

WILLIAM GIPSON (1753-1835) was born at Moncks Corner, South Carolina. He volunteered five times between 1777 and 1781 in North Carolina military units for a total of two years' service.

The Revolution in South Carolina and central North Carolina, inflamed by ethnic differences, British occupation, and a large and active Tory population, exhibited a vicious brutality matched in no other part of the country. Gipson made occasional contact with the main army under Greene, but he largely served with small companies roving the country, searching for Tories and meting out justice as they saw fit. The company headed by Colonel Moore, on Gipson's third tour of duty, executed one prisoner and tortured another by "spiketing," a brutal backwoods version of "picketing" (the spike was supposed to merely touch the foot, not be driven through it, as was the case here), an antiquated form of discipline occasionally used in both the American and the British armies. Gipson's narrative was included here because it demonstrates the harsh aspects of the war that are often forgotten in accounts of battlefield heroism.

In other places, Gipson's account is faulty, although it appears to have been the result not of intentional deception but of failing memory as to dates and officers. The Battle of Briar Creek occurred in March 1779, long before Greene was in the South and a year and a half before Gipson's dating of the event. The Roebuck, on which he claims to have been imprisoned in Savannah, did not arrive in the South until early 1780, making a March 1779 capture improbable. There was an engagement at Deep River, North Carolina, on 29 July 1781, where a Colonel Alston and twenty-odd men were killed or taken, but this took place far north of Briar Creek. One can only guess about the engagement, place, and time when Gipson was actually captured by the British.

After the war Gipson moved to Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and finally Boone County, Indiana, where he successfully applied for a pension in 1832.

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1980 (see page 189 re Col. Philip Alston)

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In June or July in the year 1777, he volunteered and entered the company of Capt. James Armstrong in Rowan County, North Carolina. Besides Capt. James Armstrong, his company was officered as follows: one Sharp was lieutenant, one Irvin was ensign, and this applicant was first sergeant; the company belonged to Col. William Armstrong's regiment. His company volunteered to go down into the lower counties of North Carolina in order to drive out and disperse the Tories collecting under one Eli Branson. His company rendezvoused at Salisbury Courthouse, otherwise Rowan Courthouse, two days, when they marched. No other company went with them, but Gen. Francis Locke and the said Col. William Armstrong went in company with them. This applicant, with the company, marched from Rowan Courthouse to Randolph Courthouse, thence to Hillsboro, thence to Chatham County, thence up Deep River to the Sand Hills. At the latter place the company took several Scots Tories and there hung one of them, thence proceeded up Deep River into Moore County, where they met with Colonel Philip Alston's regiment and marched with his regiment about fifteen miles to the Colonel Alston's plantation. He recollects there was one Capt. John Carrall and one Major Irvin belonging to Alston's regiment. At Alston's plantation they left his regiment, and applicant's company proceeded low down on the Big Pee Dee River, about the swamps on that river, where his company dispersed a collection of Tories.

He then, with his company, marched up that river to the Grassy Islands, where the company halted, and his captain took out about thirty men, among which number this applicant was one, and went to the lower end of Randolph County to take or disperse one Hugh McPherson and his associates, Tories, who were there collected and forming into a band to commit depredations. This force of thirty men ranged through the lower part of Randolph and Rockingham counties and went to a Quaker meetinghouse in the latter county, where they took one Campbell, a lieutenant in McPherson's company, and from thence immediately started to meet the balance of his company left in command of Colonel Armstrong (General Locke having returned home when the company were at Randolph County on their march out), and they proceeded on their journey about four days, when at night some disaffected persons in the detachment, as it was supposed, turned Campbell loose, and he made his escape. The company then proceeded and joined Colonel Armstrong in the lower end of Rowan County, on the Yadkin River, and then proceeded home, where he arrived about the last of November or first of December to the

best of his recollection, making a campaign of about six months, the term for which he volunteered. During his absence, his mother, a widow woman, was tied up and whipped by the Tories, her house burned, and property all destroyed.

This applicant would now set forth his second tour of duty as a soldier of the Revolution. In the month of March or April, but the precise month not now recollected, in the year 1778, General Locke ordered Colonel Armstrong with the same company, or detachment, to march to the upper parts of South Carolina, on the waters of the Pee Dee River, to disperse certain Tories then in that neighborhood collected. This applicant, with his company under the same colonel, captain, and other company officers (except he declined serving as sergeant), in pursuance of the general's order, in the year and one of the months last above stated, met at General Locke's, the above place of destination being about sixty or seventy miles from Rowan Courthouse. That he thinks sometime in the month of May, but is not certain, he and his companions in arms on some small branch of the Pee Dee or Yadkin engaged with a number of Tories, and in the engagement Colonel Armstrong received a shot in the hips which penetrated through and through. In this engagement, there were three of his company wounded and several killed to the best of his recollection. The Tories were driven and a number killed and wounded. They were commanded, to the best [of] his recollection, by one Bryan, and [he] is certain the Tory company were a squadron of Bryan's men. Colonel Armstrong was taken home, where he shortly after, to the best of his recollection, died with his wounds above described, and after the engagement above related, this applicant and his company in about three weeks returned home nearly direct from near a little town in South Carolina called Charlotte. The company marched to General Locke's in Rowan County, and there this applicant received a discharge from the general including his first term of service of six months and the last tour of duty, three months, which was certified in the same discharge. The last campaign he thinks terminated in the months of July or August and made nine months which he had then served his country in the cause of independence. But the discharge showing these two terms of service, this applicant regrets to say, were not esteemed as valuable as the prosperity of his country and the gratitude of the present generation have since made it, and he in a short time afterwards lost or mislaid the same and has no knowledge at this time of its existence.

Sometime in the winter of 1779, this applicant's family having

suffered greatly by the disaffected party called Tories, his home and patrimony having been almost entirely destroyed in consequence of the attachment of himself and brother to the cause of independence, he joined a very small party of Whigs who had been more or less harassed and inspired by the disaffected, which party were headed by one Risdell Moore (colonel), Capt. John Haley, Lt. Elijah Charles, Ens. Elisha Charles, and others of Guilford County, North Carolina. This party ranged through Guilford, Randolph, and Surry counties.

That sometime in the summer of 1779, at one Wm. Brazleton's in Guilford county, he and his party were in the house, when suddenly two armed men stood at the door. They, seeing the party within, immediately wheeled, and Colonel Moore knocked down one of the men, who proved to be the notorious Hugh McPherson, a Tory. His party soon took the other one, who proved to be one Campbell and brother to the Campbell taken prisoner and made his escape during the first campaign above related. His party took both of these Tories to Guilford Courthouse, about fifteen miles from the place of capturing them. There, a court-martial was held, composed of the officers of his

Pay-Table Office, *Decemr 16th* — 1783

S I R,

PLEASE to secure to *W. Lewis Thord*
the Payment of *Thirty pounds four shillings and four pence*

being the Balance found due to him

for Service in the Continental Army, *in the year* 1780

Agreeable to Act of Assembly---and Charge the State.

L. 30. 4-4

John Lawrence Comptroller

JOHN LAWRENCE, Esq; Treasurer.

party, and McPherson was condemned and shot in the presence of this applicant. And Campbell was condemned *to be spicketed*, that is, he was placed with one foot upon a sharp pin drove in a block, and was turned round by one Thomas Archer, to the best

of his recollection, until the pin run through his foot. Then he was turned loose. This applicant cannot forbear to relate that as cruel as this punishment might seem to be to those who never witnessed the unrelenting cruelties of the Tories of that day, yet he viewed the punishment of those two men with no little satisfaction, as they were then supposed to belong to the identical band who inhumanly inflicted corporal punishment upon his helpless parent, who had committed no other offense than that of earnestly exhorting her sons to be true to the cause of American liberty. So notorious was the conduct of this applicant and his party towards the Tories of that neighborhood, that they were compelled to range the country, not daring to return home to stay anytime or separate until about Christmas 1779, when he separated from his party, where he stayed for the most part of his time until about October or November 1780.

In the months of October or November, 1780, there was, to the best of applicant's recollection, a call for a regiment of men in the counties of Guilford, Randolph, and Moore, and Colonel Philip Alston and Captain Carrall wrote from Moore County, where they resided, to Guilford County, where he resided, requesting him to join their regiment to go to the southward. And this applicant, upon receiving this letter, went without delay to Colonel Alston's, and in about two weeks after his arrival the regiment was made up, and on or about the first of November, 1780, the regiment marched, as it was then said, to join General Greene's army. They crossed the Pee Dee at the Grassy Islands, thence towards Columbia, South Carolina, and within a short distance of that place had a slight brush with the enemy. Thence they marched towards Camden, crossed the Wateree River above Camden, thence towards the Congaree, where his regiment joined General Pickens's regiment, who took command, crossed this stream below Columbia, South Carolina, thence they marched towards Savannah, crossed Briar Creek, and within a few miles of the crossing of that creek they joined the main army commanded by General Greene, thence down to the mouth of Briar Creek, where the American army halted and the British army came up and gave battle. This applicant was [in the] engagement. He was close by Colonel Alston when he hoisted a white handkerchief upon the hilt of his sword as a signal of his surrender, and this applicant, with twenty or thirty of the regiment, including Colonel Alston, were taken prisoners, and a great number, but how many he does not recollect, were taken prisoners from other regiments.

The prisoners in a few days were marched towards Savannah,

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"The Alston" = Alston of Mills
& South Camden "Fellow with P 227"

and this applicant with the rest were there confined in an old ship called "the old *Roebuck*," which was placed at a considerable distance out in the bay. He thinks about five hundred prisoners were in the ship, including what were in before with the number captured at the mouth of Briar Creek. This applicant well remembers the severity of this imprisonment. He and his fellow sufferers were daily tempted to enlist into the king's army by gold and promise. A great many listed, and many died with disease.

After he had endured for better than a month his imprisonment, Colonel Alston proposed to him and several others, particular and personal friends, to make their escape from the ship by throwing certain scantling out of the portholes. This project was accordingly, about ten or eleven o'clock that night, put in execution by the colonel by throwing a few pieces of scantling out as proposed. The colonel got out, and this applicant alone followed him, the others not venturing the hazardous enterprise. This applicant, placing himself upon a piece of scantling, followed his brave colonel and, together with him, as a good Providence would have it, this applicant was after some little effort and the aid of the tide, which was then favorable, carried to land safe. He and the colonel entered a swamp, and where they wandered that night. At daylight they were directed by the sound of an ax to a Negro man who was boating wood, or rather towing it out with a canoe. The colonel soon made an agreement with the Negro to set him and this applicant upon a certain point, not now recollected, and the colonel was to carry the Negro to the British and set him free as a reward for his services, and they were accordingly taken to the place. They then left the canoe in the care of the Negro, promising him to return soon and fulfill the agreement. That day, after the Negro landed them, they lazed about plantations, then being in an enemy's country, until night, when the colonel left the applicant and went to a house where he procured a piece of meat and returned. They attempted, dark as it was, to travel on towards the upper part of South Carolina. After several days, they arrived at one Hughes's, an acquaintance of the colonel. He furnished the colonel with a Negro, a horse, money, and clothes, and with this applicant proceeded to the Waxhaws settlement to the widow Jackson's, mother of the now venerable president of the United States, to the best of this applicant's present belief. At the widow Jackson's they stayed two days. There, at the hands of the old lady, they both received a suit of clothes, and the colonel was furnished also by her with a horse to ride home.

They arrived at the colonel's residence in Moore County late in the winter of 1780. There, the colonel gave this applicant a discharge, and he thinks the last of February, 1781, making about four months. This discharge he also shortly after lost. He returned home to Guilford County and there stayed a few days, but such was the notoriety of his sentiments and feelings and attachment to the cause of liberty among the Tories that he did not feel safe to continue there but for a few days.

And about the first of March, 1781, with one Capt. Thomas Hamilton with about fourteen or fifteen others, volunteered to go and meet the main army under General Greene, then retreating before the British. They met the main army at Charlotte, North Carolina. Their little squad kept along near the main army for several days, until they arrived at Salisbury, and continued on in the same manner until they arrived at the Moravian towns, and thence through Guilford County, crossed Haw River at the High Rock Ford, thence to Halifax Old Town in the state of Virginia, where Greene's army was reinforced. And the British retreated, and the American army following, recrossed the Haw River at the same place where the British burned their wagons, but this applicant's party arrived on the ground before they were entirely burned. Next morning, Captain Hamilton of this applicant's party had a little engagement with the flanks of the British, and this applicant had his horse shot from under him, lost his pistols, sword, and cap, and made his escape back to the main army. Captain Hamilton procured a horse and equipment for this applicant, and he was again mounted; thence they proceeded to Guilford Courthouse and the British to Deep River Meeting House, and at these two places the two armies lay preparing for battle several days.

The fourteenth of March, to the best of his recollection, Captain Hamilton advised his party to join Colonel Little's company, and the party accordingly fell in upon the left wing of Little's regiment. And on the fifteenth he was engaged in the battle at Guilford Courthouse. With army, retreated to Troublesome Ironworks on the waters of [Troublesome] River, where they rendezvoused for one day with the main army, when, with Captain Hamilton's squad, they again returned to near Guilford Courthouse and there discovered the British to be upon the move. They returned back to the main army but found them just ready to proceed after the British. His party continued to follow the main army, camped with it (if not out at night) for several days, when

Greene turned again for South Carolina. Hamilton, with his party, left the main army and went down into North Carolina, to one Colonel Crump's, who commanded a regiment of militia, where this applicant with Hamilton's party stayed some days, perhaps a week.

Then they crossed the Pee Dee in South Carolina, joined a party commanded by one Marion, with whom they stayed about two weeks, caught one Tory, who was left with Marion to deal with. Then Hamilton's party went again to General Greene's army, laying between the Wateree and Congaree. When they came to the army, they were preparing to march to the Eutaw Springs, where the British army then lay. The day after they arrived, the army moved towards the springs. Hamilton's party continued to flank the main army until the day before the engagement at the springs, when they attached themselves to [Colonel] Washington's corps of horse and entered into the engagement with the corps. The horse broke through the brush breastworks enclosing the springs. Washington was taken prisoner, and they retreated back about five miles upon the same road upon which they had marched to the engagement. There the party under Hamilton again left the main army and went back towards the springs to take observations of the enemy, whom they found retreating, and they returned again towards Greene's army and found him advancing again towards the springs. They proceeded, with the Americans harassing the British until the latter took shelter in Charleston. Greene marched then up to what was called "the Four Holes" to winter, and a short time after this, going into winter quarters, the army had cause to celebrate and rejoice at the fall of Lord Cornwallis, and, soon after this memorable event, this applicant took sick, went about four miles from the main army, and lay at a private house all winter sick, and in the meantime his party under Hamilton returned to North Carolina.

In March or April he went into camp, where he found that Hamilton had left a discharge with one Colonel [blank] of the regular army and a recommendation or paper certifying the good conduct of this applicant, both of which this applicant lost or mislaid in a very few years. He returned home the summer of 1782 on foot, having, the winter before, lost his horse.

GARRET WATTS (1756-1838) was born in Caroline County, Virginia,

Hipson's memory was not too sharp. See
"Alstons & Allstons of North and South Carolina)
in regards Col Philip Alston and himself.

See Page 99 +

Col Phil Alston lived in N.C. until after Revolution
when they moved P(101)