

## COL. JAMES HAWTHORN

James Hawthorn , a native of County Armagh Ireland, was born in 1750. When he was a small boy the family emigrated to America.

This area was a frontier, virtually unsettled when the Hawthorn family arrived. The French and Indian Wars had the frontier in turmoil. The local Indians, the Catawbas, were friendly to the whites but the Catawbas had many enemies among a majority of tribes up and down the eastern coast and beyond into the middle west.

When James was 12 years of age his mother and siblings were captured. The mother and the girls were killed. Ordinarily the Indians took captive women and children into the tribes but wars disrupted societies and women and children were a burden.

There seems to be no record telling how long James spent with the Indians but, at length, he was surrendered to the whites and returned to York County. He learned the blacksmith's trade.

Hawthorne married Mary Neel whose family lived close to the Hwy # 49 bridge over the Catawba river (for a long time called the Buster Boyd Bridge). In 1776 the Cherokee Indians were scalping white settlers who were settling on traditional Cherokee hunting grounds. One of those scalped was Hawthorne's mother-in-law, the wife of Thomas Neel, Jean Spratt, sister of Thomas "Kanawah" Spratt. Jean Spratt Neel had long coal-black hair. It is believed that the Cherokees intended to claim her scalp was that of a Catawba Indian, their traditional enemy.

Thomas Neel was already in the field at the time of his wife's scalping. Struggling through waist-deep snow, Neel and his men surprised the Cherokee and destroyed many of their towns and villages in what was called the Snow Campaign.

In 1776 Neel was elected to the First South Carolina Congress. South Carolina had declared its independence from Great Britain. Neel spent much more time as a militia officer than he did in Charleston attending sessions of the new government.

In 1777 Hawthorne became a first lieutenant in the Sixth Regiment. In 1778 he was promoted to captain and sent on an expedition to Florida. When he returned he joined with Gen. Thomas Sumter's forces and was in the battles of Hanging Rock, Carey's Fort and Fishing Creek.

He was in the battles of Fish Dam Ford and Blackstocks Plantation and wounded in February 1780.

In October, Hawthorne, now a colonel, headed Col. William Hill's troop at Kings Mountain. He had taken Thomas Neel's place in 1779 when Neel was killed in action.

Hawthorn was wounded in the battle of Camden on April 25, 1781 and wounded again in the battle of Cowpens. His men had a high respect for his toughness and his willingness to take risks.

When the war was over, James Hawthorn was appointed the first sheriff of York County. He took office in 1786.

Hawthorn was not one to seek publicity and very little is known about him beyond his military record. Early court records are sparse. We don't know much about what he did as sheriff. Nor do we know what year he left South Carolina. The last record we could find was when he served on the jury in February 1794. Sometime after that he moved to Livingston, Kentucky where he died in 1809.

James Hawthorn has no monument in York County. But, surely, he is one man who can be called "an unsung hero."