




Eyewitness of the American Revolution



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

*The Battle of Princeton begins!
Photo by Michael Russell.*



LIEUTENANT SIMON WILMOT

British 16th Light Dragoon Regiment



Early on the morning of January 3, 1777, my troop of horsemen led about a thousand British soldiers under Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood out of Princeton. We headed towards Trenton on the King's Highway [today's Route 206] to reinforce and bring supplies to General Cornwallis, who was planning to renew his attack on General Washington's army at Trenton that morning. Marching down the highway, we passed farms and came to a small settlement around Samuel Worth's water-powered grist mill on the Stony Brook that created flour from the wheat grown by the local farmers. As we approached the bridge over the brook, we saw that the road had been disturbed by something crossing it. We needed to get to Trenton, so we did not try to find out who had left their tracks. [That disturbance had been made very recently by some of Washington's troops sent ahead to help him attack Princeton.]

Just after crossing the bridge, the highway went up a hill and when we reached the top, Cornet Evatt, riding near me, saw a group of men with guns marching through a wood about a mile in the distance on our left. I immediately told Colonel Mawhood about this, and he sent me to ride down to the edge of the wood to see who they were. When I saw that they were men from Washington's army, I reported back to the colonel. But he did not believe me and thought the men might be Hessian soldiers. To be sure, he sent me down a second time to get closer to them. Soon I saw a group of rebel soldiers coming toward me across a farm field with some aiming their rifles at me. I could see that there were many more of them than I had seen before. Although they were so near that it was difficult for me to retreat, I hurried back to Colonel Mawhood and told him there were two other groups of rebels. By that time, Colonel Mawhood had turned our column around, and while sending some of our troops back towards Princeton prepared to attack the enemy troops with our 17th Regiment of Foot and some other small groups, including my troop of horsemen. These actions began the unexpected Battle of Princeton.

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