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Robert M. Dunkerly. *Redcoats on the Cape Fear: The Revolutionary War in Southeastern North Carolina.* Revised Edition. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. Illustrations. viii + 207 pp. $45.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-6958-1.

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The Bloody Cape: The American Revolutionary War in North Carolina's Cape Fear Region

In *Redcoats on the Cape Fear*, Robert M. Dunkerly moves the reader's focus away from the larger conflict between Great Britain and the American colonies in order to tell the story of the Cape Fear area of North Carolina, specifically Wilmington and Cross Creek, during the American Revolutionary War. This microcosm of the overall war featured a bloodthirsty and violent civil war between the Tory Loyalists and the rebellious Whigs with a smattering of British involvement, specifically when the Redcoats set their sights on Wilmington, the most important trading and sea port in North Carolina. The preface to the new edition reveals a two-fold purpose in Dunkerly's writing. Not only does he wish to spark an interest in the little-studied war in the Cape Fear area, but he also invites the reader to think about the preservation efforts, or lack thereof, of the most important war-related sites in North Carolina. Dunkerly traveled to most of the sites discussed in his monograph, taking a hands-on approach to history. Several of Dunkerly's photographs dot the pages of *Redcoats on the Cape Fear*, giving the reader a glimpse of what the area and battle sites look like in the present day.

Dunkerly's descriptions of the region and how war came to the Cape Fear are fascinating. In most historical texts related to the American Revolutionary War, the conflict centers around the Northern colonies with nothing much on the South before 1780 except for British attacks on Charleston (a failure) and Savannah (a success). Dunkerly makes it clear that resentment between the British, Loyal North Carolinians, and North Carolina's Whigs, simmered for just as long as it did in New England and other Northern colonies. As resentment turned to armed conflict across the colonies in the early 1770s, so too did North Carolina experience waves of violence. Several factors played into this violence that exploded in the Cape Fear region. First, a local and very active Sons of Liberty group lashed out against government and Loyalist figures during the various taxation crises leading up to armed conflict with the British. These Whigs and their brethren would plague the Loyalists throughout the war, and vice versa; the cycle of violence between the Tories and Whigs gave shape to many of the bloodiest battles and most violent retributions of the war in the Cape Fear region. The Regulator conflict during the 1760s that pitted western North Carolinians against the eastern planter elite also fed into resentments and conflicts that would erupt again throughout the course of the war. Finally, the presence of a large community of Scottish immigrants and their descendents, loyal to the king after the failed Jacobite uprising of 1745 , meant that the British had a built-in pool of manpower to draw from. These Scots were more than ready and willing to bring a bloody and violent end to North Carolina's Whig rebellion against King George III.

Several "main characters" of the Revolutionary War, both famous and infamous, played roles in the events in southeastern North Carolina. William Tryon, Loyalist governor of New York during the war years, served as governor of North Carolina during the Stamp Act crisis. British cavalry Colonel Banastre Tarleton led his troops alongside Lord Charles Cornwallis and his army as they moved through North Carolina into Virginia (where the war would end for both at Yorktown). Both General Nathanael Greene and Commander in Chief George Washington played minor roles, though only Greene actually set foot in North Carolina. Through correspondences, Washington urged the recapture of Wilmington from the British and Loyalist forces holding the town. The involvement of all of these men serves to show that the war in the Cape Fear area was not an isolated conflict, but one that needs to be recognized as an integral part of the overall course of the American Revolutionary War.

There is very little about *Redcoats on the Cape Fear* to criticize. However, two problems arise from reading

Dunkerly's monograph. First, what happened during the years 1777-80? While Dunkerly devotes several pages to the years in question, the fact remains that the entire four-year span is covered in one single chapter (chapter 6). While the British had shifted their attentions back to the war in the Northern colonies during this time, the war in North Carolina continued between the Tories and the Whigs. Dunkerly notes that the Tories tried to lay low without active British support, so perhaps the years in question were actually relatively quiet compared to 1776, 1780, and beyond.

Secondly, and most connected to Dunkerly's stated goals, is the lack of information regarding any active preservation efforts in the Cape Fear area. In the epilogue, Dunkerly urges the reader to remember wartime events should they ever visit Wilmington and the surrounding areas as he did. Dunkerly searching out the battle sites and walking the areas is a fantastic way to get a physical sense of abstract historical events, yet there is little for the reader to do in regard to helping in preservation efforts. Are there any groups in the area devoted to the preservation of Revolutionary War sites? Is there perhaps a nationwide group the reader could join or donate to in order to preserve these sites? While the preservation of Civil War sites is a major focus of several groups, including the Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Park Service, surely there are comparable groups devoted to the preservation of Revolutionary War sites. A small appendix with the necessary information would be a welcome addition to any further printings of Dunkerly's book.

Overall, *Redcoats on the Cape Fear* is an excellent addition to the historiography of the American Revolutionary War. While not exactly written with a popular audience in mind, Dunkerly's monograph is nevertheless an effortless read. Anyone interested in that time period will enjoy *Redcoats on the Cape Fear* and the light it sheds on the conflicts in southeastern North Carolina.

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