

DAR promotes monument to honor African American Patriots

(Background details and quotes on The Battle of Kings Mountain, written by Loretta Cozart.)

The American Continental army suffered successive defeats at Charleston, Waxhaw, Camden, and Sumter, South Carolina in the summer of 1780. By the fall only the Backwater Militia units remained in the field to oppose the armies of Cornwallis. There was no regular army south of Virginia to stop Cornwallis and the loss of America was eminent.

The Backwater Militia, under the command of William Campbell of Virginia, contained strong leaders from North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia. And, with the exception of Major Patrick Ferguson, all of the participants of the battle were from the colonies. Ferguson commanded over 1,000 Loyalist well trained and drilled, while the 900 rebel Patriots were under the command of a group of frontiersmen colonels.

Cornwallis sent Major Patrick Ferguson into the western Carolinas to recruit and equip militia loyal to the British cause. He was to raise an army and suppress the remaining Backwater Militia. Intending to intimidate the Patriots, he sent a proclamation in September 1780 to the mountain settlements, telling them to lay down their arms or "he would march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword."

The result was the march of the famous Overmountain men from the Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga River across the mountains in search of Ferguson. Overcoming hunger, weather, wrangling, and intrigue the Backwater Militia attacked and defeated Ferguson's Loyalists at Kings Mountain. These brave individuals were not intimidated by Ferguson's threat. The Militia rallied to the call of democracy and drew their "line in the sand" at Kings Mountain. Before the battle, Ferguson wrote, "Not even God himself can take me off of this mountain." The Backwater Militia proved him wrong!

The Hon. J. T. Preston delivered a speech at the Kings Mountain Battleground on the 4th of October, 1855 in which he stated: "A white flag was run up, arms thrown down, and God's champions shouted, 'Victory! Liberty!' That shout echoed from the mountain to the sea and far along the shore to where the majestic Washington sat almost weeping over the sad horrors of the South. His great heart leaped with prophetic joy as this beam of hope came borne on the triumphant voice of his beloved and trusted men of 'West Augusta;' for the men who sent that shout were the very men of whom Washington said he would 'trust to them to maintain American liberty after all else had failed.'"

Sir Henry Clinton called this defeat "the first link of a chain of evils" that ended in "the total loss of America." Cornwallis' retreat gave the Continental Congress time to organize a new southern army. In just more than a year, on October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown.

C.P. Russell, Supervisor of Interpretation in Washington writes regarding the Battle of Kings Mountain, "Probably no other battle in the Revolution was so picturesque or so furiously fought as that at Kings Mountain. The very mountain thundered. Not a regular soldier was in the American ranks. Every man there was actuated by a spirit of democracy. They fought under leaders of their own choosing for the right to live in a land governed by men of their own choice." (From The Regional Review, National Park Service, Region One, Richmond, Va., Vol. V, No. 1, July 1940, pp. 15-21.)

The thanks of Congress were given in a resolution of the 13th of November, as follows: "Resolved, That Congress entertain a high sense of the spirited and military conduct of Colonel Campbell, and the officers, and privates of the Militia under his command, displayed in action of the 7 of October, in which a complete victory was obtained over superior numbers of the enemy, advantageously posted on King's Mountain, in the state of North Carolina; and that this resolution be published by the commanding officer of the southern army, in general orders."

Historians haven't given the Backwater Militia the proper respect they deserve, probably because those fighting were part of voluntary militia units and not part of the Continental Army. The Backwater Militia was considered barbaric by Cornwallis, he labeled them "Backwater Men". But, it was these extraordinary men who mustered the strength to defeat Major Patrick Ferguson and turned the tide of the

British in the Southern Campaign and, indeed, the Revolutionary War itself.

The efforts by the Backwater Militia pushed Cornwallis back to Charleston and their "spirit of democracy" allowed Nathaniel Greene and the Continental Army time to reorganize and prepare for the total defeat of the British at Yorktown. The time has come to recognize these Patriots and allow them to take their place in history.

When speaking of the Battle of Kings Mountain, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I remember well the deep and grateful impression made on the minds of every one by that memorable victory. It was the joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of our independence."

Dwight L. Davis, Secretary of War submitted in his report, Historical Statements Concerning the Battle of Kings Mountain and the Battle of Cowpens, SC, "In considering the effect of the Battle of Kings Mountain upon the situation in the South, it was only this epic tragedy to Ferguson's army that halted Cornwallis in his subjugation of North Carolina. Without this, or a similar calamity, he would have reached the northern borders of the Province in December, and with the Chesapeake occupied by the British fleet, Virginia would have suffered the same fate. What the outcome of such a situation in the winter of 1780-81 would have been is problematic."

On October 7, 1930, upon the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain, President Herbert Hoover proclaimed: "Here less than a thousand men, inspired by the urge of freedom, defeated a superior force.... This small band of patriots turned back a dangerous invasion well-designed to separate and dismember the united colonies. It was a small army and a little battle, but it was of mighty portent. History has done scant justice to its significance, which rightly should place it beside Lexington and Bunker Hill, Trenton and Yorktown, as one of the crucial engagements in our long struggle for independence." Hoover was the first President of the United States to visit a Revolutionary War battlefield in the South. His words were broadcast by radio coast-to-coast in the United States—and to Great Britain. Within a year of his visit, Congress established Kings Mountain National Military Park.

And, let us not forget Theodore Roosevelt's assessment of the Battle in his history, The Winning of the West, "This brilliant victory marked the turning point of the American Revolution."

In 1975, Vice President Rockefeller sounded the Bicentennial theme when he noted that the defeat of the British troops by a ragged band of patriots was a "perfect example of what the American character is all about." He noted that the patriots went into the battle without orders from the Continental Congress, without pay, and even without uniforms, but "they had courage and they loved freedom more than life itself. Their Colonel Shelby commanded them to 'shoot like hell: fight like devils!' and that's just what they did!"

On September 8, 1980, the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail was officially designated as a national historic trail during September 1980 by federal legislation authorized by the U.S. Congress, and later in 1980, President — recognizing the historical significance of the frontier patriots marching over the to defeat the army at the Battle of King's Mountain—signed federal law designating the historical overmountain route as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, the first established within the eastern United States exactly 200 years after the event it commemorates.

Senator James T. Broyhill, in the foreword to Randell Jones' book, "Before They Were Heroes at Kings Mountain" writes succinctly: "If there had been no victory at Kings Mountain, there would have been no battle at The Cowpens. And if there had been no victory at Cowpens, there would have been no battle at Guilford Courthouse. And if there had been no Battle of Guilford Courthouse, there would have been no Yorktown and no surrendering of the British troops under General Lord Cornwallis. The victory at Kings Mountain initiated a chain of events that ended with America's freedom. This victory was secured by the brave backwoodsmen and Overmountain Patriots who enjoyed a reputation that had grown in notoriety, legend, and respect."



Sample of marker the DAR plan to replicate with their monument to the African American Patriots at Kings Mountain. It will read: (DAR Insignia) IN HONOR OF THE FIVE KNOWN AFRICAN AMERICAN PATRIOTS, AND OTHERS, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN: ESAIAS BOWMAN, JOHN BRODDY, ANDREW FERGUSON, PRIMES, ISMAEL TITUS. MARKER PLACED BY THE COL. FREDERICK HAMBRIGHT CHAPTER, NSDAR, OCTOBER 7, 2013

The Colonel Frederick Hambright Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, has begun a fundraising campaign to honor five African American Patriots, among others, who fought at the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. In his book, Kings Mountain and Its Heroes, Lyman C. Draper notes no less than twelve African Americans fought in the battle. Using pension records from the period, only five men can be identified: Esaius (Esaias) Bowman, John Broddy (Broady), Andrew Ferguson, Primes (Primus), and Ishmael Titus. Three were free men, one earned his freedom fighting on behalf of his owner, and one was a servant to William Campbell. (That man was later freed for his service.) The proposed new monument will honor these men along with others who

served but for whom no records exist.

"We've been exploring the possibility of erecting a monument to the African American Patriots at Kings Mountain for several years now," said Loretta Cozart, Regent of the Col. Frederick Hambright Chapter. "We know that African Americans participated in this significant battle, but no monument exists at the Kings Mountain National Military Park to honor them. Working with the National Park Service and NSDAR, we hope to erect a monument and honor these men." The monument cost is estimated at \$2,200.00 and the Colonel Frederick Hambright Chapter has begun the fundraising campaign.

"All funds raised will be meticulously tracked and used exclusively for erecting this monument," said Cozart. "We have a goal to

raise the funds needed by the end of January 2013. NSDAR does have a matching grant program, but we need funds in-hand to apply; that deadline is February 1, 2013. We prefer we raise the funds locally, because our community prefers to handle things ourselves. We take pride in what we can accomplish on our own and this is a wonderful opportunity to honor these men." Cozart added, "If everything goes according to plan, we will dedicate the new monument on October 7, 2013."

If you would like to donate to the monument honoring African American Patriots at Kings Mountain, please write your check to D.A.R. and indicate it is for the "monument fund". Please mail it to:

D.A.R., c/o Loretta Cozart, 421 Minuet Lane, Suite 204, Charlotte, NC 28217

LIFESTYLE DEADLINES

Deadline for wedding and engagement information is 12 noon Monday. Items received after deadline will run if time and space permit; if not, they will be held until the following week.

The cost is \$20. Wedding and engagement forms are available at the receptionist's desk at The Herald, 700 East Gold Street. Only the information requested on the form will be published at the \$20 price. Additional information will be charged at regular advertising rates.

Contact the Herald at P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086, come to the office, phone 739-7496, fax 739-0611 or Email lib.kmherald@gmail.com



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