



They did what? Back when?

To do:

1. Construct a timeline that shows each day's events; follow along day-by-day.
2. Read the 12-episode serial, *Footsteps for Freedom*, online at www.OVTA.org.

3. Create a map.
(See **Where are we anyway?** activity.)
4. Imagine what you would be doing if you were part of the militia.
(See **Journaling** activity.)

This is the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and how they helped win America's independence.

Late September 1780

September 12, Burke County (NC) militiamen under the command of Charles McDowell attack a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army, then retreat over the mountains to Sycamore Shoals.

As a prisoner of war released by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Patriot militiaman Samuel Phillips delivers Ferguson's threatening message to Isaac Shelby in the overmountain regions of NC. Isaac Shelby rides 40 miles to the home of John Sevier to talk about the threat. The men agree to send messengers to call for a muster of militia at Sycamore Shoals (today's Elizabethton, TN).

September 24 – Colonel William Campbell leaves Craig's Meadow (today's Abingdon, VA) with 200 Virginia militiamen. Colonel Arthur Campbell leads another group of 200. They ride along the Watauga Road.

September 25 – Four-hundred eighty militiamen from the Overmountain regions of North Carolina (today's Tennessee) muster at

Sycamore Shoals with the militiamen from Virginia and 160 militiamen from Burke Co.

September 26 – The Overmountain Men ride toward the mountains driving a herd of cattle to feed their army; they camp at Shelving Rock, storing their powder beneath the rock ledge to keep it dry.

September 27 – Overmountain Men "Cross the Roan" through the Yellow Mountain Gap after slaughtering beeves and preparing the meat. At the top of the mountain saddle, they parade in "snow shoe-mouth deep" and take roll. Two men with Tory leanings are discovered missing. The Overmountain Men camp on along Roaring River. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Majors Joseph Winston and Benjamin Cleaveland ride upstream along the Yakin River toward Quaker Meadows.

September 28 – Overmountain Men move south along the North Toe River and camp where it joins Grassy Creek (near today's Spruce Pine).

September 29 – Patriots divide into two groups at Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue



Ridge mountains following two routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.

September 30 – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride on both sides of the Catawba River (north and south of today’s Lake James) and reunite along the way. They camp at Quaker Meadows where they are joined by the Wilkes-Surry militia and others. The spirit of the men is lifted as the band of Patriots grows in number.

October 1 – The combined army of over 1400 militiamen head south toward Gilbert Town (near today’s Rutherfordton) where they expect to find Ferguson’s army. Because of heavy rain, the Patriots stop in the late afternoon at South Mountain Gap.

October 2 – Continuing rain keeps the men in camp this day. The Patriot leaders meet and elect William Campbell as their commander.

October 3 – The Patriot militiamen prepare for battle and move toward Gilbert Town along Cane Creek. They do not pitch camp. The men sleep on their arms.

October 4 – The Patriots arrive in Gilbert Town to find that Ferguson is already gone. The militia leaders send out scouts and continue south to learn if Ferguson is heading for the fort at Ninety-six (SC) or for Charlotte (NC).

October 5 – The Patriots head southwest and camp at Alexander’s Ford on the Green River. They learn from scouts that Ferguson is marching toward Charlotte and the protection of Cornwallis’s army.

October 6 – The Patriots ride southeast toward Cowpens where they are joined by militiamen from South Carolina, Georgia and Lincoln Co., NC. They learn that Ferguson is only 35 miles away, camped at Kings Mountain. The leaders pick the 900 best marksmen and the 900 fastest horses. At 9:00 pm, these Patriot militiamen ride into the night as a cold rain continues to fall.

October 7 – Having ridden all night and forded the rain swollen Broad River, the Patriot army encircles Little Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in “one heroic hour” captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriots losses are small: 28 killed and 65 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded.

Epilogue – On Sunday, October 8, the Patriot militia hurriedly bury the dead and leave. They worry that Cornwallis’s reinforcements will soon arrive. (They never came.) The Patriot militiamen with 800 Loyalist prisoners rides to Quaker Meadows. Along the way, they take revenge against some of the Loyalists with quick trials and the hanging of nine men. The Patriot leaders stop the hanging.

With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guildford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved onto Virginia where just 12 months and 12 days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered the British forces to the Continental Army under General George Washington, Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA.

