

**THE LIFE AND SERVICES OF
THE HONORABLE MAJ.
GEN. SAMUEL ELBERT, OF
GEORGIA**

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The Life and Services of the Honorable Maj. Gen. Samuel Elbert, of Georgia by Charles C. Jones

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CHARLES C. JONES

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HONORABLE
MAJ. GEN. SAMUEL ELBERT
OF GEORGIA

BY
Charles C. Jones, Jr.
CHARLES C. JONES, JR., LL. D.

AN ADDRESS delivered before THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
at Savannah, on the 6th of December, 1888

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TO THE
HONORABLE GENERAL HENRY R. JACKSON,
Of Savannah, Georgia,
PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
This Sketch
IS CORDIALLY INSCRIBED.

MAJOR-GENERAL SAMUEL ELBERT.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN :

Responding to the flattering invitation extended by the Lecture Committee of this Society, I come to-night, my friends, to recall the image of one who, a century ago, was the honored chief magistrate of this commonwealth, — who acted a conspicuous part in our colonial struggle for independence, — who was numbered among the earliest and the most zealous “Sons of Liberty,” — whose reputation, both civil and military, was free from all alloy, — who bore himself on every occasion as a courageous man and a worthy citizen, — who sleeps in an unmarked grave within cannon-range of this Hall in which we are now assembled to render tribute to his virtues, — and of whom, so far as our information extends, we possess no portrait save such as his own brave hand has painted on the historic canvas.

To the Continental Army Georgia furnished only two officers who attained the rank of Brig-

adier-General. They were Lachlan McIntosh and Samuel Elbert. Both were excellent soldiers, sterling patriots, and influential citizens. Their services alike in peace and in war were held in high repute. It is of the latter of them that we would speak.

Born in the province of South Carolina seven years after Oglethorpe had planted his colony upon Yamacraw Bluff, and of English parentage, his youth was spent in the Parish of Prince William, where his father, a Baptist clergyman, had charge of a congregation. Of the early life of Samuel Elbert but little is known. While still a lad he was deprived by death of both his parents. In quest of employment he repaired to Savannah, in Georgia, where his steady habits, energy, honesty, and upright conduct soon commended him to general favor. There, entering upon a commercial life, by his integrity and devotion to business he won the confidence and secured preferment at the hands of those with whom he was associated. For several years antecedent to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he was recognized as a leading and prosperous merchant in the commercial metropolis of the province. With the Indians his trade relations were extensive. His marriage with Miss Elizabeth Rae confirmed his social position and influence. While still a young man he manifested a decided taste for military affairs ; and,

during the latter years of Governor Wright's administration, held a captain's commission in a company of Grenadiers.

Savannah was then the capital of Georgia, and the home of considerable wealth and refinement. The only town which aspired to a rivalry with it for the trade of the colony was Sunbury, situated near the mouth of Midway River. When the disagreements between England and her American colonies became serious, and public sentiment was divided, Captain Elbert promptly enrolled himself among the "Sons of Liberty." Of the Council of Safety which convened on the 22d of June, 1775, and was composed of such influential patriots as Noble W. Jones, Archibald Bulloch, John Houstoun, William Ewen, Joseph Clay, Edward Telfair, George Walton, and Joseph Habersham, he was an efficient member. By the action of this body was Georgia placed in correspondence with the Continental Congress and with the Councils of Safety of the other revolting provinces. Then was a union flag defiantly hoisted upon a liberty pole. Then were thirteen patriotic toasts proposed, and responded to by salutes from two field-pieces and by martial music. Then were resolutions adopted pledging Georgia to the common cause of American liberty.

To the Provincial Congress, which assembled in Savannah on the 4th of July in the same

year, Captain Elbert was a delegate. This was Georgia's first secession convention. It committed the province to positive sympathy and confederated alliance with the twelve sister American colonies; — practically annulled within her limits the operation of the objectionable acts of Parliament; — questioned the supremacy of British rule, and inaugurated measures intended to accomplish the independence of the plantation and its erection into the dignity of a State. By that Congress was Samuel Elbert chosen a member of the Council of Safety charged with the conduct of public affairs and empowered to provide for the common defense. The organization of the militia enlisted the liveliest interest, and the most potent measures at command were adopted by this Council to enroll, officer, and equip the arms-bearing population of the province.¹ All vessels which would engage to import war materials were declared exempt from the penalties of the non-importation agreement, and Samuel Elbert, Edward Telfair, and Joseph Habersham were appointed a committee to supply Georgia with arms and ammunition. They were authorized to contract for the purchase of four hundred muskets with bayonets, twenty

¹ A committee, consisting of Stephen Drayton, Samuel Elbert, Dr. Nathan Brownson, and Peter Tarlin, was raised and commissioned to prepare a report upon the militia of the province, with such suggestions as might be deemed proper for its efficient organization.

thousand pounds of gunpowder, and sixty thousand pounds of cannon-balls, bullets, bar-lead, grape and swan shot. The battalion raised under the resolution of the Continental Congress for the protection of Georgia was organized on the 7th of January, 1776, by the enrollment of eight companies, fully officered, and by the appointment of Lachlan McIntosh as Colonel, Samuel Elbert as Lieutenant-Colonel, and Joseph Habersham as Major. From this time until the conclusion of the Revolutionary War Colonel Elbert was actively engaged in the military service of the struggling confederacy.

On the 19th of May, 1776, Major Joseph Habersham married Miss Isabella Rae, — a sister-in-law of Colonel Elbert. This cemented a friendship already existing between that officer and Major Habersham's younger brother, — Lieutenant John Habersham, — who was soon announced as Brigade Major of the Georgia forces upon the Continental establishment. During their joint service in Georgia these officers were at all times associated upon terms of the closest intimacy, and together shared the common peril.

The first passage at arms in Georgia between the King's soldiers and the rebels occurred at Savannah, early in March, 1776. Only a little while before, Governor Wright, escaping from