

## **Revolutionary War Patriot John Roper**

Revolutionary War Patriot John Roper was honored on May 16, 2015 with a grave marking service conducted at the Oak Level United Methodist Church Cemetery in Fruithurst, Cleburne County, Alabama.

More than 20 descendants of Patriot John Roper including John and Robert Hollingsworth of the Cahaba-Coosa Chapter Sons of the American Revolution and Lynne Williams and Rowena Pugh of the Josiah Brunson Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution were among those descendants in attendance. Other family members and friends, special guests from the community and members of numerous patriotic organizations were also present for the ceremony.

Rev. Henry Donald Payne, Pastor of the Oak Level United Methodist Church, opened the ceremony with greetings and prayer. Betty Payne, Chaplain of the Josiah Brunson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

William (Bill) Clement, Past President of the Birmingham Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution greeted the group of about 50 attendees on behalf of the SAR. Mary Lewey, Regent of the Josiah Brunson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, extended a warm welcome on behalf of the DAR and recognized the descendants of John Roper and special guests. Brief compositions of the personal life and military service history of John Roper were shared by two of his 4<sup>th</sup> great-grandchildren, Lynne Williams and Mike Roper, respectively.

John Roper was born on February 24, 1763 in Brunswick County, Virginia. He volunteered for service and served three months in Captain Samuel Lockhart's Company, Colonel Etherington's Regiment in 1780 at the age of 17. He fought in the Battle of Camden which began in the middle of the night on August 14, 1780.

A month later they were assembled and marched under the command of Brigadier General Jones to Smithfield in North Carolina where it was discharged. John Roper was drafted in February 1781 and served three months in Captain Benjamin Drew's Company, Colonel Andrew Haynes' Regiment. He received a slight head wound on March 15, 1781 during the Battle of Guilford Courthouse.

John Roper marched with his company in pursuit of Cornwallis to Ramsey's Mill after the battle of Guilford and was discharged when his term of service expired.

He re-entered the service shortly thereafter as a substitute for someone else for another three months. These three months of his military career may be the most interesting since General George Washington was in the area where he was serving. However, no dates, commanding officers or tours of duty are specified in Roper's pension record for this period of time.

John Roper was once again drafted on March 1, 1782 and served three months in Captain Thomas Williams' Company as part of a guard of a military store. He served three months beginning in September 1782 in Captain Johnathan Jackson's Company as a volunteer. His company marched to Little York, Virginia (now known as Yorktown) and traveled on to Williamsburg. They were charged with the defense of the port of entry as guards of the military magazine where the last major engagement of the American Revolution had been fought.

He was voluntarily engaged in scouting parties pursuing the Tories from this time until the close of the war in September 1783 and served once under Colonel Polk and oftentimes under Captain Burt. Private John Roper (though not quite 21 years old) had served with the military for 26 months over the terrain of at least three states by the time the Revolutionary War ended.

John Roper married Sarah Fincher in Mecklenburg, NC in 1797 and they had ten children over the next 16 years. They moved to Oak Level, Benton Co. (later became Cleburne Co.) AL in their later years to be near some of their children. Sarah Fincher Roper died in Oak Level, AL in 1849. John Roper was 87, blind and was living with his youngest son, Samuel and his wife and children in Oak Level, AL in 1850 as noted on the U.S. Census.

Revolutionary War Patriot John Roper died and was buried at the Methodist Church Cemetery in Oak Level, AL on July 25, 1852.

The dedication of the DAR and SAR markers that were placed in his honor was led by Mary Lewey, Regent of the Josiah Brunson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and William Clement, Past President of the Birmingham Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution. Three 5th great-grandchildren of John and Sarah Fincher Roper participated in the ceremony: Carley Newman played "Ashokan Farewell" on the violin while Eli Hollingsworth unveiled the markers and Kathryn Petty placed the wreath.

Guests mingled and made photographs to seal the memories of the day after the closing remarks and were treated to a lovely outdoor reception hosted by members of the Oak Level United Methodist Church, Ruth Boswell Piper and Kay Howell Melton.

*Submitted by John R. Hollingsworth, Sr. Secretary, Cahaba-Coosa Chapter ALSSAR*

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