



Whispering Down the Lane

The Story of Unsung Patriot John Anthony

Kathleen Herrmann

One afternoon, Kathy sat with her cousin Ellen, reflecting on their shared family history.

"When you are researching the family, Kathy, you have to check and double-check your information," explained Ellen. "Remember, Cornelius whispered down the lane," meaning Cornelius Scott did not remember everything accurately.

"So, you are saying our third great-grandfather, John Anthony, wasn't from Seville, Spain?" replied Kathy.

"Look at your DNA, Kathy. Do you have any Spanish blood?"

"Ummm, no," Kathy shook her head.

"I don't either," said Ellen.

The story about Spanish ancestry is one piece of information that a little boy named Cornelius Scott had heard wrong. As a sickly old man seventy years later, just two weeks before his death, he had reported his memories of Revolutionary War patriot John Anthony to the Kent County, Maryland courthouse.

"He was wrong about that but right about the other information," said Ellen.

"How do you know what's accurate or not?" asked Kathy.

"Look at the primary sources!"

Ellen recounted some of the stories from the courthouse's historical records. "The Kent County Courthouse documents say that Cornelius Scott was ten years old when he last heard our third great-grandfather regale the children of Downs Cross Roads (now Galena, Maryland) with tales of the Revolutionary War."

According to Cornelius Scott, John Anthony, known as Pop-pop to his family, told the local children how the road by Downing's Tavern was used eight times by George Washington and the Continental Army. John Anthony had joined the Old Maryland Line and fought at the

Battle of Long Island under the leadership of General George Washington. "Thank God for that storm, or the Old Maryland line would have been decimated," Pop-pop would recall in later accounts. Washington praised the Maryland Militia and said they were some of the best fighters he had ever seen. This confirmation from the General led to the group's reorganization as the 6th Pennsylvania Regiment.

As the story goes, Pop-pop would tell the enthralled, wide-eyed children that in 1777, the regiment participated in the Philadelphia Campaign and fought at the Battle of Germantown, where General Anthony Wayne became separated in the fog. Even worse, the men were also beginning to run low on ammunition. The separation of General Wayne, the lack of gunfire from the comrades, and the commotion of battle convinced the commanding officer that they had been cut off and needed to withdraw. Simultaneously, a second colonial regiment mistook General Wayne's men for the enemy and opened fire. A mutual exchange of artillery induced both units to break and flee the field. Thankfully, darkness aided their successful retreats.

Pop-pop reminded the children of the strategic importance of this battle. This skirmish had taken place on the road between Baltimore and Philadelphia, which General Washington needed to block to prevent British forces from attacking Philadelphia.

Pop-pop would often repeat the story of his military service with his arm around his son Wayne and holding his toddler daughter Caroline in his lap. He told them about the women of the 6th Pennsylvania who brought water to the men while they were under fire at the Battle of Brandywine on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Those women were just as tough as the men. They demonstrated it repeatedly by courageously walking unarmed into battle to aid their military men. Pop-pop nicknamed them all "Grace" because they displayed grace under fire.

And as if those stories were not enough to fill the children's heads, the 6th Pennsylvania Regiment spent the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge. Pop-pop told the children how the men's uniforms hung off their bodies in threads, leaving their skin exposed and frostbitten while trying to survive in small huts with no blankets. He added that the men were so hungry that they even started eating the soles on their shoes.

According to Cornelius Scott, Pop-Pop Anthony would become most animated in his storytelling at this point in the tale. In 1779, Pop-pop's regiment fell under the command of General Wayne, who had become known as "Mad Anthony." Under Wayne's leadership, they stormed the British fortifications at Stony Point, New York, causing significant casualties to the enemy. Pop-pop loved the General and said he was honored to follow him bravely into any battle they encountered.

In October 1781, John Anthony was as proud as a peacock to be General Wayne's Quartermaster in Yorktown, Virginia, as the British prepared to lay down their arms. He witnessed with his own eyes the surrender of the Red Coats and remembered how Cornwallis feigned sickness rather than be humiliated by the Yankee Doodle Dandies!

John Anthony's storytelling sometimes took place at his mill. He would draw diagrams in the dirt showing his position relative to General Wayne and General Washington during the surrender. He took great pride in having witnessed Washington's refusal to accept the sword of surrender from anyone by Cornwallis.

After the war, John Anthony moved to Kent County, Maryland. In court records, the renowned Dr. Thomas Sears had described John Anthony as a man who did not suffer fools. Soon after his arrival in Kent County, he had purchased a prime piece of property and a mill. The land led to the Sassafras River, on the Gregg Neck Creek. In 1806 John Anthony married into an

old, respected Kent family when Sophia Briscoe became his young wife. They named their son Wayne after Pop-pop's favorite General.

The main road from Chestertown and Rock Hall went through John Anthony's property. This road led to the port where ships arrived from the Chesapeake Bay. The road east provided easy passage from his mill to Middletown, Delaware, located between Wilmington and Philadelphia. When he died in August 1836, John Anthony was fittingly buried on his property near these roads to and from this family business.

DAR daughter Kathy grew up in Cecilton, eight miles from this property. Before this research, she had never heard about her patriotic third great-grandfather buried in the woods with honors or the last name "Anthony." A sunken area marks where horses and buggies made indentations in the ground; these can still be seen and followed today. While the house and mill are gone, this area is known today for a great little mom-and-pop restaurant called Twinneys on the Anthony family's "Mill Lane."

On a hot summer day in 2021, Kathy asked God to help her locate her third great-grandfather so she could honor him. She screamed "Pop-pop" until her voice was parched. After several hours of wandering, she found him.

Patriot John Anthony is honored by the existing owners. Both the Chestertown DAR and the American Legion have marked his grave. His granddaughter Carolina Anthony, a member of the newly created DAR, ordered the stone that still marks his grave today. His great-grandson went to the train station to take charge of the headstone when it arrived. These relatives ensured that he was honored with a special military ceremony in 1936.

The more DNA matches to the Anthony lineage that Kathy receives, the more pilgrimages she will take to his resting place. Her cousin Ellen has been consumed with his legacy since she

heard his story as a child. They both wish they could have known each other as children so they could have shared the love for their Patriot ancestor. They are newfound cousins and Sisters in the DAR.