

Created Image of Brothers at Odds With Each Other – One Loyalist, One Patriot, Circa 1775

PATRIOT, LOYALIST, OR NEUTRAL?

The time of the American Revolution was characterized by bitter internal conflict, often described as a "civil war within a revolution". The issue polarized North Carolinians into three prevailing allegiances frequently making rivals of friends and family members. Black individuals in the region also had to choose a position. While many free black men in North Carolina served in integrated Patriot militias and Continental units, others sided with the British, who offered freedom to enslaved people. Records indicate black soldiers like Elisha Boon served in the 10th North Carolina Regiment, and Benjamin Blango is also documented as a continental soldier from nearby Beaufort County.

THE PATRIOTS (WHIGS)

Milestones: North Carolina patriots opposed British Rule early. In 1774, delegates met in New Bern in defiance of the Crown to elect representatives to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. On April 12, 1776, the North Carolina Provincial Congress adopted the *Halifax Resolves*, becoming the first colony to officially authorize delegates to vote for independence nearly five months before the Declaration of Independence was signed in August of 1776.

Military Success: The Patriot victory at Moore's Creek Bridge (February 1776) hindered Loyalist recruitment.



THE LOYALISTS (TORIES)

Milestones: Loyalist activity was mostly covert or did not take place on North Carolina soil until late in the Revolutionary War.

Recruitment: Governor Josiah Martin's early efforts to recruit British Loyalists in eastern North Carolina were thwarted by the Patriot victory at Moore's Creek Bridge.

THE NEUTRALS

Economic Non-Combatants: Many, including sailors, chose neutrality with the hope of avoiding conflict to maintain their means of support and safety.

Religious Pacifists: Quakers and similar groups were fewer in Carteret. Those who held out as neutral were permitted to pay higher taxes instead of serving.

Vulnerability: By 1779, many men were away at sea or serving in the Continental Army, leaving the remaining "non-combatant" population—largely women and the elderly—vulnerable to raids and attacks.

THE BATTLE OF BEAUFORT

The "Battle of Beaufort" is a distinct example of the port's vulnerability in those unstable times. On the morning of April 5th, 1782, the Town of Beaufort experienced a significant and destructive event when it was attacked and occupied by Loyalist forces. This incident, often overshadowed by larger Revolutionary War events, involved a violent plundering of the town after the British surrendered at Yorktown in October of 1781. The devious attack and actions by the Loyalists involved looting supplies, robbing private homes, destroying property, burning ships, and taking prisoners, including enslaved individuals, which left the town heavily damaged. Beaufort's residents were terrorized for two weeks before local militia led by Col. John Easton devised a defense strategy that caused the Loyalists to retreat. While long referred to as a raid, recent research has many historians asserting it was the last battle of the American Revolution because it involved an occupation and the North Carolina militia.





WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN SALT

Could salt theft have been a key factor in making Beaufort a target for the Loyalist and British attack in 1782? Yes, salt was essential to preserving food to feed local populations through winter months, feed crews and passengers on trans-Atlantic voyages, and feed soldiers on both sides of the conflict. While never quite as valuable as gold, it came close. The world's population relied on salt for the caring of livestock, curing animal hides, and providing basic nutritional needs of humans and animals.

Following a 1775 import ban on salt to the colonies from Britain, the Provincial Congress established and funded salt works in 1776, with major operations located near Beaufort. Two of four men appointed to develop North Carolina salt works were Robert Williams and Richard Blackledge. Williams came to Carteret County from England and began production of his salt works at Gallant's Point near Beaufort in April 1776. Williams' enterprise failed and lost financial backing, however Blackledge's site proved successful located at the mouth of Core Creek on the north side of the Newport River. Blackledge drowned in September 1777, but the works continued to operate through the Revolutionary War.

REFLECTION

- Imagine living in this century of extreme conflict as an exercise, can you advocate for all three allegiances?
- Would you have been a Patriot, Loyalist, or Neutral?