



# Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

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*On the Path*

**G**reetings from the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

Now in its 34th year, the trail continues to grow with new pathway added each year, additional sites preserved and interpreted, and partnerships created and fostered. More people are now enjoying its benefits along all 330 miles.

This year we drafted a Master Plan for the Biggerstaff Property in Rutherford County and produced a Historic Structure Report for the McDowell House in McDowell County. Look for more stories about these important developments in future Updates. Projects such as these help chart our next steps to enable visitors to learn more fascinating stories along the trail.

NPS is continually engaging its partners and supporters in exploring innovative thinking to determine best management practices and sustainable strategies. Together we are working to make the OVNHT a better pathway and a more engaging portal to exploring Revolutionary War-era history that all our visitors can understand, appreciate, and enjoy.

Come visit, and then join us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Paul Carson, Superintendent

## A Portrait of Courage

*Richard Luce unveils his new painting*



The new painting, "The patriot Victory at Kings Mountain, October 7, 1780" by Richard Luce was on display during the 2013 OVTA Annual March.

**H**istorical artist, Richard Luce, unveiled his latest painting during the 2013 OVTA March. Luce is an OVTA member and has been participating in the annual commemorative and interpretive march since 2004. During those years he has studied the story and the landscape and then painted scenes from the story of the Overmountain Men on their campaign to Kings Mountain. His paintings and details from them appear in interpretive

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Gillespie Gap to Lynn Gap

*New and future trail along the Blue Ridge Parkway*

**A**t Gillespie Gap in the fall of 1780, the Overmountain Patriot militiamen were forced to make a key decision: split their forces and descend the face of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Catawba River valley along two separate routes. At that same spot on September 28, 2013, a new segment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail was dedicated.

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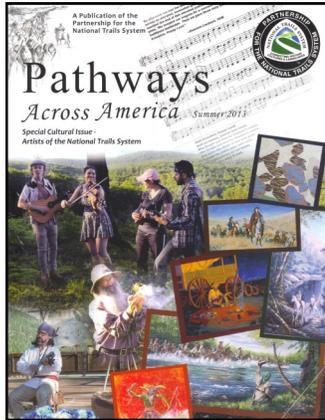


OVTA marchers strike off onto a new trail section from Gillespie Gap toward Lynn Gap led by the Watauga Fife and Drum Corps.

# A Pathway to Popularity

The word is getting around

The OVNHT received some good, national exposure in the fall 2013 issue of *Pathways Across America*, a publication of the Partnership for the National Trails System. The 16-page color magazine highlighted just some of the many artists, authors, interpreters, and storytellers associated with the 30 nationally scenic and historic trails, and it featured, with a half-page each, two tellers of “The Story” told along the OVNHT. The publication featured Randell Jones, author of *Before They Were Heroes at King’s Mountain* and *A*



Pathways Across America featured OVNHT

*Historic Trail* as one of only two authors in the magazine. Talented storyteller and musician Trae McMaken, who worked with the OVNHT during 2013 through his graduate assistantship through the Storytelling Department at East Tennessee State University was featured as one of only four musicians and storytellers. An image of the artwork of Richard Luce, “Call To Arms,” appeared on the cover, and OVTA past-president Alan Bowen appeared in a photograph with OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson.

Guide to the Overmountain Victory National

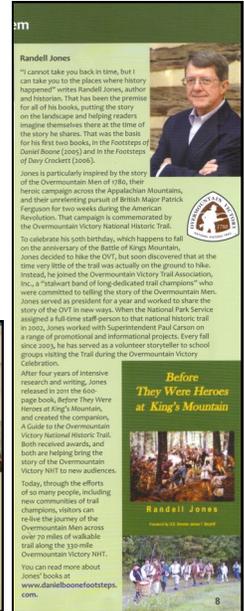
In December, an article about the NPS Overmountain Victory Celebration at the Museum of North Carolina Minerals at Gillespie Gap appeared in *High Vistas*, the semiannual magazine of the Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Clearly, the OVNHT enjoys widespread recognition for its excellence as a national trail. ●



**Trae McMaken**  
A fiddler, banjoist, multi-instrumentalist, and singer of wide explorations, McMaken has an active performance and teaching career and appears at libraries, schools, historical sites, workshops, festivals, camps, outdoor education programs, churches, private functions, and more. His roots along the rural Michigan-Ontario border inspired McMaken from a young age to explore varied styles of fiddle playing including Irish, Scottish, Quebecois, Ontario Old Time, and Michigan Old Time. He blends storytelling, humor, and traditional music in his shows to bring folk history and culture to life.  
As an adjunct professor among the prestigious faculty of the Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Program at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), McMaken has also delved into traditions of the American South. His graduate assistantship with the Storytelling Department at ETSU connected him to the nearby Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.  
In the fall of 2013, McMaken performed his storytelling show, *Tales of Frontier Conflict: The Battle of King Mountain* in a sponsored spotlight for the National Park Service and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association throughout Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. His lively and entertaining show combined research and imagination to bring the story of the Overmountain Men to schoolchildren and families throughout the region.  
“Trae McMaken has recorded on several albums and published a book, *Roads for Braids: Reflections of a Traveling Fiddler*, a multi-genre collection that expresses the experience and point of view of a fiddler on the road.”  
See where McMaken is performing next at [www.traemcmaken.com](http://www.traemcmaken.com)

“Trae’s performance was both informative and captivating. Not only were the students engaged by the storytelling, but the interpreters who are very familiar with the story of the campaign and Battle of King’s Mountain were as well. Trae’s unique approach was a great way to open our eyes.”  
Leigh Anne Hunter, Superintendent of the Abingdon Master Grounds



**Randell Jones**  
“I cannot take you back in time, but I can take you to the places where history happened,” writes Randell Jones, author and historian. That has been the premise for all of his books, putting the story on the landscape and helping readers imagine themselves there at the time of the story he shares. That was the basis for his first books, *Before They Were Heroes at King’s Mountain* (2005) and *In the Footsteps of Davy Crockett* (2008).  
Jones is particularly inspired by the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780, their heroic campaign across the Appalachian Mountains, and their surprising pursuit of British Major Patrick Ferguson for two weeks during the American Revolution. That campaign is commemorated by the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.  
To celebrate its 30th birthday, which happens to fall on the anniversary of the Battle of King’s Mountain, Jones decided to hike the OVNHT, but soon discovered that at the time very little of the trail was actually on the ground to hike. Instead, he joined the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc., a “volunteer band of long-dedicated trail champions” who were committed to telling the story of the Overmountain Men. Jones served as president for a year and worked to share the story of the OVNHT in new ways. When the National Park Service assigned a full-time staff person to that national historic trail in 2009, Jones worked with Superintendent Paul Carson on a range of promotional and informational projects. Every fall since 2009, he has served as a volunteer storyteller to school groups visiting the Trail during the Overmountain Victory Celebration.  
After four years of intensive research into the book page books, *Before They Were Heroes at King’s Mountain* and *In the Footsteps of Davy Crockett*, and created the companion, *A Guide to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail*. Both received awards, and both are helping bring the story of the Overmountain Victory Trail to new audiences.  
Today, through the efforts of many partners, visitors can re-live the journey of the Overmountain Men across over 70 miles of walkable trail along the 330-mile Overmountain Victory Trail. You can read more about Jones’ books at [www.danandrandelljones.com](http://www.danandrandelljones.com).

**Musician Trae McMaken and author Randell Jones were featured in Pathways Across America giving more well-deserved national exposure to the OVNHT.**

## The Best Laid Plans

Biennial planning conference well attended in Asheville

Over 70 partners and interested parties attended the two-day annual planning conference for the OVNHT in Asheville in January. “These are the people who will continue to make a difference in the success of this historic trail,” said Paul Carson, Superintendent for OVNHT. “We had active participation from people all along the Trail, from all four states, with a strong interest from

local governments in opportunities to build new walkable sections of the trail in their communities. Our future continues bright.”

Garrett Jackson, Assistant Town Manager, Abingdon, Virginia, engaged the group in a helpful idea-generating exercise. With enthusiasm still running high, the group then concurred with a shorter list of goals they wanted to

achieve in cooperation with the NPS this year. Marketing ideas and

opportunities offered by technology were high on the list as well as celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> annual march this year. Many other ideas and projects will be taken on by the local groups and communities themselves. “As expected, I saw a genuine spirit of cooperation and helpfulness continue between the longtime partners and those new to the Trail,” said Carson.

Communities including Elkin, Lenoir, Gaffney, Spartanburg County, Rutherfordton, Morganton, Abingdon and others shared their plans for adding to the OVNHT. Charlynn Smith and Dr. Hugh Devine of NC State University presented an update on online access to interactive GIS information about the OVNHT. Andrew Kota of Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina talked about a planning grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to study the site of the Battle of Cane Creek. ●



Partners from along the 330-mile OVNHT gathered in Asheville to talk about plans and to share ideas for building more trail and more awareness in their communities of this wonderful resource.

## Sharyn McCrumb shares “The Story”

*New historical novel reaches out to her fans*

The Muster Grounds in Abingdon were filled with excitement and anticipation on September 22 as celebrated author Sharyn McCrumb introduced her most recent historical novel, “King’s Mountain.” The event was held on the Joella Barbour Stage at the W. Blair Keller Interpretive Center.

McCrumb declared as a writer of historical fiction, her task is to “speak for the dead” and to make the reader feel that “once upon a time is now.”

Marc Bowen, OVTA president, said this new book will bring this story to the attention of a whole new potential audience. “The OVTA has been telling ‘The Story’ for 38 years through its annual marches, reaching, in recent years, over 10,000 students and adults annually.

McCrumb’s excellent book is welcomed and her faithful fans are

encouraged to learn more. This is the story we’ve been telling since 1975.” ●



Sharyn McCrumb spoke at the Muster Grounds. Leigh Anne Hunter, Superintendent, Abingdon Muster Grounds, handled book sales benefiting Virginia Chapter OVTA.

## A Step in the Right Direction

*NPS Service Award goes to Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway*

The 2013 NPS Service Award was presented to Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway in recognition of several years of outstanding effort by the Greenway Council to incorporate into its development plans opportunities to create walkable trail segments of the OVNHT. Since its founding in 1994 and the dedication of its first trail in 2002, the Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway has developed trail segments now including seven miles designated as part of the OVNHT.

NPS Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin wrote, “The Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway reflects a community commitment to the future while showing sensitivity to the past. By incorporating and embracing the story of the Overmountain Men into its plans, you have demonstrated that partnering opportunities can open doors that serve multiple audiences and users.”



R.G. Absher (r) representing Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway received the Certificate of Appreciation from OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson.

The Certificate of Achievement was presented in January 2014 at the OVNHT planning conference in Asheville. R.G. Absher, Executive Director, received the award on behalf of the Wilkes County Yadkin River Greenway. ●

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displays along the OVNHT and murals composing part of museum displays.

This year he released “The Patriot Victory at Kings Mountain, October 7, 1780,” a dramatic rendering of the battle in a scene measuring six feet by three feet and portraying over 100 figures. Colonel William Campbell is at the center of the advance up the slope.

“I knew that I wanted this painting to present the story from among the men advancing up the mountain,” said Luce. “I studied the blank canvas for a long time before I

began to sketch out the positioning of figures and the portrayal of the action you see here.”

Luce constructed a special easel on which to display the massive painting during the 2013 March. “I am so pleased that the painting was unveiled and received by the public along this year’s march. I met so many people who told me how meaningful the painting was to them and how helpful it was in conveying to them the courageousness and determination of these men.”

The painting can be viewed online at [www.richardluce.com](http://www.richardluce.com). ●

## Paddy's Creek Trail Continued

*A new segment added at Lake James State Park*

Another segment of the OVNHT along Paddy's Creek in Lake James State Park was dedicated during the commemorative march on October 2. The OVTA marchers did the honors on that date as NPS personnel were not available due to the fall 2013 shutdown of the federal government.

"This is another beautiful stretch of trail along Paddy's Creek," said Bryant Lindsey, OVTA member, who donated funds for the trail segment in honor of his mother. The new trail segment continues for 1.2 miles below the

bridge where the segment dedicated along the Paddy's Creek two years ago ends. The new segment was built by volunteers from OVTA and Friends of Lake James and by state park personnel.

Around the curve in the road from the bridge is a parking area for one of the park's Discovery Trails. A wayside there shows the OVNHT segments in Lake James State Park and offers visitors copies of trail brochures. One of these is the Kids in Parks brochure for "The

Overmountain Victory Trail." This brochure was a project of the OVTA in collaboration with Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. ●



A new segment of OVNHT was added in Lake James State Park. Visitors learn more at a wayside exhibit for the Holly Discovery Trail.



## Cane Creek Concept Battlefield Protection Grant issued

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina has received a \$40,000 grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to identify and delineate the site of the Battle of Cane Creek. That was the September 12, 1780 skirmish between Patrick Ferguson's patrol of loyalist and patriot militiamen of Burke and Rutherford counties riding under the command of colonels Charles McDowell and Andrew Hampton. "This is such an important episode of our story that immediately precedes the campaign of the

Overmountain Men in pursuit of Ferguson," said Superintendent Paul Carson. "We are delighted that a Trail partner has secured this grant in an effort to find and perhaps someday possibly protect this battlefield." OVTA has contributed \$5,000 to the project. Land owner and OVTA member Albert Dale has added \$2,000. The investigation and assessment will begin in 2014 and include public meetings such as the first held at The History Museum of Burke County in Morganton. ●

**The Battle of Cane Creek will be studied during 2014 under a grant awarded by the American Battlefield Protection Program to the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina.**



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"This is mile number 83," declared Marc Bowen, president of the OVTA. "Out of the 330 miles of the OVNHT, we now have 83 designated and walkable." The new route departs from the Museum of North Carolina Minerals on NC Hwy 226 at the Blue Ridge Parkway and follows south along the Blue Ridge Parkway toward Lynn Gap. It was from Lynn Gap where the militiamen then descended the mountain to camp at Turkey Cove.

The current completed trail segment is about ¾ mile. The trail will be completed to Lynn Gap in the near future. It is hoped that a partnership with the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina will examine preservation of land below Lynn Gap toward Turkey Cove on which remnants of the original road have been identified. ●



**For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:**

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**Picture credits:** All photography by Randell Jones except scene along Yadkin River Greenway