

The Battle of Guilford Courthouse



There are a number of people who have found their way onto our family tree through marriage. As we trace their lines, we discover segments of history that have not only helped to shape our family but also our nation.

Mark Snow was a farmer from Virginia who happens to be the 5th great grandfather of the man who married one of my nieces. And without Snow, and others like him, the Revolutionary War may have turned out quite differently.

Snow served under Captain Jacobus Early as part of Col. Charles Lynch's regiment in the Virginia Militia. Once France entered the war in 1778 on the side of the Americans, the British army began focusing on obtaining victories in the south so as to gain a foothold from which they might launch an offensive to the north. In March of 1781, when Lt Gen. Cornwallis and his 2100 men marched upon Guilford Courthouse near Greensboro NC, Mark Snow and 4500 other soldiers were there to meet him.

After a battle that lasted nearly two hours, the colonial

troops withdrew, giving the British a dubious victory. Dubious because due to the Americans' early withdrawal, their troops were left largely intact while Cornwallis' army suffered casualties of 25% or more, decimating their effectiveness. As British statesman Charles James Fox commented when asked about the battle, "Another such victory would ruin the British army."

Afterwards, Cornwallis abandoned his efforts to gain a foothold in North Carolina, marched his troops into Virginia to refit and replenish but to no avail. In October of the following year, after the Battle of Yorktown, he surrendered to George Washington.

Snow later married Elizabeth Torrence and relocated to Gwinnett County, Georgia where his name was drawn as part of a land grant lottery made available to Revolutionary War veterans who had given service for 3 years or more. He died, in Georgia, in 1843 at the age of 79.

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