

Book number four of Nothing But Blood and Slaughter, the most complete history of the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas

Nothing but Blood and Slaughter, the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Four, 1782

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1782

“Deliverance and independence.”

Videau’s Bridge, South Carolina ¹ **Skirmish**
Siege of Charlestown
3 January 1782

American Forces

Commanding Officer	Colonel Richard Richardson, Jr.
South Carolina Militia	400
Colonel Richard Richardson, Jr.	
Marion’s Brigade of Partisans	
Colonel Richardson’s Regiment ²	
South Carolina State Troops	
Captain John Carraway Smith	
Maham’s Light Dragoons	
Lieutenant Colonel Screven’s Troop	detachment
Captain G. Sinclair Capers	
Major Samuel Cooper	
Captain William Bennett	

Casualties 9 killed, 6 wounded, 15 missing ³

British Forces

Commanding Officer	Major William Brereton
British Regulars	
Major William Brereton	
Grenadiers and Light Infantry	
Provincials	
Major John Coffin	
New York Volunteers	
Major John Coffin’s Troop of Mounted Infantry	
Captain Archibald “Mad Archy” Campbell	
South Carolina Royalists	

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Major John Doyle	
Volunteers of Ireland ⁴	
South Carolina Loyalist Militia	
Captain March ⁵	
Independent Troop of Black Dragoons	
Lieutenant Mingo	
<i>Total British Forces engaged</i>	360
<i>Casualties</i>	4 killed, 14 wounded, 1 captured ⁶

In 1782 the British were penned up inside the city of Charlestown, surrounded by a combination of partisans and regular soldiers. Major General Alexander Leslie was the commandant of the city and had to slaughter 200 horses for the lack of feed for the animals. To protect the approaches to the city Leslie had several outposts which were guarded by armed galleys.

One of these galleys was in the Wando River guarding the outpost on Daniel’s Island. This outpost was under surveillance by Colonel Richard Richardson and a small body of men who were based in the settlement of Cainhoy. The British had placed these galleys there to facilitate the movement of their foraging parties into the surrounding countryside.

Leslie had received reports that Francis Marion’s detachments might be vulnerable to attack and he ordered Major William Brereton to cross the river and invade St. Thomas’s Parish. On January 2nd Brereton crossed from the city to Daniel’s Island with 350 infantry and cavalry and then moved up the Strawberry Road. Colonel Richardson knew that he was outnumbered so he requested for reinforcements from Marion. Marion was low in men, but he did send a detachment of new and inexperienced cavalry from Lieutenant Colonel Screven’s troop, led by Captain John Carraway Smith.

Brereton marched across Daniel’s Island and crossed Beresford Creek. On January 3rd he rested his troops at Brabant Plantation, the plantation of Reverend Robert Smith. Brereton put troops on Videau’s Bridge to guard the approaches leading to the plantation.⁷ Richardson had his men circle around and come at the bridge from the north.

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Brereton went out on a reconnaissance alone, but soon came racing back with the New York Volunteers, the South Carolina Royalists, and the Independent Troop of Black Dragoons hot on his heels. When Richardson reached his men he wheeled his mount and ordered a charge. Captain Smith charged with his cavalry and the British quickly retreated. Unfortunately Smith's cavalry was untrained and they were soon strung out and disorganized.

At Videau's Bridge the British infantry fired a volley into the disorganized partisans and killed twenty-two of them. Major Coffin charged the confused partisans with fresh cavalry, causing Marion's new recruits to flee. Some of Maham's veterans, led by Major Samuel Cooper, stayed and fought, but they were either slaughtered or they ran.

In the intense fight Captain G. Sinclair Capers had taken three sword thrusts through the body. Captain Archibald Campbell of the South Carolina Royalists was killed when he attempted to escape after he had been captured.⁸ The British pursued the partisans on a six mile running gun battle before they turned back to their main force. Brereton continued on the cattle raid, foraging as far north as Quinby Bridge before he returned to Haddrell's Point.⁹

Gholson's Farm, North Carolina 7 January 1782

When Colonel Elijah Isaacs had departed from Cox's Mill and moved his forces westward David Fanning followed, capturing any stragglers left behind. Isaacs knew of Fanning's presence and left behind covering forces to ambush any Loyalists that would pursue them. Fanning was not fooled and in turn hunted those men down. He ambushed a party of Whig militia that was left behind, killing two and wounding many more. Fanning continued to pursue Isaac's men, killing two more of the group.

Captain Charles Gholson was a commander in the Chatham County Militia and was one of men pursued by Fanning. Gholson's militia stopped at a Loyalist house near Salisbury and was in the process of plundering the property when Fanning discovered them.

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When Gholson learned that Fanning was approaching he fled, but one of his men was left behind and captured. Fanning hanged the prisoner and continued the chase but he was unable to capture Gholson's force. In retaliation Fanning rode to Gholson's home and burned the farm. The Loyalists burned two more houses near Gholson's farm. As a final touch Fanning executed “a man who had been very anxious” to have some of his Loyalists executed.

On his return to Cox's Mill Fanning captured Captain John Thompson, a “Rebel magistrate.” Fanning had Thompson take a message to acting Governor Alexander Martin. The message stated that if the Whigs did not cease their harassment of the Loyalists he would retaliate in kind with more executions.

Fanning learned from Thompson that some of the other Loyalist leaders, Archibald McDugald and Hector McNeil, had taken refuge in South Carolina. Fanning hoped for a peace in North Carolina and offered the Patriot authorities his terms for peace. He demanded that all Loyalists be allowed to return to their homes unmolested. He also wanted the Loyalists to be under no restriction to do anything against the Royal government and to not have to pay any taxes to support the war against the King. Several of the Patriot leaders were supportive of the peace and were tired of all the constant fighting. They took the terms to General Butler.

The killing went on while the negotiations were being settled. One of Fanning's men, Captain William Lindley, had quit the Loyalist militia and had headed into the Blue Ridge Mountains. Three of his former comrades followed him into the wilderness and hacked him to death with swords. Colonel Fanning found out about the murder and had two of the killers, William White and John Magaherty, hanged from the same tree limb. The third murderer escaped into the wilderness.

On January 11th Fanning was supposed to meet with a party of Whigs at Baalam Thompson's near the Wilcox Iron Works. Fanning was under a flag of truce to discuss his terms for peace but Captain Gholson and Robert Scoby were waiting in ambush for Fanning to ride by. Thompson warned Fanning and averted a disaster. After this

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Fanning did not trust the Whigs and no longer considered peace as an option.¹⁰

Atlantic Ocean, the Bahama Channel
7 January 1782

After determining that Charlestown was still under British control Commodore Alexander Gillon convened a council of his officers to decide where to go to next. The council decided to sail to Havana. The frigate *South Carolina* sailed towards Abaco and spotted a small fleet of five ships heading up the Bahama Channel. This was a convoy going from Jamaica to Europe loaded with sugar and lumber.

Gillon coerced the closest four brigantines to heave to and be boarded. Three of these ships were privateers and were armed but they were no match for the heavily armed frigate. The fifth ship, the *Nelly*, did not follow the example of the others and avoided the frigate. Gillon sent a jolly boat with Lieutenant John Mayrant and 24 marines disguised in British uniforms to demand permission to board. The captain of the *Nelly* threatened to fire on the boarding party, but she soon came within range of the *South Carolina* and had to surrender. Commodore Gillon was able to sail into Havana on January 12th with five prizes in tow.¹¹

New Cut, Johns Island, South Carolina **Skirmish**
Siege of Charlestown
12 – 15 January 1782

American Forces

Commanding Officer	Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens ¹²
Continental	Unknown number
Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee	
Lee's Legion	
Major James Hamilton	
Corps of Light Infantry	244
Unknown Captain	
North Carolina Light Infantry ¹³	150

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Unknown commander	
1 st Maryland Regiment ¹⁴	3 companies
Major James Hamilton ¹⁵	
2 nd Pennsylvania Provisional Battalion	2 companies
Captain Isaac Seely	
Captain Abraham George Claypoole	
South Carolina Militia	
Major Joseph Eggleston Johnson	Unknown number

British Forces

Royal Navy	
Armed Galley	1
“Gunboats”	2
Schooner	1

After Cornwallis surrendered in Yorktown the British only had troops in three Southern port towns, Savannah, Wilmington, and Charlestown. Wilmington was evacuated and Lieutenant Colonel Craig and his 82nd Regiment were moved to Charlestown. Craig was assigned the job of tending the British cattle on Johns Island and commanding the garrison of 500 troops on the island. Craig was housed on the eastern end of John’s Island at Gibbes’s Plantation. His troops were stationed at Fenwick Hall and some British dragoons were stationed four miles away.

When Cornwallis surrendered in Virginia the Continentals at Yorktown were moved into the Carolinas to reinforce Greene’s army. General St. Clair marched into South Carolina with a force of 2,000 Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware Continentals. They drove along with them 400 beef cattle and moved through mud up to their knees. They arrived at Round O on January 4th.

On January 8th some of the Pennsylvania and Maryland troops were assigned to Colonel John Laurens near Parker’s Ferry. Lieutenant John Tilden of the Pennsylvania Line wrote that they built “huts of rails which we cover with straw.” The huts were “very bad off for want of furniture.” On January 11th they received some relief when their tents arrived.

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Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee devised a plan with Laurens to steal the British cattle on Johns Island and then presented the idea to General Greene. On January 8th the General Assembly would convene for the first time since Charlestown fell. Since the capital was still in British hands the legislature would meet in Jacksonboro. Greene knew that the only threat to the Legislature was the British on John's Island. He decided to eliminate this threat with the surprise raid on John's Island.

Laurens and Lee would lead the Patriot expedition against John's Island and would be supported by the main army under Greene. Since the Patriots didn't have any boats they could only approach the island by a narrow canal to the Stono River called New Cut. The canal could only be crossed two times each month, shortly after midnight when "the depth of water was not more than waist high."

The British knew about the strategic value of New Cut and they placed a galley and two gunboats, four hundred yards apart, to guard the cut. The galleys had to remain apart so they could still stay afloat at low tide, and this left a gap that the Patriots could pass through. The tide gave them only small window to get in, strike the British, and get out.

Lee and Laurens decided to strike at John's Island on December 29th, but they learned that the British had stationed troops on James Island across the inlet from John's Island. To go ahead would be too risky and the operation was canceled until a later time. Two weeks later both commanders agreed to make another attempt.

On the cold and rainy night of January 12th Lee and Laurens rendezvoused at a point less than a mile from New Cut. Greene and the main army had broken camp the day before and marched towards John's Island in case the British tried to send reinforcements to assist Colonel Craig.

As Laurens waited he addressed his men, appealing to their honor and their patriotism. He issued instructions to his men on how to cross the waist deep water without getting their arms or ammunition wet. He told them that no one was "to fire or advance without orders, confusion only can arise from unconnected individual efforts."

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Laurens divided his force into two columns. Lee commanded one and Major James Hamilton of the Pennsylvania Line commanded the other. At one o'clock in the morning the crossing began. Lee sent Captain John Rudolph across first with the Legion Infantry. As they moved they could hear the British sentries in the boats call out "All's safe." Lee's column easily made the crossing onto John's Island.

The second column under Major Hamilton soon broke contact in the darkness and disappeared. Laurens searched for an hour and finally found Hamilton. Hamilton's guide had deserted him leaving his troops to find their way on their own. That hour they were lost had seemed like an eternity. When the tide came in Laurens had no choice but to call off the operation and recall Lee's troops who had made it on the island. On the march back across the cut Lee's men found themselves waist deep in "mud, weeds and water." Several soldiers became stuck in the mud and "were obliged to be pulled out."

On January 14th Greene had his men search the riverbank for a boat to ferry Laurens' troops back across the inlet to try again. To cover their withdrawal he brought up his cannon to fire on the galleys as they crossed. The artillery fired on the British vessels throughout the day, but the boats refused to withdraw. That night Craig evacuated the island and the British galleys withdrew from the cut.

On the 15th Laurens and a small force of cavalry and infantry crossed the Cut in a boat and found the remains of the British camp. It had been hurriedly abandoned. Laurens captured a few stragglers, but General Leslie had learned of Greene's raid and had moved all his men to James Island. Laurens did find a schooner that the British had loaded all their supplies onto. Laurens ordered his men to attack the schooner and his men fire a volley at her. This "threw the Crew into great confusion" almost making the schooner run aground. The British crew on the schooner stacked the baggage and used it as protection against the musket balls. They returned fire as their ship moved slowly away. Laurens had remarked, "If I had a three pounder...perhaps She might still be taken."

Craig's new position was at Perroneau's on James Island. Greene remarked, "We have got the territory but we missed the great objective of the enterprise." Greene withdrew to an encampment at

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Skirving's Plantation, six miles in front of Jacksonboro on the road to Charlestown. The expedition was a failure, but it did eliminate the threat to Jacksonboro.¹⁶

Dorchester, South Carolina
Siege of Charlestown
14 January 1782

Skirmish

On January 14th Major John Coffin and forty-five of his New York Volunteers surprised a party of the 3rd Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons led by Lieutenant John Kelty. Coffin captured Kelty and seven of his men.¹⁷

Deep River, North Carolina
11 February 1782

Skirmish

On the night of February 11th Colonel Fanning and Captain Gholson both encountered each other and attacked. The fight was short with no losses and both sides withdrew until morning. The next day Fanning made a truce with Gholson's force. He was still hoping for some peace with the Patriot forces. They decided that if Fanning's militia and the Whig government wanted to come to terms there would have to be no more "plundering, killing, or murdering" by either side.

Fanning sent a new list of demands for a peace treaty to General Butler. On March 9th Butler sent back a message to Fanning that he did not have the power to agree to his terms, but he would forward the demands to Governor Burke in Halifax. Burke had escaped from Charlestown and resumed his position as governor early in the year. Fanning continued to keep an uneasy peace until he had a chance to hear from the Governor.¹⁸

**Near the North Carolina Coast
February 1782**

The *Savage* was a British frigate bound from Savannah to New York. She encountered a North Carolina sloop bound for Rhode Island and quickly captured the ship. The Sloop carried a cargo of indigo, spirits of turpentine, pitch and tar.

Near the same location a Loyalist ship, the *Orphan's Frigate* spotted a sloop and a brigantine of 14 guns. Both the ships were from the West Indies. The *Orphan's Frigate* ran both the ships onto the shore. Shortly afterwards the *Orphan's Frigate* took a North Carolina sloop and unloaded her naval stores. The sloop was burned.¹⁹

**Durant's Plantation, Wambaw Creek,
Strawberry Ferry, South Carolina²⁰ Skirmish
Siege of Charlestown
24 February 1782**

American Forces

Commanding Officer	Colonel Archibald McDonald
South Carolina Continentals, State Troops and Militia	
Marion's Brigade of Partisans	500
Colonel Archibald McDonald	
Major John James	
Major William Benison	
Horry's South Carolina Regiment	
Captain John Carraway Smith	
Maham's Light Dragoons	
Colonel Lemuel Benton ²¹	
Colonel Lemuel Benton's Regiment ²²	

Casualties 10 killed, 8 wounded, 8 missing or captured

British Forces

Commanding Officer	Colonel Benjamin Thompson ²³
British Regulars	Unknown number

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Unknown commander	
30 th Regiment of Foot	
Unknown commander	
Royal Regiment of Artillery	
3 rd Battalion	
3-pounders	2
German Auxiliaries	
Unknown commander	
Hesse-Kassel Feld Jäger Korps	
Provincials	Unknown number
Major John Doyle	
Volunteers of Ireland	
Major Thomas Fraser	
South Carolina Royalists	
Captain George Dawkins	22
Captain John Saunders	
Queen's Rangers	
Captain Saunder's Troop of Light Dragoons	23
Captain Thomas Sanford	
British Legion ²⁴	
Captain Sanford's Troop	25
Major John Coffin	
New York Volunteers	
Major Coffin's Troop of Mounted Infantry	40
Captain Robert Gillies	
North Carolina Independent Dragoons	
South Carolina Loyalist Militia	
Captain Edward Fenwick	
South Carolina Light Dragoons	31
Major William Young	
Major Young's Mounted Militia (Rifle Hussars)	45
Colonel William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham	
Cunningham's Troop of Dragoons	
Captain March	
Independent Troop of Black Dragoons	30
<i>Total British Forces engaged</i>	700

Casualties

1 wounded

When the war began dying down in the Carolinas a feud erupted between two of Marion’s officers, Colonel Peter Horry and Hezekiah Maham. Maham had an independent Continental cavalry unit, but since he was assigned to Marion’s Brigade he was not able to operate independently.

Even though he was a Continental officer Marion had been elected to the South Carolina General Assembly as the senator for the Parish of St. John Berkeley. He left Horry in charge of his brigade while he was at the general assembly in Jacksonboro. Hezekiah Maham still considered his unit totally independent and would only take orders from General Greene, not Peter Horry.

On the advice of Marion, Horry moved the brigade to Wambaw Creek near the Santee River. The forage was more available there and it had better protection from the British troops.

Colonel Benjamin Thompson, a Loyalist from Massachusetts, learned that Marion was at the general assembly and that there was a breakdown in communications between Marion’s two colonels. Thompson decided to attack the partisans while their guard was down.

Thompson had put together a cavalry force that consisted of all the mounted units in Charlestown. He wrote that “the principal objects of the expedition were to practice the Cavalry in marching in Regular order in the Enemy's Country, and to accustom them to act with the mounted militia, who will be very useful in covering our flanks. They are all armed with rifles as well as Swords, and are perhaps the best marksmen in the world for shooting on horse back.”

Horry was on the other side of the Santee River visiting his plantation and had left Colonel Archibald McDonald in command while he was gone. Marion had told Horry that if he had to absent himself for any reason the command should go to Maham, however Maham was with Marion at the assembly.

On the morning of February 24th Colonel Thompson set out from Daniel’s Island and rode towards Marion’s camp. Colonel Lemuel Benton held a position at Durant’s Plantation. Benton’s men

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consisted of two regiments of “six month’s men” and were made up of “reformed Tories.” These men had come in under Governor Rutledge’s amnesty proposal.

Major William Benison commanded the scouts in St. Thomas’s and told Benton that the British were approaching his position. Benison proceeded to Colonel McDonald’s headquarters and also told him of the approaching enemy. Many of the officers there were eating dinner and most of the Patriot officers did not believe that the British were going to attack.

Colonel Benton was one of the few who did believe the reports and rode to Durant’s plantation only to encounter the advance of Thompson’s army. Major John Doyle did not wait for the rest of the cavalry force to arrive and charged Marion’s men at Wambaw Bridge. Major William Young wounded Benton as he was about to cut down Lieutenant Simon Jones, Thompson’s adjutant. Benton’s dragoons fled and raced across the Wambaw Bridge.

The stress was too much for the old bridge and it broke under the weight of men and horses. Many of Benton’s men tried swimming across and a few drowned. The men who had not fled across the bridge hid themselves in thickets. This saved them from capture and death because the British were giving no quarter. Major James had two British dragoons try to cut him down, but he kept them at a distance with his pistols. He leapt the twenty foot chasm in the bridge and rode to safety.

The rest of Marion’s Brigade fell back to Mrs. Tydiman’s Plantation in between Echaw and Wambaw. Thompson continued to raid the countryside and was able to capture and parole Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.²⁵

Beaufort, South Carolina
24 February 1782

Skirmish

Colonel Robert Barnwell and his St. Helena Volunteer Militia Company attempted to cross the Savannah River at Beaufort to burn the British stores in Georgia. He was attacked by the Beaufort Loyalist militia under the command of Major Andrew Deveaux and

driven back across the river. Barnwell lost six men killed and five captured.²⁶

Tydiman’s Plantation, South Carolina **Skirmish**
Siege of Charlestown
25 February 1782

American Forces

Commanding Officer	Brigadier General Francis Marion
South Carolina Continentals and State Troops	500
Brigadier General Francis Marion	
Marion’s Brigade of Partisans	
Colonel Peter Horry	
Horry’s South Carolina Regiment	
Lieutenant Jacob Smiser	
Captain John Carraway Smith	
Maham’s Light Dragoons	

Casualties 4 killed, 1 wounded, 6 captured

British Forces

Commanding Officer	Colonel Benjamin Thompson
British Regulars	
Unknown commander	
30 th Regiment of Foot	
Unknown commander	
Royal Regiment of Artillery	
3 rd Battalion	
	2 pieces
German Auxiliaries	
Unknown commander	
Hesse-Kassel Feld Jäger Korps	
Provincials	
Major John Doyle	
Volunteers of Ireland	
Major Thomas Fraser	
South Carolina Royalists	
Captain George Dawkins	

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Captain John Saunders	
Queen's Rangers	
Captain Thomas Sanford	
British Legion	
Major John Coffin	
New York Volunteers	
Captain Robert Gillies	
North Carolina Independent Dragoons	
South Carolina Loyalist Militia	
Captain Edward Fenwick	
South Carolina Light Dragoons	
Major William Young	
Young's Mounted Militia (Rifle Hussars)	
Captain James Robins	
Colonel William "Bloody Bill" Cunningham	
Cunningham's Troop of Dragoons	
Captain March	
Independent Troop of Black Dragoons	
<i>Total British Forces engaged</i>	700
<i>Casualties</i>	1 wounded

Once Marion learned of the attack against Wambaw Creek he left Jacksonboro with Colonel Hezekiah Maham and quickly rode back to his brigade. Marion took Maham's dragoons and covered thirty miles until he reached Mrs. Tydiman's Plantation on February 25th. At the plantation he set up camp while Maham continued on to his own plantation. Maham had left Captain John Carraway Smith in command of his dragoons in his absence.

Colonel Thompson had let his Loyalist infantry continue walking along the road with their stolen cattle. This gave the appearance to Marion's spies that this was merely a foraging expedition. Thompson in reality had taken his cavalry and mounted infantry and headed back towards Wambaw Bridge to strike Marion's camp a second time. Thompson knew that Marion would come to the camp after he had attacked the first time.

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Both sides were startled by the appearance of the each other's cavalry, but Thompson quickly recovered and swung his cavalry into a field and formed a line of battle. Marion ordered Captain Smith to charge the forming Loyalists. As Smith bore down on the enemy he was suddenly seized with panic and dashed into the woods on the right. His cavalry followed him, veering to the left to avoid a pond in their path. This threw the whole attack into disorder. The British saw this confusion and charged. Smith's dragoons broke and fled, some attempting to swim across the Santee. The British riflemen fired into the water, killing all they could see. Lieutenant Jacob Smiser of Horry's cavalry drowned trying to cross the river.

A half a mile away Marion rallied the broken horsemen, but Thompson never followed. Marion's men lost most of their arms and many of their horses. After the battle his regiment had only sixty dragoons left and Horry's dragoons were decimated. Thompson had killed twenty of Marion's men and took another twelve prisoner. In addition Thompson captured the officers' baggage, some horses, Marion's tent, and some canteens filled with rum. Marion reverted to the tactics that made him a successful partisan and withdrew his men into the woods. Thompson declined to attack him in the covered location. Around 1 p.m. Thompson rejoined his infantry and marched back to Charlestown. Captain Smith resigned over the controversy after this action.

This action finally settled the dispute between Maham and Horry. Governor Mathews ordered the two decimated regiments to be combined and Maham was placed in charge of the new regiment. Horry felt slighted and resigned. Marion consoled him by placing him in command of Georgetown.

Greene dispatched Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens to the support of Marion's Brigade. Marion retreated across the Santee River to rebuild his forces. Thompson's raid did allow the British to forage at will from the end of February until the beginning of April.²⁷

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