James Collins, Teenaged Soldier

At sixteen, James Collins began collecting information about the local Tories (also known as Loyalists). He soon graduated to fighting with local informal militias that plundered and killed to terrorize local Tories. He also fought with local militias in several battles, including King's Mountain and Cowpens. He describes how to keep Tories under control.

We would meet at a time and place appointed, probably at a church, schoolhouse, or some vacant building, generally in the afternoon, lay off our circuit and divide into two or more companies, and set off after dark. Whenever we found any Tories, we would surround the house, one party would force the doors and enter sword in hand, extinguish all the lights, if there were any, and suffer no light to be made, when we would commence hacking the man or men that were found in the house, threatening them with instant death, and occasionally making a furious stroke as if to dispatch them at once, but taking care to strike the wall or some object that was in the way, they generally being found crouched up in some corner, or about the beds. Another party would mount the roof of the house, and commence pulling it down; thus, the dwelling house, smoke house, and kitchen, if any, were dismantled and torn down, at least to the joists. The poor fellows, perhaps expecting instant death, would beg hard for life, and make any promise on condition of being spared, while their wives or friends would join in their entreaties.

From John M Roberts, ed., Autobiography of a Revolutionary Soldier