



Eyewitness of the
American Revolution

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



January 3 1777
**Princeton
Battlefield**
Society
www.pbs1777.org

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*