

GEN. ARMSTRONG DESCRIBES THE BATTLE OF GERMANTOWN IN A LETTER TO GEN. GATES

After General Howe had occupied Philadelphia, Washington attacked British troops at Germantown. The Americans planned a four-pronged attack. The morning was foggy, and American coordination broke down. As a result, the attack failed, and the American troops were forced to withdraw.



October 9, 1777: Three days ago I wrote you...but (found) that (because of rushing) I have sent your letter to some other gentleman. On the fourth (of October), General Washington attacked the enemy...The British troops were encamped chiefly at Germantown, the foreigners (Hessians) principally betwixt¹ the Falls of Scuilkill and Vanduring's mill...

At the head of Germantown the Continental troops attacked with vigor, and drove the British who

frequently rallied and were drove again and again about the space of two miles, when some unhappy spirit of information seized our troops... (and) they began to retreat and fled in wild disorder unknown to the General, (and) without his orders and beyond his power to prevent. So (with) that a victory...(was) shamefully but mysteriously lost. For, to this moment no one man can or at least will give any good reason² for the (retreat). The conjectures² are these: The morning was foggy and so far unfavorable. It's said our (troops) took the maneuvers of part of our own people for I large reinforcements of the enemy and thereby took fright at themselves or at one another. Some unhappy officer is said to have called out: "We are; surrounded, we are surrounded!"

The enemy also in their flight—I mean part of them—took into a church, and a larger body into Mr Chew's Germantown house where on our part...there a flag was sent in, insulted and the bearer wounded, where also a number of our people fell by the wall pieces and musketry from the house which proved too strong for the metal of our field pieces. .

¹ Betwixt: between

² Conjectures: speculations or guesses