

Citation:

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Battlefield Tour

During the assault on June 18, Provincials under Major Greene garrisoned the Star Fort. The Provincials were Americans who had enlisted into the British military. Issued the traditional scarlet coats and military equipment, they were well trained and were the equivalent of British Regulars. When the Americans assaulted the fort, Lieutenant John Roney and Captain James French led a party out and around the far side of the fort to flank them, and the counterattack stopped their progress. Roney paid with his life.⁹⁶

Enter the fort and move ahead to the wall opposite the American rifle tower.

Peer over the walls to see the defenders' perspective of the American trenches. Be careful not to walk on the fragile earthworks. Here you can see how the rifle tower, three times as high as what you see today, threatened the safety of the Star Fort's defenders. As you walk through this fort, imagine the desperation of the garrison in this tiny space, under constant infantry and artillery fire.

As you leave the fort, note the markers on your left for the communications trench, known as a caponier ditch. Archaeology showed this connecting trench to be 3Vz feet deep and 3 to 5 feet wide at the top, sloping to 2 feet wide at the bottom. Back and forth, crouched over for protection, couriers relayed messages, slaves ran supplies and troops moved to and from the town, taking their turn in the Star Fort.⁹⁷

NINETY Six MYSTERY: During the siege local civilians visited the American camp to sell goods to the soldiers. A local legend speaks of a woman named Kate Fowler who regularly visited Greene's camp selling food and other articles. One day she drove her wagon through the camp and up to the trenches, where the American guards failed to stop her. She spurred her horses forward, making a break for the fort. The Loyalist guards let her in, and Kate delivered a message to Cruger: reinforcements were coming. For the first time the garrison knew that Lord Francis Rawdon, with British Regulars and Loyalist militia, were marching to their aid. Who was Kate Fowler and did she really deliver the message? We will probably never know.⁹⁸

Endnotes

96. Bobby Moss, *The Loyalists in the Siege of Fort Ninety Six* (Blacksburg, SC: Scotia Hibernia Press), 1999, x; Mackenzie, 146-60; Alice Waring. *The Fighting Elder* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 86.

97. Prentice, *Archaeological Excavations*, 65. In 1970 archaeologists discovered the communications trench and followed it by opening sections at regular intervals. The trench was denoted by a discolored soil stain running from the Star Fort to the town. A cross section was opened in one area to reveal its depth.

98. Marjore, Young, et. al., *South Carolina Women Patriots of the American Revolution* (1979); Lee, *Memoirs of General Henry Lee*, 374; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 155-6; Waring, *Fighting Elder*, 84. Lee, in his memoirs, states that the messenger was a local man who had frequently been delivering supplies to the American camp, and thus aroused no suspicion when he drove through on this day. The legend further states that Kate Fowler had an affair with an officer in Cruger's garrison, and he left her at the end of the war. Another legend states that Kate Fowler received the message and arranged to have a man deliver it to the fort. Many women did serve as messengers and acted as spies for both sides during the conflict, including several well-known ladies from South Carolina. Whether it was a man or woman who delivered the message, the important thing was that Cruger now knew he could reject any surrender terms and hold out for Rawdon to reach him. Whatever Kate Fowler's true identity and role was, local legends affirm that she was somehow involved with getting the news to Cruger.