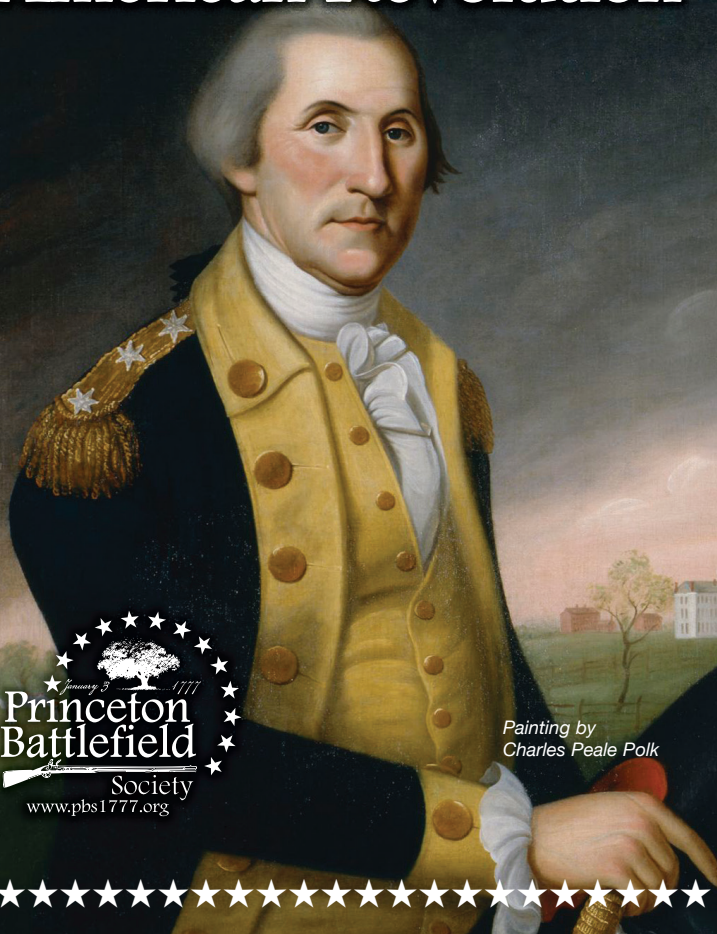





# Eyewitness of the American Revolution



January 3 1777  
**Princeton  
Battlefield**  
Society  
[www.pbs1777.org](http://www.pbs1777.org)

*Painting by  
Charles Peale Polk*



# Jan 3 - General George Washington Commander-in-Chief, Continental Army



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January 3, 1777 was one of the most important days of my life. When day broke I had my army about a mile south of Princeton, New Jersey after completing an all-night march avoiding the British troops camped at Trenton waiting to complete the previous day's battle. I had a very different army than I had had just ten days before at the Trenton victory. Many of my Continentals had gone home when their enlistments expired just two days ago but I had a larger force than on the 26th thanks to the many militia regiments and companies from New Jersey and Pennsylvania that had joined me after that victory.

While I had developed a complex plan to attack the approximately 1,500 British troops in Princeton, that I greatly outnumbered, that plan became useless. General Cornwallis had sent orders to Princeton the night before to send most of the troops down to Trenton early this morning to assist in the battle there. Those troops marching toward Trenton spotted my troops marching about a mile away toward Princeton and we spotted them. At first I did not know how many enemy troops we faced and sent a small number under General Hugh Mercer to intercept them. The British also sent troops to intercept us. Mercer's men ran into more British than we expected on the William Clarke farm and were broken by a British bayonet charge. Troops sent in to assist them could not completely stop the retreat. I believed the only way to defeat those British was to bring two brigades of Continental soldiers out of our line of march approaching Princeton and personally lead them in a charge against the left flank of the British. I risked my life by riding between the lines of soldiers firing at each other but in doing so I inspired my men and, stiffened in their resolve, we drove the British from the field. We then entered Princeton and defeated the small number of enemy as they retreated from there.

This victory capped the ten days of military events that turned the Revolution around, bringing renewed confidence to my side and greatly reducing the confidence of the British. The war would continue for six and a half years before we would eventually win, something that seemed almost impossible when those ten days had begun. *Text by Larry Kidder.*