

BRITISH GEN. WILLIAM HOWE'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

The Americans occupied Bunker Hill overlooking Boston on the evening of June 16th. The British, commanded by General Gage, had no choice but to attack the Americans. On the afternoon of the 17th, Gage's forces attacked. In a hard fought battle, the American were forced to withdraw. While the British were victorious, they suffered heavy losses. The battle shocked the British who were expecting an easy victory.



...The troops were no sooner ashore than it was instantly noticed (that) the enemy were...posted...upon the right being large and full of men with cannon. To the right of the redoubt¹ they had troops the (middle) space (was) not occupied, being exposed to the cannon of the Boston (militia)...From the left of the redoubt, they had a line...and from...their left, close upon the Mystic River, they had a (defense) made with strong railing...which...secured those behind it from (musket fire)...the sentries on the Boston side...heard the

Rebels at work all night without making any...report of it, except mentioning it...in the morning. The first (word) the General had of it was by hearing one of the ships firing at the workman...

...I sent to Gen. Gage to (request) a reinforcement, which he immediately complied with... Our strength being then about 2200 rank...we begun attack...the line moving slowly and frequently halting to give time for the artillery to fire...The (infantry) upon the right were ordered to keep along...beach to attack the left...of the enemy's (fort)... The Grenadiers being directed to attack the enemy's (in) front... executed (those orders) with a (courageous) perseverance², but not with the greatest...discipline, for as soon as...the attack with bayonets was (repelled)...they began firing, and...fell into disorder... The Infantry at was repulsed as well...but by the (courage) of the officers (the attack) was...recovered and carried (on).

Upon the left, Pigott met with the same (difficulty) from the fences, and also had the troops in the houses to combat with...at the second onset he (captured) the redoubt in the (finest) manner and it was (persistently) defended to the last (man). Thirty of the Rebels not having time to get away we killed with bayonets...

But I now come to the fatal (results) of this action...9 officers killed and wounded... The General's returns will give you the particulars of what'll call this unhappy day. I freely confess to you, when I look to the (casualties) of it, in the loss of so many brave officers, I do it with horror. The success is too dearly bought. Our killed, sergeants and rank and

¹ Redoubt: stronghold or fort

² Perseverance: persistence or determination

Primary Source

Battle of Bunker Hill

file, about 160; 300 wounded and in hospital...The Rebels, I have this morning learnt...had 300 killed and a great number wounded...I have heard a bird sing that we can do no more this campaign...to preserve the town of Boston...and it is my opinion...that we must not risk...the loss of Boston...The intentions of these (rebels) are to fortify every post in our way; wait to be attacked at every one... destroying as many of us as they can before they set out to their next strong situation, and, in this defensive mode (the whole country coming into them upon every action)..