

# Chapter 12

## Georgia in the American Revolution

### Chapter Preview

#### TERMS

neutral, faction, radical, conservative, siege

#### PEOPLE

Lachlan McIntosh, Florida Rangers, George Galphin, Andrew Pickens, John Dooly, Elijah Clarke, John Wereat, William Few, Nancy Hart

#### PLACES

Hutchinson Island, Fort Morris, Kettle Creek, Brier Creek

General Nathanael Greene commanded the Continental Army in the South in the final phase of the Revolutionary War. The grateful citizens of Georgia rewarded him with a gift of the Mulberry Grove plantation near Savannah, where he lived until his death in 1786. A few years later, while a guest at Mulberry Grove, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin.







**W**hen the fighting began, the British expected a quick and easy victory. The British had an army of professional soldiers and trained soldiers hired from German states such as Hesse. They also had a large and experienced navy. The colonists, on the other hand, would have to fight with citizen-soldiers, who were farmers and craftsmen. Some had had military experience in the French and Indian War, but many had been too young to fight in that earlier conflict. The British hoped that a large show of force would convince the colonists that fighting was not a good idea. They planned to concentrate their efforts in the North, which had been more rebellious than the South. After taking New York, British General William Howe planned to separate New England from the other colonies.

At first, this strategy was quite successful. After humiliating losses in New York, General George Washington wrote to his brother that he feared “the game is pretty near up.” Victories in Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey, helped lift American spirits. But it was only after the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 that American fortunes began to change. In 1778, the French made an alliance with the Americans, and British strategy changed. Believing that there were more Loyalists in the South, the British brought their forces to the rebellious southern colonies. In December 1778, they captured Savannah. Although the southern cities of Savannah and Charleston could be taken, gaining control of the vast southern backcountry proved too difficult.

For Georgia, the American Revolution was mainly a civil war between those loyal to Great Britain and those supporting independence. They raided each other’s farms and plantations, fought each other in small actions, and sometimes attacked each other’s families. US General Nathanael Greene said they fought each other “with little less than savage fury.” Many Georgians changed sides during the war, depending on who controlled the area where they lived. Only when the British army came to Georgia did the war have more organized campaigns. Georgia Patriots were less successful because they had conflicts with each other. In the end, however, Georgia was able to free itself of British control with the help of the United States Continental Army.



# Section 1

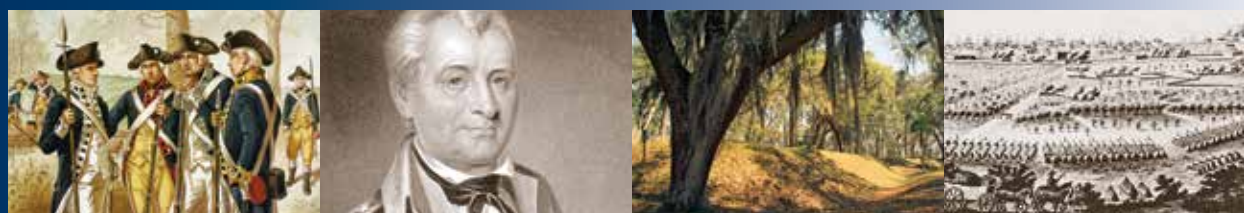
## Georgia in the Early Days of the Revolution

**As you read, look for**

- the early fighting in Georgia,
- the new government established by Georgia,
- terms: **neutral, faction, radical, conservative.**

Although fighting had begun in Massachusetts in April 1775, months went by before there was any action in Georgia. In January 1776, a fleet of British navy vessels sailed to the mouth of the Savannah River. The British wanted to buy goods, mainly rice, for their troops on duty in the northern colonies. The Patriots who controlled Savannah thought the British were there to invade Georgia and put a stop to the resistance. The Council of Safety, which had taken charge, arrested Governor James Wright, the members of

**Figure 22**  
**Timeline:**  
**1775 to 1782**



**1776**  
Battle of the Rice Boats; Rules and Regulations of 1776; First invasion of Florida

**1777**  
Second invasion of Florida; new constitution written

**1778**  
Third invasion of Florida; fall of Savannah

**1779**  
Fall of Sunbury, Augusta; Battles at Kettle Creek, Brier Creek; siege of Savannah

**1780**  
First battle for Augusta

**1781**  
Patriots retook Augusta

**1782**  
Patriots retook Savannah

**1775**

**1776**

**1777**

**1778**

**1779**

**1780**

**1781**

**1782**

**1775**  
Battles at Lexington and Concord

**1776**  
Declaration of Independence written

**1778**  
France recognized the independence of the United States

**1780**  
Battles at Camden, Kings Mountain

**1781**  
Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown

his Governor's Council, and other royal officials. They placed them on parole (a conditional release) with orders not to communicate with the Royal Navy ships downriver.

Georgia's Patriots began to prepare to fight if necessary. As in other colonies, Georgia developed two groups in its military. A main part of the Patriot defense would be the militia, Georgia citizen-soldiers who would be paid by the Georgia Patriot government. The Continental Congress had also given approval for Georgia to raise a battalion of over seven hundred men and officers called *Continental troops*; they would be paid by the Continental Congress. Men from other colonies could join the Georgia Continental troops, which were under the command of Colonel Lachlan McIntosh of Darien in St. Andrew's Parish. His lieutenant colonel was Samuel Elbert, and the major was Joseph Habersham. Eventually other battalions were allowed, forming a brigade, and McIntosh was promoted to brigadier general.

## Battle of the Rice Boats

In February 1776, more British ships with troops arrived. On February 12, Governor Wright with three of his children, several members of his Council, and other royal officials escaped to those ships. Other Loyalists also began leaving Georgia, some fleeing south to East Florida, a colony that had remained loyal.

The British naval commander tried to convince the Georgia Patriots that all he wanted was supplies, not a fight. When they refused to believe him, the commander decided to seize the merchant ships that were already loaded with rice and docked at Hutchinson Island (in the Savannah River across from the main bluff of the town). On March 1, as the commander moved his ships up the river closer to Savannah, the Patriots were sure he was coming to capture them. Colonel McIntosh sent troops to places he thought the British might try to land.

On March 2 and 3, the British, instead of coming directly to the rice boats, sailed to the back side of Hutchinson Island and landed men. Those men marched across to the other side of the island and got aboard the rice boats. When the Patriots sent a few men to the rice boats to take the sails so the boats would not be able to leave, they were captured by the British soldiers already there. Patriot riflemen went into the river to shoot at the British on the boats. The first shots of the Revolution in Georgia had been fired.



**Above:** The Continental Congress gave Georgia approval to raise a battalion of Continental troops, with their distinctive dark blue uniforms. In contrast, the British wore red coats.

## Something Extra!

The Battle of the Rice Boats is also called the Battle of Yamacraw Bluff.



**Above:** Archibald Bulloch was the first president of the Council of Safety in the brief period of statehood before Georgia wrote its first constitution in 1777. As president, he was also commander-in-chief of the state militia.

That night, the Patriots set two boats on fire, cut them loose, and sent them toward the rice boats. They hoped the two boats would set many of the rice boats on fire. Only two caught fire, and people on shore watched them burn. The British were able to sail the other boats down the river, unload the rice onto their ships, and sail away. With them was Governor Wright and most of the royal government of Georgia. This March 2-3 “Battle of the Rice Boats” was over. The Patriots thought they had saved Savannah. Georgia was now in the hands of the revolutionaries.

## Establishing a State Government

With the royal government gone, the Patriots wanted a government that could run Georgia and keep law and order. In April 1776, the provincial congress wrote a temporary constitution called “Rules and Regulations of 1776.” It made the provincial congress the official legislature and gave it most of the governmental power. The executive branch was the Council of Safety and its president, who were both chosen by the provincial congress. The judicial branch had a court with a chief justice and two assistants. Like the executive branch, all members of the judiciary were chosen by the provincial congress. This temporary constitution said that all current Georgia laws would remain in

effect. The new government began in May. Archibald Bulloch became the first president of the council, which also made him the commander-in-chief of the Georgia militia.

On August 8, a copy of the Declaration of Independence arrived in Georgia, where President Bulloch read it to the Council of Safety. On August 10, Thomas Jefferson’s inspiring words rang out in three locations in Savannah as they did in towns all over the colonies. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” After listening to the list of wrongs committed against the colonists by King George III, the citizens heard that “these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States.”

From the time the British left in March 1776 until British troops returned in December 1778, the revolution in Georgia was basically a civil war fought among its own citizens. Patriots and Loyalists fought each other. With the Patriots in control of the government, many Loyalist men went across the border into Florida, which was still under British rule. These Loyalists left their wives, children, and slaves on their Georgia farms and plantations. From Florida, the Loyalists raided southern Georgia, attacking Patriot farms and stealing Patriot property. Thomas Brown, who had been badly treated by the Patriots in Augusta, formed a Loyalist military unit known as the Florida Rangers. They were particularly effective in these raids. But while Loyalists were harassing Patriots in southern Georgia, Patriots raided the homes of Loyalists in the backcountry.



## Native Americans and the War

One of the major issues in Georgia throughout the war involved the American Indians, who were caught between the warring whites whose disagreements they did not entirely understand. The British Commissioner to the Indians John Stuart was also very popular with the Native Americans. Most of the traders who had worked and lived with the Indians became Loyalists. Thomas Brown urged the British government to make allies of the Indians and get them to fight in the war on the side of the British.

One major trader had not become a Loyalist: George Galphin. He had a trading post on the Ogeechee River and a plantation at Silver Bluff on the Savannah River in South Carolina downriver from Augusta. Galphin worked hard to get the Indians to remain **neutral** (to not take sides). His task was made harder by backcountry settlers who did not like the Indians and sometimes attacked them. When a Creek or Cherokee was killed, that person's tribe often killed an American in revenge. As a result, the cycle of killing often resulted in many deaths.

Keeping the Indians neutral was also difficult because the Patriots quickly ran out of presents to give them. Those had always been supplied by the British government. Some of the gunpowder taken by the Patriots from the *Philippa* had been given to the Creek, but a regular giving of presents was not possible. In the end, most, but not all, Indians who fought sided with the British, who wanted to keep the trade going.

## Florida and the War in Georgia

Georgia Patriots wanted to fight for the Revolutionary cause. They thought that invading British Florida and possibly capturing the fort at St. Augustine would not only help protect Georgia, but would also help the war for independence. Preparation began after the commander of all the southern Continental troops, Major General Charles Lee, agreed to an expedition into Florida.

The first attempt occurred in August 1776 under the command of Colonel Lachlan McIntosh. While the August invasion broke up several settlements, the Georgians wanted a larger expedition and, against the advice of General Lee, invaded in September. That did not go well; most troops never got out of Georgia. In spite of that failure, most Georgians wanted to try again in 1777 to bring some security to the southern part of the state. Georgia Governor and Commander-in-Chief Button Gwinnett and Georgia Continental Commander General McIntosh did not agree to this plan. The second expedition was also a failure, and Florida raids into Georgia began again.



**Above: Colonel Lachlan McIntosh was commander of the Georgia battalion of the Continental Army and was responsible for the defense of Savannah in the Battle of the Rice Boats, the first Revolutionary War battle in Georgia.**



**Above:** Lachlan McIntosh and Button Gwinnett became embroiled in a conflict over leadership of the Georgia troops that escalated until an insult caused Gwinnett to challenge McIntosh to a duel. Button Gwinnett received a fatal wound and died shortly thereafter.

Gwinnett and McIntosh blamed each other for the failure of the Florida plan and got into several disputes. When McIntosh called Gwinnett a “Scoundrel and lying Rascal,” Gwinnett challenged him to a duel. In May 1777, they met outside Savannah. Both were wounded, but Gwinnett died three days later. McIntosh was put on trial and acquitted but was transferred out of Georgia to serve with the Continentals under George Washington’s command. He spent the winter at Valley Forge.

The growing division among the Patriots in Georgia became a major problem. While both groups wanted independence, they differed over how much change should come to Georgia with independence. The group that was centered around Savannah did not want much other change in Georgia

and wanted to keep government leadership in the hands of those they considered to be better prepared to lead. Lachlan McIntosh was part of that **faction** (group). The other faction wanted changes that would allow more ordinary people to have a say in government. Gwinnett had belonged to that group. Many of that faction were from Liberty County and the backcountry counties of Richmond and Wilkes. This was the group that ended up controlling the writing of the state’s new constitution.

## Something Extra!

Button Gwinnett was buried in Colonial Park Cemetery in Savannah, but no one knows the exact location of his grave.

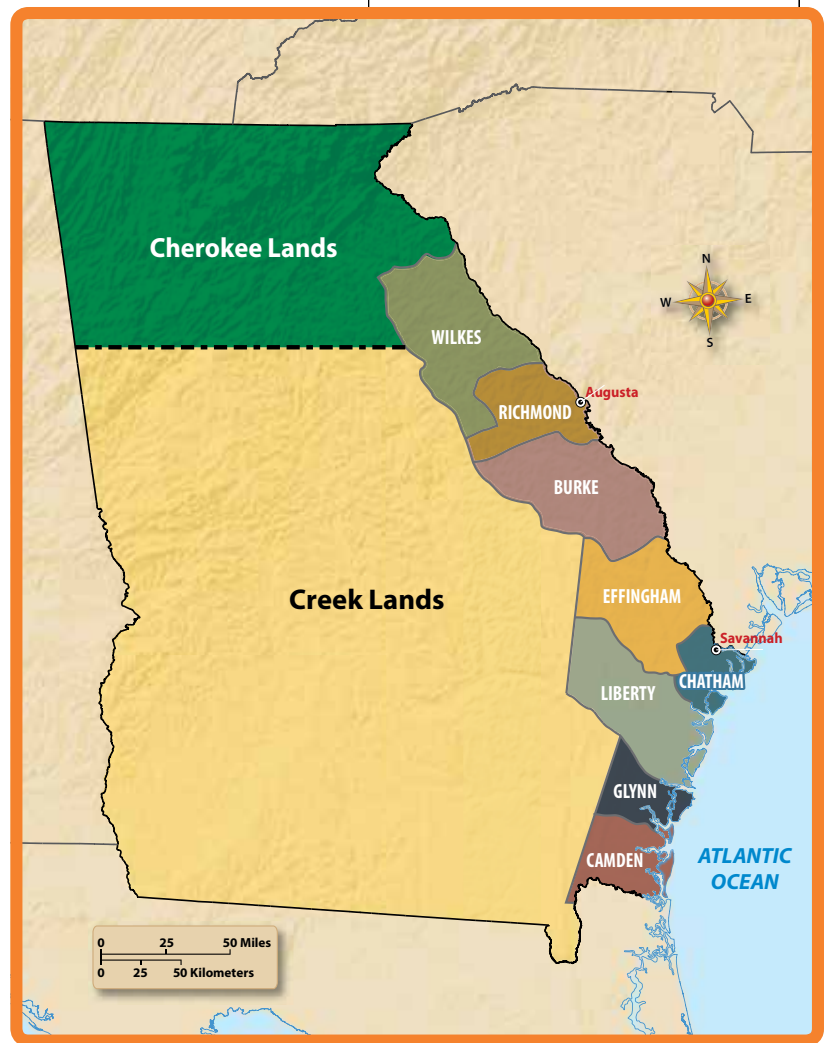


## The Constitution of 1777

As a now-independent state, Georgia needed a permanent state constitution and a reorganization of its government. That led to the writing of a new constitution in 1777. Under the new government, the twelve parishes of the colonial period became eight counties. The names of all but one county honored British Whigs in Parliament who had supported the colonies' side in the debate over their rights: Camden, Glynn, Chatham, Effingham, Burke, Richmond, and the new county Wilkes, which was created from the lands the Indians had turned over in 1773. The old St. John's Parish was renamed Liberty County in honor of that area's early and strong support of the Patriot cause and independence.

These counties took over the work of local government. Each had a sheriff to maintain law and order, as well as tax collectors. Justices of the peace for their lower courts heard minor criminal cases and lawsuits involving small amounts of money. County officials were elected by eligible voters, with the exception of local officials who performed state duties. The state assembly chose those.

According to the new Constitution of 1777, the legislature would be "composed of the representatives of the people." While both voting and holding office was limited to free white males, the property qualifications for these men were much lower than they had been—only 10 pounds or a trade to vote, and 250 acres of land or 250 pounds to hold office. These requirements represented the view of the **radicals** (those who wanted the most change). This was very democratic for that time, when most states required that men own far more property to participate in government. The **conservatives** (those who wanted less change) thought that allowed too many men to become eligible to vote and hold office. They feared it might put government in the hands of uneducated, inexperienced men who would not be able to govern well.



### Map 21 Original Georgia Counties

**Map Skill:** In which county was Savannah located?





**Above:** Under the Constitution of 1777, the governor was without much power, limited to a single one-year term, and unable to be reelected within the next two years. Georgia's first governor was John Adam Treutlen. Treutlen was born in Germany, coming to Georgia with a group of Salzburgers in 1745. He grew up in Ebenezer and represented Ebenezer at the second provincial congress in 1775. He was on the committee that drafted the first constitution and was a popular choice for governor, winning election easily.

The new state government put most of the power in the hands of a one-house legislature called the House of Assembly. It could elect its own speaker, make its own rules, and decide when to meet and adjourn. It also elected the governor and his Council and the state's delegates to the Continental Congress. The executive branch of the governor and his Council was very weak. The Council could not vote on the laws, and the governor could not veto them. The writers of the 1777 constitution did not want the council or governor to be able to stop laws the Assembly wanted."

The constitution ended the Church of England being the government-supported religion. The state's residents could now not only practice the religion of their choice but would not have to support any religion but their own. A complete separation of church and state did not yet exist, however, since there were religious requirements to hold office. The constitution guaranteed freedom of the press and gave citizens a trial by jury if they were accused of a crime.

Each county had a superior court with assistant judges in that county. All the state's superior courts were under a chief justice who presided over them in rotation. Juries had the power to decide cases and how the law applied to the cases, a significant power for the people. The state had an attorney general who was the prosecutor of the superior courts. This first Georgia Constitution of 1777 was simple and understandable.

### Reviewing the Section

1. Define: neutral, radical, conservative.
2. What was the first battle of the American Revolution in Georgia? When did it occur?
3. Why did the Patriots want to keep the Native Americans in Georgia neutral?
4. What changes in freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and rights of the accused were included in the Georgia Constitution of 1777?

# Georgia Portraits

## Mordecai Sheftall

**Benjamin Sheftall and his wife Perla** were among the first Jewish colonists who arrived in Georgia in July 1733. They were of German Jewish heritage. Their only son Mordecai was born in Savannah in December 1735. Less than a year later, Perla died, and Mordecai was raised from the age of three by his stepmother Hannah.

Mordecai bought his first fifty acres of land in 1753 when he was eighteen. He continued to acquire land through headright grants during the royal period. By 1759, he had also become a merchant. He was successful enough to build a warehouse and dock in Savannah the following year. Over the years, he had a growing family and made money in real estate, ranching, farming, and leather tanning.

Sheftall joined the Revolutionary cause early and was involved in many of the protests and events that led up to the break with Great Britain. Once the war began in Georgia, Sheftall received an appointment as both deputy commissary general of the Continen-

tal troops in Georgia and South Carolina and commissary general of Georgia. The latter position made him responsible for seeing that the Georgia soldiers had the food and other supplies they needed. He was promoted a year later to commissary general for both Georgia and South Carolina. He was a colonel in the army, the highest rank in the American army achieved by any Jewish officer. He was so loyal to the cause that he used his own money to get supplies for the troops and make loans to the Patriot government.

That was not his only sacrifice in the war. When the British invaded Savannah in 1778, they captured Sheftall and his son and held them as prisoners of war. He was still a prisoner during the siege of Savannah many months later. He was finally exchanged for a British officer in mid-1780. He and his family were finally able to return to Savannah in 1782. Unfortunately, by the end of the war, much of his personal wealth was gone. He never recovered financially from his wartime losses.



Mordecai Sheftall established the Old Jewish Burial Ground in Savannah in 1773.



## Section 2

# Georgia in the Latter Part of the Revolution

### As you read, look for

- the significance of the Battle of Saratoga to the Americans,
- the British invasion of Georgia,
- Patriot success and failure at Kettle Creek and Brier Creek,
- how the British retained control of Savannah,
- a civil war in the backcountry,
- events at war's end,
- term: **siege**.

**While Georgians had been busy fighting each other** and making unsuccessful raids into Florida, the American Patriot forces in the North had suffered several defeats and won very few victories. But in October 1777, the Americans won the Battle of Saratoga in New York. This victory was good for the morale of the Patriots. It also resulted in the Americans gaining a major ally in their fight—France.

In February 1778, France and the United States signed a military alliance. French money and troops and the French navy would now be helping the

Americans. This changed the war in many ways. One was that British leaders decided to change their strategy. They chose to send professional British troops to the South to recapture Georgia and South Carolina. In those colonies, the British thought that, with troops there to protect them, many Loyalists would return to the British fold and fight with the king's soldiers. They also hoped to gain Indian allies. Georgia did not know it in the spring and summer of 1778, but by the end of the year, Georgia would be greatly changed.

**Below: Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.**



## The Fall of Savannah, Sunbury, and Augusta

In 1778, Georgia once again attempted to invade Florida. Like the other two attempts, this one, too, failed. Once again, part of the problem was the lack of cooperation between the Georgia state militia and the Continental troops because they disagreed over who was in charge. But they would all find themselves threatened for the first time with a direct confrontation with British troops.

During the summer of 1778, the British were preparing for their own invasion of the South. The new British commander-in-chief in America, Sir Henry Clinton, chose Savannah as the first target. The commander of the expedition was Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, who was joined in the effort by the British commander in Florida, General Augustine Prevost.

The first two expeditions Prevost sent to Georgia—one by land and one by sea—arrived before Campbell and his troops, who were sailing down from New York. The naval expedition arrived at the port of Sunbury and demanded the surrender of Fort Morris. Patriot Colonel John McIntosh sent back the message, “Come and take it.” General Prevost decided instead to return to Florida. The other troops from Florida arrived after the first group had left. They burned the Midway meetinghouse and a few other buildings and then returned to Florida.

Campbell’s fleet arrived on December 23, 1778. A Loyalist local slave guided the troops from their landing place at Brewton Hill. Campbell’s forces entered Savannah with no real opposition. The British captured several hundred American Patriots; others were either killed or drowned trying to get away. According to Campbell, only seven British troops were killed. The American Continental forces under General Robert Howe had to retreat quickly back into South Carolina. The Georgia Patriot government fled. In January 1779, the British offered a full pardon to all Patriots who would take an oath of allegiance to the king.

## Something Extra!

According to the National Park Service, Fort Morris at Sunbury was the last Patriot fort to fall to the British in the American Revolution.

**Below:** Fort Morris was authorized by the Continental Congress to protect the port of Sunbury; however, the fort fell to the British in 1779 in the aftermath of their conquest of Savannah. The location has been preserved as Fort Morris Historic Site, where the remains of the fort’s earthworks are clearly visible.







## Map 22 The Revolutionary War in Georgia

**Map Skill:** Which of the battles shown on the map took place first?

In January 1779, British General Prevost again led his forces into Georgia, this time capturing Fort Morris at Sunbury. He then took over command in Savannah. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Campbell left with his troops to capture Augusta, establishing outposts manned by soldiers along the way. He wanted to be the first British commander to remove “a star and stripe” from the American flag by returning Georgia to the king.

With Georgians gathering at the Burke County jail to oppose the British, General Prevost sent Thomas Brown and his Florida Rangers to rescue the Loyalists there and take the fort. But Brown was driven back by the Americans, one of whom was Lieutenant Colonel William Few, later a signer of the US Constitution. The Burke County Patriots then joined with Colonel Samuel Elbert’s army to try to stop Campbell, but they had to keep retreating. Campbell marched into Augusta on January 31 to the joy of the Loyalists in the area.

Campbell quickly sent soldiers into the backcountry to find more Loyalists and encourage Patriots to take the oath. Hundreds swore loyalty and agreed to be in militia units for the British. But Campbell suspected that many were not truly loyal. He believed many would desert the British if they could. He also realized that the Indians did not turn out to help the British. His soldiers had hoped to meet up with Colonel James Boyd and his North Carolina Loyalists. Instead, Boyd got into a skirmish at Carr’s Fort in Wilkes County.

Campbell did not stay in Augusta for long. In February, Patriot General Andrew Williamson and his South Carolina militia were camped on the South Carolina side of the river. They were joined by North Carolina Patriots under General John Ashe. Campbell decided to leave Augusta on February 14 and headed back toward Savannah. By February 20, Campbell was camped with his troops at Hudson’s Ferry on the Savannah River, over twenty miles above Ebenezer. There he turned command over to Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost, brother of the general in Savannah. On March 11, Campbell sailed away. When surprised Loyalists in Augusta realized they had been left “exposed to the Fury of the Rebels,” they were angry and terrified. Williamson, however, treated them humanely.

## The Battles at Kettle and Brier Creeks

On February 14, 1779, as Campbell marched away from Augusta, a major battle was taking place in the backcountry of Wilkes County. Carolina Loyalist Colonel James Boyd and his men had camped near Kettle Creek on February 13. They had been through a February 11 skirmish crossing the Savannah River from South Carolina. Boyd planned to leave the next morning for Augusta. There he hoped to join Campbell, not knowing that Campbell was leaving. The next day, however, the Patriot militia led by Andrew Pickens, John Dooly, and Elijah Clarke surprised the camp. Andrew Pickens and his men attacked Boyd's camp head on. Elijah Clarke and John Dooly went around back and had to cross the creek to attack the left and right rear. Even though Pickens's men fired early and alerted the Loyalist guards, the Patriots defeated the Loyalists. Boyd and many of his followers were killed, and many others were captured. Out of over 600 Loyalists, only 250 managed to escape and eventually join Campbell's forces.

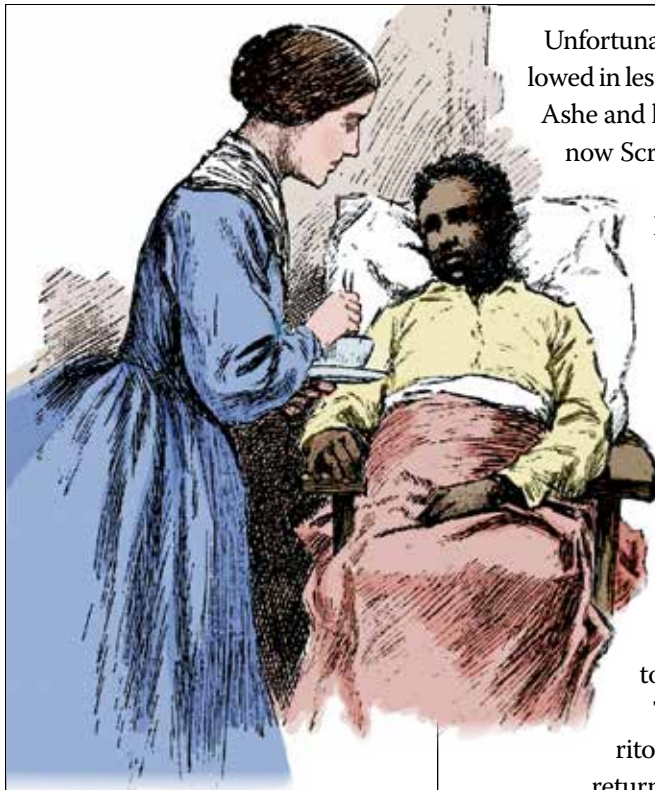
The Battle of Kettle Creek was minor when compared to those fought in other parts of the country. It was, however, important to Georgia. The militia was able to take badly needed weapons and horses from the Loyalist soldiers, and the spirits of the Georgia militia were lifted by their victory. The victory at the Battle of Kettle Creek also ensured that the backcountry remained in Patriot control, although Loyalist and Patriot killings continued. A year later, a Loyalist murdered John Dooly in his home. Dooly, Clarke, and Pickens are all honored with county names.



### Map 23 The Battle of Kettle Creek

**Map Skill:** How might geography have affected the battle?





**Above:** Austin Dabney was a slave who served in the Georgia militia as a replacement for his master. The bravery he displayed and the wounds he received at the Battle of Kettle Creek earned him his freedom. **Opposite page, above:** This monument in Savannah commemorates the heroism of Sergeant William Jasper, who died in the assault following the siege of Savannah. **Opposite page, below:** A combined force of French troops and Georgia Continental forces maintained a siege of Savannah for three weeks.

Unfortunately for the Patriots, the victory at Kettle Creek was followed in less than three weeks by a major defeat. Patriot General John Ashe and his men had crossed the river and set up camp in what is now Screven County where Brier Creek merges with the Savannah River. There he was surprised by British forces under Lieutenant Colonel Mark Prevost. The surprise was so complete that many of the Americans did not even have time to load their guns. Most of Ashe's troops, including Colonel Samuel Elbert, were captured.

After this period of fighting, the British held Savannah, the upper coast, and the land up the Savannah River for many miles. The Patriots controlled a small section of the lower coast, Augusta, and the countryside north and west of Augusta. Georgia was part state and, as far as the British were concerned, part colony. George Washington realized how bad it was to lose Georgia, but he had no troops to spare. He believed French help would be needed to retake the portions the British controlled.

The British reestablished a royal government in the territory they held, with Savannah as the capital. James Wright returned as governor, and many other royal officials took their old positions. The Patriots, however, were disorganized. They could not even get enough people together to hold an official assembly. An Executive Council had been set up in Augusta in January. It fled when Campbell came, only to return when he left. A group of Patriots from various counties met in July in Augusta. But, since they had not been elected, they knew they could not exercise any real power. They did choose what they termed a "Supreme Executive Council" of nine men who they hoped could be approved when it was possible to have an assembly. John Wereat of Savannah was chosen as its president. Basically, the only areas over which they were really operating were the northern counties.

## The Siege of Savannah

In September 1779, Georgia Patriots received some surprise help. The French naval commander Count D'Estaing arrived off the coast with twenty-two ships and four thousand troops to recapture Savannah from the British.

The Patriots did not know that he was coming, so Continental Commander Benjamin Lincoln began a rapid march from Charleston and spent two days ferrying his troops across the Savannah River. In Savannah, Governor Wright and General Prevost quickly began to build defenses and asked for reinforcements from British troops at Beaufort, South Carolina.

### Something Extra!

Austin Dabney's federal pension amounted to \$60 a year in 1789.

## Something Extra!

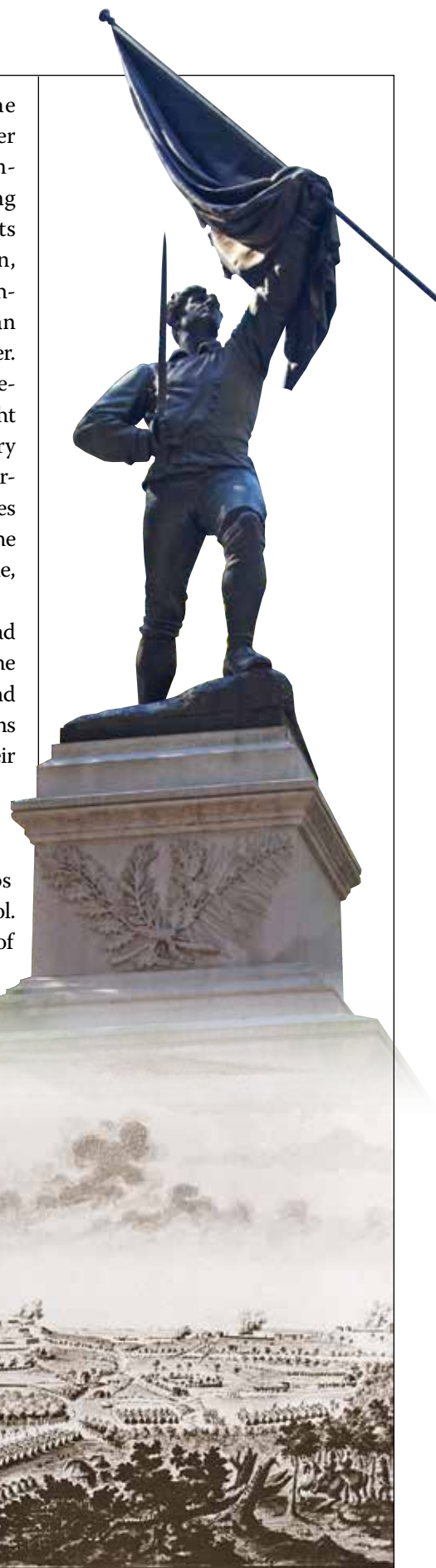
**The battle at Savannah was the second bloodiest battle of the Revolution. Only at Bunker Hill did more men die in battle.**

When D’Estaing demanded the surrender of Savannah on September 16, General Prevost asked for twenty-four hours to consider it. During that time, the British reinforcements arrived. With these additional men, Prevost decided to defend the city rather than surrender. The French began bombarding Savannah in early October. They hoped that a siege would force Prevost to surrender without having to fight a battle. (A **siege** occurs when military forces try to capture a fort or town by surrounding it and preventing any supplies

from reaching it.) The bombardment went on for three weeks, terrorizing the citizens in Savannah, including its many women and children. Meanwhile, the British strengthened the town’s defensive structures.

When the British had not surrendered by October 9, D’Estaing, who had not planned to stay in Georgia this long, decided to attack. Even though the British were outnumbered two to one, their defenses held. The French and many Americans fought bravely, but hundreds of Frenchmen and Americans died in the unsuccessful assault. Two famous Patriot soldiers who lost their lives in the attack were Sergeant William Jasper, a South Carolina Patriot hero, and Count Casimir Pulaski, a Polish citizen who had joined the American cause. The French retreated to their ships on October 18 and, within two days, sailed away. General Lincoln and his American troops retreated back to South Carolina. Savannah remained under British control. In Savannah, the British and Loyalists celebrated their victory with a day of thanksgiving and prayer on October 29.

British commander-in-chief Sir Henry Clinton turned his attention to the capture of Charleston. At the end of December 1779, Clinton set up a base on Tybee Island and prepared his troops for the upcoming invasion of South Carolina. On May 12, 1780, Charleston fell to Clinton’s forces as American General Benjamin Lincoln was forced to surrender over 5,000 men, the worst American defeat of the war. The South’s two major ports were in British hands.







**Above:** The most frequently retold story about Nancy Hart concerns her killing of two Loyalists and capture of four others when they came to her house demanding food. The illustrations on these two pages are from Georgia history textbooks of 100 years ago, where Nancy's exploits were told as though they were fact.

## The War in the Backcountry

The British then attempted to capture the backcountry of both South Carolina and Georgia. British troops were sent to the major outposts in both states. Clinton returned to New York, leaving British General Lord Cornwallis in command. The King's Ranger Loyalist Thomas Brown got the assignment to capture Augusta, which he was able to do without opposition. The Georgia Patriot government fled to Heard's Fort in Wilkes County until forced to abandon it as Loyalist troops arrived in the backcountry.

For months, the location of Georgia's government, if one existed, remained a mystery. But although the Patriots were disorganized, they had not given up. Many left Georgia for the Carolinas, while others built forts around their houses and tried to protect themselves from Loyalists and Indians. The civil war turned deadly, as bands of Loyalists and Patriot militia roamed the backcountry. Homes were raided, families were sometimes murdered, and crops were burned.

One of the legends of the backcountry fighting involved a woman named Nancy Hart, a real woman who lived in what is now Elbert County. The first stories about her Revolutionary War exploits began in the 1820s and became part of the legend of the war. Historian John Thomas Scott has traced seven stories about Nancy. The most famous was about her supposed capture of several Loyalists who came to her cabin demanding food. While they ate, she slowly began to remove their guns. When one of them noticed, they jumped to their feet. But she pointed a gun at them and held them prisoner until her husband and other Patriots arrived. It is impossible to know the truth to this story, but it has become part of the Georgia legend. Hart County bears her name.

## The Battles for Augusta

Over the summer of 1780, the Patriots made plans to recapture Augusta. In September 1780, they gathered on a hill outside the city. The plan was to attack from more than one direction. One group came in from the west. When Thomas Brown and his troops came out to meet that threat, another group came through the town from the east, cutting off Brown's escape route back into the city. Brown and his men were forced to take refuge at the house of Indian trader Robert Mackay, about a mile from the town. For three days, the Patriots kept Brown and his men pinned down in the house, shooting anyone who came out. Inside, the men ran out of water and had only raw pumpkins left for food. Just when it appeared that a Patriot victory was at hand, Loyalist reinforcements arrived on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. The Patriots retreated, pursued by the Loyalists. Some of the captured Patriots were turned over to the Indians. Thomas Brown, following General Cornwallis's orders, hanged thirteen. This first Battle of Augusta was a British victory. Brown began immediately to build stronger defenses, including a new fort where the old Fort Augusta had been. He named it Fort Cornwallis.

After the American loss at Camden, South Carolina, General George Washington had appointed one of his best generals, Nathanael Greene, as commander for the Southern Continental forces. Greene was determined to retake the South, using the Continental and state militia troops. His first targets were the backcountry outposts. To retake Augusta, Greene chose Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee of Virginia, known by his troops as "Light-horse Harry." (Lee later had a son destined for military fame—Robert E. Lee.) Henry Lee coordinated his attacks with General Andrew Pickens of the South Carolina troops and Colonel Elijah Clarke of Georgia. The Continentals first took George Galphin's old outpost at Silver Bluff, where the British had supplies that the Americans needed.

As Elijah Clarke and his militia marched toward Augusta from the west, the Continentals crossed the river to Augusta. After taking the fortified house of Loyalist James Grierson, the Patriots laid siege to Fort Cornwallis. After several days, Brown surrendered on June 5, 1781. Augusta was once again under Patriot control, and the Patriot government returned.



**Above:** This illustration of the Nancy Hart story shows her daughter Sukey secretly blowing the conch shell to warn her father and other Patriots that Loyalists were at the house.





**Top:** Lieutenant Colonel “Lighthorse” Harry Lee was a renowned cavalry officer. General Nathanael Greene sent him to Georgia to coordinate with troops from South Carolina and Georgia in retaking Augusta. **Above:** Colonel Elijah Clarke, who had been one of the Georgia militia leaders at the Battle of Kettle Creek, led his troops in the siege of Fort Cornwallis.

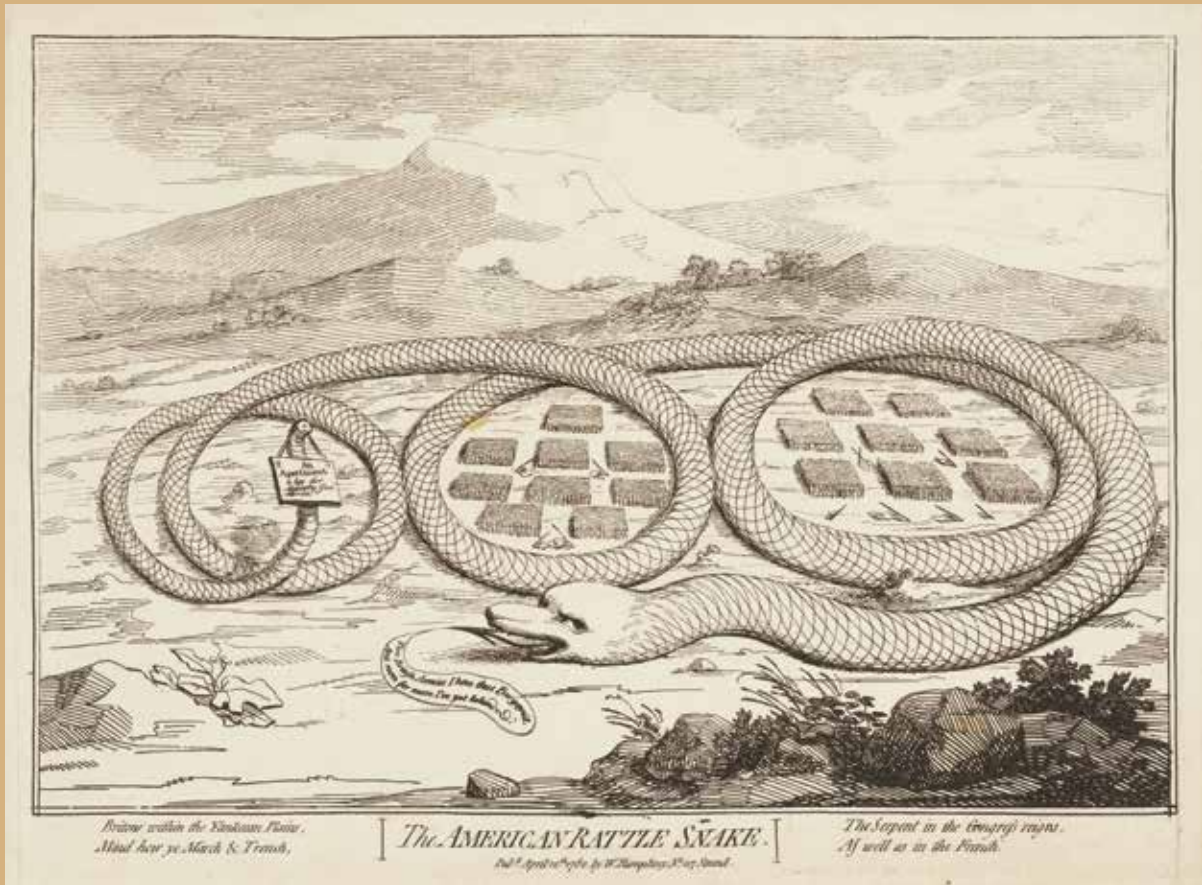
## The End of the War in Georgia

From the summer of 1780 through the summer of 1781, British General Cornwallis had been fighting in the Carolinas. He had victories at Camden, South Carolina, and Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina. He also suffered losses such as that at King’s Mountain, South Carolina. Fighting in the back-country was difficult for British troops.

In the summer of 1781, Cornwallis marched his army to Virginia, where he camped on the Yorktown peninsula. The French fleet soon arrived off the Virginia coast, blocking any British reinforcements or rescue from the sea. General George Washington and French Commander Comte de Rochambeau had marched quickly down from Pennsylvania and come up behind Cornwallis. He was trapped at Yorktown and forced to surrender his entire army in October 1781. When news of Cornwallis’s defeat reached Great Britain, the government decided that continued fighting was not in its best interest, even though they still controlled many areas in America, including Savannah.

Even after the British surrender at Yorktown, Georgia’s fate was unknown. Loyalists and Patriots continued to fight each other. In January 1782, Brigadier General Anthony Wayne came to Georgia as the commander of the Continental forces. Governor Wright pleaded for more British troops, believing that the British could keep Georgia in the empire. The British commander in Charleston sent him about 500 men. General Wayne, however, was aggressive, and many Loyalists defected to the Patriots hoping to keep their land. Wayne carried out small strikes against the British and Loyalists when he could.

# The Art of Politics



This English cartoon makes fun of the British army's efforts in the American Revolution. The rattlesnake symbolizes the Continental Army with its coils wrapped around the armies of Burgoyne and Cornwallis as they were about to surrender. A rattlesnake, with the words "Don't Tread on Me," was a common emblem on early American flags.



Colonel Christopher Gadsden was representing his home state of South Carolina at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, PA when he designed the famous flag. A 1776 Gadsden flag currently housed at the North Carolina State Capitol.



The flag of the Culpeper Minutemen - of Culpeper Virginia - had a coiled rattlesnake on a white background and added "Liberty or Death" to "Dont Tread On Me."





**Top:** The surrender of British General Cornwallis's army at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 9, 1781, marked the end of the Revolutionary War. However, Patriot and Loyalist troops continued fighting each other in Georgia until the summer of 1782.

## Something Extra!

When the British surrendered at Yorktown, it is said that British musicians played a tune called "The World Turn'd Upside Down."

To his amazement and dismay, Governor Wright was notified in May 1782 that Georgia was to be evacuated. On July 11, 1782, General Wayne allowed a young Georgia Patriot, Colonel James Jackson, to take the formal surrender of Savannah. That summer, British troops and officials, along with hundreds of Loyalists, many with their slaves, left in ships sent for them. Some went to East Florida, which was still British, hoping to get land there and start over.

The Georgia Patriot government relocated to Savannah and began the process of governing. For Georgia, the fighting was over. In gratitude for their victory, Georgia officials voted to give Generals Nathanael Greene and Anthony Wayne plantations that had been taken from Loyalists. As the British, American, and French representatives worked in Paris for a treaty, Georgians began to rebuild their state, their towns, and their lives.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Why did Georgia's invasions of British Florida fail?
2. Why was the Battle of Kettle Creek important?
3. What was the outcome of the siege of Savannah?

# Georgia Portraits

## Elizabeth L. Johnston: Georgia Loyalist

In 1836, when she was seventy-two years old, Elizabeth Johnston wrote her memoirs about her life in Georgia during the American Revolution. Titled *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, they describe the difficulties of being in an area of fighting, the tragedy of losing one's homeland, and the difficulty of beginning life anew in an unfamiliar environment.

Johnston was born a few miles outside of Savannah, and she spent her childhood in colonial and revolutionary Georgia. Her father, John Lightenstone, was the colony's scout boat pilot, paid by the royal government to take government officials where they needed to go by boat. Like other royal officials, Elizabeth's father was a Loyalist from the beginning. When the Patriot government took over Savannah, he had to make a last-minute escape to avoid capture. He left with other Loyalist government officials, leaving behind the



**Above:** Elizabeth L. Johnston was born Elizabeth Lightenstone on May 26, 1764, to a Russian father and a French Huguenot mother. Her mother's death in 1774 sent her to Savannah to live with an aunt who trained her in embroidery. After living through the siege of Savannah, she was married at the young age of fifteen to a Loyalist officer, Captain William Martin Johnston, with whom she had ten children.

women of his family. In 1778, then fourteen-year-old Elizabeth had to go before the Patriot authorities to prevent them from taking away her family's land, which would have left her homeless.

After the British retook Savannah in December 1778, Elizabeth was reunited with her father for the first time in two years. Elizabeth endured the Patriot-French siege of Savannah in a barn with other Loyalist women, including her future mother-in-law. She wrote that, afraid of defeat, "every heart in our barn was aching, every eye in tears." One month after the British-Loyalist victory, the young Elizabeth married a Loyalist officer, William Johnston. His father was a wealthy physician and merchant and a member of the Governor's Council.

Finally, in July 1782, the family evacuated Savannah. They lived in several places, including Florida, Scotland, and Jamaica, before finding a permanent home in Nova Scotia.



# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1 Georgia in the Early Days of the Revolution

- Georgia's forces in the Revolution consisted of the militia and the Continental troops. Colonel Lachlan McIntosh was in charge of the Georgia Continental troops.
- The first battle of the Revolution in Georgia took place March 2 and 3, 1776, and was called the "Battle of the Rice Boats."
- When the royal governor fled, Georgia Patriots established a government under the Rules and Regulations of 1776. It consisted of the provincial congress, the Council of Safety, and a judicial branch. Archibald Bulloch was the first president of the council.
- Georgians, including trader George Galphin, tried to keep the Native Americans neutral. In the end, however, most Native Americans who fought sided with the British.
- In September 1776, Georgia's Continental troops made an unsuccessful invasion of British Florida. The Continentals made another unsuccessful attempt in 1777.
- Georgia wrote a permanent constitution in 1777. The constitution established a one-house legislature called the House of Assembly, which held most of the power. The assembly chose the governor and his council. The constitution also ended the policy of a state-sponsored religion.
- The 1777 constitution established a system of counties, rather than parishes.

### Section 2 Georgia in the Latter Part of the Revolution

- In March 1778, France became an ally of the United States in its war for independence.
- Great Britain changed its strategy in 1778 and turned its attention to the South. The British expected to regain the southern colonies and acquire Loyalist and Native American support.
- In April 1778, Georgia began its third unsuccessful invasion of Florida.
- In December 1778, British troops captured Savannah. In January 1779, Augusta fell to the British for two weeks. The British occupied parts of Georgia until 1782.
- In February 1779, American forces defeated Loyalist forces at the Battle of Kettle Creek in Wilkes County.
- In September 1779, French forces arrived to try to retake Savannah from the British. The siege was unsuccessful, and American and French forces retreated.
- For much of the Revolutionary War, fighting in Georgia took the form of a civil war between bands of Loyalist and Patriot militia.
- Augusta was retaken by Patriot forces in June 1781.
- Although General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October 1781, Patriot forces did not regain control of Savannah until July 1782.

## Activities for Learning

### Understanding the Facts



1. What were the “Rules and Regulations” set forth by the Georgia provincial congress?
2. Summarize the Battle of Kettle Creek.
3. Describe the siege of Savannah and explain what happened when Patriots and French soldiers tried to break the siege.
4. What is the significance of the Battle of Yorktown?

### Developing Critical Thinking



Explain why Savannah was such an important military objective for the British. Describe the economic and psychological impact on the Patriots of Georgia due to the blockade.

### Writing across the Curriculum



Legends surrounding the patriot Nancy Hart have been handed down for more than 200 years. Her stories have been retold even though there is no proof that they are factual. Write a short essay to answer the following questions: Why would people keep telling Hart’s stories without proof? What types of people would have found the story appealing? What purpose do such legends have in a society?

### Extending Reading Skills



Read the first paragraph after the head *Establishing a State Government* on page 274. Then, answer the following questions.

1. What is the main idea of the paragraph?
2. What sentence in the paragraph states the main idea?

3. Which sentences provide supporting details?
4. What are some of the details?

### Exploring Technology



Use a credible search engine to identify and re-search women heroines of the American Revolution. Write a brief summary of one woman and include what she did during the war.

### Practicing Your Skills



Overland travel during this era was slow and difficult. The best speed on land only averaged a few miles an hour at best. Use a map of the United States to calculate the mileage between Savannah and Philadelphia. Estimate the miles per hour of travel on land and along the shoreline to determine how long it took Georgia’s delegates to arrive in Philadelphia. Likewise, estimate how long it took news about the war to travel from the northern colonies to Georgia.



**Above:** This Polish patriot died in the assault following the siege of Savannah. What is his name?