

Monuments at Buford Battleground

by Louise Pettus

On April 1, 1845 a group of citizens of Lancaster District led by Col. J. H. Witherspoon met at the Lancaster Court House and decided to start a subscription drive for a monument at Buford Battleground, nine miles east of the village of Lancasterville.

It was at the present-day junction of Highways 9 and 522 that Patriot Col. Abraham Buford, commander of a Virginia regiment of infantry and a company of artillery (3-400 men), was attacked by the British officer, Col. Banastre Tarleton with about 700 cavalry and infantry.

The date was May 29, 1780. The massacre that followed was one of the most brutal and bloody in the Revolution War. The American loss was 113 killed, 150 wounded, and 53 taken prisoner. The British had 5 killed and 14 wounded.

The Lancaster citizens who met in the Lancaster Court, nearly 65 years after the event, never forgot the rallying cry, "Remember Tarleton's Quarter." Their resolution was filled with indignation and concern that the people of the District had never erected a monument to commemorate the event.

The committee, which consisted of J. H. Witherspoon, Col. Thomas W. Huey, Dr. R. E. Wylie, Samuel B. Massey, A. C. Dunlap, William Hilton, Samuel Robinson, and James R. Massey, sought to discover the history, both the military records and the traditionary accounts of the local community.

Of all of the accounts of the butchery that occurred, none is more vivid than that of Capt. John Stokes (for whom Stokes County, N. C. is named). Stokes received 23 wounds, "he was attacked by two dragoons, one of whom cut off his right hand, which was extended to ward off the blow aimed at his head - the other cut off the forefinger of the left hand- he was then cut down by a blow on his head, after he fell, was transfixied four times with the bayonet; yet, strange to relate, he survived and was afterwards promoted to a seat on the Bench." Judge Stokes, it is said, did not need a gavel; instead, he used the silver ball attached to his arm as a replacement to his lost right hand.

The committee report, vividly written, was published in the Camden Journal June 18, 1845. The only known American survivors of the attack were named as Captains Stokes, Lawson and Hoard, Lieutenants Pearson and Jamison, Ensign Cruitt and Col. Buford himself. Some of the wounded had been taken to Waxhaw Church where they were nursed by local

of the wounded had been taken to Waxhaw Church where they were nursed by local citizens, including young Andrew Jackson and his mother. It is known that a number were buried at Old Waxhaw cemetery but not who they were or where the graves were located.

At the battleground site the dead were buried in two mass graves. A man named Usher and the Rev. Jacob Carnes had assisted in burying the dead, and in 1845 Usher's son recalled that 84 who died the day of the battle were buried in the larger grave and that 25 who died the following day were buried in the smaller grave about 300 yards off from the first grave. A two-foot wall of white rocks surrounds the common grave of the 84 patriots.

To raise the money to mark the two graves, the citizens of 1845 appointed a Monument Committee of 150 local citizens. It took 15 years to raise the money for a marble monument inscribed by W. T. White's marble yard in Charleston.

Time and souvenir seekers who chipped off pieces of the marble so marred the 1860s monument that in the 1950s a second monument was erected. The Waxhaws Daughters of the American Revolution and the Lancaster County Historical Commission jointly erected in 1955 the second monument which preserved the wording of the first.

The land on which the battle occurred remained in private hands until 1894 when two acres around the monument were deeded to the Buford Monument A. R. P. church. The church only survived four or five years and, in 1946, the A. R. P. Synod deeded the two acres to Lancaster County.