



Character Sketch: Important People from the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge

U.S. Department of the Interior

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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.

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