

## **Wassamasaw and the Revolutionary War ~**

In the late 1680's, English planters in Barbadoes were discouraged over conditions there and many of them left and came to Carolina. In Barbadoes, a colonial social system had already been established, with a plantation life developed upon the basis of Negro slavery. These planters brought with them and gave to Carolina the Barbadian social customs, the parish electoral system, and the slave system. Many Barbadians settled within the present bounds of Berkeley County, some of them being the "Goose Creek men" of whom the Lords Proprietors warned Colonel Philip Ludwell when he became governor of the province. A few of these people lived at Wassamasaw, the name given to the area adjacent to and east of Ashley River. Several French families also settled at Wassamasaw when they arrived in Carolina, but they soon left there and went to the Santee River section.

Under the Proprietary Government, the people in Carolina made considerable material progress in spite of political turmoil, religious antagonisms, Indian uprisings, and other hardships, but "few countries at any time exhibiting so striking an instance of public and private prosperity as did South Carolina between the years 1725 and 1775," says historian McCrady. To cultivate the land, the mother country furnished them laborers on credit. Each person had entire liberty to manage his affairs for his own profit and advantage, and having no tithes, and very minimal taxes to pay, reaped almost the entire fruits of his industry (especially when it came to naval stores, hogs and cattle, and growing corn). Frugal planters, every three or four years, doubled their capital, and their progress towards independence was advancing rapidly.

Early settlers in Berkeley County established themselves near navigable streams, which they used for transportation purposes. But, as lands further out and away from the rivers were becoming more and more occupied, roads became necessary.

The highway from Charleston northward through "The Neck" (between Cooper and Ashley rivers) was known as "The Broad Path." About five miles north of town, this "Broad Path" divided, one continuing northward toward Fair Lawn Seignior, and the other turned northwesterly to the town of Dorchester, near the head of Ashley River. Just beyond Goose Creek, another road branched off northwestwardly through Wassamasaw Swamp toward Orangeburg, and was called the Wassamasaw Road. This road became part of the "mountain to the sea" highway, which became known as the "State Road."

Skipping ahead and fast forwarding, the conduct of South Carolina Governor Boone had aroused considerable resentment against the English Government. Local leaders were taking every opportunity to promote a spirit of rebellion. The Stamp Act was passed in 1764 and caused further arousal of the people. Then it was repealed, but the damage was accumulating. Meetings were held, Circular letters sent out concerning the grave situation arising from the acts of the English Parliament affecting several colonies in America. States became divided, peoples thoughts divided them, and families as well, not just communities. Opposition and separation spread. Soon war became imminent, the American Revolution was underway.

A few of our patriots highlighted today are from Berkeley County, and Wassamasaw most especially. Lieutenant Richard Singleton was from St. James Goose Creek. His home was at Wassamasaw, where he entered the American service as a lieutenant in the First Regiment, commanded by Colonel Gadsden.

And another, Major Robert Thornley of St. James Goose Creek, who lived at Wassamasaw. Thornley was a representative in the 1792-93 legislature. He died May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1805, and of him the City Gazette states, "he was an old, respected, and useful citizen of this State; he served as an officer in the militia, from the beginning of the Revolutionary War to its termination, and was often engaged in the most trying and dangerous services, having been one of those who were most constantly and actively employed by General Marion, in opposing the British troops and Tories, when this State was in its most reduced situation under their power. At the time of his death, he was Senator for the parish of St. James Goose Creek."

Another patriot was Captain James Stevenson, of St. James Goose Creek, who also lived at Wassamasaw. Also, Captain John Wright, St. James Goose Creek, who lived at Wassamasaw, was a member of the Provincial Congress in 1775. He was killed at the Quarter House on Sunday, July 15, 1787. General Sumter wrote of him, ". . . in him we have lost a brave Intrepid Officer, a good Soldier and a Staunch Friend."

Other American Revolution patriots from Wassamasaw were John Brown and John Deas (*that we have no further information about. Please advise if you have information, and if you have other patriot names/information*). The above history resource was *Historic Berkeley County 1671-1900, by Maxwell Clayton Orvin*.

**Wassamasaw Tribal Ties** ~ When it comes to the Wassamasaw tribe, most historical records available are of the white progenitors who married and had

children with our native progenitors, and most of the history pertaining to the Revolutionary War comes from these records. The tribal community was very friendly with the colonists in supporting them in the war efforts against the British. Most native tribes who supported the British during the war did so in order to stop the settler's encroachment on their ancestral lands (which the British had promised to do). Since we were a small group, already living peacefully in a settlement community outside our ancestral lands, we didn't have any reason to support the British. Unfortunately, there are no historical documents, from the native side, showing specifics. There are, however, a few pertaining to white ancestors who married into the community.

One example is John R. Dangerfield, who married Hannah Edings, the daughter of Indian Mary of Edisto Island. Together they had four sons, who had to go to court to prove they were of native descent to prevent having to pay capitalization taxes.

John R. Dangerfield's father was Captain William Dangerfield (1758-1826), from Fredericksburg, Va., who served in the Revolutionary War. It is interesting to consider whether or not Dangerfield ever thought he would be the grandfather of children with native bloodlines.

His obituary was found in *The National Daily Intelligencer* of Washington, DC, on July 2, 1826, as well as a more detailed account, found locally in *The Southern Patriot* of Charleston, SC, on Friday afternoon, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1826, giving details about him that otherwise may never have become known. The obituary goes like this:

"Died, at the Plantation of Mr. Alexander Broughton, St. Johns, Berkeley, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, WILLIAM DANGERFIELD, in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of his age. For the last fifteen years, Mr. Dangerfield has had the management of planting interests upon, and in the neighborhood of the place where he died. The satisfaction given to his employers is the best testimonial of his character for skill and integrity; but however excellent these qualities in a department, though not exalted, certainly important, they are not all that belong to the character of the deceased.

When a poor man, or one of lowly walking life dies, his good deeds are peculiarly the property of his descendants and his country, especially whereas in the present instance, they consist in acts of patriotic devotion. Mr. Dangerfield was a native of Fredericksburg, Va. At the commencement of the American Revolution, he joined the Army, and remained faithful to his station until the recognition of

American Independence. He was in the battles of White Plains, Germantown, Monmouth, Stony Point, Camden, Cowpens, Guilford, Eutaw Springs, and Yorktown; places consecrated in the annals of American freedom.

“When our country became involved in her second War, the spirit of patriotism did not slumber in the deceased. Though an old soldier, he was still a soldier, and at the head of a troop of Horse, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Regt. Of Cavalry, accompanied the drafted Militia in 1813, in defence of our seaboard. He was afterwards promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of the same regiment, which commission he held, till old age compelled him to relinquish it.

“How vain and worthless are the pomp and pageantry of pride and birth, when contrasted with the simple history of a true patriot and an honest man.”

The gravesite of one of William’s sons, John R. Dangerfield, and his wife, Hannah Edings, is located off Whitesville Road.

*“Wassamasaw Tribal Ties” history by Lisa M. Collins, Wassamasaw Tribal Administrator*