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 Eyewitness of the  
**American Revolution**

*Reenactors of 4th CT Continentals  
 representing Sergeant Nathaniel  
 Root's 20th Continental Regiment*


  
 Princeton  
**Battlefield**  
 Society  
[www.pbs1777.org](http://www.pbs1777.org)



# Sergeant Nathaniel Root

## 20th Continental Regiment



As my regiment descended sloping ground through an orchard on our way to check out what we thought was a British patrol from Princeton the morning of January 3, 1777, a party of British soldiers, positioned behind a bank and fence, rose up and fired upon us. Their first shot passed over our heads and cut limbs from the trees under which we were marching. At this moment, we were ordered to change direction. As my platoon was obeying the order, the corporal standing at my left shoulder, received a musket ball, and fell dead. If he had not bent forward at that moment, the ball might have ended my life instead. We formed in a line, advanced, and fired at the enemy. They retreated to their packs, where they had laid them. I advanced to the fence along the ditch which the enemy had just left, got down on one knee, and loaded my musket with ball and buckshot. Our fire significantly thinned their ranks, and victory seemed nearly complete. But, then the British were reinforced, and many of our brave men had fallen, so we were unable to withstand them and retreated.

Amid the fighting, I remember the exact moment I saw Washington appear in front of our army, riding towards those of us who were retreating, and yelling: "Parade with us, my brave fellows, there is but a handful of the enemy, and we will have them directly." I immediately joined him and helped drive the British from the field.

As soon as the shooting stopped, an officer asked me if I was wounded. I told him I was not, that I never expected to be injured in battle. However, when I checked myself over, I found the end of my forefinger was gone, and I was bleeding profusely. I didn't have any idea when it happened. Checking further, I also found bullet holes in the skirts of my coat, but no further wounds to my body.

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