

Islanders In History

Dr. Mosse, Militia Surgeon, Lived Here, Mapped Island

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A trim, versatile young Irish physician, kinsman of the popular Dr. Bartholomew Mosse of Dublin, arrived in Charleston in 1765. He began practicing medicine in the Parish of St. Thomas and St. Denis where he married Elizabeth Martin in 1767.

Following her death in childbirth he secured a small acreage on St. Helena's Island, resumed his medical practice, opened a large general store and established a profitable tannery and leather manufacturing business. His 12-oared barge made monthly deliveries of his merchandise alternately to Charleston and Savannah, returning with needed supplies. Several journeymen and apprentices augmented his work force of slaves. He planted benne from which sesame seeds were harvested for oil; he planted cane from which he manufactured sugar and distilled rum; he cultivated grapes and made wines commercially.

Dr. Mosse married again in 1771 Phoebe, younger daughter of aging planter Jonathan Norton. Her sister Sarah was the wife of Samuel Green of Hilton Head's Fish Haul Plantation and they were frequent visitors here. They hired a resident male tutor for the seven daughters born to them, all of whom they raised; there were no sons.

From the 1775 outbreak of Revolution, Dr. Mosse and the St. Helena's and Hilton Head Island planters were active participants

The victory at Sullivan's Island gave the state almost three years of respite from war. But the December 1778 fall of Savannah and the subsequent burning of Prince William Parish Church (Sheldon) by Royal Militiaman Maj. Andrew Deveaux, his wife's cousin, brought war's violence to Beaufort District. By May 12, 1780, when Charleston fell, all Georgia and Carolina had been lost through the bad judgment and worse military tactics of three Continental generals: Robert Howe, John Ashe and Benjamin Lincoln.

One more Continental effort was made at Camden by Gen. Horatio Gates; his inefficient supply service left his men so hungry that they ate unripened fruit the day before the battle and were too ill to fight. Dr. Mosse served as a Militia surgeon during the battle and was captured by the British who marched him from the Camden battlefield to prison in Charleston.

Upon being paroled Dr. Mosse returned to his family. In May 1781 in contravention of the terms of his parole, the British arrested 129 of the leaders of South Carolina and confined them aboard the prison ships *Forbay* and *Pack Horse* in Charleston harbor. Hilton Head landowner and future S.C. Governor Benjamin Guerard and planter William Elliott of Myrtle Bank Plantation, whose wife was a close cousin of Dr. Mosse's wife, were among those held illegally with Dr. Mosse in the stinking, disease-ridden, overcrowded vessels.

writing on May 18, 1781 to Gen. Nathaniel Greene, that "should it fall to the lot of any or all of us to be made victims agreeable to the menaces herein contained, we have only to regret that our blood could not be disposed of more to the advancement of the glorious cause to which we adhere."

A general exchange of prisoners was arranged, resulting in Dr. Mosse's being put aboard ship for Philadelphia. As the ship passed the North Carolina coast the prisoners overcame their guards, seized control of the vessel, and sailed her into port. From there, "after many perils," Dr. Mosse made his way home safely.

In early 1782 Dr. Mosse supplied the S.C. military establishment with 115 gallons of rum and 300 pounds of "muscavado sugar" manufactured on his plantation. He became a Hilton Head landowner, his plantation adjoining that of his business partner and brother-in-law the Rev. William E. Graham and

The Dr. George Mosse Chapter of the South Carolina Society of the Sons of the American Revolution was chartered 21 October 1984.

* In 1782 the State of South Carolina had siezed the Bayley property and commissioned Dr. Mosse to make the survey. The State sold the property for its own account.



GEORGE
Dr. ~~George~~ Mosse
War Hero

their nephew Capt. William Pope.

As the Treaty of Peace was signed in 1783 he was still shipping wine for the use of the Militia. Also in 1783 Dr. Mosse surveyed Hilton Head Island and made a detailed map, complete with names of concurrent property owners, dividing most

of the island into plantation field lots for sale by Benjamin Bayley as agent for Henry Bayley, heir of original grantee Landgrave John Bayley in 1788.

Ten years later Dr. Mosse moved his family to Savannah in order to provide better educational opportunities for his daughters, the eldest of whom had settled there after marrying Capt. Patrick McKenzie, Revolutionary soldier from Maryland. His daughter Elizabeth married Capt. James Stoney and became mistress of Otterburn Plantation on Hilton Head the same year.

In Savannah Dr. Mosse organized the Savannah Medical College and was a charter member of the Georgia Medical Society. In 1795 he became the first deacon of Savannah's First Baptist Church which he helped establish. But he complained that he "made no dollars in Savannah" whereas he had "made pounds (sterling) on St. Helena's and Hilton Head."

In May 1806 he bought a plantation at Robertville where several of his daughters had settled. There he died Feb. 17, 1808, and his wife six weeks later. They were buried in the plantation cemetery and the site of the grave of this Revolutionary War hero is now lost.