

Milton's namesake a revolutionary, too

Many of the houses in the new city of Milton can easily be called manors.

Touring the many undulating acres of hillsides and creek bottoms, their miles of pretty white fences frame horses grazing away amid lavish mansions. It gives a visitor to this gem of Atlanta suburbia a sense of arriving in Utopia.

Except, of course, during morning and afternoon rush hours!

Even at that, Milton doesn't have, nor is it likely ever to boast, a genuine castle. At least not like the one where Capt. John Milton, the Revolutionary War officer whose name is memorialized by Old Milton County and the new Town of Milton, briefly resided:

Castillo de San Marcos.

This National Monument, built by the Spanish between 1672 and 1695, at St. Augustine, Fla., to protect the first European settlement in the continental U.S., was the exclusive home of our reincarnated namesake, Capt. Milton, for nine months.

A prisoner of the British, who held East Florida during the Revolutionary War period, Capt. Milton, was confined to the most foreboding portion of the castle, the infamous dungeon. He found his every word, going and coming, censored.

But our stout hero did languish long. After Milton's sojourn at San Marcos, his prisoner exchange with the enemy came nearly a year later and followed

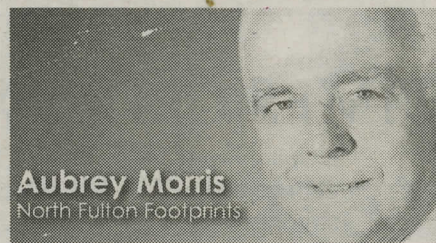
the British and Indian capture of Fort Howe, in Georgia, in February 1777.

The gallant Georgia officer, apparently a rising favorite among Gen. George Washington's officer corps, was itching to get back to duty. This according to Joe Reynolds, retired telephone executive residing in Alpharetta, and like Capt. Milton, a native of Burke County, Ga.

Mr. Reynolds thinks it's more than a coincidence that 1st Lt. John Milton, while languishing in that dank dungeon well below ocean level in the lower depths of Castillo de San Marcos, was promoted to captain of the First Georgia Regiment in General Washington's Continental Army. A speedy advancement, one might aver from John's beginning with the rank of ensign. He had joined the fight against Mother Britain leaving his comfortable plantation of several thousand acres, "Paden Aram," in upper Burke County in January 1776, a little over a year earlier.

Former prisoner Milton, with visions of his dungeon days at Castillo de San Marcos rapidly fading away, was soon back in the fray.

With plenty of fighting for the Patriot Cause yet to be done, one might conjecture that Capt. Milton was more focused on helping General Washington's Continental Army and its allies win independence, than in getting back to his horses, social calendar, and other



aspects of the "good life."

Then only in his late 20s or early 30s, Captain Milton, had been romancing a lovely young and proper Charlestonian, Miss Hannah E. Spencer.

Furthermore, the lass had the right family connections, through the Pinckney Family, one of the most illustrious families in South Carolina. What else could a young officer ask?

While the captain was jousting with Cupid, other battles were going on, or looming largely, all around him, from Charleston to Savannah to Augusta.

And the call of politics could also be heard in the land. Sometime in 1777, according to the Dictionary of Georgia Biography, Vol. II (University of Georgia Press), the Georgia Legislature elected Milton the state's first Secretary of State, a position he was to hold until 1799. Things then really began popping.

In an order, issued at "Chas. Town" (Charleston, S.C.), Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, by then Washington's Continental southern commander, hastily directed the following order to Captain

John Milton, at, or near Savannah, Ga.:

"Chas. Town, Feby. 25, 1780 – Sir: As this Town will probably be besieged, if not invested, in a few days – I unink it unsafe for the interest of the State of Georgia to suffer her public papers to remain in it – in a siege they would be constantly exposed to fire, and other accidents.

You will therefore be pleased to remove in the Continl. Waggon, ordered you, the public papers of Georgia, to Monk's Corner, and, if then Mr. Parker one of the Treasurers of this State, and an Officer of the Continental loans, will take them into his possession, & engage to secure them as he secures ye. public papers of So. Carolina to his care – you may, I believe, wt. safety deliver them to him ..."*

Young Capt. Milton, a man on the move, sure set the right pace for today's "Modern Miltonians!"

**Excerpted from Gen. Lincoln's order to Capt. John Milton. A typescript copy of the complete order is in the hands of Joe Reynolds, Alpharetta, Ga.*

Photostat of original, from the LETTERBOOK OF BENJAMIN LINCOLN, manuscript, in the Boston Public Library, sent to Mrs. Mary Bryan, then Director of the Georgia Department of Archives by Dr. Charles E. Lee, Director of the Department of Archives of South Carolina Oct. 19, 1963.