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| **The Flower Swift Militia Company**  **Of Montgomery Co., Virginia 1779-1783**    **Reconstruction of a vanished community in today's Carroll and Grayson Counties.** | mhtml:file://C:\Users\Glenn\Documents\THE%20MASTER%20FOLDER%20FOR%20WEB%20SITE%20UP%20LOADS\Cox-and-Osborne-Revolutionary-War-Stories-and-Grayson-Co-VA.mht!http://www.newrivernotes.com/nrm.gif |
| **By** [James A. Quinn](mailto:rsajaq@erols.com) | [Return to New River Notes](http://www.newrivernotes.com/nrv.htm) |

**Introduction**

Following the Battle of Alamance, 1771 a group of intermarried families left the Piedmont of North Carolina and moved just across the Virginia border into virgin wilderness along Chestnut Creek and its tributaries. These families were mostly Quakers or disowned Quakers and many of the men had been active in the Regulator movement and participated in the Battle of Alamance. Amongst 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, 1776-1779, was a war against the Cherokee. This war was likely to have been unpopular in the upper New River community served by the Osborne, Cox, Baker and Swift militia companies. Quakers preferred to send peace emissaries to the Indians instead of troops -- such as [Thomas Beals](http://www.rootsweb.com/~genepool/bealthom.htm) (who lived in the Chestnut Creek community off and on 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, but the county commanders complained that they did so with no enthusiasm. In fact, it appears these companies mutinied 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 Cox and Osborne were freed unhurt and the mutiny was put down by militia troops that came from the north, led by Colonels Preston and Crockett. By the end of 1780 the Tories in 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 Tories who did not take the pardon fought a guerilla war and were killed in battle with local militias or hung by 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 form 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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