

# History Of Col. Cleveland For Whom County Was Named

(The following article published in the Gaffney Ledger and written by Rev. J. D. Bailey will be of much interest to people of this county as this county was named for Colonel Cleveland, Kings Mountain hero and subject of this sketch. Daughters of the American Revolution should preserve the articles along with others relating important local history of the Revolutionary war period.)

Lyman C. Draper begins his narrative of Benjamin Cleveland with the following story: "A beauty of the time of Charles the First—so runs the story—named Elizabeth Cleaveland, a daughter of an officer of the palace of Hampton court, attracted the attention of her sovereign, and an amour was the result. When Oliver Cromwell became the rising star of the empire, the same charms won his sympathies, and a son was born unto them. The mother retired from the public gaze, and subsequently married a Mr. Bridge. When this wild colt of a son grew up, he took his mother's name and was the reputed author of a book—"The Life and Adventures of Mr. Cromwell, Natural son of Oliver Cromwell," published after his death, by consent of his son, first in 1731, a second edition, with a French translation, in 1741, and yet another edition in 1760."

Continuing, Draper says, "The perusal of the work more than thirty years ago, left on the mind of the writer the strong conviction that it was a romance and a recent re-emanation of it, confirms that opinion. Noble in his learned production on the Cromwell family, published nearly a century since, declares that these pretended adventures are 'too marvelous to be true; and a writer in Notes and Queries, in 1856, states that from the extraordinary adventures related in it, he considers it a fictitious narrative.' Whether or not this work is a romance, or records a series of facts more wonderful than fiction, it is nevertheless true, that Colonel Benjamin Cleveland had a copy of it, to which he used to point with no little pride, claiming his descent through this Mr. Cleveland from the illustrious Oliver Cromwell. Others of the Cleveland connection made the same claim."

"While Noble, Guizot, and other writers on Cromwell, agree that the renowned Protector, with all his religious seeming, 'probably had natural children,' yet it is exceedingly doubtful if our Kings Mountain hero descended from any such questionable origin. History informs us that the Cleavelands were an accident family, deriv-

ing their name from a tract of country in the North Riding of Yorkshire, England, still called Cleveland. Tradition designates Alexander Cleveland, sr., and jr.; and that John Cleveland, with his father, the younger Alexander Cleveland, early migrated to Virginia, and married a Miss Martha Coffee. He settled on the since famous Bull Run, in Prince William county, where he engaged in the employment of a house-joiner. His son, Benjamin Cleveland, the subject of this sketch, was born there May 29th 1738; and while yet very young, his father removed some 60 miles to the southwest, locating in a border settlement on Blue Run, some six or eight miles above its junction with the Rapidan, in Orange county, near the line of Albemarle. Not only young Cleveland's parents, but his grandfather Cleveland and wife also settled on Blue Run; the latter couple dying there about 1770, within three days of each other, when about a hundred years old; and here his parents lived and died at a good old age."

"If then, Alexander Cleveland, the younger, who died about 1770, was a hundred years old, he must have been born about 1670—only seventeen years after Cromwell became protector. This would seem to spoil the story of descent from Oliver Cromwell through the pretended 'Mr. Cromwell'; and that he must have descended from Alexander Cleveland sr., whose birth evidently was considerably anterior to the time of the protectorate."

Having acquainted our readers with the controversy concerning the ancestry of Benjamin Cleveland, we leave it to them to form their own conclusions. Whether a descendant of Cromwell or not, he certainly had an equal courage and audacity. As a hunter and Indian fighter, he was a peer of David Crockett, and Daniel Boone, as a soldier he knew neither fear nor danger.

**Puts Drunken Rowdies to Flight.**  
One day, when about 12 years of age, Ben was left in charge of the house, while his parents went away, either on a visit or business. While thus alone, some drunken rowdies came along and began to throw some of the household belongings into the fire. The little fellow, satisfied what his father would do were he at home, snatched the old man's rifle from its place above the door, and said, "gentlemen, do you see this?" Drunken though they were, they saw it, and also, the attitude of the young defender, which caused them to think that discretion was the better part of valor; hence one of the party said to his fellows: "We'd better be off; we don't

know what this excited child might do." Thus, a lad of twelve summers put a bunch of lawless drunkards to flight, and saved his father's property. Such an example of youthful bravery has seldom, if ever, been equaled, much less excelled.

**Becomes Mighty Hunter.**  
Young Cleveland had a great aversion to the tame drudgery of farm life, as he regarded it. The thrills and excitement of the chase appealed to his animate nature; hence, like Nimrod of old he became "a mighty hunter," and the sparsely settled wilderness which spread out in all directions around him was an ideal hunter's paradise. About the heads of the Dan, Staunton and Pig rivers, in the region that afterwards became Pittsylvania county, was a favorite resort for hunters, and here young Cleveland reaped a rich harvest of skins and furs, for which he found a ready market.

**Torchlight Hunting.**  
This was a very easy and successful mode of procuring deer in those days. Finding their resorts at night, especially in the summer time, the flaming torches carried by the hunters would so disconcert the animals that they would stand quietly gazing on. This would enable the hunter to "shine their eyes" which would make the man easy prey for the rifle bullet.

**A Puzzled Dutchman.**  
There was an old Dutchman in that region who had a favorite stand for "fire-hunting", and young Cleveland concluded that he would have some fun out of him. Peeling some bark from a tree, he shaped and placed it so as to represent a deer. The next night Cleveland secreted himself nearby where he could see the fun. In due time the Dutchman put in his appearance and seeing the supposed deer, he fired but did not bring him down. He shot again, and still the deer stood unmoved. This alarmed the Dutchman, and he exclaimed, "It's de duy-vil," and precipitately fled—Cleveland in the meantime chuckling with great glee over the success of his stratagem.

**Gets Married.**  
Benjamin Cleveland married Miss Mary Graves in Orange county, at a date unknown to us. The Graves family was of excellent character, and in quite comfortable circumstances. According to tradition Cleveland took an active part in the French and Indian war, but history is silent as to the particulars. It is most probable, that in that border conflict he was initiated into military life, which proved to be a preparatory school for his subsequent and brilliant Revolutionary career.

**Removes to North Carolina.**  
In order to break away from such habits and associations, Cleveland about the year 1769, removed with his father-in-law and family, to North Carolina, and settled, near the foot of the Blue-ridge, on Roaring Creek, a

northern tributary of the Yadkin, in what was then Rowan, afterwards Surry, and later still Wilkes county. Here Cleveland with the aid of his father-in-law's servants, opened up a farm, raised stock, and devoted much of his time to his favorite occupation—hunting. After remaining on Roaring Creek for some years, he removed to, and located in the noted tract, on the northern bank of the Yadkin, 15 miles below Wilkesboro, known as the Round-About, taking its name from the horse-shoe shape of the land, it being nearly surrounded by the river.

**Begins His Military Career.**  
Cleveland's achievements as a woods man-hunter and adventurer were about to end. It was no longer a war with wild beasts, birds and reptiles, but one with an invading foe, his fellow countrymen and treacherous Indians. The story of the taxing of the Colonies by the Kings and Parliament—taxation without representation—reached the Yadkin Valley, and was soon followed by the tidings of Lexington and Bunker Hill. Benjamin Cleveland was among the first to resent the threatened tyranny. The North Carolina patriots flocked to arms, and were soon organized into companies, regiments and brigades. On the first of September, 1775, Cleveland was appointed an ensign in the second regiment commanded by Colonel Robert Howe; but it appears that he did not accept it, preferring to serve in the militia in his immediate neighborhood, where he considered his presence and services would be more effective.

**Leads Party Against Oppressors.**  
In the latter part of the year 1775, Cleveland's friends and neighbors had occasion to go to Cross creek to sell their produce, and purchase their supplies of iron, sugar, salt and other necessities of life; but before they were permitted to sell or buy, they were compelled to take the oath of allegiance to the king. This stirring the ire of Cleveland, for when he heard of those tyrannical acts, and efforts to force the people to join the King's standard, he swore roundly that he would like nothing better than to dislodge those Scotch scoundrels at Cross Creek. He did not have long to wait, for in February, 1776, the Highland Tories of that locality raised the British standard. It appears that this caused Cleveland to raise a company of volunteer riflemen, of which he was chosen captain. At any rate, Captain Cleveland, with such a party, marched down from the mountains; and according to tradition, he reached the front in time to share in the contest and in suppressing the revolt.

**Goes After the Loyalists.**  
Soon after the war began, British emissaries were sent out, and by intrigue and delusive arguments, succeeded in inveigling the Cherokee Indians into hostilities against the Americans. This caused Captain Cleveland, in the summer of 1776, go on a tour of scouting duty in the western frontier. While there he received intelligence that a Tory Colonel Roberts had embodied a party of Loyalists on the northwest side of the Blue Ridge, on the borders of North Carolina and Virginia. He went after them, but these friends of the king, hearing of Cleveland's approach, disbanded and dispersed. In the autumn of that year, General Griffith Rutherford led a strong force on his famous campaign against the Cherokees. Cleveland and his company went on this campaign, in the Surry regiment, under Colonel Joseph Williams and Major Joseph Winston. William Lenoir, who was a Lieutenant in Cleveland's company, was accustomed, in after years, to relate the hardships and privations suffered by the troops on that expedition—"often destitute of provisions, without tents, with but few blankets, dressed in clothing made of rude materials, derived from hemp, tow, and the wild nettle. Though often harassed on their march by parties in ambush, Captain Cleveland sharing in the skirmishes and bush-whackings of the campaign. The villages and settlements of the hostile Cherokees were laid waste, their crops and provisions destroyed, and they were compelled to sue for peace." Captain Cleveland's demeanor on this campaign having proved his special fitness for frontier service, led to his selection, in the spring of 1777, to lead his command to the Watauga settlement for their protection against the yet troublesome Cherokees. Passing through the rugged intervening mountain county, Cleveland and his men reached Watauga valley, and took post at Carter's Fort, while the Virginia troops were stationed at Long Island of Holston. Though scouting parties were sent out and a vigilant watch kept, every legitimate means was used to bring the Indians to terms, and they were not ineffective; for, in July, the North Carolina and Virginia troops having concentrated at the Long Island, a treaty of peace was signed. Cleveland and his company, then returned to their distant home.

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