

A CHERISHED TRADITION

# John Howard of the French and Indian war

BY ELMER ORIS PARKER

John Howard was a young Virginia militiaman in 1755 when near Fort Duquesne in Pennsylvania he overheard Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock of the British Army rebuke his aide Col. George Washington for telling him he should not march his army through Indian country in strict military formation as its colorful uniforms and shining arms would make his men easy targets for the Indian warriors who would fight from behind rocks and trees, or so goes a time-honored and much cherished tradition in the Howard family. Soon Braddock was ambushed and mortally wounded but lived long enough to repent his error, saying, "Another time we shall know better how to deal with them." He was buried in the military road and his wagontrain allowed to pass over his grave so as to conceal its whereabouts from the Indians.

The French and Indian War began as a struggle between the English and French for ownership of the Ohio Valley. The Iroquois Nation occupied the territory between the French and English provinces. When the French heard that the English were preparing to settle this region, they began to build forts on the frontier. The English countered by building Fort Duquesne at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, now Pittsburgh. The French took it and General Braddock was sent over from England to retake it with two regiments of Regulars and a body of Virginia and North Carolina militia. Although there is no contemporary record that documents John Howard's service, there is no reason to doubt it. The account of it was told to his son George who related it to his son Jacob, who passed it on to his son John Stouton, and he in turn told it to his son Thomas Lee, who repeated it to this writer on a warm summer afternoon 30 years ago (on July 11, 1949).

It was said that John Howard came



THE TRAGEDY OF BRADDOCK'S DEFEAT.

from old England as a young man, and landed at Norfolk. He was indentured to a Virginia planter to pay for his passage to America. Something happened one day that displeased his master who took an ear of dried corn, stripped back the shuck, and brutally beat young John in the face with it, leaving scars that he carried with him to the grave.

Howard served out his indenture and sometime before the War for In-

dependence, migrated to South Carolina and settled in the fork of the Saltcatchers near the line between Orangeburgh and Charleston districts, later Barnwell (now Bamberg) and Colleton counties. He married a daughter of John Inman and to them were born Catherine, Samuel, George, Jacob, John and Mary Elizabeth. Beginning in 1772 he received land grants from the state totaling 486 acres. In 1796, he deeded 200 acres to his