

Biography

Thomas Roy

by James D. Schaffer
Great 5 Grandson

Thomas Roy was born circa 1735 in Spotsylvania County, within the Colony and Dominion of Virginia. He was the son of James Roy (1686–1741), a native Virginian. At the time of Thomas's birth, Spotsylvania County—established in 1720—served as the westernmost edge of the Virginia frontier. The county was intentionally structured to incentivize westward migration and to function as a buffer against French and Native American influence beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains.

In 1761, Roy married Margaret Meadows (1739-1805) (frequently mis-transcribed or compressed in genealogical records as "Mead") in King and Queen County, Virginia. The marriage produced at least eight children.

Roy pledged his allegiance to support the Patriot cause during the American Revolution. On February 15, 1777, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in Captain Cleon Moore's Company of the Additional Continental Regiment of Foot of Virginia, commanded by Colonel William Grayson.

During his tenure, Lieutenant Roy participated in the 1777 Philadelphia Campaign. His unit engaged in skirmishing throughout northern New Jersey near the Morristown and Middlebrook encampments, followed by the Battles of Brandywine (September 11) and Germantown (October 4) in Pennsylvania. Roy officially resigned his commission on December 1, 1777. Given the timing, his departure aligns with the mass exodus of Continental officers and enlisted personnel immediately preceding the army's march into winter quarters at Valley Forge.

An enduring family tradition alleges that during a period when the Continental Army was encamped near his Virginia residence, Roy requested a brief furlough to visit his family. Upon being refused by his commanding officer, he departed without authorization. He was apprehended as a deserter upon returning to camp the following morning and sentenced to execution by firing squad. According to the legend, General George Washington personally reviewed the case and issued an executive pardon.

Sometime between 1790 and 1802, Roy, through a series of moves, relocated his family to the Pulaski County, Kentucky area.

Thomas Roy died circa 1805 in Pulaski County, Kentucky. His exact interment site remains unverified.

Sources

"The Ancestors of Charles Wesley Clabaugh and Louise Zimmerman Clabaugh and Their Descendants", pages 260 & 261

"Heitman Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution 1775-1783", Francis Bernard Heitman, page 476

"Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution: Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, 1775-1783", John H. Gwathmey, page 681

"The Roy Family of Virginia and Kentucky", Nancy Reba Roy, page 13

DAR RC# 752287

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