



Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Institute Housing Should Avoid Site of Historic Revolutionary War Battle

To The Editor:

On behalf of the Princeton Battlefield Society, I'm writing to point out some discrepancies in your article related to Princeton Battlefield and the proposed Institute for Advanced Study housing development.

Our organization has been working hard for several decades to preserve and protect the Battlefield Park and surrounding land.

Unfortunately, the IAS has been trying to minimize the public outcry opposing their potential desecration of hallowed ground in order to move forward with their plan to construct 15 new homes to accommodate faculty. Terms like "proximity to the site" and "in an area not directly adjacent to the battlefield" continue to support a factually incorrect position the IAS has taken.

We are dealing with two separate areas of the battlefield — the actual Battlefield Park and the adjacent areas that are currently owned by the IAS, where critical fighting took place during Washington's first victory over the British Regulars in January 1777.

To set the record straight, the bulldozers will be disturbing actual ground where British soldiers and American patriots sacrificed their lives.

It is also important to understand that the Institute did not "turn over" the 589 acres of woodland and farmland and in fact was well compensated for the development rights. That acreage is still a part of the Institute property and is still being used for the original intent, of providing an area of contemplation and relaxation for its faculty. The donated portion of the land to the Park was very small in comparison.

As a preservation organization, we are not questioning whether the IAS has a right to build faculty housing. We object strongly to the location of the proposed development and the misinformation currently accepted as fact as a means of minimizing public opposition. We should be working together to find a reasonable solution that involves IAS building on another portion of the vast expanse of the property. If the Institute's own study proved that actual fighting took place where they want to dig foundations, we can't sit back as responsible Princeton residents and allow decisions to be made based on a misunderstanding of the facts.

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