

Elijah Clark

by Christine Swager, Ph.D.

In his seminal work on the Revolutionary War, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South*, Dr. Henry Lumpkin wrote:

After the British capture of Charleston, South Carolina, in May of 1780, Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, kept the war alive for over a year in the swamps and forests of lower South Carolina. The backcountry, that wide and wild land lying between the Cherokee tribal frontier, the mountains and the coastal plain of Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia was the fighting territory of many other partisan leaders. Three of the greatest were Thomas Sumter of South Carolina, William Richardson Davie of North Carolina, and Elijah Clarke of Georgia (Lumpkin, 1981:80).

The third great partisan, Elijah Clarke, moved from tidewater Virginia a few years before the Revolution to what is now Wilkes County, Georgia, at that time still a wilderness, and became a prosperous farmer. Clarke's deserved reputation as an effective and successful guerilla commander has been overshadowed by those of Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and other more dramatic figures. A steady, reliable, and, when necessary, deadly fighting leader, Elijah Clarke made contributions to eventual victory in the South that merit high recognition (Lumpkin, 1981:81).

Not only do modern scholars appreciate this Georgian, who Robert Scott Davis describes as “almost fatally courageous” (Davis, 2007), but his contemporaries appreciated his daring and dogged determination on the battlefield. Clarke led his militia in battle cooperating with other militia commanders such as Andrew Pickens, Thomas Sumter, James Williams and Isaac Shelby. Major General Nathanael Greene, commander of the Continental Army in the South, called on Clarke's service, and his actions in concert with Lt. Col. Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee at Fort Galphin and Augusta were highly praised. Who was this Georgian and what did he do to warrant such high praise from Militia and Continental commanders?

In **A History of Georgia** there are few references to Elijah Clarke and his Revolutionary War service. He is described thus:

Clarke was a North Carolina regulator and illiterate frontiersman who came to Georgia in the 1770s with no material goods but with the ability to succeed in the rough-and-tumble frontier society. He became a leader in the guerrilla fighting in the backcountry and an Indian fighter after the war. In the 1780s he was a member of the assembly, a member of the council, and a militia brigadier general (Campbell, 1991:87).

This is faint praise for a Georgian who merits such high praise from Revolutionary War leaders from outside the state.

Elijah Clarke was born in North Carolina in 1733. His family had been part of the Scots-Irish migration and had moved down from Virginia in the previous generation. In about 1750 Elijah, as a young man,

settled on property his father owned along the Pacolet River in what is now Spartanburg Country, South Carolina. Spartanburg historian Wes Hope wrote:

Clarke, at the age of 17, had been the first white settler into what is today Spartanburg County. A contemporary of Daniel Boone, the famous pioneer who pushed back the frontiers of Kentucky, Clarke is considered the 'Daniel Boone' of Spartanburg, where he played a similar role in the Carolina frontier (Hope, 2003:46).

This author also comments:

He played a leading role in four of the area's most important battles, starting with the Seizure of Fort Thicketty and concluding with the Battle of Blackstock. Today, unfortunately, Spartanburg seems to know almost nothing of this man who contributed much to the area and to the country in the very early beginnings of the establishment of both (Hope, 2003:47).

It is unknown how long Clarke remained on the Pacolet this first time as he returned to North Carolina and married there and started a family. When the settlers in North Carolina were disturbed at the excesses of the royal governor, Lord Tyron, they signed a letter of protest. Elijah Clarke's name was on the list of protestors. However, by the time hostilities began between the Regulators and the royal governor, and the Regulators met defeat at the battle of Alamance on 16 May 1771. Clarke and his family were no longer in North Carolina. They had moved back to his previous location at Grindal Shoals on the Pacolet River. He escaped the brutal treatment the Regulators suffered at the hands of a vengeful governor.

At his South Carolina location he provided for his family by hunting but the land was not very productive. In Georgia the Cherokees and the Creeks became heavily in debt to traders. In 1773, Governor Wright assumed their debt in return for their relinquishing claim on two million acres in two parcels. One parcel was an area north of Augusta and was called Wilkes County. That county included land that is now Lincoln, Elbert and Wilkes Counties, and most of Hart, Madison, Oglethorpe, Taliaferro, and Clarke. The country bordered on Indian lands and was opened for settlement in small lots as Georgia wanted the greatest number of men possible to provide militia. The settlers could purchase 200 acres for himself and twenty-five for each member of his household (Swager, 2008).

Elijah Clark was among the first settlers moving into the Ceded Lands. He arrived in early 1774 and settled in Wilkes County where he built Clarke's Fort. In those days a fort was little more than a fortified dwelling. Settlers often built a strong fence around their cabin to protect family and possibly neighbors in the case of Indian attacks. Some forts were large enough to hold several families as well as livestock. Clarke had made a wise choice as, although the Indian chiefs had agreed to the transfer of land, many disaffected Indians were still at war with the settlers. The militia unit to which Elijah Clarke belonged soon recognized his abilities, and when the Indian attacks came, it was Clarke who led his neighbors in retaliatory raids. However, it would be in the Revolutionary War that his leadership became crucial.

When the rebellion began in Boston, settlers in the newly settled regions of Georgia signed a letter of support for the British Government. Colonel John Dooley, commander of the Wilkes County Militia, and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke, second in command of that unit, signed that letter of support. Their motivation was simple. The British troops in Georgia helped keep the Indians in check. If they were to be moved to

Boston to put down a rebellion, Georgia would lose this defense. It was expediency, not political conviction, which prompted their actions. However, when it appears that the British would use the Indians to put down any opposition, the mood changed.

Anti-British sentiment arose and Sons of Liberty became increasingly active. In New Richmond, they had targeted a rather obnoxious Loyalist, Thomas Brown of Augusta. After brutal treatment, he was tarred and the hot tar resulted in the loss of two toes (Cashin, 1999). Some scholars, including Cashin, interpret Brown's later acts of brutality as merely a British officer obeying the commands of a higher authority. Georgians, especially Elijah Clarke and the men of the Wilkes County Militia who bore the brunt of Burnfoot Brown's wrath, thought otherwise.

Brown, along with many other supporters of the King, moved from the increasing hostile Carolinas and Georgia to British Florida. There they were organized into military units, trained, armed, uniformed and paid by the British. These units, comprised of Americans, would become as ruthless, if not more so, than the British regulars. In 1777, Brown returned to Georgia with his rangers. By inciting the Indians, he started attacks on the settlers which killed families. The militia responded and Elijah Clarke led the settlers against the Indians.

With the influx of hundreds to Florida, food became a problem and raids into south Georgia's rich agricultural areas became common. Three campaigns were organized to attack Florida and to put an end to the raids. The three were poorly planned and the coordination between land and sea forces resulted in the first two being aborted without any significant achievements. In the third campaign in June of 1778, the governor of Georgia insisted on commanding the Georgians without cooperation from the other commands. This isolated the Georgians and, when they attacked, Thomas Brown's rangers flanked the Georgians and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke was shot in the leg and barely escaped capture. This was the first encounter between Brown and Clarke and it would not be the last (Cashin, 1999).

In December 1778 the British captured Savannah and British troops, under the command of Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell, moved into Augusta. Campbell, believing that most of the Southerners would flock to the King's standard when British troops arrived, envisioned a force of six thousand Loyalists (Swager, 2008). He sent Major Daniel McGirth up the Savannah River with orders to build boats for use in crossing the river to attack Patriot forces in South Carolina. Lt. Col. Boyd was sent to recruit in north-western Carolinas and Major John Hamilton was sent to Wilkes County. The recruiting in Wilkes County was brutal as Hamilton believed that anyone who did not join him deserved to be hanged and he did just that.

Colonel John Dooley and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke of the Wilkes Country Militia lacked the manpower to deal with Hamilton and appealed to South Carolina for help. Col. Andrew Pickens arrived and among his men was Capt. James McCall who will later accompany Georgia forces. Hamilton moved to Carr's Fort, and was soon surrounded by Pickens and the Patriot militia. Knowing there was no water in the fort, it was expected that Hamilton would have to surrender. Initially the plan was to burn the Loyalists out, but when Pickens realized there were women and children in the fort he abandoned that plan and let thirst force a surrender.

As the siege continued, word came that Lt. Col. Boyd who was recruiting in South Carolina was threatening the homes and families of Pickens's men. Fearing for the safety of their families, Pickens and

his militia hurriedly left Carr's Fort and rode towards Ninety-Six. He left a detachment under the command of Capt. Robert Anderson to move north and prevent Boyd from returning to Georgia. Major Hamilton evacuated Carr's Fort and returned to Augusta.

Lt. Col. Boyd returned to Georgia but suffered serious casualties when Anderson attempted to prevent the much larger British force from crossing the Savannah River. Col. Pickens moved back into Georgia, and with the South Carolina militia and the Wilkes County militia attacked Boyd as the Loyalists camped at Kettle Creek on 14 February 1779.

Recent archaeological studies are providing new insight into that battle. However, Elijah Clarke is credited with contributing to the patriot victory. Seeing a British officer attempting to mount a defense, Clarke charged. According to the story, his horse was shot under him, he mounted another and scattered the Loyalist. In the battle Lt. Col. Boyd was mortally wounded and his force suffered 70 killed and wounded and the patriots took 150 prisoners and more than 600 horses. The patriots suffered 9 killed and 21 wounded. These actions forced the British to abandon Augusta. They also demonstrated that the British Southern Strategy had a serious flaw. The vast numbers of Loyalist which the British had depended on recruiting were just not there (Davis, 2006).

Emboldened by the events in Georgia, Major General John Ashe of North Carolina led a combined force of Continentals and militia into Georgia intending to attack the British in Savannah. He was attacked by British troops at Briar Creek on 3 March. In a brief battle, the Americans lost two hundred killed, fifty wounded, and one hundred seventy-five captured. At the time of the battle, Col. John Dooley and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke were leading their militia toward Ashe to join him. They arrived at the scene of the battle too late to participate but buried the dead.

With the British success at Briar Creek, Georgia was once again established as a royal colony. In the fall a combined force of French and Americans attacked Savannah attempting to dislodge the British. The Wilkes County Militia was part of this attempt. When the British successfully defended Savannah, and then, in the spring moved to South Carolina and captured Charleston, the war seemed lost.

In Georgia, Augusta was once again in the hands of the British and this time the commander was Lt. Col. Thomas Brown. Burnfoot Brown, as he was known to his enemies, called for the militia to surrender and many did take the terms of parole offered. Col. John Dooley accepted parole, but Elijah Clarke vowed to fight to the death. In South Carolina, Col. Andrew Pickens accepted parole but Major James McCall spurned the offer and would join forces with Clarke in many engagements in the future.

With Georgia and South Carolina occupied by the British, North Carolina would be under attack next. Col. Charles McDowell of North Carolina set up camp at Earle's Ford on the Pacolet River in north-western South Carolina and called for militia to join him to oppose the British. The site was well-chosen as it was near both North Georgia and Western North Carolina, an area of the Watauga and Nolichucky settlements in what is now east Tennessee.

Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke and the Wilkes County Militia joined McDowell at the Patriot camp. Also, Col. Isaac Shelby arrived with his Overmountain Men. The men of these two units may have been acquainted from the long years of Indian fighting. Many may have moved from North Carolina after the Battle of Alamance. Some may have been related. In any case, these were men cut from the same cloth. They

shared the same culture and history, and were rugged, hard, experienced fighters, as the British would soon learn.

The first action was an attack on Fort Anderson, known locally as Fort Thicketty. On 30 July the combined forces of Shelby and Clarke attacked and the Loyalists surrendered without firing a shot. Clarke moved his militia to camp in the vicinity of Cedar Springs and Shelby camped nearby. On 8 August a detachment of British Provincials under the command of Capt. James Dunlap attacked Clarke's camp. Clarke moved back to Wofford's Iron Works and was joined by Shelby as Dunlap pursued. In a running battle, the Patriots killed thirty soldiers and took fifty prisoners before driving Dunlap off. In his retreat, Dunlap met his commander, Major Patrick Ferguson who renewed the chase.

Another running battle ensued and, as the Patriots stood and fought, then retreated to make another stand, they were able to move and retain their prisoners. In the battle, Clarke had sustained two sword wounds, one on his head and one on his neck. Briefly, he had been taken prisoner and held by two Provincials. When he saw that his son was in difficulty, he threw off his captors and returned to the fight. When the Patriots reached the high ground along the Pacolet, their position was too strong for the British to attack, and they retreated without recovering the prisoners. Those prisoners would be taken over the mountains and held there. This was the first time Shelby and Clarke thwarted Major Ferguson and it would not be the last time.

On the night of 17 August, Clarke, Shelby and the newly arrived Col. James Williams and his Little River Militia, started a ride towards Musgrove's Mill on the Enoree River. They expected to find a Loyalist force of about 200 and planned a surprise attack. Arriving at dawn, they discovered that a large force of British soldiers from Ninety-Six had arrived the evening before and were camped on the site. A Tory patrol discovered the Patriots so the element of surprise was lost as well as an opportunity for a direct attack. The Patriots erected makeshift breastworks in the woods overlooking a cleared field. To lure the British into firing range, Capt. Shadrick Inman of the Wilkes County Militia, went forward with a small group of horsemen and attacked the British camp. The British pursued and in the resulting fire, all of the British and Loyalist officers but one were killed or wounded. The British retreated in a rout, followed by the Patriots firing into the retreating British. In the engagement the Patriots had killed sixty-three of the British forces, wounded ninety and taken seventy prisoners. There were four patriots dead. Sadly, one was Shadrick Inman.

Shelby, Clarke and Williams were determined to follow the retreating British clear to Ninety-Six but, while waiting for their horses to be brought up, word arrived from McDowell that the British had defeated the Continental Army under Major General Gates at Camden. McDowell ordered the men to return home before they could be cut off by the British forces which would certainly move into the backcountry with a larger force. Before the commanders parted they agreed that the way to deal with Major Patrick Ferguson was to mass the militia. They would keep in touch and, if one were threatened, they would all respond.

Shortly after the Patriots left the field, Ferguson's mounted arrived. A pursuit followed but was called off by Ferguson when his horses were exhausted. This is the second time troops under Ferguson's command had experienced defeat at the hands of the Patriot militia.

Back in Georgia, Elijah Clarke turned his attention to Augusta where Lt. Col. Thomas Brown commanded. It was at Augusta that Brown stored trade goods for the Indians whom he used to intimidate the settlers. Clarke, accompanied by James McCall, attacked on 14 September, scattering the Indians, and moving against Brown who took refuge in the McKay Trading Post (Rauch, 2005). After a four day siege which went well for the Patriots, British troops arrived from Ninety-six, commanded by Lt. Col. John Cruger. In their haste to retreat, many of Clarke's wounded were left behind and taken prisoner.

Captain Ashy and twelve of the wounded prisoners were hanged on the staircase of the White House (McKay's), where Brown was lying wounded, so that he might have the satisfaction of seeing the victims of his vengeance expire (McCall, 1909:486).

McCall also relates that other prisoners were turned over to the Indians to be tortured and killed. A wave of violence swept over Wilkes County. One hundred homes were burned, and Cruger hanged those who had once taken parole and then returned to the fight. Old men who had taken no part in the event were herded into prison, and prominent citizens were rounded up and imprisoned (Rauch, 2005).

With violence threatened from all sides from Cruger and his forces from Ninety-Six, Thomas Brown's troopers, and Thomas Walters and his Tories and 'white savages,' (white men who participated dressed as Indians), Wilkes County suffered numerous atrocities. Col. John Dooley who had taken a parole and promised to remain neutral, had been assured that the British would honor his position. However, he was killed by Tories.

Seeing the danger, Clarke called for the militia to muster at Petersburg, a village on the Savannah River north of Augusta. Three hundred men arrived accompanied by four hundred and fifty women, children slaves and old people. There was no safety for civilians in Wilkes County! (Hays, 1946). Clarke knew that the British had not been able to breach the mountains between what is now North Carolina and Tennessee. If he could get his people to the settlements of Watauga and Nolichucky, they would be safe. The distance was over two hundred miles and would take weeks, and there were rations for only a few days. Many would have to walk as there were not enough horses. The weather, now in late September, was deteriorating. There was no other choice. He would lead his people through the mountains of North Georgia and the Carolinas to safety.

In his pension application, David Thurmond reports that they followed the Savannah River to its confluence with the Tugaloo where they crossed over into South Carolina (Thurmond, 1833). There are reports of stragglers being captured and suffering atrocities from Tories and Indians alike.

When Lord Cornwallis learned that Clarke was headed for the mountains, he sent Major Patrick Ferguson into the Backcountry to intercept the Georgians. Ferguson rode as far as Old Fort, just west of present-day Marion, North Carolina, forcing McDowell's militia ahead of him. However, he did not find Clarke. One must assume that since Ferguson used the roads of that time, Clarke must have used the trails at the base of the Appalachian Mountains. When Ferguson failed to find Clarke, he sent an ultimatum across the mountains to Col. Isaac Shelby, ordering him to return the prisoners, lay down his arms, and swear allegiance to the King, or Ferguson would cross the mountains, hang the militia, and lay waste their settlements with fire and sword.

Col. Shelby was not to be intimidated. He called for the militia units to assemble at Sycamore Shoals.

The militia, who assembled as Sycamore Shoals, were men who lived on the land as they traveled. They carried dried corn, maple sugar and little else. They did not need a commissary or a large supply of provisions. They carried their rifles, tomahawks, and scalping knives. Their meager food supply would be supplemented with game. They were a self-sufficient unit and a fearsome group. Proud of the homes they had established in the mountains, they were prepared to protect them. However, they would not fight in their own territory. They would take the war to Ferguson (Swager, 2008:76).

Militia units from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina joined the Overmountain Men as they moved to hunt down Ferguson. Where were the Georgians? Clarke, at Musgrove's Mill, had agreed to keep in touch and respond when needed. It appears that Clarke and his refugees were lost somewhere between Mount Pizgah and Mount Mitchell. That would put them close to present-day Asheville, North Carolina. Patriot Militia, commanded by Col. Edward Hampton, encountered them as the Georgians searched for a passage through the mountains confronting them. When appraised of the situation, Clarke sent a detachment of about thirty Georgians under the command of Major William Candler and Captain Stephen Johnson and they would fight at King's Mountain under Col. James Williams whom they knew from the Musgrove's Mill battle (Hays, 1946).

The men who had found the exhausted and starved Georgians directed them to Sam's Gap, a pass that took them to Nolichucky where the civilians remained until the danger of war was over. That would be about two more years! (Hays, 1946). According to pension records, it seems that Clarke remained in the area for about three weeks getting his civilians housed and protected (Thurmond, 1833). He then led his militia back over the mountains to continue the fight. Since the number of militia accompanying Clarke from this point forward never approach the three hundred who left Georgia, it is possible that some of the men stayed with the civilians. That seems reasonable since they were leaving their women and children in a territory vulnerable to Indian attacks.

Clarke attached himself to Thomas Sumter's command and fought at the battles of Fish Dam Ford, and then at the patriot victory over Tarleton at Blackstock's. However, after Sumter was wounded, Clarke and his militia moved south towards Ninety-Six and were caught between a Loyalist militia force and Provincial troops at Long Cane. Clarke and McCall fought their way out but 14 of their men were killed and Clarke and McCall were wounded. McCall's wounds were superficial but Clarke sustained a chest wound and the British commander thought that Clarke had been mortally wounded. Captain James Dunlap was left on the field to attend to the mopping up operations. When he realized that Clarke had not succumbed from his wound, Dunlap was determined to hunt him down.

The first stop was James McCall's home where the British destroyed property and terrorized the family, plundered even the family's clothing leaving Mrs. McCall and her children destitute. Not finding either McCall or Clarke, Dunlap then make a mistake that would have an impact on the rest of the war. He attacked Andrew Pickens's plantation, violating Pickens's parole. Knowing the earlier association of Pickens and Clarke, Dunlap believed Clarke may have found sanctuary there. An enraged Pickens declared that he had kept his word, but the British had not kept theirs. He would rejoin the fight with 'a halter round his neck'. If caught by the British in arms he would be hanged.

Brigadier General Daniel Morgan was campaigning in the area to 'spirit up the people and annoy the enemy.' He had Continental troops with him but needed militias support. On Christmas Day 1780, Andrew Pickens with men of his Long Cane Militia, and Major James McCall with his troops arrived at

Morgan's camp on Grindal Shoals on the Pacolet River. He offered his service to Morgan and it was gratefully accepted. Pickens left to call out more militia and McCall stayed with Morgan's cavalry and became their eyes and ears as he knew the territory.

Clarke continued to remain hidden as he healed from what was a high chest, or shoulder wound. He was a tough old bird, but the wound was serious requiring a long period for healing. While Clarke was indisposed, his Georgians answered the call Andrew Pickens sent through the area for militia to join him. About one hundred Georgians did and many fought as skirmishers under the command of John Cunningham of the Wilkes County Militia. James McCall commanded the mounted militia in the battle. Following Morgan's brilliant success at the Battle of Cowpens, Andrew Pickens and his militia, James McCall and the Georgia militia accompanied the Continental Army in the Race to the Dan providing militia support to the Dan River.

The first weeks on March Pickens led the militia back home and a healed Elijah Clarke resumed command of his militia. Accompanied by James McCall they went looking for Captain James Dunlap. They found him at Beattie's Mill in the Long Cane District. The Georgians poured rifle fire into the poorly protected British and, after Dunlap and about three dozen of his men were killed or wounded, the British surrendered. It was expected that British officers would be imprisoned at Salisbury until they could be exchanged for American officers of equal rank. Dunlap did not make it to the prison. The Georgians killed him. Although Pickens and Nathanael Greene considered it murdered, those who had encountered Dunlap's brutality in the past considered it justified. Georgians called it "Georgia parole."

As the Georgians moved back toward the Savannah River and home, many men became ill with smallpox. It was reported that one hundred and fifty Backcountry militiamen were afflicted and fifty died. Elijah Clarke was stricken and went into self-imposed isolation to recover and would survive. James McCall, a veteran of Kettle Creek and fourteen other engagements, was infected and died of the disease.

When Elijah Clarke and his militia were sufficiently recovered to take the field, they turned their attention again to Augusta and their nemesis, Burnfoot Brown. Knowing that Brown was moving large supplies for his Indian allies to Fort Galphin on the Savannah River, Clarke moved in that direction. Anticipating the attack, Brown moved two companies of his King's Rangers to Fort Galphin. Clarke began a siege of the fort.

While Clarke had been ill, Major General Nathanael Greene had moved into South Carolina and had forced the British out of Camden. He was now ready to attack Ninety-Six. He ordered Lt. Col. Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee, newly promoted General Andrew Pickens, and Col. Elijah Clarke to attack Augusta. When a detachment of Lee's Legion arrived at Fort Galphin to inform Clarke of the order, the British were forced to surrender, including many of the King's Rangers.

The Patriot force moved to Augusta. They first attacked Fort Grierson which fell, then sieged Fort Cornwallis where Brown commanded. On 6 June, Brown surrendered (Rauch, 2006). It was no secret that the Georgians were determined to kill Brown, but he was conducted under guard of Lee's Legion to Savannah and turned over on parole. He would remain out of action until exchanged for an American officer of equal rank. Since he was very soon back in action, the Georgians were disappointed with that outcome. However, Col. Grierson was not so fortunate. He was wounded and held as prisoner. A rider rode up to the window of his room, fired a shot through the window killing Grierson. Georgia historians

Edward Cashin and Steven Rauch have documented that the shooter was James Anderson whose father had been brutally treated by Grierson and his Tories after the first attack on Augusta.

With Augusta reduced, Pickens and Lee moved to join Greene at Ninety-Six, but Clarke and the Wilkes county Militia remained in Georgia and returned to their devastated settlements. Clarke moved to the abandoned plantation of Tory Thomas Waters, a property which Georgia would confiscate and deed to Clarke.

Later in the summer, after Camden and Ninety-Six has been evacuated by the British, Major General Nathanael Greene was assembling an army at the High Hills of the Santee. The only British in the field were camped on the Santee River and Greene intended to regain that territory. He called for Clarke to join him with one hundred and fifty militia. Clarke did not respond. His men were still not recovered from the smallpox epidemic, his horses were tired, and the long trip in the blistering summer heat was impossible. It was fortunate he remained in Georgia as the Indians were a constant threat. Ever after Greene had pushed the British into Charleston, and Lord Cornwallis had surrendered his force at Yorktown, the conflict in Georgia and South Carolina continued.

Clarke was not idle. On 6 November 1781, Indians attacked Wilkes County. Clarke's men responded and burned Indian villages and destroyed hundreds of bushels of corn and provisions. The brutality in the backcountry continued as Lt. Col. Thomas Brown was once again in action accompanied by his Indian allies. The war in Georgia continued through the early summer months of 1782.

On 11 July 1782, the British evacuated Savannah taking over seven thousand people, three thousand were British soldiers and the rest civilians. They took three hundred Indians and five thousand slaves. Half the wealth of Georgia had been destroyed.

But it was not over. One officer did not leave. It was Lt. Col. Thomas Waters. He was still plundering in the mountainous regions of Georgia. He led Tories, Indians and white savages. In September Waters attacked. General Andrew Pickens and Col. Elijah Clarke assembled a militia force of 414 and moved across Georgia to the Cherokee territory. They took prisoners but, short of ammunition, Pickens had ordered his men not to shoot women, children and old people. They took prisoners and sent word to the chiefs that the quarrel was not with the Indians but the white men among them. Patriots would not advance if the Indians turned over their prisoners and the white men who were leading them into war. If not, Pickens would burn their villages, kill their people, destroy their provisions, and set fire to their hunting grounds. The Indians surrendered six of Waters' men and promised to capture Waters but he escaped into British Florida.

On 17 October 1782, an agreement ending the Cherokee War was signed and gave up the land between the Chattahoochee and Savannah Rivers. It was finalized in May 1783.

On 14 December 1782 the British evacuated Charleston. It took five hundred ships to remove the British Army, the Loyalists, their property and slaves from South Carolina.

What of Elijah Clarke and his Wilkes County Militia? They returned to their homes to rebuild. Clarke was promoted to brigadier general and established his permanent home at the former Waters's plantation on the Savannah River.

However, the story of Elijah Clarke doesn't end there. As part of the treaties that ended the war, Spain took what had been British Florida. The French were determined to drive them out and planned a sea and land attack on Florida. They engaged the services of Elijah Clarke to command the attack from Georgia. There were two attempts and both were aborted when the American president intervened. The new nation wanted no part of foreign intrigue.

The second attempt presented problems for Elijah Clarke. When that attack was called off, Clarke and his men had already moved towards the Florida border, and were camped at St. Mary's River. Clarke could have continued into Florida but, without the French forces, it was unwise. Clarke withdrew.

While Clarke had been occupied with the French and their invasion of Florida, the Indians in Georgia had increased their activity. Clark's men had been promised land in return for their service. Now, with Florida lands out of reach, Clarke moved against the Indians and confiscated Indian lands which he would establish as an independent republic. He called it the Republic of Oconee. This was not without precedent as his friend and fellow militia commander, John Sevier, had established the Republic of Franklin in Tennessee. Clarke's militia settled in his new republic (Hay, 1946).

Governor Matthews of Georgia, never an admirer of Clarke and, bolstered by the American government which ordered all settlers removed from Indian lands, ordered Clarke arrested. In the conflict which followed, Clarke relinquished the republic and returned home a free man. Sevier's State of Franklin was broken up, and Sevier arrested. However, Sevier was later elected as governor of Tennessee. Clarke received no such support in Georgia. However, Clarke County is named for him.

Clarke spent his last years on his plantation and was, by all accounts, a successful farmer. He died at his home in December 1799. His wife, Hannah, died in 1824. Hays writes:

After a hundred and twenty-five years Georgia waked up and realized that the short-comings of the Clarks were out-weighted by the great service they had rendered the State. General Elijah Clark, by his determined bull-dog tenacity to recover Augusta, had saved Georgia and a grateful State wished to do him honor. The neglected and unmarked graves of Elijah and Hannah Clark were located and amid great ceremony were marked....The City of Athens erected a monument to General Elijah and Hannah Clark and placed it on the principal thoroughfare at the entrance to the University of Georgia. The Daughters of the American Revolution created two new Chapters at Athens and Quitman and named them for General Elijah Clark and his wife, Hannah Clark (Hays, 1946:304).

When the Savannah River was flooded to form Clark's Hill Reservoir, the graves of Elijah and Hannah were moved to The Elijah Clark State Park. The change in spelling from Clarke to Clark occurred when children of Elijah dropped the "e." The State of Georgia uses the new spelling.

Each year, on the second week-end in February, citizens of Washington-Wilkes and members of the Georgia Society, Sons of the American Revolution, (GASSAR) assemble at Washington, Georgia, to commemorate the Battle of Kettle Creek, which was fought on 14 February 1779. On Saturday the ceremony is held on that battle site. On Sunday, a moving ceremony is held at the graves of Elijah and Hannah Clarke. The ceremony is a tribute to those men and women who fought and died to win America's independence. No man did more to deserve this honor than General Elijah Clarke.

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