

## **GENERAL WILLIAM LENOIR**

General William Lenoir was born in Brunswick county, Virginia, on the 20th of May, 1751. He was of French (Huguenot) descent, and the youngest of a family of ten children. When he was about eight years old his father removed to a place near Tarboro, N.C., where he resided until his death, a short time afterward. He received no other education than his own limited means and personal exertions enabled him to procure. When about twenty years of age he married Ann Ballard, of Halifax, N.C.--a lady possessing, in an eminent degree, those domestic and heroic virtues which qualified her for sustaining the privations and hardships of a frontier life, which it was her lot afterward to encounter.

In March 1775 Gen. Lenoir removed with his family to Wilkes county (then a part of Surry) and settled near the place where Wilkesboro now stands. Previous to leaving Halifax he signed the paper known as the "Association," containing a declaration of patriotic principles and means of redress, relative to the existing troubles with Great Britain. Soon after his removal to Surry he was appointed a member of the "Committee of Safety" for that county. He took an early and active part in repelling the depredating and murderous incursions of the Cherokee Indians upon the frontier settlements. In this kind of service he was actively engaged until the celebrated expedition, under Gen. Rutherford, completely subdued the Indians, and compelled them to sue for peace. From the termination of this campaign, in which he acted as a Lieutenant under Captain Benjamin Cleaveland, to the one projected against Major Ferguson, he was almost constantly engaged in capturing and suppressing the Tories, who, at that time, were assuming great boldness, and molesting the persons and property of the Whig inhabitants.

In the expedition to King's Mountain Gen. Lenoir held the appointment of Captain in Colonel Cleaveland's regiment, which united with the other Whig forces at the head of the Catawba river. When it was ascertained it would be impossible to overtake Ferguson, now evidently showing signs of fear, with the footmen, it was decided by a council of the officers, that as many as could procure horses should do so, and thus, as mounted infantry, advance rapidly upon the retreating enemy. Accordingly, Gen. Lenoir and his company offered their services, joined the select Spartan band of nine hundred and ten brave spirits, and pressed forward without delay to the scene of action.

In the brilliant achievement on King's Mountain, Gen. Lenoir was wounded in the arm and in the side, but not severely, and a third ball passed through his hair, just above where it was tied. He was also at the defeat of Col. Pyles, on Haw River, where his horse was shot and his sword broken. At a later period he raised a company and marched towards Dan river with the hope of joining General Greene, but was unable to effect a junction in time. He performed many other minor but important services, which it is here unnecessary to enumerate.

General Lenoir served as Major General of the militia about eighteen years. In a civil capacity he also discharged many high and responsible duties.

He filled, at different times, the offices of Register, Surveyor, Commissioner of Affidavits, Chairman of the County Court, and Clerk of the Superior Court for Wilkes county. He was one of the original Trustees of the State University, and the first President of the Board. He was also a member of both the State Conventions which met for the purpose of considering the Constitution of the United States. He served for many years in both branches of the State Legislature. During the last seven years of his services in the Senate, he was unanimously chosen Speaker of that body, and performed the duties of that important station with great satisfaction, firmness and impartiality.

In private life General Lenoir was no less distinguished for his moral worth and generous hospitality than in public life for his unbending integrity and enlarged patriotism. His mansion was open at all times, not only to a large circle of friends and relatives, but to the stranger and the traveller. To the poor he was kind and charitable, and in his will made liberal provision for those of his own neighborhood.

During his last illness he suffered much pain which he bore with Christian resignation. He often said "he did not fear to die--death had no terrors for him." He died, with calm composure, at his residence at Fort Defiance, on the 6th of May, 1839, aged eighty-eight years.

His remains were interred in the family burying ground which occupies the spot where Fort Defiance was erected during the Revolutionary war.

Source: Sketches of Western North Carolina, Historical and Biographical  
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