



The  
**JOURNAL**

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# Drum Roll

THE SUMTER  
CONUNDRUM



## Inside:

Did Tarleton burn  
Sumter's home on the  
way to the Battle of  
Waxhaws?

C. Leon Harris

A publication of



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# The Journal

## Editor

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

## Contributing Writers

C. Leon Harris  
Chief Lamar Nelson  
Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

## About Us

### *For The People*

*SCART is on a mission to preserve, protect and promote (into perpetuity) the stories, artifacts and history of South Carolina's role in the American Revolution. South Carolina changed the world. The Trust's collections highlight the pivotal times, places and people that helped us win our independence and catalyze over 250 years of change.*

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# Letter from the Editor

I am Richard C. Meehan, Jr., Noggin Universe Press, LLC, based in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the new editor of the Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution—THE JOURNAL. I wish to thank the leadership team of SCART, Inc. for choosing me: Thomas Persons, John Allison, Julian Burns, Corinne Hoch, “Bucky” Haas, and Wesley Herndon. I have researched and written about South Carolina’s involvement in the Revolutionary War for many years, not realizing that so many of you created the source materials I was enjoying.

This scholarly publication was the brainchild of the much beloved Charles B. Baxley, former South Carolina Sestercentennial Commission chairman. He was passionate about gathering and preserving our Revolutionary War heritage. In his first edition, Charles dedicated this journal to the “study of the War for American Independence in the Southern Department from 1760 to 1789. We want to encourage the exchange of information on the Southern Campaigns’ battle sites, their location, preservation, historic signage, interpretation, artifacts, archaeology, and the region’s personalities, military tactics, units, logistics, strategy, and political leadership. We will highlight the dynamic exchange of information. All are invited to submit articles, pictures, events, and suggestions. We will feature battles and skirmishes, documents, maps, artifacts, Internet links, and other people involved in research.”

This editor has been given a challenging task. I will do my best to uphold the ideals expressed by the original author. The submission form is now open, and I look forward to collaborating with you.

*Richard C. Meehan, Jr.*

Editor



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# Hear Ye, Hear Ye

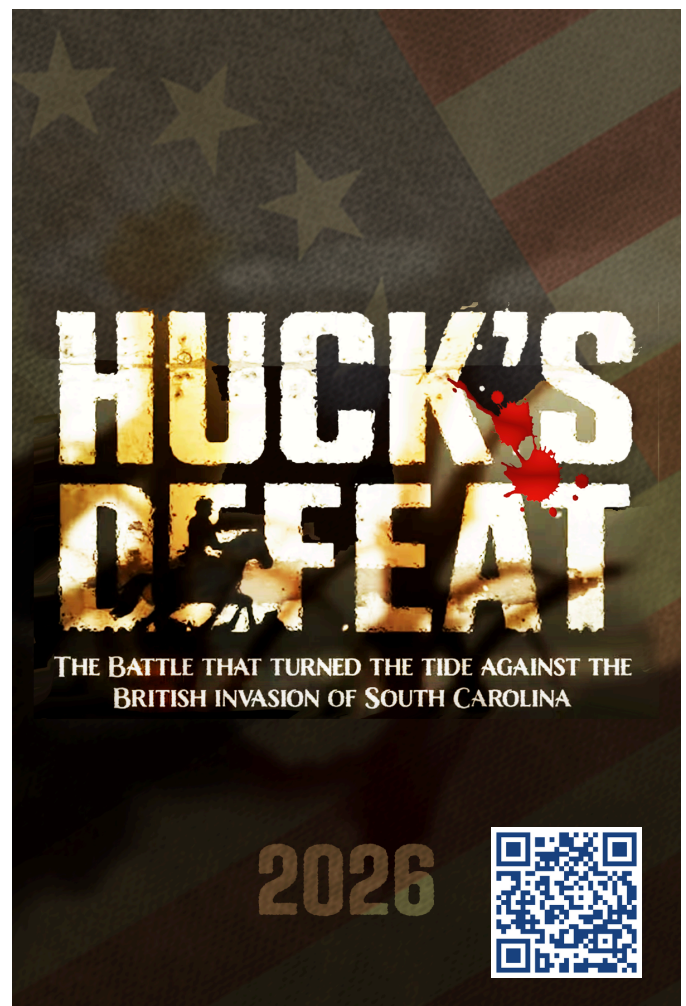


Edgar Michael Bravo of No Restrictions Studios, SC—Spartanburg, a visionary writer and director of eight feature films distributed worldwide, has co-written "Huck's Defeat" with award-winning Spartanburg author Richard C. Meehan, Jr. (Editor of this Journal). Bravo will soon direct this movie, which is slated for production in 2025. It will be the first picture to highlight South Carolina's significant contributions to the Revolutionary War since "The Patriot," released in 2000. View the trailer and get further information on [hucksdefeatmovie.com](https://hucksdefeatmovie.com).

Set during the American Revolution in 1780, Huck's Defeat tells the story of the Bratton family and their fight against Loyalist forces in South Carolina. Martha Bratton, a courageous and resourceful woman, faces danger when Captain Christian Huck, a ruthless Loyalist officer, targets her family farm. Huck's campaign of terror against local Patriots intensifies, leading to widespread destruction and executions, while his subordinate, Lieutenant John Adamson, struggles with the brutality of their mission.

When Huck's forces approach, Martha refuses to betray her husband William's location, even under threat. She sends Watt, a trusted ally, to warn William, who is organizing a militia with local leaders. The Patriots launch a daring ambush on Huck's camp, resulting in a decisive victory that ends with Huck's death. Simultaneously, a rescue mission led by Captain Reid secures the Bratton family's safety. Martha's unwavering bravery inspires the militia and demonstrates the resilience of the Patriot cause.

The victory at Huck's Defeat becomes a turning point, rallying the local population and weakening British control. The story closes with reflections on the sacrifices made by ordinary individuals like Martha and William, whose courage helped shape the course of history in the fight for American independence.



# ECSIUT

## *Join the Pow Wow*

Eastern Cherokee, Southern Iroquois and United Tribes of South Carolina  
is a nonprofit organization (501c3) representing Native Americans.

The Cherokees and other Native American tribes in South Carolina participated in the Revolutionary War.

Every spring, ECSIUT hosts a Pow Wow, which is a family-friendly gathering celebrating Native American culture and open to everyone. At our Pow Wow, visitors can immerse themselves in Native American traditions through activities such as singing, drumming, dancing, arts and crafts, and cultural demonstrations like flint knapping.

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## MAY 3, 2025

Hagood Mill Historic Site  
138 Hagood Mill Road  
Pickens, SC 29671

9:30 AM to 5:30 PM

Contact: Chief Lamar Nelson  
Phone: (864) 978-9525

# Submissions Welcome

The Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution is a free downloadable magazine dedicated to the Revolutionary War, focusing on Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. We are committed to fostering knowledge about the people, sites, artifacts, military strategies, and engagements pivotal in the fight for American Independence (1760-1789). Each issue presents compelling battles, historical documents, maps, and links to enhance your understanding. Join us in promoting research and preservation by sharing articles, photos, and events. Founded in 2004 by Charles B. Baxley and David P. Reuwer, The Journal, now part of the South Carolina American Revolution Trust, aims to be your trusted resource for Revolutionary War histories. [Connect with us](#) to keep history alive!

~ Richard C. Meehan, Jr., Editor

We encourage the submission of articles based on original research. For examples, please refer to previous issues at <https://southern-campaigns.org/>.

1. Before any work can be considered for publication, a formal query must be submitted via <https://southern-campaigns.org/contact/>. The editor will respond promptly.
2. The Journal promotes original conclusions and speculations supported by primary sources clearly distinguished from established facts.
3. Every assertion of fact should be backed by at least one primary source unless it is widely accepted, like “Charleston surrendered on 12 May 1780.” Secondary sources can serve as supporting evidence.
4. Submissions must be in MS Word format, letter size, with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. The cover page must include the author’s name and contact information.
5. Chicago Manual of Style, the latest edition, will be used for footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies. ([https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html).)
6. Articles may include illustrations and photos, preferably embedded within the text. Artwork, illustrations, and images must be in the public domain or include citations confirming they can be used commercially and non-commercially in print and online formats. The preferred graphic format is PNG or JPG, at 300 dpi. Lower or higher resolutions are not acceptable for this publication. Upon request, the editor may assist with resolving graphics issues.
7. All article submissions will undergo thorough peer review by three individuals recognized by the historical community for their relevant expertise, ensuring that references are legitimate and sourced from the best materials available.
8. If a submission is turned back for further citations or significant edit suggestions, the writer may resubmit the work when the edits are complete. When resubmitting, we use a “third strike – you’re out” policy.
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10. The author must provide a short autobiography pertinent to their expertise in this field of study of no more than 300 words. A picture may be included if desired. The author may also provide a contact email address at the end of the article to obtain feedback from readers, but that is solely at their discretion, and the Journal accepts no responsibility for the results.
11. Announcements related to Revolutionary War events are welcome if submitted in graphic format (PNG or JPG). They should be 3x4 inches horizontally or 4x3 inches vertically for quality viewing and printing at 300 dpi.
12. News stories about Revolutionary War projects are accepted and should follow the same format as research papers.

# The Dragoon



*Charles B. Baxley (1952-2024)*

For further information about the late Charles B. Baxley, click his image or visit <https://southcarolina250.com>.

Our new editor, Rick Meehan, asked me to write this inaugural piece for *The Dragoon*. I suspect that because I'm older, he thinks I might have been one. I'm actually not quite old enough to be a primary source, but that's all right because Rick and I believe this should be a space free from the requirements of scholarly research papers. Sometimes, there are good ideas or questions that simply can't be documented. So, all of you who have speculations or questions or who want to share your current projects are invited to send Rick 300 to 400 words on the subject.

For this first effort, I thought it would be fitting to reflect on the evolution of *The Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*, particularly since its first editor, Charles B. Baxley (March 25, 1952 – March 30, 2024), passed away exactly one year ago as I write these words. Despite being a busy lawyer

and civic leader, Charles managed to find time to pursue many other interests, including the Revolutionary War. Through the *SCAR Journal*, Charles and David P. Reuwer brought together an impressive group of fellow enthusiasts, many of whom are reading these words. Above all, Charles cherished the camaraderie of all those who passionately shared their interest and knowledge.

The first issue of *The Journal*, dated September 2004, was a mailed MS Word document that included a compilation of sources on Sumter's attack at Rocky Mount, updates on projects, news of events, a book review, and a calendar of upcoming events. Over the years, *The Journal* transitioned to an online format, with more thorough research as the papers of Nathanael Greene and Lord Cornwallis, pension applications, and other documents became accessible. Eventually, each issue of *The Journal* evolved into a long research paper focused on a single topic.

For twenty years, Charles devoted considerable effort to editing *The Journal*, even after his diagnosis with a debilitating disease. I had the privilege of co-authoring several papers for *The Journal* with him. During late-night emails and visits at his home, scheduled around the effects of his medications, he patiently nurtured those papers until they met his exacting standards. I'm sure Charles would be pleased with this current evolutionary stage of *The Journal*, with its return to the original scope in an exciting new format.

~ C. Leon Harris

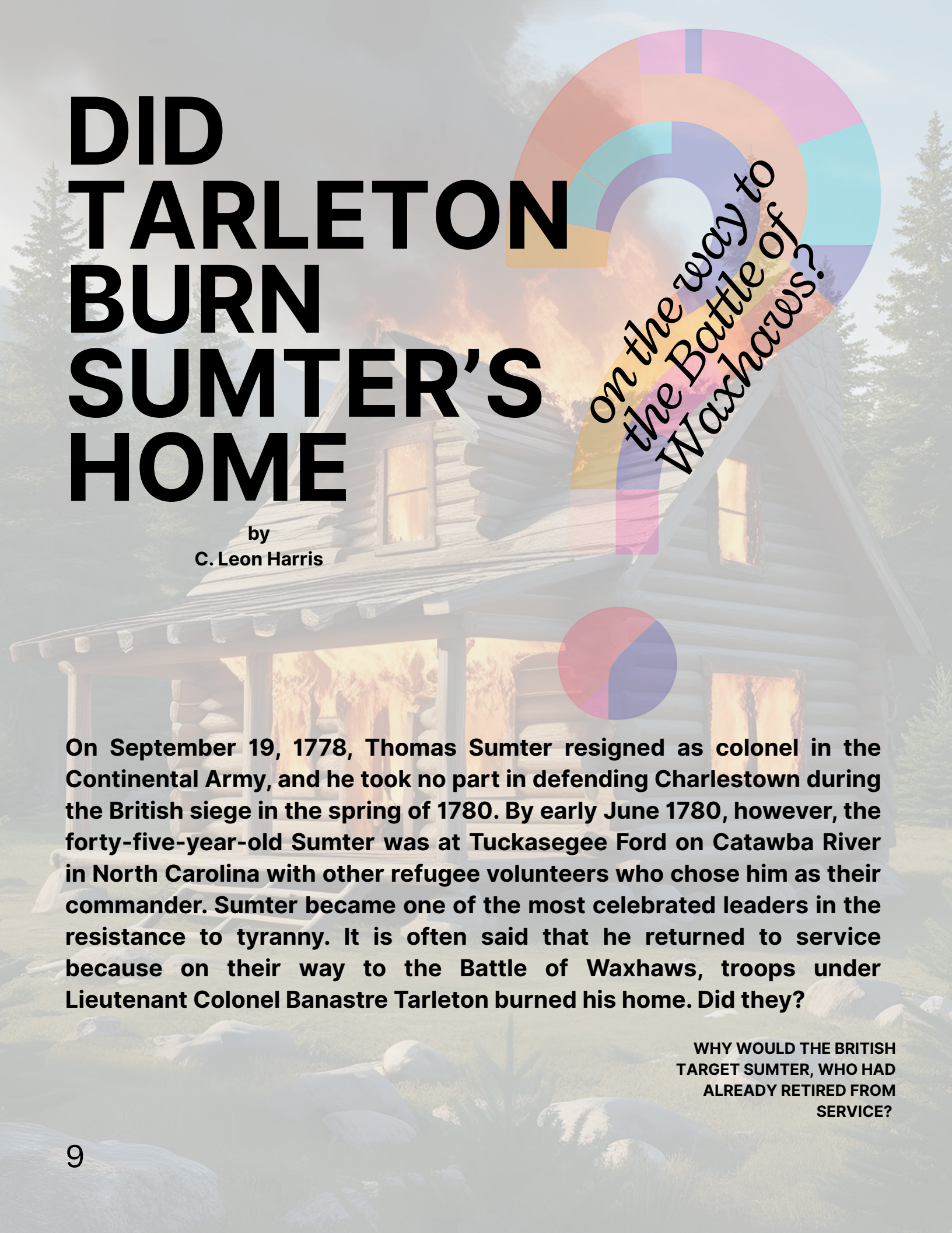


# DID TARLETON BURN SUMTER'S HOME

by  
C. Leon Harris



*On the way to  
the Battle of  
Waxhaws?*



On September 19, 1778, Thomas Sumter resigned as colonel in the Continental Army, and he took no part in defending Charlestown during the British siege in the spring of 1780. By early June 1780, however, the forty-five-year-old Sumter was at Tuckasegee Ford on Catawba River in North Carolina with other refugee volunteers who chose him as their commander. Sumter became one of the most celebrated leaders in the resistance to tyranny. It is often said that he returned to service because on their way to the Battle of Waxhaws, troops under Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton burned his home. Did they?

WHY WOULD THE BRITISH  
TARGET SUMTER, WHO HAD  
ALREADY RETIRED FROM  
SERVICE?



Figure 1. General Thomas Sumter by Rembrandt Peale and Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton by Joshua Reynolds

## Origin of the Story

According to the generally accepted history, on May 27, 1780, Tarleton's men burned Sumter's home while pursuing a detachment of Virginia Continental soldiers commanded by Colonel Abraham Buford. Buford had led the detachment to relieve Charlestown during the British siege, but at Lenud's Ferry on Santee River Buford learned that the British had blocked all access to the town. On May 14, 1780, two days after the surrender of Charlestown, Buford began a slow retreat toward the Whig-dominated village of Charlotte, North Carolina. (Fig. 2)

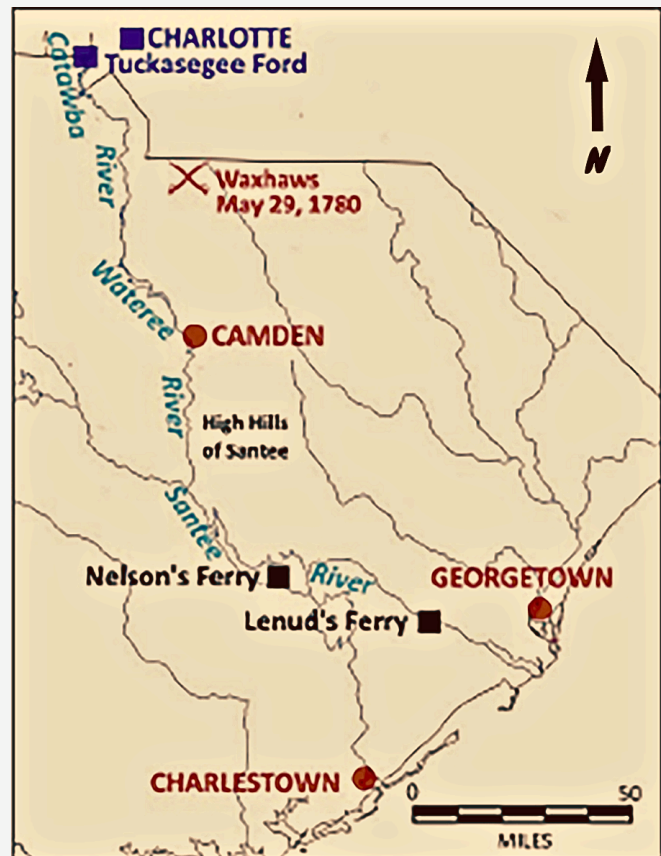


Figure 2. Places mentioned in this paper. In this and other maps, the north is toward the top.

In the meantime, Tarleton, with his British Legion, marched westward from Georgetown, “upon the same road by which Colonel Buford had retreated ten days before. The infantry marched to Nelson’s ferry with as much expedition as the climate would allow.”<sup>1</sup> On May 22, Tarleton arrived at Nelson’s Ferry on Santee River, where Gen. Charles, Lord Cornwallis, ordered him to pursue Buford’s detachment. “Earl Cornwallis thought proper to detach a corps, consisting of forty of the 17th dragoons, and one hundred and thirty of the Legion, with one hundred mounted infantries of the same regiment, and a three pounder, to pursue the Americans.” Tarleton left Nelson’s Ferry on May 27, while Buford’s detachment was at Camden sixty miles to the north. On May 29, Tarleton caught up with Buford at the Waxhaws settlement and cut the Virginians to pieces as they were surrendering.

William Dobein James, in his biography of General Francis Marion, published in 1821, was the first to state that in their pursuit of Buford, Tarleton’s troops burned Sumter’s home in the High Hills of Santee near the area that later became Stateburg. (Fig. 3)

The news of these two events, the surrender of the town, and the defeat of Buford, were spread through the country about the same time, and the spirit of the whigs, sunk into despondency. The American cause appeared to be lost; but, on this expedition, Tarleton burnt the house of Gen. Sumter, near Stateburgh, and roused the spirit of the lion; at Camden, a party of his men cut to pieces Samuel Wiley, whom they mistook for his brother, John Wiley, then sheriff of the district, at his own house.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 3. Excerpts from a 1787 map by William Faden, Geographer to the King,<sup>3</sup> published as the frontispiece in Tarleton’s History, showing in yellow Tarleton’s route from Farrar (Great) Savannah near Nelson’s Ferry to the High Hills (Santee Hills). The square west of Santee Hills indicates the later location of Stateburg.

<sup>1</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (Dublin: Colles, et al., 1787), 28.

<sup>2</sup> William Dobein James, *A Sketch of the Life of Brig. Gen. Francis Marion* (Charleston, SC: Gould and Riley, 1821), 40. John Wyly signed his name thus.

<sup>3</sup> “The marches of Lord Cornwallis in the Southern Provinces...,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692779/>.

Almost a century after Sumter's home is said to have been burned, Lyman Copeland Draper gathered information for a book about Sumter. The book was never published, but Draper's notes survive as the Sumter Papers. Excerpts relating to the event are transcribed in the Appendix of this paper. Sumter's biographer, Anne King Gregorie, used Draper's notes in the following account often cited by historians:

According to tradition, Sumter left his home in the High Hills just before Tarleton swept through in the horse-killing ride after Buford. Young Tom Sumter, then a boy of twelve, happened to be out on his horse, when an excited neighbor warned him that the British were coming and he had better tell his father and save himself.

A few hours later, Captain Charles Campbell of Tarleton's Legion, arrived at Sumter's house and tried in vain to make Mrs. Sumter tell where her husband was. The British then picked her up in her chair and, carrying her out, placed her under a tree. A young girl, Nancy Davis,<sup>4</sup> then staying with Mrs. Sumter to help with the housekeeping, had locked everything and thrown the keys in the grass in the yard, but the British were not to be stopped by locks, and quickly plundering the house and smokehouse, set everything afire....

Sumter may have been able to see all this from a hiding place—the echoes of tradition are nowhere more confused than here—but at any rate this disaster to his property is said to have “roused the spirit of the lion.” On May 28 he left his family to begin the most famous and spectacular part of his career; and four days later he must have already begun preparations for action, for nineteen United States Loan Office \$1,000 certificates were issued to him, bearing date of June 1, 1780.<sup>5</sup>

## Questions

Gregorie referred to the burning of Sumter's home as a “tale” and “traditions” with good reason. No primary source refers to such an event. Tarleton, who was not modest about burning Whig homes, in fact wrote that nothing of consequence happened on the march to Waxhaws. “The detachment left the army on the 27th, and

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<sup>4</sup> Evidently the same person referred to by Thomas Delage Sumter as Martha Davis. Sumter Papers 11VV503.

<sup>5</sup> Anne King Gregorie, *Thomas Sumter* (Columbia SC: R. L. Bryan Co., 1931), 74-75. The Loan Office certificates are sometimes misinterpreted as loans to Sumter. They were actually certificates guaranteeing repayment of money Sumter had loaned to the United States, probably weeks before Congress issued them. “Thomas Sumpter. (To accompany Bill H.R. No. 388.) January 11, 1838,” Library of Congress, [https://www.loc.gov/resource/llserialsetce.00334\\_00\\_00-030-0359-0000/?sp=1&st=image](https://www.loc.gov/resource/llserialsetce.00334_00_00-030-0359-0000/?sp=1&st=image)

followed the Americans without anything material happening on the route, except the loss of a number of horses, in consequence of the rapidity of the march, and the heat of the climate.”<sup>6</sup> Sumter did not mention such an event in any known correspondence.<sup>7</sup>

The tradition raises a number of questions. Why would the British target Sumter, who had retired from service? Cornwallis, and presumably Tarleton, were apparently unaware of Sumter until a month later, when Lt. Col. Francis, Lord Rawdon mentioned that “Sumpter is appointed a general and is near Charlotteburg.”<sup>8</sup> One should also wonder whether Tarleton’s men would have gone out of their way to burn Sumter’s home after having covered more than thirty miles and with thirty more miles to go before resting at Camden. Another problem is that Capt. Charles Campbell, who is said to have done the burning, was in the 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment, which was not with Tarleton at the time.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there is little evidence that Sumter was then living near Stateburg, which did not exist until 1783, when he and others founded the town.

## Was Sumter living in the High Hills?

The accounts gathered by Draper are vague and inconsistent regarding the location of the burned house. Only one of his six informants, Thomas Delage Sumter (1809-1874), a son of Thomas Sumter, Jr., stated that the house was near Stateburg. “Dont think the British burned any house for Gen. Sumter save the one less than a mile east of where Stateburg is since located—on a fine elevation with a fine view,” and “was ever after called ‘The Ruins’ & is now a part of the Devoe Estate on first hill east of Stateburg.”<sup>10</sup> The National Register of Historic Places nomination form for Stateburg Historic District states that “The Ruins” was “owned by Gen. Thomas Sumter in 1784.”<sup>11</sup> (Figure 4)

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<sup>6</sup> Tarleton, History, 29. On November 11, 1780, Tarleton boasted to Cornwallis that he had “laid the houses and plantations of violent rebels waste about Richardson’s and Jacks Creek.” Ian Saberton, ed., *The Cornwallis Papers*, six volumes (Uckfield, East Sussex, England: Naval & Military Press, 2010), 3: 337.

<sup>7</sup> May 21, 2024, email from David McSwain, who has collected and transcribed the Sumter correspondence.

<sup>8</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, June 29, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers* 1: 187.

<sup>9</sup> Note 57 by Ian Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers* 1: 227. Todd Braisted, “British Legion Biographical Sketches, Cavalry Officers,” *The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies*, does not list a Capt. Charles Campbell  
<https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/britlegn/blcav1.htm>. Todd Braisted, June 5, 2024 email.

<sup>10</sup> Lyman C. Draper, *Sumter Papers*, 11VV503-504. Devoe is usually spelled Deveaux.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Schuette, *Stateburg Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, August 29, 1970).  
<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/sumter/S10817743022/S10817743022.pdf>.

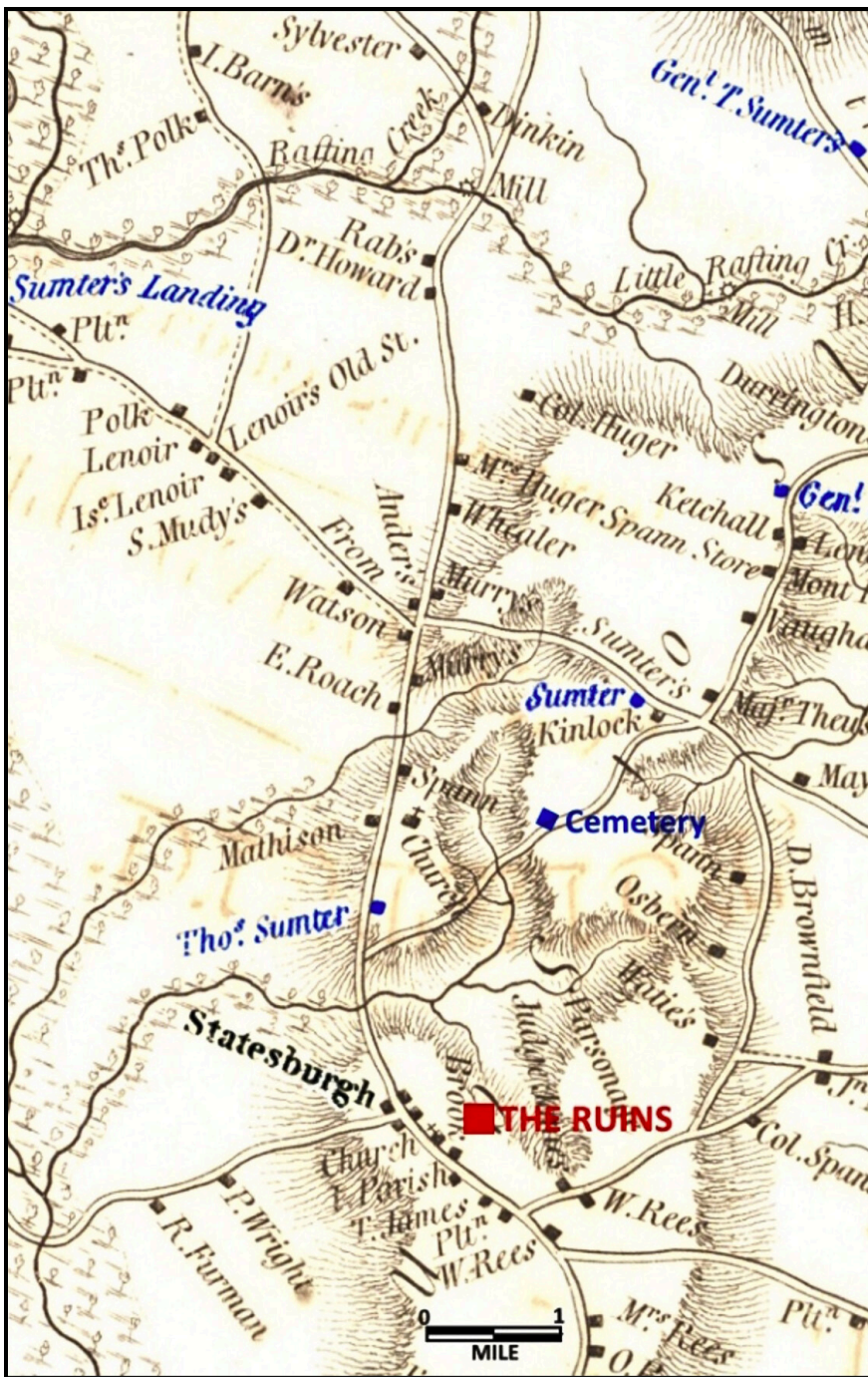


Figure 4. Part of Mills Atlas, Sumter District, based on an 1821 survey, showing two properties of Gen. Sumter, recolored blue. Note also two other Sumter properties, perhaps belonging to Thomas Sumter, Jr., as well as Sumter's Landing on Wateree River. Added to the map are the locations of the Sumter family cemetery and "The Ruins."

Sumter did have a plantation in the High Hills by March 1781, but there is no evidence that he lived there. Pension applicant George Dowell testified that "about the first of March [1781] or some time in the Spring. I was dismissed at the High Hills of Santee and received a written Discharge from General Sumpter himself, being then stationed at his plantation guarding public property."<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the spring of 1784 Sumter acquired numerous other properties in the area.<sup>2</sup>

Sumter's granddaughter, Pauline Brazilia Brownsfield (1813-1889), informed Draper that two houses were burned, the first possibly near Nelson's Ferry, and the second at the High Hills.

[Tarleton] came to Sumter's neighborhood, & burned his residence on Santee—perhaps near Nelson's Ferry.... Having a place at the High Hills & lands there, Mrs. Sumter repaired there—and not very long after, a British party (don't remember who commanded, unless it was Tarleton)... plundered & then burned the house.<sup>14</sup>

## SUMTER'S GRANDDAUGHTER, PAULINE BRAZILIA BROWNSFIELD, INFORMED LYMAN DRAPER THAT TWO HOUSES WERE BURNED.

<sup>12</sup> Pension application S32222 <https://revwarapps.org/s32222.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Plats of land surveyed for Thomas Sumter <https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/>

<sup>14</sup> Sumter Papers 16VV95. Gregorie, Thomas Sumter, 30 believed that Sumter moved in the reverse direction, from the High Hills after his house was burned there, to Nelson's Ferry.

Faden's map (Fig. 3), as well as two maps from 1773 and 1775, also show "Sumpter" near Nelson's Ferry. Another of Draper's informants, Augustus Fludd (1833-1897), also stated that Sumter's house was near Nelson's Ferry. (Fig. 5)

Statement by Augustus Fludd:

I am inclined to the opinion of a very old negro who belonged to Jno. N. Davis when he owned the lands cited in yr. letter – that Gen. Sumter residence stood on the left hand side of the road leading from Nelson's Ferry via Wright's Bluff to Camden, back upon the swamp about ½ mile from the public road. This spot had been pointed out to him. It is fully 3½ miles from the Ferry across river swamp to the high land & 2 miles from this point to where I am informed the house stood. The locality for a low & flat country, immediately on the swamp is a pretty one, rather an elevation, high & dry and a beautiful growthe of live oak & cedar.<sup>15</sup>

**NELSON'S FERRY by Lossing**

<sup>15</sup> Sumter Papers 2VV171. Draper's letter to Fludd is apparently lost.



Figure 5. Parts of four maps showing locations of Sumter's home near Nelson's Ferry. Each map is referenced to Nelson's Ferry in the lower right and the junction of the road to the ferry and the road to Camden to the northwest. Top left: John Cook's 1773 map, with Sumter's home recolored red. Top right: Henry Mouzon's 1775 map with Sumter's home recolored green. Bottom left: William Faden's 1787 map with Sumter's home recolored orange. Bottom right: Mills Atlas based on an 1821 survey showing the location of Sumter's home in violet according to Augustus Fludd. The scale of one mile is in the top left panel.



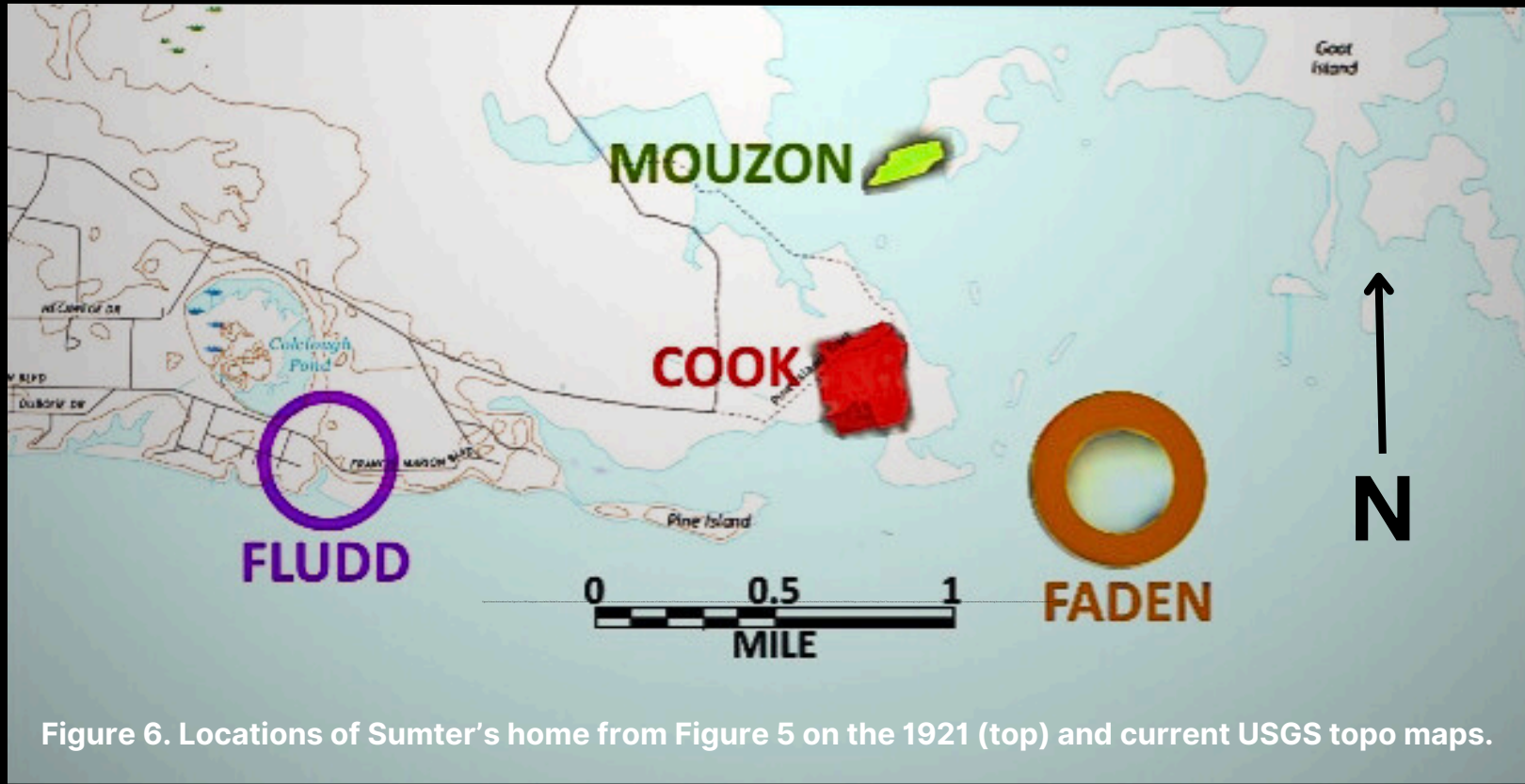
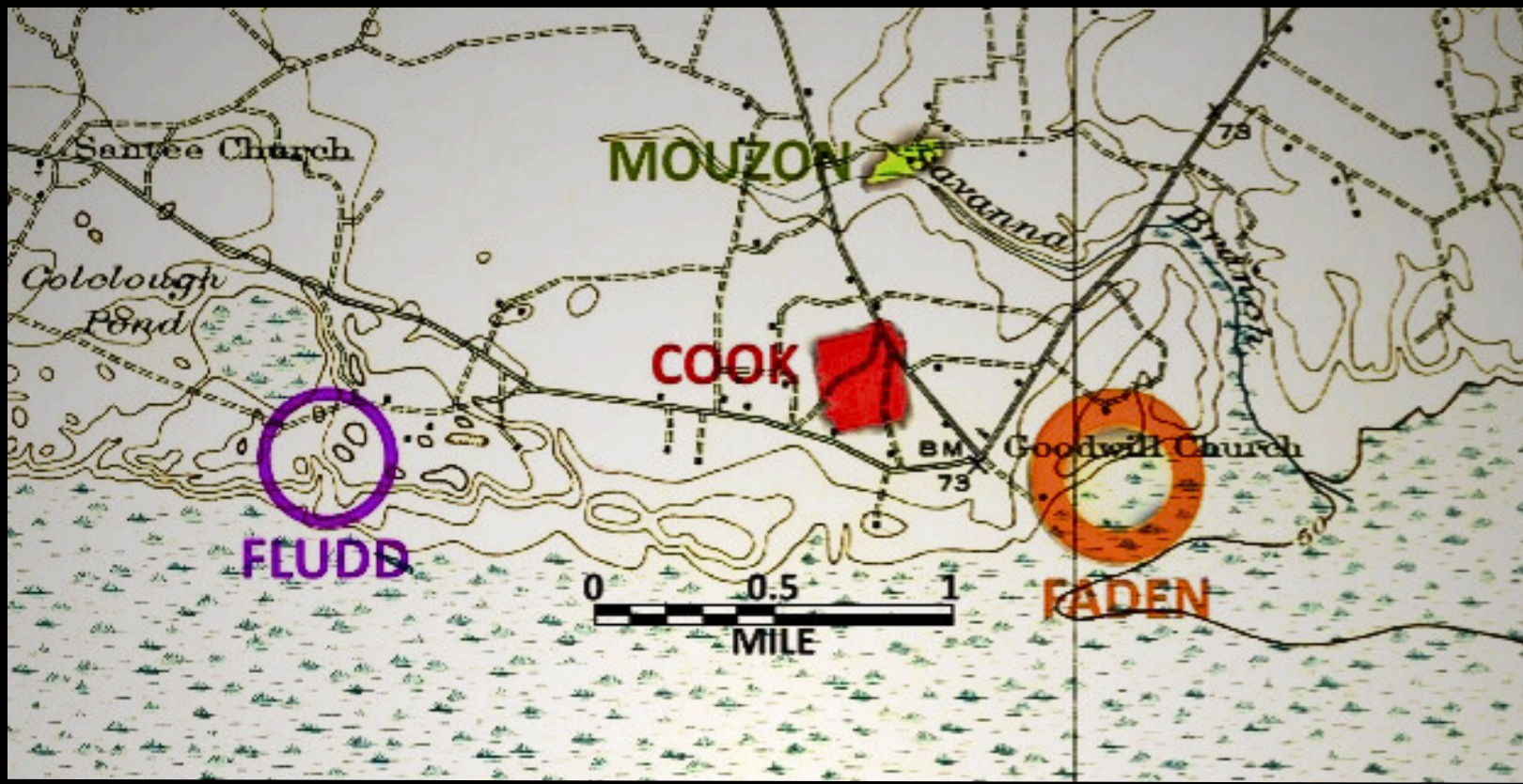


Figure 6. Locations of Sumter's home from Figure 5 on the 1921 (top) and current USGS topo maps.

Figure 6 shows the locations from Figure 5 on a 1921 topographic map before Santee River was dammed, and on the current USGS topographic map. Some potential locations are now under the water of Lake Marion, but if Fludd was correct that the location was "rather an elevation, high & dry," then it may yet be above water. It may have been at the site on Cook's map near the Pine Island Trail in the Santee National Wildlife Refuge, or southeast of Colclough Pond. The maps are not accurate enough to give a precise location. There are numerous plats for properties owned by Sumter during the war, but none includes any of the four sites or shows his house.

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# 2026

## Did Tarleton Burn Sumter's House Near Nelson's Ferry?

Tarleton had ample opportunity to burn Sumter's home near Nelson's Ferry if he was so inclined. He spent five days in the area before pursuing Buford, and Faden's map shows that his route went past Sumter's home. The house was apparently still standing, however, on August 25, 1780, when Gen. Francis Marion rescued Continental prisoners who were being held there after being captured at the Battle of Camden on August 16. Marion reported to Gen. Horatio Gates, "Hearing of some prisoners, which the enemy were carrying down to Charlestown by the way of Nelson's ferry, I marched my party of seventy men and surprised them the 25th. Instant, at the Great Savanna, at Colonel Sumpter's house, near Nelson's ferry."<sup>16</sup> If Sumter's house was burned in late May of 1780, he must either have had a new one built within three months, or he owned another house nearby.

Sumter's wife and son were apparently still living in the house in early March, 1781, when Sumter finally evacuated them, according to three pension applicants.<sup>17</sup> They then went back to Santee River where Sumter lived and fetched some of his White family & slaves away & carried them to North Carolina.<sup>18</sup> We received orders to go and act as a guard for the removal of Col Sumter's family from Santee River - into North Carolina - we went to the Santee river and proceed with his family to the Waxhaws where we left them - on the journey and march we had frequent Skirmishes with the tories and Enemy.<sup>19</sup> Went to the Big Savannah to General Sumter's plantation and took his wife and son and some of his slaves which were left.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Marion to Gates, August 29, 1780, "Battle of Great Savannah," American Battlefield Trust, accessed January 22, 2025. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/i-am-certain-they-will-desert-francis-marion-battle-great-savannah>. Another source gives the date as August 20: Marion to Col. Peter Horry, August 27, 1780, in James, Sketch, Appendix, 12.

<sup>17</sup> C. Leon Harris and Charles B. Baxley, "'To Keep Up the Spirits of the People and Alarm the Enemy': Sumter's Rounds in South Carolina," academia.edu, (2024), 24-25. [https://www.academia.edu/118640111/\\_To\\_Keep\\_Up\\_the\\_Spirits\\_of\\_the\\_People\\_and\\_Alarm\\_the\\_E\\_nemy\\_Sumter\\_s\\_Rounds\\_in\\_South\\_Carolina](https://www.academia.edu/118640111/_To_Keep_Up_the_Spirits_of_the_People_and_Alarm_the_E_nemy_Sumter_s_Rounds_in_South_Carolina).

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Townsend S11561 <https://revwarapps.org/s11561.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> James Jordan S32346 <https://revwarapps.org/s32346.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Gillham S32270 <https://revwarapps.org/s32270.pdf>

# conclusions

The belief that Sumter was living in the High Hills of Santee near Stateburg in May 1780 is based on a brief remark by William Dobein James and a weak assertion by a grandson, Thomas Delage Sumter. It is likely that they merely assumed that Sumter was already living there, but there is no evidence that he owned a home in the High Hills of Santee before 1783.

Pauline Brazilia Brownfield, another grandchild of Gen. Sumter, believed the first burned house may have been near Nelson's Ferry, and early maps show that Sumter lived in that area. Tarleton's men had ample opportunity to burn that home, but the fact that his family was still living there in August 1780 and March 1781 suggests that they did not.

Although it appears that Tarleton's troops did not burn Sumter's home either in the High Hills or near Nelson's Ferry, it is possible that the rest of the tradition is true. It would not have been out of character for Tarleton's men to have plundered the plantation and to have abused Mrs. Sumter without knowing who her husband was. Their plundering, and especially the mistreatment of his wife, would have been sufficient provocation for Sumter to return to active duty. Tarleton's massacre of Buford's detachment at Waxhaws might also have roused the spirit of the lion.

# Appendix

Notes by Lyman Copeland Draper regarding the burning of Sumter's home and mistreatment of his wife.<sup>21</sup>

## Information from grandson Thomas Delage Sumter (1809-1874) (11VV503-504):

Burning of Sumter's House &c. Dont think the British burned any house for Gen. Sumter save the one less than a mile east of where Stateburg is since located—on a fine elevation with a fine view: Thinks Tarleton himself not present: perhaps Capt. Campbell commanding (remembers seeing somewhere, that Cornwallis regretted the burning of Sumter's house, as he would have preferred to conciliate.)—Mrs Sumter was carried out in her chair—then partly paralyzed—& put under a shade tree near by, beside some briar bushes—& Martha Davis was with her, & the house & meat house burned after being plundered: One soldier more thoughtful & kind than the rest, threw a ham into the briars, for her calling her attention to it quietly as he passed.

There was a young man named Hinson,<sup>22</sup> sallow, & cadaverous, who had long suffered from chills & fever, who lived there, & stood beside the lone woman, sick, & almost helpless—worked as he was able as a carpenter; seeing whom the British jeered him—& one threatened to blow his brains out; pointing a pistol at his head, when an officer told him not to waste power [powder?] on such a tallow-faced object. At this, Hinson began to feel indignant & the blood rushed to his face, as Mrs Sumter observed his face suffused with pent-up indignation—& he went off, joined Sumter—became thence forward well—& proved a fine soldier. While at work subsequently he killed one or two Tories stabbed them with his chissel. Martha Davis lived in the family—married Judge B—y[?]<sup>23</sup>—& lived to a great age. left many descendants. Mrs. Ann Clark, with whom Mrs. Sumter, Miss Davis & young Tom Sumter boarded several months, after the destruction of the residence, resided some seven miles south east of Sumter's burned house, at Cane Savannah. The Sumter place was ever after called "The Ruins"—& is now a part of the Devoe<sup>24</sup> Estate, on first hill east of Stateburg.

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<sup>21</sup> Some pages have been renumbered since they were cited by Gregorie.

<sup>22</sup> Gregorie, Thomas Sumter, 74, gave the name as "Archie Henson" in a paragraph citing information from Pauline Brazilia Brownfield, who gave the name as Henderson, and Sebastian Sumter, who did not mention the name. In 1785 one Archibald Henson applied for pay for 335 days service in the militia in 1780. <https://revwarapps.org/sc3821.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup>



Gov. Rutledge.—Immediately after the fall of Charlestown, Gov. Rutledge finding Col. Sumter's on his route to N.C., stopped there briefly; & Col. S. urged him strongly not to leave the State, but remain & re-animate the people, & encourage them to make a stand; &c that he knew he (Sumter) could raise troops & take the field—all to no purpose:<sup>24</sup>

### **Information from granddaughter Pauline Brazilia Brownfield (1813-1889) (16VV95)**

[preceding page not transcribed] ... the fall of Charleston—he came to Sumter's neighborhood, & burned his residence on Santee—perhaps near Nelson's Ferry—he sold land to Nelson—perhaps 40 or 50 miles from High Hills: No particulars of this burning[?]. Having a place at the High Hills & lands there, Mrs. Sumter repaired there—& not very long after, a British party (don't remember who commanded, unless it was Tarleton)—Mrs S. was a cripple—took & carried her out of doors, & left her under a tree—plundered & then burned the house: An Officer more [interlined "felt for her"] kinder than the rest, passing Mrs. S. sd “There in the bushes she wd find I have a thrown a ham & a few other articles of provisions, which he had thrown there.

One Henderson, a feeble, sickly & apparently inefficient young man of the neighborhood—was present when the house was burned: British jeered him—wd have captured him, but did not think him worth the least effort." Mrs. S. who saw him, & witnessed the effect of the remark, said with his face suffused, [two crossed out words] & he seemed silently to resolve he wd not let them know that he [end of page].

### **Information from grandson, Sebastian Sumter (1820-1909) (11VV493-494)**

Burning of Sumter's house.- That a part of Tarleton's cavalry were approaching; Col. Sumter had out his son some miles scouting on horseback; who met a neighbor in the road, who told him Tarleton was approaching, & he had better at once notify his father so he could save himself—& did so—& though Col. Sumter had been but a few hours from home, he fled to North Carolina. That Capt. Campbell\* commanded the cavalry that came to Mrs. Sumter's house — had her carried out in her chair, & set Down near by under a shade tree — the house plundered, & meat house, & then all fired: That a kind-hearted gen cavalryman slipped a ham under his blanket[?] & threw it under Mrs. Sumter's chair as he passed her.

That there was a man who was engaged in doing some carpenter work, & a British Soldier came up & jeered him for taking no sides, & provoked he stabbed & killed him — in the abdomen — with his chisel; & then fled & joined Sumter—though Gen. S. cd. not induce him before to do so. *\*Afterwards Killed at Hanging Rock Sumter's Fishing Creek Defeat. - L.C.D.*

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<sup>24</sup> Gov. John Rutledge escaped from Charlestown on May 10, and he was in Camden on May 24. “Letter from John Rutledge to Abner Nash,” Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr14-0781>.

**Information from Louisa Sumter Murrell (1787-1878), who grew up in Gen. Sumter's home.<sup>25</sup> (11VV513)**

Burning of the House-1780.— British tried to frighten her & make her tell where Col. Sumter was — She was firm, & wd give them no satisfaction: was carried out—left arm drawn up to her breast, & left limb drawn up shorter than the other: She saved nothing whatever: Don't remember particularly about the ham.

Thinks it probable Sumter's old papers prior to May, 1780, were burned with the house. Neighbors were kind & furnished articles to recommence house-keeping—first boarding with Mrs. Anne Clark—saw her abt. 1797, then very old; she did not live long after that. Ths. Sumter Jr. was then hid out in the swamp, by Old Tom & other negroes, & once he was up in a tree top, & British passed under the tree & did not see him. He learned to be very adroit, in evading them.

Remembers about Henson—knew him—after the war, settled in Sumter District, & lived to a good old age. Was jeered at the burning[?] of the Sumter house, & indignant, joined Sumter & served till end of the war.

Once young Thomas Sumter Jr. in 1780, after the house was burned, while out, & was taken prisoner by the British, & taken to where Manchester now is, & there was, in some way, rescued—or got away in a swamp by dodging in Swamp & bushes. This while Mrs. [end of page].

**Copy of a letter from Augustus Fludd (1833-1897) (2VV171)<sup>26</sup>:**

Bonneau's Ferry, S.C.  
Bloomfield  
Oct 10th 1873

Dear Sir,

Your's of the 11th ultimo reach'd my home during my absence which'll acc't to you for delay in replying.

I fear I cannot give you any very satisfactory information as to yr. first enquiry – viz. as to the residence of Gen. Sumter its exact locality &c. I am inclined to the opinion of a very old negro who belonged to Jno. N. Davis when he owned the lands cited in yr. letter – that Gen. Sumter residence stood on the left hand side of the road leading from Nelson's Ferry via Wright's Bluff to Camden, back upon the swamp about ½ mile from the public road. This spot had been pointed out to him. It is fully 3½ miles from the Ferry across river swamp to the high land & 2 miles from this point to where I am informed the house stood. The locality for a low & flat country, immediately on the swamp is a pretty one, rather an elevation, high & dry and a beautiful growthe of live oak & cedar. In reply to yr 2nd, as to the exact distance from Nelson's Ferry, down the Nelson Ferry Road towards Charleston, to the cross road, is about 3 miles. and in conclusion I have written to Mr. Porcher relative to the record's of the churches of St. John's & St. Stephen's — but having not yet rec'd a reply, write you at this time, & will send you the information he gives me, when it come's.

I am Very Truly Your's  
Augustus Fludd

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<sup>25</sup> Gregorie, Thomas Sumter, 5, n. 14.

<sup>26</sup> On the page following this copy Draper has a rough copy of part of Mills Atlas, part of which is shown here. The asterisk below the a in "Davis" shows "Probably where Sumter's residence stood."

### Information from Mrs. Susannah Smart (1761-1850?) (9VV22)<sup>27</sup>

Gen. Sumter, when he fled from his house, came to the house of her father, John Barnett (dont know where he lived—says Mr. Stinson,<sup>28</sup> verbally—but probably in the neighborhood where Mrs. Smart lived, 9 miles southwest of Charlotte, on the Saluda road. L.C.D.) Mrs. Sumter was lame on one side from infancy. She was riding on horseback, on a feather bed, with a negro woman on behind her, to hold her on. Nevertheless she had fallen off frequently on the road, and bruised her face until it was very black. Their only child, little Tom, was with them, about 16 years years (13) years old. A young woman, Nancy Davis, who was their house-keeper was also with them. She said that when the British & Tories came to Sumter's house, she locked up every thing & flung away the keys in the grass in the yard; but it availed her nothing—they fired the house, and all was soon a pile of ashes. Genl. Sumter's family lived at this time with the family more than a month.



<sup>27</sup> This account evidently confuses events related to the evacuation of Sumter's wife and son to North Carolina in March 1781 with the burning of Sumter's home.

<sup>28</sup> Possibly Daniel Stinson who provided much information to Draper.



## About the Author

C. Leon Harris's first research on a gamecock was 60 years ago as an undergraduate physics major at Virginia Tech under Dr. Paul B. Siegel of the Poultry Science Department when he designed a transmitter and implanted it into the bird to record its heart rate and body temperature during a fight. After earning graduate degrees in biophysics at Penn State, he taught biology, wrote textbooks, and did neurobiological research at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh, for over three decades. After retiring to Mount Pleasant SC and Adamant VT, he was inspired by the late Charles B. Baxley to research the Revolutionary War in the South and has helped Will Graves transcribe more than thirty thousand Revolutionary War pension and bounty-land applications, rosters, and other documents at [revwarapps.org](http://revwarapps.org).

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