

The Patriot Hart *(cont.)*

Historical Background Information

Legends are stories from the past that are believed by many but cannot be proven true. Legends are a valuable part of history. They can help develop an understanding of the situations people faced and how they dealt with them. But legends sometimes make it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Such is the story of Georgian Nancy Hart.

In the years following the American Revolution, historical accounts of heroes of the war appeared in journals and books. Illustrations of Nancy Hart and the Tories captured the imaginations of many. The story that inspired the illustrations made Hart a legend. She was known as a fierce patriot and defender of American independence.

Hart was born in North Carolina in 1735. She moved to Georgia with her husband, Benjamin, around 1771. They built a cabin in the Broad River valley. When the war broke out, Benjamin served as a lieutenant in the Georgia Militia. Hart stayed at home with their eight children.

Hart was a big, strong woman. Some accounts claim she was six feet tall. She was not able to read or write. But, she knew much about plants and the remedies that could be made from them. When anyone was sick, they asked "Aunt Nancy" for help finding a cure. She was courageous and, by most accounts, had a very bad temper.

According to the legend, five or six loyalists came to Hart's cabin one night. They were looking for information about men who supported the patriot cause. Hart said she did not know anything. Because she would not cooperate, one of the loyalists shot her prized turkey. They ordered her to cook the turkey for them. They asked her for some wine to drink while they waited. The men stacked their guns in the corner of the cabin before they sat down. While the men drank their wine, Hart was able to sneak the guns through a hole in the cabin wall. She then quietly sent her daughter to get help. Soon, the men realized what Hart was up to. A fight broke out. Hart shot and killed one of the men. When the others continued to resist, she shot another. When her husband and other patriots arrived, they were angry. The patriots took the remaining loyalists into the woods and hanged them.

Though there is no written evidence to support this story, it has been passed down from generation to generation. Hart is described as a heroine of the American Revolution. Later, in 1912, men who were working on a railroad line near the old Hart cabin uncovered six skeletons buried in a row. It was thought that these were the loyalists who had entered Hart's cabin that night.

