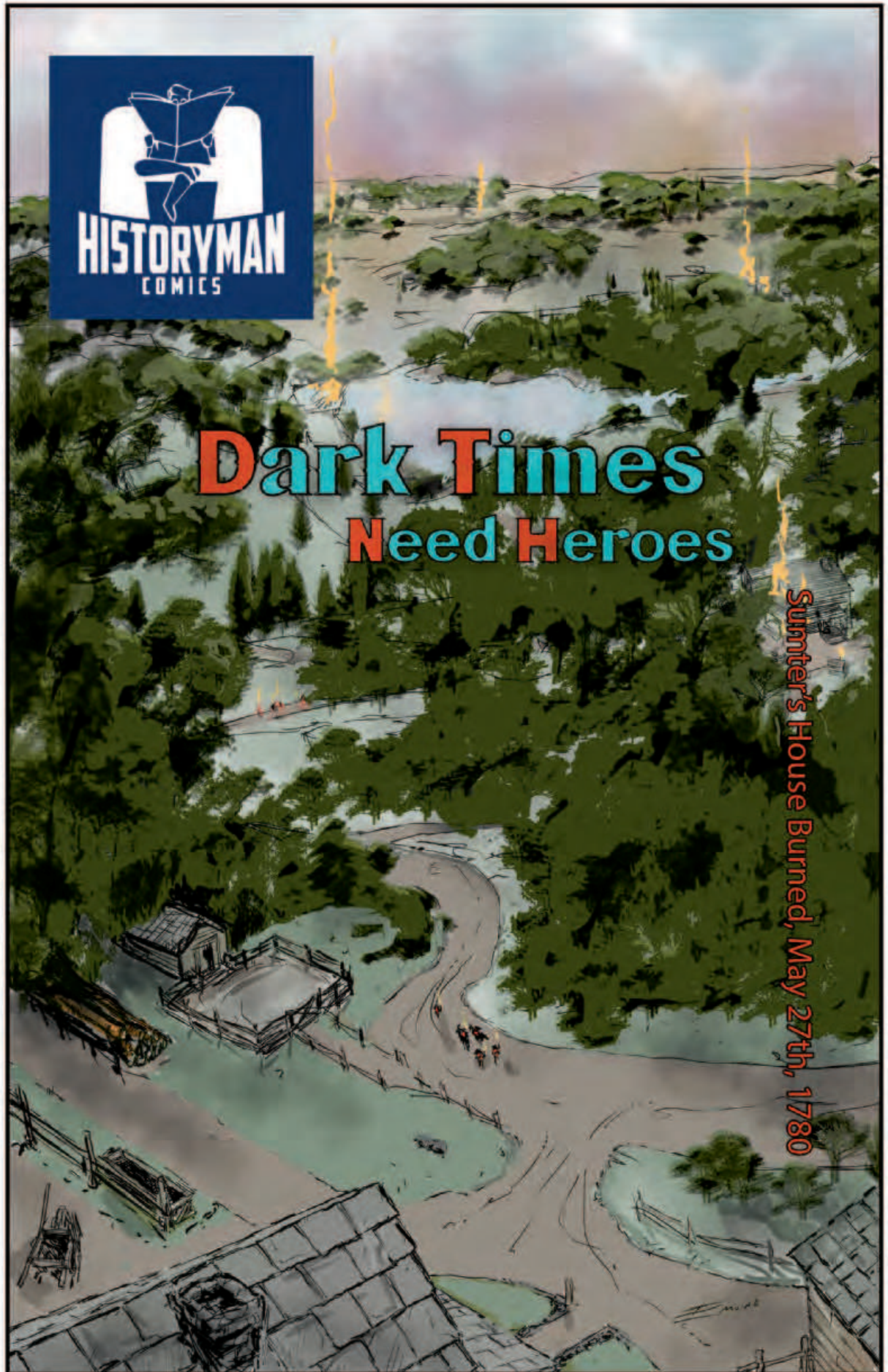




Dark Times Need Heroes

Sumter's House Burned, May 27th, 1780





Biography of General Thomas Sumter (August 14, 1734 – June 1, 1832)

Biography of General Thomas Sumter (August 14, 1734 – June 1, 1832)
Thomas Sumter was born in colonial Virginia.

Little is known about Thomas Sumter's father. The elder Sumter may have been an indentured servant. He settled on a homestead at Freddy's Creek in Louisa County, VA, where Thomas was born.

William Martin, a childhood associate of General Sumter, would say that Thomas "seems as if he felt mortified at the idea of his low birth (his father being a miller, and his mother a mid-wife) and that he wished everything connected with his early life be forgotten." (1)

Sumter would play a role in the capture of Fort Pitt in the French and Indian War. At the conclusion of that conflict, Sumter would embark on another journey as an escort of Cherokee chiefs to London. When he returned, he found himself in some financial trouble while waiting to be paid by the Royal government. He would end up settling near the Eutaw Springs in South Carolina. (2)

He became a merchant and sought to move up in social standing in his new colony. He married Mary Cantey and increased his property. He was a planter, a trader and even a ferry operator. He made business and social connections that would turn into political collateral later. He was elected as a delegate to the first Provincial Congress in December 1774 for the District Eastward of Wateree River. (3)

The British burned the future General out of his home just north of Sumter, South Carolina on May 20, 1780. At the time he had resigned his commission as a Continental officer. Left homeless with his physically challenged wife and young son, he made the decision to return to the fight at the age of 46.

Sumter's men gave battle to the British at Williamson Plantation, Rocky Mount, Hanging Rock, Cary's Fort, Fishing Creek, Kings Mountain, Fishdam Ford, and Blackstock's. They killed, captured, or defeated British Captain Christian Huck, N.C. Loyalist Colonel Samuel Bryan, Loyalist Lt. Colonel James Cary, British Major Patrick Ferguson, British Cavalry Major James Wemyss and British Legion Lt. Colonel Banastre Tarleton.

General Sumter continued his war efforts even after being wounded twice. He would help supply the war effort with intel and provisions, even when he was not in the field fighting. However, his preference of independent command often put him at odds with American General Nathaniel Greene.

After the war he served the citizens of South Carolina for five terms in the House of Representatives in Washington, DC. He also was elected to the U.S. Senate and served till 1810.

And for these and other momentous reasons, General Thomas Sumter is a proud hero of the South Carolina.

(1) Gregorie, A (1931) Thomas Sumter, Rt. Bryan Company (pg. 4)

(2) Jones, R (2011) Before They Were Heroes at King's Mountain, Daniel Boone Footsteps Publishing (pgs. 8-17)

(3) Gregorie, A (1931) Thomas Sumter, Rt. Bryan Company (pg. 39)



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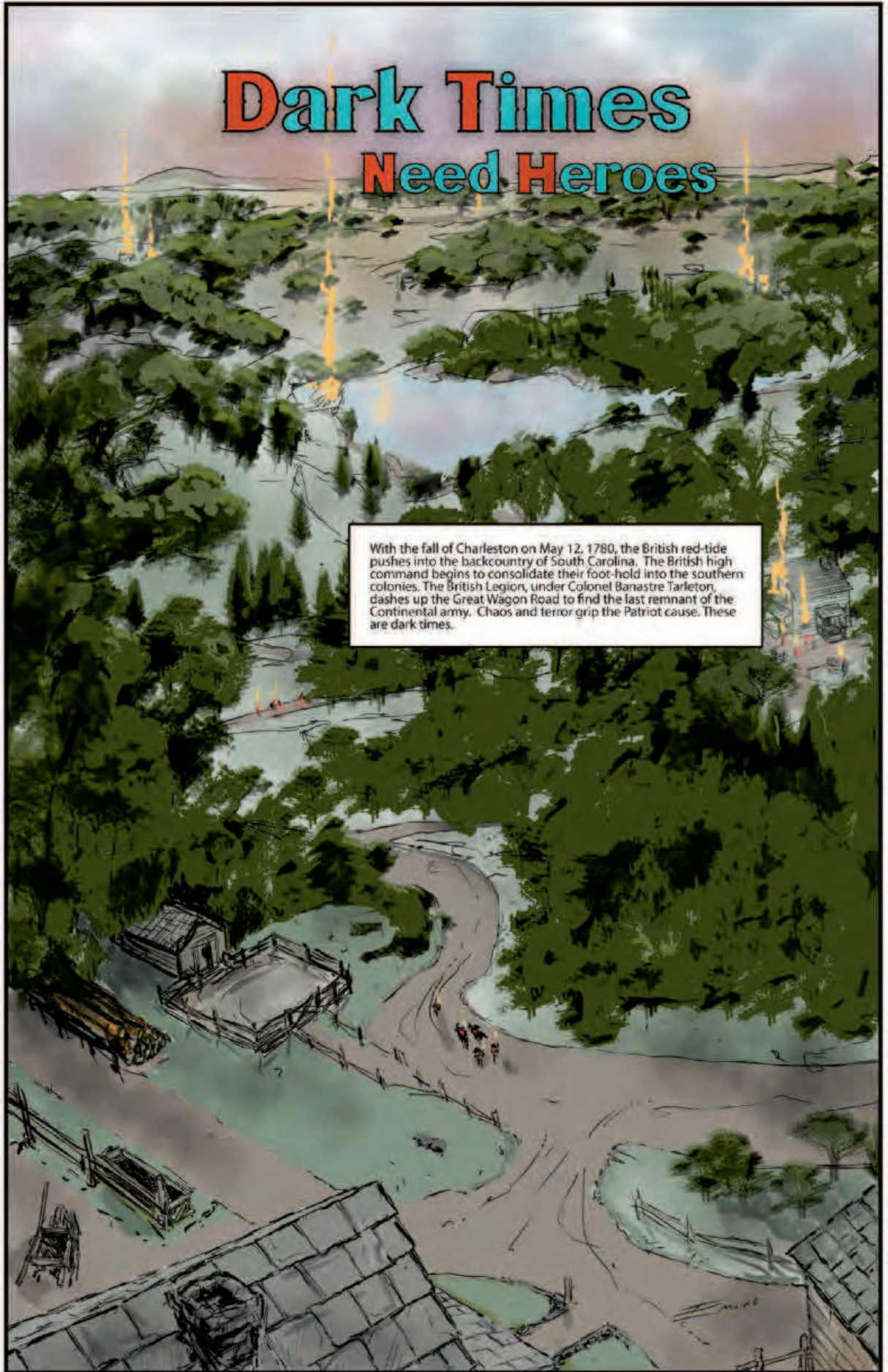
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Dark Times Need Heroes

With the fall of Charleston on May 12, 1780, the British red-tide pushes into the backcountry of South Carolina. The British high command begins to consolidate their foot-hold into the southern colonies. The British Legion, under Colonel Banastre Tarleton, dashes up the Great Wagon Road to find the last remnant of the Continental army. Chaos and terror grip the Patriot cause. These are dark times.



Wake up.

Wake up!



Dad! They're coming!
I just heard that the British are chasing
Buford and Governor Rutledge up this way.
They will be by here soon!

What?! I guess
they mean business if they are
following after Colonel Buford
this far inland.



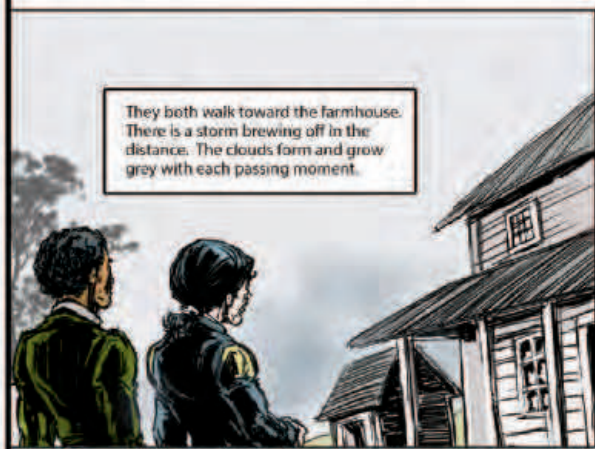
Go find Soldier
Tom and tell him
I need him.





Tom Jr. said the Brits were coming up the road?

Yep. They seem determined to catch up to Governor Rutledge and Colonel Buford.



They both walk toward the farmhouse. There is a storm brewing off in the distance. The clouds form and grow grey with each passing moment.



Tom, how about you saddle up a couple of horses? We need to take a ride south for a little bit.



Is everything okay, Thomas?

Yes, everything is fine. Governor Rutledge and Colonel Buford are headed north.



Mary looks up from the chair. Her cane is by her side, an ever-present reminder of her frail physical condition. A young neighbor girl, Nancy Davis, is there also. She helps Mrs. Sumter with the house-chores.

If the governor came by here, it must be bad in Charleston.

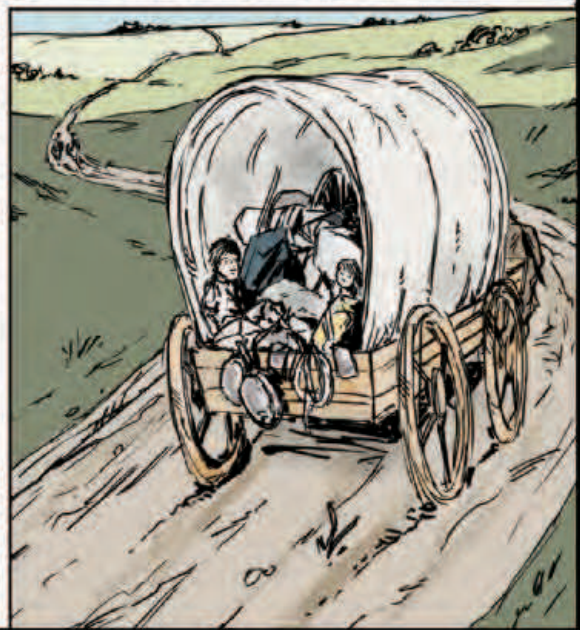
I suppose it is bad, Tom Jr. came up and said the Brits are heading this way.



They turn their horses to the south and trot down the road at a leisurely pace.

Both are silent as they ponder the events of the day.







What's with all the stuff in your wagon?

We decided to get ahead of the Brits and try and make it out of Charleston. We just barely did. We heard later that a powder magazine exploded, but we don't know which one.



Where are you headed now?

I imagine we will continue north for a while. Maybe head to Salisbury or Hillsborough, North Carolina.



Well, good luck to you all.

You might want to think about it yourself. The British soldiers are making their way north. I don't think anyone is safe at this point.

We will see.



Come on, Tom. We probably need to head back and make some plans.

I think I've heard enough. We need to think about laying low, till this danger subsides.

But what about the army?

What army? Governor Rutledge and all those planters gave away Charleston and the army with it. There's no-one left.

But Colonel Buford and Governor Rutledge are still in the field.

Whoa! What's all the hurry?

The British are just a few miles behind us!

Both Sumter and Soldier Tom recognize their danger. In unison they both spur their horses and dash towards home. Sumter's moody and dark thoughts drown out the hoofbeats as they race up the road.

He realizes he may have waited too late to decide.

- Boston Massacre March 5, 1770
- Charleston Tea Party December 3, 1773
- Boston Tea Party December 16, 1773
- Intolerable Acts March-May-1774
- 1st Continental Congress September 5, 1774
- Continental Congress passes Associational Acts October 18, 1774
- Camden Resolves November 5, 1774
- War begins at Lexington/Concord April 19, 1775
- Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" January 15, 1776
- British evacuate Boston, MA March 17, 1776
- British failed attack on Charleston, SC Sullivan's Island June 28, 1776
- Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776
- The Ring Fight October 12, 1776
- Washington crosses Delaware river December 25, 1776
- Winter camp at Valley Forge December 18, 1777
- Battle of Monmouth, NJ June 28, 1778
- British occupy Savannah, GA December 29, 1778
- Battle of Stono Ferry, SC June 20, 1779
- Battle of Stoney Point, NY July 15-16, 1779

1. Burning of Sumter's home in High Hill of the Santee
2. Williamson Plantation
3. Rocky Mount
4. Hanging Rock
5. Cary's Fort
6. Fishing Creek



- Fall of Charleston, SC May 12, 1780
- Thomas Sumter's House burned May 27, 1780 *Dark Times Need Heroes*
- Buford's Massacre in Waxhaws May 29, 1780
- Battle of Ramsour's Mill June 20, 1780
- Battle of Williamson's Plantation July 12, 1780 *Huck's Defeat*
- Battle of Rocky Mount and 1st battle of Hanging Rock July 31, 1780 *A Rocky Response*
- 2nd Battle of Hanging Rock August 6, 1780 *The Shattering*
- Battle at Cary's Fort August 15, 1780 *On the Warpath to Cary's Fort*
- Battle of Camden August 16, 1780
- Battle of Fishing Creek August 18, 1780 *The Battle at Fishing Creek*
- Battle of Musgrove Mills August 19, 1780
- Battle at Blue Savannah September 4, 1780
- Battle of Kings Mountain, SC October 7, 1780
- Battle of Fishdam Ford, SC November 9, 1780
- Battle of Blackstocks, SC November 20, 1780
- Battle of Cowpens, SC January 17, 1781
- Raid on Georgetown, SC January 24, 1781
- Battle of Guilford Courthouse, NC March 15, 1781
- Capture of Fort Watson, SC April 23, 1781
- Battle of Hobkirk Hill, Camden, SC April 25, 1781
- Battle of Hayes Station, SC May 8, 1781
- Capture of Orangeburg, SC May 11, 1781
- Capture of Ft. Motte, SC May 12, 1781
- Capture of Ft. Granby, SC May 15, 1781
- Capture of Augusta, GA June 6, 1781
- Siege of Ninety-Six, SC May 21-June 18, 1781
- Battle at Shubrick's Plantation, SC July 17, 1781
- Battle of Eutaw Springs, SC September 8, 1781
- British surrender at Yorktown, VA October 19, 1781
- British evacuation day in Charleston, SC December 14, 1782
- Peace Treaty of Paris September 3, 1783

Thomas Sumter, 46 yoa, District Eastward of the Wateree River, South Carolina (Stateburg and Eutaw Springs), Husband, Father, Businessman, Planter, Soldier, Politician



Soldier Tom, unknown age, Stateburg, SC, Father, African Slave owned by Thomas Sumter who went by the monicker "Soldier Tom" presumably because of his bearing and service to the general during the war

Patriots

Mary Cantey Sumter, 57 yoa, District Eastward of the Wateree River, South Carolina (Stateburg and Eutaw Springs), Wife, Mother.





Captain Charles Campbell, unknown age, Great Britain, Soldier

British





Tom, go ahead and pack for the trail. I need to talk to Mary and Tom Jr.



Mary, we are in a tight spot. The British are coming up from Charleston. I don't know how long we have.



If they catch you, what will they do?

Well, I doubt they'll want to discuss the weather. Soldier Tom and I, both, are probably on some list somewhere.



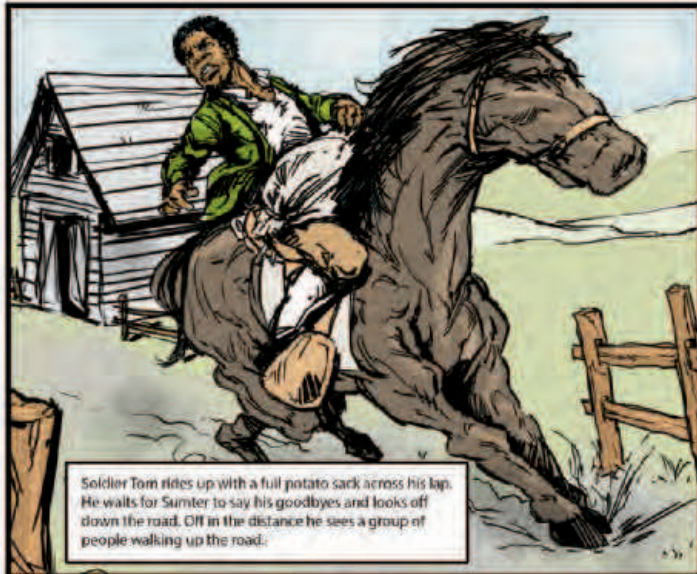
Thomas, you can't get caught. You can't. You must hide. They won't burn the house if it's just me and Tom Jr.



Well, I hope that's true.

I sent Tom to pack some things. We need to ride out quick. We may live in the saddle for a bit till this blows over.

I'm mostly concerned about you and Tom Jr.



Soldier Tom rides up with a full potato sack across his lap. He waits for Sumter to say his goodbyes and looks off down the road. Off in the distance he sees a group of people walking up the road.



Tom, be careful!



Sumter turns in the saddle to bid farewell, but Soldier Tom stops him short. The group of people that were walking along the road, moments before, are now running into the woods to get away from some unseen approaching threat.



Sir, they're here. We must go now!



As Mary, Nancy and Tom Jr. turn their gaze toward the roadway, Sumter and Soldier Tom gallop behind the house and make for the wood line.



Nancy, lock everything up in the closets and the smokehouse.



Hurry, Nancy!

In a valiant attempt to keep everything safe, Nancy throws the key in the yard and dashes into the front room.



Mary grabs Tom Jr. and they melt back into the house and close the door.



Peering out the front window, they see a contingent of soldiers riding up the lane.



Upon reaching the immediate vicinity of the house, several pairs of men break from the main force and surround the house on all sides.



Madam, I am Captain Charles Campbell of his Majesty's armies.



I am commanded to find a Colonel Thomas Sumter who lives on this farm.




This is his home. I am his wife. This is our child. He is not here.

I am ordering you to tell me where he is. If you do not, I will be forced to extreme measures.



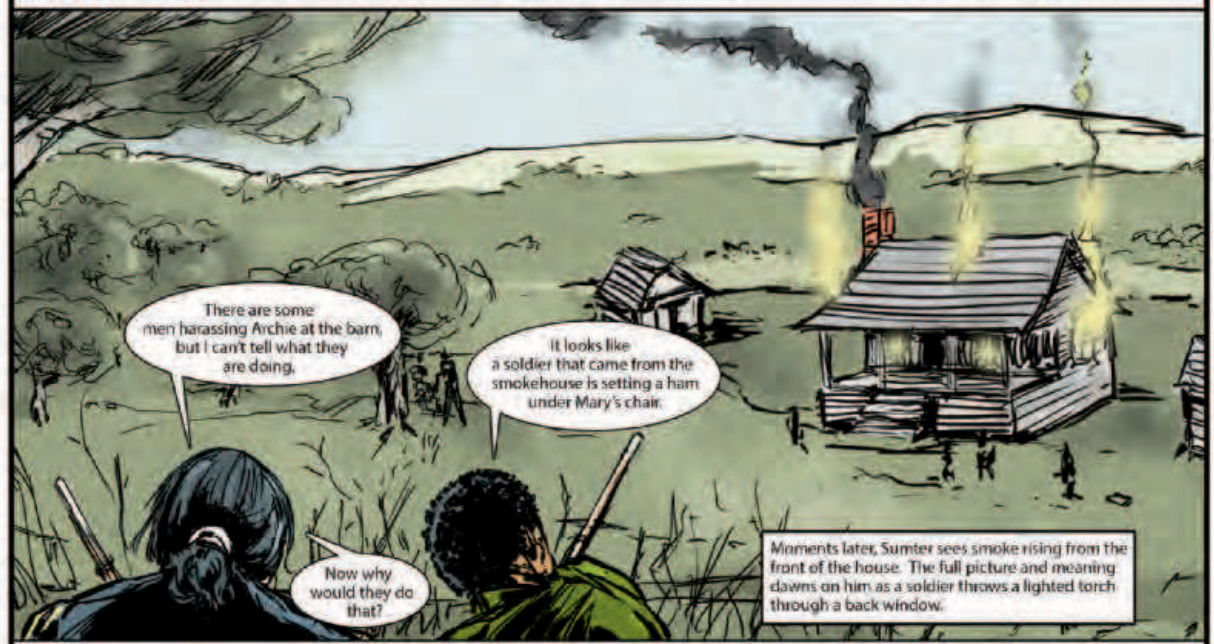
Search and fire the house. We have an appointment with a Colonel Buford and we cannot be late.



What do you see, Tom? I see Mary being placed under that tree



She seems OK, Mr. Sumter. I see Tom Jr. and Nancy.




There are some men harassing Archie at the barn, but I can't tell what they are doing.

It looks like a soldier that came from the smokehouse is setting a barn under Mary's chair.

Now why would they do that?


Moments later, Sumter sees smoke rising from the front of the house. The full picture and meaning dawns on him as a soldier throws a lighted torch through a back window.



No!... Tom, I can't!... I can't sit here and watch them make us homeless!

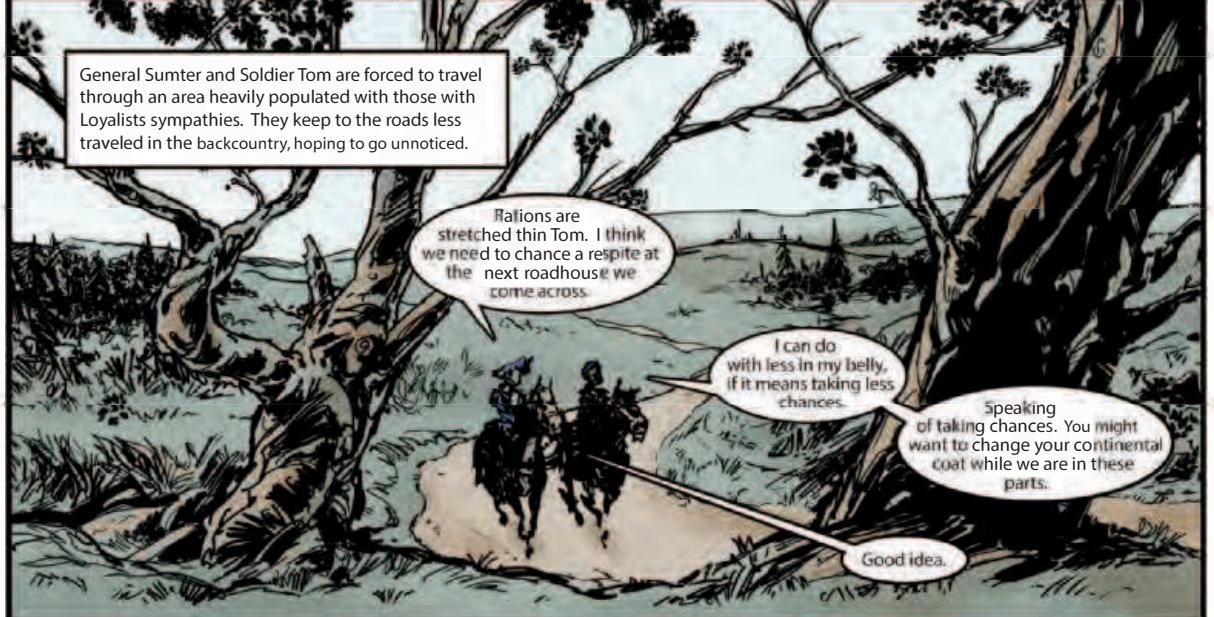
No, Mr. Sumter, you can't. There are too many of them. Now is not the time!

Oh, my poor Mary! Oh, Tom Jr.! Our home! They have destroyed us!



It looks bad, but they will be fine. My boy, Edmund, is still there and Mack and Polly. And Nancy's family will help. We must go now, Mr Sumter!

Come on! Sir, come on!



General Sumter and Soldier Tom are forced to travel through an area heavily populated with those with Loyalists sympathies. They keep to the roads less traveled in the backcountry, hoping to go unnoticed.

Rations are stretched thin Tom. I think we need to chance a respite at the next roadhouse we come across.

I can do with less in my belly. If it means taking less chances.


Speaking of taking chances. You might want to change your continental coat while we are in these parts.

Good idea.



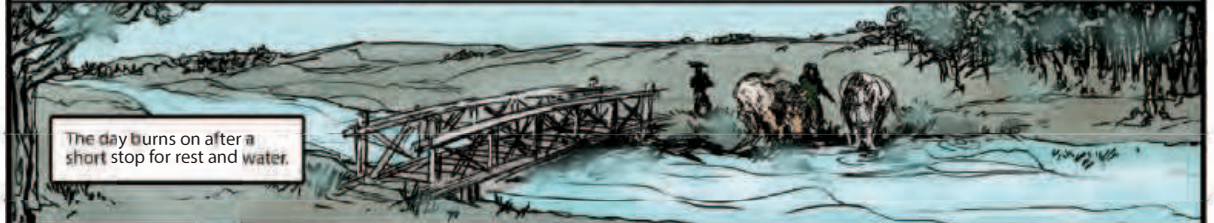
You know ...

A tired and hungry man has less chance against a well-fed redcoat, if we should be so unfortunate as to meet up with even a small scouting party.




Can't say as I have a good argument with that one.


It's settled then. If we're lucky we will be just two more travelers nestled in for the night. We'll be stocked with provisions and have rested horses come the morning.




The day burns on after a short stop for rest and water.



Sumter and Tom remain hidden in the brush on the roadside as two redcoats on horseback slowly ride past their hiding place.



Finally shadows grow long as the sun begins to dip in the west, and the promise of cool night air begins to offer respite.



Maybe it's all that talk about rest and food, but I swear that I smell something mighty tasty cooking somewhere up ahead.



Yes sir.

Folks out in these parts are not welcoming of strangers. Leave the talking to me.



The roadhouse is little more than a collection of lean to shelters with raiseable panels to dispell the heat of the day.



Welcome, what can I get for you?

Feed and water for the horses. A meal and a place to rest for myself and my man here.



Thank you kindly young miss, it sure smells good.

Oh Lord, we sure would appreciate a hot meal and a quiet night, but I don't expect you see it that way.

I see an unfamiliar face seated among us this evening.



Can't say I recall seeing you in these parts before mister. Might I know your kin?

I don't believe you would know me or mine. I'm not from around here, just passing through.

For all I know you could be heading toward something or running away from something else.



Which is it, friend?



We here about's, are loyal to the Crown. On which side do you make your stand?



Are you asking if my master is a Rebel? Lord, now I have gone and heard it all!

He has a painting of King George hung over his fireplace. I know cause I'm the one has to dust it, real careful like.

Especially on his Highness's birthday. On that day he has us all gather around and sing, God Save The King!

A rebel. Why I remember one time ...

Alright, alright, stop yer yammering!





Sorry mister. Old Herb get's something in his head. It just has to come spilling out of his mouth.

No harm done.

Alright everyone! The redcoat patrol will return soon and we'll have a proper lock up til sun rise.

Find a patch to lay your bedrolls.



Soldier Tom and Sumter lock eyes. They realise their danger and the need for quick action.



Did you not hear me friend?

I did sir, but my man takes his care of the horses seriously. He wants to see to them once more before we rest.



Move it along, I'm not waiting for you two!



And just who is it you are using that tone with?

Oh! Not you sir, I assure you.



I was speaking to ... please, forgive me... my intention... Never mind.





These are Dark Times.

The night will fall and the morning bring the light.



Footsteps of Heroes: The Others

In the history of the Revolutionary War, most participants are lost to anonymity. We're fortunate to know a few more heroes from this story because of the research of some fine historians.

Soldier Tom was the personal manservant for Thomas Sumter. He was born in Africa and was enslaved before the Revolution.

It was a tradition to refer to some slaves by their trade or craft. The identifying name of "Soldier" suggests that he was known as being "soldier-like" in bearing and deed. He was with Sumter in all his campaigns and helped in his recovery after the general was shot at the Battle of Blackstock's in November of 1780.

A neighbor girl, Nancy Davis, was helping keep house for Mary Sumter. She went about locking up various doors and outbuildings before the British soldiers rode into the yard. To keep the valuables from falling into the enemy's hands, she threw the key away in the yard before they arrived.

A frail young man by the name of Archie Henson was doing carpentry work on the property when he was accosted by the British soldiers. The soldiers jeered at him for being so weak-looking. Whether he lashed out at them is uncertain, but the incident resulted in him immediately joining the Patriot cause.

The struggles during the Revolutionary War were tough and complex. They varied from person to person on both sides of the conflict. The lives of so many different people were intertwined in the larger conflict of the war. Not much more is known about any one of these heroes. However, their actions on this day reflect people of honor and spirit.

Freedom Reigns!



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