

The British evacuate Savannah, Georgia

On this day in history, July 11, 1782, the **British evacuate Savannah, Georgia** as the American Revolution comes to a close. Georgia was the site of many bloody battles during the war, many between patriots and Loyalists who were their neighbors or brothers.

Georgia saw its first British troops in early 1776 when a fleet of British ships arrived at the mouth of the Savannah River to buy rice for the British troops which were then blockaded in Boston. **Georgia patriots resisted the efforts to buy rice and the Battle of the Riceboats ensued.** During the affair, Georgia's Royal Governor, James Wright, was taken captive. Wright eventually escaped and fled the colony with the British and their confiscated rice.

For the next two years, Georgia remained relatively peaceful and a provincial government developed. The entrance of France into the war in 1778 changed things for Georgia, however. England was forced to remove some troops from the northern colonies to send to defend British possessions in the West Indies. A new strategy was developed to take back the southern colonies based on the belief that there were large numbers of Loyalists in the south who would support the effort. Savannah was the first target and it was easily captured on December 29, 1778 by British Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell.

The rest of the colony fell quickly, though the militia continually gave the British trouble. Governor Wright returned in July of 1779 and re-established the royal government, the only colony to have lost its royal government and then re-establish it. In September of 1779, a joint American/French attempt to retake Savannah failed with massive casualties to the French and Americans.

In December of 1780, after several large defeats in the south, **the Continental Congress appointed General Nathanael Greene the new head over the Continental Army's southern department.** Greene's leadership and skill quickly subdued the south. By the summer of 1782, the British had abandoned all of Georgia except for Savannah.

The **surrender of General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown** finally persuaded Parliament to end the war. As peace negotiations proceeded, the British began evacuating troops from the colonies. Orders arrived from New York on June 14 to abandon Georgia for good. Governor Wright was furious as General Alured Clarke made preparations to evacuate Savannah. Troops began leaving the city on July 11, headed to New York, St. Augustine and the West Indies. Governor Wright and other officials fled to Charleston.

Later that evening, Lieutenant Colonel James Jackson of the Georgia Legion marched into Savannah to reclaim their capital city. The Georgia House of Assembly met in Savannah on the 13th and took control of Georgia once and for all.