

**Revolutionary Reminiscences
from the “Cape Fear Sketches”**

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Introduction

This essay introduces transcriptions of two oral history selections that describe events in Wilmington, North Carolina, during its 1781 British occupation. The transcriptions comprise about one-eighth of an 1850s manuscript, the “Cape Fear Sketches and Loafer Ramblings.”¹ The anonymous author, believed by the editor to be John D. Jones (1790-1854), a Wilmington lawyer and state legislator, was a skilled writer and keen observer of his times. Jones had first-hand knowledge of much of the material included in his “sketches;” a significant portion of the manuscript is autobiographical. But the author had no direct knowledge of the American Revolution, “the times that tried men’s souls.” He wrote the editor of the *Wilmington Chronicle* that, on this topic, he was able to relate only information that he had “been furnished with by others.” Jones probably grew up listening to tales of the Revolution. His father, David Jones, was a “young, Continental officer,” a lieutenant in the Fourth North Carolina Regiment who saw action at Brandywine and Germantown during the 1777 siege of Philadelphia, and wintered at Valley Forge. John D. Jones committed these oral histories to paper in the latter years of his life. To place them into their historical context, a synopsis of the 1781 British expedition to Wilmington opens the paper.

The theater of conflict over America’s independence from England shifted from New Jersey to the southern colonies during the winter of 1778-1779. Thirty-five hundred British

troops landed at Savannah on December 29, 1778. In the spring of 1780 Generals Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Charles Cornwallis, with 8,000 men, besieged Charleston and captured it on May 12. Clinton soon returned to New York, but he left Cornwallis with orders to hold the territory they had won and to extend his control into the interior. In January 1781 Cornwallis began his march through South Carolina that led to his pursuit of General Nathanael Greene's Continental forces across the North Carolina Piedmont, and to their March 15 battle at Guilford Court House.²

Cornwallis knew that he would require a supply depot in the Carolina interior, and that his need would grow greater the further he advanced from Charleston. He selected Cross Creek, now Fayetteville, for that point, and ordered Major James Craig to Wilmington to secure the route. Craig was to seize barges and flatboats between Wilmington and Cross Creek, more than 100 miles up the Cape Fear River, and to stockpile provisions at Cross Creek for Cornwallis's use. Craig's force of 300 left Charleston on January 21, 1781, and reached the Cape Fear estuary four days later. Unfavorable winds and the river's difficult entrance prevented their landing for three days. The inhabitants of Wilmington offered no resistance and surrendered the town. Many fled into the countryside, but others welcomed the British and joined their ranks. Town officials attempted to save supplies and official records by sending them by boat up the Northeast Cape Fear to Heron's Bridge where militia under Colonel Henry Young prepared a defensive position.³

Craig, with 250 troops and two cannon, marched ten miles from Wilmington to Heron's Bridge on January 30. They routed the defenders, destroyed the bridge, and recovered some of the arms, ammunition, and rum the townsfolk had hoped to salvage. But the British did not capture other materiel aboard vessels that burned during the battle. Soon a stalemate developed at Heron's Bridge. During the last week of February a militia force under General Alexander

Lillington re-occupied positions at the river crossing and repaired the bridge. They were too small in number to attack Craig's defenses in Wilmington; likewise the British force was not large enough to dislodge Lillington's troops. The presence of the American militia at Heron's Bridge curtailed Craig's ability to forage provisions from the area north of Wilmington. The militia also forced Craig to keep most of his troops near Wilmington; he could not move against Cross Creek without exposing his position at the port.⁴

Craig's primary objective, to provide a supply depot at Cross Creek, faced obstacles beyond the ones presented by the militia at Heron's Bridge. He discovered that bluffs along the river were held by the Whigs so his route upstream was not secure. Craig could not procure enough flatboats to serve his needs because many were beyond his reach at Cross Creek. He also found the water level of the Cape Fear so low that upstream transportation was difficult. Craig described this situation to Cornwallis in a March 22 letter writing that it was "impracticable" to send supplies to Cross Creek until "the Country is settled."⁵

Cornwallis also faced unexpected developments that altered his plans. After the January 17 defeat of a division of his army at Cowpens, Cornwallis turned to pursue General Daniel Morgan's army in South Carolina. When he resumed his pursuit of Greene, he destroyed his baggage train so he could travel more quickly. Cornwallis was unable to establish reliable communications with Craig. On his April 6 arrival at Cross Creek Cornwallis learned, to his "great mortification," that much-needed supplies were not there; he had to continue his withdrawal to Wilmington for respite. He sent two letters to Wilmington during his march southeast asking in vain that Craig send supplies upstream. The British force "looted indiscriminately" and smothered any enthusiasm among the local Tories who might have wished to join the army.⁶

This looting by Cornwallis's starving troops was one example of how the treatment of both Whig and Tory non-belligerents – by professional soldiers, militia, and irregular partisan forces – deteriorated as the war wore on. Wayne Lee wrote that the British officer corps was divided between those who wanted to redeem the colonials, and those who wanted simply to treat them all as enemies. Some British officers “actively pursue[d] policies of devastation.” Cultural restraints against the killing of civilians gave way to the law of retaliation as both sides committed crimes in what became a bloody civil war. The militias were even more prone to mistreating prisoners, robbing and murdering their enemies, and burning their homes than were the regular soldiery.⁷

The British presence in Wilmington encouraged loyalist militia activity throughout the lower Cape Fear region, and skirmishes between Whigs and Tories became more frequent. With the mobilization of forces, both sides required increased victuals, and foraging parties made frequent raids to secure food and fodder. Craig's force in Wilmington provided a safe haven to which loyalists could repair if they were hard-pressed by the Whigs. While the British force and the Whig militia faced each other, frequent “between the line” actions by individuals or small groups occurred, many of them clashes of foraging parties. Massey reported a singular February incident unrelated to foraging, that of sailors from one of Craig's supporting vessels who were temporarily captured by Whigs. The second of the transcriptions that follow relates several such “between the line” incidents, and illustrates the theme of reprisal that the military activity around Wilmington encouraged.⁸

In addition to fostering Tory activity through the mere presence of his troops, Craig developed a second tactic to demoralize his enemy: the capture of prominent Whigs. Cornelius Harnett, a delegate to the Continental Congress and a founder of the Wilmington-New Hanover Safety Committee, and John Ashe, a brigadier general of the militia, were the most powerful of

those he sought and took. Craig reported the capture of Harnett in a letter to Cornwallis dated April 12, writing that he had ridden with twenty cavalymen “seventy five miles without halting” to pluck Harnett from his refuge in Onslow County. Both Harnett and Ashe suffered ill treatment while in Craig’s custody, and died as a result of their imprisonment. Harnett died on April 28.⁹

Cornwallis reached Wilmington from Cross Creek on April 9, about the same time that the capture of Cornelius Harnett occurred. There is no record of the date on which Harnett was brought into Wilmington “thrown across a horse like a sack of meal,”¹⁰ but knowledge of this date could help confirm another incident. In his April 12 letter Craig wrote that his party had also driven in a hundred head of cattle, and that one of his advance guard had come upon “sixteen Rebels in a house,” all of whom “fell by the bayonet.” This refers to the Rouse House massacre, the subject of the first of the two reminiscences recorded in these pages.

Two letters in the Nathanael Greene papers confirm that Craig wrote about the Rouse House incident. General Lillington on April 9 wrote Greene that he had deployed his light horse to drive off cattle that might otherwise be taken by the British, and that eleven men detailed for this operation “would not Obay their Officers.” They stopped for the night “at a house About Eight Miles of Town, on the main road.” Of the eleven men, the British bayoneted eight and wounded two more.¹¹ In another letter to Greene, dated April 18 from Cross Creek, Colonel Robert Rowan, the clothier general for North Carolina, described “an inhuman piece of Barbarity” committed by the British the “week before last.”

A small party consisting of ten persons, mostly respectable people, were diverting themselves in a public house; pretty late at night they were surprised by the enemy, who rush’d in, and put them all to death, but two who escaped, wounded,

notwithstanding they begged quarter, some of them on their knees, in the most supplicating manner.¹²

The Rouse House massacre made a strong impression on these two officers. It was an example of how far restraint among the participants had fallen – to the murder of supplicants begging for mercy. Major Craig was busy in April, with excursions to capture Whigs and with preparations for Cornwallis's arrival in Wilmington on April 9. Craig, in his April 12 report to his superior, wrote that his advance guard had killed sixteen persons in the action at Rouses. He may have been told about two incidents, and reduced the two actions to one in his report. On the night of the massacre, George Reed and five other Whig militiamen stayed at the widow Colier's house five miles northeast of the Rouse House. Craig's troops also attacked them and captured all six.¹³

Cornwallis stopped briefly in Wilmington, and then marched north for Virginia with 1,400 troops on April 25. Lillington's militia at Heron's Bridge fell back to Kinston on orders from Greene, and all but a small guard dispersed. William Dickson was in the Whig militia that retreated before Cornwallis; in 1784 he wrote a long letter to a kinsman in which he described the British passage through Duplin County.

Horses, cattle and sheep and every kind of stock were driven off from every plantation, corn and forage taken for the supply of the army and no compensation given, houses plundered and robbed, chests, trunks, etc., broke, women and children's clothes, etc., as well as men's wearing apparel and every kind of household furniture taken away. The outrages were committed mostly by a train of loyal refugees . . . We were also distressed by another swarm of beings (not better than harpies). These were women

who followed the army in the character of officers' and soldiers' wives. They were generally considered by the inhabitants to be more insolent than the soldiers.¹⁴

Cornwallis's passage emboldened the Tories to commit further depredations against the Whigs. Craig aided the Tories in this struggle by commissioning individuals as officers in loyalist militias. David Fanning, a colonel of the Randolph and Chatham counties militia, was the most infamous of these individuals. Another, recalled in these reminiscences, was John Gordon, a Wilmington merchant, who as captain commanded Craig's cavalry. At the end of May Craig reported that the "Country is in a glorious situation for cutting one anothers' throats." Tories were "numerous," but Craig was ambivalent about encouraging them because he felt his garrison was too small to provide them protection. A month later Greene received a report from General Jethro Sumner, commander of North Carolina's troops, that Craig "continues his Ravages for thirty and forty Miles up Cape Fear with little or no Opposition." But even with the Tory ascendancy in the wake of Cornwallis's passage, the Whigs engaged in small acts of harassment. The second excerpt from the "Cape Fear Sketches" records that Colonel Thomas Bloodworth took up his sniper's post across the river from Wilmington's Market Street during the first week of July.¹⁵

Craig had orders to evacuate Wilmington when he received news that Cornwallis was in Virginia. But instead of withdrawing, Craig proposed a new operation to his superiors in South Carolina. He did not wish to give up his post because it supported the insurgent loyalist forces in the lower Cape Fear. To bolster his prospect of remaining in Wilmington, he proposed that he field 1,200 men to march into South Carolina to attack Greene from the rear. He would gather this force by sweeping through Tory strongholds of North Carolina, recruiting disaffected loyalists along his route.¹⁶

Craig's superiors authorized his expedition, but they withheld a force Craig expected to command, the troops that Cornwallis had left to recuperate in Wilmington. On August 1 Craig marched north from Wilmington with 250 British troops and eighty loyalists in a scaled-back foray to gather forces to his flag. Dickson wrote that the Whigs were once more "reduced to the utmost extremity." Craig reached New Bern on August 19 with 400 loyalists, and stayed there two days plundering the town and destroying materiel. A few days before the army reached New Bern Captain Gordon fell during an engagement with Lillington's militia. Craig retreated to Wilmington when he learned that Continental troops under General Anthony Wayne were moving toward him from Virginia.¹⁷

A few weeks later a final humiliation galvanized the Whigs into mounting a serious offensive to remove Craig from Wilmington. Six hundred Tories led by David Fanning captured 200 Whigs, including Governor Thomas Burke, in Hillsborough on September 12. Although local militia harried Fanning's march, he delivered his prisoners to Craig on September 23. Shortly after that reversal, General Griffith Rutherford assembled 1,100 Salisbury district militiamen, and marched to Cross Creek where he joined forces with General John Butler's Hillsborough militia. This army defeated the Tories of Hoke and Robeson counties at Raft Swamp on October 15, and then besieged Wilmington. Craig's position was critical; on November 6 he asked Colonel Nisbet Balfour in Charleston for reinforcements and supplies, writing that the town was on two-thirds rations and that he had grain for twenty-five days. Reinforcements did not come to his aid. Before any decisive military action took place, news of Cornwallis's surrender reached the lower Cape Fear, and Craig evacuated Wilmington on November 14.¹⁸

The second reminiscence given here contains details about the final day of Wilmington's British occupation, and about Griffith Rutherford's character. By this account the Whigs

harassed the British even as they embarked on their transports. The Tories who did not evacuate were “in the utmost consternation” over how they would fare once the Whigs recovered the town. They appealed to a “young officer, a native of the Welch tract,” who interceded on their behalf. The lower Cape Fear Tories had reason to be apprehensive about Wilmington’s fall to the Whigs – General Rutherford had a reputation for cruelty. Nathanael Greene wrote Rutherford on October 18 that Greene had received reports “that you are treating the Inhabitants denominated tories with great severity driving them indiscriminately from their dwellings without regard to age or Sex and laying waste their possessions destroying their produce and burning their houses.” He urged Rutherford not to engage in such practices for doing so “will authorize the enemy to retaliate.” Both Whigs and Tories, in Wilmington and throughout the country, suffered greatly from the terrors of the civil war that raged within the larger context of the American Revolution. Some, like Thomas we will meet, were never able to forgive the deeds of those who held the opposite conviction.¹⁹

The author of these reminiscences, born shortly after the close of hostilities, was able to pity the Tories. He differentiated those who remained in the colony and tried to remain neutral; those who held official posts and returned to Britain at the outbreak of hostilities; and those who actively aided the enemy. These reminiscences are from a 214-page holograph titled the “Cape Fear Sketches and Loafer Ramblings by the Author of the Wilmington Whistling Society, etc.” The author is unnamed, but there is strong internal textual evidence to support its attribution to John D. Jones (1790-1854), a Wilmington lawyer, state legislator, banker, actor, and proponent of agricultural improvement. The manuscript resides in the Benjamin Franklin Perry papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina.²⁰

Benjamin Perry was not the author of the “Cape Fear Sketches.” He and the son-in-law of John D. Jones, General Waddy Thompson, were friendly rivals and neighbors in Greenville,

South Carolina, in the 1850s. John D. Jones died in Greenville on June 21, 1854, while visiting his daughter, Cornelia Thompson. The editor hypothesizes that the manuscript became a part of the Perry library sometime after Jones's death. Mrs. Sam Rice Baker of Montgomery, Alabama, Perry's great-granddaughter, brought the manuscript to Chapel Hill in 1941. She returned to Alabama with the original. The University of North Carolina has only the microfilm and a copy derived from the microfilm. Although several generations of Perry descendants believed the "Cape Fear Sketches" to be the work of their ancestor, it is not.

The document opens with two letters describing the author's travel from Wilmington to Charleston, then through South Carolina to Flat Rock and Asheville, North Carolina, at some date no earlier than 1851. Two sections follow containing Jones's recollections of the War of 1812, and oral histories that he collected from the Revolutionary period. The material given here comprises a substantial portion of this section of the "Cape Fear Sketches." Humorous short stories describing colorful Wilmingtonians make up about half the manuscript, and the author published many of these sketches – anonymously – in Wilmington newspapers.

In sum, the "Cape Fear Sketches" is a remarkable source of material written by a highly literate author during a period of North Carolina history that is little studied – the state's "Rip van Winkle" period – when many natives left the state to pursue their fortunes elsewhere. We are fortunate that John D. Jones did not leave his native Wilmington, but instead recorded a rich and very readable account of people and events from this period of the state's history.

Editorial Method

Every editor pursues two primary goals. First and foremost, editors strive to transcribe an author's text faithfully and without editorial intrusions that alter or obscure the original work.

Second, editors endeavor to make authors' words easily understandable. These two goals can sometimes be at odds, and when this happens the editor must strike a balance between them.

John D. Jones was an articulate writer who employed very evocative and moving prose. But the complex sentences, the punctuation, and the capitalizations of an 1850s author are not those readily assimilated by today's reader. Jones told stories, and the editor labored to make sure that his style of writing did not impede his story-telling. To this end the editor expanded the text in the following particulars.

The editor retained the author's spelling (for example, "dessolate," "endeavouring"), strikeouts, and ampersands; transcribed underlining in the original in italic, "*meagre profusion*," and double underlines in small capitals, "MASSACRE AT ROUSES;" but replaced the author's tailed "s" with a regular "s."

The author's use of capital letters was inconsistent. Jones sometimes closed a sentence with a dash, and opened the following sentence with a small letter. The editor removed such a dash, added a period, and began the next sentence with a capital letter. Where Jones began a proper name with a small letter, the editor capitalized it.

Jones used commas frequently, sometimes even separating noun from verb. But at other points, the editor felt the text needed an additional comma to set off a phrase. The editor both removed commas and added them to improve the flow of the author's sentences.

Jones did not always mark direct quotes; the editor added missing quotation marks. The editor regularized the author's paragraph indentions, and brought superscripts down to the line of text. An underline in the text denotes the author's superscripts and other caret-ed insertions.

The editor sparingly supplied letters within words (for example, "he[a]d," "sel[d]om"). In the rare instance where the editor added a word to the text, the addition is given in Roman

type within square brackets. The editor noted a conjectural transcription with a question mark and enclosed it within square brackets, “[desceit?”].

Revolutionary Reminiscences from the “Cape Fear Sketches,” p. 151-161

The Massacre at Rouses²¹

An incident of the Revolutionary War --

To Asa A. Brown,²² Esq.

Dr Sir

You were pleased to ask me on a certain occasion, If I had any revolutionary reminiscences of a local nature? If so, you would be glad to have them related. As I came into the world long after “the times that tried men’s souls,” I can relate nothing of my personal knowledge; but only detail such facts as I have been furnished with by others.

There was a remarkable event, which took place in the vicinity of Wilmington, & which I am astonished never to have seen recorded in any history; the leading facts of which are within the knowledge and recollection of many men now living.

I think it was sometime about the first of July 1819, my business calling me to Newberne,²³ I set out from Wilmington soon after the usual breakfast hour; it is well known what a dreary and dessolate road it was in those days. When I had proceeded on my journey about eight miles, finding the heat rather oppressive, I alighted under the shade of a very ancient mulberry tree, which stood near the road side, giving some indications [that] a house had once stood hard by. It was a spot of extreme sterility, being a deep barren sand, no sign of culture anywhere nigh; tufts of wiregrass, and a few prickly pears were scattered in *meagre profusion* here and there over the area; a few stunted [struk?] oaks, and dwarfish pines in the distance, and two timeworn live oaks to the right, were the only prominent symptoms of vegetation to relieve the eye from the monotony of an arid desert: the stillness and solitude of the place, relieved only by the grunting of a few poverty stricken swine, regaling themselves with such fallow mulberries as the charitable winds had detached from the tree; and a shrill mouthed locust, exultingly

shedding his skin on an adjacent pine. Stretched at length under the tree, my he[a]d supported and pillowed on a root, I commended myself to a dreamy slumber inspired by the dreary solitude of the place.

“Good day, young friend,” said a voice that startled me from my recumbent posture; looking up I saw a good looking old man with a wallet on his shoulder containing apparently a few ears²⁴ of corn. I returned his salutation very courteously, and invited him to follow my example in making a pillow of the projecting roots of the tree. “A warm day this,” said he stretching himself by my side; “I have been searching for a few stray shoats,²⁵ but fear they have got into Holly Shelter bay,²⁶ some scattering prongs of which are to be found in this neighborhood; or that they have fallen into the paws of bears, which are sometimes troublesome hereabouts.” I expressed surprise that bears were to be found in an old settled country like this. “O, yes,” said he, “they come down upon us from the main swamp, and commit great havoc among our hogs. Holly Shelter is a vast bay or dismal swamp, stretching away towards Newberne 30 or 40 miles long, and nearly as broad; it is hard to dislodge beasts of prey from its vast recesses; hence they pay us periodical visits, and are sometimes the terror of the inhabitants living on the borders.” I began to discover that my new acquaintance was a very inteligent man, a fact I little dreamed of at first, & felt a desire to continue our conversation, begun under such pleasing auspices. I observed to him that we were now resting in a very desolate looking place. “Yes,” says he, “and on this spot was enacted one of the most horrid & savage tragedies of the revolutionary war, long known as the MASSACRE AT ROUSES;”²⁷ here the old man struck his forehead with his hand, and a convulsive shudder agitated his frame; “You are no doubt,” he continued, “surprised at my emotions, but I had a beloved brother murdered here by the infernal British, led and piloted by one of those imps of hell, an infamous Tory. My father and family, who were well off in the world, were reduced to begging and want, and driven into the fastnesses

of Holly Shelter bay; where they encountered hardships worse than death, surrounded by wolves and pant[h]ers, which were lambs compared to the more savage & wilder beasts of England, and the prowling bloodstained Tories. The British themselves would sel[d]om have committed any depredations in the surrounding country, had they not been piloted by the Tories; I abjure & abhor the very name, I cannot look with complacency on their descendents even to the 3^d & 4th generation;²⁸ but when the hand of one is presented to me in salutation, an instinctive chill and shudder comes over my frame; perhaps I sin in carrying my prejudices so far, but the scriptures tell us, the sins of the father shall be visited on the children to the 3rd & 4th generation which may be some extenuation of my fault.”

I told him I partook of his feelings towards a certain description of Tories, but notwithstanding the decree of scripture, I thought the descendents were to be pitied, & not dealt with too roughly – that I certainly would not place them on a par with the descendants of virtuous Whigs, so far as regards the offices of honor & trust in the country; unless, by some redeeming act of patriotism or public service, they had obliterated the stigma of descent; yet I would treat them with ordinary civility, and would not pain them by calling to mind and twitting²⁹ them with the misdeeds of their fathers.

“I cannot blame you for being lenient and charitable towards them,” responded he; “but you have not suffered as I have suffered; you have not wept over the body of a beloved brother, mangled and torn, sent to his long account suddenly, & in the morning of his days; you have not seen your aged parents and little brothers and sisters reduced to shadows by famine; driven into the recesses of a dismal swamp, depending for subsistence on a few birds and squirrels, that chance threw in their way; and not safe even in this trackless bay, for those hell hounds would sometimes discover the retreat of the Whig families, and bring upon them the bayonets and sabres of a ferocious bloodthirsty soldiery.”

I observed to him that during the revolutionary war there were three classes of Tories: for instance, those who had all their relations living in England at the time who held offices of trust under the British government, and were entirely dependent for their subsistence on the fidelity with which they were executed; that these returned to England after the declaration of independence and had never committed any barbarous act towards the patriots, that many returned after the peace, and were admitted to the rights of citizenship; & that I was disposed to treat such with lenity & forbearance. There were also many Scotch emigrants, who had fled from their country after the battle of Culloden,³⁰ seeking refuge & peace in our country; that they had suffered so much from rebellion, the very name struck them with awe, and had been so severely chastised by England, that they thought her invincible; and our revolution absolute madness, insuring the destruction of all concerned; altho' they hated England as their deadliest foe, yet absolute despair induced them to join her, fearing to remain neutral; lest their late rebellion might render them objects of suspicion. They were really subjects for commiseration, and I would throw the mantle of charity over them and their descendants; and it may be further urged in their favour, that they were neither mischeivous nor cruel, rendering our foes such assistance only as they were driven to by hard necessity; but there was one description towards whom I participate in all your feeling tho perhaps not so deeply. I mean those narrow souls who loved wealth more than liberty or country; to preserve which, and ensure the favour of our tormentors, they joined in the most relentless persecution of their quondam friends and neighbors, dissolving all the ties of kindred and country. To which I would add another description of cowardly abject villains who, thinking Britain the stronger side, joined our enemies thro fear and the love of gain, and meanly plundered, & inhumanly murdered their neighbors.

“Perhaps you are right,” says he. “I did not think of the distinctions, but was disposed to blend them into a homogeneous undivided mass.”

I now asked him to relate to me some of the particulars of the Massacre. “I would do it,” says he, “to oblige you, but had rather avoid it, as the bare mention and allusion to the subject overwhelms me with indignation and sorrow.

“I do not recollect the year precisely, but the British held possession of Wilmington – a long time, under the command of Major Craig.³¹ They had been much harassed by several gallant spirits among the Whigs, who hung upon the outskirts of the town, particularly by Captain James Love³² of Sampson County and William Jones³³ of the Welch tract³⁴ near South Washington,³⁵ two of the most daring men that ever lived; and a young Continental officer who had been in the battles of Brandywine & Germantown,³⁶ and who was then on the recruiting service, and with great exertions was endeavouring to organize the raw militia into a somewhat disciplined way.

“Love an[d] Jones mounted on swift horses would ride up to the borders of the town, and sometimes dash into the town itself, shooting down the sentinels and such of the military as came within the reach of their rifle barrelled carbines; and instead of flying directly to the woods, would wait patiently ~~first~~ in the suburbs for the British dragoons: keeping just far enough ahead to be out of the reach of their pistols, and as they decoyed one or two of their numbers in advance of the rest, turned suddenly upon them, giving the contents of their carbines, or cutting them down with their broad swords manufactured in the blacksmith shops of the country.

“One of them when asked why they were so daring? replied, ‘No danger at all, we know the speed and bottom of all their horses & they have not one to match us; besides we soon tire them down at sand shuffling.’³⁷ They are not used to it like Small Hopes & Hector’ (the names of their two horses). They tormented the British to such a degree that they used to say one was the

devil, and the other his lieutenant, and long after the revolution the survivor went by the name of 'Devil Bill Jones' (the British sobriquet).

“Love and the young officer mentioned before laid a plan to capture Major Craig; and no doubt would have succeeded, had the men employed been of the like resolution with themselves. The plan was this; the major for exercise was in the habit of riding out on the Newberne road every evening, accompanied by Captain Gordon,³⁸ and escorted by twelve or fifteen dragoons. Now the two friends collected an undisciplined set of 25 or 30 men picked up promiscuously from the sound & neighbourhood³⁹ & laid in ambush in a thick swamp just on this side of Walkers bridge,⁴⁰ about a mile from town. Their orders to the men were to this effect: ‘When the company pass the bridge, and enter upon the causeway, they will fall into single files, so that each of you can pick his man; Major Craig & Capt. Gordon will be at their head; you will let them pass; you may know them by the epaulettes on their shoulders, but make sure of all the rest; and then rush out and secure the two officers, after shooting their horses.’

“All succeeded very well, so far as regarded the posting of the men; but when the red coats came in full view on the bridge and they heard the clattering of the horses’ hoofs, the undisciplined crew, who had never seen service, and some of them never a red coat before, were seized with a panic, broke ground and retreated into the interior of the swamp; but very noiselessly, as if impelled by instinct, leave [leaving] Love and the young man alone at the perilous station. Love, indignant at their conduct, and following the dictates of his noble soul, raised his rifle and aimed at Major Craig as he passed, saying in a subdued tone to his companion, ‘I’ll take that fellow down any how.’ The latter seized his hand and entreated him to desist; that it would be madness to lose their lives so foolishly; for they could not possibly have escaped the charge of the Dragoons.

“Love was a man much given to frolic & fun, and one cold night in winter he proposed to some young men of a like temperament, to have what is commonly called ‘*a bit of a spree*’⁴¹ at Rouses, having heard he had received a supply of brandy the day previous. The house stood about thirty yards from where we are now resting. He proposed it too to the young Continental officer; but having learned prudence from the severe discipline in the army, he declined it, & told Love of the danger of the procedure. We were so situated that we dare not sleep in a house, but usually sought repose under the shelter of a tree, sometimes among its limbs; for the Tories, like the jackall hunting out prey for the lion, would be sure to know it, and conduct the British soldiers to murder us in our sleep. Knowing this his friend told Love that the British would be upon him. ‘But,’ says he, ‘I promise you to be back by 10 o’clock, and those fellows never appear until a few hours before daylight in the morning;’ and away he went with eleven others. They met and caroused, drinking freely as men would do, who had lost their homes and are turned out on the bleak world; seeking a short oblivion of their cares, thinking no doubt they would return to the young officer’s camp at the appointed hour; but as their meriment increased, they forgot the flight of time, and about half past twelve they all betook themselves to rest on the floor of the dwelling, their saddles for pillows.

“I was by chance passing that way about 9 o’clock the same night, and hearing a merry making, and finding my brother among them, young man like, I joined in; but did not drink so freely as the rest. Not liking the berth on the floor, I left the house, and ascended this mulberry tree as I had often done before; stretching myself between two limbs which projected in close order; resting my head and back against the tree. I see now the marks where they once stood; but the limbs have disappeared with age, giving place like human existence to younger sprouts. I soon fell into a gentle slumber; I do not know how long I remained in this state, when I was suddenly awakened by the trampling of horses, and rattling of steel scabbards. I knew at once it

must be the British lighthouse;⁴² the house was immediately surrounded, and torches which they brought in their hands lighted up and threw a brilliant glare around. I saw about 60 or 70 men, some equipped as foot soldiers with muskets & bayonets, but the most of them were dragoons; the foot soldiers I had conjectured rode behind them, or on separate horses furnished for the occasion. I saw among them a notorious Tory who had acted as pilot. All was calm and noiseless in the house, the slumbers of the inmates not yet disturbed. The commanding officer, who was a ferocious looking fellow, in a low tone of voice gave the order to dismount. 'Link horses' was the next; the horses were taken a few paces in the rear, forming separate rings, with the bridles attached to each other, and in the custody of two or three soldiers who had been detached for the purpose. Still there was no noise nor movement in the house. The Captain, just above a low whisper, ordered a crowbar which had been brought for the purpose to wrench open the door; when I heard a sudden noise within, as if made by a man springing suddenly on his feet; before the crowbar was at work, I saw the door fly open, and the giant form of Captain Love in full view; he held his saddle on his left arm, serving as a shield; and on his right hand, he wielded his ponderous sword; no fear was impressed upon his countenance but with a lionlike courage, quicker than thought he sprung amidst his enemies, and seemed to take them by surprise; their sabres flew from their sheaths, the bayonets were levelled at his breast; nothing daunted, he laid about him with superhuman strength, and many a red coat did he tumble on the ground before him; cutting & thrusting, and pressing forward thro the dense mass, which had obstructed his way, until he approached just where we are now reposing; having cut his way full 30 yards, when he fell lifeless; lifting up his hand (with a convulsive effort) which contained the broken stump of a sword as if to give a parting blow to his foes; few of the others got beyond the threshold of the door; but were barbarously murdered, either in their sleep, or in that middle state

between sleeping and waking – for upon giving the assault the word was ‘no quarters to the damned rebels.’

“About daylight I heard something stumble in the yard just under where I was perched. ‘My God! it is just as I expected,’ said a voice which I recognized for the young Continental officer, who had stumbled over the body of Captain Love. ‘Is that you, Lieutenant,’ says I? ‘Who are you, and ~~what~~ [where] are you that calls my name?’ (seizing the handle of his sword, and looking anxiously around him). ‘Just where a raccoon or squirrel ought to be,’ was the reply; ‘the British have driven us from our houses, and we occupy the premises of the squirrels, without ever saying “kind sirs by your leave.” Nothing more than following the vocation of the world, the strong drive out the weak, but tis a noble edifice at last the weak have, look what a roof it has, It is the blue vault of heaven, and we are lighted to our rest by innumerable glittering lamps, which would puzzle the best mechanic of them all to immitate.’ ‘I understand you, Thomas.⁴³ Come down and let us see the worst of last night’s work.’

“I descended and joined him, immediately; he was bending over the body of Captain Love, and seemed deeply affected. ‘Here lies,’ said he, ‘the tenement of one of the noblest hearts that ever beat in the bosom of man, he was my friend and I loved him dearly, had his bravery been tempered with prudence he might have longer lived, a rankling thorn in the side of our enemies; but I always feared his rashness would have this end, for he knew no fear, and had no regard for his personal safety. Brave, generous, and noble, his watch word was his country’s freedom, and detestation for British tyranny.’ As we approached the house we passed several dead bodies, among them I recognized my poor brother; he was covered with wounds and quite dead; an empty carbine was clinched in his hands which he had dealt in blows ~~upon~~ on his enemies: Upon entering the house what a scene presented itself! The floor covered with dead bodies & almost swimming in blood, & battered brains smoking on the walls; In the fire place

sat shivering over a few coals, an aged woman surrounded by several small children, who were clinging to her body, petrified with terror. We spoke to her, but she knew us not, tho familiar acquaintances; staring wildly around, and uttering a few incoherent sentences, she pointed at the dead bodies; reason had left its throne. Leaving the house, we followed ~~the [massacrerers?]~~ the tracks of horses in the direction of Wilmington; traces of blood were everywhere seen along the road, indicating that men badly wounded had been borne along; and that the messy broad sword of Captain Love had ~~done~~ made its mark, and done good service; and affording the grateful evidence that the bloodhounds & worse than wild beasts of England did not leave their lair unscathed.”

Revolutionary Reminiscences from the “Cape Fear Sketches,” p. 45-61

Incidents of the revolutionary war!

Negr[o]head point!

Wilmington “long time ago”

There is a tongue of land called Negrohead point,⁴⁴ formed by the confluence of the North West⁴⁵ & North East⁴⁶ branches of the Cape Fear river, situated some four or five hundred yards in a North western direction from Market Street dock,⁴⁷ in the town of Wilmington, North Carolina. It received this appellation from a tradition that, in the early settlement of the country, the head of a famous Negro outlaw⁴⁸ had been erected on a stake at this point as a salutary warning to evil doers; said outlaw having committed sundry acts of theft and murder in this and the adjacent counties. It is at present the site of a steam saw mill,⁴⁹ whose spacious front painted white, and tall chimney belching forth a dense column of dark smoke, tipped with voluminous folds, rolled together, expanding in curls, and floating off in graceful detachments, present a no unpleasing aspects. The area beyond, containing several hundred acres, is now the rice farm of SAMUEL R. POTTER, Esquire.⁵⁰

This place is celebrated & rendered classical by having been the theatre of one of the most remarkable incidents of the revolutionary war.⁵¹ It was at that time an uncultivated swamp, or forest of tall cypress trees, intermingled with an undergrowth of loblolly-bay, rattan and bamboo briers. On the spot where the little office painted white, and in front of the main building, now stands, once grew a lofty cypress, the monarch of the swamp. It is said to have been seventy feet to the first limb, seven feet in diameter and hollow throughout containing within its base and circumference a chamber large enough to accommodate a small family – the body in the exterior appearing perfectly sound, with no visible entrance to the cavity. The hollow was discovered in this wise. A Welch gentleman, COL. THOMAS BLUDWORTH⁵² by name,

had been on a fox chase one morning, when the dogs pursued a fox to this point – and suddenly disappeared. The Col. could distinctly hear them barking, but could not determine their whereabouts; at length it occurred to him they must be concealed in this tree, but [he] could find no visible entrance into its trunk; retracing his steps some forty or fifty feet, he found the leaves and earth scratched up as if by dog's feet, and an aperture in the earth; and [a] cavern or tunnel large enough to admit a man on his hands & feet leading in the direction of the tree. Nothing doubting he followed the trail and dived into the cavern. He was suddenly ushered into a spacious chamber, and found the dogs mangling the carcass of a fox; which had sought a refuge in the hollow tree.

A thought suddenly flashed across the mind of Col. B- that it might be easily converted into a citadel for annoying the British, who then held possession of Wilmington; he returned home and never breathed to a human being his discovery; for such was the perilous state of the times, that at most the inmost thoughts of the Whigs were conveyed (in anticipation of their deeds) to the British by the infamous, prowling Tories.

The town of Wilmington was at this time confined to very narrow limits, the buildings concentrated in the hollow west of the sand hills, and resting on the river; the old Episcopal Church⁵³ being the extreme limit to the east; the rock spring⁵⁴ to the north and the Cameron house⁵⁵ just beyond the present residence of DOCTOR EVERET⁵⁶ to the South. I do not know the number of men that held possession; but it must have been a strong garrison; as they frequently sent detachments of light horse into the country on marauding excursions; whose footsteps were marked with cruelty & outrage. At length they capped the climax of their cruelty by the murder of eleven men, whom they fell upon in their sleep at Rouses, eight miles from town on the Newberne road, led on as usual by a Tory. Horror and indignation pervaded the land at the murderous deed, and the Whigs as one man cried aloud for vengeance and revenge on their

merciless enemies. Did any of the British light horse go afterwards on a foraging party? They were killed off in detail by young men lying in ambush, concealed behind fences; or in the borders of bays & swamps inaccessible to cavalry. Their sentinels posted out on the sand hills were shot down by horsemen who vigilantly watched the motions of the British; dashing even into the town itself in broad day light, sabring and shooting down such redcoats as came in their way. The British were thus harrassed for many weeks, when a young officer, a native of the Welch tract in New Hanover County, returned from South Carolina with a troop of cavalry, where the war had been raging; having distinguished themselves in the battles of Eutaw & Cowpens.⁵⁷

A particular friend of this officer, who he loved as a brother, had been massacred at Rouses, and he vowed vengeance on his murderers. An old gentleman, now no more, who was a perfect chronicle of the times, has often related to me scenes of the encounters & conflicts of the troop of cavalry with the military who held possession of Wilmington. They would ride down as far as the old Episcopal Church, and display themselves to their enemies, and pretend suddenly to retreat; with a view of drawing out the British cavalry; who nothing loth would mount and pursue. When turning suddenly their faces to the foe, would pour upon them a volley from their carbines, which were short guns slung at their backs; and drawing their hangers as they called their swords, furiously rush upon them – hewing them down & compelling such as escaped their desperate charge, rapidly to retreat into the town. The enemy had erected batteries around the sand hills⁵⁸ (some of the cannon & balls partially covered with sand may be seen at this day). This company of light horse would charge upon the batteries & spike the cannon. Attacked on all sides from sand hill & swamp his majesty's forces at length grew sick at heart, and determined to evacuate the town. Transport ships were riding at anchor in the river; and early one morning they commenced carrying their plan into execution.⁵⁹

The young Welshman received intelligence overnight of their purpose, and was determined to give them a parting salutation. Before day, ~~say~~ says my informant – who was an eyewitness, the army was in motion; boats lined the wharves; baggage upon baggage; dragged down and conveyed to the ships, riding at anchor in the stream. About daybreak the fife and drum were heard, and company after company, headed by their respective officers, marched in solid columns thro' the streets, leaving their horses behind; and had most of them reached the wharf, & were busily embarking. "I was standing," says he, "~~about [xxxxx?]~~ near where the old Court house⁶⁰ used to stand, just as the sun was rising; and looking up Market Street in the direction of the old church;⁶¹ when I saw a cloud of dust arising on the hill; in a moment the trampling of horses was heard all around me. It was the Whig light horse, who came thundering down the street, and at full speed. There was a noted Tory who had lagged behind the embarking columns, not dreaming of danger. He seemed petrified with fear as the cavalry approached, and in a state of apparent mental halucination walked forth with his hand stretched out, as if to salute the troop. A young man left the ranks, drew his hanger, rushed upon him, and with one blow by a vertical cut laid his head open, the divided parts falling on each shoulder." This Tory had hung that young man's father with a grape vine. The name of the young man was Thomas Tyer.⁶² All but the rearguard had embarked, one column alone had not reached the spot. The Whig cavalry dashed thro this like lightning, hacking & hewing to the right and left, receiving in return a scattering fire from the broken column, which did but little mischief; slightly wounding two or three of the horsemen. The retreating enemy had now all reached their shipping in the harbour, when a cannonade was opened upon the town, but it was too late, the light horse had disappeared.

A distressing scene now followed. The Tories who remained in the town were in the utmost consternation; looking forward to nothing less than death, or the deprivation of all they

possessed as the reward of their crimes. Genl RUTHERFORD,⁶³ who had sworn vengeance against them, was approaching at the head of a large body of Militia. They now all gathered around the Welsh captain, who was as humane as he was brave, and implored his mercy and protection from RUTHERFORD'S men. After giving them a severe reprimand, he was touched with compassion, and placed a Dragoon at the door of each to protect their families; he could not however prevent the enraged soldiers from placing the male principals of those families in a pen made of rails,⁶⁴ like a common hog pen, near the Episcopal church, where they were exhibited to the public gaze, and received the scoffing taunts of boys.

It may be said in mitigation that there were many called Tories in Wilmington that were not intrinsically such; never having perpetrated any outrage upon the Whigs; but for the want of nerve were afraid to join the revolutionists, and had helpless families dependent ~~upre~~ upon them. They were rather neutrals than malignant Tories – for which latter class I never had, have not now, and never can have the least charity whatever. But let us return to the cypress tree and Negrohead point.

The family of the Bludworths were one of a Welch colony who settled and established themselves many years before the revolution near South Washington in the county of New Hanover, ~~North Carolina~~. This colony is said to have been patronized by the celebrated Sir WILLIAM JONES,⁶⁵ himself a Welchman & at that time called the most enlightened man in Europe. The old colonists used to exhibit his letters to them with much pride & satisfaction, expressing for him an affectionate regard. They were poor, but not unenlightened; industrious and moral; with strong national feelings; regarding themselves as the pure and original Britons, whom the Anglo Saxon race had driven from their homes and despoiled of their property; they therefore held the English in utter abhorrence; and when the war of the revolution broke out, joined the patriots to a man. It used to be a common saying among the Whigs, that you might as

soon expect to ~~find~~ discover a mare's nest, as to find a Welch Tory. They furnished many a gallant spirit for the contest; and it was not to be expected that amid the general ~~cry for~~ ~~vengeance~~ excitement and cry for vengeance, after the massacre at Rouses, the Welch would be passive and idle spectators.

The Blutworths were all mechanical genuses, a hereditary trait in the family. Like Tubal Cain⁶⁶ they were particularly cunning in the working of metals: they manufactured sword blades, pikes, pistols and the very best of rifles. It occurred to COL. BLUDWORTH when he discovered the hollow cypress tree, that he could make a rifle that would carry with accuracy a ~~rifle that was~~ two ounce ball to the dock of Market Street. He accordingly set to work and made a huge rifle of uncommon calibre & length, & practiced shooting at a target the distance he supposed this tree to be from Market dock, having an accurate eye for the mensuration of distances. The experiment succeded to his wishes; drawing the sketch of a human figure on a barn door, he never failed to lodge a ball in its body every shot; but he kept his intentions a profound secret from all.

One fine day in July he says to his son, TIM,⁶⁷ then a small lad, and to JIM PAGET,⁶⁸ a lath of an urchin in his employ, "Come boys, let us see if we can't start a fox or tree a raccoon this morning; but as it may be a long hunt suppose we take some PROG⁶⁹ along with us." So he loads two wallets with provisions, placing them on the shoulders of the boys, and took Old Bess, (so he had named the rifle) on *his* shoulder, an auger and large jug to hold water in his hands, and set out for Negrohead point; entering a canoe on the NoEast river. When [they] arrived at the aperture which led to the hollow of the tree, he disclosed his plans to the boys. "Well, boys, yonder cypress tree is to be our home for several days to come, and perhaps it may be our everlasting home. I want to take possession of it, it contains a large hollow capable of lodging us comfortably; we must erect a little scaffold, and make an opening in the tree fronting Market

dock, where the British are in the habit of assembling. This opening must be big enough to admit the muzzle of Old Bess, and when she goes off in that direction with the right charge of powder and lead, somebody's head may ache, but not ours; at least the hardest must fend off. Now if you think you can stand to it without flinching, say so; if not, say so, and you can return home and old Tom will try his luck alone." The boys gave three cheers & said they would stand by him to the last. They now dived into the aperture, and were soon into the hollow of the tree. TIM commenced boring a hole to admit Old Bess, standing on the shoulder of his father, & supported by JIM PAGET. A scaffolding was in a short time erected from pieces of timber brought in from the swamp, and additional holes bored high up in the trunk of the tree to admit more light & air. Old Bess was soon soon brought into battery, and ranged in proper position. Now there were several bay trees in front which completely concealed the lower part of the cypress, and by cutting away a few limbs & leaves, a full view was given of the British on Market wharf. It so happens that in Summer, the wind sets almost uniformly up the river, (being from south to north) from 10 o'clock in the morning to near sun down, serving to bear away the smoke of the rifle in a northerly direction & among the cypress trees & thick bays; deadening the report and concealing it from the enemy.

The morning of the 4th of July, the day of independence, was fixed upon for Old Besses' introduction to his majesty's loyal subjects. "You see, boys," says Col B., "that group of Britishers with their red coats, standing before NELSON'S liquor store⁷⁰ on Market wharf? Now I'll just dispatch a two ounce ball, civilly to enquire what they are doing there this morning, and politely to ask after the health of Major CRAIG & that infernal Tory, CAPT. GORDON of the dragoons." Crack! went the rifle. "See! by blood," says TIM, "there is a man down; and four men are lifting him into the shop." "Very good," says the Col. coolly wiping out the gun, filling the charge with powder, emptying it carefully into the muzzle, taking out a patch from the

breach, rubbing it in the tallow box, placing it under the ball at the muzzle, and carefully ramming it home. "Fix my seat, TIM, & I'll try and send another into the shop, to look after the first." Another report of the rifle. "I'll be darned to small flinders," says JIM PAGET, "if another ain't down and see they are bearing the red coat into the shop." Utter consternation seemed to prevail on the wharf, men running to & fro' some pointing one way, and some another, but no one suspecting the secret source of their annoyance. The drums began to beat to arms, the fifes to squeal, muskets & bayonets gleaming thru the streets, all uproar tumult and confusion; but all in vain! They were struck down by an unknown and invisible hand. As if impelled by fate, a column of soldiers now marched down to the wharf, colours flying, drums beating, and fifes discoursing most martial music. "Kurnil," says Jim, "suppose you let me try my hand this time at yon pretty flock of red pigeons?" "But, Jim," says the Col., "do you think you can hold the gun steady?" "To be sure I can; tis true my shanks nor my arms are none of the biggest, but I think I can do that thing."

The Col. surrendered to JIM, who taking steady aim drew trigger. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," there was a universal fluttering in the dove cote; the column deployed and scattered in every direction, dragging along a slain or wounded man. JIM, elated with his success, began to indulge in a little ribaldry. "Kurnil, Old Bess must have been rude and offensive to them thar folks, they seem to cut her acquaintance, & not fond of her society; she's been imprudent to them. No doubt for I've allers hearn, they are mighty well bred clever folks, and don't like rough shod rebel missionaries to come preachin' among them." "But see! JIM," says the Col., "they are taking to their boats, and we may have to leave here in double quick time. Wait and see." The boats were rowed across the river to the ferry landing on the opposite side; the men divided, some penetrated the swamp on the left, some on the right, having called a council & adjudging the shot must have come from the swamp opposite Market dock. No boat

approaching Negrohead point, from which it was deemed impossible a rifle ball could reach them; being staggered in their minds, that no report could be heard, and no smoke discovered. The Col. calmly withdrew Old Bess from the battery, & leant her carefully against the side of the hollow tree. “Now boys, this will do for this first day’s work, and having paid our respects to the outer, lets try and comfort the inner man.” The contents of the wallets were spread before them, to which with keen appetites they did ample justice. The shadows of night now gathered around them, when our gallant adventurers having finished their repast, addressed themselves to sleep on rush beds, which had been gathered for the purpose, on the borders and marshes of the river.

Upon awakening next morning, they could discover no one stirring on Market wharf. A deathlike stillness seemed to pervade the town. Presently the drum and fife struck up the morning reveillie; and the usual hum & bustle were heard in the streets; but still no one approached Market wharf, which had been the theatre for the display of Bess’s prowess, the day before.

“What, ye have got shy, have ye?” says JIM, “wait till grog time, which with these Britishers is allers about 11 o’clock (for they say the sun rises an hour too late in this country) and if you don’t see NELSON’S liquor shop crowded with red coats; then call me DAVY RAZOR, (a purty sharp name) & a liar to boot. We need be in no hurry, for the wind won’t set fairly up the river before that time.” Sure enough JIM proved no false prophet in Israel; for just as that hour arrived; several red coats were seen gliding rapidly into the shop, as if fearful they would be shot down in their transit. It now approached near 12 O’clock when meeting with no molestation, they became more confident and assembled as usual, in groups before the door. “Kurnil,” says JIM, “suppose you introduced Bess among them again?” No sooner said than done; Crack! went the rifle, and another prostrate Briton was carried in. The gun is reloaded. A dragoon came to water his horse at the dock. “Kurnil,” continued Jim, “that’s a mighty purty feather in that thar

fellers cap, I think a leetli wetting would improve it, try and dip it in the river.” Another blast from the rifle, and the dragoon & plume lay in the ~~river~~ water. He is hurriedly borne up the street. The drums beat to arms again, boatmen are sent to scour the swamp on the opposite side; but returned with the same result as before.

Our adventurers amused [amused] themselves with this pastime for more than a week, when a prowling Tory informed the British, that old TOM BLUDWORTH had been missing from home for some time past; that he took with him a large rifle which he had recently manufactured, and no doubt he was hid somewhere in the swamps about Wilmington; & that *he* was the author of all this mischief: that it was possible, tho not probable, Negrohead point was the place of concealment, and advised to give it a thorough search, to cut down all the undergrowth, and some of the cypress trees, so as to afford no hiding places for the d--d rebels.

“Tim,” says Col. Bludworth one morning early, “are not those boats steering for this place?” “I think they be, father.” “Shall we retreat, or wait the result?” “Why,” says Jim Paget, “if Tim will only shut up that thar hole, where Old Bess peeps out when she wants to pry into other people’s business, I think we might as well stay here; for it will take good eyes; much better than ther’n, I guess, to look inter this here holler.” Jim’s advice was taken, and the hole ingeniously closed up. In the mean time the boats approached, and landed twenty men at the point, who proceeded instantly with axes to cut away the undergrowth, and some of the cypress trees. It was late in the afternoon before they got to the cypress where our heroes lay concealed. “Well,” says a soldier, as he struck his axe into it; “as it is now almost sundown, suppose we let this huge fellow stand until morning. It is necessary to cut it down, it is so large as to obstruct the view into the swamp beyond.” “It will be an Herculean labour,” says an officer, not suspecting it was hollow. “Be it so, and let ten axes encounter it at sunrise on the morrow.”

The inmates of the tree, who had thought their last hour approaching, now began to breathe more freely, when they overheard this discussion, and a prospect of long life opened before them, not doubting they could effect their escape the coming night. The officers called off the men, and returned to town; all but the ten that were to be employed in the charitable service next morning of removing the tree. These latter retired to a large yawl floating at the point; spread over it an awning, and unceremoniously went to sleep, ~~leaving~~ [leaving] three sentinels, (viz) one posted at the yawl, one, a few hundred yards up the North west river, and another about the same distance up the North east; near where the old ferry landing used to be.

There is a small recess in the river, concealed by rushes, where our adventurers had left the canoe which was to serve them in time of need; this recess was within a few feet of where the No east Sentinel was placed; to reach it unobserved they deemed impossible. They had even thoughts of creeping up, and tomahawking him at his post. Fortunately, they had no need of this bloody alternative; for having left the tree unobserved, *Jim* went forward to reconnoiter. He approached, and got within ten yards of the sentinel, opening noiselessly the rushes; when ~~as ill luck would have it~~, a rotten rattan snapped short in his hand as he endeavoured to thrust it aside. “Who goes there?” cried the sentinel, presenting his piece in the direction of the sound. *Jim* who had got his diploma for mimicking the voices of sundry animals wild and tame, answered with a grunt, the facsimile of a piney woods hog. “O, blast your long snout,” says the sentinel, “I might have known it was you, for who the devil would be fool enough to be eat up with musquittoes travelling in the swamp this time of night? There will be but little use for you tonight,” says he addressing his gun, and resting it on a stump; and leaning himself against a tree, in a few moments began to snore with his mouth wide open, which *Jim* could plainly see by the light of the moon.

He hastened back to his companions, “Come quickly. The cussed critter is fast asleep and with his mouth wide open. ‘Tis a pity to kill him; so we’ll jist thrust a gag into his mouth to prevent him from hollerin; which ef he attempts to do, I’ll just tell him, this hatchet shall taste his scull; and I’ll swagger but h’ell keep quiet. JIM cuts him a round stick, tying a string at each extremity, proceeded directly up to the guard, & thrust the stick between his jaws; the other two leaping upon him at the same instant, tying the string back of his neck, and leaving him bound hand and foot in the swamp. Our gallant adventurers now returned home in safety. The Englishmen finding their companion bound at his post in the morning; and upon attacking the big cypress pursuant to orders, the whole secret of their anoyance was brought to light. They soon after evacuated the town as before related.

I wish from the bottom of my heart I could say ~~that~~ that the British officers who held possession of Wilmington during this war were what officers always should be, *perfect gentlemen*. There may have been eminent exceptions, but in the mass, they so demeaned themselves in their high calling as to leave behind them recollections fraught with cusses and execrations. They were insolent, intemperate, and bent upon the gratification of brutal lusts, employing as their panders the degraded Tories; and many an innocent and simple female became their victims.

Poor POLLY RUTLEGE! She was a Welch girl named RIVENBARK,⁷¹ who had been betrothed to a young man whom the British murdered at the Massacre at ROUSES. The day had been fixed on for their nuptials, when she received the sad intelligence of the massacre. Overcome by her feelings she left home, it was thought partially demented, and was found by two Tories a few days afterwards weeping over the grave of her lover. The brutal wretches conveyed her ~~in force to~~ forcibly to Wilmington and delivered her to an officer named Rutledge,

whose hated name she ever after bore. He soon abandoned her and she was cast friendless upon the world.

As was to be expected, she now lost her mind entirely, and concealed herself for years in the bays and pine forests which abound near Wilmington. She had been a beautiful woman, her long black hair almost enveloped her body, which now with a few scanty rags formed her only covering. Often have I seen her in my youthful days, gliding like a spirit among the pine trees, looking wildly and anxiously around, as if fearful of being pursued; and when first seen by me, I asked a negro boy accompanying me, who that was & he replied with much indifference, "It is only crazy POLL RUTLEGE." My father⁷² had a residence in the piney woods about three miles from Wilmington, which was resorted to in summer for health, leaving in the winter months a negro woman in charge, whose usual employment was spinning. One day in winter, I arrived suddenly at the residence, and found poor POLL in the kitchen at the spinning wheel. Upon discovering me, she exhibited great perturbation of mind, being much frightened. I addressed her soothingly, and told her she need not be under any apprehension, that I would not disturb her, & bade her go on with her work. She relaxed in an instant her wild & frightened appearance, dropped a low curtsy, and with the air of a lady, and soft mellow voice which I shall never forget, apologized for the intrusion, saying she had been hungry, and was spinning a few broaches⁷³ for the old woman who had given her a meal's victuals. She now paused for awhile, hung down her head and seemed in deep meditation, when all at once starting as if from a trance she resumed her wild aspect and rushed past me, tossed her arms frantically & disorderly about her, screaming aloud, "They've killed him! They've killed him!" And running almost with the speed of a deer dashed into, and hid herself in a dense swamp hard by.

The ways of providence are past finding out! Here thought I is a poor and innocent girl brought to shame, and ruin, poverty, and sorrow & the deepest misery, without any fault of her

own; while her betrayers were proba[b]ly reveling in ease and [xxxxx?] luxury. “Thy will be done!”⁷⁴ It is not for the creation to say to the creator, “Why hast thou done this thing?” We must bow at the footstool of omnipotence, adore, and not complain.

But let me bring this tedious narration to a close, which if the reader be as tired of as myself, he will hail the signal with the delight of one who descries signs of land after a long sea voyage.

Col. Blutworth after the revolution lived to a good old age and died poor, but much beloved and respected, which is indeed characteristic of this family. Men of genius seldom die rich; accumulation is to them, the despised instinct of the jackdaw. They hate its dross and individuallity, and to covet it alone for the sake of the accumulation, and with no higher motive than to add house to house, and barn to barn, they deem unworthy a rational being; the lowest propensity in human nature & offensive to the deity; for we read in holy writ: “Covetuousness the lord abhors.”⁷⁵ His son *Tim* kept a little drygoods store, more than forty years ago, in South Washington; and as he had been to a dancing school in youth, and received lessons on the violin, and was withal fond of dress, the Sobriquet of “BEAU TIM” attached to him ever after; as well from its own intrinsic germaneness, as in contradistinction of to others of the same name. I remember him well; as he was just such a character to attract the attention of a lively boy. He was the only man I ever knew who could dance and play the fiddle at the same time, & I have often in the days of my boyhood seen him practicing before a large mirror, playing the fiddle, & contemporaneously cutting the pigeon wing.⁷⁶ then a highly fashionable step, and which few could achieve in perfection. But I must say as a just tribute to his skill, *Tim* did it well. He was a harmless good natured man, who liked to pass his time in cheerful gossip; fulfil[ing] to the letter the scriptural injunction, “take no thought for the morrow,”⁷⁷ for so he enjoyed the present moment, the morrow with TIM was left to take care of its own concerns.

Appendices

1. John Collett, *A Compleat Map of North-Carolina from an actual Survey*, 1777.
2. *Plan of Wilmington in the Province of North Carolina*, [1781].
3. Untitled map of Wilmington defenses, [1781].
4. C.J. Sauthier, *Plan of the Town of Willmington in New Hanover County, North Carolina*, December 1769.
5. Point Peter Steam Saw Mill: illustration from *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* 8 (February 24, 1855): 120.

The Appendices are not included in this version of the “Revolutionary Reminiscences.”

Endnotes

¹ [John D. Jones], "Cape Fear Sketches and Loafer Ramblings," Folder 29, in the Benjamin Franklin Perry Papers, #588, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

² Lawrence Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 276-277.

³ Gregory De Van Massey, "The British Expedition to Wilmington, January - November, 1781," *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (October 1989), 391; Stephen Drayton to Nathanael Greene, February 2, 1781, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 7, *26 December 1780 - 29 March 1781*, Dennis M. Conrad, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1994), 236-237.

Thomas Bloodworth, Wilmington's tax commissioner, attempted to save the town's tax records by placing them aboard one of these vessels. Colonel Bloodworth figures prominently in the second of these transcriptions. See Andrew J. Howell, *The Book of Wilmington* ([Wilmington ? : n.p.], 1930), 65; Gregory De Van Massey, "The British Expedition to Wilmington, North Carolina, January - November, 1781" (master's thesis, East Carolina University, July 1987), 32. Hereafter cited Massey, "British Expedition . . . N.C."

⁴ Massey, "British Expedition," 391-393; James Craig to Nisbet Balfour (Craig's superior in Charleston), February 4, 1781. See K.G. Davies, ed. *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783 (Colonial Office series)*, vol. 20, *Transcripts 1781* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1979), 54-55; Stephen Drayton to Nathanael Greene, February 2, 1781, *Greene Papers*, 7:236; Richard Caswell to Nathanael Greene, February 21, 1781, *Greene Papers*, 7:329; William

Dickson, *The Dickson Letters*, compiled and ed. by James O. Carr (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1901), 13.

⁵ Massey, “British Expedition,” 390, 393; James Craig to Lord Cornwallis, March 22, 1781, British Records 79.1911, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/69.

⁶ Massey, “British Expedition,” 392, 396; Lord Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, April 10, 1781, *Documents of the American Revolution*, 20:108; Lord Cornwallis to James Craig, March 19 and April 3, 1781, British Records 79.2003, 79.2005, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/85; John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* ([University]: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 188.

⁷ Wayne E. Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina: The Culture of Violence in Riot and War* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2001), 194-198.

⁸ Massey, “British Expedition,” 393-394; Don Higginbotham, “The American Militia: A Traditional Institution With Revolutionary Responsibilities,” in Don Higginbotham, ed., *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 96-97; Massey, “British Expedition . . . N.C.,” 50; Lieutenant’s Log, *H.M.S. Delight*, February 22, 1781, British Public Records Office ADM L/D/61; Lieutenant’s Log, *H.M.S. Otter*, February 22, 1781, ADM L/O/63.

⁹ Massey, “British Expedition,” 394; James Craig to Lord Cornwallis, April 12, 1781, British Records MF Z.5.176P fol. 305-305b, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/5; R.D.W. Connor, *Cornelius Harnett: An Essay in North Carolina History* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1909), 196-199; Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 63-64; Hugh F. Rankin, *The North Carolina Continentals* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 320-321.

- ¹⁰ Waddell attributed this statement to Dr. A.J. DeRosset, Sr. (1767-1859), who witnessed Harnett's arrival in Wilmington. See Alfred Moore Waddell, *A History of New Hanover County and the Lower Cape Fear Region*, vol. 1, 1723 - 1800. ([Wilmington ? : n.p.], 1909), 185.
- ¹¹ Alexander Lillington to Nathanael Greene, April 9, 1781, Nathanael Greene Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Abstracted in *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 8, 30 March - 10 July 1781, Dennis M. Conrad, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1995), 75.
- ¹² Robert Rowan to Nathanael Greene, April 18, 1781, Nathanael Greene Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Abstracted in *Greene Papers*, 8:114.
- ¹³ John W. Powell, "George Reed," *Clarendon Courier* 7 (Winter 1995): 79-80.
- ¹⁴ Massey, "British Expedition," 396; Nathanael Greene to Alexander Lillington, April 5, 1781, abstracted in *Greene Papers*, 8:56; Dickson, *Letters*, 14-16.
- ¹⁵ James Craig to Nisbet Balfour, May 28, 1781, British Records 79.1881, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/6; Jethro Sumner to Nathanael Greene, June 25, 1781, abstracted in *Greene Papers*, 8:460.
- ¹⁶ Massey, "British Expedition," 397-398; James Craig to Nisbet Balfour, June 2, 1781, British Records 79.1883, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/6.
- ¹⁷ Massey, "British Expedition," 403-5; Dickson, *Letters*, 17-18; Massey, "British Expedition . . . NC," 125.
- ¹⁸ Massey, "British Expedition," 406-409; James Craig to Nisbet Balfour, November 6, 1781, British Records 79.1890, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/6.
- ¹⁹ Nathanael Greene to Griffith Rutherford, October 18, 1781, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 9, 11 July 1781 - 2 December 1782, Dennis M. Conrad, ed. (Chapel

Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1997), 452-453.

²⁰ The editor's "Snake Take de Hoe Cake" provides evidence to support the conclusion that John D. Jones authored the "Cape Fear Sketches." See John A. McGeachy, "Snake Take de Hoe Cake," May 2001; available on the Internet at <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/staff/jmcgeachy/snaketake.htm>.

²¹ Alexander Rouse owned the Rouse House, an "ordinary," a tavern eight miles northeast of Wilmington on the sound road to New Bern. He bought the property in 1769 from Richard Ogden, and served on New Hanover County juries that same year. George Reed, in 1847, testified to support his pension application that he, Sandy Rouse, and four other men were at the widow Colier's house, about five miles northeast of the Rouse House, on the night of the massacre. "Sanders Rowse" resided in the Upper Sound District of New Hanover County in 1786. See New Hanover County (North Carolina) Deed Book F:22, 23 (1769); Alexander McDonald Walker, *New Hanover County Court Minutes, 1738 - 1769* (Bethesda, Md.: Alexander M. Walker, 1958), 88, 96, 101; Powell, "George Reed," 79-80; Alvaretta Kenan Register, *State Census of North Carolina, 1784 - 1787*, 2d ed. rev. ([Norfolk, Va.: n.p., 1971]; Baltimore.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1973), 105.

The precise location of the Rouse House is no longer known. Most writers placed it eight miles northeast of Wilmington, and some even refer to the event as the massacre at the "eight mile house." The John Collet map of 1777 shows both the names "Rouse" and "Colier" on the New Bern road northeast of Wilmington. See Eli Washington Caruthers, *Interesting Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character, Chiefly in the "Old North State,"* 2d Series (New York: Hayes and Zell, 1856), 349; Waddell, *History of New Hanover County*, 186; Samuel A'Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, vol. 1, *From 1584 to 1783* (Greensboro, N.C.:

Charles L. Van Noppen, 1925; Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Co., 1971), 664; Griffith J. McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, 2 vol. in 1 (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), 530-531; John Collett, *A Compleat Map of North- Carolina from an actual Survey* (London: S. Hooper, 1770). A copy of a portion of the Collett map is found as Appendix 1.

In 1934 the Stamp Defiance Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a highway marker fifty feet east of the site of the Rouse House. The following year Mattie Erma Edwards of the state's Historical Marker Program visited the DAR marker site with Andrew J. Howell, a Wilmington minister and local historian. Edwards proposed that a state highway marker could be sited "on U.S. 17 about seven and one-half miles from Wilmington at Ogden. It should be placed on the west side of the highway opposite road going east from the highway. Distance and direction: Fifty feet west." The state did not place a historical marker at the site. Since 1935 Highway 17 has become a divided, major four-lane artery along the coast, and the DAR marker has disappeared. See untitled typed note, Andrew J. Howell Papers, LCPF no. 803, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, N.C.; Mattie Erma Edwards, "Record of Investigation of Places to be Marked In and Around Wilmington, November 18, 19, and 20, 1935" in Box 10, Series IV, Miscellaneous Marker Data, 1934 - 1952, Historical Marker Program, Division of Historic Sites, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

²² Asa A. Brown established the *Wilmington Chronicle* in March 1839, and as editor he espoused the principles of the Whig party. In 1851 Brown sold the *Chronicle* to Talcott Burr, Jr., who renamed the newspaper the *Wilmington Herald*. During 1855 Brown served as a Town Commissioner. See Nancy Beeler, et al., *Wilmington Town Minutes, 1847 - 1855* (Wilmington: New Hanover County Public Library and Old New Hanover Genealogical Society, 1997), 198; J.S. Reilly. *Wilmington: Past, Present & Future* ([Wilmington: n.p.], 1884), 35.

²³ Baron Christoph de Graffenried founded New Bern in 1710. It was the seat of colonial and state government from 1746 until Raleigh replaced it as the state capitol in 1792. A modern road atlas notes the distance between Wilmington and New Bern is eighty-seven miles. See William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 348; C.J. Puetz, *North Carolina County Maps*, [4th ed.] (Lyndon Station, Wisc.: County Maps, [1996?]).

²⁴ The text has “. . . a few years of corn.”

²⁵ A shoat is a young, weaned pig.

²⁶ The Collet map places Holly Shelter Pocosin a short distance above Exeter, north of Holly Shelter Creek and east of the Northeast Cape Fear River. Bloodworth in 1947 made additional references to Holly Shelter, writing that “Holly Shelter Pocosin occupies a large part of the southeastern section” of Duplin County, and that Angola and Holly Shelter Bays are in the western part of the county, a part of the “far famed black lands.” The old man’s pigs were lost in one of the southeastern “scattering prongs” of the pocosin. See John Collet’s map (1777); Mattie Bloodworth, *History of Pender County* (Richmond: Dietz, 1947), 8, 10.

“Pocosin” is an Algonquin word for “swamp on a hill.” Holly Shelter Pocosin was formed from the blocked drainage system of an interstream flat in which “peat domes [have] built up in [the] blocked stream valleys; domes that have grown vertically and laterally until they filled the valleys and spread out over the adjacent interstream divides.” See J. Otte, “Origin, Development and Maintenance of the Pocosin Wetlands of North Carolina; report submitted to North Carolina Natural Heritage Program . . . and The Nature Conservancy” (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University, 1981, photocopy), 1.

²⁷ In addition to the four monographs cited in the second paragraph of note 21, four authors have recounted the Rouse House massacre in serial publications. The unsigned 1845 piece by John D.

Jones was the earliest. All of the other writers used this source or those derived from it, but only Caruthers acknowledged “the writer of the communication in the *Wilmington Chronicle*.” See “Revolutionary Reminiscences,” *Wilmington Chronicle*, 11 June 1845; “J.,” “The Old Mulberry Tree at the ‘Rouse House:’ A Revolutionary Reminiscence,” *Our Living and Our Dead* 3 (October 1875): 456-457; Andrew J. Howell, “The Rouse House Massacre of 1781,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 27 September 1931, 2:5; Bill Reaves, “Historic Wilmington: The Rouse House Massacre,” *Coastal Carolinian*, 25 August 1983, 5.

The 1845 newspaper account by Jones is a different text from that found in the “Cape Fear Sketches.” The editor has not been able to confirm that Jones published the material transcribed here in a newspaper, despite the fact that the composition was addressed to Asa A. Brown, editor of the *Wilmington Chronicle*, a publication in which several contributions by Jones appeared during the 1840s.

²⁸ Exod. 20:5; Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9.

²⁹ To twit is to taunt, tease, or ridicule with references to anything embarrassing.

³⁰ The Battle of Culloden Moor resulted in the defeat of Prince Charles Edward Stuart’s forces near Inverness in 1746. It hastened the end of the Highland clan system, which in turn accelerated the emigration of Highland Scots to the American colonies. See Douglas F. Kelly with Caroline Switzer Kelly, *Carolina Scots: An Historical and Genealogical Study of Over 100 Years of Emigration* (Dillon, S.C.: 1739 Publications, 1998), 68.

³¹ Sir James Henry Craig (1748-1812) was a career military officer who first saw service at Gibraltar in 1763. He was a captain when the American Revolution began, and was twice wounded in New England. General Burgoyne, impressed with his service, sent Craig to England with dispatches describing Burgoyne’s 1777 offensive in New York. Craig returned to Canada as a major in 1779; then served under Cornwallis in North Carolina in 1781. As a lieutenant-

colonel he commanded in Ireland in 1791, then became adjutant-general to the Duke of York's army in the Netherlands in 1794. Major General Craig defeated Dutch colonists in South Africa in 1795, and between 1798 and 1802 commanded a division in India. He returned to North America as governor-general of Canada from 1807 to 1811. Craig died in London twelve days after his promotion to general in 1812. See Leslie Stephens and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to 1900*, vol. 4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937-38), 1368-1370.

³² James Love entered the historical record infrequently. One reference in the *Colonial Records* may refer to this man. George Doherty submitted a memorial to the Halifax provincial congress on December 10, 1776, testifying that James Love, with a party of armed men, "violently broke into an outhouse [belonging to Samuel Portevints, of New Hanover County], and took from thence a Quantity of Salt . . ." Captain James Love served under Alexander Lillington at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge February 27, 1776. John D. Jones wrote that his father and Love were "neighbors, friends and fellow soldiers," and that Love had invited David Jones to join the party at Rouses. See William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vol. 4 (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886), 963; B.G. Moss, *Roster of the Patriots in the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge* (Blacksburg, S.C.: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1992), 132; *Wilmington Chronicle*, 11 June 1845.

³³ William Jones of the Welsh Tract was a member of the Wilmington-New Hanover Safety Committee during 1775. A second William Jones, of Long Creek, served concurrently on the Safety Committee. William Jones of Long Creek was the brother of David Jones, the father of John D. Jones. See Leora H. McEachern and Isabel M. Williams, eds., *Wilmington-New Hanover Safety Committee Minutes, 1774 - 1776* (Wilmington: Wilmington-New Hanover County American Revolution Bi-centennial Association, 1974), 128.

³⁴ The Welsh Tract was located in what is now central Pender County, in an area between the Northeast Cape Fear River and the Cape Fear River. The first land grant in the area was in 1730 to David Evans for 640 acres. A number of Welsh families migrated from Pennsylvania to the Welsh Tract at this same time and shortly thereafter. Hugh Meredith, formerly a partner of Benjamin Franklin, was among those who left Pennsylvania for Wilmington and the Welsh Tract in 1731. See Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer*, 524; Hugh Meredith, *An Account of the Cape Fear Country, 1731*; edited by Earl Gregg Swem (Perth Amboy, N.J.: Charles F. Heartman, 1922).

³⁵ South Washington was the Welsh Tract's center of trade, located in north central Pender County on Washington Creek near its confluence with the Northeast Cape Fear River. Malatiah Hamilton laid out South Washington about 1740; it was incorporated in 1791. Around 1840 the inhabitants abandoned the site and moved approximately fifteen miles to a new location, Hiawatha, on the Wilmington and Raleigh rail line. The town is now known as Watha. See Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer*, 467; John Gilbert, ed., *Crossties Through Carolina: The Story of North Carolina's Early Day Railroads* (Raleigh: Helios Press, 1969), 4, 8.

³⁶ The battles of Brandywine (September 11) and Germantown (October 4) were two engagements in the campaign for Philadelphia. General William Howe captured the city on September 26, 1777. The reference to the "young Continental officer" is most intriguing. The officer may have been the author's father, David Jones, who, as a first lieutenant in the Fourth North Carolina Regiment, was present at these events. David Jones enlisted in November 1776. During the winter encampment at Valley Forge (1777-78) troops of the Fourth North Carolina merged with the Fifth Regiment. A number of officers returned to North Carolina at this time to raise recruits for Continental service. See Richard L. Blanco, ed., *The American Revolution, 1775 - 1783: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland, 1993), 155-161, 650-658;

McEachern, *Wilmington Safety Committee*, 127; Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of the Officers of the Continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April 1775 to December 1783* (Washington: Rare Book Shop, 1914; Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1982), 324; Hugh F. Rankin, *The North Carolina Continentals* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 63, 93, 147.

³⁷ This refers to Wilmington's sandy soil, and to the fact that horses unacquainted with such conditions would tire more easily than those accustomed to the local terrain.

³⁸ Captain Gordon was a Wilmington Tory, and co-partner with a Mr. Titley. Gordon commanded Craig's cavalry in the British excursion to New Bern in August, and was killed south of Kinston during that venture. Mr. Titley left Wilmington with the British evacuees on November 14, taking with him "all the books, notes, bonds & other Securities belonging to the Copartnership." On February 7, 1782, Mrs. Margaret Gordon petitioned Governor Thomas Burke for a flag of truce under which she could travel to Charleston in hopes of finding the wherewithal to settle the late Mr. Gordon's "just debts." On March 20 Burke asked a similar petitioner to convey his sympathy to Mrs. Gordon. The governor allowed her to leave Wilmington, but not to return. See Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, vol. 22 (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1907), 565-566; Massey, "British Expedition . . . N.C.," 125; *State Records*, 16:506, 551-552.

The state's General Assembly, on May 2, 1780, rejected a "Memorial of the Merchants, Traders and Others Residing at Cape Fear." The memorialists argued that the Confiscation Act of 1777, which authorized the state to seize property of disloyal persons, was unjust. John Gordon and Joseph Titley were among the thirty-two signers. The Cape Fear merchants were reacting to the passage of an Act in October 1779 to carry out the provisions of the Confiscation

Act. The Confiscation Act was repealed in 1780. See *State Records*, 15:203-205; 24:263-268, 352-353.

³⁹ The “sound and neighborhood” is probably a reference to Masonboro and Middle Sounds, to the area around present day Wrightsville Beach, and to other places on the peninsula formed by the lower Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean.

⁴⁰ Walker’s bridge was probably the structure known in 1781 as Dunbibin’s bridge. A bridge of that name is shown on the *Plan of Wilmington in the Province of North Carolina* [1781], on Market Street about a mile east of the river. (See Appendix 2.) Jonas Dunbibin was one of the 1780 merchant memorialists (note 38). Although undated, this map is clearly from the time of Wilmington’s occupation for it shows the British fortifications and their galleys in the river. The stream is today known as Burnt Mill Creek, a tributary of Swift’s Creek. A bridge still crosses it 1.3 miles east of Fifth Street, the old eastern boundary of Wilmington, adjacent to the National Cemetery.

⁴¹ A spree is a lively or boisterous frolic frequently accompanied by drinking. A spree can devolve into a prolonged bout of drinking or carousing. Reports vary as to what brought the party to the Rouse House that night. Jones, in the present text, wrote that Love knew Rouse had a new supply of brandy. In his 1845 newspaper account Jones recorded the party was in the house “to drink cider and play whist.” “J.,” Howell, and Reaves reported the same scenario. “J.” and Waddell wrote that the militia officers had gathered for a “frolic.” McRee added more colorful elements: the group was there “to meet the maidens of the neighborhood at an entertainment they had ordered . . . excited by the animated notes of the fiddle, and intoxicated by the charms of their fair countrywomen, they disported themselves with as little thought as motes in a sunbeam; they neglected every precaution.” See [John D. Jones], “Revolutionary Reminiscences;” “J.,” “Old Mulberry Tree,” 456; Howell, “Rouse House Massacre;” Reaves,

“Historic Wilmington;” Waddell, *History of New Hanover County*, 186; McRee, *James Iredell*, 531.

⁴² Lighthorse refers to lightly-encumbered cavalry units employed by both the British and American forces. These cavalymen carried a saber, pistols, and a long carbine. See Charles Mackubin Lefferts, *Uniforms of the American, British, French and German Armies in the War of the Revolution* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1924), 24-25.

⁴³ The old man narrating the story is here revealed to be “Thomas.” He was probably in his early to mid-fifties. The interval between 1781 and 1819, given at the head of the story, is thirty-eight years. Thomas joined in the Rouse House merrymaking “young-man like,” evidence that he was in his teens. Jones was twenty-nine in 1819 when he conversed with the “old man.”

⁴⁴ The peninsula formed by the confluence of the Northeast Cape Fear and the Cape Fear river at Wilmington was known as Negrohead Point. At a later time it became Point Peter, and now is simply called, by some, Muddy Point. The origin of the name, “Negrohead Point,” is no longer clear. Some individuals believe it has an association with the 1897 Wilmington race riots; others think it refers to an incident from the time of the Nat Turner insurrection in 1835. But the name was in use long before those events took place. As one example, Negrohead Point appears on the British map of 1781 (Appendix 2). For more information relating to Negrohead Point, see note 48. See Gregory Lee Komara, “The Road to Freedom: The History and Use of the Negro Head Point Road (Wilmington-Fayetteville, N.C.)” ([n.p.: Gregory Komara, 1995?]), 52; Bloodworth, *History of Pender County*, 48-49; *Plan of Wilmington in the Province of North Carolina* (1781).

⁴⁵ The Northwest branch of the Cape Fear is now known simply as the Cape Fear River. It is the longer of the two rivers that form the setting of this story, but at their confluence the Northeast Cape Fear is broader. The Cape Fear River is formed from the junction of the Haw and the Deep

Rivers on the Chatham-Lee County line. From there it flows two hundred miles southeast through Harnett, Cumberland, Bladen, Columbus, and New Hanover Counties until it empties into the Atlantic west of the cape of the same name. See Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer*, 87; Lee, *Lower Cape Fear*, 31-32.

⁴⁶ The headwater of the Northeast Branch of the Cape Fear River is about two miles south of Mount Olive in northwest Duplin County. It flows south through Duplin and Pender Counties, then turns slightly west and forms the border between Pender and New Hanover Counties. It enters the Cape Fear River just above Wilmington. See Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer*, 355.

⁴⁷ Market Street remains Wilmington's principal east-west avenue. Now US 17, it was the sound road to New Bern in the colonial period. Travelers could take a ferry from the dock at the foot of Market Street to Eagle's Island where the road continued into South Carolina. The map drawn by C.J. Sauthier in 1769 is an excellent representation of the town; a copy is found as Appendix 4. See C.J. Sauthier, *Plan of the Town of Willmington in New Hanover County, North Carolina*, December 1769.

⁴⁸ On February 8, 1768, the Wilmington Court of Magistrates and Freeholders condemned "a Negro Man named Quamino belonging to the Estate of John DuBois" to death for "robbing sundry Persons." The court decreed "his head to be affixed up upon the Point near Wilmington." There are even earlier references to Negrohead Point, so the example made of Quamino is not the origin of the name. The earliest reference to Negrohead Point that Komara reported is from 1761. See *Colonial Records*, 7:685-686; Komara, "The Road to Freedom," 52-57.

⁴⁹ The Point Peter steam saw mill stood on Negrohead Point. In 1830 Oscar G. Parsley worked in the steam saw mill business of E.B. Dudley and P.K. Dickinson. Parsley later purchased Dickinson's share of the business; he eventually owned several steam saw mills, including the one on Point Peter. On January 2, 1855, Bennet Flanner bought the Point Peter mill at public

auction for \$11,000. The former owners hoped to receive \$40,000, and had rejected an offer of \$20,000. The following year, on April 23, 1865, the Point Peter mill burned. Flanner had not operated the facility since he purchased it, and no guard was present at the mill. Sparks from a passing steamboat may have started the fire. An illustration of the Point Peter Saw Mill appeared in *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*; a copy is included as Appendix 5. See Beeler, *Wilmington Town Minutes*, 207; Claude V. Jackson III, *The Cape Fear - Northeast Cape Fear Rivers Comprehensive Study: A Maritime History and Survey of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers, Wilmington Harbor, North Carolina*, vol. 1, *Maritime History* ([Raleigh]: North Carolina Department of Archives and History and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1996), 116; "Depreciation of Property," *Wilmington Daily Herald*, 2 January 1855; "Fire," *Wilmington Tri-Weekly Commercial*, 24 April 1856.

⁵⁰ Samuel R. Potter (1812?-1856) was a wealthy Wilmington rice plantation owner whose properties included the Benevento Plantation, Point Peter rice mill, and Snow's Point Plantation. In 1851 he bought the large house, built circa 1846, at 121 South Second Street from Jethro Ballard for \$8,000. It is now known as the Ballard-Potter-Bellamy House. See Jackson, *Cape Fear Comprehensive Study*, 97, 116, 128; Tony P. Wrenn, *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historical Portrait* (Charlottesville: Published for the Junior League of Wilmington, N.C., Inc., by the University Press of Virginia, 1984), 65-66.

⁵¹ Caruthers in 1856 and Bloodworth in 1947 related the story of Colonel Bloodworth and the cypress tree. Trawick published a popularized version of the tale in *The State* magazine. See Caruthers, *Interesting Revolutionary Incidents*, 355-367; Bloodworth, *History of Pender County*, 207-215; Gary E. Trawick, "Attack From the Cypress Fort," *The State* 36 (1 August 1968): 7-8.

⁵² Colonel Thomas Bloodworth was a member of the Wilmington-New Hanover Safety committee in 1775. He was Wilmington's tax commissioner in 1781 (note 3). Ashe wrote that

Bloodworth was the ferry keeper at Point Peter, and thus familiar with the peninsula. In 1786 Bloodworth resigned his positions as Colonel of New Hanover County and as a Justice of the Peace. See McEachern, *Wilmington Safety Committee*, 122; Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 664; *State Records*, 18:79, 311, 315.

⁵³ Saint James Episcopal Church, the “old Episcopal Church,” stood at the southwest corner of Market and Fourth Streets. The Sauthier map (Appendix 4) denotes its location with an “A.” It was completed around 1770, and demolished in 1839 to be replaced by a larger structure. See Wrenn, *Wilmington*, 80.

⁵⁴ The Rock Spring was located near the foot of Chestnut Street, two blocks north of Market Street. It had an abundance of fine water, “prized by ships’ captains who there filled their casks for their sea voyages.” The frontispiece of Howell’s volume is a photograph of the “Old Rock Spring in course of demolition.” See Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 72.

⁵⁵ The George Cameron House is now located at 512 Surry Street near the southwest boundary of Wilmington’s historic district. It originally stood on the opposite side of Surry Street. A 1793 deed from Henry Toomer to George Hooper mentioned a dwelling on the property. Cameron purchased the lot from Hooper in July 1800. See Wrenn, *Wilmington*, 269.

⁵⁶ Doctor Sterling B. Everett (1791-1855) occupied Governor Edward Dudley’s Mansion, 400 South Front Street, in 1853. His widow resided there until 1869. See Wrenn, *Wilmington*, 54-55.

⁵⁷ A combined Continental and militia force under General Daniel Morgan defeated Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton’s troops, a wing of Cornwallis’s army, at the battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781. Eutaw Springs (September 8, 1781) was an action of General Nathanael Greene’s operation to push British forces from South Carolina’s interior to the coast. Both sides

suffered heavy losses and, as had happened at Guilford Court House, the British withdrew toward a coastal stronghold. See Blanco, *American Revolution*, 1:408-411, 1:515-517.

The structure of this passage echoes the Brandywine and Germantown reference in the Rouse House transcription, above (note 36). But in this instance the editor has not been able to develop a connection between the “young officer, a native of the Welsh tract” and the Jones family.

⁵⁸ The British batteries around the sand hills south of Wilmington are clearly shown on the map reproduced as Appendix 3.

⁵⁹ Major Craig’s troops evacuated Wilmington on November 14, 1781. Lee recorded the date as November 18. See Massey, “British Expedition,” 410; Lee, *Lower Cape Fear*, 280.

⁶⁰ The old Court House is designated with a “B” on the Sauthier map (Appendix 4). Erected in 1740, it stood in the center of the intersection of Front and Market Streets. By 1786 its condition was such that, rather than sit there, courts convened in various homes, churches, and taverns. A new building of the same design replaced the old Court House in 1797. This second building burned in 1840. See Elizabeth Francenia McKoy, *Early Wilmington Block by Block From 1733 On* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1967), 68; *State Records* 23:135; James E. Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660 - 1916*. 2d ed. (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1916), 591-592.

⁶¹ The “old church” refers to Saint James Episcopal Church located three blocks east of the Court House (note 53).

⁶² Thomas “Tyrrer” purchased properties from Daniel Dunbibin and James Smallwood in 1744. In the 1760s Thomas Tyer concluded two other New Hanover land transactions. This second man was a county juror and vice constable for Topsail in 1769. Thomas Tyer, a loyalist of Craven County, lost 100 acres through confiscation during the Revolution. See New Hanover

County (North Carolina) Deed Book C:29, 30 (1744), E:125 (1765), and F:75 (1769); Walker, *Court Minutes*, 75, 77, 99-100; Robert O. DeMond, *The Loyalists in North Carolina During the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940; Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1964), 243.

⁶³ Griffith Rutherford (1721-1805) saw service during both the French and Indian, and the Revolutionary Wars. He became brigadier general of the Salisbury District militia in 1776, and was captured at Camden in 1780. After his exchange, he returned to North Carolina and resumed his command. He led militia from the western district in the battle of Raft Swamp (October 15, 1781) and during the final action at Wilmington. For ten years after the war he represented Rowan County in the state legislature. Both as a soldier and as a legislator, “Rutherford was ruthless in his determination to destroy those who did not ardently embrace the Revolutionary cause.” See William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 5. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 275-276.

⁶⁴ Howell reported that Craig confined some prisoners in “the Bull Pen . . . situated in the depression on the north side of Market street between Second and Third.” The “pen made of rails” was probably this same facility. See Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 65.

⁶⁵ Sir William Jones (1746-1794), oriental scholar, British jurist, and judge of the high court of India, was born in England of Welsh parents. Due to the extraordinary range of his knowledge, others viewed Jones as a “prodigy of learning.” He visited Benjamin Franklin in Paris three times during the American Revolution, and planned to travel to the colonies in 1782, but was unable to complete satisfactory safeguards to undertake the voyage. His biographer did not mention Jones’s reputed connection with the Welsh Tract. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, 10:1062-1065; Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 171-180.

The 1970 edition of Jones's collected letters contains 596 transcripts. Cannon, the letters' editor, remarked that Jones's correspondence "mentions numerous letters which have not been located by the editor. Sometimes he [William Jones] notes that he has written 50 or even 100 in a short period of time." But this collection of letters does not contain correspondence with any colonial North Carolinian as John D. Jones reported. See William Jones, *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Garland Cannon, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), ix.

⁶⁶ Gen. 4:22 records that Tubal Cain, a descendent of Cain, was "a forger of all instruments of bronze and iron." John D. Jones was probably familiar with the poem, "Tubal Cain," by Charles MacKay (1814-1889) that begins

Old Tubal Cain was a man of might
In the days when earth was young:
By the fierce red light of his furnace bright
The strokes of his hammer rung;

Tubal Cain fashioned all manner of weapons "sharp and strong," but then grew saddened that others used his handiwork "to slay their fellow-man!" At length he returned to his forge with a song, "'Not alone for the blade was the bright steel made;' And he fashion'd the first plowshare!" Jones, with an interest in agricultural improvement, probably appreciated that sentiment. The poem appeared in MacKay's *Ballads and Lyrical Poems* published in 1845. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, 12:564-565; Charles MacKay, *The Poetical Works of Charles MacKay* (London: Routledge, 1857), "Advertisement," [iii], "Ballads and Lyrical Poems," 14-16.

⁶⁷ The editor has discovered little about Tim Bloodworth beyond what John D. Jones wrote at the close of this selection. "Beau Tim" was overshadowed by his uncle, Timothy Bloodworth (1736-1814), a founder of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, commissioner of

confiscated property for the Wilmington District, and a U.S. Congressman, 1784-1787. Timothy Bloodworth's name appeared on a few deeds from the 1820s and 1830s. See Powell, *North Carolina Biography*, 1:177; New Hanover County (North Carolina) Deed Book S:711 (1827), U:252 (1832), and X:258 (1838).

⁶⁸ Jim Paget was a Northeast Cape Fear raftsman “for many years after the Revolution,” and the protagonist of another tale from the “Cape Fear Sketches.” The editor identified four James Padgets in “Snake Take de Hoe Cake,” and proposed that a James(III) born between 1755 and 1758 was the most likely candidate to be the raftsman. The description given here, that Jim Paget was “a lath of an urchin” in 1781 appears to conflict with that hypothesis. A younger James(IV) was an heir of Joab Padget (1743-1814), but no other information about this man has been collected. See [John D. Jones], “Cape Fear Sketches,” 64-70; McGeachy, “Snake.”

⁶⁹ Prog refers to food or victuals.

⁷⁰ Alexander Nelson purchased land from Peter Drouillard in 1761. During the 1760s he served on New Hanover juries and was a litigant in two lawsuits. In 1792 an Alexander Nelson received two land grants from the state. The editor has not been able to confirm the site of Nelson's liquor store on Market wharf. See New Hanover County (North Carolina) Deed Book D:508 (1761), and E:86, 88 (1792), Walker, *Court Minutes*, 39-95 passim.

⁷¹ A John Rivenbark was in Duplin County in 1764, and fathered at least six daughters and several sons between 1748 and 1778. One was Mary, and Polly is a common nickname for Mary. But this Mary Rivenbark married a Francis Savage, so it is unlikely she was “poor Polly.” Perhaps Polly was another unidentified sibling in this family. A family historian speculated that Polly was the daughter of Frederick (1748-1837), John's eldest son. Frederick is believed to have married twice, but information about his earlier marriage is limited. Frederick was a militiaman in 1776, but “arrived too late for the battle” at Moore's Creek Bridge. See Audrey

Fraday Rivenbark, *Rivenbarks of Eastern North Carolina*, 4th ed. (Burgaw, N.C.: Audrey F. Rivenbark, 1992), 1, 5; Audrey Rivenbark, telephone conversation with editor, November 11, 2001; "Frederick Rivenbark, Revolutionary War Soldier," *Rivenbark Family Review* 18 (September 1985): 3.

⁷² The father of John D. Jones was David Jones (? -1810). He was a patroller in the Welsh Tract, and a first lieutenant in the North Carolina Continental line. More information about David Jones is contained in notes 32 (James Love), 33 (William Jones), and 36 (Brandywine and Germantown). See McEachern, *Wilmington Safety Committee*, 127.

⁷³ "Old-time spinners used to wind a corn shuck on the back of the spindle shaft to form the center for each 'broach,' or spindleful, of yarn. Then, when the spindle was full, the broach of yarn was slipped off and laid by until the day's stint was done. The spinner saved the time of stopping to wind off each spindleful of yarn after it was spun and the skeining could be done all at once . . ." See Marilyn Kluger, *The Joy of Spinning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 86.

⁷⁴ Matt. 6:10; 26:42.

⁷⁵ This is a paraphrase of Psalm 10:3. "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."

⁷⁶ The Pigeon Wing was a dance of Black origin. It and the Buck dance "appear as authentic dances of the Negro on the plantation," long before minstrel and vaudeville shows. An informant to the Virginia Writers' Project recalled the Pigeon Wing's steps as "flippin' yo' arms an' legs roun' an' holdin' ya' neck stiff like a bird do." The *Oxford English Dictionary* noted the Pigeon Wing was a "fancy step in dancing," and quoted five nineteenth century references of its use. Johnson wrote that it was a called step performed in ante-bellum dances. James Avirett in 1901 described the Pigeon Wing as a "graceful" dance. See Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance*

in the United States From 1619 to 1970 (Palo Alto, Ca.: National Press Books, 1972), 90; Fanny Berry, informant, Virginia Writers' Project, *The Negro in Virginia* (New York: Hastings House, 1940), 92, quoted in Emery, *Black Dance*, 90; Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 93; James Battle Avirett, *The Old Plantation; How We Lived in Great House and Cabin Before the War* (New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1901), 193, quoted in Emery, *Black Dance*, 110.

⁷⁷ Matt. 6:34.

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Plan of Wilmington in the Province of North Carolina. N.p., 1781. Original is "Brun 602" and "Clinton 286" in the General Henry Clinton Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Copies are available in the map collections of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (193-F), and the New Hanover County Public Library (C-37). A portion of the map showing Negrohead Point is reproduced in Komara, *The Road to Freedom*, Appendix A, Map 1. The *Plan of Wilmington* is reproduced here as Appendix 2. A second map, untitled and undated, among the British Records in the North Carolina State Archives shows the British fortifications south of Wilmington (British Records 79.1891, North Carolina Archives; British Public Records Office PRO 30/11/6). For a copy see Appendix 3.

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