



Company of Military Historians - *Military Uniforms in America* plate 521, 17th Regiment of Foot, 1775-87

# Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood

## 17th Regiment of Foot



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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*