

# McLure's Rangers drove Tories out

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■ Chester native eventually gave his life for the revolutionary cause.

John McLure of Chester was with Col. William Washington's cavalry at Moncks Corner during the Revolutionary War siege of Charleston in May 1780. He lost a horse but managed to escape.

McLure returned to Chester and gathered the men of his family and the neighborhood into a mounted group known as McLure's Rangers. McLure's three brothers, three brothers-in-law, and about 30 neighbors made up his company.

McLure's Rangers next fought in a skirmish at Beckhamville near his Fishing Creek home. This was followed by an attack on Mobley's Meeting House in Fairfield County in concert with Col. Richard Winn of Winnsboro and Col. William Bratton of York County. The British were routed and McLure was able to recapture the horses previously taken by the British. Four of the horses belonged to McLure's mother.

British regulars under Colonel Turnbull were ordered to pursue the Whigs. Colonel Houk (pronounced Hook), a native of Philadelphia, was sent with 400 men to capture McLure and the others who had been at Mobley's. Houk stopped at Mary McLure's house to plunder and destroy. In the altercation, Houk struck McLure's wife with the flat of his sword and took her son, James, and son-in-law, Edward Martin, as prisoners. Evidence was found that James McLure and Edward Martin had cast bullets out of Mrs. McLure's pewter plates. The two men were sentenced to hang the following day.

As soon as she could, Mrs. McLure sent her daughter, Mary, to Sumter's camp to inform her sons, John and Hugh, of the British action and the number of British soldiers. Capt. John McLure set off with Col. William Bratton and 150 men in an effort to stop the British and take back his brother and



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brother-in-law. In the 30 miles before they reached Houk's campgrounds, about half of the Whig volunteers dropped out. Others insisted on sleeping before encountering the British.

Col. Bratton pressed on, for he knew the British were near his home, now known as "Brattonsville." British troops were found before daylight at Williamson's plantation, next door to Brattonsville, planning to destroy Bratton's home the next morning. James McLure and Edward Martin were tied up inside a corncrib. Bratton and John McLure surprised and entrapped the British in a lane. The two Tory officers, Houk and Ferguson, managed to mount their horses but were killed before the fighting ended. James McLure and Edward Martin were released.

News of the victory spread quickly over the countryside. In a few days Sumter had 600 men under his command.

McLure's Rangers pursued Tories as far as Spartanburg, Union and Ninety-Six. The captured Tories and their horses were brought by McLure's men to Thomas Sumter's camp on Clem's Branch in the

Indian Land area of Lancaster County.

Sumter commanded the largest infantry militia in the upcountry. William Richardson Davies of the Waxhaws of Lancaster County headed the largest cavalry group. The Chester men were not directly affiliated with either Sumter or Davie but, nevertheless, joined with either Sumter or Davies on occasion. Other times they were scouting on their own.

About the end of July the Chester men elected McLure colonel. John McLure's Rangers became riflemen for Sumter at Rocky Mount and were in the thick of things. On Aug. 6 McLure was at Hanging Rock in Lancaster County. He was shot through the thigh early in the action. Refusing to quit, he stuffed his wound with cotton wadding and led his men forward. He received several additional wounds before the action ended.

With others, Colonel McLure was taken to Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church, which served as a hospital. McLure's mother, Mary Gaston McLure, crossed the river to be his nurse. A widow for many years, she had four sons, all of whom were in the fight. When the Waxhaws became too dangerous, Colonel McLure was moved to Charlotte. There, anxious to get back into the fight, he got out of his sickbed too early. The internal wounds ruptured and McLure died.

General William R. Davies said of McLure that, "of the many brave men, with whom it was my fortune to become acquainted, he was one of the bravest; and when he fell, we looked upon it as a loss not to be easily calculated."

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