



The first massed resistance by American troops was near the crossroads of Oak Tree and Plainfield Roads, (Edison) where Cornwallis' column was fired upon by a body of men under Conway, plus the accumulated militia. They were joined by three companies of Pennsylvania-German volunteers of Major Nicholas van Ottendorff, newly placed under the command of the French Colonel Armand-Tuffin with three brass field pieces marking the first use of French command and arms in the war. Conway's troops were strongly posted on the hill watching the endless line of British bayonets glittering in the rising sun as they marched. As soon as they came within range, they fired the cannons at them. The British, disregarding the fire, charged the hill with fixed bayonets. The Hessian and British infantry separated the two brigades as they fought through "Martin's Woods," but Conway was able to rejoin the main body of Stirling's troops at The Short Hills, Ash Swamp, (Edison-Scotch Plains) with little loss.

Washington, observing the British lateral movements from the high point in the Watchungs in Greenbrook, now called Washington's Rock, discerned that they intended to break through the mountains and ordered every able-bodied man, even some from hospitals, to move into the defense lines at the Gaps. Howe, with General Vaughan's column somewhat behind schedule, marched around the swampy areas of Samp Town some units penetrating American defenses as far as Plainfield Ave., Plainfield, before joining the rear of Cornwallis' column.

Back at The Short Hills, Lord Stirling, divided by Cornwallis, drew his troops into battle formation on rising ground on a bare hill near Ash Swamp (Old Raritan and Rahway Roads) determined to make a stand. His force of 1,798 men included "Scotch Willie" Maxwell's Brigade consisting of four New Jersey Regiments under Colonels Matthias Ogden, Israel Shreve, Elias Dayton and Ephraim Martin (with Lt. Col. David Rhea in command) along with Conway's and some of Armand's troops. In addition, they were joined by Morgan's riflemen as well as an undetermined number of militia.