

## BIOGRAPHIES OF SEVIER'S TWO WIVES

### SARAH HAWKINS

FIRST WIFE of Gen. John Sevier--Sarah Hawkins, b. (June 3 ?), 1746 Frederick, now Shenandoah, Co., Va.; d. between January and late spring 1780 at the Nolichucky fort, Washington Co., Tenn.; daughter of Joseph Hawkins and Sarah Marlin.

Sarah Hawkins was small and blonde, according to Mrs. Mary Hoss Headman. Mrs. Headman distributed the following material in mimeographed form. She obtained the details when she interviewed Joanna Catherine (Carland) Tompkins, a granddaughter of Sarah Hawkins and Gen. John Sevier, in 1895. Portions were printed in a Knoxville newspaper, June 2, 1946.

Sarah's father, Joseph Hawkins, had established a large trading post in a stockade or fort, on the frontiers of what was then Frederick Co., Va. [Probably towards the close of the French and Indian War] the Indians attacked the post, were driven off, and it was then that Sevier made his first bid to fame. He at once left his wife and her two young brothers to defend the post, should the Indians return. Then Sevier gathered together his neighbors and pursued the raiders. In driving off the Indians, most of the bullets were used, and the men had to take all that were left with them. Sarah rose to the occasion, started a big fire in the fireplace of their home, and spent most of the day kneeling before it, with her two young brothers, melting lead and moulding bullets, so that they would have enough to protect them by nightfall.

During Sevier's frequent absences from home on military duty, trading or pioneering trips, she carried on the trading and defended their home. She made the long and difficult journey with seven small children, one a babe in arms, to reach the new home Sevier had chosen in Tennessee. She was noted for her hospitality which included receiving into her household General McDowell, his family and others driven from their homes by the British and Tories.

[In the early part of 1780] Sevier was building new mills on Limestone Creek [on the north shore of the Nolichucky, Washington Co., Tenn., six miles below Jonesboro]. News came of a large party of Indians on the warpath, and it became urgent to get his family to the fort on the Nolichucky. Sarah had just given birth to their tenth child. They reached the fort safely, but Sarah died early one morning and was buried that night. An attack by the Indians was momentarily expected, but soon after dark, the men slipped out of the fort into the nearby forest and dug her grave. Before midnight the burial took place. This was considered the safest time, as the Indians generally attacked at dawn. Sevier declared that all the children must be present to show respect for their mother, even the newborn baby. So there in the heart of a forest in darkness, gloom and pouring rain, amid flashes of lightning and claps of thunder, John Sevier laid to eternal rest Sarah Hawkins.

Sarah's grave was leveled over and covered with brush and leaves, lest the Indians discover it and desecrate it. Mary Ann [then about eight years of age] told her daughter, Mrs. Tompkins, that she wore mitts, "gloves without fingers". Mary Ann was terrified by the storm and the scene and fell down on the way back to the fort and had to be carried the rest of the way by two young ladies in the party.

A monument in Sarah's memory, beside the grave of her husband on the courthouse lawn in Knoxville, was unveiled June 3, 1946 by Mrs. Headman. The inscription reads: "Sarah Hawkins Sevier, daughter of Joseph and Sarah Marlin Hawkins, born in Shenandoah County, Virginia, 1746. Died in Washington County, Tennessee, 1780. She had an unusual education and great strength of character. Married at fifteen, she was for the nineteen creative, formative years of his [Sevier's] life the greatest single factor in his spectacular early rise to fame and fortune. A wise, capable, understanding wife and mother who commanded her husband's post in his absences. Made the hazardous journey down the Shenandoah Valley in December 1773, with seven children under eleven years of age. The mother of ten, giving five fighting sons to the protection and building of Tennessee. Finally giving her life during an Indian uprising."

See Hawkins family records in the appendix of this book.