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THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW BRUNSWICK IN THE  
STRUGGLE FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE UNVEILING OF THE ROSBRUGH  
MEMORIAL,<sup>1</sup> FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TRENTON, N. J.,  
JANUARY 23, 1917.

BY THE REV. GEORGE H. INGRAM,

Chairman of the Committee on Historical Materials,  
Presbytery of New Brunswick.

A sorrier prospect can scarcely be imagined than that which  
confronted General Washington and his patriot army as they

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<sup>1</sup> The Rosbrugh Memorial was erected by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in the churchyard of the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton. It stands on the east side of the church edifice, facing State Street. It is six feet in height, and is of Georgia marble. The dedication took place January 23, 1917. The inscriptions are as follows:

*South Face—*

IN MEMORY OF  
REV. JOHN ROSBRUGH  
CLERICAL MARTYR OF THE REVOLUTION  
MODERATOR OF THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW BRUNSWICK, 1776  
CHAPLAIN 3<sup>d</sup> BATTALION NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PA.  
MILITIA, DECEMBER 25, 1776  
BAYONETED TO DEATH BY HESSIANS IN TRENTON  
JANUARY 2, 1777

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ERECTED BY THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW BRUNSWICK, 1917

began their retreat across New Jersey. Since the disastrous battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776, door after door of hope closed in turn. And now, having nowhere else to go, as a possible refuge he sought the west shore of the Delaware River. Daily, through desertions and expirations of enlistments, his force was fast melting away. And ragged and hungry were the men who remained in the ranks. Tory sympathizers were doing their utmost to show the colonists that the war was over; that it was the height of folly for them longer to hold out; and offering them flattering terms, if they would but give up their rebellion.

From the American standpoint, such was the situation as the winter of 1776 closed in.

But presently, as if by magic, a mighty transformation came. That little handful of famished, despised recruits turned upon their easy-going, self-satisfied foe, and won the battle of Trenton. A few days later by a midnight march they again surprised the enemy, and added the battle of Princeton to their laurels. And still again, on a hot June day the following year, within the bounds of this same Presbytery, on the field of Monmouth, Washington won the third of his four victories of the Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

These three decisive struggles, in as many parishes of this Presbytery, turned the tide of war in favor of the colonists. That first victory, which was won about this church, was acknowledged, by Lord Germain, as the turning point, when in a speech in the British Parliament, he declared: "All our

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*North Face—*

REV. JOHN ROSBRUGH  
 BORN OF SCOTCH PARENTS  
 GRADUATE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, 1761  
 PASTOR OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN GREENWICH,  
 OXFORD AND MANSFIELD WOODHOUSE (NOW WASH-  
 INGTON) WARREN CO., N. J., 1764-1769  
 ALLEN TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON CO., PA., 1772-1777

<sup>2</sup>The Presbytery of New Brunswick at that time included Monmouth County.

hopes were blasted by that unhappy affair at Trenton,"<sup>3</sup> and the inscription on the bronze door of the Washington Monument in Trenton perpetuates this admission.

Historians have not stopped to note the fact that these three important victories were won on Presbyterian soil, and within the bounds of the Presbytery which at that time was, by all odds, the leader in the American colonies. But in this presence it may not be counted amiss to give some reasons why Washington found it comparatively easy to win victories under such surroundings.

In the first place, as Bancroft declares:

"We shall find the first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came, not from the Puritans of New England, or the Dutch of New York, or the planters of Virginia, but from Scotch-Irish Presbyterians."<sup>4</sup>

Reference is here made to the Mecklenburg Resolves, which preceded the Declaration of Independence by more than a year.<sup>4a</sup>

Again, it is to be borne in mind that the Presbytery of New Brunswick was the center of the Scotch-Irish colonization in the middle colonies. Hanna, in his volumes on *The Scotch-Irish* enumerates no less than a hundred different settlements of these people within the bounds of this Presbytery as originally constituted.<sup>5</sup> And if we take in adjoining territory

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Debates and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, Vol. XII, p. 391, as quoted in Stryker: *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 482.

<sup>4</sup> George Bancroft, *History of the United States* [1855 ed.], Vol. V, p. 77. See also E. W. Smith, *The Creed of Presbyterians*, 1901, p. 144.

<sup>4a</sup> See Ford, *The Scotch-Irish in America*, 1915, pp. 474-476 and 588ff.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Hanna: *The Scotch-Irish, or The Scot in North Britain, North Ireland, and North America*. See "Colonial Presbyterian Churches and Settlements" in this work, Vol. II, pp. 118ff.

*Cf.* Henry Jones Ford: *The Scotch-Irish in America*, p. 498f.: "As soon as Washington had crossed the Delaware he was in touch with the Scotch-Irish settlements in Bucks and Northampton Counties and felt the sustaining influence of active popular support. Clothing and blankets were collected by committees of citizens for the use of his soldiers.

the number of these settlements is doubled, if not tripled. These Presbyterians from the old world, and those who sympathized with them, dominated the thought of the Presbyterian Church of all this region. What they believed, they believed with all their might. And they were ready to stand by their convictions to the very last ditch.

Thus when Washington came into such an atmosphere his army was transformed, as it were in a night, into a Gideon's band.

The Tennents, the leaders of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, at its outset, were far away in advance of their times. And they and their friends were subjected to all sorts of troubles by their brethren who had not begun to think along the lines of a constructive America, particularly as pertaining to education and religion. Nevertheless Gilbert Tennent and his Log College men stood like a rock in defense of the right as they saw it. And they electrified the middle colonies with a new life. The Great Awakening, too, stirred all the Atlantic seaboard, as Whitefield, the mighty preacher, exalted evangelical religion throughout his journeyings from Georgia to Massachusetts. And nowhere did he receive more enthusiastic support, and nowhere did his ministry leave a more lasting impression than in the Scotch-Irish settlements of which the Presbytery of New Brunswick was the very heart and core.

Then there was another reason why the Scotch-Irish rang true for independence, no matter how untoward the outward appearance might be. These colonists had fled from the old world, because they could not longer tolerate the tyranny of their rulers in spiritual things. And now, as these same rulers were reaching their strong arm over the sea to dominate

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. . . More important than the direct aid was the assurance of protection against surprise by volunteer scouts in every direction. The Scotch-Irish farmers could be depended upon to watch the roads and convey prompt intelligence of a movement in any quarter.

“With his base of operations thus made secure, Washington was in a position to conceive and execute the brilliant exploits by which he gained military renown in the crisis.” Also see p. 472.

them in the new world, every drop of blood in every Scotchman and every Ulsterman was sacredly pledged to Washington and his cause.

Taking these things into account, they afford quite a sufficient reason that on the pages of the history of those times Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth are synonymns of victory.

Regarding the services of the members of this Presbytery, in the foreground stands Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, President of the College of New Jersey, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a member of Congress throughout the Revolution. Notwithstanding his many duties he was a faithful attendant upon the meetings of Presbytery. Preacher and educator as he was, Dr. Witherspoon was counted a man of affairs in the counsels of Congress in all those times of stress. With the leader of the Presbytery as one of the men at the helm in Congress, it is not strange that his brethren were ever inspired to do their utmost for the success of the cause for which he planned.

Next in this roll of honor stands the name of Rev. Alexander Macwhorter,<sup>6</sup> who studied theology with the Rev. William Tennent, of Freehold (Old Tennent), and was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick July 4, 1759. He was soon afterwards dismissed to the Presbytery of New York to become the pastor of the First Church of Newark. When Washington reached Newark on his retreat, when the cause of the patriots was at its lowest ebb, Dr. Macwhorter joined him. He seems to have been an intimate friend and counsellor of the Commander-in-Chief from that very day. For a few weeks later he attended the council of war held, just before the battle of Trenton, at the Merrick house in Upper Makefield Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup> He was present again at the council of war in the Douglas house in Trenton, on January 2, 1777, when the plans for the Princeton

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<sup>6</sup>Jonathan F. Stearns, D.D.: *Historical Discourses Relating to the First Presbyterian Church in Newark*, pp. 216-261.

<sup>7</sup>Stryker: *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 85.

march were made. To join the army when he did required a man who put his convictions above everything else. No wonder that Washington admitted such a patriot, minister though he was, into his innermost plannings. Such men kept hope burning in the Commander's breast, when to all outward intents hope seemed well nigh dead. Later Dr. Macwhorter was sent on important missions; once to North Carolina, to cheer up the patriots far removed from the seat of war, by informing them of the progress at the front.

Then there was another man whom the Presbytery of New Brunswick trained and then gave to the Presbytery of New York, Rev. James Caldwell, who was ordained by this Presbytery September 17, 1760, and was thereupon dismissed to become the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethtown, as it then was. The enemy burned his church, and murdered his wife. Mr. Caldwell was appointed Assistant Commissary-General, and in this capacity he rendered yeoman service. At the battle of Springfield, N. J., June 23, 1780, the material for wadding running short, he took the hymn books from the church, and giving them to the soldiers shouted, "Put Watts into them, boys." He was murdered by a Tory November 24, 1781.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. Dr. John Woodhull succeeded William Tennent as pastor of Old Tennent Church in 1780, coming from Leacock, Pa., a Scotch-Irish colony, in the Presbytery of New Castle. Here he had been known as the ardent patriot who had roused all the able-bodied men of his congregation to march to the front, he going along with them as chaplain. In the battle of Monmouth he took the place of a cannoner who had fallen beside his gun. For forty-six years Dr. Woodhull was a mighty force for patriotism and righteousness in his parish and throughout the Presbytery.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See this JOURNAL, Vol. VI, pp. 260ff.: "A Revolutionary Hero: James Caldwell," by Harry Pringle Ford. Cf. Bret Harte's poem: "Caldwell at Springfield."

<sup>9</sup> *Records of Presbytery*, Vol. III, p. 199. Cf. Rev. Frank B. Symmes: *History of Old Tennent Church*, pp. 111ff. Dr. Woodhull served old Tennent Church some time before uniting with the Presbytery.

Rev. Charles McKnight was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick July 19, 1744, and served a number of churches of the Presbytery. He was pastor at Cranbury and Allentown in 1744. Afterwards he accepted a call to Shrewsbury, Middletown Point, and Shark River. He was wounded at the battle of Princeton. Afterwards he was arrested while preaching in Monmouth County, and his church was burned. From the privations of that imprisonment he died, January 1, 1778, and is buried in Trinity churchyard, New York City.

Ashbel Green, afterwards President of the College of New Jersey and a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, as a youth was an orderly sergeant of militia.

Rev. Elihu Spencer, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, as a patriot became so obnoxious to the enemy that a reward of a hundred guineas was placed upon his head. He was sent by Congress to North Carolina on the errand already mentioned, with Dr. Macwhorter.<sup>10</sup>

James F. Armstrong was accepted as a candidate for the ministry by the Presbytery of New Brunswick at the beginning of the war. But owing to the disturbed condition of affairs in these parts, he was transferred to the Presbytery of New Castle. Afterward he was appointed chaplain in Gen. Sullivan's Brigade. Upon the death of Dr. Spencer he became the pastor of the First Church of Trenton.<sup>11</sup>

Rev. John Guild, pastor of the Hopewell Church (Pennington) was an enthusiastic patriot, and efforts were made to lay hold of him. His church building was despoiled.<sup>12</sup>

In short, the Presbyterian ministers to a man stood for the patriot cause, and on this account they were marked men.

Side by side with the ministers of the Presbytery stood the laymen.

First on this honor roll is to be placed the name of one who,

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<sup>10</sup> Rev. John Hall, D.D.: *History of the Presbyterian Church, Trenton, N. J.*, pp. 125-178.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-227.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel B. Ketcham: *Bi-Centennial, the First Presbyterian Church of Pennington, N. J.* See also George Hale: *A History of the Old Presbyterian Congregation of the people of Maidenhead and Hopewell.*

born in Trenton, of Scotch-Irish descent, was in his younger days an officer of the First Church of Trenton, Col. Joseph Reed.<sup>13</sup> Col. Reed became General Washington's secretary and aide-de-camp. At a time when Washington sorely needed men upon whom he could rely implicitly, he found such a man in Col. Reed. And on account of his knowledge of his home town and Princeton—he was a graduate of the College of New Jersey—his services in the Trenton and Princeton campaigns were of inestimable worth to his superior; in fact had it not been for the knowledge furnished by Col. Reed, the results might have been very different. An effort was made to bribe him. To the diplomat who approached him, he said, "I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the King of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it."

Richard Stockton, of Princeton, a member of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was an officer of the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton.

Laymen of the First Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick<sup>14</sup> were conspicuous for service rendered in various capacities. Their church edifice was burned by "the public enemy."

Dr. Moses Scott, an elder of this church, was Director-General of the Military Hospital of the Revolution. He took part in the battles of Trenton and Princeton.

Colonel John Neilson, also an elder of the First Church of New Brunswick, was a colonel of a battalion of "minute men," and afterwards a brigadier-general of militia. He was ruling elder for forty years.

Colonel John Bayard, afterwards a ruling elder of the First Church of New Brunswick, took part in the battle of Trenton. He was also a member of the Committee of Safety.

Old Tennent<sup>15</sup> churchyard contains the graves of her mem-

<sup>13</sup> Stryker: *Op. cit.* (see Index).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Davidson: *A Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church of the City of New Brunswick.*

<sup>15</sup> Symmes: *Op. cit.*



bers who fought for independence. The statement has been made that between one and two hundred revolutionary soldiers are buried in this historic God's acre.

Colonel Nathanael Scudder, an elder in Old Tennent, was an officer in the Monmouth County Militia, and a member of the Committee of Safety.

Thomas Henderson was an elder in Old Tennent, was a major of minute men, and later a lieutenant-colonel.

Signal service was rendered by the laymen of Trenton (which in those days included Ewing as a very important factor), Hopewell (Pennington), and Maidenhead (Lawrenceville).<sup>16</sup> They served as boatmen, guides, spies, and in any capacity to which they were called to help.

Among these were Colonel Joseph Phillips, Captain Philip Philips, Adjutant Elias Phillips, John Muirhead, John Guild, William Green, Ensign Amos Scudder, Stephen Burroughs, Ephraim Woolsey, Edwin Burroughs, David Lanning, and Joseph Inslee.

Amwell First Church<sup>17</sup> contributed its share in the service of Captain John Schenck who performed an important part in leading an attack upon an expeditionary force of the enemy, led by Cornet Geary.

Some day the Presbytery may secure a complete roll of the laymen who served in the patriot cause.

Of the Scotch-Irish settlements of the middle colonies, one especially calls for more particular mention upon this occasion.

In 1717 a colony of people from the North of Ireland arrived on the Kennebec River. That winter was an exceedingly severe one in New England. And the next spring these emigrants were on the wing again in search of a more hospitable clime. This time they sought their abode in "The Forks of the Delaware," the common designation in early times of what is now Northampton County, Pennsylvania. And here

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<sup>16</sup> Stryker: *Op. cit.*, p. 138, note.

<sup>17</sup> Rev. John Backer Kugler: *The History of the First Presbyterian Church in Amwell*, p. 120.

they set to work to build homes, break up the soil for the sowing, and commence to live again. There were two colonies of these people, one near the Delaware, and the other near the Lehigh. It is the latter, the Craig Settlement,<sup>18</sup> that calls for some details. These settlers erected a church for themselves on the west bank of the Catasauqua Creek, a mile north of the village of Weaversville. And the frequent calls for supplies of preaching entered upon the records of the Presbytery of New Brunswick<sup>19</sup> attest the important place that the worship of God had in their estimation. And likewise, they looked carefully to the education of their children. It was a typical Scotch-Irish colony. Visitors, to-day, are soon reminded by the people of Northampton County of the points of interest associated with the early life in this region, which to this day is commonly spoken of as "The Irish Settlement."

In 1769 there came to serve them as supply a Scotch minister by the name of John Rosbrugh.<sup>20</sup> Of the early life of this man little is on record. Probably he was born in Scotland in 1722,<sup>21</sup> although some authorities place the date in 1714. His parents left for Ireland soon after this son was born. Be it remembered that in Scotland those were the days

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<sup>18</sup> Rev. John C. Clyde: *Genealogies, Necrology, and Reminiscences of the Irish Settlement*, pp. 214ff.; *History of Allen Township Presbyterian Church and the Community which Has Sustained It, in What Was Formerly Known as the Irish Settlement, Northampton County, Pa.* (Philadelphia, 1876).

<sup>19</sup> The first reference in the records of the Presbytery of New Brunswick to the "Forks" Church is at the meeting at Bound Brook, held "July the last," 1739, where we read: "Agreed that Mr. G. Ten': preach at the Forks sometime this Fall." See this JOURNAL, Vol. VI, p. 340.

<sup>20</sup> There are several spellings of this name. The one here used is found in his letters. Cf. Rev. John C. Clyde: *Rosbrugh, A Tale of the Revolution* [out of print]; and his work, *The Genealogies, Necrology, etc.*

<sup>21</sup> There is great variation as to the date of his birth. Clyde places it in 1714; Sprague, in 1717; some descendants place it as late as 1724. Rev. J. E. Peters places his age at the time of his death at fifty-five years, on the testimony of his widow who upon applying for a pension so testified. If this is reliable, Rosbrugh was born in the year 1722. See *Pennsylvania Archives, Fifth Series, IV*, pp. 547f.

when Presbyterians did not have things made exceedingly pleasant for them. Some years after, the Rosbrughs joined the procession across the seas, in search of a wider place and a freer air, where they might worship their God without molestation.<sup>22</sup>

Well on in years, John Rosbrugh turned his thoughts toward preparation for the gospel ministry, graduating from the College of New Jersey in the class of 1761. The records of the Presbytery show that candidate Rosbrugh had rather a difficult time passing his trials for licensure, but at last he reached his goal, when Presbytery ordained him, December 11, 1764, pastor of Greenwich, Oxford, and Mansfield Woodhouse (now Washington) churches.<sup>23</sup> He had for a parish nearly all of what is now Warren County. He did not have an easy time of it. Frequent complaints found their way to Presbytery. Finally in 1769 he was released from his charge.

Then he began supplying in "The Forks of the Delaware." He was not unknown in Allen Township Church, for some years before, he, a widower of years' standing, had found favor in the eyes of Jane Ralston, daughter of James Ralston, the leading ruling elder in that church. In 1772 Mr. Rosbrugh was installed pastor, and in this field all went happily.

On April 23, 1776, the Presbytery of New Brunswick met in Bound Brook and Rev. John Rosbrugh was chosen moderator.

The Presbytery met again in the intervals of the meeting of Synod, in Philadelphia, May 23, 1776. And the records show that the following members were in attendance: "Mr. Rosbrugh, the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, William Tennent, Elihu Spencer, John Debaw, and Jeremiah Halsey. Elder John Walker."<sup>24</sup> There were ten absentees. This was the last meeting of Presbytery that Mr. Rosbrugh attended.

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<sup>22</sup> Where they settled has not surely been determined. Some authorities think that Danville, Sussex County, N. J., was the locality.

<sup>23</sup> See *Historical Magazine*, New Series, V, 250. Also D. X. Junkin: *First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich, Warren County*.

<sup>24</sup> *Records of the Presbytery of New Brunswick*, Vol. III.

That fall the news from the army threw gloom over everybody in the "Forks." Things seemed to be going from bad to worse. One day, according to common report, the pastor appeared in the pulpit with a letter from the front, which he read. It was a cry for help from General Washington, sent out from his headquarters in the Keith house in Upper Makefield Township, calling for the immediate mustering in of the militia of Northampton County. The story goes that Mr. Rosbrugh preached a sermon from the text, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judges, v. 23). Such was the magnetism of the preacher and such the spirit of the men of Allen Township that a company marched away from this parish, reporting at the front within eight days.<sup>25</sup> Some of the much vaunted preparedness of modern days is put to blush by the expedition of this Rosbrugh company. It is declared that practically every able-bodied man in the Allen Township Church served at one time or other in Washington's army.

It was this sort of spirit ever rallying to the cause of independence that finally brought victory to the colonies.

Reaching the front, Pastor Rosbrugh was made chaplain<sup>26</sup> of the Third Battalion of the Northampton County Militia. The new recruits hurried on from Philadelphia and Mr. Rosbrugh wrote his last letter home from Bristol Ferry under date of December 27, 1776. Here there were sixteen

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<sup>25</sup> Washington's letter calling for the militia of Northampton County bears the date of December 22, 1776. The Allen Township company reported Philadelphia by December 25, 1776, for Mr. Rosbrugh's first letter home bears that date. See Clyde's *Irish Settlement*, pp. 266, 267.

The only way to get in the steps enumerated in Clyde's *Rosbrugh, A Tale of the Revolution*, is to conclude that preparations must have been under way before the receipt of Washington's letter. For Washington's letter, see Rev. John Baer Stoudt: *The Life and Times of Col. John Siegfried, Northampton, Pa.*, 1914, p. 42.

<sup>26</sup> The Council of Safety held a two days' session, beginning on December 25, 1776. The commission as chaplain was actually made out on the last day of the meeting, December 26.

hundred recruits hastily gathered after the manner of the Rosbrugh company.<sup>27</sup>

On January 2, 1777, Washington, with a portion of his forces, made a demonstration against the enemy, going out as far as Maidenhead (Lawrenceville). As the British appeared in force the patriot army slowly retreated toward Trenton. It had been a muddy day. But toward night there came a change in temperature. Toward evening Washington gave orders to withdraw to the south side of the Assumpink Creek, where the remainder of the army was already intrenched. The camp reached along the banks of the creek for two to three miles from the Delaware River.<sup>28</sup> Chaplain Rosbrugh, unacquainted with military ways, was left behind. He was eating his supper at the "Blazing Star" tavern, which stood where Mechanics Bank now stands, on the southwest corner of State and Warren Streets, when he was apprised that the enemy was upon him. Rising, he found that his horse was gone. He tried to cross at the bridge, but could not. Then he went toward the ford, which was about where Warren Street crosses the creek, only to meet disappointment again. Then in a clump of trees he was overtaken by a company of Hessians, under a Tory officer, who bayoneted him to death, while he cried for mercy and prayed for his captors. Captain John Hays, of his own congregation, and his brother-in-law, James Ralston, found the body, and at the risk of their lives, wrapped it in a cloak and buried it where their pastor had fallen.<sup>29</sup>

January second came on Thursday. On the next Monday, the Rev. George Duffield, chaplain of Congress, who also served in the army as he had opportunity, learning of the death of his friend, searched out the grave and had the body taken up to "inter in the burying ground."

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<sup>27</sup> In Stryker's *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 253 and 433, are given detailed accounts of the reinforcements.

<sup>28</sup> For a description of the movements of the patriot army on January 2, 1777, see Stryker, pp. 258ff.

<sup>29</sup> Clyde's *Reminiscences*, pp. 270ff., contain Captain John Hays' account of the death of Chaplain Rosbrugh. Also see pp. 356ff.

The death of Rosburgh made a profound impression. It called attention to the atrocities<sup>30</sup> that were being committed by the enemy. Congress appointed a committee to inquire into the conduct of the enemy in these matters. *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, of April 24, 1777, begins the report of this committee. The report, as published, contains the following summary of their investigations: "The committee found it to be the general opinion in the neighborhood of Princeton and Trenton that the enemy before the battle of Princeton had determined to give no quarter. . . . A minister of the gospel at Trenton, who neither was nor had been in arms was massacred in cold blood, though humbly supplicating for mercy." The report is signed by the secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson.<sup>31</sup>

In connection with this report, in the issue of the *Post* of April 29, 1777, there is an affidavit by Rev. George Duffield, as follows:

The following circumstances relative to the death of the Rev. Mr. Rosburgh [*sic*], chaplain of a battalion of the Pennsylvania militia, who was killed at Trenton, on the evening of the second of January, last (the day of the engagement here), I was informed by some of the inhabitants in those parts, on whose veracity I could well depend, viz.:

That, as a party of Hessian jagers marched down the back of the town, after our troops had retreated, they fell in with M. Rosburgh, who surrendered himself a prisoner; notwithstanding which one of them struck him on the head with a sword or cutlas, and then stabbed him several times with a bayonet, while imploring mercy, and begging his life at their hands.

That this account was given by a Hessian who said that he had killed him (save only that he did not know Mr. Rosburgh's name, but called him a *damned rebel minister*) and that Cortland Skinner, and several other officers, who were present at the relation of the fact, highly applauded the perpetrator for what he had done. That after he was thus massacred, he was stripped naked, and in that condition left lying in the open field, till afterwards taken up and buried near the place by some of the inhabitants.

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<sup>30</sup> Hall: *The History of the Presbyterian Church, Trenton, N. J.* (new edition), in Ch. XIII, refers to the atrocities committed in the vicinity of Trenton. See also the Appendix, p. 333.

<sup>31</sup> See Ford's edition of the *Journal of Congress*, Vol. VII, p. 43. The committee consisted of seven members, one of whom was Dr. Witherspoon.

The above was from the information of others.

And on Monday following I saw the corpse, when raised in order to inter it in the burying ground, and observed that besides the strokes which had been given him on the head with some edged weapon, he had been stabbed with a bayonet in the back of the neck, and between his ribs on the right side, which last appeared remarkably deep, and from which, even then, there issued a large quantity of blood.

GEORGE DUFFIELD.

Philadelphia

Personally appeared before me, James Young, Esq., one of the Justices of the Peace, the Rev. George Duffield, and made oath to the truth of the above relation.

Sworn the 25th, day of April, 1777 before me, James Young.

Different stories became current as to the manner of death, the place of death, and the place of burial.

This affidavit of Dr. Duffield, who was afterwards pastor of the Pine Street Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, settles some of these differences. While Dr. Duffield does not, in so many words, declare that the second burial was in the First Presbyterian churchyard, yet it disposes of two claims, one, that he was buried in Philadelphia, and another that he was buried in Ewing. If the First churchyard was open for the burial of Hessians who fell in the battle of Trenton, surely this same God's acre would be the natural resting place for the Moderator of the Presbytery of New Brunswick.

Rev. John Hall, D.D., states in his *History of the Presbyterian Church of Trenton* some of the facts as here related, and declares that in his day there were no traces of Chaplain Rosbrugh's grave.<sup>32</sup> Taking into consideration the unsettled conditions at the time, and the fact that the friends of the massacred minister lived many miles away, it is not strange that no stone was set up to mark the resting place.

Concerning this tragic death the records of the Presbytery could scarcely say less than they do. The next meeting was held at Bedminster, April 21, 1777. There is the following record:

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<sup>32</sup> See pp. 163, 164.

“The Revs. Messrs. Tennent and Rosbrugh have deceased since our last Presbytery.”<sup>33</sup>

Those were strenuous days, and the Presbytery of New Brunswick had no time for so much as the semblance of a tear for their fallen comrade.

The next meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia was in Philadelphia on May 21, 1777, when the Presbytery of New Brunswick reported “that the Rev. Mr. John Rosborough was barbarously murdered by the enemy at Trenton on January second.”<sup>34</sup>

And now, after one hundred and forty years since the bullets flew over this place, and the gallant Rosbrugh was done to his death, the Presbytery of New Brunswick, with the coöperation of their friends, writes in stone here in this revolutionary churchyard the name of this patriot pastor.

And here, hard by this historic highway, as, in the generations the throngs of people shall come and go, this ROSBRUGH MEMORIAL will ever rehearse the story of the service, the heroism and the sacrifice of this brave man, yea and of the men of the colonies, in risking their all that they might hand down to their children the priceless heritage of American Independence.

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<sup>33</sup> *Records of the Presbytery of New Brunswick*, Vol. III.

<sup>34</sup> *Records of the Presbyterian Church* (New Edition), p. 477.