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*Formal Report of  
The Battle of King's Mountain  
Oct 1780*



Only three days after their [Letter to General Gates](#) requesting a Continental Commander to oversee their regiments, the Overmountain Boys met on top of King's Mountain, and in an engagement that lasted only one hour and five minutes, totally routed Col. Patrick Ferguson's "superior force."

On October 7, 1780, the one-thousand plus all-volunteer frontier troops met up with the English Colonel's larger, and allegedly better-trained force with the result that Ferguson was slain, and his army decimated.

A formal report of the battle, signed by Cols. William Campbell, Isaac Shelby and Benjamin Cleveland, was given to General Gates when they passed through Hillsboro a few days after the battle:

A Statement of the proceedings of the Western Army, from the 25th of September, 1780, to the reduction of Major Ferguson, and the army under his command.

On receiving intelligence that Major Ferguson had advanced as high up as Gilbert Town, in Rutherford county, and threatened to cross the mountains to the Western waters, Col. William Campbell, with four hundred men from Washington county, of Virginia; Col. Isaac Shelby with two hundred and forty men from Sullivan county, North-Carolina, and Lieutenant-Col. John Sevier, with two hundred and forty men from Washington county, North-Carolina, assembled at Watauga on the 25th of September, where they were joined by Col. Charles McDowell, with one hundred and sixty men from the counties of Burke and Rutherford, who had fled before the enemy to the Western waters.

We began our march on the 26th, and on the 30th, we were joined by Col. Cleveland, on the Catawba River, with three hundred and fifty men from the counties of Wilkes and Surry. No one

officer having properly a right to the command-in-chief, on the 1st of October, we despatched an express to Major General Gates, informing him of our situation, and requested him to send a general officer to take command of the whole. In the meantime, Col. Campbell was chosen to act as commandant till such general officer should arrive.

We reached the Cow Pens, on the Broad River, in South Carolina, where we were joined by Col. James Williams, on the evening of the 6th October, who informed us that the enemy lay encamped somewhere near the Cherokee Ford of Broad River, about thirty miles distant from us. By a council of the principal officers, it was then thought advisable to pursue the enemy that night with nine hundred of the best horsemen, and leave the weak horses and footmen to follow as fast as possible. We began our march with nine hundred of the best men about eight o'clock the same evening, marched all night, and came up with the enemy about three o'clock P.M. of the 7th, who lay encamped on the top of King's Mountain, twelve miles north of the Cherokee Ford, in the confidence they could not be forced from so advantageous a post. Previous to the attack, in our march the following disposition was made:

Col. Shelby's regiment formed a column in the centre on the left; Col. Campbell's another on the right; part of Col. Cleveland's regiment, headed by Major Winston and Col. Sevier's, formed a large column on the right wing; the other part of Col. Cleveland's regiment composed the left wing. In this order we advanced, and got within a quarter of a mile of the enemy before we were discovered. Col. Shelby's and Col. Campbell's regiments began the attack, and kept up a fire on the enemy while the right and left wings were advancing forward to surround them. The engagement lasted an hour and five minutes, the greatest part of which time a heavy and incessant fire was kept up on both sides. Our men in some parts where the regulars fought, were obliged to give way a small distance two or three times, but rallied and returned with additional ardour to the attack, and kept up a fire on the enemy while the right and left wings were advancing forward to surround them. The engagement lasted an hour and five minutes, the greatest part of which time a heavy and incessant fire was kept up on both sides. Our men in some parts where the regulars fought, were obliged to give way a small distance two or three times, but rallied and returned with additional ardour to the attack. The troops upon the right having gained the summit of the eminence, obliged the enemy to retreat along the top of the ridge where Col. Cleveland commanded, and were there stopped by his brave men. A flag was immediately hoisted by Captain Dupoister,<sup>(1)</sup> the commanding officer, (Major Ferguson having been killed a little before,) for a surrender. Our fire immediately ceased,<sup>(2)</sup> and the enemy laid down their arms—the greater part of them loaded—and surrendered themselves to us prisoners at discretion. It appears from their own provision returns for that day, found in their camp, that their whole force consisted of eleven hundred and twenty-five men, out of which they sustained the following loss:—Of the regulars, one Major, one captain, two lieutenants and fifteen privates killed, thirty-five privates wounded. Left on the ground, not able to march, two captains, four lieutenants, three ensigns, one surgeon, five sergeants; three corporals, one drummer and fifty-nine privates taken prisoners.

Loss of the Tories, two colonels, three captains, and two hundred and one privates killed; one Major and one hundred and twenty-seven privates wounded and left on the ground not able to march; one colonel, twelve captains, eleven lieutenants, two ensigns, one quarter-master, one adjutant, two commissaries, eighteen sergeants and six hundred privates taken prisoners. Total loss of the enemy, eleven hundred and five men at King's Mountain. <sup>3</sup>

Given under our hands at camp,

WILLIAM CAMPBELL,  
ISAAC SHELBY,  
BENJAMIN CLEVELAND

The loss on our side-

Killed—1 colonel,	Wounded—1 Major,
1 Major,	3 captains,
1 captain,	3 lieutenants,
2 lieutenants	<u>55</u> privates
4 ensigns,	
<u>19</u> privates	62 total wounded.*
28 total killed.	

Published by order of Congress [4](#)

CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary

(*Virginia Gazette*, 18 Nov 1780, *King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780, and the Events Which Led to It* by Lyman C. Draper, Cincinnati, 1881, pp. 522-24. Also published in *The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, J.G.M Ramsey, Walker and Jones, Charleston, SC, 1853, reprinted by the East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1967, pp. 243-5, which shows 53 privates wounded for total of 60 wounded)

1 Captain Abraham De Peyster

2 That the cease fire was not immediate upon the white flag being raised is documented by a number of other first-hand accounts, including [British Capt. Andrew Chesney](#), and other [Men of King's Mountain](#)

3 No mention is made in this report of the "impromptu court marshall" held a few days after the battle. Those executed may have been included in the above report of numbers killed (not researched).

4 The Journal of the Continental Congress, Monday, November 13, 1780, includes the order that the above report be published, referencing a letter from Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson dated 7 Nov 1780 that was accompanied by a letter from General Gates dated 1 Nov 1780, with the above report enclosed. The actual date of the report is not known, other than that it was written between Oct 7th and Nov 1st. *Draper* postulates that it was written after Lacy and Sevier retired at Quaker Meadows [Oct 11th] or their signatures would have also been appended, and before October 26th when Campbell turned over the command at Bathabara to Cleveland.



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