

# Fight at Spinks Plantation, January or February 1872

*By Warren Dixon*

Enoch Spinks' Mill and Plantation on Fork Creek was a regular stop for the Continental Army and was known as the Widow Spinks' plantation after Enoch's death. Militiaman Ezekiel Croft (Craft), serving under Captain William Gray, gave this description of a skirmish there: "In January or February, 1782, he volunteered for six months in the same county of Randolph as a state ranger under Captain William Gray. During this tour he served under Colonel Dugan and was again badly wounded. The chief affair that occurred was the defeat of Fanning by Colonel Dugan at Mrs. Spinks' plantation, where affiant had the joy to see him overtaken and routed at a moment when he was engaged in hanging some Whigs he had captured."

Other militia accounts:

- Ralph Lowe, fighting under Thomas Dugan when he was a captain, mentions a fight at "Spinks' Hill" but says it was in the northern part of Randolph. The Widow Spinks' plantation was in southern Randolph on Fork Creek.

## Gen. Alexander Gray's Account of the Fight

*Alexander Gray (1768-1864) was a long-lived leading citizen of Randolph County. For many years he was the county's largest landowner. He also was the county's largest slaveholder, although he supported gradual emancipation and allowed the Manumission Society to meet on his property. He earned the title General for leading a militia unit in the War of 1812 that did not see combat. In 1847 at the request of a friend, he penned an account of Col. David Fanning's time in Randolph County, based on previous conversations with Patriot leaders who had fought against Fanning.*

At another time, Fanning and his troop met a man who had staid the night before at Mr. Bell's and was on his way to Fayetteville. The traveler had been warned of danger by Mr. Bell, but replied he was under no apprehension of being interrupted by either party, as he never hade acted with either but remained neutral in the great political strife. But in this he was mistaken, for when he fell into Fanning's hands he was hung, stript of his clothing, horse, baggage, &c, and left lying naked in the road. In the evening of that day, on hearing that Fanning and his troop was in motion, the Whigs collected and went in pursuit; on seeing the dead body of the traveler, (who was recognized by Bell with whom he had staid the night before) they pushed with all speed in expectation that Fanning was near. Fanning and his men, after hanging the traveler, repaired to the house of a friend, Mr. Spinks, and were amusing themselves with fiddling and dancing. The Whigs came on so unexpectedly that they and the Tories, before they could mount, were intermingled with each other. Some shots were interchanged on each side, but I never heard that any man on either side was killed or wounded. The Tories fled in every direction, and Fanning, who was on the swiftest nag, kept ahead; he was pursued by John Merrill, who knew him, and shot at him as his mare jumped down the bank of Fork Creek, which occasioned Merrill to overshoot him.

## Lt. Edward Beeson's (Possible) Account

*In his 1832 pension application, Edward Beeson (1757-1837) provided an account of a skirmish at John Needham's house, described as being on Fork Creek. Fork Creek joins Deep River near the southern Randolph County line on the west side of the river. Needham's house was further north, on the east side of the river. Nor does Beeson's account of the action at Needham's, which took place on June 8, 1781, match those of other participants. It does, however, seem more similar to descriptions of the fight at Spinks' plantation, which was located on Fork Creek. Beeson's count of casualties among the Loyalists – 21 killed – does not seem realistic, and Fanning does not record in his narrative a similar engagement or one that takes place at Spinks' plantation.*

...[T]hey pursued the Tories... to fork Creek and there besieged them in a house belonging to one John Needham [*Spinks?*]. In the morning before they got to Needham's [*Spinks'?*] – there Colonel (Dugan) joined them. This Deponent was then ordered with half of his Company to [paper torn and word missing] the back of the house under a concealment of an Orchard – while the rest were to attack in front – This Deponent's Company were the first who took possession of the same. Those in front having feigned a retreat to draw out the Tories – which accordingly succeeded – twenty-one were killed – seven at the house – and fourteen at the place where they kept the horses. The Tories having fled there, to where they were concealed on the bank of Deep River – and where Colonel Dugan himself had gone with a Detachment – to surprise them if they should be driven from the House.”