



THE STATE OF DELAWARE HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove Historical Marker Unveiling

On September 8, 1777, General George Washington and his Continentals were pursuing British forces headed north along Limestone Road to seize Philadelphia following the Battle of Cooch's Bridge. General George Weedon advanced his Continental brigade to a hillside east of Mill Creek at what is now known as Spring Grove. British forces advanced to the hillside west of Mill Creek where a skirmish broke out and gunfire was exchanged. The foray aided General Washington in making strategic adjustments that enabled his forces to reach Chadds Ford in time to create defensive positions in preparation for the Battle of Brandywine on September 11.



THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023
10:00 A.M.

3200 Stoney Batter Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19808



121 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd. North
Dover, Delaware, USA
archives.delaware.gov
302.744.5000



Following the Battle of Cooch's Bridge, General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove allowed General Washington to confirm the British forces had changed the direction of their march to seize Philadelphia and allowed General Washington to redirect his continental army to Chadds Ford in time to engage the British in the Battle of the Brandywine.



The hill where the Spring Grove Mill House now sits was previously the location of Henry Brackin's pre-American Revolution sawmill that would be the first of three mills that would become known as Spring Grove. This same hill was used by the British forces to fire upon the Continental forces position on the other side of Mill Creek.

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove Historical Marker Unveiling

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023
10:00 A.M.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Stephen M. Marz, CA

*Director & State Archivist
Delaware Public Archives*

REMARKS

Major General David E. Deputy (DE ANG Ret.)

*Chief of Staff, House Minority Caucus
Delaware General Assembly*

The Honorable Michael Ramone

*House Minority Leader
Delaware House of Representatives*

UNVEILING



121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. N | Dover, DE 19901 | (302) 744-5000

Historical Marker Application

Proposed Marker Information (required info is in red)

Suggested Marker Topic:

Date of Application: 07/22/2021

Site of General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove

Preferred Location (Please provide the exact address or GPS Coordinates):

3200 Stoney Batter Road, Wilmington, DE 19808

Town: Wilmington

County: New Castle County

The reason this location was chosen:

Due to the close proximity to where the Revolution War event known as General Weedon's Foray occurred.

Property Information

Public or Private Property:

Public Property

Owner's Permission (if private):

Yes

Your Contact Information

Full Name:

David E. Deputy

Phone Number:

(302) 354-4566

Email Address:

david.deputy12@gmail.com

Organization (if applicable):

Street Address:

3200 Stoney Batter Road

City: Wilmington

State: DE

Zipcode: 19808

Please complete both sections found on Page 2 of this application before submitting. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed or considered.

Funding Statement

Historical markers are funded on an individual basis by local legislators. Financial support must be obtained from a local Senator or Representative *after* the marker application has been approved by the Delaware Public Archives. Once support is gained, the legislator will notify the Archives and we will move forward with the production of a marker.

DPA Office Use Only

Date Received: 7/26/2021

Approved by:

Markers Committee

Date Approved: 8/12/2021



121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. N | Dover, DE 19901 | (302) 744-5000

Historical Marker Application Supplemental Information

Please include or attach the following information

1. Statement of Significance

On an attached sheet or document or in the text box below, please explain in a thorough but concise typed statement why the proposed subject is important and why it should be commemorated with a marker. Please refer to the [guidelines and criteria](#) when writing your statement.

Attached

2. Background Information

On an attached sheet or document or in the text box below, please provide a typed list of relevant facts, notes, and/or information pertaining to the proposed marker subject. Please include citations to the resources you used to research this topic. This information will be helpful in researching and writing the marker text. Please note: DPA staff will edit proposed marker text to conform to research and format standards, including space limitations.

Attached

Save & Email, Print, or Clear this form:

Save for Email

Print

Clear

Delaware Public Archives
Historical Marker Application Supplemental Information
Site of General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove

1. Statement of Significance

SITE OF GENERAL WEEDON'S FORAY AT SPRING GROVE

Delaware currently has two locations with historic markers that represent sites where combat action occurred in the First State: Cooch's Bridge in Newark and the Cannonball House in Lewes. [Combat Action is a military term used to describe engagement with the enemy.]

Recent research by noted Delaware historian Walt Chiquoine has uncovered new details of a historical site where combat action occurred at Spring Grove.

The following is a draft 100-word summary of his findings:

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SITE OF GENERAL WEEDON'S FORAY AT SPRING GROVE

On September 8th, 1777 General Washington and his Continentals were pursuing British forces headed north along Limestone Road to seize Philadelphia. General Weedon advanced his Continental brigade to a hillside to the east of Mill Creek at Spring Grove. The British advanced to the hillside on the west of Mill Creek. They exchanged gunfire into the evening across the hills of eminence separated by Mill Creek. Both sides maintained the high ground advantage by not advancing further and progressed northeast to the Battle of the Brandywine occurring three days later.

2. Background Information

Walt Chiquoine's research uses direct firsthand accounts written by soldiers from both the Continental side and the British side to verify his findings. He uses currently known points found on the original maps made by the British during their encampment and overlaid the original map onto current maps. This allowed current topography to be compared to the old map and compared to landscape descriptions provided by the actual combatants, allowing Chiquoine to pinpoint the location of the foray.

Below Reference A is a copy of relevant pages of his research, including his citations.

The marker location was chosen due to its proximity to where the foray occurred, the visibility to the public, and the Spring Grove structures that are located behind the marker. The marker

would be placed behind an existing guard rail on state owned roadway frontage located approx. 20 feet to the east of the driveway entrance to 3200 Stoney Batter Road. This driveway was once County Road 426. The hills where the foray occurred are directly behind where the marker would be placed. As someone would be reading the marker, they would see the hills in the background separated by Mill Creek where the foray occurred.

The Spring Grove Mill House at 3200 Stoney Batter Road was built in 1813 and is located on the same hill used by the British forces to fire upon the Continental forces positioned on the other side of Mill Creek. During the foray, Henry Brackin's sawmill was located on this same hill where the house sits, and the British forces were positioned during the foray. This pre-American Revolution sawmill would be the first of three mills that would become known as Spring Grove. The mill races and an original wall from the mill remain and they are located behind where the marker would be placed. The current house on the property is the center piece of the Spring Grove milling complex which was continuously operational from 1750 until 1881.

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Securing a historic marker at this location fits into a much broader objective to promote the significant history of the surrounding area. Chester County, Pennsylvania is actively planning to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War's Philadelphia Campaign in the 2026-2027 timeframe.

Here is why General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove is significant to the Philadelphia Campaign and Chester County:

The Revolutionary War was a long and complex web of interrelated and sometime spontaneous events. A small change or miscalculation in any one situation along the timeline could have a domino effect changing the war's outcome. General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove was such an event.

The most significant battle of the Philadelphia Campaign was the Battle of Brandywine in Chadds Ford. General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove played an important role in the Battle of Brandywine. The foray allowed General Washington to confirm that the British forces changed the direction of their march to seize Philadelphia. This knowledge gained from the foray allowed Washington to quickly redirect his Continental Army to Chadds Ford in time to engage the British in the Battle of Brandywine. Without the knowledge gained from the foray, Washington may have delayed his movements thereby allowing the British to march into Philadelphia without resistance. If there was no resistance, the French may have been more hesitant to provide Washington with the support needed to win the war.

Besides the objective to preserve the history of this Revolutionary War event, another objective in securing the historic marker is to preserve and reveal the forgotten history of Spring Grove. The owner of the Spring Grove Mill House, David Deputy is in the final stages of drafting a book he intends to publish in 2022 titled, The Spring Grove Mill House, the Delaware Home with the Most Ties to Events Throughout American History. The book will link Spring Grove and the Spring Grove Mill House to the following events in American History:

The Colonial Period
Revolutionary War
The American Industrial Revolution
The War of 1812
The Underground Railroad
The Civil War
Du Pont Family Ownership
The Great Depression and the Founding of Delaware Park
The 1962 Preakness Victory
Apollo 11 Moon Launch

Additionally, the pending book is designed to provide documentation to have the Spring Grove Mill House listed on the National Register of Historic Places and perhaps the List of National Historic Landmarks.

Below reference B is the chapter in the draft manuscript of the book describing the foray.

OTHER RESOURCES

Below is a link to a recent article written in the Mill Creek Hundred Historic Blog by Scott Palmer that summarizes the foray and describes the overall history of the property.

<https://mchhistory.blogspot.com/2019/06/spring-grove-factory-and-estate-part-i.html>

<https://mchhistory.blogspot.com/2019/06/spring-grove-mills-and-estate-part-ii.html>

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROPOSED MARKER LOCATION: Two photos



REFERENCES

Reference A: Walt Chiquoine Research [Page 16-17 and Endnotes]

FINDING THE DANIEL NICHOLS HOUSE (DraftV1) Page 16 © 2016 Walt Chiquoine, Mill Creek Hundred DE
THE CONTINENTAL RESPONSE

Aside from the correspondence of George Washington and a few others, there is only one immediate and substantial account of the march from a Continental source. That is the diary of Lieutenant James McMichael of the Pennsylvania Line. Fortunately, McMichael was a part of the action that day, September 8, and he left us some understanding of events.

According to McMichael, the Continentals went on alert at 3 AM. Alarm guns were fired at 9 AM and the army was drawn up in line of battle. Sometime later, General Weedon was dispatched with a brigade “to bring on the attack,” and McMichael’s regiment was part of that brigade. They marched to a hillside near McCannon’s meeting house (now Red Clay Presbyterian Church) and waited for the British. McMichael observed the army encamped across the hill; no attack came but shots were exchanged into the night.²⁰

The story is confirmed by both British²¹ and Hessian²² sources. When the Continental units were spotted, the British light infantry pushed forward to head them off. The 42nd and 44th companies, part of the 3rd Brigade Foot, pushed forward behind the light infantry. But only the Jaegers managed to get off a few shots with their amusettes – very large bore rifles that outranged the standard musket.

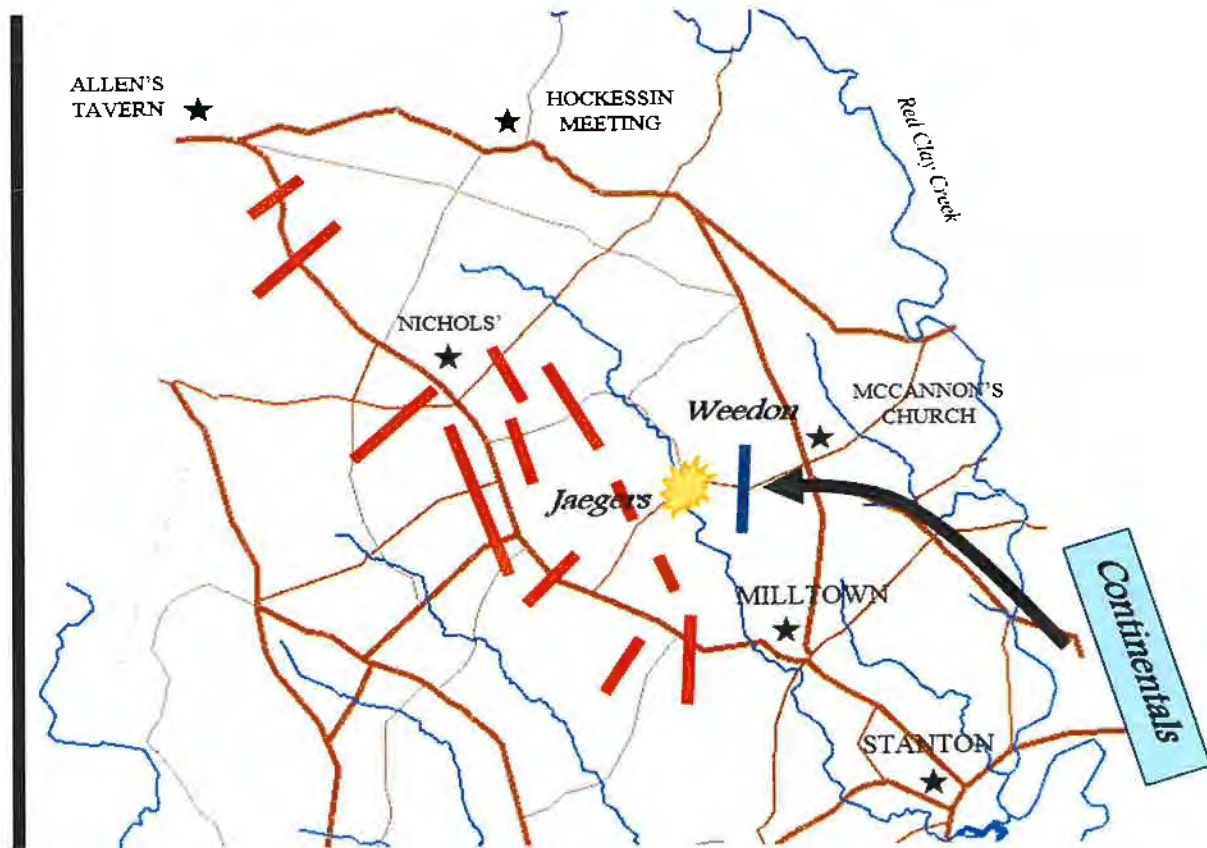


Figure 14: Weedon's approach to the British line across Mill Creek.

Weedon's foray is diagrammed in Figure 14. The location of the Jaegers (Chasseurs) on André's sketch and the reference to McCannon's Church pinpoint this event with certainty, at a place where the hills rapidly rise about 100 feet above Mill Creek. Neither side dared to cross the steep valley. amusettes drove Weedon back from the top of the hill, but his brigade stayed to keep a lookout over the British army.

Washington and the Continental army waited throughout the day of the 8th, yet there was no British attack. But there is evidence in a historical newspaper story from 1857 that Washington visited Milltown that evening to confer with his pickets and see things for himself. That story tells of his visit to the home of Caleb Harlan, the local miller.²³ Harlan's house was barely a mile from the British light infantry; it is doubtful that Washington took more than a small number of staff. From the Harlan house, Washington would easily see the campfires and pickets of the British above Mill Creek.

In a fateful decision, Washington concluded that there would be no attack, that Howe was trying to pass to the Continental right. So Washington returned to headquarters, held a general staff meeting, and made the decision to immediately march north to the fords of the Brandywine Creek. General orders were given, and the Continental army began moving out about 2 AM on September 9.

Before his departure that morning, Washington penned a letter to the Continental Congress that captured the day in an almost poetically concise way,²⁴ including a coy reference to his own reconnaissance. He wrote,

"The enemy advanced yesterday...upon our post near Newport. We waited for 'em the whole day; but in the Evening they halted at a place called Milltown..."

Upon reconnoitering their situation, it appeared probable that they only meant to amuse us in front...
it was judged expedient to change our position immediately.”

ENDNOTES

- ¹ John Peebles, *John Peebles' American War: the diary of a Scottish grenadier, 1776-1782*, Ira D. Gruber, ed., (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998), 129
- ² See, for example, Francis Downman, *The Services of Lieut.-Colonel Francis Downman in France, North America, and the West Indies, Between the Years 1758 and 1784*, Colonel F. A. Whinyates, ed., (Woolwich, UK: Royal Artillery Institution, 1898), 32
- ³ New York Historical Society, Ed., *The Kemble Papers*, (New York: New York Historical Society, 1893), 489-490. General Orders by Major General the Honourable William Howe.
- ⁴ G. D. Scull, Ed., *The Montesor Journals*, (New York: New York Historical Society, 1881), 448
- ⁵ Muenchhausen, Freidrich Ernst von, *At General Howe's Side 1776-1778*, trans. Ernst Kipping, (Monmouth Beach, NJ: Philip Freneau Press, 1974), 30
- ⁶ Peebles, *Diary*, 132
- ⁷ *Progress of the army from their landing till taking possession of Philadelphia*. [?, 1777] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71000678>. (Accessed June 24, 2016.)
- ⁸ John André, *Major Andre's Journal: Operations of the British Army under Lieutenant Generals Sir William Howe and Sir Henry Clinton*, (Tarrytown: William Abbatt Press, 1930), included map sketch, Position of the Army at New Garden the 8th September 1777.
- ⁹ André, *Operations of the British Army*, included map sketch, Position of the Army near Aiken's Tavern the 5th September 1777.
- ¹⁰ See the description of Ewald's march up White Clay Creek above Newark. Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, trans. and ed. Joseph P. Tustin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 79
- ¹¹ Byrnes Family Collection, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware
- ¹² Rev. George Morrison, "Delaware Branch of the Morrison Family," in *The History of the Morison or Morrison Family*, ed. Leonard A. Morrison (Boston, MA: A. Williams & Co., 1880), 420
- ¹³ William Dansey Letters, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware
- ¹⁴ S. Sydney Bradford, Ed., "A British Officers' Revolutionary War Journal 1776-1778," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 56 (1961), 169
- ¹⁵ Joseph Townsend, "Some Account of the British Army Under the Command of General Howe and the Battle of Brandywine," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 1 (1846), 6
- ¹⁶ Bernard A. Uhlendorf, trans., *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 104
- ¹⁷ Muenchhausen, *At General Howe's Side*, 30
- ¹⁸ Peebles, *Diary*, 132
- ¹⁹ Downman, *Services*, 32
- ²⁰ James McMichael, "Diary of Lieutenant James McMichael," *Pennsylvania Archives* 2nd Series XV (1890), 210
- ²¹ Peebles, *Diary*, 132
- ²² Muenchhausen, *At General Howe's Side*, 30
- ²³ "One of the Relics," *Delaware County American*, August 19, 1857, accessed June 25, 2016, <http://www.accessible.com/accessible/print?AADocList=4&AADocStyle=STYLED&AAStyleFile=&AABeanName=toc1&AANextPage=/printFullDocFromXML.jsp&AACheck=2.8.4.0.0>
- ²⁴ "From George Washington to John Hancock, 9 September 1777," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0176> [last update: 2016-03-28]). Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 11, *19 August 1777 – 25 October 1777*, ed. Philander D. Chase and Edward G. Lengel, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), pp. 175–176.

afterwards reached our advanced detachment, where I was informed that in the late skirmish three of our regiment were killed and one wounded. At evening returned to camp.

September 7.—According to General orders of the day, the officers' chests and heavy baggage were sent over Brandywine, and everything prepared for the expected attack tomorrow.

September 8.—At 3 A.M. the General was beat and all tents struck. All the regiments were paraded, the men properly formed with an officer at the head of every platoon, and after wheeling to the right, we remained under arms until 9 o'clock. Then the alarm guns were fired and the whole army drawn up in line of battle, on the east side of Red Clay Creek, with Gen. Greene's division to the right. Here we remained for some time, when Gen. Weedon's brigade (of which my regiment was a party) was detached to the front to bring on the attack. We crossed the creek and marched about a league to an eminence near Mr. Matheson's meeting house, and there awaited the approach of the enemy, who were within half a mile of us. They however, encamped, which occasioned us to remain under arms all night, the sentries keeping up a constant fire. One of our officers on picket, deserted his post and was immediately arrested.

September 9.—At 4 A.M. we received marching orders and proceeded E.N.E. to the Crooked Billet, on the great road from Wilmington to Lancaster; thence thro' Kennett township, Chester county, crossed the Brandywine and turning S.E. encamped in the township of Birmingham, being extremely fatigued for want of rest and severe marching.

September 10.—At noon the alarm guns were fired, and the army drawn up in the usual manner, and marched to a height near the Brandywine, where we took post. The enemy not appearing we posted strong pickets and remained all night in the woods.

September 11.—An attack was made at 7 A.M. on our scouting party, in which Capt. Marshall was wounded. We all

Reference B:

**The Spring Grove Mill House
3200 Stoney Batter Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19808**



Chapter 4

REVOLUTIONARY WAR AT SPRING GROVE

Summary of the American Revolutionary War

The American Revolutionary War was initiated by the thirteen American colonies of British America who objected to taxation without representation.

The war began in 1775 in Boston. The last major battle at Yorktown ended with the British surrendering in 1781. The war officially ended with the 1783 Treaty of Paris, in which Great Britain formally recognized the independence of the United States.

The Philadelphia Campaign

During the early stages of the Revolutionary War, the British captured New York in 1776. Soon after, they set their sights on Philadelphia, the colonial capital and seat of the Second Continental Congress. By European standards of war, capturing the seat of the enemy's government would be a victorious end of the war.



General William Howe

General William Howe led the campaign to capture Philadelphia. The shortest route to Philadelphia from where Howe's forces were positioned in New York would have been to sail up the Delaware River. Howe's intelligence indicated the rebels would be prepared to defend the Delaware River through a series of forts, river defenses and *chevaux de frises* (timber obstacles).

Howe avoided these Delaware River hazards by sailing his ships from New York up into the Chesapeake Bay. In late August of 1777, approximately 15,000 troops on 265 British ships landed in and around the port town of Elkton, Maryland at the north end of the Chesapeake Bay, 55 miles west of Philadelphia. Although the route to the head of the Chesapeake was twice as long as the Delaware River route to Philadelphia, Howe selected the Chesapeake route because it was unexpected.

The Continental Army of 11,000 strong under General George Washington understood Howe's objective and attempted to prevent the capture of Philadelphia. Once Washington was able to ascertain that Howe was taking the unexpected Chesapeake Bay route to Elkton, Washington assumed Howe would follow a direct path to Philadelphia through the city of Wilmington, Delaware. It was the shortest route with a bridge in Wilmington to cross the Brandywine River.

Initially, Washington was planning to defeat Howe at Cooches Bridge located in Delaware just across the Maryland line south of Newark, Delaware. After consulting with his War Council, Washington decided to battle the British further east at the Red Clay Creek crossing in Stanton, Delaware near Newport. A victory at this location for either side would likely have ended the war in their favor. Washington left some of his forces in the Cooch's Bridge area to create resistance and provide reconnaissance resulting in the Battle of Cooch's Bridge occurring on September 3rd, 1777.

On September 8th, Washington was anticipating the British arrival at the Red Clay Creek in the Stanton area where his troops were in the highest spirits imaginable and prepared for the battle that could potentially win the war. But Howe's forces never came. Instead there was an unusual display of magical northern lights in the morning sky (aurora borealis) divinely signaling another one of Howe's deceptive maneuvers. Howe did not risk confronting Washington in Stanton where Washington was well prepared to fight from a defensive position. Howe changed his plan and moved his troops north towards Kennett Square, Pennsylvania around Washington's right. From Kennett Square, Howe would continue east to Philadelphia along the area now known as Pennsylvania Route 1. If Howe was able to make this directional change swiftly, and delay Washington from detecting the change, Howe would be able to have his forces get around Washington's troops and create a clear path to take Philadelphia with little resistance from Washington.

Washington needed to find out why Howe was not marching through Stanton as expected. Washington's long trusted general, Brigadier General George Weedon would be given the order to locate and confront the enemy which occurred at Spring Grove.

General George Weedon



Brigadier General George Weedon

Brigadier General George Weedon (1734–1793) was an American soldier during the Revolutionary War from Fredericksburg, Virginia. Weedon served as a lieutenant under George Washington in the French and Indian War (1754 – 1763).

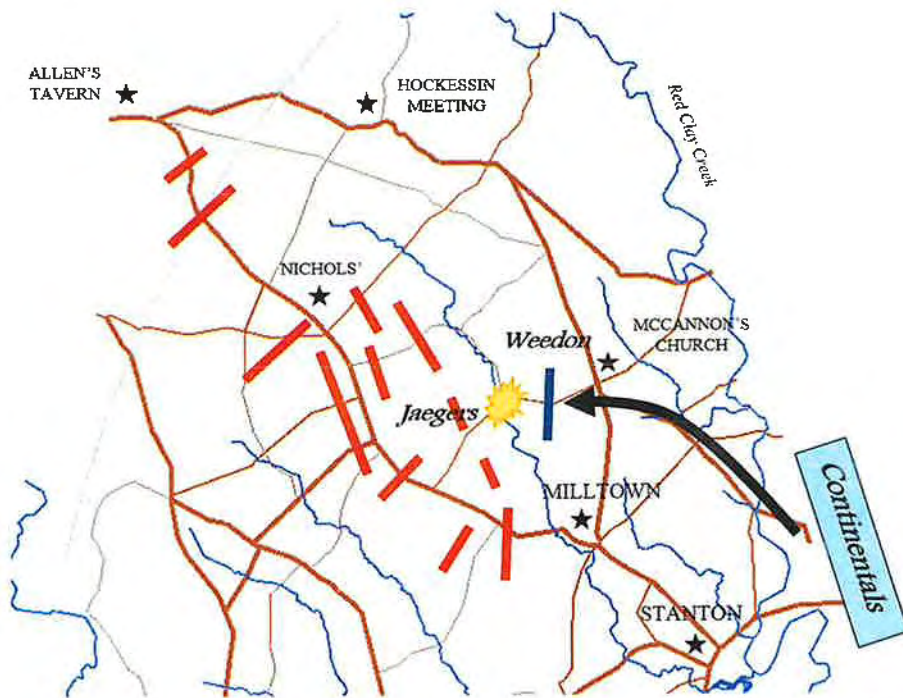
Weedon commanded a brigade in Nathanael Greene's division at Valley Forge. His brigade was composed of the 13th Pennsylvania Regiment, and the 2nd, 6th, 10th, and 14th Virginia regiments.

In 1778, he resigned from the Continental Army after a dispute with the Congress over seniority. At the request of Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson, Weedon lead a brigade of the Virginia state militia. He led his militia unit in the Yorktown campaign, the final victorious campaign that ended the war. His brigade successfully repelled the unit of Colonel Banastre Tarleton, closing the one means of British escape at Gloucester Point.

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove

The Revolutionary War was a long and complex web of interrelated and sometime spontaneous events. A small change or miscalculation in any one situation along the timeline could have a domino effect changing the war's outcome. General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove was such an event.

At 9 AM on September 8, 1777, as ordered, General Weedon advanced his Continental brigade from the east side of Red Clay Creek in Stanton, west towards Mill Creek in attempt to draw an enemy attack and to figure out why Howe was not moving his forces towards the Red Clay Creek crossing in Stanton as expected.



Weedon's approach to the British line across Mill Creek as depicted by Walt Chiquoine; ©2016

As Weedon's forces approached the east side of Mill Creek at Spring Grove, they were at a point of high elevation overlooking Mill Creek. The Continentals could see the British forces perched high on the next hill on the west side of Mill Creek approximately one-half mile away. At the time there were few trees in the area to provide cover or concealment. The hill occupied by the British forces is where the Spring Grove Mill House sits. Both forces were safe and secure due to the high elevations on the separate hills split by Mill Creek, and the half-mile separation between the two opposing forces. Long hours of gunfire were exchanged across the hills of eminence separated by Mill Creek. Both sides maintained the high ground advantage and chose not to become vulnerable by advancing into the low area of the creek. General Weedon's Foray ended in deadlock as both forces would progress northeast to the Battle of Brandywine occurring three days later.

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove would allow Washington to ascertain that Howe was attempting to maneuver around Washington's right and march into Philadelphia without any resistance. The intelligence gained from the foray enabled Washington to quickly adjust his plans and maneuver his forces to confront Howe at Chadds Ford in the Battle of Brandywine.

General Washington's Meeting in Milltown

An article appearing in the Delaware County American dated August 19, 1857 described an incident involving General Washington and his staff holding a War Council meeting in Milltown, Delaware on the evening prior to the Battle of Brandywine. This is not an accurate statement because it would not be possible for Washington to be able to march his troops the distance between the Stanton area to Chadds Ford in one day. Since it took three days for Washington to relocate his troops from the Stanton area to Chadds Ford, a more accurate description in the 1857 article would have been that the meeting occurred on the evening prior to Washington and his troops leaving the area and heading to Chadds Ford for the Battle of Brandywine which occurred three days later. If you take this adjustment in language into account, the story is consistent with the events described in this chapter.

The Milltown location of the meeting was within a mile to where the British forces were encamped at the time and 1.5 miles south of Spring Grove. Throughout the war, Washington had a track record of operating near the enemy. Based on 1849 Rea and Price Map of the local Milltown area, the Harlen House where the meeting took place is where Limestone Road and Milltown Road currently intersect.

The exact purpose of the meeting is not stated in the article. Based on the other known activities of this day, the logical purpose of Washington's presence in Milltown that evening was to see things for himself. He needed to validate what he learned earlier that day from General Weedon's engagement with the British forces at Spring Grove. Due to the risk of moving his entire army of 11,000 soldiers in the wrong direction, Washington had to be certain that the British forces were changing their course to Philadelphia by heading north towards Kennett Square before he would make a commitment to execute the orders to send his troops to Chadds Ford to cut off Howe from reaching Philadelphia. He made the final decision based on his personal observations and published the orders for his army to head for Chadds Ford at 2 AM on the early morning of September 9th. That same day Washington sent a letter to John Hancock the President of the Continental Congress informing him of what he had learned, and his actions of moving to Chadds Ford. (A copy of the letter and transcription are contained later in this chapter).

Below is a copy of what appeared in the Delaware County American article. The two words "heading for" were added by this author and underlined to show a more accurate version of the story, and to show how easily the inaccuracy could have crept into the story written 80 years after the incident:

ONE OF THE RELICS. - It is said that General Washington and Staff held a council of war on the evening previous to heading for the Battle of Brandywine, in the house on the old Harlan property, now belonging to Mr. Allen Ward, in the Milltown, Mill Creek Hundred. The room pointed out for this important conference is little more than ten by twelve feet and is still in good repair. Although the present owner has erected a substantial brick dwelling adjoining, we presume he intends to preserve this memento of the days of the revolution. The American army was posted in great force at this point, as the British were expected to take the route to Philadelphia, but they changes there course, keeping farther to the north, and the Battle of Brandywine, at Chadds ford, was the result. The house alluded to above, is built of logs, dovetailed together, which are in a remarkably good state of preservation; there are four rooms and a passage on the first floor, and five on the second, with a garret above; the floors are oak, and although they are said to be 112 years old, look as though they might last for a century to come. Attached to the ceiling, in the entry, is a three-cornered box, which is of the shape of the military hat worn in the revolution, and it is generally supposed that it may have held the chapeaux of Washington. The descendants of the Harlan's may know something of his history, and we have no doubt that they might furnish an interesting chapter in regard to it.

Based on the events of General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove, and later the same day. his personal observation at Milltown, Washington concluded that the British were attempting to disguise their diversion of heading north to bypass Washington's forces to his right. The foray helped Washington confirm that the British had changed their path to Philadelphia allowing him enough time to change his course and confront Howe at Chadds Ford before reaching Philadelphia.

Washington quickly moved his troops at 2 AM the next morning (September 9, 1777) heading for Chadds Ford at the Brandywine River crossing and taking a more direct route than the British. This allowed Washington to get in front to the British movement. Three days after General Weedon's Foray, the British arrived at Chadds Ford initiating the Battle of Brandywine. This battle is often cited as the largest battle in the Revolutionary War. The Continentals were defeated, and by September 26th, Howe captured Philadelphia.

The capture of Philadelphia did not end the war as the British expected. The British abandoned Philadelphia in June of 1778 because they needed to defend New York due to the increased support France was supplying to the Americans. At the end of the day, the Philadelphia Campaign was unsuccessful for the British. Besides abandoning Philadelphia, the British forces were defeated in the Saratoga Campaign occurring during the same time as the Philadelphia

Campaign. Howe failed to support the Saratoga Campaign as expected by his leadership, thereby allowing a major victory at Saratoga for the rebels. Howe having not supported the Saratoga Campaign as expected, was relieved of command. This led to the French substantially increasing their support to the Continentals thus leading to the eventual defeat of the British.

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove; Walt Chiquoine's Research

Walt Chiquoine used the first-hand accounts from the diary of Lieutenant James McMichael of the 13th Pennsylvania Regiment to assist in validating the Spring Grove location of General Weedon's Foray. Here is the full content for the day of the foray as written by McMichael in his diary:

September 8. — At 3 a.m. the General was beat and all tents struck. All the regiments were paraded, the men properly formed with an officer at the head of every platoon, and after wheeling to the right, we remained under arms until 9 o'clock. Then the alarm guns were fired and the whole army drawn up in line of battle, on the east side of Red Clay Creek, with Gen. Greene's division to the right. Here we remained for some time, when Gen. Weedon's brigade (of which my regiment was a part), was detached to the front to bring on the attack. We crossed the creek and marched about a league to an eminence near Mr. McCannon's meeting house, and there awaited the approach of the enemy, who were within half a mile of us. They however, encamped, which occasioned us to remain under arms all night, the sentries keeping up a constant fire. One of our officers on picket, deserted his post and was immediately arrested.

Chiquoine has found Lieutenant McMichael's diary account to be accurate based on the confirming accounts by both British and Hessian sources and by using the André's sketch of the British and Hessian troops in the area overlaid onto current maps to pinpoint the location of the foray to Spring Grove.

When the Continental units were spotted, the British light infantry pushed forward to head them off. The 42nd and 44th companies, part of the 3rd Brigade Foot, pushed forward behind the light infantry. But only the Jaegers managed to get off a few shots with their amusettes – very large bore rifles that outranged the standard musket. The location of the Jaegers (Chasseurs) on André's sketch and the reference to McCannon's Church pinpoint this event with certainty, at a place where the hills rapidly rise about 100 feet above Mill Creek. Neither side dared to cross the steep valley. The

amusettes drove Weedon back from the top of the hill, but his brigade stayed to keep a lookout over the British army. [Chiquoine]


Chiquoine fully documented his research on determining the location of the foray at Spring Grove in his published paper titled, *Finding the Daniel Nichols House – A new Interpretation of the British March Through Mill Creek Hundred, September 8-10, 1777.*

General Washington's Letter to John Hancock



General George Wasahington

General Washington made the following report in a letter to John Hancock, President of Congress describing his conclusions drawn from the of the events that occurred in and around



6 Miles from Wilmington of Sept 1777

The Enemy advanced yesterday with a seeming intention of attacking our post near Spring Grove. It rained for us the whole day, but in the evening they halted at a place called Mill Run about two miles from us. Upon reconnoitering their situation it appeared probable that they only meant to amuse us in front, when their real intent was to march by our right and by suddenly passing the Brandywine and gaining the heights on the north side of that River get between us & Philadelphia. It was judged essential to change our position immediately the Army accordingly marched thither at 8 o'clock this morning and will take post this evening on the high grounds near Chads Run. We have had nothing remarkable but of the Enemy to day, when I do please immediately transmit you an account.

I am Sir
Your Obedt Servt
G. Washington

Spring Grove on September 8, 1777:

:

TRANSCRIBED VERSION

6 miles from Wilmington 9 Sep 1777

Sir: The Enemy advanced Yesterday with a seeming intention of attacking us at our post near New Port. We waited for them the whole day, but in the Evening they halted at a place called Mill Town about two Miles from us. Upon reconnoitering their Situation, it appeared probable that they only meant to amuse us in front while their real intent was to march by our Right and by suddenly passing the Brandywine and gaining the heights on the North side of the River, get between us and Philadelphia and cut us off from it. To prevent this, it was judge expedient to change our position immediately, the Army accordingly by marching at 2 O'Clock this morning and will take post this Evening on the High grounds of Chadd's Ford. We have heard nothing circumstantial of the Enemy to day, When I do, I shall immediately transmit you an account.

*I Have the Honor to be Sir, Yr most obt Servt,
George Washington
To the Hon. John Hancock President of Congress*

Letters from Delaware's President McKinly to Major General Caesar Rodney

Delaware's President John McKinly was knowledgeable of the military activities as they occurred in and around the area of Mill Creek Hundred and Spring Grove on September 8th and 9th. He wrote two letters to his top general in the Delaware Militia, Major General Caesar Rodney on September 9th and 10th passing on what he knew about the military situation. [The position of president of Delaware was similar to a governor of today, but with less authority. Most of the legal authority at that time was within the Delaware General Assembly]

To better understand the context of the letters, it is necessary to explain the relationship between the federal government and the 13 colonies. The Continental Army under General Washington consisted of regular forces which were troops under the full control of Washington and the new federal government. The other much larger force available to Washington were the militias from each of the colonies operating as separate independent entities under the authority of their

individual colony governments and not the federal government. This militia concept is maintained today as the National Guard.

Today's National Guard state forces integrate seamlessly with the federal U.S. regular forces because the National Guard receives almost all funding from the federal government with the legal obligation to train and equip the state controlled National Guard to U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force standards. And the states agree to allow the federal government to callout the National Guard into full federal control when needed. But when not called into federal service, the National Guard is under the control of the governor and can be mobilized by the governor to support the state at the expense of the state.

During the time of the Revolutionary War, the militias of the various colonies were totally funded and controlled by the individual colony making it challenging for Washington to be able to use the militias and integrate them into his regular federal forces. The militias did not integrate seamlessly into the regular federal forces as they do today for the reasons stated. To make the most of the colony militias, Washington needed to closely coordinate with the governors to take advantage of the capabilities the militias provided under this less than ideal militia system.

The letters sent to Major General Rodney from Delaware's President McKinly provided additional validation about the military actions in Mill Creek Hundred and Spring Grove as reported by Washington to John Hancock in his September 9th letter. These letters also validated the accounts of General Weeden's Foray at Spring Grove as reported in Lieutenant James McMichael's diary. Specially McKinly states that Washington's troops waiting for the enemy in Stanton were "in the highest spirits imaginable" prior to being "given the slip" when Howe diverted his march to the north rather than face Washington on his terms in Stanton. McKinly then goes on to explain about a confrontation on a "high hill" 3 miles east of Newport also consistent with McMichael's description of the foray location at Spring Grove where McMichael describes the "hills of eminence" at Spring Grove just as they exist today. In the McKinly September 10th letter to Rodney, McKinly accurately describes the movements to Chadds Ford prior to the Battle of Brandywine which occurred the next day after writing this letter.

These two McKinly letters are noteworthy from an additional perspective. They demonstrate a surprising ability for Washington to quickly communicate with key leaders (Delaware President McKinly) to provide timely situational awareness that in certain circumstances would be essential in gaining support that Washington would need throughout the war from militia forces and others. [Copies of the McKinly letters are found in a book titled, Delaware Archives,

Military and Naval Records, Volume II, pages 1414-1416, published by the Public Archives Commission of Delaware in 1912.]

The Significance of General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove to the Revolutionary War

General Weedon's Foray at Spring Grove was a significant Revolutionary War event from a national perspective. Significant enough for General Washington to refer to the conclusions drawn from the foray at Spring Grove and other events occurring on September 8th in a letter to John Hancock the President of the Continental Congress on the next day.

If Washington had not ordered General Weedon's advance, he may not have discovered Howe's diversion to the right (north) in time to confront him at Chadds Ford in the Battle of Brandywine before reaching Philadelphia. And without Washington's strong resistance in the Battle of Brandywine, the French may not have had the confidence to support Washington at the level necessary to win the war. Additionally, Howe's focus on defeating Washington in the Philadelphia Campaign caused him to not support the Saratoga Campaign in defiance of his leadership. This was considered a major factor in the defeat for the British at Saratoga. As a result of neglecting to support the Saratoga Campaign, Howe was sent home and relieved of his command. The combination of Washington's resistance in the Philadelphia Campaign, and the rebel victory in the Saratoga Campaign successfully encouraged a higher level of support from the French which lead to the ultimate defeat of the British.

From a Delaware historical perspective, Spring Grove is only one of few sites identified in Delaware where combat action occurred on land involving a foreign enemy during any war. Other sites include the Cooch's Bridge and the surrounding area, and the Cannonball House in Lewes damaged by British cannon fire during the War of 1812. [Combat action is a term used by the military to describe military actions where there is engagement with the enemy.] [There were numerous naval engagements within the jurisdiction of Delaware waterways.]

Also, during this time period, Henry Brackin Sr. owned a sawmill that stood on the Spring Grove property during the foray, and his son Henry Brackin Jr. served in the 2nd Regiment of the Delaware Militia during the Revolutionary War. Henry Brackin Sr. died in 1779 leaving his sawmill and the Spring Grove property to Henry Brackin Jr.



Photo of Spring Grove taken by Charles S. Philips on the morning of November 29, 1895.