

A REVOLUTIONARY WAR INCIDENT, MARY TRAMMELL AND THE TORY

I want to tell you about about the bravery and courage of my great-great-great-great grandmother, **Mary Trammell**, the wife of Revolutionary War soldier **Thomas Trammell** who we are honoring here today. I will quote from a Letter to the Editor written by Methodist minister W. D. Mathews which appeared in the **March 16, 1859** issue of the *Talladega Daily Alabama* news paper.

"Mr. Editor: My appointment of last Saturday and Sabbath was at the Emory Chapel in the Lafayette circuit, Alabama Conference. Arriving at the place some time before the hour of preaching, I took a walk through the little grave yard, and on stopping to read the inscription upon a humble tomb stone, I recognized in the name, age, etc., just there slept the remains of our friend and 'mother in Israel' Mary Trammell, whose funeral I had preached some eight years earlier. While pausing in thought, several incidents, some of thrilling interest which I had heard as connected with herself and husband came to my memory, and thinking that they may be of interest to yourself and many of the readers of your excellent paper, I have concluded to furnish some of them for your columns."

"Mrs. Trammell died, I think, in her 94th year. She was therefore old enough to have been familiar with many of the bloody events which occurred near the close of the Revolutionary War, in the immediate neighborhood of her home, which was near King's Mountain, S. C. . Her husband, Thomas Trammell, had unhesitatingly identified his fortunes with those of the '**Liberty Party**' as they were familiarly called, and being a good shot and of unflinching courage, he was a terror to all the friends of the King, as far as his name was known."

"At the time of which we write, that section of the country was overrun by a band of Tories, encamped in large numbers at Kings Mountain, South Carolina under General Ferguson. There was in his command a noted Tory by the name of **John Towns**, who had long been the neighbor and professed friend of Trammell. At this time Towns was a sergeant, and was constantly upon the scout for the purpose of capturing men, horses, etc. Young Trammell could not feel much afraid somehow of Towns. He though 'surely he will not injure me' but in this he was mistaken as he afterwards had occasion painfully to learn. He had been for some time hiding and keeping out of the way as best he could, until one night he ventured to sleep in his own house. Just before day he was aroused by the heavy tramp of horses, and on arising he found the house quite surrounded by a troop which proved to be Sergeant Towns and his band. Trammell was at once seized and bound and carried out into the yard for execution. Towns produced his authority, and executed in due form, and flourishing it over his head, offered to free him if he would take the oath of allegiance to the King and take up arms against his countrymen. This proposition Trammell met with merited scorn, and said in reply: 'you can carry me bound to the King's Army, but you can never make me fight against my countrymen'." 2

"After some consultation, they concluded to try to get hold of some of Trammell's horses, knowing that he owned some very fine ones which were hid out, and they knew not how to find them without using him as a guide. They proposed to release him upon condition that he would go and drive them up. He went and found them but rode and drove them another way."

"After waiting until all hopes of his return had vanished, eating, drinking, pillaging everything they could turn to account, and feeling no little chagrin at their disappointment, Sergeant Towns called on Mrs. Trammell for some clothing for his men, or goods cut of which to make some. She replied, 'Sir, you already stripped me of all. I have nothing more for you except your nephew here', pointing to his sister's son, an orphan boy, whom they in charity had taken some time before to keep him from suffering. 'He has a few clothes which I have made for him. You can take them if you will'. But they did not do so."

"About this time his eyes rested upon a strong box which sat near the fireplace, and he said, 'What have you in that box?' She replied indignantly, 'Sir, it is none of your business'. 'Well', said he, 'It is my business, and I'll see what it contains'. 'No, Sir' said she, 'You will not look into that box', and seizing a heavy iron poker she placed herself between Towns and the box, and planted herself firmly, resolved to defend her little treasure. The box contained a few quilts and counterpanes, and work of her own hands. Towns advanced and drew his sword to intimidate her, but she maintained her position without moving a muscle. He presented his sword and sneeringly said, 'Now would you hit a fellow?' Said she, 'Do you advance a step further and you will see'. He looked her in the eye and saw plainly what her determination was and retired and left her in possession of her little treasure. Just as the last of the Tories was walking out of her house, Mary called to him, 'Officer, here is something you forgot'. He stepped back to the door and she struck him in the face with a wet dish rag."

"Sergeant Towns continued to scout Trammell's neighborhood, pillaging and capturing men and horses wherever he could, until he succeeded in getting every horse poor Trammell had, save one, and that one he longed to secure. Trammell was now in active service, in defense of his country, but one night on leave he ventured to sleep in his now desolate house. Just before day dawned he heard the approach of a troop of horses. He had just time to spring from bed, gather his rifle, and leaving his clothes and knocking one of his toes out of joint against the door facing, he cleared the door and sprang behind a corn crib which stood near the back door of his cabin. It was empty and through the cracks he witnessed the eager approach of Towns and his company and as he took a position while his men were searching the house, which made him an easy prey to Trammell's unerring rifle, the temptation was so great that thrice he raised his gun and drew a bead on the object of his scorn and hate. But prudence finally triumphed over revenge, and changing his purpose, he stole noiselessly away and returned to camp."

"Shortly after this, Mrs. Trammell by dint of her unconquerable courage and industry, managed to get a grist of corn, and having one horse left, she put out all the fire in the house and locked her oldest child in, got her corn upon her horse and taking her youngest child in her lap, (a very heavy child several months old), she set off for Cook's Mill on Tiger River, eight miles distance. She arrived safe in due time, her corn was soon in the hopper and not long in grinding out, but just before the last handful was pulverized up rode the much dreaded Towns and his band, and espying her horse tied to a limb, he asked whose horse it was. On being answered by the miller 3

that it was Trammell's he said, 'That is the very horse I have been after this long

time', and he took him and made away, leaving Mrs. Trammell and her heavy child eight miles from home, and not a crust at home for herself and children. She tied up as much meal as her apron would hold and set off on foot, and though a great feat for a woman she was not long in making the trip. She found her captive child safe and it was soon feasting voraciously on a smoking piece of corn bread."

"After this, I think at the Battle of King's Mountain, Sergeant Towns was taken prisoner and to save his neck he took the oath of allegiance to the heretofore despised country, and was in a skirmish or two against his former allies before the war closed."

"Soon after peace was concluded, Trammell took the remnant of his little all and moved to Georgia, and in the wilderness built and prepared him another home, made a comfortable support, and by industry and economy grew easy in circumstances temporally; but best of all, he became religious, as did his wife."

"One evening just at dusk, two travelers called at his gate, and asked lodging for the night. When Trammell rose to welcome them at the door, who should he meet but his old inveterate enemy, John Towns. The recognition was mutual, and the pause that followed was painful in the extreme for Towns; but Trammell called him by name, shaking his hand cordially, said, 'Fear not, it is true I once intended to kill you on sight, but, Thank God! I have learned a better way. Vengeance belongs to God, not to me. Be seated, and feel at ease. We will treat you the best we can.'"

"In the course of the evening, as Towns began to feel at ease, he spoke of some heroic achievement with which he was in some way connected, making himself rather prominent. Mrs. Trammell remarked that she had the misfortune to meet with Sergeant Towns at Cook's Mill, on a certain time, which she supposed he had forgotten. This stopped Towns for the balance of the evening, and he rose and left before day on the next morning."

"Thomas Trammell died many years ago, full of glorious hope of immortality and eternal life. His devoted wife followed him only a few years ago, having lived to see her children all raised and comfortably situated in life, and, best of all, nearly all members of the Methodist Church, which she loved so much. She died 'a good woman, full of the Holy Ghost and faith', and they now rest together where wars and fightings are over."

This concluded Reverend Matthews's letter to the editor.

Just as in all wars, the wives of the soldiers and the women of this country have always done their part and backed up their men to the limit.

Thank you for listening to the story of this brave early American.

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