

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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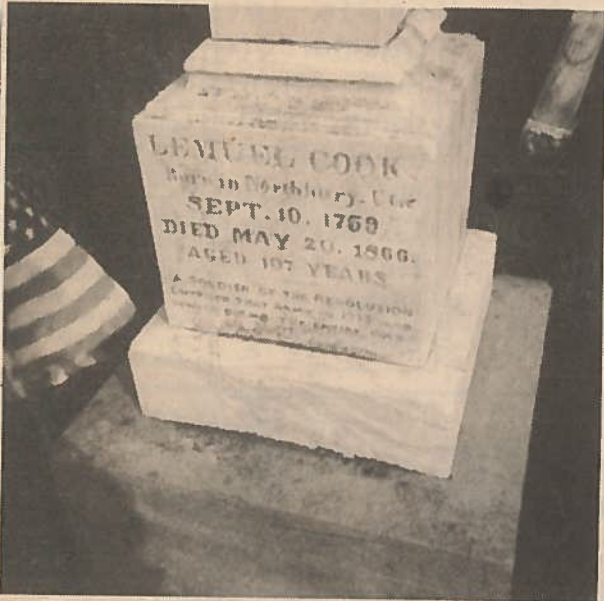
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LEMUEL COOK

Oldest Survivor Of The Revolution



The monument pictured here may be found in the Root Cemetery in the Town of Clarendon. It states:

Lemuel Cook
Born in Northbury Ct.
Sept. 10 1759
Died May 20 1866
Aged 107 Years

A Soldier of the Revolution
Entered the army in 1775 and
Served during the entire war.

Lemuel Cook became the oldest survivor of the American Revolution out-living all his other compatriots. He settled in Clarendon in 1808 on the east side of the South Holley Road near the junction of the Munger Road. His first wife, Hannah Curtis died in 1832. They had eleven children. In 1834 he married Ruth Cooper. She died in 1860. In his advanced age he lived with his son, Gilbert. In his latter years he related these circumstances as follows:

"The first time I smelt gunpowder was at Valentine's Hill (West Chester, New York). A troop of British horses were coming. 'Mount your horses in a minute', cried the colonel. I was on mine as quick as a squirrel. There were two fires — crash! Up came Darrow, good old soul! and said, 'Lem, what do you think of gunpowder? Smell good to you?'"

Mr. Cook was at the battle of Brandywine and at Cornwallis' surrender. Of the latter he gives the following account: "It was reported Washington was going to storm New York ... Baron Steuben was mustermaster. He had us called out to select men and horses fit for service. When he came to me, he said, 'Young man, how old are you?' I told him. 'Be on the ground tomorrow morning at nine o'clock' said he.

... We marched off towards White Plains. Then 'left wheel' and struck right north. Got to King's Ferry, below Tarrytown. There were boats, scows, etc. We went right across into the Jerseys ... Then

we were in Virginia. There wasn't much fighting. Cornwallis tried to force his way north to New York, but fell into the arms of LaFayette, and he drove him back. We were on a kind of side hill. We had plaguey little to eat and nothing to drink under the heaven. We hove up some brush to keep the flies off. Washington ordered that there should be no laughing at the British; said it was bad enough to have to surrender without being insulted. The army were paraded on a great smooth lot, and there they stacked their arms. Then came the devil — old women, and all (camp followers). One said, 'I wonder if the d--d Yankees will give me any bread'. The horses were starved out. Washington turned out with his horses and helped 'em up the hill. When they see the artillery, they said, 'There, them's the very artillery that belonged to Burgoyne'. Greene come from the southard: the awfulest set you ever see. Some, I should presume, had a pint of lice on 'em. No boots nor shoes."

David Sturges Copeland who wrote the History of Clarendon published in 1889 has this account of Lemuel Cook: "The author has a distinct recollection of Lemuel Cook, the old soldier. He was as white above his eyes as Rip Van Winkle, his hair hanging in long locks down to his coat-collar, with a heavy face, large mouth, prominent nose, and when he opened his lips he could be heard the whole length of Main Street by a deep, gasping, choking, exploding "A-hem!" which attracted the attention of all, and would have frightened a modern infant into fits. He was very deliberate in his walk, resting upon a heavy staff, and moving at a snail's pace in his latter days. If one desired to speak with him, he had the pleasure of taking in a full inspiration of breath, with the certainty that he would need the whole supply before the auditorium of the aged veteran was penetrated ... When he died Col. James Fuller was invited to deliver the sermon, and the exercises were held on the Root Road, in the woods now owned by Tommy Benton. A few boards were placed in front of the speaker, where the coffin rested, and the large audience seated themselves as best they could, and for two hours listened to the elequent words which came pouring forth in memory of the departed soldier. The text was taken from the words, "We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us," etc. This was the most impressive funeral that ever took place in Clarendon, and the only one that has ever been held in that most beautiful and grand of all, God's temple, the woods, where the golden pencils of light came streaming down through the arches of shade in all the richness of glory and softness of perfect peace and hallowed rest."

"He has fought his last fight,
He has seen his last battle,
No sound can awake him in glory again."

— Byron