

First Veteran Among Many

Veteran Private (Pvt.) Zachariah Hankins was born on January 18, 1754. He died in May of 1850 (age 96) and is buried in the [Cook Family Cemetery](#) located on Blyth Lane, South Knolls, Jackson, NJ. Zachariah married Phebe Herbert. They had nine children, Richard, Nancy, Euphemia, Mahala, James, Elias, Louis, Charles and Phobe. They Lived in Van Hiseville (formally Irish Mills), Jackson, NJ for most of their lives.



Cook Cemetery prior to FSSK



Cook Cemetery at FSSK 2020

Along with Pvt. Zachariah, his wife, Phebe Hankins, and Green Cook, are the graves of unknow individuals in the Cook Family Cemetery.



This picture is the Dedication of the Cook Cemetery August 25, 2009. The Cook family is on the left and the Hankins family is on the right. (Photo courtesy of James Hankins.)



Pvt Zachariah Hankins began this military enlistment when he joined the 2nd regiment of the Monmouth Militia in late 1776 (The Revolutionary War). Pvt Hankins began his Military service under Captain Reuben Randolph in the 2nd Regiment. (Nov. 1776). One month later he joined Captain John Cook's Monmouth Militia, 2nd Regiment, and marched to join up with Washington's Army in Pennsylvania.

Pvt Zachariah crossed the Delaware with George Washington's Army and engaged the British forces in Trenton and Princeton. The battles occurred over a span of nine days (December 26, 1776–January 3, 1777) and are notable as the first successes won by the Revolutionary General George Washington, in the open field battle.

Pvt Zachariah then marched with Washington's Army to Morristown, NJ, where they went into winter quarters. During the cold winter of 1777 George Washington and the Continental Army hunkered down at Valley Forge, Morristown and other locations. The British had successfully occupied Philadelphia. No one knew better than Washington that his army was on the brink of collapse, and instead fell back to rest and refit his troops. Congress had no money, so the troops dined on rice and vinegar, and were forced to bind their bleeding, frost-bitten feet with rags. Desperate the harsh winter, Pvt Zachariah remained with Washington's Army. George Washington later described his men marching without clothes, blankets, or shoes—leaving bloody trails in the snow. Pvt Zachariah remained in Morristown until April 1777.

After the severe winter Hankins returned home. The journey home was treacherous due to the continuous necessity of avoiding the British troops. Hankins then performed Militia duties at the Monmouth Court House. In the latter part of 1777, he received orders to march to Pennsylvania. He joined up with Washington's Army once again and engage the British near Germantown, PA. On the morning of October 4, 1777, the Battle of Germantown began and was a major engagement in the Philadelphia campaign of the American Revolutionary War. Unfortunately, The British forces were too much for Washington's Army. They had to retreat. Once again Pvt Zachariah was discharged and went home. He was called up on monthly assignment to handle many skirmishes near the Jersey Shore and Mount Holly.

With the French signing the Treaty of Alliance (February 6, 1778) the French became allies of the United States and engaged in the war, along with the Military support of the Dutch, and Spain. The British forces were forced to move out of Philadelphia and marched to New York. On June 18th, 1778, Washington Army engaged the British at Monmouth in Freehold, NJ. Monmouth was the largest battle of the American Revolution. On the last night of the battle the British retreated in the middle of the night. Although tactically a draw, it was a strategic victory and a political triumph for the Continental Army and General Washington.



Pvt Zachariah fought bravely during the fierce Monmouth battle. Shots and shells were landing everywhere, and his musket was damaged either by gun or cannon fire. Desperate Pvt Zachariah found himself without a weapon. He saw a dead British soldier's gun nearby, pick it up and keep on fighting. That gun was a British Army issued, English Short-Land Musket. The firearm was a shorter version of the English "Brown Bess" Musket. That Musket remains in the Hankins' Family Archives to this day.



British Issued English Short-Land Musket British Army's Muzzle-loading Smoothbore Flintlock

These actual pictures of the musket and bayonet were supplied by the Monmouth County Historical Association, where the items are housed.

The barrel lock plate is stamped with GR which is the Royal Armory for Georgius Rex. (King George).



Flintlock Firing Mechanism with Brass Fittings



Bayonet, English-type with triangular blade.



Direct descendants of Zachariah Hankins hold the gun that he carried at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. from left to right are: William Hankins, Douglas Hankins, Joseph Hankins, James Hankins, Stephen Hankins, James Shaw, Sharon Shaw and in the baby carrier, Kacie Rose Hankins.

The gun, and other artifacts are in the Monmouth County Historical Association Archives, Freehold, NJ.

On September 25, 2003, Pvt Zachariah Hankins was honored by the US Congress with a flag flown over the US Capital, requested by Congressman Rep. Christopher H. Smith (NJ-04), to acknowledge the bravery of Pvt Zachariah Hankins during the Revolutionary War. He is also recognized by the Monmouth County Chapter of the Woman and Sons of the American Revolution for his loyal service and bravery.

handed down 5 generations

Among My Souvenirs

WEST LONG BRANCH — When Zachariah Hankins fought the British at the Battle of Monmouth outside Freehold in 1778, he picked up a musket that has been handed down through his family to the present day.

But he didn't carry off the musket because he was a gun collector.

Shot and shell were flying hot and heavy during one point of that battle on a sweltering June 28th, and his musket was suddenly shattered in his hands.

It was no place to be without a weapon.

The private quickly picked up a musket from the battlefield and got back into the fighting.

As it turned out, the musket he found was a British Army issue, the famous large-caliber "Brown Bess."

Hankins carried the piece throughout the Revolutionary War, and it became a fond keepsake in his family long after he died at the age of 96.

Today, with an estimated value of \$2,000, it is the possession of his great-great grandson, Arthur Hankins, a retired stock broker and businessman, who lives here.

The musket was forged at Tower Barracks, London, according to Hankins, weighs 16 pounds and has an effective range of 40 yards. It is in excellent condition and still has its original bayonet.

Hankins' great-great grandfather enlisted as a private in December 1776 in Dover Township, joining the Second Regiment of the New Jersey Militia. He was a resident of Dover at the time.

He also fought in the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Germantown and Mount Holly.

In addition, he had wintered with the American troops at Valley Forge and Morristown.

At Mount Holly, his company served with Morgan's Riflemen, a tough group of wilderness rangers, to hold the right flank as the main body hit the British.



Asbury Park Press
Arthur Hankins displays the Revolutionary War musket his great-great grandfather picked up at the Battle of Monmouth.

Despite all the fighting that Hankins saw as a young man, he was eventually mustered out of the militia in Freehold at the end of hostilities with nary a scratch.

On July 31, 1832, he appeared before the Inferior Court in Freehold to apply for a \$12-a-month pension which he received until he died in 1850.

To obtain the pension, Hankins had to file a sworn testimony of his service tenure because he hadn't received written enlistment or discharge documents. The deposition is still filed in the Monmouth County Hall of Records.

His Brown Bess was passed down in the family to Arthur Hankins'

grandfather, the late Charles Hankins, and then to him.

Charles Hankins was born in Monmouth and established a large building contractor business in New York City. After retiring, he built a home in the Elberon section of Long Branch where he lived until his death.

"I don't have any use for it at my age," said Hankins, "so I guess I'll one day pass it on to the Monmouth County Historical Society.

"It has an interesting history and we know quite a bit about its ultimate owner in the Revolution. You don't find that with many weapons that old."

Note: Article from the Asbury Park Press March 14, 1982, written by the Hankins Family.

The Veterans Committee of the Men's Club of FSSK would like to thank James and Joseph Hankins for the information provided on the life and service of their family ancestor, Private Zachariah Hankins. He is the "First Veteran Among Many" of those who have served our country here at FSSK.

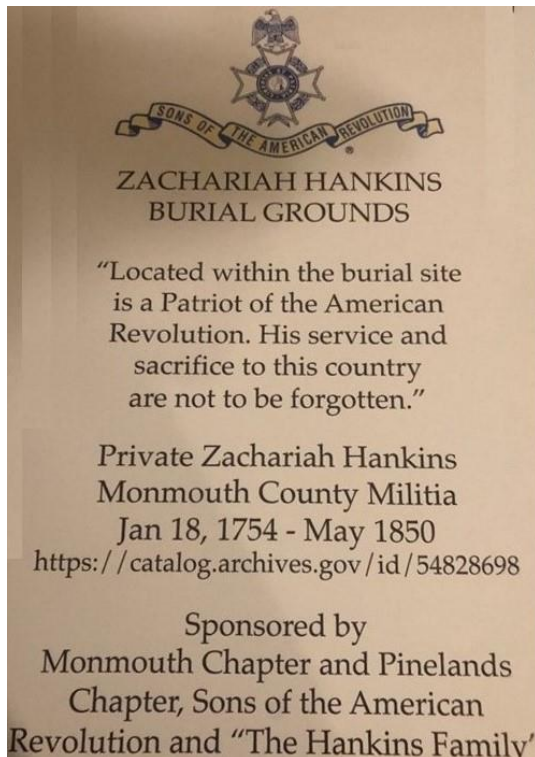
Article Written by Vincent and Debora Scatuccio. 12-26-2020.

References:

- *The Hankins Family*
- *Ancestry.com*
- *Monmouth County Historical Association*
- *Asbury Park Press*

Update 2023:

On May 27, 2023, a memorial service was held near PVT Zachariah Hankins grave at Four Season at South Knolls (FSSK) cemetery. The ceremony included ancestors of the Hankins family, including James Hankins 4x grandson of Zachariah and other family members. The FSSK Veterans Committee members and residents of South Knolls.



This plaque was placed at the FSSK cemetery to honor Zachariah Hankins for this service to our country and the sacrifice he and his family made to the United States of America.

The service honored PVT Hankins with an honor guard presenting the colors and Taps.