



Revolutionary
SOUTH CAROLINA

RESEARCH
PUBLICATION

1770-1783



Bloody Bill Cunningham

Life and Times of a
Revolutionary War Villain

Paul Ariel Wood, Jr.

Bloody Bill Cunningham

Life and Times of a Revolutionary War Villain

Paul Ariel Wood, Jr.



**Bloody Bill Cunningham:
Life and Times of a Revolutionary War Villain**

Copyright © 2026 Paul Ariel Wood, Jr.

ISBN: 978-1-971106-80-9

Published by the SC American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SC250)
in conjunction with United Writers Press, Asheville, N.C.

Cover art based excerpted from the Henry Mouzon survey map of North and South Carolina, 1775
Mouzon, Henry, and Robert Sayer And John Bennett. An accurate map of North and South Carolina with their
Indian frontiers, shewing in a distinct manner all the mountains, rivers, swamps, marshes, bays, creeks, harbours,
sandbanks and soundings on the coasts; with the roads and Indian paths; as well as the boundary or provincial lines,
the several townships and other divisions of the land in both the provinces. [London, Printed for Robt. Sayer and J
Bennett, 1775] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692527/>.

Unless otherwise noted, all images herein are in the public domain.
Maps created by C. Leon Harris at the direction of the author.

Notice: The writing, editing, and peer review of this work was financed via a grant from the SC American
Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SC250).

Dedicated to:
Mary Kay Wood

and to the Memory of
John C. “Jack” Parker, Jr.
and
Charles Baxley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
Introduction: South Carolina’s Civil War	1
1: Historical Perspectives on Bloody Bill	6
2: A Culture of Hardship and Violence	16
3: The Cunninghams Take Opposing Sides (1775-1776)	26
4: In Service of the King, 1777–1779	38
5: From the Fall of Charleston to the Evacuation of Ninety Six, Winter 1780 until July 1781	50
6: A Camp on Cane Creek, 1781	71
7: The Context of the Bloody Scout	77
8: From Wantoot to The Ridge: The Bloody Scout Begins	82
9: More “Mellancholy Circumstances”	91
10: Final Stages and Assessments of the Bloody Scout	100
11: In and Out of Charleston, 1782	107
12: East Florida Chaos, 1783-1785	119
13: Bloody Bill’s 29th and Final Year	128
14: Bloody Bill in Retrospect	140
<i>Appendix A: Members of the Little River Loyalist Militia who participated in the Bloody Scout and returned to Charleston, December 1781</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Appendix B: Excursus on Ned and Dick Turner</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>Appendix C: Cunningham and Arthur Middleton’s Thoroughbred Silver Heels</i>	<i>149</i>
<i>Appendix D: The Blood Scout’s Estimated Casualties</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>153</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>163</i>

Key Events in the Life of William Cunningham

**Cunningham did not participate in these actions.*

Date	Event
1757	Born in Augusta County, Virginia
1758-1761	First Cherokee War *
1767-1769	Regulator Movement *
1769 or 1770	Settles in Laurens County, SC
April 19, 1775	War begins at Lexington and Concord *
June 1775	Musters with SC's 3rd Ranger Regiment (Pvt.)
July 12, 1775	Fort Charlotte falls to Revolutionaries
Nov. 19-21, 1775	First Siege of Ninety Six
Dec. 22, 1775	Battle of the Great Cane Brake
June 28, 1776	Battle of Sullivan's Island
July 1 – Oct. 27, 1776	Second Cherokee War
Fall of 1776	Becomes a Loyalist
Fall 1776 through summer 1778	In hiding
Dec. 29, 1778	The British take Savannah *
Dec. 30, 1778	Arrives in Savannah
Jan. 1779	Murders William Ritchie
Feb. 14, 1779	Battle of Kettle Creek
Feb. 1779	2nd Lieutenant, SC Royalists
March 3, 1779	Battle of Brier Creek. Briefly held captive.
March 31, 1779	Battle of Shell Bluff Community
May 14 or 15, 1779	Captured below Orangeburg
Fall 1779	Escapes or is released from Charleston jail
Fall 1779 – May 1780	In hiding. Patrick gives him Ringtail.
May 12, 1780	The British take Charleston *
June 1780	Captain in James Dunlap's company
Aug. 16, 1780	Battle of Camden *
Oct. 7, 1780	Battle of Kings Mountain
Dec. 30, 1780	Battle of Hammond's Store
Dec. 31, 1780	Batte of Williams's Fort
Jan. 17, 1781	Battle of Cowpens *

Date	Event
March 23, 1781	Dunlap's Defeat; promoted to major
May 22-June 19, 1781	Second Siege of Ninety Six
July – Sept. 1781	Raiding out of Mountain Encampment
Oct. 19, 1781	Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown *
Oct. 1781	Concludes raiding and goes to Charleston
Nov. 10, 1781 (approx.)	Bloody Scout launches from Wantoot
Dec. 29, 1781 (approx.)	Bloody Scout concludes in Charleston
Jan. 1782	Ringtail dies of exhaustion
Jan.-Sept. 1782	Foraging raids/other missions out of Charleston
January 1782	SC General Assembly convenes *
Feb. 26, 1782	General Assembly passes Confiscation Act *
Sept. 1782	Evades William Butler at Lorick's Ferry
Oct. or Nov. 1782	Overland to East Florida
Nov. 11, 1782	Last Rev War battle in SC: Dill's Bluff *
Feb. 1783	SC Gov. Guerard issues reward for his capture
Jan. 1785	Captured & jailed in St. Augustine
April 1785	Sent to Cuba by the Spanish governor
Nov. 1785	Banished from Spanish territory by the viceroy
Dec. 1785	Arrives in Nassau
March 1786	Sails to London with Robert
Oct. thru Dec. 1786	Sails back to Nassau with Robert
Jan. 18, 1787	Dies in Nassau

Preface

I embraced the American Revolution as my hobby following my retirement from the ministry. As I delved into reading, audiobooks, and podcasts, and as I visited battle sites and attended lectures, one name and one event captivated me. They were the Loyalist William “Bloody Bill” Cunningham and his Bloody Scout raid of 1781. I wondered what inspired him and more than a hundred compatriots to murder dozens of Patriots during a six-week period. Murder did not assuage their desire for revenge. They also destroyed the homes, barns, and mills of men they hated and left countless families destitute. I was curious to learn the circumstances which allowed the raid to unfold. Cunningham’s bravery also caught my attention. He and his men left the safety of British-held Charleston and incurred the wrath of Patriots wherever they went. At least twenty-seven of his men met their fate by the hangman’s rope, rifle, musket, pistol, or saber.

I learned William Cunningham’s barbarity was part of a war within a war. Neighbors and even family members took sides and put hatred into action. They stole each other’s crops and livestock, burned homes and barns, and murdered fathers, husbands, and sons. Cunningham was no black swan. He was part of a culture of violence and lived in a time of war which, like most wars, provided no law enforcement. During the American Revolution, South Carolinians could settle scores, and there were no consequences except more retribution. Bloody Bill also fascinated me because some “facts” about his life seemed beyond the realm of possibility. I also found inconsistencies and contradictions in what had been written about him. This remarkable man warranted closer study.

My friendship with Charles Baxley, who died in 2024, blessed me immensely. Though we grew up in the same town, he was three years older than I, and we only met much later. After college and law school, he practiced law in our hometown of Camden, South Carolina, while I stayed away to go about my calling as a pastor. I reached out to Charles after I delved into my new pursuit. Charles edited *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*, a peer-reviewed online journal. He led the Corps of Discovery, which took groups of “Rev War” devotees to locations in the Carolinas where battles well-known and obscure had taken place. Charles and I met when the South Carolina General Assembly created the state’s American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission. The state tasked the commission with a wide variety of responsibilities, such as supporting the research for and publication of this book. Governor Henry McMaster named Charles the commission’s first chairperson.

Charles showed immense patience with this newbie and a conviction that I was worth his mentorship. A friendship blossomed. The ever-gracious Charles introduced me to kindred history enthusiasts, who pursued research on the war in the South. How they went about their work appealed to me. They showed the eagerness of children and the brilliance of serious-minded adults. They introduced me to other members of this informal circle. Charles enlisted me to collaborate with John C. “Jack” Parker, Jr., who had performed extensive research into Cunningham’s Revolutionary War activities. Jack’s work included the routes

Cunningham took during the Bloody Scout and the murders he committed. Charles enlisted Jack and me to co-write a Cunningham biography, something no one had attempted. Declining health led Jack to hand the project to me. Then, sadly, he died in 2025. I benefited enormously from my partnership with Jack. His book, known as *Parker's Guide*, provides a wealth of information and insight.¹

When I studied what other historians had written about Cunningham, I discovered discrepancies and conflicting accounts. For example, the chroniclers diverged as they described Cunningham's place and family of origin, his travels, and his actions. Contradictions have marked even the date and location of his death. Cunningham started the war fighting for the nation's independence, yet he changed his allegiance and gave his all for the King of England. His motives warranted research. People have depicted him as a freewheeling killer and thief. I wondered if he ever fought as a reputable soldier. I also detected other opportunities for clarification. For example, I wondered about his life after the war and permanent exile from his home state.

I have written this book for two audiences: historians and non-historians or armchair readers. I did not major in history at Furman University, but I learned that men and women who write historical texts must act like scientists. They perform forensics to understand what happened and why. They find the best evidence, make sense of it, and present their findings and their conclusions. British historian R. G. Collingwood wrote that the "prime duty of the historian [is] a willingness to bestow infinite pains on discovering what actually happened."²

For much of my life, I thought all those who write history received their training in an academic environment and that most held advanced degrees. But historians include numerous dedicated men and women whose primary work is in other fields. In their after-work hours or in retirement, they research primary and secondary sources. They catalogue materials, write and edit books and articles, and share insights with one another and the public. I have witnessed gainful partnerships between these two types of historians as they work hand-in-hand to gain knowledge and share it.

I have also written this book for another kind of reader. These people are curious to understand our country's origins and the passions and war which birthed it. They enjoy lectures, movies, and videos about the American Revolution and its heroes, heroines, and anti-heroes. These readers tour Revolutionary War sites and visit museums and battlefields. Some teach children and youth. Others are themselves still young and eager to understand the nation's past.

Historians and non-historians have much in common. For example, after they uncover the past, both groups like to reflect on it and seek to know what the past can teach us. That is vital work and often fun. If we cannot learn what the past has to teach us, we are doomed.

Non-historians might find this book challenging because I have had to research source documents to uncover the truth. Historians expect me to justify my conclusions and acknowledge the gaps in my knowledge. They also want to examine my sources and the rationale for my conclusions. If these aspects of this book become tedious for non-historians, I ask them to bear with me. Historians will also need to practice patience as I tell non-historians about people and circumstances with which they are familiar. I

1. John C. Parker, Jr., *Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina: Battles, Skirmishes, and Murders*, 4th ed. (Columbia, SC: Harrellson Publishing, 2022).

2. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1946), 55.

hope all this book's readers will be resolute and understand the needs of the twin audiences for which I have written.

The book's two audiences share a multitude of interests. For example, few Americans are familiar with William Cunningham's fascinating life. Few know why tens of thousands of residents of the thirteen colonies chose loyalty to King George III over the American quest for independence. Cunningham stands out as both a Loyalist and an anti-hero. Legacy groups such as the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution regard all Patriots as men and women to be honored. In the twenty-first century, Loyalists seldom, if ever, receive accolades. To grasp Cunningham's motives, one must know about the civil war in South Carolina during the American Revolution. One cannot overstate the importance of South Carolina's remarkably violent war-within-a-war. No other state experienced internecine strife of such magnitude.

I encourage readers of this book to consider an alternative view of William Cunningham. I often employ the word *murder* as I write about the killings for which he was responsible during the Bloody Scout. I regard those deaths as homicides. But the reader might wish to consider a different point of view. Was the Bloody Scout so much a part of the Revolutionary War that the killings were equivalent to the violence common to all wars?

Only when necessary do I correct spellings found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents. I employ the present-day spellings of towns, Charleston instead of Charles Town being the best example. Also, South Carolina's colonial government partitioned the colony into parishes and districts, not counties. My geographical references refer to present-day counties and towns. If a town or city did not exist during the war, I employ phrases such as *present-day Spartanburg* and *present-day North Charleston*.

Introduction

South Carolina's Civil War

To comprehend William Cunningham's life, one must know about South Carolina's civil war, which happened simultaneously with the Revolutionary War. In South Carolina, the struggle for American independence was closely connected to a separate conflict within the state. Combatants in the state's war-within-a-war carried the same labels as those of the larger conflict. *Rebels*, *Whigs*, or *Patriots* sought independence.³ They fought the *Tories*, also called *Loyalists*, *Royalists*, or *King's Men*. But the motives which drove the state's civil war were not those that drove the war for independence. The larger conflagration was fought between American colonists who wanted an independent nation and British-aligned soldiers and other American colonists whose loyalties lay with the monarchy. A complex and volatile mix of longstanding disputes and the lack of a system of justice fueled South Carolina's civil war.

The Patriot victory at Kings Mountain exemplified South Carolina's civil conflict in miniature. Between 2,000 and 2,800 men fought on the Cherokee County mountain on October 7, 1780. Most, if not all, participants hailed from the Carolinas, Georgia, or southwestern Virginia. Only one man, Major Patrick Ferguson, was British.⁴

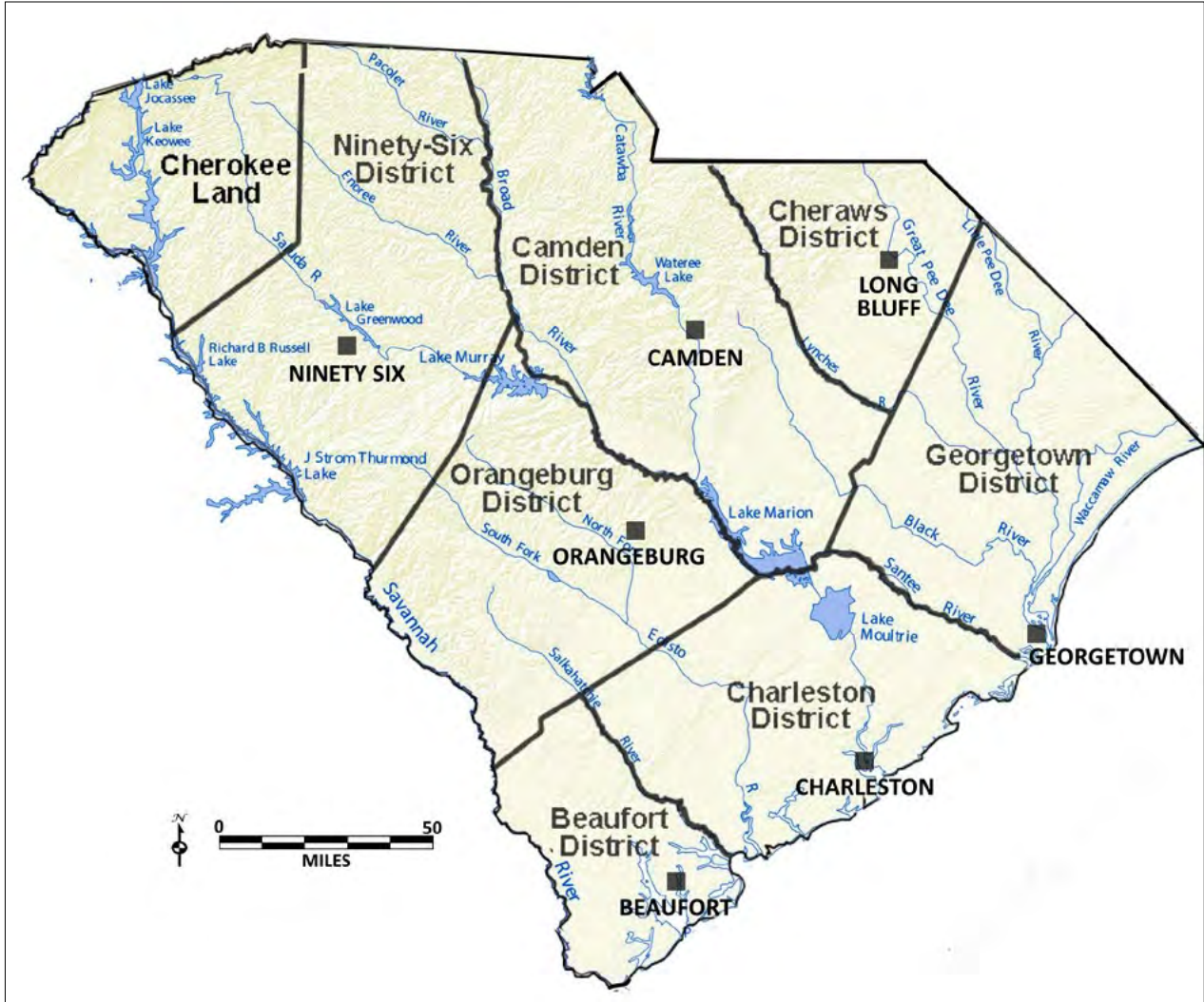
In 1769, the South Carolina Commons House, a colonial assembly dominated by wealthy Low Country residents, enacted the Circuit Court Act. The law created nine districts. Five districts had tidal waters. Four other districts, Camden, Cheraw, Orangeburg, and Ninety Six, made up the vast bulk of the state's geography. The Commons House provided each Backcountry district with a sheriff, courthouse, and jail. Each year had seen more residents moving into the Backcountry, but a major influx began after the First Cherokee War ended in 1761. By the time the War for Independence started in 1775, more than half of the state's white population lived in the Backcountry. The Ninety Six District encompassed all the land between the Savannah and Broad rivers except for present-day Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville



South Carolina Royalist Belt Plate. Williamsburg

3. Though in common usage today, during the Revolutionary War, *patriot* was not used to identify those who supported independence. *Whig* was the preferred term.

4. "Kings Mountain," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_kings_mountain.html (accessed September 28, 2024).



South Carolina Districts – 1775 to 1784

counties. The expansive area exceeded all other districts in its size and population. Not all Low Country residents favored revolution, but the majority did. In contrast, the Backcountry was home to thousands of people who desired independence and thousands more who preferred the status quo. In parts of the Ninety Six District, Loyalists outnumbered Patriots. The state's civil war raged at its harshest levels in the Ninety Six District. William Cunningham came of age in the Ninety Six District.

Cloud's Creek: Two Wars in One Event

The Cloud's Creek Massacre, only summarized here, serves as an example of the state's internecine warfare. Though the American Revolution did not officially end until the Treaty of Paris in September 1783, a Patriot victory seemed inevitable by November 1781. In South Carolina, King George III's troops had already abandoned their inland posts and were confined to the Charleston area. Then on October 19, Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis surrendered his entire army to George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia. The surrender led to loud demands in the British Parliament to end the expensive conflict and give the American colonies the independence they desired.

Patriots in the Ninety Six District saw signs that the larger war and the state's internal war might soon end. Hundreds of Loyalist families had abandoned their farms and followed the king's forces to Charleston. Others had left earlier in the war for British-held East Florida and more distant parts of the British Empire. Hundreds of Loyalist families remained on their farms and tried to mend relationships with their Patriot neighbors. Only a few independent marauders called *outliers* caused trouble. Most Loyalists who remained in the South Carolina Backcountry aspired to peaceable relations with their Patriot neighbors and wanted to get on with their lives.

One community that seemed on the verge of tranquility in the fall of 1781 was Mount Willing in the Saluda County portion of the Ninety Six District. The violence, hunger, and deprivation of the war had reached a hopeless low eighteen months earlier when the British took the state. But by November 1781, Mount Willing residents probably thought their suffering had ended. The coming year appeared to offer a return to prosperity.

In that month, a band of armed men on horses, Loyalist militia, invaded the calm community and seized cattle from Mount Willing's farms. British officers in Charleston had dispatched the militiamen to find food for the thousands of refugees and soldiers confined to Charleston. Once in control of the cattle, the raiders drove the cows toward Charleston. A smaller Loyalist party led by Captain James Radcliff rode north, crossed the Saluda River, and entered Newberry County. Mount Willing residents now faced months of hunger. They were counting on the cattle to put food in their bellies and cash in their hands.

Captain Stirling Turner had spent the war leading a Patriot militia unit. But hostilities had subsided, and he was back at home in Mount Willing. Turner quickly formed a posse to catch the raiders and retrieve the livestock. He first followed the smaller Tory contingent across the Saluda River into Newberry County. The furious Patriots caught up with the Loyalists and killed several of them, including Captain Radcliff.

Stirling Turner then turned about and pursued the slow-moving caravan of Tories, horses, and cattle. Turner caught them at Tarrar Springs. Today, the offices of Lexington County School District One overlook the spring and a pond. A negotiation ensued, and the Tories gave up the cattle. The Patriots and their livestock began the long trek back home.

After the Patriots left, a larger unit of Loyalists led by Major William Cunningham arrived at Tarrar Springs. Cunningham learned about the day's events. He no doubt felt disappointed that their military mission to seize cattle had been thwarted. He became enraged over the killing of Radcliff. Cunningham and his men rode off to retrieve the cattle and punish the farmers of Mount Willing.

Turner decided the weary Mount Willing men and their cattle should stop for the night. Cunningham came within sight of Turner but kept his presence secret. Then at dawn, Cunningham's much larger force fell upon the Patriots. They surrounded them and convinced them that if they put down their arms, they would not be harmed. Once the Patriots were helpless, Cunningham and his troops identified the men they felt warranted execution. After allowing a handful of Patriots to go free, Cunningham and his comrades slaughtered fifteen men. No one reported that Cunningham's fighters used their pistols, muskets, or rifles. Instead, they wielded their sabers and swords and slashed to death the Mount Willing farmers, leaving body parts strewn on the ground.

After Cunningham's troop left Cloud's Creek and rode farther from the coast, the only food they seized was for themselves. After Cloud's Creek, they continued with additional massacres, murders of

individuals, and massive destruction of private property. The public named Cunningham's campaign the *Bloody Scout*, and he received the moniker still employed today, *Bloody Bill*. The massacre at Cloud's Creek started as a mission during the Revolutionary War to take cattle to the hungry people in Charleston. But the massacre was the other war, the civil war, fueled by vengeance. American independence was not involved.

More Than Biography

This book presents William Cunningham from about age thirteen when he arrived in South Carolina until his death. To comprehend and evaluate his life, one must understand the culture in which he lived and the civil war which ensued in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. The text explores the unresolved conflicts that spawned the internal war while it interprets Cunningham's motives and actions in both the larger war and the state's civil strife.

As the nation commemorates the 250th anniversary of the war, Americans are expanding their knowledge of the Revolutionary War. The Revolution is often perceived as King George's redcoats battling George Washington's Continentals. However, thousands of ordinary men, most of them farmers, wore everyday apparel, rode their own horses, used their own guns, and returned home, when possible, to work on their farms. These combatants were both Patriots and Loyalists.

The American Revolution began in New England, but Patriots won the war in the South. South Carolina may have seen more battles and skirmishes than any other state. Fighting drew its energy not solely from differences of opinion about independence, but from hatred. Vengeance drove William Cunningham and hundreds of others like him, both Patriot and Loyalist, to take the law into their own hands. Cunningham and his fellow South Carolinians fought two wars simultaneously. Unrestrained, criminal violence marked the state's war-within-a-war. William Cunningham played a central role in that second war.

1

Historical Perspectives on Bloody Bill

No one defends Bloody Bill anymore. If a public opinion poll was taken of Americans who know anything about him, he would receive close to a 0.0% approval rating.

However, it was not always this low. When Cunningham applied for a military pension in 1786, his former superiors supported his application with effusive words of praise. During the first sixty years after the war's conclusion, a handful of writers minimized his crimes and tried to relieve him of personal culpability. In the 1840s, a Cunningham family member with excellent communication skills attempted (but failed) to redeem his and the Cunningham family's name. The last public attempt to portray Cunningham in a positive light appears to have been an 1893 letter to the editor of *The State* newspaper. This chapter surveys the varied ways Cunningham has been assessed and introduces noteworthy chroniclers whose work informs this book.

The Real, the Exaggerated and the Imagined

Anyone reading about William Cunningham must be cautious, because historians have spread untrue accounts of his life ever since 1782. Their successors have often carried those mistakes forward without close examination. Noted twentieth-century South Carolina historian Robert D. Bass exemplified the spread of misinformation about Cunningham. In his 1961 biography of Thomas Sumter, Bass wrote that during the six-week Bloody Scout raid, Cunningham “killed fifteen hundred Whigs between the sea and the mountains.”⁵ Given the limited time Cunningham and his raiders had to carry out the Bloody Scout, the geography, the limitations of horses, men, and weaponry, and the armed resistance the murderers faced, such a number was beyond the realm of possibility. But in recent years, professional and amateur researchers have accessed primary source documents such as Loyalist muster rolls, British military service records, and applications for military pensions. Once transcribed, these sources have helped to correct misinformation about Cunningham and have contributed immensely to the overall work of Revolutionary War historians.

During the first few decades after the Bloody Scout, the public transformed Bloody Bill's actual misdeeds into exaggerated tales fueled by fear and imagination. The killing spree so terrified South Carolinians that people reported seeing him when he was not present. Stories of Cunningham's activities should never be taken at face value.

In the 1830s, Judge John Belton O'Neill corrected a story of butchery by Cunningham. He wrote about men who were captured during the Bloody Scout and then slaughtered with swords. O'Neill wrote:

5. Robert Duncan Bass, *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of General Thomas Sumter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 212.

“It is the tradition, in Colonel Glenn’s family, that Capt. William Cunningham commanded this party, and that his sword performed the shameful butchery to which I have just alluded. But I am sure it is a mistake. One who lived in those times, and who knew most of those who acted and suffered on that occasion, assured me that it was the sudden outbreak of two ferocious spirits, Ned and Dick Turner, raging like tigers to be slaked with blood! Cunningham’s memory is loaded with a sufficient load of blood and vengeance, without adding to it the acts of others. He was not present on that bloody night.”⁶

Historian Ben Rubin observed, “The many atrocities of the American Revolution in the South fall basically into three different categories: The real, the exaggerated and the imagined.”⁷ A chronicle about former President Jimmy Carter exemplified all three categories. Cunningham’s murderous ways have been connected to the family tree of Mr. Carter. The narrative below contains both facts and errors:

Major William Cunningham was an infamous Tory officer during the American Revolution. He earned the moniker of Bloody Bill after committing numerous atrocities against his Patriot neighbors. One such atrocity was against Andrew Seawright, the 5th great-grandfather of President Jimmy Carter.

Andrew Seawright was born about 1712 in Ireland. He and his family immigrated to South Carolina arriving in Charleston in 1762. Among the family traveling with him was his son James Seawright, 4th great-grandfather of President Carter. James Seawright would meet his wife Elizabeth McCullough, 4th great-grandmother of President Carter, aboard the ship from Ireland.

Andrew Seawright was too old to fight during the Revolutionary War, but it is said that he served the Patriotic cause by supplying food to the Patriots. In 1781, Andrew Seawright’s home was attacked by Bloody Bill Cunningham and over 200 Tories and Indians that he commanded. They set Andrew Seawright’s house afire, burning Andrew to death inside. Bloody Bill then attacked the farm of James Seawright and Elizabeth McCullough. James was away fighting with the militia leaving Elizabeth at home with the children. Elizabeth was able to escape from the Tories and hide in the fields with her children during the attack. Unfortunately the night was very cold and two of the children would freeze to death before the night was over. One child who survived the night was Jane Seawright, President Carter’s 3rd great-grandmother.⁸

Andrew Seawright and his son James were indeed ancestors of James Earl “Jimmy” Carter. Former President Carter was admitted to the Sons of the American Revolution because he descended from Seawrights and other Patriots. The above account placed the atrocities against the Seawright family in 1781, the year of the Bloody Scout. However, Andrew Seawright died in 1777. Cunningham fought for the nation’s independence in 1775 and 1776 and did not participate in the war in 1777.

Andrew Seawright’s son James, like his father, was a native of Ireland and fought in the Revolutionary War. No source documents have surfaced to prove the Seawright family suffered Cunningham’s fury. He and his men torched structures and committed murders, but no primary accounts show Cunningham

6. John Belton O’Neill and John Abney Chapman, *The Annals of Newberry: In Two Parts*, (Newberry, SC: 1892), 195-196. The mention of the Turner brothers and Colonel Glenn’s family indicated the butchery took place when Ned Turner led a mission away from the main body of the Bloody Scout in late November 1781. See Chapter 9.

7. Ben Rubin, “The Rhetoric of Revenge: Atrocity and Revenge in the Revolutionary Carolinas,” *Journal of Backcountry Studies* 5, no. 2 (2010), <https://libjournal.uncg.edu/jbc/article/view/102/84> (accessed September 28, 2024).

8. “Ancestry of Jimmy Carter,” <https://famousskin.com/family-tree.php?name=12937+jimmy+carter> (accessed September 28, 2024); “James Seawright,” <https://sarpatriots.sar.org/patriot/display/286694> (accessed September 28, 2024).

having burned a house with people inside. The Seawright/Carter narrative exemplifies others which have exaggerated and even fictionalized Cunningham's nefarious behavior.

Elizabeth Ellet's 1848 landmark *Women of the American Revolution* offers another example of Rubin's "imagined" category of Cunningham stories.⁹ Ellet deserves kudos because she was the first person to compile accounts of women who made significant contributions to the war effort. She devoted a chapter to Dicey Langston, who served the Patriot cause in Laurens County. At age 14 or 15, Dicey Langston sprang between her father and a Loyalist who was preparing to shoot Mr. Langston. She announced the culprit would have to kill her first. Ellet added the Tory was a member of "the Bloody Scout." Several writers and storytellers have taken Ellet's accounts of Dicey Langston's heroic actions and elaborated upon them without evidence. One of those later writers inserted the name of William Cunningham into his version of Ellet's account of Dicey bravely saving her father's life.¹⁰

"Bloody Scout" refers to a particular event and no other. For six weeks, the men on the expedition rode at great speed through the Ninety Six District. No one had more than a few minutes' notice to escape their fury. Living in proximity to Loyalists, Dicey Langston no doubt heard talk of Tory plans. But the Tories in Ellet's account of the planned ambush could not have been the fast, stealthy riders of the Bloody Scout. In summary, some writers and storytellers have, without evidence, added the name Bloody Bill to their narratives of the American Revolution in South Carolina. To this day, storytellers decorate their tales with his name. All Bloody Bill stories warrant careful inspection in order to separate fact from fiction.¹¹

Portrayals of Cunningham

Several high-ranking British officers wrote accounts of the war after they returned to England. Having lost the war, each one defended himself against accusations of incompetence and unwarranted violence. It appears that none of the officers mentioned William Cunningham. Charleston physician Dr. David Ramsay was the first historian to write about how the American Revolution unfolded in South Carolina. After finishing his medical degree in Philadelphia, he practiced medicine in Charleston, served in the state's Patriot legislature, and started writing history. After taking control of Charleston, the British imprisoned Ramsay in St. Augustine, but he continued writing. The result was a two-volume history of the state's involvement in the war, the first volume going into publication only two years after the war ended. Ramsay devoted two pages to Cunningham and focused on the six-week Bloody Scout raid:

In the close of the year 1781, when the successes of the American army had confined the late conquerors to the vicinity of Charleston, a desperate band of Tories adopted the infernal scheme of making their last revenge, by carrying fire and sword into the settlements of the Whig militia. To this end Major William Cunningham of the British militia, collected a party, and having furnished them with everything necessary for laying waste to the country, sallied from Charleston.... In the rear of the American army, they began to plunder, burn, and murder.¹²

9. Elizabeth F. Ellet, *The Women of the American Revolution* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1848), 1:288.

10. Elaine Thorpe, "Contributions of Women in Future Laurens County," in *Discovering Laurens County, South Carolina*, ed. Richard Fowler (Gray Court, SC: Discovery Book Project, 2015), 2:141-142.

11. Paul A. Wood, Jr., "South Carolina Biography: Revolutionary Women, Laodicea 'Dicey' Langston Springfield," 25-26, <https://southcarolina250.com/publications> (accessed September 28, 2024).

12. David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina, from a British Province to an Independent State* (Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785, 2: 272.)

Ramsay reported that at the Hayes Station Massacre, Cunningham tried but failed to hang three men. He instead hacked them to death with his sword. But he eventually tired and allowed his men to choose the Patriots they deemed worthy of death. The Tories dismembered more victims. Many people validated Ramsay's account of the massacre. Almost twenty years later, renowned Patriot General William Moultrie took up his pen and chronicled the war in his 1802 *Memoirs*. Moultrie, like Ramsay, informed his readers about the massacres at Cloud's Creek and Hayes Station.¹³ Neither Ramsay nor Moultrie offered any defense of the hated "Bloody Bill."

In 1838, the *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of Arts* published Judge O'Neill's brief biography of Cunningham. His article offered no defense for Cunningham and echoed the prevailing opinion in nineteenth-century South Carolina. O'Neill wrote that Cunningham was known "to have been a man of great physical powers, and of fine personal appearance." O'Neill also provided graphic accounts of Cunningham's massacres and referred to his "fiend-like disposition." He made an error regarding Cunningham's age at his death, one of many inaccuracies which have survived into the twenty-first century.

Of Cunningham I know no more certainly, save that in him was not fulfilled the Scripture. The violent man did not die a violent death. His life was sought most diligently and fearlessly by the surviving kinsmen of his murdered victims. He lived to a good old age and died quietly in his own bed in the West Indies.¹⁴

In 1847, New Englander Lorenzo Sabine released a groundbreaking book on Loyalists. *The American Loyalists* provided summaries of the lives of three thousand men and women who remained faithful to George III. Sabine's effort earned him far-flung derision from Americans who perceived him to be unpatriotic. Sabine defended most of the South Carolina Loyalists he addressed. However, Sabine did not downplay Cunningham's violence and devoted only one sentence to him: "Was known as 'Bloody Bill;' and there seems no little evidence to show that he well deserved the appellation."¹⁵

Valuable Revelations from Battling Historians

From 1845 until 1847, an informative literary battle over William Cunningham's legacy erupted. One biographer, Ann Pamela Cuningham, defended William Cunningham and provided details otherwise unavailable to students of his life. The other, William Gilmore Simms, responded with corrections, more information, and stern criticism of Lorenzo Sabine, Ann Pamela Cuningham, and the long-dead William Cunningham. The historians' fray proved enlightening for everyone who has had an interest in Cunningham. Their differing perspectives warrant more attention than this book can provide.

Ann Pamela Cuningham came from another branch of the Cunningham family tree and therefore was a distant relative of William. Her grandfather, Patrick Cunningham, was a contemporary of William and played major roles in King George III's quest to extinguish the rebellion. Patrick had three brothers who

13. William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution: So Far As It Related to the States of North and South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (New York, 1802), 2:302-303.

14. John Belton O'Neill, "Random Recollections of Revolutionary Characters and Incidents," *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of Arts* 4, no. 1 (July 1838): 40-45.

15. Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists, or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in The War of the Revolution; Alphabetically Arranged; with a Preliminary Historical Essay* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847), 237.

were also Loyalists. Most writers refer to Patrick and his brothers as “cousins” of William Cunningham. But the exact nature of their family relationship remains unknown.

Though all four Cunningham brothers fought for the King in the war, Robert and Patrick Cunningham were older, wealthier, and played more prominent roles. The two served with honor and distinction and showed integrity throughout their lives.¹⁶ The wartime actions of Patrick and Robert often intersected with those of their relative William.

Patrick Cunningham named one of his sons after his brother Robert. This Robert Cunningham and his wife Louisa Byrd Cunningham were the parents of Ann Pamela Cuningham.¹⁷ Ann Pamela lived her entire life at her parents’ Rosemont Plantation in Laurens County. She was well-educated, an accomplished pianist, and an excellent writer. She became an equestrian; but in 1833, the year she turned seventeen, a horse threw her. Her injuries caused lifelong pain and impairment. Trips to Philadelphia for care yielded little relief.¹⁸

In the 1840s, some South Carolinians still held the Cunningham name in low regard. To establish a more positive reputation for the Cunninghams, Benjamin Franklin Perry, a friend of the family, suggested Ann Pamela write a family history. With further encouragement from her father and access to family records, Ann Pamela chronicled the lives of the four brothers and their reviled relative, William. Ann Pamela gave her articles to George A. Ward, who was preparing his third edition of *The Journal and Letters of Samuel Curwen*. Curwen had been a New England Loyalist and admiralty judge, so his *Journal and Letters* presented the Loyalist cause positively. Ann Pamela defended her grandfather, Patrick, her great uncle, Robert, and her relative William. She guessed her readers would give scant attention to a woman’s words, especially one with the surname Cunningham, so she arranged with Ward for her work to be published anonymously.¹⁹ When Ann Pamela Cuningham’s support for her relatives went into publication, readers of the 3rd edition assumed its appendix contained the reports and opinions of Curwen, the editor Ward, or another man. In fact, a female Cunningham had written the appendix.²⁰

To vindicate her great uncle Robert, Ann Pamela recounted the unjust cruelty experienced early in the war by the men and women who remained loyal to King George III. Her words demonstrated her excellent reasoning and superb writing skills and also yielded valuable insights into South Carolina’s civil war. Ann Pamela related how the Patriot-dominated Provincial Congress oppressed the opponents of the rebellion, including Robert and Patrick. In doing so, she provided an apt summary of relations between Patriots and Loyalists. She erred only in the closing clause where she attempted to lay blame solely at the feet of Patriots:

16. Rebecca Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion: The Reintegration of the South Carolina Loyalists* (University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 156-157.

17. From their arrival in South Carolina, the family used two spellings. Around 1880, the family announced their surname was spelled with one *n*. For clarity’s sake, this book spells Ann Pamela with one *n* and all her relatives with two *n*’s. Hence, Ann Pamela Cuningham and William Cunningham.

18. D. Christy Snipes, *Rosemont Plantation, Laurens County, South Carolina: A History of the Cunningham Family and Its Life on the Land* (Gray Court, SC: Rosemont Preservation Society, 1992), 22.

19. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, 159.

20. Samuel Curwen, *Journal and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen*, George Atkinson Ward, ed., 3rd edition (New York, 1845). It is important to note that the appendix to the 3rd edition of the Curwen *Journal and Letters* was written by Ann Pamela Cuningham, not by the editor, Ward, or Curwen.

When, therefore, the Assembly in July 1775 passed a vote in commendation of Massachusetts, and also a non-importation act, Robert Cunningham was opposed to both, and afterwards when the "Association Act" was passed he openly expressed his disapprobation of it in the strongest terms. This independent line of conduct soon brought him, and those who acted with him, under the ban of the dominant party, and it would far exceed our limits to enumerate all the insults that were heaped upon them, or the many grievances of which they had ere long to complain. As force has ever yet proved but a feeble instrument in the work of conversion, its effect on the loyalists was only to make them adhere the more firmly to their principles, and to drive them into active and determined hostility. Vengeance for wrongs committed against themselves and their families whetted their swords, and directed the aim of their muskets. A civil war raged with unmitigated fury, and its guilt of right belongs to those with whom it originated.²¹

Ann Pamela Cuningham titled the second part of the appendix "Major William Cunningham of South Carolina." She reported that William first sided with the rebellion. He was treated unfairly by his superiors, which led him to become a Loyalist. Once a Loyalist, Patriots' mistreatment of him worsened:

No sooner had he made his declaration (that of turning from the patriot to the tory side in the war), than a system of persecution was commenced against him. ... [Their persecution] speedily changed a kind and affectionate tempered man into a vengeful and unsparing partisan. He was hunted more like a wild beast than a man.²²

Ann Pamela's detailed descriptions of the Bloody Scout massacres, while biased and not entirely accurate, have yielded invaluable information to generations of readers. She argued that William's killings were mandated by General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, British commander in the South, and wrote:

Cornwallis issued orders that all such [Patriots who took parole in 1780 and broke it] should be put to death as rebels, who had forfeited their lives by breaking the oaths of fealty they had so short a time previously taken. Major Cunningham, then an officer in the British service, was one of those who received these orders, and who executed them rigorously on all such offenders as fell into his power. Away with the sickly sentimentality that would say that he did wrong in so doing.²³

Her description of a murder William Cunningham committed during the Hayes Station massacre exemplified her viewpoint that William Cunningham carried out justice when no one else would do so. She wrote that William Cunningham slew one victim "with his sword. He then gave permission to his men to do as they pleased with the rest. All who had rendered themselves obnoxious by acts of cruelty and plunder were slain without mercy. The others were saved. Each of Cunningham's men singled out whomsoever among the prisoners had been guilty of murdering any of his relatives, and killed them forthwith."²⁴

Ann Pamela summarized her case for William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham:

21. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 623.

22. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639-640.

23. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 643.

24. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 645.

Major William Cunningham had suffered fearful wrongs, and fearfully did he avenge them. Where the law could not reach, he took the law into his own hands, and it is not for us to measure the amount of guilt he incurred by doing so.... We cannot doubt, however, that it is the comprehensiveness as well as the severity of the acts of retribution, that the name of Cunningham owes the distinction of being, even to this day, very cordially hated in South Carolina.²⁵

William Gilmore Simms was the foremost South Carolina writer and historian of the nineteenth century. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., described Simms as “one of the best known and most respected of all American authors, with a literary reputation that extended across the Atlantic.”²⁶ The appendix in the 3rd edition of Curwen’s *Journal* stirred the ire, if not rage, of Simms. He assumed the anonymous author was a man and employed his full literary talents and immense knowledge of South Carolina history to repudiate the writer. Simms later apologized to Ann Pamela when he learned the Appendix was her work, yet still wondered if a man might have been the actual author.²⁷

In 1846, a year after the third edition of Curwen’s *Journal and Letters* debuted, Simms published two unsigned articles about South Carolina’s role in the American Revolutionary War. They ran in the *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review*, which he edited. The first was published in three parts and entitled “The Civil Warfare in the Carolinas and Georgia, During the Revolution.”²⁸ Simms provided rich insights into the war. However, he held a stringently negative view of all Loyalists, as best seen in his Revolutionary-era novels. A later chapter will introduce Thomas “Burnfoot” Brown, a South Carolinian who was tortured by Patriots. Simms showed Brown no sympathy, describing him as “a savage, a brute, in many respects ferocious and cruel.”²⁹

In the first article written in response to Ann Pamela Cuningham, Simms sternly criticized Loyalist Samuel Curwen and Lorenzo Sabine’s recently published book about Loyalists. Simms had these harsh words for all Tories: “The loyalists of 1775 were *not* [Simms’s emphasis] banished for their opinions, and even if they had been it cannot be allowed that their opinions can be justified. They paid the penalty of obtuseness and presumpties [presumptuousness].” Simms wrote of Curwen, “We do not say this by way of sneer nor censure. Samuel Curwen was true to nature when he was scarcely true to America.”³⁰

The second article by Simms was published in two parts and entitled “Biographical Sketch of the Career of Major William Cunningham of South Carolina.”³¹ Simms complimented the character and actions of Robert and Patrick Cunningham. But Simms wrote wrathfully about what Ann Pamela had to say about William. Historian Rebecca Brannon wrote: “[Simms] cut to the jugular and demolished her efforts to find anything good to say about William Cunningham.”³² After correcting Ann Pamela’s description of the Cloud’s Creek Massacre, Simms added that her account “proves nothing more conclusively, than the

25. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 648.

26. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 54.

27. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, 160.

28. William Gilmore Simms, “The Civil Warfare in the Carolinas and Georgia, During the Revolution,” *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review* 12, no. 5, May 1846, 222-236; 12, no. 6, June 1846, 321-330; no. 7, July 1846, 395-412, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acf2679.0012.005/262:1>.

29. Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782*, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, 4-5.

30. Simms, “Civil Warfare.”

31. William Gilmore Simms, “Biographical Sketch of the Career of Major William Cunningham,” *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review* 12, Sept. 1846, 513-525; Oct. 1846, 577-586.

32. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, 159.

diseased blindness, and the prejudiced hostility of the writer.” Simms responded bluntly to Ann Pamela’s argument that William Cunningham was simply following Cornwallis’s orders to execute Patriots who had broken parole: “[A man’s] duty as a soldier is one thing—that of the butcher is another. Cornwallis might properly require him to fight, and to destroy in fight, the enemies of the crown:--he could not require him to be a hangman.” Though one must always be alert to the two writers’ biases and Ann Pamela’s distortions of fact, the Cunningham/Simms scabble provided invaluable information about William Cunningham’s life and personality.³³

The fierce and highly talented Simms was victorious in the short-lived academic fray, and Ann Pamela soon halted her efforts to write history. Another life-changing event for Ann Pamela occurred in 1853. For the rest of her life, she *made* history. That year she and her mother, Louisa Byrd Cunningham, traveled to Philadelphia for Ann Pamela to receive more medical care. Louisa left her daughter behind, and during her journey home Louisa took passage on a steamer which sailed down the Potomac. On deck one moonlit evening, Louisa had a clear view of Mount Vernon, the estate of George Washington. From her childhood, Louisa’s family had social connections with George Washington’s family. Before marrying Robert, Louisa visited the first president’s relatives, so she became familiar with the buildings and grounds of Mount Vernon. What Louisa saw deeply distressed her. Everything had fallen into disrepair. Louisa wrote to her daughter and urged Ann Pamela to save Mount Vernon. Ann Pamela took up the challenge. Later, in 1853, she announced the formation of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Her vision was for Southern women to organize and raise the funds, but letters from Northerners showed they did not want to be left out of the project. Soon, every state had a vice regent who worked directly with Ann Pamela and implemented fundraising campaigns. She used her excellent writing skills, organizational skills, and deep passion to establish the nation’s first historic preservation society. Ann Pamela, the first regent, and her vice regents overcame numerous obstacles and purchased the estate for \$200,000 right before the start of the Civil War. At the war’s conclusion, the Association raised more funds and restored it to its former glory. A physically impaired South Carolina woman whose efforts to restore her family’s reputation failed, nonetheless achieved resounding success in a different endeavor, one which still bears fruit in the 21st century. Ann Pamela could not change Bloody Bill’s public image, but her achievements at Mount Vernon elevated the Cunningham family’s standing.³⁴

In 1852, John Belton O’Neill completed Part One of *The Annals of Newberry: Historical, Biographical and Anecdotal*, which included descriptions of the Bloody Scout raid. Forty years later, John Abney Chapman wrote Part Two of the book. The combined parts were published in 1892 and added to the public’s knowledge of Cunningham. Their text has provided valuable material for this book.³⁵

Another descendant of Patrick Cunningham attempted in 1893 to defend William Cunningham. The author of a letter to the editor of *The State* newspaper (Columbia) was Floride Cunningham. Ann Pamela had a brother named John; Floride was John’s daughter. She reacted to her father’s obituary:

33. Sims, “Biographical Sketch;” Rebecca Nathan Brannon, “Reconciling the Revolution: Resolving Conflict and Rebuilding Community in the Wake of Civil War in South Carolina, 1775 – 1860,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 442; Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, 159-162.

34. Mount Vernon Ladies Association, “The Early History of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association,” <https://www.mountvernon.org/preservation/mount-vernon-ladies-association/early-history> (accessed November 28, 2024); Mount Vernon Ladies Association, *Historical Sketch of Ann Pamela Cunningham, the “Southern Matron,” Founder of “The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association”* (New York: Marion Press, 1903), 1-49.

35. John Belton O’Neill and John Abney Chapman, *Annals of Newberry: In Two Parts* (Newberry, SC: Aull & Houseal, 1892).

To the Editor of The State:

In the Charleston Sunday News (and Courier) of March 12th, the day of the funeral of my late father, Col. John Cuningham, I find the following remarkable statement regarding him in the obituary notice with which that paper honors him: "He was a grandson of Colonel William Cuningham of Revolutionary fame, familiarly known as 'Tory Bill,' of the Revolution." As William Cuningham was never married, the assertion is a prostitution of history. My father was a grandson of Patrick Cuningham, a commissioned colonel of the Royal Army of England, Deputy Surveyor General, under Sir Edgerton Leigh, of the Province of South Carolina, and a brother of Brigadier General Robert Cuningham, also of the British Army.

"Tory Bill," as it chooses to call him, was a cousin of Patrick Cuningham, and was the only Whig member of the family. His mother and only brother, as a young boy, and a hunchback accompanied him to America. William Cuningham was fond of hunting, and often indulged in the sport, and when absent upon one of these occasions for several days, a party of Whigs, bitterly opposed to the Cuninghams, and knowing him to be away from home, made a raid upon and burnt it during the night—the inmates being his mother and her little son. William Cuningham returned to find them houseless, thinly clad, and full of the despair of long hours without food and shelter. He discovered the names of the leaders, and openly declared that he would kill them for their cowardly act, and he did, and then he joined the Tories. History affirms that the Cuninghams repudiated him. This is not true. He was intimate at Rosemont always, and continued so until his return to England. He was a man of unusual beauty high education and liberal means. And was of a frank, generous and affectionate disposition, as was exemplified by his tender love for his mother and afflicted brother. Had I been a man, and with the same provocation, I should have done likewise. I do not blush for him. I am proud of his manhood.

Floride Cuningham, Rosemont Plantation, S.C., March 20th, '93.³⁶

As will be seen, Floride Cuningham's letter contained several errors. It appears to have been the final public attempt to redeem Bloody Bill.

At the turn of the twentieth century, two more South Carolina historians wrote about William Cuningham. Like O'Neill and Chapman, they depended heavily upon the narratives of Ann Pamela Cuningham, who they assumed to be Samuel Curwen, and William Gilmore Simms.

Close on the heels of *The Annals of Newberry County*, a Spartanburg County physician who was named for O'Neill turned his attention to the American Revolution. John Belton O'Neill Landrum wrote two books. His *Colonial and Revolutionary History of "Upper" South Carolina* was published in 1897. He followed it with *History of Spartanburg County*, published in 1900. Though Landrum depended upon his predecessors, he provided new information and insights into Cuningham's crimes.³⁷

Edward McCrady made further contributions to the public's understanding of South Carolina's role in the Revolutionary War when in 1902 he published two volumes about the Revolution in South Carolina.³⁸ Like his predecessors, McCrady depended upon Ann Pamela Cuningham and Simms. McCrady

36. Bela Padgett Herlong, Carol Hardy Bryan, and Charles Reneau Andrews, *Where Our Paths Crossed: The Old Edgefield District Settlement of Mount Willing* (Cumming, GA: Mount Willing Press, 2011), 431.

37. J.B.O. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of "Upper" South Carolina: embracing for the most part the primitive and colonial history of the territory comprising the original county of Spartanburg, with a general review of the entire military operations in the upper portions of South Carolina and portions of North Carolina* (Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co., 1897); J.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* (Atlanta, GA: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1900).

38. Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902).

paraphrased Ann Pamela when he wrote of William Cunningham: “in the beginning of the struggle his political opinions leaned more to the Whig side than those of the rest of his family. He is represented as being of lively, jovial disposition, open-hearted and generous, priding himself upon keeping his word, but of a quick and fiery temper. He was a remarkable horseman, with a passion for fine horses, fine weapons, and fine clothing. These qualities rendered him a favorite with the young men of his neighborhood.” Significantly, McCrady put Cunningham into the context of wartime suffering experienced by all South Carolinians. This biography will return frequently to the theme of cultural context: “The history of the notorious William Cuningham, whose cruelties have given him a name in the annals of his state as that of ‘Bloody Bill Cuningham,’ is interesting and instructive as illustrating the dreadful condition of affairs at this time, and their effect upon characters which otherwise might have developed peaceable citizens with no unkindly disposition.”³⁹

In recent years, historians have accessed previously unavailable primary sources which unpack the lives of Loyalists. Their discoveries helped create a new field of study (“Loyalist Studies”) and provided valuable information for researchers and the public. The field has been correcting the numerous biases and inaccuracies found in earlier works. Robert Stansbury Lambert’s *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* provided a superb survey of the motives and desires of Loyalists and their activities during and after the war. Lambert’s reflections presented Loyalists as human beings, not monsters, and identified revenge as the principal cause of William Cunningham’s crimes.⁴⁰

Rebecca Brannon’s *From Revolution to Reunion* described the process of reconciliation between Patriots and Loyalists and proved that many of the state’s Loyalists became valued and respected citizens after the war. In *Liberty’s Exiles*, Maya Jasanoff provided a general survey of the thousands of Loyalists who left the United States. They settled in far-flung parts of the British Empire and helped lay foundations for democracy in other nations.⁴¹

39. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:467.

40. Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Clemson University Digital Press, 2010).

41. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*; Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

A Culture of Hardship and Violence

An untold number of erroneous stories about William Cunningham have been told and published since 1782. Chapter One cautioned the reader to beware of errors, exaggerations, and fictions. This chapter urges the reader to use caution when evaluating the cruelties for which Cunningham was indeed responsible. During the Revolutionary War, South Carolina often lacked law enforcement, trials by jury, and magistrates. Institutions of law and order frequently did not exist during the war years. Remarkably and tragically, those institutions had never existed in the South Carolina Backcountry until 1769. Only six years later, with the start of the war, they again ceased to exist. The state had few schools, and the social stability and moral behavior engendered by church life and the clergy were scarce in the Backcountry until after the war. To fairly assess Cunningham's life, one must have some understanding of South Carolina's one-hundred-year history, of the war for American independence, and of the other war, the civil war, which transpired in the state concurrently with the Revolution. The British colony where Cunningham attained adulthood had endured a hundred years of hardship and violence since its founding in 1670, and the Revolution launched even more extreme hatred, violence, destruction, poverty, illness, injury, and death. Over the state's 350-year history, only one period surpasses the Revolution regarding suffering. That was the nation's Civil War. Cunningham's behavior was part and parcel of the history of his state and the country's infancy.

The introduction labeled South Carolina's war-within-a-war a civil war. *Merriam-Webster* defines civil war as "a state or period of fighting between groups of people in the same location." *Britannica* provides a more accurate understanding of South Carolina's civil war. It describes a civil war as "a violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state's territory."⁴² South Carolina's government changed four times between 1775 and 1782. The first transition occurred in 1774 and 1775 when Patriots replaced the king's colonial government. In 1775, Patriots forced the royal governor, Lord William Campbell, to retreat to a ship in Charleston harbor. They also created a Provincial Congress which elected a General Committee of ninety-nine men. The Congress later elected a Council of Safety with only thirteen members to govern the state and handle military matters. This wartime regime imposed its will on South Carolinians still loyal to the crown.⁴³ Patriot governance ended five years later when Governor John Rutledge went into exile and Charleston fell to the British. The majority of Patriots who had taken up arms during the war took parole or fled to North Carolina. No Continental soldiers remained to contest royal control. On many occasions, British troops showed little restraint in their treatment of the rebels and

42. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "civil war," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/civil%20war> (accessed Dec. 18, 2024); *Britannica*, "civil war," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-war> (accessed March 5, 2024).

43. Agnes Hunt, "The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution," <https://www.committee.org/PCOS33SouthCarolina.htm> (accessed November 29, 2024).

burned farms and homes. Loyalists took advantage of the period of British dominance to retaliate against those who had mistreated them.

Amid enormous bloodshed, the tide of war turned again. Continentals and Patriot militia forced the British back to the vicinity of Charleston in the summer of 1781. Several thousand Loyalists accompanied them. They took what possessions they could, left their Backcountry homes for the last time, and became refugees in Charleston. Patriots reestablished their government in February 1782, when Major General Nathanael Greene provided a safe harbor in Jacksonborough for a newly elected General Assembly. The Assembly and Governor Rutledge sought in concert with Greene to put down the remaining Loyalist resistance and force the British out to sea. The new civil authorities banished hundreds of Loyalists and confiscated their property. General Assembly members amerced (levied heavy taxes on) many of those Loyalists who remained in the state and others who had left but were allowed to return. In summary, the official government of South Carolina swapped back and forth between 1775 and 1782. With each transition, the men, women, and children on the losing side suffered severe repression. Hence, as *Britannica* defines “civil war,” South Carolina endured “a violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state’s territory.”

Choosing Sides

What were the fundamental desires which distinguished South Carolina’s Patriots from Loyalists? What drove the quest for independence and the opposite desire to maintain allegiance to King George III? There is no simple explanation, and every generalization includes exceptions. Simplifications such as national origins and religion provide insights but are insufficient. For example, recent emigres from Germany remained loyal to King George III. They were grateful for his royal land grants and fearful they might lose their property if they supported the rebellion and the King prevailed in the war. Besides, George III was a German. His grandfather, George I, and his father, George II, never learned to speak English.

Loyalists’ numbers were high in parts of the state recently settled by German immigrants. Robert W. Barnwell, Jr. identified Loyalist concentration in the “Dutch Fork, Orangeburg Township, and the fork of the Edisto, Saxe Gotha Township, the settlements on the upper part of Lynches River, and the Little Pee Dee region. Also, the Hillsborough Township in the Ninety Six District where Palatines had settled.”⁴⁴ But not all German emigres were Loyalists, and Barnwell’s summary did not explain the remarkable strength of Loyalism in the Ninety Six District. Loyalism was stronger in the Ninety Six District than in any other South Carolina locale, and the fiercest Patriot/Loyalist violence took place in the Ninety Six District.

Scots-Irish, or Scotch-Irish, were also concentrated in the Ninety Six District. Before beginning their transatlantic migration, the Scots-Irish fought for several centuries to be free of English control. Intertwined with that conflict was the discrimination they endured as Presbyterians. In the twenty years before the Revolutionary War began, Scots-Irish were South Carolina’s largest group of immigrants. The vast majority of Scots-Irish in South Carolina supported the rebellion.⁴⁵

Other factors led to the division of hearts and minds. The intricacies of the Regulator Movement, described below, fostered opaque hatred and the still-simmering feuds influenced relationships throughout

44. Robert Woodward Barnwell, Jr., *Loyalists in South Carolina, 1765-1785* (PhD diss., Duke University, 1941), 134.

45. David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 605-782.

the war. In the Low Country, government positions and economic ties, especially among merchants, fostered loyalty to the British Empire. Close bonds with the Church of England kept some Low Country residents with the Crown. Ordination mandated sworn support for the monarch, so Anglican priests abandoned the state. Most Low Country whites ultimately supported the Revolution. They objected to Parliamentary taxes and Parliamentary interference in local affairs.

Two ethnic groups stood almost uniformly with the British. Persons of African ancestry, almost all of whom lived in slavery, hoped the British would prevail. British wartime policies gave them reason to risk escape from their enslavers and to enlist. To their immense disappointment, these policies had limited real or permanent success. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, formerly enslaved men, women, and children who had found harbor with the British were to be returned to their previous owners.

With one exception, South Carolina's indigenous people supported a British victory. Since South Carolina's founding in 1670, Native Americans had suffered from displacement, diseases, famine, and warfare. Survivors had to move farther and farther from the coast. After the Seven Years' War, known as the French and Indian War among English-speaking colonists, George III established the 1763 Proclamation Line. British law forbade whites from traveling over or settling west of the line. In the South, the Proclamation Line proved especially important to the Cherokee who were the dominant southern tribe in the mountains. These tribes guessed correctly that, given a Patriot victory, the line would cease to exist. They would have no choice but to move closer and closer to the Mississippi.

One southern tribe proved itself committed to the rebel cause. The Catawba people inhabited the Carolinas, close to the village of Charlotte. The small tribe enjoyed cordial and financially productive relationships with whites before the American Revolution. Dozens of Catawba men fought and died with the Patriots.

Historians estimate a third of the state's population chose the equally dangerous road of neutrality. Loyalists and Patriots alike pressured those who were neutral to join them. Loyalist and Patriot militia not only stole goods from their opponents' homes and farms but also disregarded the protests of neutrals. Nonpartisanship was nearly as dangerous as making a declaration of loyalty to the rebel cause or to the king. Jim Piccuch wrote: "From the royal governors to small farmers, almost everyone in those provinces who supported the British or preferred to remain neutral suffered."⁴⁶

One more dynamic of South Carolina's civil war warrants mention. An undetermined number of men switched sides during the war. Some Loyalists later fought for the rebel cause, and others entered the war on the side of rebellion but became Loyalists. William Cunningham was among those who abandoned his initial commitment.

Brutality in All Thirteen Colonies

The remarkable savagery which ensued before the outbreak of war and continued throughout the American Revolution was not restricted to the Palmetto State. New Englanders were the first to react to the British taxes which Parliament imposed to pay off debts incurred during the French and Indian War. Patriot groups, such as the Sons of Liberty, used intimidation and violence to silence those who supported Great Britain. Residents of New England were first to employ tarring and feathering in the 1760s. The practice

46. Piccuch, *Three Peoples*, 45.



New Method of MACARONY MAKING, as practifed at BOSTON.

A new method of macarony making, as practised at Boston.
1774. British cartoon. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004673300/>.

spread south. Governments not aligned with the crown imposed fierce policies to punish those who refused to sign oaths supporting the Patriot cause. A later chapter will tell of southerner Thomas “Burnfoot” Brown, who in 1775 refused to side with the Patriots. His opponents tied him to a tree and set a fire beneath his feet.⁴⁷

In 1773, Connecticut’s legislature transformed an old copper mine into a prison. The Simsbury Mine came to be known as the “Catacomb of Connecticut.” Men not deemed worthy of hanging were lowered into the mine and confined there with little food, sanitation, or fresh air. Although about half the prisoners at Simsbury escaped, few others survived. Their tomb was forty feet beneath the surface.⁴⁸

Another account shows that violent oppression was not unique to the Carolinas and Georgia. In late March 1782, Pennsylvania militia mustered to punish Wyandot and Lenape Indians who were terrorizing white families near present-day Sandusky, Ohio. Once in the vicinity, the Patriots learned the native warriors outnumbered them. The Patriots retreated, but to no avail. The Native Americans apprehended the militia commander, Colonel William Crawford, along with other members of his unit. They tortured Crawford and burned him at the stake.

What set off such violence? A massacre of pacifist Indians took place a few weeks earlier in Ohio. The Native Americans who killed William Crawford were taking revenge for the Gnadenhutzen Massacre. In early March 1782, other Pennsylvania militia commanded by Colonel David Williamson marched into Ohio to punish Moravian Indians living near Gnadenhutzen, Ohio. As Christian pacifists, the tribe had not taken up arms in the war. Williamson concluded without evidence that they had taken part in recent raids against Patriot enclaves. Williamson arrived while the Indians tended their fields, and he told them his men would lead them to safety at Fort Pitt. The innocents soon learned they were to be put to death the next morning. Williamson allowed his men to rape women and children. The next day, they destroyed the village and executed ninety-six men, women, and children. Their primary tool of execution was a cooper’s mallet. The Moravian Massacre is regarded as the largest massacre of civilians during the war.⁴⁹

In 1848, William Gilmore Simms described the old feuds between the Scots and the Irish. He overgeneralized about Americans with roots in Scotland and those with roots in Ireland. The Scots, he contended, were for the Crown, and the Irish for American independence. However, Simms more accurately concluded: “America was simply a battle-field for fighting out these ancient quarrels.”⁵⁰

Rhode Island native Nathanael Greene grew up as a Quaker and therefore as a pacifist. He became a lifelong student of warfare and was forced out of the Quaker community. In 1775, Greene offered his services to General George Washington. The two quickly became trusted friends, and Washington made Greene a brigadier general. Greene preferred to lead men in battle but reluctantly agreed to assume the position of quartermaster general in 1778. He performed exceptionally well in that role and held the position for two years. The primary test of his generalship came when Washington dispatched Greene from West Point to the Carolinas in the fall of 1780. British troops had taken Savannah in Georgia in 1778.

47. Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (Oxford University Press, 1975), 56-57; Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 25; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 41-65.

48. Wayne Lynch, “Tory Stories from the Simsbury Copper Mine,” *Journal of the American Revolution*, May 13, 2013, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/05/tory-stories-from-the-simsbury-copper-miner> (hereafter cited as *JAR*) (accessed March 5, 2024).

49. Timothy C. Hemmis, “Under the Banner of War: Frontier Militia and Uncontrolled Violence,” *JAR*, March 29, 2022, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2022/03/under-the-banner-of-war-frontier-militia-and-uncontrolled-violence/> (accessed March 5, 2024); Eric Sterner, “Moravians in the Middle: The Gnadenhutzen Massacre,” *JAR*, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/02/moravians-middle-gnadenhutzen-massacre> (accessed September 30, 2024).

50. William Gilmore Simms, “Civil Warfare” 12, 394-398.



General Nathanael Greene

General Sir Henry Clinton captured Charleston in May 1780 and claimed an entire Continental Army. Then Charles, Lord Cornwallis devastated another army at the Battle of Camden. The South was in grave jeopardy. Even if Maryland and states to its north achieved independence, the British might force the capitulation of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Greene's movements, strategies, ultimate goals, and correspondence will play important roles in this narrative of the life of William Cunningham.

Greene arrived in the village of Charlotte in December 1780 and took command of the Continental Army's remnants from the defeat at Camden. He had served for five years in the northern theater and was dumbstruck by a dramatic contrast. The war in the South was ruthless beyond measure. Once encamped in Charlotte, he shared his impressions with General Robert Howe. "The Whigs and Tories pursue one another with the most relentless fury, killing and destroying each other whenever they met.... The great bodies of militia... employed against the enemy and in quelling the Tories have almost laid waste the country."⁵¹ Six months later, during his siege of Ninety Six, Greene wrote to John Wilkinson, "Two evils which prevail in all the Southern States should be checked as soon as possible, plundering and private murders. The Country groans under those two evils and if they continue to rage, as they have done, it will soon be depopulated."⁵²

Contemporary historians have analyzed the internecine fighting in all the colonies and have arrived at a consensus that the internal warfare of the American Revolution led to more atrocities in South Carolina than in any other state. These scholars place blame equally at the feet of Patriots and Loyalists and, to a lesser extent, the British. Nathanael Greene never had sufficient control of his officers, who sometimes allowed their soldiers to pillage and even to murder opponents who had surrendered. During his exile in North Carolina, Governor John Rutledge made Thomas Sumter a militia general, which meant Greene did not have authority over Sumter. Sumter received fewer supplies and arms than did Greene. During part of 1781, he employed "Sumter's Law" as a recruitment tool. The policy allowed his men to plunder Tory homes, steal booty, and take possession of enslaved people.

Three events in the latter half of 1780 transformed South Carolina's civil war into a house fully engulfed in flame. First, while Henry Clinton was besieging Charleston in May 1780, Colonel Abraham Buford pushed through the Carolinas with a Virginia Continental regiment to reinforce the city. When Buford learned Charleston had fallen, he turned around. Governor John Rutledge avoided arrest by leaving the city before Clinton arrived. He joined Buford in the retreat northward. General Cornwallis responded to Buford's reversed course by dispatching Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton to corral Buford, his troops, and the governor. A small contingent left Buford's army and delivered the governor to safety in Hillsborough, North Carolina. However, Tarleton engaged Buford in the Waxhaws, near present-day Lancaster. Scholars debate the degree to which Tarleton is to blame for what followed. The brief battle brought about the severe

51. Nathanael Greene to Robert Howe, December 29, 1780, *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, Richard K. Showman and Dennis Conrad, eds. (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 7:7 (hereafter cited as *PNG*.)

52. Greene to John Wilkinson, June 13, 1781, *PNG*, 8:386-387; Bass, *Gamecock*, 213.

injuries and deaths of over one hundred Continentals. Tarleton's saber-wielding cavalry hacked many of them to death. Word spread of the "massacre" at the Waxhaws. Patriots contended Tarleton never offered Buford the opportunity to surrender, "to give quarter." Calls for revenge spread throughout the southern states. "Tarleton's Quarter" became a rallying cry for Patriot militia, many of whom felled Tories and British soldiers after they surrendered.

A second British mission spawned additional animosity. Cornwallis dispatched Captain Christian Huck on a slash-and-burn mission through upper South Carolina. Huck's raiding gave Patriots even more reason to hate the British. Huck was defeated and killed at Williamson's Plantation in York County. Clinton and Charles, Lord Cornwallis, his successor in the South, made a strategic error by never pacifying the citizenry. If they had treated Patriots, even those in arms, with equanimity, the war might have taken a different course in the South. The warring between neighbors had begun in 1775, and British leadership failed to improve the situation. Vengeance remained the primary motivation for violence, destruction, and theft after the British arrived.

A third major event contributed heavily to the explosion of internecine warfare after the fall of Charleston. Following their October 1780 victory at Kings Mountain, the Patriots took several hundred prisoners and marched them toward confinement in Virginia. The victors stopped at Biggerstaff's Plantation to hold a kangaroo court for some of the Loyalists. They found thirty-six men to be guilty of various crimes and prepared to hang them. Before Colonel Isaac Shelby brought the killing spree to an end, nine men were hanged from the "Gallows Oak." As the surviving prisoners continued their journey, many of them escaped. They rejoined their militia companies and British officers and told of the hangings. They told sympathetic listeners how fellow Loyalists surrendered and lay down their arms on Kings Mountain yet were slain. These reports, though sometimes exaggerated, further heightened the mayhem. With the events during and immediately following Kings Mountain, the cycle of retribution vaulted to a new level of hatred and bloodshed. The violence of this worst part of South Carolina's civil war reached its wretched peak a year later when William Cunningham led a rampage through the Ninety Six District.⁵³

The Origins of South Carolina's Civil War

South Carolina's history shaped the civil war that occurred during the Revolution. From its founding, colonial South Carolina was a domain of constant danger and violence. The Europeans who arrived at Charles Town Landing in 1670 risked injuries as they established farms and plantations. Diseases common to warm, moist climates afflicted them. Menacing mammals and reptiles also posed threats.

The founders brought with them enslaved people, and the enslaved population grew much faster than the white population. By 1720, the colony had about 17,000 residents, 12,000 of whom were black. Twenty years later, the colony had a population of 45,000. Only 15,000 were white. The people held in bondage occasionally resorted to violence against whites. Punishment was swift and extreme, ranging from whipping, removal of limbs, or death. Outright rebellion took place only once in colonial South Carolina. During the Stono Rebellion of September 1739, about a hundred enslaved people attempted to find freedom in Spanish Florida. Whites quickly subdued the rebellion, but only after enormous bloodshed among both races. With

53. John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1997), 237-239.

the 1740 Negro Act, the colony created measures to keep a closer watch on enslaved people and to temporarily slow the importation of additional Africans.⁵⁴

Much more lethal and constant peril for the colonists came from the knives, tomahawks, arrows, and bullets of the Native peoples. Whites were attacked and their farms burned. Warfare broke out in 1715, when the large Yamasee nation formed an alliance with other southern tribes. These included the Creeks, Catawba, Cherokee, Waxhaw, and Santee. The Natives sought to punish, if not eradicate, white South Carolinians. The tribes objected not only to encroachment on their territories but to unfair trade practices which had pushed them into enormous debt. During the Yamasee War, the allied tribes slaughtered fur traders and hundreds of other whites. They forced half the landowners to abandon their cultivated fields. Refugees escaped to Charleston but faced starvation. South Carolina's colonists became so desperate they armed enslaved men. White leaders eventually convinced the powerful Cherokee to ally with them instead of the Yamasee. That ended the war, resulting in a 1718 treaty. The Yamasee and several smaller tribes ceased to exist. More than half the population of whites and blacks died from murder and starvation. The colony came close to extinction.⁵⁵

Despite their temporary ties with the Yamasee, the Cherokee lived in relative harmony with whites. Their dwellings and cultivated fields in South Carolina's foothills lay over two hundred miles from the coast and were called the Lower Settlements. The Native people traveled many miles from home to harvest deer and beaver. They sold the pelts to white traders at inland outposts such as Ninety Six. Once delivered to Charleston, merchants shipped the pelts to European markets.

For the first few decades of European presence, the white and black populations clustered in and near Charleston and coastal villages such as Georgetown and Beaufort. Enslaved people labored on large indigo and rice plantations. Almost the entire non-native population lived close to the tidal waters, which were necessary for crop production and transportation.

With the defeat of the Yamasee and their confederates, a modicum of peace ensued between Native tribes and their uninvited neighbors. But increasing numbers of whites migrated to the colony. These newcomers came not from the West Indies but from Europe and northern colonies, where the land was becoming overcrowded. Younger sons usually received a smaller inheritance than their oldest brother. Royal land grants with very easy terms encouraged them to settle inland. Low Country residents appreciated how these new residents served as a barrier against Indian incursions toward the coast. However, the land grants lay in the Cherokees' traditional hunting grounds. All Backcountry settlers endured hardships, such as clearing land, building shelter, planting, harvesting, disease, and privation. But they also had mortal enemies. Angered at the encroachment on their land, the Cherokee carried out deadly assaults. Besides murder and the destruction of structures and fields, the Cherokee employed two other means to terrify the whites. One was scalping. Another was capture and torture, followed by death by burning. White youth of both sexes learned how to handle muskets, rifles, and sabers. Every locale beyond the tidal waters was a terrifying place. Yet more and more families of European descent moved into the Backcountry.

54. Daniel C. Littlefield, "Slavery," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published Aug. 1, 2016, last modified Aug. 23, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/slavery> (accessed March 6, 2024); Mark M. Smith, "Stono Rebellion," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published Aug. 1, 2016, last modified Aug. 25, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/stono-rebellion/> (accessed January 11, 2025).

55. Michael P. Morris, "Yamasee War, 1715-1718," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published July 7, 2016, last modified August 22, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/yamasee-war> (accessed March 13, 2024).

The Cherokee lived in an arc of land which stretched from the foothills and mountains of South Carolina, present-day East Tennessee, and the mountains of Virginia. Therefore, South Carolina's conflicts with the Cherokee were not unique. The First Cherokee War, which began in 1759, was a component of the French and Indian War. This North American conflagration was part of the worldwide Seven Years' War of 1754 to 1763. The First Cherokee War started when Virginia militia killed several Cherokee warriors in 1758, although the Cherokee were allied with the British against the French. A cycle of revenge prompted the Cherokee to go to war in North Carolina in 1759. The fighting soon spread to South Carolina. White settlers in present-day Abbeville County learned a Cherokee war party was moving in their direction, so they set out for Augusta. On February 1, 1760, the Indians caught them near present-day Troy, South Carolina, and slaughtered twenty-three adults and children and took some prisoner.⁵⁶ In March, Cherokee warriors ventured as far as the forks of the Edisto south and southeast of present-day Columbia and ravaged families between the foothills and the Orangeburg District. The warriors attacked the same areas in May. An army of 2,600 whites defeated the Cherokee later in 1761, destroying 15 towns, 15,000 acres of crops, and forcing 5,000 Cherokee to abandon their homes and lands and move permanently into the mountains.

The First Cherokee War ended with a treaty signed on September 23, 1761, in Charleston. The tribe conceded all but a corner of the South Carolina Backcountry, and the fighting devastated the Lower Settlements. Before the war started, South Carolina's Cherokee numbered between 7,700 and 9,000, including women and children. By war's end, fewer than 6,900 remained. They lost fifteen of their towns and fifteen thousand acres of cropland.⁵⁷ Tensions between native peoples and whites subsided until the start of the Revolution. Historical conflict with Native Americans was a major component of South Carolina's culture of violence.

A deplorable lack of government contributed to the deprivation and bloodshed of William Cunningham's youth. Fresh waves of new settlers began arriving when the First Cherokee War concluded. Most of the new families came down the Pennsylvania Wagon Road from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. Land grants allowed them to claim fertile land along the creeks and streams in the far-flung Ninety Six District. Rachel Klein reported that "By the late 1760s, the [Backcountry] contained between thirty thousand and thirty-five thousand inhabitants and about three-fourths of the colony's white population."⁵⁸ The tide of new residents continued until the war started in 1775.

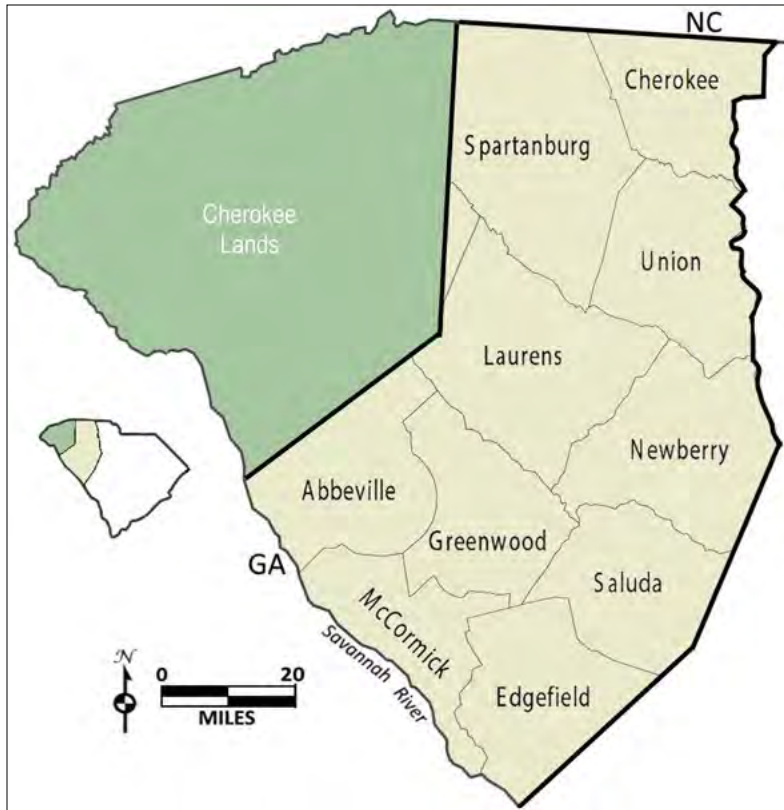
By 1775, South Carolina had about 70,000 white residents, two-thirds of whom lived in the Backcountry. The Ninety Six District, just one of the Backcountry districts, had more residents than any other district in the state.⁵⁹ Despite these quick and impressive demographic changes, the colonial legislature continued to center all government functions in Charleston. Registering a deed, resolving a boundary dispute, pressing criminal charges, or appearing before a judge meant an arduous one-way journey of three or more days. The Backcountry did not have magistrates or jails, nor did anyone have authority to make arrests. To make matters worse, the Backcountry was allowed scant representation in the Commons House of Assembly. The

56. "The Long Cane Massacre Site," South Carolina Department of Archives and History, <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/mccormick/S10817733008/index.htm> (accessed November 13, 2024); Adam Benson, "Long Cane Massacre Site Rededicated in Solemn Ceremony," *Greenwood Index-Journal*, March 12, 2018.

57. Alexander Moore, "Cherokee War, 1759-1761," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published April 19, 2016, last modified July 20, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/cherokee-war-1759-1761> (accessed March 6, 2024).

58. Rachel Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981): 661-680.

59. Jim Picuch, *South Carolina Provincials: Loyalists in British Service during the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2023), 2-3.



Ninety Six District with Present-day County Lines. Map by Dr. Leon Harris

Backcountry, vaguely defined as St. Mark's Parish, was represented by only two members of the Assembly. Power rested in the hands of the rice kings on the coast. The dearth of governmental systems of justice fueled Backcountry violence and also led many back-settlers to hesitate to join the Low Country planters in their rebellion against royal rule.⁶⁰

Public order was in shambles following the First Cherokee War, and the Regulator Movement began in the mid-1760s to establish public safety. Men called "hunters" lived in isolated locations and made a living by hunting; however, they also killed livestock and stole food and household items. They also made forays across the Indian Line, which infuriated the Cherokee.

The hunters committed murders and

assaulted women. Ian Saberton wrote: "When public order totally breaks down, it is a fact of life that the dregs of society creep out of the woodwork (to mix my metaphors) and take advantage of the disordered times to perpetrate all sorts of enormities."⁶¹ In response, established farmers launched the Regulator Movement as they attempted to "regulate" civil life in the Backcountry.⁶² As self-appointed, freewheeling officers of the law, they patrolled the roads and arrested men and women thought to be responsible for crimes. They often delivered those they apprehended to jail in Charleston. They forced others out of the colony. The Regulators held no proceedings for some people and administered punishments which ranged from whipping to hanging.⁶³

Stable societies provide systems which ensure justice and restraint. Such a system can be as simple as a small gathering of elders or as complex as codified laws, law enforcement officers, judges, jails, and methods of execution. However, the South Carolina Backcountry had no such system. Into the void stepped the Regulators, who meted out justice with little restraint. They based their form of justice on *lex talionis*, a system codified and named by the Romans in 450 BCE. It meant retribution in kind, or in biblical terms, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The intent of *lex talionis* is restraint, and the concept continues to provide general guidance to justice systems in developed nations. Though incapable of ensuring the

60. Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry," 663.

61. Ian Saberton, "Midsummer 1780 in the Carolinas and Georgia-Events Predating the Battle of Camden," *JAR*, July 15, 2019, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2019/07/midsummer-1780-in-the-carolinas-and-georgia-events-predating-the-battle-of-camden/> (accessed October 1, 2024).

62. Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry," 668-669; Klein, "Regulators," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published June 20, 2016, last modified Aug. 23, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/regulators/> (accessed October 1, 2024).

63. South Carolina's Regulator Movement was not connected to North Carolina's Regulators' War.

innocent do not receive punishment, *lex talionis* provides a rough system of equal, limited response, and functions best within a broader system of government.⁶⁴

The year 1769 saw the colony make progress on several fronts. The Regulators' aggressiveness motivated other Backcountry leaders to create a group known as Moderators, and the two groups soon arrived at a truce. Also in 1769, the grand jury in Charleston called for the establishment of schools. Most significantly, the colonial legislature adopted the Circuit Court Act. Each district was provided with a court, at least one magistrate, and a jail. The Act also adjusted the geographical representation of the colonial assembly, though it fell short of providing equal representation for the populous Backcountry.⁶⁵ One wonders how many unresolved personal and family feuds influenced decisions of allegiance when the independence movement broke out soon after the Regulator Movement concluded. Though hard to measure, experiences of oppression and victimization no doubt influenced South Carolinians when they chose sides in the upcoming war.

Finally, 1769 was significant for the Cunningham clan. In one or more contingents in 1769 and 1770, they left Virginia and moved into the Ninety Six District. William Cunningham was to come of age in a British colony that had experienced a century of suffering, oppression, chaos, and bloodshed. This particularly applied to the Backcountry. Unrestrained revenge fueled much of the distress and anguish. As twenty-first century observers assess Cunningham's life, they would be remiss to overlook his cultural context.

64. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "lex talionis," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lex%20talionis> (accessed March 9, 2024).

65. Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry"; Klein, "Regulators."

The Cunninghams Take Opposing Sides (1775-1776)

Robert and Patrick Cunningham, Zealous Loyalists

Researchers have struggled in vain to determine William Cunningham's roots or his family of origin. For example, his parents' names remain unknown, and no document has surfaced to provide the exact date of his birth. No words in Cunningham's own writing exist, and he may have been illiterate. Confusion has reigned for many years among chroniclers who reported Cunningham's place of birth incorrectly. He signed his name on his will and his pension application, but apparently did not compose the legal statements.⁶⁶ In his 1847 volume *The American Loyalists*, Lorenzo Sabine perceptively observed, "Men who, like the Loyalists, separate themselves from their friends and kindred, who are driven from their homes, who surrender the hopes and expectations of life, and who become outlaws, wanderers, and exiles, --- such men leave few memorials behind them. Their papers are scattered and lost, and their very names pass from human recollection."⁶⁷

William Cunningham was not born in Ireland, a subject to be addressed in a later chapter.⁶⁸ Neither was he a native of South Carolina, as J. B. O. Landrum reported.⁶⁹ The William Cunningham of this biography should not be confused with another infamous Loyalist named William Cunningham. This Cunningham served as provost marshal for the British in New York and became notorious for his inhumane treatment of American prisoners of war.⁷⁰ Other writers have confused captain, later major, William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham with Private William Cunningham. The two were stationed at Fort Ninety Six from mid-1780 until mid-1781.⁷¹

The life of William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham intertwined with the lives of Cunningham brothers Robert and Patrick, who were not his siblings. One learns much about South Carolina's civil war by considering what Robert and Patrick did during the war and the treatment they received at the hands of

66. Cunningham signed several documents which have surfaced in recent years. All contain salutations, vocabulary, and phrases which are "legalese," and beyond the abilities of almost all residents of the South Carolina Backcountry.

67. Sabine, *American Loyalists*, iii.

68. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 147.

69. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary War History*, 342; O'Neill, "Random Recollections," 40-45.

70. Woody Holton, *Liberty is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2021), 349; J. L. Bell, "The Myth of Provost William Cunningham," <https://boston1775.blogspot.com/2007/10/myth-of-provost-william-cunningham.htm> (accessed November 15, 2024); Edwin G. Burrows, "Patriots or Terrorists? The Lost Story of Revolutionary War POWs," *American Heritage* 58, no. 5 (Fall 2008), <https://www.americanheritage.com/patriots-or-terrorists> (accessed November 15, 2024).

71. Bobby Gilmer Moss, *The Loyalists in the Siege of Ninety Six* (Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1999), 32; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 147.

Patriots before, during, and after the war. The brothers' lives had a distinct impact on William and often paralleled William's.

The Cunninghams originated as a Scottish clan. Some Cunninghams left for the Ulster Plantation in Northern Ireland, while others remained in Scotland. Members of both parts of the clan emigrated from Scotland and Northern Ireland to the Middle Atlantic colonies in the late 1600s. Scots are easily confused with Scots-Irish, also called Scotch-Irish, whose roots lay in both Ireland and Scotland. But Scots and Scots-Irish shared a common history of conflict with the English. The border region between Scotland and England was an unsettled and violent place for several centuries as the two entities vied for control. In Scotland, Presbyterianism faced violent opposition from the English when Roman Catholic and Anglican monarchs were in power. Desires for peace, for freedom of worship, and for escape from poverty attracted Scots and Scots-Irish to the New World.⁷² It is not clear if the Cunningham forebears of Robert, Patrick, and their siblings, and William and his family of origin were Scots or Scots-Irish. William Gilmore Simms's observations about the Cunninghams help to shed light on the clan: "The Cunninghams were a bold and spirited family. They came from a stout and worthy stock in Scotland, who immigrated to America in 1681."⁷³

The influx of new residents to South Carolina which followed the First Cherokee War included an extended family of Cunninghams who sold their holdings in the Shenandoah Valley. In the late 1760s, they relocated from Augusta County, Virginia, to the fertile bottomlands along the Saluda River. They arrived at a fortuitous time, most likely in 1769, the year the Circuit Court Act became law. The journey appears to have been Robert's second trip to South Carolina, because he received and recorded land grants in 1767. The brothers' acquisitions and quick rise in status indicated they brought accumulated wealth with them. Their younger brothers, David and John, and sisters either traveled with them in 1769 or arrived within the next two years. Robert settled near Island Ford on the Saluda River. Patrick established his home nearby and began construction and landscaping for what eventually became the Rosemont Plantation. It overlooked a part of the upper Saluda River, which is now Lake Greenwood. Ann Pamela Cuningham, granddaughter of Patrick, reported that the original section of Patrick's large home was the first frame house built in the Backcountry. Robert and Patrick quickly became respected citizens. Within weeks or months of his arrival, Patrick received the lucrative position of Deputy Surveyor General for the Ninety Six District. Robert was named the first magistrate of the newly created circuit court.⁷⁴

Desire for independence from Britain first surged in South Carolina among the Low Country planters. With exceptions, Backcountry residents felt inclined toward allegiance to the king. As noted, they distrusted their Low Country rulers. For a brief period, the complaints of the opponents of royal rule appealed to Robert. Andrew Pickens penned thoughts on Robert many years after the war. Pickens wrote that in June 1775, the South Carolina Provincial Congress discussed appointing Robert as the commander of a regiment of rangers. He wished the Congress had done so because Robert Cunningham might never have become a Loyalist.⁷⁵

72. Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 605-78, provides excellent analysis of the forces which prompted Scots and Scots-Irish to relocate to Britain's North American colonies.

73. Simms, "Civil Warfare."

74. Snipes, *Rosemont Plantation*, 6-7, 9; Sabine, *American Loyalists*, 235.

75. Sabine, *American Loyalists*, 236-237.

In defiance of Royal Lieutenant Governor William Bull, a South Carolina Provincial Congress convened in January 1775. It adopted the Continental Association, an agreement intended by the First Continental Congress to restrict commerce with Great Britain in order to force changes in British policy. Many South Carolinians had not yet decided where their loyalties would rest. The membership of the Provincial Congress initially included Robert Cunningham and another prominent Ninety Six District resident, Thomas Fletchall. Robert Woodward Barnwell deemed Fletchall “the most influential man between the Broad and Saluda Rivers.”⁷⁶ Within a few months, though, Cunningham, Fletchall, and several other members of the Provincial Congress decided to oppose the impending rebellion.

The American Revolution began in April in Massachusetts with the actions at Lexington and Concord. In South Carolina, the Provincial Congress was still trying to avoid violence. It formed a Council of Safety whose purpose was to govern the colony. The Council confirmed that the opposition movement lacked substantial support in the Backcountry. When the Congress re-convened in June 1775, members such as Robert Cunningham declined to take part. Those present were determined to rebel against King George if no resolution to the dispute with Britain was forthcoming. The Congress resolved “whenever our Continental or Provincial Congress shall decree it necessary, we will go forth and be ready to sacrifice our lives and fortunes to secure her (that is the United Provinces of America) freedom and safety.” The Council ordered Thomas Fletchall, still in command of the Upper Saluda militia, to have all members sign their names to the Continental Association. On July 13, Fletchall mustered fifteen hundred men on the Enoree River. No one signed the document.⁷⁷

In June 1775, the Provincial Congress created two infantry regiments and a cavalry regiment.⁷⁸ Colonel William “Danger” Thomson assumed command of the cavalry, and William Cunningham, to be better introduced below, joined the 1st company of Thomson’s regiment. John Caldwell was made captain of the 1st company. The Council of Safety promptly ordered the 1st and 2nd companies of the 3rd Regiment to go out from Ninety Six and seize Fort Charlotte. It lay upstream from Augusta on the Savannah River.⁷⁹ The fort stood on the South Carolina bank, and British Captain George Whitefield commanded the small garrison. Major James Mayson, in charge of Patriot personnel at Fort Ninety Six, led the Patriots’ mission. Whitefield surrendered without a fight on July 12. The 3rd Regiment apprehended Whitefield and others, and captured gunpowder, small cannon, ammunition, and muskets. No shots were fired.⁸⁰ Mayson delivered the valuable supplies to the Patriots at Ninety Six. Portions of the 3rd Regiment, including Captain John Caldwell’s 1st company, remained behind to hold Fort Charlotte. Two hundred Loyalists responded by marching on Ninety Six, arriving on July 17. Again, without an exchange of gunfire, the Tories reclaimed the supplies, released the captives, and departed.⁸¹

76. Barnwell, “Loyalists in South Carolina,” 94.

77. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 10; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:37; Robert M. Dunkerly, “Chaos in the Backcountry: Battle of Ninety Six,” *JAR*, June 24, 2013, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/06/chaos-in-the-backcountry-the-battle-of-ninety-six> (accessed March 14, 2024).

78. O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 20.

79. This part of the river became the Strom Thurmond Lake. McCormick, SC, resident Charlotte Tallent reported to the author on June 14, 2024, that the remains of the fort had been recently located above the waterline of the lake in McCormick County.

80. Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 336; Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:37; O’Neill, “Random Recollections,” 40-45.

81. Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 49; Patrick O’Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter* (Blue House Tavern Press, 2004), 1:35-36 (hereafter cited as *NBBS*.)

On July 23, the Council of Safety made one more attempt to win the hearts and minds of Backcountry residents. The Council dispatched a delegation led by William Henry Drayton. Four highly respected men accompanied him: the Reverend William Tennent, the Reverend Oliver Hart, Colonel Richard Richardson, and Joseph Kershaw. Their mission was to “explain to the people at large the nature of the unhappy public disputes between Great Britain and the American Colonies – to endeavor to settle all political disputes between the people – to quiet their minds, and to enforce the necessity of a general union in order to preserve themselves and their children from slavery.”⁸²

The delegation stopped first in the Saxe Gotha community, south of the junction of the Broad and Saluda rivers. They announced a meeting for area residents, many of whom were recent emigres from Germany. No one appeared to hear Drayton and the others, not because of language difficulties but because they feared the loss of their lands if the rebellion failed. Drayton’s party continued into another German-American community, the Dutch Fork. It was located northwest of present-day Columbia between the Broad and Saluda rivers. People gathered for the occasion, but Drayton’s persuasive abilities did not convince anyone to join the opposition to Britain. The delegation met with little success anywhere.⁸³

The string of failures continued at a large gathering on the Enoree River on August 25, 1775. Robert Cunningham and Thomas Fletchall spoke against the Patriots, as did the terribly maimed Loyalist Thomas Brown (or Browne). Brown was born in England and arrived in New Richmond, South Carolina, near Augusta, in 1774. Brown, his brother Jonas, and James Gordon worked as partners. They received a land grant exceeding 5,000 acres from the Royal Governor of Georgia, Sir James Wright, and moved into Georgia. Assisted by several hundred indentured Scots who they had helped to move to the colony, the Browns and Gordon developed the land. In the summer of 1775, Thomas Brown incurred the wrath of rebellion-minded Georgians and South Carolinians by ridiculing them at their gatherings. In August, the Sons of Liberty apprehended and tarred and feathered him. They tortured him in other ways, including burning his feet. Despite his suffering, he refused to renounce his loyalty to the King of Great Britain.⁸⁴

Friends delivered the crippled Brown to the Ninety Six District and Fletchall’s home. But Brown refused to stand down. On August 25, when Robert Cunningham and Fletchall spoke against the rebellion, Brown, too, spoke vehemently against it. Brown then departed Fletchall’s home for Charleston. Once there, he was arrested and forced to leave the colony. He moved to East Florida, which remained firmly under British control. Brown’s experience in 1775 demonstrated the barbarity of the American Revolution in the South. His life parallels that of William Cunningham, and he will re-appear in this narrative.⁸⁵

82. “South Carolina-In the Council of Safety,” July 23, 1775, in Robert W. Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution, Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the Contest for Liberty, Chiefly in South Carolina, from Originals in the Possession of the Editor, and Other Sources, 1764-1776* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1855), 106; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:41-43.

83. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 26.

84. Wayne Lynch, “The Making of a Loyalist,” *JAR*, Jan. 1, 2024, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/01/making-loyalist> (accessed Feb. 10, 2023); Roger Smith, “The Southern Expedition of 1776: The Best Kept Secret of the American Revolution,” *JAR*, Sept. 20, 2016, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/09/southern-expedition-1776-american-revolutions-best-kept-secret> (accessed Nov. 29, 2024); Edwin J. Cashin, “Thomas Brown,” in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, published Dec. 8, 2003, last modified Sept. 25, 2014, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/thomas-brown-1750-1825> (accessed October 1, 2024).

85. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:43; Wilbur H. Siebert, “*Loyalists in East Florida, 1774 to 1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto, Edited with an Accompanying Narrative*,” 2 vols. (DeLand: Florida State Historical Society, 1929) 2:323-324.

The War Comes to South Carolina

The Council of Safety recognized it could not rely on rhetoric to win over the Backcountry Loyalists. At first, the Council only used intimidation and economic warfare, not violence. For example, it banned anyone who had not signed the Association document from taking goods to market in Charleston. Drayton put guards at the gates of Charleston to ensure that the wagons delivering goods to the city were driven by men who had signed the Association. Moses Kirkland's story exemplifies the extreme actions to which the Council of Safety turned. As noted below, Kirkland changed his allegiance in July and met with harsh consequences. For an entire century, South Carolina's whites had employed hateful speech, political and economic retribution, and violence against one another, against the enslaved, and against Native Americans. The pattern continued throughout the American Revolution. Jack M. Sosin described the maltreatment of Tories and South Carolinians who attempted to maintain neutrality. He reported that everyone who supported the British or tried to remain neutral received equal levels of persecution.⁸⁶

In October, the Council of Safety attempted to assuage the Cherokee and keep them out of the conflict. They did so by sending a thousand pounds of gunpowder and two thousand pounds of lead to help the Native people with their winter hunt. Loyalists perceived the gift differently by concluding that the Council of Safety was arming the Cherokee to fight alongside Patriots. In early November, the Council arrested Robert Cunningham and jailed him in Charleston. Patrick was furious about his brother's jailing and attempted and failed to rescue him.⁸⁷ He also became determined to keep the ammunition from the Cherokee. With five hundred men, Patrick commandeered the wagon train on November 3 and captured the lead and powder. But they did not keep it for long. Colonel Richard Richardson of the Camden District retrieved it a few weeks later during the Snow Campaign.

Major Andrew Williamson sent word for Patriots to assemble at Ninety Six. Once there, they transformed the farm of Loyalist John Holmes into a defensive position and dubbed the small fort Williamson's Fort. Williamson welcomed the cavalymen of the 3rd Regiment, including John Caldwell's 1st company. One of its privates was nineteen-year-old William Cunningham. True warfare was brewing, as a force much larger than that of the Patriots, nineteen hundred compared to about six hundred, assembled to retake Ninety Six. They were led by Major Joseph Robinson and Captain Patrick Cunningham. The First Siege of Ninety Six began on November 19. The Tories soon forced Williamson's men out of the town but were unable to take the fort. The Patriots ran short of ammunition and water, so a truce seemed to be the best course for them. For their part, the Loyalists became concerned that Williamson might soon receive reinforcements. The two sides arrived at an informal truce on November 21. The Loyalists agreed to move north of the Saluda River, disband, and not engage the Patriots. In turn, the Patriots would end their efforts against the King's Men. Both sides would wait for the Council of Safety and Governor Campbell to resolve the dispute, and any reinforcements coming to aid either side would be bound by the truce. The First Siege of Ninety Six was the first armed engagement of the Revolution in the South, though historians have failed to reach a consensus about the number of casualties. South Carolinian James Birmingham died during the three days of conflict, making him the first southern Patriot to give his life for the rebellion. At least

86. Jack M. Sosin, *The Revolutionary Frontier 1763—1783* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), 5; Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 28; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 45.

87. "Brigadier General Robert Cunningham," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/loyalist_leaders_sc_robert_cunningham.html (accessed Jan. 11, 2025).

one Loyalist, his name unknown, also died. The war in the South saw its first bloodshed at Ninety Six in Greenwood County, and William Cunningham was there.

Richard Richardson was in the Back Country but not present at Ninety Six. He did not support the treaty, and in an exchange of letters with the Council of Safety he was ordered to disregard the agreement. Richardson began to assemble an army with the goal of quashing Tory resistance to the rebellion. As Richardson moved toward the Ninety Six District, an extraordinary number of Patriots joined his ranks. By November 27, when he arrived at the Congarees, below present-day Columbia, Richardson had 1,000 men under his command. Continuing into the Ninety Six District, he arrived in the Dutch Fork on December 2, and his numbers grew to 1,500 militiamen. With his December 12 arrival at the Enoree River, his army doubled in size and had 3,000 men. Then Major Andrew Williamson found Richardson at the Enoree River. Williamson led militia from both Carolinas. By mid-December, Colonel Richardson counted 4,500 men under his command. That many of them were on foot testified to their determination to assert Patriot supremacy.

Though Patrick Cunningham had signed the treaty that ended the siege at Ninety Six, he and other Loyalists correctly guessed they were in danger. His informal army began marching toward the safety of Indian territory. Scouts informed Richardson that Cunningham was leaving the Ninety Six District. On December 21, Colonel Richardson split his army. More than half stayed behind at Hollingsworth Mill in southern Laurens County while Richardson dispatched William Thomson to move against the Loyalist force. Thomson included his 3rd Regiment of Rangers in the expedition. Thirteen hundred men set out on horseback for a cold, rainy, 25-mile overnight ride to the Indian Line.

Patrick Cunningham had encamped for the night about five miles inside the Indian Line in a large cane brake on the Reedy River. At dawn on December 22, Thomson ambushed Cunningham at the Battle of the Great Cane Brake. The Patriots killed only six Loyalists but captured 130. That only one Patriot received wounds testified to the overwhelming Patriot victory. Patrick Cunningham narrowly escaped into Indian territory.⁸⁸ The Loyalist cause in South Carolina came to an abrupt halt. Except for the Second Cherokee War and for naval skirmishes along the coast, a semblance of peace came to South Carolina.

Richardson, his men, and their prisoners returned to Hollingsworth's Mill the following day. As they arrived, a monumental snowfall began. Richardson's successful expedition, called the Snow Campaign, concluded with a miserable journey. Notably, the Patriots established supremacy over the King's Men and kept it for four years.⁸⁹

In February 1776, Patriots apprehended Patrick. He and a younger brother, David Cunningham, joined Robert in jail in Charleston. The Council released all three in July.⁹⁰ The Cunninghams agreed to refrain from further fighting and returned to their homes. When the new state adopted its first constitution, Robert ran for and won a seat in the State Senate. His victory proved the strength of the Loyalists in the Backcountry. However, he did not assume the position, because the constitution required that he swear allegiance to the Revolutionary cause.⁹¹

88. "Great Cane Brake," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_cane_brake.html (accessed November 15, 2024); Michael Cecere, *March to Independence: The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2021), 109.

89. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:97; Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*, 79-80; "Snow Campaign," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_snow_campaign.html (accessed March 20, 2024); "Great Cane Brake," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_cane_brake.html (accessed June 20, 2024).

90. Snipes, Rosemont Plantation, 10.

91. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 34; Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 54.

In the interregnum following the Snow Campaign, a few King's Men and their families fled to British East Florida. Their exodus hit its peak in 1778. Some Loyalists switched sides temporarily or permanently, while others attempted a benign passivity. The years between the Snow Campaign and the British takeover in May 1780 were marked with fear, uncertainty, and resentment for every South Carolinian. Many Loyalists yearned for revenge, but they lived under the thumbs of their oppressors and seldom found opportunities to express their rage.⁹²

A Cunningham Named William

The divisions between Whigs and Tories (Patriots and Loyalists) led to division in families in all thirteen colonies. Even Benjamin Franklin's son William broke with his father and supported King George. William Franklin served as the last Royal Governor of New Jersey. The Franklin family split was both permanent and tragic. In South Carolina, at the Great Cane Brake, Patrick Cunningham battled against a relative named William Cunningham. Chroniclers usually refer to the younger man, born in 1757, as a cousin of Robert, Patrick, John, and David. But the exact nature of their family connection is unknown. In order to avoid inferring that they were first cousins, it seems wise to use *relatives*, *relations*, and *kinsmen*. Around the time Robert, Patrick, and their siblings arrived in South Carolina, William and his family also relocated from Augusta County, Virginia. Ann Pamela Cuningham recounted that the families traveled together. William's father received a land grant which lay within scant miles of where the others settled in the Ninety Six District and present-day Laurens County.⁹³

In 1838, John Belton O'Neill wrote of Cunningham's youthful personality: "William Cunningham is represented to have been a man of great physical powers, and of fine personal appearance. One of his contemporaries (the late Wm. Caldwell) used to say 'that he had often heard it said, Cunningham was a coward but,' added he, 'whoever said so, did not know him; he was as brave a man as ever walked the earth.'"⁹⁴

Patrick's granddaughter Ann Pamela Cuningham wrote in 1845 that, as a young man, William occasionally visited Patrick's home. She emphasized his horsemanship and the contributions which a remarkable horse named Ringtail made to his successes and escapes. As already described, she presented William as a victim of Patriot repression during both his tenure as a Patriot and his time of service as a Loyalist. Ann Pamela Cuningham portrayed him in a sympathetic and positive light. While acknowledging some of his brutal actions, she sought to persuade her readers that William's life of crime resulted from mistreatment by others.

The names of William's mother and father remain unknown. As a member of the extended family, Ann Pamela Cuningham had access to family records and undoubtedly had a more accurate understanding than any other writer of William Cunningham's family of origin. She referred to her own family of origin and wrote that William "was the third and youngest son of a cousin of those Cunninghams." She provided the names of William's two older brothers, John and Andrew. William's father supported the rebellion,

92. Jim Picuch, "The Loyalist Exodus of 1778," *JAR*, May 17, 2016, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/05/the-loyalist-exodus-of-1778> (accessed October 1, 2024); Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 147; Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:315, reported incorrectly that Robert and Patrick lived quietly in Charleston until Clinton took the city in 1780. In fact, they were allowed to return home to Laurens County.

93. John Bennett Boddie, *Virginia Historical Genealogies* (Redwood, CA: Pacific Coast Publishers, 1954), 10; Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 638.

94. O'Neill, "Random Recollections," 45.

which appears to have been the deciding factor when William joined the Revolutionary cause instead of siding with Robert and Patrick.⁹⁵

William enlisted in the militia at nineteen and became a private in the 3rd Regiment of Rangers commanded by Colonel Thomson. As noted, Private Cunningham was assigned to the 1st company in which John Caldwell served as captain. Oliver Towles was a sergeant in the 3rd Regiment. For unknown reasons, Cunningham came to hate Towles. Six years later, long after becoming a Loyalist, Cunningham turned his hatred for Towles into action.⁹⁶

As a Patriot in arms, William took part in an impressive number of battles and skirmishes from the middle of 1775 to the fall of 1776. The Council of Safety ordered the 1st and 2nd companies of the 3rd Regiment to seize Fort Charlotte in July, meaning William Cunningham was present for the first land action of the American Revolution in South Carolina.⁹⁷ While some members of the ranger regiment took the captured supplies to Ninety Six, others, including John Caldwell's 1st company remained behind to hold Fort Charlotte. Cunningham was probably not present when Loyalists successfully and without bloodshed retrieved all the Fort Charlotte supplies from Ninety Six. The entire 1st company was sent to Ninety Six when Major Andrew Williamson arranged for Patriots to build Fort Williamson. At the First Siege of Ninety Six, the little-known Private William Cunningham defended Ninety Six against the Loyalist attackers led by Major Joseph Robinson and the well-known Captain Patrick Cunningham.⁹⁸ Then in December, Caldwell's 1st company joined Colonel Richardson's large Patriot force, which chased Loyalists led by Patrick Cunningham. Richardson chose Caldwell's cavalry to participate in the overnight ride to the Reedy River and the milestone battle at the Great Cane Brake. The action was the first and only occasion which pitted William against Patrick.

The Recalcitrant Patriot

In late 1776, after eighteen months of service in a Patriot cavalry unit, William Cunningham changed his allegiance. Chroniclers have provided several contradictory explanations, so his real motivations remain cloudy. Ever the family's defender, Ann Pamela Cunningham told a complex tale. She reported that in mid-1775, John Caldwell asked the charismatic young William to help him recruit a militia company:

Being a great favorite of the young men of the district of his own age, he had considerable influence over them. On this account, he was applied to by John Caldwell, to assist him in raising one of the companies of armed volunteers, embodied under the authority of Congress, for the alleged purpose of keeping the peace, and of preventing the Tories from creating a disturbance. To induce him to do so, Caldwell agreed that, if they succeeded in raising the full complement of men, Cunningham should be made first lieutenant, and should have a right to retire from the company, in case they should be sent to the lower country, or ordered on any other service than that specified by Congress. The company was accordingly raised, and was engaged at the taking of Fort Charlotte, on the Savannah river. In the course of time, they were ordered down to Charleston, and Cunningham

95. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 640.

96. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 646.

97. Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 336; "Fort Charlotte," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_fort_charlotte.html (accessed March 20, 2024); Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:37; O'Neill, "Random Recollections," 40-45.

98. "Ninety Six," https://carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_ninety_six_1775.html (accessed October 1, 2024); "Ninety Six," <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/ninety-six> (accessed October 1, 2024).

consented to go down with them on the express condition that he should be permitted to resign as soon as they reached their destination. They were encamped near the city for about a week, and were then ordered either to John's or James's island. Cunningham immediately tendered his resignation, which, to his surprise, Caldwell refused to accept. Reminding him of their solemn agreement, Cunningham swore he should abide by it, and that if he were taken over to the island, it should only be as a corpse. One half of the company who had joined through Cunningham's influence, showed a strong spirit of mutiny and insubordination, as soon as they heard of the altercation that had taken place; and, at last, to prevent immediate desertion, Cunningham consented to go over, on the renewed condition, that his resignation should be accepted as soon as they should reach the island. No sooner had they landed than Caldwell, thinking to strike terror into his men, and thereby have them more under control, had him arrested, put in irons, and tried by court martial on a charge of mutiny. The result of this shameless and ungrateful act of perfidy was, contrary to Caldwell's expectations, that Cunningham was not only acquitted, but by a decision of the same court, freed from his military engagement, on the ground of conditional agreement; and Caldwell became an object of hatred and contempt to a set of men, to whom the unsettled state of the country afterwards afforded ample opportunity of satisfying their resentments, and avenging their private wrongs.⁹⁹

Research conducted by Bobby Gilmer Moss supported Ann Pamela Cuningham's report. Moss wrote that in 1775 Cunningham "assisted John Caldwell to raise a company of rangers on the condition that when on service he be allowed a rank higher than specified by the Provincial Congress." No records show Private Cunningham received a promotion while a Patriot. Ann Pamela set the stage for one of the Bloody Scout murders by portraying her relative with a winsome personality and depicting Caldwell as a deceitful, unpleasant character, a description not supported by any other historian.¹⁰⁰

Other accounts contradicted or at least modified those of Ann Pamela Cuningham and Moss. Without specifying a date, Edward McCrady recounted that William Cunningham suffered the pain and humiliation of a whipping. If Cunningham indeed received such punishment, the reason remains unknown. The event did not stop him from taking part in the Battle of Sullivan's Island or the Second Cherokee War later that year.¹⁰¹

O'Neill provided an account which contradicted the story of Cunningham's preference to stay closer to home. He wrote that Cunningham "served with credit; so much so, that his Captain was about promoting him, over the head of his own brother, Wm. Caldwell who belonged to the same company. Some trivial offense prevented his promotion, and sent him before a Court-martial, by which he was sentenced to be whipped; and he actually suffered the degrading punishment! With his blood on fire, and vengeance his predominant feeling, he deserted the flag of his country and fled to Florida." As seen below, William Cunningham did not go to East Florida until 1782.¹⁰²

Ann Pamela Cuningham's narrative placed William on James Island in June 1776, for his confrontation with his captain. The company might have gathered there initially, but military records prove Caldwell's company engaged in the defense of Breach Inlet on Sullivan's Island. Ann Pamela Cuningham and John Belton O'Neill wrote that Caldwell failed to uphold his agreement with Cunningham and made him suffer

99. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639.

100. Moss, *Loyalists in the Siege of Fort Ninety Six*, 31.

101. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:468.

102. O'Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 252.

for disobeying orders. Taken together, these accounts lead one to conclude that William Cunningham was never fully committed to the Patriot effort.¹⁰³

George Washington forced the British to evacuate Boston in March 1776. Washington's counterpart, Sir William Howe, responded by preparing to take New York City. Then Howe sent his second-in-command, General Henry Clinton and Commodore Sir Peter Parker southward. Howe ordered them to coordinate with Loyalists in North Carolina and take Wilmington. Once there, British troops could spread out across the South whenever they had sufficient men and supplies. However, on February 27, North Carolina Loyalists suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of the Patriot militia at Moore's Creek Bridge. The event convinced Clinton and Parker to look for a different target. Despite Clinton's reluctance, Parker chose the wealthiest city in the South and fourth largest city in the thirteen breakaway colonies, Charleston. The British would hold the entrance to the harbor and wait for an opportune time to capture the city and move inland.

Early in June, a menacing armada of fifty ships arrived outside of Charleston Harbor. Most carried thousands of troops, but nine warships carried dozens of cannons and hundreds of sailors. Patriot leadership quickly reinforced their defenses around Charleston and began building a fortress of sand and palmetto logs at the south end of Sullivan's Island. From that location, Patriot cannons could prevent ships of all sizes from entering the harbor. Initially, South Carolina militia colonel William Moultrie led the preparations. But the Continental Congress had chosen Charles Lee, a major general, to take command of Continental personnel in the South. When he arrived in Charleston, Lee inspected the unfinished fort on Sullivan's Island and deemed it to be a worthless enterprise. He ordered Moultrie to desist from the construction and withdraw into the city. However, Moultrie was not a Continental; he answered to the President of South Carolina's Assembly, John Rutledge. Moultrie deferred to Rutledge, who told him to continue to build the fort.

Clinton's troops began disembarking onto Long Island, now the Isle of Palms, on June 9. He planned to cross Breach Inlet, which separated the two sea islands, and march four miles to the south end of Sullivan's Island. He and Parker would take the fort, and therefore the entrance to the harbor, from both directions. South Carolina's 3rd Regiment, led by William Thomson, moved onto the northern end of Sullivan's Island to counter the upcoming British assault. In Thomson's force was John Caldwell's 1st company, including William Cunningham. Before landing his soldiers on Long Island, Clinton failed to assess the treacherous currents at Breach Inlet and the depth of the inlet at low tide. Clinton's men could not walk across the inlet at low tide and would be forced to cross in flat boats. Shots would rain on them from muskets, rifles, and small cannons, which fired highly dangerous grapeshot. Clinton tried to improve his tactical situation, but did not arrive at a better strategy than to wait for a low tide and try the crossing despite the odds. He and Parker began the two-pronged one-day assault on the morning of June 28. At the north end of Sullivan's Island, Clinton settled for a feigned attack that failed to create a diversion for Parker's ships.

Four miles away, Commodore Parker conducted a fierce, hours-long barrage against what was later named Fort Moultrie. Charles Lee was mistaken; the fort's palmetto logs and sand absorbed the cannonballs. Though the Patriots fired fewer shots, they caused severe damage to several ships. A small frigate which Parker sent into the harbor entrance ran aground. Casualties were lopsided; the rebels won the Battle of Sullivan's Island, and His Majesty's ships soon turned northward toward New York City.

103. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639.

Six months after the Battle of the Great Cane Brake, Cunningham had participated in another significant Patriot victory. As for Henry Clinton, his failure to capture the city was an embarrassment, which made him determined to return to South Carolina and take it for his monarch. When Clinton returned to the South four years later, the king's forces achieved resounding success.

The June 1776 Patriot victory was immensely important to the continuation and ultimate success of the war. In fact, though the Second Continental Congress had not yet learned of the events at Charleston, Congress's members signed the Declaration of Independence a few days later. Moultrie and others, such as the famous Sergeant William Jasper, who re-raised the Moultrie Flag when it was knocked down by a cannonball, have been hailed as heroes ever since. As for the more limited action at the north end of Sullivan's Island, historian Doug McIntyre wrote of the rebels who defended Breach Inlet: "Danger Thomson and his diverse band of unsung heroes were instrumental in winning one of the earliest, most complete, and most shocking victories of the American Revolution."¹⁰⁴

The Second Cherokee War: Cunningham Attacks the Innocent

When the British laid their 1776 plans to take the South, their Indian agents asked the Cherokee to not become involved. Led by Dragging Canoe, they began a campaign anyway on July 1. As Peter Parker sailed away from the South Carolina coast, hundreds of Cherokee warriors attacked homes, killed families, and burned structures, primarily in the Ninety Six District. Backcountry Patriot families, who had taken the Indian hunting lands with the sanction of the royal government, suffered immensely. On July 15, Native men besieged settlers who had taken refuge at Lindley's (or Lyndley's) Fort in Laurens County. Major Jonathan Downs had arrived at the fort the night before the assault. Downs, his militia, and the farm families repulsed the Cherokee.¹⁰⁵

So began the brief but gruesome Second Cherokee War. Andrew Williamson, soon promoted to brigadier general, led South Carolina's forces in the conflict which also took place in Georgia, North Carolina, and western Virginia. Williamson responded to South Carolina's Cherokee with a devastating rampage through villages in Oconee and Pickens counties. The allied ranks included Continental troops and militia, among them William Cunningham's unit, the 1st company of Thomson's 3rd Regiment. For the first time, the twenty or twenty-one-year-old Cunningham pillaged and burned homes and outbuildings. He helped to set fire to hundreds of acres of farmland. Slaughter of Native noncombatants had been the norm for many years, and Williamson's men killed 2,000 men, women, and children. William Cunningham almost certainly took the lives of innocents, a first for him. Violence ended in the fall, but the war did not officially end until the signing of a treaty at Dewitt's (or Duett's) Corner, near present-day Due West, on May 20.¹⁰⁶ With their dwellings, storehouses, and fields destroyed, the surviving Cherokee had little choice but to move out of South Carolina.¹⁰⁷ Only a few remained in South Carolina's foothills and mountains.

104. Doug MacIntyre, "Danger at the Breach," *JAR*, May 11, 2023, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2023/05/danger-at-the-beach> (accessed December 17, 2024); "Battle of Sullivan's Island," <https://www.nps.gov/articles/battle-of-sullivan-s-island.htm> (accessed March 25, 2024); O'Neill, *Annals of Newberry*, 208.

105. "Lyndley's Fort," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_lyndleys_fort (accessed October 1, 2024); O'Kelley, *NBBS* 1:149-151.

106. Faye Jensen, "May 1777: The Treaty of Dewitt's Corner," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, May 1, 2023, <https://schistory.org/may-1777-treaty-of-dewitts-corner> (accessed October 1, 2024).

107. William Webster Adams, "The Lower Towns of the Cherokee Nation," *Sandlapper Magazine*, Year-end 1991, 55.

Two future brigadier generals served under Williamson during the Second Cherokee War. During that conflict, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Sumter commanded the Second Regiment of South Carolina riflemen.¹⁰⁸ Colonel Andrew Pickens commanded a militia company of the Upper Ninety Six Regiment.¹⁰⁹ In Oconee County on August 12, Pickens achieved fame for his leadership at the Ring Fight. Cunningham might have met both men during the Second Cherokee War. Fighting against the Patriots five years later,



Thomas Sumter

Andrew Pickens

Cunningham returned to the Indian territory and camped in the region's deserted villages. In the fall of that year, Sumter and Pickens tried to put a stop to the Bloody Scout. Sumter's men stumbled upon the Bloody Scout at the beginning of the expedition, and Pickens ambushed Cunningham as the Loyalists returned to Charleston.¹¹⁰

Cunningham's participation in the Second Cherokee War was the last time he took orders from Patriot officers. He had fought for eighteen months as a rebel. Then, like so many other South Carolinians, he changed his allegiance. Edward McCrady wrote that following the raids Cunningham "declared that, having seen reason to change his opinions, he was determined to continue no longer in the service of the Whigs."¹¹¹ If Cunningham made the decision after Sullivan's Island, he could not leave his unit. The 1st company marched swiftly into the Backcountry to support the Second Cherokee War. Besides the mixed accounts of what led him to change sides, a more psychological motive warrants consideration. His relatives, Robert and Patrick, had proven themselves honorable men. Despite his father's support for the rebel cause, William may have desired to align himself with his renowned kinsmen. Whatever led to his change of heart, William Cunningham left the Revolutionary cause at the close of 1776.

108. Josephine L. Harper, *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1983), 285.

109. Samuel K. Fore, "Andrew Pickens," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published June 20, 2016, last modified Aug. 22, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/pickens-andrew> (accessed December 7, 2024).

110. Rod Andrew, *The Life and Times of General Andrew Pickens: Revolutionary War Hero, American Founder* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 44-52; Alexander Moore, "Cherokee War (1776)" in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published April 19, 2016, last modified July 20, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/cherokee-war-1776> (accessed September 12, 2024); "Cherokee Attack, July 1, 1776," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_cherokee_attack_1776.html (accessed March 3, 2026).

111. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:469.

In Service of the King, 1777–1779

Ann Pamela Cuninghame wrote that following Cunningham's change of allegiance in 1777, "a system of persecution was commenced against him by those from whose association he had retired." She continued:

He was hunted more like a wild beast than a man, and his only secure place of rest was in the deepest recess of some all but impenetrable forest. He dared not visit any of his family, except by stealth, and under the cloud of night, lest he should bring down upon them also the lawless vengeance of his persecutors, for holding communication with one whom the Whigs placed under the ban of their displeasure. Thus he lived, sleeping on the ground in the open air, not venturing under cover even for the night, and enduring hardship and privation of every kind, rather than act with those from whom he had, on due deliberation, conscientiously seceded.¹¹²

While everything Ann Pamela Cuninghame wrote about William Cunningham should be approached with caution, plausibility marked her portrayal of William's plight after changing his allegiance to the monarchy. Many other Loyalists were forced to hide. And for those like Cunningham who had changed sides, such decisions have historically led one's former comrades-in-arms to seek the death of the turncoat. William went into exile, though Ann Pamela Cuninghame's narrative appeared to signify he did not go far from home. No research has fixed his location for twenty-four months, beginning in the fall of 1776.

Following the Second Cherokee War, Whig leaders increased their oppression of the Tories with more economic, social, and physical persecution. In early 1778, the General Assembly passed a law that made it mandatory for all men above age fifteen to pledge loyalty to the state and its Patriot government. Anyone who refused to do so lost the right to vote, carry out business affairs, or conduct legal transactions. A few wealthy Loyalists exited the state for Great Britain or the West Indies. Most of those who sided with George III either did not wish to leave North America or could not afford the costs of a sea voyage. Small parties of Loyalists had been leaving South Carolina for East Florida since 1775, among them Thomas Brown. East Florida's British governor Patrick Tonyn issued an open invitation for Tories to migrate to his province. The increased oppression following the Second Cherokee War led to a temporary upsurge in departures. Six hundred Loyalists crossed the Savannah River in the spring of 1778. Despite opposition from Continentals and militia, two hundred Georgia Loyalists joined them, and the combined group of about eight hundred arrived in East Florida in April.¹¹³

¹¹². Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 639-640.

¹¹³. Jim Picuch, "The Loyalist Exodus of 1778," *JAR*, May 17, 2016, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/05/the-loyalist-exodus-of-1778> (accessed October 1, 2024).

That spring, Patriot militia put a stop to the East Florida exodus. When a second large contingent of Loyalists gathered in April and attempted to cross the Savannah River, South Carolina militia blocked them. Also in the spring, another Loyalist group of families assembled near the Pee Dee River and set St. Augustine as their destination. Whig militia from North Carolina engaged them in battle. Men on both sides lost their lives and the Tory families' efforts came to naught. Patriot militia in both Carolinas and Georgia broke up gatherings of Loyalists. The Loyalists' exodus had ended.

If Cunningham had journeyed to East Florida, Thomas Brown would no doubt have welcomed him and would have immediately put him into his king's service. The maimed, angry Brown did not go to Florida to nurse his physical and emotional wounds and evade the fighting. Patriot persecution transformed Brown into a warrior for the king. When he left South Carolina in late 1775, he went to St. Augustine. A few months later, Governor Tonyn commissioned Brown as a lieutenant colonel and gave him command of a corps of Provincials. These were Loyalists who were allowed into the British Army. They were paid, received training, and were as well equipped as British Regulars. Brown's Provincials began their service under the name East Florida Rangers but later were called the King's Rangers. Brown's Rangers launched forays into coastal Georgia. There, they harassed Patriot farmers and seized cattle. They drove the livestock to the refugees, other civilians, and Provincials in East Florida. The East Florida Rangers helped to doom three invasions of the colony launched by Patriot militia and Continentals.¹¹⁴

William Cunningham's past involvement in the rebellion and his change of heart would have made him a helpful asset to the Rangers. The publication in 1816 of the second volume of *The History of Georgia* by Hugh McCall led to confusion about Cunningham's location. McCall wrote that on February 16, 1777, "colonels Brown, Cunningham, and McGirth, with seventy Florida rangers, and eighty Indians" surrounded Fort McIntosh in far southern Georgia. The next day, British Regulars reinforced Brown's Rangers, and Colonel Richard Winn "surrendered the fort."¹¹⁵

McCall made two mistakes when he included Cunningham in the force which attacked Fort McIntosh. First, Cunningham never attained the rank of colonel. Second, Cunningham was not present.¹¹⁶ No records have surfaced, which might prove that William, Robert, or Patrick Cunningham ventured to East Florida until late 1782.¹¹⁷ So where was William Cunningham? Following Ann Pamela Cuninghams' commentary, it seems likely that William concealed himself in the Ninety Six District or in interior Georgia near Augusta. Fellow Loyalists, including Robert and Patrick Cunningham, perhaps helped him survive.

Back into Action: 1778

For many years, the United States Congress dragged its feet in response to requests from veterans of the American Revolution for pensions. Acts passed in 1818 and 1820 made pensions available to veterans of the Continental Line, but not the militia. Only in 1832 did men who served in militia units receive the

114. Siebert, Loyalists in East Florida, 2:323-325; Edwin J. Cashin, "Thomas Brown," in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, published Dec. 8, 2003, last modified Sept. 25, 2014, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/thomas-brown-1750-1825>; (accessed October 1, 2024); Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 46.

115. Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia Containing Brief Sketches of the Most Remarkable Events Up to the Present Day (1784)* (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell Publisher, 1909), 2:325.

116. McCall's erroneous report is paraphrased on a Georgia state historical marker near where Fort McIntosh was located.

117. Todd Braisted confirmed this conclusion in a conversation with the author, March 22, 2024.

opportunity to apply. The National Park Service provided this summary of the process faced by these men and their widows:

In addition to documentation applicants were required to appear before a Court of Record to provide oral testimony about their service, corroborated by at least one credible witness. While they answered standard questions, the veterans often told much more than required, perhaps seeing this as their chance—as elderly and largely illiterate men in the twilight of their lives—to get their stories on the record.¹¹⁸

Pension applications should not be taken at face value. A militiaman, aged twenty in 1776, attained the age of 76 in 1832. Advanced age and the vagaries of memory inevitably cast doubt upon all the 1832 (and later) applications. Everyone considering the applications should be mindful of the tendency to embellish Patriot achievements and magnify the misdeeds of the enemy. Most times, one pension application is not considered sufficient proof of the events of the war. Two applications bearing the same information are more dependable.

Two pension applications support the conclusion that Cunningham rejoined the war as a Tory in the summer of 1778. Jethro O'Sheals reported in 1832 that he served as a militiaman under Captain Blasingame in Major William Farr's Battalion of Brandon's (2nd Spartan) Regiment. In August 1778, O'Sheals's unit skirmished in Laurens District "with a party of Tories under the command of Cunningham of the bloody scout & defeated them."¹¹⁹

A pension application filed by James Cannon, combined with the skirmish described by O'Sheals, showed Cunningham and his party were on their way from the Ninety Six District to Savannah. James Cannon came to adulthood in Newberry County. While living in Missouri in 1832, Cannon told the justices of the Lincoln County (Missouri) Court "that he entered the service of the United States in the year 1778 or 1779, in the state of South Carolina." Following guard duty at Edgehill Station [Hayes Station] in Laurens County, he "engaged in scouting parties against the Tories – that he went with several hundred men under Col. Levi Casey after a large number of Tories called Cunningham's Men, and followed these men several days, and until they were dispersed in a swamp in the lower part of S. Carolina and took from them horses, coats, &c." Because William Cunningham appeared in Savannah in December 1778, a venture from the Ninety Six District through the Low Country appears viable and necessary. Cannon's account confirmed that Cunningham assembled Loyalist militiamen in the Ninety Six District in 1778. Cunningham went to Savannah because British ships were bringing an invasion force from New York to capture Georgia's capital.¹²⁰ As will be seen, Loyalists in the southern Backcountry had received advance notice of the British Southern Strategy.

From the earliest days of the American Revolution, France secretly supplied North American rebels with arms, ammunition, and supplies. King Louis XVI and his government officially joined the war when they learned the Americans had vanquished an entire British army at Saratoga, New York, in the fall of 1777. French leaders perceived the American rebellion as an opportunity to weaken their longtime rival,

118. "Revolutionary War Veteran and Widow Pensions," <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/revolutionary-war-veteran-and-widow-pensions> (accessed August 22, 2024).

119. Jethro O'Sheals, (also Oshiel, Oshiels, and O'Shields) Pension Application S18144, Sept. 27, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s18144.pdf> (accessed Aug. 13, 2024).

120. James Cannon, Pension Application S16684, Feb. 4, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s16684.pdf> (accessed August 13, 2024).

Great Britain. The British government responded to the shocking loss at Saratoga and the stalemate they faced with George Washington around New York City by launching their Southern Strategy. The Secretary of State for the American Department, Lord George Germain, chose the fresh course of action. Germain was determined to learn from the mistakes made in the summer of 1776, when His Majesty's navy and army failed to take Charleston. He determined to reclaim control of the rebellious colonies by invading Georgia and advancing northward. He chose Savannah as his first target and began preparations in early 1778.¹²¹

From his New York City headquarters, Henry Clinton organized the assault on Georgia. Clinton sent Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell to take Savannah. Campbell left New York on November 26 and arrived at the mouth of the Savannah River at the end of December with 3,000, possibly 3,500, British Regulars, Provincials, and Hessian auxiliaries. American Major General Robert Howe had only 850 Continentals and Georgia militia to defend Georgia's capital. Campbell's troops killed 83 Patriots, captured 450, and claimed the city on December 29. Only three days later, on January 1, Campbell began marching between 650 and 1,000 well-trained Loyalists into the Georgia backcountry. He stayed on the south bank of the Savannah River, with Augusta as his destination. Campbell counted on more Loyalists along both sides of the river to join him. Loyalists exiled in Great Britain and others ensconced in New York City, such as the former royal governors of South Carolina and Georgia, assured British authorities that thousands of their fellow King's Men would join the fight to retake the southern colonies. The arrival of British troops, they claimed, would inspire Tories to take up arms.¹²²

When news spread that Archibald Campbell's army was nearing Savannah, hundreds of Loyalist families fled into the city from Georgia and South Carolina. Officials in Charleston responded to the Loyalist exodus. The General Assembly granted Governor John Rutledge power to punish anyone who joined the British and did not return to the Patriot fold within forty days. Rutledge could take their property or even have them put to death. The governor also ordered the formation of over 2,500 militia. They were "to crush any insurgents in our back Country."¹²³

Major General Augustine Prevost commanded His Majesty's personnel in East Florida. As Campbell neared Savannah, Prevost marched up the coast from St. Augustine with nine hundred additional men. Prevost made Georgia's capital his new headquarters and assumed command of all British and Loyalist personnel in East Florida and Georgia. To establish control of Georgia, the British had to not only hold Savannah, but the interior. Augusta was only a village, yet it was Georgia's foremost inland community. Traffic crossed the river at Augusta with relative ease. As he marched into the interior, Campbell's well-armed, trained, and disciplined soldiers fought off outnumbered Patriot militia. On January 23, they arrived at Brier (or Briar) Creek near where it emptied into the Savannah. At its mouth, the creek was wide with steep banks, but a bridge provided passage. Campbell's army crossed the creek and continued on their way. Andrew Williamson controlled both sides of the river at Augusta. Realizing the greater strength of Campbell's army, Williamson moved all his fighters into South Carolina and present-day North Augusta. Campbell took Augusta on January 31; he set up defenses, built huts for his troops, and began constructing

121. Harry Schenawolf, "Battle of Brier Creek: American Rout that Opened the Carolinas to Invasion," *Revolutionary War Journal*, <https://revolutionarywarjournal.com/battle-of-brier-creek-american-rout-that-opened-the-carolinas-to-invasion/> (accessed March 3, 2026).

122. Robert S. Davis, "The Battle of Kettle Creek," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 2 (Feb. 2006): 30-37, <https://southern-campaigns.org/article-index>, hereafter cited as *SCAR*, (accessed December 18, 2024).

123. Piecuch, "Loyalist Exodus of 1778."

flat bottom boats for a river crossing. A stalemate ensued as Campbell and Williamson both awaited reinforcements. Campbell discovered to his dismay that Loyalists were not as eager to rejoin the war as former royal governors had claimed.¹²⁴

The Kettle Creek Campaign, January-February 1779

James (or John) Boyd grew up in the Ninety Six District. His commitment to the King and fear of reprisal steered him to British-held New York soon after the war began. Henry Clinton came to admire and respect Boyd, so he assigned him to sail with Archibald Campbell to Savannah and play a major role in the British retaking of Georgia and South Carolina.¹²⁵ Campbell set a goal or “warrant” for Boyd and other Loyalist leaders. To become a major, a man needed to recruit 200-250 men. To be commissioned as a lieutenant colonel, the goal was 350 men. For the rank of colonel, Campbell set the goal at five hundred recruits. Boyd eventually met his aim in the South Carolina Backcountry.¹²⁶

When James Boyd arrived in Savannah with Campbell, Boyd set out for the Carolina Backcountry to recruit Loyalists to join him and to form a militia unit. An able and willing William Cunningham agreed to be part of Boyd’s mission. Boyd received orders to cross the Savannah River, and travel northwest through South Carolina. He was expected to recruit more Loyalists to rejoin the fight, just as Campbell sought to accomplish on the Georgia side of the river. Augustine Prevost instructed Boyd to recross the river above Augusta and unite with Campbell at Augusta. Although Boyd left Savannah with a small company of volunteers, he gained many more in the following weeks. His trek came to be known as the Kettle Creek Campaign. Boyd and his party initially faced little opposition as they moved into the Backcountry of South Carolina, where Patriot efforts to oppose the Loyalists were just starting.¹²⁷

William Cunningham began his service to the Crown as a militiaman in the Kettle Creek Campaign. It is not clear if he left Savannah with Boyd or if he delayed joining Boyd until he completed a personal mission. When he arrived in the city, Cunningham received devastating family news. On or about December 21, three Revolutionaries led by William Ritchie tried to force his brother John to enlist with them. Like many other personal conflicts in eighteenth-century South Carolina, it is not clear why bad blood developed between Cunningham and William Ritchie. The two lived near one another in the Ninety Six District and served together in the 3rd Regiment. Edward McCrady called their relationship “bitter neighborhood strife.”¹²⁸ The reason might have boiled down to Cunningham’s decision to abandon the Patriot cause. According to Ann Pamela Cuningham, William Ritchie determined to find William Cunningham and kill him. Cunningham learned of Ritchie’s threat and warned Ritchie to desist. Ritchie responded: “he intended to shoot him down the first sight he got of him, and would follow him, if necessary, to the very gate of hell.” Ann Pamela Cuningham reported that Ritchie, frustrated at not being able to find William, turned

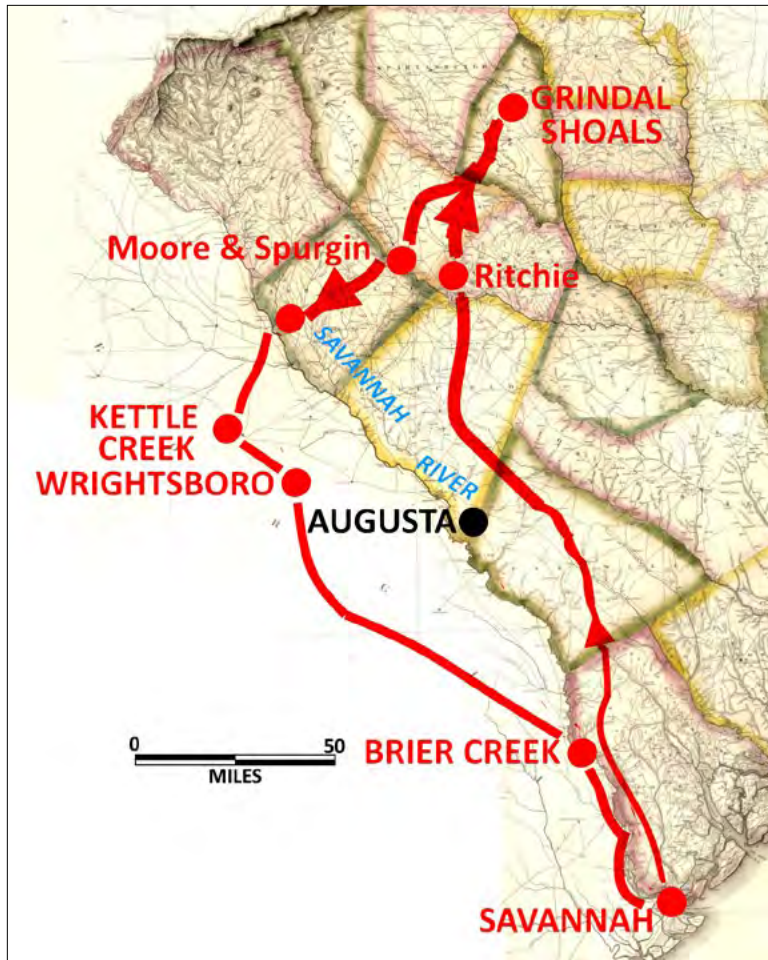
124. Robert Scott Davis, “The Battle of Briar Creek,” *SCAR* 3, no. 10-11: 26-27, <https://southern-campaigns.org/article-index> (accessed September 30, 2024); Davis, “Kettle Creek,” 30-37; Piecuch *South Carolina Provincials*, 90.

125. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 58, note 11, reported that Boyd’s origins, his move to New York, and how he came to be regarded as a colonel are not proven facts and need additional research.

126. Robert Scott Davis, “Battle of Kettle Creek,” in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, published Dec. 8, 2003, last modified on Oct. 11, 2016, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/battle-of-kettle-creek/> (accessed October 3, 2024).

127. Sabine, *American Loyalists, 171-172*; Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 102-103; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 58.

128. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:469.



Cunningham's First Actions as a Tory, January-April 1779

his wrath on William's brother John and their father. She reported John could not fight for either side. "He had been not only entirely lame from birth, but was subject to fits of an epileptic character." Ritchie, assisted by Samuel Moore and John Cook, whipped and beat William's brother John and killed him. Next, they maimed the father.¹²⁹

Ann Pamela Cunningham reported William did not have a horse when he set out in January 1779 to avenge his brother's death. Her account of a horseless Cunningham substantiates James Cannon's pension statement, mentioned previously. Cannon stated that Colonel Levi Casey's force engaged the fleeing Loyalists in a Low Country swamp and stole their horses.¹³⁰

Ann Pamela Cunningham recounted William's first murder: "When Cunningham finally arrived at Ritchie's home, Ritchie tried to escape over the

fence, but Cunningham shot him down." O'Neill reported Cunningham arrived at Ritchie's house and "in the presence of his family he consummated his cherished and fell purpose by shooting him dead." William waited three additional years for revenge against the other two culprits.¹³¹ Ritchie is buried at the Greenville Presbyterian Church in today's Greenwood County. His grave marker reads: "killed by Tories."¹³²

Years later, on May 11, 1786, Cunningham submitted a formal request called a memorial for a pension at half-pay as a British major. His application provides key background to Cunningham's activities from his arrival in Savannah until he filed the application eight years later. The memorial was substantially correct, and statements by others which accompanied Cunningham's memorial confirmed the accuracy of his words. However, Cunningham lied in his first sentence. He wrote, "That upon His Majesty's Troops taking possession of the Province of Georgia, Your Memorialist assembled the Loyalists in the District of Ninety Six, South Carolina, and accompanied by 600 men, set off for Georgia." Cunningham undoubtedly played a significant role in recruiting Loyalists, but James Boyd led the Kettle Creek Campaign, not Cunningham.¹³³

129. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 640; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 1:469, paraphrased Ann Pamela Cunningham's narrative of the event, further demonstrating his dependence upon her as his source. The father's given name is unknown.

130. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 90, 100.

131. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 640; Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 513-522; Landrum, "Random Recollections," 40-45.

132. Durant Ashmore, telephone conversation, November 10, 2023.

133. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 92; William Cunningham, "Memorial of William Cunningham of South Carolina,"

James Boyd's growing number of personnel stole horses, sometimes even from plows. Like Archibald Campbell in Georgia, Boyd had confidence that thousands of King's Men in the Ninety Six District would join the Kettle Creek Campaign. He met with substantial success, and it appears coordination took place before the start of the expedition. A party of Tories appeared at Grindal Shoals and joined Boyd's militia on January 29. From there, the corps turned south and marched toward the Savannah River. On the Reedy River in Greenville County, North Carolina Loyalist John Moore met Boyd and supplemented the unit with 250 additional men in arms. With these increased numbers, Boyd became a colonel, Moore a lieutenant colonel; and another North Carolinian, John Spurgin (also spelled Spurgen and Spurgeon) a major. There is no record of William Cunningham being assigned a rank or role of leadership. But he was again on horseback and probably earning the esteem of others.¹³⁴

Boyd forged a remarkably powerful force. He had six hundred or more men with him when he crossed into Abbeville County, South Carolina. On or about February 5, Boyd captured a small Patriot unit stationed at Broad Mouth Creek and claimed the outpost without casualties. Two days later, his force arrived at Fort Independence, another modest outpost, and torched it. Under normal circumstances, Cherokee Ford was a convenient place to cross the river, but a handful of Patriots controlled McGowan's Blockhouse, which overlooked the ford. Although the Patriots possessed only two small cannons, Boyd moved five miles upstream to the mouth of Vann's Creek. There, on February 10, Boyd began crossing the Savannah. Rafts carried the baggage, and men and horses swam. South Carolina and Georgia Patriot militias, commanded by Captains Robert Anderson and James Little, gathered on the other bank. The first battle of the Kettle Creek expedition occurred as Boyd made the crossing. The tall canes on the Georgia side worked to the advantage of the King's Men. Boyd lost a few men, and Anderson and Little lost one. Fifteen other Patriots received wounds and eighteen were captured. Boyd had arrived in Georgia, was ready to march to Augusta, and expected to find Campbell waiting for him.

Leadership in Britain and in British-held New York had estimated Campbell would garner 6,000 Loyalists into arms when uniformed soldiers landed in Savannah. Though Boyd was joined by 600 North and South Carolinians, Campbell saw only 1,400 Georgia Loyalists go to him and pledge allegiance to King George III. Campbell realized Tory farms near Augusta could not provide enough food for his soldiers and mounts. He also learned that North Carolina rebel militia Major General John Ashe had arrived across the river from Augusta to reinforce South Carolina's Williamson. Ashe had with him one thousand militia and 250 Continentals. Campbell feared that the American forces in Augusta or those of General Benjamin Lincoln in Charleston might cross the river somewhere below Augusta and cut off his retreat to Savannah. At sunrise on February 14, 1779, Campbell evacuated Augusta and began a return to the coast. He did not know Boyd was nearing Augusta, and later that day would direly need his help.¹³⁵

On February 14, Boyd stopped on a rocky hilltop overlooking Kettle Creek in Wilkes County, Georgia, and allowed his men to slaughter cattle and eat. The inexperienced commander did not deploy scouts who would have quickly detected a Patriot encampment only four miles away. The Patriot governments of Georgia and South Carolina had coordinated a response to the British land invasion of the two states. South Carolina Colonel Andrew Pickens and Georgians, Colonel John Dooly and Lieutenant Colonel Elijah

May 11, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn.htm> (accessed October 6, 2024).

134. Davis, "Kettle Creek," 30-37.

135. Davis, "Kettle Creek"; O'Kelley, *NBBS* 1:244.

Clark, discovered Boyd's whereabouts and surprised the Loyalist encampment. Boyd was shot and died later that day, reportedly in the arms of Pickens. Boyd's men began to scatter, and his second-in-command, John Moore, disappeared from the battlefield. Major Spurgin rallied the remaining 270 troops, including Cunningham, and led them toward Wrightsboro. Most had lost their horses in the melee.

Although Pickens, Dooly, and Clark defeated the Tories at Kettle Creek, actual losses were light on both sides. The Patriots lost seven men killed and fifteen wounded. Boyd and nineteen other Loyalists died. The Patriots took 600 or more horses, plus much of Boyd's baggage. The victors also took twenty-two Loyalists captive and delivered them to Ninety Six and Augusta. Others returned home after the defeat but surrendered later to the Patriots. One hundred and fifty Loyalists were jailed. Twenty received death sentences and five were eventually hanged. With the failed Kettle Creek Campaign, the unremitting violence of American against American had resumed in the South.¹³⁶

Spurgin's group fared better than the deceased or incarcerated. Once in Wrightsboro, he and his 270 men were met by North Carolina Captain John Hamilton, who led them to Lieutenant Colonel Campbell.¹³⁷ Campbell and General Prevost put the remaining 270 men into their army. Campbell sent a request to Savannah for clothing for them and organized them into two "corps," the Royal North Carolina Volunteers and the Second Battalion of the South Carolina Royalists. The South Carolina regiment's first battalion had been organized in East Florida in 1778.¹³⁸

John Hamilton was given command of the North Carolina regiment, eventually attained the rank of lieutenant colonel, and in 1786 he assisted Cunningham with his pension application. Major John Spurgin received command of the new battalion of the South Carolina Royalists and William Cunningham was commissioned as a lieutenant in that corps.¹³⁹ Cunningham was no longer a militiaman. He had become a Provincial, a British soldier.¹⁴⁰ Fifty thousand Americans took up arms for King George III, and 19,000 of them served the King as Provincials.¹⁴¹

The 1779 British effort to take and hold Augusta had failed miserably. As for Cunningham, his participation in the Kettle Creek campaign provided more experience fighting as a Tory. Once in Archibald Campbell's army, he began service in the company of professional soldiers and engaged in two more Georgia battles. His second battle in the state, the British victory at Brier Creek, was a significant accomplishment for the British and provided a clear sign the British would take and hold the South.¹⁴²

Victory at Brier Creek

On the return march to Savannah, Campbell's troops did not cross Brier Creek near its mouth, as they had done several weeks earlier. Instead, Campbell moved southwest from Augusta and crossed the creek upstream at Odom's Ferry. Once on the southern side of the watercourse, Campbell followed it to where

136. Davis, "Kettle Creek."

137. Robert S. Davis in conversation and emails in December 2024 provided the author with information about Hamilton, Spurgin, and Shell Bluff.

138. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 93.

139. John Hamilton, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham," May 11, 1786, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn6.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

140. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:467. British payrolls provided additional proof that Cunningham served for several months as a Provincial.

141. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 41.

142. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 92.

it emptied into the Savannah. From there, Campbell continued his march toward Savannah on a course parallel to the river. He stopped, though, at Ebenezer, Georgia, and relinquished command to Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost, a younger brother of General Augustine Prevost. Campbell himself continued on to Savannah and returned to England.

Mark Prevost received information that Ashe had crossed the river at Augusta and was marching toward Savannah. Ashe's aim was to either retake the city and expel the British or to confine them in the city until he was reinforced. He also learned Benjamin Lincoln was leading Continentals to join Williamson. Lincoln planned to incorporate Williamson's militia into his army and then rendezvous with Ashe. For Prevost, time was of the essence, and a major confrontation loomed.¹⁴³

Campbell told Prevost about the circuitous route he had taken across Brier Creek, so Prevost had the bridge destroyed. Safe passage across the creek was nearly impossible. Prevost sent a battalion of the 71st Regiment of Fraser's Scottish Highlanders and two cannons within three miles of the crossing, but only to serve as a decoy. Prevost astutely took most of his army on a fifteen-mile trek upstream. They crossed the watercourse at Paris Mill on March 2, quickly marched to the principal thoroughfare called River Road, and entrapped Ashe at the mouth of the creek.¹⁴⁴

Prevost's deployment of the cannons near the site of the bridge confused Ashe, who was surprised to find Prevost on his side of the creek on March 3. Many of Ashe's men had to run to supply wagons to acquire ammunition. The attackers skewered dozens of Patriots with their swords and bayonets or shot them. Other Patriots drowned as they attempted to swim across the river. Some hid in the tall cane along the river, but Prevost's troops set fire to the cane, leading to the deaths of more rebels. Prevost killed between 150 and 250 Patriots and captured 173 officers and other men.

Some members of the Scottish regiment Fraser's 71st Highlanders used their sabers against Patriots who had grounded their arms. The Highlanders excused their brutality on account of the death of one of their own a few weeks earlier. During Campbell's stay in Augusta, Patriots led by Lieutenant William Butler of Andrew Pickens's militia embarked on a nighttime mission to reconnoiter the British encampment. In the darkness, Sergeant McAllister of the 71st Highlanders Light Infantry, who had been assigned to protect local residents, encountered the intruders. He was shot and killed, though a rumor began that he was slain by a hatchet. When a soldier such as McAllister acted as a "safe guard," the practices of the era regarded him as a neutral not to be harmed. At Brier Creek, the sergeant's Scottish comrades found an opportunity to retaliate against the rebels and to slay those who had fallen into their hands. To be described later, the account of how McAllister died inspired William Cunningham to murder William Butler and his son during the Bloody Scout. That would make him a mortal enemy of another member of the Butler family.¹⁴⁵

Revolutionary War veteran John McWhorter fought at Brier Creek. McWhorter stated in his 1833 pension application that before Prevost launched the attack, his unit "went to the British camp, took seven prisoners, among them the celebrated Tory Cunningham; during that day the British attack surprised and defeated General Ashe, and when we returned in the evening to the camp, being ignorant of the events of the day then we were fired on by the British sentry and with difficulty our party made a thin escape to the

143. Harry Schenawolf, "Battle of Briar Creek, American Rout that Opened the Carolinas to Invasion," <https://revolutionarywarjournal.com/battle-of-brier-creek-american-rout-that-opened-the-carolinas-to-invasion> (accessed March 30, 2024).

144. "The Battle of Brier Creek, March 3, 1779," *Georgia's Revolutionary War Trail* (accessed December 9, 2024).

145. Davis, "Briar Creek," 26-27.

camp of General Williamson, leaving behind about twenty-five killed and prisoners.” McWhorter’s claim about the capture of Cunningham and the other militiamen lacks support from other sources, but it might still be true. Prevost deployed his Provincials to his far left, meaning Cunningham was not near the action. McWhorter’s unit could have stumbled upon the Loyalists before the battle started and apprehended them. Cunningham and his fellow prisoners regained their freedom when the Patriots made their “thin escape to the camp of General Williamson.”¹⁴⁶

The resounding British triumph at Brier Creek proved much more important to the course of the war than Boyd’s defeat at Kettle Creek because it set back the Patriot cause for many months. If Lincoln and his army had recaptured Savannah in 1779, the British invasion of South Carolina might not have happened. But the British maintained control of Savannah. Mark Prevost’s brother, Major General Augustine Prevost, would soon achieve notable success, with Cunningham playing a part in Prevost’s accomplishments.

Despite the British success in Georgia, Patriots and Loyalists continued to engage in smaller actions. On March 31, Major Spurgin led members of his South Carolina Royalists battalion, including William Cunningham, to engage Patriot militia at the community of Shell Bluff in Burke County, Georgia. Twenty Loyalists, including Spurgin, died.¹⁴⁷

Captured and Jailed in 1779

After Brier Creek, Benjamin Lincoln launched a new effort to retake Georgia. He moved elements of his army along the South Carolina side of the Savannah from Purrysburg, South Carolina, crossed the river at Augusta, and began marching southward. At Savannah, General Prevost faced a shortage of provisions because ships sent to resupply him had been captured or sunk. Prevost knew he could not forage foodstuffs without venturing a significant distance from the city. As a result, he led about two thousand soldiers into South Carolina with two purposes: to forage and to force Lincoln to quit his effort to retake Savannah. Prevost began his invasion on April 28 and made rapid progress toward South Carolina’s capital; on May 10, he had arrived at the Ashley River. Lincoln’s Continentals, by then returning to Charleston, were still many days distant. Prevost’s lead elements arrived at the gates of Charleston on May 11.¹⁴⁸

The city’s leaders made a stunning offer. They proposed a surrender to Prevost with the condition that the state be regarded as neutral for the rest of the war. Prevost, however, never intended to take the city. He did not have sufficient arms or men to hold it once Lincoln arrived. Prevost also concluded he did not have the authority to grant South Carolina neutrality. During the night of May 12, Prevost moved his army back across the Ashley River and began his escape from Lincoln. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Robinson, Second Lieutenant William Cunningham, and the South Carolina Royalists were the last contingent to leave the vicinity of the city and served as a rear guard. Prevost made a slow return trip. His army foraged cattle and rice on James Island and Johns Island and crossed tidal creeks and sea islands on their way to Beaufort, where they later boarded ships for the brief trip back to Savannah.¹⁴⁹

146. John McWhorter, Pension Application S32400, June 28, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s32400.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2024).

147. Robert S. Davis, “Augusta at the Center: Loyalist Rebels and the Failure of the King’s Cause in the Georgia Backcountry in 1779,” *Augusta Richmond County History* 49 (Spring 2018): 17-29.

148. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 98-99.

149. “Prevost’s March of 1779,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_prevosts_march_1779.html (accessed October 8, 2024); Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 99.

Prevost faced significant opposition from units of Lincoln's army of Continentals and militia. He deployed Lieutenant Colonel John Maitland to establish defenses at the crossing over the Stono River and hold off Lincoln. Lincoln attacked Maitland at the Battle of Stono Ferry on June 20. Both sides suffered significant losses, but Lincoln failed to break through the British fortified positions, and the British general continued back to the safety of Savannah.¹⁵⁰

Patriots took William Cunningham captive during Prevost's return march to Savannah. Cunningham told of his capture and jailing in his 1786 pension application. However, Cunningham did not provide the location of his capture. As noted above, John Hamilton submitted a statement to support Cunningham's pension application. Hamilton wrote that Cunningham "suffered a rigorous confinement" in the Charleston jail.¹⁵¹ After several months, Cunningham either escaped his imprisonment or received parole. Cunningham reported in his memorial that he then "found shelter with friends at Ninety Six, until the reduction of Charleston."¹⁵²

According to two pension applications and a diary entry, Cunningham was taken captive near Orangeburg as Prevost returned to Savannah. The widow of Thomas Boon of Clark County, Illinois, submitted his application in 1833. Born in North Carolina, Boon lived in Edgefield County during the Revolution. Mrs. Boon related her husband's service in 1779:

About June 14, 1779, Gen. Benjamin Lincoln was, at this time, commander in chief though Gen. Andrew Williamson was still with us. Our Army had increased to about six thousand men, including volunteers and militia. We now marched day and night until we arrived at Bacon's Bridge and on the night on which we arrived we were fired upon by some Tories. By this time, we had gotten between the British forces and Charleston. In order to elude the American pursuit, the British took another route toward [away from] Charleston, crossing the Edisto River towards the mouth of Stono [River.] We then shifted our course about ten or fifteen miles southwest from Edisto River. We overtook a party of about two hundred or two hundred fifty men, who appeared to have been the rear guard of the enemy or to have straggled from the British in some manner. This party of British had with them two ox wagons and several hogsheads of rum. The men were Sent as prisoners to Orangeburg Jail. I well remember that among those prisoners was one William Cunningham, a son of the Tory Gen. Robert Cunningham of South Carolina.¹⁵³

Mrs. Boon's account aligned with the timing of Prevost's return to Savannah. Her estimation of the Patriots battling between two hundred and two hundred fifty Loyalists matches what is known about the rearguard. Bacon's Bridge crossed the Upper Ashley River. According to the applicant, his unit chased the Loyalists and engaged them near the Edisto River. Orangeburg lay near this location, so it was sensible to jail the captives there. At a later time, the captors transported the Carolina Loyalists to the more secure confinement in Charleston. Boon, like others, confused William Cunningham's family relationship with Robert.

In 1832, Robert Kirkpatrick, a resident of Jackson County, Tennessee and earlier of the Camden (South Carolina) District, submitted his pension application. Kirkpatrick wrote that his company crossed the Edisto to engage elements of Prevost's army. The Patriots "intercepted a large party of Tories driving

150. "Stono Ferry," <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/stono-ferry> (accessed October 6, 2024); "Stono Ferry," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_stono_ferry.html (accessed October 6, 2024).

151. John Hamilton, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham."

152. William Cunningham, "Memorial."

153. Thomas Boon, Pension Application W23656, Dec. 3, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/w23656.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2024).

negroes toward Savanna, among whom we took a celebrated Tory by the name of Bill Cunningham.” Kirkpatrick’s account further substantiated that Cunningham was taken captive as the Carolina Loyalists returned to Savannah.¹⁵⁴

The diary of North Carolina militiaman John Graham also showed Cunningham was captured while Prevost returned to Savannah. Graham’s report was secondhand, but as he marched from Burton’s Ferry to Parker’s Ferry, he learned Patriots captured Cunningham and two associates of Loyalist officer Daniel McGirt. Graham dated his entry May 16, 1779, and wrote “Cunningham was taken, & 2 of McGirt’s Men.” Prevost began his return trip on May 12. Graham’s diary entry provides a strong indication Cunningham was captured on May 14 or 15.¹⁵⁵ Cunningham’s brief tenure as a Provincial concluded ignominiously. By year’s end, he was back in Laurens County, probably under the protection of Patrick or Robert Cunningham.

154. Robert Kirkpatrick, Pension Application S1845, Nov. 13, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s1845.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2024).

155. John Graham, Diary, May 16, 1779, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

From the Fall of Charleston to the Evacuation of Ninety Six Winter 1780 until July 1781

The British Take South Carolina

While Cunningham was confined in 1779, allied American and French forces attempted to push the British army out of Savannah. A combined land and sea assault in October met with failure, and the French fleet sailed away. As Major General Benjamin Lincoln regrouped in Charleston, General Sir Henry Clinton completed his plans to conquer the entire American South. As in 1776, Clinton's target was Charleston, but he would not repeat the mistakes of four years earlier. The new invasion and the surrender of Charleston on May 12, 1780, initiated three years of boundless bloodshed and misery in the South, particularly in South Carolina. The state had seen nothing like it before and would not see it again until the Civil War. The United States won its independence in the South during the months following the British capture of Charleston. But success came only after several hundred skirmishes, actions, murders, and full battles. Definitions vary for the words "battles" and "actions." South Carolina had more actions than any other colony except for possibly New Jersey. During those final three years of warfare, William Cunningham earned his nickname "Bloody Bill." In the first year and a half after the fall of Charleston, Cunningham committed more murders than anyone in the state's entire history and left an unsurpassed legacy of horrific, unrelenting revenge.

Henry Clinton left New York Harbor the day after Christmas 1779 with 120 ships, 5,000 troops, and hundreds of horses. Intense storms prolonged an otherwise short voyage. Most horses perished because of the turbulence. On February 11, 1780, Clinton's army finally began disembarking at Johns Island. This time, Clinton kept his ships at sea. His men seized horses from Low Country farms, and the army arrived at Charleston's outer fortifications in March. By March 29, they were on Charleston Neck and started a brief siege. On April 9, His Majesty's ships began dropping their anchors in Charleston Harbor. Charleston's civic leaders convinced Benjamin Lincoln to stay and defend the city despite the poor odds of success. Lincoln yielded to their pleading and did not send his Continentals or militia out of Charleston before they became trapped. On April 14, Loyalist dragoons (cavalry trained to also fight as infantry) led by Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton cut off the last route of escape when they captured Moncks Corner. On May 7, Fort Moultrie fell, and four days later Lincoln accepted Clinton's terms of surrender. With the official surrender on May 12, the United States lost all its uniformed soldiers in the South except for one regiment. The surrender of five thousand members of the Continental Army was the largest single loss of personnel in the war

Captured officers were quartered in Charleston, Mount Pleasant, and Haddrell's Point and generally treated well. However, Continental soldiers were confined in the Charleston barracks and other buildings; after many escaped, those who remained were imprisoned on ships in the harbor, where hundreds perished from disease and starvation. Clinton gave better treatment to Patriot militia. He put them on parole, an amnesty in which one swore not to participate in the war until exchanged. If a man broke his parole, the British and Loyalists could hang him immediately. In return, the British promised not to harass parolees.¹⁵⁶ High ranking militia officers, among them Andrew Williamson and Andrew Pickens, took parole. Francis Marion was in Charleston as the British approached. One night he jumped from a second-story window to escape a party. He broke his ankle but recovered enough to slip out of the city, avoid capture, and continue the fight for liberty.

Little time passed before British troops and Loyalist militia began to harass Thomas Sumter, who had earlier retired from military service, and some parolees. For example, Tarleton instructed Captain Charles Campbell to destroy Sumter's plantation in the High Hills of the Santee. Sumter received a last-minute warning of Campbell's approach. He had no choice but to leave behind his family. Campbell forced Mrs. Sumter out of the house, and she watched helplessly as the British torched their home.¹⁵⁷ Sumter took refuge among the Patriots' traditional allies, the Catawba Indians.¹⁵⁸ Nineteenth-century historian Lyman C. Draper summarized the situation in the summer of 1780: "Gloom and dismay overspread the whole Southern country."¹⁵⁹ Before the war's end, William Cunningham would engage in combat with two of the state's most prominent heroes of the Revolution, Marion and Pickens, and with elements of Sumter's force.

Upon his arrival in Charleston, General Clinton announced his intentions to restore civil order. He dispersed his soldiers to the four major courthouse/market towns in the state, Camden, Cheraw, Georgetown, and Ninety Six, and to smaller outposts at Hanging Rock (Lancaster County), Rocky Mount (York County), Orangeburg, Saxe Gotha (present-day West Columbia/Lexington), and Augusta, Georgia. However, neither Clinton nor his successor Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, spent much effort to restore order. One reason they failed to do so was their lack of personnel. The war had spread far beyond the shores of North America. The British fought throughout the Caribbean, at Gibraltar, and other locales, including India.

On June 1, 1780, Henry Clinton issued a new decree which abrogated the conditions of parole and denied Patriots the option of neutrality. Every non-disabled man in the state was expected to swear allegiance to the King. Most Patriots believed they were thus required to take up arms against "rebels and enemies of their country," though both Clinton and Cornwallis repeatedly stated that they wanted only reliable Loyalists to serve in the royal militia.¹⁶⁰ Walter Edgar deemed Clinton's proclamation "a monumental error."¹⁶¹ John

156. Walter Edgar, "Revolutionary War," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published June 20, 2016, last modified Aug. 23, 2022, <https://www.sencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/revolutionary-war> (accessed September 3, 2024).

157. Scholars debate the accuracy of this Sumter narrative.

158. C. Leon Harris and Charles B. Baxley, "Thunder Even at the Gates of Charlestown: Thomas Sumter's Raid of the Dog Days of 1781," https://www.academia.edu/118970918/Thunder_Even_at_the_Gates_of_Charlestown_Thomas_Sumter_s_Raid_of_the_Dog_Days_of_1781 (accessed September 3, 2024).

159. Lyman C. Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of Kings Mountain, October 7th, 1780, and the Events Which Led To It* (Peter G. Thompson, Publisher, 1881), v.

160. Henry Clinton, "Proclamation of Pardon for Rebels," June 1, 1780, <https://charlestonlibrarysociety.omeka.net/items/show/1331> (accessed March 3, 2026).

161. Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001), xv.

Buchanan wrote: “Consternation followed by anger swept the ranks of the recently vanquished. It was one thing to give up the fight against seemingly hopeless odds, quite another to pledge active support against brethren still active in the field.”¹⁶² Hundreds of Patriots rejoined the fight.

The burning of Sumter’s home was a minor occurrence compared to the real and psychological effects of an event which occurred a few days earlier. Debate continues among historians about the Battle at the Waxhaws in Lancaster County. Banastre Tarleton led his Provincials and a small number of British regulars to Lancaster County in pursuit of the last Continental unit in South Carolina. When Tarleton caught up with the retreating Americans and their commander refused a demand for surrender, Tarleton attacked. His troops killed 113 Continental soldiers, wounded 150 more, and captured 53 uninjured soldiers. Almost all the victims were sabered or bayoneted.¹⁶³ Was the near annihilation of Abraham Buford’s detachment in reality a massacre? Is it fairer to deem it a severe defeat for the Americans? Whatever the case, news about the Waxhaws spread like wildfire through the Carolinas. Word of “Buford’s Massacre” inspired Patriots to act with unrivaled barbarity. Charity and leniency were forgotten. “Tarleton’s Quarter” meant giving surrendering opponents no opportunity to avoid being slain.

Before returning to New York, Henry Clinton gave Charles, Lord Cornwallis, charge of the southern army. Cornwallis had the authority to change Clinton’s June 1 proclamation, but Cornwallis never did so. South Carolina’s war-within-a-war entered its most furious phase. Richard Maxwell Brown wrote, “Another brief breathing spell was ended in 1780 by a renewal of the Whig-Tory war, and for three years the Backcountry was wracked by some of the cruelest and devastating civil strife that has ever beset an American community.”¹⁶⁴

With the entry of France and then Spain into the war against Great Britain, the American Revolution became a world war. King George III’s government had to spread its personnel across the globe. As a result, British troop numbers never sufficed to pacify South Carolina. Regulars and Provincials established garrisons in South Carolina with swiftness and ease, but they seldom ventured beyond the walls to accomplish anything more than to buy or gather supplies. Loyalists did not offer their services to the degree the British assumed and needed. Hence, Clinton’s pledge to restore civil authority came to naught, and the countryside became a terrifying place for everyone. Loyalists also lacked the experienced military leadership found among the Revolutionaries. Many of the Loyalist leaders of 1775 and 1776 did not take an active part in the new royal militia. Thomas Fletchall declined to serve, while Cornwallis thought so little of Moses Kirkland and Richard Pearis that he refused to return them to leadership positions. Robert and Patrick Cunningham received significant commands in the summer and fall of 1780. But neither man demonstrated the charisma, or the tactical and strategic abilities needed to recruit men, lead them in battle, and hold the state for the King. Other factors were crucial to the eventual Patriot victory. But weak command leadership among militia, on whom the British had to depend, contributed immensely to the surrender at Yorktown and eventual British capitulation.

162. Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 72.

163. “Waxhaws,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_waxhaws.html (accessed November 19, 2024).

164. C. Leon Harris, “Massacre at the Waxhaws: The Wounds Bear Witness,” manuscript published 2024, https://www.academia.edu/118018911/Massacre_at_Waxhaws_the_Wounds_Bear_Witness (accessed May 6, 2024); Timothy Compeau, *Dishonored Americans: The Political Death of Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2023), 92; Brown, *Strain of Violence*, 71.

Before he left Charleston, General Clinton organized Loyalist units and outfitted them for his southern campaign. He brought along well-trained commanders to recruit and lead more Loyalists after his arrival. The most notable was Scotsman Patrick Ferguson, a major in the 71st Regiment of Foot. Ferguson had earned respect in the French and Indian War and later in the northern theater of the American Revolution. The major was also known for his invention of the effective Ferguson Rifle, a breech-loading flintlock rifle. Early in the war, Ferguson formed a Provincial unit called the American Volunteers. He and his Provincials sailed to Charleston with Clinton and helped to take the city. Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull, another Scotsman, also sailed with the armada. Turnbull had retired from the British army and made his home in New York. But when war came, Turnbull took charge of the New York Volunteers. As troops deployed around South Carolina in 1780, Turnbull assumed command of the fort at Rocky Mount in Lancaster County. A Philadelphia lawyer, Christian Huck, an officer in Tarleton's British Legion, accompanied Turnbull on the trip to South Carolina. Huck held the rank of captain.

On May 22, 1780, Clinton made Ferguson his Inspector of Militia and tasked him with recruiting and training local Loyalists. Ferguson's military achievements, leadership skills, and personality made him the ideal choice for the position. All four Cunningham brothers soon entered the war. Robert answered directly to Ferguson and commanded the Ninety Six Brigade with its six regiments. Patrick was commissioned as a major and given command of the Little River Regiment of Militia. Andrew became the captain of a company in Patrick's regiment. The youngest brother, John, also received a captain's commission and served as a paymaster in Charleston.¹⁶⁵

The Magnificent Ringtail

In late 1779 or early 1780, William Cunningham gained possession of a remarkable horse. Ringtail was named for the white ring around his tail. The strong steed helped him to evade capture or death on countless occasions. Ann Pamela Cunningham reported William received Ringtail as a gift from her grandfather, Patrick. William was never a person of wealth, so one can assume the accuracy of Cunningham's account. However, Ann Pamela did not relate when William received the magnificent gift. Moss contended that Patrick gave the steed to William in January 1779 after the horseless William walked from Savannah to William Ritchie's home. But Cunningham was made a prisoner a few months later near Orangeburg and imprisoned in Charleston. It seems more likely Patrick gave Ringtail to William after William got out of the Charleston jail and returned home in late 1779. Patrick might have concealed William on his own farm and given him Ringtail in the winter or spring.¹⁶⁶

A thoroughbred gave William Cunningham an enormous advantage over his adversaries. No breed surpasses the thoroughbred for speed over distances greater than a quarter or half a mile. Thoroughbreds race at 35 to 40 miles per hour and can keep up that pace for over two miles. Breeders in Great Britain developed thoroughbreds for racing, and they are known for "great stamina and courage."¹⁶⁷

165. Ian Saberton, "The Revolutionary War in the South: Reevaluations for Certain British and British American Actors," *JAR*, Nov. 21, 2016, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/11/revolutionary-war-south-re-evaluations-certain-british-british-american-actors> (accessed July 10, 2024).

166. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 641-642; Moss, *Loyalists in the Siege at Fort Ninety-Six*, 32.

167. "Thoroughbred," <https://www.horsefactbook.com/breeds/worlds-fastest-horses/>, accessed August 27, 2024; "How Fast Can a Horse Run? The Need for Speed," <https://horseracingsense.com/how-fast-can-horse-run-racing-records> (accessed August 27, 2024); *Britannica*, "Thoroughbred," <https://www.britannica.com/animal/Thoroughbred> (accessed August 27, 2024).

Out of Hiding, June 1780

William Cunningham rejoined the war as a captain in a company of the Little River Militia. Two officers in the company were senior to him: Captain James Dunlap (sometimes spelled Dunlop and Dunlapp) had charge of the company, and Captain William Helms was second to Dunlap.¹⁶⁸ James Dunlap grew up in Ireland. He was living in New York when the war broke out, joined the Queen's Rangers, and established a reputation as a capable military leader. Dunlap was in Ireland when Campbell took Savannah. He sailed for Georgia and served under Patrick Ferguson when Charleston fell. C. Leon Harris and Connor Runyan wrote: "In the South Carolina Backcountry one of the most active and allegedly brutal loyalist leaders was Capt. James Dunlap."¹⁶⁹

When William Cunningham applied for a military pension in 1786, he received letters of support from several previous commanders. These statements proved his service in the militia came to a temporary halt after Brier Creek when he became a Provincial. The pension statements made it appear Cunningham never again served as a militiaman. Terminology used by Cunningham and the men who supported his application implied he remained a Provincial for the rest of the war. For example, in London on May 16, 1786, Nisbet Balfour submitted his statement on behalf of William's pension application. Balfour wrote:

I do hereby certify that I knew Mr. William CUNYNGHAM soon after the Surrender of Charleston; that I found him in one of the most distant parts of the Province of South Carolina, exerting himself in a very active and Spirited manner against the enemy. And I do certify that, by Order of Lord CORNWALLIS, he was appointed a Captain in a Corps of Provincial Cavalry commanded by Major DUNLAPP [Dunlap], which Corps, being almost totally destroyed by service, and Major DUNLAPP killed, Mr. CUNYNGHAM was afterwards appointed Major in a Corps of Cavalry consisting of four Troops, where he continued until the evacuation of the Province.¹⁷⁰

In a similar vein, Major Archibald McArthur wrote that William Cunningham "joined His Majesty's Troops in Georgia in the year 1779." After his imprisonment in Charleston, he remained with "His Majesty's Troops" for the rest of the war. Cunningham's own statement says he "joined the army under Colonel Archibald CAMPBELL at Brier Creek in Feby. 1779.... Soon afterwards he was appointed a Lieutenant in the 2d Battn So. Carolina Royalists commanded by Colonel INNIS [Innes.] He later became a Captain of a Troop of Provincial Light Horse, under Major DUNLOP." McArthur also reported that Cunningham continued his service "as Major of Provincial Light Horse." Lieutenant Colonel John Hamilton of the North Carolina Provincials also submitted a Memorial for Cunningham. Hamilton stated Cunningham was a major in the Provincial Cavalry. Lieutenant Colonel Francis, Lord Rawdon wrote of Cunningham's "appointment in the Provincial Line."¹⁷¹

168. Murtie June Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War: Official Rolls of Loyalists Recruited from North Carolina and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1981) 1: 228, 262; Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 124.

169. C. Leon Harris and Connor Runyan, "James Dunlap: British Officer in Ferguson's Army," <https://amrevnc.com/biographies/james-dunlap> (accessed May 1, 2024); Ron Crawley, "Major James Dunlop: 'An Officer of Much Energy and Promptitude,'" schistory.net (accessed October 8, 2024).

170. Nisbet Balfour, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," May 16, 1786, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn5.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

171. Archibald McArthur, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," Feb. 24, 1786, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn3.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024); William Cunningham, "The Memorial of William Cunningham"; John Hamilton, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina"; Francis, Lord Rawdon, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/>

Despite the 1786 memorials, William Cunningham's name does not appear in any Provincial rolls for the war in North America. In fact, he signed payrolls for his militia unit. These discrepancies remain unexplained, but appear to be insignificant, as the surviving Provincial rolls are incomplete. What is certain is that Cunningham helped to lead and later had command of Loyalist cavalry from June 1780 until he left for East Florida in late 1782.

With British troops and materiel being deployed into the Backcountry in late May and June 1780, the Ninety Six District became a place of frenzy. Walter Edgar wrote of that period: "The only thing a man could trust was his best friend, his rifle." Loyalists were free to express their pent-up rage and join the new militia units. Patriots had to protect themselves and their families and make quick, life-changing decisions. Would they take parole? Would they leave for safety in North Carolina? Or would they report for duty under the leaders who remained committed to the rebellion?¹⁷²

The first pay period for James Dunlap's company began on June 14, but the company organized and entered the fray before that date.¹⁷³ According to Loyalist David Fanning, he and Cunningham teamed up in early June to capture Colonel James Williams. Williams was a prominent and wealthy resident of the region near the boundary of Newberry and Laurens districts. He called his plantation Mount Pleasant. At the rank of colonel, Williams commanded the Ninety Six Militia from the earliest days of the war. When Williams learned about the imminent arrival of Loyalist and British forces, he loaded up portable possessions and delivered them to his brother's home in Caswell County, North Carolina. Then he returned to South Carolina to lead the Ninety Six District Militia in its engagements with the British and their Loyalist allies. Williams played a key role in the victory at Kings Mountain on October 7 yet received mortal wounds. He died the following day, making him the highest-ranking Patriot casualty at Kings Mountain.¹⁷⁴

Colonel David Fanning hailed from the Ninety Six District. He became a charismatic leader, fought in both Carolinas, and is often compared to William Cunningham. Fanning penned a book about his wartime exploits, but historians have substantial doubts about the historicity of Fanning's accounts. Fanning wrote, "After the reduction of Charlestown, one William Cunningham and I concluded to embody a party of men, which we effected. We determined to take Col. Williams of the rebel militia prisoner, and then to join Capt. Parish, who was to raise a company and assist us. Col. Williams got notice of it and pushed off, and though we got sight of him he escaped us."¹⁷⁵ By Captain Parish, Fanning meant Richard Pearis. Fanning contended that before British units arrived in the Ninety Six District, he and Cunningham attempted to capture James Williams and take control of his plantation. The account remains unvalidated, but if factual they made the effort before June 10, the day Mount Pleasant was taken by other Loyalists.¹⁷⁶ However, Cunningham might indeed have partnered with Fanning to recruit Loyalists and try to take Williams and

[clmcunn4.htm](#) (accessed January 14, 2024).

172. Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats*, xv.

173. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign* 1:262.

174. After spending four years in command of the East Florida Rangers, Colonel Thomas Brown returned to the Ninety Six District in the spring of 1780. He arrived ahead of Ferguson and recruited King's Men to punish the rebels.

175. David Fanning, *Colonel Fanning's Narrative of His Exploits and Adventures as Loyalist of North Carolina in the American Revolution*, edited by A. W. Savary (Toronto: 1903), xi, <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.98061/1>; William T. Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary: James Williams (1740 – 1780) with Source Documents* (Lugoff, SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press. 2012), 76-77; Moss, *Loyalists at Kings Mountain*, 20-21; "Colonel David Fanning," https://www.carolana.com/NC/Revolution/loyalist_leaders_nc_david_fanning.html (accessed October 8, 2024).

176. Cunningham later murdered two sons of Colonel James Williams at the Hayes Station Massacre in 1781.

his plantation. If Fanning's account is accurate, then this was the only occasion the two noted Loyalists met and served alongside one another.

The War Returns to the Backcountry, Summer 1780

In June 1780, Patriot Colonel Thomas Brandon of the 2nd Spartan Regiment established a post on Fairforest Creek near Union, South Carolina. He intended to recruit men to break parole and rejoin the war effort. Governor John Rutledge had delivered gunpowder to Camden before he fled from Charleston, so Brandon went to Camden and received a substantial quantity. Brandon hid the gunpowder in the forests along Fairforest Creek. While bivouacked at the creek, Brandon held Loyalist Adam Steedham prisoner. Steedham escaped and found William Cunningham. As Brandon's men ate breakfast on either June 8 or 10, Cunningham and other Loyalists charged Brandon's camp. The action is commonly called Brandon's Defeat. Cunningham's men killed five members of the 2nd Spartan but failed to locate the gunpowder. Once retrieved, the powder proved essential to Patriot victories at Hanging Rock and Huck's Defeat.¹⁷⁷

At least four pension applicants identified William Cunningham as the leader of the Loyalist attackers. Applicant Joseph Hughes, for example, wrote that Brandon "was defeated by the Tories commanded by Bill Cunningham." The scribe for pension applicant Shadrach Gibbs wrote that he took "protection under Colonel Brandon who on the next day after our assembling was defeated by a Tory Colonel named Cunningham." The scribe for Aaron Guyton wrote that Guyton was with Brandon when "a large Body of Tories came on was commanded by Wilm Cunningham and defeated us with the loss of some killed and some taken prisoners." Applicant Samuel Mayes stated Cunningham's men captured him at Brandon's Defeat and jailed him for "about six weeks" at Ninety Six.¹⁷⁸

None of the applicants mentioned James Dunlap, so Dunlap, though in command of the company, was probably somewhere else. Alternatively, the pension applicants might have remembered Cunningham instead of Dunlap because of Bloody Bill's later notoriety. Whoever led the ambush on Fairforest Creek, William Cunningham was no doubt back in action.

After Steedham told Cunningham where to find Brandon, Steedham escaped to Georgia. Later that year, Steedham went back home, and Thomas Young expected his return. Young had lost his brother John at Brandon's Defeat and regarded his brother's death as a murder. The very night that Steedham arrived back at his home, men dispatched by Young seized him. Young then personally hanged Steedham.¹⁷⁹

Though William Cunningham did not participate in the violence and destruction wrought by Captain Christian Huck, Huck's actions and defeat serve as another example of the mayhem which overtook the state in the summer of 1780. George Turnbull, in command of the outpost at Rocky Mount, dispatched Huck to the New Acquisition District, present-day York County. Huck swiftly gained a reputation for cruelty and wanton destruction.

177. Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia: Huck's Defeat and the Revolution in the SC Backcountry*, May – July 1780 (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2005), 110-111.

178. Joseph Hughes, Pension Application S31764, Sept. 20, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s31764.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2024); Shadrach Gibbs, Pension Application S10740, March 11, 1836, <https://revwarapps.org/s10740.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2024); Aaron Guyton, Pension Application W21237, Oct. 1, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/w21237.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2024).

179. Ben Rubin, "The Rhetoric of Revenge: Atrocity and Identity in the Revolutionary Backcountry," *Journal of Backcountry Studies* 5, no. 2 (University of North Carolina, Greensboro, 2010), 25.

In 1837, Major Joseph McJunkin published a memoir of the war. McJunkin reported Turnbull assigned Huck to “punish the Presbyterian inhabitants of that place, which he did with barbarous hand by killing men, burning churches & driving off the ministers of the gospel to seek shelter amongst strangers.”¹⁸⁰ Colonels William Hill and Isaac Hayne owned and operated Hill’s Iron Works. It produced ammunition, guns, and agricultural implements.¹⁸¹ On June 18, Huck and the 3rd American Regiment successfully battled Patriots stationed at the iron works and then destroyed the store, the furnace, and the mills. Next, Huck burned churches and houses and murdered Whigs who refused to side with the British. Colonel Hill later wrote of that day: “The British burned the forge, furnace, grist and saw mills together with other buildings even to the Negro huts, & bore away about 90 negroes.”¹⁸²

In July, Turnbull sent Huck back into the New Acquisition District with 115 Provincials and Loyalist militia. Many Whigs had left their homes and gone into the territory of the Catawba tribe to rally with Thomas Sumter. Leading Patriots such as Colonel James Williamson, Lieutenant Colonel William Bratton, and Captain John McClure, had also gone to Sumter’s camp. On July 11, Huck entered McClure’s home and captured McClure’s wife, Mary, their son James and daughter Mary, along with James’s brother-in-law, Edward Martin. Huck announced he would hang the two young men the next day. Later that day, Huck took control of William Bratton’s farm. Mrs. Bratton refused to reveal the location of her husband and Sumter’s camp. That night, Huck camped several hundred yards from the home of Colonel Williamson.¹⁸³

Someone notified McClure and Bratton of Huck’s location, so a force of 500 Patriots assembled and moved through the night to Williamson’s Plantation. The Patriots surprised and trounced Captain Huck and his Provincials early on the morning of July 12 at what is called both Huck’s Defeat and the Battle of Williamson’s Plantation. For the first time since Charleston’s fall, Patriot militia succeeded against the British-trained Provincials. Huck and thirty-four other soldiers were killed; fifty wounded; and twenty-nine captured. News spread among the Whigs about Huck’s Defeat and the victory at Cedar Springs, which occurred on the same day in Spartanburg County. Patriot morale began to turn upward slowly. But months would pass before the death and destruction in South Carolina would cease.¹⁸⁴

Battling for the Upper Ninety Six District

In late June or early July, Patrick Ferguson sent soldiers and militia to the uppermost part of the Ninety Six District, present-day Spartanburg and Cherokee counties, to claim and hold Fort Prince. Ferguson put a fellow Scotsman, Colonel Alexander Innes, in charge of the fort. Fort Prince was constructed during the French and Indian War and lay near the Indian Line. Two British-held forts, Prince and the smaller Fort Thicketty in Cherokee County, were more distant from Ninety Six than any other posts. Without a fight, Fort Thicketty fell to Patriots on July 30. Fort Prince was on a much-used thoroughfare, the Blackstock Road. The road began about forty miles south of Fort Prince in Union County at the farm of Patriot Captain William Blackstock.¹⁸⁵ It provided a route for travelers and farm goods between Blackstock’s Farm and a

180. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, 117, 136.

181. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, 140; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:559.

182. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, 138; O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:175-178.

183. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia*, 184; “The Battle of Williamson’s Plantation,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_williamsons_plantation.html (accessed October 8, 2024).

184. O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:190-191; Terry Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1973-1983), 3:33-35.

185. Thomas Sumter defeated Banastre Tarleton at William Blackstock’s Plantation on November 20, 1780.

pass which led into the North Carolina mountains. A smaller fortification, Gowen's Fort, lay on Blackstock Road on the Indian Line a few miles south of the state line. No one occupied Fort Gowen in July 1780.

Two or three days before Huck's Defeat, Major Ferguson learned that members of the Spartan Regiment had set up a camp at Cedar Springs in central Spartanburg County. Ferguson laid plans for James Dunlap, accompanied by fourteen Regulars and 130 militia, to attack the Cedar Springs encampment. Dunlap was to leave Fort Ninety Six on July 11 and attack before dawn the next day. The British had captured the commander of the Spartan Regiment, John Thomas, Sr., and two of his sons, Abram and Robert, and jailed them at Ninety Six. Jane Black Thomas, the wife of John Thomas, Sr., and mother of Abram and Robert, traveled sixty miles from her home to the jail to deliver food to her husband and sons. While at the jail, she overheard Tory women talking about Ferguson's plan to ambush the regiment at Cedar Springs.

On July 11 and 12, Jane Black Thomas became a heroine of the American Revolution. Another son, John Thomas, Jr., had been elected to succeed his father as colonel in command of the Spartan Regiment. Mrs. Thomas mounted her horse the morning of July 11 and made a hasty return journey to give her son an urgent warning. Early the next morning, the planned Tory ambush became a Patriot ambush. Dunlap's company, including William Cunningham, arrived before daybreak on the 12th. Dunlap found campfires burning and rushed into the trap. Shots erupted from the darkness, and Dunlap received a non-lethal wound. Dunlap lost twenty or thirty killed or wounded and the action ended without a clear winner. Cunningham seems to have escaped unscathed. His steed Ringtail proved worthy of many tests in 1780 and 1781. One wonders what role the thoroughbred played in Cunningham's escape through the darkness at Cedar Springs.¹⁸⁶

When Nisbet Balfour appointed James Dunlap captain of the company in 1780, he expressed worry that Dunlap often rode "too far forward in his patrols." As will be seen, Balfour was correct in his assessment and should have found someone else for the position.¹⁸⁷

Captain Dunlap's men fled in two directions. The injured and some of those who were healthy returned to Ninety Six. Despite his wound, Dunlap led the others north on Blackstock Road and stopped at Fort Prince. Colonel Innes welcomed Dunlap's men; but perhaps for lack of sufficient space, a smaller contingent continued past Fort Prince and took refuge at the vacant Fort Gowen. However, Patriots saw them go into the fort and notified Georgia Patriot Captain John Jones. He and thirty-five militiamen appeared at the gate of Fort Gowen and convinced the Loyalists they supported the King's cause. Once inside, Jones attacked his bewildered hosts. Jones's men killed several Tories, captured thirty-two, and took possession of horses and guns. The day had gone badly for Dunlap and his company, and his mistakes and misfortunes would continue for another twenty-four hours.¹⁸⁸

Also riding north on Blackstock Road was the victor at Cedar Springs, John Thomas, Jr. Thomas's goal was a rendezvous with North Carolina militia Colonel Charles McDowell near the state line. By the end of the day, on July 14, both Thomas and Jones had turned off Blackstock's Road onto Rutherford Road.

186. Sheila Ingle, "South Carolina Biography: Revolutionary Women: Jane Black Thomas," <https://southcarolina250.com/publications/> (accessed April 23, 2024); Wayne Lynch, "Major James Dunlap: Was He Murdered Twice?" *JAR*, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/01/major-james-dunlap-murdered-twice/> (accessed April 20, 2024.)

187. Lynch, "Dunlap: Was He Murdered Twice?" *JAR*, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/01/major-james-dunlap-murdered-twice/> (accessed April 20, 2024).

188. Lipscomb, *Revolutionary Battles* 3:35; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:200.

They joined McDowell at a ford over the North Pacolet River, Earle's Ford, which lay three miles from Rutherford Road.¹⁸⁹

At Fort Prince, Innes learned Thomas was riding north toward Earle's Ford. However, Innes did not know about McDowell's arrival. Innes dispatched Dunlap to stop Thomas. Dunlap set out with seventy dragoons, including his trusted subordinate, William Cunningham. During the night of July 15, Dunlap came upon Jones and Thomas at Earle's Ford. Dunlap once again failed to reconnoiter his surroundings before attacking. If he had, he would have realized that McDowell was encamped nearby with about three hundred men. What ensued that night bears several names, among them the Battle of Earle's Ford and the Battle of the North Pacolet. Accounts vary, but Dunlap wounded or killed thirty-eight Patriots and had only one casualty. McDowell woke and gathered his men when he heard the gunfire. He charged after Dunlap, who retreated toward Fort Prince.¹⁹⁰

As they rode back to Fort Prince through the night, Dunlap did not know McDowell had dispatched Captain Edward "Ned" Hampton to pursue the Loyalists. McDowell provided Hampton and thirty-four other men with the best available horses. As the sun rose, Hampton surprised the Tories, and a running battle began at Shiloh Church near present-day Inman. Shots were exchanged and sabers wielded while the two parties galloped toward Fort Prince. Hampton killed several of Dunlap's men and ended the pursuit only when Dunlap neared the fort. Hampton returned to McDowell with thirty-five captured horses, arms, and other equipment. What began as a small nighttime victory at Earle's Ford became a resounding defeat for the Loyalists. Innes abandoned Fort Prince the next day, July 17.¹⁹¹

Patrick Ferguson left Fort Ninety Six during the summer to recruit more South and North Carolina Loyalists. Cornwallis gave charge of Fort Ninety Six to Provincial Lieutenant Colonel John Harris Cruger. A New York Loyalist, Cruger had taken part in the sieges of Savannah and Charleston. This proven soldier held the fort for the next twelve months.¹⁹²

The largest British post in the Backcountry, Camden, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Francis, Lord Rawdon. When Rawdon learned that the Continental Congress was sending a new army south under Major General Horatio Gates to attempt to retake Charleston, he began concentrating troops at Camden. He had already ordered the post at Cheraw to be abandoned because so many troops had become sick. Archibald McArthur withdrew from Cheraw and moved to Black River and eventually to Camden. Thomas Sumter engaged George Turnbull at Rocky Mount on July 30. Turnbull had constructed a well-fortified installation. Sumter's five hundred militia failed to prevail against the well-trained and disciplined New York Loyalists. Despite the defeat at Rocky Mount, Patriot militia had, in two weeks' time, reclaimed three posts: Fort Prince, Fort Thicketty, and Cheraw. Many battles followed and the British and their Loyalist allies often won. Looking back, the war's momentum shifted. Patriots who felt gloom when Charleston fell in May saw glimmers of hope. More men gave up their neutrality and began again to give of themselves

189. For locations of the roads, see John H. Jameson, Jr., "The Lesser Known Frontier Forts & Actions of Backcountry Militia in the Revolutionary War," presentation made to the Southern Campaigns of the Revolutionary War Roundtable, Wofford College, April 8, 2013, netally.com (accessed October 8, 2024).

190. Crawley, "Major James Dunlap"; Picuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 113; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:201-202.

191. C. Leon Harris and Conner Runyan, "Prelude to Kings Mountain: Colonel Charles McDowell's Campaign in the South Carolina Backcountry," https://www.academia.edu/108514124/Prelude_to_Kings_Mountain_Colonel_Charles_McDowells_Campaign_in_the_South_Carolina_Backcountry (accessed July 16, 2024).

192. Saberton, "Midsummer 1780 in the Carolinas and Georgia."

for the nation's freedom. William Cunningham participated in both victories and defeats in the summer of 1780.

From their strong post at Ninety Six, the British made more incursions into the upper Ninety Six District. Dunlap and his company left the safety of the fort in early August and returned to Cedar Springs. Georgia Colonel Elijah Clark and North Carolina colonels Isaac Shelby and William Graham were consolidating control of the upper Ninety Six District. They had gathered at Cedar Springs when Dunlap surprised them on August 8. Another running battle ensued, much of which included hand-to-hand combat. Dunlap again found himself outmatched, and he began a withdrawal. As he did, though, Patrick Ferguson and his Provincials came on the scene. Then the Patriots reversed direction. They set out for Wofford's Iron Works on Lawson's Creek, where they had stored their baggage. Ferguson and Dunlap pursued the enemy and engaged the Patriots at the ironworks. The action did not end there. It lasted throughout the day and concluded when Ferguson halted, and the Patriots arrived at the Pacolet River. Dunlap again received minor wounds.¹⁹³

A significant part of the day's events occurred at a peach orchard. The battle is called Second Cedar Springs, Wofford's Iron Works, and the Battle of the Peach Orchards. The minor British victory came about because of the timely arrival of Patrick Ferguson. Dunlap was proving himself too prone to attack before determining his enemy's strength. His rush to battle would lead to a more significant wound at Cane Creek in North Carolina in September. William Cunningham was surely learning from his commander's errors.¹⁹⁴

The British Victory at Camden

Major General Baron Johann de Kalb was a German who had served in the French army and supported American independence. He received temporary command of the new southern Continental Army, which was attempting to retake Charleston. While de Kalb was moving his troops southward, the Continental Congress voted to give command to Major General Horatio Gates. Many members of the Congress regarded Gates as the "Hero of Saratoga," though the credit should have been shared with other officers, such as Brigadier General Benedict Arnold and Colonel Daniel Morgan. Some members of the Continental Congress held Gates in such high regard they felt Gates should replace Washington. When Gates caught up with de Kalb's army at Buffalo Ford on Deep River in North Carolina, Gates took over and de Kalb became second-in-command. Despite de Kalb's advice, born of experience in Europe, Gates hurried through a region of North Carolina which provided no food for his men. When Cornwallis learned Gates was on his way to Charleston, the lieutenant general left Charleston to take command at Camden.

On the night of August 15, Cornwallis's healthy, well-supplied army stumbled across Gates's malnourished army several miles north of Camden. Cornwallis achieved absolute victory the next morning. Gates abandoned his troops in the middle of the fight, and de Kalb received mortal wounds. The British had decimated another Continental Army. Two days later at Fishing Creek, Banastre Tarleton vanquished Thomas Sumter and nearly captured "The Gamecock." The fast-moving "Bloody Ban" put another notch in his belt. In a mere three days, the British had won two significant engagements. Camden and Fishing Creek

193. "Wofford's Iron Works," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_woffords_iron_works.html (accessed October 8, 2024); O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:232-236.

194. Recent study of primary sources has led to several contrarian depictions of the actions at Cedar Springs, Fort Gowen, Fort Prince, and Earle's Ford. See C. Leon Harris and Conner Runyan, "Prelude to Kings Mountain." See also Ron Crawley, "Major James Dunlap: 'An Officer of Much Energy and Promptitude,'" *schistory.net* (accessed October 8, 2024).

proved to be the twin pinnacles of British success following their conquest of South Carolina. The Patriots had many hurdles to overcome in their mission to reclaim the state, despite their earlier victories.

Cornwallis began preparations to move his army into North Carolina. The decision is surprising, because he did not have full control of South Carolina. Events in the coming months would prove Cornwallis should have better secured the Palmetto State before marching across the state line.

On the Way to Kings Mountain: September 1780

After the disappointments along Blackstock and Rutherford roads and moderate success at the Peach Orchards, Cunningham returned to the post at Ninety Six. He was not at Musgrove Mill on August 18, when Patriot militia soundly defeated Provincials and Tory militia. Provincials led by Colonel Alexander Innes, not James Dunlap's corps of militia, fought at Musgrove Mill where Whig militia led them into a trap.

Around the time of Musgrove Mill, Dunlap's company received orders for a much longer expedition. It changed the course of the war much more than the British victories and defeats which preceded it in the summer of 1780. Much had changed during the five years since William Cunningham had fought against his kinsman Patrick at the Great Cane Brake. Captain Dunlap's corps, including the former Patriot William, marched out under the command of Colonel Patrick Cunningham. Moving northward, Patrick's Little River Regiment rendezvoused with Major Ferguson's Provincials. Lord Cornwallis was confident that Ferguson's American Volunteers and Loyalist militia could put down Patriot activities in western North Carolina and the Ninety Six District. Cornwallis assigned Ferguson to serve as a western flank guard while the earl marched his main army of regulars into North Carolina.

Through the summer of 1780, Ferguson recruited and trained hundreds of volunteers who hailed from Georgia and the western Carolinas. Upon receiving his orders to protect Cornwallis from the west, his corps skirmished more and more frequently with Patriots. These Whigs also lived in Georgia and the western Carolinas. Some were from parts of western North Carolina called the Overmountain region, which later were incorporated into Tennessee. Everyone on both sides of the skirmishes and minor battles was American. The Scotsman, Ferguson, was the only exception.¹⁹⁵

On September 7, Ferguson established a post at Gilbert Town, North Carolina. Because of the Patriot defeat at Camden in August, North Carolina Patriot Colonel Charles McDowell left South Carolina and moved up Cane Creek in Burke County, North Carolina.¹⁹⁶ When Ferguson learned about McDowell's movement, he led his Provincials out of Gilbert Town toward McDowell's position. McDowell learned Ferguson was approaching, so he prepared an ambush. Unaware of McDowell's plans, Ferguson also called for an ambush and put James Dunlap in charge of it. Dunlap led the maneuver and was badly injured. Eventually, Ferguson turned the tide of battle and lost only one killed and two wounded, including Dunlap. Ferguson killed two Patriots, wounded two, and captured twelve.¹⁹⁷ The role William Cunningham played in the British victory remains unknown. The victory at Cane Creek might have convinced Ferguson that his opposition was weakening. He did not yet comprehend the peril he faced from angry Patriots.

195. Draper, *King's Mountain*, 72.

196. Harris and Runyan, "James Dunlap: British Officer."

197. "Battle of Cane Creek: Patriots Ambush and Overmountain Men Camp," <https://amrevnc.com/battle-cane-creek> (accessed October 8, 2024).

Around the time of Cane Creek, Patriots led by seven colonels organized themselves into a powerful fighting force of almost two thousand men. For two hundred years, historians have contended that the Patriots were inspired to gather in such numbers in response to a threatening message sent out by Ferguson. These writers have said Ferguson notified the Patriots that if they would not be pacified, he would cross the mountains, “hang their leaders, and lay waste to the land with fire and sword.” This version of events preceding Kings Mountain is not accurate.¹⁹⁸ However, an enormous battle with far-reaching impact would soon take place a few miles south of the North Carolina line. And William Cunningham would be there.

A Narrow Escape at Kings Mountain, October 1780

The Patriots who fought at Kings Mountain hailed from many places, but at least one historian maintained that the majority were South Carolinians.¹⁹⁹ Others came from the Watauga River valley and were called Overmountain Men. Units from Virginia and the piedmont of North Carolina met up with the mountaineers. They all stopped at Hannah’s Cowpens in Cherokee County, South Carolina, to determine who was best prepared for battle. The colonels learned Ferguson had moved across the state line and encamped on Kings Mountain in Cherokee County. Ferguson concluded the small mountain offered him an excellent location to defend against his opponents.²⁰⁰

On the morning of October 7, about a thousand Patriots, all on horseback, left for Kings Mountain. Seven units, each led by a colonel, spread around the mountain, secured their horses to trees, and simultaneously moved up the steep hill. The fray involved over two thousand combatants and lasted only one hour. The Patriots achieved a stunning and complete victory. Patrick Ferguson struggled valiantly before falling dead. The Loyalists who died on the mountain numbered 119. Another 123 received wounds; and 664 were captured. Only sixty-two Patriots received wounds, and only twenty-eight lost their lives.²⁰¹

Neighbor killed neighbor, relative slew relative. Each participant saw himself and his loved ones as victims of the acts of hatred unleashed by the Revolutionary War. Survivors reported Loyalists were shot or sabered after they grounded their arms. Ben Rubin wrote, “Colonel Isaac Shelby...tried desperately to contain his men from participating in wholesale slaughter of their opponents as they surrendered.” Rubin noted the Patriots recalled how Banastre Tarleton’s riders allegedly had not granted quarter to Buford’s troops in May. They felt justified in slaying Loyalists who had laid down their weapons in surrender.²⁰²

On the long journey northward to Virginia, where the prisoners of war were to be confined, Colonel William Campbell called for an impromptu trial for the Loyalists. Tennessee Colonel Isaac Shelby reported that thirty-six men were convicted of crimes such as murder and destruction of homes. Nine of the thirty-six were hanged. Among them were Lieutenant Colonel Ambrose Mills, two captains, and six other men.

198. William Caldwell, “Isaac Shelby, Patrick Ferguson, and Fire and Sword: The Power of a Good Story,” *JAR*, May 28, 2024, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2024/05/isaac-shelby-patrick-ferguson-and-fire-sword-the-power-of-a-good-story> (accessed September 3, 2024). Caldwell has challenged the traditional understanding of the events which led to the Battle of Kings Mountain.

199. Charles B. Baxley, “South Carolina Loyalist Militiamen at the Battle of Kings Mountain,” December 19, 2020, unpublished manuscript.

200. For an alternate opinion about why Ferguson was atop Kings Mountain, see Noel Yancey, “Battle of Kings Mountain,” <https://www.ncpedia.org/kings-mountain-battle> (accessed December 6, 2024).

201. Among the dead was Colonel James Williams.

202. Rubin, “The Rhetoric of Revenge,” 3.

Unrestrained revenge marked Kings Mountain and the march toward Virginia. A year later, Cunningham's Bloody Scout displayed the same vengeful fury.²⁰³

The relatives Patrick and William Cunningham fought together at Kings Mountain, as did one or both of Patrick's younger brothers. The other captain in Dunlap's company, William Helms, also fought in the devastating British loss.²⁰⁴ Given his tendency towards rashness, James Dunlap was fortunate not to be present for the battle. He had returned to Ninety Six to recover from the wounds he suffered at Cane Creek. Pension applicant Andrew Ferguson (or Furgason) reported on William Cunningham's actions during the battle and how the Tory escaped unharmed. "The next place if I remember right was Kings Mountain away down in North Carolina. We got to that battle when it was partly over. We whipped the British badly who were commanded by Major Ferguson. I do not recollect at this time the name of any of the American commanders except Colonel [William] Campbell, [John] Sevier and [Benjamin] Cleveland. I saw at Kings Mountain a Tory they called Bill Cunningham kill an American [with]in two hundred yards of us. He was on horseback and then rode off."²⁰⁵

Andrew Ferguson provided the only written record of Cunningham's actions at Kings Mountain. One would hope for more proof. However, Ferguson's application bears several marks of historical truth. Given the strength and speed of Ringtail, Cunningham likely rushed down the mountain as more and more men were shot and sabered. Most of the Loyalist prisoners escaped during the long journey to confinement in Virginia. No records prove the victorious Patriots captured Cunningham. If they had done so, he would have lost possession of Ringtail. He kept the thoroughbred for the next fifteen months.

Aftermath of Kings Mountain

Kings Mountain not only caused the loss of hundreds of men killed and captured, but it also drained the British and their Loyalist allies of supplies, horses, and momentum. More and more men with Loyalist inclinations remained at home to protect their families. The defeat compelled Lord Cornwallis to make personnel changes. He promoted Robert Cunningham to brigadier general and put him in command of the Ninety Six District Militia Brigade. Cornwallis promoted James Dunlap to major and put him in command of all cavalry based at Ninety Six. With Dunlap's promotion, captains William Cunningham and William Helms were given charge of separate companies.

The October victory at Kings Mountain combined with Daniel Morgan's January 1781 drubbing of Banastre Tarleton's British Legion and other units at Cowpens proved to be the twin pivots for the war in the South. In fact, the two frays brought a sea change to the entire war. By the end of October, Patriots controlled most of northern South Carolina. Henry Clinton later wrote that Kings Mountain "proved the first Link of a Chain of Evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America." Kings Mountain also provided a profound example of the American Revolution as a civil war. Every participant at Kings Mountain was an American, except for Patrick Ferguson.²⁰⁶

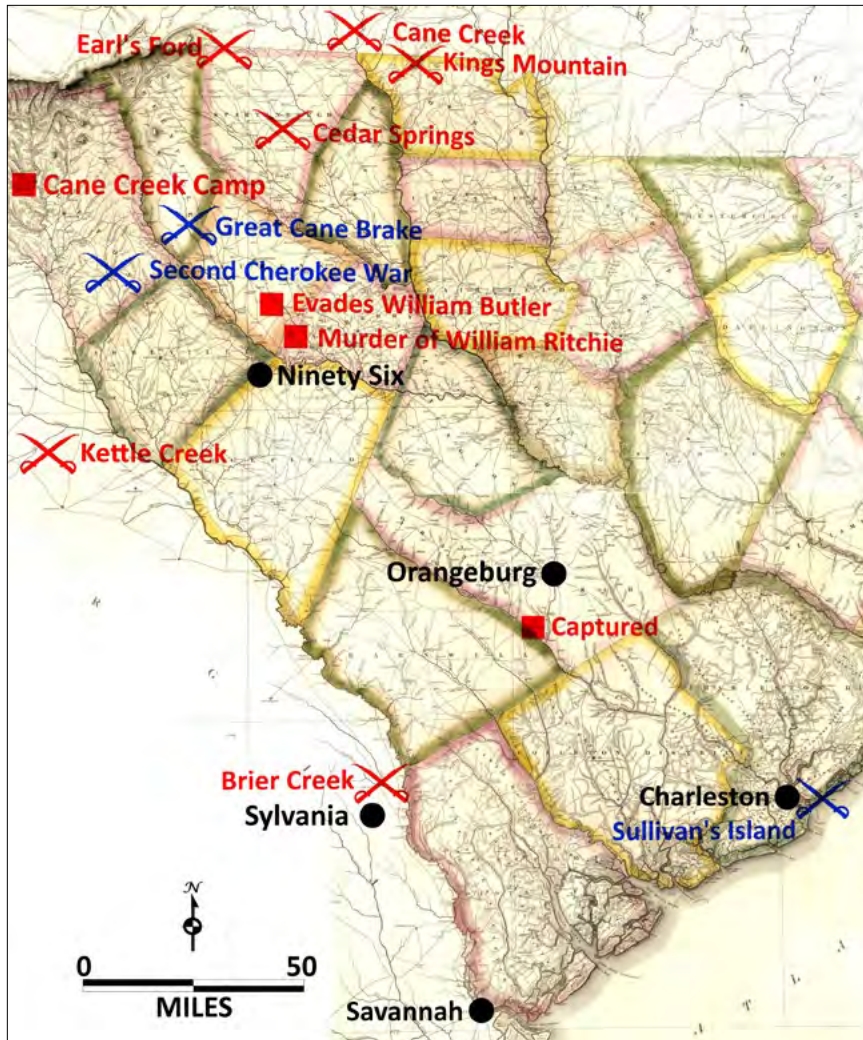
Major James Dunlap's cavalry needed replenishment. He had recovered sufficiently from his Cane Creek wounds to leave Fort Ninety Six and begin to gather horses and supplies. William Helms and Wil-

203. Compeau, *Dishonored Americans*, 55; O'Kelley, *NBBS* 2:327.

204. Moss, *Loyalists at Kings Mountain*, 20-21, 39.

205. Andrew Ferguson (or Furgason), Pension Application S32243, August 15, 1838, <https://revwarapps.org/s32243.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2024).

206. "Kings Mountain," <https://www.ncpedia.org/kings-mountain-battle> (accessed May 9, 2024).



Major Actions Involving Cunningham Not Including Bloody Scout

William Cunningham remained based at Ninety Six. Pension applicant Silas C. Sterling reported that in the weeks following Kings Mountain, William Cunningham was “plundering in the neighborhood of Ninety Six.” Though no other pension application corroborates Sterling’s report, it seems likely that Cunningham and other cavalry pilfered food from neighboring Patriot farms in order to feed the Provincials who held the fort at Ninety Six and the Loyalist families who were taking refuge there.²⁰⁷

Dunlap’s efforts to replenish his cavalry met with little success, so no later than November 24, he departed Ninety Six for Charleston. He might not have returned until January.²⁰⁸ Because Dunlap was absent for so much of

November and December, captains Helms and Cunningham led Dunlap’s force in that time period. Patriots developed significant animosity toward Dunlap for what they perceived to be unnecessary cruelty. Their anger brought about his murder in March. However, there is scant evidence that Dunlap was particularly cruel.

Andrew Pickens had been active throughout the war’s first five years. But as noted, he took parole when Charleston fell. He maintained his neutrality despite fervent pleas from Patriots and indicators that the rebels might eventually prevail. The British were also courting Pickens. John Harris Cruger, in command at Ninety Six, and Nisbet Balfour, the commandant in Charleston, exchanged correspondence during the fall of 1780. They expressed hope to one another that Pickens would give himself to the King’s cause.²⁰⁹ But in December Pickens re-committed himself to the Revolution. His decision was a response to the pillaging

207. Silas C. Sterling, Pension Application R10120, Oct. 4, 1843, revwarapps.org/sR10120 (accessed May 1, 2024); Wayne Lynch, “Major James Dunlap: Was He Murdered Twice?”

208. Andrew, *General Andrew Pickens*, 329, n. 59; Ian Saberton, “The Revolutionary War in the South.” Andrew and Saberton cite primary sources which prove Dunlap did not return to Ninety Six until January.

209. Conner Runyan and C. Leon Harris, “Colonel Andrew Pickens and the Long Cane Skirmish,” *JAR*, Aug. 15, 2023, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2023/08/colonel-andrew-pickens-and-the-long-cane-skirmish/> (accessed September 4, 2024).

of his home in late November and a battle which took place near his home in the Long Cane community in December. William Cunningham participated in both events.

Primary sources and the interpretations of historians do not provide a clear picture of the two events.²¹⁰ In late November, Tory militia burned Colonel Andrew Pickens's house and that of his neighbor, Colonel James McCall. Neither man was at home, and Pickens had sent his family into hiding. But McCall's family suffered humiliation plus the loss of almost everything they owned. Pickens's losses were significant but not devastating. Historian Hugh McCall, son of Colonel James McCall, reported that James Dunlap led the raids. McCall wrote: "Captain [Dunlop]'s dragoons, united with parties of Loyalists, made a general sweep over the country. Colonel Pickens house was plundered of moveable property, and the remainder wantonly destroyed. McCall's family was left without a change of clothing or bedding, and a halter put round the neck of one of his sons, by order of Dunlop with threats of execution, to extort secrets of which the youth was innocent." McCall laid the blame for the raids solely at the feet of James Dunlap. But Dunlap was not there. He was in Charleston or en route. Historians have not determined who ordered the two raids. Captain William Cunningham participated in both of them, possibly commanded them, and almost certainly had been ordered to do so. Whatever the case, the British had broken the terms of Pickens's parole.²¹¹

American militia, led by General Thomas Sumter, achieved their first victory against British Redcoats on November 20 at Blackstock's Plantation in Union County. Encouraged by their victory over "Bloody Ban," many participants began to march into the Long Cane area of Greenwood and McCormick counties. Georgia militia colonels Elijah Clark and Benjamin Few, accompanied by Colonel James McCall of South Carolina's Long Cane militia, led 400 to 500 men, wagons, and cattle. Major Samuel Hammond was also part of this Patriot force. He later wrote: "It was resolved, in council, to make a bold and rapid push through the western part of Ninety-Six District, into the Long Cane settlement, west of the British, stationed at the town, Cambridge, or Ninety-Six. Our wish also, was to draw out the well-affected of that part of the country, who had been paroled by the enemy on the surrender of General Williamson."²¹²

The commanders dispersed their men into camps along several creeks in the Long Cane area of McCormick County. John Harris Cruger sent out Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Allen to oppose this large contingent of Patriots. General Robert Cunningham was also part of the mission, but little is known about the role he played.²¹³ Allen led both Provincials and Dunlap's militia at what came to be called the Battle of Long Cane. On December 12, when the two sides first encountered each other, the Patriot officers assumed they were facing only militia. They realized too late that they were also battling better trained and armed and more disciplined Provincials. Allen's soldiers and militia vanquished the Patriots who suffered fourteen deaths, seven injured, and nine taken as captives.²¹⁴ To make the defeat worse, Elijah Clark received wounds which kept him out of action for several months.

Once again, James Dunlap was not present for the Battle of Long Cane. He was in Charleston. Given Captain William Cunningham's promotion to major a few months later, it is safe to assume Cunningham

210. The narrative presented here largely follows the work of Rod Andrew in his book *The Life and Times of General Andrew Pickens*.

211. McCall, *The History of Georgia*, 2:352. Andrew, General Andrew Pickens, 88.

212. Conner Runyan and C. Leon Harris, "Colonel Andrew Pickens and the Long Cane Skirmish."

213. Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary*, 141.

214. "Long Canes," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_long_canes.html (accessed Jan. 16, 2025); Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 339.

commanded the Tory militia at Long Cane. The attack on his home, possibly combined with the stinging defeat at Long Cane, convinced Andrew Pickens to break parole. Pickens recruited several hundred other Ninety Six District Patriots to rejoin the war effort. They followed Pickens as he went to assist the new Southern commander, Nathanael Greene. As a result, they reinforced Daniel Morgan for his victory over Tarleton in mid-January.

Devastating Setbacks at Hammond's Store and Williams's Fort, December 1780

Lord Cornwallis held Charlotte when Major Patrick Ferguson was vanquished at Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. The defeat diminished Cornwallis's army, and he was short on food and his men were wracked by diseases. Cornwallis returned to South Carolina and made a winter encampment in Winnsboro. In Philadelphia, the Continental Congress had to grapple with its own bad news. How would they respond to Horatio Gates's horrendous loss at Camden? This time, the Congress did not choose a new southern commander. The body gave George Washington discretion to choose Gates's successor. Washington selected Rhode Islander Major General Nathanael Greene, whose decision-making, movements, and correspondence will be significant to this narrative of William Cunningham.

Greene traveled south to replace Gates and arrived in Charlotte on December 2. Greene faced the same lack of food for men and horses, which triggered Cornwallis's decision to vacate the village. Two weeks later, Greene made a remarkable decision to split his small army. With about half of his force, Greene encamped at Cheraw, South Carolina, and thereby posed a threat to Camden. He dispatched Daniel Morgan with part of his infantry and all of his cavalry, often called his "flying army," beyond the Catawba River. Morgan's mission was "to give protection... and spirit up the people." On Christmas Day, Morgan set up camp at Grindal Shoals on the Pacolet River. He had with him 320 Continentals from Maryland and Delaware, and 200 riflemen from Virginia.²¹⁵ But significant opposition awaited Morgan. Cornwallis sent Banastre Tarleton out of Winnsboro with orders to destroy Morgan's flying army.

Morgan was joined at Grindal Shoals by Lieutenant Colonel William Washington. This excellent cavalry leader was a distant cousin of George Washington and had already distinguished himself in several northern battles. In 1778, he was made a lieutenant colonel and given command of the 3rd Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons. In 1780, General Washington sent his relative and his light dragoons south, to help stop the British from taking South Carolina. Once in South Carolina, William Washington was defeated three times by Tarleton and forced to spend several months in North Carolina re-fitting his regiment.²¹⁶ When Washington was ready for more action, Greene ordered him to assist Morgan's force on the Pacolet River.²¹⁷

215. Andrew Waters, "Hammond's Store: The 'Dirty War's' Prelude to Cowpens," *JAR*, December 10, 2018, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/12/hammonds-store-the-dirty-wars-prelude-to-cowpens> (accessed October 8, 2024); Scott Withrow, "William Washington: Calvary Man in the Southern Campaigns," *SCAR* 3 no. 4:24, <https://southern-campaigns.org/article-index> (accessed October 8, 2024).

216. Samuel K. Fore, "William Washington," in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published July 7, 2016, last modified Aug. 26, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/washington-william> (accessed September 2, 2024). Tarleton defeated Washington at Rantowles Bridge on March 26, at Moncks Corner on April 14, and at Lenu's Ferry on May 5.

217. "William Washington," George Washington's Mount Vernon, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/william-washington> (accessed September 2, 2024); "William Washington," National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/william-washington.htm> (accessed September 2, 2024).

Captain William Cunningham was not with Tarleton's fast-moving cavalry, who were all Provincials. As a militiaman, Cunningham was based at Ninety Six serving under John Harris Cruger. In a bold and ill-fated move, Cruger dispatched militia many miles north of Ninety Six to suppress the Patriots in the upper Ninety Six District. Cruger placed Georgia Colonel Thomas Waters in charge of a 250-man force. Most of those under Waters were refugees from Georgia, but Cruger also assigned South Carolinians to help with the raiding. Among these were captains William Cunningham and William Helms. The commander of the Tories' Little River Regiment, Major James Dunlap, did not go on Waters's mission.²¹⁸

In late December, Morgan learned of the Tory incursion. Colonel Waters had gotten to Fair Forest Creek and was only twenty miles south of Grindal Shoals. Morgan sent Washington with 85 Continental light dragoons to respond. Soon, Patriot militia, including the Little River District Regiment of Militia, joined Washington. Colonel Joseph Hayes commanded the regiment. Washington's party was further strengthened with the arrival of Colonel Thomas Brandon and members of the Fairforest Regiment.²¹⁹ Washington's riders now numbered 285 as they pushed toward their foes. Waters was on the move, going back toward either Ninety Six or the smaller British outpost on the Little River called Williams's Fort. Waters stopped for refreshment at Hammond's Store on the Bush River in Laurens County. He would not have done so if he had known he was being pursued by nearly three hundred men on horseback, many of whom carried sabers.

Joseph McJunkin served as Washington's guide while the Patriots searched for the unsuspecting Loyalists. McJunkin later wrote: "Washington came suddenly upon the Tories at Hammond's Store and a general rout ensued. It was said Washington reported 100 killed and wounded, with forty prisoners." A young man at the time of Hammond's Store, Thomas Young years later wrote a narrative of the action. Young reported that "Col. Washington and his dragoons gave a shout, drew swords, and charged down the hill like madmen. The Tories fled in every direction without firing a gun."²²⁰

Waters lost more than half his personnel to non-fatal wounds or death. Washington captured forty men and fifty horses. Remarkably, Washington suffered no casualties. Hammond's Store might warrant the label "massacre."²²¹ Two pension applications provided evidence that William Cunningham, though not a member of Waters's militia unit, was present at Hammond's Store. Pension applicant Henry Smith stated that in late December 1780, he was "sent out as a Spy after Bill Cunningham & the Tories of Bush River, took two prisoners, & returned to Camp, when Col. Washington & his Light Horse joined Morgan, and deponent was sent to pilot Col. Washington's troops to Cunninghams Camp on Bush river, where they were defeated by Col. Washington who took a number of prisoners."²²²

218. Robert Scott Davis, "Fighting in the Shadowlands: Loyalist Colonel Thomas Waters and the Southern Strategy," *JAR*, June 11, 2024, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2024/06/fighting-in-the-shadowlands-loyalist-colonel-thomas-waters-and-the-southern-strategy> (accessed June 22, 2024); O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2: 396-397; "Williams' Plantation," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_williams_plantation.html (accessed October 9, 2024).

219. Some secondary sources state that Major James McCall led the militia who joined Washington. Andrew Waters, "Hammond's Store," proved this assertion to be incorrect.

220. Joe Goldsmith, "Touring Laurens County, South Carolina's Revolutionary War Sites," *SCAR* 1:3 (Nov. 2004): 14-22, <https://southern-campaigns.org/article-index> (accessed July 15, 2024); Waters, "Hammond's Store"; "Hammond's Store," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_hammonds_store.html (accessed October 8, 2024).

221. Waters, "Hammond's Store."

222. Henry Smith, Pension Application W2183, Jan. 28, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/w2183.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2024).

Pension applicant William Grant stated that as a lieutenant he joined Morgan at Grindal Shoals and was at Hammond's Store. Grant reported the force "attacked the Tories at Hammond's Old Store & defeated them there under the Bloody William Cunningham & took two wagons loads with arms & a good many prisoners."²²³ Both Henry Smith and William Grant misidentified Cunningham as the Loyalists' commander. Astride Ringtail, Cunningham escaped the slaughter at Hammond's Store, but not without witnessing the deaths of many Loyalist comrades. Cunningham undoubtedly recalled Kings Mountain and Hammond's Store, bloody battles where dozens of unarmed men were murdered, when he launched his rampage of revenge, the Bloody Scout, ten months later.

Waters and the other survivors of Hammond's Store began a hasty retreat to Fort Williams. One hundred fifty Loyalists were stationed at the reinforced former home of Colonel James Williams. Patriots had fortified the house after they captured it in June, but Loyalists had retaken it. Robert Cunningham commanded the fort, and with him were his brother Patrick and members of the Little River Regiment. When the Hammond's Store survivors arrived at Fort Williams, General Cunningham concluded it was not safe to remain there. He was correct. Before William Washington began his return to Grindal Shoals, he instructed Joseph Hayes to pursue the Hammond's Store survivors. Cornet James Simons, ten Continental dragoons, and forty mounted militia rode with Hayes.

Historians have not determined when Robert Cunningham learned Hayes was approaching Fort Williams. But overnight, Cunningham ordered its evacuation.²²⁴ Accounts of the action at Fort Williams vary. It is known that Hayes killed several Loyalists and took twenty or more captive. He possibly ignited the fortified structure. Most of the Loyalists, including all three Cunninghams, escaped and retreated to Ninety Six. With the fort under his control, Hayes claimed its supplies and returned to Grindal Shoals.²²⁵ Cruger's efforts to invade the upper Ninety Six District had ended in absolute failure, and William Cunningham had more reason to seek revenge on the Patriots who were retaking the Ninety Six District.

Less than three weeks after Cunningham escaped from Hammond's Store and Williams's Fort, Daniel Morgan led an astounding triumph over Banastre Tarleton at Cowpens. William Washington and his Continental cavalry and Andrew Pickens and his militia played important roles in the Patriot victory. The British were victorious in many actions after Cowpens, and the Patriots lost hundreds more lives in the ensuing months. But the primary fighting ground, South Carolina, was slowly returning to Patriot control. Also, fury was unquestionably building in William Cunningham's heart and mind. His fellow soldiers were dying, his friends' homes were being set afire, and the tide of war had turned against him. Neither Cunningham nor any members of James Dunlap's Little River Regiment were part of the engagement at Cowpens. Though Cunningham had become an accomplished cavalry leader and would soon receive a promotion to major, Tarleton's men were Provincials and British Regulars. Cunningham was a Provincial for only a few months in 1779.

Daniel Morgan had no time to celebrate his victory at Cowpens. He marched northward to join Greene. Cornwallis was in hot pursuit but failed to catch Greene and Morgan in the famous "race to the Dan." After two weeks in Virginia, Greene went back into North Carolina and faced off with Cornwallis

223. William Grant, Pension Application W1757, March 1835, <https://revwarapps.org/w1757.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2024).

224. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:396.

225. Andrew Waters, "Hammond's Store"; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 2:396-397.

at Guilford Courthouse. The British had a pyrrhic victory but lost so many men and so much materiel that Cornwallis was forced to march to Wilmington to resupply. From Wilmington, he made his way to Yorktown. After a lengthy siege, he surrendered his entire army to George Washington in October 1781. Meanwhile, Morgan retired from service and Greene returned to South Carolina. Andrew Pickens's militia supported Greene and his Continentals in North Carolina, but Pickens then returned to the South Carolina Backcountry with the new rank of brigadier general. He was given command of all Patriot forces in the Ninety Six District.²²⁶ In the South Carolina Low Country, General Francis Marion continued to conduct guerilla warfare against British soldiers, wagon trains, and minor posts.

Between February 16 and March 9, 1781, Thomas Sumter led 280 militia on "Sumter's Rounds." Sumter harassed British troops at places like Fort Granby and Radcliff's Bridge but did not achieve major successes. Colonel Elijah Clark was still recovering from the wounds he suffered at Long Cane, so he was not at the Battle of Cowpens or the ensuing actions in North Carolina. But soon after Greene arrived back in South Carolina, Clark returned to action.²²⁷

Taken together, two pension applications show that following Hammond's Store and Fort Williams, Cunningham remained stationed at Ninety Six and was dispatched toward Orangeburg to forage. George Rowdon signed his sworn pension application at age ninety. While a resident of the Camden District, he entered service five times. The fourth time, in January 1781, he served "as a mounted volunteer private militia man furnishing his own horse... under Captain John McCool." They "marched with Captain McCool & his company in pursuit of the Tory Colonel Will Cunningham" and "pursued the Tories to the Congaree & down that River some distance and after scouring the country for some time we returned home." Pension applicant Daniel Gillespie testified that among his deployments was a mission with Captain Joseph Calhoun's mounted infantry in February 1781. The unit "set out in pursuit of Captain William Cunningham and the Tories and went to Bull Swamp where they joined Colonel Hammonds Regiment."²²⁸ Rowdon and Gillespie may have, like many other veterans, ascribed to the well-known Cunningham an action for which he was not present. But both applicants referred to actions south of present-day Columbia along the Congaree River and in the Edisto swamps.

Cunningham might have taken part in another action at Williams's Fort. Loyalists had retaken the fort, and Patriots successfully reclaimed it on March 2. Certain historians have reported Cunningham participated in the skirmish called Mudlick Creek 2, Fort Williams 2, and Roebuck's Defeat. But no records have been found which indicate members of Dunlap's Little River Regiment were present.²²⁹

By March 1781, William Cunningham had served under the command of James Dunlap for ten months. Sometimes Dunlap was present for the unit's battles, skirmishes and foraging missions, and sometimes not. Whatever the case, the Little River Regiment usually met with defeat. The worst occasions were Hammond's Store and Kings Mountain. Cunningham's tenure under Dunlap's command came to a

226. Andrew, General Andrew Pickens, 110.

227. Andrew Waters, "Sumter's Rounds: The Ill-Fated Campaign of Thomas Sumter, February–March 1781," *JAR*, May 23, 2018, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/05/sumters-rounds-the-ill-fated-campaign-of-thomas-sumter-february-march-1781> (accessed October 9, 2024).

228. George Rowdon, Pension Application S15623, Feb. 27, 1834, <https://revwarapps.org/s15623.pdf> (accessed May 6, 2024); Daniel Gillespie, Pension Application S31692, Oct. 1, 1833, <https://www.revwarapps.org/s31692.pdf> (accessed May 6, 2024).

229. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:105-106; "Mudlick Creek," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_mudlick_creek.html (accessed October 8, 2024); Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 297.

sudden end in March. Apparently on a foraging mission, Dunlap had ventured from Fort Ninety Six. He had around ninety men, but not all of them had horses. Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clark had returned to action and had command of almost two hundred men. They stumbled upon the Little River Regiment on March 23.

Being outnumbered and caught unawares, many Loyalists died or were injured. Pickens notified Nathanael Greene that Clark's men killed thirty-four Loyalists and captured forty-two. Some of the Tories were discovered inside a house and surrendered. But Clark's men executed Lieutenant William Conway and two other men. Dunlap was wounded and taken captive. Cunningham and others returned to Ninety Six.²³⁰

The skirmish's location was long considered to be Beattie's Mill on the Little River. However, researchers struggled to confirm the location. In 2022, a group led by John Allison determined the March 23 event occurred a mile or two inside Abbeville County in the old Boonesborough Township. The site is on Long Cane Creek at the intersection of Haddon and Devore roads. Given his rank and the nature of his duties, William Cunningham was undoubtedly present at Dunlap's Defeat. But no proof has surfaced to prove his presence. If Cunningham was there, he and Ringtail once again escaped.²³¹

Though only wounded, the defeat led to Major James Dunlap's death. A contingent of Elijah Clark's militia began to deliver Dunlap northward to face trial in Virginia. The group stopped for a night at Gilbert Town, North Carolina. Under clouded circumstances, two or more men found Dunlap unguarded in his bed and murdered him. Andrew Pickens wrote a letter of apology to John Harris Cruger for the death of Dunlap and offered a reward for the capture of his killers. The killers were never brought to justice.²³²

James Dunlap left a mixed legacy. The men who killed him at Gilbert Town, other contemporaries, and certain historians perceived him as a despicable man. But little evidence supports this conclusion. Dunlap had no particular faults except his deficiencies when leading men in combat.²³³ Knowing that Cunningham was Dunlap's subordinate, and that Cunningham carried out barbaric acts in the Bloody Scout, Captain Cunningham may warrant much of the blame ascribed to Dunlap. Whatever the case, Dunlap's capture and death brought about a pivotal moment for Cunningham. A few weeks later, he became commander of the Little River Regiment at the rank of major.

230. Charles B. Baxley, "Notes on Maj. James Dunlap's Defeat," April 30, 2023, unpublished manuscript.

231. John Buchanan, *The Road to Charleston: Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 75-76; Crawley, "Major James Dunlop"; Lynch, "Major James Dunlap"; John C. Parker, Jr., "Dunlap's Defeat," unpublished manuscript.

232. Andrew, *General Andrew Pickens*, 127-128; "Beattie's Mill," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_beatties_mill.html (accessed June 1, 2024).

233. Ian Saberton, "The Revolutionary War in the South."

A Camp on Cane Creek, 1781

Ninety Six Besieged and Evacuated

Within weeks of Dunlap's murder in late March 1781, Major William Cunningham took command of the Little River Regiment. A lack of payroll records for the first nine months of 1781 makes it difficult to know who Cunningham commanded or their number. Another question remains unanswered. Why did he receive the promotion and not his superior, Captain William Helms, who also fought at Kings Mountain? A simple explanation is probably the best. Cunningham was the better soldier. Helms went to Charleston during the evacuation of Ninety Six. But he served as a captain in the Little River Regiment later that year during the Bloody Scout. The four pay abstracts for 1782 proved Helms continued service in the regiment as a captain until it disbanded in October.²³⁴

After the defeat at Cowpens, Lord Cornwallis placed Lieutenant Colonel Francis, Lord Rawdon, in command of all British and Loyalist troops in interior South Carolina. Rawdon established his headquarters in Camden. Cornwallis then began his pursuit of Greene and Morgan. After Guilford Courthouse, Greene did not pursue Cornwallis to Wilmington. Instead, he returned to South Carolina where he could cooperate with militia generals Sumter, Pickens, and Marion. Greene assigned the three to strike the British supply lines in order to push the British back toward Charleston. During their "war of posts," they captured smaller British forts, such as Fort Watson (April 23) and Fort Motte (May 12), cutting the supply line between Camden and Charleston. The British still held their major forts at Camden and Ninety Six and their lesser posts at Orangeburg, Augusta, and Fort Granby. On April 19, Greene's lead elements arrived on the outskirts of Camden. Six days later, on April 25, Rawdon attacked Greene's position a mile north of Camden on Hobkirk Hill. Greene could not hold the ridge, so technically he lost the battle. But he retook the hill the following day. The war of posts had cut off Rawdon's supply lines with Charleston, so Rawdon found that he could no longer hold Camden. Rawdon burned much of the town and retreated to Charleston. He took with him Loyalist families who camped outside the gates of Charleston and were almost totally dependent upon the British to shelter and feed them. Their impromptu community of refugees came to be known as Rawdon Town.²³⁵

After forcing Rawdon out of Camden, Greene set his sights on Ninety Six, arrived there on May 22, and began the longest siege of the war. John Harris Cruger's 550 Provincial troops and militia defended the

234. Moss, *Kings Mountain*, 39; Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:269-275.

235. Harry Schenawolf, "Lord Rawdon in America," <https://revolutionarywarjournal.com/lord-rawdon/> (accessed November 21, 2024); "Hobkirk Hill: Second Battle of Camden," <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/hobkirk-hill> (accessed November 21, 2024); Withrow, "William Washington."

town and its Star Fort, while also sheltering hundreds of Tory civilians. The role played by Cunningham's cavalry during the siege remains unknown.

Soon after Rawdon arrived in Charleston from Camden, he welcomed 2,000 fresh British troops from the Irish garrison who disembarked from a trans-Atlantic voyage. Rawdon knew he had to save Ninety Six, so he led the troops through the summer heat into the Backcountry. The woolen uniforms and June sun took their toll on the British, who were unaccustomed to such weather. Many died during the arduous march. Greene's siege proved unsuccessful, and on June 18, his last-gasp effort to take the Star Fort failed. Greene withdrew from Ninety Six the next day. During the siege, Patriot Captain Joseph Pickens, a brother of Andrew Pickens, lost his life. A few months later, the Bloody Scout would lead to the demise of another of Pickens's brothers, John. When Rawdon arrived at Ninety Six, he gave chase to Greene but to no avail. Greene led his weary army to respite in the High Hills of the Santee, south of Camden. Greene famously wrote to George Washington on May 1, 1781, concerning his many defeats: "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again."²³⁶

Rawdon consulted with Cruger and the two recognized that Patriot advances had made resupply from Charleston next-to-impossible. Therefore, Rawdon returned to Charleston; and soon thereafter, on July 10, Cruger set much of the fort and town ablaze and departed. Small skirmishes along the way made it a torturous journey for Cruger, his Provincials, and the Tory families who Cruger had protected at Ninety Six. When these homeless citizens of the Backcountry arrived outside the city gates of Charleston, they made the crowded conditions of Rawdon Town even more uncomfortable.²³⁷

Forays from a Mountain Hideaway

On July 18, 1781, Nathanael Greene wrote to Griffin Greene about the misery he found in the Carolinas. "New England should rejoice she has really felt nothing of the War. It rages here like a fire at large, and destroys every thing before it. Such destruction and waste, such misery and distress, as this country affords, have not been seen in America." In the final six months of 1781, William Cunningham created more "misery and distress" than any other participant in the war in South Carolina.²³⁸

About a week before John Harris Cruger's Provincials, militia, and civilians left behind the smoldering ruins of Ninety Six, William Cunningham marshaled some members of his cavalry regiment in the opposite direction, to the west.²³⁹ Captain William Helms went with Cruger to Charleston and did not serve under Cunningham again until the Bloody Scout began in November.²⁴⁰ Major Cunningham presumably took the old Cherokee Path, which for generations connected the Cherokees' Lower Settlements with Charleston.

236. "To George Washington from Nathanael Greene, 1 May, 1780," <https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/default.xqy?keys=FOEA-print-01-01-02-5589> (accessed November 22, 2024); "Ninety Six: May 21-June 15, 1781," <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/ninety-six-may-21-jun-15-1781> (accessed November 22, 2024); "The Siege of Ninety Six, May 21-Jun 19, 1781," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_ninety_six.html (accessed November 22, 2024).

237. Moss, *Loyalists at Ninety Six*, 32, documented another William Cunningham who evacuated Ninety Six in July 1781. This Private William Cunningham was not Major William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham.

238. H. Allen Skinner, "Patriots and Politics, Redcoats and Reconstruction: General Nathanael Greene's Grand Southern Strategy," *JAR*, Jan. 10, 2023, https://allthingsliberty.com/2023/01/patriots-and-politics-redcoats-and-reconstruction-general-nathanael-greenes-grand-southern-strategy/#google_vignette (accessed June 27, 2024).

239. The uncertain time frame of the failed plundering mission in Abbeville, described below, indicates Cunningham left Ninety Six before Cruger.

240. Moss, *Loyalists at Ninety Six*, 59.

Cunningham found sanctuary on isolated, mountainous land. Hundreds of square miles, which are present-day Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville counties, were almost bereft of human beings. Five years earlier, most survivors of the Second Cherokee War evacuated and left behind empty villages and fallow fields.

In the isolated foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Cunningham's horses had bountiful forage in the canebrakes of Cane Creek and the nearby Keowee River, now Lake Keowee. Maps drawn during the late 1780s and studied in the 1970s by Margaret Mills Seaborn portrayed a Cherokee village on Cane Creek called Cane Creek Town. The Cherokee called it Coweeshee or Coweshe. This is where Cunningham established a camp.²⁴¹

Cunningham and his men probably harvested wild game such as deer and bear. Plundering provided the men with additional nourishment. The Loyalists might have stolen cattle from Patriot farms and led the beasts to their hideout. The cattle could range freely in the forests. It seems certain the militiamen took shelter in whatever Cherokee houses they could repair. Cunningham was safe and free to go about his major priorities: protecting Loyalists who had not left for the coast and acting against Patriots who were making life miserable for them.

Edward McCrady described the Backcountry in late 1781. "The inhabitants in the interior, between the Indians on the frontier and the armies now restricted to the coast, were yet in a fearful condition," he wrote. "Open war had ceased, and the armies had passed away, but the internecine struggle in many parts of the State still continued with fearful results."²⁴²

When he seized Charleston, Charles, Lord Cornwallis, chose John Cruden to serve as the province's Commissioner of Sequestered Estates. Cornwallis tasked Cruden with appropriating the property of Patriots and raising crops until its owners swore allegiance to George III; if they did not, the property would likely be distributed to Loyalist families. Cruden met with little success and reported to Cornwallis in the summer of 1781: "The frontiers and great part of the interior of this province became scenes of confusion, robbery, and murder."²⁴³

Andrew Pickens's July 19 letter to Greene revealed Cunningham's whereabouts, details of his first raid, and the approximate number of men who left Ninety Six with him. "The settlements are much alarm'd as a number of Tories have lately gone in to Indian Contry." Pickens wrote. "Bill Cunningham & about forty men in one party which was pursued by our people, five kil'd & some negroes and Horses Retaken, Maj^r [Fields] Purdue Commanded the pursuing party." Pickens added, "very strong parties of Indians and Tories was Murdering the Frontier Inhabitants which gave the people much uneasiness."²⁴⁴

Early in the summer of 1781, Greene worried the British were planning to increase their numbers in Charleston and would try to regain control of interior South Carolina. Though Greene's fears soon proved unfounded, he ordered Pickens to the Low Country to help fend off the presumed invasion. Before Pickens departed, he assigned Major Fields Purdue to stay behind and pursue Cunningham. Sometime between July 8 and 17, Purdue found Cunningham plundering in the village of Abbeville. Cunningham laid claim

241. Dennis Chastain, October 2023 emails and phone conversations, provided assistance with the location of Cane Creek and the author's portrayal of the countryside.

242. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:626.

243. Ian Saberton, "The Management of Sequestered Estates in South Carolina, 1780 – 1782," <https://allthingsliberty.com/2021/12/the-management-of-sequestered-estates-in-south-carolina-1780-1782> (accessed September 26, 2023); *Andrew, General Andrew Pickens*, 144.

244. Pickens to Greene, July 19, 1781, *PNG*, 9:49.

to horses and enslaved people. But Purdue's men responded by killing five of Cunningham's militiamen and recapturing the horses and enslaved people. Following this defeat, Cunningham returned to Cane Creek.

The *Royal Georgia Gazette*, a propaganda tool for the British published in Savannah, ran a report on October 11, 1781. The newspaper referred to an event "before the beginning of last month," meaning late August. Cunningham met with success at an unidentified location. He also welcomed Tory families into the isolation and safety of his hideaway.

Charlestown, September 13,

Capt. William Cunningham of the Ninety Six District militia, who had retired to Cane Creek, a branch of the Seneca, a little before Ninety-Six was evacuated, made an irruption before the beginning of last month into the country betwixt the Enoree and Saluda Rivers, killed eight noted Rebels, and collected 60 of the loyal inhabitants; who availed themselves of that opportunity to get rid of the Blessings of Independence, which have been lately forced upon them by their new masters; and retired to Cane Creek, determined to join the loyal inhabitants there in harassing the Rebels, until they are enabled by the co-operation of the King's troops to live peaceably at home as British subjects.²⁴⁵

Cunningham met with additional success in late August at Ridgeway's Fort in Laurens County.²⁴⁶ The *Royal Gazette*, published in Charleston, shared good news with their Loyalist and British readers:

The Rebels above Ninety-Six, having constructed two block-houses on Reedy river, where they had taken post with 30 men under Capt. Ridgeway, to check the incursions of the Loyal Refugees from the Mountains, were on the 5th instant attacked by a detachment of Capt. William Cunningham's party, when after a short resistance, they were obliged to submit, with the loss of Capt. Ridgeway, another officer whose name is not known, and eight privates killed. On this occasion, the Loyalists did not lose a man.²⁴⁷

In April 1833, Alabama resident Thomas Arnold filed his pension application. While living in South Carolina, he volunteered for service in 1779, under the command of Captain John Ridgeway. Arnold served in North Carolina, received wounds at Hammond's Store in December 1780, and was present, though unable to fight, at Cowpens. He continued to serve under Ridgeway until "Dirty Creek," an alternate name for the battle at Ridgeway's Fort. The applicant recalled that Ridgeway "was killed by William Cunningham."²⁴⁸

John C. "Jack" Parker, Jr., wrote that Ninety Six District residents built two blockhouses before the Revolution started. They constructed them near the Reedy River to stop incursions by Native Americans and later the raiding of Loyalists, such as Cunningham. Ridgeway commanded members of the Patriot Little River Regiment at the fort. Parker noted that several historians have contended that two actions occurred at Ridgeway's Fort, one in early August and one in September. It seems more likely that Loyalists under Cunningham attacked Fort Ridgeway only once, in early August, and that Ridgeway died that day.²⁴⁹

At Ridgeway's Fort, Cunningham deprived the Patriots of a capable leader and several other men. The mountain camp received more temporary residents who traveled with Cunningham to Charleston

245. *Royal Georgia Gazette*, October 11, 1781.

246. Researchers have struggled to determine the exact location of Ridgeway's Fort.

247. *South Carolina Royal Gazette*, September 26, 1781; Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:35.

248. Thomas Arnold, Pension Application W5640, April 16, 1833, revwa<https://revwarapps.org/w5640.pdf> (accessed August 13, 2024).

249. Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 296.

a few weeks later. Major Cunningham gathered ammunition, guns, supplies, and men who could fight. Finally, Cunningham was mastering the art of guerilla warfare. Francis Marion, who learned it from Native Americans, famously employed this style of fighting. Partisans observed enemy movements and sprang assaults to deny the British and Loyalists personnel and supplies.

Historian Lyman Draper communicated with dozens of people in the middle of the nineteenth century. He sought to record what their older relatives experienced during the Revolution. Draper received two reports from descendants of Revolutionary War Patriots, who became refugees after the Battle of Fishing Creek in 1780. The accounts' details bore a notable resemblance. The Patriots described fleeing to "Table Mountain." Their descriptions of the mountain strongly resemble Table Rock Mountain in Pickens County.

Several aspects of the Draper accounts cast doubt upon the historicity of the recollections. First, Fishing Creek, in southern Lancaster County, lay more than one hundred miles from Table Rock. One must question why they fled such a great distance. Fishing Creek was purely a military engagement, and Sumter's defeat at the hands of Banastre Tarleton did not force any Patriots out of their homes. Also, Cunningham did not enter Indian Territory between the Second Cherokee War and the evacuation of Ninety Six in 1781, the year following Fishing Creek. The accounts Draper collected might have, like others, originated in the imaginations of Patriots.

However, the two accounts provided remarkable detail, including the name of the horse which the fleeing Patriots cajoled to walk up a rock face. Hikers at Table Rock State Park call that granite face Governor's Rock. Another scenario presents itself. The accounts shared with Lyman Draper may be based on the actual experiences of Patriot families who were driven out of their homes when Cunningham set up camp in Oconee County.²⁵⁰

Cunningham undoubtedly attacked other farms and communities within riding distance of Cane Creek. A contemporary newspaper article and a pension application confirmed he engaged in at least one more action. Cunningham attacked Pratt's Mill in Abbeville County on October 3. Charleston's *Royal Gazette* began an article in its Oct. 10-13, 1781, edition with a reminder of Ridgeway's Fort. "Captain William Cunningham, who lately reduced the Rebel post on Reedy River commanded by Captain Ridgeway." The article then described an attack on thirty Patriots who were commanded by "Capt. [John] Norwood." Pratt's Mill lay on the Little River between Due West and Abbeville. Like the blockhouses used by Ridgeway to guard Whigs from Loyalist attacks, Patriot militia had fortified the grist mill. Cunningham "surprised that post on the night of 3d instant, without the loss of a man, burnt the mill and took thirty horses. The Rebels got off in the dark unhurt except the Captain... who was slightly wounded."²⁵¹

Pension applicant John Miller shared memories which paralleled the news article, except Miller reported that Cunningham's party totaled 500 men, including Cherokee. This number seems unreasonably high, but it is conceivable that Cunningham included Cherokee in his raid.²⁵² Cunningham no doubt took the captured horses with him to Charleston later that month; his men might have ridden the hardier ones during the Bloody Scout.

250. Lyman Draper, Manuscript Collection, 4VV, 181-182, Microfilm, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

251. South Carolina Royal Gazette 1:61, October 10-October 13, 1781; Lipscomb, South Carolina Revolutionary Battles, 7:35.

252. John Miller, Pension Application S1702, December 19, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s1702.pdf> (accessed August 13, 2024).

Several contemporary historians have contended that William Cunningham went to Beaufort County in August 1781 and participated in the August 30 Battle of Parker's Ferry. These authors have confused William with either Patrick Cunningham or Robert Cunningham.²⁵³

Reports have circulated that Cunningham massacred 28 Patriot men by hacking them to death in October.²⁵⁴ The Hellhole Creek Massacre, said to have taken place in present-day Batesburg-Leesville, has also been called Carter's House, Carter's Old Field, Big Lick, Hartley's Creek, and Lee's Tavern. Two factors, the number of victims and how they died, strongly resembled the Cloud's Creek Massacre, which occurred near Batesburg-Leesville the following month. No primary sources have surfaced to substantiate that the Hellhole Creek action occurred. It likely has been confused with Cloud's Creek.

Cunningham's company was not the only Loyalist unit to remain in the Ninety Six District when John Harris Cruger evacuated the fort in July. For example, on the night of September 3 and 4, Tories attacked Patriots holed up in Kellett's Blockhouse in Laurens County. Primary sources are skimpy and provide no proof that Cunningham's party was involved. Hezekiah Williams remained in the Ninety Six District and may have taken refuge in his own home in the Steven's Creek community in Edgefield County. On September 5, Captain Hugh Middleton of Major Samuel Hammond's Regiment attacked Williams. The Patriots prevailed, killing eight of Williams's men and wounding 18. The following day, September 6, Williams took the initiative and battled Patriots near Turkey Creek in Edgefield County. Williams killed or wounded ten Patriots.²⁵⁵

When Hezekiah Williams returned to Charleston in October 1781, he received a promotion to colonel. When the Bloody Scout launched a few weeks later, he was the officer-in-charge. Other men who later engaged in the Bloody Scout also stayed in the backcountry after the evacuation of Ninety Six. Among them were Bill Elmore, Matthew Love, Edward (Ned) Turner, Jack Prescott, and Austen Moultrie. Their names will reappear in the narrative of the Bloody Scout.²⁵⁶

On September 8, soldiers and militia fought the last major battle of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina at Eutaw Springs, near the Santee River. William Cunningham was still in the South Carolina foothills. British commander Alexander Stewart could have used Cunningham's cavalry during the grueling, five-hour battle. Greene and Stewart fought to a stand-off with no clear-cut victor. However, Stewart realized he could not maintain his reduced force so far from Charleston. Stewart placed his army in Charleston and at posts such as Moncks Corner. Three or four weeks after Eutaw Springs, Cunningham left Oconee County, rode through the Ninety Six and Orangeburg districts, and reached the city, probably in early October. He delivered an undetermined number of refugees, horses, and supplies. His independent operation in the Backcountry had ended, but Cunningham would return only weeks later.

253. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:323; Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 245; Picuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 209.

254. Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 319. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:371.

255. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:372-373; Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 209, 215; "Joseph Kellett's Revolutionary War Block House Memorial Bridge," <https://visitold96sc.com/revwar> (accessed June 29, 2024).

256. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:35.

The Context of the Bloody Scout

The Revolutionary War began in Massachusetts at Lexington and Concord in 1775 but eventually spread around the globe. By the time Yorktown fell, Great Britain's effort to put down the rebellion of thirteen North American colonies had expanded immensely. Spain and the Netherlands joined the war with France, though neither made an alliance with the new nation. The three European countries hoped to weaken the world's only superpower and claim some of its colonies. The warring nations fought land and sea battles in the Caribbean, Central America, the Bahamas, Gibraltar in the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic, and even in India and the Indian Ocean.

The Continental Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris in April 1783, and the war officially ended on September 3, 1783. Despite present-day misconceptions, Washington's victory at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, did not end the war. For South Carolina in particular, warfare lasted for another fourteen months. The last of the British ships to cross the bar of Charleston Harbor left South Carolina waters on December 18, 1782. Rod Andrew summarized the post-Yorktown Southern Theater with these words: "Yet this simple chronological divide drawn at the Battle of Yorktown is an artificial one for South Carolina and Georgia."²⁵⁷

Political leaders in London recognized Yorktown as a major turning point, but remarkably, King George III doubled his resolve to defeat the colonists' quest for independence. Andrew O'Shaughnessy wrote that following Yorktown, King George's "fixation on winning the war at all costs was unabated."²⁵⁸ The departure of Cornwallis and his troops from North America following Yorktown changed little for Greene. In fact, for several months, he had to assume Britain would renew its efforts to take the South and debark a new army at the docks of Charleston.

The British never undertook such a drastic measure, but months passed before Greene could be relieved of that concern. Greene was also keenly aware of the international situation and the predicament faced by Georgia and both Carolinas. The British wanted to retain them in the Empire. Though treaty negotiations began after Yorktown, negotiators and their nations did not finalize and sign the document for many months. The British had no hope of keeping Virginia and the rebellious colonies to the north. But the internationally recognized principle of *uti possidetis* provided them reason to keep hold of the land and waters they controlled in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. According to the principle, an entity would permanently retain the territory it held at the close of warfare.

Political leaders in London recognized they did not have enough soldiers to deploy to Charleston and still defend New York City from George Washington's Continentals. Nor could London afford to recruit, train, and arm thousands of new troops for an Atlantic crossing. General Alexander Leslie, stationed at

257. Andrew, General Andrew Pickens, 151.

258. Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America* (Yale University Press, 2013), 41.

Charleston and in command of all British forces in the southern theater, was on his own. His only resources arrived in ships which anchored in Charleston Harbor and the foodstuffs which his soldiers and militia seized in the countryside.

In September, Tories captured the governor of North Carolina, Thomas Burke. David Fanning led several hundred Loyalists in a daring raid during which they captured Burke and other state officials. However, Yorktown fell a few weeks later, and the British soon ended their efforts to hold North Carolina. In November, Major James Craig, following orders from Leslie, evacuated his 300-man force from Wilmington. His departure meant independence for North Carolina and left the British without a port between Charleston and New York City. Nathanael Greene still faced an untenable situation. He had to retake and hold the South Carolina and Georgia coasts, in particular, Savannah, and Charleston. Following Yorktown, authorities in London ordered Henry Clinton to hold New York, Charleston, and Savannah.²⁵⁹

In response, Clinton sent Leslie simple instructions: “you will endeavor to preserve such of the Posts in that Province in actual Possession of the Kings troops, as you judge will be conducive to H. M. Interest. Always regarding the Safety of Charlestown as the Principal Object of your Attention. To which every other Consideration must of course give way.” Alexander Leslie had to stand fast. So did Nathanael Greene.²⁶⁰

Leslie’s personnel in Savannah and Charleston vastly outmatched Greene’s Continentals. But the two cities and their environs were all that Leslie held. He needed to hold the two towns, feed his own personnel, the citizens, and the Loyalist refugees and hope the peace talks in Paris would conclude with Great Britain keeping South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida.

Greene, too, had limited supplies and personnel, which made a siege unthinkable. Militia under generals Thomas Sumter, Andrew Pickens, and Francis Marion were chronically short of ammunition. From time to time, their men returned home to protect their families and manage their farms. The generals’ forces varied in strength according to the seasons of planting and harvest. Regardless, Marion’s men supported the Continentals and contended against Leslie’s foraging raids. In June 1781, John Cruden, the Commissioner of Sequestered Estates, informed Leslie about Francis Marion’s victories in the state. He wrote that Marion had “overrun and destroyed the eastern and southern parts.” Cruden also described how Thomas Sumter compelled Loyalist communities near Ninety Six and along the Congaree and Wateree rivers to disband. “On this occasion all the settlements at Ninety Six and on the Congaree and Wateree were broke up. Many overseers were murdered, and several Negroes having been carried off, the rest were secured at the different posts until they could be removed to places of more security.”²⁶¹

As Patriots regained more and more territory in South Carolina in late 1780 and 1781, Tory families found themselves with three options. A small number took up residence in East and West Florida as early as 1775. But the journey was arduous and usually blocked by Patriot militia. Most Loyalists who eventually left South Carolina went first to Charleston. In late 1782, thousands left the United States. Many never returned. For those who chose East Florida as their new home, the Treaty of Paris brought enormous disappointment. All British residents had to leave the province; Spain was to take East Florida in 1785.

259. Ken Scarlett, *Victory Day: Winning American Independence: The Defeat of the Southern Strategy* (Palmetto Publishing, 2022), 273.

260. Charles B. Baxley, “Gen. Nathanael Greene’s Operations November 1781-February 1782,” *SCAR* 12, no. 1.1 (Jan. 23, 2015), <https://southern-campaigns.org/gen-nathanael-greenes-operations-november-1781-february-1782> (accessed April 23, 2023).

261. Ian Saberton, “The Management of Sequestered Estates.”

Hundreds of other Tories chose a third option. They tried, not always with success, to make amends with their neighbors. In early 1782, the General Assembly banished certain Loyalists from the state and identified others from whom they demanded amercements. These were taxes of 12 percent imposed on total assets. As hostilities diminished, some Loyalists managed to re-assimilate in this way. Patrick Cunningham had to leave the state when the British evacuated in December 1782; however, the Assembly later allowed him to return under the condition of amercement. He paid the tax and eventually became the wealthiest resident of Laurens County.²⁶² A lesser number of Loyalist men who had no attachments to family remained near their homes. They became known for lawlessness. These *outliers*, as they were called, made life miserable for Patriot households.²⁶³

Multiple contemporaneous documents put the Bloody Scout into its barbaric historical context. Aedanus Burke served as a judge in the Ninety Six District. It was Burke who informed Governor Benjamin Guerard of the trial, acquittal, and murder of Matthew Love. In May 1782, Burke wrote to Arthur Middleton, who was in Philadelphia serving in the Continental Congress. Burke described a change in the “temper of the people.” Patriots had become so filled with rage and desire for revenge that “the very females talk as familiarly of shedding blood & destroying the tories as the men do.” Burke also told Middleton about the “small tory parties who live in swamps & make horrid incursions on the peaceable settlements, [are] neither given nor receive quarter”; they “sally from their swamps, & destroy our people in cold blood, and when taken are killed in their turn.”²⁶⁴

In the mid-1800s, Lyman Draper received a letter from a descendant of a Captain Jeffries. The writer described events in the Backcountry following the fall of Charleston. Tories “went out and plundered Whig families in every direction, stole horses and everything else they could.... They plundered my father’s home, stole his horses – drove off his cattle, built up a fire on the floor, abused my mother as the meanest of all rebels.”²⁶⁵

North Carolina Loyalists faced plights similar to those in South Carolina. Charles, Lord Cornwallis had made Charles Stedman his commissary in the winter of 1781. Stedman wrote of himself:

The commissary, who considered it as his duty not only to furnish provisions to the army but also to learn the disposition of the inhabitants, fell in about this time with a very sensible man, a Quaker, who, being interrogated as to the state of the country, replied that it was the general wish of the people to be reunited to Britain; but that they had been so often deceived in promises of support, and the British had so frequently relinquished posts, that the people were now afraid to join the British army lest they should leave the province, in which case the resentment of the revolutioners would be exercised with more cruelty; that although the men might escape or go with the army, yet such was the diabolical conduct of those people that they would inflict the severest punishment upon their families.

“Perhaps,” says the Quaker, “thou art not acquainted with the conduct of thy enemies towards those who wish well to the cause thou art engaged in. There are some who have lived two and even three years in the woods without daring to go to their houses but have been secretly supported by their families. Others, having walked out of their houses under a promise of being safe, have

262. Snipes, Rosemont Plantation, 14-21.

263. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, provides a thorough summary of the dynamics and success of Loyalist reintegration in South Carolina following the American Revolution.

264. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 158; Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign* 1:218, 222.

265. Lyman Draper, Manuscript Collection, 23 VV:254-256.

proceeded but a few yards before they have been shot. Others have been tied to a tree and severely whipped. I will tell thee of one instance of cruelty: a party surrounded the house of a loyalist; a few entered; the man and his wife were in bed; the husband was shot dead by the side of his wife.”

The writer of this replied that those circumstances were horrid but under what government could they be so happy as when enjoying the privileges of Englishmen? “True,” says the Quaker, “but the people have experienced such distress that I believe they would submit to any government in the world to obtain peace.”²⁶⁶

Another source document helps to put the violence of the Bloody Scout into its historical context. The “massacred list” provided compelling details of the persecution faced by Tories. On April 4, 1781, the British executed the Patriot Colonel Isaac Hayne. The execution set off an uproar on both sides of the Atlantic. Patriots considered Hayne’s execution to be a murder and unjustified by the rules of war. Some members of Parliament held the same stance. On April 19, 1782, eleven South Carolina Loyalist officers, by then restricted to the Charleston area, sent a petition to their monarch, though they sent it through an intermediary, Lord George Germain. One officer was a captain, another a major, and the other nine, including Thomas Fletchall, lieutenant colonels, and full colonels. They strenuously objected to anyone labeling Hayne’s death as murder. The officers took a stance against the outspoken Duke of Richmond, a member of the House of Lords, who had vehemently opposed capital punishment for Hayne. The eleven battle-hardened officers had endured the torment of the Patriots. But they did not emphasize their own sacrifices. Instead, they told King George III that the Duke was unaware that “the usurpers in this province have murdered three hundred men, some after and some without pretense of trials, simply because they were suspected of being attached to Your Majesty’s government.”

The eleven officers had served His Majesty primarily in the Ninety Six District, though three or four had served in the Camden District. They accompanied their petition with a list of men who were “massacred in this province.” Their roster had 299 names of men, some of whom were too young or too old to have taken up arms. The petitioners said the list was incomplete. The total number “butchered and hanged,” they contended, was “thrice that number.”

The victims all lived in the Ninety Six District except for a few in the lower Camden District and upper Orangeburg District and five in Charleston. Entries predominantly included just first and last names. Yet the officers included brief notes with some of them. Some examples: John Atkinson, age 65; Arthur Carradyne, age 76; James Clark, and a youth, his son; Major Thomas Keating, age 80; Robert Love, killed while asleep; Emanuel Miller, age 70; James Moore of Camden and his four sons; and Jesse Moore of Long Cane and his three sons.²⁶⁷

Robert Stansbury Lambert observed that the commanders in Charleston might have compiled a somewhat fictionalized list to further justify the hanging of Isaac Hayne. However, Lambert conjectured the list was genuine and mostly accurate, based on the character of the petitioners, their years of experience, and their contacts with evacuees in Charleston. Lambert also noted that the surnames of many of the murdered men matched those of members of the Bloody Scout.²⁶⁸ One wonders how many of the victims of the Bloody Scout had, earlier in the war, killed family members of Cunningham’s men. The savagery of the war-

²⁶⁶ Ian Saberton, “Midsummer 1780.”

²⁶⁷ “Petition to Lord Germain,” http://sc_tories.tripod.com/list_of_murdered_loyalists.htm (accessed December 8, 2024); Picuch, *Three Peoples*, 382, note 15.

²⁶⁸ Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 150-151.

within-a-war went both ways. The violence which preceded the expedition must be considered when one evaluates the morality of the destructive, murderous raid. South Carolina's environment of brutality became the incubator for the cruelties of the Bloody Scout.

From Wantoot to The Ridge: The Bloody Scout Begins²⁶⁹

Nathanael Greene penned a letter to Thomas Sumter on November 2, 1781, only weeks after Cornwallis surrendered his entire army to Washington. However, Greene gave the “glorious news” little attention. Greene, his Continentals, and Patriot militia could not relax. Greene wrote: “I find from the reports of several people the Tories are getting troublesome and insolent in the neighborhood of Orangeburg, in the Forks of the Edisto, and even as high as the ridge [in Edgefield County] towards Ninety Six.” Greene reported the Tories had stolen cattle for delivery to Charleston. He wanted Sumter to put a stop to the raiding and regain the cattle. Greene also made an interesting comparison. He urged Sumter to “check the depredations of the Tories which are more distressing and cruel than all the rest of the British Army.”²⁷⁰

Sumter asked Pickens to dispatch troops to assist with the mission. Pickens reduced his own numbers when he sent some of his men to help Sumter. The infamous Bloody Scout raid had not begun when Greene wrote the November 2 letter. The Tory opposition in the Orangeburg District and near The Ridge was minor compared to what was about to happen. Fast-changing events proved Pickens needed all his men to address an impending crisis in the Ninety Six District. Pickens was shorthanded when the Bloody Scout got to the Ninety Six District. Then a massacre led by another Tory in Spartanburg County took Pickens away from where he was actually needed.

Two days before Greene wrote to Sumter, an event occurred as gruesome as any in South Carolina during the war. Fort Gowen, which lay in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains on the Indian Line, was mentioned above in the narrative of James Dunlap’s forays along the Blackstock and Rutherford roads. Cunningham had not yet left Charleston and begun the Bloody Scout when a bloodbath occurred on October 31, 1781, at Fort Gowen. However, Pickens’s reaction to the slaughter at Fort Gowen and the loss of some of his militia, who went to assist Sumter, significantly reduced Pickens’s ability to stop Cunningham’s butchery.

In late October, Loyalist Captain William Bates joined with a fierce sub-group of the Cherokee known as the Chickamauga, and their chief, Dragging Canoe. Bates led the mixed force, white and Native, out of the South Carolina mountains to assault the small and weakly defended Fort Gowen. Major John “Buck” Gowen of the Spartan Regiment had command there. Because of limited ammunition, Gowen could not hold off the assailants. Bates and Gowen agreed to terms of surrender. The Patriots would put down their weapons with a promise they would be protected from the Chickamauga. But when Gowen

269. AUTHOR’S NOTE: In the Acknowledgments, I express deep appreciation to Mr. John C. “Jack” Parker, Jr. Mr. Parker determined the approximate chain of events of the Bloody Scout. This work’s accuracy is my responsibility. However, details such as dates, participants, and routes depend largely upon Parker’s superb research.

270. Greene to Sumter, November 2, 1781, *PNG*, 9:517-518.

opened the gate, a general slaughter took place. The next day, neighbors recovered at least ten bodies, among them Major Gowen, other men, and women and children. At least two people survived, a young man named Motley and the wife of Abner Thompson. Mrs. Thompson was scalped and presumed dead. She lived another fifty years, her hairless head a reminder of the violence of the state's internecine warfare.²⁷¹

Several years after the massacre, Bates, by then also known as "Bloody Bill," was arrested for horse stealing and was jailed in Greenville. Motley, who had survived the carnage at Fort Gowen, went to the Greenville sheriff and demanded the keys to Bates's cell. Once Motley and his associates had Bates outside, they shot and killed the leader of the Fort Gowen Massacre. They buried Bates on Main Street in Greenville.²⁷²

Andrew Pickens reacted to the carnage at Fort Gowen by taking personal command of two regiments of cavalry. He engaged in an eleven-day chase of Bates and his Tory and Native marauders. Pickens rode northwest for many miles into Cherokee Territory, finally stopping at Chota and other Cherokee villages, which lay on tributaries of the upper Savannah River. His cavalry killed approximately thirty Cherokee, captured another thirty, and burned several villages, but he failed to apprehend Bates. The number of innocents Pickens killed and took captive, combined with the destruction of their dwellings, provided another example of violence carried out against non-belligerents and the cycle of revenge so prevalent in South Carolina.²⁷³ Tragically, Pickens's extravagant efforts to punish Bates and his accomplices made it impossible for him to protect Patriot families from Cunningham. Bloody Bill Cunningham launched the Bloody Scout only days after the Fort Gowen Massacre.²⁷⁴

The Men of the Bloody Scout

British Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Leslie led troops in the colonies before the war started at Lexington and Concord. He steadily rose through the ranks. Though he was desperate to return to Scotland on account of poor health and his desire to be with his family, his commanders denied his requests. In fact, at the rank of major general, he was assigned to replace Cornwallis following Yorktown. Leslie arrived in Charleston in November 1781, soon after the Bloody Scout began.

Before Leslie's arrival, Lieutenant Colonel Nisbet Balfour served as military commander in Charleston. Early in November, before Leslie's arrival and Balfour's subsequent departure for Britain, Balfour sent Loyalist Militia Brigadier General Robert Cunningham into the Backcountry. Regrettably, researchers have not found Balfour's order. If found, the document would provide valuable insights concerning his desires and expectations. Balfour undoubtedly approved an expedition far into the interior to gather food. Though he would not have dared to put into writing authorization to commit murder, Balfour most certainly knew about the Tories' desires for blood vengeance. Without evidence, it is not fair to place substantial blame for the Bloody Scout at the feet of Nisbet Balfour. But as will be seen, he provided the Tories with ample supplies and means for combat. It appears he knowingly gave angry, defeated Tories one last opportunity

271. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 359-363; Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 329; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 160; Andrew, *General Andrew Pickens*, 155.

272. A. V. Huff, *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995, 27-28; Buchanan, *Road to Charleston*, 256; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 213.

273. More research is needed on Pickens's November 1781 revenge raid. It appears that Pickens's reaction to Bates's slaughter at Gowensville exceeded the cruelty of the massacre itself.

274. Andrew, *General Andrew Pickens*, 155; Buchanan, *Road to Charleston*, 256.

to kill before they would be exiled from South Carolina. In current usage, the term *scout* means to explore, observe, or search in an area or a body of people. In the eighteenth century, however, a *scout* was a mission or expedition. “Bloody Scout” appears to have gone into usage soon after the trek concluded.

When John Harris Cruger left Fort Ninety Six for Charleston in July 1781, most Ninety Six District Loyalist militiamen traveled with him. Once in Charleston, British commanders trained the militia to function more effectively. The commanders also reorganized the Ninety Six militia into five regiments. Hezekiah Williams was made a colonel, given charge of the Stevens Creek militia, and played a major role in the Bloody Scout. Lieutenant Colonel Baily Cheney had his own regiment.²⁷⁵ Some members of Cheney’s regiment started the Bloody Scout expedition. Major William Cunningham led the Little River Regiment. As Lambert reported, William Cunningham’s regiment consisted of “dragoons whose enlisted personnel was essentially new, although his senior officers stayed with him throughout the period.” His captains were William Helms, William Parker, Richard Long, John Hood, and a lieutenant, Daniel Cargill. All five remained with Cunningham and relocated together to East Florida in late 1782.²⁷⁶

When the foray began, Robert Cunningham had command and four officers were his direct subordinates: Colonel Hezekiah Williams, Lieutenant Colonel Bailey Cheney, Major William Cunningham, and Captain John Larrence. The expedition began with three hundred to five hundred men. However, after a few days, General Cunningham and Cheney turned back to Charleston, taking an unknown number of others with them. The reason for their return to the city is a mystery; however, the possibility exists that they delivered captured livestock to Charleston. General Cunningham’s departure put Colonel Hezekiah Williams in command. The Bloody Scout has always been regarded as Cunningham’s expedition. This is fitting because Cunningham led the most heinous actions. In reality, the Bloody Scout was commanded by Williams; but the colonel and the major seldom rode or acted together.

By the fall of 1781, there was so much bad blood between Cunningham’s men and their former neighbors that it seems doubtful that any members of the regiment could have ever lived again safely in the Ninety Six District. Murtie June Clark transcribed Cunningham’s men’s names from British pay records. Eighty-seven participants in the Bloody Scout survived and returned with him six weeks later. Excluding one, Cunningham did not need to name those who perished. Cunningham assigned the date December 19, 1781, to the pay statement, but he had not returned to the city by the nineteenth. On December 20, Andrew Pickens ambushed Cunningham in the Battle of the Tory Camps. Cunningham and the other survivors made their way back to Charleston a few days later. The December 19 roster showed Matthew Love received wounds and could not return to Charleston in December. Five months later, Cunningham filed a report on May 13 concerning Love. The handwriting is almost illegible, but Murtie June Clark guessed that Cunningham meant Love had been disabled at Hayes Station. The returnees, and eventually Love, were paid for service rendered between November 3 and January 2. Appendix A provides the names and ranks of the Little River Regiment members who survived the expedition.

Eight returned with wounds which warranted mention. Private David Long was the only one listed as killed in the line of duty, his name being on the payroll because his brother, Captain Richard Long, was

275. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign* 1:319-321. Cheney’s given name is variously spelled Baily, Beley, Baley, and Baly. His surname is variously spelled Cheney, Chaney, and Chany.

276. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 156.

present. The following chapter will tell of a small group of men who Cunningham sent on a separate, brief mission. Ned Turner led the mission, probably accompanied by his brother Dick.

There are no extant payroll records for Cunningham's tenure in Oconee County, making it impossible to determine which of the Bloody Scout participants had also served under him while he operated out of the mountains. Presumably, most who went with him on the Bloody Scout had evacuated with Cruger and been in Charleston since July or August. Once in Charleston, they enjoyed relative safety and may have shared the company of wives, children, and other family members. As militia, they also supported foraging sorties outside of the city.

In late October 1781, the Little River Regiment, numbering more than one hundred militiamen, began preparing for the far-ranging operation. Lambert observed poignantly, "Returning to familiar scenes could not have been a pleasant experience for these men, for it is likely that in some cases they found that Whig families had taken over their homes and other property."²⁷⁷ The men of the Bloody Scout went out not only as soldiers serving under command but as defenders of the families, livelihoods, freedom, and properties they had lost. In their minds, they represented all the refugees in Rawdon Town. Yes, they successfully delivered sustenance (beef) to Charleston. But their actions proved their primary goal was to express the feelings of rage and abandonment felt by the thousands they left behind. Whatever were the written, spoken, or inferred instructions given to Robert Cunningham by Nisbet Balfour, the Bloody Scout was primarily an operation of retribution.

John Belton O'Neill introduced his readers to the Bloody Scout with an apt description: "Near the close of the year, in October, 1781, while the American army was near Charlestown, and there were very few, if any, Whigs embodied and in arms in the upper part of the State, a band of Tories, actuated seemingly by a desire to take one last and ferocious taste of revenge, carried fire and sword into the Whig settlements of Ninety-Six district. They were led by Major William Cunningham, known always as Bloody Bill. His watchwords on this expedition seemed to be plunder, burn and murder."²⁷⁸

Unlike other food-gathering operations, the Bloody Scout did not require wagons. Balfour provided the raiders with sturdy horses, ample ammunition, muskets, rifles, swords, and sabers. William Cunningham was still astride Ringtail. Despite their losses at Eutaw Springs in September, the British had a major post at Fair Lawn Barony at the head of navigation on the Cooper River. Seven miles north of the barony, they held Daniel Ravenel's Wantoot Plantation and posted cavalry there.²⁷⁹ This forward location provided shelter and rest for the men and horses before the arduous venture into the Backcountry began.²⁸⁰ That same month, General Francis Marion was encamped in nearby Williamsburg County and saw an opportunity to take Wantoot. Marion dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Hezekiah Maham, Colonel Isaac Shelby, and Colonel John Sevier. They attacked the post on November 17, and the British had to fall back to Fair Lawn. However, Marion's men did not encounter the Little River Regiment. The Tories had already left and begun the Bloody Scout.²⁸¹

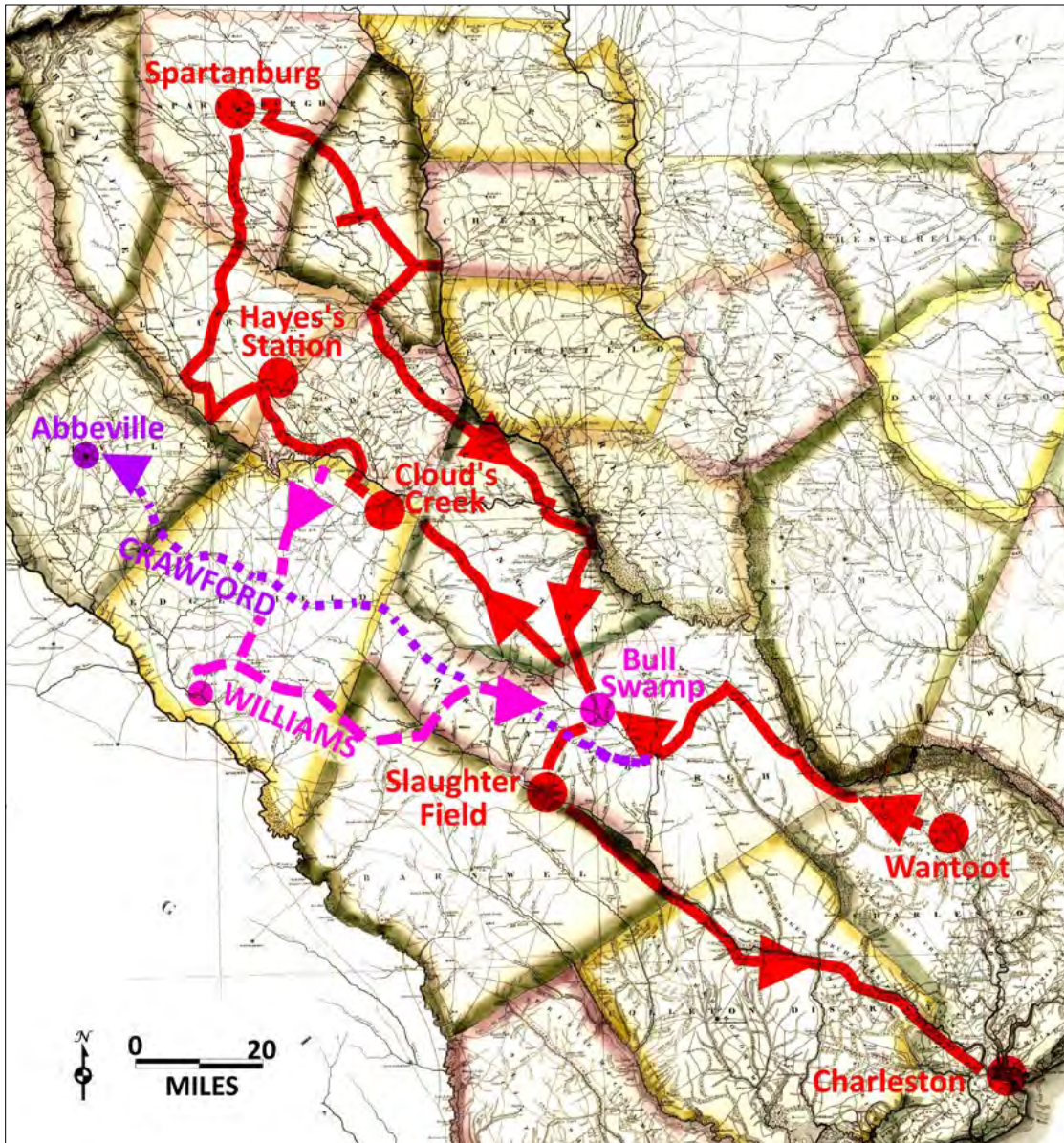
277. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 148.

278. O'Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 479.

279. Wantoot is now under the waters of Lake Moultrie.

280. Charles B. Baxley, email to the author, Dec. 18, 2020, contended that Wantoot was the logical starting point for the Bloody Scout. No primary sources support the conclusion, but it is almost a certainty.

281. Charles B. Baxley, "Gen. Nathanael Greene's Operations."



The Bloody Scout, November – December 1781

The pay period for the Bloody Scout started on November 3. The corps first engaged with the enemy in Orangeburg County on November 13, so it appears the Bloody Scout launched from Wantoot around November 10. The first action took place three miles south of the village of Orangeburg, a straight-line distance of 55 miles from Wantoot. Williams and Cunningham knew they faced an arduous journey through Patriot lines. They probably did not know that Thomas Sumter had begun to station personnel in and around Orangeburg.

The first goal of the invasion was, for reasons unknown, to take revenge on Patriot Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Rowe. Hezekiah Williams's and William Cunningham's combined regiments, as many as three hundred strong, arrived at Rowe's Plantation on November 13. Rowe's wife told them her husband was not at home. Before the regiment could leave the plantation, they were spotted by one of Thomas Sumter's units under the command of Major John Moore. The mission's first blood was spilled when Moore attacked the

Loyalists. Moore held the advantage initially, but the Tories found refuge in a swamp and counterattacked. Eleven Patriots died, and Moore was forced to retreat.²⁸²

In a letter he wrote to Nathanael Greene the following day, Thomas Sumter reported a force of “over five hundred men” had arrived in the Orangeburg area. Sumter added that about 180 Provincial troops encountered Patriot troops at “Roes [Rowe’s] place about a mile from Orangeburg.” The battle at Rowe’s Plantation is also called Moore’s Surprise and Moore’s Defeat. With prescience, Greene replied to Sumter on November 17. “I am sorry that Major More [Moore] fell into the Enemy’s ambush, as dispersing that party will give them more confidence,” he wrote.²⁸³

In the November 14 letter, Sumter told Greene that Robert Cunningham led the raiders. In his November 17 update, he correctly identified William Cunningham and Hezekiah Williams as the commanders. But he incorrectly referred to William Cunningham as a colonel. William Cunningham never received a promotion beyond major. In the November 17 report, Sumter offered a new assessment of the number of the Bloody Scout participants. He estimated about three hundred men, not including more who “Lay in the fork,” meaning the swamps near Orangeburg between the North and South Edisto rivers. Sumter added that cattle were plentiful in the swamps. Six days later, November 23, Sumter informed Greene that the “Cunninghams and Williams Parties separated at the Ridge; one Went to the Saluda the Other to Savannah rivers, Lawrence With him and several Cap [Captains] With parties still Remain in the forks of the Edistoes.”²⁸⁴

Sumter’s second estimate of the enemy’s numbers, three hundred, seems correct for Williams’s and Cunningham’s combined force. No records confirm Sumter’s report that some of the Tories remained in the Edisto Swamps. Sumter may have received reports that other Tories were camped in the swamps near Orangeburg.²⁸⁵

Once informed of the Bloody Scout, Greene ordered Pickens to lead the pursuit of Cunningham. But Pickens had been preoccupied pursuing Bloody Bill Bates. Rod Andrew wrote: “Pickens returned to find that several units from his brigade and from Sumter’s were in pursuit of Williams and Cunningham. Pickens took charge of the pursuit.” For the next few weeks, the furious pace of events made it difficult for Pickens to stop the marauders. Shortages of ammunition further weakened the Whig response.²⁸⁶

In September, Governor John Rutledge of South Carolina had tried to ease tensions in the Backcountry by pardoning Loyalists. His proclamation of September 27, 1781, did not apply to all those who had fought for the King. But to some, he offered “free pardon and oblivion for such their offense of having borne arms with or [who] adhere to the enemy.” Such a person would go to a militia brigade commander and volunteer for six months of service bearing arms. Upon the completion of the terms, the Tory was free to return home and “hold and enjoy their property...without molestation or interruption.”²⁸⁷

Sumter began receiving Tories at Orangeburg. Even after the amnesty offer expired, they continued to go to him. Many brought with them women and children, and Sumter expressed grave concern for their

282. O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:384-385; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:485.

283. Sumter to Greene, November 14, 1781, *PNG*, 9:575, 581. Some writers have mistakenly claimed Cunningham defeated Colonel Richard Hampton shortly after Moore’s Defeat. The mistake originated with an erroneous newspaper report that Hampton was the commander at Moore’s Defeat.

284. Sumter to Greene, November 17, 1781, *PNG*, 9:586.

285. Sumter to Greene, November 23, 1781, *PNG*, 9:615.

286. Greene to Sumter, November 14, 1781, *PNG*, 9:633-634; Andrew, *General Andrew Pickens*, 155.

287. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 159.

welfare. He wrote to Greene on December 19: “The Number and Retchedness of the Women & Children Cant be Conceived. Utterly out of the power of Many to Move, or Subsist Much longer where they are.” Sumter also hesitated to allow them to return home. Outside of Orangeburg, they could easily fall prey to the predations of revenge-minded Patriots. By January, Greene had over a hundred of the Loyalist men performing military service. On the other hand, some Loyalist-turned-Patriot men changed their allegiance again, slipped out of Orangeburg, and returned to the Loyalist cause.²⁸⁸

Mount Willing and the Massacre at Cloud's Creek

Williams and Cunningham took different routes from the Edisto Swamps as they rode into the Ninety Six District. Colonel Williams and Captain Thomas Radcliff got to the district first and arrived at Mount Willing in Saluda County on November 15 or 16. They seized cattle, as described in this book's introduction, and began to drive them to Charleston. For reasons that are not clear, Captain Radcliff led a smaller group of men northward and across the Saluda River. Because the raiders later murdered men in Newberry County, Radcliff might have set out to avenge Patriot depredations in that area.

Patriot Captain Stirling Turner quickly formed a posse of thirty Mount Willing men, among them Smallwood Smith, Matthew Jones, Captain James Butler, Sr., and Butler's nineteen-year-old James, Jr. They pursued Radcliff first. The Patriots arrived at the river, which was swollen with recent rains. James Butler, Jr., spotted a canoe, swam the river, returned with it, and helped his comrades enter Newberry County. On November 16, Captain Turner found Captain Radcliff and his detachment. Turner killed Radcliff and several other Tories. One of these may have been Thomas Ellison, whose killing was avenged a day or two later. No records have proven when Ellison was killed.²⁸⁹

Stirling Turner did not return home after killing Thomas Radcliff and other Tories. He and his posse pushed their steeds and caught up with Williams and the cattle about twenty-six miles from Mount Willing. The parties encountered one another at Tarrar Springs (or Tarrar Spring).²⁹⁰ After firing shots without injuries on either side, Turner and Williams negotiated a resolution. Williams gave up the cattle, and Turner and his twenty-nine men began driving them back to Mount Willing.²⁹¹

The elder Butler, Captain James Butler, Sr., had spent many months imprisoned in Charleston, first in the Provost jail, then on a prison ship.²⁹² In August, he was allowed to return home but was still in poor health when he joined the posse chasing Hezekiah Williams and the cattle rustlers. Because Butler had more experience than Turner, Turner asked Butler to lead the expedition. Butler was still regaining his strength and declined to command the posse. After they left Tarrar Springs, the elder Butler advised Turner to keep moving away from further contact with the Tories. But as the sun set, Turner ordered a stop for the night at an unfinished cabin owned by a Mr. Carter. It lay near Cloud's Creek, outside of present-day Batesburg-Leesville.²⁹³ Turner did not know that William Cunningham had arrived late that day at Tarrar

288. Sumter to Greene, December 13, 1781, *PNG*, 10:49; Sumter to Greene, December 19, 1781, *PNG*, 10:80-81.

289. O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:385; Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 401-402; Simms, “Biographical Sketch,” 519.

290. The spring now feeds a small pond. The office of Lexington School District 1 overlooks this serene setting.

291. O'Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 479-480; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:471; Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:36; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:389; “Cloud's Creek,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_clouds_creek_2.html (accessed September 28, 2024).

292. Simms, “Biographical Sketch,” 522.

293. Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 391. Some writers contend the nearby creek was actually Big Lick Creek. The massacre goes by several other names, including Lick Creek, Big Lick, Turner's Station, Turner's House, Hugh's Old Field, Carter's House,

Springs and learned about the recent events, including the deaths of Radcliff and Ellison.²⁹⁴ Cunningham's hatred for the Butler family requires a review of a 1779 event which unfolded while Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell held Augusta. Cunningham and other King's Men thought that James Butler bore responsibility for the alleged murder of Sergeant MacAllister. They could have easily taken to be true the unfounded rumor that Butler and his men slew the unarmed MacAllister with a hatchet.

Cunningham and over 100 confederates ambushed Turner's party at sunrise. The Tories and Patriots exchanged fire, which resulted in the deaths of several members of Turner's party. With his ammunition spent, Turner tried to parley with the Tories. Cunningham had served alongside Butler during the Snow Campaign when Cunningham was still a Patriot. Whatever respect he had for Butler when the war began had become fury. Cunningham undoubtedly recalled the 1779 episode in Augusta, which inspired Redcoats and Tories to seek revenge on James Butler and his family. When Cunningham arrived at Tarrar Springs the previous day, he learned the younger Butler, James, Jr., had killed his friend and officer, Captain Thomas Radcliff. Upon Turner's surrender, he learned father and son were inside the dwelling. The father offered his life for that of his son. But James, Jr., brought the ceasefire to an end when he fired a shot from the cabin and killed a Tory whose surname may have been Stewart.²⁹⁵ The Tories fired back and killed the younger Butler. With Captain Turner's troop now at his mercy, Cunningham ordered a slaughter. The avengers employed sabers and swords.

The following day, a burial party gathered the body parts and put them into a mass grave. Edward McCrady described the scene: "Women only performed the rude rites of burial possible. A large pit was dug, into which the bodies were indiscriminately placed; except that a separate grave was prepared by the sister of Captain Butler, in which the remains of the father and son were deposited."²⁹⁶

Only one member of the Bloody Scout died at Cloud's Creek. Members of the Bloody Scout interceded for a handful of the Patriots, but sources differ concerning which Patriots were spared. Those who avoided execution apparently were Hendley Webb, Bartlett Bledsoe, Warren Bletcher, and Benjamin Hughes, though Hughes may have escaped. Pension applicant Abner Corley reported he served under Captain Stirling Turner but fortunately had left Mount Willing to deliver a message to Ninety Six.²⁹⁷ Those who died at Cloud's Creek were captains Stirling Turner and James Butler, Sr., James Butler, Jr., Smallwood Smith, Burdit Escridge, Benjamin Bell, William Scissom, John Bland, Gideon Nicholson, Mat. Jones, Peter Foy, John Bledsoe, Nat Corley, and a man with the surname Sullivan.²⁹⁸

Patriot Colonel Leroy Hammond wrote to Nathanael Greene on December 2 about "Mellancholy circumstances" carried out by "those vile Miscreants." Hammond reported to Greene that the Loyalists "fell

Carter's Old Field, and Carter's Tavern.

294. Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 213, 341; McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:472. Some writers have contended Cunningham was with the Tories who seized the cattle at Mount Willing. It seems doubtful that a peaceable agreement to return the cattle to their rightful owners could have been reached if Cunningham and his larger contingent of well-armed men had been present at Tarrar Spring.

295. Boddie, *Virginia Historical Genealogies*, 11.

296. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:471-473.

297. Abner Corley, Pension Application S21707, April 10 (no year provided), <https://revwarapps.org/s21707.pdf> (accessed December 9, 2024).

298. Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 522; Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 644. Ann Pamela Cunningham's efforts to minimize William Cunningham's culpability and to maximize the guilt of the Patriots are replete in her narrative of the Cloud's Creek massacre. She deemed the Patriots who died that day "marauders," referred to Turner's cabin as a military post, and avoided the words "massacre" and "slaughter." Cf. https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_clouds_creek_2.html which reports thirty Patriots were at Cloud's Creek, and twenty-eight were slain.

in with Cap. Turner with a party of 24. Turner having possession of a house bravely defended him self and little party for near two hours against Cunninghams whole force.... At last having six men killed dead in the house and his Ammunition expended he was obliged to surrender to the mercy of these base incendiarys. The Capt. and 14 others were most cruelly murdered and mangled Both his hands were cut of [off] whilst alive and it is said many other cruelties committed on him shameful to repeat." Ann Pamela Cuningham made an erroneous claim in her defense of her relative William. She wrote that he was not present for the massacre, and he regretted it had taken place. The events at Cloud's Creek allowed Cunningham and his men to retrieve the cattle. But circumstances also gave them an unplanned opportunity to carry out their primary goal: retribution.²⁹⁹ James Butler had other sons. One was William, who served as a captain under Andrew Pickens. Twice the following year, in May at Dean Swamp, and in September at Lorick's Ferry, William Butler tried to avenge the murders of his father and brother.

Nathanael Greene's November and December correspondence does not clearly establish that Hezekiah Williams was present for the slaughter at Cloud's Creek. He might have left Mount Willing after the cattle were captured and gone to a predetermined rendezvous point, The Ridge community in Saluda County. It is certain, though, that Cunningham and Williams re-joined briefly at The Ridge following Cloud's Creek and then went their separate ways. They split into three contingents. One restarted the journey to Charleston with the cattle, going between the north and south branches of the Edisto. They had to stay well south of Orangeburg to avoid Sumter's militia. They led the cattle across the Edisto below Orangeburg and continued into the safety of British-held territory. Colonel Williams led his regiment toward the Savannah River and his home near Steven's Creek. Cunningham led the third and largest contingent, the Little River Regiment, and, as will be seen, members of other regiments. Cunningham and Williams rode farther from the safety of Charleston. Neither man bothered to seize more cattle unless they pilfered and butchered some for their own needs. After Cloud's Creek, Cunningham focused on retribution and keeping out of reach of furious Patriots. With the Tory massacre of Patriots at Cloud's Creek, the most horrific string of homicides in South Carolina's history had started.

299. Colonel Leroy Hammond to Greene, December 2, 1781, *PNG*, 9:651; Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 644.

More “Mellancholy Circumstances”

From The Ridge to Hayes Station

On November 17, when he rode out of Saluda County’s Ridge community, Cunningham rode north toward the Saluda River. This central part of the Ninety Six District had been home to many, if not most, members of the Little River Regiment. Patriots had been at odds with them for six years, and many of the Tory families had little choice except to flee to British-held Charleston. Other Tories remained on their farms but were outnumbered by and defenseless against their Patriot neighbors.

Before crossing the Saluda at the Saluda Old Town Ferry, Cunningham’s invaders arrived at the home of Samuel Abney, who had been a sergeant in the Upper Ninety Six District Regiment. Like Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Rowe of Orangeburg, Abney was not at home. Abney’s wife and other family members pleaded for the Tories to leave without delay. The Tories had no reason to linger after they set the Abney home ablaze.³⁰⁰

Later that day, or on the morning of November 18, Cunningham crossed the Saluda into Newberry County. He approached the farm of Patriot Captain John Towles, Jr., sometimes referred to as Stokely, who served in Colonel Leroy Hammond’s Lower Ninety Six District Regiment.³⁰¹ Ann Pamela Cuningham, whose portrayals of Patriots were often suspect, wrote that Towles had a reputation for stealing the livestock of Tories and for sending Tory women and children to Charleston. John Towles heard Cunningham’s party approach his property, so he ran to his barn. Ned Turner had a relationship with Towles, which allowed for subterfuge. Turner convinced Towle’s wife that he was there to protect her husband. Mrs. Towles sent her son to tell his father he was safe. When Towles came through the barn door, Turner shot and killed him. Before saddling up, Cunningham ordered the house to be torched.³⁰²

Wasting no time, the raiders rode to the home of Cunningham’s former Patriot commander, Captain John Caldwell, who operated a mill on Mills Creek. Caldwell might have assumed he would never again encounter William Cunningham, the subordinate with whom he had such a stormy relationship. Caldwell was so surprised when he saw Cunningham that he walked toward him. But no courtesies ensued. Cunningham drew his pistol and executed him while Caldwell’s wife watched. The avengers of the Bloody

300. “The Sergeants,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriot_military_sc_serjeants.htm (accessed August 26, 2024); Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 387.

301. Some secondary sources refer to John Towles as Stokely Towles. See Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 350-351. Cf. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 646. Ann Pamela Cuningham confused the brothers by contending that Oliver Towles was hanged by Cunningham with a cowhide.

302. Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 348; “John Towles,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriots_sc_capt_john_towles.html (accessed July 20, 2024); O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 614, tell the story of Towles’s death differently. He was home with smallpox; Turner forced two of his sons to reveal where he was hiding; he was shot and the house torched.

Scout torched the house, leaving the Patriot family without their breadwinner and bereft of shelter, food, and clothing. And it would soon be winter.³⁰³

Fast horses and excellent planning allowed the murders of the Bloody Scout to continue without delay or challenge. The militants rode to the home and blacksmith shop of John Towles’s brother, Oliver. Cunningham had known Oliver since 1775, possibly earlier, when the two served in the same company of the 3rd Regiment, Towles as a sergeant and Cunningham as a private. Six years later, Cunningham was a Tory major and Towles a Patriot captain in the 3rd Regiment. When they took Charleston, the British imprisoned Towles but later released him on parole.³⁰⁴ Cunningham might have nursed anger against Towles since their time together in the 3rd Regiment, or some later events might have angered him. Ann Pamela wrote that Oliver Towles was a “notorious cattle thief who had preyed on Loyalists.”³⁰⁵ No other writer supported what she wrote about Towles, but Patriot cruelty was often overlooked in the works of nineteenth-century historians.

Cunningham and his men told Towles they would spend the night at his place. The next morning, November 19, they demanded that he shoe some of their horses. When their no-doubt unhappy host finished the work, he was slain by the confederates of the Bloody Scout. His death did not entirely satisfy the Loyalists, though, because they also murdered one of Towles’s sons and an African American boy. Finally, they set all the structures ablaze.³⁰⁶

The Massacre at Hayes Station

Cunningham moved with great speed and efficiency from one farm to another, so he may have drawn up maps before leaving Charleston. He and his accomplices perhaps composed a list of foes they hoped to locate and dispense with. From Towles’s farm and shop, they rode across Newberry County, into Laurens County, and to Hayes Station. This fortified house and plantation belonged to Colonel Joseph Hayes. Cunningham and the men of the Bloody Scout had countless reasons to hate him. Joseph Hayes had served as a captain in the Little River District Regiment of Militia until 1780. After the death of James Williams at Kings Mountain, Hayes replaced Williams and was promoted to colonel. In 1781, Hayes came under the command of Andrew Pickens. Patriots had forced the well-known Tory Thomas Edgehill, Sr., out of his home, then called Edgehill Station, and Hayes claimed the property for himself.³⁰⁷ Late in December 1780, the colonel participated in the slaughter at Hammond’s Store. Then overnight, Hayes commanded the attempt to kill the Tories based at Williams’s Fort. Among these Loyalists were Robert, Patrick, and William Cunningham.

Events at Hayes Station resembled the Cloud’s Creek Massacre in several ways. One is that Hayes Station gave Cunningham an unplanned opportunity to execute a number of enemies at one location. On November 19, only two days after Cloud’s Creek, Hayes was at home and at his forge. Other Patriot militiamen were at Hayes’s house. William Caldwell, a neighbor, rushed to Hayes Station. Caldwell’s

303. Simms, “Biographical Sketch,” 523-524; O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 201-202.

304. “Capt. John Caldwell,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriots_sc_capt_john_caldwell.html (accessed September 3, 2024).

305. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 646.

306. O’Neill and Chapman, *The Annals of Newberry*, 200-201; Simms, “Biographical Sketch,” 519.

307. “Colonel Leroy Hammond to Nathanael Greene,” *PNG*, 9:651; “Joseph Hayes,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/patriots_sc_capt_joseph_hayes.html (accessed July 20, 2024); Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 430. After Edgehill took refuge in Charleston, he became Adjutant General and Superintendent of Refugees.

brother’s house was ablaze, and he suspected Cunningham had started the fire and was on his way to Hayes Station. Unconvinced by Caldwell’s words, Hayes continued his work. But the pounding hooves of more than a hundred horses convinced Hayes and the other men at his farm to run for shelter. As Hayes ran inside his reinforced home, he avoided a Tory’s sword by mere inches.

A brief gun battle ensued. Patriot Lockley Leonard died inside the fort, while one of Cunningham’s men died outside. The men of the Bloody Scout then set fire to the roof. With the building ablaze, Hayes arranged a surrender. Cunningham assured Hayes that the Patriots would not be harmed but taken as prisoners.

However, Cunningham had lied. The Tory commander pronounced that Hayes and Major (or Captain) Daniel Williams, age eighteen, were to be hanged. Cunningham understood Daniel Williams had taken the life of his friend Thomas Ellison two or three days earlier. Williams’s younger brother Joseph, age thirteen or fourteen, objected strenuously to the upcoming execution. This inspired Cunningham to string all three men to a fodder pole and hang them. However, the pole could not sustain their weight, and it broke. Cunningham pulled out his sword and butchered Hayes and the Williams brothers. They were sons of Colonel James Williams, who had died at Kings Mountain. Cunningham then gave free rein to his men to continue the carnage. Cunningham slew John Cook himself. Cook had helped William Ritchie kill Cunningham’s brother and maim his father in December 1778. As previously noted, Cunningham took revenge on Ritchie in January 1779. Almost three years later, the assault on Hayes Station gave Cunningham the opportunity to take revenge on Cook. Cunningham would encounter his brother’s and father’s third assailant only one day later.³⁰⁸

O’Neill and Chapman listed sixteen deaths at Hayes Station.³⁰⁹ Two Patriots died in the initial action, while another fourteen were slaughtered:

*[Cunningham] told his men to kill whomever they chose; which they did. Only two had fallen in the exchange of gunfire, and fourteen were cut to pieces after they surrendered. The following are their names and rank: Colonel Joseph Hayes, Captain Daniel Williams, Lieutenant Christopher Hardy, Lieutenant John Niel, Clement Hancock, Joseph Williams, Joseph Irby, Sr., Joseph Irby, Jr., John Milven, James Ferris, John Cook, Greaf Irby, Benjamin Goodman, Yancy Saxon.*³¹⁰

Listings of the Patriots who died at Hayes Station have slight variations. For example, Parker lists fifteen victims, not including the two who were shot: Joseph Hayes, Daniel Williams, Christopher Hardy, John Neill, Clement Hancock, Joseph Irby, Sr., Joseph Irby, Jr., Joseph Williams, John Milven, James Ferris, John Cook, Benjamin Goodman, Yancy Saxon, and “two others.” The website carolana.com reports seventeen or eighteen Patriots died at Hayes Station. It adds that four were taken prisoner and eleven escaped unharmed.³¹¹ The monument at the site lists the same fourteen names as are found in O’Neill’s and Chapman’s *Annals of Newberry*.³¹²

308. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:474.

309. The slaughter is also called the Battle of Edgehill Plantation.

310. O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 480.

311. “Hayes’ Station,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_hayes_station.html (accessed December 10, 2024).

312. “Hayes Station,” *Southern Adventures*, <https://adairholland.com/hayes-station/> (accessed December 10, 2024). The Henry Laurens Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected the current monument in 1910. It replaced an original which was placed at the site in 1855 but later destroyed.

At least four Patriots escaped harm on November 19. At age 72, pension applicant James Tinsley wrote that the Tories took him prisoner at Hayes Station, but he escaped that night.³¹³ O’Neall and Chapman reported three Patriots avoided death: James Tinsley, William Dunlap, and John “King” Cummins. At least one other person at Hayes Station avoided death. The widow of Patriot Major Jonathan Downs filed his pension application in 1838. Mrs. Downs testified her husband took a ball in the abdomen during the Ring Fight in the Second Cherokee War. He could no longer take up arms but still supported the rebel cause. Mrs. Downs said her husband was present when Cunningham arrived at Hayes Station. The Tories took him prisoner but then released him.³¹⁴

Matthew Love played an especially bloody role in the massacre, and he was wounded and unable to continue the raid.³¹⁵ Three years later, in late 1784, Love was apprehended and tried for crimes committed at Hayes Station. Judge Aedanus Burke presided over the trial. Survivors of the event testified Love was a “principal actor in this tragical business.” He “traversed the ground” among the bodies of his “former neighbors and old acquaintances,” and pierced their bodies to make certain they were dead. The General Assembly had passed a postwar law to prevent further acts of revenge. On those grounds, Judge Burke dropped the charges against Love. The judge retired for the night but kept Love in the Ninety Six jail for his protection. Burke reported to Governor Benjamin Guerard that during the night, “A party of men, as respectable for good character and services in the war... composed of the fathers, sons, brothers and friends” of the victims at Hayes Station “quietly seized Love” and hanged him.³¹⁶ Love’s 1784 death added, belatedly, a final name to the list of members of the Bloody Scout who died in action.

The attackers had many opportunities to steal valuables from the bodies, horses, farms, and houses of those they killed. Researcher Will Graves transcribed a formal request for compensation submitted by a brother of Daniel and Joseph Williams. John Williams’s sworn statement of May 22, 1783, listed twenty-eight items stolen by Cunningham’s men. These included the pants (breeches) of both men, their saddles, bridles, a rifle, five pistols, two holsters, blankets, coats, spurs, hats, buckles, shoes and saddle bags. It was a bounty of necessary items which were or might be needed as the six-week mission continued. One can only imagine how many more items of value were pilfered during the Bloody Scout.³¹⁷

Patriot Hugh O’Neal, owner of O’Neal’s Mill, watched this second massacre unfold by observing it from a nearby ridge. O’Neal slipped away undetected, and the attackers found shelter for the night at his mill. O’Neal watched helplessly the next morning, November 20, as his uninvited guests torched his mill. Once the intruders had departed, O’Neal and his neighbors went to the station and engaged in the sad work of identifying the dead and placing body parts in two mass graves.³¹⁸

The Hayes Station site and its monument are accessible to the public. At this writing, onsite interpretive media is being developed. The preservation and interpretation of Hayes Station showcases

313. James Tinsley, Pension Application S21426, Sept. 25, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s21426.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2024).

314. Jonathan Downs, Pension Application W2100, Dec. 10, 1838, <https://revwarapps.org/w21000.pdf> (accessed July 16, 2024).

315. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:270. As indicated above, Love’s absence due to injury was noted by Cunningham in the payroll submitted when the other Bloody Scout participants returned to Charleston.

316. “Aedanus Burke to Governor Benjamin Guerard,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88, no. 1 (January 1987): 59-61.

317. Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary*, 223-224.

318. O’Neall and Chapman, *The Annals of Newberry*, 221-222; Lipscomb. *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:36; Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 299.

the many ways local organizations can collaborate with preservation trusts, such as the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust.

Pickens’s Late Arrival

Andrew Pickens’s pursuit of Bill Bates and others responsible for the Fort Gowen Massacre was a double tragedy. First, as noted, many Cherokee innocents such as women and children and men who had played no part in the mass murder were killed or made homeless. Second, Pickens’s mission took place far from the locale of the Bloody Scout. If he had remained in the Ninety Six District, Pickens might have been able to slow down the revenge raid or even put a stop to it. But the general was preoccupied and did not learn about the Bloody Scout until it was well underway. Cunningham had several advantages over Pickens. The British had equipped the raiders well for their journey, and Cunningham had planned a route which took him efficiently from one stop to another. Cunningham proved a fast-moving target. Only after he turned his company back toward Charleston and took refuge in the Edisto Swamps did Pickens locate and confront him. By then, the death toll had reached a horrendous number.

General Pickens’s first known response to the Bloody Scout was to deploy Captain Samuel Moore to find and challenge the marauding company of Tories. The choice of Moore for the mission proved fatal because Moore had helped to kill William Cunningham’s brother and maim his father in December 1778. Cunningham had swiftly dispatched the ringleader, William Ritchie, in January 1779. Cunningham found the second assailant, John Cook, at Hayes Station. The day after Hayes Station, November 20, Pickens’s directive to Moore gave Cunningham an opportunity to finish taking revenge on his brother’s killers.

At least five pension applications, though varying in their details, described a chase which took place within a few hours of the destruction of Hugh O’Neal’s mill.³¹⁹ Historians have described the event in a variety of ways but without significant differences. Samuel Moore was accompanied by other militiamen, but Moore mistakenly left most of them on the opposite side of the Saluda when he and Cunningham spotted each other. Thus ensued a dramatic miles-long pursuit. Cunningham, astride Ringtail, chased Moore, who also rode a fast horse. More than one account related that Cunningham stayed close behind his foe and taunted him by shouting to Moore, “Push the rowels in Sammy, honey.” Cunningham tired of the chase and cut down Moore with his sword. In her version, Ann Pamela Cuningham reported that Moore “immediately put spurs to his horse then considered the fleetest in the country.” After a chase of about a mile and a half, “Cunningham overtook him and . . . cut him down with sword,” bringing “forth Ringtail’s great powers of strength and speed—but very many were the occasions afterwards, on which Major Cunningham was indebted entirely to his horse for his safety.” The praise Ann Pamela heaped so often on Ringtail provided additional proof that her grandfather, Patrick Cunningham, gifted Ringtail to William.³²⁰

After slaying Moore, Cunningham led the Little River Regiment to Anderson’s Mill, located close to the confluence of the Reedy and Saluda rivers. The mill served as the headquarters of Colonel Leroy

319. John Wallis or Wallace, Pension Application R11085, Oct. 17, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/r11085> (accessed December 10, 2024); William England, Pension Application S10631, Oct. 24, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/S10631.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2024); John Sample, Pension Application S32505, Jan. 28, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s32505.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2024); John Hodges, Pension Application, W10117, Oct. 3, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/w10117> (accessed December 10, 2024); John Parker, Pension Application S21414, Oct. 1 (no year provided), <https://revwarapps.org/s21414.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2024).

320. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 642.

Hammond, but Hammond and his corps were absent. Cunningham ordered the burning of the mill.³²¹ Following the November 20 destruction of Anderson’s Mill, the historical record of routes and events lacks clarity. O’Neill and Chapman wrote that Cunningham quickly burned more structures. “Cunningham... crossed Saluda at Anderson’s mills,” they wrote. “He then passed up the river by Daniel Dyson’s, William Burgess’, John Wallace and Robert Gillam’s, to John Caldwell’s, burning every house on the way, and plundering every thing which could be found.”³²² No one reported killings at these farms, but at least five more families lost all their possessions and their houses. Cunningham next crossed the Enoree River and entered Spartanburg and Union counties; however, confusion marked later reports concerning the dates of Cunningham’s actions and routes he took.³²³

It seems most likely that Cunningham’s raiders left Laurens County, forded the Enoree River, and arrived in present-day Spartanburg which is about 45 miles in a straight line from Anderson’s Mill. After resting on the night of November 21, the raiders resumed their killings on November 22. They found James Wood at his home on Lawson’s Fork Creek. Wood was the state’s lieutenant governor and also its commissioner of sequestered estates. In that capacity, he had confiscated the farms, houses, and lands of Loyalists. From the Loyalist perspective, he was a thief on a grand scale, a criminal whose misdeeds had the full sanction of the state’s lawmakers. Wood paid with his life for doing his state-sanctioned job. Cunningham’s shot failed to kill Wood, so the major granted permission to his men to hang Wood “from a dogwood tree” until he died.³²⁴

Colonel John Wood, a brother of James Wood, became the next victim of the Bloody Scout. John lived about a mile down Lawson’s Fork from his brother, James. John Wood was at home recovering from an illness. As J. B. O. Landrum prepared to write his book *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*, he received a letter dated March 18, 1894, from John Earl Bomar. Bomar shared with Landrum an account his grandmother had told him before her death in 1837:

*The facts of the killing...: John Wood was a staunch Whig and a gallant soldier, greatly hated and feared by the Tories. From the beginning of the contest with the mother country, he took sides with the colonies, and was a commissioned officer, actively engaged in the service of his country, up to the time of his death. ... he had nearly recovered from his sickness, and was preparing to return to his command. He had no intimation of the approach of the Tories until they had completely surrounded his house. When he saw the condition of affairs he went out to confront his enemies, followed by his wife and little son, a lad of only a few summers. He saw at a glance that resistance was useless, and that there was no possible way of escape. Nothing was left therefore for him to do but to offer to surrender and throw himself upon the mercy of his enemy, which he did, saying that he surrendered himself as a prisoner of war. This was met by curses and cries from the Tories, “Shoot him, shoot him!” A volley was fired into him and he fell a lifeless corpse into the arms of his wife, who caught him as he fell. His death was instantaneous. ... Before leaving the murderous crew proceeded to pillage the house, taking with them such things of value as they could easily carry.*³²⁵

321. O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:398.

322. O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 200.

323. Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 409.

324. O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:401.

325. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 352-354.

The letter writer provided Landrum with one more account. After killing the Wood brothers, Cunningham’s men planned to kill another man in the same vicinity, a Mr. Ballenger. But a neighbor had gone to visit Colonel Wood. He discovered what had transpired moments before he arrived and overheard the Bloody Scout call the name of Mr. Ballenger. The neighbor saved Ballenger’s life when he used a shortcut and ran ahead to warn Ballenger. Cunningham could not remove Ballenger from his list, but other men he wanted to dispatch lived nearby.³²⁶

The raiders rode several miles to the east of Spartanburg into what is presently known as the Zion Hill Community. They found their next victim, a Mr. Lawson, at home. With him was a visitor whose name is a mystery. The raiders slew Lawson, but the other man fled unharmed. The systematic killing continued. Before sundown, the men of the Bloody Scout arrived at the home of Hilliard Thomas. Thomas left his house to greet them but was promptly slain. A companion escaped out of the back of Thomas’s house.³²⁷ John Snoddy lived near Wofford’s Iron Works, southeast of the middle of today’s Spartanburg. The Bloody Scout did away with Snoddy and spent the night at the iron works.³²⁸ Many of the metal implements southern Patriots used during the war were manufactured there. Before leaving on the morning of November 23, Cunningham’s men set the facility on fire.³²⁹ In one day, the men of the Bloody Scout had killed four men, including the lieutenant governor. They deprived the Patriots of a valuable individual. All of this was accomplished within five miles of the center of Spartanburg.

For many years, historians have reported that during this portion of the Bloody Scout, William Cunningham killed Colonel Edward “Ned” Hampton. Edward Hampton was a brother of Wade Hampton I, the scion of South Carolina’s Hampton family which achieved renown in the nineteenth century. In actuality, Colonel Edward Hampton died on October 23, 1780, at the home of a man named Blasingame in Union County. North Carolina Loyalist Lieutenant Colonel John Moore killed Hampton. The mistake stands as another example of William Cunningham being blamed for homicides he did not commit.³³⁰

After destroying the iron works, Cunningham led his marauders out of Spartanburg County into Chester County. There they found John Knox, a member of Benjamin Roebuck’s regiment.³³¹ Knox did not survive the encounter. Riding into Union County, they located another member of Roebuck’s regiment, Thomas Dunlap, and murdered him, too.³³²

On November 23, Cunningham allowed Ned Turner to lead a separate mission away from the primary group. Turner was accompanied by his brother Dick and an unknown number of other Tories. Much, if not all, of the three or four-day detour held personal significance for the Turner brothers. Ned and Dick hoped

326. Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 354; O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:40; Landrum, *History of Spartanburg County*, 154, 221, 360, 633.

327. Jim Brooks, “The Iron Works on Lawson’s Fork,” 6, 12, 44, 51, extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgglefindmkaj/https://www.piedmont-historical-society.org/records/pdf/TheIronworksonLawsonsFork.pdf (accessed December 10, 2024); “The Iron Works,” <http://glendalesec.com/ironworks.html> (accessed December 10, 2024); Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 356-357; Landrum, *History of Spartanburg County*, 154, 220, 295-296.

328. Landrum, *History of Spartanburg County*, 154, 221; Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*, 356; Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 10:13-14.

329. The iron works was rebuilt soon after the war ended.

330. Landrum, *History of Spartanburg County*, 248; Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History*, 354-355; and Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 83, serve as examples of this error. Hampton’s Audited Account and six pieces of correspondence in the Draper Manuscripts prove Cunningham was not responsible for Hampton’s death. See South Carolina Audited Accounts relating to Edward Hampton SC2264. For an example of Draper correspondence, see Elijah Clark to Thomas Sumter, Oct. 29, 1780, Draper Manuscripts, Sumter Papers, 12vv7-8.

331. The regiment was also known as the Second Spartan Regiment.

332. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 10:13-14; Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, K.

to take revenge on Colonel Davis Glenn and other Patriots who had killed their brother. On November 24, the Turner retinue arrived in Laurens County at the Duncan Creek home of John Gray. Gray served under Andrew Pickens but had gone home to be with his wife, Ailesy, and their newborn child. Gray saw the Tories approach his house and escaped into the woods. John C. Parker, Jr. wrote of what followed: “They entered the house where Ailesy was confined and plundered the valuables. They scattered the feathers of the bed to the four winds, and gave her only enough time to grab the new born infant and a satchel of baby clothes before they torched the house and burned it to the ground.”³³³ No records have surfaced to prove the Turners wanted Gray dead because of the killing of their brother. But it seems likely.³³⁴

At 2:00 in the morning on November 25, they arrived at the home of Captain Robert Dugan and his brother James. The Dugans had helped Colonel Glenn murder the Turners’ brother. The mother of Robert and James heard the Tories surrounding the house, so she alerted her sons who were asleep upstairs. Ned Turner knocked and demanded entrance. Robert went out through a window and jumped from the roof, breaking his leg. James hid inside the chimney. The Turners easily apprehended the Dugans and left behind some of their compatriots to hold them as prisoners. Ned, Dick, and others in the party resumed their ride through the darkness in order to locate two other men, John Ford and Jacob Anderson, who had helped to kill their brother. The Turners found and eliminated both of them. They rode on to the farms of Colonel Glenn and William Wilson, but neither man was at home. At that point, they returned to the Gray house and killed Robert and James. In *The Annals of Newberry*, O’Neill and Chapman provided gruesome details about how the Turner party mutilated the bodies of the Dugan brothers. They chopped off a hand and a head. Next, Turner and his men rode into Newberry County. Later, on November 25 or the following day, they found Daniel Goggan (also spelled Goggans and Goggins) at his home. The Tories shot and killed him as he ran from the house. Then they set the house ablaze. Another Patriot family had suffered the wrath of the Bloody Scout.³³⁵

The day after Ned Turner left the main body of the Bloody Scout, November 24, Cunningham suffered a severe setback as he attempted to kill John Boyce. Boyce lived on Duncan Creek in southern Union County, near Whitmire. The Patriot had returned home from militia duty and was sitting down for a meal. He heard the hooves of dozens of horses and looked out to see Cunningham. Being unable to escape any other way, he ran out his front door, disturbed the animals by waving his hat at them, and ran toward the nearby woods. Cunningham galloped after Boyce and severed three of his fingers, but Boyce escaped into thick trees which Cunningham could not enter.

After Boyce had staunched the flow of blood from his hand, he made his way to the home of Captain Christopher Casey, his commander in the Spartan Regiment. Casey promptly recruited neighbors who formed a posse. Cunningham’s men apparently had scattered because Casey apprehended five of the Tories. They hanged the men at a prominent location, the intersection of the Ninety Six and Charlestown roads.³³⁶ One might wonder if the attempt on Boyce’s life would have turned out differently if Cunningham had not

333. Moss, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots*, 381; O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 213-214; Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 305.

334. Payroll records did not prove that the brothers participated in the Bloody Scout. See Addendum B for more information about Ned and Dick Turner.

335. O’Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 614. It can be assumed the Turner party rejoined the rest of the Littler River Regiment on November 26.

336. O’Kelley, NBBS, 3:400-401; Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of “Upper” South Carolina*, 351-352.

allowed Ned Turner and other members of the force to go on their separate mission.³³⁷ Pickens’s militia and other Patriot units were now in hot pursuit, and Cunningham was many miles from the safety of Charleson. The time had come to return quickly but cautiously to British-held territory.

As reported above, Colonel Leroy Hammond wrote to Nathanael Greene on December 2 and described the Cloud’s Creek Massacre and its “Mellancholy circumstances.” Hammond also reported that mills, houses, and stores of grain had been destroyed. Hammond informed Greene that his own troops lacked the ammunition needed to respond to the intruders, who “went off with impunity.” Colonel Hammond did not mention Hayes Station, so he must not have known about it or the many other horrors which followed Cloud’s Creek. Cloud’s Creek was only the first of many “Mellancholy circumstances.”

337. Cunningham might have gone into Chester County later that day and killed John Knox at his home.

Final Stages and Assessments of the Bloody Scout

A letter from Georgia Governor Nathan Brownson to Major General Nathanael Greene on December 1 exemplified the panic which the Bloody Scout sparked in Georgia and South Carolina. Brownson said his citizens and men-in-arms desperately needed a load of supplies. He told Greene of his concern that those attempting to resupply him “may have come across him [Cunningham] which would distress us immensely.”³³⁸

Colonel Hezekiah Williams and his militia spent less than two weeks in his home area of Stevens Creek in Edgefield County. No sources have surfaced which might show that General Andrew Pickens’s men ever encountered Williams’s party, nor exactly what Williams did while he was in Edgefield County. The simplest explanation is that he and his men made their final visits to their homes. If the houses and farms were not already occupied by Patriots, the former owners might have tried to retrieve some valuables. Their sheer numbers, possibly more than a hundred men on horseback, would have frightened away all but the strongest of opponents.

Williams’s brief stay in the home region of his regiment ended with a return to the expedition’s preset rendezvous point, the dense Edisto swamps near Orangeburg. He arrived there in late November and already knew that General Pickens was trying to put a stop to the Bloody Scout. As for Cunningham, he and Ned Turner rendezvoused after Coggan’s death.³³⁹ On two separate occasions at unknown locations, two of Pickens’s top officers, Samuel Hammond and William Butler, caught up with some of Cunningham’s force and skirmished with them. But neither Hammond nor Butler could slow down Cunningham. The Whigs were outnumbered and probably low on ammunition. Everyone on the killing spree escaped and continued to Orangeburg County.³⁴⁰ Along the way, they had more opportunities to burn houses, farms, and mills, and to commit more murders. No such atrocities have been substantiated, however.

Quite unlike William Cunningham, Nathanael Greene aimed to restore peace and harmony to the Backcountry residents. His letters to Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter revealed his desire to avoid punishing the Tories and his determination to bring back peace. On November 28, he wrote to Sumter and expressed his hopes for a reconciliation between the Patriots and Tories.

Don’t spare any pains to take off the Tories from the british interest for tho we have great reason to hate them, and vengeance would dictate one universal slaughter, yet when we consider how many of our good people must fall a sacrifice in doing it we shall find it will be more for our interest to forgive than to persecute. This was always my opinion and if the war continues in this Country, unless we can detach those people from the british interest, we shall

338. Nathan Brownson to Greene, December 1, 1781, PNG, 9:644.

339. Unknown location but probably Laurens or Newberry counties.

340. O’Neill, “Random Recollections,” 44; Leroy Hammond to Greene, Dec. 2, 1781, PNG, 9:653n5.

*feel more inconvenience from them than from all the british army. Indeed, we do now. Besides the benefit which will result from a principle of policy I think the measure more consistent with the principles and feelings of Human nature, and the practice of civilization.*³⁴¹

Sumter's replies to Greene yielded insights into Sumter's efforts to abide by his superior's wishes. On November 27, Sumter informed Greene he was attempting to "enduce the Tories to with draw from the British." But his efforts met with limited success. Several hundred Tories had entered Orangeburg, sworn they no longer had allegiance to the Crown, and pledged to serve in Patriot units. Sumter reported his disappointment that about 150 had changed their minds and deserted. It seems likely that some of those men who returned to the Tory cause joined the Bloody Scout while Williams and Cunningham were hiding in the swamps.³⁴²

Crawford's Raid

The streams and swamps which feed the North Fork of the Edisto River were a sensible location for Williams and Cunningham to gather before they rode into the Ninety Six District. No sources have provided a more exact location for their meeting in early November. But all sources agree that their rendezvous point for the return trip was the junction of Bull Creek and the North Fork of the Edisto. The swamp lay some ten to fifteen miles upstream from Orangeburg and near the present town of North, South Carolina. With its immense bald cypress, water tupelo, and willows, the patches of high ground offered excellent hiding places. Williams was concerned about the danger they would face when Pickens arrived in the area, so before Cunningham got there, Williams sent Captain John Crawford on a foray to lure away some of Pickens's personnel. Williams probably also expected Crawford to take opportunities to avenge old grievances, because that is what Crawford did. He employed the same tactics as Cunningham, by setting a direct course for his destinations, carrying out his intentions, and seldom resting.³⁴³

With an unknown number of men, Crawford departed around December 2 and rode swiftly over familiar terrain. His re-entry into the Ninety Six District took him first into Edgefield County, where, probably on December 4, he located another enemy of the Tories, George Foreman. Crawford killed Foreman and his two sons near the Pinewood House and Tavern. More riding took them into Greenwood County and Whitehall, the home of Brigadier General Andrew Williamson. The general took parole after the fall of Charleston and had lived in the city since its fall. In Williamson's absence, Pickens used Whitehall as a fort. Pickens had left only a small force at Whitehall, so when Crawford attacked and claimed it on December 5, neither side suffered any casualties. Crawford set it ablaze and continued to the Long Cane community in Abbeville County.³⁴⁴

As his foray continued, Crawford allied himself with Cherokee warriors. Two days after his assault on Whitehall, on December 7, Crawford arrived at the blockhouse of Andrew Pickens. His motives appear to have been either to punish the Patriot general or to distract him. The building was on McCord Creek, near present-day Abbeville. By chance, Crawford spotted a wagon train, which was led by Patriot Captain Moses Liddell. Crawford ambushed Liddell. He then burned the wagons and captured the drivers, among

341. Greene to Sumter, November 28, 1781, *PNG*, 9:634.

342. Sumter to Greene, November 27, 1781, *PNG*, 9:633.

343. Hammond to Greene, *PNG*, 9:653, n5; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:404.

344. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:37; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:405.

whom was Andrew Pickens's brother John. Crawford handed over some of his prisoners, including John Pickens, to the Native men. Oftentimes, the Cherokee incorporated their captives into their tribe. But if they desired revenge, they typically tortured the prisoners and killed them, sometimes with fire. The Cherokee who remained in South Carolina had many reasons to take revenge on the Patriots, in particular the great suffering of the Second Cherokee War. John Pickens most certainly suffered such a fate.³⁴⁵ No records have surfaced to indicate how many Patriots died or were injured as a result of Crawford's attack, but several members of the wagon train escaped and reported what happened. Andrew Pickens later termed the event a "General Massacre." McCord Creek was the third Bloody Scout massacre. In contrast to Cloud's Creek and Hayes Station, Cunningham did not have command of it or take part in it.³⁴⁶

On December 13, six days after McCord Creek, a skirmish occurred near the Duncan Creek Meeting House in northern Laurens County. Records have provided only sketchy details. Crawford probably instigated the action. He had sufficient time to ride to Duncan Creek before returning to the Edisto swamps. Also, no other Tory militia were reported to be active in the Ninety Six District. If this theory is correct, then Crawford rode east from Abbeville County to Laurens County with at least one more revenge target in mind. Whatever happened at Duncan Creek Meeting House resulted in no casualties. Crawford then returned to the swamps near Orangeburg.³⁴⁷

The Bloody Scout's Last Events

Not long after he sent out Captain John Crawford, Colonel Williams found an opportunity to exit the Bull Creek Swamp. On December 12, Greene wrote to Sumter: "I am sorry Mr. William [Hezekiah Williams] got off, but I think he has been so hunted, that he will not hazard another maneuver in your Neighborhood."³⁴⁸ Captain Crawford arrived back at Bull Creek Swamp and assembled with Cunningham before the morning of December 20. Crawford and his men were needed at dawn that day because Brigadier General Andrew Pickens had finally located the band of well over one hundred Tories. Pickens and his troops crossed to the north bank of the North Fork and launched their ambush at daybreak. The gunfire at the first encampment alerted all the other Tories of the impending danger, allowing them to mount their horses and escape. At least four pension applicants told of the event and called it the Battle of the Tory Camps, Bull Swamp, Bull Creek, or Edisto River. Pension applicant Thomas Farrow reported that Pickens's men found the camps ten miles from Orangeburg, killed "about twenty" Tories at the first camp, and described the action as "a breaking stroke to the Tories." Veteran John Farrow said he went to Orangeburg under the command of Colonel Levy Casey (who replaced Colonel Joseph Hayes after the Hayes Station massacre). Farrow "helped to Defeat a great body of Tories in the Edisto Swamps we killed a good many of the Tories and destroyed their camps."³⁴⁹

Applicant Captain James Dillard received a wound "in a scrimmage with the Tories on Edisto River." Private William Logan provided information of a more personal nature concerning himself and William Cunningham. Logan reported "the Tory Cunningham and party...had murdered seventeen Americans in

345. Andrew, General Andrew Pickens, 155-158; Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:37.

346. Thomas Sumter to Greene, *PNG*, 9:633, 653n5; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:405.

347. Moss, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots*, 138, 300, 464.

348. Greene to Sumter, Dec. 12, 1781, *PNG*, 10:47.

349. Thomas Farrow, pension application S17946, Sept. 26, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s17946.pdf> (accessed Jan. 23, 2025); John Farrow, pension applicant S21193, Oct. 16, 1832, <https://revwarapps.org/s21193.pdf> (accessed Jan. 23, 2025).

my neighborhood or within about eighteen miles from me.” Logan added that the Tories “all escaped by swimming the River, Cunningham left his sword and fled immediately to Charleston to the British, where he staid till the close of the war.”³⁵⁰ Logan’s application is a vital clue concerning when and how Cunningham lost his sword.

The Battle of the Tory Camps demonstrated Cunningham’s prowess as a leader. He was astute to spread out his men. The battle brought about the deaths of more Bloody Scout participants than any other event during the six-week expedition. There seems little doubt it was the occasion on which Cunningham lost his sword. Logan’s statement that Cunningham and Ringtail crossed the Edisto means he began his escape by going toward Barnwell County and the site of one more massacre.

As noted, some of the Tories who went to Orangeburg in late 1781 and swore allegiance to the American cause experienced a change of heart. Sumter updated Greene in a December 22 letter. He reported twenty Tories joined Cunningham when the Bloody Scout went through “this Neighborhood.” Thus, it seems Cunningham welcomed newcomers before the Battle of the Tory Camps and the re-entry into Charleston.³⁵¹

The December 20 swamp fray and its twenty casualties were probably not the final engagement of the Bloody Scout. Tories routed Patriots two mornings later in nearby Barnwell County at Slaughter Field. A detachment of Colonel William Harden’s regiment under the command of Captain Benjamin Odom was encamped about five miles south of the South Fork of the Edisto River near Windy Hill Creek. Odom and nineteen other men were beset at sunrise. Sixteen died, and the other four, including Odom and his brother, escaped. Researchers have not determined who carried out the attack near Windy Hill Creek.³⁵² It was unlike the nature of the Bloody Scout revenge mission to assault unknown Patriot men. But knowing their mission was almost completed, they might have taken advantage of an unforeseen opportunity to take revenge on Whigs.

Writers have deemed the action a “slaughter” because no Loyalists were injured or killed and because all but four of the twenty Whigs died.³⁵³ Distance and time would have allowed Cunningham and members of the Bloody Scout to cross to the south bank of the Edisto’s North Fork and to arrive at and ford the South Fork. They, as well as Odom, might have been initially attracted by the fresh, clean water of the Healing Springs, which feed Windy Hill Creek about a mile away from the site of the Patriot encampment.³⁵⁴ Cunningham might have spotted Captain Odom and his men and lay in wait until sunrise. Traveling into Barnwell County meant moving away from Charleston, but this might have been the direction Cunningham and his men were forced to go as they escaped Pickens. One other scenario would make Slaughter Field a component of the Bloody Scout. The Tories might have been members of Colonel Hezekiah Williams’s regiment who had become separated from Williams and were taking an alternate route to Charleston. A third option is that an independent company of Tories found a chance for revenge near Windy Hill Creek, meaning Slaughter Field was not part of the Bloody Scout.

350. William Logan, pension application S32385, Oct. 15, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s323854.pdf> (accessed Jan. 23, 2025); James Dillard, pension application S6797, July 11, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s6797.pdf> (accessed Jan. 23, 2025).

351. Sumter to Greene, Dec. 22, 1781, *PNG*, 10:90.

352. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:37.

353. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 10:9-10; O’Kelley, *NBBS*, 3:409; Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 23. Several legends are told of what happened to the bodies of the slain Patriots, and visitors have reported finding a Revolutionary-era earthworks where the ambush took place.

354. The spring still attracts many visitors today who fill up containers of the clean water for later consumption.

Though few details are known about Slaughter Field, its numbers warrant the label “massacre,” meaning it was the fourth and final event of mass carnage during the Bloody Scout. Slaughter Field gave Cunningham and his revenge-minded comrades a final opening to carry out justice in the only way they thought possible.

The Bloody Scout Assessed

The Bloody Scout warrants several forms of analysis, starting with the numerical. Cunningham dated his post-mission records December 19, but he could not have been in the city by then. He probably re-appeared in Charleston between December 24 and 27. If he was not at Slaughter Field on December 22, then he might have arrived as early as December 23. The December 19 payroll established which raiders made it back alive. About twenty outliers joined the trek near its conclusion, but Cunningham had no reason to name them or compensate them. The total number of Little River Regiment members who started with Cunningham remains unknown, though it was well over one hundred. At least twenty-eight Bloody Scout participants lost their lives. This includes Matthew Love, who was lynched in December 1784.

John C. Parker, Jr. determined that the entire circuit covered 480 miles, all on horseback, and sometimes at a full gallop. The journey pressed men and beasts to their physical limits. Cunningham and company slew Patriots in eight counties: Orangeburg, Saluda, Laurens, Spartanburg, Newberry, Union, Chester, and finally Barnwell. Parker’s research showed at least 79 victims of the Bloody Scout.³⁵⁵ However, sources do not always agree on the number of participants who lost their lives, and definitions of “murder” vary. This author tallies approximately 59 murder victims, but the figure excludes actions involving armed men killing armed men. Therefore, the number of men murdered does not include Moore’s Defeat, the deaths of Captain Thomas Radcliff and those serving under him, and Slaughter Field. In total, the raiders killed about ninety-one Patriots. Widows and their children undoubtedly turned to relatives and neighbors for shelter and food. But the oncoming winter weather, lack of adequate clothing and food, and other privations unquestionably led to the deaths of women and children. See Appendix D for estimated casualties.

Other unarmed Patriots might have been slain. Given the distances between farms, such deaths might not have been reported. The invaders destroyed at least two mills and Wofford’s Iron Works, plus at least twelve houses. Countless cows, horses, sheep, goats, chickens, pigs, and other animals died while trapped in blazing farm structures. If the raiders needed fresh horses or fresh meat, they no doubt seized what they needed. Records proved the many possessions the Bloody Scout members took from the bodies and horses of the Williams brothers who died at Hayes Station. The number of corpses at Hayes Station indicates the attackers substantially refitted themselves before they left the bloody ground. And it was certainly not the only occasion valuable items were taken off a lifeless body or a horse with no owner. One can assume that the Tories plundered small items of value which they could take back to Charleston. Besides the property and lost lives, it appears more than a thousand Backcountry residents lost loved ones, neighbors, and friends. Even today, descendants of the victims speak of the Bloody Scout with horror.³⁵⁶

355. Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 482.

356. Conversation in 2023 with Heather Hawkins, staff member of the South Carolina 250th Commission. In her travels through the Upstate of South Carolina since 2021, more than one person has spoken to her of their revulsion over the violence carried out by William Cunningham almost 250 years earlier.

Beyond the numerical, the Bloody Scout warrants other forms of assessment. Cunningham and his men were merciless but not indiscriminate. He designed the raid to punish offenders who could not otherwise be brought to justice. Cunningham targeted his victims for specific reasons, although some of those motives have been lost to history. Cunningham and his saber-wielding men were not impulsive nor capricious during their two massacres of unarmed Patriots. Present-day observers might consider death by a sharp blade to be more cringeworthy than death by bullet. But swords and sabers were frequently employed by warriors on horseback and could kill quickly. As noted, several historians reported thoughtful conversations preceded decisions about who would be slain, the rationale, and who should receive the opportunity to swing the blade. The Bloody Scout avengers did not murder women or children, a crime which was out of bounds in colonial America. In summary, the operation was furious, extravagant, and feverish in pace and emotions. It was unconscionable but not irrational.

Cunningham appears to have achieved most of his goals. He sent cattle to Charleston and probably took the lives of most of the men he intended to kill. He knew he had limited time, given that his journey would eventually attract mounting opposition. Besides his excellent planning, he was better armed and rode faster horses than his opponents. As stated previously, Cunningham was an opportunistic leader. When he found more than one of his enemies in one location, multiple killings ensued.

The Bloody Scout offers a wealth of insights into South Carolina's war-within-a-war. In fact, it was the climactic and ultimate example of South Carolina's civil war. With hundreds of family members, neighbors, and friends ensconced in Charleston, bitter Tories took a final opportunity to unite under British authority and use British horses, weapons, gear, and food to carry out their understanding of justice after seven years of persecution. The Revolutionary War began to wind down after Yorktown. Though officials as knowledgeable as Washington and Greene feared there would be a new invasion, no new British army entered Charleston Harbor and renewed the fight to re-establish British rule. Indeed, thousands of refugees left Charleston a year later. Upcoming narratives will establish that violence between South Carolina's Tories and Whigs did not come to a complete stop with the Bloody Scout. But no actions which followed the late-1781 expedition came close to matching the fury and widespread, long-lived impact of the Bloody Scout.

At the war's start, loyalty to the Crown was the primary, if not only, motivation for the men of the Bloody Scout. But when they set out seven years later on the dangerous venture, the raiders were not motivated by loyalty to their king. Loyalism *per se* did not energize them or give them courage. The men did not know where they would live when the war ended. And they were surely enraged that the British government had not done more to help Loyalists. Their energy sprang from their indignation and wrath over how they had been treated for seven years. They were still soldiers and were paid to follow the orders of their superiors and engage in combat when necessary. But in another sense, they were not soldiering at all. They were no longer serving their king or defending their homeland. The Bloody Scout was not the Revolutionary War. It was an extravagant, extended exercise in unrestrained retribution. Those three hundred or so men under Hezekiah Williams and William Cunningham bade farewell to their families and friends and spurred on their steeds. They had suffered much. The Bloody Scout allowed them to make many others suffer.

Chapter 8 contended that Lieutenant Colonel Nisbet Balfour warranted some blame for the Bloody Scout. He undoubtedly expected the carnage. Colonel Hezekiah Williams was also culpable. He was

William Cunningham's superior and as they parted ways at The Ridge, he allowed Cunningham to travel far from his own position without means of communication. Williams was well aware of the rage which drove Cunningham and Cunningham's men and was probably familiar with the plans which Cunningham had made for the foray. Williams could also anticipate the carnage that Captain John Crawford waged when he sent Crawford back into the Ninety Six District.

The six weeks of the Bloody Scout do not provide enough information to fully evaluate the life of William Cunningham. But the mission provides insights into his personality, strengths, and weaknesses. The excursion, along with earlier and future military ventures, proved his effectiveness as a leader. One of the many definitions of leadership is the quality of having followers. Thus defined, William Cunningham was an excellent and charismatic leader. Men who shared his vision of retribution followed him for six weeks and nearly 500 miles. His zeal and courage inspired them, even though they were also following their superior's commands. The avengers followed his example and his orders to kill, pillage, and burn. Cunningham galvanized them.

His actions during the Bloody Scout and later activities in East Florida, yet to be explored, lead to the conclusion that Cunningham had no conscience or moral compass. The best that can be said about him is that he showed devotion and faithfulness to his family and to Loyalists. He demonstrated his dedication to them with horrific, unconscionable acts of retribution carried out against people who had harmed his family and friends. The code "an eye for an eye" is still employed in many communities and nations to set limits on acts of revenge. But Cunningham showed no restraint. He was judge, jury, and executioner. His uncontrolled rage robbed women and children of their husbands and fathers and left them homeless.

If William Cunningham had any trace of compassion, it can be seen in his acts of retribution. He did not kill indiscriminately. Instead, he found and punished certain people who had harmed him, his family, and his Loyalist comrades. Given the dearth of pastors and churches in the Backcountry, he probably never heard preached or taught the self-control promoted through the centuries by the Christian Church. As twenty-first century people evaluate him, they must remember the violence of his culture and the nature of warfare. All of this set the stage for the Bloody Scout. Cunningham was far from the only Revolutionary War participant who practiced reprisal.

Most of the Bloody Scout's raiders returned safely to Charleston. South Carolinians brought down eighteenth-century justice on a few of them. Examples include those who were hanged after the failed attempt to slay John Boyce and the murder of Matthew Love in 1784. Considering its purpose and despite the loss of personnel, the Bloody Scout was a success.

In and Out of Charleston, 1782

An Outlandish Funeral

The Bloody Scout brought about the deaths of dozens of men and countless expressions of mourning. However, no funeral had the fanfare of the interment made necessary by the Bloody Scout's last casualty. The decedent was not a person, but Cunningham's horse, Ringtail. Cunningham's relative Patrick Cunningham had given the thoroughbred to William in late 1779 or early 1780. The strenuous activities of the Bloody Scout, carrying rider, weapons, gear, and food, often at breakneck speed, caused Ringtail's death by exhaustion three weeks after they returned.

The nineteenth-century feud between Ann Pamela Cuninghame and William Gilmore Simms provided the only historical proof of the funeral. Even if the two historians exaggerated the honorifics which William Cunningham provided for Ringtail, it was undoubtedly a bizarre occasion. The burial included full military honors and the tolling of church bells. Ann Pamela Cuninghame wrote that William "wept like a child over his poor favorite and friend."³⁵⁷

Simms did not dispute the details of the event narrated by his opponent Ann Pamela Cuninghame; instead, he offered a contrasting interpretation. Ann Pamela wrote that the people of her time portrayed William as a "heartless, unfeeling monster" and "cold blooded demon." She asked how those "words of approbation accurately describe someone who felt such sorrow, a sorrow shared by others in the City of Charleston who rang bells and fired volleys of tribute?" Simms considered the funerary rites to be a sign of Cunningham's inhumanity.

British and American Dilemmas

When Major General Alexander Leslie took command of all British soldiers and Loyalist militia in the South, he faced a strategic predicament. Despite Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, Leslie had orders to hold Savannah and Charleston. He had to feed between 16,000 and 18,000 people. Ships bearing food from Britain and the Caribbean often encountered storms and resistance from South Carolina's small navy. What His Majesty's ships delivered was never enough. To make matters worse, Leslie lacked the personnel to reclaim valuable farmland outside of Charleston for more than a few days.³⁵⁸ Leslie's decisions largely determined Cunningham's travels and actions that year. As a result, not long after Ringtail's death, Major Cunningham began making new forays out of Charleston. William Gilmore Simms reported that

357. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 641, 646; Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 518.

358. Scarlett, *Victory Day*, 215.

Cunningham replaced Ringtail with a remarkable thoroughbred named Silver Heels which he stole from the stables of the wealthy Arthur Middleton. This report is false, as seen in Appendix C.³⁵⁹

Until November 22, 1781, the British had an outpost at Wappetaw Meeting House at the head of navigation on the Wando River. With that post abandoned, His Majesty's forces still held an arc around Charleston. A post at Stono Ferry protected the city from the south and gave the British access to the fruitful land of Johns Island. They had another post at Dorchester, the head of navigation on the Ashley River. Leslie's troops also held Fair Lawn Barony at present-day Moncks Corner. These positions served as launching pads for foraging parties which rode on horseback and pulled wagons. Cunningham led men on these dangerous expeditions.³⁶⁰

Despite these many challenges, Major General Leslie's job paled compared to the complexities faced by his counterpart, Major General Nathanael Greene, who had to keep the British in Charleston and prevent them from expanding their footprint. If supplied with more personnel, ammunition, and arms, he might have besieged the city; but he never had the resources. Instead, he had to contain the British and, if possible, tighten the noose. Greene's frequent requests for ammunition, clothing, salt, food, and other necessities continued throughout 1782, with little help from other states or the Continental Congress. War had left the countryside short of labor to plant and tend the crops. Ongoing conflict made farming dangerous, and Greene's men frequently lacked adequate nourishment, clothes, and shoes.³⁶¹

H. Allen Skinner asserted that Greene had to establish two "centers of gravity." One was to encompass the British army despite his dearth of men and supplies. The number of militia fighters was not sufficient for other nations to verify American sovereignty. The other center of gravity, according to Skinner, was the need to maintain "support from the population, information, supplies, and militia reinforcements." Skinner added, "Loss of one or both would spell failure to Greene's campaign."³⁶²

As noted, Greene sought to reduce the tensions between the Patriots and Tories. Even before the British abandoned Ninety Six, Greene urged Pickens to help Tory families remain in the Backcountry. Pickens had the advantage of firsthand knowledge of the conflicts in the Backcountry, and he felt powerless to restore peace. In his July 19, 1781, letter, Pickens reported, "It is impossible for us and them to Inhabit one Contry, and Live together in peace, at one time." Leslie had urged Loyalists to leave their homes for Charleston, and Pickens contended the British policy was the only workable course. Pickens also worried that Loyalists who continued to live in the Backcountry might provide intelligence to the British.³⁶³

Nathanael Greene died not long after the war ended. Alexander Hamilton offered a eulogy for Greene on July 4, 1789. "To supply a necessitous army by coercion and yet maintain the confidence and good will of the coerced, this was among the first and not the least of the difficulties to be surmounted. But delicate and difficult as was the task it was nevertheless accomplished."³⁶⁴

In 1782, Greene knew he had to make clear to British leaders and their representatives in Paris that neither South Carolina nor Charleston was theirs to keep. He was confronted with the internationally

359. Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 426.

360. Charles B. Baxley, "Gen. Nathanael Greene's Operations November 1781-February 1782," *SCAR*, 12:1.1, Jan. 11, 2015, <https://southern-campaigns.org/gen-nathanael-greenes-operations-november-1781-february-1782/> (accessed July 1, 2024).

361. Buchanan, *Road to Charleston*, 52-55, 59-60

362. H. Allen Skinner, "Patriots and Politics."

363. Pickens to Greene, July 19, 1781, *PNG*, 9:48-49; Chronology, *PNG*, 9:xliv.

364. "Eulogy on Nathanael Greene [4 July 1789]," <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-05-02-0141#ARHN-01-05-02-0141-fn-0001> (accessed July 1, 2024).

embraced doctrine *uti possidetis*, “as you possess, so shall you possess,” a principle that could have led to the British retaining control of South Carolina and Georgia in the peace treaty. Greene eventually received the resources he needed to try to expel the British from the smaller port of Savannah. When Brigadier General Anthony Wayne arrived at Greene’s camp on January 4, 1782, Greene tasked Wayne to take Savannah. The British made a determined defense of Savannah, and Native Americans assisted the British. Colonel Thomas “Burnfoot” Brown also helped to defend the city. Wayne maintained constant pressure despite the obstacles of limited resources and personnel, and the British evacuated the city on July 12. William Cunningham continued to operate out of Charleston and did not participate in the action in and around Savannah.³⁶⁵

Forcing the British out of Charleston proved to be equally difficult. Nathanael Greene corresponded with George Washington on April 13, 1782: “Our force is much inferior to the Enemy’s and they are daily threatening us with an attack.” By “attack,” Greene meant Leslie’s raids designed to claim food, livestock, and timber. Often, the Patriots could not respond to their rapid movements. On other occasions, Continentals and militia arrived and hindered the British foraging. Leslie’s men always returned to the city, never holding land for more than a few days. Greene also told Washington, “No part of Saxony last War I believe ever felt the ravaging hand of War with greater severity than it has been felt here.”³⁶⁶

Greene determined one way to convince the negotiators in Paris that Georgia and South Carolina belonged in the hands of the new nation. He enabled the two state governments to reorganize themselves. Greene convinced Georgia’s Governor John Martin to return from Philadelphia. Martin met with the Georgia legislature in Augusta on August 17, 1781. More than a year had passed since the Georgia Assembly had convened. Next, the General Assembly and Governor of South Carolina, John Rutledge, reconvened on January 17, 1782. They could have met in Camden, where Rutledge was living. But Greene deemed it important for Rutledge to meet with a newly elected legislature in proximity to Charleston. Greene provided them with a haven in Jacksonboro,³⁶⁷ a village located only thirty miles south of the city. The Continental encampment at nearby Pon Pon protected the legislators. The delegates elected John Mathews to succeed Rutledge.³⁶⁸

News about the Bloody Scout had spread throughout the state by late December, and Cunningham’s return to the Low Country sparked enormous anxiety. On January 24, before he was succeeded by Mathews, Governor Rutledge sent a letter to General Greene from Jacksonboro. Rutledge said certain lawmakers heard Cunningham was preparing to attack the assembly. He informed Greene that Cunningham was “a daring, desperate Fellow, well acquainted with the Woods and Bye-paths.” However, Leslie never sent Cunningham or any other unit to Jacksonboro. The rumors of an attack by Cunningham provided early proof of the breadth and power of Bloody Bill’s reputation.³⁶⁹

Unreliable accounts of Cunningham’s travels and raiding appeared in print for at least a hundred years after the war. In 1898, Alexander Samuel Salley, Jr., released a history of Orangeburg County. Salley provided several problematic stories about Cunningham. He conveyed to his readers several narratives

365. Hugh T. Harrington, “Anthony Wayne’s 1782 Savannah Campaign,” *JAR*, Oct. 9, 2014 (accessed July 1, 2024).

366. Greene to Washington, April 13, 1782, *PNG*, 9:54.

367. Various spelled through the years as Jacksonboro and Jacksonborough.

368. Chronology, *PNG*, 10:xlili; Gregory D. Massey, “Jacksonborough Assembly,” in *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, published June 8, 2016, last modified Aug. 25, 2022, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/jacksonborough-assembly> (accessed November 20, 2024).

369. Governor John Rutledge to Greene, *PNG*, 10:259, 259n1.

about Bloody Bill, which were passed along to him by W. W. Culler of Orangeburg County. Culler's grandmother told her grandson that Bloody Bill Cunningham went to her house on more than one occasion. Cunningham demanded she run down, kill, and cook chickens for him. Culler's grandmother frequently heard Cunningham was in her community. She also told of an occasion when Captain Jacob Rumph was hosting two sick members of his company. Rumph learned Cunningham was approaching his house. He urged his ill friends to leave the house without delay. One guest replied he was too sick to run. He stayed in the house and was discovered by Cunningham, who dragged him outside and "cut off his head with an axe." Mrs. Culler's accounts originated in hearsay and bore marks of exaggeration. In 1780, 1781, and 1782, Cunningham did not linger in the Orangeburg area or anywhere else in South Carolina. He carried out military missions and did not roam the countryside.³⁷⁰

The General Assembly Convenes

While still in exile, Governor John Rutledge issued a proclamation to Loyalists on September 27, 1781. He encouraged them to take an oath of allegiance and serve in the American militia. In return, they were to receive pardons. The Bloody Scout had not yet begun; but after its conclusion, neither Rutledge nor his successors would have considered making such an offer to the Tories who carried out the Bloody Scout.³⁷¹

Thanks to General Greene's efforts, the assembly convened in January 1782 and hotly debated how to treat Tories. On February 26, they adopted the Confiscation Act. Opponents contended (correctly) that the law was inspired by retribution and greed. The Act allowed the state to claim thousands of acres and hundreds of houses, other buildings, livestock, and supplies belonging to 237 people. It also enabled Commissioners of Forfeited Estates to auction land and personal property. William Cunningham was assigned to Class V, which included individuals who held British government commissions. The Confiscation Act further cemented his status as a man without home or possessions except what he carried on his person. After becoming a Tory in late 1776, William could not live openly in the Ninety Six District. The brothers Robert and Patrick Cunningham were banished from the state as "inveterate enemies of American independence."³⁷² In late 1782, Robert and Patrick sailed to East Florida. Robert left East Florida the following October and moved to the Bahamas. After spending a year in East Florida, Patrick successfully petitioned to be allowed to return and suffer amercement of 12 percent assessed on one's holdings. Patrick returned to his land on the Saluda River and sold assets to fulfill the requirements of the amercement. Hundreds of other Loyalists also rebuilt their farms, businesses, and relationships.³⁷³

370. Alexander Samuel Salley, Jr., *The History of Orangeburg County, South Carolina: From Its First Settlement Until the Revolutionary War* (Orangeburg, SC: R. L. Berry, Inc., 1898), 485-486.

371. Victoria Proctor, "The American Revolution: South Carolina Loyalists," <https://www.sciway3.net/proctor/revwar/scloyalists.html> (accessed July 1, 2024); Charles B. Baxley, David Neilan, and C. Leon Harris, "Outfoxed – Marion's Forces Dispersed by a Genius: Wambaw Bridge and Tidyman's Plantation February 24-25, 1782," *SCAR* 12: 1.12, <https://southern-campaigns.org/marions-troubles-wambaw-creek-tidyman-plantation> (accessed July 1, 2024).

372. Massey, "Jacksonborough Assembly"; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 206.

373. Snipes, Rosemont Plantation, 10-11.

Cunningham Returns to Action

Though many of his riders on the Bloody Scout received wounds or were slain, nothing of the sort happened to Cunningham. Historian Alexander Salley wrote of Cunningham: “He seemed to bear a charmed life.”³⁷⁴ He returned to duty only days after his return from the Bloody Scout and kept his position as a major in charge of the Little River Regiment. He answered to British officers who regarded his regiment as Royalist dragoons (mounted militia.) His commanding officer, Colonel Thomas Fraser, led large foraging parties out of Charleston in late 1781. As early as January 12, 1782, Cunningham might have gone with Fraser on a foraging mission to John’s Island.³⁷⁵

In the fall of 1781, British commanders in London deployed Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Thompson to New York City. They sent Thompson to take command of the King’s American Dragoons. Thompson was a Massachusetts Loyalist who served as a spy for the British until he had to flee to England in 1776. While in England, the brilliant man served as Undersecretary of State in the American Department and took part in scientific and literary pursuits. In late 1781, Thompson boarded a ship for New York, but a storm forced it far off course. The ship’s captain found shelter in Charleston Harbor, and General Leslie took advantage of Thompson’s unplanned presence. In a temporary command capacity, with Colonel Fraser serving under him, Thompson implemented a regimen of discipline and training for Provincial and militia cavalrymen.³⁷⁶

Informants told Thompson that Francis Marion’s forces had moved to the vicinity of Wambaw Creek, north of Charleston. Marion’s militia had gone there to gather food for themselves and hinder the British from claiming it for residents, refugees, and soldiers in Charleston. In response, Thompson assembled a large contingent of at least seven hundred men, both infantry and cavalry. It was an impressive mix of British regulars, American Provincials, German Hessians, and militia. Thompson established a forward base on Daniel Island, close to peninsular Charleston, and carried out two attacks on Marion’s forces. Thompson’s first operation took him to Wambaw Creek. He expertly divided his force into three units, which took different routes. They arrived at Strawberry Ferry on February 19 and earned a significant victory over Marion’s men, who suffered many deaths and injuries. Thompson claimed 140 head of cattle, along with hogs, sheep, and goats. Marion was not present, though. He had been elected to the South Carolina General Assembly and was in Jacksonboro. Marion’s absence and squabbling between the officers he left behind, Peter Horry and Hezekiah Maham, led to the significant defeat at Strawberry Ferry. When he learned about the loss, Marion immediately left Jacksonboro, rode through the night, and re-assumed command the following morning.³⁷⁷

However, Thompson was not finished. He prevailed again six days later on February 25 at Tidyman’s or Tydiman’s Plantation. Though Thompson did not decimate Marion’s militia, he returned to Charleston with additional supplies, including Marion’s tent. The British forced Marion away from Charleston and

374. Salley, *History of Orangeburg County*, 482.

375. Saberton, “Revolutionary War in the South.”

376. Jim Piecuch, “Francis Marion Meets His Match: Benjamin Thompson Defeats the ‘Swamp Fox,’” *Journal of the American Revolution* (April 29, 2014), <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/04/francis-marion-meets-his-match-benjamin-thompson-defeats-the-swamp-fox/> (accessed March 7, 2025); Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 157; *Britannica*, “Sir Benjamin Thompson, count von Rumford,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sir-Benjamin-Thompson-Graf-von-Rumford>, accessed July 21, 2024. *After the war*, Thompson returned to England, became a noted physicist, founded the Royal Institution of Great Britain, and became Sir Benjamin Thompson, and later Count von Rumford of the Holy Roman Empire.

377. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 7:19; Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 64-65.

consequently gathered more food in the fertile land between the Cooper and Santee rivers. William Cunningham had helped to lead one of the few defeats Marion ever suffered.³⁷⁸

The British victories in February in Berkeley County undoubtedly involved some of the same British Regulars, Provincials, and Loyalist militia who had fought the previous August at Parker's Ferry. Francis Marion outsmarted the British on August 30 and was a clear victor. Presumably, many of the men who served under Thompson in February had lost comrades at Parker's Ferry. These King's Men were undoubtedly satisfied when they turned the tables on Marion at Strawberry Ferry and Tidyman's. Though Marion's men lost both actions, they may have gained extra motivation when they realized they were fighting the notorious Bloody Bill Cunningham who had murdered countless Patriots only a few weeks earlier.

Improved weather allowed Thompson to depart Charleston in March 1782 and sail for New York. Thompson had provided leadership for Leslie at a critical time. William Cunningham may not have ever served under a leader as capable and intelligent as Benjamin Thompson. Between forays, Cunningham filed a pay abstract on March 19 for his regiment of forty-two men. John Hood, William Helms, Richard Long, and William Parker continued to serve as his captains.³⁷⁹

Following Thompson's departure, Thomas Fraser took charge of more irruptions north of Charleston. In mid-March, his superiors sent him on a mission not to seize food but human beings. When the South Carolina General Assembly met in January and February, it authorized the capture of enslaved people who belonged to Loyalists. By March, Patriots had accumulated several hundred. British commanders objected vigorously to the new policy, so they tasked Fraser to reclaim enslaved people. Fraser's expedition included Cunningham's dragoons. They entered Georgetown County and went to two plantations near the Santee River, one of which belonged to Daniel Horry, the other of which belonged to the Motte family. At Horry's plantation, the Tories reclaimed 150 enslaved persons, seized provisions and household items, and captured two Patriot officers, Major Thomas Pinckney and Major Edmund M. Hyrne.

The Motte plantation was one of the homes of Pinckney's mother-in-law, Rebecca Brewton Motte. Once there, Fraser and Cunningham captured a third Patriot, Judge Henry Pendleton. Tories disdained the judge for the harsh sentences he had imposed on Loyalists in the Cheraw District. Pendleton was in Charleston when the city fell, and he was put on parole. But he broke his parole and rejoined the conflict. After the three were captured, Pinckney wrote to his friend Nathanael Greene, but the letter was lost. On March 31, Pinckney sent a second letter. His own capture, he correctly contended, was illegal because he was on parole. Pinckney sought Greene's intervention, and he also complained about the treatment the Motte family received.³⁸⁰ Cunningham played an interesting and even humorous role in Henry Pendleton's capture. Pendleton hid inside the Motte house, and Fraser's men could not locate him. Finally, on their fourth try, Cunningham found "poor Henry rolled up in a carpet."³⁸¹

British commanders in Charleston had constant need for provisions, so in May they sent forays into Orangeburg County. Loyalist militia attacked a train of wagons south of Orangeburg. The wagons were carrying weapons from Greene's headquarters to Charlotte. The Tories burned the wagons, killed one

378. "Tidyman's Plantation," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_tidymans_plantation.html (accessed July 1, 2024); Scarlett, *Victory Day*, 213.

379. Baxley et al, "Outfoxed," 6, 18; Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:271.

380. Pinckney to Greene, March 31, 1782, *PNG*, 10:566; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 157.

381. *PNG*, 10:567n. Cf. Piccuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 233. Piccuch referenced a newspaper account which reported that Cunningham discovered Pendleton "concealed between a feather bed and a mattress."

Patriot, and wounded another. No sources proved Cunningham took part in the assault or any other attacks in Orangeburg County, but Cunningham probably led one or more of the actions.³⁸²

May 1782 brought new challenges for both Alexander Leslie and Nathanael Greene. On May 5, General Sir Guy Carleton arrived in New York City to replace Sir Henry Clinton. Carleton sent a secret dispatch to Leslie, ordering his commander in the South to prepare to evacuate Savannah and Charleston.³⁸³ The next day, not having seen Carleton's order, Leslie sent 1,200 Regulars to Jamaica. Their departure left Leslie with 5,800 troops and militia to defend the city.³⁸⁴ For his part, Greene received news in mid-May that the British soundly defeated the French fleet between April 9 and 12 at the Battle of the Saintes. The French could not help Greene force the British from Savannah or Charleston.

Around May 16, Tories apprehended Colonel Hezekiah Maham, who was ill and at his home in Berkeley County. Maham penned a letter to Greene on May 20, saying he had permission from Marion to return home to recover. While there, "a party of Cunninghams Under the command of Lt. Joseph Robins, Rushed into my house... accompanied by Lt. Smith." The treatment given to him by the Tories surprised Maham. Because he had played leading roles in the war, Maham had expected to be "tortured in the most horrid manner." Instead, he received parole. This was another case of someone erroneously claiming to have seen Cunningham. His regiment did not have anyone named Robins or Smith. Bloody Bill's reputation led to blame, or in Maham's case, credit, which Bloody Bill did not warrant.³⁸⁵

Around May 24, Tories and Patriots engaged one another at Dean Swamp, a location southwest of Orangeburg in Aiken County and several miles west of the present-day town of Salley. Writers have named the skirmish Dean Swamp, Johns Town, and John Town. Accounts have provided a variety of scenarios. Loyalists were at Dean Swamp and were confined there or encamped in the vicinity and not held captive. Alternatively, Loyalists had encamped there with plans to free their compatriots from a nearby prison camp.

Patriots in The Ridge area of Edgefield County learned Loyalists were near Dean Swamp. In response, rebel captains Michael Watson and William Butler assembled militiamen who rode through the night into Orangeburg County. As the next day dawned, a Tory who Watson's party had captured overnight escaped and alerted the Tories. Watson and Butler lost the advantage of surprise but continued with the operation. Mortal wounds took Watson out of the battle, and Butler assumed command. Butler's men ran low on ammunition, and the Tories assumed a battle formation. Despite his disadvantages, Butler prevailed against his Tory opponents who suffered substantial casualties. Terry Lipscomb wrote in 1981, "As recently as the early part of the present century, at least thirty-seven graves are said to have been visible on the site."³⁸⁶

No primary sources have been found which prove that William Cunningham led the Loyalists at Dean Swamp. But if it began as a rescue mission, then it seems likely that Major General Alexander Leslie dispatched Major Cunningham to lead it. Being native South Carolinians, not Provincials or Regulars, made the Little River Regiment a likely choice for the expedition. An earlier chapter related Cunningham's reason for seeking revenge on William Butler and his family. At Cloud's Creek, he achieved his goal when he murdered William Butler's father and brother, James, Sr., and James, Jr. If Cunningham was at Dean Swamp in May, then Butler saw the engagement as an opportunity to avenge the deaths of his loved ones.

382. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 9:35; Salley, *History of Orangeburg County*, 485.

383. *Chronology, PNG*, 11:xli.

384. Scarlett, *Victory Day*, 223.

385. Maham to Greene, May 20, 1782, *PNG*, 11:225.

386. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 9:35.

However, William Butler failed to apprehend Cunningham at Dean Swamp. Later that year, at Lorick's Ferry, Butler received one more chance to avenge his family members' murders.³⁸⁷

Primary sources showed the possibility, though not proof, that Cunningham participated in skirmishes at Saltketcher Camp and at Dorchester on May 25 and May 28. His whereabouts cannot be established in May or June before June 28 when he submitted a pay abstract in Charleston. That day Cunningham reported Matthew Love, notorious for his behavior at Hayes Station and apparently wounded there, had rejoined the regiment and been a member during the previous ninety-two days. However, Love did not continue to ride with Cunningham after June 28. Love might have briefly left the state for the safety of East Florida. As related in chapter 9, Love should have never returned to South Carolina.³⁸⁸

The commanding officer of the Bloody Scout, Colonel Hezekiah Williams, made one more sojourn into the Backcountry in June and presumably went home to Stevens Creek for the last time. Little is known of Williams's movements, but he returned to Charleston later that summer, then went to East Florida and never returned.³⁸⁹

The General Assembly continued to punish Loyalists and compensate Patriots for their losses. As noted, it allowed Patriots to kidnap enslaved people who belonged to Loyalists. The human property was sold at auction and the proceeds were distributed to Patriots. The British continued to respond by kidnapping enslaved people from Patriots. After the British raid into Georgetown County in April, described above, the British carried out more kidnapping missions. The Charleston *Royal Gazette* of July 6 reported a successful raid by Cunningham's dragoons. Loyalists took enslaved people before Patriots could apprehend them. "In pursuance of an act of the Rebel Assembly of this province, the property of several persons... has been publicly sold as forfeited to the State," the *Gazette* account stated. "Upwards of fifty negroes belonging to Col. Elias Ball, of Wambaw, have been lately disposed of in this manner; and it being justly apprehended that the whole of the [number?] would undergo the same fate, a party of our dragoons was on Tuesday sent over to St. Thomas parish, to assist that gentleman in removing his negroes to a place of security. This has been effected, and the dragoons returned yesterday to the redoubt at Haddrell's Point."³⁹⁰

Major Cunningham went on one more sortie to claim enslaved people. Colonel John Laurens's July 5 letter to Nathanael Greene appeared to begin with a description of the same mission reported by the *Royal Gazette*. Laurens informed Greene that Henry Pendleton had arrived from Charleston "to day." The British cavalry "crossed into St. Thomas Parish on the same day that [William] Cunningham marched." Laurens reported the cavalry were assigned "to make a collection of negroes."³⁹¹

The summer of 1782 brought several significant events leading up to the British departure in December. On July 7, Major General Nathanael Greene moved closer to Charleston when he took Ashley Hall. He remained there until the evacuation. With the departure of the British from Savannah on July 11, the Georgia legislature finally met in their capital city. The assembly convened there on July 13.³⁹² Also

387. Abraham Elledge, pension application S10625, July 16, 1833, <https://revwarapps.org/s10625.pdf> (accessed December 31, 2024); Moss, *Roster of SC Patriots*, 971; Scarlett, *Victory Day*, 225; O'Kelley, *NBBS*, 5:71.

388. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:273-274. Matthew Love's murderous behavior at Hayes Station and his December 1784 lynching in Greenville are related in chapter nine.

389. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:271-272; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 158.

390. *Royal Gazette*, July 6, 1782.

391. John Laurens to Greene, July 5, 1782, *PNG*, 11:396-397.

392. Edward J. Cashin, "Revolutionary War in Georgia," in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, published March 26, 2005, last modified Sept. 30, 2020, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/revolutionary-war-in-georgia> (accessed December 23, 2024).

in July, informants mistakenly told Greene that the British were preparing to retake Georgetown. Greene ordered Andrew Pickens to leave his duties in the Backcountry and hurry to the coast. When Pickens arrived near Charleston, he filed a July 23 report to Greene. Pickens told Greene about the havoc Tories were creating in the Low Country: “the People had not quite finished their Harvest, and several parties of Tories suddenly March’d up through the country.” The sturdy and dependable Cunningham unquestionably took part in or commanded several of the summer raids.³⁹³

A Final Venture into the Backcountry

On August 1, Leslie received orders from Carleton to hasten his preparations to remove all Loyalist civilians and military personnel from Charleston.³⁹⁴ Six days later, Leslie issued a declaration. Tories who wished to leave Charleston for other parts of the British realm should register. Forty-two hundred Loyalists requested passage out of Charleston. Enslavers registered an additional 7,100 persons who needed passage. Thus, over 11,000 people, plus thousands more Regulars and Provincials, awaited transport. But a lack of British shipping delayed their departure. Presumably, all members of the Bloody Scout expedition made plans to move out of South Carolina, though some were not in the city when Leslie issued his declaration.

On June 28, Cunningham submitted pay abstract 169 for himself and 41 other men. They had served His Majesty King George III for 92 days. The Little River Regiment soon began a mission, officially on July 9, which took them a significant distance from the coast. Their travels led to a second significant and deadly encounter with Captain William Butler.³⁹⁵

When Nathanael Greene learned that the British did not intend to retake Georgetown, he gave Andrew Pickens a new assignment. Pickens returned to the Ninety Six District and proceeded with a long-delayed plan to prevent the Cherokee from harboring Tories beyond the Indian Line. Pickens wisely ordered Captain William Butler to stay behind with a company of the Lower Ninety Six District Regiment of Militia. Their assignment was to defend against any new Tory incursions into the region. In August, Butler learned Cunningham had returned to the Ninety Six District. Butler and his militia had many reasons to seek revenge on Cunningham. Terry Lipscomb wrote: “Butler and most of the men in his troop of mounted rangers had lost brothers, fathers, or neighbors in the Cloud’s Creek massacre of November 1781.”³⁹⁶ The families of Butler’s fighters might have also suffered from Cunningham’s other 1781 raids.

Butler discovered the Loyalist cavalry in the Mount Willing community and surreptitiously followed them to Carradine’s Ford. Butler crossed the Saluda River at Carradine’s and went into Newberry County. On September 1 or 2, he found Cunningham encamped in thick woods and marshaled his company to encircle the camp in a battle which came to be called Lorick’s Ferry. When Cunningham realized a trap had been set, he and his men escaped in various directions according to a plan they had developed earlier. A series of skirmishes ensued, but few guns were fired because of the previous night’s rain. Some of Cunningham’s men died, though sources vary as to the number. It appears that Dick Turner, Ned’s brother, was among those killed. (See Appendix B.)

393. Pickens to Greene, July 23, 1782, *PNG*, 11:523.

394. Chronology, *PNG*, 11:43.

395. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:273-274.

396. Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 9:38; “Lorick’s Ferry,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_loricks_ferry.html (accessed Jan. 23, 2025).

The ambushade included a dramatic chase with Butler riding a powerful horse named Rantor.³⁹⁷ Once out of the woods, Cunningham and his horse outran Butler and Rantor. Butler had once again failed to avenge the murders of his father and brother. It was to be his last opportunity. Conversely, Butler expelled Tories from the Backcountry. Cunningham's regiment re-assembled and went back across the Saluda near Bauknight's Ferry, later known as Lorick's Ferry.³⁹⁸ They departed their home district for the final time, returned to Charleston, and mustered at the Cooper River shipyard on September 23. Cunningham and his men received pay for service from July 9 until October 9. Records are not clear about how many men survived the expedition. Cunningham returned with between thirty-seven and forty-two, a low number compared to the Bloody Scout.³⁹⁹

Researchers have struggled to pin down the location and even the month of Butler's assault on the Little River Regiment. Two letters confirmed Butler's success and proved the Lorick's Ferry battle took place around September 1. On September 6, Pickens sent instructions to Butler. The captain was to go to the Edisto River and gather "twenty-five or thirty good beeves." Pickens wanted Butler to deliver them to his party at the Cherokee Ford by September 16. His men needed more food as they continued through Indian territory. Pickens expressed concern to Butler that Cunningham might not be vanquished. "I'm glad to hear you've got your company, and are quiet with respect to the out layers [outliers], though I would recommend to you to be on your guard, least they should return, at a time when you do not expect them, and come on your unawares," Pickens wrote.⁴⁰⁰

The same day Pickens wrote to Butler, he also penned correspondence to his superior, Nathanael Greene. Without referring to Cunningham by name, he had the Lorick's Ferry victory in mind and regarded his troops' efforts to be successful. From his camp at "Long Cain," Pickens reported "Alarm and Confusion" in the Ninety Six District. "Several parties of outliers" were attempting to "destroy it [its] peace but all such at present are Chiefly kill'd & drove from amongst us." He expressed sorrow that the "Disaffected, who Justly bear Infamous Characters, are returned into the Contry." Pickens reaffirmed his concern for the welfare of Tory families who remained in the Backcountry. He told Greene the Tories were still victims of violent acts. He pleaded with Greene to help ensure the "quick and timely Establishment of Courts of Justice in those parts."⁴⁰¹

Cunningham got back to the safety of Charleston later in September. Two accounts established he took a direct route. Patriot Captain John Joyner lived near Camden. On September 5, he composed a letter of gratitude to Nathanael Greene. Joyner had traveled from his home to Belleville, the home of Patriot Colonel William Thomson. Belleville lay on the south bank of the Congaree River in Calhoun County. Continentals sent by Greene escorted him. Joyner reported that Cunningham and fifteen other men were in the "Neighborhood" of Colonel Thomson's plantation the day before Joyner's arrival. A direct route to Charleston kept Cunningham on the south side of the Saluda and Congaree rivers. Though Joyner's

397. Some writers have reported erroneously that Cunningham rode a thoroughbred named Silver Heels. See Appendix C for more information

398. Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 381-384; Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary War Battles*, 9:38; Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 410; Parker, *Parker's Guide*, 342.

399. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:273.

400. Gibbes, *Documentary History*, 1:221; PNG, 11:634n.

401. Pickens to Greene, Sept. 7, 1782, PNG, 11:633-634.

informants might have only assumed Cunningham led the Loyalists, it appears that Cunningham was returning to Charleston.⁴⁰²

Richard B. Baker of Archdale, now North Charleston, wrote to Nathanael Greene on or about September 11. He complained about “Cunningham’s people” who had done “much Mischief about the Neighborhood.” Cunningham and his troops needed to seize provisions during the foray into the Ninety Six District. A need for more food for themselves and their horses might have led to Cunningham’s “Mischief” as he returned to the city.⁴⁰³ Considering the dates and content of the two letters written on September 6, and the correspondence from Joyner and Baker, the Lorick’s Ferry action occurred sometime between August 30 and September 1.

Certain writers, probably misled by the words of Ann Pamela Cuningham, contended that Cunningham left Charleston for East Florida in the summer of 1782, rode through the Backcountry, crossed the Savannah River, and continued through Georgia to East Florida. Cunningham’s pay abstracts of September 23 and October 1 and 5, 1782, proved he and his troops returned to Charleston after Lorick’s Ferry. When they got back, they no doubt heard the important news. Free passage to other parts of the Empire awaited them.⁴⁰⁴

Cunningham and his force posed a threat to Patriot families in the Ninety Six District during the expedition, which began on July 9. But surprisingly, no proof has surfaced of encounters with Patriots other than the action at Lorick’s Ferry. Cunningham’s men faced much more danger in the summer of 1782 than they did the previous fall. The populace was more settled and able to defend themselves, and Pickens was better able to counter attacks by Tories. Given these realities, and the lack of a military aim, Cunningham appeared foolhardy to go into the Ninety Six District in 1782. What motivated him and his men to brave such danger? Acts of revenge and the theft of valuables were the only motivations for their summer venture into the Backcountry. Possibly, they also wanted to see their homes one last time.

Departure for East Florida

On October 5, less than two weeks after his regiment returned to Charleston, Cunningham filed for prospective compensation for his men. For service not yet rendered, his men were paid for the period October 10 through December 31. The Little River Regiment was about to disband, and its members were preparing to leave the port city. Despite their reputations, some members of the regiment may have made efforts to regain their standing in the Ninety Six District. Matthew Love made a deadly miscalculation when he returned home in 1784. As noted, his attempt to settle back in the Ninety Six District ended with his hanging.⁴⁰⁵

The war in America was winding down. British officials protected and resettled thousands of Americans loyal to George III. Maya Jasanoff estimated that, by the end of 1784, 60,000 Loyalists and 15,000 enslaved persons had fled the United States. This ratio is one in every forty Americans. These Americans resettled in England, Jamaica, the Bahamas, East Florida, Quebec, and the Canadian Maritimes. Jasanoff wrote: “Together the evacuations of Savannah and Charleston set more than twenty thousand loyalists, slaves, and

402. John Joiner to Greene, September 5, 1782, *PNG*, 11:629.

403. Richard B. Baker to Greene, September 11, 1782, *PNG*, 11:645.

404. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1: 273-274.

405. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:273-274.

soldiers on the move; so many people separated, so much left behind, so many lives bent on unpredictable routes.”⁴⁰⁶

In October 1782, Sir Guy Carleton ordered General Alexander Leslie to evacuate Charleston. Leslie had anticipated the order, so by the end of the month, 58 ships had sailed out of Charleston Harbor. They carried 4,000 whites and blacks who had spent more than a year in Rawdon Town. This initial group set out for a new life in East Florida, unaware that developments in faraway Paris would make their residence in East Florida short-lived. The evacuation continued in stages. Prior to December 14, thousands more Loyalists, Provincials, and regular army members departed. Robert Stansbury Lambert stated that East Florida had approximately 1,000 white people and 3,000 enslaved people before the exodus from Charleston. By the close of 1782, East Florida had 17,000 residents. Lambert wrote: “Virtually all of the blacks and a substantial majority of the whites who came from ‘Carolina’ were South Carolinians.”⁴⁰⁷

Not all refugees who fled the interior departed the state. Like the younger brothers of Robert and Patrick Cunningham, David and John, some received permission to remain in the state. They re-integrated into the independent nation. Many Loyalist militiamen who had continued the fight until the fall of 1782 saw little choice but to leave the state. They had created hard feelings with their pillaging and violence. Along with Thomas Brown, Daniel McGirt, and David Fanning, William Cunningham and his captains were unquestionably the most reviled of all South Carolinians.

Cunningham’s party might have left Charleston soon after receiving their compensation on October 10. Historians have reported five companions traveled with him. These were his captains, William Helms, William Parker, Richard Long, and John Hood, and his ensign, later lieutenant, Daniel Cargill.⁴⁰⁸ As Robert Stansbury Lambert commented: “With their reputations linked firmly with his, they accompanied him to East Florida.” Wives and children might have also tackled the arduous journey through wetlands and over tidal creeks and rivers, but it is more likely they sailed there. The Tory families had made innumerable sacrifices for their king, but all to no avail. They had lost their farms, livestock, and other possessions. All Loyalists who left South Carolina faced grim journeys.⁴⁰⁹

406. Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 6, 77.

407. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 179, 187.

408. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 646; cf. “Evacuation of Charleston, December 14, 1782,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_evacuation_of_charleston.html (accessed December 29, 2024). which reports incorrectly that Cunningham and 41 dragoons boarded ships for East Florida. Though most of his men probably sailed to East Florida, Cunningham and his officers did not.

409. Don Glickstein, *After Yorktown: The Final Struggle for American Independence* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2015), 102; Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:315; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 156.

East Florida Chaos, 1783-1785

On December 19, 1782, Nathanael Greene delivered cheerful news to his Excellency George Washington:

Sir: I have the honor to communicate to your Excellency the agreeable information of the evacuation of Charles Town, and beg leave to congratulate you upon the event. The Enemy completed their embarkation on the 14th and the same day fell down into rebellion road, and on the seventeenth crossed the Bar and went to Sea.⁴¹⁰

The last flotilla unfurled its sails with Alexander Leslie onboard the *Duchess of Gordon*. Simultaneously, Continentals led by Anthony Wayne took possession of the city. General Greene, Governor John Mathews, and other notables soon followed. In his *Memoirs*, published in 1802, William Moultrie wrote that December 14, “is the real day of delivery and independence and ought never be forgotten.”⁴¹¹

December 14, 1782, Victory Day, launched a new era. The Palmetto State faced many years of recovery. The countryside was devastated; residents continued to die of hunger and disease; families struggled without their breadwinners; and the war-within-a-war did not subside overnight. Wealthy Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda joined the Spanish army in 1780 to fight the British. He visited Charleston in 1783 and was astonished at the number of widows in the city. Residents told de Miranda widowhood was much more common in the Ninety Six District. William Cunningham was personally responsible for many of these tragedies.⁴¹²

Bloody Bill Hysteria

Only weeks following Victory Day, alarming news spread throughout South Carolina. Bloody Bill had returned. Benjamin Guerard, elected governor on February 4, 1783, wrote Nathanael Greene four days later to express grave concern. The governor reported that Cunningham, the “notorious & daring Villain,” had returned from East Florida and was in the Orangeburg District “plundering horses etc & otherwise distressing the Inhabitants.” Guerard warned that if Cunningham were not “timely checked” he might acquire “a force of serious Consequence,” and “the Inhabitants are not in possession of proper Horses for the purpose, and if they were, to impress will be attended with too much Delay for the Occasion.” The governor

410. Joseph W. Barnwell, “The Evacuation of Charleston by the British in 1782,” *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 11 no. 1 (Jan. 1910):10, https://archive.org/stream/jstor-27575255/27575255_djvu.txt.

411. Scarlett, *Victory Day*, 294.

412. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 212; Conner Runyan, “We Have Sacrificed Our All,” *JAR*, May 25, 2017, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2017/05/we-have-sacrificed-our-all/> (accessed Sept. 22, 2024).

asked General Greene to send mounted men “in immediate pursuit.”⁴¹³ Greene replied that same day. He informed Guerard he could not render immediate aid because his horsemen were too distant from the Orangeburg District. However, Greene sent orders later that day to Major John Swan to dispatch twenty dragoons to assist Brigadier General William Henderson, who was an officer in the State Troops.⁴¹⁴

News of Cunningham’s return was published in a Charleston paper on February 22. Charleston’s *Weekly Gazette* informed its readers that Captain Jacob Rumph of Orangeburg County found and attacked Cunningham and David Fanning near Orangeburg on February 10. Rumph killed one of the Tories, wounded another and captured five horses.⁴¹⁵

The reports spurred Guerard and the legislators to take several actions. On February 22, 1783, the governor wrote to the General Assembly. He included a February 17 letter he had received from General Henderson about the activities of “those banditti of Theives from St. Augustine.”⁴¹⁶ Governor Guerard made two proposals. He urged the Assembly members to “form a Company of Twenty well mounted Rangers for Six Months, to be commanded by Capt. [Jacob] Rumph and a Lieutenant, with an Allowance of Provisions, Forage, Ammunition and Pay of ten or twelve Dollars per Month to ease the Subscription the General Mentions.” Guerard also proposed a reward be offered “to take such Ringleaders & common Disturbers of Mankind as Cunningham & others.” The General Assembly took Guerard’s advice and allocated funds for a company led by Rumph.⁴¹⁷

Governor Guerard received more reports about activities by Cunningham and other Tories near Orangeburg. He then issued a proclamation on March 27, which ran in several newspapers in the ensuing days. Notably, his proclamation referred to only three men and proffered extravagant amounts of reward money and a full pardon to those who might have otherwise faced penalties for their Loyalist activities:

Whereas William Cunningham, John Laurance alias John Lane and William Lee, have perpetrated sundry Murders, Robberies, and other offenses in the back parts of this State; and who have baffled all pursuits for the apprehending of them, by being (as it is firmly believed) harboured by wretches as unprincipled and unfeeling as themselves:

To the end, therefore, that such villains may be brought to consign punishment, the General Assembly have directed that I should, in and by this my Proclamation, offer a Reward of THREE HUNDRED GUINEAS for the taking of the said William Cunningham, dead or alive, and ONE HUNDRED GUINEAS each for John Laurence alias John Lane, and William Lee, with a free and full Pardon to those who will apprehend such offenders.⁴¹⁸

All reports of the Tory raids originated in the Orangeburg District. Jacob Rumph lived about five miles north of Orangeburg. An attack on Rumph’s house on January 15, 1783, seemed to implicate Cunningham. Alexander Salley published an unverified account which was related in a previous chapter. Tories entered

413. Guerard to Greene, Feb. 8, 1783, *PNG*, 12:421.

414. Greene to Guerard, Feb. 8, 1783, *PNG*, 12:422.

415. Parker, *Parker’s Guide*, 366A.

416. “Henderson to Guerard,” Feb. 17, 1783, <http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/Thumbnails.aspx?recordId=283989> (accessed Dec/ 13. 2025).

417. “Guerard to the General Assembly, Feb. 22, 1783, <http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/Thumbnails.aspx?recordId=283989> (accessed Dec. 13, 2023).

418. *South Carolina Gazette & General Advertiser Extraordinary*, March 28, 1783; *PNG*, 12:422n.

Rumph's home and beheaded one of the ill visitors he was hosting. Salley did not validate the accuracy of the account.⁴¹⁹

As mentioned, Guerard's February 22 letter to the General Assembly included a letter sent to him by William Henderson. Henderson's February 17 letter began, "I am just returned from the Congarees where I have been in search of those banditti of Theaves from St. Augustine. I have to inform your Excellency they are still in the Neighborhood of Orangeburgh." The letter described two recent events. One was the same event described in the February 22 newspaper report mentioned above. First, Henderson reported that Rumph and his militia engaged Cunningham's party. Rumph's men killed one Tory, wounded another, and recaptured five stolen horses. Second, Henderson informed the governor that Major Derrill Hart discovered Cunningham "in the Cruel Act of Murdering of three waggoners that was coming to Town." Hart rescued two men, though a commissary attached to Andrew Pickens's brigade was killed before Hart could intervene. Henderson continued, "they were immediately Charg'd but the Horses proved too good the Chase lasted ten miles, four of the most inferior horses were taken by Major Hart, the Men saved themselves by quitting the Horses and taking to the Swamps." Henderson doubted the Tories could stay long in the area because the men pursuing them were employing dogs to track them.⁴²⁰

Of the reports about Cunningham's presence in South Carolina in 1783, the one by Henderson most clearly implicates Cunningham. Henderson was not present for the incident, but he was told the witnesses had identified Cunningham. The news report of February 22 informed the public of these actions but added a name. Henderson's report did not mention Colonel David Fanning. But the February 22 article, without providing a source, stated Fanning was part of one or more raids. On April 3, 1783, Philadelphia's *Pennsylvania Packet* newspaper repeated the account of Cunningham and Fanning raiding together:

Saturday the 8th instant intelligence was received that a party of Tories under the command of the notorious Cunningham and Fanning had made their appearance to the southward, plundering and destroying all that opposed them, that they had reached Col. Thompson's plantation, which they had stripped of everything movable. Three different divisions of the military were immediately dispatched after them to prevent their retreat, by taking four different roads. We hope to give a good account of them in our next.⁴²¹

Did William Cunningham return to South Carolina in January 1783? According to Henderson, Major Derrill Hart identified Cunningham "in the Cruel Act of Murdering" the men driving the wagons. Otherwise, no reports stated that Cunningham himself was seen. Tory outliers undoubtedly carried out raids near Orangeburg in the winter of 1783, but Major Hart was the only eyewitness who identified Cunningham. The otherwise unidentified Tories might have stolen the goods only for self-preservation. Major Hart's story, related by his superior General Henderson, served as meager proof that Cunningham was active near Orangeburg in 1783. Also, Hart and Henderson did not mention Fanning.

The notorious Fanning was easily identified everywhere he went because he concealed his disfigured head with a bandanna. He had married not long before he left for East Florida. Given his family obligations, marauding far from where he lived would not have served any purpose. In his *Narrative*, Fanning did not

419. Salley, *History of Orangeburg County*, 426.

420. "Henderson to Guerard," Feb. 17, 1783, <http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/Thumbnails.aspx?recordId=283989> (accessed Dec/ 13. 2025).

421. "Ghosts of Cunn'ham and Fanning," *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia), April 3, 1783.

tell of a return to South Carolina. Indeed, when Fanning learned he and his family had to evacuate East Florida, he attempted to sail to West Florida. When that journey met with failure, the Fannings lived in the Bahamas for several months. Finally, they immigrated to the Maritimes of Canada. Fanning spent the rest of his life there. His name made the Philadelphia news story more sensational. Yellow journalism, though not yet labeled as such, existed in eighteenth-century America.⁴²²

Despite the letters, news articles, reward, and public uproar, there is no confirmation that William Cunningham returned to South Carolina after his departure in the fall of 1782. No primary sources prove that he left East Florida until he was forced out. Cunningham tried to murder Orangeburg area resident Christopher Rowe during the Bloody Scout. He seemed to have had no other scores to settle outside of the Ninety Six District. The infamous Bloody Bill would have faced mortal danger if he had gone back to South Carolina. And for what purpose? Cunningham did not return to his home state in 1783. The State of South Carolina was pursuing a phantom.⁴²³

Loyalist Life in East Florida

Great Britain took control of Spanish La Florida when the Seven Years' (French and Indian) War concluded in 1763. To expedite governance, Britain created two colonies. West Florida's eastern boundary was the Apalachicola River, and its western boundary was the Mississippi River. Pensacola served as its center of government. All the rest of present-day Florida was East Florida, with St. Augustine serving as its capital. Most Spaniards departed the Florida provinces in the 1760s, because they disliked British authority. At the start of the Revolution, East Florida had an unknown number of indigenous people, about 1,000 white residents and about 3,000 black (enslaved and free) residents. The non-native people lived along the coast, sparsely distributed fifty miles north and south of St. Augustine. As already noted, in the first years of the war a few Loyalist families left their homes and established new lives in the Floridas. Thomas Brown was the best known of the refugees.

Patrick Tonyn assumed the governorship of East Florida in 1774. When the Revolutionary War started the following year, Tonyn issued an invitation for Loyalists to move there. He met with limited success, and the population remained low until the fall of 1782. What started as a trickle became a tsunami as the British provided ships for the exodus from Charleston in late 1782. Estimates vary, but by the close of 1782, 17,000 non-native people lived in East Florida. Tonyn said their arrival was ushering in a "happy era for this province" and he regarded his province as a "safe asylum and permanent residence." He expected the economy would strengthen based on exports of timber and naval stores. Most of the newcomers hailed from South Carolina. Carole Watterson Troxler wrote, "Estimates for the population in early 1783 range between 6,000 and 8,000 for whites and between 9,000 and 11,000 for blacks."⁴²⁴

However, only months after thousands of British subjects arrived in East Florida, Tonyn and his citizens learned developments in Paris had dashed their hopes and dreams. The Treaty of Paris placed West

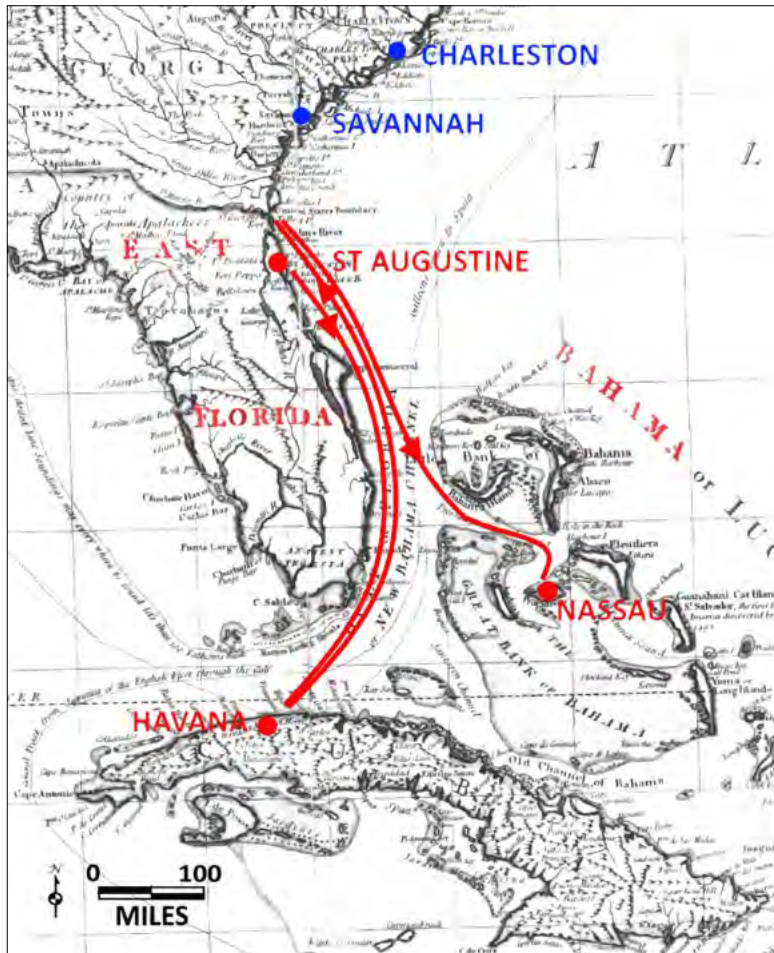
422. North Carolina History Project, "David Fanning, 1755-1825," <https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/david-fanning-1755-1825/> (accessed Jan. 13, 2-25); Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:349-351.

423. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 212-213. Lambert correctly observed "there is no clear evidence that he [Cunningham] was directly involved in plundering the Carolina frontier after he went to East Florida in 1782."

424. Carole Watterson Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees and the British Evacuation of East Florida, 1783-1785," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1, (July 1981):1; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 187; Picuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 48.

and East Florida back into the hands of Spain. The men who wrote the treaty finished it on September 3, 1783. It stated that Spain would retake the colonies eighteen months after the treaty's ratification. Tonym was to be the last British governor of East Florida.

When Tonym notified the public about the coming retrocession, the undoubtedly frustrated white residents began disposing of their new acquisitions, paying off their debts, and learning what other parts of the Empire might welcome them. Great Britain guaranteed them free passage. As with the evacuations of Charleston and New York, they were given a choice of destinations. They could resettle in Jamaica, Britain, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, or the Bahamas. Many, if not most, who had first moved from



From East Florida to the Bahamas, November 1782-January 1787

South Carolina chose Canada despite its unfamiliar climate and formidable rocky landscape. Several wealthy South Carolinians, accompanied by enslaved people, went to Jamaica because of its sugar plantations. A number of those South Carolinians eventually changed their minds and went elsewhere. Many went to the Bahamas. The archipelago had limited acreage for farming, but this was not commonly known until the mid-to-late 1780s.⁴²⁵

News of retrocession led to a period of waiting and uncertainty. Some former South Carolinians delayed their departures. They hoped their home state might loosen its restrictions and make reconciliation possible. Indeed, some such as Patrick Cunningham were allowed to move back to South Carolina, though Patrick had to pay the heavy tax called amercement. The Assembly barred Robert from ever going home. As for their relative, William, the Assembly

had already confiscated his property. Combined with the bounty on his head for his capture, dead or alive, William knew he could not go home.

Some East Florida residents considered going back to the Carolinas without permission; however, they heard they would face persecution by revenge-minded Patriots. Despite the uncertainty and risks, some in East Florida did indeed re-assimilate themselves in South Carolina. In 1786, Tonym estimated that 5,000

425. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 90, 187; Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 15.

former backcountry residents went back to the United States before the evacuation concluded at the end of 1785. The returnees met with mixed success.⁴²⁶

At the start of 1783, East Florida was garrisoned by 900 Provincials under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Hamilton. With news of the impending cession of the province to Spain, these men became focused on their personal futures. Military duty was a lifelong commitment, so retirement was not an option for most of them. They feared being deployed to disease-plagued Jamaica. The command in London sent more than half to Nova Scotia and others to the Bahamas. Some went to Jamaica, and a few stayed in East Florida with their families. All active-duty Provincials left by the end of October 1783. Without troops, Governor Tonyn had insufficient resources to restrain the actions of the marauders he called *banditti*. He developed a force composed primarily of Loyalists under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Young of the Ninety Six District. Tonyn assigned them to maintain law and order. Ironically, the Loyalist William Young began to pursue and apprehend other Loyalists.⁴²⁷

Troxler described the difficulties faced by all residents of East Florida leading up to the evacuation:

When the fear became reality in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, the loyalist refugees' response resulted in anything but the orderly and prompt evacuation which the peacemakers envisioned. An examination of that response and the ensuing British evacuation of East Florida discloses the anguish, desperation, and pettiness of men and women whose roles in an imperial struggle had ended but whose personal lives faced a wrenching and uncertain transition.⁴²⁸

As will be seen, William Cunningham made matters all the worse for the unsettled Loyalists of East Florida.

Cunningham in East Florida

The date of William Cunningham's birth in 1756 remains unknown. He himself might not have known. But by the time he and his fellow travelers ended their late 1782 horseback exodus to East Florida, he was twenty-six years old. Life there presented new challenges. He had taken up soldiering at age nineteen, so he had little time to learn to farm or to apprentice in a trade. In 1786, Cunningham applied for compensation for property he lost when forced out of East Florida. The words and documents he submitted to the East Florida Claims Commission provided important information about his whereabouts and activities during his three years in East Florida.

In his sworn statement to the Commission, Cunningham wrote that he cleared 15 acres on the St. John's River, a location forty miles north of St. Augustine. He informed the commissioners he had owned three "negroes," a mare, ten hogs, and "a considerable amount of red hay and cedar lumber and syprus shingles." He also wrote that he lost his possessions and had to leave the province on May 1, 1785, "when owing to his having been active in a dispute between the Spaniards and some of the inhabitants he was taken prisoner by the Spaniards and sent to Cuba."⁴²⁹

426. Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 13, 20.

427. Joseph B. Lockey, "The Florida Banditti, 1783," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 24 (Oct. 1945), no. 2: 1-2; Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:143, 329.

428. Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 2.

429. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:3-5.

The land which Cunningham cleared belonged to Lady Egmont, the widow of John Percival, Second Earl of Egmont. The Earl owned 65,000 acres in East Florida, part of which a Colonel Agar served as her agent, and Cunningham wrote that he received permission to settle on her land. In their summary, the commissioners noted he did not own a house; however, he held the human labor he needed for clearing and working the land. He and the associates who had served together and gone to East Florida together may have helped each other.⁴³⁰

Cunningham supplemented his application with the sworn statements of three men, among them his relative Robert. Based on the weak proof of his claim, the commissioners declined to make a decision. William agreed to go back to the Bahamas, collect statements from other former residents of East Florida, and reapply to British officials in Nassau.⁴³¹

Cunningham did not report the kind of farming he engaged in. Wilbur Siebert identified various types of East Florida agriculture. After clearing land, the new residents put in crops such as “Indian corn and provisions, sugar cane and rice.” Some established “groves of orange, lemon, shaddock, peach, pomegranate, and other fruit trees.” Others manufactured “indigo, resin, turpentine, tar, and pitch.”⁴³² The farming, if he ever engaged in any, failed to satisfy Cunningham. Beginning in 1783, residents north of St. Augustine reported thefts of their livestock, enslaved people, farming tools, and food. Events would eventually prove Cunningham and at least three other men were the culprits: Daniel McGirtt (or McGirth, or McGirt), Stephen Mayfield, and Bailey Cheney. One surmises that Cunningham never engaged in farming.

Cunningham proved himself an energetic and charismatic leader after the evacuation of Ninety Six. Interestingly, though, the records showed he was not the leader of the East Florida bandits. Daniel McGirtt’s name appeared first in all correspondence about the depredations. Like Cunningham, the former South Carolinian McGirtt first served as a Patriot but later rendered his support to the Crown. After the Snow Campaign, McGirtt departed South Carolina for East Florida and joined Thomas Brown’s East Florida Rangers.⁴³³ From East Florida, the Rangers conducted raids into Georgia. Robert Stansbury Lambert reported that McGirtt and his followers were “the scourge of the Georgia frontier during the war and continued their activities in the Floridas after hostilities had ceased.” Joseph B. Lockey wrote that McGirtt, John Linder, Jr., and other lawless men left South Carolina and Georgia and “sought safety across the southern border. Here they fell into the evil practice of attacking the persons and properties of the residents, especially along the lower reaches of the St. Johns river. The leader of the band was Daniel McGirtt and his chief lieutenant an individual by the name of John Linder, Jr.”⁴³⁴ Stephen Mayfield had lived on Brown’s Creek in the Ninety Six District. He moved to East Florida in 1778 and later began service with the South Carolina Royalists.⁴³⁵ McGirtt and Mayfield had lived in East Florida much longer than Cunningham. This could partially explain why Cunningham did not lead the East Florida bandits.

The bandits victimized Loyalists and showed no sympathy for those who, like themselves, had gone into exile. The Loyalist officer chosen by Governor Tonyn to engage the banditti, William Young, knew

430. Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 436.

431. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:6.

432. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:ix.

433. “Lt. Colonel Daniel McGirt,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/loyalist_leaders_sc_daniel_mcgirtt.html (accessed Jan. 15, 2025).

434. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 189; Lockey, “Florida Banditti,” 87-88; Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 254.

435. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 18, 189; Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 254; Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 6.

Cunningham. Young had commanded the Tyer River Loyalist militia. He and Cunningham served together under Colonel Benjamin Thompson in the February 1782 raids. Young and around fifty men, most of them former South Carolinians, sought to apprehend Cunningham and other Loyalists. William Cunningham, an accomplished soldier, and notorious murderer, had become a common criminal.⁴³⁶

Cunningham Becomes Spain's Problem

Spain took control of both Floridas in July 1784. Vincent Manuel de Zéspedes y Velasco replaced Tonym and assumed the title of governor and captain general of St. Augustine and the Province of Florida. British citizens were not compelled to leave until March 1785, though those wishing to become Spanish subjects could remain, but there were delays. In September of that year, Tonym was onboard the last ship to leave East Florida.⁴³⁷

Zéspedes needed to know how many British citizens lived in the province, so he immediately called for a census. He also prioritized reconciliation and peaceful relations and was not inclined to punish the Tory raiders. Two days into his term, Zéspedes pardoned five men who had been identified as *banditti*: William Mangum, John Linder, Sr., William Collins, Bailey Cheney, and William Cunningham. The five approached Zéspedes and requested permission to emigrate to present-day Mobile, Alabama, in West Florida. Zéspedes granted their request. Four of the five left, but for unknown reasons, Cunningham stayed behind.⁴³⁸

In the company of Daniel McGirtt and other former South Carolinians, Cunningham continued to cause trouble for East Florida's displaced Loyalists. For the rest of 1784, Zéspedes received reports that Cunningham and his former ensign, later lieutenant, Daniel Cargill, were looting silver and other property. The governor identified Daniel McGirtt, William Cunningham, and John Linder, Jr., son of John Linder, Sr., as the worst of the marauders. In a July 5, 1784, letter to Zéspedes, Tonym described McGirtt and Linder, Jr., as "murderers and assassins." Zéspedes refrained from employing the American, Colonel William Young, to capture the marauders. He assigned his own troops to the task.⁴³⁹

In January 1785, Spanish troops apprehended Cunningham, McGirtt, Mayfield, Cargill, and two other men, and jailed them in St. Augustine.⁴⁴⁰ In a January 25 letter to Zéspedes, forty-seven residents expressed gratitude that the governor had dealt with Cunningham and the others. They thanked him for "Having Secured the Persons of Daniel McGirth, William Cunningham, Stephen Mayfield, and Others. Who in Defiance of Law have for these many years past, Disturbed this Province, Plundered many of its Inhabitants and Had our Lives and Property instantly at their Mercy, which Rendered our Abode unsafe and Precarious."⁴⁴¹

On February 9, Governor Zéspedes wrote to his superior, the Viceroy of New Spain, concerning the arrests. He described the bandits as "desperate men capable of all kind of wickedness" and continued:

Daniel McGirtt, one of the outlaws under English government and the ostensible chief of the highwaymen of this country; William Cunningham, a worse man than the preceding; and Stephen

436. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 189.

437. Troxler, "British Evacuation of East Florida," 13.

438. Lockey, "Florida Banditti," 88-89.

439. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 189; Lockey, "Florida Banditti," 88; Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 16.

440. Lockey, "Florida Banditti," 91-92.

441. Piecuch, *South Carolina Provincials*, 254.

Mayfield, who always harbored in his inn every thief who presented himself there with three of his accomplices.... I consider it my duty to say to your Excellency that even if the evidence is not conclusive, it would be in the interest of the royal service and public tranquility to banish forever from this province and those of Louisiana and Pensacola these Incurables who have severally times previously been guilty of capital offenses, especially McGirtt and Cunninham.

Zéspedes's words further confirmed that Cunningham was not the leader of the bandits. Regrettably, the governor failed to clarify what he meant by "capital offenses." Tonym had earlier described the bandits as "murderers and assassins." Cunningham may have returned to the crime of murder.⁴⁴²

In April, Zéspedes delivered Cunningham, McGirtt, and Mayfield to Havana. The viceroy, Bernardo de Galvez, had recently moved to Mexico to establish his headquarters. Tonym's correspondence was delivered to Galvez who sent orders back to Havana. Tonym had observed that there might be a "ray of hope" for the criminals and recommended not punishment but banishment. Galvez followed Tonym's advice and sent orders for the three to be put out of all Spanish territory. They were held captive until November 7, when they embarked on a Nassau-bound ship. Mayfield arrived in the Bahamas, but McGirtt and Cunningham did not. The ship's captain, presumably the recipient of a bribe, put them ashore in East Florida. Authorities re-apprehended Cunningham and McGirtt in December and delivered them to Nassau in January 1786.⁴⁴³

When Zéspedes took over the government of East Florida in July 1784, he immediately called for a census. The entry for Wiliam Cunningham reads:

Cunningham, Guillermo. Page 1. Origin:...Virginia. Family status: single. Other: William Cunningham in a statement of five Americans who are disturbing the peace of the country of 15th of July of 1784, wishes to avail himself of Spanish protection and settle in Louisiana. He is unmarried, and has seven slaves, and four horses.⁴⁴⁴

"Cunningham, Guillermo" told the census taker he had been born in Virginia and that he was not married. Cunningham arrived in the Bahamas in December 1785 with his compatriot McGirtt. Among questions yet to be answered are whether Cunningham ever married and the reasons he and McGirtt did not want to live in the Bahamas.

442. Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 436.

443. Lockey, "Florida Banditti," 92-94; Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 436.

444. Lawrence H. Feldman, *The Last Days of British St. Augustine, 1784-1785: A Spanish Census of the English Colony of East Florida* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1998), 1; Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 638. Ann Pamela Cunningham used family records when she composed the appendix in the third edition of George A. Ward's *Journal and Letters of the late Samuel Curwen*. She confirmed Virginia was William's place of birth.

Bloody Bill's 29th and Final Year

When William Cunningham finally and unwillingly arrived in the Bahamas in December 1785, he could take advantage of land granted by the crown. Lieutenant Governor James Edward Powell had received orders from London the previous year to provide acreage to British citizens who chose the islands as their new home. The head of each household received forty acres. Everyone else, no matter their race, gender, or age, received twenty acres. After ten years' residence, the refugees were expected to pay tax on their land. There is no record that Cunningham received land, but it seems likely that he did despite his misdeeds in Florida. Enslavers brought their human property with them, but it seems doubtful Cunningham was allowed to retain any he owned in East Florida. Having been confined since January, the major may have had few possessions. His arrival was part of a flood of East Florida residents. The Bahamas' British white population doubled; the black population tripled.⁴⁴⁵

Cunningham was qualified to pursue a pension and two other forms of compensation. For many years, Parliament had provided pensions to Regulars, Provincials, and, once the American rebellion started, Loyalist militia. Besides the land grants provided in the Bahamas and the Canadian Maritimes, Parliament sought to compensate Loyalists for their losses. Parliament first legislated compensation allowances for Loyalists in 1776. It improved the system by setting up the Loyalist Relief Commission in 1782. Parliamentary action in 1783 further enhanced the methods used to verify claims and compensate claimants. Thus, the Loyalist Claims Commission was born. Finally, Parliament sought to compensate British citizens who had to leave East Florida when the Spanish took control. This was the Florida Claims Commission, created by an act of Parliament in 1785. William Cunningham's application for a pension and a claim he filed for losses in East Florida occupied him throughout most of 1786.⁴⁴⁶

A Claim Denied in Halifax

Two 1786 documents have created significant confusion about Cunningham's activities that year. One was a claim submitted to the Loyalist Claims Commission in February 1786 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. That claim has led writers to make erroneous statements about Cunningham's life story. A Charleston newspaper notice published in March was the other document.

The Loyalist Claims commissioners conducted personal interviews and received documents called memorials. These were the written statements of the claimants and their witnesses. Unlike a judicial

445. "Arrival of the Loyalists," *The Tribune* (Nassau), March 24, 2023.

446. Siebert, "Loyalists in East Florida," 2: vii; Loyalist Claims, Great Britain Audit Office Papers, Vol. 12, "The Loyalist Collection," Series I (AO 12): 1776-1831, <https://loyalist.lib.unb.ca/node/4127> (accessed January 14, 2024); Compeau, *Dishonored Americans*, 115-118, 135-136.

proceeding, the commission was free to call its own witnesses. Sometimes an heir, executor, or agent submitted the claim. Any evidence could be submitted for validation. A Board of Agents assisted the claimants, and a lawyer was dispatched to the United States to verify property valuations. The commissioners stayed alert to dishonesty and did not hesitate to deem claims to be fraudulent or to contain inflated figures. Despite changes in membership and the challenge of receiving claims in distant Canada, the Commission finished its work in 1790. Around five thousand people made claims, and some were dismissed. Parliament granted approximately 3 million pounds sterling to over four thousand claimants.⁴⁴⁷

On February 18, 1786, a former South Carolinian and Loyalist named William Cunningham sought compensation for losses. This William Cunningham resembled William Cunningham of the Ninety Six District not only in name but also in three other regards. The February 18 claimant lived for a time in the Ninety Six District. He entered the war on the Patriot side and later became a Loyalist; and he evacuated Charleston in late 1782. Certain historians have contended the claimant was the subject of this book.⁴⁴⁸

After three years of work, the Loyalist Claims Commission separated with Colonel Thomas Dundas and Jeremy Pemberton sailing to Halifax. Their presence in Canada made it much easier for Loyalist emigres living in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick to apply for compensation. On February 18, 1786, Dundas and Pemberton received Claim 49, found in vol. 54 of the Commission's records. Claimant 49, William Cunningham, was a South Carolinian before leaving with the British in late 1782. That same day, Dundas and Pemberton penned their response. They deemed the claim to be "grossly prevaricated" and "fraudulent," and denied him any compensation. William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham might have had many reasons to conceal his nefarious past from the commissioners. Therefore, prevarication and fraud would come as no surprise.⁴⁴⁹

However, the claimant of February 18 was not "Bloody Bill." Claimant 49 stated that when Charleston fell in 1780, he fled there for safety. He did not serve under arms, and he left the United States for Jamaica in late 1782. Then, on June 7, 1784, he settled in the village of Rawdon, Nova Scotia, a new community of Loyalists who honored Francis, Lord Rawdon by naming their settlement after him.

Claimant 49 provided the Commissioners with an inventory of extravagant wealth. He assessed its value at 1,413 pounds sterling. His list showed he owned four hundred acres of land, a house, and other buildings, thirty-two head of cattle, nine horses and mares, two enslaved persons, farm implements, and hundreds of bushels of corn and peas ready for sale. However, he left everything behind in Colleton County, including the enslaved people, to find safety in British-held Charleston. Claimant 49 did not provide invoices or other proof of his former wealth. This lack of evidence was perhaps the primary reason the commissioners decided the claim was fictitious. Claimant 49 presented sworn statements by four residents of Rawdon, who knew him when he lived in Colleton County. None of them offered assessments of the value of his properties.

Other than an unverified inventory which indicated great wealth, Claimant 49 provided a plausible life story to Dundas and Pemberton. He stated he was born in Ireland, moved to America in 1757, and left in 1782 for Jamaica. He found Jamaica did not suit him, so he settled in Rawdon in 1784, and made his

447. Gregory Palmer, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (London: Meckler Publishing, 1984), x, xiii, xxiv.

448. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:315; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 147.

449. Mabel Webber, "South Carolina Loyalists," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 14 (Jan. 1913), no. 1:36-43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27575356> (accessed Dec. 19, 2023).

home near other former residents of the South Carolina Low Country. E. Alfred Jones, the editor of the *Journal of South Carolina Loyalist Alexander Chesney*, listed fifty-six South Carolina men who received land grants in 1784 in Rawdon, Nova Scotia. Among them was William Cunningham.⁴⁵⁰

Another primary source proved Claimant 49, who appeared before Dundas and Pemberton on February 18, 1786, was not Bloody Bill. Six days later, William “Bloody Bill” Cunningham was in Nassau. On February 24, he received from Brigadier General Archibald McArthur a statement concerning Cunningham’s service in “his Majesty’s Troops in Carolina.” Cunningham took McArthur’s statement with him to London.⁴⁵¹

William “Bloody Bill” Cunningham never presented an application to the Loyalist Claims Commission. The only applications he submitted were for a military pension and for losses in East Florida. Misinterpretations of Claim 49 led writers to contend that William Cunningham was born in Ireland and received land in Nova Scotia. Bloody Bill’s family roots were in Virginia, and he did not receive land grants in Canada.⁴⁵²

A Clever Newspaper Notice

Another early 1786 document has fostered questions about Cunningham’s travels and intentions that year. A notice in a Charleston newspaper appeared to prove Cunningham sailed to Charleston in early 1786. On March 2, 1786, the *Patriotic Courier of North America*, a Charleston paper also known as the *Columbian Herald*, ran the following notice:

This is to inform whom it may concern, that William Cunningham; Richard Paris, and Thomas Edgehill, jun, now lodging at John Cunningham’s in Kingstreet, are the very persons who came to my house, with arms in their hands, to rob and plunder, and wantonly destroy all they could come at. Thomas Edgehill, jun. is the same person that Col. Casey, Major Douns, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Hunter wish to introduce to us as an honest man; he is a noted enemy to the country, which I can prove by his base conduct during the late war, and by several witnesses.

MARY WILLIAMS

N. B. I have now a suit against him, for robbing and plundering me. He is no citizen, but an intruder from Jamaica.

Charleston, March 1, 1786⁴⁵³

Williams’s notice has raised several questions. How accurate was it? Why would Cunningham and the other two return to Charleston in 1786? What complaints did Mary Williams have about the visitors’ behavior? What were her thoughts on their potential city activities? And who was their host, John Cunningham?

Richard Pearis’s name was sometimes spelled Paris. He was well-known throughout the state as a strident Loyalist. Pearis was jailed in Charleston on December 12, 1775, when Patriot Colonel Richard Richardson apprehended him. Pearis returned home after nine months of confinement. But he discovered

450. Alexander Chesney, *Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After*, E. Alfred Jones, ed., *Ohio State University Bulletin* 26, no. 4, October 30, 1921, 88, 118, <https://archive.org/details/journalofalexand00ches> (accessed November 27, 2024).

451. Archibald McArthur, “Witness on behalf of William Cunningham.”

452. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 147; Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:314-315.

453. Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 437.

Patriots had destroyed his home and mill on the falls of the Reedy River, now downtown Greenville, during his absence.

Despite strenuous efforts, Pearis failed to convince the Patriot government to reimburse him for his losses. He fled to West Florida, where the British made him a captain in the West Florida Loyal Refugees. Pearis assisted with the taking of both Savannah and Charleston. Following the fall of Charleston, Pearis recruited Ninety Six District Loyalists to fight for the king.⁴⁵⁴

Pearis was in Augusta when rebels took the town. The Patriots captured him, put him on parole, and sent him to Charleston. Like thousands of other Loyalists, he and his family lived there throughout 1782. He never took up arms again. The Pearis family sailed to East Florida in late 1782. When compelled to abandon East Florida, they moved to Grand Abaco in the Bahamas. Pearis received compensation for his losses, received a monthly allowance, and spent the rest of his life in the Bahamas. Pearis had no discernible reason to sail to Charleston following his departure in 1782. He received an income for a comfortable life. Also, armed robbery did not match what historical records have shown about his personality and style of life.

After he returned to Charleston from the Bloody Scout in December 1781, William Cunningham possessed a far-flung reputation. He inspired enormous fear and rage. In 1786, South Carolina was still offering a substantial bounty to anyone who apprehended Cunningham. Bloody Bill could not have gone anywhere in the urban environment without being recognized, arrested, assaulted, or killed. As noted, William Cunningham was in Nassau on February 24, 1786. That day he received a memorial written by General Archibald McArthur.

Mary Williams started her advertisement with a fiction. She began it with the names of Cunningham and Pearis to draw attention to the person who truly concerned her. This was Thomas Edgehill, Jr. His father, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Edgehill, Sr., lived in Laurens County until Patriots forced him out. Hayes Station had been Edgehill Station. The persecution of Edgehill was one reason William Cunningham took revenge on Hayes.

When the British took Charleston, Edgehill, Sr., and his son Thomas Edgehill, Jr., served in the Little River Militia. When he joined the exodus to Charleston, the father became adjutant general and supervised the refugees. Was the Jr. to whom Mary Williams referred the son of Lieutenant Colonel Edgehill, Sr.? The younger Edgehill served in 1781 as the brigade's quartermaster. In November 1781, Thomas Edgehill, Sr., received a coffin for "his son." The British records did not provide the name of this son. It seems likely that the Thomas Edgehill, Jr., of Mary Williams's advertisement was a son of Adjutant General Thomas Edgehill, Sr.⁴⁵⁵

Williams composed a clever and deceptive advertisement. Her words could be construed to mean the three intruders came to her home only days before she ran the notice. But she referred to one or more episodes which took place during the British occupation. Armed men plundered her house, one of whom, she contended, was Edgehill, Jr.

454. "Upstate Loyalists," <https://southcarolina250.com/story/upstate-loyalists> (accessed Jan. 2, 2025); Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:431, 433-435, 492-493, 499-500; Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:363-365.

455. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, concerning Thomas Edgehill, Sr., 1:265-266, 296, 492, 495-496, 499-500, 505, 518-520, 527, 545; concerning Richard Pearis 1:431, 433-444, 492-500; Snipes, *Rosemont Plantation*, 9, 11; Jim Piecuch, "Richard Pearis and the Mobilization of South Carolina's Backcountry Loyalists," *JAR*, October 27, 2024, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/10/richard-pearis-and-the-mobilization-of-south-carolinas-backcountry-loyalists/> (accessed November 7, 2023).

John Cunningham of Williams's notice was probably one of the younger brothers of Robert and Patrick Cunningham. Like Edgehill, Jr., he was a quartermaster in occupied Charleston, so they knew each other. After the British departed, the South Carolina legislature allowed John to continue to live in Charleston. If Mary Williams was correct, Edgehill, Jr., had been living in Jamaica. By early 1786, he had found a friendly reception at John Cunningham's residence. In summary, Mary Williams intended to alert the public about Edgehill. An untrustworthy man had arrived in town and might have planned to settle there. Mary Williams wanted the public to know she had sued Edgehill. She began with the names of Bloody Bill and Richard Pearis to draw attention to her notice. Cunningham and Pearis did not return to Charleston in 1786.

To London and Back

General Robert Cunningham relocated to the Bahamas before his kinsman William was forced there in late 1785. By December 1784, Robert was serving on a roads commission created by the Bahamian General Assembly. Before the Revolution started, Robert and William Cunningham had lived near one another in Laurens County, South Carolina. Ten years later, Brigadier General Robert and Major William Cunningham resided on the same Bahamian island, New Providence.⁴⁵⁶

Soon after William's arrival, he and Robert left for London and arrived there in April or early May 1786. This trip abroad was William's first and last. He sought two forms of compensation from the British government. He hoped to receive a pension at the rate of half-pay for a major and also to be compensated for the possessions he had left behind in East Florida. With the twin goals in mind, William carried with him the statement which Brigadier General Archibald McArthur had written in February. McArthur and Cunningham had known each other for several years. McArthur served under Cornwallis in the 71st Regiment at the rank of major. He was captured at Cowpens in January 1781 but released not long thereafter. In May 1781, McArthur joined the forces of Francis, Lord Rawdon. Then in August, Nisbet Balfour deployed McArthur to command British soldiers stationed near Moncks Corner.

The next month, Cunningham and his Little River Loyalist militia departed their encampment in Oconee County, slipped past Nathanael Greene's Continentals and Patriot militia commanded by Andrew Pickens and Thomas Sumter, and arrived in Charleston. Cunningham and his men left the city a few weeks later and made Wantoot, near Moncks Corner, their staging area for the Bloody Scout. Therefore, McArthur and Cunningham first encountered one another no later than the fall of 1781. In July 1782, McArthur was promoted to brigadier general and made the garrison commander at St. Augustine. Cunningham and McArthur might have encountered one another again in East Florida. McArthur conducted the evacuation of British residents. In August 1783, he sailed to Nassau and became military commander of the Bahamas. McArthur not only knew William Cunningham but had knowledge of the Bloody Scout's mayhem. As military commander in both East Florida and the Bahamas, McArthur knew why the Spanish had exiled Cunningham and McGirtt from their territories.⁴⁵⁷

In his February 24, 1786, statement, Archibald McArthur reported on Cunningham's military service but failed to mention his criminal activities. He stated that Cunningham "joined his Majesty's troops in

456. jim, staff member of the Bahamas Society of Archives and History, email to the author, April 11, 2022.

457. Carole Troxler, "Royal North Carolina Regiment," 2006, <https://www.ncpedia.org/royal-north-carolina-regiment> (accessed June 22, 2024); Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:333; McArthur, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham.

Georgia in the year 1779, & was taken prisoner by the Rebels in the course of that Campaign, having effected his escaped out of Goal at Charlestown, he served the Campaigns of 1780 & 81, with His Majesty's Troops in Carolina, and always behaved like a Gallant and Zealous Officer; and abandoned a valuable Plantation on account of his Attachment to His Majesty's Service."⁴⁵⁸

William Cunningham located other officers in London who might submit memorials in his behalf. He found Lieutenant Colonel John Hamilton, who had commanded the Royal North Carolina Regiment. Hamilton had found the Kettle Creek survivors, among them Cunningham, and led them to join Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell's army. Hamilton and Cunningham were both part of the Battle of Brier Creek and also made the 1779 trek to Charleston under General Augustine Prevost. Hamilton's regiment served under Cornwallis until the surrender at Yorktown. George Washington did not force Hamilton to return to England, so Hamilton's superiors re-deployed him and his regiment to Charleston. Hence, Hamilton was in Charleston in 1782 when Cunningham was there. They most certainly became reacquainted. As the British evacuated Charleston, Hamilton and his North Carolinians were sent to St. Augustine, where their commander was Brigadier General McArthur. Cunningham and Hamilton might have also had additional contact in East Florida.⁴⁵⁹ Hamilton's regiment left East Florida before Cunningham became a thorn in the flesh for the province's residents.⁴⁶⁰

Cunningham was wise to request support from John Hamilton. In London on May 11, Hamilton signed a statement which confirmed McArthur's testimony. Cunningham had joined His Majesty's Troops in Georgia in February 1779. He became a lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of South Carolina Royalists and was taken prisoner during an expedition to Charleston where he suffered "rigorous confinement," Hamilton wrote. Cunningham served as a major of Royalist cavalry once he was free and left for East Florida when the British and Loyalist refugees evacuated Charleston. Hamilton did not mention Cunningham's criminal behavior. In fact, he closed with these words: Cunningham "on all occasions behaved with great Zeal & Gallantry, & was much respected by all the Officers of the Army for his active Services."⁴⁶¹

That same day, May 11, Cunningham introduced himself to the Rt. Hon. Lord Sydney and submitted his personal memorial. This document received mention in a previous chapter which related how Cunningham became a Royalist. A comparison of Cunningham's words with those which others wrote about him in 1786 reveals no significant differences. As such, his memorial provided important, generally reliable information:⁴⁶²

Humbly Sheweth

That upon His Majesty's Troops taking possession of the Province of Georgia, Your Memorialist assembled the Loyalists in the District of Ninety Six, South Carolina, and accompanied by 600 men, set off for Georgia; and being twice Attacked by the Rebels on the march, many of the men killed, or taken, & others declining the enterprize, Your Memorialist with 330 men, joined the army under Colonel Archd. CAMPBELL at Briar Creek in Feby. 1779.

458. Archibald McArthur, "Witness on Behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," Feb. 24, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn3.htm> (accessed Jan. 14, 2025).

459. Carole Waterson Troxler and Arthur C. Menius, "John Hamilton," <https://dev.ncpedia.org/biography/hamilton-john> (accessed June 22, 2024).

460. Troxler, "Royal North Carolina Regiment," Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:333.

461. John Hamilton, "Witness on Behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," May 11, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn6.htm> (accessed Jan. 27, 2025).

462. As noted earlier, Cunningham deceptively took credit for leading the Kettle Creek expedition. James Boyd commanded the venture and was in charge of recruiting Loyalist militia from Georgia and the Carolinas.

That Your Memorialist was immediately appointed Lieutenant in the 2d Battn. So. Carolina Royalists commanded by Colonel INNIS [Innes]; On the march of General PREVOST into Carolina, he was taken by the enemy, & after four Months confinement in the Goal at Charlestown, made his escape, & took shelter among his friends at Ninety Six, until the reduction of Charlestown, when, in pursuance of General CLINTON's Proclamation he joined the Loyalists, (& the 2d Battn. So. Cara. Royalists being draughted [incorporated] into the first) continued to perform various Service with them; in consideration of which he was allowed his pay as Lieutenant aforesaid, until he was appointed by Colonel BALFOUR, Captain of a Troop of Provincial Light Horse, under Major DUNLOP: which Troop he raised, & served accordingly until the Major was killed in 1781.

That Your Memorialist was soon after Appointed by Col. BALFOUR, Major of Provincial Light Horse, with Orders to raise four Troops, which he soon compleated, & were attached to Lord RAWDON's Regiment, the Volunteers of Ireland: in which station he acted until the evacuation of Charlestown, when they were dismissed with three months pay advanced; and Your Memorialist, went to East Florida, & from thence to the Bahama's.

That Your Memorialist having lost all his Property, & being reduced to very great distress, most humbly hopes his Services & Sufferings in the Royal Cause will appear to have been such as may merit the favor & Support of His Majesty's Ministers.

Your Memorialist therefore humbly begs Your Lordship will be pleased to take his Case into Your consideration: and that you will be pleased to Grant him Half Pay as Major of Provincials aforesaid.

And Your Memorialist will ever Pray &c &c &c

Wm. Cunningham

London May 11th, 1786⁴⁶³

Cunningham was told he should provide more substantiation for his claim. So, on May 16, Cunningham found his former commander, Colonel Nisbet Balfour. On his return to London, Balfour received a promotion to colonel, was made an aide-de-camp to George III, and named to the Loyalist Claims Commission. In his witness statement, Balfour recounted he met Cunningham in the Ninety Six District in 1780 when Balfour was in command of Fort Ninety Six. He wrote that Cunningham was "in one of the most distant parts of the Province of South Carolina, exerting himself in a very active and Spirited manner against the enemy." Cunningham was "appointed a Captain in a Corps of Provincial Calvary commanded by Major DUNLAPP [Dunlop], which Corps, being almost totally destroyed by service, and Major DUNLAPP killed, Mr. CUNYNGHAM was afterwards appointed Major in a Corps of Cavalry consisting of four Troops, where he continued until the evacuation of the Province."

Balfour added that Earl Cornwallis was unavailable to submit a memorial but wrote that the general was "well acquainted with his [Cunningham's] real services" and his "Zeal, loyalty, and gallant behavior."⁴⁶⁴ Another commander with knowledge of the Bloody Scout chose not to acknowledge the raid or its bloodshed.

The following day, May 17, Cunningham was received into the presence of Francis, Lord Rawdon. Rawdon had departed South Carolina several months before the Bloody Scout, so Rawdon might not have ever learned about him. They might have met one another during Rawdon's brief stay in Ninety Six in the summer of 1781. Rawdon authored perfunctory yet complimentary words.

463. William Cunningham, "Memorial of William Cunningham of South Carolina," May 11, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

464. Nisbet Balfour, "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," May 16, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn5.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

I am perfectly acquainted with the Service of Major William CUNNINGHAM and beg leave strongly to support his Application for Half Pay, to which his Appointment in the Provincial Line (setting aside the consideration of his active exertions) give him fair pretension.⁴⁶⁵

With Lord Rawdon's document in hand, William Cunningham delivered all his paperwork to an even higher-ranking officer, Major General Oliver De Lancey. A native of New York City, De Lancey recruited three battalions of Loyalists in 1776 for what came to be known as De Lancey's Brigade. Two of his three battalions fought for the British cause in the South. De Lancey became adjutant general for all British forces in North America. Along with several thousand soldiers and Loyalists, he evacuated New York in late 1783. De Lancey never went to the South, so he and Cunningham could not have met until Cunningham introduced himself in London.⁴⁶⁶

Once in London, De Lancy continued his role as an adjutant general. In that capacity, he received William Cunningham's memorial and supporting witness statements. On May 25, De Lancey wrote to Home Secretary John Thomas Townshend, who held the title 1st Viscount Sydney. De Lancey referred to an "Order" by Lord Sydney to review Cunningham's "Certificates." De Lancey responded to Townshend with his evaluation: "the Certificates Mr. CUNNINGHAM produces [provided] and the Circumstances I have been able to learn are so strong in favor of his pretensions, that his application should be referred to the Treasury." Cunningham's efforts paid off, and he received a pension at the amount of half-pay for a major. He probably received a portion of his pension before he left London to return to Nassau.⁴⁶⁷

Robert Cunningham sought to be granted a pension and to receive compensation for the property he lost in South Carolina and East Florida, so he ran similar errands in London in May 1786. The British lavishly rewarded the Loyalist general. He received a pension at half-pay as a brigadier general. For the property which South Carolina confiscated from him, the Loyalist Claims Commission gave him 1,080 pounds sterling. In addition, he received "tracts of valuable land in New Providence, where he is said to have built a handsome residence." As a new resident of the Bahamas, he received at least three land grants. These included two parcels totaling 608 acres on Grand Caicos and a lot in the Western District of Nassau. Records in the Bahamian Department of Archives and History provide a map of the tract in Nassau. It lay near the middle of town on land that is now a golf course.⁴⁶⁸

The Cunninghams were forced to wait in London through the summer of 1786. Parliament had created the Florida Claims Commission the previous year, and Colonel Nisbet Balfour and John Spranger received appointments to the commission. However, the commissioners did not receive applications until August or early September. Siebert wrote that "many" such people were in London by the fall.⁴⁶⁹

On September 14, Robert Cunningham filed his application for property he lost in East Florida. The commission granted him only 41 pounds sterling for the land and implements he had to leave behind

465. Francis, Lord Rawdon, "Witness of Behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," May 17, 1786, <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn4.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

466. Gene Procknow, "Top 10 Loyalist Officers," *JAR*, February 24, 2014, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/02/top-10-american-loyalist-officers> (accessed January 14, 2024).

467. Oliver DeLancey to John Thomas Townshend, "Witness of [sic] behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina," <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn2.htm> (accessed January 14, 2024).

468. "jim," a staff member of the Bahamas Historical Society, April 11, 2002, email message to the author, reported three land grants made to Robert. The email included a map of the parcels, one of which is now a golf course; "Brigadier General Robert Cunningham," https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/loyalist_leaders_sc_robert_cunningham.html (accessed July 11, 2024).

469. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:vii, 363; Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists*, 192.

when the Spanish took over the province. Three weeks passed before William Cunningham could meet with Balfour and Spranger and submit his claim. On October 7, he asked the Florida Claims Commission to compensate him for the losses he suffered when Governor Zéspedes banished him from East Florida. His claim, described in the previous chapter, included sworn statements of support from three former residents of East Florida, among them General Cunningham. Robert informed the commissioners he had settled on the St. Mary's River, about 50 miles from Major Cunningham, and had heard about his relative's losses only "by report." Major Nicholas Welch described his acquaintance with William Cunningham. Sometime between Cunningham's arrival and Welch's departure in September 1784, Welch saw Cunningham and his three enslaved men "in a little town called St. John's Bluff, about 30 miles from Major Cunningham's plantation." Welch confirmed the value of the enslaved men who Cunningham had listed in his memorial. Like General Cunningham, Welch did not have personal knowledge of the property which Major Cunningham said he had owned.

The third witness William Cunningham recruited was Henry Ferguson, who lived closer to William Cunningham than did the other two, only "5 miles distant." Ferguson knew enough to state Cunningham lived "upon a good piece of land on St. John's River," but he acknowledged he knew little about Cunningham's possessions. Ferguson provided commentary on the value of two of the enslaved men, Davy and Sam, and the "white mare" Cunningham rode. Though he did not admit he knew about Cunningham's crimes in East Florida, Ferguson added a puzzling statement. A "neighbor" had purloined much property in South Carolina and East Florida. Ferguson says he "heard [the white mare] was stolen in the latter end of the year 1783." Did Ferguson mean Cunningham lost his own horse to a thief? Or did he mean Cunningham gained the horse by theft and lost it when he was forced from East Florida?⁴⁷⁰

The Florida Claims commissioners needed proof of what Cunningham said he owned in East Florida. Cunningham reassured the commissioners he could locate other witnesses in the Bahamas who knew him in East Florida. The London commission said he and his additional witnesses would need to be examined "before the Governor and council there and the examinations transmitted to the Commissioners in the manner prescribed by the act, and in the mean time his claim to be kept open."⁴⁷¹

In its October 7 summary, the commission wrote that William "Says that he intends setting out for the Bahama Islands in the course of a week or a fortnight and that he has taken his passage for that purpose." General Cunningham and Major Welch stated they would be on the same ship.⁴⁷²

In the 1700s, the average sailing time between England and North America was six weeks. It appears the party disembarked in Nassau no earlier than late November. William Cunningham's life would end less than eight weeks later.⁴⁷³

470. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:3-6.

471. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:6.

472. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:4.

473. Jim Ulvog, "Time to Cross the Atlantic-500 year History," Nov. 27, 2023, <https://outrunchange.com/2015/11/27/time-to-cross-the-atlantic-500-year-history/> (accessed Feb. 27, 2024).

Death in the Bahamas

On January 18, 1787, three months after submitting the East Florida claim in London, William Cunningham died. He would have turned age 30 on an unknown date in 1787, so it can be assumed he died at age 29. The January 30 edition of the *Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* ran this notice:

NASSAU-Jan. 20, 1787. Thursday last [January 18], died here Major William Cunningham, formerly of the S.C. Royal Militia.⁴⁷⁴

Cunningham's will was executed on January 20, 1787, in Nassau. His former captain and friend Daniel McGirtt witnessed the will along with William Slater, whose name did not appear in chronicles of Cunningham's life. The transcriber, Edith Greisser of Cross Hill, SC, experienced difficulty reading the original document. It did not contain a date.

I commit my {soul?} unto the hands of Almighty God, hoping for redemption of all my sins through the merits of Jesus Christ, my blessed savior and redeemer and my body to the earth should it please God. And as for {distribution?} of estate and effects which I shall possess of or entitled unto at the time of my decease:

I give and bequeath the same to the {?following person, that is to say} my dear wife Mary Cunningham, all my estate both real and personal after paying all just debts and demands against the said testator.

And I do hereby nominate and constitute and appoint the said Mary, my lawful wife, sole executrix of this my last will and testament. And I do give and bequeath unto my said executrix all the rest and residual of my estate whatsoever, both real and personal. Hereby revoking and making void all other and former wills by me heretofore and do declare this to be my last will and testament.

{line not readable - appears to refer to King George} Britain, France and Ireland, King defendant of the faith.

Signed William Cunningham

Signed, sealed and published and declared by William Cunningham as and for his last will and testament.

Subscribed as witnesses in the presence of the testator

Daniel McGirt

William Slater⁴⁷⁵

Judge John Brown presided at the January 20 hearing, and William Slater wrote the formal report:

Bahama Islands New Providence

To all Christian People to whom the Presents shall come.

Know ye all that on the twenty --day of January in the year of Our Lord, one thousand, seven hundred, and eighty seven, before me, the Honorable John Brown Esquire, President and Commander in chief and Ordinary of the said islands, personally appeared Mary Cunningham and being duly sworn, took upon herself the Execution of the will of William Cunningham as sole Executrix.

474. "Marriage and Death Notices from the *Charleston Post and Daily Advertiser*," compiled by Mabel L. Webber, *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 20 no. 1 (1919):260-261, https://archive.org/details/schgm/The_South_Carolina_Historical_and_Genealogical_Magazine_Volume_K/page/260/mode/2up?view=theater (accessed Feb. 16, 2024).

475. Herlong, et al, *Mount Willing*, 632.

Before me, the Honorable John Brown Esquire, President and Commander in Chief and Ordinary of the said Islands, personally appeared William Slater of (Nassau) Merchant of the {?} witness in the forgoing will who, being duly sworn in the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God upon his said oath {?} was present and did see the testator, William Cunningham, make his mark and seal and the same will and also publish and declare the said William Cunningham was, at the time of the making and publishing the said will, of sound disposing mind. {?} according to the deponent. And that Daniel McGirt, Joseph {Barnes?}, William {Melvil1?} and Robet {? Neelley} --- in together with this deponent inscribed their names witness that at the request and in the presence of the said testor and in the presence of each other.⁴⁷⁶

Like William Slater, the three men whose names followed Daniel McGirt's name do not appear in other accounts of Cunningham's life. The will and the summary written by Slater pose questions such as the identity of Cunningham's widow, the date and location of their marriage, the date of his will, and the cause of death.

British citizens in East Florida could not marry because the province had no Anglican priests. Once replaced by his Spanish successor, Zéspedes, former governor Patrick Tonyn tried to help couples who wanted to wed. He asked Zéspedes to grant authority to St. Augustine merchant John Leslie to perform marriages. The Spaniard refused the request.⁴⁷⁷

Cunningham told a 1784 Spanish census taker he was single. Hence, he and Mary could not have married until they reached the Bahamas or London. It seems unlikely Mary went with William to London. In summary, they probably exchanged vows soon after William first stepped foot in the Bahamas or in late 1786, after William returned from London. It seems most likely that they married in the winter of 1785-1786, and that he prepared his will before leaving for England.

Mary Cunningham's own will provided insight into her identity. She signed her will in Nassau on October 15, 1803. Mary Cunningham owned an enslaved man named Jack. She required that he be freed twenty years after the date of her will. Her possessions were to be divided equally among an aunt, Mrs. Mary Mcgrill (or MCGIRTH); her brother John Collins; and Martha Paulson, infant child of her friend Mrs. Paulson.⁴⁷⁸

If Mary's aunt was a relative of Daniel McGirt, then Daniel introduced William to Mary. Also, William Cunningham knew two men, possibly three, whose surname was Collins. Loyalist militiaman Private James Collins served in the Bloody Scout in 1781.⁴⁷⁹ When Cunningham went before the new Spanish governor, Zéspedes, on July 14, 1784, four other men accused of criminal activities accompanied him. Along with Cunningham, William Mangum, John Linder, Sr., and Bailey Cheney was William Collins. Zéspedes gave the five men permission to relocate to West Florida. Only Cunningham remained in East Florida.⁴⁸⁰ One wonders if the Collins family eventually settled in the Bahamas. Another man named Collins, thought by Siebert to be William Collins, was a Loyalist who settled near where Cunningham lived along the St. John's River.⁴⁸¹

476. Herlong, et al., *Mount Willing*, 633.

477. Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 18-19.

478. Ms. Tomoko Smith, Archivist with the Bahamas Department of Archives and History, emailed the author April 19, 2022, with a summary of Mary Cunningham's will.

479. Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:269-270.

480. Lockey, "Florida Banditti," 89.

481. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:68.

Cunningham died with a multitude of enemies who, like him, might have taken the law into their own hands. Neither he nor McGirtt wanted to live in the Bahamas, so they arranged to be dropped off in Florida. Eventually, circumstances forced them to live in the Bahamas. The two men thieved from any number of British residents of East Florida who had since relocated to the Bahamas. As noted above, Patrick Tonyn told his successor Zéspedes that Cunningham and McGirtt were “murderers and assassins.” The next year, Zéspedes informed the Viceroy of New Spain that the two were “Incorrigibles... [and had] severally times previously been guilty of capital offenses.” Whether they had committed murders, Cunningham and McGirtt were undoubtedly fearful of their neighbors on New Providence Island. They had done some of them much harm. One or more Loyalists who had moved from East Florida to the Bahamas could have murdered Cunningham. Alternatively, even at such a young age, Cunningham might have died of natural causes. He and Robert recrossed the North Atlantic during hurricane season. William could have suffered injuries in a storm, become ill during the voyage, or even taken sick after he disembarked at Nassau. But ironically, a Loyalist who had harmed hundreds of South Carolina Patriots did not die at the hands of Patriots. If he was killed, he was probably murdered by South Carolina Loyalists.

Robert Cunningham spent the rest of his life in the Bahamas and died on February 9, 1813. His tombstone reads: “exiled from his native Country in the American Revolution for his attachment to his King and the Laws of his Country.” In January 2020, this author met with Ms. Andrea P. Major, President of the Bahamas Historical Society and Museum. The author spoke to the staff at the Bahamas Department of Archives and History, as well as Bahamian historian Mr. Paul Aranha. The kind people of the Bahamas knew of Robert Cunningham and led the author to his burial site in Nassau’s Western Cemetery. But they did not know the name of William “Bloody Bill” Cunningham. They shared a conjecture that family members buried him on land belonging to Robert. The surname Cunningham is common in the Bahamas today.⁴⁸²

482. Personal conversations with Paul Aranha and Andrea Major in Jan. 2020.

Bloody Bill in Retrospect

A summary of William Cunningham's life must begin with his cultural and historical setting. In 1775, while governing South Carolina for the first time and simultaneously engaging in a war, Patriot leadership did not provide a system of criminal justice. In fact, the new government persecuted South Carolinians who remained loyal to Great Britain. It denied them the right to vote or to deliver goods for sale in Charleston. The government did not arrest or prosecute Patriots who burned Loyalists' property, apprehended them, or tortured them. The two sides took up arms, and the Patriots completely subdued the Tories by the end of 1776. However, South Carolina's internal war, like the Revolution itself, was far from over. Fuel lay ready for the fire when the British took over the state in 1780. Tories finally had their king's soldiers to help them avenge the harm done to them by South Carolinians who favored independence. Civil war erupted. Making matters worse, the occupying British did not govern the state or establish a justice system outside Charleston.

William Cunningham was born in Virginia in 1756 and moved to South Carolina in 1769 or 1770. For eighteen months, he fought in the Revolutionary War as a Patriot, but then, like many other Patriots and Loyalists, he switched sides. While serving in the South Carolina (Patriot) 3rd Regiment, Cunningham participated in two important battlefield victories, the Great Cane Brake and Sullivan's Island. After becoming a Tory, he played roles in several British victories. Brier Creek and the defense of Savannah, both in 1779, were the most significant. He helped to defend Ninety Six against Nathanael Greene's 1781 siege. Cunningham was also present for several British defeats, including the 1780 tide-turning battle at Kings Mountain. At Kings Mountain and Hammond's Store, he lost hundreds of his compatriots to death, injury, and imprisonment. Cunningham evaded his enemies at defeats of lesser importance, such as Kettle Creek in Georgia, Cedar Springs, the running battle along Blackstock Road, Long Cane, and Cane Creek in North Carolina.

Other than Kings Mountain, Cunningham did not take part in the most significant South Carolina battles. He was not at the surrender of Charleston in 1780 nor the battles of Camden, Cowpens, Hobkirk Hill, or Eutaw Springs. However, he engaged with the most noted Patriot officers in the South. Besides the defense of Ninety Six against Greene, Cunningham battled Continental Lieutenant Colonel William Washington at Hammond's Store and fought the militiamen of three South Carolina generals, Thomas Sumter, Francis Marion, and Andrew Pickens.

Cunningham served under the direct command of two British officers who had limited soldiering abilities (militia colonel James Boyd and Provincial major James Dunlap) but also under numerous prominent British officers. These included Mark Prevost, Augustine Prevost, Nisbet Balfour, Alexander Leslie, Thomas

Fraser, and Benjamin Thompson. High-ranking commanders such as Nisbet Balfour and Francis, Lord Rawdon knew him well enough to recommend him for a military pension. As a serviceman, Cunningham was courageous, dependable, and well-disciplined. However, Cunningham committed a homicide in 1779 when he took the life of a man who had killed Cunningham's innocent, crippled brother and maimed his father.

The tide of war turned against the Tories a second time in late 1780. As British troops were forced back into the Charleston area in 1781, Tory refugees fled there as well. Others cowered in their homes and fearfully sought to make amends with their Patriot neighbors. After General Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, defeat seemed inevitable. Nisbet Balfour, military commander of Charleston, enabled the terror of the Bloody Scout expedition by sending Major Cunningham and 200 to 300 men to forage cattle and to carry out reprisals as they wished against Patriots. Balfour supplied Cunningham with everything he needed for hundreds of miles on horseback and six weeks of carnage. The Bloody Scout was a coordinated revenge mission at a time and in a place where there were no law enforcement officers, no judges, no jury system, and no courts. Cunningham and his men executed justice as they deemed right and feasible. During the mission, Cunningham murdered or commanded those serving under him to murder at least fifty-nine unarmed men. The Bloody Scout destroyed countless houses, barns, mills, and other structures, and left several hundred women and children bereft of food and shelter. The six weeks of the Bloody Scout earned Cunningham the moniker "Bloody Bill."

During the mission, Cunningham and most of his confederates evaded capture, even though at least twenty-eight of them were killed in battle or by hanging. During the return to Charleston, near Orangeburg, Andrew Pickens's militiamen killed twenty members of the Bloody Scout but failed to capture Major Cunningham. The following year, 1782, William Butler ambushed and chased Cunningham and his small force at Lorick's Ferry. This might have been Cunningham's closest brush with death, but again, he got away unscathed. Throughout the war, he evaded his enemies on account of his shrewd planning, leadership abilities, horsemanship, marksmanship, and the horses he rode. As the Revolutionary War wound down, he left the state along with at least two thousand other South Carolina Loyalists. He relocated to the British province of East Florida. Four months later, in March 1783, South Carolina's governor offered a significant reward to anyone who might bring him to justice; however, Cunningham had already departed the state. East Florida soon became Spanish territory. Cunningham became a common thief in East Florida and might have committed more serious crimes against his fellow Loyalists. His criminal activity led to his arrest and imprisonment by Spanish authorities and eventual banishment to the Bahamas. There, before his thirtieth birthday, he died, probably at the hands of Loyalists he had harmed in East Florida.

A Complimentary Assessment

William Gilmore Simms was no fan of Bloody Bill, and he did not know about the limited time frame of Cunningham's bloodshed against the innocent. Simms and many others before and after have portrayed Cunningham as someone who throughout the war engaged in unrestrained violence against the innocent. In fact, Cunningham spent most of the war as a soldier, first on one side, then on the other. He was a good soldier. It was during the Bloody Scout that he went far beyond the bounds of legitimate warfare.

When he responded to Ann Pamela Cunningham's defense of Cunningham, Simms provided this fairly positive description of Bloody Bill:

He is conspicuous as a pursuer and persecutor of the whigs in the Saluda country and the contiguous districts. He had all the blood-hound facility of finding and running down his feeble prey...and, a first rate horseman, an apt, acute, and experienced woodman, a bold and daring soldier, reckless and unsparing, he acquired a local distinction, and a terrible notoriety for his crimes, long before the British were compelled to seek refuge in the settlements more immediately along the sea. Compelled to retreat with them to the seaboard, he availed himself,—with all the skill and audacity of the partisan,—of all those fluctuations in the tide of war, which sometimes made the Americans fall back after their successes,—to dash into the interior, and write blood and havoc upon cot and hamlet, in token of his presence, where he came. But for the cruel nature of the warfare which he waged—his wild and wanton revenges—his coarse, unsparing brutality, we should unhesitatingly accord to him the merit of being, in these forays, a most daring and admirable partisan. He was certainly never wanting in the resources of courage, celerity and skill. But all these virtues of the soldier were obscured and dishonored by the vicious passions of the savage.⁴⁸³

Challenges for Today's Readers

While researching and writing this book, I engaged in many casual conversations about Bloody Bill. Typically, those talking with me did not know he existed. As I gave them a quick summary of his life and the six weeks for which he is best known, my listeners always expressed distaste and often horror. Many wondered why a Christian minister wanted to share his story. It is hard to hear about the killings, destruction, and long-term impact on women and children. I imagine that for readers of this book, learning about Cunningham's life story has been intellectually and emotionally demanding. It is indeed a horror story of defenseless people suffering enormous pain and loss. For many readers, the book also presents new, unpleasant information and perspectives. It is much easier to simplify and romanticize the Revolutionary War, to make it a valiant conflict against an oppressive force of menacing foreigners who served a tyrannical king.

Almost all of those I spoke with and, I suppose, many readers of this book, did not know that the American Revolution, particularly in the South, was a civil war which pitted neighbor against neighbor. The Americans who first resorted to violence in 1775 were those we refer to today as Patriots, the founders of our nation. Since its own founding in 1670, South Carolina's story had been one of brutality. South Carolinians who craved freedom from Great Britain started a new cycle of violence in 1775. Willing to go to war with King George III, they turned to harassment, persecution, and then murders when friends of King George made known their opposition to independence. The Patriot persecution led inevitably to Tory retaliation. And so began a new period of carnage and retribution, which were prevalent phenomena during South Carolina's first hundred years. This new internal conflict was so pervasive that no one living in South Carolina could avoid involvement. It involved wealthy rice barons and poor yeoman farmers; the enslaved and the free; whites, blacks, and Native peoples; women and men; people of all ages, all religions, and many places of origin. Neutrality was impossible. South Carolina went to war with itself, and every single resident suffered. William Cunningham did not act independently from the war-within-a-war. He was part and

483. Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 520.

parcel of South Carolina's civil war. However, during the Bloody Scout, he took that conflagration to its highest level of vengeance and brutality.

As this book is being published, the United States of America and South Carolina in particular are observing the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding. The time frame for the observance should not be one day, July 4, 2026, but the entire span of the conflagration. During the observance, it is tempting to focus upon the nation's joy, gratitude, and pride. Every war, however upright its participants, involves unpleasantness. One should not evaluate William Cunningham's life without awareness of his surrounding culture and the wider war which fostered his violence. There was nothing virtuous about the Bloody Scout, and the rampage cannot be justified. But it had its causes, and they do not all rest in Cunningham's hardness of heart. Learning about Bloody Bill will inevitably cultivate distress.

In the early 1760s, Scots-Irish Presbyterians began establishing farms in southern Spartanburg County and founded Nazareth Presbyterian Church. It became the center of social life for the community. At the congregation's centennial observance in 1861, the Reverend George Howe felt called to remind his listeners of this unwelcome reality of internecine conflict during the Revolution: "The most bloody foes your fathers had were neighbors reared with them, acquainted with all their ways, and more unforgiving than those who had crossed the ocean to fight us." John "Jack" Buchanan astutely summarized the Bloody Scout: "The Bloody Scout did not serve a military purpose. It was a barbaric exercise in revenge by men hardened by six years of turmoil and war who had been on the receiving end of terrorism by the Rebels and had lost their homes and lands forever. For let us admit there were Rebels who equaled William Cunningham in savagery."⁴⁸⁴

No one can tally the number of Loyalists who lost their lives, nor the number of homes and farms destroyed between 1775 and 1783. Such information conveniently disappeared. As many have observed, the winners, not the losers, establish the narrative of wars. I hope this book has provided historical narratives which have been, until recent years, suppressed. Rebecca Brannon spent time in South Carolina for some of her research and writing. She later observed: "To this day South Carolinians excel at deliberately forgetting inconvenient memories of the reality of their first civil war – the American Revolution."⁴⁸⁵

General William Moultrie's 1802 *Memoirs* provided a perceptive summary of South Carolina's war-within-a-war. He addressed the dramatic turn of fortune when the British were forced back to the Charleston area in 1781. Not one to describe Loyalists with affirming words, Moultrie's observations serve as a reminder that Cunningham and other Loyalists were not the only ones who resorted to persecution and violence:

In a few weeks, the British were dispossessed of all their posts in the upper country, and the injured and exasperated Whigs had again the superiority. On their return to their homes, they found starving families, and desolate places. Sweet revenge comes now to reek [carry out] her vengeance on those infamous, merciless, bloody villains that had gone before. The Whigs began to plunder and murder.

The conduct of those two parties was a disgrace to human nature, and it may with safety be said that they destroyed more property, and shed more American blood than the whole British army.⁴⁸⁶

484. "Nazareth Church History," <https://cge.a42.myftpupload.com/history/> (accessed March 26, 2025); Lipscomb, *South Carolina Revolutionary Battles*, 10:14; Buchanan, *Road to Charleston*, 257-261.

485. Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion*, 140.

486. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 2: 303.

Timothy Compeau documented and analyzed the violence carried out by Patriots and Loyalists. He summarized history's high regard for the Patriots and low opinion of the Loyalists: "Nonetheless, it was the Loyalists in both history and memory, who acquired the reputation of bloodthirsty, vengeful killers." Compeau continued, "Loyalists underwent almost supernatural metamorphoses in the Patriot imagination." The life and legacy of William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham exemplifies the "supernatural metamorphoses" of Loyalists. However, despite the false narratives which developed concerning Cunningham, he was indeed a criminal who, without restraint, took dozens of lives and wrecked the lives of hundreds of innocent people.⁴⁸⁷

Cunningham's life provides insights into the Revolutionary War and the war-within-a-war in South Carolina. But his legacy was established during a small fraction of his life, the six weeks of the Bloody Scout. It is impossible to defend Cunningham's Bloody Scout. However, his behavior during the mission and the subsequent exaggerations of his other wartime activities offer a cautionary note. Humans have always been and continue to be keen to dehumanize those they perceive to be threats.

487. Compeau, *Dishonored Americans*, 80, 88.

Appendix A

Members of the Little River Loyalist Militia who participated in the Bloody Scout and returned to Charleston, December 1781

Major	Cunningham, William
Captains	Helms, William Hood, John Long, Richard Parker, William
Lieutenants	Cargil, Daniel, wounded Dyel, Isaac Nun, Joshua
Ensigns	Crum, Harmon Hughes, Ralph, wounded Melton, Michael Washam, Joshua
Sergeants	Atkins, John Foster, Henry, wounded Niblet, Timothy, wounded North, Thomas Philpot, Peter, wounded Sims, James Warton, Barkley, wounded
Privates	Atkins, Joseph, Sr. Atkins, Joseph, Jr. Atkins, Thomas Anderson, John Anderson, William Atkins, John Bealy, William Bratcher, William Burrows, William

Privates (cont'd)

Brown, John
Bunnels, William
Cradock, Bartholomew
Craddock, John
Cargal, John
Cargal, William
Collins, James
Cross, Joshua
Drew, William, rec'd Ralph Hughes
Duncan, Samuel
Ervin, William, wounded
Foy, James
David, George
Grimes, William
Goodin, John
Griffin, John, Sen., witness: William Helms
Green, James
Griffin, John, Jr.
Hendrick, Mickagey
Hendrick, Winn
Hughes, Thomas, rec'd William Parker
Johnson, Bunch, witness William Parker
Love, Matthew, wounded, not present
Largent, William
Lasley, William
Lasley, Joseph
Lasley, Thomas
Lester, James
Lester, Peter, witness: Capt. John Young
Long, David, killed, paid his brother Capt. Richard Long
Lucas, William
Martin, Daniel
Mading, John
Madon, John
Madon, Moses
Mills, Stephen
Mills, James
Murphy, Roger
Montgomery, Alexander

Musgrove, William
Niblet, Aaron
Proctor, Phillip, wounded
Proctor, Edward, witness: Richard King
Powel, Caleb, rec'd by Captain Long
Shayers, Archy
Stevenson, George
Shirlock, Joshua
Summers, James, witness: Thomas Pearson
Suter, William
Shurley, Robert
Silcock, John
Underwood, Joseph
West, John
Wood, Robert
Waits, Jonathan
Wood, Thomas, rec'd Ralph Huges
Wood, James
Williams, Joseph
Youngblood, Jesse, witness: Captain William Rhodes.¹

1. Murtie June Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign*, 1:269-270. The names of Ned and Dick Turner do not appear in this roster. However, they rode with the Little River Regiment and were dispatched to commit additional murders. See Appendix B for an excursus on their participation.

Appendix B

Excursus on Ned and Dick Turner

Only two historical works appear to provide dependable information about both Ned and Dick Turner. Though a secondary source, O'Neill and Chapman in *Annals of Newberry* told of both brothers and included extensive background information about the Turner family and the Patriots who Ned and Dick killed or tried to kill. In particular, they had a vendetta against men who killed their brother. A primary source of enormous value for the Turners and other Loyalists is Murtie June Clark's late twentieth-century transcriptions of British records.

The payroll abstracts verified that Ned and Dick ("Edward" and "David") entered the war with the British soon after the fall of Charleston. They served as privates in Major Patrick Cunningham's regiment, the Little River Royal Militia, from June 14 until December 13, in 1780. In addition, Clark identified two men named David and Edward Turner who fought in the second half of 1781. However, these Turners were in the Little River Militia of Colonel Thomas Pearson's regiment. David was a captain and Edward a lieutenant, so they were not the Turner men in question.

According to Clark, no Turners were on Major William Cunningham's payroll for the Bloody Scout expedition. However, O'Neill and Chapman portrayed Ned as the leader of the side mission of the Bloody Scout, which led to the deaths of the Grogan brothers and others. Though O'Neill and Chapman did not mention Dick, it is logical to conclude that Dick went along with Ned to avenge their brother's killing. According to Clark, privates Ned and Dick Turner received compensation for service under Major William Cunningham in the first quarter of 1782. For unknown reasons, Captain J. Robins served as a witness for Ned and Captain Richard Long as a witness for Dick. For the second quarter of 1782, neither brother received pay. This raises the possibility that both were wounded during the first quarter and could not serve during the second quarter. Ned was paid for serving under Cunningham during the third quarter, but Dick's name did not appear on the payroll. Because Dick was not with Cunningham in the second and third quarters, nor included in the pay abstracts for the fourth quarter of 1782, it would seem that he lost his life in actions in the Low Country or in the bloody encounter with William Butler at Lorick's Ferry. Cunningham filed for a private's compensation for Ned for the last quarter of 1782, when Cunningham and his captains rode to East Florida. In the main text of the present book, I tell of a continued partnership between Cunningham and Ned Turner that lasted until Cunningham was banished from Spanish territory.

I offer the following scenario for which I have no proof. The Turner brothers asked if they might ride with Cunningham on the Bloody Scout. Permission was granted, and without compensation they participated in the mission. As Cunningham promised, the Turners and a few like-minded men left Cunningham's main body for four or five days to avenge the killing of the Turners' brother.¹

1. O'Neill and Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, 59, 195, 201-202, 522-523, 614; Clark, *Loyalists in the Southern Campaigns*, 167, 254, 269-275, 297; Lynch, "The 'Celebrated and Notorious' Ned Turner."

Appendix C

Cunningham and Arthur Middleton's Thoroughbred Silver Heels

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, historians have shared the riveting narrative of Lorick's Ferry. In September 1782, Patriot Captain William Butler, a son and brother of two men who were murdered by William Cunningham the previous year, ambushed Cunningham's party in the Ninety Six District. The episode was one of Cunningham's closest encounters with capture or death, but he escaped Butler and returned safely to Charleston. Most of these accounts emphasized the life-or-death drama when Butler chased Cunningham. Some writers identified the splendid horses the two men rode. They reported Cunningham rode Silver Heels, a thoroughbred which he had taken from the plantation of Arthur Middleton, and that Butler rode the fast and sturdy Rantor. A close look at original sources proves that Cunningham never had possession of Silver Heels.

No one wrote a more detailed account of the Lorick's Ferry action than William Gilmore Simms. After Simms responded to Ann Pamela Cuninghams's story of the death and funeral of William's magnificent steed named Ringtail, Simms wrote:

The horsemanship of Cunningham, in particular, was considered very remarkable. He now rode a horse, perhaps scarcely less famous than the Ringtail of which our biographer was so lavish in his [Ann Pamela Cuninghams's] eulogy. This animal was commonly called Middleton's mare,--her proper name was "Silver Heels." We have before us, at this moment, amongst a variety of papers, original and otherwise, from which much of the material of our narrative is drawn, the original letter of the Hon. Arthur Middleton, acknowledging the return of the mare, at the hands of Captain William Butler, by whom she was captured in a pursuit of Cunningham, to which we have yet to refer. Middleton writes,—"She was got by my horse, Lofty, out of a chestnut mare I bought of Mr. John Parker, and was taken away, a yearling, by some of Prevost's (General Prevost of the British army) parties."¹

Having Middleton's own written words at hand, Simms quoted Middleton's report about his loss and recovery of Silver Heels. It is important to notice which words were Middleton's and which words were written by Simms. After Middleton described his prized horse's pedigree, he wrote that he lost Silver Heels when General Augustine Prevost's army, based in Savannah, approached and retreated from Charleston in the spring of 1779. Middleton did not mention the well-known Bloody Bill Cunningham or Lorick's Ferry. Instead, without reporting when or where William Butler retrieved the mare, Middleton credited Butler with finding the horse and returning her to the Middleton Plantation. Simms, not Middleton, wrote that Cunningham stole the horse from Middleton's stables. Simms wrote that Cunningham rode Silver Heels during the dramatic chase at Lorick's Ferry. Simms did not report that Butler captured Silver Heels during the chase. Cunningham lost his saddlebags, sword, and other accouterments, and Butler's men retrieved them. But according to Simms, Cunningham did not lose Silver Heels that day. In fact, Simms provided accounts of Cunningham's travels and actions in South Carolina in early 1783. Cunningham, according to Simms, rode Silver Heels. But as seen in chapter 12, Cunningham left South Carolina in late 1782 and

1. Simms, "Biographical Sketch," 580-584.

never returned. Nothing Simms reports about Cunningham's 1783 ventures in South Carolina should be taken as fact. Among his many literary endeavors, Simms wrote fiction. The renowned storyteller inserted Silver Heels into his Lorick's Ferry narrative to make the account more exciting for his readers.

Ann Pamela Cuningham, who Simms was refuting, gave scant attention to Lorick's Ferry and did not mention Silver Heels.² No writer put Silver Heels into a narrative of Lorick's Ferry until Simms did so. Some later nineteenth-century writers, such as J.B.O. Landrum, failed to mention the remarkable steed in their accounts of Lorick's Ferry. However, noted historian Edward McCrady followed Simms's narrative. McCrady told the story according to Simms's account and apparently depended solely upon him.³

At least one other nineteenth-century historian wrote about Lorick's Ferry and included Silver Heels. In 1885, Thomas P. Slider released *Memoirs of General William Butler*. Despite its title, the document is Slider's own account of Butler's life. Like McCrady, he appeared to rely upon Simms for his description of the chase.⁴

Slider continued with an erroneous account of Cunningham's activities after he left South Carolina. Slider wrote: "[Cunningham] retired to Cuba, where he was awarded after his arrival something like an ovation by the British for his traitorous services." As seen in chapters 12 and 13, Cunningham settled in British East Florida when the British evacuated Charleston. After the Spanish took control of East Florida, Cunningham was apprehended, jailed, and sent to Cuba for trial. Spanish authorities banished him from their territories and forced Cunningham to live in the Bahamas, where he died in 1787. Great Britain did not control Cuba during or following the American Revolution. This false narrative should lead readers to mistrust all that Slider wrote about Cunningham and Butler.

One can safely assume that Arthur Middleton was truthful about losing and regaining his prized horse. If Simms was also correct, then someone recaptured Silver Heels from the British sometime between the conclusion of Prevost's 1779 invasion of South Carolina and early 1782. This person returned her to Middleton's plantation. Then, when Cunningham needed another fast horse following Ringtail's death in January 1782, he stole Silver Heels from Middleton's plantation and rode the mare until early 1783. Only later did he lose Silver Heels. Butler found her and returned her to a grateful Middleton. But in fact, Cunningham left South Carolina in late 1782 and never returned.

Depending upon Middleton's own words, one comes to a simple narrative of Silver Heels. She was taken by the British in the spring of 1779. At some point, the British lost possession of her, possibly when they evacuated Savannah. The respected Captain, later General, Butler, found the horse and returned her to her rightful owner. Middleton provided a factual narrative, and Simms provided a fanciful one. William Cunningham never rode Silver Heels.

2. Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 646-647.

3. McCrady, *South Carolina in the Revolution*, 2:628-631.

4. Thomas P. Slider, *Memoirs of General William Butler Including a Brief Sketch of his Father and Brother who fell in the Revolution, at Cloud's Creek, Lexington District, SC* (Atlanta, GA: James P. Harrison and Co., 1885), 22-23.

Appendix D

The Blood Scout's Estimated Casualties

Bloody Scout Participants Killed

Event/Location	Date	Deaths	Notes
Stirling Turner killed Thomas Radcliff & Others	Nov. 15, 1781	5	Estimate
Cloud's Creek Massacre, Lexington Co.	Nov. 17, 1781	1	
Hayes's Station Massacre, Laurens Co.	Nov. 19, 1781	1	
Duncan's Creek, Laurens Co., hangings near Whitmire	Nov. 24, 1781	5	
Battle of the Tory Camps, Orangeburg Co.	Dec. 20, 1781	20	
Matthew Love lynched at Ninety Six, Greenwood Co.	Dec. 1784	1	
TOTAL		33	

Victims of Bloody Scout Unarmed Patriot Victims

Event/Location	Date	Deaths	Notes
Daniel Williams kills Thomas Ellison	Nov. 16	1	
Cloud's Creek	Nov. 17	14	JD Lewis reports 28 killed
Capt. John Caldwell , Newberry Co.	Nov. 18	1	
Capt. John Towles, Jr., Newberry Co.	Nov. 18	1	
Oliver Towles and others killed, Newberry Co.	Nov. 19	3	
Hayes's Station Massacre, Laurens Co.	Nov. 19	15	Possibly 16
Samuel Moore murdered, Laurens Co.	Nov. 20	1	
James Wood murdered, Spartanburg Co.	Nov. 22	1	
John Wood murdered, Spartanburg Co.	Nov. 22	1	
Hilliard Thomas murdered, Spartanburg Co.	Nov. 22	1	
Mr. Lawson murdered, Spartanburg Co.	Nov. 22	1	
John Snoddy murdered, Spartanburg Co.	Nov. 22	1	
John Knox murdered, Chester Co.	Nov. 23	1	
Thomas Dunlap murdered, Union Co.	Nov. 23	1	
Ned Turner caught the Dugan bros. & later killed them	Nov. 25	2	
Turner killed John Ford & Jacob Anderson	Nov. 25	2	
Turner killed Daniel Goggan, Newberry Co.,	Nov. 25	1	
Crawford killed George Foreman & two sons, Edgefield Co.	Dec. 4	3	
McCord Creek Massacre led by Crawford, Abbeville Co.	Dec. 7	8	Estimate
Total Unarmed Men Murdered		59	

Armed Patriots Killed

Event/Location	Date	Deaths	Notes
Moore's Defeat, Orangeburg Co.	Nov. 13	11	
Slaughter Field, Barnwell Co.	Dec. 22	16	
Total Armed Patriots Killed		27	
Total Bloody Scout Victims		86	

Bibliography

Abbreviations

JAR: Journal of the American Revolution

NBBS: Nothing But Blood and Slaughter, O'Kelley

PNG: Papers of Nathanael Greene

SCAR: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution

Primary Sources

MANUSCRIPTS

Balfour, Nisbet. "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina, May 16, 1786." <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn5.htm>. Accessed Jan. 14, 2024.

Clinton, Sir Henry. "Proclamation of Pardon for Rebels," June 1, 1780. <https://charlestonlibrarysociety.omeka.net/items/show/1331>.

Cunningham, William. "Memorial of William Cunningham of South Carolina, May 11, 1786." <https://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn.htm>. Accessed Oct. 6, 2024.

Draper, Lyman C. Manuscript Collection. Microfilm. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

Graham, John. Diary. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

Hamilton, John. "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham, May 11, 1786." <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn6.htm>. Accessed Jan. 14, 2024.

Loyalist Claims, Great Britain Audit Office Papers, Vol. 12, 1776-1831. Loyalist Collection, Series 1. <https://loyalist.lib.unb.ca/node/4127>.

McArthur, Archibald. "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina, Feb. 24, 1786." <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn3.htm>. Accessed Jan. 14, 2024.

Rawdon, Lord Francis. "Witness on behalf of William Cunningham of South Carolina, May 17, 1786." <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/mems/sc/clmcunn4.htm>. Accessed Jan. 14, 2024.

PENSION APPLICATIONS

- Arnold, Thomas. Pension Application W5640. April 16, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/w5640.pdf>. Accessed Aug. 13, 2024.
- Boon, Thomas. Pension Application W23656. Dec. 3, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/w23656.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2024.
- Cannon, James. Pension Application S16684. Feb. 4, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/s16684.pdf>. Accessed Aug. 13, 2024.
- Corley, Abner. Pension Application S21707. April 10 (no year provided). <https://revwarapps.org/s21707.pdf>. Accessed Dec 9, 2024.
- Downs, Jonathan. Pension Application W2100. Dec. 10, 1838. <https://revwarapps.org/w2100.pdf>. Accessed July 16, 2024.
- England, William. Pension Application S10631. Oct. 24, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/S10631>. Accessed Dec. 10, 2024.
- Ferguson (or Furgason), Andrew. Pension Application S32243. Aug. 15, 1838. <https://revwarapps.org/s32243.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2024.
- Gibbs, Shadrach. Pension Application S10740. March 11, 1836. <https://revwarapps.org/s10740.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Gillespie, Daniel. Pension Application S3692. Oct. 1, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/sS31692.pdf>. Accessed May 6, 2024.
- Grant, William. Pension Application W1757. March 1835. <https://revwarapps.org/w1757.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Guyton, Aaron. Pension Application W21237. Oct. 1, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/w21237.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Hodges, John. Pension Application W10117. Oct. 3, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/w10117.pdf>. Accessed Dec. 10, 2024.
- Hughes, Joseph. Pension Application S31764. Sept. 20, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/s31764.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Kirkpatrick, Robert. Pension Application S1845. Nov. 13, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/s1845.pdf>. Accessed April 9, 2024.
- McWhorter, John. Pension Application S32400. June 28, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/s32400.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2024.
- Miller, John. Pension Application S1702. Dec. 19, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/s1702.pdf>. Accessed Aug. 13, 2024.
- O'Sheals, Jethro (also Oshiel, Oshiels, and O'Shields). Pension Application S18144. Sept. 27, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/s18144.pdf>. Accessed Aug. 13, 2024.
- Parker, John. Pension Application S21414. Oct. 1 (no year provided). <https://revwarapps.org/s21414>. Accessed Dec. 10, 2024.
- Rowdon, George. Pension Application S15623. Feb. 27, 1834. <https://revwarapps.org/s15623.pdf>. Accessed May 6, 2024.
- Sample, John. Pension Application S32505. Jan. 28, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/s32505.pdf>. Accessed Dec. 10, 2024.

- Smith, Henry. Pension Application W2183. Jan. 28, 1833. <https://revwarapps.org/w2183.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Sterling, Silas C. Pension Application R10120. Oct. 4, 1843. <https://revwarapps.org/r10120.pdf>. Accessed May 1, 2024.
- Tinsley, James. Pension Application S21426. Sept. 25, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/s21426.pdf>. Accessed Dec. 10, 2024.
- Wallace (or Wallis), John. Pension Application R11085. Oct. 17, 1832. <https://revwarapps.org/r11085.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.

PUBLISHED WORKS

- “Aedanus Burke to Governor Benjamin Guerard.” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 59-61.
- Chesney, Alexander. *The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After*. Edited by E. Alfred Jones. *Ohio State University Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (Oct. 30, 1921). <https://archive.org/details/journalofalexand00ches>. Accessed Nov. 27, 2024.
- Clark, Murtie June. *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War: Official Rolls of Loyalists Recruited from North Carolina and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana*, vol. 1. Genealogical Publishing Co., 1981.
- Curwen, Samuel. *Journals and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen during the American Revolution, Judge Of Admiralty, Etc., An American Refugee In England, From 1775 To 1784, Comprising Remarks On The Prominent Men And Measures Of That Period. To Which Are Added, Biographical Notices Of Many American Loyalists And Other Eminent Persons*, 3rd edition. Edited by George A. Ward. New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co., 1845.
- Fanning, David. *Colonel Fanning's Narrative of His Exploits and Adventures as a Loyalist of North Carolina in the American Revolution*. Edited by A. W. Savary. Toronto: 1903. <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.98061>. Accessed Nov. 19, 2024.
- Gibbes, Robert W., ed. *Documentary History of the American Revolution, Consisting of Letters and Papers Relating to the Contest for Liberty Chiefly in South Carolina, from Originals in the Possession of General Francis Marion, by Gen. Peter Horry, of Marion's Brigade: Together with Others from the Collection of the Editor*. 3 vols. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1853-1857.
- Greene, Nathanael. *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*. Edited by Richard K. Showman and Dennis M. Conrad. University of North Carolina Press, Vol. 7, 1994-Vol. 12, 2002.
- The Last Days of British St. Augustine, 1784-1785: A Spanish Census of the English Colony of East Florida*. Translated and edited by Lawrence H. Feldman. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1998.
- “Marriage and Death Notices from the *Charleston Post and Daily Advertiser*,” compiled by Mabel L. Webber, *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 20, no. 1 (1919): 260-261, https://archive.org/details/schgm/The_South_Carolina_Historical_and_Genealogical_Magazine_Volume_K/page/260/mode/2up?view=theater.
- Moultrie, William. *Memoirs of the American Revolution: So Far As It Related to the States of North and South Carolina and Georgia*. 2 vols. New York: David Longworth, 1802.

NEWSPAPERS

Pennsylvania Packet, Philadelphia.

Royal Georgia Gazette, Savannah.

South Carolina Royal Gazette, Charleston (R. Wells & Son).

South Carolina Gazette & General Advertiser Extraordinary, Charleston.

The State, Columbia, SC.

Secondary Sources

BOOKS

Andrew, Rod, Jr. *The Life and Times of General Andrew Pickens: Revolutionary War Hero, American Founder*. University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Bass, Robert Duncan. *Gamecock: The Life and Campaigns of General Thomas Sumter*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961.

Boddie, John Bennett. *Virginia Historical Genealogies*. Redwood, CA: Pacific Coast Publishers, 1954.

Brannon, Rebecca. *From Revolution to Reunion: The Reintegration of the South Carolina Loyalists*. University of South Carolina Press, 2016.

Brown, Richard Maxwell. *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism*. Oxford University Press, 1975.

Buchanan, John. *The Road to Charleston: Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution*. University of Virginia Press, 2019.

Buchanan, John. *The Road to Guilford Courthouse*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997.

Burns, Russell and Richard Fowler, eds., *Discovering Laurens County, South Carolina, Volume 1, From Pre-History through the Colonial Period*. Laurens, SC: The Discovery Book Project, 2014.

Cecere, Michael. *March to Independence: The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies, 1775–1776*. Westholme Publishing, 2021.

Collingwood, R. G. *The Idea of History*. Clarendon Press, 1946.

Compeau, Timothy. *Dishonored Americans: The Political Death of Loyalists in Revolutionary America*. University of Virginia Press, 2023.

Crawford, Alan Pell. *This Fierce People: The Untold Story of America's Revolutionary War in the South*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2024.

Draper, Lyman C. *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780 and the Events Which Led To It*. Cincinnati: 1881.

Edgar, Walter. *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution*. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Ellet, Elizabeth F. *Women of the American Revolution*. Vol. 1. New York: Baker and Scribner, 1848.

Fischer, David Hackett. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Fowler, Richard, ed. *Discovering Laurens County, South Carolina, Vol. 2: Revolution and County Growth, 1775–1840*. Laurens, SC: The Discovery Book Project, 2015.

- Gilbert, Oscar E. and Catherine R. Gilbert. *True for the Cause of Liberty: The Second Spartan Regiment in the American Revolution*. Casemate Publishers, 2015.
- Glickstein, Don. *After Yorktown: The Final Struggle for American Independence*. Westholme Publishing, 2015.
- Graves, William T. *Backcountry Revolutionary: James Williams (1740–1780) with Source Documents*. Lugoff, SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2012.
- Harper, Josephine L. *Guide to the Draper Manuscripts*. Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1983.
- Herlong, Bela Padgett, Carol Hardy Bryan, and Charles Reneau Andrews. *Where Our Paths Crossed: The Old Edgefield District Settlement of Mount Willing*. 2 vols. Cumming, GA: Mount Willing Press, 2011.
- Holton, Woody. *Liberty is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution*. Simon and Schuster, 2021.
- Huff, A. V. *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- Jasanoff, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary War*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.
- Jones, Charles C., Jr., ed. *The History of Georgia: Aboriginal and Colonial Epochs*. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1883.
- Lambert, Robert Stansbury. *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*. 2nd edition. Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010.
- Landrum, John Belton O'Neall. *Colonial and Revolutionary History of "Upper" South Carolina: embracing for the most part the primitive and colonial history of the territory comprising the original county of Spartanburg, with a general review of the entire military operations in the upper portions of South Carolina and portions of North Carolina*. Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co., 1897.
- Landrum, John Belton O'Neall. *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*. Atlanta, GA: Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1900.
- Lipscomb, Terry W. *South Carolina Revolutionary War Battles, parts 7-10, 1773-1783*. Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
- McCall, Hugh. *The History of Georgia Containing Brief Sketches of the Most Remarkable Events Up to the Present Day (1784)*. Vol. 2. Savannah, GA, 1816.
- McCrary, Edward. *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution*. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan Company, 1902.
- Moss, Bobby Gilmer. *The Loyalists at King's Mountain*. Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1998.
- Moss, Bobby Gilmer. *The Loyalists in the Siege at Fort Ninety-Six*. Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1999.
- Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, *Historical Sketch of Ann Pamela Cunningham, the "Southern Matron," Founder of "The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association"*. New York: Marion Press, 1903.
- O'Kelley, Patrick. *Nothing But Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas*. 4 vols. Blue House Tavern Press, 2004-2005.
- O'Neall, John Belton and John Abney Chapman. *Annals of Newberry: In Two Parts*. Newberry, SC: Aull & Houseal, 1892.
- O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America*. Yale University Press, 2013.

- Palmer, Gregory. *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*. Meckler Publishing, 1984.
- Parker, John C., Jr. *Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina: Battles, Skirmishes, and Murders*. 4th ed. Columbia, SC: Harrellson Publishing, 2022.
- Piecuch, Jim. *South Carolina Provincials: Loyalists in British Service during the American Revolution*. Westholme Publishing, 2023.
- Piecuch, Jim. *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782*. University of South Carolina Press, 2008.
- Ramsay, David. *The History of the Revolution of South Carolina from a British Province to an Independent State*, vol. 1. Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785.
- Rubin, Louis D., Jr. *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South*. Louisiana State University Press, 1989.
- Sabine, Lorenzo. *The American Loyalists, or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution; Alphabetically Arranged; with a Preliminary Historical Essay*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown Co., 1847.
- Salley, Alexander Samuel, Jr. *The History of Orangeburg County, South Carolina: From Its First Settlement Until the Revolutionary War*. Orangeburg, SC: R. L. Berry, Inc., 1898.
- Scarlett, Kenneth. *Victory Day: Winning American Independence: The Defeat of the British Southern Strategy*. Palmetto Press, 2022.
- Scoggins, Michael C. *Relentless Fury: The Revolutionary War in the Southern Piedmont*. Rock Hill, SC: Culture and Heritage Museum, 2006.
- Scoggins, Michael C. *The Day It Rained Militia: Huck's Defeat and the Revolution in the South Carolina Backcountry, May-July 1780*. History Press, 2005.
- Siebert, Wilbur H. *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774 to 1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto, Edited with an Accompanying Narrative*. 2 vols. DeLand: Florida State Historical Society, 1929.
- Slider, Thomas P. *Memoirs of General William Butler Including a Brief Sketch of his Father and Brother who fell in the Revolution, at Cloud's Creek, Lexington District, SC*. Atlanta, GA: James P. Harrison and Co., 1885.
- Snipes, D. Christy. *Rosemont Plantation, Laurens County, South Carolina: A History of the Cunningham Family and Its Life on the Land*. Gray Court, SC: Rosemont Preservation Society, 1992.
- Sosin, Jack M. *The Revolutionary Frontier 1763—1783*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967.

ARTICLES

- Adams, William Webster. "The Lower Towns of the Cherokee Nation." *Sandlapper Magazine* (Year-end 1991).
- "Battle of Brier Creek." *Georgia's Revolutionary War Trail*. <https://gasocietysar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Brier-Creek-2021.pdf>. Accessed Dec. 9, 2024.
- Barnwell, Joseph W. "The Evacuation of Charleston by the British in 1782." *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 11, no. 1 (Jan. 1910): 1-26. https://archive.org/stream/jstor-27575255/27575255_djvu.txt.

- Baxley, Charles B. "Gen. Nathanael Greene's Operations, November 1781-February 1782." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 12, no. 1.1 (Jan. 23, 2015). <https://southern-campaigns.org/gen-nathanael-greenes-operations-november-1781-february-1782>. Accessed April 23, 2023.
- Baxley, Charles B., David Neilan, and C. Leon Harris, "Outfoxed – Marion's Forces Dispersed by a Genius: Wambaw Bridge and Tidyman's Plantation, February 24-25, 1782." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 12, no. 1.12, (July 2018). <https://southern-campaigns.org/marions-troubles-wambaw-creek-tidymans-plantation/>. Accessed July 1, 2024.
- Bell, J. L. "The Myth of Provost William Cunningham" (Oct. 10, 2007). <https://boston1775.blogspot.com/2007/10/myth-of-provost-william-cunningham.html>. Accessed Nov. 15, 2024.
- Brooks, Jim S. "The Iron Works on Lawson's Fork." <https://www.piedmont-historical-society.org/records/pdf/TheIronworksonLawsonsFork.pdf>. Accessed Jan. 28, 2025.
- Burrows, Edwin G. "Patriots or Terrorists? The Lost Story of Revolutionary War POWs." *American Heritage* 58, no. 5 (Fall 2008). <https://www.americanheritage.com/patriots-or-terrorists>. Accessed Nov. 15, 2024.
- Caldwell, William. "Isaac Shelby, Patrick Ferguson, and Fire and Sword: The Power of a Good Story." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 28, 2024). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2024/05/isaac-shelby-patrick-ferguson-and-fire-sword-the-power-of-a-good-story>. Accessed Sept. 3, 2024.
- Crawley, Ron. "Major James Dunlop: 'An Officer of Much Energy and Promptitude.'" <https://www.schistory.net/3CLD/Articles/Biographical%20Sketch%20of%20James%20Dunlop.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Davis, Robert S. "Augusta at the Center: Loyalist Rebels and the Failure of the King's Cause in the Georgia Backcountry." *Augusta Richmond County History* 49 (Spring 2018):17-29.
- Davis, Robert S. "Fighting in the Shadowlands: Loyalist Colonel Thomas Waters and the Southern Strategy." *Journal of the American Revolution* (June 11, 2024). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2024/06/fighting-in-the-shadowlands-loyalist-colonel-thomas-waters-and-the-southern-strategy>. Accessed June 22, 2024.
- Davis, Robert S. "The Battle of Kettle Creek." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 2 (Feb. 2006): 30-37.
- Davis, Robert S. "The Battle of Briar Creek, Georgia." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, nos. 10-11 (Oct.-Nov. 2006): 26-28.
- Dunkerly, Robert M. "Chaos in the Backcountry: Battle of Ninety Six." *Journal of the American Revolution* (June 24, 2013). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/06/chaos-in-the-backcountry-the-battle-of-ninety-six/>. Accessed Feb. 14, 2025.
- Goldsmith, Joe. "Touring Laurens County, South Carolina's Revolutionary War Sites." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 1, no. 3 (Nov. 2004): 14-22.
- Harrington, Hugh T. "Anthony Wayne's 1782 Savannah Campaign." *Journal of the American Revolution*. <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/10/anthony-waynes-1782-savannah-campaign/>. (Oct. 29, 2014).
- Harris, C. Leon. "Massacre at the Waxhaws: The Wounds Bear Witness." Manuscript published 2024. https://www.academia.edu/118018911/Massacre_at_Waxhaws_the_Wounds_Bear_Witness. Accessed May 6, 2024.
- Harris, C. Leon and Charles B. Baxley. "Thunder Even at the Gates of Charlestown: Thomas Sumter's Raid of the Dog Days of 1781." https://www.academia.edu/118970918/Thunder_Even_at_the_Gates_of_Charlestown_Thomas_Sumter_s_Raid_of_the_Dog_Days_of_1781. Accessed Sept. 3, 2024.

- Harris, C. Leon and Connor Runyan. "James Dunlap: British Officer in Ferguson's Army." <https://amrevnc.com/biographies/james-dunlap>. Accessed May 1, 2024.
- Harris, C. Leon and Conner Runyan, "Prelude to Kings Mountain: Colonel Charles McDowell's Campaign in the South Carolina Backcountry." Manuscript published 2023. https://www.academia.edu/108514124/Prelude_to_Kings_Mountain_Colonel_Charles_McDowells_Campaign_in_the_South_Carolina_Backcountry. Accessed July 6, 2024.
- Hemmis, Timothy C. "Under the Banner of War: Frontier Militia and Uncontrolled Violence." *Journal of the American Revolution* (March 29, 2022). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2022/03/under-the-banner-of-war-frontier-militia-and-uncontrolled-violence>. Accessed March 5, 2024.
- Hunt, Agnes. "The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution." First published in 1904. <https://www.committee.org/PCOS33SouthCarolina.htm>. Accessed Oct. 15, 2024.
- Ingle, Sheila. "South Carolina Biography: Revolutionary Women: Jane Black Thomas." <https://southcarolina250.com/publications/>. Accessed April 23, 2024.
- Klein, Rachel. "Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation." *William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Oct. 1981): 661-680. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1918909>. Accessed Oct. 1, 2024.
- Lockey, Joseph B. "The Florida Banditti, 1783." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Oct. 1945). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30138586>. Accessed Nov. 10, 2023.
- Lynch, Wayne. "Tory Stories from the Simsbury Copper Mine." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 13, 2013). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/05/tory-stories-from-the-simsbury-copper-mine>. Accessed March 5, 2024.
- Lynch, Wayne. "The Making of a Loyalist." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Jan. 1, 2014). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/01/making-loyalist>. Accessed March 30, 2024.
- Lynch, Wayne. "Major James Dunlap: Was He Murdered Twice?" *Journal of the American Revolution* (Jan. 14, 2016). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/01/major-james-dunlap-murdered-twice>. Accessed April 20, 2024.
- MacIntyre, Doug. "Danger at the Breach." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 11, 2023). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2023/05/danger-at-the-beach>. Accessed Dec. 17, 2024.
- Mount Vernon Ladies Association. "The Early History of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association." <https://www.mountvernon.org/preservation/mount-vernon-ladies-association/early-history>. Accessed Nov. 28, 2024.
- O'Neill, John Belton. "Random Recollections of Revolutionary Characters and Incidents." *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of Arts* 4, no. 1 (July 1838).
- Piecuch, Jim. "Francis Marion Meets His Match: Benjamin Thompson Defeats the "Swamp Fox." *Journal of the American Revolution* (April 29, 2014). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/04/francis-marion-meets-his-match-benjamin-thompson-defeats-the-swamp-fox/>. Accessed March 7, 2025.
- Piecuch, Jim. "The Loyalist Exodus of 1778." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 17, 2016). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/05/the-loyalist-exodus-of-1778>. Accessed Oct. 1, 2024.
- Piecuch, Jim. "Richard Pearis and the Mobilization of South Carolina's Backcountry Loyalists." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Oct. 27, 2024). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/10/richard-pearis-and-the-mobilization-of-south-carolinas-backcountry-loyalists/>. Accessed Nov. 7, 2023.
- Procknow, Gene. "Top 10 Loyalist Officers." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Feb. 24, 2014). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/02/top-10-american-loyalist-officers>. Accessed January 14, 2024.

- Runyan, Conner. "We Have Sacrificed Our All." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 25, 2017). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2017/05/we-have-sacrificed-our-all/>. Accessed Jan. 12, 2025.
- Saberton, Ian. "Midsummer 1780 in the Carolinas and Georgia-Events Predating the Battle of Camden." *Journal of the American Revolution* (July 15, 2019). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2019/07/midsummer-1780-in-the-carolinas-and-georgia-events-predating-the-battle-of-camden/> Accessed Oct. 1, 2024.
- Saberton, Ian. "The Revolutionary War in the South: Reevaluations for Certain British and British American Actors." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Nov. 21, 2016). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/11/revolutionary-war-south-re-evaluations-certain-british-british-american-actors.> Accessed July 10, 2024.
- Schenawolf, Harry. "Battle of Brier Creek: American Rout that Opened the Carolinas to Invasion." *Revolutionary War Journal* (Jan. 2, 2023). <https://revolutionarywarjournal.com/battle-of-brier-creek-american-rout-that-opened-the-carolinas-to-invasion.> Accessed March 30, 2024.
- Schenawolf, Harry. "Lord Rawdon in America." *Revolutionary War Journal* (March 28, 2023). <https://revolutionarywarjournal.com/lord-rawdon.> Accessed Nov. 21, 2024.
- Simms, William Gilmore. "Biographical Sketch of the Career of Major William Cunningham, of South Carolina." *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review* 12, no. 9 (Sept. 1846), no. 10 (Oct. 1846). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000080746161&seq=591>. Accessed Dec. 1, 2023.
- Simms, William Gilmore. "South Carolina in the Revolution." *The Southern Quarterly Review* 14, no. 27, July 1848: 37-77.
- Simms, William Gilmore. "The Civil Warfare in the Carolinas and Georgia, During the Revolution." *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review* 12, no. 5 (May 1846), no. 6 (June 1846), no. 7 (July 1846). <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acf2679.0012.005/26>. Accessed Dec. 24, 2024.
- Skinner, H. Allen. "Patriots and Politics, Redcoats and Reconstruction: General Nathanael Greene's Grand Southern Strategy." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Jan. 10, 2023). https://allthingsliberty.com/2023/01/patriots-and-politics-redcoats-and-reconstruction-general-nathanael-greenes-grand-southern-strategy/#google_vignette. Accessed June 27, 2024.
- Smith, Roger. "The Southern Expedition of 1776: The Best Kept Secret of the American Revolution." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Sept. 20, 2016). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/09/southern-expedition-1776-american-revolutions-best-kept-secret.> Accessed Nov. 29, 2024.
- South Carolina Department of Archives and History. "The Long Cane Massacre Site." <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/mccormick/S10817733008/index.htm>. Accessed Nov. 13, 2024.
- Stern, Eric. "Moravians in the Middle: The Gnadenhütten Massacre." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Feb. 6, 2016). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/02/moravians-middle-gnadenhuetten-massacre.> Accessed Sept. 30, 2024.
- Troxler, Carole Watterson. "Loyalist Refugees and the British Evacuation of East Florida, 1783-1785." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (July 1981): 1-28.
- Troxler, Carole Watterson. "Refuge, Resistance, and Reward: The Southern Loyalists' Claim on East Florida." *Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 4 (Nov. 1989): 563-596.
- Waters, Andrew. "Hammond's Store: The 'Dirty War's' Prelude to Cowpens." *Journal of the American Revolution* (Dec. 10, 2018). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/12/hammonds-store-the-dirty-wars-prelude-to-cowpens.> Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.
- Waters, Andrew. "Sumter's Rounds: The Ill-Fated Campaign of Thomas Sumter, February–March 1781." *Journal of the American Revolution* (May 23, 2018). <https://allthingsliberty.com/2018/05/sumters-rounds-the-ill-fated-campaign-of-thomas-sumter-february-march-1781.> Accessed Oct. 9, 2024.

Withrow, Scott. "William Washington: Cavalry Man in the Southern Campaigns." *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* 3, no. 4 (April 2006): 21-31. <https://southern-campaigns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/v3n4.pdf>, pg. 21 Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.

Wood, Paul A., Jr. "South Carolina Biography: Revolutionary Women, Laodicea 'Dicey' Langston Springfield." <https://southcarolina250.com/publication/laodicea-dicey-langston-springfield-sc-revolutionary-war-heroine/>. Accessed Sept. 28, 2024.

DISSERTATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS

Barnwell, Robert Woodward, Jr. "Loyalists in South Carolina, 1765-1785." PhD. diss., Duke University, 1941. internetarchive.org. Accessed Nov. 27, 2024.

Baxley, Charles B. "Notes on Maj. James Dunlap's Defeat." April 30, 2023. Unpublished manuscript.

Baxley, Charles B. "South Carolina Loyalist Militiamen at the Battle of Kings Mountain." December 19, 2020. Unpublished manuscript.

Brannon, Rebecca Nathan. "Reconciling the Revolution: Resolving Conflict and Building Community in the Wake of Civil War in South Carolina, 1775-1860." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/57715>. Accessed July 2, 2024.

Jameson, John H., Jr. "The Lesser Known Frontier Forts & Actions of Backcountry Militia in the Revolutionary War." Presentation made to the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War Roundtable, Wofford College, April 8, 2013. netally.com. Accessed Oct. 8, 2024.

Jensen, Faye. "May 1777: The Treaty of Dewitt's Corner" (blog). *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, May 1, 2023. <https://schistory.org/may-1777-treaty-of-dewitts-corner>. Accessed Oct. 1, 2024.

Parker, John C., Jr. "Dunlap's Defeat." No date. Unpublished manuscript.

Acknowledgments

This book would have never come to fruition without the backing of the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SC250). The commission's enthusiasm and grant were invaluable. The commissioners and their two initial staff members, Molly Fortune and Heather Hawkins, provided me with immeasurable encouragement and guidance. All South Carolinians can be proud of the remarkable contributions which their publicly funded commission is making to advance research, to preserve historic sites, to interpret the war that birthed the nation, and to celebrate our nation's freedom and independence.

Partnership is built into the DNA of the South Carolina Sestercentennial Commission. For example, scholars work with amateur historians. Also, county-level committees do grassroots work and link up with nearby counties to interpret and celebrate wartime events which occurred in more than one county. In the Preface I highlight how Charles Baxley and Jack Parker launched me into this project. Then, to my surprise, an informal support network was born. How often have I introduced myself and the book project to someone at a conference or received a phone call or email from a stranger? Many of these interactions have led to significant learnings about Cunningham and the start of new friendships.

When they learned about my research, historians, both professional and amateur, were eager for me to pick up where Jack Parker left off, to take Jack's research to even higher levels, and to assemble a complete biography. Several PhDs and lifelong nonprofessional historians took me under their powerful wings. They never scoffed at this rookie historian who posed questions which sprang from astounding ignorance but also genuine curiosity.

Along with the praise and gratitude which I express in the Preface to Charles Baxley and Jack Parker, I wish to recognize the assistance of many other individuals, including my beta readers: John Allison, Durant Ashmore, Eric Barnes, John Beakes, Todd Braisted, Judith Chandler, Dennis Chastain, Bill Davies, Bob Davis, Brittny Evans, Bill Funderburk, William "Will" Graves, C. Leon Harris, Dean Hunt, Christie Lang, JD Lewis, Garrison Marcoux, Nel Marshall, Jim Piecuch, Ken Scarlett, Guy Wallace, and Andrew Waters. For their never-ending encouragement, I also want to thank my brothers Bob and Jimmy and our mother, Ruby Wood, as well as my daughter and son, Jane Wood Hray and Paul Wood III.

Several other groups also warrant my kudos, including archivists and historians in the Bahamas, the Research Room staff at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, and the Body Care/Spirit Care clergy group of the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Finally, I could not have finished this book without the unbounded support of my wife, Kay Langston Wood. Kay served as our navigator on our all-important Bloody Bill driving tour. She helped me through my weariness and tolerated my foul moods. When other people questioned the value of this project, Kay reminded me that the public needed to learn about Bloody Bill and South Carolina's civil war. She rejoiced with me whenever I made a discovery or reached another milestone. Kay was my partner all the way.