

# Memoir of Major Thomas Young

This memoir was published in the *Orion Magazine*, in October and November, 1843. Major Young died in 1848 and was buried in the Old Union Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Monarch, South Carolina.

I was born in Lawrence [Laurens] District, S.C., on the seventeenth of January, 1764. My father, Thomas Young, soon after removed to Union District, where I have lived to this day. In the spring of 1780, I think in April [June], Col. Brandon was encamped with a party of 70 or 80 whigs, about five miles below Union courthouse, where Christopher Young now lives. Their object was to collect forces for the approaching campaign, and to keep a check upon the tories. They had taken prisoner one Adam Steedham, as vile a tory as ever lived. By some means Steedham escaped during the night, and notified the tories of Brandon's position. The whigs were attacked by a large body of the enemy before day and completely routed. On that occasion, my brother, John Young, was murdered. I shall never forget my feelings when told of his death. I do not believe I had ever used an oath before that day, but then I tore open my bosom, and swore that I would never rest till I had avenged his death. Subsequently a hundred tories felt the weight of my arm for the deed, and around Steedham's neck I fastened the rope as a reward for his cruelties. On the next day I left home in my shirt sleeves, and joined Brandon's party. Christopher Brandon and I joined at the same time, and the first engagement we were in, was at Stallions' in York District.

We had received intelligence of a party of tories, then stationed at Stallions'; a detachment of about fifty whigs, under Col. Brandon, moved to attack them. Before we arrived at the house in which they were fortified, we were divided into two parties. Capt. Love with a party of sixteen -- of whom I was one -- Marched to attack the front, while Col. Brandon with the remainder, made a circuit to intercept those who should attempt to escape, and also to attack the rear. Mrs. Stallions was a sister of Capt. Love, and on the approach of her brother she ran out, and begged him not to fire upon the house. He told her it was too late now, and that their only chance for safety was to surrender. She ran back to the house and sprang upon the door step, which was pretty high. At this moment, the house was attacked in the rear by Col. Brandon's party, and Mrs. Stallions was killed by a ball shot through the opposite door. At the same moment with Brandon's attack, our party raised a shout and rushed forward. We fired several rounds which were briskly returned. It was not long, however, before the tories ran up a flag, first upon the end of a gun, but as that did not look exactly peaceful, a ball was put through the fellow's arm, and in a few moments it was raised on a ram-rod, and we ceased firing. While we were fighting a man was seen running through an open field

near us. I raised my gun to shoot him, when some of our party exclaimed, "Don't fire; he is one of our own men." I drew down my gun, and in a moment he halted, wheeled round, and fired at us. Old Squire Kennedy (who was an excellent marksman) raised his rifle and brought him down. We had but one wounded, William Kennedy, who was shot by my side. I was attempting to fire in at the door of the house, when I saw two of the Tories in the act of shooting at myself and Kennedy. I sprang aside and escaped, calling at the same time to my companion, but he was shot (while moving) through the wrist and thigh.

The loss of the Tories was two killed, four wounded, and twenty-eight prisoners whom we sent to Charlotte, N.C. After the fight, Love and Stallions met and shed bitter tears; Stallions was dismissed on parole to bury his wife and arrange his affairs.

The next engagement I was in, was at King's Mountain, S.C., I believe on the 7th of October, 1780. I was under the command of Col. Brandon. Late in the evening, preceding the battle, we met Colonels Campbell, Shelby, Cleaveland, and Sevier, with their respective regiments, at the Cowpens, where they had been killing some beeves [beef]. As soon as we got something to eat, for we were very hungry and weary, we retired to sleep at random in the woods. I did not wake until broad daylight. In the morning we received intelligence that Major Ferguson was encamped somewhere near the Cherokee Ford, on Broad River. We pushed forward, but heard no tidings of the enemy. At a meeting-house, on the eastern side of the river, we discovered some signs and continued our pursuit for some distance, when a halt was ordered, and we were on the point of sending out for some beeves, when we met George Watkins, a Whig, who had been taken prisoner and was on his way home on parole. He gave us information of the position of the enemy.

A consultation of the officers was then held, and the command was given to Col. Campbell. Watkins had informed us that we were within a mile of the enemy. We were then formed into four divisions; who commanded each division I cannot now say. I think Col. Roebuck commanded the one I was in.

Major Ferguson had taken a very strong position upon the summit of the mountain, and it appeared like an impossibility to dislodge him, but we had come there to do it, and we were determined, one and all, to do it, or die trying. The attack was begun on the north side of the mountain. The orders were at the firing of the first gun, for every man to raise a whoop, rush forward, and fight his way as best he could.

When our division came up to the northern base of the mountain, we dismounted, and Col. Roebuck drew us a little to the left and commenced the attack. I well remember

how I behaved. Ben Hollingsworth and myself took right up the side of the mountain, and fought from tree to tree, our way to the summit. I recollect I stood behind one tree and fired until the bark was nearly all knocked off, and my eyes pretty well filled with it. One fellow shaved me pretty close, for his bullet took a piece out of my gunstock. Before I was aware of it, I found myself apparently between my own regiment and the enemy, as I judged, from seeing the paper which the whigs wore in their hats, and the pine knots the tories wore in theirs, these being the badges of distinction.

On the top of the mountain, in the thickest of the fight, I saw Col. Williams fall, and a braver or a better man never died upon the field of battle. I had seen him but once before that day; it was in the beginning of the action, as he charged by me at full speed around the mountain; toward the summit a ball struck his horse under the jaw, when he commenced stamping as if he were in a nest of yellow jackets. Col. W. threw the reins over the animal's neck -- sprang to the ground, and dashed onward.

The moment I heard the cry that Col. Williams was shot, I ran to his assistance, for I loved him as a father, he had ever been so kind to me, and almost always carried a cake in his pocket for me and his little son Joseph. They carried him into a tent, and sprinkled some water in his face. He revived, and his first words were, "For God's sake, boys, don't give up the hill!" I remember it as well as if it had occurred yesterday. I left him in the arms of his son Daniel, and returned to the field to avenge his fall. Col. Williams died next day, and was buried not far from the field of his glory.

Joseph Williams -- who was a mere boy -- and his brother Daniel, were, I think, subsequently massacred by the tories at Hay's station. I remember to have heard it told that they were surrounded by the tories, and during the fight a crib or outhouse near the building in which the whigs were stationed caught fire, and when they found there was no hope, Daniel Williams threw his father's pistols into the flames, exclaiming that he would rather see them burn, than go into the hands of a tory. Our loss at the battle of King's Mountain, was about twenty-five killed and wounded. The enemy lost above three hundred, who were left on the ground -- among them Major Ferguson. We took, moreover, seven or eight hundred prisoners. Awful indeed was the stench of the wounded, the dying, and the dead on the field, after the carnage of that dreadful day. A few days after the battle, a court martial was held to try some of the tories who were known to be of the most outrageous and blood-thirsty character. About twenty were found guilty, but ten received a pardon of respite. Nine were hung, and the tenth was pinioned [bound], awaiting his fate. It was now nearly dark. His brother, a mere lad, threw his arms around him, and set up a most piteous crying and screaming, as if he would go into convulsions. While the soldiers were attracted by his behaviour, he

managed to cut the cords, and his brother escaped.

After the battle we Marched upon the head waters of Cane Creek, in North Carolina, with our prisoners, where we all came very nearly starving to death. The country was very thinly settled, and provisions could not be had for love or money. I thought green pumpkins, sliced and fried, about the sweetest eating I ever had in my life! From this point we Marched over into the Dutch settlements in the fork of Catawba and recruited, until we joined Gen. Morgan at Grindall Shoals.

The next engagement I was at Hammond's store, on Bush River, somewhere near '96. Gen. Morgan was encamped at Grindall Shoals to keep the tories in check. He dispatched Col. Washington with a detachment of militia, and about seventy dragoons [mounted infantrymen], to attack a body of tories, who had been plundering the whigs. We came up with them at Hammond's store; in fact, we picked up several scattering ones, within about three miles of the place, from whom we learned all about their position.

When we came in sight, we perceived that the tories had formed in line on the brow of the hill opposite to us. We had a long hill to descend and another to rise. Col. Washington and his dragoons gave a shout, drew swords, and charged down the hill like madmen. The tories fled in every direction without firing a gun. We took a great many prisoners and killed a few. Here I must relate an incident which occurred on this occasion. In Washington's corps there was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, a mere lad, who in crossing Tiger River was ducked by a blunder of his horse. The men laughed and jeered at him very much, at which he got very mad, and swore that boy or no boy, he would kill a man that day or die. He accomplished the former. I remember very well being highly amused at the little fellow charging round a crib after a tory, cutting and slashing away with his puny arm, till he brought him down.

We then returned to Morgan's encampment at Grindall Shoals, on the Packolette, and there we remained, eating beef and scouting through the neighborhood until we heard of Tarlton's approach. Having received intelligence that Col. Tarlton designed to cross the Packolette at Easternood Shoals above us, Gen. Morgan broke up his encampment early in the morning of the 16th, and retreated up the mountain road by Hancock's ville, taking the left hand road not far above, in a direction toward the head of Thickety Creek. We arrived at the field of the Cowpens about sun-down, and were told that there we should meet the enemy. The news was received with great joy by the army. We were very anxious for battle, and many a hearty curse had been vented against Gen. Morgan during that day's March, for retreating, as we thought, to avoid a fight. Night

came upon us, yet much remained to be done. It was all important to strengthen to cavalry. Gen. Morgan knew well the power of Tarlton's legion, and he was too wily an officer not to prepare himself as well as circumstances would admit. Two companies of volunteers were called for. One was raised by Major Jolly of Union District, and the other, I think, by Major McCall. I attached myself to Major Jolly's company. We drew swords that night, and were informed we had authority to press any horse not belonging to a dragoon or an officer, into our service for the day.

It was upon this occasion I was more perfectly convinced of Gen.'s qualifications to command militia, than I had ever before been. He went among the volunteers, helped them fix their swords, joked with them about their sweet-hearts, told them to keep in good spirits, and the day would be ours. And long after I laid down, he was going about among the soldiers encouraging them, and telling them that the old wagoner would crack his whip over Ben. (Tarlton) in the morning, as sure as they lived.

"Just hold your heads, boys, three first," he would say, "and you are free, and then when you return to your homes, how the old folks will bless you, and the girls kiss you, for your gallant conduct!" I don't believe he slept a wink that night!

But to the battle. Our pickets were stationed three miles in advance. Samuel Clowney was one of the picket guard, and I often heard him afterwards laugh at his narrow escape. Three of Washington's dragoons were out on a scout, when they came almost in contact with the advanced guard of the British army; they wheeled, and were pursued almost into camp. Two got in safely; one poor fellow, whose horse fell down, was taken prisoner. It was about day that the pickets were driven in.

The morning of the 17th of January, 1781, was bitterly cold. We were formed in order of battle, and the men were slapping their hands together to keep warm -- an exertion not long necessary.

The battle field was almost a plain with a ravine on both hands, and very little undergrowth in front or without firing a gun. We took a great many prisoners and killed a few. Here I must relate an incident which occurred on this occasion. In Washington's corps there was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, a mere lad, who in crossing Tiger River was ducked by a blunder of his horse. The men laughed and jeered at him very much, at which he got very mad, and swore that boy or no boy, he would kill a man that day or die. He accomplished the former. I remember very well being highly amused at the little fellow charging round a crib after a tory, cutting and slashing away with his puny arm, till he brought him down.

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growth in front or coming in advance, a party, which I soon discovered to be British. I knew it was no time to consider now; so I wheeled, put spurs to my horse, and made down the road in hopes of meeting Jolly and his party. My horse was stiff, however, from the severe exercise I had given him that morning, and I soon found that they were gaining upon me. I wheeled abruptly to the right into a cross road, but a party of three or four dashed through the woods and intercepted me. It was now a plain case, and I drew my sword and made battle. I never fought so hard in my life. I knew it was death anyhow, and I resolved to sell my life as dearly as possible.

In a few minutes one finger on my left hand was split open; then I received a cut on my sword arm by a parry which disabled it. In the next instance a cut from a sabre across my forehead, (the scar of which I shall carry to my grave), the skin slipped down over my eyes, and the blood blinded me so that I could see nothing. Then came a thrust in the right shoulder blade, then a cut upon the left shoulder, and a last cut (which you can feel for yourself) on the back of my head – and I fell upon my horse's neck. They took me down, bound up my wounds, and placed me again on my horse a prisoner of war.

When they joined the party in the main road, there were two Tories who knew me very well -- Littlefield and Kelly. Littlefield cocked his gun, and swore he would kill me. In a moment nearly twenty British soldiers drew their swords, and cursing him for a damned coward, for wanting to kill a boy without arms and a prisoner -- ran him off. Littlefield did not like me, and for a very good reason. While we were at Grindall Shoals with Morgan, he once caught me out, and tried to take my gun away from me. I knocked him down with it, and as he rose I clicked it, and told him if he didn't run I'd blow him through. He did not long hesitate which of the two to choose.

I asked Kelly not to tell the British who I was, and I do not think the fellow did. Col. Tarlton sent for me, and I rode by his side for several miles. He was a very fine looking man, with rather a proud bearing, but very gentlemanly in his manners. He asked me a great many questions, and I told him one lie, which I have often thought of since. In reply to his query whether Morgan was reinforced before the battle? I told him "he was not, but that he expected a reinforcement every minute." "He asked me how many dragoons Washington had. "I replied that "he had seventy, and two volunteer companies of mounted militia -- but you know how they won't fight." "By God!" he quickly replied, "they did to-day, though!" I begged him to parole me, but he said, "if he did, I should go right off and turn to fighting again." I told him he could get three men in exchange for me, and he replied-- "Very well, when we get to Cornwallis' army, you shall be paroled or exchanged; and mean while, I'll see that your wounds are taken care of."

We got to Hamilton Ford, on Broad River, about dark. Just before we came to the river, a British dragoon came up at full speed, and told Col. Tarlton that Washington was close behind in pursuit. It was now very dark, and the river was said to be swimming. The British were not willing to take water. Col. Tarlton flew into a terrible passion, and drawing his sword, swore he would cut down the first man who hesitated. They knew him too well to hesitate longer. During the confusion, a young Virginian by the name of Deshaser (also a prisoner) and myself, managed to get into the woods. Intruth a British soldier had agreed to let us escape, and to desert if we would assist him in securing the plunder he had taken.

We slipped away one at a time up the river, Deshaser first, then myself. I waited what I thought a very long time for the British soldier, and he came not. At last I began to think the British were across, and I gave a low whistle -- Deshaser answered me, and we met. It was now very dark and raining when we came to the Packolette. I could not find the ford, and it was well, for the river was swimming. We therefore made our way up the river, and had not gone far before we approached a barn. It had a light in it, and I heard a cough. We halted and reconnoitred, and finding it occupied by some British soldiers, we pressed on and soon arrived at old Captain Grant's where I was glad to stop. The old man and his lovely daughter washed and dressed my wounds, and in looking over the bag of plunder which the soldier had given us, they found a fine ruffled shirt, which I put on and went to bed. I shall never forget that girl or the old man for their kindness!

On the next day I left with Deshaser, and arrived at home that evening, where I was confined by a violent fever for eight or ten days; but thanks to the kind nursing and attention of old Mrs. Brandon, I recovered. I now slept in the woods for about three weeks, waiting for some of the whigs to come in and commence operations. I was concerned about a horse. The British soldiers, when they took me, dismounted me from the fine charger I captured at the Cowpens and put me on a pacing pony. One day I met old Molly Willard riding a very fine sorrel horse, and told her we must swap. She wouldn't listen to it -- but I replied that there was no use in talking, the horse I would have, and the exchange was made not much to the old woman's satisfaction, for she didn't love the whigs; I don't believe the Willards have forgiven me for that horse swap to this day.

Soon after this I joined a detachment of whigs under Col. Brandon, and scouted through the country till we reached the siege at Fort Motte. There I remained for several days, when we joined a detachment under command of Col. Hampton, to take

Orangeburg. The state troops, under Col. Hampton, out Marched us, for we had a piece of artillery to manage. We arrived the morning after them. The Tories were lodged in a brick house, and kept up a monstrous shouting and firing to very little purpose. As soon as the piece of artillery was brought to bear upon the house, a breach was made through the gable end; then another, a little lower; then about the centre, and they surrendered.

I then joined a party of dragoons under Capt. Boykin, at the solicitation of Capt. Giles, to capture some horses we heard were billeted out by the British, near Bacon's Bridge, in the low country. It was a most hazardous expedition, and required great courage and prudence. Capt. Boykin had both. We went to the hotel and called for the hostler. Capt. Boykin drew his pistol, cocked it, and told him if he did not open the stable door, he would shoot him dead. You may rest assured he did not long consider about it! They got three very fine animals: two stallions and a gelding. Neither Giles nor I got a horse, and we were in no very good humor, as knew we should have to go back at so rapid a pace that our nags could not stand it. Sure enough, after one day and night's travel, our horses began to fail, and we resolved to take the words; but Boykin begged us to try and keep up, and as we soon should come to another billet of horses, we should have the first choice. Well, next day we did come upon a fine lot of horses, wild as devils. Giles and I went in, and I soon caught a yellow sorrel mare. Giles, who was an excellent judge of horse flesh, was struck with her form, and said to me, "Young, if you will let me have that mare, I will help you catch any horse in the lot!" I gave her to him, and picked me out a bay mare. Time proved that Giles was correct in his judgment, as the yellow mare was never caught in a chase, or beaten in a race afterwards. We were all now well mounted, and pushed off to join our detachment above.

When we arrived at Granby, we were nearly all discharged. Col. Brandon, Major Jolly and myself, resolved to make an excursion to 96 -- where the siege were then going on.

Here I remained during the siege. As we every day got our parallels nearer the garrison, we could see them very plain when they went out to a brook or spring for water. The Americans had constructed a sort of moving battery, but as the cannon of the fort were brought to bear upon it, they were forced to abandon the use of it. It had not been used for some time, when an idea struck Old Squire Kennedy, (who was an excellent marksman,) that he could pick off a man now and then as they went to the spring. He and I took our rifles and went into the woods to practice at 200 yards. We were arrested and taken before an officer, to whom we gave our excuse and design. He laughed, and told us to practice no more, but to try our luck from the battery if we wanted to, so we

took our position, and as a fellow came down to the spring, Kennedy fired and he fell; several ran out and gathered round him, and among them I noticed one man raised his head, and look around as if he wondered where that shot could have come from. I touched my trigger and he fell, and we made off, for fear it might be our time to fall next.

After the siege of 96, I returned to my old neighborhood, and was engaged in various scouting expeditions till peace was declared. I was on a scouting expedition to Mudlick, under Col. Brandon. We were all mounted. We saw two spies, before we came upon the tories, and pursued them to the creek. Col. Brandon sent out Major Jolly with a flank guard to prevent their outflanking us -- they were on the opposite side of the creek, and commanded the ford, so that we could not cross. Jolly and I approached very near; so near that a cousin of mine, William Young, hailed us and inquired who commanded. A good deal was said to keep us engaged. Young waived his sword to me several times, and hallooed to me to go away; a moment after we were fired upon by a party who had crept up the creek through the bushes. A shot went under Jolly's horse's belly, and another shaved my horse's forelegs. We returned the fire, but did not damage, saving putting a ball through Young's horse's nose. We then retreated, under the hope that they would pursue us, but they did not.

This same cousin of mine had offered a hundred guineas to any man who would bring me into 96. In one of our excursions we heard of a band of tories being concealed in a very dense thicket, over on Sandy River; it was said they had a great deal of plunder. A party, of which I recollect Col. Brandon, Col. Casey, Col. Hughes, and Major Jolly, were members, went to attack them. We got there early in the day, and it was not long before we had possession of the place. In the fight I took a little fellow, by the name of Tom Moore, prisoner. I ran him for some distance, shot at him, and broke his arm. When I took him back Tom Salter wanted to kill him, because Moore had once had him prisoner, and would in all probability have killed him, if he had not escaped. I cocked my gun, and told them no! he was my man, and I would shoot the first one who harmed him. During this skirmish I witnessed rather an amusing scene between Col. Hughes and a Tory. Hughes had dismounted to get a chance to shoot at some fellow through the bushes, when a tory sprang upon his horse and dashed away. Hughes discovered it in time, fired, and put a ball through the hind tree of the saddle and the fellow's thigh. The tory fell, and Hughes got his horse. In this excursion we got a great deal of plunder, which has been concealed by the tories.

Once after this, I was taken by a party of "Outliers," (a name given to the Greys,) the most notorious and abandoned plunders and murderers of that gloomy period. On

account of the kindness I had once shown to one of them while a prisoner, in my charge, I was set at liberty without being hurt.

While we were in North Carolina recruiting, an incident occurred which may be well enough to relate. One Capt. Reid was at a neighbor's house, in York District, on a visit. The landlady saw two men approaching the house whom she knew to be tories, and told Capt. Reid he had better escape, for they would kill him. He replied, no! -- they had been his neighbors; he had known Love and Sadler all his life, and had nothing to fear from them. He walked out into the yard, offered them his hand, and they killed him. His mother, a very old woman, came to where we were encamped in North Carolina. One morning we were called out on parade, and this old woman came before us, leaning upon the arms of two officers. She drew from her bosom the bloody pocket book of her son, and three times attempted to go to her knees, but was prevented by the officers who supported her

Col. Brandon stepped out and asked if there were any here willing to volunteer to avenge her wrongs. Twenty-five stepped out at once. I was one of the number. We started, rode all night, halted in the next day, kept watch in the woods, but slept not; the next night we arrived at old Love's. One part of our company was to attack the house, another the barn. The house was attacked, and the door broken down by a powerful man by the name of Maddox, who was afterwards killed at King's Mountain. In staving open the door, he floored old Love and knocked some of his teeth out. At this moment a cry was raised that they were in the barn, and to the barn we all rushed. One of our men fired through the door and killed one of the murderers, the other was killed in the skirmish. What is most strange about the matter is, that another man was sleeping with them, and in the melee he escaped unhurt. We now felt that we had done all that was required to us, and returned to our quarters in North Carolina.

After the declaration of peace in 1783, Major Thomas Young married, and settled in Union District, upon the spot where he now lives, where he brought up a large family. He is beloved by his neighbors for his kindness, and respected by all for the scars he received in the cause of Liberty.