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Cowpens National Battlefield
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From the Editor

The Saber and Scroll Historical Society has been conducting field trips to various historical sites over the past few years, including trips to national battlefields. These trips have included visits to the Civil War battlefields of Gettysburg, Antietam, and Kernstown and to the Revolutionary War battle sites of Cowpens, Kings Mountain, and Ninety Six. Members have also met at historical society conferences. In each case, the members who attended the events found great value in sharing historical research interests and camaraderie.

In May 2012, several Saber and Scroll members, including instructor Bill Speer, as well as Mike Gottert, Kay O'Pry-Reynolds, and Leigh-Anne Yacovelli attended the Society of Military History Annual Conference in Washington, DC. One of the largest Saber and Scroll group trips in our society's history occurred over Veterans Day weekend in 2013. It was master-minded by past President Lew Taylor and led by member Phillip Muskett, who is a licensed Gettysburg Battlefield guide. Society members attending the event included Chris Cox, Lisa Bjorneby, Katie Ebner, Katie Mitchell Reitmayer, Susan Schenk Watts, Mike Gottert, Chris Watt, Scott Manning, and Guy Williams. The group visited both



Figure 1. Gettysburg Battlefield tour. This photo captures Phillip Musket discussing the 20th Maine on Little Roundtop. Photo by Scott Manning.

Gettysburg and Antietam.

Past President Guy Williams led a Wine and War tour through the

Shenandoah Valley over the weekend of 25-26 September 2015. The group started at the Kernstown Battlefield and concluded the first day at the Naked Mountain Winery. The following day, Lew Taylor led the group to the



Figure 2. Wine and War participants. Back row: Sean Watts, Guy Williams, Lew Taylor. Front row: Susanne Schenk Watts, Elizabeth D. Young, Melissa Weger.

Harrisonburg, Virginia area for the electric map of Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign.

The Wine and War tour is commemorated in the following parody of the Guy Fawkes poem:

Remember, remember the twenty-fifth of September!
The Wine and War tour of the fall season held in the VA valley spot.
I know of no reason why the tour ever should be forgot.
Guy Williams and his companions
Did the scheme contrive
To keep history alive!
Several battlefields and wineries did they show
To prove Stonewall Jackson as the ultimate foe.
But with many miles driven and a great docent did they catch
to prove Stonewall as the strategic victor in the valley match.

A bottle, a picture, for camaraderie's sake
Let our wine and war tour a happy time make.
If you cannot come and have some fun
I will drink for two and have pity upon you.
A pose, a pose to display our mascot Jake
Five dollars on a snack platter to feed him
and a glass of wine to wash it down
and many good stories to cheer him.
Holla boys! holla boys, make the bells ring!
Holla boys! holla boys, let the voice of historic truth sing!
Yeeehaaa many more trips to come and deeds of gallant figures to
remember
as we plan for our next trip in September!

Sadly, one of the Wine and War participants, Saber and Scroll member Melissa Weger, passed away on May 6, 2016.



Figure 3. Photo of Melissa Weger from APUS Commencement weekend, June 16, 2015, with her sidekick, Thomas Jefferson. Photo by Lew Taylor.

A student at Oakton High School wrote a beautiful tribute to her, stating:

Ms. Weger's enthusiasm and passion for learning and teaching were infectious. She truly brought out the best in her fellow teachers and in students at Oakton. Her students report that she consistently gave lessons that were engaging, relevant, and above all, fun and interesting.¹

This year, Saber and Scroll members re-visited the Cowpens National Battlefield and Kings Mountain National Battlefield on October 8, during the South Carolina Revolutionary War week. In the planning phase to prepare for the trip, the project team realized that many people who were interested in the event would not be able to attend in person due to time, distance, or money constraints. We structured components of the event so that members could participate long-distance. We created a special Saber and Scroll Cowpens Facebook site and shared numerous documents and ideas among the project team. We also gained approval from the Saber and Scroll leadership team and the journal team to create a special issue of the *Saber and Scroll Journal* devoted to the Revolutionary War Southern Campaign and the Battle of Cowpens.

In this singular issue, you will find articles that describe the British strategy for the Southern Campaign, as well as articles about key leaders—their challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and tactics. Readers will learn about the deceptions employed by Brigadier General Daniel Morgan that led to the American victory and made Cowpens the battle known as the American Cannae. Readers will also find articles describing medical challenges faced during the war, women's roles during the war, African Americans participation in the war, and an article devoted to this unique battle, the only case of double envelopment in the American Revolutionary War.

I would like to thank the members of the Cowpens project team, including Dr. Robert Smith, Frank Hoeflinger, William Lawson, Mat Hudson, Noah Hutto, Jona Lunde, Bill Speer, Jessica Larry Lathrop, Elizabeth D. Young, Bruce Sarte, and Kim Trenner. I would especially like to thank Dr. Smith (Smitty) and his wife, Katie and Elizabeth and her mother, Angie for joining my husband Bill and me on the latest Saber and Scroll adventure.

If you would like to sponsor a future Saber and Scroll event, please let us know by contacting any Saber and Scroll officer. We hope you enjoy this special issue of *the Saber and Scroll Journal*!



Figure 4. 2016 Cowpens National Battlefield trip participants. Left to right: Angie Young, Elizabeth D. Young, Anne Midgley, Dr. Robert Smith, Katie Smith, and in the rear, Bill Midgley.

¹ Andrew Lokay, "Remembering Ms. Weger," *Oakton Outlook*, accessed October 19, 2016, <http://oaktonoutlook.com/4007/feature/remembering-ms-weger/>.

Anne Midgley

General Charles Lord Cornwallis's temper snapped—as did the sword blade upon which he was leaning—as he listened to a humbled Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton relate to him the details of his defeat at a backwoods pasture known as Hannah's Cowpens. The American rebels, led by Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, had trounced the British. Tarleton's losses were appalling, perhaps as high as eighty percent of the men he had led into battle, which represented nearly twenty-five percent of the army led by Cornwallis. Tarleton left behind over one hundred dead and nearly eight hundred men whom the Americans captured following the brief, but intense, battle. Tarleton's report left Cornwallis desperate to overtake Morgan and the rebels, wreak his revenge, and retrieve his men. The British loss at Cowpens on 17 January 1781 set in motion a series of events that culminated in a Pyrrhic British victory at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on 15 March 1781, and eventually led to Cornwallis's own defeat at Yorktown, a loss which sealed the American victory for the War of Independence.¹

Charles, Lord Cornwallis

Born in 1738, the future 1st Marquess and 2nd Earl Cornwallis was the sixth child and first son born to Charles, 1st Earl Cornwallis and his wife, Elizabeth Townshend. Young Cornwallis received an excellent education, studying at Eton College and Cambridge University. He attended the prestigious military academy at Turin, Italy and fought for Frederick the Great of Prussia during the Seven Years' War. Upon inheriting his father's earldom, Cornwallis became active in British political affairs, sitting in the House of Lords, where he frequently sided with the opposition to the Crown. Cornwallis opposed the Stamp Act and voted against the Declaratory Act of 1766.²

Despite his opposition to a number of the British policies that led to the American rebellion, Cornwallis was loyal to the Crown and offered his services to King George III when hostilities broke out in 1775. Cornwallis became the highest-ranking member of British nobility to serve in America. His aristocratic rank posed problems for his relationship with General Sir Henry Clinton, who became commander-in-chief following the resignation of General Sir William Howe. Cornwallis's close relationship with George III and with Lord George Germain, the

British minister responsible for the war effort, meant that Cornwallis often corresponded directly with Germain on matters related to military strategy, undercutting his superior, Clinton.

Despite modern portrayals of Cornwallis as an effete aristocrat such as found in the Hollywood blockbuster, *The Patriot*, much the opposite is true of his character. He was an aggressive, hard-charging commander and a leader who often shared the deprivations of his men. Cornwallis's penchant for action placed him at odds with the more restrained Clinton. Cornwallis chose to interpret broadly Clinton's orders and sent troops throughout South Carolina to pacify the state, rather than use his limited resources to protect British interests in the wealthy coastal areas surrounding captured Charleston.³

Following the war, Cornwallis continued to serve Britain as a high-level military commander and government leader—acting as a talented trouble-shooter in hot spots throughout the realm. He chalked up the most successful post-war career of the senior British commanders who had fought in the War for America. In 1786, he became the governor-general and British commander-in-chief in India. He brought a hitherto unknown level of stability to British India, and enacted the Cornwallis Code in 1793, which remained the framework of government in British India until 1833.⁴ During the Irish rebellion of 1798, Cornwallis returned to the British Isles to become the lord lieutenant and commander in chief of Ireland. According to historian Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, Cornwallis “led his troops



Figure 1. Pen-and-ink and wash design of a proposed mausoleum for Lord Cornwallis by Thomas Fraser (1776-1823), c.1805.

into battle and defeated a French invasion force . . . the first time in a century that a lord lieutenant had commanded troops in war in Ireland.”⁵ In Ireland, Cornwallis championed the rights of the Catholics, and supported Catholic emancipation in opposition to the King. After serving in Ireland, Cornwallis returned to India to serve a second term as governor general in 1805. He died shortly after returning to India. He is buried “on a bluff overlooking the River Ganges” and his grave is marked by a magnificent mausoleum with the inscription “This monument, raised by the British inhabitants of Calcutta, attests their sense of those virtues which will live in the remembrance of grateful millions, long after it shall have mouldered in the dust.”⁶

Britain’s Southern Strategy

Britain suffered a devastating defeat at Saratoga when General John Burgoyne surrendered his army on 17 October 1777. Although the terms of the convention he signed with the victorious American general, Horatio Gates, permitted the British soldiers to return to England, the Continental Congress overruled Gates’s terms and the “convention army” remained prisoners on American soil. After news of Saratoga reached France, the French officially entered the war as an American ally. France had already lent crucial support for the American cause out of a vengeful determination to humiliate Britain. The French military and naval support now provided to the American cause, however, proved crucial to the rebels.⁷

Facing their ancient enemy, France, and a conflict that endangered British holdings from the home islands to the West Indies, Minorca, Gibraltar, and India, Britain developed a new strategy to defeat the American colonists. Britain’s focus shifted to the southern colonies and the presumed Loyalist strength that lay therein. Based in part on reports from the exiled royal governors of the southern colonies and Loyalist refugees, George III, his Prime Minister Lord North, and particularly Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for America believed that the Southern colonies contained a significant population of Loyalists. They reached the hopeful, but seriously flawed, strategic assumption that numerous Loyalists would flock to support the British cause, providing men, material, and logistical support.⁸

The British believed that southern Loyalists support would not only overwhelm local rebels but would also dissuade the large population of neutrals from actively supporting the rebels. They assumed that the rebels would lose the battle for the hearts and minds of the southern population, and that the rebel network of support, material, and field intelligence would wane, shifting the

advantage to the Crown forces and their Loyalist allies. This shift to Britain's favor would then convince the substantial neutral element of the population that their best interest lay in returning to firm allegiance to the Crown, and it would cause the less fanatical among the rebels to seek their own self-interest, abandoning the radical few to their fate. The Southern provinces would remain within British fold, alienating them from the Northern colonies, and putting the entire rebellion at risk. However, the Southern strategy rested on inflated claims from interested parties and ministerial daydreams. It proved infuriatingly elusive—and though initially successful—was not sustainable. It is true that self-interest and ideological inclinations drove the southern colonists' allegiance. Some southerners were indeed staunchly devoted to the Crown—others shifted their allegiance with the whims of war. Many simply desired to remain aloof from the fight.⁹

The initial results of the British campaign in the South were spectacular. Savannah, Georgia fell to the British on 29 December 1778. Continental Army Major General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered Charleston, South Carolina, the



Figure 2. *Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquess Cornwallis* by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), National Portrait Gallery, London.

largest city in the South, to the British on 12 May 1780 after a lengthy siege that overwhelmed Lincoln's Continental Army and militia forces. This forced him to turn over thousands of men and enormous quantities of weapons and supplies to the British. However, complications almost immediately ensued. General Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander in Chief, returned north to his headquarters in New York and left Cornwallis a powder keg. Prior to leaving, Clinton issued an amnesty proclamation, almost immediately complicated by a second proclamation, which mandated that all the rebels on parole take an oath to support the British. This oath required that if called upon, men were to take up arms against their former comrades—in effect, leaving no room for neutrality.¹⁰

Hoping to pacify the colony, Cornwallis sent his commanders and their men fanning out into the backcountry to establish strongholds and rally the Loyalists. However, the British seriously misjudged the temperament of backwoods North and South Carolina. Major Patrick Ferguson, the “inspector of militia,” threatened to lay waste to the homes of the “Over-mountain” rebels. His words and actions inflamed the backcountry and men gathered from what is now eastern Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia to track down and destroy Ferguson. The Battle of King's Mountain on 7 October 1780 resulted in Ferguson's death and the destruction of his Loyalists troops. King's Mountain proved to be a turning point, and afterward, far fewer Loyalists came forth to join the British troops. The British faced mounting obstacles and fewer Loyalists actively aided them, while the neutrals moved into the rebel camp. The Loyalist Strategy, built on misinformation and wishful thinking, quickly began to unravel.¹¹

Small bands of partisan fighters also hampered British efforts to regain control of South Carolina. These insurgents continually harassed the British communications and supply lines as well as their troop movements, particularly hampering Cornwallis's men as they moved inland away from their coastal stronghold and naval-based supply chain. The rebel partisans also provided intelligence and support to Major General Nathanael Greene's Continentals, kept their Loyalist neighbors from gaining the upper hand, encouraged the dispirited rebels, and eliminated the threat of Britain's Native American allies.¹²

Britain's War for America became a world war when France joined the conflict. Spain, France's Bourbon ally, never joined with the American rebels but did declare war on Britain in 1779. For Britain, the war became extraordinarily complex, as the British now had to stretch their military and naval resources to the breaking point to defend their possessions in the valuable West Indies, as well as India, Gibraltar, and the home waters surrounding the British Isles.¹³ In September 1779, fear for the safety of Jamaica caused Clinton to order Cornwallis “to go with

another five thousand troops . . . to the defense of Jamaica.”¹⁴ Had the threat to Jamaica not passed, the British would have lost over twenty-five percent of their troop strength in the mainland colonies for the defense of a single island colony.¹⁵

Personality conflicts between Cornwallis and Clinton added to Britain’s troubles in the South. Clinton failed to exert overarching strategic initiative while he gave the aggressive Cornwallis too much operational leeway.¹⁶ Cornwallis communicated directly with Lord Germain, who preferred Cornwallis to Clinton, but left Clinton in overall command. Cornwallis did not communicate with his commander-in-chief for months following the British defeat at Cowpens. Clinton, for his part, issued frequent and conflicting instructions to Cornwallis, particularly during the summer of 1781, leading to Cornwallis’s occupation of Yorktown. Cornwallis did not maintain close contact with the Royal Navy and the Navy’s failure to attain control of the Chesapeake Bay paved the way for the American and French victory at Yorktown in October 1781.¹⁷

In addition to the challenges noted above, the British face unanticipated foes—yellow fever and malaria. British soldiers had no immunity to these lethal diseases, unlike the Southern rebels. Yellow fever’s mortality rate among populations with no previous immunity approached eighty-five percent and it was particularly deadly for young adult populations; precisely those represented by the typical British invasion force. Survivors receive a life-long immunity and large populations of immune people stop the transmission of the disease. Living with significant slave populations and their relative imperviousness to the disease protected the Americans colonists to a degree, while the British soldiers had no defense from the illness.¹⁸ Fear of disease influenced Cornwallis’s decision to not move northward along the coastline; he feared that the route was too disease-ridden for his troops and he elected to move further inland—away from his naval lifeline. At Yorktown, twenty five percent or more of Cornwallis’s troops “were too sick to fight, compared to roughly [five] percent of American and French troops.”¹⁹

The actions of Cornwallis, a faithful servant to the Crown, led to the greatest British loss of the American Revolution at Yorktown, Virginia. Yet Cornwallis shares the blame with a number of other British civil and military leaders who did not recognize—until it was too late—that winning the hearts and minds of the Southern populace would prove to be an insurmountable challenge. Without civilian support, the British could not hope to recapture the American Southern colonies, and British policies following the fall of Charleston assured that the rebels—not the Loyalists—would have the upper hand.

Portions of the preceding article were previously published by the author in “First Empire Unraveled: Why the British Lost the War of American Independence,” *Saber and Scroll* 2, 4 (2013): 139-153.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/saberandscroll/vol2/iss4/11>

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The early morning hours of 17 January 1781 were cold and damp as Brigadier General Daniel Morgan's wing of the southern army prepared to fight. They had reached the Cowpens the day before and were rested and well fed. Coming to meet them was part of the British army under the command of Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Drawn up in a single line of battle, Tarleton's legion was met first by fire from sharpshooters, then from militiamen, and finally from Continentals. The militiamen were under orders to fire three volleys and fall back to the Continental line. When the British reached the third line their numbers were shrinking but they still had enough to attempt a flanking maneuver. As Morgan's lines fell back he ordered them to do an about face and fire once more before chasing the enemy with bayonets. By the time the engagement was over "complete victory" belonged to the Americans. Upon receiving word, Nathanael Greene, the Commander of the Southern Armies, drank a toast to Morgan's army and fired a cannon salute.¹



Figure 1. Major General Nathanael Greene
by Charles Wilson Peale, circa 1783.

Nathanael Greene was born 27 July 1742, the second son of Nathanael Greene, Sr. and his second wife, Mary Motte. The Greene family came to America in the 1600s as adherents of Roger Williams, ultimately settling in the Rhode Island colony. At the time of Nathanael Greene, Jr.'s birth, the family had become Quakers and was quite prosperous, owning a farm, sawmill, and iron forge. Nathanael Greene Sr. was not only a successful businessman but also the preacher at the East Greenwich Quaker meetinghouse. He raised his sons to value hard work and not formal education. They learned numbers in order to work the ledgers of the family business and letters so that they might read the Bible and a few other approved books. Nathanael Greene Jr. was resentful of his father's "prejudices against literary accomplishments," writing later that he was "digging into the bowels of the earth after wealth" when he "should have been in pursuit of knowledge."²

When Nathanael Greene Jr. was eleven his mother died and he began to immerse himself in the handful of books that were approved reading. Somewhere around this time he persuaded his father to hire a tutor who instilled in the young Greene a thirst for knowledge. From that point on, at any available opportunity, he could be found with a book in hand, reading. Ever aware of his lack of a proper education the young Greene sought out those from whom he might learn and on business trips began selling small anchors made at the family forge so he might buy books. By his twenties Greene had amassed a collection of around 250 books including works by John Locke, Sir William Blackstone, and Jonathan Swift.³

In 1774, as tensions with Britain intensified, Nathanael Greene joined the local militia, the Kentish Guards. As a founding member, he had hoped to be elected an officer but as he wrote a friend, "it is my misfortune to limp a little," which led his fellow guard members to pass him over. Settling for being a private was not easy for Greene but he persevered and kept up his avid reading, particularly of military tomes. In May 1775, the Rhode Island Army of Observation was formed and the state's Assembly offered him command of the army. The Assembly was not concerned with his limp or his lack of experience, for in Nathanael Greene they saw a capable, intelligent man with a proven ability to lead. As Major General Henry Knox would write, "His knowledge was intuitive. He came to us the rawest and most untutored being I ever met with; but in less than twelve months he was equal in military knowledge to any general officer in the army, and very superior to most."⁴

Within a few weeks, the now General Greene, was en route to Massachusetts to lay siege to British troops encamped at Boston. One month later the Continental Congress formally recognized the troops in Boston as the

Continental Army and named Nathanael Greene as one of eight brigadier generals, making him the youngest brigadier general in the army. Shortly thereafter, Greene was invited to General George Washington's headquarters where he met Washington for the first time and forged a friendship that would shape the course of his career.⁵

General Washington sent Greene to Prospect Hill and placed him in command of a seven regiment brigade under the direct command of Major General Charles Lee. Following the Boston siege Greene became the military commander in the city for a short time until Washington sent him to New York to command the American troops on Long Island. Here Greene proved what an asset he could be as part of the high command by keeping up with the steady stream of paperwork, maintaining order and discipline among his troops, and keeping them drilled and ready for action. During this time Congress promoted Greene to the rank of major general.⁶

Ultimately, New York was lost to the British and Greene was sent to neighboring New Jersey to command the state's defenses. This placed him in close proximity to Washington allowing the two men to work together and for Washington to witness his diligence and preparedness first hand. This prompted one of Washington's secretary's to write, "Greene is beyond doubt a first rate military genius, and one in whose opinions the General places the utmost confidence."⁷ Washington was also able to see the military mettle of his major general as they fought in engagements including Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, and Germantown from late 1776 through 1777.⁸

After Germantown, the army marched to Valley Forge to spend the winter months. Here it became apparent that supplies of every kind were seriously low with the troops "exposed to the severity of the weather . . . [with] nothing but bread and beef to eat morning, noon, and night, without vegetables or anything to drink but cold water."⁹ The supply situation only worsened as snow hampered the flow of necessities into the camp. As men and horses were starving to death, Greene was placed in charge of a foraging expedition that was forced to resort to sometimes brutal tactics to achieve its goals. Though he hated the work and the methods necessary for success, Greene proved himself up to the task helping to alleviate some of the hardship of the winter. His efforts did not go unnoticed. Soon Greene was appointed as quartermaster general to the Continental Army, a position he did not wish to take but felt he must. He was, however, able to retain his rank of major general.¹⁰

Greene held the position of quartermaster until September 1780 when the treasonous acts of Benedict Arnold were discovered. He was selected to head the

military tribunal of Arnold's British handler, Major John André, and then to assume command of West Point. This command did not last long. On 14 October 1780, Washington, with Congress' approval, appointed Greene Commander of the Southern Armies, which were then camped around Charlotte, North Carolina following their ignominious defeat at Camden in August.¹¹

Upon his arrival in Charlotte, Greene found the troops in "wretched and distressing . . . [circumstances] . . . starving with cold and hunger, without tents and camp equipage."¹² These conditions caused him to decide to move the army to Cheraw, South Carolina where there were better supplies. He also chose to divide the army by detaching Brigadier General Daniel Morgan into western South Carolina with a force of around six hundred men. In doing so, he forced the British commander, Lord Cornwallis, to divide his troops as well. Knowing that defeating Cornwallis was not possible with the resources at his disposal, Greene sought instead to be an irritant and frustrate the British. He ordered Morgan to raise militia while working with patriots in the area thus annoying and confusing the army under Cornwallis. Morgan succeeded admirably in the task sending out parties to raid and forage and communicating with other patriots to engage in actions to further disorient the British. Greene's forces were gaining the initiative with Morgan's daring taunts. Cornwallis dared not attack either division of the American army without exposing himself to attack in other areas.¹³

As Greene had predicted, Cornwallis divided his army—not in half but into three prongs with Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton in the lead with orders to hunt down Morgan. Baggage laden and hampered by swollen rivers and miry swamps, the British plan quickly went awry. The only hope they had was for Tarleton to catch up to Morgan and defeat him as the other divisions, encumbered as they were, would be of no help. Tarleton did catch up to Morgan but at the place of Morgan's choosing: the Cowpens. With no thought of defeat and with no assistance from the other wings of the British army forthcoming, Tarleton urged his troops forward. Within an hour they had been soundly defeated. Tarleton fled the field having lost eighty-six percent of his force. American losses were minimal.¹⁴

Morgan and his army, together with hundreds of British prisoners, retreated across the Broad River into North Carolina where a few weeks later they rendezvoused with Greene's troops. With his army once again united Greene began "the race for the Dan," attempting to beat Cornwallis to the Dan River. Greene won the race setting the stage for what would result in the British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia in October 1781.¹⁵

Congress declared the war to be over on 11 April 1783. Several months

later, Nathanael Greene officially resigned his commission as major general to build a new life. He returned to Rhode Island for a time but having received plantations in both South Carolina and Georgia in gratitude of his military service he and his family decided to make Mulberry Grove, the Georgia plantation, their permanent home. They arrived at Mulberry Grove, near Savannah, in November 1785. Eight months later Greene joined a friend in inspecting his plantation. Later that day he began to complain of a headache which only worsened. A doctor was summoned but to no avail. In the early morning hours of 19 June 1786, Major General Nathanael Greene breathed his last. He was buried in the confiscated vault of Tory Lieutenant Governor John Graham in Savannah's Colonial Cemetery with no marker placed on his tomb.¹⁶

In 1901, thanks to Rhode Island's Society of the Cincinnati, an organization for descendants of Revolutionary War military officers, Nathanael Greene's remains were discovered and disinterred. His bones were sent to Rhode



Figure 2. The monument to Nathanael Greene in Savannah's Johnson Square. Photo courtesy of the author.

Island until the family made the decision to have them formally reinterred in Savannah. Today his remains, along with those of his eldest son who drowned in an accident at age eighteen, are buried together beneath an impressive monument in Savannah's Johnson Square.¹⁷

Notes

1. Gerald M. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the America Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 164-166; Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1, 55; Benson Bobrick, *Angel in the Whirlwind: The Triumph of the American Revolution*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 429. Historians differ over the number of volleys fired by the militiamen. The author has gone with Babits and Bobrick's number of three as it is derived from the memoirs of militiaman Thomas Young who was a participant in the battle.

2. Terry Golway, *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 15.

3. Ibid., 21-23.

4. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 17; Bobrick, *Angel in the Whirlwind*, 150.

5. Golway, *Washington's General*, 57.

6. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 25, 32; Golway, *Washington's General*, 85.

7. Golway, *Washington's General*, 96.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 159.

10. Ibid.; Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 88-89.

11. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 139-144.

12. Golway, *Washington's General*, 239.

13. John Moncure, *The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 23-24.

14. Ibid., 28-31; William J. Hourihan, "The Cowpens Staff Ride: A Study in Leadership," The Army Chaplaincy (Winter 1998): accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.web.archive.org/web/20070624212824/http://www.usachcs.army.mil/TACarchive/Acwin98/Hourihan.htm>.

15. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 175.

16. Golway, *Washington's General*, 312; Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 235.

17. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, xviii.

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Morgan Saw Him Coming: Banastre Tarleton and the Pursuit to Cowpens

William F. Lawson

The Battle of Cowpens is rightly identified as a touchstone event in the British Southern Campaign of the American Revolution. Thanks to the innovative tactics employed by American Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, 17 January 1781 marked a turning point in the fortunes of the British field army under General Charles Lord Cornwallis. While the Americans would not win again on the battlefield until Yorktown, Cowpens served as one of the primary way stations along the road to that momentous day.¹



Figure 1. *Portrait of Sir Banastre Tarleton*, circa 1782. Oil on canvas, by Joshua Reynolds.

The British commander at Cowpens was Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Only 26, he was young for such a post, but had proven himself an able and, at times, gifted commander, especially in the area of mobile operations. Tarleton's youthful energy served him well in the field, as he pushed himself and the men of his British Legion hard, often surprising his American adversaries as he did with his pursuit of the Virginia troops at Waxhaws in May, 1780² and his dispersal of the guerrilla leader Thomas Sumter's force three months later.³

For all his success, Tarleton's lack of seasoning resulted in a downside to his operations. He was often reckless, to the detriment of his force in terms of the state of the men, their mounts, and the security of his logistics and communications. Tarleton's zeal sometimes led to a lack of control over his men, resulting in atrocities such as the massacre of surrendering Virginians at Waxhaws.⁴ American troops soon began to refer to such actions as "Tarleton's Quarter," vowing to return such actions in kind if presented the opportunity. Such attitudes made the already brutal conflict between Loyalist and Patriot in South Carolina even worse.

Tarleton's part in the drama which culminated on the field at Cowpens began in response to American General Nathanael Greene's decision to split his forces—then based in Charlotte, North Carolina—in an effort to ease the problems of their provision and demonstrate a Patriot presence in South Carolina. While Greene moved his main army southeast down the Pee Dee River, Morgan took his force of light infantry and cavalry, the latter under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, nephew of the Commander in Chief, George Washington, southwest across the Broad River. Morgan's track put him in position to threaten the critical British outpost at the village of Ninety Six, at least from the point of view of Cornwallis.⁵

Confused and somewhat alarmed by Morgan's move, Cornwallis dispatched Tarleton with his Loyalist British Legion, reinforced by the 7th Regiment of Foot, a battalion of the elite 71st Highland Regiment, and a detachment of the 17th Light Dragoons to block Morgan should he move on Ninety Six.⁶ By 2 January 1781, intelligence gathered by Tarleton and Cornwallis determined that Morgan was not moving on Ninety Six, but his separation from Greene offered an opportunity for the Americans to be dealt with in detail via a bold operational thrust by Tarleton, supported by Cornwallis with the main army.⁷

Invited by Cornwallis to outline a plan of action, Tarleton proposed a halt to gather his baggage and four day's provisions, to be followed by a quick march north against Morgan. Cornwallis, who offered the support of the main army, was to march north from Winnsboro toward Charlotte to serve as the anvil to Tarleton's

hammer. The quick British movement would catch Morgan between both elements, leading to his certain defeat, which would in turn prompt the withdrawal of Greene, thus clearing South Carolina of regular Patriot forces. It should be noted, however, that Tarleton reserved the option to defeat Morgan on his own, depending on the circumstances.⁸

The general course of Tarleton's short campaign is told elsewhere in this volume. Suffice it to say here that his actions demonstrated both his strengths and his weaknesses as described earlier. As always, Tarleton drove his men hard, moving to within six miles of Morgan's force by 16 January. Morgan wrote that "Tarleton came on like a thunderstorm."⁹ Aided by Loyalist guides who knew the country, the British arrival on Morgan's doorstep was so sudden that the Americans were forced to break camp in the middle of cooking their breakfast and withdraw. Tarleton's account of his capture of the American campsite is revealing. He states that his troops captured much in the way of supplies, which he describes as being "most welcome." Such a comment would seem to indicate that his force was short on provisions, especially food.¹⁰

It should be remembered that Tarleton gathered provisions for four days before moving against Morgan. By 16 January, his troops had been on the march for five days. It should also be noted that the weather was cold and damp, with intermittent rain. The roads were terrible and the men had to cross numerous icy streams. Tarleton, as he was wont to do, pushed the pace, beginning each day's march at 2:00 or 3:00 am. His men were tired, cold, and underfed by the time they reached the American campsite the evening before the battle.¹¹

Still, he had put himself in a position to carry out the instruction of Cornwallis, who had urged him to push Morgan "to the utmost."¹² According to Tarleton's plan, approved by Cornwallis, Morgan would be driven across the Broad River and trapped against the main British force advancing from Winnsboro. Tarleton's strength had always been pursuit. He was a harrier and he was good at it. On 16 January, however, his aggressive instincts worked against him.

Having caught up to Morgan, Tarleton faced a dilemma. Hearing a rumor that a large force of backwoodsmen was advancing to reinforce Morgan, he felt that he could not wait to attack.¹³ Tarleton had to take the threat seriously, considering the fate of the British detachment engaged by such a force at King's Mountain the previous October. Yet he failed to take advantage of his primary strength: his mobility. The British preponderance of cavalry compared to the Americans would have allowed Tarleton to send reconnaissance missions to ascertain the truth of the rumor of reinforcements, as well as the dispositions of Morgan's army and the progress of Cornwallis. He did none of these things.

Tarleton, in his account of the campaign, states that he was afraid Morgan would escape over the Broad, an opinion which prompted him to attack as early as possible on the morning of 17 January without conducting a proper reconnaissance except along his route of march.¹⁴ The problem with that explanation is that the objective of the entire enterprise was to force Morgan across the river where he could be dealt with by Cornwallis. It is true that Cornwallis, due to delays in leaving Winnsboro and a less-than-energetic pace, was not in position to block Morgan's retreat, but Tarleton was not aware of that circumstance until after his flight from Cowpens.¹⁵ On the night of 16-17 January, Tarleton still believed Cornwallis to be in position to provide support should Morgan attempt to cross the river.¹⁶ It is also true that Morgan felt he could not withdraw over the river without losing half his militia to desertion, but, again, this circumstance was unknown to Tarleton.¹⁷

Communications in 1781 were slow, to say the least, but neither Tarleton nor Cornwallis kept the other apprised of their relative positions in an operation which required each element to perform its function if the desired results were to be achieved.¹⁸ So, essentially blind to everything except the fact that Morgan was in front of him, Tarleton characteristically pushed on.

Morgan, for his part, demonstrated the difference between a seasoned commander and an impetuous leader like Tarleton. Morgan had talked to many American officers who had faced Tarleton and had a good idea of how the British commander would carry out an attack as well as how he might respond to given situations once battle was joined. Morgan craftily tailored his plan to take advantage of what he knew about Tarleton. In modern parlance, Morgan "saw him coming." Knowing that Tarleton would push hard, Morgan withdrew further into the interior, pulling the British force away from its base of supply. The movement not only stretched Tarleton's provisions, it separated him further from the support of Cornwallis and made communications more difficult. Morgan then set his tactical plan to take advantage of what he knew about Tarleton. The British commander, true to form, walked right into the wily American's trap.¹⁹

As for the battle itself, it is not the purpose of this work to provide a blow-by-blow account, but rather to comment on Tarleton's performance and his contribution to the British defeat. His failure to gain proper intelligence regarding Morgan's intentions and dispositions has already been addressed. When they came upon the American skirmish line on the morning of 17 January, Tarleton's men were already worn out. They had been on the march since 2:00 a.m. over muddy roads torn up by the passage of the Americans the evening before. They were wet, cold, hungry, and tired.²⁰ Being professionals, however, they shook out into line of

battle and pressed the enemy hard.

From Tarleton's perspective, thanks to lack of knowledge of Morgan's position, Cowpens took on the appearance of an engagement. His guides told him that the field where Morgan was drawn up was suitable for cavalry, with open woods and only slight elevation changes. Yet Tarleton still failed to detect Morgan's shrewd use of what terrain features there were. The American regulars and cavalry were skillfully hidden behind folds of ground, leading Tarleton to believe the initial line of militia was the primary American defensive position.²¹

Tarleton's account, and those of others, indicate that the American position was "vulnerable," implying a susceptibility to envelopment by mobile troops.²² Yet Tarleton failed to make use of his three to one superiority in cavalry to effect such a maneuver. Instead, his cavalry was detailed into small detachments to protect the flanks of his infantry and to provide a reserve.²³ Given Tarleton's past, coupled with his apparent belief that he faced only militia, there seems to be no explanation for his actions if indeed the ground was as represented to him by his guides.

Historian Lawrence Babits has demonstrated that the American flanks may not have been as unprotected as has been previously believed. Slight defiles on either side of the battlefield, which form the heads of several creeks, appear to have created marshy ground covered in canebrakes, which would have made the employment of cavalry problematic at best.²⁴ Only when the militia withdrew after the initial exchange of fire would the British cavalry have been able to gain the flanks of the American infantry, as the 17th Light Dragoons did before being driven off by Washington's cavalry and the reforming militia.²⁵

The perceived inability to strike the American flanks may have led Tarleton to deploy his cavalry as he did, thus dispersing his mobile strength and rendering it ineffective in the face of the concentrated cavalry force of Washington. A cardinal rule in the employment of mobile units is concentration. By spreading his units across the field, Tarleton violated that rule and lost the advantage of numbers in regard to his cavalry. Given Tarleton's background, it is difficult to see why he would employ such a course of action unless he felt that the battlefield did not favor the use of cavalry. Since he is silent on the subject, one can only speculate. What is known is that each time Washington's cavalry engaged its British counterpart, the latter were overwhelmed, though Tarleton's final desperate charge checked Washington for a moment.²⁶

Tarleton's employment of his infantry was solid, if not inspired. Frankly, had his men not been so exhausted, they may well have carried the day. But, once again, Morgan anticipated Tarleton's reactions when he saw the militia retreat, and

drew the British further into his trap. Still, several fortuitous instances, such as the unplanned withdrawal of the Continental main line, helped the Patriot cause. Had Tarleton been more judicious regarding the condition of his men, the outcome may well have been different. Once again, Tarleton's failure to conduct a proper reconnaissance left him reacting to Morgan's initiative.

That Tarleton's force was routed is a matter of record. There is no doubt that the careful preparations of Morgan, which included making certain that his men were fed and rested,²⁸ along with the valor of the American troops played a large part in the victory. It must be recognized, however, that the actions of Banastre Tarleton played their part as well. Carl von Clausewitz describes war as being akin to two wrestlers, each striving to gain advantage over the other.²⁹ Never is there an action in which success can be solely ascribed to the actions of the victor without also considering the actions of the vanquished.

It is a fact that Tarleton's men were already tired, and likely undernourished, when they advanced on the American skirmish line at Cowpens. It is a fact that a proper reconnaissance of American intentions and dispositions was not carried out. It is a fact that, according to the plan approved by Cornwallis, Tarleton did not need to force an action against Morgan in order to drive him across the Broad River. Ironically, Tarleton's failure to communicate with Cornwallis should have led him to believe that he did not need to attack, given his belief that Cornwallis was in position to block Morgan's withdrawal. As noted earlier, however, Tarleton had allowed for the option to attack and defeat Morgan on his own. It may have been that he intended to do it himself all along. Tarleton himself does not make such a statement, but, after the result of the battle, any such admission would be unexpected. Cornwallis, for his part, must also bear some responsibility for the lack of timely communication between the two elements of his army.

It seems, from the vantage point of over two centuries of hindsight, that Tarleton suffered from something akin to tunnel vision. Once he got the bit in his teeth he was unwilling to let go. It also appears that Morgan anticipated just such behavior from his adversary. Banastre Tarleton was no doubt a very capable commander who performed good, if sometimes controversial, service to the British Crown. At Cowpens, however, there seems to be little doubt that Daniel Morgan "saw him coming."

Notes

1. Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping, The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1998, xiii.

2. Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels, The American Revolution Through British Eyes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 270-271.

3. Ibid, 278-279.

4. Babits, 44.

5. Ibid, 6-9.

6. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1787), 210-211. Accessed September 30, 2016, <http://archive.org/details/historyofcampaig00tarl>.

7. Ibid, 244-245, n. F.

8. Ibid, 211-212.

9. Babits, 58.

10. Ibid, 53.

11. Ibid, 56-57.

12. Tarleton, 244-245, n. F.

13. Ibid, 215-216.

14. Ibid, 214-215.

15. Ibid, 218-220.

16. Ibid, 214-215.

17. Hibbert, 300.

18. Tarleton, 220.

19. Babits, 52.

20. Ibid, 56-57.

21. Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 477.

22. Tarleton, 215.

23. Babits, 85.

24. Ibid, 63-65.

25. Ibid, 96-99.

26. Ibid, 129.

27. Ibid, 156-158.

28. Ibid, 55.

29. Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

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Daniel Morgan and Cowpens

Francis Hoeflinger

Daniel Morgan, warrior, husband, father, and Patriot was undoubtedly one of the most combat-experienced battlefield commanders that the American Army produced during the Revolutionary War. From Massachusetts to Canada, New York, South Carolina, and many points in between, Daniel Morgan organized, led, inspired, motivated, and commanded some of the most elite units and ad-hoc units in the Continental service.

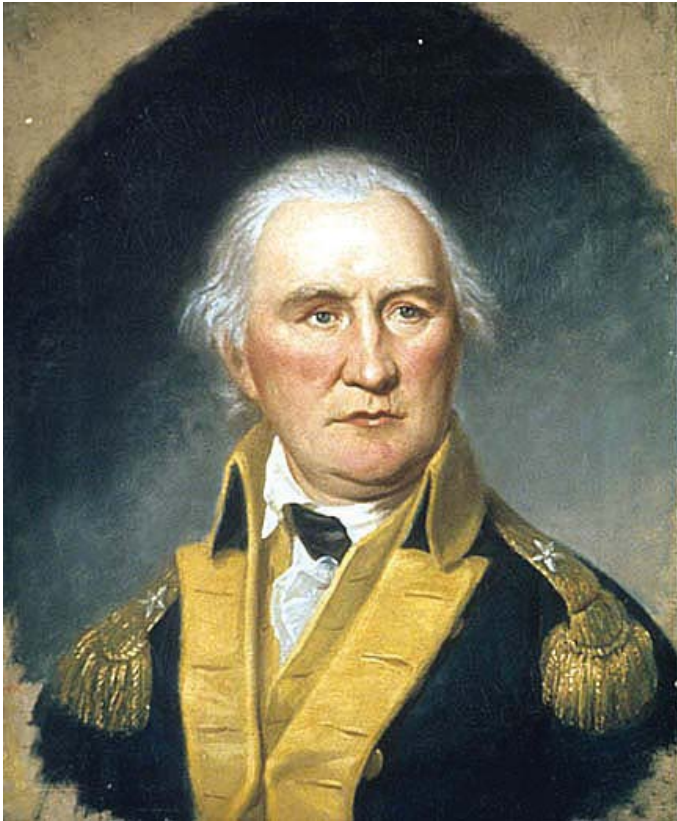


Figure 1. Daniel Morgan (1736-1802), oil on canvas by Charles Wilson Peale, c. 1794.

Born on 6 July 1736, Daniel Morgan was the fifth child of James and Eleanor Morgan. Believed to have been born in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, Morgan's place of birth may have been Bucks County, Pennsylvania where his father worked as an ironmaster. Enduring a harsh childhood, he left home around 1753 after a bitter argument with his father. Crossing into Pennsylvania, Morgan initially worked around Carlisle before moving south to Charles Town, Virginia. An avid drinker and fighter, he was employed in various trades in the Shenandoah Valley before beginning a career as a teamster.

Early in the French and Indian War, Morgan found employment as a teamster for the British Army. In 1755, he took part in Major General Edward Braddock's ill-fated campaign against Fort Duquesne, which ended in a stunning defeat at the Battle of the Monongahela. Also part of that expedition were two of his future commanders, Lieutenant Colonel George Washington and Captain Horatio Gates. Remaining in army service, Morgan encountered difficulty the following year when taking supplies to Fort Chiswell. Having irritated a British lieutenant, Morgan became irate when the officer struck him with the flat of his sword. In response, Morgan knocked the lieutenant out with one punch.

Court-martialed, Morgan was sentenced to five hundred lashes. Enduring the punishment, he developed a hatred for the British Army. Later, at the Battle of Cowpens, Morgan would remark that the British had miscounted and only given him 499. Two years later, in 1757, Morgan joined a colonial ranger unit attached to the British. Since Morgan was known as a skilled outdoorsman and crack shot, several leading men recommended him for the rank of captain. As the only commission available was for ensign, he accepted the lower rank. As Ensign Morgan and two escorts traveled with dispatches for Winchester, Virginia, Native American warriors ambushed them near Hanging Rock, and severely wounded Morgan.

With the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War following the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the Continental Congress called for the formation of ten rifle companies to aid in the siege of Boston. In response, Virginia formed two companies, giving command of one to Morgan. Quickly recruiting ninety-six men, he departed Winchester with his troops on 14 July 1775 and arrived in the American lines on 6 August. Later that year, Congress approved an invasion of Canada and tasked Brigadier General Richard Montgomery with leading the main force north from Lake Champlain.

To support this effort, Colonel Benedict Arnold convinced the American commander, General George Washington, to send a second force north through the Maine wilderness to aid Montgomery. Approving Arnold's plan, Washington gave

him three rifle companies, collectively led by Morgan, to augment his force. Departing Fort Western on 25 September, Morgan's men endured a brutal march north before finally linking up with Montgomery near Quebec. Defending the city on 31 December, the British repulsed the Americans. Montgomery died early in the fighting. Governor Sir Guy Carleton's forces captured Morgan and many of his men after fighting in the town streets. Holding Morgan as a prisoner until September 1776, the British paroled him before finally releasing him through a formal prisoner exchange in January 1777.

Rejoining Washington, and promoted to colonel in recognition of his actions at Quebec, Morgan raised the 11th Virginia Regiment that spring. He led the Provisional Rifle Corps, a five-hundred man formation of light infantry. After conducting attacks against General Sir William Howe's forces in New Jersey during the summer, Morgan received orders to take his command north to join Major General Horatio Gates's army above Albany, New York. Arriving on 30 August, he took part in operations against Major General John Burgoyne's army as it advanced south from Fort Ticonderoga. On 19 September, Morgan and his command played a key role as the Battle of Saratoga began. Under pressure from the British, the Americans rallied when General Arnold arrived on the field and led the Continental troops in inflicting heavy losses on the British before retiring to Bemis Heights.

On 7 October, Morgan commanded the left wing of the American line as the British advanced on Bemis Heights. Defeating this attack, Morgan then led his men forward in a counterattack that saw American forces capture two key redoubts near the British camp. Increasingly isolated and lacking supplies, Burgoyne surrendered on 17 October. The victory at Saratoga was a major turning point in the war and led to the French alliance with the American rebels early in 1778.

All battles and campaigns are complex interactions of men and women, technology, meteorology, and topography. The Battle of Cowpens was no exception. General Morgan's victory at the Battle of Cowpens was due to his employment of the rifle and its increased lethality against high value targets. The battle occurred on 17 January 1781, near the modern city of Gaffney, South Carolina. Numerically, it was a small affair on a small battlefield. However, its impact is in inverse proportion to the number of men who fought and bled on the field. The battle was the first step in the path that ultimately led to the surrender of General Charles Lord Cornwallis and his army at Yorktown, Virginia in October 1781. The battle pitted Brigadier General Daniel Morgan and a composite force of Continentals, state troops, and militiamen, against Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his British Legion-based task force.

After the British defeat and destruction of the Continental Army at the Battle of Camden, Continental Congress assigned General Nathanael Greene as the new commander of the Continental Army Southern Department. General Greene found an army of approximately 1,170 Continentals supported by over 870 militiamen.¹ Greene quickly determined that his army was so poorly equipped that “if he counted as fit for duty only those soldiers who were properly clothed and equipped, he had fewer than 800 men and provisions for only three days in camp.”² One of the assets that General Greene had assigned to his army was a battalion of Light Infantry under the command of Brigadier General Daniel Morgan.³

Daniel Morgan had participated in a large number of the major operations conducted by the Continental Army, including the siege of Boston, the American attack on Quebec, and the Battle of Saratoga, and always at the command of Light Infantry, or as they were also called, riflemen. Riflemen, as the name implies, were soldiers trained and equipped with rifles. Unlike muskets, rifles had lands and grooves—rifling—carved into the inside of the barrel. This imparted a spin on the smaller and tighter fitting bullet. The rifling produced a firearm that, for its day, had lethality out to a distance unmatched by the smooth bore musket of “regular” or “line” infantry. The rifle, like all other advancements in technology, had drawbacks as well, which will be discussed later.

Weaponry of the American Revolutionary War

The terms below are critical to later discussions of the Cowpens battle.

Begin Morning Nautical Twilight (BMNT): The start of that period where, in good conditions and in the absence of other illumination, enough light is available to identify the general outlines of ground objects and conduct limited military operations. At this time, the sun is 12 degrees below the eastern horizon.⁴

Civil Twilight: The time at which the sun is six degrees below the horizon. At this time, there is enough light for objects to be clearly distinguishable and that outdoor activities can commence (dawn) or end (dusk) without artificial illumination. Civil twilight is the definition of twilight most widely used by the general public.⁵

Maximum effective range: The greatest distance at which a soldier may be expected to deliver a target hit.⁶

Maximum effective rate of fire: The highest rates of fire that can be maintained

and still achieve target hits.⁷

American Weaponry

Muskets: The Continentals and some of the militia were armed with the standard firearm for the Continental Army, the Charleville Musket, Model 1766, a .69 caliber gun. “A well-drilled musketeer . . . [could] hit a man-sized target eighty yards away with five out of six shots in one minute.”⁸ To increase the lethality of the musket General Washington “ordered that “buckshot are to be put into all cartridges which shall hereafter be made.”⁹ The effect of this order was that one paper cartridge for a Continental musket would contain “one large ball (.63 caliber) and at least three smaller (.30 caliber) balls.”¹⁰ That meant that every time a Continental soldier fired his musket, one .63 caliber and at least three .30 caliber balls would be discharged. With the Delaware Company as an example, its sixty men would have discharged a minimum of 240 projectiles every time they discharged their muskets.¹¹

Cavalry Firearms: The men of the 3rd and 1st Continental Light Dragoons were armed with pistols and sabers. “Prior to and during the War for Independence there was no standard American pistol.”¹² The “handguns at the start of the war were of British

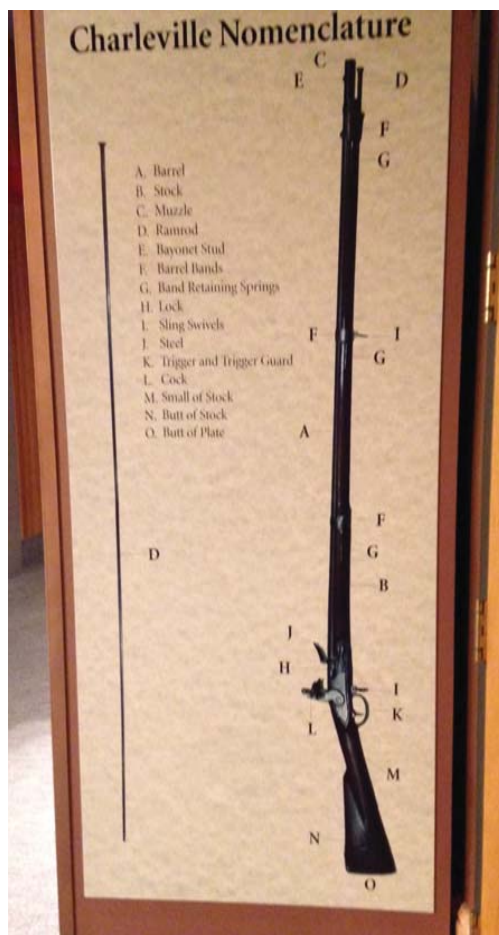


Figure 2. Charleville Musket Nomenclature, Cowpens National Battlefield Visitor Center, courtesy of Anne Midgley, October 8, 2016.

origins or style; towards the end of the fighting, French models were more common.”¹³ The British model would provide the user with a .56 caliber pistol lethal to approximately 20 yards.

Rifles: The rifles used at Cowpens were either the Kentucky or the Pennsylvania “long rifles.” Based on the same pattern, both rifles therefore had similar capabilities. The long rifle had a barrel length of forty inches, and .35 to .60 calibers (or .35 to .60 inches), weighing seven to ten pounds.¹⁴ With the longer barrel “the ball went faster (almost 2,000 feet per second at the muzzle) and farther (effective up to 200 yards or more). The faster bullet meant a flatter trajectory or flight.” It is much easier to hit a distant target if the shooter does not have to allow much for the drop of a relatively slow bullet. “Since the front and rear sight are farther apart, aim was more precise.”¹⁵ Despite all the advantages that the rifle represented in accuracy and lethality, it was not adopted by any contemporary modern armies. “Why, then didn’t the army use it? Armies did use it but not very much. There were some good reasons: (1) The rifle was slow to load. A soldier could fire a musket three times as fast. (2) The Long Rifle took longer to make, and cost more than a musket. (3) Rifle calibers varied so much that supplying ammunition for an army of riflemen would be a real problem. (4) Muskets withstood a soldier’s rough handling better than rifles. (5) Rifles did not take bayonets. Muskets did, and the bayonet often decided the battle’s outcome.”¹⁶

Capabilities and Limitations

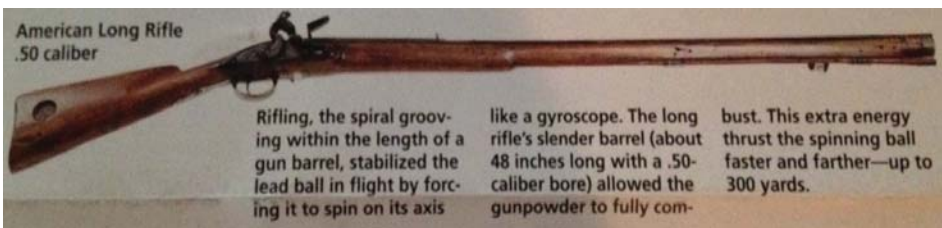


Figure 3. American Long Rifle, Cowpens National Battlefield brochure.

Rate of Fire: The smooth bore and undersized bullet (.71 caliber for the British Brown Bess and .63 caliber for the French Charleville Musket) gave the soldier the ability to reload and fire approximately four rounds per minute. The rifle, with its lands and grooves and tighter fitting bullet was capable of approximately one round of aimed fire per minute. The cavalry pistols and carbines, while effective,

would have been impossible to reload during the chaos of a cavalry melee and would have been fired once before closing to saber distance, or to finish off an opponent after an effective saber attack. The British 3-Pounder was capable of firing approximately three rounds per minute.¹⁷



Figure 4. Replica of three-pound cannon. Photo by author.

Maximum Effective Range: As mentioned earlier, rifles, because of their design, provided the shooter the ability to engage targets at greater range than the musket. The rifle could hit targets easily at 150 yards, and in the hands of a capable marksman was capable of hitting a target at 400 yards. The musket, with its smooth bore and undersized bullet, was incapable of hitting a target 6 feet tall and 30 yards wide at the distance of 100 yards. This caused most commanders to hold their fire until within fifty yards of the enemy. In the case of Cowpens, this meant the British had to move (depending on the riflemen) between 100 and 350 yards under fire, without an ability to return fire. As mentioned earlier, the maximum effective range

of the pistol was 20 yards.

Linear Warfare Tactics: The capabilities and limitations of the weapons that were available to eighteenth century armies drove linear warfare tactics. The army that was in possession of the battlefield at the end of the battle determined the victor. As mentioned above, muskets were a relatively inaccurate weapon. Because of the buildup of residue in the barrel from the combustion of the black powder, the barrel became constricted to the point of not being able to ram home a round. To compensate for this problem, the rounds were smaller than the barrels (.71 caliber balls for the .75 caliber Brown Bess, and .63 caliber balls for the .69 caliber French Charleville). The resulting space was termed “windage.” As the ball traveled down the barrel, the ball would travel from side to side and from top to bottom. When the ball reached the end of the barrel, called the muzzle, it would travel the opposite of the last “bounce.” In other words, if the ball last bounced against the top of the barrel, the ball would travel in a downward arc, or trajectory. To mitigate this lack of accuracy, armies would line up in two or three ranks and fire in “volleys,” or in unison. To account for the inevitable casualties, armies organized in ranks (side to side) and files (one behind the other). If a soldier in the front rank became a casualty, the next soldier in the file would step forward to take the casualty’s place.

Prior to the firefight phase of the battle, artillery positioned as close as necessary to the enemy to provide fire support throughout the anticipated maneuver distances. Because artillery was too heavy to move once firing started, if the supported unit moved too far forward, there would be no fire support. This was the impetus for the development of the 3-Pounder Light Infantry Cannon. The cannon



Figure 5. Implements used to move 3-pound cannon by hand. Photo by author.

was maneuvered around the battlefield by hand. Once it was felt that the musket fire had achieved the objective of wearing down the enemy, a bayonet charge would be executed to destroy, or rout the enemy unit. For these reasons, staying in formation, and dressed—lined up side to side and front to back—was critical to a successful fight.

Commanders normally placed cavalry on both side of the infantry's linear formation, both in order to protect the line formation from being outflanked but also to protect the infantry from enemy cavalry. After a successful bayonet attack, the cavalry would normally charge and destroy or disperse any survivors. Cavalry also would cover any retreat by the infantry to discourage an enemy cavalry charge during the rearward movement. Cavalry could not successfully attack enemy infantry that had not been softened up by artillery or musket fire first. Infantry would form into "squares"—actually a diamond shape formation—with the first rank kneeling and presenting bayonets at chest height, and the second and third rank waiting until the cavalry came within a range that the officers thought was "deadly"—usually between twenty-five to thirty yards—dispersing or destroying the attacking cavalry.

American Infantry Tactics: The Continental Infantry were the units organized and under the authority of the national command, in this case the Continental Congress and General Washington. States could and did raise and organize their own armies. Commonly referred to as "states troops" or "state line," the Virginia state troops present at Cowpens exemplified this type of force. Continental infantry, and theoretically state troops, trained in the same manner and used the same tactics as the British infantry units. Additional factors for consideration are the commands used by the Continental and militia units to control the fire of the musketmen. When General Friedrich Von Steuben developed the drill procedures for the Continental infantry units at Valley Forge, he realized that simplified commands would greatly compress the training time required to teach the "manual of arms," as the sequence of events necessary to load and discharge a firearm were then known.¹⁸ The simplified commands not only created a shorter cycle to load, fire, and reload, but a more lethal system. The Continental commands were "Poise-----
--Firelock!" This command brought the musket to the shoulder and the right hand position for the next command. "Cock-----Firelock!" This command cocked the weapon and placed the trigger finger under the trigger guard. "Take Aim!" This command caused the soldier to place his finger on the trigger, "and with the right eye looking along the barrel." "FIRE!" was the last command and caused the soldier to discharge his weapon.¹⁹ With the addition of the command "Take Aim"

the Continental soldier was able to ensure that his weapon was indeed aimed at the enemy formation, increasing the probability of his fire being effective.

American Order of Battle: General Morgan's forces prior to the battle consisted of "500 Continentals and Virginia six-month men."²⁰ Morgan planned to use this group as the nucleus of a larger force supplemented by militia men, both infantry and cavalry. To construct an effective cavalry force Morgan had available the eighty Continental Dragoons, combined from the survivors of the 3rd and 1st Continental Light Dragoons under Major William Washington.²¹ Morgan had sent out a call for militia and volunteers, and by the night of 16 January 1781, accumulated a force of approximately 1,800 men, of whom 125 were dragoons and mounted volunteers acting as cavalry.²²

Terrain and Climate

Topography: Numerous participants of the Cowpens battle described the terrain and it can be viewed much as it was then at the battlefield park today. The terrain features gently rolling land with three ridges and little to no underbrush, providing excellent visibility and fields of fire. The slopes are very slight and viewed from the approach direction of the British Legion, looked relatively open and level. The Green River Road bisected the battlefield, perpendicular to the battle formation, and was the main avenue of approach for Tarleton and his men onto the battlefield.

Meteorology: Historians cannot analyze the Battle of Cowpens in a vacuum. Fought in winter, in an age when armies typically went into winter quarters, as opposed to facing the harsh winter weather with its concomitant weather-induced casualties, the combatants met in difficult conditions. "Participants who mentioned the weather referred to it being cold and



Figure 6. Cowpens National Battlefield and recreation of 3-pound cannon, courtesy of Anne Midgley.

very raw. Average temperatures from Spartanburg [approximately 15 miles from the battlefield] suggest it may have been well below freezing that morning.”²³ Temperature is not the only factor affecting soldiers’ performance. In eighteenth century warfare, eyesight, and the data generated from observation, was critical to decision making. The light data for 17 January 1781 is as follows:

Sun Rise: BMNT: 6:36 a.m., Begin civil twilight: 7:07 a.m., Sunrise: 7:34 a.m., Sunset: 5:41p.m. End civil twilight: 6:09 p.m., EENT 6:39 p.m.²⁴ Moon Rise: 1:00 a.m., Moon Set: 12:13 p.m. Phase of the moon on 17 January: waning crescent with forty three percent of the moon’s visible disk illuminated.²⁵ The percentage of illumination represents the amount of light available for discerning objects at night. The lack of a full moon and the poor ambient light would negatively affect the ability to observe and discern formations and numbers of men and equipment.

Pre-Battle Movements and Conduct the Day of Battle

American Conduct: The night prior to the battle, Morgan first briefed all of his officers on his concept of how the battle would be fought. After briefing his officers, Morgan spent the rest of the night moving from campfire to campfire talking to the men, explaining their part in the upcoming fight, and sharing his exuberance and enthusiasm for victory in the impending battle. Morgan ensured that his men were well rested and fed, and that they had prepared a breakfast in the eventuality that Tarleton arrived ahead of Morgan’s estimate. He knew, as commanders do today that “tired men take fright more easily. Frightened men swiftly tire. The arrest of fear is as essential to the recovery of physical vigor as is rest to the body which has been spent by hard marching or hard work.”²⁶ Morgan’s actions prepared his men physically before the stress and exertion of battle confronted them.

American Battle Plan: Morgan developed a battle plan that would maximize his strengths, minimize his weaknesses, and exploit the tendencies that Morgan believed Tarleton had displayed in previous battles with the rebels. On the first ridge, Morgan placed a line of militiamen. Approximately 150 yards in front of the militiamen, Morgan placed a skirmish line of riflemen. The riflemen had instructions to engage the British when they came within range, “Riflemen, accurate to 300 meters [approximately 325 yards], would man the skirmish line from behind the scattered trees to pick off British officers and then retire into the main militia line.”²⁷ The skirmishers would then retire and join the second line composed of militiamen under their own officers. Morgan instructed the militiamen

to “aim and shoot twice, attempting to pick off the officers.”²⁸ The second line would fire two rounds and then retire around the left flank and reform behind the third ridge line. Here Morgan placed his Continentals. In the low ground behind the Continentals Morgan placed Washington and the mounted men that he planned to use as dragoons. Morgan believed that his plan would persuade Tarleton that the militia were running as they typically did when confronted by British bayonets, and this would entice Tarleton to react rashly and lead to his defeat.

Effect of Rifle Fire on the British: The effect of the skirmishers’ rifle fire was lethal and pronounced. Contemporary accounts contend, “A number, no less than two-thirds of the British infantry officers present had already fallen.”²⁹ Morgan reported that Americans killed ten officers and wounded none. This would indicate the lethality and accuracy of the rifle fire. At this time, a noncommissioned officer would not typically assume command upon the incapacitation of his officer. Morgan reported that he captured two hundred wounded noncommissioned officers and privates, thirty seven officers and five hundred fifty unwounded noncommissioned officers and privates. He reported more than one hundred men killed in addition to the ten officers already mentioned.³⁰ This would have produced a casualty rate of approximately 82 percent, effectively destroying the British Legion.

Effect of Officer/Noncommissioned Officer Casualties on Command and Control: The eighteenth century British army was trained and disciplined to perform the maneuvers and tasks required of linear warfare. This placed a premium on discipline and the execution of orders regardless of the conditions. When Morgan used tactics that he had perfected during the Saratoga campaign—targeting the officers and noncommissioned officers—he effectively destroyed Tarleton’s ability to command his units. Once the Americans routed the British, there were not enough officers to rally the surviving soldiers.

Effect of Rifle fire on British Morale/Combat Power: Morgan’s masterful use of the long range and lethality of the rifle destroyed the British Legion’s ability to control soldiers in battle. Because Tarleton had pushed the British Legion to its physical and mental limits in the days and nights prior to the battle, it was in no condition to face what appeared to be a sudden and deadly change in fortune. The soldiers no longer had the willpower to continue after witnessing their officers and noncommissioned officers fall from the deadly effects of the American long rifles. With the inability to exercise command and control of his units, Tarleton lost the

ability to mass his combat power at the critical place and at the critical time to ensure not only victory, but also the survival of his unit. Roderick Mackenzie, an officer wounded at the battle of Cowpens, blamed the defeat on Tarleton's failure to rest his men and consult with his subordinate commanders. Mackenzie seemingly overlooked the lethality of rifle fire and its effect on the British Legion's willingness to close in and destroy the enemy, the mission of all infantry units.

Summary

Primary and secondary sources in both overt and subtle ways attest to the brilliance of Morgan's plan and his ability to capitalize on the capabilities and limitations of his men and their weapons. There are various points of disagreement among sources such as the numbers of men engaged, positions of units or individuals, and what was said by whom and when. It is without a doubt that Tarleton ignored the welfare of his men, and put them in a position where it was impossible for them to win the fight. There is a controversy on the numbers of rebels present on the field that day in January, but it is without doubt that the fighting men of both sides displayed valor.

The victory at Cowpens marked a turning point in the American Revolution. The results of the fight led directly to Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown. However, none of that could have been possible without Daniel Morgan's tactical and technical expertise. Regardless of the mistakes that Tarleton made prior to the fight—and there were many mistakes made—it was Morgan's employment and deployment of his riflemen that was the key to victory. Without the rifle's ability to place long range selective fire against high value targets, the British Legion would have retained its ability to maneuver and to mass its combat power at the critical place and time to defeat Morgan. The British Legion had fought outnumbered and won before; however, Morgan did a masterful job of deceiving Tarleton. If the command and control system of the British Legion had been left intact, it is a distinct possibility that the British Legion would have been able to maneuver itself out of its predicament to fight another day, if not win the fight out right. Morgan's genius at targeting officers and noncommissioned officers ensured victory and the continuation of the "Flying" Army to resist Cornwallis and the British Army.

Notes

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2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.
4. Department of Defense Dictionary, JP1-02, accessed April 26, 2014, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/.
5. “Three Types of Twilight”, National Weather Service Forecast Office, Louisville, KY, accessed April 27, 2014, <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lmk/?n=twilight-types>.
6. Department of the Army, *RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP, M16-/M4-SERIES WEAPONS (INCL CI)*, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008, pg. GLOSSARY-7.
7. Ibid.
8. Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 13.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, 32.
12. George C. Neumann, *The History of the Weapons of the American Revolution* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967), 150.
13. Neumann, *The History of Weapons*, 151.
14. Robert Lagemann and Albert C. Manucy, *The Long Rifle* (New York, Eastern Acorn Press, 1993) 6.
15. Lagemann and Manucy, *The Long Rifle*, 6.
16. Lagemann and Manucy, *The Long Rifle*, 25.
17. Adrian B. Caruana, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies: The Light 3 Pounder of Pattison and Townshend*. Alexandria Bay: Museum Restoration Service, 1979, 27.
18. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, 12.
19. Frederick William Baron Von Steuben, *Baron Von Steuben's Revolutionary War Drill Manual* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 16-7.
20. Thomas Fleming, “Downright Fighting” in *Cowpens: Official National Park Handbook*, ed. Thomas J. Fleming, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988, 38.
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22. Ibid.
23. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, 79.
24. U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department, accessed April 27, 2014, http://aa.usno.navy.mil/cgi-bin/aa_pap.pl.
25. Ibid.

26. Colonel S.L.A. Marshall, *Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation*, Quantico (The Marine Corps Association, 2004), 46-47.

27. Lieutenant Colonel John Moncure, *The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour* (Fort Leavenworth, Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 48.

28. Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 134.

29. Roderick Mackenzie, *Strictures On Lt. Col. Tarleton's "History of The Campaigns Of 1780 And 1781, In The Southern Provinces of North America"....In A Series Of Letters To A Friend. By Roderick Mackenzie,-Primary Source Edition*. Breinigsville, NABU Publishing, 2014, 99
Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, pg. 142.

30. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, pg. 142.

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“Give Them an Indian Halloo!”

Anne Midgley

On the cold winter morning of 17 January 1781 in a backcountry South Carolina cow pasture, one of the most unexpected—and pivotal—battles of the American War for Independence occurred. In less than an hour of intense fighting, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, in command of the American rebel forces, decisively trounced his opponent, British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Known by military historians as the American Cannae, it was the only case of double envelopment in the war. Morgan, with a personal grudge to bear against the British, led a force of Continental soldiers, cavalry, and militia against one of the most feared commanders in the British Army. Morgan’s success was due in large part to his tactical expertise and personal leadership.



Figure 1. Key battles in the Southern Campaign of the War of American Independence, 1780–1781. Map courtesy of National Park Service.

Cowpens occurred roughly three months following the 7 October 1780 rebel militia victory at Kings Mountain, which wiped out British Loyalist troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Ferguson. The British loss at Kings Mountain eliminated General Charles Lord Cornwallis's left flank screening force and disheartened southern Loyalist partisans. Cornwallis and the British could ill afford to lose again.¹

In William F. Lawson's "Morgan Saw Him Coming: Banastre Tarleton and the Pursuit to Cowpens," beginning on page twenty-five in this issue, Lawson described how the British commander of the Southern forces, Major General Charles Lord Cornwallis responded to the move by American Major General Nathanael Greene to split his forces. Cornwallis dispatched Tarleton "with his corps of cavalry and infantry, of five hundred and fifty men, the first battalion of the 71st [Highlanders] consisting of two hundred, and two three-pounders [small artillery] to counteract the designs of General Morgan, by protecting the country, and compelling him to repass [the] Broad river." Cornwallis directed Tarleton to chase Morgan down, and finding him, to push in to "the utmost."²

As Lawson noted, Tarleton set off after Morgan—pushing his men swiftly toward his target. Tarleton wakened his troops in the pre-dawn hours; reportedly at 2:00 a.m. daily and again took up the pursuit. Morgan and his men were aware of Tarleton's chase; one of Morgan's men described Tarleton's advance as an approaching thunderstorm. The speed of Tarleton's advance limited Morgan's options. He had to find a suitable place to take a stand.³

In Morgan's assessment, his "situation at the Cowpens enabled me to improve any Advantages I might gain, and to provide better for my own Security, should I be unfortunate."⁴ Tarleton reported that his guides were consulted about the ground Morgan had chosen and what lay to his rear and that they "described both with great perspicuity."⁵ Each leader put forth significant efforts to gain the knowledge necessary to prepare for battle. A key difference between the two leaders was the way that each prepared the men that they were to lead into battle. Morgan and his infantry commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard, one of the most acclaimed officers in the Continental Army, together with the militia officers on hand, personally rode the Cowpens field to become as familiar as possible with the terrain.⁶ Morgan then designed a plan that took advantage of the slight elevation changes and set up three battle lines; the first to be made up of riflemen, a breed of men that Morgan knew well. These skirmishers—sharpshooters—were instructed to aim for "the men with the epaulets," as Morgan knew that bringing down his opponent's officers would cause confusion in the ranks.⁷



Figure 2. *John Eager Howard in Uniform* by Charles Wilson Peale, c. 1782. Nathanael Greene wrote “Howard, as good an officer as the world affords. . . . He deserves a statue of gold.”

Morgan’s second battle line would be composed of militia. While Morgan understood that militiamen were frequently unreliable in battle, he also knew how to set the men up for success. Throughout the night of 16 January, militiamen responded to Morgan’s call and came into his camp. Morgan spent the night moving from campfire to campfire to welcome the militia and to tell the nervous men what he expected of them. Morgan joked and quipped with the men, calming and inspiring them. Historian John Buchanan related that Morgan raised his shirt to show the scars he had received from his scourging at the hands of the British years before.⁸ He gave them specific instructions to get off two rounds of fire,⁹ then to withdraw. Morgan was well aware that Tarleton and his men would perceive the withdrawal as a sign that they had routed the militia and would

charge in to destroy them, as this was Tarleton's standard battle tactic, one from which he seldom strayed. However, rather than running down panicked militia, Morgan intended that Tarleton would race into a trap, for Morgan's third battle line was composed of his best men: Maryland and Delaware Continentals, led by the formidable Howard. Morgan held in reserve another surprise: Continental dragoons and mounted militiamen commanded by Colonel William Washington. A slight dip in terrain elevation concealed the mounted men from Tarleton's initial view.¹⁰

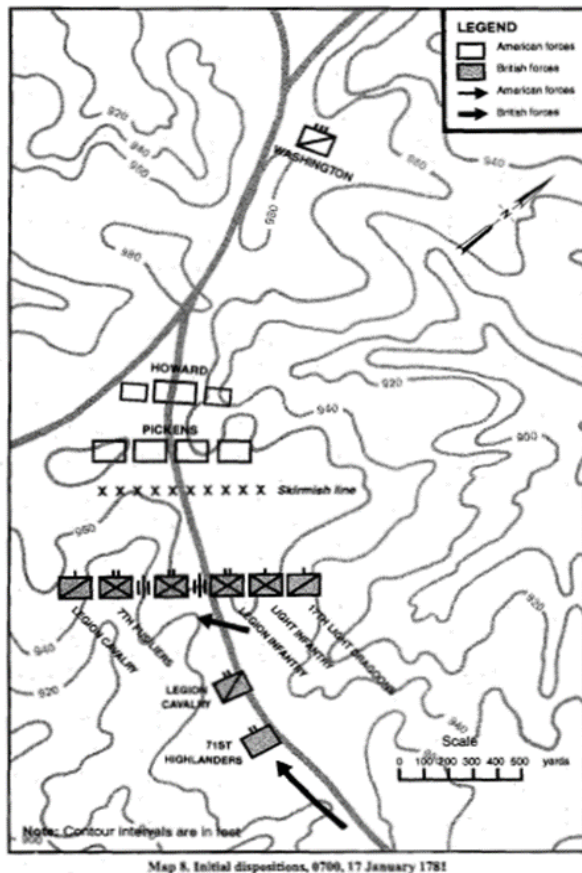


Figure 3. Initial dispositions, 7:00 a.m. Courtesy of The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour, Lieutenant Colonel John Moncure, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1996.

As noted earlier in Francis Hoeflinger's article, "Daniel Morgan and Cowpens," beginning on page thirty-three of this issue, Morgan did his utmost to prepare his troops mentally and physically for the battle ahead. Tarleton's advance followed his familiar pattern. He approached Morgan's camp in his typical style, pushing his men hard. On 17 January, he roused his men at 3:00 a.m. although they had reached their enemies' previous camp area on the Pacolet River only five hours beforehand. During Tarleton's pre-dawn race to Morgan's camp by Cowpens, the British captured several of the American pickets. Sensing their quarry near, Tarleton urged on his tired men. Neither well fed nor rested, Tarleton's troops soon faced Morgan and his well-prepared men. Morgan's measures had stripped Tarleton and his men of a key advantage: the element of surprise. In previous engagements, the furious pace that Tarleton set for he and his men often caught their prey off-guard; this was not the case at Cowpens.¹¹



Figure 4. Monument at Cowpens National Battlefield noting British forces at battle. Photo by author.

Although a variety of accounts provide conflicting details of Tarleton's arrival and the initial disposition of his men, it is sufficient to state that they quickly deployed and found themselves facing enemy sharpshooters scattered in the field before them, hidden behind trees and awaiting their advance. Colonel Andrew Pickens, in overall charge of the militia, had positioned these handpicked riflemen from Georgia and North Carolina some one hundred fifty yards in front of the main line of his militia. Fire from the skirmishers' rifles hindered Tarleton's advance. He ordered approximately fifty of his dragoons forward to destroy the riflemen. Charging toward the skirmishers, the British dragoons were met by a hail of gunfire, and as many as fifteen of them tumbled from their galloping horses. Incensed with the failure of his dragoons to disperse the skirmishers, Tarleton ordered his infantry into battle before his entire command arrived on the scene and was in place. The skirmishers followed their orders, withdrawing slowly, reloading and firing as they did so, working their way back to Pickens's main line of militia.¹²

Tarleton described the battle in his *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America*:

The attack was begun by the first line of infantry, consisting of the 7th regiment, the infantry of the legion, and corps of light infantry annexed to it; a troop of cavalry was placed on each flank; the 1st battalion of the 71st, and the remainder of the cavalry, formed the reserve. The enemy's line soon gave way, and their militia quitted the field; but our troops having been thrown into some disorder by the pursuit, General Morgan's corps faced about, and gave them a heavy fire: This unexpected event occasioned the utmost confusion in the first line: The 1st battalion of the 71st, and the cavalry, were successively ordered up; but neither the exertions, entreaties, or example, of Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, could prevent the panic from becoming general. The two three-pounders were taken, and I fear, the colours of the 7th regiment shared the same fate. In justice to the detachment of the royal artillery, I must here observe, that no terror could induce them to abandon their guns, and they were all either killed or wounded in the defense of them.¹³

Of course, the perspective of the American side was somewhat different. As the British advanced, they discharged their cannon and raised three "Huizzas" to intimidate the rebels. Morgan rode through the militia lines, encouraging the men, "They give us the British halloo, boys, give them the Indian halloo, by G—."¹⁴ The Americans were directed to hold fire until the British were within forty to fifty

yards—once that distance was bridged, the militia executed their orders. Thomas Young, a young militiaman who participated in the battle, described the effect of the militia fire: “The militia fired first. It was for a time, pop—pop—pop, and then a whole volley; but when the regulars fired, it seemed like one sheet of flame from right to left. Oh! It was beautiful.”¹⁵ The British volley scarcely caused damage to the militia. However, the rebel fire was deadly, especially as the Americans aimed for British officers and sergeants. British infantry often overshot their targets, and this was the case at Cowpens. Though the British line was hit hard, it was not shattered, and Tarleton’s men continued their advance, this time with their feared bayonets presented.

The militia expended their volleys, then withdrew as Morgan had previously ordered them to do, seeking refuge behind the Continental line.



Figure 5. *Colonel Washington at the Battle of Cowpens*, by S. H. Gimber (1806-1862).

However, to the British, the militia movements appeared to be their hoped for rout of the Americans. Tarleton ordered a cavalry charge to decimate the militia; Morgan responded in kind by unleashing Washington’s mounted counter-attack. Another participant, James Collins, described the clash of the cavalry units: “In a few moments, Col. Washington’s cavalry was among them like a whirlwind, and

the poor fellows began to keel from their horses. . . . The shock was so sudden and violent they could not stand it and immediately betook themselves to flight.”¹⁶

While Washington’s dragoons protected the militia’s withdrawal, Howard’s Continentals traded fire with the advancing British. Tarleton ordered his Highlanders, under the command of Major Archibald McArthur into action, attempting to flank the Americans. They advanced to the sound of wailing bagpipes. Meanwhile, Morgan and Pickens rallied the retreating militia, who formed and returned to the fight, under the cries of Morgan: “Form, form, my brave fellows! Give them one more fire and the day is ours. Old Morgan was never beaten.”¹⁷ The bulk of the militia followed their commanders, making a wide arc behind the Continentals. As Morgan left the militia, and headed back to Howard and the Continentals, he was greeted with the sight of an unexpected retreat. Alarmed, he galloped to Howard’s side to demand an explanation. It appears that the battle din had caused Howard’s orders to be misunderstood, and the men were making an unintended, but orderly, retreat. Seeing that the action moved the men away from the charging Highlanders, Morgan and Howard awaited the opportune moment, then ordered the men to turnabout and fire. Hearing Morgan cry “Face about, boys! Give them one good fire, and the victory is ours!,” the Continentals turned and covered the British in an almost point-blank volley, followed by a

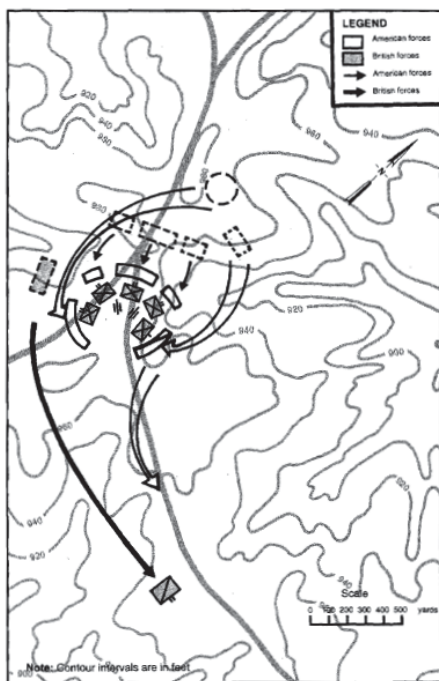


Figure 6. Envelopment and destruction, 0750, 17 January 1781.

Courtesy of The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour, Lieutenant Colonel John Moncure, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1996.

This image shows the double-envelopment that occurred in the final stages of the Battle of Cowpens.

bayonet charge.¹⁸ The withering fire broke the British headlong charge, turning their expected rout of the Americans into anarchy in the British ranks. Many of the British dropped their guns and begged for mercy. Morgan and his officers prevented their men from bayoneting the surrendering troops. Meanwhile, Pickens's militia, having passed behind the Continentals, re-entered the fray and pursued the Highlanders. Caught between the militia advance and the Continentals, who had wheeled and cut off the Scots from the opposite direction, the Highlanders fought a desperate battle, but succumbed.¹⁹

Tarleton attempted in vain to rally his men to aid the Scots, sending word to his reserve forces, who failed their commander and "fled through the woods with the utmost precipitation, bearing down such officers as opposed their



Figure 7. Monument at Cowpens National Battlefield noting American rebel forces at battle. Photo by author.

flight.”²⁰

Morgan had won the day. In his report to Nathanael Greene, Morgan stated, “The Troops I had the Honor to command have been so fortunate as to obtain a compleat Victory over a Detachment from the British Army commanded by Lt Colonel Tarlton.”²¹ Morgan described the battle to Greene:

The Enemy drew up in single Line of Battle 400 yds in Front of our advanced Corps. The first Battalion of the 71St Regt was opposed to our Right; the 7th Regt to our Left. The Infantry of the Legion to our Center. The Light Companies on their Flanks. In Front moved two Pieces (sic) of Artillery. Lt Colonel Tarlton with his Cavalry was posted in the Rear of his Line. The Disposition of Battle being thus formed, small Parties of Riflemen were detached to skirmish with the Enemy, upon which their whole Line moved on with the greatest Impetuosity shouting as they advanced. McDowell & Cunningham gave them a heavy & galling Fire & retreated to the Regiments intended for their Support. The whole of Colonel Picken’s Command then kept up a Fire by Regiments retreating agreeable (sic) to their Orders. When the Enemy advanced to our Line, they received a well-directed and incessant Fire, but their Numbers being superiour to ours, they gained our Flanks, which obliged us to change our Position. We retired in good Order about 50 Paces, formed, advanced on the Enemy & gave them a fortunate Volley which threw them into Disorder. Lt Colonel Howard observing this gave orders for the Line to charge Bayonets, which was done with such Address that they fled with the utmost Precipitation, leaving the Field Pieces in our Possession. We pushed our Advantage so effectually, that they never had an Opportunity of rallying, had their Intentions been ever so good.

Lt Colonel Washington having been informed that Tarlton was Cutting down our Riflemen on the left Flank pushed forward & charged them with such Firmness that instead of attempting to recover the Fate of the Day, which one would have expected from an officer of his Splendid Character, broke and fled.²²

Tarlton’s loss had a tremendous impact on the British, as he lost more

than eighty-five percent of the men that he led into combat. Of these, more than one hundred lay dead, over seven hundred were prisoners, and more than two hundred were wounded.²³

The outrage felt by General Charles Lord Cornwallis over Tarleton's loss led him to a swift, but unsuccessful pursuit of the Americans, in hopes of freeing his captured men. Following the battle, the American militia melted away to return to their homes, while Daniel Morgan and his Continentals as well as the British prisoners, marched to join Nathanael Greene. The Americans commenced a retreat throughout North Carolina to the Dan River, the border with Virginia, and safely delivered the British prisoners from the reach of Cornwallis. Turning back into North Carolina, Greene faced Cornwallis at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, which became a costly victory for the British, and led Cornwallis on the path to his eventual defeat at Yorktown.

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Available at: <http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/saberandscroll/vol4/iss1/9>

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1. Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3.
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3. John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 481.
4. Daniel Morgan, "Letter to Nathanael Greene January 19, 1781," accessed October 11, 2016, <http://www.battleofcowpens.com/battle-of-cowpens-letters/daniel-morgans-post-battle-letter-to-nathanael-greene/>.
5. Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns*, 215.
6. W. J. Wood, *Battles of the Revolutionary War: 1775-1781* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1990) 217-218.
7. *Ibid.*, 217.
8. John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 317.
9. Historians differ on the number of shots that Morgan directed the militia to fire before pulling back from Tarleton. In brief research, the author noted a number stating "two" while several others said "three." While not an exhaustive list, those stating "two shots" were John S. Pancake, *This*

Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782 (1985; repr., Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 135; John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 317; W. J. Wood, *Battles of the Revolutionary War: 1775-1781* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1990), 217; Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 757; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* Rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 479; Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 366; while those that stated three were John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 481; Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 55; Thomas Fleming "The battle of Cowpens" *Military History, suppl. America's Great Battles, 1775-2002* (2002) , 20; Lt. Colonel John Moncure "The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour," *Combat Studies Institute* (January 1996), 38,158; and Benson Bobrick, *Angel in the Whirlwind: The Triumph of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 429. Given that the time to re-load was not insignificant—the differences noted are surprising.

10. Wood, 217-218; Lieutenant Colonel John Moncure, *The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour*, Combat Studies Institute, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, January 1996, 58.

11. Wood, 219-220.

12. Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 320.

13. Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns*, 250-251.

14. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping*, 89.

15. Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 322.

16. *Ibid.*, 323.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, 324.

19. *Ibid.*, 325.

20. *Ibid.*, 326.

21. Morgan, "Letter to Nathanael Greene."

22. *Ibid.*

23. Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 326.

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Medical Services Available During the Revolutionary War Including Treatment for Soldiers Wounded in Action

Jessica Lathrop

The Revolutionary War signals the beginning of true American history, the point at which we evolved from thirteen fledgling colonies maintaining a separate existence from one another under the watchful, restrictive eye of Great Britain into a collective force of American citizens, fighting together for independence, freedom, and autonomy. While every boy and girl learns about the American Revolution during grade school, and although aspects of the Revolutionary War permeate our daily culture from annual holidays to celebratory liquor labels, there is a lot left unexplored within the history of the Revolutionary War.



Figure 1. Revolutionary War wound care. Photo courtesy of NPS.gov.

One of the often uncharted avenues of information pertains to the care and treatment of wounded soldiers, from medical services available during the late eighteenth century to the treatment of veterans. This paper seeks to examine, at least briefly, the various methods of medical care for wounded soldiers and their families as well as the options within the colonies for long term and short term veteran treatment.

Brief Overview of the Revolutionary War—Casualties and Wounded

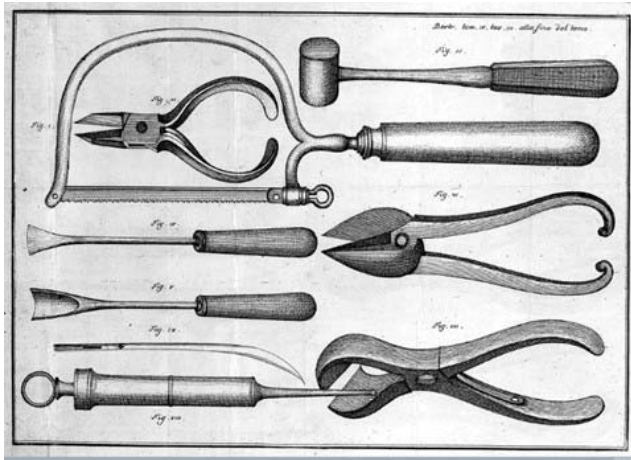


Figure 2. Elements of a mid-eighteenth century surgeon's kit. Photo credit: Wellcome Images.

It is important to note some basic statistics of the Revolutionary War in terms of wounded soldiers and related casualties in order to gain a fair scope of the challenges faced during this time. It is extremely difficult to get an accurate number of casualties from the war for several reasons, but perhaps most notably due to the large number of casualties that stemmed from famine and disease during the war rather than the war itself. Historian Edwin G. Burrows estimates that some 25,000 American patriot soldiers died during the Revolutionary War, with approximately 6,800 soldiers having actually died due to battle.¹ This is an extremely conservative number, however, with some medical professionals during that era having calculated a much higher casualty rate of 70,000—or 10,000 per year.² According to Census Bureau statistics, the general population of the collective colonies in 1775 was approximately 2.3 million people.³ A death toll of 70,000 would equal 3 deaths per 100 Americans, or 1 in 4 soldiers. These statistics are important to keep in mind regarding the scope of the medical care throughout the Revolutionary war.

Wound Care—Treatment of Injury during Battle



Figure 3. Revolutionary War medical doctor's instruments. Photo credit: Paul Revere Memorial Association.

Generally, when a soldier is wounded in battle, there are different levels of severity in regards to the injury sustained. The treatment of injuries that did not result in loss of life would have differed both in the availability of treatment as well as the urgency of care received. The treatment varied depending on the type of wound as well. The most popular treatment for wound care during the Revolutionary War was the application of lint to the wound site. The use of lint was instrumental as a form of bandage to keep the wound from continuing to bleed, to absorb blood in the form of a type of compress, and also to ward off any further damage to the wound.⁴ In fact, the use of lint became preferential over any other type of ointment or bandage due to the mild and healing effects of the soft lint against the tender injury. Opium was often a treatment to manage pain.

At the beginning of the war, it was not uncommon for men to be left injured in the fields for up to three days.⁵ This resulted in the development of military hospitals, established and structured much like the hospitals in Europe, with one surgeon and two assistants to serve each hospital in addition to orderlies, nurses, and occasionally housekeepers.⁶ Each regiment was to have their own

hospital. Generally, surgeons trained through an apprenticeship, as there were a limited number of medical schools and professionally trained instructors.⁷ Therefore, care of wounded soldiers often widely varied from location to location, and knowledge or prevention of infection caused by unsterile medical practices was not common or regulated.

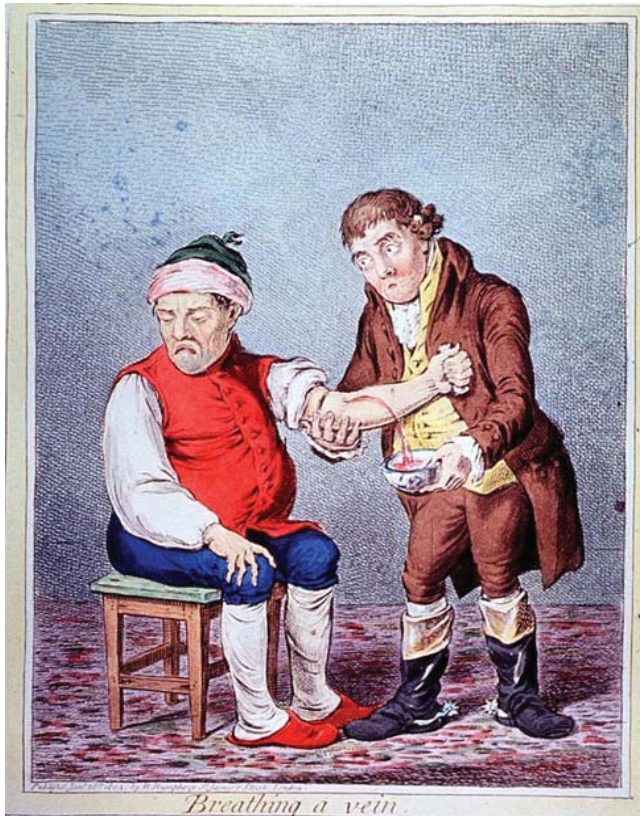


Figure 4. “Breathing a vein,” by James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey, hand-coloured etching, published 28 January 1804. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

General wound care, aside from the treatment of lint to the wound, varied depending on the type of wound. Inflammation was often treated with warm baths, bleeding (to release the swelling), laxatives, and medication meant to induce sweating. Wounds such as incisions, cut tendons, and lacerations were typically treated with plaster and bandages to hold the wound together, and only given

sutures in cases of transverse (latitudinal) wounds. Puncture wounds were usually left untreated, except in severe cases.⁸

Wounds to the extremities, such as gunshot wounds, fractures, or severe lacerations, often resulted in amputation of the limb. This was in itself a very risky and poorly effected treatment, as it carried a sixty-five percent mortality rate.⁹ Those who did not die were generally disabled and treated with standard veteran care.

Frequently the threat of death, as mentioned before, was not from injury itself, as only ten percent of soldiers actually died in battle. Rather, the highest mortality rate seemed to occur within the hospitals themselves. "The danger was not just to the patient. During the revolution, more surgeons died in proportion to their numbers than line officers."¹⁰ Risk of infection and disease ran rampant through the treatment centers, as it was difficult with the technology of the day to prevent or even fully understand the risks of infections. As knowledge spread throughout the area regarding the terminal risk of hospital settings, it was advised that "If the weather was 'at all moderate,' [Robert Hamilton] advised regimental surgeons to erect tents for the accommodation of at least part of the sick, as they can be more easily kept clean, and a free circulation of air obtained."¹¹

Treatment of Disabled and Invalid Veterans

The early American colonies held the general order that soldiers sent to battle on behalf of the colony and the American people were to be taken care of in the event of injury. This essentially meant that if a soldier was hurt during battle, whether temporarily or permanently disabled, care would be provided by the colony. Colonies established a treatment plan for disabled soldiers first in Virginia in 1644, then Maryland in 1661; New York in 1691; North Carolina in 1715; New Hampshire in 1718; Rhode Island in 1718; South Carolina in 1747; Georgia in 1755; Delaware in 1756; and finally New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1777.¹² In many cases, these laws covered support for family members of fallen soldiers as well in the circumstance that the family (widows and children) were incapable of providing for themselves. Modelled after the English "Acte for the Relief of Souldiours" of 1593, the American colonies kept the key components of veteran care, with each colony bearing slight differences in the quality of provisions provided to veterans and/or their families.

Conclusion

In general, there was a large amount of uncertainty in regards to the treatment and care of wounded soldiers. Medical technology was rudimentary, often with simpler injuries being treated as severe injuries due to lack of training or knowledge—for example, the amputation of broken or fractured limbs rather than re-setting the bone. Lives were generally at risk from infection and disease rather than actual wounds. The Revolutionary War, while records are sparser and more limited than historians would like, did provide a great deal of knowledge and experience for the medical profession. This promoted developments in advanced care and specialized treatments that included the standardized use of the microscope. In conclusion, the varied and undefined medical care developed into a more consistent healthcare system.

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Daughters of Liberty: The Women Who Fought in the American Revolution

Kimberly Trenner

These Daughters of Liberty during the Revolutionary War were wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers. They served as cooks, nurses, laundresses, spies, couriers and even fighters. They followed their men folk to the camps (camp followers) to do what was necessary in support. They served on the home front keeping the family business and farm intact and active. Even the simple act of gathering flannel, making clothes, and assuring that local merchants did not raise prices on general use goods made a difference in how the War progressed. They spoke to their husbands, fathers, and friends—some even wrote for publication—about the struggles against England and how women were affected. Some were so instrumental in the Revolution that they were awarded military pensions. There is no way to tell how many women were passive in the struggle against England, but it is estimated that approximately 20,000 women were active in the fight by being spies, couriers, nurses, fighters, and camp followers.

—Jerome R. Reich, *Colonial America*

Throughout time women have risen to the occasion—whatever the occasion may be—to support the men folk in their lives whether it was father, brother, or husband. Women worked within the home and the business, acted as spies, couriers, and soldiers. Their help was important in moving the fight for liberty forward. It is important to remember that war breeds sacrifice not only for the soldiers, but for everyone.

Young girls were expected to learn domestic duties. They moved from their father's authority to their husband having no greater purpose in society other than to marry, have babies, and be a good wife. Being a good and proper wife included cooking, cleaning, taking care of and butchering small animals, such as chickens. It was their responsibility to make cheese and butter, to smoke meat, milk the cows, sew and mend clothes, make homespun cloth, candles, and soap, raise the children, and take care of the sick.¹ These same skills made women important during the war. They took over running farms and family businesses. These "deputy husbands [were taking] on larger responsibilities . . . in a socially

acceptable way.”²

While women may not have had a voice in politics during the American Revolution, they had a voice at home and they expressed their beliefs and fears. Women such as Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, and Mercy Otis Warren were able to use the time with their husbands and their husband’s friends to aid in setting in motion the split from England. Abigail Adams wrote many letters to her husband expressing her concerns for what was happening pre-war and post-war. In fact, in a letter dated 31 March 1776 she asked that her husband “remember the Ladies”



Figure 1. *Mercy Otis Warren*, oil on canvas by John Singleton Copley, c. 1763.

when creating a new government.”³

The author Mercy Otis Warren was the sister of John Otis who was active in early Revolutionary War politics. In 1754, Mercy married John Warren, who went on to serve in the Massachusetts state legislature. Along with his political activism, John Warren often entertained many of the key leaders of the rebellion in their home. In 1769, after her brother was beaten “by colonial revenue officers [Mercy] was increasingly drawn to political activism and hosted protest meetings at her home that resulted in the organization of the Committees of Correspondence.”⁴

Each of the thirteen colonies set up Committees of Correspondence as a way for the colonies to cooperate with each other on all things from commerce to politics. Samuel Adams “at a Boston town meeting on November 2, 1772, secured the appointment of a 21-man ‘committee of correspondence’ . . . to state the rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular, as men, as Christians, and as subjects; and to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in the Province and to the World.”⁵ Within three months some eighty similar groups had formed locally. Mercy used this platform to expand her talents as a writer by penning several plays that appeared in serial form in the Boston newspaper highlighting the tyranny displayed by the likes of the royal governor against the colonists.

Other women called for boycotts of local merchants who were thought to be price gouging due to the war and limited supplies getting through from England. Other store owners, such as William Jackson, refused to sign the non-importation agreements as a rebuttal to England’s Stamp Act of 1765. Milcah Martha Moore copied such boycotts against Jackson into her commonplace (a journal or diary used by young women to record their thoughts and things they read or heard) book. One entry was a poem encouraging the Daughters of Liberty to

[S]tand firmly resolved
and bid Grenville to see
That rather than Freedom,
we’ll part with our Tea
And as we love the
Draught when adry,
As American Patriots,
—our Taste we deny.⁶

Realizing the importance of keeping the women involved in the rebellion, the Boston Post-Boy Advertiser ran an article on 16 November 1767 telling the women why their cooperation in boycotts would help to preserve not only their freedom but also their safety.⁷ The article encouraged all women to wear their

country linen and to disparage their brocades. The final line of the article read, “Tho’ the times remain darkesh, your men may be sparkish and love you much stronger than ever.”⁸

In 1774, led by Penelope Barker, fifty one women of North Carolina circulated and signed a petition representing the first time that women in a group made a conscientious step into politics. Known as the Edenton Tea Party, the petition read “We, the aforesaid Ladys will not promote ye wear of any manufacturer from England until such time that all acts which tend to enslave our Native country shall be repealed.”⁹ After signing the petition, the group sent it to a London newspaper with the hopes that it would be printed and England would take note.



Figure 2. Penelope Barker.
Artist unknown, circa 1776.

These boycotts increased the need for home-grown goods—in essence, the need for more spinning, weaving, and sewing. Women gathered in small groups and sewed shirts for soldiers. In Boston, women gathered on the Commons with their spinning wheels and spent the day spinning as a protest towards importation.¹⁰ The women of Boston in 1769 “produced 40,000 skeins of yarn, [while] the women in Middletown, Massachusetts, wove 20,522 yard[s] of cloth.”¹¹ Some women chose to help the rebellion by corresponding with each other and family members. By writing to each other, they were able to pass information along as to what the enemy was doing in their particular area.

When open warfare broke out in 1775, many women chose to follow their men to war—sometimes they even took their children along. Known as camp followers, these women played an important role in the war effort. Due to their importance as part of the camp, women were treated to half rations (quarter rations were given to the children) and “earned pay as cooks, nurses and laundresses . . . and were subject to military discipline. One woman, for instance, was jailed for using abusive language to an officer.”¹²



Figure 3. Woodcut of Patriot woman, Marblehead, MA, 1779.

Some camp followers worked taking water out to the battlefields for thirsty soldiers and to cool cannon barrels. Known as Molly Pitchers, the name did not represent a single woman as sometimes thought; the name was more a job title. Several Molly Pitchers have stood out in history. Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley followed her husband into battle and when he “collapsed by his cannon at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, Molly loaded and fired the cannon throughout the battle and is often depicted holding the large rammer.”¹³ At the Battle of Monmouth, McCauley marked the second woman to man a gun during an American battle and she received a warrant as a non-commissioned officer.¹⁴

Deborah Sampson dressed as a man and enlisted in the Army on 20 May 1781 joining the 4th Massachusetts Regiment under the name Robert Shurtleff.¹⁵ Deborah was wounded in the battle at Tarrytown, New York in both the head and thigh. While she allowed the doctor to treat her wounded head, she did not admit to

the leg wound fearing the doctor would discover her secret. Deborah tried to dig the bullet out of her leg herself, and later developed a fever. When the doctor began treating her fever, he discovered her secret. The doctor kept the secret until after Deborah returned to duty at which time he told a General at Fort Knox. On 23 October 1783, Deborah received an honorable discharge with no one the wiser to her gender.¹⁶



Figure 4. Deborah Sampson, engraving by George Graham. Used as the frontpiece of *The Female Review: Life of Deborah Sampson, the Female Soldier in the War of Revolution*, by Herman Mann (1771-1833).

Anne Trotter Bailey was another woman who disguised herself as a man to fight on the American side. Anne's husband, Richard, died in a battle on 19 October 1774 between Native Americans and the Virginia militia.¹⁷ Another girl, sixteen year old Sybil Ludington, rode forty miles through the countryside in the middle of a rain storm at night to call the militia under her father's command to arms.¹⁸ They knew the British were on the move and feared they would burn Danbury, Connecticut. Thanks to Sybil's ride, nearly four hundred troops rallied, met the British, and saved the town by pushing the British back to sea.

General George Washington's Continental Army suffered a horrible winter at Valley Forge in 1777-1778. The Oneida Indians brought a gift of corn, which was unknown to the soldiers. Polly Cooper, a member of the Oneidas, was left behind to teach the soldier's "how to prepare the nutritional and medicinal food."¹⁹

Patriot Laodicea "Dicey" Langston Springfield spent the war spying on the enemy. Dicey became a "fly on the wall" in her town in Laurens County, South Carolina, picking up bits and pieces of information. She crossed the Enoree River and reported her tidbits to the rebels. Eventually, the Loyalists became suspicious of her actions and threatened her father. For a while, Dicey stopped her activities. Hearing that Loyalist partisan commander "Bloody Bill" Cunningham was on his way to attack a nearby settlement, Dicey set out in the middle of the night, crossing streams and marshes as well as the storm-swollen Tyger River. When Dicey arrived to warn her brother, "he and his friends rushed to warn everyone, and the next day, when the 'Scout' arrived, they found the area deserted, no one was there for them to 'wreak their vengeance'".²⁰

Emily Geiger volunteered to carry a message for General Nathanael Greene across enemy lines. The General wrote the message down, but because of its importance, told Emily what it contained. Tories captured Emily but she refused to give up any message. Since she was a woman, they called a matron to search her body. While waiting for the matron, Emily spent her time eating the message. When nothing could be found on her person, Emily was released and went on to carry out her task by repeating the message given to her by General Greene.²¹

Kate Barry acted as courier and scout. In fact, Kate was such a good scout the South Carolina troops were "seldom surprised by the British."²² At one time (according to legend) Kate got word that the British were headed into the area so she tied her toddler to the bedpost and rode out to tell her husband and his troops that the British were on the way.

These American women were couriers, spies, Molly Pitchers, nurses, cooks, and laundresses. They were the daughters, wives and mothers. They were

the Daughters of Liberty who fought in the field or on the home front to support their men folk. More importantly, they began to feel a part of something greater than themselves. They served where needed and they took a stand against the British. Traditionally thought of as the weaker sex, through their actions, they soon showed their toughness and value.

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“How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?”

Anne Midgley

In favour of this exemption of the Americans from the authority of their lawful sovereign, and the dominion of their mother-country, very loud clamours have been raised, and many wild assertions advanced. . . . These antipatriotick prejudices are the abortions of folly impregnated by faction. . . . We are told, that the subjection of Americans may tend to the diminution of our own liberties; an event, which none but very perspicacious politicians are able to foresee. If slavery be thus fatally contagious, how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?

—Samuel Johnson, *Taxation No Tyranny*
An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress, 1775.

In his response to colonial American cries for relief from the taxation and legislative control of Great Britain, Samuel Johnson, the great eighteenth century writer, excoriated the American rebels for the obvious hypocrisy of their claims to liberty.¹ During the mid-eighteenth century, anti-slavery opinions arose in Britain, particularly among the educated classes. Johnson’s sentiment in his resolution to the American Congress reflects the growing British sense of moral outrage at slavery, which led to Britain’s abolition of its slave trade in 1787 and outright abolition of slavery in 1834.²

Across the Atlantic, in Britain’s thirteen American colonies, however, the slavery of blacks was largely an accepted fact. On the eve of the American Revolution, the colonies contained over four hundred thousand people of African and West Indies descent, representing nearly twenty percent of the population. In the stratified and hierarchical society of colonial America, slaves held the lowest rung on the ladder. Many others—women, children, indentured servants, apprentices, and those without property—had few rights as well, since only adult white male property holders had the right to cast ballots in American politics.³

The experience of blacks during the American War for Independence varied significantly. Determinants included their home colony, their occupation, and their status—free or enslaved. The war affected African-Americans in a variety of ways, some of which are relatively unknown to twenty-first century Americans. Blacks fought both for and against the rebellion. In addition, at the close of the war, as many as twenty thousand blacks left America with the British, preferring an unknown future to the certainties of life as a black person in the new

republic.⁴

Not every black person in America was enslaved and the experience of individual blacks during the war was exceptionally diverse. This paper is intended to highlight some instances of African-Americans' participation in the war; it is not intended to be a holistic examination of that very complex topic. If it spurs the reader to further examination and research on the topic, then it has accomplished its purpose.



Figure 1. *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, oil on canvas by Emanuel Leutze, c. 1851.

A close examination of the 1850 painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze provides some sense of the diversity of colonial America. Among the oarsmen propelling the boat forward to the fateful Battle of Trenton is a sailor of African descent wearing the “short tarpaulin jacket of a New England seaman.”⁵ It is without doubt that the black man represents a member of the New England “Marblehead men.” As the mariners Colonel John Glover recruited for the 14th Massachusetts Continentals hailed from Marblehead, Massachusetts, many in his regiment reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of that New England sea-faring region. Native Americans and African Americans frequently sailed as shipmates in the New England fishing vessels and are known to have served with Glover. General George Washington crossed the Delaware with the men of Glover’s Marblehead unit, who became known as some of the best soldiers in the Continental Army.⁶

William Ranney's famous painting of *The Battle of Cowpens*, which graces the cover of this issue, depicts a sword fight between American Lieutenant Colonel William Washington and British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Outnumbered by the British, Washington's life was in grave danger. The young black bugler, depicted in the painting, who raced to the scene and shot one of Washington's opponents, saved Washington from certain death. The National Park Service documents fifteen black soldiers who fought with the Americans at Cowpens, but cannot confirm the identity of that young man.⁷

A John Trumbull painting of General George Washington reflects Washington accompanied by William Lee, a young black man wearing an exotic



Figure 2. George Washington, oil on canvas by John Trumbull, c. 1780. Trumbull served in the Continental Army as an aide-de-camp to Washington.

turban. According to historian David Hackett Fisher, William “Billy” Lee was Washington’s slave, man-servant, comrade, friend—and a horseman who rode nearly as well as Washington, who was known as one of the best equestrians in the colonies.⁸ These paintings depict three black men actively involved in the pursuit of American Independence.

Early in the war, John Murray, Earl of Dunmore and the British governor of Virginia offered freedom to slaves who would rally to fight for the British and raised an “‘Ethiopian Regiment’ of three hundred African Americans, their uniforms inscribed with the rallying-cry ‘Liberty to Slaves’.”⁹ The rebels quickly defeated Dunmore and he fled to the safety of a British warship. Precedent was set however, and both the British military and the American rebels sought to recruit African Americans to their respective cause. Thousands of black Americans fought with the British as soldiers, and as “scouts, laborers, and servants.”¹⁰ Historian Paul Shirley noted that the British formed several black regiments, including the Black Dragoons, a cavalry regiment formed entirely of former slaves and led by black officers.¹¹

Historian Gary Nash, among others, estimates that ten to twenty times as many blacks fought for the British than for the rebels, in large part due to the hope that fighting for the British would earn the soldier his long-sought freedom.¹² After the close of the war, tens of thousands of African Americans sailed with the British to gain a better life. Their diaspora brought these people—including women and children—to far-flung corners of the globe. They settled in regions as diverse as the colony of Sierra Leone in Africa, British Canada, East Florida, Jamaica, and the Bahamas in the Americas, and London and other major European cities. In “Harry Washington’s Atlantic Crossing: The Migrations of Black Loyalists,” found in *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America*, Douglas R. Egerton outlines the challenges facing both the free blacks and former slaves who fled the American colonies. Ironically, those who migrated from the former American colonies felt that their own opportunity for “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” was far from its shores.¹³

Notes

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O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, The American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

Book Review

Robert Smith, PhD.

It is arguable that no one knows how to do disasters like the British. It is true to such an extent that they should have been the entertainment industry leader in epic disaster films. Consider if you will these historical vignettes—one has the Titanic where they do not have enough lifeboats and the Somme in 1916 where they send tens of thousands of men walking in a straight line into machine guns. Then to one up the historical ante, they lost their Empire in France in the 1400s, despite Agincourt, and lost their Empire for good post-1947. However, losing their Empire in the American Revolution took a special kind of intellectual inertia and failure of leadership at nearly every single level of the British Monarchy and Whitehall. In his highly engaging study of this phenomenon “*The Men Who Lost America*,” Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy achieves just that, but accomplishes making scholarly work pleasurable and accessible.

O'Shaughnessy's work treads a good pathway established by B. H. Liddell Hart's *The Other Side of the Hill*. There Hart interviewed and talked to the surviving key Wehrmacht Operational Commanders to ascertain the key decision points, their personal decision trees, and what went wrong leading to the defeat of the Third Reich. Of course, conveniently with Hitler being dead, at this time it was easy for these commanders to ladle all their sins onto the dead Fuhrer. Here O'Shaughnessy has no one to interview, but his work at looking at the historical record from both sides presents and paints both a convincing and at times human portrayal of the failure of British decision-making. Unlike Hart, whom it felt simply swallowed the German blame-the-dead-guy game; O'Shaughnessy is more rigorous and fair-handed in his approach.

One of the key elements that O'Shaughnessy weaves throughout is his ability to put us into the mind and social conventions of the era without the book becoming a dull review of eighteenth century British aristocracy. One of the things the reader will be surprised to find out is that many of the commanders who failed in America—John Burgoyne, Henry Clinton, and William Howe—were appointed to their posts not due to the normal channels of patronage but because they were capable field officers. Perhaps even more pointed is the case of Charles, Lord Cornwallis, who we lampoon for getting himself boxed in at Yorktown. Yet

instead the reader will now come face to face with a different Cornwallis—a deadly and capable officer who was let down in this instance by the games played within the British court, and who would go on to be one of England’s greatest figures in India.

The British did lose the American colonies, so in that they did fail. However, O’Shaughnessy hammers home that Britain never lost control of the seas, despite a formidable naval coalition arrayed against them. The Battle of the Chesapeake stands out as perhaps the only naval defeat. The British ministers understood that losing the Americas would be bad, but if coupled with the loss of the islands in the Caribbean, the British Empire would be reduced to an impoverished state. The thesis is almost the Cold War domino theory, that should North America fall, Canada falls, the Caribbean Islands fall, and those defeats might just encourage the other jackal empires of Europe to attack it elsewhere. For the American Patriots, the American Revolution was one war, but for the British, as the war lengthened, it took on different dimensions.

O’Shaughnessy’s best work is his dissection of Lord George Germain. In any view of history, Germain is neither a likable nor sympathetic character. His obstinacy in fighting the war and driving the Empire down ill-considered paths had a psychological component to it. The stain of his imputed cowardice at the Battle of Minden seems to have always haunted Germain. Despite the favoritism of the court, he carried that stain on his honor with him. What better way to show he was a British fighting man of spirit than to stand up this time for the king in the face of the war party’s opposition in Parliament?

We see how the British reacted, albeit more slowly than they could have, to changing circumstances. They had a Northern strategy to suppress Massachusetts and Boston and upon its failure shifted to the more traditional seizure of the enemy’s capital, as that always worked in Europe. When that failed, they tried splitting New England from the Middle colonies by the devilishly hard-to-defend-against strategy of Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne, who was undone when his own commander in Philadelphia refused to move up the Hudson River, and cut the colonies in half. *The Men Who Lost America* has just about something for everyone—land warfare, naval warfare, political intrigue, a smattering of psychology and gossip. *The Men Who Lost America* is the perfect coffee table book that will actually be read, as it is that rare scholarly work that transcends the line between academia and popular writing.