



America

celebrating 250 years

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*First in freedom:***Surry County's unsung role in the American Revolution**

By Ryan Kelly

When Americans think of the Revolution, they tend to picture the same scenes: Paul Revere galloping through the Massachusetts night, delegates hunched over parchment in a stuffy Philadelphia hall, Washington crossing the Delaware in the dead of winter. The story of American independence, in the popular imagination, is a northern one.

North Carolina has always told a different story.

On April 12, 1776, nearly three months before the Declaration of Independence, 83 delegates gathered in the small town of Halifax and did something no colonial assembly had yet dared. They unanimously authorized North Carolina's representatives to the Continental Congress to vote for independence from Great Britain.

The document they produced, later called the Halifax Resolves, was the first official action for independence by any of the 13 colonies. It is why the North Carolina state flag carries two dates, and why some of the state's license plates declare "First in Freedom."

Surry County sent three men to Halifax that day. One of them was Joseph Winston. The other two were Joseph Williams and Charles Gordon.

Winston had settled on the Town Fork of the Dan River by the early 1770s, a close kinsman of Virginia statesman Patrick Henry and a veteran of frontier Indian fighting before the Revolution began. He was not yet 30 when he helped pass the Halifax Resolves and would spend the next seven years proving he meant every word of them.

Surry County itself was barely five years old in 1776, carved from Rowan County in 1771, a frontier territory of rolling foothills and fertile river land along the Yadkin and the Dan. There was no established town to speak of and roads, such as they were, were rough paths through the wilderness. The settlers scratching a living from the frontier were farmers, surveyors, frontiersmen and, increasingly, men who would have to choose a side.

Two men dominated the new county's early political life, and they were already rivals before the Revolution gave them reason to become enemies.

Gideon Wright was a veteran of the French and Indian War who had moved south from New York and established himself as one of the most powerful men in the Surry region. When the county was formed in 1771, Wright maneuvered ahead of his neighbors to secure the location of the county seat on his own land. The legislative act authorized him to build the courthouse and he became a justice of the peace. The first court of Surry County met in his home.

Martin Armstrong was a surveyor who had helped lay out the county itself. Where Wright had land and influence, Armstrong had military experience and the confidence of the Patriot cause. When the North Carolina Provincial Congress authorized the formation of the Surry County



The date April 12, 1776, stitched into the North Carolina state flag marks the Halifax Resolves — the moment the state told the Continental Congress it did not need to wait for permission to seek independence.

Regiment of Militia on Aug. 26, 1775, Armstrong was the man tapped to lead it.

During the Regulator uprising, Wright had backed Royal Gov. William Tryon, risen to the rank of colonel, and stayed loyal when the Revolution began. In January 1776, Gov. Josiah Martin authorized Wright to raise the king's standard in Surry County, enlist loyal subjects and "oppose all rebels and traitors." The two most powerful men in a frontier county of a few thousand souls were now on opposite sides of a war, and they both knew exactly where the other stood.

While Wright quietly waited, Armstrong's regiment went to war. The Surry County Regiment would fight for eight years across four states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. Its battle list reads like a roll call of the Revolution's southern theater, including Moore's Creek Bridge, the Siege of Savannah, the Siege of Charleston, King's Mountain, Cowpens and Guilford Court House, among more than two dozen engagements.

These were not professional soldiers, but the same farmers and frontiersmen who had been clearing timber and planting crops along the Yadkin River a season before. That was the nature of militia service: a man picked up a rifle when he was needed and came home to tend his fields when he was not. Many of them did both, multiple times, over the span of years.

Joseph Winston was among them at every major turn. He led Surry volunteers to Moore's Creek Bridge in February 1776, the first significant Patriot victory in North Carolina, and marched against the Cherokee that same summer. He was at King's Mountain in October 1780 when the frontier militia destroyed British Maj. Patrick Ferguson's force in 65 minutes of fierce fighting on a South Carolina ridgeline.

The largest battle of the Carolina campaign came five months later. At Guilford Court House in March 1781, Winston and his Surry riflemen fought on the flank of Greene's first line against Cornwallis's regulars. Although the British won the day, it was at such a cost that Cornwallis was forced to abandon his Carolina campaign. Winston's monument stands at Guilford

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As communities celebrate the Semiquincentennial with fireworks and reflection, 21 Bail Bonds reaffirms its commitment to liberty and justice for the next 250 years.



Courthouse National Military Park to this day.

In October 1780, while most of Surry County's militia was away confronting Ferguson, the county they left behind was in chaos. Wright and his brother Hezekiah seized the moment, rallying Loyalist forces across the area. On Oct. 3, a party struck Richmond Town itself, killing Sheriff John Hudspeth, then rode on to the home of William Sheppard near the county seat, located in what is now Forsyth County, taking his horses and whatever arms they could find.

Days later, a party of more than a hundred men loyal to the king rode into Richmond Town again. They came, the Moravian diarists of nearby Salem recorded, "to take back the things of which they had been robbed." One man was wounded in the attack.

The Moravians, German-speaking pacifists who kept meticulous daily congregational diaries throughout the war, were watching it all from close range. Their settlements at Salem, Bethania and Bethabara sat squarely between Richmond Town and the Yadkin River crossings that both sides needed to control. What they wrote down, night by night, is among the most detailed primary source material that survives from this period of the war.

The morning of Oct. 9, a young man rode into Salem to fetch a doctor. His brother-in-law, Johann Krause, had been shot in the leg the day before while standing guard at Richmond. The Salem diary recorded what he told them: Richmond had been "again visited by a strong party of Tories under Gideon Wright."

By mid-October, both sides were massing within a few miles of Bethabara. Wright was pushing his column south toward Shallow Ford on the Yadkin, intending to link up with Cornwallis in Charlotte. Patriot forces cut him off before he got there. By Oct. 15, the Salem diary had its verdict: "Gideon Wright's party was defeated at the Shallow Ford by Capt. Gambly, and completely routed."



Historical Marker Database

The Halifax Resolves commemorative plaque marks the 150th anniversary of North Carolina's call for independence, adopted April 12, 1776 — three months before the Continental Congress voted to break from Britain.

What followed was messier than many of those battles, fought on shaky and untested ground.

Armstrong returned from King's Mountain with hundreds of Loyalist prisoners and, on his own authority, offered them a choice: enlist in the Continental Army, or go free. It was a gesture that may have seemed merciful or practical in the moment.

General Nathanael Greene did not see it that way. Those men were supposed to be exchanged for American prisoners, including General Griffith Rutherford, who were held by the British. Armstrong was criticized and ultimately suspended from command for the decision.

When Armstrong fell, Winston moved into the breach. A letter reached



National Parks Service

Reenactors fire a period cannon during the 2025 battle anniversary demonstration at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park.

the Moravian merchant Traugott Bagge in February 1781 informing him that Winston was now serving as second colonel of the county, "since Colonel Armstrong has been suspended." His first act in the role was to write Bagge asking how he could help protect the Moravian settlements from the lawlessness that trailed the armies through the county.

Gideon Wright survived Shallow Ford, slipping away as so many of his men did not. His brother Hezekiah was not so fortunate. The Salem diary recorded that November that he had been shot in his own home, very likely intending to give himself up, as many were doing at that point. Gideon's land was confiscated after the war. He died in 1782 before he could face a full accounting.

Winston went on to a distinguished second act as state legislator, U.S. congressman and senator. He led the movement to divide Surry County, creating Stokes County in 1790. When Forsyth County was later formed from Stokes, its county seat was named for him.

The towns of Winston and Salem consolidated in 1913 to become Winston-Salem. A Surry County militia major's name is now on a city of more than 250,000 people.

The Surry County Regiment mustered out in 1783, eight years after it had been called into existence on the frontier of a colony that did not yet know what it was becoming. The men who had marched to Moore's Creek Bridge in 1776 had spent most of a decade at war across four states. They had fought not just British regulars but Cherokee warriors, Loyalist neighbors and, sometimes, the confusion and chaos of a conflict that no one had planned for and no one knew how to end. They came home to a county, and a country, that had to be built from the ground up.

The Halifax Resolves still appear on the North Carolina state flag, the date April 12, 1776, stitched there as a reminder that this state did not wait for someone else to point the way. Battle Branch still runs to the Yadkin near where Wright's column broke and fled. The monument to Winston stands at Guilford Courthouse, facing the field where Cornwallis won a battle and lost a war.

That this story is not well known outside the Yadkin Valley is part of the reason for reflection on this anniversary of the nation's break from England. Two hundred and fifty years later, the Revolution still echoes in the names on the map, and in the unsung story of the county and the men who helped start it all.



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Area patriots paid price for freedom

Local man possibly last killed at Guilford Courthouse

By Tom Joyce
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Years after the smoke cleared, much pomp and pageantry has been assigned to the American Revolution – portrayed as patriots in fancy blue uniforms gallantly fending off the British redcoats before breaking into a chorus of “Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

But such joyous depictions are a far cry from the misery and death confronting those fighting for the cause of independence, which included soldiers in the Surry County region.

That same sugar-coated presentation often is applied to signers of the Declaration of Independence – who were not just a bunch of guys who put quills to paper and then went their merry ways.

In reality, five of those 56 brave souls were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died, according to various historical accounts.

Another nine Declaration signers later would succumb to wounds, disease or other causes during the Revolutionary War.

Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned, while two lost sons in the war and another two had sons captured, with still others reduced to poverty because of the stand they took.

Locals' mark on history

Closer to home, the sacrifices of those fighting on behalf of the colonies proved just as great, based on historical accounts.

Four men from Surry County are listed as making the ultimate sacrifice in the Revolutionary War: Mark Armstrong, Levi Eldridge, Micajah Lewis and Richard Taliaferro.

Taliaferro, known as an “ardent patriot,” was possibly the last casualty of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in March 1781 – the largest, most hotly contested action of the Revolution’s decisive Southern Campaign which was a prelude to the surrender at Yorktown.

He and fellow Surry Countian Jesse Franklin, his neighbor, part of a local home militia, had ridden by horseback to Guilford and tied their mounts nearby.

As the final retreat began, both men ran for their horses, with Franklin getting away but Taliaferro killed by pursuing British cavalymen. He was 21.

Franklin also participated in the Battle of King’s Mountain.

Micajah Lewis was another local resident known as a brave and great patriot who died a hero’s death. He served along with two brothers in the Battle of King’s Mountain, where all three were wounded, though not fatally.



A scene from the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, where Richard Taliaferro of Surry County possibly was the last American killed.

Three days later, Micajah, who had risen to the rank of captain, died after being shot during a reconnaissance mission.

Gideon Edwards, a brother-in-law of Jesse Franklin, was another notable figure locally during the Revolutionary era.

Edwards was a militia captain in the Surry County regiment at various times between 1775-1783, according to local historian and retired teacher Rodney Pell.

He survived the war and furthered pursuits as a farmer, planting 2,000 acres along the Fisher River, and in politics, Pell advised.

Edwards became a justice of the peace in 1788, a delegate to the 1789 constitutional convention in Fayetteville, a member of the N.C. House of Commons in 1789 and served in the state Senate from 1790-1803 and in 1809, Pell noted.

He died in 1810, but not before building the structure known as the Edwards-Franklin House on Haystack Road in 1799 which is now owned by the Surry County Historical Society.

Hunt victimized

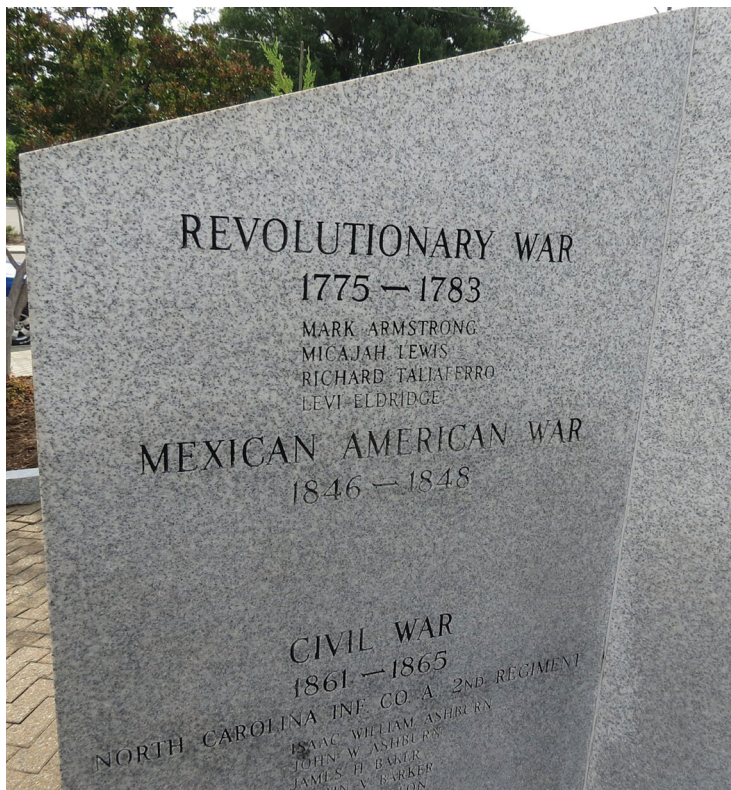
Another individual who did not die in the war but still paid a great price was Jonathan Hunt, for whom the Surry County chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is named.

Hunt had fought with the British in the French and Indian War and rose to the rank of colonel, before later leading a company of men assigned to protect citizens across the region.

In May 1771, Hunt was part of a key force at the Battle of Alamance, which some historians consider the first real action of the Revolutionary War, coming a full four years before Bunker Hill where its initial major engagement occurred.

British Gen. Charles Cornwallis took Hunt prisoner and his soldiers destroyed all buildings at Hunt’s home but the main house.

Yet Hunt supported the patriot efforts until his death in 1782.



The local DAR chapter was established on Feb. 20, 1930 by 14 women who were descendants of Jonathan Hunt and a few other patriots.

A fighter at 62

Another Revolutionary War figure local officials are highlighting during the America 250 observance is Samuel Freeman.

At age 62, Freeman enlisted in Dixon's Company One of the North Carolina Battalion commanded by Thomas Clark.

Freeman fought at the Battle of King's Mountain, a pivotal engagement in October 1780 in the South Carolina back country, where patriot militia forces decisively defeated Loyalist troops and halted British advances.

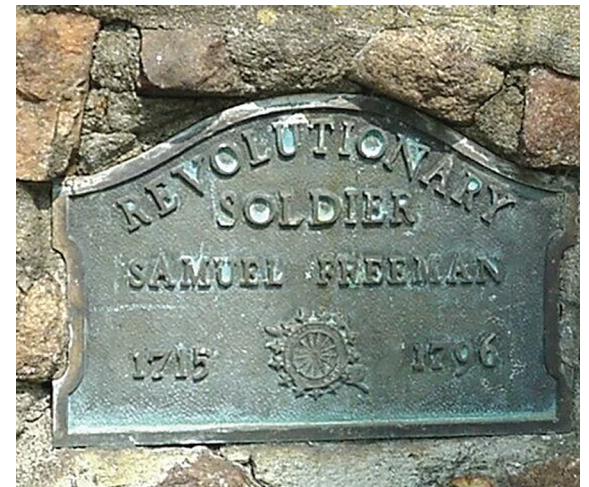
He was a captain in the Surry Militia.

Before the war, Freeman had served on the Committee of Safety for Surry County. That group was appointed by the governor in 1771 to erect and furnish public buildings for the first county seat of Surry in the Old Richmond community.

His involvement in this way is credited with helping to establish law and order in the fledgling county.

Freeman continued to serve his community and state after the Revolutionary War.

In all, 1,198 Surry County patriots have been identified as serving during the war, either as actual soldiers or otherwise supporting the cause.



The grave of patriot Samuel Freeman in Siloam.

The Mount Airy War Memorial contains the names of four Surry Countians who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Revolutionary War: Mark Armstrong, Levi Eldridge, Micajah Lewis and Richard Taliaferro.

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Memorable' Fourth planned by museum

Tom Joyce | *The News*

Local theater veteran Brack Llewellyn once again will read the entire Declaration of Independence outside Mount Airy Museum of History, a July 4 tradition.

By Tom Joyce
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Mount Airy Museum of Regional History is known for going all out in celebrating Independence Day, and this year is doing so not to the Nth – but the 250th degree.

“It only comes around once every 250 years,” museum Executive Director Matt Edwards reasoned regarding America’s birthday, 1776-2026.

“We thought there was a need to really put something memorable together,” Edwards added. “It’s a one-time deal.”

In addition to its normal Fourth of July observance featuring local theater veteran Brack Llewellyn reciting the Declaration of Independence while dressed in colonial garb, two special activities are planned that day at the 301 N. Main St. facility downtown.

These include Voices for Freedom – A Living History celebration, and a Red, White and View event Saturday which will allow participants to watch Mount Airy’s annual July 4 parade in air-conditioned comfort from the inside of the museum.

The Declaration reading in the museum courtyard is scheduled for 11 a.m., which is planned to coincide with parade entries departing from Veterans Memorial Park at the same time.

Theoretically, the reading will be concluded by the time the procession reaches the downtown area.

Edwards says this also will be an occasion for highlighting an America 250 essay contest involving local youths.

“The winner of the essay contest will be announced and their essay read as well.”

Voices for Freedom

Edwards advised that the museum received a state grant of about \$18,000 that will provide visitors an opportunity to step back in time and experience the stories, voices and spirit that shaped the nation.

“Kind of what informed the American identity as we know it today,” the museum official explained concerning how the family friendly program that is free of charge will incorporate what he called “Americana themes.”

This won’t just showcase patriots, but individuals making a difference

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The program will involve local actors portraying iconic figures in U.S. history.

Along with such usual Founding Father suspects as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln and Sojourner Truth are among others to be depicted by the costumed interpreters in historically correct period clothing who museum visitors can meet.

Edwards described the Voices for Freedom segment as “a station-based program throughout the museum” which also will highlight historical displays.

“Through engaging guided tours, these interpreters will bring history to life, sharing the stories, struggles and triumphs that helped build our nation,” according to a museum announcement.

Red, White and View

While admission will be free for the Voices for Freedom program on the museum’s Fourth of July slate, the Red, White and View segment costs \$20 for museum members and \$35 for non-members.

But amenities are to included, such as lunch, snacks and drinks.

Organizers say this will offer the best vantage points for watching the parade and hearing the Declaration of Independence read, skipping the crowds and staying cool while celebrating America’s birthday.

Free museum admission also will come with a ticket purchase to experience America 250 activities throughout the facility.

The Fourth of July observance by the museum represents an attempt to provide the kind of anniversary occasion the nation deserves.

“As the de facto county history authority, we wanted to make sure we adequately celebrate it,” Edwards said.

“We want to make sure we do it right.”



Tom Joyce | The News

Museum Executive Director Matt Edwards gets into the spirit of the occasion dressed in colonial attire along with other museum personnel.



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Carroll County's namesake and the Carroll who gave the county its name

By William Patrick Paine

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Now that the semiquincentennial anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence is upon us, it's a fine time to reflect on American history and though Carroll County, Virginia, had little direct impact on the American Revolution, its namesake was deeply involved in the birth of this nation.

Even so, it's fair to say that Carroll County acquired its moniker as a result of efforts given by two historical individuals, both of Irish heritage and both named Carroll.

John Carroll was born in Ireland in 1801 and came to settle in the area of Dugspur in modern day Carroll County. From where in Ireland and exactly when he immigrated is not generally known.

John Carroll became a farmer and landowner and in 1839 was elected to the Virginia General Assembly as a representative of Grayson County. Dugspur was located within the confines of Grayson County at that time, as Carroll County did not yet exist.

Grayson County was established in 1793 from the southern portion of Wythe County, which itself was carved out of a section of Montgomery County in 1790. Grayson County was named after Revolutionary War veteran William Grayson (1740-1790) who was a delegate to the Continental Congress. Grayson and Richard Henry Lee were Virginia's first two United States Senators.

John Carroll, a Democrat, ran on the platform of splitting Grayson County into two distinct territories. The new county, which was to be carved out of the eastern half of Grayson County, was to be renamed for Carroll himself. John Carroll submitted a bill to the General Assembly which would do just that.

James Blair, a rival Grayson County delegate from the Galax area, amended John Carroll's bill, so that the new county would be named after Charles Carroll, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The bill to split Grayson County passed into law on Jan. 17, 1842 with the caveat that the newly created Carroll County would officially be named in honor of Charles Carroll.

John Carroll later sponsored another bill which changed the name of the Carroll County seat of government from Hillsville to Carrollton. The bill passed into law but locals stubbornly kept calling their town Hillsville and the name stuck. James Blair supposedly wrote a poem mocking John Carroll's thwarted ambitions but no historical record of the poem exists or if it does, it has yet to be discovered.

John Carroll served multiple terms in the General Assembly with some gaps from 1839 to 1856. Initially he represented Grayson County then Carroll and Grayson jointly after 1842 and later Carroll alone. Carroll County annexed portions of Patrick County's southwestern territory, the region that is now known as the Fancy Gap District, in 1845 and 1854. The General Assembly formalized the annexation on February 26, 1856 and those boundaries remain in effect today. John Carroll served as a delegate representing Carroll County during this period of time and it seems likely that he had a hand in pushing for these annexations and thereby increasing the geographic area of Carroll

County.

John Carroll died in 1860 and was buried in Wytheville.

Charles Carroll is an illustrious and celebrated character from the revolutionary era of American history, though he likely never stepped foot in the confines of what is now Carroll County, Virginia.

Charles Carroll is said to be descended from the O'Carroll clan in Ireland. His grandfather, known as Charles the Settler, immigrated from Ireland to Maryland in 1659 and soon established himself as a man of wealth and prominence. Land grants given to Charles the Settler in 1706 enabled his son, Charles Carroll of Annapolis, to develop the family domicile, Doughoregan Manor.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton was born in Maryland on Sept. 20, 1737 and at 12 years of age, was sent to France for his schooling. After completing his studies in France, Charles Carroll moved to London to study law. It was there that Carroll developed a distaste for the monarchy and began to embrace Republican ideals.

Charles Carroll returned to the American colonies in 1764 and with his father's support built Carrollton Manor in Maryland. Charles married his cousin Mary Darnell on June 5, 1768 and they had seven children before Mary's death in 1782.

In 1773, Charles Carroll wrote opinion pieces critical of taxation that were published in the Maryland Gazette. Carroll insisted that fees placed on Marylanders were nothing more than badly masked taxes that had been illegally foisted on the colonists. Having experienced the anti-Catholic sentiment that was common in colonial America, Carroll argued for the expansion of religious freedom and against anti-Catholic laws. Though Carroll wrote under a pseudonym, his identity was an open secret and it was well understood that he was adamantly against the excesses of the crown and that he strongly supported the cause of his fellow colonists.

Maryland had its own pre-revolutionary "Tea Party" with an incident known as the Burning of the Peggy Stewart. In response to the British Intolerable Acts, which were passed as a response to the 1773 Boston Tea Party, Maryland patriots enforced a boycott on tea imports. The Peggy Stewart, a ship owned by Anthony Stewart, arrived in the Chesapeake Bay at Annapolis carrying more than 2,000 pounds of tea from London in mid-October of 1774. Stewart paid the controversial tea tax to unload, which enraged the locals and caused much unrest.

When Charles Carroll was consulted during the crisis he said, "Gentlemen, set fire to the vessel and burn her with her cargo to the water's edge."

The namesake of Carroll County was clearly no moderate.

To appease the crowd Stewart agreed to burn the tea and the ship, which he did after running the brig aground and reading an apology in front of spectators.

Carroll's revolutionary voice was formally recognized in 1774 when he was



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asked by Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Chase to seek aid from Canada. While his efforts were unsuccessful, this further burnished his reputation and in 1775, Carroll became a delegate to the Revolutionary Convention in Maryland. As such, he was instrumental in convincing Marylanders to vote on behalf of independence.

Charles Carroll was named delegate to the Continental Congress, on July 4, 1776. When given the opportunity to sign the Declaration of Independence, on August 2, 1776, Charles Carroll reportedly replied that he would sign "most willingly." When Carroll initially signed only as 'Charles Carroll,' John Hancock challenged his dedication to the cause. Hancock stated that Charles Carroll was a common enough name that Carroll could escape persecution by claiming a case of mistaken identity. Without objection, Carroll added 'of Carrollton' to his signature.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton served in the Continental Congress from 1776 until 1778. He was also a member of the Board of War from 1776-1777. He was subsequently elected to the U.S. Senate where he served from 1789 to 1792. Carroll participated in the joint Senate-House committee that approved the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution. When new laws were enacted to prevent members from serving at both the national and state levels, Charles Carroll ran for a Maryland State Senate seat. Carroll's tenure as a Maryland Senator lasted from 1777-1800. As Senate President Carroll was instrumental in the ratification of the Maryland constitution, which ensured religious freedoms.

Charles Carroll died in 1832, at the age of 96. He was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence and the last signer to die. His likeness can be seen in a painting depicting the signers of the Declaration of Independence by Barry Faulkner in the Rotunda of the National Archives Building. A statue of Charles Carroll, created by Richard E. Brooks, resides in the Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol. A dozen states have counties that are named in honor of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Many primary and secondary schools in America also bear his name. Carroll and Pulaski Counties are the only two counties in Virginia named after a persons of the Catholic faith.

Charles Carroll's place in American history is notable, perhaps even

necessary to the formation of the United States but though John Carroll's historical shadow does not loom as large, his historical significance as a local Virginia politician is noteworthy.

John Carroll was responsible for the formation of this county, spent most of his life within the confines of modern day Carroll County and represented Carroll County in Virginia's General Assembly. Charles Carroll of Carrollton is a giant in the annals of American history but John Carroll had a significant role in local history that still endures. After all, if it weren't for him, Carroll County could have been given any one of a thousand other names or may not have been formed at all.

As it stands today, John Carroll, is known mostly for his failed efforts to name the county and the Town of Hillsville after himself. This hardly seems a proper legacy for the man who insisted upon the formation of Carroll County and who likely had a role in expanding the territory of the county to include the areas of Fancy Gap and Cana.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton became a delegate to the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, an act that could have led to his execution by the British if the revolution was lost. Instead, it led to the birth of a nation and to the eternal and well earned glory of all of its signers. He was truly great man who deserves the honors bestowed upon him but what about the farmer who spent most of his life in the county that bears the Carroll name? Does he not deserve some official credit for his efforts and is it time for the citizens of Carroll County to reconsider the singular status of the Carroll County namesake.

That is to say, would it not be proper to allow John Carroll of Dugspur to share in the honor of being the official namesake of Carroll County with Charles Carroll of Carrollton?

Here in the land of free expression, it is at least something to consider as Virginians celebrate the semiquincentennial of the founding of this great nation.

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250 Years of Dreaming:

This Independence Day is Time for Celebration, Gratitude, and Unity in an Age of Division

By Ryan McCafferty

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In a small country town like Hillsville deeply entrenched in the traditionalist values and headstrong patriotic fellowship that proudly defines the heart and soul of the red, white, and blue, no one ever needs to be reminded why we celebrate the Fourth of July. But this Fourth of July is not every Fourth of July.

This coming week marks exactly 250 years since the Second Continental Congress officially adopted our Founding Fathers' Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. Seven years and a Revolutionary War later, 13 colonies were recognized as the United States of America, which over the ensuing centuries has risen into an economic and militaristic global powerhouse, a hotbed of cultural excellence in sports, arts and business, and most quintessentially of all, a land of opportunity for those dreaming of a better tomorrow.

To be American is to be a dreamer. It's to choose your own destiny. It's to have the freedom to live your truth and build a legacy of self-made success that can inspire and uplift others along the way. There is a distinct brand of idealism and rugged individualism that is unique to the American DNA as inherently embedded in the vision our forefathers saw, which in turn serves as our duty to carry on. And that duty is much less a chore as it is a privilege.

We hear a lot of talk about privilege today. But regardless of ethnicity, gender, cultural background, financial status, or political affiliation, there is no greater privilege than the privilege to be American. In America, we are free to be informed. We are free to have a voice. We are even free to coexist with differing views on how we see the world. In some countries, not everybody is.

As we reflect on what makes our home land so beautiful, it is also important for this very reason to emphasize the "U" in the U.S. of A. It can be easy to forget, with sensationalist modern media designed to amplify outrage and sow division, that America at its core is not a battleground of opposing entities competing for dominance. Rather, it is one sovereign nation, connected by a quest to measure up to the same ideals once envisioned in 1776.

The Idea of America may still not yet be fully realized. But it is the idea that keeps us moving forward, for now and forever. It has taken us to great heights and it can reach even greater ones. That rings true both in times of war and of peace, no matter if the economy is booming or tanking, no matter which party may occupy control of the federal government.

America is an idea that transcends the gravity of any one human being,

or even any one subset of human beings within its population. It is an idea that lifts communities when embodied at the individual level, and lifts our entire collective spirit when embodied at the community level. Americans may have different interpretations of what it means to be American, but our one indisputable commonality is that we are all Americans. And if there has ever been a time to set aside our disagreements and be proud and grateful together for everything this country has granted us, that time is now.



Courtesy photo: David Felts

A July 4th parade in Hillsville, Va.

Our 250th birthday as a nation is an opportunity to remember who we are. We are strong. We are brave. We are fiercely resilient and unwaveringly loyal to our principles. We are privileged to be independent. We are privileged to be different from one another. We are privileged, in each of our own unique ways, to dream the American Dream.

Never stop dreaming, America. Here's to 250 more.



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John Stokes

An extraordinary Patriot

By Patti Dunlap, President
Stokes County Historical Society

In 1789 Surry County was divided in half to form the county of Stokes. This division, on the eastern side of Surry, included present-day Stokes County and then Forsyth County (1849). The western side of Surry would include present-day Yadkin County (1850). 1789 was the same year that North Carolina gained statehood as the 12th state in the Union.

Stokes County was named for Revolutionary War Captain John Stokes. Born in 1756 in Lunenburg, Virginia, John Stokes spent his early years in Halifax County in North Carolina. He served in Washington's Continental Army fighting in northern engagements in Trenton, New Jersey; Princeton, New Jersey; Brandywine, Pennsylvania; Germantown, Pennsylvania; and Monmouth, New Jersey.

In 1780 Captain Stokes was sent to South Carolina to help defend Charleston. Before reaching Charleston, at the Waxhaws, just south of present-day Charlotte, Stokes and his fellow Americans were attacked by Banastre Tarleton's British forces. This bloody engagement became known more as a massacre than a battle. Captain Stokes fell in battle after being severely wounded, including the severing of his hand. Stokes pleaded with a British soldier for "no quarter," meaning to finish him or to kill him. The soldier bayoneted Stokes, as did other members of Tarleton's legion. Yet, somehow Stokes survived. Andrew Jackson, who was about 13, lived close by the battle site with his mother. They took John Stokes into their home and nursed his wounds until a surgeon could remove more of his injured arm.



Painting by Patsy Grebos

This portrait is on display at the Stokes County Ronald Reagan building. Artist's rendering of John Stokes by Patsy Grebos.

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The Revolutionary War in Stokes County

Researched and written by Debbie Brown
Genealogical Society of Rockingham and Stokes

The Revolutionary War was ignited by deep-seated political and economic friction between Great Britain and its thirteen American colonies. Years of taxation without representation, combined with the restrictive measures of the British Crown, forced colonial leaders to take a stand.

In North Carolina, the friction reached a tipping point when Royal Governor Josiah Martin vehemently opposed the colony's participation in the First Continental Congress. Defying his authority, local delegates met at New Bern, rejected British taxation, and aggressively organized local militias. By the time the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, North Carolina had already seen its first major clash between local factions at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. This event fractured local communities into two heavily armed camps: the Whigs (Patriots) and the Tories (Loyalists).

The Tories in the North Carolina Piedmont were smaller in number compared to other regions, but they shared a unified goal: to preserve

British rule and suppress the rebellion. Their motivations were rooted in protecting law and order, securing land and status, and resisting political control that did not include the British constitution. Clinging to the belief that the British Crown was the only legitimate authority; they maintained their allegiance despite unfair taxation and unequal laws. They saw the Patriot cause as a direct threat that would ultimately strip them of their political standing under the British constitution.

During the American Revolutionary War, the region that now comprises Stokes County became a smaller version of the bitter civil strife that defined the Southern Campaigns. Though Stokes County was not officially carved out of Surry County until 1789, the communities nestled along the Dan River and the Sauratown Mountains were deeply entangled in the war. While the county did not face massive clashes between grand armies, they did experience a neighbor against neighbor war.

Before Stokes County was formally separated, its citizens operated under the jurisdiction of Surry County, with the historic courthouse located at Richmond Town. In October 1780, local Tory leaders Gideon and Hezekiah Wright raised a massive force of Tories and launched an assault directly on the Surry County Court House. They successfully captured the town, executed the local sheriff, and raided the home of Captain William Shepherd to punish him for riding off to fight against Major Ferguson with the Patriot army, who were fighting at King's Mountain. Local families were in a constant state of fear.

The impact on Stokes County (then Surry), was not the scene of large-scale battles, and it escaped the devastation left by Cornwallis' army. However, it was plagued by partisan warfare, raids and ambush-style guerrilla tactics.

Continued on page 21

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The Rock House

An American Patriot's home

By Patti Dunlap

Stokes County Historical Society

On a hill in the northwestern corner of Stokes County stand the ruins of an impressive home whose foundation was laid in 1770 by a young John "Jack" Martin. In 1768, Jack came to Rowan County (which was divided to create Surry County in 1770 and Stokes County in 1789) possibly in the company of his older brother William. Born in Virginia, his date of birth is traditionally listed as 1756, but historians believe he could have been born five to seven years earlier.

To build this home would have been a monumental task for any skilled



The remains of the Rock House.

stone mason. Could Jack Martin have been as young as 14 when he began building this structure? Or if older, could he have been a mason with extraordinary skills for a 19- to 21-year-old? Who assisted him? He owned no slaves, that we know of, until later in life. If indeed he was a mason, he would have had connections to other skilled workmen. Using native rock found in the area, his home was four stories, which included the basement, where an interior kitchen and dining area was located. The completed home used an estimated 40,000 loads of native stone with red clay mud used as mortar. The walls were two to three feet thick. The slightly medieval architectural style was a design found in New England, Virginia and among the Moravians in Bethabara. Being on the edge of the western frontier of North Carolina, Martin's home provided shelter and refuge for local settlers in times of danger. Interrupted by Indian uprisings and war, and heeding the call to serve, it took Jack 15 years to finish his home.

Jack Martin began his military career in early 1776 as a militia lieutenant serving with General Griffith Rutherford in Western North Carolina and Southwest Virginia. Knowing that conflict with the British was imminent Rutherford's militia sought to keep the Cherokee from siding with the British. In the fall of 1776 Martin readily began his service in the Patriot Militia to fight for American independence from British rule. Serving under the leadership of many different high ranking officers during the Revolutionary War years, Martin was known as a light horse militia scout. He frequently rode with Major Joseph Winston. In October of 1780, when the Overmountain Men (Patriots) marched to King's Mountain, where they soundly defeated a group of Loyalists and British (a turning point in the Revolutionary War), Martin was sent ahead to scout the area. He and another scout were ambushed, shot and left for dead. Martin was found, his wounds treated and returned home with an escort. Five months later, in March of 1781, Martin was marching with Major Winston to the Battle of

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Guilford Courthouse, another major turning point for the Patriots. Jack was wounded at least twice during the Revolutionary War years – from his King's Mountain scouting injury he carried buckshot in his temple the remainder of his life.

Extraordinary times created extraordinary men

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Jack returned and began finishing his home and restoring his fallow fields, officially completing the Rock House in 1785 when a white stucco material was applied to the exterior making the house visible for miles. Jack married Nancy Shipp Martin in 1784. Nancy was a sister of Thomas Shipp, a fellow Patriot and neighbor. Nancy's family had moved to Surry County from Virginia when Nancy was about 12 years old. For the next 38 years Jack and Nancy lived and raised 10 children within the sturdy walls of the Rock House. Tradition says the Martins had a finely appointed home and entertained friends and dignitaries who were a part of Col. Jack Martin's public life. Nancy was said to be an excellent hostess.

Settling into life after the war continued to be a life of service for Jack Martin. He was a magistrate in the Court of Pleas and Quarters for more than 30 years and represented Stokes in the North Carolina State Legislature for two one-year terms. Including his Revolutionary War service, Jack served in the militia for more than 40 years. He was promoted to colonel of the local militia in 1804.

Jack loved the land and loved speculating on land. Buying and selling land, he owned between 8,000 and 10,000 acres at any given time. Martin's land transactions opened up the area to new settlers. Jack died in 1822 after helping to fight a brush fire on his land. According to family tradition Nancy found Jack near their home shortly after he had died. Nancy continued to

live at the Rock House until her death in 1841. They are both buried near the Rock House. Their descendants are many.

The Rock House has seen much in 256 years. Built by an incredible American who served his county, his state and his country through dangerous and uncertain times, these walls probably heard war strategy, they protected his neighbors, they heard the laughter and held the tears of his children. The grounds were used to muster the militia for two wars. But the ravages of time and the thoughtlessness of strangers have left this grand sentinel in a perilous state. Protected now by a tall wrought iron fence and under the ownership of the Stokes County Historical Society since 1975, the house is on the National Register of Historic Places. It remains an architectural wonder and is recognized as an honored Revolutionary site by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

For America 250 the Stokes County Historical Society has erected a memorial marker to honor John "Jack" Martin's life, his service, his home and his family. The marker was paid for entirely by donors who believe Jack Martin was an important figure in North Carolina history.

On July 4 the Stokes County Historical Society will officially dedicate the marker on site at the Rock House. The dedication will begin at 10:30 a.m. and will conclude at about 11:45 a.m.. Guests include Stokes County's own Chad Tucker of WGHP TV and actress Julie Morgan of Danbury as Nancy Shipp Martin. Discover the history of a true American Patriot and his amazing home as we pay respects to the birth of our country during the event.

The Rock House is located on Col. Jack Martin Road in Pinnacle. Free and open to the public. Those attending should take a chair. A port-a-john will be on site.

From page 15

Stokes went on to study law and opened law offices in North Carolina in Rowan County and Montgomery County. He tutored several law students including Andrew Jackson, the young boy whose mother had probably helped save Stokes' life after the battle of the Waxhaws during the Revolutionary War. Andrew Jackson went on to become the seventh president of the United States.

Stokes served in state government, was an original trustee of the University of North Carolina, and received a judicial appointment as the first federal judge for the NC District from President George Washington in August 1790. Stokes only served one term as federal judge. He died after

serving his first court appearance in October 1790.

It is believed that, even though John Stokes never lived in Stokes County, his constituent in war and government, Joseph Winston (for whom Winston-Salem is named) suggested naming the new county after hero and statesman, John Stokes.

Stokes married Elizabeth Pearson, the daughter of Richmond Pearson, in 1788. Richmond Pearson gave his newly married daughter and her husband 700 acres of land in Davie County where they established their home. This property later came into the ownership of the Peter Hairston family of Stokes County, the name of this plantation was Cooleemee

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History day for local youth

By **Kitsey Burns Harrison**

kburns@yadkinripple.com

Each fall area fourth grade students walk in the footsteps of history at Elkin Municipal Park, site of the Surry Muster Field where militia men began the march to Kings Mountain. Kids from Yadkin, Surry and Wilkes counties take part in this annual education day hosted by the Wilkes Heritage Museum and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association.

During the event numerous volunteers, dressed in period costume, share details of colonial life with the children. The games they played, tools they used, weapons the militia men carried and the foods they ate are among the things on display.

Jennifer Furr, director of the Wilkes Heritage Museum, said the event has been happening for more than 20 years now.

“We try to make it a really fun, hands-on day for the students,” Furr explained at the 2023 event.

The day gives students a glimpse into the history of the Revolutionary War era and the early days of American life, but also gives them an appreciation for the modern day conveniences, Furr said.

“For them to actually immerse themselves, to see people in period dress, to learn what life was like then it really helps them, number one, to enjoy the time they live in today, and to



Courtesy photo

Elkin Elementary fourth graders get a hands-on history lesson at Elkin Municipal Park as part of annual presentation on colonial times presented by the Overmountain Victory Trail Association in 2025.



Kitsey Burns Harrison

Katiey Swaim gives an 18th-century cooking demonstration to area fourth-graders during a special history day program at Elkin Municipal Park in 2023.

understand where we came from,” she said.

Katiey Swaim was among the volunteers showing off 18th-century cooking at the 2023 history day. In addition to preparing something over

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an open flame for the children to see, Swaim also spoke to students about the ways that food was preserved before refrigeration by drying, sugaring in honey, smoking, and salting. She also talked about herbs and flowers that were used to flavor foods and as medicines.

In 2023, Swaim focused on corn, saying, "They called it the king of the grains. You could have cornbread, parched corn, pop corn, grits, and cornbread fritters. There are so many different uses."

Though a longtime volunteer demonstrator with the Overmountain Victory Trail, in 2023 Swaim was new to doing the cooking demonstrations. She said she enjoyed reading and research and had done a lot of that to learn about the flavors and methods

of cooking that would have been used in the time period and location in North Carolina.

Swaim said the students were fascinated by the demonstration and had questions like, was the food real, was the fire real. She said one student asked if all the food was going to be wasted that Swaim had on display at her station. She told them no that it wouldn't be. Volunteers would be eating from her station throughout the day.

"I love seeing that little glint in their eyes," Swaim said that day. "There's usually a handful that you can see that maybe that passion has been ignited. If we just reach a couple, this will continue to the next generation."

"We have such a rich history that will be lost if we don't share it," added Swaim.



Kitsey Burns Harrison

Doug Mitchell shows students some of the weaponry that would have been used during the Revolutionary War era in America.

From page 17

The most famous localized conflict within modern Stokes County boundaries took place near what is now Hanging Rock State Park at a natural cave known as Tory's Den. In early 1781, a band of Tories led by Captain Stanly raided a local farm, completely stripping a Patriot farmer named Blackburn (probably Ambrose) of his possessions. In response the Surry County Militia led by Lt. Colonel Joseph Winston tracked the Tories to their hideout and launched a surprise attack. The Tories were scattered and hunted down in a fierce skirmish, cementing Tory's Den as a permanent regional landmark of the revolution's bitter domestic violence. The cave showed clear signs of what had been a long-time hideout for the Tories, that included food, guns and other items needed to survive.

Stokes County pioneers were instrumental in major turning points across the Carolinas. Local militia units regularly mobilized to fight alongside larger forces. Notable figures like Lieutenant John "Jack" Martin who built the historic Rock House in Stokes County and Major Joseph Winston led local troops to fight at the pivotal Battle of Kings Mountain (1780) and the Battle of Guilford Court House (1781). Martin was wounded on the way to Kings Mountain and was sent home to recuperate but later he fought at the Battle of Guilford Court House.

The war left deep scars across the region, but it ultimately cleared the way for the birth of the county. In 1789, the newly independent North Carolina legislature officially established Stokes County. The county was

named in honor of Captain John Stokes, a revolutionary soldier who was severely wounded and lost his hand to British sabers at the Waxhaw Massacre in 1780. Following the war, figures such as John Stokes, Jack Martin, Charles McAnally, Absalom Bostick, and Joshua Cox, transitioned from battlefield heroes to community leaders, serving as judges and lawmakers who built the civic foundation of the county. Today, sites such as the ruins of the Rock House stand as physical reminders of the grit, sacrifice, and complex loyalties of Stokes County's first citizens.

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Elkin's forgotten Revolutionary War legacy:

how a small settlement helped shape American independence

By Doug Mitchell

Special to The Tribune

By the time Americans celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, many will remember the famous names of the Revolution – Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, Yorktown, Paul Revere, and the Boston Tea Party.

But few realize that the struggle for American freedom was not confined to New England. It reached deep into the Carolina backcountry, and the land that would one day become Elkin played a remarkable and largely forgotten role in the fight for independence.

Long before the towns of Elkin and Jonesville existed, a New Jersey settler named David Allen arrived in the early 1760s and acquired 640 acres of wilderness along the banks of the Big Elkin Creek. Historians believe his home stood high above the creek near the present-day location of the Elkin Presbyterian Church.

Though already in his 50s, Allen began the difficult task of transforming the frontier forest into a thriving settlement. He cleared timber, constructed a lumber mill, and by the late 1760s was floating lumber down the Yadkin River to the growing Moravian communities of Bethabara, Bethania, and Salem.

Allen's industries became the economic engine of the region. By 1772, the Moravians referred to the area as the "Allen Settlement." Around this same time, Allen established an iron works near the location

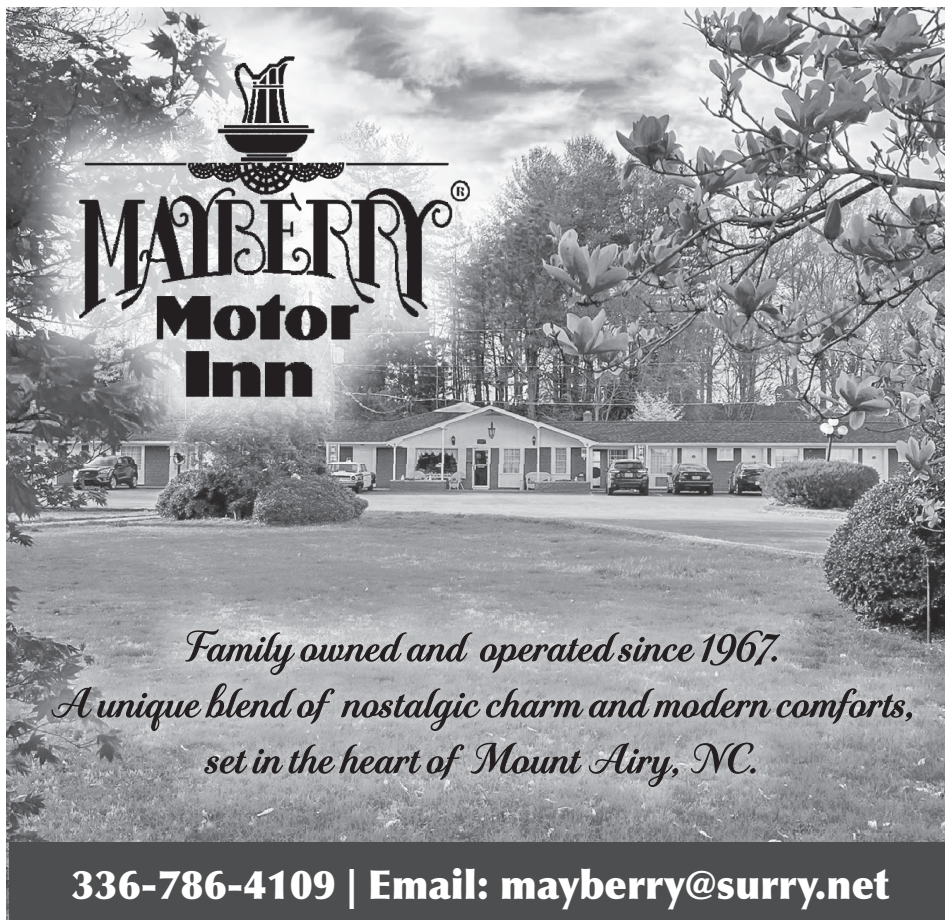
of the modern Elkin Public Library, producing essential iron products for settlers across the region. The lumber, nails, hinges, tools, and other iron goods that helped build early homes and structures throughout the Yadkin Valley and Moravian settlements may have originated from Allen's lumber mill and forge.

As the settlement grew, roads were carved through the wilderness beginning in 1772 that connected Allen's Iron Works with Longbottom, Fox Knob, Richmond Courthouse, and crossings leading toward the Moravian settlements. Remarkably, many of those pathways survive today as modern roads now known by Elk Spur, Austin-Traphill Roads, Hwy 67, Hwy 21 and Hwy 268 East. Residents and visitors still travel these Colonial era roads not knowing the history that they have witnessed.

When the American Revolution reached North Carolina in 1776, the Allen Settlement answered the call. British authorities had rallied Loyalist forces— including large numbers of Scottish Highlanders – to support King George III. Surry County militia members joined Patriot forces racing to stop them before they could unite with the British Army.

David Allen was among those who supplied the Patriot effort, hauling provisions to the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on Feb. 27, 1776, the first major Revolutionary War battle fought in North Carolina and one of the earliest Patriot victories of the war. After the battle, Allen helped transport captured Loyalist prisoners to Hillsborough before returning home.

Because Allen's Iron Works was the only known iron production facility in this part of western North Carolina, it became a vital resource for the Patriot cause. Its strategic importance also made it a



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target for Loyalist attacks.

To protect this crucial operation, Colonel Benjamin Cleveland organized a military garrison in 1778 known as the Iron Works Company. Soldiers established their camp in what is now the Elkin Municipal Park. For the next five years, until the war's end in 1783, Patriot troops guarded the Iron Works and the settlement, although the buildings, stables, and fortifications they occupied have long since disappeared into history.

Then came one of the Revolution's most dramatic moments.

In September 1780, British Major Patrick Ferguson issued a chilling threat to the frontier Patriots:

"If you do not desist your opposition to the British Arms, I shall march this army over the mountain, hang your leaders, and lay waste your country with fire and sword."

The response from the backcountry was swift.

More than 100 men from the Allen Settlement gathered at the military encampment in what is now Elkin Municipal Park. The location became known as the Muster Field, a name it still carries today.

On Sept. 27, 1780, those men marched west along the Yadkin River to join Colonel Benjamin Cleveland and other Patriot forces gathering from present-day Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Their destination was Kings Mountain.

On Oct. 7, 1780, the frontier militia confronted Ferguson and his Loyalist troops in what became the Battle of Kings Mountain. The battle ended in a decisive Patriot victory. Ferguson was killed, his army was destroyed, and the British campaign in the southern colonies suffered a devastating setback.

Men from the Allen Settlement and Surry County were among those who stood on Kings Mountain that day.

While many local Patriots were away fighting, Loyalist forces struck back closer to home. They attacked the Surry County courthouse at Richmond, killing Sheriff John Hudspeth and terrorizing the

region. Around Oct. 11, 1780, they turned their attention toward David Allen's Iron Works and attacked it but were repelled and the Iron Works survived.

Local Patriots learned that the Loyalists intended to cross the Yadkin River at a place known as the Shallow Ford in the next few days. David Allen and other area men assembled and waited.

On Oct. 14, 1780, as the Loyalist forces crossed the river, Patriot militia opened fire. The resulting Battle of Shallow Ford became another Patriot victory and a crushing blow to Loyalist power in the region.

David Allen was wounded in the fighting and remained under the care of Moravian doctors until Dec. 8, 1780, before making a full recovery.

Three years later, in May 1783, tragedy struck. Allen's home, lumber mill, and iron works were all destroyed by fire during the same night under mysterious circumstances. Allen eventually moved with his family to Georgia, where he spent the remainder of his life.

The iron works that had helped supply settlers and Revolutionary soldiers eventually disappeared beneath the forces of nature. Floodwaters from the Big Elkin Creek buried and concealed the site, and it faded from memory for centuries until another flood revealed its remains again only a few years ago.

Today, most people visiting the Elkin Public Library have no idea they are standing on ground where a vital Revolutionary War industry once operated.

This small corner of Elkin holds a unique distinction in American history. The attack on David Allen's Iron Works is the only known Revolutionary War military action site remaining in Surry County and it is located in downtown Elkin.

As America reflects on 250 years of independence, the story of Elkin reminds us that the Revolution was not fought only in famous cities and on well-known battlefields.

It was fought in small frontier settlements, along quiet creeks, at forgotten forges, and by ordinary men like David Allen – whose contributions helped forge not only iron, but the foundation of a new nation.



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As we commemorate and celebrate our nation's 250th birthday, we recognize how blessed we are to be part of such a great nation.

To all who serve our country,

Thank You!

United We Stand.

Proud to be an American.

Contact me directly or the Department of Insurance with your insurance related questions!

NCDOI.gov | Mike.Causey@NCDOI.gov | MikeCauseyNC.com

Paid for by Mike Causey Campaign