



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

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On the Path

Welcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

In September 1780 a military campaign began which ended in the decisive American victory at Kings Mountain. Historians agree that the battle, resulting from the courageous actions and decisions over two weeks by spirited, Patriot frontier militiamen, was a turning point in our War for Independence.

On September 8, 1980 the President of the United States signed congressional legislation creating a trail to commemorate the campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain, a series of important benchmarks in American history. 2005 marks the silver anniversary of the establishment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and the 225th anniversary of the event it commemorates.

The National Park Service has administered the Trail since its creation 25 years ago. Working with a variety of partners the route is being developed for public use. As of 2004, visitors can access 47 miles of varied length trail sections of the pathway. This publication contains articles about some of the successes associated with those efforts in the past year.

Additional segments will continue to be added, eventually resulting in a 330-mile trail following as closely as practical that followed by the Overmountain men in 1780. On behalf of the National Park Service I invite you to relive history and to walk a portion of the route. Also, if you or your organization have ideas about how you can participate, please contact us. We welcome your interest in, and support of, the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

- Paul Carson, Superintendent

A Walk In the Woods

US Forest Service dedicates trail in Pisgah National Forest

The setting was perfect—early fall on a sun-bright day deep in the solitude of a North Carolina forest. The quiet was only slightly disturbed as the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. (OVTA) marchers climbed their way from North Cove to the spot where Forest Service Trail 308 crossed Hwy 106 in the middle of the Pisgah National Forest. On this date 224 years earlier, ancestors of



OVTA marchers advance into the Pisgah National Forest along a new section of the OVNHT.

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A New First Step in a Historic Direction

Land owner puts first Virginia trail segment on ground

In 1780, the Virginia militiamen bound for the muster grounds at Sycamore Shoals first gathered at Craig's Meadow (a.k.a. Dunn's Meadow today). From there they proceeded south along Wolf Creek and then continued their trek south.



Abingdon's Mayor Lois Humphreys watches as EH Bowers receives his Trail Award from OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson.

On September 24, 2004 the citizens of Abingdon witnessed another first. Through the generosity of Mr. E.H. Bowers, Virginia now has its first stretch of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail lying on land dedicated for that purpose.

"It is a great beginning," said long time trail advocate and OVTA

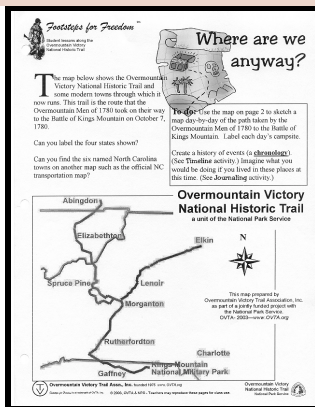
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A Continuing Revolution

A curricula-based education program about the Overmountain Men keeps on teaching

New generations are continuing to learn about the Patriot heroes in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution.

Last year, the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. (OVTA) partnered with Kings Mountain District Schools (now part of Cleveland County Schools) to develop a curricula-based education program. It was jointly funded through the NPS's Challenge Cost Share Program.



Example page of materials created for teachers to use with students.

Those extensive and comprehensive educational materials have been published and distributed to interested teachers throughout the trail's four-state area. All teachers continue to access the PDF materials through the official OVNHT website at www.NPS.gov/ovi. The materials can be found under "Management Documents." They include vocabulary lessons, reading materials, quiz games, writing and math exercises, outdoor activities and the 12-episode serial *Footsteps for Freedom*. All the exercises tie into goals set out by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for Social Studies.



Students write in their journals about the Overmountain Men

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some of these marchers had ridden horses along this same path toward an uncertain future.



Bob Benner helped lay out the historic trail in 1975.

But today, the events of the morning were set. Citizens gathered for a special ceremony to dedicate just over four miles of trail that lies on US Forest Service land in McDowell and Burke counties. Andy Webb, representing McDowell County commissioners and Maynard Taylor representing Burke County each offered their congratulations for the continued success of certifying and dedicating additional segments of the Trail in their counties. Susan Tillotson, Superintendent of NC State Parks, in her remarks to the group offered her support for additional segments of the OVNHT which could soon be included within the Lake James State Park addition. Everyone attending was encouraged about prospects for adding to the OVNHT in this area.

Miera Crawford, District Ranger, Grandfather Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest greeted all the attendees and served as the master of ceremonies. Through her efforts, this segment of the OVNHT was becoming a reality. Even though Forest Service Trail 308 is on public land, the dedication process brings with it protections that will prevent this historic route from being disturbed by certain forest management practices that might otherwise be applied to the area.

Stepping forward to address those gathered on behalf of OVTA, Mike Dahl reminded the crowd, "When we lose a piece of the trail, we can never again stand in that spot and tell the story quite as well as we could before. Preserving the trail and telling the story are the reasons OVTA was

organized. And for 30 years we have walked and talked, helping keep alive this story from America's heritage." Also attending was Butch Hogan, who in 1975 had served as one of the first marshals for the initial commemorative march.



Mike Dahl (l), a 25+ - year marcher, meets Butch Hogan, a marshal in the 1975 march.

In his dedicatory remarks, Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent said, "By preserving this pathway for future generations we have made our nation a little richer by ensuring that our cultural heritage will continue to educate, provoke, and inspire." It was clear to all those attending that more communities all along the trail were being inspired to participate. By helping put walkable trail on the ground they are involving themselves in a worthwhile effort that will connect their community with others through celebration of this shared story from America's heritage. ●



OVNHT Superintendent Paul Carson and USFS District Ranger Miera Crawford celebrate the new trail segment

A First Step — a Journey Renewed

OVNHT grew from the efforts of a small group in 1975

The six-year effort that gave birth to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in 1980 began in Boone, NC with the passion two men had for celebrating a heroic tale of America's patriotic past. In 1974, Robert L. "Rip" Collins wrote an article for the Appalachian Consortium's newsletter about Bright's Trace. Hearing Collins later explain that this trail was part of a larger tale of America's Revolutionary War experience, Consortium director Borden Mace developed with Collins the idea to commemorate the 1780 campaign of the "overmountain men" with a re-

enactment walk. Collins carefully researched the records and located the historic campsites. He then organized a series of county marshals from Sycamore Shoals to Kings Mountain. The marshals marked the route Collins had mapped and recruited

Tom Gray (l) and Rip Collins listen as Bob Harman signals the muster of marchers in 1975.



local participants. The commemorative marchers mustered on September 25, 1975 at Sycamore Shoals. With the blowing of a cow's horn, the marchers started toward Kings Mountain. They

carried with them a Bible, the horn, and a scroll that people signed along the way. Having passed these items to

marchers in successive counties, Collins and the final group of marchers presented these items to Vice President Nelson Rockefeller who greeted them at Kings Mountain, NC along with 20,000 spectators.

Capitalizing on America's Bicentennial spirit, Collins and Mace recruited Harry J. Smith, 1975's Safety Marshal, to serve as Grand Marshal in 1976. Despite rain on 12 of 13 days, thousands gathered at points along the march route and 17 walked the entire way.

Frustrated in their later attempts to get state recognition for the trail, a core group created and chartered the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. Successive marches were led by Grand Marshals Bill Stronach in '77, Tom Gray in '78, Charley Goble in '79, and Dennis "Stumper" Kline in 1980.

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Photo: Johnson City Press-Chronicle, 1975

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marcher Blair Keller. "We have eleven miles of this historic route lying in Virginia. After the national historic trail was designated 24 years ago, we are delighted today to have this stretch dedicated as a permanent commemoration of the efforts of these American heroes."



OVTA marchers fire commemorative volleys to honor the Virginia militiamen of 1780 and give Mr. Bowers three "huzzas."

In addition to Mr. Bowers, the trail dedication ceremony was attended by members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA), the Sons of the American Revolution, and by Abingdon Mayor Lois Humphreys. Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, shared the history of events connected with this trail and presented plaques to Mr. Bowers, the Town of Abingdon and Abingdon Stockyards.

The trail along Wolf Creek is accessible south of the town's wastewater treatment plant. For access when the gates are locked, the trail was routed around the plant on land owned by Abingdon Stockyards, Inc. The pathway was built with the help of members of the local chapter of OVTA and through the efforts of Austin Bridwell whose work served as his Eagle Scout service project.

Mr. Bowers said he was delighted to contribute his land for this commemorative purpose. The property lies along Wolf Creek through a narrow, scenic gorge. It contains an old roadbed and the historic path taken by these Virginia militiamen in 1780.

Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, said, "Having this segment of trail on the ground is a significant part of this community's efforts to support the OVNHT and to commemorate these Revolutionary



Bob Wolf (l) celebrates the new trail with fellow local OVTA members Blair Keller (c) and Gene Cunningham (r) who both rode to Kings Mountain on horseback in the 1980 bicentennial reenactment.

War heroes. We are working already with other land owners in the area and expect to add more trail in Virginia during this year. These landowners are excited to be a part of this patriotic project. Their voluntary, willing participation is what makes this historic trail so special."●



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

This is the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and how they helped win America's independence.

Late September 1780

September 12, Burke County (NC) militiamen under the command of Charles McDowell skirmished with a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army at Cane Creek, then retreat over the Appalachian Mountains to Sycamore Shoals.

As a prisoner of war released by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Patriot militiaman Samuel Phillips delivers Ferguson's threatening message to Isaac Shelby in the overmountain regions of NC. Isaac Shelby rides 40 miles to the home of John Sevier to talk about the threat. The men agree to send messengers to call for a muster of militia at Sycamore Shoals (today's Elizabethton, TN).

September 24 – Colonel William Campbell leaves Craig's Meadow (today's Abingdon, VA) with 200 Virginia militiamen. Colonel Arthur Campbell leads another group of 200. They ride along the Watauga Road.

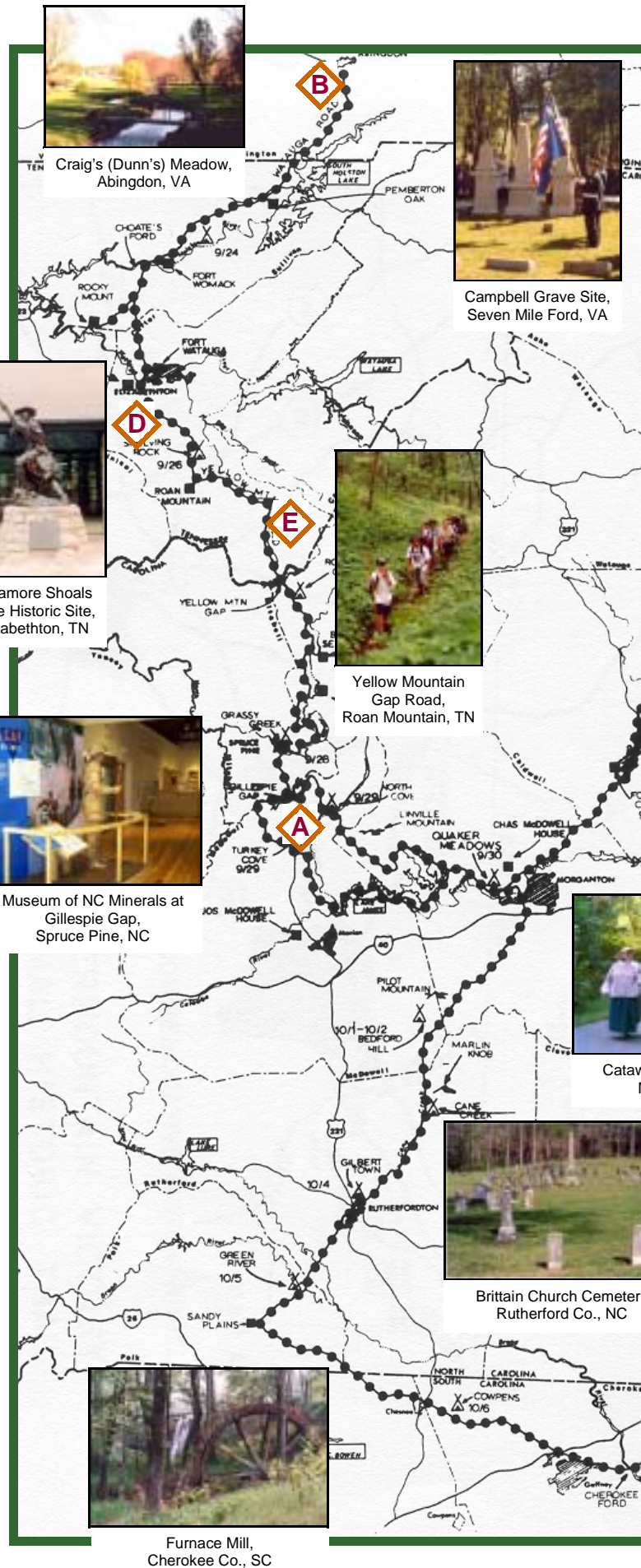
September 25 – Four-hundred eighty militiamen from the Overmountain regions of North Carolina (today's Tennessee) muster at Sycamore Shoals with the militiamen from Virginia and 160 militiamen from Burke Co.

September 26 – The Overmountain Men ride toward the mountains driving a herd of cattle to feed their army; they camp at Shelving Rock, storing their powder beneath the rock ledge to keep it dry.

September 27 – Overmountain Men "Cross the Roan" through the Yellow Mountain Gap after slaughtering beeves and preparing the meat. At the top of the mountain saddle, they parade in "snow shoe-mouth deep" and take roll. Two men with Tory leanings are discovered missing. The Overmountain Men camp along Roaring River. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Major Joseph Winston and Colonel Benjamin Cleaveland ride upstream along the Yadkin River toward Quaker Meadows.

September 28 – Overmountain Men move south along the North Toe River and camp where it joins Grassy Creek (near today's Spruce Pine).

September 29 – Patriots divide into two groups near Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue Ridge Mountains following separate routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.





Yadkin River Greenway,
North Wilkesboro, NC



OVNHT along Yadkin River,
Elkin, NC



W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir,
Wilkes Co, NC



Yadkin River Greenway
Morganton, NC



Locator Map



Kings Mountain
National Military Park,
York Co., SC

September 30 – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride along separate routes near the Catawba River and reunite along the way. They camp at Quaker Meadows where they are joined by the Wilkes-Surry militia and others. The spirit of the men is lifted as the band of Patriots grows in number.

October 1 – The combined army of over 1400 militiamen head south toward Gilbert Town (near today's Rutherfordton) where they expect to find Ferguson's army. Because of heavy rain, the Patriots stop in the late afternoon at Bedford Hill in South Mountain Gap.

October 2 – Continuing rain keeps the men in camp this day. The Patriot leaders meet and elect William Campbell as their commander.

October 3 – The Patriot militiamen prepare for battle and move toward Gilbert Town along Cane Creek. They do not pitch camp; the men sleep on their arms.

October 4 – The Patriots arrive in Gilbert Town to find that Ferguson is already gone. The militia leaders send out scouts and continue south to learn if Ferguson is heading for the fort at Ninety-Six (SC) or for Charlotte (NC).

October 5 – The Patriots head southwest and camp at Alexander's Ford on the Green River. They learn from scouts that Ferguson is marching toward Charlotte and the protection of Cornwallis's army.

October 6 – The Patriots ride southeast toward Cowpens where they are joined by militiamen from South Carolina, Georgia and Lincoln Co., NC. They learn that Ferguson is only 35 miles away, camped at Kings Mountain. The leaders pick the 900 best marksmen and the 900 fastest horses. At 9:00 P.M. these Patriot militiamen ride into the night as a cold rain continues to fall.

October 7 – Having ridden all night and forded the rain-swollen Broad River, the Patriot army encircles Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in "one heroic hour" captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriot losses are small: 28 killed and 65 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded, some 800 captured. Cornwallis's left flank is destroyed.

Epilogue – With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved into Virginia; just 12 months and 12 days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered the British forces to the Continental Army under General George Washington, on Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA. ●

Mustering the Troops

Elkin celebrates its Patriot heroes

On Saturday, September 25 the Town of Elkin hosted its second annual celebration of the mustering of Patriot militia on their way to the Battle of Kings Mountain. Gathering in Elkin Municipal Park, citizens and visitors commemorated the assembling of militia from Wilkes and Surry counties who rode off to Quaker Meadows and eventually Kings Mountain. The audience was treated to a militia encampment provided by the Backcountry Militia from Kings Mountain National Military Park and to the stirring music of the Deep River Pipes and Drums.

The morning's official ceremonies were emceed by Lestine Hutchens, mayor pro-tem of Elkin. Duke Power Company was recognized for its donation of land to the Town of Elkin for a future wayside where visitors will be able to enjoy a display about the OVNHT. Interface Fabrics, Inc. was also recognized for its certification of a trail segment within the community.

Former Senator Jim Broyhill spoke to the gathering and reminded the audience of the sacrifice and courage of these Patriot militiamen. Senator Broyhill introduced the bill in Congress to create the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in 1980.

The celebration concluded with the firing of a ceremonial volley to honor Patriots of Wilkes and Surry counties. ●



(clockwise from top) Backcountry Militia musters new "recruits," Deep River Pipes and Drums, Sen. Jim Broyhill speaks to the crowd, Lestine Hutchens receives plaque from Duke Power donating land to Elkin for a wayside exhibit, Child learns about weaving, Re-enactor Buck Jolly explains how a black-powder longrifle fires.

A New Foothold on the Trail

Roan Mountain dedicates new trail along Doe River

Along the Doe River flowing through today's Roan Mountain, Tennessee 1,000 mounted militiamen passed on September 26, 1780 as they approached the end of their first day riding from Sycamore Shoals. They camped in the fields near Shelving Rock beneath which they stored their powder to keep it dry. The next day they would cross the Appalachians through Yellow Mountain Gap not knowing exactly what dangers lay beyond.

Today, visitors to the Town of Roan

Mountain can walk in the footsteps of these patriot heroes along the banks of the Doe River. Thanks to the efforts of many in the community, a segment of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail now runs through Roan Mountain Community Park. This important link in the chain of certified trail segments will serve to

encourage other communities and landowners to connect

new trail to that which has already been designated. This will enable future visitors to walk along the Doe River for an extended hike and to relive the experience of those Patriot heroes over 200 years ago.



OVTA fires a volley at Roan Mountain Community Park to honor the 1780 Patriots.

Though several people were involved in the process to create the trail, Chris Schuettler, Director of Carter County Planning and Zoning, was recognized for his continuing efforts to champion the project and make it a reality in this the 24th year as a National Historic Trail. ●



Officials and volunteers at Roan Mountain celebrate designation of the OVNHT Trail along the Doe River.

A Map to the Future Trail

Wayside exhibits and a new trail map set for 2005

During 2005, the official visitor use map of the OVNHT will be released by the National Park Service. (The current map in popular use is for only the Commemorative Motor Route.)



Detail from current Commemorative Motor Route map

The new map will be used in creating new exhibits that are planned for installation this year as well.

"This is not a static, one-look map," says trail Superintendent Paul Carson.

"The NPS

Interpretive Center at Harper Ferry is creating a digital, multi-layered map file that can be manipulated to display several levels of detail at one time or to isolate relevant information. We are excited to have this important tool for creating visitor use maps available at this time in the Trail's development."

Along with the map's development, 2005 will see the installation of several wayside exhibits along the trail. New exhibits will appear on the eastern leg of the trail at W. Kerr Scott Reservoir, at Cowpens National Battlefield and Kings Mountain NMP. A new trailhead exhibit in Elkin, NC will be erected near the muster field where Joseph Winston's militia gathered.

The Commemorative Motor Route continues to be an important opportunity for visitors to experience the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. During 2004, roadways in Tennessee were completely marked with the official OVNHT signs. The route has been recently marked in

Hampton Creek Cove Connects History

OVNHT partners with State of Tennessee to create trail segment up Yellow Mountain adjacent to historic route

One of the most heroic aspects of the Campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain is the Crossing of the Roan. In 1780, the men rode along Yellow Mountain Gap Road and, according to contemporary accounts, arrived at the crest of the mountains in snow "shoe-mouth deep." It was there they discovered that two men known to have Tory leanings were missing and, as it was later learned, had deserted to warn Ferguson of the approaching army of Patriot militiamen.

When Congress designated the OVNHT, it specified that the official trail follow within a corridor one-half mile on either side of the historic route. Thus when Bob Hardin, trail liaison for OVTA, saw Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area, he



Members of OVTA fire a volley in the Hampton Creek meadow saluting the militiamen who traveled here in 1780.

also saw the opportunity to build additional walking trail that would link with the historic route over Yellow Mountain Gap. He worked with the National Park Service, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, and the Southern Highlands Nature Conservancy to help establish this important trail segment which also provides access to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

South Carolina and Virginia as well through agreements with the state departments of transportation.

"In the coming year," adds Paul

On September 27, representatives from all these organizations, as well as landowners and members of the community gathered for the certification of a new trail segment that now enables hikers public access through a nature preserve to the Yellow Mountain Gap.

Additional trail to be built on US Forest Service land during 2005 will connect with historic Yellow Mountain Gap and thus link together significant stretches of the OVNHT.

The new trail segment passes through landscapes similar to that which the mounted militiamen would have experienced more than two centuries ago. As the contemporary account records, "there was a road; but not one on which wagons could pass." The actual historic route from the west follows today's paved Hampton Creek Cove Road and then crosses private property on the western face of the mountains. The new segment of dedicated trail is within a half-mile of this historic route and enables reenactors, hikers, and the public to experience the landscape of this historic episode in the story. ●



Lisa Huff of the TN Dept. of Environment and Conservation and Herb Roberts of TN State Parks accept the NPS certification.

Carson, "we hope to see even more interpretation along the trail to enhance visitors' experiences and to improve their understanding of the story told by the Trail." ●

Patriots for Partners

Trail partners are taking big steps together

Business consultants tell us that an organization is formed when a task is more than one person can do alone. That is certainly true when it comes to building the OVNHT.

Today, dozens of organizations are working together across four states to build the commemorative Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). In fact, today the Trail has over 100 partners and more are joining every month! Here are some of the trail's partners:

Virginia

Numerous Private Landowners
Virginia DOT
Virginia Department of Tourism
Virginia Department of Historical Resources
Town of Abingdon
Washington County Historical Society
Washington County



Tennessee

Numerous Private Landowners
Tennessee DOT
Town of Elizabethton
Carter County
Sullivan County
Southern Appalachian Greenway Alliance
Tennessee Department of Tourism
Roan Mountain State Park
Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area
Rocky Mount State Historic Site
Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area



Cherokee National Forest – U.S.F.S
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Appalachian National Scenic Trail
Appalachian Trail Club

North Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners
NCDOT
NC Dept. of Cultural Resources
NC Dept. of Tourism
Pisgah National Forest – U.S. Forest Service
Blue Ridge Parkway – NPS
The Altapass Foundation
McDowell County
Wilkes County
Brittain Church
McDowell County Historical Society
Historic Burke Foundation, Inc.
Wilkes County Historical Society
Surry County Historical Society
Rutherford County Historical Society
Lake James State Park
Fort Defiance Historic Site
Yadkin River Greenway
Catawba River Greenway
Duke Power Company
Crescent Land Corp.
Unimin Corporation
Catawba-Wataree Relicensing Coalition
Rutherford County
Polk County
City of Morganton
City of Kings Mountain
Town of Elkin
Town of Rutherfordton
Town of Ruth
County of Burke
Wake Forest University
Wilkes County Heritage Museum



Piedmont Land Conservancy
Foothills Land Conservancy
Mountain to the Sea Trail
Kings Mountain Gateway Committee
Betchler Development Corporation
Brushy Mountain Cyclists Club
W. Kerr Scott Reservoir – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Foothills Nature Science Society
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

South Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners
SCDOT
SC Department of Tourism
Cowpens National Battlefield – NPS
Kings Mountain NMP – NPS
Kings Mountain State Park
SC Department of Parks
Overmountain Victory Trail Committee
Cherokee County
Town of Gaffney
Carolina Backcountry Alliance
The Palmetto Conservation Foundation
Colonial Pipeline Company
Cherokee County Historical Society



All States

Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc.
Federal Highway Administration
Daughters of the American Revolution
Sons of the American Revolution
American Hiking Society
HistoryAmerica Tours
American Battlefield Protection Program
Eastern National Monument Association

With so many interested parties working together on the OVNHT, we should not be surprised to see major elements of the Trail becoming a reality every year. It is indeed an exciting time to be involved with building the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. ●



For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:

Paul Carson, Superintendent
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail
2635 Park Road
Blacksburg, SC 29702

(864) 936-3477
www.nps.gov/ovvi



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During those years, NC Congressman James T. Broyhill continued to submit bills to the House of Representatives designating the Overmountain Victory Trail as a National Historic Trail. Through his diligent efforts and with the help of Gary Everhardt, former director of the National Park Service, this bill was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter only weeks before the 200th anniversary of the Overmountain Men's heroic feat.

With that legislative victory, the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 was officially acknowledged. During the next 25 years many others championed the Trail. Today, their efforts along with those of the Overmountain Men are celebrated on the 25th anniversary of the designation of the OVT as a National Historic Trail. ●

Picture credits: All photography by Randell Jones except "Sounding the Horn" by Herchel Ornduff, Johnson City Press-Chronicle, 1975.