

Loyalists/Tories in the American Revolution

John Adams wrote that approximately one-third of the American population supported the move for independence (Patriots), one-third of the population supported the king (Loyalists), and one-third supported neither side (neutral).

It is hard to say exactly how many colonists were Loyalists; often they kept their loyalty a secret. Their numbers also varied by location. There were many in New York, so many in Pennsylvania that an officer described it as “enemies’ country,” in South Carolina there were more Loyalists, and in Georgia, there were so many Loyalists that the Georgians considered leaving the revolution. In *The Price of Loyalty*, the backcountry of Carolina is called “The Promised Land of Tories.” Two major Loyalist battles fought in the Carolinas were Moore’s Creek Bridge and Kings Mountain.

There were many reasons for people to remain loyal to the government of King George. Some of the Loyalists expected to be rewarded at the end of the war. Some wanted to protect their vast amounts of property. Many were professionals such as clergymen (who were dependent on the Church of England for their livelihood), lawyers, doctors, and teachers. Some Loyalists were servants or slaves. They felt that the way to freedom was not through American independence. In *The Price of Loyalty*, there are accounts of a kidnapped servant trying to get back to England and of a slave who wanted to remain with the British. Unfortunately, many of the slaves who were promised freedom by the British were sold into slavery in the West Indies.

The Backcountry (Upcountry) of South Carolina had a large number of Loyalists because the people in the frontier felt the need for protection that the British could provide. They still feared the Native Americans living in the area. The people in the Upcountry also had a great distrust of the planters in the Lowcountry and opposed the war because they thought it would increase the planters’ power.

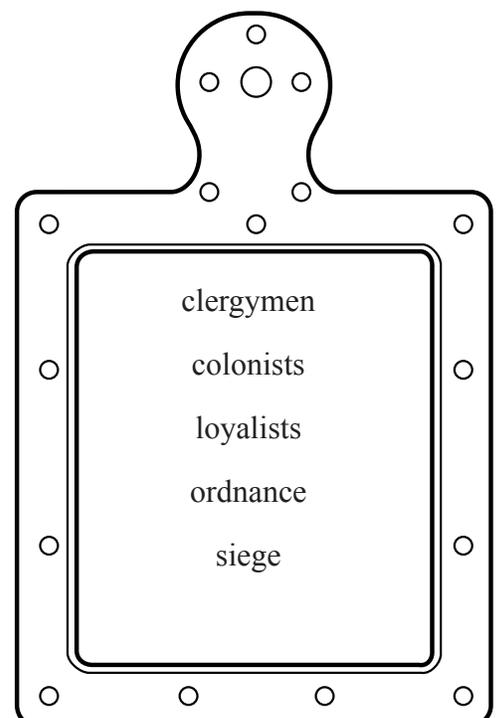
During the time from 1775-1780, the Loyalists of the Backcountry had been harassed by their Patriot neighbors. With the fall of Charleston in May 1780, the Loyalists felt they could retaliate. In the Backcountry, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians joined the Patriots when the British/Loyalists attacked some Presbyterian churches on the assumption that the Presbyterians were encouraging the rebellion. The Loyalists also began to seize property, burn houses, and harass people.

On May 29, 1780 Lieutenant Banastre Tarleton brought his Legion of Loyalists and forty British regulars to the Waxhaws settlement

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

- 1) define the terms Loyalist/Tory and Patriot;
- 2) explain reasons why people chose their respective sides;
- 3) define a civil war and explain why the American Revolution was a civil war.





Cartoon illustrating the treatment of Loyalists by Whigs disguised as Indians.
Facts on File

near the North/South Carolina border. The small band of Patriots under Lieutenant Colonel William Washington and Colonel Abraham Buford were beaten by Tarleton's forces. The Americans were brutally killed by Tarleton's men even after asking for quarter (to surrender). The phrase, "Tarleton's Quarter," became a synonym for cruelty.

In the area around the Catawba River, Patriots came together under Colonels William Bratton, William Hill, Captains John McClure and Edward Lacey, Jr. They engaged Loyalists in skirmishes at Winnsborough and Fishing Creek. Loyalist units from other areas were sent and formed a calvary/

infantry unit under Captain Christian Huck (or Houk), a Loyalist from Philadelphia. This force destroyed Colonel William (Billy) Hill's iron works and plundered the houses of Bratton and McClure. The iron works were destroyed because Colonel Hill was casting cannons, cannon balls, and other ordnance for use by the Patriots. Huck and his men were later defeated near Williamston's Plantation. Huck was killed. This was an important skirmish in the area because it proved to the local militia that the British could be defeated. (NOTE: There is a reenactment of the Battle of Huck's Defeat held at Historic Brattonsville in York County the second weekend in July every year.)

The dispute divided families. One author states that Colonel Isaac Shelby told him that at the Battle of Kings Mountain "two brothers, expert riflemen, were seen to present at each other, to fire and fall at the same instant." The expert Lyman Draper speculated that these were the Goforth brothers of Rutherford, NC since there were four brothers - one Patriot and three Tories who were all killed in the battle. Another family, the Logans of Lincoln County had four brothers that participated in the battle, Patriots (William and Joseph) and Loyalists (Thomas and John).

These accounts show how the country was divided. Neighbors fought neighbors, friends fought friends, and family members including fathers and sons and brothers fought each other. Ultimately, each person had to make a decision about his/her beliefs and how much of a sacrifice each would be willing to make.

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