



The Sons of the American Revolution Catawba Coalition



A monthly Newsletter for
The Catawba Valley Chapter of
The Sons of the American Revolution

President's Report



Catawba Valley Chapter finished off 2021 in style with several members joining in the Wreaths Across America Commemoration at Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery in Black Mountain NC on 18 December 2021. Pictured above are left to right; 1st photo, Ben Setser, Jack Bowman and Kevin Allec of the Col Alexander Erwin Chapter; 2nd photo, Chris Stone; 3rd photo, Lisa Pupkiewicz; 4th photo, Jack Bowman, Kevin Allec; 5th photo, Roy Lightfoot, Lisa Popkiewicz, Ben Setser, Jack Bowman.

It was a great morning, there was rain off and on, but it stopped long enough to place the wreaths. There was torrential rain during the commemoration ceremony where our Chapter President gave the Proclamation presented by our President General, Davis L. Wright.

Strangely enough, a reporter from ABC news affiliate WLOS, channel 13, Asheville ask to interview our Chapter President. Of course he complied and part of that interview was on the evening news.



I must admit, I do love this Chapter, SAR and the things that we do. We seem to stay busy and I know that not everyone can attend everything, but we do appreciate everyone who is able to get out to events. Here is one particular event coming soon, Compatriot William Alexander Graham III, pictured below, State SAR President, 1930-1931, Grave Marking and Remarking of damaged and stolen markers of Patriots Gen. Joseph Graham and Capt. Alexander Brevard on January 22, 2022, 10:00 am at Historic Machpelah Presbyterian Church Cemetery, 226 Brevard Place Rd, Iron Station, NC 28080. We need all of the Color Guard that can be there to turn out and earn points for this event.

There is an RSVP page on the state website for Color Guard to register so that we may try and get a count of the number of Color Guardsmen in attendance on that day at <https://ncssar.org/event/compatriot-grave-marking-nc-sar-president-william-alexander-graham-ii/>

I understand that there is some concern pertaining to the resurgence of the COVID virus and attendance at events and meetings. We are going to attempt to function as usual while we can. If you feel that you need to stay home, wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart, or avoid touching, please do as you may deem necessary to keep yourself safe. Our mutual safety is more than any event or meeting. Please use your own judgement.



William A. Graham III

You will find a list of upcoming events in this publication in the **More Chapter Happenings** column on page 3. Hope to see you there.

**PATRIOT
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Ben Setser
Chapter President



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10 January 2022

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“The Battle of Cowpens”

If you take a short drive down Interstate 85 into South Carolina, you will come upon the Cowpens National Battlefield. In looking at it, you may not be very impressed. The visitor's center is small. The land does not have very many monuments or markers on it like so many other national battlefields, however, the National Park Service is attempting to recreate the foliage as it existed over two hundred years ago. The most important fact is this hallowed place's significance for two reasons in American Revolutionary history. The first has already been discussed in a previous article as the gathering place for the Patriot forces before the Battle of Kings Mountain. The other reason is the battle which happened a few short months after Kings Mountain on 17 January 1781. At this place, and on that day, the Patriot American forces soundly defeated the British army. Under the command of General Daniel Morgan, the Patriot force numbering approximately 2000 men, met and routed the British force numbering approximately 1150, under the command of LtCol Banastre Tarleton.

Prior to the battle, General Nathanael Greene had split his forces in two, and sent Morgan and his force of 300 Continentals, and 700 militiamen towards the fort at Ninety-Six, which was manned by British Loyalists. In response, General Charles Cornwallis sent Tarleton to catch Morgan. Morgan prepared for Tarleton's attack by backing his men up to a river with a ravine on one side of his line at Cowpens in present-day Spartanburg County. Morgan's placement of his troops would not allow them to retreat as easily as they had in the past.

Morgan had a three-pronged strategy. The first was comprised of sharpshooters, which were set to harass the attacking troops, and then fall back to the second line. The second line was his militia, which the British did not respect because of their reputation of running away. The third were his Continentals with the light dragoons in reserve under the command of Colonel William Washington, and James McCall.

As the British attacked, Morgan employed a tactic which had not been used before. He instructed his militia to form a skirmish line, and only leave after firing two volleys. In the past, they were known for leaving after firing only one volley or at the first sign of defeat. Once they had fired, the militia began moving off the field to the left with the first line of sharpshooters, who had fallen back. This appeared to the British as a retreat. Tarleton, sensing a victory, moved into full attack mode, and ran headlong into the Continental line who had placed themselves on top of a small hill. On the American right flank, a group of militia mistook instructions given as an order to retreat and began moving off the field. Seeing this, Morgan rode up, and ordered them to stop and fire a volley. The group about-faced, and fired directly into the British line at the short distance of 30 yards, thus causing them to come to an abrupt halt. At this point, the Continentals in the center mounted a bayonet charge, and captured two of the British cannon. Simultaneously, the Patriot dragoons came from the left of the American line, and proceeded to attack the British right and rear. If all of this was not bad enough for the British, the Patriot “retreating” militia had now reformed, and came from behind the small hill to reinforce the center of the Continental line.

With this sudden charge, combined with the reemergence of the militia on their left, proved too much for the exhausted British and Loyalist infantrymen, and nearly half of them wounded or not fell to the ground in surrender. With his right flank and center collapsed, Tarleton rode back to his last reserve unit, and ordered them to attack. They refused, and fled the field. In an attempt for something good to come of this battle, Tarleton ordered forty cavalymen to attack, and retrieve his cannon. They, too, were captured. As he retreated, he was able to evade the Patriots by forcing a local planter to assist him and serve as his guide. The battle lasted a little over one hour.

The Americans took 712 British prisoners, including 200 wounded, with 110 soldiers killed. Every single artilleryman was either killed, wounded, or incapacitated in some way. All totaled, the British suffered an 86 percent casualty rate. It was reported by an American prisoner that upon Tarleton's return to Cornwallis, he took his sword from him, and leaned on it until the tip of it snapped. Morgan's official report listed 73 American casualties, however, further research indicates there were 68 Continentals and 80 militia casualties for a total of 128.

With this demoralizing defeat, Cornwallis' army in the South had been decimated with no replacements to be had. In addition, this spurred on the Patriot movement not only in the backcountry of the Carolinas but in all the Southern states. Along with the British defeat at Kings Mountain, the Battle of Cowpens dealt Cornwallis' army an unrecoverable blow. Had Tarleton won the battle, Cornwallis could have continued to defeat the remaining resistance in South Carolina, and moved into North Carolina. However, as this was not the case, it was another step in the eventual defeat of the British army, and the surrender at Yorktown.

The Catawba Valley Chapter
of the
Sons of the American Revolution

More Chapter Happenings

The **Battle of Cowpens** commemoration will take place on Sunday, **January 16, 2022** in Cowpens National Park, 4001 Chesnee Hwy, Gaffney, SC 29341, with the commemoration beginning at noon and if participating, one should be on site and ready by 11:00 am. This is a great function in which to participate and gain points toward Color Guard medals. The National Park wants to limit the number of people, and have stated that masks "May Be Needed" so bring one with you just in case. There is a registration form for those who want to serve in Color Guard, [National Society SAR Color Guard: Cowpens Commemoration - 16 January 2022 \(signupgenius.com\)](https://ncssar.org/event/national-society-sar-color-guard-cowpens-commemoration-16-january-2022) Please keep in mind, this may be one of the colder events that we attend, please dress accordingly. We would love for you to join us.

Catawba Valley Chapter, on **January 20, 2022**, 1:00 pm, will confer the **Heroism Medal and Certificate** to NC Highway Patrolman Kendall Huss, at the NC Highway Patrol Station, 3265 US-70, Conover, NC 28613. Huss saved a 5-year-old boy and his mother from a wreck that burst into flames on US HWY 321, Hickory, 23 November 2021. Let us turn out in force for to honor this hero. Current clothing rather than uniforms will be the order of the day.

Compatriot **Grave Marking** for William A. Graham III, **January 22, 2022**, 10:00 am, Historic Machpelah Presbyterian Church Cemetery, 226 Brevard Place Rd, Iron Station, NC 28080. There will be replacement of stolen and damaged markers for Gen. Joseph Graham and Capt. Alexander Brevard. An RSVP for Color Guard is at <https://ncssar.org/event/compatriot-grave-marking-nc-sar-president-william-alexander-graham-ii/> Please come join us.

The **Battle of Cowan's Ford** Commemoration and our NC SAR **Winter BOM** will take place Saturday, **January 29, 2022** at Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 10500 Beatties Ford Rd Huntersville, NC, NC 28078, register on the State website, Commemoration beginning at 10:00 am, lunch at the church afterward and the winter NC SAR Board Of Managers meeting just after lunch. If you have never attended a BOM, this will be a treat for you. Please come be with us. Battle of Cowen's Ford Registration is at <https://ncssar.org/event/241st-commemoration-of-the-battle-of-cowans-ford/> Winter BOM registration is at <https://ncssar.org/event/nc-sar-winter-bom-meeting/>

February is a little crowded and some events are a lot further away. **Heroes of the Hornet's Nest** on **February 11th** at 2959 McCormick Highway, Lincolnton, GA 30817, about 140 miles away, and **Battle of Kettle Creek** on **February 12th** at 299 War Hill Rd, Washington, GA 30673, about 210 miles away. Both events begin at 9:00 am. I hope some may be able to go to these. **George Washington's Birthday** will be celebrated as a holiday on Monday, **February 21st, 2022**, but his birthday is in fact **February 22nd**, events will happen both days. The **Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge** on **February 26th**, 200 Moore's Creek Dr, Currie, NC, starting at 10:00 am. If participating in Color Guard be on site by 9:00 am. Register online at ncssar.org/event/battle-moores-creek-2/

The **Battle of Guilford Court House** Commemoration, **March 12th, 2022**, 2332 New Garden Rd, Greensboro, NC 27410, is the only confirmed event in March and origination registration for this not complete at this time.

We are planning several Patriot Grave Markings in the near future, and knowledge of future events along with everyone's schedule will dictate the dates. January 22, 2022 at 10:00 am has been set for Machpelah Presbyterian Church. March 5th, 19th and 26th appear to be good dates to choose from for these other grave markings, Old St Paul's Lutheran Church, 2035 Old Conover-Startown Rd, Newton, NC; and Littlejohn United Methodist Church, 4120 Littlejohn Church Rd, Lenoir, NC. The stones are ready for Machpelah and will be installed prior to January 22, the stone and bronze for Littlejohn is almost finished and the very large stone for Old St Paul's has been ordered and should be ready around the end of March or first of April. Please, if there is a conflict with these three dates, let me know.



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“The Patriot’s Corner”

The next installment of “The Patriot’s Corner” comes from Catawba Valley Chapter President Ben Setser with his ancestor, Major George Wilfong (1740 – 1818).

George Wilfong was born on 18 May 1740 near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He and his brother, Jacob, moved to North Carolina in the late 1750s, at the urging of a trapper named Heinrich Weidner. The brothers lived with the Weidner family for several years in a newly developed settlement, which would later become Catawba County. Because of a Cherokee attack 26 April 1759, George and the settlers moved into South Carolina and stayed there for two years. Weidner, who was friendly with the local Catawba tribe, struck a deal with them for a red line to be painted on a particular tree once all was clear for the settlers return. Upon returning, Wilfong married Mary Ann Poffh Mull in the first wedding of the new settlement. Mary Ann’s husband had been killed in the 1759 attack.

Along with Weidner, Wilfong spoke German, English, and the native tongue of the local Native American tribe. He was involved with the creation of the local government, and establishment of the western frontier settlement. In 1766, he is listed as a Lieutenant in the Rowan County North Carolina Militia. With the onset of the American Revolution, he was appointed Second Major with the Second Rowan Militia Regiment by the Provincial Congress in 1776, and was referred to as the “Adjutant of the Regiment” in a post-war pension application presented by Sarah Beekham, wife of Colonel Christopher Beekham. On 9 May 1777, the regiment was renamed the Burke County Regiment, and on 1 June 1777, Burke County was formed from a part of Rowan County, and named for Continental Congress delegate, Thomas Burke. Wilfong, along with several others, were tasked with the job of selecting sights for the county seat, courthouse, and prison stocks. In 1784, the site was chosen in central Burke County, and the town of Morgansborough (present-day Morganton, North Carolina) was established.

Included in the engagements where Wilfong served during the Revolution were the Battles of Moncks Corner, 14 April 1780; Ramsour’s Mill, 20 June 1780; Kings Mountain, 7 October 1780, where he was noted for his bravery, and where his son John was wounded; and Cowpens, 17 January 1781. After Kings Mountain, two notorious Tory plunderers passed through Lincoln County, and robbed Wilfong’s home making off with whatever they could carry, and two horses. They used the clothesline there as halters for the horses. Wilfong, along with several others gave chase, however, were unable to catch them, although they did recover the horses. Wilfong left the halters with Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, with instructions for the two thieves be hung with this, once they had been caught. Not long afterwards, the two thieves were returning to Ninety-Six, and were captured by some of Cleveland’s scouts taken to Wilkesboro where they were hung using Wilfong’s clothesline.

After the conclusion of the war, Wilfong settled into life in the community. He served on several road commissions, and was instrumental in securing a strong infrastructure in the South Fork Community of Lincoln County, which eventually became present-day Catawba County in 1842. Wilfong continued to serve his state, and his county throughout his life.

George and Mary Wilfong had six children: John, Mary, Elizabeth, Katherine, Peter, and Sarah. Mary (his wife) passed away on 7 January 1816 and Wilfong died 3 November 1818. Both are buried at Old St Paul’s Lutheran Church in Newton, North Carolina.

Roy C Lightfoot
Contributing Editor

Upcoming SAR events

- | | |
|---|---|
| Jan 16 . . . Battle of Cowpens | Jan 20 . . . Heroism Award, HWY Patrol, Conover |
| Jan 22 . . . Machpelah Church | Jan 29 . . . Battle of Cowan’s Ford & Winter BOM |
| Feb 12 . . . Battle of Kettle Creek | Feb 22 . . . Washington’s Birthday |
| Feb 26 . . . Battle of Moore’s Creek | Mar 12 . . . Battle of Guilford Courthouse |

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The Catawba Coalition welcomes submissions, comments and/or suggestions. Please send them to

lennon_0102@yahoo.com

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Did You Know?

The Continental Army mimicked the strategy employed by the Romans during the Second Punic War. The Fabian strategy involved closely shadowing the opposing force but avoiding pitched battles in order to wear down the strength of the invaders over time.

The Roman dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus had his forces shadow those of Hannibal Barca; any time Hannibal switched the allegiance of an Italian town, Fabius arrived the next day to switch it back. The process didn’t involve daring battles, but nullified the threat of the Carthaginians.

After the defeat at the Battle of Long Island, George Washington realized a more cautious approach was needed. The Continental Army trailed British forces, waiting patiently for the opportunity to fight on more favorable terms while wearing down the redcoats.