LACHLAN MCINTOSH – General, Patriot

By: John Whiteside

About 100 or so intense Scottish immigrants braved the dangerous Atlantic Ocean voyage to begin a new life in the Colony of Georgia in 1736. Aboard the ship were John Mcintosh, some of his family, and his eleven-year-old son, Lachlan. Arriving in what is now known as Darien, Georgia, the Scottish clans carved a community out of the terrifying wilderness. The colony was governed by a strict British official and founder of the colony, James Oglethorpe. Frequent skirmishes and battles with Spanish insurgents from Florida occurred in the Darien area, and John Mcintosh was captured during one attack. Learning of his father's capture, and enduring the hard life of an outdoorsman, would help forge young Lachlan's future role as a soldier.

After completing his education and serving as a military cadet, in 1748 Lachlan Mcintosh relocated to Charleston, South Carolina, where he served as a clerk for Henry Laurens, a wealthy plantation owner and future President of the Continental Congress. After a few years under Laurens tutelage, and soon getting married, he and his wife returned to Georgia. He bought his own land, planted and farmed rice, and learned to be a surveyor. As the result of hearing John Laurens frequent complaints about British excesses in the colonies, Mcintosh began understanding the need to support the growing rebellion. He joined the Georgia militia and was appointed Captain. As time passed, he was promoted to Colonel of the regiment and soon saw action against British regulars and loyalists coming from Spanish Florida to capture supplies, food and forage to support their troops and deny access to the colonists.

Mcintosh and his brother would find themselves at odds with other Georgian politicians during the early days of the revolution. Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, was one of Mcintosh's antagonists. Words were exchanged and a duel was called for between the two patriots. While

both were shot during the duel, the wound to Gwinnett's leg proved fatal. Gwinnett's compatriots wanted Mcintosh charged with murder, and while he was not found guilty, life was being made difficult for him in Georgia. To assist Mcintosh, and save him from further persecution in Georgia, George Washington had him transferred to the Continental Army up north.

Mcintosh would arrive in Pennsylvania about the time the troops encamped for the winter at Valley Forge. During the five months Mcintosh spent there, he would be put in charge of the nine North Carolina regiments whose leadership had been killed and wounded at Germantown. He was directed to better clothe and rebuild the North Carolina regiments as well as to increase their size. Washington also had Mcintosh reorganize the Life Guard, visit all the local hospitals to ensure they were being run efficiently, and assist with obtaining food and forage for the encampment, keeping it from British troops. In May, 1778 when a need developed for leadership at Fort Pitt, Washington sent Mcintosh to serve there.

Nine months later, Mcintosh was again transferred to the southern theater of war to command with Benjamin Lincoln in an effort to take possession of Savannah and Charleston. While their efforts were noteworthy, overwhelming British forces were able to beat the American forces at Savannah, who scattered north to Charleston. More fighting would continue there until British forces eventually compelled Lincoln to surrender. Mcintosh would be taken prisoner and held for almost two years, until the British army left Charleston in 1782 as the result of the pending treaty negotiations.

Following the war, Mcintosh, now a Major General, would retire in Georgia. He would return to Savannah and would spend his retirement working in various civic duties for the State of Georgia. Mcintosh would die in Savannah on February 20, 1806. He is buried in the Colonial Park Cemetery in the historic district of Savannah, Georgia. Even though there were no Georgia troops at the Valley Forge encampment, there are four different monuments there today that hold his name.

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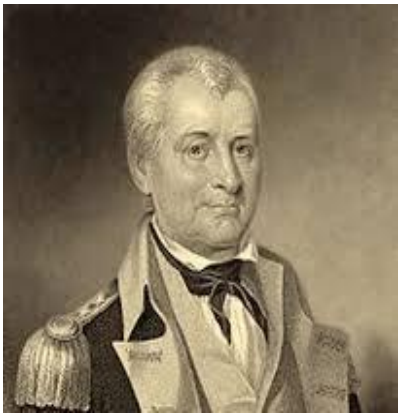

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Engraved by Hoppner Meyer from a painting by J. B. Longacre after an original portrait.

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