

James Frost

1742 – 1815



The New World was a harsh, untamed wilderness that was pregnant with possibilities. The kings of Europe, saw it as a land rich in resources available for exploitation. But for common men and women it was as a place of opportunity and freedom. St. Augustine Florida, founded by the Spanish in 1565 was the first continuously occupied European-established city and port in the United States. France's colonial empire truly began on July 27, 1605, with the foundation of Port Royal

in what is now Nova Scotia, Canada. The Jamestown Settlement Colony founded in the Colony of Virginia on May 14, 1607, named for King James I, was the first successful English settlement on the mainland of North America. It was followed in 1620 by the establishment of the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts settled by the Pilgrims. The first Dutch settlement in the Americas was founded in 1615 at Fort Nassau, on Castle Island in the Hudson River, near present-day Albany, New York. In 1624 the Dutch founded New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island.

With their acquisitions in the New World, the kings of Europe, who had been at war with one another off and on for centuries, turned their attention on each other in the Americas. While the Spanish dominated South and Central America and the American Southwest, the British soon came to dominate the Atlantic seaboard of North America. In 1664, English troops attacked the New Netherland colony. Being greatly outnumbered the Dutch surrendered New Amsterdam and Fort Orange to the British. New Amsterdam was renamed New York. The entire Dutch colony became the Province of New York. The French and Indian War between Great Britain and France in North America lasted from 1754 to 1763. The British with assistance from the colonist defeated

the French who were allied with several Indian tribes. To the victor goes the spoils, in this instance; Canada and any claims to the territory west of the Appalachian mountains.

The Proclamation Line of 1763 running down the crest of the Appalachian Mountains from Nova Scotia to Eastern Georgia divided the British possessions in North America. The area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River was set aside as Indian Territory. The area east of the Appalachian Mountains was divided into thirteen colonies under the Authority of the King. After colonizing and taming the land, the colonists had become independent in heart and mind. They rejected the policy of being governed and taxed without representation in parliament claiming that it violated their rights as Englishmen. The colonies were declared in rebellion and the colonists were branded as traitors to the crown. British troops were sent to Boston in 1775. In defiance, the colonists responded with "the shot heard around the world". On July 4, 1776 they formally declared their independence. For the next several years they were involved in the struggle of their lives and that of a new nation, The United States of America.

As the war progressed, the colonists rallied to stand against their mother country. Among them was Captain James Frost of the North Carolina Militia who recruited a company of volunteers and marched south to fight the British in South Carolina.

Captain Frost was born in 1742 in Roxbury, Morris County, New Jersey to Ezekiel and Alice Hopkins Frost. He was the first of eight children. James's grandfather, Jonathan Frost was born in 1685 in Lasboro, Gloucestershire, England and came to the American colonies as a young man sometime around 1705.

James became an iron maker by trade and moved to Pennsylvania which was rich in iron ore. The area west of Philadelphia in the Appalachian Mountains possessed beds of iron ore, hardwoods, and plenty of limestone deposits which were ideal for iron production. In 1767 he married Martha Harris of Pennsylvania, but she died within a year of two of their marriage. He then married Isabelle Van Dyke in 1769. Isabelle was born November 4, 1744 in New Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey. She was the

3rd great granddaughter of Jan Thomasse Van Dyke, a prominent Dutch colonist who migrated from Amsterdam, Holland to New Amsterdam in 1652 with his wife and seven children.

While living in Pennsylvania, two children were born to James and Isabelle; Ezekiel (1771) and Jonas (1773). In about 1775 they moved to Richmond County, North Carolina where three more children were born; James (1777), Jonas (1778), and Nicholas (1781).

During the time they lived in Richmond County, the colonies had declared their independence and were engaged in the American Revolutionary War. James served in the North Carolina Colonial Militia with the commissioned rank of Captain. He raised a company of men and marched to the South, participating in the campaign in South Carolina and Georgia. This kept him away from home for six to nine months.

About a year later, he was called again for an expedition against the Tories, who were colonist loyal to the King. He fought in the battle of Ransom's Mills in the Southern part of North Carolina on June 20, 1780. At this time he was absent from his family for three months.

Next, he commanded a company raised in Guilford, Stokes, and Rockingham counties in North Carolina. He marched with his company under the command of General Nathaniel Green and met the British at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15, 1781. After the battle he and the troops under him pursued the British Army for several days. This was a pivotal battle in the Revolutionary War's decisive Southern Campaign. The engagement set the stage for the region's liberation from enemy occupation and impelled British General Lord Charles Cornwallis to take the ill-fated road that led him to final defeat at Yorktown, Virginia, seven months later.

After serving for a year and a half, James returned to his family and livelihood. Following the war, the rest of their children were born. They were; Samuel (1783), McCaslin (10 Dec 1785), Rachel (1787), and Sarah (1790).

James Frost was a man of great intelligence and respectability of character and had no motive in giving false statements of his services. He was a man of scientific

knowledge which was required in the business he carried on, exploring and opening iron mines.

James Frost was listed in the 1790 Census as living in the Salisbury District of Rockingham County. In 1793 he bought land there, and in 1797 he bought two acres of ground in Johnston County and built a blast furnace. He moved his large family to Johnston County where he introduced the manufacturing of iron in that region. He developed a primitive procedure for smelting the ore.

He was attracted there by geological charts claiming that there was iron ore of superior quality in the county. He employed only crude methods of working the ore. That is to say he made great piles of logs and stuck the ore in the cracks of logs and in that way the fire converted it to liquid. He used large hammers to shape the ore into bars of iron. The power employed was generated by a waterwheel. The remains of his plant is still in existence, also the pits from which he dug ore... Some of the implements he used are still in existence, and are regarded as great curiosities.

James resided on the land now known as the Frost Plantation. In 1793 the land was still known at as "The Frost Place." James operated his ironworks mill until 1805 when he sold his land and the forge. He died on October 1, 1815 in Johnston County at the age seventy-three.

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The main source of this story comes from an application filed by his daughter, Rachel Frost Britt, for his Revolutionary War pension obtained from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

A second source for this story came from The Charles William Merrell Family page 333 by Maria Stevens Facer published in 1994. (Charles William Merrell was married to a great great granddaughter of James Frost.)

Historical references were added for background information.