

Life in the Backcountry of SC and Its Effect on the American Revolution  
September 2007

**Lesson Name**

Unit Title: History Brought to Life

Lesson: Life in the Backcountry of SC and its Effect on the American Revolution

**By Katherine Britton**

**Content Standards**

**State: South Carolina**

USHC-1.1 Summarize the distinct characteristics of each colonial region in the settlement and development of America, including religious, social, political, and economic differences. (H, E, P, G)

**Thematic Strands:**

Time, continuity, change

Science, Technology, and Society

**Process Standards**

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| A. Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources—graphs, charts, tables, diagrams, texts, photographs, documents, and interviews |
| B. Plan and organize a geographic research project (e.g., specify a problem, pose a research question or hypothesis, identify data sources)                |
| C. Select and design appropriate forms of graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts to organize social studies information                                      |
| D. Use a variety of media to develop and organize integrated summaries of social studies information   |
| E. Put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure                                       |

**Historical Background:**

South Carolina's crucial role in the American Revolution is often overlooked as many history textbooks focus on battles in the north eastern US. The battles in the northern part of SC are often forgotten as the focus on the SC American Revolution is often settled on

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Charleston and the coast. Life in the backcountry of SC was very different from that in Charleston and near the coast, and the results of those differences made the battles fought in the backcountry different also. Battles often reflect the people of a region, as was the case in SC. This lesson allows students to assemble information from social histories, battle histories, and folklore to depict life in the SC backcountry in the late 1700's and infer how that affected the battles fought there.

### **Sources Used:**

**Primary Source:** "It Will Require Much Time to Model the Manners and Morals of these Wild Peoples": Charles Woodmason Visits the Carolina Backcountry, 1768

Edgar, Walter. *Partisans and Redcoats: The American Revolution in the Southern Backcountry*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

Kierner, Cynthia. *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1834*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Babits, Lawrence L. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 2001.

Project CITE: Cowpens Initiative for Teacher Education. CD from Cowpens National Battlefield, Post Office Box 308, Chesnee, South Carolina 29323, or contact us via the worldwide web at <http://www.nps.gov/cowp>

### **Procedures**

Hook: Class will complete Did You Know (attached) to assess knowledge of the subject.

1. Divide class into 4 groups. Give each group the sources listed or segments from the sources. Assign one group to create a description of home life in the SC Backcountry during the Revolution. Assign a second group to create a description of religious and social life. Assign the 3<sup>rd</sup> group the military and political arenas to describe. Assign the 4<sup>th</sup> group the history (1700s) of the area to include

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- settlement and the Indian situation. Allow the students to work on their topic for 3 to 4 days, using the primary and secondary sources given as well as other sources to be found.
2. Each group will then depict their findings visually on a web site, poster, art work, children's book, etc.
  3. Each group will present their findings to the class.
  4. Individuals will synthesize the areas of life in a discussion question on the test.  
“What was life like in the SC Backcountry? How did these elements affect the battles?”

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**Primary Source Segment 1:** Charles Woodmason, (Richard Hooker, ed.), *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1953), 58–63.

Tuesday August 16. In Consequence of a Promise made, set off this Morning with a Guide for Flatt Creek—Here I found a vast Body of People assembled—Such a Medley! such a mixed Multitude of all Classes and Complexions I never saw. I baptized about 20 Children and Married 4 Couple—Most of these People had never before seen a Minister, or heard the Lords Prayer, Service or Sermon in their Days. I was a Great Curiosity to them—And they were as great Oddities to me. After Service they went to Revelling Drinking Singing Dancing and Whoring—and most of the Company were drunk before I quitted the Spot—They were as rude in their Manners as the Common Savages, and hardly a degree removed from them. Their Dresses almost as loose and Naked as the Indians, and differing in Nothing save Complexion—I could not conceive from whence this vast Body could swarm—But this Country contains ten times the Number of Persons beyond my Apprehension.—[total] Miles 2606

Returned in the Evening to a Gentleman's House 10 Miles distant and stayed the Night. Next Day went down to Pine Tree.—25 [miles]; 25 [miles]

Here I found a Packet from the Lieutenant Governor enclosing some Proclamation lately issued for the Rioters to disperse on Pain of Proscription—with a pardon for all who would remain Quiet for the future. This I am directed to publish thro' the Country, and to accompany it with suitable Exhortations.

Tho' vastly fatigu'd—almost famished, and very weak thro' Heat of the Weather and Pain of traveling (having several Boils broke out on me and my Skin full of Seed Ticks) Yet I set to Work to draw up a Discourse suitable to the Subject enjoyn'd Me.

Thursday) Went up the Wateree River to marry and baptize according to Notice given—Here I published the Proclamation.—2656 [total miles]

The Licentious Gang of Presbyterians stopt the Governors Messenger—broke open my Packet to see the Contents and would have whipp'd the Man, if not prevented: for some among them fear'd, that if they took this Step, I would leave off preaching and retire to Town, and then the Church People would whip them——10 [miles]

Sunday 21) A Day appointed for a General Meeting of the people on 25 Mile Creek to hear the Proclamation and my Discourse on the State of Public Affairs—To hinder which the Presbyterians sent up to the Waxaws and brought down their Teacher from thence to the Meeting House at Pine Tree—Where was a General Assembly of the Sectaries of all Kinds round about and many Church People some out of Curiosity—Others, because they would not hear the Proclamation—The Provost Marshal was to come up from Town to publish it—But the Regulators got Intelligence and arm'd 500 Men, threatening to whip, or shoot Him—So it was sent to Me. Another was sent to St Marks to Col.

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Richardson for him to draw out his Regiment and publish it. He indeed came up, but was afraid to do—To such pass are Things come here—and so weak are the Hands of Government.

I had not above 50 Auditors—but they were so well pleas'd with my Sermon, as to desire me to print it—I intend to send a copy to Charlestown.

The Congregation confirm'd to Me the Report, that the Anabaptists should threat to whip me, if I came any more on that Side the River to preach, or publish Proclamations—Excited thereto by some of the principal of the Presbyterians—Returned in the Evening to Pine Tree alias Cambden, to my Lodgings.—20 [miles]

Monday the 22d. The People tell me that the Regulators being exasperated, at my publishing the Governors Proclamation some of their Head Men brought their Children as Yesterday to the Meeting to be baptized, altho' they are Members of the Church. ——— 2686 [total miles]

Wednesday the 24. Hearing of an Assembly at Hanging Rock Creek I sat off for that place with my Horse heavy loaded with Provisions and Necessaries—Weather exceeding dry and Hot. The Creature gave out, and was obliged to tarry in the Wild Wilderness all Night—I ty'd the Horse to a Tree, Wrapp'd my Self in my Cloak—took my Saddle for my Pillow, and (like Charles the 12th) slept in my Boots very comfortably—I had no Fire—But I am under no dread of Wild Beasts or Snakes—Thousands Would have been scar'd—I had a fine warm Night. But had it rain'd, I should have been in an dismal Situation.—30 [miles]

Thursday) Attended the Multitude, which consisted wholly of Irish Presbyterians and lawless Persons—so that I dar'd not to read the Proclamation as my Life would have been endangered.

Friday) Hearing that another Multitude was to assemble as this day on Lynch's Creek, I sent the Proclamation to the Heads of them—fearing to go my Self, lest I should be torn in Pieces for not one of the Magistrates dare do as I do—and 'tis a Mercy that they pay some Regard to my Gown.

Set off for the Waxaws, to consult with some Persons about building of a small Chapel in those Parts, Met on the Road with a Presbyterian Teacher, who travelled with me the Day. The People subscribed to a General-House—i.e. Neither Church, or Meeting—but open for Ministers of all denominations. My Horse greatly jaded thro' heat of the Weather and Great drought and my Self greatly tormented with Seed Ticks, by my lying in the Woods. Seed Ticks are a small Insect not bigger than the Point of a Needle with which ev'ry Leaf and Blade of Grass is covered at this Season of the Year—they bite very sharp—get into the Skin cause Inflammations—Itchings, and much torment.—20 [miles]; 2736 [total miles]

Saturday—Crossed the River—and came to Rocky Mount very weary and hungry—having eaten nought but a little Rice these 4 days.—20 [miles]

Sunday 28) Went to the Wateree Creek to attend the Congregation there—Many People

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assembled. Read the Proclamation— and in afternoon my late Sermon, which pleas'd them—And they too desired that I would print it.—10 [miles]

In the Evening attempted to ride up to Jacksons Creek to attend a Congregation on Tuesday—But the Horse being very Sick and tired, gave out. So put up at a Cabbin on the Road.

Monday) Finding the Horse unfit for Travel, walk'd back to the Wateree Creek, and from thence led the Horse down to Pine Tree where I came on Tuesday very weak and very Weary—the Weather being very hot and dry, and having had no Sleep for some Nights, my Skin being full of Seed Ticks.—30 [miles]

Employ'd this Week in answering the Governor's Letter—Writing to the Council—Board of Church Commissioners and in filling up Petitions from the Peoples.

The Seditious Multitude refuse to embrace the Governor's Proclamation.

Saturday September 3) Rode down the Country on the West Side the Wateree River into the Fork between that and the Congaree River—This is out of my Bounds—But their having no Minister, and their falling (therefrom) continually from the Church to Anabaptism, inclin'd me to it—The People received me gladly and very kindly. Had on Sunday 4—a Company of about 150—Most of them of the Low Class—the principal Planters living on the Margin of these Rivers.

Baptiz'd 1 Negroe Man—2 Negroe Children—and 9 White Infants and married 1 Couple—The People thanked me in the most kind Manner for my Services—I had very pleasant Riding but my Horse suffered Greatly. The Mornings and Evenings now begin to be somewhat Cool, but the Mid day heat is almost intolerable— Many of these People walk 10 or 12 Miles with their Children in the burning Sun—Ought such to be without the Word of God, when so earnest, so desirous of hearing it and becoming Good Christians, and good Subjects! How lamentable to think, that the Legislature of this Province will make no Provision—so rich, so luxurious, polite a People! Yet they are deaf to all Solicitations, and look on the poor White People in a Meaner Light than their Black Slaves, and care less for them. Withal there is such a Republican Spirit still left, so much of the Old Leaven of Lord Shaftsbury and other the 1st principal Settlers still remains, that they seem not at all disposed to promote the Interest of the Church of England—Hence it is that above 30,000£ Sterling have lately been expended to bring over 5 or 6000 Ignorant, mean, worthless, beggarly Irish Presbyterians, the Scum of the Earth, and Refuse of Mankind, and this, solely to ballance the Emigrations of People from Virginia, who are all of the Established Church.—50 [miles]; [total] Miles 2846

It will require much Time and Pains to New Model and form the Carriage and Manners, as well as Morals of these wild Peoples—Among this Congregation not one had a Bible or Common Prayer—or could join a Person or hardly repeat the Creed or Lords Prayer—Yet all of 'em had been educated in the Principles of our Church. So that I am obliged to read the Whole Service, omitting such Parts, as are Repetitious, and retaining those that will make the different Services somewhat Uniform— Hence it is, that I can but seldom use the Litany, because they know not the Responses.

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It would be (as I once observ'd before) a Great Novelty to a Londoner to see one of these Congregations—The Men with only I a thin Shirt and pair of Breeches or Trousers on—barelegged and barefooted—The Women bareheaded, barelegged and barefoot with only a thin Shift and under Petticoat—Yet I cannot break [them?] of this—for the heat of the Weather admits not of any [but] thin Cloathing—I can hardly bear the Weight of my Whig and Gown, during Service. The Young Women have a most uncommon Practise, which I cannot break them off. They draw their Shift as tight as possible to the Body, and pin it close, to shew the roundness of their Breasts, and slender Waists (for they are generally finely shaped) and draw their Petticoat close to their Hips to shew the fineness of their Limbs—so that they might as well be in Puri Naturalibus—Indeed Nakedness is not censurable or indecent here, and they expose themselves often quite Naked, without Ceremony—Rubbing themselves and their Hair with Bears Oil and tying it up behind in a Bunch like the Indians—being hardly one degree removed from them—In few Years, I hope to bring about a Reformation, as I already have done in several Parts of the Country.—284[6?] [Miles]

Received Letters from England—One acquaints me with death of the Reverend Mr. Crallan, 10 days after his Embarking. This is the 13th or 14th of the Clergy dead or gone here within these 2 Years—This Gentleman grew insane before his departure. He was a Saint—An Angel in his Life and Manners—A most pious and devout Young Man, and yet he could not escape the Censure of these flighty, Proud, Illprincipled Carolin[i]ans. They are enough to make any Person run Mad—And they crack'd the Brain of one Young Man Mr. Amory the Year before. We have two now in the same Condition—And others, whose Situation is so uneasy, that Life is a Burden to them—I would not wish my worst Enemy to come to this Country (at least to this) Part of it to combat perpetually with Papists, Sectaries, Atheists and Infidels— who would rather see the Poor People remain Heathens and Ignorants, than to be brought over to the Church. Such Enemies to Christ and his Cross, are these vile Presbyterians.

Tuesday 6th) Officiated at Sawneys Creek; I expected at least 3 or 400 People, but had not half the Number—They refus'd to listen to the Governors Proclamation—But readily subscribed My Petitions drawn up for Churches and Chapels—Even several of the Anabaptists subscrib'd. There being very Great Enmity between these Sects. They begg'd Pardon for [MS torn, one word missing] Indiscreet Speeches of some of their People, laying the blame on some of the Church People, who had threatned to whip some of their Teachers if they offered to harangue the Multitude.—20 [miles]; 2866 [total miles]

My Horse being jaded, I borrowed one of a Gentleman for this Days Duty, who proved restif and unmanageable—and in my Return run away with me into the Woods amidst the Bogs and Marshes, where at last he stuck—And I was obliged to wade thro' a large Morass to get to dry Land—After which he became more governable, and brought me home safe, tho' I sweated thro' fear of passing the Night in that Bogg.

The River is now very low, and fordable in many Places, so that I cross it with Safety, tho' always with Fear and trembling— the Bottom being rough Rocks and Sharp Stones, and the Water rolling over the Rocks makes beautiful Cascades, but what is terrifying to Horses. Mine is now used to it. There are but 3 Boats on this Long River of 150 Miles but they are about opening of Roads, and making of Ferries.

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Thus You have a Journal of two Years—In which have rode near Six thousand Miles, almost on one Horse. Wore my Self to a Skeleton and endured all the Extremities of Hunger, Thirst, Cold, and Heat. Have baptized near 1200 Children—Given 200 or more Discourses—Rais'd almost 30 Congregations—Set on foot the building of sundry Chapels Distributed Books, Medicines, Garden Seed, Turnip, Clover, Timothy Burnet, and other Grass Seeds—with Fish Hooks—Small working Tools and variety of Implements to set the Poor at Work, and promote Industry to the amount of at least One hundred Pounds Sterling: Roads are making—Boats building—Bridges framing, and other useful Works begun thro' my Means, as will not only be of public Utility, but make the Country side wear a New face, and the People become New Creatures. And I will venture to attest that these small, weak Endeavours of mine to serve the Community, has (or will) be of more Service to the Colony, than ever Mr. Whitfield's Orphan House was, or will be. On which he has [Ms. torn, one word missing] Twelve Thousand Pounds Sterling (by [Ms. torn]) from which Mankind has not been twelve pence benefitted.

Source: Charles Woodmason, (Richard Hooker, ed.), *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1953), 58–63.

Source 2: from cd CITE (Cowpens National Parks source)

In 1781, the backcountry of the Carolinas was a frontier landscape, a mosaic of towering forests, clear flowing streams, grassy prairies and savannas. Recently vacated by the Cherokees as a result of the Treaty of Paris which concluded the French and Indian War, the land had been used as a hunting ground by the native peoples.

The Cow Pens was one such savanna area. The native Americans had periodically burned similar areas, using fire as a cultural tool. They hunted the buffalo and deer that came to feed on native grasses. Such a situation was likely at Cow Pens, but there is no documentation of burning and native prairie status.

Early settlers, in turn, used these areas for agricultural activities. One was the pasturing of cattle. The name, Cow Pens, is indigenous to this area where there were numerous “cow pens”: lowcountry cow pens where cattle fed on native cane, and upland cow pens where cattle fed off native grasses and rich legumes. Cattle-raising and herding was quite a large industry in colonial Carolina.

The site of the Battle of Cowpens was perhaps one of the better known and largest of such sites in the upstate. It was here that forces combined to provide a grassy landscape, dotted with trees, with at least eight natural springs emanating landscapes from its rolling plain — a perfect site for grazing cattle. Cattle were pastured here and then driven to population centers to the east. This grassy landscape became a well-known landmark. It

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was a crossroads and a meeting place, easily identifiable in the winter with its leafless trees and the landmark Thicketty Mountain on the horizon.

Daniel Morgan chose the Cow Pens for his stand against the British. He sent word along the frontier for the militia to meet him here. He had moved his troops from the war-ravaged area around Charlotte to the Carolina backcountry to provide food for his men and forage for his horses. "Meet Morgan at the Cow Pens" must have echoed through the backcountry militia, and they did.

The Battle of Cowpens unfolded on this historic landscape.

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*Scruggs House on the Cowpens Battlefield property was built in 1828. "Life was hard, and children were expected to participate in the daily activities. Girls helped with the household chores while the boys accompanied the men in the fields and forests. Even very young boys were proficient hunters."*



The Scruggs House on the Cowpens Battlefield property was built in 1828.

### Chapter 3

When the first white settlers arrived in the western Carolinas, they found a terrain which had been home to Indians for generations. The land was rugged but rich in forest and fields. Unlike those settlements along the ocean, where supplies were transported by ship, these frontier families had only the supplies they carried with them. The first necessities were shelter and food.

The first shelters were rude cabins of round logs. In the areas where the trees were cut, they planted corn. But the immediate need for food made it necessary to hunt and kill the many animals in the area. Because accuracy was required, the early settlers carried long rifles, and to butcher the larger animals where they fell, they carried large knives. Meat was cooked over the open fire on a green wood spit, or was stewed in an iron pot hung over the fire.

The forests supplied the wood for the few pieces of furniture to make the cabin more comfortable. Chairs and bedsteads were fashioned from small trees, and tabletops were made from sawn lumber. Even the household utensils were carved or fashioned from branches and small trees. Plows and farming utensils were made the same way. When the light faded, or when bad weather kept the men close to the cabins, the time was spent building.

Frontier women had little leisure time. There was food to prepare, candles to make, cows to milk, butter to churn and animals to feed. Those who had sheep sheared the animals, carded the wool into strands and spun the strands into yarn. Clothing had to be fashioned from the wool or linen when it was available. Later, cotton was available. Women used roots and vegetation

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to make dyes to give color to their material.

Animal hides were scraped and tanned, providing leather for harnesses, leggings and moccasins. Many frontiersmen wore deerskin hunting clothes. Life was hard, and children were expected to participate in the daily activities. Girls helped with the household chores while the boys accompanied the men in the fields and forests. Even very young boys were proficient hunters.

These early settlers had few neighbors and no doctors. When an injury occurred, they dealt with it in the best manner they could. Sickness was a constant threat, and herbal medicines were administered. Many women died in childbirth, and many children died in infancy. In addition to natural disasters, Indian attacks were sporadic as the settlers pushed into the Indian territory. Who were these frontier settlers, and where did they come from?

Many of the early settlers were Scots-Irish, Scots lowlanders who had fled from the border areas of Scotland and England to escape the border wars. The Scots first settled in Ireland, but were dissatisfied with that area since they were staunch Presbyterians among the Irish Roman Catholics. They emigrated from Ireland to the New World and traveled down the Old Wagon Road from Pennsylvania to the hills of the Carolinas. Fiercely independent, they were very adaptable, and they learned quickly to survive in this wild country. They modified the Scandinavian/German log cabin to their own use. They were the quintessential frontiersmen. The lives of these people centered on families, homes, hunting, farming and herding. As the settlers pushed west, there was increasing conflict with the native people, the Cherokees, who resented the encroachment into their territory.



Typical clothing and equipment of this period included a hunting frock, a haversack and a musket.

- Long rifles (advantages and disadvantages)
- Hunting
- Conflict with Indians
- Log structures
- Lifestyles
- Independence
- Skills:
  - Candle making
  - Carding and spinning wool
  - Making linen
  - Cotton material
  - Dyeing material
  - Churning butter
  - Iron work
  - Carving
- Plowing
- Herbal medicines

## Did You Know?

1. Which was the wealthiest colony in the colonies in 1774?
2. What 3 religions were prominent in SC in the 1760s-1780s?
3. All legal documents in SC had to be filed where?
4. Outlaws were all along what major road through the South?
5. How accurate is “The Patriot”?
6. What was the belief about the militia compared to the continentals?
7. Where did Cowpens get its name?
8. Name 3 major battles in SC.
9. What were the homes like in the Backcountry?
10. What did the women spend their time doing?
11. Were the Indians still a threat in 1760-1790 in SC?
12. Many settlers were from what countries?