

Observations & Recollections  
of the  
Recent Engagement of  
Our Forces & the British at  
Bordentown, New Jersey  
on  
the 7th & 8th Day of  
June 1997

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By  
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Capt. Selin's Independent Rifle Co.

We arrived the morning of the 7th. instant amid cloudy dark skies. My son and I were rejoining our Company after leave to attend to family business.

Bordentown is a small community, lying east on the River Delaware and just south of Trenton.

We were met near the encampment perimeter, which was situated just beyond the town limits, by Sargent Collward.

We were escorted back to our company camp where we cached our gear and met up with the rest of our unit. A warm drink by the fire was greatly appreciated after our long trip along with hearing of the actions our brave unit had taken part in during our absence.

The drums beat the call to assemble for general inspection. I could now see that by the size of our amassed forces we were preparing to take part in a large action.

Our field commanders issued the orders of battle and upon being dismissed the riflemen were led across the assembly field and down through a small patch of wood which opened into a smaller field.

Here we were assigned work detail of cutting timbers and vine to assemble field fortifications in preparation of the British advance.

Our commanders were confident that the bulk of the British forces would advance on us by way of this field. Here they planned to place the heavy cannon to check their advance.

The morning grew hot and we stripped off much of our gear to make it easier to work in the surrounding forest. Trees were felled and removed to the field. The breast works were taking shape quickly. In another part of the field fascines were being rolled and tied.

The men worked diligently despite the heat. Upon being dismissed from this detail and returning to camp we met up with the artillery train which was being moved into the fortifications.

We retired to our camp where we all ate a hastily prepared meal, prepared rations for the next days and readied ourselves for the upcoming battle.

We were in good spirits. Lt. Plyter did his best to give us an idea of what we were in for and how he planned to move us once the battle began.

We didn't have to wait very long, as things began to happen quickly. From reports the British had sent Indian scouts and two officers out to reconnoiter our defenses.

We riflemen were given the job of advancing in front of our artillery through the surrounding wood to impede their incursions.

Our group was the third of four groups of riflemen descending through the trees along a path that led to a small bridge which the British needed to cross in order to form their attack. The plan was to watch the bridge and to prevent any of their advance parties from crossing.

Our Indian scouts had told us that our side of the bridge was clear so our Captain led the first two groups down the path to the bridge advancing at a quick pace.

Lt. Plyter felt that this advance was dangerous and implored the other commanders to slow the descent to the bridge and send out a company of rifles to the flanks to prevent ambush by Indians.

He slowed our group's advance almost knowing of impending disaster. He prepared us by breaking the column and moving us into the trees. Just about then we heard firing and screams as Mohawks attacked our front in ambush.

Lt. Plyter was right and his quick thinking had saved us from complete ruin.

Selin's Company advanced on the left through the woods and got around to the Indians' positions.

Many of the first group of riflemen were dead and the second group were pinned down on the road unable to advance or retreat. The fourth group followed our lead and moved to the right through thick underbrush preventing them from totally surrounding us.

We got upon the savages in good order, killed six and the others ran. We continued our advance to the bridge by way of the woods.

Upon reaching it we saw that the British had moved up their troops quickly once they heard the firing. We were met on our far right by a group of our light infantry. My heart felt good to see them.

The joy was short felt as the British fired their first volley and many of the brave men fell.

We fired from behind trees in groups of twos and tried our best to prevent their advance over the bridge, while our light infantry met them head on.

British lights started advancing across the stream towards us and we then started to retreat back to the field where the cannons lay.

We, with our infantry made our retreat up the woods path the way we came and the rifle men stayed to the flank of the forces amassed behind the artillery.

We were advanced upon by Hessians at one point. We have heard of their hatred for riflemen and upon seeing them there was some anxiety. They advanced through the trees up an incline in front of us. Their tall golden hats being the first thing to rise on the hill caused many of us to fire too soon and the balls went astray.

They were upon us before many of us could reload and we were forced to pull back farther. At this point Lt. Plyter received injury to his leg but was able to lead us behind our main body .

The ground then began to shake as our cannons opened up. A noise such as this we never heard. The force of the firing could be felt in one's belly. The sound was deafening and smoke began to fill the air.

We continued firing upon the enemy from the woods as our main body met them on the field.

We could not stop their advance and the commanders gave the orders to pull back. Our men were in charge of watching the only road of retreat and hold it from attack by Indians advancing through the woods.

This we did very well along with the other riflemen. We all fought gallantly. The cannons were moved back in a most amazing manner and I feel we were able to recover our entire battery.

The French removed past us in their retreat in such an orderly manner as never I have seen during such chaos.

We had some difficulties with Indians along the road. During the firing they would taunt us with their screams and gyrations but we grew wise to this and as we advanced a few rods and fired into the wood they fled. Our forces pulled back until the commanders were able to regroup them on the main field.

Here the formal battle was to be played out as our commanders formed the troops and the British forces amassed on the opposite side of the field.



The sight of the enemy was terrifying. I felt we all would run before the enemy. The cannons began to play on either side and they began their advance.

It did my heart good to see the fine execution our volleys had wrought upon them.

Their advance was cut short. They moved back and advanced again. Our next volley dispatched twice as many as before.

Again they advanced and a well directed line volley cut the rest of them to shreds.

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The remaining forces filed off  
the field.

The heat of the day had taken  
its toll on us all.

We did not pursue them any further.

We removed from the bloody field  
for the evening.