National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior **Forest Service** U.S. Department of Agriculture Corps of Engineers U.S. Army

Overmountain Victory Trail Association



'Gathering of the Mountain Men at Sycamore Shoals" From a painting by Lloyd Branson, Tennessee State Museum Collection

In the summer of 1780, the Southern American colonies - and hopes of independence - seemed at the mercy of an invading British army. Believing the Southern colonies mostly loyal, the Royal army planned to conquer the South and recruit Loyalist militia (local volunteer soldiers) to help British regulars and British Provinicial troops defeat the Continental Army and the local Patriot militia.

When Charleston, South Carolina, surrendered May 12th, 1780, the British captured most of the Continental troops in the South. Additional large losses occurred later in the summer with Patriot defeats at Waxhaws, South Carolina, May 29th, and Camden, South Carolina, August 16th. Only Patriot militia remained to oppose a British move through North Carolina into Virginia, America's largest colony. Victory for Royal troops and an end to talk of independence seemed near.

Lord Charles Cornwallis, the British commander, appointed Major Patrick Ferguson as Inspector of Militia for South Carolina to defeat the local militia and to recruit Loyalists. Ferguson's opposition included men from South Carolina's backwoods under Thomas Sumter, North Carolinians commanded by Charles McDowell, and Over mountain men from today's Tennessee under Isaac Shelby.

Moving into North Carolina, Ferguson attempted to intimidate the western settlers, threatening to march into the mountains and "lay waste the country with fire and sword" if they did not lay down their arms and pledge allegiance to the King. The response was a furious army formed on the western frontier. Growing in numbers as they marched east, some 900 men gave chase to Ferguson, surrounding his army at Kings Mountain, South Carolina, and killing or capturing Ferguson's entire command.

"...That Turn of the Tide of Success..." Thomas Jefferson

Ferguson's defeat was a stunning blow to British fortunes. The strength of the Patriot militia was affirmed. The hoped for Loyalist support didn't materialize. Cornwallis was forced to pull back from North Carolina, giving the Continental Army time to bring fresh regulars and new commanders south. On January 17, 1781, Daniel Morgan, using Continentals and militia, defeated Colonel Banastre Tarleton's British army at Cowpens, South Carolina. That winter saw a running campaign between Cornwallis and the armies of Morgan and Nathanael Greene. Try as Cornwallis might, the Americans always seemed to cross the river to safety before Cornwallis could cut them off.

At Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina, on March 15th, Greene finally turned to face Cornwallis. Greene's army was driven from the battlefield, but Cornwallis suffered severe losses which he could not replace. Cornwallis pulled back to recuperate, finally moving his army north into Virginia without subduing North Carolina. In the fall of 1781, George Washington rushed his army south to join French reinforcements. When French warships fortuitously gained control of the Chesapeake Bay, Cornwallis was beseiged and forced to surrender on October 19, 1781, just over a year after Kings Mountain.

Kings Mountain was the beginning of the successful end to the Revolution, assuring independence for the United States of America. On an unimposing and obscure mountain, Americans fought Americans to determine their destiny. The citizen militia of the community, the predecessors of today's National Guard and Reserves - like volunteer fire departments - organized to protect their community.

Men without formal training or recognized social standing - Ferguson called them mongrels - took hold of their destinies, just like the men who began the American War for Independence on April 19, 1775, at Lexington and Concord. They relied upon their individual initiative, skills with the rifle, and courage to ensure the success of their cause.



"The Battle of Kings Mountain" From a painting by F.C. Yohn, courtesy Dr. Bobby G. Moss

William Campbell Preston, Said to Closely Resemble His Grandfather



Isaac Shelby



William Campbell

Leading the largest contingent, Virginian Campbell was chosen by his fellow colonels to command in Charles McDowell's place. Campbell died in 1781, just before Yorktown.

Charles McDowell

A tireless campaigner in 1780, he stepped down from command rather than split the Patriot army.

Isaac Shelby

Later first governor of Kentucky, Shelby was a strong, forceful influence the summer of 1780. The morning of October 7th, he refused to stop and rest when the men tired after spending 36 hours on the march, vowing to follow Ferguson into Cornwallis' lines, if necessary.

John Sevier

Later Tennessee's first governor, John Sevier was the best known man west of the mountains and gave his personal guarantee to fund supplies for the militia army.

Mary Patton This little-known Tennessee

woman manufactured 500 pounds of powder purchased by William Cobb for the Overmountain men. Benjamin Cleveland

The voice for independence in

Wilkes and Surry Counties, Tories attempted to ambush Cleveland on his way to Quaker Meadows, wounding his brother instead. **Edward Lacev**

Commanding South Carolina troops, Lacey rode through the stormy night of October 5th to intercept the Overmountain men at Green River and head them towards Kings Mountain.



Patrick Ferguson

Major Patrick Ferguson

Intelligent, brave, charming, inventive, headstrong, he fruitlessly advocated use of Patriot "Indian-style" warfare, yet he relied on the bayonet charge at Kings Mountain, allowing his army to be surrounded.

Abraham de Peyster

From New York, he served as Ferguson's second in command. He lived in New Brunswick, Canada, after the Revolution.

Veazey Husband A Loyalist from the Yadkin country

near Cleveland, he was killed at Kings Mountain.

Rocky Mount State Historic Site U.S. 11E, Rte 2, Box 70, Piney Flats, TN 37686 615-538-7396		•	•				•		•	•	•	Old Wilkes 203 N. Bridge St, Courthouse Sq, Wilkesboro, NC 28697 919-921-3390	0.			•	•		•	•	•	•	, ,
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Hefner Gap				I							•	National Park Service,								\top	\top	\top	Ť
Historic Burke, Old Burke County Courthouse P.O. Box 195, Morganton, NC 28655 704-437-4104		•	•							•	•	Southeast Regional Office 75 Spring St S.W., Atlanta, GA 30303 404-331-5465				•							
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The Overmountain Victory National In 1975, local citizens, many de-

Citizens' Trail Honoring A Citizen Army

Historic Trail follows the route of assembly of the American Patriot army which decisively defeated an American Loyalist army at the battle of Kings Mountain, South Carolina, in the dark days of the fall of 1780.

scendants of those Patriots and Loyalists, determined to march the route again as part of the American Revolutionary Bicentennial celebrations. From that first march reenactment came the Overmountain Victory Trail Association which carried petitions along the route collecting thousands of signatures requesting national trail status. In September, 1980, just before the October 7th 200th anniversary of the battle, the route was designated a national historic trail. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail covers some 220 miles from Abingdon, Virginia, through Eastern Tennessee, over the high mountains of North Carolina, across

the Piedmont of North and South Carolina, to the Kings Mountain

National Military Park. A 70-mile branch from Wilkes-Surry joins the main route near its center at Quaker Meadows (Morganton, North Carolina). Three routes are designated: the true historic route, now often inaccessible, the route used by OVTA each year, and the public motor route over highways.

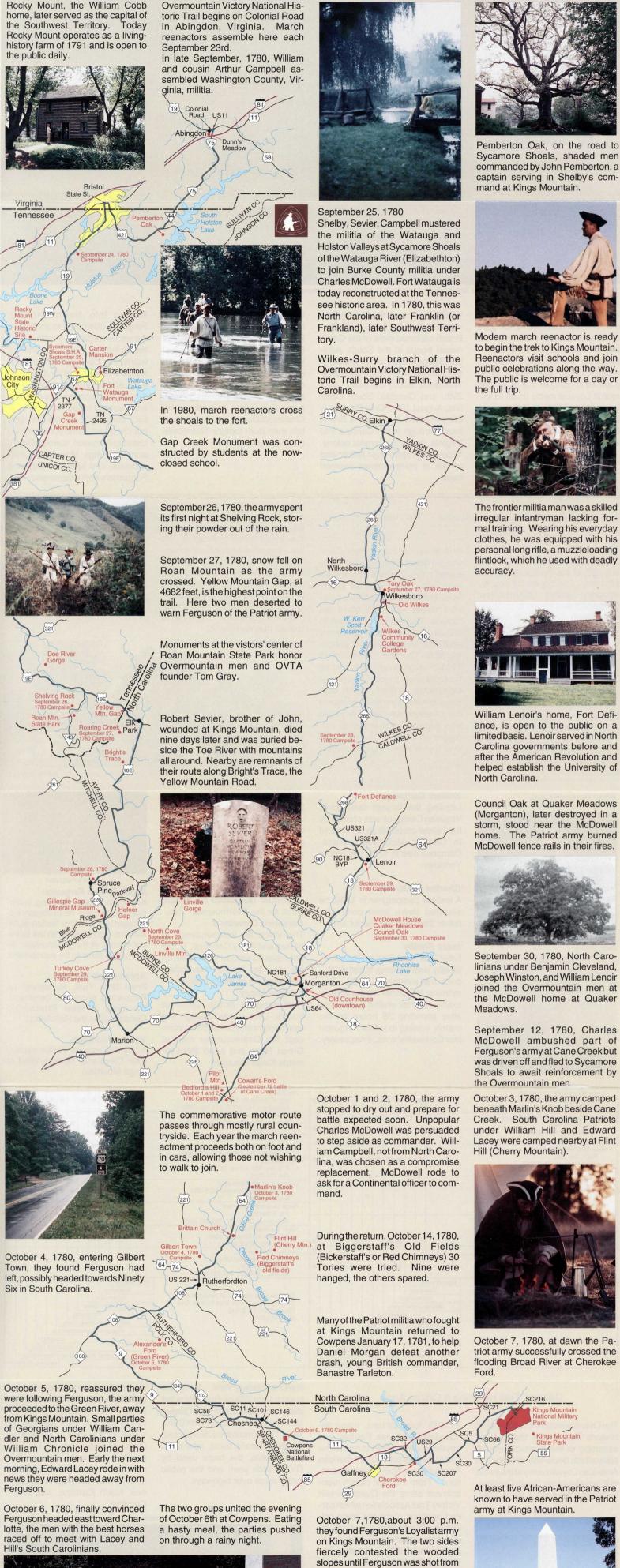
the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a cooperative effort of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, OVTA, local governments, local citizens' associations, local historical societies, and the states of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Part of the National Trails System,



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

Commemorative Motor Route



his horse, killed with some 120 of his men. Only 40 Patriots fell.

Each year the OVTA march reenactors assemble over two weeks to remember the events of 1780 and place a wreath on the U.S. monument at Kings Mountain

National Military Park.