

As he walked the deck of the Phoenix man-of-war on the night of November 9, 1778, Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell must have wondered if the dark rumors of the incompetence of the British war effort in America were true. Despite his limited rank and his experience solely as an engineer, not as a field commander, Campbell, the night before, had been placed in command of an army of three thousand men and a fleet of ships under orders to sail from New York to invade the far-off rebelling colony of Georgia.¹ For security reasons, Campbell had not been told anything of his new assignment before the fleet sailed. However, he had correctly surmised that because security was so bad at British headquarters in New York, the Americans already knew of his objective.² Particularly galling to the lieutenant colonel was the realization that he knew nothing about where he was going:

It was a Matter of great Concern, that there was not a chart of Georgia in the Possession of any Officer in this Army nor any Information of the Roads, Swamps or Creeks, which could be depended upon, for directing our Operations into the interior Parts of the Province.³

Furthermore, he had no information on enemy fortifications or troop strength in the colony.

Lt. Col. Campbell was also surprised that although Britain's Carlisle Peace Commission had appointed him provisional governor of Georgia (contingent upon his success in conquering the province), Sir Henry Clinton, British commander of the King's forces in North America, had vetoed the Commission's recommendation to make Campbell a brigadier general. Unbeknownst to Campbell, Clinton had been ordered to send the expedition to Georgia against personal misgivings. Archibald Campbell, the engineer, was probably the highest ranking officer Clinton could afford to lose on an expedition sailing not only into the unknown but, Clinton feared, into disaster.⁴

Campbell, however, succeeded. Before setting out for England in March 1779, he captured Savannah, marched to Augusta and back, killed or captured hundreds of American troops, restored fourteen hundred Georgians to the King's cause (at least on paper), and organized a provisional colonial government in Georgia--all at practically no loss to his forces.⁵ The success of Campbell's highlander troops is believed to have provoked legislation later passed by the State of Georgia forbidding Scotsmen from settling in the state unless they could prove that they had served on the American side in the Revolution.

This dark hour for the American cause ultimately proved to be an important watershed for future Georgia historians and geographers. Campbell and his subordinate, Ensign John Wilson, found time in this brief but eventful campaign to correct deficiencies in British knowledge of Georgia. As a legacy of the British invasion, they left behind maps and journals of the province unlike anything prepared on Georgia since the work of John William Gerar DeBrahm.

Archibald Campbell was well prepared to undertake a survey

of Georgia when he could spare time from restoring the province to the King's cause. Born in Argyllshire, Scotland, on August 24, 1739, he entered the British Corps of Engineers as an ensign in 1758, possibly having studied engineering at Woolwich Academy. He subsequently practiced his profession in Dominica, where he made prints of the island that were later published. From 1768 to 1772, Campbell served as chief engineer for the East India Company in Bengal, India. Returning to Scotland in 1773 a wealthy land-owner, he served in the British Parliament from 1774 to 1780. During that time, he joined the 71st Scots (Fraser's) Highlanders as a lieutenant colonel to serve in His Majesty's army against the rebelling American colonists. His transport was captured in Boston Harbor before he could take part in the fighting, and he was not exchanged for two years. After his Georgia campaign, Campbell returned to England to marry Amelia Ramsey, the daughter of the noted artist Allan Ramsey. He went back to America to serve in Jamaica, where he was eventually appointed governor. Campbell later received an appointment as governor of Madras, India. A major general and Knight of the Bath, Archibald Campbell died in London March 31, 1791 and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.⁶

The province that Campbell and his troops explored in their marches in 1778-79 was a sparsely settled frontier of farms, plantations, and villages scattered along the Savannah River and the Atlantic seaboard, linked together by a network of trails and poorly made roads. Georgia, only forty-six years old in 1779, had a population of eighteen thousand whites and fifteen thousand blacks (men, women, and children). With such a small and scattered population, this relatively new settlement did not inspire detailed surveys or journals.

Archibald Campbell's most well-known work relating to Georgia was his 1780 map, Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia, extending from the Mouth of the River Savannah to the Town of Augusta, by Archibald Campbell Lieut. Coll. 71st Regt.⁷ Despite its title, this map includes all of the major settlements and roads in the province, with the exception of the Ceded Lands on the northwestern frontier and the colony's outermost fringes. Campbell was not content merely to detail the road network of the colony. Included on the map are individual buildings, fields, swamps, water courses, and hills. On all other areas of the map, the spaces are filled with trees. Campbell's Sketch has been found accurate for those areas he actually saw, which was most of the area covered by the map. Information on locations provided to him from other sources, however, is usually not as correct. Roads on those parts of the map were inaccurately represented as straight lines, and the locations that they connected were not exact.⁸ Information from the Campbell Sketch was combined with data from William De Braham, A Map of South Carolina and A Part of Georgia (1757) to compile the Georgia portion of John Stuart's Map of South Carolina and a Part of Georgia (1780).⁹

Compatible information on the roads, locations, and terrain on the Campbell Sketch can be found in his memoirs of the Georgia campaign, Journal of An Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia in North America Under the Orders of Archibald Campbell Esquire Lieut. Colol. of His Majesty's 71st Regimt. 1778, which have recently been published.¹⁰ The Campbell journal is not, as some researchers have assumed, a contemporary diary of his experiences in Georgia, although the

entries are arranged in day-by-day fashion. Comparisons of the Journal to Campbell's dispatches of the time and to other contemporary sources reveal errors in dates and the sequence of events in the Journal that were probably errors in memory. The Journal also makes Campbell appear to be an extraordinarily accurate prophet. Further evidence that the Journal was written sometime after the actual events can be seen in Campbell's failure to use first names when referring to individuals. The manuscript of the Journal originally was illustrated with local area maps. Only one of these illustrations, a plan of the Savannah area, is known to have survived in any form, and it is a copy.¹¹ This loss is only partially redeemed by Campbell's Sketch of the Northern Frontiers. Despite these shortcomings, Campbell's journal is the most detailed extant account of the British invasion of Georgia, and it provides both geographers and historians with details not available elsewhere.

One other contribution by Archibald Campbell to knowledge of Georgia in 1779 is an anonymous, undated, manuscript map preserved in his personal papers. Although this map, "A Plan of a Part of the Province of Georgia in North America," shows the 1773 Ceded Lands addition to the province, most of the map was drawn much earlier, in the 1760s.¹² Some details on the map as Campbell first rendered it include the colonial parishes, the Indian trading houses of Augusta, and various roads and trails, only a few of which can be found on other contemporary maps. Another valuable feature of this document is its notes on roads, ferries, and forts from Augusta northward to the Ceded Lands. These notes were penciled in by Campbell from information provided by his patrols and scouts. No mention is made of this map in the manuscript of the Journal, although Campbell apparently took part of the title of his memoirs from the title of the map. For reasons not understood, none of the unique features of this map were later used in his Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia.

The other major geographer of the British invasion of Georgia was John Wilson, Campbell's secretary. Wilson was born in 1755, the son of engineer and architect James Wilson of Stirling, Scotland. When Lt. Gen. Simon Fraser of Lovat raised the 72nd Regiment in late 1775, John Wilson enlisted as a "volunteer," a form of cadet waiting for an officer's position. He was captured with Campbell in Boston Harbor on June 16, 1776. After his exchange, he was promoted to ensign in the first battalion of the 71st and accompanied it to Georgia in 1778. Wilson worked as an engineer on the fortifications at Ebenezer, Georgia, in February 1779 and was wounded directing artillery at the Battle of Stono Ferry, South Carolina, the following spring. Promoted to first lieutenant shortly after his service at the Siege of Savannah in October 1779, he was severely wounded while serving as an engineer at the Siege of Charleston. He married Judith Isabel Wilson, daughter of Charleston Loyalist Dr. Robert Wilson, on September 14, 1782. John Wilson subsequently served as an engineer for the British army in South Carolina, New York, East Florida, the Bahamas, and Nova Scotia. Returning to Scotland, Wilson worked as a surveyor for his old commander, Archibald Campbell. From 1785 until his death in 1798, he was listed as retired on half pay as a member of the engineers department. Wilson lived in Lanarkshire before finally settling at Stirling.¹³ His son was Maj. John Wilson, remembered as the state engineer of South

Carolina and the chief engineer of the Pennsylvania State Railroad.¹⁴

Wilson's best known work from the invasion of Georgia is his map of the British capture of Savannah, "Plan of the Decent [sic] and Action of the 29th. Decr. 1778, near the Town of Savannah, by His Majesty's Forces under the Command of Lt. Colol. Campbell of the 71st Regt. foot." However, a similar sketch by Wilson of the unsuccessful attack upon the British lines at Savannah on October 9, 1779, has been published several times, sometimes anonymously, after being redrawn.¹⁵ Wilson also prepared maps and a journal of Georgia similar to, but not copies of, those by Archibald Campbell. His complete manuscript, maps and texts, was in the Abertaff Collection of Abertaff, Scotland, in the possession of descendants of Lt. Gen. Simon Fraser, when Georgia historian Charles Colcock Jones, Jr. published the narrative in 1887.¹⁶ By 1921, the original manuscript had been broken up and sold at auction. Wilson's map of the roads and major locations from Ebenezer to Augusta, table of distances, and introduction are today in the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress. The rest of the manuscript, including a map of the Georgia coast that Wilson probably copied, the narrative, and six local maps illustrating the text, are in the Department of Special Collections, University of California at Los Angeles.¹⁷ Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. published the narrative in 1961.¹⁸ However, neither Jones nor Nunis identified the author or published the maps.¹⁹

The Wilson map of the roads from Ebenezer to Augusta is not as detailed as Campbell's Sketch of the Northern Frontiers of Georgia, and it lacks Campbell's trees. However, his six local maps are so exact that they illustrate buildings and fences and even the steepness of hills and creek banks. Wilson's narrative, like Campbell's Journal, was written largely from memory and notes after the invasion of Georgia and was apparently intended as a sort of military-engineering textbook, illustrating advantages and disadvantages of terrain and roads from an actual wartime situation. John Wilson, however, could not refrain from adding opinions of persons and places he had encountered. As a result, his work represents not only a description of the terrain and roads but also a travelogue of Georgia in 1779.

Other engineers also served with the British invasion force. Capt. James Moncrief came to Georgia as part of the British troops from East Florida. Being related by blood or marriage to a number of prominent American leaders apparently did not dampen his enthusiasm for the King's cause. He won laurels for his defensive works at Savannah, which even at their weakest point held back the French and American attack on the British lines there on October 9, 1779. This Scotsman from Fifeshire was mortally wounded in battle at Dunkirk in 1793.²⁰

Engineer Lt. Alexander Sutherland accompanied Campbell and Wilson in the marches through Georgia and sailed for New York about the same time Archibald Campbell returned to England. Campbell thought so much of Sutherland's abilities that years later when governor of Jamaica and in desperate need of a military engineer, he requested Sutherland by name. Alexander Sutherland died as captain of engineers at the Battle of Lannoy, Holland on October 28, 1793.²¹ Neither Moncrief nor Sutherland is known to have left any maps or journals of the British invasion of Georgia.

The first fifty years of Georgia's settlement are reflected in a handful of maps and written accounts of the terrain, roads, and settlements of the province. These records were the work of trained, professional engineers and were drafted to help restore Georgia to the British cause. While the British military effort eventually failed, the renderings of a few British engineers have survived, providing historians and geographers with a very detailed picture of that time and place.

NOTES

¹Archibald Campbell, Journal of An Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia in North America Under the Orders of Archibald Campbell Esquire Lieut. Colol. of His Majesty's 71st Regmt. 1778, ed. Colin Campbell (Darien, Ga.: Printed for the Richmond County Historical Society by the Ashantilly Press, 1981), pp. 4-7.

²Ibid., pp. xiii-xv.

³Ibid., p. 31.

⁴Robert S. Davis, Jr., "The British Invasion of Georgia in 1778," Atlanta Historical Journal 24 (Winter 1980): 6-8.

⁵Robert S. Davis, Jr., "Portrait of a Governor," Atlanta Historical Journal 26 (Spring 1982): 45-46; Robert S. Davis, Jr., "The Invisible Soldiers: The Georgia Militia and the Siege of Savannah," Atlanta Historical Journal 25 (Winter 1981): 33-34.

⁶Campbell, pp. ix-xi, 130 fn. 130.

⁷Copies of this map are available in most major collections of early American maps and the larger archives in Georgia.

⁸Compare the Campbell map to Thomas H. Robertson and T. Heard Robertson, A Bicentennial Map of Augusta, Georgia and Surroundings 1735-1781 (Augusta: County Board of Education of Richmond County, 1976).

⁹For information on these maps, see Janice Gayle Blake, comp., Pre-Nineteenth Century Maps in the Collections of the Georgia Surveyor General Department (Atlanta: State Printing Office, 1975), pp. 64-65, 114, 117.

¹⁰Edited by Colin Campbell and published by the Richmond County Historical Society. See footnote 1.

¹¹The map is in the Georgia Historical Society Library in Savannah. Campbell, pp. 97, 115 fn. 97.

¹²The map is now in the Campbell family papers in the possession of John L. Campbell, Isle of Canna, Scotland. It is reproduced in the inset of the published edition of the Campbell Journal.

¹³Truman Morgan, "Wilson Family," pp. 30-34, General File, South Carolina Historical Society; Great Britain--Army, 71st Foot Regiment, 1775-1784, Ford Collection, New York Public Library; Memorandum Book of Rev. Edward Jenkins, 1780-1782, South Carolina Historical Society; Wilbur Henry Siebert, Loyalists in East Florida 1774-1785, 2 vols. (Deland, Florida: State Historical Society, 1929), 1: 114, 121-22, 149-52, 184-85.

¹⁴William Hasell Wilson, Reminiscences of William Hasell Wilson (1811-1902), ed. Elizabeth B. Pharo (Philadelphia: Privately Printed, 1937), p. 2; Gene Waddell, "Robert Mills, Cartographer," in Robert Mills, Mills' Atlas, Atlas of the State of South Carolina 1825 (1825; rep. ed. Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1980), pp. iii, viii-xi.

¹⁵The Wilson maps are in the Sir Henry Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁶Charles C. Jones, Jr., ed., "Memorandum of the Route pursued by Colonel Campbell and his column of invasion, in 1779, from Savannah to Augusta; with a Narrative of occurrences connected with his march, and a record of some of the military events which transpired in that portion of the Province of Georgia during the Revolution." Magazine of American History 18 (1887): 256-59, 342-48.

¹⁷The Library of Congress portion of the manuscript is "[Roads and country that Col. Campbell marched thro'--Ebenezer to Augusta in Georgia. 1779?]," G3921 .S3 1779 .R6 Vault. The rest of the manuscript is "Memorandums of the road and the march of a corps of troops from Savannah to Augusta and some subsequent occurrences [Jan.-April 1779]," Department of Special Collections, University of California at Los Angeles.

¹⁸Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., ed., "Colonel Archibald Campbell's March From Savannah to Augusta, 1779," Georgia Historical Quarterly 45 (September 1961): 275-86.

¹⁹The complete text and maps by Wilson will be published by Robert S. Davis, Jr. through the Partridge Pond Press in 1985.

²⁰Alexander A. Lawrence, Storm Over Savannah: The Story of Count d'Estaing and the Siege of the Town in 1779 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968), pp. 38-39, 138; Campbell, p. 126 fn. 180.

²¹Archibald Campbell to?, 2 Feb. 1782, Colonial Office Papers 137/82, p. 115, and Officer Service Papers, Alexander Sutherland, British Public Record Office (London); Campbell, pp. 19, 107.