

them well provided with arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, and as much provisions as they can. You are to march immediately with the militia arrayed and provided as above, and to such places as may be most necessary to annoy the enemy and prevent them from effecting their purpose."

On August 25 McKinly again wrote to Rodney as follows:

"The Enemy have landed this Morning at Cecil Court House & are proceeding towards the Head of Elk where there still remains a considerable quantity of Continental Stores, which his Excellency General Washington who is here, is desirous that the Militia of this County should cover the removal of & the first & second Battalion have proceeded toward that place accordingly—The third to follow—pray hurry the Militia under your command towards that place as fast as possible—Where you will receive further orders—pray make what haste you possibly can, the Continental Army is within a few miles of the place—

(P. S.) Just as I had finished the Letter on the other side I was favoured with Yours of the 24 Inst. by Mr. Barret, pray come as fast as possible & take the command of the Militia of the State, the 1st & 2d Battalions of this county have turned out I believe to a Man almost, in high Spirits. General Washingtons Army near the place is said to be about 11,000 besides Light Horse & Artillery, I hope we shall give our Enemy's what they deserve a hearty drubbing pray bring as many from Kent as possible & as quick as possible—however you need not wait for them all—Excuse haste. I have had a busy Day."

Washington, on August 25, issued the following order to General Armstrong of the Pennsylvania militia:

"I have just received information that the enemy began to land this morning about six miles below the Head of Elk oppo-

site to Cecil Court House. I desire you to send off every man of the militia under your command that is properly armed as quick as possible They are to proceed to Wilmington where they will receive orders for their destination Whatever militia are at Philadelphia and equipped should be ordered down immediately."

The militias proceeded to Cecil County, Maryland. They took part in several minor clashes prior to the coming of the regulars under General Maxwell. It must be admitted, however, that the heavy storms were more productive of delay than were the combined efforts of the militias.

On the same day that Washington reached Wilmington, he notified the President of Congress: "There are a quantity of public and private stores at the Head-of-Elk, which I am afraid will fall into the enemy's hands if they advance quickly. Among others, there is a considerable parcel of salt. Every attempt will be made to save that.—When I get my force collected, I shall dispose of it in the most advantageous manner in my power. To this end, I purpose to view the grounds towards the enemy in the morning. I am yet a stranger to them."

On August 26 Washington proceeded to the Head of Elk. It was on this trip that he, with Generals Lafayette and Greene, viewed the enemy from the summit of Iron Hill. This event has beautifully been portrayed by Stanley M. Arthurs. That night a deluge of rain delayed their return to Wilmington and caused them to seek shelter in a nearby farmhouse. Returning to Wilmington the next day, he reported to Congress as follows:

"I this morning returned from Head of Elk which I left last night. In respect to the enemy I have nothing new to communicate. They remain where they debarked first. I could not find

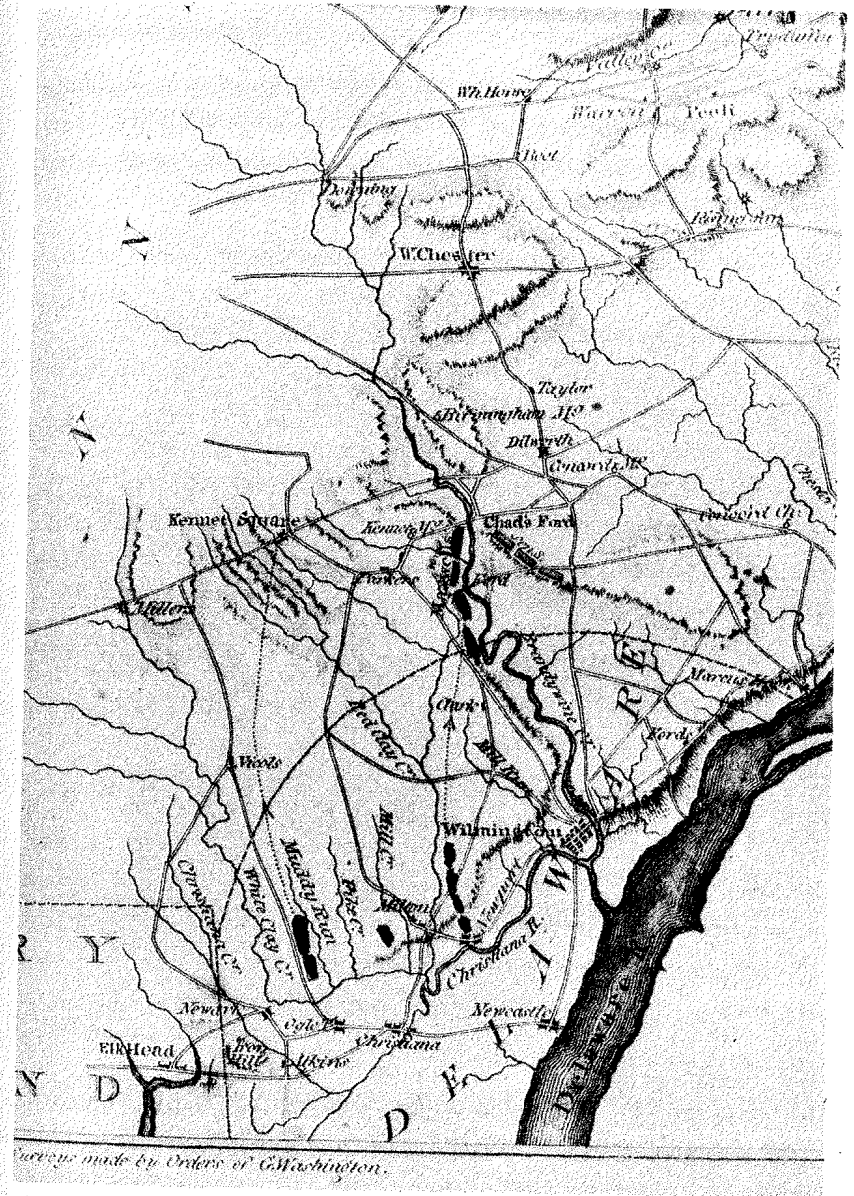
out from inquiry what number is landed nor form an estimate from the distant view I had from their encampment. But few tents were to be seen from Iron Hill and Grey's Hill, (now called Red Hill) which are the only eminences about Elk."

Major Andre records on August 28 as follows:

"Washington had been there (Head of Elk) on the 27th and dined at the house now General Howe's quarters." Johnston states that Washington spent the night at Jacob Hollingsworth's hotel, west of the Episcopal church, but neither Washington nor Andre make any mention of his having done so.

On August 27 Washington directed the battalions of militia under Colonels Evans, Hunter, and Undree to march to Christiana Bridge, and there halt until further ordered. They were directed to be ready to move at a moment's warning. On the same day General Greene's division was directed to take post at White Clay Creek.

On August 28 the American army left its camp on the east side of the Brandywine at 4 A. M. and proceeded through Wilmington, Newport, passed Rising Sun Tavern at Stanton, and encamped to the north of White Clay Creek and east of White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church. The site was on a farm owned by the father of Captain Robert Kirkwood of the Delaware regiment. It was Kirkwood who recorded Washington's orders, and was closely associated with him. Kirkwood, however, did not come to Delaware on August 25 with Washington. His order book records that he marched from Philadelphia to Wilmington on the 29th, "and the 30th I went to my Father's". It seems probable that the selection of the site had been at the suggestion or on the invitation of Captain Kirkwood. The farm is now owned by former Judge Hugh M. Morris. Washington



American map, showing encampments along White Clay Creek and Red Clay Creek, 1777. From John Marshall's *Life of George Washington*, 1807. Drawn by S. Lewis from surveys made by orders of Washington.

Chapter 22

HOWE LANDS AT HEAD OF ELK

WASHINGTON started southward from his camp on the Neshaminy, on August 23, at 4 o'clock in the morning; that evening, he camped near Germantown and the next morning formed his troops for the march through Philadelphia in such manner as to impress the strong Tory elements there, including the Quakers. His preparations and directions for this display of his strength were "pathetically minute."

The army was to march in one column, "First—A Sub, and twelve light horse, 200 Yards in their rear a complete troop," then a space of a hundred yards and "a company of pioneers, with their axes &c in proper order." At another hundred yards distance a regiment of Muhlenberg's brigade, followed by field artillery and so on with Weedon's, Woodford's and Scott's brigades, Lincoln's and Stirling's divisions, the artillery and cavalry, winding up with a troop of horse 150 yards in the rear of all the rest. The men were to be "made to appear as decent as possible" and to "carry their arms well"; any man who dared "to quit his rifle" was to receive 30 lashes at the next halting place. The drums and fifes were to play "a tune for the quick step . . . but with such moderation that the men may step to it with ease; and without dancing along." As they lacked uniformity, to give them some appearance of uniformity they wore sprigs of green leaves in their hats.

So, with Washington riding at the head, Lafayette at his side and his mounted staff following, the long column of 15,000 men marched down Front Street and up Chestnut, to the awe of the disaffected and the delight of the patriots. John Adams watched the procession; "They marched twelve deep," he wrote to his wife, "and yet took up above two hours in passing by." They were "extremely well armed, pretty well clothed and tolerably dis-

of soldiers. They don't step their heads quite erect nor hold up their heads quite erect nor ht. They don't all of them t all wear them the same y gentleman, noted that held well burnished arms looked, in short, as if they with a reasonable prospect of success."

The army marched to Darby that day, and on the next moved on to Naamans Creek, under orders to "encamp on the first good ground beyond" it. The horsemen were, however, to keep Washington before encamping. Washington himself, with his staff, also kept on, entered Wilmington and set up his headquarters in a house on Quaker Hill. Here he heard that the army had begun to land that morning "about Six Miles below Head of Elk opposite to Cecil Court House." He set about contacting all available troops, called on Armstrong to send on "every Man of the Militia under your command [at Chester and Marcus Hook] that is properly armed, as quick as possible," to march from that very night; he called on Baylor to bring "Such Men as you have ready," on Greene's division and Stephen's division, also on Sullivan, but not to press his men "too hard in their march," as they "must no doubt have been greatly harassed" in the Staten Island expedition. He had already detached General Smallwood and Colonel Mordecai Gist from their commands in Sullivan's division and sent them to Maryland to take over the militia of that state, called out to the number of 2,000 by a late resolution of the Congress, which also called for 1,000 from Delaware to rendezvous at Newport and Christiana Bridge, "then to wait the orders of General Washington."

On the following morning, Washington, accompanied by Greene, Lafayette, his aides and a strong troop of horse, rode southward from Wilmington on a scouting expedition. From the summits of Iron Hill and Gray's Hill, they scanned the country below, but, although Gray's Hill was within two miles of the enemy's camp and they could see the tents, they were unable to form a satisfactory estimate of the number of men who had

landed. The rest of the day was spent in surveying the surrounding country, until they were overtaken and taken refuge in a farm house, Washington to go out into the tempestuous night upon him the danger of capture while perhaps citing the fate of Charles I but he chose to remain until daybreak. The owner of the house was a Tory and might have sent word to the arch-rebel's presence and so led to a coup that might have turned the American cause, if Washington had not guarded against that danger. Washington afterward acknowledged his imprudence at this time.

It was on a Sunday morning, August 25, "a distressingly hot close morning," that the van of the British fleet dropped anchor in the Elk, opposite Cecil County and the debarcation of the army began. The first to come in contact with the rebels were the grenadiers and the flat-bottomed boats were the first to contact for four companies of militia out firing a shot." The light infantry post about four miles toward the head of Elk landed during the day, all except the horses on the shore. The rest of the army came ashore with the horses on the next morning. The first to land were the troops to hut themselves with which could have afforded little protection of Rain, Lightning and Thunder" that night.⁵

Orders were given to march at 3 o'clock the next morning but they were countermanded because of another heavy storm that night. In spite of the rain and the hanging of two soldiers for similar offenses, the troops indulged in extensive plundering of houses and farmsteads [they] having destroyed their houses and drove off their stock.

CONTINENTALS

It is in surveying the surrounding country by a severe storm. The night showed an inclination to light. His companions were lying so close to the shore as to be in similar circumstances. The owner of the house led to the British camp of the coup that might have turned the American cause, if Washington had not guarded against that danger. Washington afterward acknowledged his imprudence at this time.

August 25, "a distressingly hot close morning," that the van of the British fleet dropped anchor in the Elk, opposite Cecil County and the debarcation of the army began.

Two regiments of light infantry and Amphibious Corps were the first to come in contact with the rebels were the grenadiers and the flat-bottomed boats were the first to contact for four companies of militia out firing a shot." The light infantry post about four miles toward the head of Elk landed during the day, all except the horses on the shore. The rest of the army came ashore with the horses on the next morning. The first to land were the troops to hut themselves with which could have afforded little protection of Rain, Lightning and Thunder" that night.⁵

Orders were given to march at 3 o'clock the next morning but they were countermanded because of another heavy storm that night. In spite of the rain and the hanging of two soldiers for similar offenses, the troops indulged in extensive plundering of houses and farmsteads [they] having destroyed their houses and drove off their stock.

red a great deal of cattle clander

ther than the storm, for the soldiers were not sufficiently refreshed from their long confinement as had survived the voyage to be "mere Carrion." On the extremely fine" and the roads were so muddy that the army had to march to Elkton, a town of stone houses." At their approach a Colonel Patterson and the rest of the town to Gray's Hill and the guard arrived at that point. The warehouses full, consisting of wheat, Tar and some Cordage troops had not had time to

and divisions. It was the one day moved toward Elkton; the Knyphausen, had crossed the head of the Elk, the two bodies to of the Christina River.

The next five days. There were several bodies of the Americans, as they pushed a body of the rebel army "Welch fusileers fired a few shots of about 200." But there was no more. On the 31st, Knyphausen, made a foray "thro Bohemiah" and drove off 350 sheep, 55 horned cattle and 568 sheep. There was a great need of horses, over 1000 were killed or rendered "totally unfit for duty" by the rebels. There was also a great hunger. The rebels demolished a whole flock of sheep and drove off their stock.

On September 1, Wemyss' corps

Headquarters and Camp of Continental Army at Wilmington, August 26 to September 6, 1777

For the next ten days the Continental Army was encamped outside of the Borough of Wilmington, on ground now the center and northern part of the City, and on both sides of the Brandywine. Timothy Pickering, Adjutant-General of the army, entered in his journal: "August 25th—The army marched through Chester to Naaman's Creek, the General and family advancing to Wilmington (a pretty town and pleasantly situated)." Lieutenant James McMichael of the Pennsylvania Line wrote in his diary: "At 4 A. M. we marched from our encampment (Naaman's) to Brandywine Bridge, near Wilmington, then turning N.N.W. we proceeded a few miles and encamped near the east bank of the Creek." Sullivan's division with Smallwood's brigade and the Delaware regiment joined the army at Wilmington. Captain Robert Kirkwood wrote in his order book: "Tuesday, September 2nd. Struck tents and marched to Wilmington in the Delaware State & encamped about one mile west of the town." General Washington and his family, or staff, took headquarters on the top of Quaker Hill, now Third and West Streets, affording an open view of Iron Hill fifteen miles to the south. It was here the councils of war were held, general orders issued and many letters of importance written by Washington. An order of local color was:

"Head Quarters, Wilmington (Sunday) August 31st, 1777.

"A General Court Martial is to sit to morrow at 9 o'clock in the morning at Mr. Lawson's at the Cross Keys near the Academy"—the Cross Keys being on the east side of Market Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets.

Washington reconnoitering in Delaware

"A true Virginian, whether in war or in the chase," says Trevelyan, "Washington went fearlessly wherever a good horse could carry him, and on more than one

occasion Howe's skirmishers had a very near view indeed of a soberly dressed officer mounted on a powerful bay charger, who did not shirk his fences, and was closely attended everywhere by an aide-de-camp in a rich foreign uniform." On Tuesday, August 26th, the day after reaching Wilmington, General Washington had Jacob Broom, the town burgess and surveyor, draft him a road map of New Castle County, and with Greene and Lafayette rode through Christiana, White Clay Creek and Pencader Hundreds to reconnoiter the country between his own headquarters and Howe's outposts—at great risk to himself and his companions. They rode forward to two hills—Iron Hill and Gray's Hill—about fifteen miles south of Wilmington and six miles from Howe's camp. Night fell upon the little party as they turned their horses' heads homeward, together with a great tempest of wind and rain. Washington sought the shelter of a neighboring farmhouse at the foot of Chestnut Hill near the Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Pencader Hundred. The party with drenched clothes crowded the little rooms and feared that the enemy might capture Washington as they had General Charles Lee not twelve months before. There was in fact great peril, but the Delaware farmer was a patriot. Washington returned the next morning and wrote to the President of Congress:

"Wilmington, August 27th.

"I this morning returned from head of Elk which I left last night. The enemy remain where they debarked first; I cannot find out from inquiry what number is landed or form an estimate from the distant view I had of their encampment. But few tents were to be seen from Iron Hill and Gray's Hill, the only eminences about Elkton."

Having escaped capture, General Washington, a week later, suggested to General Maxwell the exploit of capturing a Hessian General, who may have been Knyphausen. In a letter from Wilmington he writes: "Several persons have mentioned that there is a Hessian General quartered at one Fishers, covered only by a small guard. This is well worth your attention and may

afford a glorious opportunity for a partisan exploit. Any of the country people can direct you, I suppose, where Fisher's is." And later on the same day General Washington writes: "Let me know by the bearer whether you have received such information, as to enable you to make the attempt to night (or rather in the morning)—if you have the parson will be an excellent hand to accompany you." The "parson" may refer to the Rev. Thomas Read, minister at Old Drawyers, who is known to have served at this time as a guide for Washington.

General Greene's Choice of Post for Washington's Army

General Washington ordered General Greene to examine the ground further and select a position upon which the army could be advantageously posted. Two days later, on August 28th, General Greene accompanied by Brigadier-General Weedon, after careful examination, selected the "cross roads near six miles distance from the Royal army" and close to Iron Hill. From an examination of old road maps, it is apparent that the only "cross roads near six miles distance from the Royal army" is the cross roads at Cooch's Bridge, and that the ground on which we are now standing is the post selected by a very great American general from which to battle with Howe. Greene's idea was to fight as close as possible to the landing place; so as to give Howe no room for developing his army. He thought the cross roads furnished an open country behind from which to draw assistance and good skirmishing ground in front to harass and annoy the enemy before they were organized and provided with horses, provisions, &c. General Greene wrote to the Commander-in-Chief acquainting him with the spot he had chosen, but the information was received too late. The same day, probably Thursday, August 28th, a Council of War held at Wilmington determined to take a position upon Red Clay Creek near Stanton, upon the Kings Highway, about half way between Wilmington and Christiana. Had Greene's report been accepted, one of the great battles of liberty would have been fought on Delaware soil.

Skirmish at Cooch's Bridge, September 3, 1777

Washington lacked scouts and a body of expert riflemen to harass the enemy. He regretted detaching Morgan's regiment to the northern army. Accordingly, he organized a corps of light infantry.

Orders

"Head Quarters, Wilmington, August 28th, 1777.

"A corps of Light Infantry is to be formed; to consist of one Field Officer, two Captains, six Subalterns, eight Serjeants and 100 Rank & File from each brigade" (there being eleven brigades).

"Head Quarters, Wilmington, August 30th, 1777.

"Brigadier Genl. Maxwell will take Command of the corps of light Infantry."

It is quite possible General Maxwell marched his corps to this spot where we stand, which had been selected by General Greene for the army. In a letter to General Maxwell, dated "Head Quarters, Wilmington, 2d Sept. 1777," 8.30 p. m., Washington wrote: "I do not know where the Sign of the Buck is, I therefore cannot say whether it will be proper for you to leave your present post to go and attack the party that is said to be thereabouts. If it is upon your left as I suppose it is, it will be by no means proper, because while you were gone down, the Enemy might advance from Grey's Hill to Christeen and cut you off from us."

Chief Justice John Marshall, then serving as a captain in the Eleventh Virginia Regiment of Woodford's brigade, describes the skirmish at Cooch's Bridge in his "Life of Washington" in these words: "On the morning of the 3d . . . two divisions under Lord Cornwallis and General Knyphausen moved forward, forming a junction about Pencader (Glasgow), their left extending across the Christiana towards Newark. On their way the column under Lord Cornwallis fell in with and attacked Maxwell, who made a short resistance and then

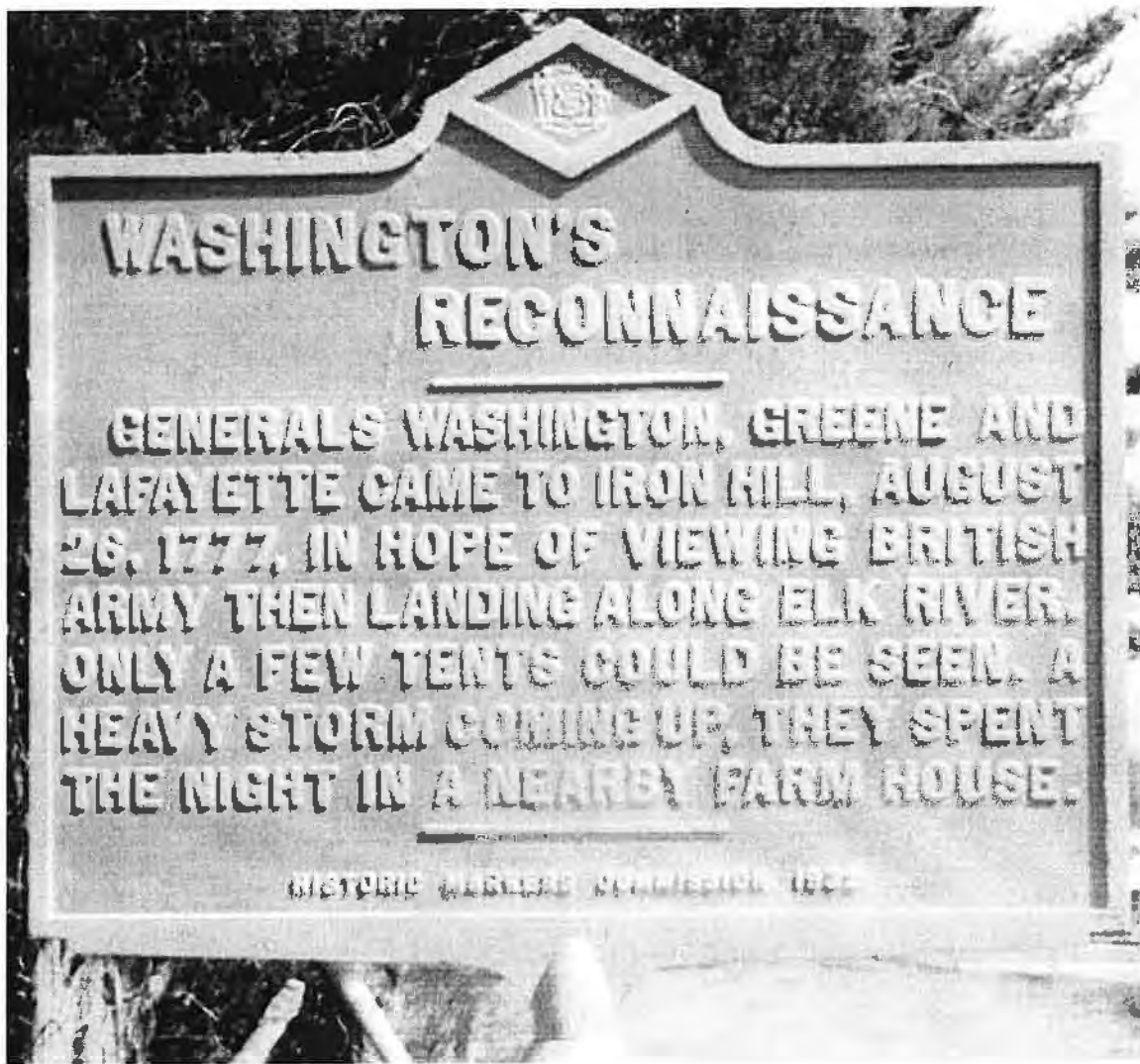
Historic Markers of Pencader Hundred



www.PencaderHeritage.Org

GUIDE
to
Historic Markers
in
DELAWARE





WASHINGTON'S RECONNAISSANCE

Generals Washington, Greene, and Lafayette came to Iron Hill, August 26, 1777, in hope of viewing British Army then landing along the Elk River. Only a few tents could be seen. A heavy storm coming up, they spent the night in a nearby farm house.

NC-53

LOCATION: 1 mile west of Cooch's Bridge. North side of Wilmington to Elkton Turnpike. (The marker remains on Old Baltimore Pike 0.4 mile from Rt. 896)