

On the evening of the 7th, it is an admitted fact, that General Stewart, the British Commander, was unapprized of the approach of the American Army, and so entirely secure did he feel in his position, that an unarmed party under a small escort had been sent up the river, for the purpose of collecting the sweet potatoe. This party, commonly called a "rooting party," had advanced about three miles, and then turned towards the plantations on the river.

The first intelligence that Greene had approached within seven miles of his position, was communicated to Stewart by two of the North Carolina conscripts, who had deserted during the night. Captain Coffin was sent on to re-call the "rooting party," and to reconnoitre the American position. The American advance had already passed the road, when they were met by Captain Coffin, who immediately charged them with a confidence which betrayed his ignorance of its strength, and of the near approach of the main army. It required little effort to repulse the British Cavalry, but the probability that their main army was near at hand forbade a pursuit.

The firing at this point drew the attention of