

American Independence Won In The South

In snow shoe mouth deep they came that 27th day of September 1780, a long column of mounted riflemen full of wrath and anger. The long slender rifles of the frontier (aka Flintlock American Long Rifle, Pennsylvania Rifle, Kentucky Rifle) were balanced across their saddles and knives strapped on their belts. They were "Over Mountain Men" from western North Carolina in the area that would later become northeast Tennessee in 1796. Several years earlier they had formed little settlements along the Watauga, Holston, and Nolichucky rivers on the western side of the Appalachian mountains.

The Revolutionary War for American Independence had not affected them until earlier in this year and due to their remote location they were virtually independent of British and American government. But the war in the north which had been ongoing since 1775 had been fought to a stalemate. Now England had decided upon a Southern Strategy and the war moved from the north to the south. Georgia, the youngest and weakest of the 13 American colonies had fallen to the British with the capture of Savannah on Dec. 29,1778. The British and their loyalist American Tory forces had moved into South Carolina and American Continentals and Whig militia patriots had suffered devastating defeats at Charleston, Waxhaws, and Camden.

British Major Patrick Ferguson had been ordered by British General Charles Cornwallis to invade the South Carolina back country between the Catawba and Saluda rivers and recruit Loyalists and suppress Whig Patriots. Within days of his invasion of the Carolina up country Ferguson had recruited many Loyalist Tory British sympathizers and had begun to hunt down and punish Whig Patriots. During the summer of 1780 "Over Mountain Men" militia had swept eastward and engaged Ferguson and his Loyalist Tories in fierce little engagements at Woffords Iron Works, Musgrove's Mill, Thicketty Fort, and Cedar Springs. They had recrossed the mountains back to their homes planning to resume resistance next Spring.

Ferguson made a decision that would prove fatal to him and his Loyalists. He paroled a Whig prisoner and sent him to inform Col.

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Isaac Shelby whom he considered the titular head of the "Over Mountain Men" or "Back Water Men" informing them that if they did not cease resistance to the British Crown that he would cross the mountains and hang the leaders, burn their houses, and lay waste to the area with "fire and sword". Col. Shelby met with Col. John Sevier (Nolichunky Jack) and a gathering of the mountain men took place at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River. A decision was made to carry the battle to Ferguson and it was to be a fight to the finish. They rode eastward, a column of about 1000 men, and were joined by North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia militia and now numbered about 1800. Most were mounted but some were walking.

Spies informed Ferguson that the Over Mountain Men were coming. He retreated and his 1100 Loyalist Tories took up a position on top of King's Mountain on the NC. and SC. line. The Patriot army selected 900 of the best rifleman and best horses to get to Ferguson quick before he received reinforcements from Cornwallis at Charlotte NC. All through the night they advanced toward King's Mountain in rain and without sleep. At 3 PM on October 7 they totally surprised the Loyalists. The Colonels on horseback horseshoed around the mountain and led the men fighting "Indian Style" from tree to tree to the summit. Ferguson was killed and the battle was a total Patriot victory.

Then at Cowpens South Carolina on Jan.17,1781 General Daniel Morgan and American Patriots defeated British Col..Banastre Tarlton. The victories of these two battles caused a British retreat to Winnsboro SC. Later they invaded North Carolina where the American army engaged and bloodied them severely at Guilford Courthouse. With the help of the French fleet this led to surrender by the British at Yorktown Virginia on Oct. 19, 1781. On Sept. 3, 1783 England granted Independence to each of the 13 sovereign American colonies.

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