JULY 2026

THE HERITAGE OBSERVER

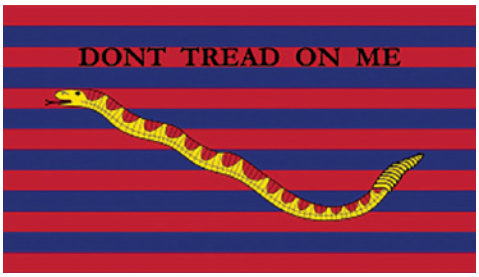
News from The Heritage Library

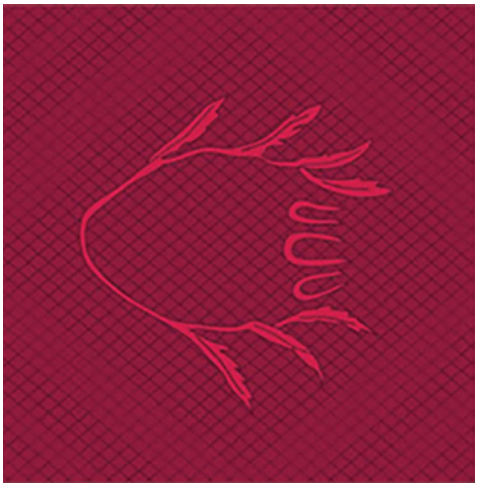
VISIT HILTON HEAD ISLAND — A JOURNEY ROOTED IN HISTORY

SOUTH CAROLINA FLAGS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

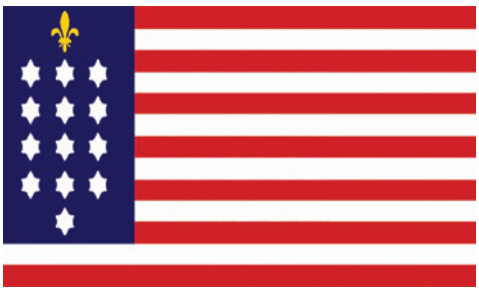












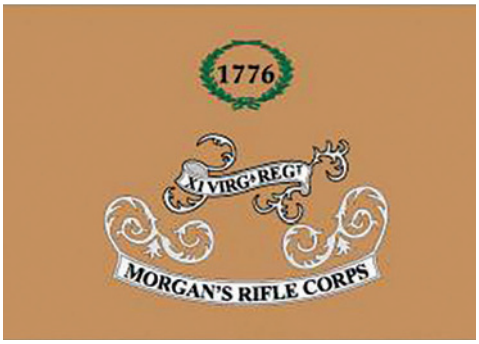












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843-686-6560

www.heritagelib.org

From the Executive Director

By Barbara Catenaci | Executive Director

The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution marks a historic milestone for our nation. This semiquincentennial is not just a look back at 1776, but a powerful reminder of the ongoing journey we share.

Our democratic republic was built on the radical idea that citizens should shape their own destiny. This system is not self-sustaining; it requires our active participation, care, and dedication. We must protect the freedoms won centuries ago while working daily to expand them for future generations.

As members of this community, we hold a shared responsibility to strengthen our civic fabric. Let us use this anniversary to educate ourselves, engage in meaningful dialogue, and serve our communities. By doing so, we ensure that the promise of the American experiment continues to grow and thrive.

I hope you enjoy this special edition of *The Observer* and the articles that were contributed by our volunteers, friends, and special contributors.

Happy Birthday America!



On the Cover

During the American Revolution, South Carolina's flags served as vital symbols of defiance, unity, and emerging sovereignty against British rule. The most famous of these, the Moultrie Flag (or Liberty Flag), featured a deep blue field with a silver crescent in the upper left corner and the word "LIBERTY" emblazoned across it. Designed by Colonel William Moultrie in 1775, this flag flew over Fort Sullivan during the crucial American victory in June 1776. It became a powerful emblem of successful resistance, signaling to the colonists that British naval supremacy could be challenged and overcome. The crescent paid homage to the silver insignia worn on the caps of South Carolina's first line of defense, linking the flag directly to the individual soldiers putting their lives on the line. Other standards, such as the Gadsden Flag, further highlighted the state's ideological contribution to the war effort. Created by South Carolina statesman Christopher Gadsden, the bright yellow flag featuring a coiled rattlesnake and the phrase "Don't Tread on Me" became a universal symbol of American independence and unity.

Regiments that came from other areas to fight in the Southern theater brought their standards with them. In South Carolina, where fighting was exceptionally brutal and divisive, these distinct banners provided crucial visual rallying points for Continental troops and local militia forces. Because the United States began as 13 independent colonies, there was no standardized national military uniform or flag system. General George Washington actively encouraged individual regiments to design their own flags to foster unit pride and identity. The flags helped transform a fragmented regional rebellion into a coordinated national struggle, establishing visual identities including influencing the design of South Carolina's state flag today.

Row 1: Cowpens Flag; Gadsden Flag; and Ensign Flag of the South Carolina Navy

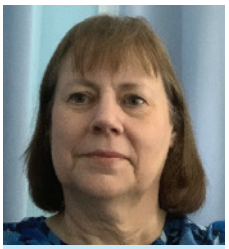
Row 2: Eutaw Standard; Naval Ensign Flag; and French Alliance Flag

Row 3: Moultrie Flag, Light Horse Lee's Light Dragoons Guidon; and Spartan Regiment Flag

Row 4: 1775 SC Provincial Flag Green; First Flag Resolution 1777; Morgan's Rifle Corps Standard (Cowpens)

SPOTLIGHT ON THE LIBRARY

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



BY JANE THEISSEN
Library Chair

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, I'd like to shine the spotlight on one of this country's oldest and, I daresay, more important institutions. The Library of Congress (LOC) had its beginning during the formation of the country. Our founding fathers were well-educated and well-read gentlemen. As they discussed, debated, and hammered out the form our government would take, they found it necessary to refer again and again to the ideas and writings of those who came before them. John Locke, Cicero, and Montesquieu were among the many philosophers and historians that were widely read at the time and these men, among others, greatly influenced our founding fathers.

As deliberations ensued, they found it helpful to have a collection of writings concerning government, natural philosophy, civic virtue, and reason available to them for reference.

Libraries in Philadelphia and New York served this purpose when Congress was meeting in those towns. But some members of Congress did not feel that this was sufficient. In 1783, James Madison proposed creating a separate library, but it was not until 1800 that John Adams, as second President of the United States, signed an act of Congress to appropriate money to purchase books "for the use of Congress," along with a room in which to house them. Those first 740 books and three maps were held in the Capitol Building, and a Librarian of Congress was first appointed by Thomas Jefferson in 1802.

In August 1814, during the War of 1812, British troops invaded Washington, D.C. and set fire to several government buildings. The Library of Congress lost three thousand of the volumes it had accumulated. Soon after the blaze, Jefferson offered to sell much of his large personal library to replace the loss, sending more than six thousand volumes to Washington. Unfortunately, this was not the only fire that the Library experienced. Another, in 1851, destroyed 35,000 books, including some of Jefferson's original collection. Most of Jefferson's books that had been lost in the blaze have since been replaced, and today, Jefferson's original collection is featured in an exhibit at the Library.

Housed in three buildings in Washington, D.C., the Library of Congress is one of the most remarkable institutions in the world. As the country's national library, it holds more than 32 million catalogued books and other print materials in 470 languages; more than 61 million



manuscripts; the largest rare book collection in North America, including the rough draft of the Declaration of Independence, a Gutenberg Bible (originating from the Saint Blaise Abbey, Black Forest – one of only three perfect vellum copies known to exist); over 1 million U.S. government publications; 1 million issues of world newspapers spanning the past three centuries; 33,000 bound newspaper volumes; 500,000 microfilm reels; U.S. and foreign comic books – over 12,000 titles in all, totaling more than 140,000 issues; 1.9 million moving images (as of 2020); 5.3 million maps; 6 million works of sheet music; 3 million sound recordings; more than 14.7 million prints and photographic images including fine and popular art pieces and architectural drawings; the Betts Stradivarius; and the Cassavetti Stradivarius. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Congress#Holdings/)

The collection is truly mind-boggling. Equally amazing is the main edifice, the Thomas Jefferson building. This building is a testament to learning and art, depicted in the paintings that adorn the ceiling and walls of the interior. The main Reading Room provides space for visitors to conduct personal research, and exhibit and event spaces, concert venues, and, as noted above, Thomas Jefferson's original library collection can also be found in this building. The Library's Gutenberg Bible is on display in the Great Hall. Visitor information can be found on the Library's webpage at https://www.loc.gov/. LOC's other two buildings, the James Madison Memorial Building and the John Adams Building, house administrative, preservation, and cataloging departments, and the Copyright Office.

If you have never been to the Library of Congress, it is certainly worth the trip. But if that is not possible, I suggest you at least make a virtual visit. Through a virtual visit, you can explore numerous digital collections, (click on Digital Collections from the main LOC webpage). I wrote about Chronicling America in the July 2024 issue of this periodical. The newspaper portal is one of these digital collections. You can find the article in the Observer archives on the Heritage Library's website. Other digital collections at LOC include maps, historic architecture, sound and film holdings, images of America's past, and a treasure trove of other things. As a virtual visitor, you will be amazed at what you will find.

As we pause to remember our founding, I encourage you to discover more about the Library of Congress and the other institutions created as our founding fathers undertook the task of fashioning a government that aspires to serve us all. Although it is not perfect, they left us a legacy that persists to this day.

A HILTON HEAD ISLAND PATRIOT

ISAAC BALDWIN FROM IRONWORKER TO PATRIOT TO LEGISLATOR TO PLANTER

MONDAY VOLUNTEERS – *Veda Keeling, Joe Player, Steve Strandmark, and Rick White*

Isaac Baldwin (1752–1826) was a prominent early settler, Revolutionary War patriot, and planter on Hilton Head Island. An ironworker from New Jersey who came to the island in 1773 to work at Hilton Head's shipyards, Baldwin found himself unemployed after British warships destroyed the Broad Creek boatyard where he worked. Joining the militia, he would rise from private to lieutenant by the end of the war. He was elected to the state legislature after the war, but resigned after a year to return to Hilton Head Island.

Early Years

Born around 1752, Baldwin spent his youth in New Jersey learning the highly skilled, physically demanding trade of an ironworker. At the time, this typically meant working as a blacksmith, forgeman, or specialized iron-fitter. During the mid-to-late 1700s, New Jersey was the epicenter of the American colonial iron industry, driven by massive operations like the Morris County forges and mines. Baldwin would have been trained in casting, forging, and shaping raw bar iron into specialized tools, chains, and hardware.

Baldwin's specific niche was the structural and mechanical side of ironworking, which made him an invaluable asset to the shipping industry. Shipyards required ironworkers to forge massive anchor chains, rudder irons, structural bolts, bands, and specialized tools needed by shipwrights to bind heavy timber hulls.

It was this exact expertise that caught the attention of early southern entrepreneurs. Around 1770 to 1773, E. Laurens (a member of the prominent South Carolina Laurens family) recruited Baldwin directly from New Jersey to migrate south. He was brought in specifically to oversee and execute the heavy metalwork at Laurens' newly developing shipyard along Hilton Head Island's Broad Creek. Ultimately, his time working the forges of New Jersey provided the exact mechanical and structural expertise that transformed him into an essential craftsman for Hilton Head's pre-war maritime economy.

The War Years

When British naval raids scorched and destroyed the Broad Creek boatyard around 1779, Baldwin transitioned from shipwright ironworker to an active



combatant in the Hilton Head Patriot militia. Baldwin suffered a major military setback when he was captured by British forces under General Lincoln during the historic Fall of Charleston in May 1780. He was imprisoned, but later paroled. Defying his British captors, Baldwin broke his parole to return to active duty with Hilton Head's militia.

He served as a private in a fierce local partisan unit known as the Bloody Legion (led by Captain John Leacraft). This unit famously executed retaliatory strikes against the Royal Militia from neighboring Daufuskie Island, particularly after the ambush and death of fellow Patriot Charles Davant. Baldwin's leadership in these campaigns earned him a promotion to Lieutenant in the Beaufort District Militia by the war's conclusion.

Post-War Politics & The Baldwin Plantation

Though Baldwin briefly served in the South Carolina state legislature, he quickly abandoned politics to focus on building a life on the island. In 1783, he purchased 535 acres of land from Peter Bayley. This tract became the 290-acre Baldwin Plantation, which sat near what is now the center of Hilton Head Island. As an island planter, Baldwin primarily cultivated indigo, a lucrative, deep-blue dye crop that thrived in the Sea Islands prior to the rise of Sea Island cotton.

Personal Life

Baldwin's personal life was marked by the frequent tragedies common to the era. Shortly after arriving on the island, he married Mary Wolcott of Spring Island. Tragically, Mary died during childbirth, leaving him to raise two infant sons alone. He later married Martha Parmenter (1771–1826). Together they had four more children: two daughters and two sons. Isaac and Martha both passed away in 1826. Following their deaths, their daughter Mary sold the Baldwin Plantation to Thomas Henry Barksdale (owner of the neighboring, massive Scull Creek/Barksdale plantation).

If you visit Hilton Head Island, you can view the physical markers of Isaac Baldwin's life. He, Martha, and their daughter Sarah are buried in the historic Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery located at the corner of US-278 and Mathews Drive. You can view his headstone inside the Kirk Plot, which sits adjacent to the famous Baynard Mausoleum.

TALES THAT ARE *Local*

TUESDAY VOLUNTEERS – ***Bailey Keeling, Richard Chalk, Terri Epps, and Suzanne Moyer***

Bailey Keeling is a gifted water colorist and created his interpretation of some of the events that happened during the American Revolution in the Lowcountry. The team that volunteers with Bailey on Tuesdays, provided the stories that accompany Bailey's artwork.

Burn Them Down

The American Revolution caused a divide between the Loyalists, who sided with Britain, and the Patriots, who supported the Revolution. That divide made an impact on Hilton Head Island as many sided with the Patriots while those on neighboring Daufuskie chose to be loyal to the British crown.

A noteworthy event occurred in the fall of 1781, when a British commander ordered the Loyalist on Daufuskie to burn the homes of all Patriots between Savannah and Beaufort.

As the Loyalist made their way along Skull Creek, they come to the home of John Talbird, a lieutenant in the Patriot Militia who was away serving in Colonel William Harden's regiment under the command of General Frances Marion, the Swamp Fox. They were met by Mary Ann Talbird who offered hospitality and refreshments to the officer in charge.

With an apology, she was informed that they were under orders to burn her home along with those of other Patriots. Some have identified the officer as her brother-in-law while others have reported that he informed her that he knew of her two older sisters, who were married to faithful British officers.

This familiarity led the officer to state that the order was to burn down the houses which did not necessarily include the contents; so, he allowed the removal of the furniture and personal belongings before setting fire to the house.

As things were removed from the home, they were placed under the branches of a large live oak tree located in a nearby field.

The Talbird oak still stands on Seabrook



Drive in Hilton Head Plantation and is a reminder of the events that occurred that day.

Patriot Central on Hilton Head Island

Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery is Hilton Head Island's reminder of the colonial and antebellum periods on the Island. During the American Revolution, it was the center of "town" and where local militia mustered. The militia muster house on Hilton Head Island served as the strategic operational hub and gathering point for the local Patriot militia and was located just east of the cemetery. The island's unique position during the war pitted its pro-independence plantation owners directly against the Loyalist (Tory) population on neighboring Daufuskie Island, creating a localized, highly volatile theater of conflict.



The specific roles and historical significance of the muster house include:

1. Staging Ground for the "Bloody Legion"

   Militia Assembly: The muster house was where local Patriots gathered to train, organize, and receive orders. This unit operated under the Beaufort District Regiment.

   The "Bloody Legion": Because of their relentless and aggressive guerrilla tactics against British forces and Loyalist neighbors, the Hilton Head militia earned the fearsome nickname "The Bloody Legion" in Tory newspapers.

2. Launchpad for Amphibious Raids

   Rowboat Warfare: Militia members used the muster house to plan and launch nighttime boat raids across the Calibogue Sound.

   Targeting Loyalists: These forces launched far-reaching assaults to disrupt British supply lines, safeguard coastal ports, and attack Loyalist strongholds on Daufuskie Island.

3. Focal Point of Civic and Military Activity

   Strategic Center: The muster house was built in close proximity to a Masonic Lodge and the Zion Chapel of Ease (completed in 1788). Together, these structures formed the absolute center of political, religious, and military life on the late 18th-century island.

   Proximity to Tragedy: The heavy reliance on this hub made local Patriots prime targets. In 1781, prominent local Patriot Charles Davant was ambushed and mortally wounded nearby by a Daufuskie Tory militia unit. He remains the only known Patriot casualty buried on the island.

4. Coastal Defense and Supply Interception

   Seizing Cargo: Acting on orders, the militia used their coordinated presence at the muster house to police the waters of Port Royal Sound. They successfully intercepted and seized British shipments, including capturing critical stockpiles of gunpowder intended for Royal forces.

Loyalist Women of the American Revolution

WEDNESDAY VOLUNTEERS –
Bob Blot, Cate Samuelson, Steven Strandmark, Jane Theissen, Diane Larsen, and Sheila Broadbent

Note: Bob Blot was a Library volunteer and a passionate genealogist. His skill at tracing family members, breaking through brick walls and finding the stories that bring to life a family's journey helped countless Heritage Library members and visitors. He passed away in May before we published this edition of ***The Observer*** *and he is missed.*

The Revolutionary War affected the life of every citizen living in the thirteen colonies. Even those who were indifferent to the conflict were faced with life-changing events. As the move toward a break with Great Britain gained momentum, many people found themselves on the outside looking in. The prevailing mood of the country was, "if you're not with us, you're against us," and those on the wrong side often faced harsh consequences.

Writing in *The Loyalists, Revolution, Exile, and Settlement,* Christopher Moore explores the fate of those citizens who opted to remain loyal to the Crown. While many Loyalists fled to safety at the start of the conflict, others chose to stay to protect their homes, property, and businesses. Those who remained often found themselves exposed to violence, abuse, and worse from their Patriot neighbors. As the Patriots became better organized and war was formally declared, colonies officially authorized forced exile, property seizures, and other penalties for those not supporting them. Even before the war began, many Loyalists found themselves in a desperate fight against Patriot mobs to save their farms and livelihoods and to avoid physical violence or imprisonment.

At this time in history, a woman was in all ways bound to her husband. She had no rights of her own. As a result, the political choices a woman's husband made affected her entire life, and Loyalist women often faced the loss of everything they knew and held dear as a result. As men went off to combat, their wives were often left to manage and defend their homes, children, businesses, and properties against Patriot mobs. This was a role these eighteenth-century women, who had been raised to be subservient to their husbands, were not prepared to handle. But the Loyalist women who remained in America still managed to provide service to their cause: delivering intelligence to British troops, importing and selling British goods, and feeding and housing British soldiers, all at great cost to themselves.



The experience of Mary Holt of Norwalk, Connecticut, whose husband had joined the Royal Navy, provides a tragic but common example of what these women faced.

> Living in their dwelling house in Norwalk with her family, she was frequently on account of her husband's being in the Kings service insulted and abused, both by the leading and common people in the rebellion, the soldiers when marching by firing balls into the house. On the night of the 17th of February 1777 a number of armed men, supposed to be about fifty, came to the house, broke open the doors, instantly rushed in upon her and closely confined her, and immediately plundered and destroyed all the household furniture and clothing they could lay their hands on, leaving her and her family consisting of five children naked and destitute of clothing at that inclement season. One of the children died soon after, and the rest of the family were harried through town and finally sent off to New York City (page 112, as written in the original).

By this time, New York was a Loyalist stronghold and "drew thousands of Loyalists… from every colony, who arrived by every route." Mary's experience was not uncommon. Many Loyalist women, whose husbands or fathers had been killed, imprisoned, or left to fight, experienced a similar fate. Of course, this was not the only fate Loyalist women faced:

Janet Cummings, a widow living in Charleston, was a midwife. She had practiced this profession for many years, and it provided her a steady income. Leaving her profession and means of supporting herself behind, she followed her daughter and son-in-law back to England because of their British sympathies.

Margaret Draper continued to publish the Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter, a key Loyalist publication in British-held Boston after her husband died. After the Siege of Boston, she was forced to leave the country.

Lorenda Holmes endured a traumatic experience at the hands of the Patriots. She helped carry letters from ships in New York to assist the Loyalist cause. When she was seized by the Patriot Committee of Safety, she was forced to completely disrobe to expose any letters she might be carrying, and was thus paraded before a mob.

Eleanor Lestor emigrated from Ireland to America with her husband in 1770. They settled in Charleston, South Carolina, where they maintained a shop selling liquor. Shortly after their arrival, her husband was killed. Eleanor kept the shop running until it burned down in a fire in 1778. She was among the first to welcome the British to Charleston and provided housing for them until she moved to England in 1782.

Susannah Marshall was forced to house Patriot soldiers in her home and had possessions taken from her home to support the soldiers.

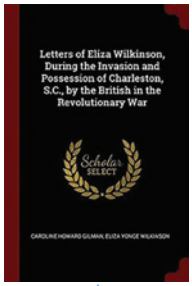
Grace Galloway, a wealthy Philadelphia woman, kept a diary recording the daily hardships that she and other Loyalist women faced, including the seizure of her property.

Molly Brandt was a Mohawk leader who held immense influence over the Mohawk people. She was able to channel their activity in support of the British cause. She remained in Canada after the war.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, thousands of colonial Americans had been driven into exile for the sake of their beliefs. Most moved to Nova Scotia and Quebec. Some made their way to Jamaica, Dominica, St. Lucia, or the Bahamas, while others fled to England. These women lost not only their homes and possessions, but often their communities, relatives, friends, and way of life, as well.

Eliza Yonge Wilkinson and the Historical Importance of Her Revolutionary War Letters

THURSDAY VOLUNTEERS – *Audrey Callahan, Robert Carpenter, Kirstin Clarke, Julie Orr, Sue Siegel, and Rick Bart*



Among the most vivid civilian accounts of the American Revolution in the South are the letters of Eliza Yonge Wilkinson (1757–1839), a South Carolina planter's daughter whose correspondence during the British occupation of Charleston offers a rare and intimate perspective on war as experienced by women. Writing to her cousin during the darkest months of 1780–1782, Wilkinson documented fear, displacement, political tension, and personal resilience with remarkable immediacy. Her letters stand today as one of the most important firsthand narratives of the Revolutionary War from the Southern home front.

Born into a prominent South Carolina family, Eliza Yonge grew up in a world of rice plantations, the Atlantic trade, and elite education. In 1777 she married John Wilkinson, and by 1780 she was a young widow when British forces targeted Charleston, then one of the most important cities in the American South. The fall of Charleston in May 1780 marked one of the worst American defeats of the war. British control of the city upended civilian life, particularly for families known to support the Patriot cause.

It was during this occupation that Wilkinson wrote the letters that would later secure her historical reputation. Addressed to a trusted cousin, they were never intended for publication.

Their privacy is precisely what gives them power. Unlike official reports or patriotic propaganda, Wilkinson's letters capture the confusion and emotional strain of living in a contested region where loyalties divided neighbors and even families.

One of the most dramatic episodes she described was the destruction of her family's plantation by British forces. Wilkinson recounts fleeing as soldiers approached and watching property burn.

Her words convey both shock and composure – fear for her family and friends, indignation at British aggression, and an unwavering commitment to the American cause. The domestic sphere, often overlooked in military histories, becomes central in her account. War is not distant; it invades kitchens, nurseries, and drawing rooms.

Her letters also illuminate the precarious position of elite Southern women. Though legally and politically excluded from formal power, women like Wilkinson played critical roles in maintaining households, preserving property when possible, managing enslaved laborers, and sustaining Patriot morale. Wilkinson's writing reveals how women processed political events and formed sophisticated opinions about military leadership and British policy. She was no passive observer; she analyzed developments and expressed clear ideological convictions.



Importantly, her correspondence provides historians with insight into the British occupation of Charleston itself. While military records describe troop movements and strategy, Wilkinson describes shortages, social tensions, rumors, and daily anxieties. She writes of restricted movement, strained resources, and the emotional toll of uncertainty. Through her perspective, we see how occupation reshaped urban and rural life in South Carolina.

Her letters also underscore the divided nature of the Southern war. The Revolution in South Carolina was as much a civil war as a struggle against Britain. Wilkinson references shifting allegiances and the dangers posed by Loyalist neighbors. Her testimony helps scholars understand how violence and mistrust permeated communities, leaving lasting scars even after formal hostilities ended.

The literary quality of Wilkinson's writing further enhances its importance. She wrote with energy, clarity, and emotional candor. There is wit in her observations, but also intensity. Her descriptions of smoke rising from burning homes or of hurried escapes through the countryside are vivid and cinematic. Because the letters were written in real time rather than reconstructed years later, they preserve the immediacy of unfolding events.

Wilkinson's correspondence survives today largely because it was later collected and published under the title *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson During the Invasion and Possession of Charleston, S.C., by the British in the Revolutionary War.* The publication of these letters in the nineteenth century ensured that her voice would enter the broader historical record. For historians of women, the Revolution, and the American South, her work became indispensable.

Beyond military and political history, Wilkinson's letters are essential to understanding gender, class, and slavery in Revolutionary America. As a member of the planter elite, she inhabited and defended a slaveholding society even while advocating for American liberty. Her writings therefore remind us that the rhetoric of freedom coexisted with the reality of enslavement. Modern scholars examine her letters not only for what they say about resistance to Britain, but also for what they reveal about the contradictions of Revolutionary ideology in the South.

In summary, Eliza Yonge Wilkinson's letters matter because they restore human texture to a conflict often told through generals and battles. They show how war transformed private life, how women interpreted political upheaval, and how Southern communities endured invasion and internal division. Through her pen, we witness the Revolution not as an abstract struggle for independence, but as a lived experience marked by loss, courage, and conviction.

More than two centuries later, her voice still speaks – urgent, observant, and profoundly personal – reminding us that history is not only made on battlefields, but also recorded at writing desks by those determined to be heard.

Footnotes:

1) Eliza's letters were compiled and published in 1839 by Caroline Howard Gilman.

2) Her letters can be found at: archive.org

3) This article was drafted with assistance from ChatGPT and edited by humans.

Jim Capers, A Revolutionary War Patriot

FRIDAY VOLUNTEERS –

Carolyn Anderson, Marty Anthony, Paul Anthony, Sheila Broadbent, Jeff Farmer, Shannon Ruff and Joe Grondalski

On September 23, 1742, a slave child named Jimmy was born on the plantation of Richard Capers which was located near Bull Island, South Carolina. As a slave, he would take the last name of his owner when he went out into the world. In 1775 at the age of 33, Jim Capers enlisted as a Revolutionary War Patriot in the 4th South Carolina Regiment. There appear to be no records that clarify if Jim Capers was still a slave when he enlisted.

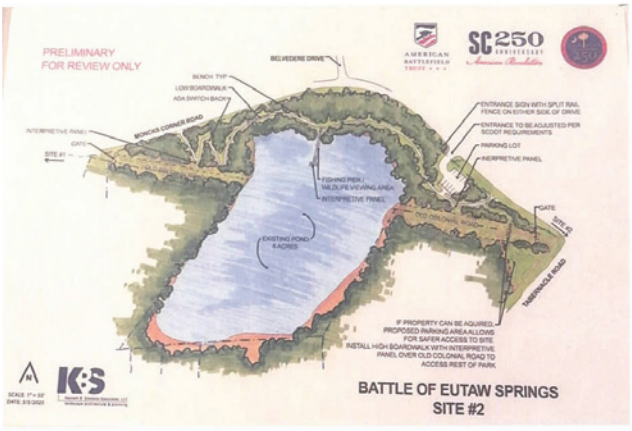
Jim Capers served seven years as a Drum Major. This role was given to boys as young as 12, older men no longer fit for the front lines, or to black men who the southern colonies did not want to arm due to their fear of slave uprisings. These musicians had to stand in the front lines with their instruments so commands could be relayed clearly to the soldiers. Because Drum Majors were heavily exposed in this lead position, they were commonly targeted by the enemy.

A Drum Major was crucial for communication in the camp and on the field of battle during the Revolutionary War. Drumming was an ideal form of communication because it was easily heard during loud battles and across the campgrounds. In camp life, Jim Capers would have been the human alarm clock signaling chores like get up (*Reveille*), break camp (*The General*), gather wood, eat meals, or clean the camp (*Police Call*). On the battlefield, he would have played specific rhythmic beats that would signal orders to the soldiers. His drumming would direct movement (*march, turn, halt, or change formation*), combat actions (*load muskets, fire, or cease fire*) and additional directions (*Retreat, medical assistance, or Parley*).

Capers combat experience was in major engagements and guerilla actions across the Lowcountry of South Carolina. He was present at the Battle of Beaufort



Drum Major Jim Capers is highlighted on the left, "in the Glorious Cause of Liberty," by Jeff Trexler.



The Eutaw Springs Battlefield Park, expected to open in 2031 includesa 10 acre parcel named for Jim Capers.

(1779), Siege of Savannah (1779), Siege of Charleston (1780), Battle of Camden (1780), Battle of Biggin Church (1781), and the Battle of Eutaw Springs (1781). At Eutaw Springs, he served under the command of General Francis "Swamp Fox" Marion. During this bloody battle, Capers received four severe wounds (three saber wounds to the head and face and a musket shot that went through his side, killing the drummer behind him). Despite his serious injuries, Capers traveled with his regiment to Virginia and was present for the surrender of General Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Mr. Capers was discharged in 1782, and with that discharge he was emancipated. In 1826 he married an enslaved woman named Milley in Sumter County, SC. Together they had six children. In 1840 Jim and Milley Capers were in Pike County, Alabama. They lived on the plantation of Norman McLeod where Milley was enslaved.

On July 2, 1849 at the age of 107 years, Jim Capers applied for a Revolutionary War pension. As with many black veterans, Capers did not have written records of his enlistment, muster, or discharge. Consequently, the application process dragged on for three and one half years until finally being settled by an Act of the US Congress on February 3, 1853. Capers was to be paid $8 per month beginning on August 1, 1850. Jim Capers died in Pikes County, Alabama April 1, 1853. Jim never saw his pension, however, Milley did receive $256.00 under this act.

In recent years, Jim Capers has been honored. In 2015, the Alabama Society of the Sons of the American Revolution in conjunction with the Wiregrass Chapter SAR honored Jim Capers with a Memorial Marker and Dedication Ceremony. The 2020 painting, "In the Glorious Cause of Liberty," by Jeff Trexler, Jim Capers is the Drum Major depicted in the lower left corner.

Jim Capers is also to be honored in Orangeburg County, South Carolina. The approximately 10-acre parcel located within the Eutaw Springs Battlefield Park will become a park area to be named after Jim Capers. According to the American Legion website, https://www.legion.org/information-center/news/usa250/2026/march/south-carolina-post-backs-new-revolutionary-war-park, "...the project is believed to be the first public park on record named after an African American Revolutionary War veteran born into enslavement."

Little Bermuda - Daufuskie Island in the Revolutionary War



BY SAM WATERS
Daufuskie Island Historical Society

The Revolutionary War divided the colonies into partisan factions as individuals took sides with either the colonial rebels or supporters of the monarchy. The colonies were not, as some might think, a uniform picture of support for independence.

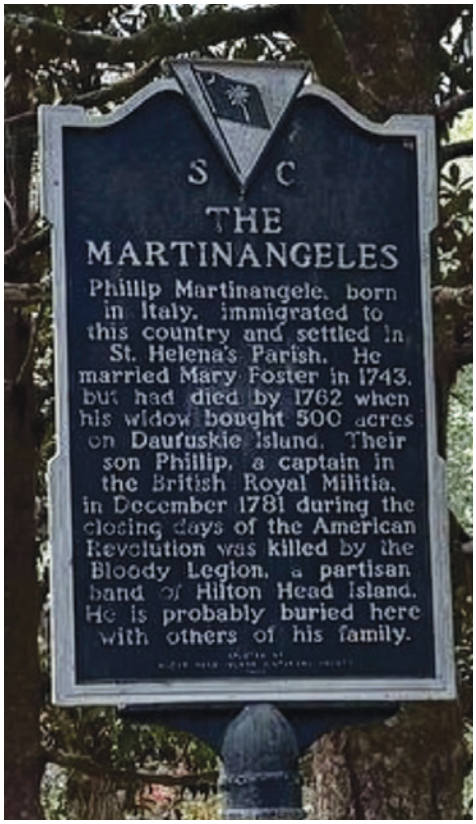
Locally, Daufuskie Island came to be identified as "Little Bermuda" due to the predominance of Tories or loyalists, while Hilton Head was more aligned with the Whigs or colonials. This alignment, combined with the proximity of the islands, resulted in confrontation and violence, with raiding parties, ambushes and murder included in the events of the time. Consider the following series of attacks, retaliations and counter-retaliations that occurred between the locals.

The story begins with Richard "Tory Dick" Pendarvis, who lived on property overlooking the May River and was married to Margaret Martinangele, a member of the prominent loyalist family from Daufuskie Island. Her brother, Phillip, was a captain in the Royal militia on Daufuskie. Brothers Simeon, Isaac and Francis were also listed on the Royal Militia Rolls.

In January of 1781, Pendarvis led a contingent of the Royal Militia to Bear Island to apprehend one James Dougherty (Doherty or Doharty), described as an "energetic leader of the Revolutionists". The encounter between Pendarvis and Dougherty ended with the death of the latter, and the escape of the men who accompanied him. Among the escapees was a young (age 17) John Leacraft, and this incident possibly contributed to his subsequent formation of the "Bloody Legion," whose members included David John Mongin, Sr., and John David Mongin, Jr., among others (more on them later).

In April of 1781, Leacraft and his accomplices carried out their vengeance and shot Pendarvis in front of his residence, "Stephenville," on the banks of the South May River, where he and his wife were on their honeymoon. He died in his wife's arms. The Georgia Gazette reported that "The villains afterward went to the house and insulted Mrs. Pendarvis with opprobrious language, and upon leaving took with them three horses and Captain Pendarvis' gun."

Of course, the death of Phillip Martinangele's brother-in-law demanded retribution, so in December of 1781,



Phillip and five of his men rowed to Hilton Head Island from Daufuskie and ambushed a dawn patrol consisting of Charles Davant and John Andrews. Charles Davant, mortally wounded, managed to ride back to his home, where he died in his son's arms. His last words were reportedly, "Martinangele, get Martinangele."

Retaliation was swift, with the "Bloody Legion," led by John Leacraft, crossing to Daufuskie Island and raiding the home of Phillip Martinangele, and, finding him sick in bed, shot him while two of the raiders held his wife as she watched. Afterwards, according to reports in a Charleston newspaper, they "plundered Mrs. Martinangele and her children of almost everything they had."

To put all this in the proper timeline, it is important to note that British General Lord Charles Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington on October 17, 1781, following the siege of Yorktown, so this last act of vengeance occurred after that event, highlighting the personal nature of the back and forth that came to occur.

After the end of the war, however, it appears that hostilities and animosity subsided fairly quickly. The surviving Martinangeles returned to their Daufuskie plantation, and, in a particularly surprising development, in 1783 the widow Margaret Martinangele Pendarvis married Captain William Edwards Mongin, who was not only a Whig (patriot) but was a half-brother to David John and John David Mongin, members of the Bloody Legion, the very same band who had murdered her husband.

The newly married couple divided their time between the Mongin mansion, Walnut Grove, on the South May River, and living with Margaret's mother, Mary, at their Plantation on Daufuskie. And, as any student of Daufuskie Island history will know, the Mongin family came to significantly shape Daufuskie Island's character during the antebellum era.

Thus ends our story of murder and mayhem involving Daufuskie during the Revolutionary period. There were no major engagements or military campaigns, but very personal hostilities were a significant part of local history.

Revolutionary War Activity in the Bluffton Area



BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS
Special Contributor to The Observer

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence, you may be wondering if Bluffton experienced Revolutionary War activity. While there were a number of battles and skirmishes throughout the Lowcountry, events specific to Bluffton are not well known. We do know that in May 1779 several houses in the Devil's Elbow barony (modern day Colleton River Plantation) were burned by British troops commanded by Major General Augustine Prevost. During this operation houses owned by John Colleton were torched and burned to the ground. John Colleton was the grandson of the

John Colleton who was one of the original Lords Proprietors in South Carolina. The only other widely known Revolutionary War action was the murder of British Loyalist Richard Pendarvis, AKA "Tory Dick," that occurred on April 13, 1781, on Montpelier Plantation - in what we know today as Palmetto Bluff. That murder was in retribution for Tory Dick's having been suspected of killing Colonial Captain James Doharty in December 1780 on Bear Island near modern day Moss Creek Plantation. Aside from these three events, there was no other known Revolutionary War action that occurred in the Bluffton area.

Or so we thought!

Who knew that cleaning a cemetery in Sheldon, SC, would lead to a new discovery of Bluffton area Revolutionary War activity and a resulting legal battle that lasted over 70 years? Sheldon is an unincorporated area in in northern Beaufort County near Pocotaligo. A gravestone in the cemetery reads:

Mrs. Margaret Euphemia Wigg
(1809-1848),
Consort to William Hazzard Wigg.
Born in the City of Charleston,
May 27th 1809
Died in the Village of Bluffton on
May 18th, 1848



Seeing she died in the Village of Bluffton sparked an interest in me for additional research. I had studied old maps that showed the area on the northwest side of the Okatie River (now Oldfield Plantation) was once called "Wiggs Bluff," so realizing this woman died in Bluffton made me think they could be related. My subsequent research revealed her husband was William Hazard Wigg II (1809-1875). As I delved further into the Wigg family history, I found his grandfather was also known as William Hazzard Wigg, and his story is definitely worth knowing.

The elder William Hazzard Wigg (1746–1798) turned out to be one of the most often overlooked figures of the American Revolution in the South Carolina Lowcountry. His life serves as a classic study of the "Southern Patriot" of that era. He was a man of great wealth and social standing who risked his wealth, his and his family's safety, and his personal liberty to support the cause for American independence.

Wigg was born on November 28, 1746, in Beaufort into the coastal elite of the Beaufort District. He was a member of a prominent family that had already established deep roots in the South Carolina Lowcountry. His father was Richard Wigg, who immigrated from Buckinghamshire England, possibly around 1705. By the 1770s, William Hazzard Wigg was a substantial planter, owning thousands of acres in the Beaufort and Bluffton areas and numerous enslaved people alongside the Reynolds, Fripp and Chaplin families. In the colonial era of South Carolina, men like Wigg were often the first to feel the pressures of British taxation and the tightening grip of the King against America. His land holdings included large tracts that likely included modern day Oldfield Plantation, the Camp St. Mary's area where we believe his house was located, and parts of what today is Sun City Hilton Head.

When the Revolution broke out, Wigg did not hesitate to get fully involved. Unlike many of his contemporaries who chose to be loyal to the crown to protect their property, in 1775 Wigg committed himself to the local militia to secure freedom for America. He was commissioned initially as a Captain but then later as a Major in the South Carolina Militia, specifically within the Granville County Regiment (current Beaufort County).

Wigg fought in a number of Revolutionary War battles including the Florida Expedition in May-July 1778; the Battle of Coosawhatchie on May 3, 1779; the Battle of Charleston Neck May 11-13, 1779; the Battle of Stono Ferry on June 20, 1779; and the Siege of Savannah that occurred September-October 1779. He was a recognized hero in the Battle of Coosawhatchie, as he made a heroic effort to rescue a friend, John Cuthbert,

who had been captured by the British. Wigg waited for the British army to appear, and as their prisoners were passing by, he rode into the line of fire to pick up Cuthbert and ride him to safety on his prized horse Independence. Wigg's horse was named Independence because the steed was born on July 4, 1776, the same day the Declaration of Independence was signed. From March 29 until May 12, 1780, Wigg was part of the defense during the Siege of Charleston. When the city fell to British General Sir Henry Clinton in May 1780, it was the greatest American defeat of the entire war. Wigg was captured along with over 5,000 other patriot and militia troops.

Unlike the common soldiers who were often sent to disease-ridden prison ships in the harbor, Wigg, being an officer, was initially granted parole. This allowed him to remain free although usually that required he remain in the Charleston area and not return to his home near Bluffton. It also required that he not engage in military efforts against the British war efforts. He was free to walk the streets of Charleston and interact with Charleston residents as an ordinary person.

Wigg did this until he witnessed the British execute his brother-in-law Colonel Isaac Hays on August 4, 1781. Hays had himself been captured by the British and paroled, but later the British ordered him to fight against the patriot troops, and Hays refused to do so. As a result, he was held for treason against the Crown and without a trial hung on the open streets of Charleston for all to see. Wigg was enraged by the execution of his brother-in-law, and seizing a moment of high public emotion, he delivered an impassioned and defiant speech before a large crowd. In that speech he went so far as to say that the Colonial Army would find and execute a British soldier of the same rank in retribution for the execution of Hays.

Wigg's speech infuriated the British, and his parole was withdrawn. He was arrested and sent to the infamous prison ship Pack-Horse. The conditions on these ships were horrific; men died daily from smallpox, dysentery, and starvation. Wigg's survival on these ships for nearly a year is a testament to his physical and mental fortitude. He was eventually exiled to St. Augustine, Florida, which was then a British stronghold serving as a dumping ground for the most dangerous South Carolina rebels. Imprisonment was not the only punishment the British would impose against Wigg. While he was in captivity, the British, knowing Wigg was a high-profile patriot leader, targeted his estates for total destruction. We don't know the exact date, but British troops sailed into the Okatie River – passing many other fine homes of similar size – to burn Wigg's home. Not only did they burn his home and outbuildings, they also looted his farm, stealing cattle, horses, and even 96 of his enslaved workers, who they would later sell. There are some reports the prison ship *Pack-Horse* also sailed into the Okatie River with Wigg aboard, so he could see his own house burn and compound the punishment. There are differing reports as to whether Wigg could see the fire itself or just the heavy column of smoke, but regardless, he would have known his large Southern home was being destroyed.

Following the war, Wigg faced the monumental task of rebuilding. He had lost nearly everything but his land. He became a significant figure in the early South Carolina state government, helping to draft the new laws for South Carolina and even served in the state legislature.

Also, after the war, Wigg filed a claim for "The Plunder of 1781," seeking reimbursement from the British government for his losses. The British ignored Wigg's claim, prompting him to file a different claim with the United States government for their failure to protect him under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783). He specifically cited Article VII of the treaty that said "the British would withdraw from the United States without causing any destruction or carry away any Negros or other property owned by American inhabitants." Some historical accounts also mention that the British government was required to return Wigg's property after the war ended but did not do so. Despite his house being burned and his property confiscated prior to the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Wigg had evidence that the British had transported his enslaved persons to Florida and even to the British West Indies after the treaty was signed. Wigg also claimed the British burning of his home and property was "surgical," and he was specifically targeted as evidenced by the fact that the British troops who carried out the raid had passed many other similar homes without any consequences to them, and that it was all done while Wigg was a prisoner of war.

Wigg's claim remained active for over 70 years, well after his death. His son, William Hudson Wigg (1777-1827), continued the fight for justice, but he, too, died before closure was reached. Wigg's grandson William Hazzard Wigg II (1809-1868) then continued to pursue the claim, and in the early 1850s even moved his family to Washington so he could better lobby Congress for relief.

On August 11, 1852, the US Congress passed "an Act for the Relief of the Heirs of William Hazzard Wigg," paying the Wigg family approximately $43,000, which would be worth millions in today's dollars. By then the Wigg family included members of the Barnwell, Heyward, and Hazzard families. We are not certain how the money was divided, but there are records that suggest most of the money was invested in new land holdings and used to purchase enslaved people, all of which was lost during the Civil War due to the Direct Tax act of 1862 and emancipation, which resulted in devastating losses for many Southern landowners. Further reports indicate that by 1870 the Wigg family "fortune" was worthless.

It was very exciting to discover what was largely unknown local Revolutionary War history in the Bluffton area. And how ironic that Wigg's and three generations of valiant efforts to recover the losses he sustained in service to his new country would, after 70 years, result in very little benefit and be a direct reflection of the fall of the Old South.

Author's note: I encountered conflicting dates of deaths at times while researching for this article but used the dates taken from their tombstones.

America's 250th Anniversary: Remembering the Cost of Freedom



Special to The Observer
CHARLOTTE D. WILLIS
Capt. William Hilton Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

I remember July 4, 1976, when our nation celebrated its 200th birthday. On July 4, 2026, fifty years later, Americans will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. For me, this anniversary is both national and deeply personal. According to our family history, my great-great-great-grandfather, John Michael Lightner, served as a drummer during the Revolutionary War, and his son, Henry Lightner, later served as a drummer at Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.

When we remember the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, we often think first of the words themselves: the courage, conviction, and promise they represented. We should also remember the suffering that followed. Independence was not won in a day, a week, or even a year. It required years of sacrifice, hardship, and war.

By 1763, nearly two million people lived in the American colonies. Many were of English descent, but many others had come from Germany, Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Africa, and other places. They built farms, businesses, families, churches, and communities. America was already becoming a land of opportunity, but the British government increasingly viewed the colonies as a source of revenue and control.

After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, Britain tried to manage colonial expansion and raise money from its North American colonies. The Proclamation of 1763 restricted settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1764, Parliament passed the Sugar Act, which imposed duties on certain imported goods, and the Currency Act, which restricted the colonies from issuing their own paper money. In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act, requiring many legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, licenses, and other printed materials to carry an official tax stamp.

These measures angered colonists who believed they were being taxed without representation in Parliament. The phrase "no taxation without representation" became a powerful expression of colonial frustration. Over time, that frustration grew into organized resistance, and eventually into open conflict.

The Revolutionary War began in April 1775, more than a year before the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. The Declaration did



not begin the war; it declared to the world why the colonies believed separation from Great Britain had become necessary.

One of the most remembered hardships of the Revolutionary War was the Continental Army's winter encampment at Valley Forge in 1777 and 1778. General George Washington and his army endured cold, mud, disease, and shortages of food, clothing, blankets, and shoes. Yet Valley Forge was also a place of discipline and transformation. The army that left Valley Forge was stronger, better trained, and more unified than the army that had arrived there.

Drummers and fifers played an important role in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century armies.

Their music did more than lift spirits. Drumbeats and fife calls helped regulate camp life, keep marching time, sound alarms, and communicate commands when voices could not be heard over distance or battle noise. Many of these musicians were young, and their service could place them in real danger.

America won its independence, but peace with Great Britain did not last forever. The War of 1812 grew out of several conflicts, including British interference with American trade, the impressment of

American sailors, and disputes on the frontier. In August 1814, British forces burned public buildings in Washington, D.C. Their next major target was Baltimore, an important port city and a center of privateering.

Fort McHenry guarded the entrance to Baltimore Harbor. Built between 1797 and 1805 as part of the nation's coastal defenses, the fort was named for James McHenry, a signer of the United States Constitution and Secretary of War under Presidents George Washington and John Adams. Its star- shaped design helped strengthen its defensive position.

In September 1814, British forces advanced on Baltimore by both land and sea. Soldiers landed near

North Point and marched toward the city, while British ships moved into position to attack Fort McHenry from the water. The fort had to hold. If Fort McHenry fell, British ships could move into the harbor and Baltimore itself would be in grave danger.

During the bombardment, Henry Lightner, then a young Maryland militia drummer, served at Fort McHenry. He has long been remembered as the "Drummer Boy of Fort McHenry." Accounts associated with his service

describe him sounding commands and helping maintain order during the attack. His drum, decorated with an American eagle and shield, is associated with the Lightner family's military service and has been displayed at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House in Baltimore.

The bombardment of Fort McHenry lasted twenty-five hours, from September 13 to September 14, 1814. British bombs and rockets lit the night sky, but the American defenders did not surrender. At dawn, the large garrison flag still flew over the fort, signaling that Baltimore had held.

Francis Scott Key witnessed the bombardment from a truce ship in the Patapsco River. He had gone with Colonel John Skinner to negotiate the release of Dr. William Beanes, who had been taken prisoner by the British after the burning of Washington. Because Key and Skinner had heard British plans for the attack, they were not permitted to return to Baltimore until the battle was over. When Key saw the American flag still flying in the morning, he began writing the poem first known as "Defence of Fort M'Henry." Those words were later set to music and became "The Star-Spangled Banner." Congress officially designated it as the national anthem in 1931.

Some people say our national anthem is difficult to sing. It is. But before we decide what we think of it, we should remember what the words describe: a long night of danger, uncertainty, and courage, followed by the sight of a flag still flying over a free people.

The first verse asks:

"O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,

Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?

And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;

O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

I also treasure these words from the fourth verse:

"Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,

And this be our motto: 'In God is our Trust.'"

Freedom has always come at a cost. It was purchased by men and women who endured fear, loss, hunger, cold, separation, and danger so that future generations could live in liberty. As America approaches its 250th anniversary, may we remember their sacrifice with gratitude. May our flag continue to wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave.

God bless America, and God bless all those who gave so much for us to be free.

BOOK REVIEW

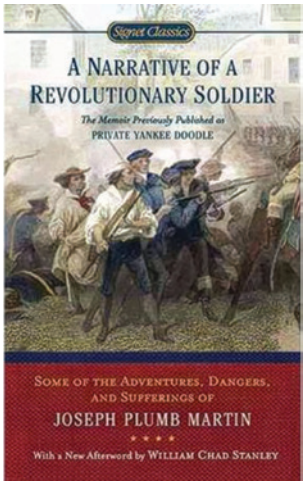
A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier

– Joseph Plumb Martin

Submitted by Carol Clemens, *Heritage Library Volunteer*

Joseph Plumb Martin served in the Continental Army from 1775 – 1783. In 1830, at age 70, he wrote a memoir of his service. This book has been described as an honest, raw, and complete account written from the common soldier's perspective rather than that of an officer. The book was "lost" and rediscovered in the 1950's and since has been published under various titles including ***Private Yankee Doodle, The Diary of Joseph Plumb Martin, and Ordinary Courage***.

As a fifteen year old in Connecticut, Joseph left his grandparents' farm and joined the Continentals probably because of a sense of duty and peer pressure. This first-hand narrative does not glorify the war but provides a clear description of the extreme hardships faced by the soldiers. Joseph focuses on the constant hunger, lack of adequate clothing, harsh winter conditions without appropriate clothing or blankets, promises not kept for the soldiers, the endless "walking for nothing," and the difference in treatment of the officers vs. the common soldiers.



This work includes humorous incidents and pranks played by the soldiers, often out of boredom and hunger. For example, some soldiers set off a musket with black powder in the tent of a captain to frighten him.

He includes descriptions of the battles in which he participated such as Monmouth, Kips Bay, and Yorktown.

For a different perspective on the Revolutionary War as seen through the eyes of a common soldier, I recommend this book.

NOTE: The book is currently available as Kindle download for $0.99 on Amazon.

Maroons in Colonial Beaufort District

HISTORY VOLUNTEERS – *Rich Thomas, Diane Larsen, John Eddy, Sheila Broadbent, Rosemary Staples, Robbie Davis, Larry Stine, Kathy Smith and Pat Fall*

As early as 1572, "maroons" appear in the English-language historical record as Symarons in the ship's log of Sir Francis Drake during his voyage to Panama. Drake described them as "a black people which, about eighty years past (1492) fled from the Spaniards, their masters, by reason of their cruelty, and since have grown into a nation, under two Kings of their own."

The word *maroon* is an English corruption of the Spanish word *cimarrón*, meaning "wild" or "untamed," which was originally applied to livestock that had escaped from farms and run free in the woods. Because enslaved people were regarded as property in much the same way as livestock, the same term came to be applied to those who fled plantations in Spanish settlements and sought refuge in remote mountainous regions.

It is likely that the Panamanian maroons encountered by Drake had escaped from one of the voyages of Columbus in the 1490s. Many of them later signed on with Drake and other English sailors to raid and plunder Spanish trading convoys and generally harass Spanish authorities throughout Central America.

Maroons were distinct from ordinary runaway slaves, as far more enslaved people escaped than ultimately became maroons. It was not uncommon for runaways to be enticed back into captivity after enduring the many hardships of life in the wilderness. Those who became maroons, however, had no intention of returning to slavery. Instead, they deliberately sought to establish self-sufficient communities that could exist entirely outside the governmental and social systems established by Europeans in the Americas.

Maroon communities frequently benefited from the support and knowledge of nearby Native American villages, with whom they often forged alliances and formed blended communities known to the Spanish as *palenques*. These settlements were typically located in remote, difficult-to-access territory and were carefully concealed by their inhabitants. False trails and traps were employed to mislead, confuse, and discourage those searching for them. Maroon and blended societies eventually emerged in Surinam, Brazil, the French West Indian colonies, and throughout the British Caribbean.

In North America, most maroon communities were established in inhospitable and nearly impenetrable swamp environments. Areas of high ground were often cleared behind overgrown perimeters, creating hidden villages complete with fields, gardens, and livestock that remained invisible to passing travelers or search parties. In the coastal Southeast, maroons established settlements near Spanish towns and even fought alongside Spanish forces when the British invaded Florida in 1740. When Spain ceded East Florida to Britain in 1763, most of these maroons relocated to Cuba rather than risk resettlement under British rule.



Given its deep roots in Barbadian culture, South Carolina quickly became the colony most sharply defined by slavery of any British possession in North America. Long before the Revolutionary War, slavery had become a mature labor system upon which much of the colony's wealth depended.

Following the passage of the draconian Slave Codes of 1740, enacted in response to the Stono Rebellion of 1739, in which runaway slaves had been captured before reaching Spanish refuge in Florida, enslaved people increasingly sought escape through Native American allies of the Spanish before eventually making their way south to Florida. In the years following the Revolution, most maroon communities in eastern Florida either moved westward to join indigenous tribes or were absorbed into the Seminole Nation.

During the Revolutionary War, a different kind of maroon incident occurred during General Augustine Prevost's retreat across the Sea Islands south of Charleston in August 1779. Having received word of Patriot General Benjamin Lincoln's advance toward Savannah, Prevost was forced to abandon his expedition at the gates of Charleston and begin a complex withdrawal involving 5,000 troops, hundreds of captured slaves, and large quantities of supplies across five rivers and St. Helena Sound without support from British warships.

Upon reaching Otter Island on the northern side of St. Helena Sound, nearly all of the army's supplies and captured spoils had to be abandoned due to a lack of boats sufficient to transport them. Among these spoils were nearly 800 captured slaves, who were effectively marooned on the shores of uninhabited Otter Island without any means of escape and with only meager supplies left behind by the British. Few knew how to swim, and the distances to the mainland on either side were too great to traverse without watercraft. According to contemporary accounts, all of the former slaves eventually perished. As late as 1795, passing ships reportedly observed bleached white bones littering the island's beaches.

Maroon societies of varying sizes nevertheless continued to exist in South Carolina. Highly mobile groups of approximately ten individuals, living in temporary camps and functioning at times as bandits, were common in areas distant from concentrations of plantations where encounters with white

settlers were less likely. In the swamp forests along the Congaree, Santee, and Savannah Rivers, maroon villages sometimes reached populations of around one hundred people and were often protected by defensive palisades. South Carolina maroons were typically young male runaways, although African-born fugitives often escaped in groups of two or three. As maroon communities remained established over time and increased in size, they increasingly included women and children as well.

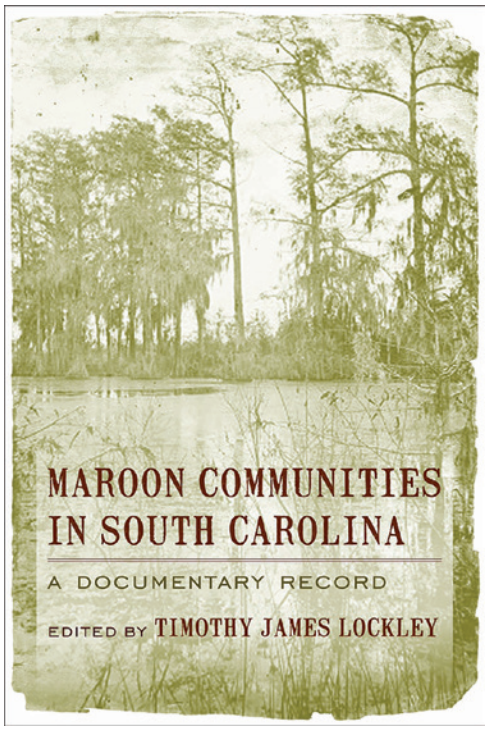
Maroons were not exclusively runaway slaves. Some Black men who had fought for the British during the Revolutionary War in hopes of obtaining freedom, but who were ultimately denied it, joined maroon communities both during and after the conflict. In 1786, for example, a party of white militiamen engaged a large maroon settlement on an island in the Savannah River. Many of its inhabitants had served with British forces during the war and referred to themselves as "the King of England's Soldiers."

Larger maroon settlements sometimes resorted to raiding plantations to supplement food supplies and obtain tools and equipment needed for agriculture and other tasks. Government retaliation occasionally followed, particularly when raids were unusually violent. Cycles of maroon raids and planter reprisals occurred periodically throughout the Colonial era and during the Revolution.

One of the largest maroon settlements in Beaufort District existed during 1786–1787 on Abercorn Island between Ebenezer and Purrysburg. Its inhabitants had gained familiarity with the area while serving the British Crown. The settlement originated from a group of "upward of a hundred Black Dragoons" who continued launching disruptive raids against Patriot forces even while peace negotiations were underway in Paris during 1783. Rather than return to slavery, these former soldiers chose to preserve their freedom and establish homes in the swamps along the Savannah River.

This situation contrasted with the period immediately following the British evacuation, when the plantation system was gradually reestablished through new importations of enslaved Africans. By the spring of 1786, South Carolina slaveholders may have begun to believe that peace and stability had returned. However, Charleston newspapers soon carried reports describing violent maroon uprisings and atrocities in the Bahamas and on the island of Dominica.

Shortly thereafter, General Thomas Pinckney, then Governor of South Carolina, mobilized militia forces to retaliate against maroons living in the Hartstone Swamp region of the Savannah River, between Purrysburg and present-day



Ridgeland. These maroons had repeatedly raided the neighboring plantation of a Mr. Guerard after the destruction of a provisions magazine at their camp. Guerard, who operated a store and trading post at Okatie Bluff, frequently found his plantation lands targeted by such raids.

Unable to confront the maroons immediately, Pinckney later recruited approximately twenty Catawba scouts and offered a bounty for every maroon captured or killed. On October 18, 1786, a combined force of Georgia and South Carolina militia attacked the maroon camp at Belleisle, several miles upriver from Purrysburg. Four maroons were killed and four militiamen wounded before the attackers withdrew due to a shortage of ammunition. When the militia returned, they found that the camp had been evacuated. The maroons, however, returned to the island during the winter.

On April 7, 1787, Colonel Thomas Hutson led a detachment of approximately fifty militiamen from Purrysburg to destroy the settlement. Hutson dispatched Captain Jacob Winkler with three scout canoes to establish an ambush where Collins Creek entered the Savannah River near the island. At approximately eight or nine o'clock, one of Winkler's boats spotted three or four maroon canoes descending the creek, and the militia immediately opened fire.

Although the militia decisively won the engagement, killing several maroons, one militia officer was killed and two men fell overboard and never resurfaced. Had Hutson not delayed his advance in an effort to rescue the men who had fallen into the river, he likely would have succeeded in cutting off and capturing or killing most of the camp's inhabitants. By the end of the following month, the settlement had been destroyed and the maroon community either captured or dispersed into the wilderness, presumably migrating southward and eventually becoming assimilated into indigenous communities.

Ultimately, the remaining maroon communities of South Carolina and Beaufort District disappeared. As the frontiers of the United States expanded, they either moved westward or southward. Nevertheless, small family groups of Black settlers continued to establish claims in remote regions during the decades preceding the American Civil War, and in many cases their origins can be traced to the maroon societies of the Southeast.

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Interesting Islanders
Binyahs & Comyahs



BY RICK BART
Library Volunteer

Phibe, Ackabee, Cesar, Rose, Hagar, Amelia, Venture, Harry, Peter, Bachus, Cain, Roger, January, Daniel, York, August June, Phillis, Jacob, Flora, Sharper, Jack, Die, Aaron, Tom, Juddy, Pegg, Morris, Blanford, Cloe, Kate, March, Ammoretta, and Amantta, are "Comeyahs." They did not come to Hilton Head Island on their own accord. They were not granted land by the Lords Proprietors or by petitioning the Governor. They were enslaved by local plantation owners to work rice and indigo fields and serve as house slaves.

In the 1700s, South Carolina had a unique black-majority population, with enslaved Africans forming the backbone of a brutal rice and indigo plantation economy. Over 40% of enslaved people in the US entered through Charleston, making it the largest, most significant port of disembarkation in North America. They persevered through extremely harsh conditions on the ships that brought them here. Their difficult and backbreaking work funded the American Revolution even though their freedom was not part of the bargain in most cases. They brought essential agricultural knowledge and skill with them to our shores and the Gullah culture that is essential to American culture grew from their history and experiences.



Records list Phibe, Ackabee, Cesar, Rose and Hagar as having been enslaved at Braddock's Point Plantation. Amelia was enslaved at Honey Horn under owner John Hanahan. Amantta is listed on records from Buckingham Plantation. Venture, Harry, Peter, Bachus, Cain, Roger, January, Daniel, York, August June, Phillis, Ammoretta, Jacob, Flora, Jack, Sharper, Die, Aaron, Tom, Juddy, Pegg, Morris, Blanford, Cloe, Kate (and her children), March & Robin were left by Edward Ellis to his sons Thomas and Edmond in his will. Six enslaved people were left in trust for his wife, Elizabeth Fenden in 1769. While their names were not listed in brief summaries, they are part of the colonial deed and trust records.

That is all the information we have on these "comeyahs" – just first names on a list – but we know that they were much more and that they contributed greatly to our history. They were here on our Island at the time of the American Revolution. Some of our current Native Island families are descendants of these "Interesting Islanders." They were the beginning of generations that became "binyahs" and contributed to hundreds of years of our local and American history.

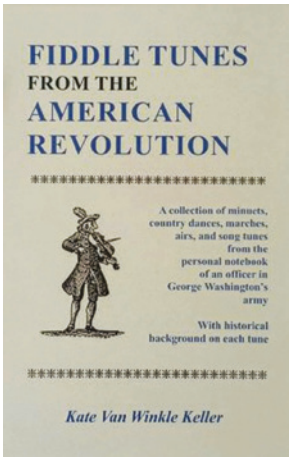
That Was Entertainment

While the American Revolution is often remembered for its grueling marches and harsh winters, the average soldier spent far more time fighting boredom than fighting the British. In the long stretches between battles, Continental soldiers and militiamen turned to a variety of pastimes to keep their spirits up and distract themselves from hunger and homesickness.

Games of Skill and Chance
Gambling was the most popular – and most controversial – form of entertainment. Soldiers frequently played card games and dice, even though General George Washington repeatedly issued orders against "the wicked practice of gaming" to prevent fights and the loss of meager pay.

When cards weren't available, soldiers played "Bowling on the Green" or Ninepins. They also engaged in "Fives" (a precursor to handball) and various forms of wrestling and marksmanship competitions to maintain their competitive edge.

Music and Song
Music was the heartbeat of the camp. Every regiment had its drummers and fifers, who played not only for signaling maneuvers but also for recreation. Soldiers sang bawdy tunes, patriotic anthems, and folk songs from their respective colonies. Instruments like the fiddle or jew's harp were prized possessions, often brought from home to provide a soundtrack for evening campfires.



"Wicked" Theatrics
In larger winter encampments, such as Valley Forge, entertainment became more organized. Despite a Congressional ban on theatrical performances, officers often staged plays to boost morale. In May 1778, for instance, Washington famously encouraged a performance of Joseph Addison's Cato, a play about resisting tyranny that resonated deeply with the troops.

Socializing and Letter Writing
For many, the primary "entertainment" was the simple act of socialization. Soldiers gathered around communal fires to swap stories, debate politics, and share news from home. Those who were literate spent hours writing letters to their families, while those who weren't often paid or bartered with comrades to write letters for them.

Training as Sport
To pass the time, soldiers often turned military drills into a form of sport. Bayonet exercises and mock skirmishes allowed them to show off their prowess. On rare occasions, particularly during holidays or after a victory, the army would hold a "Feu de Joie" (Fire of Joy) – a ceremonial firing of guns and cannons followed by an extra ration of rum, which was perhaps the most celebrated "entertainment" of all.

Through these simple diversions, the soldiers of the Revolution managed to maintain the psychological resilience necessary to endure an eight-year war for independence.

The Significance of Carolina Day



By Richard Thomas
Beaufort County 250

The prevailing urban legend that Colonel William Moultrie's stunning victory at Sullivan's Island, celebrated annually since 1777 as Carolina Day, reached Congress in Philadelphia in time to encourage the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, is false. But the truth that the June 28, 1776 defeat of the British Navy at Charlestown encouraged many delegates to affix their signatures to the Declaration on August 2, 1776 is, indisputably, fact.

That the news could have reached Philadelphia in six days is impossible given the means of communication at the time. The recorded facts indicate that, on July 2, General Charles Lee sent an official report on the victory north by express, enclosing several other documents. The packet reached what we now know as Independence Hall on Friday, July 19, late in the day, a few minutes before the usual time for adjournment. That a formal copy of the Declaration suitable for a signing ceremony had not yet been ordered had nothing to do with hesitancy or timidity. The problem was that New York had not yet assented to its adoption. Approval from her Legislature was not received until July 15.

When Lee's packet arrived on July 19, what can be claimed is that Continental Congress was immediately and acutely aware of the extreme importance of the report from South Carolina. After Lee's letter and enclosures had been read, the notation in the minutes of the Congress was: "Ordered, that an extract of General Lee's letter be published" and circulated throughout the colonies. The legislators were instantly appreciative of the psychological impact of the victory of a Patriot army over the most powerful imperial forces in the world.

Two resolutions were immediately offered: one, referring the information received to the Board of War; and, second, "That the thanks of the United States of America be given to General Charles Lee, Colonel William Moultrie, Colonel William Thompson (a commander in Beaufort and Colleton Districts) and the officers and soldiers under their command, who, on the 28th of June last, repulsed, with so much valor, the attack which was made that day on the state of South Carolina, by the fleet and army of his Brittanic majesty."

While Congress could not have known the outcome in Charlestown Harbor by July 4, they were well aware of a determined British effort to capture the strategic Southern American city: the British fleet had anchored outside the harbor in May and news of its whereabouts reached Philadelphia in June. That every Signer of the Declaration of Independence was fully cognizant of Moultrie's astounding victory over vastly superior power by the time he signed the document, is a well-known fact. The formal, engrossed copy of the Declaration was received by Congress by August 2, and it is believed that 50 of the 56 Signers affixed their signatures that day … emboldened by the knowledge that Patriots could battle and best the mightiest Imperial military in the world.



Celebrate Carolina Day 1776 - 2026
by Cathleen Steward

Various accounts of that "real July Fourth" survive, and as is the way with eyewitness accounts, they are often contradictory. However, all agree on the solemn atmosphere of the assembly, described by Benjamin Rush as "the pensive and awful silence which pervaded the house when we were called up, one after another, to the table of the President of Congress to subscribe to what was believed by many at the time to be our own death warrants." But where the situation is deadly serious, our human nature tends to create the room for "gallows humor." Benjamin Harrison, father and grandfather of two Presidents under the then unsigned Constitution, provided it.

William Ellery of Rhode Island was standing beside Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, staring into each man's face as he signed. As he signed, Harrison quietly addressed Ellery: "I shall have a great advantage over you, Mr Ellery, when we are all hung for what we are now doing. From the size and weight of my body, I shall die in a few minutes, but from the lightness of your body, you will dance in the air for an hour or two before you are dead." Actually, Ellery did dance – or move with the exceptionally slow, deliberate gait for which he was celebrated by his peers – until February 1820, when, the longest living Signer but one, he died in his 93rd year. Only Charles Carroll of Maryland lived longer… until 1832, when he died at 95.

Legislators' letters began spreading the news soon after the battle. Noble Wimberly Jones of Savannah wrote Benjamin Franklin on July 11 giving detail of the damage to the British fleet. On August 7, Franklin and two other Signers, Harrison and Robert Morris, acting as the Secret Committee of Correspondence, wrote to American agent Silas Deane that it was not expected that the British would attempt anything further due to the ravaged condition of her ships and the sickness of her men. Our last Royal Governor, Lord William Campbell, having been wounded in the attack, could not correspond, but his counterpart, Governor Martin of North Carolina, wrote on July 5 to Lord George Germain from the deck of the ship Peggy, anchored off Charlestown Bar: "The check His Majesty's arms received in the attack made by the Squadron here the other day, will certainly operate disadvantageously by teaching the Rebels higher opinions of their own strength."

If the Battle of Sullivan's Island did not launch a directly linear reaction resulting in the Declaration of Independence, it did more than anything else in the dark days of 1776 to make Americans believe they might stand a chance against the mightiest military power in the world, encouraging many to sign the Declaration and New York to assent. In March of 1775, General James Grant had assured the House of Commons that American soldiers could not possibly offer serious opposition to British regulars. Now, as Henry Laurens and other Patriots proudly observed, he had received his contradictory proof from William "Danger" Thompson at Breach Inlet and William Moultrie at Fort Sullivan. It was a proof that would be repeated many times over the course of the war, and, again by Moultrie, after a three-year British absence from South Carolina, on Port Royal Island at the Battle of Beaufort on February 3, 1779, the first land victory over British regulars by a Patriot army in the war in SC.

Brigadier General Thomas Sumter & Major General Nathaniel Greene

Letters Regarding the Southern Campaign 1780-1783



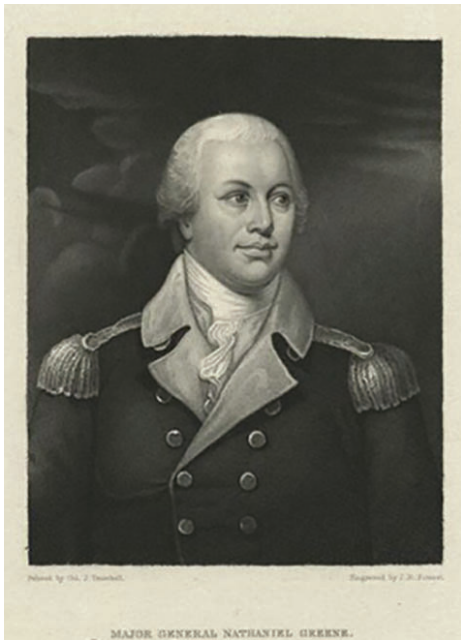
BY JIM CLOSSON
Missouri Society, William C. Corum Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution

The following are excerpts of official correspondence from 1781 between Brigadier General Thomas Sumter and Major General Nathanael Greene from original unpublished letters of Gen. Sumter, in the possession of the Misses Brownfield (granddaughters of General Thomas Sumter), and certified copies of letters of General Greene, in possession of Gen. Edward McCrady, President South Carolina Historical Society.

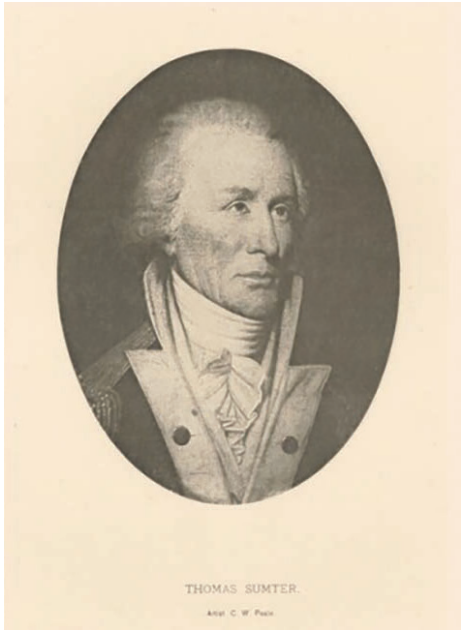
NOTE: Spelling and punctuation of the following correspondence is unedited and remains as found. It is not known whether the spelling and punctuation are original or occurred during transcription. These letters contain N. B. after many with further comments. N.B. stands for the Latin phrase nota bene, which translates literally to "note well" or "mark well".

Two of the most notable figures in South Carolina during the American Revolution were Brigadier General Thomas Sumter and Major General Nathanael Greene. Appointed by South Carolina Governor John Rutledge on October 6, 1780, as the only Brigadier General in South Carolina at the time, General Sumter was in command of the state militia. After the disastrous American defeat at the Battle of Camden, General George Washington appointed Major General Nathanael Greene to replace General Horatio Gates to command the Southern Department on October 14, 1780. He assumed command of the Southern Army in Charlotte, NC, on December 3, 1780.

The working relationship between Greene and Sumter was famously volatile. Sumter prized his autonomy and frequently ignored Greene's orders, refusing to integrate his militia with the main Continental Army. He demanded an independent command and believed the Continental command structure did not give him the credit he was due. Despite these persistent frictions and



Major General Nathanael Greene



Brigadier General Thomas Sumter

Sumter's eventual resignation in February 1782, their combined – if uncoordinated – efforts successfully fractured British control of the South.

The following exchange of correspondence between the two provides some insight into their relationship.

By January 8th, 1781, General Greene is growing impatient for Sumter's recovery and return to the field to strengthen the militia forces, as he writes to General Sumter from his camp on the Peedee River.

Brigadier General Sumter

Dear Sir,

I am impatient to hear of your perfect recovery and of seeing you again at the head of the Militia. General Morgan has gone over to the West side of the Catawba agreeable to what I wrote you before I left Charlotte. But I expect he will have but few men from your Brigade until you are in a condition to appear at the head of them. Your influence in bringing them out is not only necessary, but the means you have of obtaining intelligence is not less important. I lament exceedingly your wounds confining you so much longer than I was flattered with, from appearances at Sumpter the time I was with you; and I esteem it no less unfortunate for the public than myself. If Genl. Morgan don't meet with any misfortune until you are ready to join him I shall be happy, as your knowledge of the Country and the people will afford him great security against a surprise.

When I was with you, your soul was full of enterprise. The salvation of this country don't depend upon little strokes; nor should the great business of establishing a permanent army be neglected to pursue them. Partizan strokes in war are like the garnish of a table, they give splendor to the Army and reputation to the Officers, but they afford no substantial national security. They are most necessary and should not be neglected but should not be pursued to the prejudice of more important concerns. You may strike a hundred strokes and reap little benefit from them unless you have a good Army to take advantage of your success. The enemy will never relinquish their plan, nor the people be firm in our favour until

they behold a better barrier in the field than a Volunteer Militia who are one day out and next at home.

There is no mortal more fond of enterprize than myself. but this is not the basis on which the fate of this country depends. It is not a war of posts but a contest for States dependent upon opinion. If we can introduce into the field a greater army than the Enemy, all their posts will fall of themselves; and without this they will reestablish them though we should take them twenty times. Nevertheless, I would always hazard an attack when the misfortune cannot be so great to us as it may be to the enemy.

Plunder and depredation prevails so in every quarter I am not a little apprehensive all this Country will be laid waste. Most people appear to be in pursuit of private gain or personal glory. I persuade myself though you may set a just value upon reputation your soul is filled with a more noble ambition.

I tell you in confidence I am in distress: My fears increase respecting subsistence; and if the State of N. Carolina continue to bring out fresh shoals of useless militia as they have done the last season, it will be impossible to subsist an Army in this Country.

Ten of the militia drawn out in classes, are not worth one of your men, whose all depend upon their own bravery. What gives safety to one brings on ruin to the other. If your Militia do not fight their families are exposed. If the others run away their persons are safe.

I shall be happy to hear from you at all times and beg that you will suggest such things as you may think will promote the interest and safety of this Country.

I am, Dear Sir With esteem Your Most Obedient Humble Servant NATH GREENE .

13 Jan 1781

Honble Maj. Genl. Greene, Commanding the American forces Southw Department

Dr Genl

By a person just returned, who I sent towards Charlestown to meet the late arrived Reinforcement of the Enemy to Discover their Number Movement etc, I am informed there was twelve hundred with Genl. Leslie which Crossed McCords ferry and went to Camden, except seventy-five which was sent on to Lord Cornwallis - Maj. Maxwell with one hundred men had taken post at the Congree Store, where he is erecting a fort, and improving the other works there. Thirteen hundred men is Certainly all that has Marched out of Charlestown up the Country, and is believed to be the whole of the Reinforcement. I have also much more perfect accounts from the westward. I sent you, there what Lord Cornwallis lay on Wednesday, at McCallisters eleven miles from the X Roads, 40 miles from Charlotte. Col. Tarlton, Col. Cruger from 96, Maj-. McAuther from Bayley's ferry, and Genl. Cunningham had forced a junction at the Long Lane, their whole force not over one thousand. A Quantity of arms, salted Provisions, and Salt, spirits and c has been lately brought up from the town to the Enemy, three of the best mills upon the Congrees are taken from the proprietors for Public use where large Quantities of Meal is Barreling up for the use of the army - I have nothing particular from our Troops Westward, I believe they are lying very Quiet.

I am Dr. Genl- with the Greatest Respect your most obedt- Hble. Servt. THOS . SUMTER

P. S. from Accounts just received from Camden I am informed that a party of the Enemy crossed at Nelson's ferry, their numbers not known so that the number in Camden cannot be ascertained, they are carrying on the works at Camden with great expedition and are now abating. T. S.

Reporting to General Greene was Brigadier General Daniel Morgan who was preparing his men for battle against British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, who earned the title of the Butcher of the Carolinas for his ruthless behavior. Tarleton was in pursuit of General Morgan and his men. They would ultimately wage battle at Cowpens, South Carolina Wednesday, January 17, 1781.

The tone of the following correspondence reflects the stress both General Sumter and General Greene were experiencing.

Camp Pee Dee, January. 15th, 1781.

General Sumter.

Dear Sir :

I am favored with yours of the 13th. I am afraid you are not well informed either of the enemies or Morgan's strength. If the enemy's numbers are not greater than you mention, and Morgan as numerous, as you say, they run some hazard in dividing their force. It will afford Morgan an opportunity to strike at one or the other of the divisions, which I have no doubt he will avail himself of, if he thinks his force competent to their numbers.

I am persuaded the object of the movement is to route Morgan from his present position, and to terrify the inhabitants. I think there is nothing else in that Country that can be a military object; nor will the resources of the Country afford them subsistence for any length of time. However, I wish you to watch their motions narrowly and keep me constantly informed.

It is a great misfortune that the little force we have is in such a wretched state for the want of clothing. More than one half of our numbers are naked, so much so, that we cannot put them on the least kind of duty. Indeed, there is a great number that have not any cloths on them, except a little piece of a blanket in the Indian form around their waists.

The barreling the meal and other preparations at Camden indicate a serious movement; but I think the present is only meant to pave the way to the other.

I have heard nothing of the troops in Virginia since I wrote you before. Where is Genl. Davidson? Is he at Charlotte or with Morgan?

I am dear Sir, Please to communicate with General Morgan it will be of advantage to all parties.

Your most obedient huml. Servt. NATH GREENE .

After General Morgan defeated the forces of General Banastre Tarleton at Cowpens, the language from General Greene became terse as he admonished General Sumter.

Camp on Pee Dee January 19, 1781

The honble General Sumter .

Dear Sir,

I have just received letters from General Morgan informing me of his situation and representing the difficulty he meets with in collecting provisions, and among other things he mentions some embarrassment which has arisen from an order of yours to Colonel Hill, not to obey any orders from him unless it came through you. I imagine there must be some misapprehension about the matter; for I cannot suppose you could give an improper order, or that you have the most distant wish to embarrass the public affairs.

It is certainly right that all orders should go through the principal to the dependents as well for the preservation of good government as to inspire a proper respect. This is a general rule and should never be deviated from but in case of necessity, as when the difficulty of conveying an order through the principal will be attended with a fatal delay. In that case the order should be directed to the branches and not to the principal; and as the head is subject to the order the branches are of course: for it would be very extraordinary if a Captain should presume to dispute an order from his General because it was not communicated through his Colonel. At the same time that the right is indisputable, it should always be avoided, but in cases of absolute necessity.

Genl. Morgan is an exceeding good Officer and understands his duty perfectly well, and I know he has the highest respect for your character, and therefore am persuaded if there has been any interference different from the general principles, which should govern military affairs, it must have happened through inadvertence or from a persuasion that you did not mean to exercise command during the time of your indisposition. If anything in his conduct has had the appearance of indelicacy or neglect, I hope you will not suffer it to bias your conduct from that line which has given you weight and influence among your Countrymen. It is the mark of a great mind to rise superior to little injuries and our object should be the good of our Country and not personal glory.

I find from intelligence through different channels that Lord Cornwallis is at the Crossroads and that Tarlton is upon Tiger river, but the accounts differ widely respecting their numbers, nor is there a probability of knowing with any certainty the strength of an Army or detachment without knowing the Corps and the strength of each.

Genl. Morgan has about 900 Men with him, Genl. Davidson is also collecting a considerable force at Charlotte. I have directed them to consult with you the practicability of forming a junction with your force and making a combined attack upon one of the divisions of Lord Cornwallis's Army. You will please to favour them and me with your opinion upon the matter. General Morgan also proposes a diversion into Georgia and have your and Genl. Davidson to cover the Country from Broad River to the Catawba. I am doubtful of its effects and wish your opinion upon that also.

I have had no further news from Virginia.

I am with esteem Dear Sir Your Most Obedient Servant, NATH GREENE .

Writing from Oliphant Mill, General Greene sends correspondence to General Sumter thanking him for the militia's performance at Cowpens.

Oliphant Mill near Shuard's ferry on the Catawba January 30th, 1781.

General Sumter,

Dear Sir

I have been so much engaged since Tarlton's defeat that I have not had time to congratulate you upon the success of General Morgan. Nothing this war has been more glorious or more timely. As you are acquainted with the particulars, I will not trouble you with them. I have this moment received the agreeable news of the surprise at George Town by Lt. Col. Lee. I have not the particulars and therefore cannot gratify you on this point. But I believe it will be a pretty affair and happened very seasonably.

The question is what is to be done with Lord Cornwallis. He seems to be pushing into the Country with great confidence. Methinks if the Militia could be generally brought out in aid of the Continental Army he might be ruined.

I have the pleasure to hear by Genl Morgan that you are all most well enough to take the field. Nothing will afford me greater satisfaction than to see you at the Head of the Militia again; and I can assure you I shall take pleasure in giving you every opportunity to exercise that talent of enterprise which has already rendered you the terror of your enemies and the Idol of your friends.

If you are well enough to ride up to Beatty's ford, I shall be glad to see you there. I wish to consult you upon a particular plan of operations.

I am with esteem and regard, Your Most Obedient Humble Servant NATH. GREENE

From his letter of April 13, 1781 along the Catawba River to General Greene, General Sumter mentions General Greene's movement toward Camden.

Catawba 13th Apl. 1781

The Hon Maj Genl . Greene- Commander in Chief of the Southern Army

Dr Sir.- On Tuesday night a party of horse and foot to the number of about one hundred and fifty from Camden appeared in the Waxsaws, they marched with great precipitation as far as the Meeting House, which they burned together with some other houses, barns, etc - they have kild, wound and taken several persons, carried off all kinds of horses, plundered the settlement of as much as they could carry, as soon as I received Intelligence of their approach, I detached Cols Hampton and Taylor after them but as they begun to retreat on Wednesday night, don't expect they will be overtaken.- By accounts just received from Genl. Pickens who wrote me about ten days ago that he had collected a few men of his Brigade and also a few Georgians- but was unable to attempt anything against the enemy. I give orders to the Cols Commanding four Regmts- in my Brigade westward of broad river to join Genl. Pickens, which has been done accordingly. I requested Genl Pickens to move down to take a position upon Tyger River near the fish dam ford to endeavor to cover the country and collect provision, and if hard pressed by the enemy to pass Broad River to this side, rather than retreat towards the Mountains.

The enemy I find have retreated to their forts at Williams and Ninety six, notwithstanding Genl Pickens is, as I am informed by the Barer Capt

Mcbee, moving upwards. With the men of these four Regmts already mentioned, which if with a design to take them on to Savannah river, will weaken me considerably, but as I wrote Genl. Pickens very fully a few days ago- wherein I mentioned the measures necessary to be entered into in consequence of your movements towards Camden - I am of opinion that he don't mean to go far- however, I expect to have near the number in the field, as mentioned to Majr Herne Shoud - I miss of these four Regmnts - But as I intend to form a junction of all that are embodied on Tuesday next shall then be able to give you a more satisfactory account--which I shall do without loss of time. I apprehend that a number of North Carolinians might be got out at this time if the officers were active.

I am Dr Sir Your most obdt – Hble Servt
THOS. SUMTER

April 19, 1781, General Greene writes to General Sumter to advise him that he has taken a position within three miles of Camden and desperately needs provisions. By the 23rd he writes again. He's concerned his letter has fallen into enemy hands.

HD . Qrs . April 19th , 1781.

General Sumter . Sir

The Army has arrived and taken a position within three Miles of Camden. The Country is barren, and promises us no hope of support. My greatest dependence is on you for supplies of corn and meal. Both of these articles are immediately wanted, and unless you can furnish me with them it will be impossible for me to keep my position.

I want to know very much your situation, and how you have disposed of yourself, so as to cooperate with our Army on any particular emergency.

I am Sir with great esteem

Your most hble servt . NATH . GREENE

Camp before Camden, April 23d , 1781

General Sumter . Dr. Sir

I wrote you a day or two ago of our arrival in the neighborhood of Camden, and desired to know your strength and situation, to which I have received no answer, and am not a little afraid that it has fallen into the hands of the Tories.

Since I wrote you I have critically examined the fortifications of this place and find them much superior to what I expected. The Garrison from the best intelligence I can get is also much stronger than I expected; and I had the mortification to hear yesterday that the South Carolina royalists had the day before thrown themselves into the place from Ninety-six. Our numbers are not equal to a full investiture of the place without dividing our force too much to be secure from insult in any par . This will give the Enemy an opportunity to draw what reinforcements they please from other posts. I must depend entirely upon you to secure us on the quarter from ninety-six and Charlestown on the West side of the Wateree, and General Marion on the East side from George Town and Charles Town.

General Marion and Col. Lee are at Nelson's ferry, they have closely invested the fort at that place upon the Lake , but for want of Cannon I am not a little afraid they will fail of success , as the Garrison appears to be well supplied with provision , and the situation don't admit of storming the Works .

I long to hear from you that I may know how to take my measures respecting provision and other matters. beg you to keep two or three of your people constantly in camp with us that I may have it in my power to forward you the earliest intelligence; and I beg you to get all the information you can from Charles Town as there are flying reports of General Philips having sail'd from Virginia to the Southward with 2000 Men. The arrival of this force, if it is true, is a matter highly interesting to the success and safety of our operations to be ascertained as soon as possible.

With esteem and regard, I am Dr. Sir Your most obt . serv . NATH GREENE

N. B. The reinforcement which came in yesterday was from the Congree's.

On Wednesday, April 25, 1781, a small American force occupying Hobkirk's Hill, north of Camden under General Greene, was attacked by British troops led by Francis Rawdon. After a fierce clash, General Greene retreated, leaving Rawdon's smaller force in possession of the hill. Unknowingly, General Sumter pens a message to General Greene with a general update on his activity.

Camp at Davis' Broad River April 25, 1781

Honble - Maj Genl . Greene Head Quarters

Dr Sir- My movements are very slow which I fear will be attended with many disadvantages, which would have been avoided if I had been down sooner-

The Militia are coming in tolerable well , now , I have also a number of wagons coming down and expect to be joined tomorrow by three more well appointed troops from N. Carolina- as I found delay unavoidable I marched into Mopley's and Sandy river settlements with a view to harass the enemy which has been effectually done and will I hope in a great measure relieve our friends in that part of the country from the unnatural cruelties that were daily exercised over them. Some small skirmishes has happened. I have lost no men, several of the enemy have fallen and many others taken prisoners, upon the whole they have been pretty well scurged, I shall send some large parties into the Dutch Fork tomorrow to clear that place also and call out the well disposed inhabitants, I shall move on tomorrow and the instant I am joined by these troops behind March for the Congerees with all possible speed - I detached Col. Hampton to the Wateree with a few wagons which are to be loaded with provisions if to be got and sent to you, he will also keep back small parties of the enemy from going into or coming out of Camden -- While there , Genl . Pickens joined me, today he has none of his brigade with him. Many men belonging to mine gone after Col. McCall who is in the neighborhood of Ninety Six with a considerable number of men with him, Genl. Pickens will set off tomorrow, with Col. Flag's Regmt - of my brigade to take command of the troops in that quarter- the Georgians are gone into that State and are joined, I am informed by almost every man in the upper country, the enemy have burnt what works they had at Williams and and are moving towards the Congaree, numbers of the Tories hiding out until they know what terms may be offered - I find the country very bear of provisions, and striped of Chief of the Negroes and horses.

I mention by letter to Genl. Polk - and many others the inhabitance of Macklinburg what straits you were in for provisions, in consequence of which I am informed that twenty odd wagon loads were very soon collected and to start yesterday.

I hope by Saturday to know how things are at Congarees and immediately send you some meal and corn - The trouble and perplexity I have had to get the militia are inconceivable - but I think them pretty well subdued .

I hope you have not suffered for supplies, and that your expectations and wishes may be fully and speedily answered .

I am Dr- Sir Your Most obdt Hmble Servt THOS SUMTER

N . B . I have not as yet received any accounts from Charles Town . I shoud be very glad to know where Lrd- Cornwallis is.

That very same day a letter is penned to General Sumter from General Greene's headquarters. It's a distress call.

Head Quarters, April 25th 1781.

General Sumter. Sir

General Greene wishes you to collect all your force and join him immediately. His Army is too small to maintain his ground before Camden, and therefore it becomes necessary that we should form a junction of our forces.

The Enemy advanced out this morning and gave us Battle. They drove us some little distance from the field, but we saved our stores and took a number of prisoners.

I am Sir, Your most obedient and most hble serv . WM . PIERCE , JR . Aid de Camp .

General Sumter writes to General Greene on April 27, 1781 and laments at his inability to help him when he desperately needed it.

Broad River Near Boyley's Ferry April 27, 1781

The Honble- Maj- Genl- Greene Commander in Chief of the Southern Army

Dr. Sir. I am just favoured with yours of the 23rd- Inst- and wrote you immediately - After which I sent to Col – Hampton there upon the Wateree to be forwarded to you. I lament not having it in my power to prevent Maj..Frazier's detachment from getting into Camden- I have been under great perplexity. The detachments from North Carolina and the upper Regemts- in the South have not yet joined me, My force is daily increasing, I move slow for that purpose, I have parties dispersed through the Tory settlements in both forks to bring in the Militia collect wagons and horses. and disperse parties of Tories that are lying out, I cannot possibly ascertain what forces I may have in a few days I may be able to do it more to your satisfaction- But I am convinced it will not be inconsiderable and have no doubt but I Can prevent your having any interruptions from the South Side of the Wateree, except a very large force should come from Charles Town- I am just informed that the Tories which have fled from above are embodying West of Saluda River- I have prepared a proper party to send after them, which if dispersed will have all the back country open and secure, quite to 96- So that the inhabitance can have no good excuse for not turning out- Genl- Pickens set out yesterday for 96- where there is a number of men employed under Col- McCall he will cut of all supplies from the Garrison as soon as he arrives. I have nothing certain from Charles Town yet- A report prevails there that Genl- Phillips is coming to Virginia with three thousand men- I have corn grinders at the Congrees and shall be able to send a quantity of meal to you in a few days--

I am Dr Sr your most Obrdt- Hble Servt-- THOS- SUMTER

N. B. I have neither paper wax or wafer if you have any to spare should be much obliged to you for some by any opportunity; I will have proper person engaged for carrying intelligence. T. S.

On May 15, 1781, "Light-Horse Harry" Lee captured the Fort Granby, held by the British and knowing of the imminent arrival of British reinforcements led by Lord Rawdon. Lee feared that if he did not secure the fort immediately, Rawdon's approaching forces would force him to abandon the siege entirely. Lee quickly came to terms of surrender with Major Andrew Maxwell. He and his Loyalist garrison were allowed to keep their personal belongings and the massive amounts of plunder they had looted from the surrounding countryside. The garrison was also permitted to withdraw to Charleston as prisoners of war until they could be exchanged.

General Sumter was livid that Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee allowed British troops to keep their loot upon surrender and submitted his resignation to General Greene. General Greene refused the resignation at that time to maintain military stability.

On May 17, 1781, General Greene wrote to General Sumter from camp at Ancrum Plantation

The Honourable Brigadier General Sumter

Dear Sir

I take the liberty to return you your commission, which you forwarded me yesterday for my acceptance; and to inform you that I cannot think of accepting it, and to beg you to continue your command.

I am sorry for your ill state of health, and shall do every thing in my power to render your command, as convenient as the nature of the service will admit it is unnecessary for me to tell you how important your services are to the interest and happiness of this Country; and the confidence I have in your abilities; Zeal for the good of the service. Your continuing in command will lay the public in general and me in particular, under a very great obligation; and tho it may be accompanied with many personal inconveniences, yet I hope you will have cause to rejoyce in the conclusion of the business from the consideration of having contributed so largely to the recovery of its Liberty.

With Esteem and respect I have the honour to be Dear Sir Your most obedient Humble Servant NATH GREENE

Just five days after his May 17th letter to General Sumter, General Greene

besieged the vital South Carolina post of Ninety Six on May 22, 1781. After learning that a relief party from the British garrison at Charleston was almost a day's march away from Ninety Six, Greene decided to launch an all-out assault on the British fort on June 18th.

Although General Greene would ultimately withdraw from Niney Six June 19th, his letter to General Sumter June 10th didn't foretell what was in store.

Camp Ninety Six, June 10, 1781

The honble.Brigadier Genl . Sumter

Dear Sir

We have but a small part of the Militia Regiments you mention with us, they have been and still are wanted to compleat the reduction of this place the Garrison of which defend themselves by the advantages of the ground, strength of the works, and number of the Garrison with great obstinacy. However I hope it will fall in a few days, as we are preparing a mine to blow up their principal work.

I am happy to hear the Orangeburg Militia have be haved with such spirit. This promises well. Go on with the good business of arranging and arming the Militia as fast as possible.

All the Enemy's posts upon the Savannah are reduced. Upwards of 800 Men were made Prisoners of different characters at the several posts. Several pieces of Cannon with some military Stores were taken. When this Post is reduced the Enemy will have no Posts in the two southern States, except Charles Town and Savannah. General Marion has reported the evacuation of George Town before your Letter arrived.

By a Charles Town paper of the 2d. I find a Fleet as lately arrived at that place; and it is said with a large reinforcement . As you do not mention anything of it in your Letter, I imagine you had not received an account of it. Please to make particular inquiry into the matter. The Enemy's laying waste the Country in the Neighborhood of Charles Town, looks like preparing for a Seige, which perhaps they expect on the arrival of the 2d. division of the French Fleet.

Should the Enemy move out in force with a view of raising the Seige of this place, you will give them all the opposition in your power, that their march may be delayed as long as possible and retire before them so as to form a Junction with us, as it is my intention to collect our force and give them Battle. Reports say the reinforcement amounts to 3000, but it is most probable that it is only a few recruits for the different Corps perhaps to the amount of 700 or 800 Men.

Our force is accumulating in Virginia. The Pennsylvania- Line has arrived, and a reinforcement for the Maryland Line also. Nothing is to be feared from that quarter. Lord Cornwallis has formed a Junction with Arnold. General Philips is dead. The people are in high spirits, and all the young Gentlemen in the Country are forming a Corps of Light Horse. Our affairs wear an agreeable face in every quarter.

With esteem and regard, I am Dr. Sir Your most obt . hble Serv. NATH . GREENE



Caty Greene

Author's note: This article covers only a small portion of the correspondence between Brigadier General Thomas Sumter and Major General Nathanael Greene during the Southern Campaign. They were thrown together out of necessity. Their personalities were opposites. Their common ground was love of country. Their combined efforts in capturing British strongholds and persistent pressure forced British troops to retreat to coastal enclaves. The campaign culminated in the successful liberation of Savannah and Charleston, effectively ending British control of the South by late 1782. General Sumter formally resigned his commission earlier that year, as victory seemed more assured and frustrations over militia reorganization plagued him. The remainder of his public life was spent in politics. Elected by Camden District to the US House of Representatives, he served five terms in Congress between 1789 and 1801. He then served in the US Senate until 1810. He was the lastsurviving American general of the Revolution, dying in 1832 at the age of ninety-seven.

After retiring his commission in late 1783, Major General Nathanael Greene settled on his Mulberry Grove plantation near Savannah, Georgia. It was there on Monday, June 19, 1786 that he suddenly died of a heatstroke at the age of 44.

In 1782, with the military and government coffers empty, General Greene was forced to buy uniforms for his Southern Army through a Charleston speculator named John Banks. When Banks entered into a money-making scheme that went bad, Congress delayed paying Banks' creditors. Banks, in turn, refused to deliver the provisions without a guarantee. In his desperation to clothe and provision his troops, Nathanael Greene signed a guarantee for the £30,000 money he didn't have, and Congress did not reimburse it.

In April 1792, Caty Greene, Nathanael Greene's widow, stood before Congress with an indemnity claim to settle her husband's estate and debts totaling more than £30,000 that he had incurred during the Revolutionary War.

Alexander Hamilton helped Caty prepare the claim, and she was supported by old friends such as Henry Knox, Benjamin Lincoln, Governor John Mathews, and William Washington. Anthony Wayne held a seat in Congress and fought furiously for her settlement. South Carolina militia General Thomas Sumter, who harbored ill feelings for Nathanael Greene, tried to block Caty's claim. On April 27, 1792, she was awarded $47,000, and for the first time since the war, her family was solvent.

Using AI Graphics

– Carol Clemens

Carol has offered and will offer again a class on using AI graphics in your genealogy research. As we worked through this newsletter, she graciously took a timeline of the American Revolution in South Carolina and illustrated it using the programs she teaches.



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