

draft national scenic/historic  
trail study

december 1979

OVERMOUNTAIN  
VICTORY TRAIL



VIRGINIA - TENNESSEE - NORTH CAROLINA - SOUTH CAROLINA - GEORGIA

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SERVICE, THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, AND  
OTHER FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES.

THE OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL  
A Potential National Trail

January 1980

This Review Draft Prepared By  
The National Park Service  
Southeast Region

## Foreword

The story of the Overmountain Victory Trail Study begins in Europe during the period of colonial expansion when vast new colonies were being established by most of the major powers--England, France, Spain and to a lesser degree, other countries. To the people of the Old World, the prospect of escaping the rigid social and religious cast systems was a golden opportunity. They came to the New World by the hundreds, all hoping and dreaming of a fresh start for themselves and their children.

By the mid 1700's, the British frontier had been pushed back from the North American coast to the Appalachians. The coastal areas had been settled largely by Englishmen while further west, stretching across the Piedmont and Appalachians were Germans, Swiss, English, Welsh, French and Scotch-Irish. The east and west differed in many ways. The largely aristocratic class had established itself along the east coast with a plantation type economy in many ways not unlike the Europe they had left. The western mountainous regions, however, were settled by small isolated settlements of small farmers. The land they settled was referred to as "the Overmountain" region. These frontier folk were largely independent and self sufficient with a natural fear of the "eastern aristocracy." Thus, because of geography and cultural background the diverse stage was set upon which a small but important part of the struggle for colonial independence would be fought in the southeast in the 1770's.

Once open hostilities began, England felt that a majority of the colonists would side with the Crown. To be sure, many did, especially many of the aristocratic class. However, this was not a struggle of just class, it was a struggle of ideals and way of life. For many the War for Independence became a civil war, for friends and families were often split in their views. For most, the outcome would decide their life and expectations for the future.

By the 1780's the Royalist Cause (those supporting the Crown) was going well with much of the settled areas of the east coast in their control. However, in the fall of 1780 a small Royalist force under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson was sent into the southwest region to gain additional Royalist support. Major Ferguson was a young, brilliant military man but like many British, he did not understand these independent frontiersmen and largely discounted their ability to fight. Major Ferguson made the mistake of demanding their allegiance or else he would "come over the mountains and lay waste to their settlements."

With this threat, the War for Independence became a personal challenge, something the "Overmountain Men," as they were called, could not ignore.

In October 1780, the Overmountain Men gathered in small groups, and these groups merged with larger groups and finally this frontier army marched to the defense of their ideals. At Kings Mountain in South Carolina the

frontiersmen and Major Patrick Ferguson's army locked in mortal combat. When it was over, these rough independent overmountain men had soundly defeated the Royalist force and had given new hope to the American Cause.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The feasibility study of a national trail, in the vicinity of the historic "Overmountain Victory Trail" route, is the result of a joint effort by many individuals, and both public and private groups. Participating Federal agencies included the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the National Park Service. Representatives from the State of Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia were also included as well as assistance from area planning and development commissions within the States. In addition, valuable assistance was rendered by county and city agencies throughout the study area. An finally, the National Park Service would like to thank the many private individuals who have assisted in this study. To all of these agencies and individuals, the National Park Service is indebted.

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## CREDITS

- Study Team                      The National Park Service Study Team consisted of Luther S. Winsor, Mackay Asbury, Gerald Lowrey and William C. Bellinger from the Regional Office; Jim Anderson from Kings Mountain; and Steve Chapin from Blue Ridge.
- Graphics/Artwork              Finalized by Elizabeth Rayfield in conjunction with the study team.
- Manuscript                      The manuscript was typed by Debra Johnson, Carol Cortino, Linda McBride and Carolyn McFadden.
- Photographs                    All photographs courtesy of the National Park Service Study Team.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This study, called for by the Congress, examines the feasibility and desirability of establishing a national scenic or historic trail along the route taken by the victorious 18th century frontiersmen which culminated in a significant victory over the British in 1780.

### Authority

In 1968, recognizing the growing demand for increased outdoor recreation opportunities, the Congress passed Public Law 90-543, the National Trails System Act. The purpose of the Act was threefold: (1) to institute a national system of scenic, recreation and connecting side trails to provide recreation opportunities and preserve the scenic, natural, cultural and historic areas; (2) to designate the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail as the initial components of the system, and (3) to provide guidelines by which additional trails could be added to the system. Nationwide recreation use surveys conducted in 1960, 1972 and 1977 showed most Americans preferred simple recreation activities such as walking, picnicking, sightseeing, bicycling and swimming. Trails offer a low-cost energy conserving means of satisfying some of those recreation needs.

In a 1978 amendment to Public Law 90-543, Congress gave the Department of the Interior the responsibility for studying the Overmountain Victory Trail--one of 23 potential trails in the country having possible national significance. At the

present time there are seven national trails in the system. In November 1978, the historic trail category was added (Public Law 95-625). The criteria for national scenic and/or historic trails is as follows:

1. Be nationally significant and be capable of attracting visitors from throughout the country.
2. Possess significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities relatively undisturbed by highways, power transmission lines, industrial developments, etc.
3. Allow for adequate public access by way of connecting or side trails.
4. Be primarily land based for hiking and other compatible uses. The National Trails System Act prohibits use of motorized equipment on these trails, except in certain circumstances.
5. Be several hundred miles or more in length.
6. Be continuous, except where no practical or feasible interconnection exists.

To qualify as a national historic trail, a trail must:

1. Be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its locations must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally follow the historic route, but may

deviate somewhat, on occasion of necessity, to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variation offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked on site as segments which link to the historic trail.

2. Be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on the broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included.
3. It must have significant potential for public recreational use of historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails, and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.

### Purpose

In accordance with the Act, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Secretary of Agriculture, are directed to make such additional studies as are called for in the Act or as may be thereafter called for by the Congress. Section 5(b) describes the required work items to be addressed in each study. Section 5(c), as amended, lists the Overmountain Victory Trail study as one of 23 specific studies to be undertaken. This study is, therefore, submitted to satisfy the provisions under the aforementioned Act.

### Scope

This study delineates a "study area" encompassing as nearly as possible the routes travelled by the American frontiersmen through the States of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina (See Map One). The study identifies and analyzes the cultural and natural features within this corridor to determine the feasibility and desirability of designating and establishing a national scenic or historic trail within the study area. The study examines opportunities for trail development; existing landownerships; present and potential land use trends; trends in trail use and the needs for trails; land acquisition costs; trail development and maintenance costs; and options for management and administration.

### Conduct of Study

The National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, was given the overall responsibility for the study. A "study coordinator" was assigned to coordinate



0 25 50 75 100 MILES

## Location Map I OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL

the input from cooperating Federal and State agencies and various interest groups and to assemble data into the field draft report. Assisting the Southeast Regional Office were personnel from Blue Ridge Parkway and Kings Mountain National Military Park. The Federal/State "Advisory Group" comprised one representative each for Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina plus the Forest Service, Tennessee Valley Authority and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Special interest groups, particularly the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, also were encouraged to provide input. Additional public input was obtained through three public meetings, during the September 24-October 7, 1979, annual reenactment march and from numerous individual contacts.

Because of the desirability of completing the study in time for Congressional consideration prior to the Bicentennial celebration of the battle of Kings Mountain, the draft report was completed in approximately 6 months (July-December 1979), necessitating an abbreviated document. Significant additions and revisions will be accomplished during the review process (January 1-June 1, 1980).

This study has completed a formal review period and is hereby now ready for transmittal by the Secretary of the Interior to the President and the Congress for possible legislative action.<sup>1/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> This statement will apply only when the draft study is thoroughly reviewed by all concerned participants.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During a thorough but relatively compressed study process, the Overmountain Victory Trail was found to meet the criteria for designation as a National Historic Trail. This proposed addition to the National Trails System commemorates the routes of the Overmountain Men from their primary muster points to the Revolutionary War battle at Kings Mountain, South Carolina. The patriot victory at Kings Mountain in 1780 was the first link in a chain of events which led to the British surrender at Yorktown a little over one year later in October 1781.

In order to submit a completed report on the proposed Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail to Congress for action prior to the 200th anniversary of the battle, the National Park Service study team accelerated the study process. During the study a vigorous effort was made to achieve maximum public involvement. Numerous informational exchanges occurred between members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and study team members. Several field resource investigations, public meetings and contacts with local leaders, historians, and concerned citizens highlighted the study team's efforts to obtain a broad and comprehensive sampling of public opinion on this proposed trail.

From the collection and analysis of data gathered on the proposed Overmountain Victory National Scenic/Historic Trail, some important findings emerged. They are summarized as follows:

1. The Overmountain Victory Trail does qualify for designation as a National Historic Trail.
2. The Overmountain Victory Trail does not qualify for designation as a National Scenic Trail.
3. The Overmountain Victory Trail is a trail of national historic significance, since it marks the route taken by a unique group of mountain patriots who played an invaluable role in the success of the American War for Independence.
4. The general route of the Overmountain Victory Trail has been located. However, some trail segments need additional research in order to determine exact trail locations.
5. Established on-the-ground trails following the historic route of the Overmountain Victory Trail are practically non-existent.
6. The vast majority of the historic route is located on private land or covered by transportation routes.
7. There are an abundance of historic sites and other points of historic interest related to the Overmountain Victory Trail in the study area, although many of them lack sufficient recognition and interpretation.

During the course of the resource investigation, four (4) specific alternative courses of action were developed by the study team. These four alternatives are summarized as follows:

1. Continuation of existing programs--Status quo to be maintained. Existing authorities and programs to continue without additional federal legislation.
2. Designation of the historic route as the "Overmountain Victory National Historic Route"--federal legislation proposed designating the historic route but not as a national scenic or historic trail.
3. Designation of the historic route as the "Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail" with limited State and Federal involvement.
4. Designation as a national historic trail with significant State and Federal involvement and more extensive acquisition and development.

After carefully considering all of the options, the study team's "preferred alternative" recommends designation of the historic march route as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (Alternative 3). This alternative recommends a cooperative but limited State and Federal involvement in the project as being the most acceptable and effective way to establish the trail. In particular, the active participation of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, a group of private citizens which primarily includes the individuals involved in the annual reenactment of the march, and other interested organizations and individuals was considered to be vital in the success of the project. The degree to which they participate in acquisition, trail construction, maintenance, and management will largely determine what can be accomplished. A cooperative Federal, State, and private effort would insure the constructive involvement of a broad spectrum of interest groups and individuals including perhaps the most important group, the landowners along the historic route.

Specifically, the preferred alternative for action calls for designation of the entire march route as a National Historic Trail with the initial components comprising those established trail segments within Kings Mountain National Military Park, Cowpens National Battlefield, Sycamore Shoals and Roan Mountain State Parks in Tennessee, and the National Forest Service Trail over Linville Mountain in the Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina. Later, if the Doe River Gorge Trail is successfully initiated by the State of Tennessee, it would also be included.

In order to link these initial trail segments and better publicize their existence, a highway marking program would be authorized with the Federal Government providing the signs and the States placing and maintaining them.

Bicycle trails along highways which have displaced the historic trail or along paralleling roads should be strongly considered by the States involved. The addition of bicycle trails along these roadways during regularly scheduled resurfacing or other road construction projects should be a long-range goal for much of the trail corridor.

The National Park Service would have overall administrative responsibility for the trail with the U.S. Forest Service and the States managing trail segments within their jurisdictions. An advisory council including Federal, State, local and private representatives would be established to assist the National Park Service in the administration and development of the route. The advisory council would also be involved in an active program

to identify, authenticate, publicize and preserve the important historic sites relating to the march. All agencies, organizations and interested individuals would be encouraged to assist in locating trail opportunities following the historic route. The advisory council would provide a platform enabling the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and its supporters to function with Federal and State backing. The Superintendent of Kings Mountain National Military Park would serve as the responsible administrator for the trail. The Kings Mountain staff would be able to absorb much of the added work load of trail administration with the assistance of advisory council members; thus reducing the need for new staffing requirements.

The National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and States would provide technical and administrative assistance to private organizations such as the Overmountain Victory Trail Association. The Overmountain Victory Trail Association would initiate most of the negotiations with landowners for the acquisition of additional trail segments. Condemnation of property would not be used and any appearance of government pressure on landowners to give up land rights would be avoided. The Secretary of the Interior would be authorized by legislation to add segments to the designated trail as these segments are brought up to national trail standards.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

#### Overview of the Physical and Cultural Characteristics

The Overmountain Victory Trail study area includes portions of three physiographic regions in the southeastern United States. These three regions beginning eastward are: the Piedmont, the Blue Ridge and the Appalachian Ridge and Valley, and together they offer a wide array of topography, natural areas, flora, and fauna. The land forms range from the rolling hills of the Piedmont farm lands to the steep, rocky mountain slopes overlooking the narrow, fertile valleys of the Blue Ridge and Ridge and Valley regions. Originally, most of the study area was forested with a mixture of hardwoods and pines, with hardwoods predominating. The animal and plant life were abundant prior to the arrival of the earliest settlers. The native Americans, who lived in the southeast before the Europeans settled in the region, were at first "hunters and gatherers." Later, small clearings in the forests near their villages were used for rudimentary agriculture. Many ancient sites such as ceremonial mounds and burial grounds remind us, even today, of the culture of these earliest inhabitants of the Overmountain Victory Trail study area.

When the Overmountain Men made their historic march 200 years ago, the region through which they passed was sparsely settled by small farmers, plantation owners, and villagers. The first settlers in the region had established small communities on the Holston, Watauga, and Nolichucky Rivers.

The fertile valleys of these mountain streams drew a growing number of new people over the mountains to settle where land was plentiful and rich. By the mid-eighteenth century, the growing numbers of immigrants to America were having difficulty finding the land they so eagerly sought. Most of the best land east of the mountains had been settled. When Daniel Boone opened the Wilderness Road across the mountains, he was soon followed by many others. Life in the frontier communities proved to be full of rugged trials and difficulties. The people were often under threat of imminent Indian attack and had to be constantly on their guard. Being mostly concerned with securing subsistence from a frontier environment, the early settlers had little time for recreation in the sense that we think of it today. When they did take time off for leisure activities, their recreation often centered around such frontier contests as horse racing, shooting matches, and foot races, in addition to camp meetings and religious holiday celebrations.

Remarkable changes have taken place in this part of the southeastern United States in the past two centuries. The states in the study corridor have experienced growth in population, industrialization, and agricultural development. Aside from several small State and local parks, the national forests represent the best areas under public ownership for both expanding recreational opportunities and honoring the earlier travels through the region by the Overmountain Men. The more significant parks and forests include portions of the Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests, Blue Ridge

Parkway, Sycamore Shoals State Park, Roan Mountain State Park, Cowpens National Battlefield and Kings Mountain National Military Park. Refer to Map Two for specific locations.

### Piedmont Region

Approximately 55 percent of the Overmountain Victory Trail study area is in the Piedmont Region. The meeting of the Blue Ridge and the Piedmont occurs at roughly 1,500 feet of elevation where the rugged mountainous terrain abruptly gives way to the Piedmont hills which descend to the south and east. The Piedmont land surface is characterized by rolling hills and a few small mountains. The Piedmont soils are sandy loam and clay loam of moderate fertility.

The climate of the Piedmont segment of the study area is temperate, characterized by warm summers, generally mild winters, and abundant rainfall. The growing season is long, lasting approximately 225 days per year. Average July temperatures range from 80 degrees to 82 degrees Fahrenheit and average January temperatures range from 40 degrees to 42 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual rainfall in the Piedmont Region is 50 inches.

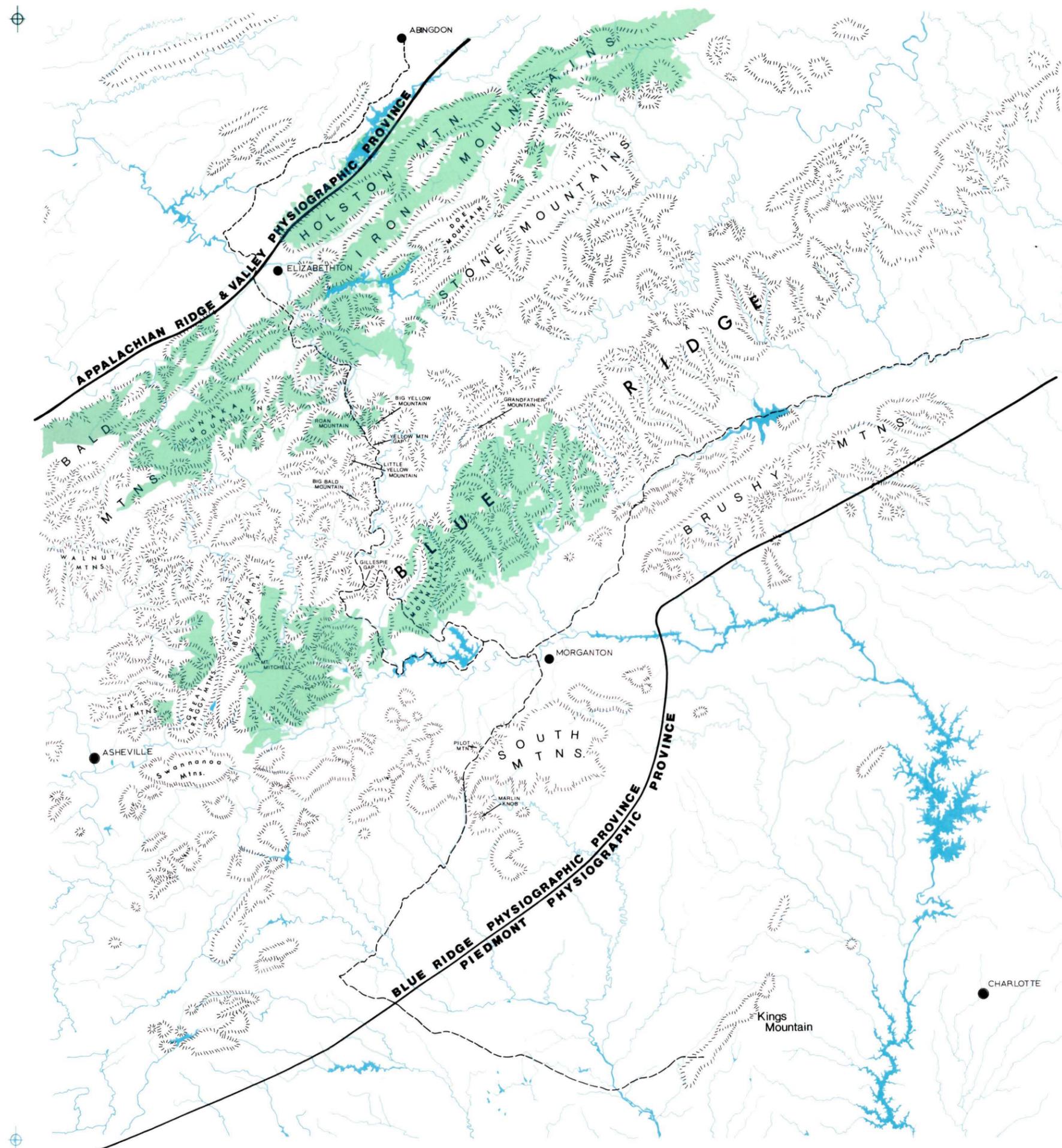
Very little of the scenery which the Overmountain Men encountered in their march through the Piedmont remains unchanged today. The composition of the region's natural vegetation and wildlife have been disrupted by man-made changes in the environment. The practice of clear-cutting timber and, the widespread practice of planting monoculture replacement forests of pine are in evidence throughout the study area.

# OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL



1780 — 1980

MAP 2  
PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY



- |                          |  |                            |  |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| NATIONAL FOREST LAND     |  | URBAN AREAS                |  |
| PHYSIOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES |  | TRAIL                      |  |
| TOPOGRAPHY               |  | LAKES, RIVERS, AND STREAMS |  |

In the years following World War II, there has been a dramatic shift of the population from rural to urban areas in the Piedmont. There has been a corresponding proliferation of transportation corridors: Federal interstate highways, State and local road systems. With small landowners currently predominating, land use patterns in the study area include residential tracts of varying sizes, small farms, large manufacturing sites, pulp and paper company holdings, all connected by a diverse network of roads, railroads, and utility corridors. The Piedmont economy is heavily dependent upon manufacturing and especially on the textile and apparel industries which account for approximately 40 to 50 percent of the employment opportunities. Because of the rapid growth in population and development which is characteristic of the Piedmont Region, very few on-the-ground trail opportunities exist in this segment of the study area.

#### Blue Ridge Mountain Region

Comprising approximately 31 percent of the Overmountain Victory Trail study area, the Blue Ridge Mountain Region in Tennessee and North Carolina exhibits numerous peaks ranging from 2,000 to over 6,000 feet above sea level. A forest of hardwoods and pine cover the slopes of these mountains. The rivers and streams of the region provide much of the hydroelectric power for the Southeast. Soils in the Blue Ridge Mountains consist mainly of weathered, eroded rocky materials. The best of these soils have washed down into the valleys where farming takes place. The growing season is roughly 150 days per year. The rainfall, which averages over 50 inches per year, stimulates the growth of extensive plant life. The average annual

temperature in the Blue Ridge ranges from 75 degrees Fahrenheit in July to 39 degrees Fahrenheit in January. In the winter, snow often covers the mountains providing very picturesque scenery. In fact, the Blue Ridge Mountains offer scenic vistas year-round; mountain valleys, clear, spring-fed streams, cascading waterfalls, and flower-filled meadows. It was in the Tennessee segment of the corridor where the Overmountain Men encountered snow "shoe-mouth" deep.

There have, of course, been many changes in the Blue Ridge portion of the study area in the past 200 years although much of the area remains in a condition approximating that which the Overmountain Men encountered. The notable changes in the region include the cutting of most of the virgin timber, moderate clear-cutting and replacement of hardwood with monoculture pine forests, and more transportation and utility corridors. The natural vegetation and wildlife remain abundant. In many ways the plant and animal life of the region remains today remarkably similar to that encountered by the Overmountain Men 200 years ago. The region remains rural with only a few small towns and cities scattered throughout the study area. Landownership is a mixture of small private landholdings, federal lands in the Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests, timber, mining and other corporate holdings. When compared to the Piedmont section of the study area for example, the Blue Ridge segment presents a rustic, natural impression. It is in this Blue Ridge region that the best chance exists to establish a long distance hiking trail to give the hiker a flavor of the sort of environment and the sort of experience the Overmountain Men encountered in their 1780 march.

The economy of the Blue Ridge region is dominated by the forest products industry. There is also some farming in the mountain valleys as well as extensive mining (particularly in the Spruce Pine area) and light industry in the few scattered population centers. There are no large population centers in this portion of the study area. Tourism and recreation also account for an important part of the economy in the Blue Ridge region. Hiking, camping, fishing, backpacking and other outdoor activities bring thousands of individuals to the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains each year. Bicycling and horseback riding trails have been identified as high priority recreational needs in this region. In the Blue Ridge region numerous opportunities exist to give the trail user an idea of the topography, flora, and fauna which the Overmountain Men encountered in their historic march through the region on the way to the Battle of Kings Mountain.

#### Appalachian Ridge and Valley

Only about 14 percent of the study area is in the Appalachian Ridge and Valley. This physiographic area is west of Blue Ridge and stretches for about 55 miles, most of which is beyond the study area. This region is characterized by parallel wooded ridges and valleys generally following the Appalachian Mountains in a northeasterly direction. The easternmost part of this area is called the Great Valley. Soils are a complex pattern of relatively good in the valley to rather poor rocky soils on the ridges. Most farming occurs in the valley due to the better soils and drainage patterns.

The climate of the Ridge and Valley is generally mild, ranging from an average January temperature of 39 degrees to an average July temperature of about 75 degrees. The average annual rainfall in the Ridge and Valley region is about 41 inches with snow occurring periodically throughout the winter months.

Land use in the Ridge and Valley area consists of small farms and associated small towns where commercial activities and some light industry is found. The largest single landowner is the U.S. Forest Service. Portions of both the Jefferson and Cherokee National Forests are located within this portion of the study corridor. Although the region appears little changed since the Overmountain Men traveled it, subtle changes to the landscape have occurred. Where once great forests of oak, hickory and other hardwoods stood, there are now pine and other relatively quick growing softwoods. The valleys are crisscrossed with local, State and Federal highways, some following old long forgotten pioneer paths and Indian trails. Some of the free flowing rivers and streams are now dammed for hydroelectric and recreational benefits. Wildlife remains abundant throughout this region and although some species have declined in number or range, others have actually increased. However, even with the obvious changes in land use, there still remain small areas retaining their original or near original character which could be utilized in planning a trail or trail system.

The economy of the region is geared to the forest products industry, light commercial and farming. The Tri-Cities area, consisting of Bristol,

Kingsport and Johnson City, is the largest urban center in the region. In the years since World War II there has been a shift of population from rural to more urban areas in search of better paying jobs.

### Complementary and Competitive Resources

The physical and cultural resources of the Overmountain Victory Trail study area show a wide range of diversity. Opportunities for trail development vary with this diversity. Some resources complement trail opportunities while others compete with them. A brief summary of some of the complementary and competitive resources in the study area may prove useful in determining basic trail opportunities for the Overmountain Victory Trail.

### Physical Resources

Geologic and hydrologic processes are major factors in the formation of physical resources. Within the study area of the Overmountain Victory Trail, these and associate natural processes have created mountain ranges, river gorges, fertile soils, mineral deposits, and other physical resources that either complement or compete with trail opportunities for the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Many of the physical resources in the Overmountain Victory Trail study area favor trail development. The mountain topography of the Ridge and Valley, and Blue Ridge regions is well-suited for trails. Primarily forested and covered with shallow rocky soils, these mountain ridges remain essentially undeveloped and in their natural state. The

Appalachian National Scenic Trail follows the highest ridgelines as it winds through the study area, intersecting the Overmountain Victory Trail at Yellow Mountain Gap. Gorges such as the Doe River Gorge and Linville Gorge provide exceptionally scenic and dramatic trail opportunities. The rugged topography of such areas generally prohibits any type of use other than as a natural area. Stream courses are also good resources for trail opportunities, although development along waterways often involves more costly engineering problems such as bridge construction. The Overmountain Victory Trail study area is fortunate to have stream courses such as the Doe River, the North Toe River, and Cane Creek, that have not been heavily developed and still furnish ample trail opportunities. The forested slopes of the mountainous Ridge and Valley, and Blue Ridge regions provide favorable opportunities for trail development. With the exception of commercial logging, they are generally too steep for other types of development.

Not all physical resources are conducive to trail development. Within the Overmountain Victory Trail study area are several resources that compete with trail opportunities. Valuable minerals are deposited at scattered locations in the study area and the mining and processing of these resources compete with trail opportunities. These operations normally require large areas of land and often disrupt the natural landscape. The only current conflict with mining operations along the historic route of the Overmountain Victory Trail is along a portion of the North Toe River in Avery and Mitchell Counties near Spruce Pine, North Carolina.

Fertile soils and forested lands are found throughout the study area. Agriculture and commercial logging, respectively, are attracted to these resources and their land use practices also compete with trail opportunities.

### Cultural Resources

Transportation routes, urban areas, and rural areas are basic cultural resources that have major impacts on trail opportunities. Certain characteristics of these resources complement trail opportunities while others compete with them.

Trail opportunities can be enhanced or limited by transportation routes. As a complementary resource, roads can provide trails with the access necessary to make them usable by the general population. The Overmountain Victory Trail study area has many such roads. It contains four Interstate Highways and numerous U.S., State and county roads. For trails such as the Overmountain Victory Trail, roads can also serve as the backbone for historic tours, retracing historic routes and linking historic sites. Modern highways can also provide a corridor for high quality bicycle trails and thus furnish an alternate means of touring a historic or scenic area. As a limiting factor, roads often cut across potential trail opportunities reducing scenic qualities and the desirability for trail development. Modern highways have largely obliterated many of the historic roads and trails significant to the history of the United States. Much of the Overmountain Victory Trail has been the victim of progress.

Urban areas are important complementary resources for trail opportunities. The large numbers of people residing there provide the support base needed for trails to be successful. This is particularly crucial in the case of the Overmountain Victory Trail where citizen interest and commitment to the development, maintenance, and use of the trail will help determine its development and ultimate survival. Urban areas often contain historic features that provide historic trail opportunities. Urban areas eliminate many opportunities for traditional trail development, but offer in their place the challenge to develop walking tours of historic sites, bicycle paths and jogging trails.

Rural areas are typified by small farms that utilize the land for uses that compete with trail opportunities. The Overmountain Victory Trail study area is primarily rural, consequently, developing trail opportunities will involve negotiating with competitive land uses such as agriculture and cattle raising. However, most rural areas do have some large-tract land ownerships which could accommodate trails. Several ownerships that might offer such trail opportunities do exist along the historic route of the Overmountain Victory Trail.

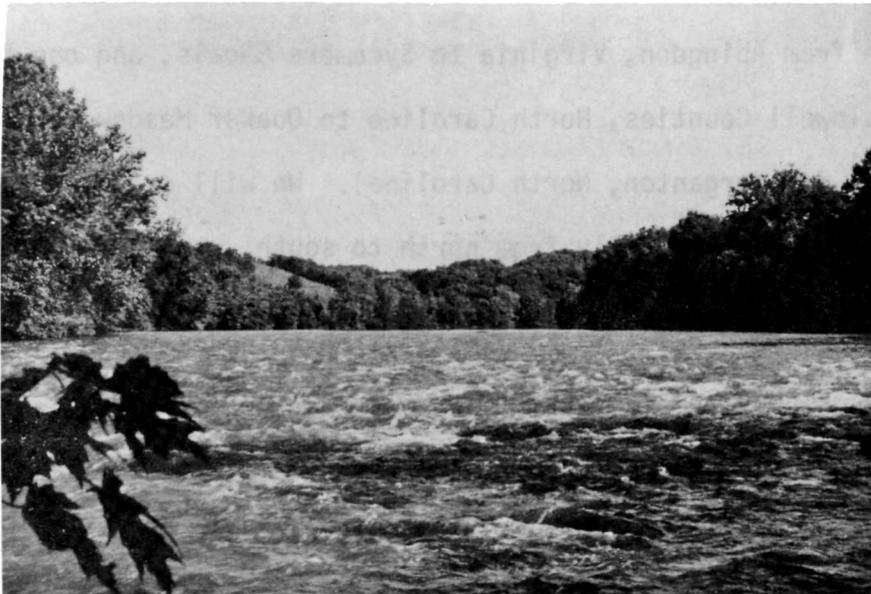
## The Overmountain Victory March

The exact route followed by the patriots from "over the mountain" to the battle of Kings Mountain is difficult to pinpoint with absolute certainty. Many of the eighteenth century trails that they followed are not in existence today. Also, many questions concerning the part played by the various participants in the battle have yet to be resolved. A great deal of future research will be necessary to more precisely identify the routes followed by the various individuals involved in the victory at Kings Mountain. However, there are some sites along the march route of which we are reasonably certain. Some of the streams fords, campsites, buildings, trails, and gaps that the Overmountain Men encountered in their long journey have been located. In the following narrative description of the primary historic sites along the Overmountain Victory Trail, the main march route from Sycamore Shoals, Tennessee to Kings Mountain, South Carolina is included along with the two major feeder routes: one from Abingdon, Virginia to Sycamore Shoals, and one from Wilkes, Surry and Caldwell Counties, North Carolina to Quaker Meadows, North Carolina (near present-day Morganton, North Carolina). We will describe the route of the Overmountain Men generally from north to south.

The first established point of interest is the Abingdon Historic District in Washington County, Virginia. This town was chartered in 1778 and is the oldest city west of the Blue Ridge. Overmountain Men from Tennessee and Virginia gathered in Abingdon at the place called Wolf Hill for their march to the primary



Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area--rendezvous point of the Overmountain Victory March--near Elizabethton, Tennessee.



Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River.

# OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL

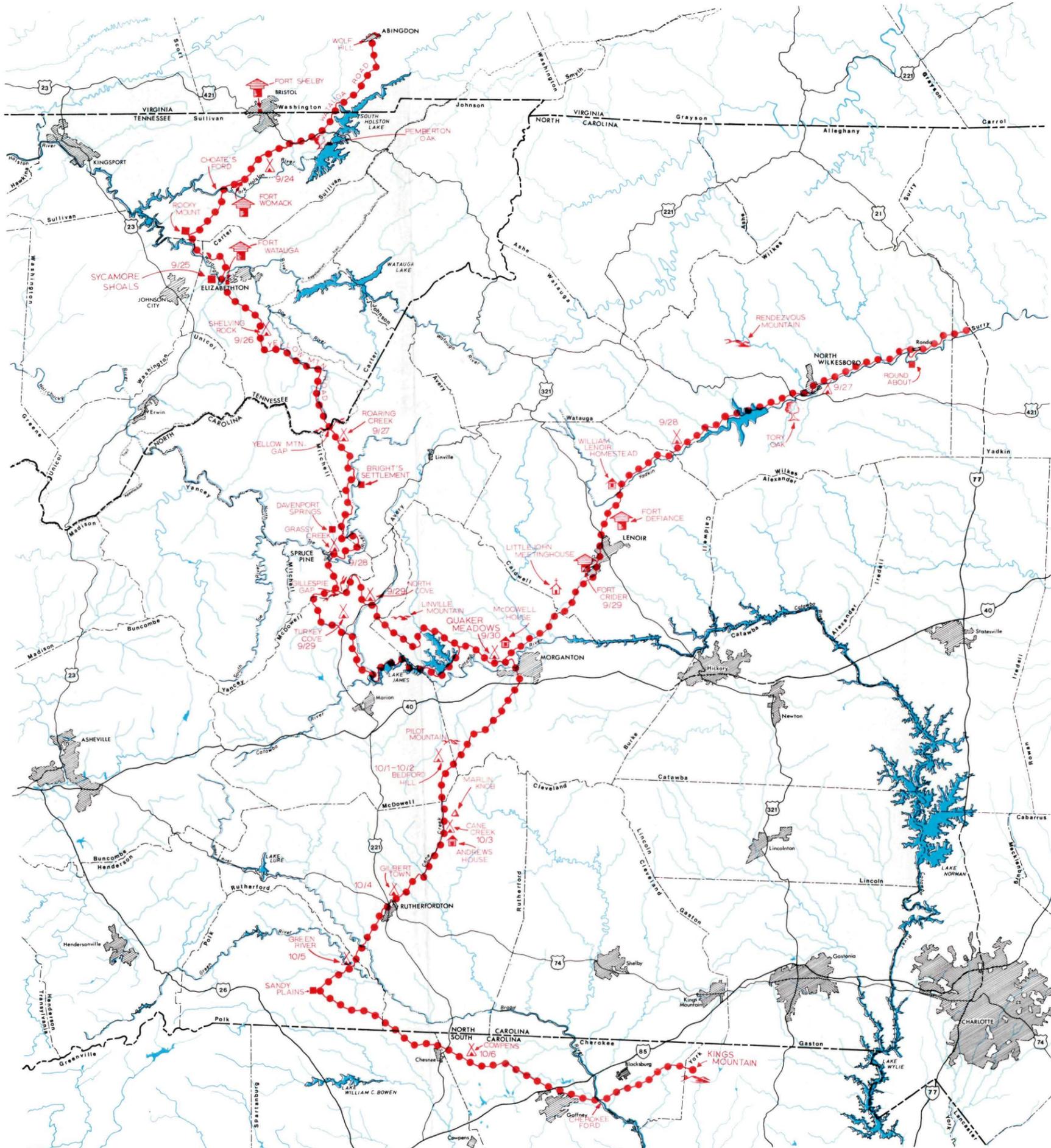


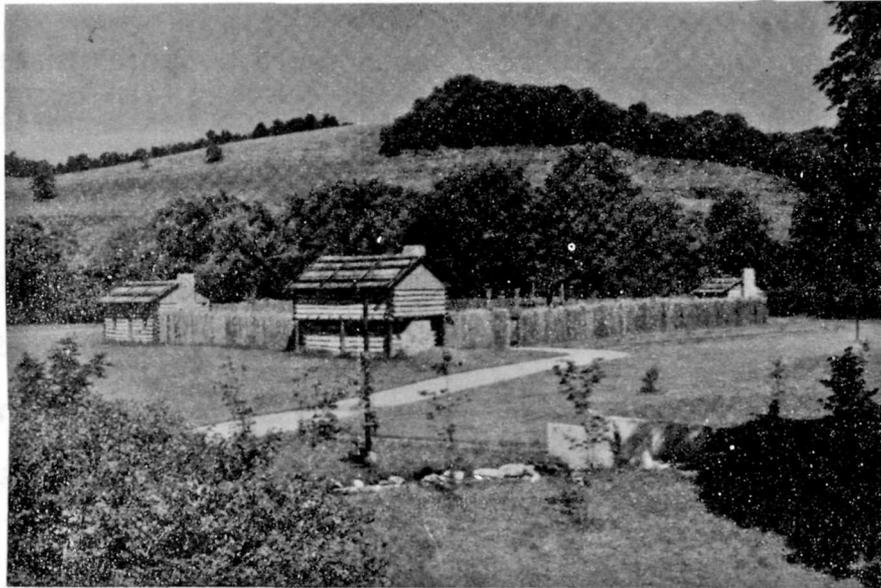
1780 — 1980

MAP 3

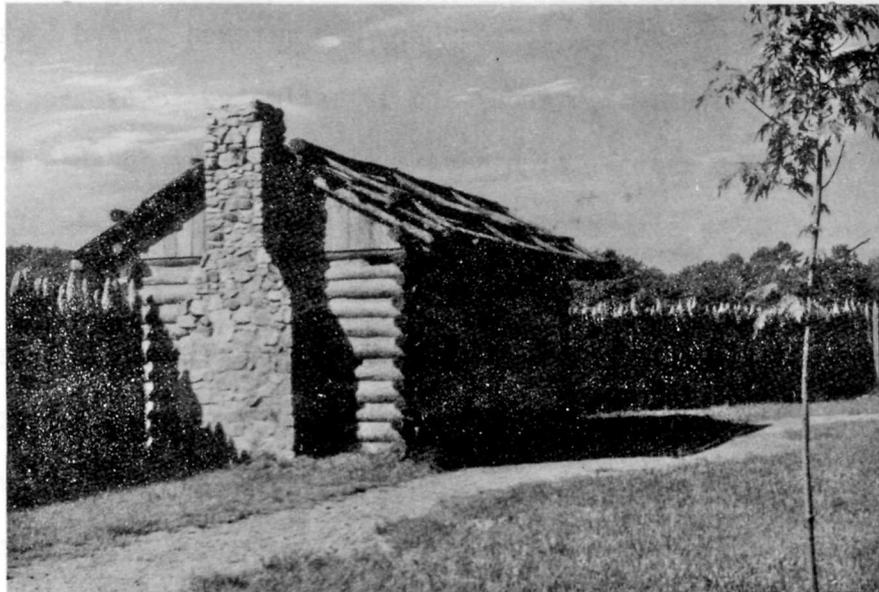
## HISTORIC FEATURES — 1780 (on 1980 base map)

- |  |               |  |                          |
|--|---------------|--|--------------------------|
|  | CAMPSITE      |  | URBAN AREA               |
|  | FORT          |  | INTERSTATE HIGHWAY       |
|  | HOMESITE      |  | FEDERAL HIGHWAY          |
|  | HISTORIC SITE |  | LAKES, RIVERS, & STREAMS |





Reconstructed Fort Watauga at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area.



Interior of Fort Watauga.

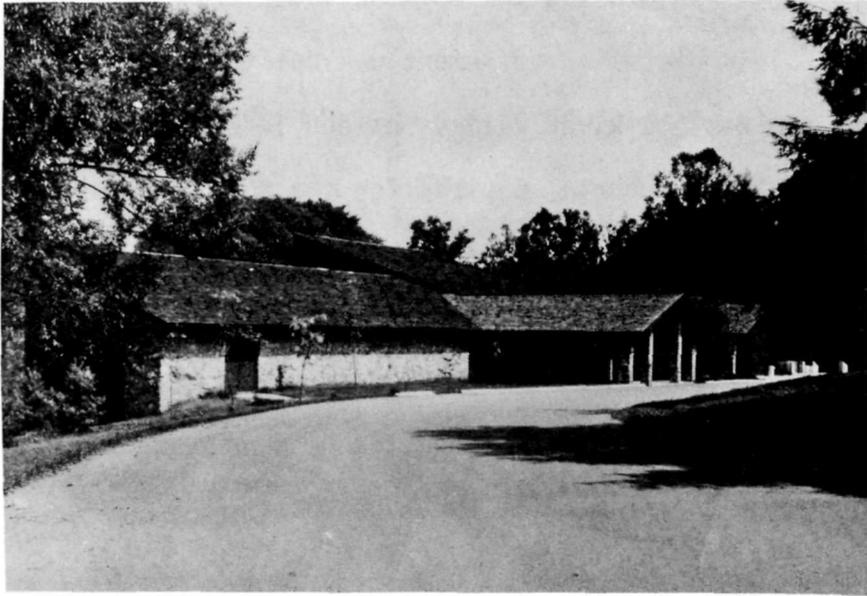
muster site at Sycamore Shoals. Wolf Hill was so named by Daniel Boone, who, when camping there with some companions in the early 1760s was harrassed by a large pack of wolves that lived in a cave in the side of the hill.

The major road from Abingdon to the southwest at that time was known as the Watauga Road. It followed the Holston Valley and generally paralleled the South Fork of the Holston River. Today this road is covered by portions of Virginia State Road 75, Tennessee State Road 44, U.S. Route 421, and other secondary roads. This was the route travelled by the Overmountain Men as they made their way southward toward Sycamore Shoals.

In what later became Sullivan County, Tennessee, is found the Pemberton Oak, which is located alongside the Watauga Road. Today, this historic site is located southwest of the community of Holston Valley off of U.S. Route 421. This massive oak tree was used as a mustering site for additional patriots who joined the growing Overmountain forces here and marched toward Sycamore Shoals. The tree is still standing today and is estimated to be over 500 years old. Fort Womack is another significant historic site in this portion of the trail corridor. The site of this small frontier stockade is located northeast of Bluff City, Tennessee, on the Weaver Pike. In active use at the time of the Overmountain March, Fort Womack offered the settlers protection from Indian raiding parties. Nearby, Choate's Ford, a rock-bottomed portion of the South Fork of the Holston River, is thought to be the place where the Overmountain Men crossed the river while still following the Watauga Road. Today, this ford is found several hundred yards downstream from the Southern Railroad bridge in Bluff City, Tennessee.

Once the patriots had crossed the Holston River they very shortly arrived at Rocky Mount. This historic settlement was built by William Cobb on a hill overlooking the Watauga River Valley between 1770 and 1772 and later served as the first U.S. Territorial Capitol for the territory south of the Ohio River from 1790 to 1792. It is probable that here at Rocky Mount, William Cobb supplied the Overmountain Men with many of the provisions that they would need on the trail and in battle. They received food, ammunition, gunpowder, and horses. After leaving Rocky Mount, they turned upstream and followed the Watauga River to the ford at Sycamore Shoals.

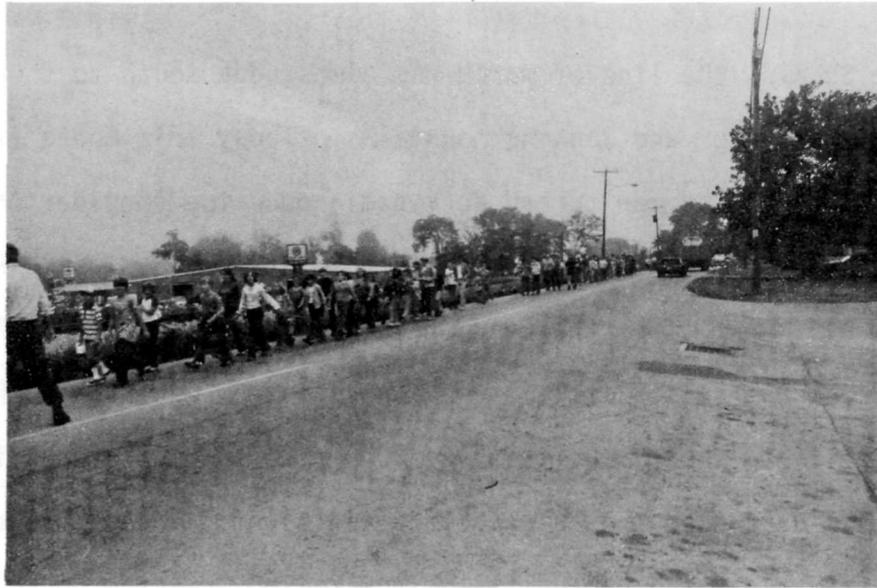
September 25, 1780, was the date set for the muster at Sycamore Shoals in present-day Elizabethton, Tennessee. In the flat river bottom below Fort Watauga, the patriots assembled. John Sevier brought 240 men from what is now Washington County, Tennessee. Isaac Shelby commanded a like number from Sullivan County, South Carolina, and the initially reluctant William Campbell caused rejoicing as he led into camp the 400 Virginians who had marched down from Abingdon. Charles McDowell's 160 Burke and Rutherford County patriots, who had already fought Ferguson's forces once before retreating over the mountains, swelled the numbers at Sycamore Shoals to about 1,040 fighting men. On September 26, the frontiersmen bid farewell to their families after receiving a prayer for the expedition by Reverend Samuel Doak who urged them to remember as they entered battle, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This phrase became the battle cry of the patriots.



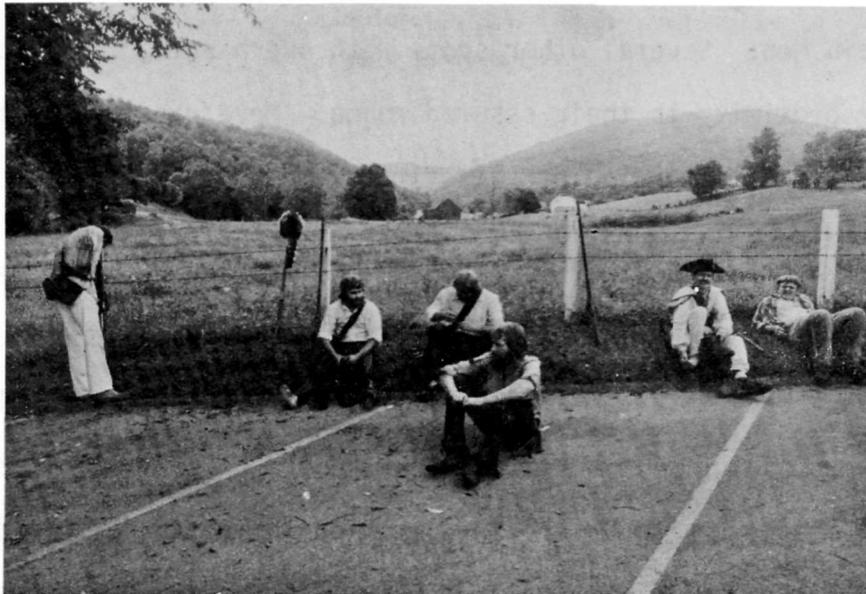
Visitor Center at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area.



Participants on the 1979 reenactment of the Overmountain Victory March depart Sycamore Shoals.



Marchers strung out along the highway near Elizabethton, Tennessee.



Modern-day frontiersmen take a break.

Leaving Sycamore Shoals, the line of march was almost due south to the head of Gap Creek, between Greer and Jenkins mountains. Today this route is known as Gap Creek Road. Then the men turned eastward around the shoulder of Stone Mountain to Tiger Valley. Crossing between Fork Mountain and Ripshin Ridge near present-day U.S. Route 19E, the Overmountain Men reached the Doe River. The Doe was a narrow but swift little stream whose source was high on Roan Mountain. They followed the river, crossing from side to side as conditions necessitated, until dark when they stopped for the night. The patriots marched 20 miles on this first day and camped at a place called Shelving Rock. The spot provided a small natural shelter, a large rock jutting out of a hill to form a semi-cave in which it is reported that the patriots stored their powder to keep it dry. Although there is a bronze plaque affixed to the rock, which is located on the east side of Tennessee State Road 143, there is currently some dispute over whether this is, in fact, the actual Shelving Rock described by the Overmountain Men. Several other spots with overhanging rock ledges are located in closer proximity to their assumed route. More research is necessary to authenticate the exact location of this first campsite.

On the next day, September 27, they moved on up the Doe River to the very foot of Roan Mountain. After slaughtering some of the cattle they had with them and sending the rest back to Sycamore Shoals, they set off on an established route up into the mountains. This route, known as Bright's Trace or the Yellow Mountain Road, climbed over 3,000 feet in elevation to Yellow Mountain Gap which was their more likely crossing point of the high mountain ridge. To reach this



The frontier army grows. . .



. . .And grows.



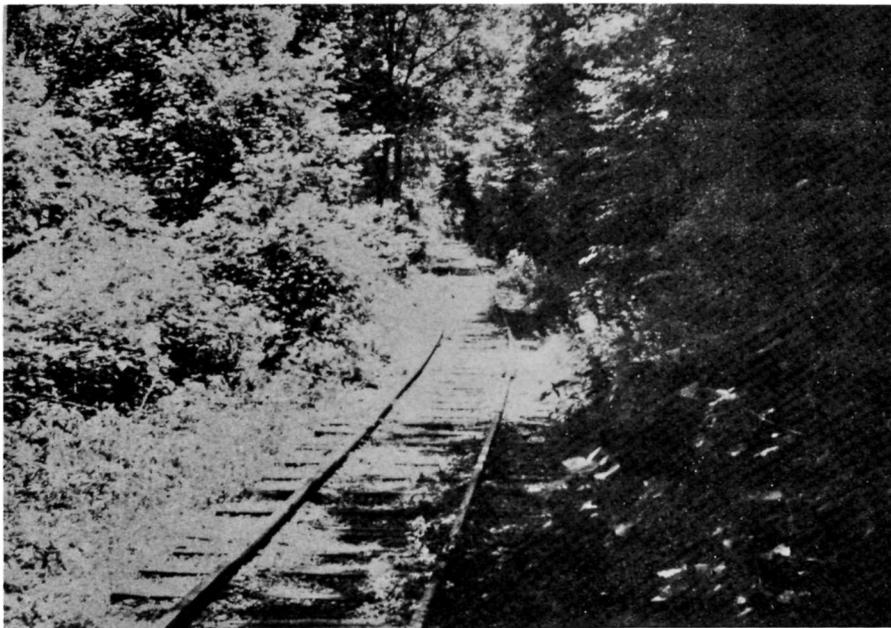
Informal talks were given at selected stops along the way.



Demonstration firings of antique firearms were a crowd pleaser.



Second tunnel on the Roan Mountain and Doe River Railroad (now abandoned).



Roan Mountain and Doe River Railroad (now abandoned).



Cedar Mountain provides one of many outstanding panoramas in the Doe River Gorge.



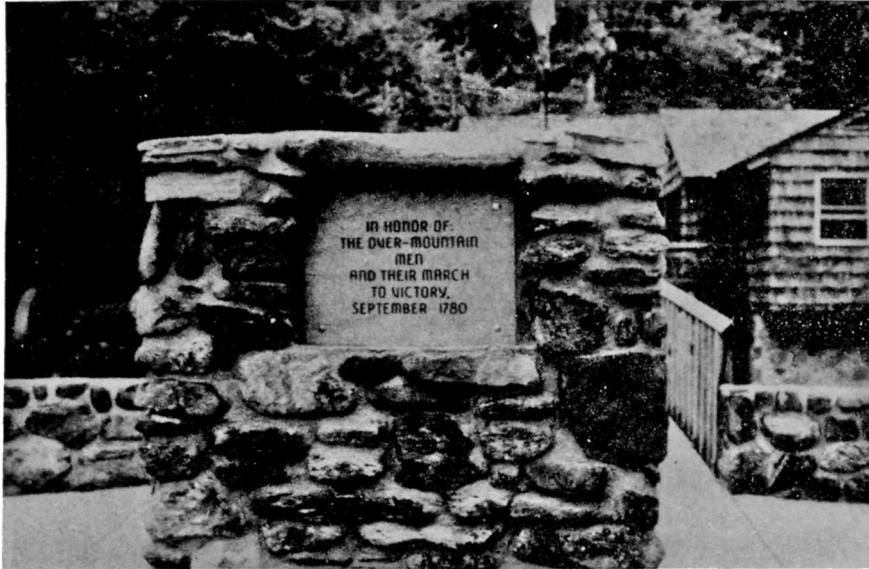
Doe River Gorge.



Railroad Grade Road, north of Roan Mountain, Tennessee



Railroad Grade Road--a great potential trail area.



Roan Mountain State Park honors the Overmountain Men at its visitor center with this stone marker.



The 1979 Overmountain army moves single-file up the ridge of Yellow Mountain.



The significance of the Overmountain Victory Trail is recognized here at its intersection with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail at Yellow Mountain Gap.



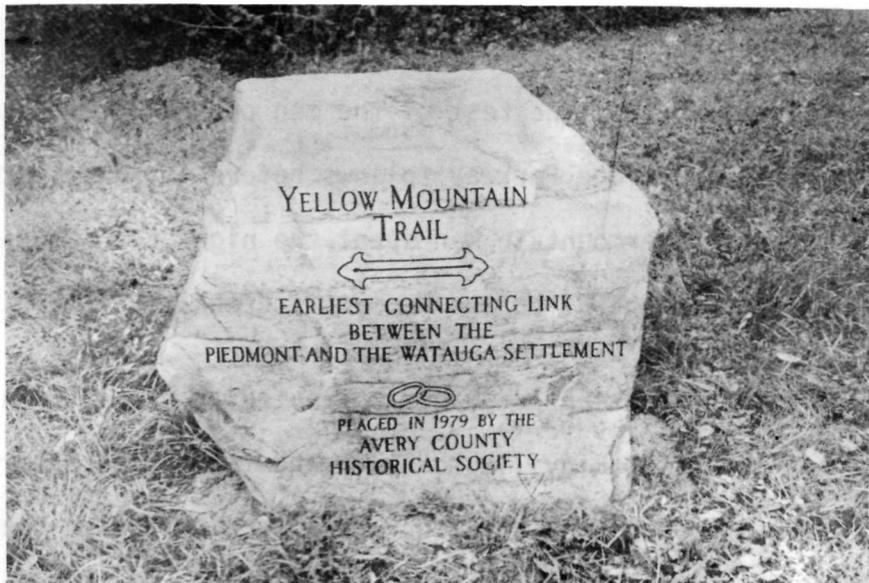
A modern Overmountain Man takes a rest at Yellow Mountain Gap.

gap they probably followed one of three tributaries to the Doe River: Hampton Creek, Heaton Creek, or Sugar Hollow Creek. More research is needed to clarify their route. After passing through Yellow Mountain Gap, the volunteers were drilled and paraded by their respective commanders, and were ordered to discharge their rifles. The flat land at the top of the mountain where the patriots drilled was covered with snow, "shoe-mouth deep." This place was referred to as "the Bald Place" or "the Bald of the Yellow" by Lyman Draper in his authoritative book, Kings Mountain and Its Heroes. The location of this bald is also in dispute. At this point the men noticed that two of their companions had deserted and it was suspected that they were on their way to inform British Major Ferguson of their travel route. The patriot leaders, hoping to confuse the enemy, turned left and followed a more northerly route which descended the eastern slope of the mountains into Elk Hollow—a slight depression between the Yellow and Roan Mountains, rather than a gap. Their second campsite was located at a spring flowing from Elk Hollow into Roaring Creek. This campsite is located approximately 4 miles up Roaring Creek from its confluence with the North Toe River.

The next day, September 28, the Overmountain Men followed Bright's Trace, which was also known as the Yellow Mountain Road, down the creek to the North Toe River, then turned and followed the river downstream. They passed Bright's Settlement, for which the trace was named, and which was located near the present-day town of Plumptree, North Carolina, on U.S. Route 19E. Shortly thereafter, they came to Avery's Farm, which was the probable burial site of Robert Sevier, who died of his wounds while attempting to return home from the Battle of Kings Mountain. This historic gravesite is located approximately 4½ miles upstream



William Wiseman's gravesite--he was one of the first men to settle "over-the-mountains."



A marker locating the Yellow Mountain Trail in Avery County, North Carolina.

from Spruce Pine, North Carolina, on the North Toe River. From Avery's Farm, the men marched down the North Toe River to Davenport Springs, a commonly used spring located a short distance from the river, when they probably rested at mid-day. Resuming their march, the men continued to follow the river, sometimes travelling on one side, sometimes the other and occasionally marching down both sides of the river simultaneously. They camped for the night at Cathey's Plantation at the mouth of Grassy Creek, a small eastern tributary of the North Toe River near present-day Spruce Pine, North Carolina.

On Friday, September 19, the patriot army followed a winding course up the valley of Grassy Creek to its head, some 8 or 9 miles, along present-day North Carolina Route 226. They then passed through Gillespie's Gap in the Blue Ridge. It was here that the leaders decided to divide the army into two groups for safety purposes. Campbell first took his Virginians west following a course near the present-day Blue Ridge Parkway, then southward into Turkey Cove. They camped for the night near the confluence of Armstrong's Creek and the North Fork of the Catawba River. The rest of the men pushed eastward along the ridge which the current Blue Ridge Parkway follows before turning south into North Cove. This group of Overmountain Men spent the night near the junction of the North Fork of the Catawba River and Honeycutt Creek.

On Saturday, after learning that Ferguson had retreated to Gilbert Town, Shelby, Sevier, and their men traversed Linville Mountain and turned south to the head of Paddy Creek. There, Campbell and his men, reassured by courier that no trap was waiting, rejoined them, and together they marched down the creek to the



The modern Overmountain Victory Army camps for the night at Roan Mountain State Park



This log house on the North Toe River at Plumtree, North Carolina is thought to be a part of Bright's Settlement, built prior to 1780.

Catawba River. The route they took was then eastward past the mouth of the Linville River and on down to the broad fields of Quaker Meadows, the noted home of Colonel Charles and Major Joseph McDowell. Here the Overmountain Men camped for the night.

Quaker Meadows, the broad valley on the north side of the Catawba River, in what is now Morganton, North Carolina, was the site of the second primary muster for the patriot army. At Quaker Meadows they were joined by Colonel Ben Cleveland and Major Joseph Winston with 350 men from Wilkes, Surry, and Caldwell Counties. Setting off on September 27, from the vicinity of the present-day boundary of Wilkes and Surry Counties, these men travelled west along the Yadkin River, camping for the night at the location of present-day North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. The next day, September 28, this branch of Overmountain Men proceeded 8 or 9 miles to the mouth of Warrior Creek where they crossed the Yadkin River and from here the men continued southwest down the Yadkin River to the mouth of Elk Creek where they camped for the night. On September 29, the patriots followed the Yadkin River to Fort Defiance, which today is fully restored and located off of North Carolina State Road 268, northeast to Lenoir, North Carolina. From Fort Defiance, the Wilkes, Surry and Caldwell County men marched 8 or 10 miles across Warrior Mountain to Crider's Fort, camping there for the night on the site of the present-day Lenoir High School. Departing Fort Crider on September 30, they followed Lower Creek southwestward toward Quaker Meadows where they joined the main army of Overmountain Men.



A modern Overmountain man.



Modern Overmountain army marching along Cane Creek Road, Rutherford County, North Carolina.

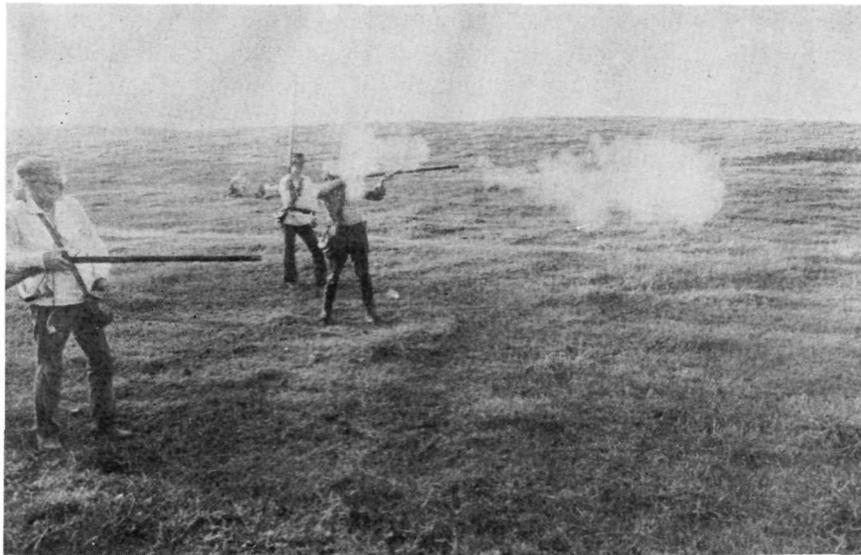
On Sunday morning, October 1, the patriot army resumed their march along a better road and made a more rapid advance. Marching a route that is covered today by U.S. 64, they passed Pilot Mountain, a prominent landmark which was used by travellers as a reference point. Heavy rains forced the Overmountain Men to camp early. They camped at Bedford Hill which is on a ridge near the headwaters of Cane and Silver Creeks. They remained at Bedford Hill for two nights because of the rainy weather.

On Tuesday, October 3, the men left Bedford Hill and slowly marched toward Gilbert Town, expecting to encounter Ferguson at any moment. They moved down Cane Creek, which parallels present-day U.S. 64, passing below Marlin Knob, a prominent ridgetop summit used by both the patriots and loyalists as a look-out point. After travelling only about 5 miles, the Overmountain Men camped for the night near the Andrews' House on Cane Creek. This home which was built in 1740 had the distinction of being used by both the tories and the patriots as a campsite. Ferguson and his men stayed there some 3 weeks prior to the Battle of Kings Mountain while the Overmountain Men camped there enroute to the battle. Andrews lost all of his stock, crops, and food supplies to the soldiers.

The next day the men left their camp and followed Cane Creek downstream to the Second Broad River which they crossed. They then followed the main road into Gilbert Town, located just north of the present-day Rutherfordton, North Carolina. It was here that they learned that Ferguson had retreated in the direction of Fort Ninety-Six in South Carolina. They camped for the night in



Overmountain Men loading their 18th century-style long rifles.



Although antique by modern standards, these muzzle loaders could hit their target at 100 yards or more.



The Andrews Home, on Cane Creek, Rutherford County, North Carolina.



A new group of marchers joins the main army, reminiscent of that event 200 years ago.

Gilbert Town. At this point, Major William Candler with 30 Georgians from Colonel Elijah Clarke's force marched into camp to join the patriots amid welcoming shouts. Following the same general direction and route that they thought Ferguson had followed, the patriot army crossed Mountain Creek, and then the Broad River at Denard's Ford, southwest of present-day Rutherfordton, North Carolina. Not long afterwards, Major William Chronicle, with a group of 20 men from the South Fork of the Catawba, joined the Mountain Men. Every such addition to their numbers was hailed with delight. The Overmountain Men, after crossing the Broad River, went on another 2½ miles, to what is now Alexander's Ford of the Green River where they camped for the night.

The leaders noticed that many of the men were foot-weary and slowing down. They decided to select their best men, best horses, and best rifles; and with this streamlined group, pursue Ferguson more rapidly in order to overtake him before he could reach any British post or receive reinforcements. Most of the night at Green River was spent in this selection process. It was also at this point that Colonel William Lacey reached the patriot camp and, after first being taken for a Tory spy, managed to give them the first accurate information on Ferguson's position, strength, and the possibility of overtaking him. Colonel Lacey agreed to meet the Overmountain Men the next day at the Cowpens with his South Carolinian soldiers.

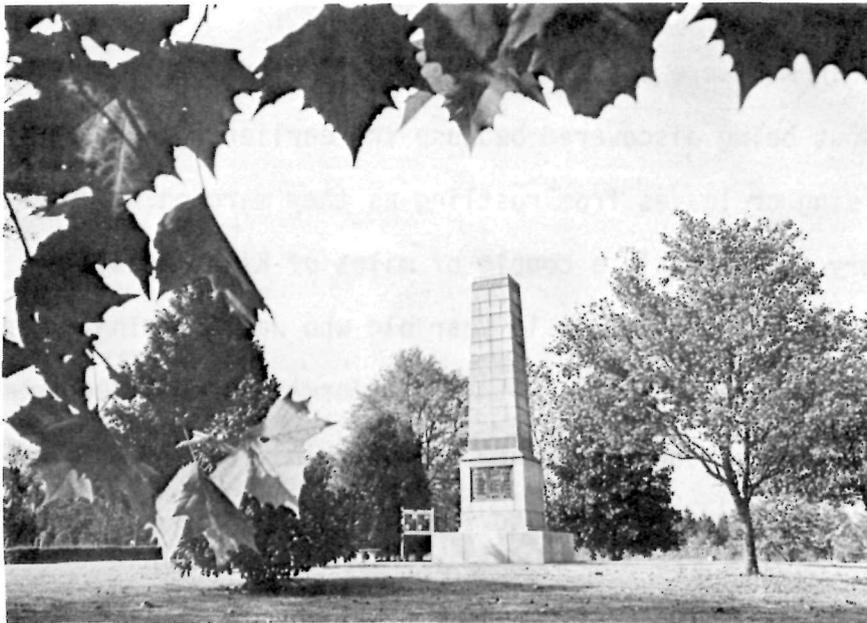
On October 6, the 700 men that had been selected the night before, set out on horseback at a rapid pace from Green River. The men on foot and those men with weak horses were left to follow along behind the main group as quickly as possible.

The patriots followed a southerly direction to Sandy Plains along a ridge road well adapted for travel. From there they turned southeastward and rode rapidly toward Cowpens. The South Carolinians under the leadership of Colonels Hill, Lacey, Williams and Graham arrived at the Cowpens just before sunset and very shortly thereafter they were joined by the Overmountain Men. Cowpens, which today is a National Battlefield on South Carolina Highway 11, derived its name from the large number of cattle kept there in holding pens during the winter months. The Cowpens was not an overnight campsite, although the patriots did rest here for several hours before resuming their ride. While at the Cowpens, 210 men were selected from among the new South Carolinians to supplement the 700-man patriot army. Thus, a total of 910 soldiers comprised the advanced party which set off to catch Ferguson.

The Overmountain Men left Cowpens on October 6, a dark and rainy night, moving toward Kings Mountain. The Virginians under Colonel Campbell took a wrong turn and were separated from the main body of the army. At dawn the error was discovered and the two groups were reunited. The men pressed on after Ferguson at an accelerated pace. They crossed the Broad River, not at Tate's Ford as was normally done, but rather, they crossed further downstream at Cherokee Ford. This was done to avoid ambush in case Ferguson and his men were waiting on the eastern side of the river. Today, this ford lies 1 to 2 miles south of Interstate 85 on the Broad River. After crossing the river, some of the leaders advised a rest stop, but Colonel Shelby refused to stop until Ferguson was caught. They continued without a rest break. About 3 miles from the river, the army arrived at Solomon Beason's house. From Beason, who was a half-Whig, half-Tory, as occasion required, they learned that Ferguson was only 8 miles



The Boy Scouts provide modern-day marchers with a way to stay off busy major highways.



Cowpens National Battlefield, where American Cavalry and Infantry defeated a British force in January, 1781.

in advance of them. The Overmountain Men also captured two Tories who were forced to direct the army to Kings Mountain.

The rain clouds which had hindered the army all morning cleared at noon and a bright sun warmed and dried the soaked patriots. Buoyed by the improving weather and the excitement of finally being so near the elusive Ferguson, the Overmountain Men pressed on toward Kings Mountain. They crossed Jumping Branch, Mill Creek, and Ponders branch, all in rapid succession as they approached the British stronghold from the west. At this point, the patriot leaders withdrew a short distance from their army to plan the attack on Ferguson and his Loyalist forces. Major Chronicle and Captain Mattocks, who were familiar with the spur of Kings Mountain upon which the British were posted, described to the assembled officers the characteristics of the ground occupied by Ferguson. A plan to surround Ferguson's army was heartily agreed upon.

The Overmountain Men were able to approach very closely to the British position without being discovered because the earlier rain prevented a dust cloud from rising or leaves from rustling as they marched. Sevier's men captured some Tory spies within a couple of miles of Kings Mountain. Later the patriots captured John Ponder, a 14 year old who was carrying a message from Ferguson to General Cornwallis. With the information provided from these two sources, the patriot leaders were now ready to initiate their plan of battle. The Overmountain Men were ordered to form into two lines, two men deep and to



Modern Overmountain Victory Army arrives at Kings Mountain National Military Park.



Period costumes were in evidence throughout the march and at each campsite.



Houser House at Kings Mountain--thought to have been constructed shortly after the battle.



Some of the weary marchers at the restored Houser House.



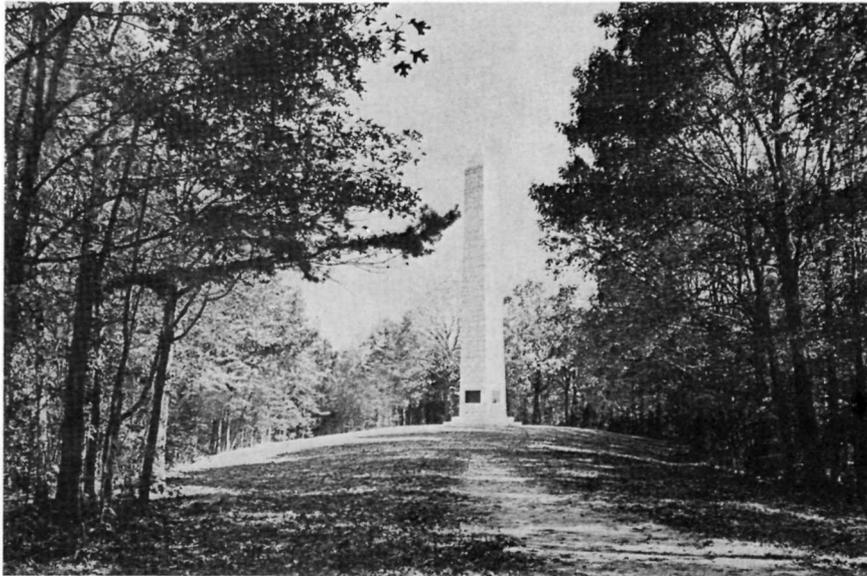
Marchers tread the last few miles toward the battle site on Kings Mountain.



The original route of the march by the victorious frontiersmen.



Overmountain Victory Trail marchers on Kings Mountain.



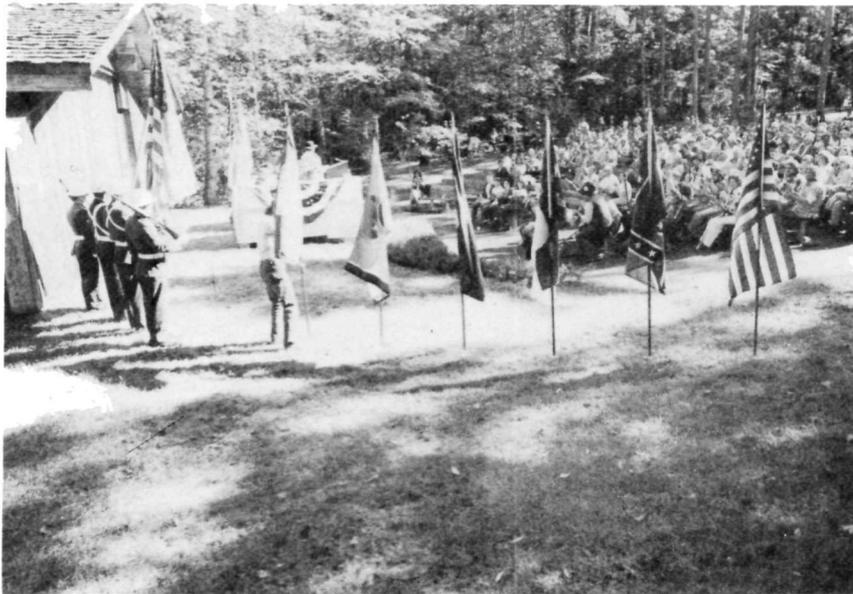
Monument on top of Kings Mountain to honor the American Victory there in 1780.

proceed in absolute silence, to their positions encircling the mountain. At three o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, October 7, the men were ordered to halt, dismount, and tie their horses. Next they took off their coats, tied their extra gear to their saddles, and primed their rifles. After covering the remaining distance to Ferguson's position on foot, the Overmountain Men were instructed by Colonel Campbell to look to their own safety and to "shout like hell, and fight like devils." At four o'clock the battle began and the rest is history.

Years later, Thomas Jefferson called "that memorable victory" at Kings Mountain "the joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success, which terminated the Revolutionary War with the seal of independence." Less than a year after the Kings Mountain Victory, the patriots accepted the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown to end the Revolutionary War.



Patriotic speeches are part of the ceremonies held at Kings Mountain National Military Park.



Dedication ceremonies celebrate the American Victory at Kings Mountain and mark the end of the 1979 reenactment of the Overmountain Victory March.

#### IV. DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

The National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543, as amended) provides for the development of a system of trails to meet the needs of the nation as a whole rather than to satisfy State and local demands. The act authorizes four categories of National Trails--Recreation, Scenic, Historic and Connecting or side trails. The intent of the "Historic" amendment (Public Law 95-625), which also authorized the Overmountain Victory Trail (OVT) study, appears to direct joint Scenic/Historic studies whenever the historic aspect is significant.

In the case of the OVT the historic trail potential has been found to far outweigh the scenic potential but both have been evaluated against the following criteria.

##### National Scenic Trail Criteria

To be eligible for national scenic trail status a potential candidate must possess a number of outstanding characteristics which viewed in the aggregate depict the best trail opportunities in the country. The following characteristics are considered particularly important.

##### National Significance

Because of their special status as the most outstanding trails in the nation, scenic trails should be nationally significant, capable of attracting visitors from throughout the United States.

To be nationally significant as a scenic trail the OVT should have a combination of features which would attract users from throughout the nation to follow it by means other than a motorized vehicle. Portions of the OVT route are located in outstandingly scenic surroundings. Other portions are located in pleasant but otherwise ordinary countryside. However, there is at the present time almost no trail of any kind specifically dedicated to public use as the Overmountain Victory Trail. There are some potential trails following portions of the route which are being investigated by public agencies but at present there does not appear to be enough potential trail to support national significance.

#### Route Selection

To be eligible as a national scenic trail, the route selected should be ". . .so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass."

The historic OVT route limits a route selection for scenic purposes. There are opportunities such as the Doe River gorge to locate a trail parallel to and near the historic route but in many cases possible OVT trail segments will not be in the most scenic locations.

### Accessibility

National scenic trail candidates should be provided with adequate public access via connecting trails or other access points at reasonable intervals and with reasonable cost and should be readily accessible to population centers.

The historic OVT route is accessible at many points along its length and can be reached by interstate highway from all population centers in the southeast.

### Continuity

National scenic trails should be continuous for their entire length except where no prudent alternative exists. At the present time there is almost no existing trail dedicated to public use as the OVT. It is extremely doubtful that there will ever be enough continuous trail to meet this criteria.

### Length

National scenic trails should be extended trails, usually several hundred miles or longer.

The historic OVT route from Sycamore Shoals to Kings Mountain covers a distance of 164 miles. If the routes from the Mustering Point near Abingdon, Virginia (Abingdon to Sycamore Shoals 44 miles), and in Wilkes,

Surry, and Caldwell Counties, North Carolina (to Quaker Meadows 64 miles), were included the total historic OVT trail would cover 272 miles. If trail could be established to national scenic standards along the entire route the length criteria would be satisfied but this is unlikely.

#### National Historic Trail Criteria

The historic background of the OVT route is rapidly gaining recognition for its significance to the American Revolution. The significance of the actual battle at Kings Mountain has been fully recognized and the area is protected and interpreted as a National Military Park. In many other military engagements the routes to the battles were also important but in the case of Kings Mountain the gathering of the Mountain Men and their march to engage the British was as significant as the Battle itself. National historic trails established under the provisions of the Act are intended to be extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of National historic significance.

To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the following criteria:

1. Historic Remains

"It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location

must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variation offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked on site as segments which link to the historic trail."

All participants in the study have agreed that the OVT route has national historical significance. The National Park System Advisory Board will be asked for its recommendation as to the historical significance based on criteria developed under the Historical Sites Act of 1935.

Almost none of the original route exists as a discernible trail but its location is known sufficiently to evaluate its recreation and historic interest potential. The study participants have identified a high level of interest on the part of all who have become aware of the efforts to establish an Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The major problem has been a general lack of knowledge concerning the historic event, even on the part of residents in the vicinity of the route.

If a national trail is designated it will be possible to follow the original route quite closely with occasional deviations for a more pleasurable recreation or historic experience. However, unless the States and counties accept the challenge to use bicycle trails extensively along roadways which are now superimposed on the historic routes, there will be a much larger percentage of marked highways than marked trails.

2. National Significance

"It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on the broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included."

The gathering of the Mountain Men and their march to engage the British at Kings Mountain is a valid part of the Battle of Kings Mountain and a military campaign recognized as a turning point in the Revolutionary War in the south. Its effect in swinging the momentum away from the loyalist support of the British was significant to American independence.

3. Potential for Historic/Recreational Use

"It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments

developed as historical trails, and at historical sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category."

Interest in the overmountain march was confined to historians and students of history for most of the 199 years since the event took place. One of the few historians who gave special attention to the Appalachian area of the south during its settlement and the revolutionary period was Lyman C. Draper, LL.D., "Secretary of the State Historical and Actiquarian Societies of the Country." Draper's introduction to his book "King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of Kings Mountain," gives an indication of his area of interest:

#### INTRODUCTION

"While in the long years past the materials for this work have been collected, ample facts and documents have also been gathered for a continuation of similar volumes, of which this is the commencement--to be called, perhaps, the Border Series, embracing, in their sweep, the whole frontier from New York and Canada to the Gulf of Mexico--Sumter and his Men--Pickins and the Battle of Cowpens--Life and Campaigns of General George Rogers Clark--Boone and the Pioneers of Kentucky--Kenton and his Adventures--Brandy and his Scouts--Mecklenburg and its Actors--Tecumseh, the Shawnee Leader--Brant, the Mohawk Chief--and a volume on Border Forays and Adventures. If there is a demand for these works, they will be forth coming.

Should Kings Mountain and its heroes be received with favor, and regarded as shedding new light on an interesting portion of our revolutionary history, not a little of the credit is deservedly

due to the enterprising publisher, Peter G. Thomson, who warmly encouraged the undertaking, and has spared no pains in bringing it before the public in a style at once tasteful and attractive."

Madison, Wisconsin, September 1, 1881.

Interest in Drapper's book was revived 73 years later and it was reprinted by the Continental Book Company, Marietta, Georgia, in 1954 and again by the "Reprint Company," Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1967. Other authors have written about the battle and the march but it is very evident that they drew heavily on Draper's work as their source.

As the Bicentennial approached, interest in Kings Mountain and the Overmountain Men increased rapidly and broadened beyond the avid students of revolutionary history. Descendants of participants in the battle were particularly interested in developing a Bicentennial project to give recognition to the contributions of their ancestors. An effort to organize a reenactment of the march of the Overmountain Men from Sycamore Shoals in Tennessee to Kings Mountain in South Carolina gained grass-root support and the first "march" was successfully planned and executed in the fall of 1975 following the same timetable and overnight camps as the original event--September 23 to October 7.

There was some doubt as to whether there would be enough interest to repeat the march in succeeding years except for perhaps the 1976 Bicentennial year and the Anniversary year--1980, but the strictly

volunteer organization continued to thrive and the "Annual March" idea generated continuing interest and resulted in the formal organization of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association in December of 1978.

The general interest to date has been oriented toward commemoration and Bicentennial celebration rather than in establishing a trail for the general public to follow. In the minds of many participants the purpose of establishing a permanent "Trail" would be to facilitate the annual march. However, there is a growing recognition that a "National Historic Trail" should be more than that. The public meetings, individual interviews during the 1979 march and discussions with other individuals have surfaced a strong desire to qualify the OVT as a national historic trail for use and appreciation by the general public on a year-round basis.

There is definite potential for both recreational use and historic interest in following the route of the Overmountain Men. The story fascinates people when they hear it and when exposed to an on-the-ground experience they show an interest in learning more. Perhaps the greatest potential interest lies in the need for widespread public participation in establishing and maintaining segments of trail which can be designated and used as a part of a national historic trail.

## V. SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION

### General Planning Considerations

The Overmountain Victory Trail study has shown that the trail route meets the criteria for a national historic trail. However, there are problem areas to be resolved as well as some development and management alternatives which must be considered in order to comply with those criteria.

### Historic and Current Use

The historic use of the route was a one-time military march on horseback and on foot. Modern day reenactments of the march have been largely by annual group participation on foot using foot trails, road shoulders, open fields and even railroad tracks. Horses have only rarely been used but on several occasions a horse and wagon participated. Motor vehicles have been used to escort groups on road shoulders, to transport occasional participants who developed physical problems, to move the entire group to starting points or to by-pass short segments of the route.

A significant point to consider is that there has been almost no additional use of the route as a foot or horse trail. An occasional individual or small group follows the route by car with stops at various historic spots, but no efforts have yet been made to encourage use at times other than the annual reenactment. In order to present a valid trail proposal there should be a significant potential for trail related use during a major portion of the year over a reasonable portion of the route.

### Potential Trail Segments on Public Lands

Several segments of trail are currently in the planning stage. The U.S. Forest Service has located a 10-mile segment of the original Yellow Mountain Road crossing Linville Mountain from North Cove to the Kistler Memorial Highway. The Yellow Mountain Road existed at the time of the march and while much of it has been displaced, this segment is reported to be undisturbed except for periodic tree cutting. The Forest Service plans to construct a trail near the historic traces of the road without further disturbing it. The opportunities for historic interpretation as well as wilderness type experiences are outstanding.

Other segments of Bright's Trace, the Yellow Mountain and other early roads used by the Overmountain Men have been reported as still visible and accessible. Most are on private lands but with the landowner's cooperation these road segments could provide opportunities for additional trail and historic interpretation.

The Tennessee Department of Natural Resources has an outstanding trail project underway utilizing the Doe River Gorge, Roan Mountain State Park and the old Doe River Railroad grade road. The gorge is untouched by the modern world except for a narrow gauge railroad track which is no longer in use and now provides a convenient access to the gorge.

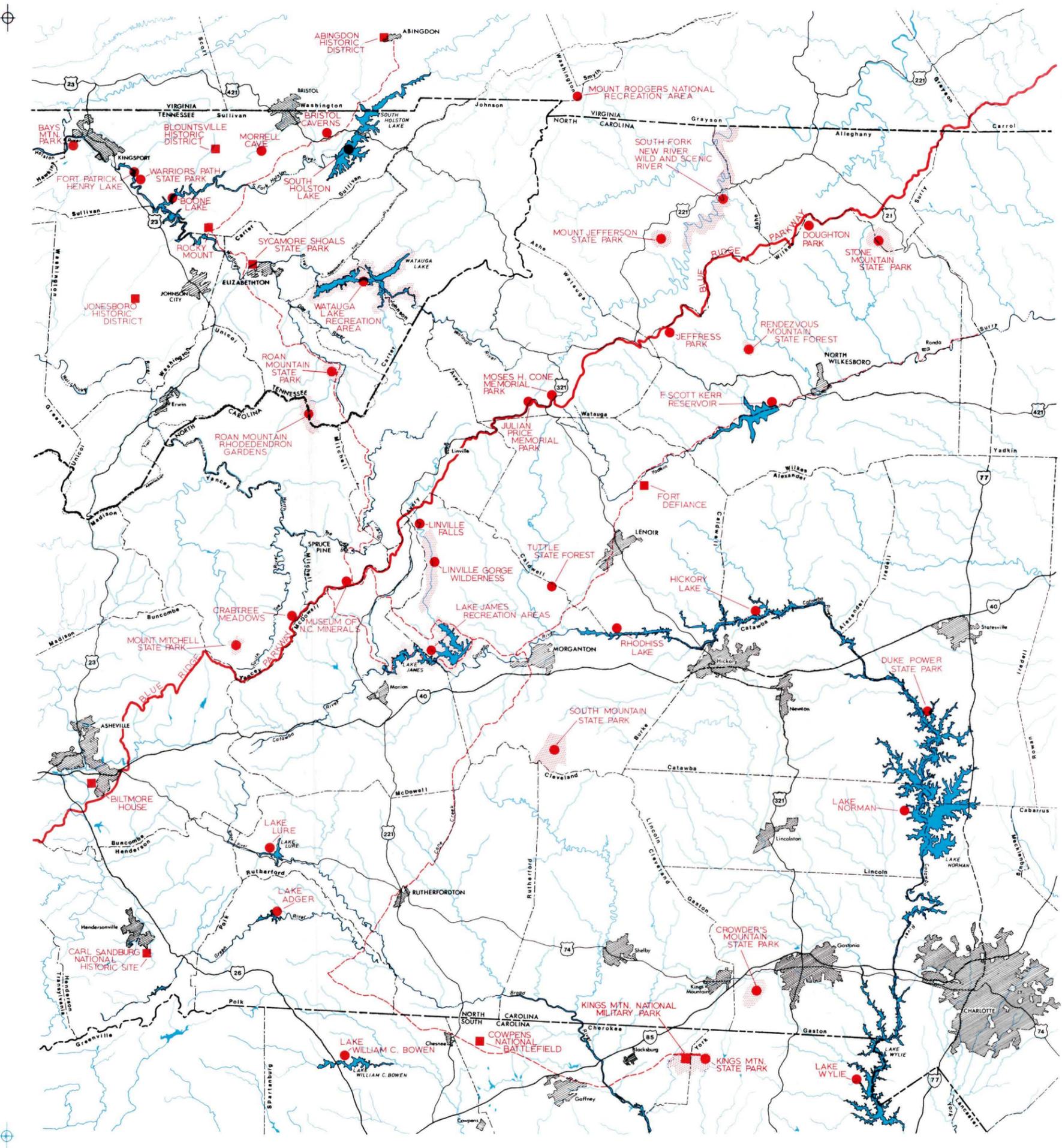
The Doe River has carved a spectacular canyon with high rock outcroppings jutting from heavy forest cover which can be seen from the abandoned railroad grade. Trestles over the river are sound and the road bed is in

# OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL



1780 — 1980

MAP 4  
SIGNIFICANT FEATURES  
1980



- |                    |   |                            |  |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| HISTORIC SITE      | ■ | URBAN AREA                 |  |
| RECREATION AREA    | ● | INTERSTATE HIGHWAY         |  |
| BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY |   | FEDERAL HIGHWAY            |  |
| TRAIL              | — | LAKES, RIVERS, AND STREAMS |  |

excellent condition. Some legal problems related to the ownership of the gorge still exist but the potential for providing trail use in the near future is very good.

A public road, built on the railroad grade above the gorge, follows the banks of the Doe River to a point near the town of Roan Mountain, Tennessee. The road has occasional residences and other developments along it but, because it dead-ends at the upper end of the gorge and has very limited access to U.S. Highway 19E, it still provides an excellent opportunity for a bicycle trail.

Roan Mountain State Park is ideally located on the Doe River a short distance above the town of Roan Mountain, Tennessee, in a beautiful valley at the base of Yellow Mountain (5200 ft.), Round Bald (5800 ft.) and Roan High Knob (6285 ft.). It provides a starting/ending point for the Doe River/Railroad Grade Trail and further trail development. It also can provide a contact point for visitors using the trail or touring the historic and natural points of interest.

The Doe River gorge and railroad grade road above the gorge are not on the most probable route taken by the Mountain Men because of the rugged nature of the canyon. The most likely route has now been displaced by U.S. Highway 19E which parallels the gorge a mile or so distant.

### Potential Trail Segments on Private Lands and Public Roads

Between Sycamore Shoals and U.S. Highway 19E near the entrance to the Doe River Gorge the historic route has been displaced by urban development and the Gap Creek Road. No horse or foot trail opportunities have been found in this segment. The Gap Creek Road is too narrow for designation as a bicycle route in its present condition but perhaps the road right-of-way is wide enough to construct a bicycle trail beside the existing road. Between Roan Mountain State Park and Yellow Mountain Gap there are three routes that the Mountain Men might have used, Sugar Hollow, Hampton Creek, or Heaton Creek. All have roads with varying degrees of development following the creeks to elevations in the 3200 to 3800 range.

Above the roads or on the ridges between, there are opportunities to build suitable trails but all of these lands are privately owned until reaching the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail which also runs through the gap. The Forest Service has recently acquired land protecting the Appalachian Trail in the gap area.

Historic accounts of the route between Yellow Mountain Gap and the September 27, 1780, campsite on Roaring Creek are not very clear which would make it difficult to try to establish a trail exactly following the route. From a physical standpoint trails which would meet proper standards could follow several routes to the campsite without compromising the historical integrity of the trail. Hikers or horseback riders would have to be informed in the interpretive programs that historic trail locations in many cases are not specifically known

and in this case 800 riders and men on foot could have followed several trails to reach a given point. Trail rights-of-way in this area would also have to be negotiated with private landowners.

Historians have also given general rather than specific accounts of the route from the Roaring Creek campsite to the September 28 campsite at Grassy Creek near present day Spruce Pine, North Carolina, indicating that Roaring Creek and North Toe River were forded many times. U.S. Highway 19E generally follows the North Toe in this area and there are no public lands which can be utilized for trails. Here again suitable trail development would depend on the cooperation of land owners in allowing trail segments to be constructed on their lands.

A specific trail opportunity in this area is the existing trail leading to Robert Sevier's grave. The grave has been marked allowing groups and individuals to visit the grave site but permission from the landowners must be obtained for each visit. A more permanent arrangement might be arranged for public access.

The route from Grassy Creek campsite to Gillespie Gap, one of the many gaps in the Blue Ridge Mountains, follows Grassy Creek to its headwaters. The route has largely been replaced by North Carolina Highway 226 and no trail opportunities have been found.

At Gillespie Gap the force of Mountain Men divided. One group under the command of Colonel Campbell headed west down the Blue Ridge to what is now known as Little Switzerland and are thought to have followed Three Mile Creek and Armstrong Creek down the mountain to Turkey Cove. The western

loop of North Carolina Highway 226 follows this route and has displaced any trail opportunities. No alternate trail locations have been found.

From Turkey Cove, Campbell's group followed the North Fork of the Catawba River and rejoined the main group in the vicinity of what is now Lake James. The Clinchfield Railroad also follows this portion of the river, however, there is a possible trail location in this segment with some opportunity on Forest Service owned lands. The lower end of the historic route has been covered up by Lake James.

Sevier and Shelby led the other group in a northeasterly direction up the Blue Ridge and then down the mountain to their September 29 campsite near the confluence of Honeycutt Creek and the North Fork of the Catawba River in North Cove. The Clinchfield Railroad winds its way up and down this **steep mountain slope using over a dozen tunnels.** Reenactment marches in the past have used sections of the railroad to get to North Cove. There appears to be an ample opportunity to establish an excellent trail through relatively undisturbed forest down this mountainside if the railroad and other landowners will allow the use of their lands.

On the morning of September 30 the force under Sevier and Shelby first crossed the North Fork of the Catawba River then Linville Mountain, presumably on the Yellow Mountain Road. The Forest Service trail project in this segment has been described in the section on Public Lands.

From the Forest Service lands to Quaker Meadows the Yellow Mountain Road has not yet been identified and trail options will depend on its location and other possible routes around Lake James.

Colonel Campbell's force rejoined Sevier and Shelby on the banks of the Catawba on September 30. They crossed the Linville River and continued along the banks of the Catawba finally arriving at Quaker Meadows and camped near the McDowell home in what is now Morganton, North Carolina. Much of the historic route has now been covered by Lake James and below the lake by urban development. Duke Power Company owns the lake and they may have some lands adjoining the lake which might provide some trail locations. The urban areas hold little promise for additional trail opportunities.

The remainder of the route from Quaker Meadows to Kings Mountain has been almost entirely displaced by major highways, secondary and rural roads. There are no obvious foot or horse trail opportunities available but many of the roads pass through scenic countryside in terrain suitable for bicycle trails. Road shoulders and right-of-way on many of the roads are wide enough to accommodate a bicycle trail. From a historic point of view foot and horse trails seem to be the most appropriate way to establish the Overmountain Victory Trail. However, from the viewpoint of recreational use, a bicycle trail becomes a valid option. A first class bicycle trail from Lake James to Kings Mountain visiting historic points of interest along the way merits strong consideration.

#### Branch Routes

The legislation directing the study specified only that the historic route from Elizabethton, Tennessee, to Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina be evaluated as a potential National Scenic/Historic Trail.

Early in the study process, the public raised the issue of branch trails and their inclusion as integral parts of a complete Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

The two major mustering points were at Sycamore Shoals and Quaker Meadows. These are the points emphasized in historic accounts of the gathering of the Mountain Men. However, well identified groups under specific leaders important to the success of the venture gathered at other well known points and their routes in joining the main fighting force must be considered as significant.

Two of the branch routes have been considered as being feasible for inclusion along with the main route.

A major force of 400 Virginians led by Colonel William Campbell gathered at Wolf Hill in what is now Abingdon, Virginia, and headed for Sycamore Shoals following well known roads on the west side of the Holston River. Another group of 350 men rallied under the leadership of Colonel Benjamin Cleveland and Major Joseph Winston and marched up the Yadkin Valley to join the army of Mountain Men at Quaker Meadows.

Both of these routes are well known but because of the short time available for the study a full investigation of trail potential was not possible.

There may be some opportunity for short sections of foot or horse trail along both routes but it appears that modern day roads have almost completely displaced the routes these forces moved along. Bicycle trails would appear to

be a good possibility along both routes but this has not been verified. Other important leaders brought groups to the mustering points along less documented routes. John Sevier brought 240 men from Washington County; Isaac Shelby a like number from Sullivan County (then North Carolina, later Tennessee); Charles McDowell's 160 Burke and Rutherford County patriots had already fought Ferguson's forces but were forced to retreat across the mountains to Sycamore Shoals where they joined the swelling ranks of Mountain Men. The routes they followed can be incorporated into historical accounts and interpretive programs concerning the battle but it has not been feasible to consider them for potential trail development.

#### Land Acquisition

Public lands available for foot and horse trails amount to less than 5 percent of the historic trail corridor. Three options for acquiring lands on which to construct additional miles of foot or horse trail have been considered:

1. Condemnation by Federal and State agencies with jurisdiction along the corridor. The objections to using this method far outweigh the advantages. The cooperation and in fact the willing support of many landowners along the route is considered essential to the success of this project. The use of condemnation would destroy that support.
2. Purchases of fee title or trail use easements from willing sellers by public agencies or by interested private organizations is a valid option. It should be used with great sensitivity to the desires of landowners. This option can also be used in combination with the many forms of less-than-fee and donation methods.

3. Donations both of fee and less-than-fee interests in lands needed for trail right-of-way appear to have the greatest chance of success. Landowners are often reluctant to give up significant control of a portion of their land for public use, particularly if their land may be divided by a long narrow strip such as a trail or road right-of-way. When the action is voluntary and the terms of the donation are better controlled by the landowner then the fear of outside control is greatly diminished. If the donation is made to a foundation or other non-governmental organization an even greater basis for trust rather than fear seems to be generated.

#### Administration and Management

Three public agencies presently share in the administration of existing segments of the trail, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the State of Tennessee.

Section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act directs that the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture conduct proposed National Scenic/Historic Trail studies and as a part of the report recommend a Federal administering agency and identify the extent to which the States, their political subdivisions and public and private organizations might reasonably be expected to participate in acquiring the necessary lands and assist in the management of the trail.

Much of the trail route from Sycamore Shoals to Lake James passes through the Cherokee and the Pisgah National Forests. However, only a few short segments are actually on lands owned by the Forest Service. The Forest

Service does have the authority to acquire needed lands within their proclaimed boundaries and are the logical manager for trail segments which may be established on their lands.

The National Park Service has a vested interest in the trail at Kings Mountain and Cowpens and in the interpretation of the Overmountain March and battle at Kings Mountain. This is perhaps the most logical agency to provide overall administration of the trail.

All five of the States from which the Mountain Men gathered have an interest in the history of the event and for that reason an obligation to participate. The State of Tennessee also has two State parks that are in part dedicated to the Overmountain Victory Trail. Tennessee's Doe River Gorge Trail project is another investment in the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Public and private organizations perhaps have a greater opportunity than government agencies to determine the success or failure of an Overmountain Victory Trail. The degree to which they participate in acquisition, trail construction and maintenance and in management will largely determine what can be accomplished.

The Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA) represents primarily the active participants in the annual reenactments of the march. They have the potential for representing a much broader spectrum of interest groups and individuals including perhaps the most important group, the landowners along the historic route. Other organized groups and individuals should also be afforded the opportunity to participate.

## Specific Alternatives

It is seldom possible to incorporate all of the available and desirable options for action into one realistic action plan. In the case of the Overmountain Victory Trail all of the alternative plans presented are considered feasible. However, based on the conditions as they exist at the time of the trail study, several of the alternatives have more practical and desirable features than others. The following alternative plans are presented:

1. Continuation of existing programs--Status quo to be maintained. Existing authorities and programs to continue without additional Federal legislation.
2. Designation of the historic route as the "Overmountain Victory National Historic Route"--Federal legislation proposed designating the historic route but not as a national scenic or historic trail.
3. Designation of the historic route as the "Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail" with limited State and Federal involvement.
4. Designation as a national historic trail with significant State and Federal involvement and more extensive acquisition and development.

Time available for completion of the study has not permitted a detailed concept development of each alternative. Map Five illustrates these alternatives. Table Two compares some of the important features.

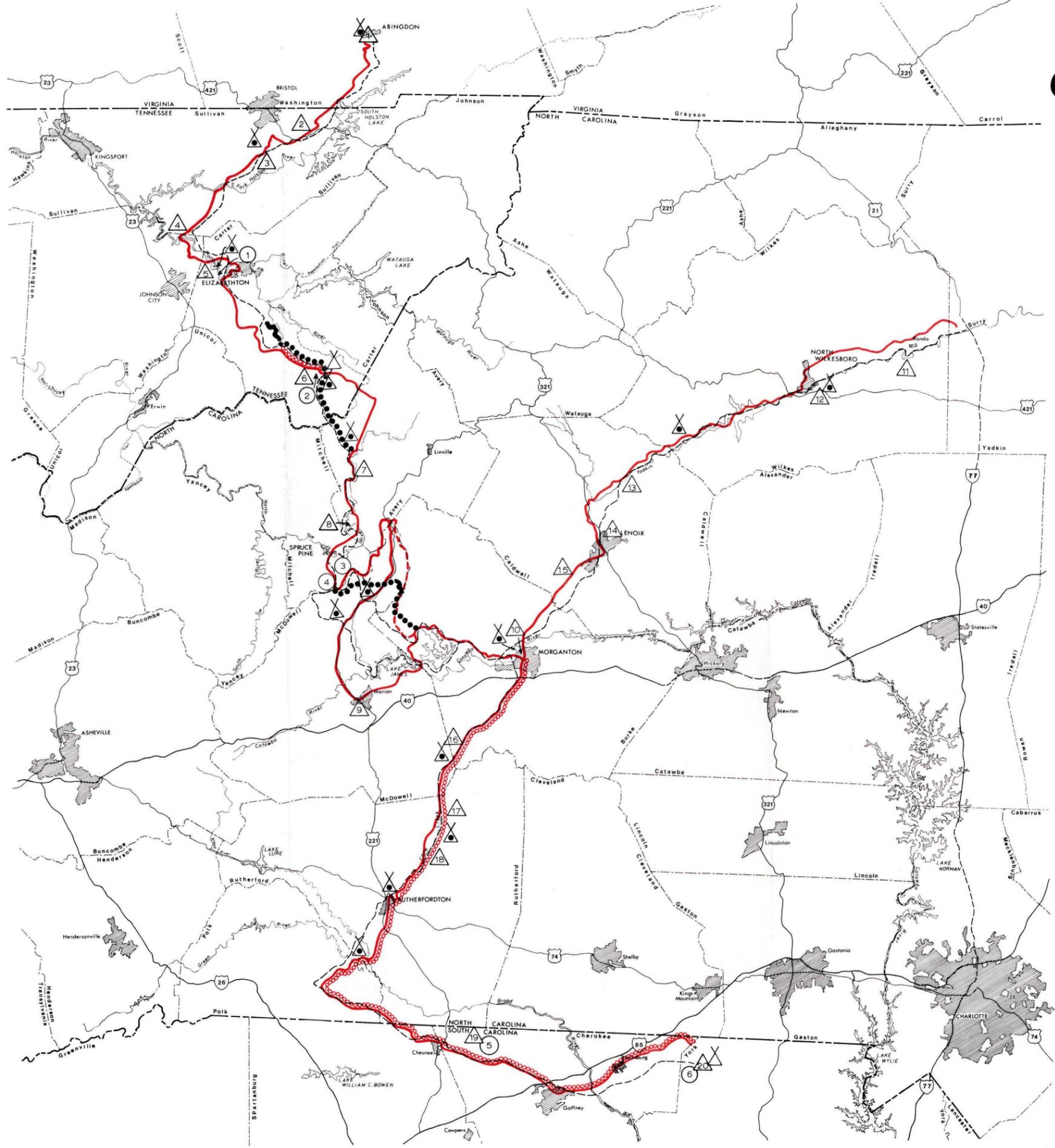
# OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL



1780 — 1980

MAP 5

PLAN ALTERNATIVES



- |                                    |  |   |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| DESIGNATED TRAIL<br>(FOOT & HORSE) |  | POTENTIAL BICYCLE TRAIL                       |  |  |
| POTENTIAL TRAIL<br>(FOOT & HORSE)  |  | UNDEVELOPED HISTORIC CAMPSITE                 |  |  |
| ROUTE USED IN 1780                 |  | EXISTING CAMPGROUND                           |  |  |
| MOTOR TOUR                         |  | HISTORIC SITE<br>(REFER TO TABLE ONE)         |  |  |
| ALTERNATE MOTOR TOUR               |  | STATE & FEDERAL AREAS<br>(REFER TO TABLE TWO) |  |  |

TABLE ONE  
RECREATIONAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1. Abingdon Historic District	Private	Chartered in 1778, this quaint and historic town is the oldest town west of the Blue Ridge. More than 400 men gathered here in September 1780 to begin the Abingdon-Sycamore Shoals portion of the Overmountain Victory March
2. Pemberton Oak	Private	This massive oak was a mustering point for additional men coming to join the growing Overmountain Army. It is still standing today and is thought to be over 500 years old.
3. Fort Womack	Private	On this site stood a frontier fort used by settlers of the area for protection from Indian attacks. The Overmountain Men passed here as they marched to muster at Sycamore Shoals.
4. Rocky Mount	Private	Built between 1770 and 1772, this settlement became the original U.S. Territorial Capitol of the Southwest between 1790 and 1792. It is believed that the Overmountain Men stopped here to obtain supplies as they marched to Sycamore Shoals. Today, it is a museum displaying many artifacts from the early settlement of the region.
5. Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area	State	On September 25, 1780, over 800 Overmountain Men gathered here to begin their march to the Battle of Kings Mountain. Today, this historic park contains a short nature trail along the Watauga River, a full-scale replica of the frontier Fort Watauga, a museum interpreting the culture of the early settlers of the region, and a film telling the story of the Overmountain Men.

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
6. Roan Mountain State Park	State	This State park is situated in one of the most scenic areas of the Southern Appalachians. It currently offers visitors activities such as hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing. By the summer of 1980, tennis courts and an olympic-size swimming pool will be completed. The land within the park is historically significant because the Overmountain Men came through here on their march to Kings Mountain and it is believed that they camped overnight at the so-called "Shelving Rock."
7. Bright's Settlement	Private	This log house located on the North Toe River at Plumtree, North Carolina, is thought to be part of the settlement built by frontiersman William Bright, prior to 1780. The Overmountain Men travelled by here on their way to Kings Mountain.
8. Davenport Springs/ Robert Sevier Gravesite	Private	The Overmountain Men used this spring to replenish their water and rest from their long march. Nearby is the gravesite of Captain Robert Sevier who was mortally wounded at the Battle of Kings Mountain.
9. McDowell House (Marion)	Private	The homesite of Colonel Charles McDowell who fought at the Battle of Kings Mountain. The home is now used as a store.
10. McDowell House (Morganton)	Private	Major Joseph McDowell, one of the leaders of the Overmountain Victory Army, lived on this site. The Overmountain Men camped in the surrounding fields and used McDowell's fence rails for firewood. The house presently on the site is historic in its own right, being built in the early 1800's.
11. Round-About	Private	A prominent turn in the Yadkin River gives the name to this historic site that marks the homesite of Colonel Ben Cleveland, leader of 350 Overmountain Men from Wilkes, Surry, and Caldwell Counties and one of the many heroes at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
12. Tory Oak	Municipal	Colonel Ben Cleveland used the branches of this oak tree to hang Tories during the American Revolution.
13. Fort Defiance	Private	General William Lenoir built this fine log home on the Yadkin River between 1788 and 1792. Prior to this structure, Fort Defiance had been a small frontier fort made of earth and logs and used for protection from the Indians. The Overmountain Men from Wilkes, Surry, and Caldwell Counties passed by here on their march to the Battle of Kings Mountain.
14. Fort Crider	Municipal	Lenoir High School now occupies the spot that was once the site of Fort Crider, one of many frontier forts built for protection from the Indians. The Wilkes, Surry and Caldwell County Overmountain Men stopped here on their march to the Battle of Kings Mountain in September 1780.
15. Littlejohn Meeting House	Private	This church was organized prior to 1780 and the site was in use when the Overmountain Men passed by on their way to Kings Mountain. Its cemetery contains the grave of the first Revolutionary soldier buried in the county.
16. Pilot Mountain	Private	This prominent mountain has long served as a landmark for travellers in the region.
17. Marlin's Knob	Private	Rock outcrops near the top of this high ridgetop peak provide an excellent panorama of the Cane Creek Valley. Both the British and American armies used this knob as a lookout during the Revolutionary War.
18. Andrews House	Private	Built around 1740, this house was used by both British and American forces during the Overmountain Victory March.

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
19. Cowpens National Battlefield	Federal	American forces under General Daniel Morgan defeated Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his British forces here on January 17, 1781. Less than 4 months prior, the Overmountain Men had stopped here to rest before making the final leg of their march to Kings Mountain. The National Park Service now administers this site as a National Battlefield.
20. Kings Mountain National Military Park	Federal	On October 7, 1780, an army of Overmountain Men crushed a British force led by Major Patrick Ferguson. The patriot victory took away the momentum of the British army while restoring vigor and hope to the patriot cause. The victory began a chain of events that culminated in the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in June 1781. Today, the National Park Service administers this historic site as a National Military Park.

TABLE TWO  
STATE AND FEDERAL AREAS

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1. Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area	State	On September 25, 1780, over 800 Overmountain Men gathered here to begin their march to the Battle of Kings Mountain. Today, this historic park contains a short nature trail along the Watauga River, a full-scale replica of the frontier Fort Watauga, a museum interpreting the culture of the early settlers of the region, and a film telling the story of the Overmountain Men.
2. Roan Mountain State Park	State	This State park is situated in one of the most scenic areas of the Southern Appalachians. It currently offers visitors activities such as hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing and by the summer of 1980 tennis courts and an olympic-size swimming pool will be completed. The land within the park is historically significant because the Overmountain Men came through here on their march to Kings Mountain and it is believed that they camped overnight at the so-called Shelving Rock.
3. Blue Ridge Parkway	Federal	Blue Ridge Parkway, a unit of the National Park System, extends 469 miles through the southern Appalachians, past vistas of quiet natural beauty and rural landscapes lightly shaped by the activities of man. Designed especially for motor recreation, the parkway provides quiet, leisurely travel, free from commercial development and congestion of high-speed highways. No ordinary road, it follows mountain crests to link Shenandoah National Park in northern Virginia and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee. The Overmountain Victory Trail intersects the Parkway at Gillespie Gap near Spruce Pine, North Carolina.

SITE	OWNERSHIP	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
4. Museum of North Carolina Minerals	State	Located in Gillespie Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway, this museum displays the numerous minerals found throughout North Carolina.
5. Cowpens National Battlefield	Federal	American forces under General Daniel Morgan defeated Lieutenant Banastre Tarleton and his British forces here, on January 17, 1781. Less than four months prior, the Overmountain Men had stopped here to rest before making the final leg of their march to Kings Mountain. The National Park Service now administers this site as a National Battlefield.
6. Kings Mountain State Park	State	Located adjacent to Kings Mountain National Military Park, this State park provides camping, trails, and water recreation activities.

TABLE THREE  
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

ALTERNATIVE	LOCATION	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	APPROXIMATE ROUTE MILEAGE**				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	A. Abingdon, VA to Sycamore Shoals, TN B. Sycamore Shoals, TN to Quaker Meadows, NC C. Ronda, NC to Quaker Meadows, NC D. Quaker Meadows, NC to Kings Mountain, SC	None B5 Designated Foot and Horse Trail None None					6
		TOTAL					6
2	A. Abingdon, VA to Sycamore Shoals, TN B. Sycamore Shoals, TN to Quaker Meadows, NC  C. Ronda, NC to Quaker Meadows, NC D. Quaker Meadows, NC to Kings Mountain, SC	A1 Motor Route  B1 Motor Route B2 Alternative Motor Route B5 Designated Foot and Horse Trail C1 Motor Route  D1 Motor Route D3 Potential Bicycle Trail	44  115  65  96	16		96	6
		TOTAL	320	16	96		6
3*	A. Abingdon, VA to Sycamore Shoals, TN B. Sycamore Shoals, TN to Quaker Meadows, NC	A1 Motor Route  B1 Motor Route B2 Alternative Motor Route B3 Potential Bicycle Trail B4 Potential Foot and Horse Trail B5 Designated Foot and Horse Trail  95	44  115	16	96	28	6

ALTERNATIVE	LOCATION	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	APPROXIMATE ROUTE MILEAGE**				
			1	2	3	4	5
3* (cont.)	C. Ronda, NC to Quaker Meadows, NC D. Quaker Meadows, NC to Kings Mountain, SC	C1 Motor Route	65				
		D1 Motor Route D3 Potential Bicycle Trail	96		96		
		TOTAL	320	16	192	28	6
4	A. Abingdon, VA to Sycamore Shoals, TN B. Sycamore Shoals, TN to Quaker Meadows, NC  C. Ronda, NC to Quaker Meadows, TN D. Quaker Meadows, NC to Kings Mountain, SC	A1 Motor Route	44				
		B1 Motor Route B2 Alternative Motor Route B3 Potential Bicycle Trail B4 Potential Foot and Horse Trail B5 Designated Foot and Horse Trail C1 Motor Route	115	16	96	28	6
		D1 Motor Route D3 Potential Bicycle Trail	96		96		
		TOTAL	320	16	192	28	6

\* Preferred Alternative

- \*\* 1 - Motor Route  
2 - Alternative Motor Route  
3 - Potential Bicycle Trail  
4 - Potential Foot and Horse Trail  
5 - Designated Foot and Horse Trail

Alternative 1--Continuation of existing programs.

Existing authorities and programs provide a number of ways in which the historic Overmountain Victory march can be commemorated. The story of the march is being told now, in varying degrees, at four State and Federal areas located at key points on the historic route. No trails dedicated to the march currently exist but there are actions underway to establish two trails which would qualify as national recreation trails and there are opportunities to develop additional trails. Several historic points along the route have been recognized and marked under State and Federal historic programs and a number of additional sites could receive further recognition.

The following actions are recommended under Alternative 1:

1. Kings Mountain National Military Park, Cowpens National Battlefield, Sycamore Shoals and Roan Mountain State Parks should increase the level of their interpretation of the march so that the visiting public will have a full understanding and enjoyment of its significance.
2. The Federal, State and local governments involved should cooperate in an active program to further identify, authenticate, give recognition to and preserve the important historic sites relating to the march. Where possible the sites should be made available for enjoyment by the interested public.

3. The Overmountain Victory Trail Association should be encouraged to work actively within its own resources to accomplish the objectives listed under "2", and to develop a cooperative effort with all governmental agencies. The Association has the ability to keep such an effort alive and working towards a suitable commemoration of the march. They should also make special efforts to involve landowners along the trail in their organization and to work closely with other trail and conservation organizations.
  
4. All agencies, organizations and interested individuals are encouraged to locate trail opportunities following the historic route and where possible construct trails which will meet national recreation trail standards. Bicycle trails along highways which have displaced the historic trail should be considered.

Alternative 2--Designation as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Route.

The National Trails System Act does not recognize a "National Historic Route" category but since no trail exists at the present time and a motor tour of the historic points along the route is both feasible and desirable, then such an alternative to trails legislation is an action which should be considered.

The following actions are recommended under Alternative 2.

1. The entire historic route from Sycamore Shoals, Tennessee, to Kings Mountain, South Carolina, together with the branch routes from Abingdon, Virginia, to Sycamore Shoals, Tennessee, and from a point near the Wilkes/Surry county line on the Yadkin River in North Carolina, to Quaker Meadows in Morganton, North Carolina, should be designated as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Route.
2. The National Park Service acting for the Secretary of the Interior should be directed through legislation to establish, mark and maintain the route with the cooperation of the five States involved.
3. Following the concept of Section 5(d) of the National Trails System Act an advisory council should be established to assist the National Park Service in determining the degree of development and administration of the route.
4. The National Park Service should be given authority to identify and acquire or protect important historic sites associated with the route which can be interpreted as a part of a historic motor tour.
5. All of the recommended actions in Alternative 1 can also be incorporated in Alternative 2.

Alternative 3--Designation of the historic route as the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, with limited State and Federal involvement.

The Historic event is of sufficient national significance to merit the title "national historic." The nature of the event, involving an overland march by approximately 1000 frontiersmen following about 200 miles of early roads and trails on foot and horseback, establishes a strong relationship to the purpose of "historic trails." While there are no existing trails along the historic route dedicated to the event, there are two trails in the planning stage and opportunities for many miles of additional trails.

If qualification of the route as a national historic trail is accepted then the major question concerning alternative action plans is the proposed extent of designation, acquisition and development. A related question concerns the degree of involvement by the State and Federal Governments. Alternatives 3 and 4 are essentially the same except for the degree of involvement and extent and method of acquisition and development.

The following actions are recommended under Alternative 3:

1. The entire historic route should be given recognition as the "Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail" but only those segments under control of State or Federal agencies should be listed as initial components of the trail.

2. The initial components would be the designated trails within Kings Mountain National Military Park and Cowpens National Battlefield in South Carolina; the Forest Service trail over Linville Mountain in the Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina, and designated trails in Sycamore Shoals and Roan Mountain State Parks in Tennessee. If the Doe River Gorge/Railroad Grade Trail is sufficiently under control by the State of Tennessee by the time legislation is enacted, it should also be included.
3. A highway marking program should be authorized which would link the initial trail segments and inform the public of their existence. The Federal Government should provide the signs and the States should place and maintain them.
4. Except for the change in the designation as a "historic trail" instead of "historic route" the recommendations in Alternatives 1 and 2 should be incorporated in this alternative.
5. As the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and the five States involved succeed in establishing additional trail segments which meet national trail standards, the Secretary of the Interior should be authorized by legislation to add the segments to the designated trail.
6. Administration by the National Park Service with joint management by the Forest Service and the involved States would essentially be the same as in Alternative 2.

Alternative 4--Designation as a national historic trail with significant State and Federal involvement and more extensive acquisition and development.

The emphasis in Alternative 3 was on public recognition, establishing some initial trail segments and incorporating historic sites along the route with a highway marking program. Additions would largely come from the efforts of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and other interested organizations and individuals.

Alternative 4 proposes a much more active role by State and Federal agencies, particularly the National Park Service.

All the actions in Alternative 3 are recommended with the following additions and modifications:

1. The initial trail and historic site components would be authorized as in alternative 3 but the National Park Service and Forest Service would be authorized and funded by the legislation to actively acquire land and seek agreements with landowners along the route for right-of-way to construct the trail. They would also be authorized and funded to protect and where necessary acquire important historic sites along the trail, construct and maintain trail and access points, as well as manage and protect the trail.
2. The States would be expected to share the Federal burden particularly in the long segments where bicycle trails along existing highways are the only feasible options for trail development. The amount of bicycle

trail mileage within the study area is flexible. Eventually, it is suggested that as much as 70 percent of the trail corridor be provided with bicycle trails paralleling and, where possible following the historic route. Bicycle trails should be phased over time as the States and Federal Government are able to afford the costs involved.

3. The Overmountain Victory Trail Association and other organizations and individuals would still play a very important role in this alternative. Through the advisory council they would shape policy and direction as well as take the lead in identifying trail segments and historic sites which should be added to the trail. In many cases Overmountain Victory Trail Association members would make the initial contacts with property owners and negotiate the type of agreement to be used--easement or purchase when appropriate.
4. The ultimate extent of trail development under this alternative is not predictable at this time. Map Five gives an indication of what might be possible given sufficient funds, time and a great deal of cooperation at all levels. Table Three provides information on the possible mix in trail types and other data.

### Preferred Alternative

Alternative 3 has been selected as the most likely to succeed in providing suitable public recognition for the historic event and eventually in providing the interested visitor with the opportunity for a trail oriented recreation experience.

Alternatives 1 and 2 fall short of the intent of the National Trails System Act. Alternative 4 would probably assure a more complete trail at an earlier date if it received approval and received the necessary funding. There might also be a negative reaction to Alternative 4 by landowners.

The key to the success of the preferred alternative lies in gaining the cooperation and support of all levels. Federal and State agencies would have an important role to play but the Overmountain Victory Trail Association along with other organizations and interested individuals would have the major responsibility.

In the preferred alternative (Alternative 3) the National Park Service would have overall administrative responsibility. The Forest Service and the States would manage trail segments within their jurisdictions. The advisory council would provide a platform that would enable the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and its supporters to function with Federal and State backing.

The Superintendent of Kings Mountain National Military Park is the most logical individual to serve as the responsible administrator for the trail. He and his park staff would be able to absorb much of the added work load of

trail administration. Assistance from other advisory council members should further reduce the need for new staffing requirements.

This plan provides for very little "on-the-ground" trail at the time of designation but opens the door to the acquisition and development of a significant Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The short trails within Sycamore Shoals, Roan Mountain, Cowpens and Kings Mountain can be augmented within a short time by the Forest Service Yellow Mountain Road Trail across Linville Mountain and Tennessee's Doe River/Railroad Grade Trail. The proposed highway marking system will serve to orient visitors wishing to follow the historic route by motor vehicle until additional trail segments can be provided.

The emphasis in acquisition of trail right-of-way will be on obtaining donated easements from landowners who may find great satisfaction in having a historic trail dedicated to a significant Revolutionary War event located on their land. To support land acquisition efforts, the legislation should specify that the Federal side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund could be utilized by the Forest Service and National Park Service to pay for easements or purchase costs if landowners would rather sell than donate. The States involved could also use their side of the Fund to develop trail as well as to acquire right-of-way.

Emphasis will also be placed on building landowner confidence in the right-of-way acquisition process by encouraging the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and other private organizations and foundations to

initiate most of the negotiations. The National Park Service, Forest Service and States will provide technical, administrative and financial assistance but avoid any appearance of government pressure on landowners to give up land rights. Condemnation should not be considered.

Development of additional trail should pose no major problems. Emphasis here, as in acquisition of trail right-of-way, would be on the use of existing programs and fostering a large volunteer effort. Interest in the trail can be greatly stimulated by volunteer participation in construction and maintenance. Financing should come from regular appropriations of the National Park Service, Forest Service and the States. Funding should keep pace with the rate of acquisition to be most effective and should be available to support volunteer efforts as well as Federal and State youth and young adult programs.

The plan, at present, must remain quite general since there is no way to predict how rapidly and to what extent the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, the States and particularly the landowners along the route will respond. This should not be cause for concern. Too great an effort to structure a plan at the Federal level could create conflicts at the levels where the action will take place. The plan does identify the location of the historic route and many of the opportunities for establishing a trail which will meet national historic trail requirements. Flexibility in the development of a final plan will assist the advisory council in functioning as a "working" organization rather than an "honorary" body.

Map Five, previously shown, and Table Two give a reasonable concept of the plan. The National Trails System Act asks for more definitive data on acquisition, development and maintenance costs than can be provided at this point in the planning process. It is hoped that the costs of foot and horse trail segments will be relatively low if response to the plan is positive. Volunteer and youth program costs should be insignificant compared to commercial contracts on purchased right-of-way.

Bicycle trail segments would be more expensive. Existing highway rights-of-way can be utilized but construction costs for a separated bicycle lane are significant. The most economic approach would be for the States and counties to plan the construction of bicycle lanes to coincide with resurfacing projects. Road shoulders nearly always need to be graded and raised during these projects and the widening to accommodate a bicycle lane would not pose as much extra work at that time. The bicycle lane will also serve as an improved safety factor for motor vehicles as compared to gravel or grassed road shoulders.

The Act also asks for data concerning the number of anticipated visitor days on the entire length of the trail (as well as the individual segments), the relative land uses, economic and social benefits and the man years of employment generated by the proposed plan. Because there is no trail in use at present and there is no way to predict the rate of acquisition and development, there would be absolutely no reliability or

value in trying to generate such data. The intent of this part of the Trails Act is to determine if the proposed plan would provide adequate benefits for the costs incurred. There would appear to be adequate safeguards built into the proposed plan to assure a justifiable cost-benefit relationship. Each segment added to the trail will have a major advisory board and interested citizen involvement, including landowners. State and Federal funds allocated to the proposal will have to be justified in the regular annual budget process. Authorizing legislation should recognize this process as valid and not place unwarranted and restrictive limitations on the budget process.

#### Impact of Proposal

The National Trails System Act requires an evaluation of the anticipated impact of public outdoor recreation use on the preservation of a proposed national historic trail and its related historic and archeological features and settings. The Act calls for an examination of the measures proposed to ensure evaluation and preservation of the values that contribute to its national historic significance. Any impact of the proposal on the environment should also be evaluated.

The historic event left very little "trail" to preserve. The existing frontier roads and trails the mountain men followed have been replaced by modern roads which continued as transportation routes and by other land uses unrelated to transportation uses. The few remnants such as the Yellow

Mountain road over Linville Mountain will be treated with great care to preserve and interpret not only the one-time military march but also the historic transportation routes of the revolutionary period.

Historic buildings and other sites along the route were only incidental to the march and battle at Kings Mountain at the time the event took place. However, 200 years later existing buildings and landmarks which relate in any way to that period or to the participants have become historically interesting and significant. Care must be taken to keep historic places and objects in proper perspective. A long range program of historic research should be made a part of the adopted management plan to assist in locating and preserving as many of the significant sites and objects as possible and practical. All individual development plans for trail segment additions should be preceded by careful historical and archeological investigations.

None of the described alternatives should result in adverse impacts to historic or archeologic resources if the above precautions are taken. Only a complete "no action" approach which would ignore these values and accept an uninformed and unguided future would have adverse effects

The impact of the alternatives on social and economic values in the area would be in direct proportion to the degree of acceptance and support each alternative received. A major surge in interest could have a very beneficial effect. Increased community interest would respect property owners

needs and desires and should generate a spirit of community pride. There is no way to estimate the extent of financial gain to individuals and communities that protection and restoration of historic features and construction of trail segments would generate. Certainly as interest increases and more people are involved, economic values will also increase. There is nothing to indicate that establishing trail segments or protecting historic sites would have any adverse social or economic impacts.

No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated. Any direct impacts caused by trail construction activities must be weighed against the probable future of the area through which the trail passes. In the general case of a national trail with the attention focused upon it and the standards of construction and maintenance imposed on it, there is every reason to expect that long-range environmental conditions will be an improvement over conditions that would exist if the trail were not established.

In the specific case of the Overmountain Victory Trail, the areas through which trail segments may be established are in much greater danger from other developments than from trail construction. This does not provide an excuse to consider lowering any environmental standards when trail segments are established. Great care will be exercised to assure a better environment at the completion of a project than at its beginning.



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

75 Spring Street, S.W.

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L58-SER-PA

Dear Reviewer:

I am pleased to send you a copy of the first draft of the National Park Service report on the Overmountain Victory Trail Study. It is being sent to a large number of agencies and individuals who have expressed an interest in the study and who we feel can provide us with a critical review of the results.

The study has been conducted on a severely shortened schedule in order to have a final report ready for Congressional consideration prior to the Bicentennial celebration of the Battle of Kings Mountain in October of this year. We realize that the report is not as complete as it should be and that factual material has not been checked as closely as it should have been. For this reason, we ask that you provide us not only with a review that will point out deficiencies, but also provide corrections and additional material that will enable us to prepare a final report of the quality the Overmountain Victory Trail deserves.

We also realize that you might not agree with all of our study findings and recommendations. If you feel that other conclusions should have been reached, or that other recommendations would be more realistic, please tell us.

Because we are still hoping to have a final report cleared and ready for Congressional consideration by June 1, 1980, we will need your review comments by March 15. If you can provide them earlier, it will help. Your comments will be considered in preparing a revised draft of the report that will be cleared through the Director of the National Park Service. The report will then be sent out for official review by the Federal and State agencies cooperating in the study, the Governors of the five involved States, the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, the Appalachian Consortium and other organizations who express a particular interest during this initial review. Comments received during the official review will be incorporated into a final report to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior before it can be sent to the President and Congress.

I think you can see that there is a tremendous amount of work to be accomplished in a short time if we are to succeed in giving Congress the opportunity to act on the Overmountain Victory Trail before October 7, 1980. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Luther S. Winsor".

Luther S. Winsor, Chief  
Resource Area Studies Division  
Southeast Region

Enclosure

