



Living History Guild

Moores Creek
National Battlefield

April 2017

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- Controlled burn protects long leaf pine ecosystem
- Young volunteer and seasoned veteran recognized nationally for commitment to park

The 241st Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge Wreath Laying Ceremony and Procession



The annual Wreath Laying Ceremony kicked off the 241st Anniversary celebration festivities by taking time to honor those that came before us- those Patriots, Loyalists, and civilians who not only fought on this hallowed ground, but those who also worked to preserve this honored site. Wreaths were placed at the Women's Monument, Monumental Association (now Battleground Association) Monument, Loyalist Monument, and Grady / Patriot Monument. A special ceremony took place at the Grady Monument to honor his sacrifice, as well as to honor all the brave Patriots who took a stand for freedom and independence on that cold February morning. The Moores Creek Battleground Association, along with the National Park Service, would like to thank the various chapters of the following organizations for participating in this year's ceremony:

Daughters of the American Revolution
Sons of the American Revolution
Children of the American Revolution
Sons of the Revolution, Society of the Cincinnati
National Society of the Colonial Dames
Cape Fear Revolutionary War Round Table
Moores Creek National Battlefield
Moores Creek Battleground Association
Park Volunteers
General Public



Telling Their Story: The Loyalists of Moore's Creek



After receiving reports that Patriot forces were camped with their backs to Moore's Creek Bridge during the night of February 26, 1776, Loyalist forces prepared to ambush their counterparts before the sun would rise the next morning. Gen. Donald McDonald was now ill after being in poor weather conditions for over a weeklong march, and decided to turn command over to Lt. Colonel Donald McLeod. Six miles to the north of Moore's Creek Bridge at 1:00am McLeod led a determined force of Loyalists made up of mainly Highland Scots towards the crucial bridge crossing.

McLeod stopped half a mile from the bridge crossing around 4:00am and conveyed to his officers a plan of attack. He first sent Captain Campbell around the Patriot camp on the west bank of Moore's Creek. Campbell was to sneak around the Patriots and cut off the bridge crossing to prevent the Patriots from escaping. After giving Campbell a head start, McLeod along with Lt. Colonel Alexander McLean led two columns of men towards the Patriot encampment through the cold North Carolina forest.

McLeod and McLean pushed forward towards the twinkling light put off by the campfires in the Patriot encampment. With broadswords drawn, McLeod entered the encampment only to find the Patriot position had been abandoned. McLean soon came forward, but to his surprise, he had lost half of his force in the darkness.

Gunfire erupted at the bridge crossing, suggesting that Captain Campbell was now directly engaged with the enemy. McLeod and McLean pushed quickly forward towards the bridge in order to aid Campbell. Once at the bridge, McLeod learned Campbell had engaged Patriot sentries who quickly ran up the dark narrow causeway on the opposite side of the bridge from where the Loyalists now stood.

Hugh McDonald, a young Highlander, stated that the Loyalists believed that the "Patriots were now fast retreating" from Moore's Creek Bridge, which encouraged McLeod to give chase to the fleeing sentries. McLean, thinking McLeod was in not in immediate danger, left to find his men still lost in the woods. McLeod began to lead his men across Moore's Creek Bridge—not knowing that 1,000 Patriots were lying in wait 100 yards up the dark narrow causeway ahead.



Standing Their Ground: Patriot Militia Defeat Loyalists at Moore's Creek



In the early morning hours of February 27th, 1776, nearly one thousand Patriots waited cautiously for an attack that was sure to come. Taking cover behind strong earthworks, these Patriots held the line against an incoming force of Loyalists. The Loyalists, mostly Scottish Highlanders, were taken by surprise as they reached Moore's Creek Bridge. The bridge had been partially dismantled: the planks removed and the girders greased. This slowed the Loyalist approach considerably. With only a fraction of the total Loyalist force having made the treacherous walk to the far side of the bridge, they rallied. This small force wielded their broadswords and charged into what they thought was just a few retreating Patriot sentries.

This drastic miscalculation left between thirty and seventy Loyalists laying dead on the battlefield. In just a matter of minutes, the Loyalist charge had been stopped in its tracks by several volleys of musket fire and the earth-shattering boom of the cannon, which the Patriots had nicknamed, "Old Mother Covington." This barrage had a devastating effect on the Loyalists. Those who weren't quickly killed by the musket and cannon fire were broken and retreating. In the following days, Patriot forces would capture many of these Loyalists along with their supplies.

This victory effectively ended royal authority in North Carolina forever. Only a month and a half after the battle, North Carolina would go on to adopt the Halifax Resolves. This important document made North Carolina the first colony to officially send its delegates to the Continental Congress and declare independence. This brief but important battle in the backwoods of North Carolina earned its place in national history as one of the first significant victories for the Patriots in the American Revolutionary War.

Moore's Creek National Battlefield continues to keep these memories alive through living history. Events like the anniversary battle demonstration pictured above keep the battlefield full with Patriot and Loyalist militia alike. By preserving the sights and sounds of this historic battle, we honor those who fought and died for what they believed in.

Explore, Learn, Protect : 63 Junior Rangers Earn Their Badge During Event

April 15th, 2017 marked the start of National Park Week. Moores Creek started that event off with Junior Ranger day in the park. Youngsters and parents were able to tour a variety of informative stations as they meandered through the demonstration area. From woodworking to bread baking, kids learned about life in the 18th century. Many of these experiences were hands-on. Visitors were encouraged to touch the wood shavings, smell the freshly baked cookies and grab a dummy musket and march with the militia.

In a special presentation called, "Tar, Pitch and Turpentine: Naval Stores in North Carolina"* visitors learned about how the Long Leaf pine forests were used to produce materials which could be used to waterproof ships. Visitors watched as an active tar kiln was heated up and put in action. Stills were set up to show the process of making turpentine, and children and adults passed around a jar and smelled this volatile liquid.

After visiting all the stations, 63 kids completed the experience by returning to the Visitor Center and being sworn in as Junior National Park Rangers.

*This project was made possible by the North Carolina Humanities Council, a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Controlled Burn : Restoring the Long Leaf Pine Forest



On Tuesday April 11th, 2017, Moores Creek National Battlefield conducted a controlled burn throughout the park. Over the years, people have become very good at putting out forest fires quickly after they start. While stopping these fires from spreading can protect lives and property, it also has unintended consequences. Without regular fires to burn up the underbrush, material builds up and can fuel much larger and more devastating fires. By allowing small, highly regulated burns like this to clear that underbrush, it opens room for the Long Leaf ecosystem to thrive.

Controlled burns like this one help to restore the natural ecosystem. Many years ago, Long Leaf pine forests stretched from eastern Texas to the Carolina coast. For a variety of reasons, the Long Leaf pine ecosystem is only a fraction of what it once was. However, Moores Creek National Battlefield and the National Park Service are working hard to help restore the Long Leaf pine ecosystem to its former glory.

Upcoming Events : What's Happening in YOUR Park?



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| September 16: | Third Saturday Living History Program |
| October 21: | Third Saturday Living History Program |
| November 18: | Third Saturday Living History Program |
| November 18: | Candlelight Tour Program |
| February 24-25: | 242nd Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge |

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After his brief experience with living history during the anniversary, Michael returned to work in the visitor center. However, one afternoon, the militia was outside doing musket drills. Michael kept glancing out the window at them, and when asked, was eager to join them. Michael is currently 15, but will be turning 16 this summer, and is interested in participating in the militia program—(NPS regulations require a minimum age of 16 years to fire black powder weapons)

Volunteers-in-Parks Spotlight : Michael Bush

Michael Bush first came to Moore's Creek as a volunteer in the Visitor Center, where he assisted visitors and operated the cash register. Michael expressed an interest in participating in the park's colonial cooking program.

During the 241st anniversary, Michael was allowed that opportunity and donned colonial attire for the first time to assist with a bread baking program. He quickly fit right in by tending the fire and assisting with cooking.



Social Media Success : Nationally Recognized

Michael jumped on the opportunity to drill with the militia, and NPS cameras were there to capture the action. Jason Howell, the Historic Weapons Supervisor for Moore's Creek National Battlefield, takes a moment to instruct Michael on the proper handling of a musket. This image, taken during Michael's first experience drilling with the Wilmington District Minutemen, saw national recognition after it was widely shared on social media.

The National Park Service main Facebook page shared this image, allowing over 100,000 people to see it. To date, this is our most successful social media post. Iconic and memorable images like this one help visitors connect with the battlefield and the story we're trying to tell. Successful volunteer programs like these inspire the next generation of living historians to step forward and help visitors understand cultural and historic resources.

We continue to reach out to a broader audience through social media. Our goal is to educate the public on the sights and sounds which surround the battle that occurred here just over 241 years ago. Reaching out to a national audience can be difficult for a smaller park like Moore's Creek. However, social media successes stories like these bring us new visitors and increase public recognition of Moore's Creek as one of the pivotal battles of the American Revolution.

The Moore's Creek Living History Guild is part of the Moore's Creek National Battlefield Volunteers-In-Parks Program. Membership is open to all who have an interest in sharing the Stories of the American Revolution and the Stories Beyond the Battlefield.