

met Holmes in advance of the British, since, according to his own report, the American officer was told that the British force was probably within one hour's march of him. Not knowing the ground he at once retreated to what was then known as "Twenty Mile Creek," so called from its being about twenty miles west of Delaware, this stream being also about three miles east of Wards Station, and having re-crossed it on a bridge, took up an excellent position on its western bank, now known as "Battle Hill."

Captain Gill, with about twenty Michigan Rangers was left by Holmes to cover the retreat, and watch the movements of the pursuing Canadian Rangers, under Caldwell. Holmes' command had originally amounted to 180, men but hunger, cold and fatigue had brought on illness, and although none had died yet all were much disheartened, and sixteen were sent home since they were unable to withstand the hardships connected with this wearisome march, so that his total strength now numbered 164 men. the main body of the Americans had barely encamped before it was joined by Gill with his American Rangers who had been driven in after exchanging a few shots with the Canadian Rangers whom had vainly attempted to reconnoitre, although he was able to give the main body sufficient time to make good its retreat to Twenty Mile Creek. The remaining portion of the day and also the night were turned to good account by the American commandant. Disaffection had crept into the ranks of the invaders, and both officers and men loudly demanded that a retreat should be made still further, since many of them had suffered severely from fatigue and exposure, and alleged that others had been permitted to return home for these very same reasons. Holmes therefore was obliged to call a council of his officers to determine whether they should endeavor to maintain their present position, or retreat, and on this question there was considerable diversity of opinion. The Captain and his Adjutan Ensign Heard, however, were strongly opposed to the latter alternative, and the impression finally prevailed that they should "conquer the British or perish in the attempt,"

The strengthening of his position was then proceeded with, which was fortified by an abattis on three sides formed of logs, piled upon each other breast high, and faced on the outside with brushwood. The portion of the hills looking immediately to the east, and over which the road crossed, was also slightly strengthened in the same way. These hills, besides being very steep, were covered with water, which was brought up from the creek during the night in no stinted draughts, and being quickly frozen into ice, owing to the intense cold, was then concealed by snow being thrown thereon, so that the American position, previously naturally strong, was now practically unassailable.

The Canadian Rangers spent the night of the 3rd on the plain to the rear of the eastern hills, between which and the American camp lay a rather deep valley through which from north to south flows the creek which finally empties itself into the Thames about a mile south from where the road, now known as the Longwoods Road, crosses the hills. Although the ground is now cleared away, and the forest trees no longer wave their massive branches over the hills, the creek and the ravine, still the western bank is yet an admirable location for defensive purposes, as against an enemy advancing from the east, and the American position was therefore well selected.

Stewart having received notification, late on the night of the third, from Captain William Caldwell that he had met with a party of Americans on that very day, sent Captain James Lewis Basden at daylight, on the morning of the fourth with the Regulars consisting of the companies previously mentioned, together with the company of the Kent Militia, under Lieut. McGregor, and about forty Indians, Wyandots and Pottawatomies, acting as scouts, under Captain "Billy" Caldwell, a half-breed, to the support of the Rangers. Stewart himself was detained for several hours at Delaware, upon urgent business, with Col. Elliott, one of the survivors of Moravian Town, and not really expecting an action immediately, much to his subsequent regret was not present at the fight that followed.

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