

HENRYS OF HENRY'S KNOB

Henry's Knob, located in the Bethany community of York County not far from Kings Mountain, is a small mountain named for the Henry family. The first Henry settled in the area before there was a North Carolina-South Carolina boundary line but the site was generally considered to be in North Carolina. The original land grant was issued by Anson County, NC. A boundary adjustment in 1772 placed the land in South Carolina.

William Henry, according to family tradition, was the only son of a well-to-do Irish father. William's mother died when he was young and his father remarried. William and his step-mother did not get along. When he was 18, in 1733, the young man left for America and never returned to claim his inheritance.

William Henry settled first in Augusta County, Virginia where he married Isabella McKown. The couple were in Carolina by 1750, first settling near Tuckaseegee Ford, a Catawba River crossing between Mecklenburg and Gaston counties. About 10 years later the Henrys were living in present-day York County, SC on the headwaters of Allison Creek. Various court records show Henry as obtaining 9 land grants between 1764 and 1773. All of the land was situated on Crowder, Allison or Fishing Creeks.

When the Revolutionary War came along, William Henry was a firm Whig but at age 60 too old to fight but he had four sons who took up the patriot cause: William, Malcolm, John and Alexander. However, the senior Henry served in second General Assembly of South Carolina, 1776-1778, representing the New Acquisition. The New Acquisition was that part of York District west of the Catawba River, stretching 11 miles deep, that was designated a part of South Carolina by the boundary line adjustment of 1772.

There are two very different versions of an event that is supposed to have happened at William Henry's home on the eve of the battle of Kings Mountain.

Lawrence Wells' version is thoroughly researched and most likely correct. Wells says that two Tories were carrying a message from British Col. Patrick Ferguson to Lord Cornwallis on October 6, 1780, presumably requesting aid from Cornwallis. The messengers stopped at the Henry house in search of refreshments which they were given but the messengers were so hasty in leaving that Henry's sons followed them. The messengers anticipating that they were being followed took a circuitous route. They got to Cornwallis but too late for him to send aid to Ferguson. The Tories lost the battle of Kings Mountain and Ferguson lost his life.

Robert J. Herndon, a Henry descendant, wrote in 1930 the version that he said was handed down in the family. He said it was 3 or 4 days before the battle and many of the men from the neighborhood were at the Henry house molding bullets for their Dechard rifles when two British spies were caught. The spies claimed to be innocent starving travelers.

In the Henry house, like so many others, near the fireplace was a trapdoor leading to a cellar used for storing sweet potatoes to keep the potatoes from freezing. The spies were put in the cellar and "guarded until nearly daylight when they were taken out and hanged a few hundred yards down the creek."

Herndon said that his grandfather, Francis Henry, was 12 years old at the time of the battle and rode on a horse, side-saddle behind his mother, to the battleground the day after the battle. The boy's wool hat served as a container to carry water from the branch to the wounded soldiers, Americans and British alike.

Herndon said that Henry's Knob was infested with wild hogs, "great long-tusked fellows, very dangerous." Malcomb Henry and some of his neighbors built a pine-pole pen, baited it, and captured some of the hogs. The night before the bullet-making they invited all the neighborhood soldiers to a pig roast.

There is a monument in Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian cemetery to Major William Henry. Born in 1715, he was 104 years of age at the time of his death in 1819.