

America 250 - A celebration of 250 years of Independence

The American Revolution in the South

Irish, Scots, Scots/Irish

The Overmountain Men

Much has been written of our War of Independence, with most of the documented action taking place in the northeast. Comes now a mountain man of Irish, Scots, and German lineage to tell of the last major battles, for Independence, in the frontier of the south.

PRELUDE - The Battle of Alamance, North Carolina - May 1771

Settlers in Western North Carolina took exception with the corruption, excess taxes, and poor representation in the government of the appointed governor, William Tryon.

The Regulators, as they were known, challenged the authority of local officials by disrupting courts, and, causing much anxiety, and turmoil. There were minor instances of rebellion between the Regulators, and the Governor, until 1768. The Regulators decided to take their complaints to New Bern NC, the headquarters, and home, of Governor Tryon. They began assembling in December of 1770. Tryon heard of the insurrection taking place and in March 1771 he called for militia volunteers, enlistments were slow. Tryon offered, payment for services, swivel guns, flintlocks, ammunition, and other equipment. The enlistments increased and the militia got underway in April 1771.

Twas the morning of May 16, 1771. Tryon ordered his militia into battle formation, and they began their advance to confront the Regulators, who had gathered 5 miles to their front.

The Regulators had no leadership, no clear purpose, an inefficient organization, and, insufficient weapons and ammunition for battle. They hoped that a show of force would frighten the governor, and militia, into listening to their claims for recourse.

The Battle of Alamance, NC began! It lasted 2 hours! Tryon's forces incurred 9 dead, 60 wounded. The Regulators also had 9 dead, and an unknown number wounded.

THE REGULATOR REBELLION CEASED TO EXIST!

***** Definition of Overmountain Men**

Frontiersmen that had settled western North Carolina Appalachian Mountain Region. This region was west of the Blue Ridge Mountains which was a significant geographical area at the time. **The patriot militias were dominated by Ulster Scots (known as Scots-Irish) and the Irish (Native Irish).**

The American Revolution in the South

Kings Mountain - Cowpens

*** SETTING

In the colonies of the north, a stalemate had occurred in the British attempt to defeat the Patriots Continental Army. Lord Cornwallis was put in command of the British Southern Campaign to possibly to divide the Patriot forces into a two front war. He landed with his army in May at Cape Fear hoping to find greater support for the British to put down the rebellion. Cornwallis laid siege to Charleston, SC, a very important southern port, as well as the fourth largest, and richest, city in North America. The city fell in May of 1780. The invasion of the southern colonies had begun.

The fall of Charleston was the worst defeat that the Americans had suffered, and several following British victories all but decimated the Continental Army of the South and gave the British confidence that they could defeat the rebellion. There was a definite feeling of desperation within the colonies, both North and South.

*** NOTE

All of the participants in the Battle of Kings Mountain were American with the exception of British Major Patrick Ferguson, who was the Commander of the Loyalist Militia ((American colonists paid to fight for the British) hailed from Scotland. **The majority of the Patriot Militias were American colonist volunteers, and, of Irish/Scots descent!**

1 - Battle of Kings Mountain, South Carolina - October 1780

British Major Patrick Ferguson was given command of an expeditionary force to continue to chase the Patriot forces, driving them north causing a two front campaign hopefully dividing the Patriot forces of the north and south. The campaign was very successful with the British Loyalist forces achieving many successes.

Because of the successes of Ferguson's campaign, the Patriot forces were in need of men to stop the British Loyalists. The call went out, and, the Overmountain Men responded. From the Appalachian region they came.

They brought with them their hunting rifled muskets, they were skilled in traversing rugged mountains, they used their hunting techniques in battle, and all were excellent marksman. The wilderness was their home and they knew how to use guerilla tactics to their advantage.

It is written that Ferguson heard of the Patriot force heading towards him. He retreated and set a defensive position upon the top of Kings Mountain awaiting the arrival of the Overmountain Men.

The Overmountain men force of approx 900 men arrived and began their assault. The Loyalist force of Ferguson had 1100 men. The battle began.

Ferguson, astride his horse, wearing a gaudy plaid shirt, directed the defense of the mountain.

The Overmountain men, being expert riflemen and using their wilderness tactics, saw the "perfect target" and took aim at Ferguson. He was shot multiple times and died on the mountain.

Without their leader, the Loyalist Militia surrendered or escaped from the field of battle. The Kings Mountain battle lasted approx. 65 minutes and was successful in becoming a positive turning point in the fight for Independence of the American colonies.

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Kings Mountain - Cowpens

***** NOTE**

The Battle of Cowpens is significant for the use of the Patriot Militia and Continental Army in its defeat of the British force. At this period of time in the colonies War for Independence, over 50% of the Continental Army was comprised of soldiers with Irish heritage.

2 - The Battle at Cowpens, South Carolina - January 1781

General Cornwallis, after the British defeat at the hands of the Patriot Militia at Kings Mtn., ordered Lt. Colonel Banastre Tarleton, a reputable and distinguished officer, to take a large British force and crush the rebellion.

General Nathanael Greene, commander of the Continental Army, gave the task of harassing the British to General Daniel Morgan, as Greene took on the challenge of eliminating British control all through the South.

Morgan's troops were very efficient in their harassment of the British, to the point that, Gen. Cornwallis, ordered Gen. Tarleton to pursue, and destroy, Morgan's forces. Morgan knew of Tarleton's tactics, and aggressiveness, and decided to find a place that he could use Tarleton's tactics against him. He chose a place that had large grazing area known as "Cowpens".

Tarleton arrived at Cowpens, with his troops, in pursuit of Morgan, not realizing that it was a trap. Tarleton established a straight line attack formation of his troops. Line upon line to eliminate the Patriots.

Morgan also deployed his troops in a line formation, utilizing on the front lines, the militia only, due to their strength of superior marksmanship. Behind the Militia were the Continental Regulars in line formation.

As the British attacked, the Patriot Militia fired several volleys at the British line causing many deaths and injuries. Then, the Militia turned and ran from the field, and, the British thinking they were retreating surged forward. The British were met by a withering fire from the Continental line and a cavalry charge on their flanks causing many heavy casualties. Then the Patriot Militia formed with the Continental regulars, surrounded the British force, crushing the attack.

The Battle of Cowpens was a devastating defeat for the British. Many deaths, injuries, and capture of many British troops.

The Battle of Cowpens uplifted the morale and conviction of those desiring Independence.
The battle took less than an hour and led to the Independence of the Colonies.

This victory forced Cornwallis and the British to abandon the southern campaign leading him to Yorktown and defeat.

**Shalom,
Tim**