



Footsteps for Freedom

—the true story of the
Overmountain Men of 1780

Provided as an educational service of
“OVTA in the Classroom.”
written by Randell Jones, past president, OVTA, Inc.



Overmountain Victory Trail Assn., Inc. founded 1975 www.OVTA.org

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Overmountain Victory
National Historic Trail
National Park Service



Prologue: An important note to teachers

A Story for Our Times

The Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. (OVTA) believes that the story of the Campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain is history worth teaching. We've been sharing this story with communities along the trail for 40 years, since 1975. In 2001, we provided copies of the video, "The Road to Kings Mountain," to selected schools in Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina.

As American history reveals, every age has produced individuals with the resolve, the courage and the commitment to uphold the ideals of the American spirit. The story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 is one such story.

For those teachers who want to talk about individual commitment to a greater purpose and the resolve of a collective citizenry—all issues related to America's current response to terrorism, then the story of the Campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain offers a powerful opportunity. Through presenting it, teachers can engage students in dialog about freedom of choice, personal sacrifice, pursuit of common goals, support of human rights, defiance of an oppressor and courage in the face of danger. It is a story about people coming together to act as one in the unselfish pursuit of a goal greater than personal fulfillment or individual enrichment. It is a story about "us"—all of us.

Others have said, "Those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it." America was born of commitment to high ideals and forged on the anvil of personal determination, resolve and sacrifice. The Campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain is part of that history. It is the history that can teach us how to go forward in an uncertain world and in trying times with confidence in our ideals and determination not to be bullied or intimidated by threats.

This history is a story for our times. We should learn it well.

- *Randell Jones*
past president, OVTA, Inc .



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How to Use "Footsteps for Freedom"

Read one episode daily from September 23 to October 7, or as closely as the calendar allows.

The Campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain took place during two weeks, September 24 – October 7. OVTA re-enacts The Campaign with historical accuracy by being in certain places on certain days during that time frame.

We suggest that teachers read the following series of 11 brief stories one-per-school-day to help students follow along vicariously with the OVTA during the reenactment. Taking only 2 or 3 minutes each day to read that day's episode can remind students what historical events were taking place at that time over 220 years ago. Each episode ends by piquing the interest of the students about what could happen next. By telling the story as it unfolds on the calendar, teachers can help students gain an appreciation for how different transportation and communication systems were in the 18th Century from what we have today. History and life unfold slowly compared to the pace of videos and computer games.

Please let us know how you used this series and what value it provided you as a teacher. Tell us what we can do to help you and your students better understand this important part of American history. (See Epilogue for contact information .)

Thank you .





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Episode 1 (Read this on or near September 23)

"If you do not stop fighting against the King, I shall march this army over the mountains, hang your leaders and destroy your homeland with fire and sword."

Sitting at his home in what is today Bristol, Tennessee, Isaac Shelby heard the message his neighbor, Samuel Phillips, had just brought him. It came from one of the British officers who had released the captured Phillips just so he could take the stern warning back across the mountains to his fellow frontiersmen. Shelby understood the message clearly and he knew instantly what he had to do. He saddled his horse and rode hard for forty miles to the home of his friend and fellow frontier militia leader, John Sevier.



When Shelby arrived, he found a large gathering of friends had come to celebrate Sevier's recent marriage. Despite the festivities, when Shelby explained why he had come, the two men left the party and went to talk about the message Shelby had received.

The year was 1780. The American Revolutionary War had been going on for five-and-a-half years. For most of this time, the fighting had been in the northern colonies and the Patriots were losing. To quickly end the war, the British had come up with a plan they called their "Southern Strategy." Under this scheme, the British planned to capture the Southern seaports along the Atlantic coast—Charles Town, Beaufort, Savannah, Wilmington—and then to march northward getting local residents who were still loyal to



British soldiers sometimes invaded the homes of American colonists taking the supplies they wanted.

King George III to join them. With such a massive army of Loyalists marching northward, the British figured they could defeat George Washington's Continental Army once and for all. But not everything was going as planned.



Thousands of settlers had moved over the Appalachian Mountains into the Tennessee Valley.

To be continued . . .

Day-by-Day (Sept. 24—Oct. 7)

"Footsteps for Freedom" is a 12-part daily serial that follows the Overmountain Men of 1780 as they march toward a destiny with freedom at the Battle of Kings Mountain. This battle, fought in "one heroic hour" on October 7, 1780 by a "ghost legion" of volunteer Patriots from North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia and today's Tennessee, was a turning point in the American Revolution. It sparked Patriot morale and led to subsequent victories in the South such that Cornwallis surrendered to General Washington only 12 months and 12 days later.

This is the story of how these Patriots crossed the mountains and pursued a threatening and invading army to protect their homeland. This is America's story. This is America's legacy.





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British Regulars and Loyalist troops were marching north from the Southern Coast as planned in the "Southern Strategy."

Episode 2 (Read this on or near September 24)

Throughout the spring and summer of 1780, British General Charles Cornwallis had been marching his army northward from the coast. He was marching through South Carolina toward Charlotte. His eastern flank was protected by Banastre (*pronounced BAN-is-ter*) Tarleton's Dragoons, a special cavalry unit who

would charge into battle on horseback slicing through foot soldiers with sabers. Cornwallis' west flank was protected by the Scotsman, Major Patrick Ferguson, a brilliant military strategist who was leading an army of Loyalists, Americans who were still loyal to the British King.

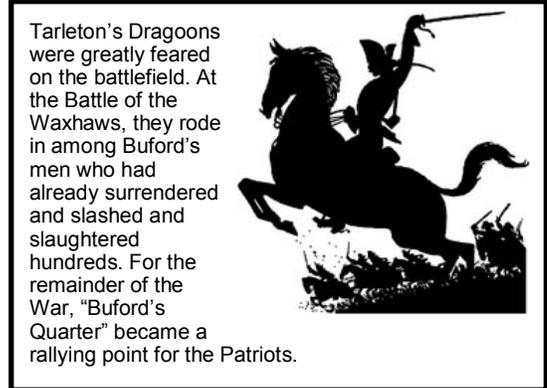


Gen. Lord Cornwallis

As Ferguson's troops swept into North Carolina west of

Charlotte during the summer of 1780, they were met on several occasions by frontier Patriot militia who would fight briefly and then retreat. This tactic was known as fighting "Indian style." After a successful skirmish at Musgrove's Mill, one group of Patriots retreated across the Appalachian Mountains to the Watauga region, along the banks of the Holston, Watauga and Nolichucky Rivers in what is today northeast Tennessee. These were the fierce-fighting

Overmountain Men who were irritating Ferguson with their attacks. He called them "backwater men" and he despised their practice of yelling and whooping like Indians while they were fighting. In



Tarleton's Dragoons were greatly feared on the battlefield. At the Battle of the Waxhaws, they rode in among Buford's men who had already surrendered and slashed and slaughtered hundreds. For the remainder of the War, "Buford's Quarter" became a rallying point for the Patriots.

fact, Ferguson had become so frustrated with these Patriots that he was the one who had sent the threatening message that Shelby and Sevier were discussing.

To be continued . . .





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Episode 3 (Read this on or near September 25)

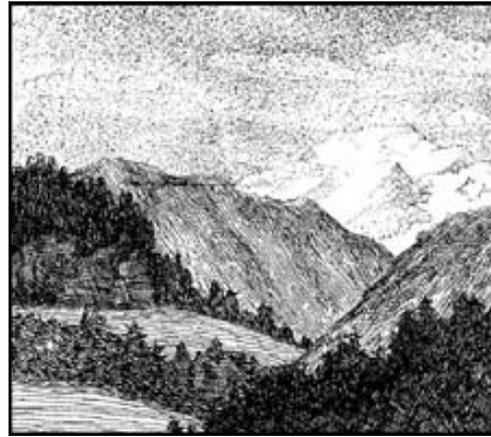
After John Sevier and Isaac Shelby carefully considered Ferguson's threat, they decided Ferguson should be stopped before he brought the war into their settlement. They planned to surprise him. They decided to cross the mountains themselves and go after him.

Shelby and Sevier sent word out by messengers far and wide for every fighting man in the area to come join them. Four hundred men from Virginia gathered at Craig's Meadow near Abingdon, Virginia. Sevier and Shelby each gathered 240 men from Sullivan and Washington counties. These were volunteers all. These three groups planned to meet at



Frontiersmen relied on their rifles for hunting as well as protection. The rifles took about one minute to load, but they were accurate. British muskets were not as accurate but they could be loaded and fired four times in one minute.

Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River on September 25. They planned to cross the mountains and then to meet with other militia units at Quaker Meadows. All totaled, they would have about 1,400 fighting men and not one of them would be a regular soldier or a Continental Army officer. This was an army of citizens. On the morning of the 25th, men began arriving at Sycamore Shoals from all over the countryside. Some came on foot and others rode horseback.



The Appalachian Mountains were a natural barrier that made communication difficult. Settlers on the west side were fairly isolated from communities on the east side of the mountains.

Some brought their families with them because they were afraid to leave them unprotected at home when the Cherokee might attack. During the long day, these frontiersmen gathered provisions and prepared for battle. They ground corn for bread and sewed clothes. Mary Patton, a local resident, provided 500 pounds of gun powder. Others mined lead from the hillsides and melted it into musket balls. Everyone was busy preparing for a fight that they knew was coming. But they did not know exactly when or where it would happen.



To be continued . . .

After the French & Indian War, the Proclamation of 1763 by the King of England was supposed to separate Native Americans and white settlers. Under British rule, the land west of the mountains was reserved for Native Americans. Cherokee and settlers alike ignored this plan. Settlers bought and leased large tracts of land from the Cherokee; but not all Cherokee recognized these agreements. In July 1776, Cherokee raiding parties attacked a number of settlements. These Overmountain Men were not welcomed by everyone and they fought continually against raiding parties of warriors who wanted to drive them back across the mountains.





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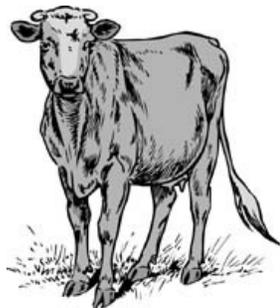
Episode 4 (Read this on or near September 26)

At dawn on the 26th, a Sunday, the frontiersmen gathered for a prayer and a sermon offered by the Reverend Samuel Doak. He was a Princeton-trained Presbyterian preacher who had made his way to the frontier. In closing his sermon, he gave the men their battle cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

As the men turned to begin their march, they heard voices in the distance. Soon another 200 Virginia militiamen arrived under the command of Colonel Arthur Campbell. He put the men under the command of his brother-in-law, Col. William Campbell and then returned to Montgomery County, Virginia to help protect the Lead Mines there from attack by local Tories.

The Patriot militiamen, then about 1,000 in number, began marching from Sycamore Shoals. They followed the Yellow Mountain Road, the only road leading over the mountains into the Carolina piedmont.

One thousand men—some on horseback, some on foot—were traveling with a herd of cattle that would be used to feed this army; but, their progress was slow.



The militia men planned to let their meat supply walk alongside them until they needed to slaughter a few head of cattle to feed this army.



Travel through the Appalachian Mountains was along ancient Native American paths used for hunting and communication among tribes. Settlers followed these routes eventually creating wider roads for wagons.

At the end of the first day's march, they camped along the Doe River, storing their gun powder under the shelter of Shelving Rock, an overhanging ledge that created a partial cave, to keep it out of the rain which had begun to fall.

To be continued . . .





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Episode 5 (Read this on or near September 27)

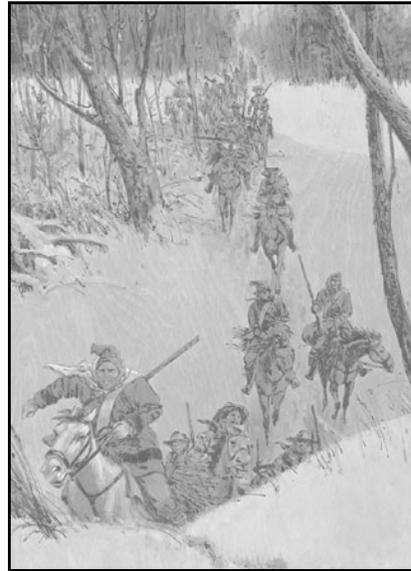
On the morning of September 27, the Overmountain men broke camp at Shelving Rock and headed into the hills, following Yellow Mountain Road along Hampton Creek. The route was steep and the walking was slow especially with the herd of cattle.

To speed up their march, the officers decided to slaughter some of the herd to prepare some of the food they would need for their journey. They spent some of the afternoon preparing the meat. Afterwards, the army pressed on toward the ridge. Some riders had to dismount and walk their horses up the mountain. They climbed over 2,500 feet in just a few miles.

When they reached the mountain ridge, they crossed the Appalachians at Yellow Mountain Gap. Snow covered the ground ankle deep. When they stopped to account for everyone, they discovered that two men were missing. These were men known by their neighbors sometimes to favor the King. Their absence was highly suspicious. Had they deserted the Patriot



Local middle school students join in a commemorative ceremony at Yellow Mountain Gap. OVTA reenactors fire a commemorative volley each year to honor the Overmountain Men of 1780. Roan Mountain is seen in the background. The Appalachian Trail runs along the ridgeline in the trees on the right side of the photo.



Overmountain men rode and walked across the Appalachian Mountains into the Carolina Piedmont. The snow was "show-mouth deep" as they crossed over the top of Yellow Mountain.

militia to warn Ferguson that an army of Overmountain Men was coming after him? Would their spying cause the citizen army to lose its element of surprise? Would Ferguson be waiting to ambush them as they walked down the narrow trails on the eastern slope of the mountains?

The Patriot militia leaders considered all this as the army started down the mountain. Not far from the top they made camp for their second night. Their decisions about what route to take to Quaker Meadows during the next three days might mean the difference between victory and defeat, between living and dying.

To be continued . . .



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Episode 6 (Read this on or near September 28/29)

On the following day, September 28, the citizen's army followed the North Toe River downstream to the point where it joined Grassy Creek. They spent the night there.

On the 29th, they walked up the gorge of Grassy Creek and crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Gillespie's Gap. If the two spies had warned Ferguson and if he were planning to ambush the Overmountain men, the trails heading down this mountain would be the place to do it.

Because two trails led off the Blue Ridge, the leaders divided the men into two groups. The Virginia militia went down the steep mountain-side through Turkey Cove. Sevier and Shelby took their men on a separate route descending the Blue Ridge slope from Hefner Gap to North Cove. They picked their way carefully along the routes and sent scouts ahead to see if Ferguson was lying in wait for them. By descending the mountain on two trails they also made certain that Ferguson was not coming up one trail while



Modern reenactors march in formation. Although militia units of 1780 practiced these drills to build military discipline, the Overmountain Men were not a regimented group. They elected their officers and followed them because they trusted these leaders, not because they had a certain rank.



As the Overmountain Men descended into the Carolina Piedmont, they were concerned that Ferguson's army might be lying-in-wait to ambush them along the trail.

they were going down the other. Such a misfortune would have led him straight into the unprotected settlement the Overmountain Men were fighting to defend.

They camped that night in the two separate coves about five miles apart, watching and listening carefully for signs that Ferguson was approaching. Soon word came from another militia leader that Ferguson was reported to be camped at Gilbert Town, more than two days' travel away. Maybe he had not yet heard that they were coming after him.

On the 30th of September, the two groups met again and marched on to Quaker Meadows. They were welcomed there by brothers Charles and Joseph McDowell as well as 350 men who had come with Colonel Benjamin Cleveland and Major Joseph Winston from Surry County. These men had marched for four days up the Yadkin River valley. All told, the army of Overmountain Men and frontier militia gathered in Quaker Meadows numbered about 1,400.

The commanders met under a large oak tree to discuss their plans for attacking Ferguson at Gilbert Town. That night, the men built fires and slaughtered a few head of local cattle for their evening meal. They dried out from the rain that had followed them for days and they prepared themselves again for the battle that lay ahead.

To be continued . . .





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Episode 7 (Read this on or near October 1 or 2)

On Sunday morning, October 1, the large army of men broke camp at Quaker Meadows and headed south along a good road toward Gilbert Town. They made better time than they had in the days past until a heavy rain set in during the late afternoon. They stopped early and made their camp at Bedford Hill, near South Mountain Gap.

On the following morning, it was still raining. The leaders decided not to march that day and to let the men rest. But the men were impatient and eager to fight. They were becoming anxious about leaving their families and being so far from home. They were not used to the discipline of military life. The men were rowdy and began to fight among themselves. The officers became concerned; and, on the evening of October 2, they met in council.

After lengthy discussions, the heads of the different militia groups decided that this citizen's



The Overmountain Men were anxious about the coming fight. They had left their homes and families more than a week ago. Staying in camp for a day in the rain was not easy for this group of back country frontiersmen.



The militia leaders knew they needed to elect one of their own to lead them all. William Campbell of Virginia had come the farthest and had brought the most men. The leaders agreed to follow him.

army needed a single leader. One of them wanted to ride to the military headquarters in Hillsboro to request a Continental officer to command the army. Others, in particular Isaac Shelby, feared that any delay, such as taking time to secure a commanding officer from elsewhere, would cost the group its opportunity to attack Ferguson before he could be reinforced. One of them would have to lead. But who?

William Campbell had come the farthest and had brought the largest group of men. He was the only colonel there who had experience with the Continental line, and also he was the only colonel there not from North Carolina, so his selection would avoid any jealousy among the other leaders. With this in mind, Shelby proposed that the group accept the able leadership of Colonel William Campbell from Virginia.

In the spirit of cooperation, the group of leaders accepted Shelby's proposal and William Campbell became the army's new leader. But, he would have to convene the other colonels for a war council.

To be continued . . .





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Episode 8 (Read this on or near October 3 or 4)

On October 3, thinking that Ferguson was only 15 miles away in Gilbert Town, the officers gathered the men together. They talked about duty and honor and reminded the men how important this mission was to protect their homes and families. Then one of the officers gave the men a last chance to back out before the fighting started. Anyone who wanted to drop out had only to take three steps back to be excused. Everyone stood firm; not a single man stepped back. Colonel Shelby praised their bravery and the men cheered their own courage and their resolve to defend their homes from the threats of Major Ferguson. They were ready for a fight.

The men spent an hour or so preparing two meals for carrying in their wallets or haversacks, not knowing when they might next be able to cook. They broke camp. The army marched quickly along Cane Creek. They walked with purpose. The army of Loyalists they had been tracking for a week was now just ahead. They steeled themselves for the battle that was only a few miles away. They walked until dark and then made a simple camp, sleeping on their arms as guards watched through the night for signs of Ferguson and his troops. The evening passed quietly.

On the morning of the 4th, the company of Patriots arose quickly and continued marching south along Cane Creek. They crossed it several times



Reenactors muster as did the Overmountain Men of 1780. Those patriots of yesteryear heard their leaders remind them of why they were fighting. Every man was given a last chance to drop out.

as the path along the stream switched from side to side. Gilbert Town was just ahead. The leaders sent scouts ahead. They returned with a disappointing report. Ferguson was gone. The Overmountain Men had missed a chance to catch him. The intended prey had escaped the hunters.

Meanwhile, at his Tory camp at Denard's Ford across the Broad River south of Gilbert Town, Major Patrick Ferguson received two visitors from over the mountains. They had startling news about an army of frontiersmen on its way to attack his army and to kill him. The messengers were the two men discovered missing at Yellow Mountain Gap. They were traitors to the Overmountain Men.

When Ferguson realized that his threat to destroy their homes "with fire and sword" had aroused these Patriot militia, he knew that a battle was closer than he had thought. He immediately sent couriers to Cornwallis for reinforcements. Then he began to think carefully about just how he would defeat this army of rebellious "backwater men."

To be continued . . .





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Episode 9 (Read this on or near October 5)

On October 5th, as the Overmountain Men were marching south following Ferguson's trail, more men joined their ranks. Some had come from Georgia where British Loyalists had recently terrorized Patriot settlers. Others were from nearby Lincoln County, North Carolina; they knew the land well and who was friend and who was foe. Together they rode and walked until they could no longer follow Ferguson's trail. They made camp. The leaders sent scouts out in several directions to see if they could discover where Ferguson had gone. Was he riding toward the safety of Ninety Six and the Loyalist troops there or toward Charlotte and Cornwallis' troops?

Some of the Overmountain Men had left home a dozen days ago. They had traveled hard. Some were tired. Most were hungry. Some of the horses were limping. This was no longer a fresh band of fighters ready to attack any moment. Still, the officers knew that if they were going to catch Ferguson, they would have to travel more quickly.

Later that day, Colonel Edward Lacey arrived in camp with some surprising news. He was a commander of South Carolina Militia, then camping in North Carolina near Flint Hill. One of his scouts, pretending to be a Loyalist, had spent two days spying in Ferguson's camp. This spy had learned about the Loyalists' plans to advance toward Charlotte. Lacey encouraged the Overmountain Men to continue after Ferguson and to catch him before he received reinforcements. Lacey also promised to bring his men and to meet the Overmountain Men on the evening of October 6.



Because neither the Loyalist militia or the Patriot militia wore uniforms, combatants on both sides looked the same. This made it easy for spies and scouts on both sides to move freely between enemy and friendly camps.

In battle, the Loyalists stuck an evergreen sprig in their hats. The Patriots tucked a small piece of white paper under their hat bands.

On October 6, the armies marched and rode 22 miles to a cattle ranch called The Cowpens. It was owned by a Loyalist, but he was in no position to argue with the presence of such a large band of Patriots. Arriving just after sundown, the Patriots slaughtered several head of cattle and roasted the meat for dinner. They harvested corn from one of the fields as well and fed that to the horses. Campfires burned as the night sky darkened.

That evening, Joseph Kerr, another South Carolina Patriot scout, caught up with the army. He had spied on the Loyalists using his disabled condition to mingle freely and without suspicion among the Loyalists for two days. He had learned that Ferguson was headed to Charlotte by way of Kings Mountain with hopes of reinforcements from Cornwallis. The Overmountain Men were encouraged. Their prey was now within range, if they could act quickly before any such reinforcements arrived.

To be continued . . .





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Episode 10 (Read this on or near October 6)

The night of October 6th was cold and it had started to rain. At nine o'clock the militia leaders, knowing they had to move quickly, picked the 900 best marksmen and the 900 best horses to pursue Ferguson. These Patriot frontiersmen rode into the damp night knowing they had to cover some 35 miles to reach Kings Mountain.



The men who did not have horses were determined not to be left out. The next day they followed behind their mounted colleagues on foot. They too had come this far and they too had come to fight. They would not be denied their opportunity.

The road was muddy and difficult to follow in the pouring October rain. The men took off their hunting frocks and wrapped them around their flintlocks to keep their powder dry and their rifles ready to fire. When the Patriot army reached the Broad River, they walked and waded across the cold, rain-swollen river. They had covered some 20 miles in the darkness, but they still had to cover 15 miles more to reach Kings Mountain.

After the long, hard night of riding in the rain, some of the officers wanted to rest the men. They were hungry, tired, cold and wet. But Shelby defied them. "No. I will not stop until night if



Nine hundred men rode all night in a pouring rain toward Kings Mountain. By noon, the sun was out. Their spirits brightened.

I have to follow Ferguson into Cornwallis' lines." They remounted and rode on toward their fate.

Around noon the sun broke through the clouds; the men's spirits were lifted as they were warmed and their clothing began to dry. They captured a couple of Tories traveling on the road and learned for certain that Ferguson was camped at Kings Mountain.

Just a mile short of Ferguson's camp, the officers stopped the men to draw up their battle plan. They decided to march in two columns around the foot of the mountain so that Patriot militia would surround the entire Loyalist camp. They rode their horses to within a quarter-mile of the hill and dismounted. They continued on foot moving quickly and quietly through the forest. The Overmountain Men were almost in place when one of Ferguson's sentries saw them and sounded the alarm. As the Patriots moved into fighting position quickly, the officers shouted to them with the only command these frontiersmen needed: "Put fresh prime in your guns, boys, and every man go into battle resolved to fight until he dies."

To be continued . . .





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Episode 11 (Read this on or near October 7)

Ferguson's Loyalist troops had positioned themselves on top of Kings Mountain. It was a small promontory some two hundred yards long and about 60 yards wide. Major Patrick Ferguson was so arrogant and overly-confident that he did not believe he could be defeated by these "backwater men." His only preparation to defend his position was to circle his supply wagons at one end of the mountain. At the other end of the mountain top, he placed his red-coated Rangers with their bayonets affixed to their muskets as his first line of defense.



Ferguson used a silver whistle to give commands during the battle. His checkered duster made

As Ferguson realized that the Overmountain Men had arrived, he ordered the drummer to beat out the commands for getting into formation. Meanwhile he rode back and forth along the line of men signaling orders with a silver whistle. The Rangers fired first, but

that volley was quickly returned by the Overmountain Men who were advancing up the hill, moving from tree to tree and carefully selecting their shots. After repeatedly charging up the hill and then retreating as the Loyalists charged downhill with bayonets, the Overmountain Men advanced to the top and held their position. After an hour of battle they encircled Ferguson's troops around his supply wagons. The hillside was covered in a sulfurous haze coming from the exploding gun powder from some 2000 rifles and muskets.

When Ferguson realized that he was trapped, he tried to break through the lines on his horse, but



Revolutionary War reenactors wearing period dress and using replicas of firearms rely on the same fighting techniques and strategies that were used over two centuries ago.

one of the Overmountain Men shot him from his saddle. As Ferguson fell, his foot became entangled in the stirrup and he was dragged around the mountain top as other Patriots continued to shoot at the body of the British officer.

With their leader dead, the Loyalist soon surrendered though not without some confusion and additional bloodshed. The only doctor at the battlefield, a British surgeon, tended to the wounded on both sides throughout the remainder of the afternoon and into the night. Both sides buried their dead in mass graves.



The army of 900 mountaineers had defeated the 1100 Loyalist troops of Major Patrick Ferguson in the brief one-hour battle that followed the Patriot's two-week effort to track him down. On the morning of October 8, the Patriots started marching some 800 prisoners away from Kings Mountain. After a week of marching, the Patriots decided to hang some of the Tories; but eventually they led the captured Loyalists to the stockade at Bethabara in today's Forsyth County where the prisoners were turned over to the Continental Army.



While the trained Loyalist troops fired in volleys and moved down the hill in formation with bayonets fixed, the Overmountain Men advanced and retreated to reload and took shelter behind rocks and trees.

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Epilogue (Read this on or near October 7)

The Battle of Kings Mountain was an important turning point for the American Patriots. This army of citizens had shown the strength of the Patriot cause. The victory brought hope to the countryside. Some Americans whose allegiance had remained with the British Crown because they had thought the King's army invincible saw now the opportunity to rally to the cause for independence. The ranks of the Patriots grew in the Carolinas.

This citizen army of Overmountain Men, this "ghost legion" that formed, fought and then disappeared back into the land that had spawned it, symbolized all that America would become. Their character was wrought of strength, duty, honor, resolve, dedication to purpose, valor, courage and selfless sacrifice. They were volunteers all, fighting for Liberty, for independence and freedom from fear.

In the following months, other battles in the South helped further secure America's freedom. Just three months and ten days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, the Patriots won a victory at the Battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781. Two months after that, on March 15, the Patriots fought bravely at Guilford Courthouse in a strategic retreat that inflicted heavy casualties on Cornwallis' army. Upon hearing the report of that battle, a Member of Parliament remarked, "Another victory like that and we shall surely lose the war."

Tired of his experience in fighting his way through North Carolina, Cornwallis withdrew to Wilmington to regroup. From there he marched north into Virginia. He fared no better.

At Yorktown, Lord Charles Cornwallis was

Who is OVTA?

The Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. is a nonprofit organization formed to protect and promote the route of the Overmountain Men to the Battle of Kings Mountain in 1780. Formed in 1975, this organization was primarily responsible for ensuring that Congress would designate this route as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in 1980. Every year since 1975, members of the OVTA have commemorated the campaign of the Overmountain Men to Kings Mountain by reenacting the march day-by-day from September 24 to October 7. Today, the group speaks to 10,000 students and adults during each annual reenactment.



Contact OVTA at www.OVTA.org.

What is OVNHT?

The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a unit of the National Park System. It works with many partner organizations (such as OVTA), communities and individuals all along the 330-mile Trail corridor in four states to help establish, promote and develop the national historic trail as a resource for the citizens of the United States.



Contact OVNHT: www.nps.gov/ovvi

besieged by George Washington. There Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, 1781, just 12 months and 12 days after the surprising victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Soon the war was over. A new nation was born, dedicated to the principle of living free. The rest of the story is, of course, history—our history.

Three cheers for the Overmountain Men and the Backcountry Patriots of the South.

—Hip. Hip. Huzza!

The end.

