

Morrison, Alexander ^[1]

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by Thomas C. Parramore, 1991

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Alexander Morrison, physician, author, and Loyalist, was born at Skinidin, Isle of Skye, Scotland. His father was descended from a long line of Highland Scottish physicians; his mother was the daughter of Iain Breac MacLeod, chief of the MacLeod Clan. Morrison entered King's College (now a part of the University of Aberdeen) in 1739 and became a physician. James Macpherson, the alleged translator of the Ossianic poems, visited Morrison in Skinidin in the summer of 1760 and gave him some of the poems he had collected. With the assistance of Morrison and the Reverend A. Gallie, both considered good Gaelic scholars, Macpherson arranged his poems and prepared a version of *Ossian: The Son of Fingal* ^[2] (1762). Both Gallie and Macpherson were alumni of King's College. Morrison also was coauthor with Macpherson of a volume entitled *Antiquities of Scotland*.

In 1772 rising rents forced Morrison and his family to leave their lands in Scotland and join an emigration of some three hundred Scots to North Carolina. He settled near Carthage. In February 1776 Scottish *Loyalists* ^[3] gathered at his home to initiate the recruitment of troops to support the Crown in the Revolutionary War. Morrison raised and commanded a company and was appointed deputy quartermaster general for the Tory forces, only to be captured at *Moore's Creek Bridge* ^[4]. A report of the Patriot committee to inquire into the conduct of insurgents and suspected persons, undated from Halifax, stated that Morrison "did actually take up arms, and lead forth to war, as captain of a company[,] thirty-five men." He was imprisoned at Halifax with *James Hepburn* ^[5], Chaplain *John Bethune* ^[6], Allan MacDonald of Kingsborough and his son Alexander, and other Highland neighbors. Morrison was one of the signers of a petition from a Philadelphia prison requesting permission to return to their families and promising not to support the enemies of America. *William Hooper* ^[7], a North Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress, endorsed this petition for humanitarian reasons.

Paroled in 1777 and exchanged the following year, Morrison was captured at sea in 1779 and jailed at Portsmouth, N.H. Again exchanged, he returned to Scotland in 1779 and soon was able to send for his family in North Carolina. His claim for compensation from the British government in 1783 documented a substantial loss of property in North Carolina—real and personal—and the fact that by this time he was "a cripple from the damps of the Gaols." He died at Greenock, Scotland, at age eighty-eight.

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