

Earle, John Baylis ^[1]

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John Baylis Earle, drummer boy and militiaman of Revolutionary ^[2] North Carolina, planter-enslaver, congressman, and longtime adjutant general of South Carolina, was born probably in Virginia as were his parents, Thomasson Prince and the frontiersman John Earle, who described himself to the Virginia House of Burgesses on June 12, 1770 as "late of the county of Frederick but now of the province of South Carolina." After pioneering settlement just below where the North Pacolet River entered Ninety-Six District (now Spartanburg County), S.C., the father established his growing household a few miles upstream in what became known as the Earle's Fort neighborhood of Rutherford (now Polk ^[3]) County, N.C. From here he weathered the Revolution as a captain of Rangers, while John Baylis, the eldest son, took up the drum and before the arrival of peace blossomed into a Morgan District militiaman. The father helped site the courthouse for Rutherford County ^[4], became a justice of the peace, was named coroner, and by the turn of the century enslaved fifteen people and was called Colonel John Earle.

By 1800, as the second census shows, John Baylis Earle had become head of such a growing family of his own in Pendleton District (now Anderson County), S.C., that he must have married Sarah Taylor, eldest daughter of Major Samuel Taylor, as much as a dozen years before. Silver Glade, the Earle estate, was located near Big Beaverdam Creek, some twelve miles south of Pendleton village. From northwestern South Carolina, about to be traversed by President Jefferson's ^[5] mail route from Washington to newly acquired New Orleans, Earle was elected as a representative to the Eighth Congress, 1803–5. The master of Silver Glade did a creditable job as congressman, but henceforth concentrated on farming and stock raising, diversified by travel over the state to supervise its militia affairs.

He may well have been the Adjutant General Earle whom Edward Hooker on December 10, 1805 pronounced "an excellent officer," exhibiting "a handsome appearance" in contrast to the ill-kempt troops Hooker saw being directed in parade ground maneuvers. If so, Lieutenant Colonel John Baylis Earle could have been the state's adjutant general in the War of 1812 ^[6]. The excellent South Carolina archives of today have no records of the Adjutant General's Office earlier than 1836, but an act passed by the legislature on December 13, 1815 explicitly upgraded Lieutenant Colonel Earle to brigadier general and expanded his duties to that of adjutant and inspector general.

Enslaver of thirty-eight people by 1830, a believer instates' rights ^[7], and conspicuous as a veteran of the Revolution, Earle took a leading but much overlooked role in the convention that drafted the Nullification Ordinance of November 24, 1832. When the legislature and the governor moved to implement the ordinance, it was Earle's General Orders of December 20-21, 1832 that geared the state's emergency defense to individual volunteering rather than to unit mobilization. Fortunately for all concerned, the immediate tariff issue was compromised. In August 1835 Governor George McDuffie, with Earle present, alluded "in a handsome and feeling manner to the long and faithful services of the Adjutant General of the State, who had assured him, that he had commenced his military career during the Revolutionary War as a drummer boy."

After death ended the general's career, his executors-sons-in-law B. F. Sloan and George Seaborn obtained the legislature's permission in December 1836 for payment of his salary for the quarter in which he died. The general's first wife predeceased him in 1815, leaving at least four sons and five daughters; his marriage to the widow Nancy Ann Douglas resulted in a sixth daughter. He is said to have been buried at Silver Glade.

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