

## **Backcountry Warrior: Brig. Gen. Andrew Williamson**

### **The “Benedict Arnold of South Carolina” and America’s First Major Double Agent -- Part I**

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This two-part series contains the following sections:

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#### **Introduction**

Andrew Williamson was a fascinating and very controversial character in South Carolina Revolutionary history. He was loved by his many supporters and reviled by his many enemies. He was called the “Benedict Arnold of South Carolina” for laying down his arms in June 1780 and taking British protection. He surprised his critics, however, by revealing after the war that for a crucial period while living in besieged Charleston he had spied against the British, and had passed vital intelligence to the Americans. Because of his high rank and important information passed on for almost a year, he can fairly be described as “America’s first major double agent.” Despite his fame and notoriety, and historical importance, no biography of Williamson longer than a page or two has ever been published. Furthermore, no book on spy-craft in the Revolution has focused on Williamson or apparently even mentioned him and his spying efforts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the relevant books that do not mention Williamson’s spying activities include: Harry and Marjorie Mahoney, *Gallantry in Action: the Biographical Dictionary of Espionage in the Revolution* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999); Katherine and John Bakeless, *Spies of the Revolution* (New York: Scholastic, 1959); Central Intelligence Agency, Public Affairs, *Intelligence in the War of Independence* (Washington, DC: CIA, n.d.); Alexander Rose, *Washington’s Spies* (New York: Bantam, 2006); Thomas Allen, *George Washington, Spymaster* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2004); John Nagy, *Invisible Ink: Spycraft in the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2009); and John Bakeless, *Turncoats, Traitors & Heroes: Espionage in the American Revolution* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1959, reprinted 1998). Most of these sources ignore or are weak in their coverage of the Southern Campaign. None of these books identify any spy for the Americans with a rank higher than Major, while Williamson was a Brigadier General in the South Carolina militia, before his defection. A note on terminology: an *agent* is spying on side A for side B. A *double agent* is pretending to spy on side A for side B, but is really working for side A. A *triple agent* is working for three intelligence services, but is loyal to only one. Williamson qualifies as a double agent working for the Americans, because for a

Williamson's beloved plantation of White Hall was equally important – and also little studied. Located near Fort Ninety Six in what is now Greenwood County in up-state South Carolina, before the Revolution White Hall was one of the only major plantations in the region. During the Revolution, it served as Williamson's military headquarters, and at various times was a fort, prison and arms depot. On 5 December 1781 a battle between Patriot and Loyalist forces was fought at White Hall, resulting in a Loyalist victory.

Surprisingly, all trace of this extensive and historic activity has now disappeared. For example, it is not known what happened to the White Hall plantation house or the associated or integrated fort/prison/depot. What little is known is preserved primarily in the memory and historical interest of the family that now owns the land, and in a rapid archaeological site survey from 33 years ago, lasting perhaps an hour or two, that involved no detailed data analysis, sketches, photography, shovel tests or excavations.

This paper aims to fill in some of these gaps by providing a more extensive biography of General Williamson, by reviewing his spy-craft, by analyzing historical documents for clues to White Hall, and by describing the archaeological search for White Hall.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am pleased to acknowledge the support of many persons in preparing this manuscript and in undertaking the recent survey of White Hall. These include Wayne D. Roberts, Chief Archaeologist for the South Carolina Department of Transportation, James F. Bates, archaeologist with the US Forest Service, the Tolbert-Logan family, including George William "Bill" Tolbert, Joseph Logan and Andrew Logan, and Richard Tolbert of New York. Thanks also to Reverend Robert Michael Jones, Professor Robert S. Davis, Jr. of Wallace State College, the staff of the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan, Nancy Lindroth of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution (SCAR), and to the librarians and archivists of the South Carolina Institute of Archives and History.

A special thanks go to the expert staff of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), especially Jonathan M. Leader, State Archaeologist, Nena Rice, Steven D. Smith and Keith Derting. I also wish to thank key members of The Explorers Club Greater Piedmont Chapter in South Carolina, notably John Hodge, Bill Vartorella and David Brinkman, and again to Jonathan Leader, head of the Chapter. More thanks are due to John Fisher and Tim Davis of South Carolina and Florida, respectively.

Last but not least, I want to thank my wife, editor and wonderful adventure companion, Susan Toulmin. Any remaining errors in this manuscript, are, naturally, hers.

## **Biography of Brigadier General Andrew Williamson**

This section provides a biography of Andrew Williamson, the most famous owner of White Hall. The longest published biographies to date of Williamson are a one page

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period of almost a year he had defected to the British, and was pretending to assist and advise them, while actually spying for and assisting the Americans.

description in *American National Biography*<sup>2</sup> and a one and a half page biography in the *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*.<sup>3</sup> The biography below draws on primary and secondary sources to expand on these short items.<sup>4</sup>

The life of General Williamson can be conveniently divided into the following sections:

- Birth and education
- Early background
- Run up to the Revolution
- The battle at “Williamson’s Fort”
- Expedition against the Indians
- The Florida and Georgia campaigns
- The siege of Savannah
- Defection
- Assisting the British
- The Hayne affair
- Confiscation as an “obnoxious person” (at this point the narrative will be broken, and Part II of this paper will continue with the remainder of the presentation)
- Williamson the spy
- Analysis of spy-craft
- The evacuation of Charleston
- Fighting confiscation
- Death
- Family, descendants and fighting amercement.

### **Birth and Education**

According to most sources, Andrew Williamson was born in Scotland, parentage unknown, about 1730. (However, one un-footnoted source states that he was born in the US.<sup>5</sup>) No source gives any proof of his origin. He reportedly removed with his parents to America when he was a child, but no sources give any information on his family

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<sup>2</sup> “Williamson, Andrew,” *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) Vol. 23, pp. 521-2. See also a shorter biography in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribner’s, 1936) Vol. X, pp. 296-7. An excellent eight page discussion of Williamson was written by Prof. Robert S. Davis, Jr. (“Andrew Williamson,” in Richard L. Blanco, ed., *The American Revolution 1775-1783: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1993)), but this paper is more of an analysis of the question of Williamson’s reputation as a traitor or a “forgotten hero of the American cause” than a biography.

<sup>3</sup> N. Louise Bailey and Elizabeth I. Cooper, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984) Vol. III, pp. 769-71.

<sup>4</sup> As part of this biographical and genealogical effort, over 100 proven descendants of General Williamson have been identified to a high genealogical standard, down to the present day. However, the present report will not list these, for reasons of space, and will only focus on the General, his life and activities, and his immediate family.

<sup>5</sup> Robert S. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987) p. 4. Saberton, with no source, states that Williamson was born about 1725. See Ian Saberton, editor, *The Cornwallis Papers, The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War* (Uckfield, UK: Naval & Military Press, 2010) Vol. I, p. 77.

background. The only hint we have is his will, in which he mentions his “sister Isabel, married to \_\_\_\_ Ramsey of Alnwick in the County of Northumberland in the Kingdom of Great Britain, or in Scotland...”<sup>6</sup> This document lends some credence to the statement that he was born in Scotland or at least Great Britain. It is ironic that his background is apparently Scottish, since Scots were often quite loyal to the Crown and were active in Loyalist regiments.<sup>7</sup>

Despite rising to Brigadier General and leader of his district, most sources state without proof that Williamson was illiterate and apparently had no formal schooling. This seems incredible today, but was possible at the time. His signature, an abbreviated scrawl, shown below, seems to support the assertion of illiteracy.



This assertion is bolstered by Alexander Bowie, whose father John Bowie was Williamson’s friend. Alexander wrote in 1856 to historian John H. Logan, and stated that John Bowie said that “Williamson was illiterate, able only to sign his name as ‘WmSon.’” Bowie described Williamson as a “man of uncommon intellect” and “of considerable wealth, to which, as was not unnatural, he was much attached.”<sup>8</sup> By contrast, severe critic Hugh McCall says that, “Williamson could neither read nor write” and Williamson’s aide, Malcom (sic) Brown, who had “long given evidences of his attachment to the royal government” was in fact “the general in everything but name.”<sup>9</sup>

As will be seen, Williamson’s supporters were extremely loyal, while his detractors were often viciously critical, so ascertaining the truth of his strengths and weaknesses is one of the most fascinating aspects of studying his life.

### Early Background

What happened to Andrew’s parents is not known, and there are no details available about his early life. Williamson lived in the Long Cane District in South Carolina, where he is mentioned in the journal of Patrick Calhoun, an early resident, as one of only three settlers in that district in 1754:

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<sup>6</sup> “Will of Andrew Williamson,” South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Charleston SC Wills, Vol. 21, pp. 820-1 (in typewritten form).

<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Barnwell, Jr., in his excellent and comprehensive Ph.D. dissertation *Loyalism in South Carolina, 1765-1785* (Durham NC: Duke University, 1941; available at Duke and Clemson libraries) p. 30, states that “the most loyal element in South Carolina were the Scots” and that of 315 former residents of South Carolina who made claims against the British government after the Revolution for losses due to their loyalty to the Crown, at least 65 were born in Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Margaret Watson, *Greenwood County Sketches: Old Roads and Early Families* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1982) pp. 44-50.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia: Containing Brief Sketches of the Most Remarkable Events Up to the Present Day -- 1784* (Augusta, GA: A.B. Caldwell, 1909) pp. 293, 470.

Williamson, [was] a Scotch trader...at White Hall, on Hard Labor Creek.... The region composing the District was in a virgin state, new and beautiful, without underwood and all the fertile portions covered by a dense cane-brake; and hence the name of the Long Cane....The region was full of deer and other game, and among them the buffalo.<sup>10</sup>

Williamson appears in reports around 1758 as a supplier of cattle and hogs to frontier forts.<sup>11</sup> This was not always an easy business. Williamson was contracted by Lt. Lachlan Mackintosh at Fort Prince George in early 1758 to supply beef and pork to the Fort, since the previous supplier had disappeared for three months, and Mackintosh was afraid that “the Command should be reduced [sic] to live upon Bread and Water.” Ever reliable, Williamson duly delivered “thirteen Steers” to the Fort, and accepted the Lieutenant’s “Note of Hand” in payment. However, when Williamson tried to cash the note, it was refused by the Treasurer of the colony and other authorities, and Mackintosh was reduced to pleading with the Governor to please pay the only reliable supplier in the district, otherwise there will be a “Deal of Disaster,” a “Deal of Disertion,” [sic] and a “Risque of starving.”<sup>12</sup> Since Williamson continued and prospered in the contracting business, presumably he was eventually paid for his steers.

The incident with the steers illustrates Williamson’s early career. He started off as a “cow driver,” a very lowly occupation but one which required “active, faithful and enterprising young men.” Johnson notes that taking care of cattle, branding them, and bringing them to market was an excellent “school for training the youth to hardihood, enterprise and scenes of danger.”<sup>13</sup> Logan adds that there was “little romance” about the cow driver, but:

...his life was one of self-reliance, hardship, and active vigilance; and in it were trained, for eminent usefulness, many of the backwoods soldiers of the Revolution. General Andrew Williamson, of White Hall, had been a cow-driver in his youth on the cane pastures of the Hard-Labor....The business of stock-raising, at this period on the frontiers, was scarcely less profitable than it is at present [1859] in similar regions of the west.... Having selected a tract, where cane and pea-vine grass grew most luxuriantly, they erected in the midst of it temporary cabins, and spacious pens...to collect the cattle at proper seasons...and... vast numbers of beeves were annually driven to the distant markets of Charleston, Philadelphia, and even to New York....Several years after

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<sup>10</sup> John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina* (Winnsboro, SC: The Reprint Co., 2009 (reprint of 1859 vol. 1 and 1910 vol. 2)) pp. 448-9. Williamson was perhaps 24 years old at this point.

<sup>11</sup> See for example “Payments for Colonial Services—1758,” *South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research*, Winter 1976, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 114-7. This article on page 117 reports that payment was made in 1758 “to Andrew Williamson, for driving of cattle and hogs, 85 pounds, no shillings and no pence.” The article notes that this service may have been rendered as much as a year earlier. This payment may have been for the 13 steers and 4000 pounds of pork mentioned in the Mackintosh letter (see the main text and the footnote immediately below), but this is not certain.

<sup>12</sup> “Letter from Lach. Mackintosh to Governor Lyttelton,” in William L. McDowell, Jr., *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1765* (Columbia, SC: Department of Archives and History, 1992) pp. 446-8.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences, Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston, SC: Walker and James, 1851) pp. 145-6.

the Revolution, General Andrew Pickens was engaged in the business of stock-raising near his new residence in the old Pendleton, and drove beeves to the market in New York....A cow-pen was quite an important institution...[with] a hamlet of cabins...large enclosures for the stock...cultivation of corn...[and] splendid thoroughbred riding horses...<sup>14</sup>

Williamson was also a “skilled woodsman”<sup>15</sup> whose talents were recognized by major land owner and district leader Dr. John Murray. The two formed a business partnership centered on Murray’s Hard Labor plantation, and were paid up to 1000 pounds for “carriage of provisions” to local forts.<sup>16</sup> Williamson contracted to build the fort at Ninety Six,<sup>17</sup> and began rising in the community.

In May 1759 Williamson purchased 250 acres beside Stephens (Hard Labor) Creek in what is now Greenwood County.<sup>18</sup> It is not clear when Williamson married,<sup>19</sup> but he made a good match, marrying Eliza “Betty” Tyler, of the famous Tyler clan of Virginia.

In February 1760 Williamson and his budding family were almost killed in a Cherokee attack on Fort Ninety Six. On February 2nd Williamson was in the fort, awaiting the arrival of his family. They dashed in that night, being chased by Indians. Williamson had the gate thrown open to receive his family, and a Cherokee bullet passed through his coat sleeve, barely missing him. They were safe for the moment, but the thirty-odd attackers led by Young Warrior assaulted the fort the next day for about two hours. The Indians withdrew, leaving two dead, when the 45 defenders put up a spirited defense. Young Warrior’s band and other Indians attacked and burned many of the homes in the area. Of about 200 whites in the district, only about 40 to 50 remained alive and settled on their original property.<sup>20</sup>

As will be seen, Williamson was most vigorous in fighting Indians, and he was keen to capture and sell Indian slaves. It seems likely that this terrifying episode stuck in his mind and was a motivating factor in his later actions.

On 22 September 1760, Williamson was commissioned a Lieutenant in the Provincial Regiment of Foot.<sup>21</sup> Thus Williamson by about age 30 had made a huge social leap, into the officer corps. As a militia lieutenant, he served in Colonel Archibald

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<sup>14</sup> Logan, op. cit., pp. 102-4. It seems likely that White Hall and its surroundings would have had some or all of these cow-pen characteristics.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> “Payments for Colonial Services,” *South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research*, Vol. 5, Spring 1977, No. 2, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Kathy Roe Coker, *The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1987), available through UMI of Ann Arbor, MI, pp. 250-260.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> The marriage date was probably some years before 1765, the reported date of the birth of the first of their four children.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Study and Historic Structural Report: Ninety Six: A Historical Narrative* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, 2007) pp. 29-30, citing the Lyttleton Papers and other sources. Watson, op. cit., pp. 11-12, citing the *South Carolina Gazette* of 16 February 1760, has a similar account of the attack on the fort, but does not mention the presence of Williamson’s family. This account says the incident happened on February 3.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey and Cooper, op. cit.

Montgomery's 1760-61 expedition<sup>22</sup> against the Cherokees.<sup>23</sup> In this effort, about 1200 men marched into Indian territory, burned small villages, destroyed cornfields and other food stores, and killed and captured scores of Indians.<sup>24</sup> Williamson himself would use these same tactics when leading an expedition against the Cherokees during the Revolution.

In 1761 Williamson was with Colonel James Grant in another expedition against the Indians,<sup>25</sup> who had been launching more attacks against the settlers. Grant and 3000 troops wreaked havoc in Indian lands, burning villages and crops, forcing the Indians to retreat to the mountains, and killing tribesmen wherever they could be found. Near starvation, the Indians sued for peace and agreed to allow the British to establish forts wherever they wanted, gave up their hunting privileges northwest of Ninety-Six, and agreed not to travel more than forty miles below Keowee without permission or a white escort.<sup>26</sup> In the Grant expedition, Williamson "distinguished himself for intrepidity and expedients."<sup>27</sup>

Around this time, perhaps through Dr. Murray, Williamson met merchant, land speculator and future statesman Henry Laurens. Laurens wrote to Williamson from Charleston on 5 December 1763 that, "If Col. Grant calls here...I will not forget to give him a hint of your request, and if I have any influence with him shall not be wanting to facilitate your business of supplying beef to the garrison..." Laurens thanked Williamson for a horse that had been sent, and for "this & many other kind acts of yours toward me."<sup>28</sup>

On 7 July 1764 Laurens wrote to Richard Oswald, discussing "an almost wholly-unoccupied Tract of about One Hundred Thousand acres of fine Land at a place commonly called Ninety Six...formerly granted to one Hamilton." Laurens thought that Dr. John Murray had control of the tract, and wanted to explore purchasing part of it.<sup>29</sup>

Later that year Laurens at Charleston wrote to Williamson, thanking him for the gifts of "Chestnuts, Hazelnuts...and Pocoon" and for the "poor unfortunate rattlesnake whose body has made an addition to my table today."<sup>30</sup> He also thanked Williamson for the "acceptable" gift of an otter skin, which is "not a little esteemed by some wise folks tother side of the Water." He asked if Williamson could procure a "Specimen of our Cherokee Clay for making potters fine Ware...a Flower Barrel full." A "special friend" had asked that Laurens secure the specimen of clay. (This is likely the origin of the expedition from Josiah Wedgwood in England to America, who in 1767 sent a party to look for more clay specimens; this party visited White Hall, as discussed near the end of this paper.)

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<sup>22</sup> Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution in the Carolinas and Georgia* (Harper, 1850) p. 205.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Greene, op. cit., pp. 34-37.

<sup>25</sup> Lossing, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Greene, op. cit., pp. 38-40.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Johnson, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> George Rogers et al., editor, *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1974) Vol. 4, pp. 70-71.

<sup>29</sup> Letter of 30 October 1764, Rogers, *ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>30</sup> Rogers, *ibid.*, pp. 485-7. Pocoon is a dye made of bloodroot, also used as a stimulant and diuretic.

Although located in Charleston, Laurens continued his interest in the district, and on 9 November 1764 wrote to Williamson about Laurens' land purchases in and plans for the Ninety Six District. He even indicated that he wanted to buy some backcountry land from Williamson:

I will have the land if you please. Name your price and I will pay it upon demand to your order. This may be [my] first step toward being a Farmer at Ninety Six...but should you not think of another name for the whole district, and reflect upon the necessity for having places to perform divine worship and also for establishing a School...? [Then] your situation would become more secure ...and your Lands would naturally increase in Value....The Tobacco you sent me as a specimen is excellent [and] this was pronounced by one of the greatest Smoakers in the Country.<sup>31</sup>

It seems quite possible that the land discussed in this letter is the 9350 acres shown on a plat map recorded 17 October 1789, which shows a large diamond-shaped tract apparently owned jointly by Williamson, Henry Laurens, John Lewis Gervais and others (see the sections of this paper on maps and chain of ownership for details). If this is correct, then these three men were not just neighboring land-owners, but partners and co-owners in a major land acquisition.

Andrew Williamson and Dr. John Murray were contracted to build Fort Charlotte on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River, below the junction with the Broad River. This agreement was reported on 3 and 16 May 1765 in letters from Captain Gavin Cochrane to General Thomas Gage.<sup>32</sup> The fort was planned as a small but strong fort of stone, about 100 by 100 feet, with "four bastions...walls 19 to 20 feet high...costing 1000 pounds" and surrounded by 430 acres of surveyed land.<sup>33</sup> Williamson and Captain Cochrane were "apprehensive for those who had to build Fort Charlotte," due to the "bad disposition of the Cherokees." Cochrane provided arms to the workmen, sent a detail of guards consisting of a Sergeant, Corporal and fifteen men to guard the workers against Indian attack, and planned to supplement this small force with a larger formation when the work advanced and the Indians felt more threatened.<sup>34</sup>

After various delays and some harassment by the Indians, Williamson reported on 2 July 1766 that the "work was finished except pointing" and that he could not do the pointing until "he got lime, and his Horses was [sic] not in a condition to draw the Waggons." He stated that "the Houses were finished four Months ago, and an Officer and twenty-five men is in Garrison there." However, in a report that could have been taken from today's headlines about government contracting, an investigating committee stated that, "Fort Charlotte is by no means compleated," and recommended against payment to Williamson by the Governor.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Rogers, *ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>32</sup> Nora Marshall Davis, *Fort Charlotte on Savannah River, and its Significance in the American Revolution* (McCormick, SC: McCormick County Historical Commission, 1976 reprint of 1943 paper presented to the DAR) pp. 8-10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, in December 1766 the Fort was apparently largely finished, except for the minor facts that there was no ditch around the wall, the foundation was built on “Grounds giving way and Caving in,” and the entire site was poorly located from a strategic point of view, surrounded by a swamp. Despite these trivialities, a sum of 7000 pounds, apparently a 600 percent cost over-run, was recommended as payment.<sup>36</sup>

Henry Laurens wrote to Williamson to congratulate him on the progress of the Fort Charlotte work, and said that [I] “flatter myself (for your sake) that when finished it will give general satisfaction.”<sup>37</sup> He also thanked Williamson for the “Rattle Snakes which are coming wet.” Apparently Laurens continued to be quite partial to rattlesnake for dinner.

Williamson continued to supply other forts in the area. For example, in June 1765 he was paid twenty-seven pounds, one shilling and three-pence for “Carriage of six hundred seventy-six and a half Pounds Weight of drest [sic] Deer Skins and Beaver in his Waggon loaded at Fort Prince George, Keowee in the Cherokees.”<sup>38</sup> It is evident that a large part of Williamson’s income came from the transport of goods, in addition to the goods themselves.

The interchange between Laurens and Williamson continued. On 20 April 1766 Laurens wrote to John Lewis Gervais, stating that a visitor Mr. Rossel had left various “little articles” which he apparently mistakenly brought down from up-country, including “a Silver Watch which Mrs. Laurens thinks belongs to Mr. Williamson,” and he forwarded all the items up to Gervais to return.<sup>39</sup>

Before October 1767, Williamson acquired the attractive and substantial Hard Labor plantation, apparently as a purchase from Dr. Murray. He renamed the plantation White Hall.<sup>40</sup> This date is when the Wedgewood expedition, led by Thomas Griffiths, arrived at White Hall and met Williamson, and later described the plantation in the expedition journals. (For details, see the section of this paper below on “Description of White Hall Before the Revolution.”) It is unclear how large the plantation house itself was. It could have been just a cabin, but there is a slim chance it was as substantial as the large fortified house with a ditch and defensive walls, as shown in Steven D. Smith et al.’s book on Fort Motte.<sup>41</sup>

On 8 April 1768 Henry Laurens and John Lewis Gervais reportedly purchased a tract of land immediately to the north of White Hall.<sup>42</sup> It is not clear if this is the same tract of 9350 acres referred to above, or yet another purchase.

On 4 July 1768 a request for improvements in the back country was presented to the Provincial Assembly by Andrew Williamson, Thomas Bell, William Calhoun and Patrick Calhoun. Part of this request was for provision for a church in the Ninety Six

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>37</sup> Rogers, op. cit., (1976) Vol. 5, pp. 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> McDowell, op. cit., p. 549.

<sup>39</sup> Rogers, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 104-5.

<sup>40</sup> Watson, op. cit., pp. 44-50.

<sup>41</sup> Steven D. Smith, James B. Legg, Tamara S. Wilson, Jonathan Leader, “*Obstinate and Strong*”: *The History and Archaeology of the Siege of Fort Motte* (Columbia, SC: SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007) pp. 53-54. This sketch shows a three story house 45 feet wide, with two chimneys, 12 windows on the front and four or six on the side, with a parapet and ditch all around.

<sup>42</sup> Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston, SC, reported in Margaret B. deWetter, “The O’Keefe Family: From the Ould Sod,” unpublished manuscript, 1988, courtesy of Joseph Logan.

area, and a minister, since “many people [in the district] had never seen a church or heard a sermon.”<sup>43</sup> Possibly Williamson was in this same condition. As a Scot, he would likely lean toward the Presbyterian denomination, and there was a Presbyterian church at Long Canes, built in about 1755,<sup>44</sup> which he could have attended from time to time, since it was only eight miles away.

In this same petition, Williamson and the others asked the legislature to establish courts of justice in the back country.<sup>45</sup> A total lack of courts, law enforcement, churches, schools and schoolmasters had led to a rise in banditry and angered the upcountry settlers. The crime wave eventually became so bad that several thousand residents formed the Regulators, a vigilante group that imposed rough frontier justice on miscreants. The back country settlers theoretically had the right to vote, but were forced to travel a great distance to the low country in order to exercise this supposed right. This was also infuriating, and helped motivate the Regulators.<sup>46</sup>

The Regulators were not merciful with their victims. Rachel Klein reports that a typical Regulator incident involved one John Harvey, who was “roguish and troublesome,” and was “thought to have stolen a horse.” Without trial, in 1769 Harvey was chained to a tree, and while “rough music” on a fiddle and drum was played, the Regulators took turns in administering 500 lashes with a whip.<sup>47</sup>

Williamson may have sympathized with the Regulators’ complaints, but not their methods, and he did not join the movement.<sup>48</sup> The South Carolina aristocracy, which Williamson was gradually joining with his successes, was “solidly” Whig, anti-British and anti-Regulator: “power was firmly in their hands and they were not disposed to brook interference from Britain, backcountry Regulators, or anyone else.”<sup>49</sup>

Barnwell, in his trenchant analysis of the politics of Loyalism before and during the Revolution, describes the key groups in the colonies as the Loyalists (always loyal to the Crown), the “moderates” and the “radicals.” The moderates were “persons who had great concern for the rights of Americans but were averse to radical action.” Radicals were of course anti-British and pro-rights for Americans, and ready to take dramatic action. In New York and some other states, many of the moderates eventually ended up on the Loyalist/British side of the conflict, while in South Carolina, “nearly all of (the moderates) adhered to the Revolutionary government, at least until the fall of Charleston.”<sup>50</sup> In this scheme, it appears that we can classify Williamson at this time as a

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<sup>43</sup> Watson, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> Rachel Klein, *The Rise of the Planters in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1767-1808* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, Ph.D. dissertation, December 1979), p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> Henry Alexander White, *The Making of South Carolina* (New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1906) pp. 105-7.

<sup>46</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 83. Barnwell (p. 137), citing contemporary historian David Ramsay, opines that during the Revolution, the Regulators generally joined the rebels while their opponents, known as Scovillites, generally adhered to Loyalism.

<sup>47</sup> Klein, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> *American National Biography*, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Wallace Brown, *The Structure of Loyalism During the American Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California at Berkeley, 1965, Ph.D. dissertation) p. 255.

<sup>50</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 35. Barnwell notes (p. 83) that although Williamson and others signed petitions to the assembly, they were not necessarily Regulators and did not necessarily participate in vigilante acts. The names of the Regulator leaders were fairly well known (Kirkland, Woodward, Scott and

“radical,” who was willing to petition vigorously for rights before the Revolution, and to take early, dramatic action to begin the revolt.

Williamson was very much a man of the Ninety-Six District. He may not have liked the low country South Carolina politicians much, but he realized that he had more hope of getting help for his district from them than from the British Parliament, thousands of miles away.

In 1769, the Circuit Court Act finally led to more legitimate law enforcement, and Williamson and six others were on the District committee which oversaw the construction of the courthouse and jail at Ninety Six.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, the structures were built at the junction of the Charleston Road and the trail to Hard Labor.

A Grand Jury for Ninety Six District was established, with Andrew Williamson and fourteen others as the first members. Sessions were held twice a year through 1779. The Grand Jury listened to complaints about “wolves and other destructive animals;” the lack of churches, schools and good roads; the absence of laws regulating drinking establishments and grist mills; and even counterfeiting. The court also handed down indictments for trial, often for horse theft, which was punished by 39 lashes and loss of the offender’s right ear.<sup>52</sup>

### **Run-Up to the Revolution**

Williamson added to his land holdings by acquiring land in the Ninety Six district, including 250 acres on Cuffey Town Creek, 250 acres on Stephenson’s Creek, 250 acres on Rocky Creek, and 500 acres on Hard Labor Creek. Down near Charleston, he acquired a plantation at Horse Savannah in St. Paul Parish.<sup>53</sup>

Williamson served as a commissioner in 1769 for Ninety Six District, and in 1770 he was named commissioner for the road from Great Rocky Creek to Mountain Creek. By this year he was promoted from lieutenant to major of militia.<sup>54</sup>

In September 1771 a wedding was held at White Hall, celebrating the marriage of Miss Frances Tyler of Virginia, sister to Eliza “Betty” Tyler to Mr. George Whitfield (or Whitefield), nephew of the celebrated Reverend George Whitefield.<sup>55</sup> Justice of the Peace, adjacent land owner, and well known land speculator John Lewis Gervais officiated. A few days after the wedding, Gervais wrote to his friend and co-land owner Colonel Henry Laurens of Charleston:

I had the honor, last week at Mr. Williamson’s, to marry Mr. George Whitfield, nephew of the late Rev. Mr. Whitfield, to Miss Frances Tyler, sister of Mrs. Williamson – a charming bride, who would have made a figure in

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Hart), and it almost certain that if someone as well-known as Williamson had been a Regulator, it would have been brought up by his enemies in their anti-Williamson campaigns.

<sup>51</sup> Greene, op. cit., pp. 47-53. Complaints continued about ill-treatment. As late as 1776, John Stuart suggested to British General Clinton that one way to sway the back country to the Loyalist cause was to issue a proclamation stating that if re-instated, the British would bring schools, churches, more equal representation and a just portion of the public purse to the up-country region. This was not done. Barnwell, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>52</sup> Greene, op. cit, pp. 53-4.

<sup>53</sup> Coker, op. cit., pp. 250-260. There is some disagreement about the date of this last purchase.

<sup>54</sup> Bailey and Cooper, op. cit., p. 770.

<sup>55</sup> Rev. George Whitefield (1714-1770) was an Anglican from England who became a famous Methodist evangelist and who traveled extensively in the American colonies.

Charleston, as well as for her appearance as elegance of dress. A Justice less grave than myself might have been tempted to give, now and then, a sly look.<sup>56</sup>

It was this husband George Whitfield who five years later, in 1776, accompanied the famous naturalist William Bartram and served as “chief of the caravan” in one of Bartram’s expeditions through the state.

John Lewis Gervais was to have a long but problematic relationship with Williamson. As we have seen, he and Williamson apparently owned land together, owned land next to each other, and were close socially. During the Revolution they worked together to supply Fort Charlotte. But Gervais could not forgive Williamson’s actions later in the war, and eventually branded him as a “traitor,” and may have been influential in having Williamson placed on the list to have all his property confiscated.

The links with Henry Laurens continued. On 23 November 1773 Laurens, in London, wrote to Peter Nephew that, “Mr. Williamson is a kind Neighbor to you. Pray Remember me respectfully to him & his family.”<sup>57</sup>

Revolutionary zeal was starting to build in South Carolina at this point. In August 1774 one of the worst cases of tar and feathering of a Loyalist took place in Charleston, when George Walker, a gunner at Fort Johnson and a known Loyalist, was asked to “drink damnation to King George III and all the rascals about him.” This he refused to do, a mob of 300 rebels gathered, he was given a sham trial at the Exchange, sentenced, then asked again to drink the disloyal toast. He refused, declared “Damnation to the rebels,” and hurled the bowl of drink onto the crowd. He was then stripped, tarred, feathered, and trundled through almost all the streets in Charleston in a cart. He was pelted for five hours, hosed down for an hour, then thrown into the harbor. His left eye was damaged by the tar, two ribs were broken, and he would likely have drowned except that his associates had a boat nearby and rescued him.<sup>58</sup> The time for taking sides was clearly at hand.

Williamson chose sides and expressed his distaste for British rule fairly early in the conflict. On 17 November 1774 a Grand Jury Report from Ninety Six, signed by Andrew Williamson, LeRoy Hammond, James Mayson and others, “condemned the attitude of the British Government toward the Colonies.”<sup>59</sup> This was strong stuff, given that the British government was strong, the British were not directly threatening the back country, the upcountry population was not fond of tea, and a large portion of the citizens were not committed to rebellion and just wanted to live in peace.<sup>60</sup>

On 19 December 1774 an election was held at Williamson’s White Hall plantation to select members of a General Provincial Committee for the Ninety Six District, and not surprisingly, he was one of those elected. In January 1775 a rebel provincial congress met at Charleston, and the “royal government rapidly disappeared with barely any protest.”<sup>61</sup> Williamson was somewhat active in this and the next provincial congress,

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<sup>56</sup> Logan, op. cit., pp. 211-4. This event gives us some insight into the social life and social connections of Williamson and his wife.

<sup>57</sup> Rogers, op. cit., (1981) Vol. 9, p. 167.

<sup>58</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Owen Johnson, “Lorena Smith Neal (Tidwell) Johnson,” *Louisiana Genealogical Register*, June 1996, Vol. XLIII, No. 2, p. 172.

<sup>60</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, op. cit., p. 247.

serving on the Ninety-Six district committee, the Cherokee department committee, the committee to determine the “proper place for ironworks in this colony,” and a committee and commission to inspect Fort-Royal, on the Savannah River, and to “report, upon oath...the state thereof, the expense of building it, and the damage done to the owner of the land.”<sup>62</sup>

In June 1775 the Provincial Congress passed a resolution that all inhabitants of South Carolina be called on to sign an “association” – a pledge to support the rebel congress with life and fortune, and to consider all those who refused to sign as inimical to the liberties of the colonies. This measure was carefully crafted to commit signers of the association document to the revolutionary government, without explicitly renouncing their allegiance to the King.<sup>63</sup> It is clear from Williamson’s actions that he signed this pact, and in fact he was made a Commissioner in his district to enforce the signing of the association document.<sup>64</sup> He was also awarded the contract for supplying provisions to the provincial regiments in the area. Because of this and his many other actions, Barnwell describes Williamson at this time as “one of the most influential men in the Ninety-Six district.”<sup>65</sup>

Also in June 1775, the South Carolina Council of Safety ordered Williamson to communicate with Alexander Cameron, Deputy Commissioner for Indian Affairs, a known Loyalist, and to prevent Cameron from harming the colony by inciting the Indians to attack the Patriots. In July Williamson met with Cameron and obtained his assurance that Cameron would resign if ordered to incite Indian attacks.<sup>66</sup>

In August 1775 Williamson wrote to the commandant at Fort Charlotte from White Hall, warning of impending tension. He stated that the (Loyalist) Regiment of Rangers might attack Augusta and also Fort Charlotte, and Williamson sent 52 militiamen and provisions to the Fort to help forestall any attack.<sup>67</sup>

Also in August 1775 Williamson was elected to the Second Provincial Congress, representing the Ninety Six District, along with nine other men from that area.<sup>68</sup> He served in the legislature until 1780. As a military officer, he was described as a “fine looking” man and “popular” officer, “attentive to his men.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Williamson was a Whig, rather radical, anti-British, and a leader in his district, his views were clearly not supported by all the residents of the Ninety-Six. Attempts to raise three volunteer militia companies of rebels in August 1775 in the district met with success, but the organizers noted that many residents were “disaffected or undecided.” And the rebels were careful not to distribute valuable powder to all the

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<sup>62</sup> William E. Hemphill and Wylma A. Wates, *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1775-1776* (Columbia: SC Archives Department, 1960) pp. 65, 227, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>64</sup> Coker, op. cit., pp. 250-260.

<sup>65</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>66</sup> Reverend Robert Michael Jones, “Andrew Williamson 1730-1786: Cow Driver to General,” unpublished paper, November 1979, p. 24, citing the *Journal of the Council of Safety* and John Drayton’s *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. Ironically, both parties at this meeting would later break their words. Williamson would switch to the British side, and Cameron would vigorously incite vicious Indian attacks against Patriot frontier settlers.

<sup>67</sup> Nora Davis, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>68</sup> “Members of the Second Provincial Congress,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 7, p. 107.

<sup>69</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, op. cit.

militia troops in the region, a good indication of nervousness about which way popular sentiment would turn.<sup>70</sup>

Andrew Williamson had made a remarkable rise. In only twenty-five years he had moved up from lowly cow driver to community leader, plantation owner, businessman and military officer. He married into and corresponded with the best society, and was a household name in his region. The looming war would test his abilities even further, and increase his fame and ultimately his notoriety.

### **The Battle at “Williamson’s Fort”**

The settlement at Ninety Six in northwest South Carolina was given this odd name because it was mistakenly thought to be 96 miles south of the Cherokee village of Keowee. It consisted of about 10 houses, a jail and a courthouse, with about 100 settlers in the area. It became the site of the first Revolutionary War battle in the Southern Campaign, and was Williamson’s first Revolutionary command.

The genesis of the battle was the on-going demand by Indians for scarce gunpowder. Early in the war, Patriot leaders promised the Cherokees a supply of powder for hunting, in exchange for their neutrality. At the same time, Robert Cunningham, an outspoken Loyalist and judge, was being arrested and jailed by the rebellious Provincial Congress for his views. In the words of Lorenzo Sabine, Cunningham “incurred the displeasure of the Whigs in 1775, when he disapproved of their proceedings in sustaining the cause of Massachusetts...”<sup>71</sup> Williamson assisted with this arrest, and was later thanked by the Provincial Congress for his efforts.<sup>72</sup>

The arrest brought Robert’s brother, Major Patrick Cunningham, into the fray. Unable to free his brother despite an attempt, Patrick and about 150 of his Loyalist followers instead fell upon a party of Patriot rangers in the Ninety Six District on November 3, 1775, and seized the ammunition and gunpowder they were delivering to the Indians.<sup>73</sup> This gift to the Indians included one thousand pounds of gunpowder and two thousand pounds of lead, a considerable prize.<sup>74</sup>

Major Williamson, as an active leader on the Patriot side, responded to the hijacking of the gunpowder by calling out the backcountry militia to capture Patrick Cunningham and recover the ammunition. Some 532 Patriots responded to Williamson’s call and arrived at the Ninety Six muster point, but this number was dwarfed by the 1500

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<sup>70</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 114-115. Barnwell notes that at least one settlement in the Ninety-Six, the “Palatines on Cuffy Town and Hard Labor Creeks,” was solidly in favor of the King. Williamson lived quite nearby, on Hard Labor Creek. In terms of the entire upcountry region, Barnwell’s analysis is that in Williamson’s part of the region, between the Savannah River (the border with Georgia) and the Saluda River, Whigs were predominant but not overwhelmingly so; that between the Saluda and the Broad Rivers the Whigs were predominant in the north and the Loyalists in the south; and that between the Broad and the Catawba-Wateree Rivers, the Whigs were again dominant.

<sup>71</sup> Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of the Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1864) p. 346-7.

<sup>72</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, op. cit. See also Hemphill and Wates, op. cit., pp. 104, 107, 108.

<sup>73</sup> McCall, op. cit.

<sup>74</sup> Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969) p. 87.

to 2000 men who took up arms for the Tories.<sup>75</sup> By November 18 this formidable Loyalist body had assembled and camped just five miles from Ninety Six.

Williamson states that on 19 November, “in about three hours [we] Erected a kind of Fortification of old Fence Rails Join’d to a Barn and some out-Houses.” But “before we had quite completed they had surrounded us with a Large body of Men with Drums and Colors.”<sup>76</sup> The Patriot position was about 85 by 150 feet,<sup>77</sup> but unwisely did not include a well or spring. “Williamson’s Fort,” as it came to be called, may also have had a stockade of vertical timbers, as revealed by archaeological investigation,<sup>78</sup> although Williamson himself does not mention this important feature.

The Tory forces were led by Colonel Joseph Robinson and Major Patrick Cunningham. According to McCall, Williamson had expected to obtain water for his fort from a nearby spring, but the Tories outwitted him, and seized the jail and village, thus commanding the important spring.

Robinson demanded that the rebels lay down their arms and disperse. Williamson refused to surrender, the Tories seized two rebels who had wandered outside the fort, a scuffle began, and general firing broke out. According to Williamson, “a Warm engagement ensued, which continued with very little intermission from 3 o’clock in the Afternoon of Sunday untill Tuesday SunSet.”<sup>79</sup> The Loyalists brought forward a large mantelet (screen or shield) in an attempt to approach the fort and set it on fire. This failed when the manelet itself caught fire. The Loyalists also failed to open any trenches to try to approach the fort using standard siege warfare techniques.

By the 21<sup>st</sup>, Williamson’s men were very thirsty. They began digging a well inside the barricade, down through forty feet of tenacious clay,<sup>80</sup> only obtaining “a scanty supply” according to Ramsay,<sup>81</sup> but Williamson states definitively that “we got very good Water the third day” of digging.<sup>82</sup> Other writers have said that food was running out, but Williamson states that “no one knew our stock but one Gentleman and mySelf, we had Thirty eight barrels of flour with four live Beeves.” The main problem according to Williamson was that “we had not above 30 pounds of Powder”<sup>83</sup> plus the little in the men’s powder horns. Williamson was about to try a desperate surprise night attack, when the Loyalists waved a white flag lit up by a candle, and began negotiating in earnest.

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<sup>75</sup> “Battle of Ninety Six: November 19-21, 1775,” Historical marker at Old Ninety Six Historic Site, South Carolina. Barnwell, op. cit., p. 124, puts the numbers as 562 on Williamson’s side and “about 2000” on the Loyalist side. Note that this large number of Loyalists is a very good indication that Loyalism was alive, well and strong in Ninety-Six, at least at this stage of the war. On this point, Barnwell notes, p. 132, that when the Loyalists raised 2000 men to attack the fort at Ninety-Six, this was an impressive proportion of the population of the district.

<sup>76</sup> David R. Chesnutt, et al., editors, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, op. cit., (1985) Vol. 10, pp. 516-8.

<sup>77</sup> Theodore P. Savas and J. David Dameron, *A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2006) pp. 24-27.

<sup>78</sup> Greene, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., p. 516.

<sup>80</sup> Greene, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>81</sup> David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South Carolina* (Trenton: Isaac Collins, 1785) Vol. 1, p. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., p. 517.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> a document was signed by Williamson, Mayson and Col. Robinson. The agreement providing that the rebel militia would march out of the improvised fort and destroy it, fill in the well, give up their “5 swivel guns firing one and a half pound balls,”<sup>84</sup> that both sides would then withdraw, retaining their other arms, and not attack each other for twenty days, and that any reinforcements would be bound by the agreement. Williamson notes that although “it will appear to your Honours by the Articles [of agreement] that we gave up the Swivels,” but in fact this condition was forced by a mob of three to four hundred Loyalists who surrounded the negotiators, and forced this extra article. In fact, the leaders from both sides had a surreptitious side agreement that the swivels would be returned to the Patriot side after a few days, and surprisingly, this was done.

The motivations for this odd agreement were the fact that the Patriots were running out of powder, and were supposedly “annoyed by the putridity of the dead horses near them.”<sup>85</sup> The Tories feared the approach of rebel reinforcements sent by the Provincial Congress. Some writers allege that both sides lacked martial ardor,<sup>86</sup> perhaps wanting a greater “butcher’s bill,” but this is hard to prove.

In the battle for Williamson’s Fort, Patriot casualties were light, with thirteen wounded, but rebel James Birmingham was killed, becoming the first South Carolina Patriot to die in the Revolution. Loyalist losses were later estimated at 52 killed and wounded,<sup>87</sup> a fairly substantial number. Williamson attributed his small losses to “blinds of Fence Rails and Straw and Some Beeves Hides Etc. Erected in the night behind the men, who otherwise would have been Exposed to the fire of the Enemy.”<sup>88</sup>

The Council of Safety thanked Williamson on 2 December 1775 and stated that, “Your Country is greatly indebted...for the Brave and very Important defense in your Fortified Camp at Ninety Six.... Had the Enemy broke through that Post, they would have been encouraged to penetrate the lower settlements.... We highly applaud the whole of your conduct in that affair.”<sup>89</sup> Although they approved of Williamson’s actions, the Council and Williamson’s superiors refused to be bound by Williamson’s agreement to a twenty-day truce.

In a follow-up campaign, rebel reinforcements did arrive as anticipated, and swelled the Patriot ranks to about 2000. Meanwhile, some of the Loyalists had dispersed, reducing their numbers to about 600. Taking advantage of this reversal of odds, the Patriots including Williamson attacked the Loyalists near the fork of the Broad and Saluda rivers on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1775. (Williamson did honor his pledge of not fighting for twenty days, but by this time the time period had expired.<sup>90</sup>) The Loyalists were routed, several leaders were captured, and many troops fled to Florida. On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of December there was a fall of about 18 to 24 inches of snow, one of the largest snowfalls ever witnessed in the area. As a result, this rebel

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<sup>84</sup> Logan, op. cit., p. 371.

<sup>85</sup> “Narrative of Col. Samuel Hammond,” Thomas Sumpter Papers, *Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Calendar Series*, Vol. V, Microfilm 3VV123-132, p. 125.

<sup>86</sup> Note that Joseph Johnson, op cit., p. 145, states that “hard fighting” took place at Ninety Six, but other sources state that fighting was relatively restrained.

<sup>87</sup> McCall, op cit., p. 295.

<sup>88</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., p. 517.

<sup>89</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., (1985) Vol. 10, p. 525.

<sup>90</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 126.

victory was called the Snow Campaign.<sup>91</sup> This short campaign was difficult, with Richardson reporting that “eight days we never set foot on the earth or had a place to lie down until we had spaded or grappled away the snow, from which circumstance, many are frost-bitten....” Richardson also stated that the Patriot forces captured 10 Loyalist captains and 120 “of the most mischievous men...and 7 kegs of gunpowder, which I delivered to Maj. Williamson to be sent to Mr. Wilkinson for the Cherokees. The arms taken by Major Williamson...I ordered stored at Fort Charlotte.”<sup>92</sup>

In the Snow Campaign, nearly all the Loyalist leaders and many of the troops were captured. The rebels, apparently including Williamson, carefully refrained from pillaging and burning the homes of their opponents, and tried to use “soft words” to bring them around to the rebel cause. But these tactics did not work, and the battle lines of Loyalist versus Patriot were set for the remainder of the war.<sup>93</sup>

Williamson held the Snow Campaign prisoners, including Patrick and Andrew Cunningham, at Fort Charlotte, until he received orders from the Provincial Congress directing him to send some of these to the “common gaol...in Charles Town” and to discharge some others. Oddly, he was also ordered to “prevent future commotions” and “suspend the disarming of the insurgents,” and await a plan to be drafted by the Provincial Congress, which would “take effectual measures to settle the state of the interior country.”<sup>94</sup> The Congress had no idea of the tidal wave of war and violence which was about to engulf them and all of South Carolina.

### **Expedition Against the Indians**

In June 1776, Cherokee Indians, encouraged by British sympathizers and agents, attacked Patriot settlements across western South Carolina. The Indians “burned homes, destroyed crops and tortured captives all along the frontier,”<sup>95</sup> and the attack in South Carolina was part of an offensive Indian campaign involving 4000 warriors attacking settlements from Tennessee to central South Carolina.<sup>96</sup> Messengers and emissaries sent to treat with the Indians were slaughtered.<sup>97</sup>

Every Indian assault was a horror story:

Capt. Aaron Smith’s family on the Little River, consisting of fifteen souls, male and female, white and black, had all been massacred, except two sons: one of these had escaped to White Hall, and alarmed that settlement whilst the other, hard-pressed by barbarians thirsting for his blood, had succeeded in reaching the

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<sup>91</sup> McCall, *op. cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Col. Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 21 January 1776, in R.W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 247, cited in Reverend Robert Michael Jones, “Andrew Williamson 1730-1786: Cow Driver to General,” unpublished paper, November 1979, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> Barnwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127. Barnwell notes that at a crucial attack at the Great Cane Break during this campaign, “many Loyalists would have been killed without being allowed to surrender,” but for “the intervention of the [rebel] officers.” It is not clear if Williamson was one of these officers, but it seems likely.

<sup>94</sup> “Second Provincial Congress, Tuesday, February 6, 1776, Resolution, and Letter to Major Andrew Williamson,” Hemphill and Wates, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 179.

<sup>95</sup> White, *op. cit.*

<sup>96</sup> Savas and Dameron, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>97</sup> Rev. James Hodge Saye, *Memoirs of Major Joseph McJunkin, Revolutionary Patriot* (Richmond, VA: Watchman and Observer, 1847) p. 7.

residence of Mr. Francis Salvador...and there holding up the bleeding stumps of his mutilated hands, told the fearful tale of the slaughter, and roused the scattered settlers of that vicinity...<sup>98</sup>

Not all of the attacks were by real Indians. According to Lossing, in “Williamson’s first skirmish with the Indians,” he captured “thirteen white men, Tories, disguised as savages, and wielding the tomahawk and scalping knife.” Lossing states that “the indignation excited against these men extended to their class, and this discovery was the beginning of those bloody scenes between bands of Whigs and Tories which characterized many districts of South Carolina.”<sup>99</sup> This incident thus set the pattern for years of bloody, vicious internecine warfare, pillage and massacre in the state.

Major Williamson “sent messengers with all speed”<sup>100</sup> to assemble a force to retaliate in what became known as the Cherokee Campaign. They met at “Due West” in Abbeville County. The force of 330 horsemen armed with rifles departed on July 31 at six in the evening, and marched westward through the night to surprise the Indians.

At about this time, Loyalist leader Robert Cunningham offered his services to Williamson in the campaign against the Indians. Cunningham had been released from prison, where he had languished until the battle of Fort Moultrie for his role in the gunpowder seizure early in the war. Despite the fact that Cunningham had supporters and was a vigorous leader, Williamson felt compelled to refuse the offer. Williamson and the other Whigs did not want the ambitious Loyalist Cunningham to gain more prominence. Also, the release of Cunningham had caused an uproar in Williamson’s camp,<sup>101</sup> and he would have been very unpopular with the rebel soldiers. It is possible that this refusal was a mistake, and that some of the later vicious internecine warfare could have been averted if Cunningham had been allowed to join the expedition against the Indians.<sup>102</sup>

Williamson, without Cunningham, advanced rapidly towards the Indian villages and towns. He focused first on catching up with a band of Indians who had killed a Captain James Ford and his wife, and captured his two daughters. The Indians had attacked this family in error, since it was reportedly a Loyalist family and their home was protected by a secret sign, namely a peeled pole wrapped with a white cloth. This signal was supposed to prevent Indian attack, and was called a “Passover.” But in this case it did not work, and the Loyalists suffered for their collusion with the Indian aggressors. Williamson was able to overtake the Indian band near the present day Greenville court house, and he rescued the Ford daughters.<sup>103</sup>

Williamson and his troops stopped there for a few days to recruit more men, then headed deeper into Cherokee territory, focusing first on the towns of Seneca and Tugalo.<sup>104</sup>

But Williamson had “not sent out scouts ahead,” and the Patriot force was ambushed by Cherokees and Loyalists at two o’clock in the morning of August 1 near

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<sup>98</sup> Logan, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>99</sup> Lossing, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 647.

<sup>100</sup> White, op. cit.

<sup>101</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>102</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

<sup>103</sup> Saye, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Seneca Old Town in the Battle of Twelve Mile Creek, in what is now Perkins County. In the “sharp engagement”<sup>105</sup> Williamson’s horse was shot out from under him, but he remounted on a horse given him by a lieutenant, and rallied his troops.

During the battle, Williamson’s friend, associate and militia officer Francis Salvador was shot through the body and left leg, fell into the bushes, was found by the Indians in the dark, and was brutally scalped. He was located in the dark by Williamson and others, and before he died he asked Williamson whether victory had been achieved, and “rejoiced” at Williamson’s reply. Forty-five minutes after having been scalped, and “weltering in his blood,” Salvador “shook Williamson by the hand, bid him farewell, and died.”<sup>106</sup>

Other Patriot riflemen arrived, and with his increased force of 640 men, Williamson was able to route the Indians, burn their corn, and destroy five of their towns. Lt. Col. Hammond played a vital role in saving the day at the crucial moment, by leading a force of twenty men in a line up to the fence which had been hiding the ambushers. His men delivered a volley of fire then jumped the fence and charged the enemy, breaking their will to fight.<sup>107</sup> After this victory, the Indians in the area were reduced to having to “support themselves on roots, berries or wild fruit.”<sup>108</sup>

On August 8 Williamson and his troops fought another battle at Oconore in Oconee County. On August 12 Williamson’s subordinate Andrew Pickens was lured into an ambush known as the “Ring Fight,” from which he and his 35 men almost did not escape. This tactical blunder was turned into a public relations success, and Pickens was hailed as a hero. By mid-August Williamson’s force had destroyed the towns of Esseneca, Keowee, Estatoe, Tugaloo and others. Williamson sent home some men to recruit additional soldiers, and remained camped on the ruins of Esseneca, where he and Pickens erected Fort Rutledge (thus helping to found the modern town of Clemson, South Carolina).<sup>109</sup> Williamson received a letter at this time (on August 29) “from the President, thanking him, his officers and men for their heroic and Gallant Behavior in their late expeditions against the Cherokee lower towns” and Williamson communicated this letter to his “Troops under Arms.”<sup>110</sup>

In September 1776, Williamson’s force, now increased to 1500 men, entered Cherokee County, North Carolina. Guided by a contingent of Catawba Indian scouts, they destroyed the Indian town of Topton in Cherokee Valley.

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<sup>105</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, “A Brief History of the New Acquisition Militia,” York County Historical Center, May 2002, at <http://newacquisitionmilitia.com>.

<sup>106</sup> John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution, From its Commencement to the Year 1776* (Bedford, MA, Applewood Books (reprint), 1821) Vol. II, pp. 345-8. Salvador, despite being Jewish and a new arrival in the colony, had been elected to the South Carolina General Assembly and the Revolutionary Provincial Congress. He was the first Jew to die for his country in the Revolution.

<sup>107</sup> Drayton, *ibid*.

<sup>108</sup> Drayton, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

<sup>109</sup> Jeff Dennis, “Southern Campaigns Against the Cherokees, A Brief Compilation,” *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* (SCAR) newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 10.1, p. 17. The SCAR newsletters are searchable and available on line at [www.southerncampaign.org](http://www.southerncampaign.org).

<sup>110</sup> Will Graves, “Fragment of a Daily Journal Kept by an Unidentified Officer Relating to the Cherokee Expedition of 1776,” SCAR newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 10.1, p. 34. This journal is believed to belong to Malcom Brown, aide to General Williamson.

On September 19, about 1000 Cherokee warriors again ambushed Williamson's troops, who were marching through a narrow defile, this time in what is now Macon County, North Carolina. The Indians were driven off in a two hour "Battle of Black Hole."<sup>111</sup> In this exchange, the Cherokees initially did not fire on the Catawba scouts, but "when they saw the buck tail worn in the hair of the Catawbas," the Cherokees "rained fire" upon them. In this engagement, thirteen Loyalists "disguised as Indians" were captured by the Patriots.<sup>112</sup>

On September 23, Williamson rendezvoused with the North Carolina militia under Brig. Gen. Griffin Rutherford, and for the next two weeks destroyed towns, crops and food stores in what is now Macon and Swain Counties in North Carolina.<sup>113</sup>

Although the campaign was successful, not all of Williamson's soldiers were pleased with his tactics. According to Captain John Buchanan, a native of northern Ireland and a regular army captain who led a company in the campaign:

Every morning at day-break the sage commander ordered the swivels to be fired off so that the Cherokees knew more about him than he did about himself, and picked their time, and place to annoy him. Williamson afterwards went off with (the) British. He was a Scotchman, and did not know a letter in the book.<sup>114</sup>

It also appears that Williamson did not use his scouts well, since as mentioned his army walked into two major ambushes.

It is not clear whether Williamson was merciful or merciless towards the defenseless during this campaign. One account alleges that his men intentionally shot an "Indian squaw through the shoulder and leg" before forcing her to tell what she knew about the Indians dispositions, while another account states that Williamson spared Nancy Ward's entire Indian village because she supported the Patriots, and also took care of wounded and captured Indians.<sup>115</sup>

In September 1776, in the middle of the campaign, Williamson found time to request the legislature to allow him to tell his men that "such of those Indians as should be taken Prisoners would become slaves and the Property of the Captors." Governor Rutledge reported that the men already anticipated this privilege, since already "an Indian woman who had been taken prisoner was sold as a slave." While William Drayton supported the slave idea, the assembly turned down Williamson's request, since it might "give the Indians a precedent which may be fatal to our own people who may unfortunately fall into their Hands." Williamson's men (and Williamson?) apparently made do with indents issued in return for Indian scalps.<sup>116</sup> As we shall see, his desire for Indian slaves came back to haunt Williamson at the end of the war.

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<sup>111</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia* (Charleston: History Press, 2005) pp. 33-34.

<sup>112</sup> J.D. Lewis, "The American Revolution in North Carolina: Coweecho River," from [www.carolana.com](http://www.carolana.com).

<sup>113</sup> Scoggins, "A Brief History...", op. cit.

<sup>114</sup> Logan, op. cit., p. 381.

<sup>115</sup> Patrick J. O'Kelley, "Rebuttal: the Patriot View of the Cherokee Indian Campaign of 1776," SCAR newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 1.0, pp. 58-59.

<sup>116</sup> Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) p. 106. Jeff W. Dennis ("The 1776 Cherokee War 'Creates' Story of Independence, SCAR newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 21-27), argues that Williamson's Cherokee expedition was characterized by

Williamson was highly motivated during this campaign. In his own words,

I shall try my utmost...to beat the Cherokees, of whose treachery and faithless behavior you are well acquainted.....I hope to soon have the pleasure of congratulating you of a happy issue ... of the expedition, and reduce the savages to such a state, as to wish they had never broke their faith with us.<sup>117</sup>

During this campaign, Williamson was made a colonel, a promotion that had been recommended for some time. For example, on 24 July 1776, near the beginning of the Indian campaign, William Henry Drayton wrote to Francis Salvador that,

As for my friend Major Williamson, I long to see him Colonel of the regiment now under his orders. In the station of Major, he does infinitely more honor to it than any Colonel it ever had; of this rank we must say something hereafter. At present the title of Commander in chief of the expedition against the Cherokees, with which he is vested, will give him command of any Colonel in his army.<sup>118</sup>

Drayton was correct in his assessment, since an army of 2300 men – a very large force for the time -- was placed under Williamson’s command for his thrust into North Carolina, and he certainly deserved and needed higher rank to command such a force.

The success of Williamson’s Indian campaign was unquestionable, from the Patriots’ point of view. About 2000 Indians were slain, and the Indians were “so completely defeated that they came to the Carolinians to beg for their lives of those that were left.”<sup>119</sup> The Indians signed a treaty, swearing not to molest the settlers again, and ceded the territory that is now the counties of Anderson, Pickens, Oconee and Greenville in South Carolina – over a million acres.<sup>120</sup> Alexander Chesney, a Loyalist<sup>121</sup> Captain of Militia, reports that he marched under Williamson against the Cherokee, and in total helped him “destroy 32 of their towns” of which there were 62 in total.<sup>122</sup> David Ramsay, the famous South Carolina historian, said:

None of all the expeditions before undertaken against the savages had been so successful as this first effort of the new-born commonwealth. In less than three months...the business was completed, and the nation of the Cherokees so far

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numerous scalplings by the Patriots, violence towards Indian women and children, and a scorched earth policy. O’Kelley (ibid) disputes at least the first two points.

<sup>117</sup> R. W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution* (New York: Appleton, 1857), pp. 26-7, in a letter dated 22 July 1776, at Camp Barker, possibly to Col. Moultrie.

<sup>118</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

<sup>119</sup> White, op cit.

<sup>120</sup> Greene, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>121</sup> Reverend Robert Michael Jones, “Andrew Williamson 1730-1786: Cow Driver to General,” unpublished paper, November 1979, notes that a number of Loyalists were active on both sides of this campaign, and asserts that: “A combined force of Whigs and Tories had defeated a combined army of Indians and Tories.” Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 128-129, agrees, and states that “many Loyalists willingly took part in the expedition” against the common enemy, the Indians.

<sup>122</sup> Alexander Chesney, “The Journal of Alexander Chesney, A South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After,” *The Ohio State University Studies, Contributions in History and Political Science*, Number 7, Vol. XXVI, 1921, No. 4, pp. 7, 76-79.

subdued as to be incapable of annoying the settlements. The whole loss of Americans in the expedition did not exceed fifty men...<sup>123</sup>

Drayton reports that the monetary cost of the expedition was 460,366 pounds, five shillings and five pence.<sup>124</sup> Despite this huge cost, on 19 October 1776, the General Assembly of the state:

Resolved, unanimously, That the thanks of this House be returned to Colonel Andrew Williamson, and the officers and men under his command, employed in the late expedition against the Cherokee Indians for their spirited conduct and services to the State upon that expedition, and that Mr. Speaker do forward the same.<sup>125</sup>

The Indians, too, in their own way, acknowledged Williamson's importance in the campaign. At the peace negotiations one of the Indian leaders, "Mankiller," stated that he had not sent a representative, but had come in person to meet the victors. He said that he had "met the Warrior Beloved Man (Col. Williamson) in the Long Grass, and had good Talks with him." He stated that he had given "much land over the Savannah River" as recompense and gifts for launching and losing the war, and was "ready to make further gifts for peace and safety..." Mankiller blamed the young Indian warriors, who were "great rogues" for starting the conflict that led to disaster for the tribes.<sup>126</sup>

No portrait images of Williamson or his wife appear to exist. The only extant image is of Generals Williamson and Pickens pursuing the Indians, shown below, and this is not contemporary. Nor is it clear which figure is Williamson and which is Pickens.

The Cherokee Indian campaign marked the war's high water mark for Andrew Williamson, in terms of his success and vigor on the side of the Patriots.

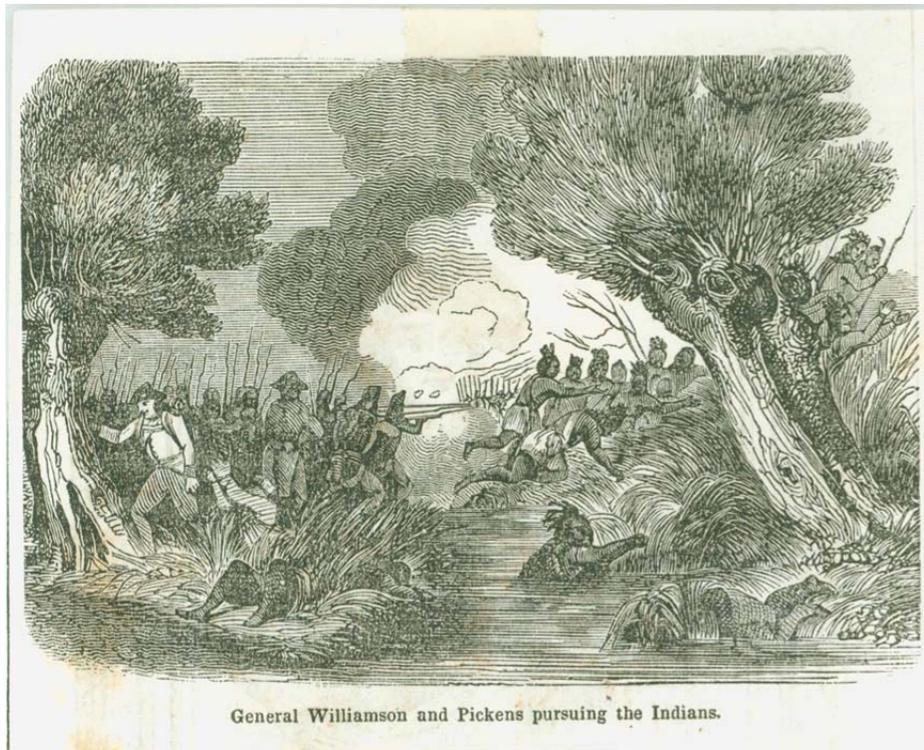
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<sup>123</sup> David Ramsay, quoted in A.S. Salley, Jr., *The History of Orangeburg County, South Carolina* (Orangeburg, SC: R. Lewis Berry, 1898) p. 353.

<sup>124</sup> Drayton, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>125</sup> *Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives 1776-1780* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970) p. 173.

<sup>126</sup> Drayton, op. cit., p. 361 (46).



Courtesy of the Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina

An interesting incident occurred, possibly during the Cherokee campaign, as reported by Edward Lacey, one of Williamson's company commanders.<sup>127</sup> Lacey's biographer states that Williamson's force was crossing a river, when a man was seen on the opposite bank, waving a white handkerchief. This proved to be an express from Congress. Williamson:

Had his command formed in a hollow square, and two large horses held in the centre; he called on Capt. Edward Lacey to mount, and stand upon the backs of the horses, and read the Declaration of Independence to his Regiment; for he had the most musical, clear, distinct voice and articulation, of any officer under his command. Having finished, Lacey cries out, "Thank God! We can now act on the offensive, as well as the defensive!" which was followed by three deafening cheers.<sup>128</sup>

The puzzling part of this account is that the incident is placed at the Altamaha River in Georgia, as part of the Florida-Georgia campaign, to which we turn next, not as part of the Cherokee campaign of 1776. But the copy of the Declaration must have reached Williamson shortly after July 4, 1776.

Ironically, when the Declaration had been brought before Congress on June 28, 1776, the South Carolina delegation had opposed it. The men in the field in South

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<sup>127</sup> M.A. Moore, *The Life of General Edward Lacey* (Spartanburg, SC: Douglas, Evins and Co., 1859) p. 4.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Carolina, including Williamson, were well ahead of their national leaders in their radical sentiments.<sup>129</sup>

A clearer account of Williamson's receipt of the news of independence, and his attitude towards it, comes from Gibbes. He reports that while camped at Seneca town during the campaign, news had come to Williamson from Drayton on 10 August 1776 "acquainting me of the independence of the United States of America being declared." Williamson stated that, "I agree with you that this is a glorious event."<sup>130</sup>

### **The Florida and Georgia Campaigns**

In 1777 there is little mention in the record of Williamson or his efforts. He apparently did not participate in the small but disastrous second Florida expedition of March through May 1777 (and had not been in the first disastrous Florida invasion, in the late summer and fall of 1776.) This was a relatively quiet time in the South, as enemy efforts were concentrated elsewhere, in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

But in 1778 the tempo of war began to increase in the South. Williamson was promoted to Brigadier General of militia in March 1778 and was put in charge of one of three brigades of militia in the state. He was one of the leaders in Robert Howe's large but ill-fated 1778 Florida expedition, the third disastrous invasion, sharing some of the blame for its failure.

Williamson began mobilizing at White Hall about April 19, 1778, "in consequence of letters from his Excellency the President, to raise a certain number of men...." He wanted "stout, able-bodied men" who would "take the oath of abjuration and fidelity" for at least three months, and "sign an agreement subjecting themselves to all pains and forfeitures of the militia law now in force in this State." He also wanted his officers to "secure all the provisions within your limits that you possibly can, as nothing can be done without a supply of that article."<sup>131</sup>

The purpose of the effort was to take St. Augustine. General Williamson's brigade consisted of about 1200 men, including regiments commanded by Colonel Hammond and Col. Goodwin.<sup>132</sup> According to Charles Colcock Jones, Williamson "hinted that his men would not be satisfied to be under Continental command or indeed any other command but his own," thus contributing to the disunity that plagued the effort.<sup>133</sup> However, at least one source reported that of the four "Commanders in Chief," only Williamson "endeavoured to accommodate all differences."<sup>134</sup>

Williamson refused to "stir a foot, till he had provided flour etc etc sufficient for the maintenance of the forces under his immediate command."<sup>135</sup> This sounds like the complaint from another general, not from an ordinary foot soldier, who doubtless appreciated Williamson's thoroughness and understanding of the importance of supply.

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<sup>129</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

<sup>130</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>131</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., pp. 93-4.

<sup>132</sup> Logan, op. cit., p. 362.

<sup>133</sup> Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., *History of Georgia: Revolutionary Epoch* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883) Vol. II, p. 297.

<sup>134</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., (1994) Vol. 14, p. 94.

<sup>135</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., (1992) Vol. 13, p. 437. This letter of May 23 indicates that Williamson had upwards of 800 militia (not 1200), "almost entirely Volunteers."

In fact, later in the Florida campaign, it was reported on 29 July 1778, that “Williamson... is healthy and expects to bring back every Man he carried out, owing in great measure to his provident Care in supplying them properly and abundantly with all Necessaries, for while other Troops were obliged to eat bad rice without Meat...Williamson’s camp abounded with good fresh Flour and fat Beef and Bacon, and a Seasonable allowance of Rum...”<sup>136</sup>

However, a letter from Williamson’s key aide Malcom Brown gives a different view of the problems of this campaign:

We are now crossing this Cursed River, on this side there is a Swamp about 2 miles through Which all the Waggons are to pass, in two places the Horses just pass without Swimming...at the third the shallowest place not less than 10 foot deep. Judge you then what blessed Amusement we are at present engaged in. You knew my opinion of Southern Expeditions long before this was undertaken...what I then prognosticated has fully come to pass....We are reduced to half an allowance of flour and not an ounce of rice (although the staple of the State) and little prospect of getting any....The Georgians have burnt [their] waggons and shott horses in great numbers....I have a headache occasioned by a Cold.

Yr. Mo. Obedt Hble Servant  
Malcom Brown<sup>137</sup>

Williamson was reportedly “insulted” by the “uncooperative Georgia militia” and by Georgians attempting to gouge the South Carolina militiamen with inflated prices for much-needed supplies.<sup>138</sup>

Williamson reported that near the end of the expedition, upon the return from St. Mary’s, the “Continental Troops” had started out with “1200 effective men” and by the end of the campaign they were down to “300 men fit for duty.” Similarly, the Georgia militia and Minute Men started with 750 men and were reduced by sickness and desertion by one half. Williamson stated that he began with 950 effectives in his brigade, about 50 of which were ailing by the end of the expedition, but “none had died, & he was almost certain of carrying them all home alive.” He attributed the health of his troops to “being constantly in motion, when the weather would permit...their having abundance of good wholesome flour and thier [sic] having, in very hot or rainy weather, a gill of rum dealt out to each, & half that quantity when the weather was moderate.”<sup>139</sup> It appears that Williamson knew the adage that “an army marches on its stomach.”

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<sup>136</sup> Rawlins Lowndes to Laurens, Chesnutt, op. cit., (1994) Vol. 14, p. 87.

<sup>137</sup> Letter to Captain John Brown, Commanding at Fort Independence; 26 July 1778; [from the Camp on the North Side of the Alatamaha River, “The Bowie Papers,” *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, April 1900, Vol. IV, no. 4, pp. 117-8. Brown served as Williamson’s secretary and senior aide for most of the war. He was alleged to have been a covert Loyalist, and supposedly was the power and brains behind the throne. Unfortunately, the truth of these allegations is impossible to determine. Brown was subjected to banishment and confiscation by act of the revolutionary assembly at Jacksonborough in early 1782. He later petitioned to be removed from the list and allowed to return home (Saberton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 104).

<sup>138</sup> Prof. Robert S. Davis, Jr., op. cit.

<sup>139</sup> Chesnutt, op. cit., (1994) Vol. 14, p. 94.

In prosecuting the campaign, Williamson was careful to focus on military objectives and avoid what today would be called “collateral damage.” One of his letters to subordinate Col. Goodwyn states that he should “annoy, repel, kill or take prisoners” of the enemy, but “the men [are] to have strict orders not to injure or molest any of the inhabitants on their march.”<sup>140</sup>

Williamson received praise from some quarters for his efforts. According to John Houston in Savannah writing to Henry Laurens, “Williamson of whose Candour and Soldierly Conduct no Man can entertain too high an Opinion, and to whose Services this State is much indebted, was a witness to the whole” Florida campaign.<sup>141</sup>

After four months of mud and misery, and the inconclusive small Battle of Alligator Bridge, the expedition was abandoned. Perhaps if Williamson had been in charge of supply and morale (and rum), the results would have been different.

On the way home, Williamson was careful to warn his men to “preserve good order” and told them that “although the expedition has not been attended with the wished for success,” he thanked his officers and men “for their perseverance and alacrity on so trying and difficult a service.”<sup>142</sup> This kind of consideration for men and morale is commonplace today, but was much rarer in Williamson’s time. There was a reason that he was beloved by most of his troops, and was known as “Warrior Beloved Man” by his Indian foes.

In November 1778, Williamson was concerned about elections in the Ninety Six District. Some Whigs in the district were running against the incumbents on the platform that all of the existing members were military men, who favored prolonging the war because it was in their interest. On the 28<sup>th</sup> Williamson wrote to Captain John Bowie, explaining the situation, giving a list of the candidates Williamson favored, and hinting that Bowie and his men should show up early at the polls to make their votes count, and crush the divisive Whigs.<sup>143</sup>

A thrust into Georgia in 1778 and 1779 yielded little success. Williamson was given contradictory and rather brutal orders. A letter from General Moultrie to General Rutledge states that “your orders ... to General Williamson ... to destroy all cattle, horses, provisions and carriages they meet in Georgia...are contradictory to the idea [given to the local population] that they should remain quiet at home...what must become of the poor orphans, widows and helpless old men?”<sup>144</sup>

British, Loyalists and Indians forces under Colonel Archibald Campbell approached Augusta on 31 January 1779, and captured it unopposed. They attracted 1400 local Loyalists to their standard.<sup>145</sup> However, the arrival of Williamson’s South

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<sup>140</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>141</sup> Houston to Laurens, 20 August 1778, Chesnutt, *ibid.*, p. 192. Houston was one of the original Sons of Liberty in Georgia, was a delegate to the Continental Congress, and served as Mayor of Savannah and Governor of Georgia.

<sup>142</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>143</sup> Beverly E. Bastian, *Fort Independence, An Eighteenth Century Frontier Homesite and Militia Post in South Carolina* (Savannah: US Army Corps of Engineers, 1982) p. 23.

<sup>144</sup> William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York: David Longworth, 1802) p. 368.

<sup>145</sup> “The Revolutionary War in Georgia,” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org). Campbell’s capture of Augusta was unopposed by Williamson because he and other Patriots were under the mistaken impression that Campbell was headed for the South Carolina backcountry, and hence Williamson held his 800 men back inside the South Carolina border, and “apprised

Carolina militia and 1200 North Carolina Patriot reinforcements under Colonel John Ashe, led Campbell to withdraw without a battle. Campbell rapidly abandoned the city, leaving his “Hospital, with a letter recommending [the] sick and wounded to the care and humanity of Gen. Williamson.”<sup>146</sup> He also left behind a considerable quantity of “provisions, ammuniton, and some arms.”<sup>147</sup>

Williamson’s own statement of the position at this point is instructive. He states in a letter of 16 February 1779 that:

It is with the utmost pleasure that...I acquaint you that the Enemy precipitously left Augusta about one o’clock on Sunday Morning, after having destroyed the Flats which they had constructed in order to cross the River. Colonel Campbell left his wounded with a polite note recommending them to my care, a proof that the cause of his retreat was sudden and unexpected. I immediately detached about 300 Horsemen to pursue the Enemy and hang upon their skirts...as it would give Countenance to desertion, and keep the Enemy in continual alarm. This important event has kept the Back Country from ruin and devastation, and of course the seat of War will be transferred to the lower part of the Country....No faith should or ought be placed in [the enemy’s] most solemn assurances – severe examples must certainly be made, for the benefit of the State and a terror to others.<sup>148</sup>

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his superiors of the gravity of the situation and urged that troops be dispatched...” Robert S. Davis, “The Battle of Kettle Creek,” SCAR newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 2.3, p. 32.

<sup>146</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., p. 107, and <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/ArticlePrintable.jsp?id=h-2709>.

<sup>147</sup> Lossing, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 712.

<sup>148</sup> From an original letter at the Library of Congress, from General Williamson to Henry Laurens and extracted and sent on to General Washington. See the American Memory project, George Washington papers, at: <http://memory.loc.gov/>. In a follow-up letter to Laurens on 20 March 1779, Washington comments that Campbell’s retreat from Augusta “seems to have been a surprise even upon Williamson.” Washington hopes that all this is proof “to the disaffected [the Loyalists] that they are leaning upon a broken reed.” See <http://memory.loc.gov/>.



Lincoln for recalling General Moultrie's brigade of 1600 men, which was ordered to reinforce Williamson, and then was called back after "marching [only] six or eight miles up the river."<sup>150</sup>

After Augusta fell to the Patriots, Williamson, Ashe, and General Samuel Elbert of Georgia pursued the British, intending to drive them back to the coast. But on 3 March 1779, the British under Lt. Col. James Mark Prevost (younger brother of General Augustine Prevost), in a brilliant 50 mile end-around forced march, attacked Ashe from the rear, and destroyed his forces at the Battle of Brier Creek. Williamson was not present at the battle, since he had been active further north, closer to Augusta, and was marching with 1200 men south towards the battle area when the defeat occurred. Williamson observed British forces approaching Ashe "in full force" from behind and sent word to warn Ashe. Ashe's scouts also gave some warning, but these various warnings were ignored, with disastrous consequences. The defeat resulted in the capture of General Elbert, the loss of about a third of the Patriot forces in the area, and the reinstatement of royal rule in Georgia.<sup>151</sup> It may have also led to the invasion of South Carolina by the British, and perhaps lengthened the war by a year.

In March 1779, Loyalist captives who had been rounded up by Gen. Williamson, Col. Pickens and other Patriots were put on trial at Old Ninety-Six for civil and military atrocities. Of the hundreds of prisoners under guard, seventy were condemned to death by hanging, although in the end only five were actually executed. One Loyalist officer, Captain Zacharias Gibbs, had been captured at Kettle Creek and was sentenced to hang, but his date of execution was postponed for over a year, while he was imprisoned in full sight of the gallows. He was finally released in April 1780.<sup>152</sup>

In the estimation of Prof. Robert S. Davis, Jr., this 1779 roundup and other vigorous actions by Williamson had destroyed the once powerful Loyalist movement in the Ninety Six district, which had once been capable of mobilizing over 2500 men on short notice, and left it as "a shell of its former self...little more than bands of thieves..."<sup>153</sup>

Williamson was perhaps present at the hard fought Battle of Stono Ferry, on 20 June 1779. Here British General Augustine Prevost led a raid into South Carolina and laid a short three-day siege upon rebel-held Charleston. Prevost began to retreat when General Benjamin Lincoln and the Continental Army approached. Crossing the Stono River twelve miles west of Charleston, Prevost left a garrison of several hundred men, including Loyalists, a substantial number of Hessians, and a contingent of the Highlanders of the 71<sup>st</sup> Foot, at Stono Ferry to cover his line of retreat. These defenders built three strong redoubts, and held off determined attacks by the Americans. Lincoln eventually withdrew, after suffering 34 men killed, 113 wounded and 155 missing.<sup>154</sup>

Evidence that Williamson was at this engagement is contained in the pension application of Howel Sellers (S31357), which states that Sellers went to "Stono Ferry" where "a battle was fought by General Lincoln and General Williamson against the

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<sup>150</sup> Charles C. Pinckney to Eliza Lucas, 24 February 1779, [www.familytales.org](http://www.familytales.org).

<sup>151</sup> Lossing, *op. cit.*, pp. 713-4.

<sup>152</sup> Jerome A. Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>153</sup> Prof. Robert S. Davis, Jr., *op. cit.*

<sup>154</sup> Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing But Blood and Slaughter: Military Operations and Order of Battle of the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas*, Vol. 1, (Booklocker.com Inc., 2004) p. 295.

British, who were protected by breastworks and entrenchments and therefore we had to withdraw.”<sup>155</sup>

However, a letter from Gen. Lincoln to John Jay seems to indicate that “the South Carolina militia, under General Williamson, were retiring home privately and individually,”<sup>156</sup> and an analysis of the battle by C. Leon Harris does not list Williamson among the participants.<sup>157</sup>

During this period, Williamson complained of the lack of the most basic equipment:

Williamson to General Lincoln; July 29, 1779, Camp at Somers, Georgia

I cannot help observing the Virginia and North Carolina troops are well supplied with necessaries, particularly tents, while our militia, some of which have been 3 year almost continuously in the field – have not got a tent.<sup>158</sup>

Williamson was also frustrated with his officers. He gave a command to a more junior officer, so the senior officer, Col. Matthew Singleton, protested and his men refused to serve under the junior man. Eventually this incident led to Williamson charging Singleton with mutiny. But the court martial failed to convict Singleton of the crime.<sup>159</sup>

Despite the frustrations, Williamson again achieved some success in the eyes of John Houstoun of Georgia: “the Creek Indians have broke upon us and ... have killed and cruelly butcher’d upwards of thirty of our inhabitants....South Carolina gave Us most ready and generous Assistance, and the active and intrepid Col. Williamson at the head of 546 Men immediately crossed over [the border] and the Indians retired...”<sup>160</sup>

At least Williamson was receiving some substantial reimbursement to pay for his costs of waging war. On 31 October 1779 he was listed as having received 29,084 pounds and five shillings from the Treasury, “in exchange for dollars of the emission of April and May, August 3.”<sup>161</sup>

By the late summer of 1779 Williamson pulled out of rural Georgia.

In the fall of 1779 he was again involved in operations against the Indians. According to General George Washington, “A part of the Cherokee Nation had been induced by Cameron the superintendent to break faith with us. They had in consequence been severely chastised by General Williamson...[and] 1000 men...”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters, Howel (Howell) Sellers, S31357, <http://southerncampaign.org/pen/>.

<sup>156</sup> Gen. Lincoln to John Jay, President of Congress, 21 June 1779, written at Stono, printed in the SCAR newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 14.

<sup>157</sup> C. Leon Harris, “The Battle of Stono Ferry,” in SCAR newsletter, *ibid.*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>158</sup> Rev. Robert Michael Jones, “Andrew Williamson 1730—1786: From Cow Driver to General,” unpublished manuscript, dated about 1984, p. 27, courtesy of the author. (This is a later and longer version of Jones’ 1979 unpublished paper with the same name.)

<sup>159</sup> Rev. Jones, *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 29-30.

<sup>160</sup> Chesnutt, *op. cit.*, (1994) Vol. 14, p. 375-6.

<sup>161</sup> *Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives 1776-1780* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970) p. 284

<sup>162</sup> Washington to Governor Clinton, 29 October 1779, at: <http://memory.loc.gov/>.

## The Siege of Savannah

In September and October 1779 Williamson participated in the siege of Savannah. American and French forces under General Benjamin Lincoln and Admiral Comte Valerie d'Estaing attacked British General Augustine Prevost, who with 3000 men was holding the city of Savannah. The 7000 American, French and Haitian soldiers besieged the city for several weeks, but the British used the time wisely to strongly fortify the city. A five day bombardment by the Allies only succeeded in destroying much of the town, but caused few British casualties and did not destroy the new defensive interconnecting redoubts.

Brigadier Generals Williamson and Isaac Huger and their force of 500 men<sup>163</sup> were ordered to lead an attack from the American right flank on the British eastern defenses, beside the river, to distract the British from the main American assault. This main assault was to come against the southwest defenses and the Spring Hill redoubt, manned by Loyalist militia, believed to be weak. This major assault was to be led by Lincoln, d'Estaing, Lt. Colonel John Laurens, and French Count Arthur Dillon. (Note that Laurens and Williamson thus worked together in 1779, likely cementing a personal relationship that would become very important later in the war.)

Early on October 9 the battle began. Unfortunately, the element of surprise was lost, and Huger and Williamson's thrust "became mired in rice fields and mud flats"<sup>164</sup> and came under heavy artillery fire. However, "the hoped-for diversion worked," for it did allow the main attack to reach the objective of the Spring Hill redoubt.<sup>165</sup>

Fighting at Spring Hill was tremendous, but ultimately the Americans were thrown back, with losses of over 1000 Americans and French in killed, wounded and captured, while British losses were low at only about 140. The well-regarded Polish Count Casimir Pulaski was killed fighting on the rebel side. The battle was a disaster for the Americans, who could probably have won if they had used a determined, classic siege warfare approach. Instead, the clear British victory helped solidify British control of Georgia, improved British relations with their Creek and Cherokee allies, and increased Tory support throughout the South. French Admiral d'Estaing was wounded and was displeased with the American generalship. He sailed back to France.

The psychological impact of this disaster on Williamson, coupled with the problems in Florida and Georgia, could have been considerable. He had observed first hand the incompetence of Lincoln, the loss to an inferior British force, and the apparent loss of French support for the Americans. All this probably affected his next actions.

## Defection

After the disaster at Savannah, Williamson retreated with the rest of the army. The American army and population were in a bad way. A letter from Col. James Williams to his commander Andrew Williamson gives some idea of the situation: "plundering" of the populace is going on, and Williams has a squad of "picked men" out

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<sup>163</sup> According to Louise Hays, the source of the "500" figure, Williamson was accompanied during this battle by "his three sons and three nephews, and Captain Samuel Hammond." (Louise F. Hays, *Hero of Hornet's Nest: A Biography of Elijah Clark* (New York: Stratford House, 1946) p. 69.) However, this assertion seems doubtful, since Williamson had only two sons and one was about eight and the other two years old at this point.

<sup>164</sup> Savas and Dameron, op. cit, pp. 227-232.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

to bring the miscreants “to justice.” He fears that embodying a part of the regiment will “turn out poorly.” Williams has made it known to the public that the Governor has promised “to get salt for the back country,” but there is so little salt – a basic commodity – that “many a poor man is obliged to turn out his hogs for want of salt.” A captain under Williams has deserted with the company payroll, his “men will probably lose their money,” and Williams will have to make the payroll out of his own personal funds. Williams says he “should be glad to get the money” for the military payroll from General Williamson.<sup>166</sup>

The next hammer blow against the rebel cause was the fall of Charleston on 12 May 1780 and the capture of 5000 American troops<sup>167</sup> -- one of the greatest Patriot losses of the war. The surrender occurred after a month-long siege, in which Williamson did not participate, as he was positioned at Augusta.<sup>168</sup> At this juncture it appeared to almost everyone in South Carolina that the Patriot effort in South Carolina and Georgia was finished.

Just at this time, the Royal General Assembly, meeting in Savannah, passed two acts retaliating against rebel leaders. The second act disqualified 151 Patriots from ever holding or exercising any office of trust, honor or profit in Georgia, including even serving on any jury. Number 19 on the list was “Andrew Williamson, rebel general.”<sup>169</sup>

Captain Samuel Hammond’s first hand account of Williamson’s dilemma at this time is very telling:

On being notified of the surrender of Charleston...a council of officers was called...[including] Colonel Clary with all the officers in his command; Governor Howley of Georgia, his council, his secretary of state; Colonel Dooly; General Williamson and suite with a number of field officers of his brigade, also attended. General Williamson presented a copy of the convention entered into by the American and British commanders, at Charleston...but no plan of operation could be resolved upon. General Williamson resolved to discharge the few militia then on duty at that place, retire to his own residence, Whitehall, near Cambridge, to call together the field officers of his brigade, and the most influential citizens, to consult what course should be taken....Williamson moved hastily to Whitehall. A large number of his officers were assembled there, and

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<sup>166</sup> Gibbes, op. cit., pp. 123-4.

<sup>167</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, op cit., p. 41.

<sup>168</sup> Some sources state that Williamson ignored a call from Governor Rutledge in February 1780 for the militia to join the Charleston garrison. It is not clear if Williamson was actually ordered to Charleston, and if it was only a “call,” perhaps Williamson foresaw the coming debacle under Lincoln, who had failed at Savannah, and simply decided not to walk into a disastrous trap. See Chesnutt, op. cit., (2000) Vol. 15, p. 287. Also, several sources (e.g. McCrady and McCall) allege that at this time Williamson began to be corrupted and was in league with the British, and even delayed forwarding information on the fall of Charleston to Governor Rutledge, such that the Governor only narrowly escaped capture. No proof other than assertion has ever been brought forward to support these charges (Barnwell, op. cit., p. 215), and it appears much more likely that Williamson went over to the British after the fall of Charleston, in June 1780, not before. Williamson and his men “evacuated Augusta” by June 9, 1780, according to Royal Georgia Governor James Wright (Steven J. Rauch, “The First Seige at Augusta, Georgia,” SCAR newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 9, p. 2).

<sup>169</sup> Charles Jones, Jr., op. cit., pp. 421-3. Of course, Williamson was most concerned with his status in South Carolina, but this action in Georgia, where he had spent much time in the last two years, showed that he was a major target for retaliation by Royalists.

high hopes were entertained, by Captain Hammond, prior to going into council...to keep up a kind of flying camp. The troops were well disciplined...three independent companies of regular infantry... [The] council met, the terms of capitulation in Charleston were read; the general commented upon them, took a short view of the situation of the country, and wound up by advising an immediate retreat; but he said he would be governed by the determination [that] a majority of the council should adopt; that they were friends...

Captain Samuel Hammond says that he was struck dumb, on not finding more than one officer of the staff, one field officer, and about four or five captains, to oppose an immediate acceptance of the terms stipulated for the militia of the State by the convention of Charleston. It was proposed and carried...that a flag should be sent forth...to settle the time, place and manner of surrender.

Yet Williamson persevered; Colonel Pickens was not of the council, but encamped a few miles off. Williamson [rode there and] had a short consultation with Colonel Pickens—his troops were drawn up in square, all mounted—the general addressed them in spirited terms, stating that with his command alone he could drive all the British force then in their district before him....He reminded them of what they had already done, and hoped they would persevere. He called to them, “My fellow citizens, all of you who are for going with me on a retreat, with arms in our hands, will hold up your hands; and all who are for staying and accepting the terms made for you by General Lincoln, will stand as you are.” Two officers, Captain McCall and Captain McLidle, with three or four privates, held up their hands; all else stood as they were. The question was again put, and the result was the same.<sup>170</sup>

Despite the lack of support from his own officers and troops, Williamson reportedly did not immediately make a public decision, but tried to serve both sides:

General Williamson being near the [new British] garrison at Ninety Six, weighed the matter, hesitated and remained quiet, and finally was caught in the act of saving himself by receiving provender and food for the British.<sup>171</sup>

Logan gives an extensive quote on Williamson’s actions at this time, from the Hon. Alexander Bowrie (sic) of Talladega<sup>172</sup> about the service of his father, a Captain of the Fifth South Carolina Regiment who served with Williamson and fought at Stono, Savannah and Guilford Courthouse. Although Logan on page 423 states that the name is “Bowrie,” there is no officer by this name in various records, and it is clear from page 458 that this officer is Captain (later Major) John Bowie, author of the letters in the Bowie Papers in the New York Public Library, and commander of Ft. Independence.

Captain Bowie was in constant correspondence with Williamson, lived on Long Cane Creek near Williamson, and served with Williamson at Savannah. Hence this

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<sup>170</sup> Joseph Johnson, op. cit., pp. 151-2.

<sup>171</sup> Harvey Toliver (H.T.) Cook, *The Hard Labor Section* (Greenville, SC: Attic Press, 1993) p. 21 (located at the SC Archives).

<sup>172</sup> Logan, op. cit., pp. 423-426, 458.

information from Logan, writing in 1856, has considerable weight in evaluating Williamson's actions:

My deceased father...[Captain/Major John Bowie] was a Scotchman by birth, and emigrated to this country in 1762. He was commissioned a Captain in the Fifth Regiment raised in South Carolina, which was soon after put on the Continental establishment. My father was engaged in the battle of Stono, acting in the capacity of Brigade Major of Williamson's Brigade. My information in regard to Gen. Williamson, is more full than in regard to any of the others, because in the early part of the war, and before it began, there existed between my father and him, a very close and intimate friendship. I have often heard from the lips of my revered father the melancholy story of Williamson's defection from the cause of his country.

General Williamson, although a Scotchman, was an illiterate man. He was able to write only his name, and that he learned to do mechanically, without any knowledge of the letters he was making. His manner of writing his name was WmSon. He was, nevertheless, by nature, a man of uncommon intellect. Before, and during a large portion of the Revolutionary War, he was a decided patriot and Whig. He held a high command in the Provincial militia, and his skill and bravery were undoubted.

His residence was near (or at) White Hall. My father was in the habit of dining with him frequently, and this hospitality was frequently reciprocated. Williamson's patriotism was, I believe, undoubted and unsuspected until after the capitulation of Ninety Six (Charleston?).<sup>173</sup> This event seemed to all, except the boldest spirits, to be the end of the struggle in that part of South Carolina, if not in the whole State. The British regarded the country as not only conquered, but subdued. General Williamson was a man of considerable wealth, to which, as was not unnatural, he was much attached. But here I close the curtain. His motives, whatever they may have been, belong to him and his God.

I now continue the narrative, as near as possible, in the words of the narrator [the father, Captain John Bowie]: Not long after the surrender and capitulation of Ninety Six, I received an invitation to dine with Gen. Williamson, at his own house, with the assurance that I should meet only a small party of particular friends. I went expecting to spend a social day with such Whig gentlemen as I had been accustomed to meet at his hospitable table. To my utter surprise and mortification, upon entering his parlor<sup>174</sup> I found it crowded with British officers in full uniform. A moment's reflection determined me to submit to the exigencies of my position with the best grace I could command. After dinner, and after a very few glasses of wine, I arose from the table and took a respectful leave of the company; but after plainly evincing to the watchful eye of Gen. Williamson my utter dissatisfaction with the whole affair.

Within a day or two afterwards Gen. Williamson rode up to my house, and soon afterwards invited me to take a walk with him. He commenced the conversation

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<sup>173</sup> This parentheses and question mark is in the original text. The reference to Ninety Six is likely correct, since the British did occupy Ninety Six soon after their major victory at Charleston.

<sup>174</sup> Note that White Hall is large enough to have a parlor.

by referring to the dinner party at his house, and expressing his surprise and regret at my too evident displeasure on the occasion. I then very seriously addressed him as follows: “You know, Gen. Williamson, that when you invited me to dine with you—a thing I had often done before—you said I was only to meet a few particular friends. I went without suspicion that any change had taken place in the political views of Gen. Williamson. You can well conceive my surprise, then, when instead of meeting such men as Col. Pickens, Mr. Rapley, and others of like stamp, I found your parlor filled with officers. I felt that all was not right, but determined to put the best face on the matter that I could. After the cloth was removed, and wine introduced, you requested your guests to fill their glasses, and to my utter confusion gave as the first toast ‘the King!’ Well, as I had no personal quarrel with King George (so I satisfied my honor) I drank it, but in that glass I drank fare well to all further intercourse with Gen. Williamson. But that was not all. Immediately afterwards, intending your remark for my special ear, you observed that you thought it now high time for every man in this country to choose which side he would espouse. I had long since made my choice, and I thought Gen. Williamson had made his. As soon as I could with decency I left the table and rode home.’ He was evidently much disturbed by these remarks, and became affected even to tears. But he had gone too far to recede; and to the day of his death, I have no doubt, sorely lamented the fatal step he had taken.

After this, my recollection is that Gen. Williamson joined the British army, and never again associated with his old friends in the upper country. His estate, I believe, was confiscated by the South Carolina Legislature.

Williamson had sent a conciliatory message to his opponents on 5 June 1780, and it was received by Loyalist officer Captain Richard Pearis.<sup>175</sup> It was addressed to “the officer commanding the British troops,” stating that he was “desirous on my part to prevent the effusion of blood and the ruin of the country.” Williamson asked about the officer’s authority and “the tenor of powers you are invested with.” For a reportedly illiterate man, it was a very carefully worded approach. It did not mention surrender, parole or protection, but did express a desire for peace, and requested a statement of the authority of the recipient.

Williamson knew that he needed to be careful in approaching the British. Two years earlier, on 27 February 1778, the national Congress had passed an act against spying by Americans or aiding the enemy, which said in part that “inhabitants of these

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<sup>175</sup> Also sometimes spelled as Paris or Pariss. According to Barnwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123, Pearis was born in Ireland about 1725, but had lived on the South Carolina frontier for years. He served in the French and Indian war as a lieutenant of Virginia provincial troops and in command of a company of Indians. He married a Cherokee wife and became a major power among them. Through his Indian connections he was granted 50,000 acres on the headwaters of the Enoree and Reedy Rivers, although this grant was actually illegal. He was involved in the gunpowder seizure early in the war that led to the first Battle of Ninety-Six, was often in debt, changed sides at least once, made a false affidavit about Indian intentions, and was “none too savory a character.” Even the British did not like Pearis – Colonel Innes said that, “I would not entrust him with a Corporal’s Guard” and Colonel Balfour described him as a “fellow of infamous character.” (Barnwell, *op. cit.*, p. 201.) Perhaps Williamson, who clearly knew Pearis and undoubtedly disliked him, was hoping that by addressing his letter to the British commander in the region, that a regular British Army officer, not Pearis, would receive the letter and act upon it. (After the war Pearis fled to the Bahamas, according to Barnwell, p. 399.)

states” whose intelligence aids the enemy “shall suffer death...by sentence of a court-martial.”<sup>176</sup> And in March 1776 the rebel South Carolina legislature had passed the Sedition Act, which provided the death penalty for “inducing persons to take up arms against the new government, or aiding the British forces with money, arms or intelligence.”<sup>177</sup>

On June 10 a capitulation paper was signed by Williamson’s officers and Captain Pearis, at Pearis’ camp on the north side of the Saluda River. It stated that “all the inhabitants on the south side of the Salludy River” would enjoy “peace and happiness.”<sup>178</sup>

The articles of capitulation stated in detail that:

In order to the immediate restoration of that harmony, peace and happiness which we once experienced under the Government of His Britanick Majesty...we do receive His Majesty’s most gracious pardon and protection agreeable to the terms of the proclamation issued by his Excellency (Sir Henry Clinton) [on] the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1780...

[We will] Deliver up...the arms, ammuniton and military stores at General Williamson’s and Fort Ruttlidge...

The independent companies...shall be immediately discharged...

Private arms ...to remain in care of the person appointed to receive the same...we will remove the publick arms and stores to Ninety Six...

Signed [for the Patriots by] John Bowie, R.A. Rapley, James Moore and Geo Whitefield

Surprisingly, the articles signed made no explicit mention of surrender or what would happen next. In the capitulation of Charleston on 11 May 1780, the terms were fairly clear: hostilities would cease, the town would surrender, Continental troops would remain as prisoners of war, the “militia now in garrison shall be permitted to return to their respective homes...as prisoners on parole...and be secured in their persons and property...the officers...shall keep their horses, swords, pistols and baggage, which shall not be searched, and retain their servants...”<sup>179</sup> In this June 10 capitulation the wording seems to be very careful and very good, from the Patriot point of view: “pardon” is immediately granted, and “protection” is provided, without even requiring an oath of loyalty to the King, which was normally required.

The proclamation issued by Clinton on 22 May (referenced in the surrender of 10 June) threatened any “person that shall hereafter appear in arms” or that otherwise intimidated “faithful and loyal subjects” with “severe” penalties, including “immediate”

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<sup>176</sup> Thomas Allen, *George Washington, Spymaster*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>177</sup> Barnwell, op. cit, p. 161.

<sup>178</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 95-6. See also Lambert, op. cit., p. 106-7. Barnwell, op. cit., p. 200, notes that Col. Samuel Hammond and about seventy of his men departed for North Carolina rather than sign the articles of surrender.

<sup>179</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaign of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Cadell, 1787, reprint by the University of North Carolina), pp. 61-4.

seizure of their estates. (This was probably Williamson's greatest fear.) But it promised that the "King's faithful and peaceful subjects" would be given "protection and support."<sup>180</sup>

Williamson himself appears to have waited until later in the month to quietly surrender to Pearis; there is no record of the document he signed, if any. But he had finally made his decision to change sides. His dilemma was how to minimize his risks and maximize his chances for success.

The exact legal situation facing Williamson was not simple. He had decided to not flee to North Carolina, thus leaving his plantations and property to be "immediately" seized and sold off or turned over to Loyalists who had lost property. But by remaining in the Ninety Six district there were at least four possibilities, as follows:

First, as anticipated by Cornwallis, Williamson would immediately "surrender" and "be given a parole for the islands." Williamson would be "given directions to call on me [Cornwallis] on his way thither, [although] perhaps I shall be gone to Charleston before he [Williamson] can set out."<sup>181</sup> Thus under this approach, Williamson would have to leave his beloved White Hall, go to the "islands"<sup>182</sup> and remain there as a prisoner of war on parole. Under the standard terms of such a parole, the prisoner signed a clear statement that, "I acknowledge my self to be a prisoner of war upon my parole...and that I am hereby engaged, until I shall be exchanged or otherwise released therefrom, to remain at my home in \_\_\_\_ and that I shall not in the mean time do or cause to be done anything prejudicial to His Majesties arms **or have intercourse with His enemies**, and that I will surrender myself and my arms..."<sup>183</sup> Obviously, this choice was almost as bad as fleeing to North Carolina and remaining a rebel. The chances that his plantation would survive intact while he waited months or even years to be exchanged from the islands were nil.

Second was the possibility presented under the standard terms of parole described earlier, and under the terms for the militia who surrendered at Charleston: to return "to their homes" and remain as prisoners of war. From Williamson's point of view, this was much more desirable – he could stay at home at White Hall and protect his property, and keep up his social network and plantation income. He might be "exchanged" but he was at home anyway. He would not have to take an oath of loyalty to the King, and he would

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<sup>180</sup>Tarleton, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

<sup>181</sup> Letter from Cornwallis to Balfour, 11 June 1780, Saberton, op. cit., Vol. 1. pp. 83-4.

<sup>182</sup> This apparently meant the British-controlled islands of the West Indies. See Scotti, *Brutal Virtue: the Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1995, Ph.D. dissertation) p. 231. (However, Barnwell, p. 205, feels that the place of exile was more often the barrier islands off the coast of South Carolina, which the upcountry men greatly feared, due to the malarial fevers endemic there.) Scotti notes that the English term "parole" comes from the French term "parole d'honneur" or word of honor, and is a pledge by a prisoner of war that he will not bear arms until exchanged for an officer of similar rank, or otherwise released. Rebecca N. Brannon states that prisoners of war were kept aboard prison hulks (ships) in Charleston or other harbors, or sent to St. Augustine (where some were kept in a fortress). See her *Reconciling the Revolution: Resolving Conflict and Rebuilding Community in the Wake of Civil War in South Carolina: 1775-1860* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2007, Ph.D. dissertation) p. 41. Prison hulks were of course notorious death traps and greatly feared.

<sup>183</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 184, emphasis added, since such "intercourse" will become important later.

not have to take up arms against the remaining rebels, some of whom were his friends and relatives.

However, Clinton issued two other proclamations on June 1 and 3,<sup>184</sup> which appeared to take this desirable option off the table. The June 3 proclamation stated that due to the surrender of Charleston, and the “defeats and dispersion of the rebel forces,” those persons “not in the military line,” were “freed from all such paroles” and were “restored to all the rights and duties belonging to citizens...” This did not apply to Williamson, since he was definitely in the military line. But the June 1 proclamation stated that “we extend royal clemency” and a “full and free pardon...for treasonable offenses...in such manner and form as His Majesty’s commission doth direct.” This pardon was to be given only to those “who, convinced of their errors, are firmly resolved to ... support [the]...government” and not to those who still “endeavour to keep alive the flame of rebellion.” It also required “a due experience of the sincerity of their professions.”

In practice, Cornwallis did not intend to enforce the June 1<sup>st</sup> proclamation by granting paroles or pardons “indiscriminately,” but rather “to have regard to characters...”<sup>185</sup> – in other words, he would consider the past actions and present truthfulness and sincerity of each individual. For the ordinary mass rank and file, His Majesty’s commissioners and officers were likely not going to bother to examine every single man one by one (although many writers and rebels at the time stated that individual oaths of loyalty would be required of all).<sup>186</sup> But a major prize like Williamson would be the subject of tougher scrutiny, and would likely be forced into taking the third possibility, below.

It should be noted in passing that the effect of the June 3 proclamation was disastrous from the British point of view. South Carolinians took this proclamation to mean that, as newly re-minted good British citizens, they could now be forced to take up arms against their fellow Americans who were still in rebellion. This view turned nine out of ten back-country residents against the British within months, even if they had previously been neutral.<sup>187</sup> And in fact the British did try to force some Patriot militia to join the British Army. Lt. Gabriel Tutt stated in his pension application that the British ordered him to take up arms and join them, under penalty of “military execution” if he refused.<sup>188</sup>

Third, Williamson could “take protection”— swear allegiance to the Crown, and officially reject all his past rebellious actions and associations.<sup>189</sup> He would have to cooperate with the authorities in every way, and this would become public knowledge very quickly. This choice was less attractive from Williamson’s point of view, since he

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<sup>184</sup> Tarleton, op. cit., pp. 73-6.

<sup>185</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 111.

<sup>186</sup> Scotti, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>187</sup> Brannon, op. cit., pp. 41-3. This view was strengthened by the fact that the surrender articles for Charleston had stated that young men must be ready to serve in the Army for up to twelve months, and could be ordered to serve in South Carolina, North Carolina or Georgia.

<sup>188</sup> Lt. Gabriel Tutt Revolutionary Pension Application, number S6279, available at: <http://www.southerncampaign.org/pen/s6279.pdf>. For a longer version of Tutt’s statement, see the section below on White Hall during the Revolution.

<sup>189</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 77.

was clearly a rebel, and he still remained friends with some associates and relatives who had fled to North Carolina to continue the fight.

Note that even the British were a bit confused over enforcement of their own rules. Cornwallis states that, "All of these [persons] possessing these protections who come under the description of being sent to the islands must have their protections taken away and proper paroles substituted in their stead."<sup>190</sup>

Instances occurred where military men blatantly abused this parole/protection system. The most famous in South Carolina was perhaps Captain James Lisle, who had served under Williamson in the Cherokee expedition of 1776. He was to be banished to the islands on parole, but managed to exchange this undesirable parole for a certificate of being a good citizen under the June 1<sup>st</sup> proclamation. He immediately enlisted in a Loyalist militia unit, and was made second in command. He waited until the unit was armed and supplied, then took the unit en masse over to the Patriot side.<sup>191</sup> Under British stated policy, if captured he could have been quickly hung. Williamson could perhaps have taken Lisle's path, but then he would have lost White Hall and his other plantations.

Fourth, Williamson could accept a commission in the British army. This was definitely a possibility. Cornwallis had signed a blank "commission for colonel of militia"<sup>192</sup> and transmitted it to Lt. Col. Nisbet Balfour (the British commander at Fort Ninety-Six) to give to the person in the Ninety Six district that he thought most fit. The commission stated that, "I appoint you, \_\_\_\_\_. to be Colonel of the Militia and Conservator of the Peace of the District...empowered to grant commissions ...for field officers, captains and subalterns...take them under your charge...in such manner and numbers as you shall see expedient." It also granted the colonel the powers of Justice of the Peace, and even allowed the colonel to grant J.P. powers to subordinate officers. (Justices of the peace could arrest and arraign citizens for violating moral and legal standards, and for disturbing public order.) These were very substantial and attractive powers, indeed. It seems most likely that Pickens would have been the first choice of the British for the colonelcy,<sup>193</sup> but surely Williamson was at least the second pick.

Williamson was making the biggest decision of his life, and was going to have to assist the British in either a passive or an active way.

### **Assisting the British**

There is no absolute proof which of the four choices above Williamson made, but we can make reasonable inferences. Although there are allegations that he "became a British officer,"<sup>194</sup> there is no evidence of this and in fact a letter from Balfour to Cornwallis states that:

I have had several private conversations with Williamson, who has every Appearance of candour and sincerely wishing to remain under the British

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<sup>190</sup> Cornwallis to Balfour, Saberton, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>191</sup> From "Rocky Mount," at [www.carolana.com](http://www.carolana.com).

<sup>192</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 89.

<sup>193</sup> See for example Saberton, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 280, which implies that Williamson is supposed to persuade Pickens to accept British command of the district. Also Lt. Col. Allen to Haldane, 29 December 1780, which states that "Pickens was always esteemed the best in the rebel service," Saberton, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 288.

<sup>194</sup> McCall, op. cit.

Government. He has a strong sound understanding, and, if I am not much deceived indeed, will be infinitely useful here if properly treated. The amount of our conversations is that from decency as well as inclination any **active military part would be impossible for him at present**, should we choose to trust him; and that he knows his influence in assisting the civil as well as the military arrangements will conduce more to bring the country to quiet and submission than if he took a more publick part; and that he is now ready to give every pledge in his power for his remaining steady to the part he now takes; that he has lived so long in the country that he has a thorough knowledge of the people here, who are of all mankind the least to be depended upon...<sup>195</sup>

Balfour also notes in the same letter that Williamson thinks that the best way to get the government re-established is the “get the leading men to exert themselves,” and Williamson offers to try to persuade four key leading men: Pickens, Hammond, Bowie and Rappillie (Rapley).

Balfour’s language makes it clear that Williamson is giving “every pledge” -- thus it seems probable that Williamson did “take protection” (option three) and swore allegiance to the Crown.<sup>196</sup>

Note that Balfour makes no mention of exiling Williamson to the islands – possibility one is now not even being considered for Williamson. Yet in the paragraph just before, in the same letter, Balfour describes the possible need to “march into the disaffected districts and by punishments etc disarm every suspicious person, break the agreements of Paris and Brown and send off [i.e., exile] immediately every leading man of the rebell party...” Williamson had apparently worked his charm on Col. Balfour, and had successfully sailed through one of the most important interviews of his career.

From Williamson’s actions over the next few months, it is apparent that he was cooperating fully with the British, and assisting them on the civil side, with military advice, and with supplies, in every possible way. He was not acting as a prisoner of war would act, as described in options one and two above.

For example, Williamson:

- Provided order of battle information on his past Patriot command: “seven regiments under his command amount [sic] to above five thousand men without reckoning the three lower regiments...it will be some time before a perfect report can be made of them.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Balfour to Cornwallis, 24 June 1780, Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 238-241, emphasis added.

<sup>196</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 77, argues that Williamson “remained on parole...at home” and that there is no evidence that Williamson took protection. While it is true that there is no written documentation to show that he took an oath of allegiance to the King, his actions are clearly not those of a prisoner on parole, who by honor and custom could not be compelled to harm his own side. The British were aware of this, were legalistically and honorably minded, and would have been unlikely to continue for months to use a paroled prisoner of war as a trusted advisor and supplier. See the description below of Williamson’s actions. To give Saberton a point, however, a British letter as late as 15 December 1780 does mention Williamson and Pickens as being “on parole.” (Saberton, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 283.) This could have been more a figure of speech than an accurate legal description of their status, however.

<sup>197</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 286.

- Was asked to advise on a suspected “rising in the Long Cane settlement. [He] immediately brought the people to me [Balfour] and shewed clearly it was a falsity.”<sup>198</sup>
- Helped prevent another rising in the Long Cane district inspired by a raid by Patriot leader Col. Elijah Clarke of Georgia: “W is gone into the Long Cane Settlement and means with Pickens to get the country to rise and assist Crugar [British commander at Ninety Six] in getting at Clark.”<sup>199</sup> When Williamson returned, he reported to Balfour that, “I learned that only six of the people in that settlement had gone off [to join the rebels], three of them the sons of one Wm Lucky.... I can assure you that every thing has been and will be done by the principal people to keep the country quiet, which have no doubt can be effected as the people seem in general determined to adhere strictly to the capitulation...”<sup>200</sup>
- Considered but rejected a proposal to join with Cunningham [his old enemy] to make an “expedition against these trans-mountain gentry” [the rebels in North Carolina and Tennessee].<sup>201</sup>
- Advised on using some of the Indian bands to protect the boundary between the rebel and British-controlled territories.<sup>202</sup>
- Received payment from the British of “two hundred guineas...on account of the purchase of beef and flour.”<sup>203</sup> This is likely a payment to Williamson to continue in his old pre-war and early war role of supplying the fort at Ninety Six with supplies. It is not clear if Williamson received other payments for his services in keeping the country quiet, but the next sentence, “your Lordship will be pleased to let me know if any more of it is to be paid to Williamson,” hints that additional payments were likely.
- Reportedly advised Cornwallis in August 1780 to capture Patriot General Thomas Sumter, the “Game Cock,” and this attempt was almost successful.<sup>204</sup>

Andrew Williamson was actively assisting the British, was in effect acting as a Tory leader, and the entire district was surely aware of this. He was one of the top defectors from the Patriot cause in South Carolina, and was widely referred to as “the Benedict Arnold” of that state.<sup>205</sup>

Because Williamson was what today we would call a “high value target,” and because of his substantial actions to help the British, they felt he was key to their plans:

The submission of General Williamson at Ninety Six, whose capitulation I enclose with Capt. Paris’ letter, and the dispersion of a party of rebels, who had assembled at an iron work on the northwest border of the province, by a

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<sup>198</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 243.

<sup>199</sup> Balfour to Cornwallis, 20 September 1780, Saberton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 91.

<sup>200</sup> Williamson at White Hall to Balfour, 21 September 1780, Saberton, *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 24 August 1780, *ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>204</sup> Hays, op. cit., p. 95. Note that Hays does not provide a primary or secondary source for this assertion.

<sup>205</sup> Sabine, op. cit., p. 437.

detachment of dragoons and militia from Lieut.-Colonel Turnbull, put an end to all resistance in South Carolina.<sup>206</sup>

James Simpson, the (Royal) Attorney General for South Carolina, advised that Williamson's considerable estates should be protected, in order to secure and maintain his influence.<sup>207</sup>

Robert Barnwell, in his detailed analysis of Loyalism in South Carolina, calls Williamson at this time "the most influential man in the Ninety-Six District, [who] had been very important in winning that region for the Revolutionary party in 1775."<sup>208</sup>

British elation at Williamson's surrender and cooperation needs to be understood in the context of the times. While some historians have tended to denigrate the contributions of the militia in the Revolution, an analysis of the South Carolina militia found that by July 1780 the men of the "Whig backcountry militia" were generally battle-hardened veterans with "five bloody years of conflict" and military experience under their belts, and were very valuable members of the rebel army.<sup>209</sup> So the surrender of their leader Williamson, with military experience and successes in battle dating back twenty years, was a tremendous blow to the Patriots, and the British knew it.

Many other officers and officials submitted to the British at about this time (the summer of 1780), including: Henry Middleton (for a short time President of the First Continental Congress), Colonel Charles Pinkney (formerly President of the Provincial Congress),<sup>210</sup> Colonel LeRoy Hammond (brother-in-law of Williamson) and Colonel Andrew Pickens, General Isaac Huger, Colonel Peter Horry, Colonel James Mayson, Colonel John Thomas Sr., Colonel Isaac Hayne, Major John Postell and Major John Purvis.<sup>211</sup> Daniel Cannon and William Trusler, leaders of the "mechanic element" in Charleston who led popular demonstrations against the British at the beginning of the war, also took protection at this point, as did Colonel Benjamin Garden and Wade Hampton.<sup>212</sup>

However, many of these fallen rebels returned to the fray on the Patriot side after the British started losing battles, and after Cornwallis made the very unwise move of trying to force older Patriots to be responsible for public order, and forcing younger men to go into active service in the British Army, and take up arms against the remaining rebels.<sup>213</sup> This raised great animosity, and gave the former Patriots a good reason to contend that the terms of their parole had been violated.

Alas for General Williamson, the timing of his crucial decision to join the British side was off by a few months. By 24 October 1780, Lord Rawdon was writing to Sir Henry Clinton that:

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<sup>206</sup> Lord Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton; Charleston, June 30, 1780, in Tarleton, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>207</sup> Chesney, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>208</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>209</sup> Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, op. cit., pp. 156-7.

<sup>210</sup> David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina* (New York: American Historical Society, 1934) p. 207-8.

<sup>211</sup> Chesney, op. cit.

<sup>212</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., p. 217-218.

<sup>213</sup> Hays, op. cit., pp. 78-9.

The defeat of Major Ferguson<sup>214</sup> has so dispirited this part of the country, and indeed the loyal subjects were so wearied by the long continuance of the campaign, that Lieut.-Colonel Kruger [now commanding at Ninety-six] sent information to Cornwallis that the whole district had determined to submit as soon as the Rebels should enter it.<sup>215</sup>

British strategy and tactics backfired, and created what has been called a “second Revolution.”<sup>216</sup> The British attempt to make ex-patriots bear arms against their former comrades, the pillaging of the countryside by bands of Loyalists, the destruction of Presbyterian meeting houses and the burning of Bibles containing the Scots version of the Psalms, and the many atrocities, all led the population to rise up again against the Crown.

In December 1780, Patriot General Few of Georgia and Colonel Samuel Hammond led troops in an invasion of the Ninety Six district. In Hammond’s own words,

Our wish, also, was to draw out the well affected off that part of the country, who had been paroled by the enemy on the surrender of General Williamson; believing that the British had violated their faith under this capitulation, they having compelled the whigs to bear arms against their late companions in arms, instead of leaving them at home, until exchanged as prisoners of war; and that this would be a favorable opportunity for them to join us.<sup>217</sup>

Hammond went to White Hall and:

...captured Gen. Andrew Williamson at his own house, with a large quantity of provisions which had been stored for the use of the British. But the indecision of the commander [Few] gave Cruger and Cunningham at Ninety Six time to come to the rescue and inflict a damaging defeat upon a few of his captors on the 11<sup>th</sup> [of December, 1780], 14 being killed and 7 wounded who escaped the vindictive cruelty of the British. Williamson accordingly took time by the forelock, escaped and retired within the enemy lines in Charleston. There he acquired a plantation....<sup>218</sup>

Hammond, who of course knew Williamson well, tried to “cajole” him into returning to the rebels, on the grounds that the British had violated the terms of the June capitulation.<sup>219</sup> But according to Cruger, the British officer commanding at Ninety Six, the “soothing and threatening arguments” did not work because Williamson behaved like a “man of honor...and character” and refused to violate his promises to the British.<sup>220</sup>

Samuel Hammond himself described the affair in a similar manner:

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<sup>214</sup> This refers to the defeat and death of Major Patrick Ferguson, commanding Loyalist troops at the Battle of Kings Mountain, 7 October 1780.

<sup>215</sup> Ross, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>216</sup> Barnwell, op. cit., pp. 219, 407.

<sup>217</sup> Joseph Johnson, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>218</sup> H. T. Hall, op. cit.

<sup>219</sup> Lambert, op. cit., pp. 161-2.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. Also, Saberton, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 282-3. According to Lord Rawdon, as early as July 7, 1780, “nine out of ten” rebels were finding reasons to not honor the paroles they had recently given. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, op. cit., p. 197.

Both detachments were ordered to bring the gentleman [Pickens and Williamson] sent for to the camp, whether willing or otherwise. They were both, of course, taken to camp. The object of the whigs was to gain their influence and their better experience to our cause. They both obeyed the call promptly, but declared that they did not go voluntarily, and considered themselves in honor bound by their parole, whether the British violated their faith to others or not, “so long as it was not violated by them.” They were subsequently ordered out by the British, when Pickens joined the Americans, and Williamson obeyed the British order.<sup>221</sup>

The British were afraid of what the rebels might do to Williamson during the kidnapping: “Major Fraser with the mounted men of the South Carolina Rangers was ordered to pursue and if possible retake Brigadier Williamson, as it was fear’d his having reverted to British Government might submit him to the worst treatment.”<sup>222</sup>

Balfour’s policy of trying to use Williamson as a Tory leader had failed. Once Williamson became the target of kidnapping, and as the situation in the backcountry became more dangerous, it was time for Williamson to leave his beloved home of White Hall, and move close to British forces on the coast.

The dangerous state of affairs in the countryside at the time is illustrated by a letter from Colonel Balfour to General Cornwallis. Balfour stated that the rebels “have adopted the System of murdering every militia Officer of ours as well as every man (although unarmed) who is known to be a loyalist...the consequence will be ... that we shall not have one Loyalist in the country, as they are crowding to Town from all quarters.”<sup>223</sup>

Around the time of the move to Charleston, Williamson suffered another major blow. In April 1781 his wife Eliza “Betty” Tyler Williamson died.<sup>224</sup> We do not know the cause, although she had been quite sick at least twice earlier. Williamson’s aide Malcom Brown had reported on 29 March 1778 that “Mrs. Williamson has mended much.” And on 28 October 1780, Brown stated that “Mrs. Williamson ... is in a Very poor State of health – either a speedy favorable turn to this disorder, or She will not long be an inhabitant of this World.”<sup>225</sup>

Betty Tyler Williamson had borne and raised four children by Andrew Williamson, suffered the terror of Indian attacks, watched her husband march off to war, and helped him build a good life in what had been a lonely wilderness. Now she would not be there to help him through some of his most difficult trials.

### **The Hayne Affair**

By July 1781, Williamson had been quietly living for some time at his new home, on his plantation near Charleston. Incredibly, on July 5 he was kidnapped again by American forces, this time led by a “small reconnoitering party” under Colonel Isaac Hayne.

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<sup>221</sup> Joseph Johnson, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>222</sup> Saberton, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 250.

<sup>223</sup> Cornwallis Papers, Balfour letter of 26 April 1781, cited in Barnwell, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>224</sup> Bailey and Cooper, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 769-70.

<sup>225</sup> From “The Bowie Papers,” *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, March 1900, vol. IV, no. 3, and April 1900, vol. IV, no. 4.

The purpose for the kidnapping is unclear. One theory is that the Americans wished to “hang Williamson in the camp of General Greene.”<sup>226</sup> Another theory, probably more likely, is that the Americans wished, again, to try to persuade Williamson to rejoin the Patriots. An unlikely but interesting theory is that the kidnapping was an excuse to begin or continue communications with Williamson the anti-British spy. In any case, according to the famous historian David Ramsay, “such was the anxiety of the British Commandant to rescue General Williamson that he ordered out his whole cavalry on that business.”<sup>227</sup>

Col. Hayne was reportedly “unapprised of the enemy’s approach until he saw them a few rods from the door” because his outpost guard was negligently off in search of fruit. “Being very active and resolute, [Hayne] pushed for his horse, mounted, and forced his way through the foe. To pass a fence in his route, he put spur to his horse, who unfortunately fell in leaping, and the entangled rider was overtaken by his pursuers.”<sup>228</sup> Hayne was captured by the British, Williamson was rescued, and a number of Hayne’s men were killed.

The local press was not kind. According to the *Royal Gazette*, “a small party of mounted rebel militia surrounded the house of Andrew Williamson, Esq., formerly Brigadier General of the South Carolina militia, about two miles from town, and without allowing him to put on his clothes, carried him off prisoner.”<sup>229</sup> This version was later exaggerated by Johnson and other critics to imply that Williamson’s lack of clothes implied that something immoral and scandalous was going on at the time of the capture. Williamson’s official biography as a legislator even states that he was captured “in a situation not credible to him as a man of family”<sup>230</sup> -- a very grave charge. In fact, it appears he was simply home in bed. Williamson was defended by Patriot officer Henry

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<sup>226</sup> Sabine, op. cit., p. 437. Also David K. Bowden, *The Execution of Isaac Hayne* (Lexington, SC: Sandlapper, 1977) p. 29.

<sup>227</sup> David Ramsay, excerpt from his *History of the Revolution in South Carolina*, published in the *Charleston Morning Post*, 28 February 1786, Vol. IV, issue 305, p. 2, Charleston, SC, on-line at infoweb.newbank.com.

<sup>228</sup> Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskip, 1812; 1956 microform) pp. 257-8.

<sup>229</sup> *Royal Gazette* (of Charleston), 11 July 1781, cited in Rev. Robert Michael Jones, 1984, op. cit., p. 45. This primary newspaper source makes no mention of any immoral activity on Williamson’s part. In terms of the location of this incident, most sources contend that Williamson lived at his Horse Savannah plantation near the Quarter House tavern, about seven miles from town, when he first arrived in the Charleston area, and that is where he was kidnapped by Hayne. But Rev. Jones in his 1984 paper contends that the Horse Savannah plantation was not purchased until 1784, after the Hayne episode and even after the war, and that Williamson may have lived from 1781 through 1784 at a 313-acre plantation in St. James, Goosecreek, purchased from Alexander DuBose and Elizabeth Blanche Hatter on 16 January 1781. (Jones cites “MFM Deed Book, Vol. 25 (1784) p. 71.”) John C. Parker, Jr., in his *Parker’s Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina* (Patrick, SC: Hem Branch Publishing, 2009) p. 74, places the capture about two miles west of the Quarter House tavern, at lat/long 32.85367, -79.99882. The *Royal Gazette* account says that Williamson was “two miles” from town – further south than the Quarter House tavern area. Unfortunately, Williamson owned so many parcels of land that tracing his actual whereabouts is difficult.

<sup>230</sup> Bailey and Cooper, op. cit., p. 770.

Lee, who stated that Williamson “was not meddling in politics...had not taken up arms [against the Rebels]...and was living quietly in the neighborhood of Charleston.”<sup>231</sup>

Next, in one of the most infamous episodes of the war, the British hanged Col. Hayne on 4 August 1781 because he (like Williamson) had given his pledge to the British to not fight against them. Unlike Williamson, Hayne had violated his parole (in the eyes of the British) by taking up arms again (although he argued his parole had been violated).<sup>232</sup> So he was hung as an example. This execution brought even more notoriety to Williamson, who would much rather have maintained a low profile. The kidnapping and rescue shows that even in his attempted retirement, Williamson was considered a major prize by both sides.

Williamson remained inside British lines until the British evacuated Charleston, near the end of the war.

### **Confiscation as an “Obnoxious Person”**

On February 2, 1782 Williamson must have been unpleasantly surprised to see his name on the front page of *The Royal Gazette* of Charleston, “said to be on a list of some of those, whose property the Rebels wish to sequester or confiscate.” The paper stated that this list was the result of “the Rebel Assembly at Jacksonburgh...busily employed in devising new schemes of paying old debts...”<sup>233</sup>

On March 20, 1782, in a follow-up and more complete story, the *Royal Gazette* published a list of persons whose property had in fact been confiscated by the Patriot General Assembly. There were six classes of persons, including British subjects, persons who presented congratulatory addresses to British military officers, persons who petitioned the British to carry arms against the rebels, persons who bore British commissions, civil or military, and the final class, “obnoxious persons.” Andrew Williamson was among eleven persons in this category.<sup>234</sup>

But Williamson confounded his many Patriot enemies. Near the end of the war he got respected Patriot General Nathanael Greene to testify that Williamson had been supplying vital intelligence to the Patriots, while under British protection! Part II of this paper will describe his spying activities, as well as the rest of his life after the Revolution, and the history and archaeology of his beloved plantation of White Hall.

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<sup>231</sup> Henry Lee, *The Campaign of 1781 in the Carolinas* (Philadelphia: E. Littel, 1824) Appendix, p. xxxix.

<sup>232</sup> Ben Rubin, “The Rhetoric of Revenge: Atrocity and Identity in the Revolutionary Carolinas,” *Journal of Backcountry Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall 2010, pp. 10-11.

<sup>233</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, of Charleston, February 2-6, 1782, p. 1, Early Newspapers of South Carolina, Microfilm Reel 12, University of Georgia.

<sup>234</sup> J.G. Braddock, Sr., *South Carolina British Loyalists Guide*, from: [http:// www.sciway.net/hist/amrev/loyalists](http://www.sciway.net/hist/amrev/loyalists). Malcom Brown was on the list as a person holding a British commission. It is significant that Williamson was not listed in this category.