



# COLORADO RIVER RED, WHITE & BLUE NEWSLETTER

**Volume 6, Number 1**

**August 2015**

Welcome to this issue of your Colorado River Chapter, AZSSAR newsletter. The Colorado River, Red, White & Blue is an official publication of the Colorado River Chapter, AZSSAR.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and the updates and information it provides.

## **Campaigns and Battles of the American Revolution (1775-1783)**

Our series on Battles of the American Revolution continues with this issue's installment – Battle of Fort Sullivan. I hope you find it interesting and informative!

### **Chapter Meetings**

**Next Chapter Meeting September 14th  
Mohave County Library  
Lake Havasu City**

Colorado River Chapter rotates meetings between Kingman and Lake Havasu in hopes that one location will be more appealing to you than the other.

Our meeting location in Kingman is Mohave County Community College, 1971 Jaegerson Ave, Kingman, which is about 4-5 miles north of I-40. The meeting room is in the Library Building in a really nice conference room across from the Library.

Our meeting location in Lake Havasu is Mohave County Library in the K-Mart Plaza at 1770 North McCulloch Blvd, Lake Havasu City.

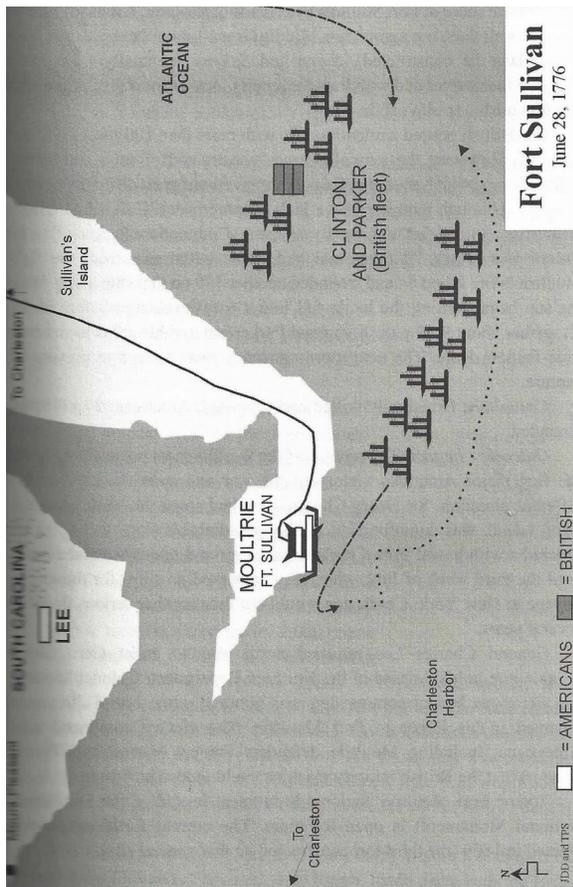
## **Battle of Fort Sullivan (Also known as First Battle of Charleston and Battle of Sullivan's Island) (First British Southern Expedition)**

**28 June 1776**

The Battle of Fort Sullivan (Fort Moultrie) on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina occurred on a sunny day with a seaward breeze. Sullivan's Island is located in the entrance to the port city of

Charleston. Charleston sits on a peninsula at the confluence of the Cooper, Wando and Ashley rivers, which empty into the Atlantic Ocean.

These three rivers help form a natural harbor that is surrounded by marshy lowlands and shifting sand bars. This harbor has a narrow and shallow entrance protected by a large sandbar that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was impassible during low tide, but even at high tide there were only five channels through which ships could pass.



While the British had good charts of the harbor and knew the issues with low tide, it was still hard to enter while under fire from Fort Sullivan.

For the British prior to the Battle of Sullivan's island, disappointing setbacks in North Carolina, which you will recall included the Tory defeat at Moore's Creek Bridge on 27 Feb 1776, and subsequent loss of Royal governorship, prompted the British to move their

operations to South Carolina, from which colony they had launched their Southern Campaign.

The overall British battle plan was to seize the ports of Savannah, GA, and Charleston, SC; and after securing these ports enlisting Tory support for an operation which included moving aggressively inland to pacify the colonies of both South Carolina and Georgia. Once complete British General Clinton intended to march north into North Carolina and Virginia and do the same thing.

Clinton had decided his initial assault against this southern colonial port would focus on Fort Sullivan and unfinished fortification on Sullivan's Island at the entrance to Charleston Harbor (north shore).

On 4 June 1776, the British arrived off the Charleston bar where they remained out of range of Patriot guns at Fort Sullivan as they carefully maneuvered their warships into position for an attack.

From 7-15 June, the British landed infantry on Long Island (now known as Isle of Palms), which was a narrow piece of land just north of Sullivan's Island. However, American soldiers were successful in preventing the British from transferring these infantry soldiers via small boats to Sullivan's Island.

But British ships, meanwhile, had moved into position at Five Fathom Hole, a channel entrance through which vessels could readily move into the harbor to engage Patriot land defenses.

Fort Sullivan was a primary Patriot defensive work established to protect the entrance to Charleston Harbor, and Colonel Moultrie was in command on Sullivan's Island, whose subordinates included prominent leaders Francis Marion and Thomas Sumter.

In anticipation of the upcoming battle with British forces, American Major General Lee, commander of the Continental Southern Department arrived at Fort Sullivan on 2 June 1776 and took the only actions he could in ordering the construction of additional fortifications around the city of Charleston in preparation for the battle.

On 28 June 1776, at around 10:30 a.m. with favorable winds, British Commodore Parker ordered his armada into action. The battle started when the British ship Thunder, a long range artillery ship, began firing its 10-inch mortars at Fort Sullivan. However, the Thunder was too far away to inflict much damage, and many of the shells buried themselves in the sand or swampy morass inside the fort and exploded with little or no impact on the Americans. The Thunder eventually became disabled and had to withdraw from the action.

At the same time British warships Bristol, Experiment, Active, Solebay, Acteon, Syren, Sphynx, Friendship, Ranger and St. Lawrence also went into action, anchoring at various distances and began showering the forts with cannon fire.

Finally the Acteon, Sphynx, and Syren set sail in an attempt to gain entrance to the Charleston Harbor along the opposite shore from Fort Sullivan to enfilade the bastion, but luckily for the Patriot defenders all three ran aground on Middle Ground shoal (where Fort Sumter would later be constructed). Syren and Sphynx eventually managed to dislodge themselves and withdrew for repairs; however, Acteon was caught fast and unable to slip off the sandbar.

The British continued the battle pouring relentless fire with more than 100 pieces into Fort Sullivan. But the American stronghold was constructed of sand and spongy palmetto logs, which absorbed the pounding without great difficulty or much damage. Colonel Moultrie's soldiers at Fort Sullivan were hampered by a lack of gunpowder but the American artillerists returned fire on the British with deadly accuracy.

During this battle Commodore Parker's flagship Bristol was hit 70 times and had to be withdrawn from the fight, and Moultrie's fire killed 64 and wounded another 170 on that ship alone.

As the sun began setting the battle fell into a fitful exchange before ending altogether at about 9:30 p.m. A stunned Commodore Parker ordered his ships to retreat to Five Fathom Hole for their safety, and the

next morning Acteon was burned to prevent her capture.

The result of the battle was the repulse of the world's most powerful navy and the first major American victory of the Revolutionary War which spun the conflict in a different direction.

British General Clinton, who had spent the battle ashore on Long Island, was dumbfounded by the pounding his ships had taken from the Patriots, and he ordered a withdrawal of British forces from Charleston. However, British ground forces remained ashore on Long Island until the third week of July 1776, when they embarked on ships for the ten day voyage to New York. Charleston would not face another serious threat for several years.

At the same time American General Lee returned north to assist General Washington in defense of the Northern Department. This victory convinced many Patriots that the British military machine could indeed be beaten.

Casualties were: British: 195 killed and wounded; Americans: 37 killed and wounded.

As a side note: Colonel Moultrie, the victorious Patriot commander was honored when Fort Sullivan was renamed in his honor to Fort Moultrie.

### **Fort Moultrie – Fort Sumter National Monuments U.S. National Park Service**



Entrance to Fort Moultrie National Monument today



Overview of Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island

The first fort of Sullivan's Island was still incomplete when this battle occurred and after the Revolution, Fort Moultrie was neglected, such that by 1791 little of it remained. Then in 1793, war broke out between England and France. The next year Congress, seeking to safeguard American shore, authorized the first system of nationwide coastal fortifications.

As a result a second Fort Moultrie, one of 20 new forts along the Atlantic coast, was completed in 1798. It too suffered from neglect and was finally destroyed by a hurricane in 1804. By 1807 many of the coastal fortifications were in need of extensive repair, Congress responded by authorizing funds which included a third Fort Moultrie. By 1809 a new brick fort stood on Sullivan's Island. Between 1809 and 1860 Fort Moultrie changed little.

The big improvements in Charleston's defenses during this period were construction of Fort Sumter at the entrance to Charleston Harbor. The forts ringing Charleston Harbor are: Moultrie, Sumter, Johnson and Castle Pinckney which were meant to complement each other.

You can visit Fort Moultrie on you next trip to Charleston.

Sources: A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution by Savas and Dameron; U.S. National Park Service.

NEXT: Battles of Cherokee Campaign (also known as the Second Cherokee War), 1 July 1776 through December 1782.

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## Chapter Member Birthdays

**August 2015**

None

**September 2015**

Chance Vallon – 25th

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## Chapter Officers

Donald Reighard – President – (928) 680-4087

Ray Lackey – Vice President – (928) 754-1941

Mike Boop – Secretary – (928) 753-7968

Ray Lackey - Treasurer – (928) 754-1941

Jimmie Bodenhamer – Registrar/Genealogist – (928) 692-6636

Michael Boop – Sergeant at Arms – (928) 753-7968

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## Membership

If you need assistance with a membership issue, or know someone interested in joining the NSSAR, please provide me the contact information and I will work the issue for you.

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

August 1<sup>st</sup>  
Chapter Newsletter Mailed

September 7<sup>th</sup>  
Labor Day

September 12<sup>th</sup>  
Chapter Meeting  
Lake Havasu City

October 1<sup>st</sup>  
Chapter Newsletter Mailed

October 10<sup>th</sup>  
Chapter Meeting  
Kingman

October 12<sup>th</sup>  
Columbus Day

October 31<sup>th</sup>  
Halloween

## Newsletter Editor

Hope you enjoyed this newsletter and I look forward to any comments or suggestion. Jimmie Bodenhamer, Editor, [jimmieb@frontiernet.net](mailto:jimmieb@frontiernet.net).

Need another copy of this Newsletter? It is on our AZSSAR website link.

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