



Gen. Nathanael Greene

Guilford Courthouse

**NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
NORTH CAROLINA**

GUILFORD COURTHOUSE

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

United States Department of the Interior

J. A. Krug, *Secretary*

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, *Director*



Here, on March 15, 1781, Cornwallis won a victory over Greene's American forces but was so weakened as a result that the British soon afterward took the road to Yorktown and final surrender

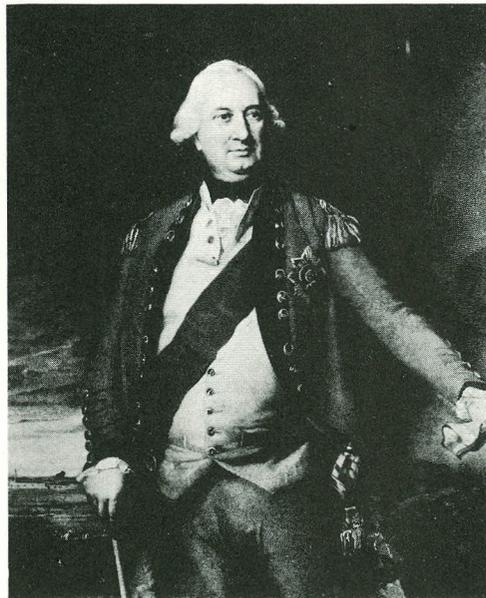
The campaign which culminated in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was itself a part of a larger campaign which began at Savannah, Ga., late in December 1778 and ended at Yorktown in October 1781. The long term plan of the British high command, which had been generally successful despite several minor reverses between its inauguration and the beginning of 1781, may be summarized as designed to overcome the rebellious colonies by the back door route. The southern colonies were to be successively subdued from the south toward the north. During 1779 and 1780 Georgia and South Carolina were occupied by British arms, and North Carolina was invaded early in the fall of the latter year, but the American victory at Kings Mountain in October 1780 forced Lord Cornwallis to abandon his northward march and to return to South Carolina where he established headquarters at Wynnboro.

Turn of the Tide

In December 1780 the tide of fortune turned. Gen. Nathanael Greene relieved Horatio Gates in command of the American forces in the South. His first efforts

were directed toward reinspiring his men and forcing the enemy to move. He divided his army, sending a strong detachment under Daniel Morgan to the Piedmont section of South Carolina in the vicinity of the present cities of Spartanburg and Greenville. The remainder he conducted to a position near the present town of Cheraw. Cornwallis at Wynn-

Lord Charles Cornwallis



Greene Monument

boro, now between the two American commanders, was forced to act. He dispatched Colonel Tarleton to drive Morgan to the northeast, while he, himself, planned to move directly northward to intercept the Americans.

Morgan severely defeated Tarleton at the Cowpens, west of Kings Mountain, and then began an immediate and precipitate retreat to the northeast. Cornwallis, with the main body of the British, delayed his movement from Wynnboro a day and thereby enabled Morgan to gain a slight lead. Greene, receiving news from his subordinate, set the troops under his command in motion toward Virginia and, with a few men, set out directly to join Morgan. For 23 days Cornwallis closely pursued the Americans. At one point the elements were against him. An overnight rise in the Yadkin River forced him to detour a considerable distance upstream to find a ford. The two wings of the American Army reunited at Guilford Court-

house just before the middle of February, and, continuing the retreat, crossed the Dan River into Virginia by means of boats that had previously been collected. Cornwallis, unable to pass this river barrier, gave up the chase and proceeded to Hillsboro, then the capital of North Carolina, where he remained for a few days to rest his men, gather food, and try to rally the Tories in that section to the royal standard. Not having much success in any of these ventures, toward the end of February he marched into the country west of Hillsboro.

Meantime, Greene rested his men in Virginia and collected supplies and reinforcements. About March 1 he recrossed the Dan and kept almost continuously on the move until the 14th when the last of his expected reinforcements had joined him. Then he marched directly to Guilford Courthouse to offer the battle that Cornwallis had so long sought. Cornwallis accepted the challenge.

The Battle of Guilford Courthouse

MARCH 15, 1781

The Americans were drawn up in three lines facing west. The first two lines spanned the New Garden Road on which the British were advancing, while the third line was entirely to the north of the road. With the exception of a few small fields and clearings, the entire area was heavily wooded. The first two lines were composed largely of raw, untrained, and poorly equipped militia, while the third line was made up of two small brigades of regular troops.

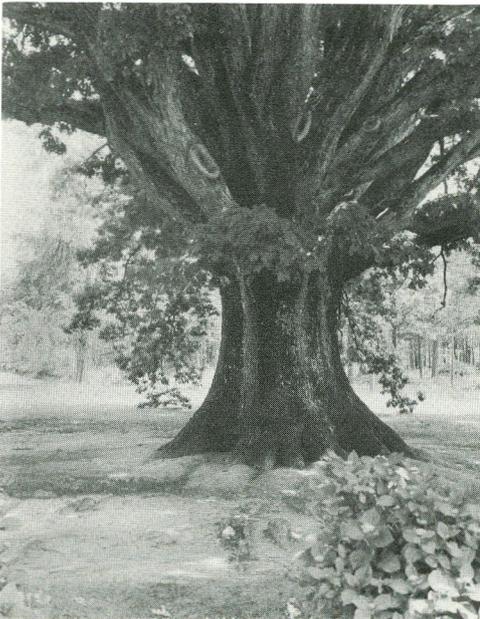
The British advanced from the west, forded a creek half a mile in front of the American position, and formed for the assault in line of battle, each wing provided with a small support with a general reserve established in the center. In the assault on the American first line the supports of both British wings were committed to the engagement and a part of

the reserve as well. This was necessary as the assailants were outflanked and the American line was strongest at its extremities. Early in the battle the American center broke and through the gap the British advanced against the second line. Here a somewhat stiffer resistance was encountered because of better trained officers and a few experienced men in the American ranks. This line in turn, however, was forced to retire, and the regulars in the third line were then engaged. In their first attempt on the regulars, the British were repulsed, but before they could renew the attack, Greene ordered a general retirement from the field, and thus conceded the victory to his adversary.

This victory, however, was the beginning of Cornwallis' downfall. He had begun the battle with about 2,000 veteran soldiers and in the engagement, which lasted only 2½ hours, he lost more than a quarter of the force he had engaged. This loss of men added to the natural attrition of a winter campaign through hostile country, a campaign which had drawn him far from his base, left Cornwallis in dire straits. His men were exhausted, his food short, his ammunition low. Rest, recuperation, and refitting were essential if the British force was to survive.

After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis conducted his men to Wilmington, N. C., where he could obtain supplies by ship from Charleston. Remaining at Wilmington a month, he marched thence to Southside Virginia, and several months later to Yorktown. Greene, on the contrary, was relatively unhurt at Guilford Courthouse where his adversary had been so crippled. His casualties were only half as many as the British and his initial force had been 4,400. He could renew the engagement at discretion, and he found that in losing a

The "Liberty Oak"





The Administration Building and Museum

battle he had won a campaign. North Carolina was safe, the British general plan was broken, Cornwallis could not take the offensive, and on proceeding to Virginia he left an active enemy in his rear. Thus the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was the culmination of the winter campaign of 1780-81 in the Carolinas, and a major step on the road to the decisive victory of the American Colonies and their Allies at Yorktown.

The Park

Situated in gently rolling country, Guilford Courthouse National Military Park contains approximately 148 acres which embrace the major portion of the battlefield and the site of the old Guilford Courthouse and county jail. In the park are a total of 29 monuments and markers, including a fine equestrian statue of Gen. Nathanael Greene. Buried in the area are the remains of 7 persons prominent in the history of the State of North Carolina.

Adjoining the national military park is a recreation park owned by the city of Greensboro in which they are facilities for picnics, swimming, boating, and a limited amount of fishing.

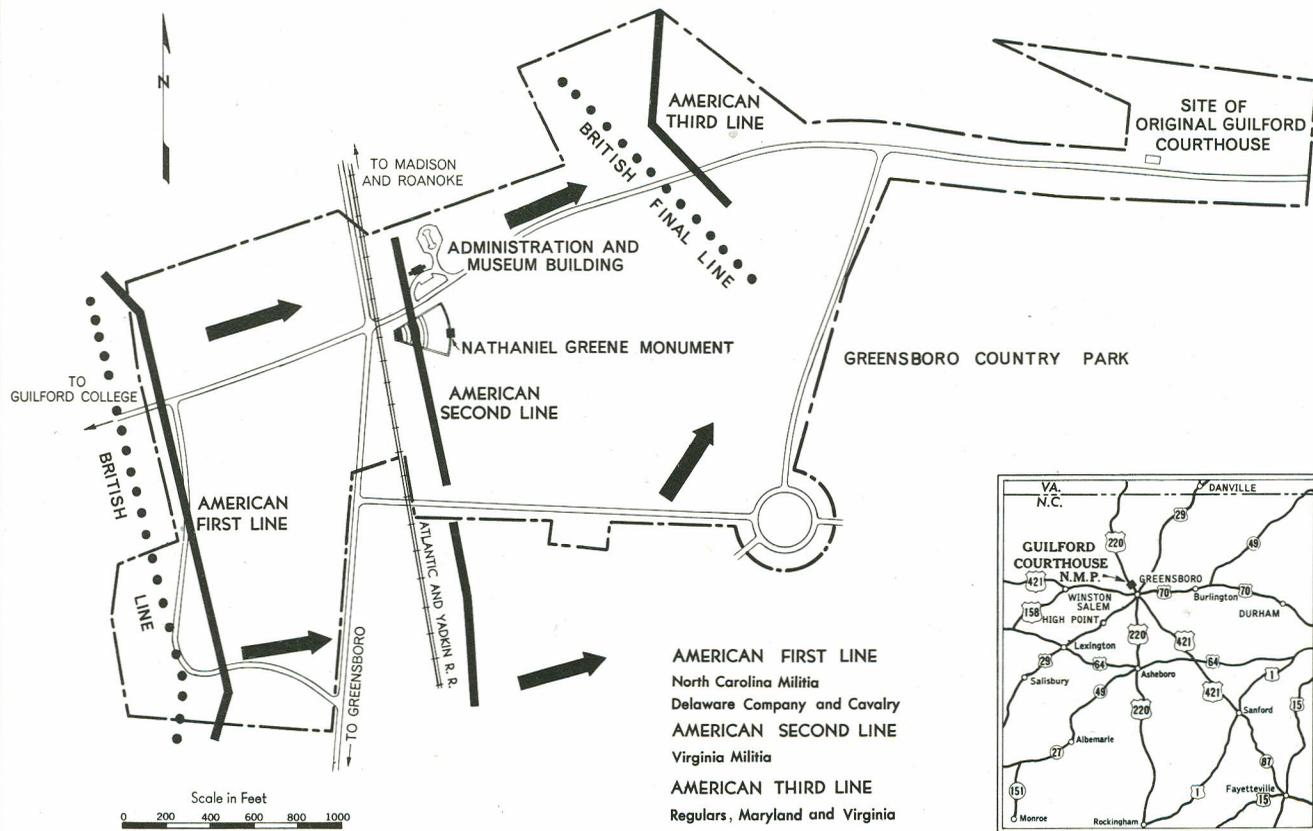
How to Reach the Park

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park lies 6 miles northwest of Greensboro, N. C., on U. S. Highway 220.

Administration

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The administration building, in which there is a small museum, is located immediately adjacent to the park entrance and here an attendant is on duty daily. All communications should be addressed to the Custodian, Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, Greensboro, N. C.

GUILFORD COURTHOUSE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK



AMERICAN FIRST LINE
 North Carolina Militia
 Delaware Company and Cavalry
 AMERICAN SECOND LINE
 Virginia Militia
 AMERICAN THIRD LINE
 Regulars, Maryland and Virginia

Drawn By R. M. Montesano NMP-GUI-7000 November 1946