

**Testimony of Joanna Craig, Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site,
before the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee, House Natural
Resources Committee, July 19, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the sub-committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today in regards to Mr. Spratt's H.R. 1674 bill to study the Battle of Camden battlefield and Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site for possible inclusion in the National Park System. The Historic Camden Foundation, the 501 (c) 3 governing body of Historic Camden, also asks your approval of this bill.

Historic Camden is a 107-acre outdoor museum and archaeological site dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of early Camden, South Carolina. The facility includes the original town site of Camden, five historic buildings and reconstructions of some of the British fortifications and the Joseph Kershaw house, commandeered by Lord Cornwallis as campaign headquarters. An affiliated area of the National Park Service since 1982, Historic Camden has served as the interpretive center for Kershaw County's colonial and Revolutionary War history for 37 years. To date more than 780,000 visitors from all over the world have visited the museum and spent tourism dollars in our community and our state.

Historically, Camden is the state's oldest inland town. During the Southern Campaign of the Revolution, Camden served "not only as a place of arms, but a general store-house or repository for the supply of the army in its intended operations," according to the 1780 British Annual Register. Young Andrew Jackson was among the many imprisoned in Camden's Gaol during that time. More than a dozen skirmishes were fought in the environs and two major battles: The Battle of Camden and the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill, a costly British win that forced the Redcoats to evacuate.

The abandonment of Camden was key to the Americans regaining control of the war in the South and a link to the chain of events that led to the surrender at Yorktown. In the past, Congressmen Kenneth Holland and John Spratt and Senators Strom Thurmond and Ernest "Fritz" Hollings from South Carolina have supported Historic Camden as an important national resource. As Senator Thurmond said before a Senate Hearing regarding bill S146 on June 24, 1981:

"Contemporary America reflects a pride and a heritage which is the result of our forefathers' noble struggle for freedom in the American Revolution. Historic sites relevant to that struggle must be preserved, so that present and future generations of Americans will be able to observe these areas and reflect on the accomplishments and sacrifices of our ancestors. Historic Camden is such an area."

Mr. Thurman's remarks are reminiscent of those of President George Washington during his 1791 visit to Camden: "May you largely participate in the national

advantages, and may your past sufferings and dangers, endured and braved in the cause of freedom, be long contrasted with your future safety and happiness.”

It is the noble struggle for freedom that we are here to honor today.

Simply put, a National Park encompassing the Camden battlefield and Historic Camden would make Camden a major Revolutionary Heritage tourism center. No other City can boast of the significant intact portions of two major battlefields and a British garrison – sites linked to Camden that share a stellar series of events and a roster of military figures including Generals Nathanael Greene and Horatio Gates, Baron de Kalb, Count Pulaski, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Francis Marion (“Swamp Fox”), Thomas Sumter (“The Gamecock”), the Marquis de Lafayette (post war visitor), plus British Lord Cornwallis, Lord Rawdon, Banastre “Bloody” Tarleton, et al.

We understand the creation of a National Park will have costs. But consider this. Heritage Tourism is a large and lucrative segment of the travel industry. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, visiting historic sites and museums is the third most popular vacation activity for U.S. travelers behind shopping and outdoor activities, and heritage tourists take longer trips and spend more money. The benefits of heritage tourism include: creation of jobs (1,000 heritage tourists equals 10 jobs/Travel Industry Association), increased tax revenues and diversity for the local economy, development of partnerships; increased historic attraction revenues; preservation of local culture; local investment in resources; and, increased awareness of the site or area's significance (© 2005 National Trust for Historic Preservation). In other words, rather than creating and building attractions, Heritage Tourism looks to the past for a sustainable future.

Kershaw County, whose slogan is “history, horses and hospitality,” is poised for such growth in heritage tourism. *A Strategic Tourism Plan for Kershaw County, South Carolina*, the County’s 2006 study by Dr. Rich Harrill of the International Tourism Research Institute at the University of South Carolina, estimates the average expenditure of a Historic Camden visitor is \$52.36 (includes lodging/food/retail), which he projects would increase to \$78.54 (based on a 30% increase in visitation to a National Park). A 40% increase in attendance and visitor nights would create 318.2 additional jobs. Harrill concludes: “Kershaw County’s current tourism “brand” is primarily historic (and equine) in nature. The assets should be carefully preserved and maintained, especially the Battle of Camden site...”

We agree. We sincerely ask your consideration and approval of this bill.