

**Rod Andrew.** *The Life and Times of General Andrew Pickens: Revolutionary War Hero, American Founder.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 424 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-3153-0.

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**Published on** H-War (October, 2019)

**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In recent years, Revolutionary War scholarship has given much-needed attention to the lesser-known hostilities in the far interior of the rebelling colonies, particularly in the South. There, on the western edge of white settlement, fighting was particularly brutal, with Patriot militia battling British and Loyalist units as well as Native Americans allied with the Crown. Personal vindictiveness was a common feature, as neighbors on opposing sides targeted each other and their properties. History professor Rod Andrew Jr. of Clemson University places his subject, South Carolina's General Andrew Pickens, squarely in the midst of this violence and chaos. A deeply religious man, Pickens devoted his adult life to not only fighting for his country's independence, but also to building a law-abiding, moral postwar society. Ahead of many of his contemporaries, he also strove to extend this virtuous behavior to treatment of Native American tribes and African American slaves.

Pickens first came to prominence on the battlefield. His military career began with service in a colonial South Carolina regiment which, under the command of British regulars, launched a devastating punitive expedition against the Cherokee Tribe in 1761 in retaliation for attacks on white settlers in the northwestern section of the colony.

Later, early in the War of Independence, when the Cherokees once again assaulted white settlements on South Carolina's western frontier in the summer of 1776, Pickens (by then a regimental captain) cemented his reputation by successfully fending off a surrounding band of Cherokee warriors in the so-called Ring Fight on August 12. When the southern states became the main theater of operations in North America, Pickens and his militia soon proved their mettle in combat with Loyalist partisans, winning a key victory at Kettle Creek on February 14, 1779. Even better for the Patriot cause, Pickens was one of the few militia officers to fully cooperate with Continental Army commanders, particularly after General Nathanael Greene assumed command of the Southern Department in late 1780: "Unlike other militia officers, Pickens himself showed absolutely no reluctance to cooperate with and subordinate himself to high-ranking Continental officers, never once attempting to go his own way by appealing to state autonomy" (p. 95). Pickens proved to be a crucial asset as a commander of South Carolina militia units at the battles of Cowpens (January 17, 1781) and Eutaw Springs (September 8, 1781), receiving a chest wound at the latter engagement that brought recurring pain for the rest of his life. Meanwhile, the brutality of the war in the interior

personally affected Pickens when a Loyalist neighbor deliberately singled out and killed Pickens's brother Joseph during Greene's unsuccessful siege of Ninety-Six in the spring of 1781. For Pickens, the War of Independence did not end with the siege of Yorktown. In fact, nearly a year later, he commanded another punitive expedition against the Cherokee and their Loyalist allies, laying waste to their villages and crops on the Georgia frontier.

Despite his frequently ruthless tactics against Natives, Pickens "was also determined to maintain basic standards of humanity"; he strictly ordered his soldiers, on pain of death, to refrain from killing women, children, and elderly men (p. 160). In addition, when reaching out to Native leaders for peace negotiations, he repeatedly emphasized that he "did not blame the Indians so much as the white men that were amongst them" for inciting violence (p. 161). Through this combination of combat and diplomacy, Pickens eventually gained the trust and respect of Native leaders in the area. Consequently, he became an invaluable ambassador for the state and fledgling federal governments in the years after the war. Negotiating with area tribes, particularly the Cherokees and the Creeks, proved a daunting task through the 1780s and 1790s, with efforts frequently sabotaged by dishonest land speculators and by bloodshed on the frontier. These difficulties notwithstanding, Pickens's efforts culminated in treaties with three of the four major Southern tribes (Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws) in 1785-86 that sought to guarantee the Natives' rights to land not ceded by legitimate sale or treaty. Unfortunately, violations soon erupted. Consequently, Pickens supported the strengthened national government created by the Constitutional Convention of 1787, as he perceived it as the best guarantor of the tenuous peace. However, he also soon learned the limitations of federal officials unacquainted with local conditions, and of federal authority when confronted with jealous protestations of states' prerogatives. When resumption of land

speculation and violence again threatened peace on the frontier in the mid-1790s, President George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox named Pickens to another treaty commission, this time with federal as well as state commissioners from Georgia. Although the commission restored stable relations and boundaries with the Creek Tribe, it was plagued by bickering between the federal and state agents, and many frontier Georgians "bitterly resented" the resulting treaty, perceiving it as an encroachment on their liberties.

As an ethical man who was nevertheless economically dependent upon slave labor, Pickens grappled with its moral implications to a greater extent than many of his contemporaries. He was apparently receptive to the more moderate abolitionist preachings of several of his fellow Presbyterians: "He may have given a hostile reception to ... liberal preachers who advocated immediate abolition. On the other hand, he was probably willing to give serious consideration to the prospect of gradual emancipation" (p. 303). Though he did not free his own slaves in his lifetime, as executor of other slaveholders' wills, he occasionally manumitted their slaves. He also endeavored to treat his slaves with compassion and fairness. Finally, Pickens stipulated in his own will that, should his son Joseph die intestate, his slaves would not only be emancipated, but also provided the means to live independently.

As the author amply demonstrates, the common thread in Pickens's life was the goal of building an orderly and equitable society for those living in the less-developed backcountry. Before and after the war, he led efforts to establish institutions of law, religion, and education in the interior, and to strengthen the region's economic and political ties to the more affluent coastal section. Professor Andrew has given us a detailed portrait of a complicated, often enigmatic, historical figure and the society that produced him.

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**Citation:** Jon Ault. Review of Andrew, Rod. *The Life and Times of General Andrew Pickens: Revolutionary War Hero, American Founder*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. October, 2019.

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