

Eyewitness of the American Revolution



*Photo courtesy
of the Third New
Jersey Grays
<http://jerseygrays.org>*

Princeton
Battlefield
Society
www.pbs1777.org

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*