

Nathan Hale Primary Sources and Timeline

A Letter from Nathan Hale to Dr. Aeneas Munson in New Haven

New London, November 20, 1774

Sir,

I am happily situated here. I love my employment: find many friends among strangers: have time for scientific study, and seem to fill the place assigned me with satisfaction. I have a school of more than thirty boys to instruct, about half of them in latin; and my salary is satisfactory. During the summer I had a morning class of young ladies—about a score—from five to seven o'clock, so you see my time is pretty fully occupied, profitably I hope to my pupils and to their teacher.

Please accept for yourself and Mrs. Munson the grateful thanks of one who will always remember the kindness he ever experienced whenever he visited your abode.

**Your friend,
Nathan Hale**

Aeneas Munson Jr, whose father was one of Hale's favorite professors at Yale wrote:

“In dress he was always neat neat; he was quick to lend a helping hand to a being in distress, brute of human; was overflowing with good humor, and was the idol of all his acquaintanced.”

**An excerpt from Nathan Hale's Army Diary
(existing in the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford)**

Duty outside Boston in 1775 turned out to be pretty boring for many of the young soldiers. They were engaged in a holding action, a stalemate, with the British occupying the city and the Americans surrounding them. Nathan's diary from this period indicates he spent a lot of time reading about how to be an effective officer.

"it is of the utmost importance that an Officer should be anxious to know his duty, but of greater that he should carefully perform what he does know. The present irregular state of the army is owing to a capital neglect in both of these."

He also drilled his men, played football and other games, and visited with friends.

"Clean'd my gun—pld some football, & some chequers."

"Promised the men if they would tarry another month they should have my wages for that time."

" October 6, 1775 Near 100 cannon fired at Roxbury from the enemy. Shot off a man's arm & killed one cow,"

**A Letter from Nathan Hale to his family
(stationed at Bayard's Mount outside New York)**

"It gives me pleasure to observe the health which prevails in our army. Every day the army is improving in discipline and it is hoped that we will soon be able to meet the enemy. My company which at first was small has now increased to eighty men. We are hardly able to judge as to the numbers of the British army. Undoubtedly there are enough to cause too much bloodshed. .. For about six or eight days we have been expecting the enemy. The event we leave to heaven."

**Diary Entry of September 22, 1776, of Lieutenant Frederick
MacKenzie, A British Officer written on the day of Hale's hanging:**

"He behaved with great composure and resolution, saying he thought it the duty of every good Officer, to obey any orders given him by his Commander-in-Chief, and desired Spectators to be at all times prepared to meet death in whatever shape it might appear"

**From the memoirs of Captain William Hull (of the Continental Army),
quoting British Captain John Montresor, who was present at the
hanging and who spoke to Hull under a flag of truce the next day:
September 23, 1776**

“On the morning of his execution my station was near the fatal spot, and I requested the Provost Marshal to permit the prisoner to sit in my marquee, while he was making the necessary preparations. Captain Hale entered, he was calm, and bore himself with gentle dignity.....He asked for writing materials, which I furnished him: he wrote two letters, one to his mother..... and one to a brother officer. He was shortly summoned to the gallows. But a few persons were around him, yet his characteristic dying words were remembered. He said, **‘I only regret that, I have but one life to lose for my country.’**”

Nathan Hale

June 6, 1755	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Born in Coventry, Connecticut
1769	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attends Yale College
1773	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduates from Yale with honors becomes a teacher
1775	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joins the Connecticut Militia, elected first sergeant
July 6, 1775	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joins Continental Army's 7th Connecticut Regiment
March 1776	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoted to Captain
Sept 1776	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteered to spy and report on British Troop Movement
Sept 21-22 1776	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captured by the British and hanged