

**D. A. R. UNVEIL MARKER** "The Battle of the Waxhaws" of the Revolutionary war was memorialized yesterday when a bronze tablet was unveiled at the old Walkup home, where the battle was fought. It is near Waxhaw in Union county. Shown here are women prominent in D. A. R. activities and the two little girls who unveiled the marker. They are, from left to right, Mrs. W. H. Belk, Mrs. J. M. Wallace, Sarah Dew and Ann Kluttz, Mrs. J. P. Quarles, and Mrs. Joseph S. Silversteen. Mrs. Silversteen is state regent. (Observer Staff photo.)



*Photo above from The Charlotte Observer, September 26, 1941*  
(a photocopy of clipping found at The Heritage Room, Monroe, NC)



**Battle of the Waxhaws, September 20, 1780:**

*Keeping the Name of a Revolutionary War Event Straight (Impossible!)  
and Lamenting the Loss of a DAR Monument*

Patricia M. Poland, September 2008

Dickerson Genealogy & Local History Room

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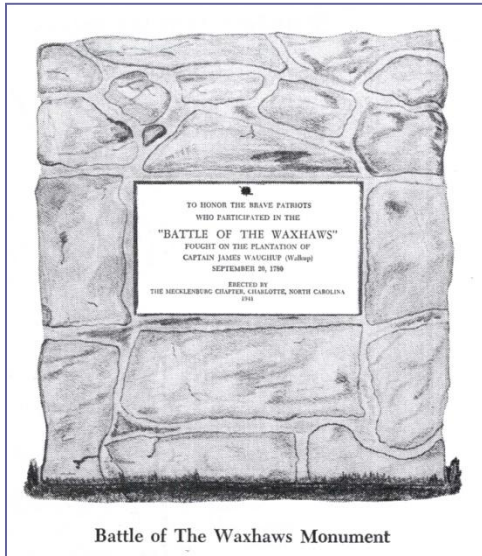
Presented to the John Foster Chapter DAR, first meeting of the new year  
(paper revised after the 9-11-2008 meeting—this is the revised & 'official' paper)



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Sixty-seven years ago, a group from the Daughters of the American Revolution (Mecklenburg Chapter) stood in the pouring rain in southern Union County to dedicate a monument for a brief battle fought on the plantation of Captain James Walkup (Wauchope).<sup>1</sup>



Battle of The Waxhaws Monument

Made of mortared stone and fitted with a proper brass plaque, the large and impressive monument sat on Walkup Road upon ground that saw a Revolutionary War conflict. (see sketch inserted here from “The Wisackyola Historical Festival Review 1966”, p 29)

Sometime between 1992 and 1997 the monument was destroyed. The details of this destruction are not clearly known.<sup>2</sup>

But why this DAR group felt a monument was important enough to erect – that is something which should be known.

The battle is considered a ‘skirmish’ which does not mean it was insignificant. Patrick O’Kelley shares in his three-volume series, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter*, insight into how he had to rethink battles and skirmishes. He found this in *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1781*:

“Most of these actions would in other wars be considered as skirmishes of little account, and scarcely worthy of a detailed narrative...The operations of war spread over that vast continent...it is by such skirmishes that the fate of America must be necessarily decided. They are therefore as important as battles in which a hundred thousand men are drawn up on each side.”

The very first problem a researcher will run into is the confusion over the name of this Revolutionary War skirmish in Union County (then Mecklenburg), North Carolina. Why?

1. Because of the locality.
2. Because the spelling of the plantation owner’s family name changed.
3. Because those who wrote about the battles gave them different names.

Occasionally the date of the battle fluctuates between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of September (1780). Since most sources, including the destroyed marker and the current highway marker, give the date as the 20<sup>th</sup>, we’ll go with the majority.

A recent article<sup>3</sup> in “U. S. News & World Report” about the gruesome “Buford’s Massacre” of May 1780 referred to the massacre as ‘The Battle of the Waxhaws’!

This has been a continual mistake throughout time but easy to understand for anyone doing research in Union County, North Carolina or Lancaster County, South Carolina. The area called the “Waxhaws” is in both states. After all, this is most assuredly why President Jackson mixed up his place of birth, yes?

Though one cannot be certain, it is possible that many researchers and historians upon seeing the area of the Buford’s Massacre then consult a list of battles. Finding “Battle of the Waxhaws”, they assume they have the correct name. Or perhaps they are even looking at someone else’s history that has named it as such.

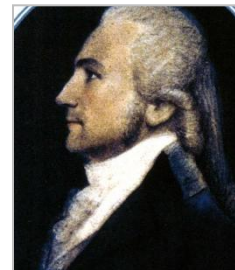
More than likely, in today’s age of the Internet, they have ‘googled’ the battle. When you do an Internet search on the “Battle of the Waxhaws” almost 100% of the hits will be for what we call “The Buford’s Massacre”.

A recent search revealed one hit that reminded researchers that this name was also used for “Wahab’s (Wauchope’s) Plantation”.<sup>4</sup>

Usually battles were named for the area or place in which they occurred. (Think about the Civil War and how the Confederacy often referred to battles by citing the nearest body of water, usually a stream, whereas the Union named them for the nearest town – Antitam vs. Sharpsburg in Maryland is a good example). So it is easy to see how a name with the word ‘Waxhaws’ in it could get mixed up with the “Buford’s Massacre” which happened in the Waxhaws of South Carolina.

Consulting various texts and histories we find “our” “Battle of the Waxhaws” sometimes listed as: “Wahab’s Plantation” or “Wahab’s Mill”. Other spellings found: Wauhuh and Waughup.

The state’s historical highway marker erected in 1991 on 200 S at Tirzah Church Road names it “Davie’s Attack”. An excellent choice considering William Richardson Davie was in command.<sup>5</sup> (Illustration at right from *The Revolutionary War: The American Cause in Peril*, vol. 8, p 62)



“Battle of Walkup’s Mill” is nice – just think, if this had been the name settled on maybe this eternal confusion would never have happened!

But this brings us to the name change for the plantation owner —a name we know today as “Walkup”.

Captain James Walkup, serving with Col. Davie, took part in the skirmish on his plantation in what was then Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. It stands to reason that the very man who owned the land would certainly know the best way in and around it, helping take the British by surprise! But first the name...

The descendants prefer the name *Wauchope*. LeGette Blythe, author of “William Henry Belk: Merchant of the South” (p. 18) notes that “Marquis James, in the biography, *Andrew Jackson: The Border Captain*, gives the name correctly: Wauchope”. Blythe’s 1950 book is based on interviews he had with William Henry Belk<sup>6</sup> in 1948. He quotes Mr. Belk about the name as saying: “I don’t know just when the name was changed.” Belk continued to explain that the name was being simplified but he himself wished they had “let it stay Wauchope”.

James Wauchope’s name was pronounced as we do it today, “Walkup”. O’Kelley’s endnotes in Volume II of *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter* notes the name was more commonly known as “Wahab” in accounts of that time. Thus the “Wahab’s Plantation” that we often see this skirmish named.

Wauchope’s parents were from Ireland. We know that he served with Col. Davie<sup>7</sup> on September 20<sup>th</sup>. He is also listed in the latest DAR Patriot Index.<sup>8</sup> More information can be found on him in files at The Heritage Room in Monroe, NC and in Harry Gamble’s Walkup history (see endnotes).

Imagine the delight (and even fear) that Captain Wauchope and Col. Davie felt when they got word that the British were camped out on their old stomping grounds. Davie, though born in England, was raised in the Waxhaw area of South Carolina after being adopted by his maternal Uncle, William Richardson.<sup>9</sup>

Herein follows a version of the events for the “Battle of the Waxhaws” as gleaned from O’Kelley’s *Nothing But Blood and Slaughter* (Vol 2), Thomson-Gale’s *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* and a July 26, 1992 *Enquirer-Journal* newspaper article:

A good number of the British were ill with yellow fever. Major George Hanger with the British Legion was camped near “Wahab’s” Plantation. The men who weren’t sick kept busy conducting raids out into the countryside.

Patriot Colonel George Davidson, who had been sending out scouting parties, deduced the approximate area of the raiding British troops. He and Davie decided to put a stop to them.

The hated Banastre Tarleton, of the “Buford’s Massacre”, was not present in spite of William Henry Belk’s version of “one of the most dramatic fights of the Revolution in the South”.<sup>10</sup> Tarleton was one of the British who had succumbed to the fever and was camped elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

Proceeding from the Providence or “New Providence” area of Charlotte, Davie now “Colonel Commandant of all the Cavalry of North Carolina”, Col. George Davidson, and Captain James Wauchope, together with men from the North Carolina Partisan Rangers, Mecklenburg Regiment and the Anson County Militia (under Davidson) rode towards the Waxhaw area of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

They did their best to move quickly and quietly through the fields and forests, tracking the British. But the first home they arrived at around 2:00 am proved not to be the place. By the time they arrived at a third home they finally received a tip as to where to find the enemy encampment (I like to think from the lady of the house). How Capt. Wauchope must have felt to learn they were at his home!<sup>12</sup>

It would be there, just before dawn, they would find Wauchope's plantation surrounded by Loyalists, some of the 71<sup>st</sup> Highlander Regiment and corn fields. The corn fields would prove to be most excellent cover! With about a total of 150 men to the British's 360 men, Davie dug in his heels and refused to turn around.



Cornfields today at the site of the former Walkup home. (photo by S. Merville 2008)

He divided the men into three segments and told them to “take no prisoners”. Davie ordered the cavalry to come from one end of the lane as soon as they heard the guns of the infantry (led by Davie). Davidson<sup>13</sup> was to come up through a cornfield and take the house.

Attacking at almost the same time, the Loyalists were completely off-guard. When the men began firing, some while charging and some from the cover of the cornfield, the British Legion ran from the house – right into Davie's waiting riflemen.

Think of the chaos this must have been – horses rearing, surprised men rushing about, bullets whizzing and the Loyalists & British tearing down the farm fence in their hurry to get away! It was over in a matter of minutes.

One of Davie's men, Jack Barnett, actually recognized one of the Tories – a man named Dixon – who dropped his gun and fled. Barnett picked the gun up and took cover. After firing at two British dragoons he ran to rejoin his forces only to be hit three times by ‘friendly fire’! (maybe he shouldn't have picked up that gun?) However, he was able to answer the countersign, a signal decided among the patriot troops beforehand, and lived to become the only wounded man on the American side of this skirmish.<sup>14</sup>

Almost any of the stories written about this event relate how Captain Wauchope briefly greeted his wife and children (imagine the joy and tears of relief!) before returning to his men for the march back towards Charlotte. Imagine also the anxiety Wauchope must have felt when barely into the march he turned and saw smoke—and then realized it was his house and barns that were burning. (The 71<sup>st</sup> had reformed to counterattack but finding Davie and his men gone they set the fires in retaliation.)

Davie collected ninety-six horses, “as many saddles”, along with 120 muskets lying in the field. The British lost 20 men with another 47 wounded and one captured.<sup>15</sup> This seems to go against what Davie ordered. There is no mention in the texts consulted as to whom that prisoner might have been.

Cornwallis, who was close by, was furious (no doubt embarrassed!) and marched immediately to Charlotte. Davie, hours ahead, was ready and waiting to cause enough trouble that Charlotte would earn its “hornet’s nest” nickname by the British.

This brings us back to the lost monument erected 161 years later.

Though state historical highway markers are nice, they don’t really tell passersby exactly where an event was. (The current marker states that ‘Davie’s Attack’ occurred at the plantation of James Wauchope “3 ½ ml. NW”). Very few people will stop to take the time to read the information on a marker and besides, most of us are ‘directionally-challenged’.

Therefore, it’s left to us, any of us who find the history of our community and people fascinating, to continue to share the stories.

Continue the thread of history as best as we can so that others won’t forget.

Today, cornfields surround the old Walkup home built about 1869 – just as they surrounded the house that was there 228 years ago.

Without even realizing it, the current home and land owner has planted a most fitting monument to the only Revolutionary War battle fought on what is now known as Union County soil.

If you take a ride out into the Waxhaw countryside – drive slow as you pass by with the window rolled down and listen to the rustling of the cornstalks. Remember the men, our men, who snaked up through the cornfield to pull one over on the British.

We don’t need a monument to remember, we just need to keep passing the story on.



cc: via email: P. Walton, V. Bjorlin, S. Merville, C. Lane, V. Tesar, B. Moore  
cc: hardcopy: Dana Eure with copy of handouts, The Heritage Room (w/bibliography)  
(endnotes on next page—a bibliography which is not exhaustive was also created with this paper—copies were given out at 9-11-08 meeting & also attached with emails & will be available online in 2012 with paper)

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<sup>1</sup> “D.A.R. Marker Near Waxhaw is Unveiled: Tablet Commemorates Battle Between Patriots and Redcoats,” *Monroe Enquirer*, 29 September 1941, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Year range of destruction determined by using dates/years: 1) July 26, 1992 *Enquirer-Journal* [Monroe] article by Bill Walker which included photo of monument; 2) Daniel Barefoot’s 1998 “Touring North Carolina’s Revolutionary War Sites” with reference to destruction as “vandals destroyed it in recent years”. The 1941 DAR marker sat on Walkup Road to the left of the Col. W. W. Walkup home at the intersection of Jaars and Walkup Roads in Waxhaw, NC. Various locals shared that the resident of the home at the time of the destruction said the marker was ‘blown up’ by vandals, that he gave chase in his car causing him to have an accident. A search of the Union Observer online at N. C. Live (America’s Newspapers, Charlotte Observer) on 9/12/2008 did not reveal any articles about this destruction for the time period between 1992 and 1997. Search terms used were: Waxhaw, American Revolution, Walkup, Monument, Destroyed. A quick look at the files at The Heritage Room gave no information about the demise of the monument or when it happened however there was a photo of the bronze plaque itself inside the old W. W. Walkup home, mounted to the staircase.

<sup>3</sup> Creighton, Linda L. “In a Massacre, Seeds of a Civil War.” *U S World News & Report*, (July 7-14, 2008), 56. Patriot forces led by Col. Abraham Buford were almost completely slaughtered by British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton’s men on May 29, 1780 in the Waxhaw area of Lancaster County, SC. This battle is also known as “Tarlton’s Quarter”. Marker name: Buford Battleground. Article copied for DAR meeting.

<sup>4</sup> <http://gz.jrshelby.com/bufordsbg.htm> (no longer viable) with a single page about Wahabs Plantation at: <http://gaz.jrshelby.com/wahabsp.htm> (still viable 2012) Internet search w/Microsoft Net on Sept. 9, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Utter, Jim. “Highways to History: Across Union County, Bill Walker can find the signs of history”, *Union Observer (Charlotte Observer)*, 26 June 1994 (American’s Newspapers – online at N C Live). Also see “Davie, William Richardson”, Thomson-Gale, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (2006), Volume 1, p 301. Davie (1756-1820) was also governor of North Carolina in 1798. His accomplishments, including the surveying of the NC/SC line between Union County, NC & Lancaster County, SC, are too many to list in an endnote! He is buried at the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, SC.

<sup>6</sup> William Henry Belk, founder of the Belk Stores, was the son of Abel Nelson Washington Belk and Sarah Walkup Belk, the granddaughter of James Wauchope (Walkup). In this same book (p. 16) Mr. Belk also muses on his own grandfather, Thomas Milburn Belk’s penchant for giving all his children three names!

<sup>7</sup> Gamble, Harry Y., compiler. *Backgrounds and Beginnings of The Walkup Family and the tracing of one ancestral line descending from Samuel Walkup and Nancy Alexander Walkup*. On pp 5 & 6: Walkup married Margaret Pickens of Anson County, NC. Margaret died Dec. 22, 1793; James died Feb. 1, 1798. Both are also buried at the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, SC. Gamble’s history quotes an article written by Robert Ney McNeely and published in “The North Carolina Booklet” (July 1912) that incorrectly informs that the American forces were defeated in “our” Battle of the Waxhaws. McNeely does however cite the confusion with the May 1780 battle at Buford’s Battleground.

<sup>8</sup> Watkins, Linda Tinker, President General. *DAR Patriot Index, Volume III, P-Z* (National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Millennium Administration, 2003) p 2817 (see Wahab)

<sup>9</sup> Davie, William Richardson. (see endnote #5)

<sup>10</sup> Blythe, LeGette. *William Henry Belk: Merchant of the South*. (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p 17

<sup>11</sup> Bellesiles, Michael (revisionist). “Wahab’s Plantation, North Carolina”, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Volume 2. (Thomson-Gale, 2006)

<sup>12</sup> Walker, Bill. “Battle of the Waxhaws: Attack catches British by surprise.” [Monroe] *Enquirer-Journal*, 26 July 1992, p 5E (Section: Where We’ve Been)

<sup>13</sup> Please note that some histories do not have Col. George Davidson present at this particular skirmish instead having him meet back up with Davie in Charlotte afterwards. O’Kelley’s book does place Davidson at the Sept. 20, 1780 event. Further research would be required.

<sup>14</sup> For more information about Barnett’s recovery at home in Charlotte (NC) see Patrick O’Kelley’s *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter, Volume II’s* endnotes, page 546.

<sup>15</sup> See “Sword, English Cemetery Trace Route of Cornwallis” by Sid Hart, *Enquirer-Journal*, 28 Aug 1974, 1 & 8A. Article reveals a cemetery near Marvin where English soldiers were buried. No one knows exactly who or how many.

End note #2 revised in 2012.