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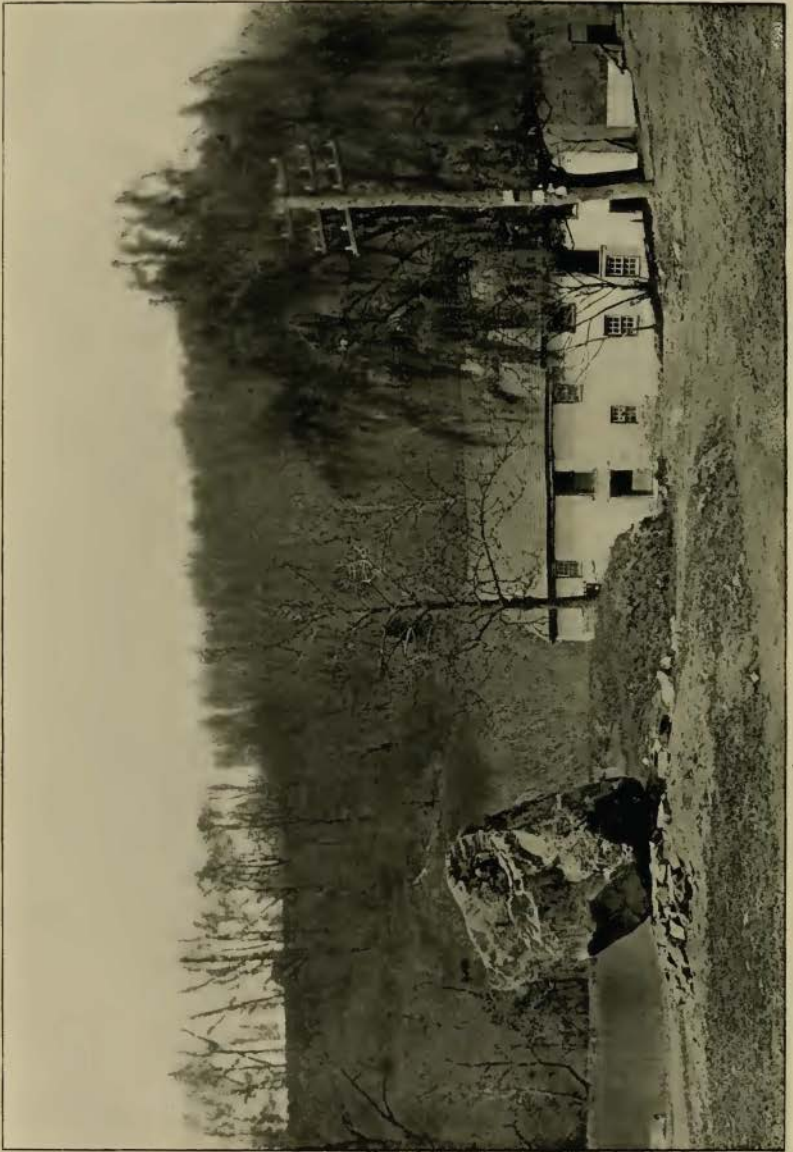
The Camp
by the Old Sulph Mill.

By
William Spohn Baker.



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THE
CAMP BY THE OLD GULPH MILL.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF SONS OF THE REVOLUTION, JUNE 19, 1893, ON THE OCCASION OF DEDICATING THE MEMORIAL STONE MARKING THE SITE OF THE ENCAMPMENT OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT THE OLD GULPH MILL, IN DECEMBER, 1777.

BY
WILLIAM SPOHN BAKER.

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THE CAMP BY THE OLD GULPH MILL.

In the closing scenes of the eventful campaign of 1777, the encampment of the Continental army near the old Gulph Mill¹ is an interesting feature. The army remained on these grounds from December 13 to December 19, and it is curious to note that this fact has been passed over by most historians, or, if alluded to at all, spoken of in very brief mention.

As a part of the story of the march to Valley Forge, it is well worthy of remembrance, and the permanent memorial which has been so generously presented to the Society by Mr. Joseph E. Gillingham, erected on ground courteously tendered by Mr. Henderson Supplee, the owner of the mill, has been fitly located.²

¹ The Gulph Mill, erected in 1747, is situated in Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, at the intersection of the Gulph Road with the Gulph Creek, which empties into the Schuylkill at West Conshohocken. It is about a mile and a half west of the river and six miles southeast of Valley Forge. What is understood as the Gulph is where the creek passes through the Gulph Hill, and to effect a passage has cleft it to the base.

² The memorial consists of a large boulder, nine feet in height, taken from the adjacent hill and erected upon a substantial foundation. It is located at the intersection of Montgomery Avenue with the Gulph Road, about one hundred yards southeast of the mill. The entire cost of construction was defrayed by Joseph E. Gillingham, of Philadelphia, a friend of the Society. The stone, which weighs about twenty tons, bears the following inscription: "GULPH MILLS. THE MAIN CONTINENTAL ARMY COMMANDED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON ENCAMPED IN

If, in presenting some facts concerning this encampment, and the movements of the army which led to it, I am unable to throw around the subject any of the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," I would beg you to consider that the month of December, 1777, was one of the gloomiest periods of the struggle for independence.

Brandywine and Germantown had been fought and lost; Congress was a fugitive from its capital, and the capital in the hands of the enemy; the currency was rapidly depreciating; supplies were rotting on the roads for lack of transportation; the commissariat in the direst confusion, and the army in the utmost straits. It was stern reality, not a chapter of romance.

After the battle of Germantown (October 4, 1777) the Continental army fell back to the Perkiomen Creek, at Pennybacker's Mills, now Schwenksville, Montgomery County, the ground of a previous encampment.¹ Notwithstanding this lengthened march of some twenty miles,²—I suppose we may as well call it a retreat,—the troops do not seem to have been badly demoralized, as there exists good evidence to the contrary. The writer of a letter from this encampment to the *Continental Journal*, of Boston, under date of the 6th, and published in that paper of the 30th, states that "all the men were in good spirits and seem to grow fonder of fighting the more they have of it;" and again, General Knox, in writing to Artemas Ward on the

THIS IMMEDIATE VICINITY FROM DECEMBER 13 TO DECEMBER 19 1777 BEFORE GOING INTO WINTER QUARTERS AT VALLEY FORGE. ERECTED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF SONS OF THE REVOLUTION 1892. THIS MEMORIAL TO THE SOLDIERS OF THE REVOLUTION STANDS ON GROUND PRESENTED BY HENDERSON SUPPLEE OWNER OF THE GULPH MILL ERECTED IN 1747."

¹ From September 26 to September 29, 1777.

² "After the army were all retreating, I expected they would have returned to their last encampment, about twelve or thirteen miles from the enemy at Germantown; but the retreat was continued upwards of twenty miles; so that all those men, who retired so far, this day marched upwards of thirty miles without rest, besides being up all the preceding night without sleep. This step appeared to me not of such pressing necessity."—*Pickering's Journal*.

7th, uses the following language: "Our men are in the highest spirits, and ardently desire another trial. I know of no ill consequences that can follow the late action; on the contrary, we have gained considerable experience, and our army have a certain proof that the British troops are vulnerable."

While the army was resting at Pennybacker's Mills a considerable re-enforcement from Virginia was received, and on the morning of the 8th a move was made into Towamencin Township, the camping ground being in the vicinity of the Mennonite meeting-house (near Kulpsville), in the burial-ground of which rest the remains of General Francis Nash, of North Carolina, and other officers mortally wounded at Germantown.

It was at this encampment that Washington received a letter from the Rev. Jacob Duché, of Philadelphia (who had forsaken the patriot cause), which has assumed much greater historical importance than it is entitled to. In this letter the reverend gentleman, after censuring the motives of Congress and those of the leaders in the cause of freedom, urged the commander-in-chief to "represent to Congress the indispensable necessity of rescinding the hasty and ill-advised Declaration of Independency."

Washington transmitted the letter to Congress, with this remark: "To this ridiculous, illiberal performance, I made a short reply, by desiring the bearer of it [Mrs. Ferguson, of Graeme Park] if she should hereafter by any accident meet with Mr. Duché, to tell him I should have returned it unopened if I had had any idea of the contents."

Here the army was again re-enforced by some troops from Peekskill, under General Varnum, of Rhode Island, and on the 16th a further move was made to the southward, near "Methacton Hill," in Worcester Township, the point from which the army had started on the evening of October 3 to attack the enemy at Germantown. While here, the cheering news of the defeat and surrender of General Burgoyne was received, and the general order issued in reference to it directed the chaplains of the army to prepare discourses suited to the occasion.

On the 19th of October the British army entirely evacuated Germantown and retired nearer to Philadelphia, their new line of intrenchments extending from the upper ferry on the Schuylkill, at Callowhill Street, to Kensington on the Delaware.¹

On the 21st the army moved lower down into Whitpain Township, within fifteen miles of the city. It was from this encampment that the following general order was issued on the 25th, announcing the successful defence of Fort Mercer on the Delaware by Colonel Christopher Greene, of Rhode Island :

“The Gen^l again congratulates the Troops on the success of our arms. On Wednesday last [October 22] a Body of about 1200 Hessians under the command of Count Donop made an attack on Fort Mercer at Red Bank, and after an action of 40 Minutes were repulsed with great loss. Count Donop himself is wounded and taken prisoner together with his Brigade Major and about 100 other officers and soldiers, and about 100 were left on the Fields, and as they carried off many of their wounded their whole loss is probably at least 400—our loss was trifling, the killed and wounded amounting only to about 32.”

Count Donop died from his wounds three days after the battle. His last words, “I die the victim of my ambition and of the avarice of my sovereign,” are painfully suggestive.

The gallant defender of Red Bank, Christopher Greene, while on duty at Croton River (May 13, 1781), was basely murdered by a band of Westchester County Tories.

On November 2 the march was made to Whitemarsh Township, twelve miles from the city, the encampment at this place being formed of two commanding hills, whose front and flanks were additionally secured by a strong advanced post, the right wing resting upon the Wissahickon

¹ At the time of the battle of Germantown the British army was encamped upon the general line of School-House Lane and Church Lane, crossing the town at the centre. The extreme left was at the mouth of the Wissahickon, and the right near Branchtown, on the Old York Road. These lines were retained until the movement of October 19.

and the left upon Sandy Run. A redoubt known as Fort Washington, on the right of the lines, is still well preserved. Near this spot a memorial stone was erected by the Society two years ago.¹

Here news was received of the evacuation of Fort Mifflin on the night of the 15th, followed by that of Fort Mercer on the 19th. The loss of these forts ended the defence of the Delaware, and the obstructions in the river being removed, the enemy had full possession of Philadelphia.

Winter was now rapidly approaching, and it became necessary to determine whether any attempt should be made to recover possession of the city. Accordingly a council of the general officers was called to meet at headquarters² on the evening of the 24th of November, to consider the expediency of an attack on the enemy's lines, the arrival of some troops from the Northern army and the absence of a large body of British under Lord Cornwallis, in New Jersey, being considered favorable circumstances.

The council adjourned without coming to a decision, and the commander-in-chief, despatching a special messenger to General Greene, who was watching the movements of Cornwallis in New Jersey, required of the other officers their written opinions. On comparing them, eleven were found against making the attack (Greene, Sullivan, Knox, De Kalb, Smallwood, Maxwell, Poor, Paterson, Irvine, Duportail, and Armstrong) and four only (Stirling, Wayne, Scott, and Woodford) in its favor.

¹ The stone, a neat granite slab, stands on the southeasterly side of the Bethlehem Turnpike Road, about thirteen miles north of Philadelphia. It bears the following inscription: "ABOUT 700 FEET SOUTH OF THIS STONE IS AN AMERICAN REDOUBT AND THE SITE OF HOWE'S THREATENED ATTACK DEC. 6, 1777. FROM HERE WASHINGTON'S ARMY MARCHED TO VALLEY FORGE. ERECTED IN 1891 BY THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF SONS OF THE REVOLUTION."

² The Whitmarsh head-quarters are still standing, about half a mile east from Camp Hill Station on the North Pennsylvania Railroad. The house, built of stone, is two and a half stories in height, eighty feet front, and twenty-seven feet in depth. Camp Hill, on which part of the left wing of the army was posted, is directly in the rear of the house.

The letter of General Wayne, advising the attack, is so characteristic of the enterprise and dash of the man that we quote it entire. It is dated "Camp at White Marsh, 25th November, 1777.

"After the most Dispassionate & Deliberate Consideration of the Question your Excellency was pleased to put to the Council of Gen^l Officers last evening—I am solemnly and clearly of Opinion; that the Credit of the Army under your Command—the safety of the Country—the Honor of the American Arms—the Approach of Winter that must in a few days force you from the field, and above all the Depreciation of the Currency of these States, point out the Immediate necessity of giving the enemy Battle.

"Could they possibly be drawn from their lines it is a measure devoutly to be wished—but if that can not be effected It is my Opinion that your Excellency should march tomorrow morning and take post with this Army at the upper end of Germantown, and from thence Immediately detach a working party to throw up some Redoubts under the Direction of your Engineers—this Intelligence will reach the Enemy—they will Conclude that you Intend to make good your winter-quarters there—and however Desirous they may be to dislodge you—they can't attempt it until they withdraw their Troops from the Jersey—this cannot be done in the course of a night.

"By this manœuvre you will be within striking distance—the Enemy will be Deceived by your working Party—and lulled into security—your Troops will be fresh and ready to move that Night so as to arrive at the Enemies lines before daylight on this day morning—agreeable to the proposed plan of Attack—the outlines of which are good and may be Improved to Advantage and Crowned with Success.¹

¹ The plan of Lord Stirling and those in favor of the attack was, that it should be at different points, the main body to attack the lines to the north of the city, while Greene, embarking his men in boats at Dunk's Ferry (below Bristol), and passing down the Delaware, and Potter, with a body of Continentals and militia on the Schuylkill, should attack the eastern and western fronts.

“It has been objected by some Gentlemen that the attack is hazardous—that if we prevail it will be attended with great loss. I agree with the Gentlemen in their position.

“But however hazardous the attempt and altho some loss is Certain—yet it is my Opinion that you will not be in a worse Situation—nor your arms in less Credit if you should meet with a misfortune than if you were to remain Inactive.

“The eyes of all the World are fixed upon you—the Junction of the Northern Army gives the Country and Congress some expectations that vigorous efforts will be made to Dislodge the Enemy and Oblige them to seek for Winter quarters in a less hostile place than Phil’a.

“It’s not in our power to command Success—but it is in our power to produce a Conviction to the World that we deserve it.”¹

On the morning of the 25th a careful examination of the defences on the north of the city was made by the commander-in-chief in person. The results of this reconnoissance, taken from the west bank of the Schuylkill, is best exhibited in the following extract from a letter written on the 26th by John Laurens to his father Henry Laurens, President of Congress:

“Our Commander-in-chief wishing ardently to gratify the public expectation by making an attack upon the enemy—yet preferring at the same time a loss of popularity to engaging in an enterprise which he could not justify to his own conscience and the more respectable part of his constituents, went yesterday to view the works. A clear sunshine favoured our observations: we saw redoubts of a very respectable profit, faced with plank, formidably fraised, and the intervals between them closed with an abatis unusually strong. General du Portail declared that in such works with five thousand men he would bid defiance to any force that should be brought against him.”

All intentions of making an attack were then abandoned,

¹ “’Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we’ll do more, Sempronius; we’ll deserve it.”

and the question of winter-quarters for the army came up for consideration. On this point the views of the general officers were widely separated, some inclining to Reading, others to Lancaster and Wilmington.¹ It is said that Washington himself made the decision in favor of Valley Forge.

On the evening of December 4, General Howe, with nearly all his army, marched out from Philadelphia, with the boasted purpose of driving the rebels beyond the mountains. His advance arrived at Chestnut Hill about daylight the following morning, in front of and a short distance from the right wing of the Americans. General James Irvine, with six hundred men from the Pennsylvania militia, was ordered to move against them. A smart skirmish ensued, resulting in the retreat of the militia, leaving the general wounded in the hands of the British.

On the 7th the enemy moved to Edge Hill, on the American left, when their advanced and flanking parties were attacked by Colonel Daniel Morgan and his riflemen, and also by the Maryland militia, under Colonel Mordecai Gist. A sharp contest occurred, and the parties first attacked were driven in; but Washington, being unwilling to come to an engagement in the open field, declined re-enforcements, and Gist and Morgan were compelled to give way.

The enemy continued manœuvring the entire day of Sunday, the 7th, in the course of which Washington, expecting at any moment an attack, "rode through every brigade of his army, delivering in person his orders respecting the manner of receiving the enemy, exhorting his troops to rely principally on the bayonet, and encouraging them by the

¹ "If you can with any convenience let me see you to-day. I would be thankful for it. I am about fixing the winter cantonments of this army, and find so many and so capital objections to each mode proposed, that I am exceedingly embarrassed, not only by the advice given me, but in my own judgment, and should be very glad of your sentiments on the subject, without loss of time. In hopes of seeing you, I shall only add that from Reading to Lancaster inclusively, is the general sentiment, whilst Wilmington and its vicinity has powerful advocates."—*Washington to Joseph Reed, December 2, 1777.*

steady firmness of his countenance, as well as by his words, to a vigorous performance of their duty.”¹

The dispositions of the evening indicated an intention to attack on the ensuing morning; but Howe was afraid to assail Washington, and, failing in all attempts to draw him out, gave up the design, and on the afternoon of Monday, the 8th, changed front, and by two or three routes marched back to the city, burning a number of houses by the way.

“Washington, on receiving intelligence of Howe’s retreat, said: ‘Better would it have been for Sir William Howe to have fought without victory than thus to declare his inability.’”²

This virtually closed the campaign of 1777, and early on the morning of Thursday, the 11th of December, the army of eleven thousand men, many of them unfit for duty, set out for winter-quarters,³ moving up the Skippack Road to the Broad-Axe Tavern, and from thence five miles westward to the Schuylkill, the intention being for the main body to cross at Matson’s Ford, now Conshohocken, where a bridge had already been laid. It was also arranged that a portion of the troops should cross the river at Swede’s Ford, some three miles higher up the stream.

When the first division and a part of the second had passed over the bridge at Matson’s Ford, a body of British, three thousand strong, under Lord Cornwallis, was discovered stationed on the high ground on both sides of the road leading from the river and along the Gulph Creek. This forced the return of those who had crossed, and, after rendering the bridge impassable, the army was ordered to

¹ Marshall’s “Washington,” Vol. III. p. 319.

² Lee’s “Memoirs,” Vol. I. p. 45.

³ “December 11.—At 3 A.M. we struck tents, passed White Marsh Church, and on to the upper bridge over the Schuylkill, when the enemy having crossed at the Middle Ferry [Market Street], attacked a party of Militia under Gen. Potter. The loss was inconsiderable on both sides. We then turned W.N.W. and proceeded thro’ Hickorytown and encamped near Swedes Ford.”—*Diary of Lieutenant James McMichael*, PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE, Vol. XVI. p. 156.

Swede's Ford, now Norristown, where it encamped for the night. The British, who were on a foraging expedition, were met in their advance by General James Potter, with part of the Pennsylvania militia, who behaved with bravery and gave them every possible opposition till he was obliged to retreat from superior numbers.

General Potter's report of his opposition to this raid, made to Thomas Wharton, President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, if not very good English, is certainly quite graphic:

"Last Thursday [December 11] the enemy march out of the City with a desine to Furrige; but it was Nessecerey to drive me out of the way; my advanced picquet fired on them at the Bridge [Market Street]; another party of one Hundred attacted them at the Black Hors.¹ I was encamped on Charles Thomson's place,² where I staeoned two Regments who attacted the enemy with viger. On the next Hill, I staeoned three Regments, letting the first line know, that when they were over powered, the must Retreat and form behind the sacond line, and in that manner we formed and Retreated for four miles; and on every Hill we disputed the matter with them. My people Behaved well, espealy three Regements, Commanded by the Col^r Chambers, Murrey and Leacey. His Excellency Returned us thanks in public orders;³ — But the cumplement would have Been mutch more substantale had the Valant Generil Solovan [Sullivan] Covered my Retreat with two Devissions of the Army, he had in my Reare; the front of them was

¹ The Black Horse Tavern was on the old Lancaster Road, about five miles northwest of Philadelphia.

² Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress. The Thomson place, known as "Harriton," was on the Old Gulph Road, about twelve miles from Philadelphia and three miles from the Gulph Mill. The mansion-house is still standing.

³ "The Commander-in-Chief, with great pleasure, expresses his approbation of the behavior of the Pennsylvania Militia yesterday, under General Potter, on the vigorous opposition they made to a body of the enemy on the other side of the Schuylkill."—*Orderly-Book*, December 12, 1777.

about one half mile in my Rear, but he gave orders for them to Retreat and join the army who were on the other side of the Schuylkill, about one mile and a Half from me; thus the enemy Got leave to plunder the Countrey, which they have dun without parsiality or favour to any, leaving none of the Nessecereys of life Behind them that the conveniently could Carry or destroy . . . His Excellancey was not with the Army when this unlucky neglaect hapned; the army was on there march, and he had not come from his Quarters at Whit marsh."¹

Lord Cornwallis returned to Philadelphia the following day.

Want of provisions² prevented any movement of the troops until the evening of the 12th, when at sunset the march was commenced, some crossing the river on a bridge of wagons at the ford and others at a raft bridge below. Early on the morning of the 13th of December the army arrived at the Gulph,³ the depressing aspect of which prompted the Connecticut surgeon, Albigeance Waldo, to record in his journal entry of that day that the place was well named, "for this Gulph seems well adapted by its situation to keep us from the pleasure and enjoyments of this world, or being conversant with any body in it."⁴

During the whole course of the war but few marches may be compared with this, short as it was, for hardship, privation, and almost despair. Yet, half starved, half naked

¹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Vol. VI. p. 97.

² "The next morning [December 12] the want of provisions—I could weep tears of blood when I say it—the want of provisions render'd it impossible to march till the evening of that day."—*John Laurens to Henry Laurens*, December 23, 1777.

³ "December 12.—At 6 P.M. we marched to the bridge [made of wagons], which we crossed in Indian file, and at 3 A.M. encamped near the Gulph, where we remained without tents or blankets in the midst of a severe snow storm."—*Diary of Lieutenant James McMichael*.

⁴ Albigeance Waldo was a regimental surgeon in the brigade of General Jediah Huntington, of Connecticut. His diary from November 10, 1777, to January 15, 1778, from which we quote, is published in the fifth volume of the *Historical Magazine*.

as they were, their footsteps leaving tracks of blood,¹ the *Soldiers* of the Revolution bore up against all, and the *Sons* of the Revolution, in honoring their memories by the simple services of to-day, honor themselves.

It was cold, stormy weather, beginning with snow on the night of the 12th and ending with rain on the 16th, when for the first time the tents were pitched² and some little degree of comfort secured for the men, whose miserable condition is described by Dr. Waldo: "There comes a soldier—His bare feet are seen thro' his worn out shoes—his legs nearly naked from the tatter'd remains of an only pair of stockings—his Breeches not sufficient to cover his Nakedness—his shirt hanging in strings—his hair dishevell'd—his face meagre—his whole appearance pictures a person forsaken & discouraged."

Dismal as were the days, unpromising as was the future, we find the commander-in-chief still hopeful, still courageous, as he issues his order to the army on the 17th, wherein, after expressing his thanks to the officers and soldiers for the fortitude and patience with which they had sustained the fatigue of the campaign, he adds, "Although in some instances we unfortunately failed; yet upon the whole Heaven hath smiled upon our arms and crowned them with signal success; and we may upon the best grounds conclude, that, by a spirited continuance of the measures necessary for our defence, we shall finally obtain the end of our warfare, Independence, Liberty and Peace."

Brave words, well worthy of such a commander and such soldiers.

While some of the letters written by Washington during

¹ "December 14.—It is amazing to see the spirit of the soldiers when destitute of shoes and stockings marching cold nights and mornings, leaving blood in their foot-steps! yet notwithstanding, the fighting disposition of the soldiers is great."—*Letter from the army, Continental Journal*, January 15, 1778.

² "December 16th.—Cold Rainy Day—Baggage ordered over the Gulph, of our Division, which were to march at Ten—but the baggage was order'd back and for the first time since we have been here the Tents were pitch'd to keep the men more comfortable."—*Diary of Albigeance Waldo*.

this encampment are dated "Head Quarters Gulph Mill," others again are from "Near the Gulph," and one to the Board of War is dated "Head Quarters Gulph Creek, 14 Dec. 1777." In the absence of any positive information on the subject, and with the knowledge that the mill merely marked the locality, it is, therefore, impossible to name with any accuracy the premises occupied by the commander-in-chief as head-quarters. The army was posted on the high grounds on both sides of the Gulph, and the tradition which points to a house which stood about one mile north of the mill and beyond the creek may be entitled to some consideration. It was at the time the residence of Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Hughes, of the Pennsylvania militia. The house, a substantial stone building, was taken down some years ago.

An entry in the orderly-book of General Muhlenberg, directing "The Guards to Parade at the Gulph Mill at 3 o'clock" on the afternoon of December 13, is thought by some to indicate that head-quarters were in the immediate vicinity of the mill. If such is the case, the house which stands on the opposite side of the road may be entitled to the distinction. This house, considerably increased in size and importance, is now owned and occupied by Henderson Supplee, the proprietor of the Gulph Mill.

Apart from the usual routine of an army at rest, the incidents connected with this encampment which are known to us are few. We are told that on one occasion a party of the enemy, to the number of forty-five, was surprised and made prisoners,¹ but beyond this there is little to note. When the army lay at Valley Forge, however, the Gulph was an important post, and a characteristic anecdote of Aaron Burr in connection with it, related by his biographer, Matthew L. Davis, is of sufficient interest to repeat.²

¹ "December 17.—We have been for several days past posted on the mountains near the gulph mill, and yesterday a party of the enemy, to the number of forty five were surprised and made prisoners."—*Letter from the army, Continental Journal*, January 22, 1778.

² Colonel Burr joined the main army at Whitmarsh in November. He was at this time in the twenty-second year of his age.

It appears from this story that the militia stationed to guard the pass at the Gulph were continually sending false alarms to camp, which obliged the officers to get the troops under arms and frequently to keep them on the alert during the whole night. These alarms, it was soon found, arose from the want of a proper system of observation and from a general looseness of discipline in the corps. General McDougall, who well knew the quality of Colonel Burr as a soldier, recommended the commander-in-chief to give him the command of the post.

This was done, which resulted in the introduction of a system of such rigorous discipline that mutiny was threatened and the death of the colonel resolved upon. This came to the knowledge of Burr, and on the evening decided upon (every cartridge having been previously drawn from the muskets) the detachment was ordered to parade. When in line, one of the men stepped from the ranks and levelled his musket at him, whereupon Burr raised his sword and struck the arm of the mutineer above the elbow, nearly severing it from his body. In a few minutes the corps was dismissed, the arm of the mutineer was next day amputated, and no more was heard of the mutiny.

General Wayne, in writing from this encampment to a friend, requesting him to apply to Congress in his behalf for a short leave of absence, gives as his reasons ill health, a continued service of twenty-three months, and a desire to attend to his private affairs. Three very good pleas for such an indulgence, it being the first, as he says, that he had ever asked. The letter, dated "Camp at the Gulf 19th Decr. 1777," reads thus:

"After struggling with a stubron cold for months with a pain in my breast occasioned by a fall at Germantown—the Caitiff has taken post in my Lungs and throat—and unless I am permitted to change my Ground I dread the Consequence. I have not Interest sufficient with His Excellency to Obtain leave of Absence long enough to effect a Radical cure. My physicians advise me to go to some Inland town or place when I can be properly attended and procure a

suitable Regiment. I have now been on constant duty for 23 months, sixteen of which I served in Canada and Ticonderoga, the Remainder with his Excellency during which period I have never had one single moment's respite. My private Interest is in a suffering Condition, all the amts of Money's Recd and Expenditures since then remain unsettled—so that if any misfortune should happen me—there is no person who could liquidate them.

“These considerations together with my state of Health induces me to request you to lay my case before Congress and endeavour to obtain leave of Absence for me for five or six weeks. I am confident that when they reflect on the length of time I have served them together with the hard duty I have underwent they will not hesitate to grant me this Indulgence it being the first I ever asked.”

It does not appear that the leave of absence was obtained; at all events, we know that Wayne was still on duty at Lancaster and York in January, looking to a supply of clothing for the Pennsylvania troops.

On the 18th of December, a day set apart by Congress for thanksgiving and prayer, the troops remained in their quarters, and the chaplains performed service with their several corps and brigades. On this day, in general orders, the commander-in-chief gave explicit directions for constructing the huts for winter-quarters.

Although it has generally been stated that the establishment of winter-quarters at Valley Forge was fully decided upon at Whitemarsh, yet it seems that even when the army lay on these hills the matter was still under consideration. Timothy Pickering, in a letter to Mrs. Pickering, under date of December 13, wrote, “The great difficulty is to fix a proper station for winter quarters. Nothing else prevents our going into them . . . it is a point not absolutely determined.” And, two days later, John Laurens, writing to the President of Congress, says, “The army cross'd the Schuylkill on the 13th and has remained encamped on the heights on this side. Our truly republican general has declared to his officers that he will set the example of passing

the winter in a hut himself. The precise position is not yet fixed upon in which our huts are to be constructed; it will probably be determined to day; it must be in such a situation as to admit of a bridge of communication over the Schuylkill for the protection of the country we have just left."

This uncertainty, which does not seem to have been removed until the 17th of the month, will account for the lengthened period of the encampment at the Gulph, and it may not be too much to say that in all probability this locality was also taken into consideration.

At ten o'clock on Friday morning, December 19, the army marched from hence to Valley Forge, six miles to the northward.¹

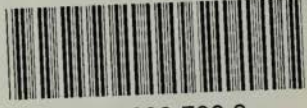
We are standing on historic soil. Yonder hills, one hundred and sixteen years ago, witnessed the privations and sufferings of a band of heroes,—the soldiers of the Revolution. The old Gulph Mill, its walls grim and gray with age, still guards the spot, a faithful sentinel. Here have passed and repassed men whose names are history itself, whose deeds are a cherished inheritance. Washington, modest as virtuous; Greene, wise as brave; Knox, gallant as true; Lafayette, the friend of America; Sullivan, Stirling, De Kalb, Muhlenberg, Maxwell, Huntington, and Wayne! Anthony Wayne! Pennsylvania's soldier and patriot.

These grounds were the threshold to Valley Forge, and the story of that winter—a story of endurance, forbearance, and patriotism which will never grow old—had its beginning here, at the six days' encampment by the old Gulph Mill.

The memorial which we dedicate to-day in remembrance of this encampment—rough, unchiselled, nature's monument—is a fit emblem of the dreary days of December, 1777.

¹ The movements of the army which have been traced in this paper were entirely in what was then Philadelphia County, now (since 1784) Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, the townships or districts mentioned being the same as at present.

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