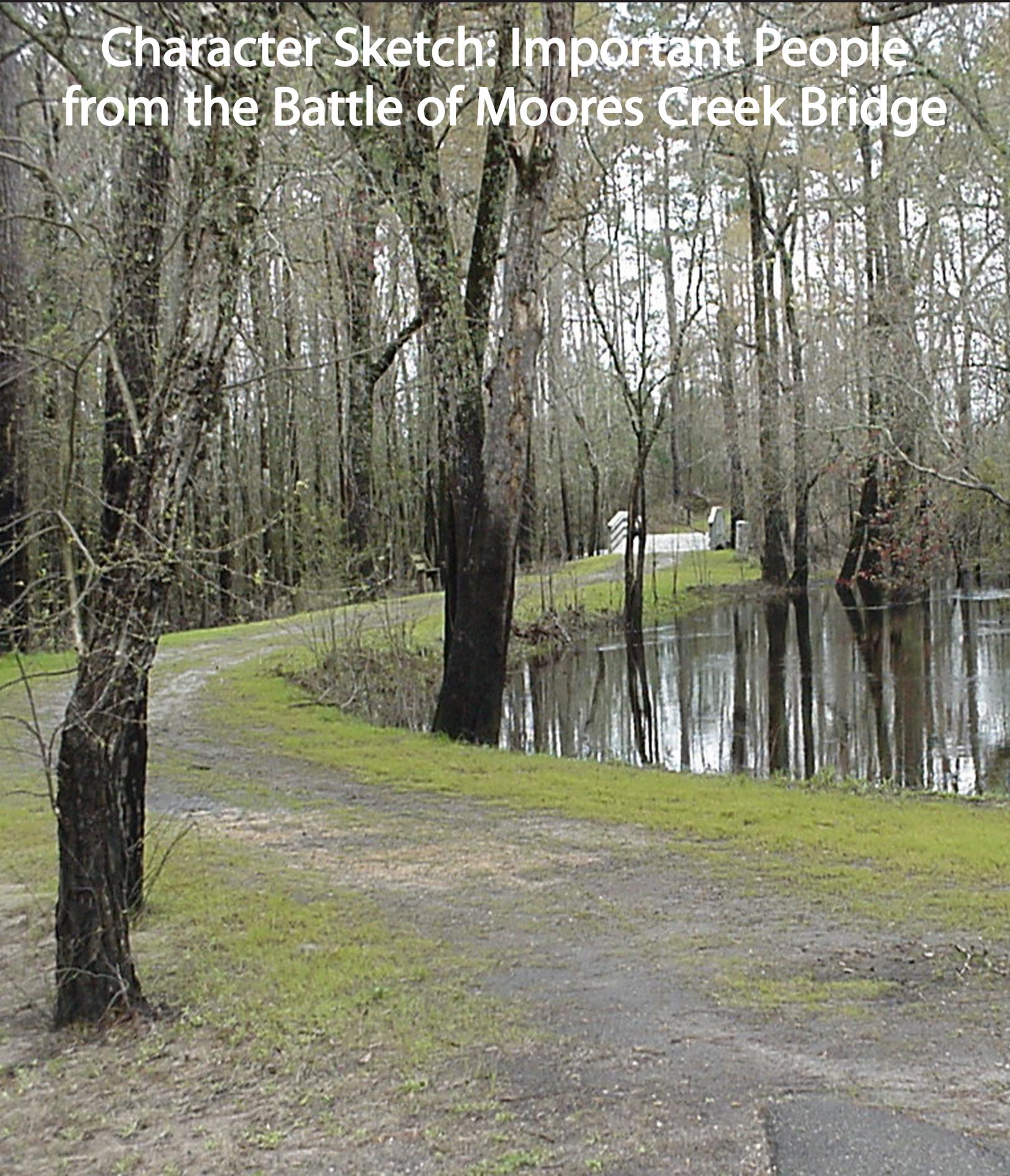




# Character Sketch: Important People from the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge



# Donald MacDonald



Donald MacDonald was an emigrant from Scotland. He fought in the Battle of Culloden, and came to America to find a new beginning. MacDonald was pursued by Governor Josiah Martin and placed in charge of recruiting a force for his strategic plan of preserving British rule in the colony, and putting down the rebellions that were rising all across the state. The key to Gov. Martin's plan was to gain allegiance from the Scots Highlanders who had recently emigrated to North Carolina in the years leading up to 1776. They had been granted land and a forgiveness of their transgressions as long as they took an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Lieutenant-Colonel Donald MacDonald was appointed to the rank of Brigadier-General over the Loyalist Militia, and was given the task of forming The Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. He was to lead his militia to Brunswick Town to rendezvous with other British forces, including Lord Cornwallis.

After leaving Cross Creek with a band of about 1,600 Loyalists, General MacDonald became intertwined in a game of chess with Patriot forces led by Col. James Moore, Col. Richard Caswell, and Col. Alexander Lillington. After being trapped several times, Gen. MacDonald made a break for Moores Creek Bridge, the main pathway to Wilmington. Upon finding out that he had been beat to the bridge, Gen. MacDonald ordered an attack on the smaller force of Patriots. He could not go on though, as he became ill, and handed over the command to his second-in-command, Lt. Col. Donald McLeod. Out-gunned, and out-maneuvered, the Loyalist forces were severely defeated. Gen. MacDonald was caught, and after insisting upon a formal surrender, gave his sword to Col. Moore, who then in turn, returned it, as was the custom. He was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Halifax.

# Donald McLeod



In July of 1775, two Scottish officers were ordered to go to North Carolina to recruit men for a Battalion of the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. Many of their Scottish relatives had settled in the Upper Cape Fear Valley Region near Cross Creek. One of these men was Lieutenant-Colonel Donald MacDonald, a veteran of the Battle of Culloden and the Battle of Bunker Hill, and the other officer was Captain Donald McLeod, a veteran as well. MacDonald and McLeod were regular officers in the British Army. Upon reaching North Carolina, they were stopped and questioned as to what their motives were in North Carolina. After pretending to be retired soldiers looking to settle among their “friends”, they quickly moved in to action and starting recruiting.

Before long, newly appointed Lieutenant-Colonel McLeod had recruited a force of 500 “rough and raucous” men. After hearing of a possible attack by a local Patriot force, the group soon disbanded, and McLeod was left to rendezvous with MacDonald without the soldiers. Another attempt was made to recruit soldiers, and this time the Loyalist officers were successful. During their march to the sea, the Loyalists were met by Patriot forces, blocking their path to Wilmington and Brunswick Town. When the forces met at Moores Creek, General MacDonald was too ill to fight, and the young Lt. Col. McLeod was placed in charge of the Loyalist forces as they marched on Moores Creek Bridge. During the ensuing charge over the bridge, McLeod and over thirty Loyalist were killed, leaving the Loyalist forces leaderless. McLeod was found a few paces away from the Patriot defensive earthworks, riddled with nine bullets and twenty-four swan shots.

## Josiah Martin



Josiah Martin, the young and energetic Royal Governor of North Carolina, was the Loyalist leader and a most profound supporter of British law and policy as America headed to war with England. Martin became governor as the former Governor, William Tryon, left North Carolina for New York. In an effort to put down rebellious meetings, Governor Martin issued a Proclamation against the Patriots for forming an illegal assembly. Two weeks later, the first of several Provincial Congresses, as well as several Committees of Safety, formed in the region, watching Governor Martin's every move. Alarmed by the warlike preparations going on throughout the colony, Governor Martin fled Tryon Palace and headed to Fort Johnston, near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Upon hearing that Governor Martin was held up at Fort Johnston, a militia unit was dispatched to capture the fort. Fearing the attack, Governor Martin escaped to the *Cruizer*, a sloop waiting just off shore. Martin's departure left North Carolina without an organized government.

From the *Cruizer*, Gov. Martin reached out to the British Secretary of State for the colonies, Lord Dartmouth, and offered a plan to put down the rebellions and preserve British rule in the colonies. His grand plan called for a raising of troops from within North Carolina, as well as troops from Boston and England, and even a powerful fleet of ships led by Vice Admiral Sir Peter Parker. The plan was accepted and was put into motion as the primary objective in England's defense and preservation of British rule in the colonies. When the Loyalist forces lost at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, Royal Governor Martin and Great Britain lost all strongholds on North Carolina, as the Halifax Resolves were passed, declaring North Carolina as a free and independent state, no longer ruled by the Crown.

## Richard Caswell



Born on August 3, 1729 in Joppa, Maryland, Richard Caswell was a militia officer during the American Revolutionary War, and led troops at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. His military experience in the British militia led him to gain the rank of Colonel. Caswell commanded the right wing of former Governor Tryon's army at the Battle of Alamance in 1771.

Caswell studied law and politics. From 1754 to 1776, Caswell was a member of the colonial assembly, and was Speaker of the House for a short period. Caswell was a leader in all five of North Carolina's Provincial Congresses and also served in the First and Second Continental Congress. In a letter to William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, Governor Josiah Martin stated that Caswell had become "the most active tool of sedition." Caswell eventually resigned as a delegate to the Continental Congress, and took on a military role, using his military and political experience to command the minutemen for the New Bern District.

Col. Caswell was instrumental in helping the Patriots defeat the Loyalist militia at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. Caswell brought 800 men to Moores Creek Bridge, and joining up with Col. Alexander Lillington's 150 men, built a defensive perimeter on the east side of the creek. Caswell set up a camp on the west side, but after receiving a proclamation from Loyalist Gen. MacDonald to surrender, he pulled his troops across the creek, leaving behind an empty camp. Caswell assumed responsibility for the victory and was given the rank of Brigadier-General of the militia in the New Bern District. Caswell went on to become the first governor of the newly independent state of North Carolina.

## Alexander Lillington

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alex Lillington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

John Alexander Lillington, born in the 1720's, was orphaned at a young age, and was raised by his uncle in the Cape Fear region. He was moderately active in local affairs, and serving as a Lieutenant, helped repel the Spanish invasion of Brunswick Town in 1748. He was involved in a multitude of political affairs in and around New Hanover County, from holding a seat in the Colonial Assembly to serving as a Justice of the Peace. He was given the position of Commissioner of the Roads in 1745 and 1773, as well as Commissioner to survey the Duplin-New Hanover boundary in 1766.

Lillington was not reserved in his feelings to liberty. During the Stamp Act crisis, he publicly indicated to Governor Tryon that he was not happy with the restrictions on commerce in the Cape Fear Region. He served as a Lt. Colonel, and then as Colonel of a light infantry unit put into action to put down the Regulator movement. He was appointed as Colonel of a group of minutemen from Wilmington. When the Committees of Safety in the region were alarmed that Gov. Martin was putting together a plan to put down the rebellion in the colony, Col. Lillington and his minutemen were dispatched to stop the Loyalist advance from Cross Creek to Wilmington and Brunswick Town. When the Loyalist out-maneuvered the Patriot forces, Col. Lillington was ordered to head to Moores Creek Bridge and fortify the area. Col. Lillington and his men beat the Loyalists to Moores Creek, and together with Col. Caswell, defeated a much larger Loyalist force.

# James Moore

A cursive signature of the name "James Moore" in black ink, written in a fluid, historical style.

James Moore, Jr. was born in 1737. Being preceded in life by his grandfather, Governor James Moore of South Carolina, and his father, Colonel Maurice Moore of the famed Orton Plantation and Brunswick Town, James Moore was destined to be a great leader, militarily or politically. He was given command of Fort Johnston very early on, assuming the rank of Captain during the French and Indian War. On several occasions, Governor Tryon appointed Colonel Moore as commander of his troops to put down the Regulators, and in doing so, earned him a reputation as a soldier fit for leadership.

By the time General Donald MacDonald and his Loyalists were ready to march down and rendezvous with Sir Henry Clayton, Sir Peter Parker, and Lord Cornwallis, Colonel James Moore had begun to concentrate his troops below Cross Creek. Although Col. Moore was not present at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, he was given credit as being the hero of the battle. "It was Moore who, with all the finesse of an experienced chess player, maneuvered his troops in such a manner to effectively block the Loyalists from their objective of reaching the coast and forced them to do battle on his own choosing." (1) Moore arrived after the battle, where Col. Richard Caswell and Col. Alexander Lillington led their troops to the first decisive American victory of the Revolutionary War, and he assumed control. He organized search parties to round up the retreating Loyalists, and sent orders to local militias and regiments to block all paths to the sea and to Cross Creek. Col. Moore summed up the incident by stating that the encounter "has most happily terminated a very dangerous insurrection and will, I trust, put an effectual check to Toryism in this country." (2)

1. Rankin, Hugh F., *The Moores Creek Bridge Campaign, 1776*. 1953, p. 37 (59).  
2. Hatch Jr., Charles E., *The Battle of Moores Creek Bridge*. 1969, p. 46.

# John Grady



John Grady, 20 years old at the time of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, was a Minuteman serving under Col. Lillington and Col. Caswell at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. A private from Duplin County, he was a volunteer, which several of the soldiers who fought in this battle were. Like the others, he lacked many of the basic fundamentals of a trained soldier. On the other hand, many of the soldiers involved were members of the Minutemen and local militia, and these units were trained very well. No records exist to put John Grady on a regular military roster, but it was told that he shouldered his musket and voluntarily joined Caswell's regiment as it marched through the countryside to Cross Creek.

Never the less, Private Grady took part in the Battle at Moores Creek Bridge, closely hugging the earthworks as the Loyalist Scots Highlanders, with broadswords wielding, charged the Patriot defenses. As "Old Mother Covington and Her Daughter" fired upon the attacking Loyalists, the Patriot muskets fired into the darkness, penetrating the Loyalist charge with ease. After the three-minute battle, thirty-plus Loyalists lay dead on the battlefield in front of the earthworks. John Grady, the lone Patriot fatality, was found, shot in the head. Not much is known about how he really died. What is known is what his death did for liberty and independence. John Grady became the first North Carolinian to die in the war for independence, and his death, along with the decisive American victory at Moores Creek Bridge, urged North Carolina to push for complete independence from Great Britain.

# Scottish Highlanders



Governor Josiah Martin counted on the Scottish Highlanders to fulfill his strategic plan of putting down rebellion and strife in the colony. Many Scots Highlanders sought North Carolina as a haven, joining the number of other Highlanders who had already emigrated before them. When the union between Scotland and England was broken after the Battle of Culloden on April 16, 1746, many Highlanders took up an oath to England and emigrated in peace. Many of the Scots Highlanders settled in the Upper Cape Fear Valley in Campbelltown and Cross Creek (present-day Fayetteville). Many became merchants and farmers, and many others worked in the production of naval stores, North Carolina's chief export to England.

The Highlanders would prove to be a dedicated force to Governor Martin's plan, as they would make up nearly half of the Loyalist militia. But with only a Broadsword, Dirk, and maybe a pistol as their weapons, the Scots fell quickly at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, and many were caught in their retreat. After taking another oath, this time promising to never rise up against the Patriot cause, the Scots Highlanders settled back down. Some fled North Carolina due to the persecutions and harassments brought upon them by Patriot and Loyalist colonists alike. Many went to Nova Scotia or New York, both British havens.

# Flora MacDonald



Flora MacDonald, heroine of the Revolutionary War for the British cause, was born in Milton, in South Uist off the west coast of Scotland, in 1722. At an early age she made acquaintances with Charles Edward Stuart, more commonly known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. An uprising occurred in England starting in 1745 by the Jacobite faction, and soon afterwards, the Scottish were defeated by the British at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Having been defeated, Flora smuggled the young prince to the Isle of Skye by disguising him as a woman. For this act she was imprisoned for eight months. In 1750, she married Allan MacDonald and they later moved to North Carolina, which became a haven for Scots Highlanders who fled Europe after the Battle of Culloden.

Close to thirty years of age when her family moved to the Cape Fear Region, she quickly sided with the King and Loyalists during the rebellion that was to become the American Revolution. Flora and Allan MacDonald soon became an integral part of the Loyalist recruiting process, helping to raise more than five hundred Highlanders to fight for Great Britain to preserve British rule in the colony. It was said that Flora rode up and down the lines, on a white horse, calling out words of encouragement as the Loyalists marched out of Cross Creek. Allan MacDonald fought in the Battle at Moores Creek Bridge, and was soon captured by Patriot forces and imprisoned at Halifax. After serving an eighteen month sentence, Allan MacDonald was released in a prisoner exchange program in New York, where Flora joined him. Flora and Allan MacDonald would soon travel to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then back to the Isle of Skye, but Flora's legacy is still a source of pride among Scots.

# Mary Slocumb



So the legend goes, on the eve of the Battle at Moores Creek Bridge, Mary (or Polly or Molly) Hooks Slocumb, of Dobbs County, had a vision in her dreams of a body wrapped in her husband Ezekiel's guard-cloak, bloody, with other bloody, dead and wounded bodies surrounding him. She quickly woke, leaped out of bed, and boarded her horse, leaving her young son in the care of a servant. She proceeded to ride sixty miles through the night from her home in Goldsboro "through a country thinly settled and poor and swampy" to Moores Creek Bridge. "But neither my own spirits nor my own beautiful nag's failed in the least." As daybreak approached, the sounds of gunshots in the distance forced her to gallop quicker.

It was eight or nine o'clock in the morning when she reached the battlefield, jumping from her horse to tend to the wounded, who were spread throughout the battlefield. "Under a cluster of trees were the wounded" she recalled as she had seen this sight a thousand times in her dreams. She found the body she had seen in her dreams wrapped in her husband's guard-cloak. As she tore the garments to reveal the face, to her relief it was not her husband, but that of another wounded soldier. Throughout the rest of the morning, she proceeded to tend to the wounded soldiers from both sides of the battle, both Patriot and Loyalist alike. After many hours of tending to the wounded, Mary heard a familiar voice, that of Ezekiel's, standing there, bloody and muddy. She leaped into his arms at the sight of his unharmed presence. She stayed throughout the day to finish helping with the wounded, and at nightfall, mounted her horse and began the sixty-mile journey home. Upon reaching her house, her son came running to her, jumping into her arms, giving an equally embracing hug. Her family was safe, but the war for independence continued on.