

# The Journal

Editor Richard C. Meehan, Jr. Contributing Writers
C. Leon Harris
Paul Wood
MG Julien Burns
Jim Piecuch

Peer Review Pool
C. Leon Harris
Rick Wise

Ben Rubin Tom Persons Iim Piecuch John E. Allison Greg Brooking Richard C. Meehan, Jr. Mike Burgess

Mike Burgess Wayne Lynch

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Treasurer

Corinne M. Hoch

Secretary

John "Bucky" Haas Board Member SCART, Inc.

P. O. Box 2552

Camden, S.C. 29020

https://sc-art.org

https://southern-campaigns.org

Physical Address:

The Robert Mills Courthouse 607 South Broad Street Camden, S.C. 29020

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

4	Letter from the Editor In Liberty and Gratitude
6	The Dragoon Columnist C. Leon Harris
8	Op Ed  Mobile Warfare in Colonial Times: Decisive Jim Piecuch and MG Julien Burns
15	The Loyalist Columnist Rev. Dr. Paul Wood, Jr.
18	Cover Story The Presbyterian Rebellion in the South Carolina Backcountry and Huck's Defeat at Williamson's Plantation C. Leon Harris
51	Submission Guidlines

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Have a scholarly article? Submit.



Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

## Letter from

### the Editor

Dear Readers,

I wanted to share a few words about the great time I had at the Battle of Camden Reenactment on Saturday, November 8, 2025. The day was crisp, the field was alive with activity, and everywhere I turned I saw people who cared deeply about keeping our history visible and real. Watching the units take their positions, hearing the commands ring out, and seeing the smoke drift across the field pulled me straight into the world of 1780. It was more than a show. It was a reminder of the grit and sacrifice that shaped the Southern Campaigns.

Events like this matter. They keep stories alive that might otherwise fade. They give us a chance to walk the ground, ask questions, and meet people who have devoted countless hours to research and interpretation. They bridge the distance between the past and the present in a way that books alone cannot. Most important, they help us understand the crucial role South Carolina played in securing our freedom.

If you have never been to a reenactment or a living history program, I hope you will make the time. Go, watch, listen, and enjoy. There is no better way to learn about the struggles, courage, and contributions that shaped our state and our nation.

In Liberty, Richard C. Meehan, Jr. Editor, THE JOURNAL



## Hear Ye, Hear Ye



The South Carolina American Revolution Trust is on a mission to preserve, protect and promote (into perpetuity) the stories, artifacts and history of South Carolina's role in the American Revolution. We take this work very seriously and have developed an effective system that acknowledges the donor's work, celebrates the story of your collection and honors the legacy this information represents.

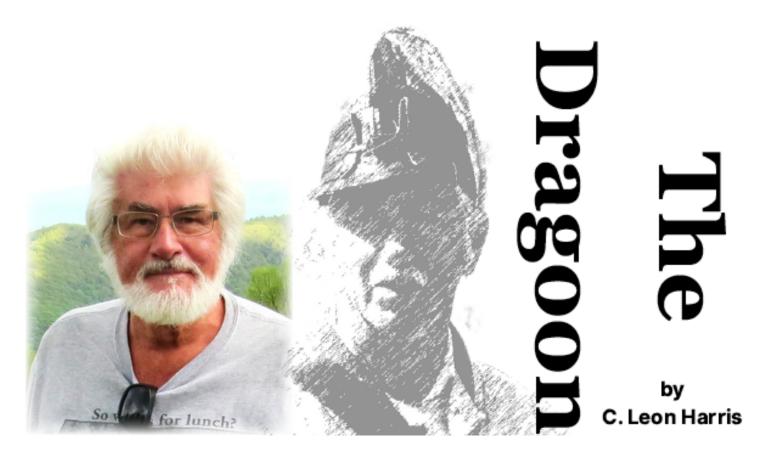
We primarily work with donors that have information, stories or artifacts related to South Carolina's role in the American Revolution. The Trust exists to honor your life's work and build a repository of stories, data, facts and artifacts from this period so that this information can be preserved for and accessed by future generations.

Are you interested in donating, but have some questions? Contact us below, and we will happily answer your questions or concerns about your potential donation.

Wesley O. Herndon Executive Director info@sc-art.org 843-655-4683



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Before I turned into a historian, I was a scientist, and I became very interested in the philosophical basis for how scientists operate. The physicist Richard Feynman is credited with saying that "philosophy of science is as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds." However, there is doubt about whether he actually said this. I didn't find it to be true, and I was especially drawn to the ideas of Karl Popper, who is best known for his criterion of falsifiability in determining if a statement is scientific.

Contrary to the common belief that science seeks truth, Popper's criterion states that a statement is scientific only if it can be proven false. I believe this can also serve as a useful standard for distinguishing history from legend and myth. William Dobein James quoted Tarleton as saying of Francis Marion, "as for this d—d old fox, the devil himself could not catch him." But James wasn't there, and since there's no way to prove that Tarleton didn't say those words, it's not history but myth or legend.

I found the falsifiability criterion helpful in designing experiments, and now I see it as a

valuable approach to historical research. I even think that the goal of good historical scholarship, like good scientific work, should be to make it as easy as possible to disprove conclusions. Good researchers do this by being honest with the data, whether from the laboratory or from primary sources, citing everything accurately even when it doesn't support their arguments. They are also transparent about the assumptions they make, qualifying them with words like "apparently" and "possibly" when appropriate. Of course, we strive to make our conclusions as accurate as possible, but we always accept that future discoveries or better interpretations of old data may change our understanding.

Many capable scholars rarely publish because they fear making mistakes. The Popperian approach should free them from that fear and encourage them. If someone finds a flaw in their work or improves it, that is an achievement, not a failure. It shows that the work was so valuable that someone built on it and thought it worth the effort.



## Walnut Grove Plantation December 13th 3:00-8:00

Candlelight tours - Backcountry Christmas Service
Photos with Father Christmas - Children's Crafts

www.spartanburghistory.org/events





## The Cavalry in the Revolutionary War



Originally published in The Cavalry & Armor Journal as edited by Jim Piecuch and MG Julian Burns.

#### **Mobile Warfare:**

### Decisive in the Revolution, Decisive Now and in the Future "Transformation in Contact" in Colonial Times

#### Jim Piecuch, Ph.D. Julian JB Burns MG (R)

Welcome to what will be an exciting and informative series in *Cavalry & Armor Journal*, a series that will capture the elan and spirit of our Cavalry-Armor history: mounted operations in the American Revolution, 1775-1782. With the 250th Anniversary of the Revolution, it is fitting to explore the doctrinal and leadership dimensions of the birth of the United States Cavalry – our forebears in the Mounted Arm of Decision – in the United States, a key part of a fledgling army at war, fighting for a country not yet in existence.

As that great cavalry leader, our former Army Chief of Staff General Gordon Sullivan said: "History strengthens." 1 Our aim is to do just that by provoking thought among today's cavalry practitioners. Moreover, our current Army Chief, General Randy George, has directed us to "Transform in Contact:" And, as General Chris Donahue said on assuming command of USAREUR-AF on 12 December: "We have to out-think, -innovate, -adapt, and -work any potential adversary." The brave Ukrainian Army stands as an example for the US Army. But there is another, and that is the American Revolutionary Army. Over the next several years, this journal will leverage our American Revolution to spark dialogue on the present and future role of armor and cavalry through providing a thorough understanding of American Cavalry's earliest battles as a branch of the combat arms. We here introduce a series of articles on our Revolutionary legacy to challenge the young cavalry and armor leaders of today. What will follow in these pages from 2025 through 2032 are historical offerings by distinguished authors, today's

top cavalry historians, that will provide a comprehensive record of mounted combat in the Revolution. Topics to be addressed include leadership, logistics, doctrine, tactics, and equipping, as illustrated by battles and campaigns. That history will appear in *Cavalry & Armor Journal*, published on the 250th anniversary of each of those battles or campaigns.

We urge all readers to join in the commentary, to learn and participate. For, no great commander was either ignorant of history nor a blind follower of precedent; every great commander was a skilled practitioner of the military art, and embarked upon innovation decisively, but only enacted change with thorough grounding in the lessons of the past. As Julius Caesar, one of the great commanders of antiquity, declared: "Ut est rerum omnium magister usus," that is, "Experience is the best teacher."<sup>2</sup> Effective leaders have always learned by carefully assessing the experiences of the past while making necessary changes to suit conditions of warfare in their own era. Improvements in arms and various inventions and technologies which affect society, from bronze to iron: from steam to internal combustion engines and electric drive; from helicopters, drones and robots to space and cyber; all have had an influence on the military profession and science. The best commanders are those who can ingeniously secure the best results from the troops, terrain, and materiel at hand, and deny those same advantages to the foe. The cavalry leader must be inspired by this idea, and ruthlessly (but not recklessly) seize every possible advantage to the force.

Such has been the nature of the great leaders in our American Combat Arm of Decision, in restoring freedom of action through maneuver and offensive action,

dominating and exploiting the battlefield, operating in harmony within the combined arms team. Cavalry has deep roots indeed. From Biblical times to the present, to the modern age of gunpowder and steel to drones, space, and cyber, the serious students of our profession exploited every opportunity to their advantage. Frederick the Great and Friedrich Wilhelm von Seydlitz of Prussia, Napoleon Bonaparte and Marshal Michel Nev of France, astonished the world by winning victories with the application of existing and emergent technologies and tactics, in combination with older, proven doctrine that they infused with new energy, brilliance and inventive genius. They overcame in battle the numbing drudgery of garrison duty and peacetime routine – that every soldier knows - which makes even veterans of long service in the profession mere novices when their first battle begins. Too often, what peacetime teaches must be "unlearned" in the hard school of combat. Alternatively, the great commanders knew that the profession can, by rigor of training and study of the military art throughout history, avoid defeat, and acquire acumen and savvy to win while avoiding grievous losses among those they lead.

That is the aim of this series. We hope to inspire examination of the profession in the forthcoming articles, appearing in the anniversary years of each major cavalry action in the War for Independence. The collection will begin with articles on European cavalry theory and practice in the eighteenth century and Seven Years' War, tracing its influence on American doctrine and examining its application in that conflict's North American counterpart, the French & Indian War (1754-1763). The articles will then examine the rise of American cavalry in each theater of operation:

early cavalry operations in the Northern theater, 1775-1779, later operations in the Western theater beginning in 1778, and cavalry maturity in the Southern theater in the final phases of the Revolution, 1779-1782.

In order to provide context and to avoid ignoring the valuable lessons that can be learned from an opponent, these articles will also devote attention to British and Loyalist cavalry leaders, units, and operations. Each theater of the Revolutionary War will furnish insights for today's Army, even in the age of drones, space, cyber and robots, and reflect the elan and esprit of mounted warfare from its earliest history.

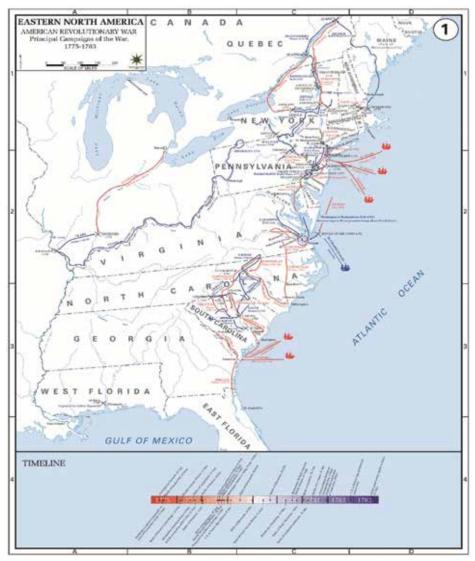
Among these lessons are:

- That cavalry principles remain immutable from 1775 to the present; and,
- That cavalry's functions remain necessary to battlefield success, independent of technology, though varied in their applications, from the time of the Revolution to the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) of the present day.

Means may change, but the principles and functions of cavalry operations remain the same. It matters less whether security missions are performed by helicopters or saber-wielding light dragoons, or reconnaissance is conducted by drones, robots and cyber or by eighteenth-century mounted hussars, or breakthroughs, assaults and exploitation are carried out by a Combined Arms Task Force of Bradleys, Paladins, AMPVs and Abrams or by squadrons of dragoons and mounted light infantry teamed in the "legion" organization and supported by "grasshopper" three-pounder artillery pieces. It matters more that these battlefield tasks must be performed. We will discover what our horse-mounted forebears achieved as they "transformed in contact," to learn and apply cavalry doctrine in the hard school of combat - in recruitment, equipping, organization, tactics, leaders and leadership, in an era that required cavalry to accomplish the same tasks as their counterparts of today, but with the limited means then at their disposal.

American cavalry had turbulent origins. The century preceding the American Revolution had been marked by frequent warfare - the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697), the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) that brought numerous innovations in the types and employment of cavalry on European battlefields. In North America, where the conflicts spread (known as King William's War, Queen Anne's War, and King George's War, respectively, to British colonists), none of the participants, including both colonial forces and troops sent from Europe, made any significant use of cavalry. Not until the French and Indian War did French, British, and colonial leaders begin to employ cavalry. The results were not impressive, as demonstrated at the defeat of British general

Edward Braddock in ambush in Pennsylvania in July 1755. In Quebec, French commander the Marquis de Montcalm had more, albeit limited, success with his mounted troops. However, while across the Atlantic Frederick of Prussia and his many imitators again demonstrated the value of cavalry and made further strides in its development and use, most commanders in North America drew a far different conclusion. Many British and colonial officers, from General Jeffery Amherst to an ambitious militia major, George Washington, concluded from their experiences that conditions on the colonial frontier restricted mounted operations in the broken terrain and forests. Thus, when the Revolution broke out in 1775, both sides approached the conflict



The American Revolution 1775-1782. The War returns to the South in 1779 when the British are contained in New York. (West Point Atlas, USMA Academic Department of Military History)

with inadequate cavalry. The British had the advantage: more than twenty regiments of well-trained regular cavalry were available, but believing Amherst's claim that cavalry was of little value in America, officials dispatched only the 16th and 17th Regiments of Light Dragoons under General Sir William Howe. These units immediately proved their worth in battle during the 1776 campaign in New York, particularly at Chatterton's Hill during the Battle of White Plains in September.

Washington, having had little experience with cavalry in the French and Indian War, initially dismissed the mounted arm as unnecessary; he asserted that the fences, woodlots, and uneven terrain in the colonial countryside made cavalry operations too difficult. Colonial mounted forces in the early days of the Revolution were primarily militia formations from Connecticut and Virginia, and some hardened mounted riflemen in the Carolinas. They were initially assigned only to light horse missions. Finally, after the disasters of 1776, the Continental Congress was receptive to Washington's pleas for an army of regulars, organized along European lines. Likewise, Congress had cause to listen when Washington, having learned costly lessons from the British light dragoons, changed his mind regarding the value of cavalry. "From the Experience I have had in this Campaign, of the Utility of Horse," he wrote on 11 December, 1776, "I am convinced there is no carrying on the War without them, and I would therefore recommend the Establishment of one or more Corps...in Addition to those already raised in Virginia." 3 Congress approved a plan to create a Continental light dragoon regiment the very next day.

And so, Congress's action marked cavalry's birth as an arm of combat in the United States Army. However, the units raised by the Resolve of 12 December and later congressional action were disbanded after the war; and, though other mounted units were raised at various times in the years following the Revolution, the oldest Regular Army Cavalry units date to 1833.

The Tank Service was formed on 5 March, 1918; the Armored Force was formed on 10 July, 1940. Armor became a permanent branch with the passage of the

YEAR TO PRINT	REVWAR YEARS	Article Topics By Year, timed to Battles and events
2025	1775	<ul> <li>Overview for Cavalry Operations in the Revolution and "Transformation in Contact"</li> <li>European Cavalry Doctrine impacts on the American Army</li> <li>French &amp; Indian War as Legacy, and Cavalry on the "frontier"</li> </ul>
2026	1776	<ul> <li>Mounted Operations against the Indian tribes</li> <li>New York Campaign and what Gen Washington learned about Cavalry in the battle of White Plains/Chatterton</li> </ul>
2027	1777	Philadelphia Campaign     Brandywine & Germantown
2028	1778	<ul> <li>Northern Theater (Monmouth/Baylor's Massacre)</li> <li>The Revolution in the War in West (1778-81)</li> </ul>
2029	1779	Northern Theater in Stalemate     War moves to the Southern Theater     Savannah to Chaston/Stono River and then Charleston to defeat at Savannah
2030	1780	<ul> <li>Fall of Charleston/Lenud's Ferry</li> <li>Tarleton's Cavalry Legion at Waxhaws</li> <li>Defeat at Camden/Fishing Creek, with Tarleton and the Gamecock, Sumter</li> </ul>
2031	1781	<ul> <li>Decisive Victory: Hammond's &amp; Cowpens with Militia and Combined Arms in William Washington's "Legion"</li> <li>Greene's Race to the Dan/Guilford CH with Light Horse Harry Lee, and Washington</li> <li>Cavalry at Hobkirk Hill with British LTC Coffin and Wm Washington</li> <li>Cavalry at Eutaw Springs with Marion, Lee and Washington</li> </ul>
2032	1782	<ul> <li>The Swamp Fox at Wambaw. Tidymans Plantation</li> <li>Siege Operations with Cavalry leaders in the South: Marion, Lee and Pickens</li> <li>Logistics and Equipping of Cavalry Formations</li> <li>History as a Teacher: A Concluding overview of Cavalry in the Revolution</li> </ul>

Army Organization Act of 1950. This is our lineage.

Once Congress approved the formation of Continental cavalry regiments, Washington wasted no time in dispatching Major Elisha Sheldon to Connecticut to recruit six troops, each consisting of a captain, a lieutenant, a cornet, a quartermaster, two sergeants, two corporals, a trumpeter, a farrier, and a mere 34 privates. A major, an adjutant, and a surgeon would complete the regiment's staff.4

On 24 December, Congress further authorized Washington to raise a total of some

3,000 light horse. He then authorized four regiments: Colonel Theodorick Bland's Virginia Light Horse, already with the army, became the 1st Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons; Elisha Sheldon's became the 2nd; George Baylor commanded the 3rd Regiment; and Stephen Moylan the 4th. Congress dutifully approved the table of organization on 14 March, 1777, and each regiment was founded upon the British model with 6 troops each. However, recruitment below the officer level was slow. Col. Sheldon had delivered only 16 troopers to Washington's head-

quarters by 16 June, 1777, and that month the cavalry totaled only 260 men across all four regiments. The restraints on cavalry were largely financial: horses and kit were expensive. Those with the means and experience proved to be the well-to-do, who preferred to serve as officers, and horses of cavalry quality in speed and size were rare indeed in what was a farming society. The British had no such restraints and deployed from Great Britain with war horses. Once in the colonies, the redcoats and later, the green-jacketed dragoons, were quick to appropriate what they needed.

Washington dispersed what cavalry he had into small detachments and did not form a sizable strike force. It was not until the Battle of Brandywine on 11 September, 1777, that the lesson was made clear when Bland's regiment failed to spot the British turning movement that led to the Patriot rout. It was only Washington's personal mounted guard who distinguished themselves, when Polish Count Casimir Pulaski, then only an aide to Washington, rallied the 30 horse-guards and led a sortie that checked the pursuing redcoats. For this action, Pulaski was promoted to brigadier general, and it led to his distinction as the "Father of United States Cavalry." Unfortunately, Pulaski found the Continental Army's cavalry was not up to its assigned tasks and required an infusion of professionalism. Yet, no formal effort was undertaken to standardize drill as was seen under Baron Friedrich von Steuben for the Continental infantry. Each cavalry regiment and militia element was left to fend for itself. Hungarian volunteer Col. Michael Kovats was appointed drill master under Pulaski and led what one British officer called "the finest Cavalry the rebels ever had." Both Kovats and Pulaski were killed in 1779 in the South, but other Europeans stepped up, such as Col. Charles Armand and Maj. Pierre-Jean-Francois Vernier.6

Nevertheless, as we shall see in subsequent articles, after early defeats, the cavalry under Americans who emerged as outstanding commanders established an admirable record in reconnaissance, screening, and direct combat. Some examples follow that will illustrate to whet the professional interest:



Col. Theodorick Bland's Virginia Light Dragoons, organized in 1776, were taken into Continental service in early 1777 as the 1st Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons. (Painting by Charles M. Lefferts, c. 1910)

Lt. Col. Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee led his Legion and, after impressive successes in the North, reinforced the Southern Army where he participated in siege



Troopers of the British 17th Light Dragoons. Note the "death's head" skulland-crossbones emblem on the front of the rider's helmet, which the regiment adopted after serving alongside Prussian cavalry using the same emblem in the Seven Years' War. (Painting by Charles M. Lefferts, c. 1910)

operations in South Carolina and Georgia with Brigadier General Francis "Swamp Fox" Marion and Gen. Andrew Pickens, and in rear guard operations in the "Race to the Dan" across North Carolina under Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, all in 1781. Lee's use of the legion concept, combining cavalry and light infantry, was a forerunner of Combined Arms in today's forces.

Lt. Col. William Washington, of the 3rd Continental Light Dragoons, overcame early defeats to emerge as one of the Revolution's most effective cavalry commanders. He frequently employed his troopers as "heavy cavalry" in actions at Hammond's Store, Cowpens, and Guilford Courthouse.

And we must begrudgingly cite British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, who first earned distinction in raids in New Jersey, participating in the capture Washington's second-in-command, Maj. Gen. Charles Lee. Tarleton later assumed command of a Loyalist regiment, the British Legion, and in the South became the scourge of American forces with devastating raids, attacks and breakthroughs at Lenud's Ferry, Waxhaws, and Camden, where he employed his mounted contingent as heavy cavalry, culminating in the pursuit to Fishing Creek, where he inflicted a major defeat on the "Gamecock," Thomas Sumter.

We get ahead of ourselves. There are articles to follow to make these and other points. To be sure, each of these and other cavalry leaders had their share of defeats, and lessons aplenty will follow. But here is a summary to set our upcoming course:

**First Battles.** Armies and nations pay the price of unpreparedness.

At the outset of the Revolution, the Americans had no cavalry; but from a beginning with small militia forces leaders adapted and generated cavalry capabilities that were fundamental to winning independence. Battles were fought, and lessons learned, from which emerged a modern (eighteenth-century) force of Continental cavalry and militia "light horse" or dragoon formations for classic cavalry missions in the Northern theater and in the South, from Virginia to the Carolinas and Georgia in bloody, ultimately successful, conflict with the British forces.

Missions were conducted as timely then as now, such as security and screening; reconnaissance; foraging; rear, flank and advance guard; hasty attack; envelopment; and pursuit and exploitation.

**Leadership.** Leadership is the force multiplier.

Leaders were developed and rose to command as less capable officers were replaced. Those who followed were able to organize forces that mastered the cavalry art by war's end and contended on equal footing with British mounted troops. Of note are the astonishing successes in the backcountry and the frontier fighting along and beyond the Appalachians. Some leaders are well-known, including the previously mentioned Tarleton, Lee, and William Washington. Others will emerge in surprising ways: George Rogers Clark in the West, Marion and militia Col. James McCall in the South, and European officers who cast their lot with the Patriots as did Casimir Pulaski.

**Doctrine, Formations and Tactics.** Doctrine leads change. It is the "tribal wisdom" of armies' corporate experience applied to manning, equipping, and tactics, and the formations employed.

Colonial mounted forces originated in the bitter struggles of the French and Indian War, with colonists importing European doctrine, organization, equipment, and even important leaders from the European school – adapted to the frontier conditions and to the militia heritage of the American colonies and beginning the lineage of the Regular Army and today's National Guard. The concept of the "legion" emerged, first in the British, then in the American formations: a Combined Arms formation with light dragoons, light infantrymen who were sometimes mounted to increase mobility, and occasionally with the smashing power of cannons forward. Tarleton, Lee, and Europeans Pulaski, Kovats, and Armand all utilized the technique in important battles we will review: Guilford Courthouse, Savannah, Camden, and more.

Personal study and examples from the enemy were the school of the soldier, and the hard knocks of the early years of the Revolution purchased such experience, with the price paid in blood and materiel. The books of important French



The Cavalry of Lee's Legion in Action at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, March 15, 1781.

and Prussian cavalrymen could be found in British camps, but the Americans never adopted a standard manual of training and organization for their cavalry, whereas Von Steuben's famous "Blue Book" became the standard for the Continental infantry. One principle was famously instructed by Lt. Col. Washington: that the saber was the weapon of choice. Pistols and carbines were used on occasion, and the role of the lance died with Pulaski in Savannah.

**Equipping and Logistics.** The serious practitioner focuses on logistics.

The American cavalry was always in need of equipment and even more so of mounts, problems occasionally faced by the British as well. Cavalry was ever dependent on finding proper horses. Manning and mounting were persistent concerns. Famously, Thomas Young at Cowpens, upon unhorsing his green-jacketed dragoon foe, appropriated the British mount to exchange his own "tackey," a plow horse, for "the finest horse he ever rode." The well-to-do officer could equip himself with horse, saddle and other furnishings, pistol, and saber, but the lower ranks never achieved the numbers needed to



Lt. Col. Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee of Virginia, who achieved numerous successes at the head of his legion of cavalry and light infantry.



Lt. Col. William Washington, who overcame earlier defeats to lead his Continental Light Dragoons to victory at the battles of Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse.

complete the Continental Congress's authorized strength of 3,000 for the four regiments of horse. And Loyalists and Patriots alike raided the horse inventories of their opponents.

At the army level, Gen. Washington reassigned his trusted subordinate, Maj. Gen. Greene, from line command to be guartermaster, a brilliant stroke in selecting exactly the right man to provide the muscle and sinew of sustained operations and victory. Greene was later rewarded with field command in the South after the disastrous Battle of Camden, replacing Gen. Horatio Gates. Greene's skill in logistics was the heart of his "Race to the Dan" and return to North Carolina, roughly handling Cornwallis's army at Guilford Courthouse in March 1781, which led Cornwallis to move his army to Virginia where it met disaster at Yorktown. After Guilford Courthouse, Greene led his army back to South Carolina, fighting yet more battles in campaigns of attrition that depleted the British forces. In those final operations, cavalry was vital to Greene's schemes of maneuver, even to the point of employing cavalry in siege operations against British forts in Georgia and South Carolina.

The Battles and Campaigns: Finally, the series will address various cavalry engagements.

We will illuminate and excite further study by examining cavalry operations across



American and British dragoons clash at Cowpens, South Carolina, January 17, 1781. (Painting by William Ranney, 1845)

the vast scope of the Continent at War, with American, British and Loyalist formations as well as actions involving Native Americans on the frontier. The battles in the North led to an uneasy stalemate, and as a result the British shifted their principal effort to the South in 1779, and that region remained the primary theater of operations until the war's end in 1782, long after Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. With that said, here is the menu of articles you can expect to harvest over the span of this celebration of our Revolution's 250th Anniversary.

To conclude, Cavalry & Armor Journal sees the years 1775-1782 as a history to be remembered, reverenced, and harvested so as to provoke thought on lessons for the Army today. The Patriots, both Continentals and militia, started with no cavalry or mounted arm, whereas the British cavalry was among the best in the world, ranked with that of France, Spain, and the very best, Prussia. Congress and Gen. Washington nurtured a battered Army and oversaw the growth of a formidable mounted arm. The persistence of the American leaders and European volunteers demonstrated the most exemplary commitment, from which a cavalry force emerged in the school of combat itself.

The story of the leaders, campaigns, and battles of the Revolution illustrate how a fledgling army learned the value of the mounted arm of decision, derived doctrine and formations - equipped, skilled and formidable – and developed leaders and learned lessons highly instructive for the Army of today: heavy and light dragoons, mounted militia, combined arms "legions" incorporating infantry and artillery ... all in classic cavalry missions of reconnaissance, screening, guard, attack, exploitation, pursuit ... offense and defense. We aim therefore to fill the void in our dialogue where there has been minimal reference since the 1970s to the American Revolution, presenting opportunities not only for celebrating the heritage of the mounted trooper but also to shape the



Lt. Col. William Washington in action with his cavalry at the Battle of Cowpens, January 17, 1781. (Print by S. H. Gimber, 1931)

future Mounted Combined Arms force

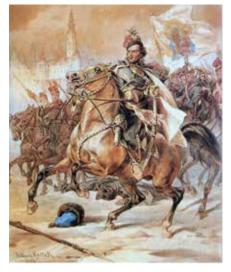
– to learn how to use history to "transform in contact."

Jim Piecuch earned BA and MA degrees in history from the University of New Hampshire and a PhD in history from the College of William & Mary in Virginia. He is the author of numerous articles on Colonial Revolutionary history, and has published nine books on the American Revolution, including Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South; Cavalry of the American Revolution; The Battle of Camden: A Documentary History; General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South, co-edited with Gregory Massey, and biographies of Continental Army officers John Eager Howard and Henry Lee, both co-authored with John Beakes.

**MG JB Burns**, US Cavalry, is active in the SC 250th Commemoration of the Revolu-



Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, commander of the British Legion, was one of the most aggressive and successful cavalry commanders of the War for Independence. (Painting by Joshua Reynolds, 1782)



Brigadier Casimir Pulaski, of Warsaw, Poland, Father of America Cavalry. Killed in Action in the Battle for Savannah, GA, October 11, 1779. (Painting by Juliusz Kossak, 1883)

tionary War. He commanded from Cavalry Platoon to a Joint Task Force in Israel, with frontier service in Korea, Germany, Iraq, and Bosnia/Kosovo. He is a former VP in two major US Defense Companies, Board member for the museums for the War College, Infantry and Armor, Golden Medallion in the Order of St George, and author of two books on the Chairman, JCS. JB is a graduate of USMA, West Point, the Army War College, and the University of Southern California. He is a Trustee with the SC American Revolution Trust.

#### Notes

- 1 General Gordon Sullivan, in The Chiefs of Staff, United States Army: On Leadership and the Profession of Arms (Washington, DC: Information Management Support Center, 2000, updated 2016), https://cissm.umd.edu/sites/ default/files/2019-07/IMCEN-1%20 CSA-%20April1%2C2017.pdf (accessed July 8, 2024), 78.
- 2 "Ut est rerum omnium magister usus," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ut\_est\_

- rerum\_omnium\_magister\_usus#:~:text =Ut%20est%20rerum%20omnium%20 magister%20usus%20(roughly%20%22 experience%20is%20the,commentaries %20of%20the%20Civil%20War. (accessed July 8, 2024).
- 3 Quoted in Gregory J. W. Urwin, "The Continental Light Dragoons, 1776-1783," in Jim Piecuch, ed., Cavalry of the American Revolution (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2012), 4.
- 4 Urwin, "Continental Light Dragoons," 4.
- 5 Urwin, "Continental Light Dragoons," 4-6.
- 6 Lee F. McGee, "European Influences on Continental Cavalry," in Piecuch, ed., Cavalry of the Revolution, 42-47.
- 7 Lawrence E. Babits and Joshua B. Howard, "Continentals in Tarleton's British Legion," in Piecuch, ed., Cavalry of the Revolution, 190-191.



Colonel Commandant Michael Kovats, of Hungary, first "Master of Exercise" of Continental Cavalry, under BG Pulaski, as Founders of American Cavalry, and killed at the gates of Charleston May 11, 1779. (Portrait by Sandor Bodo, Original in Karcag Municipality Museum, with copies widespread, and published in Wikipedia.)



Rev. Dr. Paul Wood, Jr.

## A Heavy Lift for Revolutionary War Interpreters

by

#### Dr. Paul Wood

I did not start researching Revolutionary War topics and then writing and speaking about them until I retired in 2017. While many of my peers in parish ministry have taken full-time or part-time ministerial roles after retiring, I knew that kind of retirement wasn't for me.

Within months, I found a hobby and called it "the Rev War." I was blessed beyond measure when fellow South Carolinian Charles Baxley became my mentor. After about a year, he gave me my first assignment. (I've heard many others say Charles had a knack for sending them on missions.)

He asked me to research South Carolina's patriot heroine Dicey Langston Springfield. As I tried to separate fact from fiction about Dicey, I began an apprenticeship under Charles. He introduced me to Jack Parker, author of <u>Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina</u>: Battles, Skirmishes & Murders.

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Jack shared much of his time and knowledge with this rookie. Both of those dear men have passed away, but I am not bereft. Many others allow me to share the joy of research, writing, and interpreting the Rev War to the public. I learn from them, and they say they learn from me in return.

I was comfortable with public speaking, so when I finished the Dicey article, I started traveling around South Carolina to tell the verified stories of what Dicey Langston accomplished and the risks she took for American independence and her family.

Dicey is a joyful topic for me and my listeners. When a Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapter asked me to speak about Ann Pamela Cunningham, I had another happy subject to explore and teach. "Baxley," as Jack Parker called Charles, gave me a second, more challenging mission. I was to team up with Jack and write a book about William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham. Jack had gathered a wealth of information about Cunningham and had

mapped out the route of the infamous Bloody Scout expedition. That was a great starting point. But declining health soon forced Jack to entrust the book entirely to me.

I expect the Cunningham biography to be published next year. I've given only two presentations about him so far but anticipate more requests after the book's release.

Major William Cunningham and the roughly 150 Tories under his command had suffered massive losses before Bloody Scout began in early November 1781. They and their families had lost their homes and farms. They probably thought their land and belongings would be confiscated. That's exactly what happened to many of them when the General Assembly met in February 1782. Yes, some had committed horrific acts, but they believed they were fighting for their King. They thought their colony would be better off remaining within the British Empire.

Cunningham identified a relatively safe window to launch a revenge raid into the Backcountry. Eutaw Springs and Yorktown were behind them. He correctly believed that many militiamen had gone back to their families and farms. If he could get past Nathanael Greene's Continentals, Francis Marion's guerrillas, and Thomas Sumter's militia, he could carry out swift raids on farms owned by patriots he and his men despised. Fortunately for Cunningham and unfortunately for the victims, Andrew Pickens had left the Ninety Six District to pursue the man behind the Fort Gowen massacre, Bill Bates. As is well-known, in November and December of 1781, Cunningham carried out the worst string of murders South Carolina has ever seen.

The Bloody Scout presents a difficult challenge for anyone trying to talk about it publicly. John or Mary Doe would probably react with shock upon learning about houses and barns being burned and unarmed opponents being dismembered with sabers and swords. It's easy to dismiss Bloody Scout as pure evil, beyond understanding.

But to be accurate, one must consider the motives of the Bloody Scout members. Since 1775, Loyalists had been persecuted by revolutionaries. Although criminal and unethical, what Cunningham and his men did was the common response to mistreatment at the time—mortal revenge. And there was a lack of civil or military forces to stop these rampages. Cunningham and the Little River Regiment weren't sociopaths; they shared a common goal—revenge—and carried out their missions systematically. They knew it would be dangerous. My research shows that thirty-three of Cunningham's men paid with their lives for the success of their mission.

I also highlight Thomas "Burnfoot" Brown as another example illustrating the challenges faced by Revolutionary War interpreters. Brown was known for his excellent military leadership of a Provincial cavalry regiment. But he also earned a reputation for brutality. The historian understands what motivated Brown. First, he was devoted to his king, the monarch who granted him thousands of acres in Georgia near Augusta. Second, he, like Cunningham, sought revenge. On August 2, 1775, Sons of Liberty captured him, struck him hard on the head, partially scalped him, tarred and feathered him, and burned the soles of his feet. The Patriots turned Brown into the warrior he became. Their mistreatment was terrible. But Mr. and Mrs. Doe, especially if they are descendants of patriots, don't want to hear about such evil.

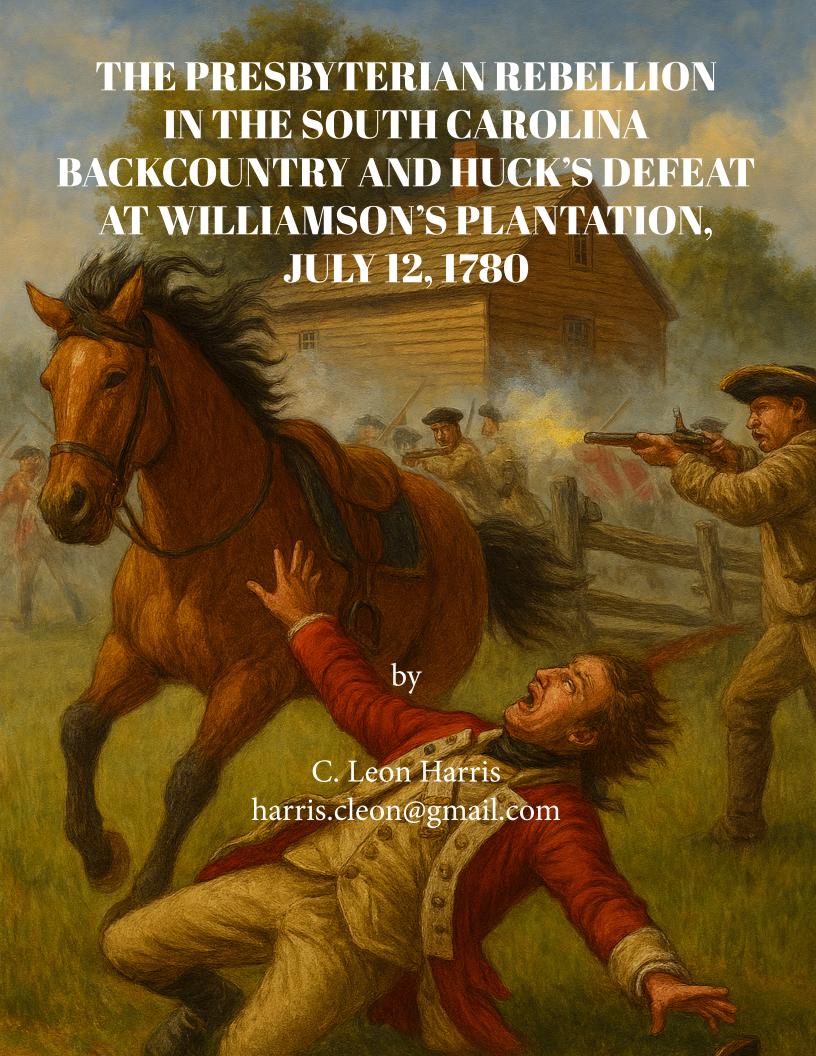
But it was evil. Both sides fought relentless violence against each other. Interpreting South Carolina's civil war, a war within a war, is a heavy task. I welcome thoughts from readers of this journal.



Inspired by the true story of Martha Bratton and her fight to win against the British invasion of South Carolina during the Revolutionary War

2026





ome Loyalists referred to the Revolutionary War as the Presbyterian Rebellion, and it surely must have seemed like that in South Carolina in June and July of 1780. After Charlestown surrendered on May 12, 1780, and the British established posts at Camden, Rocky Mount, and elsewhere in the Backcountry, General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, expected an easy march to Charlotte, North Carolina, and on into Virginia. He soon discovered that he would first have to deal with ardent Patriots, mostly Presbyterians, in Chester District, now Chester County, and the New Acquisition District, now mainly York County. Those Patriots kept the struggle against tyranny alive with skirmishes at Alexander's Old Field, Mobley's Meeting House, Hill's Ironworks, and especially with the defeat of Captain Christian Huck at Williamson's Plantation near Brattonsville in the New Acquisition District. I can't give a more detailed account of their actions than Michael C. Scoggins did in his book *The Day it Rained Militia*, or a more engaging one than Edgar Michael Bravo and Richard C. Meehan, Jr. have done in the forthcoming film *Huck's Defeat*, but it may be a helpful adjunct to those works to add some background information and maps of the events. (Fig. 1)

Presbyterians in Chester and the New Acquisition districts between the Broad and Catawba Rivers had both political and religious reasons to resist the King's forces. Their Scotch-Irish ancestors had migrated from Lowland Scotland to Northern Ireland during the seventeenth century in search of economic opportunity and freedom from religious persecution. In Ireland, neither was found, and many objected to the British government's involvement in religion. In the four decades preceding the American Revolution, approximately 250,000 Scotch-Irish immigrants arrived in America in search of a better life and religious freedom. Many migrated from Pennsylvania down the Great Wagon Road and settled in what became the New Acquisition and Chester districts, where they established communities centered around their churches. Stories of what it was like under British rule were probably passed down through the generations and often repeated from pulpits.<sup>6</sup>

#### Alexander's Old Field

Among the Presbyterians standing in the way of British domination were the McClures and the Gastons, members of the Lower Fishing Creek Church in Chester District (number 6 in Fig. 1, and in Fig. 2). Joseph Gaston stated that his first cousin, Captain John McClure, was "the first that made any resistance to the Enemy in this part of the Country." At about twenty-five years old in 1780, John McClure was already a seasoned veteran of the battles of Sullivan's Island on June 28, 1776, and Stono Ferry on June 20, 1779, as well as several skirmishes. In 1778, he had organized a volunteer company known as McClure's Rangers, with himself as captain and his brother, Hugh McClure, as first lieutenant. They called themselves militiamen, but as volunteers, they provided their own horses, rifles, clothing, and food, and they were more independent than most militia

<sup>1</sup> Richard Gardiner, "The Presbyterian Rebellion?" *Journal of the American Revolution* (September 5, 2013). https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/09/presbyterian-rebellion/, accessed July 1, 2025.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For concise descriptions of the siege of Charlestown and other actions mentioned in this paper, see the following: Patrick O'Kelley, Nothing but Blood and Slaughter, Vol. 2 (Booklocker.com, 2004); John C. Parker, Jr., Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Columbia, SC: Harrelson Press, 2022); J. D. Lewis, "Known Battles & Skirmishes in South Carolina," <a href="https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/SC\_Revolutionary\_War\_Known\_Battles\_Skirmishes.htm">https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/SC\_Revolutionary\_War\_Known\_Battles\_Skirmishes.htm</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> New Acquisition District was an area now comprising York County and part of Cherokee County to the west that had been claimed by North Carolina until the boundary was settled in 1772.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day it Rained Militia* (Charleston SC: The History Press, 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "Huck's Defeat Movie Trailer 9 20 24," https://hucksdefeatmovie.com.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Durwood T. Stokes, "The Presbyterian Clergy in South Carolina and the American Revolution," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 71, no. 4 (Oct. 1970), 270-282. George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, Vol. 1 (Columbia: Duffie & Chapman, 1870), 376-540, Google Books.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The location of Lower Fishing Creek Meeting House = Richardson's Church is according to Mills Atlas, Chester County, surveyed 1820

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Joseph Gaston federal pension application W23089. This and other pension applications and audited accounts cited in this paper are transcribed mainly by Will Graves at <u>revwarapps.org</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Pension application of Hugh McClure W21789.

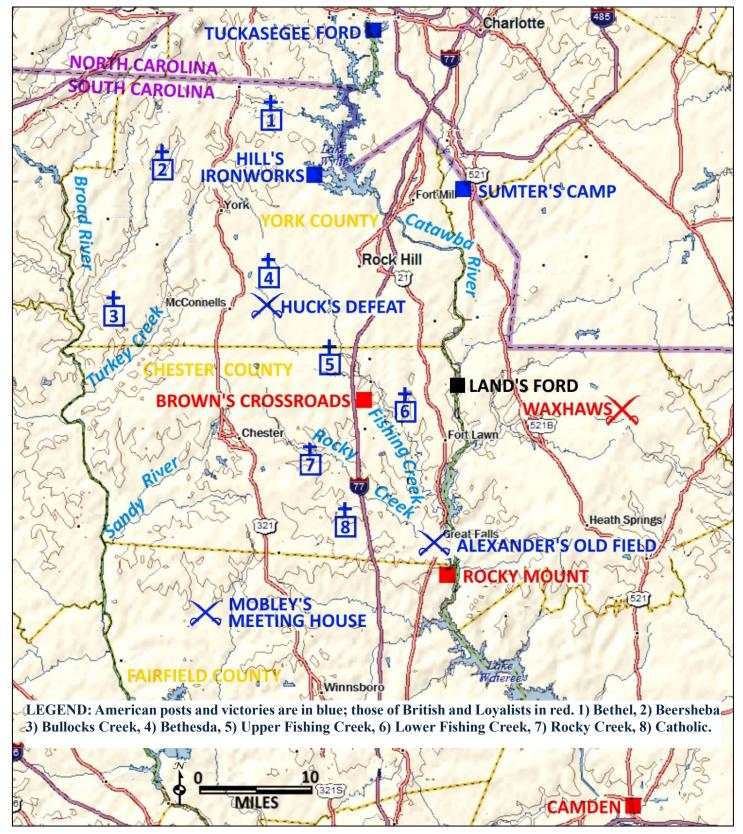


Figure 1. A modern map showing major locations and Presbyterian churches mentioned in this paper.

companies. During the British siege of Charlestown, McClure and some of his militiamen were near Moncks Corner, twenty-nine miles north of the city, to defend a route of access for reinforcements and possible escape. Before dawn on April 14, Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton's British Legion surprised them and took their horses.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Hugh Gaston pension application S10729. Wayne Lynch, "John McClure Rallies the South," *Journal of the American Revolution* (December 4, 2014), <a href="https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/12/mcclure-rallies-the-south/">https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/12/mcclure-rallies-the-south/</a>, accessed July 1, 2025. C. Leon Harris and

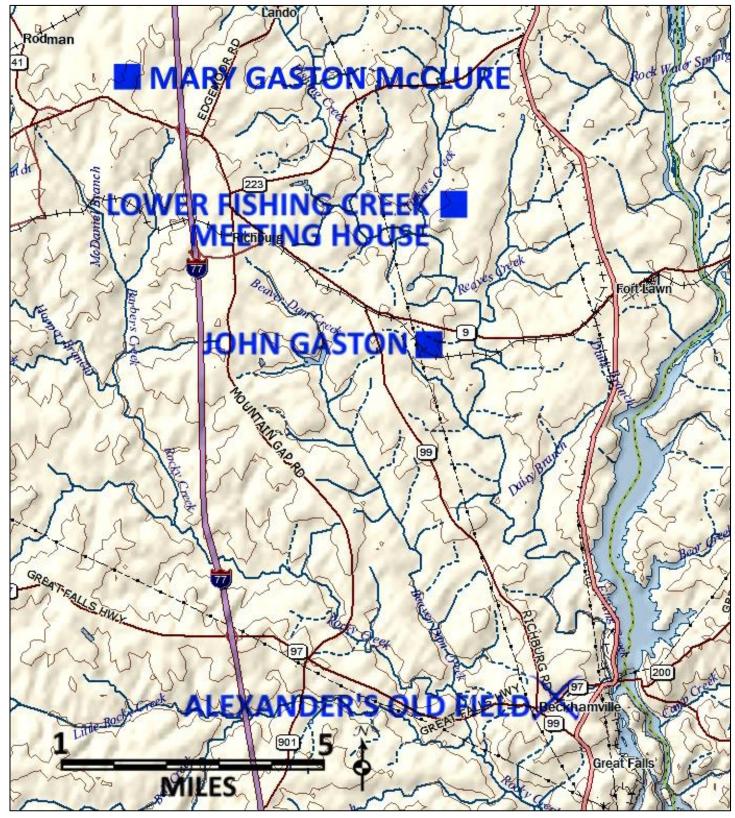


Figure 2. Locations of the McClures, Gastons, and their church.

Charles B. Baxley, "Tarleton Tightens the Noose Around Charlestown Neck: Biggin Bridge, April 14, 1780," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 18, no. 2 (November 29, 2021), <a href="http://www.southern-campaigns.org/tarleton-tightens-the-noose-around-charlestown-neck-biggin-bridge-april-14-1780/">http://www.southern-campaigns.org/tarleton-tightens-the-noose-around-charlestown-neck-biggin-bridge-april-14-1780/</a>. McClure's men were still at Moncks Corner when Charlestown surrendered on May 12, according to Joseph Gaston, "A Reminiscence of the Revolution," [Dawson's] Historical Magazine [Morrisania], N. Y., Vol. II, Third Series (August 1873), 90, <a href="https://lundeenfamilytree.com/?page\_id=1869">https://lundeenfamilytree.com/?page\_id=1869</a>.

During his more than 150-mile return to the house of his widowed mother, Mary Gaston McClure, Capt. McClure stopped at his uncle John Gaston's house. There on May 31, he learned of the massacre two days earlier at Waxhaws, twenty miles to the east. As Continentals under Col. Abraham Buford were surrendering, Tarleton was thrown from his horse, and his men, thinking he had been shot, went into a murderous frenzy. The Legion cavalry cut the Americans to pieces, and the Legion infantry bayonetted the wounded and helpless Americans. It was apparently a 9/11 moment for McClure and his company. According to Hugh McClure, "on the reception of this news, he (Captain McClure) and three of said Gaston's sons, and Captain John Steele, I think, arose upon their feet and made this united and solemn declaration, 'that they would never submit nor surrender to the enemies of their country; that liberty or death from that time forth, should be their motto'!" 14

Also, at John Gaston's house, an incident occurred that his son, Joseph Gaston, described as follows: About this time a man calling himself Col. Houseman, came to the house of John Gaston, Esq., in a dress altogether plain, accompanied by about fifty of those plundering banditti, which British policy had dignified with the name of loyalists and exhausted a considerable share of his logic in advising the old gentleman to have his sons brought on a certain day to give up their arms at his encampment. (His camp was to be pitched at Alexander's old fields, now Beckhamville). The eloquence of the orator was inadequate to the task. True, they met him on the appointed day; but for a purpose very different from that which he desired. <sup>15</sup>

On the night after Houseman's visit, three of John Gaston's nine sons visited settlements along Fishing Creek, Rocky Creek, and Sandy River to recruit men for the planned gathering. Thirty-two men volunteered to serve under Capt. McClure. Around June 6, they surprised and scattered about two hundred men that Col. Houseman had gathered at Alexander's Old Field. The exact location of Alexander's Old Field is unknown, but Joseph Gaston and others said it was where Beckhamville was later situated, Probably on a relatively level plateau where the Charlotte-to-Charlestown road crossed a road to a ford of the Catawba River. (Fig. 3) The fighting was not intense. Joseph Gaston speculated that "McClure's men did not wish to kill, knowing that many good men might be there who knew of no relief but to submit and take parole. Only one was killed, and he was known to be a real friend to his country." On the Patriot side William McGarity was slightly wounded in the arm. Lt. Hugh McClure got his arm broken. McClure's son, James McClure, testified that he had "often heard his mother the said Jane McClure say that she had to pick the creepers out of her husband's arm after he was wounded as he was concealed near a large pond near the home until he was so far recovered as to join the Company of his brother John McClure on Hagler's Branch." Hugh McClure was soon back in service, serving at Huck's defeat in July and replacing his brother as captain of his company in August.

<sup>1.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The location of Mary Gaston McClure's home is according to a plat for 100 acres laid out for "Mary Gaston alias McClure... on the Draft of the S fork of fishing Creek" dated June 10, 1772 and abutting plats at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/, accessed July 1, 2025; James H. Saye, "Cedar Shoal Church and Congregation Chester County, South Carolina," (Typed copy in York County Library, Rock Hill SC, 1878), 6, https://www.rootsandrecall.com/chester/files/2013/04/Cedar-Schoals-Pres.-Church-Chester-County-SC.pdf., accessed July 1, 2025; Scoggins, *Day*, 103. John Gaston's home is according to Saye, "Cedar Shoal Church," 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> C. Leon Harris, "Massacre at Waxhaws: The Wounds Bear Witness," *academia.edu* (2024). https://www.academia.edu/118018911/Massacre\_at\_Waxhaws\_the\_Wounds\_Bear\_Witness.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Joseph Gaston, "Reminiscence," 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Joseph Gaston, "Reminiscence," 90. Scoggins, *Day*, 54-55, deduced that "Col. Houseman" was actually Capt. Henry Houseman.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Joseph Gaston, "Reminiscences," 90; see also Gaston's pension application W23089 and his testimony in Francis Wylie's pension application S21592.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Joseph Gaston, "Reminiscence," 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Pension applications of Hugh McClure W21789, William McGarity R6713 and Francis Wylie S21592.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> William McGarity R6713.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Gaston, "Reminiscence," 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> In Hugh McClure's pension application W21789. The creek formerly named Hagler's Branch is about two miles north of Fort Mill. Capt. John McClure had by then joined Thomas Sumter there.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Pension applications of John McWhorter S32400 and Hugh McClure W21789.

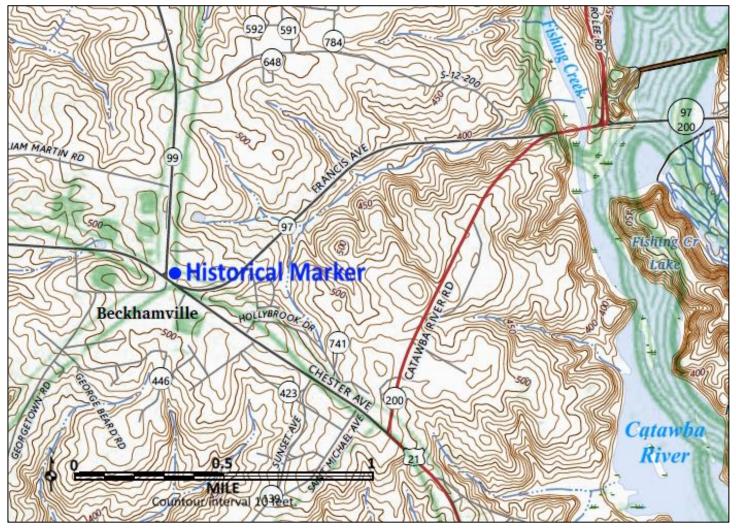


Figure 3. Alexander's Old Field, at present Beckhamville, on the current USGS topographic map (Great Falls 2024 quadrangle). Overlaid faintly in green is part of Mills' Atlas, Chester District, showing the roads that existed in 1820 and probably at the time of the skirmish.

The skirmish at Alexander's Old Field could not be called a great military victory, but it was the first act of resistance in South Carolina at a time when the struggle appeared to be lost. In contrast, at about the same time, most of the militiamen from the Ninety Six District to the west, under Gen. Andrew Williamson, chose to surrender.<sup>23</sup> According to Col. William Hill, "When these events came to be known to the citizens in the new acquisition," the commanders of the New Acquisition Militia, Col. Samuel Watson and Lt. Col. William Bratton, "...appointed a meeting of the Regt. at a place called Bullocks creek meeting house." [number 3 in Fig. 1]. At this meeting, they did not encourage the men, but much the reverse, by telling them that they had hitherto done their duty. But it appeared to them that any further opposition to the British would not avail & as for their parts could have nothing more to say to them as officers but to advise each of them to do the best they could for themselves."<sup>24</sup>

It was too dangerous for the disbanded militiamen to return to their homes. "The country became so over-run with the British and Tories so that all the Whigs were obliged to be in the Army for their own safety and the Safety of their country." Capt. Richard Winn, "finding the Enemy was fast advancing & that he could not raise one Single person to oppose them" in his own Fairfield District, "set out himself, for the New Acquisition, to see if he could not raise Men." With the help of Col. Edward Lacey, Col. William Bratton and Lt. Col. John Nixon, "in

<sup>23</sup> Ian Saberton, ed., *The Cornwallis Papers*, Vol. 1 (*CP* 1 hereafter) (Uckfield, East Sussex, England: Naval & Military Press, 2010), 96-97.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Morrow pension application S21892.

<sup>24 &</sup>quot;Colonel William Hills Memoir" transcribed by Will Graves, https://revwarapps.org/scx1.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025. Samuel Gordon, who filed pension application S30441, also described this event in testimony supporting the application by James Clinton S2437. Gordon stated that Col. Watson disbanded the regiment after the destruction of Hill's Ironworks on June 18.

the course of the day, they collected 100 Millitia."<sup>26</sup> Winn, Lacey, and Bratton later played crucial roles in Huck's defeat, so it will be helpful to say more about them here.

Unlike most of the Patriots mentioned in this paper, **Richard Winn** (1750-1818) was of Welsh ancestry. He was born in Fauquier County, Virginia, and in the mid-1760s, he moved with his parents to what is now Fairfield County. He and his brother John received grants of thousands of acres on which they founded the town of Winnsboro.<sup>27</sup> In 1775, Richard Winn enlisted in the South Carolina 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Rangers and served as a lieutenant and captain in the Snow Campaign of 1775, the Battle of Sullivan's Island in 1776, and the Battle of Fort McIntosh in 1777. In the following relatively quiet years, Capt. Winn resigned from the Continental service and returned to Fairfield District to raise a militia company and serve in the state legislature. Like John McClure and the Gaston brothers, Winn seems to have been prodded back into active service by the massacre at Waxhaws; it is the first thing mentioned in his notes on the war in 1780. After raising a hundred men and scattering the Loyalists at Mobley's Meeting House, as will be described below, Winn was summoned by the British to Camden, where the British commander "Grossly Abused" him as "the Damest Ruffen & Scoundrel that Ever disgraced human being." Winn responded by walking northward (his horse having been confiscated) until he eventually arrived near Charlotte and joined Gen. Thomas Sumter, who had come out of retirement a few days after the Battle of Waxhaws. During the remainder of the war, Winn served notably under Sumter, eventually rising to the rank of colonel.

Like Winn, **Edward Lacey**, **Jr.** (1742-1813) played a crucial role in Huck's Defeat. His early life is largely unknown, except for local traditions related by York County historian Dr. Maurice A. Moore in 1859.<sup>29</sup> According to Moore, Edward Lacey, Jr. was born in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, in September 1742. His father was an Englishman who had settled on Chesapeake Bay before moving to Pennsylvania. At the age of thirteen, Edward Lacey, Jr. ran off to join the British army, but because he was too young, he was assigned as a pack-horse rider and driver in the commissary department. He was present at Braddock's Defeat on July 9, 1755. Lacey remained in the British army for two years, until his father discovered his whereabouts and brought him back home, where he stayed for only another year. At the age of sixteen, young Lacey ran away again, this time to Chester District, where he apprenticed himself as a bricklayer to William Adair, who provided him with a basic education. By 1772, Lacey acquired his own land next to Adair's near Turkey Creek.<sup>30</sup> Edward Lacey, Sr., and the rest of the family followed. According to Moore, Edward Lacey, Sr., "...was an uncompromised Tory..." who, swayed by a "large amount of gold" from a British officer, tried to get his son to join the Loyalists.<sup>31</sup> Once again, the son parted company with his father.

The first documented service by Edward Lacey, Jr. in the Revolutionary War was an expedition against Florida in late July of 1776 under the command of Gen. Andrew Williamson. After crossing Altamaha River in Georgia, "...a horseman made his appearance on the bank and... deliverd to Gen'l Williamson dispaches containing the Declaration of Independence." Gen. Williamson, who was illiterate, had Lacey read it to the men, eliciting "much fireing of arms and rejoicing."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "Middleton, Henry, Plat For 500 Acres In Craven County. Date: 12/24/1772" and "Adair, William, Plat for 250 Acres In Craven County. Date: 4/16/1773," https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/, accessed July 1, 2025.

<sup>26</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Transcribed from Richard Winn's Notes in Kenneth Shelton, "The Battle of Mobley's Meeting House Fairfield District, South Carolina, June 1780," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, no. 7 (July 2005), 22, https://southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/v2n7.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025. For a complete transcription see "General Richard Winn's Notes – 1780" transcribed by Will Graves, https://revwarapps.org/scx2.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025. William White (W8995) and Thomas McClorken (W2179) credited only Lacey with raising the hundred men.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Scoggins, Day, 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "Winn's Notes." The British commander at Camden during this period was Cornwallis, but the language quoted by Winn does not appear to be typical of Cornwallis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> M. A. Moore, *The Life of Gen. Edward Lacey* (Spartanburg SC: Douglas, Evins & Co., 1859), https://www.bmgen.com/document/pdf/Life\_of\_General\_Edward\_Lacey.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025.

Moore, *Life*, 6. Moore, *Life*, 17, note 6 also cites a "tradition of the country" that Reuben Lacey, son of Edward Lacey, Sr., was a Tory. An audited account (https://revwarapps.org/sc544.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025), however, shows that Reuben Lacey performed the following services as a mounted militiaman in Col. William Bratton's regiment: July 24, 1780 30 days; October 5, 1781 72 days; May 20, 1781 23 days. This account was attested by his brother, Col. Edward Lacey, Jr., as Justice of the Peace.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Robert Wilson pension application W2302. See also Joseph Robison W10246.

In June 1780, the Turkey Creek Volunteer Militia regiment elected Lacey their colonel, but his command got off to a rough start, possibly because of his father's leanings.<sup>33</sup> According to Joseph McJunkin, who was then a captain, "About this time... there were some doubts respecting the soundness of the principles of Col. Edward Lacey's, fearing he would join the Enemy; but Sumter sent an armed party & brought him into camp—he was detained some time a prisoner in camp; & then declared himself on the side of the American cause, & he was set at liberty & joined Sumter, & proved ever after a good soldier & a good officer & was reinstated in his command."<sup>34</sup> Lacey did continue to serve with honor at Mobley's Meeting House and Huck's Defeat, as will be described later, and at numerous other battles, including Kings Mountain and Sumter's campaigns.

A third major player in Huck's Defeat was **William Bratton** (1742-1815), who was probably born in Northern Ireland and migrated through Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina, finally settling, about 1765, along the South Fork of Fishing Creek near Bethesda Presbyterian Church.<sup>35</sup> Bratton and his siblings acquired thousands of acres of land that later became Brattonsville, part of which is now Historic Brattonsville. In 1775, William Bratton was commissioned a captain in the New Acquisition Militia, and by June 1780, he had been elected lieutenant colonel. As noted above, he and Col. Samuel Watson then decided the struggle was hopeless, and they disbanded the regiment. Bratton, however, soon joined forces with Sumter.

#### Mobley's Meeting House

Winn, erroneously referring to Mobley's Meeting House as Gipson's, noted that the hundred volunteers raised by him, Lacey, and Bratton "immediately marched for Gipsons Meeting House in Moberleys Settlement where we found a large Body of Tories strongly posted under the Command of Col Ch's Coleman." This would have been several days after the skirmish at Alexander's Old Field, possibly on June 10. As at Alexander's Old Field, the Patriots routed the Tories with little loss to either side. As he often did, Winn gave the impression that he was in command: "As Capt Winn was well acquainted with the strength & situation of the place it was left to him to bring on the attack." Hugh Gaston, however, stated that they were under Capt. John McClure. In fact, as a volunteer, each man could follow whomever he chose, most likely the officer he trusted the most.

Winn's account of the action continues as follows: "...in a few minnits this body of Tories was drove from a strong house which answered for Block House & totally defeated with a small loss of killed & wounded, the wig [Whig] party lost nothing." Hugh Gaston stated that "he was called out in the militia under the command of Captain [John] McClure when he was at the battle at Mobley's Meeting house where the Tories were defeated, the battle was fought at break of day & lasted a short time several Negroes were killed & some Tories were taken prisoners. After the battle the militia returned home." According to Thomas McClorken, "we were ordered after a party of Tories supposed to be at Mobley's Meeting house — where we found them and killed a number of them, the remainder of their party fled when our company returned home." William White stated that "Captain Lacy raised a volunteer company of one hundred men [and] marched after a Body of Tories encamped at Mobley's Meetinghouse, came up, fired at them and killed a number, when we were compelled to run, after which we returned home."

Winn's Notes include a crude sketch showing Mobley's ("Gipson's") Meeting House with the notation that it was "situated on a high hill immediately to the East, very Steep." Some of the Tories were said to have been

<sup>35</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, "The Early History of the Bratton Family," *New Acquisition Militia*, https://newacquisitionmilitia.com/the-early-history-of-the-bratton-family/, accessed July 1, 2025.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Scoggins, Day, 99.

<sup>34 &</sup>quot;McJunkin's Statement: Draper MSS, Sumter Papers 23VV203-212," transcribed by Will Graves, Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution 2, no. 11.1 (November 2005), 35, https://southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/v2n11.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025. Joseph Gaston (Reminiscences, 92), however, stated that doubts about Lacey persisted into July 1780. "Major John Nixon... was elected Lieutenant-colonel—Colonel E. Lacy having at that time, become unpopular among the Chester Whigs."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Winn, "Notes." Col. Charles Coleman is unknown. There was a Loyalist Major Christopher Coleman (Scoggins, *Day*, 35). For a discussion of the founding of Mobley's Meeting House and Winn's confusing it with Gibson's Meeting House, see Shelton, "Battle," 17-23

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Hugh Gaston pension application S10729.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Thomas McClorken (McClurken) pension application W21792.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> William White pension application W8995.

injured while escaping down the steep bluff.<sup>40</sup> At least three different locations up to two miles apart have been proposed for Mobley's Meeting House. Based on Mills' Atlas and the sketch in Winn's Notes, I propose the location shown in Figure 4. It is also possible that Mobley's Meeting House was on the hill about a half mile to the south. These locations are now in a privately owned pine plantation.

#### Captain Christian Huck (c. 1748 – 1780)

The action at Mobley's Meeting House did not go unnoticed by the British, who responded by sending Captain Christian Huck to deal with the rebels. Little is known of the short life of Christian Huck.<sup>41</sup> He is first

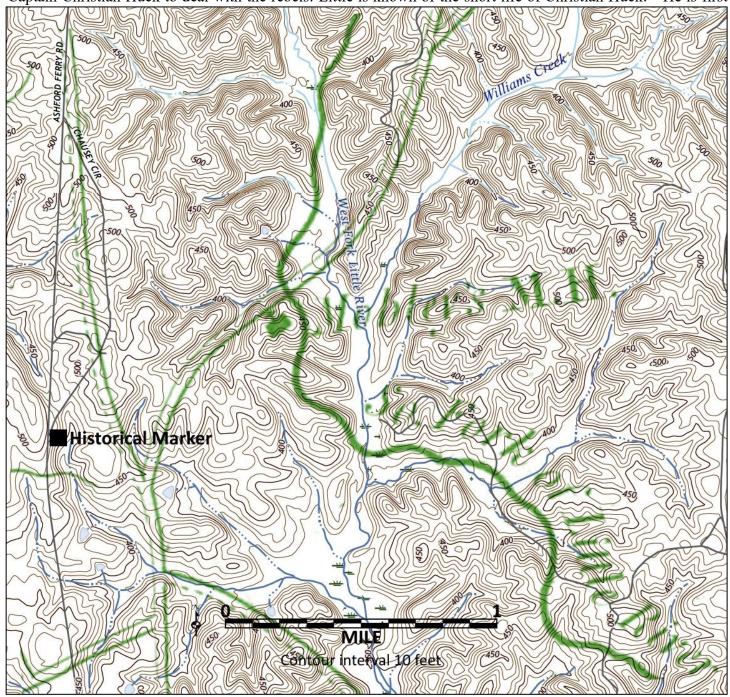


Figure 4. Overlay of part of Mills Atlas (green) onto the current USGS topographical map (Salem Crossroads and Carlisle SE quadrangles) showing a possible location of Mobley's Meeting House 13.4 miles northwest of Winnsboro, as deduced in Appendix A.

<sup>40</sup> Shelton, "Battle," 24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Marge Baskin, "Oatmeal for the Foxhounds: Banastre Tarleton and the British Legion/ Friends, Comrades and Enemies: Christian Huck (c. 1748-1780)," https://www.banastretarleton.org/, accessed July 2, 2025. Scoggins, *Day*, 215-228.

documented as a lawyer and real estate dealer in Philadelphia on April 12, 1775, a week before the Revolutionary War broke out. Huck sided with the British, and in May 1778 his name appeared on a list of those who were to either forfeit their property to Pennsylvania or "suffer such pains and penalties...as persons attainted of High Treason ought to do." Huck fled Philadelphia, and on June 7, 1778, he was commissioned a captain in a corps of provincial troops, trained, uniformed, and equipped like British regulars. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, commander of the British army in North America, attached Huck's troop of dragoons to Tarleton's British Legion. According to Richard Winn, "Huck was one of those that Cut Buford's Men to pieces" at the Battle of Waxhaws.<sup>42</sup>

After the Battle of Waxhaws, Huck was attached to the command of Lt. Col. George Turnbull at Rocky Mount. On June 10, Turnbull sent Huck and thirty-five dragoons, together with twenty mounted infantries of the New York Volunteers and about sixty Loyalist militiamen, to deal with McClure, Bratton, and the other rebels along Fishing Creek. Coincidentally, on the same day, Capt. Richard Pearis obtained the surrender of the Ninety Six militia by offering generous terms. Huck had a different approach to securing submission. On Sunday, June 11, he and his party arrived at the Upper Fishing Creek Church, expecting to find McClure, Bratton, and other rebel congregants of the Rev. John Simpson. However, Simpson had joined the militia regiment of Col. Edward Lacey that day and gone with the others to join Sumter at Tuckasegee Ford. As Turnbull later reported to Cornwallis, Huck returned to Rocky Mount on the 14th, "having made a circular tour of about forty miles to the westward. The rebells who were embody'd fled so fast to the mountains that he could not come up with them. From information that some of them had taken post at Simson's [sic] Meeting, he surrounded the house and, finding them gone, reconnoitring the roads which led to it, two men with rebell uniforms were discover'd running through a field of wheat. The militia fired upon them, killed one and wounded the other."

On the way to the Upper Fishing Creek Meeting House, Huck's officers are said to have hacked to death young William Strong while he was reading his Bible, and as his mother pleaded for his life. <sup>45</sup> Perhaps because of such actions, on June 16 Cornwallis informed Turnbull that, "I strictly forbid & will severely punish any act of cruelty to their [rebels'] wives & children." <sup>46</sup> Huck's men allegedly burned Simpson's home and the church. Pious Presbyterians were put off not only by Huck's deeds but by his words, calling him "the Swearing Captain." Former army surgeon David Ramsay wrote as follows about Huck:

During his command he had distressed the inhabitants of every species of insult and injury. He had also shocked them with his profanity, having been often heard to say, "that GOD ALMIGHTY was turned rebel; but that if there were twenty GODS on their side they should all be conquered." In a very particular manner he displayed his enmity to the Presbyterians, by burning the library and dwellinghouse of their clergyman the rev. mr. Simpson, and all bibles which contained the Scots translation of the psalms. These proceedings, no less impolitick than impious, inspired the numerous devout people of that district with an unusual animation. A warm love for independence blended itself with a religious fervour—and these two passions reciprocally added strength to each other.<sup>47</sup>

According to Richard Winn, "Capt. Huck with his party... Burnt the Meeting House of the Rev'd Mr. Sampson [sic] who was at the head of a large Presbyterian Congregation the people in that Quarter Fishing Creek immediately Cried Out they wanted no protection from Such a Set as burnt Churches & the word of God, & Billy Hills Iron Works, the Consequence of this was Mr. Simson & about 80 of his Church took up Arms and Joined Genl. Sumter, by this you will See Out of Evil cometh good."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Winn, "Notes," transcribed by Will Graves. This is the only evidence that Huck was at the Battle of Waxhaws, but it appears to be credible, because Winn had the opportunity of questioning prisoners after Huck's defeat. Scoggins, *Day*, 222.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Audited account of John Simpson, https://revwarapps.org/sc6229.pdf. Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution 1775-1780* (New York: MacMillan, 1901), 591. Scoggins, *Day*, 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Turnbull to Cornwallis, June 15, 1780, *CP* 1, 139.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Cornwallis to Turnbull, June 16, 1780, *CP* 1:141.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> David Ramsay, The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina Vol. 2 (Trenton NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785), 135-136.

<sup>48</sup> Winn, "Notes."

#### William Hill's Ironworks

The Billy Hill mentioned by Winn was William Hill (1741-1816), who was born in Northern Ireland, emigrated with his parents before 1752, and lived in Pennsylvania before settling in present York County, South Carolina, around 1770.<sup>49</sup> In 1775, Hill was commissioned a captain in the New Acquisition District militia. After Watson and Bratton dissolved the regiment, the men elected Andrew Neel (or Neal) as colonel and Hill as lieutenant colonel.<sup>50</sup> Both Andrew Neel (1757-1780) and Hill were congregants in the Bethel Presbyterian Church (number 1 in Figure 1). Although younger, Neel was more experienced.<sup>51</sup> The regiment was soon joined by refugees from Georgia and other parts of South Carolina, including men who had formerly served as Loyalist militiamen under Col. Matthew Floyd.<sup>52</sup> Hill was a prominent figure in the New Acquisition District, having built Hill's Ironworks, including AERA Furnace, with financial support from the state in 1776 and from Isaac Hayne in 1778. In addition to the AERA Furnace, the ironworks included forges, a grist mill, a sawmill, and quarters for ninety skilled slaves, as well as workers who were paid in iron.<sup>53</sup> The ironworks manufactured a variety of agricultural and domestic goods (Fig. 5); however, by 1780, the production of cannons, cannonballs, and rifles



Figure 5. A fire-back for a fireplace produced by AERA Furnace in 1778 with the motto "Liberty or Death." Note the initials of William Hill and Isaac Hayne. (Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, NC. https://mesda.org/exhibit/fireback-2/.)

<sup>49</sup> James E. Mitchell, "Colonel William Hill," <a href="https://carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot leaders sc william hill.html">https://carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot leaders sc william hill.html</a>.

28

<sup>50 &</sup>quot;William Hill's Memoir."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 75. Scoggins has Neel as lieutenant colonel and Hill as colonel. Compare J. D. Lewis, "The Colonels," <a href="https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot military sc colonels.htm">https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot military sc colonels.htm</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Scoggins, "Brief History."

Thomas Cowan, "William Hill and the Aera Ironworks," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 13, no. 2 (November 1987), 1-31, <a href="https://ia600201.us.archive.org/9/items/journalofearlyso1321987muse/journalofearlyso1321987muse.pdf">https://ia600201.us.archive.org/9/items/journalofearlyso1321987muse/journalofearlyso1321987muse.pdf</a>. On August 4, 1781, Hayne was hanged by the British for violating his parole by taking Gen. Andrew Williamson prisoner.

had taken precedence. Hill's Ironworks is generally thought to have been flooded with the creation of Lake Wylie, but an 1814 plat suggests that part of the site may still be above water. (Fig. 6)

The British were aware of the importance of Hill's Ironworks, and Turnbull sent Huck from Rocky Mount to destroy them. On June 16, Turnbull wrote to Cornwallis:

I immediately order'd Captain Hook of the Legion to get ready, that with Captain Floyd's company and the other militia which we cou'd assemble it was necessary to give these fellows a check. The weather prevented their setting off last night, but they took the morning early. I have taken the liberty to give Captain Hook orders to destroy the iron works. They are the property of a Mr Hill, a great rebell. I hope the marching of this party will do something towards the quieting our frontier. Those rebells embody'd between charlotburgh [Charlotte, N.C.] and Salisbury overawes great part of the country and keeps the candle of rebellion still burning.<sup>54</sup>

Huck left for the ironworks that morning, stopping to set up a base at Brown's Crossroads (Fig. 1).<sup>55</sup> Sumter had sent men from Tuckasegee Ford to protect the crucial ironworks, but, on June 18, most of them were away pursuing Loyalists under Col. Matthew Floyd. In Turnbull's words, "a party of rebells had sally'd forth from the

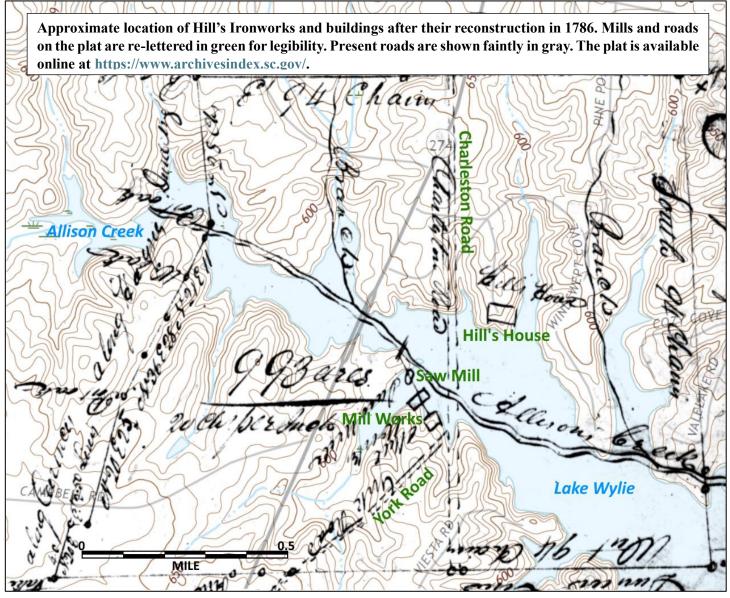


Figure 6. Plat surveyed for Solomon Hill on April 11, 1814, overlaid onto the current USGS map (Lake Wylie quadrangle).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Turnbull to Cornwallis, June 16, 1780, *CP* 1:142. On the same day Cornwallis approved Turnbull's plan to destroy the ironworks: Cornwallis to Turnbull, June 16, 1780, *CP* 1:141. Capt. Floyd was Abraham Floyd, son of Col. Matthew Floyd.

<sup>55</sup> Scoggins, Day, 79.

iron works and had gone into the settlement of Mr Floyd and his company and were tearing everything to pieces." According to Hill, "we received information that there was a tory colonel by the name of Floyd in the western part of the District who much distressed the Inhabitants and was collecting men to go to the British post at Rocky Mount, upon this Col. Neel with all the men but about 12 or 15 that was left to keep the camp went in persuit of that party of Tories but unfortunately before he got to their settlement they had marched to Rocky Mount." Hill was writing thirty years after the fact, but if the force left to guard the ironworks was as small as he recalled, they may all have been under the command of Capt. John McKenzie—a natural choice, since he was the superintendent of the ironworks. Despite having the buildings for defense, McKenzie stated that, "after all the Resistance that could be made [Huck] Defeated Declarant & his Company and destroyed the works." According to Hill, "captain Hook with a company of Horse and about 500 Tories came to the Iron works, destroyed all the property they could not carry away. Burned the forge furnace, grist and saw mills together with all other buildings even to the negro huts, & bore away about 90 negroes all which was done before Col. Niel returned with the army to camp."

As was common, Hill exaggerated the enemy's strength. Turnbull probably did the same in his June 19 report to Cornwallis:

I have the pleasure to acquaint your Lordship that, by a letter from Captain Huck of the British Legion dated yesterday some miles this side of the iron works, that the rebells were assembled at that place about one hundred and fifty strong; that he with his detachment of the Legion and about sixty militia attacked them; the rebells had time to pull down a bridge very near the iron works, which impeded them for some time; that, repairing the bridge, they were lucky enough to overtake their rear, killed seven, and took four prisoners; the rest fled to the mountains. I am likewise to inform your Lordship that Captain Huck has compleatly destroy'd the iron works, which has been the head quarters of the rebells in arms for some time past. <sup>60</sup>

On June 20, two days after Huck destroyed Hill's Ironworks, the British suffered a severe setback with the defeat of Loyalist militiamen at Ramsour's Mill, thirty miles northwest of Charlotte. Sumter's men did not arrive until the fighting was over. However, they benefited greatly from the captured weapons and provisions, which they took to their new camp in the Catawba Nation (Fig. 1). Knowing that the Patriots would be encouraged by the victory at Ramsour's Mill, Turnbull marched from Rocky Mount to reinforce Huck near Brown's Crossroads.<sup>61</sup>

The defeat of the militia that Cornwallis depended on for his advance into North Carolina gave him "great concern." Still, he was confident that at least South Carolina was in his hands. On June 30 he wrote to Gen. Clinton, "the submission of General Williamson at Ninety Six, whose capitulation I inclose with Captain Paris's [Richard Pearis's] letter, and the dispersion of a party of rebels, who had assembled at an iron work on the north west border of the province, by a detachment of dragoons and militia from Lt Colonel Turnbull put an end to all resistance in South Carolina." Or so he thought. On July 5, Sumter made a move from his new camp on Clem's Branch in the Catawba Nation toward Rocky Mount, forcing Turnbull to return to that post. Turnbull became increasingly frustrated with what he called the "Bounty Irish," referring to the Scotch-Irish, many of whom had arrived between 1763 and 1768 when South Carolina paid bounties to attract settlers. On July 6, he confided to Cornwallis, "I believe them to be the worst of the Creation, and nothing will bring them to reason but severity."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Turnbull to Cornwallis, June 15, 1780, CP 1:141.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> "William Hill's Memoir."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Pension application of John McKenzie W1049.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> "William Hill's Memoir."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Turnbull to Cornwallis, June 19, 1780, *CP* 1:143. In this letter Turnbull also mentions the capture of Capt. John Henderson, who was released after promising to capture South Carolina Governor John Rutledge in exile in North Carolina. In Henderson's pension application Hill certified that "on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1780 when a Great part of the State of South Carolina was over run by the British, that there was a party of Our friends made a Stance at the Iron works in York County in said State & that I Sent Capt. John Henderson to endeavour to make discovery of the Enemies movements, who in the execution of that endeavour, was Taken prisoner by the british." https://revwarapps.org/r4869.pdf, accessed July 1, 2025.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, June 22, 1780, *CP* 1:182. Scoggins, *Day*, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Cornwallis to Rawdon, June 29, 1780, *CP* 1:185.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Cornwallis to Clinton June 30, 1780, *CP* 1: 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Turnbull to Cornwallis, July 6, 1780, CP 1:363.

It was alleged that, in addition to severity, the British tried bribery. The Loyalist father of Col. Edward Lacey is said to have been given "a large amount of gold" to try to get his son to switch to the British side, and that Col. Lacey indignantly rebuffed his father.<sup>65</sup>

#### Huck's Last Ride

On July 10, Turnbull received intelligence that Col. William Bratton, Capt. John McClure and others had left Sumter's camp, then near Nation Ford on Catawba Nation land, and returned to their homes to bring in crops and recruit. Turnbull sent Capt. Huck to Upper Fishing Creek to apprehend Bratton and McClure. With Huck's thirty-five dragoons were twenty New York Volunteers and about fifty mounted militiamen under Col James Ferguson of the Camden District and Col. Matthew Floyd of the Spartan District. <sup>66</sup>

Huck's march is not well documented in primary sources, but it became the stuff of local legend, which Scoggins compiled.<sup>67</sup> Huck left Rocky Mount on July 10 and is said to have camped that evening near Brown's Crossroads, about 4 miles southwest of Walker's Mill. (Figs. 1 and 7) On the following day, he stopped at the home of Mary Gaston McClure (Figs. 2 and 7) expecting to find Capt. John McClure, but both John and his brother, Lt. Hugh McClure, had left to rejoin Sumter twenty miles to the northeast. Another brother was there, however.<sup>68</sup> This brother, said to be James McClure, and another man were caught melting pewterware into rifle balls, and Huck took them prisoners and condemned them to be hanged on the following morning. His men then pillaged and destroyed the home. From McClure's, Huck returned to the road from Rocky Mount and turned toward Col. William Bratton's, stopping along the way to plunder crops of rebels, capture more prisoners, and recruit more Loyalists. Huck then stopped at the plantation of William Adair, who had taken young Edward Lacey, Jr. as an apprentice bricklayer. His son, John Adair, <sup>69</sup> was a lieutenant in Lacey's regiment. Huck's men plundered the plantation of food and other goods. Soon after crossing into the New Acquisition District, Huck and his officers visited Col. Lacey's Loyalist father, Edward Lacey, Sr., who treated them to "a fine breakfast." Their next stop was the home of John "Gum Log" Moore, whom they took prisoner because his sons were serving under Bratton. <sup>70</sup>

Late that afternoon, Huck's men with their prisoners arrived at the home of Col. William Bratton, now a part of Historic Brattonsville. Hratton's son, Dr. William Bratton, Jr. (1773-1850) recalled to his son (born in 1831) that his mother, Martha Bratton, had been warned of Huck's approach. According to Dr. Bratton, "At last they were seen coming up the road, a long line of 'Red Coats' followed by a great multitude of 'Tories.'" Martha Bratton was waiting on the porch when "a small squad" approached and asked her for the whereabouts of her husband. When she answered that she did not know, "a red-headed ruffian swore that he would make her know, seizing a sickle that was hanging on a peg in the Piazza he placed it in a position around her neck and drawing his sword swore that, 'if she did not immediately tell where her Husband was that he would cut her head off and

<sup>65</sup> Scoggins, Day, 99.

<sup>66</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 101-102. Cornwallis later reported slightly different numbers: "Captain Huck of the Legion with a detachment of about 30 or 40 of that corps, 20 mounted men of the New York Volunteers, and sixty militia" (Cornwallis to Clinton, July 15, 1780 CP 1:170). Lt. Hunt of the British Legion reported that "Capt. Huck commanded the party consisting of one subaltern and seventeen dragoons of the Legion, three subalterns and eighteen New York Volunteers, twenty-five militia men" (Anthony Allaire, "Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire," In Lyman C. Draper, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes* (Cincinnati: P. G. Thompson, 1881), 500). William Jenkins (S31774) stated that there were "about one hundred & fifty Tories, and about thirty Dragoons." As often happened, the size of the enemy force tended to be exaggerated. Hill in his Memoirs stated that, "Hook had about 100 horse & Col. Forguson, at this time commander of the Tory Militia, had about 300 men." John Craig (W22864) stated that "there were of the Tories about 300 men Commanded by Colonel Floyd, Captain Hook Commanded 50 dragoons Captain Adams 50 Light Infantry which made 100 British in addition to the 300 Tories." John Adair (W2895) stated that Huck's force amounted to "between five and six hundred men."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 102-108.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Turnbull to Rawdon, July 12, 1780, *CP* 1:201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> John Adair (1757-1840) was Governor of Kentucky 1820-1824.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> At the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/) there is a plat for 200 acres on Gum Log Branch of Fishing Creek on the road to Land's Ford, surveyed for John Moore, dated April 15, 1764.

<sup>71 &</sup>quot;Historic Brattonsville," Culture & Heritage Museums, https://chmuseums.org/brattonsville/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> "William Bratton Jr.'s Reminiscences of Huck's Defeat," transcribed by Michael Scoggins, (York County Historical Center, June 2001). Scoggins notes that the reminiscences were "dictated to his son, Gen. John Bratton [1831-1898], who enclosed them in a letter to Dr. E. M. Boykin on April 18, 1876."

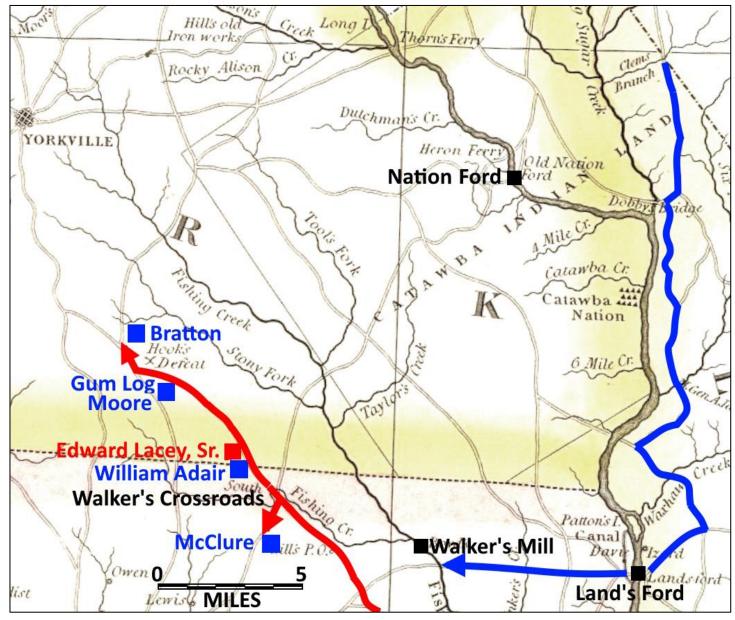


Figure 7. The ride of Huck's men from Rocky Mount to Bratton's on July 10 and 11 according to Scoggins and Figure B2, and the proposed June 11 ride of rebels from Sumter's camp in pursuit of Huck, plotted on the Wilson map of 1822. Walker's Mill was known as White's Mill after the war.

split it." Scoggins says the red-headed ruffian was an Irishman named "Henry." In the film script by Bravo and Meehan, he is represented as Sgt. Henry Hudson. Young William Bratton, "clinging to [his] Mother's dress, was transfixed with horror and fright [and] could not even scream." Mrs. Bratton said calmly, "I told the simple truth and could not tell if I would, but I now add that I would not if I could." At this point, recalled William, an officer beat the ruffian "with the flat of his sword and kicked him headlong down the steps."

According to Dr. Bratton, Huck arrived "not long after" and met with Mrs. Bratton, at first "very courteous and polite, even extending his consideration to me and so won me over by his kind attention that I was sitting on his knee playing with his watch chain and seals" as he tried to convince Mrs. Bratton to influence her husband to accept a British commission. According to William, his mother replied, "My husband is in Sumter's Army and I would rather see him die there true to his country and cause, than have him live a traitor in yours. Huck then behaved very badly—sprang up from his chair and stamped about the room swearing fearful oaths of vengeance against the Rebels, and my Father particularly. The suddenness of his movement threw me from his knee on my face on the hearth, and the result of my misplaced confidence will attend me to my grave in the shape of a broken

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Scoggins, Day, 106.

nose."<sup>74</sup> Huck then ordered Mrs. Bratton to cook supper for him and the other officers, then confined her, young William, and his four sisters, ranging in age from one to thirteen, in the garret. Huck then moved his force to the plantation of James Williamson, apparently to let the horses feed in a nearby field of oats. Turnbull later wrote to Lt. Col. Francis, Lord Rawdon, "By what I can learn, the only bait which led Huck to encamp at this cursed unlucky spot was an oat field that was near, but by every acount the position was very unfavourable."<sup>75</sup>

#### Huck's Defeat

Family tradition has it that Martha Bratton had sent her slave, Watt, to warn Bratton and others at Sumter's camp of Huck's approach. Col. Winn stated that he was at "the Old Catawba Old Nation ford on the E. side and being informed that a Considerable force had of British horse and tories had this day the 11<sup>th</sup> July 80 past up on the other side of the River on their way towards Hills Iron works and Knowing that most of the Officers & Men would pass that this way determined to Stop and See if they could git as many Men as would fight Hoouck and his party." Winn stated that officers and men were reluctant to go against Huck's horsemen after Waxhaws, but those who did volunteer left "in high Spirits," according to John Craig. More than 130 men volunteered to march that night from Sumter's camp on Clem's Branch with a waxing gibbous moon low in the sky. (Fig. 7).

According to John Craig, after crossing the Catawba River, the rebels found the far bank "lined with women and children, who had been ordered from their homes by the British and Tories on account of their relations generally having joined themselves to the Whig party."

These women who had been forced to leave their homes informed us that Col. Floyd, Capt. Hook, and Capt Adams [Adamson?], with other officers, commanding about four hundred British and Tories, were lying at White's [Walker's] mill in Chester county. The situation of these women and children driven from their firesides, excited in every bosom a sympathy for the distressed, and an indignation against the hard-hearted foe who could perpetrate such an inhuman deed. We received our orders to set these distressed people over the river which we did. Then we received orders to turn out our horses to graze, and meanwhile the officers called a council and soon determined to risk all consequences and attack the inhuman ruffians.<sup>81</sup>

John McWhorter gave a different version of how they were told that Huck was at Walker's Mill: "...just after we had crossed the Catawba River, we met a man who informed us that one Captain Hook, with some British Regulars and Tories, was at White's [Walker's] Mills." According to secondary sources, they arrived near Walker's Mill around sunset on July 11. Finding that Huck had already left, they decided to camp for the night. Early on July 12, they continued northward on the road from Rocky Mount, and, according to Winn, "about two Hours before day Stopt at John Price's a respectable man to gain information of Hook & his party and was informed they had Stopt there a little before Night but had gone on to Colo. Brattons." 84

Winn stated that with colonels Edward Lacey, William Hill and William Bratton present, "it was Agreed on as Winn had been in the regular Service that he should take command and dispose of the Men as he thought best when he got in a Mile of the Enemy it was then about One Hours to day brake…."<sup>85</sup> McWhorter, however, stated

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 106-107 quoting Dr. William Bratton, Jr.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Turnbull to Rawdon, July 12, 1780, *CP* 1:207.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 105. John P. Collins, no doubt erroneously, stated that the decision to attack Huck was made a few days after the destruction of Hill's Ironworks on June 18. James P. Collins, *Autobiography of a Revolutionary Soldier* (Clinton LA: Feliciana Democrat, 1859), 25, 26.

<sup>77</sup> Winn, "Notes."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> John Craig, "The War in York and Chester," *Chester Standard* (Chester SC), March 16, 1854, quoted by Scoggins, *Day*, 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Winn, "Notes," gives the number as 130. Others gave the following numbers: "William Hill's Memoirs" and John Craig (quoted in Scoggins, *Day*, 109), 133; the same John Craig (W22864) 135; William Jenkins (S31774) about 100; Thomas Lofton (S17114) 110; Samuel Killough (S4475) in John Wallace (W955) some 400.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Hugh Gaston S10729; Samuel Watson S17187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Craig, "War" in Scoggins, *Day*, 109. According to Scoggins, *Day*, 246 note 61, White's Mill was known as Walker's Mill until 1784. The change in name has led some to believe that Walker's Mill was several miles to the north in York County.

<sup>82</sup> John McWhorter S32400.

<sup>83</sup> Scoggins, Day, 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Winn, "Notes." John Price's land adjoined that of William Adair to the south on the South Branch of Fishing Creek. (Fig. 7) Price, John, Plat for 150 Acres 4/18/1764 and Plat for 200 Acres 12/18/1766.

<sup>85</sup> Winn, "Notes,"

that after crossing Catawba River they had "solicited Col. Bratton to take the command of us, with Hugh McClure as Lieutenant." No other known participant mentioned Winn as overall commander, or otherwise. John Craig (pension application W22864) mentioned colonels Bratton, Lacey, and Andrew Neel. David Sadler (S9471) mentioned Bratton and Neel. Three pension applicants mentioned only Bratton as colonel, 86 two mentioned only Neel, 87 and one mentioned only Lacey. 88 Most likely, each man considered his own colonel to be his commander. According to Lt. John Adair, "the men seemed to act more by instinct than by order or command." 89

It is not clear whether Winn's run-on sentence says he was given command "when he got in a Mile of the Enemy" or whether it was there that he "dispose[d] of the Men as he thought best." The rest of the sentence reads, "here Colo Winn Ordered the party to file off to the Left of the Road & Dismount and immediately had the whole paraded." This suggests that they covered the last mile to the battle on foot, probably continuing the on road from Rocky Mount toward Bratton's.

Winn's sentence continues, "then Capt. Read a bold daring Officer was Ordered to pick Out twenty five Men and file of [off] to the left of Col. Brattons plantation and as soon as the Action begun in front he was to Attack the rear of the Enemy & take all Straggling parties."90 Winn continued, "at the same time Capt Read rec'd his Orders the Remaining part of the Men Commenced their March to bring on the Action (being the 12th July) on coming to the fork of the Road was informed by two tories in Search of their Horses that Colo. Ferguson with his party lay in the Edge of a field which was in advance of the British Horse about three Hundred yards." The "fork of the Road" may refer to the junction of the road from Rocky Mount with the road to Hill's Iron Works. An 1817 plat for 509 acres belonging to John Bratton shows such a junction about three-tenths of a mile south of a "house." Since John Bratton inherited his father's estate, the house is presumably that of Col. William Bratton. 92 This appears to be the same junction shown in Wilson's 1822 map (Fig. 7). This "fork in the road" is about where the blue arrowhead is shown in Figure 8. Roads thought to have existed at the time of the battle are shown in brown, assuming the roads avoided water crossings and changes in elevation. The assumed eastern part of the lane past Williamson's is from lidar-based imagery (Fig. B4), and the western part is drawn to conform to topography, the "old Road" shown on an 1876 map by Daniel G. Stinson, and a description by one of Bratton's grandsons.93

It appears that the twenty New York Volunteers, and about fifty mounted militiamen under Col. James Ferguson, were camped at the edge of a field near Huck's thirty-five dragoons. According to Col. William Hill, "they were encampd. in a Lane—a strong fence on each side — the Horse picketed in the inside of a field next to the lane, with their furniture on."94 Huck and other officers occupied Williamson's home, described by Richard Winn as "a Strong log House two Stories High" and by William Hill as "a mansion house in the field." There is surprisingly little evidence showing the exact location of Williamson's house, 96 but its approximate location can be deduced from documentary evidence. (Appendix B) They kept their horses nearby, "prepared to Mount in a moment if Required."97 James McClure, Gum Log Moore, and other prisoners were confined in Williamson's corn crib.98

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> John McWhorter S32400, William Jenkins S31774, Samuel Watson S17187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> William Hillhouse S7008, Thomas Lofton S17114.

<sup>88</sup> Hugh Gaston S10729.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 110.

<sup>90</sup> Winn, "Notes." "Capt Read" was probably George Reed of the Fairfield regiment: Lewis, "Known Battles."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 25.

<sup>93</sup> Scoggins, Day, 211; Scoggins et al., "Defining," 24.

<sup>94 &</sup>quot;William Hill's Memoir."

Winn, "Notes;" "William Hill's Memoir."Scoggins et al., "Defining," 43.

<sup>97</sup> Winn, "Notes."

<sup>98</sup> James McClure testimony in the audited account of Thomas McCance [McCants] https://revwarapps.org/sc5260.pdf. McCance and Edward Martin W21746 were also prisoners.

James P. Collins added that "in the rear of the building [Williamson's log house] was a large peach orchard; at some distance behind the peach orchard we all dismounted and tied our horses; we then proceeded on foot through the orchard, thinking the peach trees would be a good safeguard, against the charge of the horseman."<sup>99</sup>

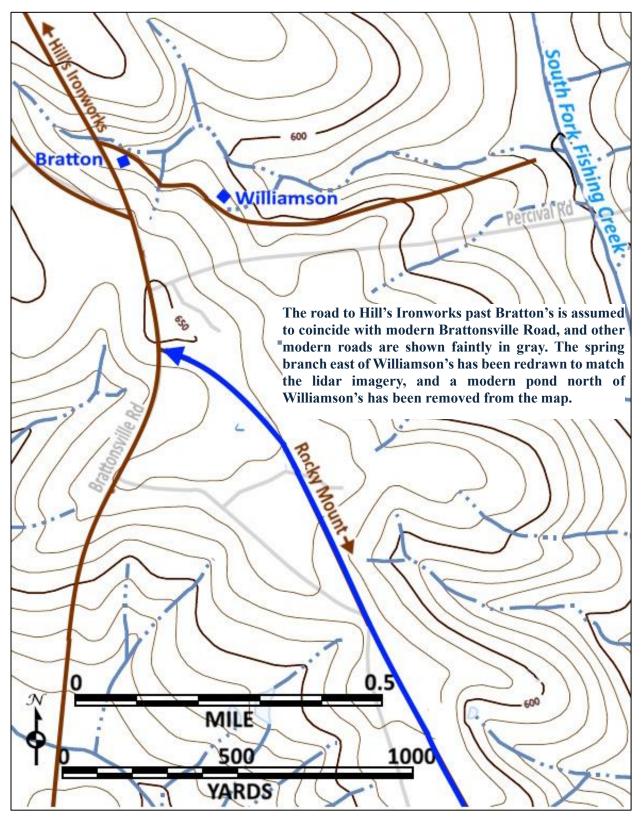


Figure 7. Proposed route of the Americans on the road from Rocky Mount toward William Bratton's, and the locations of James Williamson's house and lane as deduced in Appendix B, shown on the current USGS map (Lowrys SC quadrangle).

<sup>99</sup> Collins, Autobiography, 26.

It is not clear who was in command of this party or where the "rear of the building" was, and the statement that they dismounted in the orchard is contrary to Winn's account. 100

According to Hill, "the plan was to attack both ends of the Lane at the same time." Winn stated that "when I took the two tories I halted for a Short time and sent Capt. McClure with his Company Round Williams [sic] plantation to Attack the Enemy as soon as he heard the first firing." An 1857 map (Fig. B2) shows McClure marching from east to west on Williamson's Lane, while the main force, said to be under Bratton, attacked from the southwest.

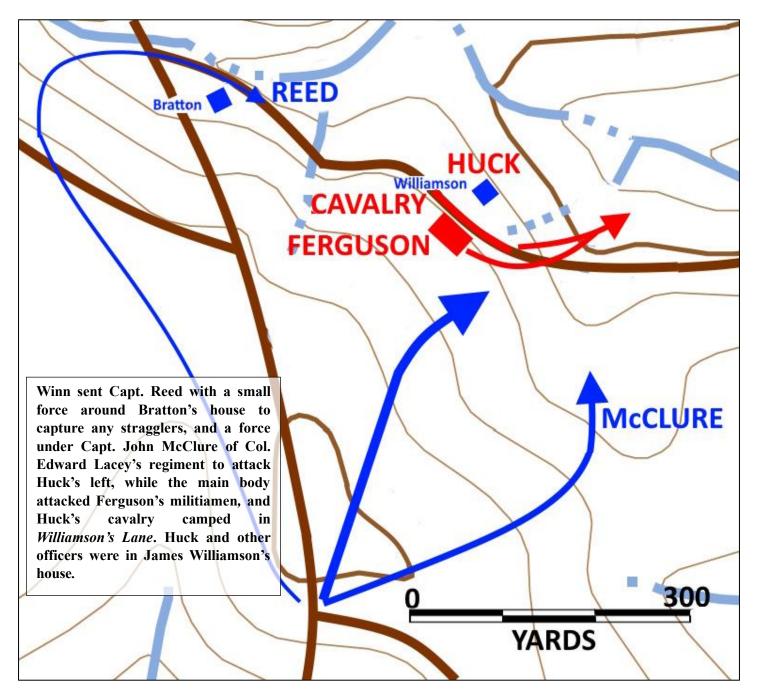


Figure 8. The Battle of Williamson's Plantation as interpreted from Winn's description.

Also contrary to Winn's statement is the pension application of Benjamin Copeland (Coplin) (S21122) stating that the Americans intercepted the Loyalists "at both ends by posting the Horse at one and & the foot at the other."

101 "William Hill's Memoir."

Participants consistently stated that the fighting began around sunrise (McWhorter said "about cock crow"), <sup>102</sup> and that much of it took place at the lane. <sup>103</sup> Winn noted, "the Sun was about to rise and Notwithstanding I marched in 10 or 15 Steps for at least 200 yards I was not discovered by any of his of Colo Fergusons party I was not discovered untill they were fired on." McClure's company was supposed to attack from the east. According to Hill, "unfortunately the party sent to make the attack on the east end of the lane met with some embarrassments, by fences, brush, briars &c. that they could not get to the end of the lane until the firing commenced at the west end." (Fig. 8)

Winn said, "Colo Ferguson and some of his Men was Killed the first onset the rest ran and Chiefly left their Horses tho saddled and ready to Mount." As the fleeing Loyalists "ran by Capt. McCluer he gave them a fire but was not Near Enough to do them much damage." After dispersing Ferguson's militiamen, according to Winn, "we did Not Stop One Minute but went on to commence our Attack on the British horse in a Clear oppen Old field we was paraded in About one Hundred yards from them." From this account by Winn it appears that the main body of rebel troops forced the cavalry out of the lane and into a field. The rebels then formed a line within rifle range of the horsemen and out of range of their pistols and carbines. The horsemen soon fled, apparently without putting up much of a fight.

Capt. Huck suffered a fatal gunshot, but details of how it happened vary among the sources. According to Anthony Allaire, Lt. Hunt of the British Legion reported that the rebels "had possession of every pass before they were apprised of it—except a road leading towards North Carolina, where Captain Huck, with four dragoons, attempted to make off. Huck got shot through the neck, of which he died." According to Hill, Huck came out of Williamson's house "in which was a number of women, which the said Hook had brought there. and at the moment the action commenced, be was then flourishing his sword over the head of these unfortunate women. & threatening them with death if they would not get their husbands & sons to come in." James P. Collins, who said he was in a peach orchard behind Williamson's house, described Hucks demise as follows:

The leader drew his sword, mounted his horse, and began to storm and rave, and advanced on us; but we kept close to the peach orchard. When they had got pretty near the peach trees, their leader called out, "disperse you d—d rebels, or I will put every man of your to the sword." Our rifle balls began to whistle among them, and in a few minutes my Lord Hook was shot off his horse and fell at full length; his sword flew out of his hand as he fell and lay at some distance, and both lay till some of his men gathered about him and around him two or three times. At length one halted and pointed his sword downward, seemed to pause a moment, then raising his sword, wheeled off and all started at full gallop. <sup>105</sup>

### According to Collins, a controversy arose over who had fired the shot that killed Huck.

Before the body of Hook was examined, two claimed the honor of killing him; both showed their guns and named the part of his body they had taken aim at, and both claimed the sword. One presented a large rifle, the other a very small one. The person having the small gun, cried, "I shot him! I shot him! I shot two balls which entered close under the ear." When Hook was examined, the two small balls were found to have passed through the place as described. <sup>106</sup>

One of those claiming to have killed Huck may have been Sergeant James Stephenson in Col. Edward Lacey's regiment. His widow stated in her pension application (W596) that "he always talked he was the man who killed a celebrated Tory by the name of Hook." The other was John Carroll, who claimed in his pension application (R1733) that, "he was the same John Carroll who killed the celebrated Tory Captain Huck or Huyck." Carroll's claim was supported by Joseph McJunkin, who wrote, "a little David by the name of John Carroll of York, slew him by drawing a bow at a venture, while he was harassing his men, & placed two leaden arrows in his head so fatal that this mighty man fell with his face across the threshold of liberty, & like dagon broke in pieces." 107

<sup>105</sup> Collins, Autobiography, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> McWhorter S32400. Also Hugh Gaston S10729; John Wallace W955; William Hill's Memoir;" Collins, Autobiography, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Robert Patteson S3654; William Jenkins S31774; Thomas Woods S32614.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Allaire, *Diary*, 500.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Collins, *Autobiography*, 26-27. Lt. Hunt of the British Legion reported that "Huck got shot through the neck."

Joseph McJunkin to Lyman C. Draper, Sumter Papers 23VV203-212, transcribed by Will Graves, "What Did Joseph McJunkin Really Saye?" *Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, no. 11.1 (Nov. 2005), 35. Dagon was a Philistine god (1 Samuel 5:2-7). Carroll's claim was also supported by Craig, "War," quoted in Scoggins, *Day*, 120.

Winn stated that "we was in full possession of the field in five Minutes." He was "well convinced the Enemy during the Action Never fired a Single gun or pistol." Archaeologists did find one carbine or pistol ball and one Brown Bess ball, both of which showed signs of having been fired. They recovered 23 rifle balls and buckshot. Apparently, this was not exciting enough for storytellers, and it had been greatly embellished by the time Dr. William Bratton, Jr., told his son about it. "Huck and Adamson displayed splendid pluck and courage, rallying their men & refusing returning to the charge only to be broken & repulsed by the sure aim and deadly fire of our men, who were fighting for their firesides. Huck was killed in the second or third charge when the command devolved on Adamson who rallied his men and fell leading the last charge that was made." 10

Winn believed that "had I have not lost the Service of Capt. Read but few of the British or Tories would have been able to have Escaped," and Hill attributed the escapes to McClure's not being able to join the engagement in time. Only one rebel was killed<sup>111</sup>—one of McClure's men, "being a little Advanced before the rest... Kild by One of his Own party." This man may have been the Campbell said to be buried beneath an apple tree in Figure B2. One rebel was said to have been wounded, possibly John Forbes, according to his son's pension application (R3645). James McClure, Gum Log Moore, and other Whigs were released from their corncrib prison. Sumter reported to Gen. de Kalb that "we Released a Number of our friends, Who was fast Bound With Cords, and otherways Treated with Great Sevearity." <sup>112</sup>

According to Hill, the Loyalists killed included a "considerable number of privates the number not known, as there were many of their carcasses found in the woods some days after." George Neely was surprised to find among those killed "acquaintances and men I had never suspected of Toryism." Thirty to forty Loyalists were taken prisoner, 114 including a "Lieut. Hunt of the British horse [who] in trying to Escape on his Horse received a Wound and finding he could not get off rais'd a white flag and delivered himself up to me a prisoner to Winn." As often happened, Sumter received a report that greatly exaggerated the enemy numbers:

The enemy's Loss Kild upon the Spot was one Col., one Capt. & Twelve others; one Maj'r one Lt. & Twenty Seven others Taken prisoners Since Which the Number found Dead amounts to Twenty one, the Loss Very Considerable among the Dragoons — I had about one hundred and thirty men in the action the Enemy Twice that Number, Seventy of which was Brittish. 116

### Hours after the battle Turnbull sent Rawdon a report that underestimated the casualties.

Nine of our missing men have come in, and one dragoon. A Negroe boy who was taken has made his escape and says that Lieutenant Adamson fell of his horse (being much bruised, is taken prisoner), that seven of ours and a serjeant, and two of the dragoons, are likewise wounded and taken prisoners. Lieutenant McGregor and Cornet Hunt, we suppose, have made their escape, but have not yet arrived. Captain Huck is the only person who was killed on the spot. 117

Rawdon was eager to have Lt. Adamson exchanged so that he could return to service, because he had "ingratiated himself exceedingly with the people of the country." <sup>118</sup> By July 27, Lt. Adamson was well enough to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Hugh Gaston S10729 said "the action continued but a few minutes."

<sup>109</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Bratton, "Reminiscences."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Winn, "Notes." John Craig W22864 gave the same number.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Sumter to de Kalb, July 17, 1780, transcribed from an image from Library of Congress provided by the Culture & Heritage Museums, Historical Center of York County.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Pension application S4613.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> John Adair W2895; John Craig W22864; Edward Doyle S32216; Thomas Lofton S17114. John Patton W162 said they took nearly thirty prisoners.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Winn, "Notes." "Lieut. Hunt" was probably Cornet Cosby Hunt: Ian Saberton, *Cornwallis Papers* 1:201 note 24. Lt. Hunt of the British Legion escaped (Allaire, *Dairy*, 500).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Sumter to de Kalb, July 17, 1780.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Turnbull to Rawdon , July 12, 1780, *CP* 1:207. Saberton identified Lieutenant McGregor as John McGregor and Ensign Cameron as Allan Cameron, both of the New York Volunteers. *CP* 1:202, notes 26 and 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, July 22, 1780, CP 1:213.

deliver messages,<sup>119</sup> but on September 16 the following notice appeared in a Charlestown newspaper: "DEATH. At Camden, Lieutenant William Adamson, of the New York Volunteers." <sup>120</sup>

If Dr. William Bratton, Jr. remembered correctly after more than sixty years, then either there were two officers named Adamson at Huck's Defeat, or the Lt. Adamson in Turnbull's report was more than "much bruised." Bratton recalled that a Capt. John Adamson "was not touched by ball or sabre but was thrown from his horse and impaled on a pine sapling stump about the size of a candle. It penetrated his chest. The wound was a terrible one and little or no hope was entertained of his life." Lt. John Adair (W2895), another eyewitness, also recalled fifty-two years later "a Capt. Adamson (who commanded the British Infantry) wounded and taken." The two Adamsons have given rise to much confusion, as discussed in Appendix C below.

Dr. Bratton said his father "had heard of the dastardly attack" against Mrs. Bratton on the previous day, "but as might easily happen under the circumstances, was misinformed as to the perpetrator of it and he and old Capt. Chambers 122 were about to hack him to pieces with their swords, although he appeared to be dying.... My Father says that his sword was raised to strike, when he was checked as much by the countenance of the man as by his words which were, 'My life is of little consequence to me, Sir, for you can only hasten the end which I feel is fast approaching, but I beg of you to consult Mrs. Bratton before you perpetrate so great a wrong." Lt. John Adair was sent to fetch Mrs. Bratton from the garret of her house to determine whether the wounded man was the ruffian who had attacked her the day before or the officer who had saved her. She and young William, fearing that Col. Bratton had been killed, rushed out over the wounded and dying "lying so thick that it was impossible to reach the door without stepping on them."

On our approach my Mother was asked if she recognized the man. He was so pale and changed in appearance by his wound that she did not recognize him. Indeed she was lost in a sort of maze of relief from the fearful anticipations with which she left the house and could not take in the situation or recognize the officer until he addressed her saying, "Madam you were sent for at my request, more to save your Husband from a cruel injustice to himself than for any service you may be able to render me. He has heard that it was I who threatened your life." He spoke with difficulty but my Mother recognized him and comprehended the whole scene.

When my Mother recognized him and gave the true statement of his part in the attack upon her, all of their savage fierceness changed into tender care. My Father and old Capt. Chambers were kneeling on either side of him administering Rum, the panacea of our Revolutionary Fathers, while my Mother with Adair & some others, went to the house to prepare a place for him. {I remember well how Adair and another man took up Redcoats, one by the head and the other by the heels, and threw them out of the house like dead hogs, and laughed at my Mother when she remonstrated with them.} A room was cleared of dead and wounded, of whom the house was full, and a bed was prepared and the British Officer (Capt. John Adamson) was brought in. My Mother who was skilled in concocting healing salves and poultices, dressed his wound and he was made as comfortable as circumstances would permit.... by care of Mrs. B. his recovery was complete. 123

# The Significance of Huck's Defeat

In the words of Col. William Hill, the battle at Williamson's Plantation was "of greater consequence to the American cause than can be well supposed from an affair of small a magnitude — as it had the tendency to inspire the Americans with courage & fortitude & to teach them that the enemy was not invincible. According to Lt. John Adair (W2895), "our numbers increased daily after this action." The battle had exactly the opposite effect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, July 27, 1780, CP 1:218-219

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Obituary of William Adamson first noted by Todd Braisted. *The South-Carolina and American General Gazette* Vol. XXIII, no. 1099 (September 16, 1780), 3, https://www.newspapers.com/image/605607654/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Bratton, "Reminiscences."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> John Chambers, according to Scoggins, *Day*, 118.

<sup>123</sup> Bratton, "Reminiscences."

<sup>124 &</sup>quot;William Hill's Memoir."

on Loyalist militias and provincial cavalry. Rawdon informed Cornwallis that "my militia are so allarmed it will be some days befor they recover their spirits," <sup>125</sup> and Cornwallis replied, "Cavalry acts chiefly upon the nerves, and if once it loses its terror, it loses its greatest force." <sup>126</sup>

Turnbull correctly predicted that "their success will no doubt encourage them to pay us a visit." On July 30, Colonels Hill, Winn, Lacey, and others under Sumter attacked Turnbull's post at Rocky Mount. They failed to take the post, but the British realized it was indefensible and soon abandoned it. On August 6, these officers, along with Bratton, won a significant victory against Loyalist militiamen and provincials at Hanging Rock. 128 These victories came at a substantial cost. Col. Andrew Neel was killed at Rocky Mount. At Hanging Rock, Capt. John McClure "got wounded twice the first ball went through the thick part of his thigh & the next ball went in under the left breast and out under the shoulder blade — he died of the wound nine days afterwards." Two of the Gaston brothers were killed in the battle. 129 Many other setbacks lay ahead. On August 16, 1780, the American Army of the South suffered a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Camden, and two days later, Tarleton surprised and routed Sumter's troops at Fishing Creek. In the Backcountry, a civil war between Whigs and Tories raged for another two years, but Bratton, Lacey, Hill, Winn, and others kept up the struggle against tyranny until the British finally abandoned their last post at Charlestown on December 14, 1782.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Rawdon to Cornwallis, July 14, 1780, *CP* 1:207.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Cornwallis to Rawdon, July 15, 1780, CP 1:205.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Turnbull to Rawdon, July 12, 1780, CP 1:201-202.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> C. Leon Harris, "Thomas Sumter at Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock, South Carolina: 'A Great Victory Scarcely Ever Heard Of" *Academia.edu* (2024).

https://www.academia.edu/116805346/Thomas\_Sumter\_at\_Rocky\_Mount\_and\_Hanging\_Rock\_South\_Carolina\_A\_Great\_Victory\_Sc arcely Ever Heard Of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> John Walker W9875. Scoggins, Day, 147.

# APPENDIX A: Deducing the location of Mobley's Meeting House

Only two known maps display the location of Mobley's Meeting House. One is the Mills Atlas for the Fairfield District, based on an 1820 survey that is accurate within about one mile. Overlying that map onto a modern topographic map places Mobley's Meeting House within a mile of the mouth of Williams Creek on the West Fork of Little River, labeled as the "So. Fork of Little River" on Mills Atlas. The map indicates "Mobley's M. H." on the west side of the river and south of a road leading north toward Chester. Currently, there is no road to Chester from that area across the West Fork. Like other roads from that period, it likely followed a ridge whenever possible.

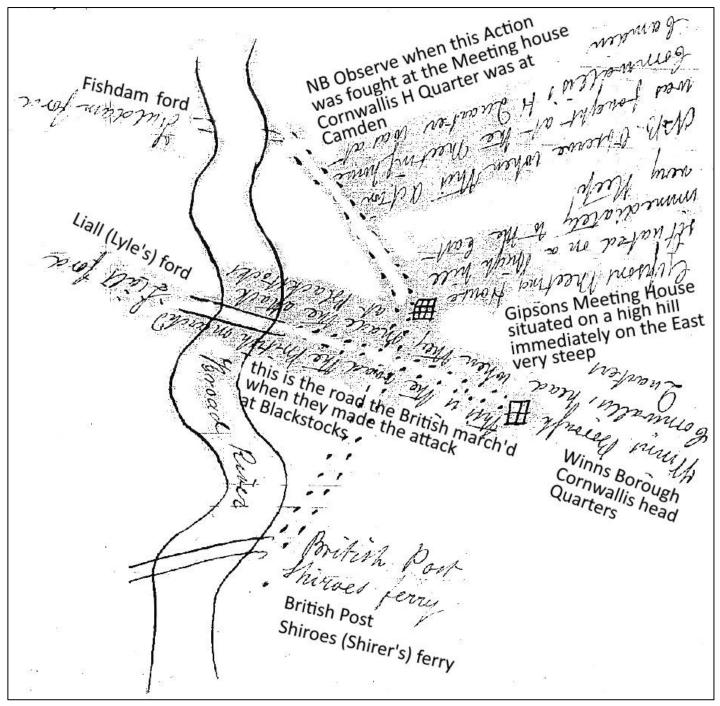


Figure A1. Winn's sketch rotated 180° so that north is toward the top and with annotations transcribed.

The second map is a rough sketch with Richard Winn's Notes showing "Gipsons Meeting House." (Fig. A1) A notation on the sketch says, "Gipsons Meeting House situated on a high hill immediately to the East, very Steep." Combining this statement with the assumption that the road to Chester ran along a ridge, I deduced that Mobley's Meeting House was as shown in Figure 4.

Mills Atlas is not accurate enough, however, to rule out a location on the hill about a half mile to the south. That location is more consistent with a statement by Winn that "Gipsons Meeting House is twelve Miles above Shiroes [Shirer's] ferry," and an 1873 letter stating that "Mobley's Meeting-house is about twelve miles, in a direct line, North-east [sic: northwest], from Winnsboro."<sup>131</sup> It is also closer to the direction, but not the distance, of the historical marker, which states that the skirmish occurred "1½ miles east on Little River." The location in Figure 4 is 13.4 miles from the site of Shirer's Ferry, about the same distance from Winnsboro, and 0.9 miles northeast of the historical marker.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Shelton, "Battle," 18.

<sup>131</sup> Winn's Notes in Shelton, "Battle," 22. George Howe to Henry B. Dawson in Shelton, "Battle," 24.

## APPENDIX B: Deducing the location of Huck's Defeat

The location of Col. William Braxton's home is well known, since it is still standing, but the location of James Williamson's house is uncertain. Michael Scoggins, Steven Smith and Tamara Wilson did not find convincing archaeological evidence of the site. <sup>132</sup> Richard Winn made a rough sketch of the area in 1812, <sup>133</sup> part of which is in Figure B1 below. It shows the house "Huck took possession of" east of an adjoining plantation, which was Bratton's. A plat shows the approximate location of the 300-acre property Williamson bought in 1766. <sup>134</sup>

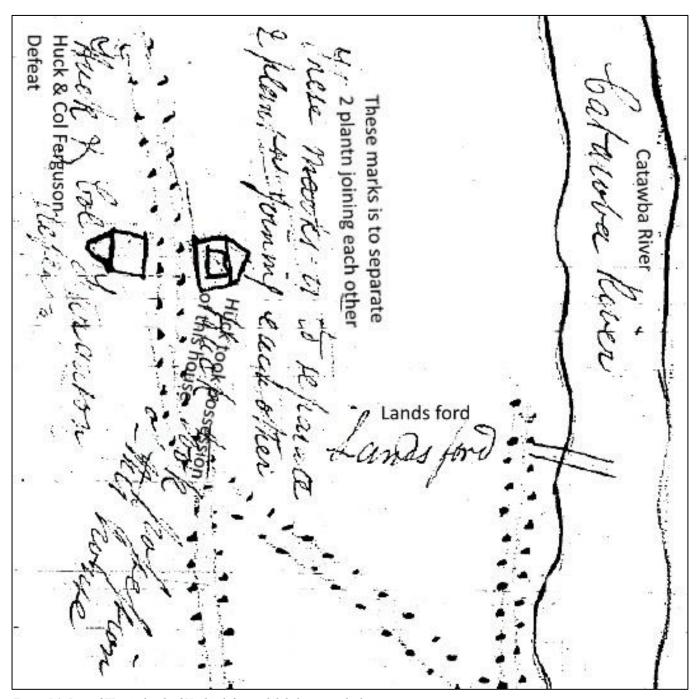


Figure B1. Part of Winn's sketch of Huck's defeat with labels transcribed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 43.

<sup>133</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 17.

<sup>134</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 12.

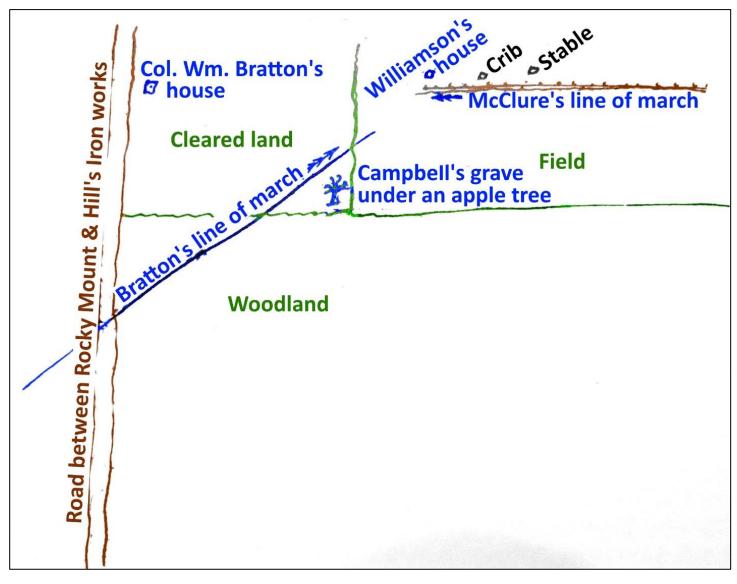


Figure B2. Draper's copy of Moore's 1857 map recolored and re-lettered for clarity. The road from Rocky Mount to Hill's Ironworks runs generally northward.

In the 1870s, Lyman C. Draper obtained a map of the battlefield created in 1857 by John Star Moore, who grew up in the neighborhood and whose father and uncles had fought in the battle. Draper's copy of the map shows Williamson's house north of a lane and due east of Bratton's. Also shown are the corn crib where Huck's prisoners were held, and the direction of Bratton's and McClure's marches toward Williamson's. The sketch also shows the grave of a Campbell, not otherwise identified, but possibly the sole Whig said to have been killed at the battle. (Fig. B2)

According to Scoggins, in 1871, Draper visited two of William Bratton's grandsons in Brattonsville, who had walked the field with participants during a commemoration of the battle on July 12, 1839. One grandson informed Draper that "McClures party went up the ascending Williamson's lane... & as they reached the ridge, & just over it was a hollow in which at a spring & spring branch was Williamson's house, long since disappeared – & just beyond on high ground was Col. Bratton's house – some 60 rods [330 yards or 990 feet] off." Several years later, Draper sought further information from local historian Daniel Green Stinson, who walked the field with one of the grandsons and drew a map of it dated August 24, 1876. [137] (Fig. B3) Like Winn's and Moore's sketches, Stinson's shows Williamson's house eastward of Bratton's, but the corn crib is in a different location from where it is shown in Moore's map. It also shows where Huck was buried near the house.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 209-210.

<sup>136</sup> Scoggins et al., "Defining," 24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Scoggin, *Day*, 212-213.

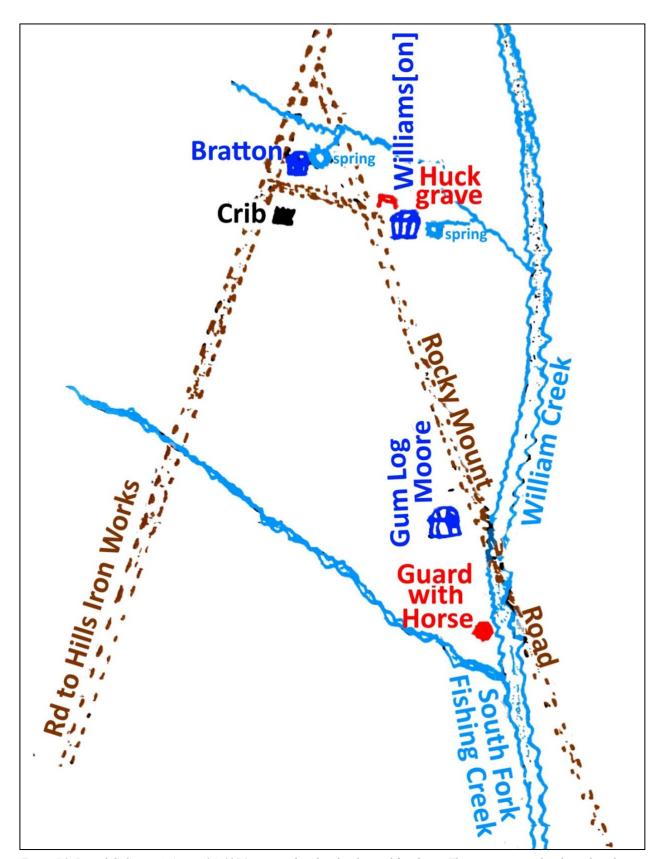


Figure B3. Daniel G. Stinson's August 24, 1876 map recolored and re-lettered for clarity. The map is oriented with north at the top.

Stinson's map shows Williamson's house on the west side of a spring branch, as Draper had been informed earlier. Lidar-based imagery shows such a spring branch. (Fig. B4) An earlier sketch by Stinson shows an "old

Road" south of Williamson's and continuing northwestward and past the north side of Bratton's house, <sup>138</sup> which I assume to be Williamson's lane. The lidar imagery shows what appears to be a roadbed north of and parallel to modern Percival Road toward the South Fork of Fishing Creek, which may be the eastern part of Williamson's lane. If this information and my assumptions are correct, Williamson's home and lane are as shown in Figures 8 and 9. The distance of the proposed location of Williamson's house from Bratton's is approximately the same as was told to Draper by Bratton's grandson (330 yards). The area is now wooded property of York County.

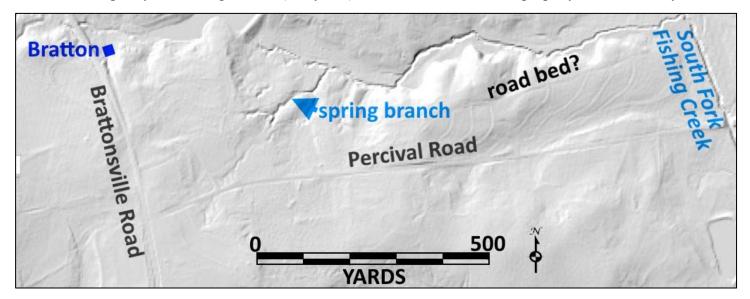


Figure B4. Lidar-based image showing the spring branch assumed to be the one in Stinson's map, east of Williamson's house, and what appears to be a roadbed, possibly part of Williamson's lane.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Scoggins, *Day*, 211.

# APPENDIX C: Lt. William Adamson or Capt. John Adamson?

Col. William Bratton's son, Dr. William Bratton, Jr., who was a few days shy of seven years old during Huck's Defeat and in his seventies when he dictated his recollections, stated only once and parenthetically that Captain John Adamson was wounded at Huck's Defeat. John Adair (W2895) also referred to "a Capt. Adamson (who commanded the British Infantry) wounded and taken." It was assumed by others that this was Lt. John Adamson of the Camden District Loyalist militia. A pay abstract dated July 25, 1782, shows that this John Adamson never rose to the rank of captain. In a petition to the South Carolina legislature, he admitted only to having accepted a commission as lieutenant. It is possible that Lt. John Adamson commanded a company and was therefore acting as a captain; however, it is unlikely that a militia lieutenant would have commanded British or provincial infantry. Scoggins, in 2005, wrote the following about Lt. John Adamson:

He was born in County Antrim, Ireland, in 1744 and, sometime between 1765 and 1770, settled in Camden, where he became a prominent merchant in the years before the Revolution. In early June 1780, Adamson assisted [Col. Henry] Rugeley in raising a regiment of Loyalist militia and accepted a lieutenant's commission in that regiment. Although he had remained loyal to the British government since the beginning of the war, Adamson had strong ties to the Whig community in the Camden District, and after the British occupied the Upcountry he used his influence to protect his friends in the Whig party. A petition presented to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1784 on his behalf stated that Adamson accepted the lieutenant's commission in Rugeley's regiment "at the Earnest request of his Neighbours (now Subjects of this State) to prevent its falling in to the hands of a person whose intentions was well known was to oppress them." The petition further stated that "he used all the Influence he had with the British in favour of Such persons as avowed their attachment to the American Cause." Similarly, Adamson's great-grandson, Dr. Edward M. Boykin, maintained that Adamson assisted distressed Whigs by "protecting them from the oppression and pillaging of the 'Black riders' and 'Cowboys' who under the sanction of the British Flag were common thieves. 139

By 2011, Scoggins decided it was Lt. William Adamson of the New York Volunteers, not John Adamson, who was at Huck's Defeat. 140 The July 22 letter cited previously confirms that a Lt. Adamson had been wounded and captured at Huck's Defeat and was then at Camden as a prisoner on parole. Lt. William H. Adamson had been commissioned a lieutenant in the New York Volunteers on March 1, 1778, and the name William Adamson appears on a November 29, 1779, muster roll of the company of Captain Allan Cameron of the New York Volunteers at Savannah. 141 Lt. Adamson died in September 1780, possibly from wounds received at Huck's Defeat. In common with John Adamson, he was said to have "ingratiated himself exceedingly with the people of the country."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Scoggins, Day, 100. John Adamson is also the subject of a chapter entitled "The Honored Tory" in Thomas J. Kirkland and Robert M. Kennedy, Historic Camden, Part One: Colonial and Revolutionary (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1905), 281-299. According to this source, in 1782 John Adamson was banished from South Carolina and lived in Florida for two years until he was permitted to return to Camden, where he died in 1816.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, Steven D. Smith and Tamara S. Wilson, "Defining the Williamson's Plantation: Huck's Defeat Battlefield" University of South Carolina, Scholar Commons (2011), 31, 34. Turnbull to Rawdon, July 12, 1780, CP 1:202, 207, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1119&context=anth facpub.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Saberton, CP 1:202 note 25. Todd Braisted, "New York Volunteers: Cameron's Coy" The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies, accessed July 20, 2025, https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/musters/nyv/nyvcam1.htm.

### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**



C. Leon Harris attended public schools in Henry County, Virginia, and earned a BS in physics at Virginia Tech. After completing graduate degrees in biophysics at Penn State, he taught biology, authored textbooks, and conducted neurobiological research at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh, for over thirty years. 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. He has also helped Will Graves transcribe more than thirty thousand Revolutionary War pension and bountyland applications, rosters, and other documents at revwarapps.org.

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