

Earle's Ford, Battle of ^[1]

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by John Hairr, 2006

The Revolutionary War ^[2] battle of Earle's Ford occurred on 15 July 1780 in western South Carolina adjacent to the far southern end of present-day Polk County ^[3]. On 13 July 1780 Col. John Jones of Georgia successfully ambushed a party of Loyalists ^[4] at Gowen's Old Fort ^[5] near the South Pacolet River in South Carolina. Following the raid, Jones and his men fled north to join a large contingent of Whigs ^[6] operating nearby under Col. Charles McDowell ^[7]. Jones crossed the North Pacolet River at Baylis Earle's Ford and made camp near McDowell's troops. Meanwhile, British colonel Alexander Innes dispatched a force of 70 dragoons under Maj. James Dunlap to overtake the raiders. They reached Earle's Ford late on the night of 15 July 1780 and, unaware that McDowell's larger contingent was encamped nearby, launched a surprise attack.

Fording the river in relative silence, Dunlap's men descended on the sleeping Georgians, killing 8 and wounding 30. Jones himself received eight saber blows to the head. Some Georgians managed to fall back to a fence line about 100 meters behind their camp. Soon, McDowell's troops formed into a line of battle alongside them. Discovering that his enemies had been reinforced, Dunlap called off further attacks and ordered his dragoons back across the North Pacolet River.

The next morning, 52 men under Capt. Edward Hampton rode out to intercept Dunlap. They overtook his force approximately 15 miles away on Old Blackstock Road. The surprise was successful: eight British soldiers were killed in the initial attack, and the rest beat a hasty retreat to a nearby British outpost known as Prince's Fort, which stood near the present town of Inman, S.C.

Reference:

John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782*(1985).

Subjects:

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Battles ^[9]

War ^[10]

Authors:

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Origin - location:

Polk County ^[12]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[13]

1 January 2006 | Hairr, John

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