

Decision Activity
Captain Joshua Huddy, Monmouth County April 12, 1782



The wooden Block House in Toms River was a target of the Loyalists since it was erected in 1777 at the intersection of Main and Water Streets. It was a fortress defended by Patriots to protect the salt produced in this area and to protect the Patriot privateers in Barnegat Bay. Salt was necessary to preserve fish and meat and produced in Toms River for about \$15 a barrel but controlled by the British. It sold in Morristown, New Jersey for \$35 a barrel. Because of inadequate military forces and the lack of an economy during the war, corruption was widespread in New Jersey. This was a dangerous stretch of coastline in North America, and Captain Huddy had previously defended it against several British attacks, in April and August of 1778.

As a result, on September 1, 1780, the home of Captain Joshua Huddy in Colts Neck was attacked by 72 men. They were all Loyalist rebels or Refugees, under the command of Lieutenant Joseph Parker and William Hewlett. The Refugee Club was organized by John McKinley, former President of Delaware, after his release from prison in Flatbush, New York. In a fight that lasted for two hours, Captain Huddy was captured and his home was burned and plundered. He escaped by jumping from a boat as he was being taken prisoner.

Captain Huddy was a privateer who was commissioned by the Continental Congress as a privateer to attack British ships along the Jersey coast and in Barnegat Bay. He was captain of the *Black Snake*, a whaleboat and conducted raids after his escape.

After the British surrender at Yorktown, Captain Joshua Huddy was assigned to protect the Block House in Toms River on January 1, 1782 with a small arsenal of ammunition and the support of several local Patriots living in the Toms River area. The Loyalist refugees gathered at Sandy Hook under the command of Lieutenant Blanchard. Their journey to Toms River was delayed by storms but they arrived at midnight on March 23, 1782. The Loyalists marched to the Block House where Captain Huddy and about 15 Americans engaged in fighting until they had no more ammunition. Captain Huddy was captured and taken to prison in New York.

Joshua Huddy was accused of executing Stephen Edwards a Loyalist from Middletown, NJ, who was found guilty of treason as a British spy. The British wanted revenge against Huddy and former the royal governor of New Jersey, William Franklin, ordered Captain Richard Lippincott to hang him.

“That the governor judging it proper that retaliation should take place sent for me upon the occasion and gave me orders (which I supposed were authorized by the Board) for the execution of Huddy.”

There were negotiations for Captain Huddy’s release. Captain Charles Asgill, age 19, was held in an American prison in the Chathams with other British officers. He was selected to be executed in exchange for the release of Captain Huddy and 13 other British officers held in American prisons. Captain Asgill received the sympathy of the American people and his mother, Lady Theresa Asgill, asked the Count de Vergennes, foreign minister to King Louis XVI, to obtain her son’s release. This was granted.

As a result, Captain Huddy remained in prison with undocumented charges against him regarding the murder of Philip White, a refugee who was captured by Patriot forces in the area of Colts Neck. During his transport to jail, he jumped from his horse and was shot and wounded. After he was captured again, he was violently abused and died on March 30, 1782. During this time, Captain Huddy was a prisoner from March 26, 1782 until his execution on April 12 of the same year. He was not near the area of Colts Neck or able to witness the atrocity that came to Philip White.

The British then accused Captain Huddy of boasting of the hanging of Stephen Edwards while in prison, an event that occurred five years earlier in September 1777. Stephen Edwards was arrested and found guilty of treason during his trial and sentenced to death. Captain Huddy claimed his words were twisted by Captain William Cunningham because of his statement, under oath, that *“I greased the Rope that it might slide more easily.”* I did not hang Stephen Edwards. There is a difference between approving of an execution by a rope that would intentionally be an act of mercy in a death by hanging. Captain Huddy claimed he did not physically take part in the execution.

On April 8, 1782 Huddy was transferred from the Sugar House prison in New York to the prison ship, *Brittanie*, which was stationed off the Sandy Hook coast. On April 12, 1782, Captain Huddy was taken ashore at Gravelly Point, near Sandy Hook, from the British prison ship. He was carried to the beach and they pinned to his chest the following:

“We, the Refugees, having long with grief beheld the cruel murders of our brethren, and find nothing but such measures daily carried into execution, therefore determined not to suffer without taking vengeance for the numerous cruelties; and this being, having made us of Captain Huddy as the first object to present to your view; and we further determine to hang man for man wile (sic) there is a Refugee existing. Up goes Huddy, for Philip White.”

He stated in his Will: *“In the name of God, Amen. I, Joshua Huddy of Middletown in the County of Monmouth, being of sound mind and memory, but expecting shortly to depart this life, I declare this my last will and testament.*

First, I commit my soul unto the hands of Almighty God hoping he may receive it in mercy; and next, I commit my body to the earth, do also appoint my trusty friend Samuel Forman to be my lawful executor and after all my debts be paid, I desire that he divide the rest of my substance whether by book debts, note, or any effects whatever, my children, Elizabeth and Martha Huddy. In witness whereof, I have

hereunto signed my name this 12th day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two."

He was hanged at 10:00 in the morning and left on the tree until friends removed his body to Freehold after 4:00 p.m.

"This murder was attended with so much deliberate injustice and wanton cruelty, that the circumstances ought to be preserved and made publick, not only to call upon the vengeance of his countrymen to expiate the names of the sufferer, but as a shocking instance of the blackness of that guilt which human nature is capable..."

Over 400 respectable citizens met in Monmouth on April 14, 1782 approving an appeal to General Washington:

"To his Excellency, George Washington, Esq., Commander-in-chief of the combined armies of America and France, acting in North America, etc., etc.

"the inhabitants of the County of Monmouth, being assembled on account of the horrid and almost unparalleled murder of Captain Joshua Huddy by the Refugees from New York, and, as we presume, by approbation, if not by the express command of the British Commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Clinton; hold it as our indispensable duty, as well to the United States in general as ourselves in particular, to show to your Excellency that the aforesaid Captain Joshua Huddy, late commanding the post at Toms River, was after a brave and gallant defense, made a prisoner of war, together with fifteen of his men, by a party of refugees from New York, on Sunday, the 24th of March last past. That five of the said Huddy's men were most inhumanely murdered after the surrender; that the next day, at night, to wit, on Monday, the 25th of March aforesaid, the said Captain Huddy and the other prisoners who had been spared from the bayonet, arrived at New York, and were lodged in the main guard during that night; that on Tuesday morning, the 26th of the same month, the said Huddy was removed from the main guard to the Sugar-House."

On April 19th at West Point a Council of War met and informed General Washington that Captain Richard Lippincott needed to be released to them. On April 21 General Washington notified British commander Sir Henry Clinton. The British refused to turn Captain Lippincott over to the Americans. Instead, they ordered a court martial of Captain Lippincott and an investigation of the execution of Captain Huddy. A court martial never occurred because Captain Richard Lippincott was never in the British army but a Loyalist and member of the Refugees. In May, Sir Henry Clinton was replaced by Sir Guy Carleton, who condemned the execution of Joshua Huddy.

Captain Joshua Huddy was buried on April 15, 1782 with the honors of war. The funeral sermon was preached by Reverend John Woodhull, pastor of the Tennent Church. There is Huddy Park on Bay Ave. in Highlands, NJ in remembrance of Joshua Huddy. Even after the Battle of Yorktown, over 5,000 Americans remained in British prisons and on prison ships under inhumane and horrible conditions of abuse.

Decisions:

If you were General Washington...

1. Would you have tolerated war crimes by Loyalists and Refugees following the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown?
2. Would you have been stronger in your demand for the release of Captain Joshua Huddy after he was taken prisoner?
3. Would you have allowed the British to incarcerate more than 5,000 Americans in their prisons under cruel and deadly conditions? How would you handle this?
4. Did you commit a crime by not demanding justice for the immoral actions against Captain Joshua Huddy, his wife and two daughters?

If you were Captain Richard Lippincott...

1. Are you at peace in carrying out the orders to execute Captain Joshua Huddy for his acts against British soldiers and Loyalists?
2. Is your execution justified If evidence is produced that Captain Joshua Huddy operated a black market in salt and supported illegal actions of the privateers in Barnegat Bay?
3. Who do you say is responsible for the murder of the Captain Joshua Huddy? Why?

<https://www.accessible-archives.com/2017/02/execution-stephen-edwards-spy/>

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/10/joshua-huddy-the-scourge-of-new-jersey-loyalists/>

On February 14, 1837, The United States Congress granted the heirs of Captain Huddy (his daughters Elizabeth and Martha), the benefits of existing pension laws. The same as if he had been an officer of the regular Continental service; also giving them six hundred acres of the public lands and the sum of twelve hundred dollars, it being the amount due to him for seven years' service as captain of artillery.

Discussion: Do you agree with this resolution?