

George Washington and the Palmetto State

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Overview

This lesson will enable the students to compare George Washington's description of South Carolina from 1791 to South Carolina today.

Connection to the Curriculum

South Carolina History, Science, Language Arts

South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards

8-1.3 Summarize the history of European settlement in Carolina from the first attempts to settle at San Miguel de Gualdape, Charlesfort, San Felipe, and Albemarle Point to the time of South Carolina's establishment as an economically important British colony, including the diverse origins of the settlers, the early government, the importance of the plantation system and slavery, and the impact of the natural environment on the development of the colony.

Social Studies Literacy Elements

- F. Ask geographic questions: Where is it located? Why is it there? What is significant about its location? How is its location related to that of other people, places, and environments?
- I. Use maps to observe and interpret geographic information and relationships
- S. Interpret and synthesize information obtained from a variety of sources—graphs, charts, tables, diagrams, texts, photographs, documents, and interviews

Grade Range

Grades 8-12

Time

One to two fifty-minute class periods.

Materials Needed

South Carolina: An Atlas

Map of South Carolina

Outline map of South Carolina (Can be found online at www.cas.sc.edu/cege)

Diary account of George Washington's visit to South Carolina in 1791

SCGA "Rivers of South Carolina" poster

Objectives

1. Trace George Washington's travels through South Carolina.
2. Identify the major towns visited by George Washington.
3. Provide descriptions of the landscape that George Washington described in his journal.
4. Identify the purpose of George Washington's journey through South Carolina.

Suggested Procedures

1. The teacher will ask students to brainstorm ideas about how South Carolina has physically changed in the past two hundred years. Answers may include more highways, more houses, etc.
2. The teacher will then ask students how they might find out how it has changed. Next, the teacher may tell the students that by using primary sources, we can get accounts of events from people in that time.
3. The teacher will then hand out *South Carolina: An Atlas* and the diary account of George Washington and explain that he made a visit to South Carolina in 1791 and kept a diary in which he made numerous remarks about the state.
4. The teacher will then instruct the students to read the diary account and on a South Carolina outline map, trace the journey that Washington made across the state. Use *SC: An Atlas* to identify locations.
5. After the students have finished the reading and map, have them name areas where George Washington visited. List any descriptions that he may have made about the areas. Have these areas and descriptions on an overhead or on the board for all the students to see.
6. The teacher will then ask students questions about the journey. For example, why did Washington travel to South Carolina? Through what landform regions did he travel? What rivers did he have to cross? (Use *SC: An Atlas* to find the answers to these questions.)
7. The teacher will then ask students to compare the descriptions that Washington gave of South Carolina to those of today. The teacher will list these descriptions with those already given. Have there been any changes? What kind of changes have occurred? Why have these changes occurred?

Lesson Extensions

1. This lesson may be extended by having the students make a diary of their own, as if they were traveling with George Washington.
2. A field trip may be arranged to one of the areas George Washington visited on his 1791 trip.
3. Students may design ways Washington could travel through South Carolina today using the same transportation that he used in 1791.

Suggested Evaluation

Evaluation may be made by teacher observation of student answers, participation, and maps.

The First Presidential Visit to the Palmetto State

President George Washington entered the state from North Carolina not far from the Myrtle Beach area. He crossed over the long beach (Myrtle Beach) to the swash and followed the Waggamau (Waccamaw River) to George Town (Georgetown), making a brief stop. From there he traveled down the coast to Charleston where he was met by dignitaries, given a cannon salute, and danced with the ladies at parties. After leaving Charleston, his campaign trail carried him to Savannah and overland through Georgia, finally reentering South Carolina in the vicinity of the present city of North Augusta. He traveled by chariot to Columbia along the road that later became a major US Highway. After meeting with state officials in the capital, he continued on his visit through South Carolina. Camden was his next stop where he was again entertained by influential people. From there, he traveled to Lancaster and on back through North Carolina to Philadelphia, which was the capital of the United States at that time.

The following is an account of George Washington's 1791 South Carolina visit, taken from his personal diary and published in *The State* newspaper by W.D. Workman, Jr., in 1980. The original account was printed in a pamphlet prepared by A.S. Salley, a former South Carolina State Historian.

President Washington's South Carolina Visit

Part I

Every four years when the presidential election approaches, South Carolinians expect visits to their state not only by would-be presidents but increasingly of late by the President himself. . . .

The first presidential visit to the Palmetto State, however, was more of a history-making pilgrimage than a vote-seeking political venture. It occurred back in 1791 when President George Washington decided to visit areas of the South where he had never before set foot. He was a Virginian but apparently had never been south of that state, either during the Revolution or in his first term as president.

In April of 1791, Washington set out by horseback from Philadelphia, then the nation's capital, on a trip of more than 1,800 miles over a period of about two months. Fortunately for South Carolinians who savor the historical significance of the President's trip to their state, he kept a diary of his journey.

Crossed the boundary line between No. and South Carolina abt. half after 12 o'clock . . . and lodged at Mr. Vareen's 14 miles more and 2 miles short of the long bay . . .

Mr. Vareen piloted us across the Swash (Wither's Swash) on the long (Myrtle Beach) of the Ocean. Kindly invited by a Doctor Flagg to his house, we lodged there; it being short about 10 miles from Pauley's & 33 from Vareen's.

We left Doctr. Flagg's about 6 o'clock and arrived at Captn. Wm. Alston's on the Waggamau to Breakfast. At Captn. Alston's we were met by General Moultrie, Col. Washington & Mr. Rutledge, son of the present Chief Justice of So. Carolina, who had come out that far to escort me to town.

Crossed the Waggamau to Georgetown by descending the River three miles - at this place we were recd. under a Salute of Cannon & by a Company of Infantry handsomely uniformed. George Town seems to be in the shade of Charleston - it suffered during the War by the British having had many of its Houses burnt.

Left Georgetown about 6 o'clock and crossing the Santee Creek at the Town and the Santee River 12 miles from it, at Lunch's Island, we breakfasted at Mrs. Horry's and lodged at the Plantation of Mr. Manigold about 19 miles farther.

Breakfasted at the Country seat of Govr. Pinckney & then to the ferry at Haddrel's point, where I was met by the Recorder of the City (Charleston), Gent. Pinckney & Edward Rutledge, Espr. in a 12 oared barge rowed by 12 American Captains of Ships, most elegantly dressed.

As we approached the town a salute with artillery commenced, and at the Wharf I was met by the Governor, the Lt. Governor, the intendt. of the City, and the two Senators of the State &c, &c.

Was visited about 2 o'clock by a great number of the most respectable ladies of Charleston - the first honor of the kind I ever experienced. Dined with the Members of the Cincinnati and in the evening went to a very elegant dancing Assembly at the Exchange, at which wee 256 elegantly dressed & handsome ladies.

Visited the works of Fort Johnson, James Island, and Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island - both of which are in Ruins. Saturday, May 7th, I visited the Orphan House.

Monday, May 9th, I recommended my journey for Savanna . . . and proceeded to Col. W. Washington's at Sandy-hill with a select party of particular friends - distant from Charleston 28 miles.

May 11th. We road 20 miles to a place called Pokitellico where a dinner was provided by the Parishioners of Prince William.

May 12th. By five o'clock we set out from Judge Hayward's, and road to Rusiburg 27 miles to breakfast. At that place I was met by a . . . a Comee from the city of Savanna to conduct me thither.

President Washington's South Carolina Visit

Part II

He reentered the Palmetto State on May 21, at which point we pick up his own description of the trip, as recorded in his personal diary:

Left Augusta about 6 o'clock and takg. leave of the Governor & principal Gentlemen of the place at the bridge over Savanna River, I proceeded in Company with Col. (Wade) Hampton & Taylor & Mr. Lithgow, a committee from Columbia, & a Mr. Jameson from the Village of Granby on my Rout.

May 22. Rode about 21 miles to breakfast, and passing through the village of Granby just below the falls in the Congaree - which was passed in a flat bottomed boat at a Rope Ferry - I lodged at Columbia, the newly adopted Seat of the Government of South Carolina.

The whole road from Augusta to Columbia is a pine barren of the worst sort, being hilly as well as poor. This circumstance, added to the distance, length of the stages, want of water and heat of the day, foundered one of my horses very badly.

Beyond Granby 4 miles I was met by sevl. Gentlemen of that place & Wynnsborough; and on the banks of the River on the No. side by a number of others, who escorted me to Columbia.

Columbia is laid out upon a large scale; but in my opinion had better been placed on the River below the falls. It is now an uncleared wood, with very few houses in it, and those all wooded ones. The State House, which is also of wood, is a large and commodious building, but unfinished . . . near two miles from the River at the confluence of the Broad and Saluda. The river from thence to the Wateree below it takes the name of the Santee and is very crooked; it being, according to the computed distance near 400 miles - Columbia from Charleston is 130 miles.

May 25th. Set out at 4 o'clock for Camden, breakfasted at an indifferent house 22 miles from the town (the first we came to) and reached Camden about two o'clock. The road from Columbia to Camden, excepting a mile or two at each place, goes over the most miserable pine barren I ever saw, showing quite a white sand, very hilly.

May 26th. After viewing the British works about Camden I set out for Charlotte. On my way, two miles from Town, I examined the Ground on wch. Gent. Green and Lord Rawdon had their action. Six miles further on I came to the ground where Genl. Gates & Lord Cornwallis had their Engagement wch. terminated so unfavourably for the former.

Camden is a small place with appearances of some new buildings. It is much injured by the British whilst in their possession. After halting at one Sutton's 4 m. from Camden I lodged at Ingrams 12 miles farther.

May 27th. Left Ingrams about 4 o'clock and breakfasting at one Barr's 18 miles distant lodged at Majr. Crawford's 8 miles farther. About 2 miles from this place I came to the Corner where the No. Carolina lines comes to the Rd., from whence the Road is the boundary for 12 miles more.

As Majr. Crawford's I was met by some of the chiefs of the Catawba nation who seemed to be under apprehension that some attempts were making, or would be made, to deprive them of part of the 48,000 Acres wch. was secured to them by Treaty and wch. is bounded by this Road.

(Barr's, where Washington got breakfast, was a tavern long kept by Nathan Barr just north of the present town of Lancaster. "Majr. Crawford" was Major Robert Crawford whose title has been acquired by much effective service in the militia of South Carolina during the Revolution. Major Crawford's home was Washington's last stop in South Carolina.)