

## **GENERAL GRIFFITH RUTHERFORD**

General Griffith Rutherford was an Irishman by birth, brave and patriotic, but uncultivated in mind and manners. He resided west of Salisbury, in the Locke settlement, and actively participated in the internal government of the county, associated with such early and distinguished patriots as Moses Winslow, Alexander Osborn, Samuel Young, John Brevard, James Brandon, William Sharpe, Francis McCorkle, and others. He represented Rowan county in the Provincial Congress which met at Halifax on the 4th of April, 1776, and during this session he received the appointment of Brigadier General of the "Salisbury District." Near the close of the summer of 1776, he raised and commanded an army of two thousand four hundred men against the Cherokee Indians. After being reinforced by the Guilford Regiment, under Colonel James Martin, and by the Surry Regiment under Colonel Martin Armstrong, at Fort McGahey, General Rutherford crossed the "Blue Ridge," or Alleghany mountains, at Swannanoa Gap, near the western base of which the beautiful Swannanoa river ("nymph of beauty") takes its rise. After reaching the French Broad he passed down and over that stream at a crossing-place which to this day bears the name of the "War Ford." He then passed up the valley of "Hominy Creek," leaving Pisgah Mountain on the left, and crossed Pigeon River a little below the mouth of East Fork. He then passed through the mountains to Richland Creek, above the present town of aynesville; ascended the creek and crossed the Tuckasege River at an Indian town. Pursuing his course, he crossed the Cowee Mountain, where he had a small engagement with the enemy, in which one of his men was wounded.

As the Indians carried off their dead and wounded, their loss could not be ascertained. Thence he marched to the "Middle Towns," on the Tennessee river, where, on the 14th of September, he met General Williamson with troops from South Carolina on the same mission of subduing the Indians.

In skirmishes at Valley Town, Ellajay, and near Franklin, General Rutherford lost three men, but he completely subdued the Indians. He then returned home by the same route, since known as "Rutherford's Trace." The Rev. James Hall, of Iredell county, accompanied this expedition as chaplain.

The uniforms of the officers and men was a hunting-shirt of domestic, trimmed with cotton: their arms were rifles, and none knew better how to use them. Many of the hardy sons of the west there experienced their first essay in arms, and their bravery was nobly maintained afterwards at King's Mountain, the Cowpens, and elsewhere in the South.

General Rutherford commanded a brigade in the battle of Camden, (16th of August, 1780), and was there made a prisoner. After he was exchanged he again took the field, and commanded the expedition which marched by way of Cross Creek (now Fayetteville) to Wilmington, when that place, on his approach, was evacuated by the British, near the close of the war.

He frequently represented Rowan county in the Senate during and subsequent to the war, showing the high appreciation in which his services were held by the people. Shortly after his last service in 1786,

he joined the strong tide of emigration to Tennessee, where his well-earned fame and experience in governmental matters had preceded him. The Knoxville Gazette of the 6th of September, 1794, contains the following announcement:

"On Monday last the General Assembly of this territory commenced their session in this town. General Rutherford long distinguished for his services in the Legislature of North Carolina, is appointed President of the Legislative Council."

General Rutherford died in Tennessee near the beginning of the present century, at a good old age, and it is to be regretted more has not been preserved of his life and services.

Source: Sketches of Western North Carolina, Historical and Biographical  
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