

# *A Battleground of Freedom*

## *South Carolina in the Fight for Independence*

By Ray Sigmon

*With the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution, it is only fitting that the motto from South Carolina's Bicentennial American Revolution celebration, "Battleground of Freedom," is being used again for this anniversary.*

*A*s one of the 13 original Colonies, South Carolina took a lead in the War for Independence and more than 200 battles and military engagements are recorded on its soil. During the early years of the Revolutionary War, 1775-76, South Carolina Patriots defeated a British fleet in Charleston harbor, quelled the Loyalist's (British sympathizers) resistance and crushed a British backed Cherokee uprising in the Backcountry. For the next two and a half years South Carolina remained relatively quiet. Backcountry farmers planted their crops and Charleston merchants sent ships loaded with rice, cotton and indigo to ports around the world. But this was to be the calm before the storm. When the war stalled in the Northern Colonies, the British shifted the focus of the war to the South in 1778.

Once the British captured Savannah and secured Georgia they turned their sights on Charleston. Following the siege of Charleston in early 1780, led by British Gen. Henry Clinton, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln surrendered his force of several thousand Continentals and militia in May rather than have the city destroyed. The British army, with the aid of Loyalists ended the remaining rebel resistance, and with the defeat of General Horatio Gates's Continental army at the Battle of Camden in August of that year, all appeared lost for the cause of independence. The British then established a string of outposts from Charleston into the interior to keep the rebellion in check and assure their supply lines.

Unfortunately for the British, their harsh rule and "no quarter" attitude in battle led to a re-emergence of American resistance in the Backcountry. By late 1780, the British had their hands full with the likes of Andrew Pickens, William Bratton, Francis Marion, William Hill and Thomas Sumter, to name a few Revolutionary leaders.

One by one, battles at Kings Mountain, Cowpens, Ninety Six and Eutaw Springs led to the collapse of British control of the interior. By 1782, the countryside had been liberated and the British and their supporters were trapped in Charleston surrounded by American forces. In December 1782, the British army departed Charleston along with 4,200 Loyalists. Now free and independent of British rule, South Carolina was indeed a "Battleground of Freedom."

Visit the state's battlefields, stroll the quaint streets of its Revolutionary-era villages and towns, and explore the secret hideouts of patriots like the Swamp Fox and the Gamecock.

### *Find out more...*

For information on these sites and events scheduled for the 225th celebration, call 800-968-5909 for a free Revolutionary War sites brochure or go to our website [www.southcarolinarevwar.com](http://www.southcarolinarevwar.com) to learn more on the fight for Independence in South Carolina and where we will be hosting special events and celebrations.