Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

Commemorative Motor Route

Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail begins on Colonial Road in Abingdon, Virginia. March reenactors assemble here each September 23rd.

The commemorative motor route passes through mostly rural countryside. Each year the march reenactment proceeds both on foot and in cars, allowing those not wishing to walk to join.

Days of the March

September 12, 1780, Charles McDowell ambushed part of Ferguson's army at Cane Creek but was driven off and fled to Sycamore Shoals (Elizabethton, TN) to await reinforcement by the Overmountain men.

In late September, 1780, William and cousin Arthur Campbell assembled Washington County, Virginia, militia.

1. September 25th, 1780,Shelby, Sevier, and Campbell mustered the militia of the Watauga and Holston Valleys at Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga River (Elizabethton) to join Burke County militia under Charles McDowell. Fort Watauga is today reconstructed at the Tennessee Historic Area. In 1780, this was North Carolina, later Franklin (or Frankland), later Southwest Territory.

2. September 26, 1780, the army spent its first night at Shelving Rock, storing their powder out of the rain.

3. September 27, 1780, snow fell on Roan Mountain as the army crossed. Yellow Mountain Gap, at 4,682 feet, is the highest point on the trail. Here two men deserted to warn Ferguson of the Patriot army.

4. October 1 and 2, 1780, the army stopped to dry out and prepare for battle expected soon. Unpopular Charles McDowell was persuaded to step aside as commander. William Campbell, not from North Carolina, was chosen as a compromise replacement. McDowell rode to ask for a Continental officer to command.

5. October 3, 1780, the army camped beneath Marlin's Knob beside Cane Creek. South Carolina Patriots under William Hill and Edward Lacey were camped nearby at Flint Hill (Cherry Mountain).

6. October 4, 1780, entering Gilbert Town, they found Ferguson had left, possibly headed towards Ninety Six in South Carolina.

7. October 5, 1780, reassured they were following Ferguson, the army proceeded to the Green River, away from Kings Mountain. Small parties of Georgians under William Candler and North Carolinians under William Chronicle joined the Overmountain men. Early the next morning, Edward Lacey rode in with news they were headed away from Ferguson.

8. October 6,1780, finally convinced Ferguson headed east toward Charlotte, the men with the best horses raced off to meet with Lacey and Hill's South Carolinians.

9. The two groups united the evening of October 6th at Cowpens. Eating a hasty meal, the parties pushed on through a rainy night.

10. October 7, 1780, at dawn the Patriot army successfully crossed the flooding Broad River at Cherokee Ford.

11. At about 3:00 p.m. the same day, the Patriots found Ferguson's Loyalist army on Kings Mountain. The two sides fiercely contested the wooded slopes until Ferguson was shot from his horse, killed with some 120 of his men. The Patriots suffered 90 casualties: 28 killed

12. During the return, October 14, 1780, at Biggerstaff's Old Fields (Bickerstaff's or Red Chimneys) 30 Tories were tried. Nine were hanged, the others spared.

Many of the Patriot militia who fought at Kings Mountain returned to Cowpens January 17, 1781, to help Daniel Morgan defeat another brash young British commander, Banastre Tarleton.

Wilkes-Surry branch of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail begins in Elkin, North Carolina.

Citizens' Trail Honoring a Citizen Army

In 1975, local citizens, many descendants of those Patriots and Loyalists, determined to march the route again as part of the American Revolutionary Bicentennial celebrations. From these first efforts came the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA) which carried petitions along the route collecting thousands of signatures requesting national trail status. In September 1980, just before the October 7th 200th anniversary of the battle, the route was designated a national historic trail.

Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail follows the route of assembly of the American Patriot army which decisively defeated an American Loyalist army at the battle of Kings Mountain, South Carolina, in the dark days of the fall of 1780.

The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail covers some 220 miles from Abingdon, Virginia, through Eastern Tennessee, over the high mountains of North Carolina, across the Piedmont of North and South Carolina, to the Kings Mountain National Military Park. A 70-mile branch from Wilkes-Surry joins the main route near its center at Quaker Meadows (Morganton, North Carolina). Three routes are designated: the true historic route, now often inaccessible, the route used by OVTA each year, and the public motor route over highways.

One Trail, Many Efforts

Part of the National Trails System, the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a cooperative effort of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, OVTA, local governments, local citizens' associations, local historical societies, and the states of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Legend

- Commemorative Motor Route
- Mountain
- Point of Interest
- Interstate Highway
- US Highway
- State Highway – North Carolina
- State Highway – South Carolina
- State Highway – Tennessee
- State Highway – Virginia

Overmountain Victory National Historical Trail Map Area

OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL 1780 ™