

The Battle of Brookdale

“The Other Revolutionary Skirmish in Chesterfield Township”

The following excerpt was taken from:
Crossroads of the American Revolution in New Jersey,
Special Resource Study
National Heritage Area Feasibility Study
Environmental Assessment

Prepared by: The National Park Service
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Taylor-Newbold House (Brookdale), Chesterfield, Burlington County.

During the Revolutionary War, a small skirmish fought at this house illustrates the extent to which that conflict was actually a civil war. Samuel Taylor, uncle of Brookdale's owner, was a Tory. About thirty Whig militia set out to collect fines from Samuel Taylor. At Brookdale, this contingent encountered a party of some forty Tory men and ten or twelve women. An intense but inconclusive battle ensued, with the combatants employing brickbats, axes, hoes and boiling water.

British troops stopped twice at Brookdale during the Revolutionary War, but because they were well treated there, did not damage the house. This building is listed in the National Register. The Taylor-Newbold House relates to the "Divided Loyalties" theme.

The following narrative of the “Battle of Brookdale” was kindly forwarded to the CTHS from a direct living descendant of General Anthony Taylor Commander and Chief of the Tory Party.

The narrative states the following: From *Major E.M. Woodward's History of Mercer and Burlington Counties*. The following letter, the original of which with other valuable papers, was placed in our hands by the Hon. George Sykes (Edith Gibbs Reeder's great uncle) shortly before his death.

As best discerned, the letter was written to Coll. Israel Shreve, Brunswick
From Marmad Curtis, Black Horse (Columbus) August 10, 1784

* Please note the following discrepancy: *Crossroads of the American Revolution in New Jersey* states Samuel Taylor and the following letter states Anthony Taylor.

Dr. Coll: you doubtless have heard of the discussions that have subsisted this sometime passed between the Whigs and Tories about collecting the Militia Fines. They have occasioned such a battle on Saturday last as perhaps never was recorded in history. As I expect our account of any Military engagements will be acceptable to you, I propose giving you a detail of this as I have it from several who were in the Battle. Capt. Jones had given orders to his Sergeants to collect fines from sundry delinquents in his company. Among the rest they levied on two cows belonging to Anthony Taylor, commander in Chief of the Tory Party. The Wigs hearing that he had hired and was collecting a number of persons to oppose the Undue, collected to about the number of thirty about ten o'clock on Saturday morning.

When after selling from place to place without opposition (except at Edwards Rockhills where fourteen or fifteen attempted to oppose, but finding they were too weak returned to their body at Taylor's) a detachment of eight was sent to demand the cows which they found, one locked up in the wash house, the other in a pail'd garden, the Gate of which was locked. On demanding the cattle they were answered by Taylor that they were there and take them if they dare. He had got a sheet fixed to a long Pole, hoisted on the Top of his House, his forces consisted of about forty men and ten or twelve women, the Women had two kettles of boiling water and each one a pail or Piggins, the men had each one club, nine loaded guns and about four wagon loads of Stones and Brickbats. The detachment observing them so well prepared blew a Horn for the remainder of their forces, when the most furious and bloody Battle ensued. The onset was begun by General Taylor who with a club broke the jaw bone of a Whig and lay him for dead. The Women play'd their part to a miracle, scalding several so that their clothes were obliged to be cut off. Stone, Brickbats, Axes, Hoes, Wagon Fires, hinges, stalk Knives, Hot Water etc. etc. Flew to and fro for about half an Hour incessantly. The behaviour of the General's Daughter in this engagement can not be too Admired, at Some times she was seen with a club in one hand and a urinary in the other, at other times beating on a brass Kettle which she had for a drum, whilst a sergeant of the Whig party was singing the double Wag.

But the Tories ammunition being nearly expended, and many of them much bruised, they were obliged to retreat into the house, from the first story they were obliged to retreat in a short time up to the second, where the engagement continued until there were scarce a whole pane of glass in the windows when the Whigs observing that the noise of the engagement had frightened the cattle so that they broke out of their confinements, they drove them off and left their adversaries to dress their wounded. Happily there was no lives lost but where it will end God only knows as the Tories and the London traders are bent upon ruling this country and the Whigs are determined to oppose it.

*I am Dr Coll your aff. Serwt.
Marmad^{ke} Curtis*