

This Coming Sunday

County Historical Association To Conduct Tour "Rich In History"

Revolutionary War Cattle Drive Route To Be Traced

By - Cal Carpenter

When the guests and members of the North Carolina Society of County and Local Historians meet this Sunday, they will take a Fall Tour through an area rich in history. It is right here in Transylvania county; one that is, unfortunately, not as well known as it should be.

The group, jointly sponsored by the Cedar Mountain Community Club and the Transylvania Historical Association, will gather at the Cedar Mountain Community Center Sunday morning for a full day of activity. High spot of the meeting will be the tour, conducted by members of the local historical association, of an area that looms larger than most people realized in the early history of these United States — the area in and around Cedar Mountain, Connestee Falls, and the Sylvan Valley where Brevard is located.

Beginning at the headwaters of the Green River, which rises in Transylvania county, first flows east toward Hendersonville then southward into South Carolina, the group will trace the latter part of the route taken by a detachment of Revolutionary War soldiers who drove a herd of cattle from Cowpens, just over the border in South Carolina, into the upper French Broad's Sylvan Valley before the battle of Cowpens in January 1781. This mundane seeming action was an important factor in the defeat of a British army, and thus in eventually securing American independence. It was also directly responsible for the first settlers coming into the area that is now Transylvania County.

LIKE FICTION

The story of this cattle drive into the mountain fastness of Western North Carolina, then largely unexplored and populated only by a few wandering Cherokee Indians, reads like historical fiction. But it is fact — a page of history that deserves to be better known.

To briefly set the background: After the Colonies declared their independence, the British, under Lords Howe and Cornwallis, achieved little in the way of strategic military success in the first years. Despite the fact that they won several bloody battles and captured the larger cities of the northeastern seaboard in their beginning campaign in 1776, they still had re-enforced the King's rule in only a small area in the northeast. The vast geographic body of the 13 rebellious colonies was still intact and supporting General Washington's army.

Recognizing the necessity of breaking the geographic solidarity of the rebels, the very competent British leadership devised a "southern strategy;" that is, invade and split the south and then move northward. This was begun with an assault on Charleston, S. C. in 1776, with land forces supported by the powerful British navy, but it was repulsed.

They tried again in 1778 with more success. Combined land and sea forces captured Savannah and the reduction of a large part of Georgia quickly followed. Then, in 1780, a similar attack on Charleston succeeded. At this point it appeared that Lord Cornwallis was in a position to achieve his objective; reduce the Carolinas and leave General Washington and his army cut off in the area along with the Virginia - New Jersey - New York coasts.

Two battles prevented the full success of this strategic British plan: Kings Mountain, in October, 1780, and Cowpens in January, 1781. At Kings Mountain, Colonel Ferguson's bloody defeat convinced Cornwallis that he couldn't carry his campaign into the back country, that he'd have to stay close to territory controlled by British sea power. At Cowpens, the American long rifles deprived him of most of Colonel Tarleton's light troops, forces most necessary to overrunning the Carolinas.

THE CATTLE DRIVE

It was shortly before the battle of Cowpens, probably in the Fall of 1780, that the connection of local history with that strategically important battle begins. For this story the writer is indebted to Mrs. Mary Jane McCrary, well known Brevard historian.

In their inland push through South Carolina, the King's soldiers were on short rations and hungry for meat — a not uncommon thing for soldiers of that day. Armies lived off the countryside, and the colonial countryside was too sparsely settled to provide good pickings. Then too, patriotic Americans, warned of the

coming British, hid their food and drove their cattle off to safety.

A large herd of these cattle had been gathered in the pea vine pastures along the Catawba River near Cowpens — that's how the present town got its name. And knowing of the British need for food and determined that the enemy should not have the cattle, the Americans decided to drive them northward into the vast wilderness of the mountains where the British would never find them.

A military detachment was assigned as herdsmen — men with names like Benjamin Davidson, William Davidson, John Carson — names that are now known as founders of Transylvania county. And these men began the long drive: up the Catawba to the confluence with the Green River, up the Green River into the climbing foothills; through the passes and valleys of the ever - rising mountains until the rushing Green River was little more than a brook.

On they went, near what is now the Green River Road, past the place where the present Blue Ridge Baptist Church stands. Following an even earlier Indian trail, the drive toiled on northward, along what is now Reasonover Road and U. S. Highway 276. Just south of Brevard, the drive descended the rugged Mill Hill after passing Connestee Falls (where the old mill stood that much later gave the hill its name), and onto what is now Island Ford Road. Then, moving westward, the gaunted cattle and tired men finally reached the East Fork section of Transylvania. There the cattle were held while the British took their losses at Cowpens and moved on.

After Cowpens, the weakened British army pushed on across North Carolina to another bloody, but not so strategically important battle, at Guilford Court House near the Virginia border in March 1781. Though tactically a British victory, Guilford Court House so weakened Cornwallis' force that a more thorough invasion of the South was impossible. He retired first to Wilmington and then turned away and joined the British forces in Virginia. That was in May. He surrendered to Washington at Yorktown on Oct. 19, 1781, some five months later.

DROVERS RETURN

What became of the cattle? No one knows for sure. It is presumed they were driven back down the long trail to their owners, but that is not important historically.

What is important is that the military herdsmen, in their mountain camps here in the Sylvan valley, discovered rich, level river bottoms for farming, tall timber for cabins, and plentiful game for food. They probably spent the winter of 1780-81 here and experienced our mild temperatures in the protection of the mountains. They visualized snug cabins and homesteads; they decided to return.

Many did. These Revolutionary War cattle herdsmen, who had contributed materially and probably unknowingly to America victory by depriving the British of badly needed food, became Transylvania county's first settlers.

Cub Scouts Of Pack No. 711 To Have Pinewood Derby, 28th

Cub Scout Pack No. 711 under the leadership of new Cubmaster Donald Culin will have their first pack meeting at the first United Methodist church on Thursday, October 28 at 7:00 p.m.

The October theme is Fire Prevention, and the major portion of the meeting will be in the form of a fire engine race — a variation of the Pinewood Derby, held annually for several years. Cars in the shape of fire engines have been made of wood by the boys and their dads, and prizes will be awarded the fastest cars, the slowest cars, and the one with the best design. An exciting evening is anticipated.

Officers for this year are:

- Cubmaster—Don Culin
- Secretary—Jim Heglar
- Treasurer—Don Blackwell
- Outings Chairman—Chrome Reddick
- Publicity and Institutional Representative—Carolyn Cox
- Awards Chairman—Roger Cline
- Song Leader—Leon Wall
- Webelos leaders are Bill Wallace, Jim Hay, Wilmer McGee, Don Pinney and John Spencer.
- Den mothers and assistants

are Judith Lee, Lou Parker, Mary Stowell, Rita Atstupenas, Kitty Watson, Sue Heglar, Sue Pessmore, Lois Hannah, Eleanor Cline, Ima Hay, Kay Metoyer and Bronis Odum.

To Hold Youth Day Sunday At Church Of God

Sunday, October 31, will be Youth Day at the Brevard Church of God on French Broad street.

Rickey Burrell, of Hendersonville, will be the visiting youth speaker for the day.

The youth of the church will be in charge of the services during the day. They will be serving as Sunday school superintendent, teachers of all the Sunday school classes, choir director, etc.

Sunday school will begin at 10 a.m. Worship service will be at 11 a.m. and the evening service will begin at 7 p.m.

The public is cordially invited to attend these services.



Historical Blue Ridge Baptist Church

"Homesteaders" Achievement Book Winners To Have Party Friday Evening

The See-Off "Homesteaders" will have a halloween party at the Community Center on Friday, October 29th, beginning at 6:30 p. m.

Games, prizes and refreshments will be available for children and adults.

When you think of prescriptions, think of VARNER'S, adv.

Achievement Book Winners Announced, Day Successful

The annual Achievement Day for Extension Homemakers in Transylvania county was held Friday, October 22, in the American Legion building. Mrs. Edwin Rice, council president, coordinated the activities of the day. Mrs. John Rhyne was in charge of the luncheon.

Achievement books were judged and winners include:

First place—Gladys Branch Club, Mrs. Lamar Hamilton, president,

Second place—Cherryfield

Club, Mrs. Glennon Parker, president,

Third place—Cedar Mountain, Mrs. Donald Shipman, President.

Exhibits of handmade items by members in each club were visited in the afternoon.

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