

Volume Three of the acclaimed Revolutionary War series in Carolinas

Nothing but Blood and Slaughter, the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Three, 1781

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1781

“We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again”

**Georgetown, South Carolina
6 January 1781**

Skirmish

The Queen’s Rangers had been in the siege of Charlestown in 1780, but returned to New York with Clinton. They came back south as part of Arnold’s force that captured Petersburg, Virginia. John Saunders troop of the Queen’s Rangers returned to Charlestown on December 16, 1780, and then were assigned to Georgetown on Christmas Eve.

Saunders did not go with the troop to Georgetown, but rode to Winstonsboro, to meet with Cornwallis. He wanted to return to New York, and had left his troop under the command of Lieutenant John Wilson. The day after they arrived in Georgetown Lieutenant Colonel George Campbell ordered the Queen’s Rangers to conduct a raid through southern Williamsburg in December. The Queen’s Rangers engaged fifty of Marion’s partisans and Wilson was wounded in the exchange.

In January Campbell decided to personally conduct a patrol in the countryside around Georgetown in order to find some of Marion’s men that had been continuously attacking British forces. Wilson had recovered from his wounds he received on Christmas day, and accompanied the King’s American Regiment on this raid. While on patrol Campbell observed a dozen mounted men in the middle of the road, and ordered Wilson to charge.

The men in the road had been a decoy for an ambush, which were hidden on the side of the road. As Wilson came alongside the ambush site, the partisans fired a volley into the horsemen. They were able to capture two of Wilson’s sergeants, John Burt and

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William Hodgins, as they rode into the ambush. Corporal John Hodgins of the Rangers was killed, while three others were wounded and three horses were killed. Surprisingly the Rangers didn't flee, but turned and charged into the ambush site. The partisans were not used to this type of response, and ran to their horses, fleeing the area.¹

Long Cane, South Carolina²
January 1781

In October Major James Dunlap had been recovering from wounds received at Cane Creek, when he was shot by a party of Whigs and left for dead. Dunlap recovered from these additional wounds, and Cornwallis gave him the command of the cavalry under Cruger at Ninety-Six. By January of 1781 Dunlap was making progress recruiting and outfitting his corps. Cornwallis was becoming impatient with the inability to conquer the partisans, or slow down their constant harassment of his supply lines. He ordered Cruger to seize "Negroes, cattle and other property" that might be useful to the partisans. Cruger gave Dunlap the mission to subdue the countryside.

Dunlap led his troopers to the Long Canes and plundered the home of James McCall. His men abused McCall's wife and daughter. Dunlap made the mistake of burning Andrew Pickens farm.³

After Charlestown had surrendered, Pickens had turned himself in at a fort in the Ninety-Six District. He had been observing his parole, but after Dunlap burned his home he notified Colonel Cruger that he considered his parole violated.⁴ Pickens took the field and became a major enemy of the British in the backwoods of Carolina.⁵

Backcountry, South Carolina⁶
January 1781

Skirmish

Lieutenant Colonel James Hawthorne had been born in County Armagh, Ireland in 1750. He was described as 5 foot, 10 inches tall, 170 pounds, sandy hair and grey eyes. Indians captured him and his mother and sisters when he was 12 years old. His mother and sisters were exhausted by the hard marching and could not keep up. They

were murdered before his eyes. A chief who had lost a son his age adopted him. He remained with the Indians for four years, until a Treaty was made and all the abductees had to return home. His father found him dressed in "Indian garb, very expert with a bow and arrow."⁷

When he was still a child his father drowned trying to take some horses to market in Charlestown. He had no relations and became an apprentice to a blacksmith. He remained with the blacksmith until the beginning of the war, when he enlisted as a private. He had been in Colonel Thomas Neal's regiment on the Snow Campaign. Colonel Neal was his father in law. He was also with Williamson in the Cherokee campaign of 1776. He was a 1st Lieutenant in the 6th South Carolina Regiment in 1777, and was a captain on the Florida expedition in 1778.

In late 1780 or early 1781 he had been wounded by a British patrol. The ball had entered under the right breast and exited out near the spinal column. The surgeon said it was miraculous how his lungs had escaped injury. He was sent with a small escort to the York settlements to regain his health. Along the way a squad of British intercepted them. His men fled, but his brother in law, Thomas Neal, Jr., chose to fight to the death with his colonel. The two men drove the British off, and were able to escape. The men who had fled had told the settlements that they had been killed, so "there was a great rejoicing when they arrived safe."⁸

Shortly after his return he rode out with Colonel Lacey to an old deserted warehouse. They discovered some British soldiers chasing chickens. Lacey said "By my soul, there are too many for us colonel." Hawthorne replied, "I'll be burned if here shan't be one less." He raised his rifle, *Blacksnake*, and fired. Lacey had also raised his rifle and fired at the same time. Both men had found their mark and two British soldiers fell. The two colonels quickly retreated, but Hawthorne found his mare falling behind. He rode into the brush and concealed himself until the British left.⁹

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Waccamaw Neck, South Carolina¹⁰ **Skirmish**
13 January 1781

American Forces

Commanding Officer	Lieutenant Colonel Peter Horry	
South Carolina Militia		
Williamsburg Township Militia		
Colonel Archibald McDonald's Regiment		80
Captain Daniel Conyers		
Captain John Clarke		

<i>Casualties</i>		1
wounded		

Loyalist Forces

Commanding Officer	Lieutenant Colonel George Campbell	
Provincials		65
Lieutenant Colonel George Campbell		
King's American Regiment		
Lieutenant John Wilson		
Queen's Rangers		
Captain John Saunder's Troop of Cavalry		
Cornet Thomas Meritt		
Unknown commander		
South Carolina Rangers		

<i>Casualties</i>	3 killed, 3 wounded, 2 captured	
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Marion sent Peter Horry to Waccamaw Neck to collect boats and drive off cattle. The partisans rode hard down the Waccamaw Neck, below Kingston, whooping, hollering, and frightening the Loyalists. The advance patrol captured a slave from William Allston's plantation, but Clarke freed him that night. The Queen's Rangers picked up the slave and he betrayed the presence of Horry's troops. Horry did not want to be surprised, so he placed Clarke and five troopers ahead as an advance guard.

Horry had described Clarke as a simpleton and a poltroon. When Clarke had heard the horns of the Rangers sounding an alarm, he told

his men to stop and observe because a hunt was on. Clarke and his men were captured by the Rangers, but were able to quickly escape. Alarmed by the noise of Clarke being captured, Horry's troops dashed forward and gave the Rangers a blast of swan shot. All Horry's men had shotguns loaded with swan shot. The damage they inflicted on the Loyalists would have been worse if they had buckshot. Campbell's horse was killed under him. Horry's horse bolted was frightened by the noise and threw him. His uniform looked so much like that of the enemy that it fooled a Ranger sergeant about to run him through with a sword.¹¹

The Rangers left the field in possession of Horry's troops. Two Loyalists of the South Carolina Rangers were captured, Thomas Wise and John Stillwell. Stillwell was captured when his horse threw him as he tried to escape. When Stillwell surrendered, Horry's men asked for his pistol. He surrendered his pistol, and then was instantly shot with it. He lay on the ground protesting the actions of the partisans and then they asked him for his sword. He surrendered up his sword, and Horry's men slashed his skull several times.

Thinking that they had won the field, Horry was surprised to find Campbell dashing up with his entire force. Sergeant McDonald gave Horry his horse and then they fled into the swamp. The Loyalists did not pursue them for fear of an ambush.

John Stillwell was taken to his home, "his brains, that is part of them, were two inches issued from his head. He preserved his senses perfect for two days, and told regularly the same story, then died."¹²

Horry met reinforcements sent by Marion and returned to the site of the skirmish, but the Loyalists had returned to Georgetown. Horry entrenched himself in a redoubt that had been abandoned by the King's American Regiment, but Marion sensibly recalled him. On the return to Marion's camp he was pulled from his horse by a low branch, while crossing Lynch's Creek in the dark. He stayed there until his men rescued him, because not only was Horry a bad rider, he was no swimmer either.¹³

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**Freeland's Station, Tennessee
15 January 1781**

Skirmish

Colonel James Robertson arrived at Freeland's Fort in January with badly needed salt and ammunition. Soon afterwards a band of Chickasaws crept into the settlement at midnight and attempted to capture it. Robertson awoke and went into the station yard. He saw the Indians and sounded the alarm. The settlers fired from within their cabins, holding off the Indians. The sound of the swivel gun firing in Fort Nashborough, signaling that help was on the way, drove the Cherokees away. Two of the settlers were killed, one white, one black, when rifle balls passed in between the logs of their unchinked cabins.¹⁴

**Cowpens, South Carolina¹⁵
17 January 1781**

Battle

American Forces

Commanding Officer Brigadier General Daniel Morgan
Continental

Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard

Maryland-Delaware Light Infantry Battalion

Captain Robert H. Kirkwood

Delaware Company¹⁶

63

Captain Richard Anderson

1st Maryland Company¹⁷

60

Captain Henry Dobson

2nd Maryland Company¹⁸

60

Lieutenant Nicholas Mangers

3rd Maryland Company¹⁹

60

Captain Edmund Tate

State Troops

Captain Andrew Wallace

Virginia Company²⁰

Captain Conway Oldham

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Major Samuel Hammond ²¹	
Hammond’s South Carolina State Troops ²²	60
Captain Joseph Pickens	
Captain John Lawson	
Virginia State Troops	50
Captain Henry Connelly	
North Carolina Company ²³	40
Captain Patrick Buchanan	
Augusta County Riflemen	
Lieutenant Colonel William Washington	
3 rd Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons	82
Major Richard Call	
Lieutenant Henry Bell	
Captain Churchill Jones’ Troop	
Captain William Parsons	
Captain William Barrett	
Captain John Watts	
1 st Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons	10
Major James McCall	
State Dragoons	
South Carolina State Dragoons	27
Major Samuel Taylor	
Captain Shadrick Inman ²⁴	
Captain Thomas Price	
Captain Alexander Luckie	
Captain Mordecai Clark	
North Carolina State Dragoons	15
Major John Nelson	
Nelson’s Regiment of Virginia State Cavalry ²⁵	15
Captain Clement Read	
Major Benjamin Jolly	
Georgia Cavalry	20
Colonel Andrew Pickens ²⁶	
State Militia	
Major David Campbell	
Campbell’s Virginia Militia Regiment	

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Captain Robertson ²⁷	25
Captain Hanley ²⁸	25
Major Francis "Frank" Triplett Triplett's Virginia Battalion	
Captain James Taite Augusta Riflemen ²⁹	50
Captain John Combs Fauquier County	Unknown number
Captain James Winn Captain James Gilmore Rockbridge Rifles ³⁰	42
Captain John McCampbell	
Captain Beatty ³¹ Captain Mordecai Clark's Company ³²	25
Colonel Andrew Pickens South Carolina Militia	270
Lieutenant Colonel John Thomas, Jr. 1 st Spartan Regiment	
Captain Thomas Farrow Captain John Files, Sr. 2 nd Spartan Regiment	
Captain Andrew Barry Captain John Collins	24
Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Roebuck Roebuck's Battalion	
Captain George Roebuck Captain Major Parsons Captain Dennis Tramell Captain John Lawson ³³ Captain Jeremiah Dickson	
Colonel Joseph Hayes Little River Regiment	
Captain James Ewing Captain James Dillard Captain William Harris Captain John Ridgeway	

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Major James Dugan	
Captain John Lindsay	
Captain Samuel Sexton	25
Captain James Irby	
Refugee Company	70
Colonel Thomas Brandon	
Fair Forest Regiment ³⁴	
Captain Robert Anderson	
Captain Robert Montgomery	
Captain Samuel Caldwell	
Captain Francis Carlisle	
Captain John Thompson	
Captain William Grant	
Lieutenant Joseph Hughes	
Captain James Adair	
Fairfield County Company	
Captain John Moffitt	
Chester District Militia	
Colonel Joseph “Quaker Meadows Joe” McDowell	
North Carolina Militia Battalion	300
Major Joseph McDowell	
Captain Joseph “Pleasant Garden Joe” McDowell ³⁵	
Burke County Militia Battalion	
Captain Alexander Ervin	
Captain James Alexander	
Captain Samuel Hampton	
Surry and Wilkes County	60
Captain William Lewis	
Captain Joseph Cloud	
Captain Henry Smith	
Captain Joseph White	
Lincoln and Rutherford County ³⁶	40
Captain Thomas White	
Captain Samuel Martin	
Major David McKissick	
Captain William Wilson	

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Guilford, Rockingham, Caswell, Orange, Granville and Warren County Militias	60
Captain Abel Armstrong Rowan County Company	75
Captain William "Black Alexander" Major John Cunningham Georgia Militia	490
Major James Jackson's Regiment Captain George Walton Captain Joshua Inman Georgia Refugees Captain Richard Heard Wilkes County Company	
<i>Total American Forces engaged</i>	900 – 2,400
<i>Casualties</i>	24 killed, 104 wounded ³⁷

British Forces

Commanding Officer	Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton
British Regulars	
Major Timothy Newmarsh 7 th (Royal Fusilier) Regiment of Foot 1 st Battalion	167
Captain Charles Helyar Major Archibald McArthur 71 st Regiment of Foot (Fraser's Highlanders) 1 st Battalion	263
Captain Robertson Duncanson Grenadier Company Lieutenant Roderick MacKenzie Unknown Sergeant	
Royal Regiment of Artillery 4 th Battalion 6 th Company	
Additional from the 7 th Regiment of Foot	9
3-pounder	1

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Additional from the British Legion	9
3-pounder	1
Lieutenant Thomas Lindsay	
Light Infantry	
Unknown commander ³⁸	
71 st Infantry Regiment (Highland Scots)	
1 st Battalion, Light Infantry Company	35
2 nd Battalion, Light Infantry Company	34
Lieutenant Thomas Lindsay	
Prince of Wales American Regiment	
Captain Daniel Lyman’s Light Infantry	25-50
Lieutenant John Skinner	
16 th Regiment of Foot	
Light Infantry Company	41
Provincials	
Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton	
British Legion	
British Legion Dragoons	250
Captain David Ogilvie ³⁹	40
Captain David Kinlock	
Captain Richard Hovenden	
Lieutenant Nathaniel Vernon	
Captain Jacob James’s Troop	
Captain Thomas Sanford	
Captain Francis Gildart	
Lieutenant Henry Nettles	
17 th Regiment of Light Dragoons ⁴⁰	50
Captain John Rousselet	
British Legion Infantry ⁴¹	201
Captain Patrick Stewart	
Captain Thomas Miller	
Lieutenant Donald McLeod	
Captain Rousselet’s Company	
Captain Charles McDonald	
Unknown Lieutenant	
Captain James Edward’s Company	

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Unknown Lieutenant	
Captain Donald McPherson's Company	⁴²
South Carolina Loyalist Militia	
Captain Alexander Chesney	
Loyalist Volunteers	50
<i>Total British Forces engaged</i>	1,050
<i>Casualties</i>	110 killed, 229 wounded, 600 captured and missing ⁴³

General Nathanael Greene understood what needed to be done to win the war in the South, but he only had about 800 men who were armed and clothed when he took over Gates's command. He decided to use a daring plan to supply his men, and defeat the British in South Carolina. Greene divided his forces in the face of a superior enemy. This would seem almost suicidal, but the plan was ingenious.

By dividing his forces each element was able to forage from different areas, and they were able to survive in the same areas where the British draw their supplies. If Cornwallis moved back to Charlestown, he would have an army on each of his flanks. If Cornwallis attacked the army in the west, it would leave Charlestown open. If he attacked the army in the east, it would leave Fort Ninety-Six and Augusta open. Greene did not fear being defeated, because his lightly equipped men could move faster than the enemy.

The army that would be to the west of Cornwallis would be under the command of Daniel Morgan. Morgan would take the remaining Continentals, with a force of militia, and head into South Carolina. He was ordered to have his 600 infantry and dragoons harass the Loyalists in the South Carolina backcountry. Morgan headed towards Fort Ninety-Six in South Carolina, and stayed at Grindal Shoals until January 14th.⁴⁴

Cornwallis understood the predicament he was in. If he pursued Morgan, Charlestown would be wide open to an attack from Nathanael Greene's main army. Greene's main army consisted of the militia under the command of General Huger. If Cornwallis went after Greene, then Morgan would try to take Fort Ninety-Six. Cornwallis responded to Greene's daring move with one of his own, by dividing his army into three parts. Cornwallis ordered General

Leslie to hold Camden against an attack by Sumter and Marion’s partisans, or from Greene’s main army. Cornwallis knew that the continuing slaughter and capture of Loyalists would stop any hope of an effective Royal militia, so he sent Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton after Morgan to “Catch him,” and “wipe him out.” The final part of Cornwallis’s plan would be that he would move into North Carolina, hoping to intercept the remains of Morgan’s army after Tarleton had defeated him in battle.

Most of Morgan’s command consisted of militiamen who could not be trusted to stand up to Tarleton’s Regulars, so he retreated when he learned of the approach of Tarleton. To protect against desertions he had the rolls called every two hours. Discipline was swift and severe. Sergeant Major Seymour wrote that on January 1st a deserter was found guilty of going over to the British and “piloting the Indians on our army, they making great havoc among them; upon which he was hanged on a tree that same day till he was dead.” On January 4th “one of Col. Washington’s Horse tried and found guilty of desertion to the enemy, when agreeable to his sentence he was shot the same day.” Morgan hoped to cross the Broad River. If Tarleton pursued him, he would make a stand at Thicketty Mountain. Unfortunately heavy rains had swelled the rivers in the area making it extremely hazardous to cross.

Tarleton’s men had run out of rations on the 15th and had to move through an area that had already been picked clean by Morgan’s men. Luckily for Tarleton he had caught up to Morgan’s scouts. A small skirmish ensued, and some British dragoons were captured. Morgan’s force quickly withdrew, leaving their breakfast on the campfires. Tarleton said that the camp “yielded a good post, and afforded plenty of provisions, which they had left behind them, half-cooked, in every part of their encampment.”

By nightfall on January 16th Morgan was still six miles from the crossing of the Broad River. William Washington reported that Tarleton was less than ten miles to his rear. Daniel Morgan stopped running at Hannah’s Cow Pens, and prepared to stand and fight. The Cowpens was a well-known spot where farmers wintered their cattle.

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Low ridges, just high enough to conceal the Patriot army, bordered the field.

Both armies were about evenly matched. An additional 500 militia had joined Morgan, but Tarleton was coming at him with 1,100 infantry and mounted men. There were 520 veteran Continentals with Morgan who could be expected to stand their ground. Lieutenant Colonel William Washington was also with Morgan, with his Continental dragoons. A large portion of Morgan's militia had prior Continental service, and virtually all had been in backcountry skirmishes. Some of the State Troops were actually Continentals who had not been captured after Charlestown. Morgan knew that Tarleton had a formidable mounted force, so a call for volunteers went out to form a cavalry unit. Fifty-six men stepped forward and were issued sabers and pistols. The men were told that they "had the authority to press any horse not belonging to a dragoon or an officer into our service for the day." Two mounted companies from Georgia and South Carolina were created from these men, and augmented Washington's Dragoons.

Morgan moved among the campfires on the night January 16th talking to the officers and men, inspiring confidence in them. Thomas Young was a soldier in Major Jolly's company, and he wrote in his memoirs, "It was upon this occasion I was more perfectly convinced of Gen. Morgan's qualifications to command militia, than I had ever before been. He went among the volunteers, helped them fix their swords, joked with them about their sweet-hearts, told them to keep in good spirits, and the day would be ours. And long after I laid down, he was going about among the soldiers encouraging them, and telling them that the old Wagoner would crack his whip over Ben (Tarlton) in the morning, as sure as they lived. 'Just hold up your heads, boys, three fires, he would say, and you are free, and then when you return to your homes, how the old folks will bless you, and the girls kiss you, for your gallant conduct!' I don't believe he slept a wink that night!"

The militia had initially resented Morgan's retreat, but upon learning that they would stand and fight, they became anxious for battle. Many of these militiamen had fought at King's Mountain and

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were not as afraid of the British bayonets as they had been. The Continentals with Morgan had been the survivors of Charlestown, Camden and the Waxhaws, and had their own score to settle with Tarleton. After he had talked to the militiamen, Morgan went to the Continentals. McJunkin wrote, “the revillie was beat, and Howard’s regiment paraded to hear their general...He said to them “My friends in arms, my dear boys, I request you to remember Saratoga, Monmouth, Paoli and Brandywine, and this day play well for your honor and liberty.”

Tarleton had received word that Morgan was about to be reinforced by a “corps of Mountaineers being upon the march from Green river” and he knew he had to finish Morgan off now, before those men arrived. At 3 a.m. the British began their march. Tarleton’s men had slept only about four hours in two days, and they had not eaten any breakfast. The wagons were ordered to remain in the camp until sunrise. They would have slowed down Tarleton’s force due to the muddy track that was the road to Cowpens. The trail of Morgan’s army was easy to follow in the churned up roads. The British approached slowly, marching in a tactical formation and scouting the front and flanks as they moved. The natural obstacles slowed Tarleton’s advance. His men had to swim their horses across the cold rivers, or chop down trees to make a bridge. Morgan’s advance patrols set fire to the woods, further slowing down Tarleton.

An hour before dawn Morgan was informed that Tarleton was five miles away. “Boys get up!” Morgan shouted, “Benny is coming!” He had his men eat a breakfast that had been prepared the night before. The men did not lack any food, since cattle were butchered the night before. Extra ammunition and flints were issued to the men, and then the baggage wagons were sent to the rear. The mounted militia was told to tie their horses where the wagons had been parked.

Morgan knew that Tarleton only had one maneuver, a head-on frontal assault. This tactic had seldom been successful against veteran infantry. It had not worked at Hanging Rock, Charlotte, Wahab’s Plantation, or the Blackstocks. Morgan knew he could defeat Tarleton, but it would be “nothing but downright fighting.” By sunrise Morgan placed his men into three lines, in what is now

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referred to as a defense in depth. Each line would be stronger than the last, and an enemy would wear themselves out trying to break through each line.

The first line consisted of 120 picked marksmen led by Major McDowell and Major Cunningham. These men would be partially concealed in high grass and trees. Their job was to fire two volleys and then retreat to the second line, firing as they fell back. The marksmen were told to fight in groups of three, with two reserving their fire. They were also told to “feel the enemy as he approached,” and “not deliver their fire until the enemy was within fifty yards.” McJunkin described Cowpens as a “long ascending plain, overgrown with large chestnuts.”

Morgan's second line was 150 yards up the hill and consisted of 300 Georgia, North and South Carolina militia led by Colonel Andrew Pickens. These troops were formed in extended order in the grass and among the trees. They were at a tree line, behind the crest of the hill, in what is known in modern military terms as a reverse slope defense. Colonel Brandon was on the left of the Cowpens road, and Colonels Roebuck and Thomas were on the right. They were to fire until the enemy came close enough for a bayonet charge, then fall back to the third line.

One hundred and fifty yards from the second line, on top of the rise, were the Continentals under the command of Colonel John Eager Howard. Howard and his battalion of light infantry were in the center of the Mill Gap road. On the Continental's left were 100 Augusta Riflemen led by Captains Tate and Buchanan. To Howard's right were Major Triplett's Virginians and Captain Beatty's South Carolinians.

The reserve force of William Washington's Dragoons was behind a low ridge. Militiaman Thomas Young was with the group of the newly created dragoons from the day before. He wrote that since he was so young he was placed behind “a Frenchman who had been in Pulaski's Legion. He said “Don't be scared my son. I can cut my way through the British columns at any time.”

Morgan had placed his least reliable forces in the front, but he knew the militia, and how to use them. Morgan knew that

skirmishers would run, but he told them they were allowed to run after they fired two rounds at the "epaulets."⁴⁵ Three miles in advance of the main line Morgan had placed pickets, or vedettes, made up of Continental Dragoons under the command of Lieutenant Leonard Anderson, and the Georgia Refugees under the command of Captain Joshua Inman. These men were to harass the British and give Morgan a last minute warning of Tarleton's approach.

After moving a mile from the Cowpens Inman encountered Captain Hovenden's dragoons in the lead element of Tarleton's army. The British dragoons pursued Inman and captured two of Morgan's pickets. One of the prisoners was Sergeant Everheart of the 3rd Continental Dragoons, who had been captured when his horse fell. Tarleton personally questioned Everheart and wanted to know if Morgan would fight. Everheart told him that Morgan would fight, even if he only had 200 men. He also said that Morgan was five miles away at the Cowpens.

Tarleton told Everheart, "It will be another Gates defeat." Everheart replied, "I hope it will be another Tarleton defeat." Tarleton coldly replied, "I am Colonel Tarleton, Sir." Everheart countered, "I am Sergeant Everheart." Tarleton was used to striking fear in his opponents, but Everheart's response left him wondering what lay ahead. Tarleton ordered Captain Ogilvie of the Legion to the front, with two companies of dragoons.

As Tarleton's force moved forward, Morgan's pickets harassed them with rifle fire. The riflemen used the trees for cover, but were no match for the cavalry who scouted before the advancing army. The riflemen did do their job of delaying the British, because for the last two miles they slowed their advance, constantly looking for ambushes. Hovenden sent word back to Tarleton that Morgan had halted at the Cowpens, and was forming for battle.

Before sunrise on January 17th Morgan's men saw Hovenden's dragoons emerge from the trees at the bottom of the long sloping hill. The Legion dragoons quickly moved back into the woods, only to reemerge with the 17th Dragoons. The morning was cold, possibly below freezing, with a high humidity. Tarleton could barely see the

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second line of Morgan's men, and could not see the Continentals at all, who were 500 yards away underneath the shadows of the trees.

Tarleton ordered his dragoons forward to investigate whether this was a battalion holding the road, or just a rear guard sent to delay him. A scattering of rifle shots was directed towards the dragoons as they advanced.

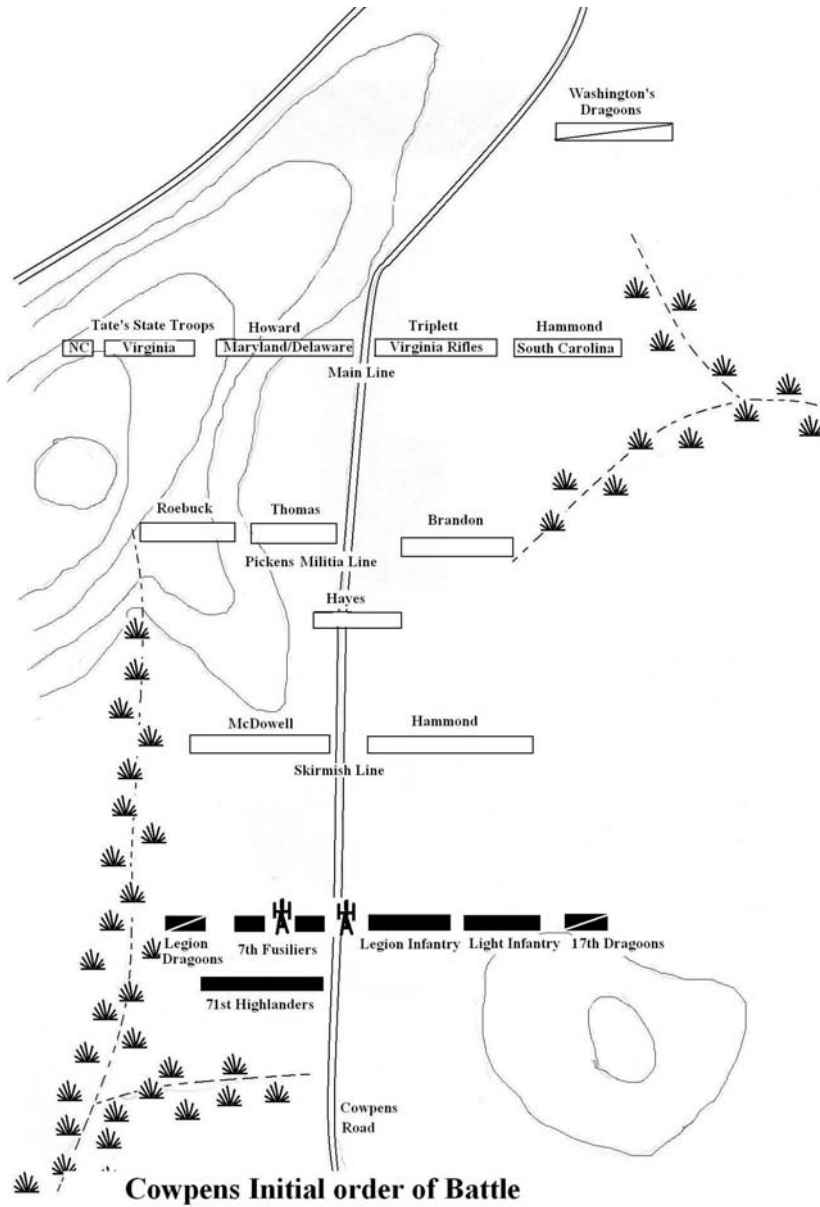
McJunkin wrote "The guns of the videttes, led by Capt. Inman announce the approach of the foe, and soon the red coats stream before the eyes of the militia. A column marches up in front of Brandon's men led by a gayly dressed officer on horseback. The word passes along the line, "Who can bring him down?" John Savage looked Col. Farr full in the face and read yes in his eye. He darted a few paces in front, laid his rifle against a sapling, a blue gas streamed above his head, the sharp crack of a rifle broke the solemn stillness of the occasion and a horse without a rider wheeled from the front of the advancing column."

The horsemen quickly wheeled and rode along the front of the skirmish line. Riflemen rose out of the grass and fired upon them, but did not inflict many wounds. McJunkin wrote, "Two dragoons assault a large rifleman, Joseph Hughes by name. His gun was empty, but with it he parries their blows and dodges round a tree, but they still persist. At the moment the assault on Hughes began John Savage was priming his rifle. Just as they pass the tree to strike Hughes he levels his gun and one of the dragoons tumbles from his horse pierced with a bullet.

The next moment the rifle carried by Hughes, now literally hacked over, slips out of his hands and inflicts such a blow upon the other dragoon that he quits the contest and retires hanging by the mane of his horse."⁴⁶

Morgan's skirmishers could not be driven off, so the dragoons returned to the main line. A few of the riflemen began drifting back to Pickens' line of militia, but most stayed waiting to see what would happen next.

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Tarleton's infantry marched onto the field early in the morning and then filed off quickly into a line of battle. They formed a double rank at open order, about three feet between each two-man file. Tarleton commented that he deployed his men in the "loose manner of forming in the south." His army was 1,100 strong, and was 300 yards from Morgan's first line. In the center of Tarleton's line was the British Light Infantry. To the left of the Lights was the British Legion infantry, and in between both was a 3-pound cannon.

On the right of the Lights were the new recruits of the 7th Regiment, and in between them was another three-pound cannon. A company of fifty dragoons was stationed at each end of the line. The 1st Battalion of the 71st Regiment and 200 Legion cavalry formed Tarleton's reserve, 150 yards in the rear. It took Tarleton nearly half an hour to deploy the men into a line of battle. They dropped their packs and blankets and grounded all excess gear, except their arms and ammunition.

Tarleton gave the order to the entire line to advance at open order, and meet Morgan's skirmish line. The skirmishers continued to fire upon the approaching line, while moving slowly back to Pickens' militia line. The British artillery fired in unison at the skirmishers, and moved forward with the British line. The artillery did little damage to the skirmish line, and was not even mentioned by the veterans of the battle, except to note that the first shots flew past the militia and landed amongst Washington's Dragoons waiting in reserve. Washington moved his men to a safer location on the right wing to get away from the bouncing iron balls.

Some of the new recruits of the 7th Regiment lost their nerve due to the accurate rifle fire, and stopped to fire. Their officers knocked some of them down with the flats of their sabers, and ordered them to continue advancing. The 71st Highlanders moved to the left rear of the line, but intermingled with the left flank of the 7th Regiment because of a ravine located beside them. The British Legion Infantry moved forward quickly to meet the line of McDowell and Cunningham receiving a "heavy and galling fire." The North Carolinian riflemen did not move back until "the bayonet was

presented.” Even then the skirmishers moved back orderly, firing and using the trees for cover.

McDowell and his North Carolinians withdrew to their place in the second militia line, to the right of Roebuck’s South Carolinians. Hammond with McCall’s Regiment was on the left of the line, and to the left of Hammond were Captain Donolly and his Georgians.⁴⁷ The rest of the militia had been waiting for an hour for their chance, listening to the fighting on the other side of the ridge in front of them. Thomas Young wrote “The morning of the 17th of January was bitterly cold. We were formed in order of battle, and the men were slapping their hands together to keep warm – an exertion not long necessary.”

As the British moved forward at a trot, they kept up a continual shout to intimidate Morgan’s militia. Young wrote, “About sun-rise, the British line advanced at a sort of trot, with a loud halloo. It was the most beautiful line I ever saw. When they shouted, I heard Morgan say, “They give us the British halloo, boys, give them the Indian halloo, by G—— and he galloped along the lines, cheering the men, and telling them not to fire until we could see the whites of their eyes. Every officer was crying don't fire! for It was a hard matter for us to keep from it.”

As the British line approached “small parties of riflemen were detached to skirmish with the enemy.” These men moved out from the line about twenty feet, and then fired on the quick moving line. One of Colonel Brandon’s Fair Forest men fired first, killing Captain John Rousselet in the front of the British Legion Infantry. The militia first fired at the approaching British with individual rifle shots, but when Tarleton’s line was within fifty yards they began firing volleys into the British ranks. This was well-aimed rifle fire, at close range, and the effect was devastating. The 7th Regiment returned fire but with little effect. The light infantry and the Legion infantry knew better. They attempted to close the distance with the militia, because only then could their bayonets be put to use.

The four militia battalions did not fire all at once, but fired one battalion at a time from the left to the right. This tactic was used to ensure that one element was loaded at all times, and to keep up a

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continuous fire. The fire from Morgan's men staggered the light infantry and stopped their assault. Two thirds of the British officers were down, and over half of the men fell. Some of them did not go down due to wounds, but instead collapsed due to the lack of sleep, food and continual fighting up to that point.

Morgan had placed his men well below the crest of the hill, and the British fire went mainly over the heads of the militia line. The fire from the riflemen hit the British silhouetted on the hillside. Each battalion fired one round, and began to reload. The British recovered from their initial shock and charged. Unfortunately for the Light Infantry, Brandon's men were able to reload and get off a second shot, which stopped the British again. Most of the British who were killed in the battle fell in front of the militia line. After the battle "the dead were found in straight lines across the field."

The militia was unable to defend against the bayonet and retreated in "very good order, not seeming to be in the least confused." Some of the riflemen moved back from tree to tree, firing as they went. Benjamin Roebuck had his horse shot out from under him, but he was able to move back with his men. The South Carolina militia moved through the middle of the third line. Morgan and his aides slowed the militia's withdrawal and began reforming them in the rear of the Continentals. The British thought the militia was retreating, because they were defeated and came on in great spirits, shouting as they moved forward. They did not know about the third line of Continentals.

Tarleton saw the fleeing militia, and also thought that they were retreating. He ordered the cavalry to strike at both flanks to end the battle. The 17th Dragoons under Lieutenant Henry Nettles saw the disorderly band of 800 militiamen milling to the rear of Hammond's State Troops, and charged. They broke right through Hammond's troops and plunged into the mass of militia. The Dragoons hacked and slashed at all within reach. There were only fifty Dragoons, but the militia would later state that there were 300 of them, due to the violence of their attack. Some of Picken's militia ran to their horses and fled the field.

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The only thing that stopped the attack from becoming a total panicked rout was when William Washington arrived with his 200 cavalry and smashed right into the 17th Dragoons. The riflemen recovered from their initial shock, and reloaded their weapons. When the British turned upon them, the riflemen fired, emptying out fifteen of the saddles. The riflemen also began firing on the approaching British infantry at long range. Others ran to their horses and joined Washington's Light Dragoons in the pursuit of the 17th Dragoons. Washington sent a quarter of his men under Lieutenant Henry Bell after the 17th Dragoons, and moved the rest back into their reserve position.

As the militia was passing through the Continental line, the British officers reformed their lines. The initial shock of seeing the Continental line under the trees wore off, and the British reformed from open order, into regular order. If they were to take on the Continentals they would need to be a more compact force, able to withstand the hand-to-hand, life or death struggle that would soon occur. The British artillery had been pushed up the road and was with the 7th Fusiliers. Once the militia had passed through the lines the Continentals closed ranks, and the line began to fire.

In Triplett's Virginia Battalion was 17-year-old William Anderson, he would later write, "Morgan had commanded his troops not to fire until he gave the order, and then to aim at the knee buckles, which were conspicuous upon the knees of the British soldiers. A young man in the Botetourt Company, before General Morgan gave the order to fire, had leveled his rifle and was taking aim at the British, who were then rapidly approaching General Morgan's lines, and were then in point blank range. General Morgan cursed this young soldier, asking him "what in hell" he meant by violating his orders; and the young soldier, with tears running down his cheeks, said, "General, I'm not going to fire; I'm just taking good aim."

The volleys were done by companies, from the right to the left. Each company fired in sequence, which kept up a continuous fire upon the British ranks. The two lines fired volley after volley into each other's ranks for ten minutes. The Patriot main line took on the appearance of a "U". McDowell's North Carolinians on the right and

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Hammond's South Carolina State Troops on the left held the flanks of the "U". Kirkwood's Delaware Continentals suffered the most in the Patriot line, because they were across from the 7th Fusiliers and the two artillery pieces firing grapeshot into their ranks.⁴⁸

Tarleton sent his reserves to turn the Patriot's right flank. One company of the 71st Highlanders moved forward, behind Captain Ogilvie's Legion Dragoons. The rest of the Highlanders moved in column at a quick pace, and charged headlong into McDowell's riflemen. The 71st Highlanders had been told to give no quarter. Ogilvie's Dragoons also charged into the North Carolinians. Unable to stand up to the bayonets and swords of the Dragoons and Highlanders, McDowell's men ran for the protection of the Continentals.

The Highlanders ran forward at the double, and overlapped Howard's right flank. Seeing what Tarleton was doing, Howard ordered his right flank company to wheel to meet the threat. Wallace's Virginians turned their backs on the Highlanders while they were doing this maneuver. What happened next was one of the biggest mistakes of the battle, and Howard blamed the mistaken order on Captain Andrew Wallace. Howard wrote that Wallace had "formed a connexion with a vile woman of the camp, and the infatuation was so great that on guard or any other duty he had this woman with him and seemed miserable when she was absent." Captain Conway Oldham commanded a platoon in Wallace's company, and did not wheel his men, but instead they marched straight back.

To further confuse matters the 71st Highlanders fired a volley right into the backs of Wallace's company while this was happening, killing Captain John Lawson. His replacement saw Wallace moving off and the Virginians followed them. The rest of the Continental line began moving backwards, and seemed to be retreating. As each company fired, they turned about and marched to the rear. The British sensed a victory and broke ranks, charging towards the backs of the Continentals. This was not an orderly bayonet charge, but instead the British "shouted victory, and advanced rapidly and in disorder, within thirty yards of Howard's rear."⁴⁹

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General Morgan rode up to Howard and demanded to know why his men were retreating. Howard replied, “Do men who march like that look as though they are beaten?” Morgan saw the men marching as if on parade, and also saw the British line charging after them. Morgan told Howard that the rising ground near Washington’s horse would be the proper place to face about.

Washington had organized his cavalry after slashing his way through the 17th Dragoons, and then turned his attention to Ogilvie’s Dragoons on the right flank. Ogilvie’s men were busy attacking the North Carolina militia, when Washington’s horse rode right through their ranks, slashing as they went. Washington then turned back and rode through them again. He saw the disorganized charge of the 71st, and sent a messenger to Howard telling him “They are coming on like a mob. Give them a fire and I will charge them.”

Tarleton had witnessed Washington riding through Ogilvie’s dragoons, and ordered the rest of the Legion Dragoons in reserve to attack. They moved forward to watch the battle, but did not charge. Washington rode through the Highlanders for a second time and then stopped, waiting for Howard to fire.

Howard’s Continentals turned and began firing a volley into the charging British, at a range of “ten or fifteen yards.” Each company, from the left to the right fired their volley. Some of the British soldiers saw the Continentals turning on them and “threw down their arms and fell upon their faces.” Thomas Young wrote, “The militia fired first. It was for a time, pop-pop-pop-and then a whole volley; but when the regulars fired, it seemed like one sheet of flame from right to left. Oh, it was beautiful!” When the line fired, “The ground was instantly covered with the bodies of the killed and wounded, a total rout ensued.”

The Continentals followed up the devastating volley with a bayonet charge right into the front of the Highlanders. At the same time Washington’s white-coated dragoons returned, smashing into the Highlanders left flank and rear.

Young wrote, “At this moment the bugle sounded. We about half formed, and making a sort of circuit at full speed, came up in rear of the British line, shouting and charging like made men!” This was

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what most commanders dreamed of, the classic double envelopment. Kirkwood's Delaware's "wheeled to the right and attacked their left flank so vigorously that they were soon repulsed." Young wrote, "The British broke, and throwing down their guns and cartouch boxes, made for the wagon road, and did the prettiest sort of running!"

The 71st fought back with "irregular firing" but when Pickens' riflemen came back onto the field and began firing on the Highlanders, they broke and ran. As the British line fled from the field they left the artillery behind. Washington's Dragoons rode through the Highlanders and continued on toward the Legion cavalry in reserve. In their path were the artillerymen. The artillerymen did not run, but stood by their guns. The Dragoons cut down the drivers of the artillery limbers, and rode on.

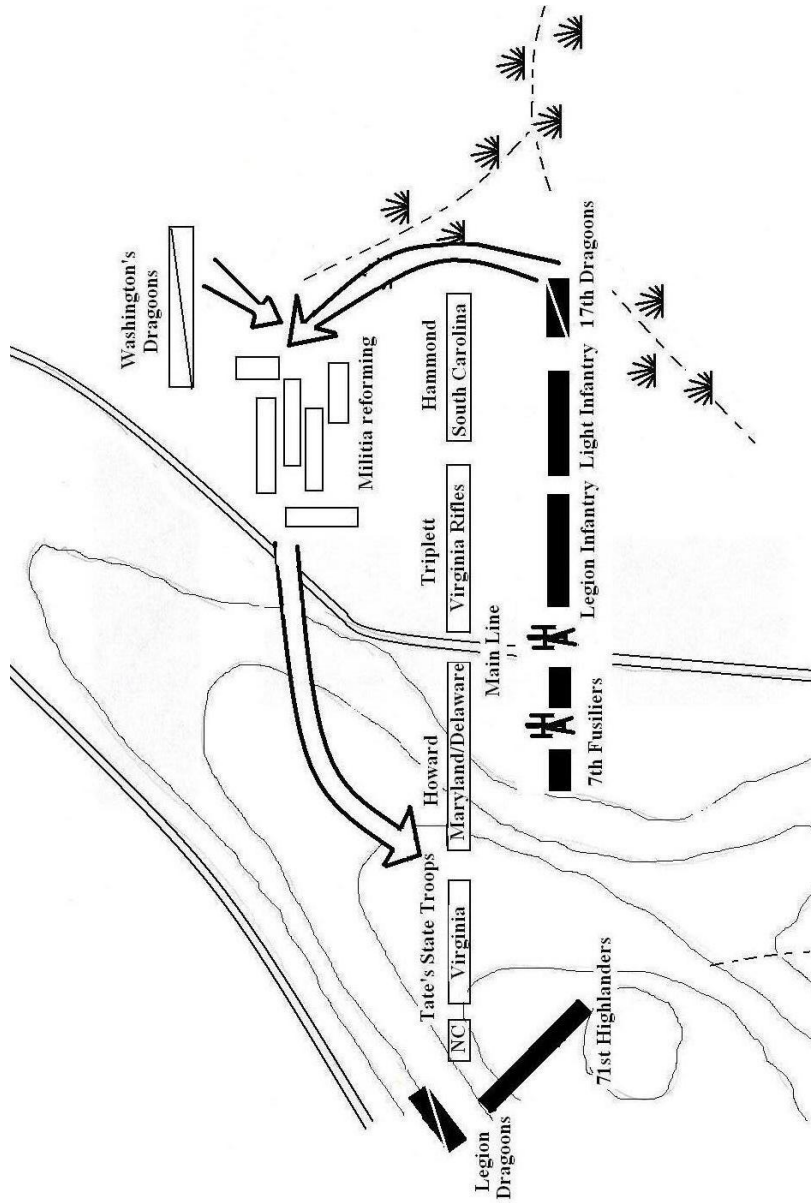
Howard ordered Captain Richard Anderson of the Marylanders to take the artillery piece closest to him. Anderson saw the gunner about to put the slow match to the gun and sprang over the gun with his spontoon.⁵⁰ Anderson turned his improvised pole-vault onto the gunner, and killed him. At the other gun the Marylanders were going to bayonet the gunner, "who appeared to make it a point of honour not to surrender his match." Howard stopped them. All the artillerymen were bayoneted, sabred, or shot to the last man.

The 17th Dragoons, and Lieutenant Nathaniel Vernon's troop of the Legion Cavalry, returned to save the guns, but were stopped by the Continentals and Virginians who had pushed on past the guns. A short cavalry fight erupted that involved some of Washington's Dragoons.

Thomas Young was almost killed by a British dragoon, but Colonel Brandon came "galloping up" and "struck up his sword and killed the Briton." Roebuck also saved Young's life when he rode up and "cut off the head of a Tory at one stroke, with his broad sword."

Young wrote "In this charge, I exchanged my tackey for the finest horse I ever rode; it was the quickest swap I ever made in my life!" Pickens' riflemen fired on the dragoons, then mounted their own horses, and continued to press the British until "they began to throw down their arms, and surrender themselves prisoners of war."

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The British infantry ran as they never had before, dropping their weapons and accouterments. British Regulars dropped their muskets and fell to the ground begging for mercy. Along the Patriot's line came the cry, "Tarleton's Quarters...Tarleton's Quarters!" Morgan quickly got the men under control, and stopped a possible massacre.

The 71st Highlanders had rallied after running up the slope, forming in a tight compact group. Intermingled with the Highlanders were the remains of the Light Infantry, the Legion Infantry and the 7th Fusiliers. Colonel Jackson charged into their ranks at the head of his Georgians, and tried to snatch what he thought was the 71st regimental flag, but missed. This was actually the flag of the 7th Regiment, since the 71st did not carry a flag onto the field that day. Howard promised quarter to Major McArthur of the 71st if he surrendered.

McJunkin wrote, "When Howard called out 'throw down your arms and you shall have good quarter', in an instant 500 men piled their arms." McArthur offered his sword to Pickens, stopping the slaughter.⁵¹ The 71st had suffered badly in the battle. Out of sixteen officers that were on the field, nine were killed or wounded, and all but one was captured. McJunkin describe them, "the Highlanders contrasted strangely with that of their conquerors. They looked like a set of nabobs, in their flaming regimentals, set down with us militia, in our tattered hunting shirts, black, smoked and greasy."⁵²

Tarleton rode to the Legion dragoons that had remained in reserve, but it was hopeless. For the first time he couldn't get them to obey. About 200 dragoons disobeyed him and left the field of battle.⁵³ When they saw Washington's dragoons riding fast towards them, yelling "Buford's Play! Tarleton's Quarter!" they fled into the woods. The panicked cavalry overran Captain Kinlock's dragoons. Unable to keep Sergeant Everheart prisoner anymore, they shot him in the head with a pistol. Everheart survived this wound, and would later point out the man who did it, who was then instantly put to death.

Tarleton had his horse shot out from under him, but Robert Jackson, the Assistant Surgeon of the 71st Highlanders, rode up and gave Tarleton his horse. As Washington pounded into view, three British officers wheeled about and stopped. The Continental

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dragoons, led by Washington stopped “and dared each other to advance.” One of these British officers may have been Tarleton.

Cornet Thomas Patterson of the 17th Dragoons saw the stalemate and charged at Washington. When Patterson swung his sword at Washington he was “cut down by the Colonel’s orderly serjeant.”⁵⁴ Patterson was not killed, but he was seriously wounded. The other British officer was ready to saber Washington, but a “Negro boy named Collins” rode in and shot the British officer in the shoulder.

The third officer, possibly Tarleton, “retreated 10 or 12 steps and wheeled about and fired his pistol which wounded Washington’s horse.” Washington pursued Tarleton for twenty miles, but took a different road than Tarleton. He was not able to catch up to Tarleton, but his men rounded up 100 stragglers from his shattered army.

Tarleton rode back to his wagons, and found Morgan’s militia looting them. Ensign Fraser of the Highlanders initially had guarded the wagons, but when Fraser learned of the defeat, he mounted his men on the wagon horses, cut the reins, and rode to the main army. The enraged Tarleton charged into the looters, wounding and killing several, and drove them off. He ordered the wagons set on fire, and resumed his retreat. Morgan’s aide, Baron de Glaubeck, was able to capture the thirty-five wagons, which Morgan described as “immense”.

Besides the staggering British losses, much valuable equipment had been captured, including two small fieldpieces, 800 muskets, two 3-pound cannon, one traveling forge, the thirty-five baggage wagons, seventy “Negro servants”, 100 horses, the colors of the 7th Regiment, and “all their music.”⁵⁵ The battle lasted less than an hour, and in that short time Tarleton had lost 86% of his force. The largest number of Patriot officer casualties occurred among the South Carolina militia, from officers who were leading their men from the front.

Morgan knew that Cornwallis would be coming after him to get back all of the prisoners from Cowpens, so he withdraw into North Carolina. Colonel Pickens was left behind to bury the dead and take care of the wounded. Pickens gathered up what equipment might be useful, collected the dead, and after taking the paroles of the British, placed the wounded in tents under a white flag with medical

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personnel to await the expected return of Tarleton. Pickens would later become a Brigadier General by Governor John Rutledge for his actions that day.

Greene at first thought to attack Ninety-Six, but the Virginia militiamen under General Stevens were preparing to leave for their homes when their time expired. Greene decided to let Morgan lead Cornwallis out of South Carolina, then combine the two forces and attack the British far from their supply lines. Cornwallis had been under instructions from Clinton not to invade North Carolina or Virginia without making Georgia and South Carolina secure. Cornwallis took Greene's bait and followed.⁵⁶

**Near Cowpens, South Carolina
17 January 1781**

Skirmish

After the battle of Cowpens Morgan's militia covered the roads leading from the battlefield sweeping up British stragglers. Thomas Young wrote "Major Jolly and seven or eight of us resolved upon an excursion to capture some of the baggage. We went about twelve miles, and captured two British soldiers, two negroes, and two horses laden with portmanteaus. One of the portmanteaus belonged to a paymaster in the British service, and contained gold. Jolly insisted upon my returning with the prize to camp, while he pursued a little farther. I did so. Jolly's party dashed onward, and soon captured an armorer's wagon, with which they became so much engaged that they forgot all about me. I rode along for some miles at my leisure, on my fine gray charger, talking to my prisoners, when all at once I saw, coming in advance, a party, which I soon discovered to be British. I knew it was no time to consider; so I wheeled, put spurs to my horse, and made down the road in hopes of meeting Jolly and his party. My horse was stiff, however, from the severe exercise I had given him that morning, and I soon found that they were gaining on me. I wheeled abruptly to the right into a cross road, but a party of three or four dashed through the woods and intercepted me... My pistol was empty, so I drew my sword and made battle. I never fought so hard in

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