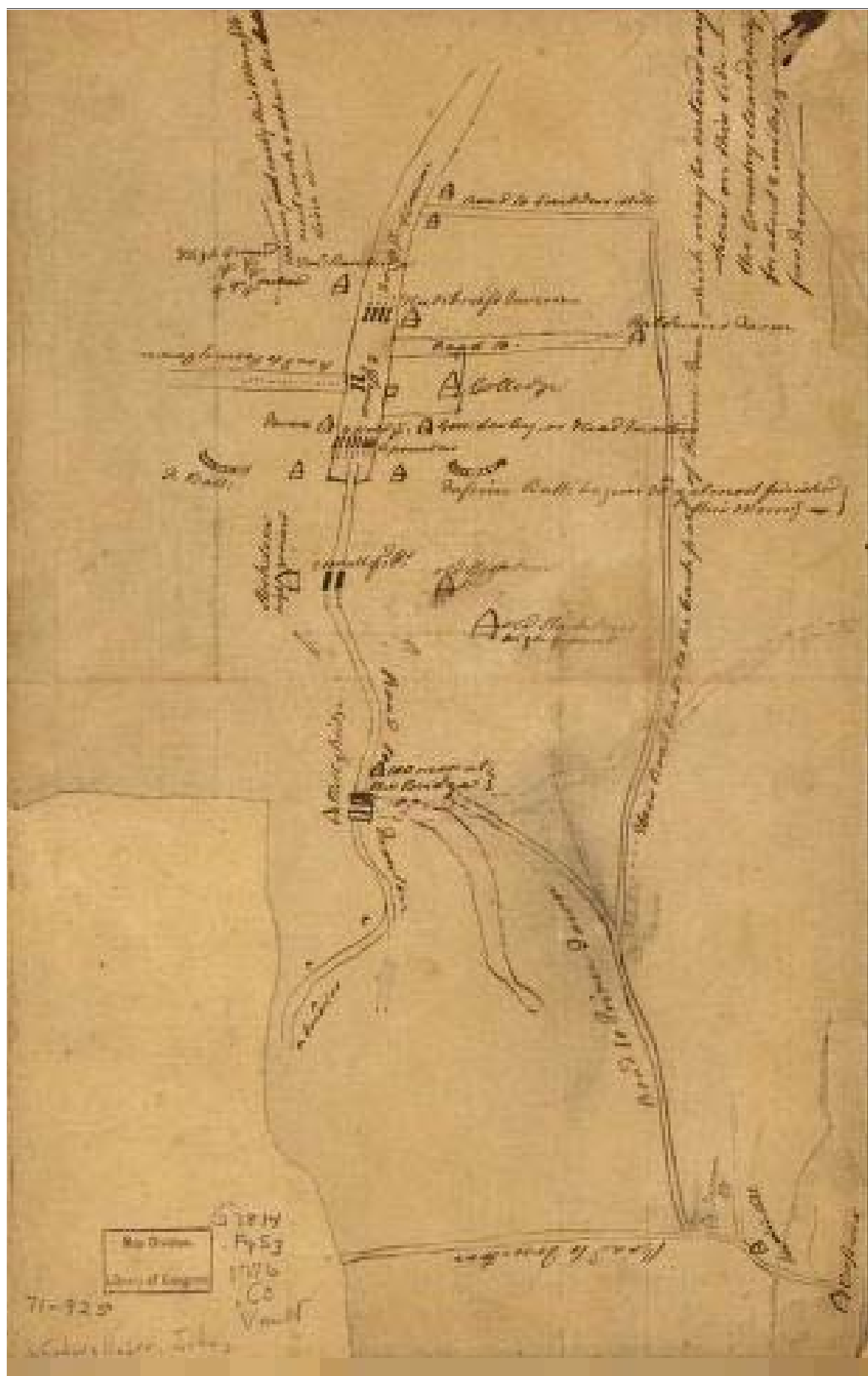
⁴ This was an understandable mistake. Joseph Stockton's farm, correctly depicted on the map, was actually just to the west side of the Trenton-Princeton Post Road, and a map of the area from 1766 depicts the homes of Richard Stockton, Robt Stockton, Joseph Stockton, and Samuel Stockton all running along this west side of the Post Road from Princeton toward Trenton. See Azariah Dunham, *A Map of the Division Line Between the Counties of Middlesex and Somerset, in New Jersey Road Maps of the 18th Century*, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey, reprinted in the *Cultural Resource Survey and Assessment of*

Stockton family in this area, the unknown informant might be forgiven for thinking that the Clarke farms had once been Stockton property as well. But the name of the farm's owner would have mattered far less to Cadwalader and the Continental Army than the nature of the terrain, and here the "spy map" was correct, for the house he calls "old Stockdens high-ground" did rest on some of the highest ground between the Saw Mill Road and the Post Road, as the topographical maps in the Milner Report demonstrate. (In addition, p. 12 of Milner Reports lists the Thomas Clarke farm at 120 ft. asl as an "elevation that figures prominently in the battle.")

Nonetheless, the Milner Report's conjectural depiction of Saw Mill Road has the road following a route which directly contradicts the "Spy Map," and which makes very little sense. First, after skirting the woods to the southeast of the Quaker Meeting House, which all accounts agree that the Saw Mill Road actually did, the Milner Report then claims that the road took a sharp, nearly 90 degree turn to the left, heading north by northwest, at an angle almost perpendicular to the route to Princeton, and climbing in a straight line up to the high ground occupied by the Thomas Clarke house. From there, the Milner Report suggests that the road takes another sharp turn, this time to the right, again at almost a 90 degree angle (avoiding, for no apparent reason, the William Clarke house) before resuming its meandering way toward Princeton when it reached the vicinity of the present-day IAS buildings.

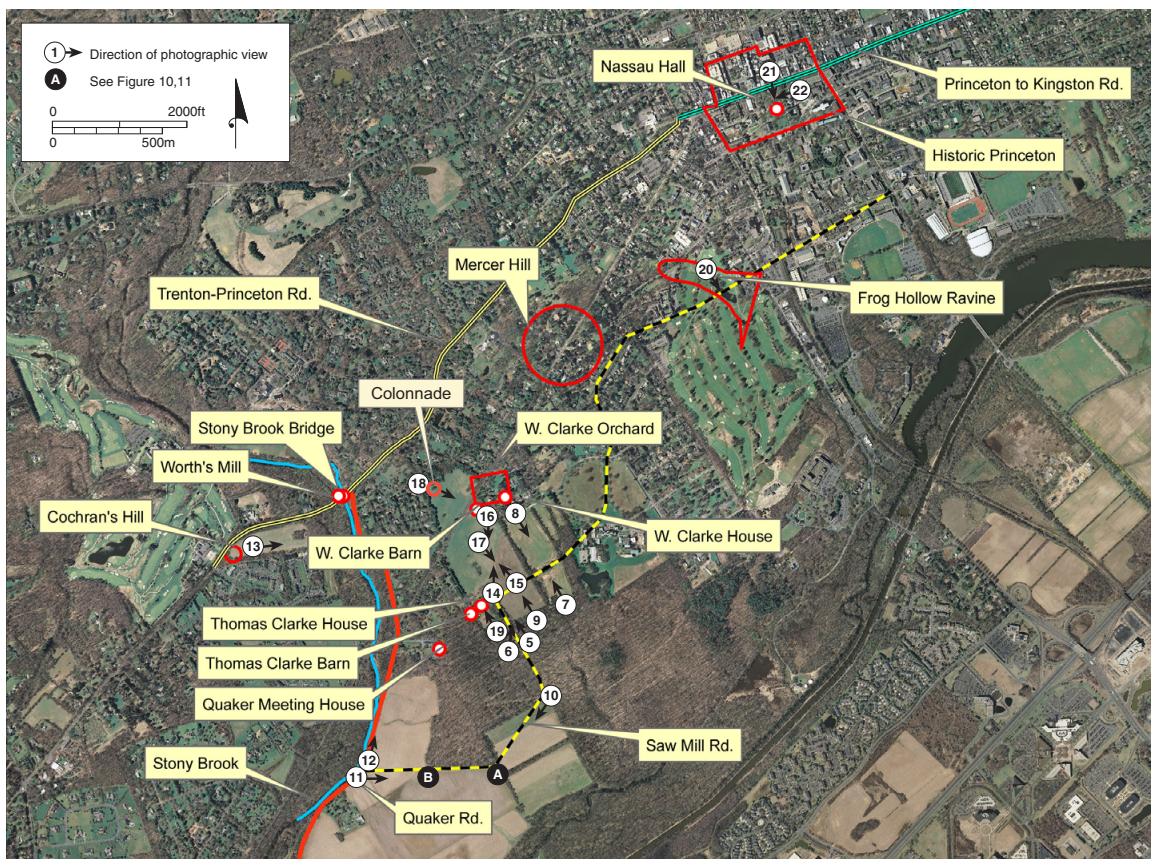
Simply on the face of it, this course seems an unlikely one for a little-known and underused country road to take — to switch suddenly from gently meandering along the natural features of the terrain to taking sharp-angled turns, following straight lines, and climbing up to and down from high points without any apparent reason, only to switch back to meandering again. At another point in the Milner Report, the claim is made (without substantiation) that "Roads lead to houses, and houses sit close to roads" (56) in order to explain why the Saw Mill Road very likely passed near the Olden house. This is, of course, no explanation at all -- merely the sort of old saw that is true except when it's not, which seems to be the case here.

Effects, prepared for the Institute for Advanced Study by the Louis Berger Group, June 2007 (hereafter the Berger Report), Figure 11, p. 30.



Why Saw Mill Road should lead to the Thomas Clarke house and to the Olden house but at the same time veer sharply away from and entirely bypass the William Clarke house is left entirely unexplained, and unquestioned, by the Milner Report. Roads lead to houses – except when they don't – is not the kind of explanatory logic that inspires confidence.

The Milner Report's conjectural location for the Saw Mill Road seems unlikely, based only on the topography and the general tendencies of unplanned pre-modern rural roads. But when also considered within the military context of the Battle of Princeton, it becomes downright preposterous. On 31 December 1776, Colonel Cadwalader forwarded the "Spy Map" to General Washington. Over the next several days this map played an important role as Washington formulated his battle plan to slip away from Cornwallis's forces near Trenton in the middle of the night of 2-3 January and stage a surprise attack on Princeton the next day. The



unknown informant who aided Cadwalader in constructing the "Spy Map" had only just been released the day before by the British Army in Princeton after being held there for

questioning.⁵ He knew enough to tell Cadwalader where the British Army had been building defensive fascines in the vicinity of Princeton, where British troops and artillery pieces had been stationed along the Post Road from Princeton to Trenton, and where General Leslie's headquarters in Princeton were – all these strategic points are marked on the Spy Map.

The informant recommended the Saw Mill Road as an alternative route for the Continental Army to use to attack Princeton's undefended east side – exactly the plan that Washington chose to pursue. But if the Milner Report's conjecture is true, then the Saw Mill Road actually deviated from a relatively direct route toward the back side of Princeton, (a route that for the first part of the march lay half a mile or more away from the Post Road) and instead took a perpendicular turn away from Princeton and directly toward the heavily guarded Post Road, and in this direction climbed to a highly visible spot at the Thomas Clark house, much closer to the Post Road and well in view of the 100 British soldiers the map places at the Stony Brook Bridge and exposed to the British field pieces trained over the open fields.

If this were indeed the case, then it stands to reason that the informant, who after all was describing the strategic virtues of the Saw Mill Road to Cadwalader, would have mentioned that there was a risky and exposed sharp turn in the road that would slow the trip to Princeton and bring Washington's forces onto higher ground closer to the guarded and patrolled Post Road. But no, the informant indicated, by contrast, that the Saw Mill Road made no sharp turns and stayed far away from this marked point of "high-ground." As the Milner Report itself suggests, the "crucial element of surprise" (7) involved in the attack on Princeton was a critical part of Washington's planning, just as it had been at the first battle of Trenton. Yet if the Saw Mill Road's actual course followed the conjectural one offered by the Milner Report, it is hard to imagine how Washington could ever have hoped to sustain the element of surprise, unless he was badly and deliberately misinformed by the "Spy Map." And if the "Spy Map" was so fatally inaccurate in its depiction of the Saw Mill Road's route to Princeton, it is

⁵ David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 280–283, has a thorough account of the informant's communications to Colonel Cadwalader, and stresses the significance of the Spy Map in Washington's plans for a surprise attack.

also strange that none of the officers in the battle, including Cadwalader who had personally annotated the map, ever mentions that the actual road deviated so sharply from the one drawn on the map. But all this is exactly what the Milner Report would have us believe.

I am not arguing that the conjectural location the Milner Report posits for the Saw Mill Road is impossible, only that the topography and geography of the terrain, and the military circumstances under which Washington and his fellow officers chose to use the Saw Mill Road for a surprise attack on Princeton's undefended side, make the conjectural location seem extremely unlikely.

A still more significant weakness in the Milner Report is the fact that it treats the question of the location of the Saw Mill Road differently from every other aspect of its account of the Battle of Princeton. On all other matters, including the placement and order of forces on both the British and the American sides, the location of regiments at the time of first sighting, and the complex decision-making processes of officers throughout the battle, the Milner Report considers a range of various possibilities from multiple angles and puts each of them to a test, with an awareness of "Inherent Historical Military Plausibility" (3). The Milner Report also tells us that when clear evidence is lacking, "an educated guess, logical deductions, or simply common sense must be used to provide as completely as possible that coherent and logical image of past events historians strive to paint" (7). But when it comes to the question of Saw Mill Road, for which the report admits we lack sufficient evidence to substantiate its location, the Milner Report fails to submit its conjectures to the same kind of careful scrutiny, logical deductions, and common sense.

The KOCO method of analyzing terrain according to the dictates of "military usage," which is purportedly useful to interpret "the authenticity of battlefield maps," suggests that "in the case of troop movements . . . 'military usage' of terrain would demand that forces be redeployed under cover of ridges or through low-lying ravines outside the view of the enemy" (15) — in other words, not marching them up to high ground in full view of the enemy, which is what the conjectural version of Saw Mill Road calls for. Why the Milner Report never subjects its own conjectural map of the Saw Mill Road on the Princeton Battlefield to these KOCO standards of "military usage" is left unexplained.

Of course, there is an immediately obvious reason for the Milner Report's conjecture that the road followed this unlikely path. By suggesting this strange route for the Saw Mill Road, the only historically well-known but geographically indeterminate location in the Battle of Princeton can then be placed squarely on the land that the IAS hopes to develop.

The Milner Report lists 17 significant "Defining Features of the Princeton Battlefield" (Table 1., pp. 15-16). Of these, Saw Mill Road is the only "defining feature" whose present-day location is unknown. The location of all the other defining features is certain, and none of them is on the land the IAS plans to develop. Consequently, the Saw Mill Road is the only geographical feature that is in any sense malleable, subject to a new interpretation, and thus it is no coincidence that the Milner Report makes strenuous efforts to suggest that, no matter how unlikely it may seem, the Saw Mill Road crossed the IAS land. All of the rest of the report's conclusions about the significance of the IAS land in the Battle of Princeton follow from this claim about the location of Saw Mill Road.

As Professor Fischer argued in *Historians' Fallacies*, historians who seek to prove a declarative question are likely to "find 'evidence' sufficient to illustrate their expectations if not actually to sustain them." This has certainly been the case with respect to the Milner Report's claims about the Saw Mill Road. All the "evidence" assembled for the location of Saw Mill Road is dependent upon accepting the conjectural route across the IAS land as a given fact and then seeking evidence to substantiate it, rather than asking open-ended questions about where the Saw Mill Road was most likely to have been. If we examine the "evidence" that the Milner Report presents, it becomes obvious how much its selection was driven by the desire to have the road cross IAS land, and how little this "evidence" was subjected to rigorous analysis.

The first piece of evidence used in the "reinterpretation" of Saw Mill Road's location is taken from the "Spy Map" itself. The Milner Report claims that "Cadwalader shows [or more correctly someone has penciled in] the Clarke House at the intersection of the Quaker Bridge Road and Saw Mill Road, showing the road to intersect above the house, not below." [To my own eye, the penciled words are "Clarks Farm," not "Clarke House," based on my reading of a high-

resolution image of the Spy Map downloaded from the Library of Congress.⁶ The key point here is that this "Clarks Farm" is an element of the map that may not be in Cadwalader's handwriting, and is written in pencil rather than ink (another similar pencil addition appears at the bottom of the map). This means that we do not know when, or by whom, or for what purpose, the words "Clarks Farm" were added to the map.

Any historian familiar with ancient documents knows full well how often these are palimpsests, with later writers making additions and annotations based on later knowledge. Furthermore, although the Milner Report does not mention it, the land in the area south and east of the Post Road was owned by many generations and branches of the Clarke family, beginning in 1693 with Benjamin Clarke II, and continuing through the 1860s. An 1849 map of the area depicts at least six different "Clarke" houses in the region between the Post Road and Stony Brook.⁷ But the Milner Report does not stop to consider *which* "Clarks Farm" the one on the map might be. It therefore seems difficult to attribute very much meaning to the appearance of these two words -- Clarks Farm -- in this location on the document. Since we do not know who wrote them, when, or why, and because there were many Clarke farms in this area, the words offer little solid indication of the actual course of the Saw Mill Road in 1777 and its relationship with the built environment of that time.

The second piece of evidence used to support the conjectural route for Saw Mill Road comes from an interpretation of a property deed from William and Anna Clarke to Thomas Clarke, recorded in 1772, which describes "a stone planted on the east side of Saw Mill Road and about 30 links [19.81 feet] southward of a gate . . . " as marking one of the corners of Thomas Clarke's property (16). Here, the Milner Report claims to have discovered the very same stone through "field inspection". Exactly how this field inspection was conducted is unexplained, though presumably the reference point of the 18th-century gate 30 links from the stone is long since gone. A photograph of the "discovered" stone in question is offered, but there is no discussion of the relative

⁶ DIGITAL ID g3814p ct000076, URL: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/map_item.pl, accessed 7/20/11.

⁷ J. W. Otley and J. Keily, Map of Mercer County, New Jersey, (Camden: L. Van Derveer, 1849), reprinted in Berger Report, Figure 18, p. 39.

prevalence of stones anything like this in and around these fields.

As anyone familiar with the agricultural regions of the northeastern United States will attest, stones in the fields have been and still are the bane of farmers.⁸ With every winter, and every cycle of freezing and thawing, the earth pushes up new stones where none were before, it moves around the stones already above ground, it even disassembles stone walls built with less than perfect care. To assume so readily, and without any other evidence about the original stone's size or shape, that a single upright stone in a field must be the same one described by a deed almost 240 years earlier, is a remarkable act of wishful speculation, not a piece of historical evidence that will stand up to scrutiny. Furthermore, the photograph of the upright stone itself depicts its location only a few feet away from a trolley line that was built in the 19th century and then abandoned years later. To imagine that the construction and use of this trolley line did not disturb the area around it is another questionable assumption.

And yet, it is on the location of this "remarkable" stone that all the other conjectures about the unlikely route of the Saw Mill Road depend. The Milner Report, once this stone has been discovered, next makes the inference that a "linear depression" nearby, which runs northward from this point, must therefore be the remains of Saw Mill Road. Once again, no possible alternative explanations for this linear depression are raised, and no potential challenges to this "discovery" are offered. This despite the fact that the region has been used as farmland for more than 300 years, and that in the period between 1777 and the present, the area has seen the creation and abandonment of a trolley line, the construction of the Raritan Canal, and untold other activities. The possibility that any of these other uses of this land might have brought about the creation of a road-like depression — a farmer's lane, or a route used by equipment for building trolley lines — seems at least as plausible an explanation as the assumption that this must be the trace of Saw Mill Road.

To offer one example, an 1875 map of the area depicts a small road or country lane running roughly north northwest,

⁸ As I write this, I sit in the rural town of Petersham, Massachusetts, surrounded by small farm fields alive with stones, by stone walls that once contained them, and by woods through which crumbling stone walls and scattered remnants of former farm sites abound.

along the edge of the current IAS property, in the vicinity of the Thomas Clarke house then owned by H. E. Hale. It crosses the Mercer Turnpike and then heads further north to the Post Road where it ends. In other words, there is evidence of a 19th-century road, bearing no connection to Saw Mill Road, running in the same direction and in the same vicinity to be consistent with the "linear depression" that the Milner Report discovered.⁹ In short, there seems to be no reason why the linear depression discovered by the Milner Report must necessarily be the Saw Mill Road, and many reasons to be doubtful.

Again, let me make clear that I am not arguing in favor of any particular alternative explanation, but rather pointing out that a heavy burden of proof lay on the Milner Report to investigate and substantiate its conclusions more thoroughly. Instead, the Milner Report never even considered any other possibilities for what its "discoveries" of the stone and the "road trace" might have been.

The Milner Report offers one more minor piece of physical evidence for the conjectural route of the Saw Mill Road. It claims that "early aerial images" (unnamed and not reproduced in the report) depict a "linear feature" running eastward across the State Park property in a way that would be consistent with a "possible Saw Mill Road segment on the IAS property" (20). This claim is presumably what is responsible for the sharp right turn that the conjectural version of the Saw Mill Road takes at the site of the Thomas Clarke house. But in addition to not providing the reader with the "early aerial images" to substantiate this claim, the Milner Report once again fails to investigate with any rigor just what this "linear feature" might possibly have been.

Just as in the case of the northward running "linear depression," other explanations for this linear feature are equally plausible. For example, a map of the Battle of Princeton site made in 1969 by the Department of Conservation and Economic Development, Bureau of Parks, depicts the outline of a small road it calls "Thomas Clark Lane" running eastward from the Quaker Road, onto the State Park lands near the Thomas Clark house and trending toward

⁹ Everts and Stewart, *Combination Atlas Map of Mercer County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1875), reprinted in Berger Report, Figure 20, p. 41. For the chain of ownership of the Thomas Clarke farm, see Berger Report, Table 1, p. 19.

the IAS lands on roughly the same path as the Milner Report's conjectural route of Saw Mill Road.¹⁰ Why, then, does the Milner Report fail to ask whether its further "discovery" might not be the remains of "Thomas Clarke Lane" rather than a "possible Saw Mill Road segment?" And why does the Milner Report make no effort to "discover" traces of Saw Mill Road in the more conventional locations that earlier maps of the area have suggested, and test these possibilities against their own conjecture?

The answer to these questions should, by now, be obvious. The Milner Report is a classic example of the "fallacy of the declarative question" as described by David Hackett Fischer. Its new "discoveries" are merely the product of an idea it intended to prove all along. To paraphrase Fischer, the Milner Report has found "evidence" sufficient to illustrate its expectations, but not actually to sustain them. Its results were a foregone conclusion.

The remaining "evidence" presented by the Milner Report for the Saw Mill Road location consists of several historical accounts that it claims support its conjectures. The first is the testimony of Appollos Morris who said that the Saw Mill Road and the Post Road were "essentially parallel routes only one-half mile apart." But this testimony is actually inconsistent with the conjectured route of the Milner Report, where sharp turns toward and then away from the post road make it anything but "essentially parallel," and bring it to a point much closer than half a mile from the Post Road. Henry Knox is also quoted, saying that the Post Road and the Saw Mill Road were "about a quarter mile apart," but the report does not tell us *where* Knox was on the road when he made this estimate. On virtually every map ever made of the battle, the two roads draw closer to each other as they get nearer to Princeton, so the observer's position on the road could presumably make a substantial difference in estimates of distance from the Post Road. Finally, the Milner Report concludes that these two historical statements together indicate "that the roads were less than a quarter mile apart" (20). This makes no sense at all.

Other contemporary observers are also quoted – General Cadwalader and an anonymous British officer thought to be named Hall – but their testimony speaks to the road's location well to the east of the IAS land, and it is by no

¹⁰ Reprinted in Berger Report, Figure 32, p. 62.

means necessary for Saw Mill Road to have taken the strange route through IAS land for these more easterly accounts to be true.

In addition, the Milner Report also argues on pp. 51-53 that the only possible location for the "first sighting" of British troops by officers in the rear of Sullivan's division "is a small brook past the end of the surviving road section at the boundary of or on the property of the Institute for Advanced Study" (53). But here, too, we are dealing in conjecture upon conjecture. In order to reach this exclusive conclusion, the Milner Report now assumes that its earlier conjectures are established fact, and narrates Sullivan's marching route as if its dubious "discoveries" about Saw Mill Road were indisputably true. It assumes the current location of a small brook on the Institute property must be identical with that of a "little river" of the 1770s. It fails to analyze inconvenient evidence, such as Apollos Morris's claims that at first sighting the British troops, the Continental forces were still a mile and a half away from Princeton, a claim which doesn't square well with the location on the Institute property. Nor does this location mesh with Morris's statement that they saw the British light horse-men on "the heights to the left," because if the Milner Report's conjectural location is true, and Sullivan's column was marching in a north-northeasterly direction toward Princeton from the current IAS property, then the Cochran hill location is almost directly behind Sullivan's troops, not all that much "to the left". Although the map provided by the Milner Report to support its conjecture (p. 52) claims that the distance from Cochran hill to the "First Sighting" location is approximately one mile, its own scale suggests this distance is rather less than that, closer to 4500 feet. In other words, neither one of the rough distance estimates provided by eyewitness observers match this location particularly well. But a location considerably to the south of this point, along a route that need not require the curious zig-zags of the Milner Report's conjecture, could easily match up with both of the eyewitnesses' estimates of distance, but it would lack the one thing the Milner Report persistently seeks - a route that crosses the IAS property.

Finally, the Milner Report also discusses archeological evidence in its attempt to support its conjecture about the Saw Mill Road. As I am not trained in archeology, I will not address this material. But I do note that in this instance as well, no archeological testing or evidence for

other possible locations of the Saw Mill Road is offered. Here too, the conjecture alone seems to be driving the use of evidence.

In the end, the Milner Report wants to have its history both ways. It wants the current state of knowledge and the condition of the evidence about the Battle of Princeton to be fluid and indeterminate enough to allow for the possibility of substantial reinterpretation. At the same time, it wants its own claims to be accepted as the "only possible" explanation for various events, and it wants vague conjectures to nonetheless yield an extremely precise (albeit extremely unlikely) determination of the location for the Saw Mill Road across IAS property, even though the evidence for this is slim to non-existent. As a result, the Milner Report displays exactly the disingenuous qualities that *Historians' Fallacies* warns are likely to occur when pursuing a declarative question, even with "the best will in the world." Its discoveries and conjectures about a new route for Saw Mill Road across the IAS property do not stand up to careful logical and historical scrutiny.

Let us suppose, contrary to all indications and purely for the sake of argument, that every claim in the Milner Report about the route of the Saw Mill Road across IAS property were actually true and well-supported by solid evidence, and that therefore we could be sure that more of the Battle of Princeton occurred on IAS land than earlier accounts would indicate. What, then, would this mean for the IAS plan to build housing on this site?

Though not explicitly detailed in the Milner Report, the inference I draw from the general suggestion of its conclusions, an inference supported by the Princeton Battlefield Society's own website, is that this land should therefore be considered hallowed ground and never developed in any way for contemporary uses. But is this really the best way to preserve the memory of historical events? Is it the way other equally prominent military sites in American Revolutionary history have been commemorated?

My own research on this subject suggests otherwise. For example, the city of Boston and its surrounding towns where the revolutionary war began have approached its commemoration in a variety of different but effective ways, from the massive obelisk that marks the battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, surrounded by a busy rebuilt urban landscape, to its modest sister at Concord in the midst of

a large commemorative green space, erected on a site where the famous North Bridge had once stood but, in 1836, when the obelisk was dedicated, had long since crumbled and been swept away.

At Lexington, where the first shots of the war were fired on the town green, many changes have occurred over time. The church that stood on the green at the time of the battle is long gone. The rebel militia who died there were initially buried in scattered plots around town, but then in the early 19th century, a monument was built on the green, the bodies were disinterred, and reburied next to the monument. Useful signs were placed to show the line of defense on which the militia had stood, but this was not the exact location of the monument. Meanwhile, the town immediately around the green went through many of the changes characteristic of the passing centuries, and is now a thriving suburban community, with buses and cars rolling past the green and bustling shops nearby, bringing tourists and sightseers to the scene. The Buckman Tavern across from the green still survives and has become a historical museum, with costumed interpreters trained to give visitors guidance about the town's history and the dramatic events that took place there on April 19, 1775.

In nearby Cambridge, of which Lexington was once a part, George Washington took command of the Continental Army on its Common, where the militia who had fought at Lexington and Concord assembled after that long and bloody day. Here, in July 1775, Washington began the training of his army over the course of the next year, and from here he coordinated the siege of Boston. But the town of Cambridge has not closed off the Common as "hallowed ground." It now has a softball field on which I and thousands of others have played, a children's playground, benches for strollers, and bus stops on its various sides. The physical space of the Common has changed to accommodate roads, the more intense traffic of Harvard Square, and the like. But there is a monument and a group of cannons there to commemorate its important revolutionary history.

I would argue that exactly because this is a busy place, central to the contemporary life of the Cambridge community, far more people are exposed to the Revolutionary War monuments and the Common's place in the sweep of history than would be the case if it had been preserved as "hallowed ground." Washington's forming of the Continental Army on Cambridge Common was a crucial event in the history of the United States, but it was not the only important

historical event to take place there. In 1637, an election for the Massachusetts governor was held on the Common, and supporters of John Winthrop shouted down the supporters of Henry Vane, which had a crucial impact on the famous Antinomian Controversy in Massachusetts. There is also a Civil War monument on the Common, with statues of Lincoln and a common soldier of the Union Army, because the Common served as a mustering ground in the dark days of 1861, when the fate of the Union was in question. Recently, another monument has been added to the Common to commemorate the sufferings of victims of the Irish famine of the 1840s who washed up in Boston and Cambridge, starving and destitute, reshaping the city's history as well. Across the street, the old Cambridge burying ground features the graves of fallen soldiers from the events of April 19th, alongside those of Harvard Presidents, famous authors and statesmen, and the ordinary men and women of the town across the centuries, not only reminding passers-by of important events, but integrating them into the larger sweep of history and connecting the past to the present.

In Boston itself, a similar story can be told. The infamous Boston Massacre occurred on King Street, now State Street, right in front of the old State House, the seat of government. But this, too, was not the first important historical event to happen on this site. In April 1689, a citizens' uprising arrested the tyrannical British royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros, and shipped him back to England, in a rebellion that would serve to inspire the revolutionary generation. Nor would the Massacre be the last historical event to take place on this site. In 1854, the escaped slave Anthony Burns was arrested by Federal Marshals in Boston pursuant to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Riots ensued, and the US Marines were called out to escort the captive Burns down State Street, right across the Boston Massacre site, to a waiting Revenue cutter that would return him to slavery in Virginia. This event, more than any other, solidified Massachusetts' political opposition to slavery in the growing sectional conflict that would end in Civil War.

My point is that had any of these Revolutionary sites -- Lexington Green, Cambridge Common, the Boston Massacre site -- been treated solely as "hallowed ground," preserved from the normal sorts of development and usage that are a natural part of human activity and society, then the meaning of these events would have been far less well known, and far less influential, than they have actually become. To reflexively set aside battlefields and other

important historical sites for permanent preservation is to remove them from history, to declare that nothing important can ever happen there again, and that nothing but the one event commemorated on the site has any historical importance.

By saying this, I do not mean to suggest that no commemorative efforts should be made. Quite to the contrary, all three of these Massachusetts sites have important and beautiful monuments and plaques. In addition, these communities have provided useful instructional guides and signage, Freedom Trails, trained interpreters and the like to help visitors use their imaginations and their knowledge to understand and make sense of the past. The best tool, the most useful commemorative device, that we have for understanding, remembering, and interpreting our history is not physical space or objects that create an illusion of being undisturbed across time, but rather our knowledge and imagination applied to the places and things that remain from the past.

For the purpose of historical commemoration, it makes far more sense to me to direct resources toward knowledge and education, guidance and imagination that will enhance the experience of visitors, than it does to fetishize space and preserve it in amber. The presence of lively and vigorous human communities and the possibility for "more history" is a far better way to keep a historical site interesting and attractive than to turn it into "hallowed ground," which as often as not tends to become neglected, ignored, and forgotten, removed from the world in which life is lived.

I am a historian, and make no special claims for any ability to predict the future. But the Institute for Advanced Study is an important part of America's intellectual, cultural, and political history, and a living institution with every prospect for continuing to promote and contribute to its already rich legacy. For that reason, I cannot see why its reasonable, limited, carefully planned and sensitive growth should be detrimental to the excellent commemorative efforts being made by the Princeton Battlefield Society and the National Park Service for the battle of Princeton. Indeed, having a vital institution at a neighboring site, with a historical importance of its own that can nonetheless complement the significance of the battle site, may well enhance the degree to which the Princeton Battlefield Park remains in the public eye.