



- *Educator*
- *Founder*

Nancy Morgan Hart

1735–1830

Inducted 1997

Nancy Morgan Hart is the only woman to have a Georgia county named for her. Hart County was carved from Elbert, Franklin and Wilkes counties in 1853 to honor the legendary frontierswoman.

Nancy was born in North Carolina some time around 1735. She is said to be related to pioneer Daniel Boone, Revolutionary War General Daniel Morgan and, by marriage, to Senators Henry Clay and Thomas Hart Benton. Her physical appearance was both dramatic and imposing: She had red hair and freckles, was six foot tall and cross-eyed with scars of small pox evident on her face. She was a hard swearer and a sharpshooter who could handle a rifle as well as any man.

When Nancy married Benjamin Hart, the couple migrated first to South Carolina and then to the Georgia back country where they settled along the banks of the Broad River in Wilkes County in 1771. A mother of eight children, Nancy's knowledge of frontier medicine made her a sought-after midwife.

"Poor Nancy, she was a honey of a Patriot, but the devil of a wife."

– A neighbor

In the years of the Revolutionary War, most women and children were relocated for their safety. Nancy, however, chose to remain with her husband. According to legend, one day while Benjamin was working in fields some distance from their house, five or six Tories appeared and demanded that Nancy prepare a meal for them. In the course of preparing the meal she managed to seize the men's rifles, having made them tipsy on corn whiskey. When the men attempted to reclaim their rifles, she killed one man and quickly picked up a second gun and wounded another. Her husband and a few neighbors, who had rushed to the cabin upon being summoned by one of the children, suggested shooting the remaining captives. His wife, however, is reported to have said that shooting was too good for Tories. They were taken to the woods and hanged. In 1912 a gang of workers grading a railroad bed about half a mile from the site of the Hart cabin discovered what may have been the remains of the hapless fellows when they dug up six skeletons.

Nancy also acted as a spy for the local militia, boldly entering the British camp disguised as a man to get information that helped General Elijah Clarke win the Battle of Kettle Creek. According to one account, in order to get the location of an enemy camp in Carolina for Georgia troops, Nancy crossed and then re-crossed the Savannah River on a raft made of four logs tied together with grapevines. Another famous story tells of her response to being spied on while she was boiling lye soap in her cabin: when she caught sight of a Tory peering through the chinks in the cabin wall, she threw the soap through the holes, blinding him.

Nancy's boldness was well-known to her neighbors. Even the Cherokees knew her, and gave her the name of "Wahatchee"—or War Woman. They also named a creek after her.

After the Revolution, the Harts moved to Brunswick, where Benjamin died. Nancy then moved to Clarke County, Georgia, and finally to Kentucky, where she died in 1830. It was courage, steadfastness and a pioneering spirit such as Nancy's that helped turn a raw wilderness into a country.

Additional Resources

Hart County Historical Society
(706) 376-6330

E. Merton Coulter, *Nancy Hart, Georgia Heroine of the Revolution: The Story of the Growth of a Tradition*. Georgia Historical Quarterly, 39:118-51.