

Life in the Hornets' Nest: How Did Carolina Piedmont Residents Experience the American Revolution?

With Details of Historical Sites and Maps of Troop Movements

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How did Carolina Piedmont residents experience the American Revolution?

Residents of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and surrounding counties participated in the American Revolution. Some were important leaders on the state and continental levels. Many more served their country as Continental soldiers and militiamen. What was it like to live at that time in Mecklenburg County and follow the unfolding events? What happened in Charlotte and what was the news about Mecklenburg residents deployed elsewhere? Here is a timeline of significant local events or activities of local residents.

Since research in this subject is ongoing, this document inserts a citation to authenticate each assertion which more closely links it to its source than indirect footnotes.

1750s–1760s

Before the Revolutionary War, most residents of Mecklenburg County were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who had emigrated from Pennsylvania during 1740–1770. Earlier, they or their parents emigrated from Ulster, Ireland. In the part of Bladen, later Anson, County that became Rowan, Mecklenburg, Iredell, and Cabarrus Counties, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians organized the following 12 churches: Cathey's 1747, Rocky River about 1750, Third Creek 1751, Coddle Creek 1753, Sugar Creek 1755, Steele Creek 1760, Hopewell 1762, Poplar Tent 1764, Fourth Creek 1764, Centre 1765, Providence 1767, and Clear Creek 1770. Of these, 7 originated in Mecklenburg County (Blythe and Brockmann 1961, 195). Centre Church was organized in Mecklenburg County but moved to Rowan County, now Iredell County. Poplar Tent and Rocky River Churches are now in Cabarrus County. About 1777, Cathey's Presbyterian Church was renamed Thyatira Presbyterian Church. In 1780, Clear Creek Presbyterian Church was renamed Philadelphia Presbyterian Church. In 1924, Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church was renamed Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church (McGeachy 1954).



Sugar [Sugaw] Creek Presbyterian Church and Academy

About 1750, Thomas Polk was an original settler in the area now known as Charlotte. At that time, this area was in Anson County, North Carolina. Polk was a surveyor of the Granville Line (J. H. Williams 2010–2017). He

represented this area in the North Carolina General Assembly (J. H. Williams 2010–2017). In 1763, he built a courthouse and jail as the minimum requirement for a new county. Polk named the new county seat Charlotte in Mecklenburg County in honor of the new Queen Charlotte from Mecklenburg-Strelitz [pronounced Strāy-lits], a German principality. In 1768, the General Assembly passed a law creating Mecklenburg County with Charlotte as its courthouse (Preyer 1987, 63).

22 May 1767

North Carolina colonial governor William Tryon passed through Charlotte on the way to negotiate a boundary treaty with Cherokee chief *Jud's Friend* on the Tyger River in South Carolina (NCCR 1886, VII:991–1008) (Davidson 1951, 22). Lieutenant Colonel Moses Alexander commanded the Mecklenburg County militia. He and some of his men accompanied Governor Tryon (Preyer 1987, 54). Also, Lieutenant William Lee Davidson from Rowan County militia participated (Davidson 1951, 22). Thomas Polk may have participated (J. H. Williams 2010–2017).

1769

Mecklenburg County land to the west of Catawba River became Tryon County. It comprised present-day Lincoln, Gaston, Cleveland, and Rutherford counties. Then Mecklenburg County included what are present-day Mecklenburg, Union, and Cabarrus counties.

1770–1772

January 1771

In January 1771, Thomas Polk, Matthew Locke, Griffith Rutherford, and others were appointed by the North Carolina General Assembly to define the boundary line between Mecklenburg and Rowan Counties so that those living in the area were certain of where they owed taxes. Later, these men became important leaders. (North Carolina General Assembly 1770–1771, 23:787–849). Polk was elected and served in the General Assembly in 1766–1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1773 and 1774 (J. H. Williams 2010–2017). Sessions were typically two months of each year.

A college in the backcountry was the inspiration of two educated and capable individuals: Hezekiah Alexander and Waightstill Avery. Colonial North Carolina Governor Josiah Martin supported an application for a charter from the government in London. In 1771, the North Carolina General Assembly chartered *Queens College* in Charlotte.

Whereas the proper education of Youth has always been considered as the most certain source of tranquility, happiness and improvement both of private families and of States and Empires ... the rising generation may repair, after having acquired at a Grammar School a competent knowledge of the Greek, Hebrew and Latin Languages ... to obtain ... a regular and finished education ... and whereas several Grammar schools have been long taught in the western parts of this Government ... Be it enacted ... founding establishing and endowing Queen's College in Charlotte Town ... (J. H. Williams 2010–2017)

The application stated that the college president must be Anglican, but the 3 or less teachers need not be.

In 1771, Polk aligned with North Carolina Governor William Tryon against the Regulators (Preyer 1987, 54–56). In 1772, he was a commissioner responsible for surveying the extended boundary line between the two Carolinas (NCCR 1886, IX:302). Since 1772, land to the immediate south included the Catawba Indian Nation on a 15-mile square, and the New Acquisition District, present-day Lancaster and York counties (Salley 1929, 29) (Davis 1942) (Pettus 2005b).

1773

28 June 1773

The British government denied the Queens College charter, fearing it would encourage Presbyterian dissention (NCCR 1886, IX:665). The decision was unworkable since no Anglican teachers were available. Nonetheless, as the only school available, it continued operation under the name *Queens Museum*. It was constructed south of the courthouse at the present-day southeast corner of Tryon and Third Street, now occupied by *Two Wells Fargo Center*

building. It was the first college south of the *College of William & Mary* in Virginia. Doctor Ephraim Brevard taught science and medicine. It had approximately 80 students. (Preyer 1987, 70–72).



Opposite sides of Liberty Hall Monument
Trustees listed include Isaac Alexander, Thomas Polk, Abraham Alexander,
Ephraim Brevard, and John McKnitt Alexander.
Liberty Hall Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution monument, 1913.

1774

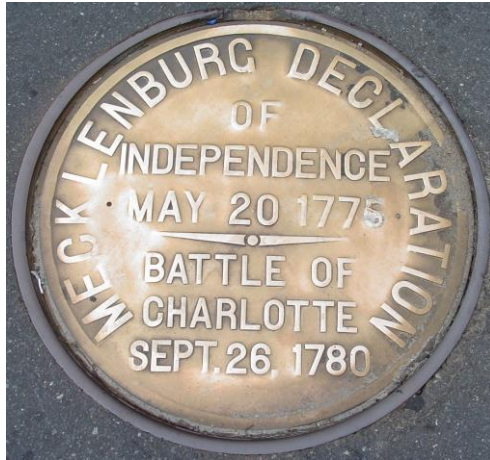
18 October 1774

Based on the recommendation of the First Continental Congress, Mecklenburg County formed a Committee of Public Safety. Thomas Polk and Hezekiah Alexander were elected members. (Preyer 1987, 94)

1775

19–20 May 1775

When news arrived of British soldiers firing on Americans at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, prominent Mecklenburg citizens allegedly met at the courthouse and composed the *Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence* and read to the public the next day. However, a declaration requires publication, yet there was no known contemporaneous newspaper article or original source document that mentions this event (Salley 1907) (Preyer 1987, 97–98) (Syfert 2013).



Bronze Plaque at Tryon Street and Trade Street, Charlotte.

31 May 1775

The Mecklenburg Committee of Safety met and composed the *Mecklenburg Resolves*. This act was reported in regional newspapers (Preyer 1987, 97–98) (Syfert 2013).



Mecklenburg Resolves, righthand column, South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, 13 June 1775



Backcountry Patriot

Representation of Hezekiah Alexander

Signer of both Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and Mecklenburg Resolves

Sculpted by David Dowdy, 2001.

1 June–July 1775

Charlotte resident Captain James Jack carried the Mecklenburg Declaration and Resolves to the North Carolina delegates at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His passage was recorded in Salisbury and Salem.



Spirit of Mecklenburg

Representation of Captain James Jack

Sculpted by Chas Fagan, 2010.

30 June 1775

Royal North Carolina Governor Josiah Martin explicitly referenced the Mecklenburg Resolves in his correspondence with William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth:

The Resolves of the Committee of Mecklenburgh, which your Lordship will find in the enclosed Newspaper, surpass all the horrid and treasonable publications that the inflammatory spirits of this Continent have yet produced, and your Lordship may depend its Authors and Abettors will not escape my due notice, whenever my hands are sufficiently strengthened to attempt the recovery of the lost authority of Government. A copy of these Resolves I am informed were sent off by express to the Congress at Philadelphia as soon as they were passed in the Committee. (Martin 1775 in NCCR 1886, X:48)

Martin mentioned the Mecklenburg Resolves in two other known correspondences. Since he never mentioned the more extreme declaration, either it did not exist or it was a declaration that was not declared.

14 August 1775

Tryon County residents composed the *Tryon County Resolves* which included a loyalty oath that all residents were to sign. (Griffin 1937, 17)

20 August–10 September 1775

During 20 August–10 September 1775, Thomas Polk was a delegate to the North Carolina Provincial Congress (NCCR 1886, X:165). On 9 September 1775, he was promoted to colonel and commander of the Mecklenburg County Militia.

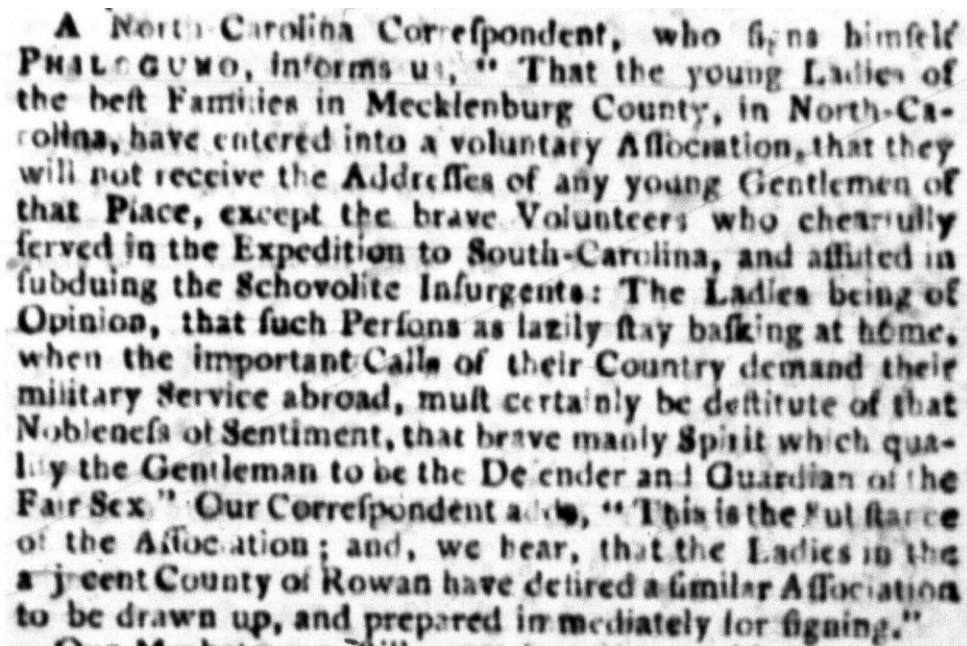
Late 1775

Reverend Alexander McWhorter and Elihu Spencer toured North Carolina loyalist settlements attempting to gain their support for the American cause (Dusseck 2011–2014).

November–December 1775

Mecklenburg and Rowan counties militias joined South Carolina troops in the campaign against Scovelites loyalists near Ninety Six, South Carolina. The leaders were Colonels Thomas Polk, Griffith Rutherford, and Richard Caswell (Preyer 1987, 113).

The 2–9 February 1776 issue of the *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, printed in Charlestown, South Carolina, published the article:



A North-Carolina Correspondent, who signs himself PHALOGUHO, informs us, " That the young Ladies of the best Families in Mecklenburg County, in North-Carolina, have entered into a voluntary Association, that they will not receive the Addresses of any young Gentlemen of that Place, except the brave Volunteers who cheerfully served in the Expedition to South-Carolina, and assisted in subduing the Schovolite Insurgents: The Ladies being of Opinion, that such Persons as lazily stay basking at home, when the important Calls of their Country demand their military Service abroad, must certainly be destitute of that Nobleness of Sentiment, that brave manly Spirit which qualify the Gentleman to be the Defender and Guardian of the Fair Sex." Our Correspondent adds, " This is the Substance of the Association; and, we hear, that the Ladies in the adjacent County of Rowan have desired a similar Association to be drawn up, and prepared immediately for signing."

Ladies of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
Printed in *South Carolina and American General Gazette* issue of 2–9 February 1776

Which transcribes as:

A North Carolina Correspondent, who signs himself PHILOGUMO, informs us, “That the young Ladies of the best Families in Mecklenburg County, in North-Carolina, have entered into a voluntary Association, that they will not receive the Addresses of any young Gentlemen of that Place, except the brave Volunteers who cheerfully served in the Expedition to South-Carolina, and assisted in subduing the Schovolite Insurgents : The Ladies being of the Opinion, that such Persons as lazily stay basking at home, when the important Calls of their Country demand their military Service abroad, must certainly be destitute of that Nobleness of Sentiment, that brave manly Spirit which qualify the Gentleman to be the Defender and Guardian of the Fair Sex.” Our Correspondent adds, “This is the Substance of the Association; and, we hear, that the Ladies in the adjacent County of Rowan have desired a similar Association to be drawn up, and prepared immediately for signing.”

Unfortunately, the Association declaration and the names of the signers are not known. A 1946 newspaper article indicated that the Mecklenburg ladies met at Queens Museum (Fore 1946). However, the above original article included the full context and did not make that assertion. Nonetheless, that was possible since the Queen’s Museum had a hall used for public meetings (Foote 1846, 514).

Similar actions by the ladies of Rowan County were recorded in the minutes of the 8 May 1776 meeting of the Rowan County Committee of Safety:

A letter from a number of young ladies in the [Rowan] county, directed to the chairman, requesting the approbation of the committee to a number of resolutions enclosed, entered into, and signed by the same young ladies, being read ; Resolved, That this Committee present their cordial thanks to the said young ladies for so spirited a performance, look upon their resolutions to be sensible and polite ; that they merit the honor, and are worthy the imitation of every young lady in America. (Rumple 1881, 192) (J. C. Blythe 2015–2017)

Because of a rare 2-foot snow on 23 December, this expedition became known as the “Snow Campaign” (Hunter 1877, 113). William Polk, son of Colonel Thomas Polk, was an officer in a South Carolina regiment. He was wounded in a skirmish (Polk in Hoyt 1914, II:403) (Rankin 1971, 23).

1776

February 1776

Local militias were called up again to counter a Highlander Tory uprising in and around Cross Creek, present-day Fayetteville, North Carolina. Colonel Thomas Polk led the Mecklenburg County militia to Cross Creek arriving there on 22 February. Militia Colonel Adam Alexander is credited with quelling the February 1776 Highlander uprising. He was probably among the Salisbury District Whigs under Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Martin that occupied Cross Creek. The loyalist threat dissipated after the Moore’s Creek Bridge battle on 27 February (Hatch 1969, 44–45).

9 April 1776

The North Carolina General Assembly established six Continental Army regiments. Colonel Thomas Polk was appointed to command the Fourth Regiment. Major William Lee Davidson was appointed his subordinate in the same regiment (Rankin 1971, 63).

June 1776

Polk’s Fourth Regiment marched to Charlestown to defend against a threatened British invasion fleet, but was ordered back towards North Carolina to guard the coast from British raids (Rankin 1971, 76–77).

1776, James Rankin Alexander

In early 1776, James Rankin Alexander, son of Hezekiah Alexander, was a student at Nassau College, present-day Princeton University. After the British captured New York City, he enlisted in Captain Walter Alexander’s company of Maryland militia, called the “Maryland flying Camp,” and was appointed sergeant. In November 1776, he

participated in General Nathanael Greene's evacuation of Fort Lee to Trenton and across the Delaware River. He was discharged before the battle at Trenton on 26 December 1776. During 1776–1780, he studied medicine, and then returned to his father's home in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. (Alexander, James Rankin, pension application 1833).

September–October 1776

Local militiamen served in Rutherford's campaign against the Cherokee Indians. They marched as far as the extreme western tip of present-day North Carolina. (Hunter 1877, 113–115) (Hunter 1877, 177) (Preyer 1987, 118) (Hatley 1995, 194–197). Hezekiah Alexander was a commissary officer during the Cherokee campaign (Preyer 1987, 118). Joel Baldwin, a Mecklenburg County resident, may have participated in this campaign. He died on 21 October 1776 at age 26 and was buried in the Charlotte Burying Ground, now known as Settlers' Cemetery. His grave is the oldest known grave there.

Late 1776

Thomas Polk's Continental regiment assembled in Halifax, North Carolina.

24 November–16 December 1776

Fifth Provincial Congress adopted the first North Carolina Constitution. This ended the Provincial Congress and emergency Provincial Council along with all county committees of safety. The new constitution created a bicameral legislature, the office of Governor, Council of State, and judiciary. (Rankin 1959, 23). Hezekiah Alexander was a Mecklenburg County delegate in the Fifth Provincial Congress (Preyer 1987, 130–135).

The North Carolina Provincial Congress also established the Brigade of Volunteers to aid South Carolina resist an expected British invasion. The brigade was commanded by Brigadier General Allen Jones. It included two battalions. The Second Battalion was commanded by Colonel Francis Locke. Its officers included local leaders Captain James Jack and Captain Joseph Dickson. This brigade of volunteers was stationed in Camden, South Carolina, until the threat of invasion passed in April 1777.

1777

May 1777

Polk's regiment arrived at Alexandria, Virginia (Rankin 1971, 90). All soldiers were inoculated for smallpox (Rankin 1971, 91) with the newly developed treatment that transferred pus from a nearly recovered smallpox victim onto a healthy person's skin. This procedure gave the recipient a mild case of smallpox that lasted 3–4 weeks, and afterwards, lifetime immunity. Afterwards, the regiment marched to Philadelphia to join General George Washington's army.

9 May 1777

The North Carolina General Assembly authorized the continuation of *Queen's Museum* as *Liberty Hall Academy*.

13 June 1777

In April 1777, Gilbert du Motier Marquis de Lafayette, age 19, wrote his wife Adrienne, "The happiness of America is intimately connected with the happiness of all mankind; she is destined to become the safe and venerable asylum of virtue, of honesty, of tolerance, and quality and of peaceful liberty." (Lafayette 1777 in Lafayette 1837). He and Baron Johann DeKalb sailed to America on the ship *Victoire*. The destination was Charlestown, but its harbor was blockaded by British warships. Consequently, on 13 June 1777, they disembarked on North Island off the coast of Georgetown, near present-day Pawley's Island. They returning to Charlestown on 19 June, and after a month long trip, they arrived at Philadelphia on 27 July.

11 September 1777

Thomas Polk's regiment participated at Brandywine Creek battle (Rankin 1971, 105).

Late September 1777

As British forces advanced on Philadelphia, a detachment of Mecklenburg Continental soldiers was assigned the task of transporting heavy baggage to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Col. Polk was assigned to remove the heavy baggage from Philadelphia. This amounted to 200 men and 700 wagons containing also all of the brass bells of Philadelphia (to keep the British from melting them down for cannon balls). Among these, of course was the State House Bell, later know as the Liberty Bell. He carried the baggage first to Trenton and then to Bethlehem Pa. The arrival is recorded in the Moravian church records of Sept 23, 1777. The wagon with the State House Bell broke down in the middle of the street and they had to unload the bell. Highland prisoners [those captured after Moore's Creek Bridge] were moved out – further west – and their quarters were turned into a hospital. The wagons were unloaded and sent back to Philadelphia. (W. H. Polk 1912) (J. H. Williams 2010–2017).

4 October 1777

Polk's regiment participated at Germantown battle. Thomas Polk was wounded (Rankin 1971, 115) and his son William Polk was badly wounded in the jaw. (Polk in Hoyt 1914, II:404) (Rankin 1971, 118). Thomas Polk exchanged final words with mortally wounded Brigadier General Francis Nash, commander of the North Carolina Brigade (Rankin 1971, 115).

Winter 1777–1778

Colonel Thomas Polk's Fourth Regiment wintered at Valley Forge, PA. (Rankin 1971, 138).

1778

29 May 1778

All North Carolina Continental regiments were reorganized. Before the end of May, the North Carolina Fourth Regiment returned to North Carolina and was disbanded (Rankin 1971, 147).

24 June 1778

From about 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., Carolina residents experienced a total solar eclipse. Its track ran along the Carolina Piedmont about 25 miles south of and parallel to present-day highway I85. Totality was experienced within 50 miles on both sides of that track.



Total Solar Eclipse, Zone of Totality, 24 June 1778 (NASA 2012)

A Moravian, probably at Bethabara or Bethania settlement, recorded:

Beginning shortly before 9 o'clock in the morning there was an almost total eclipse of the sun. At the peak of the eclipse the sun was under a cloud, and for some minutes it was necessary to light the candles, stars peeped out here and there, and no one can remember to have seen the like before. The reapers returned from the field about 9 o'clock, and did not go out again until afternoon. (RMNC 1922, III:1237) (Bumgarner 2014)

26 June 1778

On 26 June, Colonel Thomas Polk wrote General Washington from Mecklenburg County resigning his commission:

May it please your Excellency:

From the earliest Commencement of the present War, I have been actively engaged in the services of my country. I embarked in it at so early a season as rendered me not a little obnoxious to a vast majority of the Province in which I lived. The timid, the Friends of the established Government, & the moderate, as they were called, at that Period composed the bulk of the Inhabitants—by them was my forward zeal universally condemned. Thro' innumerable difficulties, from opposition, & inconveniences to my private interest, in the militia and regular service, I continued my efforts for the public good, and doubted not, as I had done more of this kind for the defence of the State than any other member of it, that I had deserved well of my Country; but as soon as an opening for promotion was made by the unhappy fall of Gen'l Nash, the power of a party, overlooking the merit of these services, procured a recommendation in favour of a Junior Officer. Such a flagrant demonstration of partiality and injurious preference, without alledging a single article of disqualification against me, has determined me no longer to serve my ungratefull country in so painful and so hazardous a capacity.

I rejoice in the prosperity of my country, and am willing, on every occasion, to aid the advancement of its Interests, but choose not to obtrude my services.

For these reasons I am constrained to offer your Excellency my Commission in the Army, and humbly beg that you would kindly condescend to accept it.

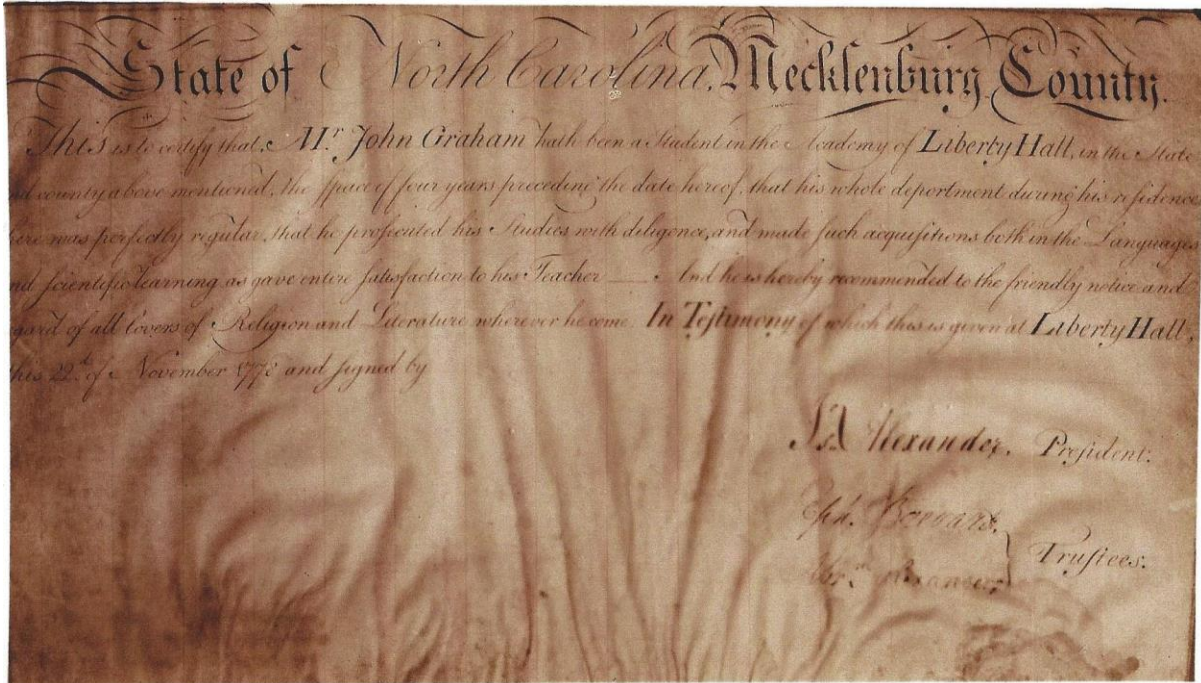
I am, may it please your Excellency,
with the profoundest respect,
Your Excellency's most humble,
most obedient, and most devoted Servant,
THOMAS POLK.

Mecklenburg County, in the State of N. Carolina,
June 26, 1778.

His Excellency Gen'l Washington, Commander
in Chief of the Armies of the United States. (Polk 1778 in NCSR 1895, XIII:451) (J. H. Williams
2010–2017)

22 November 1778

Student John Graham received a certificate from Liberty Hall Academy:



John Graham's certificate from Liberty Hall, 22 November 1778 (Boyer 2008–2017)

In 1846, the original certificate was held by John Graham at Vesuvius Furnace, home of Brigadier General Joseph Graham, in Lincoln County, North Carolina (Foote 1846, 516). Its transcription is:

State of North Carolina, Mecklenburg county.

This is to certify that, Mr. John Graham hath been a student in the Academy of Liberty Hall in the State and county above mentioned, the space of four years preceding the date hereof, that his whole deportment during his residence there was perfectly regular; that he prosecuted his studies with diligence, and made such acquisitions both in the languages and scientific learning as gave entire satisfaction to his teacher — And he is hereby recommended to the friendly notice and regard of all lovers of Religion and Literature wherever he comes. In testimony of which this is given at Liberty Hall, this 22nd of November, 1778, and signed by

Isaac V. Alexander, President.

Ephraim Brevard,

Abraham Alexander, Trustees. (Foote 1846, 516) (W. A. Graham 1904b, 18)

This certificate indicated that Queens Museum/Liberty Hall was active during the 4 years 1774–1778.

1779

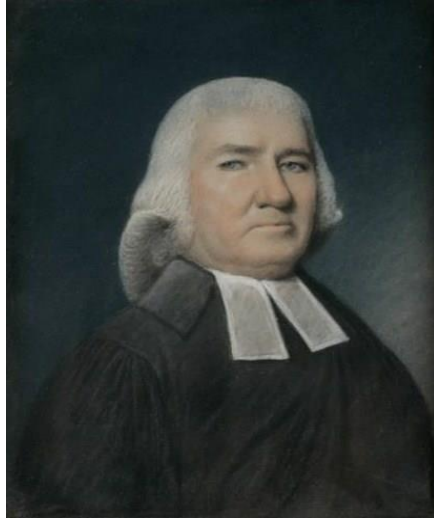
January–April 1779

Mecklenburg County militiamen were drafted to support Major General Benjamin Lincoln's army in South Carolina along the north bank of the Savannah River. Hezekiah Alexander was paymaster of the Mecklenburg County militia.

March 1779

Threats forced Reverend Alexander McWhorter to leave Newark, New Jersey. He moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where he was appointed President of Liberty Hall Academy (Dusseck 2011–2014). In 1774, he had created

Newark Academy. McWhorter was a personal acquaintance of General George Washington and had served as chaplain to Major General Henry Knox's brigade. (McLachan 1976, 194–199)



Reverend Alexander McWhorter
Painted by James Sharples, 1795–1800.

April 1779

Tryon County was split and renamed Lincoln and Rutherford counties after the two generals. The former county included present-day Lincoln, Gaston, and Cleveland counties.

20 June 1779

Major William Richardson Davie was wounded in Stono Ferry battle, south of Charlestown, South Carolina.

1780

12 May 1780

American forces defending Charlestown surrendered to British forces after a 6 week siege. Mecklenburg surgeon Ephraim Brevard was captured with the American forces (Preyer 1987, 165). He probably attended to the many soldiers who held on prison ships.

18 May 1780

Lieutenant General Charles Lord Cornwallis led a large army into the interior of South Carolina and soon captured Camden, South Carolina.



Lieutenant General Charles Earl Cornwallis
Painted by Thomas Gainsborough, 1783,
National Portrait Gallery, London.

29 May 1780

Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, commander of the British Legion, chased down retreating Virginia Continental soldiers in the Waxhaws. These Virginians, under the command of Colonel Abraham Buford, first offered battle, but soon tried to surrender. Of the 350 Virginians, 113 are killed and another 150 wounded (Tarleton 1787, 31). Local Scotch-Irish residents responded to treat and house the wounded (Howe 1870, 538). Doctor James Rankin Alexander, son of Hezekiah Alexander, went to Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church to treat soldiers (Alexander, James Rankin, pension application 1833). A hospital was organized at Liberty Hall Academy in Charlotte. The entire region was horrified by the carnage. Soon the slogan “Tarleton’s quarter” meant wanton cruelty.

31 May 1780

South Carolina Governor John Rutledge arrived at Charlotte as a refugee.

3 June 1780

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon marched from Camden to the Waxhaws and threatened Mecklenburg (Tarleton 1787, 86) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 213).

8 June 1780

Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford, commander of the North Carolina Western (Salisbury) District militia, called up the entire militia of about 800 men. They were harangued by Reverend Alexander McWhorter (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 212). On 12 June, they marched to Mallard Creek. William Richardson Davie was commissioned a major and appointed commander of local militia cavalry. Davie was a 1776 graduate of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University (Hamilton and Battle 1907, 5). He was active partisan, based near New Providence where his uncle, William Richardson, had been minister of the Presbyterian Church ten years earlier (Matthews 1967, 46). Davie raised 65 cavalymen that he equipped using much of his inheritance (Hamilton and Battle 1907, 7). After Rawdon withdrew to Camden, Rutherford’s released his men but told them to remain ready to be called at any moment (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 212) (Hunter 1877, 101) (Robinson 1957, 42). Rutherford moved to Tuckasegee Ford on the Catawba River.



William Richardson Davie
Patriot Officer. North Carolina Governor 1798–1799. Special envoy to France 1799–1800.
Buried in Waxhaw Presbyterian Church cemetery.
Painted by John VanderLyn in Paris, France, 1800.

10–18 June 1780

About 1000, Lincoln County loyalists assembled at Ramsour's Mill, just north of present-day Lincolnton, North Carolina (Schenck 1890, 53).

18 June 1780

A detachment of the British Legion under Captain Christian Huck burned William Hill's Iron Works on Allison's Creek near Catawba River. Hundred of South Carolina refugees, including Colonel William Hill assembled at Tuckasegee Ford. They selected fellow South Carolinian Colonel Thomas Sumter as their leader (Hill 1815, 7) (Gregorie 1931, 80). In Charlotte, Rutledge commissioned Sumter to raise a regiment established as South Carolina state troops (Bass 1961, 54).



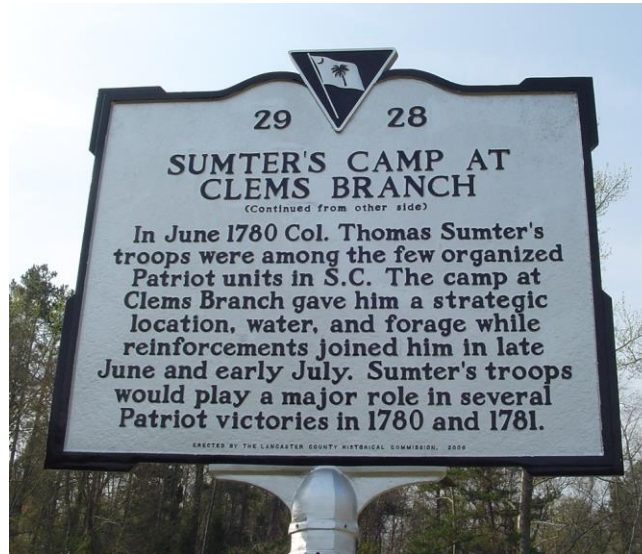
12 and 24-Pound Cannonballs Manufactured at Hill's Iron Works
Gift of Bigger Family to Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library, 2017

19–20 June 1780

Rutherford ordered Colonel Francis Locke with 400 militiamen from Rowan County to advance towards Ramsour's Mill. Rutherford also marched from Tuckasegee Ford toward Ramsour's Mill. With Rutherford were Lieutenant Colonel William Lee Davidson, Major William Richardson Davie, and Colonel Thomas Sumter. Locke arrived first and routed the loyalists before Rutherford arrived. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 214–227). Sumter was authorized to confiscate military equipment abandoned by the loyalists (Hill 1815, 8).

25 June 1780

Sumter marched through Charlotte to Clems Branch campground on the state line between North Carolina and South Carolina in southern Mecklenburg County (Hill 1815, 8). Davie with 65 cavalrymen set up camp at Waxhaw Creek 15 mile further south (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 8). Most of Rutherford's North Carolina militia pursued Rowan County loyalist who assembled under Colonel Samuel Bryan along the Yadkin River. Mecklenburg County militiamen return to Tuckasegee Ford and are released to their home, at least temporarily.



South Carolina historical marker, erected 26 March 2007

4 July 1780

Sumter's men moved from Clems Branch to Nation Ford on Catawba River (Bass 1961, 58).

6 July 1780

British Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull, commander of Rocky Mount, became extremely frustrated by the British setbacks during June. On 6 July, he wrote Cornwallis:

Those Mecklenburgh, Roan, and my friends the [Scotch] Irish above are perhaps the greatest skum of the Creation. English lenity is thrown away when there is not virtue to meet it half way. If some of them could be caught who have submitted and run off and join'd the rebels, an example on the spot of immediate death and confiscation of property might perhaps make them submit. (Turnbull 1780 in CPS 2010, I:364)

12 July 1780

Part of Sumter's men, attacked and defeated Huck's men encamped at Williamson's Plantation near present-day Brattonsville, South Carolina. (Hill 1815, 9)

17-19 July 1780

Sumter joined Davie at Waxhaw Creek (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 233) (Gregorie 1931, 86). The next day, Sumter moved closer to Land's Ford at Doctor Harper's plantation (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 233-234). The next day, upon threat of a British attack, Sumter moved back to Waxhaw Creek and with Davie prepared an ambush on both sides of the creek (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 234).

19-21 July 1780

About 19 July, from Salisbury, Rutherford ordered Davidson to attack Colonel Samuel Bryan's loyalist forces assembled at Colson's Ordinary where the Rocky River joins Pee Dee River (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 230-232). (The Yadkin becomes the Pee Dee below the mouth of Uwharrie River). On 21 July, Davidson routed Bryan's loyalists, but he was severely wounded in the abdomen and returned to his home to recover. Rutherford

joined his troops and pursued the loyalists who crossed the Pee Dee to the east side. The loyalists evaded and reached the safety of MacArthur's 71st Regiment at Cheraw.

20 July 1780

Sumter moved 15 miles north to Clems Branch and temporarily dismissed his men (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 235). Davie made a daring ambush at Flat Rock behind British camp at Hanging Rock. He was joined by Captain William Polk. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 9)

21 July 1780

25 July 1780

From Clems Branch, Sumter recalled his men (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 235).

28 July 1780

Sumter had sufficient men to begin a march to Rocky Mount (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 236). Some Mecklenburg County militiamen who lived close to Clems Branch joined Sumter (Ellet 1850a), but the main militia under Colonel Robert Irwin did not arrive in time to accompany Sumter (Adair 1832 in Draper 1873, VV:10:16) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 237). These eyewitness recollections are more credible than Davie's 1810 recollection that Irwin did accompany Sumter (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 11).

31 July 1780

Sumter's men attacked Rocky Mount, just south of Great Falls, South Carolina (Sumter 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:540) (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 11) (Hill 1815, 11) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 236) (Gregorie 1931, 87). Alexander Haynes, a young Mecklenburg County militiaman, while peeking behind a rock during the battle at Rocky Mount had an eye shot out and his cheek badly disfigured (Ellet 1850a). Nonetheless, he lived to be an old man (White 1871 in Stinson in Draper 1873, VV:11:292). Unable to force the fort to surrender, Sumter returned to Land's Ford where he was joined by Irwin's Mecklenburg County militia (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 237) (Adair 1832 in Draper 1873, VV:10:16).

6 August 1780

Rutherford, including Rowan County militiamen, all under Major General Richard Caswell, former North Carolina Governor, joined Major General Horatio Gates marching towards British occupied Camden, South Carolina. (Caswell 1780)



Major General Horatio Gates
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1782.

5-6 August 1780

Mecklenburg County militiamen under Colonel Robert Irwin and Davie joined Sumter and marched to Hanging Rock to engage and defeat a large British camp (Sumter 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:541-542) (Tarleton 1787, 94)

(Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 13). Among the British were Rowan County loyalists under Colonel Samuel Bryan. In this battle, Colonel William Hill was injured (Hill 1815, 13) as well as Thomas Spratt Junior, son of the first settler in the Charlotte area.

Mid August 1780

Jane Brown, 1767–1858, a 13-year-old resident of Chester County, South Carolina, visited the hospital at Liberty Hall in Charlotte. After her 1790 marriage to Joseph Gaston, she was referred to as Jane Gaston. About 1850, she recalled this visit to author Elizabeth Fries Lummis Ellet who wrote:

The hospital being not far from the house of Mr. Haynes, Jane Brown went frequently, with others, to see the wounded soldiers. Many of the wounded of Beaufort [Buford] where there, and disabled men from the battles of Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock were lying in rude log-houses, upon boards covered with straw, and laid across the sleepers for their resting-place. The subject of this notice remembers seeing the soldiers there, maimed and suffering, some having but one arm, some having lost a leg, and some deprived of both arms, or both legs. She heard them laughing and joking with one another and her attention was particularly attracted to one who had lost both arms, and was threatening to knock down a fellow-sufferer. It was common thus to see cheerfulness manifested in the midst of misfortune, by these martyrs to liberty. Mrs. Gaston also remembers well having seen there her neighbors, Henry Bishop and the gallant John McClure, both severely wounded. (Ellet 1850a)

13 August 1780

Gates and Caswell camped at Rugeley's Mill, 14 miles north of Camden. Unknown to them, Cornwallis arrived in Camden and planned a counteroffensive.

15 August 1780

Sumter with attached Mecklenburg County militia moved down the west bank of the Catawba and Wateree River. At Fort Cary, opposite Camden, they captured a large convoy of supplies. With prisoners, they reverse marched. (Bass 1961, 78)

16 August 1780

During the night of 15–16 August, Gates marched the American Army from Rugeley's Mill to secure the defensible position at Saunder's Creek. Simultaneously, Cornwallis marched north to surprise Gates' army. Both met on the road north of Camden. Gates was defeated (Tarleton 1787, 105–109). Baron Johann DeKalb was killed. Rutherford was captured. Gates with a small guard arrived in Charlotte about 11:00 P.M. He briefly stopped at Thomas Polk's house and continued on to Salisbury (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 243).

17 August 1780

At noon, 300–400 militiamen retreating from Gates' Defeat appeared in Charlotte. Later in the day, many more soldiers arrived (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 243).

18 August 1780

Tarleton caught Sumter's men near Fishing Creek and totally disperses them. Sumter escaped to Charlotte (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 20). But Sumter soon raised another large force (Cornwallis 1780 in NCSR 1895, XV:272) and relocated to Bigger's Ferry, now under Lake Wylie.

19 August 1780

Major General William Smallwood arrived in Charlotte. He organized the soldiers who had retreated from Gates' Defeat. Most continued on to Salisbury towards Hillsborough. Major Anderson of the Maryland Third Regiment remained in Charlotte about 12 days. He collected about 60 more men before marching north. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 244)

20 August 1780

During the commencement ceremony of *Liberty Hall Academy*, President Reverend Alexander McWhorter, exhorted the older students to suspend their studies and join the militia (Preyer 1987, 153).

Late August 1780

About 400 Mecklenburg and Rowan militiamen assemble at McAlpine Creek, probably near the present-day Old Providence Road crossing (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 246). Graham later wrote:

Colonel Irwin selected a position seven or eight miles southeast of Charlotte, between the two roads that lead to Camden from that place, and encamped behind McAlpin's Creek. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 246).

That location was probably near the present-day Old Providence Road bridge over McAlpine Creek.



Probable American Campsite on McAlpine Creek

31 August 1780

The spirited response of the Mecklenburg County and Rowan County militiamen encouraged Governor Abner Nash to write Brigadier General Jethro Sumner at Ramsey's Mill on Deep River on 4 September:

The Western Counties are now high spirited, and things there wear a good countenance; 500 Virginia regulars will be here [Hillsborough] in a day or two, and nothing is wanting but the countenance of your brigade to give life and spirit to our affairs; so let me beg of you, sir, to march on, surmounting and despising all difficulties. Appoint a commissary yourself. (Nash 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:771)

At Ramsey's Mill, surgeon Robert Williams joined Sumner.

We continued on until we joined the remains of the defeated army at Ramsey Mills on Deep River in this State then under the command of General Jethro Sumner who was a Brigadier in the Continental line. James Cole Montfloreance was his aid. He gave me an appointment of Surgeon General which I went and returned because I was young and there was several surgeons on the Continental establishment who had been several years in service. He then gave me an appointment as surgeon to the army as he said the Doctors he believed that were there were inattentive to their duty and some of them drank hard. (Williams 1832 in Draper 1873, VV:10:192) (Williams, Robert, pension application 1832)

6 September 1780

North Carolina General Assembly "established a *Board of War* for the more effectually and expeditiously calling forth the powers and resources of the State against a common enemy." (W. A. Graham 1904b, 380). Thomas Polk was appointed, but he declined. The Board of War quickly usurped the governor's war powers and micromanaged the war (J. H. Williams 2010–2017). Governor Abner Nash complained. Polk served as Continental Army Commissary Officer.

7-12 September 1780

Cornwallis advanced from Camden to Waxhaw Creek. His large army camped on Major Robert Crawford's plantation for 12 days (Money 1780, 7 Sep) (Stedman 1794, 2:215). Davie withdrew to New Providence probably at Six Mile Creek on Providence Road, to the front of Davidson and Sumner at McAlpine Creek (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 21).

Graham later wrote, "Davie retired before them [the British] until near General Davidson's quarters at McAlpin's Creek." (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 249). The inference is that Davie's camp was distinct from Davidson's camp and that Davie was closer to the enemy. Graham, who was with the Mecklenburg County militia at McAlpine Creek, remembered the camps relative positions. Davie recorded that he was at "Providence." Because of his many horses, Davie was probably at either Four Mile Creek or Six Mile Creek.

To replace Rutherford, Davidson was promoted brigadier general and given command (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 246). Davie was also promoted.

Col^o Davie who was now appointed Col^o Com^l of all the Cavalry of N^o Carolina with orders also to raise a regiment had there collected only about seventy men however with these and two companies of riflemen commanded by Major Geo. Davidson [of Anson County] he took post at Providence twenty five miles above the British camp. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 21)

With this promotion, Davie no longer reported to the Mecklenburg county militia command, but to Sumner. Major George Davidson was from Anson County and not related to William Davidson. He contributed 80 mounted infantry, bringing Davie's strength to 150 cavalymen (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 21). Both William Davidson and Davie were subordinates to Brigadier General Jethro Sumner, but operated independently. Davie's cavalymen continued to patrol throughout the Waxhaw region.

14 September 1780

In a 14 September report to Gates, Davidson wrote:

I am now encamped 8 miles South of Charlotte, my number consisting of 400, minute men from Rowan and Mecklenburg counties, none from the other counties being yet arrived. The enemy are at Wax Haw creek, 20 miles distance. Lords Cornwallace and Roddin [Rawdon] are both with them. Their number, by the best intelligence, about 1,000. They are busied threshing and flouring wheat, collecting cattle, sheep, butter, &c. I do not learn they have any artillery. ...

... Col. Paisley joins me to morrow with near 200. Gen. Sumner with his brigade is expected to be a Salisbury this evening. Gen. Sumpter lies 13 miles to my right [probably Bigger's Ferry] with 200, his number daily increasing. Our troops are in high spirits, and seem determined to stand out to the last extremity rather than submit to the fate of So. Carolina. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:615-616).

20 September 1780

Brigadier General Jethro Sumner arrived at McAlpine Creek with 400 additional militiamen from Hillsborough District. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:775-776) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 247)

20-21 September 1780

Davie made a daring raid on loyalists camped a Wahab Plantation (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 23). Davie later wrote about when he returned from Wahab's:

Generals Sumner & Davidson had arrived that day [actually previous evening] at his [Davie's] camp with their brigades of militia both of which However did not amount to one thousand men all on short enlistments, illy armed, and diminishing every day. These with Davie's corps were the whole assembled force at that time opposed to the enemy. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 23).

Sumner described these events in a 12 October letter:

I arrived at Salisbury on the September 14th & joined Gen. Davidson on the 21st [should be 20th]. His Brigade was greatly reduced, not amounting to upwards of 20 [obvious misprint, should read 200] privates fit for duty. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:785–786).

22 September 1780

Cornwallis wrote his superior General Henry Clinton:

If nothing material happens to obstruct my plan of operations, I mean, as soon as Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton can be removed, to proceed with the 23rd, 33rd, volunteers of Ireland, and legion, to Charlotte town, and leave the 71st here until the sick can be brought on to us. I then mean to make some redoubts, and establish a fixed post at that place, and give the command of it to Major Wemyss, whose regiment is so totally demolished by sickness, that it will not be fit for actual service for some months. (Cornwallis 1780 in Tarleton 1787, 191).

23 September 1780

Davidson ordered Colonel Francis Locke to march the Rowan County militia to Sherrill's Ford and from there guard against further British advance from the west. (Locke 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:774–775)

24 September 1780

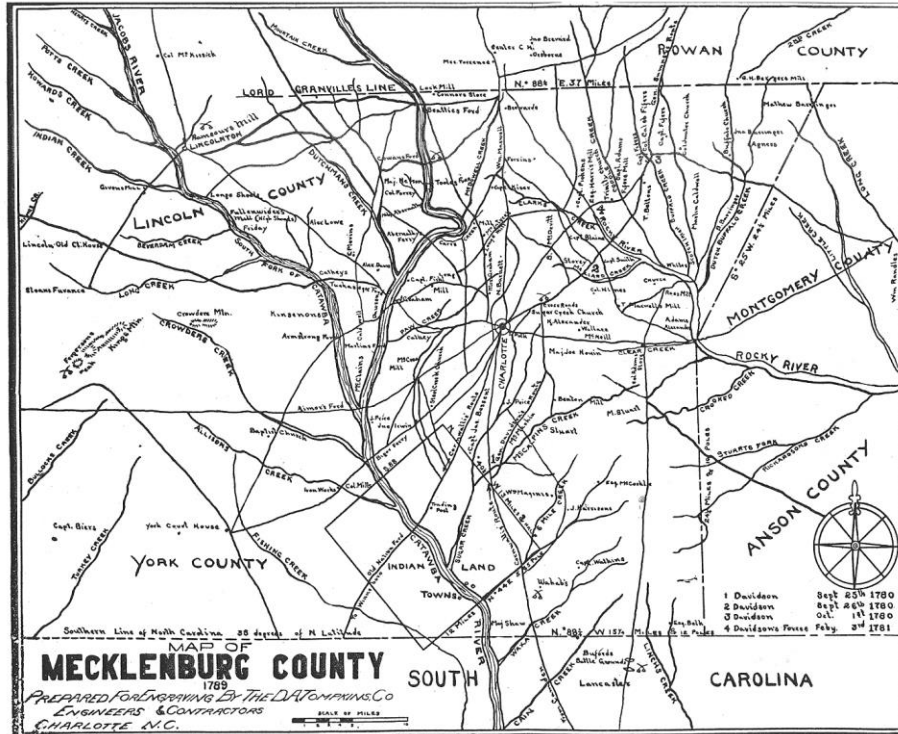
Cornwallis marched with about 2000 professional uniformed soldiers from Waxhaw Creek towards Charlotte (Money 1780, 24 Sep) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 249).

Meanwhile, from Waxhaw Creek, the British began their march. Lieutenant John Money recorded:

The following Corps marched this [24 September] afternoon at 4 pm towards Charlotte — 23rd, 33rd, Vol'n of Ireland and Legion with 2, 3 and 6-pounders. Halted at Twelve Mile Creek till the moon rose and then proceeded toward Sugar Creek on the Charlotte Road. (Money 1780, 24 Sep) (Allison 2009–2011)

Interestingly, on the morning of 25 September 1780, the moon was four days past its last-quarter phase. Thus, it rose about 4:00 a.m. (time and date.com 2009).

The 23rd and 33rd Regiments had distinguished records since the beginning of the war. The 23rd Regiment accompanied Brigadier General Hugh Percy's rescue of British soldiers and Marines who fought at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, on 19 April 1775 (Mackenzie 1930, 19–23). Both regiments participated in the flanking maneuver on Long Island, New York, that won an important British victory on 27 August 1776. In 1780, the 23rd Regiment was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Webster. He was also delegated command of the 33rd Regiment by its titular colonel, Cornwallis.



Original Map from which this was compiled bore this inscription:-

*A plan of Mecklenburg and portion of
 joining Counties
 is laid down by a scale of five miles to an inch
 January 16th 1789 By Maj Joseph Graham*

Caption reads: Original Map from which this was compiled bore this inscription:-

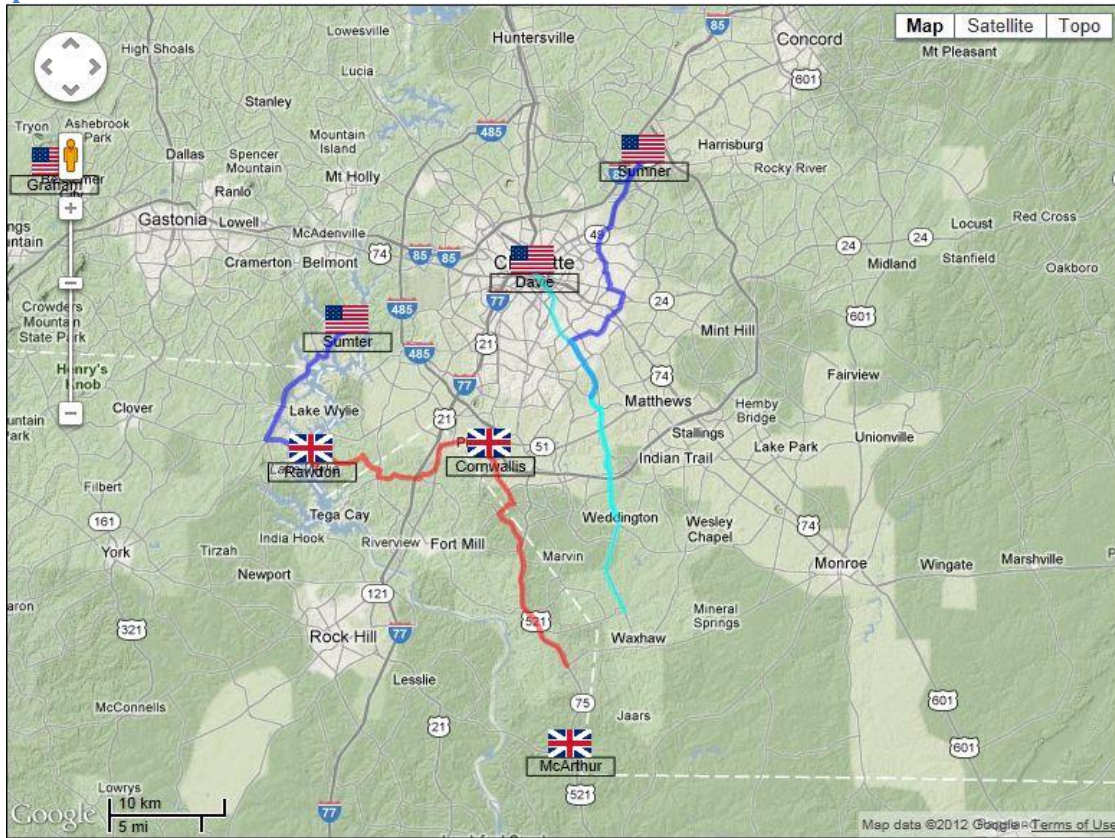
“A plan of Mecklenburg and portion of joining Counties is laid down by a scale of five miles to an inch. January 16th 1789 By Maj Joseph Graham.” (J. Graham 1789)
 (Graham 1789 in Tompkins in W. A. Graham 1904b, 188)
 (Graham 1789 in Tompkins in Robinson 1976, 6)

Davie later wrote, “on the 24th of september our patrols gave information, that the enemy were in motion on the Steele-creek road leading to Charlotte.” (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 24). Consequently, early in the morning on 25 September, Sumner and Davidson abandoned their camp.

Sumner marched from McAlpine Creek to Charlotte. There he loaded all public stores and marched north along the Salisbury Road (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:778) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 69, 249). Sumner ordered Davie to make a stand at Charlotte. Sumner described these events in a 12 October letter:

On September 25th I was informed that the enemy had moved towards Charlotte. We marched into Charlotte at 6 o'clock in the morning, and found the main British army advancing and only 12 miles away. Having positive orders not to risk a general engagement, & our force not being able to cope with the enemy's, I thought proper to order a retreat, having secured what provisions we could and all the public stores, leaving Colo. Davie with his horse to cover our retreat. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:785–786).

25 September 1780



[British and American Troop Movements, 25 September 1780](#)

Cornwallis crossed state line at Clems Branch campground (W. L. Anderson 2008a). The British Army halted that afternoon one mile north of McAlpine Creek (Robinson 1957, 70), and camped that evening south of Little Sugar Creek (Money 1780, 25 Sep), “ten miles from Charlotte, between McAlpin and Sugar Creeks on the Camden Road.” (W. A. Graham 1904b, 62). That camp was near present-day President James K. Polk Birthplace State Historic Site (Money 1780, 25 Sep) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 62, 249).

Cornwallis dispatched Rawdon to attack Sumter at Bigger’s Ferry. Sumter escaped to opposite side of river. (Hill 1815, 17) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 249). Money wrote:

No certain Intelligence being received of Sumpter’s having passed the Catawba River, Lord Rawdon was detached with the Legion and Flank Companies of the Vol’n of Ireland to attack him. I marched with his Lordship to Bigger’s Ferry where we learned he had passed the evening before and that Sumner and Davidson had retired from McAlpine’s Creek. (Money 1780, 24 Sep)

Colonel William Hill was with Sumter and later wrote:

Cornwallis detached Rawdon & Tarlton [actually British Legion without Tarleton] with a number of horse & foot to five times the number that Gen^l—Sumter had then in camp in order to surprise him but fortunately he got news of their intentions & crossed the River to the west side at Bigers’ (now called Masons ferry) & there encamped. (Hill 1815, 17)

Davidson withdrew east of Charlotte past the Cross Roads (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 249), about a mile east of Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church. Graham described that road:

Persons going from Waxhaw to Salisbury would not pass through Charlotte, but, after passing Sugar [meant McApine] Creek, take a right-hand fork, and leaving Charlotte four miles to the left,

enter the Charlotte-Salisbury road at “Cross-Roads” near the Alexander Residence. (W. A. Graham 1904b, 69).

In Charlotte, Davie ordered Graham:

to go down to the enemy’s lines and relieve a party who had been out two days. He [Graham] relieved Colonel Davies’s party in the afternoon [25 September], and in the evening took four men, stragglers, at a farm adjacent to the [British] encampment, who had gone out in search of milk, and sent them on to Colonel Davie. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 250).

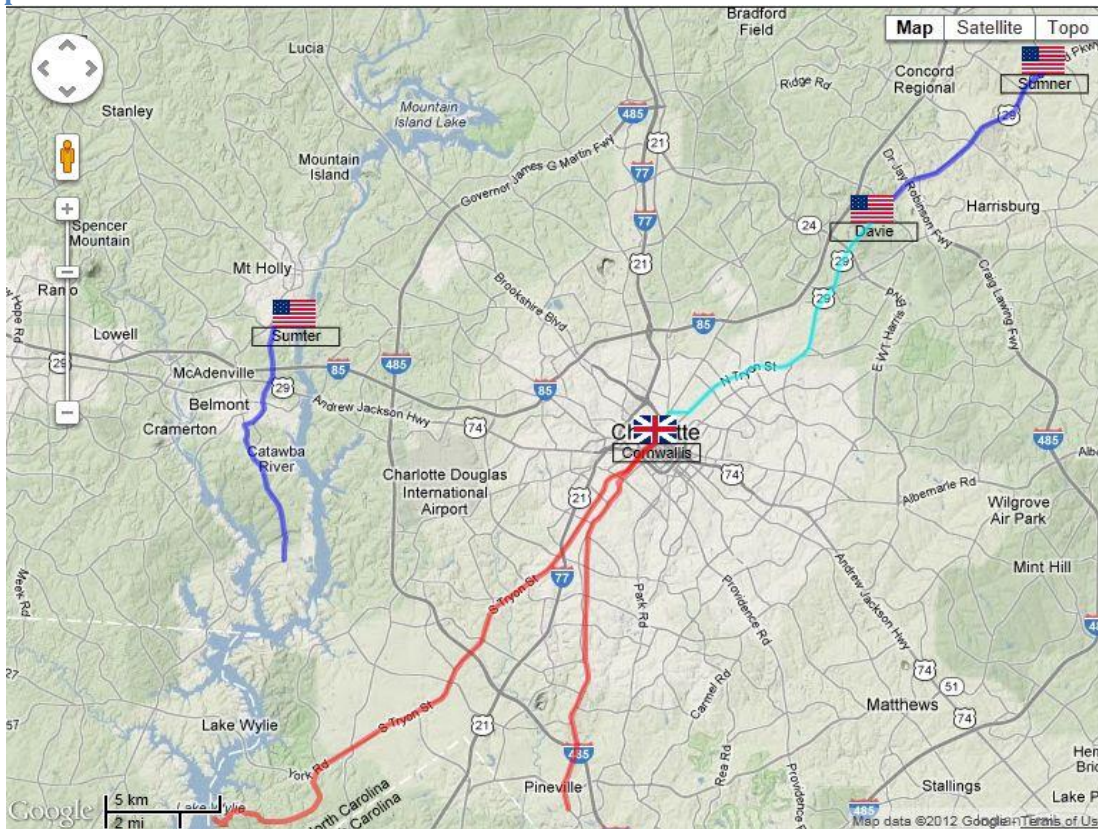
Davie wrote Sumner that he would “keep parties down every Route and wait here [Charlotte] for further orders.” (Davie 1780 in Robinson 1957, 70). Davie, “during the night and morning had the hospital and military stores removed.” (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 251).

Doctor James Rankin Alexander testified in his pension application that the Liberty Hall Academy hospital was closed:

At the time the enemy reached Charlotte, most of the invalids had sufficiently recovered to go home and the hospital was broken up. (Alexander, James Rankin, pension application 1833).

Likewise, Reverend Alexander McWhorter, with his family, escaped Charlotte (Marting 1948) (Dussek 2011–2014). Before the British arrived in Charlotte, James Reed transported the moveable property of Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church to McCorkle’s Meeting House (Allen, James, 1781 in Mecklenburg County Estate Papers n.d.) (Boyer 2008–2017), probably Thyatira Presbyterian Church where Reverend Samuel Eusebius McCorkle was minister.

26 September 1780



[British and American Troop Movements, 26 September 1780](#)

On the morning of 26 September, events occurred quickly. Graham wrote:

Before sunrise on the 26th, Graham's party discovered the front of the enemy advancing, and two of his men who had been sent down their left flank [maybe Nations Ford Road], reported that the whole army was in motion — that they had seen their artillery, baggage, etc., coming on. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 250).

Receiving this report, Davie wrote to Sumner, "The Enemy were in motion at day break and if they march on will reach this place by ten [o'clock]." (Davie 1780 in Robinson 1957, 70).

Two weeks later, on 8 October, Davidson reported to Sumner, "Golson Step, a Tory, on examination gave the following particulars: That the Enemy brought to Charlotte 100 Waggons, 1,100 infantry in uniform, 550 Light Dragoons, 800 Militia & 2 field pieces" (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:678).



Brigadier General Joseph Graham
Artist unknown, about 1805.
(W. A. Graham 1904b, frontispiece).

Ezekiel Polk signed a "protection" form to avoid confiscation or destruction of his property. Although he was a Patriot leader, this act tarnished his reputation. Even 64 years later, during the 1844 Presidential-election campaign, political opponents of James K. Polk falsely asserted his grandfather was a Tory.

At daybreak on 26 September, Lord Rawdon's troops marched from Bigger's Ferry to rejoin Cornwallis. Lieutenant John Money wrote that juncture occurred at the "Cross Roads within four miles of Charlottetown." (Money 1780, 26 Sep) (Allison 2009–2011). Graham, who was also an eyewitness, located the juncture within 2 miles of Charlotte.

Within two miles of Charlotte, where the road from the ferry [Bigger's Ferry] comes in, Tarleton [actually Rawdon and Hanger] joined them [the main British army]. In five minutes after he arrived, being indisposed by his night's march, Major Hanger took command of the cavalry, and, coming in front, compelled Graham to keep a more respectful distance. He [Graham] was pursued by the front troop in a brisk canter for a mile; after that they went at a common travel, until they came in sight of the village, when they halted that the rear might close up, and some of their officers endeavored to reconnoiter. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 250–251)

That location was probably where Camden Road joins South Tryon Street. Further up the road, approximately just south of present-day Stonewall Street:

One of his [Captain Joseph Graham's] men (his brother-in-law, Thomas Barnett) remarked to a comrade, "I believe that is Cornwallis; I am going to get him." He dismounted and was aiming his rifle, when Captain Graham rode up and told him he had given him orders not to fire, and if he did not remount his horse he would cut him down in his tracks. Barnett obeyed the command. (W. A. Graham 1904b, 62)

At noon, Cornwallis's army entered Charlotte along present-day South Tryon Street (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 249) (W. A. Graham 1904b, 62). Davie set up defense behind the stone wall under the courthouse at present-day Square. Davie's 150 militiamen repulsed three cavalry charges by the British Legion (Stedman 1794, 2:216). But they were driven away by British light infantry (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 25).

Davie's defense of Charlotte was later described by Graham:

The disposition of troops in the village for battle was about as follows: Major Dickson's command was placed behind the McCombs' House, near where the Buford Hotel now stands [northeast corner South Tryon and Fourth Streets (Kratt and Boyer 2000, 73)]. The infantry was formed in three lines across North Tryon street, the first line twenty steps from the court-house, the other lines each fifty yards in rear, with orders to advance to the court-house, fire and retire by flank. Eighty yards distance on East and West Trade streets were two troops of cavalry, each concealed by a building. (W. A. Graham 1904b, 62–63)

Because Tarleton was sick, the British Legion was led by Major George Hanger.



Major George Hanger
Painted by Thomas Beach, about 1782.

Charles Stedman, the British commissary officer, wrote:

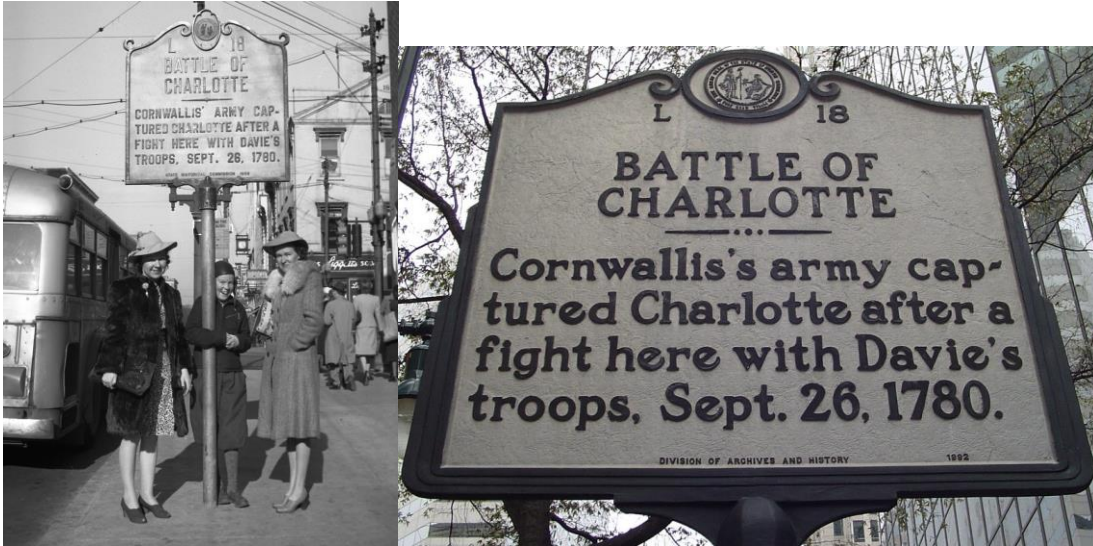
In the centre of Charlotte, intersecting the two principal streets, stood a large brick [pillared] building, the upper part being the court-house, and the under part the market-house. Behind the shambles a few Americans on horseback had placed themselves. The legion was ordered to drive them off; but upon receiving a fire from behind the stalls, this corps fell back. Lord Cornwallis rode up in person, and made use of these words: — “Legion, remember you have everything to lose, but nothing to gain;” alluding, as was supposed, to the former reputation of this corps. Webster's brigade moved on and drove the Americans from behind the court-house; the legion then pursued them; but the whole of the British army was actually kept at bay, for some minutes, by a few mounted Americans, not exceeding twenty in number. (Stedman 1794, 2:216).

Davie wrote that the battle:

... furnishes a very striking instance of the bravery and importance of the American Militia; few examples can be shewn of any troops who in one action changed their position twice in good order although pressed by a much superior body of Infantry and charged three times by thrice their number of Cavalry, unsupported & in the presence of the enemy's whole army and finally retreating in good order. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 25).

On 15 August 1833, Captain Henry Connelly [testified](#):

At the time of approach of Cornwallis to Charlotte, under Col Davie the troops posted themselves to meet the enemy. On the enemy's approach the companies commanded by this applicant received the first onset from Tarleton's Cavalry, and the firing became general on the left wing. The troops were commanded by Col Davie in person, and for three times we succeeded in repulsing the enemy. At length we had to yield to superior numbers. In this battle we had many men killed, several from under this applicant. (Connelly, Henry, pension application 1833)



North Carolina historical marker, 1938 and 1992, on South Tryon Street near where the British Legion was repulsed by the American musket volley

Davie and Graham continued to slow the British advance along Salisbury Road and rear guard the slower foot-soldier army marching towards Salisbury (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 250–251). Brief skirmishes occurred at Muddy Branch, near present-day highway I277 overpass, and Kennedy Creek, near present-day 36th Street (W. A. Graham 1904b, 63). Graham was badly wounded (Graham 1832 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 49) and left for dead at the Cross Roads where present-day Eastway Drive intersects North Tryon Street.

Sassafras Fields, about 3 miles from Cross Roads and 1.5 miles from Mallard Creek (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 254) (Murphey 1830 in Hoyt 1914, II:243), or about 7 miles from Charlotte, was the furthest extent of the British Legion advance (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 255). This location was approximately at the present-day Lieutenant George Locke monument. Although this marker conveniently marks Sassafras Fields, Locke's was probably killed near Cross Roads (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 25) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 255–256) (W. A. Graham 1904b, 64). Before sunset, the British pursuers disengaged and returned to Charlotte (W. A. Graham 1904b, 64).



Captain Joseph Graham monument marks where he was wounded.

Monument erroneously indicates his rank as major, his rank after September 1781.

Erected in 1916 across from Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church but event occurred at Cross Roads.

Lieutenant George Locke monument marks Sassafras Fields, the furthest extent of the British Legion dragoons. It was unveiled on 26 September 1911 (In Social Circles 1911) near where present-day highways US29 and NC49 diverge. It erroneously indicates Locke's rank as lieutenant colonel. Also, he probably was killed near Cross Roads.

Cornwallis's headquarters in Charlotte was Colonel Thomas Polk's white house on the northeast corner of Independence Square (Foote 1846, 509).



Cornwallis's Charlotte Headquarters Building on right photographed by Rufus Morgan, 1873 (Kratt and Boyer 2000, 6).

Liberty Hall Academy continued to be used as a hospital by the British. It was at the southeast corner of present-day Second Street and South Tryon Street.

In Charlotte, the British Army encampment configuration is not known from original sources. Nonetheless, before 1827, Joseph Graham learned that the British camp surrounded the courthouse in an approximant square. Graham wrote that the 23rd and 33rd Regiments camped 220 yards east from and parallel to present-day Tryon Street. The Volunteers of Ireland Regiment camped 165 yards north from and parallel to present-day Trade Street. O'Hara's regiment camped west, opposite the 23rd. The British Legion and Tories camped south, opposite the Volunteers of Ireland. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 257). However, Joseph Graham did not witness the British camp because he was recovering from serious wounds. Also, neither Brigadier General Charles O'Hara nor his unit, the Brigade of Guards, was in Charlotte. The British encampment enclosed the square that runs approximately along present-day College Street, Fifth Street, Church Street, and Fourth Street. Later, on 8 October, the 71st Regiment 1st Battalion was ordered to march from Waxhaw Creek to Charlotte (Money 1780 in CPS 2010, II:284). It could have camped along the western side.

Davidson's Mecklenburg County militia set up camp on Rocky River 16 miles north on Salisbury Road. Mounted men from both Davidson and Davie's units patrolled all roads leading to Charlotte.

27 September 1780

Cornwallis, using a mobile printing press, issued a proclamation that offered peace and protection to inhabitants (Preyer 1987, 157). He tried to encourage loyalist civilians, but had little success. Most Whig families evacuated. Their men were already on active duty.

3 October 1780

Sometime before 3 October 1780, former colonial North Carolina Governor Josiah Martin joined Cornwallis in Charlotte. Although he was exiled 5 years earlier, he presumed himself reinstated. He issued a proclamation that offered peace and protection to inhabitants (Martin 1780 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 263–266).

The entourage of Cornwallis's army was huge. Charlotte acquired an additional 4100 residents (Stedman 1794, 2:216–217). That was at least 20 times its normal population. Charles Stedman, the British commissary officer, described food procurement in Charlotte:

There were several large, well-cultivated farms in the neighbourhood of Charlotte. An abundance of cattle; few sheep; the cattle being mostly milch-cows, or cows with calf, which at that season of the year was the best beef; for the cattle in North and South Carolina run wild in the woods, and at this season are in general very poor. As an instance, when the army was at Charlotte, we killed upon an average 100 head [of cattle] per day. The amount of rations issued, including the army departments, militia, negroes, &c. was 4,100 per day. The leanness of the cattle will account for the number killed each day. This was not confined to Charlotte, for they were poor at this season throughout the Carolinas; very few of the oxen were fit to kill. In one day no less than 37 cows in calf were slaughtered. Necessity only justified this measure. At this period the royal army was supported by lord Rawdon's moving with one half of the army one day, and colonel Webster, with the other half, the next day, as a covering party, to protect the foraging parties and cattle-drivers. This measure was rendered necessary from the hostile disposition of the inhabitants. Wheat and rye were collected in the straw, Indian corn in the hulk, and brought in waggons to Charlotte, where (in the court-house) it was threshed out by the militia and negroes, and then sent to the mill. This was attended with much trouble and fatigue to the army; nevertheless meal was not wanting; cattle there were in abundance. (Stedman 1794, 2:216–217)

British troops destroyed considerable property in Mecklenburg County. Loss or destruction was reported later by Sara McDough (McDough, Robert, 1783 in Mecklenburg County Estate Papers n.d.), John Taylor (Sharply, Moses, 1785 in Mecklenburg County Estate Papers n.d.) and John and James Armstrong (Armstrong, Matthew, 1787 in Mecklenburg County Estate Papers n.d.). (Boyer 2008–2017)

3 October 1780

Captain James Thompson and Lieutenant George Graham obtained permission from Davidson to return home. There, on 3 October, they collected a party of men and disrupted a British foraging party at McIntyre's farm on

Beattie's Ford Road (W. A. Graham 1904b, 28). Musket balls remained evident on farm house until it was demolished in 1941 (W. A. Graham 1904b, 28).



McIntyre House, built about 1769, demolished 1941, shown 1 May 1931.

E. L. Baxter Davidson stands in doorway riddled with musket ball holes (Boyer 2008–2017).

Davie later wrote:

Colonel Davie returned towards Charlotte, as his force was insufficient to make any impression on the enemy in their camp, all that could be done was to confine them if possible to the Town by attacking their foraging parties, and to distress them by cutting off their supplies; in consequence of which positions were chosen within fifteen & twenty miles, and parties detached on all sides to watch and harass the enemy; he was confined by express orders to remain always with the principal body in the direction between Salisbury & Charlotte, and by no means to risque being generally engaged. These orders limited the operations of this partisan but much was done by his perfect knowledge of the Country and the daring bravery of the militia under his command: no part of the enemy ventured out without being attacked, and often retired with considerable loss; the people of the neighbouring Country were strongly attached to the American cause, and gave his Lordship no assistance, and all information was cut off by the vigilance and activity of the militia cavalry. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 26)

Later, Tarleton wrote:

Charlotte town afforded some conveniences, blended with great disadvantages. The mills in its neighbourhood were supposed of sufficient consequence to render it for the present an eligible position, and, in future, a necessary post, when the army advanced: But the aptness of its intermediate situation between Camden and Salisbury, and the quantity of its mills, did not counterbalance its defects. The town and environs abounded with inveterate enemies; the plantations in the neighbourhood were small and uncultivated; the roads narrow, and crossed in every direction; and the whole face of the country covered with close and thick woods. In addition to these disadvantages, no estimation could be made of the sentiments of half the inhabitants of North Carolina, whilst the royal army remained at Charlotte town. It was evident, and it had been frequently mentioned to the King's officers, that the counties of Mecklenburg and Rohan were more hostile to England than any other in America. The vigilance and animosity of these surrounding districts checked the exertions of the well affected, and totally destroyed all communication between the King's troops and the loyalists in the other parts of the province. (Tarleton 1787, 159).

Likewise, British commissary officer Stedman later wrote:

So inveterate was their rancour, that the messengers, with expresses for the commander-in-chief were frequently murdered; and the inhabitants, instead of remaining quietly at home to receive

payment for the produce of their plantations, made it a practice to waylay the British foraging parties, fire their rifles from concealed places, and then fly into the woods. (Stedman 1794, 2:216).

5 October 1780

Despite the many difficulties, Cornwallis admonished his soldiers to be lenient toward the American residents:

Head Quarters Charlotte Town 5th. Octr. 1780

The Officers & Soldiers, of this Army, have given such repeated proofs of their Zeal and Attachment to the Interests of their King and Country, that Lord Cornwallis can have no doubt of their paying the most exact attention to them in every Instance by which they can be Materially affected.

He desires the Officers & Soldiers to reflect that the great object of his Majesty's forces in this Country is to protect & Secure his Majesty's faithfull & Loyal Subjects, & to Encourage & Assist them in Arming; & opposing the Tyranny & Oppression of the Rebels. His Lordship therefore recommends it to them in the Strongest manner, to treat with kindness all those who have Sought protection in the British Army, & to believe that Although their Ignorance & want of Skill in Military Affairs, may at present render their appearance Awkward in a Veteran & Experienc'd Army; When they are properly Arm'd, Appointed, & Instructed, they Will shew the same Arduor, & Courage, in the Cause of Great Britain, As their Countrymen who repair'd to the Royal Standard in the Northern Colonies. (Cornwallis 1780 in Newsome 1932, 381)

7 October 1780

Probably about 7 October (Stedman 1794, 2:223–224), from Rocky River camp, Davidson ordered Major Joseph Dickson, commander of the Lincoln County cavalry, to circumvent Charlotte using outlying roads. He attacked a British guard at Polk's Mill, probably near where present-day Remount Road crosses Irwin Creek (Price and Strother 1808). On 8 October, Davidson reported to Sumner:

I have the pleasure to enclose to you a large packet taken yesterday at McAlpines Creek, on the way to Camden, by a small party of my brigade. A detachment of 120 horse under Rutledge and Dixon [Dickson] almost surrounded Charlotte yesterday, attacked a picket at Col. Polk's mill, and at a certain Mr. Elliott's brought off a sentry and 8 Tories, who are now on their way to join you. A small party of riflemen brought off 50 horses from the Tories at Col. Polk's plantation last night. Dixon [Dickson] lost one man and killed one. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:784)

On 13 October 1832, Rowan County militiaman Joseph Patton [testified](#) a bit more detail:

He [Patton] was in a skirmish at Col. Polk's Mill the British were guarding said mill we thought it was the Tories until we fired a few times on them they wounded 7 [could be 17] of our horses and killed one man of ours named Hugh Gray, we took one of their guards and retreated and then returned to head quarters at Rocky river. (Patton, Joseph, pension application 1832)

Tarleton wrote:

An attack was directed against the picket at Polk's mill, two miles from the town: The Americans were gallantly received by Lieutenant Guyon, of the 23d regiment; and the fire of his party from a loop-holed building adjoining the mill, repulsed the assailants. (Tarleton 1787, 160).

Charles Stedman wrote:

At Polk's Mill, near Charlotte, a small detachment of the twenty-third regiment was posted, commanded by lieutenant Guyon, a very young man. The Americans made an attack upon the mill, with a very superior force, but were repulsed. Lieutenant Guyon's conduct was highly applauded. (Stedman 1794, 2:223–224).

Later, Joseph Graham wrote:

A guard of fifty men were stationed at Polk's Mill (now Wilson's), in two miles of Charlotte, which was kept grinding night and day for the army. On the 28th of September [more likely about 7 October], Major Dickson set out from Colonel Davie with sixty men, made a circuit around Charlotte, and in the evening charged on this post. The garrison was vigilant, threw itself into a log house on the hill above the mill, and had loop-holes in the daubing and chinks to fire through. Major Dickson was repulsed, with the loss of one man killed and several horses wounded. Before the enemy got into the house, two were wounded, but after that they were secure, and the assailants, much exposed, withdrew. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 258).

In early October, Cornwallis planned to advance beyond Charlotte. Tarleton later wrote:

In the beginning of October it was intended to send a corps from Charlotte town, under the orders of Lieutenant-colonel Webster, to attack a party of Americans, commanded by General Sumner, at Alexander's mill, on a branch of Rocky river. (Tarleton 1787, 165).

On 5 October, Cornwallis ordered Major Archibald McArthur to march the 71st Regiment 1st Battalion from Waxhaw Creek to Armour's Ford on Catawba River on either 7 or 8 October in order to support Ferguson (Cornwallis 1780 in CPS 2010, II:282). At the same time, he advised Ferguson of this deployment:

I would have you come to Armer's Ford just below the forks [of the Catawba River]. If we can then fix the enemy, or if they presume to pass on towards Ninety Six, I will detach in force against them. Take all possible pains to get intelligence and let me hear when you arrive at Armer's Ford. Major McArthur will meet you there. (Cornwallis 1780 in CPS 2010, II:161)

Since Ferguson did not move during the day 7 October, he probably never received Cornwallis's order. On 8 October, McArthur was redirected to Charlotte (Money 1780 in CPS 2010, II:284). So the 71st Regiment 1st Battalion was in Charlotte for a few days.

7 October 1780

Major Patrick Ferguson was defeated at Kings Mountain by Scotch-Irish Overmountain men and North Carolina and South Carolina militiamen. The Lincoln County militiamen, or so-called "South Fork Boys" from present-day Gaston County, played a prominent role at Kings Mountain (Draper 1881) (W. L. Anderson 2009a). At this time, all Mecklenburg County militia were camped at Rocky River under Davidson.

8 October 1780

By 9 October, after weeks of stressful fighting, Davie became sick, but remained active. Davidson reported his concern to Sumner: "Colo. Davie is very sick. I don't know what I should do should he be rendered unfit of Duty." (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:677) (Davidson 1951, 83). Davie's subordinates Captain Joseph Dickson and Captain Rutledge patrolled Charlotte's perimeter. Without knowledge of Kings Mountain, Davidson learned that Cornwallis ordered his army in Charlotte to draw two days' provisions for a march (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:677). Davidson presumed that Cornwallis planned to attack his position at Rocky River. On 10 October, Davidson wrote, "I find he is determined to surprise men & I am as determined to disappoint him." (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:683) (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 83).

On 8 October, Sumner reported to Gates:

I am just now informed by Colo. [Philip] Taylor, who is just arrived from Colo. Phyfer's, that the Enemy is reinforced from their outposts with 14 pieces of Cannon in all & two Grass-hoppers; that their intention was to march this day, & to fix their Encampment contiguous to Mr. Frohock's Mill, near Salisbury. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:678)

In the same message, Sumner described what he thought to be deliberate biological warfare:

A Woman who passed about 15 days ago I am apprehensive has proceeded towards Hillsborough, from the enemy, with the small-pox. I doubt not but she has been sent on purpose to spread that Contagion among the Troops. The Ferry man at this ford, I am informed by Doctor Pasteur & Alexander, whom I sent to examine him, has got it. I have had him removed, & shall take such

precaution in my power to prevent the infection spreading. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:678–679)

10 October 1780

On 8 October 1780, Brigadier General William Davidson moved his 600 troops from Phyfer's plantation to Rocky River on Salisbury Road, present-day highway US29 near Lowes Motor Speedway (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:677). That was 16 miles from Charlotte. When news of Kings Mountain got to Davidson, he hurriedly wrote Brigadier General Jethro Sumner:

Sir — I have the Pleasure of handing you very agreeable Intelligence from the West. Ferguson, the Great Partizan, has miscarried. This we are assured of by Mr. [Samuel] Tate, Brigade Major in General Sumpter's Brigade. The particulars from that Gentleman's Mouth stand thus: that Colonels Campbell, Cleveland, Shelby, Sevier, Williams, Brandon, Lacey, Etc., formed a Conjoint Body near Gilbert Town consisting of 3000 — From this Body were selected 1600 good Horse, who immediately went in search of Colonel Ferguson, who was making his way to Charlotte — Our people overtook him well posted on King's Mountain, and on the evening of the 7th Instant at 4 o'clock, began the attack which lasted forty seven minutes, Colonel Ferguson fell in the action, besides 150 of his men — 810 were made prisoner, including the British — 150 of the prisoners are wounded — 1500 Stands of arms fell into our Hands. the enemy surrendered. We lost about 20 men among whom is Major Chronicle of Lincoln County, Colonel Williams is mortally wounded, the number of our wounded cannot be ascertained. This blow will certainly affect the British very considerably. The designs of our conquering Friends near King's Mountain not certainly known, it is most probable that they will secure their prisoners in or over the Mountains and proceed toward Charlotte — The Brigade Major who gives us this was in action. The above is true. The Blow is great and I give you Joy upon the Occasion. (Davidson 1780 in Tarleton 1787, 195) (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:685) (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 86)

When Davidson's letter arrived at Sumner's camp on the Yadkin River, Colonel Thomas Polk wrote the North Carolina Board of War:

Camp Yadkin River, 11th Oct. 1780

Gentlemen:

I have the pleasure to inform you that on Saturday last the noted Col. Ferguson with 150 fell on Kings Mountain, 800 taken Prisoners with 1500 Stand of Arms. Cleaveland and Campbell Commanded. A glorious affair. In a few Days doubt not but we will be in Charlotte & I Will take Possession of my house & his Lordship take the Woods.

I am, Gent., with Respect, Your humb. Servt., Thomas Polk (Polk 1780 in NCSR 1895, XV:414)

Davidson's letter was forwarded from Sumner to Gates, to Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson, to Continental Congress in Philadelphia. It was published in newspapers across the country.

In Charlotte, British Lieutenant John Money recorded the first intimation of the results of Kings Mountain. On 10 October 1780, he wrote to Major James Wemyss, "We have a report of Ferguson being routed and killed." (Money 1780 in CPS 2010, II:224) (Allison 2009–2011) Nonetheless, Cornwallis was not certain of Ferguson's predicament. Having a few days earlier sent an order to Ferguson to march to Armour's Ford on the Catawba River (Cornwallis 1780 in CPS 2010, II:161), on 10 October, Cornwallis sent Tarleton's British Legion and light infantry to that ford. On arrival, Tarleton confirmed the defeat. He later wrote:

On the 10th [October], Earl Cornwallis gave orders to Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, to march with the light infantry, the British legion, and a three pounder, to assist Major Ferguson, no certain intelligence having arrived of his defeat : It was rumoured with great confidence by the Americans in the neighbourhood of Charlotte town, and the probability of the circumstance gave weight to the report. Tarleton's instructions directed him to reinforce Ferguson wherever he could find him, and

to draw his corps to the Catawba, if after the junction, advantage could not be obtained over the mountaineers; or, upon the certainty of his defeat, at all events to oppose the entrance of the victorious Americans into South Carolina : Accordingly, Tarleton marched to Smith's ford [should be Armour's ford, since Smith's ford was on Broad River], below the forks of the Catawba, where he received certain information of the melancholy fate of Major Ferguson. This mortifying intelligence was forwarded to Charlotte town [corrected errata], and the light troops crossed the river, to give protection to the fugitives, and to attend the operations of the enemy. (Tarleton 1787, 165–166).

The roads taken were probably present-day York Road, highway US49, and Shopton Road. Armour's Ford was near the South Fork River confluence (I. Price 1796). Joseph Graham provided more detail that he must have learned from resident Matthew Knox.

On the day he received the express [from Ferguson], Cornwallis ordered Tarleton's cavalry to go with the bearers, who were to serve as guides, to Ferguson's aid. The ford at which they had crossed was Armour's, near the mouth of the South Fork of the Catawba; it was deep and somewhat difficult to find, which being represented to Colonel Tarleton, he sent for Matthew Knox, an old man nearly seventy residing hard by, to show them the way over. They arrived at the ford a little before sunset; the water had risen considerably since the express had passed. The old man knew this, but said nothing about it, only giving them directions how the ford ran. The advance, about twenty in number, went in, but before they had gone twenty steps, they were swimming; after much difficulty they got out, on the same shore; some nearly drowned. They were much enraged with Mr. Knox, threatening to "cut the old rebel to pieces," but the commander protected him. They repaired to a neighboring farm and encamped until morning, by which time the river had fallen so as to be passable, and they were about to go over when they met two men who had been in the battle of King's Mountain, and gave Tarleton information of the destruction of Ferguson's army, ... (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 268–269)

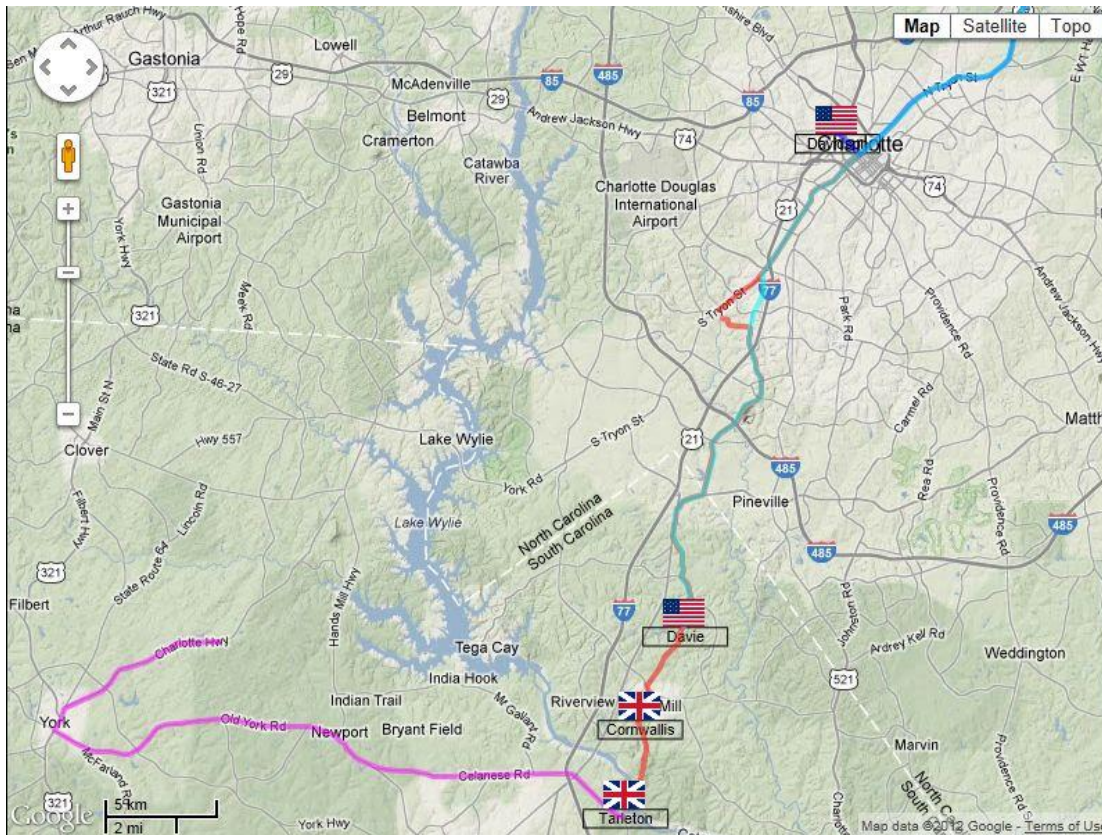
Although William Faden's 1787 map (Faden 1787) suggests that Tarleton crossed the Catawba River at Bigger's Ferry, the above evidence for Armour's Ford is stronger. That is where Cornwallis ordered Ferguson to go and thus where Tarleton would expect to meet him.

12 October 1780

When Cornwallis learned of Ferguson's defeat at Kings Mountain, he was concerned of immediate rebel attack against Charlotte or the British fort at Ninety Six. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon was second-in-command and privy to Cornwallis's decision making. Soon afterwards, on 21 October, Rawdon wrote:

The inveteracy of the inhabitants in Mecklenburg County was so great that during the latter part of our stay there we were totally ignorant of the situation of many of our posts, all our expresses being way laid and many of them murder'd on the road. We had obtained accounts of Major Ferguson's misfortune but we cou'd procure no intelligence of its consequences. We had, however, reason to fear that they might be fatal to the Ninety Six District and from thence might eventually extend yet farther. This consideration, added to our incertitude of co-operation from the northward, made Lord Cornwallis determine to pass the Catawba and put this country in a proper state of security before he proceeded so far as to be out of reach of being called to its assistance should circumstances require it. (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:126)

The reference to cooperation from the northward was about Major General Alexander Leslie's 2500 soldiers which were to disembark in Portsmouth, Virginia, as a diversion in the American rear. This force did not reach Portsmouth until 22 October. Historical evidence reveals that Cornwallis's risk was not as severe as he presumed. Had Kings Mountain not occurred on 7 October, Cornwallis's army would have likely advanced further into North Carolina.



[British and American Troop Movements, 12–14 October 1780](#)

During the afternoon of 12 October, the British Army pulled out of Charlotte, ending its 16-day occupation (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:694–695). Graham indicated this evacuation occurred on 9 October (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 270) (McLeary, Michael, pension application 1832). Tarleton indicated this event occurred on 14 October (Tarleton 1787, 167). Stedman (Stedman 1794, 224) repeated that date, as did Davie (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 27). However, Davidson and Sumner’s contemporaneously dated correspondence (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:694–695) (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 90) (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:693), shown below, indicate that this event occurred during the early evening of 12 October. Consistent with 12 October is the 10:00 a.m. correspondence of Lieutenant John Money in Charlottetown to Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull in Camden (Money 1780 in CPS 2010, II:252) (Allison 2009–2011). Turnbull acknowledged the 12 October date in his 20 October reply to Rawdon:

Lord Cornwallis’s groom and a corporal of the Legion who left Charlotte express the 12th instant for this place [Camden] — the groom arrived here next morning before day. He met an officer with twelve dragoons carrying Lord Cornwallis’s dispatches from New York and turn’d him back, saying that it was his orders to turn every thing back and that we shou’d send nothing forward untill we shou’d hear from his Lordship. The corporal was killed at Sugar Creek. (Turnbull 1780 in CPS 2010, II:257)

The corporal was likely killed where Camden-Charlotte Road crossed Little Sugar Creek. That is near present-day President James K. Polk Birthplace State Historic Site. Private Michael McLeary was probably among the Americans who intercepted this express. In 1832, he testified:

your Declarant was also want [one] of a small Detachment who captured an express from Lord Cornwallis to Col. Turnbull Commander of his Majesty’s forces in Camden South Carolina (McLeary, Michael, pension application 1832)

As the British Army evacuated Charlotte, it burnt the Liberty Hall Academy buildings (Polk 1825 in Hoyt 1914, II:401) (Foote 1846, 516). The army included many regiments: 23rd, 33rd, Volunteers of Ireland, and 1st Battalion of the 71st, in total over 2000 soldiers. The entire entourage was about 4100 individuals (Stedman 1794, 2:216–217). There were approximately 100 wagons (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:678). The British marched to “Barnets Creek 5 Miles below Town, on the Road to Armours Ford.” (Davidson 1780 in Robinson 1957, 80) Its name in 1780 may have been Park’s Mill, later renamed Barnett’s Mill (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 270). This was where present-day South Tryon Street crosses Big Sugar Creek.

Immediately south of this crossing was the John McDowell house where present-day South Tryon Street intersects Beam Road. After the British passed her house, Jane Parks McDowell quickly mounted a horse and rode 10 miles to alert the Americans (I. B. Williams 1927) (Crosland 1934) (Hastings 1955, 48–49) (Blythe and Brockmann 1961, 89) (R. Blackwelder 1973).



Jane Parks McDowell monument
Erected 1927 by Daughters of the American Revolution

During the night, the British learned they were not on the road to Catawba-Nation Ford. Charlotte resident William McCafferty guided the British Army. He stated that he would find the correct road, but abandoned the British. Unwilling to backtrack, the British traveled cross-country during that night attempting to locate the road to Nation Ford. British soldiers became confused, separated, and lost. Their route was along or near present-day Westinghouse Road (Faden 1787). Tarleton later wrote:

The British rear guard destroyed, or left behind, near twenty wagons, loaded with supplies for the army, a printing press, and other stores belonging to public departments, and the knapsacks of the light infantry and [British] legion. (Tarleton 1787, 167)

In 1787, Lieutenant Roderick MacKenzie wrote in a criticism of Tarleton’s book:

The cause, however, was known by every individual in that army. The guide at this time employed was a Doctor M [McCafferty], a Presbyterian fanatic from Glasgow, the ambiguity of whose faith did not escape the discernment of the General. Under this distrust he was given in charge to a corporal and two dragoons of Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton’s corps. The Doctor was too shrewd for his guards, and finding that they had no suspicion of his real design, he led the army, in a dark and rainy night, through thick woods, briars, deep ravines, marshes, and creeks scarcely fordable. After such a progress of six hours, the General grew impatient, the alarmed guide eluded the vigilance of the dragoons, and escaped unobserved. Left in such a situation, any army, where not one of the individuals which composed it knew where they were, might be well contented to come off with a loss so trifling as that of a few wagons. (MacKenzie 1787, 49)

At this time, Tarleton was west of the Catawba River and was approaching Brigadier General Thomas Sumter’s men on Bullock’s Creek. He wrote:

The situation of Colonel Sumpter's detachment on Bullock's creek attracted Tarleton's attention, and he was adopting measures to dislodge the Americans when the expresses from the royal army prevented his design, by requiring his instant return to the Catawba. (Tarleton 1787, 166–167)

Meanwhile, at Rocky River, 16 miles north of Charlotte, Davidson received reports of British Army movement. In the early morning, he reported to Sumner.

Yesterday I received intelligence of a party of the Enemy marching out of Charlotte towards Biger's ferry on Catawba, consisting of 800, with one field-piece. I have waited till this morning to have this account officially confirmed, but am not fully convinced of the truth of it yet. We have a Report from a Man of Veracity just arrived from within 6 Miles of Charlotte that the Enemy have evacuated Charlotte & that last Night at 10 O'Clock the Rear of the Army passed Barnet's Creek 5 Miles below Charlotte on the Road to Bigger's Ferry. This account agrees with a piece of intelligence received about midnight, by 5 Tories who deserted in the evening, that the Enemy were just ready to march at that time. Colo. Davie was yesterday evening in the neighbourhood of Charlotte with a sufficient force to gall the Enemy in the Rear. I cannot account for Colo. Davie's not sending me accounts, unless he is so busily engaged on their Rear as to neglect this. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:694–695) (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 90)

McCafferty raced to Davidson's camp at Rocky River, arriving the next morning. He disclosed the British predicament. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 270). At 7:00 a.m., Davidson sent an express report to Sumner:

This morning Mr. McCafferty is come to me & informs me that the Rear of the Enemy left Charlotte at 4 o'Clock last Evening; that he went with them to Barnet's Creek, five Miles below Town, on the road to Armour's ford. His conjecture is that their design is to go in quest of our Western Army, as they were particular in inquiring the nearest ford on Catawba river. You will be pleased to accept as an Apology for my not sending a reinforcement of Horse to the forks of the Yadkin the accounts of 90 horsemen imbodyed there last Wednesday as per Express, my orders of yesterday to Co'o Brandon to imbody all the Minute men he could to join them, & Colo. Davie being now out with 140 Horse. I am now preparing to march to Charlotte. Mr. McCafferty is sent with this under guard; his late conduct is to me a demonstration that he is not a friend to his Country. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:695)

At 9:00 p.m., Sumner relayed this report to Gates who was in Hillsborough.

About an hour ago I receiv'd the inclosed Express from Genl. Davidson of the Enemy's Retreat from Charlotte towards Beggar's Fery on Catawba River. I shall, Sir, recross the [Yadkin] river to Morrow, or Early next morning, with all the troops at this place. (the sick and convalescents, with great part of the baggage, I shall leave proper Officers to take charge of, &c., &c., &c.) and March after the enemy, so as to annoy as much as possible, preventing a general Action. Colo. [Daniel] Morgan Arrived in Camp about two Ock. this after Noon with his Troops. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:693)

Also with Colonel Daniel Morgan's troops were Lieutenant Colonel William Washington's cavalymen.

13 October 1780

On 13 October, Davidson marched his militiamen towards Charlotte (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:788). In route, he ordered his infantry to camp at John McKnitt Alexander's plantation. With the remaining 317 cavalymen, Davidson entered Charlotte (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:788) (Davidson 1951, 90). Davie continued trailing the British column (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 271).

On 14 October, Davidson reported to Sumner about events on 13 October:

Last evening I marched to Charlotte with the remainder of the cavalry, and by the latest intelligence the enemy were on the way to Nation ford. Col. Davie is now in pursuit with all his cavalry. The enemy seem to have gone off with an alarm, but from what cause is uncertain.

Deserters say they received accounts last Monday of Gen. Clinton's Defeat at West Point; others, that we were reinforced with 5,000. The inhabitants say they left their kettles on the fire, and 20 waggons, which they left 5 miles from town, with a quantity of valuable loading, have fallen into our hands. Express this moment arrived from Col. Davie informs that the main body of the enemy lay last night 11 miles from town. I propose to march downwards today. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:788)

The 11 mile distance from Charlotte placed the British camp approximately where Nations Ford Road crossed the state line and near its intersection with present-day highway NC51. That is near where Flint Hill Baptist Church was later organized. Later, using evidence provided by others, Graham wrote:

Finding that no advantage could be taken of them [the British] in that manner, Davie turned to the left, where the road enters the Indian Lands (which at that time were woods and unsettled), passed up their left flank at a distance of three-fourths of a mile from the road (his spies viewing them at every favorable position), and marched for four miles, but the enemy's march was so condensed and in such perfect order that it was impossible to attack them without encountering at the same time their whole army. In the afternoon he returned to the settlements of Sugar Creek. (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 272)

By tradition, while Cornwallis retreated from Charlotte, he and Tarleton allegedly stopped at the home of Robert Wilson, who was held prisoner, and encountered his wife Eleanor Wilson. The Wilsons had seven sons, the older sons fighting with Brigadier General Thomas Sumter. Cornwallis offered to free Robert if Eleanor could persuade him to join the British. She replied:

I have seven sons who are now or have been bearing arms; indeed, my seventh son, Zaccheus, who is only fifteen years old, I yesterday assisted to get ready and go to join his brothers in Sumter's army. Now, sooner than see one of my family turn back from the glorious enterprise, I would take these boys (pointing to three or four small sons) and would myself enlist under Sumter's standard and show my husband and sons how to fight; and, if necessary, how to die for their country. (W. A. Graham 1904b, 84)

To this, Tarleton allegedly complained that the Charlotte region was a "hornets' nest" of rebellion (W. A. Graham 1904b, 84). However, at that time, Tarleton was on the opposite side of the Catawba River. The origin of the expression "Hornets' Nest" as applied to this region is not known. Its first known appearance in writing was in 1819 in correspondence of William Polk to historian Archibald DeBow Murphey (W. Polk 1819). Polk attributed the expression to an unnamed British officer who could have been Charles Stedman (Stedman 1794, 2:224). The expression appeared soon afterwards in reference (Johnson 1822, 308).

Major George Hanger later wrote:

I caught the yellow fever at Charlottebourg. Tarleton was just recovering from it as I sickened. When the army marched from that town, myself and five officers, who had the same disorder, were put into waggons and carried with the army. They all died in the first week of our march, and were buried in the woods as the army moved on. (Hanger 1814, 408)

Three of these officers were Captain Peacocke, Captain Harrison, (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:126) and Major Fraser (Godey 1856) (Allison 2009–2011). The latter could have been Lieutenant Alexander Fraser of the 71st Regiment 1st Battalion who was known to have died on 15 October 1780 (Baule and Gilbert 2004, 67) (Howard 2011).

14 October 1780

Probably on 15 October, Davie reported to Sumner describing events through 14 October:

After I wrote to you I hung on their flank till they arrived at the river. I found no opportunity of skirmishing, as they marched in close order, with large flanking parties, and the old Indian fields gave them great advantage. They discovered our trail early, and detached a large party in our rear,

whom we discovered on our return. The men having no provisions for two days, and the evening rainy, obliged us to retreat. (Davie 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789)

Probably late on 14 October, from Charlotte, Davidson also reported to Sumner, “The enemy were at Nation ford this afternoon, whether crossing or not I have not learned.” (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:788) Soon afterwards in another report, Davidson wrote:

There appears to me a high probability that the enemy’s force will now be divided by the rising of the [Catawba] river, as by the best accounts the [British] legion crossed last Thursday, and no account of their return. Accounts are uniform that their wagons move with great difficulty on account of the poverty of their teams. (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:788)



Nation Ford during high water

All Davidson’s men joined him in Charlotte and encamped 2 miles west (Davidson 1951, 92), probably at or near Polk’s Mill on Irwin Creek.

15 October 1780

Davidson argued that Americans should attack (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 92). In a separate letter, Davidson notified Sumter who was camped west of Catawba River on Bullock’s Creek of Broad River (Davidson 1951, 92).

On 15 October, with the intent of supporting Davidson, Morgan crossed Yadkin River at Trading Ford with his Virginia riflemen, Continental light infantry, and Washington’s cavalymen (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789) (Davidson 1951, 92). Sumner wrote to Major General William Smallwood:

Gen. Morgan crossed the [Yadkin] river this morning. The rain set in very heavy before he effected his crossing; however, he has just got his corps over. The rain continuing, I deferred my recrossing under it. The troops are generally very bare of clothing, tents, etc., and cartridges are exposed to the weather, as almost three-fourths are without cartridge boxes. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789)

The date of this report is consistent with William Seymour’s journal that indicated Morgan’s troops arrived in Salisbury on 15 October (Seymour 1883, 290).

On 15 October, a Rawdon order located the British Army on “Old Nation Ford Road” (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:231) (Allison 2009–2011). Probably in the morning of 15 October, Tarleton’s Legion re-crossed the Catawba River, west to east, at Nation Ford (Tarleton 1787, 167) (Faden 1787). He wrote:

As soon as the British Legion, and the light infantry, arrived at the Catawba ford, they were ordered to cross the river, which they accomplished with some difficulty, on account of a great fall of rain. (Tarleton 1787, 167)

This exceptionally heavy rain may be due to the *Great Hurricane of 1780* whose center was moving northward off the Carolina coast (US National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center 1996). It was noted in many contemporaneous sources in the Carolinas:

- On 14 October, at Biggerstaff’s Plantation, Doctor Uzal Johnson recorded a “Shed to keep out of the Rain.” (Moss 2000, 77).
- On 15 October, near present-day Morganton, Lieutenant Anthony Allaire noted in his diary, “Marched all day through the rain — a very disagreeable road.” (Allaire 1780, 511).
- British commissary officer Charles Stedman wrote: “it rained for several days without intermission” (Stedman 1794, 2:224).
- Tarleton wrote: “a great fall of rain” (Tarleton 1787, 167).
- On 15 October, “heavy rain” was noted in the *Records of the Moravians* at Salem, North Carolina.
- Davie wrote: “heaviest rain ever poor fellow lived through” (Davie 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789–790).
- Colonel Phillip Taylor wrote: “Such a rain, good God!” (Taylor 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:790).
- Sumner wrote: “rain set in very heavy” (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789).
- Graham wrote: “It was rainy weather, and the roads bad” (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 272).

No known source, then or later, associated this rain with the Great Hurricane of 1780 probably because the characteristic northward movement of hurricanes was not understood. Only recent recognition of the coincidence of dates implies this association. In fact, there were three major storms during October 1780: the *Savanna-la-Mar Hurricane*, 3–7 October, the *Great Hurricane of 1780*, 10–20 October, and *Solano’s Storm*, 16–21 October. The latter reached Pensacola, Florida, on 21 October and was thus too late to induce rain in the Carolinas on 15 October. The track of the Great Hurricane of 1780 is usually shown passing near Bermuda on 18 October (Garrison, et al. 1989, F-15), yet there is some evidence that its track could have been closer to the coast of North America. Josiah Smith made the following diary entry in Saint Augustine, Florida:

Thursday 19th October [1780]. The weather as mentioned on Saturday [14 October], growing worse, by Sunday evening it came on to Rain and blow excessive hard, and till the evening of yesterday was a mere Gale at about N. N. E. by which means the Sea came in very heavily upon the front of the Town and raised the Tide several feet higher than common, and which ran through some of the Lanes up to the Second Street, above 150 feet from the bay... (Smith 1780 in Smith 1932, 24)

On 16 October, Davie reported to Sumner describing events on 14–15 October and the great vulnerability of the British:

The enemy’s baggage arrived at Nation ford almost 3 o’clock in the afternoon. The evening turned in rainy and my dependence alone upon the dryness of my powder, I was under the necessity of retreating and marching all night thro’ the heaviest rain ever poor fellow lived through. Not a gun will fire in the corps, and the ammunition, for want of cartridge boxes, is principally lost. It will be three or four days before I can move again. Col. Tarleton crossed the river [east to west on 10 October], two days before his lordship marched, with 200 dragoons and 400 of the infantry mounted. The Catawba was too high Saturday [14 October] evening for Cornwallis to cross over or Tarleton to return. [Actually, unknown to Davie, Tarleton did return probably on 15 October.] Gen. Sumter is somewhere near on the other side in quest of Tarleton, with 2,500 men. His lordship never was in such a pound—the river impassible in the West, and Sugar Creek in the

same condition to the Southward of him, his lordship's reason for retreating turned him on every quarter, without one mouthful of provisions or forage to be gotten within several miles. I am sure the convention of Saratoga has flew through his lordship's head five hundred times these two days. A few troops would make him very uneasy. (Davie 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:789–790)

Davie's Saratoga reference is to the surrender of British Major General John Burgoyne. The content of this message is remarkably insightful for a 24-year-old who had spent days in the field. Probably on 16 October, Colonel Philip Taylor, who's Granville County mounted militia was assigned to Davie's cavalry, reported to Sumner:

There's not a man in my regiment saved his ammunition. Such a rain, good God! I never saw a better opportunity to confine British progress—had we our whole force so as to make a descent on them in six days. We suffered much for four days past during a pursuit, and afterwards in the most powerful rain I ever saw. We this moment received intelligence that the Legion (Tarleton's) have recrossed the Catawba. They are d—d shy, depend on it. (Taylor 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:790)

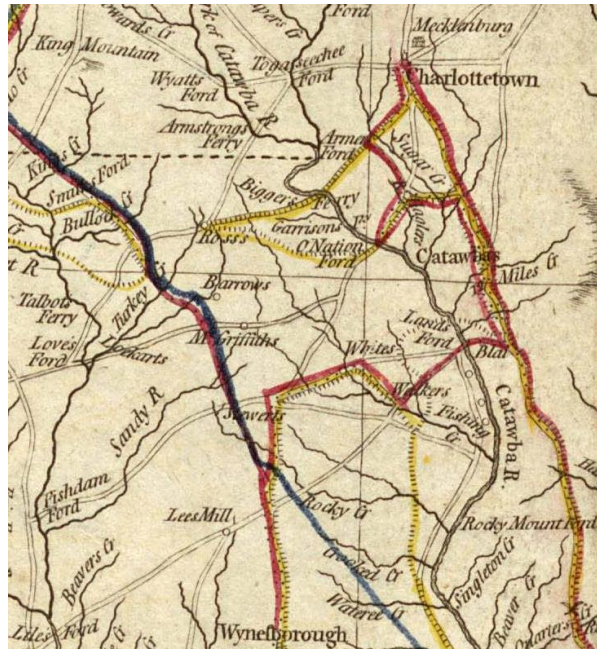
Probably on 17 October, Sumner responded to Davie:

I wish I could join you, that we might by detachments annoy the enemy more effectually. By the retreat of Cornwallis great advantage might be made in our favor by a general action [battle], were we near him. I am now recrossing the [Yadkin] river with all possible diligence, and shall march forward to you without loss of time. In the mean while, by order, I dare not risk a general action [battle] before the army makes a junction. (Sumner 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:791)

After Tarleton crossed the Catawba River, reducing the risk on the west side, Sumter furloughed his men (Bass 1961, 92). British commissary officer Charles Stedman wrote:

In this retreat the King's troops suffered much, encountering the greatest difficulties; the soldiers had no tents; it rained for several days without intermission; the roads were over their shoes in water and mud. At night, when the army took up its ground, it encamped in the woods, in the most unhealthy climate; for many days without rum. Sometimes the army had beef, and no bread; at other times bread, and no beef. For five days it was supported upon Indian corn, which was collected as it stood in the field, five ears of which were the allowance for two soldiers for twenty-four hours. (Stedman 1794, 2:224)

Torrential rains made Nation Ford on Catawba River impassable for wagons. Because of the British Army's vulnerability near the river, it backtracked to a more defensible position near a farm with provisions. The William Faden 1787 map shows this backtracking (Faden 1787).



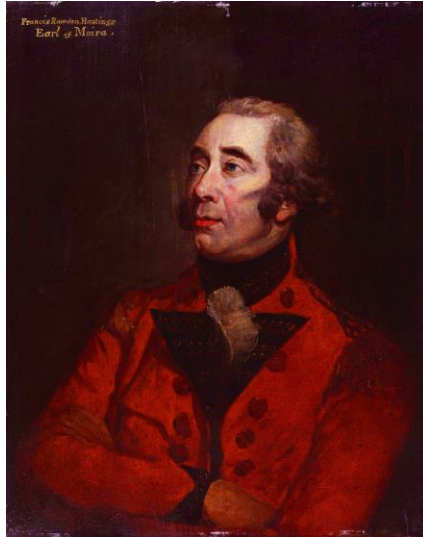
Cornwallis's advance on and retreat from Charlotte
William Faden 1787 map segment (Faden 1787)

Private Michael McLeary, who was with Davie, testified in his 1832 pension application:

Followed them to the old Nation Ford on the Catawba River, where the [they] encamped all night hanged one of their men and left him hanging. The River being high could not cross — marched back up the Road about 10 miles, ... (McLeary, Michael, pension application 1832)

The British Army may have camped on Thomas Spratt Junior's Plantation at the old 1760 Catawba Indian fort (Godey 1856) (Allison 2009–2011). Today, that fort's location is identified by a historical marker immediately south of present-day Fort Mill, South Carolina, on Brickyard Road. Or it may have camped where a crude fort was built earlier on Hagler's Hill near where Nation Ford Road crossed Steele Creek (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 233) (Gregorie 1931, 84). That location is within present-day *Anne Springs Close Greenway Park*.

Probably on 15 October, Cornwallis became ill. He delegated command to Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon.



Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon
Painted by Hugh Douglas Hamilton, 1801.

16 October 1780

The British were exceedingly vulnerable at their campsite. But because of rain and distance, Americans could not concentrate enough force to take advantage. The British marched away at the first opportunity, probably 16 October. In 1851, Susannah Barnett Smart recalled in an interview by D. G. Stinson that the British Army occupied her maternal grandfather Thomas Spratt Junior's house. In 1856, her edited recollections were published.

The unbidden guests [British Army] took from Spratt over a hundred head of cattle, hogs, etc. When the time came for marching, the army formed a line before the [illegible] and then formed a hollow square, with their drums muffled. These played a mournful air; till at length the army deployed, and took up the line of march with a lively tune and a quick step. The cause of this ceremony was the punishment of one of their own soldiers, whose body hung from the limb of a tree, he having been executed for an alleged attempt to desert and join Davie's troops. (Godey 1856)

Tarleton later wrote:

The royal forces remained two days [probably afternoon 14 – afternoon 16 October] in an anxious and miserable situation in the Catawba settlement, owing to a dangerous fever, which suddenly attacked Earl Cornwallis, and to the want of forage and provisions. When the physicians declared his lordship's health would endure the motion of a wagon, Colonel Lord Rawdon, the second in command, directed the King's troops to cross Sugar creek, where some supplies might be obtained from the country. On this move, the Mecklenburg militia, supposing the cavalry still absent, attempted to harass the head of the column; when their want of intelligence proved fatal to the most enterprising of the party. (Tarleton 1787, 167)

After the rain subsided, on 16 October, the British Army marched to Steele Creek where Rawdon dispatched an order to Turnbull. It was marked "Dispatched from Steel Creek on the 16th [October] at eight at night." (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:253–254) (Allison 2009–2011). Davie's force included 300 horsemen that harassed the British rear and prevented foraging to the north. At 7:00–8:00 a.m. the next morning, Tuesday 17 October, Davie wrote Sumner:

I have just received Intelligence from one of my patrol parties that the Enemy moved yesterday at One O'clock in the Afternoon, and were taking the route by one Roush's, on Sugar Creek, leading to the Waxhaws. Their Waggon Horses are so poor that they make very slow Marches. For want of provisions and ammunition, it will be out of my power to march before the Afternoon. O! for a few Light Troops. (Davie 1780 in NCSR 1895, XV:111)

These two sources suggest that the British crossed Sugar Creek near Steele Creek. Since no known reference mentions crossing any creek other than Sugar Creek (Tarleton 1787, 167) (Stedman 1794, 2:225) (Davie 1780 in NCSR 1895, XV:111) (McLeary, Michael, pension application 1832), the crossing was probably downstream of the Steele Creek confluence, perhaps near the present-day highway SC160 bridge over Sugar Creek. Davie described the connecting road as “by one Roush’s on Sugar Creek.” This might have been Thomas Roach’s plantation (Pettus 2005b), or possibly Ross’s plantation which was located north of Doby Bridge (Mills 1825). William Faden’s 1787 map suggests the crossing was further north (Faden 1787), but this map was not drawn with great precision. British commissary officer Charles Stedman wrote about the crossing:

The continual rains had swelled the rivers and creeks prodigiously, and rendered the roads almost impassable. The waggon and artillery horses were quite exhausted with fatigue by the time the army had reached Sugar Creek. This creek was very rapid, its banks nearly perpendicular, and the soil, being clay, as slippery as ice. The horses were taken out of some of the waggons, and the militia, harnessed in their stead, drew the waggons through the creek. We are sorry to say, that, in return for their exertions, the militia were maltreated, by abusive language, and even beaten by some of the quarter-master-general’s department: In consequence of this ill usage, several of them left the army the next morning, for ever. (Stedman 1794, 2:225)

Later, Davie summarized these events:

Lord Cornwallis had intended to cross the Catawba river, at the old Nation ford, but a sudden swell of the river, obliged him to halt the army. After remaining here two days in a miserable situation without supplies, surrounded by Militia Cavalry who prevented all foraging, they marched precipitately down the river attended by the Detachment of Cavalry under Col. Davie who continued skirmishing with their rear. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 27)

17–21 October 1780

On 17 October, the British Army may have foraged for provisions east of Sugar Creek. From this location, the army likely marched the short distance to the main commercial wagon road called the Camden-Charlotte Road which existed before the Revolutionary War (W. L. Anderson 2006). That was the same road the British Army previously used to advance on Charlotte during 24–25 September (Faden 1787). On 18 October, the army could have camped at Twelve Mile Creek, the first major water source. On 19 October, the army marched along the Camden-Charlotte Road that included the connected segments of present-day highway US521, Niven Road, Old Church Road, to the intersection of US521 and SC5. On that date, Rawdon wrote that he was at “Waxhaw” (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:255). This site was likely Crawford’s Plantation on Waxhaw Creek where the British previously camped during 11–24 September 1780. Rawdon also wrote that he “plan to camp on Catawba” (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:255). This implied he was not then on Catawba River (Allison 2009–2011). On 20 October, the army continued south on present-day US521, North Corner Road, across US521, Old Hickory Road, past Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church, Industrial Park Road, and Landsford Road to the Catawba River (W. L. Anderson 2008a). On that date, Rawdon wrote that he was at Blair’s Mill which was on the river (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:256) (Allison 2009–2011) (Joy, Stine and Clauser 2000).

On 21 October, the British Army crossed Catawba River at Land’s Ford (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:126) (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 27) (McLeary, Michael, pension application 1832) (Walkup, Samuel, pension application 1832). Later, Stedman wrote:

At length the [British] army reached the Catawba, which was forded by the troops. This river is six hundred yards wide, and three and a half feet deep. Two hundred rifle-men placed on the opposite bank must have destroyed many of our men before we could have gained the shore. (Stedman 1794, 2:226)



Land's Ford
Relatively wide and shallow Catawba River ford.

Later, Davie wrote:

on the 19th they [the British] completely evacuated the State [North Carolina] and crossed the Catawba river at Lands-Ford. (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 27).

The date reflects Davie's understanding of the unusual state line in 1780 (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 21) (Salley 1929) (Pettus 1992) (W. L. Anderson 2008a). In 1832, Samuel Walkup testified:

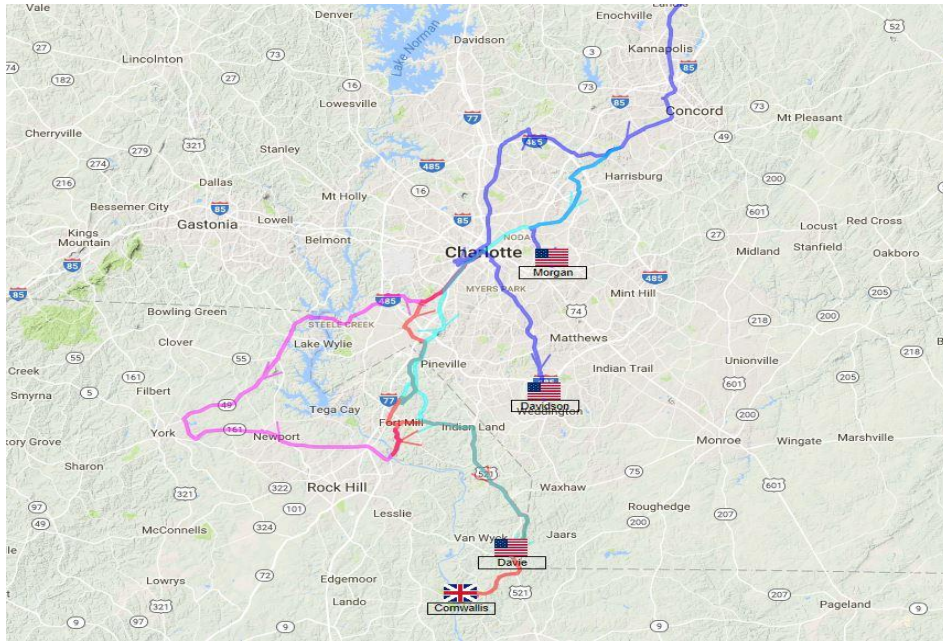
when Rawdon was retreating from Charlotte Davis' [Davie] Company & others harassed him near the Waxhaw Creek we had a little skirmish & took one prisoner & five horses – and as Rawdon crossed the Catawba at Lands Ford – we came up just as he had crossed. Our numbers were too Small to think of attacking. (Walkup, Samuel, pension application 1832)

Tarleton wrote that the army crossed “near Twelve-mile creek” (Tarleton 1787, 167) which is 5 miles further north. This vague location is probably incorrect or possibly where the British Legion crossed first to secure the opposite embankment.

On 21 October, after passing Land's Ford, Rawdon described events in correspondence with Lieutenant Colonel Nesbit Balfour.

We attempted to pass at the [Nation] ford in the Indian lands but, the river being swollen, were disappointed, and rain coming on, our baggage embarrassed us so much in passing the creeks that we were detain'd for some days in that quarter, still ignorant of all that was passing in any other part of the province. We passed at Lands Ford this morning [21 October]. (Rawdon 1780 in CPS 2010, II:126)

On 29 October, the British Army encamped at Winnsboro, South Carolina, a town equally distant from Camden and Ninety Six forts (Stedman 1794, 2:226).



Cornwallis's Retreat from Charlotte and American Response
including Tarleton's raid west of Catawba River, 10–20 October 1780 (W. L. Anderson 2011c)

In American history, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton is often maligned. But his book is balanced and perceptive. Only 7 years after these events, he described of the significance of the British invading Charlotte and Mecklenburg County:

It was now evident, beyond contradiction, that the British general [Cornwallis] had not adopted the most eligible plan for the invasion of North Carolina. The route by Charlotte town, through the most hostile quarter of the province, on many accounts, was not advisable. Its distance likewise from Ferguson allowed the enemy to direct their attention and force against that officer, which ultimately proved his destruction. A movement on the west of the Catawba, towards Tryon county, would have been better calculated either to cover the frontier of South Carolina or to protect detachments from the army. Another operation might also have been attempted, which, in all probability, would have had a beneficial effect. Considering the force of the King's troops at this period, a march to Cross Creek [present-day Fayetteville] would have been the most rational manoeuvre that could have been adopted; where the inhabitants were acknowledged to be almost universally loyal: Upon this move Ferguson would have been undoubtedly ordered to retire, and to remain upon the defensive to the westward; and Earl Cornwallis would have had a favourable and convenient opportunity to try the fidelity of the King's friends, and to discover whether the water communication between that place and Wilmington could be opened; a point which should necessarily have been ascertained before the Royal army proceeded to the interior parts of North Carolina. (Tarleton 1787, 168)

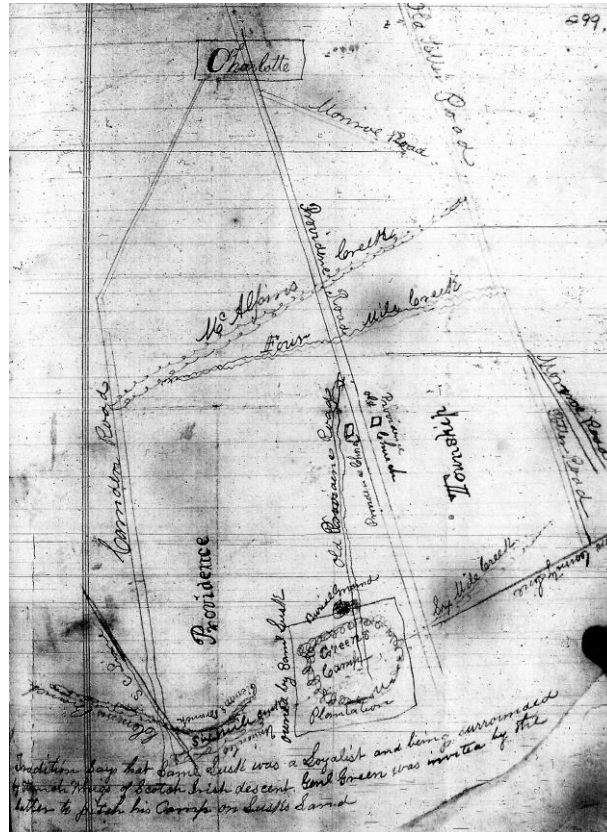
20 October 1780

Davidson advanced to where Providence Road crossed Six Mile Creek. There horses could water and graze (Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 21) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 284) (Vernon 1832 in Draper 1873, VV:10:169, 178) (W. L. Anderson 2009b). The camp was 14 miles from Charlotte and, at that time, entirely within Mecklenburg County. Today, Six Mile Creek forms the boundary between Mecklenburg and Union Counties.

Davidson passed his McAlpine Creek campsite used before 25 September. This time he was not on the defensive. By camping seven miles further south, he expected better access to provisions. He was closer to South Carolina. Six Mile Creek banks had gentle slopes, suitable for a large camp. Its headwaters were immediately upstream which provided a constant flow of clean water.

Davidson created *Camp New Providence* only 8 days after Cornwallis evacuated Charlotte and just 1 day before Cornwallis crossed Catawba River east to west. This new camp asserted American control of the east side of Catawba River as far south as the Waxhaws.

On 17 April 1872, Samuel Ellison Belk, a Charlotte resident, wrote a letter responded to questions from professional historian Lyman Draper. Belk wrote that acquaintance Jas Houston Morrison's mother, as a young girl, remembered passing through the camp and seeing soldiers washing their shirts in Six Mile Creek. Morrison's, born 1792, died 1875, mother was Mary Susannah Houston, born 1771, died 1823. Belk labeled the camp "Green's Camp." He sketched a map of the camp in relation to Providence Road and other landmarks. He reported that the camp was on the plantation of loyalist Samuel Lusk (Belk 1872 in Draper 1873, VV:6:297–299) (Potet 2009). Today, that location is within the *Providence Crossing* and *HighGate* housing developments.



Samuel Ellison Belk map of Camp New Providence. Shown as "Green's Camp." Burial ground shown on north side. (Belk 1872 in Draper 1873, VV:6:299)

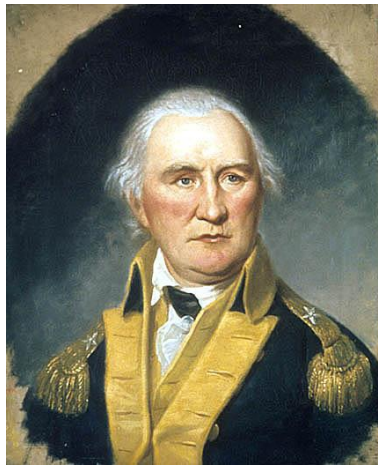
21–22 October 1780

On 21 October, Smallwood, Morgan, and Washington's units, with Sumner and Paisley's troops, marched to "two miles below Esq^r [Hezekiah] Alexanders" house (T. L. Anderson 1780, 2) (Kirkwood 1780, 216). That site was probably along Edwards Branch. Today, that location is in the back of Evergreen Cemetery on an abandoned road segment that connected present-day Kilborne Drive and Sharon Amity Road (Barden 2010). On 22 October, they joined Davidson at Six Mile Creek bring the total strength to 1300 men (Kirkwood 1780, 216) (T. L. Anderson 1780, 2).



Major General William Smallwood
Maryland Continental Officer
Assigned command of North Carolina militia.
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1782.

Also, Colonel Daniel Morgan with the Continental Army light infantry arrived, along with Lieutenant Colonel William Washington with the Continental 3rd Cavalry Regiment. (Kirkwood 1780, 216) (T. L. Anderson 1780, 2). Morgan learned of his promotion to brigadier general when he arrived (T. L. Anderson 1780, 2).



Brigadier General Daniel Morgan
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1794.



Lieutenant Colonel William Washington
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1781–1782.
Washington re-enactor Daniel Murphy, 3rd Continental Light Dragoons

Camp New Providence had several advantages:

- It raised the spirits of Mecklenburg Whigs.
- It projected American forces 14 miles south of Charlotte. It asserted American control east of Catawba River.
- It provided a base for foraging the farms in the Waxhaw region of both Carolinas.
- It recaptured assets centered near Charlotte including many gristmills, a hospital, civic leaders, and skilled craftsmen like blacksmiths.
- It provided control of roads leading south from Charlotte. Those were: Providence Road, Camden Road, and Nation Ford Road and their east-west connecting roads.
- It had relatively clean water since it was near the source of Six Mile Creek.

24 October 1780

A correspondent for the *Pennsylvania Packet* reported from Camp New Providence:

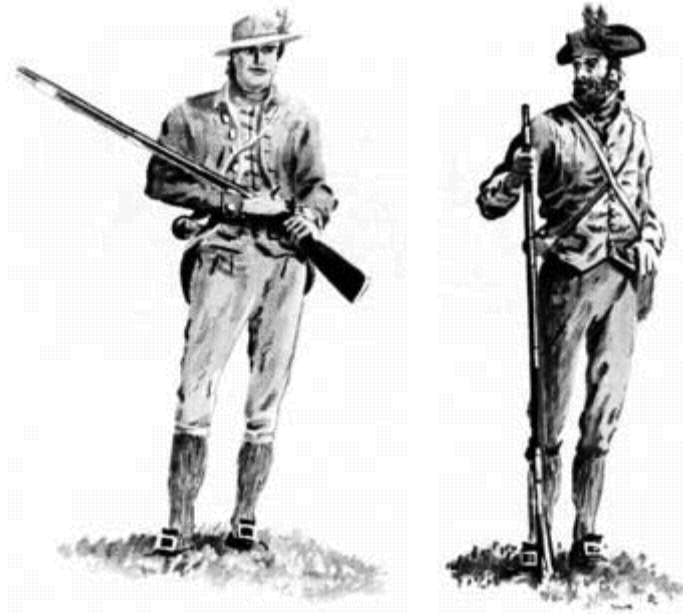
General Davidson and colonel Davie possess the entire confidence of their troops, and discipline is better than formerly, when it was more lax. It would give you pleasure to see the order our camp is in at present, and [we] are much pleased with general Smallwood's arrival [day before] yesterday to take command. (Davidson 1951, 94).

On 14 May 1833, Doctor James Rankin Alexander, son of Hezekiah Alexander, [testified](#), that he was

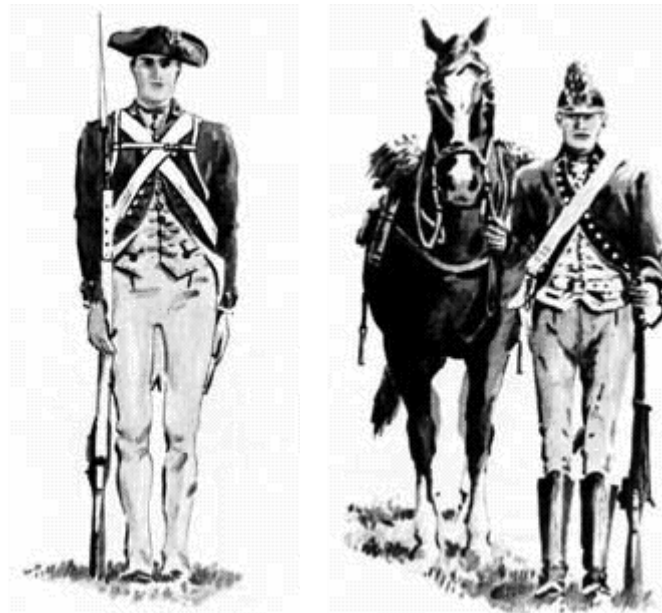
appointed surgeon to a Regiment of Militia raised in Mecklenburg County (N. C.) commanded by Colonel William L. Davidson. His Regiment was first for a while stationed at Rocky River in company with a Col. William R. Davy of Militia Cavalry — thence they both moved to Six Mile Creek between Charlotte & Camden where they joined Generals Smallwood & Morgan with their forces. (Alexander, James Rankin, pension application 1833)

31 October 1780

From Camp New Providence, Smallwood wrote that severe shortages had arisen and that Colonel Thomas Polk, as commissary officer, “has not even supplied the regular troops.” (Smallwood 1780, 45:167) Although Polk performed as best possible under the conditions, this accusation caused a rift between Polk and other generals. Smallwood retracted his statement on 16 November (W. M. Polk 1915, 25), but Polk resolved to resign his commission.



North Carolina and Virginia militiamen
 From National Park Service, Guilford Courthouse, web site.



Delaware and Maryland Infantry, Continental Line. William Washington's Cavalry.
 From National Park Service, Guilford Courthouse, web site.

4-9 November 1780

From Camp New Providence, Morgan and Washington projected a deep incursion into South Carolina. They stopped at Hanging Rock and returned. (Smallwood 1780 in Hunt 1892, 6-8) (Seymour 1780 in Seymour 1883, 290) (Tarleton 1787, 171)

22 November 1780

Gates arrived at Camp New Providence with the full Southern Continental Army (Seymour 1780 in Seymour 1883, 291). Total strength was about 2600 soldiers (Lesser 1976, 189).

25 November 1780

Gates conducted an important meeting, designed a “Council of War”. Officers in attendance were: Major General William Smallwood, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, Brigadier General William Lee Davidson, Brigadier General Isaac Huger [pronounced Hū-gāy], Colonel Tadeusz Kosciuszko [pronounced Tha-dāy-ūse Kosh-chūs-kō], Colonel Abraham Buford, Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, and Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard. These were all the principal officers of the Southern Continental Army except for Lieutenant Colonel Otho Holland Williams who was in Charlotte. Davie was in Salisbury planning to establish a “legion” force to replace militiamen discharged a few days before. It was decided to withdraw the entire army to Charlotte to establish a winter camp (NCSR 1895, XV:160–161). Most importantly, a proposal to split the American Army was debated. Davidson was a strong advocate (Davidson 1780 in NCSR 1895, XIV:759–760) (Davidson 1780 in Davidson 1951, 98). This decision was implemented by Major General Nathanael Greene in December.



Lieutenant Colonel Otho Holland Williams
Delaware Continental Officer
Adjutant General of Southern Army
Promoted brigadier general in 1782.
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1784.



Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard
Maryland Continental Officer
Name in lyrics of state song *Maryland, My Maryland*.
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1784.

27 November 1780

Gates and the Southern Continental Army, except for the light companies under Morgan, marched from Camp New Providence to Charlotte (Rankin 1971, 261). For 5 days, Camp New Providence was the headquarters of the Southern Department of the Continental Army. In Charlotte, Gates ordered the construction of winter huts (Rankin 1971, 261). Each hut was probably constructed like the 12-man log huts used at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and Morristown, New Jersey (Wilbur 1993, 64–67).

28 November – 4 December 1780

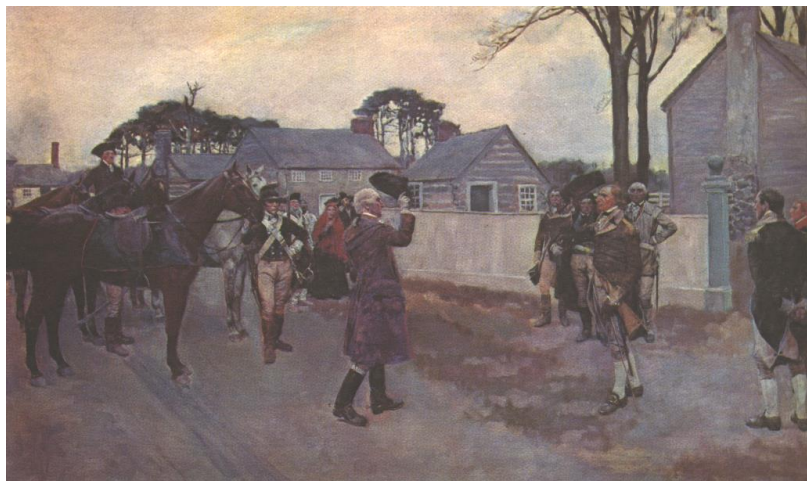
From Camp New Providence, Morgan and Washington made another incursion into South Carolina. This time, Washington attacked Rugeley's Fort 14 miles north of Camden. Washington displayed a pine log disguised as a cannon. All loyalists surrendered. (Seymour 1780 in Seymour 1883, 291)

2 December 1780

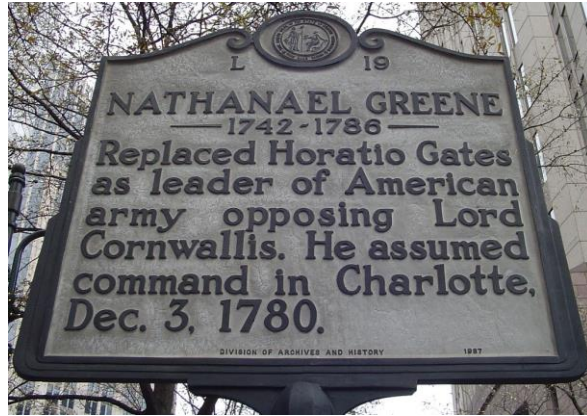
Major General Nathanael Greene arrived in Charlotte and assumed command the next day. He spent the first night with Thomas Polk assessing all conditions. Later, Polk commented, "By the following morning Greene better understood the resources of the country than Gates had during the whole period of his command." (W. M. Polk 1915, 27).



Major General Nathanael Greene
Painted by Charles Willson Peale, 1783.



Major General Nathanael Greene arrives at Charlotte, 2 December 1780.
Painted by Howard Pyle, 1903, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

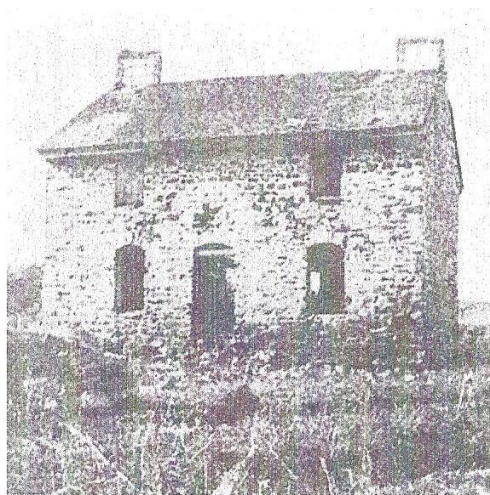


North Carolina historical marker, 1987.

In 2010, marker was positioned at site of historical event on North Tryon Street.

9 December 1780

To establish discipline, Greene ordered a deserter hung in the town square (Rankin 1971, 263). On 20 November, Brigadier General Thomas Sumter defeated Tarleton at Blackstock's in South Carolina. However, Sumter was severely wounded and retired to recuperate at Isaac Price's stone house near the Catawba River off Steele Creek Road (I. Price 1796) (Rutledge 1780 in South Carolina Historical Society 1917, 48–49) (L. Blackwelder 2015). On 9 December, Greene and South Carolina Governor John Rutledge visited Sumter. Sumter attempted to persuade Greene to attack Cornwallis at Winnsboro before he was reinforced. But Greene followed the defensive strategy he learned from years with General George Washington. Greene was not about to risk his army against Cornwallis's 2500 professional troops (Bass 1961, 116) (Morrill 1993, 122). Later, in 1790, Rutledge became a Justice of the United States Supreme Court and in 1795, Chief Justice.



Isaac Price's stone house (Gregorie 1931, 126)

10 December 1780

Greene wrote that troops were in extreme distress for lack of provisions. Colonel Thomas Polk was Continental Army Commissary Officer and thus responsible. However, he was frustrated with many supply problems. He offered his resignation which Greene reluctantly accepted (W. M. Polk 1915, 26). Polk made a final delivery of 500 head of beef and 1000 bushels of corn (W. M. Polk 1915, 26). Greene appointed Colonel William R. Davie as Commissary Officer (Greene 1780 in Davie 1810 in Robinson 1976, 64). Greene sent all sheeting and osnaburg, a burlap-like cloth, in Charlotte to Salisbury to be sewn into shirts and trousers by the women of Rowan County. He offered to pay the seamstresses in salt. (Rankin 1976, 12)

16 December 1780

Greene decided to divide his army into two groups (Greene 1780 in PNG 1997, VI:590) (Higginbotham 1961, 122).

20–21 December 1780

Camp New Providence was vacated. American Army departs Mecklenburg County.



North Carolina historical marker, erected 2 November 2010.

1781

17 January 1781

Morgan defeated Tarleton at Cowpens (Babits 1998). When victory news reached Charlotte, Davidson ordered a parade and *Feu De Joy* salute, a wave-like firing of muskets (Davidson 1951, 107).

25 January 1781

Cornwallis's army camped at Ramsour's Mill, in present-day Lincolnton, North Carolina. He ordered that all inessential baggage be destroyed in order to move faster. (Cornwallis 1781 in Nixon 1910) (Stedman 1794 in Nixon 1910)

As the British Army approached Mecklenburg County, Ezekiel Polk, fearing for his personal safety, abandoned his home south of Charlotte and travelled to Pennsylvania. By March, his house was occupied by Brigadier General Thomas Sumter's family who were refugees from South Carolina. (Godey 1856) (Bass 1961, 141)

28 January 1781

Cornwallis's army camped at Jacob Forney's plantation in present-day eastern Lincoln County (Griffin 1937, 19). Mecklenburg and Lincoln County militia were called up to defend fords on Catawba River. Captain Joseph Graham, who had recovered from wounds at the battle of Charlotte, participated (W. A. Graham 1904b, 66) (Graham 1833 in Espey, Samuel, pension application 1832).

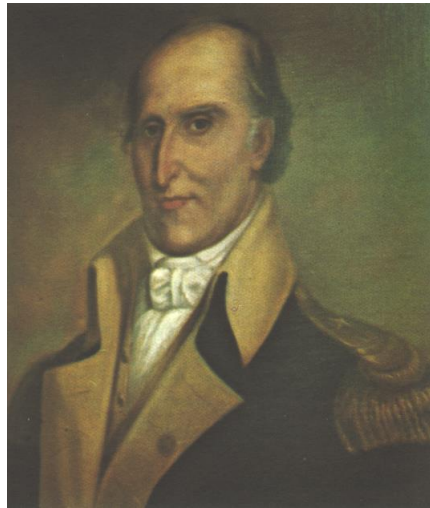
1 February 1781

British Army crossed the Catawba River at Cowan's Ford. Brigadier General Charles O'Hara's unit, the *Brigade of Guards*, led the crossing and suffered many casualties. In opposition, Davidson commanded 350 men there including Captain Joseph Graham who later wrote, "two of his company killed opposing their [British] passage, and his was the only company that went off the battle-ground in order and covered the retreat." (Graham 1832 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 50). Davidson was killed there. (Forney, Peter, pension application 1832).

Tarleton dispersed more militia at Torrence's Tavern (Forney, Peter, pension application 1832). This was the beginning of the *Race to the Dan River*.

3 February 1781

After Davidson's death, all the Western (Salisbury) District militiamen on active duty were assigned to Brigadier General Andrew Pickens (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 203).



Brigadier General Andrew Pickens
Painted by Thomas Sully, 1835.

Late February and early March 1781

Captain Joseph Graham participated in battles at Hart's Mill, Pyle's Defeat, Clapp's Mill, and Weitzel's Mill. Major Joseph Dickson participated in the last three battles. After Weitzel's Mill, Pickens was angry that Lieutenant Colonel Otho Williams put his men a high risk. The enlistment time of the North Carolina militiamen ran out in early March. Thus, Pickens withdrew all his men and marched home (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 349–350). These men did not participate at Guilford Courthouse on 15 March.

Mid March 1781

Between 16 February 1781 and about 9 March, Brigadier General Sumter, who had recovered from his wounds at Blackstock's, marched with his men to rescue his wife Mary and son Tom from their home in the High Hills of the Santee. When they returned to Mecklenburg County, the family resided in the house of John Barnett, south of Charlotte, (Godey 1856) (Bass 1961, 135) and then moved into the vacated house of Ezekiel Polk (Godey 1856).

22 March 1781

To replace Davidson, Greene appointed Colonel Thomas Polk command of North Carolina Western (Salisbury) District Militia with the provisional rank of brigadier general subject to approval by the North Carolina government (W. M. Polk 1915, 30–31) (Polk in Hoyt 1914, II:407) (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 351). The General Assemble allowed Polk the rank of "Colonel Commandant" but not general. Polk declined this commission and asked for reconsideration (W. M. Polk 1915, 31).

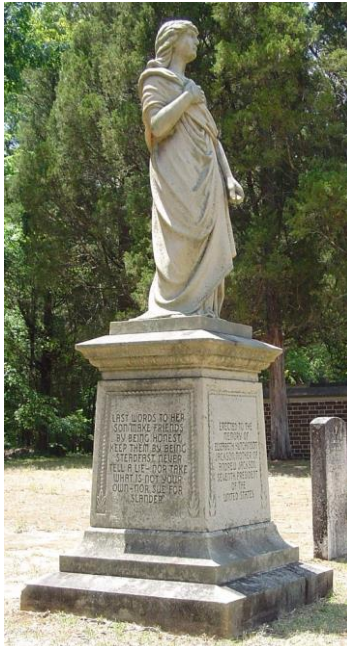
25 March 1781

Western (Salisbury) District militia under Colonel Thomas Polk was called up to join Greene who was returning to South Carolina. Lincoln County and Mecklenburg County militia marched from Charlotte out Lawyers Road and camped at Crooked Creek in present-day Union County (Forney, Abraham, pension application 1832) (Espey, Samuel, pension application 1832) (Alexander, Elijah, pension application 1832). That camp site was on Rocky River Road, the ridgeline line road between the Catawba and Pee Dee Rivers. That location allowed rapid maneuvers north and south along the ridgeline unimpeded by creeks.

April 1781

On 9 April 1781, local Whig militiamen assembled at Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church under Major Robert Crawford. These included 14-year-old Andrew Jackson, the future President, and his brother Robert. A patrol of British dragoons and loyalist militiamen led by Major John Coffin appeared and dispersed the Whigs into the woods

and burned the church. The Jackson brothers escaped, only to be captured the next day at their cousin's Lieutenant Thomas Crawford's house. There a British officer demanded Andrew clean his boots. The refusal resulted in a saber slash that cut Andrew's hand and forehead. Robert also received a saber slash by the same officer. Both brothers were marched 50 miles to the Camden stockade. From there, on 25 April, they could hear the Hobkirk Hill battle. A few days later, their mother Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson secured their release as part of a prisoner exchange. But both boys had contracted smallpox, and Robert died a few days after returning home. After Andrew recovered, Elizabeth travelled to Charlestown to help nurse her Crawford nephews on British prison ships. There Elizabeth died of the plague and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Charlestown Neck. The future President lost two brothers and his mother because of the Revolutionary War. Her last words to Andrew were, "Make friends by being honest, keep them by being steadfast, never tell a lie, nor take what is not your own, nor sue for slander, settle them cases yourself." (James 1938, 25–29)



Shrine to Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson
Mother of President Andrew Jackson
Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church

May 1781

From Crooked Creek camp, the Western District militia under Colonel Thomas Polk marched south along Rocky River Road, stopping at Flat Rock (Alexander, Elijah, pension application 1832) (Hunter 1877, 267–268) and joined Greene at Rugeley's Mill (W. M. Polk 1915, 34). They arrived after the Hobkirk Hill battle on 25 April (Alexander, Elijah, pension application 1832) (W. M. Polk 1915, 34). They remained at Rugeley's Mill after Lord Rawdon evacuated Camden on 10 May and Greene departed for Ninety Six on 12 May. On 15 May, Thomas Polk learned that he was relieved of command and replaced by Colonel Francis Locke (W. M. Polk 1915, 31). It is not certain if Polk personally went to Rugeley's Mill with his men. This was Polk's last military command (W. M. Polk 1915, 34), yet through August, Greene urged North Carolina authorities to reinstate him (W. M. Polk 1915, 32).

May–July 1781

A prisoner exchange was negotiated in May and implemented in late June. Among those released was Doctor Ephraim Brevard who returned to Charlotte. After a year of imprisonment, he was ill (Preyer 1987, 165). He wrote his will on 20 July 1781 (Boyer 2008–2017), and probably died soon afterwards.

Mid-August 1781

South Carolina John Rutledge ordered Brigadier General Thomas Sumter to organize factories and distribution of supplies from the interior of North Carolina to the Continental Army then in the High Hills of the Santee. Sumter

moved to Charlotte and stayed with his wife Mary and son Tom who were living in the vacated home of Ezekiel Polk (Godey 1856) (Bass 1961, 205–206, 210).

8 September 1781

At the time of the last major battle, Eutaw Springs, accumulated experience made militiamen the equal of British professionals. Major Thomas Polk Junior, son of Colonel Thomas Polk was killed at Eutaw Springs (Preyer 1987, 165). His brother Lieutenant Colonel William Polk led a unit of North Carolinians serving as South Carolina “State troops.” During the battle William Polk thought, “every man killed but himself.” (Polk in Hoyt 1914, II:407) (Rankin 1971, 359).

Early October 1781

From Charlotte, Sumter arranged the re-embodiment of the regiments of Colonel Isaac Shelby and Colonel John Sevier. To inspect these affairs, Greene briefly revisited Charlotte. On this trip, Greene stopped at Ezekiel Polk’s home to discuss military plans with Sumter (Bass 1961, 211). Soon afterwards, Shelby and Sevier probably marched through Charlotte on their way to join Brigadier General Francis Marion in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

September–November 1781

After a prisoner exchange, Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford returned and took command of the Western District militia. He called for volunteers for an expedition to Wilmington. They assembled and trained for two weeks. On 1 October, this army moved towards Wilmington. On the southwest side of the Cape Fear River, near the ferry to Wilmington, the British fortified a brick house (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 354). Rutherford’s forces skirmished there (Graham 1827 in W. A. Graham 1904b, 368). Wilmington was encircled and slowly constricted. During this campaign, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee’s troops brought word of the Yorktown victory. On 18 November, Rutherford’s troops entered Wilmington while British troops embarked on ships.

1782

1782

Mecklenburg County militia continued to supply soldiers to Greene’s forces surrounding Charlestown.

7 February 1782

In January 1782, when the outcome of the war was clear, Mecklenburg County Whigs enacted strong measures against local Tories.

The COURT, consisting of 11 members, unanimously agreed to meet at the dwelling house of Majr. James Harris on Thursday the 7th day of Febr. next, then and there to Set as a Court of enquiry etc. And that they in their Respective Districts (Especially) in Said Enterim do exert themselves to Summon all person therein whom they Suspect to have forfeited their Rites as Citizens by Joining, Aiding, or Assisting Our Common Enemy. Or Any person whom they know or Suspect to have Secreted any confiscated property and that the[y] Likewise Summon all Evidences whom the[y] Judge may be able to prove Said Crimes and that each Justice apply to the Militia Officers for information etc. Dc. - - ORDERED that the Clear do immediately Send expresses (at the expense of this Court) to the Absent Justices in that Quarter Notifying them of the Last Mentioned Resolution etc. Viz. To Robt. Harris, Junr., Dd. Reese, Martin Phifer, Danl. Jarret & Adam Alexander, Esqurs., And to Mr. James Reese, Commissioner. (Mecklenburg County Court Minute Book n.d., 1:9) (Boyer 2008–2017)

14 December 1782

All British forces evacuated Charlestown.

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