



Dark and Bloody Ground: The American Revolution Along the Southern Frontier

Richard D. Blackmon

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The Battles along the Rivers, Mountains, and in the Deep Woods of the South that Changed the Fate of Nations

The American Revolution marked a dramatic change in the struggle for land along the southern frontier. In the colonial era, American Indian leaders and British officials attempted to accommodate the westward expansion of Anglo-Americans through land cessions designed to have the least impact on Indian societies. The region remained generally peaceful, but with the onset of the Revolution, the British no longer exercised sole authority to curb the settlements appearing within territory claimed by the Creeks, Shawnee, and most importantly, the Cherokee. Whether it was to escape the economic uncertainty of the east, the rigors of the conflict, or the depredations of troops and militias on both sides, settlers flooded west. Under these conditions, the war in the south took on a savage character as Indians, Loyalists, and Whigs all desperately fought to defend their communities and maintain control of their own destinies. Taking advantage of the political turmoil in the east, the Cherokee Nation launched a coordinated offensive in 1776 against illegal frontier settlements. The Whigs responded with a series of expeditions from each of the Southern colonies that razed Cherokee towns and their food supplies. All the while, both British and Whig leaders walked a fine line: If the Indians attacked settlers without distinguishing between Loyalists and Whigs, those groups could unite and thwart both British and Indian interests; if the Indians attacked the western frontier with Loyalist and British support, the Whigs would face a two-front war—an event that ended up happening.

In *Dark and Bloody Ground: The American Revolution Along the Southern Frontier*, Richard Blackmon uses a wealth of primary source material to recount the conflict between American Indians and Anglo-Americans in the colonial South during one of the most turbulent periods of North American history. He explains the complex points of contact in Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia between native groups and settlers, while revealing the political gamesmanship between rival British and Whig traders and officials to secure Indian loyalty. The author also explains the critical role of the southern frontier to the American victory, a victory achieved long after the decision at Yorktown. Before the war, clashes between Cherokee and Shawnee hunters in Kentucky had become so commonplace that it was known as a “dark and bloody ground.” With the rise in Anglo-American settlements there, led by Daniel Boone and others, the dark and bloody ground became a metaphor for the entire struggle for the Southern frontier.

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