



True for the Cause of Liberty: The Second Spartan Regiment in the American Revolution

Oscar Gilbert, Catherine Gilbert

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Following their defeat at Saratoga in upstate New York in 1777, the British decided to implement a Southern Strategy against the American insurgents, a plan to “roll up” the rebellious colonies from Georgia through the Carolinas to Virginia. Instead, they triggered a savage partisan war of raids, ambushes, assassinations, and large pitched battles that rivaled any fought in the northern colonies.

Untrained Patriot militiamen?occasionally stiffened by contingents of the Continental Line?were pitted against Britain’s Cherokee and Creek allies, and Loyalist militia and British regulars led by General Cornwallis and his two ablest subordinates, Patrick Ferguson and the ruthless Banastre “Bloody Ban” Tarleton.

In October 1780 the Loyalist militia was virtually destroyed at King’s Mountain, the battle that Lord Clinton, the British commander in Chief, said was “the first link in a chain of events that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America.” Other defeats at Blackstock’s Farm and Cowpens, and a Pyrrhic victory at Guilford Courthouse, gutted the British Southern Army and drove Cornwallis north to encirclement and surrender at Yorktown.


This study uses battlefield terrain analysis and the words of the officers and common soldiers, from pension records and little-known interviews, to bring to life the crucial role of one militia regiment?the Second Spartans of South Carolina--that fought in virtually every action of the vicious back-country war that decided the fate of America. Or as one private in the Second Spartans said, expressing admiration for his colonel: “. . . a few Brave Men stood true for the cause of liberty.”

REVIEWS

... The Gilberts are precise in relating even the smallest of skirmishes in various locations throughout the South. So detailed is their tracing of the Second Spartan Regiment that I was able to learn about some small-scale engagements that took place near my childhood town of Lake Norman, North Carolina that I had known nothing about. ... well-written, ... a serious book for those with a serious interest in the southern campaigns of the Revolutionary War... It is meticulously researched, drawn heavily from interviews, letters, diary entries, and memoirs. For serious scholars of the Revolutionary War, the research alone is exciting. True for the Cause of Liberty is a valuable contribution. It is a solid volume, and is recommended for those interested in the Southern Theater of the Revolutionary War. Many thanks to the Gilberts for shedding new light on the role of the Second Spartan Regiment.

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