

# Battleground Once Forgotten

## For Many Years, Kings Mountain Site Was Inaccessible

The battle of Kings Mountain was fought and won by American patriots on Oct. 7, 1780. It was many years before people realized the importance of the battle now generally called the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

Today the Kings Mountain National Military Park covers 4,000 acres, with the U.S. government responsible for its care and upkeep. This was not always so.

For many years the battle site was so inaccessible it was largely forgotten by all except the survivors and their families.

In 1815, Dr. William McLean of Lincoln County, N.C., advertised for other descendants of the Kings Mountain combatants to meet with him at Kings Mountain, where he had erected a marker to commemorate the battle.

Dr. McLean's monument was a small headstone of black slate on a site just north of Little Kings Mountain. Following McLean's address the audience gathered up and re-interred "the scattered human bones which had been dragged from their shallow resting places by the wolves of the mountain."

When the 75th anniversary of the battle rolled around in 1855, a celebration was planned. Two prominent citizens, Gen. John S. Preston of Columbia and the Hon. George Bancroft of Washington, the nation's best-known historian, were speakers.

As the centennial of the battle approached, citizens began to think of marking the occasion with a special ceremony.

The Kings Mountain Battleground Association was formed in 1878 in Yorkville to plan events for 1880. The plan included the unveiling of a significant monument honoring the heroes.

The granite monument was 28 feet tall and 18 feet square at the base. The centennial orator was Hon. John W. Daniel of Virginia. Poems by Paul Hamilton and Clara Dargan McLean were read and a picked choir sang "Here Upon the Mountain Height."



Nearby History

Louise Pettus

For the 125th celebration, the Daughters of the American Revolution planned a large celebration at Kings Mountain. It was a huge success with more than 7,000 people attending. There was no way to get to the mountain from the York County side except by foot, so most people took the train to Grover, N.C., and were still 6 miles from the site.

Every farmer in the area was waiting with buggy or wagon to transport people to the mountains. For three days people were shuttled back and forth by a constant stream of vehicles. A stifling cloud of dust could be seen for many miles.

There was no national government official at the ceremonies in 1905 but there were more than 1,000 dignitaries and DAR members seated in a stand draped in red, white and blue bunting. The DAR had taken over the task of attempting to purchase the surrounding land from local landowners.

The 1905 festivities also included a reenactment of the battle, witnessed by 2,000 to 3,000 people at 8:30 in the morning.

In spite of the success of their celebration, the DAR had no money to purchase the land or to build a monument until a local lawyer decided to help them out. Next, South Carolina Rep. D.E. Finley and North Carolina Rep. E. Yates Webb jointly sponsored a bill in Congress to secure an appropriation of \$30,000 for the park and monument.

The U.S. War Department took over the project. In June 1908 the ground was broken for a new 115-foot monument about 100 yards north of the 1880 marker.

Again, York County roads to the site were impassable. The road commissioner complained that it would cost \$422 just to move the chain gang to do their repairs and the county commissioners had not increased his budget.

The town of Kings Mountain, N.C., said it would fix the road to the battle site because "every step is sacred to those who love liberty and rejoice in the deeds of their fathers."

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