

Battle of Eutaw Springs September 8, 1781

Location:	Eutawville, Orangeburg County
Commanders:	American – Gen. Nathanael Greene, Marion, Sumter, Pickens, Lee, William Washington and Wade Hampton
	British – Lt. Col. Alexander Stewart
Casualties:	American 138 killed, 375 wounded, 41 captured
	British – 85 killed, 351 wounded, 251 missing

By early fall of 1781, all the British outposts in the midlands of the state had been captured by the Americans and the British army was inching back closer to its home base in Charleston. British Lt. Col. Alexander Stewart was now in command, having taken over for Lord Rawdon, who returned to England due to illness. The American army under General Nathanael Greene included the troops of Francis Marion, Lighthorse Harry Lee, Andrew Pickens, William Washington, and Wade Hampton. This illustrious and talented group was camped across the river from the British near where the Congaree and Wateree rivers join to form the Santee River, but because of recent flooding, the Americans were forced to take a rather circuitous route to get to the other side. Meanwhile, Stewart had moved his men southeast and camped at Eutaw Springs, today under the waters of Lake Marion.

The strength of each of the armies was roughly 2,200. Probably no two opposing armies in any large-scale engagement during the southern phase of the war were as evenly matched as these. Severe shortages of both food and cavalry forced Stewart to send out 100 armed men to forage and dig sweet potatoes. The Americans were close by and easily captured all of them.

Fighting began around 9 a.m. with the British holding the southern end of the battlefield. The soldiers on this field were the cream of the crop, and fighting was fierce and relentless as the tide of battle turned several times. Casualties began to mount up all over the field, and it would be nearly four hours before the enemy line finally began to waver. British Maj. Marjoribanks was in command of the only part of the British that held, while the Americans rushed forward towards their encampment. Artillery was brought up to help capture the large brick Eutaw House, where British sharpshooters were holed up.

With the taste of victory on their lips, the Patriots streamed into the British camp and came upon their supplies, including barrels of rum to which they helped themselves and then some, making many of them unmanageable. As the men began to loot, eat, and drink, Marjoribanks reorganized his men and launched a spectacular counterattack. Snipers in the house were able to pick off the artillerymen, and the American guns were captured. Once again, Greene had to withdraw. Casualties were heavy – almost 700 for the British, including Marjoribanks, who was buried elsewhere and then reinterred on the field many years later. Over 500 Americans fell, including Pickens and Washington, who were both wounded, the latter also captured. Though technically a British victory, they once again retreated towards Charleston, their ranks now decimated. One month later, Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia.

Sources:

Barbour, R.L., *South Carolina's Revolutionary War Battles*, 2002

Oller, John, *The Swamp Fox, How Francis Marion Saved the Revolution*, 2016