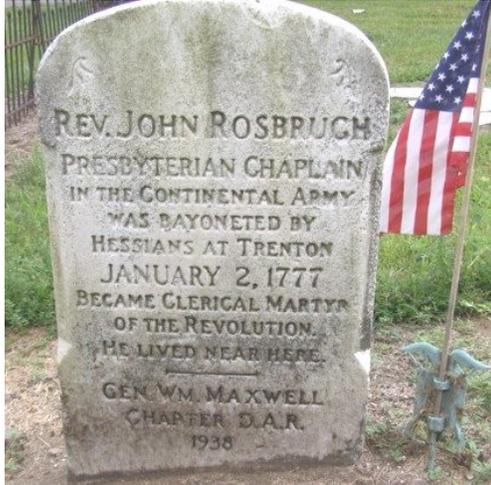# Rev John Rosbrugh, Presbyterian Chaplain

Chaplain John Rosbrugh was the first U.S. Army chaplain killed in battle. He perished in the Battle of Assunpink Creek during the Revolutionary War on January 2, 1777.

After the American surrender at the Battle of Fort Washington in November 1776, General George Washington wrote a letter to the citizens of Northampton, Pennsylvania requesting that all able bodied men to come to the assistance of the Continental Army. As a 63-year old Presbyterian Reverend Rosbrugh read the letter to his congregation, followed by a sermon featuring Judges 5:23. "Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The men of Reverend Rosbrugh's congregation agreed to go willingly only if he would lead them. He reluctantly agreed to serve as commander of the 3rd Northampton County, Pennsylvania militia, but would soon accept a more preferable commission as a company chaplain. During the second Battle of Trenton, or the Battle of the Assunpink Creek, Rosbrugh was taken prisoner by the Hessians and killed.

Chaplain Rosbrugh wrote to his wife in his last communication home seven days before his death:

Friday morning, 10 o'clock at Bristol Ferry, December 27th 1776.

I am still yours but I haven't a minute to tell you that by God's grace our company, are all well. We are going over to New Jersey. You would think strange to see your Husband, an old man, riding with a French fusee slung at his back. This may be ye last letter ye shall receive from you Husband. I have counted myself yours, and have been enlarged of our mutual love to God. As I am out of doors I cannot at present write more. I send my compliments to you, my dear, and children. Friends, pray for us. From your loving Husband, John Rosbrugh

Work cited: Parker C. Thompson, The United States Army Chaplaincy, Vol. I (Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, Washington DC, 1978) pp. 148-151.