

John Hills

(Continued from page 8)

unbelievable amount of documentation on Hill, as well as many of the original settlers in the area, with special focus on Dubois, Perry and Spencer counties' earliest settlers.

According to Pfaff, John Hills was born May 16, 1761. On October 10, 1777 while residing in Warren County, North Carolina he entered the military at the age of 16.

Think about that — a 16-year-old boy enlisting in a cause fraught with an enormous amount of challenges. He was a Patriot, willing to give his all to this new nation, born in liberty.

But would he survive?

Serving under Captain Brittain Harris, Hills' colonel was Thomas Eaton.

He was marched through South Carolina to the state of Georgia and was engaged in a battle with the British at the mouth of Briar Creek. From there he was marched back to South Carolina to a place called Parrysburgh, and from there to a place called the Black Swamp where he served for six months.

On April 10, 1778, Hills was discharged, but the war was not yet won, so in January of 1780 he re-entered service under Captain Jordan Harris and was in the battle of Guilford, North Carolina.

From there he was marched to a place called Ramsey's [or Ramsour's] Mill on Clarke's Creek.

The British commander in the South sent Loyalist Lt. Col. William Moore to North Carolina to recruit local volunteer troops for a planned invasion by the British from South Carolina.

Moore was ordered by Lt. Gen. Lord Charles Cornwallis not to gather his recruits in one place. Instead Cornwallis wanted these volunteers, mostly farmers, to focus on providing grain to feed his army. However, Moore heard that Col. Griffith Rutherford was gathering Patriot part-time "militia" troops to oppose his efforts. Moore called on Loyalist (Tory) companies and individuals

to join him at Ramsour's Mill, which is now in Lincolnton, North Carolina. About 1,300 camped on a ridge across the creek, though 300 did not have guns.

On Tuesday, June 20, 1780, 400 Patriots gathered 16 miles to the northeast after hearing about the Tory camp. They were to keep an eye on Tories in this area. Though aware Moore's force was much larger, they decided with the other officers to attack anyway: The Tories had captured 20 Patriots ("Whigs") and planned to hang them the next day.

After marching overnight, two miles east of town they split their forces. Cavalry continued slowly but directly to the east end of the ridge, while the infantry moved to the south around a bog to the base.

As dawn broke around 7 a.m., this ridge was covered with hundreds of frontiersmen and farmers asleep or starting their day. Only two officers, who had served with the regular British army had uniforms. The flatter parts of the hill is farmland, so it was mostly open with a few trees. The ground was wet after a night of strong rain, and a heavy fog hug about the hillsides.

At least a half-mile away, gunshots were fired. Men scrambled to their feet in confusion, grabbed their weapons, and formed a line across the hill.

First the "pickets" who had been guarding the road and fired the shots appeared on horseback, galloping for their lives up the road and out of the fog. They were running from the Patriot cavalry! Those horsemen charged straight up the ridgeline, perhaps hoping they still had the advantage of surprise.

When the Patriots got close enough to emerge from the fog, somewhere within 50 yards, the Tory line fired a volley. Some of the cavalymen drop.

Unlike regular armies, militia were not well drilled or organized, so men rushed into line wherever they saw fit, leaving clumps of people and gaps in both armies. Soon, though, the Tory line began to curl along

both sides of the ridge into a "U" shape, with the bottom of the U facing the direction of the first horse attack.

A Patriot officer wrote later: "In some places they were crowded together in each other's way; in other places there were none. As the rear came up they occupied those places, and the line gradually extending, the action became general and obstinate on both sides."

In the end the outnumbered Patriots destroyed a Loyalist army the British badly needed.

Hills' tour ended here after serving three months. He received a discharge from General Butler. Then in July of 1782 he entered service under Captain Francis Thornton and was stationed at General Thomas Eaton's Ferry on Roanoke River where he remained three months and was discharged October 1782.

But John Hills was not yet done with military service to his newly established country. In November of 1782 he volunteered under Edmund Gamble for one year and was stationed at Salisbury, North Carolina where he was in charge of a baggage wagon.

Finally, John Hills was discharged by Edmund Gamble at the age of 22.

While what he was up to for the next 35 years is unclear, in 1817 John Hills moved to what is now Jefferson Township, Dubois County, Indiana. The 1820 census lists John Hills, Thomas Hills and Moses Hills as residents. They had been living in Hardin County, Kentucky prior to this.

John signed a marriage certificate for Moses on January 15, 1810, daughter Margaret on May 12, 1812 and Thomas C. Hills on February 15, 1819.

John and Nancy his wife sold parcels of land in Hardin County, Kentucky — one on February 13, 1820 and another March 18, 1820 through an attorney. This stated they were living in Dubois (sic) County.

John is also found with Henry Hills in Kentucky. Henry and Ephraim Hills moved to Northern Clark Township, Perry County

close to the Dubois County line. Both Henry and Ephraim can be found in the 1820 census in Perry County. Both were messengers for Hurricane Fork Church where Adam Shoemaker was minister.

The 1885 Goodspeed History of Dubois Pike County states that John Hills built a meeting house which also served as a prominent school in the early 1820's. It listed several students last names, several of these names were from Northern Clark Township in Perry County. John Hills meeting house/school was named Jubilee. A February 1826 church record with Thomas C. Hills and Adam Shoemaker's name on it verifies that Jubilee did exist.

In 1821, Thomas C. Hills became a Justice of the Peace in Dubois County.

In 1826 John Hills was a commissioner who helped establish the Troy to Hindostan Road as a public highway.

On June 7, 1832, John filed for a pension with the assistance of Thomas Payne an attorney from Corydon.

It seems her appeared in court on May 19, 1833, possibly in relation to proving his service to the country.

John certified he had lived in Dubois County for 15 years.

Editor's note: His last pension payment was on January 10, 1835 indicating that John Hills had died between December 17, 1834 and January 10, 1835, a Patriot who has long been forgotten, save for the diligence of one woman. If not for the efforts of Doris Pfaff his name would not be listed on the honor rolls of Revolutionary War Patriots who served this new nation.

Doris has one regret. She has not been able to ascertain his burial site, although she believes he is buried in the Shoemaker Cemetery, just a stone's throw from the Dubois County line in northern Perry County. There are no official records to prove it one way or another, but just the fact she was able to finally give John Hills the credit he deserves is significant.

Serving the Ferdinand Community since 1865

**LAWN SEED • FERTILIZER
PLUMBING SUPPLIES**

Good Quality Garden Tools

Frank Heidt & Son Hardware

325 Main St. • Ferdinand • 812-367-1500



FLEIG'S CAFE *Home Of Fine Food*

Serving Thurs.-Fri.-Sat.

**Fried Chicken,
Steaks, Seafood
Beer - Liquor - Wine**

812-367-1310



Dine-In • Carry Out