



# Haverford Township Historical Society



## GENERAL WILLIAM BROOKE (1746-1829)

Compiled by Richard D. Kerr

*[The following is excerpted from Biographical Annals of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Elwood Roberts (editor), published by T. S. Benham and Company and the Lewis Publishing Company, 1904. It is included under the biography of Thomas Buckman.]*

**WILLIAM BROOKE** was born in Limerick township, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, May 12, 1746, and was the oldest son of Matthew Brooke and Sarah Reese, and the third in descent from the emigrant John Brooke, who with his wife came from England to take up a grant of land of seven hundred and fifty acres purchased from William Penn in England. The vessel arrived at Philadelphia in the year 1698, though both John Brooke and his wife died on board as she was coming up the Delaware, and were buried at or near what is now Cooper's Point, Camden, New Jersey. His will was probated at Trenton and is a very interesting document, and photographs have been made and are in the possession of a number of his descendants.

At the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, General Brooke, who was then not quite thirty years of age, volunteered his services, and was commissioned a captain in the Fourth Company, Chester County Volunteers, on May 14, 1777, as a major in the Fourth Battalion in 1779, and as a major in the Sixth Battalion, May 10, 1780. He also served as a major in the Fourth Regiment of Foot, containing six hundred and seventy men, of which Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Willing was the commanding officer. It was while serving as a captain that General Brooke had the following experience, as related by George Smith, M. D., in his "History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania :"

"It sometimes happened that some of our military scouts were captured by the enemy, when not sufficiently on their guard. About this period, such a party under the command of the late General William Brooke, of Haverford, who was then a captain, were one night taking their ease at a house, late the property of George Swain, when the house was suddenly surrounded by a larger party of the enemy. Brooke determined not to be taken, leaped from a window and ran, but in getting over the fence into the road found that a partial dislocation of his knee had happened. Putting his foot through the fence, and giving his leg a quick extension, the joint was brought into a proper condition, when he hastily made his escape."

During his absence with the army on one of the forages made into the territory surrounding Philadelphia, while the British army were in possession of the city, his dwelling was plundered of nearly every article of food and furniture, so that his wife, with two young children, was obliged to turn out in the snow and seek shelter elsewhere. This outrage afterwards formed the basis of a claim against the government, the original papers of this claim being on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in a volume of manuscript entitled "Depredations by British Army, Chester County, 1777," as follows: "An estimate of Goods and Chattels taken and destroyed from William Brooke by the British Armies under the command of Lord Cornwallis on the 11th of December, 1777."

	£.	s.	d.
Six sheep, six cows and two calves	45	15	..
Beds, bedding and wearing apparel	100	..	..
Household and kitchen furniture	20	..	..
Provision and poultry	12	10	..
Fat and store hogs	21	17	6
Two tons of hay and grain in the sheaf	<u>10</u>	<u>..</u>	<u>..</u>
	210	2	6

Chester S. S.:

Personally appeared before me, one of the justices, etc. for the County of Chester, William Brooke, and on his solemn oath doth declare and say that the above amount is just and true as it stands stated and that he hath received no part thereof.

Given under my (obliterated) the 27th of August, 1783.

Jno. Bartholomew.

Endorsed on back "Haverford."

Wm. Brooke's account."

Among said papers is the claim of John Lindsay, a son-in-law of General Brooke, who resided near him in Haverford, for goods and chattels destroyed by the British Army on the following day 1 2th of December, amounting to £134 3s. 6d.

General Brooke performed further special military service, as will be seen from the minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, then sitting at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, under date of October 2, 1777, as follows:

Ordered :—

"That Col. Evans, Col. William Evans, Col. Gibbons, Col. Thomas, Capt. Thomas Kevis, Capt. William Brooke, Capt. Jacob Rudolph be authorized and required to collect without delay, from such of the inhabitants of the County of Chester, as have not taken the oath of allegiance and abjuration or who have aided or assisted the enemy. Arms and accoutrements, blankets, shoes and stockings, for the use of the army; that they appraised the same when taken, according to their quality, allowing at the rate of three pounds for a new single blankets, and give certificate for the same to the owner; that they called to their aid the militia of the commonwealth, who are hereby ordered to obey and assist them in the execution of this order, and that they deliver the same, so taken, to the order of the Clothier General, or his Agent, with whom they are to correspond in the discharge of this business."

Official record of this is found in volume 5, page 69, Pennsylvania Archives.

For General Brooke's Revolutionary services, he was granted by congress several grants of land in Bedford county, Pennsylvania, as follows: 400 acres, surveyed Feb. 4th, 1785, 100 acres, surveyed Jan. 24, 1783 and 200 acres, surveyed June II. of the same year.

At his home in Haverford, General Brooke possessed as an heirloom a splendid mahogany chest of drawers, known as a high boy, and it was during one of the raids, when his house was plundered, that the top drawer was forced open with a bayonet in the hands of a Hessian soldier, in the belief that said chest contained treasure. This chest of drawers remained in his possession until his death in 1829, when it passed into the possession of his son Thomas Brooke, who was the father of Mrs. Buckman, and then in turn it passed to his son, George Brooke, Esq., of Delaware county, Pennsylvania, and at his death some few years ago it was bought at public sale. The purchaser in turn delivered it to Benjamin Brooke, from whom it went to Mr. Francis M. Brooke, who represented another branch of the family, and is still in the possession of his heirs. An old "grandfather's clock" from which the leads have been taken to

make into bullets, was also sold at the same time as the chest of drawers, and is now in the possession of Mr. George Brooke Lindsay, of Chester, Pennsylvania, a lineal descendant of General William Brooke.

After the Revolution was over, General Brooke returned quietly to his plantation in Haverford to pursue the more peaceful avocation of farming, surrounded by his numerous family, until the depredations of the British navy on our merchant ships on the high seas made it necessary that we should once more lay aside the ploughshare for the sword, as the country was once more destined to go to war with England. Among the first to offer their services was General Brooke, who was promptly commissioned a brigadier-general of the Third Division of Militia, with headquarters at Chester, where the troops soon assembled, and made every preparation to defend the shores of the Delaware against an anticipated invasion by the British.

General Brooke's remaining years were spent at the old homestead in Haverford, which he had built and lived in for many years prior to the Revolution, and was located at the junction of Darby and Ithan creeks, in Chester [now Delaware] county, and the old house is still standing, though it has long since passed out of the family and is fast going to ruin. His death occurred in 1829, at a ripe old age, and he was buried beside his wife, who had preceded him a number of years before, at Old St. David's church at Radnor, one of the most historic and interesting Episcopal churches in this country, and where he had been married on June 5, 1770, to Margaret Moore, who came of a family long settled in that neighborhood. Here also are buried besides General Brooke and his wife, among other children, his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband George Weed, and with this old church General Brooke had been identified nearly all his life, having served as a vestryman for many years.

The Brooke family history has been written up by Mr. Frank Brooke Evans, of Philadelphia, and shows a connected history from the coming of the emigrant in 1698 from Huddersfield, England, where the family had been settled since 1534, several of the children of the emigrant having remained in the old country and leaving numerous descendants.

*[The following is excerpted from History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania by George Smith M.D., published by Henry B. Ashmead in Philadelphia in 1862.]*

**WILLIAM BROOKE**, one of the active participants and a Captain in the Revolutionary war, was born in Limeric, Montgomery County, about the year 1750. He was very active in the military operations in the neighborhood while the British army was in Philadelphia and its neighborhood. One of his daring exploits is detailed in the general narrative contained in this volume:

It sometimes happened that some of our militia scouts were captured by the enemy, when not sufficiently on their guard. About this period, such a party, under the command of the late Gen. Wm. Brooke, of Haverford, who was then a captain, were one night taking their ease in a house, late the property of George Swayne, a mile below Darby, when the house was suddenly surrounded by a larger party of the enemy. Brooke, determined not to be taken, leaped from a window and ran, but in getting over the fence into the road, found that a partial dislocation of his knee, to which he was subject, had happened. Putting his foot through the fence, and giving his leg a quick extension, the joint was brought into a proper condition, when he hastily made his escape.

He resided in Haverford township, and while in service his dwelling was plundered of nearly every article of food and furniture, so that his wife with two young children was obliged to turn out in the snow and seek a shelter elsewhere.

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