

Great Patriots of the Revolutionary War: "Hugh Mercer will Serve his Adopted Country and the cause of Liberty"



Hugh Mercer

Dr. Hugh Mercer was born 1725 in Aberdeen, Scotland and joined the Pretender's army as assistant surgeon to engage the cause of the Stuart pretender to the throne. When that cause was lost, he left Leitch in 1746 to go to America and settled first in Greencastle (now Mercersburg, Pennsylvania) where he practiced medicine and acted as the local apothecary. He served on the expedition of Braddock where he was severely wounded, and was left for dead by his own army.

Wounded and tramping through the woods, he managed to catch up with his comrades. Afterwards, he was appointed captain in one of the military organizations formed to protect the colony against the Indians.

Then, in 1756 he commanded the Pennsylvania territory at McDowell's Fort. In another fight with the Indians, he was severely wounded and again abandoned by his comrades. He hid in the hollow trunk of a tree and heard the Indians searching for him as well as discussing plans to scalp him. When he was not discovered, he began his march of over one hundred miles

through the woods, eating roots and herbs. He has occasion to make a soup of a rattlesnake.

The wounded Mercer recovered from this ordeal. In 1757 he held the rank of major, commanding the forces of Pennsylvania west of the Susquehanna, and joined General Forbes at Fort Duquesne. It was at this fort that he made the acquaintance of General Washington who suggested that he come to Fredericksburg, which he did. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, Mercer enrolled as a minuteman and when Governor Dunmore removed the colonial store of powder from the magazine in Williamsburg to the British man of war Magdalen, Mercer was made colonel and offered his services to the Virginia Convention in these words:

"Hugh Mercer will serve his adopted country and the cause of Liberty in any rank or station to which he may be assigned."

Hugh went to Williamsburg the following year as Brigadier-General and Washington appointed him to take charge of the troops at Paulus Hook, New Jersey. He was severely wounded during the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777 and while lying there was beaten in the head and died on January 12th.

Source: Historic Houses of Early America by Lathrop. Great Patriots of the Revolutionary War