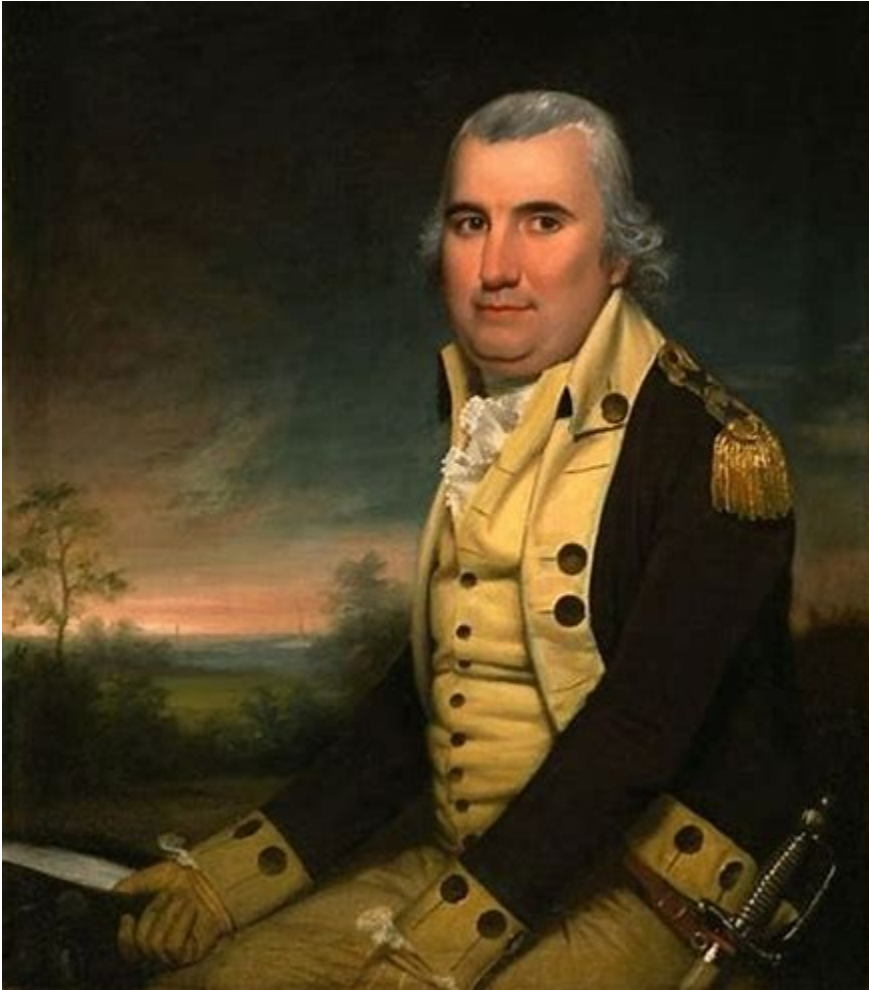


## The Pinckneys of South Carolina



Charles Cotesworth Pinckney

The founder of this family in America was Thomas Pinckney, who emigrated to South Carolina in the year 1692. He possessed a large fortune, and built in Charleston a stately mansion, which is still standing, unless it was demolished during the late war. A curious anecdote is related of this original Pinckney, which is about all that is now known of him. Standing at the window of his house one day, with his wife at his side, he noticed a stream of passengers walking up the street, who had just landed from a

vessel that day arrived from the West Indies.

The eldest son of Thomas was Charles Pinckney who embraced the legal profession and rose to be Chief Justice of the Province of South Carolina; hence, he is usually spoken of and distinguished from the rest of the family as "Chief Justice Pinckney."

The son was educated in England where he was married. Returning to Charleston, he acquired a large fortune by the practice of his profession. A strange anecdote is related of his wife also. After he had been married many years without having children, a young lady named Eliza Lucas, daughter of an officer in the English army, visited Charleston.

She was an exceedingly lovely and brilliant girl, and made a great stir in the province. She was particularly admired by the wife of the Chief Justice, who said one day in jest:

"Rather than have Miss Lucas return home, I will myself step out of the way, and let her take my place."

Within a few months after uttering these words she died, and soon after her death the Chief Justice actually married Miss Lucas. This lady gave birth to the two brothers Pinckney, who are of most note in the general history of the country. The elder of these was Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, born in 1746, and the younger was Thomas, born in 1750. When these two boys were old enough to begin their education, their father, the Chief Justice, like a good father as he was, went with them to England, accompanied by all his family, and there resided for many years while they attended school. The boys were placed at Westminster school in London, and completed their studies at the University of Oxford. After leaving the University they began the study of the law in London, and were pursuing their studies there when the troubles preceding the Revolutionary War hastened their return to their native land. They had been absent from their country twenty-one years! The landscape had changed; the elder of these brothers could

remember when the first planter's wagon was driven into Charleston. This was about the year 1753. Pointing to this wagon one day, his father said to him: "Charles, by the time you are a man, I don't doubt there will be at least twenty wagons coming to town." Often in after life, when he would meet a long string of wagons in the country loaded with cotton or rice, he would relate this reminiscence of his childhood, and add: "How happy my father would have been in the growth and prosperity of Carolina!" These young men were just coming of age at the beginning of the Stamp Act agitation, and entered the Continental army and served gallantly throughout the war.

In 1780 we find Charles Cotesworth Pinckney writing to his wife in the following noble strain: "Our friend, Philip Neyle was killed by a cannon-ball coming through one of the embrasures; but I do not pity him, for he has died nobly in the defense of his country; but I pity his aged father, now unhappily bereaved of his beloved and only child." To one of his young friends he wrote soon after:

"If I had a vein that did not beat with love for my country, I myself would open it. If I had a drop of blood that could flow dishonorably, I myself would let it out."

It was the fortune of both these brothers to be held for a long time by the enemy as prisoners of war. The elder was captured upon the surrender of Charleston. The younger was desperately wounded at the battle of Camden, and was about to be transfixed by a bayonet, when a British officer who had known him at college recognized his features, and cried out in the nick of time: "Save Tom Pinckney!"

The uplifted bayonet was withheld, and the wounded man was borne from the field a prisoner. After the peace, General C. C. Pinckney was a member of the convention which framed our Constitution. During the Presidency of General Washington, he declined, first a seat upon the bench of the Supreme Court, and twice declined entering the cabinet. During the last year of Washington's administration, he accepted the appointment of

Minister to France, and it was while residing in Paris, that he uttered a few words which will probably render his name immortal. He was associated with Chief Justice Marshall and Elbridge Gerry, and their great object was to prevent a war between the United States and France.

It was during the reign of the corrupt Directory that they performed this mission; and Talleyrand, the Minister of War, gave them to understand that nothing could be accomplished in the way of negotiation unless they were prepared to present to the government a large sum of money. The honest Americans objecting to this proposal, Talleyrand intimated to them that they must either give the money or accept the alternative of war. Then it was that the honest and gallant Charles Cotesworth Pinckney uttered the words which Americans will never forget till they have ceased to be worthy of their ancestors. Upon his return to the United States, war being imminent with France, he was appointed a Major-general in the army, and in the year 1800 he was a candidate for the Presidency. He lived to the year 1825, when he died at Charleston at the age of seventy-nine.

His brother Thomas was the Governor of South Carolina in 1789, and in 1792 was appointed by General Washington Minister to Great Britain. After residing some years in England, he was sent to Spain, where he negotiated the important treaty which secured us the free navigation of the Mississippi. After his return home, he served several years in Congress on the Federal side, and then retired to private life.

During the war of 1812, he received the commission of Major-general, and served under General Jackson at the celebrated battle of Horseshoe Bend, where the power of the Creek Indians was broken forever. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney died at Charleston in 1828, aged seventy-eight years. Source: Revolutionary Heroes, And Other Historical Papers by James Parton