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The Second Battle for Victory at Cowpens

Historical preservation is a recent phenomenon that has swept the country. Most people today would agree upon the fact that it is highly important for us, as Americans, to remember, preserve, and honor our heritage, both the bad and the good. However, this was not the case a mere hundred years or so ago. Historical preservation was once seen as unnecessary, another way for the federal government to throw money away. Starting in the 1870s, a change of heart began to spread throughout the country. There are many reasons for the increase in government spending and increase in public interest in our nation's historical sites during the thirty or so years before and after the turn of the century.

Many original documents, battle sites, and historical buildings have been damaged beyond repair or destroyed completely. Michael Kammen comments on this in his book *Mystic Chords of Memory* when telling a story about a doctor's wife who happened to stumble upon a box full of letters in a barn. These letters ended up being from the pen of President Madison, written to Washington during the War of 1812. A few of these letters were legible while the rest had suffered severe water damage. This is just one of many cases of the severe neglect our country's early history endured. Due to this lack of interest, there are very few Revolutionary War battlefields that survived the nineteenth century. Many were destroyed, settled on, or forgotten about.¹

1. ¹ Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, inc. 1991.

South Carolina is home to no less than six major Revolutionary battles, more than any other state. Only two of these are now national battlefields under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS). It is nearly impossible to account for all the battles and skirmishes that have taken place on American soil. However, an estimate concludes that over 200 battles and skirmishes have taken place on South Carolina soil, a good deal of these being key battles in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Today, in the state of South Carolina, there are only three military sites that are under the control of the National Park Service: Kings Mountain, Fort Sumter, and Cowpens; Cowpens and Kings Mountain being the only national battlefields. So why, out of over 200 different options, is Cowpens one of the two National Battlefields in the entire state?²

Early interest was shown in the area that is now the Cowpens National Battlefield. When the federal government first began to push for more spending on historical preservation, Cowpens was at the top of the list of possible sites to be funded. The changing national sentiment towards historical preservation affected South Carolina much like the rest of the country. However, the people of the upstate and the importance of the battle itself were catalysts that sparked a long, hard fought battle for recognition.³

A Revolutionary Idea

The end of the Civil War did not solve America's problems. It would take a lot, especially post reconstruction, to amend the ties that had been severed. It was in the

² NPS.gov. Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina. October 3, 2006. <http://www.nps.gov/cowp/index.htm>. September 19, 2006; "South Carolina's Revolutionary Heritage." South Carolina Historical Society Webpage. November 7, 2006. <http://www.southcarolinahistoricalsociety.org/wire/RevWar/CarolinaDay/heritage.html>; Archives.gov. *The National Archives: Records of the NPS*. <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/079.html>. October 28, 2006.

³ NPS.gov. *Cowpens NB: Administrative History*. December 10, 2002. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cowp/adhi/adhit.htm>. October 12, 2006.

1870s that the national government decided to try a new approach in order to reinstate a feeling of national patriotism as opposed to the regional loyalties that had been developing for so long. The idea was to focus on the antebellum past, a past of one nation, to firmly reunite the country. The country's centennial was a prime opportunity to put this plan into action. Congress tried to gather funds to preserve and memorialize selected battlefields. While they failed to get any of these places fully funded, they managed to obtain partial funds for eight of them. Cowpens was one of these eight.

From that time until the turn of the century there was much debate over just how much of a role the government should take in historical preservation. Some thought it was highly important while others were completely against it. Most people fell in the middle, torn between an innate sense of respect for their past and being forced to pay an arm and a leg in order to show this respect. Some also believed that it was an individual state government's duty to take care of this. The War Department, in charge of historical sites at this time, would receive hundreds of requests over the next few decades, each asking for money for different sites. Between 1901 and 1904 alone, thirty-four bills were introduced in an attempt to appropriate national funds. This number only increased over the following years.⁴

In general, there was a rise in public interest in national parks and other American sites. There are a few reasons why people became less adverse to the idea of historical and environmental preservation. The invention of the car sparked tourism across America that no one had predicted. Charles Hosmer gives a run down of these statistics

⁴ NPS.gov. *Cowpens NB: Administrative History*. December 10, 2002. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cowp/adhi/adhit.htm>. October 12, 2006.

in the introduction to his book *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949*. The number of registered vehicles in the United States in 1914 was 1,664,000. By 1926, that number had increased to 19,267,000 registered automobiles. This was mostly due to the booming economy of the time. During this same time period, the number of weekly hours decreased, allowing more leisure and vacation time, and weekly wages more than doubled.

By the 1920s, national parks and historical monuments had become extremely popular vacation sites. In 1914, the National Park System recorded a mere 240,000 visitors. Only twelve years later, in 1926, that number had soared up to 2,315,000, coinciding with increase in registered automobiles. Families packed up and made the long drive cross country to visit places such as the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park. This increase in tourism was spurred on by one of the biggest events of the early twentieth century: World War I.⁵

The victory in World War I gave the American spirit a much needed boost. The patriotism that the government had tried to ignite in the people in the 1870s was ablaze after the end of the war. New York Representative Sol Bloom said that reviewing history gave Americans, “a new feeling of stability....It enables us to feel that we are no longer a ‘young’ or ‘new’ nation, but now stand as a fixture among the firmest and strongest nations of human history.” More importantly, the federal government had received a significant increase in their power during World War I. This power enabled them to push

⁵ Hosmer, Charles B. “Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949.” Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology. 12.3 (1980). 20-27.

for more funding for historical sites, and also allowed for the National Park Service, which had been founded in 1916, to receive an increase in funds.⁶

In 1906, the passage of the Antiquities Act left the preservation of historical and archaeological sites in the hands of the Department of the Interior. Ten years later, the National Park Service was established. At this time, however, the NPS's charge was to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife." This description did not include national historic sites. Between the years of 1916 and 1928, the NPS gained control of only sixteen historic sites, while hundreds of others were severely neglected and underfunded under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior. The evolution of the NPS, would play a key role in the evolution of historical preservation.⁷

A man by the name of Horace Albright played a key role in the founding and advancement of the NPS. Albright was the first man to really fight for the NPS to control national historic areas. He became director of the National Park Service in 1929 and by the end of his time there, in 1933, they had gained jurisdiction of these sites. In 1933, Albright was invited to spend a day with President Roosevelt and a few other government officials. Roosevelt was the first president to really use history in order to gain a political advantage. He was called "Roosevelt the iconoclast," using figures such as Lincoln and equating them with the Democratic party of the 1920s and 30s. Hoover had

⁶ Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, inc. 1991, 453 ; Unrau, Harlan; Williss, G. Frank. "To Preserve the Nation's Past: The Growth of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service during the 1930s." The Public Historian. 9.2 (Spring 1987). 19-49.

⁷ Bearss, Edwin C. "The National Park Service and Its History Program: 1864-1986: An Overview." The Public Historian. 9.2 (Spring 1987). 10-18.

shared this love of history and had been a huge advocate of historical preservation. However, he did not have the charisma that FDR did and failed to use it to any kind of political advantage. Before he left office, Hoover attempted to push legislation through giving the NPS control of the historical sites that were under the Department of the Interior's jurisdiction. The legislation, unfortunately, did not have the support and failed.⁸

Albright spent three hours that day in the car with Roosevelt, discussing their mutual love of history. During this short time, Albright convinced FDR that it was in the best interest of the country and our history, to turn over all historical sites to the NPS. Roosevelt, unlike Hoover, succeeded in this and in 1933 the number of historical sites under the jurisdiction of the NPS nearly quadrupled. The problem now would be repairing years of damage that had culminated from severe neglect.⁹

Roosevelt did not simply wake up that morning in 1933 and suddenly realize that Albright had a pretty good plan in mind. His decision to push this legislation through coincided with his First Hundred Days and came at a time when the nation was in dire need of a boost, both economically and patriotically. The Roosevelt administration would create groups such as the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and the PWA (Public Works Administration) to aid the NPS in its new task. Not only did this provide

⁸ Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, inc. 1991, 449-455.
Albright, Horace. The Birth of the National Park Service: The founding Years, 1913-33. 2nd. Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1985.

⁹ Mackintosh, Barry. "The National Park Service Moves into Historical Interpretation." The Public Historian. 9.2 (Spring, 1987). 50-63.

hundreds of new jobs, but it also helped the NPS in their efforts to undo the years of neglect.¹⁰

From this point on the NPS slowly evolved into one of the largest preservation institutions in the world. In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act was passed, allotting more land and money for new areas as well as additional acres to existing areas. This act would lead to the declaration of Cowpens as a National Battlefield in 1972, as opposed to the Battlesite it had been. While The Cowpens site was dedicated before the historical sites had been reorganized under Roosevelt, the nation's changing sentiment towards historical preservation was shared by the people of the Upstate. The growth and development of the NPS is also reflected in the growth and development of Cowpens Battlefield.¹¹

Today, in the state of South Carolina, there are only three military sites that are under the control of the National Park Service: Kings Mountain, Fort Sumter, and Cowpens, Cowpens and Kings Mountain being the only national battlefields.¹²

The Upstate Takes a Stand

The first efforts to memorialize the events that took place on January 17, 1781, began as early as the 1850s. In April of 1856, the Washington Light Infantry of Charleston, South Carolina, set out on a journey to build a monument on the battlefield. Traveling by train, supplies in hand, the group made it as far as Laurens, South Carolina

¹⁰ Bearss, Edwin C. "The National Park Service and Its History Program: 1864-1986: An Overview." The Public Historian. 9.2 (Spring 1987). 10-18.

¹¹ Flickinger, B. Floyd. "Historical Methods Used in the Development of Colonial National Monument." William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine. 16.3 (July 1936). 352-358.

¹² Archives.gov. *The National Archives: Records of the NPS*. <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/079.html> October 28, 2006.

where the railroad abruptly ended. Their spirit and mood unshaken, they set out on foot from Laurens with only a few horses and wagons to aid them. The troubles did not end here as the wagons continued to get stuck and eventually broke down, leaving them no choice but to carry everything by hand. Finally, they reached the site and built the monument that they had traveled and suffered so much for. A big celebration was held in which the people of Spartanburg and other surrounding areas gathered, giving speeches and sharing food and drink.¹³

The next celebration took place on January 17, 1861. There was a gathering of the townspeople in honor of the 80th anniversary of the battle as well as a celebration over the secession of South Carolina. At first glance, it seems contradictory for the same group to celebrate these two events in one sitting. Why would the people of the upstate celebrate a battle that was so decisive in the United States' victory over the British tyrants, while also celebrating their recent withdrawal from the country that the Battle of Cowpens had helped to form? The answer is that the people in the Confederate South saw themselves as the inheritors of the Revolutionary War. The North had lost sight of what they had fought for over eighty years ago, and the South was once again fighting for freedom, but from a new tyrant: the Union. It wouldn't be until after the Civil War that any serious interest in Cowpens as a national historical site would be shown again.¹⁴

By the 1870s, the centennial of Cowpens was fast approaching. The people of the Upstate again made a push for national recognition of the battle. The Cowpens

¹³ Fowler, Virginia (DAR member and Cowpens Park Ranger). Personal Interview. 17 November 2006.

¹⁴ NPS.gov. *Cowpens NB: Administrative History*. December 10, 2002. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cowp/adhi/adhit.htm>. October 12, 2006.

Centennial Committee wanted to erect a monument of Daniel Morgan, the infamous general and hero of Cowpens. They ran into trouble however, when they realized just how hard it would be to access the battlefield.

Unlike many other historical sites, Cowpens had remained virtually untouched. Few towns had sprung up in that area, and no major roads or highways had been built. While the Washington Light Infantry Monument had suffered some vandalism, the rest of the battlefield was unscathed. Unfortunately, this also left the battleground completely inaccessible especially when trying to bring supplies for such a large monument. This problem led to the decision to place the memorial in what is now Daniel Morgan Square in the town of Spartanburg.¹⁵

The Cowpens Centennial Committee compromised and agreed to place the statue in downtown Spartanburg where it was unveiled on May 11, 1881, a few months after the Centennial. This was the second federal attempt to obtain funds in order to commemorate Cowpens, the first being in the 1870s. It was decided that the statue would be erected and partially funded by the thirteen original states plus Tennessee. A November 30, 1880 article in the *New York Times* confirmed that all the states had “agreed to participate except New Hampshire” and the “southern of the old 13” had “acted or” were “ready to act.” However, they would all still have to agree upon the inscription that would be placed on the different plaques. Alexander Hamilton of the Cincinnati Society confirmed in a letter to the Chairman William A. Courtenay that New

¹⁵ NPS.gov. *Cowpens NB: Administrative History*. December 10, 2002. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cowp/adhi/adhit.htm>. October 12, 2006; NPS.gov. Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina. October 3, 2006. <http://www.nps.gov/cowp/index.htm>. September 19, 2006.

York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware had all agreed on the inscription. It was to read:

1781
One People
No North, No South
No East, No West
A Common Interest
One Country-One Destiny
1881
As it was, so ever let it be.¹⁶

The message of the inscription is clear. This push for historical preservation in the 1870s and 1880s was clearly an attempt to reignite national patriotism and mend severed ties. The unveiling of the Daniel Morgan monument was a success; the monument beautiful. Unfortunately, the Cowpens Centennial Committee, in their attempt to memorialize Daniel Morgan and his victory, caused the battlefield further neglect. The placement of the monument in Spartanburg allowed the land to continue to be ignored, and the already existing monument to be further vandalized.

Up until the 1890s, the only attempts at historical preservation had been to erect monuments and memorials. However, between 1890 and 1899 there were five battlefields that received funding to preserve the land itself. All five of these places were Civil War battlegrounds: Gettysburg, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Shiloh, and Vicksburg. This novel idea did not go unnoticed by the people in the Upstate.

¹⁶ Daniel Morgan Monument. Erected May 11, 1881. Daniel Morgan Square. Spartanburg, SC. November 22, 2006; "Gleanings From the Mails: The Cowpens Centennial." *NY Times* Archives. November 30, 1880.
<http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F00C15FC395B1B7A93C2AA178AD95F448884F9>. November 11, 2006.

The South Carolina congressional delegation immediately began to draft a bill that would create Cowpens National Park. Heading these efforts were two men by the name of Stanyarne Wilson and David E. Finley, both South Carolina representatives and Upstate natives. Originally, the bill asked for a total of 180 acres on which to create the park. When the bill did not pass, they decreased their request to a mere 10 acres of land, hoping it would help push it through. Sadly, it was another failed attempt.

Between 1902 and 1924 alone, twelve bills were introduced from the state of South Carolina in an effort to preserve the Cowpens battlefield. During these years, a new chapter of an already existing, national group was founded and eventually became the greatest supporter of and advocate for Cowpens. A new chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was founded on October 23, 1907 in the home of Mrs. A.N. Wood. Mrs. Annie Ellerbe Wood was appointed the chapter's first regent. Each chapter gets to choose its own name. According to a brief history of this particular chapter of the DAR, these women chose the name Daniel Morgan because, "[he] was so courageous in the Revolutionary War and being the victorious leader in the Battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781, it seemed appropriate to perpetuate his memory."¹⁷

The Daniel Morgan Chapter of the DAR is largely responsible for the establishment of the Cowpens National Battlefield. They began their efforts almost immediately. In a letter from Congressman W.F. Stevenson to Mrs. W.H. Smith, he replies to her question as to whether or not they should start a new petition to try and push a bill through that would allot \$30,000 for a monument in Cowpens. He responds by saying, "There is no necessity to get up another petition during this congress about the

¹⁷ Brown, Elizabeth. A Brief history of the Daniel Morgan Chapter. Gaffney, SC: Southland Printers, Inc. , 1977.

Cowpens battleground. The one you sent is ample and has been on file with the committee,” and “there seems to be no hope in this congress of getting anything done.” The Daniel Morgan Chapter, however, would not be so easily pushed aside.¹⁸

During the regency of Mrs. J.C. Jefferies, a bill was introduced in Congress requesting a “suitable marker” for the Cowpens battlefield. The bill, however, stalled in the Senate. By 1928, Mrs. Jeffries had been elected a second time as regent. In February of that year, a bill was passed authorizing an amount of \$2,500 for an inspection and survey of the Cowpens Battleground.

Their next step was to educate the people in the surrounding area about the battle in order to gain public support. Mrs. W.S. Hall, who had taken over as regent after Miss Jefferies, began the process of getting the titles cleared for an acre of land on which to place a monument where the actual battle had taken place on. She and the other members wrote a history of Cherokee County, and distributed copies of this history to local libraries and schools.

Mrs. J. Vernon Phillips, the next regent of the chapter, appointed a committee to raise money to buy the acre of land at Cowpens. The acre cost about \$1,000, \$500 of which was donated by Cherokee County, and the rest was donated by a few other chapters of the DAR as well as members of the Daniel Morgan Chapter. The donation of this land secured a future for the Cowpens site.¹⁹

¹⁸ “Stevenson Sees No Hope For Battleground Money.” *Gaffney Ledger*. From the archives of the Daniel Morgan DAR.

¹⁹ Hall, W.S. “Daniel Morgan Chapter Has Accomplished Much: Officers and Members Worked Untiringly for Cowpens Battleground Memorial.” Brief re-cap of Former DMDAR regent. Fall, 1937.

Mrs. Samuel Marion Wolfe, better known as Miss Edith, was a driving force that would not be ignored. After the acre of land had been obtained by the chapter, Miss Edith went to Washington where she lobbied on the steps of the Capitol Building until Secretary of the Interior Ickles would recognize her presence as well as acknowledge the greatness of the battle itself. A short while later on March 4, 1929, an act was passed that declared Cowpens a National Battleground Site. It read that the government would erect a monument at the Cowpens Battleground, allotting a sum of \$25,000 for labor, materials, and services.²⁰

The unveiling of the monument took place on June 14, 1932, and Miss Edith helped to turn the first shovel of dirt where the monument was to be built. The large, marble monument had a plaque on each side listing the officers of both the British and the Patriot armies as well as the number of men lost. There were many officials there, both military and government. The Washington Light Infantry were custodians of the flag that flew over the cavalry in the Battle of Cowpens. They were also present at the dedication and brought the flag back 151 years later to the spot it had once flown. It was a moment that the Daniel Morgan Chapter of the DAR had waited and worked over eighteen years for, and their mission had finally been completed. Their next task: Kings Mountain. The Daniel Morgan Chapter and the support they received from the community and state representatives were an enormous contributor to the reason for Cowpens recognition and preservation at the time that it happened. When the battlefield

²⁰ “Act to Erect a National Monument at Cowpens battle ground, approved March 4, 1929 (45 Stat. 1558).” Enacted and drafted by the Senate and House of Representatives. March 4, 1929. Cowpens Battlefield Archives. November 17, 2006.; “Daniel Morgan DAR celebrates 75-year membership of Edith Fort Wolfe.” *Gaffney Ledger*. Feb. 14, 1992. Cherokee County Library.

was dedicated, the historical sites had yet to be reorganized by FDR under the NPS. Their passion for the cause and persistence is why the Cowpens National Battlefield exists today.²¹

The DAR did not stop with one acre and a monument. Twenty years after the NPS took over control of the Battlefield site, very little changed, in the Upstate and across the country. The NPS still wasn't receiving the necessary funds to make their vision come to life. Cowpens was sharing staff with the newly dedicated area of Kings Mountain. Both the new monument, the old Washington Light monument, and the grounds were not receiving the attention they needed. The one acre Battlefield site was just the beginning; the DAR had much bigger plans in mind for this area.

The people of the state of South Carolina tried numerous times to expand the park, even if it would just be to ten acres instead of one. In the 1950s, because of the World War II victory, America once again felt a patriotic surge that drove people out to visit the historical sites across the country. Using this as his reasoning, Conrad L. Wirth, director of the NPS at this time, convinced the Eisenhower administration to support a ten year building program, allotting more funds to these parks in order to repair any damage that had been done and to expand them.²²

This legislation eventually allowed for the expansion of the Cowpens National Battlesite, only one acre, to the Cowpens National Battlefield, over 845 acres, in the year 1972. Over the next nine years or so, different groups and many volunteers worked to get the site ready in time for the 200th anniversary. Much like the organizations such as the

²¹ Cowpens Monument. Erected March 14, 1932. Cowpens Battlefield. Cowpens, SC. November 17, 2006.

²² Albright, Horace. The Birth of the National Park Service: The founding Years, 1913-33. 2nd. Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1985.

CCC and PWA that aided the national parks during the Great Depression, a group known as the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) had been created by the Nixon administration, and aided greatly in the preparations. The new and improved battlefield was dedicated on January 17, 1981. It was again due to the dedication of the people of the Upstate and the DAR that this was made possible.²³

If one should ask someone from the Upstate why the Cowpens Battlefield was dedicated as opposed to any other battlefield in the state, or why it was so important that it received funding even before the NPS had control of the historical sites, they will simply tell you this: Cowpens was one of the most significant battles not only of the Revolutionary War but to ever take place in this country. The historical significance of the battle itself is the final piece of the puzzle.²⁴

Daniel Morgan vs. Tarleton's Quarter

General Nathaniel Greene stepped in on December 2, 1780 as the commanding officer of the southern forces, which were very limited at the time. Luckily, he found that the forces he had, while few, were extremely effective and willing to fight. One of the most significant people that Greene found under his command was General Daniel Morgan, of Virginia, whom he promptly appointed as commander of the Light Infantry. On the British side, Lord Cornwallis had given Colonel Banastre Tarleton the task of pushing Morgan's forces until they were destroyed. Armed with 1,100 well trained

²³ "Act to Provide for Increases in Appropriation Ceilings and Boundary Changes in Certain Units of the NPS, and for Other Purposes (86 Stat. 120)." Enacted and drafted by the Senate and House of Representatives. April 11, 1972. Cowpens Battlefield Archives. November 17, 2006; *History of Cowpens South Carolina*. Compiled by the Bicentennial Committee. Inter-Collegiate Press. 1982; *Cowpens Official Pamphlet*. The National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Cowpens National Battlefield.

²⁴ Robertson, John (Cowpens Park Ranger). Personal Interview. 17 November 2006.

dragoons, Tarleton began to do just that. He was known for his bold techniques and ruthlessness, as he never took prisoners. Going into the battle, he had the upper hand, especially seeing as Greene had unwisely split his army up.²⁵

Like some of the southern army, Morgan was a frontiersman, war hardened and experienced in battle. While he was illiterate and uneducated, Morgan was a brilliant military strategist. With less than 700 militia and a small cavalry, Morgan marched his army to Cowpens and called for any other American militia to meet him there. Morgan had marched through Cowpens before, as it was a familiar landmark at the time, and had a plan in mind. His men reached Cowpens the night before the battle, and that night as they rested and ate a good, hot meal, he wandered among them, telling stories and giving encouragement.²⁶

Tarleton, on the other hand, marched at a fast pace all through the night to meet Morgan's forces at Cowpens. His men reached the battlefield at dawn, exhausted and extremely hungry. There was no time for food or rest before the battle commenced. Morgan placed the poorly trained militia out in front, ordering them to fire two shots and then to retreat behind the reserves. He had planned everything down to a tee. Placing his men downhill, the British troops stood in the morning sun as perfect silhouettes, and also perfect targets. The movement of the militia after their first two shots disorganized Tarleton's men.

²⁵ NPS.gov. February 5, 2005. "The Battle of Cowpens." October 23, 2006.
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/cowp/batlcowp.htm>

²⁶ "The Battle of the Cowpens." *NY Times* Archives. May, 28, 1899.
<http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F50615FD3F5414728DDDA10A94DD405B8985F0D3>.
November 11, 2006.

Tarleton was sure of victory due to what his scouts had told him. Morgan's men were inexperienced and caught between his troops, a river behind them, and a ravine on one side. This proved to be an advantage for Morgan because it prevented the British from flanking them. After suffering casualties from the first fired shots, Tarleton ordered his men forward, as it appeared that Morgan's men were retreating. Already tired from the night's march, the men started forward only to encounter a much stronger force than before. What followed next was a military maneuver that has only been successfully executed two times before. Cowpens would be the third.

A double envelopment, while seemingly very simple, is very hard to execute correctly. It occurs when the opposing army moves towards the center, ready to attack, and the forces move around on either flank of the approaching men, surrounding them. A second group then moves around to the furthest flank to prevent the engaged troops from being reinforced. When successful, victory is quick and decisive. The only other battles in which it was successful were the Battles of Marathon and Cannae, both over 2,000 years ago. It is the only double envelopment that has ever taken place on American soil.²⁷

The damage on the British side in comparison to the Patriot's was devastating. The British lost ten commissioned officers, over one hundred rank and file, 200 were wounded, and 29 commissioned officers and 500 privates were taken prisoner along with all their supplies. The Americans lost no more than twelve people and only sixty were wounded. It was a black mark that was never erased from Tarleton's reputation.²⁸

²⁷ Symonds, Craig. Clipson, William. *A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution*. Baltimore, MD. The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America. 1986;

²⁸ NPS.gov. Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina. October 3, 2006. <http://www.nps.gov/cowp/index.htm>. September 19, 2006.

At this point in the war, any victory was a morale booster, especially after the fall of Charleston. A victory as quick and decisive as Cowpens caused hope to spread throughout the south. The Battle of Cowpens is considered one of the major turning points of the Revolutionary War in the South, as it led the way to American victory at Yorktown. This alone earned the battlefield its right to recognition and preservation.

“...our success was complete...”
Daniel Morgan to Nathanael Greene, January 19, 1781

Historical preservation affected the state of South Carolina much like it did the rest of the nation. It was a long, slow process, but public opinion, over a period of about sixty years, changed from preservation being a complete waste of money and also a power too great for the federal government, to an almost essential, everyday part of our lives.

While this movement aided the people of South Carolina in their fight for the Cowpens Battlefield, it is not what started it. Cowpens today is a very large, beautiful park with monuments and markers, however, it was over a hundred years in the making. The fight started as early as the 1850s with the Washington Light Infantry and their task they struggled to complete. The next era takes us through the 1920s with the Daniel Morgan Chapter and state representatives and their tireless efforts to create a national park. Finally it ends in 1981, when the park's expansion was complete and Cowpens as we know it today was dedicated. A sense of pride and honor that is associated with the south in general was extremely strong in the Upstate. These South Carolinians were going to make sure that this small, yet important battle got the credit it deserved.

The final answer to the question at hand is the historical significance of the battle itself. John Marshall, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court wrote, “Seldom has a battle, in which greater numbers were not engaged, been so important in its consequences as that of Cowpens.” Not only did it boost morale, but the Battle of Cowpens caused a halt in the invasion of the British troops from the South to the North, permanently damaged the reputation of one of their most renowned and ruthless officers (Tarleton), and also flawlessly executed the most studied and most failed military maneuver in history. Thanks to General Morgan and his men, the historical preservation movement, and the untiring efforts of the people of the Upstate, the battlefield still exists and is studied to this day for tactical purposes.²⁹

²⁹ Wikipedia.org. *The Battle of Cowpens*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Cowpens. November 30, 2006.

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