

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Camden Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON

The Camden Battlefield

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER state Route 58, 6 miles North of Camden

CITY, TOWN

Camden

 VICINITY OF

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

005

STATE

South Carolina

CODE  
45

COUNTY

Kershaw

CODE

055

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Regent, DAR chapter c/o Camden Historical Commission (See continuation sheet)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

P.O. Box 710

CITY, TOWN

Camden

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
South Carolina**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**
 COURTHOUSE,  
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clerk of the Court of General Sessions

STREET &amp; NUMBER

(Room 313) Court House on Broad Street

CITY, TOWN

Camden

STATE  
South Carolina**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL    \_\_STATE    \_\_COUNTY    \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The battlefield near Camden, South Carolina, where the Americans disastrously met the British on August 16th 1780, is largely an area of open country, some light timber, and marshland near two streams bounding the area on the East and West. The historical nature of the area was probably very similar to this kind of open country. Although there are a number of structures, farmhouses, barns, a church, etc. in the area now, there is no reason to believe that any were associated with The Battle of Camden.

Similarly, although there are now two highways in the battle area, Routes 521 and 58, there is no reason to believe that either one had anything to do with the battle. The movement of troops that day was very very hasty, and in many directions. There was nothing like an orderly column proceeding in any one direction.

The development of the area is minimal, and man-made structures are not intrusive to the open character of the land. An interpretation program could easily suggest to the military imagination the movement of men and cannon and the general feeling of the action without any interference from subsequent periods of history. Since a portion of the area is owned by The Westvaco Company and used as a timber farm, it is naturally to be expected that from time to time certain stands of trees will be cut, cleared, and replanted. This though should not very much affect the nature of the site.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1780 August 16th

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Battle of Camden, August 16th, 1780, is the outstanding symbol of a series of disastrous setbacks suffered by the American side in the South during The War for Independence. These losses, the surrender of Charleston, the wipe-out at Waxhaws, and then Camden, represent the lowest point to which American fortunes sank in that struggle. With this brief skirmish in the Carolina up-country, which should be called nothing other than a rout, we have the spectacle of the American Militiamen throwing away their arms virtually at the sound of the first British shot, and then fleeing wildly through the marshes and fields. Their Commanding Officer, General Horatio Gates, didn't stop his horse until nightfall, when he reached Charlotte, North Carolina, 60 miles away. As the British sped through the broken lines in pursuit of the militiamen, the regulars (the Continentals) soon found themselves outnumbered and surrounded and had to surrender. Their valiant commander, General de Kalb, gave his life in the Battle.

With such a disgraceful loss thrown in its face, Congress called for an inquiry into Gates' behavior, and for his removal until the question of that conduct was settled. Although the inquiry was never held, and Gates was later reinstated elsewhere, General Nathaniel Greene took over command of armed forces in the South. This was indeed the most important result of The Battle of Camden, for it was a turning point in the war. Under his brilliant leadership, Greene's forces patiently drove the British from Georgia and the Carolinas in the next two years.

## HISTORY

On June 13th 1780, General Horation Gates, victor at Saratoga and a favorite of the Continental Congress, was called out of Semi-retirement when Congress offered him the command of The Southern Army. Matters seemed to have reached a crisis point then, following American military disasters at Charleston, where General Benjamin Lincoln was forced to surrender on May 12th along with his 5400 men, and Waxhaws on May 29th, where Colonel Abraham Buford was wiped out by the fearsome Colonel Banastre Tarleton.

Gates reached Hillsborough, then the capital of North Carolina, on July 19th,

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Previous NPS reports by Dr. Sidney Bradford and Frank Sarles, jr., (NPS Wash., DC)  
 H.L. Landers, The Battle of Camden. 71st Congress, 1st session. House doc. 12  
 (GPO, Washington, D.C. 1929)  
 Lynn Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail: The Story of The Continental Army (New York, 1952)  
 Thomas J. Kirkland and Robert M. Kennedy, Historic Camden (Columbia, S.C. 1905), vol I  
 1926, Vol II.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 2,000

Latitude	Longitude
A. 34° 22' 17"	80° 36' 38"
B. 34° 21' 12"	80° 35' 28"
C. 24° 19' 46"	80° 36' 10"
D. 34° 21' 24"	80° 37' 42"

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION .2"  
 Best reliable information places the site of the Battle of Camden of August 1780, in a field approximately six miles north of the northern boundary of the 1935 city limit of the city of Camden, South Carolina. The map of that year is the latest available USGS map of the area and the attached copy of the map indicates the site of the battle by a broken red pencil line. The crux of this brief battle occurred entirely within the area confined by a pair of creeks flowing North to South towards Lake Shamokin. The dotted redline has been placed just east

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James Dillon/Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>National Historic Landmarks (OAHP)</u>	<u>5/28/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L. Street</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE      LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark  
 Designated: 1/20/61.  
 date

DATE 5/28/75  
 [Signature]  
 date

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST:

DATE 5/24/96  
 [Signature]  
 Acting Director, OAH

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

date

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

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Also, W.J. Baker, President  
Terrain Incorporated  
22 Perimeter Center East  
Suite 2219  
Atlanta, Ga. 30346

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1 ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

and in rhetoric reminiscent of the Saratoga Campaign, assumed command of his "grand army". The General accepted his position despite the sardonic remarks from Virginia's Charles Lee that he "Take care lest your Northern laurels turn to Southern willows".

Acting the role of a great military genius, Gates overruled the advice given him by his general officers, Baron de Kalb, William Smallwood, and Mordecai Gist, and chose to advance by the most direct road to Camden, even though it ran through the infertile, thinly-populated, and unfriendly (Loyalist) portion of the country. On July 27th, the advance began, and Gates' already hungry army found less food as they moved forward.

On August 15th, they encamped at Rugely's Mill, near Camden, with 6 cannon and 4100 men, 3000 of whom were still fit for duty. Only 900 of the 4100 however were Continentals, i.e. disciplined and seasoned soldiers. At a council of war, Gates counted his force as totalling 7,000 men, and over the objections of his officers, ordered a night march to surprise the British.

Lord Cornwallis, meanwhile, at Camden, with his 2200 men (half of Gates'), 1400 of whom were regulars, had decided to make a night attack on Gates. To the astonishment of both generals, the American and British armies collided about 2:00 a.m. on the morning of August 16th, just outside Camden. After briefly exchanging fire, both armies fell back, formed their lines, and waited for daybreak to begin the battle. Although his officers did not know it, this was the first time General Gates had ever deployed a line of battle. He placed the Continentals to his right, and 2200 North Carolina and Virginia militiamen to his left.

Cornwallis opened the battle with a vigorous attack on the left. At the first fire, the militia threw away their arms and fled. Stationed 600 yards back of the line of battle, Gates was "swept sway" by this "Torrent" of fleeing men, and when he regained control of his horse that night, he found himself at Charlotte, North Carolina, 60 miles away. His Continentals had stayed, fought, and died, including the illustrious Baron de Kalb. As the British sped through the broken lines in pursuit of the militiamen, the Continentals soon found themselves outnumbered and surrounded.

Camden was one of the most crushing of defeats for the Americans during the entire war, ending all hopes of establishing American power in Georgia, North and South Carolina, and at the same time opening Virginia

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CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

to invasion. On October 5, upon receiving the news of Camden, Congress turned upon its erstwhile favorite and voted that an inquiry be made into his conduct, and secondly that George Washington appoint another commander of the Southern Department until that inquiry be held.

Greene meanwhile treated Gates with the utmost kindness, and refused to hold the court of inquiry, saying that his few general officers could not be spared for this purpose. Gates therefore withdrew to his Virginia plantation, where he remained during 1781, constantly writing letters to Washington and to Congress requesting that the inquiry be held. On May 21, 1781, Congress resolved to rescind their suspension of Gates' military command, and asked him to return to Washington's headquarters for orders. Unsatisfied however, Gates retired once more from Philadelphia to his Virginia plantation and again demanded either exoneration or a court martial, until finally on August 5, 1782 Congress repealed its resolve of October 5, 1780. Gates, with his self-respect restored, set out for headquarters, and spent the rest of the war with George Washington at the New Windsor Cantonment near Newburgh, New York.

Following Gates' flight from the Battle of Camden, General Nathaniel Greene had relieved him of his command and assumed that role himself. The true significance of Camden came then, when a real turning point in the war was reached. Fortunes having fallen to their lowest point, Greene, the brilliant tactician that he was, pulled the army together and with systematic patience succeeded in the next two years, 1780-1782, to recapture and drive the British from Georgia and the Carolinas.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

and west of these two creeks. The whole of the battlefield lies west of state route 521, and the battlefield is nearly bisected by state route 58. Just east of state route 58 at the spot marked with a red "X" on the USGS map, lies a marker placed by the Hobkirk Hill Chapter (Camden) of The Daughters of the American Revolution. Supposedly this is the spot where Baron de Kalb fell and the marker commemorates that. No other building or monument in the area either commemorates or explains the significance of the site.

The battlefield is entirely within the area embraced by two branches of Gum Creek. At a point approximately two-tenths of a mile southwest of the southwestern most point of Lake Shamokin, Gum Creek separates into two branches, one flowing northwest. The boundary of the national landmark begins at that point and follows, firstly, the east bank of the northwesterly--flowing branch crossing an improved light-duty road (by USGS definition) running east-west from state route 58. Continuing beyond this road approximately 4/10 of a mile, the branch of Gum Creek can be seen to fork again. The boundary there follows the more easterly of those two forks along its east bank to the point where the creek branches again. At this fork the boundary proceeds along the east bank of the northwest fork to another branch about one mile from the previous fork. Thence along the northwest bank of the northeast branch to its origin. From there the boundary line is formed by a line drawn from the end of the branch to another point approximately 4/10 of a mile northeast where the northeast branch of Gum Creek (the one flowing south into Lake Shamokin) originates. The boundary line then shifts to the west bank of this, the northeast branch of Gum Creek. The line follows the creek east and south until it empties into Lake Shamokin. Completing the perimeter of the NHL boundary, at the point where the creek empties into Lake Shamokin, the official boundary follows the north bank of Lake Shamokin to its most westerly point, and then the north bank of Gum Creek southwest for approximately 2/10 of a mile to the point where Gum Creek first divided. This is the starting point and completes a perimeter boundary. The purpose of the dotted red line on the accompanying USGS map is to clarify an area on the map within which lies the official NHL boundary and the red line does not itself signify the boundary.

(Continued)



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

The battlefield zone is today a composition of grasslands near the roads, forests planted by the Westvaco Corporation at a distance from the roads, and marshes near the creeks. The land is held by a number of owners, with the Hobkirk Hill DAR Chapter administering the monument area of 2 acres and acting as primary contact for the National Historic Landmarks Program. The area covered by this landmark is approximately 3 miles x 1 mile, i.e. approximately 3 square miles, approximately 2,000 acres.