

Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution The JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2026 | VOL. 26 NO. 10



A publication of
 SOUTH CAROLINA
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION
trust

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Military Justice

Douglas R. Dorney, Jr.



The Journal

Editor

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

Contributors

C. Leon Harris
Richard C. Meehan, Jr.
Olivia Hipp
Effie Copeland
Douglas R. Dorney, Jr.

Peer Review Pool

C. Leon Harris
Rick Wise
Ben Rubin
Tom Persons
Jim Piecuch
John E. Allison

Greg Brooking
Richard C. Meehan, Jr.
Mike Burgess
Wayne Lynch
Larry Babits
Paul Wood

Some editorial illustrations in this issue were created with generative AI and subsequently altered through extensive digital editing. These images are intended to evoke historical settings and should not be interpreted as exact visual reconstructions.

About Us

For the People

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

Thomas E. Persons, Sr.
Chairman

John E. Allison
Vice Chairman

Wesley O. Herndon
Executive Director

Julian JB Burns
Treasurer

Corinne M. Hoch
Secretary

John "Bucky" Haas
Board Member

SCART, Inc.
P. O. Box 2552
Camden, S.C. 29020
<https://sc-art.org>
<https://southern-campaigns.org>

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

IN THIS ISSUE

5 [Letter from the Editor](#)

8 [The Dragoon](#)
C. Leon Harris

9 [SCART Intern](#)
Mapping Books on the Revolution in South
Carolina and Beyond
Olivia Hipp

11 [SCART Intern](#)
The Historography of the American
Revolutionary Era
Effie Copeland

15 [Feature Story](#)
Military Justice in the Southern Department
Douglas R. Dorney Jr.

27 [Submission Guidelines](#)



OUR HISTORY MATTERS.

THEIR STORIES ARE OUR STORIES.

Help South Carolina's Revolutionary history live on - forever.



PRESERVE | PROTECT | PROMOTE | PERPETUATE

MAKE HISTORY LAST.

Your gift helps SCART safeguard well-researched physical and digital resources - stories, artifacts, records, places and collections - and keep them accessible for generations.

One-time and monthly gifts are welcome.

Support the general fund or a specific collection or initiative.

SCAN TO DONATE



[SC-ART.ORG/DONATE/DONATE-FUNDS](https://sc-art.org/donate/donate-funds)

info@sc-art.org | 843-655-4683 | sc-art.org

SCART, Inc. | PO Box 2552 | Camden, SC 29020

From the Editor

My wife, Renee, and I dress as living historians and participate in special events throughout the community. We also periodically teach in the Wofford College Lifelong Learning program about the Revolutionary War history of Spartanburg, South Carolina. During these sessions, we ask questions of the audience to help guide our presentations, which are loosely structured to allow for “off-the-cuff” commentary.

One of our main questions is, “How many of you are from Spartanburg, born and raised?” The answer has changed dramatically over the years, from roughly 50% to as few as 5%. Yes, South Carolina, and especially my hometown, is being flooded with newcomers. The interesting thing is that these newcomers who attend our presentations are hungry for the history of the area where they have settled.

Another interesting tidbit is that the locals who attend these events, in general, know very little about Spartanburg’s Revolutionary War heritage. When I was in school, no teacher ever mentioned how our town was named for the Spartan Regiment of Militia, one of the most active fighting forces in the Backcountry. It wasn’t until the Bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1976 that I even heard of the Spartans. Here we are, celebrating America’s 250th anniversary as an independent nation, and I wonder how much this situation has really changed.

Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. I’m sure there are teachers who provide lessons about local Revolutionary War history. There are new teaching units available on the SC250 website, along with many other resources designed to help meet the state’s educational standards while exposing students to local history.

South Carolina’s public schools have a responsibility to teach our young people about the American Revolution, and our state has established educational standards to accomplish that. Eighth-grade students study South Carolina’s role in gaining independence, while high-school students revisit the Revolution as part of their American history education. The state’s instructional guides include such familiar battles as Camden, Kings Mountain, and Cowpens, along with the contributions of Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens.

I have had conversations with teachers who tell me they simply do not have time for local history because



Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

they must teach the overall American Revolution. This means “One if by land, two if by sea” and “Washington crossed the Delaware.” See? This is what I remember being taught in Spartanburg schools. ’Tis a shame, especially since my town’s heritage is directly tied to the successful Backcountry resistance to the British takeover of South Carolina.

But what about the hundreds of smaller engagements, the local militia regiments, and the ordinary people whose sacrifices helped win the war? The standards give teachers room to explore these stories, but they do not guarantee that students will learn what happened in their own communities.

This is where our local historians, historical societies, museums, battlefield preservation organizations, and publications such as *The Journal* can make a difference. We have an opportunity, particularly during America’s 250th anniversary, to help our schools connect the history students read in textbooks with the very ground beneath their feet.

I implore all teachers to take advantage of the many resources and opportunities available to bring our local Revolutionary War history into their classrooms. After all, it is one thing to learn that the American Revolution was fought in South Carolina. It is quite another to discover that part of it happened just down the road.

Sincerely,

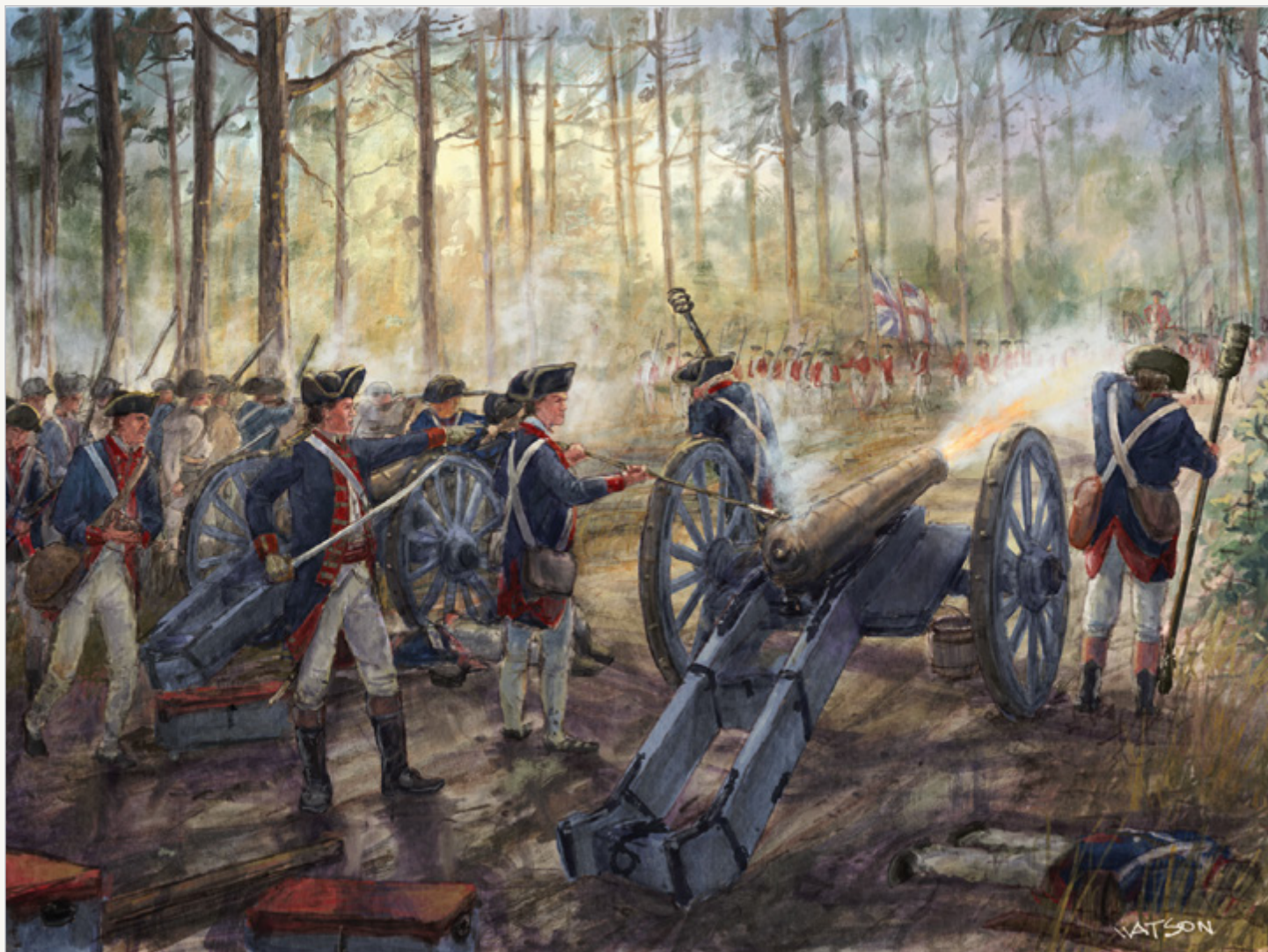
Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

Help Us Identify Camden 11A

DNA can restore a name - and a story - to a fallen American Patriot.

FHD Forensics recently announced the identification of Camden 9B as **Private John Pumphrey of the 7th Maryland Regiment**, the first of the Camden Fourteen to be identified through DNA. Inspired by this breakthrough, we are now conducting a genetic investigation of the fallen Patriot known as Camden 11A. Thanks to a generous grant from SCIAA's Archaeological Research Trust, we are **halfway to our funding goal** for this second case.

Your tax-deductible donation will help us learn everything we can about this second American hero. Like John Pumphrey's, his story should be told.



Painting: Dale Watson, Courtesy South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust



G4J Genealogy
For Justice™



SCAN TO DONATE

DONATE

Scan the QR code or visit:

GiveButter.com/Battle-of-Camden-Continental-9B

Or email:

Donations@GenealogyForJustice.org

Genealogy for Justice(TM), our sister organization, is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity.



JOIN US!



246TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE



The Battle of BLACKSTOCK'S FARM

NOVEMBER 20, 1780

Saturday, November 21, 2026

10:00AM

[Commemoration Begins]



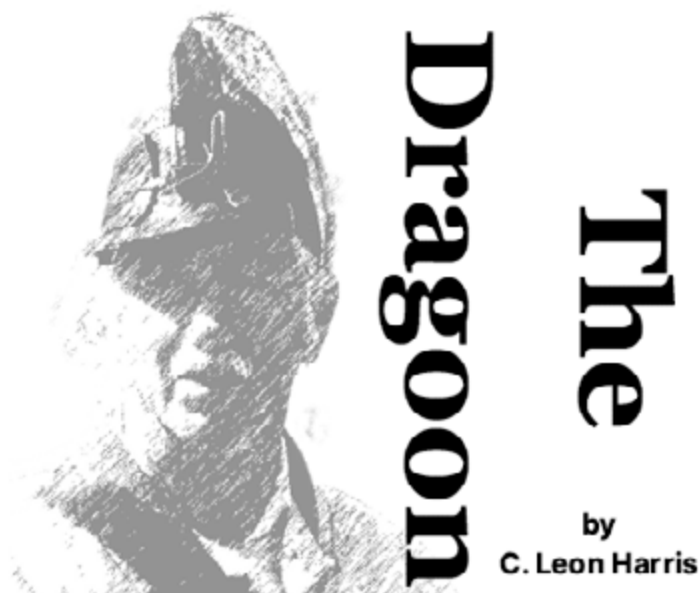
Blackstock Battlefield State Historic Site

568 Monument Road, Enoree, SC 28335



Located in the Battle of Musgrove Mill State Historic Site

<https://southcarolinaparks.com/products/10003371>



June 7 passed without any grand parades or displays of fireworks to commemorate The Running Tour, just as in the previous 244 years and probably all future years. You will not find The Running Tour in the history books, but it was so significant to its participants that they gave it that special name, and fourteen of them still vividly recalled it half a century later in their pension applications.

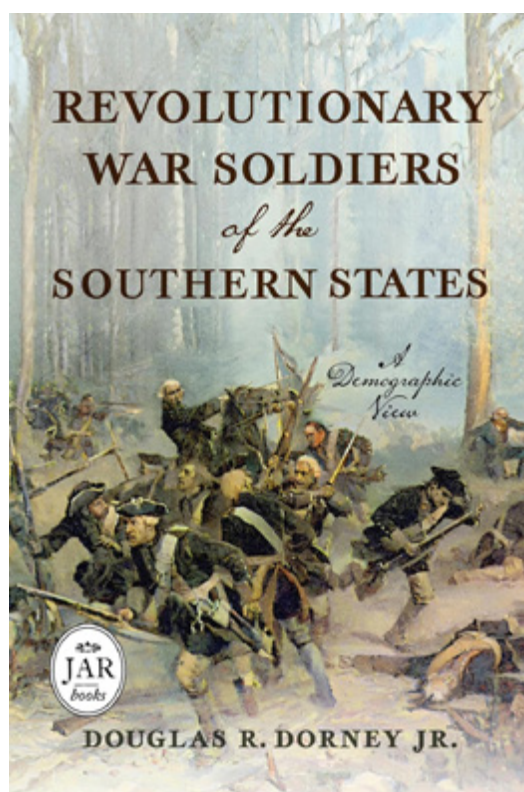
Near Scotchtown, about 20 miles north of Richmond, Virginia, militiamen under Gen. Lafayette were trying to keep out of the way of Cornwallis's army, and especially the light cavalry of Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton's Legion, notorious for lightning attacks and brutality. Just over a year earlier, Tarleton's Legion had ridden some 90 miles in two days to Waxhaws in South Carolina, where they attacked a detachment of Virginia Continentals, cutting them to pieces as they tried to surrender. At Charlottesville, just 50 miles away from Scotchtown, Tarleton had recently surprised Daniel Boone and other state legislators and had nearly captured Governor Jefferson at Monticello.

Lafayette's militiamen were so uneasy that they marched at night for safety. On the evening of June 7, 1781, the moon was nearly full but hidden by "one of the most Dreadfull Thunder Storms" Capt. Reuben Moore recollected ever having witnessed, according to his testimony in the bounty-land application of Col. John Thornton (<https://revwarapps.org/blwt1870-450.pdf>). "A severe flash of lightning alarmed the Artillery horses and caused them to run off with the Artillery. Cap'n Moore was in the rear and as his Platoon moved to the left to let the Artillery pass, he heard some person cry out, the British Light Horse are upon us, and in

consequence of the Alarm some soldiers and several officers threw down their arms and fled." One soldier's cry of "Tarleton!" triggered The Running Tour. Robert Combs (<https://revwarapps.org/s8251.pdf>) for many years afterward entertained listeners with tales "of men stumbling down in the fence ditches in the dark, and crying 'quarter,' quarters!" Samuel Daniel, apparently braver than most, "fell into a ditch, and he called upon his comrades to rise and fight for he could run no further."

"The artillery was at the moment stoped by runing against a tree and the platoon returning to the road which they had left and continuing their march, he (Cap'n Moore) discovered by the lightening which was incessant fourteen Guns & four Swords which were taken up." On the following morning, Col. Thornton of the Continental Army had the men who had run tried and sentenced to be whipped, but he excused them after Capt. Henry Towles promised they would do better in the future.

I like to imagine that as the militiamen resumed their march, there was one chuckle, then another, and soon widespread laughter, first from relief at not having been hacked to death by Tarleton's Legion, and then from amusement at their own behavior. Maybe even Col. Thornton hazarded a smile. They probably did do better in the future.



Mapping Books on the Revolution in South Carolina & Beyond

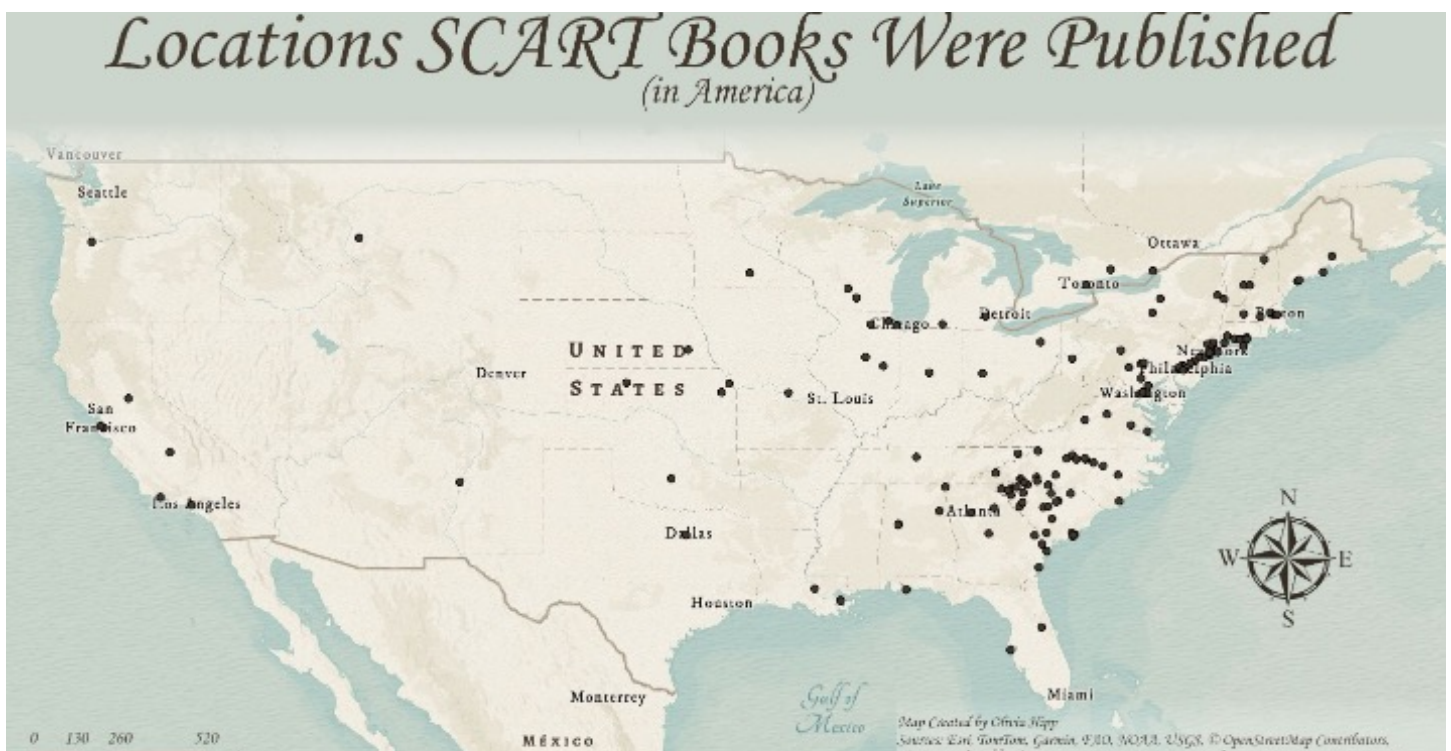
As an intern for the South Carolina American Revolution Trust, I have spent many hours cataloging books for the Trust's library collection, entering titles, authors, publishers, and dates. Many of the books were published in the metropolitan cities and academic institutions you would expect—New York, Chicago, London, Cambridge—but I also encountered many published here in South Carolina. I decided to map the publication locations of the books we have cataloged so far to better understand the geographic origins of our library collection, and I was pleasantly surprised by the outcome!

SCART's collection spans our nation, and South Carolina is particularly well-represented among publishers. This map shows that SCART's library champions not only South Carolina stories but also scholarship from South Carolina. I am excited to revisit this map after additional collections are added to see how we progress.

Looking at these trends over time, I noticed that (within the bounds of our catalog) South Carolina publishing peaked around the turn of the century. To see whether this was related to national scholarly trends, I turned to Google Ngram. Ngram allows users to search for the frequency of search terms over time within the repository of text scanned into Google Books. This system isn't perfect, of course, and is limited by both the body of work within Google Books and the system's text recognition software, but it can be helpful for a cursory glance at trends over time.



Olivia Hipp
SCART Intern





Google Ngram Search Trends

Between 1880 and 2020, mentions of the American Revolution trended upward around the Revolution's anniversaries (sesquicentennial and bicentennial) and the turns of the 20th and 21st centuries. This suggests that the spike in SC publishing in our collection reflects national trends in revolutionary scholarship.

Identifying trends in books about the South Carolina Revolution is a bit trickier. Ngram's search terms are fairly inflexible. For example, searching "South Carolina American Revolution" returns only references to those terms in that exact order. Searching "South Carolina" itself shows how often the state is mentioned, but not the context. References to South Carolina in the Civil War, South Carolina's ecology, or tourism in the state might indicate general interest in the state or related topics, but not in conjunction with the Revolution itself.

In honor of the upcoming Francis Marion symposium, I believe "Francis Marion" is a suitable search term to serve as a proxy for gauging interest in South Carolina's role in the Revolution over time. While less dramatic, trends in mentions of Marion are comparable to mentions of the Revolution itself, suggesting that published acknowledgment of SC's role in the Revolution has been proportionally stagnant over the years. The drop-off in recorded mentions of Marion's name in books since 2000 is not necessarily indicative of a stark decrease in interest in his story or in South Carolina's. More recent publications may not be adequately represented in Google Books' repository due to copyright issues, or simply may not have been scanned yet. I am hopeful that in the coming years we will see this scholarship rise beyond historical patterns of interest.

Data only gives us a portion of the story, but it is a helpful tool for understanding historical and historiographic trends and for ensuring that we are doing the work to promote the stories of South Carolina's role in the American Revolution. As SCART continues to grow its collection, I look forward to seeing where the map takes us next!



Google Ngram Search on Francis Marion

The Historiography of the American Revolutionary Era

While historians today are still eager to dissect even the smallest details of the American Revolution and new work is continuously published, few stop to consider how their interpretation of the Revolution may differ from that of a historian writing during the Early American Republic. Just as historical events do not occur in a vacuum, neither does a person's interpretation of those events. Historians' perspectives are continually shaped by the context of their time and by other influences on their ideology. Since the Revolution, some have sought to illuminate its more complex and nuanced details and perspectives, yet many early accounts greatly lauded the Revolution's ideals. This is less often the case in modern interpretations. So, how did this drastic shift in thought happen?

The earliest historical accounts of the American Revolution often continued the political rhetoric published by Patriots and Loyalists before and during the Revolution.¹ These authors were often people who lived through the Revolution and aimed to justify their position. Later, in the 19th century, more comprehensive accounts were published. These authors took a less personal approach to their depictions, but still very much portrayed the Revolution as an idealistic, heroic battle for American liberty.² Coinciding with literature's Romantic Period, honor and the virtues of Revolutionary figures were emphasized while the less than honorable details were sometimes effectively glossed over.³ These accounts relied largely on oral traditions and histories written only a few generations after those who experienced them. However, the oral nature of many of



these accounts left room for embellishment, and many folk tales without complete, documented proof stem from this period.⁴

The Progressive Era of the early 20th century saw the beginning of criticism of the American people's traditional view of the Revolution. Authors began to discuss how people in different socioeconomic classes experienced the Revolution in very different ways.⁵ This discussion opened the door for scholars like Bernard Bailyn in 1967 and Michael Kammen in the 1970s to argue that most Americans viewed the Revolution through a patriotic lens, while the real war occurred within a broader context.⁶ This line of thought continued into the 21st century.

Today, amid avid social advocacy and justice, many historians do not discuss the American Revolution

- 1 Michael D. Hattem. "Historiography of the American Revolution." *Journal of the American Revolution* (2013): par. 3. https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/08/historiography-of-american-revolution/#google_vignette
- 2 Zachary Clary, "Revolutions of Memory: The Historiography of American Independence." *Reviews on American History* 54, no. 2 (2026): 210-230. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rah.2026.a995755>
- 3 "The Romantic Period, 1820-1860: Essayists and Poets," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 8, 2026. <https://usinfo.org/enus/life/artsent/oal/lit3.html>

- 4 Clary, "Revolutions of Memory: The Historiography of American Independence," 210-230.
- 5 Hattem, "Historiography of the American Revolution," par. 7.
- 6 Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), v-vi.; Clary, "Revolutions of Memory: The Historiography of American Independence," 210-230.

without also discussing cultural, social, and political history. Their work largely analyzes the war in relation to broader social and cultural themes of the mid-to-late 18th century. Additionally, perhaps more than in some previous accounts, today's authors focus on marginalized groups and their experiences during the Revolution and their perspectives on it.⁷

The greater ability to make historical documents legible and useful for research has enabled an even more nuanced and intricate study of this period. However, some argue that greater access to research material has led to more historical accounts written by untrained authors, as well as a decline in accounts that focus on the Revolution's actual events.⁸

No era of American Revolutionary historiography has escaped the beliefs and values of its time. Each one offers a new and unique perspective on an event so intertwined with this country's identity and origins. Though sometimes contradictory, these varying approaches to studying and portraying history provide researchers with an incredibly rich array of avenues to find themselves in their own history. Resources from each era can be located within the South Carolina American Revolution Trust's collection, including Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*.



Depicted are a few examples from the collection of the South Carolina American Revolution Trust of 19th-century books on the American Revolution mentioned above.

Bibliography

Bailyn, B. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967.

Clary, Zachary. "Revolutions of Memory: the Historiography of American Independence." *Reviews on American History* 54, no. 2 (2026): 210-230. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rah.2026.a995755>

Hattem, Michael D. "Historiography of the American Revolution." *Journal of the American Revolution* (2013). https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/08/historiography-of-american-revolution/#google_vignette

Maier, Pauline. "How the History of the American Revolution Has Changed." *History News Network* (2004). <https://www.history-newsnetwork.org/article/how-the-history-of-the-american-revolution-has-cha>

"The Romantic Period, 1820-1860: Essayists and Poets," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 8, 2026. <https://usinfo.org/enus/life/artsent/oal/lit3.html>

7 Pauline Maier. "How the History of the American Revolution Has Changed." History News Network (2004). <https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/how-the-history-of-the-american-revolution-has-cha>

8 Ibid.

Southern Campaigns *of the*
**AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**

Have a Revolutionary War Event to Announce?

*Reenactment • Lecture • Living History
Battlefield Walk • Commemoration*



*The Southern Campaigns
of the American Revolution e-zine
is pleased to help promote*

**Revolutionary War–related events across
the South and beyond.**

Plan a reenactment, lecture, tour, or ceremony?
Let us help spread the word!



Submit your event details at: ➡ <https://southern-campaigns.org/contact/>

Serving historians, reenactors, and preservationists since 2003.

THE LIBERTY TRAIL—SOUTH CAROLINA

Discover The Liberty Trail South Carolina

America's independence was secured in South Carolina across its swamps, fields, woods and mountains. These events of 1779-1782 directly led to victory in the Revolutionary War. We call this history The Liberty Trail.

THE
**LIBERTY
TRAIL**
S.C.



SC 250
ANNIVERSARY
American Revolution

GET INVOLVED

South Carolina's Revolutionary War story isn't a single tale or event. It's thousands. Discover where ordinary people proved extraordinary, and experience Revolutionary South Carolina for yourself. There are so many ways to be a part of the 250th anniversary of The American Revolution in South Carolina.



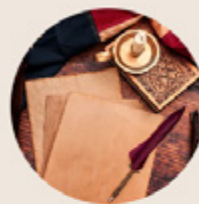
GET LOCAL

Explore what happened and what's happening in your county!



VISIT A SITE

More battles, skirmishes and events happened in South Carolina than anywhere else in



READ THE BLOG

Their stories are our stories! Learn more about the people, places, events and untold stories



TRACE YOUR ROOTS

Explore SC250's genealogy tools to uncover ancestors, family stories, and connections that

Military Justice in the Southern Department

Douglas R. Dorney Jr.



Among the most frequently recorded events in Revolutionary War Continental Army orderly books are violations of military rules of conduct and the resulting courts-martial. Documented in these volumes are thousands of soldiers' criminal prosecutions, trials, verdicts, sentences, and punishments. As a collective resource, they provide what is certainly the best window into the newly instituted American military justice system in place during the war. Enough information from sixteen southern state orderly books exists to provide a detailed statistical analysis of the trials and sentences of soldiers. This work is a study of 638 court-martial and court-of-inquiry records concerning soldiers of the Southern Department states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

There are at least two dozen known orderly (or order) books from the states that comprised the Southern Department. Nearly all of these are from Continental Army regiments in those states. At the time of this writing, many of these books remain unpublished or untranscribed. From a research perspective, they constitute a vast untapped resource of the daily workings of regiments during the war. Of the 16 sources used for this work, the largest single source of court records came from the orderly book of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment from early 1778 to late 1779, accounting for about 20 percent of all data.¹ For some unknown reason, most of the extant southern state orderly books covered in this work were of South Carolina soldiers, who account for about half of all soldiers in the data set.

The recorded court data for this work cover nearly the entirety of the war from April 1776 to August 1782. However, about two-thirds of all information recorded came from South Carolina and Georgia regiments in the period 1777–1779 serving in those states. Not all of the trial data was from soldiers serving in the South. About 15 percent of the total data recorded was collected from Virginia and North Carolina soldiers serving in the northern theater from 1777 to 1780.

Clearly referenced in the many orderly books were the various violations of the Articles of War adopted by the Continental Army. Passed by Congress on June 30, 1775, the articles were an evolution of the Massachusetts colonial system, which itself was largely derived from those of the British Army.² The penalties of the new American articles were initially more humane than those of its predecessors. Only three crimes were considered capital offences punishable by

¹ See Works Cited below for a list of orderly books used in this work.

² Nicholas K. Roland, Ph.D, “Lore of the Corps: The Articles of War and the American Revolution,” The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, *The Army Lawyer*, Issue 2, (2025).

death. Similarly, corporal punishment was limited to only 39 lashes.³ The military crisis of 1776 necessitated a more stringent code of military justice. Gen. George Washington and others proposed harsher penalties, with congressional approval, as a deterrent to the increasing problem of desertion. In the new articles, the penalties for capital crimes were increased from three to nine, and the maximum sentence for corporal punishment was increased to 100 lashes.⁴ The articles of 1776 “laid the foundation of a discipline, which in time brought our Troops to a Capacity of contending with British Veterans, and a rivalry with the best Troops of France.”⁵

Southern state orderly books contain thousands of points of data on courts of inquiry and courts-martial. Typically, men's names, their ranks, military units, dates, infractions, verdicts, and sentences are provided. In almost all instances, these recordings are brief, listing the charges, verdicts, and punishments. In a few instances, the accounts become more narrative, detailing particulars of the trial including brief commentary from presiding officers who disagreed about verdicts or sentences, or their reasoning in commuting sentences. For this study, records of 638 courts-martial were recorded from 15 orderly books and one index of court martial records. Surprisingly, most of these available orderly books (10) were for South Carolina regiments. While clearly focused on South Carolina regiments, these books also include dozens of accounts of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia soldier trials as well. The “harvested” information was transcribed into a single digital spreadsheet with each defendant assigned a row and statistical information recorded in columns from left to right, as one would see it on a computer screen. By and large, the statistics covered below are simple summaries of recorded statistics.

A considerable range of military ranks was recorded in trial data, ranging from private enlisted soldiers to two lieutenant colonels. About 20 percent of those tried by courts-martial were officers, mostly junior-grade officers such as adjutants, ensigns, lieutenants, and captains. Besides the names of the men facing trials, the charges against the men according to the Articles of War are among the most numerous details provided. Among the 638 court records are some 52 different charges brought against the men. The vast majority of these alleged crimes were situational, meaning they would not have occurred had the men not been in the army and subject to military justice. By far, the most prevalent charge brought against the men was for desertion. One third of all men in the data set were accused of this crime, 31 percent as a sole charge, with another 2 percent charged with this and a second or third charge. This figure for southern soldiers is lower than a survey of 3,000 trials of the Continental Army which found that 43 percent of trials involved charges of desertion.⁶ Significantly fewer men (16 percent) were charged with the second most prominent offence, disobedience. The third most alleged infraction was being absent without leave, involving 8 percent of men. Neglect of duty was the next most charged violation at 7 percent. Theft was the fifth most prominent alleged crime at 5 percent.

Completing the top ten charged infractions were drunkenness, losing or damaging equipment, sleeping on duty, abandoning post, and making false statements, each accounting for between 2 and 4 percent of charged crimes. Interestingly, only four of the remaining charges (assault, plundering, and two other combined charges) could be considered violent crimes, accounting for less than four percent of the total charges. Likewise, very few men were charged with other capital crimes like mutiny or spying, accounting for only about 1 percent of the total number of charged crimes. Roughly half of the 52 types of charges involved multiple infractions, accounting for about 15 percent of all men (Figure 1).

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 “[Monday August 19. 1776.] ,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-03-02-0016-0172>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 3, *Diary, 1782–1804; Autobiography, Part One to October 1776*, ed. L. H. Butterfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 409–410.]

6 James C Neagles, *Summer Soldiers: A Survey and Index of Revolutionary War Courts-Martial*, (Ancestry Incorporated, 1986), 34.

Figure 1: Charged Offences Among Officers and Enlisted Soldiers

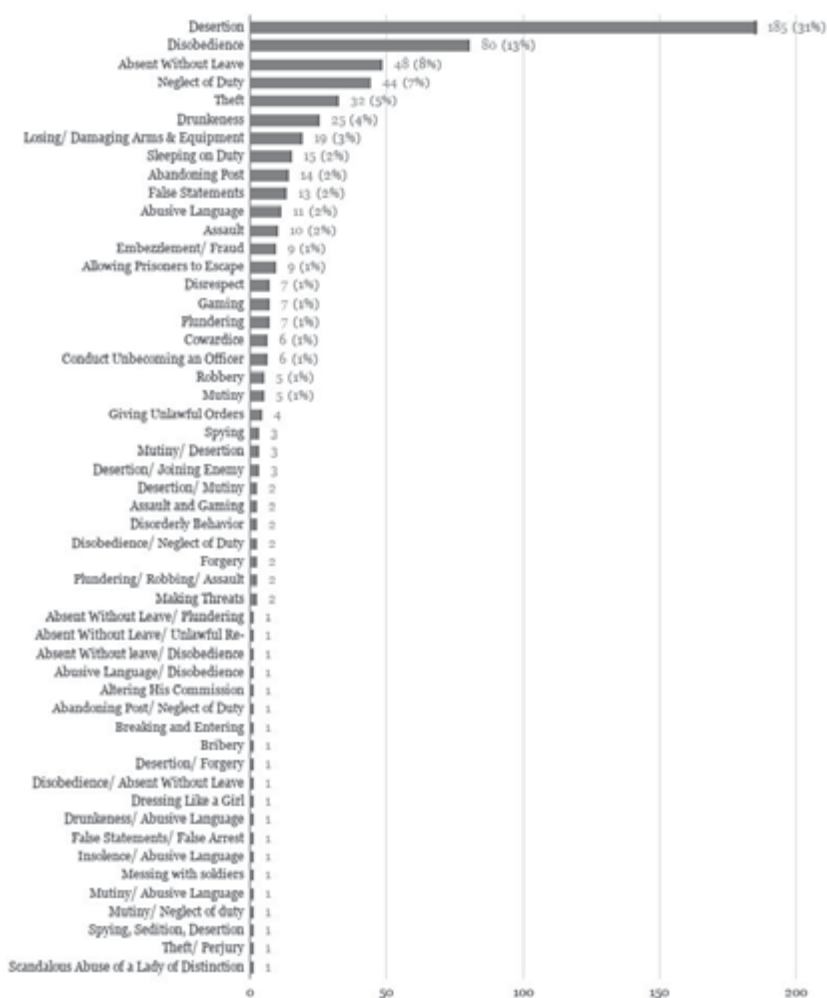


Figure 1. Charged offences among officers and enlisted soldiers.

There were a few unique charges made against this sample of men in the recorded data. In February 1779, Sgt. Joseph Grimes of the South Carolina light infantry was charged with “dressing himself like a girl” and being outside camp past curfew. He was found guilty and sentenced to a reduction in rank and a reprimand.⁷ Another unusual charge was brought against a lieutenant of the Georgia Continental Line in March 1778 charged with committing a vague “scandalous abuse of a lady of distinction.” The officer was found guilty and dismissed from service.⁸

Desertion among southern soldiers was a persistent problem from 1777 through 1781 in South Carolina and Georgia. In August 1777, Lt. Col. Samuel Elbert of the Georgia Continental Line noted that 20 men deserted in a short period after his arrival in camp. He lamented that the sentence of 100 lashes was too lenient, preferring death as a penalty.⁹ By October, Gen. Robert Howe was driven to immediately execute at least three men found guilty of desertion as a deterrent. Howe hoped the measure would halt the “scandalous and unmanly crime” of desertion.¹⁰

7 Court-martial record of Joseph Grimes, February 1779 in *Benjamin Lincoln Orderly Book*, Huntington Library, February 1779.

8 Court Martial of Lt. McKinney, March 1778, in Samuel Elbert, 1. *Order Book of Samuel Elbert, Colonel and Brigadier General in the Continental Army, October 1776 to November 1778*. 2. *Letter Book of Governor Samuel Elbert, from January 1785 to November 1785*. (Wymberley Jones DeRenne, 1902).

9 Ibid, August 1777.

10 Ibid, November 1777.

The frequency of several offences varied fairly widely over the course of the war. During certain periods, such as late 1777 to early 1779 and in 1781, rates of desertion rose sharply in the southern states. Consequently, commanding officers sought harsher treatment as a deterrent. Conversely, crimes outside the above periods were generally few and penalties more lenient. Generally, from 1776 to mid-1777 and from late 1781 onward there were few court trials, and even then sentences were less severe. One South Carolina militia orderly book from 1782 featured dozens of cases of disobedience but very few capital crimes like desertion. Among 30 guilty verdicts in Lt. Col. Francis Marion's militia in 1781, which included desertion, disobedience, and espionage, only one man was sentenced to death, and that was for being a spy. Most of these guilty militiamen were sentenced to the relatively minor punishment of serving additional time in the militia. Comparatively, Continental soldiers in previous years would have received 100 lashes for the same crimes.

There were several observed disparities in how military justice was administered. The most apparent was the clear difference in the judicial process between commissioned officers and enlisted men. Officers then were literally held to a different legal standard. While enlisted men were subject to a single trial by court-martial, officers would (or should) have initially faced a court of inquiry. This court, as its name suggests, was a preliminary hearing granted to officers to determine whether there was enough evidence of an infraction to proceed with a formal court trial. Courts of inquiry were fairly rare in the recorded data. Only 28 officers among the 133 total were recorded having undergone a court of inquiry. When they occurred, only 37 percent of courts of inquiry resulted in a later court-martial trial; the charges against the other officers were not supported by sufficient evidence. Among all officer trials, only about 67 percent were found guilty. By contrast, about four in five enlisted men, which included noncommissioned officers, were found guilty. There was likewise a disparity in the charged crimes and punishment between officers and enlisted men. Only two officers out of 133 were charged with assault. No officer was sentenced to corporal punishment. The most severe punishment for guilty officers in this data set was confinement before their trials, followed by dismissal from service.

One particular incident highlights the preferential judicial treatment provided to officers. In November 1777, two lieutenants faced trials in Savannah, Georgia, for abandoning their posts. Both were allowed to resign their commissions before their trials commenced. Lieutenant Colonel Harris, presiding over the court, granted the request but advised the officer corps that it would not be granted in the future.¹¹ There are no known instances of an enlisted man being allowed to resign military service to avoid a trial. Conversely, officers appeared to be overrepresented (per capita) among court cases overall. Considering that commissioned officers were estimated to make up at most 10 percent of the Continental Army, officers accounted for about 20 percent of the 638 individual cases recorded in this work. This figure roughly aligns with the most comprehensive study of courts martial of over 3,000 trials that found that one in six trials involved officers.¹²

An overwhelming majority of enlisted men facing courts-martial were found guilty. Over 77 percent were found guilty, with 21 percent found not guilty. About 2 percent were charged with multiple offences and were found guilty of one crime and not guilty of the other. There was no significant variation found among conviction rates for different crimes. For instance, 86 percent of men charged with desertion were found guilty. About 79 percent of men charged with neglect of duty were found guilty. Roughly the same proportion (78 percent) were found guilty of sleeping on duty. One of the lower rates of convictions was for theft, at about 65 percent

Another disparity in the collected trial data was for the sentencing of those found guilty. Convicted commissioned officers received comparatively light sentences. The most prominent punishment for officers was to be dismissed from service. About 54 percent of officers were dismissed or "cashiered" from service for their infractions, which included drunkenness, being absent without leave, and neglect of duty. Reprimands were the second most prevalent punishment for officers, accounting for 42 percent of all sentences. The most frequently observed crimes receiving this penalty were disobedience and making false statements, but several cases involved the infractions listed above. Only about 5 percent of officers were sentenced to "time [already] served" in jail (Figure 2).

Sentences for enlisted soldiers were considerably harsher. About 65 percent of enlisted men in the southern states who were found guilty of various crimes were sentenced to some form of corporal punishment. About 90 percent of these men were sentenced to be whipped or "flogged" with a cat of nine tails on the bare back. Other types of corporal punishment included running the gauntlet and "picketing," which involved men being suspended by their hands and forced to stand on a pointed stake in the ground for a period of time. Of the remaining sentences, about 12 percent of men were sentenced to death, about 8 percent to extended service, 6 percent to reduced rank, and 4 percent to a reprimand. Other sentences, each accounting for less than 3 percent, included loss of pay, dismissal, asking for pardon, and jail time (Figure 3).

¹¹ Ibid, November 1777.

¹² Neagles, *Summer Soldiers*, 29.

Figure 2: Sentences of Guilty Officers

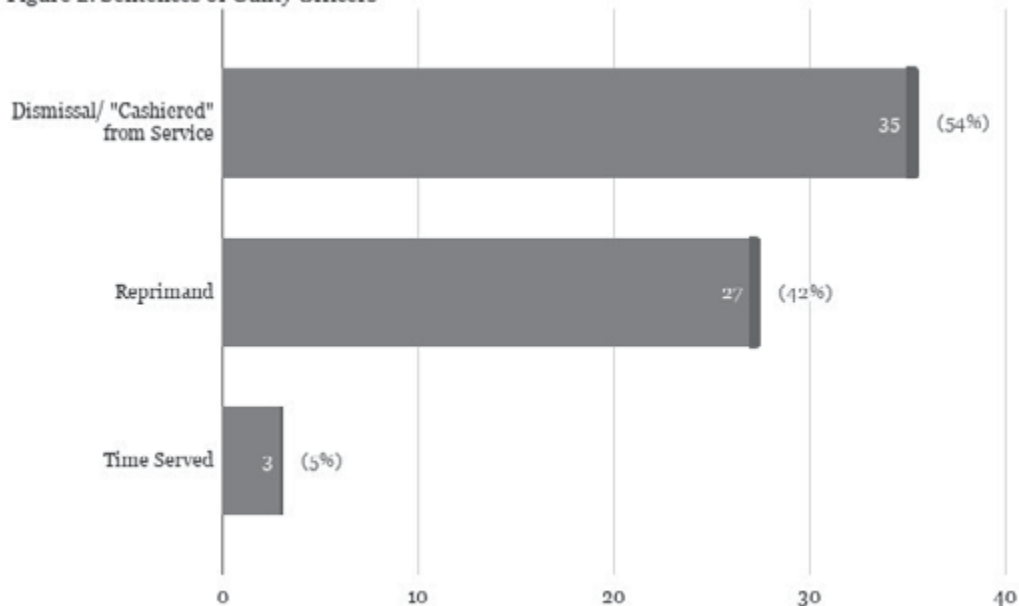


Figure 2. Sentences of guilty officers.

Figure 3: Sentences of Guilty Enlisted Soldiers

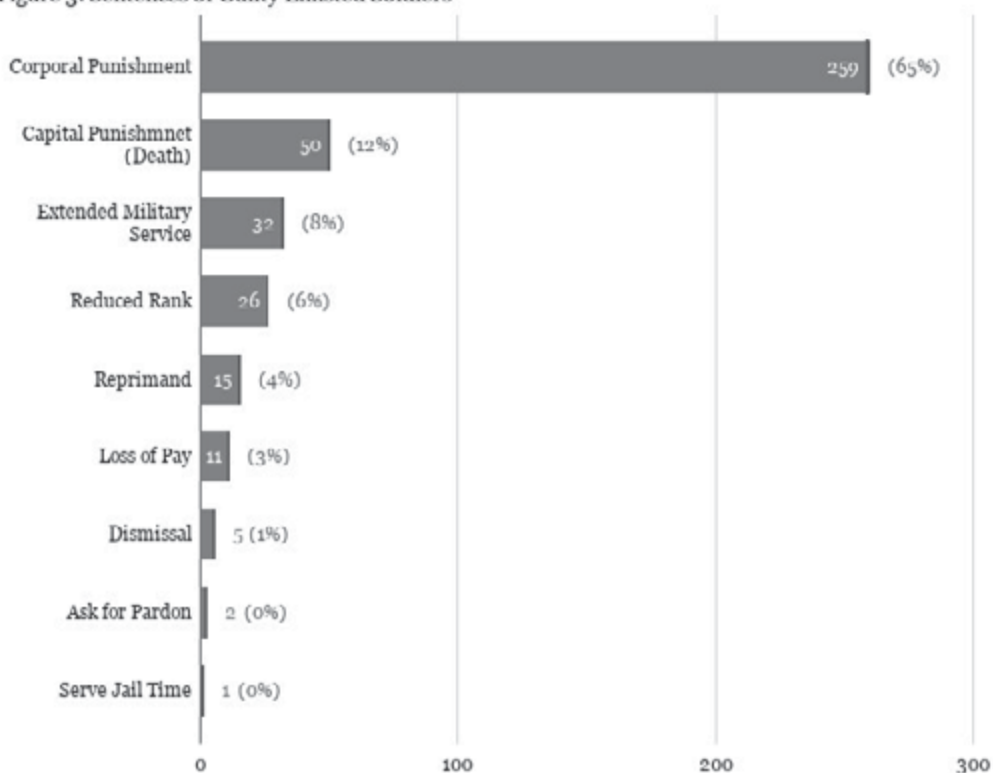


Figure 3. Sentences of guilty enlisted soldiers.

Approximately 72 percent of men found guilty for desertion were sentenced to receive 100 lashes. Nearly all of the remaining 27 percent found guilty of this crime were sentenced to death. Interestingly, relatively minor crimes were also subject to flogging sentences. Two men from the South Carolina Line in 1778 received the extreme sentence of 100

lashes for being absent without leave.¹³ Two Georgia Continentals and one North Carolina Continental received the same punishment for abusive language. Nine of nineteen men found guilty of losing or damaging their issued weapons or equipment were flogged, the penalties ranging from 25 to 100 lashes. Sentences were similar for men found guilty of neglect of duty, with 15 of 44 men receiving between 25 and 100 lashes each. Other sentences warranting corporal punishment included abandoning their post, allowing prisoners to escape, disobedience, drunkenness, fraud, forgery, mutiny, plundering, robbery, sleeping on duty, and theft (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Types of Corporal Punishment Among Enlisted Soldiers

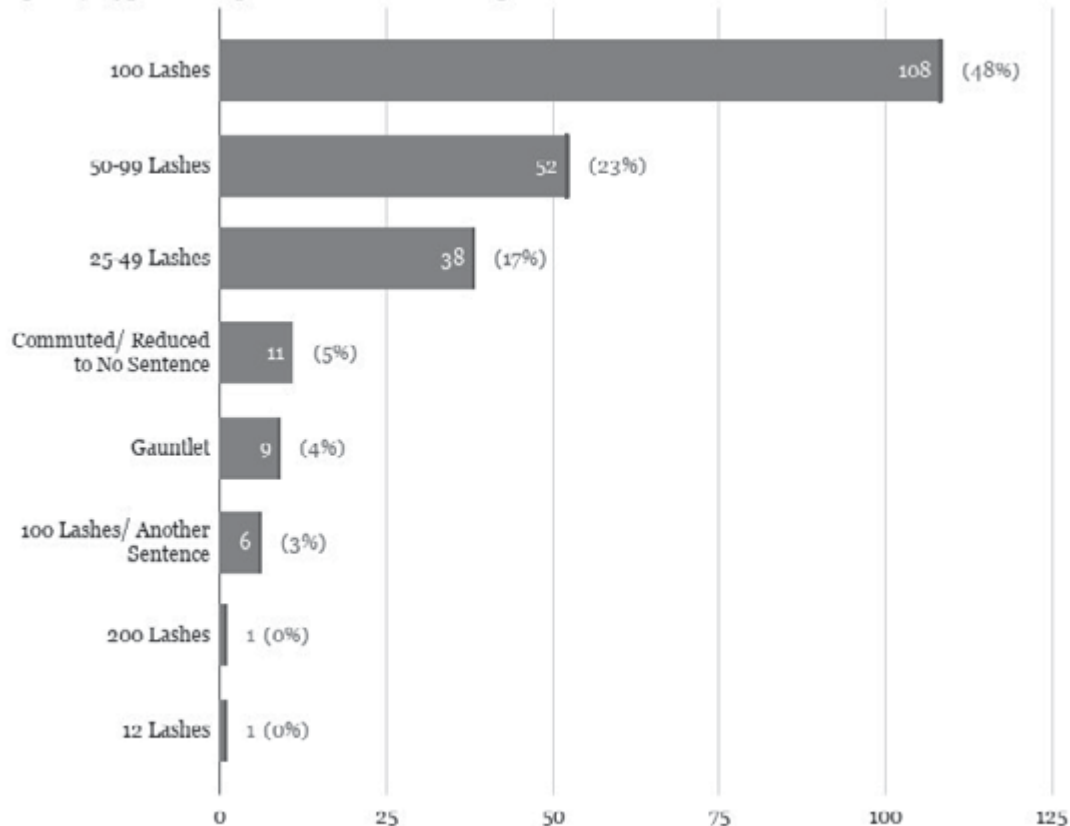


Figure 4. Types of corporal punishment among enlisted soldiers.

Among the 638 trials recorded, the death sentence was reserved for four crimes: desertion, joining the enemy, mutiny, and spying. Death sentences seem to have been commuted or pardoned by the commanding officer at slightly higher rates than sentences overall. About one in five death sentences of enlisted men appear to have been commuted with reduced charges or pardoned altogether.

There was one particular period where a relatively large number of men were convicted at the same time of desertion and sentenced to death. In May 1778, at Fort Howe in southern Georgia, ten Continental soldiers were tried at the same time for desertion. All were found guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad or hanging. The orderly book does not indicate whether all of the sentences were actually carried out. At least two men appeared to have had their sentences reduced or been pardoned. Other death sentences were likely carried out. According to several orders of the day from this period, the remaining available troops in camp were assembled to witness the executions.¹⁴

About 16 percent of all court sentences were commuted or reduced in some form by the commanding general or senior officers of the court. Roughly 41 percent of these commutations were for desertion. Most commonly, these

13 Francis Marion, in *Orderly Book of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment, 1778, Aug. 14 - 1779, Dec. 28.*, Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, November and December 1778.

14 Samuel Elbert, 1. *Order Book of Samuel Elbert, Colonel and Brigadier General in the Continental Army, October 1776 to November 1778.* 2. *Letter Book of Governor Samuel Elbert, from January 1785 to November 1785.* Published by Wymberley Jones de Renne as a Contribution to Georgia History (Wymberley Jones DeRenne, 1902).

commutations reduced the number of lashes to be received, usually from 100 to 50 lashes. About 10 percent of the reduced sentences were for disobedience and being absent without leave. Another 7 percent of the reduced sentences were for drunkenness. In a few instances, commanding officers cited their reasons for reducing sentences. The most frequently observed reason, although not recorded as a statistic, was consideration of the men's previous service. Men who had served with distinction or were well-regarded as noncommissioned officers appeared to be on the receiving end of lesser or suspended sentences. Georgia Continental soldier William Slater was one whose sentence was commuted. He was convicted of disobedience in August 1778. According to the rather vague account in the orderly book, Slater refused to be disarmed during an incident while he was on sentry duty. The unnamed presiding officer disagreed with the unspecified sentence, saying Slater "did his duty like a good soldier in refusing to be disarmed while on his post as a sentinel, and therefore remits the punishment."¹⁵

There were a few instances of what appear to be repeat offenders in the assembled list of men facing criminal charges. Only 13 men (about 2 percent of men recorded) could be positively identified as having been charged with two or more crimes. Corporal Champneys of the South Carolina Line faced two courts-martial in September and October 1778. In the first he was found guilty of abandoning his post and received a reprimand. In his second trial, he was found guilty of making threats. The sentence of this later crime was not indicated in the orderly book.¹⁶ Another South Carolina man, John Frobly, was charged with abandoning his post in November 1778 and found not guilty. By January, he was charged and found guilty of disobedience and sentenced to 35 lashes.¹⁷ Samuel Henderson of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment was found guilty at least three times in a short period. In December 1778, he was found guilty of drunkenness and sentenced to have his time in service doubled. The next month, he was found guilty of damaging or losing his issued equipment and sentenced to 100 lashes. In February 1779, if it is indeed the same man with this name, he received another 100 lashes for being absent without leave.¹⁸

Considering, as a very conservative estimate, that 15,000 men served in the 35 Continental Army regiments of the southern states, relatively few seem to have had encounters with military justice. Taken with a considerable degree of caution, one finding of this work may be that few men faced military justice during the war. Given the harshness of the system, it does appear that the possibility of corporal punishment for minor crimes provided some level of deterrence for men in the Continental Army. Corporal punishment remained in the American armed forces at least in part until the Civil War. Congress banned flogging in 1812 for a time but later reinstituted it after the death penalty was removed as a penalty for desertion in 1830. Flogging was completely abolished for the United States armed services in 1861.¹⁹

Much has been learned in the past 50 years of the bitter reality of a common soldier's life during the Revolutionary War. While it has been understood that most soldiers did not die primarily from battle wounds, recent studies of deaths from diseases such as smallpox, waterborne and insect-borne illnesses, along with thousands of deaths on prison ships, have solidified this understanding. Admittedly, very few died because of the military justice system. However, it was another, until recently little-known, pressure placed on men in already difficult circumstances. As we arrive at the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, there is a growing appreciation that soldiers' lives during the war were especially harsh and deadly. It is fair to say here that the military justice system was yet another complexity of the war to contend with for the unfortunate soldiers who faced it.

15 Ibid.

16 Courts-martial of Corporal Champneys, September-October 1778 in Francis Marion, in *Orderly Book of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment, 1778, Aug. 14 - 1779, Dec. 28.*, Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, n.d.

17 Courts-martial of John Frobly, November 1778 and January 1779, *ibid.*

18 Courts-martial of Samuel Henderson, December 1778-February 1779, in *Ibid.*

19 Roland, "Lore of the Corps: The Articles of War and the American Revolution."

Author Biography



Douglas R. Dorney Jr. is a licensed architect specializing in science and technology projects across the United States. He has written many articles on the American Revolution, ranging from biographies to soldier demographics. Most of his work can be found in the online and printed annual volumes of the *Journal of the American Revolution*. He is the author of *Revolutionary War Soldiers of the Southern States: A Demographic View* (Westholme Publishing, 2026).

Works Cited

- "An Order Book of the 1st. Regt., S. C. Line, Continental Establishment." *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. 7, nos. 2-4 (1906); vol. 8, nos. 1-2 (1907).
- Clark, Walter. "Order Book of Jacob Turner, July 05, 1777 - August 27, 1778." In *Volume 12 of the State Records of North Carolina (1777-1778)*. P.M. Hale, 1895.
- Elbert, Samuel. 1. *Order Book of Samuel Elbert, Colonel and Brigadier General in the Continental Army, October 1776 to November 1778*. 2. *Letter Book of Governor Samuel Elbert, from January 1785 to November 1785*. Published by Wymberley Jones de Renne as a Contribution to Georgia History. Wymberley Jones DeRenne, 1902.
- Greene, Nathanael. In *Orderly Book of Nathanael Greene, 1781, Apr. 1 - July 25*. Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, n.d.
- Grimke, John Faucheraud. "Order Book of John Faucheraud Grimké. August 1778 to May 1780." *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. 13, nos. 1-4 (1912); vol. 14, nos. 1-2 (1913); vol. 15, nos. 1-3 (1914); vol. 16, nos. 1-4 (1915); vol. 17, no.1 (1915); vol. 18, no.2 (1917).
- Horry, P. In *Orderly Book of Peter Horry, 1776, Aug. 18 - 1777, May 18*. Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, n.d.
- Lincoln, Benjamin. In *Orderly Book of Benjamin Lincoln, 1778, Dec. 6 - 1779, Aug. 7*. HM 659. Manuscripts, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.
- Marion, Francis. In *Orderly Book of Marion's Brigade of South Carolina Militia, 1781, Feb. 16 - 1782, Dec. 15*. Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, n.d.
- Marion, Francis. In *Orderly Book of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment, 1778, Aug. 14 - 1779, Dec. 28*. Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, n.d.
- Moultrie, William. In *Orderly Books of William Moultrie, 1775, June 20 - 1780, Dec. 15*. Manuscripts, Huntington Digital Library, San Marino, CA., n.d.
- Neagles, James C. *Summer Soldiers: A Survey and Index of Revolutionary War Courts-Martial*. Ancestry Incorporated, 1986.
- Orderly Book of Major William Heth of the Third Virginian Regiment, May 15-July 1, 1777*. printed Richmond, VA, 1892.
- "Records of the Regiments of the South Carolina Line, Continental Establishment." *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. 5, nos. 1-4 (1904); vol. 6, nos. 1-4 (1905); vol. 7, nos. 1-2 (1906).
- Salley, A.S. "An Order Book of the 1st Regt., S.C. Line, Continental Establishment." *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. 7, nos. 1-4 (1906); vol. 8, nos. 1-2 (1907).
- Salley, A.S. *An Order Book of the Third Regiment, South Carolina Line, Continental Establishment, December 23, 1776-May 2, 1777*. Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1942.
- Wallace Jr., Lee A. *The Orderly Book of Captain Benjamin Taliaferro, 2D Virginia Detachment, Charleston, South Carolina, 1780*. Virginia State Library, 1980.



JOIN US!



246TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE



The Battle of **BLACKSTOCK'S FARM**

NOVEMBER 20, 1780

Saturday, November 21, 2026

10:00AM

[Commemoration Begins]



Blackstock Battlefield State Historic Site
568 Monument Road, Enoree, SC 28335



Located in the Battle of Musgrove Mill State Historic Site
<https://southcarolinaparks.com/products/10003371>



OUR HISTORY MATTERS.

THEIR STORIES ARE OUR STORIES.

Help South Carolina's Revolutionary history live on - forever.



PRESERVE | PROTECT | PROMOTE | PERPETUATE

MAKE HISTORY LAST.

Your gift helps SCART safeguard well-researched physical and digital resources - stories, artifacts, records, places and collections - and keep them accessible for generations.

One-time and monthly gifts are welcome.

Support the general fund or a specific collection or initiative.

SCAN TO DONATE



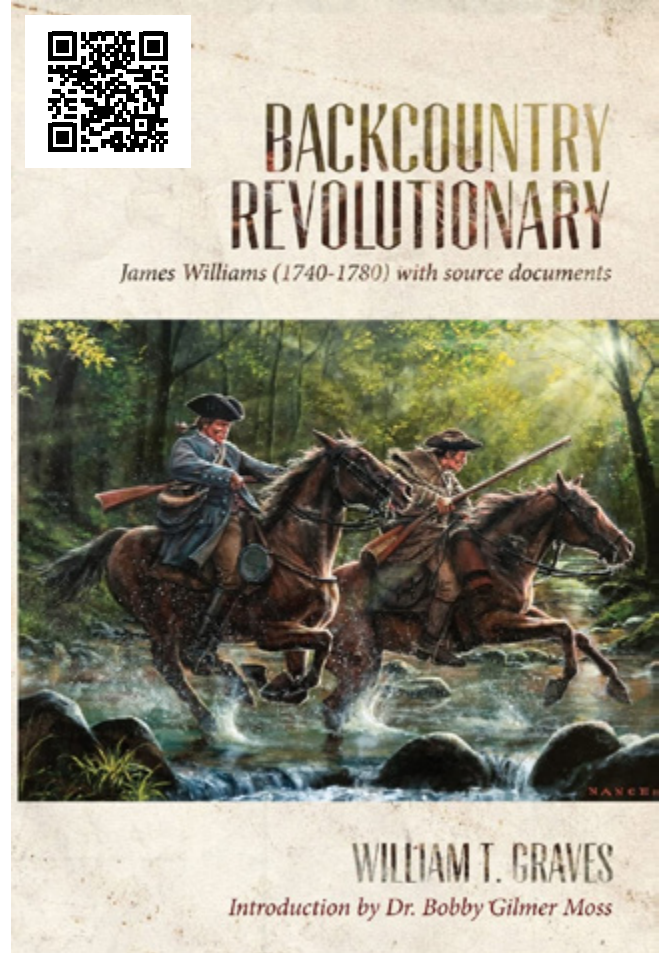
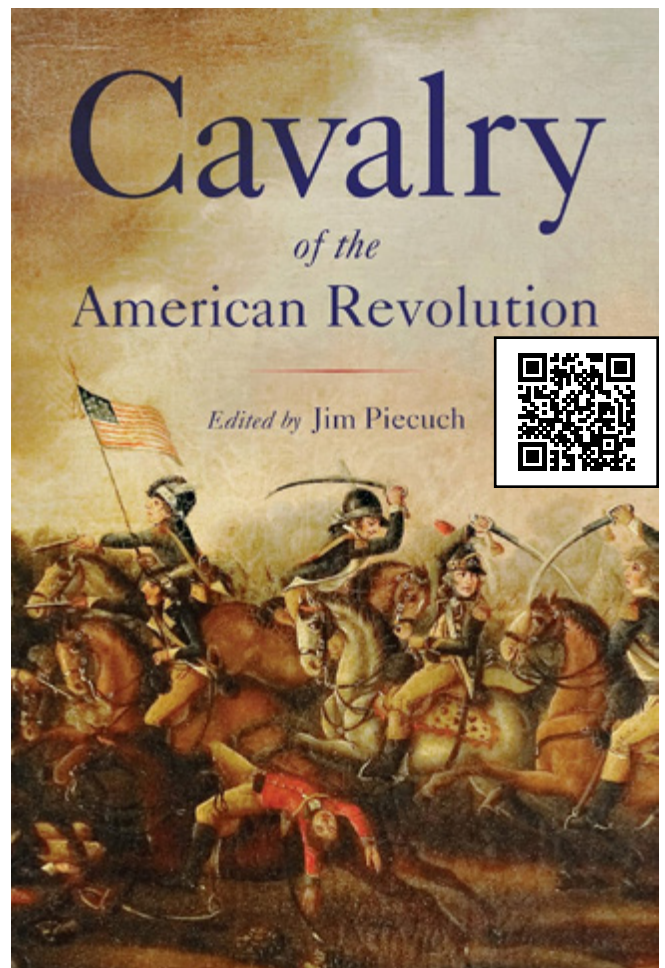
[SC-ART.ORG/DONATE/DONATE-FUNDS](https://sc-art.org/donate/donate-funds)

info@sc-art.org | 843-655-4683 | sc-art.org

SCART, Inc. | PO Box 2552 | Camden, SC 29020



CLICK OR SCAN TO BUY!



Like to read accurate
historical fiction?

FORD THE PACHOLET

Richard C. Meehan, Jr.



FORD THE PACHOLET

An American Revolutionary War Novel
Culminating in the Pivotal Battle of Cowpens



Richard C. Meehan, Jr.

"Young readers as well as adults can enjoy this book and get a 'historical fix.' A fun read!"

~ Hugh T. Harrington



amazon



CLICK OR SCAN TO BUY NOW!

Submissions Welcome

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

~ Richard C. Meehan, Jr., Editor

1. We encourage the submission of articles based on original research. For examples, please refer to previous issues at <https://southern-campaigns.org/>.
2. Before any work can be considered for publication, a formal query must be submitted via <https://southern-campaigns.org/contact/>. The editor will respond promptly.
3. The Journal promotes original conclusions and speculations supported by primary sources clearly distinguished from established facts.
4. Every assertion of fact should be backed by at least one primary source unless it is widely accepted, like "Charleston surrendered on 12 May 1780." Secondary sources can serve as supporting evidence.
5. Submissions must be in MS Word format, letter size, with 1-inch margins, single-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. The cover page must include the author's name and contact information.
6. Chicago Manual of Style, the latest edition, will be used for footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies. (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>.)
7. Articles may include illustrations and photos, preferably embedded within the text. Artwork, illustrations, and images must be in the public domain or include citations confirming they can be used commercially and noncommercially in print and online formats. The preferred graphic format is PNG or JPG, at 300 dpi. Lower or higher resolutions are not acceptable for this publication. Upon request, the editor may assist with resolving graphics issues.
8. All article submissions will undergo thorough peer review by three individuals recognized by the historical community for their relevant expertise, ensuring that references are legitimate and sourced from the best materials available.
9. If a submission is turned back for further citations or significant edit suggestions, the writer may resubmit the work when the edits are complete.
10. Acceptance for publication grants The Journal the rights to print and reprint the work in print, digitally, and on the web perpetually without compensation, allowing readers to download and print copies for personal use. The Journal does not provide any remuneration to the author. Authors retain all rights to publish their work elsewhere and to control its publication in accordance with copyright law.
11. The author must provide a short autobiography pertinent to their expertise in this field of study of no more than 300 words. A picture may be included if desired. The author may also provide a contact email address at the end of the article to obtain feedback from readers, but that is solely at their discretion, and the Journal accepts no responsibility for the results.
12. Announcements related to Revolutionary War events are welcome if submitted in graphic format (PNG or JPG). They should be 3x4 inches horizontally or 4x3 inches vertically for quality viewing and printing at 300 dpi.
13. News stories about Revolutionary War projects are accepted and should follow the same format as research papers.



Copyright © 2026 South Carolina American Revolution Trust, Inc.
southern-campaigns.org

