

Gen Hugh Mercer

I am Brigadier General Hugh Mercer of Virginia. I was born in Scotland and took part in the rebellion in 1648 in which we were defeated and I had to leave the country and come to America. I am a doctor by trade and practiced medicine in Fredericksburg, Virginia before the war. I fought under Washington during the 1776 campaign and was especially responsible for the defense of New Jersey while leading a back-up force called the Flying-Camp. I am a close friend of General Washington.

After the combat ended for the day on January 2, General Washington called a council of war at the house of Alexander Douglass which he had designated as his headquarters. He laid out the situation for us and asked for our opinions on what we should do. It may well be that he knew just what he wanted to do next but he took in all opinions before announcing it so that we all felt we were part of the decision. We could not help but think that he only appeared to have put us in an inescapable trap.

The plan we adopted was to leave Trenton as secretly as possible overnight and march by a roundabout route towards Princeton where we could surprise the three regiments General Cornwallis had left there guarding the town and some supplies. From there we could go on and take New Brunswick which was very lightly defended and capture a number of supplies, including the British war chest, and then move on to Morristown in the Watchung Mountains. This would put us on the flank of any British movements in New Jersey and force them to pull back towards New York.



Dr. John Cochran

I am Dr. John Cochran and serving with the Philadelphia Associators along with Dr. Benjamin Rush. Dr. Rush was kind enough to tell people that I was possessed of “humanity as well as skill, and was dear to all who knew me.” On January 2, I worked with Dr. Rush and several young men we had with us as students and treated at least 20 men. We worked into the early morning, when exhausted we lay down on some straw in the same room with our patients who cried and groans, some convulsing, while we lay by their side. We slept for only two or three hours.

About 4:00am, I awoke and got up to step outside the house to pull myself together so I could continue helping our wounded. Once outside, I immediately could tell that the army had left. Apparently no one had thought to inform us in our makeshift hospital that the army was leaving to march to Princeton. I quickly awoke Dr. Rush and the others and we knew we had to get our wounded men out of the area. We found wagons and horses, loaded our wounded into them, but did not know just where to take them. We surmised that the army had retreated to Bordentown, so we set off in that direction. We obviously missed the battle of Princeton the next morning and were not there to help the wounded of that battle. Dr. Rush was furious that Washington had not had the presence of mind to realize how important we doctors were to his men and had headed for battle with no medical officers.