

## Life and Times – William Lindsay – 25 October 2014

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William Lindsay, born in 1742/3, was the eldest son of Robert and Susanna Lindsay of “the Mount”, Virginia, which today is the area around the intersection of Route 66 and the Beltway. William married Ann Calvert, whose great grandfather was Lord Baltimore, the founder and proprietor of Maryland. They had ten children with the last being born shortly before his death 15 September 1792.

William’s first home was in Colchester, Virginia, which was the shipping port of the Potomac and was situated on the north bank of the Occoquan River just east of where I-95 is today. His business was principally that of selling for the planters as a commissioned merchant. He was said to have been better at making money than at keeping it and to have made and lost

several fortunes during this time. William moved from Colchester and established his 1,000 acre plantation at Laurel Hill, following in the footsteps of his father as a Virginia gentleman planter.

William Lindsay was commissioned in June 1776 as a Cornet with one of the Virginia light-horse troops which subsequently became the 1<sup>st</sup> Continental Light Dragoon Regiment. For those unfamiliar with rank of Cornet, it is equivalent to today’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and was abolished by the Army in 1800. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 31 March 1777 and was slightly wounded in an engagement near Valley Forge on 20 Jan 1778. He was promoted to Captain on 7 April 1778 and assigned to Lee’s Corps of Partisan Light Dragoons. For unknown reasons, he resigned his commission in October 1778 and returned to his Laurel Hill homestead. In March 1781 he was appointed a Major in the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia State Legion. Records show he was severely wounded at the battle of Guilford Court-House in May 1781 while serving under General Green, and returned to Laurel Hill to recuperate.

Of historical note about the Laurel Hill Plantation: In 1914, President Theodore Roosevelt approved the construction of the Lorton Reformatory. This led to the condemnation of 153 acres of the Laurel Hill land tract to become prison grounds. The Laurel Hill House became part of the District of Columbia prison facilities, and was used for several purposes including the home of the prison superintendent. In October 1953, the Army obtained the use of two sections totaling 30 acres of the Lorton Prison complex as part of the NIKE Missile system. For those that don’t remember, the NIKE system was the first nationwide U.S. air defense system designed to protect against a Soviet nuclear attack. This Laurel Hill site was labeled the "National NIKE Site" by the Secretary of the Army, and was host to visits by numerous foreign and U.S. dignitaries.

