The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763–1789
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BRITISH RETURN
TO GEORGIA, 1779

NO SOONER had the British officials been forced by the Whigs to leave Georgia and South Carolina than they began presenting plans to the government in London for the recapture of these provinces. The early ideas of Governor Wright were not favorably received by the secretary of state, who wrote, "Sir James Wright can be of little use at present, his ideas of military operations are most extraordinary. He gave me a plan for keeping a few oxen in an island, which would employ a fleet. I have another plan for subduing Georgia and S. Carolina, where he desires the alliance and assistance of all the Indians, and only 11,000 regular troops." The governors and lieutenant governors of South Carolina and Georgia presented a formal memorial in August, 1777, in which they said that the loyalists in both provinces had been subdued by the rebels but were only awaiting help and protection to resume their loyalty to the King. Help should be sent before the areas were overrun entirely by rebels, for 1,500 from Virginia were reported to have moved to Georgia. The memorial continued that the Southern colonies were essential to the rebel economy because they produced the exports which paid for rebel military supplies. The colonial products that made up these exports could be used by the British. Occupation of Charleston and Savannah would make it easy to control the entire provinces. A year later Georgia's governor and lieutenant governor presented another memorial in which they urged that Georgia be subdued even if it were not possible to subdue South Carolina at the same time. Georgia lands could be given to loyalists
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in other rebel colonies, her ports would help naval operations in the South, food and lumber would be supplied to the army and the West Indian colonies, and the cost of the entire operation could be paid for by the confiscation and sale of property of Georgia rebels.\(^3\)

The first evidence that the British government had decided to begin operations in South Carolina and Georgia was a “Most Secret” letter of March 8, 1778, informing Sir Henry Clinton that he had been appointed commander-in-chief in America and outlining plans for operations in the South as they had been developed in London. The basis of this plan was information from officials and loyalists who had left the two colonies. Once the subdued loyalists were allowed to reassert their loyalty to the King and once those who had left returned, civil government could be re-established. Other rebellious colonies would see the blessings of restored British rule and would be willing to return to it—or so it was reasoned in London.

It was estimated that it would take 2,000 troops to capture Savannah and 5,000 to capture Charleston. If enough for both were not available at once, Clinton was urged to capture Savannah as the easier of the two. Then it would be possible to make contact with the loyalists in the back country of both provinces and isolate the rebels on the Carolina coast until more troops were available to capture Charleston and all of South Carolina. James Simpson, a former South Carolina attorney general and representative of the back country in the assembly, was sent to the Carolina back country to see how the people felt about the return of royal government and to pave the way for such a return.

Clinton was directed to begin the operation just as soon as the troops could be spared from operations in the North, probably in October. He was instructed to attack Maryland and Virginia at the same time if there were enough troops available.\(^4\) General Augustine Prevost, British commander in St. Augustine, and Moses Kirkland, a deputy Indian Superintendent for the Southern Department who was in New York, advised that the expedition be undertaken in the winter because the climate made operations easier in the South then and troops could not be used in the North. Clinton’s orders for the expedition were based upon a plan submitted by Kirkland on October 13, 1778, which suggested that General Prevost march against southern Georgia at the time the troops from New York arrived and that Augusta be taken as soon as pos-
sible to open communications with the loyalists in the back country and to cut off rebel communications with the Indians. Indian Superintendent Stuart should be instructed to raise all Indians possible to cooperate with the British. It might be well to influence the Indians to attack the Virginia back country to prevent Virginia sending any help to Georgia and South Carolina.\(^5\)

The British Commissioners for Restoring Peace in America, of whom Clinton was a member, formulated a plan to use the recapture of the Southern provinces as a part of their peace offensive. They instructed the commander of the expedition to use the military only to furnish sufficient support to loyalists in the provinces and to allow them to resume their ordinary civil government. Any legal action against rebels or their property should be taken by the civil government, not the military. Should this plan work well in Georgia, then the commissioners planned to use it in other areas which they hoped would be captured by the British.\(^6\)

Preparations of an expedition of this size could not escape notice, and various rumors as to its destination were soon current in both British and American areas. A South Carolina loyalist who had been in New York informed Henry Laurens, then President of the Continental Congress, of the proposed expedition; but Laurens was doubtful of the truth of the information, because of the circumstances of its delivery.\(^7\) However, Virginia was requested to send 1,000 troops and North Carolina 3,000 to help South Carolina and Georgia. North Carolina quickly collected her troops and started them south under General Ashe. Two thousand additional troops requested later were also sent.\(^8\) The dispatches from Laurens containing his information about the proposed expedition were laid before the Georgia Executive Council on November 19, 1778, and a few precautionary measures were taken.\(^9\)

At this time Congress was considering another expedition against East Florida and authorized the enlistment of special troops for it. Laurens opposed this expedition and presented additional information about the British expedition which was preparing in New York, but Congress did not cancel its East Florida expedition.\(^10\) In December Laurens gave Congress a full report of conditions in South Carolina and Georgia, their value to Congress and the British, and the improbability that the Americans could recapture them soon if the British occupied them.\(^11\)

In New York Clinton assembled an expedition of British, German, and loyalist troops under the command of Lieutenant Col-
Colonel Archibald Campbell, 71st Scottish Regiment. There were at least two battalions of the 71st Regiment, two regiments of Hessians, three or four battalions of New York loyalists, and a detachment of royal artillery. Contemporary estimates of total strength vary from 2,500 to 3,500. A naval detachment commanded by Commodore Hyde Parker was to accompany the transports to Georgia.\textsuperscript{12}

Clinton ordered that General Prevost march his troops from St. Augustine to the St. Marys to cooperate with Campbell when he arrived in Georgia.\textsuperscript{13} Prevost sent two expeditions against lower Georgia, one by land and one by sea, in the latter part of November, 1778. Georgians were warned that their state was being invaded by four British armies but were told that if they remained peacefully in their homes and surrendered their arms upon demand they would have nothing to fear. Otherwise their property might be destroyed. When British troops arrived at Sunbury, their commander, Lieutenant Colonel L. V. Fuser, demanded that Lieutenant Colonel John McIntosh surrender Fort Morris to him. McIntosh replied that he and his troops were fighting the battles of America and would prefer to perish in defense of the fort. "As to surrendering the fort, receive this laconic reply, 'COME AND TAKE IT.'" When Fuser discovered that the other expedition from St. Augustine had not arrived to cooperate with him, he returned to Florida without making any attempt to take the fort. The other British expedition under Lieutenant Colonel Mark Prevost met American troops under Colonel John White and contented itself with burning the meeting house and other buildings at Midway before retiring to Florida.\textsuperscript{14}

Just as the invasion from Florida began, General Robert Howe was relieved as Continental Commander of the Southern Department and was replaced by Major General Benjamin Lincoln. Howe delayed his departure long enough to go to Georgia to do what he could to drive out the British. Georgia troops were busy against Indians on the frontier, and Howe reported that Georgia was totally unprepared to defend itself against further attack.\textsuperscript{15} This invasion was not generally connected by Georgians or Continental officers with the rumored British invasion from New York. General Lincoln reporting from his headquarters in Charleston did not connect the two, though he enclosed a deposition from a deserter of a British ship just arrived at Tybee which said that his vessel was one of the expedition prepared in New York. Lincoln did urge North Carolina to rush the troops authorized for service.
The Georgia Executive Council, after sending agents to Charleston to urge that defense measures be taken, busied itself with putting military matters in the best possible condition.

The Georgia expedition in New York weighed anchor on November 12, but a heavy gale drove it back to Staten Island and damaged several of the vessels. It sailed a second time on November 27 and had a rough passage south. It was off Charleston on December 17 and arrived at Tybee Island December 23, totally ignorant of the military situation in Georgia. From two local residents the British learned that the Carolina troops which had come to Georgia during the recent Florida troubles had returned to South Carolina and that there were only a few hundred troops and militia in Savannah. Campbell's troops, two or three times as many as Howe had under his command, landed unopposed below Savannah on the morning of December 29.

From start to finish the defense of Savannah was handled poorly. The British landed unopposed at one of the obvious landing places which Howe had visited the day before. General Howe, Governor John Houstoun, and Colonel George Walton, commander of the Georgia militia, did not get along with each other, probably because of the troubles Howe and Houstoun had on the 1778 Florida expedition; and there was insufficient liaison between them and no real central command. It was the old story of divided command and no real cooperation between the commanders. Howe defended the main road from the landing place to the city and said that he guarded all the approaches to the city as best he could with the 600 to 1,000 troops in Savannah. Walton later said that he pointed out to Howe additional unguarded passes through the swamps after the battle had already begun; in fact the British got around the American army and into Savannah with the help of a Negro who showed them a little-used path through the swamps. Once it was known that the British were in Savannah, panic seized the Whigs. Some officers and soldiers deserted their duty to look after families and personal property. Individual officers tried to rally troops, but there was no general effort or central control. It was practically every man for himself.

With the warnings that the Americans had received, Savannah should have been better defended. Howe had made recommendations to the state government earlier, but little had been done. Howe apparently was taken by surprise and did not use his troops to best advantage. There is no evidence that he made a determined
effort to prevent the British landings or to intercept the troops before they could organize for battle. He had fewer troops than the British, but the town was surrounded by swamps and was fairly easy to defend. Everything was confused and no single person seemed able to take hold and direct the American forces. A few days’ delay would have given time for Lincoln and his Carolina troops to arrive and perhaps prevent the capture of Savannah.

Many Americans were captured before they could escape from Savannah; the height of the water in the surrounding creeks prevented many from making their escape. Some who attempted it were drowned, and some of those who did escape lost their arms and equipment. Campbell reported that he captured some 450 Americans and that about 100 were killed or lost their lives through drowning. He reported British losses as seven killed and nineteen wounded. The battle was over so quickly that the city itself was damaged little.

In his account of the defeat written on December 30, Howe showed his complete confusion as to what happened. He did not know how many men he commanded during the battle nor how many were lost. He still hoped that many of the missing would appear and report to his headquarters, as some were doing. He praised all officers that he mentioned but offered no explanation or satisfactory account of what had happened. He recommended that the British be attacked or at least confined to Savannah if sufficient American troops were available for that task.¹⁹

No sooner had the British captured Savannah than they took steps to reclaim Georgia loyalty. On January 4, 1779, Commodore Parker and Colonel Campbell issued a proclamation stating that they had come to Georgia to protect loyal subjects of the King in all Southern provinces and inviting all such to join them. Protection was to be based upon future loyalty rather than past disloyalties, and all who would swear loyalty to the King and renounce the Continental Congress were to enjoy their property unmolested. People of every description were given three months to take the oath and receive full pardon for past offenses. Those who opposed the royal authority were warned that they would be severely dealt with, and loyal inhabitants were urged to report “ringleaders of sedition” who refused to accept royal clemency to army headquarters for punishment.²⁰

General Prevost again led his forces into Georgia from St. Augustine and captured Sunbury with its garrison on January 10,
1779.\textsuperscript{21} With the arrival of Prevost in Savannah, Campbell presented his plan for an immediate advance to Augusta to complete the control of the province by the British and, as Campbell put it, make him the first officer "to take a stripe and star from the rebel flag of Congress."\textsuperscript{22} The reaction of people outside Savannah to the British was mixed. Pastor Triebner at Ebenezer rushed to take the oath of allegiance to the British, but he could not carry his entire congregation with him. Campbell reported that many respectable inhabitants joined his army, while American observers reported that many Georgians were fleeing the state in advance of the British.\textsuperscript{23}

Campbell set out for Augusta on January 24 with about 1,000 troops and arrived, after some organized opposition from Whig militia, on January 31 without the loss of a man. He scoured the country around Augusta for sixty miles to get supplies and to make his presence known to the inhabitants. About 1,400 men submitted, swore allegiance to the King, and allowed themselves to be formed into twenty militia companies for the protection of Georgia against South Carolina Whigs.\textsuperscript{24}

After the loss of Savannah, Howe retreated up the Savannah River with the part of his army that had escaped and crossed over into South Carolina where he turned over his troops to General Lincoln and left the South. Lincoln had come to Purrysburg when Savannah fell and had collected an army of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia troops with which he hoped to attack the British and drive them out of Georgia or confine them to Savannah where they could not draw supplies from the back country or contact the Indians or back-country loyalists.\textsuperscript{25}

As soon as the shock of invasion had passed, Georgia Whigs began to try to regain as much of their state as possible. By the middle of January several hundred militia were reported collected at Burke Jail under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel James Ingram who was cooperating with Lincoln and South Carolina militia. Ingram was unable to attack Campbell upon his march to Augusta but continued to attack small parties of British and loyalists.\textsuperscript{26} In the back-country Wilkes County, Whigs collected under militia Colonels Elijah Clarke, John Twiggs, and John Dooly. By the middle of February it was obvious that the British were not going to overrun all of Georgia at once, and many people in the back country began to doubt the wisdom of their oath to the King which they had taken when the British first arrived. Many renounced the oath and entered the Whig forces.\textsuperscript{27}
The British had anticipated considerable help from the Indians once there were sufficient troops for them to rally round. Stuart had given repeated assurances that the Creeks and Cherokees would cooperate with the British once British troops arrived. However, he was not informed of the planned invasion in time to collect Indians for military cooperation. When Campbell arrived at Augusta he saw but few Indians and they were interested only in presents. Neither did the numerous back-country loyalists who were supposedly waiting to be freed from their Whig oppressors rise *en masse* to join Campbell at Augusta. The more ardent British sympathizers probably had left and joined the Florida Rangers, while others had lost some of their love for the British cause since the disappearance of royal government in 1776.

When Campbell realized that he was not going to get his anticipated reinforcements and that the Whig opposition was gaining strength daily, he became doubtful of the wisdom of his rapid advance to Augusta. With the arrival of General John Ashe and some 1,200 North Carolina troops opposite Augusta, Campbell discovered that his newly organized loyalist militia was of extremely doubtful value. Since he was outnumbered and saw no hopes for reinforcements, he marched out of Augusta on February 14 and took station at Hudson’s Ferry, some twenty-four miles above Ebenezer.28

The same day that Campbell withdrew from Augusta, Whig militia under Colonels Andrew Pickens, John Dooly, and Elijah Clarke surprised a group of about 700 Tories under Colonel Boyd at Kettle Creek, in Wilkes County near where the town of Washington is now located. After a brisk encounter, the Tories were defeated and many were captured or killed. Boyd, who had expected to join some 500 more Tories and ravage upper Georgia, was killed; and his planned expedition did not take place.29

Although all Tory operations in Wilkes County were not ended, the defeat of Boyd and the withdrawal of Campbell from Augusta insured Whig predominance in the upcountry. Kettle Creek was an illustration of how well militia could fight when well led, and the encounter was a forerunner of the savage Tory-Whig fighting that was to take place in the upcountry during the next three years.

Throughout February Lincoln pushed the collection of troops in South Carolina.30 After Campbell evacuated Augusta, General Ashe crossed the Savannah River and took post on Briar Creek to cover the area above the British outposts at Hudson’s Ferry. On
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March 3, Ashe was surprised at his camp, near where the creek empties into the Savannah, by a body of British and Tories under Lieutenant Colonel Mark Prevost. The Americans had about fifteen minutes' warning of the British approach and were drawing ammunition and taking position when the attack came. Despite personal bravery of many officers and men, there was no chance against a well-disciplined army. Ashe could not rally his troops, who escaped through the swamps, swam the creek, or got away as best they could. The main loss to the Americans was the effect the battle had upon morale and the disruption of Lincoln's offensive plans against the British, which were entirely abandoned for the time being. Ashe was absolved of any personal cowardice by a court martial but he was blamed for a poorly selected camp site and insufficient security.

Having no immediate military problems, Campbell was free to carry out his instructions to reinstate civil government at the earliest practicable moment. The initial proclamation inviting Georgians to return to their old loyalty had informed them that Parliament had given up any attempts to tax the colonies. On March 4, 1779, civilian government was restored with Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost, brother of General Prevost, as lieutenant governor. A council and complete slate of provincial officials were appointed and all laws of 1775 were declared in force. Georgia now had both a British colonial government and a Whig state government (at a rather low ebb just now), each acting in the area controlled by its military forces.

Governor Prevost invited loyalists from other Southern areas to come to Georgia and urged all Georgia loyalists to cooperate with his government and the army, especially in furnishing needed supplies. Finding the provincial treasury non-existent, he drew on the British Treasury for necessary expenses and for support of loyalist refugees. He took steps to provide for frontier defense and to regain Indian friendship.

But Prevost's term as governor was only temporary. Some of Georgia's old provincial officials had been ordered back to the province even before Campbell's success was known in London. The instructions to Governor Wright indicate the thinking of the British government about the restoration of provincial government. Wright was authorized to restore Georgia to the "Peace of the King" if he thought it advisable upon his arrival in Savannah, and he was advised to call an assembly soon thereafter to convince
the inhabitants that civil government was a reality. Nothing should be recommended to this assembly that it would not approve, and any punishment of rebels should appear to come from the assembly and not from the governor. It would be well if the assembly would vote something toward imperial expenses to set a good example now that Parliamentary taxation of the colonies had been abandoned. Loyalists coming from other colonies should be granted lands if they wished to settle. A royal council was to be created by Wright out of the best people available.35

Governor Wright, Lieutenant Governor John Graham, and Chief Justice Anthony Stokes arrived in Savannah and took up their duties in July, 1779. Wright answered the congratulatory address of welcome from the inhabitants with assurances that Parliament had granted the points for which Americans said they were fighting.36 Wright did not find Georgia in as good shape as he had hoped and did not think that there were sufficient troops to protect it from rebels who persisted in rejecting the blessings of restored colonial government. He said that the people thought the restoration of civil government restored the King's peace; therefore he issued a proclamation restoring it, but he was doubtful if Georgia was really ready yet.37 Before he left England, Wright had expressed doubts if many who took the oath of allegiance to the King could be trusted. He believed that such doubtful people could control any assembly elected if they were allowed to vote—hardly an encouraging picture for a restored province.38 Wright held to this opinion after his return to Georgia and did not call an assembly election for almost a year.

Soon after Savannah's capture, the army advertised for needed supplies.39 By February, 1779, a vessel arrived from the Bahama Islands to secure food to relieve the shortage in those islands and to bring several families of loyalists who had fled to the islands and were now returning to Georgia to live. Other loyalists in St. Augustine and the West Indies were reported to be preparing to return to Georgia.40 One of the arguments for the recapture of Georgia was that it could furnish food to the army and to the West Indies. Yet within a few months both the army and navy were ordering provisions from elsewhere with the explanation that only rice was available in Georgia and that the troops and sailors did not like it. Immediately after the capture, the navy set Georgians and refugee Negroes to work getting needed timbers and naval stores from the forests.41
After the British success at Briar Creek, Campbell was sure that 3,000 to 4,000 more troops could subjugate Georgia and South Carolina, and he urged Clinton to send them. However, he did not wait to complete the conquest but, together with Commodore Parker, left Savannah for England on March 12, 1779. Throughout the spring and summer Georgia was uneasy. The British controlled Savannah and the area for twenty-five to forty miles around it. The Whigs controlled the back country and part of the lower coast. Provincial and state militia composed of neighbors sometimes operated in the same area. Whigs often raided to within a few miles of Savannah, and the British raided the Whig areas. The border area between Whig and Tory Georgia, sort of a no man’s land, was badly devastated. Whig planters and backwoodsmen went into South Carolina in considerable numbers if the British pressed hard, but they came back into Georgia when the pressure was removed. Many Whigs from the area occupied by the British moved to South Carolina. There was considerable trouble on the frontier between state militia and the Creeks, probably urged on by the British.

In the spring General Lincoln decided that the 5,000 men under his command were enough to attack the British, confine them to the Savannah area, and cut off their contacts with the back country. By the end of April Lincoln and most of his army had crossed into Georgia at Augusta and had begun an advance on Savannah. General Prevost, soon discovering the weakened condition of the American army left at Puttyburg under General Moultrie, crossed into South Carolina, and marched toward Charleston. When Lincoln saw that Moultrie could not stop Prevost, he abandoned operations in Georgia and rushed back to Charleston in mid-May to save it from the British. After a slow progress through the Carolina low country, the British army returned to Savannah, and both armies gave up any plans for immediate offensive actions. Military activity settled down to raids into the territory held by the enemy with no important results or change in territory controlled.

Wright and the Tories continued to complain that the 1,000 British troops in Georgia were not enough to protect the loyal subjects or to conquer the rest of the province, but no more troops arrived. Neither Whigs nor British were sure of their power, and both thought the other side stronger than it actually was. There were rumors of British reinforcements which did not materialize. In August General Lachlan McIntosh wrote General Lincoln from
Augusta that he had heard rumors of an imminent British attack in that area and was afraid it would be successful. He painted a dark picture of American chances in Richmond County and the back country. The state government sent urgent appeals to General Lincoln and South Carolina for help. Georgia's treasury was empty, and South Carolina granted her a $100,000 loan to support back-country militia on duty. At the same time Wright wrote that Augusta was occupied by McIntosh and that the country above Briar Creek was ravaged by the rebels. He thought 4,000 to 5,000 troops and "a few Ships" could control all of Georgia.

From the time of Campbell's arrival in Augusta in February, it was obvious that the Indians were not going to flock to the British standard. Hence the British began to court Indian friendship and tried to get Indians to cooperate in their warfare against the Whigs. The British insisted that the Indians join them in organized combat; the Indians objected to British attempts to prevent looting and indiscriminate frontier warfare. Few Indians joined the British army, and the ones who did remained only a short time. There were continual complaints that Superintendent Stuart was not doing his job as well as formerly. Stuart died after a long illness on March 21, 1779, and the Southern Indian Department was divided into two sections. Alexander Cameron, a deputy, was given the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and other Indians along the Mississippi. Thomas Brown, the notorious Georgia Tory and leader of the Florida Rangers, was given the Creeks, Cherokees, Catawbas, and other Indians toward the Atlantic.

Soon after Savannah's capture by the British Congress and General Washington considered the loss. They realized the importance of its reconquest, but Washington said he could spare no troops, and the only hope for reconquest was with French or Spanish aid. Henry Laurens kept this subject before Congress, which, in January and February, 1779, requested Virginia and North Carolina to send what troops they could to Lincoln in South Carolina and ordered Count Pulaski and his legion to the Southern Department. At the same time, Congress debated requesting Count d'Estaing, commander of the French fleet and troops in American waters, to help recover Georgia. The French minister objected that d'Estaing was busy in the West Indies; so Congress sent no request to him. But Governor John Rutledge of South Carolina asked d'Estaing's aid to reconquer Savannah.

This invitation of Rutledge's set in motion the most interesting
and most spectacular military action that took place in Georgia after the capture of Savannah. Since there was really little hope for French help, the Americans and British were greatly surprised when d'Estaing arrived off the Georgia coast on September 1, 1779, with twenty-two vessels of the line and about 4,000 troops. D'Estaing had come to add the conquest of Savannah to his accomplishments before his return to France, and he intended to make short work of it. Governor Rutledge told him that the British would probably surrender at once if their escape was cut off. General Lincoln began collecting the Continental troops and militia in Georgia and South Carolina. General Prevost rushed to get the defenses of Savannah in shape and dispatched a call to Lieutenant Colonel Maitland to hold his 800 troops at Beaufort in readiness to come to Savannah. Governor Wright and his council ordered in four to five hundred Negroes to work on the fortifications under the able direction of the engineer, Captain Moncrief. The British forces from outlying areas were concentrated in Savannah, and guns from naval vessels were landed and manned by sailors.

Lincoln spent September 11-13 getting his troops across the Savannah at Zubly's Ferry, making a juncture with General McIntosh and his troops from Augusta, and establishing a camp near Ebenezer. On the 16th Lincoln and d'Estaing made contact and began what might be called a joint operation. Before they saw each other, d'Estaing had demanded that Prevost surrender to the French, but it was now agreed that all future negotiations would be conducted jointly. Surrender negotiations went on for two days while the British strengthened their fortifications and got Maitland's 800 troops from Beaufort into Savannah. Then the demand to surrender was refused.

On September 23 the French began entrenching operations for regular siege approaches to the city. Heavy artillery was brought from the ships and a bombardment of the city begun on the night of October 4 or 5—contemporary accounts often differ a day on the dating of happenings in the siege. This bombardment continued through October 8 and caused considerable damage inside the city. D'Estaing had already over Stayed his proposed time and was afraid of hurricanes and the possibility of a British naval attack; besides, there were shortages of provisions and supplies and much sickness because the fleet had been so long at sea. The siege seemed to make no real progress against the determined British inside Savannah. Therefore the attackers determined to try to take the city by storm.
The French and Americans, led by d'Estaing in person, stormed the British lines on October 9. Despite the gallant heroism and wounds of d'Estaing and many more and considerable loss of life, all was in vain. The main bodies of French and American troops left the lines on October 18. The French spent the next two days embarking and then sailed away. The Americans went up the river to Zubly's Ferry and crossed into South Carolina.

Thus ended a "joint" operation that might have been highly successful had it really been joint. There was never sufficient cooperation between the French and the Americans. D'Estaing was so sure of his superiority in military matters that he tended to ignore the Americans. He was so sure that his superior numbers would make the outcome certain that he delayed or gave in to Prevost on all points. In short, he allowed himself to be outsmarted by the British. Had he stormed Savannah upon landing, even before the Americans arrived, there seems little doubt that he could have captured the town. If there was any reason for his delay, d'Estaing did not report it. Instead of attacking immediately he waited until the defenses had been strengthened and Maitland's and other troops had been brought into Savannah. Any real understanding between d'Estaing and the Americans would have prevented Maitland's entry into Savannah. Some warning to the Americans of d'Estaing's anticipated arrival would have allowed them time to collect troops and otherwise prepare for him, but it might have done the same for the British in Savannah. Real French-American cooperation and quick action should have gained Savannah and might have changed the entire course of the war in the South.60

While Congress was laboring under the misapprehension that the French and Americans had been successful at Savannah, it debated a recommendation to set aside a day for thanksgiving to God for the victory.61 Governor Wright and his council, who were better informed of happenings at Savannah, set aside October 29 as a day of thanksgiving and prayer for God's deliverance of the city from the French and Americans.62 The commanding officer at St. Augustine, Colonel Fuser, gave a ball in honor of the deliverance of Savannah.63