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November 30, 2018

**Col. Francis Nash's Revolutionary War Encampment on Little River Neck
Horry County, South Carolina**

By

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In December 1776, Col. Francis Nash (1st N.C. Regiment of the Continental Army) and his army of mostly North Carolina troops left Wilmington, N.C. with orders to march to St. Augustine, Florida. Their goal was to prevent the British from entering Georgia.

The army proceeded to Lockwood's Folly, N.C. and then on to the "Boundary House", a well known residence situated directly on the boundary line of North and South Carolina. The "Boundary Meeting House", as it was sometimes called, had been built in the early 1700s. It was constructed as a meeting place for the early settlers in the area from both states and served as a halfway resting point between Wilmington, N.C. and Georgetown, S.C. It was often used by traveling ministers as a place to stay and hold religious meetings. In 1776 it was the home of Isaac Marion. Isaac's younger brother was the American Revolutionary War hero General Francis Marion of South Carolina, nicknamed "The Swamp Fox" by his British adversaries.¹

Hugh McDonald, a fourteen year old private accompanying Col. Francis Nash, left his account of the army's stay in the Little River area. After the war, McDonald, who was said to be illiterate had someone write down his recollections of the war in diary form. He recorded that the troops were a brigade made up of eight regiments consisting of 9,400 rank-and-file members. This number has been said to be high. North Carolina historian Judge David Schenk estimated the number to be closer to 4,000 while another historian, Jim Daniel, estimates it to be between 5,500 and 7,000.

Jim Daniel, historian emeritus of The N.C. Historical Reenactment Society, The 6th N.C. Regiment, writes: "*Judge Schenk's "4,000" refers to the number of North Carolina Continentals that comprised the six N.C. regiments involved in this campaign and would be essentially correct of the numbers on paper for those units. However, Nash's N.C. Continental regiments were not at full strength. However, they were bolstered by N.C. militia, whose numbers are uncertain. I would think that a more likely number for the total might be 5,500 – 7,000.*"² Daniel goes on to explain, "*I believe young Hugh's numbers, and mention of "8 regiments" would have included 2 militia regiments, adding 1,500 or more to the nearly 4,000 N.C. Continentals, resulting in the 5,500 or more that I referenced.*"³ Either account suggests a substantial force.

According to McDonald, *“When we got to the Boundary House, we encamped for a short time to rest and Col. Alston, a wealthy gentleman of the neighborhood, came to see Gen. Nash and told him he could show him a better camping ground, which was an elevated neck of land covered with hickory and other good firewood.”*⁴

“Col. Alston” was William Allston, who had obtained title to Waties Island and Little River Neck on 7 Oct 1755. A map dated 1764 shows William Allston’s house on the eastern point of Little River Neck. (Another William Allston of Little River Neck, who was a cousin of this William Allston, had also lived in the Little River area but had died by that time. That Allston had been the father-in-law of Isaac Marion. Isaac had married Rebecca, the late William Allston’s daughter.)

The distance from the Boundary House to Allston’s property by way of the Little River Bridge (located in the vicinity of the Little River Swing-span Bridge in 2011) was approximately 10 miles. That would probably have been the route that most of the army would have taken as there would have been many supply wagons, cannons and horses. Some of the troops might have taken a more direct route across the half-mile ferry (between the Boundary House and across Little River to the Allston Plantation).

McDonald goes on to describe the Allston plantation, saying, *“The trees were covered with long moss from the top to the ground, and of this we made excellent beds. There we stayed about a month waiting for further orders, where we cut and cleared about 100 acres of land. From this pleasant place we marched for Charleston and crossed the Pee Dee at a place called Winyaw about half way between Georgetown and the Inlet...thence to Charleston...here we received orders not to go any further toward Augustine.”*⁵

On February 5, 1777, while encamped at Hadrells Point (Mount Pleasant area) near Charleston, S.C., Col. Nash was appointed to the rank of brigadier general. They received orders on March 15, 1777 to march north and join General George Washington’s Army. On Oct. 4, 1777, they participated in the battle of Germantown in Pennsylvania. General Nash lost his leg to a cannonball in the engagement at the Chew House near Germantown and subsequently bled to death. In the presence of General Washington’s entire army, he was buried in the Towamencin Mettinghouse Mennonite Cemetery at Kulpsville, near Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

¹ C.B. Berry, IRQ, V. 4, No. 4, p. 13

² E-mail from Jim Daniel to Ben Burroughs, 14 Mar 2005

³ E-mail from Jim Daniel to Ben Burroughs, 22 Mar 2005

⁴ A Teenager in the Revolution, Eastern Acorn Press, 1982, The National Historical Society

⁵ A Teenager in the Revolution, Eastern Acorn Press, 1982, The National Historical Society