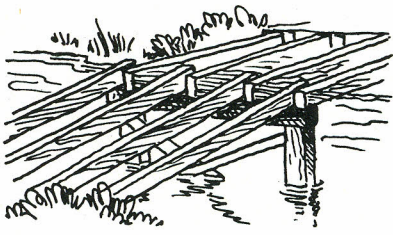


MOORES CREEK

National Military Park

NORTH CAROLINA



Moores Creek

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, J. A. Krug, *Secretary*
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Newton B. Drury, *Director*

"The Lexington and Concord of the South"

THE BATTLE of Moores Creek Bridge, February 27, 1776, was a complete victory for the Patriots over the Loyalist element of the population of North Carolina. Their success contributed much to the advancement of the Revolutionary cause in the South, and the Colony remained in the possession of the Patriots until the British invasion of 1780-81.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The growth in population of the western settlements of North Carolina brought in its wake several disturbances. The schism between the eastern and western parts, brought about by the domination of the Colony by the eastern counties, resulted in the violent encounter at Alamance Creek in 1771. There, the so-called Regulators were defeated. The defeated Westerners were placed under parole to the King through the Royal Governor, but the breach between the two groups widened.

Some elements among the settlers had not been amalgamated into the general populace by 1775. Chief of these was a large number of Scottish Highlanders, largely from clans McDonald (Isles) and McLeod. Under the leadership of Allan McDonald and his wife, Flora, these clans had settled in the central part of the Colony between 1765 and 1775. It was Flora McDonald who is given credit for having

saved the life of "Bonny Prince Charlie" when he became a fugitive after the battle of Culloden Moor.

The growth of opposition to Parliamentary taxation in 1775 forced Josiah Martin, Royal Governor, to take refuge on a ship in the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Considering the number of avowed Loyalists, the Scottish Highlanders who were loyal to the Crown, and the parole authority which he held over the Regulators, Governor Martin was certain he could muster at least 10,000 followers with whom he could maintain control of the Colony. On his appeal to the Crown for supplies, Martin was advised to assemble all Loyalists to cooperate with a strong British force under Clinton and Cornwallis, who were to arrive on the Cape Fear River in the latter part of February 1776.

Martin issued a call, in January 1776, for his supporters to assemble under Donald McDonald near Cross Creek (Fayetteville) and to arrive on the coast by the latter part of February. The Loyalists began to muster early in that month. As many as 3,000 had begun to assemble, but many of them returned to their homes when they found that no British troops had arrived. When the supporters of Martin were organized, about February 15, they consisted of approximately 700 Highlanders, 700 Loyalists, and 130 Regulators—a force of 1,500 to 1,600 men.

In the meantime, the Patriots had not been idle. Reaffirming their loyalty to the Crown, but their steadfast opposition to taxation by Parliament, they proceeded to rule the Colony in accord with their beliefs. Since Governor Martin was technically out of the Colony, they appointed a Provincial Council to rule in his stead. Upon the recommendation of the Continental Congress, two Continental regiments had been raised, and several battalions of minutemen and militia had been organized and partly disciplined. With the first news that the Loyalists were assembling at Cross Creek, the Continental troops, minutemen, and militia gathered at various points and marched to encircle them. Since Continental troops were in the field, Col. James Moore of the first regiment, was in command.

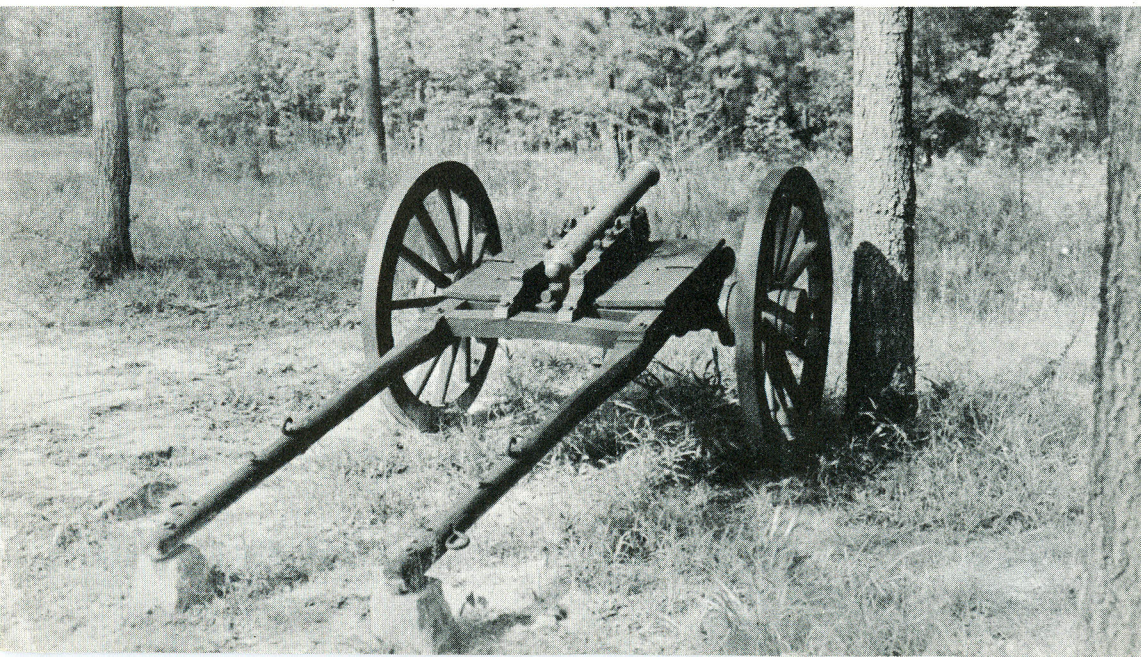
The plan of the Loyalists was to advance along the southwest side of the Cape Fear River to the coast, provision the British troops, and then cooperate with them in the conquest of the Colony. McDonald began his movement toward the coast on February 20. Blocked by Moore from his planned route, he marched eastward, crossed the Cape Fear River, and pro-

ceeded toward the Black River Road to Wilmington, along which he expected little opposition. Patriot forces from New Bern, under Col. Richard Caswell, were outmaneuvered at Corbett's Ferry on the Black River, and withdrew toward Moores Creek, 17 miles nearer Wilmington. Meanwhile, Col. Moore had ordered a concentration of the forces from the north and west at Cross Creek to prevent the retreat or reinforcement of the Loyalists. He dispatched Col. Alexander Lillington to join Caswell with all possible speed. Col. Moore then marched to follow or, if possible, to get ahead of the Loyalist force.

THE ENGAGEMENT AT MOORES CREEK

On February 26, 1776, Moore encamped half way between Wilmington and the Moores Creek Bridge with a force of about 1,000 men; Lillington camped on the east side of Moores Creek with about 150 men; Caswell camped on the west side of the Creek with about 800 men; and McDonald's Loyalists, 1,500 strong, camped 6 miles away. A messenger from the Loyalists'

Cannon on a galloper carriage



Scene in Moores Creek National Military Park. The monument to the heroic women of the American Revolution is in the background

camp reconnoitered Caswell's position and returned with the news that Caswell was on their side of the bridge in a position exposed to attack.

At a council of war it was decided to move forward at once with a party of 75 picked broadswordsmen in the lead. The advance was begun at 1 o'clock in the morning. About an hour before daybreak the party marched to Caswell's camp. They found the fires burning low and the camp deserted. During the night Caswell had abandoned his camp, leaving the campfires burning to deceive the Loyalists. The floor of the bridge over the Creek had been taken up and the girders greased. Around his new camp across the Creek, Caswell had thrown up a breastwork and posted artillery to cover the road and bridge. Here the Patriot force waited in the darkness. Believing that the Patriots had fled, the Loyalists pushed over the partly demolished bridge, but were met by a deadly fire as they approached the earthwork.

The leader of the Loyalists, Donald McDonald, was ill in camp at the time and was not present at the scene of the fight. The small advance party, under Capt. Donald McLeod and Capt. John Campbell, was practically annihilated, and the whole force was soon in retreat. The Patriots lost one man who was mortally wounded and died 4 days later.

Following this initial success, the Patriots captured or dispersed the entire body of Loyalists. Within 2 weeks they had captured most of the leaders, about 850 of the soldiers, and a large quantity of military supplies, including 1,500 muskets, 350 guns and shot bags, 150 swords and dirks, 2 valuable medicine chests, and about \$75,000 in gold. The leaders were imprisoned, some being sent out of the Colony. The soldiers were paroled to their homes.

The Patriot victory at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge prevented the Loyalists from gaining control of North Carolina and encouraged the Southern Delegates to the Continental

Congress in Philadelphia to declare for independence from England.

THE PARK

Moore's Creek National Military Park comprises 30 acres of land and was established by act of Congress approved June 2, 1926, when the area, previously a State park, was donated by the State of North Carolina to the United States.

The bridge site is appropriately marked. Original breastworks, with cannon of the type used by the Patriot troops, show where the victory was won. Several monuments and markers relate to the battle. The park is rich in plant life, the Venusflytrap being probably the most interesting.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Moore's Creek National Military Park is situated in Pender County, about 25 miles northwest of Wilmington, N. C., and is reached from

the south and north over U. S. No. 421 and N. C. Route 602. It is reached from the east and west over N. C. Routes 53 and 602.

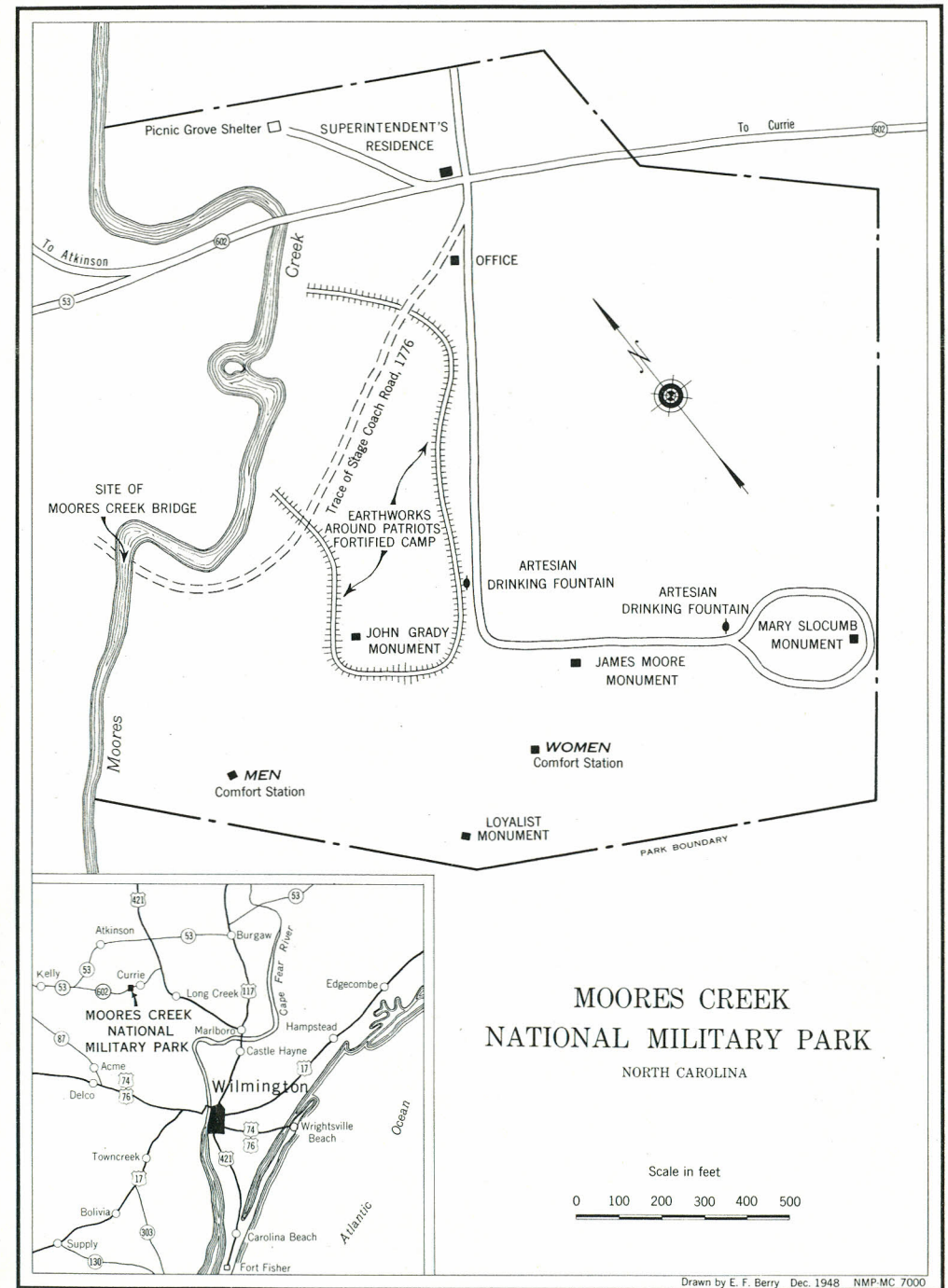
FACILITIES FOR VISITORS

The park is open to visitors every day from 8 a. m. to 5:30 p. m., during which time guide service is available without charge. Free informational literature is provided. Organizations and groups receive special services if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

ADMINISTRATION

Moore's Creek National Military Park is a part of the National Park System, owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications concerning the park should be addressed to the Superintendent, Moore's Creek National Military Park, Currie, N. C.

Remains of the earthworks in front of the Patriot camp



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Cover: *Site of Moore's Creek Bridge*