



# Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

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## On the Path

Welcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

If you have picked up a copy of this publication, most likely you did so at a site along the route where marked segments of the non-motorized trail are available for public use. Each of these sites is a significant part of the Trail. As important, these contact points represent some of the various organizations and communities who help maintain, protect, and interpret the Trail and the story from America's Revolutionary War era that the Trail commemorates.

The Overmountain Victory NHT would not exist without the support and efforts of its many partners in the four states through which it traverses. Within the pages here you will learn of some of the successes those working relationships have produced over the past year. In many ways the story of the campaign to Kings Mountain is an example of people with different backgrounds coming together to achieve a common goal. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century efforts to establish the commemorative trail on the ground mirror that willingness to work together for the common good on projects related to the resource.

We hope you enjoy your visit. Please linger and explore some or all of the 330 miles that make up the Overmountain Victory NHT. The Trail reveals a remarkable tale, step by step.

- Paul Carson, Superintendent

## Experiencing History

*Students in Washington Co., Virginia gather at Craig's Meadow for lessons and fun.*

Again in 2006, the community of Abingdon rallied to tell the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 to a new generation. On September 21-23, they hosted "A Call to Arms." Over 500 students from Washington County schools, with



Students learn about the Overmountain Men from reenactors at several stations.

some coming from Russell County, gathered on historic Craig's Meadow, where they learned about life in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most appropriately, they learned too about the courage of their ancestors who mustered there in September 1780 before riding off to join others in the campaign to what became the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Organized by the local chapter of OVTA with participation by many other organizations, reenactors, historic interpreters, and storytellers shared about the life skills of the southwest Virginia frontier in the late 1700s. They talked about cooking, salt making,

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## Coming Together

*New trail segment around Lake James is dedicated.*

On September 30, heritage-minded citizens gathered along the north shore of Lake James in Burke County, North Carolina to dedicate a new segment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The mountains across which the volunteer patriot militia rode 226 years earlier on the

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Citizens gather on the north side of Lake James for dedication of new OVNHT segment.

## “The Story” On Display

Two new exhibits in Wilkes County will attract and inform visitors

The Eastern Leg of the OVNHT ascends the Upper Yadkin Valley from the trailhead in Elkin and continues southwest to Morganton. Two sites in Wilkes County are enhancing their ability to tell the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780.

The Wilkes Heritage Museum, housed in the recently restored 1902 former Wilkes County Courthouse helps tell that story with displays in its new Revolutionary War room. “The National Park Service through the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is providing some funding for permanent exhibits,” said Jennifer Furr, museum director. “Those displays will be

installed later, but for now we have on loan some impressive artifacts related to the Battle of Kings Mountain.”



Wilkes County Heritage Museum has Rev War artifacts on display.



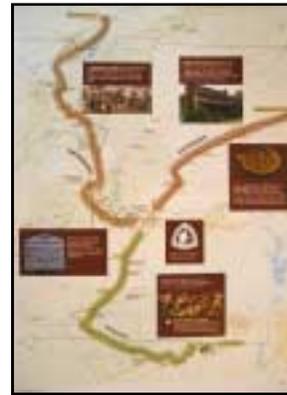
“We have a pistol owned by William Crabtree,” added Jenn Pena, museum curator. “He was

living on the Watauga River in 1777 and served as captain under Col.

William Campbell at the Battle of King’s Mountain. We also have the DePeyster sword, surrendered by Capt. Abraham DePeyster to Evan Shelby Jr. at the Battle of Kings Mountain. Many regard this as possibly the most important relic

of the American Revolution.”

Near Wilkesboro, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir is planning to install a new, comprehensive exhibit about the OVNHT and the Overmountain Men of 1780. This major informational and interactive display will inform visitors about the Revolutionary War history and acquaint them with opportunities to experience the historic campaign by following the route by car or on foot.



The display will emphasize that the militiamen came on horseback and traveled with only the bare essentials for fighting and for living off the

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New NPS display about OVNHT planned for W. Kerr Scott Reservoir Visitor Center

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medicine, pottery, weaving and spinning and music of the era. They also shared with students about the firearms, and fighting skills that these Overmountain Men would bring into battle and also face as they fought to protect their homeland during the American Revolution.

“The date 1780 is not important unless the events of that year are remembered and retold,” said Rick Humphries, co-chair of this year’s event. “Craig’s Meadow offers this community a unique opportunity to tell the story of the Overmountain Men and their campaign to Kings Mountain not only today but to future generations of Americans as well.” Blair Keller, a member of OVTA for over 25 years and a champion of Washington County’s commemoration efforts, served as co-chair with Humphries and helped

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## Student Teacher

Not all the students were just on the receiving end of the history lessons. Returning for a second year to the Craig’s Meadow celebration, Ryan Halsey, reenacted his role as a musician on the Virginia frontier. Collaborating with historical musician, R.G. Absher from Wilkes County, North Carolina, Halsey participated in several musical performances for the students.

“I like all kinds of history,” said Halsey. “This is my second year with this Revolutionary War event and my fourth year with Civil War reenacting. I guess I come by it naturally. All four of my grandparents have bluegrass heritage and come from military traditions.” Halsey plays the fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar and dulcimer. He is an 8<sup>th</sup>-grader at E.G. Stanley Middle School.



Ryan Halsey and R.G. Absher performed period music for students.

“Having Ryan participate is a real boon,” said Absher. “It’s great when the other students see someone their own age or a little older having fun being involved with history.” Absher, president of the Wilkes/Surry Chapter of OVTA, performs on hammer dulcimer, guitar, banjo and fiddle. He is well versed in the history of 18<sup>th</sup> century music. ●

# Overmountain Victory Celebration

Annual event shares *The Story* with 900 students

Once again, volunteer historic interpreters, reenactors and storytellers rallied to the call and gathered at the Museum of North Carolina Minerals to participate in the



**Jim Van Ness instructs students on fire starting c. 1780**

Overmountain Victory Celebration at Gillespie Gap near Spruce Pine along the Blue Ridge Parkway. On the adjacent hillside, they staffed two dozen stations as over 900 school children, came by bus loads during Thursday and Friday, September 14 & 15, to learn

about life in another era and about the heroics of the Overmountain Men of 1780.

The annual event hosted by the National Park Service was enhanced this year with the addition of period-appropriate tents and flies secured through a Challenge Cost Share Grant provided through the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The grant for purchasing the tents was awarded to the Altapass Foundation, Inc., a public charity, which along with the Blue Ridge Parkway, co-sponsored the event.

“This event and this location on the Blue Ridge Parkway is a wonderful way to educate students and the public about the Overmountain Men of 1780,” said Bill Carson, event storyteller and chamber of

commerce member who helps coordinate the student event. “Some people come here just to look at the leaves changing and to see the mountain vistas,” he continued, “but through their visit to the Museum of North Carolina Minerals and its display about the Overmountain Men of 1780, they get hooked on the heritage of this area. Important and surprising history happened right here. That impresses folks.”



**Shaded by a new fly and standing near a new period tent, Bill Carson tells *The Story* to students.**

The first two days of the four-day event is popular with local public schools and with home-school groups and private schools which come from as far away as Asheville. The event continued on Saturday and Sunday for the public with special “lantern tours”

conducted on Friday and Saturday evening that told the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. ●

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same date appeared in the distance. With this historic and beautiful backdrop, the assembled audience was reminded that this new segment of trail was also made possible as the result of different groups coming together for a common purpose. The trail resulted from the cooperation of Crescent Resources and Burke County.

Flanked by members of the OVTA, who later fired two volleys to honor the fighting men of 1780, several speakers offered remarks on the occasion. Troy Lucas, project manager for the development of Crescent Resources communities at Lake James, welcomed the audience and the opportunity to locate the

commemorative trail on land they are developing now in Burke County as the “1780 community.”



**New Trail at the development named to honor the Overmountain Men.**



Mike Maynard, Chairman of the Burke County Commissioners, praised the cooperative partnership of Crescent Resources and the local governments and

environmental organizations wanting appropriate development of the natural resources of the area..

In 1780, the Overmountain

Men divided their forces at Grassy Creek to descend the face of the Blue Ridge Mountains along separate trails. The original route along the Catawba River followed by Colonel William

Campbell’s forces is now inundated by Lake James, but the new commemorative trail falls within the mile-wide corridor allowed by Congress for placement of the OVNHT.

Crescent Resources hosted the dedication event with a gathering of heritage artisans and a filling meal cooked over an open fire by period reenactors. During the afternoon, some of the guests walked along part of the newly dedicated trail and heard the story of the Overmountain Men along the way. They also learned that in the near future a total of three-and-a-half miles of new trail will connect to the new portion of Lake James State Park soon to be developed. As it includes Paddy’s Creek, park developers hope to find and incorporate in the OVNHT actual trail remnants of the original 1780 route. ●



# Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

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 skirmished with a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army at Cane Creek, then retreat over the Appalachian 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 along Roaring River. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Major Joseph Winston and Colonel Benjamin Cleaveland ride upstream along the Yadkin 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 near Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue Ridge Mountains following separate routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.

**September 30** – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride along separate routes near the Catawba River 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.



Craig's (Dunn's) Meadow, Abingdon, VA



Campbell G Seven Mile



Yellow Mountain Gap Road, Roan Mountain, TN



Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site, Elizabethton, TN



Pisgah National Forest near Lake James, Marion, NC



Museum of NC Minerals at Gillespie Gap, Spruce Pine, NC



Brittain Church Cemetery Rutherford Co., NC



Furnace Mill, Cherokee Co., SC



Grave Site,  
Ford, VA



OVNHT along Yadkin River,  
Elkin, NC



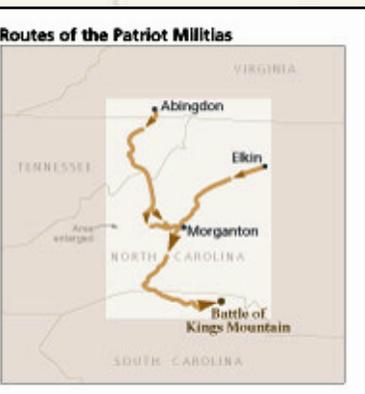
Yadkin River Greenway,  
North Wilkesboro, NC



W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir,  
Wilkes Co, NC



Catawba River Greenway  
Morganton, NC



Kings Mountain  
National Military Park,  
York Co., SC

**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 Bedford Hill in 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 P.M. 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 Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in “one heroic hour” captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriot losses are small: 28 killed and 65 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded, some 800 captured. Cornwallis’s left flank is destroyed.

**Epilogue** – With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved into Virginia; 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, on Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA. ●

### New OVNHT Trail Map

During 2006, NPS Harpers Ferry Center completed a new map (shown at left) for the Overmountain Victory National NHT. This detailed map contains much updated information and will be used widely to represent the OVNHT. It appears in the new brochure to be released in 2007 and will appear as part of future wayside exhibits. One partner, OVTA, used it in 2006 as part of a traveling exhibit during its annual reenactment. ●

## Above the Cove

*New Tennessee trail now connects Yellow Mountain Gap through public lands*

The climb was steep and the mountain high, but Yellow Mountain Gap loomed ahead as the first obstacle facing the Overmountain Men of 1780. They crested the rise on September 27 finding snow “shoe-mouth deep” and discovering that two of their party, suspected Loyalists, were missing.

Now, thanks to the efforts this summer of a corps of student trail builders, historic Yellow Mountain Gap is now accessible on public land from the Tennessee side. The new trail segment connects the historic gap with the commemorative trail dedicated in 2004 through Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area.

“They did a magnificent job” said Paul Carson, OVNHT superintendent. “A team of high school students, all young women, from around the country and as far away as California, met for four weeks to build the connecting trail as a project of the Student Conservation Association.” The crew of seven lived at the site throughout the project and worked under the supervision of two trail instructors. The project was funded by the National Park Foundation and corporate donor Nature Valley. The project was coordinated on-site by the Tennessee Division of Natural Areas.



**Students worked hard during four summer weeks to build the connector trail.**



“This is a significant step for us,” continued Carson, “in being able to locate the OVNHT within the half-mile corridor on either side of the historic route and bring it into Yellow Mountain Gap.” Reenactment hikers with OVTA previously received permission annually to cross private property through Sugar Hollow to access Yellow Mountain Gap from Tennessee. The route through Hampton Creek Cove Natural Area is closer to the historic route than is Sugar Hollow.

“Now for the first time, the public has ready access to Yellow Mountain Gap from the Tennessee side,” concluded Carson.

“And the Gap is where the OVNHT crosses the Appalachian Trail. This connection is good for the Trail because it brings in more hiker constituencies than we might otherwise have.”

The new trail segment, which crosses National Forest Service land, was dedicated in a ceremony conducted September 29, 2006 at the Hampton Creek Cove Natural Area trail head. ●



**Members of the Student Conservation Association celebrate a job well done.**



**Students, teachers, and reenactors frolicked on Craig's Meadow in a period dance.**

Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution, the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau, Historical Society of Washington Co., Washington County Schools, the Washington Farmers Cooperative, and NPS through a Challenge Cost Share Grant.

Abingdon, “what makes this event especially meaningful to our community is that the students are standing in the same meadow, on the same undeveloped property where these heroic militiamen mustered 226 years ago.” ●

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organize community support for the event. “Education is the key,” said Keller. “We have to keep passing the story along to each new generation.” Organizations participating and providing funding included the

After immersing himself in the Craig Meadow experience on the first day, Dr. Alan Lee, superintendent of Washington County Schools said, “This is the finest historic event prepared for school children in Washington County.” “Indeed,” added Lois Humphries, Mayor of



**Students gathered on beautiful Craig's Meadow to learn about The Overmountain Men of 1780.**

## “The Night Before”

*First-time program at The Cowpens draws a receptive crowd*

At 9:00 P.M. on a cold, wet October night in 1780, from among the over two thousand Overmountain Men gathered at The Cowpens, the 900 best marksmen on the 900 fastest horses set out for an all night ride to overtake British Major Patrick Ferguson before he could retreat to the safety of Cornwallis’s forces in Charlotte.



**With a local equestrian group providing mounted riders, Buck Jolley tells the story of “the Night Before.”**

The heroic story of “the night before” the battle was shared at Cowpens National Battlefield in a cooperative effort of three National Park units and the volunteer reenactors and commemorative marchers of OVTA. “The members of the Cherokee chapter of OVTA approached me about hosting this event for the first time,” said Tim Stone, the new superintendent of Cowpens NB. “I thought it was a worthwhile effort and we coordinated activities with Kings Mountain NMP and the Overmountain Victory NHT.” Members of OVTA hosted several stations all day October 6, as local students arrived by bus to learn about the history that happened there. “We had a good gathering all day of students from local schools,” said one of the demonstrators. “They were interested in learning what we had to say about life two hundred years ago, and, of course, they loved hearing

Since August, the Center for Earth Observation in the College of Natural Resources at NC State University has been working to create a GIS model for the OVNHT.

GIS stands for geographic information system. It is a way to access computerized, tabular data through spatial relationships. “Getting information about the Trail together in a way that can be accessed based on location will be a big help to managing and enjoying the Trail,” said Paul Carson, OVNHT superintendent.

“This is enormously powerful technology that has dramatically changed how natural and cultural resource managers address their work today,” said

Charlynn Smith, project manager and research associate at the Center. “The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail will be able to share quite readily with communities, county and local governments, park and recreation managers, and the NC Department of Transportation information about the Trail’s location



**Members of the audience follow reenactors along the OVNHT in Cowpens National Battlefield.**

about the adventures of these Patriot heroes.”

At 6:00 P.M., park visitors gathered for a first-person interpretive telling

## With a Map in Your Lap(top)

*GIS mapping helps manage the OVNHT*

and the National Park Services’s intentions for developing walking trails in the one-mile corridor.”

Phase I of this project includes the creation of three spatial databases that will support the use of the GIS model



**Charlynn Smith is creating a geographic information system (GIS) for the OVNHT.**

with other databases to be developed later. One is the historic route, as determined by the NPS. The Center also has available the data collected by a mapping of the route with GPS technology completed in 2003 by OVTA. These data were collected in a project funded by a challenge cost-share grant issued through OVNHT. The second database delineates the commemorative motor route and the third locates segments of the OVNHT that have been established as parts of the non-motorized route. ●

of The Story as several reenactors took part. A local equestrian group participated as well and preceded the OVTA marchers leading some of the audience in a walk along routes in the park designated as part of the OVNHT.

“We hope to do this again next year,” said local organizer Buck Jolley of the Cherokee Chapter, OVTA. “It’s a great way to get the community involved.” ●

# Patriots for Partners

Trail partners are taking big steps together

Business consultants tell us that an organization is formed when a task is more than one person can do alone. That is certainly true when it comes to building the OVNHT.

Today, dozens of organizations are working together across four states to build the commemorative Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). In fact, today the Trail has over 100 partners and more are joining every month! Here are some of the trail's partners:

## Virginia

Numerous Private Landowners  
Virginia DOT  
Virginia Department of Tourism  
Virginia Department of Historical Resources  
Town of Abingdon  
Washington County Historical Society  
Washington County



## Tennessee

Numerous Private Landowners  
Tennessee DOT  
Town of Elizabethton  
Carter County  
Sullivan County  
Southern Appalachian Greenway Alliance  
Tennessee Department of Tourism  
Roan Mountain State Park  
Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area  
Rocky Mount State Historic Site  
Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area



Cherokee National Forest – U.S.F.S  
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy  
Appalachian National Scenic Trail  
Appalachian Trail Club

## North Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners  
NCDOT  
NC Dept. of Cultural Resources  
NC Dept. of Tourism  
Pisgah National Forest – U.S. Forest Service  
Blue Ridge Parkway – NPS  
The Altapass Foundation  
McDowell County  
Wilkes County  
Brittain Church  
McDowell County Historical Society  
Historic Burke Foundation, Inc.  
Wilkes County Historical Society  
Surry County Historical Society  
Rutherford County Historical Society  
Lake James State Park  
Fort Defiance Historic Site  
Yadkin River Greenway  
Catawba River Greenway  
Duke Energy Company  
Crescent Land Corp.  
Wilkes County Heritage Museum  
Unimin Corporation  
Catawba-Wataree Relicensing Coalition  
Rutherford County  
Polk County  
City of Morganton  
City of Kings Mountain  
Town of Elkin  
Town of Rutherfordton  
Town of Ruth  
County of Burke  
Wake Forest University



Piedmont Land Conservancy  
Foothills Land Conservancy  
Mountain to the Sea Trail  
Kings Mountain Gateway Committee  
Betchler Development Corporation  
Brushy Mountain Cyclists Club  
W. Kerr Scott Reservoir – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Foothills Nature Science Society  
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
NC State University  
The Bradley Fund, LLC  
Conservation Trust for NC  
Avery County  
Mitchell County  
Caldwell County  
Surry County

## South Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners  
SCDOT  
SC Department of Tourism  
Cowpens National Battlefield – NPS  
Kings Mountain NMP – NPS  
Kings Mountain State Park  
SC Department of Parks  
Overmountain Victory Trail Committee  
Cherokee County  
Spartanburg County  
Town of Gaffney  
Carolina Backcountry Alliance  
The Palmetto Conservation Foundation  
Colonial Pipeline Company  
Cherokee County Historical Society

## All States

Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc.  
Federal Highway Administration  
Daughters of the American Revolution  
Sons of the American Revolution  
American Hiking Society  
HistoryAmerica Tours  
American Battlefield Protection Program  
Eastern National Monument Association  
National Park Foundation  
Student Conservation Association

With so many interested parties working together on the OVNHT, we should not be surprised to see major elements of the Trail becoming a reality every year. It is indeed an exciting time to be involved with building the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. ●



For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:

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[www.NPS.gov/ovvi](http://www.NPS.gov/ovvi)



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land. It will include reproductions of a Deckard rifle, a hunting knife, a barrel canteen, and a belt axe.

New maps will mark the campaign route by the actions taken: Gathering, Pursuit, Attack, and Victory. Other elements of the display will point visitors to other nearby related sites such as the Wilkes County Heritage Museum and Quaker Meadows.

The new exhibit is under construction with installation anticipated in 2007. ●