

FEATURES

# Battle trail: New Carolinas' Revolutionary War corridor needs money

by **Herb Frazier** February 23, 2024

The two Carolinas are waiting for funding from the federal government to launch a new national heritage corridor to help local groups in both states observe the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026.

A year ago, President Joe Biden signed legislation into law that created the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Historic Corridor, a winding ribbon that joins scores of sites of battles, skirmishes and other events during the war of independence in the Carolinas.

Historians often point to South Carolina as being the linchpin for the patriots' ultimate victory, thanks to the hundreds of battles and skirmishes over eight years that stretched British supply lines and wore down troops.

Among the significant conflicts in South Carolina were the Battle of Sullivan's Island in 1776, which was the patriots' first naval victory in the war, and major victories at Kings Mountain in 1780 and Cowpens in 1781.

Local efforts are underway across many of the former 13 American colonies. On July 4, 2026, the country will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the July 4, 1776, signing of the Declaration of Independence, which led to the war, the creation of the United States of America and the U.S. Constitution. By 1789, two-thirds of the states had ratified the document.



Clyburn

In announcing passages of the legislation in December 2022, U.S. Rep. James E. Clyburn, D-S.C., said, "I have studied history my entire life and the Southern Campaign's role in the American Revolution is often left out. The creation of this corridor, which closes the loop on my heritage corridors creation efforts, will not only show the rich history of the Carolinas but also help tell a more complete history of our country."

The congressman's office declined to comment on the current funding status. A spokesman referred the Charleston City Paper to the National Parks Service (NPS), which manages the nation's heritage corridors. A NPS spokesperson was not available for comment.



[Read about this week's cartoon cover](#)

Previously, Clyburn worked with former Congressman John Spratt, D-S.C., to pass the National Heritage Areas Act of 2006, which initially authorized the NPS to study the feasibility of establishing the corridor.



The Powder Magazine Museum in Charleston has scheduled a series of lectures to reveal more of the Black soldiers' role in the American Revolution and what life was like in Charleston for free people of color, enslaved people, patriot sympathizers and loyalists. Constructed in 1713, the Powder Magazine is the oldest public building in South Carolina. | Courtesy The Powder Magazine

The new corridor is the third federally designated heritage corridor in South Carolina. The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, which covers the state's western border, includes Charleston. The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor runs along the coastal region and also includes Charleston. Clyburn was chief sponsor of legislation that created the Gullah Geechee corridor. The new Carolinas' corridor is one of six new heritage corridors the U.S. legislature created last year.

## Waiting on funding

Dr. Lacy Ford, a retired history professor and administrator at the University of South Carolina, is the senior director of a group of people in both states forming a board of directors that would set policy for the heritage corridor. By January 2025, Ford said, he hopes a board of 12 to 15 members can be seated.

Ford had worked with Clyburn's staff on previous projects, and he was asked to get involved. "I want to get it off the ground then find a good person who will take it over for the next stage," he added.



Ford

Ford said he's developing a relationship with the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SCARSC), which was created last year by the S.C. General Assembly. State lawmakers have given that group \$5 million. A similar organization, America 250 NC, is in North Carolina. Ford has contacted the group in the Tar Heel state.

Bill Davies, vice chair of the S.C. commission, said nearly every county in South Carolina is aligned with the commission to schedule events across the state.

The Battle of Camden and the Recovered Soldiers is the title of military historian Rick Wise's lecture at 6 p.m. on Feb. 27 at First Baptist Church at 61 Church St. in Charleston. Wise is interim executive director of the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust.

## Telling a diverse history

Ford said he and others are focused on "getting our project started at the ground level ... in those areas [in South Carolina] where there was military action."

Their focus includes areas in Pickens and Cherokee counties, where patriots pushed members of the Cherokee tribe, who sided with the British, into Georgia, he said.

Those counties aren't typically on the map of Revolutionary War activity, Ford said. "But we feel like all of that and some enslaved insurrections all need to be included in the story."



Photo by Ken Lund

Presenting a diverse story, he said, has been part of the group's early planning to include "the Black and Native American participation in the [colonial] society. That will draw an even broader array of people to the [Revolutionary War historic] sites."

In Charleston, the Powder Magazine also has plans to tell a diverse story through a series of lectures by Charleston historians Nic and Christina Butler, who've uncovered new information on what daily life was like from 1780 to 1782 during the British occupation of the city for women, free people of color, enslaved people, patriot sympathizers, loyalists, the British military and Native Americans. A \$20,000 grant from the SCARSC supports the lecture series.

## Stamp of approval

During the observance in South Carolina, the Revolutionary War stories should extend from the Charleston area where military activity occurred from 1776 to 1780 and from 1780 to 1782 in the interior of the state, he said.



On Jan 17, 1781, patriots in South Carolina defeated British troops during the Battle of Cowpens near Chesnee. It was an important victory during the Revolutionary War to thwart the British attempts to take control of the southern colonies, which produced cash crops that could not be grown in the British Isles but were harvested cheaply in the south with slave labor.

|Circuitloss

## Proposed National Heritage Area Corridor



### THE SITES

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moores Creek National Battlefield</li> <li>2. Harmony Hall Plantation</li> <li>3. House in the Horseshoe State Historic Site</li> <li>4. Historic Hillsborough</li> <li>5. Alamance Battleground</li> <li>6. Guilford Courthouse National Military Park</li> <li>7. Old Salem Museums and Gardens</li> <li>8. Surry Muster Ground</li> <li>9. Robert Cleveland House, Old Wilkes Jail, Wilkes Heritage Museum</li> <li>10. Fort Defiance Historic Site</li> <li>11. Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail</li> <li>12. McDowell House at Quaker Meadows</li> <li>13. Joseph McDowell House</li> <li>14. Davidson's Fort Historic Park</li> <li>15. GilbertTown</li> <li>16. Cowpens National Battlefield</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. Blackstock Battlefield Monument</li> <li>18. Musgrove Mill State Historic Site</li> <li>19. Ninety Six National Historic Site</li> <li>20. Kings Mountain National Military Park</li> <li>21. Williamson's Plantation, Huck's Defeat, Historic Brattonsville</li> <li>22. Landsford Canal State Park</li> <li>23. Museum of the Waxhaws and Andrew Jackson Memorial</li> <li>24. Andrew Jackson State Park</li> <li>25. Hanging Rock</li> <li>26. Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site and Camden Battlefield</li> <li>27. Thomas Sumter Historic Burial Site</li> <li>28. Fort Watson Historic Site and Santee Indian Mound</li> <li>29. Eutaw Springs</li> <li>30. Francis Marion Historic Burial Site</li> <li>31. Fort Moultrie</li> <li>32. Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site</li> <li>33. Isaac Hayne Tomb and House Site</li> </ol> |
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The Battle of Kings Mountain, Ford said, was a turning point of the war in South Carolina that occurred about 10 miles from where he grew up in York County. South Carolina offers Kings Mountain State Park in Blacksburg adjacent to Kings Mountain National Military Park.

It is possible that the board fully formed would serve as a coordinating group to provide a stamp of federal approval for local programs, Ford said.

“I hope we would award some signal of approval to anything that is appropriate and factually accurate,” Ford said. But the board would not stop a group that does not seek its approval, he said. “This is the United States,” he added. “I trust the good judgment of people to do something that is appropriate.”

## ABOUT THE COVER:

### On a stubborn refusal to change course

The cover for this week's issue is “Miss Carolina Sullivan, one of the obstinate daughters of America.” It's an image that comes from the U.S. Library of Congress.

Art director Scott Suchy's colorized version of the Revolutionary War-era cartoon is a head-and-shoulders portrait of a woman with a big hairdo that conceals fortifications, cannons, flags and what appears to be a hanged combatant.

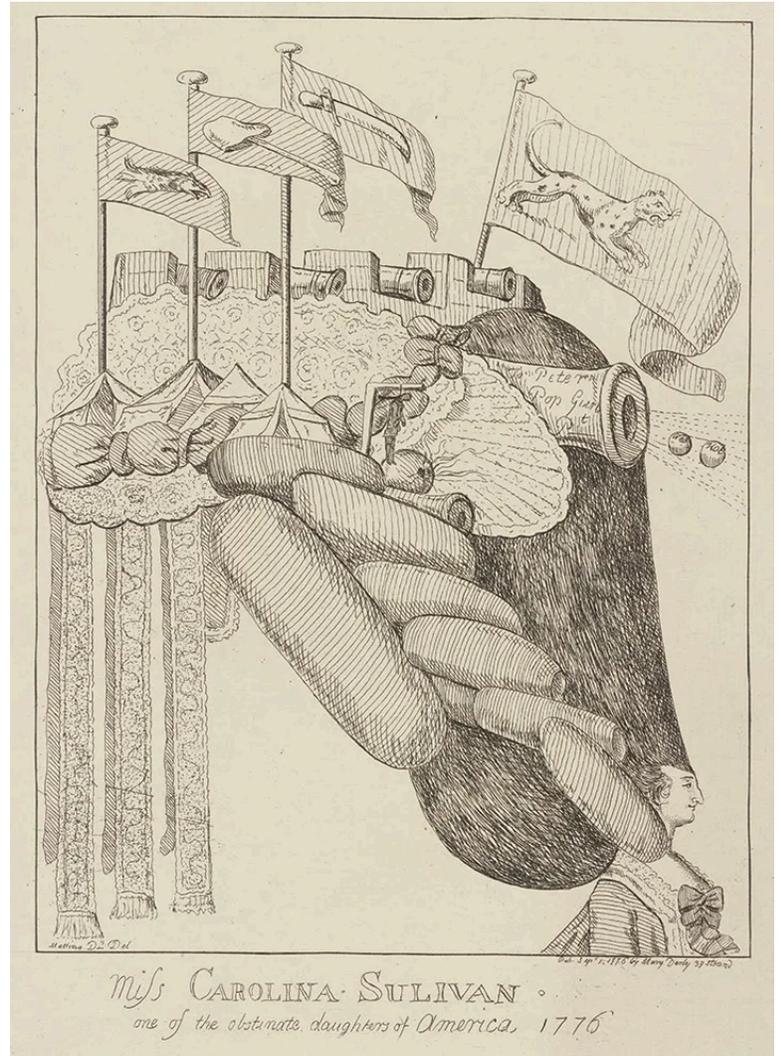
The 1776 cartoon, attributed to London engraver Matthew Darly, was published two months after the patriot naval victory over the British at Sullivan’s Island. Every June 28, we celebrate the win as Carolina Day.

Area foodies might be familiar with the phrase “obstinate daughter” because of the award-winning Sullivan’s Island restaurant that incorporated the words as its name.

The story about the cartoon image has been explained on the restaurant’s coasters, which say the name pays homage to Sullivan’s Island’s rich Revolutionary War history.

“On June 28, 1776, under the command of Colonel William Moultrie, the defenders of Fort Sullivan foiled the British fleet’s attempt to capture the city of Charleston in the Battle of Sullivan’s Island. The first American Patriots’ victory inspired a London political cartoon of the defiant defenders of Charleston: ‘Miss Carolina Sullivan, one of the obstinate daughters of America, 1776.’

“To us, the Obstinate Daughter is a beautiful reminder that the stubborn refusal to change one’s course of action can change the course of history.” —CP



Original cartoon by Matthew Darly in 1776