



# Foundation Document Overview

## Guilford Courthouse National Military Park

North Carolina



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The purpose of GUILFORD COURTHOUSE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK is to preserve for historical and professional military study as well as the benefit, education, and inspiration of the public, the battlefield and the accounts of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse during the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Guilford Courthouse National Military Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The Battle of Guilford Courthouse, one of the most intense engagements of the Revolutionary War, was so costly to the British that Cornwallis ultimately changed his whole southern strategy and abandoned his plans to capture the backcountry of North Carolina and South Carolina.
- Cornwallis' retreat to Virginia freed Greene to turn southward and retake control of the South.
- The British retreat set the stage for Cornwallis to be bottled up at Yorktown where American and French forces compelled him to surrender on October 19, 1781.
- The Battle of Guilford Court House constitutes one of the final links in a chain of events that led to ultimate American victory in the Revolutionary War.
- Guilford Courthouse was the first Revolutionary War battlefield protected by the federal government.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Guilford Courthouse Battleground**
- **Three American Battle Lines**
- **Hoskins Farm Site**
- **Courthouse Site**
- **Major General Greene Monument**
- **New Garden Road (Old Salisbury Road)**
- **Museum Collection**

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **New Deal Improvements**
- **Historic Road Network**
- **Monuments that Commemorate the Guilford Battleground Company**
- **Monuments Directly Related to the Battle**



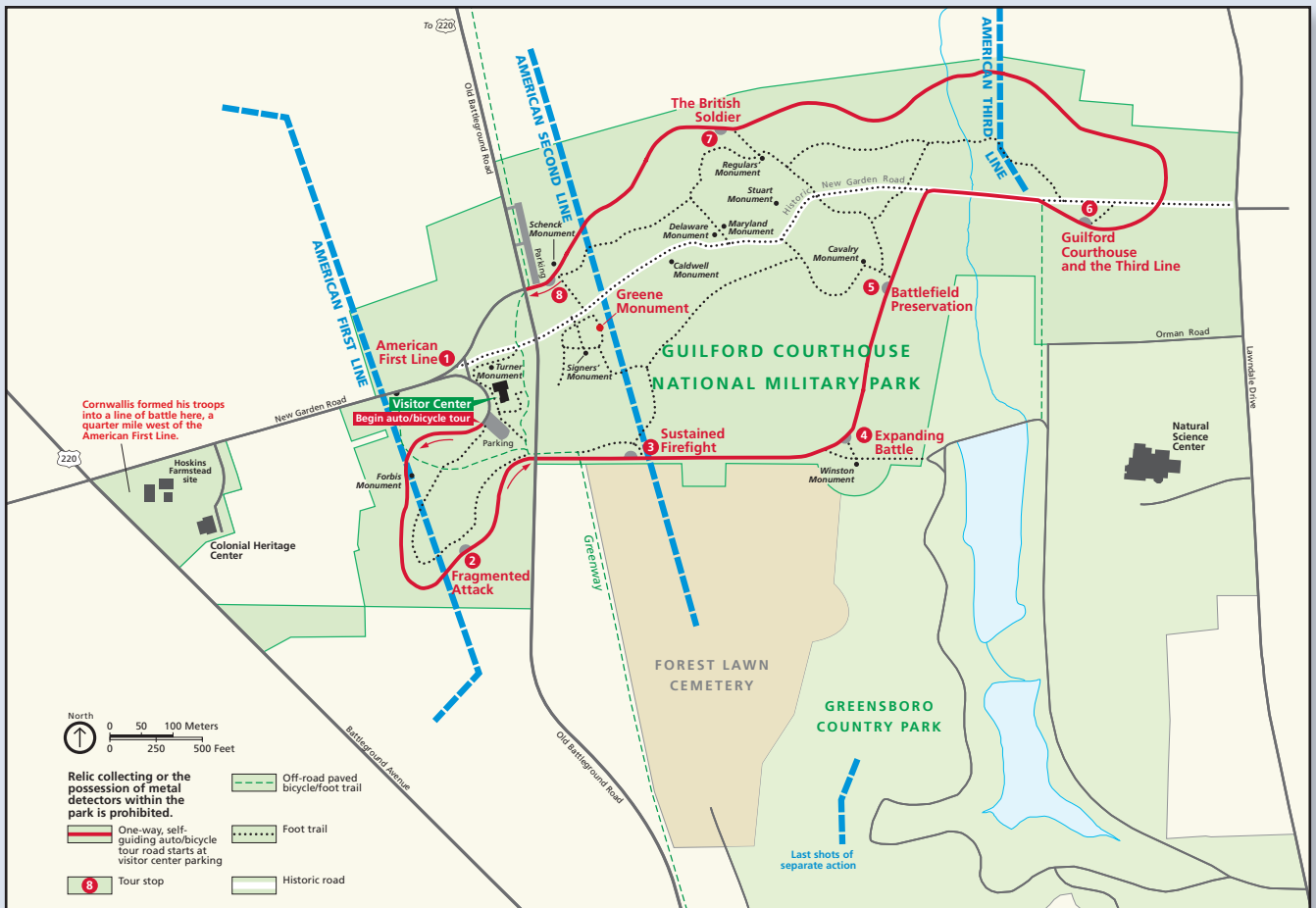
## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- With the entire Southern Campaign and the Revolution at risk, Nathanael Greene relied on his experience, judgment, and gambler's nerve in deciding to frustrate his opponents by dividing his army to buy time until he could fight the British Army on his terms.
- At Greene's urging to "Spirit up the people," local military and community leaders instilled patriotic fervor in local Whigs and intimidated Tories and neutrals in a campaign of brutality and terror that characterized the civil war in the Carolina backcountry.
- In the British Pyrrhic victory at Guilford Courthouse, American forces embodied the gritty determination, resilience, and perseverance that characterized the ultimate American victory in the Southern Campaign and the American Revolution. (The term "Pyrrhic victory" refers to the Greek King Pyrrhus and the heavy losses his forces suffered in victories over the Romans during the Pyrrhic War. The king reportedly stated that "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined." The term historically has been used to describe a conflict in which the cost of winning outweighs any possible benefit.)
- Nathanael Greene's stunning reconquest of the Carolina backcountry significantly enhanced the bargaining power of the United States in negotiating the 1783 Treaty of Paris that legitimized the American Revolution and gave rise to a period of great American expansion.
- The American victory in the Carolina backcountry enabled the southern colonies to reestablish state governments and begin to reverse the agonizing social disintegration brought on by the war against the British Empire and "relentless fury" between Whig and Tory forces.
- The efforts to preserve the battlefield at Guilford Courthouse signify the first steps to honor and commemorate the pivotal Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution.



# Description



Guilford Courthouse National Military Park protects the site of the largest, most hotly contested battle of the Revolutionary War's climactic Southern Campaign. Here on Thursday, March 15, 1781, Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene and his army of almost 4,500 American militia and Continentals were tactically defeated by a smaller British army of about 1,900 veteran regulars and German allies commanded by Gen. Lord Charles Cornwallis.

Greene deployed his troops in three successive lines, a formation that compelled the British forces to fight their way through two lines of militia before finally engaging with Greene's Continental regulars in savage bayonet fighting. Cornwallis ultimately forced the Americans to withdraw but paid for his dubious victory with more than 500 casualties.

Guilford Courthouse proved to be the high watermark of British military operations in the Revolutionary War. His army weakened at Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis moved north to Virginia. Seven months later, Lord Cornwallis would surrender at Yorktown to American and French forces under Gen. George Washington.

Established in 1917, Guilford Courthouse National Military Park was the first revolutionary war site designated by the federal government. Guilford Courthouse National Military Park protects 250 acres of the approximately 1,000 acres of the actual battlefield. Within the park boundary are locations of the American First, Second, and Third lines, the probable site of Guilford Courthouse, and portions of the New Garden Road, the region's historic main transportation corridor. The park also protects the Hoskins Farm site, where Cornwallis deployed his troops to commence his attack. The park was designated a national historic landmark in 2000.

Visitors can explore the park on the 2 1/4-mile self-guiding automobile tour or on nearly 4 miles of foot trails. The park features interpretive programs and a film on the history of the battle. The museum collection contains American Revolutionary War weapons, equipment, and other archeological and historical artifacts.