

In 1780, the momentum of America's war for independence took dramatic turns:

- During the first half of the year, the Patriots seemed to be losing.
- During the second half of the year, the Redcoats seemed to be losing.

The lowest point of the entire Revolutionary War, for America, occurred when Charleston fell. In the early summer of 1780, when that key southern city was captured, Britain seemed to hold the upper hand. General Cornwallis was confident that America's revolutionary endeavor would end badly for the rebels.

But ... Banastre Tarleton, a senior British officer, made a terrible mistake at the battle of Waxhaws (in late May of 1780). Not content with a victory, his men ruthlessly killed Americans who were trying to surrender. At least seventy-five percent of those individuals were needlessly slaughtered.

When news of Tarleton's actions at Waxhaws spread, people in the South were enraged. This book, by John Ferling, paints the picture of an unfolding miracle as Southerners with different motives joined together.

Scotch-Irish Presbyterians (who abhorred Great Britain and its state church) combined forces with rebels (like Francis Marion) to seriously challenge Cornwallis and his forces. Before long, the British commander was facing a different reality as the "whole country" turned into "an absolute state of rebellion."

As Abraham Lincoln would later observe, a house divided against itself cannot stand. But when the people are united, and disparate groups come together to achieve a common objective, losses can become wins. And ... with a shifting momentum ... goals which once seemed out-of-reach can be achieved.

Ferling argues that both the war's low point (the loss of Charleston in May, 1780) and its turning point (American victories in the late-summer Southern Campaign of 1780) happened in South Carolina.

It would still take another year, however, before the war was finally over when Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown (on October 19, 1781).

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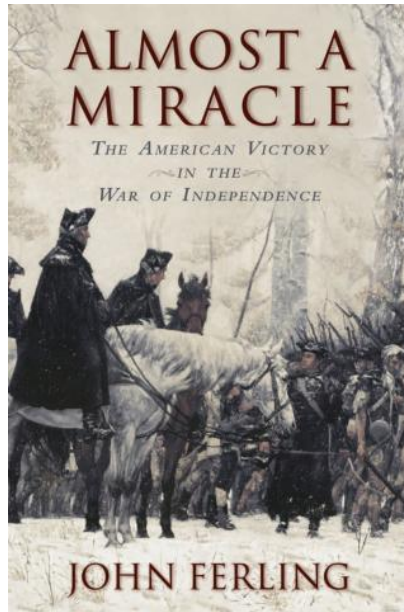
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