

REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN AIKEN COUNTY

The Martins

The Martin family of Ireland owned estates near Galway. Lawfully unable to inherit land, many of the younger sons sought homes elsewhere. Among these was Abraham Martin (1644-1711) who immigrated to Virginia and married Rebecca Bell. Their eldest son, John (1685-1756), married Elizabeth Lewis and had eight sons and five daughters. All their sons served in the American Revolution. Their youngest, Abram (1716-1773), was a Captain in the colonial militia, serving under Colonel George Washington during the French and Indian War. Abram was later killed by Indians while surveying in Wilkes County, Georgia. His widow, Betty, lived with the other wives in their house on the Martintown road to Augusta, a thoroughfare often traveled by British soldiers.

In May 1781, the Martin women learned that a courier would be passing with important dispatches. Grace Martin, widow of Captain William Martin, and Rachel Martin, wife of Barkley Martin, took action. Dressed in their husbands' clothes and armed, they hid themselves at a bend in the road and waited for the escort to pass. As darkness fell, they heard the approaching horsemen and sprang from their hidden position, brandishing their firearms. Grace Martin demanded the dispatches. Taken by surprise, the soldiers complied. The wives then set them free and disappeared into the woods, returning to the house. Sally Martin, wife of Matthew, volunteered to deliver the dispatches to General Greene. Riding alone on an old blind pony, she arrived at Ninety Six at midnight. Meanwhile, Grace and Rachel changed into their regular clothing before the soldiers and courier arrived at the homestead seeking food and shelter. The elder Mrs. Martin asked them why they were returning so soon after having recently passed by. They told her of the two "rebel lads" who had accosted them. The men stayed that night and left in next morning, never suspecting who had waylaid them.



A Plan of Gen'l Williamson's Encampment Near Adam's Ferry on the Savannah River

This is a map drawn by Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell who was in charge of the British forces occupying Fort Grierson in Augusta. It details the encampments of the Colonial forces across the Savannah River in South Carolina under the command of General Andrew Williamson, who was preparing to attack the fort and seize control of Augusta. Arrayed against the British were approximately 1000 troops under Colonels Neel, Thomas, Hammond, Winn, Goodwin, Singleton and Kershaw.

Campbell had arrived in Augusta in early February, 1779. He soon received intelligence that the Rebel forces were waiting to be reinforced by Colonels Lee and Pickens before making their assault. As the Rebels had commandeered all of the boats on the river, the British were unable to mount a counter offensive.

Campbell was also awaiting reinforcements from Savannah, which was under siege by the British and Loyalist forces, but no troops could be spared to be sent to his aid. Choosing discretion over valor, Campbell abandoned Augusta in late February and marched his contingent to Savannah, leaving Augusta open for the Rebel forces to occupy. Ironically, Williamson's reinforcements never materialized, as Lee and Pickens had continued on to Ninety Six, South Carolina.

Williamson was later captured by the British, joined their forces and was made a brigadier General in the King's army.