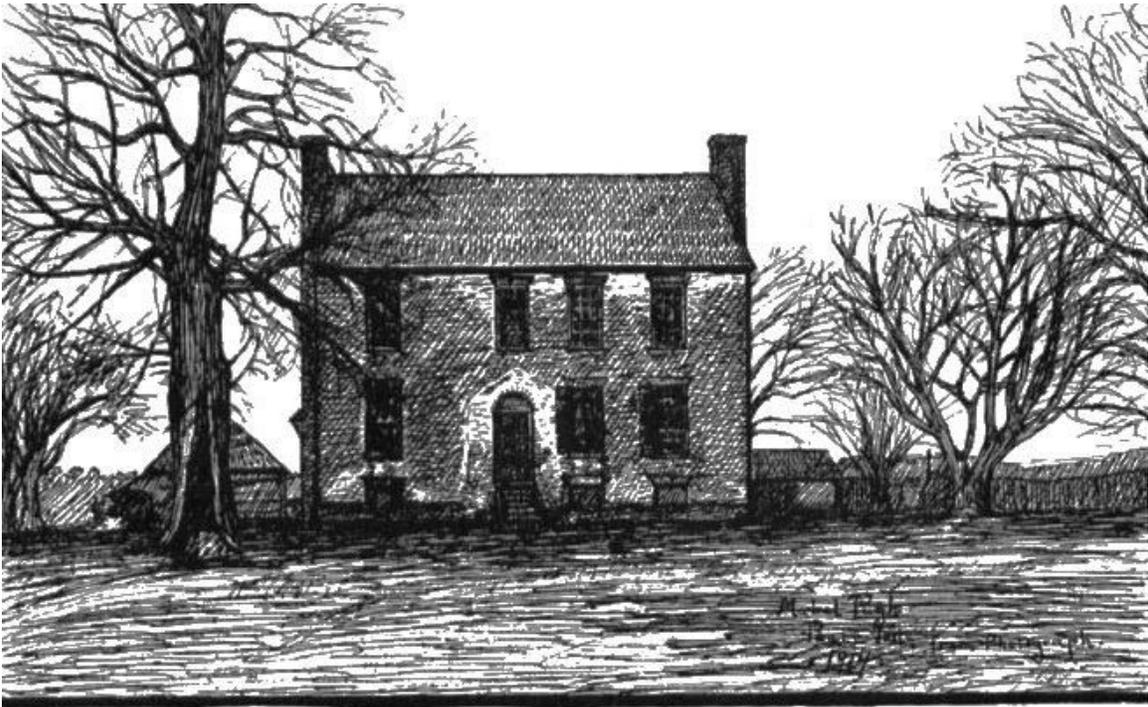


The Brave General Isaac Gregory of Fairfax Hall



FAIRFAX, CAMDEN COUNTY, THE HOME OF GENERAL GREGORY

Fairfax Plantation

It was General Isaac Gregory, one of the bravest officers who ever drew a sword, who protected the Albemarle region from the British during the American Revolutionary War. Before the long and bloody days began and he proved his worth as a soldier, he commanded a prominent place in the public affairs of his county.

His name first appeared in the Colonial Records of North Carolina during 1773 when he was elected sheriff of Pasquotank. Then, in the same year he was appointed one of the trustees of St. Martin's Chapel in Indian Town (Currituck County), a settlement whose citizens were to serve bravely in the war. After the unsuccessful attempt of General Clinton to invade North Carolina in May of 1776, no further effort to place the State under British control was made until 1780. But during the intervening years the Carolina

troops had not been idle.

Their valor had been proved at Brandywine, Germantown and Stony Point, and during the winter at Valley Forge 1,450 of her soldiers shared with their comrades from the other States the hunger, cold and suffering that was the portion of the army of General George Washington throughout those dreary months. The North Carolina troops aided in the brave but unsuccessful attempt to drive the British from Savannah, 5,000 of her soldiers having been sent to prevent the capture of Charleston; but the patriot forces had been unable to repulse the invaders. Savannah fell, then Charleston, and by the last of May, 1780, both Georgia and South Carolina were in the hands of the enemy, and Cornwallis was threatening to invade North Carolina. Isaac Gregory, who in May of 1779, had been promoted to the office of Brigadier-General of the Edenton District, was ordered to join General Caswell in South Carolina. As soon as he could collect his men, Gregory marched towards the Piedmont section, en route to join the army of General Caswell; and by June he was with the Brigade of General Rutherford at Yadkin's Ford in Rowan.

Near this place the Tories had collected, some 800 strong; and Rutherford hoped, with the assistance of General Gregory, to crush them. But to his disappointment, no opportunity emerged because General Bryan, the Tory leader, hearing of the defeat of the Loyalists at Ramseur's Mill a few days before, crossed the Yadkin River and united with General MacArthur, whom Cornwallis had sent on to Anson County.

By July 31st, Gregory, with Rutherford and his brigade, joined General Caswell at The Cheraws, just across the South Carolina border. For several weeks there was much suffering among the men on account of the lack of food. Although corn was plentiful, the rivers were so high that the mills could not grind the meal. Meanwhile, the army of Lord Rawdon was stationed near Camden, South Carolina, and General Gates, who had joined Caswell on August 17th after having learned that the British general was

daily expecting a supply of food and stores for his men, determined to intercept the convoy and capture the supplies for his own army. In the meantime Cornwallis, unknown to Gates, had joined Lord Rawdon. Gates, ignorant of this reinforcement of the troops of Lord Cornwallis, marched leisurely towards Camden to capture the coveted stores. The result of the historically wasted battle which followed is known only too well. The American militia, panic-stricken at the furious onslaught of the enemy, threw down their arms and fled and General Gates, after a vain attempt to rally his troops, lost courage and abandoned his forces and stores as well. As a result General Gates brought the everlasting disgrace upon his name which is remembered unto this generation. The cowardly conduct of Gates and several of the other officers of the American army, as well as many of the militia in this disastrous battle, was offset by the heroism and courage of others; and among those who won undying fame on that fatal field, was General Gregory. Roger Lamb, a British officer, penned an account of the battle, and speaking of the disgraceful conduct of those officers and men whose flight from the field brought shame upon the American army, said: "In justice to North Carolina, it should be remarked that General Gregory's brigade acquitted themselves well.

They formed on the left of the Continentals, and kept the field while they had a cartridge left. Gregory himself was twice wounded by bayonets in bringing off his men, and many in his brigade had only bayonet wounds." Hand to hand with bayonets requires far more courage than to stand at a distance firing a musket. In the midst of the heated battle, the horse of General Gregory was shot out from under him. When Lord Cornwallis saw him fall, he was certain the General Gregory was slain that he wrote the name of Gregory in his official report of the battle, for those American officers killed on the field. Afterwards, Gregory bravely fought many more battles. After the war, he represented Camden County in the State Senate from 1778 to 1789.

And in 1789 when the Currituck Seminary was established at Indian Town,

Isaac Gregory and his friend and brother officer, Colonel Peter Dauge, were appointed on the board of trustees of this school, which for many years was one of the leading educational institutions of the Albemarle section. General Gregory lived at the Ferebee place in Camden County in a large brick house, known then, as now, as Fairfax Hall. Source: In Ancient Albemarle by Catherine Albertson (published by the North Carolina Society Daughters of the Revolution).