

# 2 war heroes aren't well-known

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People who are familiar with the Revolutionary War as it was fought in this area are familiar with the military records and exploits of officers such as a trio of colonels — William Bratton, William Hill and William Richardson Davie. Lesser known, but just as exciting, are the adventures of such men as



## Nearby history

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Capt. James Meek of York and Robert Kilpatrick, a Whig volunteer who lived between Chesterville and Winnsboro.

Meek, who was born near Annapolis, Md., emigrated to York County when a small boy with his mother and at least two brothers, Adam and Moses. The family settled on Bullocks Creek. The war reached this area in the summer of 1780 following the fall of Charleston in May. A large part of the war was a civil war between Gen. Thomas Sumter's state militia and local Whigs (or patriots), versus the Tories (supporters of the British).

Sometime in that summer or fall, Meek was captured by Tories led by the infamous Cunninghams, a brother and sister team known as Maria and Bloody Bill. The Tories had to cross a river and, not able to find any other means, they placed Meek in a hog trough and ferried him over. The party stopped at the home of one Capt. Mayfield, a Tory, for dinner. While seated at their meal, a sentinel called out, "Yonder comes Sumter's men!"

The Tories scrambled off, leaving Meek with his arms tied behind him. Indeed, several of Sumter's men were present with the purpose of recapturing Meek. John Swan, a Tory but also an old friend who feared for Meek's life, had informed a man named Hood of Meek's capture. The two men, one Whig and the other Tory, freed Meek to fight another day.

There was another episode in which Meek and his men were trapped on Table Mountain in Greenville County with nothing to eat but some sweet milk and a few peaches. The men debated killing Meek's horse for food. Before that happened, they were saved by an Indian who knew an escape route. Meek named the horse "Sweet Milk and Peaches."

Thirty-nine years later, Meek set out from York District to Alabama to attend a land sale at the invitation of Hood's two sons, Abner and Sylvanus. Meek got as far as the Seneca River in South Carolina. His body was found in the river, presumably murdered by highwaymen for the cash he carried.

## ■ Meek, Kilpatrick escaped death at hands of British.

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Robert Kilpatrick was an Irishman who had fought the English for Irish freedom before landing in Charles Town in 1775. In Ireland, he and his friends had been surprised by British troops while they were meeting in a deserted house one evening. Kilpatrick reacted quickly by snuffing out the candle and racing through the British soldiers for the door and freedom.

In 1780 Kilpatrick joined the Whigs, leaving his wife and three small daughters at home to fend for themselves. Tory neighbors watched his house, ready to nab him if he returned. Mrs. Kilpatrick told the children that their father had "gone to the mill," hoping that is what they would say if questioned. Kilpatrick somehow found out that his daughters all had smallpox and risked returning to see them.

He found the sick children, and the only food in the house was the head of the family's milk cow that had been slaughtered by the Tories. Kilpatrick had been seen, and shortly the Tories burst into the house, seized him, and placed a rope around his neck. At the moment that he was to be strung up, a horse neighed on the other side of the house. Each of the Tories seemed to have only one thought — to capture a horse for himself. They abandoned Kilpatrick's hanging and joined a scramble to capture the horse. Kilpatrick threw off the rope and dashed into the woods.

Kilpatrick was captured by Tories a second time. The rope went around his neck again. One man was left to guard Kilpatrick while the rest hunted for a suitable limb from which to hang him. The guard made a mistake.

Taunting Kilpatrick, he picked up a piece of cow manure and stuck it under Kilpatrick's nose, saying that he should smell a bit of old Ireland. Kilpatrick's quick Irish temper flared, and his right arm struck the guard so quickly and fiercely that the man was knocked out. Kilpatrick again took to his heels. It was the third time that he barely escaped with his life.

It is said that Robert Kilpatrick was 115 years of age when he died.

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