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South Carolina experienced key battles which affected not only the state, but more importantly helped in the success of the Patriots in the Revolutionary War.

The first battle in the Revolutionary War began at [Bunker Hill](#), close to Boston. The battle went well for the Patriots until they ran out of ammunition and the British ended up winning. The British, however, had heavy losses from the fighting.

The Patriots' victory at [Saratoga](#), New York, showed France that the Patriots had a good chance at beating Great Britain and, since Great Britain was France's enemy, France formed an alliance with the American Patriots.

After their defeat at Saratoga, the British—realizing there was a large Loyalist following in South Carolina, and hoping to gain supporters there—headed to Charleston. The first attempt to capture Charleston went really badly for the British.

Fort Moultrie, located at the mouth of the Ashley and Cooper rivers, protected Charleston. The fort was made-up of unfinished palmetto logs. The tides were against the British, forcing them to fire their cannons at Fort Moultrie. The palmetto logs were soft and damp and could withstand the iron balls from the cannons. Instead of shattering they seemed to absorb the blows.

The British also fired incendiary rounds at the fort, but the damp Palmetto logs would not burn. The firing continued for nine hours without destroying Fort Moultrie. (It is for this reason that the Palmetto tree is now on the South Carolina state flag).

The second siege against Charleston began March 29 and ended May 11, 1780. Charleston Harbor had been blockaded and no supplies could get through. Patriot forces trapped on the peninsula were forced to surrender, as well as other Patriot forces in the area, and were paroled by the British.

To be paroled meant you could return to your home but would no longer bear arms against the British; if you did so, you could be hanged as a traitor. At this time, the Continental Army presence was basically wiped out in Charleston. This defeat still ranks as the third-worst surrender in the history of the American Army.

The British had hoped that the large number of Loyalists in the area, combined with the large number of neutral people in the area, would help the British control the Patriots, thus helping the British to win the war. However, the British changed the rules of the parole by requiring Patriots to take up arms against their former Patriots, while at the same time the British were burning churches, looting homes, confiscating homes and exiling, or harassing, citizens. The actions of the British and Tory supporters had a very negative effect and caused many who had been neutral to begin joining Patriot bands.

Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, Andrew Pickens and William Harden formed Patriot bands which began fighting against the British regular troops and the Loyalist forces. These Patriot bands would use the Indian tactics of hit-and-run all over South Carolina.

As a young man, Francis Marion had fought against the Cherokee. He learned, first-hand, how well the Cherokee could conceal themselves, use the terrain to their advantage, and ambush the militia fighting against them. He became known as a master at guerilla warfare. He was once chased by Lt. Banastre Tarleton for over seven hours and Tarleton called him a fox. The nickname stuck and he became known as the "Swamp Fox."

Thomas Sumter's home was burned and his response was to gather men in the backcountry to form a Patriot fighting group. The British nicknamed him the "Gamecock" because he was tenacious in his fighting against the British.

Andrew Pickens was nicknamed the "Wizard Owl," by the Cherokee whom he'd fought against, before becoming a Patriot. He learned the Cherokee fighting techniques and, it is said, he received his nickname by winning a fight against seven men.

The Battle of Camden, South Carolina, was a massive win for the British, and it meant that almost all of South Carolina was now in the hands of the British. It was a huge defeat for the regular Continental Army. As a result of this defeat, Horatio Gates—the commander of the Army at Camden who had made some poor decisions—was replaced by Nathaniel Greene.

Greene believed the Patriots would help him fight against the British in a way that would unbalance the British method of fighting. Greene simply needed to coordinate the Army's movements with the Patriots. It was a destructive war of attrition, better known today as a mobile war.

The Battle at King's Mountain stopped the Loyalist forces. The overmountain men of North and South Carolina (and present day Tennessee) had been told that they needed to stay out of the fight or their homes would be destroyed by the Loyalist Commander Patrick Ferguson. He had hoped the men would stay home; instead such threats angered the men and they decided to fight Ferguson and his men.

The overmountain men attacked from behind rocks and trees and inflicted heavy losses to the Tory forces. Ferguson was killed and his men tried to surrender. Many men were killed by the mountain men before their leaders could gain control of them. This killing, after the men wanted to surrender, was a direct result of the harsh treatment after surrender in earlier battles by British Commander Tarleton. This battle was the beginning of the retreat of the British from the Backcountry, (after the war known as Upcountry).

The Battle of Cowpens was a battle which showed the ability for the Colonial army to win, when the forces of the Patriots and the army were combined against the British. The Patriots had a reputation among the British regular forces of running away from the fighting. The American commander, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, used this as a strategy when developing his battle plans.

Under the leadership of Andrew Pickens, the Patriots attacked and then fled which made British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton believe the Patriots were retreating. Tarleton and his men gave chase and were met by the guns of the regular American army. This marked the first time that the American army had defeated a force comprised of British regulars.

Cowpens was a massive defeat for Tarleton, and a huge victory for Morgan. This forced Cornwallis and the British to retreat into North Carolina and then on to Virginia. The Loyalist Tories who were left behind were either evacuated or reclaimed by the Patriot troops or into Greene's Continental forces.

The British wanted to halt the progress of the Patriots by making a captured Patriot-parolee an example. The British had captured Colonel Isaac Hayne near Charleston in 1781. Hayne had to declare his allegiance to the British, but after his wife died, he returned to fighting against the British and was captured. The British believed he had violated his oath and condemned him to death as a traitor.

Hayne was executed, but even this action did not produce the results for which the British had planned. Commander Greene immediately responded in a public proclamation that he would retaliate.

The Battle of Eutaw Springs gave Greene all the British-officer prisoners he would need to guarantee that no more executions would take place. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the entire Revolutionary War, lasting over four hours. It was the last major engagement to take place in South Carolina. There was no winner in the battle, due to the heavy losses sustained on both sides. This battle caused the British to leave South Carolina, thus ending their southern campaign.

While current historians do not agree on who actually won the battle of Eutaw Springs, the end result was that South Carolina was now free of British rule. To celebrate this battle, a commemorative medal and the commission of a tribute door panel for the State Capital building was established in the early years of the republic, marking this battle as an important event for the Patriots' cause.

The Revolutionary War Military Engagements lists more than 130 battles fought in South Carolina, and some believe it was closer to 137 battles. However many battles were fought in South Carolina, it was the scene of many battles during the Revolutionary War, mainly due to having a large group of Loyalists in the colony.

Footnotes:

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- 11) Unknown, Grade 8 Support Document, Dept of Ed Social Studies Standards, Jun/19/2015, Jun/19/2015, <https://ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Standards-Learning/documents/Grade8SupportDocument.pdf>

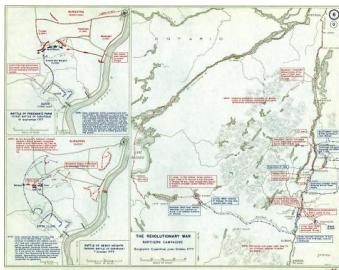
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Media Stream

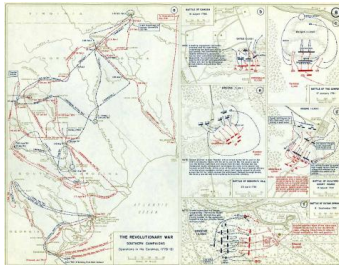


Battles of Saratoga, 1776 - Annotated Maps from USMA

Annotated map, courtesy United States Military Academy.

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Southern Campaigns, American Revolution - 1778-1781

Annotated map, courtesy United States Military Academy.

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Waterways of South Carolina - Patriots' Advantage

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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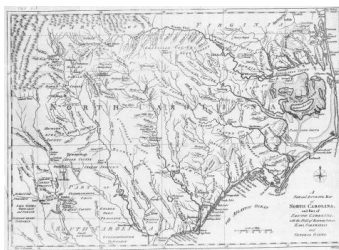
Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) - Portrait and Bio

Images, U.S. National Archives.

Information, National Park Service - *The American Revolution* web site.

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Fishing Creek - Patriot Defeat

Images online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

Information, National Park Service - *The American Revolution* website.

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Banastre Tarleton

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

Information, and quoted passage, from the U.S. National Park Service website on the battles of Cowpens and Waxhaws.

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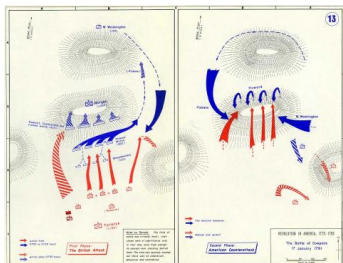


Lord Charles Cornwallis

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Cowpens - Annotated Battle Map from USMA

Annotated map, courtesy United States Military Academy.

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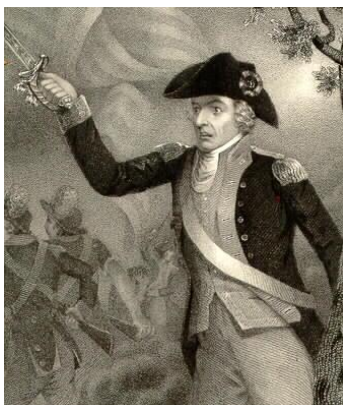
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Cowpens - Battleground

Image online, courtesy [hiwaay.net](http://www.hiwaay.net) website.

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Francis Marion

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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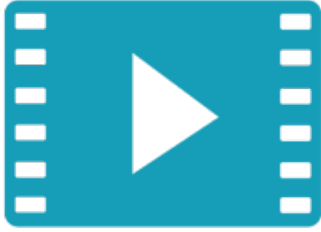
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Swamp Fox Burial Site

Joe Woodbury

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Battle of Bunker Hill - A Redcoat Victory

Clip, from the PBS series *Liberty!*, online courtesy Google Video.

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