

The following account on James "Horse-Shoe Robertson was given in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, at the Annual Labor Day Festivities in 1953, by local historian Matthew William Clinton. Mr. Clinton was a local historian and taught history at Tuscaloosa High School for many years. For fifteen years or more Mr. Clinton wrote a segment of Tuscaloosa history for each Annual Labor Day Program. The following account was (scanned) copied By Doster L. McMullen from the 1953 Program:

In 1837 there lived in Tuscaloosa County a man who was famous in history and in fiction. James Robertson, better known as "Horseshoe Robinson" was born in South Carolina in 1759. During the American Revolution he was a scout for the Continental armies in South Carolina and a terror to the Tories. He moved to Tuscaloosa County soon after Alabama became a state. In 1835 John Pendleton Kennedy wrote a novel entitled **Horseshoe Robinson**. A copy of the book was sent to Robertson by the author and Horseshoe said that the events related in the book were substantially true.

In the January 17, 1838 issue of the Flag of the Union is the following account of an interview with Horseshoe Robertson, then 79 years of age:

Horseshoe Robinson — who has not read Kennedy's delightful novel of this name, and who that has read it would not give a half days' ride to see the venerable living hero of this tale of "Tory Ascendency," the immortal Horseshoe himself—the extermination of "Jim Curry" and Hugh Habershaw?

The venerable patriot bearing this familiar sobriquet, and whose name Mr. Kennedy has made as familiar in the mouths of American youth as household words, was visited by us, in company with several friends, one day last week. We found the old gentleman on his plantation, about twelve miles from this city, as comfortably situated with respect to this world's goods as any one could desire to have him. It was gratifying to us to see him in his old age after having served through the whole war of independence, thus seated under his own vine and fig tree, with his children around him and with the partner of his early toils and trials still continued to him, enjoying in peace and safety the rich rewards of that arduous struggle, in the

most gloomy and desponding hour of which he was found as ready, as earnest, and zealous for the cause of liberty as when victory perched upon her standard, and the star of the "Tory Ascendency" was, for a while, dimmed by defeat—and in which he continued with unshaken faith and constancy until it sank below the horizon never again to rise. The old gentleman gave us a partial history of his revolutionary adventures, containing many interesting facts respecting the domination of the Tory party in the South during the times of the Revolution, which Mr. Kennedy has not recorded in his book. But it will chiefly interest our readers, or that portion of them at least to whom the history of the old hero's achievements as recorded by Mr. Kennedy is familiar, to be assured that the principal incidents therein portrayed are strictly true.

That his escape from Charleston after the capture of that city, his being entrusted with a letter to Butler, the scene at Wat Adair's, the capture of Butler at Grindall's Ford, his subsequent escape and recapture, the death of John Ramsay, and the detection of the party by reason of the salute fired over his grave, his capturing the four men under the command of the younger St. Jermyn, his attack upon Innis' camp, and the death of Hugh Habershaw by his own hand, and finally the battle at King's Mountain, the rescue of Butler and the death of Jim Curry, all are narrated pretty much as they occurred, or in the old veteran's own language, "there is a heap of truth in it, though the writer has mightily furnished it up." That the names of Butler, Mildred Lindsay, Mary Musgrove, John Ramsay, Hugh Habershaw, Jim Curry, and in fact almost every other used in the book, with the exception of his own, are real and not fictitious. His own name, he informed us, is James; and that he did not go by the familiar appellation by which he is now so widely known until after the war, when he acquired it from the form of his plantation in the Horse Shoe bend, of the Fair Forest Creek; which was bestowed upon him by the Legislature of South Carolina in consideration of the services he had rendered during the war — this estate we understood him to

say he still owned.

He was born, he says, in 1759 in Virginia, and entered the army in his seventeenth year. Before the close of the war, he informed us, he commanded a troop of horse, so that his military title is captain. Horse Shoe, although in infirm health, bears evident marks of having been a man of great personal strength and activity. He is now afflicted with a troublesome cough, which in the natural course of events, must in a few years wear out his aged frame. Yet notwithstanding his infirmities and general debility, his eye still sparkles with the fire of youth, as he recounts the stirring and thrilling incidents of the war; and that sly, quiet humor so well described by Kennedy may still be seen playing around his mouth as one calls to his recollection any of the pranks he was wont to play upon the "Tory Vagrants," as he very properly describes them. The old gentleman received us with the warmest cordiality and hospitality; and after partaking of the bounties of his board and spending a night under his hospitable roof, we took our leave of him, and sincerely wishing his many years of the peaceful enjoyment of that liberty which he fought so long and bravely to achieve. It will not be uninteresting, we hope, to remark that the old hero still considers himself a soldier, though the nature of his warfare is changed; he is now as zealous to promote the interest of the Redeemer's Kingdom as he once was in securing the independence of his country.

Since the above was in type, we have learned of the death of the aged partner of this venerable patriot. An obituary notice will be found in another column.

The obituary notice follows:

"Died—On the 7th inst., in the 75th year of her age, Mrs. Sarah Morris, consort of Major James Robertson, known by the name of Horseshoe Robertson.

For forty years she had been a member of the Baptist Church, and had acted the part of an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a zealous Christian."

Horseshoe Robertson was the great grandfather of Beatty Robertson, for many years president of the Tuscaloosa City Commission and also the great grandfather of James S. Robertson, who was also president of the City Commission from 1949 to 1952. (And later Mayor of Tuscaloosa) The grave of Horseshoe Robertson is in the family cemetery on the west bank of the Warrior River about half way between the Foster's Ferry Bridge and Sanders' Ferry.

The following inscription is on his tombstone:

"Major James Robertson

A native of S. C. died April 26, 1838, aged 79 years and was buried here.

Well known as Horseshoe Robinson, he earned a just fame in the war for independence, in which he was eminent in courage, patriotism and suffering. He lived for fifty-six years with his worthy partner, useful and respected, and died in hopes of a blessed immortality. His children erect this monument as a tribute justly due a good husband, father, neighbor, patriot and soldier."

Many heroes of less worth are celebrated more. Proper historical tablets erected on Highways 11 and 8, together with road markers to the vicinity of Romulus and to the cemetery could make the burial place of the Revolutionary hero a place of interest to many people.