



S.C. Hall of Fame Transcript

Thomas Lynch Sr.

Williams: The first member of the Lynch family to come to America was Jonah Lynch from Ireland, and they settled originally in what today is the Mount Pleasant area, in the upper region of the Wando River.

Narrator: Jonah Lynch's son was Thomas Lynch "the first," and his grandson was the man we know as Thomas Lynch, Sr., born in 1727, who moved up the coast to the area around the Santee River.

Williams: In those days, capable, adventurous young men, coming to a part of the world where there were vast amounts of land waiting to be developed. If you were enterprising, intelligent and the Lynch's were certainly that, and aggressive, you had a chance through land grants and warrants to acquire tracts of land.

Narrator: The Santee region hosted a mixture of French and English pioneers.

Williams: The French Santee was settled primarily by Huguenots. Further up the river beyond Jamestown you had what was called the English Santee and predominately English families.

Lynch, being of Irish extraction, would have been considered to be English, definitely not French. There was quite a distinction there, especially in the early days, and you did not confuse the two. I think, too, the Lynches being very prosperous made them very readily acceptable into the English establishment.

Narrator: One of Lynch's homes, built in 1749, was "Hopsewee," on the North Santee River.

Lynch's plantations used a method of rice cultivation brought to the New World by African slaves.

Williams: They realized the importance of flooding the rice fields as a means of having a greater yield. So they hit upon something that was unique and this in a sense was the beginning to that path to great riches.



Narrator: Indigo was another important source of revenue.

Williams: It produces a beautiful blue dye. This was a British colony and the Brits wanted that dye for the sailor uniforms, and they had the largest Navy in the world.

Narrator: The Winyah Indigo Society was a social assembly of planters in Georgetown who met periodically to “discuss the latest economic news from England.”

Williams: You would have found a wide range of topics ranging from politics to literature to agricultural practices. It was a center of learning and of enlightenment in the Georgetown area.

Narrator: Politics were also discussed at St. James Santee Church, near McClellanville, where the Lynches attended.

Williams: And of course, the churches were not only religious centers but social and political centers, this is where you went to vote among other things. This was part of the Anglican church in those days.

Narrator: The hot topic of the day was separation of the colonies from England.

Williams: If you look at a number of wealthy families—like the Pinckneys, and the Lynches, and the Heywards and the Middletons—it is interesting that they chose to go the route of independence.

Narrator: Thomas Lynch, a colonial assemblyman, spoke out for planters who, although currently in favor with the British, didn’t want to be totally under their control.

Beattie: Mr. Lynch, being an Irishman and his family had been Irish for 900 years, he understood the oppressive nature of the British crown and what its potential was. And this was the first time he actually took the public position in opposition to the crown policy.

Narrator: Events began to unfold that would project Thomas Lynch Sr. into national prominence.

Beattie: The Stamp Act was the event which enabled Mr. Lynch to stride onto the world stage for the first time. Before then, he had not met the leaders of New England or the Mid-Atlantic states, and they had not met him. He made an extremely favorable impression upon them by



virtue of the speeches he gave and the coherent and concise way in which he expressed himself.

Williams: A man of unquestionable intellectual abilities, drive, energy and an interest in politics he literally was able to catapult himself to the top.

It seems that he was a very down to earth person in many ways, he dressed simply, he did not put on airs, and maybe that might have impressed some people about him because they comment about that.

Beattie: In 1773, Mr. Lynch was invited on a speaking tour of New England and he spoke so well that he made a national reputation for himself. And the hinge of fate occurred with the Boston Tea Party of the following year, and immediately following the Boston Tea Party the British government closed the port of Boston. As a result of the closing of the port of Boston, the First Continental Congress was convened.

Narrator: At the Second Continental Congress, Thomas Lynch Sr. was instrumental in recognizing George Washington's leadership skills.

Beattie: It was Lynch's influence with John Adams that enabled John Adams to persuade the New England delegation to support Washington's candidacy as commander in chief.

Narrator: Lynch provided encouragement during tough times and helped start what would become the US Navy.

Beattie: The American Revolution looked like it was lost in the winter of the first year, 1775-1776. Washington had done nothing but retreat, and the troops that were under his command had enlisted for three months in each state and they were all going home. Mr. Lynch, Benjamin Harrison, and Benjamin Franklin were appointed to serve as his liaison between the Congress and Washington, trying to keep the army together. As a result of that, when the revolution began to succeed and the first naval ships were built, the first three were named The Harrison, The Lynch, and The Franklin.

Narrator: Thomas Lynch Sr. should have been a signer of one of America's most precious documents, but he suffered a debilitating stroke in February 1776.



Williams: The elder Lynch was expected to sign The Declaration of Independence, but he became ill and his son was sent forth, Thomas Lynch Jr. and it was the son Thomas Lynch Jr. who signed The Declaration of Independence.

There is a blank space between the signatures of Edward Rutledge and Thomas Heyward Jr., and that was the space in which Thomas Lynch Sr. was to sign.

Narrator: Thomas Lynch died in 1776, on his way home from Philadelphia to South Carolina.

In 1779, his son Thomas Lynch Jr., in poor health as well, was lost at sea when he tried to go abroad to recover.

So the Lynch family—rich, brilliant, politically astute—had no direct heir to enjoy the freedoms of a new republic.