

Testimony of Douglas W. Bostick
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
June 15, 2021

First, allow me to offer my thanks for your kind invitation to testify before the Subcommittee for the legislative hearing on National Heritage Area bills. I would like to thank Congressman Clyburn for his leadership in sponsoring H.R. 1286 – Southern Campaign of the Revolution National Heritage Corridor Act of 2021.

The American Revolution is the story of the founding of our country. As we approach the 250th Anniversary of the War, this bill will provide support for interpretation and telling the stories of the Southern Campaign where America was forged.

By 1778, the Revolutionary War had been fought to a stalemate in the Northern colonies. The British command determined to transfer their efforts to the South where they felt that the large population of Loyalists would rise up and support their efforts to quell the rebellion.

Though the British were initially successful with the capture of Savannah and Charleston, by late summer 1780, American forces were successful in battles such as Kings Mountain. British Commander-in-Chief Sir Henry Clinton wrote that this battle was “the first link in a chain of evils that ended in the total loss of America.”

The proposed Heritage Corridor Act would preserve the stories and battlefields in the South that had a great impact on the eventual American victory in the Revolution. The war in the South was truly a civil war as Patriot and Loyalist militias both zealously defended their vision for the thirteen colonies.

The war in the Southern Campaigns offers an understanding of the diverse groups of people who fought and sacrificed for Liberty. The brutal war in the South touched the lives of all Carolinians.

In 2014, the National Park Service conducted a feasibility study for the Southern Campaign of the Revolution National Heritage Area Suitability. In the study, four Heritage Themes were identified:

1. The military events in the Carolinas substantially influenced the eventual American victory in the Revolution;

2. Political rivalries in both North Carolina and South Carolina were catalysts to the outbreak of the Revolution in the South and played an important role in the conduct of what was, in many ways, America's first civil war;
3. The brutal combat during the Revolution profoundly disrupted traditional ways of life in the Carolinas; and
4. The American victory in the Revolution presaged momentous changes for American Indians and African Americans in the Carolinas.

In the Southern Campaign, we can all find stories and people to which all Americans today can relate. The Southern Campaign is the story of all Carolinians, white and black, men and women, new immigrants and Native Americans who fought to earn Liberty. It is the story of Europeans like Kazimir Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette, who came to America, drawn by the concepts of Liberty and personal rights.

In 1777, Lafayette bought a sailing ship – the *Victory* – to make the two-month passage to America. He landed at Georgetown, South Carolina on June 13, 1777.

During his voyage, he wrote a love letter to his wife back in France. In the letter he wrote: “Whilst defending the liberty I adore, I shall enjoy perfect freedom myself: I but offer my service to that republic from motives of the purest kind, unmixed with ambition or private views; her happiness and my glory are my only incentives to the task. I hope that, for my sake, you will become a good American, for that feeling is worthy of every noble heart. The happiness of America is ultimately connected to the happiness of all mankind; she will become the safe and respected asylum of virtue, integrity, toleration, equality, and tranquil happiness.”

The Southern Campaign is the story of enslaved African Americans like Jim Capers, a South Carolina slave who became a true American hero. In 1775, he was a slave at a plantation near Bull's Bay in Christ Church Parish, north of Charleston. On June 15 of that year, Capers enlisted as a drum major in the South Carolina 4th Regiment, commanded by Francis Marion.

In the Revolutionary War, a regimental drummer used specific drumbeats to transmit orders and coordinate troop movements for the field commander. Drummers went into battle without a weapon and subjected himself to great peril. Jim Capers was an American hero by joining the cause of independence, even when he himself was a slave.

Capers fought in the Siege of Savannah, the Siege of Charles Town, and the battles

of St. Helena, Port Royal Island, Georgetown, Camden, Biggin Church, and Eutaw Springs. It was at the Battle of Eutaw Springs that he received four wounds: two on his face and one on his head by a sword, and one in his side by a musket ball. His last battle was at Yorktown, Virginia, where he was present for the surrender of Cornwallis.

Capers was discharged on October 1, 1782, having served for seven years, five and one-half months, and he was discharged as a free man of color. After the war, Capers moved to Alabama, seeking new opportunities “in the west.” He died in Pike County, Alabama on April 1, 1853, at the age of 110. On February 1, 2015, Jim Capers was recognized and honored with a marker at his grave, placed by the Alabama Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

William Collin was a young African American bugler serving with Colonel William Washington and the 3rd Continental Light Dragoons. At the Battle of Cowpens, Collin saved the life of Washington by firing a pistol at a British officer during a mounted sword fight. This courageous act is commemorated in an 1845 painting that hangs in the South Carolina State Capital.

The Southern Campaign is the story of John Thomas, a Welshman, and his wife, Jane Black Thomas, who moved to South Carolina from Pennsylvania in 1749. John became the commander of the local militia in the Upper Piedmont part of South Carolina. In 1775, he formed the Patriot Spartan Regiment and was elected Colonel. Serving with him were his three sons and several sons-in-law. Colonel Thomas was captured in June 1780 and imprisoned in the brick jail at Ninety Six, a key British outpost. While visiting her husband on July 11, Jane overheard a conversation between two Tory women in which they spoke of a surprise attack the next evening on the Patriot Spartan regiment at Cedar Spring.

That night, Jane Black Thomas rode a horse bare-back more than sixty miles over rough terrain to warn the Spartan Regiment. When the British arrived at Cedar Spring the next evening, it was they who were surprised. Cedar Spring became a Patriot victory owing to the spirit and courage of the intrepid Patriot – Jane Black Thomas.

The Southern Campaign is the story of Scottish immigrants like the Moultrie family. Scottish physician Dr. John Moultrie immigrated to Charleston seeking a better life. In 1730, John & Lucretia Moultrie had a son – William. He was educated as a planter but chose the life of a soldier in the Anglo-Cherokee War in 1761. In 1775, he was commissioned as a colonel of the 2nd South Carolina

Regiment. On June 28, 1776, Colonel Moultrie led a small force of 331 militia in an unfinished fort built of sand and palmetto logs to defeat the British fleet attempting to enter Charleston Harbor to force the surrender of the city.

Moultrie was captured when Major General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered Charleston to the British on May 12, 1780. He was eventually released in a prisoner exchange in 1782. After the war he was elected to the state legislature and served two terms as governor.

In his memoirs, Moultrie wrote of the conditions at the start of the Revolutionary War: “A rich and powerful nation, with numerous fleets, and experienced admirals sailing triumphant over the ocean; with large armies and able generals in many parts of the globe: This great nation we dared to oppose, without money; without arms; without ammunition; no generals; no armies; no admirals; and no fleets; this was our situation when the contest began...”

The Southern Campaign is the story of Johann von Robais, Baron de Kalb a French military officer who was sent to America in 1768 on a covert mission to determine the level of discontent of the American colonists. He returned in 1777 with his protégé Marquis de Lafayette to join the Continental Army. Given command of a division of Maryland and Delaware Continental troops, de Kalb joined General Horatio Gates for the 1780 Battle of Camden. When the American lines collapsed and Gates fled, de Kalb held the field trying to rally his Maryland and Delaware Continentals. Unfortunately, de Kalb would not survive. As he laid mortally wounded on the battlefield, he stated to a British Officer, “I die the death I always prayed for: the death of a soldier fighting for the rights of man.”

The Southern Campaign is the story of the Catawba Native American tribe that fought valiantly with the Patriots. The Catawba Indian Company of Rovers, commanded by Captain Samuel Boykin fought in the 1776 Battle of Sullivan’s Island and the 1779 Battle of Stono Ferry. Again, Catawbas, led by Native American General New River, fought in the important American victory at the Battle of Hanging Rock in 1780.

The Southern Campaign is the story of John Laurens, an American soldier, statesman, and an ardent abolitionist. Laurens was the son of Henry Laurens, president of the Continental Congress, 1777 – 1778. Henry Laurens was owner of one of the largest slave trading houses in North America. John Laurens served as aide-de-camp for General George Washington. While serving with Washington, he forged a close relationship with Alexander Hamilton and the Marquis de Lafayette.

Laurens promoted the idea of forming a brigade of slaves to support the American cause, though it was never approved. He returned to South Carolina in 1779 to serve in the Southern Campaign.

In Laurens' view, if "all men were created equal" then it was important to free those who were enslaved. Unfortunately, he was killed at the Battle of Tar Bluff in 1782 and America lost that voice of conscience. Major General Nathanael Greene, in announcing Laurens' death, wrote, "The army lost a brave officer and the public a worthy citizen."

The story about the American spirit in the Southern Campaign is uniquely encapsulated in a story about Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox. Marion and his militia were camped in a secret location on Snow's Island, South Carolina. The British commander in Georgetown made it known that he wanted to negotiate a prisoner exchange. A junior officer rode out to meet Marion's men. He was then blindfolded and taken to Marion's camp.

After the young British officer negotiated the exchange of prisoners with Marion, the Swamp Fox invited him to stay to share their meal. As he was escorted to a crude table with nothing but roasted sweet potatoes, the British officer remarked, "Surely sir, this is not what you eat." Marion responded, "Indeed it is and you are most fortunate because today we dug more sweet potatoes than normal." They shared the meal, and the British officer was blindfolded again and returned to Georgetown.

As he penned his report to the commanding Colonel, after detailing the prisoner exchange, the young officer noted, "I'd be remiss in my duties if I did not point out several observations during my meeting with the great Marion. He and his men live in the swamps. They have no uniforms and are clothed in rags. They dine on roots. And serve without pay – all for the sake of Liberty. What chance do we have against such men?"

The young officer was court-martialed but deserted to serve the rest of the war as a volunteer in Marion's brigade. The spirit of Francis Marion and his men epitomizes the story of the Southern Campaign. John Blake White, a South Carolina attorney and artist, painted the scene of the "Sweet Potato Dinner" in the mid-19th century. This painting today is in the collection of the United States Senate.

The passage of H.R. 1286 – Southern Campaign of the Revolution National Heritage Corridor Act of 2021 would preserve and help tell the unknown stories of the Revolutionary War in the South Campaign.