

COL. MILES' ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

On the landing of the British army on Long Island, I was ordered...with my regiment to watch their motions. I marched...(close) to Gen. Howe's camp, and (which was filled with) Hessians. I (laid) within (a) cannon shot of the



Hessian camp for 4 days without receiving a single order from Gen. Sullivan, who commanded (the colonists) on Long Island... The day before the action he came to the camp, and I...told him the situation of the British army; that Gen. Howe, with the main body...would fall into the Jamaica road, and I hoped there were troops there to watch them.

Notwithstanding¹ this information...no steps were taken, but there was a small (encampment) in front of the village which seemed to take up (all) of his attention...He stayed (where he was) until the (major) part of the British army had gotten between him and the lines, by which...he was made prisoner...If Gen Sullivan had taken the (necessary) precaution...there would have been few if any prisoners taken...

... I will here state my position...I lay directly in front of the village of Flat Bush, but on the left of the road leading to New York, where the Hessians were encamped...The main body of the enemy, under the command of Gen. Howe, lay to my left, and Gen. Grant, with another body of British troops, lay (to) my right. There were several small bodies of Americans...to my right, but not a man to my left, although the main body of the enemy lay to my left...

About one o'clock at night (the British) began their march, and by daylight... had got within a mile of our entrenchments... As soon as they moved the firing began...I immediately marched towards where firing was, but...I was stopped by Colonel Wyllys, who told me that... we were to defend a road that lead from Flatbush road to the Jamaica road...but I told him I was convinced the main body of the enemy would take the Jamaica road...to this he consented, and I immediately made a...march... (to) Jamaica road, and to my great mortification I saw the main body of the enemy in full march between me and our lines, and the baggage guard just coming into the road.

¹ Notwithstanding: despite

Primary Source

Battle of Long Island

A thought struck me of attacking the baggage guard... I, however, ordered the men to remain quite...and I took the (aide) with me and crept as near the road as I thought prudent², to try and ascertain³ the number of the baggage guard...I found that there was a whole brigade...commanded by a general officer.

I immediately returned to the battalion and called a council of the officers and laid 3 propositions⁴ before them: 1st to attack the baggage guard and...cut our way through them and proceed...cross the Sound; 2nd to lay where we were until (they) had passed us and then proceed to Hell Gate; or, 3d,...to force our way through the enemy's flank guards into...Brooklyn...The 3d proposition was...adopted, and we immediately began our march, but...fell in with a body of 7 or 800 light infantry, which we attacked without any hesitation, but their superiority of numbers...we could not withstand... I therefore ordered the troops to push on towards our lines...

We had proceeded but a short distance before we were again engaged with a superior body of the enemy, and here we lost a number of men, but took...their commanding officer, prisoner... Finding that the enemy had possession of the ground between us and our lines...I directed the men to make the best of their way as well as they could; some few got in safe, but there were 159 taken prisoners. I was myself entirely cut off from our lines and therefore (attempted) to (hide) myself...I hoped to remain until night, when I intended to try to get to Hell Gate and cross the Sound; but about 3 o'clock in the afternoon was discovered by a party of Hessians and obliged to surrender. Thus ended the career of that day.

² Prudent: wise or safe

³ Ascertain: determine

⁴ Propositions: options