

## **Suther, Samuel** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Suther, Samuel**

by Robert W. Delp, 1994

**18 May 1722–28 Sept. 1788**

Samuel Suther, German Reformed minister, was born in Switzerland and in 1738 with his family embarked for the American colonies. Early the next year, according to tradition, he was his family's sole survivor in a shipwreck off the coast of Virginia. A decade later he was living in Philadelphia, where he advertised his services as a teacher in the "High German language" with the recommendation of the Reverend Michael Slatter, a German Reformed pastor in that city. By 1751 Suther had moved to Orangeburg, S.C., but after his ordination to the Christian ministry he served as preacher and teacher in congregations of the Lutheran <sup>[2]</sup> and Reformed persuasions in both South Carolina and North Carolina. In 1768, while pastor of Coldwater Church in Mecklenburg County <sup>[3]</sup> (now Cabarrus <sup>[4]</sup>), N.C., he attracted the attention of Governor William Tryon <sup>[5]</sup>, who ordered him to preach to the Rowan and Mecklenburg militia as the Regulator movement <sup>[6]</sup> became of increasing concern to the royal governor of North Carolina.

In 1771 Suther transferred to Law's (or Low's) Church, a union German Reformed and Lutheran congregation in Orange (now Guilford <sup>[7]</sup>) County. His outspoken advocacy of colonial rights led to dissension between Reformed and Lutheran groups and ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of Suther and his followers and the establishment of Brick Reformed Church near the site of Alamance Battlefield. Here Suther remained throughout the American Revolution <sup>[8]</sup> encouraging the Patriot cause and suffering, along with his congregation, from the attacks of Loyalists <sup>[9]</sup> who drove him from his home and laid waste his farm. After the Revolution he again served churches in Mecklenburg (Cabarrus) County before returning to Orangeburg, S.C., in 1786 to complete his life.

The organization and survival of the German Reformed Church <sup>[10]</sup> in North Carolina is due, in no small measure, to this dedicated cleric, educator, and Patriot. His efforts to provide spiritual and material assistance to the struggling German congregations took him in 1784 to Pennsylvania, where he endeavored to interest northern members of the German Reformed church in contributing to the financial support of their southern brethren.

Suther and his wife, Elizabeth, had several children, including Johann Henry (b. 2 Oct. 1752), Jacob (b. 3 June 1756), Elizabeth (b. 5 Apr. 1760), and David (b. 1770). He died and was buried in the vicinity of Orangeburg, S.C. In 1975 a monument to his memory was erected near Concord, N.C., at New Gilead Reformed Church (United Church of Christ), successor to the earlier Coldwater Church where the noted Swiss clergyman was pastor.

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**Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[17]</sup>

Religious Leaders and Clergy <sup>[18]</sup>

**Authors:**

Delp, Robert W. <sup>[19]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Cabarrus County <sup>[20]</sup>

Guilford County <sup>[21]</sup>

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