



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

*Oscar E. Gilbert, Catherine R. 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.”

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