

Scott, Captain William, The Battle of Germantown
1777
Mss.SMs.Coll.9

American Philosophical Society
105 South Fifth Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19106
215-440-3400
manuscripts@amphilsoc.org

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Title	Scott, Captain William, The Battle of Germantown
Date	1777
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Location	LH-MV-E-17
Language	English
Abstract	Captain William Scott (b.1752) was a company commander in the British 17th Regiment of Foot. He participated in many battles and campaigns during the American Revolutionary War, including the Philadelphia campaign. This three-page memorandum describes the events leading up to, and the conduct of, the Battle of Germantown, on October 4, 1777.
Preferred Citation	Captain William Scott, The Battle of Germantown, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

Captain William Scott, born in England in 1752, was captain of the Light Infantry Company of the 17th Regiment of Foot during the American Revolutionary War. He joined the 17th Regiment when he purchased an ensign's commission on January 15, 1770. Rather than earning promotion through merit, Scott purchased further promotion to lieutenant, on September 23, 1772 and a captain's commission on August 23, 1775. While not earning his promotions, Captain Scott distinguished himself at the Battle of Princeton in 1777. Overwhelmingly outnumbered by American forces, Scott and fewer than 50 soldiers of the 17th Foot defended British supply trains, forcing the Americans to withdraw and delivered the supplies to the frontlines. Scott and the 17th took part in the entire Philadelphia campaign, being heavily engaged in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown, where the regiment played a vital role in relieving the British forces stationed at the Chew family home, Cliveden.

Although it could not be determined if Captain Scott remained with the 17th Foot after the Battle of Germantown, the regiment remained at Philadelphia until the British garrison abandoned the city, withdrew to New York, and participated in the raid on Martha's Vineyard in the fall of 1778. It participated in actions in Stony Point, New York, as well as in South Carolina. Part of the British army that surrendered at Yorktown, the 17th Foot was transferred to the Canadian garrison at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and returned to England in 1787.

Work Referenced: McGuire, Thomas J. The Philadelphia Campaign: Germantown and the Roads to Valley Forge, Volume 2 (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007), 295.

Scope & content

The memorandum is three pages long, written on light blue paper, bound with a typed transcription. It chronicles events leading up to and during the Battle of Germantown. Scott describes the capture of a prisoner on the Lime Kiln Road just prior to the battle that alerted the British to the presence of American forces. The memorandum details the various companies of the larger British units that took place in the battle, including Scott's own 17th Light Infantry Company of the 17th Regiment of Foot. Casualties are mentioned, but not in detail. Historian and author Thomas J. McGuire, using the Sol Feinstone Collection of the David Library of the American Revolution, identified Captain Scott as the author. The memorandum was a gift of Robert L. McNeil, Jr., in 2006.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Provenance

Acquisition Information

Gift of Robert L. McNeil, Jr., 2006. (McNeil number M20.)

Processing Information

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Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Military Records

Personal Name(s)

- Abercrombie, James, 1706-1781
- Burgoyne, John, 1722-1792
- Erskine, William, Sir, 1728-1795
- James, Grant, 1720-1806

Subject(s)

- American Revolution
- Germantown, Battle of, 1777
- Military History

- Philadelphia History

Other Descriptive Information

This three page letter from Captain William Scott recounts the Battle of Germantown. It details the British troops involved in the engagement. Its content adds to SMS COLL 7 and 10.