

Col. Frederick Hambright

One of the heroes of the Battle of Kings Mountain was Frederick Hambright (1727-1817). Hambright was born in Germany, where he lived until he was 11 years old. He then went to Pennsylvania with his family and that of his uncle. The two elder Hambrights were Adam and Conrad, but no one know which of the two was Frederick's father.

The Hambrights, like so many of this period, headed for the port of Philadelphia and became a part of that large group known as Pennsylvania Dutch. Like a number of others, Frederick Hambright migrated elsewhere to seek his fortune. In 1755 he moved to Virginia, where he married Sarah Hardin. Five years later, he was living on the south fork of the Catawba River in Lincoln County, N. C.

When the American Revolution broke out, Frederick Hambright volunteered and was made captain. He was 49 years of age and had no previous military experience but believed wholeheartedly in the Patriot cause.

Records are scanty, but they seem to indicate that Hambright went wherever there was action. He fought the Indians on both sides of the Appalachian mountains. In 1779 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and was present at the siege of Charleston. When it was obvious that Charleston would fall to the British, Hambright came up to the Broad River and began recruiting in what later would be Chester and York counties.

On Oct. 7, 1780, Hambright was at Kings Mountain. Because of his age, Hambright was not given battle command as his rank entitled him, but chance placed him "in the right place at the right time."

About 2 miles from the British camp, Hambright spotted a young man named John Ponder whose brother he knew was a Tory in the British camp. Hambright ordered Ponder stopped and searched. Ponder was carrying a dispatch from Colonel Ferguson to Lord Cornwallis imploring Cornwallis to send additional men. When Ponder was told to identify Ferguson, he said that Ferguson was the best-dressed man on the mountain but that day he was a checked shirt over his uniform. Col. Hambright, in his Pennsylvania Dutch accent, called out to his men, "Well, poys, when you see dot man mit a pig shirt on, you may know who him is, and mark him mit your rifles."

Maj. William Chronicle, a younger, more vigorous man than Hambright, was assigned to lead one of the companies up the side of the mountain— one with about 60 South Fork men. Chronicle did not get far when he was mortally wounded. Hambright was then in charge of the company.

Toward the end of the fighting Hambright was wounded in the thigh, severing an artery. His boot soon filled with blood but he pressed on and is quoted as shouting, "Huzza, my prave poys, fight on a few minutes more and the battle will be over!" It was soon over. Ferguson was killed and the British surrendered in what has been called the "turning point of the Revolution".

When the battle was over, it was found that Hambright had not only been wounded in the thigh, but his hat had three bullet holes in it. Hambright recovered but some of the sinews in his leg were cut and he never walked well again. This ended Hambright's Revolutionary service.

When the war was over, Hambright moved to York County. He built a sturdy two-story log cabin on King's Creek within sight of Kings Mountain where he remained until his death at the age of 90.

Large families were the rule in Hambright's time, but Hambright had more than average. By his first wife, Sarah Hardin, there were 12 children and by the second wife, Mary Dover, he is thought to have had 10 more.

Frederick Hambright was buried in Old Shiloh Presbyterian cemetery just over the Gaston County, N. C. line in Grover. The stone includes the verse:

"Adieu to all, both far and near/My loving wife and children dear/for my immortal soul is fled/I must be remembered with the dead."