



Tarleton Tightens the Noose Around Charlestown Neck: Biggin Bridge, April 14, 1780

C. Leon Harris and Charles B. Baxley

In the spring of 1780 British land forces crossed Ashley River and besieged Charlestown, South Carolina, the most important city in the South and key to their “southern strategy” for winning the Revolutionary War. Virtually the entire Continental armies of Virginia and the Carolinas were in the city, and their only hope for resupply, reinforcements, and escape was by the Cooper River to the east. Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton intended to dash the Rebels’ last hope with a predawn attack on Biggin Bridge.



Figure 1. The British siege as conceived 80 years later by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887). Charlestown (now Charleston) is in the middle distance, flanked by the Cooper River on the left and Ashley River on the right, and with the Atlantic Ocean in the far distance.

The First Attempt to Capture Charlestown

Charlestown was a city of extravagant wealth that grew out of rice fields built by the labor and skill of slaves. Charlestown was so important that the British had made two earlier attempts to capture it, both involving officers who were instrumental in the 1780 action near Biggin Bridge, which will be described beginning on page 18. The first attempt came even before the British captured New York and Philadelphia, and before America declared its independence. On June 28, 1776, British ships tried to blast their way past Fort Sullivan (now Fort Moultrie) on Sullivan's Island. At the same time, land forces under General Sir Henry Clinton (1730-1795) planned to cross Breach Inlet from Long Island (now Isle of Palms) and attack the incomplete fort from the rear. (Fig. 2)

Suffering with Clinton for a miserable two weeks on Long Island in preparation for the crossing was Brigadier General Charles, Lord Cornwallis (1738-1805). Although described as “a man of diminutive appearance and having cross eyes,” he was a capable commander and more inclined than Clinton to engage the enemy.¹ Also with Clinton and Cornwallis was Lieutenant Colonel James Webster (1743?-1781) in command of the 33rd Regiment of Foot. Webster would later serve in the New York campaign and at the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey.² With South Carolina's Col. William Moultrie in command, the palmetto log revetments and sand walls of Fort Sullivan withstood the naval bombardment. The simultaneous Battle of Breach Inlet failed when the tidal inlet was found to be too deep for Clinton's forces to cross in the face of American troops and artillery commanded by Col. William Thomson.

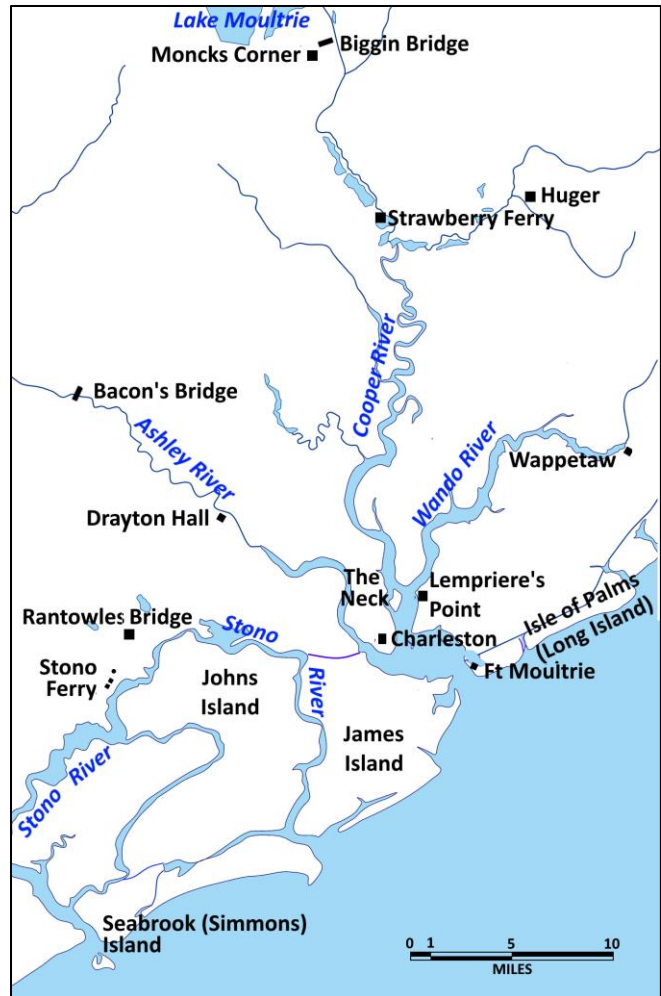


Figure 2. Current map showing major locations in this paper. In this and other maps in this paper, north is toward the top.

The Second Attempt to Capture Charlestown

In February 1778, Clinton was appointed Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America. By then France had allied itself with America and was threatening British interests elsewhere, draining men and resources from North America. While Clinton was withdrawing his army from Philadelphia to the more defensible city of New York on June 28, 1778, his American counterpart, George Washington, attacked his rear

¹ The description of Cornwallis is by Sarah Benjamin in her pension application W4558. She saw Cornwallis in Yorktown after his surrender. Cornwallis suffered an injury to one eye while playing hockey as a student at Eton, but if

portraits are to be believed, Benjamin's description of the deformity is exaggerated.

² <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/webster-james>

guard at Monmouth Courthouse. It was the last significant battle in the North.

With the war stalemated in the North, and under pressure from deposed Royal Governors in exile and Loyalists in America, the British turned their attention once more to the South. Testing a new Southern Strategy on December 29, 1778, the British captured Savannah, Georgia, with few casualties. Augusta fell a month later with little resistance. The second attempt to capture Charlestown in May 1779 was part of this renewed southern strategy. Charlestown had always been strongly fortified against Spanish, Indian, and French attack, and taking it would not be easy. The second attempt was timed to take advantage of the absence of Major General Benjamin Lincoln, who had marched the Southern Department of the Continental Army to relieve Augusta. (Fig. 3)



Figure 3. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln (1733-1810) by Charles Willson Peale, 1784.

Lincoln had risen to the rank of Major General in the militia of Massachusetts and assisted in saving Washington's army during its retreat from New York. He entered the Continental Army in February 1777. At Saratoga in the following October a musket ball shattered his ankle, but by September of 1778 he was able to take command of the Southern Department.

While Lincoln was advancing toward Augusta, Gen. Augustine Prevost led his troops from Savannah, pushing Gen. Moultrie before him to the gates of Charlestown. There Prevost demanded that South Carolina Governor John Rutledge surrender the town. Rutledge was ready to surrender Charlestown's citizens on parole (promise of no armed resistance), but Gen. Moultrie strongly disagreed. The standoff was resolved on May 12, when Prevost was shown an intercepted letter from Lincoln informing Moultrie that he was on his way back to Charlestown. Prevost escaped being pinned between the forces of Lincoln and Moultrie by slipping away in the night. To cover his retreat along the coast to Georgia, Prevost posted troops on the north side of Stono River at the Stono Ferry landing, where they erected three redoubts of earthworks surrounded by abatis (tree limbs with sharpened branches). On June 20, Lincoln led an assault against the redoubts, but his troops were hindered by a stream and the abatis, and the British did not leave the safety of the redoubts for battle.³ Lincoln abandoned the attack after seeing the causeway in the marsh on Johns Island filled with redcoat reinforcements.

With Lincoln at the Battle of Stono Ferry were three officers who were also at the attack at Biggin Bridge in the following year: Gen. Isaac Huger, Maj. Pierre-Jean-François (Peter) Vernier, and Col. Daniel Horry. At Stono Ferry Isaac Huger (Fig. 4) led the South Carolina Continentals on the left

³Harris, C. Leon. "The Battle of Stono Ferry – June 20, 1779," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 1,

no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 7-20. <http://www.southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/v1n4.pdf>

wing.⁴ The Hugers, descendants of French Huguenots, were wealthy owners of Rice Hope Plantation on the west branch of the Cooper River near Strawberry Ferry, six miles west of the community that still bears the family name. After studying in Europe, Isaac Huger fought in the Cherokee War of 1761. That military experience and his social standing were sufficient early in the war to secure him a commission as colonel and regimental commander of the 5th Regiment of Carolina Provincial Troops (riflemen). By the fall of 1776 his regiment was attached to the Continental army. Isaac Huger was promoted to Continental brigadier general on January 9, 1779 to fill the vacancy left by BG Christopher Gadsden in 1777. At the Battle of Stono Ferry he apparently performed ably.



Figure 4. Gen. Isaac Huger (1742-1797).

Pierre-Jean-François (Peter) Vernier (1736-1780) was a wounded veteran of the Seven Years War in Europe. Like many other Europeans driven by idealism or a quest for glory, Vernier made himself known to Benjamin Franklin in Paris, and Franklin

recommended him to Congress. In 1777 on his way to joining the American cause, the British captured his ship in the West Indies, and he was briefly imprisoned in St. Augustine. After reaching America he received a commission as major and was assigned to the Legion (combined cavalry and infantry) of Gen. Kazimierz (Casimir) Pulaski. At the Battle of Stono Ferry Pulaski's Legion was kept in the rear as a reserve until near the end, when they guarded the retreating Americans.

Near Pulaski in reserve was Col. Daniel Horry commanding a corps of South Carolina Light Dragoons that had existed for only four months. (Fig. 5) Horry (pronounced Oree) was the son of a prominent French-Huguenot planter. He had previously commanded militia at the Battle of Breach Inlet in 1776.



Figure 5. Col. Daniel Horry (1747-1785) by artist Jeremiah Theus.

⁴J. D. Lewis. https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot_leaders_sc_isaac_huger.html. The two syllables of Huger are pronounced like the letters U and G in English.

From September 24 until October 19, 1779, Lincoln and French naval forces besieged Savannah but failed to dislodge the British. In the siege Huger commanded the militias of South Carolina and Georgia, and Pulaski led the cavalry. On October 9 in a desperate attempt to take a redoubt, Pulaski was wounded, and he died two days later. Major Vernier succeeded Pulaski in command, but by early 1780 there were fewer than three dozen troops remaining in the Legion.⁵

The Third Attempt to Capture Charlestown

On December 26, 1779, Gen. Clinton with about 8,700 troops sailed from New York in a fleet of over 110 warships and merchantmen commanded by Admiral Mariot Arbuthnot to begin the third attempt to capture Charlestown. With Clinton were Gen. Cornwallis, Col. James Webster, and two other British officers who would later be key players in the action at Biggin Bridge: Maj. Patrick Ferguson and Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton.

Patrick Ferguson, a Scotsman and a soldier since his teens, entered the Revolutionary War in 1777 armed with a breech-loading rifle that he had designed. (Fig. 6) Soon afterward he was shot in the elbow at the Battle of Brandywine. Previously he had declined to shoot a prominent officer, who may have been George Washington, because his back was turned. He was not so generous at Little Egg Harbor in New Jersey on October 15, 1778, when he ordered his troops to bayonet 50 of Pulaski's men while they were sleeping without guards posted. Ferguson blamed the massacre on Pulaski for his "neglect of measures necessary for their security."⁶

Banastre Tarleton was only 25 when he sailed with Clinton and Cornwallis as a provincial lieutenant colonel. (Fig. 7) His early life inspired little expectation that he would rise through the ranks so quickly. In 1773 while a student at Oxford



Figure 6. Patrick Ferguson (1744-1780).

preparing for a career in law, Banastre's father, a mayor of Liverpool, died, leaving him £5,000. He quickly blew the inheritance on women and gambling. In 1775 his mother bought him a commission as a cornet in the British cavalry, and he sailed for America. Tarleton did not have to pay for future commissions, but earned them by, among other exploits, helping to capture Gen. Charles Lee at Basking Ridge NJ with his pants down (literally). Cornet Tarleton was present during the first attempt to take Charlestown in 1776, and he later fought at Brandywine and other

⁵ C. Leon Harris. Enlistments, muster rolls, and pay rolls of Gen. Pulaski's Legion, March 1779 to November 1780. <http://revwarapps.org/b222.pdf>.

"A deserter came in last night, a German, one of the Corps that was Pulaskies. They ly about 11 Miles from Stono, only 32 in number." February 20, 1780, entry in diary of John Peebles: in John S. Salmon, "A British View of the Siege of Charleston: from the Diary of Captain John Peebles February

11 - June 2, 1780." (MA Thesis, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1975), 24.

⁶ Ferguson, writing as "Egg-Shell," *The Royal Gazette*, publ. by James Rivington, New York, November 7, 1778. <http://www.silverwhistle.co.uk/lobsters/ferguson.html>.

actions, in one of which he was wounded. By the end of 1779 Tarleton commanded the British Legion. In spite of its name, the British Legion was a provincial regiment, manned by American Loyalists recruited in New York and Pennsylvania.



Figure 7. Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) by Sir Joshua Reynolds. (detail)

The voyage from New York normally took 10 days, but foul weather lengthened it to five weeks. The horses ran out of forage and drinking water, and most had to be thrown overboard. After stopping at Savannah to organize and resupply, the British landed on Simmons Island on February 11, 1780.⁷ Not a single American was there to oppose the landing, “[f]or no one, either in the countryside or in the army, had believed that any person would think of landing in this area and marching toward Charlestown from this side.”⁸

⁷ Simmons Island is now Seabrook Island; Fig. 2.

⁸ Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 198.

⁹ Malmédy signed his name simply as Malmédy.

¹⁰ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/malmedy-marquis-de>

¹¹ Pension application of James Mackey S16940. Testimony by Gen. Joseph Graham and Jonas Bradshaw in pension

On the next day Gen. Lincoln convened a council of war and asked, “Do you think it expedient that all, or any part of our army go out and meet the enemy and attack them, as we may have opportunity on their march to town?” All the officers but one answered in the negative. The possible routes by which the British could approach Charlestown were too many to be covered by the troops available, who were busy preparing defenses closer to the city.

The one officer in favor of taking the fight to the British was Col. François Lellorquis de Malmédy (ca 1750-1781), a Frenchman about whom much more will be said.⁹ Malmédy had been accepted as an officer on the recommendation of Gen. Charles Lee with the warning that “You must excuse his heat of temper at times.”¹⁰ After serving under Pulaski at the siege of Savannah, Malmédy commanded a series of infantry and cavalry units. He played major roles in several important battles, and was apparently well liked by his troops. More than 200 of them remembered him in their pension applications half a century later. Although he was a Continental officer, the troops under him were generally North Carolina militiamen who served tours of only two or three months. At the Battle of Stono Ferry, Malmédy was on the right in command of a makeshift light-infantry battalion.¹¹ In the words of Jacob Miller:

our Company was transfer’d to a regiment of light-infantry under the Command of Col. Malmady (a French man) & Magor John Nelson of the North Carolina line until about two weeks after the Battle of Stone [sic] in which Battle I was were I done my best to kill some of the Hessians then in the British service & pay but the were in the Fort and

application of James Hillan S38028. Pension application of Jacob Miller S7229. Daniel Merritt (W7441) stated that Malmédy’s troops were “in the front and centre of the Stono Battle,” but the Hessians were on the American right. Malmédy’s corps lost two killed and nine wounded <http://revwarapps.org/b354.pdf>. Transcriptions of all pension and bounty-land applications cited in this paper are available at <http://revwarapps.org>.

hard to hit the kill'd several of our men that I afterwards saw dead I received no wound, about two weeks afterwards the Regiment was dissolv'd

After receiving intelligence that the British had landed, Lincoln sent Malmédy to investigate, but there was no attempt to prevent their crossing Stono River to the mainland. With a slave boy as guide, Capt. Johann Ewald's Hessian riflemen (jägers) and Col. James Webster's 33rd Regiment searched Johns Island for a crossing, but neither the Germans nor the British had anyone fluent in the boy's Gullah language. The difficulty in communicating may have led to Ewald's and Webster's troops finding themselves on the causeway at Stono Ferry across from the Americans at the redoubts and in range of their rifles, if they had them. Ewald described their predicament:

Each of us silently wished to get out of this affair with honor, but we were in a column on a narrow causeway between impassable morasses that formed the right bank of the Stono River, which separated us from the enemy. In this situation it depended on the enemy to shoot us to pieces. Hereupon the colonel ordered the column to turn back. We marched back safely; the enemy did not fire a shot, and we certainly didn't want to fire any! We reached the causeway safely, laughed heartily, and were astonished over the strange behavior of the enemy.¹²

We shall see that this was not the only strange behavior by the Americans.

The Americans at Stono Ferry were under the command of Col. Daniel Horry, who had been sent "to watch the British foraging parties, and prevent

as far as practicable their depredations on the planters in that section of Country." British Lt. Anthony Allaire described the depredations as follows:¹³

Col. Ferguson [sic: Maj. Patrick Ferguson] got the rear guard in order to do his King and country justice, by protecting friends, and widows, and destroying Rebel property; also to collect live stock for the use of the army, all of which we effect as we go, by destroying furniture, breaking windows, etc., taking all their horned cattle, horses, mules, sheep, fowls, etc., and their negroes to drive them.

Col. Malmédy was one of the officers then under Horry's command, as was Maj. Vernier with the 30-some horsemen remaining from Pulaski's Legion. They were soon joined by Maj. John Jameson and Lt. Col. William Washington from Virginia with detachments of Continental light dragoons. Like Horry and Vernier, Jameson and Washington would later be at Biggin Bridge, a focus of this paper.

John Jameson served throughout the Revolutionary War, beginning as a captain in the Culpeper District Battalion of Minute Men.¹⁴ (Fig. 8) After serving at the Battle of Great Bridge on December 9, 1775, Jameson joined George Washington's main army in the North. In early 1777 Congress authorized four regiments of light dragoons, and Jameson was appointed major in the 1st Continental Light Dragoons commanded by Col. Theodorick Bland. Jameson was wounded in a skirmish near Valley Forge in January 1778, but by early 1780 he was in temporary command of the regiment still often referred to as Bland's Regiment.

¹² Ewald, *Diary*, 197-198.

¹³ Pension application of Amos Balch S2943. Anthony Allaire, *Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire, of Ferguson's Corps*, Appendix to Lyman C. Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881), 488. Anthony Allaire was a lieutenant in Ferguson's American Volunteers.

<https://www.tngenweb.org/revwar/kingsmountain/allaire.html>

¹⁴ For John Jameson's service and the Culpeper District Battalion see his son's application for bounty land (R15404) and the pension application of his brother, David Jameson (S5607).



Figure 8. John Jameson (1751-1810), portrait by William Joseph Williams.

William Washington, second cousin once-removed of the Commander-in-Chief, was 23 years old and studying to be a clergyman until the fall of 1775, when he raised a company of Minute Men and became its captain. (Fig. 9) In the following February the company was attached to the Third Virginia Regiment of Foot, and in the following August 1776 Capt. Washington participated in the Battle of Long Island, New York. He evidently performed well enough to be trusted in the vanguard of the successful attack on Hessians at Trenton, New Jersey, on December 26, 1776, where he was wounded. He had not yet recovered in February 1777 when George Washington appointed him a major in Col. Stephen Moylan's Fourth Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons.

¹⁵ Daniel Murphy, *William Washington, American Light Dragoon*. (Yardley PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014). Pension applications of John Monroe S31267, Jeremiah Kendall S23743, Alvin Mountjoy W8471, and Peter Jennings S4436. Capt. Washington's lieutenant at the Battle of Trenton was James Monroe, fifth President of the United States, who

In November 1778 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and given command of the Third Regiment Continental Light Dragoons after its former commander, Col. George Baylor, was seriously wounded and captured in a massacre at Tappan, New Jersey.¹⁵



Figure 9. Lt. Col. William Washington (1752-1810), portrait by Thomas Coram.¹⁶

In late May 1779 Lt. Col. Washington received orders to take his regiment south to the relief of Charlestown, but months passed before Congress provided money to replace the horses that had been lost in the Tappan massacre. Finally in February 1780 Washington's 125 dragoons arrived at Bacon's Bridge on Ashley River and joined the 200 or so horsemen already patrolling west of the river.¹⁷ As noted above, Col. Daniel Horry was there with his South Carolina Light Dragoons,

was shot in the shoulder. The Third Regiment of Light Dragoons was still often called Baylor's Regiment after Washington took command.

¹⁶ <https://www.mesdajournal.org/2016/portrait-brigadier-general-william-washington-thomas-coram>

¹⁷ Murphy, *William Washington*, 40-42.

together with Col. Pierre-Jean-François Vernier's remnant of Pulaski's Legion, and Maj. John Jameson's First Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons. Washington and the other officers did not spend all their time patrolling. A considerable amount of time appears to have been spent playing cards, drinking, fox hunting, and dining well at estates such as Drayton Hall and Sandy Hill, the home of Charles Elliot and his daughter Jane.¹⁸

Down the coast at Port Royal Island, Tarleton had replaced some of the horses lost at sea, in his own words, "from friends and enemies, by money or by force." He was now busy west of the Ashley. Washington informed Lincoln that "[t]here were many fine horses in the area," and "the enemy lose no time in collecting all the Horses they can in order to mount Dragoons." Tarleton was apparently one who looked a stolen horse in the mouth, and he found them wanting. "[T]he number was complete, but the quality was inferior to those embarked at New York."¹⁹

On March 26 near Rantowles Bridge, Tarleton and Washington had their first of several encounters. Washington, Jameson, and Vernier had tried unsuccessfully to lure Tarleton into an ambush, using fine-blooded horses as bait. Then while going to check on the estate of Gov. Rutledge, Washington captured Loyalist Lt. Col. John Hamilton and a Dr. Ludwig Smith.²⁰ While rejoining Jameson and Vernier, Washington learned that 300 of Tarleton's men were in his rear. Washington's regiment reversed direction, drew swords, and charged into Tarleton's dragoons, who were trapped on a road in the marsh near Rantowles

Creek. Tarleton lost about 20 killed and several wounded and captured, while Washington had only three wounded. As usual, Tarleton put the best possible face on his defeat, claiming that "the affair ended with equal loss to both parties." George Hight, one of Washington's dragoons, more accurately stated that Washington "whipped [Tarleton] and took sixteen prisoners including a Col. & Doctor."²¹

Lempriere's Point

Two days after the skirmish at Rantowles Bridge, the British left their base on James Island, marched to Drayton Hall, and crossed Ashley River in the night unopposed. Under cover of darkness in the evening of April 1 British soldiers and slaves started building redoubts on Charlestown Neck, marking the start of the siege.²² On April 6 they finished digging the first of three trenches, or parallels, in the sandy soil. This first parallel, would be followed by trenches (traverses) which angled forward to where a second parallel would be dug, and from there traverses to a third parallel would be dug. (Fig. 10) It was understood by both sides that if the third parallel were completed, Charlestown could be cannonaded into submission. The Americans in the meantime were busy constructing defenses, with Gen. Lincoln sometimes joining in the labor beside soldiers and slaves.²³

It was obvious, however, that no defense would be sufficient unless the Americans had a route for supplies and reinforcements or for escape. That

¹⁸ John Batzel, "Layton Yancey & the 1st Continental Light Dragoons"

http://www.williamconradgibbons.com/uploads/3/9/4/6/3946895/yancey_-_continental_dragon_history_original.pdf.

¹⁹ Washington to Lincoln, March 15, 1780, in Murphy, *William Washington*, 49. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America*. (London: T. Cadell, 1787), 7, 8.

²⁰ Gov. John Rutledge owned a rice plantation at Rantowles Creek. Lt. Col. John Hamilton commanded the Royal North Carolina Regiment, a provincial unit of refugees raised in

Georgia. He would be freed when Charlestown fell to the British on May 12, 1780. The doctor captured was Dr. Ludwig Schmidt or Smith of the British Hospital.

²¹ Murphy, *William Washington*, 50-51. Tarleton, *History*, 8. Pension application of George Hight W19769.

²² Carl P. Borick, *A Gallant Defense: The Siege of Charleston, 1780*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 121.

²³ Declaration of James Cannon, June 28, 1780, in *Original Papers Relating to the Siege of Charleston, 1780*, (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, 1898), 34.

route was the Cooper River. Charlestown's defenders also needed to keep the Royal Navy at bay to prevent a shipborne two- or three-sided attack on the defenses of the Charlestown peninsula. Several frigates of the Continental Navy and smaller boats from the South Carolina Navy had failed to keep the British fleet from entering Charlestown Harbor, and there was little reason to believe they could keep it out of Cooper River. Eventually much of the American fleet would be scuttled in Cooper River as a barrier, as shown in Figures 1 and 10. Lincoln decided to fortify the east side of Cooper River with two artillery batteries. A small battery at Haddrell Point would prevent British ships from entering Cooper River through Hog Island Channel, and a large one at Lempriere's (or Lamprier) Point (at present Remley Point) would protect the Americans' routes on Cooper and Wando Rivers (Fig. 11). Lempriere's Point was a ferry landing from which a road ran northeast past Wappetaw at the head of Wando River and beyond.²⁴

Lincoln sent Col. François Lellorquis de Malmédy from west of Ashley River with several hundred Continental light infantrymen to fortify Lempriere's Point. Together with slaves, they raised an extensive earthwork battery facing Cooper River, and to protect their landside rear, they dug an entrenchment. (Fig. 12) Lincoln ordered artillery to be sent from Ft. Moultrie, including six cannons that could fire 18-pound balls (18-pounders), smaller cannons, and several swivel guns. That Lincoln would send so much artillery and so many men out of his meagre force of about 4,500 underscores the significance of the post. But a "very disagreeable post it [was], being nothing but a bank of sand, where, in a windy day, you must keep your eyes shut or have them filled with sand."²⁵

²⁴ Early maps show that the road from Lempriere's Ferry corresponds to present Fifth Avenue at Remley Point in

Mount Pleasant. The battery was therefore at Remley Point, or more likely, on land to the west that has since eroded.

²⁵ Allaire, *Diary*, 493.

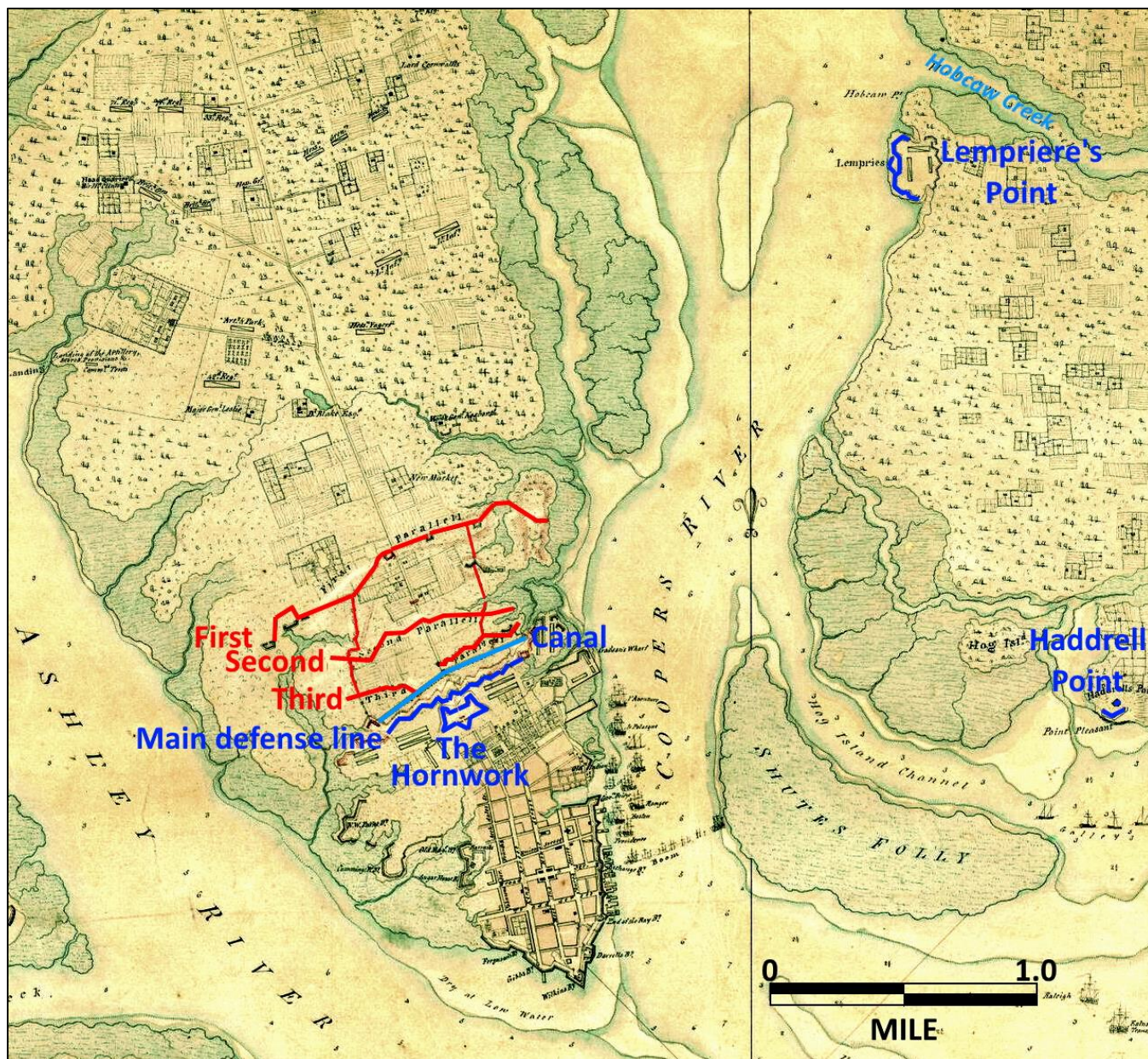


Figure 10. British siege parallels (highlighted in red) and American defenses (blue) at Charlestown. Parts of the first parallel were near present Line St., the second parallel was along Morris St. and Mary St., and the third parallel was at Vanderhorst and Hutson streets. American defenses were anchored to a seven-acre tabby fortress called the Hornwork behind the main line of defense and an abatis. Part of the northeastern section of the Hornwork can still be seen in Marion Square.²⁶ A flooded ditch across the peninsula was a further barrier. Hog Island Channel was defended by a battery at Haddrell Point, and Cooper and Wando rivers by a larger battery at Lempriere's Point. (Adapted from an excerpt of a map entitled "Investiture of Charleston 1780" by an unknown copyist based on "A Sketch of the Operations before Charlestown the Capital of South Carolina" by Joseph F. W. Des Barres. Library of Congress. Annotated by C. Leon Harris.)²⁷

²⁶ Nic Butler, "The Horn Work: Charleston's Tabby Fortress, 1757-1784. <https://www.ccpl.org/news/uncovering-history-locating-horn-work-under-marion-square>.

²⁷ <https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71000638>.

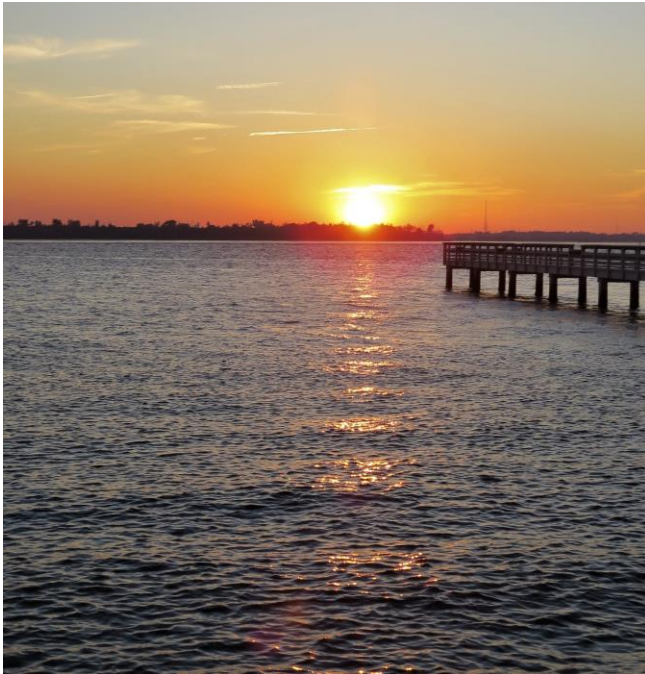


Figure 11. View across Cooper River from present Remley Point near the location of Lempriere's Point. (Photo by C. Leon Harris.)

Biggin Bridge

Lempriere's Point itself needed protection from British troops that might cross Cooper River higher up. British infantry could cross at Strawberry Ferry,²⁸ but only if the landing on the eastern side was first secured, and that would require cavalry to move rapidly before the Americans could defend it. The nearest crossing for horsemen was Biggin Bridge across Biggin Creek, a headwater of Cooper River, at the place where the water ceased to be Navigable.²⁹ (Fig. 13) Below Biggin Bridge boats could coast up Cooper River and Biggin Creek on a rising tide and return with the falling tide. Travel inland was by roads that converged at the bridge,

²⁸ Strawberry Ferry linked Pimlico Plantation across the West Branch of Cooper River to the Childsbury or Strawberry Community on the east side. It crossed near the modern CSX Railroad bridge about 10 miles below Biggin Bridge.

²⁹ Biggin Creek was named from the Biggin Hill area of Kent in England, which became famous in WWII for its airfield, which was a key defense of London in the Battle of Britain.

³⁰ <https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71000644>

³¹ <https://mountpleasanthistorical.org/items/show/88>

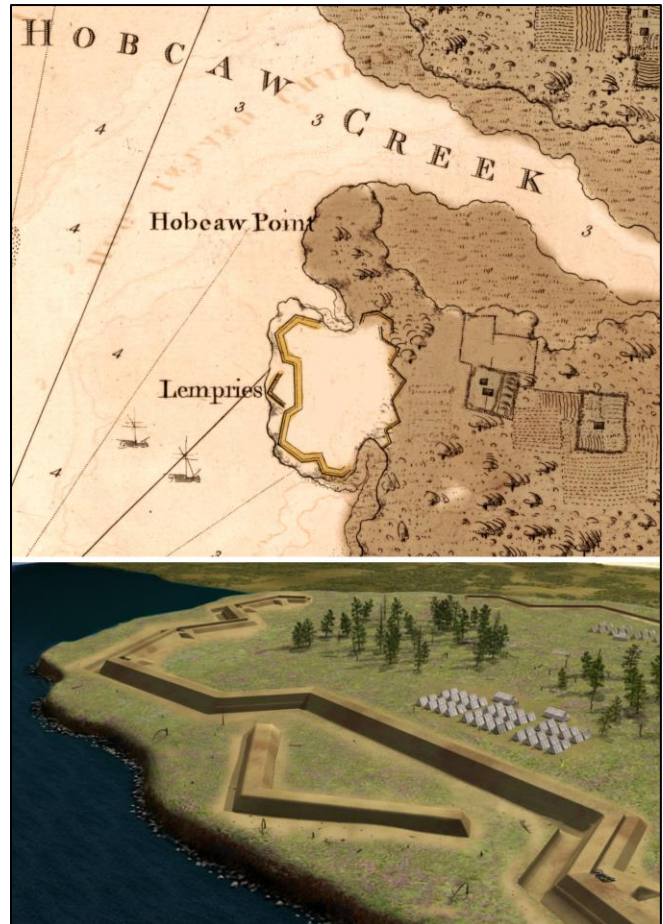


Figure 12. Fortifications at Lempriere's Point. Top: Detail from "A Sketch of the Operations before Charlestown the Capital of South Carolina" by Joseph F. W. Des Barres.³⁰ Bottom: Artist's rendering of the earthwork fortifications. (Town of Mount Pleasant Historical Commission.)³¹

so whoever controlled Biggin Bridge controlled much of the traffic in the area. Biggin Creek was bordered by Biggin Swamp, making the bridge the only crossing within six miles.³² Biggin Bridge was a choke point that should have been easy to defend.

³² After the bridge was destroyed late in 1781 or early 1782, British cavalry had to ride six miles north to get to the east side of Cooper River. C. Leon Harris and Charles B. Baxley, Francis Marion's Last Engagement: The Avenue of the Cedars: Wadboo Plantation, August, 29, 1782, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 16, No. 3.4 (Nov. 21, 2020).

<http://www.southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Wadboo-Fraser-v-Marion-Avenue-of-the-Cedars-3.4.pdf>.

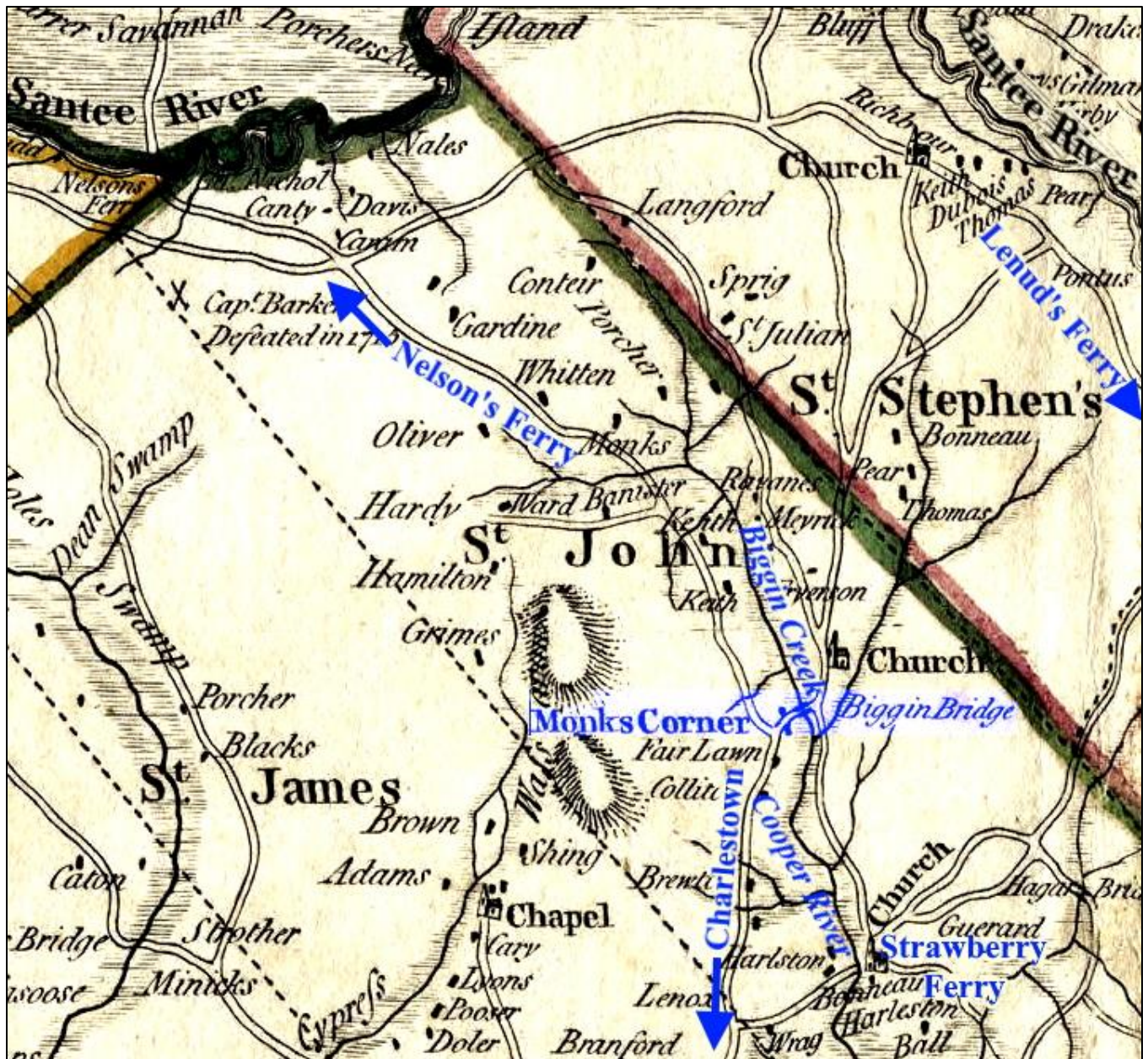


Figure 13. Part of Henry Mouzon's 1775 map showing the convergence of roads at Biggin Bridge.

From the west end of Biggin Bridge a road led south to Charlestown. A road to the northwest led to Nelson's Ferry across the Santee River to points west and to the Great Wagon Road past Camden and Waxhaws, through North Carolina and Virginia, and eventually to Philadelphia. To the east across Biggin Bridge was a road to Lenud's

Ferry across Santee River and on to Georgetown. Communities often sprang up where roads converged, and an example is Moncks Corner, named in 1728 for Thomas Monck, a landowner and tavern keeper. A map of Old Santee Canal from about 1800 shows the area of Biggin Bridge and Moncks Corner in more detail. (Fig. 14)

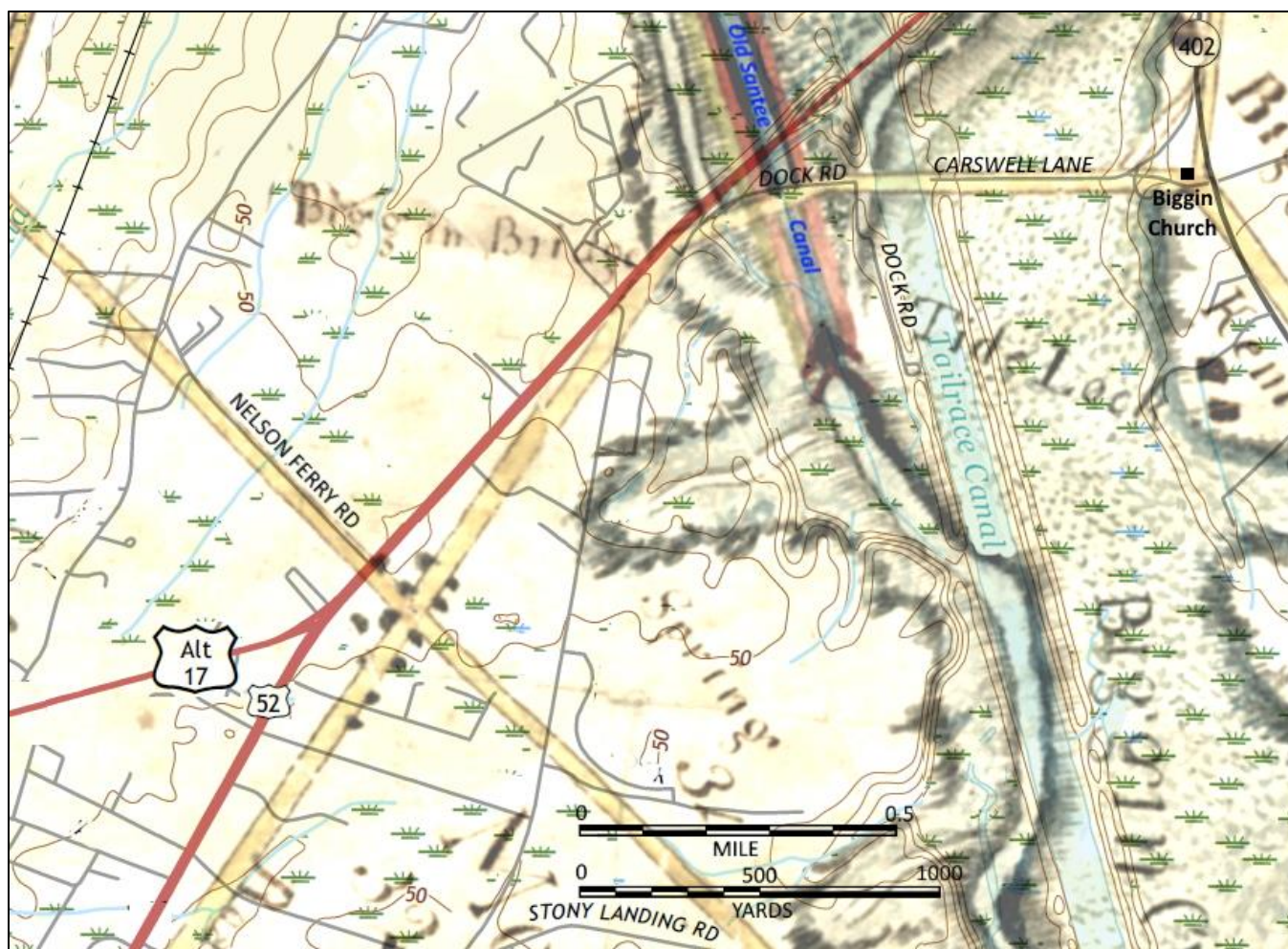


Figure 14. Part of a ca. 1800 map of Old Santee Canal³³ overlaid onto a USGS topographic map, using the canal and roads at Biggin Church as references. The road in the old map (buff color) at Biggin Bridge corresponds to modern Dock Road and Carswell Lane. Historic Moncks Corner was at the intersection of the road to Nelson's Ferry and the road to Charlestown (now corresponding to US 52) in today's sprawling Moncks Corner. (Tailrace Canal was constructed in the 1940s with the creation of Lake Moultrie to the north.)

Like the 1800 map above, a 1783 plat shows that Biggin Bridge was on a road west from St. Johns Berkeley Parish Church (often called "Biggin Church") corresponding to present Dock Road and Carswell Lane.³⁴ (Fig. 15) Col. John Christian Senf, who designed the canal, stated that he did not

change Biggin Creek in that area,³⁵ and Figures 14 and 15 show the creek at present Dock Road at about the same location as on the 1800 map. We conclude, therefore, that Biggin Bridge was located where Dock Road now crosses Biggin Creek.³⁶ (Figs. 16 and 17)

³³ "General Plan of the Canal and its Environs between Santee and Cooper Rivers..." South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Call Number: Map 1800 No. 5 Size 3.
<https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/sclmaps/id/228>. Old Santee Canal was constructed between 1793 and 1800.

³⁴ Addlestone Library, College of Charleston. SC Historical Society map 32-27-10.

³⁵ Mabel L. Webber, "Col. Senf's Account of the Santee Canal," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 28, No. 1 (Jan. 1927), 8-21. Col. John Christian Senf had been an engineer for the Americans in the Revolutionary War.

³⁶ The coordinates for 1780 Biggin Bridge are N 33.21158° W 79.97900°.



Figure 15. The road between Biggin Church and Biggin Bridge. (Top) A 1783 plat shows the road from Biggin Bridge running approximately eastward to the church (labeled “Church Walls,” the church having been burned by retreating British troops on July 16, 1781). (Bottom) Lidar shows present Carswell Lane and Dock Road west from the ruins of Biggin Church. Part of the original road may be visible bending just south of Carswell Lane. The western part of the road apparently lies beneath present Dock Road. LiDAR processing provided by Jim Scurry, PhD.

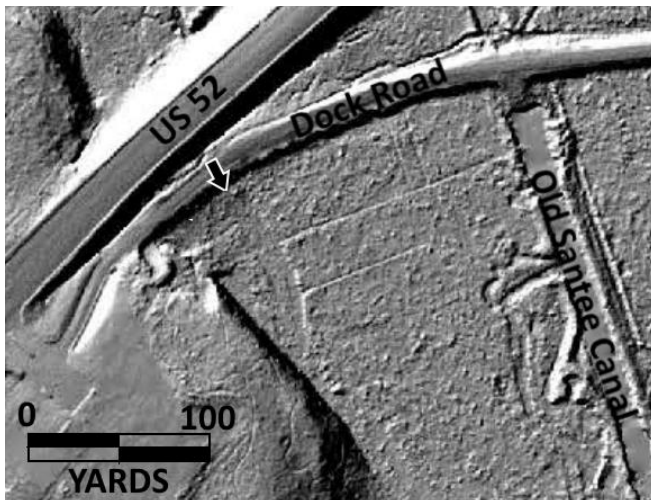


Figure 16. Detail from Figure 15 showing Biggin Creek at Dock Road (arrow). The thin straight lines are old rice canals.



Figure 17. Biggin Creek south of Dock Road. The creek remnant is no longer navigable or tidal. (C. Leon Harris)

Each end of the bridge must have been approached by a raised causeway, now probably under Dock Road. According to an 1835 advertisement (Fig. 18), the depth of Biggin Creek at the bridge varied with the tide from just over one foot to just over four feet. There is no known description of the bridge in 1780, but if it was like the 1835 replacement, it was 33 feet long and 15 feet wide. The advertisement states that Biggin Bridge was “within 200 yards of the Santee Canal,” which is consistent with the location in Figure 15.

CONTRACT WANTED IMMEDIATELY.—BIGGIN BRIDGE, over Biggin Creek, in St. John's Berkley, is to be re-built on the following plan:—The Bridge to be 33 feet long and 15 feet wide between the Railings. These to consist of a strong single Rail, supported by Posts 5 inches square, (spiked to the Joists) and properly braced outside the Rail. The Plank will rest on 7 Joists, 4 by 11 inches, 37 feet long, these to be supported in the centre by a Transverse Beam, 6 by 8 inches, 24 feet long, resting on 7 Posts, 6 inches square, firmly driven and properly braced; at each end the Joists to rest on a Brick Abutment; two brick Abutments will therefore be required, each to be 13 feet perpendicular, (of which 3 feet will be the foundation) 16 feet in length, 4 feet thick at bottom, and 2 feet at top; at the ends of each Abutment a sloping Wing, also of Brick, to be built at an obtuse angle with the Abutment attached thereto; these Wings to be 3 feet thick at bottom, and 20 inches at top. From the Brick Work to the Road must be filled up with earth in such a manner as to make an easy rise for a loaded wagon from the Road to the top of the Bridge.

Persons disposed to contract for the whole or any part of the above Work, furnishing all the Materials of the best quality, are requested to forward their Proposals to either of the Subscribers.

**SIMS WHITE.
P. J. PORCHER.
WILLIAM CAIN.**

N. B.—Biggin Bridge is within 200 yards of the Santee Canal, and 1 mile of Monk's Corner, and the rise and fall of the tide in the Creek about 3 feet; at low water the water not more than 13 inches, except in time of a freshet.

finw Feb 20

Figure 18. Specifications for a replacement Biggin Bridge in an ad in *The Charleston Mercury* published March 24, 1835.

American defenses at Biggin Bridge

To defend the vital crossing at Biggin Bridge, Lincoln sent the cavalry that had previously patrolled west of Ashley River, with Gen. Isaac Huger in overall command.³⁷ These were the 3rd Continental Light Dragoons under Lt. Col. William Washington and 1st Continental Light Dragoons under Maj. John Jameson, the remnants of Pulaski's Legion under Maj. Pierre François Vernier, and South Carolina light dragoons under Col. Daniel Horry. (The order of battle is Appendix A.) The cavalry troops were augmented by a company of North Carolina Continentals and a company of South Carolina militia. The latter two companies appear to have been all the infantry Lincoln could spare. They would have to support the cavalry in the event of an attack by enemy infantry, since cavalry swords and pistols were of little use against a line of muskets and bayonets.

According to Tarleton (Appendix C), the American cavalry camped on the west side of Biggin Bridge and not far from it. The estimated 400 troops would have needed a relatively flat, well-drained area for a camp, with drinkable water for the horses. Figure 14 shows that the area northeast of historic Moncks Corner along the road toward the bridge fits the description. The map of Old Santee Canal notes a significant spring nearby. (Fig. 14)

For several days up to April 14 North Carolina militia cavalry and mounted infantry arrived at Biggin Church, but they were not attached to the cavalry west of Biggin Bridge. The militiamen made it clear in pension declarations that they were on their way to Charlestown and camped at Biggin Church to wait for other North Carolina militiamen to come up before proceeding.³⁸ Many of them had not even been issued arms.³⁹ Huger wrote to Gen.

³⁷ Pension application of Hugh Gaston S10729; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, April 17, 1780, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/mss/mgw/mgw4/065/0900/0974.gif>.

³⁸ George Reese W8548: “joined Captain Locke's Troop of Cavalry of Rowan County in the State of North Carolina whose object was to assist in the defense of Charleston.”

Peter Lesley S4540: “we then set out for Charlestown.” William Nash S4597: “on their way to Charlestown S. Carolina to which place they were destined.” Austin Smith S21986: “set out for Charleston.”

³⁹ Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 148; pension application of Meshack Burchfield S16668.

Lincoln from Biggin Church on April 12th that he and the North Carolinians were “in a very disagreeable situation for want of Foot” (infantry). The cavalry at Biggin Church had the same vulnerability as Washington’s dragoons. Although some of the North Carolinians were infantrymen, many did not have arms with which to defend the cavalry against enemy infantry. Huger noted in his letter that “the Enemy never Come out but with a Strong Party of Infantry. the last Evening they attempted a Surprise.”⁴⁰

Clinton’s Plan

Although Clinton’s siege of Charlestown was progressing rapidly, with the first parallel completed on April 6, he was increasingly frustrated by the reluctance of the British fleet to enter Cooper River to block the Americans’ movements on the rivers and join in bombarding the city’s defenses. On the afternoon of the seventh, two detachments of Virginia Continentals crossed Cooper River from Lempriere’s Point “right before our eyes,”⁴¹ and their comrades in Charlestown welcomed them with celebratory cannon fire that no doubt added to Clinton’s irritation.⁴² These arrivals brought Lincoln’s total strength to about 5,400 men, with a third Virginia detachment under Col. Abraham Buford on the way. This number was still only about half the British force, but Clinton had no way of knowing how many more reinforcements might arrive. Nor did he know the whereabouts of the French fleet. If American reinforcements came from the north, and the French fleet blocked Charlestown Harbor, the besieger might well become the besieged.

On April 10 Clinton sent Lincoln a demand for surrender, which Lincoln rejected with a vow to defend the city “to the last extremity.” On the

following day the British began the second parallel, and on the next day Clinton put into motion a plan to break the American grip on Cooper River. (Appendix B) The plan called for Lt. Col. Tarleton to take his British Legion 25 miles north from their post at Quarter House Tavern,⁴³ together with Maj. Patrick Ferguson’s American Volunteers from New York and a troop of the 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons, and attempt to cross Biggin Bridge. In the meantime on April 13 Col. James Webster would march his 33rd Regiment of Foot with four small cannons (three-pounders) to the west side of Cooper River at Strawberry Ferry and wait there for the 64th Regiment of Foot. On the 14th Tarleton was to arrive on the opposite landing of Strawberry Ferry and secure it for the crossing of Webster’s 1,400 infantry and artillery.

Tarleton later claimed that the mission, “as had been previously concerted with the commander in chief,” was “if possible, to surprise the Americans encamped at [Moncks Corner],” which “would, perhaps, present a favourable opportunity of getting possession of Biggin Bridge.” The commander-in-chief’s (Clinton’s) instructions to Webster, however, say nothing of engaging the Americans or capturing Biggin Bridge. Tarleton was simply to cross Biggin Creek if he could and proceed to the eastern landing at Strawberry Ferry on the 14th.

It was a bold plan that depended on Tarleton and Ferguson being able to cross Biggin Bridge, which would be difficult if the Americans were posted on the east side of it. Tarleton’s force probably outnumbered the Americans, but in crossing the bridge they would be forced into a narrow line. The entire American force would be concentrated against the front of that line. If the plan succeeded, however, Strawberry Ferry would be secured for Webster’s infantry to cross to the east side of

⁴⁰ Thomas Broughton (Braughton) W897: “General Huger lay at Biggins Church and was surprised at the same time.” Huger to Lincoln, April 12, 1780, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Reel 5.

⁴¹ Ewald, *Diary*, 226.

⁴² Peter Russell, “The Siege of Charleston: Journal of Captain Peter Russell, December 25, 1779 to May 2, 1780.” *American Historical Review* 4, No. 3 (1899), 494.

⁴³ Quarter House Tavern was near the intersection of US52/78 and Success St. in present North Charleston.

Cooper River. From there they were to cross the East Branch of Cooper River at Bonneau Ferry and proceed south to secure the area east of Cooper River. Ultimately they or other forces might be able to reduce the batteries at Haddrell Point and Lempriere's Point from the land side and cut off the Americans' routes of supply, reinforcement, and escape.

Tarleton's Attack at Biggin Bridge

Tarleton's British Legion began the march from Quarter House Tavern toward Moncks Corner on April 12 and spent the night at Goose Creek. (Fig. 19) On the same day Ferguson's American Volunteers and a detachment of the North Carolinians⁴⁴ left Lining's Plantation across Ashley River from Charlestown and marched to Dorchester, then joined Tarleton at Goose Creek.⁴⁵ They spent the night there and were joined on the 13th by Webster with the 33rd and 64th Regiments of Foot. That evening Tarleton and Ferguson resumed their 16-mile ride northward while Webster marched to Strawberry Ferry. The weather had cleared and become "disagreeably cold." A waxing gibbous moon cast their shadows eerily among palmetto and sweet gum trees on their right, any of which could have hidden an American lying in ambush.⁴⁶ As the moon sank behind the trees, the green tunics of Tarleton's Legion became indistinguishable from the red coats of Ferguson's corps. "Profound silence was observed on the march," Tarleton wrote in his 1787 account. Tarleton is famous for rushing impetuously into battle, but on this occasion stealth was more

important than speed. Spies were constantly about, passing information about enemy movements.

Somewhere along the sandy road Tarleton's advanced guard spotted someone trying to hide. He was found to be carrying a letter to Charlestown from one of the officers near Biggin Bridge. "The contents of the letter, which was opened at a house not far distant, and the negro's intelligence, purchased for a few dollars, proved lucky incidents at this period.... It was evident, that the American cavalry had posted themselves in front of Cooper river, and that the militia were placed in a meetinghouse, which commanded the bridge, and were distributed on the opposite bank."⁴⁷ The American dragoons were in an exposed situation with a swamp at their backs.

It was about three o'clock in the morning when Tarleton's advanced guard of dragoons and mounted infantry neared Moncks Corner. The American camp was already awake, with horses saddled and bridled in preparation for a routine day of keeping the roads open for arriving reinforcements and foragers, and keeping local Loyalists from joining the British. A watch word was passed along the British line so that friend could be distinguished from enemy in the dark. Tarleton gave the order to charge, and the advanced guard of dragoons and mounted infantry barreled into the American guard stationed on the road. Soon they and the rest of the Legion and Ferguson's corps were upon the main camp. "[T]he attack was so sudden that although the horses were

⁴⁴ Allaire, *Diary*, 490 and Appendix C. Bobby Gilmer Moss, *Uzal Johnson, Loyalist Surgeon*, (Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 2000); Wade S. Kolb, III and Robert M. Weir, eds. *Captured at Kings Mountain: The Journal of Uzal Johnson, A Loyalist Surgeon*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011). The North Carolinians were presumably a detachment of the Royal North Carolina Regiment of Lt. Col. John Hamilton. Patrick O'Kelley,

Nothing but Blood and Slaughter, Vol. 2, (Booklocker.com, 2004), 57, 141.

⁴⁵ Allaire, *Diary*, 490 and Appendix C.

⁴⁶ Russell, "Siege of Charleston." moonpage.com.

⁴⁷ The dollars were not today's paper currency, but Spanish dollars (pieces of eight) made of silver, a not insignificant inducement.

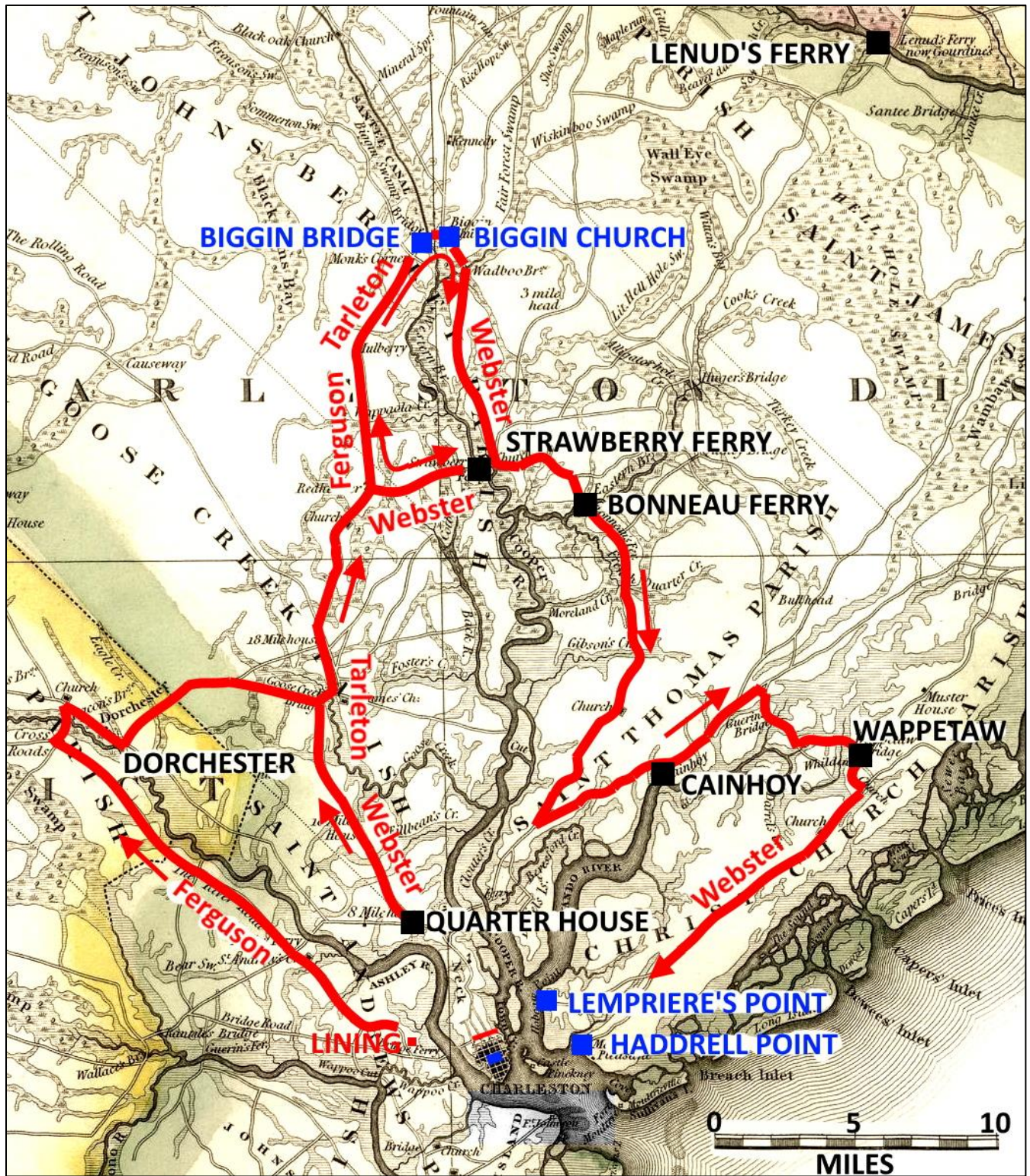


Figure 19. Part of John Wilson's 1822 map of South Carolina showing key locations and highlighting roads that Tarleton, Ferguson, and Webster may have used before the attack at Biggin Bridge, and that Webster may have used after the attack.

saddled & bridled the men had not time to mount.”⁴⁸

Capt. Baylor Hill of Jameson’s corps was lucky enough to be at one of the houses in Moncks Corner and escaped by the road to Nelson’s Ferry. He described the chaos:⁴⁹

I visited the Guards at Twelve, found all alert. I also at three rose and had the horses bridled and the men dressed – the horses being before saddled – I again returned to the house and had not been in more than fifteen minutes before the alarm’d pistol was fir’d. We immediately got up and when I first got to the door, the advance Guard of the British Horse had past in pursuit of our picquet who was flying before them. It being an alarm in earnest and no likely hood of our men forming, I went round to the stable which was on an other road that crost at the corner, I found my boy here with his horses, I mounted my own horse and he the one he road. I retreated on a different road from most of the other men that was mounted – tho the greater part of both men and officers retreated on foot, not being able to mount their horses. By the time I had got a mile, I perceived the day breaking.

Most of the American dragoons and horses scattered into Biggin Swamp. Some men stayed and fought, and most of those were killed, wounded or captured. Major Vernier “was cut to pieces fighting sword in hand,” and he died soon after.⁵⁰ Lt. Louis I. de Beaulieu of Pulaski’s Legion received two wounds to add to the seven sword cuts received at the Siege of Savannah, four or five of them in the face.⁵¹ Lt. Col. Washington was briefly made a prisoner but managed to escape on foot in the darkness. (Fig. 20)

Fighting on the west side of Biggin Bridge was over quickly, and Tarleton sent his Legion infantry under Maj. Charles Cochrane across the bridge with bayonets fixed to attack the North Carolina militiamen at Biggin Church. (Fig. 21) In the words of Meshack Burchfield of the Burke County Militia: “[T]he battle commenced some hour’s before day light and our whole army were cut to pieces slaughtered and dispersed My company was nearly without arms and could make but little resistance and my companions were nearly all slain. The few that remained were dispersed into the Country.”⁵²

The British Commissary on the expedition, Charles Stedman, stated that besides Maj. Vernier, three captains, one lieutenant, and ten privates were killed. One captain, two lieutenants, and 15 privates were wounded, and two captains, three lieutenants, and 58 privates were captured.⁵³ Also captured were 42 large wagons and harnesses, 102 wagon horses, 82 dragoon horses, several officers’ horses, ammunition, flour, butter, clothing, camp and horse equipment, all officers clothing and baggage, five puncheons of rum, six hogsheads of sugar, four barrels of indigo, tea, coffee, spices, casks of nails, French cloth, three barrels of gunpowder, and swords. Tarleton gave slightly different estimates in his preliminary report to Clinton:⁵⁴

I compute the Enemys loss, but I must beg your Excellency suspend your formal account til I collect a formal Report which you shall have the first time I have the Honor to see you- at 100 killed wounded & taken Dragns: & Militia- One Offr. of note killed Major Vernir of Pulaskis, & other Offrs

⁴⁸ Pension application of George Hight W19769.

⁴⁹ Hill, *Gentleman*, 50.

⁵⁰ Pension application of John T. Holland S34923.

⁵¹ Allaire, *Diary*, 490 and in Appendix C.

⁵² Pension application S16668.

⁵³ Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origins, Progress and Termination of the American War* (London: J. Murray, 1794), 2:183

⁵⁴ Tarleton to Clinton, April 15, 1780, Sir Henry Clinton Papers, Volume 92, item 49. William L. Clements Library, Univ. of Michigan, courtesy of Todd Braisted.

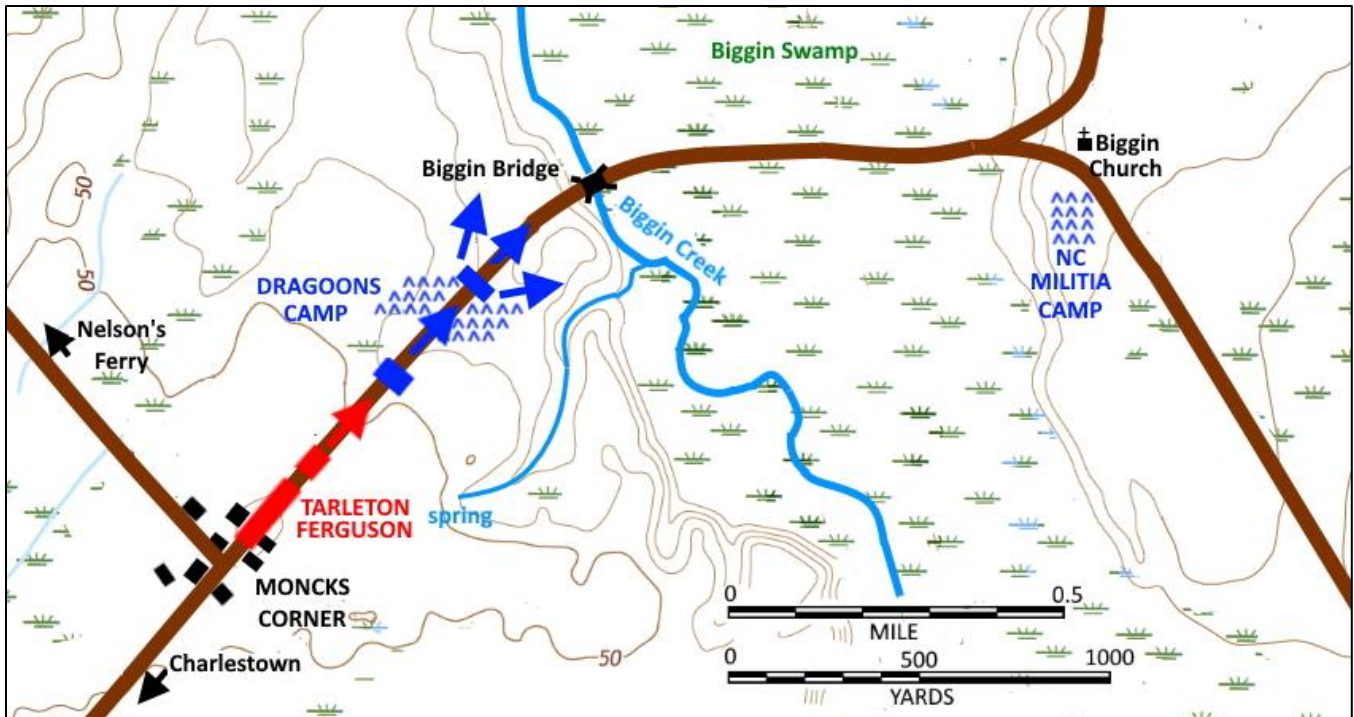


Figure 20. Tarleton's cavalry and Ferguson's infantry attack the American dragoons near Moncks Corner. Base map USGS topo current, annotated by C. Leon Harris.

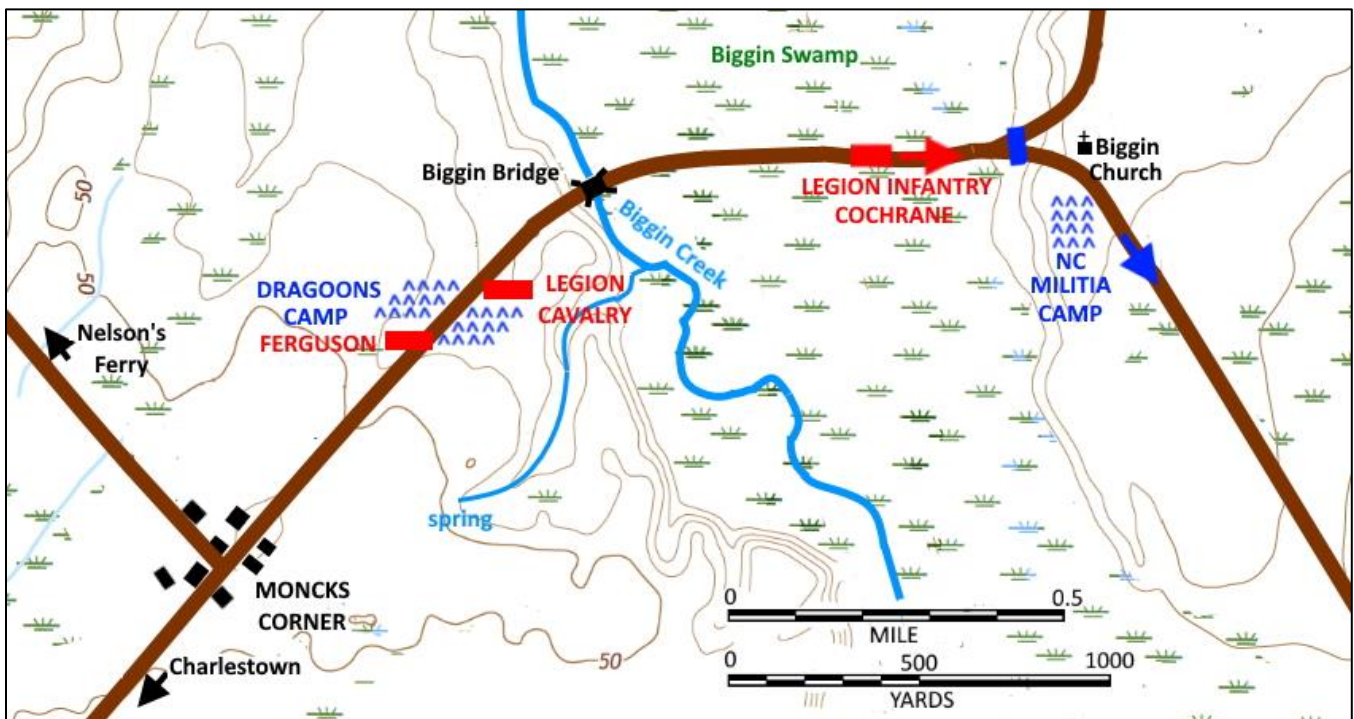


Figure 21. Attack by the infantry of Tarleton's Legion across Biggin Bridge and causeway on North Carolina militiamen camped near Biggin Church.

killed & taken- Upwards of 40 Waggon & all the Dragoons Baggage fell into our Hands- with Arms Stores & other implements of War- Col: Washington who commanded at Monks Corner was Prisoner but afterwards thro' the Darkness of the Morn'g escaped on foot- 90 Offrs. & Troop Horses I disposed of amongst the Offrs: & Cavalry this Morn'g: the Number of other Horses I suppose at 130

Tarleton in his 1787 *History* claimed to have taken “(f)our hundred horses belonging to officers and dragoons, with their arms and appointments, (a valuable acquisition for the British cavalry in their present state).” He inflated the number of horses but not their value to his Legion, which had not yet managed to buy or steal enough horses to compensate for those lost at sea. By May 3 it was reported that, “The Legion have got some good horses and are better mounted now than ever they were before.” Many of the Americans’ horses had run away during the attack, however, and Washington and others recovered some of them in the following days.⁵⁵

Thorns in Tarleton’s Laurels

Tarleton’s victory at Biggin Bridge was tarnished by three incidents, the least of which was an explosion that soon destroyed much of the baggage, food, and gunpowder that he had captured. As described by Stedman, they had been “found in a store, which was set on fire, and blown

up by the carelessness of a centinel, who, in going to draw some rum, set it on fire, and in a short time the store was blown up.”⁵⁶ Lt. Anthony Allaire of Ferguson’s American Volunteers informed his diary that, “About seven o’clock at night, accidentally a store house caught fire, in which were two casks of powder; was very much alarmed by the explosion, and all got under arms.”

The second incident was the treatment of Maj. Vernier during and after his wounding and capture, also related by Commissary Stedman:

Major Birnie [sic] was mangled in the most shocking manner; he had several wounds, a severe one behind his ear. this unfortunate officer lived several hours, reprobating the Americans for their conduct on this occasion, and even in his last moments cursing the British for their barbarity, in having refused quarter after he had surrendered. The writer of this, who was ordered on this expedition, afforded every assistance in his power; and had the major put upon a table, in a public-house in the village, and a blanket thrown over him. The major, in his last moments, was frequently insulted by the privates of the legion.

The final incident is described in detail in Appendix E and by Stedman as follows:

Some dragoons of the British legion attempted to ravish several ladies of the house of sir John Collington [sic: Colleton],⁵⁷ in the neighbourhood of Monk’s

⁵⁵ Salmon, “British View,” 77; Pension application of Richard Vernon S1883; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, April 17, 1780, (Library of Congress) <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/mss/mgw/mgw4/065/0900/0974.gif>. David R. Chesnutt and C. James Taylor, eds, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, (PHL) (Columbia: USC Press, 2000), 15:276-279

⁵⁶ Stedman, *History*, 2: 183.

⁵⁷ The house of Sir John Colleton was at Fair Lawn Plantation south of Moncks Corner (Fig. 13). It was later used by the

British as a hospital and burned by Americans. Charles B. Baxley, J. Brett Bennett, and C. Leon Harris, “Incident at Fair Lawn Plantation: How a Raid Ordered by Gen. Francis Marion Led to the Burning of a Hospital,” *Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 18, No. 15 (September 6, 2021) <http://www.southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Fair-Lawn-Raid-v.1.5.pdf>. Dr. Peter Fayssoux was Surgeon General of the Southern Department of the Continental Army and had a house on the east side of the West Branch of the Cooper River about 2.3 miles south of Biggin Church.

Corner. Mrs. [Fayssoux] the wife of Doctor [Peter Fayssoux] of Charlestown, was most barbarously treated; she was a most delicate and beautiful woman. Lady [Colleton] received one or two wounds with a sword. Miss ---, sister to major ---, was also ill treated. The ladies made their escape, and came to Monk's Corner, where they were protected; a carriage being provided, they were escorted to the house of Mr. ---. The dragoons were apprehended and brought to Monk's Corner, where, by this time, colonel Webster had arrived and taken the command. The late colonel Patrick Ferguson... was for putting the dragoons to instant death. But colonel Webster did not conceive that his powers extended to that of holding a general court-martial. The prisoners were however sent to head-quarters, and, I believe, were afterwards tried and whipped.

Lempriere's Point Abandoned

When Webster got news of the capture of Biggin Bridge he decided not to make the time-consuming and risky crossing at Strawberry Ferry and marched much of his infantry 12 miles upstream to join Tarleton. Tarleton quickly moved south along the road to Childsbury and took possession of Bonneau Ferry on the East Branch of Cooper River. In the days following, Webster's troops who had been left at Strawberry Ferry crossed to the east, and at Bonneau Ferry they reunited with those who had come down from Biggin Bridge. Webster was now free to march southward and seize control east of Cooper River

The British continued their siege of Charlestown, finishing the second parallel on April 19. The war had dragged on for exactly five years, and Clinton was under pressure from home to show results. The Americans stubbornly withstood the siege, however, as reinforcements and supplies continued to arrive across Cooper River under the protection of the battery at Haddrell Point and especially Malmédy's at Lempriere's Point. "I need not remind you," Lincoln reminded Malmédy, "that your post is critical and that the greatest precaution is necessary."⁵⁸ In spite of its importance, however, Lincoln had called the Continental light infantry from the battery and replaced them with North Carolina militiamen from Orange County under captains Richard Christmas and William Hughes, and from Granville County under captains William Gill, Howell Lewis, and Howell Rose.⁵⁹ Some of the militiamen had previously served in the Continental Army, but it is not clear that any of them had specialized training as artillerymen. Ensign James Tatum had command of three of the 18-pounders but had previously served only in Continental infantry regiments.⁶⁰

The militiamen under Malmédy apparently performed remarkably well, however. On April 19 Tarleton "had marched up to the fort, but found it so strong that it was imprudent to storm it with so few men."⁶¹ The British were becoming increasingly exasperated. Captain John Peebles wrote in his diary, "We see the Rebel Camp at Hobcaw where they are still busy working and we suppose that Webster is not far from them watching their motions. But why not Attack them, Mr. Webster?"⁶² On April 23 Clinton gave Cornwallis command east of the Cooper River with a force of 2,400 troops, and they took the battery at Haddrell Point on the following day. The British then

⁵⁸ Lincoln to Malmédy, April 18, 1780, in Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 183.

⁵⁹ Pension applications of Richard Christmas S8196, William Green W7557, Francis Johnston (Johnson) S13585 & R5614, and James Sutton R10325. John Byron (Byrum, Byrom, Byram) S30910 and John Robeson (Robinson) S32488 stated

that Howell Rose was captain of their company, but Jacob Byrum S4983 stated that Howell Rose was a lieutenant under Capt. Howell Lewis.

⁶⁰ James Tatum pension application S39102.

⁶¹ Allaire, *Diary*, April 19, 1780.

⁶² Salmon, *British View*, 69.

approached Lempriere's Point, but it did not go well. Lt. Allaire described in his *Diary* what happened:

About ten o'clock in the evening there was the most tremendous cannonade I ever heard, and an incessant fire of musketry. The Rebels sallied out and took eight of the Light Infantry prisoners, upon which the whole line got under arms; some in their hurry getting out without putting on their coats, were taken by the others for Rebels, and fired on, which unluckily occasioned warm work for a few minutes. Sixty odd of ours got killed and wounded by our own men. The Rebels were repulsed, and they finding their muskets rather an incumbrance threw thirty odd of them away.

Though the Americans still held the Lempriere's Point battery, the loss of Haddrell Point and the encounter that night apparently shook them. That evening orders were given to abandon the battery.⁶³ After disabling the 18-pounders by driving spikes into the touch holes, the Americans left to cross the harbor in small boats.

The Fall of Charlestown

The abandonment of Lempriere's Point was a great relief to the British. As Cornwallis wrote to Clinton on April 28, "the works, as they appeared to me, assisted by their shipping and galleys, would subject an attempt to storm them to considerable loss, and perhaps the event would be uncertain."⁶⁴ On May 1st Clinton wrote to Cornwallis advising him that "as the Admiral now gives us little hopes of his

intention to pass a naval force into Cooper and Wando, I submit to you the propriety of keeping Lampries." The occupation of Lempriere's was delegated to Ferguson.⁶⁵

On April 29 the British had completed the third parallel, but still the Americans refused to give up. "I begin to think these people will be blockheads enough to wait the assault," Clinton wrote to Cornwallis on May 6th. "*Je m'en lave les mains.*" He washed his hands of the consequences for the Americans. On May 12 Lincoln finally capitulated. His troops were denied the honors of marching out of the Hornwork to military music, flags flying. The captured militiamen were released on parole, but the 2,700 Continentals were kept prisoners. Many escaped, and Clinton, considering this a breach of the terms of surrender, confined the remaining enlisted prisoners to hellish prison ships in Charlestown Harbor. About 500 of those saved themselves by deserting to the British army and serving in the West Indies.⁶⁶

Strange Behavior

"Surprise" is the word used to describe the action at Biggin Bridge by everyone except perhaps Lt. Col. William Washington. As Daniel Murphy noted, Washington's troops "had been caught off guard and on foot—a cardinal sin for light horsemen."⁶⁷ As Tarleton stated (Appendix C), Washington had "neglected sending patrols in front of his videttes; which omission, equally enabled the British to make a surprise, and prevented the Americans recovering from the confusion attending an unexpected attack."

⁶³ Pension applications of Capt. Richard Christmas S8196 and Francis Johnston (Johnson) S13585 & R5614. Col. Malmédy to Gen. Horatio Gates Aug. 4, 1780, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr14-0427>.

⁶⁴ Cornwallis from camp at Wappetaw, in Ian Saberton, Ed., *The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War*, (East Sussex, Eng: Naval and Military Press, 2010), (CP), 1:14.

⁶⁵ Clinton to Cornwallis, Saberton, CP, 1:15. Russell, "Siege of Charleston," 501.

⁶⁶ C. Leon Harris, "Prisoners of war from the siege of Charleston and the battle of Camden who joined the British in the Duke of Cumberland's Regiment," Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters, <http://revwarapps.org/b406.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Gervais wrote to Henry Laurens on April 28, 1780, "Yet Colonel Washington will not allow it to have been a Surprise." PHL, 15:282-289; Murphy, *William Washington*, 53.

Tarleton cited as another mistake Washington's "placing his cavalry in front of the bridge during the night, and his infantry in the rear." As noted above, however, the infantry referred to by Tarleton were not Washington's, but North Carolina militiamen on their way to Charlestown. Since many were without arms, it would have been homicidal of Gen. Huger to use them as a shield for the cavalry, and suicidal for them to have obeyed such an order. But the question remains why the dragoons chose to camp on the west side of Biggin Creek and not near Biggin Church, where they could easily have prevented the British from crossing the bridge. It may be that they were shielding the vulnerable militiamen, or there was not enough room or forage for both bodies of troops at the church.

Another mystery is why Lincoln did not provide Malmédy with proper and sufficient troops to man and defend the guns at Lempriere's Point. His troops held out much longer than should be expected of them, but if the battery had been able to resist longer the siege might have ended differently. At least Lincoln might have been able to negotiate more favorable conditions of surrender. Abandoning it without a fight is another example of what Johann Ewald referred to as "the strange behavior of the enemy."

Epilogue

Today **Malmédy** takes most of the blame for abandoning Lempriere's Point, and by implication, the surrender of Charlestown. Lincoln sent Malmédy out of Charlestown just before the surrender, and it has been suggested that it might have been to protect him from the wrath of other

Americans.⁶⁸ None of the hundreds of pension applicant who referred to Malmédy hinted at any dishonorable act, however, and one referred to him as "my beloved Colonel Malmedy."⁶⁹ John Lewis Gervais wrote to Henry Laurens on April 28 that⁷⁰

The advices are that on Wednesday Night [April 26] the Ennemy had taken possession of Haddrells point with Troops from James Island—& that Colonel Malmady had orders to retreat last Thursday with the Men under his Command from Lampriere's to Charles Town...

The report at the time therefore appears to have been that Malmédy was ordered, presumably by Lincoln, to leave the post because of the taking of Haddrell Point. Malmédy gave the following explanation in an August 8, 1780, letter to Gen. Horatio Gates, who replaced Lincoln as commander of the Southern Department:⁷¹

I was ordered the 26th of April to Evacuate these posts and retreat to town, and the 30th to Leave town, to join the army in the country, to inform the Governor of the particular state of the garrison, and to take the command of my senior officer.

After being sent out of Charlestown just in time, Col. Malmédy became a fugitive. Cornwallis wrote to Clinton on May 5th, "I shall likewise have a guard at Huger's. Colonel Malmedy has certainly been there three days in the woods near us, but we have not yet been able to catch him, altho' he must be in great distress." He was indeed. In an August 4th letter to Gates, Malmédy stated,⁷²

I had the honour to command a body of troops during the siege of Charlestown

⁶⁸ Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 190.

⁶⁹ Pension application of Charles Mullins S30610.

⁷⁰ Gervais to Laurens, April 28, 1780, *PHL*, 15: 282-289; also transcribed by C. Leon Harris beginning at <https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/amerrevsc/id/3106>

⁷¹ Malmédy to Gates, Aug. 8, 1780, *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr14-0436>.

⁷² Cornwallis to Clinton, May 5, 1780, in Saberton, *CP*, 1:19. Malmédy to Gates, *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr14-0427>.

General Lincoln ordered me to Leave town in the most critical moment, for an important Expedition to the Governor. I have not calculated the dangers of being taken. I have surmounted every obstacles, and though in the poorest situation of healths, having Lost baggages and horses, I made all efforts to join again the army; until this day I have Laid on the ground without blanket.

Gates understandably made no reply, since he was on his march to South Carolina, where, on August 16, he lost another southern army at the Battle of Camden. Malmédy also petitioned the legislature of North Carolina, which recommended him “for a Command suitable to his Dignity, Bravery, Military Skill and experience.”⁷³ Malmédy received such a command by March 15, 1781, when Cornwallis was fought to a draw at the battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina by Gen. Nathanael Greene, who had replaced Gates. Malmédy’s militiamen were patrolling the area to prevent Loyalists from joining Cornwallis. They raced toward the sound of the opening cannonade but arrived too late for the battle. Samuel Shepherd in his pension application (S21476) stated “that Malmady did not join Greene at Guilford but that he might have been of immense service to him if he had done so.” Afterward Malmédy took on the hazardous duty of harassing Cornwallis’s rear almost to Wilmington. Among his mounted troops were “knock-em-down men” armed with makeshift lances made of oak poles.⁷⁴

In the meantime Greene took his Southern Department into South Carolina and slowly squeezed the British forces back into Charlestown, where they remained until December 14, 1782. Malmédy joined Greene in time to command the North Carolina militia in the front and center at the Battle of Eutaw Springs on September 8, 1781. Greene, who seldom had cause to praise militias, wrote that “General [Francis] Marion, Colo Malmady and General [Andrew] Pickens conducted the Troops with great gallantry and good conduct, and the Militia fought with a degree of spirit and firmness that reflects the highest honor upon this class of Soldiers.”⁷⁵ If Malmédy had been killed there he might now be as celebrated as Pulaski. Instead he was killed on what was then called a “field of honor” in a duel over some long-forgotten matter. In Greene’s words, “He lost his life by that stupid custom which has in many instances disgraced the history of the American war and deprived the public of the services of several valuable men.”⁷⁶

After the rout at Biggin Bridge, Lt. Col. **William Washington** managed to collect a few of his dragoons, together with those of Maj. John Jameson and the remnants of Vernier’s Legion. They were then joined by Col. Abraham Buford, who had arrived from Virginia with his Third Detachment and learned that he could not get to Charlestown to join Lincoln. Together they formed the only Continental force in the South. Lt. Col. Anthony Walton White arrived, and because his commission predated Washington’s, he assumed

⁷³ “Report by a committee of the North Carolina General Assembly concerning commissions for François Lellorquis, Marquis de Malmady...,” September 2, 1780, *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr15-0174>.

⁷⁴ Pension applications of John Taylor S7684, William Ferrell S3355, John Searcy S31355, John Watson W18292, and William Ward S7809.

⁷⁵ Greene to Thomas McKean, President of the Continental Congress, Sept. 11, 1781, in Dennis M. Conrad, ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 9:328-338.

⁷⁶ Greene to Alexander Martin, Governor of North Carolina, Nov. 25, 1781, in William Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States in the War of the Revolution*, (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1822), 2:417. The duel occurred at Greene’s camp at the High Hills of Santee some time between October 12, 1781, when Malmédy signed the discharge of Charles Bennett (pension application S21641) and the date of Greene’s letter. Major Smith Snead is usually said to have been the man who killed Malmédy, but one source says it was an Ensign Snead of North Carolina. See endnotes in the bounty-land application of Smith Snead’s heirs at <http://revwarapps.org/blwt2056-400x.pdf>.

command of the 3^d Continental Light Dragoons. On May 6th Washington suffered the indignity of being routed again by Tarleton, this time at Lenud's Ferry on Santee River. (in the upper right of Fig. 19) John Gore (Goare) gave an account of how it came about:⁷⁷

we could hear no intelligence of the enemy until Col White and Major Jimmeson [Jameson] with servants in disguise went among the Tories, where they soon received information of the British, they were thereby enabled to surprise a foraging party of the British at the house of one Harris, which was Commanded by a British Col. Named Ash or Nash⁷⁸ the Col. with sixteen privates a Sergeant & Harris were taken, The Sergeant and Harris made their escape, and went and informed Col Tarlton, of British Army. the sequel may be well guessed at we retreated to the ferry with all the haste we could, when we got to the ferry we could not obtain a boat for some hours when the boat came the prisoners and a Sergeant was put in it to cross the river and as they were putting off from the Shore the British came up shot the Sergeant in the head retook the prisoners -- a battle ensued in which we were sorely defeated after loosing [losing] all our horses with thirteen men killed and wounded. I with five others secured ourselves in a Swamp close by the Battle ground, until covered by the night we made our way up the river

According to Sergeant Lawrence Everhart, Washington had "tryed strenuously" to convince White not to stop on the same side of the river as the British, but he was overruled. Washington, White, and Jameson escaped by swimming the river.⁷⁹ Buford watched the proceedings from the other side of the river. Afterward he marched back

toward Virginia, and on May 29th at Waxhaws he was overtaken by Tarleton's Legion, who cut the Virginians to pieces after they had attempted to surrender.

On January 17, 1781, at Cowpens, Washington exacted revenge for the two embarrassing encounters with Tarleton by helping to capture about 600 of Tarleton's Legion. It was Cornwallis's attempt to recapture them that led him to Guilford Courthouse and on to his fateful invasion of Virginia. Washington's luck ran out at the Battle of Eutaw Springs, where he received a serious bayonet wound in the chest. There is a fairytale ending to the story, however. He was nursed back to health by Jane Elliott, whom he had met while on patrol near Rantowles Bridge. Two years and one week after the surprise at Biggin Bridge they married and lived on a plantation from which he could gaze at the place where he first met Tarleton in victory. Washington's grave can still be visited there.⁸⁰

After the rout at Lenud's Ferry Maj. **John Jameson** joined George Washington's army in the north. There Maj. John André, Aide-de-Camp to Clinton, was turned over to Jameson, who found that André was carrying a pass from Gen. Benedict Arnold and plans of the American fortress at West Point. Unwittingly, Jameson informed Arnold, who fled before his treason was discovered.

Gen. **Isaac Huger** was lucky enough to be sick at home during the surrender of Charlestown. With all the Virginia generals prisoners on parole, he was given command of Virginia Continentals at the battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina on March 15, 1781, and at the battle of Hobkirk Hill near Camden, South Carolina, on April 25, 1781.

⁷⁷ John Gore (Goare), pension application W160. Tarleton (*History*, 18-21) gives a different version. See also Gervais to Laurens, May 13, 1780, *PHL*, 15:291.

⁷⁸ Lt. William Ashe of the 17th Regiment, according to Capt. John Peebles in Salmon, *British View*, 80-81.

⁷⁹ Lawrence Everhart pension application S25068.

⁸⁰ Orphaned, Jane Elliott was probably the wealthiest woman in South Carolina.

Col. **Daniel Horry** after the surrender of Charlestown took protection from the British to avoid having his extensive plantation⁸¹ seized, and he went to England. After the American victory part of his estate was confiscated by South Carolina, and he died in 1785.

Clinton returned to New York City to sit out the rest of the war in his headquarters there, leaving Cornwallis with orders to hold Charlestown and South Carolina. Unfortunately, Clinton left him a poison pill -- a proclamation that soldiers who had been released on parole must actively fight against their former comrades in arms. One of the officers enforcing the proclamation was Maj. **Patrick Ferguson**. Ferguson expanded his American Volunteers cadre with over 1,000 South Carolina backcountry Loyalist militiamen. After issuing demands to Blue Ridge Mountain settlers in which he questioned their manhood, they surrounded his troops on Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780, and killed him in battle.

After the battle of Guilford Courthouse, and about a year after the surrender of Charlestown, Cornwallis and Tarleton invaded Virginia. After a long campaign waged mainly by Virginia militiamen under Lafayette, Cornwallis was cornered at Yorktown. The French fleet had defeated the British fleet in the Battle of the Capes, and Gen. George Washington and French forces under Gen. Rochambeau arrived from the north. After a siege of three weeks, Cornwallis capitulated. As Gen. Benjamin Lincoln had been denied the privilege of playing martial music and displaying colors, so were the British. Some of the Continental soldiers who had been surrendered at Charlestown and survived captivity in the prison ships were present at the ceremony, which had a turn to it that must have amused them immensely. Cornwallis claimed to be indisposed and delegated the handing over of his sword to his second in command. George Washington likewise had the sword received by his second in command—Gen. Benjamin Lincoln.

⁸¹ Now Hampton Plantation State Historic Site on the South Santee River near McClellanville.

APPENDIX A: ORDER OF BATTLE AT BIGGIN BRIDGE⁸²

Patriot Participants Brig. Gen. Isaac Huger, Commanding Officer	British/Loyalist Participants Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, Commanding Officer
<u>AT BIGGIN BRIDGE</u> <u>3rd Regiment Continental Light Dragoons</u> Lt. Col. William Washington Maj Richard Call -- Capt. Walker Baylor -- Capt. John Stith <u>1st Regiment Continental Light Dragoons</u> Maj. John Jameson -- Capt. Thomas Pemberton -- Capt. John Watts -- Capt. Baylor Hill -- Capt. John Belfield <u>Pulaski's Legion of Horse and Foot</u> Maj. Pierre François Vernier⁸³ -- Capt. Jérôme Le Brun de Bellecour -- Lt. Louis I. de Beaulieu <u>South Carolina Light Dragoons Regiment</u> Col. Daniel Horry -- Capt. Benjamin Waring, Berkeley County⁸⁴ <u>1st North Carolina Continental Regiment</u> Capt. Joshua Hadley <u>New Acquisition District Regiment</u> Capt. John McClure	<u>British Legion Cavalry</u> Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton -- Capt. David Kinlock <u>British Legion Infantry</u> Maj. Charles Cochrane <u>17th Regiment Light Dragoons</u> --Capt. William Henry Talbot <u>American Volunteers Cadre</u> Maj. Patrick Ferguson -- Capt. Abraham DePeyster -- Capt. Charles McNeill -- Capt. James Dunlap -- Capt. Samuel Ryerson -- unknown commander, North Carolina <u>Georgia Light Dragoons</u> Capt. Archibald Campbell
<u>AT BIGGIN CHURCH</u> Brig. Gen. Isaac Huger <u>North Carolina Militia</u> Maj. James Brandon, Rowan County -- Capt. William Murry, Burke County -- Capt. Robert Patton, Burke County -- Capt. William Bethel, Guilford County -- Capt. Redden Moore, Guilford County -- Capt. John Sterns, Mecklenburg County -- Capt. Thomas Childs, Montgomery County -- Capt. John Locke, Rowan County	<u>AT STRAWBERRY FERRY</u> Lt. Col. James Webster <u>33^d Regiment of Foot</u> <u>64th Regiment of Foot</u> <u>Detachment of Royal Artillery</u> 4 three pounder field cannon

⁸² Adapted from J. D. Lewis https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_moncks_corner.html.

⁸³ Lewis also lists Capt. Charles Baron de Frey in Pulaski's Legion, but he was a prisoner of war at the time, according to <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-07544>.

⁸⁴ Pension application of Thomas Broughton (Braughton) W897.

APPENDIX B: “Instructions for Lieutt. Colonel Webster,” from Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, April 12, 1780.⁸⁵

“Colonel Webster moves tomorrow (the 13th.) to Doctor [Alexander] Gardens [Otranto] near Goose Creek.

14th. He moves towards Strawberry Ferry, where in all Probability the Cavalry will be on the Bluff on the other Side of the River, to which he will endeavor to pass over by whatever Craft can be found, and to secure himself on the Bluff, where he will remain until joined by another Regiment from hence. In Case Colonel Tarleton cannot pass Biggins Bridge, or any where else in the Vicinity, he will send Intelligence immediately to Colonel Webster at Strawberry Ferry.

When all the Corps are joined at the Bluff on the other [east] Side of the Strawberry Ferry, Colonel Webster will then move towards Bonneaus Ferry, and cross into the Country called St. Thomas; continuing his March towards Cain Hoy until he comes to the Bridges and Causeways, on the Forks of Wando River, that lead into Christ Church Parish; where he will take a Position; from which he will pass over a small Body as soon possible across these Branches, to take Post at the other End in Christ Church Parish; and, if possible, to detach some Cavalry to destroy Wappataw Bridge over the Creek that leads into Bulls Bay.

When all this is accomplished Colonel Webster is to make a Detachment into Scots Ferry, or Daniels Island, and endeavor to throw up a small Battery for four Guns on Lascines Bluff on the Side of Wando River. Should he find that our Fleet, instead of being in the Wando, is in the Cooper, he

will take such a Position with his small Cannon as may give them Assistance, either by favoring their Passage into the Wando, or covering them in the Cooper. Or if the Navy afterwards should wish to occupy the Point at Hobcaw, he will send a Detachment to erect a small Battery there, and take Post.

Colonel Webster will take with him only four Pieces of Cannon, 3 Pounders. If the Navy pass, they will of Course take with them Guns for Batteries. From Daniels Island Boats may safely pass to this Side without our being entirely Masters of the River. But Colonel Webster will of Course send an Officer to me with any material Information he wishes to give; I shall do the same to him.

I have now explained the object of this Move, and I am persuaded Colonel Webster will fulfill it to the utmost of his Power. Should an Opportunity offer of making any Stroke against the Enemy, Colonel Webster is at full Liberty to attempt it; as I am confident he will do it with every necessary Precaution, and that he will recollect in our present Situation, we live on Victory.

He must spread my Proclamation as much as possible, and propagate likewise the Defeat of the Spaniards in Europe and Mexico Bay. If on Enquiry, when he arrives at Strawberry, he has Reason to believe it will be utterly impossible to depend on the Country for any Supply of Provisions, he is to send me Intelligence of it, and not go further into the Country than he is certain of procuring Subsistence. And when that is likely to fail, he is to fall back to Strawberry, unless he is sure of passing to Daniels Island, where we can feed him.”

⁸⁵ British Headquarters Papers, CO 5/99/477 (microfilm at the David Library of the American Revolution) excerpted and transcribed by Jim Piecuch.

APPENDIX C: TARLETON'S ACCOUNT OF THE ATTACK AT BIGGIN BRIDGE.⁸⁶

Before this time, the Americans had joined a body of militia to three regiments of continental cavalry, and the command of the whole was entrusted to Brigadier-general Huger: This corps held possession of the forks and passes on Cooper river, and maintained a communication with Charles town; by which, supplies of men, arms, ammunition, and provision, might be conveyed to the garrison during the siege, and by which, the continental troops might escape after the defences were destroyed. Sir Henry Clinton was thoroughly sensible of the inconveniencies that might arise from this situation of the enemy's light troops; and being lately relieved by a detachment of sailors and mariners, from the charge of fort Johnson, he directed his attention to dislodge them from their position. As soon as he received intelligence of the arrival of a number of waggons, loaded with arms, ammunition, and clothing, from the northward, he selected a detachment of one thousand four hundred men, whom he committed to Lieutenant-colonel Webster, with orders to counteract the designs of the Americans, and to break in upon the remaining communications of Charles town.

On the 12th of April, Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, being reinforced at the Quarter house by Major Ferguson's corps of marksmen, advanced to Goose creek: Colonel Webster arrived on the following day at the same place, with the 33^d and 64th regiments of infantry; Tarleton again moved on in the evening, with his own and Ferguson's corps, towards Monk's Corner, as had been previously concerted with the commander in chief, in order, if possible, to surprise the Americans encamped at that place: An attack in the night was judged most advisable, as it would render the superiority of the enemy's cavalry useless, and would, perhaps, present a favourable opportunity of getting possession of Biggin Bridge, on Cooper river, without much loss to the assailants. Profound

silence was observed on the march. At some distance from Goose Creek, a negro was secured by the advanced guard, who discovered him attempting to leave the road. A letter was taken from his pocket, written by an officer in General Huger's camp the afternoon of that day, and which he was charged to convey to the neighborhood of Charles town: The contents of the letter, which was opened at a house not far distant, and the negro's intelligence, purchased for a few dollars, proved lucky incidents at this period. Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton's information relative to the situation of the enemy was now complete. It was evident, that the American cavalry had posted themselves in front of Cooper river, and that the militia were placed in a meetinghouse, which commanded the bridge, and were distributed on the opposite bank. At three o'clock in the morning, the advanced guard of dragoons and mounted infantry, supported by the remainder of the legion and Ferguson's corps, approached the American post: A watch word was immediately communicated to the officers and soldiers, which was closely followed by an order to charge the enemy's grand guard on the main road, there being no other avenue open, owing to the swamps upon the flanks, and to pursue them into their camp. The order was executed with the greatest promptitude and success. The Americans were completely surprised: Major Vernier, of Pulaski's Legion, and some other officers and men who attempted to defend themselves, were killed or wounded; General Huger, Colonels Washington and Jamieson, with many officers and men, fled on foot to the swamps, close to their encampment, where, being concealed by the darkness, they effected their escape: Four hundred horses belonging to officers and dragoons, with their arms and appointments, (a valuable acquisition for the British cavalry in their present state) fell into the hands of the victors; about one hundred officers, dragoons, and hussars, together with fifty waggons, loaded with arms, clothing and ammunition, shared the same fate. Without loss of

⁸⁶ Tarleton, *History*, 16-18.

time, Major Cochrane was ordered to force the bridge and the meeting house with the infantry of the British Legion: He charged the militia with fixed bayonets, got possession of the pass, and dispersed every thing that opposed him. In the attack on Monk's corner, and at Biggin bridge, the British had one officer and two men wounded, with five horses killed and wounded. This signal instance of military advantage, may be partly attributed to the judgement and address with which this expedition was planned and executed, and partly to the injudicious conduct of the American commander; who, besides making a false disposition of his corps, by placing his cavalry in front of the bridge during the night, and his infantry in the rear, neglected sending patrols in front of his videttes; which omission, equally enabled the British to make a surprise, and prevented the Americans recovering from the confusion attending an unexpected attack.

When the news of this success reached Colonel Webster, he commenced his march for Biggin bridge, with the two British regiments under his command, as there were other difficulties to be surmounted before the general's plan was fully accomplished. On his arrival at Monk's corner, he detached Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton to seize the boats, and take possession of Bonneau's ferry; a necessary, but easy operation, whilst the country felt the influence of the late unexpected defeat. This passage over another branch of Cooper river was secured, and by the subsequent movement of the King's troops into the district of St. Thomas, Charles town became completely invested.

APPENDIX D: EXCERPT FROM THE *DIARY OF LIEUTENANT ANTHONY ALLAIRE ON THE ACTION AT BIGGIN BRIDGE*

Wednesday, [April] 12th. Received orders to march. The North Carolinians were ordered to join Col. Ferguson. We left Lining's plantation⁸⁷ about seven o'clock in the evening, and marched to Bacon's Bridge, twenty-two miles, where we arrived at five o'clock on Thursday morning; very much fatigued. We halted to refresh till seven. Cool weather.

Thursday, 13th. Got in motion at seven o'clock in the morning. Marched through a small village called Dorchester. It contains about forty houses and a church. Continued our march to Middleton's plantation at Goose creek, about fifteen miles from Bacon's Bridge, and ten from Dorchester. Here we met the Legion about one o'clock in the afternoon, and halted till ten at night. Then, in company with them, got in motion and marched eighteen miles to Monk's Corner, being informed that Col. Washington's, Pulaski's, Bland's, and Horry's Light Horse lay here. We arrived just as day began to appear on Friday morning, and found the above enemy here, in number about four hundred, including some militia that arrived the day before, commanded by Gen. Huger. Luckily for them, they were under marching orders, which made them more alert, when the alarm was given, than usual, which alone prevented their being all taken completely by surprise. They made off with great expedition. We pursued, overtook and killed Pulaski's Major Vernier, wounded a French Lieut. Beaulait [sic: Louis I. de Beaulieu],* and one other officer; about sixty privates were taken, fifteen or twenty of whom were wounded. We had but one man wounded, and he very slightly. We took thirty wagons, with four horses in each. A number of very fine horses that belonged to their troops were likewise taken, and converted to British Light

⁸⁷ On March 28 Allaire wrote that Lining's Plantation was "situated on Ashley River, nearly opposite Charlestown, and commands an extensive view towards the sea."

horses. Col. Washington and all their officers made but a narrow escape; their baggage, letters, and some of their commissions were taken.

*Beaulait has been very unfortunate since in America. He received seven wounds by a broadsword, in a charge of Campbell's Light Horse, when Charlestown was besieged by Gen. Provost [sic], and two at Monk's Corner, which amounts to nine, four or five of them in the face.—
A. A.

APPENDIX E: THE ATTACK ON LADY JANE COLLETON AND THE RAPE OF ANN FAYSSOUX

Excerpt from Lt. Anthony Allaire's *Diary*:⁸⁸

Friday, 14th. [April 1780] Remained at Monk's Corner, collecting the stores, etc. About seven o'clock at night, accidentally a store house caught fire, in which were two casks of powder; was very much alarmed by the explosion, and all got under arms. This confusion was scarcely over when three ladies came to our camp in great distress: Lady Colleton, Miss Betsy Giles, and Miss Jean Russell. They had been most shockingly abused by a plundering villain. Lady Colleton badly cut in the hand by a broadsword, and bruised very much. After my friend, Dr. [Uzal] Johnson, dressed her hand, he, with an officer and twelve men, went to the plantation, about one mile from camp, to protect Mrs. Fayssoux, whom this infamous villain had likewise abused in the same manner. There he found a most accomplished, amiable lady in the greatest distress imaginable. After he took a little blood from her she was more composed, and next morning come to camp to testify against the cursed villain that abused them in this horrid manner. He was secured and sent to Headquarters for trial.

Saturday, 15th. The army got in motion about twelve o'clock. My friend, Dr. Johnson, and myself had the happiness of escorting the ladies to

their plantation. Before we got there we were met by a servant informing us that there were more plunderers in the house. This news so shocked Lady Colleton and Mrs. Fayssoux, who were some distance before us, and the young ladies in a carriage, that I am not able to describe their melancholy situation, which was truly deplorable. After their fright was a little over we passed on to their house; but the ladies fearing to stay alone, Lady Colleton and Mrs. Fayssoux got into the carriage, Miss Giles behind me, and Miss Russell on a horse, which I led for fear he should make off with my fair one; they passed on with us four miles to a plantation called Mulberry Broughton, and here we bid adieu to our fair companions with great regret, they thinking themselves out of danger of any insults. We this day countermarched to the twenty-three mile house, and halted all night.

Excerpt from Dr. Uzal Johnson's *Journal*:⁸⁹

Friday 14th April 1780. ... This confusion was scarcely over when three ladies came to our camp in great distress: (Lady Colliton [sic], M^s Betsy Giles, and M^s Jean Keusel [Russell]). They had been shockingly abused by a plundering villain, Lady Colliton badly cut in the hand by a broadsword and bruised very much. After dressing her wounds, I went with an Officer and twelve men to the Plantation a mile from camp to protect M^{rs} Faysseux [sic], who this villain had likewise abused in a like manner. Here I found a most accomplished, amiable Lady in the greatest distress imaginable. After taking a little blood from her and giving her an anodyne, she was more composed, and came next morning to camp to testify against the villain that abused them in this horrid manner. He was secured and sent to Head Quarters.

Saturday, 15th. My friend A. Allaire, and I had the happiness of escorting the ladies home. We were met by a servant with the news that there was a villain then plundering the house and a party was sent to the house. They caught [sic] the thief who was well rewarded for his knavery. The ladies chose our protection rather than stay home, and

⁸⁸ Allaire, *Diary*, 491.

⁸⁹ Moss, *Uzal Johnson*), 23-24; Kolb and Weir, *Captured*, 9-11.

begged we would conduct them a few miles to a Plantation called Mulberry Broughton, where we bid *adieu* to those ladies with some regret, tho pleased in some measure that they thought themselves free from any further insults.

Report of Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton⁹⁰

Monk's Corner April 15 1780

Lady Colleton declares that about 12 o'Clock on the night of the 14 Instant Henry McDonnach & some others unknown, came to Fair Lawn her Habitation and entered it with a drawn sword with which he menaced her, on Acct. of her having harboured Rebels for whom he then pretended to search, but finding none he assaulted her & severely wounded her with his Sword, swearing that by God he would first Bugger her then murder her, but being prevented by the Lady's Shrieks & Strugles far from accomplishing his Designs he abandoned her & she fled, she afterwards saw him & his Accomplices in the British Camp possessed of a Jug of Rum, her Property.

Mrs. Ann Fayssoux declared that he made a Similar attack upon her Person for the aforesaid Purposes, almost strangled her, has bruised her most sorely with his Sword, tho' she prostrated herself before him beging him to spare her Life & not to violate her Person.

Miss Jane Russel saw the Attack on Mrs. F. and is also positive as to the Identity of the Culprit. Miss Elizabeth Giles d[itt]o.

Banastre Tarleton

L.C. B.L.

Witness Pat. Ferguson Capt. 70 Regt,
[on reverse]

Dr. Fayssoux Surgn. Genl. to the Army in Charles Town

Tarleton to Maj. John André⁹¹

Dear Andre

Harry McDonough Private Dragoon B. Leg: has committed a cruel Rape on a Mrs. Fasson— I sent him a Suit send Evidences that he may be hanged— in the meantime the Provost must be his Residence.

I am hurried to Death

but I am yours

Sincerely

Ban: Tarleton

⁹⁰ Clinton Papers, Volume 92, No. 47, Clements Library.

⁹¹ Clinton Papers, Volume 95, No. 59. Clements Library. Maj. John André was then acting as Gen. Henry Clinton's aide-de-

camp. On the following October 2nd André was famously hanged as a spy for assisting the betrayal of West Point by Gen. Benedict Arnold.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Jim Piecuch for his expert editing and of Mike Kirby who verified the former course of Biggin Creek in the swamp. Roger E. Harris and Mary Jane Harris provided helpful comments on early versions of the paper.

C. Leon Harris is Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences, State University of New York at Plattsburgh. He attended public schools in Henry County VA, studied electrical engineering and physics at MIT and Virginia Tech, and earned graduate degrees in biophysics at Penn State. For three decades he taught, wrote textbooks, and did neurobiology research before retiring to Mount Pleasant SC and Adamant VT. Since then he has authored or co-authored several papers on the Revolutionary War in the South, and has helped Will Graves transcribe more than 27 thousand Revolutionary War pension and bounty-land applications, rosters, and other documents at revwarapps.org.

Charles B. Baxley lives and practices law in Lugoff, SC. He has published the on-line journal, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* since 2004 which he co-founded with David P. Reuwer. He has sponsored dozens of conferences, archaeological projects, roundtables, and tours, all featuring topics on the Southern Campaigns. He serves as Chairman of the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allaire, Anthony. in Lyman C. Draper, *Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire, of Ferguson's Corps*. In *King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780, and the Events Which Led to It*, 484-515. Cincinnati: P. G. Thomson, 1881. Also at <https://www.tngenweb.org/revwar/kingsmountain/allaire.html>

John Batzel, "Layton Yancey & the 1st Continental Light Dragoons." [http://www.williamconradgibbons.com/uploads/3/9/4/6/3946895/yancey - continental dragoon history original.pdf](http://www.williamconradgibbons.com/uploads/3/9/4/6/3946895/yancey_-_continental_dragoon_history_original.pdf))

Borick, Carl. P. *A Gallant Defense: The Siege of Charleston, 1780*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

British Headquarters Papers, CO 5/99/477 (microfilm at the David Library of the American Revolution) excerpted and transcribed by Jim Piecuch.

Chesnutt, Chesnutt and C. James Taylor, eds. Laurens, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Laurens: December 11, 1778-August 31, 1782*, Vol. 15. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000.

Conrad, Dennis M., et al., eds. *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*. Vol. IX. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Ewald, Johann. *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*. Translated by Joseph P. Tustin. New Haven CT: Yale University Press. 1979.

"General plan of the canal and its environs between Santee and Cooper rivers in the state of South Carolina: commenced in the year 1795 and finished in the year 1800." South Caroliniana Library,

University of South Carolina. Call Number: Map 1800 No. 5 Size 3

<https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/sclmaps/id/228>.

Johnson, Uzal. *Captured at Kings Mountain: The Journal of Uzal Johnson, A Loyalist Surgeon*. Eds. Wade S. Kolb, III and Robert M. Weir. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011.

Lewis, J. D. www.carolana.com

Lincoln, Benjamin. *Original Papers Relating to the Siege of Charleston, 1780*. Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cooswell, 1898.

Moss, Bobby Gilmer. *Uzal Johnson, Loyalist Surgeon*. Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 2000.

Moultrie, William. *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. New York: David Longworth, 1802.

Murphy, Daniel. *William Washington, American Light Dragoon*. Yardley PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014.

O'Kelley, Patrick. *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas*, Vol. 2. Booklocker, 2004.

Russell, Peter, "The Siege of Charleston: Journal of Captain Peter Russell, December 25, 1779 to May 2, 1780." *American Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (1899): 478-501.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/1833434?refreqid=excelsior%3A1d968d663b6e87c759240dc9a80d0d49&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Saberton, Ian. Ed., *The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War*, Vol. 1. East Sussex, Eng: Naval and Military Press, 2010.

Salmon, John S., "A British View of the Siege of Charleston: from the Diary of Captain John Peebles February 11 - June 2, 1780." MA Thesis, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1975.

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4529&context=etd>

Sir Henry Clinton Papers. William L. Clements Library, Univiversity of Michigan

Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters. Federal pension applications transcribed by Will Graves and C. Leon Harris. <https://revwarapps.org>

Stedman, Charles. *The History of the Origins, Progress and Termination of the American War*, Vol. 2. London: J. Murray, 1794.

Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America*. London: T. Cadell, 1787.

Webber, Mabel L. "Col. Senf's Account of the Santee Canal," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 28, no. 1 (Jan. 1927): 8-21.