

'He was a Christian, patriot, soldier'

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Special to TJ

Andrew Pickens, Revolutionary War hero, was born in September 1739 in Pennsylvania. After moving to Augusta, Va., his family became part of the Scotch-Irish migration which settled the Up Country of South Carolina. The Pickens family eventually settled in the Waxhaws.

Because there were few opportunities for formal education at that time, Andrew spent most of his time outdoors, hunting and fishing. He was described as an active boy, tall and thin, but with a healthy and strong constitution.

Around 1756 his father died and young Andrew and his brother, John, took over the homestead. Four years later, they sold it and bought land at Long Cane in Abbeville District.

Shortly after the Pickens family moved to the settlement, Long Cane was almost wiped out by the Cherokees. The young brothers barely escaped with their lives. Another of the escapees was the beautiful

Rebecca Calhoun, sister of Patrick Calhoun, the father of John C. Calhoun, distinguished South Carolina statesman.

Andrew Pickens married Rebecca in 1765. Tradition has it that the wedding was the largest ever held in the Up Country, with festivities lasting for three days without interruption.

Long before the war for Independence, Pickens was openly opposed to the British policy of taxation without representation. This position put him in disagreement with many of his fellow Up Country men who supported the Crown.

At the beginning of the war, Pickens raised a company of volunteers and was made its captain. He took part in a number of important battles.

In November 1775, he fought in the bloody battle of Ninety-Six in which his two brothers were killed.

He served as commanding officer at the battle of Kettle Creek in 1779. Although outnumbered, he carried out a surprise attack and won an important battle.

At the Battle of Cowpens, one of the turning points in the patriots' struggle against the British, he served as second in command to Gen. Daniel Morgan. Through a series of brilliant military maneuvers, Pickens helped to defeat the British and send them fleeing.

Pickens' rank was raised to brigadier general for his part in the important victory, and a special sword was given to him by Congress. He rose through the military ranks to eventually become a major-general in 1794.

The last major battle in which Pickens took part was the battle of Eutaw Springs. He was wounded in that battle and did not fight again.

After the war for independence had been won, Andrew Pickens returned to Long Cane. In 1794, he moved to Tamasee in Oconee County where he acquired a large estate.

Throughout his life, Andrew Pickens was called upon to help his country in a variety of ways.

He served three terms in the South Carolina Legislature and one term in Congress. He was a member of the convention which framed South Carolina's first constitution in 1790.

Pickens also served as a member of the Indian Commission which made treaties with the Indians. He was even a surveyor, helping to map out boundary lines between North Carolina and Tennessee.

When the War of 1821 broke out, he was nominated as governor of South Carolina. He declined the nomination, saying the state government should be led by a younger man.

Religion played an important part in Andrew Pickens' life. He was a devout and influential member of the Presbyterian Church, helping to organize the Old Stone Church near Clemson and the Bethel Presbyterian Church at Tamasee.

Andrew Pickens was respected by his contemporaries, who admired his wisdom and calm judgment. He was a man of simple tastes, and he said little unless he had something to say.

In August 1817, although in apparent good health, Andrew Pickens died suddenly. He was buried in Old Stone Church.

His tombstone bears the simple inscription: "He was a Christian, patriot, soldier." Today, a South Carolina county and a street in the state's capital bear his name.