

## **The Battle Cowpens: A Crucial Crossroad**

The Battle of Cowpens was a victorious turning point of the American Revolution. In the backcountry pastures of South Carolina, the patriotic Continental Army, under the direction of General Daniel Morgan, sparked a stunning chain of victories. Military mettle and adroit leadership against the British Regular Army at the Battle of Cowpens gave confidence to the American patriots. This critical moment in American history sparked inspiration and determination leading to a surrender of the British at Yorktown and, at long last, American independence for the Colonists.

By 1780, the Revolutionary War had drawn on for five long years. The Southern Campaign had pitted neighbor against neighbor, and the Continental Army had low morale. On January 17, 1781, General Daniel Morgan made his stand and led his Continental Army and Southern militia men into battle. His motivating speeches inspired the men fighting for American independence. He was heard to have shouted, "wait until killing range" and "shoot for the epaulets!" His men knew their job was to eliminate British officers. Morgan's tactical choices in battle were some of the finest military strategies in the American Revolution. He utilized a location between two rivers to safeguard his men and keep their faith and confidence. Wagering that Tarleton would engage classic British field battle tactics by lining up his men in a linear assault, Morgan pointedly left his flanks open, inviting Tarleton's susceptible troops.

Morgan planned the battle to be quick by commanding his defense to break into three separate lines. The first consisted of 150 militia placed in front as a skirmish line. They were ordered to fire two volleys and retire back to the second line, where 300 militia were positioned 150 yards back. This line was advised to shoot British officers first before retreating to the third line. This tactical procedure left the British leaderless and under the impression that the Americans were withdrawing. The weakened and suffering Royal Army were left to find 450 Continental troops commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Howard. Two Hundred Virginia independent riflemen and Washington's cavalry positioned as a reserve force were flanked on both sides. By this point, the British were left with heavy casualties and had fallen apart. The unexpected victory crushed the British Army's egos and psyche. The impact of Cowpens was immense and was the precursor which helped lead to success at Yorktown.

However, Cowpens is less a fight as well known and remembered as other American Revolutionary battles. The significance of the Battle of Cowpens is multifaceted and should be recognized. The surprise victory and Morgan's tactical military masterpiece changed the entire psychology of the American Revolutionary war. An enormous blow to the British and their leader, Cornwallis, Cowpens was also the kickoff of the spirit rally for the Americans. The Battle of Cowpens exemplifies the American spirit of determination, independence, and triumph.

477 Words

#### **Works Cited**

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