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## Warren County Historical Tidbits

### Another Forgotten Founding Father and His Plantation



We have the town of Macon, Fort Macon, Randolph-Macon College, Macon GA...the list of places named for this early American hero is long, but do you know who Nathaniel Macon was? Why don't we learn more about him via history? And why is the home for his 2000 acre plantation so small? Hopefully today's History Tidbit will answer these and a few other questions...

Let's start with a few of the important events and dates...Nathaniel Macon's family was one of the earliest settlers to Warren County arriving in the 1730's from the Tidewater area of Virginia. At 18 he went north to study at the College of New Jersey (Princeton) and joined the militia in 1775 to fight for a year in the early battles of the Revolution. He returned home to Warren County and again joined the militia in 1780 to fight at the Battle of Camden in South Carolina.

From Independence he began the work that caused Thomas Jefferson to call him "The Last of the Romans" – referring to the great statesmen of the Roman Republic who represented the people and fought against an ever encroaching centralized government controlled by an all-powerful magistrate. Macon's friend and political ally, John Randolph of Roanoke, thought him the wisest man he ever knew.

Why was Macon important in the early days of our country? His political career began in 1791 when he ran for and won a seat in the House of Representatives—a seat he held until 1813. NC then elevated him to the U.S. Senate where he served from 1813 to 1828. In 1801, Macon was elected Speaker of the House and served for the next six years. In the Senate, he served president *pro tempore* from 1826 until 1827. Contemporaries have said that he had his hands on the lever of Federal power and he always pulled in favor of the people and the states. His early power helped shape the North Carolina we have inherited today.



that is still quite high today.

So, why don't we hear much about Nathaniel Macon via history classes? Well, the simplest reason is that he destroyed most of his personal documents, writings and information prior to his death. He believed that for people to study his life and write about it was a waste of time. This feeling carried over to his funeral and grave. In his will he stated that he wanted no monument and no elaborate funeral. Instead, he left money for 1,500 mourners to receive "dinner & grog" and then asked that they lay a stone on his grave...the mound



So the final question...for such a wealthy and large land-owner, why was his home at Buck Spring Plantation so small?...just two bedrooms? Well it was initially a "starter" home for his family. When his wife and young son died of malaria, he sent his two daughters to live with relatives and never saw the need to enlarge the house just for himself. His original home, pictured here, unfortunately burned in the 80s; however, a reconstruction now stands in its place.

Want to see the grave and homeplace of this Founder who fought always for the people and their right to be unencumbered by a prying government? Take 158 towards Macon and turn left on NC 1318. Then take a left onto Eaton Ferry Road towards Lake Gaston. After about 3 miles look for Nathaniel Macon Road and the sign on the left...Buck Spring is down on the left.