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Isaac Burleson – Revolutionary War Soldier

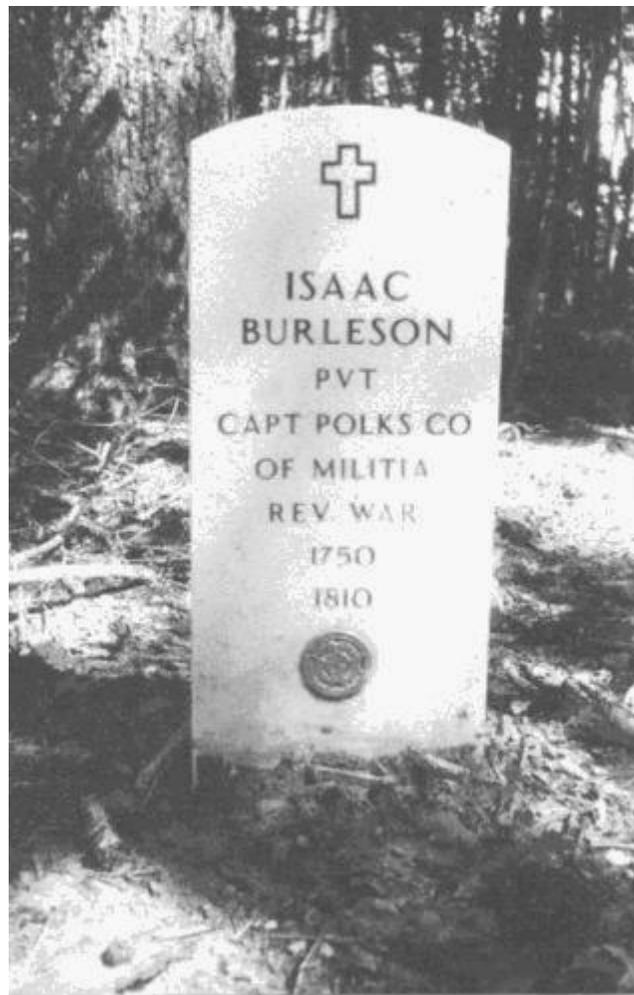
by John Hoyle Burleson

In the beginning of 1776 North Carolina had two major problems. First, the Cherokees to the west of the Blue Ridge and in the Smokey Mountains were on the warpath again. They were raiding the western frontier of Tryon, Mecklenburg and Rowan Counties. Secondly, the British were sending a fleet to Wilmington, North Carolina to rendezvous with the Scottish Highlanders who lived in Cumberland County and the Cross Creek area. They planned to put down the rebellion that had started in Mecklenburg.

In February 1776, General Griffith Rutherford commanded the Salisbury Military District. This included all the state of North Carolina west of the Yadkin River. He called for the militias to neutralize the Scottish Highlanders.

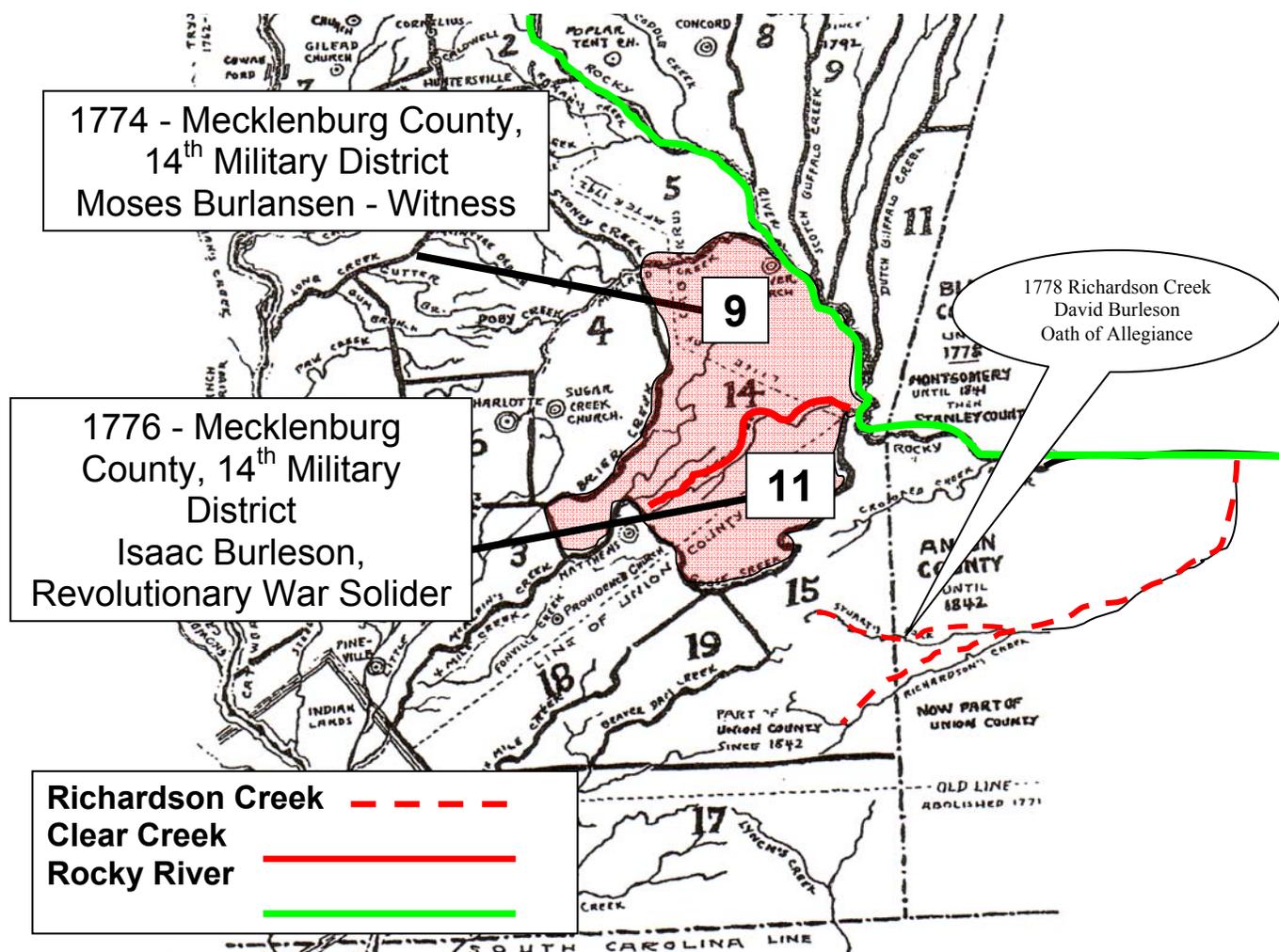
Captain Charles Polk called for his Clear Creek Militia Company of Mecklenburg County. On the roster was Isaac Burlison. This is the first document that I have for Isaac and we can trace him by documents through 1810. He is the founder of all the Stanly County Burleson Family. During the War the roster also included three signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775. John Foard, John McGinty, Charles Alexander, and James Jack who delivered the declaration to the North Carolina representatives to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Additional Clear Creek Militia members included: Thomas Shelby who was a brother of Isaac Shelby of Kings Mountain fame and first governor of Kentucky and a friend of Daniel Boone; John Pusser who's descendants would settle in McNairy County, Tennessee. One became well known for enforcing the law with a big stick. His name was Buford Pusser. Tumus Hood was the ancestor of General John Bell Hood of the Civil



War. The sons of James Jack served in the Texas independence struggle. Patrick Jack was imprisoned for his rebellion at Anahuac and after the war became a Supreme Court judge of the Texas Republic. William was a Private at San Jacinto, later served as Representative and Senator of the Republic. He was also the Secretary of State under President Burnet. Third son, James W. Jack, did not go to Texas but his only son James III did. He was one of Col. Fannin's men that were massacred going to the relief of the Alamo.

Another name on the roster is John Hunt, the founder of Huntsville, Alabama. Huntsville historians proudly point to John Hunt's Revolutionary War service under Captain Charles Polk. Everyone wanted to be part of this distinguished unit, but the historians have made a mistake. Hunt's name is on the paper not as one of the 39-militia men in 1776, but Hunt was the Administrative Officer who certified the company pay vouchers in 1779. While in Huntsville John Hunt was a contemporary of John Burleson,



son of Aaron and Rachel Hendrick Burleson. He was also the grandfather of John Hunt Morgan, the Confederate General.

Isaac served 26 days and was paid 2 pounds. and 12 shillings .The Cross Creek expedition climaxed with the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. It was the first complete victory for the Americans in the North or South. The army of Loyalist militia was composed of well-armed Scottish Highlanders; many of them were veterans of the Continental Wars. They were 1500 strong and had marched within 40 miles of the coast when a Patriot army under Governor Caswell blocked the path. The frontier militia that Isaac was a part of chased the Highlanders into the trap. The fight lasted only an hour. The Highlander's losses were 40 killed and 850 surrendered. Patriot losses were one killed. After the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on 28th February 1776, the Patriots continued to Wilmington to oppose the British fleet that was to land troops and rendezvous with the Highlanders. Of course the Highlanders never came. The Frontier Army took possession of Fort Johnston on the Cape Fear River that protected the Port of Wilmington. 86 years later in 1862 Isaac's great grandson, Absalom Burlison, would stand on the same rampart of Fort Johnston that Isaac stood on and defend his new country from another foreign invader in the War of Northern Aggression.

The Mecklenburg militia was back home in March but before the end of the month Captain Charles Polk had raised most of his company again and added a few others. But this time as a company of horse not a company of foot. The mission was to destroy the Cherokee threat to the counties of Tryon, Rowan and Mecklenburg. The expedition was well documented and successful. The Cherokee were defeated and their towns burned all the way to Lookout Mountain. The Company served 53 days from March to June 1776, but Isaac does not appear on this roster.

I don't know why Isaac was not enlisted. Each soldier had to provide his own clothes, arms and horse. Isaac was a young man; maybe he did not own a horse. Another reason could be he had family (David and Moses) that had married into Indian families! Whatever the reason, there were still British Troops to fight. Within days of the raising of Captain Polk's new company, we find on 16 April 1776, Isaac Burienson enlisted in the Fifth Regiment of the South Carolina Continental Army. This information is from the book *Roster of South Carolina Patriots* by Bobby Gilmer Moss, 1983. The source is "List of North Carolina and South Carolina Troops and officers and men of Continental Organizations raised from more than one state 1775-1783", Washington D. C. National Archive, M853, Roll 16.

South Carolina had previously raised the 1st and 2nd Regiments from Charlestown to defend Charlestown. The 3rd was a Mounted Ranger Regiment that operated in upstate South Carolina. Ezekiel Polk was a Captain of rangers in the "new acquisition", York County Turkey Creek area. Ezekiel was a brother of Captain Charles Polk, General Thomas Polk, Col. William Polk and grandfather of the future president, James Knox Polk.

By April 1776 South Carolina realized that the War would require a different type of soldier. As the 5th Regiment was being raised from upper South Carolina and the Waxhaw, Mecklenburg area of North Carolina, the first requirement would be that each new soldier would have to be an expert rifleman. This status had to be tested and certified by the Company Commander. Living on the Frontier and already a veteran of the Cross Creek Campaign, I'm sure Isaac had no trouble passing the test. Normal enlistment in the Continental Line was for 18 months or two years. Pension applications I have viewed of other veterans reflect this.

The 5th Regiment was commanded by Col. Isaac Huger and was sent to defend the area north of Charlestown. I don't know how long Isaac Burleson served, but the 5th Regiment was surrendered along with 5,000 others at the fall of Charlestown on May 12, 1780. The surviving soldiers were paroled and sent home.

To distinguish between my Isaac of Stanly County and the Isaac of Monroe Tennessee, the latter was born between 1765 and 1770 according to the 1800, 1810, 1830 and 1840 census records. These are the complete census for Isaac of Monroe, Tennessee. On 16 April, 1776 I'm sure the 5th Regiment would not enlist an expert rifle man that was between 6 and 11 years old.

There is also an Isaac Burson who had service in South Carolina as an express rider with no dates given who can be traced to a separate Burson family. They had an established history with the spelling "Burson" apparently had no connection to us.

Revolutionary War pensions were given out for different degrees of hardships up until 1834. Isaac did not live long enough to apply so we do not have a better record of his service. While researching the connection of Thomas Cutbertson and Rachel, the daughter of my Isaac Burleson, I found the pension application for Thomas's father, William, who applied in 1832 in Burke County, North Carolina. William lived in Eastern Mecklenburg County during the war. His brother Moses was also in Captain Polk's Company. William's application is very revealing.

The pension statement was submitted by a friend or lawyer acting in William's behalf and states, because of his "extreme old age (92) he cannot recollect dates or the officers under whom he served." "From the circumstance of his living in Mecklenburg County in North Carolina (the seat of war) living the whole of the revolution, he must have served often or been driven off...and there can be no doubt that he was on the side of the Whigs for all the old Whigs and Tories (alive) are known to this day," 25 October 1832.

The next documentation of Isaac that we have is the 1782 tax list for Montgomery County. Several land deeds show him on Little Bear Creek, the part that later became Stanly County in 1841. Isaac and his brother David were in Montgomery County in the

1790 and 1800 Census. By 1810, David and all his sons had moved to Tennessee. Only Isaac and his family remained on Little Bear Creek, and we are still there today.

Captain John Miller (The purchaser of the Burleson Improvements) was commander of the Turkey Creek Militia. He served under Col Edward Lacy also of Turkey Creek. Another Patriot from Turkey Creek was John Adair, later governor of Kentucky, who's descendants would marry into our Burleson Family. The Billy Hill was the grandfather of

Confederate General D.H. Hill. The iron works located on the NC/SC line in York County produced rifles and cannons balls. By John H. Burleson

Prayer by John Miller

"Good Lord, our God that art in heaven, we have great reason to thank thee for the many favors we have received at thy hands, the many battles we have won. "There is the great and glorious battle of King's Mountain, where we kilt the great General Ferguson and took his whole army. And the great battles of Ramsours's and at Williamson's. And the ever-memorable and glorious battle of Coopens, where we made the proud General Tarleton run doon the road helter-skelter, and, Good Lord, if ye had na suffered the cruel Tories to burn Billy Hill's Iron Works, we would na have asked any mair favors at thy hands. Amen."

Prayer by John Miller

found in
Rebels & Redcoats
by

George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin

The BFRG would like to thank John H. Burleson for this article on our Isaac Burleson Sr. Isn't it fascinating to consider all the history relating to the time Isaac lived. When we read about all the people he was associated with. We can get a better perspective on his life, the troubles and triumphs he lived through.

This prayer by John Miller tells a great deal of history for him, and our Burleson family was a part of it.

