

Attack Upon Georgetown

January 24, 1781

Location: Town of Georgetown, SC

On the night of January 24, 1781, General Francis Marion devised a two prong attack on Georgetown. Infantry under Lt. Col. Henry ("Light Horse Harry") Lee floated down the Black River, while Marion and Lee were to enter by land. A delay for Marion and Lee caused Capt. Patrick Carnes and Capt. Michael Rudolph of Lee's Infantry to commence the battle.

Their sites were set on the Redoubt (thought to be the brick jail at the corner of Duke and Highmarket) and the brick church (probably Prince George Winyah Church of England) where British soldiers were housed. They struck from the undefended waterfront at Mitchell's Landing (near where the two bridges going north stand today). Unable to breach the redoubt and the brick Church, they captured the British commandant, Lt. Col. George Campbell, in his lodgings (thought to be 222 Broad Street). He was paroled on the spot.

As Col. Peter Horry reported:

"Colonel Campbell, the commander, was made prisoner in his bed; adjutant Crookshank, Major [Alexander] Irwin, and other officers were sound asleep at a tavern belonging to a genteel family, with whom they had spent the evening with great hilarity. A detachment of our men approached the house, flew into the piazza flourishing their pistols and shouting to the charge. Soon as the alarm was given, the officers leaped out of bed, not waiting to dress. Major Irwin, with more courage than discretion, fired a pistol, and would have tried another shot, but just as he had cocked it, he was surrounded, stopped short by a stroke of a bayonet, which ended him and his courage together.

"Adjutant Crookshanks, acting in the same heroic style, would have shared the same fate, had it not been for an angel of a young woman, daughter of the gentleman of the house. This charming girl was engaged to be married to Crookshanks. Waked by the firing and horrid din of battle on the piazza, she was at first almost 'reft of her senses by the fright but the moment she heard her lover's voice, all her terrors vanished, and instead of hiding herself under the bedclothes, she rushed to the piazza amidst the mortal fray, with no

armor but her love, no covering but her flowing tresses. Happily for her lover, she got to him just in time to throw her arms around his neck and scream out, "Oh save! Save Major Crookshanks!" Thus, with her own sweet body she shielded him against the uplifted swords of her enraged countrymen!

"Crookshanks yielded himself our prisoner, but we paroled him on the spot, and left him to those delicious sentiments which he must have felt in the arms of an elegant young woman, who had saved his life by an effort of love sufficient to endear her to him to all eternity.

"It was told us afterwards of this charming girl, that as soon as we were gone, and, of course, the danger past and the tumult of her bosom subsided, she fell into a swoon, from which it was with difficulty she was recovered. Her extreme fright, on being waked by the firing and horrid uproar of battle in the house, and her strong sympathy for her lover's danger, together with the alarm occasioned by finding herself in his arms, were too much for her delicate frame.

"There is a beauty in the generous actions which charms the souls of men! And a sweetness, which like the immortal love whence it flows, can never die. The eyes of all, even the poorest soldiers in our camp, sparkled with pleasure whenever they talked, as they often did, of this charming woman, and of our generosity to major Crookshanks; and to this day, even after a lapse of thirty years, I never think of it but with pleasure as exquisite, perhaps, as what I felt at the first moment of that transaction."

The attack upon Georgetown was a semi-success. Marion's men did not rout the British out of Georgetown, but he did leave the British in awe of his tactics and valor.

Source:

Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution, Wayne Lynch's Webinar of Feb. 6, 2021, by Charles Baxley