

Revolutionary War Heroes

We remember all our veterans of all the Wars. This July 4th we celebrate the 233rd year of declaring independence from Great Britain. Edgecombe County led the revolution with the Halifax Resolves and early in the war provided willing patriots.

Lt. Col. Henry Irwin, 5th NC Regt Continental Line

Irwin owned land in Tarboro in 1760 when it was formed. He was a merchant and was an active representative of the County to the first Assembly in New Bern in open opposition to Royal Rule in the very presence of Royal Governor Martin. He was willing to spend his fortune and lay down his life for his rights. He was appointed Lt. Col. 5th NC Regiment. Although ill, he was at the head of his troops in October 1777 at the Battle of Germantown where he was killed. He is buried with other soldiers from North Carolina in a forgotten grave at the Upper Burying Ground in Germantown. On the stone is the inscription "Hie Jacet in pace" ... "These sleep in peace"

Lt. Col. Jonas Johnston, Edgecombe County Militia Regiment

From a farm on Town Creek, his childhood home, came Jonas Johnston whose service to this community is unequalled. He was appointed as magistrate for Edgecombe County in 1771 and showed his military talents at Moore's Creek Bridge fighting the Tories in February 1776. He continued in government service and military service throughout the war and in 1779 was at the Battle of Stono Ferry where he "greatly distinguished himself for his personal courage and the skill with which he handled his men." After this encounter he became severely ill and died near Drowning Creek. A handsome plaque is in the Edgecombe County Courthouse Lobby honoring this patriot. The whereabouts of his grave are unknown.

Maj Gen. William Lenoir, 5th NC Division Militia

The Lenoir family purchased original lots when the town of Tarboro was formed and William grew up in Tarboro and the vicinity... they had a farm outside of town. At fourteen, his father died leaving him to run the farm and family business. He educated himself in Mathematics and started a school when he was eighteen at Halifax. He married Ann Ballard and in 1775 he left for Wilkes County to ply the surveyors trade. In 1776 due to innate leadership skills, he led a company called Lenoir's Rangers against warring Indians, primarily Cherokee. During the Revolution, Captain Lenoir fought at Stono Ferry and later at King's Mountain where he was twice wounded. He recruited and grew the state militia and was elected to the NC House. He was also speaker of the House during his last five terms. He was president pro tem at the first meeting of the University of North Carolina trustees in 1790. He has a county, a town, a street in Raleigh, and a UNC building named after him. He is buried in the family cemetery, Fort Defiance.