



"The Battle of Cowpens" by Frederick Kemmelmeyer (1755–1821)

CHARGE!!!

We don't ordinarily view the Revolutionary War as a contest involving several formal, battlefield cavalry charges (as opposed to run on skirmishes and ambushes involving swordsmen on horseback), yet there were several, and even as few and small in size as these were, say compared the Seven Years, French Revolutionary, or Napoleonic wars, a number of them were so decisive that at least one charge, namely that by the Virginia dragoons and South Carolina/Georgia partisans at Cowpens, could arguably be said to have actually decided the fate of the war. This thought prompted me then to attempt to compile a list of mutually head-on confrontations where the dread command was given; with the below being the result of my readings, inquiries, and or reminders furnished by our internet community of historians.

Cavalry Charges by the British:

- * White Plains, 28 Oct. 1776. Two hundred 17th Light Dragoons cause the precipitous rout of a large contingent of rebel militia; though are forestalled by reinforcing Continentals from turning it into a sanguine debacle.
- * Waxhaws, 29 May 1780.
- * Camden, 16 Aug. 1780. Tarleton's horsemen deliver the finalizing *coup de main* to Cornwallis' victory.
- * Cowpens, 17 Jan. 1781. The ambushed and disconcerted assault on the flying militia by the 17th Regt. of Light Horse.
- * Guilford Courthouse, 15 March 1781. Tarleton successfully essays Campbell's riflemen in the latter part of that engagement.
- * Spencer's Ordinary, 26 June 1781. Simcoe's Queen's Rangers are succored by the surprise appearance of a troop of British Legion, under Capt. Ogelvey, and which disorders the Am. flank.
- * Gloucester Point, 3 Oct. 1781. British counter the charge initiated by Duc de Lauzun's Volontaires Étrangers.

By the Americans:

- * Stono Ferry, 20 June 1779. Pulaski's Legion (though the Count himself was not present at the battle) check the advancing British with a gallant charge, thus permitting a safe American withdrawal.
- * Cowpens, 17 Jan. 1781.
- * Road from New Garden Meeting House, 15 March 1781. Tarleton himself describes the charge by Lee's

Legion there as “spirited.”

* Guilford Court House, 15 March 1781. William Washington’s cavalry sends the British guards reeling.

* Gloucester Point, 3 Oct. 1781. Lauzun’s Legion spur forward, with pistols flashing, at the prone and ready Tarleton.

Possibly William Washington’s rash and ill-advised *rush* into the blackjack ensconced British flank companies at Eutaw Springs might be included here, but whether that occurrence can properly be denoted a charge, or seen rather as a slow but nonetheless provocative tactical advance, is a question that perhaps needs to be adjudicated among scholars.

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