



The Sons of the American Revolution Catawba Coalition



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



Presidents Report

Compatriots and Friends. I am so glad to be writing this newsletter. My lovely wife, second daughter, her husband, child and myself have been plagued with COVID for the past several weeks, and to be honest, I really didn't think I was going to make it. I did nothing this month other than cough, sleep, and gasp for breath, but several have joined in to take up the slack, and I greatly appreciate it.

My mentor, friend and our State Sr VP, Jack Bowman attended the Grave Marking for Compatriot Doyle E. Campbell in Black Mountain NC on 16 October along with Compatriots from across North Carolina and South Carolina. Photo on the left.

Last month, Catawba Valley Chapter had the pleasure to be involved in a parade for Constitution Day at South Newton Elementary School along with John Hoyle DAR and several others. The coordinator/teacher Mrs. Cynthia Thompson sent us a wonderful thank you card that I must share.



*Sons of the American Revolution,
Thank you for taking the time
to share history and respect for
our country with our students. They
stand taller every time we
Salute, Attention, Pledge. Your kindness
is appreciated. Sincerely,
Cynthia Thompson*

These children are our future and it is imperative that they learn American History. Thank you all. This is the last call for members to join in with Wreaths Across America. If you care to purchase wreaths, it must be done prior to November 30. One may purchase them at wreathscrossamerica.org/NC0385P they are \$15.00 each and tax deductible.

Please join us at our next meeting, 13 November 2021 at **Palermo's Family Italian & Greek Restaurant**, 924 Conover Blvd W, Conover NC. This will be our last meeting of the year and will be our Awards Meeting. Hope to see you there.

Ben Setser Chapter President



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10 November
2021

Volume 2
Issue 10

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**“The Battle of Kings Mountain”
Continued from September**

In September's newsletter, the prelude to the Battle of Kings Mountain was presented, even though there was a spoiler of British Major Patrick Ferguson's death. If you didn't know that one, the author apologizes and reports that, yes, Major Ferguson died, and is still dead. However, before we get to his demise, let's review and then, finish the story.

In September's installment, word had been sent to Lord Cornwallis at Charlotte from Major Ferguson at Kings Mountain requesting reinforcements. That letter reached Cornwallis the day after the battle, and would have done Ferguson no good. Also, on 1 October 1780 Ferguson had sent a letter to the Loyalist sympathizers in the settlements of western North Carolina (present-day Asheville). In this letter, he again showed his lack of tact, and stated many terrible things would happen to the settlements, if they did not join him in the fight against this rabble. In his letter, he stated they would be “pinioned, robbed, and murdered, and (would) see your wives and daughters, in four days, abused by the dregs of mankind.” In the same letter, Ferguson also accused the Patriots of cowardice, and questioned their manhood.

On 4 October, the Patriot force reached Ferguson's former camp at Gilbert Town, North Carolina (near present-day Rutherfordton), where they were joined by thirty militiamen from Georgia. The following day on the 5th, while encamped at Alexander's Ford along the Green River, word reached the Patriot force that Ferguson was headed to Fort Ninety-Six, and they set out to the southeast into South Carolina. By 6 October, the force had reached The Cowpens, where they received word that Ferguson was east of them, moving towards Charlotte, and Lord Cornwallis. Ferguson had encamped with twelve hundred men atop Kings Mountain, which is shaped like a foot, on Kings Pinnacle, the highest ridge, which would be the ball of the foot. Here, they assumed they were safe, and did not fortify this camp. Instead of pushing onto Charlotte as he should have, and which was only a day's march away, Ferguson stayed, and sent another letter to Cornwallis requesting reinforcements. Also, that day, the Patriot force grew in number, when they were joined by four hundred South Carolinians under Colonel James Williams, and a force of North Carolinians under Lt Colonel Frederick Hambricht. The Patriot force was informed of Ferguson's exact location, and nine hundred mounted men rode for Kings Mountain throughout the night in a driving rain, and by sunrise the morning of the 7th, they forded the Broad River. By mid-afternoon, the force had reached its destination, and surrounded the ridge.

After forming eight detachments of one to two hundred men each, the Patriot force spread out in a U-shape, and surrounded the base of the mountain. Ferguson was unaware of the Patriot movements or that he was about to be attacked. His force was composed mainly of Loyalist Carolina militia except for approximately one hundred red uniformed Provincials, who had enlisted in the army from New York.

At approximately 3 pm, after the forces were in place, the battle began. Shelby, Sevier, Williams, and Cleveland pushed from the north side of the mountain, while Campbell, Winston, and Joseph McDowell pushed from the south side. Although the mountain was difficult to scale, the slopes were heavily wooded with trees big enough to hide three or four men behind each of them, thus, providing ample cover for the riflemen to shoot from behind. Both Campbell and Shelby twice attempted to charge the Loyalist position at the “heel,” but they were driven back by the fire from above. However, after about an hour, the frontiersmen sharpshooters took a devastating toll on the Tory force, and Campbell and Shelby's forces managed to reach the summit.

The Loyalists were caught completely by surprise, and one of the Loyalist officers later wrote he did not know the Patriots were anywhere near them until the shooting started. Colonel William Campbell told his men to “shout like Hell and fight like devils” and Loyalist Captain Abraham De Peyster turned to Ferguson, and said, “These things are ominous – these are the damned yelling boys!” No one leader of the detachments held command once the battle had started, as each of them fought independently of the other. They simply followed the plan of surrounding the Loyalists' camp, and destroy them. Using the aforementioned trees, and large rocks, the Patriots crept up the hill. Ferguson rallied his troops and thrice launched bayonet charges. Lacking bayonets, the Patriots retreated, rallied, and resumed the fight, thus, became the pattern of the battle. During one of these charges up the hill, Colonel Williams was killed, and Colonel McDowell wounded. With all the cover the wooded area provided, and the downward slope, firing was difficult for the Loyalists, the latter caused them to overshoot their targets.

After an hour of fighting, and with casualties mounting, Ferguson rode back and forth across the lines using a silver whistle to signal the charges. Shelby, Sevier, and Campbell reached the Loyalist rear driving the force back to its camp, where some attempted to surrender. When Ferguson saw little white flags begin to pop up, he cut them down with his saber, and in an attempt to rally his troops, he shouted, “Hurrah, brave boys, the day is ours!” In an attempt at a counter attack, he gathered some officers together and tried to cut through the Patriot ring. Ferguson was shot by a volley and dragged by his horse behind the Patriot line, where he was confronted by a Patriot officer, who demanded his surrender. In a last act of defiance, Ferguson shot and killed the officer with his pistol, however, he was immediately shot dead by multiple patriots. When his body was recovered, at least seven bullet wounds were found in his corpse.

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Sons of the American Revolution

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As the Loyalists witnessed Ferguson fall, they attempted to surrender. Many of the Patriots, with the memory of the Battle of the Waxhaws still fresh in their minds, refused to take prisoners, and wanted to give them "Tarleton's Quarter", where many of the Patriot force were killed after attempting to surrender. Other Patriots seemed to be unaware the Loyalists were attempting to surrender. Captain de Peyster sent out an emissary under a white flag asking for quarter, which was met with the Patriots continuing to fire at them shouting, "Give them Buford's play!" and "Give 'em Tarleton's Quarter!" Many of the surrendering Loyalists were killed or wounded including the bearer of the white flag. When a second white flag was sent out, several of the Patriot officers including Campbell and Sevier, took control of the field ordering their men to cease firing.

The battle lasted sixty-five minutes, leaving casualties of two hundred ninety killed, one hundred sixty-eight wounded, and six hundred sixty-eight taken prisoner on the Loyalists' side. The Patriots suffered twenty-eight killed, and sixty wounded. Among the Patriot casualties were South Carolina militia leader Colonel James Williams who was killed, and Colonel Sevier's brother, Robert, who was mortally wounded. The dead were buried in shallow graves, and the wounded were left on the field to die. It was later reported Ferguson's corpse had been desecrated, and wrapped in an ox hide before burial. In addition, the burial detail assigned to take care of the dead took great care in burying their Patriot fallen, while did little more than kick dirt on the Loyalist counterparts. These corpses attracted scavengers, dogs, hogs, and wolves. The latter making the mountain a dangerous place for weeks after.

For fear that Cornwallis would advance to meet them, the Patriots had to move quickly out of the area. Loyalists who were well enough to walk were herded into camps near the mountain. On 20 October, the group paused in the Sunshine Community of northern Rutherford County, and thirty-six Loyalists were put on trial, convicted, and nine were hanged, among them Colonel Ambrose Mills. The land belonged to the Biggerstaff family, which was a family divided with their son Aaron, who had been mortally wounded in the battle as a Loyalist, while his Patriot brother Benjamin previously captured, was held on a prison ship docked in Charlestowne. In addition, the Biggerstaff family were cousins of Lt Colonel John Moore of the Battle of Ramsour's Mill. Colonel Shelby put an end to this after an impassioned plea from one of the Biggerstaff women. Many of the Patriot force dispersed over the next few days, while only one hundred thirty of the Loyalist prisoners remained with the rest escaping into the woodlands.

The Battle of Kings Mountain was one of many of the pivotal moments in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution. After so many disasters and defeats, including the fall of Charlestowne, the Battle of Camden, and the Massacre of the Waxhaws, this decisive defeat of the British forces was an extreme boost for the Patriot morale as well as the cause. Along with the Battle of Ramsour's Mill, this caused the Tory movement in the backcountry of the Carolinas to be broken. In addition to the total destruction of Ferguson, and his command, and with his western flank exposed, this defeat also caused Cornwallis to rethink his plan to continue his invasion of North Carolina as he evacuated Charlotte, and retreated to Winnsboro, South Carolina. He would not return to the North Carolina until early 1781 when he was giving chase to General Nathanael Greene after the British defeat at the Battle of The Cowpens, however, that is a story for another day (month).

Most of the Overmountain Men returned to their families in Washington County where in later months Sevier, Hardin, and Arthur Campbell led an expedition against the Cherokee to further secure the frontier. In addition, Shelby and Sevier played pivotal roles in the establishment of the states of Tennessee and Kentucky, respectively. Other influential Overmountain Men and veterans of the Battle of Kings Mountain included John Crockett (Davy's father), William Lenoir, Joseph Dickson, Daniel Smith, William Russell, and John Rhea, as well as Anthony Bledsoe, who was the commander of the Homeguard for the Holston Settlement while the main force was away.

These men all began this trek to root out the British troops and their Tory allies over a month prior to their return home. Not a single one of them knew what was going to happen, whether he would live or die, or how this would turn out. They simply went. There was no way to communicate what had happened until they returned to tell the story. There was no way to assure their loved ones all was well except for the use of a post rider. There was no telephone, telegraph, email, or even a message from the President. We can only imagine the torment these families went through until their people returned to their homes, or they were met with the anguish of learning their family member had been killed. The gravity of what these men accomplished can be unfathomable, as they traveled all the way from eastern present-day Tennessee to upstate South Carolina, through snow, over mountains, and on horseback and on foot, with some of them spending their last night in a driving rain, traveling thirty miles to go into battle, and win decisively.

Roy C Lightfoot



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“The Patriot’s Corner” article comes from Chapter President Ben Setser in the form of his ancestor Adam Setser (1758–1843).

Adam Setser was born in 1758 in present-day Catawba County, near the city of Newton. He was the third son of German immigrants Jacob Setser and Mary Poovey in a relatively new German speaking community near Clark’s Creek and the Catawba River. This community, which was started around 1745 by a German immigrant Heinrich Weidner, who was a fur trapper and pioneer. Weidner, who trapped beavers in the western part of North Carolina, would take them to Philadelphia each year to trade, and while there encourage other German immigrants new to the nation to migrate south. Jacob Setser was one of those immigrants Weidner convinced to move after his arrival in Philadelphia in 1750.

Adam married Elizabeth Arney in early 1781. At the age of 23, on 1 June, Adam was conscripted into Captain William Frisel’s Company in Lincoln County and marched some forty miles to Morganton, where the unit joined Colonel Joseph McDowell. From there, they marched westward to the head of the Catawba River at Fort Davidson (also known as “Rutherford’s Fort” in some pension applications), where Old Fort is located today. At this time, the fort was at the edge of the demarcation line of a 1760s treaty which granted the land west to the Native Americans. In addition, the fort, which was built in 1776 by General Griffith Rutherford’s militia, served as a staging area and jumping off point for the Rutherford Expedition, and a defensive settlement fortification for the settlers from the Cherokee. Adam Setser was a scout at this fort for two months before being discharged on 10 August 1781, when he returned home.

Soon after returning home, Adam was again drafted and served as a Corporal for three months during the Wilmington Expedition. This was the last significant campaign of the American Revolution in North Carolina, and was directed at removing the British permanently. During this time, Adam was under the command of Captain John Huzzlebarger, and joined the troops of General Rutherford in upstate South Carolina. Setser was out every other night on picket, relieving men who were standing sentry, and substituting for others in their stead.

As news of the surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, on 19 October 1781 reached the south, the British high command ordered the abandonment of Wilmington. Upon hearing the news, Rutherford, moved his force towards Wilmington, entering on 18 November, just in time to see the British transport ships sail down the Cape Fear River, and out to the Atlantic Ocean on their way back to England. After securing the city, Adam was discharged from service by Colonel Charles McDowell on 15 December 1781.

After returning home around 1785, Adam and Elizabeth moved approximately 25 miles to present-day Caldwell County. There they raised nine children. In 1840, Adam applied for his pension for his service during the Revolution. He described what he viewed as his time served, which totaled five months. Pensions were only granted to those who served six months or more. His application was initially denied, however, after his death in 1843, his son William continued to seek Adam’s pension for his mother, noting his service in the Morgan District Militia of North Carolina had not been included. Although it came after Cornwallis’ surrender, it was before the treaty was officially negotiated, and signed 3 September 1783, and was considered to be Revolution-era service. The initial denial of pension was overturned. Adam’s wife Elizabeth died 3 May 1849 and both were buried at Littlejohn Methodist Church outside of Lenoir.

Roy C Lightfoot

The above Patriot, Adam Setser, is my 4th Great Grandfather; Ben Setser, President.

Upcoming SAR events

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Nov 11. Veterans Day | Nov 13. 100th Ann. Tomb of Unknown |
| Dec 4. TOC Mini-Rendezvous | Dec 18. Wreaths Across America |
| Jan 17 Battle of Cowpens | Jan 29 Battle of Cowan’s Ford & Winter BOM |

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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?

Patrick Henry said:

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace - but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!