

**A MEMORIAL VOLUME OF THE
GUILFORD BATTLE GROUND
COMPANY, ORGANIZED MAY
6, 1887, AT GREENSBORO, N.C.**

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A memorial volume of the Guilford Battle Ground Company, organized May 6, 1887, at Greensboro, N.C. by Various

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CHAPTER I.

History of the Battle of Guilford Court House--Account of the Organization and Development of the Guilford Battle Ground Company and a Notice of its Celebrations. Monuments, Lake, Springs and Other Improvements.

Guilford County, North Carolina, was established out of the counties of Rowan and Orange in the year 1770. Its capitol was Guilford Court House, which was situated about six miles Northwest from the present city of Greensboro. In 1781 Guilford Court House was quite a small village, a mere hamlet of two or three hundred inhabitants. Researches fail to inform us of either a church or a school house in its limits. There was a Court House, a jail, a store or two and a coppersmith shop; the latter quite a prominent feature, as all the brandy and whiskey stills, for the county, were manufactured there. The most prominent personage of the village was one Colonel Hamilton, who owned fifty slaves. The Lindsays, the Whittingtons, Bevills and others lived there. There was no cemetery and their dead were buried at a burying ground about two miles East of the town.

There was one lawyer named McNairy who lived in the village. I can hear of no preacher or doctor as being among these primitive people. The neighborhood was Whig and it is said that one of their pastimes was to hang a tory or two when they needed something to enliven the town. The county jail was the common receptacle for captured tories so that victims for their diversion were generally on hand and not difficult to obtain.

A fine crop had been raised in the year 1780, and the plentifulness of provisions was one of the reasons that induced General Greene to adhere to this section of the State.

The battle of Guilford Court House was fought on Thursday, the 15th day of March, 1781. Lord Cornwallis, fresh from the conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, commanded the British Army and Major General Nathanael Greene commanded the American forces.

After a great deal of manœuvring, marching and countermarching, General Greene reached Guilford Court House on the day before the battle and Cornwallis, who was on Deep river, some fifteen miles distant to the West, recognizing the forward movement of Greene as a challenge to battle, immediately advanced to accept it.

The American Army consisted, as near as can be ascertained, of about 5,668 troops specified as follows:

North Carolina Militia.....	1,000
North Carolina Volunteers.....	700
Virginia Militia and Volunteers.....	2,253
Regulars of the Continental Army.....	1,715
	<hr/>
Total.....	*5,668

The British Army consisted of something over 2,000 veteran soldiers, disciplined for war, trained in battles on the Continent and in America, equipped with the best arms made in that day and led by as skilful and brave officers as ever fought under the British flag.

The American Army was arranged in three lines. The first line 1,000 strong were North Carolina Militia called out for six weeks service. Their left flank was "covered" by Colonel William Campbell's Command of Virginians and the North Carolina Volunteers under

*Schenck's *North Carolina 1780-81*, p. 372.

Major Joseph Winston and Martin Armstrong, with Lee's Legion to support them.

The right flank was "covered" by Kirkwood's Delawares, Lynch's Virginia Volunteers and supported by Colonel William Washington's Cavalry.

The second line, three hundred yards behind the first, was composed of Virginia Militia under Generals Lawson and Stevens.

The third line, about four hundred yards still further East, was composed of the Continental soldiers.

General Greene's idea was to cripple Cornwallis by means of the Militia and then to defeat and rout him with his regulars.

The North Carolina Militia were armed with their hunting rifles and shot guns, without bayonets of course, and with but little discipline. They were ordered by General Greene in person to fire two rounds at the enemy and retreat before the British Regulars could reach them with their bayonets. They obeyed this command, many of them remaining to fire the third round.* When the retreat began it soon became a disorderly rout.

Colonel Campbell's command was separated, in the onslaught, from the first line and after very sanguinary fighting was forced South one-half a mile.

The second line was in turn broken after a most stubborn resistance on the part of General Stevens' Virginia Brigade. The battle was waged with varying fortunes on the left flank where Washington, Kirkwood and Lynch long withstood, with sturdy valor, the charges of the Veteran Brigade of Colonel Webster. This "covering party" fell back in order on the right of the Continental line.

Colonel Webster after defeating the two first lines of

*Schenck's North Carolina 1780-81, p. 335.

Militia marched with confidence against the Continentals, but was repulsed with great slaughter by the Second Maryland Regiment under command of Colonel Gunby, and after he was wounded, under command of Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard. Colonel Webster received a wound in the knee, from a musket ball, of which he died on the retreat to Wilmington. The battle here raged fiercely but the Continental line being outnumbered finally retreated, but in perfect order, from the field. The fight between Campbell with his Virginia and North Carolina Volunteers on the one hand and the Hessians on the other continued on Greene's left until the Hessians were being slowly driven back along what was then known as the new Salisbury road, in the direction of Guilford Court House.

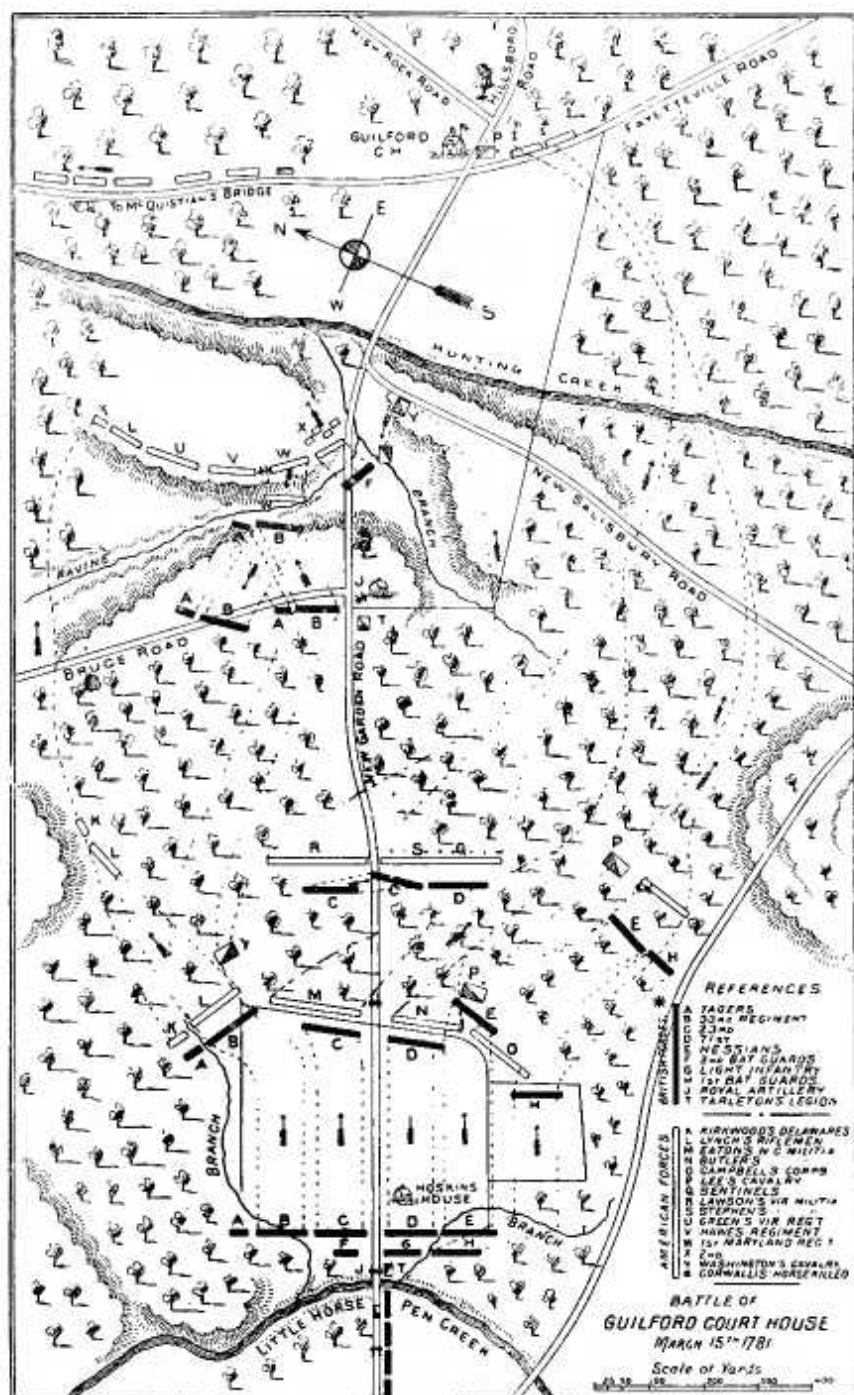
Greene having retreated and Colonel Lee having hurriedly left Campbell's flank without notice and without orders, Cornwallis dispatched Tarleton to attack Campbell and end the conflict.

Tarleton ordered the Hessians to fire simultaneously and under cover of the smoke of their muskets he charged Campbell with his cavalry and scattered this brave little band of heroes who never gave way until forsaken by Lee and overwhelmed by irresistible numbers.

No Spartan band ever fought with more fortitude or heroic valor than these Volunteers from North Carolina and Virginia, who were the *very last* to leave the field of battle on that eventful day.

Greene lost the field but gained the victory, for in thirty-six hours Cornwallis began and continued his hurried flight from the battle field to Wilmington with Greene in hot pursuit of him.

Cornwallis, discomfited, burthened with his wounded, out of provisions and medicines, reached the protection of his ships at Wilmington in a condition that warned



SITE OF THE MARYLAND MONUMENT.

him that he was not yet safe. Gathering his shattered forces he retreated into Virginia and on the 19th day of October, 1781, surrendered to General Washington, at Yorktown. The victory was won at Guilford Court House and independence assured, but the surrender was at Yorktown.

Without Guilford Court House there would have been no Yorktown. The fight for liberty began at Alamance on the 16th day of May, 1771, and was virtually ended at Guilford Court House the 15th day of March, 1781.

It is not intended in this Memorial Volume to give other than a brief account of this great and decisive battle of the Revolutionary War. If the reader is desirous of seeing a very full and detailed account of it, from a North Carolina standpoint, he can consult "NORTH CAROLINA 1780-'81," by David Schenck, of Greensboro, N. C.

The name of Guilford Court House was subsequently changed to Martinsville in honor of Governor Alexander Martin.

Rockingham was formed in 1785 from the Northern part of Guilford, and this left Martinsville far from the centre of the remaining part of the county. In the year 1809 the Court House was moved, by an Act of the Legislature, from Martinsville to Greensboro.

The Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions met at Martinsville on Monday, the 15th day of May, 1809, and on Thursday, the 18th, it adjourned to meet Friday, at 10 o'clock, at Greensboro, where the further proceedings of the Court were had.

This appears from the Clerk's Record. John Starrett, Jonathan Parker, Joseph D. Bannett, John Gullett, George Swain, John McAdoo and Ephraim Burrow, Esquires, constituted this august tribunal.

Since that time Martinsville has sunk into gradual