

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN NORTH CAROLINA

PATRIOTS, REDCOATS, AND LOYALISTS

- ◆ **Learning Outcome:** Students can explain the differences between the beliefs and actions of various Americans during the American Revolution, which led to conflict between Patriots and Loyalists.



An American Soldier and British Redcoat

During the American Revolutionary War, many battles were fought in North Carolina. In these battles, American Patriots fought against British Redcoats and American Loyalists. The **Patriots** were the Americans who supported freedom and independence from **Great Britain**. They wanted the 13 states (which had been colonies of Great Britain before the war) to be an independent country with a government chosen by the people.

However, some Americans did not want the United States to be an independent country. Instead, they wanted North Carolina and other states to continue to be colonies under the control of Great Britain. Americans who supported Great Britain during the Revolutionary War called themselves "**Loyalists**." Some Loyalists fought with soldiers from Great Britain, who were called "**Redcoats**" because of the red jackets they wore as part of their uniforms. In North Carolina many Patriots fought for America's independence, but there were also many Loyalists in North Carolina and other states, who helped the British.

VOCABULARY WORDS

- ◆ Patriots
- ◆ Great Britain
- ◆ Loyalists
- ◆ Redcoats
- ◆ Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge
- ◆ Immigrants
- ◆ Oaths

began in the far away state of Massachusetts, Patriots in eastern North Carolina became concerned when North Carolina's British colonial governor, Josiah Martin, began recruiting men to join a Loyalist army. The Patriots recognized that the

Patriots and Loyalists fought an important battle in North Carolina on February 27, 1776. It is known as the **Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge**. This battle occurred before the Declaration of Independence was signed, while North Carolina was still a colony of Great Britain.

In 1775, soon after the American Revolutionary War



Moore's Creek Bridge

governor was organizing this army to fight against them! The governor was also afraid that he would be attacked by the Patriots, so he left his home and began living on a British navy ship in the Cape Fear River near Wilmington.

Governor Martin wanted to keep control of North Carolina, so he asked the British Navy to bring soldiers (British Redcoats) from New York to Wilmington to help the army of Loyalists that he had organized. Together, they would fight the Patriots, he thought.

Many of the Loyalists were Scottish **immigrants** to North Carolina. They were people from Scotland who had moved to North Carolina beginning in the 1730s. Many of them, or their parents, had fought against the Redcoats when they lived in Scotland, and didn't want to fight the British army again. Some had even taken **oaths** promising not to ever fight the British again. However, they were willing to fight the Patriots.

Before the British soldiers from New York arrived in North Carolina, the Patriots set a trap for the Loyalist army at a bridge over Moore's Creek, about 18 miles from Wilmington. In that area, Moore's Creek was around 25 feet deep, so the Loyalists had to use the bridge to get themselves, their supplies, and their horses across the creek. The Patriots knew that the Loyalists had to cross this bridge to get to Wilmington, so they took most of the boards off the top of the bridge and put grease on the parts of the bridge that they could not easily remove. A small group of Loyalists with swords managed to get across the slippery bridge, but a large army of Patriots was waiting for them. The Patriots defeated the Loyalists and then began putting the boards back on top of the bridge, while the Loyalists were shooting at them from the other side of the creek. Then, the Patriots crossed the bridge and captured the entire Loyalist army. The Loyalists who survived the battle were allowed to return to their homes.



Loyalist Soldier in Traditional Scottish Dress

As a result of this battle, the Patriots kept control of eastern North Carolina. Later in the war, there were more battles between Patriots and Loyalists in other parts of the state. Loyalists fought alongside British Redcoats in other states also. However, as the war continued, more and more Americans joined the Patriot side.

After the Patriots won the American Revolutionary War, some Loyalists left the United States and moved to other British colonies. Other former Loyalists chose to stay and live peacefully in the newly created United States of America. There were some acts of revenge against Loyalists. However, for the most part, Americans who had fought against each other during the war managed to live peacefully with each other afterwards.

READING REVIEW QUESTIONS:

Identify one similarity and one difference between a Patriot and a Loyalist during the American Revolutionary War.

During the American Revolutionary War, what was the difference between a Loyalist and a Redcoat?

How did the Patriots win the Battle of Moore's Creek?

What happened to the Loyalists at the end of the American Revolutionary War?
