



 Newsletter of the Kettle Creek Battlefield Association, Inc. Editor: N. Walker Chewning

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Wilkes teachers discuss importance of Kettle Creek at GCSS conference



Katy Meech and Al Dawkins were organizers of a Georgia Council for Social Studies Conference session on the importance of the 1779 battle at Kettle Creek. It was one of twelve

concurrent sessions and drew a capacity audience. At the recent annual conference of the Georgia Council for Social Studies, about 60 teachers from around the state attended a one hour session on the 1779 battle at Kettle Creek. Presented by Washington teachers Katy Meech and Al Dawkins, the session was one of a dozen running concurrently at the Athens Classic Center.

Dawkins introduced Allen Burton who spoke on the importance of the Revolutionary War battle. Burton stated its influence toward a change in the British Southern strategy and that it is the battle the National Park Service described as the only significant Patriot victory in Georgia. He covered the battle itself as well as the major leadership figures and included Loyalist Col. Boyd's final words with Patriot Col. Clarke.

Burton was followed by Joe Harris who described the area, beginning with Phillips Mill Baptist Church and including the ecological diversity of the War Hill site as a teaching tool. "The site is a crucible of teaching tools, a kind of laboratory experience including physiographic geology, a diverse flora, and cultural history in less than a square mile," Harris said.

"I greatly underestimated the interest in this session of the conference," Harris continued. He had taken 10 discs of the presentation. These and copies and other materials were "...scooped up immediately," he said.

The session announced a lesson plan for use of the site with an immediate result of a request by Christie Bryan of the Lincoln County Schools for a visit by nearly 100 students to the site. They will visit the site on October 30 with six teachers. Burton and Harris are scheduled for the orientation.

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Kettle Creek Battlefield to develop conceptual plan



CVIOG Staff meet with KCBA planning Committee.

Carl Vinson Institute and KCBA members who met in Athens included (l-r) Scott Pippen, attorney planner; Dennis Epps, Deputy Director for Economic Development; Walker Chewning, KCBA president; Ruth Clements and Lou Ricciuti, KCBA funding committee; and (seated) Langford Holbrook, CVIOG Principle Investigator. The Kettle Creek Battlefield Association, Inc. (KCBA) recently signed an agreement for development of a conceptual plan for a Kettle Creek Battlefield Park. The plan would be developed by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia (CVIOG), and was signed by Walker Chewning, president of KCBA and Jere Morehead, president of the university. At the close of a recent meeting of CVIOG officials and a KCBA committee required for a final review of the agreement, Chewning thanked the hosts and remarked, "We think we have the best possible resources for advancing the project."

KCBA has been working for nearly two years to reach conditions for a conceptual plan agreement. This work has included strategic planning and related sessions by Langford Holbrook, principal investigator. His professional resources include landscape architects and environmental design specialists.

Resource materials resulting from the agreement are essential for wide appreciation and use of the site by tourists and educators with diverse interests. Such use by the public is generally required by funding sources for continued park development.

"Foundations won't fund useless projects," said Joe Harris, chairman of the KCBA board. He, with Anne Floyd and Larry Wilson have had considerable experience in submitting grant proposals. "It's a learning process," Harris said, "we must determine the nature of the competition and the persuasions of the evaluation panelists."

The CVIOG conceptual plan will furnish specific renderings or designs for current application and will initially include a restroom, parking lot, historic interpretive trails and signage, future battlefield area concepts, and recreational sites including bike and hiking trails. Such plans are required for most grant funding proposals. In addition, promotional materials will include hard copies of the master plan, a Power Point disc for plan presentation to interest groups, and a one-page promotional brochure.

Another part of the plan covers an inventory of all vascular plants on site, including data on rarity, nativity, etc. A complete set of pressed, dried, and labeled specimens will be provided to the UGA herbarium. Photographs of specimens will be provided with Geographic Information System (GIS) maps for locating plants on site. Plant communities will be identified and habitat-specific conditions indicated. The plant inventory work is being headed up by Linda Chafin of the Georgia Botanical Garden and is included in the agreement.

The total cost of the plan is \$14,488 which was raised by the KCBA membership, local and national, who respect the historic -Wilkes County resource for its tourism and educational value.



Eighth graders walk trails, experience history at the Kettle Creek battle site

Washington-Wilkes Middle School history classes of Katy Meech and Al Dawkins assembled on War Hill for a brief sketch of the 1779 battle by historian Allen Burton. In what may be the first in formal public school use of the Kettle Creek Battlefield site, Washington-Wilkes Middle School eighth-grade classes of Katy Meech and Al Dawkins visited the battle site on a recent Friday afternoon.

Stopping at a very old road (now used as a logging road) which leads to the 1700s Hammett settlement, the group of about 25 met Joe Harris representing the Kettle Creek Battlefield Association. Harris briefly described the settlement, including Liberty Church and a cemetery, and pointed out the course of the militias as they moved south toward the War Hill area. He also spoke about the natural history of the area.

“This area offers live entertainment, real live entertainment,” he said, and pointed out the Summit Trail, about a half-mile walk to War Hill. “Can we walk that trail,” a student asked. Within about 10 minutes the class, through rough terrain and blackberry bushes on the side, was on top of War Hill.

Allen Burton, who teaches history courses at Georgia Regents University, met the students near the obelisk monument and reviewed the 1779 British strat-

egy, commonly known as The Southern Campaign. He emphasized the details of the battle at Kettle Creek and leadership on both sides in the conflict.

“This battle influenced a change in the British Southern Strategy,” Burton said, “they found that recruiting from the back country was not an option.” The National Park Service claims that the battle at Kettle Creek was the only significant Patriot victory in Georgia.

A good discussion followed Burton’s talk, starting with a question about burial sites on the hill. “The markers here are not burial sites but memorials, mostly taken from abandoned cemetery sites elsewhere. But Loyalist Col. Boyd and other fatalities from the battle are buried in the area.” He described Boyd’s death on the hill and pointed out that Loyalist Boyd’s wife has been cited as a relative of Patriot Col. Pickens. “That families were divided due to their different convictions made this war a kind of civil war,” Burton said.

Harris thanked the class, Meech, and Dawkins for their serious interest and attention. “You will do well in the future,” he told the class.

KC Parking Lot Development



Improvement continues with the construction of a parking lot. Each month we take another step forward in continuing the fight to preserve the Kettle Creek Battlefield and creating a quality park for visitors. Thank you for your support.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AS OUR ANCESTORS' WAR:
A TALK GIVEN AT THE COMMEMORATION OF
THE BATTLE OF VANN'S CREEK,

by Robert Scott Davis



Professor Davis is the Director of the Family & Regional History Program at Wallace State College in Hanceville, AL.

His numerous publications include

Requiem for a Lost City: Sallie Clayton's Memoirs of Civil War Atlanta

and Ghosts and Shadows of Andersonville

My college professor and mentor Dr. Paul G. Dobson had little use for American History. He dismissed it as “myth.” When the then Governor Jimmy Carter created the state internship program, however, that same professor nominated me for it and I became Georgia’s first history intern in 1974. My assignment was writing an historical site study for the battle of Kettle Creek, fought in Wilkes County, Georgia, on February 14, 1779, three days after and as a direct result of the battle of Vann’s Creek. In reviewing the rough draft, however, Dr. Dobson demanded that I rewrite the text to explain whom the people were who fought in the battle and, more important than the battle, why were they there, how they lived, what they ate etc. Such ideas were in conflict with a historical site survey for a potential state park but I scratched together enough warm and fuzzy frontier Social History material to get me an “A” for my report. That hardly left me satisfied and there he had implanted his real lesson, what he truly wanted me to learn from that experience.

Despite pulling together a number of useful documents from the Lyman C. Draper Collection, the North Carolina Archives, and other sources by research techniques I learned only by experience and experiment, I knew that most of what I had hardly amounted to more than what Vladimir Lenin famously called History: “mutually agreed upon myth.” Just how deep this problem would go only came to me decades later when I realized, after reading the 2009 archaeological survey by Dan Elliott, that for all the years that I have continued my research on the battle of Kettle Creek, it actually took place west of where I had it. I blundered along oblivious to my mistake for years except for a queasy feeling that I had back at the beginning that I had shoed in details to make them fit the traditional battlefield and account of events. In my defense, no one else saw the problem and, from where I stood in 1974, after having finished my report, I doubted that I would ever come even one step closer to the reality of the events here

at Vann's Creek and at Kettle Creek in February 1779.

With the encouragement of modern pioneer researcher on the American Revolution and American social history Dr. Robert M. Calhoon, I would prove myself wrong again and, in the process, uncover facts, ideas, and truths about these events that go beyond a jungle like cane break on the Savannah River and a hill in the woods near Washington, Georgia. The battle of Kettle Creek, and the battle of Vann's Creek that led to it, received notice in numerous books about the American Revolution as a quirky and irrelevant sideline. Less scholarly and more boosterish works, by contrast, called it such things as "Georgia's Yorktown." The Patriot commander at Kettle Creek, Andrew Pickens, likewise bragged on it as the greatest chastisement the Loyalists ever received. Even when the battles for Savannah and Augusta, as well as Charleston, Camden, Cowpens, and Guilford Courthouse, finally join the history of the Revolution as a whole, the Kettle Creek Campaign that includes Vann's Creek has only a passing inexplicable mention outside of the neatly accepted chronology of the war.

One of the first of these new "Twenty first Century" ideas came to me in this research. Could the problem with this campaign be not that its events were a sideline or a passing footnote to the American Revolution but that the traditional chronology of the war as a whole came from what Dr. Dobson would have written off as myth? Vann's Creek and Kettle Creek were not out of place and time but, like where I thought the battlefield had been at War Hill, the American Revolution had been misplaced and misrepresented. Working with my friend, the late Augusta scholar of the Loyalists, Heard Robertson, I began to see how the meanings of the subsequent events in 1780, both in Georgia and South Carolina, had also become lost and even trapped outside of some settled view of the Revolution.

That point really hit home in 1981 when I wrote to the new national parks of Cowpens and Kings Mountain to ask why the roles of Georgians, many of them from what became Elbert County, Georgia, went ignored in the publications given out and sold at those parks. At Cowpens, New Jersey born frontier fighter General Daniel Morgan recognized the value of Georgia's frontier militia and eagerly sought them. They came. Scouts under Captain Joshua Inman of Burke County, Georgia, first brought word of the British advance, critical information if Morgan had any chance of springing his trap to destroy Banastre Tarleton's one third of the King's field army in the South. The general would subsequently lure the Redcoats in with lines that appeared to collapse before the British weapons of mass destruction of the day, well-disciplined soldiers with bayonet and musket backed up by artillery. That assignment went to riflemen such as Major John Cunningham's fifty-five Georgia militia, including men from what would become Elbert County. Englishman and Savannah lawyer James Jackson, one of the

Georgia refugees, marveled at how those frontiersmen would fire an accurate and deadly round at Tarleton's feared cavalry, then roll on the ground and reload, to kill another of the dragoons charging from the opposite direction. Such tactics actually have a long history in American frontier warfare but they were used to deadly effect by the Georgians at Cowpens. Reading the few serious studies of the battle, these facts seldom appear except as some odd statement that Cunningham and his former professional Continentals served in Morgan's troops. As far as I know, the only former Continental among them was Cunningham himself although even he had served in controversial fighting on the Georgia frontier!

Similarly, although a small part of the Georgia refugees served under Colonel William Candler at the American victory at Kings Mountain, South Carolina, on October 7, 1780, the battle would not have taken place had Major Patrick Ferguson and his corps of American Loyalist volunteers and impressed royal militia not been in pursuit of Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clark and his band of hundreds of frontier Georgians, including whole families and households from what became Elbert County, some of whom had been at Vann's Creek in 1779. They were now fleeing the destruction of their homes here on the frontier by Indians and Loyalists following Elijah Clark's unsuccessful attack on the Loyalist provincials in Augusta in September 1780.

The park superintendent responded to my letter by patiently, and politely, explaining that the battle of Cowpens involved men from many states. On the matter of Kings Mountain, he wrote that Ferguson and his American corps found themselves so far from rescue by the British army because of a number of complex circumstances but not from pursuing Clark. He did not elaborate. I wrote back, citing my sources, and, on the last point, I specifically listed letters from the time by Lord Cornwallis, Patrick Ferguson, and Elijah Clark that contradicted his number of complex circumstances thesis. Since then, I have sometimes wondered what he might have referred to. I have been unable to learn anything credible about why hundreds of men in today's East Tennessee left their families in danger of Indian attack to travel hundreds of miles across mountains and forests for the privilege of killing hundreds of their fellow Americans, men who had harmed them in no way, at King's Mountain. Strangely, many of the 800 prisoners taken in that battle subsequently disappeared as did their guards and many of these other Over the Mountain Men. Even more peculiar, Tories or Loyalists from those same settlements in 1781 made a no less epic journey to Augusta, Georgia, to aid Thomas Brown and his Loyalist provincials in defending Fort Cornwallis, another mystery of American history that hidden by what Dobson discounted as myth. (I hope some time to apply what I have since learned about research from Kettle Creek to try to find answers to these questions about Kings Mountain.)

Dr. Dobson's admonishment in 1974 about the who, why, how etc. of these people of such battles as Kettle Creek and King's Mountain comes to play here and finds some answers in the research of Dr. Robert Calhoon in his monumental work in trying to find the true American Tory. The answers lie there. Dobson, with his interest in European revolution, would hardly have been surprised that this research shows that the causes of the conflict in America run deep and long before issues like tea, taxes, and colonial assemblies contributed to raising resistance and violence to new levels. All of the thirteen colonies had some history in that regard and along the American frontier, the story goes beyond any colony or region to encompass the western areas from Canada to Florida.

In the Deep South, this resistance chiefly began in the Regulator rebellions of the late 1760s and early 1770s. Frontier families unsuccessfully rebelled against corrupt officials in North Carolina with resistance that ended with coastal colonial militia led by Governor William Tryon crushing them at the battle of Alamance on May 16, 1771. In the American Revolution that followed a few years later, that animosity between east and west North Carolina would remain so deep that supporters of the American Rebellion would call the Loyalists of the frontier "regulators." Many of the frontiersmen in the west recognized and still resisted the men from the east, such as Major General John Ashe, as the same coastal aristocracy that had defeated them at Alamance. South Carolina's Regulator Rebellion sought to bring rule of law and civil justice to the South Carolina frontier. There the families who won that struggle would see many of the bandits and colonial supporters who had oppressed them later as Tories remaining loyal to the king.

These issues form part of a greater secret history of the American Revolution that only now begins to emerge in scholarship to replace what Dr. Dobson so contemptuously described as myth. We should have learned from that past but even more so, because of the struggles we have subsequently had from the Philippines in 1899 to Vietnam to the current fighting in Afghanistan. Contrary to the history promoted in the Twentieth century, and earlier, revolution in America in 1776-1783 identifies with populist insurrections in almost any other time and place. It evolved from social and economic change that inevitably moved faster than the political realities in far off Great Britain. When the war began, the King's generals and ministers sought to achieve by military force what they declined to obtain by compromise and negotiation. The result became the carnage of British troops at Bunker Hill outside of Boston in 1775 but also in the defeat of the King's fleet at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1776. The latter campaign proved to be the more important disaster for the King's cause because thousands of southerners marched as Loyalists in 1775 and 1776 out of their traditional

loyalty to Great Britain, from being members of ethnic frontier communities that owed their monarch for their American lands, or as part of groups long persecuted by their mainstream American neighbors. The Charleston Campaign of 1775-1776 had intended to support the Loyal Americans or Tories in the South. Instead, it brought those frontiersmen into the open where their more numerous neighbors in rebellion could hunt them down and defeat them in battle. Southern militiamen of all politics also took advantage of the situation to devastate the Cherokee Indians, popularly presumed allies of the King's army.

Under such circumstances, Americans had no reason to give in to British intimidation, what the king's ministers referred to as "reason." Imperial strategists now attempted at some form of reconciliation although still tied to military force. After capturing New York and converting the city into a military base in 1776, British troops attempted to restore New Jersey as a pacified colony. His Majesty's Forces soon found themselves as peacekeepers in a land without peace, as different local groups, almost tribes, of citizens used the occupation as an excuse for settling long festering problems with violence. They unified not under the British flag but in opposing what they saw as an alien invasion. In 1777, the King's officials sent an army through the New York and Pennsylvania frontier while rallying the much-feared Indians and uniting with Loyalist Americans. The new professional American army, including men led by Daniel Morgan, subsequently surrounded and defeated the British troops at Saratoga. The King's Loyalist allies fell in battle at Bennington, Vermont. Whoever remained who dared to support the King's cause on the northwestern frontier thus found himself connected in the popular mind with Indian attacks and the British invasion.

The so-called "southern campaign" or "the southern strategy" only repeated all of the above mistakes on a grander scale. From 1778 to 1781, British troops captured Charleston and numerous towns and settlements. They destroyed complete American armies and won in almost every battle, including in Savannah in 1779 where only a miracle saved the King's army. American mistakes aided in these successes. At Blackstocks, South Carolina, November 20, 1780, for example, Thomas Sumter made a classic and often fatal strategic mistake in guerilla warfare by bringing together his different partisan and militia allies in one place. British commander Banastre Tarleton found them there and, although the result technically became an American battlefield victory, Sumter nearly died from his wounds and many of the men who fought the battle fled and never returned to the fighting.

In a war settled by winning hearts and minds, the British army under Generals Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Charles Cornwallis sought only technical victories on battlefields. Wherever the British held the ground, they could be invincible for the moment.

When they left, Americans angered by the occupation and alliances with escaped slaves and Indians, retaliated against the Loyalists left behind. Commanders of the provincials such as Colonel James Boyd, Lieutenant Colonel John Moore, and Major John Spurgeon, all at Vann's Creek and Kettle Creek, along with so many others would die in or because of battle, or from retaliation from their neighbors. Yet their cause of American Loyalism drew such contempt from British officers that even before he had learned of the battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis held his Tories of Loyalists in such contempt that he wrote that arming them amounted to the same thing as giving arms to the King's enemies.

All across the now thirteen states, the same situation existed. George Washington's army by 1776, like what remained of the King's Loyalist provincial corps, had deteriorated to a mercenary, undisciplined rabble of young men, many of them of European nativity and of all races, with nowhere else to go. When the armies marched, from Maine to Georgia, however, members of the public did what they could to impede His Majesty's invading army and would rally, at least temporarily, to join the resistance. Here at Vann's Creek in February 1779, Boyd's Loyalists marched to join a British army in Augusta in support of the king. As so many times before, however, wherever they traveled other Americans banded to stop them, some of whom would fight for the cause of independence but others because, as their descendents would do again ninety years later, of the threat to their homes and families. Here at Vann's Creek, such men fought and risked much to try to stop Boyd. They received their reward later when they defeated, at Kettle Creek, not what they saw as Americans who supported a colonial system that had always protected them. Instead, those men, many of whom had also fought here at Vann's Creek, saw the Loyalists as vandals such as they had fought against in South Carolina's regulator rebellion and who had allied themselves with a British government committed to creating slave revolts and encouraging Indian attacks.

In 1780, following the fall of Charleston, British troops and Loyalist provincials would spread across Georgia and South Carolina. The former would become the only American state ever reduced to colony status, complete with restored governor, assembly, and militia. Men such as John Twiggs, Elijah Clark, Joshua Inman, Thomas Sumter, Francis Marion, and so many others would continue the fight, either as guerillas or as militia without an organized government. A policy of reconciliation that addressed American complaints might have then allowed this guerilla war to die down and for the creation of an America with status such as Canada has today. Such a strategy, however, found no following among the British leadership in American or Great Britain. Elijah Clark's dispirited rebels would lead an attack on the King's provincial gar-

ri son in Augusta that sparked a brutal unwarranted retaliation in Georgia and South Carolina. Loyalist leaders wanted revenge and the British army would do nothing to stop them. Pursuing Clark and his Georgia refugees, Patrick Ferguson and his loyal American corps, along with impressed militia, found death and defeat at King's Mountain on October 7, 1780. Another third of the king's field army, the corps under Banastre Tarleton met disaster partially under the rifles of Wilkes Countians at Cowpens on January 17, 1781. The final confrontation, at Guilford Courthouse on March 15, 1781, ended the king's field army in the South on the road that would lead to its surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. At Guilford courthouse, Patriot General Henry Lee would remember the valiant service of the men of a mysterious Colonel Clark. Scholars have failed to identify those troops but they could conceivably be the Wilkes County militia.

More importantly, in then Wilkes County, and across the South the people rose up to end the war and the grievances that they had, sometimes for years before the fighting. Their populist solution would not be the British offer to return to the unsatisfactory past but for a new nation that would answer its own and their needs, fears, and hopes.

For the documentation for this paper see Robert M. Calhoun, et al, *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (expanded edition; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010)

Daniel T. Elliott, no. 131 *Stirring up a Hornet's Nest: The Kettle Creek Battlefield Survey* (Savannah: Lamar Institute, 2009), Internet book at: http://shapiro.anthro.uga.edu/Lamar/images/PDFs/publication_131.pdf

Lawrence E. Babits, *a Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)...

Come Join Us for the Battle of Vann's Creek Celebration

11:00 AM , December 6, 2014
Richard B. Russell State Park

Speaker will be Historian:
Anna Wright Habersham Smith

TAKE NOTICE

236th Anniversary of the Battle of Kettle Creek

This is to Proclaim to the Citizens of Georgia
and to Other Colonies....

“Revolutionary Days”

February 13, 14 and 15, 2015
Washington, Georgia

Friday February 13th

4:30 p.m. Kettle Creek Battlefield Association
Annual Meeting. Location Pope Center

6:30 p.m. Kettle Creek Battlefield Banquet .
Location Pope Center

Saturday February 14th

8:30 a.m. Presentation by Military Historian Emory Allen Burton. Location Mary Willis Library. “Fighting at Kettle Creek on February 14, 1779”

9:00 a.m.—12:00 a.m. “Celebration of history” Salute to Rev. War Monument and Wilkes County Militia on the square. Thirty Historical Colonial Characters. Visit the Mary Willis Library, 204/e. Liberty Square, the Robert Toombs House, 215 Robert Toombs Avenue and the Washington Historical Museum, 308 E. Robert Toombs Avenue.

10:45 a.m. Parade will start behind the Courthouse at Fort Washington Park and end there.

11:00 a.m. A dramatic portrayal of the Battle of Kettle Creek will be presented in Fort Washington Park.

11:30 a.m. At the close of the Skirmish Presentation – Elijah Clarke Militia will retire 1776 Colors and raise the National Colors at the Courthouse on the Square.

12:00 p. m. Musical Puppet Show , “The American Revolution: 1763-1789”/ Performed by the Washington Little Theater Company at the **Retro Event Center, 114 Spring St.** Some Characters include Betsy Ross, King George III, John Adams, Sam Adams, John Jay, and Patrick Henry.

2:30 p.m. Saturday Afternoon. Pageantry at the Kettle Creek Battlefield includes – Continental Army, Georgia militia, Fife and Drum music, Musket Volley and Wreath Presentations.

Sunday Morning February 15th

9:00 a.m. Colonial Worship Service, Phillips Mill Baptist Church, 5479 Greensboro Road, Washington, GA 30673
(706) 678-7825

11:00 a.m. Heroes of the Hornet's Nest
Ceremony, Elijah Clarke State Park,
2959 McCormick Highway, Lincolnton
30817; 7 miles northeast of Lincolnton,
GA on U.S. Highway 378 (706) 359-
3458

The Kettle Creek Battlefield Association
wishes to you a

Happy Thanksgiving & Merry Christmas

Don't Forget to joins us on
February 13th, 14th, & 15th, 2015
for a wonderful weekend celebrating our
American Heritage with the
Battle of Kettle Creek

