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# American Prisoners & Britain's Caribbean War 1780-1783

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## ABSTRACT

*This Research Note illustrates the American Revolution as part of a worldwide conflict through the seldom remembered British impressment and recruitment of American prisoners of war in Charleston and New York for service in Honduras and Nicaragua. Lord Charles Greville Montagu (1741-1784) had intended to recruit from the Loyalists of the South Carolina frontier, but the American Revolutionary war had by then deteriorated into a bloody civil war. Men were recruited from the prison hulks in Charleston and New York for a Central America campaign but became the defenders of Jamaica instead, and some of them later joined the post-war Black and White American Loyalist diaspora across the British Empire.*

## Introduction

The United States' war for independence took place within a far greater world war that even today does not have an appropriate designation. This global conflict presented special challenges for the British Empire. France and Spain, as they joined the war, for example, expended more resources in a failed effort to capture Gibraltar than the two nations devoted to America. By 1778, First Lord of the Admiralty Lord John Montagu argued that the Royal Navy needed to be transferred from America to defend British possessions in the Caribbean and even Great Britain itself.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth*, (New York: Crown, 2017), p. 309; Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire*, (New York: Penguin, 2007), pp. 615-35; Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 327-35. For more on the American Revolution as part of a global conflict see R. Ernest Dupuy, Gay Hammerman, and Grace P. Hays, *The American Revolution: A Global War*, (New York: D. Mackay, 1977) and the essays in David K. Allison and Larrie D. Ferreiro, eds., *The*

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An incident in the wider conflict that has received little notice beyond that struggle is the impressment and recruitment of American prisoners of war from British prison ships that in different ways represent the greater interconnected parts of the war across the British Empire. This incident, for example, connects the often-forgotten civil war in what is now the southern United States that was fought between Americans, and British ambitions in Central America. With the entry of France (1778), Spain (1779), and the Dutch Republic (1780) into the American conflict, British leaders saw the opportunity for the capture of a valued French sugar island or a strategic Spanish province in the New World that could better connect Britain's far-flung possessions. Such a victory would more than compensate for the loss of imperial rule over the mainland colonies. Americans from the mainland backcountry could oppose the Revolution by not only restoring the southern colonies that fed the workers of the British sugar islands of the Caribbean but by supplying soldiers for conquests in Central America. This strategy could also encourage reconciliation with the rebelling Americans and might keep some or all of Britain's American colonies within the Empire with a large degree of independence, and not unlike Great Britain's modern relationship with Canada. Any sort of end to the fighting on the mainland by Loyalist Americans would also free up the British military for new imperial conquests or defence. Optimists could envision a path through the Caribbean, Central America, and the American frontier to a world-wide victory for the British Empire.<sup>2</sup> The British, however, had a history of failure in such adventures, as with the partisan resistance in Cuba and the Philippines in the 1760s.<sup>3</sup>

Secretary for the Colonies Lord George Germain promoted such bold, if impractical schemes, and unintentionally aided the American rebels by ordering under-resourced campaigns to implement these ideas at the cost of spreading thin Britain's limited military resources, such as various misinformed schemes to create a counter-revolution by recruiting Americans. He, for example, encouraged Governor of Jamaica

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*American Revolution: A World War*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2022). For Gibraltar see Roy and Leslie Adkins, *Gibraltar: The Greatest Siege in British History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017).

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 52-53; Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826*, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 26-47.

<sup>3</sup>For British failure in Cuba and in the Philippines see Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018) and Shirley Fish, *When Britain Ruled the Philippines, 1762-1764: The Story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century British Invasion of the Philippines during the Seven Years War* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2003).

and Major General John Dalling (1731-1798) who saw Spain's entry into the war as an ally of France as such an opportunity. Dalling had served the empire in campaigns from Canada to Cuba. In January 1780, he used the British settlements in Honduras as a base from which to launch an invasion of the Mosquito Coast of Spanish Honduras and Nicaragua to seize that province as it bridged the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and could divide the Spanish Empire. He captured Honduras City, but disease then decimated his troops. Spanish Governor Matís de Gálvez, father of the later famous Spanish General Bernardo de Gálvez, proved a capable opponent. The British military, including a young Horatio Nelson, had to contend with determined resistance by Spanish forces from the interior of Nicaragua and Honduras. Nelson and most of the expedition became seriously ill. Overall, the campaign cost Dalling as many as 1,400 regulars, settlers, and native allies, and left the defences of British West Florida and Jamaica vulnerable to attack by France and Spain.<sup>4</sup>

Dalling no longer had adequate numbers to defend Jamaica, and with the recruitment of British and Hessian soldiers on the decline the British military needed to exchange captured soldiers to find men to serve in its thinning ranks and fight a rapidly expanding world war. He now considered recruiting men from Charleston, South Carolina, particularly from the American Continental Army's soldiers recently captured at the surrender of that city and at the battle of Camden. In July 1780, he dispatched Captain James Bain and two other officers of the 60<sup>th</sup> Regiment, the Royal American Regiment, to South Carolina. An American privateer outside of Charleston harbour captured their ship, however, and they became prisoners of the Americans! He next sent Major William Odell of the Jamaica militia and Lord Charles Greville Montagu, a captain in the 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment, on a mission to replace the British losses in Nicaragua with Americans.<sup>5</sup>

Odell travelled to New York and began his recruiting in late June 1780. The guards there reportedly tried to force the prisoners to enlist by cutting off their drinking water. Their efforts, according to historian Holger Hoock, still proved disappointing

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<sup>4</sup>O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, pp. 52-53 and *The Men Who Lost America*, pp. 165-207; Carl P. Borick, *Relieve Us of this Burthen: American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780-1782*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), p. 28. For the military situation in West Florida see Joseph Barton Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida*, (Tallahassee, FL: University of Florida Press, 1977); and for Jamaica see Trevor Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

<sup>5</sup>C. Leon Harris, 'Prisoners of War from the Siege of Charleston and the Battle of Camden who Joined the British in the Duke of Cumberland Regiment' (May 6, 2021) <http://revwarapps.org/b406.pdf>. Accessed 2 November 2022; Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, p. 221.

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although Odell did eventually enlist more than 300 men for his Loyal American Rangers. Some of those men came from American refugees. They arrived in Kingston, Jamaica on February 8, 1781. Odell's corps also took in two independent companies from the remnants of several volunteer corps that had served in Dalling's disastrous Mosquito Coast expedition. Captain Jeffry Amherst of the 60<sup>th</sup> Regiment would recruit 65 more men for their regiment from the prison ships in Charleston and New York after Montagu and Odell had left. Odell's troops set out to reinforce the besieged garrison at Pensacola but failed to arrive before the town surrendered to the Spanish army under General Bernardo Gálvez. The Loyal American Rangers would subsequently serve in Jamaica and 80 of their number under Major Alexander Campbell conducted a raid on Spanish Honduras in August 1782. Odell received a promotion to lieutenant colonel around May of 1782 but died on January 6, 1783. Campbell died at almost the same time. Some of the men from their battalion then became the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Duke of Cumberland Regiment.<sup>6</sup>

Lord Charles Greville Montagu (1741-1784), son of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Manchester, served as governor of South Carolina from 1766 to 1773 during which time he ended the Regulator Rebellion, a populist vigilante uprising on the frontier against bandits, by establishing backcountry courts and jails. He pardoned the rebellion's leaders.<sup>7</sup> Other political decisions by His Lordship forced him to resign, however. Montagu had pressed Dalling for permission to recruit captured Americans since he had arrived in Jamaica. Dalling now approved this idea and promised to reward Montagu with a commission of lieutenant colonel commandant of a new regiment of regulars serving as American rangers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, p. 29, p. 31, pp. 32-34, p. 36, p. 37, pp. 42-43, pp. 44-45, pp. 57-58, p. 67, pp. 77-78, pp. 124-25, p. 129; Albert W. Haarmann, 'Jamaican Provincial Corps 1780-1783,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 48 (Spring 1970): pp. 8-11. For the Caribbean on the edge of the American Revolution see Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution*. (New York: Random House, 2016), and Robert M. Calhoon, 'The Floridas, the Western Frontier, and Vermont: Thoughts on the Hinterland Loyalists' in Robert M. Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and Robert S. Davis, eds., *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (1989; special expanded and revised edition, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 218-28.

<sup>7</sup>Richard J. Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), p. 181, p. 184, pp. 233-34; Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 39, p. 93, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup>UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) - Deposition of the Duke of Manchester, n. d., Loyalist claim of Lord Charles Greville Montagu, Audit Office Papers 12/5q, p. 51; 159

Montagu intended to set out in January 1781 but failed to find a ship for Charleston and that delayed his departure until February 15. He originally wanted to recruit men from the backcountry of South Carolina, where he had ended the Regulator Rebellion by compromise.<sup>9</sup> Germain had backed the Southern Strategy, a grand scheme to invade Georgia and South Carolina to reach this backcountry population and create American Loyalist units that would fight for a British victory in South. He imagined that eventually all of the colonies as far north as Maryland could be restored to the Crown by such a strategy.<sup>10</sup>

Montagu mistakenly believed that peace had been restored in Georgia and South Carolina. Fighting on the frontier, however, had devolved into a bloody civil war as it had across Revolutionary War America. This internecine conflict has been addressed by a number of historians. Holger Hoock noted that South Carolina in 1780-1781 alone had one-fifth of all battle deaths and one-third of the wounded for the whole war and this largely from Americans fighting Americans.<sup>11</sup> Kenneth S Lynn argues that family background played a major role in whether an American chose to join the rebellion or not while Kathleen Duval argues for broadening the definition of Loyalist to encompass the conflict between the British, Native American, and Spanish people of the Gulf Coast with each other.<sup>12</sup>

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Alan D. Watson, 'The Beaufort Removal and the Revolutionary Impulse in South Carolina,' *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 84 (July 1983): pp. 121-35.

<sup>9</sup>Robert S. Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission to South Carolina in 1781: American POWs for the King's Service in Jamaica,' *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 84 (April 1983): p. 91.

<sup>10</sup>Germain to Clinton, March 8 and December 3, 1778, in K. G. Davies, ed., *Documents of The American Revolution, 1770-1783*, 19 vols., (Dublin: Valentine Mitchell BPP, 1973-1983), p. 15: pp. 58-59, p. 279; Character of Lord Rawdon, character of Lieut. Col. Doyle &c., 'Georgia Papers, Chambers Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>11</sup>Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 308.

<sup>12</sup>Duval I, *Independence Lost*., pp. 5-10. For community and American Loyalists see Kenneth S. Lynn, *A Divided People*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1977); Robert M. Weir, 'Rebelliousness: Personality Development in the American Revolution' in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), pp. 25-54; Brad A. Jones, *Resisting Independence: Popular Loyalism in the Revolutionary British Atlantic*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021); Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2013); and Taylor Stoermer, "'The Success of Either Remains in the Womb of Time": The Politics of Loyalty in the Revolutionary Chesapeake' in Rebecca Brannon and Joseph S. Moore,

The Loyalists or Tories tended to come from insular ethnic communities of immigrants and first-generation native-born Americans of different religions and/or attitudes than the much greater numbers of their American-born neighbours. To the American Revolutionaries these communities were viewed as resident alien collaborators who, as enemies of the new state, supported a foreign invader. Contempt for foreign-born persons and religious prejudice then became a powerful tool to gain support for the Revolution in the backcountry by making already suspect minority communities that failed to support the rebellion its victims. The Highland Scots of North Carolina, for example, had been largely royalists in Europe so their American neighbours generally viewed them with suspicion. With the coming of the Revolution, this mistrust evolved into a violent civil war that culminated in the Revolutionary, or Whig, militia's victory over 1,400 Highlanders and 200 former North Carolina Regulators at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, North Carolina, on February 27, 1776.<sup>13</sup> The German community of the Broad and Saluda Fork in South Carolina also remained predominately Loyalist. Historian Peter N. Moore has written about nearby immigrant poor, ethnically distinct, non-slaveholding Loyalists in the Waxhaw community in the Catawba Valley, on the border between North and South Carolina. This Scots Irish 'Blackjack' settlement found itself 'suspect, excluded, and vulnerable.' Its members suffered abuse from mainstream neighbours who 'crushed dissent and heightened fear and hatred of difference.' Like the Irish communities, some of the Germans, the Quakers, and the escaped enslaved people, the members of this settlement had been victims of intolerance elsewhere, at least as individuals, before seeking freedom and liberty on the British colonial frontier. They felt compelled to go to the British army for protection although usually not keen to serve as soldiers in anyone's military. To their American neighbours and to the British, they were misrepresented as militant

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eds., *The Consequences of Loyalism: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Calhoun*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2019), pp. 18-20.

<sup>13</sup>Robert S. Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 48-49; Wayne E. Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina: The Culture of Violence and War*, (Gainesville, FL: University Florida Press, 1990), p. 171; Robert M. Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 439-46; A. Roger Ekirch, 'Whig Authority and Public Order in Backcountry North Carolina,' in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1985), pp. 99-106. Bobby G. Moss identifies Loyalists at Moore's Creek Bridge in *Roster of Loyalists at The Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge*, (Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1992). Many of these Scotsmen must have been among the 1,400 men who eventually served in John Hamilton's Royal North Carolina Regiment.

loyalists ready to die as martyrs for the King or, conversely, as propertyless mixed race bandits termed 'white savages.' They were largely neither.<sup>14</sup>

Otherwise, the two opposing sides looked so much alike that for identification the patriots would sometimes wear white paper and the Loyalists used green twigs/pine knots, respectively, for identification. Colonel Samuel Elbert wrote that the Loyalists wore red in their headgear. General Augustin Prévost wrote that Loyalists identified themselves with either a red cross or pine twigs in their hats.<sup>15</sup> In the last months of the war, the lynching of prisoners of war in the South became known as 'Granting a Georgia parole'.<sup>16</sup> Lessons from the Southern Strategy on how to lose against populist uprisings resonates to the present.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Compensation and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants*, (Providence, RI: William Morrow Company, 1965), p. 6; Rachel N. Klein, 'Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1782,' in Hoffman, *et al*, *An Uncivil War*, p. 46; Peter N. Moore, 'This World of Toil and Strife: Land, Labor, and the Making of an American Community, 1750-1805' (PhD dissertation., University of Georgia, 2001), pp. 59-61, pp 12-14, p. 132, p.137.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas Young, 'Memoirs of Major Thomas Young,' *South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research* 4 (Summer 1976): p. 183; TNA Colonial Office Papers 5/80, folio 240 - Augustin Prévost talk to the Creeks, March 13, 1779; William Speer to John A. Speer, December 9, 1869, William Speer file, Kettle Creek Historic Site, Box 11 RCB-19864, Record Group 30-4-18, Georgia Archives, Morrow; Gordon B. Smith, *Morningstars of Liberty: The Revolutionary War in Georgia, 1775-1783*, 2 vols. to date, (Milledgeville, GA: Boyd Publishing, 2006), 1: p. 95.

<sup>16</sup>Dr. Thomas Taylor to Rev. John Wesley, February 28, 1782, Shelbourne Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; 'SAVANNAH, MARCH 14,' *Royal Georgia Gazette* (Savannah), March 14, 1782, p. 3 c. 1; William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution, So Far as It Related to the States of North and South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols., (New York: D. Longworth, 1802), 2: p. 336; E. W. Carruthers, *Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character Chiefly of the Old North State*, (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1854), p. 431; Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup>For the civil war in the Revolutionary War South see Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South Carolina*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008); Patrick O'Kelley, 'Nothing but blood and slaughter': *Military Operations and Order of Battle of the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas*, 4 vols. (Bangor, ME: Booklocker, 2004); and James Swisher, *The Revolutionary War in the Southern Backcountry*, (New York: Pelican Publishing, 2007).



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Unable to reach the frontier safely, Montagu turned to the prisoners that even he admitted were held in substandard conditions on the prison hulks. He faced serious opposition. The Continental Congress had opposed trading healthy British and German soldiers that had surrendered in the Saratoga Campaign for malnourished and sick Revolutionary POWs from the British prison hulks. One of British General Sir Henry Clinton's reasons for capturing Charleston was to take so many prisoners of war as to force a renewal of the exchange of prisoners taken at Saratoga.<sup>18</sup>

General Lord Charles Cornwallis, left by Clinton to command the British forces in the southern colonies, initially refused Montagu because he hoped to exchange the 2,000 or more men he held for the Saratoga soldiers. Nisbet Balfour, in command at Charleston after Cornwallis led his army northward, however, approved of Montagu's plans. Ironically, by that time Cornwallis had finally arranged for a prisoner exchange and he also allowed for the recruitment of men for the West Indies. Germain insisted upon recruitment from the prisoners, placing his view of the greater needs of the Empire as more important than anything that could be salvaged from what remained of the war in mainland America. Balfour threatened that the prisoners who did not enlist would suffer punishment in retaliation for atrocities committed by the Revolutionary militia.<sup>19</sup>

The British had recruited from prisoners of war since 1776. Some of the men who were captured at the British victory at Camden, South Carolina on August 16, 1780, for example, enlisted in the British Volunteers of Ireland. The Georgia Loyalists and the King's Ranger battalions enlisted men from the prison hulks in Savannah for which their commanding officers received the censure of Lord Cornwallis. Montagu's success, however, would be the largest such recruitment of the war.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>T. Cole Jones, *Captives of Liberty: Prisoners of War and the Politics of Vengeance in the American Revolution*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 158-59, pp. 191-92.

<sup>19</sup>Lord Charles Cornwallis to James Wright, Jr., July 21, 1780, Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, August 29, 1780, Saberton, *The Cornwallis Papers*, 1: pp. 274-84, 2: pp. 41-42; Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2: pp. 149-50, p. 168, pp. 166-71; Balfour to 'Militia Prisoners of War,' May 17, 1781, in R. W. Gibbes, ed., *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Columbia, SC: Banner Steam Power Press, 1853), 3: pp. 72-73.

<sup>20</sup>TNA Alured Clarke to Cornwallis, July 2, 1780, Wright to Cornwallis, July 15, 1780, Thomas Brown to same, July 16, 1780, Cornwallis to Wright, July 21, 1780, and Nisbet Balfour to Cornwallis, June 27, 1780, Saberton, *The Cornwallis Papers*, 1: pp. 242-45, pp. 274-84, pp. 328-29; Wright, to same, August 20, 1780, Cornwallis Papers, 30/11/5, folios 59-60; Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, pp. 28-31, p. 42, p.72; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' p. 92, p. 94, and 'A Georgian and a New Country: Ebenezer Platt's

British authorities had already transferred prisoners to Africa, India, the South Seas, and Sumatra to work, and often die, in labour battalions. This despite the poor treatment of the famed Ethan Allen and others having compelled the King to order that all those incarcerated be treated as prisoners of war and returned to America. Prisoners considered leaving the horrible conditions of the British prison ships, even if doing so risked death from disease in Central America. They often received treatment as traitors rather than as prisoners of war. The worst of the hulks, the *Jersey* anchored near New York, became the deadliest prison in American history considering the number of men held to the number of prisoners who died. Reportedly, hundreds of its inmates were compelled to join the Royal Navy. British officer James Simpson wrote at the time that he hoped Montagu could recruit from the prisoners in Charleston because otherwise few of them would still be alive by the following summer. Historian Carl P Borick estimates that, of 4,000 prisoners eventually held just in Charleston, nearly one-quarter volunteered for or became impressments in the British army or navy. An estimated 800 men died in British captivity in Charleston.<sup>21</sup>

Montagu ordered William Love (sometimes given as Lowe), formerly a captain in the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Carolina Continental Regiment, to board the Charleston prison hulks to recruit men on February 9, 1781. His Lordship initially found resistance from the nearly naked, sick, and starving prisoners on the Charleston hulks, despite offers of freedom and regular pay serving against Spain and not their Revolutionary comrades. Governor Darling recommended Sergeant John Brown of the 64<sup>th</sup> Regiment as a recruiting agent. Brown ordered the prisoners on deck and asked for volunteers. When none came forward, he had men seized. Anyone who resisted received a beating. Reportedly, the recruiting officers threatened to withhold clothing sent to the prisoners by Congress, and send prisoners held in barracks to the prison hulks, and to cut off rations given to the dependents of prisoners. Montagu unsuccessfully appealed to the Revolutionary General William Moultrie, then a prisoner on parole, for help in recruiting.<sup>22</sup>

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Imprisonment in Newgate for Treason in 'The Year of the Hangman,' 1777,' *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 84 (2000): pp. 106-15.

<sup>21</sup>Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 186-201, pp. 211-40; Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, pp. 78-79, p. 147; Edwin G. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners during the Revolutionary War*, (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 163-68; Robert P. Watson, *The Ghost Ship of Brooklyn: An Untold Story of the American Revolution*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 2017), pp. 214-16; Charles A. Jellico, *Ethan Allen: Frontier Rebel*, (Syracuse, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969) pp. 162-64.

<sup>22</sup>Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2: pp. 149-50, p. 168, I pp. 66-71; Shamus O. D. Wade, '1386 The South Carolina Regiment?,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 72 (Spring 1994), pp. 62-63; Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*,

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By whatever means, Captain Love had 369 White enlistees and four Black pioneers enrolled within a few days. Montagu's final totals came to six companies of almost 600 men for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of 'His Royal Highness, the Duke of Cumberland's Regiment of Carolina Rangers.' By May 21, 1781, Balfour insisted that Montagu leave with his new regiment before the prisoners revolted and tried to take over Charleston. Already more than 500 of the men incarcerated on the hulks had escaped and Balfour had to find funds to cover the expense of feeding and guarding the remaining prisoners. Montagu and his regiment left just as Generals Nathanael Greene and Lord Cornwallis had agreed to a cartel that would have exchanged these prisoners. Finding any ships leaving from Charleston proved difficult but, on May 24, Montagu and his regiment left Charleston in two transport ships protected by two frigates. The latter abandoned the transports at St. Kitts. Despite his efforts, Montagu could find no passage to Jamaica protected from enemy privateers until August 2.<sup>23</sup>

Incomplete records of Montagu's recruits as individuals survive. They included in their ranks many of the Delaware and Maryland Continentals captured fighting until overwhelmed at the battle of Camden. They were trained regulars who had proven their discipline and skill in battle, without the negative reputation of the Hessians as soldiers and with the added advantage of speaking English. Dalling had argued that the Continental soldiers were often native Europeans whom he believed would make better-disciplined soldiers for the British army than the native-born who had a reputation for stubborn independence. Some one-third of the sampling had British nativity. They had an average height of five feet, five inches tall. Place of birth shows that these men also had representatives from every colony from Georgia to New England; France; Germany; the East Indies; and the West Indies. The Duke of Cumberland Regiment had a remarkably low rate of desertion, eight men of whom only two came from the prisoners of war. Many soldiers died from tropical diseases in Jamaica, however.<sup>24</sup>

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pp. 34-35; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' pp. 96-97; Haarmann, 'Jamaican Provincial Corps,' p. 10; Bobby Gilmer Moss, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1985), pp. 583-84.

<sup>23</sup>Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, pp. 44-45, pp. 77-78; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' p. 95, p. 97; Wade, '1386 The South Carolina Regiment?,' pp. 63-65; Haarmann, 'Jamaican Provincial Corps,' pp. 10-11.

<sup>24</sup>Recruiting List, Duke of Cumberland Regiment, February 11, 1781, in Murtie June Clark, comp., *Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1981), 1: pp. 471-78; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' pp. 99-100. For the Hessians as additions to the British military and some of them forced to serve in America see Friederike Baer, *Hessians: German*

Montagu's Duke of Cumberland Regiment remained in Jamaica for the rest of the war, prepared to defend the island from a French invasion that never came. These soldiers received high praise from Dalling and from his successor Governor Archibald Campbell (1739-1791). The latter had led an invasion force that overran the northern half of Georgia in a failed effort to reach the backcountry southern Loyalists in 1778-1779. Campbell found the militia of Jamaica, as he had the Georgia Loyalists in 1779, useless. In Jamaica, he chose to depend upon the regulars, including Montagu's regiment, should France or Spain invade the island.<sup>25</sup>

As part of the worldwide nature of this war and as the British war effort failed in America, Campbell still sought soldiers to serve the King in the Caribbean. He sent agents to Charleston to recruit a third battalion for the Duke of Cumberland Regiment from free African Americans but the British evacuated that city before any new enlistments took place. Governor Campbell then asked Montagu to raise another battalion in New York. The crew of the ship in which his Lordship travelled, however, mutinied and deserted to the Revolutionary side. Montagu found himself a prisoner of war and charged with the deaths by disease of men he had recruited. General Nathaniel Greene released him, however, because North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin learned that the men Montagu had first enlisted had reportedly volunteered. Montagu brought back to Jamaica another 500 recruits from New York.<sup>26</sup>

The men of Montagu's regiment now had to make decisions about their future with this world war coming to an end. British strategists had tried throughout the war,

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*Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 37-61.

<sup>25</sup>TNA Colonial Office Papers 137/81, 137/82, 137/83 - Dalling to German, August 1 and October 10, 1780, Archibald Campbell to Lord Frederick North, June 28, 1783; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, p. 49, p. 178. For Campbell's Georgia campaign see Archibald Campbell, *Journal of An Expedition against the Rebels of GEORGIA IN NORTH AMERICA Under the Orders of ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL ESQUIRE LIEUT. COLO. Of HIS MAJESTY'S 71<sup>st</sup> REGIMT, 1778*, ed. Colin Campbell (Darien, GA: Richmond County Historical Society, 1981).

<sup>26</sup>Lord Charles Montagu to Nathanael Greene, February 3, 1783, Greene to Montagu, February 11, 1783, Alexander Martin to Greene, February 16, 1783, and March 28, 1783, in Richard K. Showman, ed., *The Papers of Nathanael Greene*, 13 vols., (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976-2015), p. 12: pp. 412-13, pp. 428-29, pp. 451-54, pp. 444-45; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' 98-101. For the Loyalist diaspora see Wallace Brown and Hereward Senior, *Victorious Defeat: The American Loyalist in Exile*, (New York: Facts on File, 1984) and Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011).

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from Georgia to Canada, to save the mainland colonies by militarising Americans for the King's cause through officers such as Archibald Campbell. This 'Americanisation' of the war failed time and again. Always the effort deteriorated into a violent civil war. Many Americans, Loyalist and not, would leave the United States after the Revolution to settle within the British and Spanish empires, from Central America to the South Seas.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fear of persecution, some of the survivors of Montagu's regiment returned to America but the majority settled in Nova Scotia as part of the great Loyalist diaspora across the British Empire, Black and White. African Americans, enslaved and free, carried the ideals of the American Revolution combined with their own struggle for human rights to Africa, Jamaica, and Nova Scotia through their leaders David George and Henry Washington, the latter once the enslaved servant of George Washington.<sup>28</sup> George Liele's enslaver, a Loyalist who died in battle in Georgia fighting for the Southern Strategy, had emancipated him during the war and he worked in Jamaica for Governor Archibald Campbell, the British officer who boasted that he tore

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<sup>27</sup>Ruma Chopra, 'Post War Loyalist Hopes: To Be "Parts and Not Dependencies" of the Empire,' in Brandon and Moore, *The Consequences of Loyalism*, 228-43.

<sup>28</sup>Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution*, (New York: Ecco, 2006), pp. 96-97; Hugh Bicheno, *Rebels & Redcoats: The American Revolutionary War*, (New York: William Collins, 2004), pp. 159-60. For the Black American Loyalist diaspora see Graham Russell Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile after the American Revolution*, (New York: Scholarly Title, 1996); Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists After the American Revolution*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 1999); Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006); John W. Pulis, ed., *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World*, (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Stephen Davidson, *Black Loyalists in New Brunswick*, (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Formac, 2020). Hessian regiments also enlisted African Americans. They accepted African Americans as labourers, musicians, servants, and soldiers, even bringing some of them back to Europe. Ironically, in Georgia in the last months of the war, Black soldiers were used to prevent Hessian desertions, Baer, *Hessians*, pp. 96-99, pp. 338-39, p. 344, pp. 379-83; Timothy Lockley, "The King of England's Soldiers": Armed Blacks in Savannah and Its Hinterlands during the Revolutionary War Era, 1778-1787", in Leslie M. Harris, Diana Ramey Berry, and Jonathan M. Bryant, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2014), pp. 26-41.

a star and stripe from the United States flag when led a conquest of Georgia.<sup>29</sup> In Jamaica, Liele's followers contributed to the end of slavery across the British Empire in 1834 with their Baptist War.<sup>30</sup>

However, and despite persecutions and a social stigma that lasted for generations, only 1 in 40 Loyalists left the United States during or after the American Revolution. Many other Americans left the new United States not because they supported British rule but because they had little faith in the future of the new country. They would sometimes move to the new post-war Spanish borderlands of East Florida, Louisiana, and West Florida.<sup>31</sup> Some 400,000 of the 'King's Friends' never left the United States at all, and of the exiles, many of them later moved back to the United States. They included 7,300 of their number who resettled in the South after crop failures in the Bahamas in 1797 and 1800. Haitians, surely including some of whom served in the

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<sup>29</sup>Manumission, August 12, 1777, Colonial Miscellaneous Bond Book JJ (1779-1780), p. 267, Record Group 49-1-9, microfilm reel 40-37, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA; Robert S. Davis, 'The Other Side of the Coin: Georgia Baptists Who Fought for the King,' *Viewpoints Georgia Baptist History* 7 (1980): pp. 47-58; John W. Pulis, 'Bridging the Troubled Waters: Moses Baker, George Liele, and the African American Diaspora to Jamaica' in Pulis, ed., *Moving On*, p. 183, pp. 189-92, pp. 199-203, p. 215 fn. 35. For more on Liele and George, see Christopher Curry, *Freedom and Resistance: A Social History of Black Loyalists in the Bahamas*, (Tallahassee, FL: University of Florida Press, 2017) and David T. Shannon, Julia Frazier White, and Deborah Van Broekhaven, *George Liele's Life and Legacy: An Unsung Hero*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013).

<sup>30</sup>Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete: Native Baptists of Jamaica—Identity, Ministry, and Legacy*, (Miami, FL: Ian Randle Publishers. 2009), pp. 5-7, p. 23, pp. 46-48, p. 83, p. 91, p. 99, pp. 100-104, p. 199, p. 205, pp. 207-209. For the Baptist War in Jamaica see Doreen Morrison, *Slavery's Heroes: George Liele and the Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica, 1783-1865*, (Seattle, WA: Liele Books, 2014) and Tom Zoellner, *Island on Fire: The Revolt that Ended Slavery in the British Empire*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

<sup>31</sup>Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, xii, p. 47, p.50, pp. 70-71, pp. 249-50, p. 256, pp. 266-72, p. 276, p. 277, p. 280, p. 305, p. 306, p. 358; Rebecca Brannon, 'America's Revolutionary Experience with Transitional Justice,' in Brannon and Moore, *The Consequences of Loyalism*, pp. 190-207; Joseph J. Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and the Discontents, 1772-1783* (New York: Liveright 2021), p. 315; DuVal, *Independence Lost*, pp. 320-51; Robert S. Davis, 'Loyalism and Patriotism at Askance: Community, Conspiracy, and Conflict on the Southern Frontier' in Calhoun, et al, *Tory Insurgents*, pp. 226-38.

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French army at Savannah, Georgia during the American Revolution, also resettled in the United States after the Haitian Revolution!<sup>32</sup>

Americans who served in Central America and Jamaica, voluntarily or otherwise, joined in this epic Loyalist migration. The Duke of Cumberland regiment disbanded on August 24, 1783. White survivors received an offer of passage back to their homes on the mainland, but they declined to go. Of those men from the Charleston prison ships, 80 chose to remain in Jamaica and enlist in the regular regiments; 74 took passage to Great Britain or Ireland; 240 of their number followed Montagu to Nova Scotia; and 92 chose to settle on the Mosquito Coast. Of Odell's men, the numbers came to 143 for the regulars in Jamaica; 50 for the British Isles; 30 for Halifax; and 15 for the Mosquito Coast. The fate of the African American Black pioneers who came from Charleston and served with Montagu's regiment remains a mystery.<sup>33</sup> A mistaken claim appeared in print that veterans of the Duke of Cumberland and the South Carolina Royalists Regiment, Black and White, became the famed First West India Regiment.<sup>34</sup>

Lord Charles Greville Montagu arrived in Nova Scotia with the first 200 of his men on December 11, 1783. Ironically, having survived years in tropical disease-ridden Jamaica, he succumbed to the effects of his first Nova Scotia winter and died on February 3, 1784, at age 45. The men he recruited from the prison hulks in Charleston and New

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<sup>32</sup>Hooock, *Scars of Independence*, 17; Leana Roberts, 'Haitian Contributions to American History: A Journalistic Record' in Doris Y. Kadish, ed., *Slavery in the Caribbean Francophone World: Distant Voices, Forgotten Acts, Forged Identities*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2016), pp. 75-90; John G. Marks, *Black Freedom in the Age of Slavery: Race, Status, and Identity in the Urban Americas*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2020), pp. 67-69; Stuart J. McCulloch, *A Scion of Heroes: The World of Captain James Murray*, (Leicestershire, UK: Troubadour, 2015), p. 116. For the Haitian Revolution refugees see David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>33</sup>Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS 'Return of the disabled officers and Privates with their Wives and Children and Servants of His Highness Duke of Cumberland's Regiment,' MG 12 Misc. vol. 6, pp. 76-77; Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, pp. 120-24; Robert S. Allen, comp., *The Loyal Americans: The Military Role of the Loyalist Provincial Corps and Their Settlement in British North America*, (New Brunswick: National Museums of Canada, 1983), p. 70, p. 72; Bobby Gilmer Moss and Michael C. Scoggins, *African-American Patriots in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution*, (Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernian Press, 2004), pp. 81-82.

<sup>34</sup>Wade, '1386 The South Carolina Regiment?' pp. 62-65; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 148; A. B. Ellis, *The History of the First West India Regiment*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1885), pp. 27-28, pp. 50-51.

York erected an impressive memorial in his honour in Halifax. Historian Todd Braisted has discovered that some of Montagu's men in Nova Scotia would, decades later, file for Revolutionary War pensions from the United States government based upon their service before leaving, or as they would claim, before being taken by force from the British prison hulks.<sup>35</sup>

Even to the end of the war, the American conflict had deep connections to the Empire. In 1782, Richard Oswald, as an official British emissary, set the final phase of the American Revolution in motion when he met in France with his acquaintance Benjamin Franklin to negotiate a way for the United States to remain in the British Empire. One of the richest men in the world, Oswald worked with many leaders close to the King on interests across the British Empire. He advised George III on America, and he worked on a project to hire the Russian navy to support Britain in the Caribbean.<sup>36</sup> Ironically, in 1775 Oswald anonymously published *American Husbandry*, a book that called for accommodations with the rebelling colonies. He had proposed the Southern Strategy believing that the population of South Carolina could be persuaded to return to their support of the Crown to restore peace.<sup>37</sup>

The negotiations in Oswald's Paris apartments resulted in the Treaty of Paris of 1783 whereby Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States. Oswald promoted the idea of a great alliance between the two nations that threatened America's relationship with France. This elderly expert on the British Empire even suggested that he might move to his lands in America. Oswald owned several thousand acres of land and enslaved people in East Florida and on the South Carolina frontier where he had intended to settle German families. His partners were Henry Laurens, the Second President of the Continental Congress, and John Lewis Gervais,

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<sup>35</sup>Harris, 'Prisoners of War from the Siege of Charleston and the Battle of Camden,' pp. 3-4; Davis, 'Lord Montagu's Mission,' p. 102; Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, pp. 127-31.

<sup>36</sup>Piecuch, *Three Peoples One King*, pp. 130-31. For Oswald's career, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Community, 1735-1785*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and for Oswald's advice to the government see Memoranda of Richard Oswald, 1779-1781, Tracy W. McGregor Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and the Richard Oswald Collection, 1779-1783, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor.

<sup>37</sup>An American, *American Husbandry*, ed. Harry J. Carman, (1775; rep. ed. New York, 1939), pp. 352-353. Oswald's authorship of *American Husbandry* remained a secret for almost 250 years. Robert S. Davis, 'The Secrets of the Author of *American Husbandry*: A South Carolina Plantation and a Two-Century-Old Literary Mystery of the Revolutionary War Era,' *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (2015): pp. 45-59.



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who provided numerous services in saving the state of South Carolina's independence. Gervais had previously worked for Oswald in Germany and across the British Empire. Oswald and Laurens had made a fortune in the Transatlantic slave trade. They added to the Treaty of Paris a demand for the return of enslaved people who had escaped to the British lines, a provision the King's officers in America refused to carry out.<sup>38</sup>

The story of the recruitment/impressment of American prisoners, many of them European-born and captured in battle in South Carolina, to serve in British campaigns against Spain and the natives in Nicaragua has complexities beyond even the obvious. It argues for a different definition of the world conflict that included the American Revolution but also for exploring a greater cultural and economic entity than just the British Empire.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Andrew Roberts, *The Last King of America: The Misunderstood Reign of George III*, (New York: Viking, 2021), p. 418, p. 420, p. 442, pp. 423-24; W. Stitt Robinson, Jr., 'Richard Oswald the Peacemaker,' *Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Collection 1950-1954, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, III* (January 1954): p. 36, pp. 121-32; H. W. Brand, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, (New York: Anchor, 2000), pp. 601-603 and *Our First Civil War: Patriots and Loyalists in the American Revolution*, (New York: Anchor, 2021), pp. 411-14, pp. 418-21, pp. 423-24.

<sup>39</sup>For more on the American Revolution as part of a longer and greater global conflict see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor, 2004); Trevor Burnard, *Britain in the Wider World, 1603-1800*, (New York: Anchor, 2020); and Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression, and Revolt* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2011).