

Brave soldiers of Upcountry helped

reshape Revolutionary War

Revolutionary War action turned southward in February of 1780. Three months later, on May 12, Charleston, the colonial capital, fell to the British. Lord Charles Cornwallis' troops soon spread out over the province.

On May 29, cavalry leader Banastre Tarleton's legion massacred a Virginia army under Alexander Buford in Lancaster County. This roused the Upcountry "Irish," as the Scots-Irish were then called. When the Tories burned Col. William Hill's Iron-

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works in York County, there was further cause for Whigs to rally against the British.

William Wylie, son of Peter and

Annie Hawthorne Wylie of Big Spring, was typical of the young men of Fishing Creek who had enlisted early. First he fought under Gen. Williamson and then was with Gen. William Moultrie on his retreat from Charleston through the swamps.

Wylie was at the "surprise" of Moncks Corner. He survived that and, with a comrade, got leave to visit his home at Fishing Creek. Along the way, Wylie slept while his friend washed his shirt in a stream. Wylie was awakened by a kick and looked up to see a British dragoon standing over him with his sword drawn. The two Americans were taken to Rocky Mount. Wylie managed to escape the next day.

Wylie happened upon a company of men from his area under Capt. John McClure while they chased the British who had been

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routed at Williamson's plantation next to Brattonsville. He joined McClure's forces and was with McClure when he was killed.

It was the nature of the guerrilla warfare of the Upcountry that men like Wylie were pretty much on their own. They might join a local officer, fight a battle and then go back home to await word that military action loomed elsewhere. Warfare was an off-and-on thing in the summer of 1780 in the South Carolina Upcountry.

In December of 1780, Wylie was with Col. Edward Lacy's forces on Turkey Creek in York County. Lacy was under Gen. Daniel Mor-

gan, who happened to be using Peter Wylie's house as his headquarters. William Wylie and "Hopping John" Miller went scouting for the British and ran into a large party of Tories on Sandy River.

Spotted by the British, Miller and Wylie took off, but Wylie's horse gave out and he was captured. The British officer by the name of Nichols would not let his men kill Wylie but took his horse, threw away the saddle, tied Wylie's arms and legs and threw him across the horse's back.

As the group made their way to Winnsboro, Wylie discovered that

the troops were a rough, undisciplined band that Nichols could barely control.

One night, as Wylie lay in a shed, Nichols crept into the shed on his hands and knees and brought Wylie some bread and spoke kindly to him, telling him that things would be better once they got to Winnsboro.

At Winnsboro, Wylie was interrogated by Lord Cornwallis and Tarleton but refused to give them information. They put him in the Camden jail, where he spent the winter without heat, but escaped the smallpox that felled so many.

Later, Wylie heard that Nichols had been hanged by his own men. Wylie felt sad and said he would have risked his own life to save Nichols, who had been so kind to him.

A few weeks after his release

from the Camden jail, Wylie married Isabella Kelso, who lived on the north side of Fishing Creek. Soon after, Wylie enlisted in the state troops in Col. Henry Hampton's regiment. He served as sergeant until the end of the war.

William Wylie was described by Elizabeth Ellet, who wrote three volumes on women of the American Revolution, as a man of "great bodily strength and an invincible spirit; withal something of a poet, and possessed of a fund of wit and humor."

The Wylies lived at Big Spring, Chester County, rearing eight children. In 1820, William and Isabella, with six of the children and their families, migrated to Perry County, Ala. William died in 1830.

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