



# Pines, Swamps and Fields

## A Geographic Study of the Tory War 1781



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A proven fact of war is that battlefield geography dictates the way a conflict is conducted. Terrain is decisive. This project will present the effects of geography on the North Carolina Tory War. The Tory War was conducted largely in an unconventional manner. Traditional combat was defined by compact lines and volley fire to break the opponent's moral. The extensive swamp lands, dense pine forests, and lackluster road systems of southeastern North Carolina simply did not allow for this kind of warfare and demanded a change in tactics. A return to convention was only possible once the fighting spilled over into the open fields of the Piedmont region.

Longleaf pine forests are climax temperate coniferous forests characterized by dense underbrush. Very sandy soil in these regions made roadways difficult to maintain and navigate.

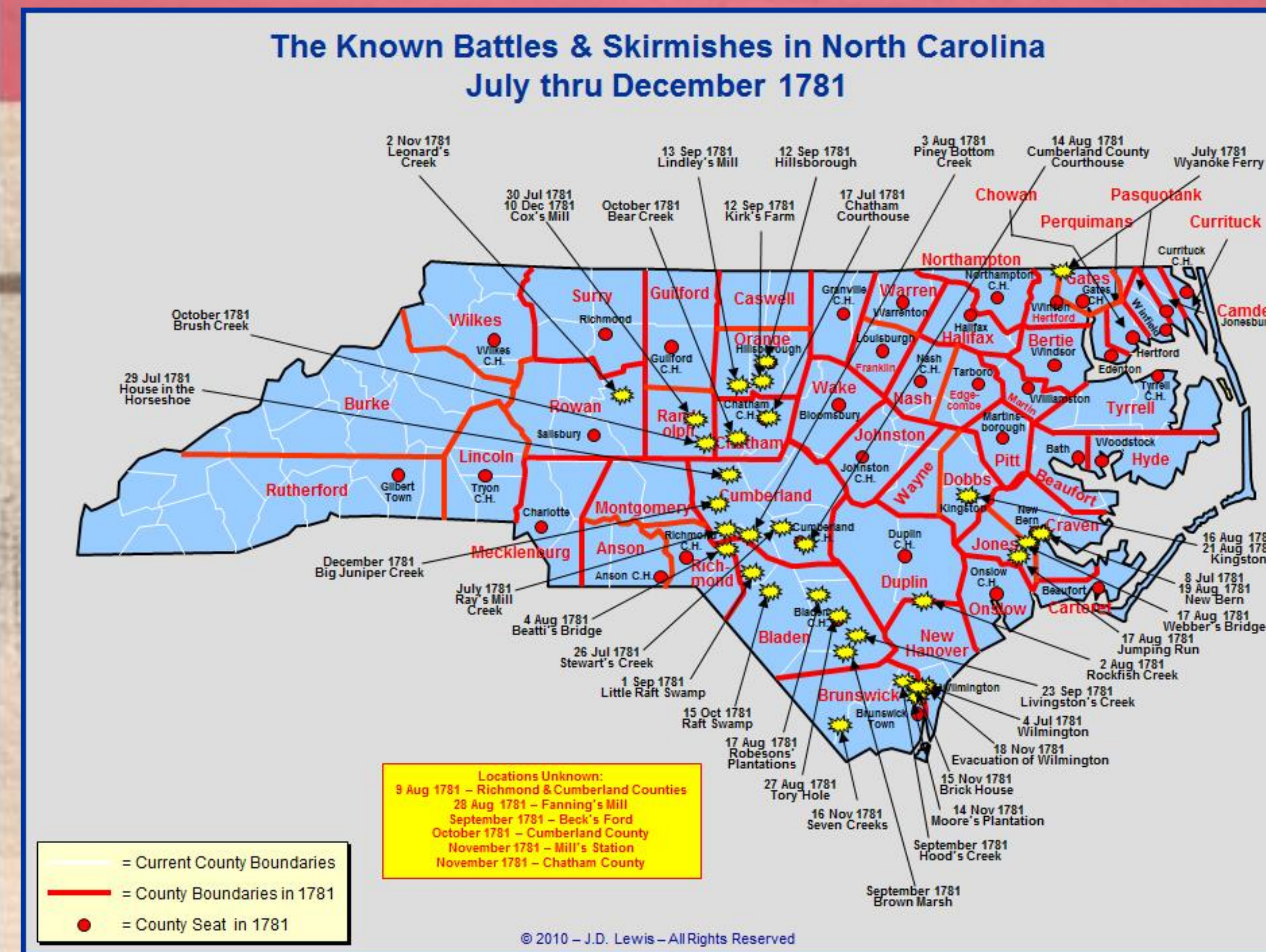
Colonel Thomas Wade was returning to the Fayetteville area with his troops. Camped at Piney Bottom Creek for the night, the forest and poor roads allowed the Loyalist forces to achieve the element of surprise.

The attack was launched an hour before dawn and resulted in the death of seven Patriots, including a nine-year-old boy. His death became a rallying point for Patriot recruiting.



Swamp: an area of low-lying uncultivated ground where water collects. Located in present day Hoke County west of the settlement of Antioch, Little Raft Swamp, which feeds into the Lumber River marks the location of the Battle of Little Raft Swamp and adjacent Battle of McPhaul's Mill.

Loyalist Commander David Fanning received word that his opponent, Colonel Thomas Wade, was moving to attack him. Wade's forces numbered over 600 men, deployed facing the swamp, expecting an attack from that direction. Fanning, greatly outnumbered, used the terrain to force Wade to retreat.



PC: NCPedia.org

In terms of men engaged the Battle of Lindley's Mill was the bloodiest battle to be fought in North Carolina. Of the 900 men who took part, some 300 became casualties.



Unknown Artist Sketch of David Fanning in combat. PC: NCPedia.org

### Sources

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The Piedmont region refers to an area between the coastal plains and the Appalachian Mountains. This area is characterized by rolling hills, fertile farmland and hardwood forests. Unlike the previous regions this section was less densely vegetated, more developed and lent itself to a more conventional military campaign.

The Battle of Lindley's Mill was the decisive conflict of the Tory War. On September 12 Fanning and a force of 600 Loyalists captured Governor Thomas Burke. Enroute to British held Wilmington, Fanning's force was ambushed by 300 Patriots led by General John Butler. The battle that followed would be the only conventional battle of the war due to the more open terrain and better developed roads. The aggressive attack by the Patriots neared success, but Fanning's quick thinking rallied his troops to victory.

