

Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina

Annotated by
William Thomas Sherman
-- with added assistance from the staff of
SCAR magazine.

[Set forth below is a reprint of an article that originally appeared in *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XI, No.3, July 1910. The article appears as originally printed except that (1) endnote annotations have been added and (2) SCAR has changed some spellings, capitalization, and punctuations to their modern conventions to improve the readability without losing the voice of the author. Old abbreviations are also written out and words added to simplify readability are in brackets. The footnotes appear as given in the original article except that the numbering thereof has been changed to correct errors in the numbering of the footnotes in the original article.]

The manuscript now printed, was presented to the South Carolina Historical Society in January, 1899, by Professor William James Rivers, through Gen. Edward McCrady. There is nothing to show where the original is to be found, and the only notes upon it are as follows:

"Col. Robt Gray's observations on the War in Carolina— He was Col. of the Provincials, & after the War settled in Nova Scotia."

Gray resided in the Cheraws District, and was a Justice of the Peace for that district in 1766;¹ a Robert Gray was on the roll of a volunteer company of Rangers, Sept. 2, 1775,² from Camden District, if the same he probably went over to the British after 1776.

Robert Gray's property was confiscated by the Jacksonborough Assembly, and he is listed in Class V. in the Statutes at Large, [vol. 6] with "Those who have borne Commissions, Civil, or Military, under the British Government, since the conquest of this Province."

Sabine (*American Loyalists*, p. 335) mentions him as holding a royal commission after the fall of Charleston; and we find in the narrative of Col. David Fanning (*N.C. State Records*, Vol. XXII, p. 2291, a further mention of him in connection with the Loyalists in Charleston.

Gray's "Observations" were evidently written in Charlestown, sometime in the Spring of 1782, certainly after February 25th, and probably prior to the first of April.

GRAY'S OBSERVATIONS

The conquest of Charlestown was attended with the conquest of the backcountry because all the continental troops in the Southern department were taken in that place except the party under Col.

Beaufort³ which was soon after cut to pieces at Waxhaws by Col. Tarlton.¹ The people at that time not much accustomed to arms and finding no troops to support them submitted when they saw the King's troops in possession of the backcountry. Posts were established at Augusta, Ninety-Six, Camden, Cheraw Hill⁴ and Georgetown. The conquest of the Province was complete. The loyal part of the inhabitants being in number about one third of the whole and these by no means the wealthiest, readily took up arms to maintain the British government, the others also enrolled themselves in the militia party because they believed the war to be at an end in the Southern provinces and partly to ingratiate themselves with the conquerors, they also fondly hoped that they would enjoy a respite from the calamities of war – and that the restoration of the King's government would restore to them the happiness they enjoyed before the war began. With these views on both sides, the Whigs and Tories seemed to vie with each other in giving proof of the sincerity of their submission and a most profound calm succeeded. This was not confined only to the Country within the new established posts. The panic of the Whigs and exultation of the Tories produced the same consequences in the backcountry beyond the reach of the posts, the people in many places coming in from the distance of fifty miles to take the Oath of Allegiance or to surrender themselves prisoners on parole. All the inhabitants seemed intent upon cultivating their farms and making money [while] great quantities of produce were sent to Charlestown and great numbers of wagons, even from the mountains, crowded the roads traveling in every direction.

This tranquility was of short duration, the abuses of the Army in taking the people's horses, cattle and provisions in many cases without paying for them, abuses almost inseparable from a military government disgusted the inhabitants. But this was by no means the principal cause of the disorders which followed: they flowed from another source, the disaffection of the Whigs. The establishment of the King's government naturally and unavoidably occasioned an entire change of civil and military officers throughout the province. A new set of men were elevated into power and place whilst their predecessors in office were stripped of their consequence and sent to cultivate their plantations. The pangs of disappointed ambition soon made these men view all our transactions with jaundiced eyes, and as Gen. Gates'⁵ⁱⁱ approach put an end to hopes of tranquility they had at first expected to enjoy, they were in general, especially the militia officers, determined to avail themselves of that opportunity to reestablish themselves in power, never doubting of

¹ *Journal of the General Assembly; March-April, 1776*, Printed by the South Carolina Historical Commission, 1906.

² See Vol. 1 of this *Magazine*, p. 196.

³ Abraham Buford of Virginia. He was appointed colonel of Morgan's 11th Virginia regiment May 16, 1778. On 29th May, 1780, his command was surprised and cut to pieces by Col. Tarleton at Waxhaw Creek. They had set out for Charleston to relieve Gen. Lincoln, but hearing of his surrender, were on the return march.

⁴ [The following note is in the Mss. Copy.] This post was withdrawn before the battle of Camden & never afterwards reestablished.

⁵ General Gates arrived on the confines about the end of July, 1780.

Gen. Gates being able to effect it, as like other men they eagerly wished for. Lord Cornwallisⁱⁱⁱ with great sagacity foresaw what followed. He instantly ordered all the leading Whigs who had been paroled to their plantations to Johns and James Island.

A great number obeyed while others went off and met Gen. Gates. The approach of the army seemed to be a signal for a general revolt in the disaffected parts of the backcountry, but the speedy and successful issue of the action at Camden⁶ put an end to it immediately, and restored tranquility to the country.

Lord Cornwallis made some severe examples of the revolvers,⁷ a measure which was become absolutely necessary to deter others from the same conduct, as many of those who had taken up arms again had never had the smallest cause of complaint, but had been treated with every mark of attention and respect by the King's officers. A universal panic seized the rebels after the Battle of Camden and had Lord Cornwallis had a sufficient army to have marched into North Carolina and have established posts in his rear at convenient places to preserve his communication with South Carolina and to prevent the rebels from assembling in arms after he had passed along, North Carolina would have fallen without a struggle, but the smallness of his numbers soon turned the tide against him. He marched from Camden to Charlotte with his army and at the same time directed Major [Patrick] Ferguson,⁸ who although he knew his danger and was ordered to join the army, yet after retreating 60 miles he loitered away two days most unaccountably at Kings Mountain and thereby gave time to the rebel militia under the command of Gen. Williams⁹ to come up with him, the rebels were greatly superior in number.

⁶ Battle fought near Camden. August 16 1780.

⁷ See Cornwallis's unjust order, McCrady, 1775-1780, pages 709-710.

⁸ Patrick Ferguson, brevet lieutenant-colonel, major 71st Highlanders, inventor of the first breechloading rifle used in the British army, born 1744; (second son of James Ferguson of Pitfours, Aberdeenshire, Senator of College of Justice, and one of the lords commissioners of justiciary for Scotland, by his wife, Hon. Anne Murray, daughter of Alexander, 4th Lord Elibank.) Patrick Ferguson was ordered to Georgia from Stonypoint, with the troops under Major-General Pattison, royal artillery, which penetrated into South Carolina, where he was employed under Tarlton (sic, Tarleton) at the Siege of Charleston. On 26th Oct., 1779, Ferguson was appointed major in one of the battalions of the old 71st Highlanders, then serving in America. After the Siege of Charleston he was actively employed in organizing and training the loyal militia of South Carolina. With the army so raised he accompanied Lord Cornwallis in his march through the Carolinas. He was killed at King's Mountain Oct. 7, 1780. *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁹ James Williams, born in Hanover Co., Va., in 1740, killed at King's Mountain, Oct. 8, 1780. He settled on Little River, Laurens district, S. C. in 1773; was member of the Provincial Congress of S. C. in Jan. 1775; was appointed lieut.-col. of militia in 1776, commanded a detachment at the battle of Stono June 20, 1779; defeated the British and Tories at Musgrove's Mills, 18th Aug., 1780, and rewarded by Gov. Rutledge with a commission of Brigadier General. McCrady's *History of S. C.*, vols. 1719-'76 & 1775-'80.

He had about 600 militia and 60 regulars, and action ensued¹⁰ in which our militia behaved with a degree of steadiness and spirit that would not have disgraced any regular troops. And the rebels were repulsed three times, but having changed their mode of attack and made an attempt on a small party of North Carolinians on our flank who were not so well disciplined as the South Carolinians succeeded in breaking them. They [soon] communicated the disorder to the others and at this critical moment Major Ferguson fell. A total rout ensued.

This unfortunate affair gave a new turn to the war. All the country on Lord Cornwallis' rear was laid open to the incursions of the enemy, who, if they had made a proper use of their victory might have taken both Ninety Six and Augusta, nevertheless the consequences were very important. Lord Cornwallis was obliged to retreat and take a position at Winsburg¹¹ in the fork of Santee between the Wateree and Congaree Rivers, that he might be at hand to succor Camden and Ninety Six and to cover the country within these posts.

This gave new spirits to the rebel militia on the Western & Northern frontiers, who began to turn out in great numbers and with more confidence. They were led by Sumpter^v and Marion^v who had both been field officers in the South Carolina State troops. [Actually, both had also been Continental officers.] The former commanded on the Western frontier between Camden and Ninety Six and the latter on the Northern betwixt Santee and Pee Dee [Rivers].

Both these countries were highly disaffected to us and the people wanted only leaders. It was therefore those people who formed and supported Sumpter and Marion and not any superiority of genius in those officers that formed and called for the militia in those parts. Sumpter was bold and rash, and run many risks, from which his good fortune always extricated him. Marion was timid and cautious and would risk nothing, yet both succeeded in their attempts. During all this time the Continental troops in general kept a cautious distance and chiefly made use of Sumpter and Marion, who began to grow exceedingly troublesome and established a decided superiority in the Militia line – Major Ferguson's loss was now severely felt. The officers of the royal militia being possessed themselves nor were able to inspire their followers with the confidence necessary for soldiers. While almost every British officer regarded with contempt and indifference the establishment of a militia among a people differing so much in customs and manners from themselves. Had Major Ferguson lived, the militia would have been completely formed. He possessed all the talents and ambition necessary to accomplish that purpose and set out exactly in that line, he therefore would have achieved with the inhabitants of the country what the other British officers can only effect with important [regular] soldiers. The want of a man of his genius was soon severely felt and if ever another is found to supply his

¹⁰ The Whigs had a combined force of 1100 men, the whole number of mounted men chosen to attack Ferguson were 910, besides a squad of unmounted footmen.—McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780*, p. 784.

¹¹ Cornwallis's army arrived at Winnsboro Oct. 29, 1780.—*Ibid.*, page 810.

place he will go great lengths towards turning the scale of the war in our favor.

The want of paying sufficient attention to our militia produced daily at this time the most disagreeable consequences. In the first place, when the rebel militia were made prisoners, they were immediately delivered up to the regular officers, who, being entirely ignorant of the dispositions and manners of the people, treated them with the utmost lenity and sent them home to their plantations upon parole and in short they were treated in every respect as foreign enemies. The general consequences of this was that they no sooner got out of our hands than they broke their paroles, took up arms, and made it a point to murder every militia man of ours who had any concern in making them prisoners. On the other hand whenever a militia man of ours was made a prisoner he was delivered not to the Continentals but to the rebel militia, who looked upon him as a State prisoner, as a man who deserved a halter, and therefore treated him with the greatest cruelty.

If he was not assassinated after being made a prisoner, he was instantly hurried into Virginia or North Carolina where he was kept a prisoner without friends, money, credit, or perhaps hopes of exchange. This line being once drawn betwixt their militia and ours, it was no longer safe to be a loyalist in the frontiers. These last being overwhelmed with dismay became dejected and timid while the others increasing in boldness and enterprise made constant inroads in small parties and murdered every Loyalist they found whether in arms or at home. Their irruptions answered the descriptions we have of those made by the Goths and Vandals.

Whilst the inhabitants of Charles Town were amusing themselves with the aspect of the war in the different quarters of the globe, the unfortunate Loyalist on the frontiers found the fury of the whole war let loose upon him. He was no longer safe to sleep in his house. He hid himself in the swamps. It was perfectly in vain to take a prisoner, he was either liberated upon parole to commit fresh murders and depredations, or if his character was very notorious, he was sent in irons to Charles Town, where after some months confinement, the witnesses against him not appearing, being deterred by the distance and uncertain of the time at which he would be brought to trial, he pestered the principal officers here with petitions until he was turned loose again, irritated with his confinement, to murder more Loyalists. The effect of all this was that the Loyalist, if he did not choose to retire within the posts, a ruined Refugee either joined them openly or gave them private intelligences of the movements of our parties for which he enjoyed real protection and was safe to go to sleep without danger of having his throat cut before morning. Had our militia been certain of being treated as prisoners of war by the enemy, many more would have sided with the royal standard.

It may be said that bad treatment will make them desperate. It has at length had that effect, but for a long time it produced a very contrary one as they did not care to expose themselves in situations pregnant with every danger -- and where they fought under peculiar disadvantages. The case of the regulars was very different. When made prisoners they met

with the mildest treatment and were always sent to Charles Town upon parole and exchanged.

This mismanagement of the King's officers proceeded from their want of knowledge of the manners of the people. They sometimes interposed in behalf of the militia, and hanged notorious murderers, but these efforts were not sufficiently frequent to produce any effect. Nothing will ever be able to put our militia here on a proper footing, but giving up to them all the rebel militia when prisoners to be dealt with according to the laws of retaliation, subject however to the control of the commander in chief in the Southern department. The regulars although they take perfect care of their own interests in war, will never take the same care of the militia. It is against all experience. No class of men will consider the interests of another class so attentively as they do their own.

About this time [January 1781] Lord Cornwallis being reinforced by Gen. Leslie^{vi} marched into North Carolina [the "race to the Dan River"], but before the subsequent transactions are mentioned it will be proper to take notice of the situation of our affairs in South Carolina at this period.

[Col. Francis] Lord Rawdon¹² was left commanding officer on the frontiers. His Head Quarters was Camden where he had about 800 men, a body sufficient to afford a detachment superior to the united forces of Sumpter and Marion, especially when to that were added about five hundred men under command of Colonel Watson¹³ who lay at Wright's Bluff.^{vii} Besides the other posts at Ninety Six and Augusta, a new one was added at Friday's Ferry on the Congaree River betwixt the frontier of these places and Camden. These covered the western frontier. A chain of small posts were erected from Camden along the Santee to Monks [Monck's] Corner, to preserve the communications to Charlestown. The first from Camden was the Fort at Motte's house upon the South side of the Congaree River about three miles from the fork of Santee and about a mile from McCord's Ferry. The second was Fort Watson at Wright's Bluff on the north side of Santee about 30 miles down the river. The third was at Nelson's Ferry^{viii} on the South side of Santee about 40 miles below McCord's ferry, and 20 [miles] from Monk's Corner, which last was on Cooper River and 30 [miles] from Charles Town.

The stores for the army at Camden were sent by water from Charles Town to Monks Corner,

¹² Francis Rawdon, (1754-1826,) first Marquis of Hastings and second Earl of Moira; was appointed Oct. 20, 1773, to a lieutenantancy in the 5th foot, embarking for America. After service in the north and the Siege of Charlestown, he was employed in keeping the Americans in check until the arrival of Lord Cornwallis, and on 16th Aug., 1780, commanded the left division of the British forces at the battle of Camden. On April 25, 1781, he defeated the Americans under the command of General Greene at Hobkirk's Hill. Rawdon was a stern martinet, and was guilty of several acts of unpolitic severity during the American war. He went so far as to set a price on the head of every rebel. He showed remarkable military ability, and Cornwallis, in his *Correspondence*, vi. p. 97, describes his victory at Hobkirk's Hill "as by far the most splendid of this war."—*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 25, p. 117.

¹³ Col. John Watson; see McCrady, *Revolution 1780-1785*, pages 18, 107, et seq.

from thence waggoned [sic] to a landing on [the] Santee [River] near Nelson's Ferry where they were embarked in boats for Camden. There was no post port? R]¹⁴ to the Northward of Charles Town except Georgetown. The rebel militia under Sumpter and Marion were now highly elated, and made no doubt of Lord Cornwallis and his army being *burgoyned* if he should attempt to follow Gen. Greene into North Carolina, while they reckoned themselves able to cope with Lord Rawdon. This will not appear surprising when it is known that they were so grossly ignorant that at the distance of forty miles from Camden they were continuously made to believe that Gen. Wayne^x or some other officer had invested Camden, that Lord Rawdon had not much more than 800 and Gen. Leslie had been driven out of Virginia with great loss, by a vast army there which was the cause of his coming to South Carolina.

Full of these ideas and confident of being on the strongest side, they were ready for any enterprise; accordingly they were daily joined by many men of influence who had been a few months before admitted to become British subjects, after they had earnestly petitioned for that purpose, which however they only did to prevent their estates from being sequestered whilst their political sentiments remained unaltered, in the same manner as many of our friends go into the country at present and submit to the rebels to save their estates from confiscation.

Daily inroads were now made across the Santee [River] and scarce a public wagons [sic] escaped to Nelson's Ferry.^x Almost all the public boats on the Santee [River] were destroyed and the communication with Camden was almost at an end.

All the loyal inhabitants at Ninety Six district being about one half and living partly betwixt Broad and Saluda rivers, commonly called the Dutch [a corruption of Deutsch or German] Fork, and in other places of that district, all the inhabitants of Orangeburg District from a few miles to the Southward of Santee [River] to the Saltkethers [River], being almost unanimous in favor of government were the friendly parts of this province on the South side of [the] Santee [River], the rest were enemies while Sumpter and Marion gave great uneasiness to our posts in their reach, one McKay¹⁵ another partisan about Savannah River, and Col. Clark¹⁶ of the ceded lands in Georgia harassed the country near Augusta. The rebel militia were now bold elated, their Partisans had hitherto escaped every attempt made to crush them and they were all become familiar with danger.

A few months before this when any party of troops marched into their country they were so alarmed that they retired back for 50 or 60 miles or hid themselves in the swamps, but now when in a similar situation, if unable to oppose the troops in the field they kept hovering round them in small parties, picked up stragglers and fired upon them from every swamp. The troops were obliged to act with caution and to keep their pickets. The loyal inhabitants were

still dejected and not sufficiently used to arms. On the frontiers they were continually harassed with small murdering parties of rebels, but in Orangeburg they were in profound peace; upon the whole however they could not in general be trusted upon any expedition themselves. While the rebel militia were every day growing more troublesome, the loyal inhabitants of Little Pee Dee [River] had become in their turn extremely troublesome to Marion and his brigade. They inhabit the country betwixt the North side of Pee Dee [River] and North Carolina in one direction and from the Cheraw Hill to Waccamaw Lake in the other. Their numbers are about 500 men fit for war. They had arms put into their hands when the post was established at Cheraw Hill before Gen. Gates arrival.^{x1} When that post was withdrawn to Camden at his approach they were the only people on the North side of Santee [River] who did not join in the general revolt. The inhabitants of Williamsburg "Township" not yet headed by Marion made an unsuccessful attempt to crush them and they have ever since stood their ground.

They carried on a continual predatory war against the rebels and sometimes surprised them at their musters. In short, they carried on the war against the rebels precisely as they had set the example and as the post at George Town supplied them with arms and ammunition they overawed and harassed Marion's brigade so much that he was obliged to leave the inhabitants of the Cheraw District at home to protect their properties while he could only call out the people of Williamsburgh Township and the neighborhood of George Town; when a small party of rebels ventured among them they were cut to pieces—when a large body invaded them, which they found they could not withstand, they hung in small parties on their skirts, harassed them with false alarms, killed their sentries, drove in their pickets, and soon compelled them to leave the country. It may not be improper to observe that the rebel militia did not at all times turn out voluntarily under their leaders, for when they were averse to an expedition they compelled them on pain of death and there have been often severe examples made of them. On the other hand the Little Pee Dee men only defended their own country and never went upon a more distant expedition than to Georgetown. The rebel militia from Bladen County in North Carolina at times also harassed the loyal inhabitants of Little Pee Dee [River], but with little effect.

Lord Cornwallis had now marched into North Carolina,¹⁷ and Major [James Henry] Craig took post at Wilmington. If I have time I shall mention in general terms the subsequent transactions of the militia in that province where about one half of the inhabitants are our friends.

Lord Rawdon had no sooner taken command than he found employment from Gen. Sumpter.

That Partisan called a general muster of his people and told them that Lord Cornwallis has gone into North Carolina – to seek a grave for himself and his army, that Lord Rawdon had only 300 men at

¹⁴ This insertion is in the copy, and was probably made by Professor Rivers.

¹⁵ Rannall McKay; see McCall's *History of Georgia*, p. 515..

¹⁶ Col. Elijah Clark, of Georgia.— [Often spelled Clarke, ed.]

¹⁷ He began his march northward on the 19th of January, 1781—McCrary, *So. Ca. in the Rev., 1780-1783*, page 92.

Camden and could not detach a man, that by making a sudden march to the Congaree they would surprise the Fort^{xii} where they could get a quantity of stores and clothing – that by proceeding down the South side of Santee River they would be joined by McKay from Augusta,^{xiii} by Marion from Williamsburgh Township, that a general revolt would ensue that all communications being cut off betwixt Camden and Charles Town, Lord Rawdon would be compelled to evacuate that place and leave the back country, which would put an end to the war, and might be effected in a fortnight's time after which they might return and plant their crops in peace forever after. This seemed so plausible that they set out in highest spirits being about 300 men. They failed in surprising the Congaree Fort,¹⁸ but invested it closely, not dreaming that Lord Rawdon could attempt its relief. In the third day they learnt that Col. Doyle^{xiv} with the Volunteers of Ireland was crossing the river at a ford about 8 miles above. They were obliged to raise the siege and marched down the South side of the river expecting to be joined by Marion who was to cross the Santee [River], and not expecting that the troops would follow them any distance from Camden. After they had proceeded about 20 miles they got a fresh alarm, they learned that Major M'Intosh^{xv} with the 64th Regiment, the cavalry of the New York volunteers and a field piece was upon the march, from Camden to McCord's Ferry after them, and that a detachment of troops and militia from Ninety Six was approaching from that quarter, to add to their misfortune a party they had sent down the Congaree River to secure all the flats, canoes and boats there and on Santee for the purpose of crossing the river and making a junction with Marion, this party was surprised by some militia and regulars they had made prisoners, and all the boats etc. carried to our post at Wright's Bluff.^{xvi} Sumpter's ruin seemed inevitable. He was left in an enemy's country with a large deep river before him, which he must cross to effect a retreat. In this dilemma Major M'Intosh advance guard came in sight of his rear about 5 miles below [Rebecca] Motte's house. To the astonishment of the whole province Maj. Mintosh instantly retreated about 4 miles, where he lay looking on, while Sumpter, having got two small canoes, carried his men and swam his horses across [the] Santee [River] unmolested, although it took up two days to effect it. Having crossed [the] Santee, they [Sumter and his men] thought themselves safe, but they now found that Col. Watson^{xvii} and 500 men were just at hand. By a rapid march they got clear of him when they found that Lord Rawdon with his own regiment was hurrying over from Camden after them. Being all mounted they gave his lordship the slip and got above him on their way home to the Waxhaws, certain that all danger was over. In this they again were disappointed. Lord Rawdon finding they had out marched him sent for Major Frazer¹⁹ of the South Carolina Regiment^{xviii} to march with it and intercept them at Lynch's Creek.^{20xix} They had just crossed the

creek when Maj. Frazer came up with them who attacked them and routed their whole body in a few minutes.^{xx} They were now exceedingly dejected; instead of 300 men under Lord Rawdon's command they had seen so many different detachments of troops superior to their whole force that they despaired [sic] of success and notwithstanding Sumpter who had carried off a number of Negroes, offered one to every person who would enlist for ten months as a dragoon to form a body of state cavalry, he could hardly procure a single recruit and he began to grow extremely unpopular. They raise so great a clamor against him for deceiving them with regard to Lord Rawdon's strength that he was obliged at a muster to enter into a long vindication of his conduct. All this however was ineffectual, and Marion's followers began also to lose all hopes. In short South Carolina seemed to be on the eve of peace. The transactions that succeeded I shall pass over only observing that Lord Rawdon adopted the plan of giving up all the rebel militia who were not prisoners of war to be tried by our militia. The plan ought to have been extended to all the rebel militia without exception. At this period Gen. Greene^{xxi} invaded this province: what followed is publicly known. The more Lord Rawdon's conduct is investigated the more blameless he will appear. We soon lost great part of the backcountry, the cruelty exercised by the rebels on our militia exceed all belief. Lord Rawdon finding, he could not bring Greene to action embarked for England on account of his health.²¹

The battle of the Eutaws²² quickly followed^{xxii} and our army lay in the neighborhood of Monck's Corner [at Colleton's Fairlawn Barony] within 37 miles of Charles Town and abandoned the backcountry. The rebels determined that no Tories should live among them, ordered them and their families within the British lines or in other words to Charles Town. At this time, or rather just after Lord Rawdon sailed, the Loyalists seemed to have acquired a new character, their situation and sufferings had made them desperate, they became familiar with danger and acquired the use of arms. According to the usual theory of this war, it might have been expected that all the country above our army must have revolted and turned their arms against us and I make no doubt that almost all the inhabitants of Charles Town who wrote England at this time represented the whole country was in the enemy's hands, as in general they are perfectly ignorant of the backcountry: the mistake may be natural, but this was so far from being the case that from this place to what is now called the Ridge betwixt Saluda and Edisto Rivers on the road to Ninety Six on one hand and from a few miles to the Southward of Santee to the Salkehatchie [River] on the other, the inhabitants refused to submit to the rebels although left by the army and surrounded at almost every hand the enemy who were in possession of Ninety Six district and the disaffected inhabitants of the Forks of Santee [between the Congaree and Wateree Rivers] the country betwixt Salkehatchie and Savannah Rivers and all the rice lands from thence to

¹⁸ Fort Granby, Sumter arrived there Feb. 19, 1781.—McCrary, 1780—83, page. 105.

¹⁹ Probably Thomas Frazer of S. C., who was a major of the S. C. Loyalist.—Sabine, American Loyalists.

²⁰ "6 March 1781 McCrary 1780-'83, p. 111."

²¹ "August 2, 1781.—McCrary 1780-'83, p. 424."

²² September 9 [sic, 8], 1781.—Ibid. p. 748.

Ashley River in short, the whole province resembled a piece of patch work, the inhabitants of every settlement, when united in sentiment being in arms for the side they liked best and making continual inroads into one another's settlements. The country betwixt Cooper River and Santee as far as Monck's Corner seemed to be in dispute, the inhabitants at the greatest distance from the garrison taking up arms and the others who were more in reach although friends in their hearts to the rebels, yet not being used to arms refused to turn out when called upon by Marion, and compounded the matter by paying fifty silver dollars in lieu of a year's service. This was in September when Gen. Greene lay at the High Hills of [the] Santee [modern Stateburg, SC]. When our army came to the Quarter House^{xxiii} and Gen. Greene crossed the Santee, the rebels made them turn out to a man, without regard to the contributions they had paid. The district of Ninety Six being all this while much divided in sentiment suffered severely. The Tories in many places would neither submit nor go to Charles Town, they hid themselves in the swamp, from whence they made frequent incursions upon their enemies. When opposed by a superior force they dispersed, when the storm blew over they embodied again and recommenced their operation. A petty partisan [war] started up in every settlement and headed the Whigs or Tories, both parties equally afraid of the other, dared not sleep in their house, but concealed themselves in swamps, this is called lying out. Both parties were in this condition in general all over Ninety Six District and every other part of the province wherever it was checkered by the intersection of Whig and Tory settlements.

Ninety Six district also suffered severely by the incursions of the loyal refugees, from the mountains on the one hand and from Charles Town on the other. As it had no great river or other natural boundary to defend it, nothing could prevent these incursions in a country covered with woods and "penetrable in every part." The cruelties of the Whigs exercised upon the Tories, which seemed to be carried to their utmost excess under the auspices of Gen. Greene when he invaded the province, were now returned upon them with interest, and both parties in this petty, but sanguinary, war displayed prodigies of military skill and address and seemed to breathe the extirpation of their enemies. In a large rebel settlement at a distance from a Tory country, the people were at peace except upon the alarm of a Tory invasion, and the center of Orangeburg District being in the heart of an extensive friendly country, was also at peace, the people sleeping safely in their houses, nay they enjoyed so much tranquility that many of the loyal refugees who came from Ninety Six as late as August and September stopped in that country at the distance of 100 miles from Charles Town and leased plantations. The inhabitants there used to say that if our army kept off Gen. Greene they could defend themselves. In November Gen. Greene crossed the Santee and our army retreated to the Quarter House, giving up the whole country. Greene sent Gen. Sumpter with a detachment of 400 men to take post at Orangeburg [May 1781] and to reduce that country. He published a general pardon to all who would submit except two. Our friends there did not upon this

determine to submit. Maj. Giessandanoer,^{xxiv} the commanding officer there sent an express to Gen. Leslie requesting assistance, in the mean time kept Sumpter pretty much within his pickets, but unfortunately no assistance could be given them. After a few weeks the people disheartened by being unsupported gradually made a submission to the enemy, but the war was now too far advanced and both parties too much irritated against each other to coalesce easily. It was no uncommon thing for a party to submit and in a few days to turn their arms against their new master. The swamps were filled with Loyalists, the rebels dare not sleep in their houses, and Sumpter irritated by the hostility of the Country, got the Catawba Indians to track the Loyalists from the swamps, which were at the same time traversed by large parties of armed rebels to kill or take the Tories. Giesandanner was made prisoner and without the least regard to the established cartel, he was thrown into the common jail, stripped to his shirt and breeches and threatened to have his two sons, boys about 10 or 12 years old carried of and made drummers to a continental regiment. He was therefore under the necessity of submitting to them. Our friends from thence and other parts of the country are daily taking refuge in this place and it is certain that such as have submitted are more irritated than ever and eagerly disposed to revolt, while the rebels themselves disgusted with the abuses of Gen. Greene's army and their own government find in many places that they have not changed masters for the better. The Loyalists on [the] Little Pee Dee [River], alarmed at the evacuation of George Town last June, entered into a truce for three months with Marion who gladly embraced the opportunity of disarming a hardy and intrepid race of men whom he had never been able to crush and which would enable him to call the inhabitants of Big Pee Dee [River area] and the Cheraws District from the defense of their properties to augment his brigade, besides they were so powerfully backed by the extensive loyal country in North Carolina and countenanced by the post at Wilmington that he had nothing to hope from force therefore agreeing to the truce was removing a most troublesome thorn from his own side—at the end of three months the truce was renewed for nine more which expired the 17th of June next. When the truce was first made the inhabitants of the Northern parts of that country furthest [sic] removed from Marion's adherents, refused to accede to it – looking upon it as a timid and ignominious measure, and blamed Capt. Ganey^{xxv} the officer who made it with Marion. They accordingly put themselves under Maj. Craig's^{xxvi} command at Wilmington and continued in arms; but upon the evacuation of that post they found it their interest to accede to it. That country is the only place in these two provinces, except Charles Town and James Island where British government is at present established. They muster regularly once a month agreeable to our militia law and have a general muster once in three months. At their particular request Lt. Col. Balfour^{xxvii} commandant of this place has lately appointed Justices of [the] Peace among them, a regulation highly necessary to enable them to ascertain disputed property. They often come to this place in boats and the commandant always loads them

back with salt gratis and supplies them with ammunition. Marion has behaved with great good faith towards them and ordered his people when they stop any of their boats to suffer them to pass unmolested unless they find ammunition aboard.

The country comprehended in the truce has furnished a safe asylum for the loyal refugees from North Carolina who are suffered to settle among them upon promising to observe conditions of the truce.

This has given great umbrage to the North Carolina rebels. Gen. Rutherford^{xxviii} who commands the militia brigade from Mecklenburg and Salisbury is a perfect savage and bears the most rancorous hatred to Tories. He has lately made a peremptory demand that all North Carolina refugees shall be delivered up. This requisition our officers there with great spirit have refused to comply with, declaring that no peaceable man who applies to them for protection and observes the conditions of the truce shall be delivered up. I expect shortly to hear that hostilities have ensued. In the mean time our friends there are in great spirits, being much elated with the King's speech and with the check Marion received lately from Col. Thomson.^{23xxix}

Upon hearing of this last affair they had public rejoicing for three days. At present they seem determined to repel force by force, but being totally unsupported they are unequal to the contest. When they fall they will give but a small accession of strength to the enemy as they will never be able to get them to do any duty which is at present an indispensable preliminary with all who join them. Want of room prevents me from saying anything with regard to North Carolina where on behalf of the people are our friends and where with only the countenance of 300 British troops in Wilmington the Loyalists had like to have overturned the rebel government. A sufficient proof of the fallacy of that kind of reasoning which in a war of this nature, where every man is a soldier, estimates the strength of the country from the number of regular troops of which an army is composed, without regarding the dispositions of the inhabitants of the country which is the seat of war. By attending to this we shall be able to account for the success of the royal cause in North Carolina and in some measure the misfortunes that attended it here.

In the above remarks I have only mentioned such circumstances of the ill fortune that attended our exertions, exclusive of Cornwallis' fall. The want of a sufficient concurrence on the part of the people compelled Lord Rawdon to leave the backcountry after having missed of crushing Greene's army. To that and to Gen. Greene invading the province when we had not a sufficient force to meet him in the field and at the same [time] to persevere our outposts, we are to attribute the loss of the country. Had Lord Cornwallis followed Greene to the Southward or had the reinforcements from Ireland arrived a month sooner, in either of these cases, we should have had an army in the field superior to Greene and all our posts would have been safe, which would have soon crushed any internal insurrection that

took place; and we should have been in the same situation as we were before Lord Cornwallis marched into North Carolina – when he lay at Winnsboro and obliged Greene to keep a respectful distance at Waxhaws. But not having a sufficient army in the field enabled Greene to reduce our outposts especially as Lord Rawdon had not sufficient warning of Lord Cornwallis going into Virginia, which prevented him from withdrawing his posts in time to form a sufficient army – but even if he could have effected this issue the measure would have been ruinous because removing the posts would have laid open the whole country to the enemy.

The re-enforcements not having arrived until the posts were broke up rendered their re-establishment impossible without crushing the enemy's army.

Should offensive measures be attempted here with a view to reduce the country the enemy's army must be destroyed or driven away, posts must be established and an army kept on the frontiers to prevent any attempts from the Northward, and the militia must be embodied. I am aware that the general opinion of the merchants in Charles Town is that every person must be disarmed and the protection of the country left to the troops only. If I had time I could demonstrate this to be impossible. Every man must take a side if he submits to our government, if he is adverse to personal service let him find a substitute or pay a stipulated sum in money. This is method the rebels have adopted. Let these men serve six months properly regimented and in the meantime let the militia who stay at home do patrol duty to preserve internal peace. Whenever this Militia is formed, the life of a militiaman when a prisoner must be considered to be as sacred as that of a regular soldier. The rebel militia when prisoners must be at the disposal in the first instance of the royal militia with the approbation of the Commander in Chief. Before the reduction of Charlestown, the loyalists promised I suppose great assistance in which they were sincere— but men cannot be taken from the plough and made veterans in a short time. This is only to be acquired by hard service and long experience. The Loyalist in this Province, as well as the Southern parts of North Carolina—have now reached that point. If every army take the field they will give a powerful assistance. Ninety Six and Orangeburg Districts would be recovered by their own inhabitants and they would not be easily dispossessed again. Indeed whatever the issue of the campaign might be, it would be the most calamitous period that ever this Province saw, for the loyal refugees inflamed with the loss of their properties and relations and Loyalist who have now submitted, irritated with the indignities and abuses if a government they hate, would make severe retaliations. Every man exclusive of his attachment to the Common Cause would have a number of private injuries to revenge. The same appearances would take place in North Carolina, but on a much larger scale as the loyalists there are so much more numerous.

The above observations have fallen far short of the idea I wished to convey but before I conclude I cannot avoid remarking that all our friends who come in at present from the country are prodigiously irritated against the enemy.

²³ “Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford; this defeat of Marion's men took place Feb. 25, 1782—McCrary, 1780-'83, pp. 603-605.”

After staying sometime in town they become often dissatisfied and disgusted and many of them go out and submit.

But they have no sooner submitted in a fit of pique than they return to their former principles from the insults and indignities they suffer from the enemy—every man of whom if he has lost any property by any part of the British army in which the other served, compels him on pain of death to make restitution, so that many of them are wholly ruined besides many after receiving pardon are killed by those who have them in bondage.

[END]



William Thomas Sherman, a Seattle-based, independent writer and historian, with a long standing amateur interest in the southern campaigns of General Nathanael Greene, is the author of *Calendar and Record of the Revolutionary War in the South: 1780-1781*, which is currently available as a free download

at <http://battleofcamden.org/sherman.htm>. You can write him at 1604 NW 70th St., Seattle, Washington 98117 or wts@gunjones.com

ⁱ Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) was a British cavalry officer much vilified for his allegedly excessively brutal tactics in fighting the Whigs. Anthony J. Scotti, Jr., *Brutal Virtue: The Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton*, Heritage Books, Inc., Bowie, Maryland, 2002. Tarleton left his own record of his activities in America during the Revolution and that record is still available in print. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., North Stratford, New Hampshire, Reprint Edition, 1999.

ⁱⁱ Horatio Gates (1728/9-1806) was born in England and served as an officer in the British Army. He was with Braddock at his defeat in the French and Indian War. He became a friend of George Washington and settled in Virginia. Upon the outbreak of the Revolution, he was commissioned as a Brigadier General in the Continental Line. He was credited with the defeat of Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga while commanding the Northern Department of the Continental Army. Promoted to Major General, he was sent to command the Southern Department in the summer of 1780 and suffered a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Camden in August of that year. On December 2, 1780 in Charlotte, he was replaced by Continental Major General Nathanael Greene as commander of the Southern Department. Mark M. Boatner, III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 1994)(hereinafter cited as Boatner, *Encyclopedia*), 412-415.

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles, second Earl and first Marquis, Cornwallis (1738-1805) was a Lt. General, commander of the southern department of the British Army (under the overall command of Sir Henry Clinton) from June 1780 until his surrender at Yorktown in October 1781. Franklin B. Wickwire and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis, the Imperial Years* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1980).

^{iv} Thomas Sumter (1734-1832) was a lieutenant colonel in the 2nd (later, 6th) Rifle Regiment of South Carolina state troops in the spring and summer of 1776. Sumter and his

regiment were later transferred to the Continental Line. He resigned his commission as a Continental officer on September 19, 1778 and remained inactive until after the fall of Charleston in May 1780. He was promoted by Governor John Rutledge to the rank of Brigadier General in October 1780 and thereafter was the ranking officer of the South Carolina militia until the end of the war. Robert D. Bass, *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of General Thomas Sumter* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1961); Anne King Gregorie, *Thomas Sumter* (R. L. Bryan Company, Columbia, South Carolina, 1931).

^v Francis Marion (c 1732-1795) held the rank of captain of the Second Regiment of South Carolina State Troops in June 1775. This unit was taken into the Continental Line. Marion was promoted to major in November 1775; to lieutenant colonel in September 1776; and to colonel in September 1780. In addition, in late 1780, SC rebel Governor Rutledge promoted him to the rank of Brigadier General in the South Carolina militia. He led his men into numerous skirmishes and engagements with the British after the fall of Charleston and earned the nickname of "Swamp Fox." Robert D. Bass, *Swamp Fox: The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (Sandlapper Publishing Co., Inc., Orangeburg, South Carolina, 1974).

^{vi} Alexander Leslie (1740-1794) was a British army major general. He participated in the battles of Harlem Heights, White Plains and Princeton in the Northern theater of the Revolution. After bringing Lord Cornwallis re-enforcements in December 1780, he accompanied Cornwallis on his invasion of North Carolina in 1781 and commanded the British right flank at the Battle of Guilford County Court House. In July 1781, the British commander-in-chief, Henry Clinton, detached Leslie from Cornwallis and ordered him to Charleston. Upon the British surrender at Yorktown, he succeeded Cornwallis as commander of the British army in the South. He supervised the British withdrawals from Savannah in July 1782 and from Charleston in December 1782. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 617-8.

^{vii} Fort Watson built on top of an ancient Indian mound on the north bank of Scott's Lake, an oxbow lake of the Santee River.

^{viii} Nelson's Ferry was located on the south bank of the Santee River at the mouth of the small creek from Eutaw Springs.

^{ix} Anthony Wayne (1745-1796), a Continental Brigadier General, was nicknamed "Mad Anthony." He was one of America's most competent commanders during the Revolution. He served mostly in the northern theater of the war, but he did march south with his troops to reinforce Nathanael Greene in January 1782. He and his troops were almost immediately, however, detached to conduct the Georgia Expedition freeing Georgia from British/Loyalist rule. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1175-1177.

^x Battle of Nelson's Ferry or Battle of Great Savannah (August 20, 1780) [Directions: I-95 Exit 102, take State Road 400 east approximately 4.5 miles.] The stage for this battle was set when Cornwallis defeated Gates at the Battle of Camden on August 16, 1780. About 150 Continental soldiers were taken prisoner by the British at Camden. Prior to the battle at Camden, Gates ordered SC militia Col. Francis Marion to roam the Santee River burning boats in order to isolate Camden from Charleston. He was successfully engaged in this task when he learned of the defeat at Camden. He learned that a small detachment of the 63rd Regiment of Foot supported by a small number of provincials from the Prince of Wales American Regiment was holding the Continentals prisoner at Thomas Sumter's home near Nelson's Ferry. Marion attacked killing or capturing twenty-three of the escorts and releasing all the prisoners. Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Two: 1780*, (N.p.: Blue House Tavern Press,

Booklocker.com, Inc. 2004) (hereinafter cited as O'Kelley, *Slaughter 2*), 293-296.

^{xi} Lord Cornwallis dispatched Maj. Archibald McArthur and the 71st Regiment of Foot to Cheraw Hills in June 1780 to be recalled to Lynch's River and then to Camden in August 1780.

^{xii} Fort Granby at Congaree Stores, modern Cayce, SC.

^{xiii} Evidently Capt. Rannall McKay, also called "McCoy," is meant.

^{xiv} Welbore Ellis Doyle (c. 1752-1797) was a Lieutenant Colonel of the Irish Volunteers provincials and served under Lord Cornwallis at Camden. In March 1781, he participated in the successful attack on Marion's camp at Snow Island. <http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/friends/doyle.html>.

^{xv} Maj. Robert McLeroth commanded the 64th Regiment of Foot, a British regular army unit. He and his unit had previously encountered SC Patriot militia Gen. Francis Marion and his forces at Halfway Swamp on December 13, 1780, without significant casualties on either side. O'Kelley, *Slaughter 2*, 384-386.

^{xvi} The reference is to the skirmish at Fort Watson on March 1, 1781, between forces commanded by Sumter and British and Provincial forces under the command of Lt. Col. John Watson Tidwell-Watson. Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Three: 1781*, (N.p.: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2005)(hereinafter cited as O'Kelley, *Slaughter 3*), 103-105.

^{xvii} John Watson Tidwell-Watson (1748-1826) Lt. Col. commanded the "Provincial Light Infantry," a unit consisting of six detached Provincial Light Infantry Companies taken from The Loyal American Regiment, The Kings American Regiment, DeLancey's Brigade (3rd Battalion), and the New Jersey Volunteers (1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions). There is an excellent short biographical note on him posted at

<http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/friends/watson.html>.

^{xviii} South Carolina Royalists provincial troops.

^{xix} This reference is to modern Lynch's River, at Radcliff's Bridge, east of Bishopville, SC.

^{xx} The skirmish at Radcliff's Bridge occurred on March 6, 1781. O'Kelley, *Slaughter 3*, 112-114.

^{xxi} Nathanael Greene (1742-1786), Major General, was the commanding officer of the Southern Department of the Continental Army from December 2, 1780 when he assumed command from Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates in Charlotte, North Carolina, until the end of the War. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 453.

^{xxii} The battle of Eutaw Springs occurred on September 8, 1781. O'Kelley, *Slaughter 3*, 335-356.

^{xxiii} It is located about 5 miles up the peninsular from the historic area of Charleston, SC near I-26 and Dorchester Road.

^{xxiv} Captain Henry Giesendanner was the commanding officer of a troop of mounted militia and provincials at Orangeburg. Clark, Murtie June. *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, 1781*, Vol. 1, 201.

^{xxv} Major Micajah Ganey. A copy of Ganey's truce proposal to Marion is set forth in R. W. Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution: Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the Contest for Liberty. Chiefly in South Carolina, From Originals in the Possession of the Editor, and Other Sources*, 2 vols. (1857; reprint, Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1972).

^{xxvi} James Henry Craig (1749-1812) Lt. Col. in the 82nd Regiment of Foot and the commanding officer of the British garrison occupying Wilmington, North Carolina. In November 1781 following Lord Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, he withdrew his garrison from Wilmington.

^{xxvii} Nisbet Balfour (1744 - 1823) Lt. Col. of the 23^d Regiment of Foot, was the commander of the British forces in Charleston, South Carolina from the summer of 1780 until

his return to England in October 1782. Prior to assuming command at Charleston, Balfour commanded the garrison at Ninety Six.

^{xxviii} Griffith Rutherford (1731-c1800) Brigadier General of the NC Patriot militia commander from North Carolina. He played a significant role in the Cherokee War of 1776; he commanded the troops (but not himself present) that defeated the Tories at Ramseur's Mill in June 1780; and he commanded a brigade at the Battle of Camden on August 16, 1780. He was captured at Charleston and held as a prisoner of war until he was exchanged in June 1781. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 953.

^{xxix} The skirmish at Tydiman's Plantation occurred on February 25, 1782, between forces commanded by Marion and Col. Benjamin Thompson [later known as Count Rumford] commanding the British forces. Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Four: 1782*, (N. p.: Blue House Tavern Press, Booklocker.com, Inc., 2005), 35.