McFarland (or McFarlane, McFarlan), Duncan [1]

Share it now!

| F | T | G+ | G | P | K |

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
No votes yet

McFarland (or McFarlane, McFarlan), Duncan

by Daniel M. Mcfarland, 1991

d. 7 Sept. 1816

Duncan McFarland (or McFarlane, McFarlan), promoter, contractor, merchant, and politician, was born sometime before the American Revolution [2] in the Laurel Hill community of Anson (later Richmond and now Scotland [3]) County. Little is known about his early life. The 1790 census lists two Duncan McFarlands in Richmond, and the one who was probably the subject of this sketch had a household of nine males, six females, and six slaves.

Duncan apparently had unlimited energy. He constructed roads and bridges in both Carolinas. He surveyed and helped build, partly at his own expense, a road from Fayetteville to Camden, S.C., where the 1798 Assembly allowed him to charge a toll for crossing a bridge. In 1810 he helped promote a lottery to improve navigation on the Lumber River. A land speculator, he once developed plans for a town in the Laurel Hill area that included a section for free blacks. The city never became a reality but the Old Scotch Fair, located at the same place, did attract traders to a thriving market for several years.

McFarland was a contentious man. Hardly a session of the superior court was held without some case against him on the docket. Hog stealing, forgery, interference with the mails, perjury, and witchcraft were among the alleged offenses. He was once extradited to South Carolina on a charge of murder. Witnesses for the prosecution were hard to find, and juries were reluctant to rule against him, except once for rape. He always claimed that the prosecution was political. In his will he testified that he had never injured anyone except in retaliation for harm done to him. His will also provided that his slaves be freed and given three acres of land each when they reached fifty, stipulations that probably were never fulfilled.

One of North Carolina's first Populists [4], McFarland [1] was constantly agitating the poor against the propertied. Called "the Stormy Petrel" of North Carolina politics, he found his political base among the Highland Scots of the Cape Fear Valley whom he enjoyed addressing in Gaelic. The Fayetteville Congressional District, created in 1791, was usually dominated by Federalists before 1816. McFarland was one of the most vocal and active leaders of the opposition. He represented Richmond County [5] in the House of Commons in 1792 and in the state senate in 1793, 1795, 1800, and 1807–9.

He first ran for Congress in 1796 against Federalist William Barry Grove [6], who defeated him 2,950–1,068. McFarland was so disliked in Anson County [7] that only one vote was cast for him in that election. Seven years later, when Grove announced his retirement, Duncan and two other Republicans opposed Samuel Purviance, a Federalist [8], for the empty seat. Grove hated the Stormy Petrel so much that he threatened to leave the district if the feisty Scotsman was elected his successor. When Purviance was elected, McFarland tried unsuccessfully to have the results invalidated. After one term Purviance decided to return home and McFarland again declared his candidacy. Federalist William Martin and anti-Jefferson Republican Joseph Pickett divided the opposition vote and allowed McFarland to win by a plurality of less than 300 votes ahead of Pickett. Two years later the Federalists confronted the new congressman with John Culpepper [9], a popular Baptist [10] preacher. Two other candidates divided the Republican vote, and McFarland lost by less than 100 votes behind Culpepper. McFarland contested the results, and in January 1808 the U.S. House of Representatives ordered a special election in which Culpepper was victorious.

Richmond returned its Republican leader to the state senate three more times, and in 1812 McFarland announced that he would be a candidate for the Thirteenth Congress. His old enemy, Culpepper, also ran as did John A. Cameron [11], a man with important political connections across the state. McFarland had lost much of his spirit and energy, and the returns showed his tally a poor third. Now he finally retired from public life. The former congressman died several years later and was buried in the yard at Laurel Hill church. The gravestone does not record his birth date.

References:

Biog. Dir. Am. Cong. (1971).

D. H. Gilpatrick, *Jeffersonian Democracy in North Carolina* [12]*, 1789–1816* (1931).

Leonard L. Richards, "John Adams and the Moderate Federalists: The Cape Fear Valley as a Test Case,"*North Carolina Historical Review* 43 (1966).

1

Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*[13], vol. 4 (1965).

Harry L. Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict*[14] (1981).

Additional Resources:

McFarland, Duncan d. 1816 in WorldCat:http://orlabs.oclc.org/identities/np-mcfarland,%20duncan$d%201816 [15]

Subjects:
Biography [16]
Public officials [17]
UNC Press [18]
Authors:
Mcfarland, Daniel M. [19]
Origin - location:
Scotland County [20]
From:
Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.[21]

1 January 1991 | Mcfarland, Daniel M.

Source URL: https://ncpedia.org/biography/mcfarland-or-mcfarlane?page=0

Links
[1] https://ncpedia.org/biography/mcfarland-or-mcfarlane
[2] https://ncpedia.org/american-revolution
[3] https://ncpedia.org/geography/scotland
[4] https://ncpedia.org/populist-party
[5] https://ncpedia.org/geography/richmond
[6] https://ncpedia.org/biography/grove-william-barry
[7] https://ncpedia.org/geography/anson
[8] https://ncpedia.org/federalist-party
[9] https://ncpedia.org/biography/culpepper-culpeper-john
[10] https://ncpedia.org/baptists
[11] https://ncpedia.org/biography/cameron-john-adams
[12] https://www.worldcat.org/title/jeffersonian-democracy-in-north-carolina-1789-1816/oclc/282675
[13] https://www.worldcat.org/title/new-geography-of-north-carolina/oclc/4388546
[14] https://www.worldcat.org/title/jacksonian-politics-and-community-conflict-the-emergence-of-the-second-american-party-system-in-cumberland-county-north-carolina/oclc/490392941?referer=di&ht=edition
[15] http://orlabs.oclc.org/identities/np-mcfarland,%20duncan$d%201816
[16] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term
[17] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials
[18] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/unc-press
[19] https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/mcfarland-daniel-m
[20] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--0
[21] https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no