

The following, "The Kelly Family: Thomas Kelly (1742-1812), his descendants and interrelated families." by Laura Kelly, was quoted directly from Heritage Quest Online:

CHAPTER I

THOMAS KELLY

1742-1812

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders and they will tell thee." (Deuteronomy 32:7)

Existing knowledge of Thomas Kelly, the founder of our branch of the family, is tantalizing. For some parts of his life we have information that, for 200 years ago, is almost unbelievably detailed. For other periods of his life, we know nothing at all. The parts that we know are filled with action and excitement and bring us into contact with some of the most significant people and events of the 18th century America. He was involved in settlement of the colonial frontier, the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the earliest phases of western expansion. We know that his path crossed those of such legendary figures as George Washington, Lafayette, Pulaski, Daniel Morgan and "Mad Anthony" Wayne. We can only speculate as to the events that occurred during those unknown periods of his life --- and hope that future research will answer some of our questions.

Thomas Kelly's ancestry, birth, and early years remain a mystery. The recollections of two of his grandsons are that he was born near Philadelphia about 1750. Later from a source that I have been unable to identify, the year of his birth was said to be 1742. A now lost enlistment certificate or a family or church record may have been the source. This latter date fits well with established facts: he could not have been born later than that, and probably not more than a few years earlier. Because of the position of Philadelphia, his birthplace could have been in Pennsylvania, New Jersey or Delaware -- there were Kelly families in all of these colonies as well as in nearby Maryland. We have investigated a number of these families without establishing a connection, and the search continues.

We are not even absolutely certain that he spelled his name as later generations have: public records of that era are about equally divided between "Kelly" and "Kelley". One reference even was to "Keller", probably an error in transcription of faded old handwriting. Orthography was quite casual in early America -- we mention this to encourage those engaged in family research to consider all these variations.

A family tradition that Thomas left home, despite his mother's wishes, to avoid being impressed into the British army is difficult to reconcile with the facts that he voluntarily entered military service in Virginia in 1757, and impressment of colonists into the British army was not done in Pennsylvania at that time. Could

this tradition have become twisted, and he, in fact, left home to join the army fighting against the French and Indians, despite his mother's wishes?

Another tradition tells us that the immigrant ancestor of Thomas Kelly was kidnapped as a young boy, by a ship captain, and brought to America, presumably as an indentured servant. This can neither be proven nor disproven. Certainly many immigrants from Ireland came as indentured servants, but most came voluntarily, working out their passage fare through the indenture.

A tradition that is somewhat difficult to reconcile with known facts states that the Kellys were Roman Catholic in America, until, comforted and supported by a circuit-riding minister at the time of the death of a baby, they became Protestant. Actually, the vast majority of those who migrated from Ireland to Pennsylvania and on to Virginia were of the so-called "Scotch-Irish" and were Calvinists and Presbyterians almost universally. These people, originally from the lowlands of southern Scotland, moved to the northern part of Ireland during the years 1610-1717. As many as 100,000 are said to have crossed to Ireland during that period. They were staunch Presbyterians, and maintained an identity completely separate from their Roman Catholic neighbors. For a variety of reasons, they became dissatisfied with conditions in Ireland in the early part of the 18th century, and a quarter of a million of them migrated to America during the period 1717-1775. The first two waves of immigration (1717-18 and 1725-29) settled largely in Pennsylvania and many later moved into western Virginia. At the time of the Revolution, this group was second in numbers only to the English in America, and was definitely the predominant group on the frontier. None of the earliest records of this family of Kelly mentions Catholicism, and Thomas Kelly's grandsons in Oregon disputed this tradition. Although traditions can be valuable sources of information, they can become confused in transmission from generation to generation, and when unsubstantiated by evidence, they must be viewed with suspicion. From the standpoint of probability, it seems more likely that the family of Thomas Kelly in America was always Protestant.

Commencing in 1737, when Thomas was about 15, our knowledge becomes much greater. In 1754, one of a long series of wars between France and England had begun. In Europe this is called "The Seven Years' War", in America "The French and Indian War". One of the points of contention was ownership of the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River -- the British claimed this by purchase from the Iroquois Indians, while the French claimed it by rights of discovery and exploration. In this, as in earlier wars, the French incurred the bitterest hatred of the British colonists by their use of Indian allies against the frontier settlements. In retaliation, the British colonists used Cherokee allies, a two-edged sword. The utter barbarity of the warfare that followed can hardly be imagined. No man, woman or child on the frontier could be safe from the constant threat of murder, torture, or slavery. The Virginia Militia was called out in 1754 to serve in a chain of small forts along the mountainous frontier. George Washington, then a young officer in the service of the Colony of Virginia, made a tour of inspection of these posts in 1756 and was

quite disappointed at the poor discipline and general inadequacy of the militia.

Because of the dangers and the poor state of the militia, Robert Dinwiddie, Royal Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, wrote in a letter to General Braddock, "You may observe a No. of Fr. and Ind's got into our Frontiers and have plunder'd and murder'd several Families; ys (this) is consist't with Y'r Let'r to me. On receipt thereof I order'd the Militia to be in readiness in Case of Surprize, but am sorry to say they are very ungovernable. I have order'd two Companies of Rangers to be immediately rais'd, each Co'y to be 50 effective Men to find out the Enemy who lurk in the Woods all Day and do w't Mischief they can in the Night, but am in hopes by Diligence the above Companies will be liable to reduce them . . ." Eventually, three companies of Rangers were organized and served until 1759 when the danger appeared over and they were disbanded.

In this war, Thomas Kelly served as a Corporal in Captain John Dickinson's Company of Rangers 1757-1759. He was stationed in the area near what is now Covington, Virginia. Part of his service, at least, was at Fort Young, on Jackson River near the mouth of Potts Creek. Interestingly, the name of Fort Young had been carried down in family tradition. It should be further noted that Thomas later laid claim to land on Potts Creek and lived in this vicinity for many years. Dickinson's Rangers were responsible for the line along lower Jackson and the Cowpasture Rivers and manned Fort Dickinson on the Cowpasture River, a fort on Craigs Creek, and possibly others.

We can't know just what Fort Young or these others were like, but we have descriptions of others of the period in Virginia. Most were of log construction and about 60 feet square, and included palisades or high walls of logs planted closely together in the ground and sharpened to points at the top. Some were merely strong log houses, surrounded by palisades 100 feet in diameter, with trenches and with the surrounding trees and underbrush cleared back to avoid its use for concealment. A very common type consisted of a palisade wall sixty feet square, with projecting covered buildings called bastions at opposite corners. A few were of two story "block-house" construction, with associated palisades. These forts were spaced from twelve to twenty-five miles apart along the frontier, and from them, patrols of Rangers would scout through the woods looking for the enemy or for signs that hostile war parties were in the neighborhood. At times of greatest danger, settlers of the area would come and live in or next to the forts. As a non-commissioned officer, Thomas commanded one of these posts at times, according to tradition, and certainly led many of these patrols.

This war with France was every bit as important to the future of America as was the Revolution 20 years later. In the peace treaty of 1763, France relinquished all claims to lands east of the Mississippi (except New Orleans); and the territory of New France (which included Canada, all of nine present states and parts of six others) came under British rule. In addition to establishing the continent as British, however, the war had taught the different colonies to act together in emergencies and had shown them that their own troops were as good or better than the professional armies of Europe -- and this kind of thinking made the

Revolutionary War possible. Also, partly to pay for this war, new taxes were put into effect by England, which stirred some of the future discontent of "taxation without representation".

In spite of the pact with France, large scale Indian raids continued in the area through the 1760's, and it is likely that Thomas Kelly divided his time between protecting the region and establishing a home farm. There was warfare around Fort Young in 1763 and 1764. It appears that he was granted some land in 1763, although we are not completely certain at present.

In 1765, Thomas (then about 23 years old) married Margaret (Peggy) Boyles. According to her grandsons' accounts, Peggy was noted for a sweet singing voice, and for her ability to assist in time of sickness, particularly as a "doctor for women". The year of the marriage is taken from records prepared by family members some fifty years ago, without the original source of the date or place being given. Marriage records for this period and area are very incomplete. We know nothing of Peggy's ancestry or earlier life. Families of this name lived in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, but this far we have been unable to trace here antecedents. Allowing for the phonetic spelling of the time, her maiden name may have been shown Boyles, Boylls, or Byles.

The region in which they then lived was originally part of Augusta County, Virginia, but in 1769 Botetourt County was formed by division from the parent county. The following year the Botetourt County Court ordered: "Joseph Carpenter, Thomas Kelly, and John Crawford to view the way leading from John Crawford's to Peter Wright's on the James River and make a report of the conveniences and inconveniences attending the same". This is to say, they were to evaluate the existing road between the mouth of Craig Creek and the present site of Covington, and make recommendations for improvements.

In 1772, Botetourt County made a list of "tithables" (white males over 16 years of age for tax purposes) and included Thomas Kelly in the district "On Jackson River, including the Cow Pasture and Down James River." This area includes Potts Creek. (Several other members of Dickinson's Rangers settled in this same general neighborhood.) This same year, Thomas and Peggy Kelly's first son (James) was born. It is quite possible that one or more of his three daughters (for whom we have no birth dates) had been born earlier. A chart of the nine children will be attached at the end of this account.

In 1774, the last major fighting with Indians in this region took place, known as "Lord Dunmore's War." A large force of Virginians marched over into what is now West Virginia and decisively defeated a large body of Indians at Point Pleasant on the Kanawha River. It was not until then that the western part of Botetourt County became reasonably secure.

An excellent description of life in this region in 1775 can be found in the journal of a circuit-riding Presbyterian minister, Rev. Philip Fithian, who visited the area then, and stayed for a time in the home of John Dickenson (who had commanded Thomas Kelly's Ranger Company earlier). Fithian states that, by then, many

of the village people had glass in their windows and books on the shelves, but wolves could still be heard howling in the forests at night and only a few miles away, Indian raids were still feared. The women usually went barefoot, while the men wore moccasins. Reverend Fithian found very strange the frontier custom of calling not only members of the family, but all neighbors and acquaintances by their given names. The pasturage was excellent, and a good quality of livestock was seen on most farms. Everyone had fine large orchards. There was "plenty of rich milk in large Basons and Noggins -- large Platters covered with Meat of many Sorts; Beeff; Venison; Pork -- & with these Potatoes, Turnips, Cabbage, & Apples beyond your Asking -- A low bench for a table you will have covered with such provisions three Times every Day -- and the Air and customary labor or exercise will set you down to each with a raging Appetite." There was also bread in great plenty, and butter and cheese. A great deal of excellent cider was made, and also some peach brandy and whiskey. It was not until after the Revolutionary War that coffee was commonly used on the frontier, and tea and chocolate were quite rare. Reverend Fithian commented at length about the extraordinary friendliness and open hospitality of the people. He found them serious in their religious feelings, and very attentive to his services.

In the spring of 1775, word was received that war had broken out in New England between the colonists and the King. The war must have seemed very remote to the people in this frontier community. The majority of them were sympathetic to the cause of the colonists -- most were Scotch-Irish rather than English, and others were German; almost none belonged to the Church of England; and the frontiersmen liked considerable independence in their lives.

Two years later, in the winter of 1777, after crops were harvested, Thomas Kelly, who was then about 35 and the father of at least three young children, volunteered for a three-year enlistment in the Continental cavalry. Why would he leave a comfortable home, a new farm, and his wife (who was expecting another baby) for the discomforts and uncertainties of a distant war? He certainly didn't enlist for financial gain; the bounty for enlisting was only \$20 and his salary would be \$8-1/3 a month (when he was paid).

His patriotic feelings must have been very strong, and his entire life indicates his love of adventure. Two additional factors may have helped tip the scale of his decision. First, the campaigns of the war in 1777 had been fought largely in the area around his birth place, in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and the city of Philadelphia was now in British hands. Secondly, the British had commenced arming Indians and using them as allies without adequate supervision to prevent barbarism in many frontier areas -- this would have infuriated the people of Western Virginia in a way nothing else could have done.

The regiment in which Thomas enlisted, the 4th Regiment of Light Dragoons, was one of the more famous organizations in the Continental Army, and for this reason we can trace his movements almost from day to day during his service between Dec. 22, 1777 and Jan. 1, 1782, slightly more than four years. As an indication of the importance of this regiment we have found records of more

than 120 letters in George Washington's personal correspondence files dealing with the unit during the time Thomas was a member. For many reasons, cavalry was not used much by the Continental Army during the first two years of the war. However four regiments of light dragoons were authorized in early 1777.

What were dragoons? In European armies of that time, cavalry was divided into several types, according to the weight of their equipment: lancers and hussars were armed only with lances and sabers, to achieve lightness and permit greater speed; while dragoons were more solidly equipped with arms and equipment but could not move as rapidly. The American Light Dragoons were equipped with heavy sabers and flintlock pistols. When available they also carried flintlock carbines (short barrelled muskets), but sometimes they carried regular muskets instead. The weapons, saddle and harness, were quite a load and were expensive and extremely difficult for Washington's army to obtain. For these reasons only picked men who would enlist for a three-year period were members. Relatively few desertions occurred in these organizations, in a time when irregular departures from the army were quite fashionable.

The Light Dragoons were all part of the Continental Line (as opposed to militia). The Continental Line was the real backbone of the army, composed of dedicated men who enlisted for long periods of service, so that they could be well trained, well disciplined, and better equipped. The militia, on the other hand, called up for short periods of time (a few weeks, or two or three months), would be used for one emergency or campaign, and would then disband to return to their homes. They would rarely serve far from their homes, and by the very nature of their service they could not be the caliber of fighting men that was found in the Line Regiments.

The Fourth Regiment of Light Dragoons was commanded by Col. (later Brigadier General) Stephen Moylan, a native of Ireland, and a well-to-do man of good family. He had come from Ireland to Philadelphia, where his intelligence, good education and personal charm made him a great favorite. Before the regiment was formed, he had been Aide-de-camp to George Washington, and was always a warm personal friend of the general. The faults and the virtues of the Irish combined in him to make a strong and colorful personality that merits a volume alone. William Washington, a cousin of the General, was an officer in the regiment; as was also Zebulon Pike, whose son (of the same name) was the famed soldier and explorer for whom Pike's Peak was named.

The work of the Dragoons involved chiefly work in small patrols; scouting and collecting information, cutting off small parties of the enemy, preventing the enemy from surprising or getting information about the Continental Army, gathering provisions, acting as advance and rear guards, armed escort, etc. This was ideal work for an old Indian fighter like Thomas Kelly.

At that time, special regiments would have individual regimental uniforms. The regimental uniform for the 4th Dragoons in 1777 was, unfortunately, red faced with blue. The men wore uniforms of this color captured from the British at

Saratoga two months before Thomas joined the regiment. Since these same colors were worn by British Dragoons, they wore linen hunting shirts over their uniforms whenever there was a chance of mistaken identity. This was the uniform worn through 1778. Some potentially dangerous incidents of mistaken identity occurred, however, and in 1779 their uniform was changed to the very distinctive and handsome one usually shown in illustrations. There was a dark green cloak, red cape, green coat faced with red, red waistcoat, buckskin breeches, boots, and a leather cap turned up with bearskin. In truth, the lovely uniforms of the illustrations in time became dirty, worn, and quite ragged, and replacements were hard to find. It would appear, however, that for the most part Moylan's Dragoons were dressed better than much of the army.

Although the regiment had an authorized strength of more than 240 enlisted men, it was difficult to find suitable recruits and in February, 1778 (shortly after Thomas joined the organization) it was made up of only 93 men. It was primarily spoken of as a Pennsylvania organization, but in 1780 there were 63 Virginians in the unit.

At the time Thomas Kelly joined his regiment, it was stationed in winter quarters at Valley Forge. Not only was there an acute shortage of provisions for the troops, but also an equal shortage of forage for the horses. Since the governor of New Jersey was fearful because of lack of protection for the northern part of that state, Washington decided to kill two birds with one stone; and, on January 8, 1778, the dragoons left Valley Forge and moved northeast 40 miles to Trenton, New Jersey. Apparently conditions were little better there, but under command of the famed Polish volunteer, General Pulaski, the mounted troops remained at that base for the winter. About one-third of the cavalry was kept on patrol at all times during this period; scouting, keeping the British confined to Philadelphia, foraging, providing escort for important people, etc. Much of the intelligence work of the Revolution was carried on through the dragoons. Information that they gained from scouting was supplemented by information from secret agents. Moylan's reports to Washington frequently enclosed reports from these agents, sometimes even written in invisible ink.

Anyone with military experience will smile with recognition at the following exchange: May 24, 1778 - Letter Washington to Moylan: Orders for the cavalry to join the army at Valley Forge.

May 28 -- Letter Washington to Moylan: Orders for the cavalry to remain in Trenton.

May 30 -- Moylan to Washington: Movement of troops halted in consequence of orders. June 1 -- Washington to Moylan: Remain where you are.

June 18 -- Washington to Moylan: Orders for the cavalry to join the army at Valley Forge.

Can't you imagine the troopers grumbling as they packed and repacked their equipment?

On June 18, however, the British garrison began to leave Philadelphia, marching northeast to join British forces in New York. Washington quickly ordered Colonel Moylan to assemble "all available horse . . . to harass the enemy's rear and to collect and forward intelligence", and to cooperate with the militia "to interrupt and impede their progress by every obstruction in their power, so as to give time to the army in my command to come with them." Washington was not certain just where the British intended going, and he depended on Moylan's cavalry to gather information and bring it back to him as fast as the horses could travel.

At that time, if you had seen Thomas Kelly, you would have found him wearing his combat uniform, a long brownish gray hunting shirt of homespun linen, with fringe at the shoulder and neck, and deerskin trousers. On his head as protection against saber blows was a helmet of leather and steel, with an ornamental strip of bearskin down the middle from front to rear. Strapped at his side was his heavy saber, with a straight blade a yard long. Attached to the saddle, in a leather holster, was his heavy flintlock dragoon pistol, and he carried a short barrelled flintlock musket. Tied behind the saddle was a big red and blue cloak, which in rainy weather would cover not only the rider but also his accouterments and would serve as a blanket at night. He also carried a beautiful red uniform trimmed in blue that had been captured from the enemy -- this he wore for dress occasions in camp, but not when the red color could cause him to be mistaken for a British dragoon. His boots and harness were relatively new, but of a poor grade of leather that wouldn't last very long. His horse (like the rider) had been pretty thin through the winter but now with new spring forage it was starting to fill out again. On a hip, the horse bore the brand "4LD."

They crossed the river and soon overtook the redcoats. Part of the regiment started worrying the rear guard and capturing any British stragglers that fell behind. The other part raced along parallel to the British and to their left, to see where the head of the column was going. As soon as it was determined that they were headed toward Mt. Holly, a dragoon went galloping back with the message for Washington. Some of the dragoons were soon ahead of the British advance guard, and the redcoats began to find their way impeded in dozens of unexpected ways. Bridges were demolished and trees felled across the roads. The hot, thirsty Hessians and English would stagger from the line of march to the roadside wells, only to find they had been filled in with dirt and sand. Small parties of the British sent out for forage or firewood disappeared mysteriously. Day after day this went on, with dragoons racing back to Washington every few hours with the news of the enemy's position. The heat was intense, the humidity was overpowering and the dust rose in clouds. Men commenced dropping from heat prostration -- one Hessian regiment lost one-third of its men along the road, and many died.

Meanwhile, the rest of Washington's army had been cutting across, trying to head off the British, who now were obviously headed for Sandy Hook where their naval transports could carry them over to New York. The leading Continental infantry corps was marching up as fast as possible under Lafayette. In a further effort to

gain information about the enemy, the famous Baron von Steuben accompanied Moylan's dragoons in their scouting. They sometimes crept up within pistol range of the British and often narrowly escaped capture, but they achieved their twin objectives of slowing down the enemy and keeping Washington informed of the British movements. The heat and the constant activity began taking its toll of cavalry horses -- some dropped dead, many collapsed, and by the end of each day none could move faster than a slow trot -- at the end of one of the worst days, in the entire regiment, Moylan had only thirty mounts capable of action.

The constant hampering of the British by the dragoons and some light infantry slowed them enough so that Washington was able to catch up with the enemy column at Monmouth Courthouse. During part of this time, the large portion of the Fourth Dragoons was under Lafayette's control. The dragoons were not heavily engaged during the important battle that followed, but they had made the battle possible -- and as soon as the British began to retreat, Moylan's men were again wearily galloping after them, capturing stragglers, assisting deserters, harassing the rear guard, and gathering military intelligence. The role of Thomas Kelly's regiment was essential in this campaign, which in turn was vital to the achievement of American independence.

During this campaign, the dragoons had been in constant activity for over two weeks, in a sultry heat that was causing prostrations and deaths every day. As many troopers as possible were kept in the saddle; but many of the horses actually were incapable of further duty, and these were sent with their riders to Shrewsbury to recuperate. The remaining dragoons were spread exceedingly thin. As the famous Virginian, Daniel Morgan wrote:

Middletown, 9 o'clock 2 July 1778

Sir: I came to this place early yesterday morning; the enemy had left it the night before; their main body is encamped about three miles from the town ; their rear within a mile; we are in full view of each other. I am, and have been ever since I came out, at a great loss for light horse, having none with me. General Scott sent me a sergeant and six, whose horses were tired and rather an encumbrance since they could scarcely raise a gallop. Maj. Jamison was here yesterday. I applied to him for a few; he sent Capt. Harrison who stayed with me about two hours when Colonel Moylan sent for him and his party. Colonel Moylan has good Reasons for so doing, but, Sir, you know the cavalry are the eyes of the Infantry and without any my situation must not be very pleasing, being in full view of the enemy's whole army.

Daniel Morgan.

Washington's army then moved north, where the main group went into camp at White Plains, New York. The Cavalry went to Tappan, New York and then moved to Hackensack, New Jersey, where they were to remain for a time. This location was selected by Washington since it provided a wide area from which to get forage and provisions, and also the cavalry patrols could prevent supplies from being moved by Tories to the British army in New York City. On July 30, Washington congratulated Moylan for the cavalry's work in rounding up livestock. Some of the cavalry was moved back to the main army, and two dragoons were assigned to each of the most strategic of the scattered guard posts to carry information back to headquarters in case of emergency.

In September 1778 a new policy was established, for George Washington's personal headquarters guard to include cavalymen detailed from the First, Second, Third and Fourth Light Dragoons during trips, troop movements, ceremonials, and combat. It may well be that Thomas Kelly served as part of Washington's personal guard on some of these occasions.

The only existing Muster Roll for the Fourth Regiment Light Dragoons is dated Sept. 23, 1778 and reports Thomas Kelley present for duty at the time. In October the regiment was moved to Passaic, New Jersey, from which they continued to watch both the British forces in New York and the enemy fleet.

During the winter of 1778-79 the army was dispersed into a number of places, with the hope that the extreme hardship in obtaining provisions experienced at Valley Forge would be prevented. The Fourth moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania during the second week in December. The horses and men were gaunt and tired, and clothing and equipment were in short supply but, on the whole, the army ate better and was better covered than during the previous winter.

The following spring, two of the four regiments of Light Dragoons were transferred to the southern colonies, leaving only the Second and Fourth Regiments with Washington's army. Describing the troops of one of the other cavalry regiments at that time, an officer wrote: "we were as naked a set as ever you saw. Half or more were without a coat, waistcoat, or shirt . . ." The Fourth Light Dragoons were fortunate in obtaining the new uniforms described earlier. Apparently the horses were in better condition, and some new mounts had been provided. As soon as the new forage had grown high enough in May, the Fourth Dragoons moved back to New York, first to New Windsor. On June 27, 1779, Washington ordered the regiment across the Hudson River to Bedford, New York, "to protect the country and inhabitants, prevent ravages of small parties, aid the militia, and gain intelligence of the enemy's force, movement, and design, of which you will give me the most punctual information." During this period, Moylan's letters indicate they were quite active in secret service matters.

In July, the British commenced a series of raids on Connecticut coastal towns by troops carried by the fleet from Long Island; New Haven and Fairfield were looted and destroyed. On their next raid, they attacked Norwalk and here they met such stout resistance that they had to cross back to Long Island for

reinforcements, and General Clinton ordered the raids stopped. The resistance at Norwalk was put up by militia and by Moylan's cavalry, which had moved there by exhausting forced marches – they had fought stubbornly for five hours and taken some prisoners before they were pushed back. They had not been able to prevent Norwalk from being partially destroyed, but the vigor of their resistance may well have played a role in causing the British to decide against more such raids.

The 4th Light Dragoons remained in Connecticut and in adjacent portions of New York for the rest of the year, assisting in protection of that area. On August 5, the regiment made a raid behind the British lines, east of Peekskill on a branch of the Croton River. The dragoons and a party of infantry were put under command of Lieutenant Colonel White, who was Moylan's second in command. This action was noteworthy in that it was one of the few American offensives in the Northern Colonies during the year, and it was directed against an enemy corps that was particularly hated for its activity against the patriot civilians of the area. They took more than thirty prisoners, gained valuable intelligence, and much plunder in the raid, and held off a superior British force by a spirited rear guard action as they withdrew. George Washington said: "I shall communicate the success of Col. White's enterprise to Congress, and beg that you will present my thanks to him, the other officers, and the Corps concerned on the occasion.

The remainder of the year was spent in scouting, gathering intelligence and guarding. It was a vigorous and wearying campaign for the dragoons. Only two regiments and two smaller independent organizations of horse, all below strength in men and horses and all insufficiently equipped and supplied, tried to cover a line of defense stretching through three states. The safety of the entire army (and much of the sympathetic civilian population) depended on their activity and vigilance. Recognition came again in October, when Washington wrote asking that his thanks be given to the dragoons for the great gallantry with which they behaved. As always, clothing was short, and in November, Moylan wrote Washington about attempts to find more "leathern Breeches" and clothing for his men before winter set in. In late November, both regiments of dragoons went into winter quarters at Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Of the entire war, the winter of 1779-80 was the time of the Army's greatest suffering and privation. Even Valley Forge could not compare with this for misery. Much of the army wintered near Morristown, New Jersey, with other parts around West Point and in Connecticut. Before huts could be built, the worst blizzard of the century closed them in. Snow from four to six feet deep obstructed all roads, preventing movement of even the scanty supplies that could be found. Clothing and food were never more scarce, and the suffering defies description. On Dec. 20, Washington wrote Moylan at Wethersfield directing that the Dragoons be moved to Colchester, where there would be better forage and supplies for the winter. On January 17, 1780, Moylan wrote Washington that the snow was so bad that they still had been unable to move, but on the twentieth they finally made the miserable thirty-mile march. Moylan's letters

describe desperate need for clothing, quarters, and flour. February 1, Moylan transmitted to Washington a letter from the citizens of Colchester stating that it was impossible for the cavalry to be supported there, and on Feb. 7 the Second Light Dragoons were moved back through the snow to Wethersfield. In late Feb. a request was received for a detachment of cavalry to be sent to Greenwich, Connecticut to prevent the Tories there from sending provisions to the enemy in New York – Moylan was unable to provide this detachment because of the extreme lack of clothing and equipment – at that time, he stated, only seven men in the second regiment were fit for duty. Moylan's letters continued to describe the suffering of the men "for want of bread and clothing," through March and April. An additional problem arose when the regimental paymaster went to Morristown to pick up the regiment's pay from the army headquarters, and his valise containing the "muster and payrolls" was stolen – months later the paymaster general of the army was still trying to disentangle the administrative problem and get the troops paid. Small wonder that the army was having difficulties with recruiting and obtaining reenlistments at this point!

Thomas Kelly apparently obtained a furlough and visited his home during the winter, possibly assisting in the program of obtaining recruits and remounts at the same time. Proof of his visit home is found in the court records for Botetourt County:

No 580

February Botetourt Court 1780

I do hereby Certify that Thomas Kelly produced his discharge and proved to this Court he served in Capt. Dickerson Company of Rangers the years 1757, 1758, and 1759 as a Corporal for the protection and Defence of the Frontiers of this Colony and that and that he hath Obtained noWarrant or other Certificate for the Same.

Test

David May – Clk

Warrant for 200 acres issued to Thomas Kelly the 4 of March 17__.

As had happened the previous year, the cavalry was spread thin when campaigning resumed in the spring. Howe, commanding in Connecticut, wrote Washington that he needed Moylan's Regiment, and Washington replied from New York that "in the present situation Moylan is essential here."

Another spectacular raid took place in July of 1780. The narrow strip of land in New Jersey between the Hackensack and Hudson Rivers had always been considered a Tory stronghold, and during the years that the British army held New York City, it had been protected and had become a center for a lawless

group of British sympathizers. They had built a strong fort at a place called Bulls Ferry (now a part of Jersey City), and carried on guerrilla activities from there. Many horses, cattle, and sheep (often stolen) were concentrated here, destined for the British garrison in New York. On July 20, "Mad Anthony" Wayne, with four regiments of the Pennsylvania Line, Moylan's Dragoons, and four pieces of artillery, made a surprise attack on the area, in which they captured several hundred head of livestock, destroyed considerable shipping facilities, took some prisoners, and achieved an important tactical advantage by delaying for three days the shipment of armament intended for use in a campaign against the patriots and their French allies in Rhode Island.

Two accounts of the regiment are found in contemporary diaries. One soldier noted Oct. 27, 1780: "Yesterday the whole army paraded for review . . . His excellency, George Washington and the Minister Plenipotentiary from France . . . made an elegant appearance, attended by their aides and Moylan's Regiment of Light Dragoons." The French Marquis de Chastellux, visiting the American camp wrote that Moylan's men "are perfectly mounted and do not fear meeting the English dragoons, over whom they have gained several advantages, but they have never been numerous enough to form a solid and permanent body." He commented on the excellence of their horsemanship.

On November 28, 1780, the regiment was again ordered into winter quarters, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The enlistments of all of the original members of the regiment expired at the end of 1780. Many were broken physically, and personal, economic, and family matters compelled many to leave the service. Deaths and a few desertions further weakened the old regiment so that it sank to the incredibly low strength of eleven troopers. Somehow Thomas Kelly, then 38 years old, in spite of many responsibilities at home, decided to stay with the regiment and reenlisted for another year.

Washington wrote repeatedly to Congress and the Board of War during the winter, urging that they "take the most effectual measures, as soon as possible, to recruit, equip, and mount Moylan's regiment of Dragoons," and, as soon as it could again be built into an effective unit, "to order them . . . to join the Southern Army" where they would be "more than ever useful." In the spring, Wayne with his Pennsylvania Line was ordered south to assist with the fighting there. Eventually Moylan's regiment was recruited to something over 80 troopers, and they were sent south in detachments to join Wayne during the summer. The regiment was active in the Yorktown campaign, scouting the enemy movements and preventing his attempts to move north by land. Accounts describe frequent skirmishing involving the dragoons around Williamsburg, where they took prisoners and assisted enemy deserters. On Sept. 28, 1781 the combined French and American armies left Williamsburg to move against the British at Yorktown. The troops leading the entire column were Moylan's Dragoons, followed by the light infantry under General Muhlenberg. This march led to the siege of Yorktown, the most pleasant campaign of the entire war for the Americans. Casualties were light, the weather was good, and (for once) supplies were relatively ample. Several

diarists even commented on the excellence of the local watermelons and the hospitality and general friendliness and patriotism of the inhabitants. As soon as trenches were constructed south of Yorktown, the dragoons and the French cavalry were moved north across the York River to the Gloucester side, to prevent any attempt at a break-out in that direction. Finally, on October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered to end the last great battle and campaign of the war. The description of the surrender, with the British band playing “The World Turned Upside Down,” has been depicted too often, in word and picture, to need repeating in this brief account, but it was one of the few glorious triumphs for Washington’s forces in the long, painful struggle and it was good that the faithful members of the Fourth Light Dragoons could be there to share in the joy.

After the victory, Moylan requested a furlough because of ill health, and the command of the regiment fell to Colonel Anthony White for the rest of the war. On November 5 the cavalry, with the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia Line Regiments, commenced to move south to reinforce General Greene in his campaign against the British in North Carolina. The march was miserable – the southern winter had set in, with drenching rains and muddy roads. Icy streams were forded, and swamps, knee-deep in mud, were crossed. Half of the cavalry scouted ahead and half guarded the rear. They laboriously covered over fifteen miles a day. On the approach of this army, the British army at Wilmington fled south, followed by the Continental Army into South Carolina. Thomas Kelly’s service was up at this time, and he apparently left the service January 1, 1782, after something more than four years. It was not until 1790 that he was finally given a certificate for \$61.60 as “final settlement of back pay, allotment, and depreciation pay up to Jan. 1, 1782.”

Throughout the three years of campaigning in the north and two in the south the regiment was constantly active at the front. The shortage of mounted troops never permitted adequate rest for either the men or their horses. Due either to increased vigilance or the sometimes peculiar fortunes of war, Moylan’s men escaped the traps that had caused several of their sister regiments to be so badly cut up, but they suffered casualties on many fields of action. They felt the gnawing of empty stomachs, and the numbing grip of cold on innumerable hundreds of occasions. They had forced themselves into incredible efforts in heat that was killing men and horses all about them. They felt the fatigue that goes bone deep, that makes the lifting of a hand or the turning of a head a terrible effort, that allows a man to fall asleep in the saddle and waken only when he painfully hits the roadway. They suffered the camp fevers, dysenteries, agues, and other plagues that were dreaded worse than British musket-balls. They often endured this while facing selfishness and even hostility from many of their civilian countrymen, and bungling or apparent indifference from their government.

In studying their part in the war, one is deeply impressed with the profound wisdom of Washington’s statement that if historians write the true story of these

soldiers, future generations would consider them fictitious, “for it will not be believed,” that such a force as Great Britain has employed for eight years in this country could be baffled . . . by numbers infinitely less, composed of men oftentimes half starved, always in rags, without pay, and experiencing every species of distress, which human nature is capable of undergoing.”

The next written record we have of Thomas Kelly is in the Botetourt County Court records where we find that he was on three juries in 1783: in May, August, and November. He was now forty-one years old, with a family of six boys from one to ten years old and at least one of the three daughters that he was to have. He was living at that time on Potts Creek (a branch of Jackson River). A twenty-three acre tract of land there had been recorded for him June 9, 1781 in the first official land survey for the county, described as him “by right of entry.” He had probably been living on this land for some time prior to the survey, and it may have been part of a larger tract since all tax lists between 1772 and 1801 show him as owning 126 acres in Botetourt County. Potts Creek, some distance west of Fincastle, originates in Greenbrier County (now West Virginia) and flows into western Botetourt County. His land was assessed at two pounds per acre. Thomas apparently was interested in horses, and personal tax lists between 1789 and 1796 show him as owning between four and nine horses. Neither he nor many of his neighbors owned slaves.

We know little of the years after the war. The children received what was a good education for the frontier; their legible signatures on documents, and the fact that some of the boys were capable of doing their own survey work establish this. The character of the children and grandchildren attest to a proper religious background.

Possibly, as the children grew up, Thomas grew restless on the quiet farm, or the area was becoming too heavily settled for his taste, or he felt that farther West there would be more land, or better soil, or a better climate for his growing family. Tradition tells us that he first moved to Greenbrier County (now West Virginia), but we have no record of this. At any rate, with James, the oldest son, and the youngest child a teenager, the family moved to Kentucky, probably 1796-1797. Wedding records fix the date, since Leah Kelly (daughter of Thomas and Peggy) married Robert Smith May 21, 1796 in Botetourt County, Virginia; but Molly Kelly married Mathew Hickson (Hixon) on Aug. 21, 1797, in Garrard County, Kentucky. Tradition states that the family had intended to move to Illinois, but they were persuaded by General Kennedy to go to Kentucky instead, because of the unhealthy climate of Illinois. Thomas would have been about fifty-five at the time, but must have been filled with vigor and enthusiasm. James, who had married in Virginia, accompanied the family, and the 1800 census listed four as “heads of households” in Kentucky: Thomas, James, John, and Isaac. Samuel was probably listed as part of his father’s household, and Elias and Abijah were still minors. Samuel had received a grant of 200 acres on Clifty Creek, March 15, 1799 – this grant required that he must have it surveyed and live there for one year. All of Thomas’ sons settled in *Pulaski or Wayne Counties. John married

in 1805, Elias in 1806, and Samuel and Abijah in 1807. Thomas' daughter Rachel and her husband apparently lived nearby until her early death, and Leah and Robert (Robin) Smith also lived in Pulaski County for a number of years. Thus, Thomas and Peggy had many grandchildren about them in Kentucky.

Thomas made his home with his son Samuel, on Clifty Creek, Pulaski County, until his death in 1812, at age 70. At this time his country was again at war against the same crown Thomas had defended in 1757 and rejected in the War for Independence. He was laid to rest on a hill "within a mile of Mt. Gilead Church", and, appropriately, this sturdy frontiersman who had bivouacked countless nights under the trees of at least ten of our states found his last bivouac under "spreading giants of the forest." Two years later, in 1814, Margaret (Peggy) Boyles Kelly, his wife of 47 years, was laid at his side.

* Pulaski County was named for Count Casimir Pulaski, a Polish patriot and American General, under whom Thomas Kelly had served as a cavalryman.

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