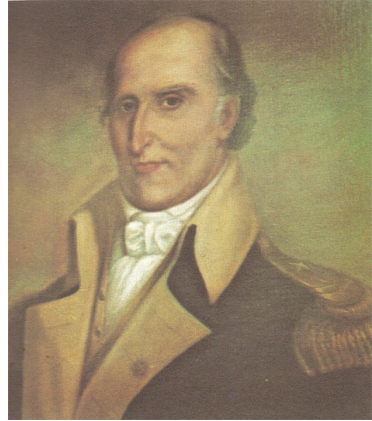


## The Battle at Kettle Creek

The victory of the Patriots at Kettle Creek, in Wilkes County on February 17, 1779, unquestionably turned the tide of warfare in the South. When the glad news reached the other colonies new determination was the result. Although this action has never received its proper place among the battles of the Revolution it was one of the major engagements and will, in time, be recognized as such.

In February, 1779, Colonel Boyd crossed the Savannah River at the Cherokee ford, the place of crossing between South Carolina and Elbert County, with a command exceeding more than 800 able and well equipped men. Here he encountered a vastly inferior force of Americans and a heated skirmish took place with the result that he lost in killed and wounded approximately 100 men. This was not his only loss for 25 of his men deserted to the Patriots. The fighting was of short duration and when the Americans had retired Boyd continued his march towards the present town of Washington. On the morning of St. Valentine's Day he halted at a farm near Kettle Creek.



Colon Pickens

In the meantime, February 12th, Pickens, Dooley, Clark, and Heard learning of his whereabouts from, it is said, the redoubtable Nancy Hart, cautiously pursued him and camped the following night within four miles of the enemy.



Lt. Col. Clark

Early on the morning of the 14th, Boyd, with astounding carelessness, allowed his men to disperse in various directions for the purposes of gathering food supplies and fire wood. It was the universal practice of the Tories to forage the country through which they passed and confiscate all food supplies and live stock in the area. Order was exceedingly lax and few, if any, sentries had been posted. The Tories army, realizing their greater numerical strength, and foolishly discounting the determination and bravery of the Americans, had no inkling of the fact that they were closely pursued.

Under Colonel Pickens command the Patriots advanced in three divisions: the right wing under Colonel Dooley; the left under Colonel Clark, and the center led by Pickens. Strict orders were given not to fire a gun until within 25 paces of the enemy. Boyd, by this time, having learned of the impending attack, took command of all the available men and met with bravery the center under Pickens. His line was partially protected by a fence of fallen rails which gave him no small advantage over the Americans entirely in the open.

Colonel Pickens, at once recognizing this disadvantage, drew off at double-quick to a small hill on his right and in this manner flanked the troops of Boyd.

On the first sustained fire by the Americans, Colonel Boyd fell mortally wounded and his men fled in disorder across the creek. Major Spurgen, who now assumed command of the British forces, gallantly rallied them and the battle again became fierce.

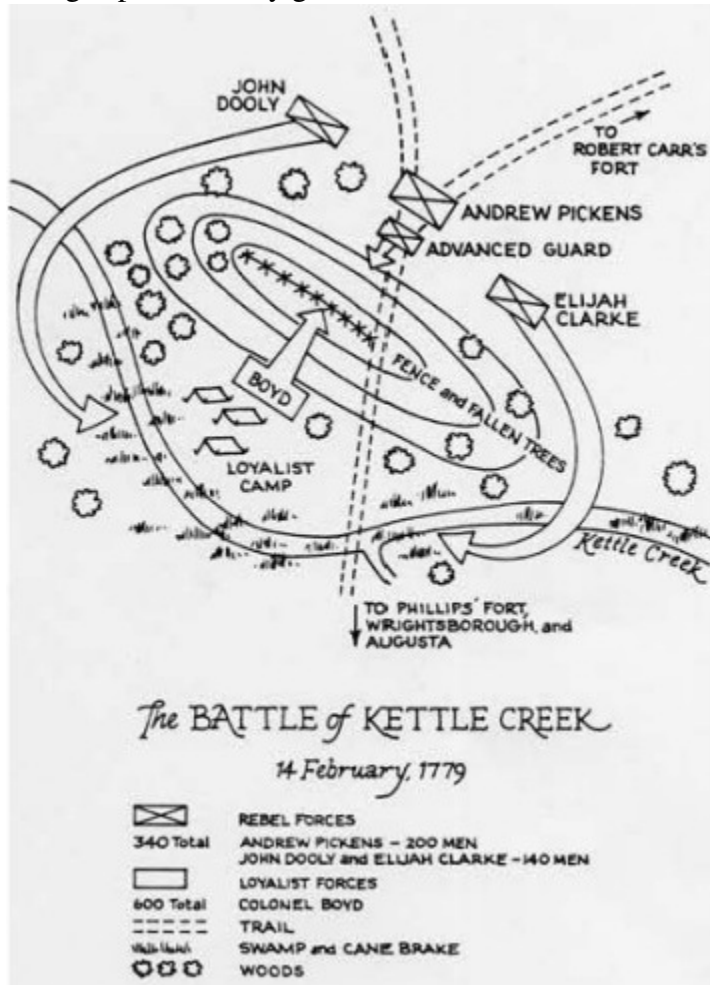
After Spurgen had assumed command it appeared that the British, so superior in numbers, were destined to force the Americans to retire, but such was not the case for the invincible Clark rallied his men showing superb military genius.

Seeing the Patriots were about to be overcome he followed a path leading to a ford across the creek and under a sustained fire from the enemy gained a hill in the rear of the Tories. The troops under his command at this time numbered about 60 and all of them were Georgians. Among this number were: Major Barnard Heard, Captain Drury Cade, Benjamin Hart, Austin Dabney, William Bailey, William Harper, Ambrose Beasley, Captain John Cunningham and Thomas A. Carter. During the greater part of the engagement Colonel Boyd, suffering acutely from his wounds, lay within the line of fire watching the outcome.

The enemy was now between two balling fires and was forced to flee in complete disorder.

At the close of the action, and when order had to some measure been restored, Colonel Pickens went to Boyd and offered to serve him in any possible manner.

Colonel Boyd thanked him and raising himself slightly from the ground said, "Had I not fallen your victory would have been defeat." According to Captain Hugh McCall, who was actively engaged in the battle, Boyd said, "I marched from my rendezvous with 800 men of which number 100 were killed and wounded or deserted at the Savannah River; and on the morning of this action I had 700, men under my command. Colonel Campbell



had promised that McGirth would join me with 500 men at Little River, but this he failed to do."

After talking to Captain McCall for a few moments he requested that someone be left to give him water and bury him in a decent manner after his death. He then turned to Colonel Pickens, who stood looking down at him, and requested that he write a letter to Mrs. Boyd and send her certain articles about his person. He died early in the night and all of his request were complied with. Many men who resided in what is now Elbert County were engaged in this battle. The following named undoubtedly were actively engaged and, perhaps, many others of which this is no record : Colonel Stephen Heard, Major Barnard Heard, Benjamin Hart, Austin Dabney, Dionysins Oliver, William Bailey, William Harper, William Allen, Robert Harper, Captain Drury Cade, Captain John Cunningham, Thomas A. Carter, Mr. Easter, Ambrose Beasley, Mr. Arnold, and Mr. Cosby. The R. T. Cosby mentioned in all likelihood was Richmond T. Cosby who in after years served in the Georgia Legislature from Elbert County.