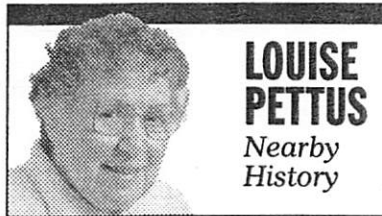


The Rev. Martin led a colorful life in Upcountry in late 1700s

During the late Colonial period, Protestant immigrants of good character were recruited as settlers for the S.C. Upcountry. It was cheaper to pay passage for settlers than it was to keep soldiers stationed in the area to guard against Indian attacks on the Lowcountry.

Land grants of 100 acres for the head of the family and 50 additional acres for each member guaranteed a steady stream of newcomers, especially land-poor Scotch-Irishmen.

A majority of the Protestants who came into York, Lancaster and Chester counties were members of four Presbyterian sects known by various names such as Covenanters, Associates and Old Seceders. They varied in their interpretation of Presbyterian doctrines but shared a mutual dislike



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of anything English.

In 1772, the Rev. William Martin brought 180 settlers to Charleston from north Ireland in a ship called Don Luce. Martin, a native Scotsman, would have liked to keep his group together but the system for allotting lands did not accommodate such colonies. Martin's Covenanters were scattered from Camden to Mecklenburg County and west as far as Spartanburg.

However, many Covenanters, including the Rev. Martin, received

grants on Rocky Creek in present-day Chester County.

Martin was the first Covenanter minister in the area when he took up his 400-acre grant. He added 240 acres by purchase from William Stroud on Big Rocky Creek, making his total acreage one mile square. There, Martin built a rock house and a rock spring house.

Martin's house was two miles east of Catholic Presbyterian Church, which had been built as a meeting house in 1759. Eventually, Martin was to become minister at Catholic and to be dismissed from the church because he was said to be intemperate in drink.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, the Rev. Martin was what the church historian, Dr. George Howe, called a "warm

Whig." Martin's thundering sermons against the British became known as "Blast of the Trumpet." To the British, Martin was a major inciter of insurrection and there was soon a price on his head.

Charleston fell to the British in May 1780. British troops spread over the state. Within a month, the 51-year-old Martin lay in chains in Camden jail.

A church he had built, Covenanter Meeting House, was burned by the British. After six months in jail, Martin was brought before Lord Cornwallis, general of all British forces in South Carolina, at his headquarters in Winnsboro.

According to Howe, Martin, a tall, large man, faced the charge of rebellion "erect, with his gray locks uncovered, his eyes fixed on

his lordship." There was no apology.

Martin stated that the Declaration of Independence was merely a statement of what his religion had always maintained. Cornwallis was so impressed by the man that he released him.

In spite of his excessive drinking, Martin lived until 1807 but some years before, 10 of his neighbors testified in court, he had lost his good sense. Proof of the charges was found in Martin's will. His widow was his third wife, Susannah Boggs.

In a confused fashion, Martin wrote that he was leaving Susannah "the sum of fifty dollars and it is also my will she is to keep the mare I gave her, at the judgment of men, at seventy dollars, and also

twenty-one dollars she lifted from Col. Senfe of my money."

A daughter had married John McCaw of York County but she had died before her father. There are no known descendants of the Covenanter minister who is said to have caused more than 1,000 poor Scotch-Irishmen to come to America.

The Covenanters, minus their leader, either drifted away from Chester or joined the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. One group, opposed to slavery, went to Ohio where they established the only surviving Covenant church.

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