



**NEWSLETTER**  
Footsteps to  
Freedom!



**Spring 2016**  
**WELCOME!**

### OVTA MISSION STATEMENT

TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND INTERPRET THE ROUTE TO THE BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

#### The Overmountain Victory Trail Association

##### Welcomes You!

We are a non-profit group, dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the Overmountain Victory Trail. The Overmountain Victory Trail Association has been a partner for 40 years, helping to preserve and interpret the historical route to the Battle of Kings Mountain. Stretching 330 miles through four states (Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina), from Abingdon, VA in the north and Elkin, NC in the east, to Gaffney, SC and Kings Mountain National Military Park in the south, the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail traces the route used by patriot militia during the pivotal Kings Mountain campaign of 1780. Follow the campaign by utilizing a Commemorative Motor Route which uses existing state highways marked with the distinctive trail logo, or 87 miles of walk-able pathways.

**The first "Commemorative March" of the historic Kings Mountain Battle Campaign of 1780, was in 1975.**

##### Did You Know?

In the Revolutionary War, the two opposing parties were the Whigs, who believed in separating from England, and the Tories, who believed that Americans should not break away from England. The Tories were also referred to as the Loyalists and the Whigs were also referred to as the Revolutionaries.

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#### Footsteps to Freedom!

Along The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, you will find many towns and communities that share and celebrate an event in our nation's history, which encompassed American spirit and truth and our God given right to be a free people. We commemorate the Southern Campaign for America's fight to freedom. During the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, the Overmountain Men were mostly a volunteer army of farmers, store keepers, ordinary people and patriots with a common bond. Their journey passed through 4 southern states, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, (which was still North Carolina at that time) and South Carolina to reach their destiny at Kings Mountain, South Carolina. At Kings Mountain, they engaged in battle with Major Patrick Ferguson and his loyalist army (Americans who sided with the British). The battle lasted only an hour and five minutes and resulted in a patriot victory over the British loyalist force. Major Patrick Ferguson lay dead. Ferguson fell on the same ridge that he himself proclaimed, "Neither God nor all his angels can remove me from the mountain." He is there to this day buried underneath a pile of stone. The patriot victory at Kings Mountain was noted as a historic turning point in the Revolutionary War. Hence we celebrate and commemorate each year the gallant victory of the American spirit, as we walk in those Footsteps to Freedom!

By: *E. S. Nelson*



**Wow! 2016 is here! We are Gearing Up for this Year's Exciting OVTA March and Community Events. Come! Join us Along the Trail!**

### The President's Desk

R.G. Absher



### OVTA President's Report

The year 2016 is off and running and we look forward to an active and exciting year along the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. Annual March planning has already begun and much progress is being made up and down the trail with respect to Master Planning projects for increasing on-the-ground trail sections along the 330 mile trail corridor. The OVTA board and various committees are rolling up their sleeves going to work. One thing that is evident from our successful 2015 Annual March, is that we need more community participation and assistance from volunteers to pull this event off successfully from year to year. In 2016, we need you to be a part of the OVTA and to assist us with growing our ability to fulfill the mission of preserving the trail and interpreting the role and route of the historic Campaign to Kings Mountain. *If you would like to find out how you can be a part of this movement contact me or one of our board members. Let's all pitch in and move out in the spirit of the Overmountain men and women of 1780. We're looking forward to seeing you on the trail in 2016.* *R.G. Absher, President*

### OVTA Board Members

**R.G. Absher**, President **David Doan**, Board Member  
**Tom Vaughn**, Vice President **Dan Hopping**, Board Member  
**Leigh Anne Surber**, Treasurer **Teresa Howell**, Board Member  
**Mary Bohlen**, Secretary **Rick Humphreys**, Board Member  
**Joella Johnson Barbour**, Board Member **Aggie King**, Board Member  
**Donna Absher**, Board Member **Ronnie Lail**, Board Member  
**Alan Bowen**, Board Member **Bryant Lindsey**, Board Member  
**Scott Bowen**, Board Member **Ralph Martin**, Board Member  
**Chivous Bradley**, Board Member **Mel McKay**, Board Member  
**Roger Byer**, Board Member **LeighAnn Snuggs**, Board Member  
**Randy Curde**, Board Member **Gary Walrath**, Board Member  
**Albert Dale**, Board Member

The OVTA was also active this year in working trail protection projects. In 2015, we witnessed some new efforts in planning for additional on-the-ground sections along the OVNHT. A Cooperative Agreement between the NPS and the Yadkin River Greenway Council to do a Master Plan from Elkin to W. Kerr Scott Reservoir is underway. In addition, the OVTA is working a Cooperative Agreement with the NPS to do a Land Acquisition Plan for the entire trail system. The OVTA remains very active with the Partnership for National Trails by sending representatives to Hike the Hill in Washington, DC each February and sending participants to National Trails Conferences.

### Hike on the Hill

Representatives  
 OVTA President  
 R.G. Absher  
 Leigh Anne Surber  
 OVTA Treasurer  
 (Photo Left)

Left to right:  
 Junior Ranger and  
 John Slaughter,  
 Ranger Margo  
 Blewett, working  
 with group, and  
 Margo displaying  
 certificate →



NPS Photo ↑

The OVTA is active in its participation with the Partnership for National Historic Trails by regularly visiting with congressional representatives during the annual visit to Hike The Hill

## National Park Service Find Your Park Keeping the Story Alive!

2015 presented many partnering opportunities for the OVTA and NPS to "Keep the Story Alive."

Park Rangers from the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution Parks Group participated in this year's Annual March by running a station for the education days at various partner sites. The NPS station presented the significance of the trail and the Battle of Kings Mountain, and placed its significance in context with the Southern Campaign Of The Revolution so the kids could understand and relate it to their studies. In addition, park staff presented the Every Kid in a Park campaign, an NPS initiative that aims to get every 4<sup>th</sup> grader (there are 4 million of them) into a National Park or other federal lands area. Getting the kids onto public lands gives them opportunities to get outdoors, exercise, and stimulates an awareness for their cultural and natural heritage. The result will be an advancement of the NPS goal of building the next generation of park stewards. Each 4<sup>th</sup> grader that participated in the education days was presented a free pass that gets them and their families onto federal lands for free for the entire year. Over 4,000 passes were given out during the 2-week Annual March. The NPS also kicked off their new Overmountain Victory Trail Junior Ranger Program as part of their fall programming. The Junior Ranger booklet consists of activities for kids of all ages. This way they have fun learning about the trail's history. Once completed, they give an oath and receive their official Junior Ranger badge. The booklets can be found at various sites along the trail.

In November, the NPS held a special Black Powder Safety Training for OVTA members. Upon successful completion of the training and passing a written exam, participants were presented with qualification cards that signified they were trained according to NPS safety standards. In 2015, the NPS also had special interpretive programs and hikes at various locations. Look for more of these programs in 2016! You know the saying, "It Takes a Village..." It truly does take the efforts of the OVTA members and the NPS staff alike to preserve the Story of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and make the public aware of this important aspect of our nation's history. *By Ranger Margo Blewett*



### Did You Know?

While it was common practice for patriots to tar and feather loyalists, the Daughters of Liberty had a less painful alternative: They used molasses and flowers instead. *Sweet Revenge*



# REFLECTIONS



Lt Col Courtney Rogers, retired from the Tennessee Air National Guard 118<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, here in Nashville is creator and presenter of the Foundations of Liberty Seminar. She has been re-elected for a second term as a member of the TN State House of Representatives seat for District 45. She currently serves on both the full and sub-committees for Transportation and on full committee for Civil Justice and has served on the Criminal Justice Committee.

Lt. Col Rogers said, "I am so glad to be able to add a note to your OVTA newsletter, so that I can tell you how thankful I am for what your members do to keep American History alive! What you do is important to me because I believe that passing on our history is the key to preserving a mindset of liberty among our people and ultimately key to protecting our own freedom. History that is reduced to nothing more than memorized dates and events does nothing to connect our generations to the stories that define our heroes (and villains) of the past. Stories of real people, making real decisions, real sacrifices - or real mistakes help to define the path that our ancestors had in mind for their future generations. History helps us to evaluate where we are today in comparison and to consider where we should strive to be tomorrow. I was so excited to be able to be a part of the joint OVTA and TN State Guard river-crossing at Sycamore Shoals! That photograph of the OVTA in the front, with the State Guard coming out of the woods behind them (like ghosts) in the river was powerful. It spoke volumes about where current state guardsmen fit in the scheme of history - since we originated with the Over Mountain Men. Indeed to hear the tale of Patrick Ferguson and his threat to 'hang your leaders, and lay waste your country with fire and sword' was a special gift, as I had had no idea as to why 'Fire and Sword' appeared on the regimental shield."



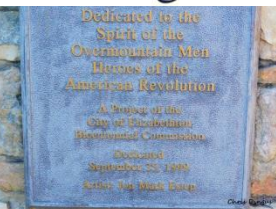
**Crossing the Watauga  
The OVTA  
And  
The Tennessee State Guard  
2015**



**Terri Lynn Weaver**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of the TN State Guard  
Of the TN 40<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

The Honorable Terri Lynn Weaver was present and participated in the river crossing at Sycamore Shoals State Park, helping to commemorate the crossing and the muster in 1780 by American Patriots on their way to the battle of Kings Mountain. Ms. Weaver lent her beautiful voice to sing our National Anthem at Sycamore Shoals State Park in Elizabethton. TN

**Join Us!  
Join the  
OVTA  
Today!**



**Sycamore Shoals State Park  
Elizabethton Tennessee**



*Lt. Col. Rogers added "the hike up Yellow Mountain Gap in my borrowed period clothing (thank you - sorry I couldn't wash them before returning!) And carrying the flint-lock was such a great time. Hearing the story and enjoying nature were truly amazing. We got a lot of "nature" that day as it was pouring rain! And I loved every minute! The stories and the firing demonstrations were entertaining, fun, and educational. Although I don't quite know how I feel about almost getting "hanged" (during a reenactment scene), your story-tellers, cooks and craftsmen, with all their talents combined gave me an experience that I will cherish as one of the highlights of my life. I have made great new friends and I can only hope to be able to join ya'll again sometime again 'on the trail!' Blessings to you all and God bless our Great Nation! "Courtney Rogers*

## Director of Interpretation

Last year's march (2015) was one of the best ones we've had in the nine years that I have been with the OVTA.

One of the most memorable events of the march was the crossing of the Watauga River at Sycamore Shoals with 165 Tennessee Home Guards plus dozens of OVTA members. This was the most people that have crossed the Watauga River at one time since 1780.

Two Tennessee State Representatives, Honorable Terri Lynn Weaver of the 40<sup>th</sup> Legislative District and Honorable Courtney Rogers of the 45<sup>th</sup> Legislative District crossed the river with us. They continued the march two more days, crossing the Yellow Mountain Gap and participating in the program at the Orchard at Altapass. Looking Forward to the 2016 Annual March! –Steve Ricker



## 2015 Revolutionary War Week in Burke County, North Carolina

Jailhouse Gallery of the Burke Arts Council attracted more than 500 to visit exhibits and demonstrations of life in the late 1700s in Burke County despite persistent rain throughout the day. The OVTA, National Park Service, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Sons of the American Revolution each provided information about their organizations and the Arts Council sponsored a collage-making activity for children. Visitors sampled an array of foods made from authentic colonial recipes, including "funeral pie", "bubble and squeak" (cooked over an open fire outside the Old Kitchen) and corn pudding made from a recipe passed down in his family by General Daniel Morgan, the Revolutionary War hero for whom Morganton is named. Students played colonial music on the front porch of the house. Skip Carson, from the Orchard at Altapass, told the story of the victory at Kings Mountain and Randell Jones shared stories from the march to and from Kings Mountain. September 30, at 9:00 A.M., more than 500 fourth graders from half the public schools and two private schools in the county arrived to visit 12 living history stations and learn the story of the Overmountain Men. In the afternoon more than 500 fourth graders from the other half of public schools in the county and home schools arrived. In all, 1,050 fourth graders participated in the day's activities. A highlight of the day was a distribution by National Park Service staff of free national park passes to all the fourth graders. The passes, worth up to \$80.00 each, can be used by the fourth graders and their families for entrance into any national park that charges an admission fee between now and August 2016. In conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary March to Kings Mountain, Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church and several Historic Burke Foundation Board Members, hosted a supper for the OVTA re-enactors. Late in the morning of October 1st, hundreds gathered on the banks of the Catawba River below Judge's Restaurant to watch the first commemorative crossing of the river by OVTA and local re-enactors on the 235<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crossing by the Overmountain Men as they left Quaker Meadows Plantation and rode south to Kings Mountain, S.C. Following the crossing, Burke County Tourism Development Authority Executive Director Ed Phillips emceed a program that included fife and drum music provided by local home school students, presentation of colors by the Freedom High School ROTC, and special statements by Morganton Mayor Mel Cohen and John Slaughter, Group Superintendent of the Southern Campaign American Revolution Parks. Reverend George Cobb did an historic portrayal of Reverend Samuel Doak, and Steve Ricker told the story of the Catawba River crossing and the Kings Mountain Campaign.

### Did You Know?

*Gunpowder for the patriots in the Kings Mountain campaign was supplied by Mary Patton, the owner and manager of a gunpowder mill located near present-day Elizabethton, TN.*

*In Honor of...*

*Blair Kessler 2-19-29 - 2-18-15*

*Frean Dahl 11-21-50 - 9-17-15*

## Reflections



During the 2015 Annual March, 1,000 4th graders found their park along the Overmountain Victory Trail in Morganton, NC. It was an exciting day with story-telling by the Overmountain Victory Trail Association and various stations that demonstrated colonial life and skills

All 1000 kids also received their pass to visit federal lands for free over the next year!

NPS Photo (Above)



Photos (Above and Below)  
Courtesy of Abingdon Muster Grounds



Steve Ricker  
Story-telling at the  
Catawba River

## 2015 Abingdon, Virginia

Since 2005, the Town of Abingdon has hosted *A Call to Arms*, an annual educational program for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students which occurs near the anniversary of when the Washington County, Virginia patriot militia mustered on September 24, 1780. In the early years of the program, the Dunn family allowed *A Call to Arms* to take place at their private residence. The nine acre property on Colonial Road is picturesque with the Federal style home "Retirement" situated on a hill and Wolf Creek running through an open meadow. While a beautiful site, the deeper value of the property is found in its history. In 1780, Washington County, Virginia encompassed the current counties of Lee, Scott, Washington, Smyth, Russell, Wise, Dickenson, Tazewell, and Buchanan with Abingdon as the county seat. When a call was issued for militia to respond to British Major Patrick Ferguson's threat that, "he would march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword," men from all over the region moved into action. Under the leadership of Colonel William Campbell, 400 Virginians set out to join patriot militia from modern-day Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. After a two week campaign, the Overmountain Men fought the Battle of Kings Mountain with an overwhelming victory. Thomas Jefferson said "The victory at Kings Mountain was the joyful annunciation of the turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of our independence". In 1780, people from backcountry Virginia played an important part in events that have national significance. The Town of Abingdon was able to purchase the historic property in 2007, forever insuring the preservation of what is now known as the Abingdon Muster Grounds. Certified by the National Park Service as the northern trail head of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, the Abingdon Muster Grounds now has the Keller Interpretive Center which houses Southwest Virginia's premier Revolutionary War exhibits. Every 4<sup>th</sup> grade student in Washington County attends the annual program *A Call to Arms*. In addition, many schools from surrounding counties and home schooled children participate in the event. Students spend a day rotating through 17 educational stations that focus on different aspects of life in the backcountry, colonial skills, artisan demonstrations, and the patriot militia who fought at the Battle of Kings Mountain. Since the inception of the program, ten thousand local children have received this education! Approximately 1600 students attended *A Call to Arms*, September 21-23, 2015. Each student received a pass for themselves and their families which awards them free admission to federal lands. This pass is part of the initiative, "Every Kid in a Park". *A Call to Arms* continues to grow and flourish with the support of the National Park Service, the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, the Blacks Fort Chapter of the DAR, the General William Campbell Chapter of the SAR, Washington County, Barbara Farris and the Farris Family, and the Town of Abingdon including Planning Department, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works.



*The Muster at Abingdon by Richard Luce*



## Fort Thicketty, Cherokee County, SC

While on the march in Gaffney several of our group took a side trip to find little known Fort Thicketty, a pre- Revolutionary War site. We were fortunate to locate the old log structure and walk around the grounds.

The fort is located near Goucher Creek about ten miles southeast of Cowpens Battlefield in, SC. The exact year it was built is not known but we know it was used as a place of refuge for settlers against Indian attacks.

During the Revolution it was used by a garrison of loyalist under the command of Captain Patrick Moore who carried on raids and threats to area patriots. On July 30, 1780 six hundred men under Colonel Isaac Shelby captured the Fort and secured 200 badly need firearms without firing a single shot.

The Fort is almost in the backyard of Goucher Creek Elementary School. Another interesting fact is that the Croucher Creek fourth graders came to the Cherokee History Museum during the march for a tour. This opened up an opportunity to share with them the story of Fort Thicketty. Students gathered around the museum's replica exhibit of the fort while our own Mel McKay told the story and significance of the Fort.

As a result of the interest from the school and the Museum, the two will be working together to get students more involved in learning about and participating in their own local history. Fort Thicketty is owned by Cherokee County Museum of History and is being stabilized and preserved by the Museum.



**Tanasi 1796** "I cannot adequately express my appreciation for your presentation of Andrew Evans and the Battle of Kings Mountain. I felt that I was at your left elbow as we searched for Ferguson. I was in the room when the young man was threatened with a hanging by the Overmountain boys. I saw Robert Young raise his trusty "sweet lips" and heard the ppphtkaboom of his flintlock rifle and watched as Ferguson immediately fell from the back of his horse; his foot caught in the stirrup and the continuous fire as he was drug around the mountain that he would never leave." David Black, Tanasi 1796 organizer

**Tanasi 1796 was performed at Clayton Center for the Arts, Maryville, Tennessee - February 20, 2016.**  
Overmountain Victory Trail participation was great! Fantastic Reviews!  
**"Keeping The Story Alive!"**

### Overmountain Victory Trail Association

OVTA members, Chivous Bradley, Mary Bohlen and LeighAnn Snuggs gave a presentation to 4th graders at Goucher Elementary School on Fort Thicketty. The site of the Fort is practically in the school yard. Also included in the photo is **Pam Cazal, Director of Cherokee County History and Art Museum,** teachers, Debra Davis and Julie McSwain along with additional school staff.

### Rocky Mount State Historic Area Piney Flats, Tennessee

Rocky Mount, one of the Southern Campaign Parks Groups Partners is a certified site along the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.



(Left)  
LeighAnn Snuggs  
Gaffney S.C.



(Above and Right) Rocky Mount School Days

(Photo Above) ↑  
Rocky Mount  
State Historic Site  
Piney Flats, TN

### Abingdon Muster Grounds

#### Abingdon Muster Ground Trout Stream Project

Visitors to the Abingdon Muster Grounds will soon be able to fish for native brook trout, as the stream running through the property undergoes a major restoration. The Mountain Empire Chapter of Trout Unlimited (METU) has received a grant of \$10,000 through the Trout Unlimited National Embrace-A-Stream grant program. METU, working in partnership with the Town of Abingdon, and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) requested grant support from Trout Unlimited to help restore a 900 foot-long section of trout habitat on Wolf Creek in the town of Abingdon, Virginia. Wolf Creek originates in and is fed by cold-water springs west of Abingdon, and runs within the town's southwestern boundary to empty into South Holston Lake in Virginia. The section to be restored travels through the historic Abingdon Muster Grounds, the northern trailhead of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. It is well suited to educate the public on stream habitat restoration and cold-water conservation. This site will be a model for future cooperative habitat restoration projects for trout in an urban setting. "At the Abingdon Muster Grounds, we work hard to preserve the story of the Overmountain Men who volunteered to confront the threat of an invading army. The Battle of Kings Mountain is known as a major turning point of the American Revolution. This project is going to contribute to the effort to preserve the site where the Washington County, Virginia mustered in 1780," said Leigh Anne Hunter Surber, Superintendent of the Abingdon Muster Grounds.

(Above right) Fourth graders at Goucher Elementary School near Gaffney, SC ↑



**The 235<sup>th</sup> Battle of Cowpens Celebration 2016**

**Battle of Cowpens**  
235th Anniversary Celebration

January 15 - 17, 2016

Mark Schneider portrays  
Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre  
Tarleton

For more information:  
Cowpens National Battlefield  
864.461.2823

Join  
Us!

# Overmountain Victory Trail Association

Footsteps to Freedom! 



George Cobb



Like Us on Facebook

Visit Our Website!

[www.OVTA.org](http://www.OVTA.org)



Cohen Daniels and Mr. John Slaughter  
Superintendent at National Park Service John  
Gilliland Memorial



Ralph Martin, Instrumental in procuring  
a beautiful Memorial, Dedicated to  
Revolutionary War hero John Gilliland



The Battle at Kings Mountain By, Richard Luce

## NEWSLETTER

Footsteps to Freedom!

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