



Paisley Family Association 2026 Meeting to highlight Paisley Patriots

The Paisley Family Association will hold it's annual meeting and luncheon on Saturday, July 18, 2026 at Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, 5120 Burlington Rd, McLeansville, NC 27405. There will be no formal presentation. Displays will be set up focusing on the American Revolution and Paisley family archival materials.

Lunch is being provide FREE for all attendees! Please bring family members, young and old! You are welcome to bring cookies, cupcakes, or snacks for people to enjoy while browsing the displays.

Lunch will be followed by a short business meeting. The doors open at 11am, lunch at noon, browsing and visiting until 3pm.

If you are visiting from out-of-town, you are encouraged to visit the Guilford Courthouse National Battlefield Park (14 miles from the church). The Park is open daily from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. for vehicles. Walkers and cyclists can access the grounds from dawn to dusk. The Visitor Center is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

The following story is written by Mark Ulmer, a descendant of Capt. Robert Paisley. The information is a great introduction to the American Revolution and how our Paisley ancestors were involved—a good preview for the PFA displays in July.

Paisleys in the fight for American Independence

By Mark Ulmer

It is fitting that I am writing this commemoration on Memorial Day, 2026, the year of the 250th anniversary of what is considered to be the founding of our great nation.

When most Americans are asked about the American Revolution, the events that come to mind all happened in Massachusetts before 1776 and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the fledgling Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4th of that year: the Boston Massacre; the Boston Tea Party; Paul Revere's midnight ride; Lexington and Concord; the Battle of Bunker Hill.

What most Americans don't think about when reflecting on the American Revolution, however, are events that took place in the South, like Moore's Creek Bridge, Kings Mountain, Cowpens and the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Odd, since it was these and related events in the Carolinas that made possible the defeat of the British Army and, ultimately, American independence.

A decade prior to the turmoil in Massachusetts, in late 1764, our common Paisley ancestors left Philadelphia and its environs for North Carolina. They first settled in the Haw Fields of Orange County (now the town of Mebane), about ten miles west of Hillsborough, where they purchased 250 acres on Back Creek, taking title ultimately in the name of Robert Paisley, second son of the family patriarch and immigrant, William Paisley, Sr., who likely financed the purchase.



Three years later, Robert returned to Norriton Township, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, to marry his cousin. Together with two of Robert's siblings that had stayed behind — elder sister, Jane, and younger brother, William, Jr. — the couple journeyed back to the Haw Fields in 1769, leaving behind their eldest brother, David, who had moved on to Baltimore.

Apparently to make room for the new arrivals, William Paisley, Sr., leased 636 acres from William Wiley on Birch Creek, a tributary of Little Alamance Creek, about 25 miles west in what was soon to become Guilford County. The following year, William, Sr., purchased that land and the family, with the exception of Robert, moved there to farm what became known as Paisley Plantation.

The Paisleys arrived in the North Carolina Piedmont at a time of growing discontent. What government existed there in the late 1760s was empowered by the British royal Governor to extract exorbitant fees, charges and taxes from the western settlers. When objections were raised, county sheriffs and judges scoffed and continued to take advantage of their positions, leading to physical confrontations and, ultimately, armed conflict in 1771.

In the end, the governor called out the militia to put down the protestors, known as *Regulators*, with cannon and muskets at the Battle of Alamance, which took place just south of where the Paisleys all lived. By all accounts, however, no Paisley was present at the battle, nor was any Paisley known to have taken up arms as a Regulator or on behalf of the governor. Victorious in battle, Governor Tryon extracted oaths of loyalty to Great Britain from the Regulators, most of whom were allowed to return to their farms. Oaths were taken quite seriously in those days, and many of those Regulators thus remained loyal to the British crown when calls for rebellion grew just a few years later.

Not much has been written about the Carolina backcountry during those tumultuous years between the Battle of Alamance and the beginning of the American Revolution. Some have claimed that Alamance was the first battle of the American Revolution, but the Regulators were not motivated to separate from Great Britain. Their objection related to the corruption of local officials, not taxation without representation. Similarly, some historians claim that the first declaration of independence from Great Britain occurred in western North Carolina in what came to be known as the Mecklenburg Resolves, adopted shortly after Alamance, but that assertion, too, is contested.



What is known with certainty, however, is that early on, settlers in the Carolina Piedmont took firm positions on the topic of independence from Great Britain, cleaving into camps as either Patriot or Loyalist, Whig or Tory.

Although the fighting began in the northern colonies, the British attempted to conquer the southern colonies by invading North Carolina three times.

The first time was in 1776 through a coordinated attack on the Carolinas from the west and east. The British encouraged their Cherokee allies to attack from the mountains, while simultaneously calling Loyalists — former Regulators and recent Scottish immigrants — to join British troops intended to be landed at Wilmington, North Carolina, near the coast. As it turned out, the British transports arrived too late at Cape Fear, giving Carolina minutemen time to defeat both the Cherokees and



the Tories before they could unite. The British landing force was diverted to Charleston, South Carolina, where it was repulsed. Relative calm prevailed in the Carolinas in 1777 and 1778, but the British invaded Georgia, taking Savannah and Augusta in early 1779, giving encouragement to Tories in the Carolinas to rise up against their Patriot neighbors.

The second attempt was in the Spring of 1780 with the landing of a large British expeditionary force, the siege and fall of Charleston, South Carolina, and the surrender of Gen. Benjamin Lincoln and the American army there on May 12, 1780. From Charleston, the British moved north, defeating the rest of the American army, commanded by Gen. Horatio Gates, at the Battle of Camden on August 16. The British commander, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, then headed for Charlotte in North Carolina, but the tide turned when Carolina and western militia annihilated the Tories gathered at King's Mountain on October 7. As a result, Cornwallis retreated from North Carolina to winter quarters at Winnsboro, South Carolina.

The third, and final, attempt to invade North Carolina took place during the first three months of 1781 after the new American commander, Gen. Nathanael Greene, arrived to rebuild the Southern Continental Army. Cornwallis sent his cavalry in pursuit of the western half of Greene's forces led by Gen. Daniel Morgan who defeated the British at the Battle of Cowpens on January 17th. Furious, Cornwallis gave chase, pursuing Morgan into North Carolina where Morgan joined up with the rest of Greene's army at Guilford Courthouse. The combined American force escaped Cornwallis by crossing the Dan River into Virginia, then returning in February to engage the British at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15th. Although the battle was a technical victory for the British, it had so depleted Cornwallis' forces and supplies that he had to retreat to Wilmington on the coast, and from there to Yorktown, Virginia, where his army was defeated and surrendered later in the year.



The Paisleys were all ardent Patriots and Whigs from the beginning. All four brothers Paisley, the sons of William Paisley, Sr., — David, Robert, William, Jr., and John — served and fought in the American Revolution from its inception when the British first attempted to invade the South in 1776.

David, the eldest (born September 1738, age 37 in 1776), a veteran of the French & Indian War, moved from Baltimore to the Delmarva peninsula and enlisted for a year in Col. John Haslet's 1st Delaware Battalion of the Continental Line, Capt. Nathan Adams' Company, on January 20, 1776. He fought in most of the battles of Gen. George Washington's New York Campaign: the Battle of Long Island; the skirmish at Mamaronek; the Battle of White Plains (where Capt. Adams was killed); and, most likely, the crossing of the Delaware and the Battle of Trenton on Christmas Day, 1776. His regiment, the "Delaware Blues," was one of the most admired units of the Continental army.

Robert (born September 24, 1739, age 36) was on an expedition against the Cherokees in the Fall of 1776 as a minuteman in Capt. William Murray's Company from Orange County, North Carolina. After moving from Orange to Guilford County in 1780, he served as a captain of Guilford's mounted militia "Tory hunting" in Randolph and Chatham Counties. He may also have served alongside Capt. Arthur Forbis in his Guilford County militia company, made up of men from the Alamance and Buffalo Presbyterian congregations. Capt. Forbis was mortally wounded at the Battle of Guilford County Courthouse on March 15, 1781, and several of Forbis' men testified that "Capt. Robert Paisley" took over command of Forbis' Company for the next three months, pursuing the British as far as Ramsey's Mill on Deep River as they retreated south from Guilford Courthouse. Later that year, Robert chased the infamous Col. David Fanning up and down Deep River with Col. Samuel Isaacs and Capt. Smith Moore as either a captain or lieutenant, retiring from militia duty upon learning of the British surrender at Yorktown that October.

William (born December 23, 1741, age 34) was also on the Cherokee Expedition in 1776, but as a Guilford County minuteman. Before that, he was on the expedition to Cross Creek (Fayetteville) in Capt. Forbis' Company, tasked with rounding up Tories after the Patriot victory at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on February 27. William most likely continued in Capt. Forbis' militia company during its three-month call-up and encampment in 1779 near Charlotte, North Carolina, engaging Tories led by Col. Samuel Bryan along the Yadkin River, and then those following Col. Gideon Wright at Shallow Ford. He likely continued in Capt. Forbis' Company throughout 1780, including another three-month tour around Charlotte following the American loss at Camden, South Carolina. William was certainly with Capt. Forbis at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in March 1781, stationed in the front line behind a rail fence, where they were both wounded: William, in the wrist; Forbis, mortally. He was

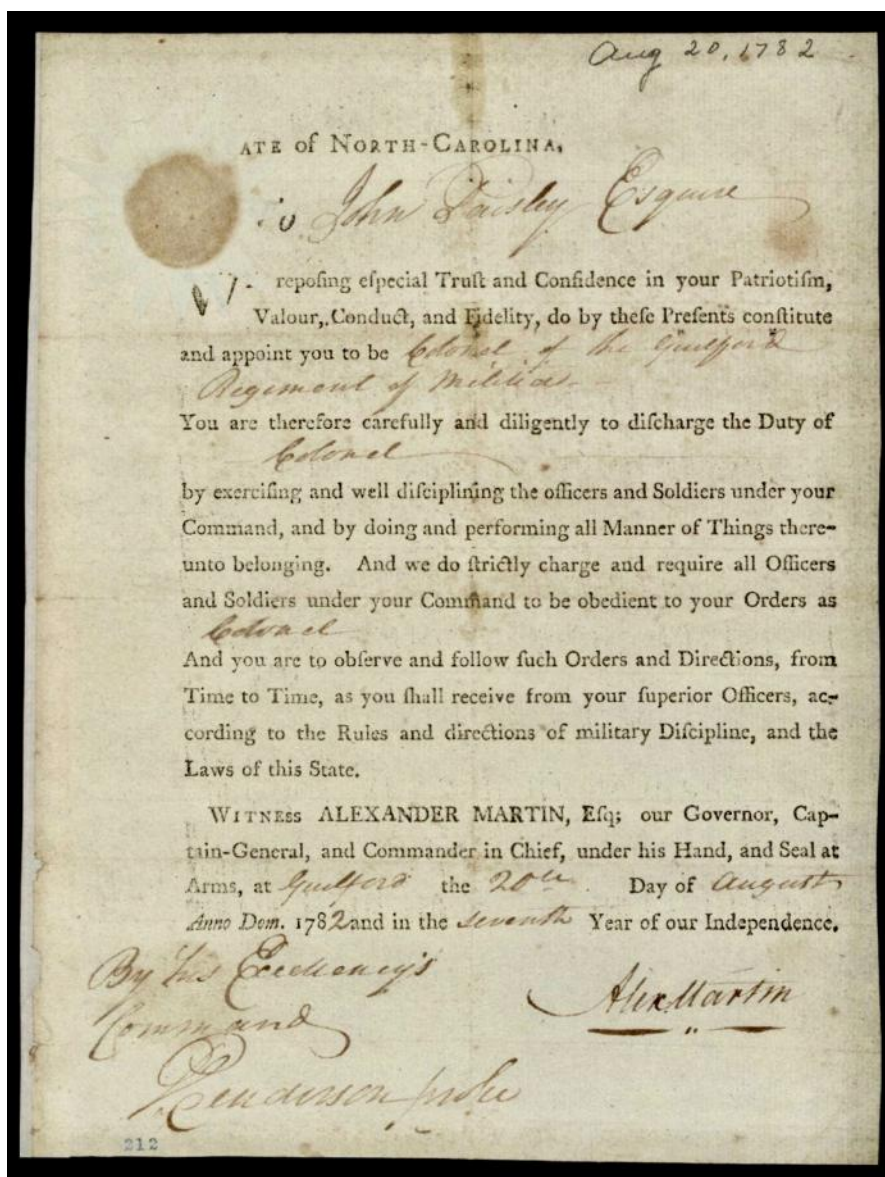
known to have shot down at least one British soldier and to have remained at his station until the British and Hessian troops engaged Forbis' men in hand-to-hand combat with bayonets against clubbed rifles. He survived by pretending to be dead as the enemy scrambled over his position.

John (Born 1745, age 30), the youngest brother, gained the most acclaim. He was:

- appointed Major of the Guilford County Minutemen on September 9, 1775, and received his commission under Col. James Martin and Gen. Griffith Rutherford, on December 18, 1775;
- promoted in rank to Lieutenant Colonel of the Guilford County Militia under Col. Martin when the Minuteman brigades were merged into the Militia on April 22, 1776;
- assigned to the newly created 2nd Battalion of Volunteers as Lieutenant Colonel under Col. Francis Locke on November 30, 1776, serving in that position until the Volunteers were disbanded on April 10, 1777, at which time he was reassigned back to the Guilford County Militia holding the same rank; and, finally,
- commissioned full Colonel alongside Col. Martin as operational commander of the Guilford County Militia on June 1, 1780, with his final commission as Colonel being issued on August 20, 1782, after the British had left North Carolina and surrendered in Virginia at Yorktown.

He led his Guilford County neighbors on numerous expeditions and engagements throughout North and South Carolina, including:

- the rescue of Lt. William Dent from Tories led by Col. William



1782 document commissioning John Paisley as COLONEL.

Field in Orange County in February 1776;

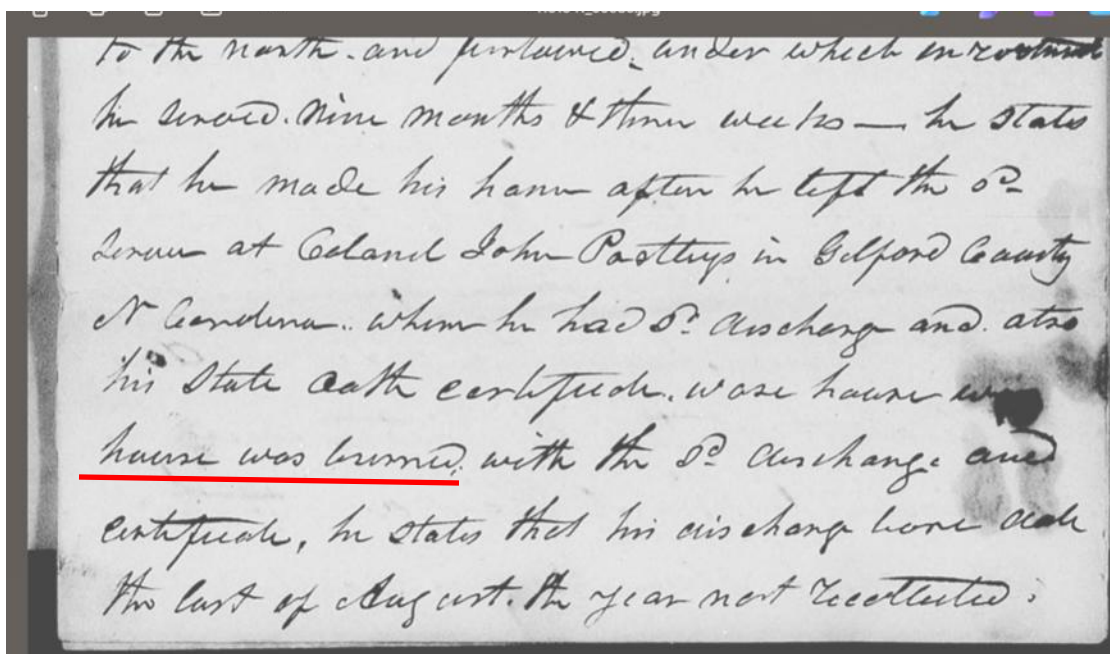
- on the Wilmington Expedition later that month where his regiment was held at Cross Creek to capture Tories retreating from the battle at Moore's Creek Bridge;
- on Gen. Rutherford's Cherokee Expedition to the upper Catawba Valley in the Fall of 1776;
- on Gen. Rutherford's Purysburg Expedition to the Savannah River, South Carolina, in early 1779 when the British invaded Georgia and, briefly, South Carolina;
- on the Second Wilmington Expedition to reinforce the Continental Army during the siege of Charleston, South Carolina, in the Spring of 1780;
- to the aid of Gen. Gates in August 1780 before the Battle of Camden in a skirmish at Little Lynches Creek, South Carolina;
- to assist Gen. William Lee Davidson in the defense of North Carolina when the British invaded and attacked Charlotte in September 1780, intercepting Tories gathered by Col. Wright at Shallow Ford on the Yadkin River;
- as an officer in Gen. Nathanael Greene's race to the Dan River in February 1781;
- with Col. "Light-Horse Harry" Lee in the running skirmishes at Clapp's Mill and New Garden Meeting House, just before the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in March 1781;
- at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15, 1781; and, finally,
- chasing Col. David Fanning and his Tory company throughout Randolph and Chatham Counties for the rest of the war.

Two younger cousins of the four Paisley brothers, Joseph McLean (the son of William Paisley, Sr.'s brother-in-law, John McLean) and John Peasley (the son of William, Sr.'s brother, John Peasley) also fought on the American side in the Revolution, enlisting in 1778 after the first British invasion of the South. They were young enough to live into the 1830s when they became eligible for military pensions. Their pension applications provide detailed, personal accounts of their service records.

Joseph McLean (born 1752, age 25 in 1778) volunteered with his neighbors in 1778 and 1779 to serve in the mounted militia of Guilford County. There were two main companies of militia active in Guilford throughout the war: Capt. Arthur Forbis' "Irish Company," made up mostly of Ulster Scots; and, Capt. Henry Weitzel's "Dutch Company," consisting mostly of German immigrants. McLean served in both companies, sometimes hunting Col. Samuel Bryan's Tories near the forks of the Yadkin River; other times in the Carraway Mountains or down Deep River, Drowning Creek, Raft Swamp and the Cross Creek settlement after "Scotch Tories." After Gen. Gates' defeat at the Battle of Camden in August 1780, a call went out for

volunteers from the Guilford militia to come to the aid of Gen. William Lee Davidson who had taken over command of what was left of the American forces then encamped near Charlotte. McLean answered the call and marched under Capt. Forbis to Salisbury, then to Camp New Providence, several miles southeast of Charlotte. As Cornwallis approached Charlotte, Lt. Col. John Paisley led several men from the Guilford Militia, including Joseph McLean, in a rear-guard action at McAlpine's Creek as the Americans retreated across the Yadkin River. McLean was also probably with Lt. Col. Paisley's men at Shallow Ford to relieve the militia forces that had skirmished with and scattered the Tories being gathered there by Col. Wright. McLean was discharged from this tour in Mecklenburg County on November 25, 1780, and returned home to Guilford where he assisted Capt. Weitzel guarding prisoners. After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, he continued with Capt. Weitzel, annoying the British on their retreat and chasing Col. Fanning and his Tory band around Randolph County.

John Peasley (born 1757, age 20 in 1778) volunteered as a teamster in the Guilford County militia under the direction of Lt. Col. John Paisley, his elder cousin, for three months in 1778. He then enlisted for a nine-month tour as a "New Levy" from Guilford County in the Continental Line and was briefly sent north, before being furloughed for six months. The New Levies were recalled as militiamen in December and sent south in response to the British attack on Savannah, Georgia. Under Col. Archibald Lytle, private John Peasley was marched to Purysburg on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River, opposite Augusta, Georgia, to prevent the British from crossing. The British launched a surprise attack on the Americans at Brier Creek on March 3, 1779, causing them to retreat. His captain was replaced and private John Peasley was promoted to sergeant. The American forces, now under the ultimate command of Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, continued in this part of South Carolina



house was burned



A part of John Peasley's Revolutionary War pension application at the National Archives.

[<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196367699?objectPage=7>]

Digitization of the records is still ongoing. See <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/300022>.

Transcriptions of some pensions that refer to Southern battles can be found at

<https://revwarapps.org/>.

until June 20, 1779, when the British made a feint toward Charleston, culminating in the Battle of Stono Ferry, from which both sides retreated: the British toward Georgia; the Americans toward Charleston. From there, Sgt. John Peasley's brigade was marched north to Charlotte, then Salisbury, and, ultimately, to Hillsborough where he was discharged at the end of August 1779. Following his discharge, he resided with Lt. Col. John Paisley at the Paisley Plantation. In 1781, he joined the Militia as a paid substitute for two other men who had been drafted: first, for John McDaniel, six weeks in Capt. Forbis' Company, including at the Battle of Guilford and the retreat to Troublesome Ironworks; then for James Lott, three months under Capt. George Stewart pursuing Col. Fanning near Cross Creek and Raft Swamp.

The Paisley Plantation was also the location of the Paisley Muster Ground at which the men of the congregation gathered to go off to fight. Col. John Paisley was nearly captured at his plantation by Tory marauders late in the war, but by guile and good humor, he managed to escape. Gen. Cornwallis encamped his British army on the property of Ralph Gorrell, adjacent to the Paisley Plantation, on the way to fight at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. John Peasley reported that Col. Paisley's house was burned to the ground by Tories sometime after the battle, but that must have been after Easter 1782 because Lt. Eno Reeves, an aide to Gen. Washington, recorded his overnight visit at the Paisley Plantation on March 30, 1782, in his diary, noting that he

“Arrived at a Colonel Peasley's, who lived on the border of an Irish Presbyterian settlement. The family speak very broad. The Colonel lives with his father, who is very old, has lost his teeth and can scarcely be understood; he is very infirm and appears to be a little childish, yet does he continue to perform the religious duties of the family, which he does in a cold formal manner. He begins with a short prayer, then reads a chapter, (either in the Old or New Testament as it happens, for he begins with Genesis and follows chapter after chapter 'till he ends with the Revelations), after that a Psalm is sung or attempted. *** That done they all kneeled for the prayer.”

We can all say a little prayer of thanks to our Paisley ancestors who made possible our country's independence.



John Porter Paisley, Jr.

(July 20, 1948 - February 12, 2026)



John Paisley, Jr. passed on February 12, 2026, at his home in Burlington, North Carolina. John lived a life rooted in faith, service, quiet strength, and unwavering devotion to his family. Born in McLeansville, NC on July 20, 1948, to the late John and Eula Kiger Paisley, He earned a business degree from Elon University in 1970 and a law degree from Wake Forest University School of Law in 1973. He was married to the love of his life, Joyce, for more than 52 years.

John practiced law in Alamance County for over 52 years, earning admission to all North Carolina Courts and the United States Supreme Court. He served the Alamance Bar Association in many roles, including President, and was known for his integrity and fairness. John served on the Alamance County Board of Commissioners, including as Chairman. His commitment extended to the Ala-

mance County Board of Elections, NC Board of Elections Chairman's Association, Alamance and Caswell Mental Health Board, and the NC Substance Abuse Professional Certification Board, among others. John also worked to improve local schools through the PTA, serving as the Burlington City Schools PTA President and on numerous school committees. He was a member of civic groups such as the Civitans, Jaycees, Burlington Luncheon Club, Hospice, Elon College Alumni Board, and the Carolina Balloon Association.

John loved coaching his children's sports teams, teaching Sunday School, and encouraging a sense of adventure and community. A longtime hot air balloon pilot, he cherished the thrill of lift-off and shared this passion widely. With his crew of family and friends, each flight added to his collection of cow pasture landings and other funny stories. He spent many weekends teaching students, flying for charities, or simply ballooning for fun to give others an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful sights.

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He was happiest when helping people and lived by the principle of “leaving things better than you find them”, which he learned from his parents, grandparents, and the Boy Scouts Eagle Scout program.

John was preceded in death by his brother, Robert Thomas Paisley. He is survived by his wife, Joyce; his four children: Janet Paisley, Susan Paisley Hedrick (Joe), John Porter Paisley III (Marcia), and Elizabeth A. Paisley (Spalding); his brother, Ronald James Paisley (Kathy); seven grandchildren: Emily, Brian, Jackson, Paisley, Tijn, Fenna, and Millie; and three great-grandchildren: Noah, Daniel, and Adalyn. The funeral service was held at Graham Presbyterian Church with the burial at Bethel Presbyterian Church Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family graciously requests memorials to be made to Bethel Presbyterian Church Cemetery Fund, 300 Knox Road, McLeansville, NC 27301.

John was a long time member of the Paisley Family Association. He is a direct descendant of Colonel John Paisley that led a regiment during the American Revolution. At the 50th anniversary of the PFA in 2019, John displayed pages from the old Col. John Paisley family Bible and the rifle that Col. Paisley owned.



Paisley Family Association

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Websites of interest to the Paisley Family

Paisley Family Association: <https://paisleyfamilyassociation.com/>

Clan Paisley Society: <http://www.paisleyfamilyociety.org.uk/>

Paisley Family Society USA Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Paisley-Family-Society/195070730565352>

Paisley Family DNA Project web page:

<http://www.familytreedna.com/public/paisley/>

Paisley & Allied Families Autosomal DNA Project :

<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/paisleyallied-autosomal/about>

2026 Calendar Dates:

- **September 12-13—Clan Paisley Society USA will sponsor a tent at the Middle Tennessee Highland Games & Celtic Festival, Hendersonville TN, just outside of Nashville. Diane & Jay Langston are hosting.**