The Delaware Continentals

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ican outpost and captured the commanding officer, "one Ionitz [?] and his Lieutenant and 3 prisoners—Killed 2 and wounded 1—the rest consisting of 100 fled—this was effected without any loss on our side."

While Washington was encamped on the Neshaminy and was still in doubt as to Howe's real purposes, he had sent Colonel Daniel Morgan, with his corps of riflemen, to join Putnam at Peekskill and to go thence to Albany to reinforce Gates. To fill a pressing need for a body of picked light infantry to take Morgan's place, Washington now organized a corps by selecting a hundred good men from each of six brigades, to be led by two captains, six subalterns and the appropriate number of non coms, being about 720 in all. Brigadier General William Maxwell was given the command of the corps, which was "to be constantly near the Enemy and to give them every possible annoyance."

Maxwell posted his corps in the general neighborhood of Cooch's Bridge on the upper waters of the Christina. On August 30, Washington warned him of a probable movement of the enemy and suggested that he place some of his men "at the pass on the Road, which has been represented to be so advantageous"; this pass has not been identified. It may have been a ford on a small stream crossing the road to Glasgow at a point a little below Cooch's Bridge, which is mentioned by Major Baurmeister, a Hessian officer, in his letters, as having been occupied by Maxwell.[6] On September 1, Washington wrote again, proposing an effort on Maxwell's part to rescue cattle and stores in the neighborhood of Nottingham, but nothing seems to have been done in the matter. On the 2nd, Washington warned him of the intention of the enemy to march the next day and begged him "to be prepared to give them as much trouble as you possibly can. You should keep small parties upon every Road that you may be sure of the one they take." It would seem that Maxwell, on the same day, had suggested an attack on a party of the enemy at "the Sign of the Buck," for Washington replied, that evening, expressing doubt as to the propriety of the attempt, fearing that the light infantry corps might be cut off from the rest of the army. Maxwell, as it appears, held the post he had taken.

The British army had, indeed, begun its movement on that very day. General Knyphausen, commanding one of the two grand divisions, marching from his camp at Cecil Court House, by the roads to the south of Back Creek, which is now a part of the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal, reached "Mill Dam," otherwise called Lum's Pond, which is above the present Summit Bridge, that evening. He established himself for the night at the Buck Tavern, otherwise called Carson's, just below the present canal.

At daybreak on the following morning, the other column, under command of Lord Cornwallis, Howe accompanying him, having left two brigades to hold Elkton, took "the lower road to Christeen by the way of Rikin's [Aiken's] Tavern, in order to avoid Iron Hill." This tavern was where the town of Glasgow now stands. They had expected to be joined by Knyphausen's troops at that point, "but did not perceive them." They pushed on through a "close" country, "the woods within shot of the road, frequently in front and flank and in projecting points towards the Road."[7] Evidently it was the sort of country to arouse apprehensions in the minds of soldiers, who preferred combat in the open, in regular battle formation.

Along this unpleasant road, at about 9 o'clock in the morning, the van of the column, Hessian and Anspach jägers, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel von Wurmb, followed by British light infantry with two light field-pieces, was making its way, cautiously, no doubt, when it met with a sudden fire from Maxwell's corps, posted among the trees by the roadside. Wurmb formed his men, and there was a hot fire from both sides. The first battalion of British light infantry brought their field-pieces into play, and, while Captain von Wreden shifted a detachment into a patch of woods on the right of the road and made a spirited attack on Maxwell's left flank, Wurmb charged with the bayonet. The Americans withdrew up the road, taking cover again and renewing their fire. The enemy came on, the Americans stood fast and for a time held their position. But again they were forced to retreat, this time across the bridge. Once more they made a stand, at the mill by the bridge. Now the second British light infantry battalion came up. Thus reinforced, Wurmb pushed his op-

ponents up a road at right angles to the first and toward the Welsh Baptist Church. There was a running fight along this road and, at one point "a body of Riflemen formed a kind of Ambuscade" and gave the British troops "several close, well directed Fires." A battalion of light infantry attempted to get in the rear of the Americans, but found "an unpassable swamp" on the Americans' flank, "which prevented this spirited little affair becoming so decisive" as it might have been. Maxwell's men were now pretty well disorganized, and the retreat became a flight. The British pursued them past the church and then gave over the chase. The Americans made their way to the White Clay Creek and joined the troops posted there.[8]

While hardly to be dignified by the appellation of "battle," this affair was a brisk engagement, in which there were substantial losses on both sides. As usual, the tale of the casualties varies with the teller. It is probable that on the American side about 30 were killed; there is no report of the wounded; they were carried away. Of the British and Hessians perhaps 30 were either killed or wounded.[9]

Knyphausen's column came up to Aiken's tavern "just after this skirmishing"; Howe's headquarters was established there; Knyphausen was quartered near by and Cornwallis in the Cooch house. The Guards were posted on Iron Hill; the camp of the rest of the army extended from the Hill to the tavern. The movement of the British army up to this time had been slow. Not only was it necessary to lag so as not to outdistance a herd of cattle, driven with the rear guard, but also to keep pace with two detachments of 100 men each which marched to the right and left of Knyphausen's column at about half a mile distant, to comb the country for live stock. These brought in "500 Head of Horned Cattle —1,000 Sheep and 100 horses, but not above forty of these Horses fit for Draught."

No movement forward was made by the British army in the next four days. That period of time was employed in reconnoitring the country, in bringing up provisions from the fleet and in sending back to the transports the sick and wounded, the heavy baggage and the soldiers' tents, so as to lighten the army for swift

marching. On the 6th, General Grant, with his two brigades which had been left at Elkton, joined the rest of the army. From that time all communication with the shipping ceased. The fleet withdrew down the bay.

On August 28, Greene's and Stephen's divisions, composed mostly of Virginia Continentals, under Brigadiers Muhlenberg and Weedon, Woodford and Scott, with Sheldon's horse, had been advanced to the White Clay Creek, and pickets were posted at Christiana Bridge.[10] Greene had suggested to Washington a position at the "cross roads," that is to say Cooch's Bridge, as a suitable place to encamp the army and make a stand, but a council of war preferred the northerly side of the Red Clay Creek near Newport and across the main road from Elkton to Philadelphia. To that position the army marched on the 6th and there encamped, Sullivan's division on the right, Stirling's on the left, with the others between or in a second line in the rear. The light infantry, including Maxwell's corps, remained as an advance post at the White Clay; Washington set up his headquarters at Newport. Having learned that Howe had disincumbered his army of its baggage and tents, which indicated "a speedy and rapid movement," he ordered his troops to be similarly relieved; both officers and men were to retain only their great-coats, if they had such apparel, and their blankets; everything else to be sent to the other side of the Brandywine. Thus stripped for action, the army awaited the next move of the enemy.

It began on the 8th, at two hours before daybreak, by the light of "a remarkable borealis," when the whole British army set out on the road that leads around Iron Hill to Newark. They passed through that town at about seven o'clock in the morning and took the road to New Garden, encamping at one o'clock. On the following day, Knyphausen, with the third division, proceeded to Kennett Square. The other two divisions, under Howe and Cornwallis, marched at sunset "by a bye road to Hokerson [Hockessin] Meeting house—Quaker meeting 4 miles distance and encamped."[11]

When the movement from Aiken's tavern was under way, the Americans had expected their enemy to march against the position on the Red Clay and give battle there, in order to gain the