

The Flower Swift Militia Company Of Montgomery Co., Virginia 1779-1783



**Reconstruction of a vanished community in today's Carroll
and
Grayson Counties.**

By James A. Quinn

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Following the Battle of Alamance, 1771
and moved just across the Virginia border

Introduction

-a group of intermarried families left the Piedmont of North Carolina
er into Nirgin NNilderness along Chestnut Creek and its tributaries.
These families were mostly Quakeri or disowned Quakers and many of the men had been **atilksakthe**
Regulator **movemegraffenfarticipated** in the Battle of **AlamarierTIYkongst** them was a Baptist named Flower
Swift who was married to a Quaker woman named Mary Bedsaul. The largest extended family was the Quaker
Cox family. The Cox family was related by blood to Herman Husband. Husband was the best known leader of
the Regulation and was a fugitive after Alamance 1771, traveling under the pseudonym Tuscape Death.
Possibly amongst the Chestnut Creek settlers was William Rankin, who had been declared an outlaw by North
Carolina's Governor Tryon. Almost all of this group came from today's Randolph, Guilford, Alamance and
Iredell counties. Before they were in North Carolina, most of their families had migrated thusly:

- Chester Co., Pennsylvania and neighboring New Castle Co., Delaware and Cecil Co., MD then
moving
to York, Adams or Franklin Co., PA, thence to North Carolina
- Harford or Baltimore Co., MD, thence to Monocacy, Frederick Co., MD, thence to North Carolina

A large percentage of the Quakers and non-Quakers were of Scotch or Irish ancestry. The non-Quakers
were
mostly Baptists.

The area to the west and east of them had been previously settled by Long Hunters and their relatives. The
Long Hunters had a very diverse ancestry including: New England Puritans who had moved to New Jersey and
then later to the Piedmont of North Carolina, Quakers like Daniel Boone from Pennsylvania, Germans from the
Shenandoah valley, Eastern Virginians who were converted to Baptists and moved to old Bedford Co., VA,
Presbyterians from Pennsylvania and old Augusta Co., Virginia and people of mixed race ancestry, possibly
Saponi Indian mixed with European, many who came from old Lunenburg Co., VA. There were also some
non-Quaker participants from the Regulator movement in the area to the west who were farmers, not Long
Hunters. Some of the families from the Bedford/Amherst County VA, and some of the mixed race people from
Lunenburg Co., Virginia would be Loyalists for the duration of the Revolutionary war.

The Chestnut Creek community was probably fairly self-sufficient and almost everyone farmed and had a
moderate amount of wealth. Some were also craftsmen and millers and Elisha Bedsaul was a blacksmith. In
the
entire community there were only two slaves, one owned by Elisha Bedsaul and one by David Fulton. They
probably met for worship in someone's home, as no Friends meeting was established here until 1793 (Mt.
Pleasant MM, later Chestnut Creek MM). Records of marriages seem mostly to have been entered at Cane
Creek MM in today's Alamance Co., NC, which was the home meeting for many of the families.

The Revolutionary War in the upper New River can be divided into two parts. The first part, 1724-1734, was a war between the Cherokee and the Quakers. This war was likely to have been unpopular in the upper New River community. The militia companies served were those of Osborne, Cox, Baker and Swift. Quakers preferred to send peace emissaries to the Indians instead of troops -- such as Thomas Beals (who lived in the Chestnut Creek community off and on

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from 1782 to 1795) . The Chestnut Creek neighborhood for the most part did not participate in the Osborne and Cox companies and Swift's militia company did not exist until 8 September 1779. The two companies to the west of Chestnut Creek, Capt. Osborne's and Capt. Cox's did partially participate in the Cherokee war. The county commanders complained that they did so with no enthusiasm. In fact, it appears these companies were active in 1779 and captured their own commanders, Cox and Osborne. It is unclear if the people of the Chestnut Creek community participated in this revolt as none of them was named in the report of Capt. John Cox to his superiors, nor in the pension applications of James Cox and Benjamin Phipps later on. The exception to this may be James Blevins (but probably not). A James Blevins confessed to Tory activity in 1779, but there are three James Blevins in Montgomery County at this time, and it appears that the two James Blevins who were active Tory supporters are not the one in the Swift company. Captains Osborne and Osborne were freed unhurt and the mutiny was put down by militia troops that came from the north led by Colonels Preston and Irwin. By the end of 1780 the upper New River had been defeated and in 1781 a

pardon was offered to those who would change sides and a number of the men who had captured Cox and Osborne are found once again on their militia rolls. Many 'Penns' did not fight a general war with local militias. Benjamin Cleveland in his sorties across the Blue Ridge.

The second phase of the war begins with the attack of the British on the Carolinas and their initial victories at Camden and elsewhere. As they moved northwards into the North Carolina homeland of the Swift company, the cause of the Whigs became more popular with the Swift company. The cause of American Independence and the Regulator cause of 1771 are in many ways one. There is no evidence that Swift's company, as such, participated in the major battles in North Carolina, but several individual members of the company did go to North Carolina and joined with old neighbors there in the American army. We know they did this because a few of them filed pension applications in the 1820s and 1830s. We also have a surviving family tradition of the Quaker Ruddicks fighting in North Carolina. It should be pointed out, though, that letters from Col. Preston to his superiors noted a difficulty in recruiting troops for fighting throughout Montgomery Co., VA in 1781 as was the case through most of Virginia towards the end of the war.

After the war, the New River Valley saw a huge influx of people headed west, some staying in the New River, but most headed farther into the wilderness. Among the new comers to the New River were many Quaker families from New Jersey. A new meeting, Mt. Pleasant, was established there in 1793, the same year that Grayson County was formed. A tax list that year shows that none of the Quakers, including the Bedsauls owned any slaves. If number of horses is an indicator of wealth, the members of the Swift company had not much more in 1793 than in 1782. Not long after 1790, the members of the new Quaker meeting began to move west themselves, particularly to Jefferson and Greene Co., Tennessee and to Ross Co., Ohio. In the years 1800-1820 this out-migration increased, and most of the men of Swift's company departed for Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois with some of the non-Quakers also going south to South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. In 1825 the Quaker meeting (now renamed Chestnut Creek MM) was laid down for lack of members. [Note: a newer brick Friends meeting house on the site of Mt. Pleasant meeting still exists and is probably still being used.]

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Re: Solomon Osborne b 1766 VA,d KYm H.Bowlin

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Posted by [Jim W. Tackitt](#) on January 21, 1999 at 10:06:04:

In Reply to: [Re: Solomon Osborne b 1766 VA,d KYm H.Bowlin](#) posted
by Angela
Bowers on January 21, 1999 at 01:47:01:

Solomon Osborne researchers:

I took a photo several years ago of the original headstone for "Indian Creek"
SOLOMON OSBORNE [pub. on the cover of "The Tackett Journal", issue 27:2].
The
dates inscribed on the stone are clearly shown as: "Born Dec 1765" and "Decease 9
Oct 1852." He was bur. on the W.F. Tackett Cem. [aka Frank Tackett Cem.] on
Long
Fork, Pike Co., KY, within 30 feet of contemporary, Elder WM. TACKITT,
1779-1851.

There has been no evidence found to date proving the parentage for this SOLOMON.
That it was NOT Capt. Enoch Osborne & Jane Hash has been fairly well established.
The Bolling Family Assn_ has presented significant evidence showing that HANNAH
BOWLING, wife of Solomon, could not have been a descendant of Pocahontas dim
her father, "Flat Gap" BENJAMIN BOWLING who was NOT a descendant of
ROBERT BOLLING and his first wife, JANE ROLFE [granddau of Pocahontas] but
by his 2nd wife, ANNE STITH.

However, I have learned in my 40 years of research to keep an open mind. We
enthusiastically welcome hearing from anyone who has verifiable evidence proving the

parentage for "Indian Creek" SOLOMON OSBORNE or who has evidence disproving the line the Bolling Family Assn. claims for "Flat Gap" BENJAMIN BOWLING.

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Solomon Osborne b 1766 VA,d KYm H.Bowlin

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Posted by [A. Osborne](#) on January 15, 1999 at 13:50:02:

I have Soloman b 1766 m Hannah Bowling as son of Capt. Enoch Osborne and Jane Hash who m in 1769 - this isn't likely. Could this Solomon have been son of Gen. Ephriam Sr m 1743-1749 Elizabeth Howard, whose son_Solomon b 1743 was killed by Indians? Solomon b 1766 would have been born after last child I have listed

Ter—mstopher ___ or Conelius b 1765) for Ephriam Sr and Elizabeth.

Did second Solomon(b1766)have son named Hiram b 1798 Scott Co VA d 30 Jan 1812 KY m Nancy Mullins? Was this Hiram father of Jesse Bowling Osborne, father of Stephen, father of Silas?

Follow Ups:

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Tackitt

1/21/99 (0)

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New River Notes

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for the Upper New River Valley of North Carolina and Virginia

Regarding Flower Swift and his Militia Company

A letter from descendant Grady Loy

Dear Dr. Quinn:

I read with some interest the posts you placed recently on the New River List.

Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2003 1:22 AM

To: ncnr@yahogroups.com

Subject: [NewRiver] Flower Swift Quaker list - final draft coming

A list member put me on to your posts.

I appreciate anyone who brings clarity to an often muddled area of history as you have. I learned several new things about the subject from reading your work and find nothing that is not correct, or at least to the best of our knowledge, which is a rare treat. I can add some additional information concerning this group that in some cases may be informative.

The controversy of the list. I do not know why Lyman Draper is supposed to have made the comments he did. Elizabeth Arndt recently went to Wisconsin and looked at a list from the Draper collection and on Flower's list or the cover of it (I can send it by e-mail later were a couple of words I think "Tories? Quakers?" and - well I had just better send it and let you see what you think. Mary Kegley published a series of Militia lists for the Whig side from Montgomery and Washington Counties during the revolution (including as an extra the loyalty oath lists where the Ruddicks declined to sign) and lists with the exact membership of the the "Tory/Quaker" lists are given as standard militia lists that she found stored at Christianburg. Lyman Draper did not make that connection apparently.

Another reason for the designation is apparently that there is a letter to William Crockett who was Flower Swift's colonel for the first 9 months of his service to the effect that he was to go down the New River and disarm the companies of Swift, Cox and Osbourne (this⁴ listed in abstract on the New River Site) It is one of three letters **rigrower** Swift either wrote or was mentioned in. The other two are a letter from William Preston's nephew Colonel Breckenridge I think reporting that around April 1780, Flower Swift had been captured and then was released or escaped from a Tory camp where he had seen red coated British officers among the Tories.

The second letter is approximately late 1781/1782 and is to Colonel William Preston concerning "delinquents" from his company. This was the period after Yorktown had fallen and General Greene was putting all his effort into removing remaining British units from South Carolina. He called the

Montgomery (among other) militias to service but Preston noted that he was only able to field 1/7 of his recorded strength. The letter from Swift appears to be an answer to an order to call up as much of

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the local force as possible so that it could be sent on to aid General Marion and others in South Carolina. (The Montgomery militia had been "disaffected since the battle at the beginning of March 1781 when the Montgomery Militia was in front on a march with some North Carolina Militia and Maryland line to join general Greene at Guilford for that battle. The infamous Colonel Tarleton attacked - I think this was Ramsour's Mill - and the Montgomery Militia fired off a couple of rounds

and began to fall back as was the general Militia Custom. While they were taking the brunt of the attack the Maryland regulars retreated with the wagons carrying the militia's supplies. The North Carolina Militia was thrown into confusion and Colonel Preston was thrown from his horse. The Montgomery men feeling they had been used as sacrificial lambs to preserve the Maryland Regulars

(not far from Greene's actual feelings on the subject) got angry and began to melt away. At the next camp the assembled captains told Preston he did not have a fighting force and they returned home. Preston shamed and broken, though his superiors did not hold it against him, spent the remainder of the war and his life trying to rebuild his militia.)

I have the text of these two letters and the second may be more interesting for you (if you have not got it already) as it has lists of names of people in service. This is probably the last of the Swift lists.

The letter I do not have, to Walter Crockett, I would love to have in facsimile or text if you have it or know where it is. I do not think it has been properly interpreted yet.

As to why there is so much confusion concerning the Swift lists, I will mention a little background of Flower Swift. He was the grandson of a man (Flower Swift) born into a London Merchant family apparently with interests in Jamaica. For whatever reason he appeared in Maryland in what is now Harford County (there is a high possibility he may have been in Cecil near the Chester Co. border first) marrying (Church of England) the daughter of Mark Whitaker. When Mark Whitaker died Flower and the children of Mark's first wife relocated to present day Frederick County to the west of Frederick where the family of one of the Whitaker brother's in law lived. He had gotten land from his wife's father Thomas Wilson. Swift's wife died and he married a Wilson also and became a constable of Monacacy hundred (Frederick Co., MD), and was responsible for the upkeep of the road from Frederick to the west, a job that rotated in his family and that his son may have held (these are positions his eponymous grandson emulated in Grayson Co.) Flower according to family legend for what it is worth went back to England in 1742-1744 to collect an inheritance, presumably that of his merchant father, another Flower Swift (his uncle Peter had died in Jamaica ca 1710). He was lost at sea and apparently the land had always belonged to his in-laws. His wife gave some land to his son Thomas as an inheritance and Thomas soon sold this and migrated to present day Randolph County NC at Sandy Creek where he bought some land during the Granville distribution. His next door neighbor and possibly brother in law by a previous wife (we are working on this) was fellow Harford County citizen Herman Husbands. Herman had been Church of England but had converted and become Quaker in North Carolina. He is well known as the North Carolina land holder, provincial legislator and regulator leader of 1771. He railed against the harsh taxation policies of the English governor Tryon in the late 1760's and as a result the Quaker community was split in North Carolina, the majority sticking to more traditional and obedient Quaker values but a vocal minority supporting his cause. He did not want a violent situation, but in addition to his small group of militant Quakers,

a large group of Baptists (Thomas Swift was a Baptist) opted for a confrontation. Husbands fled a day or two before the British Governor's militia struck at Alamance and Thomas Swift (who also did not participate at Alamance) and his family may have aided Husband's escape. Husband's children by his earlier wives remained and kept his North Carolina properties but one of the children of his third wife

named one of her children Flower and this grandson lived with some other Swift descendants in Illinois many years later.

- We do not know how the Alamance Battle and the resulting looting by militia troops against known or suspected Regulators affected the Quakers who moved to Grayson but there may have been a connection.

Captain Flower Swift was about 16 or 17 at the time of Alamance and whether he was one of the mob and had to relocate is not known. His father was able to keep his homestead until he died in 1806 when it passed to his second oldest son Thomas. The looters did some damage but he was unable to obtain state compensation having been judged to have taken the part of the Regulators.

Swift was reasonably literate as the existence of his letter will attest but not at the same level as his superiors William Preston or William Campbell and this is probably because Thomas' higher education was neglected by the early death of his father and Flower's frontier upbringing.

He was very suspicious of outsiders and this may have arisen from his experiences during the Regulator era. He was certainly with his family in 1770 but for us the period between 1770 and September 1779 remains a blank. He and his circle were very likely involved in counterfeiting various silver coins during this period - the Bedsauls were blacksmiths and had been since they were up north. There is an old Bedsaul family legend about how they made bells by day and coins by night and moved on when the silver ran out. The early homestead at Iron Mountain may have had a little native silver lying in a surface deposit and they did all move on after the war. Flower must have had some qualities or connections because Preston pulled him seemingly from nowhere to place in command of the expansion company made by dividing the Osborne and Cox companies in what was regarded as the single most dangerous Tory district in Virginia in 1779. Osborne and Flower were both men with prrrrrn loyalties and military abilities at least in frontier fighting. So one idea was probably to put the novice between the two senior men so that there would not be too weak a spot in the line [actually Swift's company is east of both Cox and Osborne - JQ]. However it is doubtful that even with his attractiveness to the Quakers - Flower Swift was probably married to Mary Bedsaul (We have information on her headstone in Missouri so the name Mary is correct) - that he would have been made captain there without some other reason. But I have no idea at this point.

I would deeply appreciate it if you could send me any references to him as captain or in any capacity prior to September 8, 1779 as I have never been able to find anything about him in Virginia prior to that date.

Back to the topic. Since Swift was very suspicious, it appears likely that he did not date his militia lists or write anything else on them (such as "militia list") that could later be used against he or his men. Unlike many of the Virginians, Swift had been on the losing side and had seen the leaders of his side hung by the British authorities and his being captured in April 1780 may have deepened this impression. He also had the example of his neighbor and senior Captain Cox who had been captured in an earlier year but who did not get away so easily as Swift did. And if Major Ferguson was making a sortie a little early (though Tarleton does not indicate that Ferguson went into North Carolina before the British victory at Camden in August) Ferguson was known for his "hanging speeches" regarding those in the backcountry that would not submit. Such a thing would also have made an impression on Swift. In any case, he alone of all the commanders I am aware of did not date or label the militia musters and he probably handed them to Preston himself as opposed to using the post.

In summary I think those factors

1. Swift's unwillingness to document his lists
2. The William Crockett Letter

- **3. The point you raised about the Ruddicks not signing the loyalty oath all combined to give an impression that Swift might have had a Tory list. But I can tell you as a matter of oral tradition, he was on the Whig side at least from the time he joined Preston.**

Another factor that I do not think is well known in circles looking at this area, though Lyman Draper was passingly aware of it, was the fact that in response to Swift's report through Breckenridge, William Preston became so greatly worried that he wrote Jefferson and asked Jefferson to commandeer William Campbell from Washington County to lead an expedition. Preston was a pretty good judge of men and while Walter Crockett was reliable as home guard leader, both Preston and Crockett felt that Campbell was better to lead an expedition. Campbell had been planning to lead an expedition against certain pro-British Cherokee towns in Tennessee with his brother-in-law and cousin Arthur Campbell and probably Colonel Sevier. Arthur and William did not get along well. Arthur was the Washington Militia Commander and resented William who had married well (Patrick Henry's daughter) received formal military training in the tidewater (prior to 1779) and frankly was a far better soldier. Arthur and William had an understanding that William could only lead Washington County Militia as part of a mixed force where Washington forces made up less than half. Otherwise Arthur was to command. Arthur had been the intended leader of the summer campaign against the Cherokee. Thomas Jefferson however, instructed William Campbell (can show the letter where he does this) to postpone his campaign and go to Montgomery County with such men as Arthur would spare him and do something about the Tory situation that worried Preston so. William, only too happy to command his own expeditionary force and somewhat enjoying Arthur's discomfiture at losing his summer expedition, rushed to Montgomery with somewhere between 50 and 100 men (I am guessing here) from Washington. He was put in charge of Crockett's southern frontline (Swift, Osbourne, Cox) with around 100 men. Whether the Montgomery force was larger (120) or the Washington force was 100 is difficult to say without knowing whether William Neal was a Washington Commander or a Montgomery Commander. The force was rounded out to about 300 men by a couple of companies Preston was able to get from Botetourt County (Still don't have their names) and such men on the North Carolina border as would join the force for 30-60 days (pension of Henry Blevins NC recruit where Campbell is given as Swift's commanding officer) Campbell moved south up the New River burning out and disarming Tory settlements as he went. At some point he headed east into North Carolina and marched as far as Guilford where he joined Cleveland and together they attacked and may have eliminated the Tory forces of Captain Fanning. This campaign lasted from mid July - Crockett was in the field with his men when Campbell arrived having done the same the previous year - and lasted until the end of August. Swift is recorded as obtaining supplies for the troops at Wilkes County NC in August 1780.

History then says that Campbell went home and was called by Shelby and others to Watauga shoals where he brought the Washington County Militia. After his arrival Arthur Campbell showed up with 100 or so more men from Washington apparently including Colonel Edmonton. After that there is the King's Mountain Battle saga that everyone well knows. Crockett was said to have been present at that battle and it is unlikely Preston would have let him go as an observer since no one knew whether

they
would even meet the enemy much less prevail.

The historical account is based on the account of Shelby who repeatedly sent letters to Campbell asking him to join. Campbell was probably at the Moravian towns with his forces intact when Shelby's call came. General Gates, having just endured savage defeat at Camden and knowing Cleveland and Campbell to be leading intact bodies of men in not insignificant numbers sent orders to Moravian Town ordering Campbell to submit to his command, turn his militia over to him and march to the Dan River at the Virginia border to resist Cornwallis anticipated northern march. Campbell's first response to Shelby declining to join him at Watauga mirrors these orders perfectly (One modern historian has sniffed that this just goes to show what a bad strategist Campbell really was. He may

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have been. His victories were all at the tactical level but this time he was following orders) He had not answered Gates and when Shelby's second letter came he opted to join Shelby and the others against Ferguson. After the battle Shelby drew up a history of the campaign and the other officers all signed it. The history said that Shelby's messenger found Campbell at home. Campbell signed it but in a letter to Jefferson later explaining why he went to Kings Mountain (some apparently accused him of overreaching his authority). He refers to Jefferson's orders of July and states that in his pursuit of Tories he invaded North Carolina as per his orders and did not cease campaigning there until Ferguson was defeated. The reason was that had he laid down his command and returned home, he would not have had the authority to raise a new force and cross into North Carolina. The other flaw in the Shelby account is that Arthur Campbell brought 100-200 or so more men to William Campbell at Watauga Shoals. Had William Campbell ever returned to Abington he would have brought them himself. Additionally if he had 200-300 with him and Arthur brought him 100-200 more, The entire Washington County Militia would have been in the field in South Carolina. The Cherokee raids that year were severe and it is unthinkable that Arthur Campbell would have given away more than half his experienced frontier militia for any reason much less the glory of his hated brother in law.

The fact is that William Campbell's account is correct - he never left the field, he took the 300 men from Washington, the Chestnut and Upper New River Districts of Montgomery and from Botetourt and went directly to Watauga Shoals. Arthur there brought him what consisted essentially of Colonel Edmonton's command (three companies?). Additionally, Walter Crockett's presence at the battle and

stories in the Osborne family (albeit with a preposterous sequence of a long hard ride by a messenger to find Osbourne just returned from the summer campaign and hard at work Cincinnatus-like at his 'plo' rather unceremoniously lifted from the pages of Livy) and the Reddick family (Swift company) has traditions apparently of being not only at King's Mountain but following Campbell all the way to Guilford Courthouse. He never wrote a fuller account of what he did because of his untimely death before Yorktown and the only thing he ever did write suggests he was on campaign continuously between the middle of July 1780 and the middle of April 1781.

Whether some or all of the Swift companies participated in the battle is not stated clearly in historical sources beyond the family stories I have mentioned (More pension information might be instructive) however, Campbell did leave Captain William Neal behind with stragglers. These companies - including the Swift company- were mounted horseback and it may be that Campbell left the men on foot (except the fast ones) so that they could make better time tracking Ferguson. The weak and ill from each company were probably given to Neal and all other companies went forward, else there is no reason to only mention his command as having stayed. It is also unlikely that Campbell sent any men back as being unnecessary for the campaign. Before catching up with Ferguson Campbell sent a message to Preston asking for more men and Preston sent Captain Francis who was killed by Tories in a battle as his unit sought to catch up to Campbell.

The month after Kings Mountain Swift and other unidentified Montgomery and Botetourt men were left on guard duty in the frontier forts in Powell Valley and other western points to defend against raids. Swift was again listed as being subordinate to Campbell in a pension application where the applicant indicated he had fought Tories and Indians under these commanders. (I only have two pension applications so far from this group - I have mentioned both. If you do not have them I could send copies. Do you have some others? It is amazing what information is in them.) Arthur Campbell again in command of the entire Washington Force left others in Powell Valley while he led William and the others into Tennessee to carry out the destruction of the Cherokee villages that had been planned for summer. That may have lasted into early February.

Campbell emerges again with a force in late February early March and joins Preston on his March to Guilford Courthouse. Campbell's force was behind the Montgomery units under Preston's direct

command and did not engage the enemy at Weltzel's Mill this group, which now included in addition to Botetort Men also Men from Augusta and Rockingham Counties probably present at the request of either Preston or Campbell. This force met and held Colonel Tarleton's dragoons for an hour or so, long after Light Horse Harry Lee's cavalry had retreated (a fact that led Campbell to resign in fury ending at last his militia command. Jefferson and I suppose Preston saw that he got a General's commission but I do not know that he ever saw action again) As to whether his Chestnut Creek units were present history so far says nothing outside of the Reddick family story. Flower Swift barely even

talked about the war (to judge by the dearth of direct information from any branch of the family - though they were and in many cases remain a taciturn people in regard to family matters) There is an old heirloom that the family always said he wore into war against the British and that his son Thomas in turn did likewise in the war of 1812.

There has been almost no memory of the Montgomery participation in the war outside of some earlier battles against Tories and Captain Francis' heroic stand - so much so that on New River Notes the comment is made that it is not clear that the Montgomery militia ever saw action. Part of the reason may have been the shame of what happened at Ramsour's Mill. Another part of the reason may have been that many of the people in militia units were part of that group of people headed to the frontier - Montgomery/Grayson was on the main East West Road to the Cumberland Gap - and people moved on so much that except for the Quakers and a few other old families no one has anything to remember from that period (The Swifts were all moved out by 1813 except for a few of the daughters and most of them were gone by 1825). Whatever happened to make the Montgomery situation confused and obscure Swift was richly rewarded as soon as the threat of combat had ebbed (Osborne and Cox were rewarded as well but less so and later in spite of their clearly longer and ~~vervjjkaLyjaarzotaiiiii~~ rtrlll ary contn u ions . wr was a e e ogomery ounty magistrate in 1781 for the area around Graysonirtarroll Counties at the unlikely age of 27-28 (Assuming a 1755 birth date. His father Thomas was born 1727 and appears to have married 1752-53. Flower was probably not more than 25-26 when made captain, 30 at the very most). He was also given the coroner's job. When Wythe County was created out of southern Montgomery he was the first justice named and again when Grayson was named (At which time Minitree Jones and Enoch Osborne also became magistrates). He was at all times until he left for Knox County ettitucicy (to join the ReMcks to ItYfioin Er was related through his wife) commander of the Grayson militia and may have been commander of the Wythe militia as well (don't know). The Reddicks reprised the Swift role in Knox

county but saw that Swift, whose health was apparently failing, was given a very high rank in the militia leading up to the war of 1812 together with a major's commission for son Thomas in the riflemen and a tax collector's job. There were many people who had far more property or education but for 20 years court records suggest the Swift organization ran Grayson County. The only jobs Swift

did not take were legislative jobs that required him to leave the county but his associates took these.

Whatever was the source of his good fortune (unless he was just a natural at politics) stemmed from

something he did while Preston was the chief political authority of that area, and since Swift's activities were almost entirely military at that point, it was something done together with the militia units and my guess would be it was something in 1780-1781. (Part of the reason that the Swifts left may have been accusations and an acrimonious trial where Sheriff McKenzie was forced to sue Thomas Swift for county funds in Swifts care that disappeared. The case is complex. Thomas had a large number of guarantors with enough money to easily cover the lost funds but somehow Sheriff McKenzie who was primarily liable (meaning guilty or not he had to come up with the funds) was apparently financially ruined. This case appears to have had something to do with an inheritance case

that P. Gaines was involved in for about the same amount of money. One suspects that Thomas' performance was part of some factional dispute occurred and it may be the Swifts either lost or

were
disheartened and elected to move on. About the time the Swifts left a Daniel Bedsaul was sent to
jail
for 5 years accused of horse theft. He later got out, moved west and died early leaving an orphan
Isaac
in Indiana)

<http://www.newriversnotes.com/va/swift/swiftletter.html>

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I am not writing from home so some dates may be slightly inaccurate. I can provide original sources if you are interested from any of it. At one point I had dated some of the Flower Swift lists more or less and may still have the information. I had worked out that the Swifts, Reddicks, McCoys and Bedsauls were pretty consistently present and I think there was a Samuel Meherin as well. I will read your list again with interest as it appears you have taken things a lot further, particularly with the Quakers.

I apologize that this was a lot of Swift and not so much the others. The spirit of what I write was that where Swift went, his core associates likely went as well and you appear to have begun to work out the structure of the group of families in his unit.

Might I ask you if you could let me know what the references to Captain Swift prior to his obtaining a company on Chestnut Creek were. That would be very valuable to me. Also, have you seen the letter to Colonel Crockett? Do you have the Revolutionary War pensions of any of the group? I would love to see any you have.

Thanks

Grady E. Loy

Yokohama Japan

J. Quinn:

For another opinion about the participation of Montgomery County in Battles in North Carolina see

Jerry Roger's account at <http://www.rogers-ben.com/bits/battleswallowford.htm>

He documents the fact that the Montgomery county militia was asked to join the forces descending upon King's Mountain, but that they did not make it and were diverted to the Battle of Shallow Ford,

where one of the Montgomery militia captains, Henry Francis was killed. Jerry's web site also has several pension applications and other documentation showing that many men from today's Wythe county (just to the north of the Swift territory) participated in Whitzell's Mills and the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Documentation of this sort for the Osborne, Cox and Swift companies is lacking as far as I know except for men who joined Swift's company after 1780.

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THE NEW NEW RIVER VALLEY (N.C.) IN SETTLEMENT DAYS



The Broyhill Center for Continuing Education here on the campus of Appalachian State University is situated on a headwaters tributary of the South Fork of the New River, which flows from a spring on the grounds of the Green Park Hotel in Blowing Rock and only a stone's throw from the Continental Divide. We are in Watauga County, the birthplace of rivers. No river flows through Watauga County, but four flow out of it.

The old Buffalo Trail, tramped out over the centuries by the migration to the Piedmont of thousands of buffalo, entered North Carolina near Trade, Tennessee, and crossed the valley of the South Fork of the New River a few miles east of Boone. This trail, still discernible in undisturbed woodlands, was followed by Indians for many generations before the white man arrived. Prior to settlement of the region beginning in the 1780's, hunters, herdsman, and explorers followed the Buffalo Trail from the Yadkin River Valley through Deep Gap and into the mountains and beyond. The Daniel Boone Trail follows roughly the Buffalo Trail. Early land grants tended to cluster along this trail, and surveys were made to either side of it. Most of the settlers there came up from the Yadkin Valley and beyond, among them many of German origin. Among families living along the trail prior to 1800 were Blackburns, Bryans, Greenes, Jacksons, Lookabills, Millers, Norrises, Proffitts, Ragans, Tugmans, and Woodrings. Some of the progenitors of these families were among the charter members of the Three Forks Baptist Church, organized in 1790 and located on the South Fork of New River about threerres east of Boone.

One of the fast explorers in the Upper New River Valley was Bishop Spangenburg, who, along with a band of Moravians, came searching in the fall of 1752 for 100,000 acres on which to settle. While camping in early December near the present town of Blowing Rock they almost froze. Moving down the South Fork and past the site of Boone into what is now Ashe County, they found the mountains too rugged and the weather too severe to suit them and finally settled in and around old Salem, now Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

By 1760 Benjamin Howard, who lived in the Yadkin Valley, had begun herding cattle during the summer months in the region in and around what is now Boone. He built a crude cabin on what is today the campus of Appalachian State university The spot now covered by Rivers Street was marked in 1912 by an 18-foot-high stone-and-concrete monument, a replica of which stands at the

spot of the hill below Justice Hall and a hundred yards or so east of the site of the original marker.

It was the Howard cabin that Daniel Boone used while on hunting trips to the region and while exploring in Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky. At the time, Boone, whose family had settled in the Yadkin Valley in 1751, was living in what was to become Wilkes County.

There is little evidence extant of permanent settlements in the Upper New River Valley prior to the 1770's, although Andrew Baker might have been living there as early as 1763. David Helton, William Walling, and William McLean came down from Virginia on a hunting expedition to the North Fork of the New River in what is now Ashe County in 1770. A year later they returned and built cabins on Helton Creek, a few miles northeast of here, but at that time they could not legally claim land there.

6, However, Enoch Osborne had moved up from Rowan County, N.C., to the Mouth of Wilson, Virginia, over the line from Ashe County by 1765. One of Enoch's sons, Soloman, was killed by Indians while on a hunting trip into what is now Watauga County in 1772. Captain Enoch Osborrie kept the farm at the Nettle River during _____ the War.

dyr

By 1778 a few families were living in the region Benjamin Howard, a Tory, returned to what is now

Boone, and hid out for a time in a shallow cliff on the knob that bears his name. He took the oath of

allegiance in 1778 but afterwards returned to the Yadkin Valley to live. In 1778 Martin Gambill brought his young wife and some slaves to the Bend of the New River in Ashe County where he established a home. Prior to 1778 it had not been possible to obtain a North Carolina title to lands west of the Blue Ridge.

Many hunters had built shelters in the region Some of the hunters had no doubt made land surveys which they entered later. Some of the "shelters" referred to in entries for land by 1780 were those of progenitors of such well known families as Baker, Collins, Fee, Gambill, Howell, Mahon, Robinson, and Sizemore. Families actually living on land prior to 1780 at the time entries for grants were made included Baker, Johnston, Yates, Pennint., ton, Howell, Ellison, King, Little.

Myuf_tlagpieReoFs-in-thc-Isliarth Fnrk were members of Captain Enoch Osborne's militia during the Revolution, and some of them were with the Overmountain Men at the Battle of King's Mountain, but only one episode connected with the American Revolution occurred in the Upper New River Valley. Captain William Riddle, a Tory, and some of his men captured Colonel Ben Cleveland, who had come o • a res, were olding him as a prisoner in the Wolf Den on Riddle's Knob a few miles northeast of Boone. This occurred in April, 1781. Robert Cleveland, having ___ been told about the capture of his brother, gathered 20 15175'07Darriots, stole through the wilderness at night, surprised Captain Riddle at sunrise, and rescued Colonel Cleveland. Later, Colonel Cleveland captured Riddle and some of his men and hanged them on the Tory Oak at Wilkesboro.

migrated to the Powell Valley in Lee County, Virginia, among tl
By 1790 as many as 200, and grants had been issued, but the few wells, probably not more than 80 households in the Upper New River Valley at that time. During the following decade many North Fork families • owell Valley in Lee County, Vir • • among them Boggsses, Creeches, Flanerys, Huffs, sbornes, Pdnningtons, Sheppards, Stidhams, Sturgills, and Wellses. A generation later these families ' swarmed' again, this time into eastern Kentucky. I grew up at Blaine in Lawrence

County, Kentucky; but among my ancestors were Boggses and Wellises who were living on the North Fork in 1790. Their neighbors at Blaine included Creeches, Gambills, Holbrooks, Lyons, Millers, Osborns, Pennington, Sparkses, Stidhams, Sturgill.s, and Weavers. The Upper New River Valley, like the Yadkin Valley, was a nursery basket for the Westward

Early settlers in the region established schools and churches. General Lenoir is credited with having founded a Baptist church in Ashe County in the early 1770's. There were Methodists in the county by 1783, before Bishop Asbury visited the region, beginning in 1789. The Three Forks Baptist Church near Boone, of which Daniel Boone's brother was a sometime member, was founded in 1790. By 1840 there was a Lutheran congregation near the Buffalo Trail in Watauga County.

Martin Gambill built a log school on his farm at Chestnut Hill about 1790 for his children and those of his neighbors. In the summer of 1784 there were four schools in what is now Ashe County. By 1790 there were ten Schools in those days were kept only during the warm summer months.

Soil in the valley is fertile. The rugged terrain and the remoteness of the region, identified later as the "Lost Provinces," made it difficult to transport bulky produce to markets off the mountains. Roads were impassible. By the 1930's only two paved roads traversed the region. People lived simply but comfortably as subsistence farmers, supplementing their income by growing a few cattle to sell to drovers, hunting, and gathering herbs, chestnuts, and bark which they transported by wagon to markets in Piedmont towns.

Until the coming of sawmills near the end of the 19th century, homes in the Valley continued to be constructed of logs, the oblong cabin with a chimney on the outside of one end of it the basic architectunk. The quality of life did not change much during that century. Dr. Elisha Mitchell, who a geological survey of Ashe County in 1828, described the region as an ocean of mountains.

Most of the homes in the North Fork were log huts. Fields were fertile. Herds of cattle, some driven over from Watauga County, Virginia, grazed in hillside pastures. Roads followed streams. Mitchell reported that he forded the stream 32 times while riding his horse a distance of 10 miles north of Helton. While in the neighborhood he attended Methodist meetings where he heard "a reasonable amount of female screaming and vociferation." He visited Captain Ballou's forge, and inspected Perkins ore bank. He heard an account of an old man in the area who "determined the locality of ores by the mineral rod."

The 1818 census reported a population of 3,694 people in Ashe County, which then included Watauga, much of Avery, and Alleghany. By 1830 there were 492 slaves in the county and by 1860 only 533.

The Civil War brought divisions among the people and left poverty that retarded economic development. Many families had left the region by the 1880's, migrating this time to the West Far West. *Machine 1870's*

In 1884 Charles Dudley Warner, best remembered as the co-author, along with Mark Twain, of the Glided Age (1873), the title of which gave the name to the decade of the 1870's, traveled through the Upper New River Valley of Ashe County and Watauga County, North Carolina. His account of his journey was included in On Horseback, A Tour in Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, which

appeared first in the Atlantic Monthly and then in book form in 1889.

After spending a night in a home near Trade, Tennessee, Warner and his party rode into Ashe County. Interested in the dialect of the natives of the region, he was disappointed when he found no local peculiarity of speech except for an occasional use of "hit" for "it" On the North Carolina-Tennessee line the travelers visited a tavern and distillery, where they were amused by a pretty, talkative young woman who explained that she was staying there for a while in order to avoid being called as a witness in the trial of one of her admirers who had killed another. She punctuated her account by spitting tobacco juice into a fireplace "with accuracy of aim and with a nonchalance that was not assumed." At Worthy in Ashe County they found a well-to-do mountain farmer whose two daughters had been to finishing school, wore stylish clothes, and could play the two pianos that were in the house.

For dinner they stopped at Tatem's on the New River. Tatem had very little corn for the horses. His home, consisting of two log cabins backed up to a huge chimney and a lean-to behind, was crude. The rough dinner was seasoned with too much grease to suit the taste of the travelers, but it was rendered even more distasteful by the presence of a bed in the dining room and a tubercular daughter with a "graveyard cough." In Mr. Tatem's "parlour," which had two beds in the hearth was decorated with two gleaming white gravestones. Mr. Tatem was not illiterate. He subscribed to the Blue Ridge Baptist, but told his guests he was planning to discontinue his subscription His guests thought he overcharged for their dinners.

The people of Watauga County the travelers found fond of lawsuits. On court days they assembled in large numbers in the shabby little village of Boone, which boasted that its elevation made it the highest cztay—setit—ettst—of the Mississippi river. The tavern in Boone was rickety and poorly profusion of flies swarmed everywhere, but an ingenious foot-operated fly shoo hung over the table in the dining room and creaked miserably as meals were being served. No alcoholic drinks were available in Watauga County. As they rode away from the tavern the next morning, the travelers noticed that the porch "resembled a carpenter's shop; it was literally covered with the whittlings of the row of natives who had spent the evening there in the sedative occupation of whittling."

As is evident in Warner's report, stereotypes of Appalachians were being created. But the region was coming out of its poverty. By the end of the century, though life in the region was much as it had been from the beginning, new homes, large country houses with many chimneys, wide porches, and gingerbread decorations, were being built, many of them around the original log cabins of the pioneers. Mostly, the same families lived in the region, many of them on the same tracts of land for which the progenitors had received grants before 1800. The "Lost Provinces" were preparing to join North Carolina, but they did not succeed in doing so completely until after World War II.

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New River Notes

Since 1998 - Historical and Genealogical Resources
for the Upper New River Valley of North Carolina and Virginia

The Flower Swift Militia List Controversy: A list of Tories or a militia roster?

Lyman Draper (the famous nineteenth century Historian and Collector) thought that the older of the Flower Swift militia rosters was a list of Tories and Quakers, not a militia list. In "*Grayson County, a History In Words and Pictures*", a very similar list (referred to as the third undated Flower Swift militia list) is given as a militia roster. Elsewhere on New River Notes it is given as Draper saw it -- as

a possible list of Tories and Quakers. Draper's assumptions are based on an order from General William Campbell, the local American commander, to construct such a list. That this is a militia list instead is supported by the following:

(a) the overlap between the lists is high with 41 of 64 men accounted for.

(a) Men are marked as unfit for duty on the third undated roster, and it appears to be a militia roster

(c) Flower Swift was known to be a militia captain, his company forming on 8 September 1779 - a few other lists of this militia company exist with him noted as the captain

(d) The persons on the list mostly remained in the New River area after the war and their property was not confiscated.

(e) Known Tories are not on the list. Capt. John Cox and others named many of the Tories active in the area and the names of many more are known.

(f) This appears to be a neighborhood list of persons living in the vicinity of Chestnut Creek (today SE Grayson and western Carroll Co., VA). Most or all of the named Tories lived outside this community.

(g) None of the men on the list are among those mentioned by John Cox as those involved capturing him or by any of the New River men who filed pensions, nor any of the regional history books, nor are any in the gang associated with William Riddle;

(h) Some of the non-Quakers filed for Revolutionary War pensions where they described serious fighting in the major battles and skirmishes in North Carolina and proven enlistment in Regular North Carolina troops starting in 1779. Timothy Spencer, for instance filed a pension claim in Grayson County in 1832, Henry Morgan in Illinois in 1833, Daniel McCoy in 1818 in Kentucky and maybe again in Jackson Co., IN in 1833. Charles Morgan got a Bounty Land Warrant in Grayson County in the 1790s. A William Blevins, in a pension application in Indiana, says he fought with Swift against Tories while guarding the lead mines.

(i) Family tradition in the Ruddick family says that these Quakers also participated in some fighting in North Carolina.

() Flower Swift was among the first court magistrates of Grayson County when it was formed in 1793.

(a) There is no tradition of Toryism in any of the families of the men from Swift's unit, other than the Blevins. Quite the contrary. The Blevins were not on Draper's list.

(I) Flower Swift's name is the first name on the list, which is where the Captain's name should be.

(m) See more in [Grady Loy's commentary on Flower Swift](#).

On the other hand, this does not look even remotely, at first glance, like an effective fighting force. The majority are marked unfit or are probable religious pacifists. Quakers were actively seeking peace with the Indians after the start of the Revolution. It is likely that **third** not want to participate in the **TIME** War. And this is a sentiment likely to be shared by many of their neighbors to the west in Osjans:,\$441,aggx's **companies**. Indians never nrUnted a major attack on settlers in the upperTire River Valley and this is not typiCaTgrthe eerieence of the Appalachian frontier. Its true the Osborne and Cig,,gpmpanies **did go** .,the. Cherokee **rnmpAign**, but their officers **wrote`bf** a lack of ,-"ft ei4husiaina. For after all, **Szia... 's2,1010,42Wourg_ialigiay's** Tennessee was oaladian land. And the villages they were destroying were not necessarily those of the hostile Chickamauga, but were mostly of Cherokee who had opted to remain neutral. However the Swift company was perhaps more willing to fight the British. Given their background in the Regulator movement and their participation in the Battle of Alamance, it seems likely that some of them would fight. The cause of the Revolution and of the Regulators in the end was one. In a way the Revolution started at Alamance in 1771.

The militia muster roll in the *Grayson County: A History in Words and Pictures*, and Draper's Tory and Quaker list on the New River Notes web site do not match perfectly. There appear to be two slightly different lists, accounting for a change in the make-up of Flower Swift's militia company over time. The Draper list on New River Notes with the Tory label was not made in 1782 as none of the additional Quakers on it are on the 1782 tax list (while almost all the Quakers in the list in the Grayson history book are on the tax list). The so-called "Tory" list may have been taken from the Montgomery county archives by Draper and is now stored at the University of Wisconsin. On it, probably in Draper's hand-writing, are the **wor41;Gga,L,pe;ggoane** column **amia.44bAlaQhkver** the other. There is no date on the list and very little to identify what it is. The other list (#3) I have used is still archived in Christiansburg (the county seat of Montgomery county).

Examining the non-Quakers who are on the Draper list, but not on list "3" we find that the few whose genealogy can be traced come from Surry Co., NC (Timothy Spencer, Isaac Little, the Winfreys, Quaker Stephen Bond). Some of the other names are SE North Carolina Indian names and that the Croatan/Lumbee Indian genealogies and are not on the internet, although, again families with these names settled in Surly/Stokes Co., NC. Not one of these men appears on the 1782 Montgomery Co., VA tax list. My guess is that the Draper list dates from the time of the most intense fighting in the Piedmont about 1780-1781. The men on that list likely brought themselves and their families over the border to escape some of the fighting. Some may have returned to participate when General Campbell called for the Montgomery troops to join him in North Carolina (see appendix on participation of

southwest Virginia in the war), although the Timothy Spencer pension application does not support this view.

At least four (and maybe more) veterans of the Flower Swift militia applied for pensions (two of which I have not read): Timothy Spencer, Daniel McCoy, Morgan Morgan [list 1] and Henry Morgan (all non-Quakers). In addition, Charles Morgan (non-Quaker, Swift's Co.) received a Bounty Warrant Land for his service in 1790. From the two that I have read so far it appears they left home and fought with North Carolina units or fought with other units before joining Swift's company. Swift's company,

<http://www.newriversnotes.com/va/swift/swiftdraper.html>

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as such, appears to have been a home guard. There may be more applications that I do not know about, but most of these were not applied for until the 1830s when most of these men would have passed.

There are other Flower Swift militia lists (marked 1st and 2nd militia rolls on the New River web site and listed first in *Grayson County: A History in Words and Pictures*). By finding out when the men in these later rolls obtained property or were taxed, it appears that these lists date from after the Revolution (see later section on dating the lists). The rolls in this study are the Swift militia company rolls that I believe date from the Revolution

(1) Discussions of the Swift militia can be found on the Swift Genforum.

<http://www.genforum.com/swift>

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William Preston Letter, July 18, 1779

July 18th, 1779

Dear Sir:

I have just rec'd intelligence that a number of Troies have embodied themslee up New River in this county [Montgomery County, Virginia], that they took Prisoners Captains Cox, Osborn & Henderson, the former of whom made his escape. That they also took two men who were sent as spies and kept them..... Prisoners in which time the spies heard them say that they intended to take the Lead Mines & that thy had but 105 men there they made were five hundred strong....

Colo. Wm. Campbell with 48 men was at the Mines on Fryday...waiting untill he could be reinforced by the militia in that neighborhood who were then preparing to join him; and that the People on that Quarter were greatly alarmed.

This news was brought to me a few hours ago by Colo. Ingles whom I have ordered to draught several companies of Militia, which with those already on foot he is to take command as a Touchstone of his sincerity in the American cause, and March immediately against the Insurgents. He seemed willing to undertake the Business and promises the utmost Exertion in Quelling the Insurrection.

I am really apprehensive that they will be joined by numbers from this county, Washington & Carolina.... become formidable unless an immediate stop be put to their career. Should that be the case I shall be obliged to apply to you for your Friendly assistance. At present, however, I shall postone making any Demand until I have further Intelligence. All I would now beg of you is that you would be pleased to give the officers orders to hold their companies in readiness to turn out on short notice. That should matters take an unfavorable turn in our first attempt to repell those people, there may be no time lost in raising a proper number to chastise them as they deserve.

I have hopes that the Insurgents, on hearing that Colo. Ingles is to command the Montgomery Militia, will Disperse. Be that as it will, I shall immediately send you the first certain intelgence I can procure.

I am Dr. Sir, your most obed't serv't.

Wm Preston

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