

Volume

4

Number 014

Francis Marion - Swamp Fox - I

Lead: In 1780 the fleeting hopes of American Independence were kept alive by in the South by partisan guerrillas.

Intro.: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.

Content: From the opening of hostilities at Lexington and Concord in 1775 until signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the Revolution was America's longest war until the Vietnam conflict. While tension between Loyalist and Patriot sympathizers continued throughout the former colonies, active fighting for

the most part had shifted to the South after 1779. First Savannah then Charleston fell and British forces under Lord Cornwallis began a series of raids into the interior culminating in the Battle of Camden, South Carolina in August, 1780. Patriot forces under the command of General Horatio Gates suffered a disastrous defeat. After that there appeared almost nothing standing in the way of ultimate victory for the British commanders.

There were two problems with British strategy in the Revolution. One political, the other military. Politically, the mother country, failed recognize that as many half of the colonials did not support the Revolution. Had the

British tried harder to exploit the divisions in the colonies they might have won back the affection of Americans through negotiation and compromise? Instead they treated Americans as undisciplined children needing to be whipped back into order. This political arrogance then led to the second strategic mistake, this one military. The American forces were vastly outnumbered, mostly clothed in rags, had little ammunition or artillery, and were, with some notable exceptions, poorly led, but they weren't stupid. They were not going to stand up in pitched battle and be mowed down by the finest European troops money could buy. When they could not win, the Patriot forces

melted into the woods and returned to fight again. Next time: Banastre Tarleton meets his match in "that vile old fox," Francis Marion.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Heider, Karl. G. "The Gamecock, the Swamp fox, and the Wizard Owl: The Development of Good Form in an American Totemic Set." *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980): 9-15.

McCrary, Edward. *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780*. New York, NY: Russell and Russell, 1969.

Nadelhaft, Jerome Joshua. *The Disorders of War: The Revolution in South Carolina*. Orono, ME.: University of Maine at Orono Press, 1981.

Pancake, John S. *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.