

Revolutionary War Touched

5/1976
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When President George Washington arrived in Columbia in 1791 on his goodwill tour of the South, contemporary accounts tell today's readers that many visitors from the communities surrounding Columbia came to pay their respects to the President.

One of these communities was Winnsboro. Many men from that town had contributed strong military leadership in the quest for American independence and had taken an active part in the early formation of the government of South Carolina and the nation.

John and Richard Winn were probably among the Winnsboro contingent to welcome the President. Three Winn brothers had come to South Carolina prior to the Revolutionary War. Like President Washington, two of them, John and Richard, had been trained as surveyors, a skill quite useful in opening the new land in South Carolina. Richard Winn was one of the commissioners appointed by the General Assembly in March 1786 for erecting the new town of "Columbia" and one can imagine the pride these commissioners felt when President Washington visited the new capital city.

Winnsboro had made its first progress toward the establishment of a town in the 1770s. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Winn surname was so thoroughly associated with the place that the borough" adopted it. Today's Winnsboro Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is primarily located within the original grid plan laid out in 1785 by an act of the South Carolina General Assembly. Today it is still possible to see some of the structures that were in Winnsboro at that time.

Clues as to what life was like in Winnsboro can also be found in the 1785 act. The

For instance, no one was arrested except for treason, felony, other capital crimes, or breach of the peace.

One of the most popular spots in town was the tavern. The county court regulated the price of drinks, meals, and lodgings. A featherbed with clean linen cost only six pence, and a fine dinner could be had for one shilling, two pence. In 1785, several licenses to operate taverns were granted.

Winnsboro's chief association with the Revolution is the result of the Battle of Kings Mountain. When Charleston fell in the spring of 1780, Lord Cornwallis, the British commander in the South, considered South Carolina a conquered province and began his march north to finish his work. However, the Battle of Kings Mountain in October changed his plans.

This Patriot victory was due to numerous and formidable mountain men who came down to attack British Major Ferguson and showed themselves to be the inveterate enemies of the Loyalists and the British," words that Cornwallis used to describe the back mountain men in correspondence to Sir Henry Clinton on December 29, 1780.

After Ferguson's defeat at Kings Mountain, Cornwallis fell back from Charlotte to Winnsboro to consolidate this position in South Carolina. He reached Winnsboro late in October, 1780 and was headquartered there until early in January, 1781. Winnsboro was actually the command post for the British effort in the South at that time. Not only was numerous correspondence dated from there, but many major decisions were made in Winnsboro.

Interesting legends are still told regarding Cornwallis's stay in the town. One of these involved a Whig plan to ambush and capture the British commander. John Winn and his brother, Minor, with another unnamed Patriot, discovered Cornwallis's habit of taking morning and evening rides and stationed themselves along his customary path, rifles in hand, to cut him off. But they were apprehended by a band of Tories and condemned to be hanged.

Minor Winn is said to have

"Winnsborough"

By 1787, less than a decade later, the site of the British encampment became the site of Mount Zion School. The Mount Zion Society had been established and incorporated in Charleston in 1777 for the purpose of founding, endow-

ing and supporting a public school in the district of Camden for the education and instruction of youth." The membership was composed of distinguished South Carolinians, most of the charter members being from Charleston.

The selection of John Winn as president, his town as the site of the school, and Robert Ewison and William Strother (two other Winnsboro citizens) as wardens, shows the confidence and regard the Charlestonians held for these men. Andrew Pickens, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Wade Hampton, John Huger, and William Moultrie were among the prominent South Carolinians who were members of the Society.

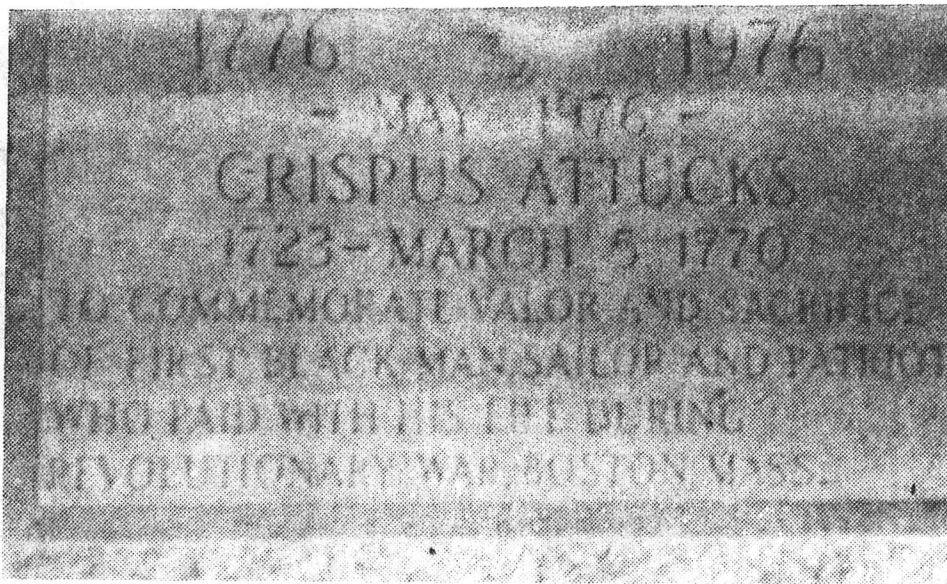
Today, Mount Zion Elementary School is located on this historic site and a granite marker tells of Cornwallis's encampment. A pre-Revolutionary home nearby is traditionally known as the Cornwallis House, where the British Commander is said to have had his headquarters.

Four other homes in Winnsboro, in addition to the Cornwallis House, were standing at the time of Washington's southern trip and they remain today. Although somewhat altered over the years, these homes are Winnsboro landmarks that are significant to the character of the historic district. Wynn Dee, or the Bratton House, was a 1777 wedding gift from Richard Winn to his daughter Christina and is located across from the Mount Zion campus; the McCreight House, which not only has the distinction of being Winnsboro's oldest home, is also said to be the first board house in town and is located on Vanderhorst Street; Willingham House, allegedly used by British soldiers during the British occupation, is on the corner of College and Vanderhorst Streets; and the Winn-Hannahan House, originally built as a kitchen

for John Winn's main house, is on Moultrie Street.

Although Winnsboro, the county seat of Fairfield County, is off the George Washington Trail, it is an interesting side trip, approximately thirty miles from Columbia on U. S. 321. Visitors wishing to see the historic houses and other buildings in the town can obtain information and maps from the Chamber of Commerce which is located in another Winnsboro landmark, the Town Clock, built circa 1833, and said to be the oldest continuous running town clock in the nation.

Visitors will be welcomed to Winnsboro by an attractive granite and brick sign which reads: Welcome to Historic Winnsboro, 1784.



Attucks Marker

This Winnsboro Blue Granite marker in memory of Crispus Attucks was made recently by Pigeon Granite Company of Winnsboro. The Rising Sun Baptist Church in Lackey, Va., commissioned Pigeon to make the marker, inscribed: "To commemorate valor and sacrifice of first black man, sailor and patriot who paid with his life during Revolutionary War, Boston, Mass." Attucks, who was born in 1723 and died on March 5, 1770, was the subject of a "Bicentennial Minute" aired over television. (Photo by Steve Robinson)