

= Griffith Rutherford =

Griffith Rutherford (c . 1721 ? August 10 , 1805) was an officer in the American Revolutionary War , a political leader in North Carolina , and an important figure in the early history of the Southwest Territory and the state of Tennessee .

During the French and Indian War , Rutherford became a captain of a local British colonial militia . He continued serving in the militia until the start of the revolution in 1775 , at which time he enlisted in the North Carolina militia as a colonel . He was appointed to the post of brigadier general of the " Salisbury District " in May 1776 , and participated in the initial phases of the Cherokee ? American wars against the Cherokee Indians along the frontier . In June 1780 , he was partly responsible for the Loyalist defeat in the Battle of Ramsour 's Mill . Rutherford was present at the Battle of Camden on August 16 , 1780 , where he was taken prisoner by the British . After being exchanged in 1781 , Rutherford participated in several other campaigns , including further attacks on the Chickamauga faction of the Cherokee .

Originally from Ireland , Rutherford immigrated with his parents to Philadelphia , Pennsylvania Colony , at the age of eighteen . In 1753 he moved to Rowan County , in the Province of North Carolina , where he married Elizabeth Graham . An active member of his community , Rutherford served in multiple civil occupations . He was a representative of both houses of the North Carolina House of Commons , as well as an unsuccessful candidate for governor . Rutherford was an advocate of the anti @-@ federalist movement , and was appointed President of the Legislative Council of the Southwest Territory in 1794 . Rutherford retired to Sumner County , Tennessee , where he died on August 10 , 1805 , at the age of 84 .

= = Early life = =

Little is known about Griffith Rutherford 's early life . Born in Ireland in either 1721 or 1731 to John Rutherford , who was of Ulster Scots descent , and Elizabeth (née Griffin) , who was of Welsh descent , he appears clearly in records after his immigration to Philadelphia at the age of eighteen . His parents died during the voyage from Ireland , and for a while he worked on a relative 's farm , where he was taught how to survey land . Around 1753 , he moved to Rowan County , North Carolina Colony , and bought a tract of land about seven miles (11 km) from Salisbury ; this was the first of several land purchases he made during the 1750s . The following year Rutherford married his neighbor 's sister , Elizabeth Graham , who eventually bore him ten children . One of their sons , James Rutherford , later became a major during the Revolutionary War , dying at the Battle of Eutaw Springs . Rutherford also became friends with Daniel Boone during this time , with whom he often went on hunting and surveying expeditions . After the French and Indian War , Rutherford became increasingly active in community affairs . He was listed as a member of the North Carolina General Assembly in 1766 , a sheriff and justice of the peace of Rowan County from 1767 to 1769 , and a tax collector .

= = French @-@ Indian War = =

Rutherford began his extensive military career in 1760 during the French and Indian War . He was a participant in several battles and skirmishes , most notably the Battle of Fort Duquesne (1758) ; the battle at Fort Dobbs (1760) ; and James Grant 's campaign against the Cherokee in the southern Appalachians (1761) . By the war 's end , he had achieved the rank of captain . Between 1769 and 1771 , he embraced the cause against the rebels during the Regulator Movement , commanding a local militia which participated in the Battle of Alamance (May 16 , 1771) . The following month , Rutherford retired to Salem to recover from an acute attack of gout .

= = Revolutionary War = =

Rutherford entered the war in 1775 as a colonel in the North Carolina militia following his

appointment to the Rowan County Committee of Safety . Throughout that year , his regiment helped to disarm and disperse Loyalist groups in the South Carolina back country , most notably during the Snow Campaign in Ninety Six , South Carolina . Rutherford represented Rowan County at the Fourth Provincial Congress in Halifax from April 4 to May 14 , 1776 , during which he helped develop and write the North Carolina Constitution and was promoted to brigadier general of the Salisbury District . In the summer following the conference , he raised an army of 2 @, @ 400 men to campaign against local Cherokee Indians , who had been attacking colonists on the western frontier since their alliance with the British .

= = = Campaign against the Cherokee = = =

Rutherford 's regiment rendezvoused at Fort McGahey with the Guilford and Surry regiments under Colonels James Martin and Martin Armstrong on July 23 . From there , the three groups traveled through the Blue Ridge Mountains at the Swannanoa Gap , passed up the valley of Hominy Creek , and crossed the Pigeon River . They then passed through Richland Creek , near the present day town of Waynesville , North Carolina , and crossed the Tuckasegee River near an Indian settlement . They moved further onwards towards the Cowee Gap , where they had a small engagement with a band of Cherokee , in which one of Rutherford 's men was wounded . After that conflict , they marched to the Overhill Cherokee " Middle Towns " (on the Tennessee River) , where he met General Andrew Williamson of South Carolina on September 14 . Williamson was on a similar mission and readily joined forces with the original three regiments .

The now four regiments skirmished with hostile Indians at Valley Town , Ellijay , and near the southern Watauga settlements (present day northeast Tennessee) . Eventually , the Indian tribes were subdued at the cost of three fatalities to Rutherford 's regiment . Casualties to the Indians , however , were severe . By the end of the conflict , the four regiments had destroyed 36 Indian towns , decimated acres of corn farms , and chased off most of the Indians ' cattle . Afterward , Rutherford returned home by the same route . He arrived back in Salisbury in early October , where he disbanded his troops . Later that month , Rutherford authorized another punitive expedition of a recently raised cavalry force , led by Captain William Moore , to attack the Middle Towns .

= = = Southern theater = = =

British strategists viewed the Southern colonies , especially lightly populated Georgia , as the most vulnerable of all . Despite early victories won by the Patriots at Charleston and other settlements , the South became the focus of English attack starting in 1778 . Governor Richard Caswell of North Carolina identified this threat and immediately ordered militia to regroup . Rutherford , who had been checking on Loyalists since his return to Salisbury in 1776 , received word of this by October . Governor Caswell and Rutherford met in Kinston , North Carolina , on November 25 to discuss the specifics of Rutherford 's assignment . Apparently a fleet of British ships were en route from New York , heavily endangering key coastal cities . Rutherford was able to amass a force which reached the border of South Carolina by early December . They proceeded to establish headquarters near Savannah in Purrysburg , South Carolina , the following month .

With the cities of Savannah and Augusta taken by February , the campaign was severely weakened . Rutherford moved his troops near Augusta , where he supported General John Ashe during the Battle of Brier Creek on March 3 . Soldiers ' enlistments soon began expiring ; by April 10 most of Rutherford 's forces returned to North Carolina .

The loss of Charleston in 1780 was a huge blow to the Patriot cause and posed a significant threat to neighboring North Carolina , which lacked adequate defenses due to expiring enlistments . Rutherford saw this danger , calling back his remaining troops stationed in South Carolina and ordering all soldiers from Salisbury to rally near Charlotte , North Carolina . A force of 900 had accumulated by early June .

= = = Battle of Ramsour 's Mill = = =

After rallying troops at Charlotte , Rutherford received information that Loyalists were gathering at arms at Ramsour 's Mill ? near present @-@ day Lincolnton , North Carolina ? and issued orders for local officers to disperse the group before they evolved into an even greater threat . After collecting troops from Rowan and Mecklenburg counties , Rutherford moved his men to the Catawba River and crossed it at the Tuckasegee Ford on June 19 . He sent word to Colonel Francis Locke of Rowan County , to rendezvous with him about 16 miles (26 km) from Ramsour 's Mill , near the forks of the Catawba . Locke accumulated a force of 400 men and encamped at Mountain Creek , which was 35 miles (56 km) away from Rutherford 's position , though still approximately the same distance from Ramsour 's Mill as Rutherford 's position was . It was resolved by Locke and his officers that a junction with Rutherford was unrealistic given the distance between the two regiments and the limited amount of time before the Loyalist group grew too large to safely engage . Therefore , it was decided Locke 's forces would attack the Loyalist 's position immediately . Colonel Johnson , one of Locke 's subordinates , informed Rutherford of the new situation by 10 : 00 pm .

Locke 's forces left their encampment late in the evening of June 19 ; arriving at the Loyalist position by early morning , June 20 . The Patriots took the Loyalists by surprise . While at first bewildered and confused , the Loyalists retaliated by firing at Locke 's cavalry , who were forced to fall back . The Patriots eventually forced the Loyalists to retreat to their camp , though it was discovered that they were regrouping on the other side of the mill stream . At this point , since an immediate attack from the Loyalists was expected , messages were sent to Rutherford , who had advanced to within six miles (9 @.@ 6 km) of Ramsour 's , to immediately move forward . Rutherford met Locke within 2 miles (3 @.@ 2 km) of Ramsour 's , where he was informed that the Loyalists were in full retreat .

= = = Battle of Camden = = =

The losses at Savannah , Charleston and the Battle of Waxhaws had practically driven the Continental Army from the South , with State defenses reduced to a number of locally @-@ lead partisan militias . In response to the loss of military presence , Congress sent Horatio Gates , who had distinguished himself at Saratoga , to reform the Continental Army in Charlotte , North Carolina . Against the advice of his officers and without knowing the capabilities of his troops ? some of which were untested in battle ? Gates marched toward South Carolina on July 27 with over 4 @,@ 000 men . He aimed to capturing the crossroads town of Camden , North Carolina , which would have been strategically important for control over the South Carolina backcountry . Lord Rawdon , who was stationed there with 1 @,@ 000 men , alerted Lord Cornwallis of Gates 's movements on August 9 . Cornwallis arrived at Camden by August 13 with reinforcements , increasing the British presence there to over 2 @,@ 000 men .

The battle ensued at dawn on August 16 , 1780 . Rutherford was positioned in the center of the Continental formation with other North Carolina militia . During the battle , he was wounded and taken prisoner . He was detained for ten months at Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine , Florida , and was later exchanged for another prisoner in 1781 .

= = = Later war = = =

Rutherford returned to Salisbury in September 1781 after his release to find his home ransacked by British troops . After a short reunion with his family , Rutherford trained and took command of 1 @,@ 400 men and allegedly began to brutally attack Tory militias and communities according to several reports sent to his superior , General Greene . Greene disagreed with Rutherford 's tactics , warning Rutherford that these methods would only encourage the Loyalist cause . While these reports were later found to be false , Rutherford decided to redirect his forces towards the British encampment and surrounding militias at Wilmington , North Carolina , beginning with the Loyalist force at Raft Swamp . During October and November , Rutherford continued to force the Loyalists into Wilmington , and eventually surrounded the city , successfully cutting off British communications

and supply lines . The commanding British officer , Major Craig , was soon afterward informed of Cornwallis 's surrender at Yorktown , and his forces at Wilmington were hastily evacuated .

After Wilmington , Rutherford again fought the Chickamauga in the west in 1782 . He followed the same route he had taken seven years before . No known accounts were written of the campaign , though it was reportedly successful .

= = Later life = =

Rutherford was elected to North Carolina 's senate during the War in 1779 and continued to serve in this position until 1789 . He opposed the restoration of Loyalist lands , supporting and assisting in their confiscation while serving in the Council of State . Rutherford ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1783 . He was an ardent anti @-@ federalist during the national debate on the recently created United States Constitution . At a Constitutional Convention held at Hillsborough , North Carolina in 1788 , he had reservations about the Constitution ? as did other anti @-@ federalists at the meeting . Rutherford requested if he could challenge some of the clauses . While each clause was challenged individually despite opposition from federalist Samuel Johnston and others , Rutherford rarely contributed to discussion . His final decision to vote against the ratification of the Constitution resulted in him losing his seat in the state senate . However , his reputation with his colleagues was relatively unaffected , and he was subsequently elected Councilor of the State .

Rutherford acquired nearly 13 @,@ 000 acres of Washington District land through trading off his 700 acres in Salisbury , government grants and purchasing Continental soldier 's tracts . With his family and eight slaves Rutherford relocated to this area , in what is today Sumner County , Tennessee , in September 1792 . Two years later , he was appointed President of the Legislative Council of the Southwest Territory .

Rutherford died in Sumner County , Tennessee , on August 10 , 1805 .

= = Legacy = =

These areas are all namesakes of Griffith Rutherford :

Rutherfordton , North Carolina

Rutherford County , North Carolina

Rutherford County , Tennessee