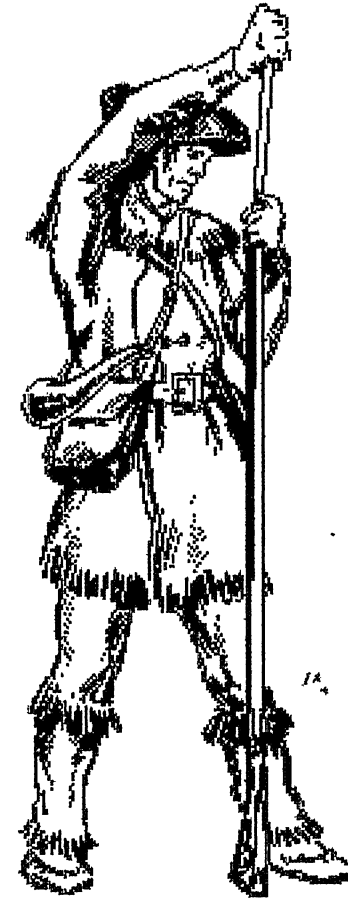


Colby Rucker

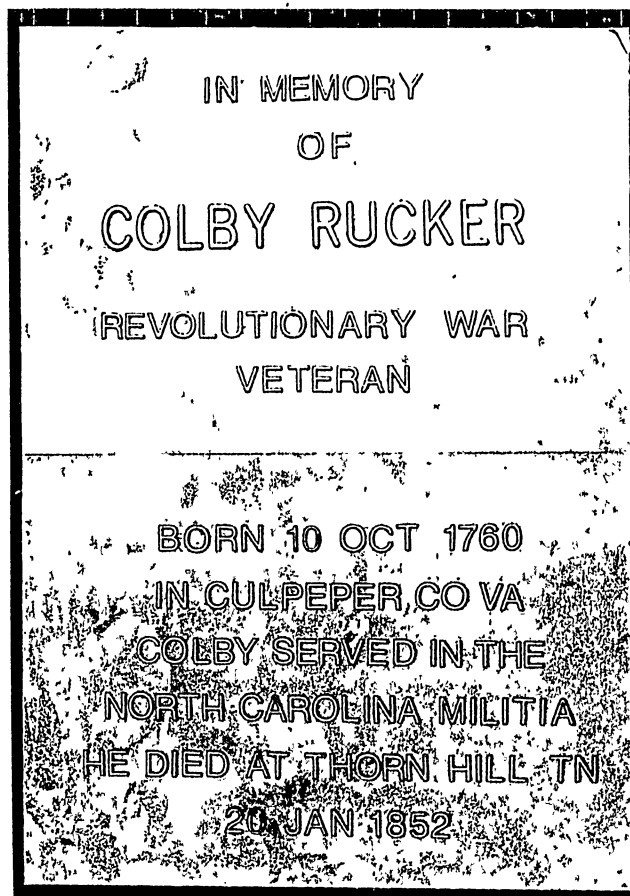


*Revolutionary War
Soldier*



Ron Payne
Rte 3 Box 20
Falkville, AL 35622-9403

COLBY RUCKER



Marker located in Rucker Cemetery
on Coffey Chapel Road, Thorn Hill, TN

COLBY RUCKER

A Brief Sketch of Colby Rucker's Life

Peter Rucker immigrated to America from Europe about 1700; his place of birth is not known. He married Elizabeth ____, probably soon after his arrival. They had ten children over the next 2+ decades, all in Virginia. Peter was naturalized on 24 April 1704 by the Virginia House of Burgesses.

Peter settled initially in Essex County, VA, where he was listed on the county Quit Rent roll with 500 acres in 1704.

Peter and Elizabeth's third child Thomas, was born about 1705.

Thomas became a founding father of Caroline County when it was carved out of Essex, King and Queen, and King William Counties in 1728.

Thomas married Elizabeth Reynolds between 1731 and 1733. Peter was the third of thirteen children born to this union, his birth occurring about 1735 in Caroline County, VA.

Peter married Sarah Wisdom, daughter of John Wisdom and Ann Collins, about 1759. Their first of six children was a son, whom they named **Colby**. He was born 10 October 1760 in Culpeper (now Madison) County, VA.

Soon after **Colby's** fourteenth birthday, his father sold their property in Culpeper County and moved to the southwest frontier of British West Florida, near the town of Natchez (now Mississippi), arriving there in May 1775.

Peter died two months after their arrival in the new territory. Sarah subsequently applied for a land grant. Approval was given for 400 acres "in Claiborne County on the south side of Bayou Pierre above the mouth of a small cr. called the Widow's Cr., 10 mi. up Bayou Pierre from where it empties into the Miss. River."

Colby's mother Sarah had apparently remarried prior to the recording of that land grant. Her second marriage was probably to Matthias Friley. The marriage most likely took place late in 1777 or early 1778.

COLBY RUCKER

Colby Rucker's activities in the Natchez area are not clearly known. In a Revolutionary War pension application filed after his death on behalf of his heirs, the claim was made that he had "enlisted about 1778 or 1779, and served for eighteen months under Captain Alston and Colonel Blunt and was engaged as a ranger up and down the Mississippi, and was in frequent skirmishes with the British and Indians." The only formal declaration **Colby** is known to have made was in support of a pension claim by the widow of his friend Henry Pumphrey. In the affidavit he filed in that case, **Colby** testified that he knew that Pumphrey served as a ranger in and near Natchez as he had stated, and gave an account of their 3 months' service in North Carolina; he made no mention of his own service in the Natchez area.

Sometime in 1781, **Colby** and his friend Henry Pumphrey, six years his senior, left Natchez for Henry's home near Baltimore, MD. During that journey, it was claimed by **Colby's** heirs that "they were captured by the British, carried to Savannah, Georgia, and held in captivity for from four to six months, when **Colby** and Henry made their escape by disguising themselves in women's clothing, and went to Wilkes County, North Carolina; that they volunteered in said Wilkes County, and served two tours of three months each (notice that **Colby** only cited one tour in his declaration) under Captain John Keys and Colonels Benjamin Harrauld and McDowell." Henry Pumphrey had claimed in his earlier pension application that they were captured on the Oconee(e) River in the state of Georgia by Captain Ingram, a Tory. (Henry's application was approved and he received \$80.00 per annum until his death.)

Data exists which disputes the claim that **Colby** and Henry were imprisoned at Savannah, where, in fact, they were privates in Captain Isaac Atwood's Company in the King's American Regiment of the British Army. They were noted as having enlisted 31 Oct 1781. A record for that Company covering the period 25 April 1782 to 24 June 1782 contains the names, **Colly Rucker** and Henry Pumphrey, with a notation beside "**Colly's**" name, "dead, 19 Mar 1782."

Discussion of these events with Dr. Robert S. Scott, Jr., a noted Georgia historian, suggested a probable explanation of **Colby** and Henry's experience. It is likely that they were captured by the Tory Captain as claimed, and that they were impressed into the military service as an

COLBY RUCKER

alternative to imprisonment. The notation of **Colby's** death in Mar 1782 indicates some subterfuge had been initiated to accomplish his "escape." Apparently his friend Henry Pumphrey followed some time later.

Colby and Henry served in the North Carolina Militia, probably in Wilkes County. North Carolina Revolutionary Army Accounts record at least one payment of 13 pounds, 1 shilling and 2 pence for **Colby's** service. A hand calculation found in **Colby's** Pension file indicates that this pay represents service time of "not quite 5 months."

The Treaty of Paris was signed on 3 Sep 1783, formally ending the American Revolution.

Colby remained in Wilkes County following the war. He was found in the county list of Taxables for 1784 and again in 1786, having no property and one tithable in each case. He was married about 1785 or 1786 to Sarah Roberts, or Robins.

The Wilkes County 1787 census listed **Colby** as head of household with himself and two females. The latter would be his wife Sarah and daughter Elizabeth, born in January of that year.

Colby was again on the county list of Taxables in 1788 and 1790, without property and with one tithable. (Females were not taxed.)

In the 1790 Federal census, the Rucker household had increased by three females. The basis of this information is not known. Daughter Margaret and son William had been born since the 1787 county census.

Colby did acquire land in 1790. He purchased 140 acres on Kings Creek for 75 pounds on 9 November. (King's Creek flows south from the Yadkin River near the southernmost boundary of Wilkes County at that time. It was some five miles east of Fort Defiance.)

On 30 Oct 1792, Thomas Robins sold 396 acres to Walter Brown "including house and plantation whereon **Coleby Ruker** now lives." But then, by 1796, the county Taxable list showed **Colby** to have 150 acres, and the next year, he bought an additional 150 acres, called "Rich Lands," on 1 September. (A 1795 map of Wilkes County includes a "Richlands of the Yadkin," which is actually 5-10 miles north of the Yadkin on the Wilkes-

COLBY RUCKER

Burke County line, on the side of the Blue Ridge Mountains.)

The county Taxables list for 1799 indicated **Colby** had 250 acres at that time in Captain Hulme's District.

Sarah Rucker joined the Church of Christ on the head of the Yadkin River in December 1799. **Colby** became a member of the same church in January 1800.

The Rucker family had grown during the decade of the nineties with Sarah being born in 1794, Nancy in Aug 1795, and Delphia in 1796.

Colby bought another 140 acres, on Reeses Creek on 18 Feb. 1802.

The eldest daughter, Elizabeth, married John Coffey on 1 Mar 1804 in Wilkes County.

The next marriage was between Sarah (Sally) and Thomas Hayes, Jr. on 19 Sep 1807 in Wilkes County, with the aforementioned John Coffey acting as bondsman for Thomas.

Colby sold 150 acres, Rich Lands, on 25 Oct 1809. He and his family were next found in the Grainger County, Tennessee, 1810 census. The relocation of the family would have taken place during the winter/spring of 1809/1810.

The settlement of what is now Grainger County, Tennessee, was begun about 1785 along the valley south of Clinch Mountain, and at the head of Flat Creek. The act creating Grainger County was passed on 22 April 1796. The county now occupies a position between the Clinch and Holston Rivers, and embraces an area of a little more than 300 square miles. The surface is made up of a series of parallel ridges and narrow valleys. Clinch Mountain, near the middle of the county, presents the highest elevation. The soil is generally very fertile, especially in the valleys.

The Grainger County Polls and Taxable Property list for 1810 showed **Colby** with 70 acres and one free poll, indicating that William was not yet 21, or he would have been an additional poll. **Colby** was listed in the Bounds of Captain George Gifford's Company.

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Colby Rucker claimed a stray heifer, which was "picked up by the Grainger County Rainger" [sic], to be his. This was noted in court records on 17 Nov 1812.

Colby was again on the county tax list for 1815 in the same area, i.e. Captain Robert McGinnis' Company. **Colby** now had 80 acres of land.

Colby Rucker was noted in many court documents during his Grainger County residency. On 21 Nov 1815 he was selected as a juror for the "next session of circuit court."

On 21 Aug 1816 "**Cobby**" **Rucker** was "appointed overseer of the road in the room and stead of Jeremiah Young and (had) the same bounds for hands that said Young had."

On 24 Aug 1816 **Colby Rucker** purchased 70 acres of land from Jacob Woolf, the sale being proven "in open court."

By 1821, **Colby** and William Rucker were on the Grainger County Tax List.

On 13 April 1823, **Colby** and son William purchased 100 acres for \$400 on the north side of Clinch Mountain on the waters of Indian Creek, "including the place whereon the said William now lives."

Colby Rucker bought 400 acres on the "north side of Clinch Mountain and on the waters of Indian Creek" for \$50 on 18 June 1832.

On 30 November 1832, William Rucker bought two tracts of land totalling 100 acres from Moses Payne for \$500, one tract being on the waters of Indian Creek and the other being on the Copper Ridge.

On 16 January 1833, **Colby Rucker** agreed "to let my son Wm. Rucker have my interest in the tract whereon the said Wm. now lives which him and myself bought of Hugh Cain on the 19th day of April 1823 . . . containing one hundred acres . . . the one half of the said tract of said land which I here bequeath to him the said Wm. Rucker for the use of himself and his heirs forever from and after my death but not until that period." On that same date **Colby** "bequeathed to my son John Rucker" 30 acres "including the building wherein the said John Rucker lives . . . from

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and after the period of my death." Obviously, **Colby**, being 72 years old was producing an active "will," although he lived another 19 years.

Postal service was introduced to the area in 1836 when the Thorn Hill Post Office was formed. (The Post Office was known as Idol, TN, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.)

Colby Rucker sold 10 acres to son John for \$40 on January 1, 1839. Two years later, 27 March 1841, he sold 2/3 acre to his daughter "Delphey, widow of Meredith Dolton," for \$40.

Colby lived out the rest of his days in the Thorn Hill area of Grainger County. At the time of the 1850 federal census **Colby** was present in the home of his son William. He died on the 20th of January 1852.

"First Monday in April 1852:" **Colby Dalton** was named administrator of all "goods, chattles, rights, and credits" of **Colby Rucker** who died intestate. Later, on the 27th of December of that year, William Hayes filed an application for a Revolutionary War pension as the "administrator of the estate of **Colby Rucker**." Although success was never achieved in this effort, it's interesting to note that many liberties were taken in reporting "facts" in support of the application.

No court records were located to indicate a change in Administrators from **Colby Dalton** to William Hayes. Kathryn Hayes-Johnson, a descendant and active family researcher, discussed some of the other errors in a letter to the author, dated 5 April 1993.

Kathryn mentioned the facts that Sarah Rucker Hayes and Delphia Rucker Dalton were depicted as being living claimants, when actually Sarah had died about 1845 and Delphia died in August 1849. Of course, the claim that **Colby** was captured and imprisoned was, at best, questionable. Ultimately the effort failed and "The claim was not allowed as proof of service of six months as required by the pension law was not furnished."

Colby is thought to be buried near Thorn Hill, although a marked grave has not been located. A descendant of his, Paul Rucker, told me that when he was young he heard that **Colby** was buried just west of the Rucker Cemetery located on Coffey Chapel Road. He said that there had

COLBY RUCKER

been a small cemetery there which was plowed under by a farmer in the 1930s.

Although **Colby Rucker** never heard the following pronouncement, made by Thomas Jefferson upon the declaration of independence by the British North American colonies, he served in the forces who were determined that such freedom should be realized:

"We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independant, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness."

This brass marker is being placed here in the area where **Colby Rucker** spent the last 40 years of his life, to recognize his participation in that struggle for freedom. That legacy which was given us, often at the ultimate cost, by **Colby** and his comrades-in-arms, has been preserved and perpetuated by the many descendants who were born and raised in these hills and valleys about Thorn Hill, Tennessee, and *their* descendants who are spread across this great and free nation.

CREDITS

- The Rucker Family Society initiated a project late in 1992 to install a memorial, honoring Colby Rucker for his Revolutionary War service. Ron Payne began an investigation into possible media and potential locations. Lillian Coffey Harrell of Thorn Hill joined the project in mid-1994 providing an impetus for the completion of the effort.
- The brass casting commemorating Colby's military service was donated by his great-great-great-great grandson, Hal Payne of Springerville, Arizona.
- Sharon Hayes Winkler and Kevin Hayes graciously permitted the placement of the memorial marker in the private cemetery where Colby's youngest son John is buried.

Rev. & 1812 Wars
Section.
R. 9061.

November 6, 1925.

Honorable Joseph W. Byrns,
House of Representatives.

My dear Mr. Byrns:

In response to your letter of the second instant, I have the honor to advise you, that from the records of this Bureau it appears that Colby, or Colley Rucker was born October 10, 1760, place not stated. During the Revolution he lived with his parents, whose names are not on record, on the Mississippi River, near Hatchez. He married soon after the Revolution, in Wilkes County, North Carolina, date not given, Sarah Roberts. He died in Grainger County, Tennessee, January 20, 1853. His wife died about eight years before he died. In 1852, their surviving children

were:

- Mrs. Elizabeth Coffee, aged sixty-seven years.
- Mrs. Margaret Coffee, aged sixty-five years.
- William Rucker, aged sixty-three years.
- Mrs. Sarah Hayes, aged sixty-one years.
- Mrs. Nancy, Pain, or Payne, aged fifty-eight years.
- Mrs. Delphia Dolton, aged fifty-six years.
- John Rucker, aged fifty-four years.
- Mrs. Jane Hayes, aged fifty-one years.

On December 27, 1852, William Hays, or Hayes, soldier's administrator, a resident of Rockcastle County, Kentucky, applied for pension in behalf of the surviving children.

He was also soldier's son-in-law, but it is not stated which daughter was his wife.

It is stated that Colby, or Colley Rucker enlisted in 1778, or 1779 and served under Captain Allen and Colonel Blunt, ranging up and down the Mississippi River near Natchez, for eighteen months. After this, while going to North Carolina, he was captured by the British and confined in Savannah between four and six months, before he escaped.

He then went to Wilkes County, North Carolina, where he enlisted and served for three months under Captain John Keyes and Colonel Benjamin Harrald and Colonel Charles McDowell against the ~~Cherokee~~. Dates of service not given.

The claim was not allowed as soldier did not render six months service in an embodied military corps as required by the pension laws.

Very truly yours,

WINSTON HOTE,
Commissioner.

Office note

Some of the data in

this letter was taken

from Colby Rucker's affidavit

in the claim of Henry Rumphrey, NC: 78534

in that off. C. R. Turner

stated: my son-in-law except the

son-in-law N. C. Wilkes Co.

He tells about the capture

but said nothing about the ranging. He evidently knew that it was not accepted as military & that son-in-law did not give him title as he never applied