

# The Saga Of Preston Goforth

By Tom McIntyre

That crisp October afternoon was filled with the roar of rifles, the splintering of bones and trees and the stench of black powder.

For almost an hour the wooded slopes and barren pinnacle shook beneath the thundering feet of running men and horses and all about was heard the shouts of determined men and the screams of dying men.

Toward the end of that bloody hour in history a brave young British Army career soldier grasped his sword in his left hand and spurred his horse toward his enemy's line. Seven lead balls fired from as many angles knocked him from his saddle to the blood-soaked earth where he died within moments.

For all purposes the death of Col. Patrick Ferguson ended the conflict atop Kings Mountain. The end came none too soon for hundreds of men and much too late for countless others.

Among the Americans who died early on in the Battle of Kings Mountain was Preston Goforth Jr. In his case the fight was brother against brother and it is speculated that Preston and John Goforth killed each other. The latter remained loyal to the King of England while Preston championed the cause of the Pa-

triot.

The day after the battle, October 8, 1780, relatives of the combatants wandered among the hacked and shattered bodies strewn among the tree-lined slopes searching for their own. Nancy Elizabeth Potts Goforth was there and she found her husband. With the aid of a black man who had accompanied her to the battlefield, Nancy Goforth placed the body of Preston Goforth on a sled used to haul rocks on the family farm. A mule towed the sled and the heartbroken widow and the black man began the eight mile walk back to Benson's Creek.

Near the homeplace the ground was prepared and Preston Goforth was buried. History tells us he was one of the few to be buried in home soil. Countless others, both American patriots and British loyalists, found their last resting place in shallow graves on the mountain where they died.

Preston Goforth's story began in North Carolina in 1739 and ended on October 7, 1780. A bit longer than five months before he died on the slopes of Kings Mountain he entered 220 acres on both sides of Benson's Creek, which lies just west of the present Kings Mountain city limits. During those months he and his

wife, Nancy Elizabeth Potts Goforth and their four children, Sarah, Preston, George and a second daughter

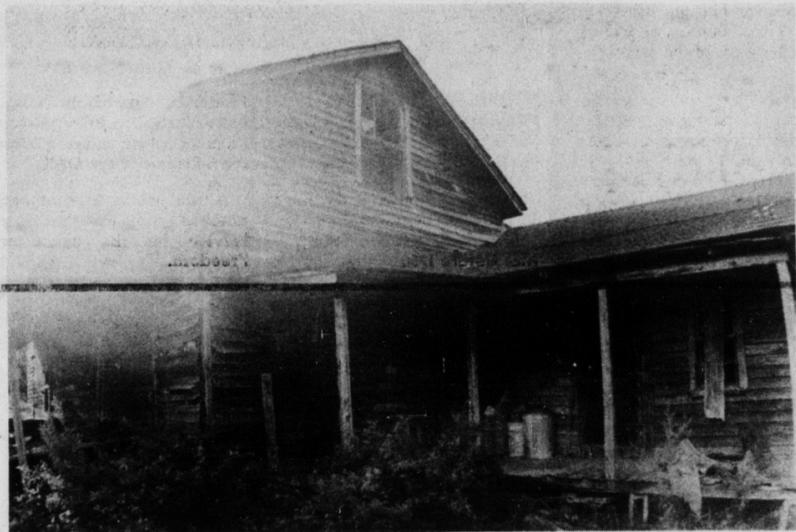
whose name is not recorded, built a homeplace and began clearing timber for farm land. They began building a life even though the Revolutionary War was raging north and south of them. It wasn't until that war moved to within eight miles of the Goforth homeplace that he put away the axe and picked up his rifle and joined Hampton's North Carolina Troops.

Preston Goforth, the man, died on that crisp October afternoon 195 years ago. But his legacy was children and good earth, the roots for generation after generation of men

and women who have helped strengthen the fibers of this and countless other communities across North Carolina.

The name of Preston Goforth will not be taught to school children along with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Nathan Hale nor even Shelby, Chronicle, Hambright or Cleveland. But, at the age of 41, he sacrificed all he had so that someday there would be an America in reality as it was in his dreams.

The original Goforth homeplace, with several additions, and the place where he sleeps, still stands one half mile north of the John Gamble Stadium as reminders of his passing. ★



Preston Goforth Cabin



Preston Goforth

## CITY AUTO & TRUCK PARTS

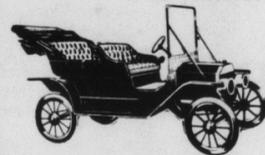
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pay tribute



to our forefathers



who fought so bravely...



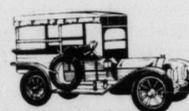
that we might



enjoy the freedom



we do today



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