

# DRUM ROLL

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## 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

## 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 Each issue presents compelling battles, historical documents, maps, and links to enhance your understanding.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

### New Submission Guidelines

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.
9. Acceptance for publication grants The Journal the rights to print and reprint the work in print, digitally, and on the web perpetually without compensation, allowing readers to download and print copies for

personal use. The Journal does not provide any remuneration to the author. Authors retain all rights to publish their work elsewhere and to control its publication in accordance with copyright law.

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.

## HEAR YE, HEAR YE

Edgar Michael Bravo of No Restrictions Studios, SC—Spartanburg, a visionary writer and director of eight feature films distributed worldwide, is co-writing "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).







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

# DID TARLETON BURN SUMTER'S HOME ON THE WAY TO THE BATTLE OF WAXHAWS?

by  
C. Leon Harris

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

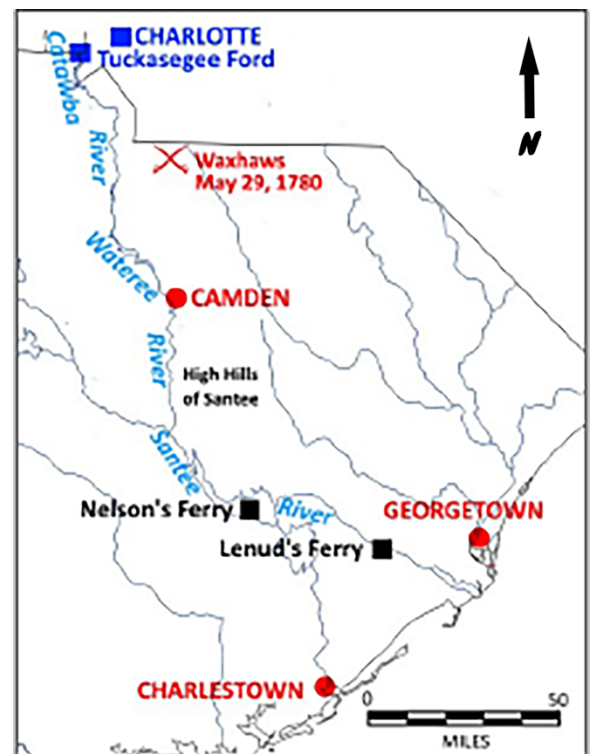


Figure 1



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?

## 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. 1)

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 assert 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. 2)



Figure 2. Excerpts from a 1787 map by William Faden, Geographer to the KING, 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.

The news of these two events, the town's surrender and the defeat of Buford, spread through the country at 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 burned the house of Gen. Sumter near Stateburg 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>

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>3</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 witnessed all of this from a concealed location—the echoes of tradition are more confused here than anywhere else—but in any case, this disaster to his property is said to have “roused the spirit of the lion.” On May 28, he left his family to embark on the most famous and spectacular part of his career, and four days later, he must have already started preparing for action, as nineteen United States Loan Office \$1,000 certificates were issued to him, dated June 1, 1780.<sup>4</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 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>5</sup> Sumter did not mention such an event in any known correspondence.<sup>6</sup>

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

<sup>4</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/l1serialsetce.00334\\_00\\_00-030-0359-0000/?sp=1&st=image](https://www.loc.gov/resource/l1serialsetce.00334_00_00-030-0359-0000/?sp=1&st=image)

<sup>5</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>6</sup> May 21, 2024, email from David McSwain, who has collected and transcribed the Sumter correspondence.



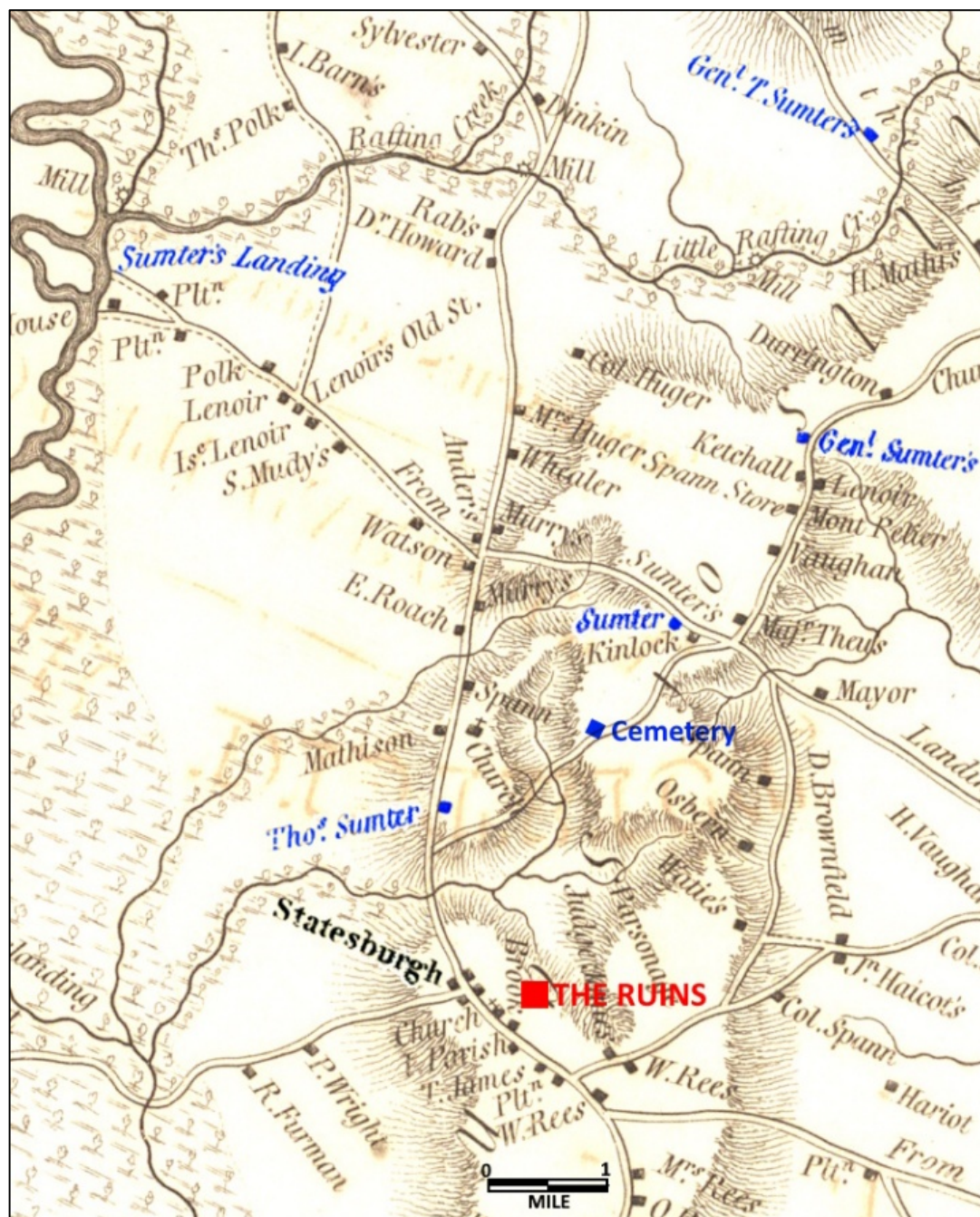


Figure 3. Part of Mills Atlas, Sumter District, based on an 1821 survey, showing two properties of Gen. Sumter, recolored blue. Note also two other Sumter properties, perhaps belonging to Thomas Sumter, Jr., as well as Sumter's Landing on Wateree River. Added to the map are the locations of the Sumter family cemetery and "The Ruins."

The tradition raises several questions. Why would the British target Sumter, who had already retired from service? Cornwallis, presumably Tarleton seemed unaware of Sumter until a month later when Lt. Col. Francis, Lord Rawdon, mentioned that "Sumter has been appointed a general and is near Charlotteburg."<sup>7</sup> One might

<sup>7</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, June 29, 1780, *Cornwallis Papers* 1: 187.



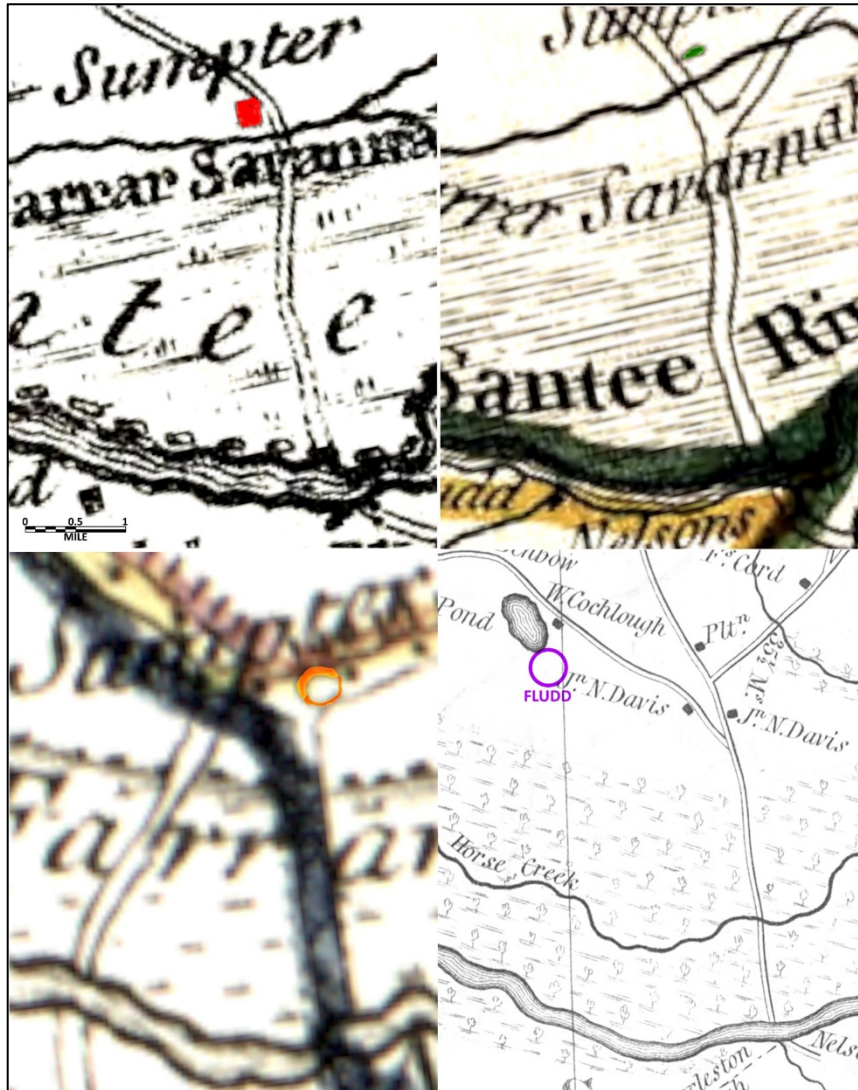


Figure 4. Parts of four maps showing locations of Sumter's home near Nelson's Ferry. Each map is referenced to Nelson's Ferry in the lower right and the junction of the road to the ferry and the road to Camden to the northwest. Top left: John Cook's 1773 map, with Sumter's home recolored red. Top right: 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.

also wonder whether Tarleton's men would have gone out of their way to burn Sumter's home after covering more than thirty miles, with thirty more to go before resting at Camden. Another issue is that Capt. Charles Campbell, who is said to have been responsible for the burning, was in the 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment, which was not with Tarleton at the time.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there is little evidence that Sumter lived near Stateburg then, as the town didn't exist until 1783 when he and others founded it.

<sup>8</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

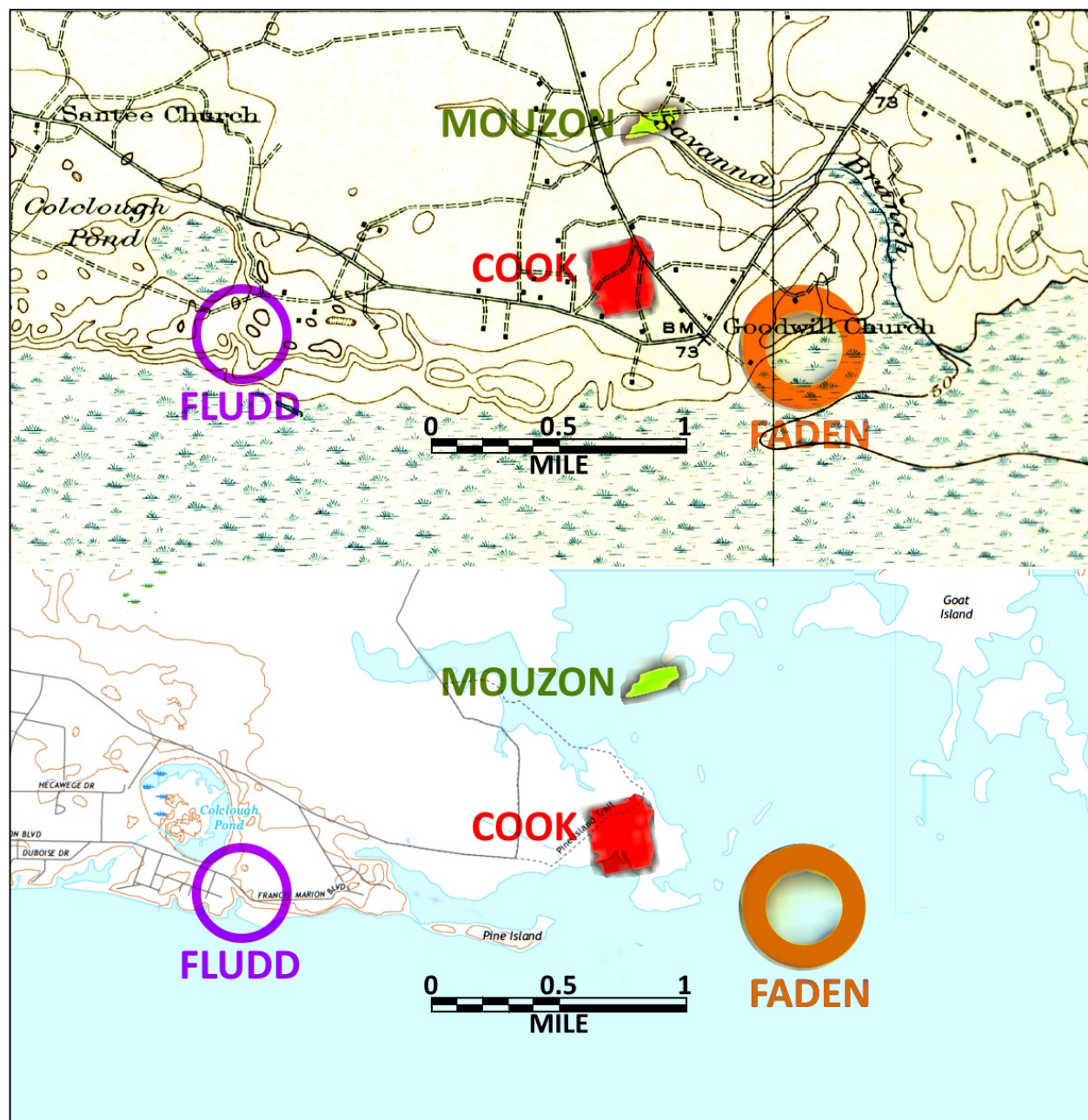


Figure 5. Locations of Sumter's home from Figure 4 on the 1921 (top) and current USGS topo maps.

### Was Sumter Living in the High Hills or Near Nelson's Ferry?

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. "Don't think the British burned any house for Gen. Sumter save the one less

<https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/britlegn/blcav1.htm>. Todd Braisted, June 5, 2024 email.



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>9</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>10</sup> (Fig. 2)

Sumter did have a plantation in the High Hills by March 1781, but there is no proof that he lived there. Pension applicant George Dowell testified that “about the first of March [1781] or sometime in the spring, I was dismissed at the High Hills of Santee and received a written discharge from General Sumter himself, being stationed at his plantation to guard public property.”<sup>11</sup> Beginning in the spring of 1784, Sumter acquired numerous other properties in the area.<sup>12</sup>

Sumter’s granddaughter, Pauline Brazilia Brownfield (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—& not very long after, a British party (don’t remember who commanded, unless it was Tarleton)... plundered & then burned the house<sup>13</sup>

Faden’s map (Fig. 2) and two maps from 1773 and 1775 also show “Sumpter” near Nelson’s Ferry. Another of Draper’s informants, Augustus Fludd (1833-1897), stated that Sumter’s house was near Nelson’s Ferry. (Fig. 4)

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’s 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>14</sup>

Figure 5 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 area 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.

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

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<sup>9</sup> Lyman C. Draper, Sumter Papers, 11VV503-504. Devoe is usually spelled Deveau.

<sup>10</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).  
<https://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/sumter/S10817743022/S10817743022.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Pension application S32222 <https://revwarapps.org/s32222.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Plats of land surveyed for Thomas Sumter <https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/>

<sup>13</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.

<sup>14</sup> Sumter Papers 2VV171. Draper’s letter to Fludd is apparently lost.



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>15</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 home nearby.

Sumter's wife and son were still living in the house in early March 1781 when Sumter finally evacuated them, according to three pension applicants.<sup>16</sup>

They then returned to the Santee River where Sumter lived and took some of his white family and slaves away, carrying them to North Carolina.<sup>17</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>18</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>19</sup>

## 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 they did not.

Although it seems that Tarleton's troops did not burn Sumter's home, whether in the High Hills or near Nelson's Ferry, the rest of the tradition might hold some truth. It would not have been surprising for Tarleton's men to plunder the plantation and mistreat Mrs. Sumter without knowing who her husband was. Their pillaging, especially the abuse of his wife, would have been enough provocation for Sumter to return to active duty. Tarleton's massacre of Buford's detachment at Waxhaws might have also stirred the spirit of the lion.

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<sup>15</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>16</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\\_Enemy\\_Sumter\\_s\\_Rounds\\_in\\_South\\_Carolina](https://www.academia.edu/118640111/_To_Keep_Up_the_Spirits_of_the_People_and_Alarm_the_Enemy_Sumter_s_Rounds_in_South_Carolina)

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Townsend S11561 <https://revwarapps.org/s11561.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> James Jordan S32346 <https://revwarapps.org/s32346.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Gillham S32270 <https://revwarapps.org/s32270.pdf>

## APPENDIX

Notes by Lyman Copeland Draper regarding the burning of Sumter's home and the mistreatment of his wife.<sup>20</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>21</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>22</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>23</sup> Estate, on first hill east of Stateburg.

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

<sup>20</sup> Some pages have been renumbered since they were cited by Gregorie.

<sup>21</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>22</sup>  
<sup>23</sup> DeVaux

<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>.

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.

Information from Louisa Sumter Murrell (1787-1878), who grew up in Gen. Sumter's home. 25 (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 recomence 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)26:

<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."



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

Dear Sir,

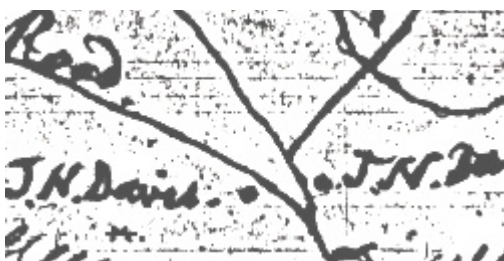
Your's of the 11th ultimo reach'd my home during my absence which'll acc't to you for delay in replying.

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

Information from Mrs. Susannah Smart (1761-1850?) (9VV22)27

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 south west 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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David McSwain and Zach Lemhouse of the Southern Revolutionary War Institute, McElvey Center, and Historical Center of York County generously searched for and provided copies of Draper's Sumter Papers.

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1759

2025



# THE TAKING OF THICKETTY FORT

Detailed Analysis of a Colonial Structure for the  
Cherokee Historical and Preservation Society

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

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# THE TAKING OF THICKETTY FORT



Case clock from Walnut Grove Plantation, Moore, South Carolina, with historical reenactor Renee Meehan in authentic clothing.

This tale is not a history of some dilapidated wooden structure off the beaten paths of Cherokee County, South Carolina, nor is it a recounting of dry facts concerning a forgotten stronghold built to withstand attacks from angered Natives. Instead, it is the saga of an early American community where heroes and heroines, friends and foes, did great and terrible deeds in the name of Liberty. Clues left by our ancestors speak of hardship, sacrifice, and triumph in their quest for freedom and justice, principles that founded this great nation – ideals we have the luxury of taking for granted. So, what is the true significance of an old timber blockhouse in the Backcountry? The answer lies in the origin of the South Carolina “Redneck.”

Imagine life in the eighteenth-century American frontier. There was no electricity, no telephones, and no flush toilets. The highest technology of the day was the tall case clock, also called the grandfather clock. Water-powered mills using levers and gears to turn large stones for grinding grains, blades to saw timber, and giant hammers to forge iron were the engines to make flour, lumber, and nails. We still use these fundamental items to make our lives more comfortable. For the duration of this account, set aside thoughts of today’s modern conveniences and walk in the handmade shoes of a Backcountry South Carolina settler.

## BACKCOUNTRY FRONTIER

There are good reasons why the areas surrounding Gaffney, East Gaffney, Blacksburg, Cherokee Falls, and Chesnee are called Cherokee County. The Native American Cherokee were the original inhabitants. This region was once regarded as a paradise: "...the woodlands, carpeted with grass; and the wild pea-vine, growing as high as a horse's back, and wildflowers of every hue, were the constant admiration of the traveler and adventurous pioneer." Until European settlers began exploiting the natural resources, "the trees were generally larger, and stood so wide apart that a deer or a buffalo could be easily seen at a long distance – there being nothing to obstruct the view but the rolling surface."<sup>29</sup>

Between 1750 and 1780, significant migration into this area occurred, primarily driven by Scots-Irish extended families. They discovered a richness in the land beyond their imaginations, filled with natural resources and potential for agriculture. This bountiful environment may have made the dangers they faced, including threats from Native Americans and outlaws, seem worthwhile in pursuit of a better life. The promise of prosperity in this new frontier compelled these settlers to brave the uncertainties and challenges of Backcountry living.

The Pacolet River Valley was a rich hunting ground full of wild game such as buffalo, elk, deer, rabbit, opossum, raccoon, beaver, turkey, duck, and other edible fowl. The streams contained many species of fish. There were deadly predators such as cougars, bobcats, lynxes, bears, wolves, and foxes. Buffalo and elk no longer come to this side of the mountains, having been hunted out. Over the years, various sightings of cougars and wolves in the Upstate have been reported to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, but there have been no proven encounters. Reptiles and insects, including poisonous snakes, mosquitos, and black widow spiders, abound today. Irritating plants like poison oak, stinging nettle, and water hemlock thrive here, each capable of causing severe



Artwork by Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

<sup>29</sup> Logan, John Henry, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina*, 7.



medical conditions or even death. Cherokee County was dangerous in the past, but it can be a challenge even now to the unwary.

### POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE LATE 1700S

Perhaps these frontier dangers inspired Brigadier General Christopher Gadsden, a South Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress, to design a flag that represented the beliefs of the Thirteen Colonies: a coiled rattlesnake along with the words, “Don’t Tread on Me.” Interestingly, a fully grown rattlesnake typically has between eight and thirteen rattles<sup>30</sup>, all layered together in unity.



The Gadsden Flag, symbol of the unity of the Thirteen Colonies, and a warning to those attempting to break it.

Eastern rattlesnakes are venomous and deadly; they will attack if provoked. This flag sent a clear political message, serving as a warning to anyone, especially the English monarchy, who would dare attempt to impose their will on freedom-loving Americans.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, King George III, in his 1775 Proclamation of Rebellion, inadvertently labeled Americans as “rebels” by accusing us of “rebellion” and “sedition.”<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, this label became a proud badge of honor to Backcountry settlers. The knees of royal troopers would tremble at the hair-

<sup>30</sup> “How Many Rattles on a Rattlesnake? - Kansas City - Kansas.” 2025.

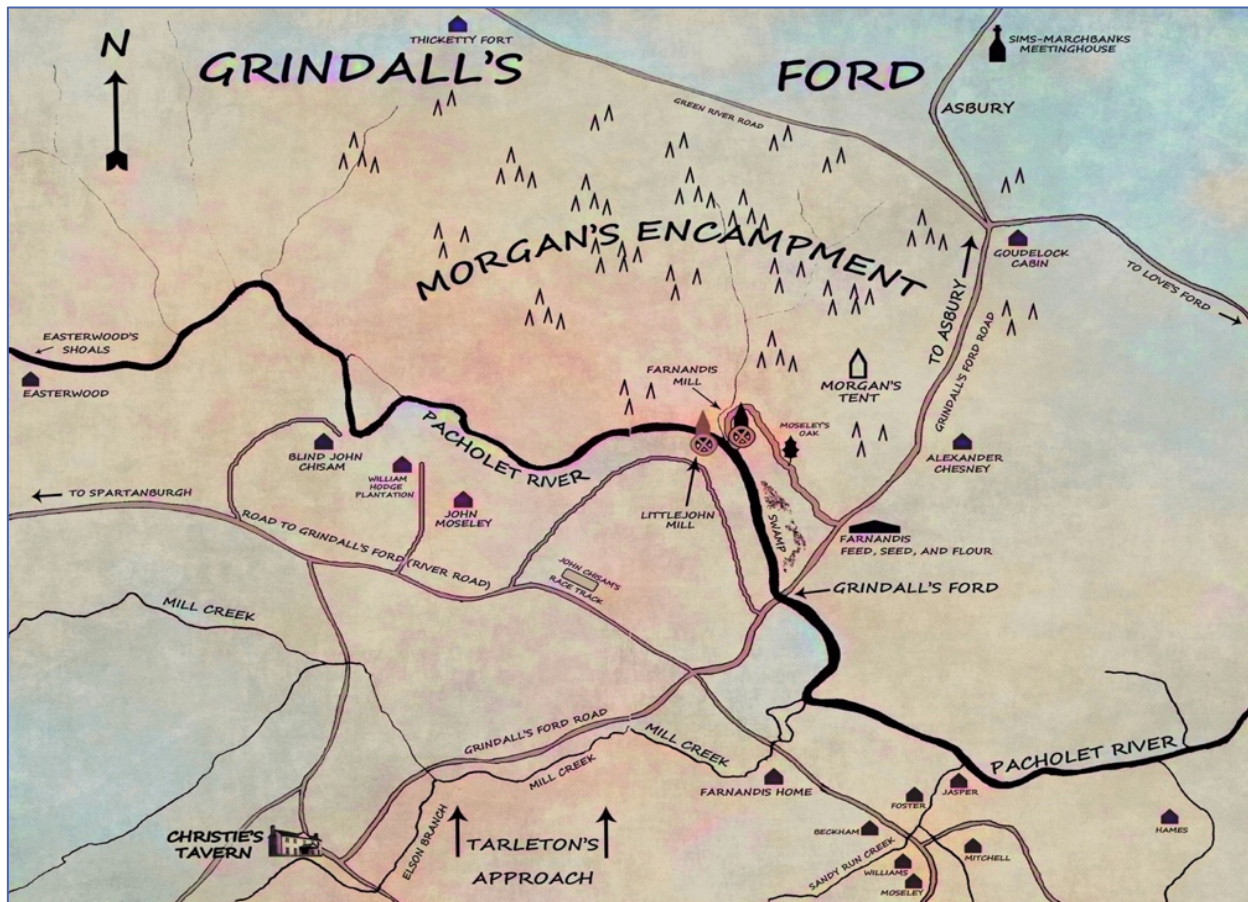
<sup>31</sup> Logan. 1859. *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina*, 87-121.

<sup>32</sup> “Proclamation of Rebellion.” American History Central. 2022.

raising Rebel Yell,<sup>33</sup> a variation of the ululating war cry of the Cherokees (Example: <https://www.urube.com/watch?v=HdJRBEYwyXs>), which later gained fame during the American Civil War. Shaped by their experiences fighting the Indians, the frontiersmen understood the significance of that eerie sound: it signaled the fury of a wronged people determined to overthrow their oppressors.

## LIFE OF TURMOIL

Backcountry life, fifty or more miles from the coast stretching to the mountains, was the edge of civilization – the frontier – during the latter part of the 1700s.<sup>34 35</sup> There were no hospitals, few doctors, and no formal police force. Unhappy about settlers' intrusion into their favorite hunting grounds (hence, *Cherokee County*), the Cherokees sought to rid their lands of trespassers. In addition to angry Native Americans, hunters, squatters, and criminals found ripe pickings among the Backcountry residents. The settlers would have to protect themselves if they wished to stay.



Map of the Greater Grindal Shoals Community just after the Cherokee War of 1760 by Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

<sup>33</sup> "Colonel Isaac Shelby." Revolutionary War Journal. January 13, 2025.

<sup>34</sup> "History of the South Carolina Backcountry." 2024. Americanacerner.

<sup>35</sup> Saberton, Ian. 2017. "The South Carolina Backcountry in Mid 1780."

From 1767 to 1769, a vigilante force of landowners cooperated with the colonial government to “regulate” roving banditti and Native Americans who were committing violent crimes and theft among the frontier settlements. Finally, the 1769 Circuit Court Act created new courthouses, jails, and four judicial districts.<sup>36 37</sup> Many of the Regulators became sheriffs and justices of the peace. John Thomas Sr. of Kelso’s Creek was one of these officers before the Revolutionary War broke out in 1775.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, he would give up those duties to form and lead the First Spartan Regiment of Militia as colonel.<sup>39</sup>

The predominantly Scots-Irish pioneers<sup>40</sup> scraped together a life from the wilderness between Jonesville and Gaffney. They were simple farmers hoping to create a better future for their children—a life free from the burden of an oppressive government led by a tyrant and safe from marauding Native Americans. Along with raising food for themselves, they grew tobacco<sup>41</sup> to earn a few extra coins to buy glass windows for their cabins. For most, this income remained too little to afford enslaved people to work their farms. Glass and enslaved labor were luxuries enjoyed mainly by the Low Country aristocracy around Charleston. With their hands full managing daily survival, settlers were slow to see the need to form militias against the threat from the Cherokee Indians, which was literally in their backyard. The pale skin of the Scots-Irish burned quickly from working in the sun, earning them yet another title: “Rednecks.”<sup>42</sup> These “rednecks” found that they had jumped from the frying pan of the French and Indian War raging in Pennsylvania and Virginia into the Cherokee fire blazing along the foothills of the Carolina mountains.

In 1773, Royal Governor James Glen purchased from the Cherokees all the lands now encompassed by the counties of Edgefield, Laurens, Newberry, Union, Spartanburg, Cherokee, York, Chester, and Fairfield. Glen hoped this would eliminate the Cherokee as a potential British enemy and allow peaceful settlement of the Backcountry.<sup>43</sup> By 1775, the Pacolet River Valley was filled with Scots-Irish families seeking a respite from conflicts with “savages.” However, they would not find peace for another eight years, until after the Revolutionary War.

The 1775 South Carolina Province census<sup>44</sup> determined how many militia-age free males, aged 16 to 60, could fight if the British sent occupation forces. Out of a population of around 175,000,<sup>45</sup> roughly 2,700 men lived along the Tyger and Broad Rivers, working 40 to 50-acre plots as farmers.<sup>46</sup> Of those men, between 40 and 50% were Loyalists, based on the numbers serving in the Ninety Six District Loyalist Militia.<sup>47</sup> This area includes what is known today as Cherokee County.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “What Was the Regulator Movement? History and Significance.” ThoughtCo.

<sup>37</sup> Lambert, Robert. 2010. *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Landrum, John. 2022. *The History of Spartanburg County*, 180.

<sup>39</sup> “Col. John and Jane Thomas Historical Marker.” 2022. Hmdb.org.

<sup>40</sup> “History of the South Carolina Backcountry.” 2024. Americanacornet.

<sup>41</sup> “Tobacco.” 2025. South Carolina Encyclopedia. (Tobacco n.d.)

<sup>42</sup> Reeves, Amy. 2017. “Where’d That Come From? Redneck.” Goldendalesentinel.

<sup>43</sup> “Glen, James.” n.d. South Carolina Encyclopedia.

<sup>44</sup> SCColony. 1995.

<sup>45</sup> Edgar, Walter. 1998. *South Carolina: A History*, 326.

<sup>46</sup> Moores. 1975. *Settlers of the Tyger River*, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Lambert, R. 2010. *South Carolina Loyalists*, 126-127.

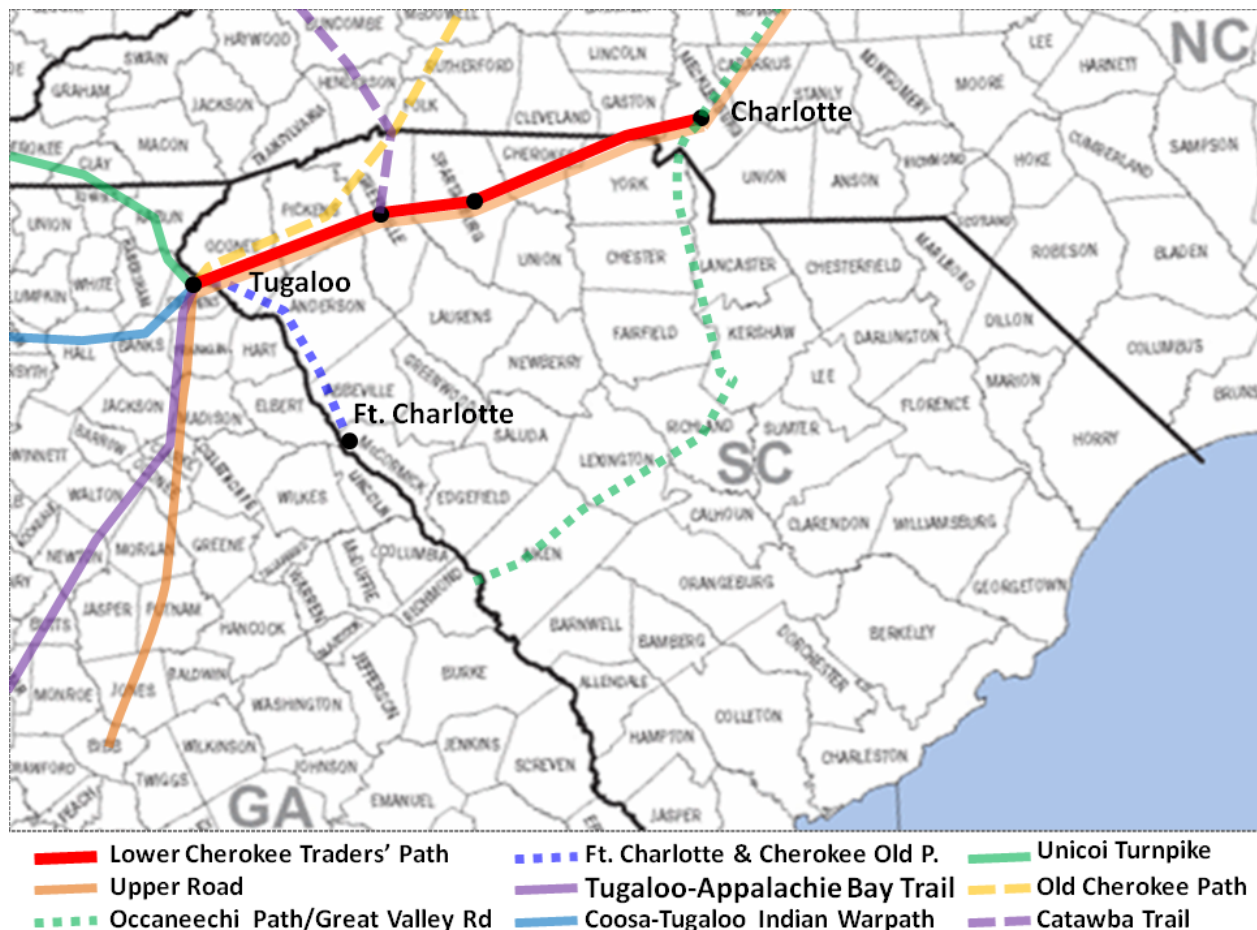
<sup>48</sup> Dorney, D.R. 2023. “A Demographic View of South Carolina Revolutionary War Soldiers.”



## GREATER GRINDAL SHOALS COMMUNITY

Buffalo paths by streams evolved into ancient Cherokee trading routes, forming the basis for today's key roadways.<sup>49</sup> The Lower Cherokee Traders' Path<sup>50</sup> [See Map, p.6.] linked the Catawba and Cherokee Nations, crossing Cherokee and Spartanburg Counties near Grindal Shoals. Another trail became Green River Road, which extends from Asbury crossroads near Grindal's Ford on the Pacolet River to Saunders' cow pens near Cherokee Ford on the Broad River, the site of the January 17, 1781, Battle of Cowpens. [See Map, p.4.]

Residing in the Backcountry next to the Indian Boundary Line was perilous. Today's Interstate 85 corridor along the Greenville and Spartanburg County lines approximates the old Boundary Line.<sup>51</sup> The Native Americans and the European settlers committed heinous acts of barbarism against each other, fighting over the land. Struggle was the expectation of life in Cherokee County, and the settlers were not about to allow "heathens" to disrupt their livelihoods for long. After all, they had



Lower Cherokee Traders' Path (see Footnote 16, p.5)

<sup>49</sup> Hove. 2017. "Ancient Road Infrastructure Created by Bison." Thelaurelofasheville.

<sup>50</sup> "Lower Cherokee Traders' Path." 2022. FamilySearch.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

sacrificed nearly everything to come here. The soil was rich, and the game was plentiful. They were here to stay. To do so, they would have to build a fortification to shelter and protect the women and children of the Greater Grindal Shoals community in the event of a Native uprising or the appearance of outlaw gangs.

Grindal Shoals, also known as Grindal's Ford (Grindell, Grandale, Grindle), was the best of a handful of firm-bottomed crossings on the Pacolet River. John Grindal obtained and settled his 150-acre land grant, which included both sides of the shoals, on the Pacolet River in March 1775.<sup>52</sup> Based on land grant records, his arrival preceded other pioneering families by mere months.<sup>53</sup> Before the Revolutionary War, the Grindal community thrived as a prime location for commerce. The network of roads that grew up at the river crossing connected other pioneering communities and trade routes to the coast and Charleston.<sup>54</sup>

Since there were no bridges in the Backcountry during colonial times,<sup>55</sup> Grindal's Ford attracted settlers. After all, good river crossings were vital for trade routes, travelers, and militia movements.<sup>56</sup> One pioneer, John Chism, built a horseracing track on his Grindal Shoals property.<sup>57</sup> John "Jack" Beckham (Beckhamville, S.C.), a notorious spy for American Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, was an expert horse trainer and huntsman.<sup>58</sup> His friend, Wade Hampton I, was a well-known horse breeder who loved to hunt with Jack as a guide.<sup>59</sup> Christopher Coleman opened Christie's Tavern, serving Whigs and Tories alike.<sup>60</sup> Such river crossings also attracted carriage houses (hostels), mercantiles, taverns, churches, and mills. Indeed, there were two known grist mills near the shoals. Communities grew up around them, and Grindal Shoals was no exception. The proximity of the ford and the success of the farmers and merchants of Greater Grindal Shoals made them a target for bandits and Native American raids.<sup>61</sup>

Grindal resident Angelica Henderson Mitchell Nott was an eyewitness to those times, writing a pamphlet called *Traditions of the Revolution*. Her sister, Elizabeth "Betsy" Henderson, married John "Jack" Beckham. Angelica's description of life leading up to and during the war spoke of hardship: "We lived at that time generally without bread, meat or salt on roasting ears. When we killed a beef, a pint of salt with hickory ashes preserved it. We went without shoes and sewed woolen rags around our feet. I have done that many times." The Tories that sallied from nearby Thicketty Fort during 1780, under the leadership of Captain Patrick Moore, brought the Whigs to this poverty.<sup>62 63 64 65</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>53</sup> "Pacolet River Land Grants Map – Mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century." Rootsandrecall.

<sup>54</sup> "Grindal Shoals." 2025. Pacoletmemories.

<sup>55</sup> Charles, Allen. 1977. "Early South Carolina Highways."

<sup>56</sup> Robertson, John. 2002. (Robertson 2002) "The Historic Significance of Grindal Shoals."

<sup>57</sup> Ivey.

<sup>58</sup> Beckham, M.C. *Colonial Spy*. 387-397.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 392.

<sup>60</sup> "Part Three: Families and Children." Coleman Family Book, 174.

<sup>61</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Bailey. 1981. *History of Grindal Shoals and Some Early Adjacent Families*, 15,73.

<sup>64</sup> "Angelica Nott Biography." AmericanRevolution.org. 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Beckham, 393.

## THE CHURCH CONNECTION

Church meetinghouses held great significance for the predominantly Presbyterian Scots-Irish settlers in the South Carolina backcountry. These places of worship symbolized freedom from the Crown's religious persecution. Presbyterians, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, and other denominations fled Britain due to political, social, and religious discrimination. The Church of England (Anglican) was the only official denomination, with King George as its sovereign head.<sup>66</sup> From the 1500s until the Revolutionary War, Parliament enacted punitive laws against adherents of other denominations. Non-Anglicans were barred from holding political office, forced to pay higher taxes and rents, and prohibited from marrying their members.<sup>67 68 69 70</sup>

The Lords Proprietors of the South Carolina Colony lured immigrants with promises of religious freedom.<sup>71</sup> Once the settlers invested in their new farms, the Proprietors began using the same persecution tactics as Britain. This maltreatment sparked anger in the Scots-Irish. They grew weary of taxes that paid the salaries of the Anglican preachers, while their Presbyterian ministers nearly



Typical Backcountry Meetinghouse (Historic Brattonsville photo taken by Richard C. Meehan Jr.)

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<sup>66</sup> "Reformation." n.d. [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>67</sup> Brinsfield, John. 1983. *Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina*, 118.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas, Sam. 2022. "1780 Presbyterian Rebellion and Huck's Defeat."

<sup>70</sup> *Religion and belief*. n.d. [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>71</sup> Brinsfield, 6.



starved due to a lack of funds. Only Anglicans could serve in the state government, and they conceived laws that benefited themselves and the British Crown.<sup>72 73</sup>

Presbyterians and other denominations initiated a campaign to eliminate religious discrimination by the South Carolina Assembly and to separate government from religion, known as the *Separation of Church and State*.<sup>74</sup> This movement did not aim to remove church influence from the government. Instead, the non-Anglicans sought to free themselves from unjust laws that oppressed those outside the Anglican tradition. By that point, the American Revolution was called a Presbyterian Revolt.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout the 1750s leading up to the Revolution, Presbyterians from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina migrated into the South Carolina backcountry around Rocky Creek. In 1772, Reverend Richard Martin was called to minister to these settlers. He brought five shiploads of Ulster-Scot Presbyterians into Charleston, providing them with land grants in the Backcountry settlements. Among the immigrants was Alexander Chesney, who settled at Grindal Shoals, fought alongside the Grindal community against the Cherokees, served briefly in the Spartan Regiment of Militia, and became a notable Loyalist captain during the Revolution.<sup>76</sup>

Backcountry meetinghouses were multipurpose facilities. They served as churches, gathering places for social functions, posts to strategize on community affairs (like how to handle bandits and religious persecution), distribution points for the current news, and sometimes hubs for military planning.<sup>77</sup> One such facility was near Asbury at the crossroad of Grindal's Ford Road and Green River Road, a mile above Grindal's Ford. It was known as the Sims-Marchbanks Meetinghouse<sup>78</sup> or the meetinghouse on Thicketty.<sup>79</sup>

William Sims and William Marchbanks were land speculators who surveyed and transacted many properties along the Pacolet River Valley.<sup>80</sup> They donated land for the meetinghouse that bore their names. Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists shared this facility. Thicketty Baptist (today's Goucher Baptist) started there.<sup>81 82</sup> The membership rolls included men who served to force the Cherokees out of Grindal Shoals. Sims and Marchbanks also owned several hundred acres that bordered the Anderson Family. [See Map, p.12.] Several accounts state that David Anderson was the builder of Anderson's Fort, later renamed Thicketty Fort (detailed citations to follow). Other notable Sims-Marchbanks members<sup>83</sup> were:

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<sup>72</sup> Shankman, Arnold. 1983. *Its People and Its Heritage*, 36.

<sup>73</sup> Brinsfield, v-xii.

<sup>74</sup> Brinsfield, v, 104.

<sup>75</sup> Gardiner, R. 2013. "The Presbyterian Rebellion?" *Journal of the American Revolution*.

<sup>76</sup> "Ulster Covenanters Migration to America." 2021. Discover Ulster-Scots.

<sup>77</sup> Merrell. "The American Revolution in the Southern Backcountry," 112.

<sup>78</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>79</sup> Howe, George. 1870. *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 369, 431, 643.

<sup>80</sup> Online Records. South Carolina Archives.

<sup>81</sup> "Goucher Church celebrates 250 years." 2020. Baptist Courier.

<sup>82</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette." Page\_id=2555.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, cat=36.

- Robert Coleman<sup>84</sup> was the son of the owner of nearby Christie's Tavern.<sup>85</sup>
- James "Horseshoe" Robertson served as a Patriot spy for General Daniel Morgan.<sup>86</sup>
- Hugh Moore, brother of Tory Captain Patrick Moore.<sup>87</sup>
- Patriot Sergeant William Jasper, 2<sup>nd</sup> S.C. Regiment, hero of the Battle of Fort Sullivan (now Fort Moultrie).<sup>88 89</sup>

This church began as a mission started by the congregation of Fairforest<sup>90</sup> Presbyterian Meetinghouse (in Jonesville).<sup>91</sup> Colonel John Thomas Sr. of the Spartan Regiment and his wife were founding members of Fairforest.<sup>92 93</sup> Many Sims-Marchbanks and Fairforest men eventually served in Thomas's regiment.<sup>94</sup> These worshipping congregants formed a tight-knit Grindal Shoals frontier community.<sup>95</sup>

## BUILDERS OF THE FORT

Most likely, as was customary during those times, a community group assisted in constructing a new blockhouse (fortified structure) or reinforcing an existing building, such as a house or barn on the Anderson Plantation, between 1759 and 1760. This period coincides with several historical events. First, settlers fleeing the French and Indian War to the north, including Colonel John Thomas' extended family, arrived. Second, the Cherokee War (1759 to 1761) broke out in South Carolina. Finally, the Provincial Congress commissioned a string of forts to be built in 1760 against the Cherokee Boundary Line (foothills) to protect the Backcountry. Significant nearby forts<sup>96</sup> constructed at this time<sup>97</sup> in the Ninety Six District (which included Cherokee County) were:

- Wofford's Fort and Iron Works in today's Glendale, Spartanburg County, was only eight miles from Thicketty Fort (Anderson's Fort).<sup>98</sup>
- Earle's Fort is near the North Carolina border in Landrum, S.C.<sup>99 100</sup>
- Wagner's Fort (Waggener's) is thirteen miles west of Whitmire, Union County.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Kamish, M.G. 2022. "Robert Coleman." Geni\_family\_tree.

<sup>85</sup> Ivey. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> "Moore Family Index." 2025. Carolinaspartan.

<sup>88</sup> Ivey, cat=12.

<sup>89</sup> Moss. *Roster of South Carolina Patriots*, 495.

<sup>90</sup> "Union County." 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Saye, James. 1847. "Memoires of Major Joseph McJunkin," 18, 19, 20.

<sup>92</sup> Howe, George. 1870. *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 422.

<sup>93</sup> Saye, 9.

<sup>94</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina – the Spartan Regiment." 2023. Carolana.

<sup>95</sup> Ivey. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>96</sup> "Descendants of William Jameson Sr. Web Site." 2024. Nettally.

<sup>97</sup> Ivers, Larry. 1970. *Colonial Forts of South Carolina, 1670-1775*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> Bailey, J.D. 1908. *Cowpens and Wofford's Iron Works*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> O'Kelly, Patrick. 2004. *Nothing But Blood and Slaughter, Vol. 2*, 201-203.

<sup>100</sup> Parker, John. 2013. *Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina*, 389.

<sup>101</sup> "Fort Wagner in Fairfield Marked by DAR Chapter." 1939. Rootsweb.

- Musgrove's Fort.<sup>102</sup>
- Otterson's Fort southwest of Union (formerly Unionsville).<sup>103</sup>
- Prince's Fort in Wellford.<sup>104 105</sup>
- Gowen's Old Fort (Jameson's Station, Jameson's Fort) near Landrum.<sup>106</sup>
- Wood's Fort in Greer.<sup>107 108</sup>
- Thicketty Fort rests in the eastern region of the Spartan District.<sup>109</sup>

Each of these structures consisted of heavy timbers only available from the virgin forests of the Backcountry during this colonial period.<sup>110</sup> Frightened settlers would rush to these places of refuge during times of attacks by marauders and Cherokees.<sup>111</sup> Based on expert scrutiny of the existing blockhouse and descriptions from several eyewitness sources (detailed shortly), the hewn heart pine logs indicate Anderson's Fort was possibly a converted barn, as was the modus operandi of the times. The settlers built these forts in haste, so renovating existing houses or barns would have been faster than starting from scratch. Since the buildings were shared with community members, not just a single family, it makes sense that construction was also a cooperative event.

In 1758, the Cherokees retaliated against the incursion of Grindal Shoals settlers into their prime hunting lands. Across the Backcountry, frightened pioneer families rushed to build forts to protect against Native American attacks. These forts were often crude, hastily built structures, often on the property of leading families. Hardening a house or barn with stockade fencing and abatis was quicker than starting from scratch.<sup>112</sup>

Anderson's Fort went by several names and variations of those names, such as Fort Anderson. With the advent of the Revolutionary War and garrisoning by Tories<sup>113</sup> (British sympathizers), Anderson's Fort became the Tory Fort on Thicketty, Fort Thicketty, and Rocky Ford. Historical records use differing spellings such as Thickety, Thickell, Thickette, and others. The fort sits between Rocky Ford Creek, a tributary of Thicketty Creek, and Goucher Creek, all of which eventually combine and flow into the Pacolet River. Today, this area is called the Goucher (pronounced go-cher) community.

David Anderson was indeed the builder of the fort, as shown by these sources:

1. There was David Anderson, who first built a fort for protection against the Indians in the area. Later, it was called Fort Thicketty.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Parker, 400.

<sup>103</sup> "Otterson's Fort Historical Marker." 2016. Hmdb.org.

<sup>104</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History of South Carolina*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> Parker, 394.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 391.

<sup>107</sup> Landrum, 86, 89, 90.

<sup>108</sup> Parker, 392.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>110</sup> Smith, Roy. 1999. "Thicketty Fort."

<sup>111</sup> Ivers, 27-31.

<sup>112</sup> Cann and Fields. 2014. *Turning Point*, 20, 21.

<sup>113</sup> "South Carolina Forts." 2025. Northamericanforts.

<sup>114</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."



- a. David Anderson owned property next to the fort.
  - b. David Anderson built the fort to protect settlers from the Indians in the 1750s and 1760s.
  - c. A Tory settler's fort built by Capt. David Anderson, also known as Fort Anderson, was initially established for protection against the Cherokee. Later, when garrisoned by British and Loyalist troops, the Patriots attacked and captured it in July 1780.
2. A captain in the S.C. 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment named David Anderson eventually became a major in the Spartan Regiment of Militia, Roebuck's Battalion.<sup>115 116 117</sup>



- Anderson's Fort, also known as Thicketty Fort, as it stood in 2025.  
Richard C. Meehan, Jr. took all the fort's exterior and interior views to follow.
- a. Buried in Nazareth Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Moore, Spartanburg County, South Carolina.

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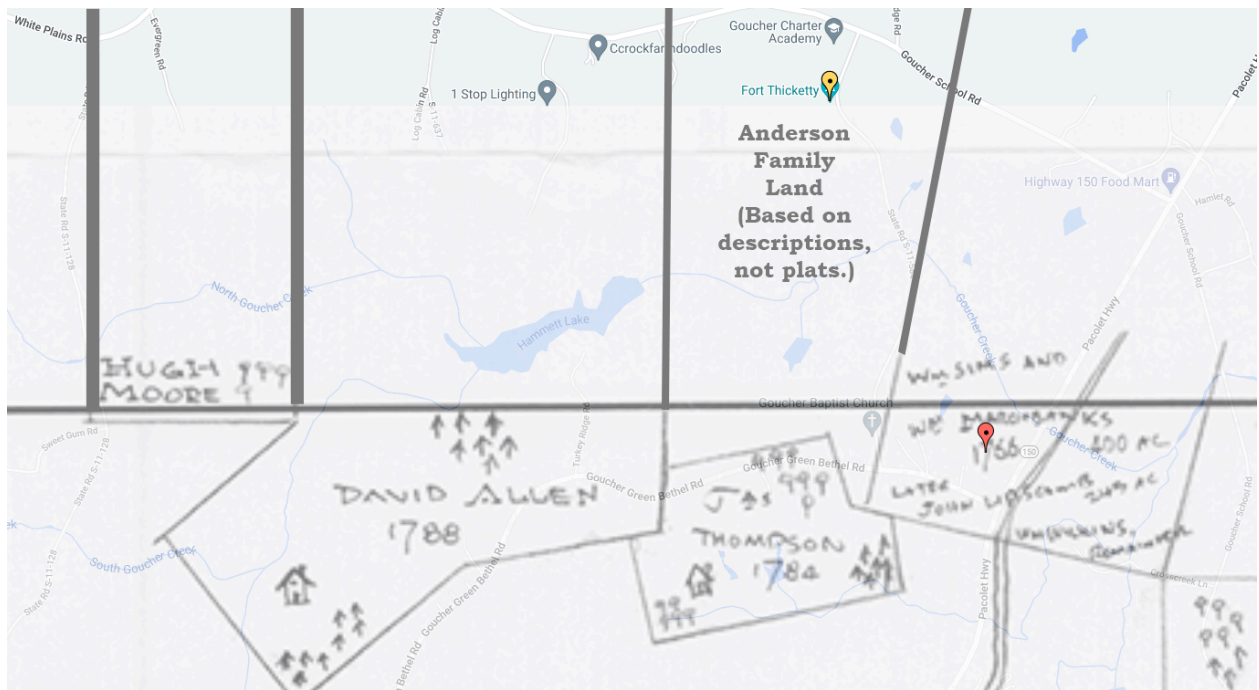
<sup>115</sup> "Major David Anderson." 2024. Find-a-grave.

<sup>116</sup> Moss, Bobby. "Roster of South Carolina Patriots." 1983, 2014.

<sup>117</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina - Roebuck's." 2025. Carolana.



- b. His wife, Miriam Maria Mayson, is listed in Moss as buried next to him in Nazareth Cemetery, which proves that this is the same David Anderson.
- c. His brothers, Captain John Anderson and Captain Denny (Danny) Anderson, also served in Roebuck's Battalion.



Grindal Shoals Map

(n.d.). [www.zeemaps.com](https://www.zeemaps.com). Retrieved March 14, 2024, from <https://www.zeemaps.com/map?group=3381494#> and PACOLET RIVER LAND GRANTS MAP - MID 18TH CENTURY. (n.d.). Cherokee County. Retrieved March 14, 2024, from <https://www.rootsandrecall.com/cherokee/buildings/pacoleet-river-basin-map/>

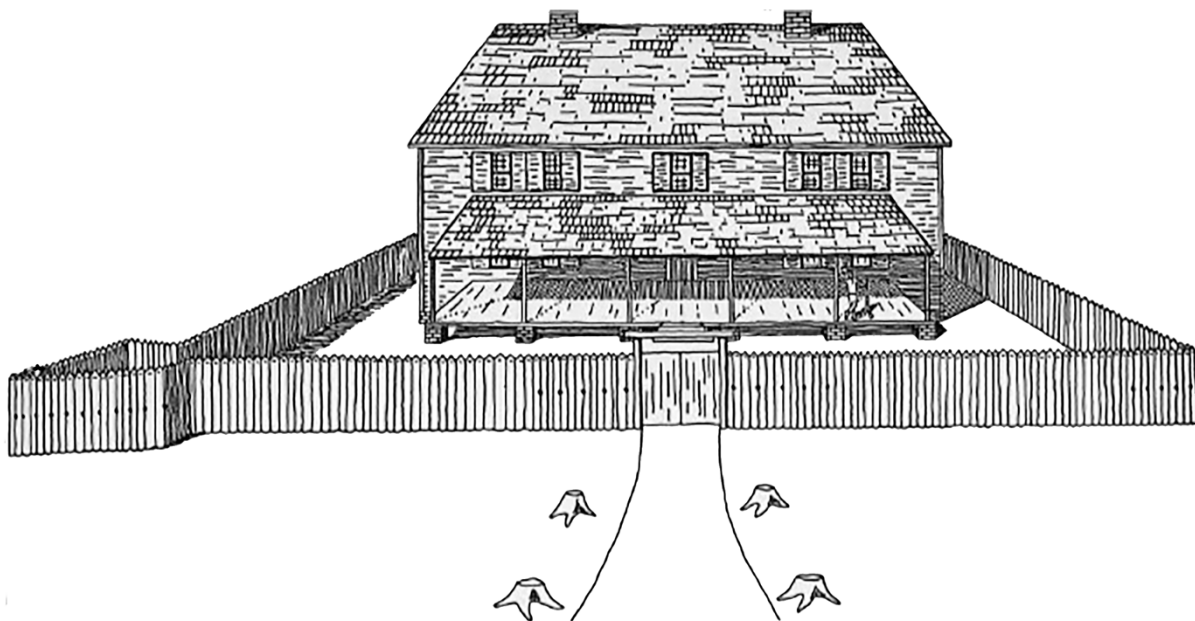
3. William Anderson, David's father, received a memorial for 300 acres on Goucher (Gouches, Gochers) Creek in 1774.<sup>118</sup>
  - a. He served as a captain in the Spartan Regiment during the Cherokee Expedition of 1776.
  - b. According to his son David's obituary, William was "murdered by Tories during the Revolutionary War" on May 9, 1779, at 72 years of age.
  - c. Zachariah Bullock, a resident of Grindal Shoals, surveyed the property.
4. Captain John Anderson (DAR Ancestor Number: A002446), David's brother, forfeited 247 acres on "Gochers Creek of Thickety Creek in Ninety Six District" on 5/1783.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Record and Image Search. 2025. S.C. Archives.

<sup>119</sup> Record and Image Search. 2025. S.C. Archives.

5. Captain David Anderson's Block House was built to defend against "Indian savages" rushing upon "defenseless settlements."<sup>120</sup>
- "We certainly know that it was during those times that old Fort Prince, Poole's Fort, near Wofford's Iron Works, now Glendale, Nichols' Fort at 'Narrow Pass,' near Capt. David Anderson's Block House, Earle's, and Thicketty forts were built..."
  - "The settlements everywhere, alarmed and terrified, lost no time in setting to the work of the building of forts and stockades."

Historian Bobby Moss stated that David Anderson lived on the Reedy Branch of Thicketty Creek in Ninety Six District. Four hundred acres of the Anderson property were initially owned in 1766 by William Sims and William Marchbanks. [See Map, p.12.] A portion of this property, including the site of the fort, was sold to patriarch settler John Lipscomb. His direct descendant, Jack Martin Lipscomb, recently donated five acres and Thicketty Fort to the Cherokee Historical and Preservation Society.<sup>121 122 123 124 125</sup>



**PLANTATION FORT**

**Ivers, L. E. (1970). Colonial Forts of South Carolina, 1670-1775.**

<sup>120</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 30.

<sup>121</sup> "Captain John Anderson." 2024. Blogspot.

<sup>122</sup> Henderson. 1917. *Isaac Shelby*.

<sup>123</sup> Roberts. 1988. *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts*.

<sup>124</sup> Parker, John. 2013. *Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina*, 139.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, Roy. 1992. "Thicketty Fort."



## CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF THE FORT

The design of Anderson's Fort was called a *blockhouse* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, it was built as a private community fort, a small fortification of one room with loopholes allowing defenders to fire in all directions. To withstand attacks by enemies without siege equipment, it had a stockade or palisade, a solid<sup>126</sup> defensive log fence planted around the perimeter of a plantation (farm) house or barn. Another name for this style of construction was *plantation fort*. [See image, p. 13.]<sup>127 128 129</sup>

When the Tories commandeered the fort in July 1780 and changed its name to Thicketty, the description of the fort was confirmed in a letter to an "Officer Commanding at Camden." Lt. Colonel Cruger at Ninety Six reported that a force of 1200 to 1500 rebels was advancing towards

<sup>126</sup> Ivers. 1970. *Colonial Forts*, 26, 30.

<sup>127</sup> Corner, A. 2024. "History of the South Carolina Backcountry."

<sup>128</sup> "Blockhouse." 1969. *World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol 2, 323.

<sup>129</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."



Colonel Ferguson on the Tyger River and that “some of our militia” had surrendered a *stockade* fort on Thicketty.”<sup>130</sup>

Early forts were mostly windowless because those taking refuge inside wanted to eliminate access points an enemy could enter. Typically, the forts had only one small window on the back wall, opposite the door, situated on the chimney wall. Since women and children would be sheltered inside for protection, the fireplace provided cooking and heat during winter. Mud chinking between the logs helped insulate and prevented the enemy from seeing inside. Defenders would create holes in the chinking between the logs to fire at approaching enemies, so windows were unnecessary.<sup>131</sup>



The primary fort structure has endured for more than 265 years against the elements due to the heart of pine logs used in its construction. Termites do not consume this pine-sap-rich wood. Additionally, the disinfectant properties of pine oil inhibit the growth of bacteria, mold, and mildew.<sup>132</sup> Though weathered, the timbers remain nearly as sturdy as the day they were cut. In

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<sup>130</sup> Cornwallis and Saberton. 2010. *The Cornwallis Papers: the campaigns of 1780 and 1781*.

<sup>131</sup> Cann and Fields. 2014. *Turning Point*, 21.

<sup>132</sup> “Pine Oil.” 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica.



1998, archeologist Carl Steen examined the fort and confirmed that the hewn logs were of a size available to the early settlers, as the virgin pine forests of the area had not been eliminated.<sup>133</sup>

During the Regulator troubles of the 1760s, eighty men successfully defended Anderson's Fort against more than three hundred outlaws. The fort was well-maintained, and the British considered it impregnable except for a cannon barrage.<sup>134</sup> The structure would withstand arrows, muskets, and rifle fire.

On February 9, 1771, John Nucholls (Nuckolls, Nichels, Nockels) of Thicketty Creek was appointed an under-sheriff (deputy) of Tryon County, North Carolina (which reached into the Gaffney area).<sup>135</sup> His orders were to push the Cherokee raiders out of Greater Grindal Shoals. Friends and church members formed a militia and named him captain. William Marchbanks served as a lieutenant. This posse service lasted for only nine days.<sup>136</sup> Without formal military training but Indian fighting experience, these local boys drove the Cherokees into the Tryon Mountains, twenty miles to the northwest. They deserve credit for such a fierce action. The Nucholls militia included names that would become both famous and infamous:<sup>137</sup>

- Ensign Patrick Moore – who became the Tory captain commanding Thicketty Fort.<sup>138</sup>
- Sergeant Adam Burchfield – Roebuck's Company (Spartan Regiment).<sup>139</sup>
- Sergeant Phillip Coleman – Brandon's Company (2<sup>nd</sup> Spartan Regiment).<sup>140</sup>
- Corporal Thomas Cole – Roebuck's Company.<sup>141</sup>
- Private Hugh Moore – Ensign Patrick Moore's brother.<sup>142</sup>
- Matthew Robertson – Spartan Regiment, brother of Patriot James "Horseshoe."<sup>143 144</sup>
- Lt. John Goudelock – Spartan Regiment.<sup>145</sup>
- Samuel Clowney – Spartan Regiment.<sup>146</sup>
- Hugh Means – Spartan Regiment.<sup>147</sup>
- George Story – Brandon's Company.<sup>148</sup>
- William Coleman – Brandon's Company.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Smith, Roy. 1999. "Thicketty Fort: An 18<sup>th</sup> Century Frontier Fort in Cherokee, South Carolina," 21.

<sup>134</sup> Draper, Lyman. 1881. "King's Mountain and Its Heroes."

<sup>135</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>136</sup> Saunders, W. "The Colonial Records of North Carolina, Vol. XIII, p.517."

<sup>137</sup> Chesney and Moss. 2002. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 138-141."

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>139</sup> Moss. 2014. *Roster of South Carolina Patriots*, 122.

<sup>140</sup> Chesney and Moss, 138.

<sup>141</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 185.

<sup>142</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 695.

<sup>143</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 821.

<sup>144</sup> "Matthew Robertson." 2023. Wikitree.

<sup>145</sup> Moss, *The Patriots at the Cowpens*, 56.

<sup>146</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 179.

<sup>147</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 670.

<sup>148</sup> Moss. *Roster*, 901.

<sup>149</sup> Moss. *Roster*, 186.

Except for Ensign Patrick Moore, every man listed in this ad hoc militia served together as Patriots four years later in the Spartan Regiment. Ensign Moore, rising to the rank of captain, commandeered Anderson's Fort for the British.<sup>150</sup> Nucholls was an ardent Patriot who ran a sizable plantation only three miles from Thicketty Fort on the Green River Road.<sup>151</sup> After the war, his son, John Jr., built an Antebellum mansion on this land known as Wagstop Plantation of Whig Hill<sup>152</sup>, which still exists in prime condition as of 2025.<sup>153</sup> (View Whig Hill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1YJ4UIC-Z4>).

Another neighbor of the fort was Captain Vardry McBee of the Spartan Regiment<sup>154</sup>, living three and a half miles east on the Pacolet River. John Nucholls and William Marchbanks surveyed McBee's 300-acre farm.<sup>155</sup> While not listed among those in the Nucholls posse, McBee most likely did serve. He had much to lose. Among his holdings were Hannah's Cow Pens, named after his wife, once mistaken as the site of the Cowpens Battlefield (Saunders' Cow Pens nearby). He owned a limestone quarry, which is now on the property of Limestone College in Gaffney. In addition, McBee owned a grist mill, ironworks, leatherworks, and a thriving plantation. Vardry McBee and his son, Silas, were in the Patriot contingent that wrestled Thicketty Fort from Captain Patrick Moore in July 1780.<sup>156</sup>

Contemplating military action against unfaithful Backcountry settlers, Britain sent representatives to parley with the Cherokees to push the Whig settlers off their farms and southeastward toward the seat of government in Charleston. British commanders postulated that these stiff-necked Scots-Irish people, as starving refugees, would be easier to control if they were closer to the coast and British occupational forces.<sup>157 158</sup>

In 1775, an armed militia unit was formed at the behest of the Provincial Council of Safety and, more specifically, the Honorable William Henry Drayton.<sup>159</sup> Settlers from twenty-five square miles around today's Spartanburg, Union, and Cherokee Counties flocked to serve in the Spartan Regiment led by Colonel John Thomas, Sr., of Rich Hill (Whitestone, SC).<sup>160 161</sup> Thomas and his Scots-Irish family settled at Fishing Creek in York County around 1755, then moved to Spartanburg County near today's Camp Croft Lake in 1762.<sup>162</sup> The Spartan Regiment gathered and trained at Wofford's Fort near Glendale in Spartanburg County. This location is six miles from Thicketty Fort and three miles from Colonel Thomas's homestead. Another notable location where the Spartan Regiment trained was Cedar Springs, within two miles of the Thomas homestead. The

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<sup>150</sup> Norfleet, Phil. 2023. "John Nuckolls."

<sup>151</sup> "SC Families." Rootsweb. (SC Families n.d.)

<sup>152</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>153</sup> "Nuckolls-Jefferies House." 2025. S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>154</sup> Moss, *Roster*, 592.

<sup>155</sup> Record and Image Search. S.C. Archives.

<sup>156</sup> Smith, Roy McBee. 1999. "Thicketty Fort."

<sup>157</sup> Ramsay. 1858. *History of South Carolina*, 159-162, 258.

<sup>158</sup> Saye. 1925. *Memoires of Major Joseph McJunkin*, 13-18.

<sup>159</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 52-53.

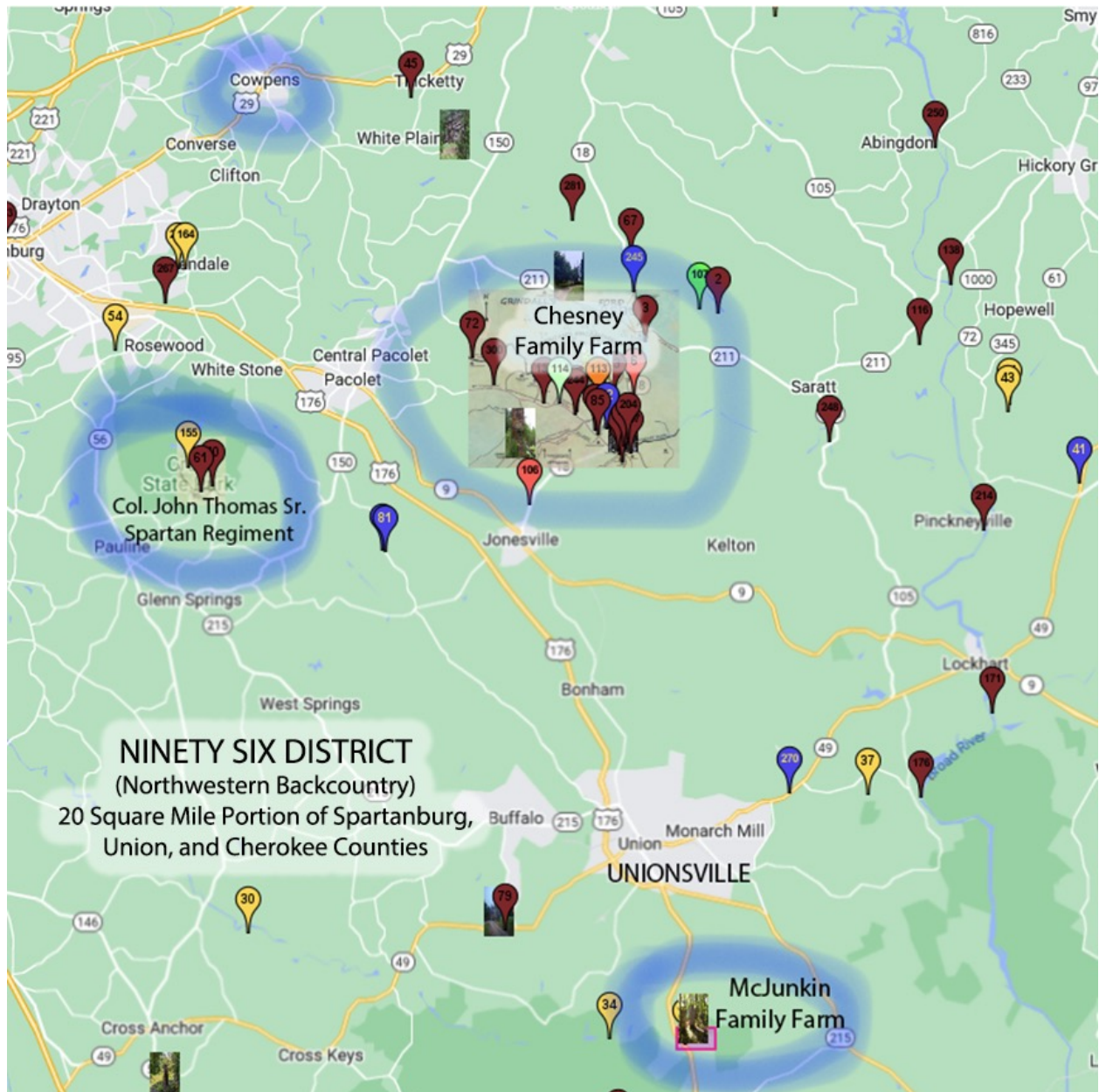
<sup>160</sup> Landrum. 1900. *History of Spartanburg County*, 176-177.

<sup>161</sup> "Spartanburg County." 2017. RootsandRecall.

<sup>162</sup> "John Thomas Cenotaph." 2025. Findagrave.

springs still flow heavily today and may be visited on the property of Cedar Springs Baptist Church, one of the oldest worship houses in Spartanburg.<sup>163</sup>

During the latter part of 1775, Tories and Cherokees combined forces and massacred Whigs residing along the frontier.<sup>164</sup> Tory families wrapped poles with white cloth and placed them at their cabins' doors as a sign to the raiders to "pass over" these homes.<sup>165</sup> On June 20, 1776, the



Created by Richard Meehan based on Google Maps (<https://maps.google.com>)

<sup>163</sup> "Cedar Spring." 2016. Cedarspringbaptist. (Spring 2016)

<sup>164</sup> Simms. 1860. *The History of South Carolina*, 215-216.

<sup>165</sup> Buchanan. 1997. *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 201.

work of death commenced against the Whigs while the Tories remained safe behind their “pass-overs.” The significance of the term “Passover” was certainly not lost on the predominately Christian Scots-Irish, who knew the Biblical reference. Among the bodies of slain Cherokee raiders were those of Tories dressed and painted to look like Natives, an obvious ploy to prevent their Whig neighbors from recognizing them and to set the blame for the debacle wholly on the Cherokee Indians.<sup>166</sup>

The Spartan Regiment and combined forces under Colonel Richard Richardson were sent to destroy the Cherokee resistance and punish the Tory participants. By the fall of 1776, the mighty Cherokee Nation had been reduced to the point where it could no longer fight, with over 2,000 warriors dead. British plans for Indian support on the Western Front failed. However, the Whigs in the Backcountry realized they must prepare for war with the British.<sup>167</sup>

Desperate for military protection, a rift opened between the Greater Grindal Shoals community residents. They became divided over the issue of remaining loyal to the Crown or throwing British forces out of South Carolina once and for all. When it came down to it, these locals were both familial relations and extended church families. Think about a family feud or a church breakup over doctrine. Nothing is nastier than squabbles between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters – even ones bonded under the Lord Jesus Christ. First and foremost, the Scots-Irish settlers in the Pacolet River Valley were God-fearing people.

One Anglican minister, Charles Woodmason, held another opinion on the subject. Woodmason served his sovereign, King George III, head of the Church of England (Anglican). On a tour of the Backcountry lasting from 1766 until 1772, he started new missions and preached at existing meetinghouses of mostly Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. His tour included the Pacolet River Valley. In general, his comments on the frontier settlers were disparaging. “Officiated in a Presbyterian Meeting House to about 200 hearers, chiefly Presbyterians. Offered to give Sermon twice every Sunday. Rejected. The people around, of abandoned morals, and profligate principles – rude – ignorant – void of manners, education of good breeding – no genteel or polite person among them.” It is no wonder that one meetinghouse set the coon dogs to braying so Woodmason could not preach. It is only speculation, but Woodmason may have been referring to a Pacolet River Valley church in some of his disparaging comments, based on the sparse nature of worship houses in the area and his mission to reach the ears of Backcountry settlers.<sup>168</sup>

The Carolina frontier was a small world of interrelated people. Tory Captain Alexander Chesney’s sister, Jane, married Private Daniel Bogan McJunkin DAR# A077343, brother of Patriot Major Joseph Caldwell McJunkin DAR# A077343. Joseph was Colonel John Thomas’s son-in-law, married to daughter Anne Jane. Captain Josiah Culbertson was Joseph’s brother-in-law, who was married to Martha, another of Colonel Thomas’s daughters. Culbertson led a contingent of the Spartan Regiment against Thicketty Fort.<sup>169</sup> These extended families all lived within the 25-mile radius commanded by the fort.<sup>170</sup> Keeping secrets from each other during an age when gossip was the best way to disseminate news would undoubtedly have been difficult. Everybody knew

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<sup>166</sup> Saye. 1925. *Memoires of Major Joseph McJunkin*,

<sup>167</sup> “Cherokee War.” 2025. South Carolina Encyclopedia.

<sup>168</sup> Woodmason. 1953. *The Carolina Backcountry*, 6, 45.

<sup>169</sup> “Josiah Culberton.” 2024. Findagrave.

<sup>170</sup> Meehan. 2023. “Rev War South Carolina.” Zeemaps.



everybody, including their strengths and weaknesses. This dynamic may have occurred during the Patriots' taking of the fort.<sup>171</sup> [See map, p.18.]

### EMBELLISHING THE FORT

When Captain Patrick "Pad" Moore commandeered the fort (around the first of June 1780) in the name of the British, descriptions of the fort changed. It was also about this time that Moore was referred to as "Colonel." Most likely, Moore and his ninety-eight Tories reinforced and improved the structure.<sup>172</sup> It [Thicketty Fort] is reported to have been a strong fortress, built a few years before as a defense against the Cherokees and was surrounded by strong breast timbers well fitted for a vigorous and successful resistance.<sup>173</sup> Among the spoils taken after the Battle of King's Mountain (October 7, 1780) was a fragment of a letter without date or signature, probably a dispatch from Ferguson to Cornwallis, in which this account of the construction of Thicketty Fort is given: "It had an upper line of loopholes and was surrounded by a strong abates, with only a small wicket to enter by."<sup>174</sup> <sup>175</sup>[See photo, p. 11.] Alexander Chesney said, "The fort, surrounded by a strong abatis and other vigorous defenses, could be entered only through an opening which was so small that one had to crawl to enter. One man or woman could stand guard inside the entrance with a club and prevent an army from capturing the Fort." In addition, British Major



STOCKADE at Apple River Fort State Site (Image from <https://visitgalena.org>)

<sup>171</sup> Meehan. 2024. "McJunkin-Thomas-Chesney-Brandon Family Tree." Myheritage.

<sup>172</sup> Jones. 1981. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 140.

<sup>173</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 157.

<sup>174</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 86-88.

<sup>175</sup> Ramsey. 1860. *The Annals of Tennessee*, (Ramsey 1860) 214-215.

Patrick Ferguson was Moore's commanding officer and sent a small unit of experienced soldiers to strengthen the Loyalist militia within the stronghold.<sup>176</sup>

Inside the fort was a stair that led to an upper scaffold where defenders could stand and shoot at the enemy through the described loopholes. A loophole is a small opening or slot. An abatis is a ring of felled trees placed lengthwise over each other, with the boughs pointing outwards or tree



trunks sharpened and buried with points toward the enemy. Wicket gates are small doors in a larger door or an opening in a wall or door through which a single person can enter. Stockades are robust fences or defensive barriers built around an area.

[Fort Thicketty] was a strongly fortified Revolutionary post occupied by Loyalist forces, originally built shortly before the beginning of the war as a defense against the Cherokees.<sup>177</sup> Wooden fences were built around an area to defend against attack. This [fort] was a strong position, well-fortified and abundantly supplied with the munitions of war. It had been, for some time, a place or resort for the predatory bands of Tories who had been robbing the Whig families in the adjacent parts of

<sup>176</sup> Jones. 1981. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 140.

<sup>177</sup> Roberts. 1988. *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts*, 724.



the country.<sup>178</sup> Colonel Isaac Shelby, leading Patriot forces to attack the fort, stated the “post was made doubly strong by abatees well-constructed around it.”<sup>179</sup>



### ABATIS

Abatis Épinglé par Doc. sur Bâtiment Médiéval | Batiment, Médiéval, Survie. (n.d.). Pinterest. Retrieved February 28, 2024, from <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/375909900150150317>

As this author witnessed, massive heart pine logs protected the structure from artillery fire. Blockhouses served as temporary accommodations for garrisons and were usually built along popular trade routes like the Lower Cherokee Traders' Path and Green River Road. A strong abatis of tree branches protruded from the walls surrounding the structure. The sole entrance was a tunnel

<sup>178</sup> Saye. 1925. *Memoires*, 57.

<sup>179</sup> Hamilton. 1938. “King’s Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby,” 367-377.



through the abatis, with barely enough space for one man to crawl through. Many considered Fort Thicketty impregnable except to a cannon barrage.<sup>180 181</sup>

Around 1940, the remaining fort structure was moved and converted to a barn. However, the fort's original site was on the plateau of the same hill where it now rests.<sup>182</sup> Although trees have grown all around the hill today, in the past, this brow offered a circular view of the pasturelands falling away all around. Entering the site from Green River Road, the original colonial lane, one can imagine first meeting a ring of sharpened trunks and felled trees with a small wicket gate and then a stout stockade fence. Once inside the stockade, to the left was the stone-lined well of sweet water that supplied the fort (still there), and directly ahead, another twenty yards would be the fort's main building. Most likely, at least two parapets had been built alongside the main building to house all ninety-three defending Tories. If the structures were of similar dimensions, each would hold around thirty men with armaments. [See image, p.21.]

When the Tories garrisoned the fort, they terrorized the Greater Grindal Shoals community by pillage and plunder.<sup>183</sup> These local Tories, who supported the Crown, competed with the Cherokees in actions often viewed as unacceptable. "The greatest suffering inflicted on the Whig

<sup>180</sup> Edgar. 2001. *Partisans and Redcoats*, 99.

<sup>181</sup> Draper, 86.

<sup>182</sup> Elliott, D. 2024. "Historical Archaeology at Fort Thicketty," 34.

<sup>183</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 114.



settlement was by thieving Tories, with which the country was infested. One of these gangs, commanded by Patrick Moore, made their headquarters at Fort Anderson, or Thicketty Fort on Goucher Creek.”<sup>184</sup> “It [Thicketty Fort] became a great place of resort and protection for Tory parties. They would sally forth and plunder Whig families in every direction – so that women and children were often left without clothing, shoes, bread, meat, or salt.”<sup>185</sup>

Here is a Nucholls Family legend concerning those times:

*Whig Hill was not immune to these depredations. A number of raids were made, but perhaps the most noted one was made in 1780. They made a clean sweep. The only bed left for the youngest child was a sheep-skin used for a saddle blanket. It was, probably, at this time when they were shooting*



Richard C. Meehan's rendition of the original position of Thicketty Fort through onsite study, 2024

<sup>184</sup> Bailey. 1981. *History of Grindal Shoals and Some Early Adjacent Families*, 77.

<sup>185</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain and Its Heroes*, 86.

*stock, breaking up furniture, and ripping open feather beds that Mrs. Nucholls, woman-like, began tongue-lashing them. One of the dirty scoundrels struck at her head with a saber, and she flung up her arm to ward off the blow and received a wound, which left a scar that she carried to her grave.<sup>186</sup>*

Additionally, here is an instance recorded by the Nucholls family concerning one of their enslaved women. This account is crucial because it speaks to the character of the Tories serving under Patrick Moore. Since the Patriots took the fort, known by all accounts to be nearly impregnable, without firing a single shot, it begs the question: Why? Perhaps here is the answer:

*On another occasion, raiders came, and “Aunt Agathy,” an old colored slave, grabbed the axe and, placing herself behind the door, threatened to kill the first one who tried to enter. Not one of the contemptible cowards made the effort. It is said that there is a bond between the descendants of Mrs. Nucholls and those of “Aunt Agathy” that grows as the years go by.<sup>187</sup>*



Cherokee Ford. (Image by Richard C Meehan, Jr. taken 2/23/2025.)

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 77-78.

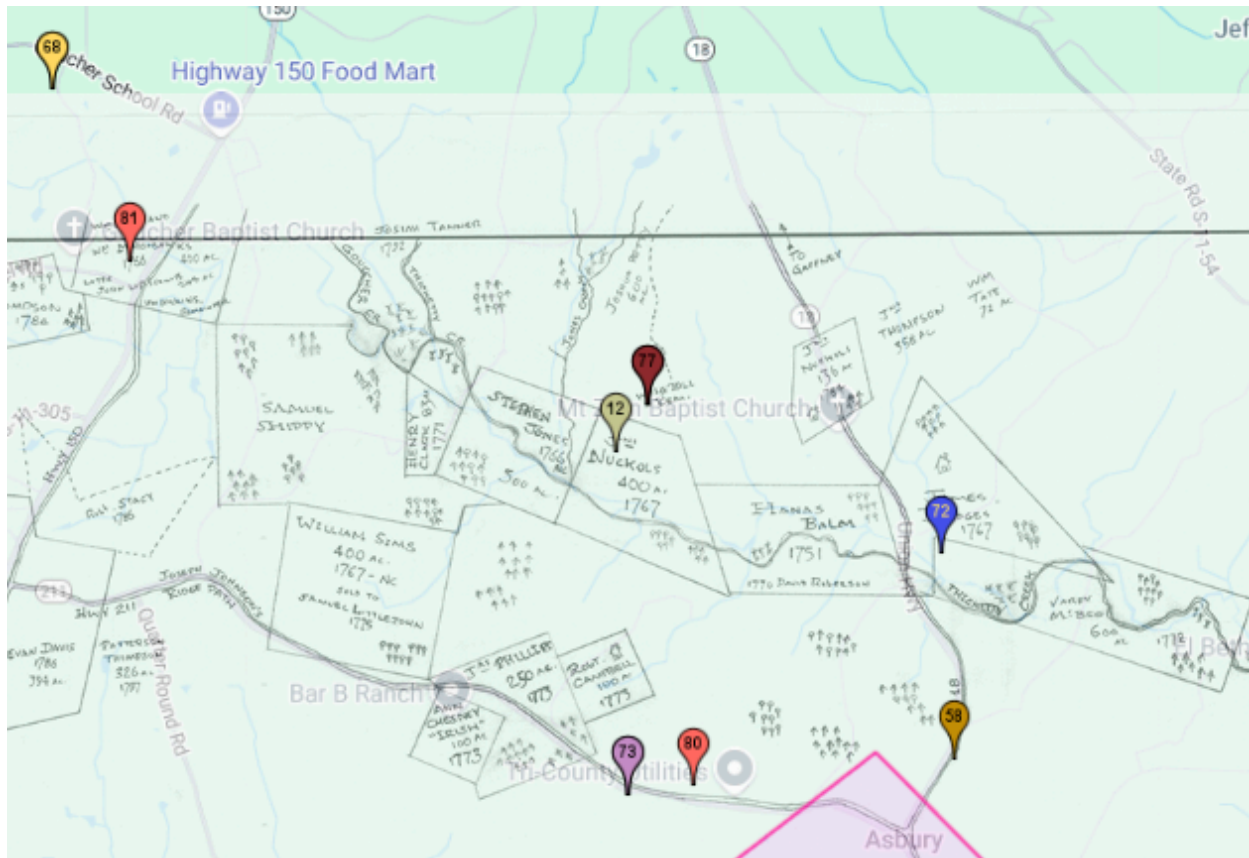
<sup>187</sup> Bailey. 1981. *History of Grindal Shoals and Some Early Adjacent Families*, 78.



Thicketty Fort, once a haven for settlers during the Cherokee raids, was turned against many of those families by neighbor Patrick Moore. Moore's being part of the Grindal Community is another possible reason for the ease with which the Patriots took Fort Thicketty. Maybe even a notorious Tory captain had a conscience. Many Whigs who stood against him were perhaps his former friends and church congregation members.

## THE TAKING OF THICKETTY FORT

Ninety Six District, which included Cherokee County, was strategically important to the British Southern strategy aimed at subduing rebellion in the Carolinas and Georgia. The British invaders needed to resupply off the rich lands of the Pacolet, and they required Cherokee Ford to advance northward. The Greater Grindal Shoals settlers stood in the way, fighting desperately for their right to live. Although there was little time for philosophical discussion while their families were in danger, these Whigs knew their position between their Loyalist neighbors at Thicketty Fort and the British occupational forces now swarming up from the coastal regions to be most precarious. Everything they had striven for since leaving their homeland was at stake.



(n.d.). Wwww.zeemaps.com. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://www.zeemaps.com/map?group=3381494#> and PACOLET RIVER LAND GRANTS MAP - MID 18TH CENTURY. (n.d.). Cherokee County. Retrieved March 14, 2024, from <https://www.rootsandrecall.com/cherokee/buildings/pacolet-river-basin-map/>.

Yellow Marker is Thicketty Fort. Blue Marker is Vardry McBee.

What good were farms without anyone to work them? As in all wars, the women of the Revolution stepped up to handle jobs that formerly belonged to the men. They kept the home fires burning so their husbands and sons would still have homes when and if they returned. Hopefully, the harvest would not rot for want of reapers, or the long winter might bring starvation. This fear drove the women and children into the fields.

The home front held its breath while Whig leaders like Thomas “Carolina Gamecock” Sumter gathered and trained volunteers to offer an organized resistance to the British occupational army marching up from defeated Charleston. A convention of backwoodsmen was held on June 15, 1780, where Thomas Sumter was elected brigadier general of the Whig resistance. By July 4, he had gathered over 500 men at Old Nations Ford on the Catawba River.<sup>188</sup> Among those present was Major Joseph McJunkin of the Spartan Regiment.<sup>189 190</sup>

Sumter, now commander of the Carolina militias, received word that British Major Patrick Ferguson’s troops were moving toward the mountains beyond the Broad River.<sup>191</sup> Ferguson was tasked with cleaning up the Whigs in the Backcountry and stopping volunteers from North Carolina and Virginia from coming “over-mountain” to make a stand.<sup>192 193</sup> Sumter messaged Colonel Elijah Clarke to move his Georgian militia in that direction.<sup>194 195</sup> Clarke, formerly a resident of Greater Grindal Shoals,<sup>196</sup> gathered volunteers and swept up along the foothills from Georgia.<sup>197</sup> The Georgians allied with Colonel Charles McDowell’s Virginians and North Carolinians on Saturday, July 15, at Earle’s Ford.<sup>198 199</sup>

Colonel Zacharias Gibbs, a Loyalist from Grindal Shoals,<sup>200</sup> learned of McDowell’s encampment and sent a spy, Tory Captain Alexander Chesney, also of Grindal Shoals,<sup>201</sup> to infiltrate.<sup>202</sup> Chesney was successful and returned to Gibbs with details of McDowell’s forces. Gibbs dispatched Captain James Dunlap’s Old Tryon Loyalists company of seventy-four men to attack McDowell. Early Wednesday morning, Dunlap began moving his company across the North Pacolet River, attempting to catch McDowell by surprise. A sentry spotted them and went back to the encampment to give warning. The Loyalists charged into the camp, catching some Patriots asleep in their tents. McDowell ordered a Patriot counterattack, which managed to drive away the

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<sup>188</sup> Bass. 1961. *Gamecock*, 3, 54, 56, 57.

<sup>189</sup> Saye. *Memoires*, 27.

<sup>190</sup> Scoggins. 2005. *The Day It Rained Militia*, 83.

<sup>191</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina - Thicketty Fort." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>192</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain*, 68-73.

<sup>193</sup> Buchanon. 1997. *The Road to Guilford's Courthouse*, 80.

<sup>194</sup> Scoggins, 141, 143.

<sup>195</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 133-134.

<sup>196</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>197</sup> Draper, 78.

<sup>198</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina – Earle’s Ford." 2024. Carolina.

<sup>199</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain*, 80-82.

<sup>200</sup> Ivey, Robert. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>201</sup> Parker. 2013. *Parker's Guide*, 389.

<sup>202</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina – Earle’s Ford." 2024. Carolana.



Loyalists.<sup>203</sup> Colonel McDowell then moved his forces to a new camp at Cherokee Ford<sup>204</sup> on the North Carolina border along Broad River.<sup>205 206</sup>

Reinforcements continued to arrive daily,<sup>207</sup> many of them Overmountain Men<sup>208</sup> from Virginia and North Carolina. Colonel McDowell put them to good use by sending a detachment to eliminate the threat from Captain Patrick Moore's Loyalist training camp at Thicketty Fort.<sup>209</sup> Thicketty was the last Tory stronghold in the Backcountry.<sup>210</sup> With Colonel Isaac Shelby (N.C.) in command,<sup>211</sup> Colonel Andrew Hamilton (N.C.), Colonel John Sevier (N.C.), Colonel Elijah Clarke (GA.), and Lt. Colonel Charles Robertson (N.C.) left to attack the fort.<sup>212</sup> Along the way, the detachment met up with three known companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Regiment of Militia (S.C.) heading to join McDowell's forces at Cherokee Ford.<sup>213</sup> Captains Josiah and Samuel Culbertson and John Collins were in the lead, likely not realizing that behind their backs, Major Patrick Ferguson had begun to move his forces up toward Cedar Springs, the Spartan Regiment's training camp (in today's Camp Croft area of Spartanburg).<sup>214</sup> With a force of six hundred, the Patriots rode at sunset on Tuesday, July 25, to surround Thicketty Fort at the coming sunrise.

Other notable Spartans present that morning were from Roebuck's Battalion of horse soldiers – Captain Vardry McBee<sup>215</sup> and his son, Silas<sup>216</sup> (DAR Patriot #A074457), who was 14 and had just joined the unit. The McBees were neighbors of Loyalist Captain Chesney and lived about seven miles east of Thicketty Fort, just below Grindal Shoals. [See Map, p. 26.]

Meanwhile, British Major Patrick Ferguson, whose Tory training camp called Camp Hill<sup>217</sup> was located on the Fairforest Creek, Glenn Springs, in Union County,<sup>218</sup> sent Captain Alexander Chesney to Thicketty Fort with a message for the fort's commander, Colonel Patrick Moore: "Hold the fort till the last minute." This statement implies that Ferguson would move his forces toward Thicketty Fort. Chesney most likely delivered the message to Moore on July 24 or 25 and left, as he was absent from the fort when the Patriots arrived on the morning of July 26. His orders were to return to Ferguson with detailed information he had spied out about McDowell's forces. Chesney found the Culbertson farm, Culbered (near Cedar Springs), absent of Loyalists,<sup>219</sup> which meant Ferguson was probably already moving his regiment toward Cherokee Ford.<sup>220</sup> This was the case, for Chesney caught up with Ferguson just before the battle of Wofford's Iron Works (also

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<sup>203</sup> Scoggins. 2005. *The Day It Rained Militia*, 130.

<sup>204</sup> Draper, 87.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>206</sup> Parker, 389-390.

<sup>207</sup> "The American Revolution in South Carolina - Thicketty Fort." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>208</sup> "Overmountain Men." 2006. Encyclopedia of Appalachia, 1607.

<sup>209</sup> Draper, 87.

<sup>210</sup> Cann. 2014. *Turning Point*, 87-88.

<sup>211</sup> Draper, 87-89.

<sup>212</sup> Parker, 139.

<sup>213</sup> "Thicketty Fort." Carolana.

<sup>214</sup> Jones. 1981. "Journal of Alexander Chesney," 12.

<sup>215</sup> "Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements: S7202" 2024. Revwarapps.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 2024. "Pension Statements: SC1006."

<sup>217</sup> "Camp Hill." 2025. S.C. Dept. of Archives and History

<sup>218</sup> Scoggins. 2005. *The Day it Rained Militia*, 122.

<sup>219</sup> Jones, 12.

<sup>220</sup> Ramsey. 1860. *The Annals of Tennessee*, 217.

called the Second Battle of Cedar Springs)<sup>221</sup> on August 8, 1780,<sup>222</sup> and gave his report on McDowell's forces camped at the ford.<sup>223</sup> Ferguson's trek from his training camp to Cherokee Ford was from southeast to northwest over about 25 miles of rough terrain. Ferguson must have planned to use his thousand-man regiment<sup>224</sup> to pin McDowell's contingent at the river crossing, as the British considered Cherokee Ford and nearby Thicketty Fort essential in controlling the Backcountry. Indeed, British Lt. Colonel Turnbull recommended to Lord Rawdon that he send Major Ferguson against the rebels before they could move against Rocky Mount Fort.<sup>225 226</sup>

With a force of six hundred,<sup>227</sup> the Patriots rode at sunset on Tuesday, July 25, to surround Thicketty Fort at the coming sunrise.<sup>228</sup> At dawn on Wednesday, July 26, Colonel Isaac Shelby arrayed his six hundred<sup>229</sup> Whigs around the base of the hillock on which perched Thicketty Fort. The stout blockhouse and several parapets stood on a flat area no larger than a football field, surrounded by a firm palisade fence ringed with an abatis of sharpened tree trunks. [See image, p.23.] To storm even a crude abatis would mean extreme exposure to fire or becoming impaled on the pointed timbers. Additionally, muskets bristled from the portholes, making Thicketty appear nearly impregnable to the Patriot attackers, especially since they had no cannon to soften the fort's defenses.

Colonel Shelby sent Captain William Cocke under a white flag to parley with Captain Moore.<sup>230</sup> In Shelby's words:

*Capt. Cocke was sent in with a flag by Col. Shelby to demand a surrender of the garrison. Capt. Moore at first refused to surrender, but on being warned by Capt. Cocke of the consequences of the garrison being stormed by the Americans, he surrendered, although his post was made doubly strong by abetees well-constructed around it.*<sup>231</sup>

For Cocke to approach the blockhouse, he would have entered the stockade through the guarded wicket gate. Once inside, he made a peremptory demand to Moore for the garrison's surrender.<sup>232</sup> In all his ferociously massive six-foot-seven height<sup>233</sup>, Moore said he would defend the place to the last extremity.<sup>234</sup> Moore's British sergeant major underscored his words with insults hurled from the second floor of the blockhouse.<sup>235</sup> [This unknown sergeant major was sent to train and discipline the Tories at the fort.<sup>236</sup> He would have been the senior noncommissioned officer

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Parker. 2013. *Parker's Guide*, 404,405.

<sup>223</sup> Jones. 1981. "Journal of Alexander Chesney," 11-12.

<sup>224</sup> "Wofford's Iron Works." Carolana.

<sup>225</sup> Scoggins. 2005. *The Day it Rained Militia*, 122.

<sup>226</sup> "Thicketty Fort." 2020. Hockery.

<sup>227</sup> "Episode 15 – The Summer Campaign of 1780 – Part 1." 2019. Society.

<sup>228</sup> Hamilton. 1938. *Letters of Colonel Shelby*, 367-377.

<sup>229</sup> Allaire. 2024. "Diary." Tngenweb.

<sup>230</sup> Goodrich. 1896. "William Cocke."

<sup>231</sup> Hamilton. 1938. *Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby*, 367-377.

<sup>232</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain*, 88.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 198.

<sup>234</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 133.

<sup>235</sup> "Thicketty Fort." 2020. Hockery.

<sup>236</sup> Tonsetic. 2013. *Special Operations*, 166.

responsible for discipline, drill, and administration.] Captain Cocke brought the reply to Colonel Shelby.

The colonel hoped to avoid unnecessary bloodletting on both sides.<sup>237</sup> However, Shelby knew that if it came to a firefight, the chances of his Patriot volunteers succeeding against the fort would be slim. He said, “The place was capable of sustaining an attack from double our force of small arms.”<sup>238</sup> Asking militiamen to risk themselves against such a stalwart fortification might result in a defeat, but more likely, a slaughter. There was also the slim chance that they would not fight. This action would require plenty of guile and luck. So, Colonel Isaac Shelby played a bluff.

On the next hill over, toward the west, in plain view of the fort, the Patriots rolled up a contraption that appeared to be a cannon.<sup>239</sup> The assailants made the pretense of loading and preparing to fire.<sup>240</sup> The act must have appeared genuine to the defenders inside the fort.<sup>241</sup> From a distance, they could not tell the device was just a black-painted log on wheels.<sup>242</sup> Then, in a regular army-style show of force, Shelby marched his militiamen out of the woods at the base of the hill and



<sup>237</sup> Landrum, 133.

<sup>238</sup> Hamilton, 367-377.

<sup>239</sup> Pancake. 1985. *This Destructive War*, 96.

<sup>240</sup> Logan. 1859. *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina Vol. II*, 278-279.

<sup>241</sup> Society. 2019. “Episode 15 - the Summer Campaign of 1780 - Part I.”

<sup>242</sup> Cann. 2014. *Turning Point*, 88.



drew battle lines just outside of musket range, about a hundred yards from the enemy defenders.<sup>243</sup> Called “yelling boys” by Colonel Shelby, these veterans of battles against Cherokees and Tories, dressed in Backcountry hunting shirts, lifted a defiant rebel yell and shook their weapons menacingly.<sup>244</sup>

During this display, Colonel Shelby sent Captain Cocke back to Moore with a second demand for capitulation.<sup>245</sup> Cocke told Moore that if he did not surrender the fort this time, his men would receive Tarleton’s Quarter, meaning no mercy,<sup>246</sup> when the Patriot forces stormed the place. Additional foul language rained on Captain Cocke as he awaited Moore’s answer.<sup>247 248</sup>

A letter fragment, probably meant for Major Ferguson, was found on a fallen Tory soldier after the Battle of King’s Mountain the following October. Ferguson, killed in this pivotal battle, never saw the letter. It stated, “The officer next in command [the sergeant major] and all the others gave their opinion for defending it [Fort Thicketty], and agree in their account that Patrick Moore, after proposing a surrender, acquiesced in their opinion and offered to go and signify as much to the rebels, but returned with some rebel officers whom he put in possession of the gate and place, who were instantly followed by their men, to the surprise of the garrison. He pleaded cowardice, I understand.”<sup>249</sup> So, amid many loud and abusive words between Moore, his men, and an unseen officer “next in command,” seemingly British, Moore crawled out of the blockhouse egress to speak once more with Cocke. The two men exited the wicket gate so Moore could get a good view of the forces arrayed against him.<sup>250 251</sup>

The sight of the defiant Patriots must have reminded Moore of several recent narrow escapes from imminent death. Whigs tracked him with malevolent intent after the Tory loss of Ramseur’s Mill. He was captured at Wofford’s Ironworks but got away by sheer luck. His captor’s gun would not fire because blood had soaked the powder. Whatever his reason for surrendering the fort, it could have been as simple as realizing he had a wife and six children to protect. After all, Patrick’s home was nearby, and some of these Whigs, like young Silas McBee and his father, knew where he lived.

Much to the chagrin of the fort’s defenders, especially the sergeant major, Patrick Moore agreed to capitulate on condition that Shelby paroled the garrison. Parole meant the Tory defenders must promise not to fight for the British anymore. The Patriots found the arrangement suitable because they did not want to be encumbered by ninety-seven prisoners. Not a single shot was fired by either side during the taking of Thicketty Fort.

British Command severely censured Captain Moore for losing Thicketty after the other officers testified that they argued to defend it.<sup>252</sup> Moore allegedly pleaded cowardice. However, Lord Cornwallis should have taken the blame. The Lord Earl was unfamiliar with the fast-moving abilities of the Overmountain Men and Spartan Regiment horse soldiers, which caused him to

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<sup>243</sup> Landrum. 1897. *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 133.

<sup>244</sup> Journal. 2025. “Colonel Isaac Shelby.”

<sup>245</sup> Landrum, 133.

<sup>246</sup> “Waxhaws.” 2025. Carolana.

<sup>247</sup> Moss. 2000. *Uzal Johnson*, 121.

<sup>248</sup> Moss. 1972. *The Old Iron District*, 58-60.

<sup>249</sup> Ramsey. 1853. *The Annals of Tennessee*, 215.

<sup>250</sup> Moss. 1972. *The Old Iron District*, 58-60.

<sup>251</sup> Moss. *Uzal*, 121.

<sup>252</sup> Landrum, 134.

underestimate the Backcountry threat.<sup>253</sup> Major Patrick Ferguson's volunteers were not up to preventing the fiercely patriotic frontiersmen from moving east. This unwelcome development threatened Cornwallis' Southern strategy, especially since all the armaments of the last Loyalist stronghold had fallen into the wrong hands.

Colonel Shelby's forces captured about two hundred fifty muskets and considerable ammunition. The muskets had been loaded with buck and ball and stood ready at the portholes.<sup>254</sup> Guns primed with such loads, meaning two or three buckshot the size of small marbles, would make formidable weapons against charging troops. Other names for these types of loaded weapons are *scatterguns* or *shotguns*. Such armaments could stop twice the number of attackers, as the lead shot would spread out once fired, increasing the chances of hitting one or more of the attacking enemy soldiers.<sup>255</sup>

Although Captain Patrick Moore and his company, a Spartan Regiment of Royalist Militia unit,<sup>256</sup> were paroled per the agreement to surrender, Patrick likely broke his parole the following year. He dropped from sight until July 1781. Reports came from Patriots, who were scouting for Loyalists, that an unusually tall man was captured and killed near Ninety Six. Moore's remains were identified only because of his unusual height of six foot seven inches.<sup>257</sup>

The taking of Thicketty Fort gave the Patriots a reason to celebrate their dominance of the Backcountry, however temporary. The victory convinced McDowell, Shelby, Sumter, and other Patriot leaders to begin a campaign focusing on the vulnerable Loyalist training camps and isolated outposts throughout the Backcountry. After the battles at King's Mountain and Cowpens, the British finally lost control of South Carolina and headed northward. "Redneck" frontier farmers of the Backcountry had defeated the dreaded British Legion.<sup>258</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The events surrounding the siege of Thicketty Fort on July 26, 1780, vividly showcase the strategic dynamics of the American Revolutionary War in the Southern Campaign. Colonel Isaac Shelby and his men, including those of the Spartan Regiment, exhibited remarkable determination and courage, bravely facing an intimidating fortification. Their actions highlighted the complexities of warfare during this challenging period and the indomitable spirit of the Patriots, who, despite overwhelming odds, demonstrated incredible resolve, tactical ingenuity, and sheer guile.

This encounter was about much more than the immediate control of Thicketty Fort; it represented a profound struggle for the hearts and minds of the Backcountry's population. The commitment of our early patriots to confront tyranny, even when the risks were dire, is an inspiring testament to the dedication required to build a new nation founded on the principles of liberty and justice.

Remarkably, neither side fired a single shot during the taking of Thicketty Fort—an extraordinary occurrence that spared countless lives. It was truly miraculous for the volunteer Whigs and Tories

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<sup>253</sup> Waters. 2019. "To the End of the World."

<sup>254</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain*, 88.

<sup>255</sup> "Buck and Ball." 2025. Pritzker Military Museum.

<sup>256</sup> "Battle of Earle's Ford and Fort Prince." 2025. *Revolutionarywarjournal*.

<sup>257</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Mountain*, 298.

<sup>258</sup> Edgar. 2001. *Partisans*, 144-145.



that this standoff did not erupt into bloodshed like so many other battles of the Revolution. In the Pacolet River Valley, friendships and neighborly ties intertwined among opposing militiamen, who once gathered as friends, neighbors, and congregants in their church. The Greater Grindal Shoals community had long relied on these relationships to fend off Cherokee raiders and roaming bandits. War exploded with the British Crown just as they believed their community was safe enough to raise families and pursue their dreams.

During the Revolutionary War, brave rebel farmers along the frontier Backcountry of South Carolina, their necks burnt red from laboring in the blistering sun, rose up against the most formidable military force of their time to wrest our country from the grasp of a tyrant king. Their struggle gifted us with Liberty—a legacy we must cherish and honor. Let us remember our ancestors for their trials and sacrifices in the name of Freedom. Without the unwavering courage of these frontier settlers, who stood resilient against what seemed like inevitable defeat at the hands of the infamous British Legion, the United States of America might still be shackled under British rule.

At least two hundred battles, skirmishes, and murders were unleashed upon our South Carolina soil during the Revolution, with a significant number happening in the Backcountry. Although hard to prove, it is traditionally believed this total is more than in all the other twelve Colonies





combined. However, the statement that the British lost the war in the South is hard to deny.<sup>259</sup> In celebrating our unique Southern drawl and rich heritage, let us take pride in being South Carolinians, especially in Cherokee County. Our “Redneck” roots are not just a label but a badge of honor—a testament to the grit and resolve of those who fought for our freedom and shaped the course of our nation’s history.

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<sup>259</sup> Lipscomb. 1991. *Battles*, 1-2.

## BRIEFS ON NOTABLE PEOPLE INVOLVED

### AMERICAN PATRIOTS

#### Brigadier General Charles McDowell (1743-1815)

Joseph McDowell, Charles' father, emigrated from Ireland to the United States in about 1730. Charles McDowell was born in Winchester, Virginia. After a residence of several years in Pennsylvania, he settled first in Winchester, Virginia, and subsequently at Quaker Meadows on the Catawba River, North Carolina. His family is distinguished from that of his cousin John by the name of the "Quaker Meadow McDowells."<sup>260</sup>

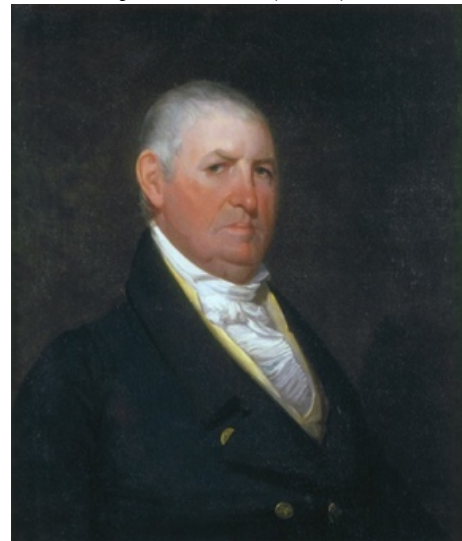
Charles was an ardent Patriot placed in command of an extensive district in western North Carolina at the beginning of the American Revolution. During the British invasion in 1780, he organized troops, fortified posts, and attacked the enemy in June of that year at their works [Wofford's Ironworks] on the Pacolet River, compelled their surrender, and subsequently gained victories at Musgrove's Mill and Cane Creek. He was absent at the Battle of King's Mountain, S.C., because he was riding to meet with Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates in Hillsborough.

In June 1780, McDowell joined Isaac Shelby and John Sevier from Tennessee and Colonel Clarke of Georgia near the Cherokee Ford on Broad River in South Carolina. Reinforcements arrived daily, and McDowell decided to put them to good use to eliminate the threat from Capt. Patrick Moore's Loyalists are known to be at Thicketty Fort. Col. McDowell detached Col. Isaac Shelby (N.C.), Col. Andrew Hamilton (N.C.), Col. Elijah Clarke (G.A.), and Lt. Col. Charles Robertson (N.C.) to attack Thicketty Fort. Along the way, they met up with two South Carolina First Spartan Regiment of Militia companies. McDowell was determined to attack and destroy a post held by the enemy in Pacolet, commanded by Captain Patrick Moore, a distinguished Loyalist.<sup>261 262</sup>

#### Colonel Isaac Shelby (1750-1826)

Isaac Shelby was born in the Colony of Maryland near Hagerstown, now Washington County. Although the family had been loyal to the Church of England, they became Presbyterians when they came to America. Isaac worked on his father's plantation and occasionally found work as a surveyor. At 18, he was appointed deputy sheriff of Fredrick County.

Hearing of the Fall of Charlestown, Shelby assembled 300 militiamen and rushed to aid General



*Colonel Isaac Shelby*

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d2/Isaac\\_shelby.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d2/Isaac_shelby.jpg)

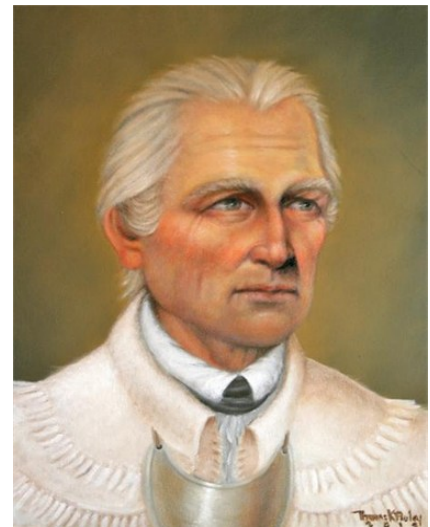
<sup>260</sup> "Charles McDowell." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>261</sup> Wheeler. 1851. *Historical Sketches*, 51.

<sup>262</sup> "Thicketty Fort." 2024. Carolana.

Charles McDowell in defending the borders of North Carolina at Cherokee Ford. McDowell ordered Shelby and John Sevier to lead their combined 600 Overmountain Men against Thicketty Fort, the first mission of this new fighting force. The Overmountain Men continued to harass Major Patrick Ferguson's forces at Wofford's Ironworks, Musgrove's Mill, and King's Mountain.

The Battle of King's Mountain was the most important win for the Overmountain Men. Shelby was awarded a ceremonial sword and a pair of pistols for his service. He was dubbed "Old King's Mountain," a nickname that followed him for the rest of his life.<sup>263</sup>



### Colonel Andrew Hampton (1713-1805)

Andrew Hampton settled on Mountain Creek in what was then called Tryon County in 1770. He served as a captain in the Rutherford County Regiment of Militia. Hampton was a major in General Griffith Rutherford's 1776 expedition against the Cherokee Indians. When Rutherford County was created in 1779, he was promoted to colonel and given command of the new county's Patriot militia.

The father of fifteen children, he was a prosperous farmer and miller. In 1775, he resigned his Royal Commission when he signed the Tryon Resolves, which declared the area's support for the struggle against British tyranny.<sup>264</sup>

Hampton pursued Colonel John Moore's Tories when they fled south from North Carolina in 1779. Early in 1780, Hampton went with relief forces to Charleston, South Carolina, then under attack by the British. Later Hampton served in battles at Earle's Ford, Thicketty Fort, Cane Creek, and King's Mountain, where he commanded the Rutherford County troops. Hampton was 67 when he commanded the detachment of Rutherford County troops at Thicketty Fort and the Battle of King's Mountain. After his military service, he was elected Sheriff of Rutherford County in early 1781.<sup>265</sup>

**Colonel Andrew Hampton**

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/252379>



### Colonel John Sevier

Sevier was an American soldier, frontiersman, politician, and one of the founding fathers of the State of Tennessee. Sullivan County militia colonel Isaac Shelby and Sevier agreed to raise armies and march across the mountains to

**Colonel John Sevier**

A 1790 portrait of John Sevier by Charles Wilson Pearle. Image from the

<sup>263</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal*, 162-163.

<sup>264</sup> "Portrait." 2013. Tryon Daily Bulletin.

<sup>265</sup> "Gilbert Town." 2024. Overmountain Victory.



engage Ferguson. This combined force of Virginians and North Carolinians from over the Blue Ridge became known as the “Overmountain Men.”<sup>266</sup>

Colonel Thomas Sumter learned that Major Patrick Ferguson was moving troops beyond the Broad River, so he directed Colonel Elijah Clarke and his Georgians to move towards that area (the Backcountry). Colonel Clarke met with Colonel Charles McDowell of North Carolina on July 15, 1780, at Earle’s Ford. From there, they moved to Cherokee Ford and encamped (McDowell’s Camp).<sup>267</sup>

Reinforcements arrived daily, and Col. McDowell decided to put them to good use to eliminate the threat from Captain Patrick Moore’s Loyalists at Thicketty Fort. McDowell detached Col. Isaac Shelby (N.C.), Col. Andrew Hamilton (N.C.), Col. Elijah Clarke (G.A.), and Lt. Col. Charles Robertson (N.C.) to attack Thicketty Fort. Along the way, they met up with two companies of the S.C. 1st Spartan Regiment of Militia. John Sevier was not in the assault force sent to Thicketty, but his brother, Captain Valentine Sevier of Washington Company, served with the detachment led by Colonel Isaac Shelby.<sup>268</sup>

### Colonel Elijah Clarke (1742-1799)

Elijah Clarke was a Scots-Irishman, an Indian fighter, and a land speculator. He had no formal education. He was born near Tarboro in the Province of North Carolina. In 1771, he moved his family to his father’s 800-acre tract on the Pacolet River near Grindal Shoals. His father ran a grist mill on Mill Creek in the Grindal community. Eventually, Henry Farnandis purchased this land and mill.

Finding farming in South Carolina unsatisfactory, Elijah moved to Wilkes County, Georgia, in 1773. There, he gained prominence as a militia captain. General Andrew Pickens promoted him to colonel, and he became a Whig leader.<sup>269</sup>

Colonel Thomas Sumter learned that Major Patrick Ferguson’s troops were moving beyond the Broad River, so he directed Clarke to bring his Georgians up to meet Colonel McDowell’s forces at Earle’s Ford. From there, they moved to Cherokee Ford, and McDowell sent them with the detachment to take Thicketty Fort.<sup>270</sup>



Colonel Eliiah Clarke

After the American Revolutionary War, Elijah Clarke was elected to the Georgia legislature and served from 1781 to 1790. In early 1794, an offer to lead a French invasion of Spanish East Florida came to him, but the plan never came to fruition. Instead of invading Florida, Clarke led a group of men from Wilkes County into Creek lands. He organized the Trans-Oconee Republic, which consisted of several settlements in traditional Creek territory.

<sup>266</sup> “Overmountain Men.” 2006. Encyclopedia of Appalachia, 1607.

<sup>267</sup> “Thicketty Fort.” 2024. Carolana.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ivey. 2024. “Grindal Shoals Gazette.”

<sup>270</sup> “Elijah Clarke.” 2024. Carolana.

He attacked Creek villages from there, but Georgia Governor George Matthews stopped his actions.<sup>271</sup>

### Captain William Cocke (1748-1828)

William Cocke was an American lawyer, pioneer, and statesman from Virginia. He settled in Holston Valley in 1774, then went with Daniel Boone to Kentucky and took part in the founding of Transylvania. He served under Colonel Isaac Shelby and Colonel John Sevier with the “Overmountain Men” during the engagement with Thicketty Fort.<sup>272</sup>

The operations of Cornwallis and his subalterns were viewed with alarm by these “over the mountain men,” who, recognizing their obligations to the parent State [Virginia], from their resources, raised a body of men and, under Colonels Sevier and Shelby, joined a force under Colonel Clarke, of Georgia, and proceeded to attack Colonel Patrick Moore at Thicketty Fort. Here, Captain William Cocke was sent forward to demand the fort's surrender, which was refused at first. However, after consideration by Colonel Moore, the fort was surrendered, and the garrison paroled.<sup>273</sup>

After his military service, Cocke served in the legislatures of Virginia and North Carolina and was active in the movement to establish the City of Franklin. He held many offices in Tennessee and was a United States Senator for nine years. He went to Mississippi as Indian Agent and spent his last years there.<sup>274</sup>

### Captain “Quaker Meadows Joe” Joseph McDowell (1756-1801)

Joseph McDowell was an American planter, soldier, and statesman from North Carolina. He was Scots-Irish Presbyterian, a younger brother of Brigadier General Charles McDowell. The McDowell family estate in Burke County, N.C., was called *Quaker Meadows*.<sup>275</sup>

He served in the campaigns against the frontier Indians before the Revolution. When Burke County was created on May 9, 1777, Major Joseph McDowell now served under his elder brother, Col. Charles McDowell, in the newly created Burke County Regiment of Militia.

As a Major, he participated in the battles of Chickamauga Towns (4/10-4/20/1779), Stono Ferry, SC (6/20/1779), Earle's Ford, S.C. (7/15/1780), Ramseur's Mill (6/20/1780), Musgrove's Mill, S.C. (8/18/1780), and Cane Creek (9/12/1780). He led the



CAPTAIN JOSEPH McDOWELL

*Alchetron, Free Social Encyclopedia for World. (2019).*

<sup>271</sup> “Elijah Clarke.” 2025. NCPedia (NCPedia 2025).

<sup>272</sup> Moss. 2000. *Uzal Johnson.*, 121.

<sup>273</sup> Goodrich. 1896. “William Cocke.”

<sup>274</sup> Hamilton. 1938. “King's Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby.”

<sup>275</sup> Moss, 41, 92-93.

Burke County Regiment of Militia at the taking of Thicketty Fort and the battles of King's Mountain, S.C.. (10/8/1780), and Cowpens, S.C.. (1/17/1781), where he was wounded.<sup>276</sup>

In the King's Mountain engagement, he commanded the Burke County Regiment of Militia with the rank of major. Before King's Mountain, he led his company against Thicketty Fort. After the war, he became a U.S. Congressman.<sup>277</sup>

#### Captain Josiah Culbertson (1742-1839)

Josiah Culbertson was the son-in-law of Colonel John Thomas Sr. of the Spartan Regiment of Militia, where he served from 1775 until 1780. He fought the Cherokees in the Snow Camp Campaign of late 1775. As a hunter and tracker, he would join one Patriot band and another as a situation arose. Known to be daring, fearless, and direct, Josiah was particularly nasty to enemy Tories, showing little mercy.

In the affair of Thicketty Fort, Josiah served under Colonel Roebuck's company of horsemen, the Spartan Regiment. Afterward, Josiah served under Colonel Shelby with the Overmountain Men. Since he was familiar with the Backcountry, especially around the Pacolet River Valley, he acted as a scout and guide for the Virginians and North Carolinians.<sup>278</sup>  
<sup>279</sup>

#### Captain Vardry McBee

Vardry McBee was a businessman with mining, farming, cattle, hogs, tanning, and surveying holdings. His 1771 300-acre grant was three-and-a-half miles east of the "stockade" and "blockhouse," Fort Thicketty or Anderson. Vardry owned Hannah's Cow Pens, named after his wife, which was mistaken for Saunders' Cow Pens, where the Battle of Cowpens occurred. Another of his holdings was the Limestone Tract and quarry, now on the Limestone College campus.<sup>280</sup> <sup>281</sup>

#### Lieutenant Hugh Moore (1750-1833)

Hugh Moore settled beside his brother, Patrick, next to Thicketty Creek around 1768. Their land was just over a mile southwest of Thicketty Fort on North Goucher Creek off today's Sweet Gum Road. Both brothers served under Captain John Nucholls and Lt. William Marchbanks for nine days against the Cherokees beginning February 9, 1771.<sup>282</sup>

As the war caught them up, Patrick and Hugh set out with various Loyalist units to disrupt the livelihoods of their Whig neighbors. They even served under their eldest brother, Colonel John Moore, on a foray through Georgia against the Whigs. After several engagements, including the significant loss of Ramseur's Mill on June 20, 1780, Patrick and Hugh returned home to commandeer and improve Anderson's Fort, now renamed Thicketty Fort. Meanwhile,

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<sup>276</sup> "Joseph McDowell." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>277</sup> "Joseph McDowell." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>278</sup> "Josiah Culbertson." 2024. Findagrave.

<sup>279</sup> "Josiah Culbertson." 2018. Historyman.

<sup>280</sup> "Silas Leroy McBee." 2022. Geni.

<sup>281</sup> Moss. 2014. *Roster*.

<sup>282</sup> Ivey. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."



their elder brother took heat from Lord Cornwallis for not following orders, resulting in the Ramseur's loss.<sup>283</sup>

Upon his narrow escape from Ramseur's Mill, Hugh must have switched sides. After returning to his home in mid-June, Hugh became a Whig. "During the spring of 1780, he was elected lieutenant under Captain Parson and served in Colonel Roebuck's Regiment. He served under Colonels Thomas, Clarke, and Shelby."<sup>284</sup>

After the war, Hugh married, had three boys, and became a minister. There is no mention of the church under which he served; however, he was a member of the Sims-Marchbanks Meetinghouse before the war. It was the closest church to his property, so Hugh likely served there. Since he switched sides and served as a Whig militiaman, his land would not have been forfeited after the war.<sup>285</sup>

#### Private Silas Leroy McBee (1756-1845)

Silas McBee was fifteen years old when he served as a private under his father, Captain Vardry McBee of the Spartan Regiment, Roebuck's Battalion of Dragoons, in 1780.

His pension application says he moved with his family from Virginia to Thicketty Creek (part of Tryon County, N.C.) in 1767. Silas entered the service as a volunteer in July 1780 near Tate's Ferry under the Command of Colonel Thomas Brandon and in the Company of Captain John Thompson and Lieutenant Josiah Tanner. This was at the Cherokee Ford encampment of Colonel Joseph McDowell. He also saw action at Fort Thicketty and King's Mountain.

In the summer of 1780, while his father (Captain Vardry Echols McBee) was absent serving his country in Sumter's army, Silas McBee was sent by his mother to Ferguson's camp to reclaim a fine horse that some Tories had taken from the McBee plantation; he not only failed to get his horse but was placed under guard; he managed to escape from the British camp, and after hiding out for a week to prevent being recaptured, he set out to join Sumter, but not finding him, he joined Shelby's corps and assisted in taking Captain Moore and 97 Royalists [at Thicketty Fort]; he was with Clarke at Musgrove's Mill; he was also with Sumter for a short time, then joined Colonel James Williams, under whom he fought at the battle of King's Mountain.<sup>286 287 288 289</sup>



Silas Leroy McBee cemetery marker image retrieved from <https://www.geni.com/people/Silas-McBee/6000000011379717694>.

<sup>283</sup> "Revolution Battle of Ramseur's Mill." 2024. Carolana.

<sup>284</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal*, 139.

<sup>285</sup> Ivey. 2024. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Draper. 1881. *King's Moutain*, 88.

<sup>288</sup> Allaire. 2024. "The 1780 Diary of Loyalist Lieutenant Anthony Allaire." Tngenweb.

<sup>289</sup> "Silas Leroy McBee." 2022. Geni.

## BRITISH AND LOYALISTS (TORIES)

### British Major Patrick Ferguson

Ferguson was a Scottish officer in the British Army. British General Henry Clinton placed him in command of the Backcountry Loyalists and ordered Lord Cornwallis to clear out the rebel Whigs. (B. G. Moss, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution* 1983, 2014) His primary job was recruiting Loyalists in the Carolinas and Georgia and intimidating Whig colonists.<sup>290</sup>

He became famous for designing the innovative breech-loading flintlock called the *Ferguson* rifle. The advantage of such a weapon was the capability of firing three rounds a minute instead of one. If it had made it into production, such a development could have swung the war back in favor of the Crown.<sup>291</sup>

After taking command of the Loyalists, Ferguson quickly established control points throughout the Spartan District. One of those points was Thicketty Fort.<sup>292</sup> (Cann 2014) Others included Ninety Six Fort and Musgrove's Fort (and Mill). His primary Tory training camp was on Fairforest Creek in Jonesville, S.C., also called Camp Hill. Interestingly, the Spartan Regiment training camp was at Cedar Springs, only ten miles upstream on the same tributary.

According to Alexander Chesney, Ferguson intended to surround the Patriot contingent sent to take Thicketty Fort and crush them. Ferguson ordered Captain Moore to hold the fort until the last extremity. It was to give Ferguson time to move his main force. The failure on Moore's part was a severe disappointment.<sup>293</sup>

On October 7, 1780, Ferguson lost the Battle of King's Mountain. He was shot from his horse. Legend has it that he was dragged onto the Patriot side with his foot caught in the stirrup. In a last act of defiance, he fired his pistol and shot the Patriot, demanding his surrender. His body was found riddled with eight bullet holes.<sup>294</sup>



Major Patrick Ferguson

<https://southernfriedcommonsense.blogspot.com/2015/10/patrick-ferguson-british-officer-who.html>

<sup>290</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal*, 104-105.

<sup>291</sup> "Patrick Ferguson and His Rifle." 2018. Allthingsliberty.

<sup>292</sup> Cann. 2014. *Turning Point*, 87-89.

<sup>293</sup> Jones. 1981. *Alexander Chesney*, 131.

<sup>294</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal*, 104-105.

### Tory Captain Patrick “Pad” Moore (1750-1781)

Born in Virginia to Scots-Irish parents from Antrim, Ireland, Moore was unusually tall, a shade over six-and-a-half feet, and known as fierce and intimidating. Another term applied to him was “dashing.”<sup>295</sup> Patrick settled beside his brother, Hugh, next to Thicketty Creek around 1768. Their land was a bit over a mile southwest of Thicketty Fort. Both brothers served under Captain John Nucholls and Lt. William Marchbanks for nine days against the Cherokees beginning February 9, 1771.

As the war caught them up, Patrick and Hugh set out with various Loyalist units to disrupt the livelihoods of their Whig neighbors. They even served under their eldest brother, Colonel John Moore, on a foray through Georgia against the Whigs. After several engagements, including the significant loss of Ramseur’s Mill on June 20, 1780, Patrick and Hugh returned home to commandeer and improve Anderson’s Fort, now renamed Thicketty Fort. Meanwhile, their elder brother took heat from Lord Cornwallis for not following orders, resulting in the Ramseur’s loss.

Barely a month later, on July 26, 1780, Patrick gave up the fort without firing a shot, yet another example of disobeying orders in the Moore family. Whig Colonel Isaac Shelby’s threat of giving Moore and his company Tarleton’s Quarter (meaning “no mercy”) if they did not surrender the fort must have weighed on Patrick’s mind after the humiliating defeat of his brother’s forces at Ramseur’s Mill. Plus, he and Hugh had to flee a party of Whigs trying to capture them after that defeat.

Although Patrick and his company, a unit of the Spartan Regiment of Royalist Militia,<sup>296</sup> were paroled per the agreement to surrender the fort (meaning the Loyalists could no longer serve the British), Patrick likely broke his parole during the following year. He dropped from sight until July 1781. Reports came from Patriots, who were scouting for Loyalists, that an unusually tall man was captured and killed near Ninety Six. Moore’s remains were identified only because of his unusual height.<sup>297</sup>



Artist Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

### Tory Captain Alexander Chesney (1756-1845)

Alexander Chesney owned a plantation near Adam Godelock’s cabin at Grindall’s Ford, five miles from Thicketty Fort. During the Cherokee raids, Chesney volunteered as an ensign under Captain John Nucholls’ command on February 8, 1771, for a nine-day posse service to push the Cherokees out of Grindal Shoals.

<sup>295</sup> Hamilton. 1938. “King’s Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby.”

<sup>296</sup> “Battle of Earle’s Ford and Fort Prince.” 2025. Revolutionarywarjournal.

<sup>297</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 140.

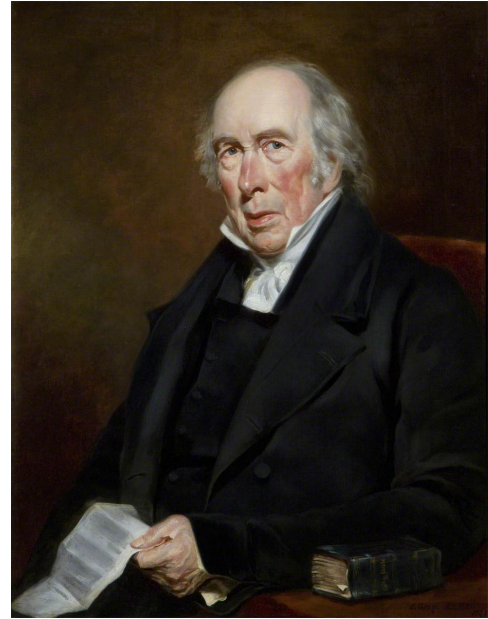


Concerning the taking of Thicketty Fort, Chesney stated, "...Major Ferguson succeeded to the command under the title of Col and Inspector General of Militia. [Took over for Colonel Balfour, who was called to Fort Ninety Six. Major Ferguson then became known as a Colonel.] Shortly afterward, he marched to Thicketty Creek, encamped, and requested me to carry an express to Cap Pat Moore, then commandant at Anderson's fort, with a particular private message to him to hold the fort till the last minute."<sup>298</sup>

After delivering his message to Patrick Moore, Chesney led his scouts to a Loyalist encampment on the Tyger River, where he learned from Captain Lewis Bobo: "...we got an account that Col McDole (McDowell) had without opposition reduced Anderson's fort and made them prisoners. Moore, having shamefully surrendered it thus disappointing Ferguson's scheme of bringing the Americans to battle whilst attacking it."<sup>299</sup>

Chesney's property was vital to Brigadier General Daniel Morgan and his American militia forces from Christmas 1780 until the Battle of Cowpens three weeks later. Morgan's men gathered and encamped there. Discovering Chesney was a Tory, Morgan had all Chesney's livestock taken, and his fence posts were raised and used for firewood to hold a barbeque to feed the starving Patriot militiamen. Chesney fled to Charleston with his wife, son, and elderly father.<sup>300</sup>

Read Richard C. Meehan, Jr.'s *Loyalist Alexander Chesney of Grindal Shoals* in the Cherokee County Museum archives for further details about Captain Alexander Chesney.



Alexander Chesney

Art UK. (n.d.). Artuk.org. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/captain-alexander-chesney-17551843-122059>



Lt. Anthony Allaire

Find a... (n.d.). [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60740834/anthony-allaire#view-photo=148927580>

### Tory Lieutenant Anthony Allaire (1756-1838)

Allaire was a New York-born Loyalist (Tory) whom British Colonel Patrick Ferguson brought to the South Carolina campaign. According to Lyman C. Draper, he was of Huguenot descent and born in New Rochelle, Westchester County, New York. He was

<sup>298</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 19.

<sup>299</sup> Jones. 1981. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 11.

<sup>300</sup> Ivey. "Grindal Shoals Gazette."

commissioned lieutenant in the Loyal American Volunteers as Adjutant in Ferguson's Corps during the Siege of Charleston.

The lieutenant's diary proves the date of the taking of Thicketty Fort as Sunday, July 30, 1780, with this entry, "Got in motion at three o'clock in the morning; countermarched twelve miles to Armstrong's Creek, Fair Forest. This day came into camp express from Anderson's Fort, a Capt. Cook, aged sixty years, who has buried four wives, and now has his fifth on her last legs."<sup>301</sup> Captain Cook brought word of the loss of Thicketty Fort. In addition to his dry humor, Allaire describes troop movements, encounters, and challenges the Loyalists faced.

### Sergeant Major (Unknown)

Most accounts mention an unknown Sergeant Major at Thicketty Fort who was there to drill and discipline the Irregular (volunteer) Tory troops. A person of this rank was a noncommissioned officer. His job was to assist the regimental adjutant with administration duties such as maintaining rosters (names and details of the soldiers), organizing and managing various duty assignments, and handling discipline. In short, such an officer was responsible for the smooth operations of the command. No adjutant officer is mentioned in any account, thus making it likely that this sergeant major had assumed those duties, too. If so, he would have administered Captain Moore's orders.

Tory Captain Alexander Chesney stated, "His [Patrick Moore's] force consisted of a sergeant of the American Volunteers and 93 Loyalists..."<sup>302</sup> The number listed is notable because a typical company had 90 men, and a typical regiment consisted of eight companies, or 720 officers and men. Moore's command was, therefore, standard.<sup>303</sup>

Major Patrick Ferguson raised and trained the American Volunteers in the Province of New York during 1779. The Volunteers fought in the Siege of Charleston in early 1780, so this unknown sergeant major would have arrived in South Carolina with Ferguson. Since Moore was himself a Tory volunteer militiaman, his captaincy outranked the sergeant major. Some accounts of the fort's actions mention a *British* sergeant major, so making this distinction between British and Provincial ranks is critical. Any officer formally trained in Britain would have outranked Captain Moore. A British officer of any rank trumped all Provincials. Therefore, Ferguson ordered this sergeant major to assist Captain Moore in organizing the fort's daily operations, not as an overseer but as a subordinate.

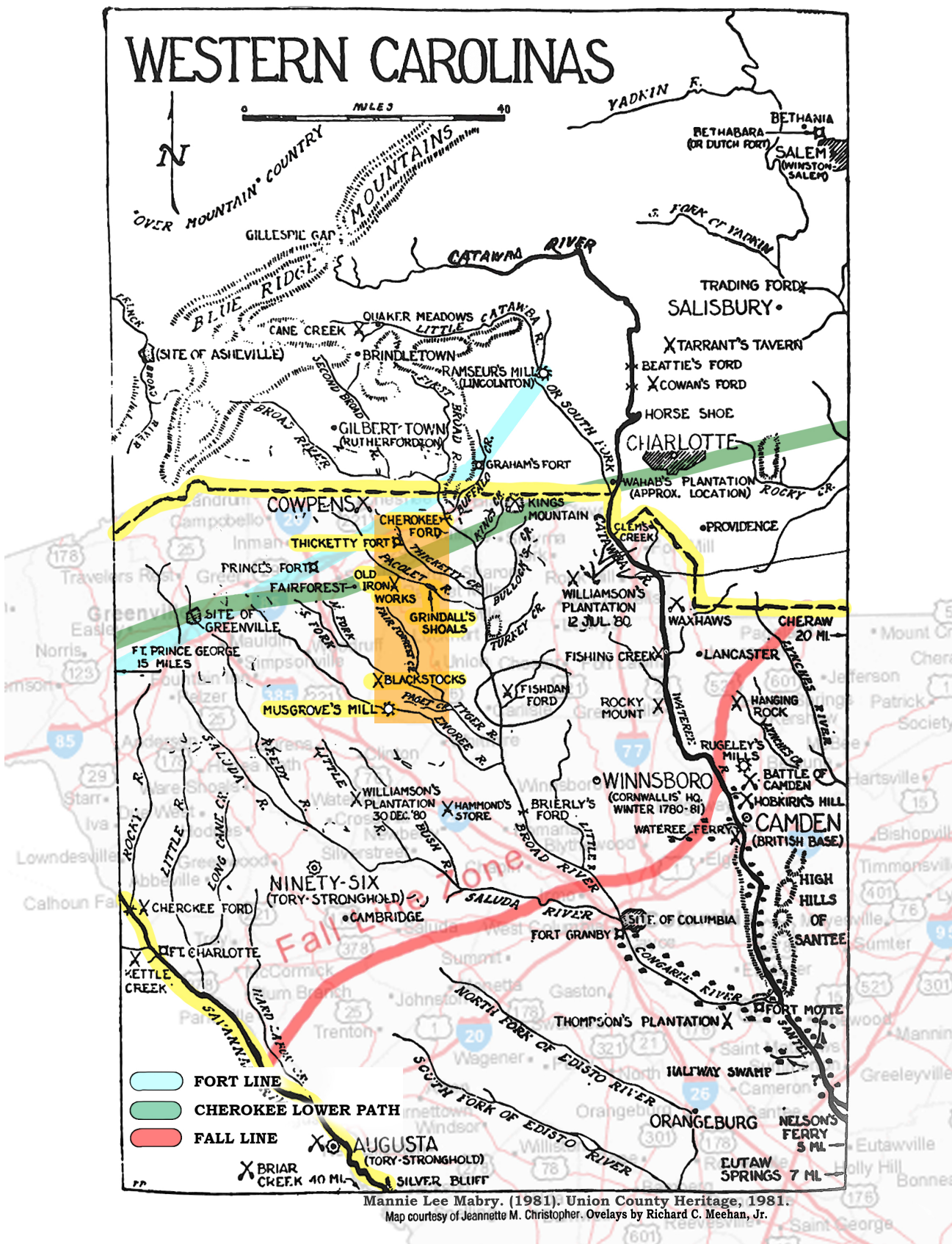
In several accounts, the sergeant major railed and insulted Captain Moore over giving up the fort without a fight. For a second-in-command, this sergeant major placed himself in a mutinous position. It would have been within Captain Moore's purview to shoot the man. Pure speculation: Moore saw the overwhelming numbers flung against him, and the thought of shooting the mutinous sergeant major would beg accidental retaliation from the surrounding Patriot forces.

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<sup>301</sup> Allaire. *Diary of Lieutenant Anthony Allaire*, 19.

<sup>302</sup> Moss. 2002. *Journal of Alexander Chesney*, 140.

<sup>303</sup> "American Volunteers History" 2025. Royalprovincial.





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