

Col. Edward Lacey, war hero

The Lacey family of Chester County furnishes a good example of families of the American Revolution divided in their loyalties. Reuben Lacey Sr. was intensely loyal to King George III and so was Reuben Jr. But another son, Edward, was to become one of the leading Whig fighters of this area.

Edward Lacey was only 13 when he ran away from his Shippenburg, Pa., home in 1755 and joined the Pennsylvania



Nearby history

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troops serving under British Gen. Edward Braddock. Braddock employed him as a packhorse rider. Young Lacey was present when Braddock was killed by Indians.

After two years, his father found the young soldier and took him home where he stayed only a few months before again running away. The second time, Edward Lacey apprenticed himself to William Adair to learn the trade of bricklayer. Adair brought Lacey with him when he emigrated to Camden District and settled in what is now Chester County.

In 1766, Edward Lacey married Jane Harper and settled on Sandy River, about 6 miles west of the town of Chester. Lacey was elected captain of a volunteer company in 1775. The British offered him a large amount of gold to serve with them, but he would have none of it. Later promoted to colonel, Edward Lacey was destined to be present at every important battle in this area.

Reuben Lacey did all he could to thwart his son's activities, even to the point of attempting to inform the British of his son's whereabouts. At one point, Edward Lacey had four of his men guard the old man all night to prevent him from contacting the British. By some means, Reuben Lacey escaped the guards, but they caught him about 200 yards off, headed for the camp of Christian Huck.

Col. Edward Lacey was present at Huck's Defeat at Williamson plantation next door to Brattonsville. Huck's Defeat encouraged the local Scotch-Irish to join Gen. Thomas Sumter's and Col. William Hill's forces on Clems Branch in Lancaster County.

Lacey's mounted troops were involved when the Americans were repulsed by the strongly entrenched British at Rocky Mount, but won a great victory at Hanging Rock in lower Lancaster County.

Lacey was still with Sumter on Fishing Creek when Sumter's army was surprised and Sumter himself barely made his escape, riding off bareback with no hat or coat. Back at his old camp on Clems Branch, Sumter commissioned the ever-popular Lacey to recruit as many men as he could manage from among the Scotch-Irish of York, Lancaster, Chester and Fairfield.

It has been told that when leaving Winnsboro with his army, Lacey came across a barrel of whiskey which he purchased and,

in the middle of the road, knocked the head out of the barrel and told the men to help themselves. The men were soon in high spirits, but not long after mounting, a troop of redcoats was spotted coming in Lacey's direction. Lacey, in fear that his drunken men would rashly attack the obviously superior force, hastened to the front to take charge. As luck would have it, a dip in the road obscured the British troops at the point the Americans reached a crossroads.

Lacey turned his horse and went into the side road, shouting to his men that the British were just ahead and thus tricked them into following him. When told of their "tricking" the British, Sumter laughed and ordered double rations for the men, but no whiskey.

At the Battle of Kings Mountain, Lacey's horse was shot out from under him. The battles of Fishdam and Blackstock's were to follow, along with engagements at Watboo Bridge and Quimby Creek in the lower part of the state.

After the war was over, Lacey continued to serve the state. He was elected one of 10 representatives of the area between the Broad and Catawba rivers in the first state legislature. He served as brigadier-general of the S.C. militia and as a judge of the district court.

In 1797 Lacey moved to Tennessee and two years later, to Kentucky.

When Lacey was a boy, a gypsy woman had told him he would fight in many battles and never be wounded, but that his life would end by drowning. Edward Lacey, 71, never wounded in numerous battles of the Revolution, was thrown by his horse on March 20, 1813, into the swollen waters of Deer Creek and drowned.