

# MONMOUTH COURT HOUSE

## Lieutenant Hale

Neversunk, 4 July 1778

General Clinton's dispatches will acquaint you of an action on the 28<sup>th</sup> June, of which our Battalion bore the principal part. Lee, acquainted with the temper of our present Commander, laid a snare which perfectly succeeded. The hook was undisguised with a bait, but the impetuosity of Clinton swallowed it.... The Grenadiers were ordered to march to the heights of which the Rebels were already possessed; such a march I may never again experience. We proceeded five miles in a road composed of nothing but sand which scorched through our shoes with intolerable heat; the sun beating on our heads with a force scarcely to be conceived in Europe, and not a drop of water to assuage our parching thirst; a number of soldiers were unable to support the fatigue, and died on the spot. A Corporal who had by some means procured water, drank to such excess as to burst and expired in the utmost torments. Two became raving mad, and the whole road, strewn with miserable wretches wishing for death, exhibited the most shocking scene I ever saw.

At length we came within reach of the enemy who cannonaded us very briskly, and afterwards marching through a cornfield saw them drawn up behind a morass on a hill with a rail fence in front and a thick wood on their left filled with their light chosen troops. We rose on a small hill commanded by that on which they were posted in excellent order, when judge of my inexpressible surprise, General Clinton himself appeared and crying out 'Charge, Grenadiers, never heed forming'; we rushed on amidst the heaviest fire I have yet felt. It was no longer a contest for bringing up our respective companies in the best order, but all officers as well as soldiers strove who could be foremost, to my shame I speak it. I had the fortune to find myself after crossing the swamp with three officers only, in the midst of a large body of Rebels who had been driven out of the wood by the 1st Battalion of Grenadiers, accompanied by not more than a dozen men who had been able to keep up with us; luckily the Rebels were too intent on their own safety to regard our destruction.

The column which we routed in this disorderly manner consisted of 4000, the force on our side not more than 800. In the mean time the pursuit of this column brought us on their main Army led by Washington, said by deserters to be 16,000. With some difficulty we were brought under the hill we had gained, and the most terrible cannonade ensued and lasted for above two hours, at the distance of 600 yards. The shattered remains of our Battalion being under cover of our hill suffered little, but from thirst and heat of which several died, except some who preferred the shade of some trees in the direct range of shot to the more horrid tortures of thirst.

W.H. Wilkin. *British Soldiers in America*. (1914):257.