



# Eyewitness of the American Revolution

Section of "The Battle of Princeton" by James Peale (ca. 1782), Princeton University, Gift of Dean Mathey, Class of 1912

January 3, 1777  
Princeton  
Battlefield

Society  
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# Captain Joseph Moulder

## Philadelphia Associator artillery



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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*