

Section 4

North Carolinians Fight Each Other

As you read, look for:

- the civil war between Whigs and Tories in North Carolina
- vocabulary terms **neutral**, **pacifism**, **pardon**

The British army was just one enemy in the War for Independence. Up and down the Atlantic coast, some colonists sided with the Whigs, wanting independence for the new United States. Others identified with the Tories, hoping that the king's armies would triumph. None of the original thirteen states was as divided in its loyalties as North Carolina. Because land titles had been jeopardized by the Regulation, state residents gambled their futures, sometimes their very lives, on the choices they made.

Taking Sides

Whigs and Tories were to be found from one end of North Carolina to the other. Yet there were pockets of Whig support and areas of Tory resistance that were notable. Many coastal residents sided with the Whigs. They had been early participants in the rebellion against British rules that restricted their access to trade. In the west, the greatest supporters of the Whigs lived in Presbyterian neighborhoods, particularly in Mecklenburg and Rowan counties. There, the Scots-Irish vented their traditional hostility to English control over their lives and property. Many of the soldiers in the first regiments sent to the Continental army were from these two areas.

In contrast, Tories were often concentrated in the central area of the state, often in the very neighborhoods that had supported the Regulators just a few years before. Many of these residents still resented what the people on the coast had done to their homes and communities. It was not so much that the ex-Regulators loved the king, but they hated the leaders of the coastal area more. Some Regulators who had fled to the mountains (such as those who settled on Mills River near today's Hendersonville) felt the same way. Finally, the strongest Tories were the Highland Scots, recent immigrants into the Sandhills. They had yet to

This section will help you meet the following objectives:

8.2.02 Describe the contributions of key personalities from the Revolutionary War era.

8.2.03 Examine the role of North Carolina in the Revolutionary War.

8.2.04 Examine the reasons for the colonists' victory, the impact of military successes and failures, the role of foreign interventions, and on-going domestic issues.



Above: This Revolutionary War reenactor is dressed as a Highland Scot Tory.



Top: Tory soldiers at a reenactment of the skirmish at the House in the Horseshoe demonstrate the firing of a Revolutionary War-era cannon. In the actual battle, the Tories had no cannon. **Above:** The House in the Horseshoe was the home of Whig Colonel Philip Alston.

gain a new identity in their new home and likely thought, if the Whigs were defeated, the king would punish them more severely than had been the case back in Scotland.

At least some North Carolinians tried to be **neutral** (not take sides) in the war. They may not have cared which government held sway over them, so long as they were left alone to live their lives. Moravians fit into this group. They did not oppose the new Whig government that created the state. However, their natural **pacifism** (a belief that no one should fight or resort to violence for any reason other than self-defense) made them oppose the war. The Moravians stayed out of the war as soldiers and were forced to pay triple the taxes of other state residents because of their position. Many Quakers were also pacifists and, since they would not swear an oath or serve in the militia, were forced to pay the triple tax.

So long as the British were not present to force the issue, North Carolina remained relatively peaceful. Still, there was Tory activity across the state. In 1777, state officers put down the Llewellyn conspiracy. That was a Tory plot to capture the guns and ammunition at Halifax and then use those guns to kidnap Governor Richard Caswell. The same year, a group of Tories “drank to the King’s health” at a secret gathering in Guilford County. About the same time, disgruntled residents of the Uwharrie Mountains marched on Cross Creek to demand that salt be sold at a reasonable price. In 1778, more than five hundred men (out of 5,000) refused to take the oath of allegiance to the state and therefore were charged *four* times the taxes paid by the other state residents. When some of these men did not pay their taxes, their lands were seized, often by greedy Whigs out to both punish them and make money.

A Civil War

Whig control of the state was all but lost when Lord Cornwallis swept through North Carolina with his army in 1781. Some Tories had become bolder during the first British invasion in 1780 and had joined with the invaders. John Hamilton, a merchant from Halifax, became one of the state's leading Tories when he organized the North Carolina Regiment for the British. It marched with Lord Cornwallis all the way to Yorktown.

The most famous Tory—or infamous, depending upon who told the story—was David Fanning. Although he was no relative of Edmund Fanning of Regulator fame, David Fanning became just as notorious. Fanning had been abused and beaten by Whigs early in the war, and he swore revenge. When the British army invaded in 1781, Fanning raised a second regiment for them and became its colonel.

Fanning's regiment did not join the British but operated independently. Fanning recruited most of his troops from among the unhappy residents of the Uwharries. As the British retreated from Guilford Courthouse to Wilmington, Fanning attacked and harassed American units whenever and wherever he could find them. In addition, Fanning and his men terrorized the backcountry neighborhoods that sent men to the North Carolina militia. Fanning's men were accused of theft, murder, and more than one rape during this time. Fanning's most astounding feat was to surprise the town of Hillsborough while it was the temporary capital of the state. Fanning's men literally ran the Assembly out of town, captured lots of supplies, and kidnapped the governor of the time, Thomas Burke. Despite being attacked along the way, the Tories delivered Burke and other prisoners to the British in Wilmington.

Neighbor Killing Neighbor

Losing the governor was symbolic of the terrible times North Carolinians faced in the years 1780-1782. With so many men either in the American army or a Charles Town prison, many families were left without protection.

Sometimes the British set a bad example, as when they angrily burned down four houses after the hard fight at Cowan's Ford. After the battle of Guilford Courthouse, British soldiers went to the log college run by David Caldwell and burned and ruined all his books. Some Tories attacked families because of the politics of the day; others simply took advantage of the situation to loot (take goods illegally) farms. When Whigs stood in the way, they were often tortured or murdered. A dozen Tories surrounded the house of Thomas Hadley on the Cape Fear River. Hadley looked out his upstairs window to warn his neighbors, but he was shot to death. Three of his four sons got away, but the youngest, only a teenager, was taken to a nearby pocosin, stripped of his clothes, and tied to a tree in the middle of a swarm of mosquitoes. Another man, taken from his Cape Fear house and imprisoned in Wilmington, escaped. He ran eighty miles in less than twenty-four hours, then hid in the woods near his house for the rest of the war.



Above: David Fanning's harsh treatment at the hands of some Whigs resulted in Fanning organizing Tory groups that committed their own atrocities upon the Whigs. This lithograph is entitled "Fanning's Atrocity: Murder of an American Planter."

Did You Know?

Governor Burke was imprisoned on James Island near Charles Town, South Carolina. He escaped in January 1782.



Above: This monument at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park honors Mrs. Kerenhappuch Turner who came to nurse her seriously wounded son after the battle. It is one of only two monuments in the park dedicated to women.

Women often showed their bravery in the conflict. Elizabeth Wiley Forbis had no time to mourn when she learned her husband had been killed at Guilford Courthouse. She and a young son took their only horse out to plow and plant corn. When two Tories demanded the animal, Mrs. Forbis stood in front of both of them. “I will split your head with this hoe,” she threatened. They left. Young Maggie McBride was so eager to help her mother tell the Whigs where the local Tory hideout was that the commander insisted she show him. She rode along on the back of the commander’s horse. When she whispered, “yonder they are,” she slid off the horse and hurried home by a back path. Mrs. Colin McRae, who lived on the Deep River, had her farm repeatedly looted. She had used her last sheet to wrap her baby. A robber came in and yanked the sheet out of her hands, rolling the baby onto the floor. So dangerous was the neighborhood that Mr. McRae hid in a swamp for a year, coming out at night to work his fields to feed his family.

Whigs could be just as cruel as Tories. During Cornwallis’s march to Hillsborough, more than four hundred Tories under the command of Colonel John Pyle marched to join him. Near the site of present-day Burlington, American cavalrymen tricked the Tories into believing that they were British soldiers. (During the war, cavalrymen of both sides wore the same green color.) Colonel Henry Lee’s men rode up to the Tories and, without any warning, began to cut them down with sabers. At least ninety were killed before they could flee. Colonel Pyle managed to jump into a nearby pond. The man for whom Pyle’s Massacre was named stayed under water all day, only raising his nose up when he had to breathe. One of the Tories, Drury Honeycutt, suffered a dozen saber wounds and was shot twice. He survived, but only as an invalid.

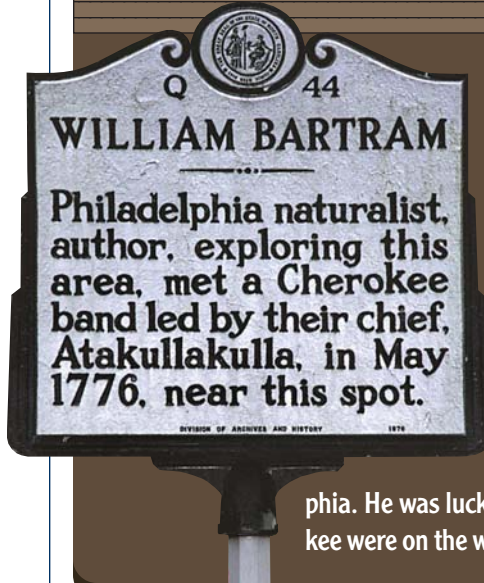
In August 1781, Whigs along the Cape Fear struck back at three hundred Tories gathered in Elizabethtown, in Bladen County. After their commanders had been shot, the Tories fled, many of them into a deep ravine that covered their retreat. The spot has been known ever since as “Tory Hole.” On the Yadkin River, Kings Mountain veteran Benjamin Cleveland hanged five suspected Tories. The tree, located where Wilkesboro would be built, became famous as the Tory Oak, surviving into the twentieth century.

The War Ends

The Tory-Whig war in North Carolina stopped after the British withdrew from Wilmington in 1782. David Fanning and many of his men left with them, resettling in Nova Scotia. Almost immediately, the Whigs tried to calm the state. County courts continued to try Tories charged with crimes, but Tories who had simply fought for the king in battle were generally allowed to return home. John Hamilton, for example, returned

HISTORY BY THE HIGHWAY

William Bartram



William Bartram, for a time a merchant in the Cape Fear, made several trips into the mountains of Cherokee country looking for plants that he could preserve and take back with him to his botanical garden in Philadelphia. His father was the official botanist to King George III for a time. After the War for Independence, Bartram set up a celebrated garden outside the city of Philadelphia. He was lucky this day in Swain County. The Cherokee were on the warpath and could have done him harm.



to the state and resumed his successful career as a merchant. He became one of the more popular men in the state and often had dinner with former Whigs, where they traded war stories. In 1784, the state legislature issued a **pardon**, an act forgiving Tories for their actions in the war.

The war left all of North Carolina destitute for several years after the British left. Ports had been closed, and farms had been ruined. The money the state had issued to pay for the war was worthless. It took a lot of currency to buy a few goods or services. The state had no permanent capital, and its leaders had only marginal influence with the national government that met in Philadelphia. In 1784, the year peace was completely restored, North Carolina seemed as divided and torn as it had been at the start of the Revolution.

Did You Know?

After the war, David Fanning was one of three men in North Carolina to whom the government did not grant a pardon for offenses committed during the war.

It's Your Turn

1. What part of the state was a Tory stronghold?
2. Which two groups of North Carolinians did not serve in the militia during the war?