



South Carolina Biography: Revolutionary Women

Laodicea “Dicey” Langston Springfield

Laodicea “Dicey” Langston Springfield: South Carolina Revolutionary War Heroine

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INTRODUCTION

No other Revolutionary era South Carolina woman enjoys more contemporary recognition and fame than Dicey Langston. Laodicea “Dicey” Langston Springfield was born May 14, 1766 in the Ninety Six District, in what later became Laurens County.¹ She married Thomas Springfield when they were both age sixteen. They started a large family and moved to neighboring Greenville County, a region of the state which was in Cherokee Territory until it was ceded to South Carolina in 1777 and opened to White settlers after the Revolutionary War. Though Dicey never lived outside those two South Carolina backcountry locales, people from coast to coast revere Dicey almost 250 years following her acts of Revolutionary War valor.



Fig. 1 Map of South Carolina as divided into Judicial Districts in 1769. The modern Interstate highways are add to help orient the map. Modern Laurens County, the home of the Solomon Langston family, is also shown. Map by George Stoll.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

After Sir Henry Clinton forced the capitulation of Charlestown in May 1780, he sought to retake the entire break-away colony for King George III. Clinton dispersed troops to fortified posts located far from the coast. Among the deployments were hundreds of men quartered at the Town of Ninety Six, the center of commerce and civil seat of the Ninety Six District, and the chief way post along the road from Charlestown to Cherokee territory. The Cherokee were allies of the British. From their fort at Ninety Six, British regulars and Loyalist militiamen attempted without success to establish control over several thousand sparsely populated square miles between the Broad and Savannah rivers. (See Figure 2.) The tensions and violence between independence-minded residents and Loyalist residents, mostly dormant since December 1775 when the rebels took control of the state, burst into a vicious civil war. This war-within-a-war pitted Whig (Patriot) against Tory (Loyalist), neighbor against neighbor, and family against family.

Dacey's father and brothers aligned themselves with the independence movement but were outnumbered in the Ninety Six District where most residents remained loyal to the King.² Less than fifteen miles from the Langston homestead was the home of Col. Thomas Fletchall who commanded the Ninety Six District Tory militia of 2,000 men.³

Despite devastating losses at the Waxhaws, Camden, and Fishing Creek in the summer of 1780, the Whigs began to take the upper hand in the South Carolina backcountry. Assisted by partners and refugees from other states

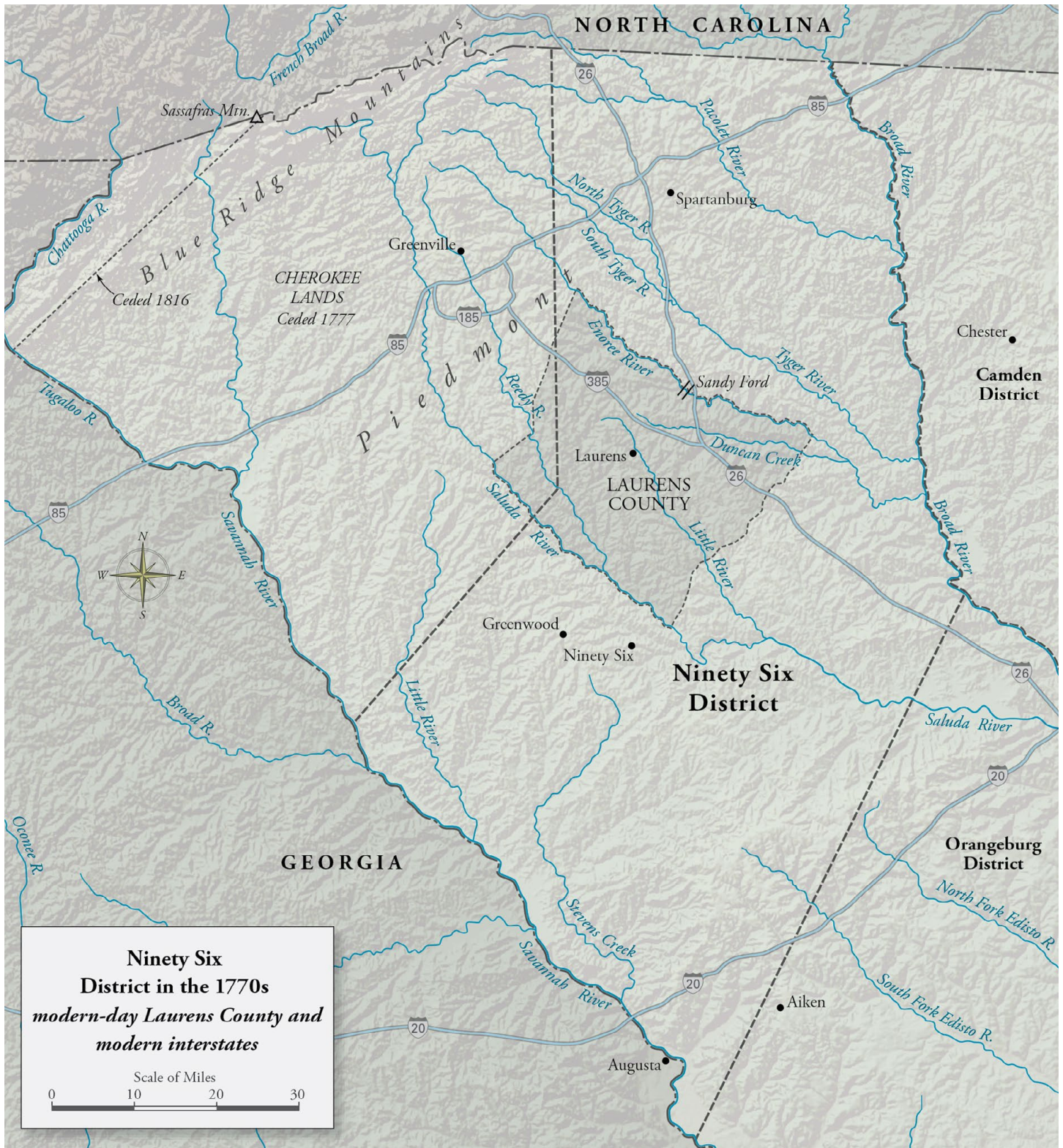


Fig. 2 Map of western South Carolina showing modern Laurens County and Sandy Ford of the Enoree River where Dicey is thought to have crossed during one of her heroic night trips with intelligence for her brother serving in the local Patriot militia. Map by George Stoll.

they defeated British and Loyalist forces at Musgrove’s Mill, Kings Mountain, Blackstock’s Plantation, and Cowpens, and many lesser-known actions. Fewer and fewer of the King’s uniformed soldiers were seen outside the relative safety of Ninety Six.

In July 1781, all King George’s soldiers stationed at Ninety Six, as well as numerous backcountry Tory families and enslaved persons, departed for the safety of Charlestown. The King’s men had failed to establish control, order, or peace. Despite the departure of many Loyalists, however, bloodshed between Loyalists and Patriots continued until early 1782 when General Andrew Pickens established authority in the backcountry for the nascent State of South Carolina.

Events between the fall of Charlestown in May 1780 and the return of peace in 1782 set the stage for a young Patriot woman to move about the countryside, spy on the enemy, and save the lives of other Patriots and her family members.

DICEY TODAY

Appreciation for Dickey Langston has reached an apex today. Some examples follow:

- “Daring Dickey” serves as the protagonist of several contemporary books for children and youth. (See Appendix A.)
- The South Carolina Department of Education has produced video and written curriculum about Dickey for students in the 3rd through 8th grades.⁴
- Songs, poems, and dramas presented from coast to coast celebrate the deeds of Daring Dickey.
- A descendant maintains a website for Dickey’s legacy.⁵

- The mother of at least 15 children, she has hundreds of descendants who proudly claim her as their forebear.
- The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) has granted membership to 129 direct descendants of Dicey.⁶
- In celebration of the country's 200th birthday, the NSDAR released the Great Women of the American Revolution series of commemorative medals. Dicey has a medal in the series.⁷

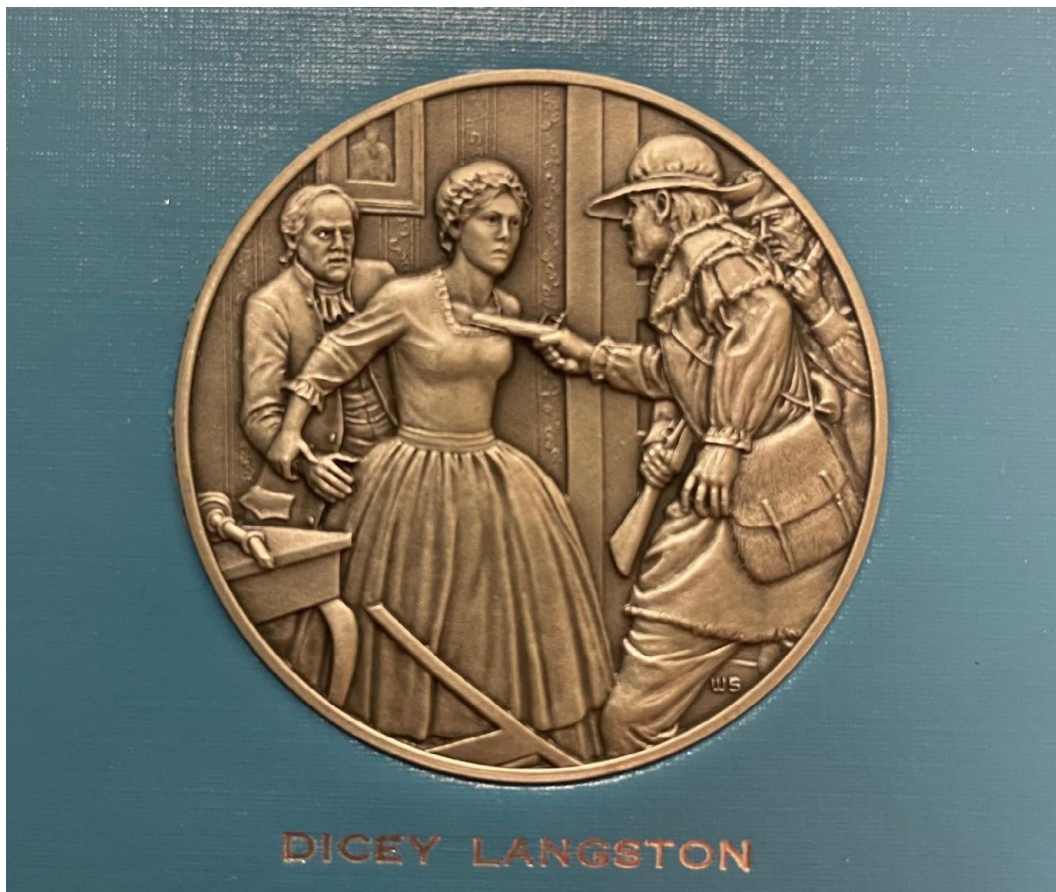


Fig. 3 DAR medal honoring Dicey. (Photo courtesy of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.)

- A South Carolina youth chapter of the DAR carries Dicey's name.⁸
- With sponsorship from its Alabama Society, the NSDAR has planted a tree in Dicey's honor on the Pathways of the Patriots in Pennsylvania.⁹
- Dicey highlights an exhibit in the Visitors' Center of the Musgrove Mill Historic Site located 10 miles from her childhood home.



Fig. 4 Langston Charter Middle School, Greenville, SC, opened in 2005.



Fig. 5 A monument near Travelers Rest, SC, honoring Dickey. (Photos by author.)

- Dickey was inducted into the Greenville County Women's Hall of Fame in 2001.¹⁰
- In 2005 the Greenville County School District named Langston Charter Middle School in her honor.¹¹



Fig. 6 The Town of Travelers Rest plans to erect a statue of Dickey. Nick Ring will be the sculptor. (Photo of model of the statue by Nick Ring.)

- Near Travelers Rest stands a monument to Dickey erected by the DAR in 1933. It is on private property which is accessible to the public.¹²
- Her grave is located on private property in Travelers Rest.
- The Town of Travelers Rest is raising funds to honor Dickey with a sculpture.¹³

THE QUESTION OF FOLKLORE AND VERACITY

Dicey, her family, and where and when she lived are well-documented historical facts. However, no primary sources corroborate the veracity of Dicey's reputed exploits. This writer has failed to find anything written about her which predates her 1837 *Greenville Mountaineer* obituary.¹⁴ The researchers who labored from the 1950s until the 2001 publication of Ellis and Pollard's two-volume work on the Springfield family and its genealogy also failed to find anything written about Dicey before her death.¹⁵ The absence of proof leads some observers to conclude that her exploits are merely folklore.¹⁶

Elizabeth Ellet's groundbreaking *Women of the American Revolution*, published in 1848, is the first printed account of Dicey's Revolutionary War exploits.¹⁷ Soon after 1848, numerous books and articles replicated and/or paraphrased Ellet's stories about Dicey. Certainly, numerous children, grandchildren and others who knew Dicey learned what was being told about Dicey. It appears that none of them challenged the accuracy of Ellet's accounts. One can look to Ellet's stories as the template upon which all other accounts were based.

Again, there is no firm proof that Ellet's stories are dependable. This article seeks to put Dicey into her family and historical settings and to prove that Dicey could have engaged in one or more of the intrepid actions for which she is known.

DICEY'S LIFE IN SUMMARY

Dicey's father, Solomon Langston, Sr. (1732–1825), was born in Isle of Wight County in southeastern Virginia. Dicey's mother, Sarah Ann Bennett (ca. 1735–1810) was born in North Carolina.¹⁸ Solomon and Sarah married in 1753 in Granville County, NC. The couple emigrated to Laurens County, SC, probably between 1763 and 1765, after the close of the Cherokee War.¹⁹

Given the roads and means of transportation available to them, Solomon, Sarah, and their children probably carried their possessions in a covered wagon and took livestock with them. They traveled at least 200 miles.²⁰ Nothing is known of the land grant which Solomon received, but at that time the Royal Colony of South Carolina gave each man a hundred acres plus fifty acres for his wife, each child, and each indentured servant and slave.²¹

The Langstons settled in an uninhabited wilderness between the Enoree River (the boundary between Spartanburg and Laurens counties) and Duncan's Creek. The Cherokee and Catawba tribes shared this part of the backcountry as a mutual hunting ground, so no Native Americans lived near the Langston farm. The family most certainly had to live in their wagon until Solomon could build a cabin.²²

Dicey had as many as eleven siblings.²³ Among them were three older brothers, James, Jacob, and John, who served in Col. Benjamin Roebuck's Battalion of the 1st Spartan Militia. The brothers' service began following the fall of Charlestown. Their father, Lieutenant Solomon Langston,



Fig. 7 Modern marker at entrance to Langston family cemetery honoring Dickey's father Solomon. (Photo by Kay Langston Wood.)



Fig. 8 The Langston family cemetery has fallen into disrepair. (Photo by author.)

Sr. also served in the War, but only in 1779. He served as a wagon driver in the Spartan Regiment when it took part in the Stono Expedition near Charlestown.²⁴

On January 9, 1783, less than a year after backcountry hostilities ceased and while both were sixteen, Dicey married Thomas Springfield (1766–1845.) For a number of years, they remained in Laurens County.²⁵

In 1793, Thomas bought 150 acres west of the Reedy River in the town of Greenville. In 1796, he bought another 300 acres in the same vicinity. It seems likely that the Springfield family resided on that land, but there is no proof of such. However, in 1799, Thomas purchased 200 acres in northern Greenville County. This land lay south of the Enoree River near Beaverdam (Beaver) Creek, less than five miles northeast of the center of Travelers Rest. Presumably, the family moved to that location the same year.

Thomas prospered as a farmer. He engaged in numerous sales of hundreds of acres. Thomas was also a founding Trustee of the nearby Jackson Grove United Methodist Church. At his death he owned several hundred acres, furniture, farm animals and implements, and six enslaved persons.²⁶

Sources differ concerning how many children Dicey bore. Without providing names, her obituary states twenty-two. Marnie Pehrson Kuhns names nineteen.²⁷ Fowler lists the names of eighteen who survived infancy.²⁸ Ellis and Pollard name fifteen.²⁹ It is safe to assume that at least fifteen of her children reached maturity.

The land near Travelers Rest which Thomas bought in 1799 was the couple's home until their deaths. Dicey died in 1837 at age seventy-one. Thomas died in March 1845 at age seventy-eight.



Fig. 9 Grave of Dicey Langston Springfield, Springfield-Langston Family Cemetery, near Travelers Rest, SC. (Photo by author.)

ELIZABETH ELLET AND THE SEVEN STORIES

As far as can be determined, Dicey's name was published in only three documents before 1849. First was her 1837 obituary in the *Greenville Mountaineer*. (See Appendix B.) Next was the 1848 release of Elizabeth Ellet's *Women of the American Revolution*. (See Appendix C.) Then on

December 15, 1848, the *Mountaineer* ran an article “Heroic Women of the American Revolution: Dicey Langston.” Like Ellet’s book, the article relates seven Dicey Langston feats of bravery during the American Revolution.³⁰

Anyone interested in the roles which women played during the American Revolution is greatly indebted to a native of Upstate New York, Elizabeth Ellet (1818–1877.) She was the first person to research and write at length about women’s lives during the Revolution. Her three-volume *Women of the American Revolution* was published between 1848 and 1850. Historian Carol Berkin writes that Ellet’s book “was based on letters, diaries, and recollections passed down from mother to daughter to granddaughters.”³¹

It becomes evident that only one person supplied Ellet with information about Dicey. In 1836, Ellet and her husband, chemist William Henry Ellet (1806–1859), moved from New York City to Columbia, South Carolina, where William taught chemistry at South Carolina College.³² Elizabeth Ellet credits Benjamin Franklin Perry (1805–1886) for relating to her Dicey’s stories and states that Perry once interviewed a descendant of Dicey.³³ Perry was editor of the *Mountaineer* from 1830 until 1833 and resided in Greenville all his adult life. He served in the South Carolina General Assembly during the years Ellet lived in Columbia, so Ellet and Perry probably met in Columbia.³⁴

In a time when men held unquestioned authority over women, Ellet’s book casts an alternative vision for women. She accentuates women’s participation in the war and how they shared in its privations. Ellet emphasizes female courage and independence and furnishes several accounts of women who fought under military command. Dicey’s independence, assertiveness, and intrepidity, moderated by devotion to

family, nation, and civic life, fit smoothly into the new roles for womankind which Ellet promotes. Carol Berkin's summary of Ellet's book applies aptly to Dicey. *Women of the American Revolution* "examines a war that continually blurred the lines between battlefield and home front, and it views that war through the eyes of the women who found themselves, willingly or unwillingly, at the center of a long and violent conflict."³⁵

Ellet presents seven distinct accounts of the young South Carolinian's heroism. Each story stands on its own with a beginning, body, and conclusion. Ellet does not connect them sequentially. Some of the writers who based their accounts upon Ellet's book provide embellishments. For example, in at least one later account Dicey marries the unnamed man who retrieves her brother's rifle.³⁶

Despite their ornamentation, the accounts which appeared following publication of *Women in the American Revolution* do not differ significantly from Ellet's original seven. Basic plot lines, geographical and historical settings, and characters are identical. Ellet is the source for all subsequent tales about Dicey Langston Springfield.

APPENDIX B PRESENTS ELLET'S COMPLETE CHAPTER ON DICEY.

In abbreviated form and in Ellet's order the stories follow:

- 1) Traveling alone at night, Dicey warns her brother James and other patriot militiamen of an impending attack by Loyalists.
- 2) Dicey saves her father's life by standing between him and Loyalist assailants.
- 3) Dicey helps both Tories and Patriots to escape harm.

- 4) Threatened at gunpoint, Dacey refuses to reveal information about Patriots.
- 5) Dacey outwits a Tory officer as he steals booty from the Langston home.
- 6) Tory militiamen attempt to enter the Langston home. Dacey refuses to open the door.
- 7) Dacey has secreted away a rifle belonging to her brother James. When other patriot militiamen arrive to retrieve the rifle, she threatens to shoot them if they do not speak the password her brother had given to her.

HISTORICAL PARAMETERS

Ellet does not supply the reader with any specific dates, yet she places Dacey's heroism within historical parameters. Fighting between Whigs and Tories continued in the backcountry after the Snow Campaign of December 1775. But Whigs suppressed the Tories, and the region enjoyed a modicum of peace until the surrender of Charlestown in May 1780. The city's fall initiated a period of remarkable violence, varying from large battles to small skirmishes. The cessation of backcountry hostilities in early 1782 delimits the later historical point for Dacey's exploits. Dacey turned fourteen on May 14, 1780, and turned sixteen as backcountry fighting came to an end.³⁷

DICEY'S ROLE AS THE FAMILY'S DEFENDER

Who resided in the Langston home and needed Dacey's safeguarding during the latter years of the Revolutionary War? Dacey's mother Sarah lived until 1810. Ellet does not mention Sarah. One wonders what role she played in the Langston household during the war. Dacey's father Solomon Sr., who died in 1825, plays a part in several of Ellet's accounts. Dacey had younger siblings. Her older siblings, James, Joseph, and John were fighting under South

Carolina militia Colonel Benjamin Roebuck. They returned home at their peril as the family's Patriot devotion was probably widely known.

Ellet keeps her focus on Dicey and the young woman's loyalty to family and nation. It appears that Ellet knew nothing else about the family.

Ellet tells her readers that Solomon Sr. is both elderly and infirm. Several of Ellet's story lines depend heavily on Solomon Sr.'s disability. With no capable male in the home, everyone depends solely upon Dicey's protection.

However, Ellet and most, if not all, authors who follow Ellet make a mistake describing Solomon as "incapacitated by age." He was born March 1, 1732, turned forty-eight in 1780, and died in 1825 at age ninety-three. Solomon served in the Spartan Militia Regiment in 1779 but departed service after only a few months. Solomon was no doubt in a weakened condition. It appears that wartime injuries or disease forced him into a period of dependency.

DICEY THE SPY

With no capable men in the home, Dicey had responsibilities which necessitated travel around the countryside. This gave her cover to learn the movements and plans of the Loyalists. She then dispensed her learnings to Patriots, such as her brother James. Various accounts which followed Ellet's work refer to Dicey as a spy. There is no historical evidence that Dicey served under military command. Yet, spy seems a justifiable descriptor for someone who risked her life to gain tactical information about the enemy and share it with friendly forces.

STORY 1: THE NIGHTTIME JOURNEY

Ellet's first account stands out as the most riveting and detailed of the seven.³⁸ More so than any of the other six, geography, names of persons and places, and the limited time frame of her journey lend themselves to evaluation. (See Figure 10.) The young woman learns that Tories plan to ambush her brother James and other patriot militiamen the following day. Dacey stealthily leaves home after nightfall and travels alone, facing significant dangers. She might drown attempting to cross and re-cross a river. Dacey might become lost or injured in the dark. She might be captured and severely punished or killed. But the stalwart young woman locates her brother. The patriots-in-arms escape mortal danger, and Dacey returns home, undiscovered, before dawn. Only later, once hostilities ceased, could James or Dacey Langston or other patriots speak of what she had done.

With nothing to prove the account's veracity, the question of feasibility arises. In consideration should be Dacey's capabilities, hindrances such as streams, darkness, and terrain, and local paths and roads. Her capacity is undeniable. Parents in the South Carolina backcountry raised hardy children, who were comfortable around livestock and horses and able to walk many miles.

Solomon and Sarah Bennett Langton raised their family somewhere between Duncan's Creek and the Enoree River.³⁹ Duncan's Creek rises several miles north of Laurens and flows eastward across the county running roughly parallel to the Enoree River. Three to five miles separates the streams.



Fig. 10 Map of the eastern portion of modern Laurens County showing the location of the modern Langston Baptist Church and graveyard, the colonial and extant Duncan Creek Presbyterian Church and graveyard, the area of Dicey Langston's home, and possible locations of "Little Eden". Map by George Stoll.

No one seems to know the exact location of the Langston homestead.⁴⁰ However, the sites of the original Langston Baptist Church and Langston family cemetery are known and furnish an approximate location for the homesite. (See Figure 11.)

The Langston Baptist Church was organized in 1773 and built on land donated by Solomon Langston. The church's property was used as a muster ground.⁴¹

In the nineteenth century the original Langston Baptist structure was destroyed by fire. The congregation built a new structure half a mile south of the original site.⁴² Solomon Langston and other family members are buried in the Langston Family Cemetery which lies about two hundred yards from the original church. The sites of the original church and the family cemetery are adjacent to the intersection of two paths or roads.⁴³

The family cemetery and related sites lie at the headwaters of Cox's Creek which flows northward into the Enoree River.⁴⁴ Because farm families needed easy access to water, one can surmise that the Langston homestead was located near the family cemetery, the original church, the trails, and Cox's Creek.

Dacey could have easily walked to the Enoree. If her home were located within a few hundred yards of the family cemetery, she would have walked about 2.5 miles. If her home were located along the banks of Duncan's Creek, she would have walked four miles.⁴⁵ Her most likely crossing point was a wide, shallow section of the Enoree known as Sandy Ford, easily seen today from the SC Highway 49 bridge over the Enoree.⁴⁶

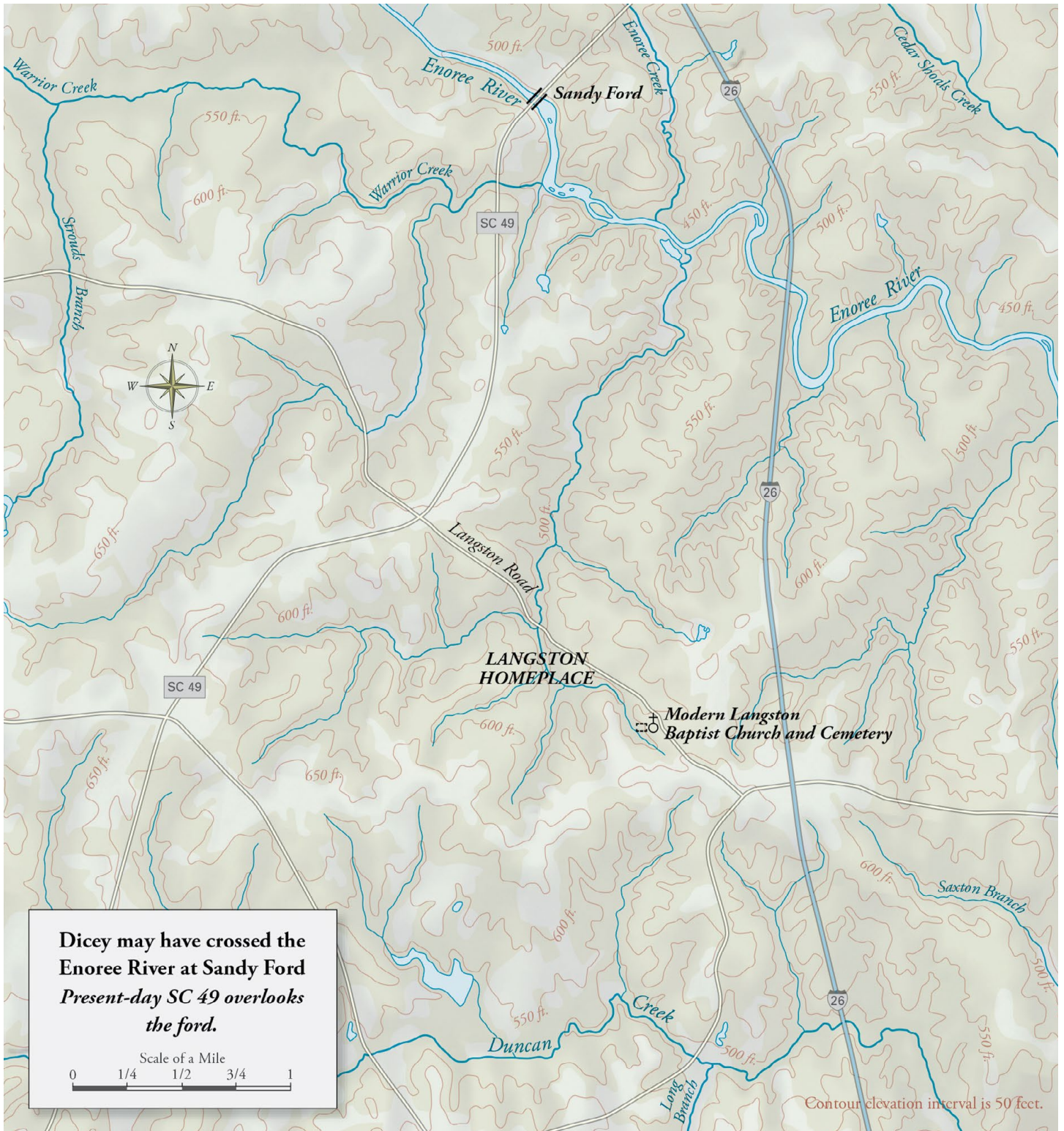


Fig. 11 Map of the eastern portion of modern Laurens County showing the location of the modern Langston Baptist Church and graveyard, the Langston home place on Langston Road, and Sandy Ford. Map by George Stoll.



Fig. 12 Sandy Ford, located at the SC 49 bridge over the Enoree, may have been Dicey's crossing point for her nighttime journey. (Photo by author.)

Elizabeth Ellet states that Dicey found her brother James at the Elder Settlement. Later authors state she located him at Little Eden.⁴⁷ Neither location appears on colonial era or later maps.

Ellet confuses the reader with an erroneous reference to the Tyger River. The Enoree and the Tyger rivers rise in Greenville County, and the Tyger lies north of the Enoree. The rivers flow roughly parallel to one another through Spartanburg County five to eight miles apart. Ellet relates that Dicey crossed the Tyger. Ellet does not mention the Enoree, though the young woman had to traverse it before arriving at the Tyger. Because walking to the Tyger would have added many more miles to the trip, she could have only gone over the Enoree.

Historian John B. O. Landrum writes that several Elder households were among the initial white settlers of Spartanburg County.⁴⁸ James M. Richardson supplies military service records of several Elders who served under Col. Roebuck.⁴⁹ J. D. Lewis lists two Elders who were captains in Roebuck's Battalion.⁵⁰ Additionally, the 1790 census⁵¹ lists at least eight Spartanburg County householders named Elder.⁵²

Little Eden is a sensible name for a settlement located north of the Enoree and south of the Tyger. Centuries-old tradition holds that the Garden of Eden lay in Mesopotamia between the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* rivers. The new settlers in what is now southern Spartanburg County found themselves living on rich land between the *Tyger* and *Enoree* rivers.⁵³

Not knowing exactly where Dicey found her brother but knowing where her journey began, one can deduce a round trip of 6 to 15 miles. Whatever the nature of Dicey's destination—a cluster of farms, a single farm, or a temporary shelter—if it lay between the two rivers, Dicey, walking at 2 to 4 miles per hour, could have journeyed to the Enoree, successfully navigated the current, found and warned her brother, crossed the river again, and returned home before daybreak.

In some versions of the first narrative, including Ellet's, Dicey cooks hoe cakes for the hungry militiamen before returning home. The adventure, including preparation of a simple, portable breakfast, though not easy, is entirely credible. Ellet's first story about Dicey bears many marks of historicity. (See Figure 12.)



Fig. 13 Miss Langston shielding her father. Alfred Jones, 1819–1900, engraver. Tompkins Harrison Matteson, 1813–1884, artist. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

STORY TWO: DICEY SAVES HER FATHER'S LIFE

Ellet's second account depicts Dickey saving her father's life by offering her own. Loyalists confront Dickey's father. One of them points his pistol at "the feeble old man." Might Loyalists have sought to kill Solomon Langston? Yes, indeed. Both sides in the war in the backcountry carried out acts of vengeance. Many contemporaneous accounts tell of thefts of livestock, destruction of homes and barns, and cold-blooded murder. In the latter stages of the American Revolution in South Carolina, all men, wherever they resided and whatever their state of health, were at risk of being killed. Women were at risk, too, but not nearly so much as men. It is conceivable that a young backcountry woman could have saved her father's life by standing before an enemy pistol or musket.

In her first two Dicey narratives Ellet identifies the enemy as “scout” or “Bloody Scout.” The words probably originated in Ellet’s time, not during the Revolutionary War, to signify Tory violence. “Raid,” “ambush,” and “ambuscade” suffice as synonyms.⁵⁴ Some authors add William “Bloody Bill” Cunningham to their versions of Ellet’s accounts.⁵⁵ In the closing days of the Revolutionary War no one committed more murders in the Carolina backcountry than Cunningham. Cunningham’s appearance adds drama to the second story.

One should not equate scout, raids, or raiders solely with Cunningham. Tories and Patriots alike carried out many attacks against civilians following the surrender of Charlestown. Cunningham’s most infamous deeds took place in November and December 1781. On his horrific November trip through Laurens County and across the Enoree, Cunningham probably rode within a few miles of the Langston farm.⁵⁶ However, to avoid capture, Cunningham and his raiders moved quickly from one settlement or farm to another, targeting certain people for death. It is doubtful he ever met Dicey.⁵⁷

STORY THREE: DICEY SAVES BOTH PATRIOTS AND TORIES

As Ellet’s third account commences Dicey learns that Patriots are planning to steal horses from a Tory neighbor. She and her father consider the man to be a “peaceable citizen,” so she delivers a covert warning to the would-be victim. Dicey subsequently learns that the same Tory is preparing to ambush the Patriots. The “generous girl” warns the Patriot group of the impending danger. Ellet closes by ensuring that the reader understands that Dicey “thus saved an enemy’s property, and the lives of her friends.”

In the other six accounts, Ellet presents Dickey first and foremost as a brave person. However, this third account emphasizes that Dickey is just and principled. Dickey desires that good actions (the peaceable nature she perceives in her neighbor) be rewarded and evil actions (stealing horses) be subverted.

Dickey learns that her neighbor, once made aware of the Patriots' plans, is preparing to surprise and capture the Patriots. This plot element appears to be contrived. Ellet seems overly determined for her reader to perceive Dickey's irenic nature and to emulate the heroine. The third account bears many traits of a morality tale designed for the young. One should question its historicity.

STORY FOUR: DICEY THREATENED AT GUNPOINT

The fourth account begins with a Tory officer demanding that Dickey tell him the locations of Patriot forces. She refuses to do so, is nearly killed, and is saved by another Tory. The narrative is believable. Loyalists undoubtedly sought to determine the whereabouts of the Langston brothers.

However, this account, like the other six, shows signs of embellishment. For example, Dickey removes a "long handkerchief" from her "neck and bosom" to present the Tory gunman an easy target. Ellet chronicles Dickey's daring response and pointed words to emphasize her gender, courage, and fiery confidence. The quick action of a more compassionate Tory adds additional dramatic flair. Could such a scene have occurred as a young female Patriot moved about the countryside and concealed her real motives? Indeed, and possibly more than once. As with the other six accounts, modern readers are free to enjoy Ellet's added flourishes.



Fig 14 Benson J. Lossing, *Men and Women of the Revolution: A Pilgrimage* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1889), 102.

STORY FIVE: DICEY OUTWITS A NOTED TORY

Like several other of Ellet's Dickey Langston accounts, the fifth assumes a dearth of able-bodied men available to defend the home. Dickey is once again dauntless, and she does not cower as Tories plunder her home. Instead, she confronts them. Ellet emphasizes a commendable trait of Dickey Langston. Dickey is a quick and confident thinker.

The home-invading Tory leader comes across a piece of potential booty, a pewter basin, which he decides to make his own. Pewter melted down was often used to make bullets. Dickey responds, "Pewter bullets will not kill a Whig." The leader asks, "Why not?" She invokes a folk tale that only a silver bullet can kill a witch. And, she adds, "I am sure the Whigs are more under the protection of Providence."

Could this narrative, at least in part, be historically accurate? Tories, as well as Patriots, pilfered items critical to domestic life. Dickey's 1837 obituary states she "suffered . . . from the ruthless ravages of the Tories and Indians. . . ." ⁵⁸ Her official DAR entry states she "suffered depredation." ⁵⁹ The heart of this plot line, Tories plundering the Langston home, appears to be historical. But the accoutrements are more doubtful.

Residents of the Carolina backcountry probably knew folk tales about silver bullets killing werewolves and witches. The Brothers Grimm in their tale "The Two Brothers" tell of a huntsman who overcomes a witch with a silver bullet. ⁶⁰

The Grimm brothers first published their tales in 1812, but their stories' origins lay in oral narratives told in previous centuries in Europe. Gainer and Byers report that for many generations residents of Appalachia have passed along a superstition that only a silver bullet could kill a witch. Dicey might have used this superstition to outwit the Tory officer. On the other hand, Dicey's nineteenth century descendants may have invented her conversation with the officer.⁶¹

Whether or not Dicey used the folk tale to outwit the Tory, it seems clear that Ellet added some historical garnish to the fifth narrative by invoking the name of a particularly dangerous Tory. He is "the noted Captain Gray." Ellet appears to not know the man's first name, but he is no doubt Jesse Gray of backcountry South Carolina.

Much was known in Ellet's day about Jesse Gray, including his harsh treatment of persons of color and the prosperous life he led in Nova Scotia following the war.⁶² As the war ended, South Carolina's General Assembly granted amnesty to numerous Tories allowing them to be reincorporated into civil life. However, in 1785, South Carolina Governor William Moultrie proclaimed Jesse Gray and other particularly heinous Tories to be outlaws and subject to arrest and prosecution.⁶³

As some later writers altered Ellet's accounts by inserting the name of William Cunningham, so the author herself may have added Gray to make this narrative more suspenseful. In its essence, the fifth of Ellet's chronicles could be historically accurate. The conversation with the officer may or may not have been a later development. And Ellet or someone before her probably added Gray to enhance readers' interest.

Removing story elements which might be chaff, one easily sees Ellet's objective. It is a theme sounded many times in *Women of the American Revolution*. Ellet, a modern woman herself, crafts a tale to promote progressive roles for nineteenth century women. She takes a compelling and credible event (an encounter in one's home with overpowering, armed men) and tells her readers to think for themselves and not always depend upon men for protection.

STORY SIX: DICEY BARS THE DOOR TO HER HOME

Dacey protects her home and family in this story. The “enemy” attempt to enter the house, an action which occurred often in the perilous times following the ascendancy of British and Tory forces in 1780. The men find the door is barred, and Dacey sternly bids them “be gone.” After a “parley” they decide to avoid further confrontation with this plucky young woman. As seen in other Dacey chronicles, Ellet promotes feminine assertiveness in contrast to the more passive, domestic expectations of women in Ellet's day.

Could this event have happened? The “enemy” probably knew the young woman's reputation. The men seeking entry could assume she was armed and ready to kill the first man who came through the door. On the other hand, it seems doubtful that men who wanted entry would simply decide to leave without trying a different time or way into the house. So, the account does not appear to be historical. According to Ellet, though, Dacey is a smart, assertive woman who defeats men without shedding blood. Dacey models assertiveness but not to the extreme. Ellet once more seeks to modify the roles assigned to women.

STORY SEVEN: DICEY RETRIEVES A HIDDEN RIFLE

Elizabeth Ellet was free to order the stories any way she chose. She smartly closes with a lighthearted narrative with little danger. Dicey's brother James has left a rifle in her care. Only someone with a password would be allowed to retrieve it. Men unfamiliar to Dicey identify themselves as Patriots and request the rifle. Dicey forgets to demand the password and retrieves the rifle from its hiding place. Only as she returns with the weapon does she ask for the countersign. The men claim to have the advantage, but they do not. The feisty woman states, "If the gun is in your possession, take charge of her!" Dicey is ready to discharge the weapon. Only then do the men speak the word she needs to hear.

The story concludes with the men "laughing heartily." Dicey's abilities resemble those of her brother. She is smart, handy with a gun, and brave. Ellet reminds the reader one more time that the protagonist is a woman, the "sister of James Langston."

Did something like this happen? The final narrative, like several others, follows no well-worn, familiar plot line. Its distinctiveness indicates authenticity.

CONCLUSION

All seven episodes engender happiness both in Ellet's era and in the present day. Dickey's quick retorts in the last two accounts move the reader to a new level of amusement. When the war for independence began, many people on both sides of the Atlantic scoffed at the notion that poorly armed colonists could succeed against the might of the British army and navy. Dickey the underdog represents the inchoate nation taking on the great empire. Provided with seven stories, the reader is entertained by Dickey's character, deeds, and winsome personality. In the process, the reader also receives lessons in the rigors and dangers faced by Americans during the birthing of the country.

Elizabeth Ellet no doubt enjoyed putting final touches to the chronicles about Dickey's exploits, tales which had never been put into writing. With the Dickey narratives, and indeed all three volumes of *Women of the American Revolution*, Ellet teaches American history. However, she also employs her notable skills as a researcher and author to encourage reconsideration of the place of women in 19th century society.

Dickey Langston Springfield grew to adulthood in back country South Carolina during the closing years of the American Revolution. With all the family's able-bodied men absent, those left in the home depended upon her for protection. Without military authorization or supervision, she served as a spy. With bravery, endurance, and shrewdness she saved patriot forces from harm and protected herself and her family. The feasibility and singularity of several of Dickey Langston's stories testify to their historicity.

- 1 Laodicea was an Asia Minor town mentioned six times in the New Testament. All place names except for Charlestown are current usage.
- 2 Richard Fowler, ed., *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina, Volume Two: Revolution and County Growth, 1775–1840* (Laurens, SC: The Discovery Book Project, 2015), 56.
- 3 Andrew Waters, *The Quaker and the Gamecock: Nathaniel Greene, Thomas Sumter, and the Revolutionary War for the Soul of the South* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2019), 11.
- 4 Idella Bodie, "Idella Bodie's SC Women: Dicey Langston." Video series.
<https://www.knowitall.org/series/dicey-langston>.
- 5 Marnie L. Pehrson Kuhns (manager of the website <http://www.dicey-langston.com>), conversation with the author, March 15, 2021.
- 6 Dianne Culbertson, email to the author, October 31, 2020.
- 7 Dicey Langston Springfield medal in the "The Great Women of the American Revolution" series, NSDAR Objects Collection, NSDAR Archives, The Franklin Mint, ca. 1974–1976.
- 8 "Dicey Langston Society, Children of the American Revolution," Facebook,
<https://www.facebook.com/dicey-langston-society>.
- 9 "Laodicia Dicey Langston Springfield,"
<https://honoringourpatriots.dar.org/patriots/laodicea-dicey-langston-springfield>.
- 10 Joyce Howard Ellis, Ann Pollard, compilers, *Springfield family, 1739–2001: Captain Thomas Springfield, his wife, Laodicea "Dicey" Langston: Including his Parents and Siblings and their Descendants* (Baltimore, MD.: Gateway Press, 2001), 1:20.
- 11 Langston Charter Middle School, <https://www.langstoncharter.org>.
- 12 The monument is located on Tygerville Road, Travelers Rest, SC, across from Enoree Baptist Church.
- 13 Brandy Amidon, Mayor of Travelers Rest, SC, conversation with the author, September 21, 2020.
- 14 "Dicey Langston Springfield," *Greenville (SC) Mountaineer*, June 10, 1837; Malea Walker, reference librarian, Library of Congress, email to the author, December 18, 2020.
- 15 Ellis and Pollard, *Springfield Family*, 13.
- 16 Margaret Spruill, Valinda Littlefield, and Joan M. Johnson, eds., *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 113; A. V. Huff, *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 1:28–29.
- 17 Elizabeth F. Ellet, *Women of the American Revolution, Vol 1* (1848; repr., New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969.)
- 18 It is not the purpose of this paper to explore Dicey's ancestors or descendants. Much about Dicey's genealogy can be found online and in print. Solomon's great-grandfather John Langston I (ca. 1625–ca. 1693) immigrated to the American colonies from England.
- 19 The close of the Anglo-Cherokee War and signing of the Treaty of Charles Town in 1761 opened the South Carolina backcountry to a great wave of settlers.
- 20 Two routes were available to them. One was a southerly route on the Ridge Road which followed the Fall Line through Camden and Granby (Cayce). From there they would have taken the State Road northwest into the backcountry. The other route was the Upper Road through Hillsborough and Charlotte.
- 21 Russell Burns and Richard Fowler, eds., *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina, Volume One: From Pre-History through the Colonial Period* (Laurens, SC: The Discovery Book Project, 2014), 128.
- 22 Burns and Fowler, *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina, Volume One*, 175.
- 23 Sources differ on the number of Langston offspring. Fowler, *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina, Volume Two*, 231, lists the names of ten children.
- 24 "Southern Campaigns of the American Revolutionary War Pension Statements and Rosters,"
www.revwarapps.org; James M. Richardson, *History of Greenville County, South Carolina: Narrative and Biographical* (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1980), 291.

- 25 The 1790 US Census for Laurens County indicates that Thomas lived in Laurens County. His name appears in Greenville County in the 1800 census. Ellis and Pollard, *Springfield Family*, 4.
- 26 Ellis and Pollard, *Springfield Family*, 5–13, provides source material for the distribution of Thomas' estate and his land transactions. Ellis and Pollard conclude that the Springfield family moved to Travelers Rest in 1793.
- 27 "Genealogy of Laodicea Langston and Thomas Springfield and Their Descendants," <https://www.diceylangson.com/genealogy>.
- 28 Fowler, *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina Volume Two*, 147.
- 29 Ellis and Pollard, *Springfield Family*, 3.
- 30 *Greenville Mountaineer*, December 15, 1848. The news article and Ellet's text bear substantial similarity. Many sentences are identical.
- 31 Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xii.
- 32 "Ellet, E. F (Elizabeth Fries), 1818–1877," Michigan State University Libraries Digital Repository. <https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/elizabeth-ellet-writes-women-into-the-history-of-the-revolution-infuriates-edgar-allan-poe/>.
- 33 Ellet in *Women of the American Revolution*, Chapter 12, 1:291, concludes her chapter on Dicey with the following footnote: "The preceding anecdotes were furnished by Hon. B. F. Perry, of Greenville, South Carolina, who received them from one of Mrs. Springfield's family.
- 34 "Benjamin Franklin Perry," <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/perry-benjamin-franklin>. Perry served eleven terms in the state House of Representatives and the Senate between 1836 and 1864. Ellet lived in Columbia from 1836 until 1845. In 1865, at the close of the Civil War, Perry served as governor of South Carolina.
- 35 Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, xv.
- 36 Susan Casey, *Women Heroes of the American Revolution: 20 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Defiance, and Rescue* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2015), 85.
- 37 "The Invention of the Teenager," <http://www.ushistory.org/us/46c.asp>. The present article regards Dicey as a young woman not a teenager. Teenager was a marketing concept not developed until the 20th century. Americans in the 18th century knew nothing of a transitional period between childhood and adulthood.
- 38 All accounts of Dicey's exploits known to this author, including songs about her, celebrate this narrative. It is understandably a favorite of children.
- 39 Huff, *Greenville: The History*, 28; Fowler, *Discovering Laurens County South Carolina Volume Two*, 189; in 1791, Solomon was granted 266 acres which lay on the Enoree River. Union County Historical Society Land Grant Map 11: Goodwin's Crossroads, Union, SC: Union County Historical Foundation, 1975.
- 40 Marlynn Powell, a member of Langston Baptist Church, conversation with the autho, August 2020. Also, conversations with the property owner, September 2020.
- 41 "Langston Baptist Church and Cemetery," 12 July 1978, Laurens County Survey 1979–1980, Record Series S108042 (Survey of historic resources, county by county data on surface properties), Box 47, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (Columbia, SC); Fowler, 412, states the congregation was organized in 1777; "Langston Baptist Church Observes 200th anniversary with homecoming." *Greenville News*, May 31, 1937. Presumably, the writer of the article intended to state that the congregation was observing its 150th anniversary.
- 42 The congregation, still extant, relocated to a two-acre site on Langston Road between SC 49 and I-26.
- 43 The family burial place and original church site are on private property which is not readily accessible to the public. The property owner and Durant Ashmore have identified the remains of the original church building.
- 44 Not all Laurens County maps portray Cox's Creek.

- 45 All distances are straight line.
- 46 The author is grateful to John C. “Jack” Parker, Jr. for identifying the section of the Enoree which seems most likely for Dicey’s crossing. Dicey might have taken a different route to the Enoree. She would have been familiar with any number of trails and convenient places to ford the river.
- 47 Other authors call her destination “Little Eden at the Elder Settlement.”
- 48 John B. O. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina* (1897; repr. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co. 1977), 26.
- 49 Richardson, *History of Greenville County*, 288. Lt. Col. Benjamin Roebuck organized his militia battalion soon after the fall of Charlestown in May 1780. Since most of the South Carolina rebel government was captured in Charlestown or surrendered to the British later, Roebuck initially served as an independent militia commander in the Spartan area and in later 1780 would come under Gen. Thomas Sumter’s brigade.
- 50 “Roebuck’s Battalion of Spartan Regiment Militia,”
https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot_militia_sc_roebucks_batallion.html.
- 51 John B. O. Landrum, *History of Spartanburg County: Embracing an account of many important events, and biographical sketches of statesmen, divines, and other public men, and the names of many others worthy of record in the history of the county* (1900; repr. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1985), 25–27.
- 52 The presence of Elder’s Mill on Dutchman’s Creek indicates an Elder family settlement. However, Dutchman’s Creek lies north of the Tyger. Such a trip for Dicey was impossible given the limited time frame of her journey.
- 53 On the fertile terrain, see *Discovering Laurens County*, 1:125.
- 54 Charles B. Baxley, conversation with the author, December 1, 2020.
- 55 For example, Fowler, *Discovering Laurens County, South Carolina*. 2:141.
- 56 Durant Ashmore, conversation with author, January 15, 2021; John C. Parker, Jr., conversation with the author, September 15, 2020.
- 57 John C. Parker, Jr., conversation with the author, October 2020. In relation to Story Five, Parker states that Cunningham, a wanted man, would not have taken time to steal from backcountry residents anything other than what he needed to survive. Cunningham and his fast-moving companions could not be weighed down by significant amounts of booty. Charles Baxley, conversation with the author April 18, 2021, states there is no record of Cunningham assaulting women.
- 58 <https://www.diceylangston.com/obituary.php>. Her *Greenville Mountaineer* May 23, 1837 obituary in full reads: “Died on Tuesday, the 23rd, Mrs. Laodicea Springfield, aged 71 years, wife of Thomas Springfield. The deceased was the daughter of Solomon Langston of Revolutionary memory, whose family perhaps suffered more from the ruthless ravages of the Tories and Indians than almost any other, and the subject of this remark took an active part in the struggle and performed many daring deeds on behalf of her suffering country and friends. She was the mother of 22 children and has left about 140 grand and great grand children. She was a kind and affectionate wife, mother, and neighbor, and has left a large circle of acquaintances to deplore her loss.”
- 59 https://services.dar.org/Public/DAR_Research/search/. The DAR ancestor number for Dicey is A069020.
- 60 The Brothers Grim, “The Two Brothers,” <https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~spok/grimtmp/047.txt>.
- 61 Patrick W. Gainer and Judy Prozzillo Byers, *Witches, Ghosts, and Signs: Folklore of the Southern Appalachians*, 2nd edition (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2008),
<https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/293741/pdf>.
- 62 Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, 25.
- 63 Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: Univeristy of South Carolina Press, 1987), 296.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to thank Charles Baxley who chairs the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission. Charles entrusted this Rev War rookie to research and write this article and provided me with enormous support and encouragement. When I had a question, Charles always had an accurate answer. What I have learned from Charles propels me forward. I plan to learn more and write more about South Carolina's prominent role in our nation's violent but successful birth.

Second, I give hearty thanks to my wife Kay Langston Wood who is a direct descendant of one of Dicey's brothers. She asked helpful questions and offered splendid ideas. Also, Kay drove to countless places with me. Together we tramped through woods and looked closely at old gravestones as I investigated Dicey's life and attempted to sort truth from fiction.

Among the organizations which I want to acknowledge are the Travelers Rest Historical Society, the staff at Musgrove Mill State Historic Site, the Spartanburg County Library, the South Carolina Historical Society, the South Carolina State Library, and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Many individuals graciously provided me with information and insights. Among them are Judith Chandler, members of the "Experienced Writers Write" OLLI classes at Furman University, Jack Parker, Marlynn Powell, Dot Bishop, Kitty Theilke, Randy "Country" Hawkins, Phil Adair, Diane Culbertson, Durant Ashmore, Carol Loar, Andrew Waters, Marnie Pehrson Kuhns, Joe Epley, and Steve Johnson. My apologies to those whom I have failed to mention here.

Kudos to George Stoll who prepared all the maps. Learn more about this craftsman at www.georgestoll.com.

Finally, I wish to salute all those people, living and deceased, who have passed along the stories of Dicey in print, drama, song, and the visual arts. Let's keep telling the story!

Paul A. Wood, Jr.

APPENDIX A

Children's Books Which Tell of Dicey Langston

Bodie, Idella. *Heroes and Heroines of the American Revolution*. Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publishing, 2003.

Bodie, Idella. *Spunky Revolutionary War Heroine*. Heroes and Heroines of the Revolutionary War Series. Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publishing, 2000.

Kudlinksi, Kathleen V. and Rudie Jan Faber. *Rebel with a Cause: The Daring Adventure of Dicey Langston, Girl Spy of the American Revolution*. North Mankota, MN.: Encounter Books, 2016.

Pehrson Kuhns, Marnie L. *The Patriot Wore Petticoats*. Ringgold, GA: CES Business Consultants, 2004.

Redmund, Shirley Mae. *Patriots in Petticoats: Heroines of the American Revolution*. New York: Random House, 2004.

APPENDIX B

Obituary

Laodicea Langston Springfield
Greenville Mountaineer, June 10, 1837

Died on Tuesday, the 23rd, Mrs. Laodicea Springfield, aged 71 years, wife of Thomas Springfield. The deceased was the daughter of Solomon Langston of Revolutionary memory, whose family perhaps suffered more from the ruthless ravages of the Tories and Indians than almost any other, and the subject of this remark took an active part in the struggle and performed many daring deeds on behalf of her suffering country and friends. She was the mother of 22 children and has left about 140 grand and great grand children. She was a kind and affectionate wife, mother, and neighbor, and has left a large circle of acquaintances to deplore her loss.

APPENDIX C

Ellet provides seven unique stories. The text below has been divided into the seven stories. Text found at <http://www.pwgroup.com/dicey/womenofrevolution.php>

The Women of the American Revolution

by Elizabeth F. Ellet

Third Edition

New York: Baker and Scribner

1849.

DICEY LANGSTON

THE portion of South Carolina near the frontier, watered by the Pacolet, the Tyger, and the Enoree, comprising Spartanburg and Union Districts, witnessed many deeds of violence and blood, and many bold achievements of the hardy partisans. It could also boast its full complement of women whose aid in various ways was of essential service to the patriots. So prevalent was loyalism in the darkest of those days, so bitter was the animosity felt towards the Whigs, and so eager the determination to root them from the soil, that the very recklessness of hate gave frequent opportunities for the betrayal of the plans of their enemies. Often were the boastings of those who plotted some midnight surprise, or some enterprise that promised rare pillage—uttered in the hearing of weak and despised women—unexpectedly turned into wonder at the secret agency that had disconcerted them, or execrations upon their own folly. The tradition of the country teems with accounts of female enterprise in this kind of service, very few instances of which were recorded in the military journals.

First story

The patriots were frequently indebted for important information to one young girl, fifteen or sixteen years old at the commencement of the war. This was Dicey, the daughter of Solomon Langston of Laurens District. He was in principle a stout liberty man, but incapacitated by age and infirmities from taking any active part in the contest. His son was a devoted patriot, and was ever found in the field where his

APPENDIX C - *cont.*

services were most needed. He had his home in the neighborhood, and could easily receive secret intelligence from his sister, who was always on the alert. Living surrounded by loyalists, some of whom were her own relatives, Miss Langston found it easy to make herself acquainted with their movements and plans, and failed not to avail herself of every opportunity to do so, and immediately to communicate what she learned to the Whigs on the other side of the Enoree River. At length suspicion of the active aid she rendered was excited among the Tory neighbors. Mr. Langston was informed that he would be held responsible thenceforward, with his property, for the conduct of his daughter. The young girl was reprov'd severely, and commanded to desist from her patriotic treachery. For a time she obeyed the parental injunction; but having heard by accident that a company of loyalists, who on account of their ruthless cruelty had been commonly called the "Bloody Scout," intent on their work of death, were about to visit the "Elder settlement" where her brother and some friends were living, she determined at all hazards to warn them of the intended expedition. She had none in whom to confide; but was obliged to leave her home alone, by stealth, and at the dead hour of night. Many miles were to be traversed, and the road lay through woods, and crossed marshes and creeks, where the conveniences of bridges and foot-logs were wanting. She walked rapidly on, heedless of slight difficulties; but her heart almost failed her when she came to the banks of the Tyger—a deep and rapid stream, which there was no possibility of crossing except by wading through the ford. This she knew to be deep at ordinary times, and it had doubtless been rendered more dangerous by the rains that had lately fallen. But the thought of personal danger weighed not with her, in comparison to the duty she owed her friends and country. Her momentary hesitation was but the shrinking of nature from peril encountered in darkness and alone, when the imagination conjures up a thousand appalling ideas, each more startling than the worst reality. Her strong heart battled against these, and she resolved to accomplish her purpose, or perish in the attempt. She entered the water; but when in the middle of the ford, became bewildered, and knew not which direction to take. The hoarse rush of the waters, which were up to her neck—the blackness of the night—the utter solitude around her—the uncertainty lest the next step should engulf her past help, confused her; and losing in a degree her self-possession,

APPENDIX C - *cont.*

she wandered for some time in the channel without knowing whither to turn her steps. But the energy of a resolute will, under the care of Providence, sustained her. Having with difficulty reached the other side, she lost no time in hastening to her brother, informed him and his friends of the preparations made to surprise and destroy them, and urged him to send his men instantly in different directions to arouse and warn the neighborhood. The soldiers had just returned from a fatiguing excursion, and complained that they were faint from want of food. The noble girl, not satisfied with what she had done at such risk to herself, was ready to help them still further by providing refreshment immediately. Though wearied, wet, and shivering with cold, she at once set about her preparations. A few boards were taken from the roof of the house, a fire was kindled with them, and in a few minutes a hoe-cake, partly baked was broken into pieces, and thrust into the shot pouches of the men. Thus provisioned, the little company hastened to give the alarm to their neighbors, and did so in time for all to make their escape. The next day, when the “scout” visited the place, they found no living enemy on whom to wreak their vengeance.

Second story

At a later period of the war, the father of Miss Langston incurred the displeasure of the loyalists in consequence of the active services of his sons in their country's cause. They were known to have imbibed their principles from him; and he was marked out as an object of summary vengeance. A party came to his house with the desperate design of putting to death all the men of the family. The sons were absent; but the feeble old man, selected by their relentless hate as a victim, was in their power. He could not escape or resist; and he scorned to implore their mercy. One of the company drew a pistol, and deliberately leveled it at the breast of Langston. Suddenly a wild shriek was heard; and his young daughter sprang between her aged parent and the fatal weapon. The brutal soldier roughly ordered her to get out of the way, or the contents of the pistol would be instantly lodged in her own heart. She heeded not the threat, which was but too likely to be fulfilled the next moment. Claspng her arms tightly round the old man's neck, she declared that her own body should first receive the ball aimed at his heart! There are few human beings, even of the most depraved,

APPENDIX C - *cont.*

entirely insensible to all noble and generous impulses. On this occasion the conduct of the daughter, so fearless, so determined to shield her father's life by the sacrifice of her own, touched the heart even of a member of the "Bloody Scout." Langston was spared; and the party left the house filled with admiration at the filial affection and devotion they had witnessed.

Third story

At another time the heroic maiden showed herself as ready to prevent wrong to an enemy as to her friends. Her father's house was visited by a company of Whigs, who stopped to get some refreshment, and to feed their wearied horses. In the course of conversation one of them mentioned that they were going to visit a Tory neighbor, for the purpose of seizing his horses. The man whose possessions were thus to be appropriated had been in general a peaceable citizen; and Mr. Langston determined to inform him of the danger in which his horses stood of having their ownership changed. Entering cordially into her father's design, Miss Langston set off immediately to carry the information. She gave it in the best faith; but just before she started on her return home, she discovered that the neighbor whom she had warned was not only taking precautions to save his property, but was about to send for the captain of a Tory band not far distant, so that the "liberty men" might be captured when intent on their expedition, before they should be aware of their danger. It was now the generous girl's duty to perform alike friendly act towards the Whigs. She lost no time in conveying the intelligence, and thus saved an enemy's property, and the lives of her friends.

Fourth story

Her disregard of personal danger, where service could be rendered, was remarkable. One day, returning from a Whig neighborhood in Spartanburg District, she was met by a company of loyalists, who ordered her to give them some intelligence they desired respecting those she had just left. She refused; whereupon the captain of the band held a pistol to her breast, and ordered her instantly to make the disclosures, or she should "die in her tracks." Miss Langston only replied, with the cool intrepidity of

APPENDIX C - *cont.*

a veteran soldier: "Shoot me if you dare! I will not tell you," at the same time opening a long handkerchief which covered her neck and bosom, as if offering a place to receive the contents of the weapon. Incensed by her defiance, the officer was about to fire, when another threw up his hand, and saved the courageous girl's life. Are these the only words Dicey speaks in Ellet's narratives? No, see stories five and seven.

Fifth story

On one occasion, when her father's house was visited on a plundering expedition by the noted Tory Captain Gray with his riflemen, and they had collected and divided every thing they thought could be of use, they were at some loss what to do with a large pewter basin. At length the captain determined on taking that also, jeeringly remarking, "it will do to run into bullets to kill the rebels." "Pewter bullets, sir," answered Miss Langston, "will not kill a Whig." "Why not?" inquired Captain Gray. "It is said, sir," replied she, "that a witch can be shot only with a silver bullet; and I am sure the Whigs are more under the protection of Providence."

Sixth story

The sixth account is the conclusion of the preceding paragraph.

At another time when a company of the enemy came to the house they found the door secured. To their demand for admission and threats of breaking down the door, Miss Langston answered by sternly bidding them be gone. Her resolute language induced the company to "hold a parley;" and the result was that they departed without further attempt to obtain an entrance.

Seventh story

One more anecdote is given to illustrate her spirit and fearlessness. Her brother James had left a rifle in her care, which she was to keep hid till he sent for it. He did so, by a company of "liberty men," who were to return by his father's dwelling. On arriving at the house, one of them asked the young girl for the gun. She went immediately, and

APPENDIX C - *cont.*

brought it; but as she came towards the soldiers, the thought struck her that she had neglected to ask for the countersign agreed upon between her brother and herself. Advancing more cautiously—she observed to them that their looks were suspicious; that for aught she knew they might be a set of Tories; and demanded the countersign. One of the company answered that it was too late to make conditions; the gun was in their possession, and its holder, too. “Do you think so,” cried she, cocking it, and presenting the muzzle at the speaker. “If the gun is in your possession, take charge of her!” Her look and attitude of defiance showed her in earnest; the countersign was quickly given; and the men, laughing heartily, pronounced her worthy of being the sister of James Langston.

The closing words of Ellet’s chapter on Dicey:

After the war was ended, Miss Langston married Thomas Springfield, of Greenville, South Carolina. She died in Greenville District, a few years since. Of her numerous descendants then living, thirty-two were sons and grandsons capable of bearing arms, and ready at any time to do so in the maintenance of that liberty which was so dear to the youthful heart of their ancestor.*

Ellet concludes with the following footnote:

The preceding anecdotes were furnished by Hon B. F. Perry, of Greenville, South Carolina, who received them from one of Mrs. Springfield’s family.

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Rev. Dr. Paul Wood, Jr. was born in Charleston, SC, and raised in Camden, SC. A product of the public schools, he holds degrees from Furman, Yale, and Emory Universities. For 37 years, he served as the pastor of United Methodist Churches throughout South Carolina. He and his wife, Rev. Kay Langston Wood, live in Camden. Kay is a descendant of Solomon Langston, Jr. a brother of Dicey. Paul and Kay have two children, four grandchildren, and a grand-dog Trudy.