

Guilford Courthouse

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK • NORTH CAROLINA



On March 15, 1781, Britain's Earl Cornwallis won a costly victory over Gen. Nathanael Greene's American forces at Guilford Courthouse. So costly was this victory that the weakened British army soon marched off to Yorktown and final surrender.

In 1780, as the Revolution dragged into its fifth year, British troops seized Charleston. Already they occupied Savannah and much of Georgia. Now they would move into the Carolina interior, rally Loyalists to their standard, pacify the countryside, and then march into Virginia. Once they secured the southern colonies, the British could strike northward to crush the rebellion. From Charleston, Cornwallis' troops moved north to Guilford Courthouse, to find Green's forces awaiting them.

Stationing his American army in three separate lines, Greene ordered the first two—mostly

untrained North Carolina and Virginia militia—to fire on the battle-wise British army and fall back behind the trained regular Continental troops of the third and last line. Attacking this third line, the British drove off one American regiment. Then the veteran First Maryland mounted a bayonet charge, supported by Lt. Col. William Washington's cavalry. With the battle going against him, Cornwallis ordered his cannon to fire into the mixed American and British, thus halting the Continental counterattack.

The Americans withdrew, allowing the British to claim success. Yet the winner suffered so severely that Charles James Fox, a British statesman, declared, "Another such victory will ruin the British Army." Having lost a fourth of his army, Cornwallis withdrew to Wilmington, and from there went on to Yorktown and eventual surrender.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

In the visitor center, located at the site of the American Second Line, museum exhibits and an audiovisual program explain the battle. Groups can receive special services by making advance arrangements with the superintendent. A 40-page illustrated handbook about the Battle of Guilford Courthouse can be purchased at the park, or from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402, for 35 cents.

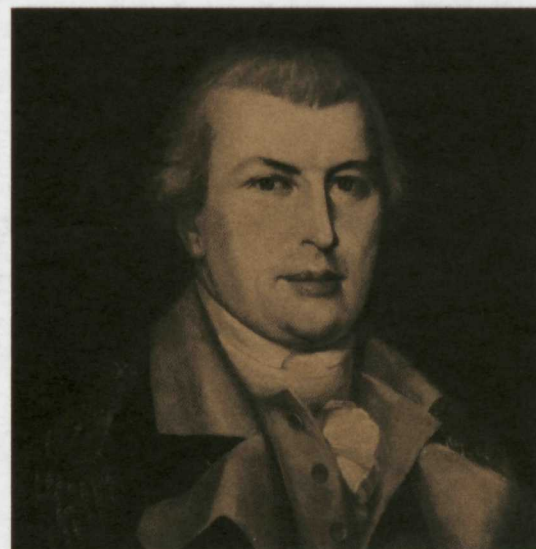
A 1/2-mile historical self-guiding walking trail leads from the visitor center to the American First Line area and to many of the monuments in the park. Several prominent historical figures are buried here, including William Hooper and John Penn, both North Carolina signers of the Declaration of Independence. A similar trail, .08 mile long, leads to the Third Line—scene of the fiercest action of the battle.

ADMINISTRATION

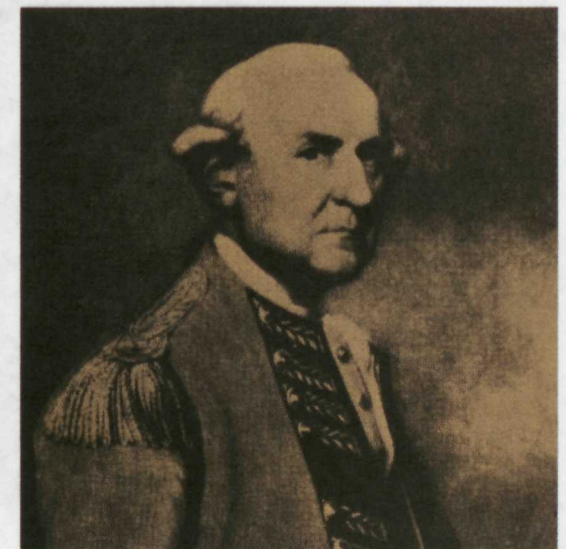
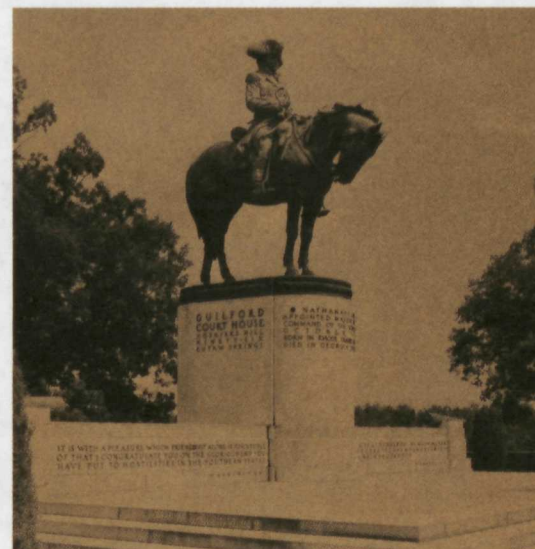
Guilford Courthouse National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 9334, Plaza Station, Greensboro, NC 27408, is in immediate charge.

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National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



Nathanael Greene



Lord Charles Cornwallis

