

ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON (JAN. 3, 1777)



...after the victory at Trenton, the American army recrossed the Delaware into New Jersey. At this time our troops were in...deplorable condition. The horses...were without shoes, and when passing over the ice they would slide in every direction...Our men, too, were without shoes or other...clothing; and...the ground was literally marked with the blood of the soldiers' feet... At this trying time Gen. Washington, having now but a little handful of men, many of them new recruits in which he could place little confidence, ordered our regiment to (march), and personally addressed us,

urging (us to) stay a month longer. He...told us that our services were greatly needed, and that we could now do more for our country than...ever...The drums beat for volunteers, but not a man turned out. The soldiers, worn down with fatigue...had their hearts fixed on home...The General wheeled his horse about, rode in front of the regiment and...again said, "My brave fellows, you have done all I asked you to do, and more than could be reasonably expected; but your country is at stake, your wives, your houses and all that you hold dear. You have worn yourselves out with fatigues and hardships... if you will consent to stay only one month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty and to your country..." A few stepped forth, and their example was immediately followed, nearly all who were fit for duty in the regiment, amounting to about 500 hundred volunteers...

Leaving our fires kindled to deceive the enemy, we decamped that night...and took up our...march for Princeton...About sunrise on 3rd Jan., 1777, (on top) of a hill near Princeton, we observed a light-horseman looking towards us...Gen. Mercer observing him, gave orders to the riflemen who were posted on the right to pick him off. Several made ready, but at that instant he wheeled about and was out of their reach. Soon after this as we were descending a hill through an orchard, a party of the enemy...rose and fired upon us... Our (return) fire was most destructive; their ranks grew thin and the victory seemed near complete when the British were reinforced. Many of our brave men had fallen, and we were unable to withstand such superior numbers of fresh troops.

I soon heard Gen. Mercer command in a tone of distress, "Retreat!" He was mortally wounded and died shortly after. I looked about for the main body of the army... (and) discharged my musket at part of the enemy, and ran for...shelter. At this moment Washington appeared in front of the American army, riding towards those of us who were retreating, and exclaimed, "Parade with us, my brave fellows! There is but a handful of the enemy, and we will

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have them directly." I immediately joined the main body, and marched over the ground again. ...The British were unable to resist this attack, and retreated into the College... Our army was there in an instant, and cannon(s) were planted before the door, and after two or three (shots) a white flag appeared at the window, and the British surrendered...