

Tide Turned Against Red Coats At Battle Of Kings Mountain

Former Editor G. G. Page Writes History.

An historic location near Kings Mountain that was marked about a half century ago only by a modest monument now is the Kings Mountain Littlefield National Park, commemorating the portentous Revolutionary War battle of Oct. 7, 1780, which historians credit with turning the tide of warfare definitely in favor of the Colonies and against England.

The Federal Government several years ago, in the dark days of the Great Depression, formally took over the large tract of land and began developing it under the direction of the National Park Service.

As the climax of the struggle of the patriotic societies and associated interests through a long period of years, the park was dedicated on the 150th anniversary of the battle, Oct. 7, 1930 by a tremendous celebration at which the principal address was delivered by Herbert Hoover, then President of the United States. A year later it was accepted by the Government.

Since that celebration, attended by many thousands of persons, the exact location of important incidents in the battle have been marked permanently after careful investigation of all available records. Roads and trails have been constructed, much landscaping has been done and necessary structures have been built.

The scene of the battle is the narrow top of a ridge, about 60 feet above the surrounding rolling plain, 1-2 miles south of the North Carolina-South Carolina line. In this battle, were engaged 1,100 loyalist militia and British Rangers under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson of the English Army. The American force was composed of backwoodsmen in several contingents commanded by Colonels William Campbell, Benjamin Cleveland, Isaac Shelby, John Sevier and James Williams. Their troops were from the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia and Kentucky and trained at the battle-ground's own hear and hand for the purpose of the hunt for Ferguson's command.

Historians have concluded that the decisive victory of the Colonies at Kings Mountain contributed largely to the success of General Nathaniel Greene's campaign against Lord Cornwallis, British commander-in-chief.

In the Kings Mountain battle the British loss included 200 killed, one of the dead being Major Ferguson, 123 wounded and 684 prisoners. The American loss was 23 killed, including Col. Williams and 62 wounded.

FIRST MONUMENT

The battle-ground first was permanently marked in 1815 when a small monument was erected. In 1880 this marker was replaced by a more impressive one. Early in this century patriotic societies began an agitation for a more adequate marking and in 1905 a Congressional appropriation was voted and the third monument was erected in 1909.

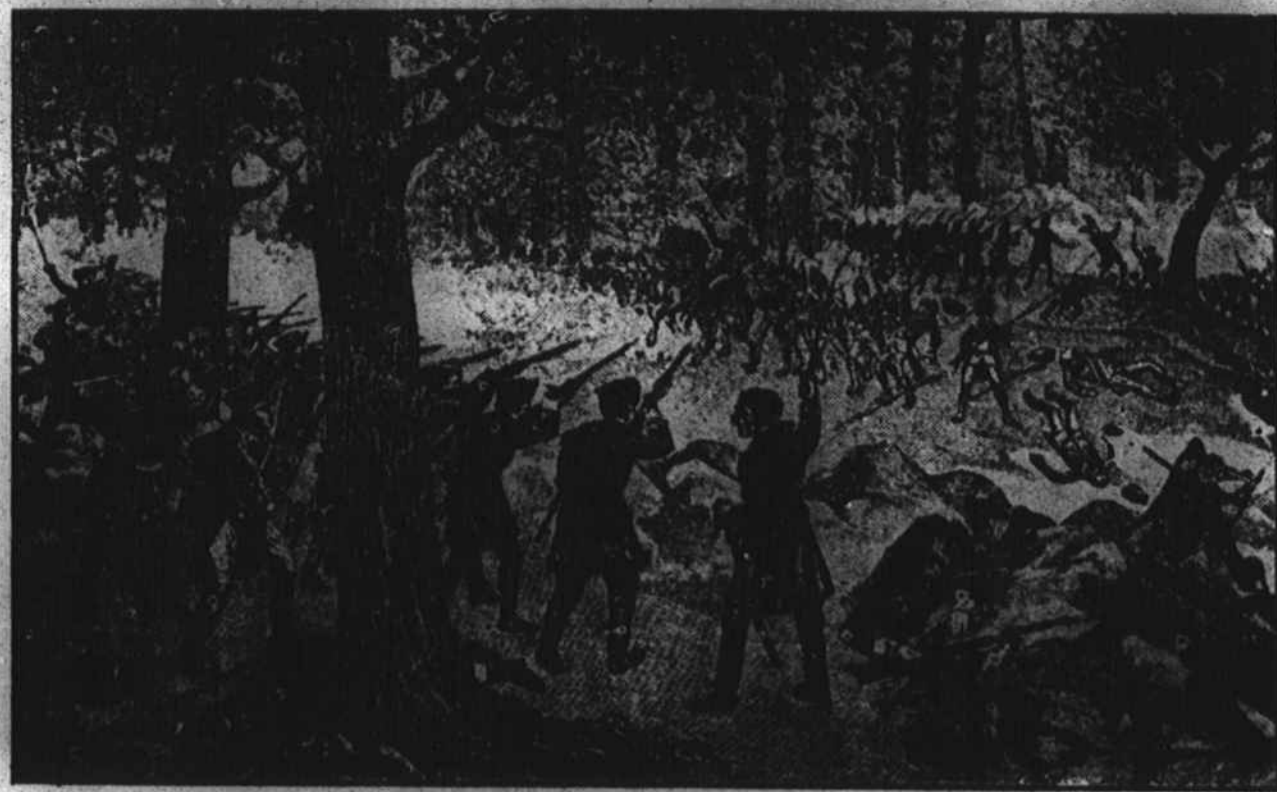
THE BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

Former Editor of the Kings Mountain Herald, G. G. Page, who is recognized as an authority on the Battle of Kings Mountain, published a history on this important event, and the following is reprinted from it by permission:

The Birthplace of Liberty

It was in the Battle of Kings Mountain the Sherry which we today enjoy was really born. Long had it slept in the bosoms of those God-fearing men who struck the decisive blow at this point, but on this mountain it leaped from its hiding into a re-found freedom. The battle of Kings Mountain was fought October 7, 1780, and was declared by no less authority than Thomas Jefferson to have been the turning point of the American Revolution. Just at the time when this Southland was drenched in freedom's blood, commingled with that of tyranny, and the cause of liberty lay prostrate and sweltering in gore, this mighty conflict was staged. Ferguson was slain and his forces slaughtered. Not a man left to tell the story; what were not killed were captured. This broke the backbone of the British and so heartened the brave Americans, who were more in quest of God than gold, that they pressed forward and followed up their victory with continuous successes until the surrender of the British at Yorktown, a year and twelve days later.

This battlefield is holy ground; ground that was hallowed by the blood of our forebears who bled this mountainside in freedom's blood that the life blood might be drained from the tyrannical hand of bondage that would hold us in political and religious slavery forever. As the blood of our noble ancestors mixed with that of the tyrant on the summit and flowed together to the level below, methinks that Heaven revealed anew that there had been a nation born where the living Gospel could have right-of-way in the hearts of men and that the tyrant's grip



Artist's sketching of the Battle of Kings Mountain

was lost from the throat of the lovers of liberty. As the result of the Council on this day, generations to follow were guaranteed the right to be born free, to worship as they please, with none to molest or cause to fear. Leading Up To The Battle

In the battle of Kings Mountain the opposing forces were about equally divided, as compiled by Draper, eleven hundred on each side. The British forces, composed of Loyalists and Tories, were under command of Colonel Patrick Ferguson and were stationed along this ridge or arm of Kings Mountain. So well pleased was Colonel Ferguson with his situation that he made the boast that "God Almighty and all the devils out of hell" could not move him. Realizing that he was being pursued by the American forces, collected at Cowpens, and fearing that he might be outnumbered and overpowered, and being desirous of making a clean job of the affair, he sent to Cornwallis, who was encamped at Charlotte, asking him to send Tarleton and his forces to his aid. As the American forces learned from stragglers along the way, Ferguson was making every effort to gain reinforcements in order that a glorious victory might be won for His Majesty, the King, and that he might add laurels to his own crown. But Providence whom he had so recently challenged, took a hand, as He always takes a hand in every war, and the waters of Catawba river were so swollen that Cornwallis could not succor his subordinate.

The American forces were composed of the over-mountain men who had assembled at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga river, and the Whigs of North Carolina and Georgia, who had joined forces at Cowpens for the purpose of pursuing and getting Ferguson. As the Americans pursued the British from Cowpens they found the population of the thinly settled country much divided. Some were pronounced Tories and aided with the British on every occasion. Some were conscientiously opposed to war and followed the lines of non-resistance being either Whigs or Tories as the exigencies of the occasion might demand. Others were lovers of liberty and shared with Patrick Henry in his noble sentiment to "Give me liberty, or give me death." This class offered every assistance and fell in with the pursuers just as many Tories had joined the forces of Ferguson. Legend tells us that even after the firing began men from the neighborhood gathered their old muskets and hurried to the fray, some on one side, some on the other, neighbor pitted against neighbor. In this case it did where two brothers went into the battle on the different sides and both were killed.

As Colonel Ferguson strutted about on the ridge and defied the Almighty and most probably ignorant of the nearness of the enemy, and cherished hope that reinforcements would reach in time for the fight, the Americans were hasten to arrive ahead of Ferguson's reinforcements, and from stragglers along the way gaining information of the British camp and lay of the land. No such word as "fall" entered into the composition or calculations of Campbell and his men. Never was the war-cry of the ancient Romans that "Carthage must be destroyed" more ceaseless and determined than was that of the Americans to catch and destroy Ferguson.

Having secured the exact location of the camp the Americans, who less than a mile away, dismounted and left a few men in charge of the horses, formed two lines of march intending to entirely surround Ferguson. Colonel Cleveland led the line coming up on the west side of the mountain, and Colonel Campbell led the procession across the ridge just south of the old monument and drawing up on the east and north of Ferguson. The British were now in

a pocket with the opening entirely too small to admit of retreat.

According to their leaders, as follows: Looking east just north of the old monument we begin with Campbell and follow around with Sevier, McDowell, Winston, Hambright, Cleveland, Lacy, Williams, and back to Shelby, who was facing Campbell.

The Battle Rages—Ferguson Falls — Battle Ended — American Victory

While it is not definitely known who fired the first shot, it is a generally accepted fact that the Americans began the hostilities. The fighting began about three o'clock and continued for an hour and a quarter. Ferguson began his defense with fixed bayonets, but found the old squirrel guns of the mountaineers too quick and accurate for that method of warfare and soon took up his rifle.

It had already become known to the American forces that Ferguson himself wore a checked shirt or duster over his uniform, which distinction, after discovered, made him an easy mark. His death was the main thing the Americans had hoped to accomplish, and Hambright had issued orders as follows in his Pennsylvania German accent: "Well, boys when you see dot man mit the pig shirt on over his clothes, you know who him is, and mark him mit your rifles."

Ferguson's men, being at a greater elevation, were placed at the disadvantage of having to shoot downward and in grave danger of killing their own men, while the Americans, being at a lower level were able to shoot over the heads of their comrades and with much better aim. They, too, had huge trees under which to take shelter, two of which now stand on yonder slope.

As the battle raged Ferguson, mounted on his gallant steed and blowing his shrill silver whistle, ripped and excited from one point to another and summoned all his powers to encourage and rally his thinning ranks. Finally he was sighted by several Americans, apparently at the same time, and six bullets were fired into his body and he fell to the ground dead. It is said that the mountaineers with a veritable volcano of smoke and fire while the earth was rapidly being littered with dead bodies and drenched with blood. After Ferguson fell, Colonel DePoyater, the next in rank, assumed command of the British forces, but within about fifteen minutes dispirited and raised the white flag.

When the smoke of battle had cleared away and the dead were numbered it was found that 23 Americans had fallen while 300 British were slain.

What of the British remained alive were taken prisoners and not a man escaped to tell the tale. The prisoners were kept in camp that night on the battlefield and were the next day marched back over Rutherford county and other territory which they had so recently plundered and where many of them had lived prior to joining themselves to Ferguson a few days before. It is said that many of them were identified by residents as being among the marauders and were hanged unceremoniously.

A mound of rocks on the eastern hillside marks the spot where the body of Ferguson was buried. Legend has it that the bodies of the dead soldiers were rolled into holes with great difficulty among the rocks only to be scratched out by wolves and rooted out by wild dogs and devoured.

The battle of Kings Mountain was not only the turning point of the Revolution, but one of the decisive battles of the world.

There were six colonels representing the American side: Campbell of Virginia; Shelby and Sevier, from

Tennessee; McDowell, Cleveland, Hambright and Winston, from North Carolina; Williams and Lacy, from

South Carolina. About a mile from the battlefield on the road to the town of Kings Mountain, stands an old house which marks the spot where a widow named Dover, and her daughter, lived at the time of the battle. Colonel Hambright was wounded in the conflict and was taken in by these people and nursed back to health. He afterwards returned and married the younger lady and made his home with them.

Kings Mountain was not so named because the King's troops encamped here, but was known by that name long before. It derived its name from a man named King, who lived down on Kings creek, which also took his name. The possessive form of "Kings" was long ago dropped by common consent and the plural form "Kings" adopted instead. The town of Kings Mountain, N. C. took its name from the mountain. It had its beginning Easter Monday, 1873, when W. A. Mauney and J. S. Mauney came to this community and started up business. It is now a

trying town with about 6,000 population, paved streets, water, sewer white way, 12 cotton mills and other industries. Good schools and ten churches. Fine opportunity for investment and congeniality.

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