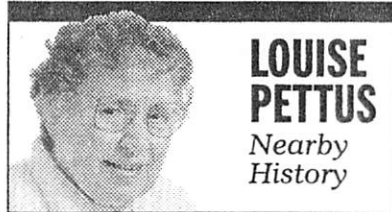


Outnumbered Americans win battle of Hanging Rock

Charleston fell into British hands in May 1780. Within weeks, Cornwallis' army had spread over South Carolina, setting up stations at major towns, such as Camden. Each station had outposts whose role was to intimidate the locals and disrupt any attempts of the Patriots to organize.

One British outpost was in present-day Lancaster county south of Heath Springs, about a mile-and-a-half from a place known as Hanging Rock. It was well-fortified with about 1,400 British troops, including the 500-man crack Prince of Wales Regiment of the regular army, led by Major Carden. Tarleton's Legion with its Irish Volunteers and two N.C. Loyalist companies were also present.

The Americans were under Gen. Thomas Sumter, commanding troops made up of Maj. Richard Winn's Fairfield regiment, Col. Edward Lacey's Chester regiment, Col. William Hill's York regiment and Maj. William Richardson Davie of the Waxhaws of Lancaster County with Col. Robert Irwin's troop of horse of Mecklenburg County, N.C.



The Americans had gathered at Landsford, the usual meeting place for upcountry militia leaders.

The British had the advantage of 1,400 men to Sumter's 600 (all militiamen). The British also had the advantage of fortifications and cannons. The Americans had no artillery.

The Americans fought furiously. Still, there were so many disadvantages that they would have lost if Major Carden had not lost his nerve. In the middle of battle, he resigned his command to Col. John Rousselet of Tarleton's Legion.

Lack of ammunition made it impossible for Sumter to completely knock out the British. The battle raged for three hours without intermission. Men fainted from the heat and thirst.

At the end, the British had lost 192 soldiers; the rebels had 12 killed and 41 wounded. Col. Hill was wounded. His arm was still in a sling at Kings Mountain on Oct. 7th. Captain McClure of Chester was mortally wounded. Major Winn of Fairfield was wounded.

Davie's forces, the cream of the American forces, were terribly cut up. Observing it all was 13-year-old Andrew Jackson, who later said he modeled his own fighting style after the brave men of Hanging Rock and that he would have followed William Richardson Davie to his death.

There were a number of other boys still in their teens involved in the battle. Andy Jackson's brother Robert, 16, was in the battle. Three Gaston teen-agers, Robert, Ebenezer and David, were killed. Joseph Gaston of Chester, 16, was seriously wounded and was one of those taken to Waxhaw church. His aunt and sisters came to take care of him.

Maj. Robert Crawford of the Waxhaws had two young sons and three nephews with him, all of them mere lads. James Crawford,

Jr. was killed.

It should have been a total American victory but the militia was raw, untrained and excitable — and very thirsty. As J.E. Cousar of Lancaster observed, "Some of Father Archibald's buddies found some rum in the British camp and became so drunk that it was necessary prematurely to start the march back to the base camp at Waxhaw." In other words, the drunken Patriots were in no condition to take prisoners and let the remainder of the British army retreat to Camden.

General Sumter attempted to put the best face on it and called to his troops, "Boys, it is not good to pursue a victory too far." Carrying their wounded loot, and the drunk too weak to walk, the army filed off.

The British had enough strength to cheer for King George but sent a flag to arrange for the burying of their dead and treated to Camden.

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