

[Andrew Balfour Family Cemetery](#)

March 24, 2009 by Mac Whatley

Doul Mountain Road, Cedar Grove Township



The dramatic story of the assassination of Colonel Andrew Balfour on the steps of his own home is by far the best known and best documented episode of Randolph County's Revolutionary War history. Balfour's grave site is the only remaining physical evidence of his residence in the county, but his memory lives on in numerous ways. Not only is the local chapter of the DAR named for him, but the Asheboro Masonic Lodge and an entire neighborhood of North Asheboro bears the Balfour name. His grave was originally located on his farm somewhere near the site of his house, the exact location of Balfour's house is now unknown, but he was buried on a west-facing slope of what is now called Doul Mountain, west of Tot Hill Farm Road and Bettie McGee's Creek. The grave became the center of a family graveyard now accessed from Doul Mountain Road, and situated on property now belonging to the City of Asheboro but outside the fenced boundaries of the Airport Authority. Once overgrown and surrounded by corn fields, the cemetery was renovated by the DAR and local Boy Scout troops. Five marked graves are enclosed by a stone wall and shaded by crepe myrtles and two young trees. The stone marking Colonel Balfour's plot in the center is inscribed "murdered by a band of Tories at his home;" a more pious epitaph also reads "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." It is flanked on one side by the grave of his second wife, Elizabeth Dayton who died in 1818 and their son, Andrew Balfour Jr., Oct. 22, 1776-Dec. 31, 1825. On his other side are the markers of the colonel's sister, Margaret Balfour, who died in 1816, and Margaret B. Hughes, 1775-1820 (his daughter by Elizabeth Dayton).



The cemetery, located at or near the site of Balfour's home and marking the site of his murder, is historically valuable in illustrating and explaining the vicious guerrilla warfare that centered around Randolph County in the aftermath of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Andrew Balfour was not the only Whig killed in the "Tory War," but he became its best known victim. David Fanning was the partisan leader of the royalist Tory forces based in the southeastern section of the county. His greatest exploit was a surprise attack on the state government meeting in Hillsborough, where he captured Governor Thomas Burke and a number of members of the General Assembly, and marched them to Wilmington as prisoners of war. But the majority of Fanning's work in the year 1782-1783 lay in terrorizing the friends and families of local patriot leaders, burning their barns and homes, intimidating local government, and engaging in several pitched battles with Whig cavalry and militia forces. Fanning's assassination of Andrew Balfour was part of his plan to deprive the local Whig forces of any competent leadership.

The primary source of the details of Balfour's murder were assembled by the Rev. Eli W. Caruthers in his 1854 book "Revolutionary Incidents And Sketches Of Characters, Chiefly In The Old North State" (commonly referred to as "The Old North State in 1776"). Chapter 20, starting on page 297, contains information on Colonel Balfour gathered by Caruthers and pioneer historian Judge Archibald D. Murphey. The Rev. Caruthers, a minister in Greensboro, interviewed numerous Randolph County residents and descendants of Col. Balfour in the early 1850s in preparation for writing his book. It appears that the family also allowed him to read and copy the private correspondence of Margaret and Eliza Balfour.

Colonel Andrew Balfour was born February 23, 1736 (old style) at Braidwood Estate near Edinburgh. He was the son of Andrew Balfour, a well-to-do member of the Scottish gentry and his wife Margaret Robertson. Andrew (who may actually have been the third in his family bearing that name) attended Edinburgh University, engaged in a mercantile business with his brother Robert Scott Balfour, and later opened his own business. Balfour married Jane McCormick in 1769 and fathered a daughter Isabel (nicknamed "Tibby") in 1771.

Genealogical information on “Andrew Balfour iii” is from the Balfour family website <http://andrewbalfour.com/Descendants%20and%20Ancestors/Descendants%20of%20Andrew%20Balfour%20III.htm>

He emigrated to America from Grenock, Scotland in May of 1772, leaving his wife and child to follow later, and arrived in Boston on the 18th of July, 1772. While working in Enfield, Connecticut, he received news that his wife had died in Scotland of fever on June 17, 1773. His sister Margaret Balfour sailed with Balfour’s daughter Tibby to Charleston, South Carolina, where their brother John Balfour resided. Meanwhile, Balfour met Elizabeth Dayton of New Port, Rhode Island and married her there on May 1, 1774, before embarking for Charleston to reunite with Margaret and Tibby.

Balfour moved south in 1777, leaving his wife with her relatives in New England while he investigated family land in North Carolina and visited his brother in Charleston. Balfour’s father had purchased land in South Carolina for his son John, and before 1773 he evidently purchased a thousand acres in North Carolina from Lord Granville, and offered it to his son Andrew if he would homestead it. Balfour, basing himself in Salisbury, had the property surveyed in May, 1779, and found it to contain 1,900 acres on the “waters” of Bettie Magee’s Creek, a tributary of Little River and the Pee Dee River basin. Balfour moved to the property with a number of slaves and began operating a “plantation.” As a prominent landowner Balfour became highly regarded in a short time, and was elected Second Major of the local militia in 1779. In 1780 he was elected one of the county’s first state representatives to the General Assembly and a short time later was appointed Colonel of the Militia.

It is interesting that Andrew Balfour became a Whig, as his brother John living in Charleston and Cheraw remained a Tory loyalist. Balfour may have served in General Ashe’s Georgia campaign, which Caruthers theorizes led him to be captured by a band of armed Tories in South Carolina. “In the fall of 1780, he and Jacob Shephard, father of the Hon. Augustine H. Shephard, who was also a prominent Whig, were captured by a party of Tories, from the Pedee, under the command of Colonel Coulson, who were carrying them as prisoners to the British at Cheraw, but were attacked by Captain Childs, from Montgomery, who completely dispersed them, and set their prisoners at liberty to return home.”

Quoted in Caruthers, “REVOLUTIONARY INCIDENTS AND SKETCHES OF CHARACTERS, CHIEFLY IN THE OLD NORTH STATE” (commonly referred to as: “The Old North State in 1776”), Chapter 20. The book is most easily found on the web at <http://andrewbalfour.com/Colonel%20Andrew%20Balfour/Caruthers.htm>.

About the same time Balfour was fighting for the Whigs, David Fanning arrived in the county from South Carolina and assembled a guerrilla army of pro-British Tories. Fanning and Balfour became linked in opposition. The only good account of their continuing series of battles comes from the Autobiography of Fanning himself:

I returned to Coxe’s Mill and remained there till the 8th June [1781]; when the Rebels embodied 160 men to attack me, under the command of Cols. Collyer and Balfour. I determined to get the advantage by attacking them, which I did with 49 men in the night, after marching 10 miles to their encampment. They took one of my guides, which gave them notice of my approach: I proceeded within thirty steps of them; but being unacquainted with the grounds, advanced very cautiously. The sentinel, however, discovered my party, and firing upon us, retreated. They secured themselves under cover of the houses, and fences; the firing then began; and continued on both sides for the space of four hours; being very cloudy and dark – during which time I had one man killed, and six wounded; and the guide, before mentioned, taken prisoner; whom they

killed next morning in cold blood. What injury they suffered, I could not learn; As the morning appeared we retreated, and returned again to Deep River; leaving our wounded men at a friend's house, privately.

. . . About the 7th March 1782 Capt. Walker and Currie, of the Loyal Militia fell in, with a party of Rebels, and came to an engagement, and fired for some time, 'till the rebels had fired all their ammunition; and then, wished to come to terms of peace between each party; and no plundering, killing or murdering should be committed by either party or side... which was to be agreed upon by each Colonel... Soon after my men came to me and informed what they had done; we received the rebel Col. Balfour's answer; 'there was no resting place for a Tory's foot upon the Earth.' He also immediately sent out his party, and on the 10th, I saw the same company coming to a certain house where we were fiddling and dancing. We immediately prepared ourselves in readiness to receive them, , their number being 27 and our number only seven; We immediately mounted our horses, and went some little distance from the house, and commenced a fire, for some considerable time; night coming on they retreated and left the ground.

Some time before, while, we were treating with each other, I had ordered and collected twenty-five men to have a certain dress made which was linnen frocks, died black, with red cuffs, red elbows, and red shoulder cape also, and belted with scarlet, all fringed with white fringe, and on the 12th of March, my men being all properly equipped, assembled together, in order to give them a small scourge, which we set out for. On Balfour's plantation, we came upon him, he endeavored to make his escape; but we soon prevented him, fired at him, and wounded him. The first ball he received was through one of his arms, and ranged through his body; the other through his neck; which put an end to his committing any more ill deeds.

We also wounded another of his men. We then proceeded to their Colonel [Collier] belonging to said county of Randolph; on our way we burnt several rebel houses, and caught several prisoners; the night coming on and the distance to said Collier's was so far, that it was late before we got there. He made his escape, having received three balls through his shirt. But I took care to destroy the whole of his plantation. I then persued our route, and came to one Capt. John Bryan's; another rebel officer. I told him if he would come out of the house, I would give him a parole; which he refused, saying that he had taken parole from Lord Cornwallis, swearing 'by God! he had broken that and he would also break our Tory parole.' With that I immediately ordered the house to be set on fire, which was instantly done. As soon as he saw the flames of the fire, increasing, he called out to me, and desired me to spare his house, for his wife's and children's sake, and he would walk out with his arms in his hands. I immediately answered him, that if he walked out, that his house should be saved, for his wife and children. When he came out, he said 'Here, damn you, here I am.' With that he received two balls through his body: He came out with his gun cocked, and sword at the same time.

The next following being the 13th march, was their election day to appoint Assembly men, and was to meet at Randolph Court House. I proceeded on in order to see the gentlemen representatives; On their getting intelligence of my coming they immediately scattered; I prevented their doing any thing that day.

From thence I proceeded on, to one Major Dugin's house, or plantation, and I destroyed all his property; and all the rebel officers property in the settlement for the distance of forty miles.



The impact on the community can be seen in the following letter from Balfour's second-in-command of the local militia, Major Absalom Tatom, who had also been Randolph County's first elected Clerk of Court in 1779. Tatom wrote to Governor Thomas Burke:

Hillsboro', March 20th, 1782.

Sir: - - On Sunday the 11th inst., Col. Balfour, of Randolph, was murdered in the most inhuman manner, by Fanning and his party, also a Captain Bryant and a Mr. King were murdered in the night of the same day, by them. Colonel Collier's and two other houses were burned by the same party.

Colonel Balfour's sister and daughter, and several other women, were wounded and abused in a barbarous manner.

There, sir, are facts. I was at that time in Randolph- -saw the Tories and some of their cruelties. Without a speedy relief, the good people of that county must leave their habitations, and seek refuge in some other place.

I am, sir, your o'bt serv't,
A. Tatom.i

Fanning blamed Balfour for refusing to approve the truce negotiated by his own men in their skirmish with the Tories, and obviously saw Balfour as the chief impediment to Fanning's control over the county. The account of Fanning and his men dressed in their special black and red uniforms provides an even more intimidating picture of their terrorizing sweep across the county. Andrew Balfour was not the only one to die during Fanning's ride of terror, but interestingly, he is the only one to be remembered by the general public even though Fanning's account of the death of John Bryan is much more dramatic.



Many additional accounts of the assassination of Andrew Balfour have survived. On Sunday, March 10, 1782, Balfour was resting. His wife, son and younger daughter were still in Connecticut, but Balfour's sister Margaret and daughter Tibby were at home with him. Family tradition says that he had recently returned home sick from some tour of military service and was convalescing in bed.

Judge A.D. Murphy, writing in the University Magazine of March, 1853, gave a succinct account of the murder: “

In one of his predatory and murderous excursions, [Fanning] went to the house of Andrew Balfour, which he had plundered three years before. Stephen Cole, one of Balfour's neighbors, hearing of his approach and apprised of his intentions, rode at full speed to Balfour's house and gave him notice of the danger that threatened him. Balfour had scarcely stepped out of his house before he saw Fanning galloping up. He ran, but one of Fanning's party, named Absalom Autry, fired at him with his rifle and broke his arm. He returned to the house and entered it, and his daughter and sister clung to him in despair. Fanning and his men immediately entered and tore away the women, threw them on the floor and held them under their feet until they shot Balfour. He fell on the floor, and Fanning taking a pistol, shot him through the head.“

The pace of communication at the time is illustrated by the fact that Balfour's wife Eliza learned of her husband's murder on May 14th, two months after his death but just two days after she received two letters from him. Margaret Balfour wrote her with details of the day on September 24th, from Swearing Creek near Salisbury, where she and Tibby had gone to live with friends:

“On the 10th of March, about twenty-five armed ruffians came to the house with the intention to kill my brother. – - Tibby and I endeavored to prevent them; but it was all in vain. The wretches cut and bruised us both a great deal, and dragged us from the dear man before our eyes. The worthless, base, horrible Fanning shot a bullet into his head, which soon put a period to the life of the best of men, and the most affectionate and dutiful husband, father, son and brother. The sight was so shocking, that it is impossible for tongue to express any thing like our feelings; but the barbarians, not in the least touched by our anguish, drove us out of the house, and took every thing that they could carry off except the negroes who happened to be all from home at the time. It being Sunday, never were creatures in more distress. We were left in a strange country, naked, without money, and what was a thousand times worse, we had lost forever a near and dear relation. What added to our affliction, was the thought of his poor, helpless family left destitute, and it was not in our power to assist them. I wish his two families were united together... Until then, I shall hire out my negroes, and go to Salisbury, where we intend to try the milliner's business. If there is good encouragement for that business with you, please let me know it, as soon as possible. If there is not, I beg you will come to us; and while I have a sixpence, I will share it with you. We are at present about ten miles from Salisbury, at Mr James McCay's, where we have made a crop of corn. We remained only a few days on our own plantation, after the dreadful disaster, having been informed that Fanning was coming to burn the house and take the negroes.“

Even after the war ended and Fanning had fled to Canada, Margaret Balfour continued to advocate for justice for her brother. Writing to Eliza Balfour on June 6th, 1783 Margaret says:

“Some time last February, having been informed that my horse [stolen by Fanning's men] was at one Major Gholson's, I got Mr. John McCoy with me, and we went to the Major's, where we found the horse, but in such poor condition, that it was with great difficulty that we got him home. However, he is now so much recruited, that he is fit for a little service. When I was after the horse, I heard that one of Fanning's men was in Hillsboro' jail; and, as the court

commenced on the 1st of April, I went to Hillsboro', and witnessed against him. The crime was proved so plainly, that not one lawyer spoke a word in his favor, though he had three of them employed. My story was so affecting, that the court was willing to give me every satisfaction in their power; and in order to do this, they broke a little through the usual course, for they had the villain tried, condemned and hung, all in the space of the court. While the judge was giving the jury their charge, I heard several gentlemen of my brother's acquaintance wishing to God the jury would not bring him in guilty, that they might have the pleasure of putting the rascal to death with their own hands; and if the jury had not brought him in guilty, I am sure they would have killed the wretch before he had got out of the house. If it is an inexpressible happiness for one to know, that his dear friends are much beloved, we have that happiness; for I believe, that there has not a man fallen since the beginning of the troubles, who was more sincerely and generally lamented, than our dear Andrew."

Margaret Balfour's account is confirmed by an indictment obtained by Attorney General Alfred Moore in Hillsboro Superior Court in April, 1783, which states that

"The jurors for the State, upon their oath, present that David Fanning, late of the county of Chatham, yeoman, and Frederick Smith, late of the county of Cumberland, yeoman, not having the fear of God in their hearts, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, on the ninth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, and in the sixth year of American Independence, with force and arms, in the county of Randolph, in the District of Hillsboro', in and upon one Andrew Balfour... did make an assault, and that the said David Fanning, [with] a certain pistol of the value of Five shillings sterling... charged with gunpowder and one leaden bullet, which pistol, he, the said David, in his right hand... held, to, against, and upon the said Andrew Balfour, then and there feloniously, wilfully, and of his malice aforethought, did shoot and discharge, and...by force of the gunpowder, shot and sent forth...in and upon the head of the said Andrew...the leaden bullet aforesaid...so as to... strike, penetrate, and wound...in and upon the head of him the said Andrew, one mortal wound of the depth of four inches and of the breadth of half an inch, of which said mortal wound, the aforesaid Andrew Balfour then and there instantly died; and that the aforesaid Frederick Smith, then and there, feloniously, wilfully, and of his malice aforethought, was present, aiding, helping, abetting, comforting, assisting and maintaining the said David Fanning...against the peace and dignity of the said State."



After the murder Margaret Balfour settled in Salisbury with her niece Tibby. Eliza Balfour and her children joined them on December 25, 1784, after a voyaging to Wilmington, journeying up the river to Fayetteville, and across country past the plantation and grave of her husband before arriving in Rowan County. In 1790 Tibby Balfour married John Troy of Salisbury, and had by him two daughters and a son, John Balfour Troy, who became a prominent merchant and Justice of the Peace in Randolph County (and the ancestor of Colonel Guy Troy, of Liberty). Margaret Balfour resided on the Balfour plantation with her grand-niece Rachel Troy, who had married Lewis Beard. She died in 1818 and was laid to rest in the burying ground beside her brother.



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i Quoted in Caruthers, "REVOLUTIONARY INCIDENTS AND SKETCHES OF CHARACTERS, CHIEFLY IN THE OLD NORTH STATE" (commonly referred to as: "The Old North State in 1776"), Chapter 20. The book is most easily found on the web at
<http://andrewbalfour.com/Colonel%20Andrew%20Balfour/Caruthers.htm>.

i David Fanning, “The Narrative of Colonel David Fanning” printed in Richmond, Va., 1861 and reprinted by the Reprint Company, Spartanburg, SC. This book can be found on the web at
<http://andrewbalfour.com/Colonel%20Andrew%20Balfour/David%20Fanning%27s%20Narrative.htm#%22The%20Narrative%20of%20Colonel%20David%20Fanning%22>

iCaruthers, op. cit.

i A.DeB. Murphey, University Magazine, March 1853.

i Quoted in Caruthers.

i Ibid.

i Ibid, but also found in the Hillsborough District Superior Court records in the state archives.