

The War for Independence History Tour Essay

Significant Events that Took Place

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WHAT WERE SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE?

THE CAPTURE OF SAVANNAH

BRITISH COMMANDER Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell

AMERICAN COMMANDER Robert Howe

The British arrived at the battle with 3100 men, and the Americans only having 850 men. The first assault the British made came when they attacked the Americans head on. But the plan changed when a slave told Campbell of a side trail that led into the right rear of the American's barracks.

Campbell told James Baird to take 350 light infantry and 250 New York loyalists to follow the slave through the swamp. Meanwhile, Campbell arranged the main body of troops as to give the impression that he was going to flank Howe's left. The continentals fell for the trap and a British officer in a tree waived his hat signaling Baird to charge, which he did. The Americans were taken completely by surprise, and attempted to retreat but were cut off.

Some of Howe's men managed to escape north but the rest were captured or bayoneted if they did not immediately surrender. In total the British took 453 prisoners and had 7 dead and 17 wounded. Howe lost an estimated 83 dead and 11 wounded. The British held Savannah for the remainder of the war, repelling a major French and American invasion attempt, and finally evacuating on July 11, 1782.

THE BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

BRITISH COMMANDER Patrick Ferguson

AMERICAN COMMANDERS James Johnson, John Sevier, William Campbell

Although the British outnumbered the Americans, this did not give them the advantage. Some people of the time saw the British army as better equipped, better trained, and having better leaders. But one thing they lacked was experienced in the wood, which would play a key part in this battle.

The majority of the American infantry in this battle were hunters, and many of them grew up in the woods having to defend themselves and others from Indian attacks, wild animals, and other dangers. This made them experienced woodsmen, which at the time beat most of the advantages the British originally had.

The battle started when the American's (at the bottom of Kings Mountain) dismounted and prepared to advance up the hill. Ferguson was right in estimating the enemy would never make it up the hill without getting shot to pieces. But he didn't take into account that his men had to expose themselves to shoot. He also didn't take into account he wasn't fighting regulars, he was fighting woodsmen who fought from tree to tree, not in columns or formation.

During the battle, Ferguson commanded his men with a whistle. Between that and his checkered hunting jacket over his uniform, he was quite noticeable. After nearly two hours of fighting, Ferguson suddenly fell from his horse with as many as eight bullets in his body. He was the only British man to die in the battle; all others were American, either loyalist or patriot.

In the end 225 loyalists were killed, and 163 wounded. 716 prisoners were taken by the Americans, who lost 28 patriots, with 68 wounded; among the patriot dead was Colonel James Williams of South Carolina.

THE BATTLE OF COWPENS

BRITISH COMMANDER Banistre Tarleton

AMERICAN COMMANDER Daniel Morgan

Following the American victory at Kings Mountain, patriot moral was high. But until now, the British had won most of the engagements between the two forces. The Americans needed another major victory if they were going to win the war.

Banistre Tarleton was in command of the British forces. Being young and enthusiastic for a victory, he pushed his men hard. Marching day and night, he had trapped the enemy against the Broad River. Morgan, hearing that Tarleton was hot on his trail, decided to fight and (rather than get caught with half his men across the river) positioned his men to defend their position.

At approximately 6:45 Tarleton advanced from the woods, and ordered his dragoons to attack the first line of skirmishers, who opened fire and dropped 15 dragoons. The dragoons panicked and retreated, whereupon Tarleton ordered an infantry charge, without studying the Americans deployment, or letting the rest of his infantry and cavalry make it out of the woods. The Americans kept firing as they withdrew to the second skirmish line, manned by Andrew Picketts men.

The British attacked the second line making it all the way to the militiamen, who (as ordered) fired two volleys into the enemy, of which 40% of the casualties being officers, were astonished and confused. They re-formed and continued to advance. Tarleton then ordered one of his officers named Ogilvie, to tack his dragoons to charge and finish off the retreating Americans. The men charged and were momentarily checked by musket fire, but continued. Picketts men fired there seconded volley and then filled around the American left to the rear as planned.

The British took the withdrawal of the first and second lines as a full blown retreat, and advanced head long at third and final lines of disciplined regulars which awaited them on the hill. The 71st Highlanders under command of Major Archibald MacArthur were ordered to flank the Americans right. John Eager Howard spotted the flanking maneuver and ordered the Virginia militiamen manning the American right flank to turn and face the Scots. However in the noise of battle Howard's order was misunderstood and the militiamen began to withdraw.

It was now 7:45 and the British had been fighting for an hour, and were tired and disorganized, but saw the militia withdrawing and believed the Americans were on the run. They charged and broke formation in a chaotic mass. Morgan ordered a volley. Howards men stopped there withdraw and

made an about-face. The Virginians fired into the British at less than thirty yards, with deadly effect, causing the British to lurch to a halt. John Eager Howard then shouted "charge bayonets!" the continentals did as ordered and mounted a bayonet charge.

Tarleton's men, faced with their second surprise, began to collapse, some surrendering, while others ran. Howard's men captured two cannons. Washington's Calvary came around the Americans right and hit the British on their right flank and rear. Pickens's militia, having re-formed, charged out from behind the hill, making a 360-degree turn around the Americans position, attacked the 71st Highlanders on the British left flank and rear.

Howard ordered the Virginia militia (who started the British charge by withdrawing) to hit the 71st Highlanders on the opposite side. The shock of the sudden charge and the appearance of the militiamen on the British left flank where Tarleton's exhausted men expected to see their own cavalry, proved too much for the British. Nearly half the British and loyalist fell over from "combat shock" wither they were hit or not. Their ability to fight was gone.

With Tarleton right flank and center line crumbling, they remained only a small part of the 71st Highlanders putting up a fight (though it was a losing one) Tarleton turned to his last remaining unit, the legion cavalry, and ordered them to charge, instead they fled the field. Tarleton clashed with Colonel Washington's cavalry, before retreating himself.

Morgan's men took 712 prisoners 200 of which were wounded. Tarleton had an 86% casualty rate and was all but wiped out. In conclusion, the Americans won a huge victory and destroyed all but a small amount of the force, and made a large step towards independence from Britain.

CONCLUSION

On Tuesday October 9, 1781, George Washington besieged the city of Yorktown Virginia with a force of 20600 men. On October 19, general Cornwallis surrender his forces to general Washington, ending the war, and making the colonies free from British tyranny forever.

There's something we can all take away from this war, however ugly and destructive war is. We must always be willing to fight for the freedom of our nation, even if it means giving our lives.

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13