

COL. JOSEPH WILLIAMS.

John Williams, a Welshman, emigrated to America, landing at Jamestown, Virginia. His son, Nathaniel Williams made his home in Hanover County, Virginia, and became a Judge of the Court for that County. Nathaniel's son, Joseph Williams, animated with the pioneer spirit, sought a new field for his activities in the wilds of the Piedmont section of Anson County, North Carolina, locating in that beautiful, rolling, well-watered section now known as "Little Yadkin." He made large entries of several thousand acres of fertile land on the East bank of the Yadkin River, embracing the famous Shallow Ford, marked as the Daniel Boone Trail. Near his home was a small stream called "Panther Creek", so named from a lair of panthers on its bank; which in turn gave name to the William's homestead, famed for the elegant hospitality of Col. Joseph Williams and his successors. Observe that Rowan County was formed out of Anson in 1756 and Surry from Rowan in 1770, and Yadkin from Surry in 1850-51. A small section of Yadkin County lying on the East side of the Yadkin River gave rise to the name of "Little Yadkin" in which is situate Panther Creek, the home of the Williams family for nearly two hundred years. This branch of the Williams' family is noted both from its numbers, all of them talented; and noted for the honorable official positions held in North Carolina Province, North Carolina, State, and in other States. It has branched out west to Tennessee and Mississippi, Southwest as far as Texas, and wherever found they are noted for intellect, enterprise and substantiality.

Col. Joseph Williams, the youngest son of Nathaniel Williams, was a Delegate to the Provincial Congress which met at Hillsboro' in 1775. Major in the Revolutionary War, took an active part against the Tories, obtained their inveterate enmity thereby. He conducted to a successful issue a campaign against the Cherokee Indians. They had made foray into the border settlements, killed and scalped innocent victims and pillaged the country. He captured, burnt and destroyed five of their towns in retaliation and completely broke their spirit for further depredations.

In the Continental Line he rose to the rank of Major and in the State a Colonel of Militia. He made many narrow escapes in battle with the Tories to whom he became very obnoxious.

While absent in the campaign ^{against} the Indians a band of Tories

assembled in the section near Panther Creek. Mrs. Williams, his wife, being informed, to save her horses sent them away. The Tories came to her home. She, diplomatically, treated them with respect and entertained them, giving her good food and best of drinks; trusting thereby to mitigate their animosity and save her plantation from being plundered. Her hospitable entertainment of this whole force was all in vain, for, Tory-like, when they left they had robbed her of every live animal and fowl on the place, except one duck; which escaped by use of its strong wings. She ordered a servant to catch the duck, saddle one of her fine horses and take it to the Tory Colonel with her compliments with a note, saying:- "As you have taken everything on the plantation except this duck please accept it too, it is lonesome here." He replied:-"Tell your mistress, in return for the duck I present her with the fine animal you are riding." It is surprising he did not take the horse. He afterwards said:-"Mrs. Williams was the prettiest woman in America." Surely she was one of the best.

Col Joseph Williams was distinguished for his patriotism, and for his progressive ideas. He was a school committeeman, a Justice of the Peace; noted for his piety, was made a Church Warden. He married Rebekah Lanier, daughter of another distinguished Colonial family, tracing their lineage to Sir John Lanier of the British Isles. Her father was Thomas Lanier, Judge of Hanover County, Va. Col Joseph Williams and his wife raised a large family, all of whom were noted and distinguished; for particulars as to them, reference is made to John H. Wheeler's history of North Carolina, page 409, and Wheeler's Reminiscences, pages 418, 419, 420. After the Revolution he was elected, or appointed, Clerk of the Court of Surry County and died incumbent of that office in 1828. A prominent, useful citizen gone to his confident reward. Acts 11:24, "For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of Faith."

The Williams' families in North Carolina vie in numbers with the Smiths, the Browns and Jones. They were very, very prominent in Colonial days and hard to distinguish. Mr. Williams (no initials) is mentioned in the North Carolina Records (Colonial) nineteen times. Capt. Williams, (no initials) seventy times; Colonel Williams (no initials) thirty-four times; and Joseph Williams one hundred and twenty-eight times and the Williams name in the whole records, occurs about three thousand times!

Unquestionable evidence of the great prominence of the Williams' families in ye olden days. Respected and honored he lived a stirring, active life in strenuous days, dying in the harness as one would suppose he would like to lay down this mortal coil.

He was a "True man and kept our country's laws,
And guarded its honor and its cause,
A man who bravely played life's game,
Nor asked rewards of gold or fame."

Wm. A. Smith.

by Lewis Shore Brumfield

Lewisville Historical Society

