

Lieutenant Samuel Patton

Revolutionary War Service, 1778 - 1781

Samuel Patton, great grandson of William Patton I, who emigrated with his family to America in the early 1720's from Ireland, was born in Rowan County, NC in about 1761. In 1778, Samuel enlisted in the North Carolina Militia to serve in various campaigns throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia as both an infantryman and waggoner.

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Delivered to a Court of Pleas and Questions in 1832 and later in 1836 to obtain pension benefits from the war.

"Well sir" replied Samuel, "followin' the Battle at Ramsour's Mill, I reenlisted in Rowan County as an ensign in a company which was to scout for Indians hostile to the frontiersman as the Cherokee was at that time allied with the British."

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"Do you recall any officers you served under at that time?" the judge asked.

"Sir, in 1781 I enlisted under Captain Daniel Smith that was in the upper part of Burke County on the Catawba River at Old Fort. Shortly before I entered the service the Cherokee Indians had murdered three children and two women, near the head of the Catawba River above John's River, at a place then, I think, in Burke County. As a result the militias was called up to defend against more attacks. I was discharged at the end of three months of service. Capt. Samuel Davidson and I was stationed at Upper Fort and Old Fort on Broad River and frequently went on scoutin' expeditions against the Cherokees, once marchin' to Watauga town on the Tennessee River.

"After this I entered the service again as a Lieutenant under Captain Thomas Little in Burke County and from there under the command of General Charles McDowell who led us on a march against the Cherokee nation. Captain Little come over to our settlement on New River, and proposed that us young men volunteer to go with him against the Cherokee Indians, sayin' that this tour would be accounted the same as the same length of service against the British.

"As scouts, we was armed with short Deckard rifles, and all us men were expert shots. We knew the woods as wild deer do, and since we grew up in Indian country we knew how to fight and track just as the Cherokee did. A piece of white paper pinned to our hunting cap was all we had for a uniform. We brought along our own horses and a wallet of parched flour or a sack of meal was all we carried to eat and one man had a frying-pan to cook on. I had my own pair of saddle-bags to store my personals in.

"At Wilkesboro, which was the place of gatherin' for the North Carolina raised for this expedition our company was filled to the number of about sixty, and about one thousand in all. We was all mounted gunmen, and nearly all armed with Rifles, tomahawks, and butcher knives, Each man, and myself amongst the rest, brung his own horse, gun, and equipment. At the end of about two days we took up the line of march by Pleasant Gardens on the Catawba, crossed John's River, then by

Cathey's Fort to Turkey Cove on the Catawba, a distance, I supposed, of about one hundred miles in all from Wilkesboro. At Turkey Cove we remained about two weeks collectin' Beef and other provisions for the Campaign. Here we were joined by the rest of the North Carolina forces, makin' our number from twelve to fifteen hundred. General Charles McDowell of Pleasant Garden, Burkes County took command of the entire force. Colonel Joseph McDowell brother of our General commanded the Burkes County Regiment which my company was a part of.

"At the end of about two weeks we marched from Turkey Cove up the Catawba on the East side along an old Indian Trace, and crossed the mountains through a gap the name which I do not recollect -- struck the waters of Swananoa River, went down the same and crossed French Broad River just above the mouth of the Swananoa. Here the infantry which marched behind us built a station, and remained to guard the frontier until our return from the Indian Country.

"From the mouth of Swanano we proceeded across Richland Creek and the Hominy creek. Here we met and were joined by twelve or fourteen hundred mounted gun-men from South Carolina. I do not remember their commander, or any of their officers except a Major Lytle, and him I recollect only from his afterwards in the course of the Campaign accidentally killin' one of his own men by the name of Morrison in an Indian skirmish. The whole Army then continued across another ledge of mountains and crossed the Tuckasegea River. The night of the day we crossed this River I was in a small scoutin' party led by Major McDowell. As we was crossin' a high ridge we was attacked by a party of Indians of whom we killed two or three, and make prisoners of a woman and child, an old man and two or three boys.

"We then marched on to the Tennessee River a distance of some 20 or 30 miles, here we found several Indian Villages on the South East side of the River, which seemed to have been recently deserted. We camped there some two weeks destroyin' the houses, corn, beans and everythin' of utility in and about the villages. We received orders one evenin' that on the next mornin' we were to march to the Valley Towns some 70 or 80 miles further on, but in the mornin' these orders were counter-manded, I have never known why.

" We next proceeded about a day's march up a River, the name of which I forget, on the South-East side of the Tennessee, to a large town surrounded by villages where we spent several days more in destroyin' the town and villages and everythin' in and about them. Rumor afterwards stated, and I believe truly, that the burnin' of these villages was the cause of the death of many hundreds of Indians from starvation.

After spendin' a week or two more in scoutin' in vain to find the Indians we made our return march, and retraced the same route as well as I recollect. When we repassed the fort near the mouth of Swanano the foot company was still there to protect the frontier, and I remained there for some time afterwards.

" After the surrender of the British at Yorktown, Gen. McDowell who was in command of "Old Fort" where me and William Brittain was servin'. The General was hopin' to end the hostilities between the frontiersman and the Cherokees so he decided to send a letter to the chiefs of the Cherokee, who at that time were encamped at the Coosawatte Towns on the Coosawatte River in Georgia. In the letter he offered to make peace and trade prisoners with them. Thinkin' that sendin' soldiers into their camp might anger them, he asked for civilian volunteers and accepted Sam Smith, just a young feller. Young Sam was sent out with an Indian guide and interpreter, Yellow Bear, and a

negro feller went along as their cook. When they come back it was said that we was finally at peace with the Cherokee.

"Considerin' we was at peace with the Cherokee, Samuel Davidson a settler from them parts dared to be the first white settler to strike out from the westernmost outpost at Old Fort and settle his family west of the Blue Ridge. Well them Cherokee considered he was trespassin' on their lands and they come in and killed Sam. His wife, child and slave woman escaped and made a long difficult trip back to Old Fort and told their story.

" Well things was stirred up terrible as a result. Volunteers armed with muskets marched into the Valley under the cover of night. They found Sam Davidson scalped and killed near a trail where he had been hunting. The men buried him at this spot. His body lies beneath a granite slab on the side of Jones Mountain, by Christian Creek just by the spot where he was killed. There was much fightin' with the Indians for a good spell after that.

"From that time the frontiersman begun to fully settle in the west parts of the Blue Ridge mountains. Here in the Swannanoa and North Fork Valleys was fertile fields and lots of game in the forests to support many settlers. Up until this time there was no frontiersmen permitted to settle in that part of the country as the British had treaties with the Indians that promised not to move the colonies west of the mountains so as to keep the peace. There were a large number of white people, such as my neice's husband Davy Crockett, who had been anxious to settle in the Indian lands and with the end of the war they come in plenty. 'Course the Cherokee didn't take kindly to this and there's been fights ever since though they was much more settled down after the campaigns during the war when they was allies with the British."

"Mr. Patton," the judge interrupted, "I'm sorry, that's a fascinating history I'm sure, but the court must move on to other cases. If I may I'd like to pose a question to you."

"Yes sir and I apologize for ramblin' on" replied Sam.

"Not at all, it was quite interesting, my question is this - is there any other service which you have proof of that could establish your service to this court?"

"Well Sir, I served again as an ensign in Burke County as an Indian scout for roughly 6 months. I have no documentary evidence of this service, and I cain't recall the names of anyone livin' who could testify to my service except Captain Little whom I had served under previous to that and William Brittain who served with me and is here as my witness the three months under Captain Little" he concluded.

"Well, Mr. Patton" the judge said, "based upon your excellent memory for detail and the witnesses you have presented we will allow your pension as per this affadavit sworn to by your witnesses. Congradulations to you and we sincerely thank you for your service to your State and Country!"