

# Summit Battle 200 Years Ago Helped Put Patriots On Top

by Donald J. Frederick  
National Geographic News Service  
WASHINGTON -- Kings Mountain, a 60-foot ridge rising from the gentle farmlands of South Carolina, looms especially large this year.

On Oct. 7 thousands of people will converge at the landmark in Kings Mountain National Military Park to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the crucial battle that took place there during the American Revolutionary War.

Speeches, an outdoor drama, reenactments, even a rocking chair marathon will all be part of the week-long festivities commemorating the event.

## Americans vs. Americans

The battle was a bitter struggle waged entirely by Americans -- Patriot against Loyalist, neighbor vs. neighbor. The only professional soldier involved on either side was Maj. Patrick Ferguson, who commanded the Loyalists, points out James Anderson, the park historian.

Appointed to lead all the Loyalist militia he could muster in the Carolinas, Ferguson had things pretty much in control after the newly formed Patriot army of the South suffered its disastrous defeat at the Battle of Camden, S.C., in August 1780.

But the "Bulldog," as Ferguson was known, made a serious mistake in late September, when he challenged the "over-mountain" men in the wild, rugged country west of the Appalachians.

His message to them was unequivocal. If they did not stop their guerrilla forays against British and Loyalist forces, Ferguson promised to "march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword."

The blunt threat backfired by unifying the bands of fiercely independent over-mountain men. Determined to take the offensive before Ferguson could strike, they gathered on the broad, open spaces by the swift-flowing Watauga River near present-day Elizabethtown, Tenn. Sympathizers from other regions joined them.

This makeshift army of men in rude hunting shirts lugging long, heavy rifles, has been described as "composed of patriot riflemen of the farmer, hunter, and Indian-fighting class from the frontiers of the two Carolinas and Virginia."

But even though less than half of the 1,800-man army was made up of over-mountain men, it was their leaders who kindled the spirit, laid the plans, and raised the money for the long march against Ferguson.

## Unforeseen Snags

The dogged backcountry force caught up with the Bulldog on Oct. 7. He had chosen to make a stand on top of Kings Mountain and had written his commander, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, that it was "a post where I do not think I can be forced by a stronger enemy than that against us."

The mountain's heavily forested slopes were to shade Ferguson's optimistic prediction.

The trees and boulders on the mountainsides gave excellent cover to the assault force. Moreover, the Loyalist defenders on the open crest above were exposed to cross fire from the deadly accurate long rifles below.

The battle began about 3 p.m. when Ferguson's advance guard discovered Patriot forces trying to encircle the mountain. A deadly barrage of fire interspersed with fierce bayonet charges disrupted the attack.

To one hard-pressed frontiersman, "the mountain appeared volcanic; there flashed along its summit and around its base, and up its sides, one long sulphurous blaze."

Fighting from tree to tree, the Patriots pushed their way to the top. Before he was aware of it, 16-year-old Thomas Young found himself between his own regiment and the enemy, "as I judged from seeing the paper the Whigs wore in their hats, and the pine twigs the Tories wore in theirs, these being the badges of distinction."

## Lean and Sinewy

A South Carolina Loyalist named Drury Mathis played possum after he was severely wounded. As he hugged the ground trying to survive the hail of bullets around him, he got a firsthand glimpse of his tormentors, men "not overburdened with fat, but tall, raw-boned, and sinewy."

Through it all a shrill whistle sounded above the crack of rifles and the desperate shouts of men crashing through the underbrush. Blowing a large silver whistle to direct his troops, Ferguson seemed to be everywhere.

But astride his horse and clad in a checkered hunting shirt, he made a conspicuous target. Refusing to the end to yield "to such a damned banditti," he was cut from the saddle by a fusillade of shot.



By Louis S. Glanzman

SPRAYING LOYALISTS with deadly fire from their long rifles, Patriots stormed Kings Mountain in South Carolina 200 years ago. Maj. Patrick Ferguson on horseback, commander of the Loyalist force, was the only British soldier in the battle, which many feel was a crucial turning point in the Revolutionary War.

His men propped him against a tree, where he died.

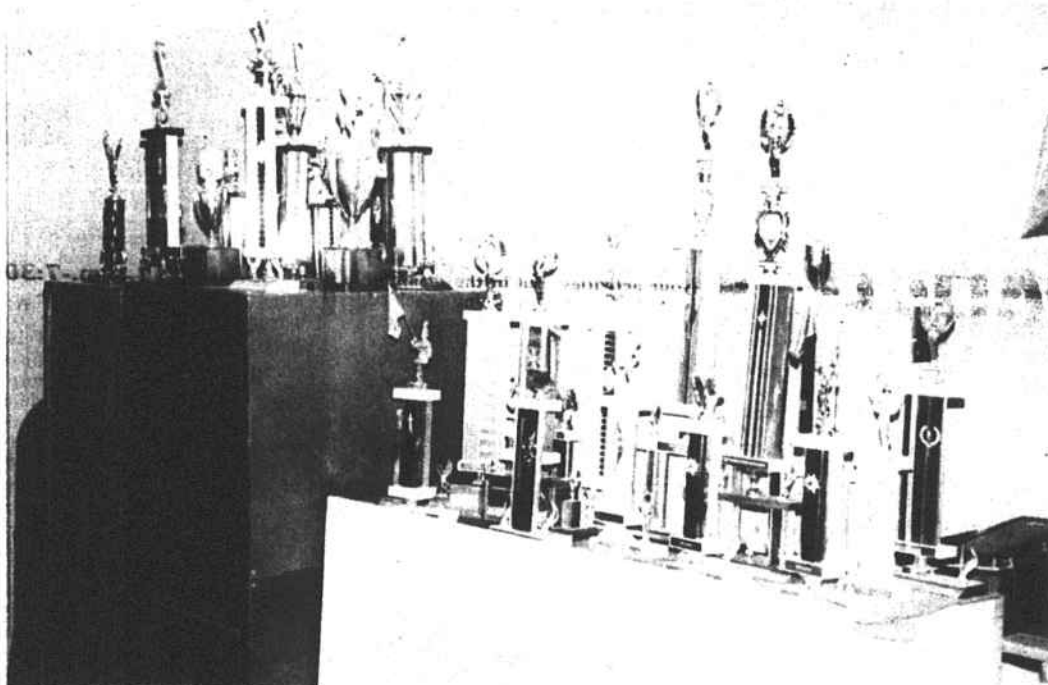
The fight continued even though Ferguson's second-in-command ordered a white flag hoisted. Patriot commanders could not immediately stop their men from shooting down the terrified, disorganized enemy.

When the carnage was halted, 225 Loyalists lay dead, 163 wounded; 716 captured. The Patriots had lost only 28 men.

Shaken by the disaster at Kings Mountain, the British began to have serious misgivings about the campaign in the South. More importantly, they realized they could no longer count on Loyalists

in the hinterlands to sustain them.

Many historians are convinced that Kings Mountain marked a turning point in the war. Thomas Jefferson described the victory as "the joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success, which terminated the Revolutionary War with the seal of independence."



32 IN FOUR YEARS -- Trophies the Hoke County High School band has won in competition in the past four years are shown in the picture. There are 30. The band also won two plaques, equivalent to trophies, in that time. All are in the Hoke High Band Room. The plaques are on a wall out of camera range. Jimmy James is the band director. [Staff photo by Bill Lindau].

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## LAW For Laypersons

In earlier time in North Carolina and other states, a man or woman had to have a good reason before a court would grant a divorce. Certainly, you are aware of such reasons as adultery, impotency, and abandonment by one's spouse. In each of these reasons, and in others listed in the General Statutes, fault was usually assigned to one of the parties and only the innocent party could ask for the divorce.

You can still obtain a divorce on those grounds, but now there is a much easier way, and you do not have to assign a "fault" to either party. North Carolina's General Statutes 50-6, sometimes referred to as the "no-fault divorce," provides that if a husband and wife have lived separate and apart for one year and either one of the parties has lived in North Carolina for six months, then a divorce may be granted upon the application of either party. Neither husband nor wife has to show that he or she has been injured, and the separation does not have to be by mutual agreement or under a court order. Separation, of course, means that there must be a physical separation, and an intention at least on the part of one of the parties to end

the matrimonial cohabitation. If, however, a couple begins to live together again during the one year period, whether or not sexual relations have been resumed, the requirement of the one year separation will be interrupted and a divorce will not be granted until a full year of separation has passed without interruption.

The purpose for the enactment of the "no-fault divorce" in North Carolina was presumably to enable a husband and wife to end their marriage without the sensationalism and public airing of dirty linen which necessarily went along with a divorce in which one party had to assign fault to the other. Obviously, if the husband or wife has only to show that they have lived separate and apart for one year and that one of the parties has lived in North Carolina for six months, there is not need to talk about who is at fault and why.

"This article is written as a matter of general interest only. It is not to be construed as legal advice, and you should not rely on the statements made in the article to govern your actions in any specific case. If you have a particular question or problem, you should contact an attorney."

## News-Journal Has 'Story Of Month'

An article published in *The News-Journal* of September 4 has been named "Story of the Month -- Non-SCS Writer" by the state office of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

The report, illustrated with

photos, was of the August 27 Final Acre ceremony in McLaughlin Park in Raeford. The ceremony formally observed the completion of the eight-year soil survey of Hoke County. The survey was made by the SCS.

## Cross Creek Railroad Show

The Cross Creek Mall Railroad Show will be presented by the Cape Fear Railroaders November 1.

This will consist of table displays of operating and static HO model trains 027 and O gauge (Lionel,

Marx and American Flyer) model trains, photographs and slides of past and present railroads, a display of railroad artifacts (lanterns, timetables, switch locks, etc.) and toy trains, past and present.



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