

REVEREND JOSEPH ALEXANDER, D.D.  
"The Gamaliel of the Upcountry"

Reverend Joseph Alexander was born in 1740, in New Munster, Cecil County, Maryland; the son of a blacksmith, Theophilus and Catherine Wallas Alexander. Theophilus is a brother of Hezekiah, John McKnitt, Ezekiel, Amos, Jemina and Josiah Alexander and is related to other members of the Alexander family who settled in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

Joseph attended Nottingham Academy located near Rising Sun, Maryland (then thought to be in Pennsylvania). On April 26, 1759 the headmaster of the school, Reverend Samuel Finley, wrote to Reverend Jacob Green, who was then President at Naussau Hall (later to be Princeton University); recommending that Joseph be accepted as a student: "I have but time to tell you, yt, the Bearer Thomas Ruston, one of my pupils, waits upon you for admission to College, & with him, I expect will also attend Joseph Alexander, his classmate. They have read the common (in-distinct) Latin, Greek Classicks used in my school, Longierius excepted, also Logic, Arithmetic, Geography, some Geometry, part of Ontology & natural Philosophy in a more \_\_\_\_\_ manner, as far as opticks in Martin's Order. They have both behaved themselves regularly and agreeably, their geniuses not mean, nor their inclination to Study languid: yet I suppose they will appear somewhat rusted in the Classicks, as they have not been the object of their attention for some time. They aim to enter no higher than the present junior class, into which I doubt not they will be readily admitted upon Examination. I know not but another will soon enter the class with them, by name Benjamin Rush. But as yet I know not his parents intention. I most

sincerely wish you, Dear Sir, Success & Comfort in your present arduous Employ & am affectionately,

Yours & c  
S. Finley

Alexander was graduated from that College in 1760. The illustrious Reverend Samuel Davies (Davis), A.M., delivered the Valedictory Address in Nassau Hall on September 21, 1760, "Sunday before the Commencement". Others of the graduating class was: Samuel Blair, Enoch Green, Alex. Ruston, Enox Shelsey (?), John Thomas(?), Benjamin Rushe, Johnathan Smith, James Thompson, and Josiah Thatcher(?).

After graduation, Joseph Alexander was duly licensed by the Hanover Presbytery and sojourned in the area of Charlotte County, Virginia; coming to the South Carolina upcountry in 1767. He ✓ came to Fairforest Church in Union District and preached to the settlers along Fairforest Creek. The Church then consisted of about eight families who had come from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He must have been warmly received by their frontier Presbyterians, for even though he was only a licentiate he is ✓ still considered the father and guardian of that church.

Reverend Alexander married Esther Davis, the daughter of Samuel Davis, on November 12, 1767 in Charlotte County, Virginia. Her father, who had signed the marriage bond, later became a supporter of the American forces during the Revolutionary War by supplying materials to the army. Through the research of Mr. Elmer Parker of Columbia, South Carolina, we learn that Alexander's father-in-law was not the Reverend Samuel Davies who became the President of Naussau Hall, as has been widely believed among the local people. This error has been widely propagated since the last century. Esther's father died in Mecklenburg

County, North Carolina in 1815. His will, now lost, was contested by his grandchildren, the children of his "only child, Esther deceased". Esther Davis Alexander preceded her father in death by twelve years, having died in 1803.

The children of Joseph and Esther Davis Alexander were: Martha "Patsy" Alexander (1768-1894, married Edward Byers), Margaret Alexander (married John Thomas McJunkin), Samuel Davis Alexander (1771-1855, married Hannah Smith), Judith Alexander (married Hugh Bankhead), Edith A. Alexander (b. 1774, married Rev. R.B. Walker), Ann Alexander (born 1777, married 1. David Garrison, 2. James Garrison), George Baldwin Alexander (b. 1780, married Ann Jane McJunkin), Esther Davis Alexander (married John King), and Sarah Alexander (married 1. Major Jacob Barnet, 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Evans). Reverend Saye, in his journal, noted that it was the knowledge of the community that some of Reverend Alexander's children were taken to hard liquor.

On October 11, 1767, Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church called Joseph Alexander as their Pastor; he had preached to this congregation before. He was not stranger to this congregation as it consisted of many of his uncles, cousins and their families. He was dismissed from the Hanover Presbytery and was ordained at Buffalo the 4th of March in 1768 by the Presbytery of Newcastle; in May he was installed at Sugar Creek. Reverend Henry Patillo presided at the ordination. David Caldwell, who later established the Log College in Greensboro, North Carolina, was also ordained at the same time. Caldwell married into the illustrious Craighead family of North Carolina. The same year of Alexander's ordination, he inherited his father's lands in North Carolina.

The first school of definite record established by Alexander was at Sugar Creek where he was assisted by Joel Benedict. A local historian said that Alexander was "...a fine scholar...and taught

a classical school of high excellence and usefulness". In 1771, the General Assembly of North Carolina granted a charter to Queen's College in Charlotte to establish a college where young men could further their education. In his letter to England, Governor Tryon wrote, "Though the President is to be of the established Church and licensed by the Governor, the Fellows, Trustees, and Tutors I apprehend will be Presbyterian, the college being promoted by a respectable settlement of that persuasion..." On April 22, 1772, the King declared the act null and void! Although he would not grant the charter to the college, it continued to flourish, and in 1777, during the Revolution, the name of the college was changed to "Liberty Hall Academy". At that time, four of it's original trustees were still on the board--one of which was Reverend Alexander. On the same day that the King nullified the establishment of Queen's College, he further insulted the colonists by disallowing another hotly contested act passed by the Assembly. This act would have permitted Presbyterian ministers to "solemnize the rites of marriage, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, by publication of their religious assemblies where the parties are best known, and by license, without any tax for fees to the clergy of the Establishment."

By the time Reverend Alexander came to the Sugar Creek pulpit, trouble was mounting over taxes, land rents, lack of currency and court justice. These finally culminated in the "Battle of Alamance" on May 16, 1771. Dissatisfied citizens had founded "The Regulation" in an attempt to straighten out the affairs of the colony. Captain William Alexander, kinsman of Joseph, a member of Sugar Creek Church and one of the "Regulators", was involved in the battle with the Governor's forces. Governor Tryon had ordered powder and other munitions from Charlestown to Alamance by way of Charlotte and Salisbury; when the Rocky River community heard of this, Captain Alexander and his friends rode out to waylay the wagon. To conceal their identity, they blacked

their faces and overtook the wagon at Concord and with a tremendous explosion destroyed the supplies. Captain Alexander was thereafter called "Black Billy".

Sugar Creek's records show that Reverend Alexander left their pulpit about 1772; supposedly two years later, he accepted a call from Bullock's Creek to be their first Pastor. We have no knowledge of his whereabouts for these two years, or if there really was a lapse. It is of interest to note that tradition says that Reverend Alexander preached part-time to the people of Duncan ✓  
Creek in Laurens County from 1770 to 1780. This leads us to believe he left Sugar Creek two years earlier than reported and served as a supply pastor for various churches in the Ninety-Six District. A Spartanburg county history says that Alexander even ✓  
established Nazareth Church in 1765!

Reverend Alexander had planned to settle near Fairforest in Union County; but for some reason he changed his plans. In 1774, he ✓  
purchased three-hundred acres on Broad River from the Robert Wood estate and made his home in the forests of Bullock's Creek near the road that lead Hamilton's Ford on Broad River (later Pinckneyville Ferry). In 1784, Alexander purchased 150 acres on ✓  
the Broad River from the Archibald Scott estate and in 1785, 36 acres from the Zachariah Bell estate. Lastly, in 1787, he purchased 136 acres on the river from John Feemster. All of ✓  
this land would have been located South of the land granted to the Bullock's Creek Congregation in 1785. The 1790 census shows Mr. Alexander to be the master of ten slaves--second only to ✓  
Colonel William Bratton who held twelve.

The exact location of the Alexander home is difficult to pin ✓  
point; but Dr. Maurice Moore, in his Reminiscences of Yorkville, says that in 1860, the Alexander home was on the Jackie Smarr Place--this is the same piece of land later to be known as the Elias Inman Place which is located west of Lockhart Road at

Bullock's Creek on Dry Branch. Until 1985, a log cabin stood in that area which could easily have been built prior to the Revolution. During a smallpox epidemic in March of 1781, the home served as a hospital; making Alexander's home the first clinic of the up-country. Here inoculations were received by the people of the area, predating the famous 1796 inoculations of William Jenner of England by fifteen years. Those that recovered from this epidemic so greatly exceeded expectations that the home was called "Lazarette", in reference to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

✓ Reverend R. Y. Russell, in his sketch of Reverend Alexander, recorded how capable he was in carrying out his pastoral duties. ✓ He wrote: "He found himself surrounded with a moral waste stretching in all directions...with here and there a cabin of a pious Pennsylvanian or a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian...he was careful to employ a portion of his time in fostering the growth of family-religion by going from house to house throughout his congregations, conversing with heads of families, instructing the youth and children of the household, and uniting with them in prayer for Divine blessing. He was accustomed at stated periods to conduct catechetical examinations, held on his own appointment in the several quarters of his congregations, at which both old and young were strictly enquired at concerning their knowledge of Divine truth, and their experience and progress in practical religion...the several churches in charge of the beloved minister became vigorous and flourishing branches of the 'True Vine', clothed in beautiful foliage, and laden with the fruits of righteousness."

A second congregation was located four miles South of the town of ✓ Union in the Brown's Creek area what was then part of Ninety-Six District. This church originated in brush harbors and in 1765, the Christians of the area built a log meeting house. The meeting house was called "Union Church" because Presbyterians,

Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists used the building for worship. The church gave it's name to the town that sprung up later. Reverend Alexander also served as part-time pastor for Nazareth in Spartanburg District. The first road from Nazareth to Hamilton's Ford was opened by Alexander's congregation as a bridle path from him to travel from Bullock's Creek to Nazareth.

Shortly after his arrival at Bullock's Creek, Alexander established another church on the West side of Broad River, called Thickety Creek--this congregation later came to be known as Salem. It is here that Reverend William Tenent II of Charleston met Alexander. Tenent was the son of Gilbert Tenent and the grandson of Reverend William Tenent who fanned revival fires among the New Jersey Presbyterians during the Great Awakening of the 1770's. William Tenent II was born in New Jersey and was educated at the Log College (Princeton) which had been founded by his grandfather and later became pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Charleston in 1772. He died at the age of thirty-seven. Reverend Tenent was a member of the provincial Congress of South Carolina and was commissioned by the Council of Safety to go into the up-country and "...explain to the people at large the nature of the disputes between Great Britain and the American Colonies". He found little sympathy for a war with Great Britain which lead to the State taking a drastic step in an attempt to coerce the up-country into resistance. This all but lead to a bloody battle between the people and the government of South Carolina.

Tenent's journal records his visit to Thickety Creek: "...rode thirteen miles, crossed Broad River at Smith's Ford to a meeting house of Mr. Alexander's on Thickety Creek where I found him preaching to a crowd of people assembled to meet me. When he had done, I mounted the pulpit and spoke near two hours". The lack of roads made traveling difficult and in one of Tenent's letters he wrote, "I have foresook my chaise and ride on horseback from

day to day, meeting with the people".

When he mounted this back-country pulpit, he was well prepared to preach against the tyranny of the British throne. He, like all Presbyterian ministers, was considered by the Crown to be a ring leader in the Revolution. Reverend Russell described the peril of the Pastor, "His unfaltering and spirited hostility to British tyranny and oppression, and to Tory butchery, arson and plunder, procured for him a prominence that frequently periled his property, his person, and the regular exercise of his professional functions... so fierce and threatening was the storm that raged around the partisan preacher, and so deep was his hold upon the affections of his people that the few man and lads of Bullock's Creek not out at the time in the public service, habitually repaired to church on the Sabbath morning with their rifles in their hands, and, stationing themselves around what the next generation called 'The Old Log Meeting House', guarded the minister and the worshipping congregation while he preached the Gospel to them". At one point in the war, Alexander had to flee his home and seek refuge in other quarters. It was said that if the British could have caught him they would have roasted him alive!

In 1787, Reverend Alexander established his famous academy near his home, a little over a mile southwest of the church. This academy was the first classical school of the South Carolina up-country. Alexander's school was not only instrumental in preparing clergymen for the local Presbyterian church, but physicians, jurists and statesmen as well; Governor Johnson of Union District was one of his more distinguished pupils.

In 1797, a College of Pinckneyville was chartered and given the noble name, "Alexandria College" in honor of Reverend Alexander. The trustees were: Joseph Alyard, James Templeton, John Simpson, Francis Cummins, Robert McCulloch, James White Simpson, John



Brown, Robert Wilson, Abraham Nott, Andrew Love, Alexander Moore, Thomas Brandon, William Bratton and Samuel Dunlap. Regrettably, this institution was never established.

By the 1790's Reverend Alexander was curtailing his traveling and giving his charges over to younger ministers. On June 24, 1801, he requested the Presbytery to give him release of his pastorate at Bullock's Creek. The reasons for his request were because of the reduction in members, a small number of communicants, the people's diminished interest in public worship and business of the church, the inattention to the collections and the lost of interest in his ministry. Although he placed the blame on the congregation, they too had a few complaints against him. By this time, he was an aged man and was extremely feeble in body. His mind had somewhat weakened and his speech was so bad from weakness and loss of teeth that it was difficult for the congregation to understand him. The last mental picture we have of the old Revolutionary is one of a small, toothless and feeble old man who walks with a limp and wears a white, linen skull cap to cover his aged head--no long the fearless and firey preacher of the past.

In 1807, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the College of South Carolina; two years later Dr. Alexander died on July 30, 1809, at the age of seventy-four. His wife had preceded him in death six years earlier. They are buried in the Bullock's Creek Cemetery, near to the then existing meeting house. On the 24th of August, 1809, the following notice appeared in The Raleigh Register: "On the 29th ult in York District, South Carolina the Reverend Joseph Alexander, DD, minister of the Presbyterian Church, approaching to 80 years of age, died. He was a native of Pennsylvania, graduated at Princeton College in 1760. He came to Carolina soon after the Peace of 1763, and was eminently instrumental in planting Churches both in North and South Carolina, at the early period of the settlement of the back

country, when both states were in very destitute condition with respect to fathers of learning in the Western Woods of Carolina".

On October 16, 1890, the congregation erected a monument at his grave; the inscription reads: "Erected October 16, 1890 by a grateful people, who desire to perpetuate the memory of this fearless patriot, distinguished teacher and faithful minister of Christ.