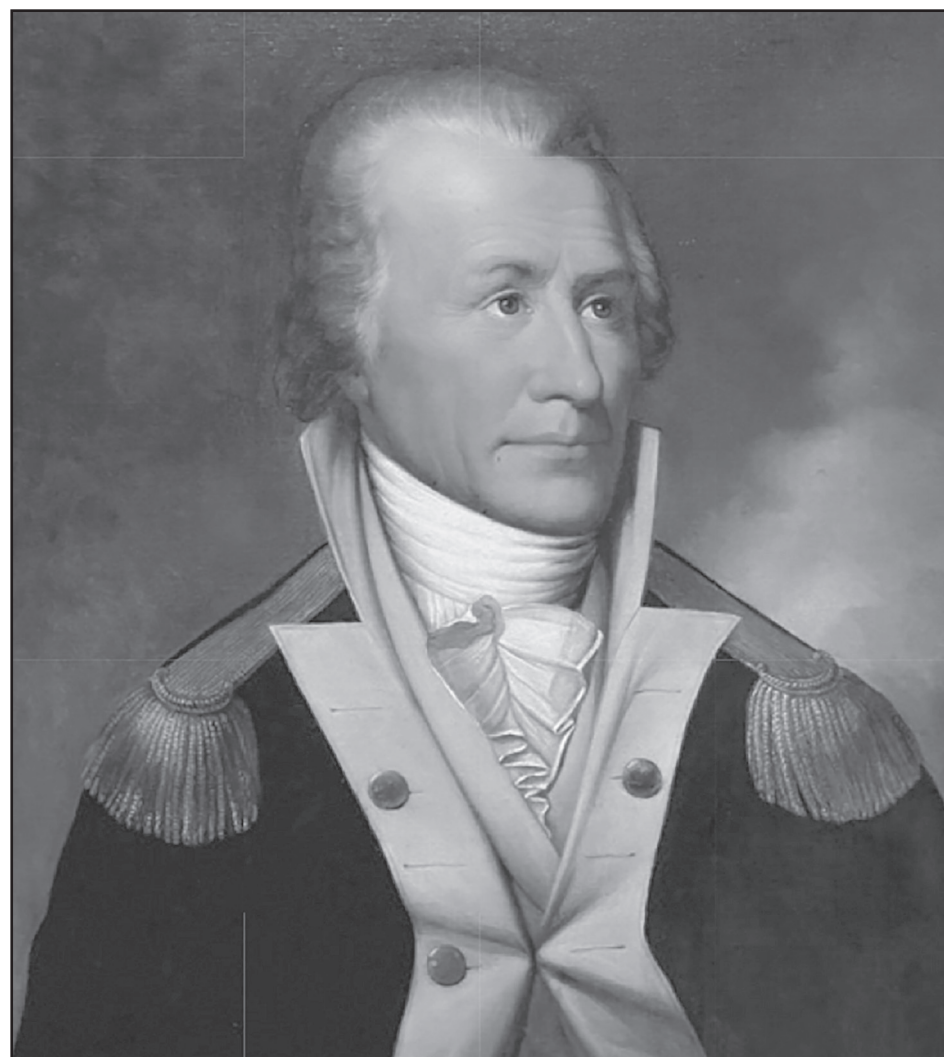




General Thomas Sumter



Francis Scott Key

Richland couple counts illustrious personages in their family histories

by Kathy Tretter

Ever since the advent of resources like Ancestry.com and 23 and Me, genealogy has acquired generations of new fans wondering who came before them.

In the early days of this nation the many immigrants who flooded the shores of this new land left the old world behind. Yes, some continued to write to relatives but when the next generation no longer knew the language and didn't have a solid connection to their cousins in other countries that petered off.

Of course some families have been here for generations, but migration and fewer ways to communicate also severed ties.

Many amateur genealogists probably secretly hope they are related to someone important from the past or are actually cousins of someone living today whom they knew nothing about.

Anyone whose ever watched *Finding Their*

Roots on PBS can attest to the excitement of famous individuals learning they descend from Charlemagne or that they are actually related to another famous person who's been on the show and whose DNA they now have on file.

And then there are those families who have just done a better job all along tracking their roots.

Tom and Vicki Brauns, who live outside Richland in Spencer County, are one such couple.

Tom is a collector extraordinaire. His memorabilia would make a museum archivist swoon. He has also collected information about his family's history and discovered his uncle about seven generations back was none other than Revolutionary War hero General Thomas Sumter.

Born in Virginia on August 14, 1734 Thomas was the son of William and Patience Sumter

and brother of Tom's sixth great-grandfather, Captain William Sumter (1731-1819).

You've probably heard of General Sumter's namesake — Fort Sumter.

Talk about a mover and a shaker — as a sergeant in the Virginia Militia, Sumter accompanied a delegation to London and acted as interpreter for Cherokee Indians with King George III. Returning to the colonies October 28, 1762, he landed in Charleston and spent that winter with the Cherokees.

During that period he single-handedly captured Baron Des Onnes, a French emissary sent to stir up trouble between the British and Cherokees.

Returning briefly to Virginia, he was arrested for an old debt, but escaped from Stanton Prison and came overland to Eutaw Springs, SC, where he invested his savings in land and slaves. He also opened a cross-roads store and earned such respect from the

community that he was made a justice of the peace in 1766.

General Thomas Sumter's service to his country during the Revolutionary War is well known and documented. His service to the fledgling Republic is perhaps not so well known. He was a man of many and varied interests ranging from experiments with tobacco and cotton to silk worms. He also raised racing horses. He founded the town of Statesburg after the war and held land grants for more than 150,000 acres of land. Service to his community, state, and country continued to December 16, 1810 when he retired from public life.

General Thomas Sumter's Military Career:

- Served in Virginia Militia during Cherokee Indian War. Came to SC about 1760. In Indian service on frontier for several years.

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