



In Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence – We Honor Congregation Members Who Were Patriots during the American Revolution

Eighty-three congregation members, plus one minister, are known to have been genuine 'rebellious scoundrels' during the American Revolution, to use the term that Englishman Nicholas Cresswell applied to members of our congregation in the autumn of 1774. I invite you to join in honoring our rebellious congregational ancestors – patriots in the cause for gaining independence from Britain – by reading their names: Robert Adam, John Allison, Robert Allison, David Arell, Samuel Arell, Robert Bailie, William Bartleman, David Black, John Turpin Brooks, William Brown, George William Carlyle, John Carlyle, Steven Cooke, Samuel Craig, James Craik, Thomas Crandall, James Cushing, John Dalton, Joseph Dean, John Dundas, John Dunlap, Abraham Faw, Andrew Fleming, Joseph Greenway (Greenaway), James Gillies, David Graham, Jonathan Hall, John Harper, William Harper, James Hendricks, George Johnston, Jr., William Johnston, John Hunter, William Hunter, James Irwin, Dennis McCarty Johnston, James Keith, James Kennedy, John Kincaid, William Ladd, Henry Lyles, William Lyles, Thomas Lewis, Charles Little, Robert M. McCrea, James McFadden, Colin McIver, Rev. John McKnight, Charles McKnight, William McKnight, Robert Mease, James Mitchell, William Mitchell, William Newton, Lewis Nicola, Henry Nicholson, William Patton, Thomas Porter, Ann McCarty Ramsay, Dennis Ramsay, William Ramsay, William Ramsay, Jr., Daniel Roberdeau, Henry Rose, William Rumney, Lawrence Sanford, John Short, Charles Simms, Thomas Simms, William Henry Smith, Charles Spooner, John Stewart, Jesse Taylor, Thomas Triplett, Unidentified Soldier at Unknown Memorial, Unidentified Soldier from Kentucky, Andrew Wales, William Ward, Josiah Watson, John Westcott, James Wilson, John Winterberry, John Yost, and Robert Young.

This is the largest number of revolutionary patriots known to be associated with a single congregation in Virginia. Forty-three of them are buried either in our churchyard burial ground or Presbyterian Cemetery and Columbarium in the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex. Others are either known to be buried elsewhere, or their burial sites remain unknown.

These persons were identified as patriots by applying the guidelines utilized by the National Society Sons of the American Revolution (S.A.R.) to designate individuals who actively participated in the American Revolution. These guidelines consider people to be patriots who engaged in any of a variety of efforts to further the cause of independence, e.g., signed the *Declaration of Independence*; signed a non-importation agreement; served in a wartime quasi-governmental organization; served in military or naval capacities; served as a member of the clergy and was sympathetic to the cause of independence; was involved in providing material aid such as furnishing supplies for the armed forces; and the like.

The revolutionary activities of a score of our congregational ancestors are presented here. Their experiences demonstrate a remarkable range of contributions and sacrifices. Their roles in the American Revolution assisted in changing the course of human events not only for inhabitants of British Colonial America but for humanity for all time.

First up is **John Allison** (1745-1803), who was born in Lancaster, Colony of Pennsylvania, and relocated to Alexandria by the early 1770s. He owned a retail establishment that sold mostly imported goods from Britain and other items ranging from surveying equipment to loaf sugar, writing supplies, and clothing. During the war, he served initially as Lieutenant Colonel in the First Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line; and then as Captain and commanding officer of the marines (shipboard soldiers) on the *American Congress*, flagship of the Potomac Navy, and as commanding officer of all marines in the Potomac Navy. He relocated to Washington, Georgia, following the war where he is buried.

David Arell (1740-1793) was the eldest son of Richard Arell (1719-1797) and Christiana Davis Arell (c.1720-c.1760). Richard Arell and his second wife Eleanor Arell (1719-1796) donated the land that became the congregation's churchyard in 1773. During the war, David Arell served as First Lieutenant of the Independent Company of Fairfax County (Independent Blues) and then as Captain of the Second Company, Third Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line. His residence at 219 South Lee Street survives. He is buried in the churchyard burial ground. Samuel Arell (1755-1795) was the second son of Richard Arell and Christiana Davis Arell. He served as Captain of Marines on a ship of the Potomac Navy. He is buried in the churchyard burial ground.



Dr. William Brown (1748-1792), son of the Rev. Richard Brown of Port Tobacco, Maryland, was born in Haddington, Scotland, while his father was pursuing theological studies there. He moved to Alexandria following the completion of his medical studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1770. During the war, he served initially as surgeon for the Second Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line and then in hospital administrative duties, which included – Surgeon General and Physician General of Hospital at Lititz and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for three years; published *Pharmacopoeia ... [a Formulary of Simple and Efficacious Remedies]* (1780), a guide to natural medicinal plants for surgeons and medical officers in the Continental Army; and delivered lectures on anatomy for army surgeons and medical officers at the request of General Washington. His residence at 212 South Fairfax Street survives. He was buried at Preston Plantation near Four Mile Run and then reinterred at Pohick Episcopal Church in 1933.



John Carlyle (1720-1780), whose ancestral family was from Dumfriesshire, Scotland, spent his formative years in Carlisle, England. He became a successful merchant and founding trustee of Alexandria. During the early revolutionary period he signed the *Virginia Non-Importation Agreement* in 1770; signed the list of grievances, *Fairfax Resolves*, which proved to be an important early influence in promoting the cause of independence in 1774, and served on the Alexandria Town Committee (local quasi-governmental decision-making unit) beginning in 1774, when it declared that it would – “enter into some spirited associations, for procuring, as far as lies in their power, some relief for their distressed brethren in New England [i.e. would support the besieged citizens of Boston, which Alexandrians subsequently generously did.]” – six other congregation members also signed the resolution. During the war, he served as a civilian

commissary agent of the Continental Congress, he provided beef, pork, and other provisions to soldiers. His residence at 121 North Fairfax Street is open to the public as a house museum. He is buried in the congregation's churchyard burial ground.

George William Carlyle (1764-1781) was the sole son to survive his parents, John (1720-1780) and Sybil West Carlyle (1730-1769). At fifteen years of age, within months of his father's death, he entered military service as a cadet (a gentleman volunteer/officer-in-waiting position) in the Third Light Dragoons, a mounted regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, a cousin of George Washington. Initially, he served as a dispatch rider between Williamsburg and commanders in the field. In only his second year of service, he was killed in a cavalry charge into British lines at the bloody Battle of Eutaw Springs, South Carolina, on 8 September 1781, where he is buried. Lieutenant Colonel Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, who commanded Lee's Legion (Second Partisan Corp) in this battle, referred to George William as "the gallant young Carlyle from Alexandria" in his memoirs.

Dr. Stephen Cooke (1751-1816) was born in Philadelphia, graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), and studied medicine in Philadelphia. He served as a naval medical officer during the war; was captured by the British during the Siege of Charleston, South Carolina; and was imprisoned in Bermuda, in 1780. After the war, he relocated to Alexandria to practice medicine. His office and residence at 217 South Fairfax Street survive.



Dr. James Craik (1730-1814) was the son of William Craik (1703-1798), a member of the British Parliament, at the Arbigland estate, near Dumfries, Scotland. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and served as a British Army surgeon in the West Indies. During the Revolutionary War, he served as Assistant Director, flying camp hospital, New York, 1776; Assistant Director of Hospitals (Surgeon General), Middle District of the Continental Army; Chief Hospital Physician and Surgeon; and Chief Physician and Surgeon of the Continental Army (Surgeon General). A steadfast friend of George Washington since the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War), he served as a confidant of George Washington's throughout the war. He also attended to both George and Martha Washington at their deaths. His townhouse at 210 Duke Street survives. He is buried in the congregation's churchyard burial ground.

John Harper (1728-1804) was born in Philadelphia, Colony of Pennsylvania, and relocated to Alexandria about 1770, where he became a successful merchant and active in the town's civic life. He was a member of the Alexandria Town Committee beginning in 1774. He holds the honor of being the first Alexandrian to procure goods directly related to establishing preparedness in northern Virginia during the uncertain times – in early 1775, he purchased gunpowder, drums, and flags from merchants in Philadelphia for the militia units being formed here. His residence at 209 Prince Street and warehouse on the northwest corner of Union and Prince streets survive. He is buried in the churchyard burial ground.

William Harper (1761-1829), the son of John Harper and Sarah Wells Harper (c.1732-1780) was born in Philadelphia, Colony of Pennsylvania, and relocated to Alexandria with his family.

He became a successful merchant, operating a ship chandlery, rope-making operation, and lumberyard, and was actively engaged in civic life. Fifteen years of age when independence was declared, William volunteered to serve in the local militia, which was incorporated into the Third Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line. This unit, which was recruited locally, saw action in – the New York and New Jersey Campaign of 1776-77, which included engagement in the Battle of Harlem Heights, Battle of Long Island (Battle of Brooklyn Heights), crossed the Delaware River at Christmas to engage in the Battle of Trenton, the Battle of Princeton, and wintering near Morristown, New Jersey. The next year the unit participated in the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777-78, which included the Battle of Brandywine, the Battle of Germantown and wintering at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. During 1780, the unit participated in the disastrous Siege of Charleston, South Carolina, where British forces captured five thousand Americans, including numerous Alexandrians.

James Hendricks (1722-1795) was born in York County, Colony of Pennsylvania, and became a successful farmer at York Hill in Jefferson County, Virginia (now Berkeley County, West Virginia) prior to establishing a business in Alexandria during the 1760s. During the early revolutionary period he served on the Alexandria Town Committee beginning in 1774 and became the initial postmaster of Alexandria's Constitutional (i.e., rebellious) Post Office in 1775. During the war, he served as Captain and commanding officer of the Independent Company of Fairfax County in 1775; then as Lieutenant Colonel, second in command, of the Sixth Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line, which crossed the Delaware River to attack the British at Trenton, New Jersey, in December 1776; and then as Colonel and commanding officer of the First Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line. As a civilian commissary agent of the Continental Congress, he supplied 600 gallons of spirits and 1,000 barrels of flour to soldiers in the Yorktown Campaign at the explicit request of George Washington. In 1789, he was forced into bankruptcy, and returned to his farm in Jefferson County, Virginia, where he is interred in the family burial ground.

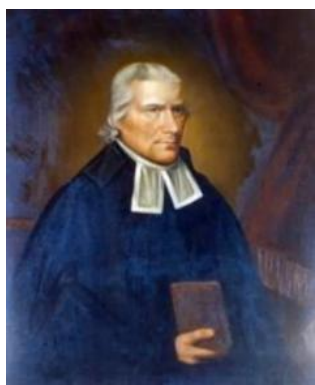


George Johnston, Jr. (1750-1777), was the eldest son of George (1702-1766) and Sarah McCarty Johnston (1724-1785). George Senior's family had emigrated from Annandale, Scotland, and he had served in the colony's House of Burgesses. George, Jr. served as Captain, First Company of the Second Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line, with which he fought at the Battle of Great Bridge at Hampton Roads, Virginia, when Royal Governor Dunmore abdicated his position in December 1775; as Major in the Fifth Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line, with which he participated in the New York and New Jersey Campaign of 1776-77, including crossing the Delaware River to attack the British at Trenton, New Jersey, at Christmas 1776; and as aide-de-camp to General George Washington, Commander in Chief, Continental Army, beginning in January 1777. He died of camp fever at Morristown, New Jersey, on 29 May 1777. William Johnston (1752-1815), another son of George and Sarah Johnston, served as Captain in a Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line. Dennis McCarty Johnston (1765-1811), a third son of George and Sarah McCarty Johnston and eleven years of age when independence was declared served in the local militia. He is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery.



This is the one ‘George Slept Here’ story associated with our congregation during the Revolutionary War. **Isaac Stockton Keith** (1755-1813), who served as the congregation’s second minister (1780-89), was not included in the list of named patriots but might have been through his family’s wartime service. In 1776, Isaac was twenty-one years of age and a recent honor graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University). His family lived on a 250-acre farm in

Bucks County, Colony of Pennsylvania, where he had spent his childhood. During December 1776, the Continental Army visited the Keith family farm and General George Washington established his headquarters in their home (pictured). The army was there to engage Hessian auxiliary troops stationed at Trenton, New Jersey, just across the Delaware River. Washington lived with the Keith family from 14 to 24 December and led the Americans to victory the day after Christmas. We are left to imagine the memories of an overcrowded house that George carried with him, and Isaac too, who certainly heard accounts from his mother. They no doubt shared their memories years later, when Isaac visited George at Mount Vernon or when George attended services led by Isaac at the Meeting House. One hopes that their recollections of that wartime moment in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, brought moments of delight to them both, especially George.



Rev. John McKnight, D.D. (1754-1823) was born near Carlisle, Colony of Pennsylvania, and graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), which was then headed by the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D. He was licensed to preach in 1775 by Presbytery of Donegal (Pennsylvania) and spent most of the next five years based in Alexandria, from which he served other area congregations, until the Rev. Isaac Stockton Keith arrived to serve as the congregation’s installed minister in 1780. He embodied ‘rebellious scoundrel’ in the pulpit (he would later support the French Revolution as well).

Unfortunately, none of the sermons he delivered here survive. He would remain connected with our congregation through a career that took him to First Presbyterian Church, New York City, and president of Dickinson College. He is buried in the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.



Lewis Nicola (1717-1807) was born in Dublin, Ireland, and served in the British Army for twenty-seven years. He was fifty-eight years of age when hostilities commenced and residing in Philadelphia. He initially assisted Pennsylvania’s Council of Safety in preparing for war (a portion of the map of Philadelphia’s defenses that he prepared is shown) and prepared several military instruction manuals for the Continental Army. He was then appointed Philadelphia’s town major in 1776 and the following year was appointed by the Continental Congress to create and command the Corps of Invalids/Invalid

Regiment. He was a founding member of the American Philosophical Society and a member of the Society of the Cincinnati. During the 1790s, he relocated to Alexandria, where he resided for the remainder of his life with his daughter, Charlotte Nicola Maus (1761-1830s), the widow of Dr. Matthias Maus (1730s-1787), who had served as a surgeon in several Pennsylvania units of the Continental Line during the war. Colonel Nichola is buried in the congregation's churchyard burial ground.

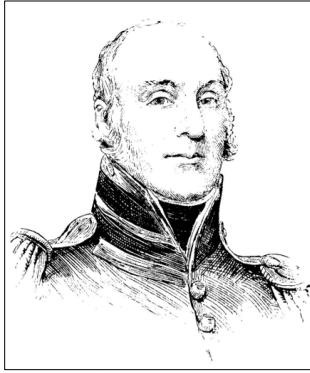
Thomas Porter (1756-1800) was a seventeen-year-old living in Boston when he participated in the Boston Tea Party. He relocated to Alexandria after the war, where he became a merchant and member of the common council. His residence, a flounder-style house, at 412 South Fairfax Street survives. Porter is interred in the churchyard burial ground. He is one of two persons buried in Alexandria to have participated in Boston's Tea Party. The other is Samuel Cooper (1757-1840), who participated as a sixteen-year-old and is buried in Christ Church Cemetery in the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex.

William Ramsay (1716-1785) emigrated from New Galloway, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland to northern Virginia during the early 1740s. He became a successful merchant and founding trustee of Alexandria. During the early revolutionary period he signed the *Virginia Non-Importation Agreement* in 1770; signed the list of grievances, *Fairfax Resolves*, which proved to be an important early influence in the cause of independence in 1774; served on the Alexandria Town Committee beginning in 1774; and as the local postmaster, he received the message that open hostilities had broken out at Lexington and Concord on 28 April 1775. The message had been carried here from Massachusetts by a series of express riders from Massachusetts – he arranged for it to be forwarded south within two hours. For the war effort, he served as Captain and commanding officer of the Independent Company of Fairfax County (Independent Blues) at its establishment – it was the first militia company independent of the Crown to be formed in the colony of Virginia, in September 1774.

Ann McCarty Ramsay (1730-1785), wife of William Ramsay, saw her opportunity to serve the revolutionary cause in 1780 and assisted mightily. Following Washington's army encampment at Morristown during the horrible winter of 1779-80, Martha Washington initiated a fund-raising campaign that was dedicated, per her husband's request, to supplying soldiers with clothing. The campaign called for the assistance of women in every county, with an overall coordinator in each state. In Virginia, Martha Skelton Jefferson, wife of Governor Thomas Jefferson, led the way and Ann McCarty Ramsay organized efforts in northern Virginia. Local clergy provided "sermons suited to the occasion" at public services to support the cause. The women of northern Virginia raised \$75,518 (more than one-million dollars today), which included a \$20,000 donation from Martha Washington. Governor Jefferson singled out Ramsay for her assistance and George Washington referred to the women who raised the funds as "female patriots." Their home at the intersection of King and Fairfax streets now serves as the city's visitor center. Ann and William Ramsay are both interred in the churchyard burial ground of Christ Church.

Dr. William Ramsay, Jr. (1744-1795) was the eldest son of William Ramsay and Ann McCarty Ramsay. During the war, he served as surgeon on the ship, *George Washington*, a local privateer beginning in 1779. The ship made multiple crossings of the Atlantic Ocean and captured at least one British ship.

Dennis Ramsay (1756-1810) was another son of William Ramsay and Ann McCarty Ramsay. He served as Captain of the Independent Company of Fairfax (Independent Blues) of the Virginia Line. His residence at 221 South Lee Street survives. He is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery on Hamilton Lane.



Daniel Roberdeau (1727-1795) spent his formative years on his family's plantation in Saint Christopher (Saint Kitts), West Indies. His father was a French Huguenot and his mother was from Scotland. After training to become a merchant in England, he sold his inherited interest in the family's holdings in Saint Christopher, including slaves, and relocated to Philadelphia, where he successfully engaged in trade with the West Indies, served many years as manager of the Pennsylvania Hospital, and as an elder of that city's Second Presbyterian Church. By the 1770s, he had businesses and residences in both Philadelphia and Alexandria. He spent most of the revolutionary war in Philadelphia, where he served on the local

Committee of Safety; served as a general in the Pennsylvania Associators (militia unit formed of volunteers); had Thomas Paine (1737-1809), author of *Common Sense*, serve as his military secretary; served in the Second Continental Congress from 1777 to 1779, where he signed the *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union*, which provided the de facto national government, and served on a committee with John Adams to inquire into the feasibility of publishing the *Aitken Bible*; helped outfit privateers; privately established a lead mine in Pennsylvania; and provided spirits for the Continental Army from his Alexandria distillery. The Roberdeau family residence at 418 South Lee Street still stands. General Roberdeau was buried in the churchyard burial ground of First Presbyterian Church in Winchester, Virginia, and later relocated to the Mount Hebron Cemetery with others from the churchyard.

Dr. William Rumney (unknown-1783) was born in Northumberland, England, and relocated to Alexandria following service with the British Army in the Seven Years' War. During the early revolutionary period, he signed the list of grievances, *Fairfax Resolves*, which proved to be an important early influence in the cause of independence in 1774, and served on the Alexandria Town Committee beginning in 1774. During the war, he served as Colonel, commanding officer, of the Fairfax militia, which was involved in the British campaign to capture Philadelphia during September 1777 and served in the home guard during for the remainder of the war. He also was appointed as Senior Surgeon in the Virginia Militia and served as director of the Continental Hospital in Alexandria, which had responsibility for inoculating troops passing from southern colonies to join the Continental Army operating in the north. His burial site remains unknown.



Unidentified Soldier in the Churchyard Burial Ground at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution. The plaque in the churchyard burial ground placed by the George Washington Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and the St. Andrew's Society of Washington, D.C., in 2006, appropriately indicates that the remains of this unidentified person is "known but to God." His remains, which lie beneath the marble table monument which was dedicated on 29 April 1929. The soldier had originally been interred in the portion of the burial ground that extended about fifty feet north of the wall that currently separates our congregation's churchyard and the Basilica of St. Mary. The body was discovered during construction of the basilica in June 1826. It was relocated to its current site at that time and remained in an unmarked grave until 1929

when the memorial was erected by the National Society Children of the American Revolution. Washington's WRC radio station broadcast the 90-minute dedication program to a national audience.

Unidentified Soldier in the Presbyterian Cemetery on Hamilton Lane in an unmarked grave. We know of this Unknown only from the entry made by the Rev. Elias Harrison in his personal register of services. One burial service entry includes the note – "an old Revolutionary soldier from Kentucky." The soldier was interred on 19 January 1821. The location of his gravesite is not known.

I hope that these brief accounts of the engagement in revolutionary activities by our congregational ancestors spur you to reflect on the challenges they experienced as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The active engagement of many people contributing in innumerable ways was required to achieve independence from Britain. The constitutional democracy that was formed by the winners of that revolution – with the U.S. Constitution being signed on 17 September 1787 and implemented when Congress met for the first time on March 1789 – established a system of competitive pluralism that requires the active engagement of the many to begin to enable it to function for all. Active participation in that system today is as much a patriotic duty as it was when residents of Britain's North American colonies sought independence from the mother country.

~ Donald C. Dahmann, History and Archives Committee, July 2026



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