

# **A Founder and a Patriot**

by

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Article II of the Constitution of the Order of the Founders and Patriots of American states that one of the objectives of the Order is "To teach reverent regard for the character, deeds, and heroism of the founders of this country and their patriot descendants." It is a commendable object which serves to remind members of our obligations to those we represent and of the dangers and sacrifices they underwent to defend their freedoms. Despite the passage of three and a half centuries since the arrival in the Americas of my founding ancestor and nearly two centuries since the birth of my patriot ancestor, there can be little doubt both was fully witting of the consequences of failure, among them death or maiming on the battlefield, execution, imprisonment, forfeiture of property, in sum destruction of their present and their future. The presence of other family members and neighbors surely help harden their resolve to rebel against governments perceived as cruel and indifferent, but each made his own decision to participate and knew fully the penalties he and his family might bear. They also knew the odds against success of their rebellion against English rule clearly were long. Nonetheless, each made the decision to rebel and was prepared to suffer the consequences. In a 21st Century where expediency and compromise sometime seem more common than principle, the strength of their convictions, despite all odds, truly is memorable.

Founder Alexander Magruder, born in 1610 probably in Perthshire, Scotland, was a Highlander loyal to the Stuarts and captured by Cromwell's forces at Worcester in 1651. His elder brother James, Commander of the Shire of Perth for Charles II, was killed at Worcester, and his younger brother John also captured. Offered a choice of execution or transport to the New World, where France, Spain, and England struggled for hegemony, the brothers wisely chose the latter. Transport offered immediate advantages to England; it emptied prisons; provided free labor that could be sent anywhere under British control; and removed convicts and Irish and Scots rebels who threatened domestic tranquility. According to Beall Family records, Alexander Magruder and 150 other prisoners, presumably including his brother John who died without issue in the New World, were sentenced to eight years servitude and shipped in 1652 via Barbados to Virginia's Governor Richard Bennett and his Secretary William Claiborne who transported Alexander Magruder to Southern Maryland to serve a John Ashcomb. Whatever the hardships and humiliations of his eight-year servitude, Alexander Magruder thrived in Maryland, as did hundreds of other Highland, Lowland, and Ulster Scots who entered the American Colonies voluntarily and involuntarily. He married twice, first to Margaret Braithwaite and second to Elizabeth Hawkins, and had five children by his first wife and

three by the second. His descendants probably number in the thousands and live in most of these United State and abroad. At his death on 25 July 1677. he owned or held claim to 3,750 acres of land, most in that portion of Calvert County, Maryland eventually transferred to Prince Georges County. His will, dated 10 February 1676, probated in Calvert County, and transferred to the Hall of Records, Annapolis, in 1718, lists his trustees as his "well beloved friends...Mr. Nathaniel Trueman, Mr. Samuel Taylor, and Mr. Ninnian Beall. Alexander Magruder was my father, eight generation removed.

Patriot Nathan Magruder, great grandson of Alexander Magruder and second son of John Magruder and his wife Susannah Smith, was born in 1718 at their plantation "Dunblane" in Prince Georges County, Maryland. He was "privately" educated and from his father John inherited in October 1748 a property called "Knaves Dispute" where he erected a manor house, a photo of which appears in the "Proceedings" published in connection with the Sixth Annual Gathering of the American Clan Gregor Society. The area surrounding his 300-acre plantation had been transferred from Prince Georges to Frederick County in 1745, and Nathan Magruder's public service was in that county rather than Prince Georges. He was appointed County Judge in March 1748 and served in the House of Burgesses from 1751 to 1754 and from 1761 to 1763; as trustee for the first schools established in Frederick County; and as Senior Warden at Christ Church, Rockville. He also served as a Frederick County delegate to Maryland's General Convention which first met in Annapolis on 22 June 1774 to elect delegates to the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Aged 58 in 1776, Nathan Magruder was too elderly to take up arms during the Revolutionary War, but his name appeared on sufficient public documents to identify him as a rebel against the Crown and therefore subject to any personal and material penalties Britain might impose had the revolution failed. He and other of Scots descent in the colonies surely also were aware of the severity of Britain's treatment of rebels after Culloden, and they would have had little reason to expect less harsh treatment. Had they failed, they would have been labeled traitors and rebels and treated according, when they won, they became the Patriots we honor today. And if success of the rebellion in 1776 against British rule was far from certain, the consequences of failure were as clear then as they were in 1651, a century and a quarter earlier when Alexander Magruder followed his convictions in Worcester. Nonetheless, Nathan Magruder and hundreds of his fellow British subjects in Maryland held to their beliefs and risked life and liberty to support the American Revolution whose success may have far exceeded their expectations.

Nathan Magruder married his cousin Rebeca Beall, and had nine children prior to his death in April 1786. His will, executed 17 January 1781 and admitted to probate on 25 April 1786 in Montgomery County, makes no mention of his wife who presumably predeceased him. He was my father five generations removed. To him and hundreds like

him who challenged all the might of England we owe admiration and gratitude as well as "reverent regard."

