



On the Warpath to

Cary's Fort

The Battle of Cary's Fort August 15, 1780





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 Preddy'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 Canteley 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, RL 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, RL Bryan Company (pg. 39)



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is a volume of **Historyman Comics**,
Dedicated to revisiting the heroes of the
American Revolution. **Historyman Comics**
presents this volume as one in a series of
books available for your reading pleasure.



It is a solemn occasion for Justice Gaston as the graveside funeral adjourns. He has lost three of his sons at the Battle of Hanging Rock where the Patriots surprised and routed multiple British camps at the outpost just north of Camden. General Sumter and his men, heads bowed, give their respects.

This was a hard day.

Those three men were good people. Brave and true. Their brother, Joseph Gaston, was shot in the head, but still lives. He is being cared for in Charlotte.

We may all follow suit at some point. They were good soldiers. The Gastons have literally given everything they have for the right to call this OUR country. Let's make sure they didn't die in vain.



Back in camp, General Sumter and his colonel look over the map of the territory. But shade is futile in the early afternoon sun. They are hot.

Alright boys. We need to understand who will be with us in the coming weeks. Our General Washington has sent General Gates south. He is coming down from Hillsborough with several thousand soldiers. I am not sure what his goal is but I suspect it is Camden.



Provisions for men and horses will be scarce, so we need to consider options. Tell us your plans.

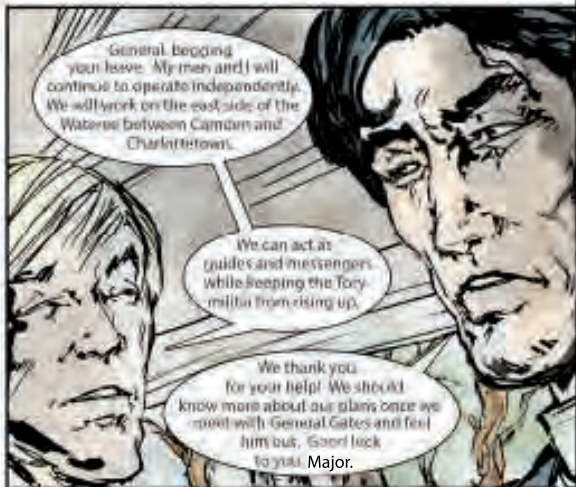
Major Davis?



General, begging your leave. My men and I will continue to operate independently. We will work on the east side of the Wateree between Camden and Charlestown.

We can act as guides and messengers, while keeping the Tory militia from rising up.

We thank you for your help! We should know more about our plans once we meet with General Gates and feel him out. Good luck to you, Major.



General, it has been an honor helping our cause here. But I feel I need to take my men home to home.

We hear that our families are being threatened and this would be a good time to help in that region closer to Ninety Six.



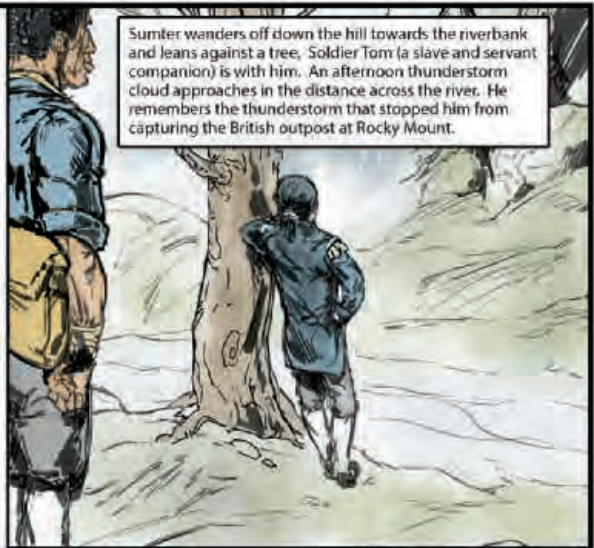
Very well, Colonel Williams. Stay in touch, though. Coordination of effort will help immensely in causing the British to rethink their strategies.

Yes, sir. I believe we may be able to link up with our North Carolina friends. We could make a stand in that area while you are helping out here at Camden.





We need to look to resupply ourselves. Give your men leave as you see fit, but supplies need to be a priority. Whatever comes next, we will need food, ammunition, and good horses.



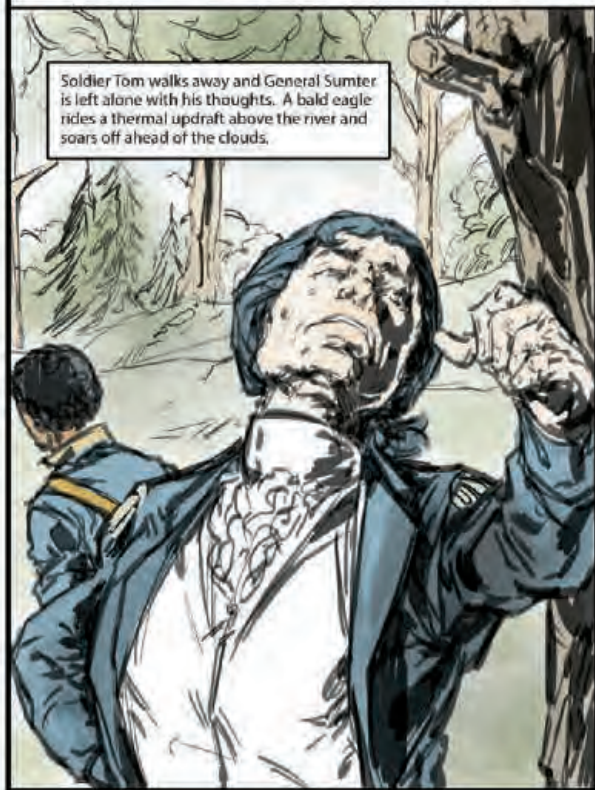
Sumter wanders off down the hill towards the riverbank and leans against a tree. Soldier Tom (a slave and servant companion) is with him. An afternoon thunderstorm cloud approaches in the distance across the river. He remembers the thunderstorm that stopped him from capturing the British outpost at Rocky Mount.



If only I had some cannons.



It certainly would make our time here shorter. The sooner we push these men out of the country, the quicker we get home.



Soldier Tom walks away and General Sumter is left alone with his thoughts. A bald eagle rides a thermal updraft above the river and soars off ahead of the clouds.



General Sumter remains by the river until the rain begins to patter on the water. He then strides toward shelter in the camp.



Men, it's time to seek out General Gates and the Continentals. I would like a handful of you to accompany me to their camp while the rest of you continue to prepare and train the men. I will leave the particulars up to you colonels.



Be on guard for any dangers as we ride. When we get to their camp, remember to conduct yourself with some dignity.

That might be hard for some of you.



We will head out as soon as Joseph Benenhaley fixes my wagon.



You mean Yusuf ben Ali?

Isn't that what I said? Joseph Benenhaley.

No. Yusuf ben Ali.

That's confusing. Can I just call you Joseph from now on?



That's fine by me, General. Thank you for asking.



General Sumter and a party of his soldiers enter the camp of General Gates. They are met by the General Gates' aide-de-camp, Otho Holland Williams and Baron Johann de Kalb.

General Sumter?
I believe you sent me a letter recently about ideas on potential targets?

I did indeed.
I was hoping to retake the crossroads around my trading post on the Santee. We could cut the supply lines from Charleston and isolate Camden in the process.

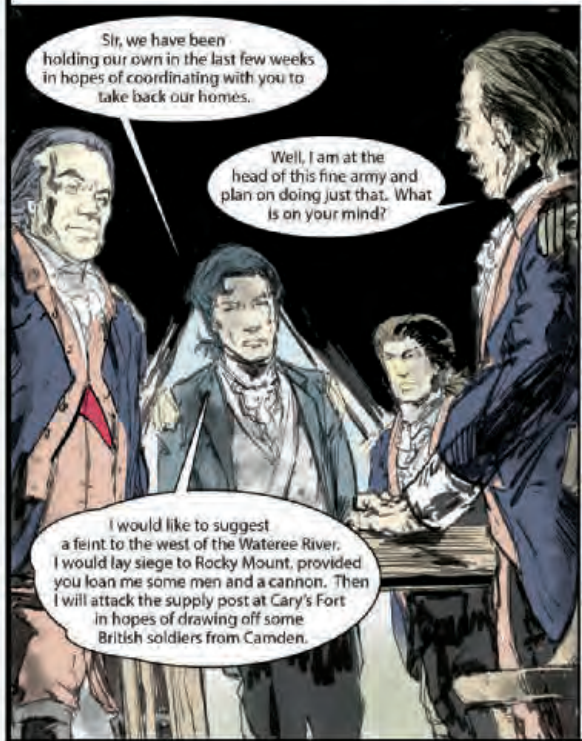


That may be in the works. Come in and meet General Gates.



General Gates, this is General Sumter of South Carolina.

Welcome, my friends. I have heard a lot about you of late.



Sir, we have been holding our own in the last few weeks in hopes of coordinating with you to take back our homes.


Well, I am at the head of this fine army and plan on doing just that. What is on your mind?

I would like to suggest a feint to the west of the Wateree River. I would lay siege to Rocky Mount, provided you loan me some men and a cannon. Then I will attack the supply post at Cary's Fort in hopes of drawing off some British soldiers from Camden.




The cattle and supplies will be a benefit to your men on campaign. We will deliver both Rocky Mount and Cary's Fort and protect your right wing.


You shall have your cannon and I will assign some men to you as well. We are going to get your state back and push these scoundrels into the sea. Let's just make sure we work in unison.



You and your men have been giving the Brits a fit. I commend your work. I have been coordinating with the North Carolina and Virginia troops as we have moved south.




I have a Francis Marion in camp who was with the Continental line at Charleston. He says he was recuperating from an ankle injury when Charleston fell.



He is a shabby fellow and his men are not much to gaze upon. They don't exactly instill confidence, if you know what I mean.

Well, I am sure you could use all the help that comes your way. We will coordinate our efforts to coincide with your movements.



Very good. I am sending Marion down to intercept the British supplies coming from Charleston. He should have no trouble keeping the boats out of the hands of our enemies. If he could raise a force of men, he could cause some real havoc.



Well, General, here they are. We will load you up some powder and shot to help you along. I will draw up the orders for the various detachments that we will be assigning to you. Godspeed.



Thank you, General. We will cover your right flank across the river and intercept any British reinforcements coming to Camden.



Colonel Winn, tell Joseph to bring up that wagon and make sure these cannons come back with us.

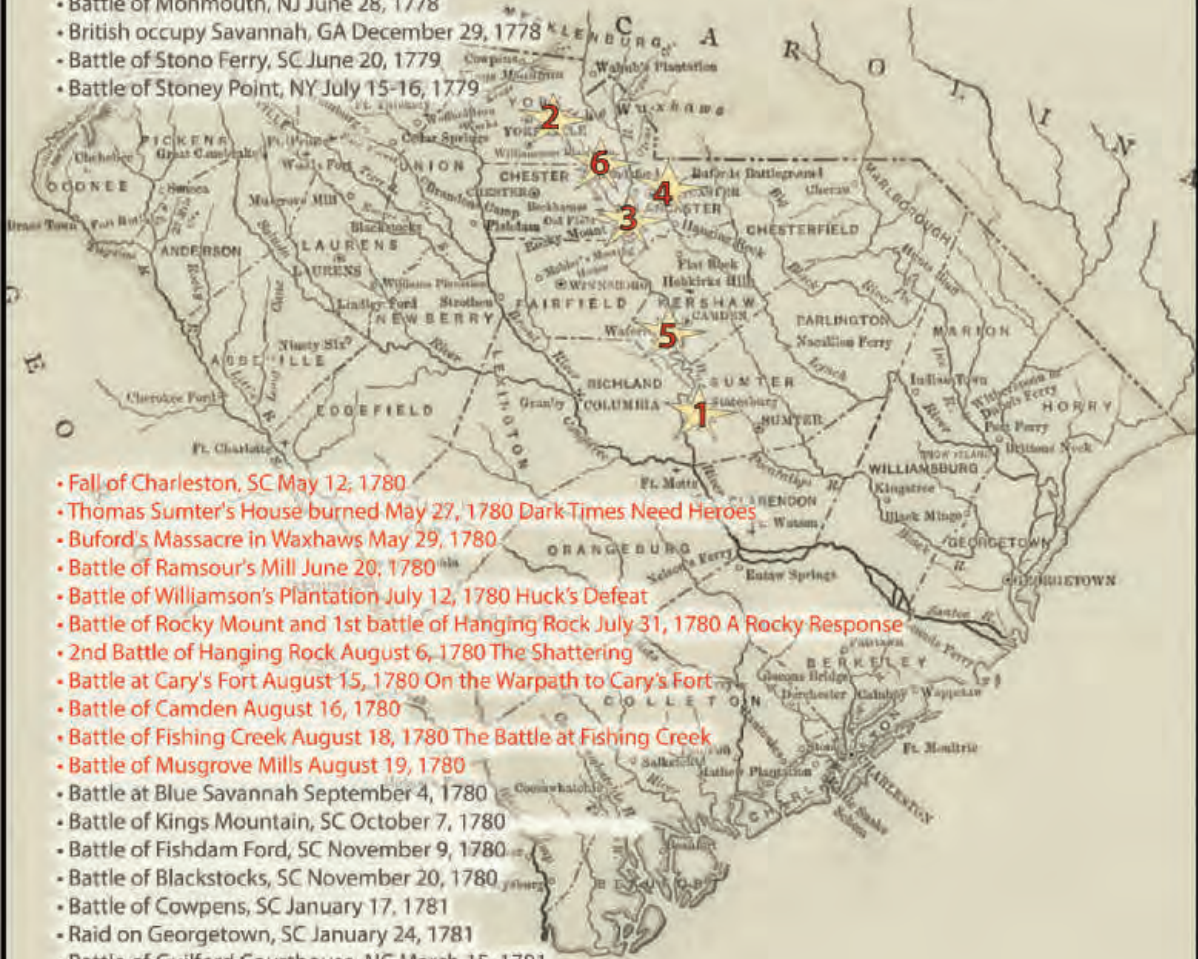


General Sumter, you have been doing well the past few weeks. The British have been pulling in their outposts. We think we can lure them out of their fortifications as we get closer.

Your work on the flank might be the spark that starts this fire.

- 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 Stony 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, District Eastward of the Wateree River, South Carolina (Stateburg and Eutaw Springs), Husband, Father, Businessman, Planter, Soldier, Politician

Thomas Taylor, 37, Richland County, South Carolina, Husband, Father, Planter, Soldier, Politician



Horatio Gates, 53, Berkeley County, Virginia, Planter, Soldier.

Patriots

The Battle at Cary's Fort



Richard Winn, 30, Fairfield County, South Carolina, Husband, Father, Planter, Soldier

SC Loyalist Lt. Colonel James Cary, unk.

(died in 1794), Camden, South Carolina, Husband, Soldier



British

General Cornwallis, 41,

Suffolk County, England,

Widower, Father, Soldier



Sumter arrives back in camp with the cannons in tow.



We have just returned from Gates' camp. His Continentals are here. We saw Marylanders and men from Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina. It is a large army and they mean business.

We will be on the warpath soon. We will have more friends with us. And now we have some artillery!



Prepare for a long march. We aim to push these lobsterbacks into the Atlantic!

Huzzah! Huzzah!



Sumter, Winn, Bratton, and Hill rest near the river. The scene is peaceful and belies the dangerous events that have swirled around this band of men over the last few weeks.

Colonel Bratton, of the four of us, you are the only one who has not had his property burned.

Only because we got there in the nick of time.

Yep, that Captain Huck torched my iron works. It was a providential sign that we stopped him when we did.

This isn't over by a long shot. The Brits are still unloading supplies in Charleston. Now that they have a foothold, they won't easily let go.

That is true. In my estimation though, we need to keep them off balance and always guessing. Hit them on the flanks while they are concentrated on a bigger army in their front. They will react like a turtle and crawl back inside their shell.

Except that the turtle has bayonets, cavalry,...

...and cannon.

And more turtles.

Well, I didn't say it was going to be easy.





General, we are about ready. I figure we can move out within a few hours.

That's good. Let's have a war council and discuss our plans. We have a lot of men and moving them correctly will be paramount.



Men, we have a plan that will take some coordination. We are going to attack Rocky Mount and then push on to Cary's Fort and attack their supply depot. We now have artillery and feel we have the odds in our favor.

We will need to send troops to the various river crossings both above and below Camden.



We also need to watch for reinforcements from Fort Ninety Six.

We must make some decisions in conjunction with General Gates. This is not a hit-and-run situation. These are large armies acting in unison, so prepare for a long ride.



Colonel Winn, before we cross the river, I want you to make sure we can pull those cannons up to Rocky Mount in quick order. I want to have another go at that fortification.

But make sure we have protection for the cannons. We can't have them taken during our mission.

Yes, sir.



Really? Are you sure?

Sir, the post at Rocky Mount has been abandoned.



Yes sir. I think Turnbull and Rawdon have pulled their outposts into Camden. Probably because Gates is in the neighborhood.

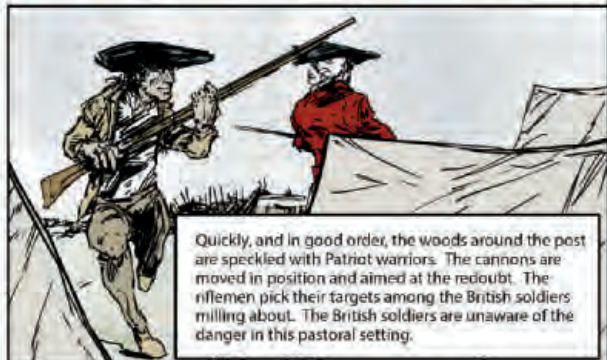


Very well, Winn. pass the word. Move past cautiously, but head towards Cary's depot. Assign men to take every river crossing between here and Cary's. Also go ahead and assign units to cover the crossings below Cary's once we arrive. And watch the road from Ninety Six.

The long column of militia and Continental soldiers moves down the road towards their various assignments. The force contains approximately 700 war fighters in all. The two brass cannons, limbered to the back of wagons, are escorted by their crews. Anticipation grows as they get closer to their target.



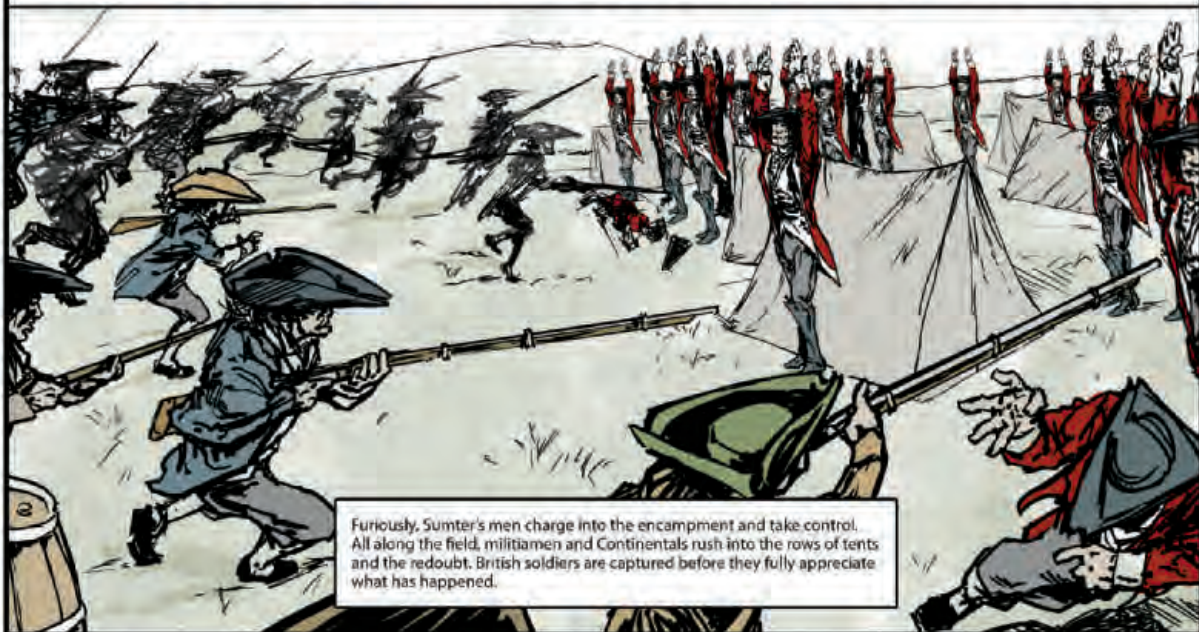
Cary's Fort is an encampment in an open field above the western bank of the Wateree River.



Quickly, and in good order, the woods around the post are speckled with Patriot warriors. The cannons are moved in position and aimed at the redoubt. The riflemen pick their targets among the British soldiers milling about. The British soldiers are unaware of the danger in this pastoral setting.



Fire!



Furiously, Sumter's men charge into the encampment and take control. All along the field, militiamen and Continentals rush into the rows of tents and the redoubt. British soldiers are captured before they fully appreciate what has happened.



As the road opens up before them, they see that Colonel Thomas Taylor has expertly ambushed the convoy and taken them all as prisoners. Patriot militia have stopped and surrounded a large line of wagons. British soldiers are being relieved of their weapons as Sumter and his relief column ride up.

I figured I would go ahead and capture them and save you any trouble, sir.

That was kind of you, Colonel. Did you get anything good in this convoy?

I am afraid we have mostly sick men in the wagons being escorted by sick men on foot. But we do have some rum, clothing, and firearms.

Every little bit helps.

General, this is a lot to take with us.

I know, but we are cooperating with Gates and we need to know his plans.



Sir, you can see our guys down by the river taking some fire. We have returned fire sporadically, and have kept them from making a serious effort. But in time, they will try and make their way across.



I have ordered Colonel Taylor to begin moving north with his prisoners and wagons. You two pass the word to do the same.

Winn, you must cover our rear and make sure the river crossings above and below us are defended. Pull the river guards off in good order. Don't leave them stranded.



You are to backtrack from where we came and find General Gates. Do not get caught, ride fast, and stay safe. Give him this report and tell him we have captured 40 wagons, over 70 British prisoners, and numerous cattle. I await further orders from him.

Yes, sir.



Colonel Bratton, we have been fortunate. I will take the victories like this any day. But this is a lot of baggage, prisoners, and cattle.

Well, if this is any indication of how Gates will handle his campaign, we will be fine.

I hope so, Colonel. I really hope so. We will be sitting ducks if it goes bad.



Footsteps of Heroes: The Catawba Nation

The Catawba Nation held sway over lands that followed the Catawba River valley from the Midlands of South Carolina to the headwaters in the Blue Ridge Mountains. During the Revolutionary era, they were centrally located in the Piedmont region near present-day Fort Mill, South Carolina.



They sent emissaries to Charlestown when word got out that South Carolina might fight against Great Britain. The messengers brought their news back and a great council was called to determine how the tribe would align themselves in the coming conflict. Neutrality was not an option for it would only mean that their people would be swallowed up in the fighting. Luckily for the Patriots, the Catawba chose to side with the colonists against the English. A consideration may have also been that the English were already making alliances with the sworn enemies of the Catawba, the Cherokee.

The Catawba, under the reign of Chief Sally Haigler New River (and her husband General New River), provided General Thomas Sumter's army a safe-haven on their lands. Because of their help and support, Sumter was able to mount a counteroffensive against the British.

The Catawba warriors were fierce in battle. They were feared by neighboring tribes and maintained their distinct status through politics and warfare. The Catawba fought at the Battle of Sullivan's Island in 1776 and were instrumental in keeping the Redcoats from getting off the boats. They were at the Battle of Stono Ferry in June of 1779. At the Battles of Hanging Rock in the summer of 1780, they fought with General Sumter and William Davie. They would continue to be allies of the American cause through the end of the war.

Disease and wars wreaked havoc on the population of the Catawba. At the outset of the War of Independence, the once great nation could only boast a population of a few hundred between a handful of towns along the Catawba River basin. After the war, many would go west or seek adventures elsewhere. Remnants of the Nation participated in Wild West shows in Ireland and England as time rolled by.

The Catawba people are still a recognized tribe of proud Native Americans. They are leaders in the communities along their ancestral homelands. They have a proud heritage of faithful service in the cause of freedom. Freedom Reigns!

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CARY'S FORT

