

Elyse Luray: Next, a mysterious object which may open a window on a key moment in the Revolutionary War. [Gunfire] It's 1778, and the American Revolution has been raging for two years. In the north, the British are no closer to crushing the rebellion. The war has reached a stalemate. They take a gamble and divert troops to the south. Their goal: to occupy the region, win over Americans to the crown, and hold onto the colonies. More than 200 years later, a relic found by a Georgia man while scuba diving in the Savannah River may shed new light on this bold strategy. Meet Darryl Boyd, an amateur scuba diver from Lincolnton, Georgia.

Darryl Boyd: Back in '93, I was diving for relics, and this was the artifact I found. I know it's something, but I'm not sure what it is.

Elyse: I'm Elyse Luray, and I'm in Augusta, Georgia, to check out Darryl's find.

Darryl: I've got this artifact I found diving.

Elyse: Wow. Well, that's unusual. Huh, it's in really good condition. Can you show me exactly where you found it?

Darryl: Sure. Okay.

[Take me, take me, take me to the river...]

Darryl: This is the South Carolina side of the river, and this is the Georgia side of the river.

Elyse: Where'd you find it?

Darryl: On the South Carolina side. This is where we do most of our diving. And I was the first one in the river that day and went down just about 30 feet off the bank, probably about 15 feet down or so. My light focused on an artifact on the bottom, and as I got to it, it was the medallion.

Elyse: Darryl believes the item once belonged to the British military, but he's not sure how it ended up on the South Carolina side of the river. That was controlled by the Americans. The British never made it over here because the Colonials were over here. What do you really want to know about the piece?

Darryl: What is it? What was it used for? And if it is from the Revolutionary War, during that time period, why would it be on this side of the river?

Elyse: Okay. Two things: I'm a bit skeptical that after all these years, the piece would just be lying there on top of the mud. But I'd like to investigate it, and I'm going to need to take it. Is that all right?

Darryl: That's fine.

Elyse: All right, well, then I will see what I can do, and I'll take good care of it.

Darryl: Well, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Elyse: I've never seen anything like this before. It appears to be made of copper. And I think it's more of a badge than a medallion or a medal because it has a hook on the back, and there's two other spots where it looks like hooks were lost. There's a thistle in the middle which is very clear. I can see a crown at the top. It appears to be Latin on the sides, and then there's the number 71. So far, Darryl's story is checking out. The crown suggests the Revolutionary War, but there's one thing that doesn't make sense. There's only two spots where there's corrosion, and if this piece was from the Revolutionary War and it was under water for all these years, I would probably expect for it to be in a lot worse of a condition. Truthfully, I don't know much about how The War of Independence was fought in the South. It's time for some research. By 1778, the British hold on the colonies was slipping. Defeat at Saratoga the previous year and the entry of the French into the war on the side of the Americans persuaded the British they needed a new battle plan. In London, the exiled southern governors convinced the king the war could be won from the South. George III diverts troops

from the northeast for a bold southern strategy. In late December 1778, 3,000 British troops sailed into Savannah and immediately scored a decisive victory. [Gunshots and shouting]

Listen to this: the British were led by Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, commander of the second battalion of the 71st regiment. And there's more. "The 71st regiment had been raised in the Scottish Highlands, a region of the British Empire where the men were renowned for their fighting spirit and skills. Wearing red-plaid bonnets and green tartan, the men of the 71st would play an important role throughout all of the southern campaigns." So I wonder if a soldier from the 71st Highlanders wore our badge. The Charleston Museum has a sizeable Revolutionary War collection. I'm meeting assistant director Carl Boric. He says he may have something for me. I have this badge, and I've been able to figure out that I think it's from the 71st Highlanders. Carl says the museum has a very similar-looking badge. This is a cartridge-box badge of the British 71st regiment. So these badges, assuming that they're identical, which they appear to be, were actually placed on cartridges?

Carl Boric: On the cartridge box, which was an implement that a soldier carried his ammunition in.

Elyse: What exactly is on the badge? We see the 71st.

Carl: Seventy-first is the British regimental unit designation, and then you see here a thistle in the center of the badge, which is the national flower of Scotland. You'll also see a crown here at the top, representing the British crown, and then there are two Latin phrases, one on the outside which means "Whatever is to be performed or endured," and then "No one assails me with impunity."

Elyse: Carl says the Scottish Highlanders, and the 71st in particular, were some of the most intimidating soldiers in the British army. Very distinctive in their dress, they spoke Gaelic. Early in the war, many of them carried broadswords. So, they were a unit that was very feared by the American Patriots. Now, how rare are these pieces?

Carl: This is a very rare piece. This is only the second example that I know of that's been found in South Carolina.

Elyse: So our object is a cartridge-box badge from the 71st regiment. But I still don't know why it was found in Patriot territory, and I'm all suspicious it's been in the river for over 200 years. Jon Leader is a metallurgist at the South Carolina Institute of Archeology and Anthropology. Jon, what do you have here? What do you see?

Jon Leader: Well, we're looking through a stereoscopic microscope, and it's very interesting. It's a very crisp piece. It's very nice. It's in excellent condition, but if you look right to the dead center, there's a black spot, and that black spot is sulfide corrosion.

Elyse: Jon says the lack of corrosion is a clue to the badge's history.

Jon: It tells me a couple of things. It tells me that the original deposition for this object in the environment didn't have a lot of oxygen in it. It was anaerobic.

Elyse: What does that mean in layman's terms?

Jon: I think it was lost sufficiently deep in the mud, so it didn't get any oxygen that could have come through, and was protected in a remarkable state of preservation for a very long period of time. I've seen things very similar to this from even earlier time periods that have the same level of just wonderful surface detail because they were buried so very quickly in the anaerobic condition.

Elyse: But surely the badge would have been swept far from where it was originally lost.

Jon: Well, I can't answer that one. Frankly, I think you probably need to talk to my colleague, the underwater archeologist Chris Amer for that.

Chris Amer: The shape of this, it's concave on the bottom and convex on the top. Our experience diving in the rivers -- we're found pottery shards, which are of similar shape. Each piece is slightly concave on one side.

Elyse: Chris says the shape and weight of the badge means it would have gone straight to the bottom.

Chris: This acts rather like an airplane wing. This would plane through the water and settle to the bottom.

Elyse: But wouldn't the current have swept it down the river?

Chris: These shapes tend to stay on the bottom.

Elyse: He doubts it. The concave shape would have pressed the badge flat to the river bottom.

Chris: The faster the water's flowing, the harder they stay on the bottom, unlike pebbles and round objects. Okay, what else, looking at the piece tells you that it hasn't been washed down the river. Well, the embossing on the surface are in very good shape. That would have been eroded off had this thing been exposed a much longer period of time. The sand moving would have been like sandpaper.

Elyse: So what you're saying is that it was probably lost near or exactly where it was found.

Chris: The artifact was found if not in the location, at least very close to where it was lost.

Elyse: Now my only question is: if the British were on the opposite side of the river in Georgia, how did the badge come to be in Rebel-held territory? Dr. Edward Cashin of Augusta State University may be able to answer that question. He says the 71st's arrival was part of the British plan to hold onto the colonies.

Edward Cashin: And they were veterans of almost all of the major campaigns in the north before the British high command decided on what they call the Southern Strategy. That is to send an army south in the hopes that a number of loyalists would join them and to use Georgia as an example for the restoration of the other southern states and eventually the northern states. In December of 1778, his troops overran Savannah. He set his sights on Augusta but faced stiff opposition from the Patriots. There was an attempt by the Patriots to stop Campbell, but Campbell circumvented that, sent his rangers across behind the American position, and that forced them to retire across the river.

Elyse: Tell me, why was Augusta so important?

Edward: By taking Augusta, you would have a mecca for the other backcountry loyalists to gather. It was part of the southern strategy plan from the very beginning. Cashin says that the battle lines were now drawn. On the Georgia side of the river in Augusta, were Campbell and the 71st. On the South Carolina side were the Patriots. The Rebels had retreated to the South Carolina side. There were about 800 of them, and Campbell was planning a night time assault. He was actually constructing flatboats for this crossing of the river. He planned to take the battle across to the Americans on the other side. Campbell was preparing a killer blow for the Americans.

Elyse: Was Darryl's badge somehow connected to this story?

Edward: Well, our piece was found on the other side.

Elyse: Did Campbell ever go over to the other side of the river?

Edward: Campbell himself tells it better than I could.

Elyse: Professor Cashin points me to a journal that Campbell kept of his efforts to route the southern Rebels. Man as Campbell: "January 20, 1779, I am of the opinion that I can with a great degree of safety proceed to Augusta with a chosen corps. I prize the hope of being the first British officer to rend the star and stripe from the flag of Congress." By February first, he's in Augusta, and he describes it. "Augusta consisted of a number of straggling houses arranged in a long street lying parallel to the river. The Savannah was not less than 200 yards in breadth, ten feet deep, and the stream moderately quick." It's curious. He says the Patriot strength was some 1,800 men. How did he gather this

intelligence? Okay, I think this explains how our badge could have gotten across the river. I can't wait to tell Darryl. I tell Darryl his badge is a fragment of a little-known chapter from the Revolutionary War, when a Scottish Highland regiment set its sights on the American South.

Darryl: I'm not real surprised, but I was definitely hoping that's what it was.

Elyse: It's quite a find. It's extremely rare.

Darryl: That's even better. [Laughs] Great.

Elyse: I was also able to find out how it got to the wrong side of the river. Okay, there are numerous references to Campbell's soldiers crossing the river and spying on Rebel troops. Man as Campbell: "February third, employed in reconnoitering the enemy. From the intelligence received from confidential spies, I learned the disposition of the Rebel army on the opposite side of the river."

Darryl: Ah, so it's possible they could have went over and one of them lost his cartridge badge. Well, that's cool. I'll go with that. [Laughs] excellent, good. Very good work.

Elyse: So what are you going to do with it?

Darryl: Well, it doesn't do good in my hands. It does better if everybody can see it. So if there's a museum at Augusta or Columbia that would want to take care of it, then I would be willing to donate it. So everybody can see it and enjoy it.

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