The Tower View

On a clear day, the view from Bowman’s Hill Tower encompasses a minimum 14-mile radius of the Delaware River Valley. Gazing out from the tower, see if you can find the following landmarks:

- A large American flag to the slight northeast. This flag marks the graves of soldiers from the American Revolution who perished during the winter campaign against British forces in Trenton, New Jersey.

- The Thompson-Neely House. The stone structure with accompanying barn and out buildings also lies slightly to the northeast. This 18th century farmstead includes a gristmill on the opposite side of River Road. Tours of the Thompson-Neely House are available.

- Bridges. Looking up river, two bridges span the Delaware River. The northernmost bridge is Route 202; the closer bridge connects New Hope and Lambertville.

Hours of Operation

The tower is open seven days per week, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, March through December, weather permitting. The tower is closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. An admission fee is required and may be purchased at the Washington Crossing Historic Park Visitor Center, the Thompson-Neely House, and Bowman’s Hill Tower. Group admission is available upon request. Please contact the visitor center.

Access for People with Disabilities

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the visitor center. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

More Information

Washington Crossing Historic Park
1112 River Road
Washington Crossing, PA  18977
(215) 493-4076
washingtoncrossingsp@pa.gov
www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/WashingtonCrossing
www.WashingtonCrossingPark.org

Washington Crossing Historic Park is administered by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in partnership with the Friends of Washington Crossing Park.

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Please be aware that even with the elevator, access to the view on top of Bowman’s Hill Tower requires climbing stairs and is not ADA accessible.
What’s in a Name?

Multiple theories exist for the origin of the name “Bowman’s” Hill. A common myth suggests the name refers to Dr. John Bowman, ship’s surgeon to the pirate Captain Kidd. It was believed Dr. Bowman retired to this area and was later buried on the hill. Although a popular story, historians disproved this theory as Robert Bradenham, not John Bowman, was the surgeon who sailed with Captain William Kidd. One theory proposes the original name was “Beau Mont” and was paired with Belle Mont, a similar peak in New Jersey. Another is the hill was named for Thomas Bowman, an English merchant who conducted trade up and down the Delaware River in the 1600s. Yet the most likely explanation involves John Beaumont, owner to the Beaumont Ferry located south of the Thompson-Neely House. In 1743, Beaumont was issued a patent for 427 acres of land including much of the hill. Over time, “Beaumont’s Hill” evolved into “Bowman’s Hill.”

Pidcock Cemetery

The Pidcock Cemetery is a small cemetery for the family of Jonathan Pidcock, grandson of John Pidcock who first settled the Thompson-Neely property in the late 17th Century and namesake of Pidcock Creek. Jonathan lived in New Jersey during the American Revolution. He joined the local militia at the beginning of the war but being too old to engage in battle, Pidcock spent the duration of the war caring for the sick and wounded. A plaque marking the graves of Jonathan and his wife, Ankey, was dedicated by the Pidcock family in 1938. The cemetery is accessible by a short trail from the parking area, on the north side of Tower Road.

A Brief History

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania created Washington Crossing Historic Park in 1917 and established the Washington Crossing Park Commission to administer and further develop the Park in 1919. The commission’s first objective was to develop the site’s potential as a historic shrine; their second objective was to preserve its natural beauty and develop areas for recreational use. Bowman’s Hill Tower was a combination of both goals. The tower was to commemorate what may have been a lookout point for General Washington’s troops. However, today’s historians believe this to be oral tradition more than documented fact.

The main structure was built of native stone gathered from Bowman’s Hill and nearby stone fences. However, the cut stone used for the sills and stair railings came from local quarries. Over 2,400 tons of material were used in the construction, including: 326,700 square feet of stone, 517 tons of sand, and 225 tons of cement. Workers excavated down 15 feet to ensure the tower’s base would rest on a solid rock foundation. Construction was accomplished entirely by employees of the Washington Crossing Park Commission. Including labor and materials, building Bowman’s Hill Tower cost $28,399.07 in 1931.

In addition to the Tower, the Washington Crossing Park Commission completed other enhancement projects to the property throughout the early 1930s. Work included planting 28,300 seedlings to reforest Bowman’s Hill as it might have looked during the American Revolution, constructing a log cabin with a stone fireplace to serve as shelter for the park guard, and building two public bathrooms. The ruins of these buildings still stand behind the site of the portable restroom facilities. Also, a roadway was constructed which connects Bowman’s Hill Tower to what is now Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve. The native stone arch bridge, now closed to vehicular traffic, acts as a walking trail between the tower and the preserve.

In the early 1980s, Bowman’s Hill Tower underwent extensive restoration and an elevator was installed. Today, visitors can ride the elevator, exit onto a landing, and climb the final twenty-three steps to the top. The view of Bucks County, New Jersey, and the Delaware River has certainly changed from when the tower was first erected, but it remains breathtaking.