

Private Asa Potter
Battlefield Script
Fort Mercer
Red Bank Battlefield Park

By: Paul Ferrante

April 7, 2015

Greetings..... [Bow with hat in hand]. My name is Private **Asa Potter** of the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment of the Continental line.

I am part of Captain William Potters Company. We all report to our platoon commander **Lieutenant William Littlefield**. He in turn reports to the company commander **Captain William Potter**..... He's my brother. Then Captain Potter reports to **Major Simeon Thayer** who reports to **Lt. Colonel Jeremiah Olney** who reports to our Regimental Commander **Colonel Israel Angell**.

Historical Note:

Names taken from Muster rolls at Valley Forge December 1777.

As you can see..... in our Regiment..... there is a whole lot of reporting going on.

I'd like to tell you a little story of the battle that took place here way back on

October 22nd 1777.

Our Regiment arrived here on the 18th of October from northern Jersey outside of New York up yonder to help defend the Fort over there..... that's Fort Mercer.

We marched 60 miles over 2 days to get here. We marched straight through the night only stopping to eat some vittles on occasion.

Historical Note:

From the Diary of Colonel Israel Angell, Commanding Officer, 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, Continental Army. "October 18 this Day we arrived at Red Banks about Seven O'clock in the Evening after marching Sixty miles without Sleeping".

We was ordered here since them Regulars and Hessians beat General Washington down in Brandywine in September and took Philadelphia. General Washington tried to take it back but them Regulars beat us again at the battle of Germantown on October 4th. So with all that going on we was in an all fire hurry to get here.

General Washington didn't want them British boys to get there ships up river and supply there troops so he commanded us to defend the forts on the river.

Well when we got here on October 18th we rested and the first thing they had us do the next morning was to help the First Rhode Island boys cut the fort in two since we didn't have enough men to properly defend it. We built us an inner wall and set about putting in Abatis?that's a bunch of sharpened tree branches and logs..... all around

that new wall. We also helped out at Fort Mifflin.... back then called Mud Fort over yonder..... to help in fortifying them in case them Redcoats were to attack them.

Historical Note:

From the diary of Major Simeon Thayer 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, Continental Army. "...I was detached the morning after my arrival at Fort Mercer on October 19th, with 150 men to join Col. Smith on Mud Island when the enemies batteries were playing, where I continued three days, when the Hessians appeared as if they intended an attack on Red Bank, I then received an express from Col. Greene to return with my troops to Red Bank about 12 O'clock, which I immediately complied with and reached the Fort just as the Hessians appeared in sight..."

On October 22nd we had just about finished all them preparations on the fort when we got word that some Hessian fellas were marching on the fort and planned on taken it from us. They got here about 1 O'clock and one of the Hessian officers and a British Major Stuart came up with a drummer and a white flag and told our Colonel Olney that if we did not surrender that they would attack and they would offer no quarter. That means they would kill everyone and take no prisoners.

Historical Note:

From the diary of Jeremiah Greenman 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, Continental "...had scarce an opportunity to get into the Fort, before a Flag came to Colo. Green, who commanded the Fort threatening to put the Garrison to death if he did not surrender it immediately ..."

Well our Colonel Olney said to them..... “Colonel Greene, who commands the fort, sends his compliments and he shall await Colonel Donop”.

Colonel DonopHe was the commander of them Hessians.

Historical Note:

From the diary of Hessian Captain Johann Ewald, Major Stuart carried back the message to von Donop, “Colonel Greene, who commands the fort, sends his compliments and he shall await Colonel Donop.”

Well about 4:30pm them Hessians began they're attack. The first attack came at the south wall were I was defending. It was a fierce fight and the Hessians were very brave.

About a hundred Hessians with fascines..... anybody know what they are? They are big bundles of sticks that are thrown into the ditch so as to make a bridge.....

Anyhow those Hessians charged the rampart and tried to throw them fascines into the ditch so they could climb up the wall of the fort. Well they didn't get close enough to use them as we opened up on them with a heavy fire of musket and cannon. Colonel Greene who was in command of the Fort told us to aim for

the big belt buckle the Hessians were wearing. Those poor fellas didn't have a chance. After about 20 minutes they all retreated and left there dead on the field.

At the same time two other group of Hessians were attacking the northern and eastern parts of the fort. That was the parts that had none of our soldiers in it. As soon as they broke in they thought that it would be easy to take the fort being they did not see any of our boys. They started to "Huzzah" and to come towards the part where we built that inner wall. As soon as they got close our boys opened up with musket and cannon. Since they were now inside the fort there was no place for them fellas to go except back out the way they came. We killed a lot of them Hessians there.

At about 5pm it was all over. In about 40 minutes we had driven them Hessians from the field. They would not stop retreating until they made it back over to Philadelphia the next day.

That night Colonel Olney took out a party and checked for wounded Hessians so as to give them aid. While doing so they found Colonel Donop who was wounded in the hip and legs. They took him to the Whithall house over yonder to be tended.

As for me, before the battle had ended, I was struck in the back by a musket ball over yonder and died in the fort. It was later told that the ball that had killed me was from one of my own. I had been killed by friendly fire.

See them Hessians were not the only ones suffering under the confusion of battle.

Sometimes that's just what happens when men are scared and in the heat of battle.

Historical Note:

*Captain Olney believed that one man, **Asa Potter**, was killed by the fire of his own men. Captain Olney stated, "...We fired at the column that came first. Our men partly on my left and rear fired across my station. When that column retreated and the other came up, I fired and fired upon it, and our men on the other side of the works, also fired across my station. Next day, Lieutenant Samuel Wipple told me he counted 13 musket balls lodged within the breastwork, where it was impossible the enemy could have lodged them..."*

You folks have any questions so far???

ANSWER QUESTIONS

Now I would like to show you the types of muskets that were used here in the battle.

DO MUSKET DEMONSTRATION

Well I want to thank you all very much for listening to me tell my story. If you have enjoyed learning about what happened here we ask that you make a donation to the cause Liberty and help us continue to bring these types of programs to anyone who will listen to us! All of us here at Red Bank Battlefield Park hope you enjoy the rest of your visit with us and have a wonderful day.