

# **MUSGROVE'S MILL STATE HISTORIC SITE**

## **HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY**


### **PART 1: THE BATTLE OF MUSGROVE'S MILL**

John Hiatt

---

South Carolina State Park Service  
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism  
1205 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29201

May 2000



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	i
INTRODUCTION.....	ii
SECTION 1: THE WAR MOVES SOUTH.....	1
SECTION 2: THE RISE OF IRREGULAR WARFARE.....	8
SECTION 3: THE BATTLE OF MUSGROVE'S MILL.....	17
APPENDIX A: THE RESPECTIVE STRENGTHS.....	47
APPENDIX B: WEAPONRY AND INFANTRY TACTICS.....	55
APPENDIX C: A NOTE ON DRAPER.....	61
FIGURES.....	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	73



## LIST OF FIGURES

FIG. 1: MAP OF WESTERN NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA. ....	64
FIG. 2: WILLIAM MUSGROVE'S 1840 PLAT.....	65
FIG. 3: SAMUEL CHEW'S 1767 PLAT.....	66
FIG. 4: WILLIAM HENDRICKS' 1768 PLAT.....	67
FIG. 5: JOHN PUCKET'S 1804 PLAT.....	68
FIG. 6: DETAILS OF "LAURENS DISTRICT" AND "SPARTANBURG DISTRICT" .....	69
FIG. 7: DETAIL OF USGS QUADRANGLE.....	70
FIG. 8: MUSGROVE'S MILL, 1767-1840.....	71
FIG. 9: 1926 MAP OF THE BATTLE OF MUSGROVE'S MILL.....	72



## Introduction

At twilight on 18 August 1780, an American militia detachment, composed of 200 well-mounted partisans, struck out from their camp, located near the North Carolina border, and headed southward. These partisans—under the joint command of Colonels Isaac Shelby, Elijah Clarke, and James Williams—intended to strike an equal number of Tories, who had assembled at Musgrove's Mill on the south side of the Enoree River. Pushing on through the darkness, the American detachment covered forty miles overnight and halted about a half-mile north of the Enoree just before dawn on the nineteenth. Yet soon after their arrival, the partisan commanders saw their original plans shattered. First, a Tory patrol detected their presence, which eliminated the element of surprise. Then, to make matters worse, the partisans learned that Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Innes, with roughly 300 provincial regulars from the British post of Ninety-Six, had joined the Tories at Musgrove's Mill the prior evening. To attack against such odds would be suicidal, but the Americans could not retreat either; the rigors of the night march had left their horses too exhausted to undertake such a movement. The only alternative that remained for Shelby, Williams, and Clarke was to make a stand, so they took up a strong defensive position astride the main road and dispatched a party of horsemen to provoke the British to attack.

Lured out of their camp at Musgrove's Mill, the provincials and Tory militia forded the Enoree, advanced up the road, and then engaged the waiting partisans. A hotly-contested firefight ensued for about fifteen minutes, during which the British managed to push within a few yards of the American line. But





at this critical moment, Innes fell wounded—as had nearly every redcoated officer on the field by that time—and without leadership, the British attack collapsed. As Innes' troops began to fall back in disorder, the Americans counterattacked, turning the British retreat into a near rout. Before the partisans broke off the pursuit, they had killed, wounded, and captured a fourth of Innes' command, while only suffering eleven casualties of their own.

The American victory at Musgrove's Mill, which occurred a few days after the devastating defeats at Camden and Fishing Creek,<sup>1</sup> probably gave patriot morale a small boost; however, it certainly could not offset the strategic predicament in which the rebels found themselves following those twin debacles.<sup>2</sup> The triumph of Colonels Shelby, Clarke, and Williams on 19 August 1780, while a stunning coup for American arms, produced few tangible results. In fact, the Carolina backcountry not only remained in British control following the battle, but Lord Charles Cornwallis, commander of His Majesty's forces in the South, also continued to prepare for his invasion of North Carolina.

Although not on par with a King's Mountain or a Cowpens in terms of its impact on the course of the Revolutionary War in the South, the battle of Musgrove's Mill still bears considerable significance. As Revolutionary War historian Hugh Rankin has pointed out, the clash on the Enoree River "was one of the few times during the American Revolution that untrained militia were able

---

<sup>1</sup> At Camden, fought on 16 August 1780, the British army, under General Charles, Earl Cornwallis, nearly destroyed General Horatio Gates' American army of the South; while at Fishing Creek, Cornwallis' aggressive subordinate, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, surprised and trounced Brigadier General Thomas Sumter's contingent of partisan militia and Continentals. In both actions the Americans sustained comparatively higher casualties.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 87.



to defeat seasoned British troops.”<sup>3</sup> Rankin's contention holds a great deal of validity, despite the false impression created by his unfortunate portrayal of the Americans as “untrained militia.” When compared to the provincials, who received the same rigorous and habitual drill instruction as professional British regulars, the American militiamen that fought at Musgrove's Mill might seem “untrained”, but that word belies the fact that they were battle-tested veterans and their previous experience surely served them well at Musgrove's Mill. Nevertheless, a detachment of American militia did defeat a larger contingent of provincial regulars and Tory militia, which in itself was quite an achievement.

Once the battle is removed from isolation and placed within the greater context of the war, however, it truly begins to resonate with significance. For this reason, the battle of Musgrove's Mill provides South Carolina State Parks with an excellent opportunity to interpret some often overlooked, or at least under-emphasized, aspects of the Revolutionary War in the South, especially with regard to the nature of the conflict in the South Carolina backcountry. First, the battle has broader interpretive value because it is representative of the “irregular” style of warfare (discussed in section two of this study) that partisans, such as Thomas Sumter, adopted after the British captured Charleston in May 1780, marched inland, and attempted to subdue the interior. The foray of Shelby, Clarke, and Williams against the Tory camp on the Enoree River exemplifies the hit-and-run/ambush tactics that were the hallmarks of irregular warfare.

---

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Mark M. Boatner, *Landmarks of the American Revolution* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1973), 491.



But most importantly, from a thematic standpoint, the battle of Musgrove's Mill illustrates that America's War of Independence was also a bitter civil war, which often pitted neighbors against one another. Interestingly enough, Colonel Alexander Innes, himself from Scotland, was probably the only British-born soldier on the field that day. North of the Enoree River, on 19 August 1780, rebel militiamen from Georgia and the two Carolinas squared off against provincials and Tory militia from New Jersey, New York, and South Carolina. Thus, the battle of Musgrove's Mill was foremost a struggle between Americans.

Particularly brutal in South Carolina, the civil war that raged in the southern colonies left few inhabitants untouched. The case of Edward Musgrove himself, the proprietor of the mill that lent its name to the battle, gives interpreters the opportunity to discuss the strains that the civil war placed on noncombatants, in addition to the complicated issues of loyalty that they faced. Evidence suggests that Edward Musgrove, who lived in a predominately pro-British region, attempted to remain neutral. Perhaps then, he cooperated with the British (by accommodating the Tory camp on his property) not because he was an ardent supporter of the crown, but because he wanted to protect his family and plantation from Tory reprisals.

For the convenience of the reader, I have divided this report into three separate yet interrelated sections. The first two sections are largely contextual in nature, providing background information on the evolution of the British southern strategy (1778-1780) and the emergence of partisan warfare in the Carolina backcountry, beginning in the spring of 1780. In the third and final section, the



reader will find a detailed analysis of the battle of Musgrove's Mill. In addition to the main sections, I have also included three supplemental appendices. The first appendix examines the compositions and respective strengths of the forces that took part in the battle of Musgrove's Mill. The second offers a general overview of late-eighteenth-century weaponry and infantry tactics. And lastly, the third contains a critical analysis of the work of Lyman C. Draper, a nineteenth-century historian whose book *King's Mountain and Its Heroes* continues to exert a profound influence on historical interpretations of the battle of Musgrove's Mill.





## I. The War Moves South

In mid-1777, His Majesty's armed forces stood poised on the brink of victory in the American Revolutionary War, or so it seemed to the British high command. Hoping to crush the rebellion with one final push, Lord George Germain—the Colonial Secretary and minister responsible for directing the crown's war effort from London—consulted his generals and together they devised a two-pronged offensive, involving approximately 20,000 redcoats. From Canada, General John Burgoyne invaded the Hudson Valley in an attempt to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies, while General William Howe, the commander-in-chief of British forces in America, struck out from the port of New York to seize Philadelphia, the capital of the fledgling United States. Improvident planning and mismanagement, however, assured a disastrous outcome for the British. Although Howe succeeded in capturing the rebel capital and indecisively defeated General George Washington in two pitched battles (Brandywine and Germantown), his failure to destroy Washington's army, or even materially disable its fighting capacity, rendered his victories of little strategic value. But, by far, the greatest reversal that the King's troops suffered during the campaign occurred near Saratoga, New York, where an American army, under General Horatio Gates, compelled Burgoyne to surrender his 6,000-man invasion force on 19 October 1777.<sup>1</sup>

Impressed by the stunning American victory at Saratoga, France forged a

---

<sup>1</sup> Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971; reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 143, 175-198.



military alliance with the United States in February 1778. Now a struggle that began as a localized colonial insurgency escalated into a war of global dimensions. Since the French navy posed a formidable threat to British-controlled ports in North America and the West Indies, the crown directed Sir Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe as commander-in-chief, to evacuate Philadelphia and lead his 10,000 troops back to New York City so that contingents could be siphoned off to protect British interests elsewhere. On 28 June, Washington caught up with Clinton's retreating army near Monmouth Court House, New Jersey. Although the battle of Monmouth ended in a tactical draw, Washington's regulars, or Continentals, demonstrated that they had finally come into their own as professional soldiers trained in the European art of warfare. They "stood face to face with Britain's best" and acquitted themselves admirably. The battle of Monmouth, however, would be the last major engagement fought in the Northern Theater. As Clinton's army marched into New York City in early July, officials in London had already begun to entertain plans of moving the principal focus of the war to the South.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Henry Clinton's evacuation of Philadelphia marked the beginning of a period of defensive operations for the British in America; and by July the war in the North had settled into a strategic stalemate. But late in 1778, King George III's forces regained the initiative when they implemented a new strategy designed to recover the vulnerable yet economically valuable South. This decision to strike southward was predicated, in part, on the belief that a sizable portion of the southern populace remained staunchly loyal to the crown.

---

<sup>2</sup> Higginbotham, 231, 245-247, 353-354.



Sympathizing with the plight of the King's friends in the southern provinces, Germain, in addition to other influential men in the government, asserted that it would be an egregious injustice to let these loyalists<sup>3</sup> continue to suffer at the hands of their Whig neighbors. Moreover, they optimistically maintained that the loyalists would readily rise against the rebels and thus provide enough additional manpower to allow Britain to subdue and occupy the southern colonies without having to rely on large numbers of regulars.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the British sought to "Americanize" the conflict so as to ease the burden on the treasury.<sup>5</sup> Other proponents of shifting the war to the South offered up commercial arguments in support of the new strategy. As one treasury official pointed out, the southern colonies were the most profitable of all of Britain's mainland colonies.<sup>6</sup> The loss of New England, the official declared, would have little impact on Britain's welfare; but the loss of the South would have adverse economic implications.<sup>7</sup>

The British commenced their southern operations conservatively with an attack against Georgia, the weakest of the thirteen rebellious colonies. In

---

<sup>3</sup> Historian Robert S. Lambert estimates that the loyalists represented roughly 22 percent of South Carolina's white population. Lambert applies the designation of "loyalist" to anyone who "performed one or more acts that opposed the movement for independence or that supported British authority against the state government during the war." See Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 306, 321.

<sup>4</sup> Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 79-97.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Shy, "British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781," in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 159.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1714-1773, the approximate monetary value of exports shipped to Britain from the South (including the Chesapeake) equaled £47 million, whereas the Middle Colonies and New England together only exported £7 million worth of goods. The exports from the rich sugar islands of the British West Indies, however, dramatically eclipsed the output of all the mainland colonies combined. During this period, these islands shipped the equivalent of £97 million in commodities to Britain; see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 225-226.

<sup>7</sup> Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 353.



December 1778, they captured Savannah with relative ease and then successfully defended the city against a Franco-American siege in 1779. Emboldened by these triumphs in the South, Sir Henry Clinton set his sights on a more ambitious prize. The day after Christmas 1779, he sailed from New York with 8,700 British and Hessian troops to attack Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>8</sup> Back in 1776, Clinton, together with Commodore Sir Peter Parker, had attempted to capture the port city by first taking Fort Sullivan, which guarded the approaches to Charleston harbor. Yet Colonel William Moultrie, directing the fire from Fort Sullivan, repulsed Parker's squadron of warships and after Sir Henry himself botched the amphibious landing, the British commanders called off the attack.<sup>9</sup> Clinton, however, learned from his mistakes. Determined not to fail a second time, he elected to attack the city from the landward side. The British army landed below Charleston, marched inland, crossed the Ashley River about fourteen miles above the city, and then plodded down the peninsula toward the port's outer defenses. Civil authorities ill-advisedly persuaded American General Benjamin Lincoln to defend the city, but this decision only increased the spoils of victory for the British. After a short siege, the strategically important city capitulated along with its 5,000 American defenders on 11 May 1780.<sup>10</sup> Clinton paroled the militia, but imprisoned the more than 2,500 Continentals on prison

---

<sup>8</sup> John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (University of Alabama Press, 1985), 30-35, 57-60.

<sup>9</sup> For an engagingly written narrative of Clinton's 1776 attack on Charleston, see John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the South* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 3-16.

<sup>10</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 60-66.





ships where many later died of disease and malnutrition.<sup>11</sup> Having won “the most decisive British victory of the war,” the British turned their attention toward pacifying the South Carolina interior.<sup>12</sup>

Immediately following the fall of Charleston, Sir Henry Clinton directed his aggressive second-in-command, Lieutenant General Charles, Earl Cornwallis, to march inland and occupy key points in the backcountry. Before Clinton departed for New York in early July, Cornwallis had established a chain of outposts, ranging from Augusta, Georgia on the Savannah River to Georgetown in the lowcountry. Between these two extreme posts, His Majesty’s troops and Tory<sup>13</sup> militia garrisoned Ninety-Six, Hanging Rock, Rocky Mount, Camden, and Cheraw.<sup>14</sup> Smaller contingents of the King’s friends, like the one that would establish a camp at Musgrove’s Mill on the Enoree River (see Fig. 1), fanned out in the backcountry to guard strategic fords, ferries, and mills. Yet maintaining the garrisons spread Cornwallis’ forces thin. In fact, Clinton had only left the Earl 4,000 British, Hessian, and provincial troops<sup>15</sup> for the purposes of pacifying South Carolina and prosecuting British views against the Palmetto State’s northern

---

<sup>11</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 70. For an American soldier’s account of the deplorable conditions onboard the prison hulks, see Joseph Plumb Martin, *Private Yankee Doodle: Being a Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (New York: Popular Library, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> Used respectively to label an American that favored the Revolution and one who remained loyal to Britain, the designations “Whig” and “Tory” were taken from the names of two British political parties that originated in the seventeenth century. In simplified terms, the Whigs in Parliament sought to check the power of the king and often stood in opposition to the aristocratic Tories, who generally supported the policies of the crown.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, vol. 2, John R. Alden, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), 704-705; Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Provincials were American loyalists that served as regulars in the British army. They raised their own regiments, generally redcoated, and received pay comparable to their British-born counterparts while on active duty. A regular officer, however, outranked a provincial who held a commission one grade higher than his own (i.e., a regular lieutenant outranked a provincial captain). See Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, 63-64.



neighbor. This meant that Cornwallis would have less than 3,000 soldiers at his disposal for the upcoming campaign.<sup>16</sup>

While still in the process of occupying the backcountry, Cornwallis also resolved to crush the last remaining body of Continental troops in the state. These 350 Virginia regulars, under the command of Colonel Abraham Buford, had been marching to the aid of Charleston, but failed to arrive before the surrender. Not wanting to stick around to meet the same fate as their fellow Continentals, Buford's men retreated toward the North Carolina border. To prevent their escape, Cornwallis unleashed the cavalry commanded by the redoubtable Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, known as the "Green Dragoon" because of the color of his Legion's uniforms.<sup>17</sup> Although Buford's foot soldiers enjoyed a week's-march lead on Tarleton, the Green Dragoon mercilessly pushed his 270 horsemen, covering 105 miles in only 54 hours. On 29 May, Tarleton overtook Buford's infantry at Waxhaws on the North Carolina border (see Fig. 1). Composed chiefly of provincials, or American loyalists trained as British regulars, Tarleton's troopers brimmed with a personal and abiding contempt for the rebels; and this contempt fueled the fury of their charge. Buford instructed his men to hold their fire until the British were nearly upon them. This order proved to be "an appalling error of judgment." The American

---

<sup>16</sup> William Seymour, *The Price of Folly: British Blunders in the War of American Independence* (London: Brassey's, 1995), 132.

<sup>17</sup> Tarleton's Legion "consisted of 300 Loyalist infantry recruited in New York and 150 dragoons of the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment;" see Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 59. Technically, the term dragoon referred to "a mounted infantryman who...rode his horse into battle but dismounted to fight, as opposed to a cavalryman, who was supposed to fight on horseback." However, these terms were used interchangeably during the Revolutionary War. As for the term Legion, it designated a combat unit that comprised both infantry and mounted troops. See Mark M. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Bicentennial Edition (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974), 338, 615.



volley knocked a few greencoats from their saddles, even Tarleton's horse was shot out from under him, but the majority of the British horsemen smashed violently through Buford's ranks. As the routed Virginians attempted to surrender, an incident occurred that epitomized the virulent nature of the civil war that raged between patriots and loyalists in the South. Instead of granting quarter, or mercy, Tarleton's command cut the Virginians down with sabers, bayonets, and buckshot. In the massacre that ensued, the Green Dragoon's troopers killed 113 Americans and wounded 203, many mortally. Tarleton later claimed that the loss of his horse during the charge prevented him from reaching the melee in time to stop the slaughter. The dashing British cavalry leader, nevertheless, earned the epithets of "butcher" and "bloody Tarleton" and the expression "Tarleton's Quarter" became synonymous with cold-blooded murder.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 80-85.



## II. The Rise of Irregular Warfare in the Backcountry

During the spring of 1780, the staggering success of King George's troops in South Carolina took the fight out of many patriots in that quarter. Back in 1778 and 1779, American prospects for winning the war had seemed promising, but now the pendulum of victory swung back in favor of the British. After the fall of Charleston and the bloody affair at Waxhaws, detachments of demoralized militia as well as hundreds of backcountry citizens trudged into posts like Camden and Ninety Six to accept the terms of parole and pledge their loyalty to the crown (see Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Having virtually subdued South Carolina, General Cornwallis, who assumed overall command in the South upon Clinton's departure, began planning an invasion of North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> But beacon fires of resistance soon ignited in the Carolina backcountry, heralding the difficulties that the British would face as they attempted to consolidate their gains in still-hostile territory. A handful of determined patriot leaders—such as Thomas Sumter—refused to concede victory to the British, rallied like-minded men around them, and organized them into bands of partisans.<sup>3</sup> Rather than fight the British on their own conventional terms, these partisans engaged in an irregular form of warfare. They employed hit-and-run tactics (the hallmark of what we call guerilla warfare today), harassing British supply lines, hounding loyalists, and attacking weak

---

<sup>1</sup> Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* 357; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 69.

<sup>2</sup> Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, vol. 2, 706.

<sup>3</sup> Just days before Sir Henry Clinton sailed out of Charleston Harbor in early July, he issued an immensely unpopular proclamation that sent many paroled Whigs back into the arms of the rebellion. Clinton's proclamation effectively annulled the neutral status of the parolees, requiring all citizens to swear their allegiance to George III or else they would be deemed rebels and dealt with accordingly. Infuriated by this action, a significant number of the neutral Whigs





links in the chain of outposts.<sup>4</sup> Yet most importantly, the partisans kept the spirit of resistance alive in South Carolina at a time when American fortunes seemed to grow dimmer by the day.

Earlier in war, Thomas Sumter saw action as a lieutenant colonel in the South Carolina Continental line, but resigned his command in 1778 after the immediate threat to South Carolina had subsided. Sumter and his family, however, would not long escape the ravages of war. In May 1780, Tarleton's dragoons, while in pursuit of Buford, pillaged and then burned Sumter's home. Outraged, the retired soldier unsheathed his sword once again.<sup>5</sup> By mid-July, Sumter, who earned the nickname "The Fighting Gamecock" because of his aggressive and implacable nature, had gathered a force of over 500 patriots at a point on the Catawba River about twenty miles south of Charlotte.<sup>6</sup>

The British, however, were not content to sit idly by and watch Sumter rally the backcountry to arms. Major Patrick Ferguson, whom Sir Henry Clinton had appointed Inspector General of South Carolina's Loyalist Militia, was policing the region north of Ninety-Six while on a recruiting mission of his own.<sup>7</sup> On 12 July, Ferguson unleashed a detachment of loyalists to scatter a party of 60 rebel militiamen that had assembled at Cedar Springs (near present-day Spartanburg)

---

took the field once again. Undoubtedly, many of these "reborn" patriots joined up with the partisans. See Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent analysis of irregular, or partisan, warfare in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, see Russell F. Weigley, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 119-121; Edgar, *South Carolina—A History*, 234. Two biographies have been written on Sumter; see Anne Gregorie King, *Thomas Sumter* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan Co., 1931) and Robert D. Bass, *The Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of Thomas Sumter* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, & Winston, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 69, 92-94.



in order to practice their drill before joining Sumter. Luckily for the Americans, an informant brought word of the imminent attack, which allowed them to prepare an ambush. When Ferguson's 150 troops stormed the camp that night, the rebels, who were hidden a good distance from their campfires, let loose with a punishing volley that shattered the loyalist attack.<sup>8</sup>

On the same day of the action at Cedar Springs, another partisan force routed a Tory contingent under the command of Christian Huck, a loyalist from Philadelphia who had come south as a captain in Tarleton's Legion. Back in June, Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull, commandant of the British outpost at Rocky Mount, dispatched Huck, with 115 provincials and militia, to disperse the area rebels and strike targets of military significance, such as the iron works owned by the patriot William Hill. Captain Huck not only razed the iron works, but also plundered the houses of several patriots, thereby incurring the ire of the backcountry partisans. On 11 July, Huck's party raided the plantation of Captain John McClure, captured the Captain's son as well as four other reputed rebels, and declared that he would hang them the next day. Although the identity of the person remains unclear, someone managed to make it into Sumter's camp to apprise Captain McClure of his son's predicament. That evening, Colonel William Bratton and Captain McClure, leading 250 American partisans, rode out of Sumter's camp in search of Huck. At dawn the following morning, the Americans struck Huck's camp at Williamson's Plantation (in present-day York County), completely surprising the legionnaires and loyalist militia (see Fig. 1).

---

<sup>8</sup> Lyman C. Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1780, and the Events Which Led To It* (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881; reprint, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co.,



At a loss of only one killed and one wounded, the Americans killed Huck (who tried to escape on horseback) and 35 of his men, while wounding 50 more. To a certain extent, the Waxhaws had been avenged. Once the fighting ended, the patriots found McClure's son and his fellow captives locked up in a corncrib and promptly released them.<sup>9</sup>

Following Huck's defeat, Sumter led his own partisans into the field. On 30 July, he attacked the British outpost at Rocky Mount, but the defenders holed themselves up in a group of fortified log structures and repulsed three separate assaults. A few days later, Sumter surprised the garrison at Hanging Rock, located about 15 miles west of Rocky Mount (see Fig. 1). Here, the British troops managed to stave off a near rout by forming a hollow defensive square while many of Sumter's men took to looting the enemy's provision of rum. Unable to bring enough troops to bear to break the British formation, the Gamecock broke off the attack.<sup>10</sup> Although Sumter failed to win a decisive victory, he had demonstrated that the British hold on the backcountry was only tenuous at best.

Sumter, however, was not the only American commander directing the resistance in the South Carolina upcountry. Fearing that Ferguson intended to invade North Carolina, General Charles McDowell, a militia general from that province, had raised a force of 300 men and sent out appeals for other militia contingents to join him. While awaiting reinforcement, McDowell established a base

---

1967), 73-75.

<sup>9</sup> Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, vol. 2, 708-709, Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 112-115.

<sup>10</sup> William R. Davie, *The Revolutionary War Sketches of William R. Davie*, Blackwell P. Robinson, ed., (Raleigh: North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, 1976), 11-15.



of operations just below the North Carolina border at Cherokee Ford on the Broad River (see Fig. 1). On 25 July, Colonel Isaac Shelby,<sup>11</sup> of the Watauga settlements in western North Carolina (now eastern Tennessee), arrived at McDowell's camp with about 200 over-mountain men. Other rebel units, including Colonel Elijah Clarke's partisan band from Georgia, reached Cherokee Ford a few days later.<sup>12</sup>

With roughly 1,000 men now at his disposal, McDowell felt secure enough to dispatch Shelby and Clarke, with approximately 300 men, to monitor Ferguson's movements and "cut off any [British] foraging parties which might fall in their way."<sup>13</sup> According to Shelby, he and Clarke "hung upon the Enemy's lines for several days." But on 8 August, Ferguson directed a certain Captain Dunlap to lead a strike force of 150 loyalists on a raid against Shelby and Clarke's bivouac near Cedar Springs. A strong reinforcement followed close behind, just in case Dunlap ran into serious trouble. Forewarned of the British advance, the American commanders had time to prepare for the attack. As "Dunlap and his party...rushed into the centre [sic] of the Rebel camp,"<sup>14</sup> they found themselves caught in an ambush; a tactic that many partisans had picked up

---

<sup>11</sup> Born in Maryland in 1750, Isaac Shelby moved to the Holston River region of western North Carolina and Virginia (now eastern Tennessee and Kentucky) in 1771. He received a lieutenant's commission in the militia in 1774 and saw action against the Shawnees. Promoted to captain in 1776, Shelby aided the American Revolutionary cause by providing commissary services to the Continental army during the first half of the war. In 1779, North Carolina Governor Richard Caswell appointed Shelby a magistrate for the new county of Sullivan and also conferred upon him the rank of colonel. Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 411-413.

<sup>12</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 80, 84-85, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Isaac Shelby, "King's Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby," J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Journal of Southern History* 4 (February, 1938), 371. Hereafter cited as Shelby, "Letters." Note: Shelby, who wrote his account 34 years after the fact, claimed that he and Clarke left camp with around 750 men; see "Letters," 371. Patrick Ferguson, however, put their strength at 300. Given Shelby's propensity to substantially inflate the respective strengths of the forces in battles in which he fought, I have gone with Ferguson's estimate; see Major Patrick Ferguson to General Cornwallis, 9 August 1780, in Papers of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, Public Records Office, London, 30/11/63: 26-27 (on microfilm at South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History, Columbia).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Allaire, "Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire of Ferguson's Corps," in Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 503. Hereafter cited as Allaire, "Diary." Shelby erroneously dated the action at Cedar Springs, 22 July; see "Letters," 371.





during prior conflicts with Native Americans.<sup>15</sup> "An action severe and bloody," in Shelby's words, "ensued for near an hour." Both Dunlap and Clarke suffered non-fatal wounds before the arrival of the British reinforcement compelled the Americans to retire. The British pursued, but Shelby and Clarke managed to elude them and made their way back to McDowell's camp at Cherokee Ford. Lieutenant Anthony Allaire of Ferguson's corps reported that between 20 and 30 loyalists were killed and wounded in the clash near Cedar Springs; whereas Shelby later maintained that his force sustained only half as many casualties. The British, Allaire also related, sent their wounded to Musgrove's Mill to be treated by a doctor there.<sup>16</sup>

The series of small successes that the Americans partisans achieved in the backcountry certainly gave them renewed confidence and took some of the sting out of the disasters suffered back in May. But to fight a successful irregular war, the partisans paradoxically needed the support of a regular army. The presence of a regular army, even a weak one, would encourage Cornwallis to mass the majority of his units together to contend with the counterpoised force. Otherwise, the British general could divide his army into a number of strong contingents with which to hunt down and eliminate the partisans.<sup>17</sup>

In early August, General Horatio Gates, the lauded "Hero of Saratoga", buttressed the partisan effort when he marched down from North Carolina with a reconstituted American army of the South. Cornwallis, who relished a good fight, rushed to confront this threat

---

<sup>15</sup> As one historian has noted, many noted partisans—such as Thomas Sumter, Francis Marion, and Andrew Pickens—learned the art of irregular warfare by adopting the tactics of their Native American enemies and allies during the French and Indian War. See Jac Weller, "Irregular But Effective: Partizan Weapons Tactics in the American Revolution, Southern Theatre," in Don Higginbotham, ed., *Military Analysis of the Revolutionary War* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1977), 133.

<sup>16</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371; Allaire, "Diary," 503.

<sup>17</sup> Weigley, *The Partisan War*, 17.



and attacked the Americans at Camden on 16 August 1780 (see Fig. 1). Gates, a somewhat self-aggrandizing general whose victory at Saratoga mostly belonged to his subordinates, deployed his 3,000 troops in two wings; placing the seasoned Continental troops on the right and the nonprofessional militia on the left. Taking advantage of Gates' reckless dispositions, Cornwallis ordered his disciplined redcoats to attack the militia, which in turn dissolved without a fight before the British bayonets. The Continentals, on the other hand, resisted heroically, beating back repeated British attacks before being surrounded and finally crushed. Gates himself fled the field during the battle, and rode all the way to Hillsborough, North Carolina (180 miles away) in three days. The Americans suffered a staggering 1,000 casualties, but Cornwallis did not get away unscathed. The stern resistance from the Continentals cost the Earl 320 killed and wounded out of an army of 2,200; and these troops would be difficult to replace.<sup>18</sup>

While the patriots were still reeling from the rout at Camden, the British scored yet another spectacular victory; and this time Thomas Sumter would be the American general fleeing for his life on horseback. On the day before Gates' defeat, Sumter, with about 400 Continentals and 400 militiamen, had conducted two successful raids against the British supply line south of Camden.<sup>19</sup> He then proceeded to march north towards Charlotte in possession of 150 British prisoners and 50 enemy wagons. All the while, Tarleton shadowed the Gamecock, waiting for a chance to strike. On 18 August, Sumter presented the Green Dragoon with such an opportunity when he halted his command along Fishing Creek, about 38 miles northwest of Camden (see Fig. 1), to give his troops a much-needed rest. The

---

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 149, 162-170.

<sup>19</sup> Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 86.



unforgiving August heat had "overpowered" many of Tarleton's troops as well, but the audacious cavalry commander was determined to bloody Sumter's nose. Leading 160 picked men, Tarleton burst into the American bivouac before the rebels could get to their weapons. The surprise was complete and offset Sumter's vast superiority in numbers. "Universal consternation," as Tarleton termed it, "immediately ensued throughout the camp." Half-naked, Sumter managed to escape, but the British killed and wounded 150 Americans and took 300 prisoners, in addition to liberating their own captives; all this at a cost of only 15 British casualties.<sup>20</sup>

The South Carolina campaign had been a smashing success for His Majesty's troops. In a span of only three months they had virtually eliminated two American armies, capturing one in Charleston and thoroughly trouncing the other on the field of battle at Camden. Although the partisans scored some limited victories, they could accomplish little without the support of a regular field army. In December 1780, General Nathanael Greene would come down from the North to take command of what he called "the Shadow of an Army in the midst of Distress" near Charlotte, North Carolina.<sup>21</sup> Greene's brilliant grasp of the strategic situation in the South would turn the tide of the war against the British in 1781.<sup>22</sup> But in August 1780, the British stood triumphantly on the culmination of their successes in South Carolina. The door to North Carolina seemed wide open; and Gates, who was in Hillsborough trying to

---

<sup>20</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Cadell, 1787; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968) 112-115.

<sup>21</sup> Richard K. Showman, ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 6 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 533.

<sup>22</sup> For an engaging comparative analysis of Greene's southern strategy and his reliance on irregular war, see John Morgan Dederer, *Making Bricks Without Straw: Nathanael Greene's Southern Campaigns and Mao Tse-Tung's Mobile War* (Sunflower University Press, 1983).



salvage the shattered remnants of his army, could do little to close it. With garrisons of redcoats and loyalists now occupying every town of consequence in Georgia and South Carolina, the whole South seemed on the verge of subjugation.





### **III. The Battle of Musgrove's Mill**

In an age before satellite communications, or even before the advent of the telegram for that matter, news traveled only as fast as a messenger could manage on horseback. Consequently, word of the debacle at Camden did not reach the Broad River camp of General Charles McDowell until after he had detached a small force to strike a contingent of Tories encamped at Musgrove's Mill on the Enoree River. Had the General been notified of Gates' defeat sooner, it is likely that the battle of Musgrove's Mill would have never taken place; for it would have been exceedingly imprudent of him to divide his force under such unfavorable circumstances. With South Carolina's "middlecountry" now virtually devoid of American resistance, what was to prevent Cornwallis from sending a strong contingent after McDowell? The division of McDowell's corps now presented the British with an opportunity, if they discovered it, to strike both American forces and destroy them in detail. Disconcerted by the prospect of a British attack, McDowell decided to beat a precipitate retreat back into his native state of North Carolina; the detachment sent against Musgrove's Mill would be left to its own devices. As the main wing of McDowell's troops marched northward, a courier dispatched by the General blazed a trail toward the Enoree to warn the now-unsupported American partisans of their peril. When the messenger drew within a mile of the mill that lent its name to the battle, he must have heard the occasional, but unmistakable, crackling of musket fire and his eyes and nose must have burned as he hastened his mount through a sulfurous



haze of gunsmoke that grew thicker as he neared the Enoree's muddied waters.<sup>1</sup> By the time he reached the battlefield, the ground would be strewn with killed and wounded from both sides; some soldiers in faded scarlet coats, others in homespun.

To fully appreciate the events which led up to the battle of Musgrove's Mill, it is necessary for us to return to early August 1780, when Colonels Isaac Shelby and Elijah Clarke rode back into General McDowell's camp, at Cherokee Ford (see Fig. 1), following their brush with Ferguson near Cedar Springs. Now commanding approximately 500 militia,<sup>2</sup> McDowell decided to move his camp six miles down the Broad River to Smith's Ford.<sup>3</sup> Within a few days of the new camp's establishment, Colonel James Williams,<sup>4</sup> who had served under Sumter in the attacks on Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock, reached Smith's Ford with a small party of South Carolina partisans.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Isaac Shelby noted that "the smoke" from the battle of Musgrove's Mill "was so thick as to hide a man at the distance of twenty yards"; see Shelby, "Letters," 372. Shelby wrote these letters to William Hill, who served as a lieutenant colonel in the South Carolina militia during the Revolutionary War. Hill did not fight in the battle of Musgrove's Mill, but he wrote an oft-cited account of the battle based entirely on his correspondence with Shelby.

<sup>2</sup> Major Patrick Ferguson estimated McDowell's strength at 450; see Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 48-49. At the time that he wrote this, Ferguson did not know that the detachment under Shelby, Clarke, and Williams had broken off from McDowell to attack Musgrove's Mill. Lt. Col. John Harris Cruger, the commandant of Ninety-Six, later received intelligence that the "Rebels on the frontiers," meaning McDowell's force, numbered between 500 and 700; see Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 68-70. Accordingly, it seems fair to conservatively approximate McDowell's strength at around 500.

<sup>3</sup> For the location of Smith's Ford, see the map "Union District" in [Robert Mills], *Mills' Atlas of South Carolina: An Atlas of the Districts of South Carolina in 1825*, Charles E. Lee, intro. (reprint, Columbia: R. P. Wilkins and J. C. Keels, Jr., 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Originally from Virginia, Williams moved to South Carolina in 1772 and established his family (in present-day Laurens County) along the Little River in what was then known as the Ninety-Six District. At the onset of the rebellion, he sided with the Whigs and fought in a number of the early campaigns against the backcountry Tories and Cherokees before joining up with Thomas Sumter.

<sup>5</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371-372; James Hodge Saye, *Memoirs of Major Joseph McJunkin: Revolutionary Patriot* (First printed in an 1847 edition of the *Richmond Watchman and Observer*,



Not wanting to hazard a general engagement with Ferguson's larger force, McDowell entertained a proposal for a strike against an enemy outpost, provided a vulnerable one could be found. To reconnoiter possible targets, the General sent out "two active and enterprising men." Upon returning from their reconnaissance mission, these scouts reported that the Tory camp at Musgrove's Mill,<sup>6</sup> situated on the south side of the Enoree River, seemed particularly exposed.<sup>7</sup> Any assault against this position, however, would involve considerable risk because Musgrove's Mill stood roughly forty miles southwest of Smith's Ford, in a decidedly pro-British district.<sup>8</sup> Yet for the Americans, the twin dangers of distance and possible detection were presumably offset by the report that only 200 Tories held Musgrove's Mill.<sup>9</sup> As one historian has reasonably concluded, these Tories "were stationed" there "to guard the rocky ford at that place."<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the correspondence, between Cornwallis and his subordinates who served in the Carolina upcountry, fails to provide us with an indication of the strategic value that the British placed on Musgrove's Mill; thus

---

reprint, Spartanburg, SC: A Press, Inc., 1977), 14-15. Hereafter cited as Saye, *McJunkin's Memoirs*. See also, Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 465-466.

<sup>6</sup> The exact site of the Tory camp on Musgrove's property cannot be definitively determined from the written historical record. Perhaps archeology may yield better results. A useful plat of the Musgrove tract, dating to 1840, shows the locations of the mill, dwelling house, and road in relation to both the Enoree and the creeks on the south side of the river (see Fig. 2). Compare with USGS Detail and Composite Plat Overlay map (Figs. 7 & 8). It is doubtful that the dwelling represented on the 1840 plat was the original Musgrove house; in fact, a descendant of Edward Musgrove claims that the Tories burned his first residence late in the war; see Mrs. L. D. Childs, "Story of Musgrove's Mill," *Laurens Advertiser*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>7</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371. Samuel Hammond, "Colonel Samuel Hammond's Account of the Battle of Musgrove's Mills," in Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston: Walker & James, 1851), 519. Hereafter cited as Hammond, "Account." See Appendix C for a discussion on the Hammond account's authenticity.

<sup>8</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 108-110.

<sup>9</sup> [James Williams], "The Report of Col. Williams," in *Massachusetts Spy*, 12 October 1780. Hereafter cited as Williams, "Report." See also Hammond, "Account," 519. See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of the numbers involved at Musgrove's Mill.

<sup>10</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 103.



we can only speculate. Since Major Patrick Ferguson was operating against the rebels north of the Tyger River, it seems probable that Colonel John Harris Cruger, commandant of British post at Ninety-Six, would have wanted to guard the approaches to Ninety-Six—especially the fords that provided passage over otherwise impassable rivers—just in case an American force flanked Ferguson and attempted to descend on Ninety-Six. In early August, Ferguson wrote that he had patrols watching the fords on the Broad River to prevent such a flanking maneuver, so it seems possible that he might have considered covering the Enoree's fords as well.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Cruger and Ferguson, in all likelihood, would have also wanted to keep all possible avenues of communication—as well as lines of supply and reinforcement—open between one another. Control of the major fords would have been an integral component of such an endeavor.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the importance of the ford, the mill itself (see Figs. 2 & 6) also deserves consideration in any assessment of the strategic significance of Musgrove's property overlooking the Enoree. Having established a chain of posts in the Carolina backcountry, the British army faced the colossal logistical challenge of keeping its far-flung troops in supply. Since provisions coming inland from Charleston were insufficient for the subsistence of the army, locally-acquired foodstuffs became an indispensable part of the soldier's diet. Mills, therefore, were of vital importance to the British occupation force. Centrally located between the garrison at Ninety-Six and Ferguson's range of operation in

---

<sup>11</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 9 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 26-27.

<sup>12</sup> In an interesting side note, during the Cowpens campaign of January 1781, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan informed General Nathanael Greene: "Tarleton has crossed...at





the upcountry, Musgrove's Mill could have furnished flour or meal—ground from grains harvested in the lower Enoree basin—to either British force.<sup>13</sup>

It should be reemphasized that both of the strategic considerations examined above are conjectural in nature; but in light of them, it seems possible that a contingent of Tories may have maintained a temporary, perhaps even periodic, encampment at Musgrove's to defend the ford or to oversee the grinding of grain. But to assert, as one student of the battle has, that Musgrove's Mill was a "fortified post" held by "a regular garrison of 200 men" clearly invests the Tory encampment there with a level of formality and formidability that it never possessed.<sup>14</sup> No corroboration can be found in the primary sources to support the claims that the camp at Musgrove's was either fortified or endowed with a regular garrison. Hence, the designation of "post" should be used with caution when referring to Musgrove's Mill. Far more permanent than a camp (which could be moved at a moment's notice), a post—especially in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War—was a fixed, fortified, and regularly garrisoned

---

Musgrove's Mill." Morgan to Greene, 15 January 1781, in Richard K. Showman, ed., *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 7 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 128.

<sup>13</sup> Following General Nathanael Greene's abortive siege of Ninety-Six in 1781, Colonel Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee informed Greene that the enemy had halted on the Enoree, probably at Musgrove's, to grind wheat and corn. See Lee to Greene, 25 June 1781, in Showman, ed. *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, vol. 8, 456. Further evidence for the value that the British army placed on mills comes from Tarleton, who reported that a Major McArthur was protecting the mills in the Dutch Fork area. Tarleton, *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 184.

<sup>14</sup> [John W. Califf, III], "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form," in Musgrove's Mill File, S.C. State Parks' Central Office. In Califf's defense, he apparently gleaned the substance of those details from the work of Draper and Landrum. He also used A. S. Salley, Jr., ed., *Col. William Hill's Memoirs of the Revolution* (Columbia: The State Co., 1921). A friend of Shelby's, William Hill wrote an account of the battle that specifically referred to Musgrove's as a post ("Memoirs," 16). Hammond, in fact, also called the Tory camp a post, but one can infer from the context that he used the term informally; see Hammond, "Account," 519. Shelby, on the other hand, said simply that the Tories were encamped at Musgrove's ("Letters," 371-373); while Williams' report and the British records include no reference to a post whatsoever.



military installation. In pursuit of their pacification plan for the Carolina backcountry, the British established posts as bases of operation and supply from which they could bring stability to and exert control over certain areas. The garrisoned and heavily fortified posts of Ninety-Six and Camden excellently exemplify this model.

The “post” at Musgrove’s Mill, however, appears to have functioned primarily as a convenient assembly and fording point used by troops on route to join Major Patrick Ferguson’s command in the upcountry. In the first week of August, for instance, Colonel Cruger directed Colonel Daniel Clary to muster his Tory militia regiment “for Ferguson’s support.”<sup>15</sup> The exact date on which Clary’s regiment marched northward to join Ferguson is uncertain; but on the day of the battle it was encamped at Musgrove’s Mill.<sup>16</sup> Roughly two weeks after Cruger ordered Clary to assemble his unit, Cornwallis directed Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Innes to reinforce Ferguson with a strong detachment of provincials from Ninety-Six. These troops likewise stopped to camp at Musgrove’s Mill.<sup>17</sup> Further support for the theory that the British camp at Musgrove’s was temporary in nature comes from Ferguson himself. On the day of the battle at Musgrove’s Mill, Ferguson informed Cornwallis that Innes had “joined to some Militia,”—Colonel Daniel Clary’s militia at Musgrove’s Mill to be sure—and was expected

---

<sup>15</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 4 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Clary commanded the Dutch Fork Regiment of the Ninety-Six Brigade of Loyalist Militia. Clary’s unit contained about 100 men; see Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 111, 133. For Clary being at Musgrove’s, also see John Belton O’Neill, *The Annals of Newberry, Historical, Biographical, and Anecdotal* (Charleston: S. G. Courtenay & Co., 1859), 71, 313.

<sup>17</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 4 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 13-14; Innes to Cornwallis, 16 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 42; Cruger to Cornwallis, n.d. [17 August 1780], Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 93.



that day to reach Lyles Ford on the Broad River.<sup>18</sup> The arrival of the Americans under Shelby, Clarke, and Williams, of course, would prevent Innes from effecting his junction with Ferguson, but the context of the latter's letter suggests that the militia encamped at Musgrove's had planned to march with the Colonel. It could be argued that some of the loyalist militia may have planned to remain behind to guard the ford and mill, but whether or not a complement of Tories was regularly posted at Musgrove's Mill cannot be conclusively determined from extant primary sources.

Even the exact date of the camp's establishment at Musgrove's Mill has proven difficult to pinpoint. An entry in the journal of British Lieutenant Anthony Allaire implies that a party of Tories had taken up position there as early as 10 August 1780. Could this have been Clary's regiment?<sup>19</sup>

The Tory occupation of Musgrove's Mill also brings up the issue of its owner's loyalties and begs the question: was Edward Musgrove himself a Tory? Again, the evidence is thin, but what little that has surfaced suggests that Musgrove had patriotic sympathies, at least early on in the conflict, but found it more expedient to remain neutral.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the fact that he neither lost his property after

---

<sup>18</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 48-49. See "Newberry District" map in *Mills' Atlas* for location of Lyles Ford.

<sup>19</sup> On 10 August, Allaire related, Ferguson "[s]ent the wounded" from the second clash near Cedar Springs (8 August) "to Musgrove's Mills, Enoree River, to be attended by Dr. Ross," see Allaire, "Diary," 503.

<sup>20</sup> In October 1775, Musgrove wrote William Drayton—a radical revolutionary from the lowcountry who had been on a proselytizing mission in the strongly pro-British backcountry—to "applaud" the statesman's efforts thus far and to advise him on the necessity of military preparedness. Musgrove, however, went on to tell Drayton that he had "interfered on neither side" and cautioned the lowcountryman: "it is wisdom to balance everything in the right scale." Obviously extrapolating from the content of the abovementioned letter, respected historian Richard Maxwell Brown claimed that "[d]uring the Revolutionary War, [Edward] Musgrove did not take sides." Edward's younger brother John, however, cast his lot with the Tories. He must have been zealous in his opposition to American independence because the state legislature confiscated his estate in 1782. It appears that John



the war nor suffered amercement (i.e., the punitive confiscation of a percentage of a loyalist's landholdings) indicates that Whig officials did not consider him an ardent supporter of the King.<sup>21</sup> Without sufficient evidence to the contrary, we can only assume that the Tories either coerced Musgrove into letting them establish a camp on his property or he elected not to protest too vehemently, lest he or his family fall victim to reprisals.

Regardless of the circumstances under which the Tories came to occupy Musgrove's property, McDowell resolved to strike their encampment and selected his trusted subordinates, Shelby and Clarke, for the task. Several other officers from McDowell's command, including Colonel James Williams of the Ninety-Six District, also volunteered to join the expedition. Sources disagree as to the exact composition of the American force, but it probably consisted of about 200 mounted men from Georgia and the two Carolinas.<sup>22</sup>

Either Shelby's memory failed him or American scouts provided erroneous intelligence because the Colonel later recounted that Major Ferguson's British regiment "lay about halfway between" Smith's Ford and Musgrove's Mill and within "two to three miles of the rout[e]" the Americans "had to travel."<sup>23</sup> The nineteenth-century historian Lyman Draper—whose discussion of the battle has left an indelible

---

Musgrove had died by the time of the confiscation. In 1783, his devisees successfully appealed and the decision was overturned. See Edward Musgrove to William Drayton, 14 October 1775, in R. W. Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 1764-1776 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855; reprint, Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Co., 1972), 201-203; Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1963), 201n16, 202-203n24; David J. McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 6 (Columbia, South Carolina: A. S. Johnston, 1839), 629-635.

<sup>21</sup> For lists of confiscations and amercements, see McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 6, 629-635.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>23</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371.





imprint on the work of almost every subsequent student of Musgrove's Mill—fixed the location of Ferguson's camp at Fair Forest Shoal (in present-day Spartanburg County).<sup>24</sup> Had Draper more thoroughly examined British Lieutenant Anthony Allaire's journal, which he included as an appendix in his book *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, he would have realized that Ferguson crossed the Broad River, heading eastward into present-day Fairfield County, on 15 August.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Ferguson's regiment would be encamped at the plantation of Whig Colonel Richard Winn (located near present-day Winnsboro) on the day of the clash at Musgrove's Mill.<sup>26</sup>

Even if Ferguson was not positioned near the American route, the force under Shelby, Clarke, and Williams still had to infiltrate hostile territory to reach their objective. For this reason, a night march made perfect sense, as stealth was essential to the success of the mission. Marching at night also afforded the added benefit of cooler temperatures for both the men and their mounts.<sup>27</sup> Anyone who has weathered a South Carolina summer knows just how insufferably hot and humid it can get in mid August—even in the upstate. Heat exhaustion was a potentially lethal problem that plagued the armies of both sides during summer campaigning. Thus, avoiding the enervating rays of the August sun was a must for the Americans, whose

---

<sup>24</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 104-105. Draper places Fair Forest Shoal in Brandon's Settlement apparently in the Cedar Springs vicinity (p. 76). See *Mill's Atlas*, "Spartanburg District".

<sup>25</sup> Allaire, "Diary," 504.

<sup>26</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 July [August] and 19 August 1780, in Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 1-2, 48-49. The information disclosed in the letter dated "19 July" clearly demonstrates that Ferguson misnamed the month.

<sup>27</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 104.



horses would need every bit of strength they could muster if they were to bring their riders to the banks of the Enoree before sunrise.

At twilight on 18 August, the combined commands of Shelby, Clarke, and Williams rode out of McDowell's camp, splashed across the Broad River at Smith's Ford, and headed south toward Musgrove's Mill. Just in case Tory scouts happened to be patrolling in the area, the American horsemen decided to conceal their movement by stealing furtively through the woods until the cover of darkness allowed them to take to the road. According to Shelby, they rode most of the night at a canter, "never stopp[ing] even to let their horses drink."<sup>28</sup> Another American participant, Major Samuel Hammond, however, left an account that contradicts Shelby's statement regarding the rigorous nature of the march. Hammond claimed that the detachment "marched twenty to twenty-five miles" and then "halted and fed and refreshed for an hour" before resuming their journey.<sup>29</sup> Despite this minor discrepancy, it was undoubtedly a long, arduous, and tense night's ride. To reach their destination, the Americans had to cross a number of creeks and rivers and at each crossing they risked running into an enemy patrol. They galloped across Gilky's and Thicketty Creeks; then passed over the Pacolet River and Fair Forest Creek; before finally fording the Tyger River, the parallel sister of the Enoree.<sup>30</sup> As they neared the Tory encampment at Musgrove's Mill, the risk of detection increased. But the American march, as Hammond put it, "was silently and skillfully conducted" and the 200 mounted

---

<sup>28</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372.

<sup>29</sup> Hammond, "Account," 519.

<sup>30</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 104. Also see Mills' *Atlas*, "Union District" and "Spartanburg District".



partisans halted along the road about half-mile from Musgrove's Mill at sunrise on the nineteenth.<sup>31</sup>

Although Williams would later, in Shelby's words, "arrogate to himself the sole honour [sic] of Commanding the action," he, along with Shelby and Clarke, reportedly decided to share the responsibility of command.<sup>32</sup> In this respect, these leaders stood conventional military wisdom on its head. Since antiquity, professional armies have embraced, and continue to today, a hierarchical command structure. Regardless of the combat situation, according to orthodox military principles, there should be one ranking officer in overall command; if he is no longer able to execute his duties, then command necessarily devolves on the next highest-ranking subordinate. This arrangement drastically reduces the potential for confusion that would arise if a number of commanders attempted to direct the action concurrently. But if military historians have learned one lesson from the "irregular" conduct of American officers during the Revolutionary War's Southern campaigns, it is that adept and innovative commanders can break standard principles of warfare to achieve spectacular victories.<sup>33</sup>

The primary sources conflict with one another concerning the events that transpired immediately after the Americans arrived within a half-mile of the Enoree; but suffice it to say that a Tory patrol discovered their presence.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Hammond, "Account," 519-520.

<sup>32</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 369; Hammond, "Account," 520.

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the 1781 campaigns of General Nathanael Greene best illustrate this contention; see Weigley, *The Partisan War*; Dederer, *Making Bricks Without Straw*.

<sup>34</sup> Of these events, Williams simply remarked, "our party meant to surprize [sic] them [the Tories], but were discovered;" see Williams, "Report." Although more detailed, Shelby's statement essentially accords with Williams'. Shelby reported that an enemy patrol stumbled into the American force, after it had halted a half-mile from Musgrove's Mill, and that a skirmish ensued, which compelled the enemy to retire to their camp; see Shelby, "Letters," 372. In



Around this time, Shelby averred, "a country man who lived in sight came up & informed" him "that the enemy had been strongly reinforced the [prior] evening."<sup>35</sup> Back on 16 August, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Innes,<sup>36</sup> pursuant to orders from Cornwallis, had marched northward to reinforce Ferguson with a "pretty considerable" detachment from Cruger's garrison at Ninety Six.<sup>37</sup> Colonel Innes had halted his command at Musgrove's Mill on the evening of the eighteenth, but had every intention of resuming his march the following morning.<sup>38</sup> Apparently numbering 300-strong, Innes' force consisted of detachments from three different provincial units. It included 50 mounted men from the Colonel's own regiment, the South Carolina Royalists, a contingent from Delancey's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Cruger's regiment) of New Yorkers under Captain George Kerr, and a detachment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of New Jersey Volunteers commanded by Captain Peter

---

contrast, Hammond wrote that the Americans sent out two men to reconnoiter the Tory encampment. Upon their return, Hammond continued, these scouts "fell in with" an enemy patrol; see Hammond, "Account," 520. Local tradition—related by the grandson of Edward Musgrove, Philemon M. Waters, who had yet to be born at the time of the battle—supports Hammond's statement, but increases the number of the American patrol to "five or six" men; see John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina*, vol. 2 (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1980), 73. For a discussion of how Draper embellished the details of the Waters' account, see Appendix C, n4.

<sup>35</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372.

<sup>36</sup> Originally from Scotland, Alexander Innes came to South Carolina in 1775 to serve as secretary to Governor William Campbell. He received a captain's commission in the British army at the onset of Revolutionary hostilities and eventually ended up in New York, where, in 1777, he secured appointment as Inspector General of Provincial Forces in America. In early 1780, Innes, who had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel, assumed command of the South Carolina Royalists, a provincial regiment formed in East Florida from South Carolina refugees. His regiment participated in the siege of Charleston, and, by early July 1780, Innes and his fellow Royalists had reached Ninety-Six. See B. D. Bargar, "Charles Town Loyallism in 1775: The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 63 (July 1962): 125; Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, 49; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 72, 105-106; E. Alfred Jones, ed., *The Journal of Alexander Chesney* (Greenville, SC: A Press, 1981), 83; Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 109n.

<sup>37</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, n.d. [17 August 1780], Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 93; Innes to Cornwallis, 16 August 1780, PRO 30/11/63: 42.

<sup>38</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 48-49.





Campbell.<sup>39</sup> Leading about a dozen men, Captain David Fanning, a loyalist partisan from North Carolina, also accompanied Innes' force, as did Captain Abraham de Peyster, of the King's American Regiment, though apparently without any troops.<sup>40</sup> With the addition of these redcoated provincials to Colonel Daniel Clary's Tory militia, the loyalist strength at Musgrove's Mill swelled to about 500 men in total, and, of those troops, it appears that Innes (himself born in Scotland) was the only British-born soldier among them.<sup>41</sup>

The 200 Whig partisans, ironically, had ridden forty, hard miles to surprise an equal number of Tories, but had received an alarming surprise of their own: they now faced an alerted enemy that outnumbered them more than two to one. Adding to the precariousness of their situation was the fact that their forced march had rendered them, as Shelby put it, "too much broke[n] down to retreat."<sup>42</sup> The Americans, consequently, had no other option but to stand and fight. These backcountry partisans—armed with an assortment of rifles, muskets, and perhaps even fowling pieces—took up a formidable defensive

---

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix A for a detailed analysis of the composition of Innes' force. Born the son of an affluent Philadelphia merchant in 1756, Peter Campbell grew up in Trenton, New Jersey and became the brother-in-law of Colonel Isaac Allen, commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of New Jersey Volunteers. Campbell joined the Volunteers in 1776. See Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> [David Fanning], *The Narrative of Col. David Fanning*, Lindley S. Butler, ed., (Davidson, NC: Briarpatch Press, 1981), 32.

<sup>41</sup> If any soldiers in Innes' force, other than the Colonel himself, were likely to be British-born, logic dictates that they would be provincial officers. However, all of the remaining regular officers were apparently born in the colonies. Captain Peter Campbell and his Lieutenants William Chew and John Camp hailed from New Jersey, as did Major Thomas Fraser of the South Carolina Royalists; whereas Captains George Kerr and Abraham de Peyster were New Yorkers. See Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey*, 40, 266; Lambert, *The South Carolina Loyalists*, 150, Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists; or, Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847), passim; Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 479.

<sup>42</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372.



position on the southern face of a "timbered ridge", which stood east of Cedar Shoals Creek and about a half-mile north of Musgrove's Ford.<sup>43</sup>

Arrayed in the fringe of the woods<sup>44</sup> and astride the "wagon road" that ran down to Musgrove's Ford, the American battle line reportedly overlooked an "old Indian field" across which the British force would have to advance (see Fig. 7).<sup>45</sup> The majority of the partisans, now dismounted, constituted the main line, while a band of twenty horsemen took up position on each flank.<sup>46</sup> As the partisans deployed, a small guard led the unrequired horses to a safer point in the rear.<sup>47</sup>

Colonel Williams' small command occupied the center of the main line, whereas Colonels Shelby and Clarke's men held the right and left respectively.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Williams, "Report"; Shelby, "Letters," 372. The exact location of the American battle line has eluded definitive identification. Retired Brigadier General George Fields, who has spent a considerable amount of time walking the field, has proposed two possible locations for the American position. The first site is located on rising ground, roughly one-half mile up from the Highway 56 bridge, in the vicinity of a chained-off access path on the west side of Highway 56. The second is situated on an even higher elevation, located about a quarter of a mile north of the first proposed position (see Fig. 7).

<sup>44</sup> Plats indicate that red cedars, varieties of oak, hickories, ash trees, gums, and pines were growing in the vicinity of the battlefield between 1767 and 1804. See Samuel Chew's 1767 plat, *Colonial Plats*, vol. 9, 287; William Hendricks' 1768 plat, *Colonial Plats*, vol. 9, 303; John Pucket's 1804 plat, *State Plats, Columbia Series*, vol. 40, 225 (Figs. 3, 4, and 5 respectively). These plats may be found on microfilm at South Carolina Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, "Report"; Hammond, "Account," 520. The reference to the "Indian field" comes from Logan, *History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 74. Also see William Chew's 1767 plat (Fig. 3). This plat, along with another dating to 1804 (Fig. 5), demonstrates that present-day Highway 56, on the north side of the Enoree River, approximates the route of the historic "wagon road," which served as the axis of the battlefield. Thus, Musgrove's Ford was situated east of the mouth of Cedar Shoals Creek. On the south side of the Enoree, the course of the road has proven more difficult to determine. A later plat, from 1840, shows it running north toward the Enoree River, passing the Musgrove House on the west, then turning eastward and running parallel to the Enoree before apparently reaching Musgrove's Ford, which by that time had fallen out of usage in favor of a bridge (see Figs. 2 & 8).

<sup>46</sup> Williams, "Report"; Hammond, "Account," 520. Many historians have written that the American line was configured in a semi-circle. None of the primary sources mention a semi-circle; in fact, the reference appears to have originated in John B. O'Neill, *Annals of Newberry*, 313.

<sup>47</sup> Hammond, "Account," 520.

<sup>48</sup> Saye, *McJunkin's Memoirs*, 15. The historian Lyman Draper maintained that "Clarke had a reserve of forty men within calling distance;" see Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 107. The primary accounts say nothing to that effect. Draper obviously gleaned this from a second-hand account republished in O'Neill, *Annals of Newberry*, 320-324 (see n72 below for further commentary on this account); also consult Hugh McCall's strangely anomalous description of the battle, published in the



The Americans stood in open order (i.e., a few yards apart as opposed to shoulder to shoulder) and their battle line presented a front that measured roughly 300 yards in length.<sup>49</sup> According to Shelby, the partisans strengthened their position by improvising a breastwork of “logs and brush.”<sup>50</sup> But whether or not the Americans actually erected a defensive barrier is debatable. Neither Williams nor Hammond made mention of a breastwork. Williams, however, did disclose that “[e]very man was ordered to take his tree,” which suggests that the partisans availed themselves of natural cover rather than constructing their own. Another statement that casts doubt on the presence of a breastwork comes from Philemon Waters, the grandson of Edward Musgrove. Waters remarked that “at least a hundred men, women, and children” visited the battlefield the day after the engagement and “not one ever said anything afterwards of a brush breast-work.”<sup>51</sup>

Even without a breastwork, the Americans still held a strong position: they occupied a commanding piece of wooded high ground and had a clear field of fire down into the expansive clearing below them. With their dispositions made, the partisans had one final problem to resolve: how to induce the British to attack their prepared position? Captain Shadrack Inman, of Clarke’s Georgians, reportedly proposed the stratagem of provocation that won the approval of the co-

---

early-nineteenth century; see McCall, *The History of Georgia* (Savannah: 1811-1816; reprint, Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1909), 478.

<sup>49</sup> Hammond, “Account,” 520. By deploying in open order, a unit could lengthen its frontage; this was often a necessity for outnumbered units, which could otherwise be easily outflanked. In addition to extending a given unit’s front, an open-order disposition also helped to reduce the effectiveness of enemy volleys—as some of the projectiles would pass through the gaps in the ranks—and made it easier for lines to retain their formation while moving through forbidding terrain.

<sup>50</sup> Shelby, “Letters,” 372. Saye, in *McJunkin’s Memoirs*, also mentions a breastwork. This is no surprise since Saye’s work is clearly a regurgitation of Shelby with a few additional observations thrown in for good measure.

<sup>51</sup> Logan, *A History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 81.



commanders. "It was," as one historian has asserted, "a classic adaptation of Indian cunning."<sup>52</sup> Inman would lead a "small party of horse"—apparently the twenty horsemen positioned on the left flank of the American line—down to the Enoree River to "scrimmage" with the enemy. Once they made contact, Inman's horsemen would conduct a fighting withdrawal and gradually lure the British up the road toward the main American position.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the discovery of the rebel presence north of the Enoree "put the whole Tory camp in commotion, and the men were called to arms."<sup>54</sup> Musgrove family tradition holds that the British officer corps held "a council of war" in the Musgrove house and that Colonel Innes "was for marching over the river and fighting at once."<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, none of the primary sources corroborate these assertions, but it seems plausible that Innes and his subordinates could have conferred in the house before the battle. Determining where the British Colonel made his fateful decision to attack, however, is far less important than the fact that he took the bait that Shadrack Inman so adroitly dangled before him. When Inman's band attacked the British pickets (who were evidently posted along the road on the north side of the Enoree), Innes directed his troops to ford the river and advance to their support. The redcoats and their Tory comrades, recalled loyalist David Fanning, pursued the Rebel band until they "arrived where the main body [of Americans] lay in ambush."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 111.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, "Report;" Shelby, "Letters," 372; Hammond, "Account," 520.

<sup>54</sup> Logan, *A History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 73.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. This tradition, related by Philemon Waters, seems intrinsically credible, despite the erroneous inclusion of Colonel Cruger in the council. Cruger was in Ninety-Six at the time of the battle.

<sup>56</sup> [Fanning], *Narrative*, 32.





When Inman and his party of decoyers returned to the American line, they apparently reassumed their original position on the left flank. At this point, the partisans must have watched with nervous anticipation as the British advanced across the field in three columns, halted about two hundred yards from their own ranks, and then deployed into a line of battle perpendicular to the wagon road.<sup>57</sup> Innes placed his redcoated provincials in the center and posted contingents of militia on the right and left.<sup>58</sup> As was customary of mounted units, the South Carolina Royalists most likely fought on foot. The British line was probably two ranks deep, with a line of file closers in the rear. It was the dreadful responsibility of the file closers to fill the gaps in the line once casualties began to drop.<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, the number of troops that Innes brought into battle cannot be determined with certainty. A descendant of Edward Musgrove, unborn at the time of the battle, claimed that the Colonel left a 100-man reserve in camp on the south side of the Enoree River. Some of these men reportedly climbed up onto the roof of the Musgrove house and watched their comrades pursue Inman until they were out of sight.<sup>60</sup> Even if Innes left such a sizeable reserve, he still would have had superiority in numbers.

In most instances, set-piece battles began with an exchange of cannon fire, but since neither side possessed artillery, the attackers had to march to within musket range to get the battle started in earnest. Yet before advancing, the

---

<sup>57</sup> Williams, "Report;" Shelby, "Letters," 372; Hammond, "Account," 520.

<sup>58</sup> Hammond, "Account," 520

<sup>59</sup> Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 136.

<sup>60</sup> Logan, *A History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 74.



provincials and loyalist militia most likely received the order to fix bayonets.<sup>61</sup>

Once a soldier affixed his bayonet to the muzzle-end of his musket, he then wielded the equivalent of a six-foot-long spear. As one historian has pointed out, "the British were well aware of the bloody virtues of the bayonet, and red-coated infantrymen were rigorously trained in its use." It took "considerable courage and discipline" for a soldier "to hold his ground as a sea of bayonets swept toward him."<sup>62</sup> Time and time again during the Revolutionary War, the British watched as American militiamen—who lacked the stringent training and discipline of regulars—dissolved before a push of the cold steel. Perhaps Innes believed he could score yet another coup for British arms by going in with the bayonet. But first, as standard eighteenth-century linear tactics dictated, he would need to soften up the American line with a couple of musket volleys and if the enemy showed signs of faltering he would order the bayonet charge.<sup>63</sup> If Innes was confident of quick victory, he probably did not realize that the Americans arrayed before him were not untested militia; rather these were seasoned partisans that had long-since undergone their baptism of fire.

Impetuosity may have gotten the better of Innes, or perhaps he was just a poor judge of distance, because his troops unleashed their first volley from about 150 yards away.<sup>64</sup> This distance exceeded the maximum *effective* range of the smoothbore musket by about fifty yards. Moreover, to inflict material damage on the opposing force, a commander generally needed to bring his troops within 80 yards of the

---

<sup>61</sup> Roderick Mackenzie, *Strictures on Lt. Col. Tarleton's History* (London: R. Faulder, 1787), 25.

<sup>62</sup> Baker, *Another Such Victory*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, "Report."



enemy before firing a volley.<sup>65</sup> Needless to say, the first British volley had a negligible effect and the dismounted partisans in the American center wisely declined to return fire. Colonel Williams had actually ordered these men "not to fire till the enemy came within point-blank shot"—that is to say, close enough for a given soldier to take direct aim at an opponent—"nor then until orders were given."<sup>66</sup> The bands of horsemen originally posted on the flanks of the center, however, had advanced through the woods that bordered the field and were now pouring a raking fire into flanks of the British line.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the annoyance of the horsemen on their flanks, Innes' loyalists continued to advance. When they "came within 70 yards" of the partisan position, nearly two hundred leveled American muskets and rifles erupted along the tree line, stopping the redcoats and Tory militia in their tracks.<sup>68</sup> Momentarily stunned, His Majesty's troops fell back, but soon regained their composure and pressed on once again.<sup>69</sup> With firearms flashing up and down the lengths of both lines, the opposing forces slugged it out for approximately fifteen minutes. The smoke, resulting from the firefight, according to Shelby, "was so thick as to hide a man at twenty yards distant."<sup>70</sup> During this hotly-contested exchange, the British, firing uphill, apparently overshot the

---

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>66</sup> Williams also said that he instructed his men "not to fire till the enemy was within 80 yards distance, and then to take his object sure," in other words, to take dead aim on an enemy soldier; see, Williams, "Report". The Whig militia's approach of taking direct aim at an opponent differed from the prevailing practice among professional soldiers (American and British alike). Professional armies placed a premium on speed in reloading and volume of fire; therefore, regulars were drilled to point their firearms in the general direction of the enemy and to fire volleys on command—the guiding principle being: the more lead in the air, the more likely you are to hit something. See Appendix B for more on eighteenth-century infantry tactics.

<sup>67</sup> Hammond, "Account," 521.

<sup>68</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372.

<sup>69</sup> Hammond, "Account," 520.

<sup>70</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372.



American position and thus inflicted few casualties on the partisans.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, the determined provincials, pushing forward with the bayonet, managed to close to within a few yards of the American line.<sup>72</sup> At that critical moment, Colonel Innes suffered a crippling “wound through the back part of his neck” and a few of his soldiers carried him to the rear.<sup>73</sup> Demoralized by the loss of their commander, the provincials faltered. As they began to fall back, “without any thing like pressure on the part” of the partisans, an American volley felled nearly all of the remaining regular officers. The Tory militiamen, seeing the regulars give ground, followed suit. While trying to rally a portion of these dispirited Tories, Captain William Hawsey—described as “an officer of considerable distinction among the [T]ories”—also fell victim to an American bullet.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> According to James Hodge Saye, a young man passed through the battlefield a few days after the fight and concluded, from observing bullet marks on the trees around the American position, that the British “had generally shot entirely above the heads of the Whigs”; see Saye, *McJunkin's Memoirs*, 16. Perhaps the British, who were firing uphill, overcompensated for the incline, lest they fire into the ground a few feet in front of the Americans, and thus overshot their position. The thickness of the gunsmoke could have also compromised the line of sight of Innes' troops.

<sup>72</sup> Shelby, “Letters,” 372; Mackenzie, *Strictures*, 25. Historian Lyman Draper claimed that Innes' provincials, surging blindly forward in pursuit of Inman, ran headlong into an “unexpected” volley from the American line. Although shaken, the British pressed on and their sheer numbers, Draper maintained, allowed them to push back Shelby's command on the American right. Shelby was at the point of breaking, Draper went on to say, when Clarke threw in a 40-man reserve and handily beat back the attack; see Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 108. Draper did not disclose the source from which he derived this information, but he undoubtedly took it from a second-hand account found in John B. O'Neill, *Annals of Newberry*, 320-324. This account, written by one General Hardin of Kentucky, was supposedly derived from the General's conversations with Shelby himself. But Shelby, in his authenticated August-1814 letter to William Hill, said that the British pushed only to “within a few yards” of the American line. This contradiction places the Hardin account under the umbrella of suspicion; therefore I have not relied on it here.

<sup>73</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 68-69; Shelby, “Letters,” 372.

<sup>74</sup> Hammond, “Account,” 521; Shelby, “Letters,” 372.





The disorderly withdrawal of Innes' troops now presented the partisans with an excellent opportunity to launch a counterattack. The two parties of horsemen, originally posted on the flanks of the American center, struck first, "charg[ing] into the ranks of the retreating foe" and putting many of the panicking loyalists to rout.<sup>75</sup> Spurred on by the prospect of total victory, the dismounted partisans also leapt forward in pursuit. As they hastened down the southern slope of the battle ridge, two Whigs managed to capture Colonel Daniel Clary, the Tory militia commander, by seizing the bridle of his horse. Clary, in spite of his predicament, kept his presence of mind and reportedly remonstrated, "Damn you, don't you know your own officers?" Perplexed, his captors released him and Clary galloped off, making good his escape.<sup>76</sup> Many other loyalists, however, did not share Clary's good fortune and fell into the hands of the onrushing Americans.<sup>77</sup>

Even though a considerable portion of the loyalists rushed like a torrent toward Musgrove's Ford, elements of Innes' force, probably provincials, kept up a concerted resistance; at least enough to avert a complete rout. By this time, one of only two regular officers still unwounded, Captain George Kerr of the Delancey's, had assumed command. We can only speculate that he organized some sort of rear guard; for the provincial Captain succeeded in getting the majority of his troops safely beyond the Enoree.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, the pursuit had rendered the Americans "so scattered and out

---

<sup>75</sup> Hammond, "Account," 521.

<sup>76</sup> Regarding this anecdote: O'Neill claimed that Clary, who remained in the backcountry after the war, often related the details of his escape at Musgrove's Mill; see O'Neill, *Annals of Newberry*, 71, 313.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, "Report."

<sup>78</sup> Mackenzie, *Strictures*, 25-26. Philemon Waters maintained that the British "made a running fight;" see Logan, *A History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 74.



of order" that they decided to halt, regroup, and send for their horses before crossing the river; though some of the mounted partisans had already rejoined the chase on the south side of the river.<sup>79</sup> While they waited for their horses, the American commanders audaciously resolved to follow up their victory "to great advantage" by pushing on to Ninety-Six. They believed that the post of Ninety-Six, located about thirty miles southwest of Musgrove's Mill, was in a "weak and defenceless [sic]" condition.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps the completeness of their success up to that point clouded their better judgment because Ninety-Six was not quite as vulnerable as the Americans may have imagined. Quite the contrary, it was strongly fortified and under the able command of Colonel Cruger, who had over 100 regulars at his disposal.<sup>81</sup> The partisans, however, would not get the chance to prosecute their views against Ninety Six. "[J]ust after the close of the action," as Colonel Shelby noted, "an express arrived from General McDowell." This express conveyed the unwelcome news of General Gates' defeat at Camden and McDowell's consequent decision to retreat back into North Carolina.<sup>82</sup> Realizing that they were now unsupported, Shelby, Clarke, and Williams had no choice but to follow McDowell's lead. Thus, in a strange twist of irony, the battle of Musgrove's Mill concluded with both the victors and the vanquished in retreat.

---

<sup>79</sup> Hammond, "Account," 521. Colonel Williams claimed that the Americans pursued for about two miles. If the partisan position was a half-mile from the Enoree, this would mean that the pursuit continued for another mile and half south of Musgrove's Ford. Williams' statement was probably an unintended exaggeration; for Fanning noted that Innes' force stopped about mile and a quarter south of the river. See Williams, "Report," Fanning, *Narrative*, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372-373.

<sup>81</sup> Before Innes left with 300 men, the garrison contained approximately 415 effectives (not including sick and unarmed); see Appendix A, 53-54.

<sup>82</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 373.



But for the American commanders, the battle of Musgrove's Mill had been a small-scale tactical masterpiece. As Shelby later recalled, "the slaughter from thence [the American position] to the Enoree river...was very great[;] dead men lay thick on the Ground."<sup>83</sup> By far, the overwhelming majority of the casualties belonged to the loyalists. In his official report, Colonel Williams declared that the partisans "killed on the field 60 of the enemy, the greatest part British," in addition to taking some "70 prisoners."<sup>84</sup> Innes had lost one hundred and thirty men, or just over one-fourth of his total force; not to mention the untold numbers of wounded that managed to elude capture.<sup>85</sup> Casualties were exceptionally high among the provincial officer corps: five, out of the seven regular officers present, sustained wounds. In addition to Innes himself, these officers included the Colonel's fellow South Carolina Royalist, Major Thomas Fraser, as well as Captain Peter Campbell and Lieutenants William Chew and John Camp of the New Jersey Volunteers. Contrary to American reports that stated otherwise, these officers all recovered from their injuries.<sup>86</sup> The American partisans, on the other hand, had accomplished this feat with the loss of only four killed and seven wounded. Cruger confirmed the low rate of American casualties, avowing: "We

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>84</sup> Williams, "Report."

<sup>85</sup> A week and a half after the battle, Cruger noted that, in addition to Innes, "the other wounded Gentlemen & Soldiers are also recruiting [recovering]." See Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 69.

<sup>86</sup> Williams claimed that Major Fraser and one regular captain were killed. Fraser, however, must have lived because he later took the reigns of the South Carolina Royalists from Innes; see Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 151. In the 27 September 1780 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* (Richmond: Dixon & Nicholson), a certain William Allman erroneously reported that Captain Campbell had been killed. Peter Campbell actually died in New Brunswick in 1822; see Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey*, 40. Allman probably confused Peter Campbell with Charles Campbell who died at Fishing Creek; see *South Carolina & American General Gazette*, 30 August and 6 September 1780. Also see Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 69.



do not know of above half a Dozen of the enemy being killed."<sup>87</sup> The partisans, however, did suffer a great deprivation in the loss of Captain Shadrack Inman, the architect of the stratagem that had induced the British to attack. Inman had fallen mortally wounded "while pressing the enemy close in his rear" and was buried on the battlefield.<sup>88</sup>

Since the news of Gates' defeat compelled the Americans to retreat for North Carolina with all possible haste, they had to leave a few of their wounded on the field. Dr. Ross—the same physician that had attended Ferguson's casualties following the second clash near Cedar Springs (8 August 1780)—reportedly treated the American wounded along with those from Innes' force. On the day after the clash at Musgrove's Mill, local tradition holds, droves of people from the surrounding countryside canvassed the battlefield, "some for plunder, some for curiosity." Still others came for a more somber purpose: "to see if any of their friends or loved ones had fallen in the battle."<sup>89</sup>

While locals leisurely combed over the battlefield, Shelby, Williams, and Clarke were pushing their men to the point of collapsing. For fear that a British detachment might overtake them, the partisans had been blazing toward North Carolina with "all the Vigilance [sic] and exertion which human nature was capable of to avoid being cut to pieces by Ferguson's light parties."<sup>90</sup> Evidence shows that their concerns were well founded, as Ferguson was "looking for them"

---

<sup>87</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 23 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/63: 62.

<sup>88</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 372. See William S. Glenn's 1926 map for the traditional site of Inman's burial (Fig. 9). Glenn's map is also of interest for its depiction of twentieth-century roads in the battlefield's vicinity.

<sup>89</sup> Logan, *A History of Upper South Carolina*, vol. 2, 79, 81.

<sup>90</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 373.





with the “the prime” of the Colonel George Turnbull's New York Volunteers.<sup>91</sup>

With only “peaches and green corn” for sustenance, the partisans, who were also suffering grievously from sleep deprivation, could endure little more hardship. As Shelby noted, “the excessive fateague [sic] for two nights effectually broke down every officer.” “Their faces & eyes swelled,” the Colonel continued, “and [they] became [so] bloated in appearance” that they could hardly see. Yet in spite of their harrowing state of exhaustion, the partisans managed to elude their pursuers.<sup>92</sup>

After having reached the relative safety of North Carolina, Colonel Isaac Shelby led his over-mountain men beyond the Blue Ridge to their homes in the Watauga settlements of present-day Tennessee, and Colonel Elijah Clarke decided to take his small band of partisans back to Georgia. Clarke's career, however, would not end after Musgrove's Mill; he would go on to participate in a number of other engagements—most notably the capture of Augusta, Georgia in 1781—before the war's end. But before beginning his return journey to Georgia, Clarke turned over the seventy loyalist prisoners to the charge of Colonel James Williams. Marching eastward, Williams and his few followers conducted the prisoners on to Hillsborough, North Carolina where General Horatio Gates had established his headquarters following his defeat at Camden.<sup>93</sup> Williams arrived in town on 5 September and submitted his report on the battle of Musgrove's Mill

---

<sup>91</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 23 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 62.

<sup>92</sup> Shelby, “Letters,” 373.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 369.



to General Gates, who in turn forwarded it to Congress.<sup>94</sup> South Carolina's Governor, John Rutledge, who had fled his state after the fall of Charleston and was at that time residing in Hillsborough, was so pleased with Williams that he conferred upon him the rank of Brigadier General in the South Carolina militia.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps for this reason, Shelby later grouched that Williams had "arrogated to himself the sole honour [sic] of Commanding the action" at Musgrove's Mill.<sup>96</sup>

Roughly a month and a half after Shelby and Williams parted company, they fought together once again in the pivotal battle of King's Mountain, South Carolina (7 October 1780). In that engagement, about 900 American backcountry militiamen, under Colonel William Campbell, effectively eradicated Major Patrick Ferguson's entire loyalist force, which numbered more than a 1,000-strong.<sup>97</sup> As Sir Henry Clinton sententiously remarked, the British defeat at King's Mountain "unhappily proved the first link in a chain of evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America."<sup>98</sup> Captain Abraham de Peyster, who fought under Innes at Musgrove's, was on the slopes of King's Mountain that day and ordered the surrender of his surviving troops after a number of well-aimed rifle shots mortally knocked Major Ferguson from his horse. The Americans had cause for lamentation as well because the newly-appointed Brigadier, James Williams, also

---

<sup>94</sup> Horatio Gates to Samuel Huntington, 5 September 1780, in Papers of the Continental Congress, Letters from Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates (Reel 174, Item 154).

<sup>95</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 119.

<sup>96</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 369.

<sup>97</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 229-236.

<sup>98</sup> Sir Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782*, William B. Willcox, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 226.



lost his life in the fighting. Colonel Isaac Shelby, however, survived and went on to win election as the first Governor of the new state of Kentucky in 1793.<sup>99</sup>

As for Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Innes, Shelby's adversary in the clash near Musgrove's Mill, his career would follow a far less luminous trajectory; certainly his defeat on the Enoree did little to enhance his standing in the British army. The acrid scent of gunsmoke was probably still lingering in the air when Colonel Innes composed the brief dispatch that reached Major Patrick Ferguson on the evening of battle. Innes' original message has not surfaced, but Ferguson communicated its substance to Cornwallis. "Colonel Innes," the Major reported, "in marching out from Musgrove's Mill on the Enoree...in order to support a party of horse he had sent over that river last night...engaged a body of Rebels, before whom he was obliged again to cross the river." Ferguson also informed his Lordship that Innes had once again taken up position at Musgrove's Mill and required reinforcements because most of the Tory militia had deserted him.<sup>100</sup>

Later that night, Captain Abraham de Peyster marched back toward Ninety-Six with a portion of Innes' command.<sup>101</sup> While on route, de Peyster may have passed Colonel Cruger, who had ventured out from his post to support Innes upon hearing of the latter's defeat at Musgrove's Mill. Cruger returned to Ninety-Six with the rest of Innes' discomfited detachment on the twenty-first.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 415.

<sup>100</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 July [August] 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 1. Lieutenant Anthony Allaire must have also read Innes' dispatch because in his journal he recorded, almost verbatim, the same information that Ferguson reported to Cornwallis; see Allaire, "Diary," 504-505.

<sup>101</sup> Fanning, *Narrative*, 32.

<sup>102</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 23 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 62.



To recover from his neck wound, Innes took up temporary residence in a house four miles from Ninety-Six.<sup>103</sup> As he convalesced, the beaten Colonel must have had ample time to reflect on the battle; however, only one letter in which he referred to the engagement has surfaced. Unfortunately, Innes went no further in this letter than to extol the gallantry of his own provincial regiment. The Colonel declared: "of the fifty men of my detach[men]t that belonged to the South Carolina Royalists, thirty five were recruits enlisted since last June, and no other men behaved with greater spirit than they did in the late affair of the 19th ult."<sup>104</sup> In early August 1780, Cruger had disparaged Innes' regiment as being no better than militia; either the Royalists improved drastically in a short amount of time or Innes was attempting to save face for the performance of his own regiment.<sup>105</sup> Yet another South Carolina Royalist, Evan McLaurin, singled out the Tory militia as scapegoats for Innes' defeat at Musgrove's Mill. According to McLaurin: "the greatest part [of the militia] fled & left a few honest followers to be sacrificed."<sup>106</sup> Here, McLaurin was probably referring to the behavior of the Tory militia during the retreat, when the majority of them abandoned Innes.

Soon after Innes recuperated from his wound, he traveled back to Charleston and then, at Sir Henry Clinton's behest, sailed for New York to join the British commander-in-chief. He remained the nominal leader of the South Carolina

---

<sup>103</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 69.

<sup>104</sup> Innes to Cornwallis, 5 September 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/64: 29.

<sup>105</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 11 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 30-31.

<sup>106</sup> "The Necessity of not depending upon the Militia in the future," McLaurin continued reproachfully, "will daily become more evident;" see Evan McLaurin to Colonel Nesbitt Balfour, 22 August 1780, Emmet Collection, Manuscripts and Archives Section, New York Public Library.





Royalists, but field command passed to Major Thomas Fraser.<sup>107</sup> Back in 1775, Innes had written that he would “retire into Obscurity and Insignificancy” if he discovered that he “could not be of service” to his to his country.<sup>108</sup> It appears that his country decided that for him at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Following the 1783 Peace of Paris, Innes returned to the British Isles and received half pay, as did all inactive British officers during times of peace. Although he was issued a warrant for a land grant in Nova Scotia as a reward for his service, Innes apparently declined to establish his claim.<sup>109</sup> At the onset of the Napoleonic Wars, the Colonel again offered his services to his king. The British army, however, would only allow him to return to active duty as an ensign (the rank below lieutenant), despite the fact that he had served as a lieutenant colonel in the provincial service.<sup>110</sup>

### Conclusion

The detachment of American partisans, under Colonels Shelby, Clarke, and Williams, had ridden forty miles overnight, only to find that the mercurial fortunes of war had undermined their original plans. But instead of panicking and hazarding a retreat on exhausted horses, the partisan leaders demonstrated the sort of adaptability and calculation required of successful practitioners of irregular war and thereby turned a potentially disastrous situation to their advantage. They established a strong defensive position and provoked the enemy to attack

---

<sup>107</sup> Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 151.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Innes to the Earl of Dartmouth, 3 July 1775, in B. D. Badger, “Charleston Town Loyalism in 1775,” 136.

<sup>109</sup> Carole W. Troxler, “The Migration of Carolina and Georgia Loyalists to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Unpublished Ph.D. Diss. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974), 281-282.

<sup>110</sup> Jones, ed., *The Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 84.



them on ground of their own choosing. Ironically, the Americans, although they fought a defensive battle, held the initiative from the beginning. In "one of the hardest [actions] ever fought in the United States with small arms," as Shelby described it, the partisan militia defeated a numerically superior adversary whose compliment of provincial regulars alone exceeded their numbers. This was one of the few times during the Revolutionary War that militia got the better of regulars on the battlefield. Furthermore, as Samuel Hammond observed, the outcome of the battle had an uplifting effect on American morale. Hammond wrote: "This little affair, as trifling as it may seem, did much good in the general depression of that period...Our numbers continued to increase from that time, and all seemed to have more confidence in themselves."<sup>111</sup> Yet for all of its tactical brilliance, the victory at Musgrove's Mill, as one historian has argued, certainly "could not mitigate the double disasters of Camden and Fishing Creek."<sup>112</sup> It was too little too late to redeem the strategic situation for the rebels in South Carolina during the summer of 1780; that would have to wait until the following year after General Nathanael Greene took the reigns of the Southern Department.

---

<sup>111</sup> Hammond, "Account," 522.

<sup>112</sup> Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 87.



## Appendix A: The Respective Strengths at Musgrove's Mill

The inherent limitations of the primary sources, unfortunately, have made it difficult to precisely determine the respective strengths of the forces engaged at Musgrove's Mill. First, the extant participant accounts of the battle contain major discrepancies concerning the sizes of the opposing forces. Secondly, the fact that both British and American forces consisted of detachments further complicates the matter. For example, the contingent of British provincials that fought at Musgrove's Mill comprised companies or detachments from three separate regiments. At full strength, a British regiment consisted of 410 rank-and-file (privates and corporals) divided equally into ten companies. Generally, a colonel commanded the whole regiment, while captains led the individual companies. Each company, under optimal conditions, contained thirty-eight privates, three corporals, two sergeants, two lieutenants, and one captain, in addition to musicians for communications. Disease, desertions, and casualties, however, significantly reduced a given regiment's effective strength during a campaign.<sup>1</sup> It would, therefore, be pointless to try to extrapolate numbers based on the ideal composition of a given regiment or company. Furthermore, companies decimated by attrition were sometimes consolidated to form larger units. On the day before the battle of Camden, for instance, the return of Cornwallis' troop strength indicates that he had one regiment, with 261 rank-and-file, divided into three companies. This

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward E. Curtis, *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution* (East Ardsley, England: EP Publishing Ltd., 1972), 4-5; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 38-39.



translates into about eighty-seven men per company.<sup>2</sup> Thus, one would need up-to-date muster rolls<sup>3</sup> or returns for every unit engaged at Musgrove's—provided every unit that fought there could be positively identified—to be able to conclusively ascertain the British strength. The same holds for the American force, which consisted of a mixture of militia from the Carolinas and Georgia.<sup>4</sup>

With respect to the numbers involved in the clash near the Enoree River, the few extant accounts written by American participants vary considerably. Colonel James Williams, who filed his report upon reaching Hillsborough, North Carolina on 5 September, claimed that the Americans marched with 200 men to attack an equal number of Tories, who were in turn reinforced by 300 provincial troops.<sup>5</sup> Writing thirty-four years after the event, Colonel Isaac Shelby, on the other hand, put American strength at between 700 and 800. As for the British force, Shelby claimed that 500 Tories were encamped at Musgrove's Mill until 600 provincial reinforcements arrived, temporarily bringing the British total up to 1,100 men.<sup>6</sup>

Shelby undoubtedly exaggerated the respective strengths of the detachments that fought at Musgrove's Mill. Even the historian Lyman Draper, an ardent admirer of Shelby, has conceded that in later life the Colonel "appears, perhaps imperceptibly, little

---

<sup>2</sup> Tarleton, *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 136.

<sup>3</sup> Luckily for researchers, Murtie June Clark has compiled, in book form, all extant muster rolls for loyalist militia and provincial regiments that served in the Southern Campaign; see Clark, ed., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War: Official Rolls*, 3 vols., (Baltimore: The Genealogical Publishing Company, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> No muster rolls were found for the commands of Shelby, Clarke, and Williams.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, "Report." If we follow Williams' estimate, then the British enjoyed a 2.5 to 1 numerical advantage at Musgrove's Mill.

<sup>6</sup> Shelby, "Letters," 371-372. Although Shelby's numbers are higher than those of Williams, his estimate, of roughly 750 Americans against 1,100 British, reduces the quotient of the troop-strength ratio, giving the British only 1.5 soldiers for every 1 American.





by little, to have magnified the numbers, losses, and prisoners in some of the contests in which he was engaged—notably so of the Musgrove affair.”<sup>7</sup>

Another American participant, Major Samuel Hammond refrained from assigning a numerical value to the American force at Musgrove’s Mill and instead referred to it as “our little band.” This statement, though, lends credence to Colonel James Williams’ figure of 200 for the American strength. Regarding the British numbers, Hammond, like Williams, related that 200 Tories were bivouacked near the mill. Hammond, however, broke with Williams when he averred that only 150 provincial troops reinforced the Tories.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, no detailed British account of the battle has surfaced. We do know that Colonel Alexander Innes, the British commander in the battle, sent word of his defeat to Patrick Ferguson, who in turn apprised Cornwallis of the affair in a surviving letter. The whereabouts of Innes’ initial dispatch is unknown and Ferguson’s second-hand report, while exceedingly valuable for listing the names of the British officers wounded during the engagement, fails to discuss the strengths of the respective forces. A series of letters that Lieutenant Colonel John Harris Cruger, commandant of Ninety-Six, wrote in the battle’s aftermath, however, has proven somewhat helpful. In a letter dated 27 August 1780, Cruger estimated that the Americans, who attacked Innes, were part of a force of between 500 and 700 rebels operating in the upcountry.<sup>9</sup> Cruger’s low-end

---

<sup>7</sup> Draper, *King’s Mountain and Its Heroes*, 120.

<sup>8</sup> Hammond, “Account,” 519-520.

<sup>9</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 27 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 68-69. Incidentally, in a letter written on 23 August, Cruger noted that he had forwarded to Cornwallis, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, a return of the killed, wounded, and missing from the battle of Musgrove’s Mill; see Cruger to Cornwallis, 23 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 62-63. Unfortunately, this letter is not in the Cornwallis papers, but perhaps it may turn up in another collection in the future.



estimate seems on target; for McDowell most likely had about 500 at his disposal before detaching Shelby, Clarke, and Williams. Judging, then, from McDowell's strength, it appears that Colonel James Williams' claim—that only 200 Americans rode to attack the Tories at Musgrove's Mill—has basis in fact. It seems entirely reasonable to conclude that McDowell would have wanted to keep the majority of his force with him just in case Ferguson decided to force the issue. Furthermore, since Williams' report is the only American participant account contemporary to the battle, logic dictates that it should, and I stress *should*, possess greater reliability than those accounts composed years after the event when the failings of memory, especially in Shelby's case, served to distort some of the facts.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, I have accepted Williams' number and put American strength at approximately 200 men.

As for the number of Tories encamped on the south side of the Enoree prior to the arrival of the provincials, I have relied on Williams once again, and in this case Hammond as well, concurring with their figure of 200. We know that Colonel Daniel Clary's Dutch Fork Militia Regiment, about 100 strong, was at Musgrove's.<sup>11</sup> In addition to Clary's men, it is not a far stretch to assume that another group of 100 or so Tories was also bivouacked there, since the site apparently served as a convenient point of assembly. Shelby, in fact, wrote about the wounding of a certain Tory leader, Captain Hawsey, and as far as I

---

<sup>10</sup> I readily acknowledge that even accounts of events written within minutes of their occurrence can contain factual and perceptual errors, not to mention the taint of bias. One could easily argue that Williams did not know the exact strength of the American force and merely approximated. He did, in fact, put American strength at "about 200". There is also the possibility that he could have underrepresented the actual number of the Whig detachment so as to make the American victory appear that much more extraordinary. But such are the imponderables of any historical inquiry.

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 111, 133; Clark, ed., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 229-231.



have been able to ascertain, Hawsey did not serve in Clary's regiment.<sup>12</sup> This certainly suggests the presence of another Tory unit at Musgrove's Mill.

Even though we will probably never know the precise size of the provincial detachment that reinforced the Tories at Musgrove's Mill, we can at least determine its composition; thanks in part to the British soldier-historian Roderick Mackenzie, who served as a lieutenant with Fraser's Highlanders (71<sup>st</sup> Regiment) during the Southern campaigns. In 1787, Mackenzie published a slim yet polemical book in response to Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, who had offended a number of British officers with his apologia *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*. After criticizing Tarleton for failing to treat the battle of Musgrove's Mill in his book, Mackenzie offered a succinct yet informative account of the engagement. Of particular interest to our inquiry is his observation that Colonel Innes' detachment "consisted of a light infantry company the New-Jersey Volunteers, a captain's command of Delancey's [New York Brigade], and about one hundred men of the South Carolina [Royalist] regiment mounted."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Mackenzie reached his figure of 100 South Carolina Royalists by reviewing the correspondence between Colonel Cruger and Earl Cornwallis. In two early-August letters to his lordship, Cruger noted that only 100, out of Colonel Alexander Innes' 190 South Carolina Royalists, were armed and fit for duty.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> See Muster Rolls for Clary's Regiment in Clark, ed., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 229-231.

<sup>13</sup> Mackenzie, *Strictures*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, 7 August and 11 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 22, 30-31; see also Cruger's return of 12 August 1780, entitled "Present State of the Garrison of Ninety Six," P.R.O. 30/11/103: 2.



Innes himself, however, related in a subsequent letter that only 50 Royalists were part of the detachment that fought at Musgrove's Mill.<sup>15</sup>

Although Mackenzie may have inflated the number of Royalists, a return of the garrison at Ninety-Six, dated 12 August 1780, provides additional support for his conclusions regarding the regimental make-up of the provincial detachment. This return reveals that the garrison not only embraced Innes' South Carolina Royalists, but also included a detachment of Cruger's own regiment—the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Delancey's<sup>16</sup> New York Brigade (which contained 81 healthy rank-and-file)—and a company of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion skirmishers (with 34 able rank-and-file).<sup>17</sup> Mackenzie furnished us with a clue as to which unit of Delancey's fought at Musgrove's Mill when he wrote that a certain Captain Kerr conducted the retreating British army back across the Enoree River.<sup>18</sup> Draper, who obviously went to Lorenzo Sabine's 1864 *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists* and looked up the name Kerr, erroneously identified this Captain as James Kerr.<sup>19</sup> Muster rolls from 1779-1781, however, show that Captain George Kerr, not James Kerr, commanded a company in Cruger's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Delancy's.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the evidence suggests that Captain George Kerr commanded the contingent of Delancey's that participated in the battle.

---

<sup>15</sup> Innes to Cornwallis, 5 September 1780, Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/64: 29.

<sup>16</sup> In 1776, the prominent Loyalist, Brigadier General Oliver Delancey, raised three battalions of New Yorkers into a provincial brigade, which numbered about 1200 strong. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Harris Cruger and Colonel George Brewerton respectively, came south in 1779 to participate in the planned reconquest of Georgia and the Carolinas.

<sup>17</sup> "Present State of the Garrison of Ninety Six," 12 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/103: 2.

<sup>18</sup> Mackenzie, *Strictures*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 106; Captain James Kerr, according to Sabine, served in the Queen's Rangers, who were not at Musgrove's Mill. Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists in the American Revolution*, vol. 1 (Boston: 1864; reprint, Baltimore: The Genealogical Pub. Co., 1979), 601.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, ed., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 18-19.





A few days before Innes' reinforcement marched to join Ferguson, Colonel Isaac Allen's 200-man 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of New Jersey Volunteers, which had been operating along the Georgia border, returned to Ninety Six. Allen's arrival, Cruger acknowledged, allowed him to free up enough troops to send Innes to Major Ferguson with a "pretty considerable" reinforcement.<sup>21</sup> The Major himself remarked that Cruger "detached the principle part of his force along with Col. Innes."<sup>22</sup> On account of Ferguson's second-hand report on the battle at Musgrove's Mill, we also know that Captain Campbell and Lieutenant's Chew and Camp of Allen's Battalion were wounded in the engagement. Muster rolls for Allen's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion indicate that Captain Peter Campbell commanded a company of New Jersey Volunteers that included Lieutenant William Chew and Ensign John Camp, the latter of whom may have held the brevet rank of lieutenant.<sup>23</sup> This evidence indisputably shows that Captain Peter Campbell's company of New Jersey Volunteers fought in the battle.

Muster rolls for Kerr's and Campbell's companies indicate that they were both under strength at the time of the battle. But the fact that Ferguson reported that Innes marched with "the principle part" of Cruger's garrison—which by that time had been increased to 415 effectives (not including the sick and unarmed) thanks to the return of Allen's 200 soldiers—suggests that Kerr and Campbell were in

---

<sup>21</sup> Cruger to Cornwallis, n.d. [17 August 1780], Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 93. For Colonel Allen's strength, see Cruger to Cornwallis, 11 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Ferguson to Cornwallis, 19 July [August] 1780, Cornwallis Papers, P.R.O. 30/11/63: 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, ed., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 140-142. Captain Peter Campbell of the New York Volunteers should not be confused with Captain Charles Campbell, who commanded an oversized company of light infantry. Captain Charles Campbell's company, 125 strong, had been at Ninety Six, but departed on the 9 August; see Cruger to Cornwallis, 7 and 9 August 1780, Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/63: 22-23, 25. Captain Charles Campbell was killed



command of units larger than their own respective companies. And with the addition of about a dozen men under the North Carolina loyalist, David Fanning, Innes' detachment could have easily numbered 300, as Colonel James Williams claimed.

---

in Tarleton's surprise attack on Sumter at Fishing Creek (18 August); see *South Carolina & American General Gazette*, 30 August and 6 September 1780.



## Appendix B: Weaponry and Infantry Tactics

### The Musket Versus the Rifle

During the Revolutionary War, the single-shot, smoothbore musket, designed with a flintlock firing mechanism, was the standard infantry weapon of both the British and American armies. British and provincial regulars carried the .75-caliber “Brown Bess” musket, while American Continental soldiers generally relied on the French-supplied “Charleville” and “St. Etienne” muskets, both .69 caliber. The calibers of these firearms referred to the diameter of their muzzles; the projectiles they fired actually measured several hundredths of an inch smaller than the muzzle.<sup>1</sup>

The musket’s ammunition came in the form of a paper cartridge, which contained a measured quantity of black powder and a single lead ball weighing approximately one ounce. “The big, heavy, soft lead slug with its low muzzle velocity (320 to 350 meters a second),” one historian has observed, “had tremendous smashing and stopping power.” A soldier struck by such a force, at less than 100 yards, “went down as if he were sledgehammered.”<sup>2</sup>

A versatile weapon, the flintlock musket was also designed to hold a bayonet—a foot-long, steel blade with a triangular shaft that tapered down to a deadly point. Once a soldier affixed his bayonet to the muzzle-end of his musket, he then wielded the equivalent of a six-foot-long spear.<sup>3</sup> The bayonet thrust, if

---

<sup>1</sup> The musket balls fired by the Brown Bess and the Charleville measured .70 and .63 respectively; see Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 136.

<sup>3</sup> Baker, *Another Such Victory*, 41.



properly executed, left an appalling wound that often defied the medical abilities of eighteenth-century doctors. The “bloody virtues” of the bayonet, therefore, made it “a potent psychological weapon.” It took “considerable discipline and courage” for a soldier “to hold his ground as a sea of bayonets swept toward him.”<sup>4</sup>

The smoothness of the musket's inner barrel distinguished it from the more technologically advanced flintlock rifle, which had spiraled grooves cut into its bore. These grooves imparted a spin to the discharged ball and thereby increased its distance and accuracy.<sup>5</sup> The smoothbore musket, however, had a well-deserved reputation for inaccuracy, especially at ranges exceeding one hundred yards. The noted soldier-marksman, George Hanger, who served as Tarleton's second command, wrote an oft-quoted evaluation of the musket's accuracy. “A soldier's musket,” Hanger declared, “will strike the figure of a man at 80 yards; it may even at a hundred; but a soldier *must be very unfortunate indeed* who shall be wounded by a *common musket* at 150 yards, PROVIDED HIS ANTAGONIST AIMS AT HIM [emphasis Hanger's].” From 200 yards away, Hanger argued, a soldier “may just as well fire at the moon and have the same hopes of hitting” his target. “I do maintain,” he continued, “and will prove, whenever called on, that NO MAN WAS EVER KILLED AT TWO HUNDRED YARDS, by a common soldier's musket, BY THE PERSON WHO AIMED AT

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The same principle applies to the throwing of a football; if you put a spiral on the ball it will travel farther and more accurately.





HIM.”<sup>6</sup> Hanger’s observations demonstrate that the maximum *effective* range of a musket was about 100 yards, perhaps a little more, but “the optimal range was thirty to forty yards.”<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the musket, the much-vaunted American “long rifle”—also known as the “Pennsylvania” or “Kentucky rifle”—varied from between .40 to .60 caliber. A rifleman, unlike a soldier armed with a musket, loaded his weapon with a tightly-fitting ball; this restricted the projectile’s course down the barrel and thus enhanced accuracy. Consequently, the rifleman, who could not use a convenient, ready-made cartridge like the musketeer, had to measure out his own powder and use a special greased patch (for lubrication) when ramming the ball down the barrel. These steps increased the amount of time required to fire a rifle. Patience, however, paid great dividends in accuracy; for the rifle could be deadly from a distance of 300 yards in the hands of a marksman shooting under optimal conditions.<sup>8</sup> But the nerve-fraying distractions of battle could greatly compromise a rifleman’s ability. At Wetzell’s Mill, North Carolina, for instance, a “select party” of riflemen, who were within musket range of their target, fired over thirty shots at a mounted British officer, but failed to strike him or his horse.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Colonel George Hanger, *To All Sportsmen, and Particularly to Farmers and Gamekeepers* (London, 1814; reprint, Richmond, England: The Richmond Publishing Co., 1971), 205.

<sup>7</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 40.

<sup>8</sup> George Hanger wrote: “I am certain, that, provided an American rifleman were to get a perfect aim at 300 yards at me, standing still, he most undoubtedly would hit me, unless it was a windy day.” *Ibid.*, 208-210.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Lee, *The American Revolution in the South*, Robert E. Lee, ed. (New York: University Publishing Co., 1869; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 267. Lee’s book was originally published under the title, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States*.



Unfortunately, the role of the American long rifle in the Revolutionary War—in both its prevalence among American arms and its prowess on the battlefield—has been romanticized to mythical proportions. In truth, the overwhelming majority of American soldiers, whether continentals or militia, were armed with smoothbore muskets. Those few Americans who did possess rifles were usually militiamen or “irregulars” from the backcountry and frontier—particularly from the over-mountain settlements in present-day Tennessee and Kentucky—where rifles were used primarily as “civilian hunting weapons”.<sup>10</sup> At Musgrove’s Mill, it is likely that a significant number of Colonel Shelby’s men fought with rifles, but since the main action took place within musket range, it is difficult to determine whether or not the rifle had a decided impact on the battle’s outcome. The presence of the rifle, however, certainly could have accounted for the high rate of casualties sustained by the British officer corps.

While the rifle was relatively effective as a snipping weapon, it had two major drawbacks that made it ill-suited for close-ordered combat. First, it took an inordinate amount of time to load. In a battle situation, a rifleman could generally get off about one shot a minute. A musketeer, on the other hand, could discharge three rounds in the same span of seconds. Secondly, the rifle’s octagonal barrel shape precluded the attachment of a socket bayonet and its fragile body design, which accounted for its light weight,<sup>11</sup> made it too flimsy to be used effectively as a club in a *mêlée*. These

---

<sup>10</sup> Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 138-139; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 51. It should also be mentioned that the Americans, during the Rev. War, were not the only ones to use rifles. In fact, the British hired special Hessian riflemen, known as jaegers. The green-coated jaegers took part in many battles during the Southern Campaign.

<sup>11</sup> Muskets weighed up to 12 lbs., while American rifles measured in at between 7 and 8 lbs. See Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 135, 140.



limitations left riflemen quite vulnerable to bayonet charges.<sup>12</sup> Thus, riflemen were usually relegated to fulfilling snipping, scouting, skirmishing roles.

Accuracy-wise, the rifle may have been a superior firearm, but the musket was undeniably the state-of-the-art infantry weapon of its age. Its capabilities or limitations, however you define them, dictated eighteenth-century linear tactics. “Although individually untrustworthy,” as one historian has noted, “a number of muskets discharged at the same time, and in the same direction, could inflict substantial damage.”<sup>13</sup> This desire to concentrate firepower explains why professional soldiers fought standing shoulder-to-shoulder in long battle lines.

#### Infantry Tactics

The following passage is an excerpt from Henry Lumpkin’s book *From Savannah to Yorktown* (137-138):

“An eighteenth-century classic set battle usually began when the lines were 600 to 300 yards apart...After a comparatively brief artillery exchange, one or both sides would move forward usually at the quick march, officers in front, drums beating, fifes squealing, national and regimental battle flags flying in the center of the formations.

At 100 yards or even as close as [30] yards, volleys were exchanged, [two to] three...rounds a minute.<sup>14</sup> This intense fire fight would continue point-blank until the commanding officer of one of the forces engaged (or the surviving senior officer) decided to order a bayonet charge. This usually occurred when the

---

<sup>12</sup> Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 214.

<sup>13</sup> Baker, *Another Such Victory*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Here, I changed “50 yards” to 30 and “three to five rounds a minute” to two to three. See Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 161-162.



opposing side obviously had begun to wilt under the fire storm and a properly delivered attack with cold steel could win the day.

The essence of this kind of fighting (and one the Americans found difficult to learn) was fire discipline—troops so trained that they would stand unflinching and take heavy losses while delivering a greater volume of fire at greater speed than the enemy. When the fire fight had been accomplished successfully, the same troops must advance on the order and engage the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet. Battles of this nature required professional officers commanding long-term professional soldiers, trained in a brutally inflexible discipline and close order drill."





### Appendix C: A Note on Draper's *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*

Referring to the myriad of minor Revolutionary engagements fought in the southern backcountry, Don Higginbotham, the foremost historian of America's War of Independence, has lamented the lack of "much sound source material" and points out that "[m]any of our extant accounts are the highly colored reminiscences collected by Lyman C. Draper of the Wisconsin Historical Society."<sup>1</sup> Even today, Draper's 1881 book *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, which contains a chapter on the battle of Musgrove's Mill, continues to inform the historiography of the Revolutionary War in the Carolina backcountry.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, Draper's description of the clash at Musgrove's Mill seems to hold a good deal of merit and validity. He did, however, spice up his narrative with a host of problematic local traditions and questionable accounts. Draper gathered some of these traditions and accounts himself through correspondence, but the majority of them came from a collection of reminiscences compiled by the nineteenth-century historian John H. Logan<sup>3</sup> and from John B. O'Neill's 1859 book *The Annals of Newberry*. Draper's failure to use qualifiers or disclaimers when relating these traditions suggests that he accepted their intrinsic veracity, even though he had to correct some obvious errors in some of them, lest he

---

<sup>1</sup> Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 364.

<sup>2</sup> John Buchanan, who has published the most recent monograph on the southern campaign, relied heavily on Draper's book in his discussion of Musgrove's Mill. See Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 176-180.

<sup>3</sup> Logan collected these local traditions and reminiscences with the aim of writing a second volume to his *History of the Upper Country of South Carolina*, but died before he could write the book. Luckily for historians, the manuscript has been published. The most accessible version is: John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina: From the Earliest Periods to the Close of the Revolution*, vol. 2 (Easley, S. C.: Southern Historical Press, 1980). Hereafter cited as Logan, *History*, vol. 2.



corrupt the “facts” of the battle. In at least one instance, he even embellished a certain tradition by adding in conjectural details.<sup>4</sup> Viewed through our current standards of historical methodology and objectivity, one can easily find fault with Draper’s work, but it should be remembered that he was writing at a time before historians had begun to apply rigorous “scientific” techniques of inquiry and documentation to their work.

Draper has also called into question the authenticity of an account purportedly written by the Whig participant, Samuel Hammond, a captain at that time of the battle. In fact, the historian explicitly indicted the Hammond account as a fraud. At the conclusion of his chapter on Musgrove’s Mill in *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, Draper declared: “[t]he pretended narrative of Colonel Samuel Hammond account, in Johnson’s *Traditions*, has not been relied on.” Evidently, he took issue with the assertion in the Hammond account that the messenger, who arrived with word of Gates’ rout, also brought news of Sumter’s defeat. The latter intelligence, Draper maintained, “did not occur, until several hours later in the day, and in a distant county.” “Colonel Hammond, of course,” Draper continued, “never wrote anything of the kind.” Why he dismissed the Hammond narrative on account of this small inconsistency, while making liberal usage of

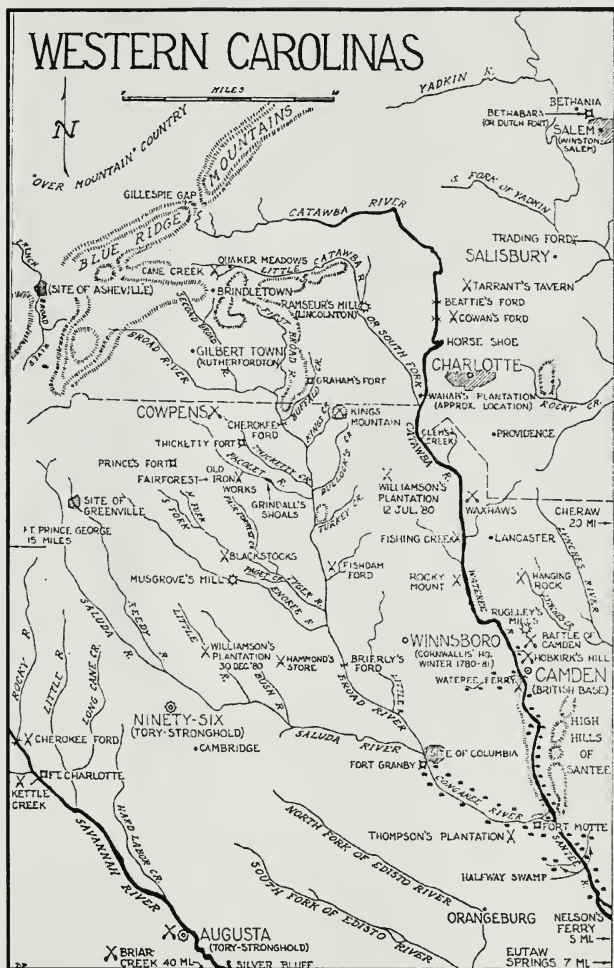
---

<sup>4</sup> For example, notice how Draper uses Philemon Waters’ account of the skirmish between the Whig and Tory patrols at the onset of the battle (see, Logan’s *History*, vol. 2, 73). Waters says only that the American patrol “went down to the river opposite the Tory camp.” Draper, however, has the American patrol crossing “the mouth of Cedar Shoals Creek, then heading “up a by-road to Head’s Ford, where they forded the Enoree” (see Draper, *King’s Mountain and Its Heroes*, 105). Waters continues: “They [the Whig patrol] were returning by the same route, when on top of the ridge, they (encountered) a Tory patrol.” Draper uses this sentence almost verbatim, throwing in Cedar Shoals Creek once again. He also cites the exact same statistics on killed and wounded, which proves he gleaned the details of the initial skirmish from Waters’ account. (On pages 110-113, Draper includes a host of other dubious traditions collected by Logan; see *History*, vol. 2, 33-34, 60, 73-76, 79.)



Shelby and the local traditions collected by John Logan—both of which are replete with obvious and sometimes glaring inaccuracies—is unknown, but it certainly betrays a strange bias. Draper also took exception to Hammond's account of the battle of Cedar Springs, claiming, "it was evidently manufactured from Mill's *Statistics*" and embellished "with some imaginary interlardings, to give it a new appearance." Perhaps his suspicions of the Cedar Springs account prejudiced him against the Musgrove's Mill offering. But unless Draper knew of other, more damaging evidence that he neglected to convey to the reader, his indictment of the Hammond account seems quite hasty, if not arbitrary. The historian J. B. O. Landrum, author of *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*, did not hesitate to incorporate Hammond's narrative into his discussion of the battle of Musgrove's Mill.



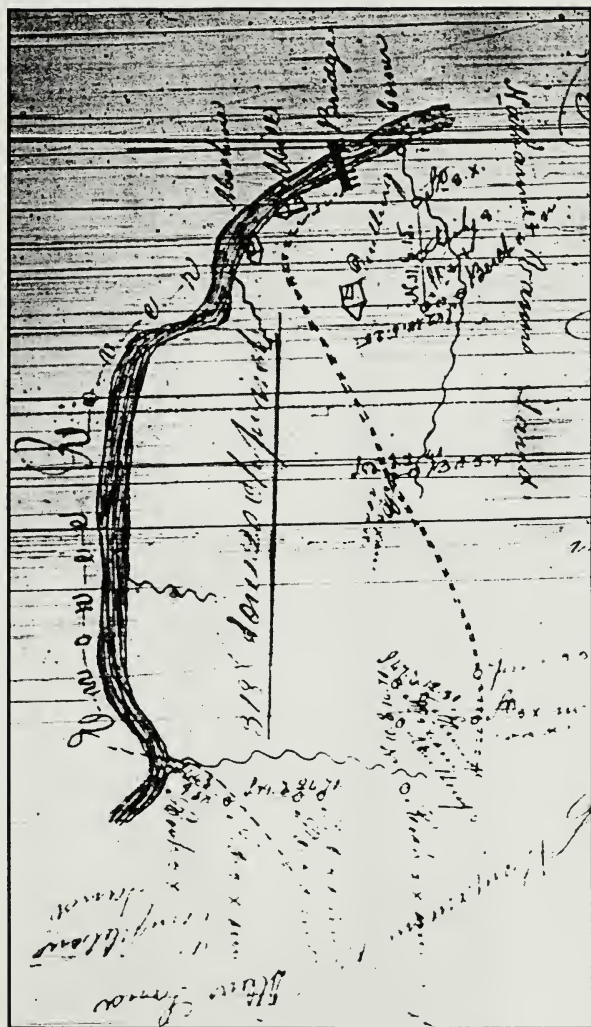


**Figure 1: Map of Western North and South Carolina During the Revolutionary War.**

Found in the endpapers of Mark M. Boatner, *The Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Co., 1966).







**Figure 2: 1840 Plat for 318 Acres Laid Out for William Musgrove on the South Side of the Enoree River.**

Following Edward Musgrove's death in 1790, his wife Ann remarried. Her new husband fell into financial trouble and the couple forfeited the Musgrove's Mill tract to George Gordon. Edward Musgrove's son, William, finally reacquired the property from Gordon's estate in 1840. Note the location of the mill and road, which ran north, passed the dwelling house on the west, and then turned eastward, paralleling the Enoree, before finally reaching a nineteenth-century bridge, presumably built over Musgrove's Ford. (South Carolina State Plats, Columbia Series, Volume 52, 410.)



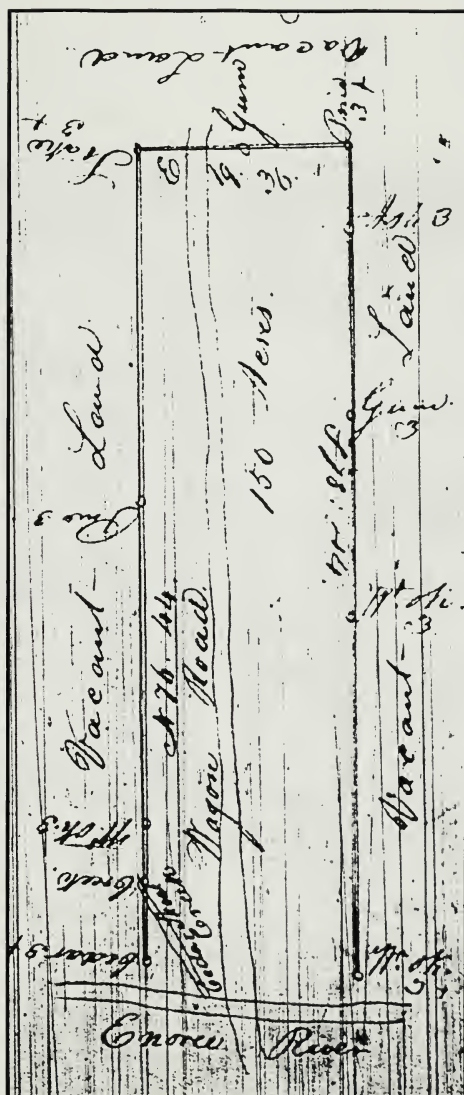
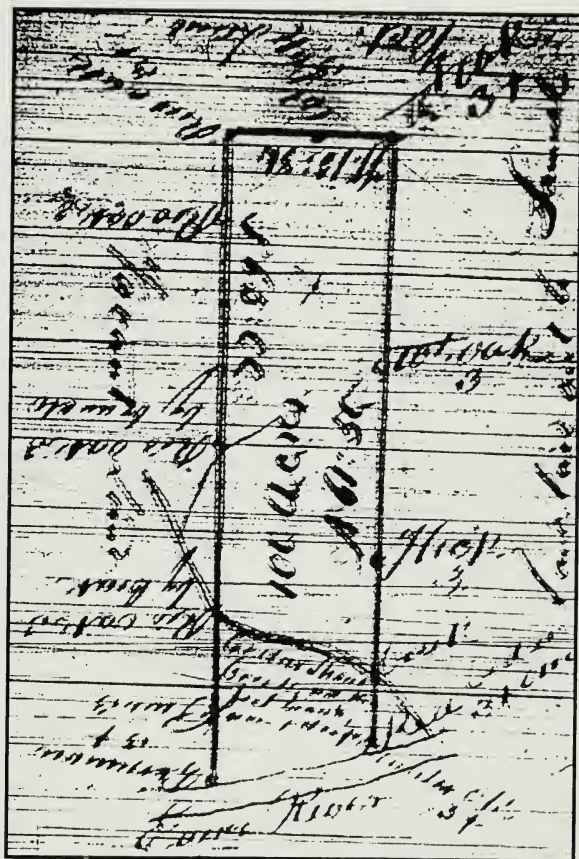


Figure 3: Samuel Chew's 1767 Plat for 150 Acres on the North Side of the Enoree River.

The Chew plat reveals that the "Wagon Road," heading northward, crossed the Enoree River to the east of Cedar Shoals Creek. Thus Musgrove's Ford (no longer visible) was also located east of Cedar Shoals Creek. This plat also demonstrates that Highway 56 (constructed in the mid 1930s) roughly approximates the route of the wagon road on the north side of the Enoree River; compare with Figs. 5 & 8. (South Carolina Colonial Plats, vol. 9, 287.)





**Figure 4: William Hendricks' 1768 Plat for 100 Acres on the North Side of the Enoree River.**

Samuel Chew's land (see Fig. 3) bounded Hendricks' property on the east. Note the location of Cedar Shoals Creek. (South Carolina Colonial Plats, vol. 9, 303.)



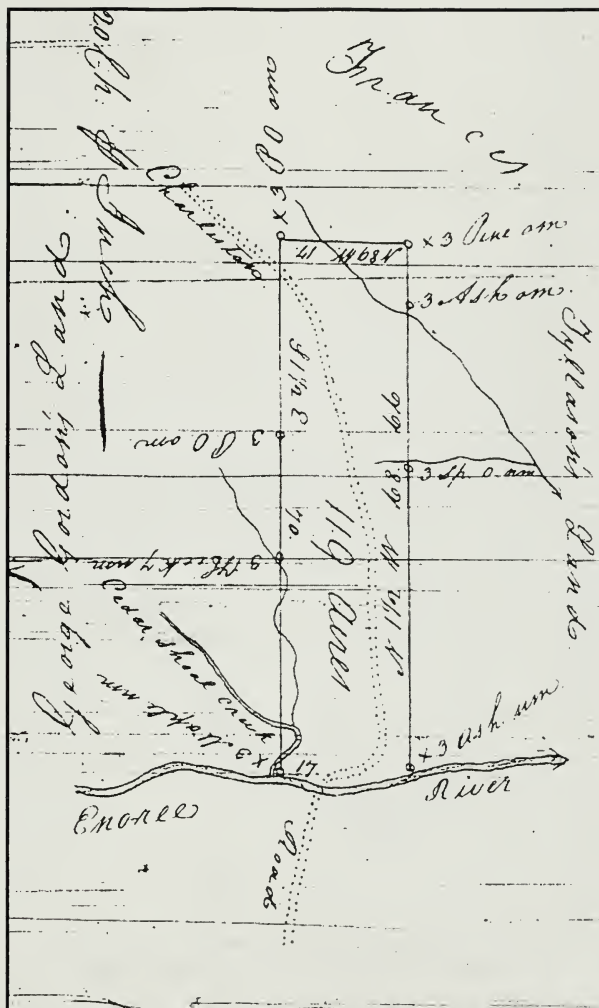
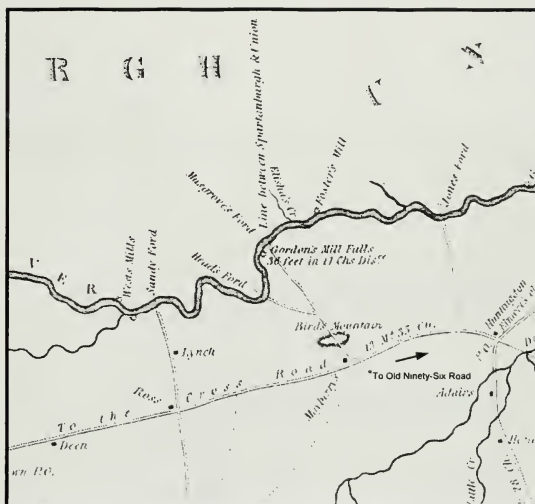


Figure 5: John Pucket's 1804 Plat for 119 Acres,  
Formerly Part of Samuel Chew's Tract.

Whereas the 1767 Chew plat (Fig. 3) depicts the road as a rather conventional set of straight, roughly parallel lines, this 1804 plat delineates a more sinuous route. Also note that the thoroughfare is now distinguished as the "Charleston Road". When compared with modern USGS map (Fig. 7), the mouth of Cedar Shoals Creek appears to have moved east since 1804. (South Carolina State Plats, Columbia Series, vol. 40, 225.)

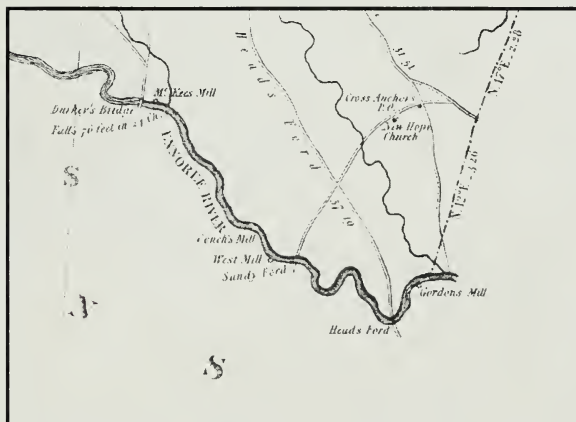






Detail of "Laurens District" in Mills' Atlas (1825).

Scale:  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. = 2 miles



Detail of "Spartanburg District" in Mill's Atlas (1825).

**Figure 6: Details of "Laurens District" and "Spartanburg District" from Robert Mill's *An Atlas of the Districts of South Carolina* in 1825.**

George Gordon acquired Edward Musgrove's property on the south side of the Enoree, including his famous mill, a few years after the latter's death in the early 1790s. For this reason, Musgrove's Mill appears as Gordon's Mill in the above 1825 maps. Musgrove's Ford, however, retained its name and is labeled as such in the "Laurens District" map. These district maps are also of interest for the roads that they represent in the vicinity of Musgrove's Mill. In the full-size version of the "Laurens District" map, the road running due south from Musgrove's Ford terminates into an east-west thoroughfare that connects with the "Old Ninety Six Road." It is likely that Colonel Innes' troops followed the same route from Ninety-Six to Musgrove's Mill.



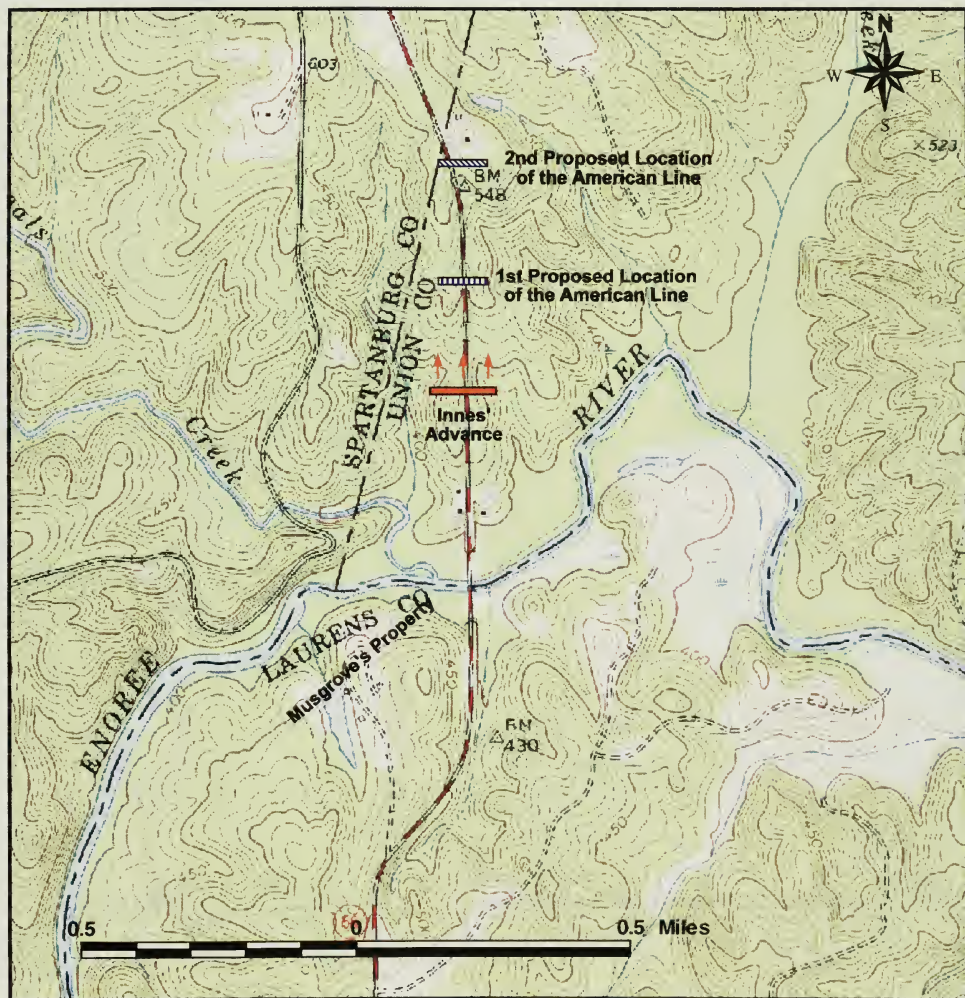


Figure 7: Detail of USGS Quadrangle, "Philson Crossroads," Including the Proposed Locations of the American Battle Line.





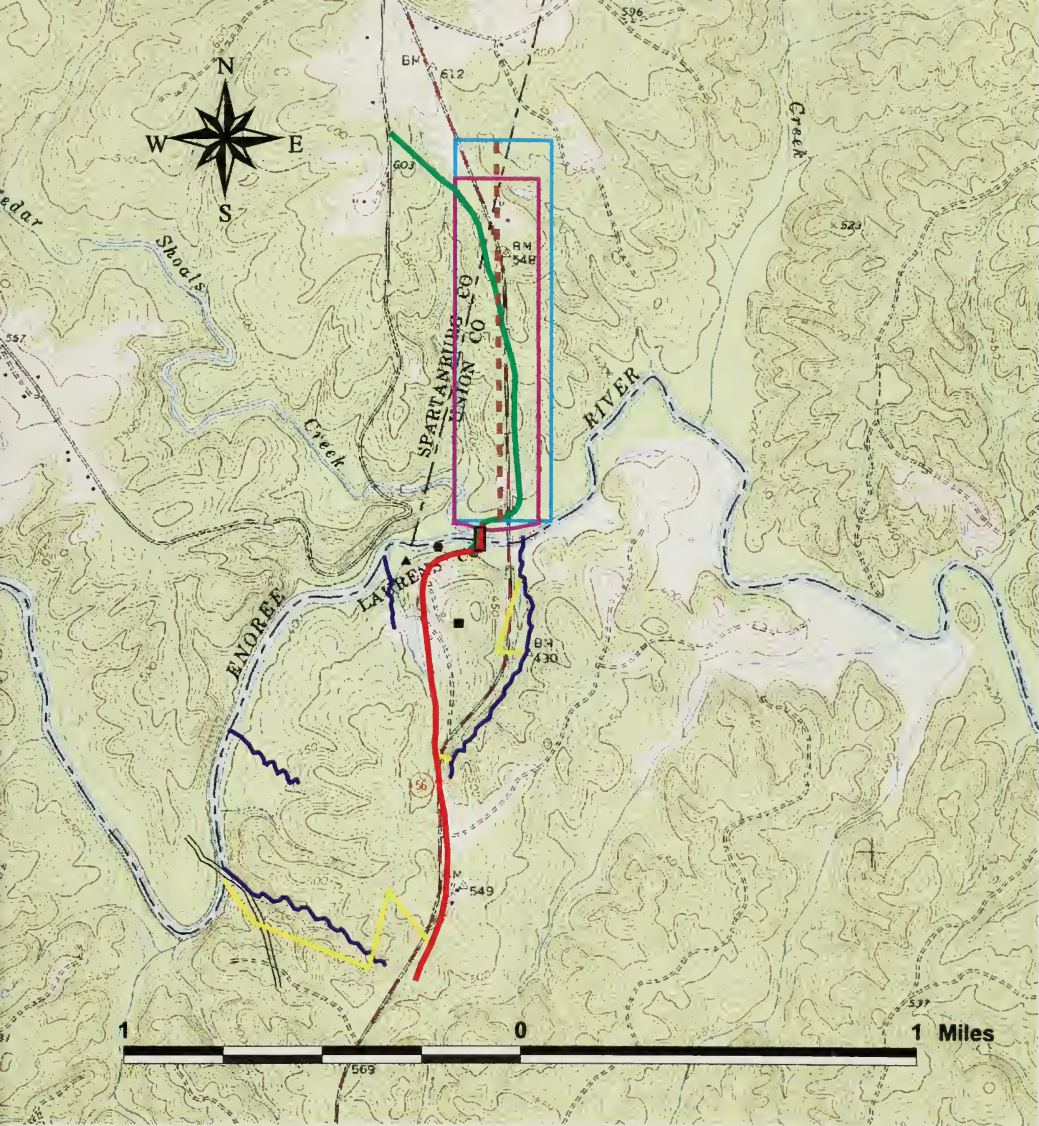


Figure 8: Musgrove's Mill Vicinity (Composite Plat Overlay) 1767-1840

## KEY

- Musgrove's Mill
- 1840 Dwelling
- ▲ 1840 Structure
- ▤ 1840 Bridge
- ▬ Creek
- ▬ Chew 1767 Plat
- ▬ Pucket 1804 Plat
- ▬ Musgrove 1840 Plat
- ▬ 1767 Wagon Road
- ▬ 1804 Road
- ▬ 1840 Road
- ▬ Head's Ford Road

This map is the product of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism and was printed on 4/24/2000. This map was produced with the intent that it be used for historic interpretation at the scale indicated hereon. There are no warranties made as to the fitness of this map for any unlisted purpose or reproduction at any other than the original scale. Boundary lines hereon are not intended to be used as legal boundaries. No SC Registered Surveyor was involved in the production of this map.

Compilation Date: 04/24/2000  
 Author: SCPRRT, State Park Service, JAC & JH  
 Source: Primary: 1767 Plat for Samuel Chew, SC Colonial Plats, Vol 8, 267; 1804 Plat for John Pucket, SC State Plats, Columbia Series, Vol 40, 225; 1840 Plat for William Musgrove, SC State Plats, Columbia Series, Vol 62, 410  
 Source: Secondary: USGS Topographic quads



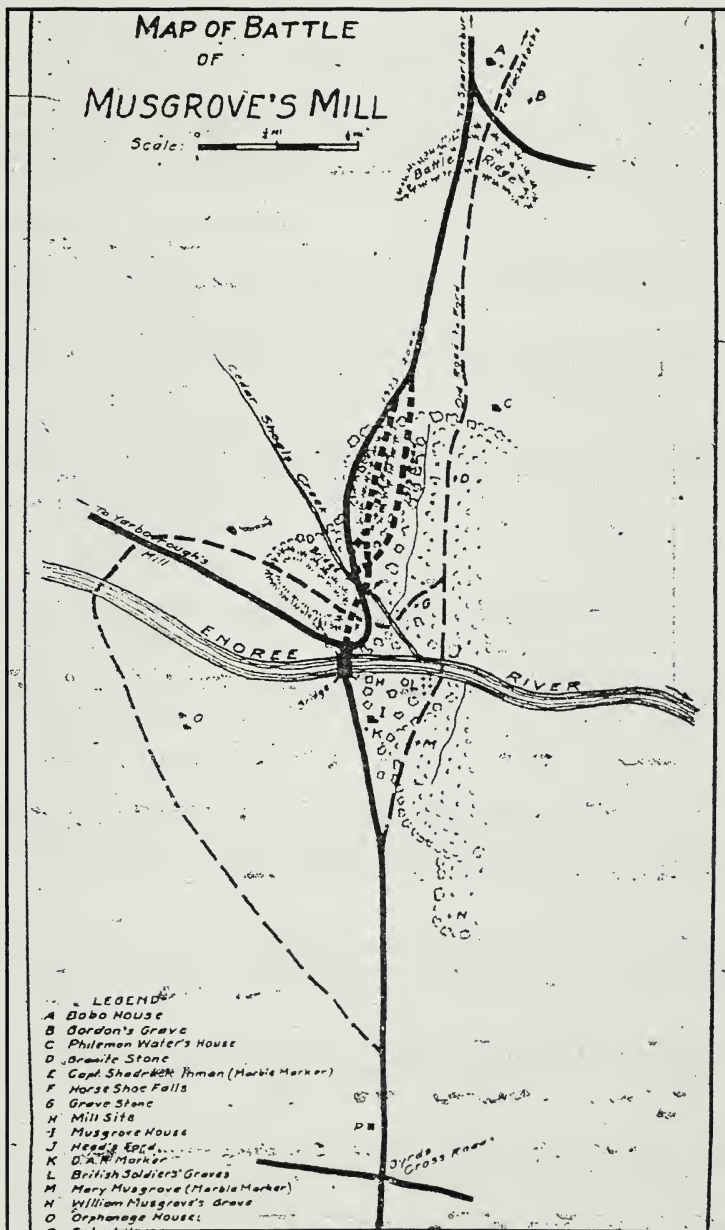


Figure 9: 1926 Map of the Battle of Musgrove's Mill (Conjectural).

This 1926 map, which accompanied William S. Glenn's article on the battle of Musgrove's Mill (see *The Spartanburg Herald*, 18 April 1926), depicts the approximate location of the historic road in addition to twentieth-century roads and other items of interest, such as the burial site of Shadrack Inman.





## Bibliography

<sup>P</sup> Denotes participant accounts of the battle of Musgrove's Mill.

<sup>S</sup> Denotes primary sources that either contain second-hand reports or at least mention the engagement in some capacity.

\* Denotes secondary sources that include descriptions and/or analyses of the battle.

### ***Primary Sources, Unpublished***

South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), Columbia.

South Carolina Colonial Plats, 1731-1775 (mfm).

South Carolina State Plats, Columbia Series (mfm).

Lyman C. Draper Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (mfm).

<sup>S,P</sup> Papers of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, Public Records Office, London, 30/11 (mfm).

Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 (mfm).

<sup>P</sup> Pension and Land-bounty Warrant Application Files Based on Revolutionary War Service (mfm).

Joseph Hughes.

Isaac Larence.

Golding Tinsley.

<sup>S</sup> New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division.  
Emmet Collection.

<sup>P</sup> [Williams, James]. "The Report of Col. Williams." In *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester). 12 October 1780.

### ***Primary Sources, Published***

<sup>S</sup> [Allaire, Anthony.] "Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire of Ferguson's Corps." In Draper, Lyman C. *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*. Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881. Reprint, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1967: 484-515.

<sup>S</sup> [Chesney, Alexander.] *The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After*. E. Alfred Jones, ed. Greenville, SC: A Press, 1981.

Clark, Murtie June, ed. *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War: Official Rolls*. 3 vols. Baltimore: The Genealogical Publishing Company, 1981.

Clinton, Sir Henry. *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782*. William B. Willcox, ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.



[Davie, William R.] *The Revolutionary War Sketches of William R. Davie*, Blackwell P. Robinson, ed. Raleigh: North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, 1976.

<sup>P</sup>[Fanning, David]. *The Narrative of Col. David Fanning*. Lindley S. Bulter, ed., Davidson, NC: Briarpatch Press, 1981.

Gibbes, R. W. ed. *Documentary History of the American Revolution*. Volume 1, 1764-1776. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855. Reprint, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1972.

<sup>P</sup>[Hammond, Samuel]. "Colonel Samuel Hammond's Account of the Battle of Musgrove's Mills." In Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston: Walker & James, 1851): 519-522.

Cooper, Thomas and David J. McCord, eds. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*. 10 vols. Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1836-1841.

<sup>S</sup>Mackenzie, Roderick. *Strictures on Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton's History*. London: R. Faulder, 1787.

<sup>S</sup>Moultrie, William. *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. New York: D. Longworth, 1802. Reprint, New York: New York Times, 1968.

<sup>P</sup>[Shelby, Isaac]. "King's Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby." J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed. In *The Journal of Southern History* 4 (February 1938): 367-377.

Showman, Richard K., ed. *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*. 10 vols. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976-1998.

Tarleton, Banastre. *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*. London: T. Cadell, 1787. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1968.

<sup>S</sup>[Hill, William.] *Col. William Hill's Memoirs of the Revolution*. A. S. Salley, Jr., ed. Columbia: The State Company, 1921.

### **Newspapers**

*South Carolina Gazette* (Charleston), 1780.

*South Carolina and American General Gazette* (Charleston), 1780.

*Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester), 1780.

*Virginia Gazette* (Richmond), 1780.



## Maps

- [1770] "A Compleat Map of North Carolina." John Collet, cartographer.
- [1773] "A Map of the Province of South Carolina." James Cook, cartographer.
- [1775] "An Accurate Map of North and South Carolina." Henry Mouzon, Jr., cartographer.
- [1791] "A Map of the South Carolina Backcountry, Showing the Locations of Revolutionary War Engagements." Rendered by Captain Benson. In the Collections of Spartanburg County's Regional Museum of History.
- [1825] *Mills' Atlas of South Carolina: An Atlas of the Districts of South Carolina in 1825*. Robert Mills, cartographer. Introduction by Charles E. Lee. Columbia: R. P. Wilkins and J. C. Keels, Jr., 1965.
- [1926] "Map of Battle of Musgrove's Mill." Attributed to William S. Glenn. *Spartanburg Herald*. 18 April 1926.

## Secondary Sources: Books, Articles, and Dissertations

- Baker, Thomas E. *Another Such Victory*. Eastern National, 1981. 1998 Printing.
- Babits, Lawrence E. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Bargar, B. D. "Charles Town Loyalism in 1775: The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 63 (July 1962): 125-136.
- Boatner, Mark Mayo. *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. Bicentennial Edition. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. *Landmarks of the American Revolution*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1973.
- Brown, Richard Maxwell. *The South Carolina Regulators*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963.
- \*Buchanan, John. *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the South*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.
- \*[Califf, John W., III], "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form." In Musgrove's Mill File, South Carolina State Parks' Central Office.



Childs, Mrs. L. D. "Story of Musgrove's Mill." *Laurens Advertiser*, 5 July 1911.

Curtis, Edward E. *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution*. New Haven, CT: Yale Historical Publications, 1926.  
Reprint, East Ardsley, England: EP Publishing Ltd., 1972.

\*Dawson, Henry B. *Battles of the United States, By Sea and Land*. Volume 1. New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company, 1858.

\*Draper, Lyman C. *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1780, and the Events Which Led To It*. Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881. Reprint, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1967

Edgar, Walter. *South Carolina—A History*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998.

Higginbotham, Don. *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1971.  
Reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983.

Glenn, William S. "The Battle of Musgrove's Mill." In *The Spartanburg Herald*. 18 August 1926.

Jones, E. Alfred. *The Loyalists of New Jersey*. Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1927. Reprint, Boston: Gregg Press, 1972.

\*Lambert, Robert S. *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

\*Landrum, J. B. O. *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*. Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co., 1897.

\*<sup>S</sup>Logan, John H. *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina*. Vol. 2. Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1980.

\*Lossing, Benson J. *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*. Volume 2. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1855.

\*Lumpkin, Henry. *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981.

\*McCrary, Edward. *History of South Carolina in the American Revolution, 1775-1780*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1901.





- \*Mills, Robert. *Statistics of South Carolina, Including a View of Its Natural, Civil, and Military History*. Charleston: Hurlbut & Lloyd, 1826. Reprint, Spartanburg: The Reprint Co., 1972.
- \*O'Neill, John Belton. *The Annals of Newberry, Historical, Biographical, and Anecdotal*. Charleston: S. G. Courtenay & Co., 1859.
- \*Ramsey, J. G. M. *The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. Charleston: Walker & James, 1853. Reprint, Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1926.
- \*Pancake, John S. *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782*. University of Alabama Press, 1985.
- Pett-Conklin, Linda M. "Cadastral Surveying in Colonial South Carolina: A Historical Geography." Ph. D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1986. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1987.
- Sabine, Lorenzo. *The American Loyalists; or, Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847.
- \*Saye, James Hodge. *Memoirs of Major Joseph McJunkin: Revolutionary Patriot*. First printed in an 1847 edition of the *Richmond Watchman and Observer*. Reprint, Spartanburg, SC: A Press, Inc., 1977.
- Seymour, William. *The Price of Folly: British Blunders in the War of American Independence*. London: Brassey's, 1995.
- Shy, John W. "British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781." In Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds. *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Smith, Paul H. *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (April 1968): 259-277.
- Troxler, Carole W. "The Migration of Carolina and Georgia Loyalists to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick." Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974.



- Ward, Christopher. *The War of the Revolution*. 2 vols. John R. Alden, ed. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952.
- Weigley, Russell F. *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970.
- Weller, Jac. "Irregular But Effective: Partizan Weapons Tactics in the American Revolution, Southern Theatre." In Don Higginbotham, ed., *Military Analysis of the Revolutionary*. Millwood, New York: KTO Press, 1977: 131-144.
- Wheeler, Col. John H. *Historical Sketches of North Carolina, From 1584 to 1851*. Volume 2. Reprint, New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, Publisher, 1925.
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944.





