

CHAPTER 11 THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

- A. Introduction. In the fall of 1775, the Provincial Congress became more assertive in its efforts to make Charleston more secure against possible British attacks. At the same time, the Congress was faced with what it feared most – an attack from disgruntled back countrymen.

- B. Early Maneuvering
 - 1. William Moultrie seized Fort Johnson in Charleston harbor.
 - 2. The Hog Island channel, which would allow warships to get too close to the city, was blocked with old ships.

- C. The Backcountry Rebels
 - 1. Backcountry loyalists besieged Ninety Six.
 - 2. A patriot army tracked down the loyalists during the famous “Snow Campaign.”
 - 3. The Provincial Congress’ lenient treatment of the backcountry leaders helped calm a potentially dangerous situation.

- D. The War in 1776
 - 1. The Cherokee went on the warpath.
 - 2. Frontiersmen from the two Carolinas and Virginia ruthlessly counterattacked the Cherokee and forced them to sue for peace.
 - *3. Battle at Sullivan’s Island**
 - *a. South Carolinians defended an incomplete palmetto log fort.**
 - *b. The might of the British navy could not dislodge the determined Carolinians.**
 - *c. The battle gave South Carolina and the United States heroes in General Moultrie and Sergeant Jasper.**
 - d. The victory at Sullivan’s Island was a major psychological boost for the American cause.

E. A Few Quiet Years

1. From 1776 until 1780, Charleston remained open and a prosperous trade developed with France and her colonies.
2. In 1778, the British captured Savannah.
3. In 1779, many South Carolinians participated in the ill-fated attempt to recapture Savannah.
4. The British plundered isolated coastal plantation but made no serious threat to move against Charleston.

***F. The Campaign Against Charleston**

- *1. Sir Henry Clinton and an army of 11,000 men sailed for South Carolina early in 1780.**
- *2. General Benjamin Lincoln and 6,000 men defended the coast and Charleston.**
- *3. The British trapped the Americans in Charleston.**
- *4. Charleston surrendered May 12, 1780.**

G. The Civilian Side of the War (1776-1780)

- *1. South Carolina adopted one of the first constitutions of any colony in March 1776.**
 - a. The Constitution was supposed to be “temporary” until the troubles with great Britain were resolved.
 - b. The lowcountry still was overrepresented and the backcountry underrepresented in what now was called the General Assembly.
- *2. The Declaration of Independence was welcomed by South Carolinians, particularly as news of it arrived after the Battle at Sullivan’s Island.**
3. Public apathy was widespread during the lull in the fighting (1776-1780).
 - a. Voter turnout was light in General Assembly elections.
 - b. The state had to offer bonuses to get men to enlist in the army.
 - c. In 1778, South Carolina revised its laws so that up to one-third of its armed forces could be slaves.

- *4. In the Continental Congress, Henry Laurens of South Carolina served as President (1777-1778) and as one of the commissioners to negotiate the peace treaty ending the war.**
 - *a. Enroute to France, he was captured, imprisoned in the Tower of London, and eventually exchanged for Lord Cornwallis who had been captured at Yorktown.**
 - *b. In 1782, he signed the preliminary peace treaty along with Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay.**
- *H. After the fall of Charleston**
 - *1. British cruelty and blundering helped generate opposition to their occupation.**
 - *2. South Carolinians resorted to partisan (also called irregular or guerilla) warfare.**
 - *a. The British may have controlled Charleston and other towns, but the partisans controlled the countryside.**
 - *b. Partisan leaders such as Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens led the fight to defeat the British.**
 - *3. Battles at Camden and Fishing Creek were disasters for the Americans and led our French allies to believe that South Carolina had been restored to the British Empire.**
 - *4. The Battle at King's Mountain turned the tide of the war in the South.**
 - *5. Three months later, the American victory at the Battle of Cowpens was another setback for the British.**
 - *6. Lord Cornwallis followed the Americans into North Carolina where, after the Battle at Guilford Courthouse, he abandoned the Carolinas and marched his army to Yorktown and surrender.**
- *I. The Reconquest of South Carolina**
 - *1. Partisans were crucial in helping defeat the British.**
 - *2. Continentals (regular American soldiers) under Nathanael Greene fought side by side with South Carolina's partisans.**
 - *3. There were a total of 137 battles fought in South Carolina during the Revolution.**

J. South Carolina Government During the Occupation

1. Governor John Rutledge helped rally the people outside Charleston to the American cause.
2. In 1782, the General Assembly met in Jacksonborough.
 - a. It gave General Greene a valuable plantation as thanks for his service in behalf of South Carolina.
 - b. It passed laws punishing those South Carolinians who had been loyal to the British (Tories).
3. The British evacuated Charleston in December 1782.

K. Aftermath of the War

1. The British plundered the state of anything that they could carry off, including some 25,000 slaves.
2. Property losses were widespread.
3. The warfare between patriots and Tories in the backcountry had left a lingering bitterness that would take time to heal.
4. About 3,800 Tories (5% of the white population) left South Carolina.
- *5. The state government was heavily in debt, but despite her desperate financial condition met all of her obligations to the Continental Congress.**

***L. Summary. The American Revolutionary War devastated South Carolina. The wanton cruelty of the British occupation coupled with the sheer number of battles fought all across the state contributed to loss of life and property. Yet, somehow, South Carolinians with some help from Nathaniel Greene's army managed to free their state from the British. Their achievement was chronicled by George Bancroft, the first great American historian, in this way: "Left mainly to her own resources, it was through the depts. Of wretchedness, that her sons were to bring her back to her place in the Republic, after suffering more and daring more and achieving more than the men of any other State."**

K. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina, Chapter 11
2. Blum, Catton, The National Experience, pp. 116-120
3. Edgar, Partisans and Redcoats
4. Horne, South Carolina, 158-181
5. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 297-298, 302-326
6. Lumpkin, From Savannah to Yorktown, pp. 10-26, 41-134, 176-211
7. Tindall, America, pp. 200-203, 221-230
8. Weir, Colonial South Carolina, pp. 321-340
9. Wiegley, The Partisan War