



Beaufort County 250 Committee  
Revolutionary Era Biographies

*Complicated  
and  
Contradictory:  
Loyalism  
in Beaufort County  
During the  
American Revolution*

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# Complicated and Contradictory: Loyalism in Beaufort County's Revolutionary War

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### Overview

The Beaufort District of South Carolina played a complex and contradictory role during the American Revolution, marked by divided loyalties, civil strife, and economic devastation. In the 18th century, Beaufort was a thriving plantation society, exporting cash crops like rice and indigo to Britain. Its strategic location made it a vital corridor between Charleston and Savannah, but also a contested space during the war. The British sought to exploit the region's wealth and Loyalist sympathies, but their harsh tactics, including plundering plantations, seizing property, and uprooting enslaved people, alienated many residents and fueled local resistance.

Loyalists like Andrew DeVeaux and Nicholas Lechmere supported the Crown, motivated by economic ties to British trade and a desire to preserve the region's racial and social hierarchy. However, British occupation often blurred the lines between Loyalist and Patriot, creating an environment of hostility and retaliation. The Revolution in Beaufort was as much a civil war as a fight for independence, with neighbors turning against each other and the district enduring cycles of occupation and violence. Ultimately, British forces failed to secure lasting control, and Beaufort emerged from the war battered and divided, with its plantation economy disrupted and its social fabric strained.

### Essay

The Beaufort District of the eighteenth century, was a very different world than that of today. In the 1760s there were no highways, only waterways. The "roads" of yesterday were the tidal rivers and creeks that cut between the Sea Islands and connected Beaufort to the open ocean. What is now a quiet small town was then a hub of a plantation society designed, quite deliberately, to be open, productive, and profitable, exporting cash crops to the mother country. Before Savannah became a major port, Beaufort was the southernmost bastion of English rule before the land blurred into Spanish claims and Indian territory. This landscape at the very tip of British North America, with its diverse makeup, made the Beaufort District unique within colonial South Carolina.

This paper explores how that distinctive community reacted to and participated in the American Revolution. It follows Beaufort from its rise as a wealthy colonial

district through the coming of war, the campaigns that swept through its fields and waterways, the complicated role of local Loyalists, and the war's aftermath. Rather than treating Beaufort simply as an incidental military zone between Charleston and Savannah, this paper reveals how a small district became both a corridor for armies and a flashpoint of the Revolution's civil war.

One way to understand Beaufort's contradictory loyalties and repeated cycles of occupation, plunder, and resistance is to view the Beaufort District not only as a battlefield for soldiers, but for political ideas as well. The famous Prussian General and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz explains that war is not an activity separate from politics, but an extension of it, "a mere continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz, bk. 8, ch. 6). In that view, a strategy can win immediate territory or ground and yet still fail if local violence undermines the political object it is supposed to achieve. (This can be simply explained with the old saying "win the battle, loose the war.") In the Beaufort District, British soldiers would raid, march, seize private property, and even install Loyalist "peacekeeping" soldiers. But those successes mattered only if they produced lasting control — the type of security, cooperation, and a peaceful population that was present in the days before the revolution. Instead, the pattern in Beaufort shows the opposite effect. Harsh conduct on the part of the British blurred the line between Loyalist and Patriot, alienating otherwise loyal citizens, punishing the whole community, and turning control of the district into a revolving door of distress and retaliation, rather than stable governance.

Using Clausewitz's principle that military action must serve a political object, this paper argues that British operations in the Beaufort District undermined their own strategy because indiscriminate plunder and abuse weakened Loyalist confidence, inflamed local resistance, and helped transform the district into the kind of "people's war" environment in which holding territory becomes harder with every mile an occupying army spreads itself out (Clausewitz, bk. 6).

To understand Beaufort during the Revolution, it is important to understand how it was structured before the "the shot heard round the world." The old Beaufort District was enormous, combining the modern-day Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton and part of Allendale Counties. It had two rivers that provided natural boundaries with its neighbors: the Savannah River to the west the boundary with Georgia and the Combahee River to the east separating it from the Charleston District. To the North, about 60 miles inland and parallel to the coastline was the border between Beaufort and Orangeburg Districts (similar to the modern-day Hampton and Allendale County line). Within that landscape the town of Beaufort still sits right where it did during the colonial period, unlike the now vanished town of Purrysburg on the Savannah River.

The geography of the area begins with its oceanography. Port Royal Sound, then as now, was known as one of the deepest and largest natural harbors on the

Atlantic coast, a safe refuge for ships seeking shelter. The coastline between Savannah and Charleston is comprised of islands and tidal inlets: Daufuskie Island, Hilton Head, Parris Island, Port Royal Island, Lady's Island, St Helena, and the Hunting Islands. Wherever colonists could grow crops, they could easily transport those crops by water, making the region ideal for commercial agriculture.

From the beginning, South Carolina, and especially its coastal Lowcountry, was shaped by a different kind of colonist. Unlike Massachusetts or Pennsylvania, which were settled primarily by religious dissenters or small farmers, South Carolina's coastal society was transplanted from Barbados. Men like Sir John Yeamans and Sir John Colleton led expeditions of wealthy Barbadian planters, among them the infamous "Goose Creek men" with their servants and enslaved Africans, to carve out a new plantation colony in the Carolinas. They brought with them ties to Old World aristocracy and a New World appetite for land and massive agricultural expansion.

From the outset, this was meant to be a slave-based plantation society producing staple crops for export. As the land was cleared and rice and indigo fields extended, South Carolinians also enslaved more Indigenous people than any other mainland English colony (The English Sugar Islands) before importing large numbers of African labor. By the 1760s, Charleston and the surrounding Lowcountry plantations, including the Beaufort area, had a population of about 20,000 whites and more than 50,000 enslaved Africans (Nadelhaft 5). This extreme demographic imbalance shaped white anxieties and helped explain both the enormous wealth and the constant fear that defined the region.

Politically and socially, the colony was organized through the parish system of the Anglican Church. In an era when we take separation of church and state for granted, it can be hard to imagine how fully combined they once were. In colonial South Carolina, Anglicanism was the official religion of the colony, and parish churches served as both religious and governmental centers. In Beaufort District, parishes such as St. Peter's, St. Luke's, St. Helena, and Prince William were the basic units of administration. The church was where people worshipped, but it was also where they met to discuss taxes, conduct elections, record attendance, and settle public business. Church and state did not simply cooperate; they were effectively one.

Outside those parish boundaries, however, the world looked very different. Anything about fifty miles inland from the coast was loosely regarded as the "backcountry," a region of hard work, scarcity, and little to no government. Backcountry settlers wanted what the Sea Island planters often took for granted: courts, schools, and jails. The refusal of the coastal elite to extend those institutions inland led backcountry colonists to take matters into their own hands. They formed armed groups known as "Regulators" who acted as a kind of partisan police force, serving as judge, jury, and sometimes executioner when no formal authority would act

(Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*). Long before the Revolution, South Carolina was already a divided society: coastal and inland, elite and common, enslaver and enslaved.

The years following the French and Indian War brought an enormous economic boom to the Beaufort region. With France expelled from much of North America and Spain ceding Florida to Britain in 1763, many of the threats that had haunted earlier generations receded. Pirates no longer prowled Port Royal Sound as they had before. The presence of Spanish Florida no longer offered such an obvious refuge for runaway slaves or Indians. Memories of the Stono Rebellion, while still lingering, were dampened by a new sense of British security and prosperity.

This new security encouraged expansion. When Georgia lifted its ban on slavery in 1751, wealthy South Carolina planters pushed south into what had been a buffer colony. They bought land along the Savannah River and turned places like Hutchinson Island into huge plantations. Beaufort itself became a center of indigo production. Indigo had been introduced in the 1740s to diversify the colony's agricultural production and quickly proved wildly successful (Nadelhaft 7). Unlike rice, which required elaborate systems of dikes, canals, and waterworks, indigo could be grown with less infrastructure and on more varied land. As a result, more of the Beaufort District could be turned into profitable fields.

Shipyards were located on the Beaufort River south of the town, where a natural bluff (the modern-day Spanish Point neighborhood) offered a place for both fortification and maritime commerce. Fort Lyttleton was built there to protect the town and its shipyard. Prosperity and population grew side by side. The plantation-based society remained deeply segregated, but wealth accumulated. There was even serious consideration in 1772 about moving South Carolina's capital from Charleston to Beaufort, a sign of how prominent the town had become (Rowland 188). Few districts in British South Carolina entered the 1770s with more economic promise than Beaufort.

As imperial tensions sharpened in the 1770s, Charleston, as the colonial capital, became the center of political conflict between the Crown and colonists. Whatever happened there inevitably echoed outward to Beaufort. By 1775, hostilities had reached such a pitch that the royal governor felt unsafe in the city and sought refuge on the British warship *Tamar* anchored in Charleston harbor (Rowland 189). News of his flight must have spread down the coast quickly, convincing Beaufort residents that colonial distaste with royal government was rapidly turning into open rebellion.

In this charged atmosphere, the self-appointed Patriot leadership in Charleston formed a Council of Safety to direct the colony's transition into resistance and war. That council attempted to harness Beaufort's resources and to prevent its wealth from aiding the enemy. They ordered livestock removed from the Sea Islands so that British forces could not capture material to help them with the war effort (Rowland 210).

They also enforced an embargo on trade with Great Britain but made a major exception: rice could still be exported for cash. Indigo, however, could not.

This policy protected Charleston's rice planters while sacrificing Beaufort's indigo economy. It exposed an already growing disconnect between the coastal elite of Charleston and the planters of the Beaufort District. Enforcement of the embargo proved difficult. Black market and illicit maritime trade flourished as merchants sought to keep their businesses alive. Beaufort developed a reputation, partly through Patriot accusation and partly in reality, as a town with strong Tory or Loyalist sympathies.

The Council's suspicion of Beaufort was confirmed in their eyes when the vessel *Beaufort* was seized at the town's waterfront. The ship was accused of smuggling goods to Tory merchants in British St. Augustine, including John Gordon, a merchant who had recently relocated from Beaufort to Charleston. The ship was confiscated and turned over to Patriot authorities for use against the Crown (Rowland 185). Even in these early stages of the conflict, the Beaufort District was becoming a contested area not just between Britain and the colonies, but between different visions of the revolutionary leadership within South Carolina.

At the same time, the larger struggle over allegiance was intensifying. In the winter of 1777, after the first British attempt to capture Charleston the previous summer had failed, the revolutionary government passed an ordinance requiring citizens to choose sides. Men were to swear an oath to the new state and "renounce, refuse, and abjure any allegiance or obedience" to the king of England (Lambert 60). For royal appointees and officials, customs collectors, port officers, and others this meant the end of their positions unless they embraced the new regime. Those who refused were given sixty days to sell what they could, pay their debts, and leave the state. If they could not afford passage, the state would pay to send them to Britain or the British Caribbean.

One Beaufort man who took this offer was Nicholas Lechmere, the royal customs collector. He placed a notice in the *South Carolina Gazette* announcing his departure (*South Carolina General Gazette*, May 15, 1777, 4). But not all Loyalists made the same choice. Many in the Beaufort region opted for patience and prudence rather than open commitment, waiting to see which side would ultimately prevail.

For the first years of the Revolution, the main fighting took place elsewhere. In June of 1776, British forces attempted to capture Charleston, only to be repelled at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. The palmetto-log and earthen fort, defended by ardent patriots including Sergeant William Jasper, a native of the Beaufort District, absorbed British naval fire with surprising ease. The failure of this invasion seemed, for a time, to confirm Patriot control of the Lowcountry. Beaufort remained on alert, but major combat did not reach its shores until later.

In the fall of 1778, the war in New England was beginning to stall, and the Patriot victory at Saratoga convinced the British to devise a new strategy. If they could not isolate the Patriots in New England, then they would focus their attention on the southern colonies and begin their conquest from British Florida up the South Atlantic coast, starting with Georgia, the youngest and one of the least populous of the colonies. This plan made sense on paper because the running consensus was that the South was full of Loyalists waiting to rally to the English banner. Even the old royal governors of Georgia and South Carolina urged Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the American Colonies, that the southern colonies' production of "Tobacco, Rice, Indigo, and Deerskins" provided enough means to supply the rebels with the necessities of war. Bringing the war to the South would thus accomplish two objectives: bring in extra troops in the form of Loyalist militia and cut off a major economic engine fueling Patriot resistance (Borick 5).

The British began this plan with the conquest of Georgia, first seizing Savannah in late December 1778 almost by surprise. The British utilized an enslaved man as an informant to deceptively avoid the primary Patriot defenses and capture the city with little resistance. After Savannah fell, the next objective was the interior Georgia city of Augusta, which offered no resistance. With the invasion of Georgia and the port city of Savannah securely in British hands, the British were now in the vicinity of Beaufort. The Patriot leadership of the city was on high alert. Recognizing that Fort Lyttleton might fall into British hands, the Patriots removed its cannon and destroyed the fort rather than allow it to be used against them. Beaufort was being prepared as a battlefield, and the three-year period of relatively little to no British interference in the Beaufort District was rapidly coming to an end.

The Continental Congress had its eyes on the South, and the recent loss of Georgia was a major setback for the Patriot cause. This concern contributed to the relief of the sitting Patriot commander, the North Carolinian Major General Robert Howe, at his base of operations in Purrysburg in the Beaufort District. His replacement was Major General Benjamin Lincoln from Massachusetts, a strong logistician and brave soldier, held in high regard by General Washington and Congress alike. This appointment also came with a political approach: Leaders hoped this northern general would tie the interests of the South and the North together and strengthen unity during this Herculean struggle (Borick 9).

Benjamin Lincoln's army at Purrysburg in April of 1779 numbered about 5,000 men, and less than one third of his forces were professional Continental soldiers (Borick 9). Militia would play a major role in the Beaufort District, in some instances performing exemplary feats, and in others proving unreliable. Francis Marion, when stationed at Old Sheldon Church, did not trust the militia from the Beaufort District,

and later commanders such as Colonel Daniel Horry would accuse them of “treachery” (Rowland 230).

Yet while the Americans were trying to regain ground lost in Georgia, the British saw an opportunity to sneak around the Patriot base at Purrysburg and cause disorder in the Patriots’ rear. In February 1779, General Augustine Prevost dispatched 200 redcoats under Major Gardner by sea. They landed at Loyalist Indigo plantation of Andrew DeVeaux in Laurel Bay. In the rush of the moment, General Lincoln sent the hero of Charleston, Colonel William Moultrie, and 300 militia men from the Beaufort and Charleston districts (two of whom – Thomas Heyward and Edward Rutledge – had signed the Declaration of Independence two years before) to intercept them on their march to Beaufort. The Patriot force was victorious in halting the British column and forcing it to retreat, standing and fighting like regular soldiers even while taking casualties. It was one of the first times when American militia had stood in the open field against British regulars and successfully driven them back

This setback for the British at Port Royal Island only left them wanting more, and it stoked British desire for further action in the drive to Charleston. Still knowing that the bulk of the southern American army was in Georgia, General Prevost decided to skip coastal operations and use an inland march for his advance to Charleston. Taking his army of 2,400 troops from Savannah, he set out through the Beaufort District avoiding the Sea Islands and met the Patriots at a small outpost containing around 300 North Carolinian men on the Coosawhatchie River. This was a rear-guard action meant to delay the British movement and gain time for General Lincoln to withdraw his army from Georgia and bring it back to defend Charleston. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Laurens, son of the president of the Continental Congress, John Laurens, chose to meet the British head-on rather than perform a defense in depth. After he was wounded in the arm leading his troops against the British, he was evacuated from the battlefield. The men withdrew back on the road to Charleston, burning bridges and destroying boats and ferries in an effort to delay Prevost’s march (Gordon 66).

Prevost’s campaign, however, did not end the threat. As British forces moved up the coast and then withdrew, they turned Beaufort District into a corridor of plunder. Plantations in Purrysburg, Beaufort, Lady’s Island, and St. Helena Island were stripped of livestock, provisions, and enslaved labor. The British and their allies, Loyalist militia and Indian fighters, “freed” enslaved people in the sense of removing them from their owners, but often only to march them with the army or send them into British territories elsewhere. The tactic served both practical and psychological purposes: It deprived Patriot planters of their labor and stoked fear of slave unrest. The devastation was enormous. Edward Rutledge, now serving as South Carolina’s Patriot governor, estimated that the Beaufort area had been robbed of property worth

millions of pounds during the British occupation (Nadelhaft 50, 62). To a society already anxious about slave revolts and economic vulnerability, the combined loss of property and people was deeply destabilizing.

Internal fears of slave uprisings combined with disturbing news from another colony stoked even more anxiety. When South Carolinians heard of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation in Virginia (of November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1775) promising freedom to enslaved people who fled to British lines, Rutledge and the Council of Safety reacted harshly. They passed a law imposing the death penalty on slaves who ran to the British army or navy (Nadelhaft 6). However, when the British Army finally captured the city of Charleston in May 1780, the army's behavior towards the slaves changed tune. The newly established Charleston loyalist city government often turned a blind eye to the overflow and plight of slave refugees and runaways that were enticed to the British lines to gain their freedom during the march to the city. That same British installed Loyalist government would also "demonstrate to the people of Charleston that the British administration would use all resources at their disposal to reinforce the slave system and assure inhabitants that they could continue to enjoy their human property unmolested." (Johnson 28) The Revolution in South Carolina, and particularly in the Beaufort District, was therefore not simply a war between Patriots and British. It was also a struggle to maintain a racial and social order built on slavery throughout the South Carolina landscape, even as both sides claimed the language of liberty.

Clausewitz's warning about occupation and resistance helps explain why this kind of warfare did not "settle" Beaufort for the Crown. When an army lives off the land, disperses into detachments, and relies on intimidation to keep a District quiet, it can unintentionally create the conditions for what Clausewitz calls a "people's war": not a single decisive battle, but a spreading hostility that attacks an occupier's security and communications. He describes this kind of resistance as working "like a slow gradual heat," destroying "the foundations of the enemy's army," especially as that army spreads itself out over wider territory (Clausewitz, bk. 6, ch. 26). In Beaufort, British raids and seizures did real damage, but they also produced a predictable political effect: they made neutrality dangerous, made Loyalism look less like protection and more like exposure, and encouraged the kind of local counter-moves—ambushes, militia mobilizations, severed routes, and sudden blows against outposts—that prevented the district from becoming reliably "held" ground. What looks, on the map, like a corridor between Savannah and Charleston functioned in practice like contested space: a place where control had to be constantly re-earned, and where harshness could win supplies today while costing legitimacy tomorrow.

In many ways the Beaufort District during the Revolution was a place where no one could be entirely sure which side would ultimately prevail. As a result, loyalties were complicated and often fluid. Of the seventeen men who served in the Beaufort

District's delegation to South Carolina's first provisional congress, only nine remained committed to the Patriot cause throughout the war. Two members, Benjamin Garden and Gideon Dupont, later switched sides and cooperated with the British after Charleston fell in 1780 (Rowland 203). Their decisions mirrored a broader pattern: when times were hard and the outcome was uncertain, many residents chose prudence over passion.

Geography also shaped loyalty. Some areas of the district had stronger Loyalist leanings than others. Tybee Island and Daufuskie Island became known as Tory refuges, especially as evacuation routes and British supply lines developed. Planters such as Philip Martinangle of Daufuskie and Richard "Tory Dick" Pendarvis of the May River neck now known as Palmetto Bluff became outspoken Loyalists, which made sense given their proximity to British-held Savannah and to Loyalist havens just over the water (Rowland 206).

Two figures, however, stand out as emblematic of Beaufort District Loyalism: Andrew DeVeaux and Nicholas Lechmere. DeVeaux, as previously mentioned, owned a large indigo plantation at Laurel Bay and allowed British troops to use his land as a beachhead in 1779. His animosity toward the Patriot faction in Beaufort only deepened after their victory at Port Royal Island. When the British army later moved through the region, particularly the 71st and 16th regiments enroute from Savannah to Charleston, DeVeaux and a small band of Loyalists played a role in the burning of Prince William Parish Church, now remembered as Old Sheldon Church. The church had reportedly been used as a storage point for gunpowder seized from British ships in Savannah Harbor and sent north to General Washington in Boston, making it both a symbolic and strategic target (Rowland 222). In August 1782, DeVeaux and his

Nicholas Lechmere, the former customs collector who had once opted for exile, eventually returned to play an even more direct role in Loyalist warfare. During his earlier tenure as customs collector he had married into the prominent DeVeaux family, tying his fortunes to theirs. After the fall of Charleston in 1780, British commander Lord Cornwallis, operating under the overall command of Sir Henry Clinton, authorized the creation of Loyalist militia regiments to maintain control of the countryside and free regular British troops for service in the still hostile backcountry. Lechmere and William DeVeaux became officers in one such regiment, the Royal Foresters, raised from the parishes south of Charleston for interior operations (Lambert 120). Their units served as rear guard and "peacekeeping" forces, though in practice that duty often meant raiding, intimidation, and reprisals.

One of the clearest examples of a locally occupied peacekeeping force was the ambush at Fort Balfour in 1781. Fort Balfour served as a British outpost on the inland road at the Pocotaligo River crossing linking occupied Savannah and Charleston, and

it was commanded by the prominent Beaufort Loyalist Nicholas Lechmere. A Patriot force of roughly one hundred men under Lieutenant Colonel William Harden found Lechmere away from the fort, visiting wounded men at a field hospital nearby, and captured him there leaving his second-in-command, William Kelsall, to face the Patriot force alone. With their commander taken, the garrison confronted an enemy force whose size they could not determine, and when Harden demanded surrender, Fort Balfour capitulated on Patriot terms. Whether that decision reflected fear of retaliation for earlier violence, such as the massacre of Beaufort militia at Stono Ferry, or simply revealed that Loyalist commitment in the district was thinner than the British army had assumed, the episode carried the same strategic message. Even in territory the Crown believed it “held,” Patriot resistance remained active enough to cut communications, capture officers, and disrupt the British system of control.

Loyalism in Beaufort, then, was not a simple matter of ideological devotion to the king. It was rooted in economic ties to transatlantic trade, personal resentments against Patriot neighbors, and a desire to preserve the racial and social hierarchy that had made the region wealthy in the first place. Simultaneously, the Patriot cause in Beaufort and the coastal area was never as fervent or unified as in Charleston. The district’s experience of the Revolution was less a neat story of liberty against tyranny than an ongoing series of calculations, reversals, and local civil wars.

By the time the Revolution ended and British forces evacuated the South, Beaufort and its surrounding islands had been battered by occupation, raids, and internal division. Plantations had been stripped, churches burned, and thousands of enslaved people uprooted or lost. For Loyalists, the peace brought a painful choice: stay and face potential retribution, confiscation, and social rejection, or just leave for other parts of the British Empire.

Some Loyalists accepted evacuation, heading to Jamaica, the Bahamas, Canada, or back to Britain. Andrew DeVeaux, for example, leveraged his loyalty and military service into new opportunities. In 1782 he led a Loyalist expedition from Charleston to the Bahamas, recapturing New Providence from the Spanish without firing one cannon shot in one of the last dramatic episodes of the war. In return for his service, he received a Royal Grant of Cat Island and other Bahamas properties but decided to retire to New York where he lived in luxury until he died in a fall from a balcony. Other Loyalist families attempted to rebuild their lives in British territories in the Caribbean or Nova Scotia.

Those who remained in South Carolina faced a legal and social landscape shaped by Patriot triumph but also by practical compromise. Confiscation laws targeted some Loyalist estates, while others were restored or only partially punished. The need to rebuild the economy and stabilize society generally tempered the impulse for vengeance, even as memories of occupation and betrayal lingered, but enclaves

within Beaufort District still sought retribution for wrongdoing. Partisan enmity erupted occasionally through mid-1783, and some believe as late as September 1785.

For the enslaved people of Beaufort, the aftermath was even more ambiguous and tragic. Some who fled with British forces managed to reach freedom in British territories. Most others were abandoned, recaptured, or resold. The rhetoric of liberty that had animated Patriot speeches did little to change the organizational structure of Lowcountry slavery in the immediate postwar years. In that sense, the Revolution in Beaufort was transformative only for the previously white English colonists and less so for the Black majority whose hard labor had built so much.

Beaufort's story in the American Revolution complicates the familiar narrative of a united Patriot people rising against imperial overreach. In this coastal district, the Revolution exposed and intensified long-standing divisions: between church and state structures and the people they governed, between Lowcountry planters and backcountry settlers, between Charlestonians and their supposed allies in Beaufort, and between Loyalists and Patriots who often shared family ties.

Before the war, Beaufort District stood at the center of a booming plantation economy, its harbor and sea islands linking it to the wider Atlantic world. The coming of the Revolution turned those same waterways into military corridors, drawing British armies, Loyalist raiders, and Patriot militias into a destructive struggle for control. Loyalists such as Andrew DeVeaux and Nicholas Lechmere did not simply resist change; they fought to preserve a particular social and economic order that they believed had given them and Beaufort its prosperity.

In the end, the Revolution in Beaufort was as much a civil war as a war for independence. Neighbors fought neighbors, churches burned, and plantations were plundered and laid waste. Yet even as British troops and Loyalist "peacekeeping" forces could seize ground and punish a district, Beaufort illustrates Clausewitz's warning that military territorial success means little if it does not serve the political object. In Beaufort District, harsh and often indiscriminate British conduct repeatedly blurred the line between Loyalist and Patriot, made neutrality impossible, and helped create the very environment Clausewitz describes as a people's war. An atmosphere of spreading hostility that attacks the opposing forces security and communications "like a slow gradual heat," weakening control the farther it extends (Clausewitz, bk. 6, ch. 26). The city of Beaufort survived, but the Crown's hold did not. What should have been a pacified corridor between Savannah and Charleston became a hostile space where control had to be constantly reinforced with a population never fully persuaded to one side or the other but determined to resist unjust dominion.

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