

## The British in Orange County during the Revolution

From the work of Historian William H.B. Thomas in "Patriots of the Upcountry", this excerpt is a companion to "Pre-Revolutionary Action in Orange County" and "Orange County Men Fight in the Revolution".

"The British did get into Orange County. A raiding party, possibly some of Banastre Tarleton's troopers, appeared in the vicinity of present-day Antioch Baptist Church on Secondary Route 660 south of St. Just. The road that passes the church was early known as the Lawyers Road, leading across the county to the first courthouse near Raccoon Ford on the Rapidan River. Less than a mile west of the church, beyond Spring Hill, then as now owned by the Wright family, Horsepen Branch flows into Wisel Run, as it was called, a headstream of Terrys Run. Near there in 1781 was the home of Robert Chandler, his wife Susannah, and their children. Among their neighbors, in addition to the Wrights, were the McNeal and Evans families.

"Robert Chandler had volunteered in Francis Taylor's company in 1776, two years after he and Susannah were married. She always said that her husband marched 'in the first volunteer company raised in Orange County after the Declaration of Independence.' In the late spring of 1781 he was out on another tour of service. Often staying with Mrs. Chandler and her children--the oldest of whom, Richard, was five--was Sally McNeal, somewhat younger than Susannah but a close friend who had waited on her at her marriage.

"Then that late spring day, the British rode up to the Chandler home. They first burned up all the farm fences. They 'robbed her house of every article except two bedsteads and stole the ropes out of them.' Warned of their approach, Susannah and her children; Salley Evans, another friend; and many other women and children hid in a nearby swamp. They lay down among the alder bushes. Susannah had 'her children, stored aways in some tobacco hogsheads in the swamp with the end where they were put in filled with straw to keep their noise from being heard.' For several days and nights the women and children stayed there. They were afraid to return to their homes. The enemy was still in the neighborhood. But the British left at last, bringing to an end what seems to be the only known enemy action in Orange County during the Revolution."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William H.B. Thomas, "Patriots of the Upcountry" (Orange, Virginia: Orange County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 68-69.