

The Battle of Sullivan's Island and St. Michael's Church



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The Battle of Sullivan's Island was a crucial Patriot victory in June 1776. Tensions between the American colonies and the British Crown had been mounting for months. To defend Charleston if British ships entered the harbor, Governor John Rutledge ordered the construction of a fort on Sullivan's Island.

Before the hastily built palmetto-log fort was fully completed, nine British warships attacked it on June 28, 1776. Leading the American forces at Fort Sullivan was Colonel William Moultrie. Although he had only 31 guns at his disposal, Moultrie and his troops inflicted considerable damage on the British fleet. In return, the fort's palmetto logs and sand absorbed much of the impact from the incoming British cannon fire.

After a nine-hour engagement, the British navy retreated. A small force of South Carolina defenders had defeated one of the world's most powerful naval forces only days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

According to legend, a messenger was dispatched to bring news of the victory to Charleston. The emissary climbed the tower of St. Michael's Church to ring the bells in celebration, but the only tune he knew how to play was "Three Blind Mice."

The city of Charleston celebrates Carolina Day each June 28 in remembrance of the Revolutionary War victory. The day begins with a patriotic service at St. Michael's Church, after which the bells play "Three Blind Mice." Following the service, the Palmetto Society leads a parade of citizens and civic organizations from Washington Square to White Point Garden. Wreaths are laid at the monument dedicated to the "Defenders of Fort Moultrie," followed by speeches, the firing of a small cannon, and a performance by the Charleston Community Band.

