

Document A- *Battle of Camden-Death of De Kalb*



BATTLE OF CAMDEN — DEATH OF DE KALB.

From the original Painting by Chappel in the possession of the Publisher.

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Document B- Letter from Jethro Sumner to Horatio Gates, July 20, 1780

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Transcription with edits for classroom use:

Sir, I arrived here on the 17th Instant and found our situation more distressing than I expected. Our whole force does not amount to one thousand men, and not more than half are fit for duty. I have ordered the Officers belonging to the State to use every possible exertion to collect the Recruits, but I fear little will be done, as there is neither Clothing nor Money to encourage them. The Enemy are daily gaining strength in South Carolina, and I have no doubt, but they will push into this State as soon as they get ready. The Militia are very slow in coming in; from appearances there is little probability of an Army being formed soon. I shall continue here until further orders and hope you will be able to give me some encouragement.

I wrote to General Caswell two days ago, requesting him to forward what Troops he had as soon as possible. I hope he may comply with my request. I am exceedingly anxious to be joined by some Continental Troops, as our present force cannot give the least opposition to the Enemy.

I am, Sir, With great respect and esteem, Your most obedient humble Servant,

Jethro Sumner

Document C- Letter from Thomas Sumter to Horatio Gates, August 10, 1780.

Transcription with edits for classroom use:

GEN. THOS. SUMTER TO MAJOR GEN. GATES.
Wateree Ferry, 10th August, 1780.

Dr. General:

Have just time to inform you that early this morning I took possession of all the pass ways over the Wateree River, five Miles below Camden. The enemy had Guards at many different places upon the river, all of which were evacuated last night or this morning, and the guards ordered into Camden, except those at the Wateree Ferry. The west side guard was surprised by my men, who killed seven & took about thirty prisoners... The boats are all upon the opposite side of the river; the ground upon our side is very bad. The enemy keeps up a constant fire, but I have received no damage yet. I intend to keep possession if I can until I am honored with your farther Commands...

The number of troops, Regulars I mean, do not exceed 1,200, and not as many as 1,000 of the militia who are generally sick and much dispirited. There is a reinforcement of 500 men said to be upon the way from town, will arrive in two days; As Soon as possible will give you a More particular account of What is passing.

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Humble. Servant,
THOS. SUMTER.

Document D- Letter from Francis Marion to Horatio Gates, August 29, 1780 (Excerpt)

Transcription with edits for classroom use:

I have destroyed all the boats at the ferries, from Murray's to the mouth of the Santee, and drove the guards placed at each ferry. Hearing of some prisoners, which the enemy were carrying down the Charlestown by Nelson's Ferry, I marched my party of seventy men and surprised them the 25th. Instant, at the Great Savannah, at Colonel Sumter's house, near Nelson's ferry - killed two, wounded five, and took prisoners of Captain of the 63d...The whole guard, as the captain informed me, consisted of forty regulars and twenty Tories.

Our loss was one man killed, and Captain Benson wounded slightly; and I have retaken one hundred and fifty soldiers of the Maryland (American) line, all of which I have brought to this place.---I heard of two other divisions with prisoners coming down, and could have taken them, but the report of our army being defeated struck such a damp on my men, with a report of the enemy's coming in my rear to cut off my retreat and take post here, where I shall use my utmost endeavors to collect some men, till I can hear from you. But, if I do not hear from you in a few days, I shall retreat to Cross-creek.

I have the honor to be
Frans. Marion

Document E- Alexander Hamilton to James Duane regarding the defeat of General Horatio Gates at the Battle of Camden, September 6, 1780

Transcription with edits for classroom use:

My Dear Sir

The letter accompanying this has lain by two or three days for want of an opportunity - I have heard since of Gates' defeat a very good comment on the necessity of changing our system - His passion for Militia I fancy will be a little cured; and he will cease to think them the best bulwark of American liberty - What think you of the conduct of this great man? I am his enemy personally for unjust and unprovoked attacks upon my character, therefore what I say of him ought to be received as from an enemy, and have no more weight than as it is consistent with fact and common sense - - - - But did ever anyone hear of such a disposition or such a flight? His best troops placed on the side strongest by nature, his worst on that weakest by nature, and his attack made with these - 'Tis impossible to give a more complete picture of military absurdity - It is equally against the maxims of war and common sense.

We see the consequence, his left run away and left his right uncovered - his right wing turned on the left has in all probability been cut off; though in truth the General seems to have known very little what became of his army - Had he placed his militia on his right supported by the Morass and his Continental troops on his left, where it seems he was most vulnerable - his right would have been more secure, and his left would have opposed the enemy better; and instead of going backward, when he ordered to attack, would have gone forward. - The reverse of what has happened might have happened - But was there ever an instance of a General running away as Gates has done from his whole army, and was there ever so precipitate a flight? One hundred and eighty miles in three days and a half. It does admirable credit to the activity of a man at his time of life - But it disgraces the General and the Soldier - I always believed him to be very far short of a Hector or Ulysses - All the world I think will begin to agree with me - But what will be done by Congress? Will he be changed or not? If he is changed, for God's sake overcome prejudice and send Greene - You know my opinion of him - I stake my reputation on the event, give him but fair play. But, above all things, let us have without delay a vigorous government, and a well-constituted army for the war.

Adieu My Dear Sir

A Hamilton Sepr. 6th. 80

Document F- Nathanael Greene to George Washington December 28th, 1780 (Excerpt)

Sir:

In my last dispatches of the 7th Instant, I informed your Excellency of my arrival at Camp, and of the condition and situation of the Army. I was apprehensive, on my first arrival, that the Country around Charlotte was too much exhausted to afford subsistence for the Army at that place for any considerable time.

Upon a little further enquiry I was fully convinced, and immediately dispatched Col. Kosciuzko to look out a position on the Peedee that would afford a healthy camp and provisions in plenty. His report was favorable, and I immediately put the army under marching orders; but the excessive rains, which continued eleven days, prevented our marching till the 20th Inst. We arrived here the 26th, having performed the march with incredible difficulty through a barren Country, with wagons and horses altogether unfit for service.

The probability that my taking this position would discourage the enemy from attempting to possess themselves of Cross Creek, which would have given them the command of the greatest part of the provisions in the lower country, was another inducement to come to this place. It is also a camp of repose, and no army ever wanted one more, the troops having utterly lost their discipline.

Before I left Charlotte I detached 300 of our best troops and Lt. Colonel Washington's Regiment of Light Dragoons, under the command of Genl. Morgan, with orders to take a position on the South side of the Catawba, near the fork of Broad river, where he was to be joined by 300 volunteers under Gen. Davidson and 4 or 500 S. Carolina and Georgia Militia under the command of Colonel Clark and Colonel Few.

With this party he is either to act upon the offensive or defensive, as occasion may warrant. This will strengthen the enemy in their limits and prevent their drawing their supplies from the upper country. It will also give spirits to the Inhabitants of that quarter, and enable them to form a number of small magazines in the rear of the troops, (which Genl. Morgan has particularly in charge,) that we may have something to subsist on should we be able to advance hereafter in force...

Document G- Nathanael Greene to George Washington December 28th, 1780 (Excerpt)

...Lord Cornwallis continues in the same position that he was when I wrote before, and Genl. Leslie arrived off Charlestown bar the 14th; But whether he has landed any of his troops I am not informed. The troops mentioned to have arrived in my former letter were only some recruits that came in with provision vessels, not exceeding 4 or 500 men.

Genl. Gates left the army the 10th and Genl. Smallwood the 19th Inst. The latter is gone to Maryland, with a view of forwarding the troops & supplies from that State, and to settle the matter with Congress respecting his right of promotion, being determined not to submit to the command of the Baron de Steuben, who is still in Virginia, very usefully employed in forming and forwarding the Troops from that State.

I have been obliged to send Major Neilson's corps of horse and Col. Armand's Legion to Virginia, both being unfit for duty for want of clothing and other equipment, and the difficulty of subsisting of them is much greater here than there. Before my arrival Genl. Gates made an attempt to employ part of Col. Armand's Legion, and fifteen of them deserted on the march from Hillsborough to Charlotte, which obliged him to recall them. I wish your Excellency's directions respecting this Corps, as they are totally deranged, and cannot be fit for service for some time. Two slight skirmishes have been fought with the enemy since my last, one by a party under Col Marion, upon the Santee, and the other by Col. Few, near Ninety six; about 20 or thirty were killed and wounded on each side.

I will not pain your Excellency with further accounts of the wants and sufferings of this army. But I am not without great apprehension of its entire dissolution unless the Commissary's and Quarter Masters' departments can be rendered more competent to the demands of the service. Nor is the clothing and hospital departments upon a better footing. Not a shilling in the pay chest, nor a prospect of any for months to come. This is really making bricks without straw. I am, with sentiments of the highest respect And esteem,

Your Excellency's most Obedient, Humble Servant,

NATH. GREENE.

Document H- Jethro Sumner to Nathanael Greene, February 25, 1781

Sir:

I received yours of the 18th instant the 21st. Immediately by Major Hawkins aide to Major General Caswell, I offered my assistance, and sent expresses to Lt. Col. Ashe and Major Murphie, who by the temporary arrangement of the officers of the North Carolina Line present in the State, were to take charge of the two of the Regiments to acquaint without delay that it was your wish that they join the militia Camp to render such assistance as may be in their power. Major Dixon and Major Armstrong, who are to take charge of the other two Regiments, Major Dixon is in your Camp, who is inspector General of the Militia and promised me to join that Camp upon a general rendezvous. Major Armstrong is with the forces from the district of Salisbury.

A large number of the other officers of this State are to my knowledge already in the militia camps. I, Sir, wait General Caswell's sentiments respecting myself. However, since I wrote him Genl. Jones, by Major Eaton, is desirous that I take charge of the Brigade of the district of Halifax, which I believe will amount to fifteen or eighteen hundred. I shall make it my business to see General Jones tomorrow and shall if I have the offer of that Brigade inform you. I am satisfied it will meet with a great majority among officers & soldiers of that Brigade. I mean as a continental officer who two years ago the militia generally were very averse to.

I am Sir, with due respect, your most Obedient Servant,

JETHRO SUMNER

Document I- Nathanael Greene to Jethro Sumner, April 19, 1781

Camp 4 Miles From Camden, April 19th, 1781.

Sir:

Your favor of the 8th instant was handed to me this morning. I shall leave it to your own discretion to fix the place of general rendezvous for the reception of the recruits, that which is secure from the enemy, and can best afford supplies for the men, will be the most proper and the most agreeable to me.

The great object is to have them collected, organized and equipped for the field as soon as possible, this I am persuaded you will pay every attention to. The present moment is big with importance to this country, and while the tide of sentiment is in our favor, it should be industriously improved.

If you cannot procure any money from the Treasury of North Carolina, I will advance two months' pay to those officers who are arranged for immediate service, but I could wish you to obtain it from the State, as the military chest is very Low.

I am Sir, your most Obedient, Very humble servant,

NATH. GREENE.

Document J- Francis Marion to Nathanael Greene, December 30, 1781

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that the enemy have moved down towards Georgetown. Their force consists of about 300 infantry and some cavalry.

I have detached Major Postell with a party to observe their motions and harass them as opportunity offers.

My men are in good spirits, but greatly in want of clothing. Many are almost naked, and I fear the service will suffer unless supplies can be sent soon.

I beg you will renew your application to the Board of War or the Governor for a supply of clothing for my corps.

I shall continue to watch the enemy and give you the earliest intelligence of their movements.

I have the honor to be, Your obedient servant,

Francis Marion

Document K- George Washington to Nathanael Greene, February 6, 1783

Newburgh Feby 6th 1783

My dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to inform you that your Packet for Governor Greene which came enclosed to me (in your private Letter of the 12th of December) was forwarded in an hour after it came to my hands by a Gentleman returning to Rhode Island (Welcome Arnold Esq.)—there can be no doubt therefore of its having got safe to the Governor.

It is with a pleasure which friendship only is susceptible of I congratulate you on the glorious end you have put to hostilities in the Southern States—the honor and advantages of it, I hope & trust you will live long to enjoy. when this hemisphere will be equally free is yet in the womb of time to discover—a little while however tis presumed, will disclose the determinations of the British senate with respect to Peace or war as it seems to be agreed on all hands that the present Premier (especially if he should find the opposition powerful) intends to submit the decision of these Matters to Parliament. The Speech, the Addresses—and Debates for which we are looking in every direction, will give a data from which the bright rays of the one; or gloomy prospect of the other may be discovered.

If Historiographers should be hardy enough to fill the page of History with the advantages that have been gained with unequal numbers (on the part of America) in the course of this contest, & attempt to relate the distressing circumstances under which they have been obtained, it is more than probable that Posterity will bestow on their labors the epithet & marks of fiction for it will not be believed that such a force as Great Britain has employed for eight years in this Country could be baffled in their plan of Subjugating it by numbers infinitely less—composed of Men often times half starved—always in Rags—without pay—& experiencing, at times, every Species of distress which human nature is capable of undergoing.

I intended to have wrote you a long letter on sundry matters but Major Burnett popped in unexpectedly, at a time when I was preparing for the Celebration of the day; and was just going to a review of the Troops, previous to the Foe de Joy—As he is impatient, from an apprehension of the Sleighing failing—and as he can give you the occurrences of this quarter more in detail than I have time to do, I will refer you to him. I cannot omit informing you however, that I let no opportunity slip to enquire after your Son George at Princetown, & that it is with pleasure I hear he enjoys good health, is a fine & promising boy.

Mrs. Washington joins me in most Affectionate regards, & best wishes for Mrs. Greene & yourself.

With great truth & sincerity & every sentiment of friendship, I am—Sir Your most obedient & Humble Servant.

Go: Washington