

Scape 'Oer Swamp

A colorful and interesting place name for a swamp largely in N.E. Sumter, partially in Lee County, South Carolina, is one called Scapo. This is a contraction of "Scape O'er", as formerly spelled, which, in turn, was a refinement of the even earlier name "Scape Whore".

The story is handed down in the family of a Mr. McCoy, one of the participants in the skirmish during the Revolution that caused the origin of the name. A small group of British soldiers-- possibly a dozen-- were camping in a cabin on a bluff above Black River opposite Camp Branch Island. They had been foraging around the neighborhood and were presumably assigned to watch the movements of General Marion, who was known to camp on the island at times. With the British group were three women camp-followers. One night, there was a dance or frolic in the cabin. Mr. McCoy, with a party of Americans, probably guerillas, approached the cabin. A fire was burning in the fireplace, thus lighting an open window near which a British officer was sitting. The Americans, some ten or twelve, advanced stealthily. As Mr. McCoy got quite close to the open window, he heard the British officer say that he would like to cut off McCoy's head and carry it to the King of England. By then, McCoy was standing, with sword drawn, just outside the window; inspired by the remark, he reached in and cut off the British officer's head. A wild scramble followed; and as the British soldiers sought to escape the cabin, now surrounded by Americans, several were killed. Others ran away. The three women escaped into the near-by swamp and were never heard of again. Hence the name: "Scape Whore" Swamp.

This designation is found in Act of December 21, 1798, (9 S.C. Stats. At Large, p. 385). Mill's 'Atlas' (1825) notes "Scape Creek" and "Scape Creek Branch".

The foregoing story was related to me on March 6, 1954, by Hudson Warren of Sumter County. Mr. Warren relates that in 1912, while engaged in sawing timber on Camp Branch Island for Tom Brunson, the latter told the above account to him. Mr. Brunson, then an elderly man and now dead some fifteen or twenty years, was a direct descendant of the Mr. McCoy mentioned, possibly a grandson or great-grandson. The story had been handed down to Mr. Brunson through his family and comes in so straight a line that there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. The Old Durant or Brunson house, where the story was told, still stands, and it is now occupied by Tom Pierce.

--Thomas M. Stubbs

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