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Rediscovering the American Revolution in South Carolina: 1775-1782 - 2003

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Rediscovering the American Revolution in South Carolina 1775-1782

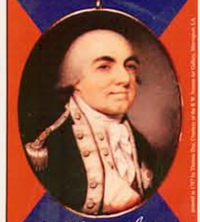

William Moultrie

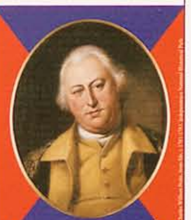

Charles Lee


Horatio Gates


Lord Charles Cornwallis


Banastre Tarleton


Sir Henry Clinton


Benjamin Lincoln


Francis Marion


William Washington

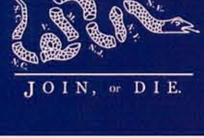

Daniel Morgan

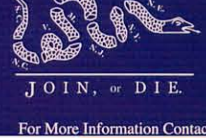

Thaddeus Kosciusko

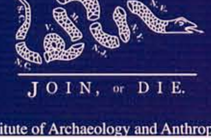

Nathanael Greene

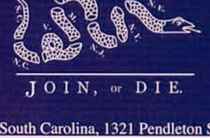
South Carolina Archaeology Month

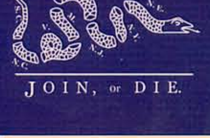
September 4 to October 4, 2003











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Rediscovering the American Revolution in South Carolina 1775-1782

South Carolina Archaeology Month September 4- October 4, 2003

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The Revolutionary War in South Carolina

by Carl P. Borick (Charleston Museum) and Steven D. Smith, (SCIAA)

South Carolina was the site of 137 known battles and skirmishes during the American Revolution, far more than in any other state. The locations of many are preserved by the National Park Service or by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, while others have vanished completely. Fortunately, historical and archaeological work has been done on many of these sites, providing a wealth of information on the events that occurred there.

The American Revolutionary War was a conflict of divided loyalties. While a majority of colonists supported the rebellion, a significant portion of the population, the loyalists, did not. The supposed presence of large numbers of loyalists in the southern colonies was the primary reason that the South became such a battleground during the war. British political and military leaders held this belief throughout the Revolution, and as a result, continued to send military expeditions to support the "King's friends."

In South Carolina, rebellious fervor had been as strong as in the New England colonies. The colony's residents had opposed the Stamp Act, Townshend Duties, and other acts of Parliament, and many accepted the outbreak of war willingly. Still, this rebelliousness was not universal, and some actively resisted it. In November 1775, South Carolina saw its first bloodshed because of divided loyalties. Patriots and loyalists faced off against each other at Ninety-Six; one man was killed and several were wounded before the two sides called a truce. It was a precursor to the bloody civil war that would later rage in South Carolina.

South Carolina's first real test in the Revolutionary War came in June 1776. Originally intending to support North Carolina loyalists, a British force under General Henry Clinton and Commodore Peter Parker moved into South Carolina when they found that rebels had defeated these loyalists at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge in February. The two commanders set their sights on an unfinished fort on Sullivan's Island which defended Charleston harbor.

Clinton's troops landed on Long Island (now the Isle of Palms) in early June; Parker's vessels, meanwhile, crossed Charleston Bar and anchored in Five Fathom Hole. The Americans waited the coming assault. Colonel William Moultrie commanded the fort that would later be named for him with 364 officers and men of the 2nd and 4th South Carolina Continental regiments.

The battle of Sullivan's Island, which took place on June 28, 1776, was a stunning success for the Americans. Solid shot fired from the Royal Navy vessels made little impression on the fort's walls, which were constructed of parallel rows of palmetto logs with sand in-between. The cannonballs were swallowed up by the sand and spongy palmetto wood. The fort's guns raked the British ships with fire, damaging them severely and inflicting over one hundred casualties on Parker's sailors. Moreover, the frigate Acteon ran aground on a large sand bank, and her crew destroyed her. Several weeks later, Clinton re-embarked his troops and the British convoy departed the South Carolina coast.

South Carolina survived its first attack by British forces, but shortly afterward, a new and equally terrifying threat arose in the western part of the province: war with the Cherokees. On July 1, 1776, Cherokee warriors attacked frontier settlements from Virginia to Georgia, but were eventually overwhelmingly defeated by the patriots. In South Carolina, Andrew Williamson and Andrew Pickens led devastating punitive expeditions against their settlements, including the villages of Seneca and Tamassee and battles at Tugaloo River and the Ring Fight. The Cherokees signed a peace treaty with patriots in May 1777, and were only a minor threat throughout the rest of the war. The victory at Sullivan's Island coupled with the suppression of the Cherokees made the Declaration of Independence much easier for South Carolinians to accept. South Carolina would now be part of a new nation.

For the next two and a half years, South Carolina was virtually untouched by war. Then, France's recognition of an independent United States brought them into the war on the American side and changed the nature of the conflict for Great Britain. No longer simply trying to subdue a colonial rebellion, they now faced their traditional enemy around the globe. With their military resources now stretched thin, British leaders placed increased emphasis on the use of loyalists. Persisting in the belief of loyalist strongholds in the South, they refocused their efforts there beginning in 1778.

Capturing Savannah easily in December 1778, British troops took control of much of Georgia. Making a foray to Beaufort in February 1779, a British detachment under Major Gardiner clashed with a force of primarily militia commanded by Brigadier General William Moultrie at Port Royal Island. After a sharp fight, the patriots forced the Redcoats to retreat.

In January 1779, Major General Benjamin Lincoln assumed command of the American Southern Department from Major General Robert Howe. Wishing to drive the British from Georgia, in April Lincoln marched the bulk of his army up the Savannah River with the intention of crossing to Augusta. Major General Augustine Prevost, the British commander in Georgia, meanwhile crossed the Savannah River at Purisburg with approximately 3,600 men and marched straight for Charleston. Lincoln left General Moultrie on the lower Savannah to guard against such a move, but Prevost's force vastly outnumbered Moultrie's.

Burning bridges along the route, Moultrie retreated to Charleston. Panic swept the city at Prevost's approach. South Carolina's civilian authorities, led by Governor John Rutledge, doubted they could withstand a British attack. When Prevost arrived before the city and demanded its surrender, they offered the neutrality of South Carolina for the remainder of the war in exchange for the city's security. Claiming they had no authority for such diplomacy, the British officers rejected this proposal and insisted on dealing with Moultrie as military commander. Taking charge of the situation, Moultrie insisted they would "fight it out," and rebuffed the surrender demand. With a determined enemy before him and Lincoln returning post haste from Georgia, Prevost retreated on the night of May 12. Charleston had survived another threat.

Prevost moved his army first to James Island and then to Johns Island. With too few troops to undertake further offensive operations, he eventually withdrew toward Beaufort. As the British army fell back, Lincoln attacked Prevost's rear guard posted at Stono Ferry on June 20, 1779. After a fierce fight, the Americans were driven back, and the British troops safely evacuated the area. Although Prevost returned with most of his troops to Savannah at the end of the campaign, he had successfully kept the Americans from making inroads into Georgia.

Convinced that loyalists predominated in the southern colonies, Lord George Germain, secretary of state for the American colonies, pushed Sir Henry Clinton, commander-in-chief in America, to make a more determined effort in the South in 1779. Delayed by the French incursion into American waters that resulted in the disastrous Franco-American attempt on Savannah, Clinton and Vice Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot departed New York in December 1779 with an army of 8,700 men and over 100 warships and transports. The fleet rendezvoused off Savannah in late January, and British troops landed on Simmons Island (now Seabrook Island) on February 11-12, 1780.

The British army moved across Johns and James Islands then up the Ashley River, where they crossed at Drayton Hall on March 29. Intending to take Charleston by siege, Clinton opened a first parallel on Charleston neck on April 1. Arbuthnot, meanwhile, led vessels of the Royal Navy across Charleston Bar, a large sandbank protecting the harbor, on March 20, and on April 7 his warships drove past Fort Moultrie and anchored off Fort Johnson.

Lincoln rejected Clinton and Arbuthnot's summons to surrender the town on April 10. Determined to hold Charleston, the American commander kept the bulk of his army within Charleston's fortifications, which consisted of a canal, two rows of abatis, a line of earthworks and batteries, and a central hornwork. The Americans bombarded the British in their approach trenches and parallels but failed to stop their advance.

Clinton next took steps to surround Charleston and cut off the garrison's escape route. Lincoln had sent his cavalry under Brigadier General Isaac Huger to the upper reaches of the Cooper River to defend his communication with the backcountry. In the early morning of April 14, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, leading the British cavalry, attacked them in their camp at Biggin Bridge near Moncks Corner. Tarleton's dragoons completely overwhelmed them and inflicted a devastating defeat upon the patriots. The British victory took the America cavalry out of action for several weeks and opened the door for British troops to enter the region east of the Cooper River.

On Charleston Neck, the two sides cannonaded each other for almost a month beginning April 13. An American sortie on April 24 temporarily disrupted the British, but by the beginning of May, cannon in their third parallel hammered Charleston's fortifications. Hopes dimmed when Tarleton again defeated the American cavalry on May 5 at Lenud's Ferry and Fort Moultrie fell to marines of the Royal Navy on May 7. Lincoln was finally forced to capitulate on May 12. He surrendered approximately 6,000 men to the British, the largest American defeat of the Revolution.

Excavation of the Moat at the Original Fort Moultrie, 1973-1974

Clinton wasted no time in following up on his victory at Charleston. British forces fanned out into the South Carolina backcountry to capture strategic points and destroy any remaining resistance to the Crown. Backcountry villages, including Augusta, Ninety Six, and Camden, were occupied, along with Georgetown along the coast. Interspaced between these towns, the British built forts like Belleville, Fort Motte, and Fort Watson, to protect supply lines. Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, in command of the British Legion, was especially active in running down the only remaining Continental force in South Carolina. After conducting a forced march of some 150 miles, he caught up with 350 retreating Virginians under Colonel Abraham Buford on May 29 at the Waxhaw Settlement in Lancaster County. Tarleton's cavalry chopped up the Virginians as they attempted to surrender. "Tarleton's Quarter," as it came to be called, did nothing to gain popular support for the British; nor did Clinton's proclamation, which declared that anyone not actively supporting Royal government would be considered an enemy to the King. In other words, paroled Americans would have to take up arms against those in rebellion. Throughout the backcountry Americans reacted by joining militia companies and striking at loyalists or British regulars. Clashes continued throughout the summer. Between the fall of Charleston and the battle of Camden on August 16, there were at least eighteen engagements (Hill's Iron Works, Williamson's Plantation, Rocky Mount, and Hanging Rock, to name a few); all were fought in the backcountry north of modern Columbia.

At the time of the fall of Charleston a force of Maryland and Delaware Continental regiments under Major General Johann, Baron De Kalb had been enroute through North Carolina to join the American army in South Carolina. Learning of the surrender of Charleston and the butchery at the Waxhaws, these reinforcements settled into camp at Coxe's Mill, North Carolina to await supplies and for the Congress to send them a new commander. General Horatio Gates arrived in July and immediately broke camp for British-occupied Camden. Gates took a direct route to Camden that lacked good forage and sapped the strength of his army. They eventually stumbled into Rugeley's Mill, some thirteen miles north of Camden. On paper, Gates army looked strong, having been reinforced by North Carolina and Virginia militia; it numbered nearly 3,500 men. But the militia were exhausted and untested in battle. Both the Continentals and militia were near starvation. Neither was in any shape for the march toward Camden that Gates ordered for 10 P.M. the night of August 15th. Unbeknownst to Gates, at the exact hour that he set out, Lord Charles Cornwallis also began marching his army north from Camden with the objective of surprising Gates at Rugeley's Mill. About 2 A.M. Gates's advanced troops ran into the British. After a brief confusing skirmish, both sides fell back and prepared for the daylight. Two hours later, through the morning mist an American artilleryman spotted the British deploying and requested permission to fire. Within mere minutes, America's second southern command was lost. Gates had deployed his forces with his veteran Continentals on his right and the untrained militia on his left. The British had put their best troops on their right also, and the result was that regular British soldiers faced-off against the untried American militia. In the opening moments of battle, the militia saw the British advancing with fixed bayonets. Panicking and throwing down their weapons, they ran away, most without firing a shot. Gates attempted to rally the militia but was caught up in the panic and was soon swept off the battlefield. On the American right, the Continental line held firm and even advanced against the British loyalist forces. Cornwallis, though, saw his opportunity and called upon Tarleton's dragoons, who gained the Continentals' rear. The patriot regulars were destroyed and Baron De Kalb died on the battlefield. American casualties are not known but numbered as many as 900 killed and wounded and another 1,000 captured. The British lost 324. Cornwallis immediately sent Tarleton after Thomas Sumter and the British cavalier surprised the Gamecock at Fishing Creek.

Having destroyed two large American army forces in four months and having gained control of most of the strategic villages of South Carolina, the British might have been feeling confident after Camden and Fishing Creek. But there were too many independent-minded backcountry settlers who remained undeterred. And in the lowcountry, the British had not counted on Francis Marion. Marion had joined Gates's army but was dispatched to command the Williamsburg militia before the battle of Camden. Marion immediately began his partisan campaign in the lowcountry. From August 1780 to April 1781, Marion would wage guerilla war against the British and loyalists, fighting skirmishes at such places as Great Savannah, Blue Savannah, Black Mingo, Nelson's Ferry, Tearcoat Swamp, Halfway Swamp and Singleton's Mill. Though Marion was largely alone in the lowcountry, the backcountry was alive with partisans. The same day Sumter was defeated at Fishing Creek, Isaac Shelby, Elijah Clark, and James Williams defeated a British garrison at Musgrove's Mill along the Enoree River.

In September, Lord Cornwallis moved his army to Charlotte. To his west, British Major Patrick Ferguson arrived in Gilbertown, North Carolina with a Provincial Corps and loyalist militia. He sent a message to the rebellious frontier settlers in western North Carolina, Virginia, and eastern Tennessee threatening that he would march over the mountains, hang their leaders, and "lay their country waste with fire and sword." Watauga settlers took umbrage at such rhetoric, rallied over 1,200 men at Sycamore Shoals and marched the across the mountains themselves, gathering additional men as they came. Ferguson retreated into South Carolina and camped on Kings Mountain in York County. There he was surrounded on October 7, 1780 and defeated. Ferguson was killed along with around 300 of his men; the rest, numbering some 700, were taken prisoner.

Kings Mountain is considered the turning point of the war in the South. Cornwallis, hearing of the defeat, decided to retreat back into South Carolina and make winter camp at Winnsboro. While the partisan war continued, the Continental Congress sent their third general south to reform the American regulars. Major General Nathanael Greene arrived in Charlotte in December, took command of the remnants of Gates's army, and marched them back into South Carolina. He divided the army into two forces, taking command of one and camping at Hicks Creek on the Pee Dee River. The other he gave to General Daniel Morgan with orders to move west and threaten the British at Ninety-Six. Morgan's detached command under William Washington defeated a group of Georgia loyalists at Hammond's Store and Cornwallis decided to move against Morgan. Tarleton was at the time in Newberry and from there carried out the order to push Morgan "to his utmost." Morgan retreated north and west and found a suitable battleground at the Cowpens in Cherokee County. The Battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781 has come to be one of the classic battles of 18th century warfare. Morgan drew up his forces in three lines, using the militia in the front two lines to dull the usual British frontal attacks. The first line delivered their volleys and retreated in an orderly manner, disrupting the British. The second line, also militia, were placed behind a slight rise, so that when the British came over the rise, they were outlined on the skyline and easy targets. Then the second line also retreated, leaving the battered British to face the rested and well-formed Continentals. Tarleton threw his dragoons into the battle, but in a series of well-timed charges, William Washington's cavalry routed them. Although even the third American line fell back, it did so in an orderly manner, and turned to deliver stunning volleys into Tarleton's Highlanders. Tarleton's army fell apart and was shattered; Tarleton himself was nearly captured.

There was little time to celebrate the victory. Cornwallis was already on his way north when he heard of the defeat and despite the loss saw an opportunity. If he could get to Morgan before Greene and Morgan could combine, he could smash one then the other. Thus began a series of forced marches by both sides, Cornwallis and Tarleton just behind Morgan in a race across North Carolina to the Dan River in Virginia. In a desperate move to increase his speed, Cornwallis burned his supply wagons, turning his army into a light force. Cornwallis never caught up. Morgan's forces combined with Greene's at Guilford Courthouse and both made it to the Dan a few hours before the British.

While Greene and Cornwallis maneuvered in North Carolina, Sumter, Marion and other partisans kept the British forces in South Carolina harassed. Marion and his officers raided British posts or fought British detachments at White's Plantation, Georgetown, Manigault's Ferry, Waboo and Keithfield Plantation. Sumter engaged the British at Fort Granby, Belleville Plantation, Big Savannah, and then returned north to the Waxhaws. In March the British made a concerted effort to get Marion, and while he stopped one force under Colonel John Watson, another under Colonel Welbore Ellis Doyle burned his depot at Snow's Island. Marion quickly recovered and, joined by Light Horse Harry Lee, he successfully reduced the British posts at Fort Watson and Fort Motte in April and May of 1781.

In North Carolina, Greene and Cornwallis engaged in battle at Guilford Courthouse on March 15th. It was a set-piece clash of standing armies that was technically won by Cornwallis, but at a price that he could not afford. He lost about one quarter of his 2,000 regulars, along with 27 officers. Cornwallis moved to Wilmington to decide his next move. Greene returned to South Carolina. His return heartened the partisans and Greene wisely used them to attack British posts. But Greene was not idle. He moved toward Camden. Always confident, the British under Lord Rawdon marched out of Camden and met Greene a few miles north at Hobkirk's Hill on April 25. The British won the day, but again, they were weakened enough that they soon decided to abandon the lynchpin of the British outposts. With Camden in American hands, the rest of the British outposts fell like dominos.

Greene moved south and joined with Marion and Lee at Fort Motte. He ordered Marion to go after Georgetown and Lee to take Fort Granby. After Granby fell, he sent Lee to assist Andrew Pickens and Elijah Clarke to capture the British post at Augusta, while Greene marched on Ninety-Six. With less than 500 Continentals and 400 militia, Greene decided a siege was the only choice against Ninety-Six's strong defenses. As Greene's army dug trenches and a tunnel to mine the fort, Lord Rawdon began a forced march from Charleston. Sumter was sent to delay him, but failed. As Rawdon got closer, time was running out for Greene, even with reinforcements from their victory at Augusta. On June 18, Greene attacked. A stockade fort fell to the Americans, but the famous Star Fort held. Greene gave up the following day and left the town to Rawdon. But once again, Greene's battlefield loss was a strategic victory. Rawdon destroyed the forts and abandoned the town to the Americans a few days later.

Rawdon and Greene maneuvered for a few weeks, but eventually Greene retreated to the High Hills of the Santee to recoup and rest. Again he sent orders to Sumter, Marion and Lee to operate against the British while he rested and trained the Continental army. Partisans clashed with British detachments at Biggin Church, Strawberry Ferry, Quimby Bridge and Plantation, and Parker's Ferry.

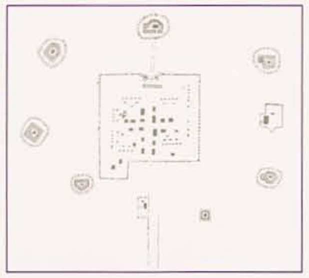
In September of 1781 the last major battle in South Carolina took place at Eutaw Springs. General Nathanael Greene came out of the High Hills and marched on a large force camped at the springs under the command of Colonel Alexander Stuart. With Greene was a host of patriot officers whose names are now well known: Francis Marion, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, William Washington, Otho Holland Williams, Jethro Sumner, Andrew Pickens, and Wade Hampton. Early on the morning of September 8, Greene's advanced party ran into a British escort party protecting foragers. Stuart sent forward additional troops to delay the Americans and formed his main army in a single line in front of his Eutaw Springs campgrounds. He anchored his right flank on Eutaw Creek with a large brick house behind the line. Greene pushed forward, using the militia in the front line and his veteran Continentals in the second line, similar to the Cowpens' battle plan. The Americans pushed back British skirmishers and hit the main British line where a bloody struggle commenced. When the center of the American line began to buckle, Stuart ordered an advance of his own. But his forces became disorderly, and Greene countered with his Continentals in a bayonet attack that collapsed the British left flank. On the verge of a major victory, many of the American troops thought the battle won and left the fighting to loot the British camp. But the British right flank had not retreated and those secure in the house began a heavy fire, which not only threw the American's into confusion, but also allowed Stuart to rally his troops. Greene got control of his troops before disaster struck and retreated. Losses on both sides were high: the British admitting to 683 killed, wounded and missing and the Americans reporting 517. Washington was captured and Pickens was wounded.

While skirmishes between partisans and loyalists continued that fall, General Greene received news on November 9 that Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia. The news was the beginning of the end of British occupation of South Carolina. As America and Britain negotiated an end to the war, Greene's army grew in strength, receiving reinforcements from the northern colonies and from the over mountain settlements. The war moved to the coastal areas around Charleston. Greene moved his army to Round O, or Sanders Hill, in Colleton County. Marion patrolled to the north of Charleston. Skirmishes occurred at Garden's Plantation, Dorchester, Videau's Bridge, Durand's Plantation, Tar Bluff Plantation, and Wadboo. One backcountry skirmish took place at Lorick's Ferry along the Saluda River. But on December 14, 1782 the war effectively ended for South Carolina when the British evacuated Charleston.

Archaeology at Historic Camden

by James B. Legg, SCIAA

The Kershaw County town of Camden was settled by the 1750's in a location just south of the present town. The site of the original town is preserved in the 107-acre Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site. Camden was occupied by the British from June, 1780 until May 1781, and during that time it was their largest and most significant post in the South Carolina back country. The British fortified the town with a log palisade and a ring of redoubts, or small forts, which are depicted on a 1781 American plan of the town and its defenses (below). While no battles were fought on the site, two major battles were fought in the vicinity, including the Battle of Camden, actually fought several miles north of the present town, on August 16th, 1780, and the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill, fought on a site within the northern edge of the modern town, on April 25, 1781. Both battles were British victories.



General Greene's Map of Camden, May 12, 1781
(Source: 1781/GP/CCP/155/II:161)

After the abandonment of the original Camden site following the Revolution, the area reverted to agriculture and the archaeological remains of the town and the British fortifications were fairly well preserved. In conjunction with the development of the town site as an historic park, extensive archaeological investigations have been conducted. With the possible exception of the site of Ninety Six, more Revolutionary War-related archaeology has been conducted at Historic Camden than anywhere else in South Carolina. Since the 1960's, this work has been conducted by archaeologists representing a number of different institutions, including the Camden District Heritage Foundation, the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, the University of South Carolina Department of Anthropology, and Michigan State University.

The earliest excavations, between 1963 and 1965, were exploratory attempts to verify the site of the fortified Kershaw/Cornwallis House (see front), which served as British headquarters during the occupation, and a fortified powder magazine, both of which are shown on the 1781 plan. The magazine site was excavated and confirmed in 1967, and its location allowed the 1781 plan to be accurately scaled and overlaid on the modern terrain; this essentially located all of the other elements of the fortifications. Between 1967 and 1975, excavations were conducted in several additional areas, including the Northeast and Southwest Redoubts, extensive sections of the palisade wall around the town, and the Kershaw/Cornwallis House. Both redoubts, the Kershaw/Cornwallis House, and portions of the palisade wall have been reconstructed in their original locations. Since 1975, archaeological attention has been focused on the remains of the civilian settlement, within the fortifications. This work has defined the sites of a number of houses and other structures in the old town, and has confirmed the gradual abandonment of the original location in favor of higher ground to the north in the decades after the Revolution.

The Camden Battlefield Collector Survey

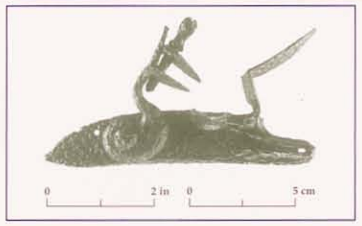
by James B. Legg, SCIAA

The Battle of Camden, South Carolina, fought on August 16, 1780, resulted in the destruction of the second southern army that the Americans had managed to form that year, and was nearly the victory that England needed to secure the southern colonies. Several miles north of present Camden, in Kershaw County, a British army of about 2200 men under Lord Cornwallis engaged a larger American army under Horatio Gates. Most of the American militia, who comprised more than half of Gates' army, ran away without firing a shot, leaving outnumbered Maryland and Delaware continentals engaged in an epic but ultimately futile struggle against Cornwallis' regulars.

In recent years a preservation effort led by George Fields of Palmetto Conservation Foundation has sought to protect the Battle of Camden site with the ultimate goal of establishing a publicly owned battlefield park. A critical component of this project has been to determine the limits of the fighting and the locations of the various events of the battle on the present landscape, which remains a relatively undisturbed pine forest. Like most other Revolutionary War battles, Camden is well described in historical documents, but it remains unclear just how and where the battle unfolded. The several crude maps of the battle prepared by British and American participants only roughly match the actual terrain, and the various eye-witness accounts of the fighting provide a disjointed and sometimes contradictory impression of events.

Controlled metal detector survey is a proven archaeological method for addressing this problem on battlefields. This approach uses metal detectors to find and collect battle artifacts, typically ammunition items, scattered across a battle site. Each artifact is recorded precisely on a modern map of the terrain, resulting in a series of maps showing the distribution and densities of different varieties of ammunition and other artifacts. This data is then integrated with historical maps and accounts, yielding a more complete understanding of events tied to the actual terrain.

Unfortunately the Camden battlefield has been very heavily collected by private individuals for many years, and most of the artifact data is no longer present on the site. The solution to this problem is the Camden Battlefield Collector Survey, a program begun in 1998 by the Palmetto Conservation Foundation and archaeologists with the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. The goal has been to record as much artifact data as possible from the private collectors who have found artifacts on the battlefield. To date, 11 collectors have been interviewed and hundreds of battle artifacts have been recorded and mapped. Several hundred artifacts have been recorded thus far. In addition to a growing body of distributional information, the collector survey has provided new details about the weapons, equipment and uniforms used by the opposing armies. The collections include fired and non-fired musket balls, artillery canister balls, musket and sword parts, equipment buckles and other hardware, uniform buttons, shoe buckles and a variety of personal items. The collector survey is a work in progress. Anyone with information regarding artifacts from the Camden battlefield is urged to contribute their knowledge to the survey. Please contact James Legg at (803) 777-8170, or at JBL857@aol.com.



Complete Musket Lock from the Camden Battlefield

Ninety Six National Historic Site

by Eric K. Williams, Chief Park Ranger, Ninety Six NHS

The Ninety Six National Historic Site is an area of unique historical and archeological significance. It is located on highway 248 two miles south of the town of Ninety Six. The unusual name was given by early traders in the 1700's because they mistakenly believed it was the estimated number of miles to the Cherokee village of Keowee in the upper South Carolina foothills.

By the mid-1700's, European colonists found it a favorable place to settle. During Ninety Six's early days, troubles with local Indians increased. In 1760, Cherokees twice attacked Fort Ninety Six, built for the settlers' protection. By the early 1700's, Ninety Six village reached its peak with a growing population, 12 houses and a newly constructed courthouse and jail.

Ninety Six also figured prominently in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution. The first land battle south of New England was fought here in 1775 and in 1780, the British fortified the strategically important frontier town. From May 22 - June 18, 1781; Major General Nathanael Greene with 1,000 patriot troops staged the longest siege of the Revolutionary War against 550 loyalists who were defending Ninety Six.

Fort Moultrie

by James B. Legg, SCIAA

Fort Moultrie overlooks the narrow entrance to Charleston Bay from the southwestern end of Sullivan's Island. The brick and stone fort that stands today is the third Fort Moultrie, which was begun in 1808. While no portion of the Revolutionary War Fort Moultrie is apparent above ground, extensive archaeological remains of the original fort are preserved beneath the surface.

Originally called Sullivan's Fort, the first Fort Moultrie was begun by the rebellious South Carolinians early in 1776, in anticipation of a British naval attempt to capture Charleston. The fort was roughly square, about 550 feet on each side, and was constructed of palmetto log and timber walls spaced 16 feet apart, with the intervening space filled with sand. Construction was still underway when the British fleet arrived, but the fort already mounted about 30 guns and held a garrison of 435 men, mostly from the 2nd South Carolina Regiment. On June 28, 1776, a fleet of eleven British warships sailed to within several hundred yards of Sullivan's Fort and began a bombardment intended to silence the fort and force a passage into Charleston Bay. Some nine hours later, the British broke off the fight and retreated, abandoning the first attack on Charleston. The artillery duel had cost the British one vessel, and many casualties on other ships, while the Americans lost only 12 dead. Ironically the hastily improvised nature of the American fortifications was an advantage – although the British fired far more projectiles, those that struck the fort were ineffective against the spongy palmetto logs and thick walls of sand. Sullivan's Fort was renamed Fort Moultrie in honor of its commander in the engagement, William Moultrie. Fort Moultrie fell to the British during their second (and successful) campaign against Charleston, in 1780; the British garrisoned Sullivan's Island until they evacuated Charleston in December 1782.

Although no visible evidence of the first Fort Moultrie were preserved, the various fortifications were recorded on formal plans and maps and described by eye-witnesses. In 1968, careful study of the surviving information by National Park Service historian Edwin Bearss established the probable location of the original fort on the present landscape. Bearss suggested that "…a trained archaeologist might pinpoint some of its remains and thus verify the location of this fort." In 1973-74, archaeological test excavations were indeed undertaken, by Stanley South of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Dick Ping Hsu and John Ehrenhard of the National Park Service.

Some of the Uniform Buttons Recovered during Excavations at Ft. Moultrie
(from "Palmetto Parapets" written and illustrated by Stanley South)

The excavations were very complex thanks to the repeated re-use of the site over nearly two hundred years. In at least two areas, however, substantial remains of fortifications were found that clearly dated to the years of the Revolution, and no later. These included a ditch or moat that was certainly a portion of the original 1776 Fort Moultrie, and an array of timber footings that were initially thought to be part of the American fort, but were eventually interpreted as part of an adjacent, unfinished British fortification. Artifacts from Revolutionary War contexts included cannon balls, ceramic tableware, bottle fragments, gun parts and ammunition, and uniform buttons from the American 2nd South Carolina Regiment and British units including the 19th, 23rd, 30th, 62nd, 63rd, and 64th Regiments and the Royal Provincials. While only minor samples of the original fort were defined, the archaeological evidence was sufficient to confirm its location and to serve as a guide for future excavations.

About the Front of the Poster . . .

A number of agencies and organizations contributed or supplied usage rights for artwork placed on the front of the poster. The portraits of Benjamin Lincoln, William Washington, Nathanael Greene, Daniel Morgan, and Horatio Gates, which were painted by Charles Willson Peale toward the end of the War, were supplied by the Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, PA. The portrait of Sir Henry Clinton was painted by Thomas Day in 1787 and was provided courtesy of the R. W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, LA. The remaining portraits were provided by the Charleston Museum and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The engravings titled "Colonel William Augustine Washington at the Battle of Cowpens" by S. H. Gimber and "Battle of Camden, Death of DeKalb" by Alonzo Chappel were also supplied by the NARA. The reconstructive drawings of the Kershaw House in Camden and the battle at Fort Watson, which was situated atop a prehistoric platform mound of the Mississippian period, were done by Darby Erd and are the property of SCIAA. Reconstructive views of Fort Moultrie and the Southeast Bastion at Fort Moultrie were drawn by Stanley South and Michael Hartley respectively and appear in the report "Palmetto Parapets" written by Stanley South describing the archaeological excavations at the Fort.

Positioned along the central and end points of the frame border are stylistic representations of flags flown during the war. In the upper left corner is the first flag displayed by patriots in South Carolina and is commonly referred to as the Fort Moultrie flag or crescent flag. It was flown at Fort Moultrie in 1776. The yellow rattlesnake flag was commissioned by Colonel Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina and presented to the Continental Congress. It was copied from the flag used by Commodore Esek Hopkins, Commander in Chief of the Continental Fleet. The Red Ensign, or meteor flag, which consisted of a blue canton superimposed with the red cross of St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew on a red field, was a popular flag flown on ships in the colonies and was later modified by patriots to serve as battle flags. The variation containing the phrase "Liberty and Union" was used at Taunton, MA in October of 1774. Another alteration containing thirteen red and white stripes representing the individual colonies was referred to as the "Grand Union" flag. This flag served unofficially as the first flag of the United States from 1775 to 1777. The other red and white striped flag containing a blue canton with a circular arrangement of 13 stars was the flag of the 3rd Maryland Regiment and was flown at the Battle of Cowpens. Finally, the blue flag at the center right is a speculative reconstruction of the one used by the 2nd Regiment of South Carolina. The "Join or Die" rattlesnake motif was published in 1754 in Ben Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette to stress the importance of unity to the Albany Congress.

The artifact drawings and photographs were supplied by the Charleston Museum, Daryl P. Miller, James Legg, and Stanley South. In addition Don Knight provided a number of the Camden Battlefield Artifacts illustrated in photographs. Running from the top right in a clockwise fashion the photographs include a canister ball, a complete musket lock, and a 71st Regiment sword belt insignia from Camden, then in opposite view, then a Continental shoe buckle from Camden, and a set of British cuff links from Monk's Corner. Running along the bottom from right to left a gun flint, a musket cock, and the 71st Regiment sword belt insignia, and in opposite views. Along the left side of the border are included a 71st Regiment hat badge and a 33rd Regiment belt buckle. The drawings of uniform buttons were inked by Stanley South and appear in "Palmetto Parapets." They derive from uniforms worn by members of the 2nd South Carolina Continental Regiment and the British 19th, 23rd, 30th, 62nd, 63rd and 64th Regiments, the Royal Provincials, and the Royal Welsh Fusileers. All of the buttons were recovered from the excavations at Fort Moultrie.

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