

**Colonel John Haslet**  
**1st Delaware Regiment**



About 7:30 on the morning of January 3, 1777, I was with Washington's army south of Princeton after marching all night from Trenton. Washington gave out orders for the attack on the town of Princeton. I, with the few men left in my regiment, was to march with General Mercer's brigade and follow the main army up a little used road called the Sawmill Road. A little after 8:00 am we passed the house of Quaker farmer Thomas Clarke and learned that a group of British light cavalry had been seen on a hill top about a mile away on the main road to Trenton. Believing this was a morning patrol from the village, Mercer was ordered to take some troops and cross the farm fields to cut off the patrol before it could alert the British troops in Princeton to our approach. As we proceeded to cross the fields, I was concerned that Mercer did not send scouts ahead. However, I marched on foot at the side of Mercer on his horse. Marching was not easy for me because I had fallen into the icy Delaware River the night after the Battle of Trenton on December 26 when we returned to Pennsylvania. This had caused my legs to swell and I was still in great discomfort. Nothing, however, was going to stop my leading the mere handful of troops left in my regiment in this battle.

What we did not know was that the "patrol" was actually more than two regiments of British and that they had also seen us. Their commander turned his column around to intercept us before we got to Princeton and he sent a regiment plus some dragoons to cross the same fields that we were crossing. As we advanced, we approached an apple orchard near a farmhouse and barn and then were surprised to see a British force over a rise in the ground. We exchanged a volley of fire with the British and they followed up with a bayonet charge that threatened to overpower our men, most of whom did not have bayonets. In the action, General Mercer's horse was wounded and the General fell to the ground. He got up and tried to rally his men but was surrounded and repeatedly bayoneted. Our brigade was now in retreat and I attempted to rally our men and hopefully be able to go to Mercer's assistance. However, a British musket ball hit me in the head and ended my life.

- Text by Larry Kidder

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# Eyewitness of the American Revolution



January 3, 1777  
**Princeton Battlefield**  
Society  
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Company of Military Historians - *Military Uniforms in America* plate 521, 17th Regiment of Foot, 1775-87



## Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood 17th Regiment of Foot



General Cornwallis left me in command of a British force at Princeton while he led most of his large army towards Trenton on the morning of January 2, 1777 to attack General Washington's troops there. I commanded three regiments of infantry, some dragoons, some artillerymen, and a number of men who were joining various regiments under Cornwallis. These men were a combination of new recruits, men who had been on detached duties, and men who had been hospitalized in New York and were now recovered. The night of January 2, I received a message from General Cornwallis to leave the 40th Regiment of Foot at Princeton and bring the rest down to Trenton early the next morning so he could finish off Washington's troops.

About sunrise, I marched my troops out of Princeton and down the Post Road towards Trenton. After we crossed the bridge at Stony Brook, we climbed Cochran's Hill where several of my dragoons spotted some unidentified troops about a mile away headed towards Princeton. I sent out Lieutenant Wilmot to scout out these unexpected men and when I learned there were quite a few of them I turned my column around to head back towards Princeton. I sent most of the 55th Regiment of Foot ahead and then turned my 17th Regiment, along with my dragoons and at least some of the men returning to their regiments, to the right to head for part of the American column.

When my men came to the top of the rise we encountered an American force of almost the same size on some farmland near a house, barn, and apple orchard. We exchanged fire that killed and wounded a number of my men and officers before we followed up with a bayonet charge to force the enemy back. They were reinforced but we continued to fight very hard. Although we were holding our own, suddenly an American force led by General Washington himself attacked our left flank and some Americans also appeared on our right flank. Attacked now on three sides, my force was vastly outnumbered and we had to retreat and disperse. Some of us, including me, headed toward Maidenhead (Lawrenceville) while others headed toward Princeton. Several hundred were captured. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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# Eyewitness of the American Revolution

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January 3, 1777  
**Princeton  
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## Ann Clarke Wife of William Clarke



When the British army occupied Princeton in December 1776, a captain and company of regulars came to take up quarters at our house, even though as Quakers we wanted to avoid helping the armies. My husband's widowed mother lived with us on our Stony Brook farm and occupied half the rooms. Shortly after the first captain came, a second captain overgrown in size and terrifying of countenance appeared. With insolence equal if not superior to the enormous bulk of his body, he demanded a room with a bed and fireplace for his lodgings. William was not at home and I was pregnant but still tried to deal with this captain. He did not want to hear about our problems and abused me verbally, swearing and cursing at me so aggressively that I fell into a violent disorder and soon after miscarried.

On January 3, 1777, much of the fighting between the British and Americans took place near our house causing us to fear for our lives. As soon as the battle ended, more than 20 wounded men were carried into our home, a mixture of Americans and British. Two died not long after.

When the British troops under Lord Cornwallis arrived back in Princeton after the Americans left, they came to our house and sent for my husband, and asked him several impertinent questions. Some of the soldiers began insulting me as I lay sick and feeble in my bed. They even robbed me of the cloak that I wore over my shoulders in bed. This infuriated me and I asked them if they always robbed women of their clothes. One man swore at me, calling me a "damned rebel bitch" and said he would run me threw with his bayonet if I uttered another word. While this was happening, soldiers plundered our house of some valuable goods and then drew their bayonets and rammed them through my feather bed while I was lying on it. They swore that they expected to find rebels hiding under it and they would find them. All the while they were doing this, the 20 wounded men were in the next room lying on straw. They never tried to help the wounded, even their own fellow Englishmen, before they left and headed for Princeton. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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**Major John Kelly**  
**Northumberland County Militia**



During the Battle of Princeton, I was with Mifflin's Brigade on the Quaker Road along the Stony Brook. Our main objective was to destroy the bridge over the creek at Worth's Mill. Some men in Mifflin's Brigade were ordered into the battle on the Clarke farms while we stayed on the road. After the action on the adjacent farm fields ended with the British retreat, I was ordered by Colonel Potter to dismantle the bridge. This would hinder a British advance up the road when Lord Cornwallis brought his army back from Trenton once he realized we had deceived him overnight.

Tearing down the bridge was not going to be an easy job, and could be very dangerous, so I worked alongside my men so no one would think I was a coward. As we worked, the British did begin to approach from Maidenhead and began firing at us with two 6-pounder field pieces. Captain Forrest's artillery company of two guns fired back to protect us.

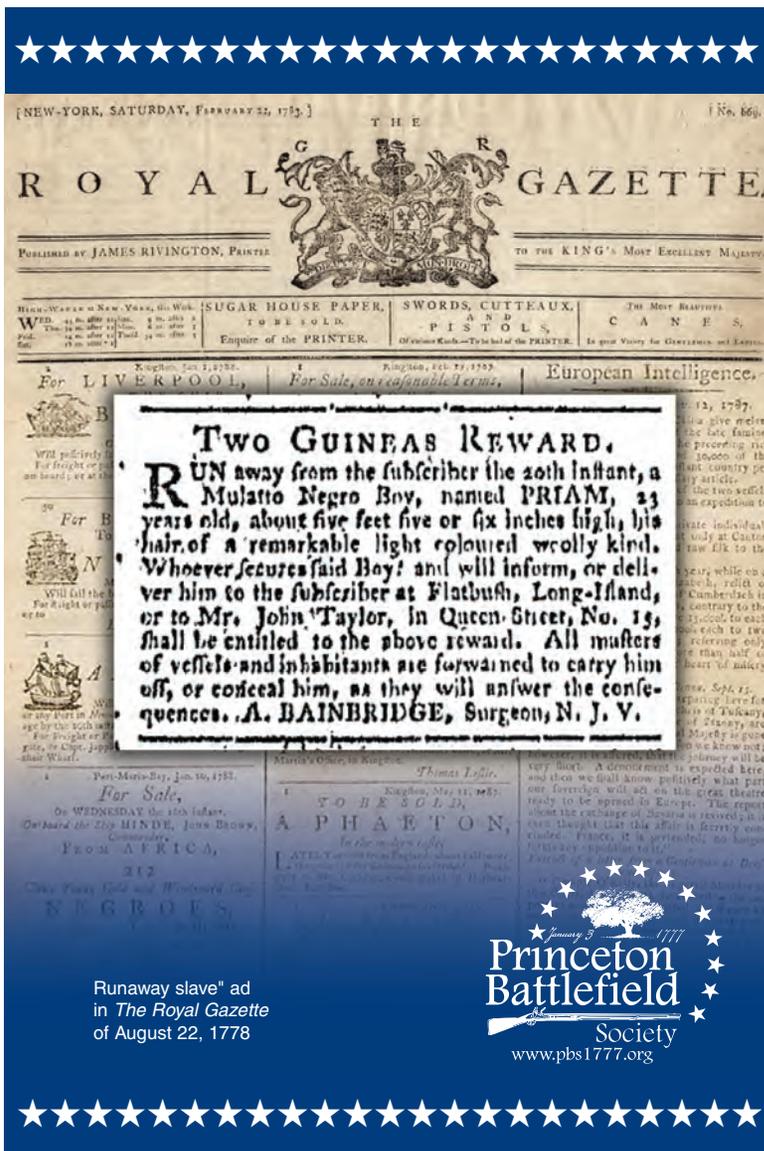
During this exchange of fire, I was hurriedly cutting away on a main beam of the bridge. Suddenly, the beam completely gave way and fell into the icy cold Stony Brook, taking me with it. The bridge was effectively destroyed and my men, thinking I had drowned, retreated from the creek into the woods and went on to join the main army. I was hardly dead, although in great danger, and making exhausting exertions, I managed to get through the high water and floating timbers to get to the bank of the creek. I struggled out and although weighed down by my wet, frozen clothes, I followed after my retreating men. Before I reached them, I ran into an armed British soldier, took him prisoner, and brought him with me to the American camp.

Because of our efforts, the British regulars coming back to Princeton had to ford the swollen Stony Brook and drag their artillery through it also. This really slowed them down and made many regulars almost as uncomfortable as I was. But it allowed our army to be able to safely move on from Princeton. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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Runaway slave" ad in *The Royal Gazette* of August 22, 1778

# Prime Dr. Bainbridge's enslaved man

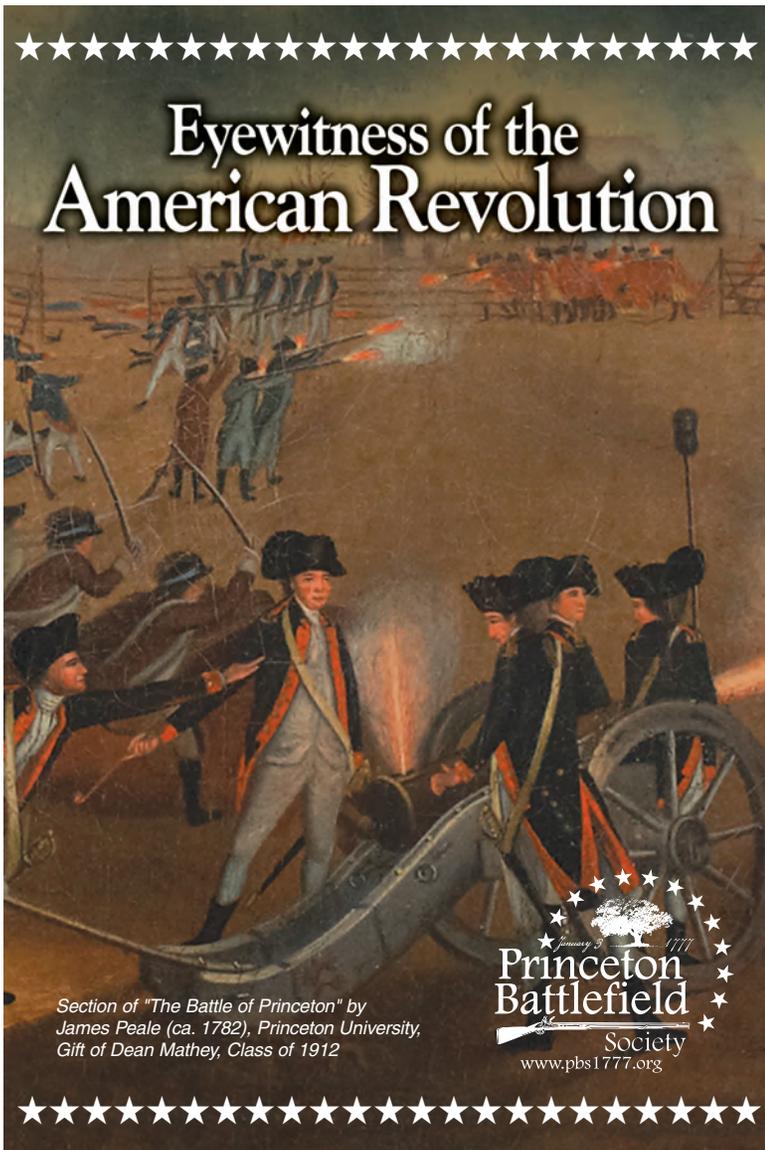


At the time of the Battle of Princeton, I was one of the many enslaved persons living in the village. My owner was Dr. Absalom Bainbridge who lived on the town's main street. At the time of the battle, he was about 34 years old and he and his wife, Mary, had a three-year-old son named William. Among my many duties for Dr. Bainbridge was going to local merchants to make purchases for him. Sometimes when I went to Thomas Patterson's store to buy thread or textiles, he actually recorded my name when noting Dr. Bainbridge's man made a purchase. Usually, he just used the term "Negro" without a name. Dr. Bainbridge also owned a woman who was merely noted in the store records as his "wench!"

When the British army fled from Princeton after the battle on January 3, 1777, my master and his family also fled with them because Dr. Bainbridge had decided to help the British. He left me behind in Princeton for a while, and then I was sent to live with Mrs. Bainbridge's parents in Monmouth County. They were Loyalists just like the doctor. In April that year, Mrs. Bainbridge sold me to her father, John Taylor, for £70, along with a horse and a riding chair at £15 each for a total of £100. By that time, General Israel Putnam commanded the Americans in Princeton and he had to approve this sale because I was considered the property of a Loyalist. I was then taken to Long Island in 1778, where the Bainbridges lived while Dr. Bainbridge served as a doctor with the British. I ran away in August and Dr. Bainbridge put a notice in the paper that described me as 23 years old, five and a half feet tall, and with hair "of a remarkable light colored woolly kind." I returned to Princeton and became a "slave of the State of New Jersey" as confiscated Loyalist property. The local man who became responsible for my fate, Jacob Bergen, believed it would be against what the patriots were fighting for to keep me in bondage and sell me, and he recommended I serve the army as a wagoner for the rest of the war to gain freedom. I did this but still had to make continuous efforts in court to eventually win my freedom. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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**Captain Joseph Moulder**  
Philadelphia Associator artillery



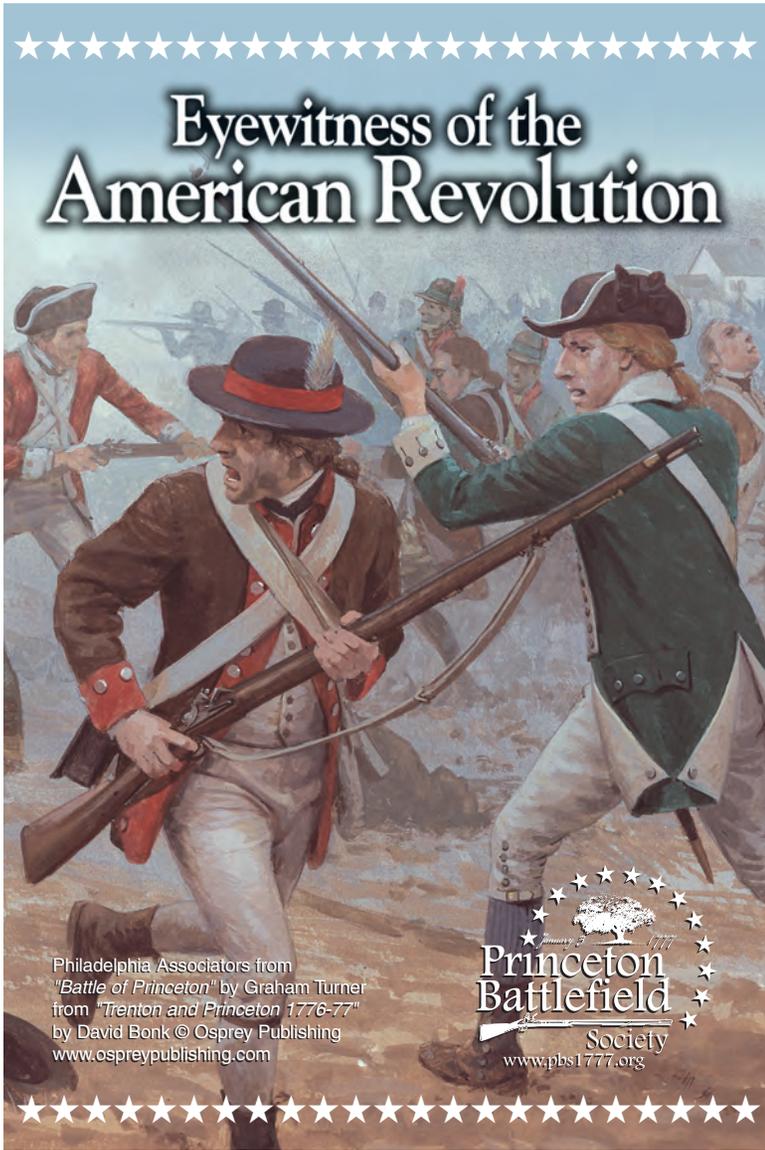
At the Battle of Princeton, I commanded an artillery company of Philadelphia Associators, volunteer militiamen. I was 62 years old and had a long career as a sailmaker and schooner owner. I recruited the men in my company from the Philadelphia waterfront, where they worked at jobs such as seaman, long-shoreman, ship rigger, and ships' carpenter. I had fought in several battles with General Washington's troops during the fall and had made the overnight march from Trenton in the freezing cold the night of January 2-3, 1777. We were with Colonel Cadwalader's brigade following General Mercer's brigade.

Mercer's brigade made the first contact with the enemy forces on the farm of William Clarke and after the deaths of Mercer and his second in command Colonel Haslet, their men retreated from a British bayonet charge. Colonel Cadwalader's men moved forward to support them and prevent their defeat. I ordered my 20 men to bring our two long-barreled 4-pounder cannon quickly into action and stationed them to the right of the Thomas Clarke farmhouse. My young gunners opened fire with grapeshot and canister fired to make every shot tell on the mass of British regulars. Our fire was so intense and accurate that the British thought we had more men and guns than we actually did. We stopped the British charge and allowed our troops to regroup. Washington then won the battle when he led several Continental regiments against the British left flank and some of General Mifflin's men attacked their right flank, nearly surrounding the British.

After the British retreated, we hauled our artillery up to Princeton and helped complete the battle in town, including firing our field pieces at the large stone college building known as Nassau Hall. Our artillery fire caused much damage, especially inside the building, and the British soldiers who had sought shelter there surrendered. When Washington decided to leave Princeton that afternoon, before Lord Cornwallis could bring up his army from Trenton and engage us, my artillery company served as a rear-guard to slow down the first British troops to arrive at Princeton, ensuring our army's safe departure for the hills around Morristown. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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**John Hood** ★ 14  
**3rd Battalion of Philadelphia Associators**

At the Battle of Princeton, I was a private in the Third Battalion of the Philadelphia Associators. We were volunteer militiamen because Pennsylvania did not have a government-organized militia system like most of the other states. We joined companies known as Associations and the men as Associators. After Washington's victory at Trenton, we were motivated to join with him to do more damage to the British regulars.

After a long night march from Trenton the night of January 2, 1777, we arrived south of Princeton near the Stony Brook at a spot on the Quaker Road about 7:30 am. General Washington split his army into three main groups and gave the officers directions on how we would attack the town of Princeton. My company was in a brigade commanded by Colonel Hausegger. Hausegger's brigade was ordered to continue along the Quaker Road, cross the Post Road (known to the British as the King's Highway), and take a back route across farms to the northwest side of Princeton. We would then be in a position to assist Washington when other parts of the army attacked the eastern and southern approaches to the town.

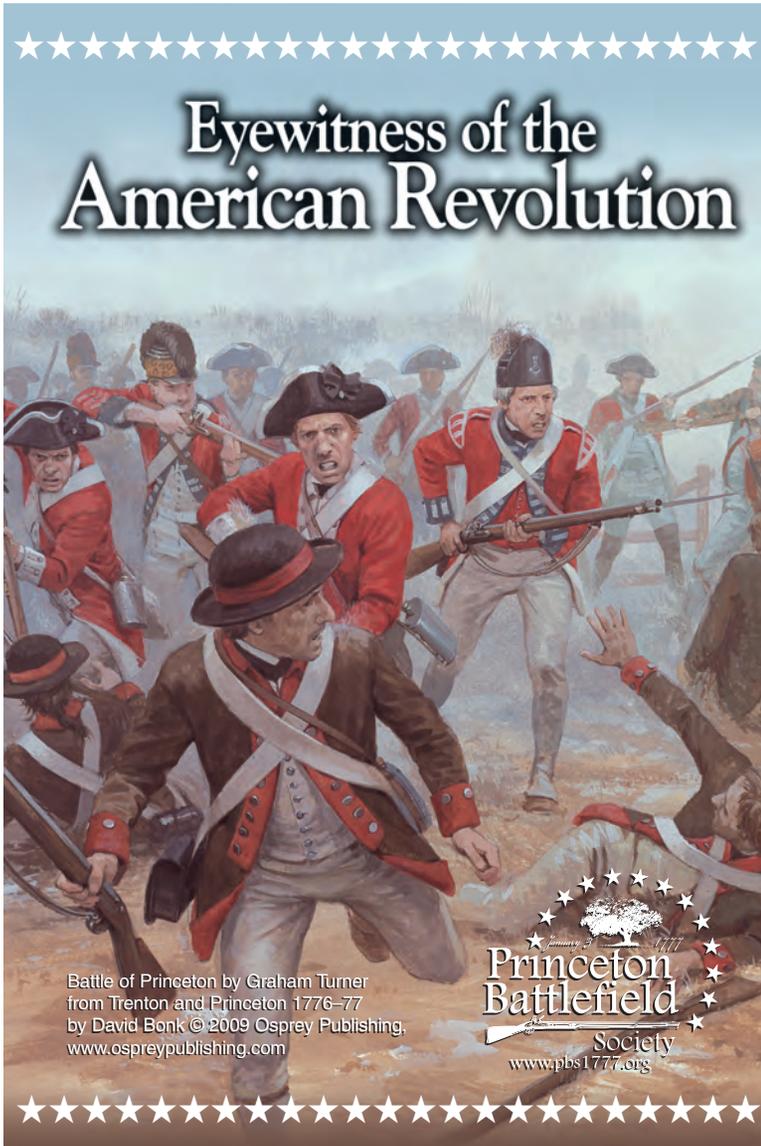
We set off first because we had the longest route to get into position. We did not know that most of the British forces were marching south on the Post Road while we were heading in the opposite direction towards Princeton just out of sight due to the rolling terrain. We reached the outskirts of Princeton about daylight, came through some woods, and a field at the back of town where we saw some defensive earthworks that British soldiers had begun constructing just days before.

From an orchard-covered hill behind the house of a Dr. Bainbridge, I could see the British column ascending Cochran's Hill just across the Stony Brook. I saw this column suddenly reverse its direction and shortly after made out the beginning of a battle on farms south of us. It became apparent that General Washington's plan to attack the town had to be canceled, and the primary action would take place south of town. We did not get involved in the main battle but did help with taking prisoner retreating British soldiers.

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## Ensign George Inman 17th Regiment of Foot



On January 3, 1777, I was a 22-year-old ensign in the British 17th Regiment of Foot at Princeton. I had been born in Boston, Massachusetts, to a family who became active Loyalists in the struggle with Great Britain. About the time of the Battle of Bunker Hill, I joined the British army under General Howe as a volunteer and stayed with the army through the campaign to secure the city of New York as a British headquarters. During that fighting, General Howe commissioned me an ensign in the 17th Regiment of Foot and I joined that regiment as we pursued General Washington's troops across New Jersey. The 17th regiment quartered in Trenton in early December until relieved by three Hessian regiments under Colonel Rall that Washington captured on December 26. General Cornwallis wanted revenge for their capture and concentrated some 8,000 troops at Princeton to attack Washington at Trenton. He took most of his soldiers to Trenton on January 2 but left our regiment with several others at Princeton as a rear guard. We got orders the evening of January 2 to march for Trenton the following morning to support Cornwallis.

We marched from Princeton at about 5:00 am that morning, and about sunrise, just as we had crossed the Stony Brook, we discovered enemy troops marching towards Princeton, and our commander determined to attack them. He turned us around and as we headed back on the King's Highway, our regiment and several other units peeled off to cross several farm fields while other units continued on to town. We found that some of Washington's troops had been detached to attack us and we met them on a farm with an apple orchard. We exchanged fire with them but became far outnumbered as more troops joined them. In the fighting, I was the only officer in the battalion right-wing not severely injured. I was only hit by a buckshot that came through my cross belt and just entered the pit of my stomach and made me sick for just a moment. When we were forced to retreat from the field, I was with a group that escaped to Maidenhead to join our forces there. We passed back over the battlefield about 4:00 pm after Washington's troops had left and arrived at Brunswick the following morning. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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## Joseph Clark

College of New Jersey student – militiaman



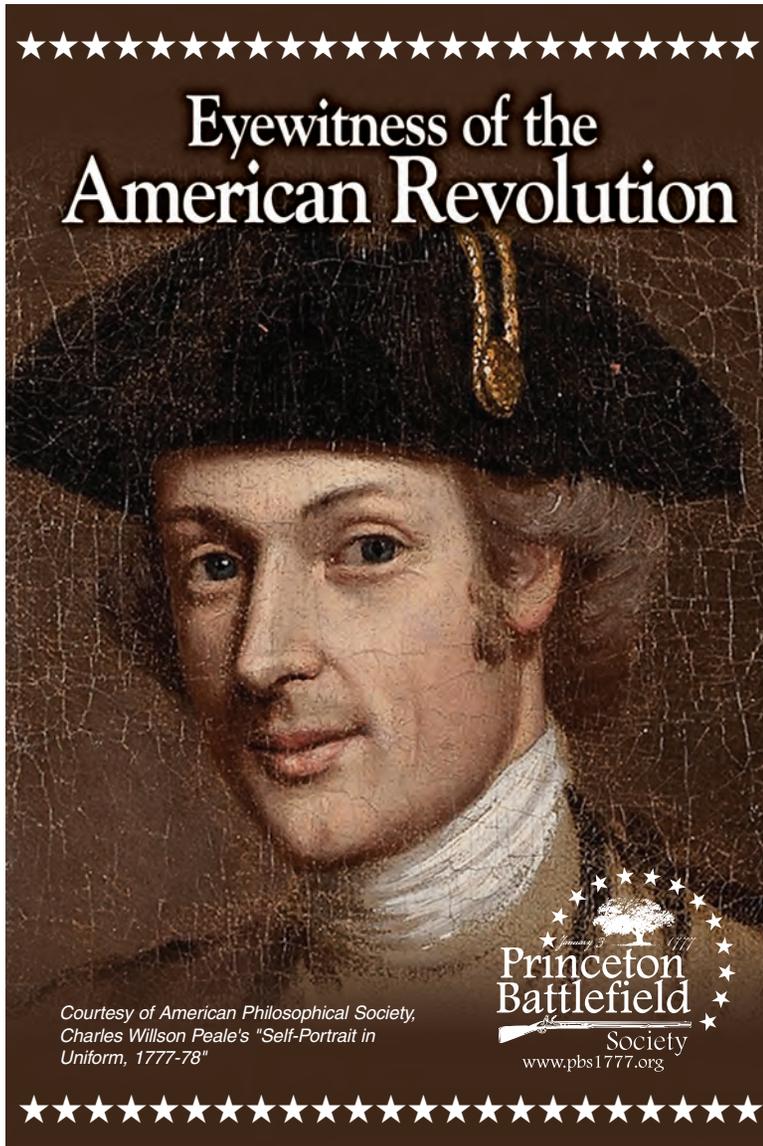
I was a 23-year-old student at the College of New Jersey in Princeton in 1776. At the end of November, it looked like both the American and British armies were going to come through Princeton. Dr. John Witherspoon, the president of our college, closed down the school on November 30 so we could all seek safety. I could not go home to Elizabethtown because the British were already there, so I went to the home of a local farmer I had gotten to know. I was able to join up with a make-shift militia company of men from Princeton and neighboring towns. When I first joined them, I did not have a musket but was able to find one I could borrow to use. We spent the month of December going back and forth across the Delaware River to Washington's encampment there. On the New Jersey side of the river, we worked in small bands to watch British movements and try to protect farms from British plundering. I sprained an ankle that caused me much pain because I couldn't take the time to give it rest to heal.

On the morning on January 3, we set out from Penny Town for Trenton, expecting to join the battle when the fighting renewed. Half an hour after sunrise, gunfire began towards Princeton. We immediately marched back to Penny Town and waited some time for intelligence. We looked for enemy patrols but made no encounters. After getting food and rest for about three hours at a local farmhouse, about 3:00 pm we headed for Princeton and came upon the battlefield. It had a most dismal prospect, with many pale mangled corpses lying in the mud and blood. I felt gloomy at the awful scene. We returned to Hopewell by a rough, tedious march that caused my ankle to swell again and grow painful.

Over the next couple of days, we helped take care of captured British baggage and cared for the wounded. I was appointed to care for a lieutenant injured late in the battle. I cared for him until Friday night, January 10, when he died. I spent the rest of the month helping with British supplies and prisoners and then attacking a British foraging party looking for food for their troops at New Brunswick. - Text by Larry Kidder

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## Charles Willson Peale Philadelphia Associator

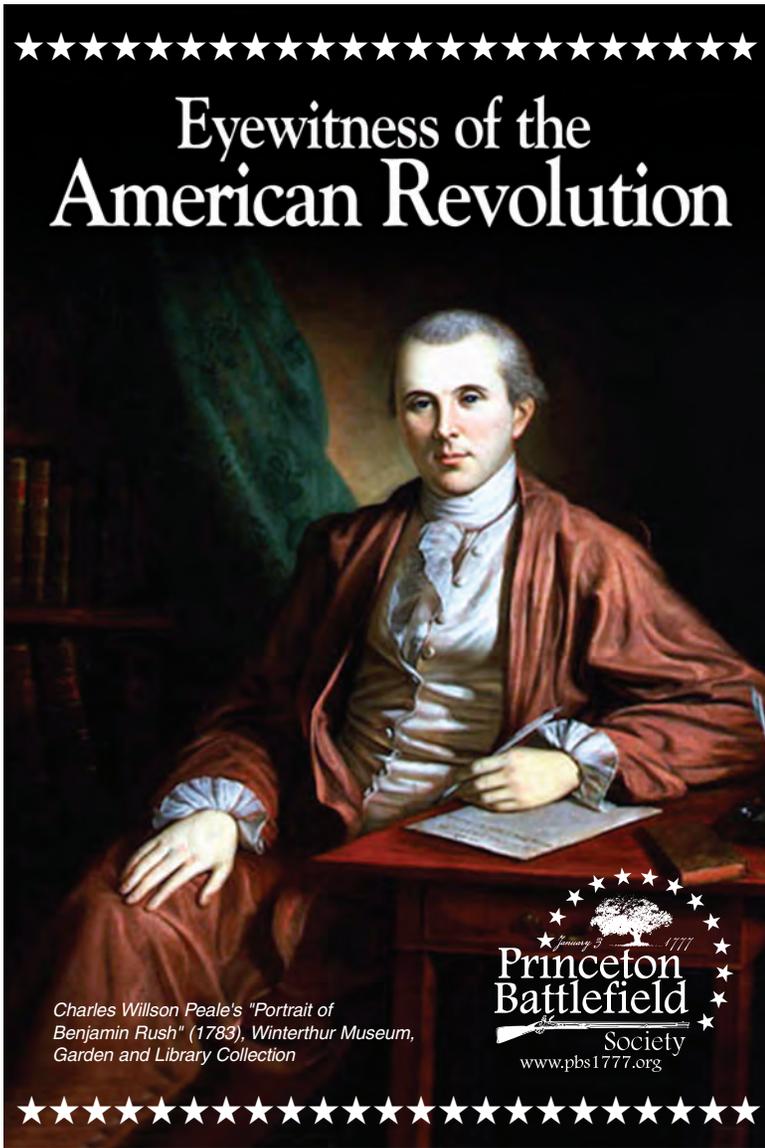


In January 1777, I was about 35 years old and in charge of a company of Philadelphia Associators with General Washington's army assigned to Colonel Cadwalader's brigade. We were at Trenton on January 2 and, after the battle that day, marched all night very rapidly around the British army and headed towards Princeton. Our brigade followed General Mercer's brigade as we started up a back road to surprise the British troops in Princeton. When Mercer's brigade turned left and crossed a farm, they ran into a British force. They exchanged fire and then were subjected to a bayonet charge in which General Mercer was mortally wounded and Colonel Haslet killed. Their men began to retreat. We marched quickly to support them and ran into some of the retreating men. The fighting went back and forth for a short time as the British put up a staunch defense against our more numerous troops and artillery. The advantage turned to our side when General Washington brought in New England troops on our right flank who formed up and withstood the enemy fire with its bullets whistling their thousand notes around our heads. With these troops joining us, we drove the British from the field in disarray.

After the British left the battlefield, we advanced toward the town and halted about a quarter-mile outside until the artillery could be brought up and our troops collected in better order. Then our artillery fire caused the final surrender of the British in town and many were captured. While we rested on our arms waiting to go into town to refresh ourselves, we heard cannon fire in our rear that we learned was at the Stony Brook bridge and that British troops were coming on. We began to march through town and then continued on. We could hear the enemy behind us as we walked on a road which had become very sloppy as the temperature rose. Our troops were so fatigued that many men just stopped, declaring they could go no further. When we finally got them moving, we reached Somerset Court House, I got my men into a loft at a tavern where there was a fine heap of straw, where some Hessians had lain. While my men usually avoided sleeping where other men had, for fear of vermin, they were glad to lie down and were asleep within minutes. I could not get even one man to go with me to look for food. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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**Dr. Benjamin Rush**  
**Continental Army Medical Officer**



Not long after I voted for and then signed the Declaration of Independence, I left Congress and joined George Washington's army to provide my services as a surgeon for his troops. I arrived shortly before the battle at Trenton. After the day-long action at Trenton on January 2, 1777, I worked with several other doctors to care for the men wounded in the battle. We set up a local house as a temporary hospital and worked well into the night before falling asleep beside the men we were caring for. We discovered about 4:00 am that Washington had removed his army from Trenton. No one had told us this was happening and we did not know where they were going. We thought it might be to Bordentown so we put our patients on wagons and drove to Bordentown. On the morning of January 3, we heard the sounds of battle in the direction of Princeton, and soon after learned that Washington had gone there overnight. I was not happy that we had been left behind and that Washington did not make sure to have doctors with him for the battle.

We took our patients to Princeton several days after the battle. I knew Princeton well because I had married the daughter of Richard Stockton, who lived there. My father-in-law was also a signer of the Declaration of Independence but he had been captured by British troops about a month earlier and there were reports that he was being mistreated by the British. Fortunately, he was released by the British under controversial circumstances, and I was able to visit with him while I stayed in Princeton to take care of wounded from that battle.

We began to set up a hospital in the college building, Nassau Hall, but some wounded remained in private homes where we and the local people cared for them. One severely injured man was General Hugh Mercer who had been badly bayoneted several times and hit on the head with the butt of a British musket stock. Even so, I believed he would recover. He lay in a bed in the Thomas Clarke house on the battlefield. This Quaker family and their enslaved woman, Susannah, cared for him and several other men. I was devastated to discover that my dear friend, British Captain William Leslie, had been killed in the battle, and I found myself shedding tears in spite of our victory. - *Text by Larry Kidder*

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