

A Revolutionary Hero gone!

Died, at his residence in Lincoln county, on the 12th ult., Major General JOSEPH GRAHAM, aged 77 years...

He enlisted in the army of the United States in the month of May, 1778, at the age of nineteen years... he...was ploughing in her field when he received intelligence of the surrender of Charleston, and that the... British... were within 40 miles of Charlotte... he resolved at once to leave his plough and enter the army...

The British Army entered Charlotte the 26th of September, 1780. Gen. Graham was assigned the command of those Troops which sustained the retreat of Gen. Davie, and opposed Tarlton's Cavalry and a Regiment of Infantry for 4 miles on the road leading to Salisbury. After a heavy and well directed fire upon the British from the Courthouse to the Gum Tree, Gen. Graham retreated with the men under his command and...again attacked their advancing column of infantry. There his life was providentially preserved from the bursting of a gun, fired by the soldier who stood at his side, and whose arm was wounded. After again retreating, he formed on the hill above where Sugar Creek Church now stands... Gen. Graham was cut down and severely wounded. He received nine wounds; six with the sabre and three with lead. His life was again narrowly and mercifully preserved by a large stock buckle which broke the violence of a stroke, which to human view, must otherwise have proved fatal. He received four deep gashes of the sabre over his head and one in his side, and three balls were removed from his body. After being much exhausted by loss of blood he reached the house of Mrs. Susannah Alexander, who yet lives near the same place, where he was kindly nursed and watched during the night, and his wounds dressed as well as circumstances would permit. The next day he reached his mother's, where Maj. Bostwick now lives. From that he was taken to the hospital, and was two months recovering... As soon as he recovered from his wounds, he again entered the service of his country...

they will hear of you from the inhabitants if I move from this place you will find my trail going up the west side of this Creek perhaps not before 10 o'clock to morrow. There was some 4 or 5 volunteers went with the party besides those ordered among others I perfectly recollect Major Macajah Lewis (~~Lewis~~ a Continental officer (who was killed a few days after at Dickey) and his brother Joel ~~but~~ tho of superior Rank neither he nor any other assumed any Command over the detachment or the officer who had received the Genl orders. The party set out between sun down and dark in proceeding some distance down the road after it was fully dark met Bob Fossitt (usually called mad Bob) and another person direct from Hillsboro &c. he gave us the first notice of the Picket at ~~that~~ ^{supposed they were about 30 W} mile and General Pickens certainly knew nothing of it when he detached us - Fossitt first thought we were a party of the British we compelled him to be our pilot if he is yet living would be leave to refer you to him for subsequent events the reason I remember Joel Lewis so distinctly that on Fossitt refusing to go with us when he discovered our character he ~~beat him~~ ^{shook him} with his sabre. I had to protect him as we needed ~~him~~ ^{his services} as a pilot -

and in the morning when we approached the picket when the sentry fired a sergeant & file of men coming to his support Simmons & men dismounting & taking their horses after the sergeant & party had fired at the noise (for they could not see us) Major Macajah Lewis and myself and 5 or 6 others ~~passed~~ ^{passed} into the road leading to wards Kebarer and ~~made a point~~ ^{changed down the road} after the sergeant & party who ran untill ^{we} came in sight of the picket when Maj Lewis suggested to me the advantage the Riflemen might have by passing to the right under cover of the hill untill they were marked by the Smiths Shop & stable we immediately returned gave Simmons the instructions & the Cavalry moved off to the left through an old field ^{some buildings} above which ~~some buildings~~ ^{some buildings} have since ^{been} erected ~~some buildings~~ in order to attract the attention & fire of the picket untill the Riflemen had gained their position ~~the plan succeeded as we expected~~ ^{from their fire} the distance being so great the Cavalry recd no damage as soon as the Riflemen fired the Cavalry charged &c &c.

Now Sir I have been thus particular going into the details 20 as I find Lee and Johnston are at issue relatives to several circumstances at this Period Lee in his Memoirs has stated

August 25 1827 Lincoln N.C.

Dear sir

Some years past I forwarded you some sketches of the events in the Revolutionary war in the year 1780-81... in order to assist you in the contemplated History of No. Carolina ---

- I have since read Lees campaign of 1781 (his studies on Judge Johnston, History of the Life of Genl Green &c) and discover several errors...

I think I stated to you that after we were defeated at Cowans ford on the Catawba on the 1st Febr. 1781 & our Genl. Wm L Davidson killed Foulton pursued... 6 or 7 miles and defeated the Militia who had retreated from Beaties ford Genl. Pickens was there and perhaps 10 or a dozen South Carolina Refugees he was vested with no command over them... the North Carolinians abated in the Rear of the British Army 6 or 700 had none but field officers... the officers around about the 8th or 9th of Febr. to give Genl. Andrew Pickens the Command & James Jackson (afterwards member of Congress & Governor of Georgia) to be Brigade Major – We moved after the enemy in 2 or 3 detachments... until we arrived near Guilford Court House... some place near this received the first inteligence of the Enemys march to Hilsboro then continued our march with caution in that direction arrived in the evening at a mill on Buck or Stony Creek said to be 10 or 15 miles from Hilsboro shortly after encampment the Brigade Major gave orders to Captn Graham Simmons to have in readiness 20 dragoons of the Comp. of the former & 20 Mounted Riflemen of the company of the latter who when they were reported in readiness the Genl. himself came & gave those 2 officers orders as follows Viz “You will proceed down the road towards Hillsboro with the greatest caution & circumspection if you can find any detachment of the Enemy out inferior to your group attack them if you discover a larger party beyond supporting distance of their main army and you can keep yourself concealed give me notice and I will come or send an additional force to assist you but if you find you are discovered by a larger party of the Enemy immediately return to this place at any rate soon in the morning they will hear of you... I moved from this place you will find my trail going up the west side of this Creek perhaps not before 10 oclock tomorrow” There was some 4 or 5 volunteers went with the party besides those ordered among others I presently recolect Major Macijah Lewis (a Continental officer (who was killed a few days after at Dickeys) and his brother Joel...

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at Harts Mill and supposed they were about 30 W. determined to attack them at light in the morning General Pickens certainly knew nothing of it when he detached us – Fosset first thought we were a party of the British we compelled him to be our pilot... I remember Joel Lewis so distinctly that on Fosset referring to go with us when he discovered our character he stroked him with his sabre I had to protect him as we needed his services as a pilot –

and in the morning when we approached the picket when the sentry fired a sergeant & file of men coming to his support Simmons & men dismounting & hitching their Horses after the sergeant & party had fired at the noises (for they could not see us) Major Micajah Lewis and myself and 5 or 6 others pushed into the road leading towards Mebanes and charged down the road after the sergeant & party who ran until we came in sight of the picket when Major Lewis suggested to me the advantage the Riflemen might have by passing to the right under cover of the Hill until they were masked by the Smiths shop & stable we immediately returned gave Simmons the instructions & the Cavalry moved off to the left through an old field above where some buildings have since been erected in order to attract their attention & fire of the picket until the Riflemen had gained their position the plan succeeded as we expected...

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Joseph Graham



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Graham, Joseph

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Joseph Graham, Revolutionary soldier, politician, and iron entrepreneur, was born in Chester County, Pa. James Graham, his father, was Scot-Irish and had settled in Berks County, Pa., in 1733. His mother, Mary McConnell Barber Graham, also of Scot-Irish descent, was James Graham's second wife. Their union produced five children; Joseph Graham was the youngest son but had two younger sisters. Widowed in 1763, Mary Barber Graham moved her family through Charleston to the Carolina backcountry, locating permanently in Mecklenburg County, N.C. Joseph Graham was educated at Charlotte's Queen's Museum (later Liberty Hall Academy), where he proved himself a good scholar of "mannerly bearing." He was in Charlotte when the patriots of that town adopted the Mecklenburg Resolves on 31 May 1775. The events of May made a lasting impression on the young scholar. Throughout his long life, Graham attested to the revolutionary intent of his Mecklenburg neighbors.

Perhaps it was the inspiration of this patriotic moment or perhaps his Scot-Irish temperament, but whatever the motivation young Graham was an eager participant in the struggle against British tyranny. Serving periodically from 1778 to 1781 as a volunteer, Graham, aged eighteen to twenty-one years, fought in fifteen minor engagements in North Carolina and South Carolina, while rising in rank from private to major. His most memorable service was commanding the rear guard action against Tarleton's cavalry, which enabled General William R. Davie to evade Cornwallis's troops after the British capture of Charlotte...

Wounded nine times, six by saber and three by lead, the bleeding and exhausted Graham was left on the field for dead; however, he survived and, after two months' recuperation, became major of a company of dragoons that engaged Tories and British regulars in the Cape Fear region. Graham demonstrated capacity as a soldier and impressed those who knew him with his youthful determination and devotion to duty.

After the American Revolution, Graham farmed near the Catawba River and held several public offices of varying importance. He was sheriff of Mecklenburg County (1784–85) and for a time served as government commissioner in land transactions. As a delegate to the 1788 Hillsborough convention to discuss the federal constitution, he voted with the majority against ratification. Later, in the Convention of 1789, he supported adoption of the Constitution. He took no part in the debates in either convention. From 1788 to 1793 Graham represented his county in the North Carolina Senate...

There he manifested an interest in education—he served on the first board of trustees for The University of North Carolina—and in internal improvements.

Graham's political horizons seemed unlimited; however, his 1787 marriage to Isabella Davidson, a refined daughter of Revolutionary hero John Davidson, was destined to divert him to more remunerative endeavors. By the early 1790s Davidson, a practical blacksmith who became a wealthy planter and ironmonger, had convinced Graham and another son-in-law, Alexander Brevard, that their future lay in Lincoln County's nascent iron industry. In October 1791 Graham purchased twenty-eight acres, mostly sand and water, on the Lincoln County side of the Catawba. Soon afterwards the three kinsmen—Davidson, Brevard, and Graham—bought an interest in a productive ore bank from Peter Forney. With Forney they formed the Iron Company. Other land was obtained in 1792, and Graham built Vesuvius Furnace on Anderson Creek in east Lincoln County. A suitable residence was constructed on a nearby bluff. There Graham settled his growing family.

These early iron manufacturers were essentially planters with an outside interest, and they learned the techniques of forge and furnace through experimentation. Fortunately the demand for iron products increased apace with the growing population of the western Carolinas. In 1795, Brevard built Mount Tirzah Forge and established his family about three miles from Vesuvius...

In the same year the Iron Company was dissolved, with Peter Forney retaining control of the ore bank. Graham, Davidson, and Brevard continued their partnership under the name of Joseph Graham and Company. Industry and good management increased their holdings. In 1804, when Davidson sold his interests to his sons-in-law, the company's assets were valued at \$28,510. Ten years later when Brevard and Graham amicably ended their partnership, both were wealthy men. Their products were marketed throughout the region and down the Catawba into South Carolina. During the War of 1812 Graham alone sold the U.S. government 30,000 pounds of shots, shells, and cannon balls of various sizes, making delivery anywhere by wagon.

The War of 1812, which also resulted in an uprising among the Creeks, touched Graham more directly. Long interested in military affairs, he was appointed brigadier general of a brigade of North Carolina and South Carolina militiamen in 1814. Although the brigade arrived after Andrew Jackson's victory over the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend, General Graham was considered an efficient officer...

Major General Thomas Pinckney, a South Carolinian who commanded the Sixth Military District, characterized him as having "conducted his Brigade with judgment and propriety" and noted "that he and the officers and men under his command have displayed much zeal, patriotism and attention to discipline." For many years after this renewed military service, Graham was major general of the Fifth Division, North Carolina Militia.

Active in public and business affairs until late in life, Graham was a councillor of state in 1814, a trustee of Lincolnton's Pleasant Retreat Academy, a justice of the peace for nearly forty years, and a ruling elder of the Unity Presbyterian Church. After 1820 he assisted Archibald D. Murphey, who hoped to prepare a state history, by writing a series of remarkably accurate accounts of military activities in western North Carolina and South Carolina. His vivid account, based on memory, of the events of May 1775 proved to be the principal authority for the disputed Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Although Murphey never completed his history, many of the Graham manuscripts eventually were included in the archives of North Carolina...