

*Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*  
The  
**JOURNAL**

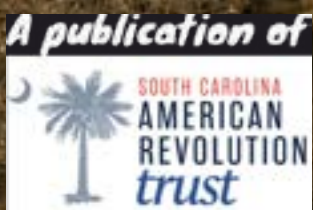
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**BONUS:**  
*Dough on the Sticks*



**INSIDE:**  
**Tarleton's First Defeat**

C. Leon Harris



# The Journal

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# From the Editor

It is my pleasure to offer a SCART interview of premier historian Hugh Harrington, whose latest story of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina has just been published.

## “Our Story”

### A Conversation with Hugh T. Harrington

Few historians have explored the lesser-known aspects of the Revolutionary War better than Hugh T. Harrington. In his recent book, *Our Story: The Revolutionary War of Colonel Robert and Mary Ouldfield Heriot*, Harrington presents a human-focused account set against the complex background of the Southern Campaign.

Harrington combines thorough research with engaging storytelling, encouraging readers to rethink not just the war but also the personal sacrifices of those who experienced it—particularly those whose voices have historically been overlooked.

In this interview, Harrington talks about his research, the Heriots’ legacy, and what their story uncovers about the Revolution in the South.

### Origins & Inspiration

**Meehan:** What first drew you to the story of Colonel Robert and Mary Ouldfield Heriot?

**Harrington:** Forty years ago, I was just getting into genealogy when my uncle, also named Hugh T. Harrington, told me about the letters Robert and Mary Heriot exchanged during the Revolutionary War. I was fascinated. These ancient ancestors could write so much better than I. And they lived through a dramatic period in our history. I’ve never forgotten these people, and when the opportunity arose to tell their story, I leaped on it.

**Meehan:** Was there a moment in your research when you realized this story demanded a full book?

**Harrington:** From the start, my intention was to make it book-length. I was only concerned with making it readable to the average citizen, not aiming it solely at scholars.



*Richard C. Meehan, Jr.*

### Research & Sources

**Meehan:** Which primary sources were the most important in reconstructing the Heriots’ story?

**Harrington:** The most important primary source was the letters the Heriots exchanged. Almost miraculously, they have been preserved for the past 250 years. In many respects, they tell their own story, with me just filling in the background for the modern reader.

**Meehan:** Did you encounter gaps or contradictions in the historical record—and how did you handle them?

**Harrington:** The biggest gap in the story is what Robert Heriot actually did day to day while paroled on James Island. There is no evidence, although I strongly suspect he was bored, as each day was the same as the previous day and the same as the following day. He was out of the war and out of the life of his family in Georgetown.

### The Heriots Themselves

**Meehan:** How would you characterize the partnership between Robert and Mary—military, social, and personal?

**Harrington:** The language and tone of the letters exchanged between Robert and Mary reveal a deep love and devotion. I had a colleague tell me, “I wish my wife would write to me like that!” Their letters are windows into their souls. It is hard to read them without feeling envy for what they had 250 years ago.

**Meehan:** In what ways does Mary Ouldfield Heriot

represent the broader experience of women during the Revolutionary War?

**Harrington:** During the war, a great many women were left to their own devices when their men went into service. These women had to keep their families together, perhaps farm their land, and, importantly, deal with the opposing forces of the British and the Patriots. In addition, they had to contend with their former neighbors in the “Civil War” that raged in the backcountry between Whigs and Loyalists. How would they determine who could be trusted and who was an enemy? Mary Heriot faced all of that, including having British officers living in her home.

**Meehan:** What surprised you most about Robert Heriot as a military figure?

**Harrington:** I was surprised to learn that Robert Heriot had little military involvement in the war, as he became a POW soon after the fall of Charleston. I must chuckle, since Mary Heriot very likely saw more combat than Robert. At one point, she was personally targeted by a British gunboat that fired at point-blank range at her, her family, her home, and her enslaved workers. I like to think that Mary would have made a charming dinner companion for the rest of her life.

## The Southern Campaign Context

**Meehan:** How does the Heriots’ story deepen our understanding of the Southern Campaign?

**Harrington:** The Heriots illustrate for us what many of the upper-class planters, who supported the Whigs, experienced during the war.

**Meehan:** Where do they fit alongside figures like Daniel Morgan, Banastre Tarleton, and Nathanael Greene?

**Harrington:** The Heriots didn’t really fit alongside any of the “name” participants, except for Francis “the Swamp Fox” Marion, who was well known to Georgetown residents because he had lived there. The Heriots, although wealthy, were not of the military stature of the “name” commanders.

**Meehan:** Do their experiences reflect the “civil war” nature of the conflict in the Backcountry?

**Harrington:** Yes. The Heriots, in the Low Country, faced the “civil war” as their friends and neighbors polarized, maybe switching sides as the winds of war blew against them.

## Themes & Interpretation

**Meehan:** What central themes do you hope readers take away from this book?

**Harrington:** I hope readers see the war from a different angle. The Heriots would experience very little combat, and Mary Heriot would face considerable tension as she tried to keep the family together with her young children while her husband remained in limbo elsewhere. Hers was a very different kind of war. Robert’s war was one of isolation and helplessness as the war and life passed him by.

**Meehan:** Does the Heriots’ story challenge any common myths about the Revolutionary War?

**Harrington:** I don’t think the Heriots shatter any myths. Rather, they tell a story that has not been told. Their story is of a wealthy family torn apart by war, and their struggle to survive in a world turned upside down.

**Meehan:** What does their story reveal about loyalty and survival in wartime?

**Harrington:** Theirs was a love story. They stuck by each other through thick and thin. While they tried to help each other, they were largely unable to do much of substance. Their letters undoubtedly lifted each other’s spirits and made life more bearable.

## Writing the Story

**Meehan:** How did you balance scholarly rigor with narrative readability?

**Harrington:** I value scholarly rigor, but I am a strong believer that one must not write like Professor Dryasdust. I strive to write in a style that anyone can read and understand. There is no need to try to dazzle the readership with complex sentences or unusual words. It is said that “No man is truly great until he is willing to use a small word when he knows a big word that means the same thing.” I agree with that 100%. However, despite a somewhat casual style, it is essential that footnotes (not endnotes) be used so the reader can assess the quality of the sources and easily access them to verify the information presented or seek additional information.

**Meehan:** Did you approach this work more as a historian or as a storyteller?

**Harrington:** I think the best historians are storytellers. One example is David McCullough, who built a career on telling history as if he were sitting by readers’

firesides, telling a story. I only wish I could do it as well as he does.

## Legacy & Public History

**Meehan:** Where do you see this book fitting within Revolutionary War scholarship?

**Harrington:** I believe this book covers the stories of many participants who are not well-known figures like Francis Marion, Tarleton, Greene, or Cornwallis. The Heriots were better known than the faceless “men of the ranks,” but they still have not received the exposure that would help us better understand them and their experiences.

**Meehan:** Are there sites associated with the Heriots that deserve greater recognition or preservation?

**Harrington:** Today, there are almost no physical locations that would have been known to the Heriots, other than St. Michael’s Church in Charleston, The Old Exchange Building – where Robert was briefly imprisoned in what is now called the Provost Dungeon – and Prince George Winyah Church in Georgetown. All of these are in excellent condition today. The rest is gone with the wind.

**Meehan:** How can local communities better tell stories like this to modern audiences?

**Harrington:** I think the character of Mary Heriot would be ideal for an enterprising actress who could tell her story in the first person to groups of all ages. Think of it as a one-woman show.

## Looking Ahead

**Meehan:** What new questions did this book raise for you?

**Harrington:** I see in their letters, while Robert was on James Island, occasional odd remarks or words that seem out of context. I keep wondering if they were some sort of code or pre-arranged messaging known only to themselves.

**Meehan:** Are there other overlooked figures from the Southern Campaign you’re considering exploring next?

**Harrington:** I don’t think so. I’m going to devote my declining years to writing brief histories of my ancestors to pass along to future generations of the family... whether they want ‘em or not.

## Closing Question

**Meehan:** If you had to summarize the Heriots’ story in one sentence for readers of *The Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*, what would it be?

**Harrington:** War took the Heriots from great wealth and social standing to a state of fear, privation, and distrust, in which their only rock was their love and faith in each other, bringing them, at last, to the sunshine of a new Nation without war.

## Why This Story Matters

The Revolutionary War in the South was not merely a contest of armies—it was a struggle that divided families, tested loyalties, and reshaped communities. Stories like that of the Heriots remind us that the war was lived as much in homes and relationships as on battlefields.

The Heriots lived at the pinnacle of society, enjoying great wealth and likely engaging in conspicuous consumption. After Charleston fell, they were physically separated and lost much of their material wealth. They trusted each other completely and looked with suspicion at everyone else, unsure whether they were friends, opportunists, or enemies. They persevered, taking one careful step at a time.

As recent scholarship and site work across the Carolina Backcountry continue to demonstrate, these personal narratives are essential to understanding the full scope of the American Revolution, particularly in regions where the line between Patriot and Loyalist was often perilously thin.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.  
*The Journal*



FEATURED REVOLUTIONARY WAR HISTORY

# Our Story

The Revolutionary War of Colonel Robert and Mary Ouldfield Heriot

## Our Story



The Revolutionary War of  
Colonel Robert and Mary Ouldfield Heriot

Hugh T. Harrington

By Hugh T. Harrington

*Foreword by Jim Piccuch, Ph.D.*

### Not every Revolutionary War story is told from the battlefield.

Robert Heriot held the rank of colonel, yet likely never came under enemy fire. Mary Heriot left no famous political tract. Their correspondence, however, reveals how the Revolution reached into family life, private choices, and the struggle to endure war.

*"What, then, can be learned from the Heriots' lives and wartime experiences? The short answer is: much."*

- from the Foreword by Jim Piccuch, Ph.D.

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# Dragon

# The

by  
C. Leon Harris

The March issue of The Journal featured an article about Loyalist Capt. Richard Pearis, who arranged the surrender of an entire brigade of South Carolina Patriots in June 1780. During the same period, Capt. Christian Huck was also trying to defeat Backcountry Patriots, as described in last November's issue. Cornwallis confidently and erroneously wrote that these two events "put an end to all resistance in South Carolina." That is about all Pearis and Huck had in common. They pursued their goals with very different approaches and achieved very different results.

Huck had been a lawyer and land speculator in Philadelphia until 1778, when his property was confiscated for refusing to join the rebellion. He fled to South Carolina and, probably still bitter, helped massacre surrendering Continentals at the Battle of Waxhaws on May 29, 1780. Huck was then sent to recruit loyalists and suppress the rebellion in present-day York and Chester counties, but many pious Presbyterians in the area were put off by his violence and alleged blasphemy. In July 1780, Huck went to capture or kill some of the rebel leaders at the home of James Williamson, where he was defeated and killed.

Capt. Richard Pearis had even more reason than Huck to be bitter about his treatment by the Patriots. In July 1776, troops under Col. John Thomas, Sr., destroyed his home and abused his wife and children, as Pearis stated in his Loyalist claim.

*When my Estate was burnt and destroyed, my*

*wife 2 Daughters and one Son were surprised by break of Day by one Colonel Thomas & 400 Militia, beat and abused my daughters and made them all Prisoners, after burning destroying and carrying away the property, forced them to March on foot through Rivers and Creeks 25 Miles in one day, without Victuals or any thing to cover their heads from the Sun, afterwards kept them confined three days without any Provisions, then sent them off in an open waggon 100 Miles and turned them out to shift for themselves amongst a parcel of Rebels without money or Provisions, they were then obliged for three years during my absence on duty, to be depending on Charitable people, added to their own Industry for their Living and under continual apprehension of being Massacred.*

Like Huck, Pearis was sent to the South Carolina Backcountry in June 1780 to recruit Loyalists to suppress the rebellion. Pearis's approach was markedly different from Huck's and surprising, given how his family had been treated. Thousands of men from the Ninety Six District under General Andrew Williamson voted to surrender to the British, and Pearis happened to be nearby. Pearis required only that they lay down their arms and return home. Williamson and many of his men not only remained peaceful but also became assets to the British.

History provides examples of Huck's fire-and-sword tactics being effective, but in the South Carolina Backcountry, Pearis's softer approach proved more effective.

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## Dough on the Sticks

by

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

Some battles are famous for their big movements, but others stand out because of a small, everyday detail that makes the moment feel real. For Major Joseph McJunkin of the Spartan Regiment, the Battle of Blackstock's on November 20, 1780, was first remembered as a dinner interrupted, and only then as a turning point in the war.

General Thomas Sumter's army, including McJunkin's men, stopped to rest and built fires. They wrapped dough around sticks and cooked it over the flames. The moment was almost peaceful. The hungry men, worn out from being chased by the enemy, enjoyed a rare break. "Just at this stage of the preparations, Tarleton's (British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton) force came in sight." McJunkin, who was officer of the day, quickly informed Sumter and was ordered to bring his men "up to the house." The dough roasting over the fire was likely left behind for

the British to find.<sup>1</sup> The house sat on a hill above the battlefield and gave some shelter from enemy fire. Sumter's men got ready to face Tarleton, forming lines along pasture fences that looked out over the rich bottom land.

McJunkin says the action happened just after Sumter moved from Fish Dam Ford on November 9, 1780. Sumter crossed to the west side of the Broad River, while McJunkin, who had just recovered from a fever, joined the few local men who had not become Tories, along with some refugee Georgians near Puget's Creek in Union District. Together, they marched to Blackstock's with "about 300 men," followed by Tarleton's mounted troops.<sup>2</sup> South Carolina Parks estimates there were 500 to 700 Patriots, and the American Battlefield Trust says 1,000, but McJunkin's "about 300" may refer to the men right around him, those he saw, or the number he remembered in the heat of the moment.<sup>3</sup> In McJunkin's story, the exact number is less important than how the fight began.

Sumter knew the danger and did not wait for Tarleton to attack. Instead, he asked for volunteers. "Boys, who will begin the action?" McJunkin remembers that he and Colonel Farr stepped forward, and others soon joined until Sumter thought the group was big enough. Then Sumter gave a bold order: move forward, and if you are pushed back, keep fighting as you fall back.<sup>4</sup>

This isn't the language of an ambush or of men hiding behind logs, waiting for a rash British attack. Instead, McJunkin offers a more dynamic account. A volunteer group went out to engage the enemy and draw it into a fight. As they advanced, they encountered a British force attempting to flank them, and shots were exchanged. McJunkin's company retreated but kept firing until the British charged Sumter's main position. According to his recollection, the battle then shifted back and forth until the Americans pushed the enemy from the area around sunset.<sup>5</sup>

McJunkin's story captures what it felt like to be sent into danger, to see the enemy, to hear the gunfire across the field, and to watch a small mission turn into a bigger battle. Later accounts focus on how strong Sumter's position was: the farm buildings, steep ground, fences, the Tyger River, and deadly rifle fire that hit British troops out in the open. South Carolina Parks says the position was a steep hill and ridge along the Tyger River, with an open field and a strong wooden fence in front. McJunkin noted that Sumter deliberately advanced to force the British into that risky spot.<sup>6</sup> According to Dr. C. Leon Harris, "The reason for hurrying Tarleton into battle was not because of the terrain, but so his artillery and infantry, lagging behind his mounted troops, could not reenforce him."

Tarleton was known for his speed, shock tactics, and ability to scare his enemies. But at Blackstock's, he faced a force that had learned hard lessons over the past year. These men were not trained soldiers, but they were not helpless farmers either. Many had lived through the collapse of Patriot control in South Carolina in the 1780s. They had seen Charleston fall, Ninety Six become a stronghold, Tory raiders grow bolder, and neighbors forced to pick sides. McJunkin's story is full of this civil war. Some men had "turned Tory." Others became refugees. Families were left unprotected. Things like protection papers, parole, loyalty, and survival were not just ideas—they were part of daily life in the Backcountry.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph McJunkin, "McJunkin's Narrative: Draper MSS, Sumter Papers 23VV153–203," transcribed by Will Graves, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, no. 11 (November 2005), 39. It is important to note that this narrative was recorded many years after the event. This source describes a few inconsistencies between several versions and explains them.

<sup>2</sup> "McJunkin's Narrative," in *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, no. 11 (November 2005), 36–39.

<sup>3</sup> "Blackstock's Battlefield," South Carolina Parks, Battle of Musgrove Mill State Historic Site, accessed May 12, 2026; "Blackstock's Plantation," American Battlefield Trust, accessed May 12, 2026.

<sup>4</sup> McJunkin, "McJunkin's Narrative," 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "Blackstocks Battlefield," South Carolina Parks. <https://southcarolinaparks.com/blackstocks-battlefield>.

Sumter was wounded near the end of the fight. McJunkin says the Patriots decided it was wise to get him to safety, so they carried him between two horses across the river.<sup>7</sup> According to Cherokee County tradition, as recorded in the Adam Goudelock material, Sumter was taken even farther to the Goudelock cabin after the battle, where a doctor treated his shoulder.<sup>8</sup>

McJunkin saw Blackstock's as a victory. He remembered British prisoners saying they heard their own bugles and knew they had lost, since the bugles were used to gather the missing. He thought Patriot losses were "comparatively few to that of our enemy—perhaps not more than one to five or six."<sup>9</sup>

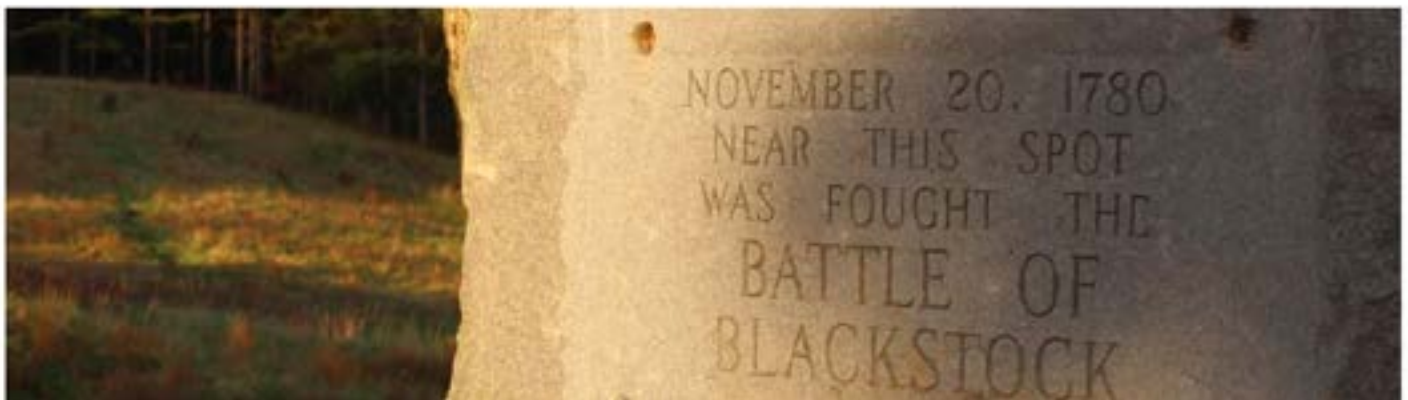
The next day, the British started fighting again and hanged John Johnson, whom McJunkin called one of "our bravest fellows." Johnson had been caught while trying to join Sumter. McJunkin believed there was no legal reason for this; Johnson was killed without a trial. The war in the Backcountry was harsh, with homes looted and burned, and men hunted down for their beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

The dough on the sticks was left behind. McJunkin gave a warning. Sumter called for men to stand up and fight. Farr and McJunkin volunteered their companies. They faced Tarleton's stronger forces, pulled back when needed, and kept firing. The British charged, but Sumter's militia held out and fought hard enough to force Tarleton to leave by sundown. McJunkin's story shows men who were hungry, poor, and angry, but still willing to fight when it mattered. These men stopped the British invasion of South Carolina and helped win our freedom.



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<sup>7</sup> Joseph McJunkin, "McJunkin's Narrative: Draper MSS, Sumter Papers 23VV153–203," transcribed by Will Graves, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, no. 11 (November 2005), 39.

<sup>8</sup> Richard C. Meehan, Jr., *Revolutionary War Sites: Cherokee County Historic Site Survey*, Adam Goudelock Cemetery and Goudelock Homestead entries.

<sup>9</sup> McJunkin, "McJunkin's Narrative," 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

# L O Y A L I S T

# THE



by  
Paul Wood



*Ann Pamela Cunningham, by James Reid Lambdin, c. 1860. MVLA*

**M**y usual enjoyable duty is to write about a Revolutionary War Loyalist, but this month I'm focusing on Ann Pamela Cunningham (1816-1875), who was born 33 years after the war ended.<sup>1</sup> When a horse threw her at seventeen, the talented young woman was left with lasting impairment. The family's great wealth meant she could get medical care in Philadelphia for her ongoing pain, though it wasn't enough.

Spurred on by her father, Robert, and family friend Benjamin Franklin Perry, Ann Pamela sought to rehabilitate the image of the Cunningham family members who had remained loyal to the Crown during the War for Independence. She had access to the family's records and, in 1845, wrote what I consider reliable accounts of the lives of her great-uncle, Loyalist Brigadier General Robert Cunningham, and her grandfather, Loyalist Colonel Patrick Cunningham. Though her narratives of her distant relative William Cunningham proved valuable to researchers, much of what she wrote about "Bloody Bill" was slanted to justify the murders of the Bloody Scout (November-December 1781) and even to exonerate him.

Ann Pamela's bias toward all Tories and her stiff defense of Bloody Bill ignited the fury of South Carolina's literary giant and historian William Gilmore Simms. The following year, he published four articles that undermined Ann Pamela's points. In present-day terms, Simms slam-dunked his opponent.

Prodded by her mother, Ann Pamela embarked on a much more successful project in 1853. She posted a notice in the Charleston Mercury calling on Americans to raise funds to purchase and preserve the by-then-debilitated estate of George and Martha Washington, Mount Vernon. She proved an excellent communicator and organizer and, with other women, founded the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, the nation's first preservation society. Ann Pamela served as Regent, and each state chose a Vice-Regent. Donations poured in from around the country. The MVLA overcame enormous political obstacles, some stemming from pre-Civil War tensions. The property owner, John Augustine Washington III, had his demands met with remarkable speed by Ann Pamela and the association's

<sup>1</sup> Ann preferred to spell her surname with only one "n."

Vice-Regents. The MVLA paid the deceased President's great-grandnephew \$200,000 and took over the estate just months before the Civil War began.

Following the war, the Association secured additional funding and began preserving Mount Vernon. Each year, thousands of Americans tour the house, outbuildings, grounds, and the tomb of our first President. Despite her debilitating injuries and her controversial attempt to write history, Ann Pamela Cunningham made history. She lived long after the war ended; however, she was a true heroine of the American Revolution.



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An illustration of Revolutionary War soldiers in a battle scene. In the foreground, a soldier in a blue coat and tricorn hat is firing a rifle. Behind him, another soldier in a brown coat is also firing. The background shows a hazy battle scene with smoke and other soldiers.

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AI Artwork generated by ChatGPT is not supposed to represent exactly the layout of the battle, only a hint of the way it might have looked. This article describes what really happened in detail.

# **Tarleton's First Defeat: Blackstock's Plantation**

**November 20, 1780**

by

C. Leon Harris

## Introduction

“Tarleton’s Defeat” usually brings to mind the Battle of the Cowpens on January 17, 1781, but that decisive defeat of Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton by Continental and militia troops under General Daniel Morgan was actually his second defeat. Almost two months earlier, Gen. Thomas Sumter defeated Tarleton at the plantation of William Blackstock on the Tyger River in the South Carolina Backcountry. (Fig. 1) The defeat of British regular and provincial forces by Sumter’s volunteer militiamen has too often been overlooked.

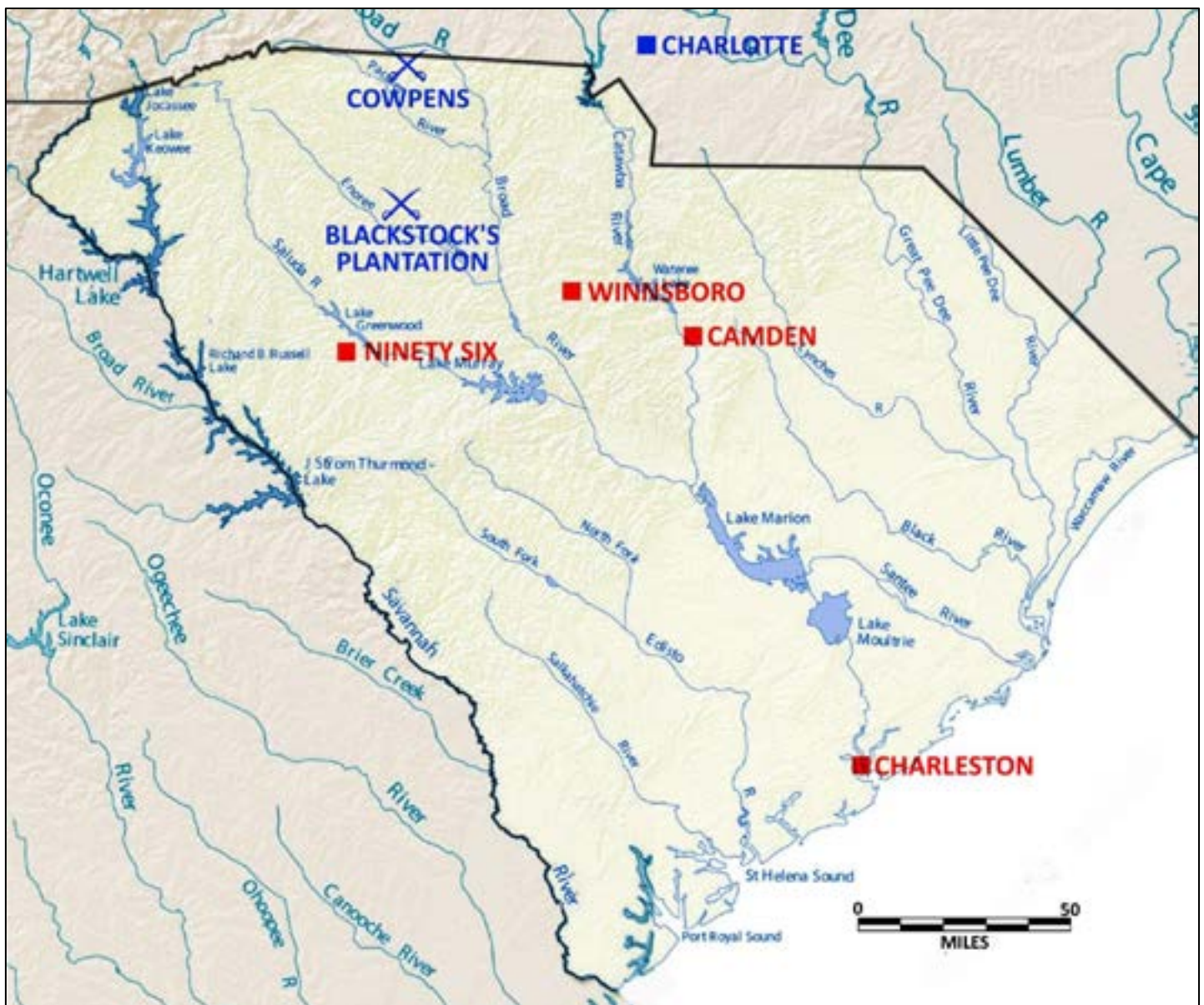


Figure 1. Locations of the battles of Blackstock's Plantation and Cowpens, as well as some British posts.

The forty-five-year-old Colonel Sumter had come out of retirement in early June of 1780, a few days after Tarleton’s legion cavalry and infantry “cut to pieces” Virginia Continental soldiers as they tried to surrender at Waxhaws. The massacre at Waxhaws caused both outrage and terror. Hundreds of state troops, militiamen, and refugees from the Carolinas and Georgia sought revenge and the safety of numbers with Sumter, near Charlotte, and chose him as their general. Although called militiamen, they might better be termed volunteers, since they were not called out by any authority and were paid only for what they could capture or plunder from their enemies.

In early November, they were camped at Stalling's Plantation about 4 miles southeast of present York, intending to march toward the British post at Ninety Six, which was crucial for Cornwallis's plan to return to North Carolina and eventually invade Virginia. Sumter's men were to serve as bait to lure some of Cornwallis's two thousand men out of Winnsboro. Gen. William Smallwood, a Maryland Continental temporarily in command of the North Carolina militia, would then attack the British remaining at Winnsboro. Smallwood did not follow through with the scheme, but Sumter decided to proceed anyway.<sup>1</sup> The plan succeeded in drawing some of Cornwallis's force away from Winnsboro. In the early hours of November 9, 1780, Sumter unwisely camped with his back on Broad River at Fishdam Ford and was surprised by part of Tarleton's British Legion cavalry and mounted infantrymen

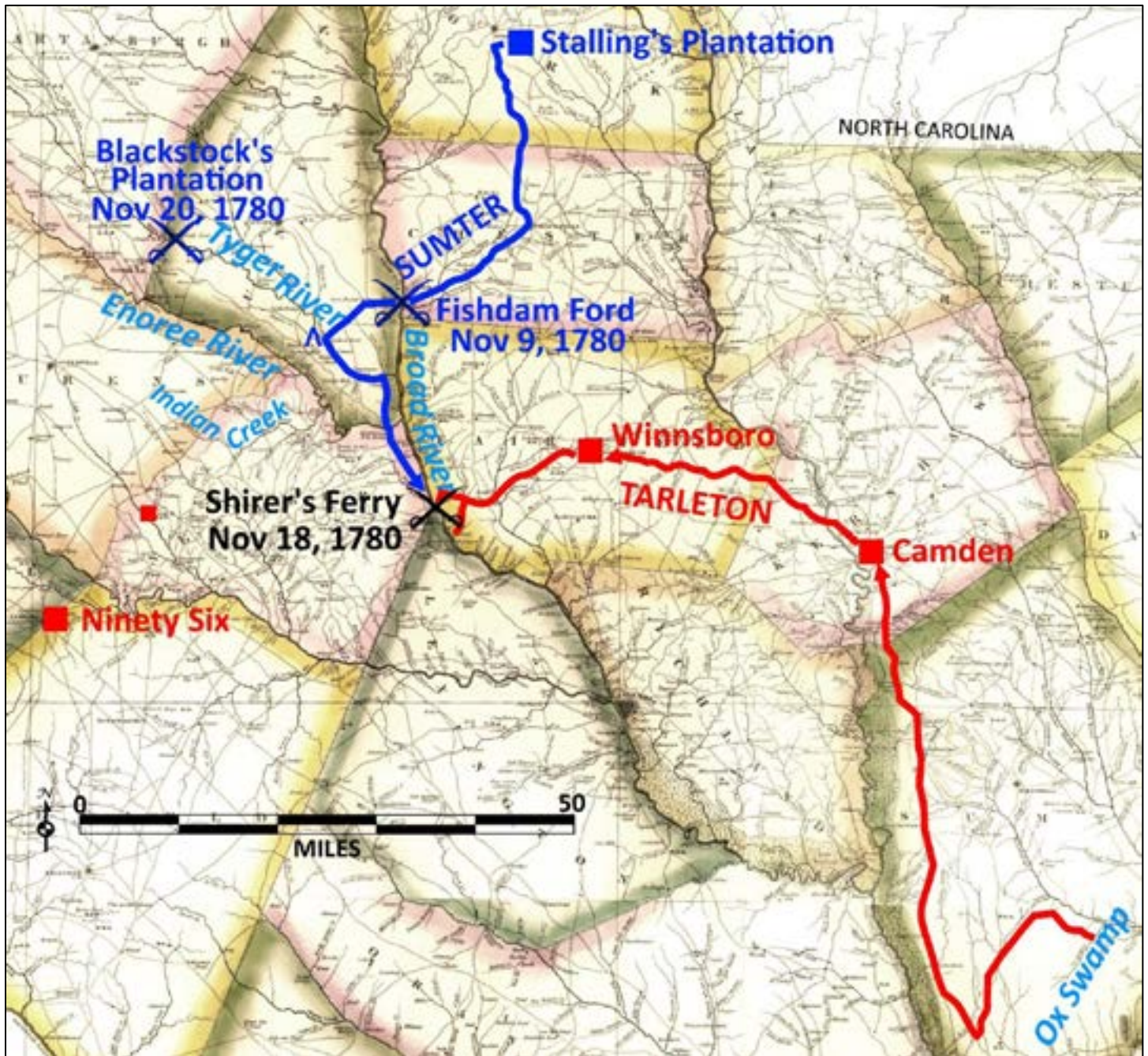


Figure 2. Possible routes of Sumter and of Tarleton to Shirer's Ferry on Broad River on roads depicted on the John Wilson map of 1822. Tarleton's route is according to a 1787 map by William Faden, Geographer to the King.

<sup>1</sup> General Richard Winn's "Notes," transcribed by Will Graves <https://revwarapps.org/scx2.pdf>. Winn alleged that Smallwood backed out because he was afraid that "if he miscarried in this enterprise, he would be highly blamed."

of the 63rd Regiment.<sup>2</sup> Sumter came out the victor and continued in the direction of Ninety Six. He crossed the Tyger River and camped on Padget's Creek.<sup>3</sup> Sumter then marched southeastward and crossed Enoree River, possibly near present Maybinton Road, and continued down Broad River to Shirer's Ferry. He had apparently changed his mind about marching to Ninety Six and was now bent on drawing more of Cornwallis's forces out for another battle. (Fig. 2)

Cornwallis soon heard about Sumter's victory at Fishdam Ford, and he immediately wrote to Tarleton, "Must beg of you to return immediately, leaving some horses for mounting men at Camden. I am under the greatest anxiety for Ninety Six and trust you will lose no time in returning to me."<sup>4</sup> Tarleton received Cornwallis's letter at Ox Swamp in the present city of Manning, where he had been pursuing Gen. Francis Marion following Marion's attack on Loyalists at Tearcoat Swamp.<sup>5</sup> Tarleton was halfway to Camden on November 11, having taken time along the way to destroy the homes and plantations of "violent rebels," including the recently widowed Dorothy Sinkler Richardson.<sup>6</sup> Two days later, Cornwallis wrote to Tarleton that "Sumpter is at Hawkins's Mill on Tyger River with what he calls a thousand men, bragging much of his victory. Our friends are all in the utmost terror and running down to the Congarees as fast as possible. I shall be glad to see you, but your corps must keep at a distance, as they would consume our whole substance [forage] in half an hour." Cornwallis added that an informant from Ninety Six had described to him "the terror of our friends beyond all belief."<sup>7</sup>

Tarleton had still not arrived at Winnsboro on November 14 when Cornwallis sent him the following urgent express:

*A Negro is just come in who was taken with Ferguson. He is clear in his story, and sticks to it, that he left Smallwood on Saturday last [November 12] near Lawson's Iron Works on the other side of Broad River, that he had 3 pieces of cannon with him and was certainly going to 96. This intelligence alarms me much for the safety of that place. I therefore wish you would, if on the road to me yourself, order on the Legion by the shortest route to Shirer's Ferry. If you are not set out, I wish you to come to me immediately and leave those orders for the corps.<sup>8</sup>*

William Faden's map shows Tarleton passing through Winnsboro, where he was probably joined by the detachment of his Legion cavalry that had been in the skirmish at Fishdam Ford, as well as an artillery crew with a field cannon.<sup>9</sup> Faden's map shows part of Tarleton's troops then crossing Broad River at "Shirers Ferry" and

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<sup>2</sup> C. Leon Harris and Charles B. Baxley. "General Thomas Sumter's Surprise at Fishdam Ford," *The Journal of the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 24, no. 3 (August 11, 2024), <https://southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SCAR-Fishdam-Ford.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph McJunkin, "Narrative," transcribed by Will Graves, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 2, No. 11 (Nov 2005), 40, <https://southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/v2n11.pdf>. William Sarter (Sartor) pension application W8700, <https://revwarapps.org/w8700.pdf>. William Smith W22272, <https://revwarapps.org/w22272.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Cornwallis to Tarleton, November 9, 1780 in Ian Saberton, Ian, Ed., *The Cornwallis Papers* (hereafter *CP*) Vol. 3 (Uckfield, East Sussex, England; Naval & Military Press, 2010), 335.

<sup>5</sup> C. Leon Harris, "Francis Marion's Attack at Tearcoat Swamp and Tarleton's Revenge," *academia.edu*, 2023, [https://www.academia.edu/115074584/FRANCIS\\_MARIONS\\_ATTACK\\_AT\\_TEARCOAT\\_SWAMP\\_AND\\_TARLETONS\\_REVENGE](https://www.academia.edu/115074584/FRANCIS_MARIONS_ATTACK_AT_TEARCOAT_SWAMP_AND_TARLETONS_REVENGE).

<sup>6</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 11, 1780, *CP* 3: 337-338.

<sup>7</sup> Cornwallis to Tarleton, November 13, 1780, *CP* 3: 339. The Congarees was the area along Congaree River between Saluda and Santee rivers. Mills Atlas of 1825 shows Hawkins's Mill on the south side of Tyger River about where Sumter is shown crossing the river in Figure 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cornwallis to Tarleton, November 14, 1780, *CP* 3:339-340. "Taken with Ferguson" indicates that Cornwallis's informant had been captured at the defeat of Maj. Patrick Ferguson at the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. "Lawson's Iron Works" may refer to an ironworks on Lawsons Fork Creek, possibly Wofford's Ironworks a few miles east of present Spartanburg. It is unlikely that Smallwood had crossed to the west side of Broad River. He was at Providence near Charlotte on November 11 when he sent a letter to Sumter saying he was waiting for the arrival of Continental troops. Cornwallis acknowledged that the information was incorrect in a letter to Maj. Archibald McArthur on November 19, 1780, *CP* 1:317.

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Lewis, "Blackstocks," [https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution\\_battle\\_of\\_blackstocks.html](https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_blackstocks.html), accessed November 26, 2025.

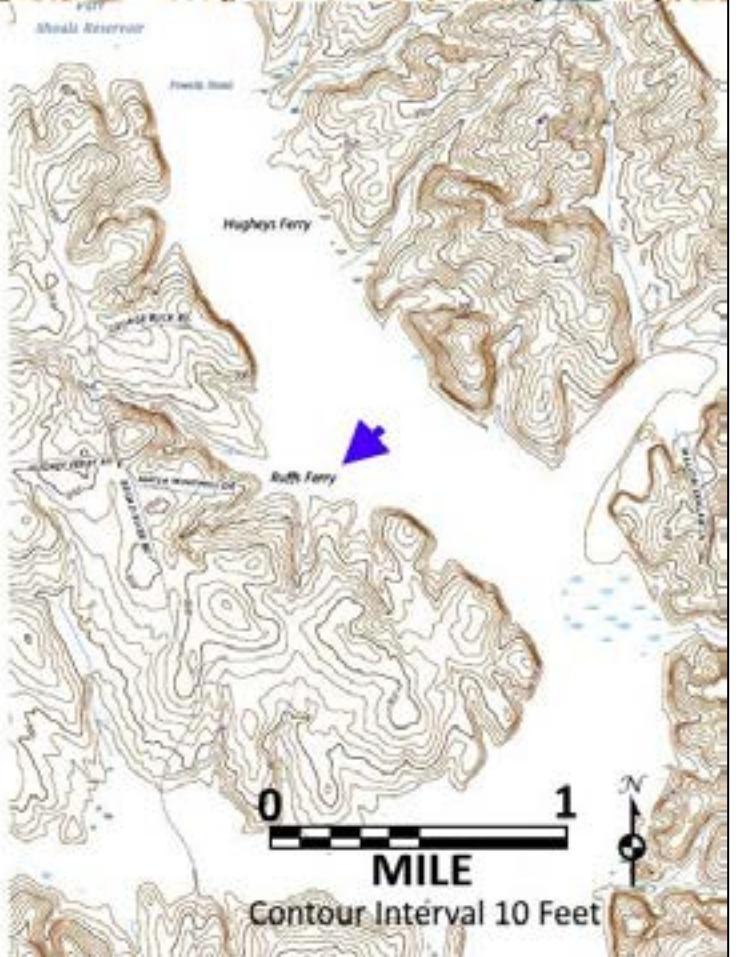


Figure 3. The location of Shirer's/Bierley's/Ruff's Ferry on three maps. (Above) Wilson's 1822 map of South Carolina shows the approximate location of Ruff's Ferry. (Above right) The 1904 USGS Columbia quadrangle shows Hughey Ferry at or near the same location. (University of South Carolina Digital Collections <https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/topo/id/182/rec/4>.) (Right) The current USGS Jenkinsville quadrangle shows Ruff's Ferry (arrow), now under Parr Shoals Reservoir. Hugheys Ferry is shown almost a mile to the north, although Hughey Ferry Rd. leads toward Ruff's Ferry.

to it as Bierley's Ferry, with various spellings. Stephen John Katzberg has shown that Bierley's Ferry was the same as Shirer's Ferry and later became "Ruff's Ferry," with the names changing with ownership.<sup>11</sup> The exact location of the ferry can be deduced from Wilson's 1822 map and the current USGS map, both of which show Ruff's Ferry. (Fig. 3)

## Skirmish at Shirer's Ferry, November 18, 1780

Cornwallis had "detached Major [Archibald] McArthur with the 1st Battalion of the 71st and the 63rd Regiment, after having sent [his] aid de camp, Lieutenant [John] Money, to take the command of it, to Brierley's Ferry on Broad River in order to cover our mills and to give some check to the enemy's march to Ninety Six."<sup>12</sup> McArthur was about to cross Broad River at Bierley's (Shirer's) Ferry on November 18 when Tarleton arrived at about 9 o'clock in the morning. Sumter was on the western side of the river and sent a hundred riflemen to fire on the British.<sup>13</sup> Tarleton later wrote, "care was taken to conceal the green uniform of the cavalry from the view of the enemy's detachment... in order to throw the Americans off their guard and continue their belief of the absence of the British legion, which Sumpter supposed still employed on an expedition against Marion. The appearance of the 63d and 71st in red clothing tended to corroborate the enemy's information and lull them into security."<sup>14</sup>

Most of the British were beyond effective rifle range and soon drove off the rebel detachment by firing two three-pounder cannons.<sup>15</sup> At 6 pm, McArthur wrote the following description of the skirmish:

*I have the honor to inform your Lordship that, a party of the rebels having come within two miles of the ferry this morning, I was just going to pass over with 150 men when Colonel Tarleton arrived at nine o'clock, and I countermanded my party. The rebels had the audacity, in half an hour after, to come close to the river and fire at our men who were washing in the flatts. Luckily the most of them had retired before the firing began, so there was only one soldier of the 63rd wounded slightly and a waggon horse hurt. They blackguarded us a great deal, but no return was made them except one shott by a militia man without orders. At two o'clock the infantry of Tarleton's corps passed at this ferry and only one shott was fired at them, which hurt nobody, for care was taken to fire several cannon shott across, which dispersed the enemy, and I have this moment received advice from Colonel Tarleton that his mounted people have passed at the Mill Ford three miles lower down without opposition and the 63rd were ready to follow.<sup>16</sup>*

## Tarleton's Pursuit of Sumter: November 18

According to McArthur's letter, the infantry of Tarleton's Legion crossed Broad River at the ferry. As night fell, Tarleton's Legion cavalry and other mounted troops swam the horses across 3 miles downstream at Somers Mill. At 10 pm 3 miles from the ferry, Tarleton assembled his entire force—the Legion cavalry and infantry, detachments of the 63<sup>rd</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> regiments, and one three-pounder and crew.<sup>17</sup> Tarleton wrote that "for want of intelligence... I had to pass the Ennoree three times before I could strike at Sumpter."<sup>18</sup> Judging from Faden's

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen John Katzberg, "The Search for Shirer's Ferry, South Carolina," *Journal of the American Revolution*, (November 18, 2025), <https://allthingsliberty.com/2025/11/the-search-for-shirers-ferry-south-carolina/>, accessed November 29, 2025. William Faden's 1787 map locates the ferry about 10 miles downstream from this location.

<sup>12</sup> Cornwallis to Gen. Henry Clinton, December 3, 1780, *CP* 3:25.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Choat pension application S3144, <https://revwarapps.org/s3144.pdf>. Gen. Richard Winn described the action as follows: "Sumter Moves from Nixon's down to Sheroes ferry and gives a Challenge to the British at that Station to come Out and fight him. They decline the invitation." General Richard Winn's Notes—1780 Transcribed by Will Graves, <http://revwarapps.org/scx2.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces* (Dublin, 1787), 178.

<sup>15</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 179. "Three-pounder" refers to the weight of the cannon ball.

<sup>16</sup> Archibald McArthur to Cornwallis, November 18, 1780, *CP* 3:316-317.

<sup>17</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 179.

<sup>18</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 24, 1780, *CP* 3:341.

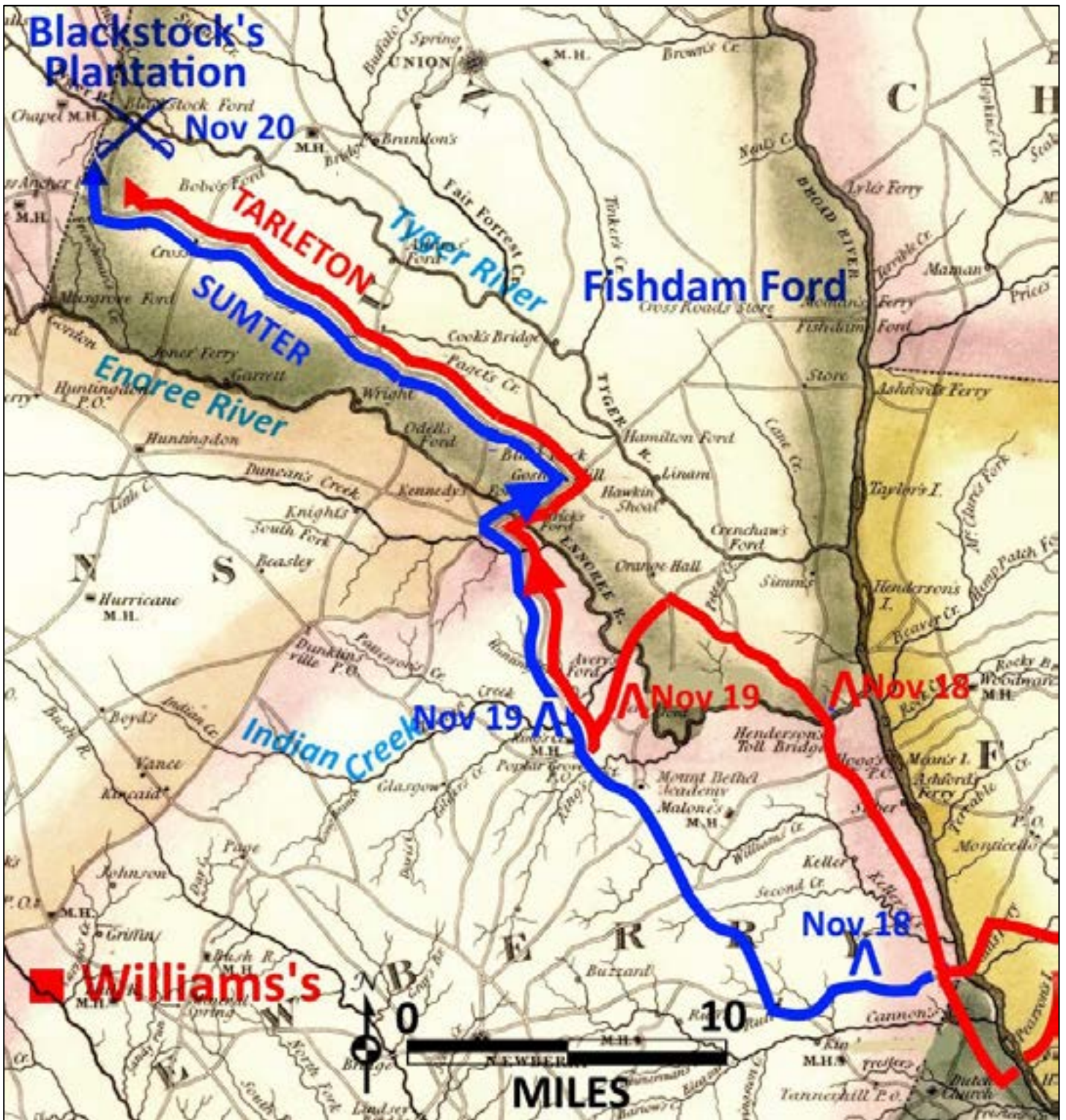


Figure 4. Possible routes and campsites of Sumter and Tarleton from Shirer's Ferry to Blackstock's Plantation.

map, Tarleton made the first crossing of Enoree River northward, where Sumter had earlier crossed, perhaps thinking Sumter was retracing his steps. Sumter was actually still near Shirer's Ferry. After being dispersed by artillery, Sumter had ordered his men "to march about Two miles on a very high eminence from the River where [they] encamped that night."<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 4)

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Choat S3144.

## November 19

According to Moses Lindsey, Sumter “marched to McCracken's Old field in Newberry County,” probably on Indian Creek,<sup>20</sup> on the morning of November 19. Sumter sent two detachments under Cols. Elijah Clarke and William Candler of Georgia to find Tarleton. Fifty-two years later, Christopher Choat recollected the patrol as follows:

*...next morning which he believes was on Sunday [sic: Saturday, November 19] General Sumpter ordered that two detachments with about one hundred men each should march in serch of Tarlton and if possible to ascertain his movments and the strength of his Army. Accordingly the two Detachments was selected, One of which was put under the Command of Col. Clark the other under the Command of Col. Candler. I was one of said party and attached to Col. Candler, who marched down Broad River until we came into the main Charlston road near where we first saw Tarltons Army we there halted and myself or four or five others was ordered to go in serch for Tarlton we started and went to the main Charlston road in about one mile we met three waggons belonging to the Brittish. We took the waggons and what men was along with them Prisoners which he believes was seven. We took them back and gave them to Col Candler. We then set out on the same buisness as above and went the same road (the distance not now recolected) when we again met four waggons with five or six men belonging to the Brittish. We took the waggons and the men Prisoners and carried them back and delivered them to our Commander Col Candler then the whole detachment marched to a mill on Broad River and filled our waggons with Flour.<sup>21</sup>*

Tarleton had been informed the previous night that “General Sumpter, with upwards of one thousand men, was moving towards Williams’ house, a post occupied by friendly militia, fifteen miles from Ninety Six.”<sup>22</sup> Williams’s house was the fortified home of Col. James Williams, who had been killed at the Battle of Kings Mountain on the previous October 7.<sup>23</sup> (Small red square in Figure 2.) Sumter had actually sent only Robert Long and thirteen others under Capt. Samuel Ewing to reconnoiter Williams’s Plantation.

*This deponent [Long] being Sent out in a detachment of fourteen men under Captain Ewing to reconetre the post toward the fort on Colonel J Williams' plantation: this, Imediately after Sumpter had returned (with a good number of his command) from taking a view of Tarletons camp at Shirer's ferry on Broad River. So the day following Tarleton pursued General Sumpter, in his turn: So by this unexpected movement he [Long] got between Sumpter & the above detachment.<sup>24</sup>*

On the same morning, Tarleton recrossed the river and marched toward Sumter at Indian Creek, but Sumter had been warned and marched up the Enoree River. Tarleton wrote,

*At daybreak next morning the light troops directed their course for Indian creek, marched all day with great diligence, and encamped at night, with secrecy and precaution, near the Ennoree. Another day's movement was intended up the banks of that river; which, if completed without discovery would,*

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<sup>20</sup> Moses Lindsey S4551, <https://revwarapps.org/s4551.pdf>. Several McCracken families lived on Indian Creek. McCracken’s Old Field may have belonged to James McCracken. “Mccracken, James, Plat For 100 Acres In Barkly County. Date: 10/9/1771,” available online at South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter SCDAH), <https://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/>.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Choat S3144. Joel Darcy (Darsey or Dossey) in pension application S6788 (<https://revwarapps.org/s6788.pdf>) gave the following account of the capture of Tarleton’s wagons: “Deponent and 11 others of us was sent out by Sumpter to get Subsistance a man by the name of Candler (whome we ust to call Col. Candler) in command of the detachment, we went out on the East side of the River we fell in with Col Tarltons bagage train captured it, and drove with all dispach posable for Col. Sumpters Camp, drove all night and the next day a little before night, we arived at Sumpters Post, deponent was sent acrost the River with the wagons.”

<sup>22</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 179. Cornwallis to Clinton, December 3, 1780, *CP* 3:26.

<sup>23</sup> The location of Williams’s plantation is from his will dated June 12, 1780, transcribed by William T. Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary: James Williams (1740-1780) With Source Documents* (Lugoff SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2012), 191-194.

<sup>24</sup> Testimony of Robert Long in the pension application of Samuel Hammond S21807, <https://revwarapps.org/s21807.pdf>.

*perhaps, give an opportunity of destroying General Sumpter's corps by surprise; or certainly would prevent his accomplishing a retreat without the risk of an action. This encouraging hope was frustrated in the evening by the desertion of a soldier of the 63d, and the American commander at twelve o'clock at night obtained intelligence of his danger.<sup>25</sup>*

## November 20

On the following morning, Tarleton resumed the chase, arriving at Hendrick's Ford near present Whitmire a few hours after most of Sumter's men had crossed. Some of Sumter's men had been left at the ford, and Tarleton's advanced guard attacked them "with considerable slaughter."

*Tarleton pursued his march at dawn, and before ten o'clock in the morning had information of the retreat of General Sumpter: He continued his route to a ford upon the Ennoree, where he expected to gain further intelligence, or perhaps meet the Americans. On his arrival near that place, he found that the advanced guard and main body of the enemy had passed the river near two hours, and, that a detachment to cover the rear was waiting the return of a patrol: The advanced guard of the British dragoons charged this body, and defeated them with considerable slaughter. From prisoners it was learned, that the sudden movement of the Americans was owing to the treachery of the deserter, by whose information General Sumpter had fortunately escaped an unexpected attack, and had now the option to fight or retire.<sup>26</sup>*

It was late in the afternoon by the time Tarleton got within several miles of Blackstock's Plantation. Fearing Sumter would escape across the Tyger River, he rushed ahead, leaving his infantry and the three-pounder behind to catch up later:

*Tarleton, unwilling to divide his corps, and risk an action against a great superiority with his dragoons and the 63d, pressed forward his light and legion infantry, and three pounder, in a compact body, till four o'clock in the afternoon; at which time it became evident, that the enemy would have an opportunity of passing unmolested the Tyger river before dark, if he did not alter his disposition: He therefore left his legion and light infantry, who had made meritorious exertions during the whole day, to march on at their own pace, whilst he made a rapid pursuit with one hundred and seventy cavalry of the legion, and eighty mounted men of the 63d.<sup>27</sup>*

## The Battlefield at Blackstock's Plantation

Before describing the battle, it is important to understand the terrain, buildings, fences, and the road.<sup>28</sup> The battlefield at Blackstock's Plantation has fared better than many in that its location, about five miles northeast of the present Cross Anchor, was never forgotten because of its association with Blackstock's Ford, an important crossing of the Tyger River. Most of the battlefield is now preserved for the public as part of the Battle of Musgrove Mill State Historic Site.<sup>29</sup> In the past, however, logging and other activities altered some features; relic hunters removed many artifacts; and, of course, buildings decayed and vegetation changed. Fortunately, there are

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<sup>25</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 179. Robert Long pension application S7157, <https://revwarapps.org/s7157.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 179-180.

<sup>27</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 180.

<sup>28</sup> The analysis of the battlefield that follows is essentially the same as in C. Leon Harris, "Blackstock's Plantation, November 20, 1780: A Revolutionary War Battlefield in the South Carolina Backcountry," [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), 2017.

<https://www.academia.edu/s/cee02c31f4/blackstocks-plantation-november-20-1780-a-revolutionary-war-battlefield-in-the-south-carolina-backcountry?source=link>. Paul T. Carter has produced a video based on this paper. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wo2M4duLypE>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://southcarolinaparks.com/blackstocks-battlefield>, accessed December 10, 2025.

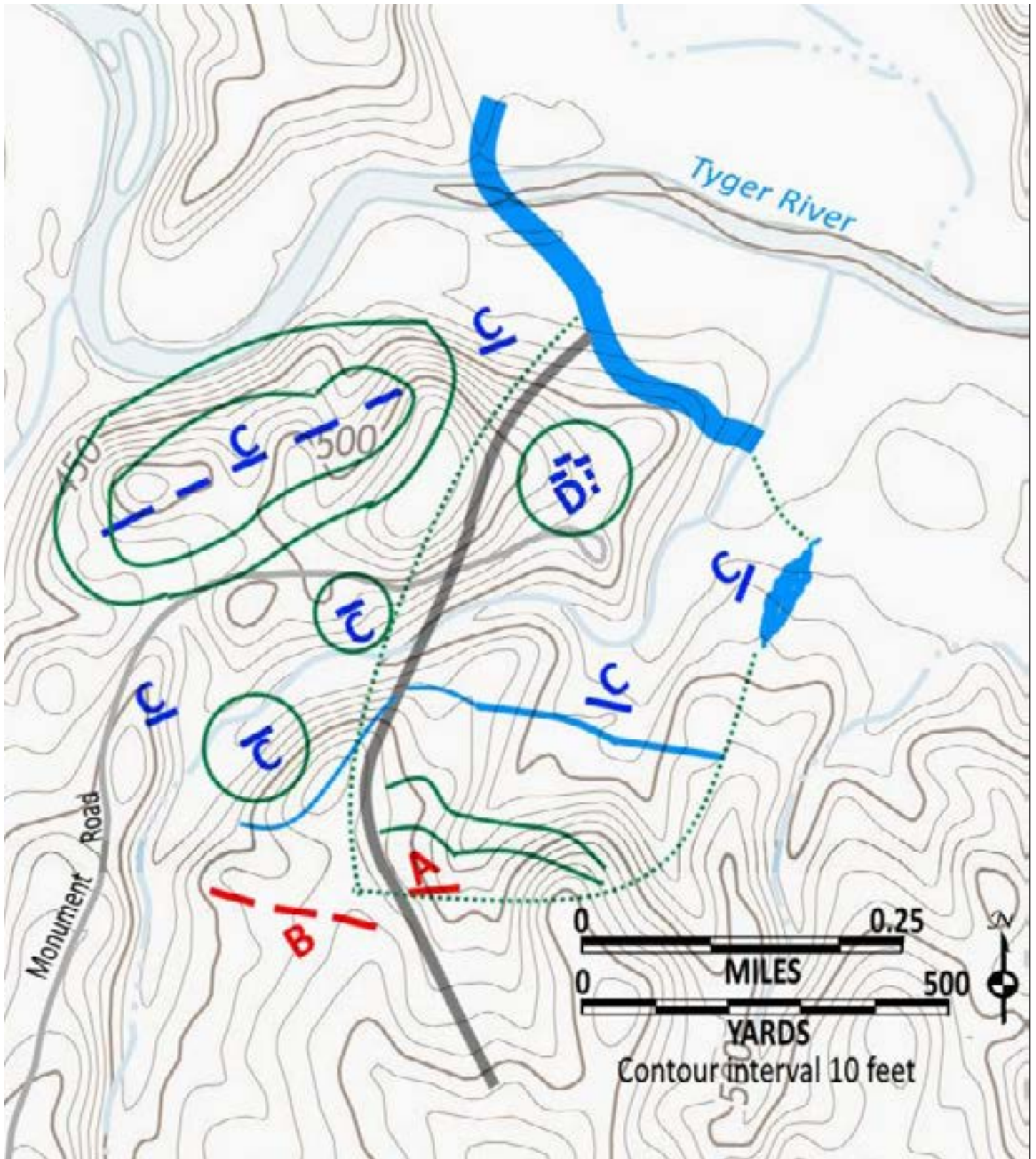


Figure 5 Tracing of British Lt. McDonald's map on the current USGS topo map, Cross Anchor quadrangle. McDonald's "References:" A 63d Regiment. B British Legion. C Rebels. D Block Houses Occupied by Rebels. The area outside the dotted green line is shown as wooded on the original map.

four relatively early sketches of the battlefield and eyewitness accounts. Although not entirely consistent with one another or with known topography, they provide some indication of significant features that affected the course

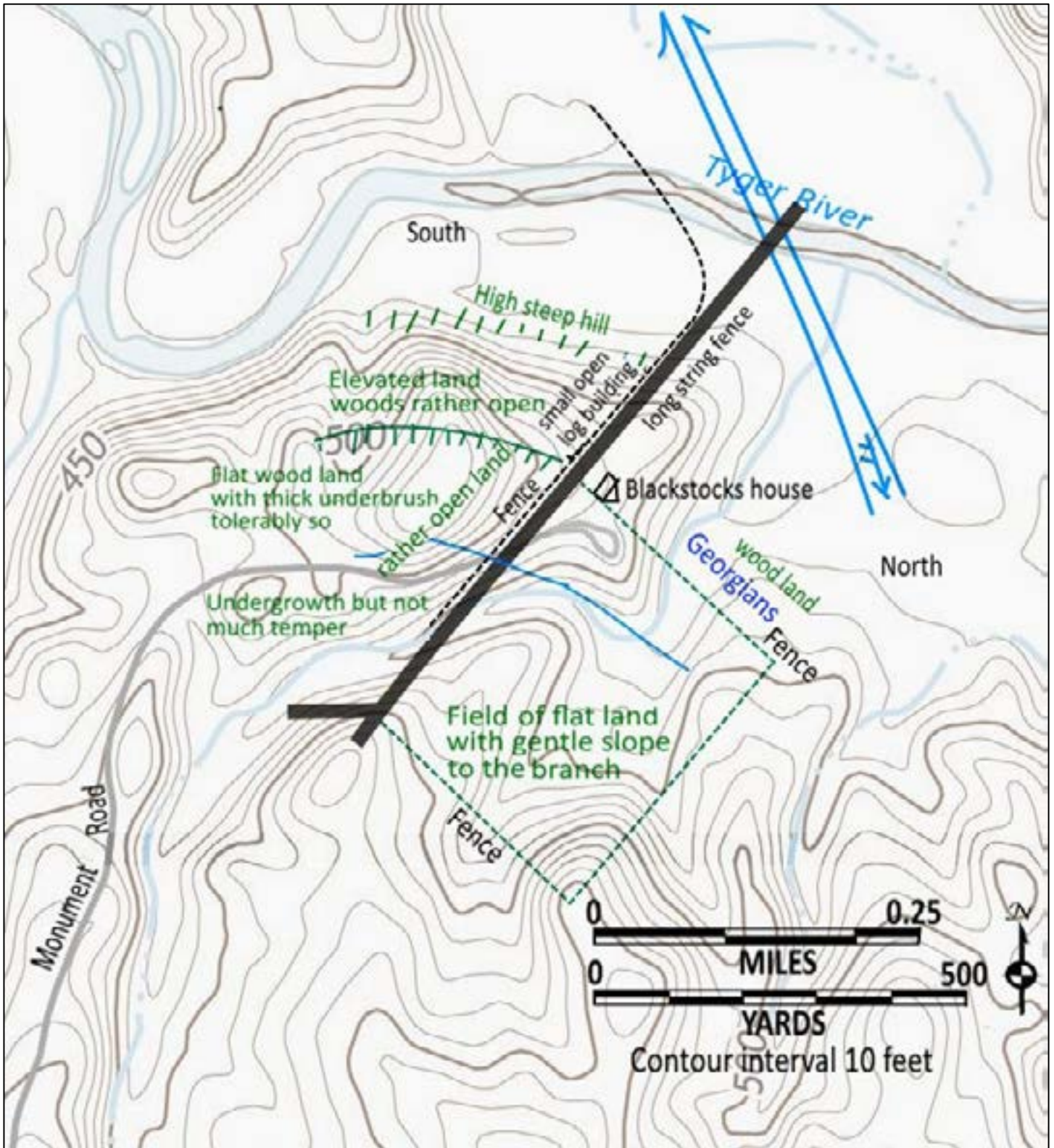


Figure 6. Tracing of Gen. Richard Winn's April 1812 map.

of the battle. The four early sketch maps were published by Michael C. Scoggins,<sup>30</sup> and tracings of them onto the current USGS topographic map are shown in Figures 5 through 8. In the tracings I have shown American positions

<sup>30</sup> Michael C. Scoggins, *Relentless Fury: The Revolutionary War in the Southern Piedmont* (Rock Hill SC: Culture and Heritage Museums, 2006), 53-56..

in dark blue, British positions in red, Tyger River and the unnamed stream in light blue, the road in gray, buildings and fences in black, and natural features in green.

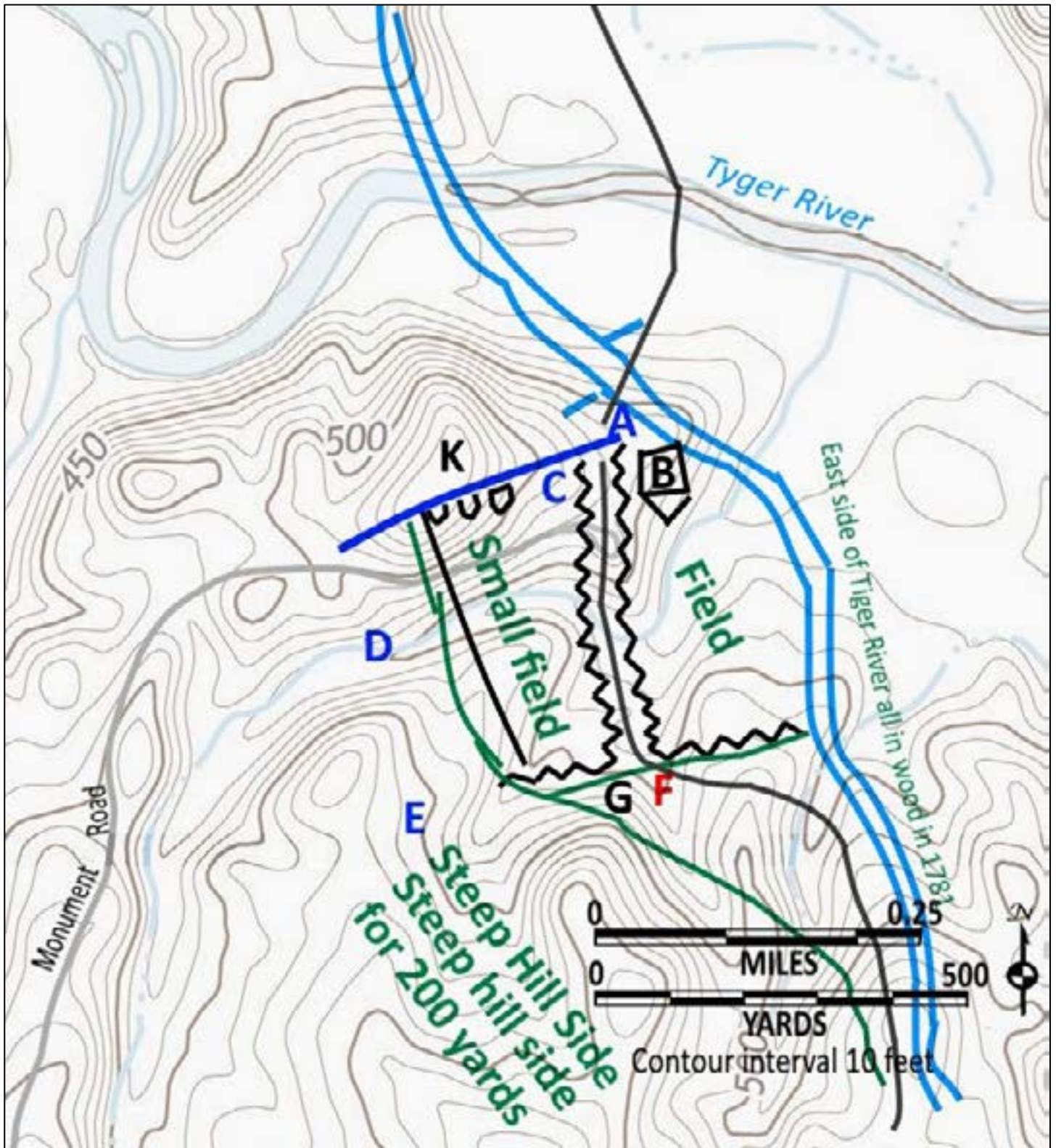


Figure 7. Dr. Maurice Moore's Aug. 1870 map. Moore's key: A Spot where Sumter was wounded. B Log Tobacco House. C Line of Battle. D Riflemen. E Lacey mounted men. F Blackstock Ford. F Tarleton line of Battle. G End of the log fence. H [not shown] Tarlton.

The first map was drawn by a British Lt. McDonald, probably soon after the battle. It was found by Scoggins in the British Public Records Office and was probably part of the official report on the battle. It bears the date “21st Nov’r. 1780,” which suggests that McDonald was not present and relied on written accounts. Like the other three maps, it does not show a scale or compass directions, and no combination of them makes the McDonald’s map consistent with the present topography. This map shows Sumter’s forces scattered among several hills,

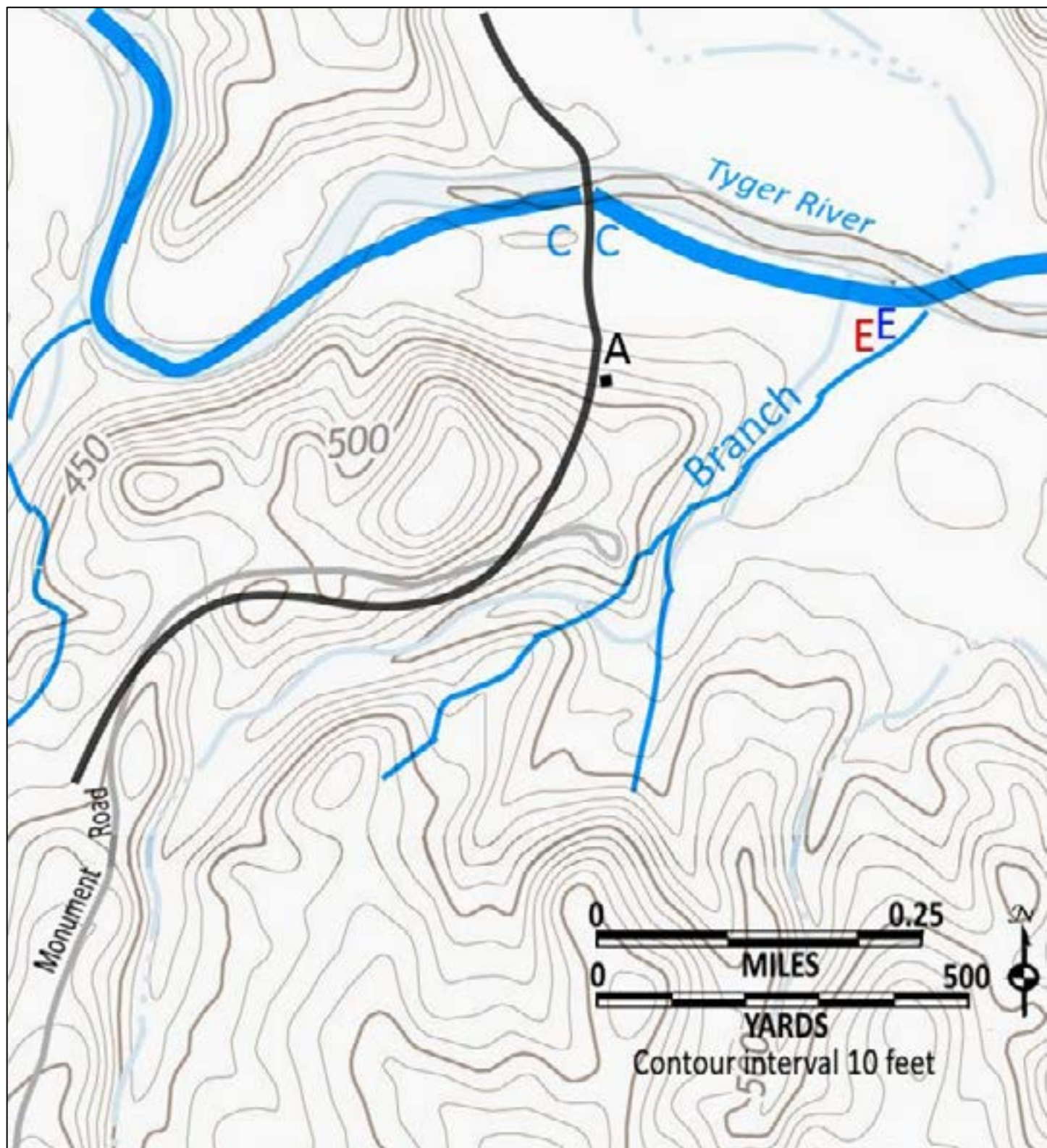


Figure 8. Surveyor H. W. Ducker’s March 1873 map. From Ducker’s notes and key: A Shows where it is Probable that the Blackstock House stood. C Shows the Blackstock Ford. E Shows the Place where the Slain in Battle are Buried.

contrary to written descriptions and sound military tactics. It also shows Sumter's main line on one side of the road at about a 45-degree angle to it, contrary to several witnesses, including Tarleton, who wrote that "the great road to the ford across the river passed through the center of the Americans, and close to the doors of houses where the main body were stationed."<sup>31</sup> In orienting and scaling the tracing of McDonald's map onto the current USGS map I used Blackstock's buildings (labeled D) as a reference point. The likely location of these buildings is known from a concentration of wrought iron nails found by archaeologist Steven D. Smith.<sup>32</sup> I used the largest hill and the escarpment to the south for scaling and orientation. (Fig. 5)

The second map is by Col. (later Gen.) Richard Winn, who was at the battle, although his map is dated April 10, 1812. (Fig. 7) Winn apparently drew his map for his grandson-in-law, Hugh McCall (1767-1824), who evidently used it in the description of the battlefield in his *History of Georgia*.<sup>33</sup> Winn's map errs in showing the Tyger River flowing from southeast to northwest and the road as straight east-to-west. His rendering of Blackstock's house, field, and fences on both sides of the lane is, however, generally consistent with written accounts. The fences were extremely important in limiting the action of cavalry. Winn's map also shows a "small open log building" across the road from Blackstock's house. In the overlay, I positioned Winn's map with Blackstock's house at the location indicated by archaeology, rotated it to align the river (rather than the direction given by Winn), and scaled it to place the branch at about the correct distance. (Fig. 6)

The third map was sketched by Dr. Maurice Moore in August 1870 for Lyman C. Draper, who was gathering information for a book about Sumter that was never published. Moore's map was drawn from the memory of a much earlier visit, made with a witness to the battle. It shows a "Log Tobacco House," which, if it existed at the time of the battle, might have been where Smith found a smaller concentration of nails about 100 yards to the northeast of the house site. Moore's map also depicts cabins along the American line, but if they were present, they do not appear to have played a role in the battle. Moore's map also purports to show the location where Sumter was wounded, but Sumter probably would not have been so close to the river until well after the fighting. I positioned the tracing of Moore's map with the American line along the ridge and the road passing near the location of the house, and I scaled it so that the lane is about as long as in Winn's map. (Fig. 7)

The fourth map is by H. W. Ducker, a local surveyor, dated March 1873, and sent to Draper. It does not attempt to show positions during the battle but indicates where the "Slain in Battle are Buried." A visual search of that area revealed no indication of graves. North is toward the top, and I scaled the map to match the river and creeks as closely as possible. (Fig. 8)

In addition to the four maps, there is also a description of the battleground in Hugh McCall's *History of Georgia*. From the detail of McCall's description of Blackstock's house, it appears that he was there at some time, possibly during the battle, as a refugee or aide to his father, Maj. James McCall of the Upper Ninety Six District Regiment.

*Blackstock's house was long and narrow, and of two apartments of eighteen feet square, with eighteen feet space between, and a roof over the whole. In the rear of the house, a few hundred yards, is the crossing place of the river Tyger: midway from the house to the river, is a hill making down from the right, nearly parallel with the house, and terminates at the road: the house is on a second elevated ground, below the hill, covered with open wood land, and lunating with its concave in the front. The road leads from the river by the right of the house, and leads directly forward, as the house fronts and descends through the field about one hundred yards to a small rivulet; and near the road to the right, is low brush wood; and on the left a field, with the fence on the left, extending a quarter of a mile, in a straight direction, where the road divides. The field on the left makes a right angle at the house, and*

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<sup>31</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 181.

<sup>32</sup> Steven D. Smith, "Research at Blackstocks Battlefield. Columbia: SC" (University of South Carolina Scholar Commons, 2006), [http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1051&context=anth\\_facpub](http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1051&context=anth_facpub), accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia* Vol. 2 (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell. 1816 [1909]), 497-500. <https://archive.org/details/historygeorgia00unkngoog>

*the fence runs directly to the left, to the low grounds of the river; on the right of the road, opposite to the end of the house, was a small pole building. On the second elevation, in the rear of the house, and parallel thereto, general Sumpter encamped his troops ....*<sup>34</sup>

William Hill provided additional details: “There were a number of houses between the River and a large open field from the American Camp, about a quarter of a mile there was a very large and strong fence not made with common rails but with small trees notched one on the other. On the west side of this Lane was a thick wood.”<sup>35</sup>

The battlefield, as it appears now, is shown in Figures 9 and 10. The extent of the mowed area is approximately the same as Blackstock’s field, as shown on Winn’s map, except that it does not extend far enough south across the creek and partly up the escarpment.



*Figure 9. View of the battlefield north from the present monument at the end of Monument Road. Blackstock’s dwelling was at the height of land in the center. The road to Blackstock’s Ford was close to the trees on the left.*



*Figure 10. Panoramic view of the battlefield south from the northern edge of Blackstock’s field. The distant knoll in the center is the site of the monument. At the start of the battle Tarleton’s troops were on the escarpment beyond the knoll, now wooded. The road to the ford was along the trees to the right. (Stitched from four photos.)*

<sup>34</sup> McCall, *History*, 497-498.

<sup>35</sup> William Hill, “Memoirs,” transcribed by Will Graves, <http://revwarapps.org/scx1.pdf>.

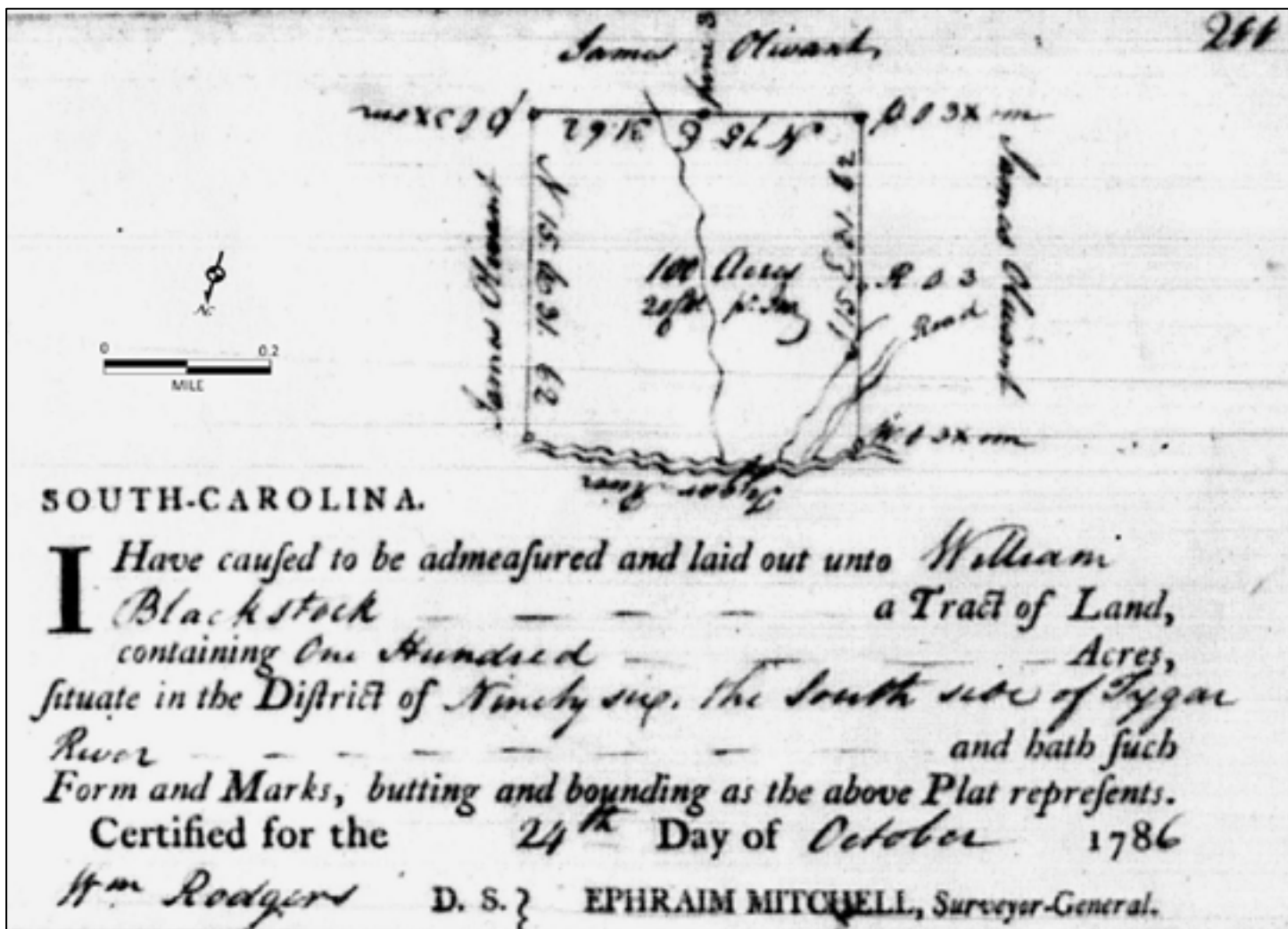


Figure 11. A plat for 100 acres of William Blackstock's land on Tyger River showing a road and creek in the lower right (northwest) corner. The road aligns roughly with present Monument Road. The creek near it is assumed to be the unnamed creek.

## The Road to Blackstock's Plantation

It is not clear from the four maps how the road ran to Blackstock's Plantation. Knowing that is essential to mapping the battle, because Sumter and Tarleton approached by the road, and much of the fighting occurred along it. Winn and Moore depicted a straight road, which was rare in hilly terrain before the advent of automobiles but a common error in memory-based mapping. Ducker's 1873 map shows the only road coinciding almost exactly with Monument Road. Some historians, notably Michael Burgess, have long argued that the road to Blackstock approached from the southeast, crossing the unnamed creek, and this appears to be the prevailing view.<sup>36</sup> Bryan Tate has found numerous fired and unfired rifle and musket balls directly southeast of the main battlefield on private property with the owner's permission. This is undeniable evidence that intense fighting occurred there, but I believe this was from a skirmish as each side attempted to outflank the other or from fighting when the Americans chased the retreating British, as will be described later. Several kinds of evidence suggest to me that the road to Blackstock's was essentially the present Monument Road.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Burgess, personal communications. "Blackstock's Farm, Battle Map," American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/blackstocks-farm-nov-20-1780>, accessed December 10, 2025.

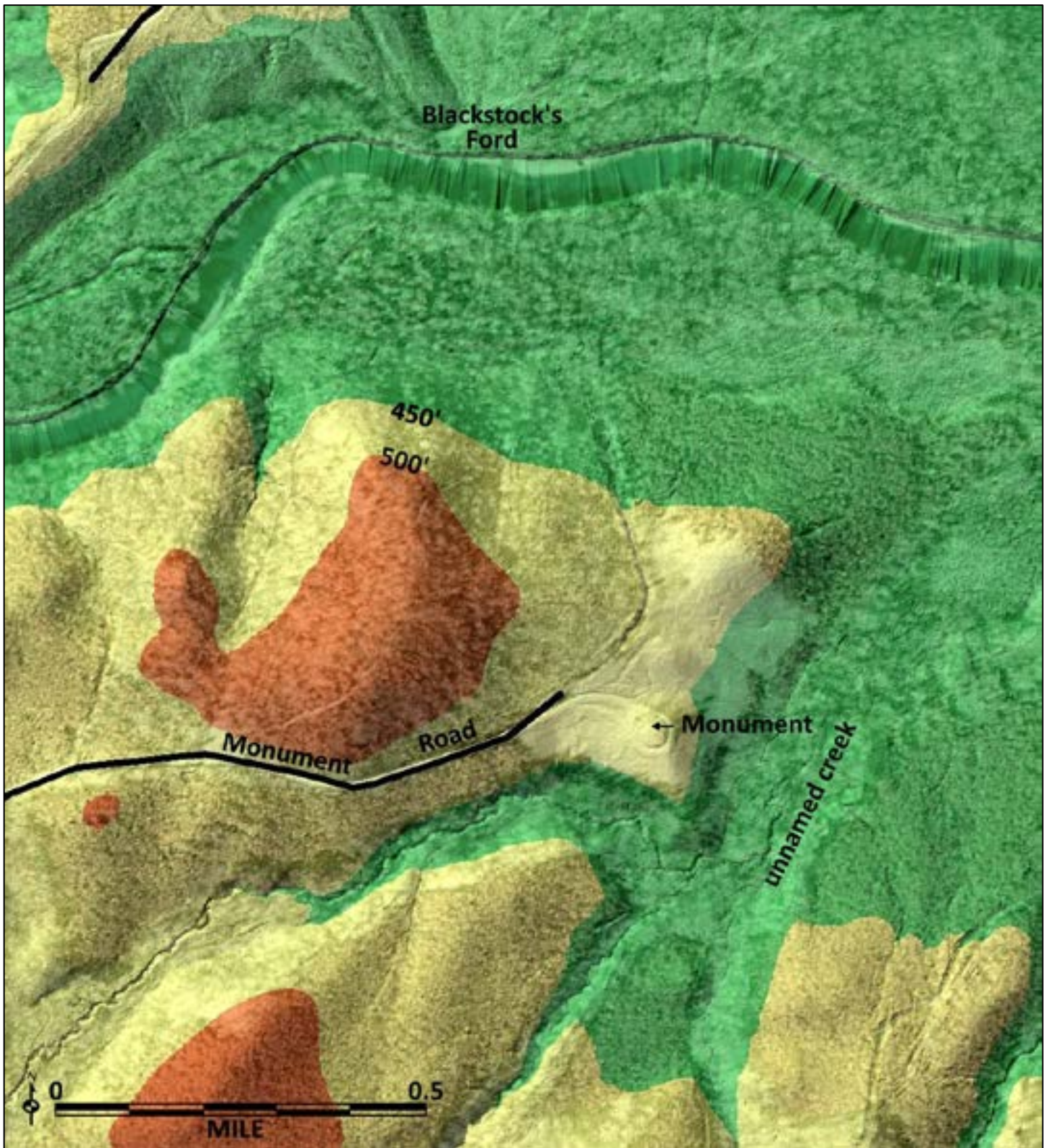


Figure 12. Lidar-based image of the Blackstock's battlefield area.

My first suspicion that the road to Blackstock's was Monument Road was the fact that it was a major public road at the time. Tarleton described it as "the great road."<sup>37</sup> A 1775 plat shows it as the "Road from Ninety Six," continuing northward to "Mr. Blackstaffs Land" on Tyger River, clearly a reference to Blackstock's land and

<sup>37</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 178.

ford.<sup>38</sup> A 1786 plat of part of the same land as in the 1775 plat shows the road as the “Waggon Road leading from Blackstocks ford to Charlestown.”<sup>39</sup> Public roads avoided water crossings to minimize erosion, and Monument Road is the only practical route to Blackstock’s Plantation that avoids the unnamed creek. Before motorized transport early roads also avoided steep grades to spare draft animals and for safety. As early as 1764 the maximum grade was codified as 12 percent (12 feet change in elevation per 100 feet horizontal distance).<sup>40</sup> Descent would have been a particular concern, because wagon wheels had poor traction, and if they started sliding, a horse would begin to run, resulting in a crash at the bottom of the hill. Sumter’s forage wagons and Tarleton’s cavalry were said to have “run in together which made a very great Noise as they had to pass Over a poled Casway [causeway] for two or three Hundred yards.”<sup>41</sup> This would be very unlikely if the wagons were either descending or ascending a steep grade. The roads were built by the local people who used them, and it was in their interest not to make them too steep. If they could not go around a steep slope, they laboriously divided the road into switchbacks with hairpin turns. At Blackstock’s plantation, the only route that would not exceed a 12 percent grade without switchbacks is Monument Road.

Another piece of evidence is a 1786 plat of part of Blackstock’s plantation showing a road northward to the river, in the direction of Monument Road, that does not cross the creek.<sup>42</sup> (Fig. 11)

Traces of the road to Blackstock’s ford are visible in satellite and lidar-based images, and they are continuous with Monument Road. There is no trace of a road or causeway crossing the creek from the southeast. (Fig. 12)

There is some archaeological evidence of fighting along Monument Road, but the main battlefield has apparently been stripped of artifacts by relic collectors. In his metal-detector reconnaissance, Stephen D. Smith found two fired American rifle balls and one unfired 0.75-caliber (British Brown Bess) musket ball west of the main battleground and north of Monument Road, indicating that fighting occurred there.<sup>43</sup> Smith, believing the British advanced from the southeast by a road across the creek, was surprised not to find military artifacts there: “...our reconnaissance level survey found surprisingly little, almost nothing, to the south of the mowed area, across the creek, and in the general direction of the supposed British advance. This cannot be explained either. We would have hypothesized at least one or two fired rifle balls from American fire.” The absence of artifacts in this area suggests that the bullets found by Bryan Tate farther to the south were not from the main battle.

Additional evidence that the road to Blackstock’s Plantation was essentially Monument Road is from Col. Samuel Hammond’s description of the British position at the start of the battle. “Blackstock’s houses were on the right of the British, and north-east of them. In front of the buildings, a small branch of the Tiger River passed through the field, margined by small bushes, but not obstructing the view of the British movements from the hill. This watercourse formed a half-moon, with its concavity towards the enemy, and the ridge corresponded with the shape of the branch.”<sup>44</sup> According to Hill’s description, the British were on the hill southwest of Blackstock’s buildings, probably to view the American position. If Tarleton had approached on a road from the southeast, he would not have had to move to that location to see the Americans. Arriving on Monument Road, however, the Americans would have been hidden behind the hill to his northeast, and Tarleton would have moved to his right to see them.

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<sup>38</sup> “Geary, James, Memorial For 1,000 Acres On Tygar River, Craven County. Date: 11/24/1775,” SCDAH.

<sup>39</sup> “Oliphant, James, Plat For 640 Acres On South Side Of Tygar River, Ninety Six District, Surveyed By Andrew Thomson. Date: 8/21/1786,” SCDAH.

<sup>40</sup> Rebecca Taft Fecher, “The Trading Path and North Carolina,” *Journal of Backcountry Studies* 3, No. 2 (2008), 1-13. <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/jbc/article/view/26/15>.

<sup>41</sup> Winn, “Notes.”

<sup>42</sup> “Blackstock, William, Plat For 100 Acres On Tygar River, Ninety Six District, Surveyed By William Rodgers. Date: 10/24/1786,” obtained from SCDAH.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Research*.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Hammond, “The Battle of Blackstocks, November 20th, 1780,” in Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston SC: Walker & James. 1851), 524-526.

Based on all this evidence, in the following description of the battle, I therefore assume that Sumter and Tarleton arrived at the battleground along what is essentially present Monument Road. For convenience in mapping, I divide the battle into five phases, although the action was without intermission.



Figure 13. Tyger River at Blackstock's Ford.

## The Battle of Blackstock's Plantation: Phase 1

Tarleton's 190 cavalymen and 90 mounted infantrymen of the 63<sup>rd</sup> regiment<sup>45</sup> under Lt. John Money approached Sumter late in the afternoon of November 20, having chased him some 50 miles in two days. Sumter's 420 men had stopped to eat at the plantation of William Blackstock, a Patriot militiaman.<sup>46</sup> According to Tarleton, "a woman on horseback had viewed the line of march from a wood, and, by a nearer road, had given intelligence that the British were approaching without infantry or cannon."<sup>47</sup> If so, then the first in Sumter's camp to receive the woman's information may have been Maj. Joseph McJunkin.

*Sumter having stopped to take some refreshment, & the troops having made up fires, prepared the dough & rolled it around sticks, & sat it before the fire in order to bake. I being officer of the day was informed of Tarleton's near approach and immediately sent word to Sumter, who ordered that we*

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<sup>45</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, *CP* 3:340. Three hours later Tarleton wrote to Cornwallis that there had been only 80 men from the 63<sup>rd</sup>. *CP* 3:341.

<sup>46</sup> Audited account of William Blackstock, <https://revwarapps.org/sc623.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 181.

*should come up to the building where he was, which we did leaving our dough on the sticks for the British got it.*<sup>48</sup>

Despite any warning, Sumter was done with running. As William Hill stated, “the Americans having been pursued for 2 days and nights took this ground under the firm determination to defend it & not to retreat further.” They had little choice. Waiting till dark to cross the river at Blackstock’s Ford would have risked Tarleton’s being reinforced by his Legion infantry and artillery, and fording the river in daylight with the enemy at their back would have been disastrous. (Fig. 13) Sumter appears to have been seeking a fight in any case.

According to Lt. Col. Charles S. Myddelton, it was not a woman who warned of Tarleton’s approach, but gunfire from the videttes (pickets). “About 4 o’clock P.M. the Vidette in front apprized us of the Enemy’s

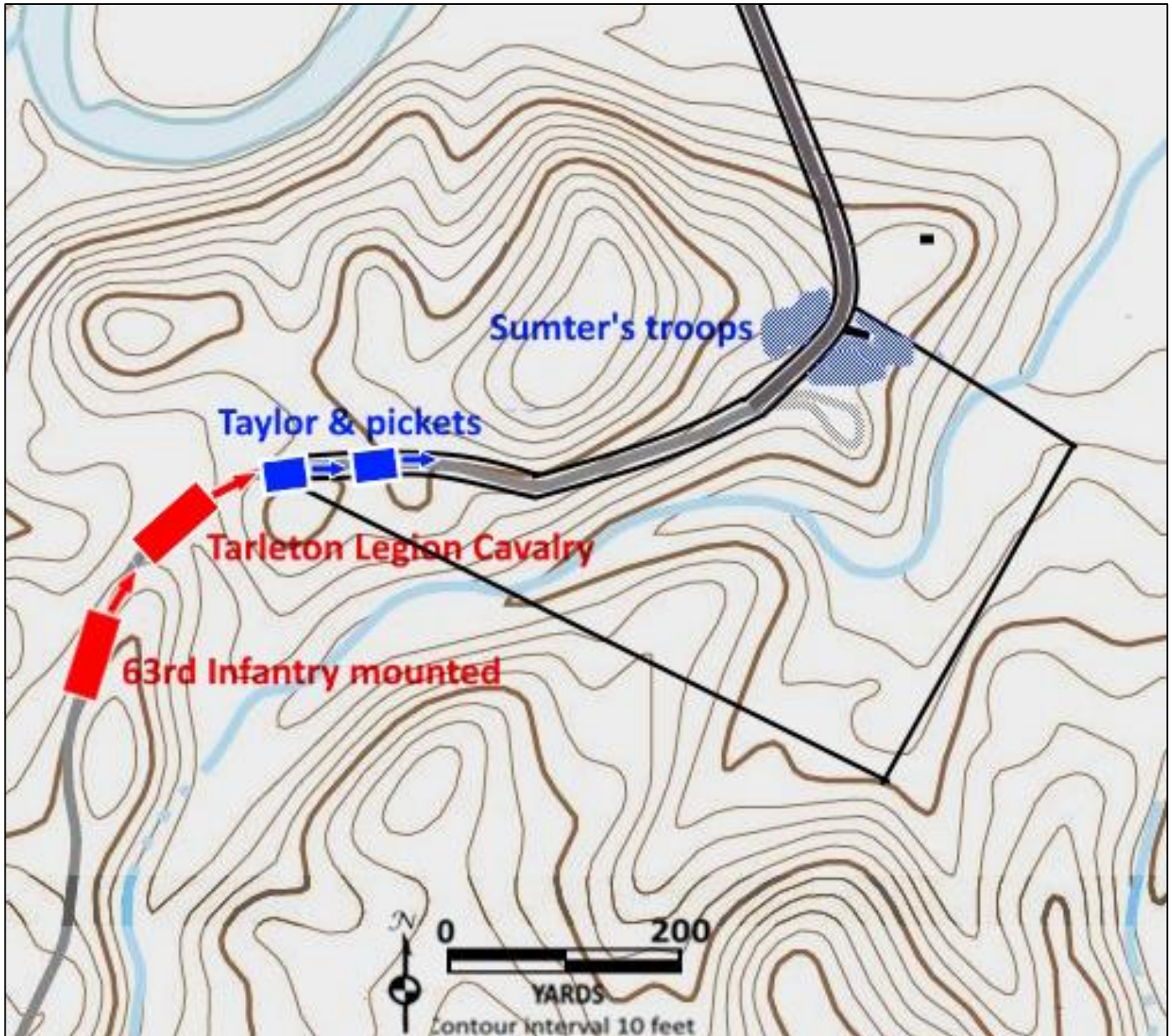


Figure 34. Phase I. Tarleton drives in Taylor’s foraging party and the pickets while Sumter’s men are cooking around Blackstock’s home.

<sup>48</sup> McJunkin, “Narrative.”

Approach by the Discharge of their pieces.”<sup>49</sup> Winn recalled not only the firing by the pickets but the noise made by the foraging wagons of Col. Thomas Taylor as they fled to Blackstock’s just ahead of Tarleton:

*Sumter Moves up the Country Arrives at Blackstocks on Tiger River 18th Novr [sic] Leaving Colo. Taylor in his Rare with 50 Men & their Wagons to Collect & bring in flour Colo. Taylor with his party and Wagons just past the Picquets when they fired On the Enemy and as Tarleton ment a Surprise Colo Taylor's party & the British Horse all run in together which made a very great Noise as they had to pass Over a poled Casway [causeway] for two or three Hundred yards. All this took place in Such a Flurry and Unexpected we had but three or four minutes to make disposition of Our Men.<sup>50</sup>*

Hammond and McCall gave similar accounts, noting that Maj. William Candler was with Taylor. Some of the wagons had been captured from Tarleton, as noted above by Christopher Choat and by Joel Darcy, who stated that “in fifteen minuts after we arived Col Tarlton arived, charged upon Sumpters Camp.”<sup>51</sup> (Fig. 14)

*When Blackstock’s house was in view, our rear videts fired at the advancing cavalry of the enemy. Colonels Taylor and Candler at that moment drove in with their wagons loaded with flour, &c. passed our rear guard, and entered the open field at Blackstock’s. At the next moment, Tarleton’s legion charged on our rear guard, but Taylor and his escort were safe.<sup>52</sup>*

*Colonel Chandler [sic], with his forage wagons, had just passed Sumpter’s piquet, when they fired on Tarlton’s van: Taylor with his party and wagons, ran in with the picquets and were closely pursued by the British dragoons as they entered the camp.<sup>53</sup>*

## Phase 2

If Tarleton approached Blackstock’s field on what is now Monument Road, the shoulder of the hill to his left would have hidden Sumter’s forces. Tarleton moved to an elevation within 400 yards of Sumter’s camp,<sup>54</sup> where he could get a better estimate of his enemy’s strength while waiting for his Legion Infantry and the cannon to arrive. (Fig. 15)

*the American commander prepared for action, and made a judicious disposition of his force: He posted the center of his troops in some houses and out-houses, composed of logs, and situated on the middle of an eminence; he extended his right along some rails, which were flanked by an inaccessible mountain; and he distributed his left on a rugged piece of ground that was covered by a bend of the river; a small branch of water ran in front of the whole rising ground, which was called Blackstock’s hill: The great road to the ford across the river passed through the center of the Americans, and close to the doors of houses where the main body were stationed. The whole position was visible, owing to the elevation of the ground, and this formidable appearance made Tarleton halt upon the opposite height, where he intended to remain quiet till his infantry and three pounder arrived: To encourage the enemy to do the same, he dismounted the 63d to take post, and part of the cavalry to ease their horses.<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Starke Myddelton, transcribed by Michael Burgess and Charles B. Baxley, “Letter concerning the Battle of Blackstock’s Plantation,” Library of Congress - George Washington Papers.

<sup>50</sup> Winn, “Notes.” The poled causeway may have been at the slight dip in the road where it curves to the east, where water would tend to collect.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Choat S3144, Joel Darcy S6788. After the battle Tarleton stated, “I have no baggage.” Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, CP 3:340.

<sup>52</sup> Hammond, “Battle.”

<sup>53</sup> McCall, *History*, 499.

<sup>54</sup> Myddelton, “Letter.”

<sup>55</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 181.

Hammond gave the following description of Sumter's preparations:

*Sumter being charged in his retreat was awkwardly situated, but he soon formed his command with an advantageous position, on the heights near and at Blackstock's houses. In forming for battle he was ably and actively assisted by Major James Jackson, of Georgia, acting as a volunteer aid and as brigade-major.... Sumter had the houses filled with his troops, and there being a strong new fence on each side of the road, these afforded a tolerable cover to the most of his men. The rest were posted on the ridge, from one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards west of the branch or ravine.... In this position the British commander found Sumter, when ready to advance upon him. The infantry were formed in front of the houses beyond the ravine, in an open field, with their left upon the road, and their right flanked by a fence and skirted by thick wood not far from the river.<sup>56</sup>*



Figure 15. Phase 2. Tarleton moves to his right to observe Sumter forming for battle.

<sup>56</sup> Hammond, *Battle*, 525.

Sumter's 420 men included his own South Carolina militiamen as well as volunteers from Georgia and North Carolina. Among the South Carolina officers was Col. Thomas Taylor, already mentioned as having come in with the foraging wagons, and Col. William Hill, Col. Richard Winn and Maj. Samuel Hammond, who provided invaluable descriptions of the battle. The South Carolinians also included Col. Edward Lacey and lieutenant colonels William Bratton, Henry Hampton and James McCall. The Georgia officers included Maj. William Candler, who had been with Taylor in the foraging party, as well as Col. Elijah Clarke, Col. Benjamin Few, Col. John Twiggs and Maj. James Jackson.<sup>57</sup> Hugh McCall gave the following account of how Sumter deployed his troops:

*Colonel Hampton, of Broad river, with his troops was to occupy the house: colonel Twiggs, the senior officer under general Sumpter, assisted by colonel Clarke, and majors Chandler and Jackson, with the Georgia militia, were to occupy the fence and wood land to the left of the house: colonels Bratton, Taylor, Hill, and M'Call were to occupy the right of the house, with their right formed on the curve of the rising ground: this corps was to be commanded by the general in person: colonel Lacey was appointed to cover the right; and colonel Winn was to occupy the hill, as corps of reserve.<sup>58</sup>*

Winn's description is similar except that he stated that colonels Bratton, Hill and Taylor were in front rather than to the right of the house:

*The Georgians on the left under Cols. Clark, Few & Chandler, Colo. Lacey to the Right Cols Bratton & Hill & Taylor in Front also a Colonel Hampton from High up Broad River was thrown into a log House with his party and Colo. Winn in a Small distance of the Hole [whole] on the top of Blackstock's Hill. This Hill is high and Steep and makes down to the Road which passes at its base and from this Situation it was soon discovered by the Colo. it would be impossible for the Horse to make any Effectual charge on him.*

### Phase 3

Sumter was anxious to begin the fighting before Tarleton's infantry and artillery arrived, so he called for volunteers to bring on the battle by riding forward and firing at Tarleton's troops with their rifles. (Fig. 16)

*General Sumpter rode along our lines, and asked if any would volunteer to bring on the attack, by making an attack, and retreating back so as to draw the enemy to a different point. A captain (whose name I have forgotten), myself, and about 30 men volunteered in this service, and marched directly in front of the enemy's line within gun shot, and fired upon them and immediately retreated back to the main army. This succeeded as was expected, for the enemy marched up to the attack.<sup>59</sup>*

Two days after the battle Tarleton wrote, "I did not mean to attack Sumpter, only to harrass and lay close to him till I cou'd bring up the rest of the corps, as he would have pass'd the Tiger if I had not acted so. The 63d were attacked by the enemy, which brought on the affair."<sup>60</sup>

The riflemen probably rode to within effective rifle range but beyond the effective range of the muskets of the 63rd Regiment. Nevertheless they were close enough that "when this company of light horsemen... was advancing up to bring on the attack against the enemy, [Jeremiah Dial's] horse was shot dead just as he had got off him."<sup>61</sup> Because rifles took up to a minute to reload, the riflemen had to quickly ride away after firing to avoid

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<sup>57</sup> J. D. Lewis has a detailed order of battle at [https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution\\_battle\\_of\\_blackstocks.html](https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_blackstocks.html).

<sup>58</sup> McCall, *History*, 498.

<sup>59</sup> James Clinton pension application S2437, <https://revwarapps.org/s2437.pdf>. McJunkin in his "Narrative" stated that it was he and Lt. Col. William Farr and others who brought on the battle.

<sup>60</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, *CP* 3:341.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremiah Dial, Jr. pension application W914, <https://revwarapps.org/w914.pdf>.

being charged with bayonets. At about the same time Sumter sent about a hundred men—almost a quarter of his force—to flank the British right.

*General Sumter ordered Colonel Clarke, of Georgia, to take one hundred good men, pass the enemy's right, then formed in the open field, and in cover of the woods, attack the infantry in the rear, and cut off, if practicable, the horses there piqueted; and to attack and annoy them in the rear, as soon as the action should commence. this order was promptly obeyed by Colonel Clarke and Colonel Candler of Georgia, who, just coming in with Taylor, volunteered on that service, as did Major Hammond, with his command.<sup>62</sup>*

Maj. McJunkin, who was apparently with this party, stated that on the way they were “met by a party intending to flank us, when we Exchanged shots & retreated.”<sup>63</sup> In Figure 16, I have shown that the British party

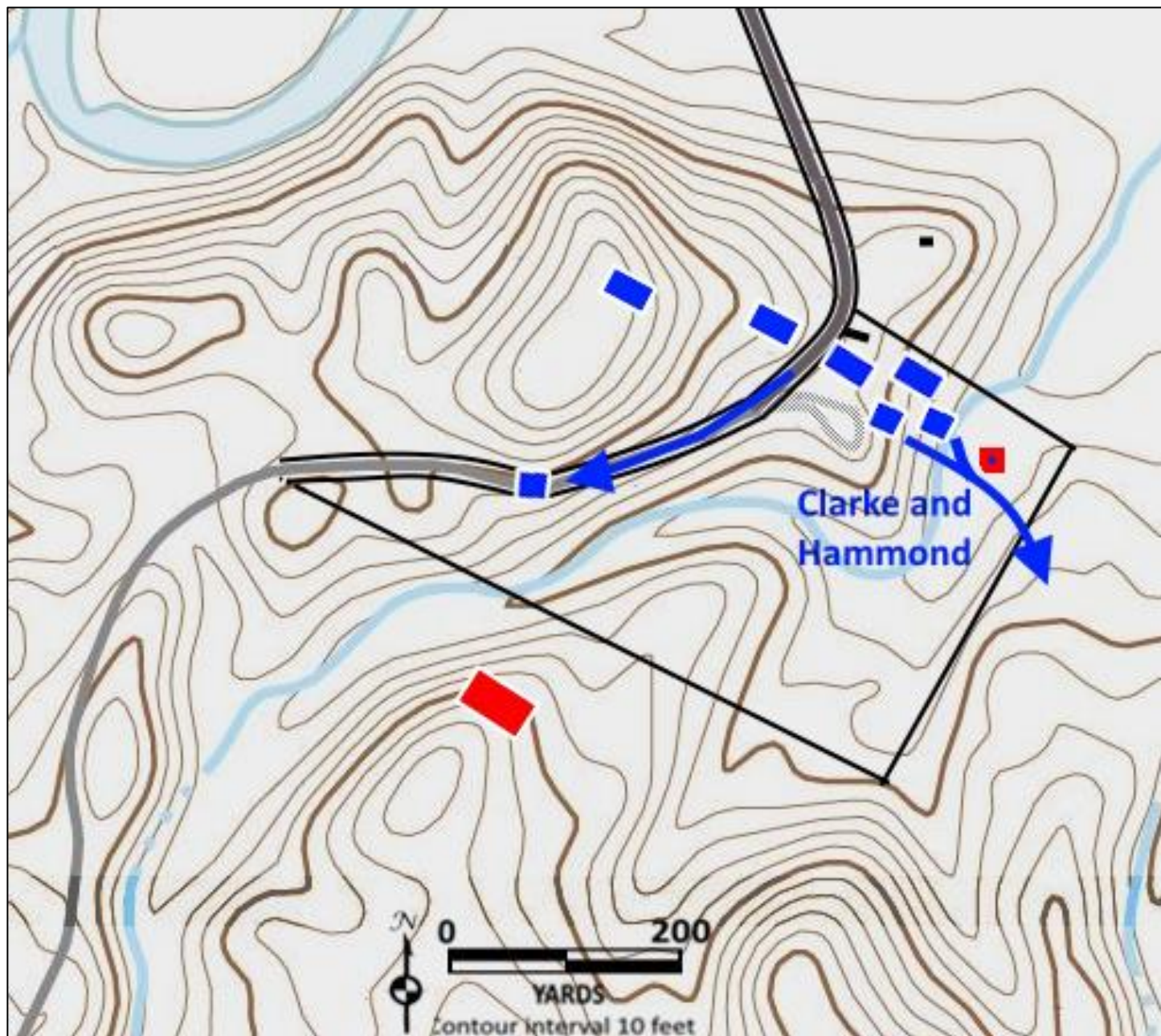


Figure 16. Phase 3. Sumter sends riflemen to bring on the battle and a flanking party to the left.

<sup>62</sup> Hammond, “Battle.”

<sup>63</sup> McJunkin, “Narrative,” 40.

was at a place where Smith found two fired rifle balls and one fired 0.75 caliber (British) ball. It is also possible that this skirmishing accounts for some of the artifacts found by Bryan Tate on private property to the southeast of the main battlefield. The combination of fire from the riflemen and the flanking action forced Tarleton to make a choice. He would have to stand while his men got shot up, give up the battle, or attack. Tarleton chose the last option.

#### Phase 4

With Tarleton's cavalry on their left, the infantrymen of the 63rd charged up the hill with fixed bayonets, concentrating their force against the remaining Georgians. In Tarleton's words, "A heavy fire and sharp conflict ensued: The 63d charged with fixed bayonets and drove the enemy back; and a troop of cavalry, under Lieutenant

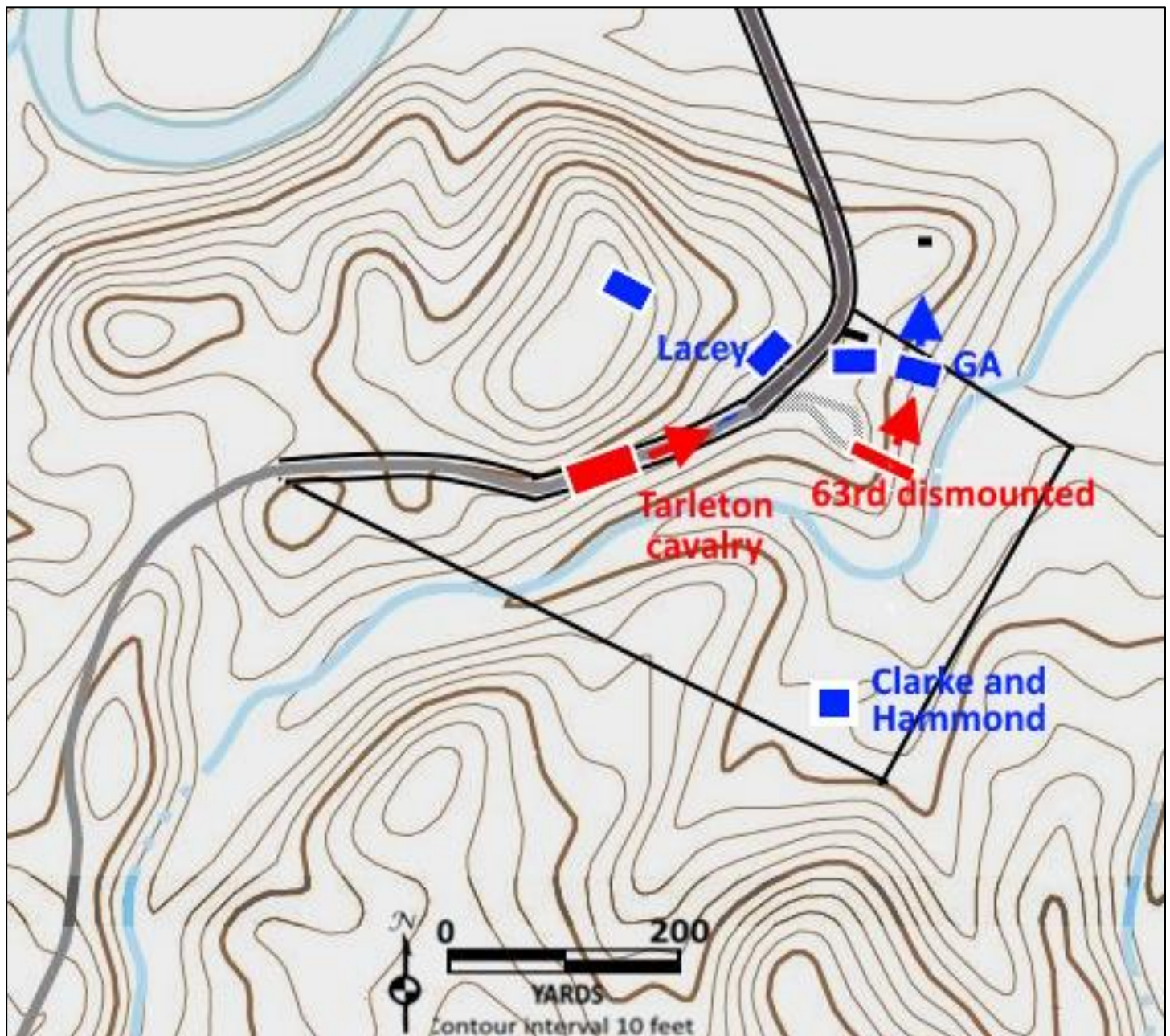


Figure 17. Phase 4. The British 63rd Infantry charge through the field, pushing the Georgians back. Tarleton's cavalry charges up the road to protect them from fire from Lacey's riflemen on the left.

Skinner, bravely repulsed the detachment which threatened the flank.” The threat to the flank came especially from riflemen under Col. Edward Lacey. (Fig. 17).

*Colo. Lacey being posted in a thick Woody Ground gave him a great advantage. When the British made an attempt to attack the front Lacey firing on them then Jumping on their Horses ride Out of Site loaded Mounted their Horses road in Gun Shot discharging in like Manner and so Off again in this way he kept the Enemy at Bay for at least two Hours tho they had in the Meantime mad Several attempts to dislodge the front which was immediately under the Com[man]d of Genl. Sumter.<sup>64</sup>*

*[Tarleton] ordered the infantry to dismount, and with the cavalry he made a rapid charge through the field, on the Georgians under colonel Twiggs. The British infantry advanced, and Sumpter led on the right to the attack, and gained their flank. Lacey’s men were on horse-back, and advanced on the enemy’s flank.<sup>65</sup>*

*As many men who had horses and accoutrements fit for action [had advanced] to the West side of the Lane through the thick wood these men were headed by Col. Lacy, he very judiciously advanced within fire of them undiscovered, as they were then on horse back near the end of the Lane, he then gave them a fire so well directed that upwards of 20 of them fell from their horses as well as a number of their horses killed, the woods being so thick that the regular horse dare not penetrate it—and a number of the men dismounted occasionally crept up so as to kill many of them in their ranks.<sup>66</sup>*

“Tarlton retreated with his cavalry, formed and returned to the charge, and thus continued directing his chief efforts with his cavalry, against the Georgians, in order to turn the American left.”<sup>67</sup> Tarleton charged a second and a third time.<sup>68</sup> The Georgians withstood the attack “manfully for sometime,”<sup>69</sup> but “by repeated efforts of the enemy, the Georgians on the left were nearly turned, and their left flank gave way.”<sup>70</sup>

## Phase 5

In Tarleton’s telling of the battle, he scored a significant victory. In his *History*, he wrote:

*The ardour of the 63d carried them too far, and exposed them to a considerable fire from the buildings and the mountain. Though the undertaking appeared hazardous, Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton determined to charge the enemy’s center with a column of dragoons, in order to cover the 63d, whose situation was now become dangerous. The attack was conducted with great celerity, and was attended with immediate success. The cavalry soon reached the houses, and broke the Americans, who from that instant began to disperse: The 63d immediately rallied.<sup>71</sup>*

Hammond and Hill, as well as other witnesses, gave a very different version of who won the battle. It was the Americans who rallied and the British who dispersed. (Fig. 18)

*The riflemen, under cover of the hog-pens, and those behind the fence, received them [the British] with becoming firmness, and fired with extraordinary activity and spirit. Sumter’s right extending*

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<sup>64</sup> Winn, “Notes.” It is unlikely that the fighting lasted as long as two hours.

<sup>65</sup> McCall, *History*, 500.

<sup>66</sup> Hill, “Memoirs.”

<sup>67</sup> McCall, *History*, 500.

<sup>68</sup> Myddelton, “Letter.”

<sup>69</sup> Winn, “Notes.” Winn stated that the Georgians “fell back Over the River,” but that does not appear likely.

<sup>70</sup> McCall, *History*, 500. McCall stated that “colonel Winn advanced to support them,” but Winn stated that near the end of the battle “my Men was all fresh as they had not been Engaged.”

<sup>71</sup> Tarleton, *History*, 182.

*along the ridge, advanced upon the flank of the British; they soon sounded a retreat, and were hurrying from the field.*<sup>72</sup>

*The Americans having the advantage of the before mentioned fence together with the thick wood just by the fence that before they got through the Lane their front both men & horse fell so fast that the way was nearly stopt up – a retreat was then ordered which was a pleasing sight for the Americans to behold —so many falling either by wounds or stumbling over the dead horses or men. They were pursued by the Americans with loud shouts of victory — at the time this happened to the horse the Infantry advanced to the houses before mentioned and there they received such a heavy fire from those in the houses as well as from a number of the reserve that had got round to that quarter they then made their retreat in as great confusion as the horse.*<sup>73</sup>

Winn also sprang into action from the top of the hill.

*my Men was all fresh as they not been Ingaged, in a line on the top of the Hill I made them Sit down to prevent discovery about 5 yards from Each Other to make greatest show possible and when I gave them the word they was to Jump up Set up the Indian Hollo and run down the Hill on the Enemy & to fire as they run at the same time Bullets in their Mouths & powder in their pockets, in a few Minutes the British Horse advanced as appead with much Caution at the foot of the Hill and when they got to the far End of my line I gave the word the Officers & Men Obeyed*<sup>74</sup>

In the meantime, “Clarke and Hammond had attacked the infantry in the rear, and taken a part of their horses; but the whole retreating British force coming up, they were compelled to retire, and only carried off a few infantry horses, and cut loose a number of others.”<sup>75</sup> James Clinton stated that “when we got beyond the old field we fell into an ambush and received a fire from their right and left.”<sup>76</sup> The ambush party on the American right is depicted in Figure 18 at a place where Smith found one unfired 0.75 caliber ball and two fired rifle balls.<sup>77</sup>

At some point in the fighting, Sumter was shot in the right shoulder. (Appendix) One month after the battle Lt. Col. David Hopkins in Winn’s regiment wrote that it occurred as Tarleton was retreating.<sup>78</sup> Winn, probably writing much later, recalled Sumter’s wounding as happening during one of Tarleton’s charges.

*The Genl. in attempting to lead on his Men Rec'd a bad wound in his Shoulder Colo. Winn was soon made Acquainted with this by Capt. Henry Hampton one of his Aids. Winn requested Hampton to have the Genl. taken off the field and Carried on the Other Side of the River and to Say Nothing about it. In a Short time after Majr. James Jackson afterwards Maj. General of Georgia came to me and give me to understand that Our Men in the Front was giving way & Sir says he I will tell you that the Salvation of this Country depends on this One Single fight. I told him we must try it.*<sup>79</sup>

According to McCall:

*When Sumpter had fairly engaged with the right, which fired obliquely on the British, he received a shot in the right shoulder: he requested aid-de-camp, captain Henry Hampton, to put his sword into the scabbard and to direct a man to lead off his horse on which he was mounted, “say nothing about it, and request colonel Twiggs to take the command.”*<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hammond, “Battle.”

<sup>73</sup> Hill, “Memoirs.”

<sup>74</sup> Winn, “Notes.”

<sup>75</sup> Hammond, “Battle.”

<sup>76</sup> Pension application S2437, <https://revwarapps.org/s2437.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, “Research.”

<sup>78</sup> David Hopkins letter dated December 20, 1780, in *The Union [SC] Times*, August 17, 1917, page 12, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/863652794/?terms=Union%20Times>.

<sup>79</sup> Winn, “Notes.”

<sup>80</sup> McCall, *History*, 499.

## Aftermath

Tarleton convinced himself, or at least tried to convince Cornwallis, that the Battle of Blackstock's Plantation was a British victory against a much larger force. Two days after the battle he wrote to Cornwallis, "The Rebels were commanded by Sumter Clarke Lacy & Brannons [Col. Thomas Brandon's] Men were present, 1000 in all & were attacked by 190 Cav.l [Cavalry] & 90 Inf.y [Infantry] on most unapproachable ground."<sup>81</sup> A few hours later he

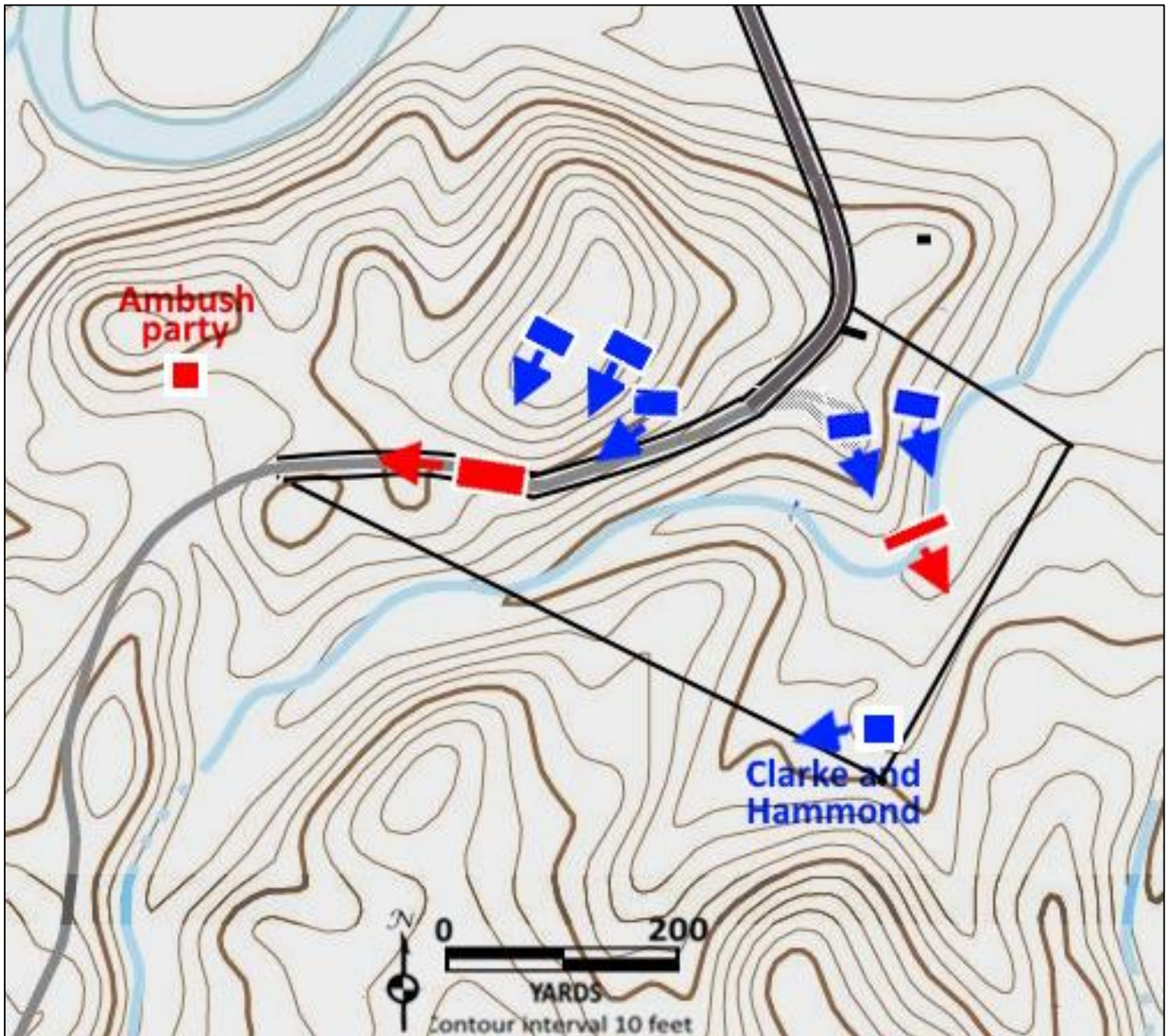


Figure 18. Phase 5. British infantry falter under fire from American riflemen on their left. Legion cavalry advances to assist and are also pushed back. American flankers under Clarke and Hammond are pushed away by retreating British.

wrote, "I believe my last action had many good consequences. The rebels have disbanded. Sumpter is mortally wound'd, one colonel of theirs kill'd, and about 120 kill'd, wounded and prisoners of the rebel army."<sup>82</sup> Sumter would, in fact, recover, take command of a much larger force, and continue to be Cornwallis's "greatest plague

<sup>81</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, CP 3:340-341.

<sup>82</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, CP 3:341.



Figure 19. Homes where Sumter was treated. Top: Adam Goudeock's home, relocated, where Sumter's wound was dressed. (C. Leon Harris) Bottom: John Price's home, no longer standing, where Sumter recuperated. (From Anne King Gregorie, *Thomas Sumter (Columbia SC: R. L. Bryan, 1931)*, 127.)

in this country.”<sup>83</sup> A more likely estimate of Sumter's losses at the battle were three killed (none of them a colonel), four wounded, and fifty captured.<sup>84</sup>

Tarleton had to admit he had casualties as well. “But my Lord I have lost Men – 50 killed & wounded & Officers which are losses to the public Service. Poor Money is wounded but not dangerously – Gibson and Cope kill'd Also numrous Legion wounded and every Officer there my own included killd or wounded.”<sup>85</sup> Lt. John Money's wound was in fact mortal, and he died at Shirer's Ferry eleven days later.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Cornwallis to Tarleton, November 23, 1780, *CP* 3:342.

<sup>84</sup> J. D. Lewis, Carolana, “Blackstocks,” [https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution\\_battle\\_of\\_blackstocks.html](https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_blackstocks.html).

<sup>85</sup> Tarleton to Cornwallis, November 22, 1780, *CP* 3:340.

<sup>86</sup> Saberton, *CP* 2:24, note 17.

The ball was extracted from Sumter's shoulder, and he was placed in a litter and carried 18 miles north during the night to Wofford's Ironworks on Lawsons Fork of Pacolet River, a few miles east of Spartanburg.<sup>87</sup> From there, he was carried 12 miles northeast to the cabin of Adam Goudeock in present Gaffney, where John Gaston, "a quack doctor," dressed his wound.<sup>88</sup> (Fig. 19) Sumter was then taken another 47 miles to a hospital in Charlotte, where he remained for more than a month.<sup>89</sup> By January 11, he was recuperating at the nearby home of John Price, where Gen. Nathanael Greene, commander of the Southern Army, prevailed on him to return to active service.<sup>90</sup> By February 1781, Sumter had recovered enough to conduct a campaign of 250 miles known as Sumter's Rounds, and in the following July, the Dog Days Expedition. By July 28, Sumter was no longer marching with his troops, his "Indisposition... interfering rather too much."<sup>91</sup> He returned to Charlotte, where he carried out light duties as ordered by Greene in cordial exchanges of letters.

Sumter would probably not be surprised that the Battle of Blackstock's Plantation is not widely known. After the Battle of Hanging Rock on the previous August 6, he was quoted as saying, "...we had got a great victory, but it will scarcely ever be heard of, because we are nothing but a handful of raw militia, but if we had been commanded by a Continental officer, it would have sounded loud to our honor."<sup>92</sup> The Battle of Blackstock's Plantation was overshadowed by Continental General Daniel Morgan's defeat of Tarleton at the Cowpens, in which Tarleton lost ten times as many killed, wounded, and captured as he had done at Blackstock's. It could reasonably be argued that the soldiers at the Battle of the Cowpens found the courage to withstand Tarleton's attack only because they knew he had been defeated less than two months earlier. As Cornwallis once observed, "Cavalry acts chiefly upon the nerves, and if once it loses its terror, it loses its greatest force."<sup>93</sup>

## APPENDIX: Sumter's Wound

As noted above, Hugh McCall stated that Sumter was shot in the right shoulder, which is consistent with Sumter's statement in a March 9, 1781, letter to Gen. Nathanael Greene that "I still labour under the misfortune of having but little use of my right hand and writing very painful."<sup>94</sup> William Hatcher also specified the right shoulder,<sup>95</sup> which is supported by the following statement by Samuel Walker: "Gen Sumpter was wounded in the shoulder. I saw him when he was shot, his sword fell out of his right hand, and he caught it with his left before it fell to the ground."<sup>96</sup> John Walker stated that "Sumter was shot through the shoulder in that Battle with a pistol Bullet,"<sup>97</sup> which suggests that the shot was fired by one of Tarleton's cavalymen. Eight other participants, including Tarleton, stated that Sumter was shot in the shoulder.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Christopher Choat S3144; James Clinton S2437; William Smith W22272; Abraham Toney R10642.

<sup>88</sup> Joseph Gaston W23089, <https://revwarapps.org/w23089.pdf>. Richard C. Meehan, Jr., "Interactive Map," <https://southern-campaigns.org/>. Testimony by Janet Gaston, widow of John Gaston, W30007, <https://revwarapps.org/w30007.pdf>. Moses Lindsey S4551.

<sup>89</sup> Samuel Gordon S30441, <https://revwarapps.org/s30441.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> Charles S. Myddelton to Nathanael Green, January 11, 1781 in Richard K. Showman and Dennis M. Conrad, eds., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* Vol. 7 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>91</sup> Sumter to Maj. Ichabod Burnet, July 28, 1781, Dennis M. Conrad, ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* Vol. 9 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 99-100.

<sup>92</sup> McJunkin's Narrative, 39.

<sup>93</sup> Cornwallis to Francis, Lord Rawdon, July 15, 1780, *CP* 1:205.

<sup>94</sup> Sumter to Greene, March 9, 1781 in Showman and Conrad, *Paper*, 7:417.

<sup>95</sup> Pension application S31727, <http://revwarapps.org/s31727.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> Pension application S3448, <http://revwarapps.org/s3448.pdf>.

<sup>97</sup> Pension application W9875, <http://revwarapps.org/w9875.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> James Alexander W9327, <http://revwarapps.org/w9327.pdf>, James Clark S32181, <http://revwarapps.org/s32181.pdf>, James Clinton S2437, <http://revwarapps.org/s2437.pdf>, Jeremiah Dial Jr. W914, <http://revwarapps.org/w914.pdf>, John Hodge S21825, <http://revwarapps.org/s21825.pdf>, James Jones R5706, <http://revwarapps.org/r5706.pdf>, Richard Winn. Notes—1780 Transcribed by Will Graves.

<http://revwarapps.org/scx2.pdf>. Tarleton, *History*, 183. Christopher Choat <http://revwarapps.org/s3144.pdf> stated that the wound was to the "shoulder or arm."

Other historians added details without citing their sources. William Dobein James wrote that “the ball passed through the shoulder and carried away a small portion of the backbone.”<sup>99</sup> Robert D. Bass probably built upon James’s statement in the following: “Sumter turned sideways in his saddle, throwing his right shoulder between his heart and their fire. Five buckshot ripped into his chest. Another plunged under his right shoulder chipped a splinter from his backbone, and came to rest in his left shoulder.”<sup>100</sup>

Some participants gave various other locations for the wound. Joel Harvey stated that Sumter was wounded in the “breast and shoulder,” and Maj. Samuel Hammond mentioned only a severe wound in the breast.<sup>101</sup> Moses Lindsey stated that Sumter was “dangerously wounded in the back,” and Reuben Long stated that Sumter was “severely wounded in his hip or thigh.”<sup>102</sup> The preponderance of evidence, however, suggests that the wound was to the right shoulder.

## Acknowledgements

Mike Burgess sacrificed a perfect spring day in 2017 to show me around Blackstock’s Plantation and share his understanding of the battle. Paul T. Carter, Larry Stephens, and Jill Cragg read the paper carefully and made helpful suggestions that improved the manuscript. Special thanks to Mary Jane Harris, my companion in life and in the briars and mud of remote parts of the battlefield.

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<sup>99</sup> William Dobein James, *A Sketch of the Life of Brig. Gen. Francis Marion* (Charleston, 1821), 73.

<sup>100</sup> Robert D. Bass, *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of Thomas Sumter* (Orangeburg SC: Sandlapper, 1961), 107. A wound from buckshot would more likely have come from one of Sumter’s own riflemen.

<sup>101</sup> <http://revwarapps.org/r4709.pdf>. Johnson, *Traditions*, 525.

<sup>102</sup> <http://revwarapps.org/s4551.pdf>, <http://revwarapps.org/r6431.pdf>.

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## About the Author



C. Leon Harris earned a BS in physics at Virginia Tech and graduate degrees in biophysics at Penn State, then taught biology, wrote textbooks, and did neurobiological research at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh, for more than three decades. Since retiring to Mount Pleasant, SC, and Adamant, VT, he and Will Graves have transcribed more than thirty thousand Revolutionary War pension and bounty-land applications, rosters, and other documents at [revwarapps.org](http://revwarapps.org).

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Welcome to my column on the dreaded “Bloody Backs” and their Provincial allies. American writers have regurgitated the same propaganda and written from ignorance about the Crown Forces in the Southern Campaign. I will attempt to educate the readers of the Journal about the Tommies who were fighting to restore the “Rights of Englishmen” to the rebellious colonies.

*Your True and Loyal Servant.*

Kim R. Stacy, 84th Regiment of Foot (Royal Highland Emigrants) retired.

## A Short History of the 7th Regiment of Foot (Royal Fusiliers) in the Southern Campaign

One of the most misunderstood British regiments to campaign in the South was the 7th (Royal Fusilier) Regiment. The regiment garrisoned Upper Canada, and it was largely destroyed and its Colours captured when the Bostonians invaded what was intended to become the 14th Colony in 1775. The 7th was recruited to full strength in England and sent back to the colonies. Remnants of the 7th fought in many of the major battles in the North.

A misconception is that the Regiment was composed entirely of recruits! The word “recruit” had a different meaning in the 18th Century. Yes, men were recruited and initially referred to by their officers as “recruits.” However, after what we would regard today as Basic Training, they spent the next two years drilling in Light Infantry tactics practiced in America before shipping to America. They constantly trained in marksmanship by firing live ammunition at targets, and the best marksmen were recognized. When they landed in Charles Town, South Carolina, with General Sir Henry Clinton in 1779, they were well drilled, had full confidence in their officers and noncommissioned officers, and were well prepared by their training. Many veterans had been bloodied in the Northern Campaigns.

The 7th took part in the Siege of Charles Town in May 1780 and later acted as convoy escorts, delivering essential supplies to Camden and Ninety-Six. They frequently engaged in skirmishes while safeguarding their convoys. Their conduct was commendable, and they gained valuable combat experience. Additionally, they maintained garrisons along the supply routes and served as a training cadre under Major Patrick Ferguson, instructing his Loyalist Militia. “Recruits” would not have been assigned such a significant role. They also engaged in anti-partisan warfare, a task that would have been difficult for typical ‘recruits’ to succeed in, especially guerrilla tactics.

The 7th had small detachments with General Clinton throughout his campaigning. They served mostly as scouts and were with him from the “Race to the Dan” to Yorktown, Virginia. On January 17, 1781, at the disastrous Battle at the Cow Pens, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton’s forces were overwhelmingly defeated, allowing major attacks on backcountry logistics posts and garrisons from that point. The 7th Regiment, with 170 men, suffered

around 21 killed and 148 captured. They lost the Regimental Colours once again! Those who managed to escape, and those on convoy duty, were sent to Charles Town to garrison and rest, then shipped to occupy Savannah, Georgia until the end of active warfare in the South, and were shipped back to England to reform and refit.

Their annual issue of uniforms consisted of red short coats, waistcoats, trousers, and cocked hats. In the South, contrary to popular myths, they did not wear their coats or waistcoats in the heat of the day. Many orders from other regiments operating in the area confirm this. Waistcoats were worn in the chill of the night, and redcoats wore them on guard duty and in anticipation of combat. By the end of the year, their poorly made uniforms were rags.

***Significant Actions (a short list):***

1. 20 June 1779. Stono Ferry.
2. Spring 1780. The Siege of Charles Town.
3. May 1780. Garrison Ninety-Six and controlling the surrounding countryside.
4. June 1780. Garrison Camden. Training Militia.
5. Late June 1780. Garrison Moncks Corner, about half of the men are sick and sent to the hospital in Charles Town.
6. July 1780. Camden garrison sent to rejoin the Regiment in Charles Town. Most are sick. Considered “unfit,” in rags, with weapons inoperable. Only about 220 men are “fit for duty.”
7. September 1780. About 200 “fit” men marched on George Town, capturing the American supplies. A troop of men was mounted and sent to Camden to inform Lt. Col. Turnbull about Francis Marion’s and other rebels’ activities in the Santee region.
8. October 1780. 106 men in hospital in Camden left the garrison vulnerable to attack.
9. December 1780. New uniform (yearly issue) arrives and is distributed. Convoy detachment participates in the embarrassment of Marion at Halfway Swamp.
10. January 1781. The regiment reorganized “fit” men into 4 companies, as 165 of about 240 total men were in hospital (out of a regiment of 500 men who started the Southern Campaign). The four companies were sent back to Ninety-Six. The rest were victims of disease. Besieged by the Insurgents.
11. 17 January 1781. Defeated at Cow Pens.
12. Late February – March 1781. “Race to the Dan” and Guilford Courthouse.
13. 6 July 1781. Company in battle at Green Springs.
14. 19 October 1781. Surrender at Yorktown.
15. December 1781. The remaining men were sent to Charles Town and then to Savannah.
16. 1782. Small-unit action in foraging for food and fodder for the garrisons at Charles Town and Savannah. In August, the Regiment evacuated the South, returned to New York City, and was then sent to England after the end of hostilities (November 1783). The Regiment reformed and refitted and went on to an illustrious career into the 20th Century.

**Further Reading:**

The 7th Royal Fusiliers and their Part in the American War for Independence:

<https://www.fusiliermuseumlondon.org/download?id=12390>

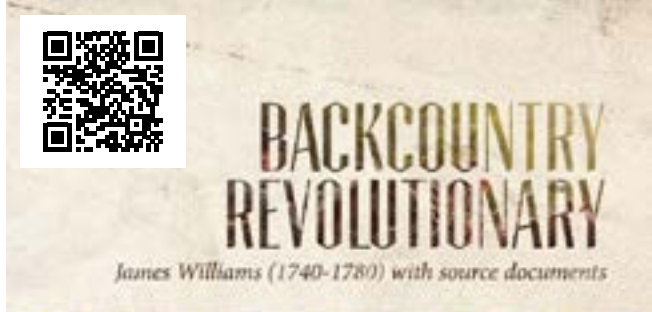
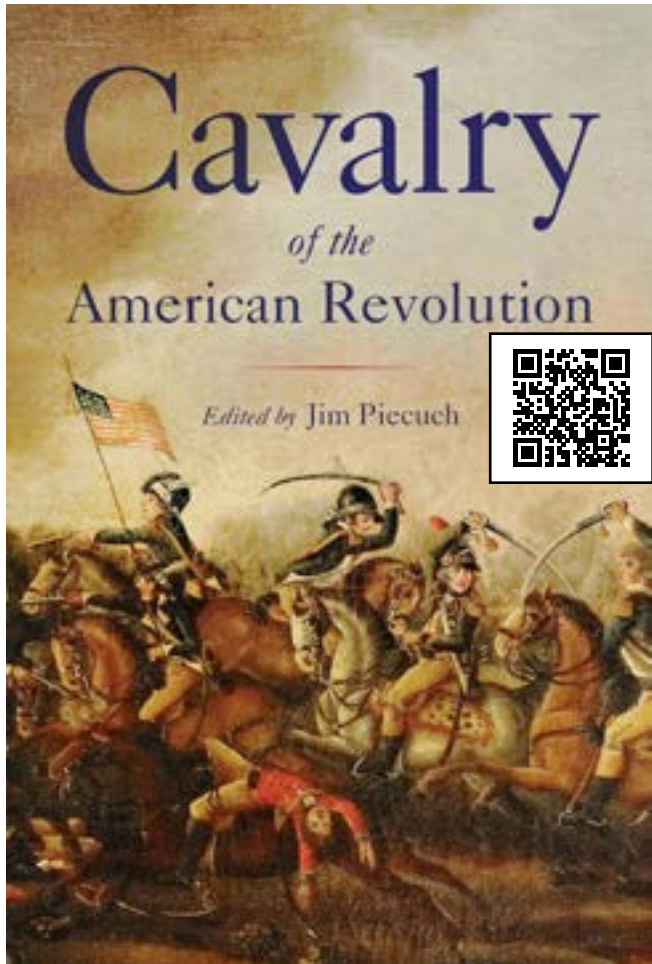
The Historical Record of the Seventh Regiment, or, The Royal Fusiliers:

[https://ia601705.us.archive.org/6/items/cihm\\_48374/cihm\\_48374.pdf](https://ia601705.us.archive.org/6/items/cihm_48374/cihm_48374.pdf)

Also see the many 7th Regiment of Foot reenactor websites such as <https://www.7thregimentoffoot.com>



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