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### Fairfield County in the Revolution

Prior to and during the Revolutionary War, Fairfield County was a part of Craven County, of the royal province of South Carolina. Winnsboro, was the headquarters of Lord Cornwallis from October 1780 to January 1781, after the defeat of Ferguson at Kings Mountain, when he retreated from Charlotte. The British General was so delighted with the country around Winnsboro, that he exclaimed, "What fair fields!" After the Revolution, it became part of Camden District, and in 1798 was made into the present county of Fairfield, receiving its name because of the words of Lord Cornwallis.

Two battles, or skirmishes, of the Revolutionary War took place in Fairfield County, namely those of Mobley Meeting House and Dutchman's Creek.

The first was that of Mobley Meeting House, in the year 1780. This year was a dark period for the patriots of Carolina. Charleston surrendered on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, and General Lincoln and the American army became prisoners of war. This success was followed up by vigorous movements. One expedition secured the important post of Ninety Six; another secured the country bordering on the Savannah; and Lord Cornwallis passed the Santee and took Georgetown.

The British line ran thru the present counties of Chesterfield, Kershaw, Fairfield, Newberry and Abbeville. They held quiet possession of all the State to the south and east of that line. The Provincial Congress had determined to organize a military force of 3 regiments. The province was then divided into 12 military districts, one of which was Camden, embracing the country between Lynch's Creek and the Congaree, the present counties of Richland, Kershaw, Sumter, Fairfield and Chester.

Armed garrisons were posted throughout the state, which lay at the mercy of the conquerors, to over-awe the inhabitants and secure a return to their allegiance.

For several weeks all military opposition ceased; and it was the boast of Sir Henry Clinton that here, at least, the American Revolution was ended. It was his plan after conquering the South, to carry his campaign to the North. A proclamation was issued, denouncing vengeance on all who should dare appear in arms, save under the royal authority, and offering pardon, with few exceptions, to those who would acknowledge it and accept British protection.

The great majority of the people, believing resistance unavailing and hopeless, took the offered protection, while those who refused absolute submission, were exiled or imprisoned.

That there were great differences of sentiment in regard to the Revolution, even among the people of the Low Country of South Carolina, has abundantly appeared in the pages of history. Friends and families were divided in opinion as to its cause, and still more so in regard to the course of events which had followed resulting in the Declaration of Independence. But these differences in the Low Country had caused little bloodshed by native Carolinians at the hands of each other. Few of the Tories in that section took up arms against their fellow countrymen. In the new field of war, alas, the people who had not been interested in the questions which brought on the trouble were to fight everyone against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, and the most dreadful internecine strife was now to rage throughout the country beyond the falls of the rivers. The Scotchmen in Charleston, especially the Scotch merchants, had almost unanimously opposed the Revolution and so had the many Scotch traders in the Piedmont region. The Scotchmen in Charleston, however contented themselves with passive resistance to the Revolutionary party until the fall of the town, and then did little more than congratulate Sir Henry Clinton upon his victory over their rebellious fellow townsmen. But in the Up Country, they rose with the advance of the British, and with heroism and determination took part in the War.

The fact is recorded that the inhabitants of York District never gave their paroles, nor accepted protection as British subjects; preferring resistance and exile to subjection and inglorious peace. A few individuals who were excepted from the benefits of the proclamation, with others in whose breasts the love of liberty was unconquerable, sought refuge in North Carolina. They were followed by the Whigs of York, Chester, Fairfield, and some other districts bordering on that State, who fled from British troops as they marched into the upper country to compel the entire submission of the conquered province. These patriot exiles soon organized themselves in companies, and under their gallant leaders, Sumter, Bratton, Winn, Moffat and others, began to collect on the frontier and to harass the victorious enemy by sudden and desultory attacks. At the time when this noble daring was displayed, the State was unable to feed or clothe or arm the soldiers. They depended on their own exertions for everything necessary to carry on the warfare. They tabernacle in the woods and swamps, with wolves and other beasts of the forest; and frequently wanted both for food and clothing.

To crush this bold and determined spirit, British officers and troops were dispatched in marauding parties to every nook and corner of South Carolina authorized to punish every Whig with utmost vigor, and to call upon Loyalists to aid in the work of carnage. The Tories in this section began to gather and organize. On May 26, 1780, that is, three days before the massacre in the Waxhaws, a party of these marauders assembled at Mobley's Meeting House, several miles west of Winnsboro, in the present County of Fairfield. This meeting house had been built by Edward Mobley, Senior, and his sons, as an Episcopal church. They permitted other denominations to use it, and at this time it had become a meeting place for Whigs and Tories.

Colonel William Bratton, of York, Capt. John McClure, of Chester, and Major Winn gathered the Whigs and defeated and dispersed the Tories, who fled at the first crack of the rifle. There is no account of the casualties on either side.

The condition of affairs in South Carolina was without parallel in the history of the Revolution. No other state was so completely overrun by British forces, no other state so divided upon the questions at issue, and in none other did the men of both sides so generally participate in the struggle. In none other were Tory organizations from other states so much used in connection with Royal troops to subdue American Whigs, thus attempting to carry out the British ministerial plan of overcoming Americans by Americans. While South Carolina received but little assistance from the North, her territory was garrisoned by Americans serving in the British Army, enlisted from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and from Pennsylvania. Northern States furnished also several excellent Tory officers who operated with the British Army in South Carolina. Pennsylvania furnished the notorious Huck. When the report of the disaster at Mobley Meeting House was conveyed to Rocky Mount, in Chester District, Colonel Turnbull, the Commander of a strong detachment of British troops at that point, determined on summary vengeance, and for that purpose sent the Tory, Captain Huck, at the head of 400 cavalry, and a considerable body of Tories, all well mounted, with the following order:

“To Capt. Huck. You are hereby ordered, with the cavalry under your command, to proceed to the frontier of the province, collecting all the royal militia with you on your march, and with said force to push the rebels as far as you may deem convenient.”

However, Huck’s career was soon ended by Samuel McConnell, of Fairfield County, who shot him from his horse.

When Washington’s corps, on a march through the uplands, halted at Ingleman’s Mill, on Wilkinson’s Creek, they were wholly out of money and supplies. The Commissary, Mr. Hutchinson, was sent to Mr. Philip Pearson’s, nearby, to try to secure meat and bread for his men, and food for his horses. For one week the horses and men were abundantly furnished from Mr. Pearson’s farm, and Mr. Pearson waived all compensation. Likewise, Mr. Reuben Harrison furnished Gen. Greene and his men with bread, vegetables, cattle, and sheep, and when Gen. Greene was leaving, he tendered a certificate for the supplies furnished and Mr. Harrison said, “No, we are all engaged in the same great cause – Your success will be my pay.”

Andrew Feaster, of Fairfield, in addition to serving as a soldier, furnished a field of grain and a horse without remuneration.

Another interesting incident was after the defeat of the British at Blackstock, when the British troops dropped down to Fairfield County, to the home of Mrs. Martha Dansby. The widow with her children was ordered out of the House. She refused to go; force was threatened. She bid defiance to force: “I will not say what I am, but you say I am a British subject, and if so, I have the rights of a British subject until I am legally divested by the verdict of a jury. If you

must need have shelter, go take the kitchen, and make the best of it.” They took her at her word, and British officers, richly clad, and trimmed off with laces and decorated with gold epaulets, were glad to find asylum in poor Martha Dansby’s kitchen. Many of the British officers and soldiers wounded at Blackstock died here.