Colonial Road Survey at King's Mountain National Military Park South Carolina

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Keywords
Excavations, King's Mountain National Military Park, York County, Cherokee County, South Carolina, Archeology

Disciplines
Anthropology

Publisher
The South Carolina Institute of Archeology and Anthropology--University of South Carolina

Comments
In USC online Library catalog at: http://www.sc.edu/library/

This book is available at Scholar Commons: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/archanth_books/57
COLONIAL ROAD SURVEY AT
KING'S MOUNTAIN NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
SOUTH CAROLINA

by

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Research Manuscript Series No. 66

Prepared by the
INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 1974
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INTRODUCTION

King's Mountain National Military Park encompasses an area of 3,950 acres situated in York and Cherokee Counties near the North Carolina state line. The Park was established to commemorate the Battle of King's Mountain on October 7, 1780, an engagement which resulted in the defeat of the Tory forces under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson, by troops comprised mainly of mountain men.

On the basis of an agreement negotiated between the National Park Service and the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, the Institute undertook the following archeological investigations at King's Mountain National Military Park in an attempt to: (1) survey and test areas of the Park evidencing potential locations of Revolutionary War period roads, trails, and related features; and (2) survey and test in areas of proposed locations of a new visitor center, parking lot, walks and other associated developments, in an effort to locate possible sites of prehistoric and historic natures.

In conjunction with the above project, Edwin C. Bearss, National Park Service Supervisory Historian, conducted an intensive documentary search intended to reveal potential information regarding the road network and other possible aspects of an historic nature relating to the Park. On the basis of new information revealed during the historic grounds study, the archeological study was primarily structured in an effort to help demonstrate the recent interpretations as they related to the road network. The results obtained through the archeological and historical study would be intended to serve the purpose of aiding the National Park Service in adding to and enhancing the interpretation of the historical events surrounding the Battle of King's Mountain.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of an archeological investigation, a considerable number of individuals play very important roles in helping to make the outcome of a project successful. This project was no exception, and wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to the following individuals:

Mr. John W. Walker, Research Archeologist, Southeastern Archeological Research Center, National Park Service, Tallahassee, Florida, who coordinated the project and offered considerable helpful suggestions and information.

Mr. Edwin C. Bearss, Supervisory Historian, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., who conducted an extensive historical research project which served as the basic framework for this study, and who, in addition, provided pertinent information, and made himself available for advice throughout the course of the project.

Mr. Ben Moomaw, Superintendent, King's Mountain National Military Park, all of the Park staff and maintenance personnel, who made us feel very welcome and who were more than willing to provide the necessary assistance required during the course of the fieldwork.

Mr. Raymond Sisk, Director, Parks & Recreation Division, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, South Carolina, and Mr. Vernon Jordan, Superintendent, King's Mountain State Park, and his staff who allowed us the use of their camping facilities.

Dr. Robert L. Stephenson, Director of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, who was responsible for overall supervision and administration of the project; John D. Combes, Assistant Director; Stanley South, Archeologist; Leland G. Ferguson, Archeologist and the rest of the Institute staff are thanked for their
efforts and for providing the technical assistance necessary to complete this report.

Special thanks are given to Mr. Robert Asreens, Research Associate, for providing his assistance and advice during the course of the fieldwork.

FIELD STUDY

First Phase

In the fall of 1973 archaelogical investigations were initiated at King's Mountain National Military Park. The initial project entailed conducting test excavations at the sites of the proposed visitor center and parking areas (Fig. 1). These are located in an area which had in the past been subjected to terracing for agricultural purposes. Testing was implemented with the use of a tractor and blade and the assistance of the Park maintenance personnel. Randomly selected areas encompassed within the proposed construction areas were subjected to shovel tests to determine possible deeper buried evidence of artifact-bearing zones. The results of the tests as indicated from the topographic and subsurface evidence indicated that the terracing had destroyed possible evidence of archeological complexes, if any had existed in these areas.

Second Phase

The second phase of the archaelogical project was carried out in the month of March, 1974. Prior to the initiation of the second phase, consultations were conducted with National Park Service Research Archeologist John W. Walker and Supervisory Historian Edwin C. Bearss. After carefully walking over and studying the road network in the Park
and making comparisons with the documentary data at hand, it was decided that the best approach would be to conduct an actual road survey of the road trace traditionally referred to as "The Old Indian Trail" (Bearss MS). Historical maps (Bearss MS) had revealed evidence which indicated the existence of only one road traversing the area, now encompassed by the Park, during the Revolutionary War Period. The location of the trace referred to as "The Old Indian Trail" appeared to conform to that road which is shown in Mill's map of 1825 (Fig. 2). Forty-five years after the battle, this road is still shown as the only road traversing the area. The purpose of the survey was, therefore, to map and determine the extent of the road trace within the Park, and make attempts at arriving at meaningful correlations between the surveyed results and those found in the documentation. The results would then be used to serve to further aid and clarify the interpretive aims of the Park.

Methodology and Physical Description

The road survey at King's Mountain National Military Park was executed during the month of March, 1974 utilizing a transit and stadia rod. A total of 61 datum points were used extending over the 2 1/2 mile road trace.

The initial datum was established at the crossroads of the present park highway and the Old York-Shelbyville road (Fig. 1). Utilizing the present Park highway as control, where possible, the road trace was mapped initially towards the northern Park boundary. As is readily observable, a considerable portion of the present Park highway either closely parallels or was built on sections of the original road bed (Figs. 1 and 3).
FIGURE 2. Moore-Mills Map of 1820
FIGURE 3. Converging Colonial Road trace and Northern Section of Main Park Highway. View to the Southeast.

FIGURE 4. Colonial road trace at point of divergence from Quarry road. View to the east.
A road trace is present between the old York-Shelbyville Road which formed a juncture with the main road trace at approximately 400 feet north from the point of intersection with the York-Shelbyville Road. This road comprises the trace of a later road referred to as the Quarry Road (Bearss MS). At the point where the old road trace and the Quarry Road diverge (Fig. 4), the old road trace veers towards the southeast. A portion of the York-Shelbyville Road encompassed a part of the original road at this point. The road veers off of the York-Shelbyville Road onto a present fire road which is situated on the original road bed. The road descends towards a gap referred to historically and presently as Hambright's Gap and passes immediately in front of the Chronicle Marker. From this area the road ascends through the gap until it is again on level ground. From this point to the location where it merges with the southern portion of the Park drive, the road trace is not as distinct as throughout the rest of its entirety, but slight traces are in evidence.

From the point where the old road trace merges with the southern section of the Park Highway, the highway is situated upon most of the original road bed with a few exceptions (Fig. 1). The road trace and highway continue towards the southern Park boundary, where the trace veers to the left and descends into a valley.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The problematical reason for which the road trace survey was executed was primarily to attempt to define and map the actual location of the primary road, now encompassed by the Park, and possibly the only road which crossed through the area during the Revolutionary War period. The historical research undertaken by Historian Bearss had
unveiled new data which appeared to reveal inconsistencies in the present historical record regarding the battle and the preceding tactical operations which led to the engagement.

The present historical account upon which the National Park Service has relied considerably for its interpretive format is based upon a book originally published in 1881 entitled King's Mountain and It's Heroes written by Lyman C. Draper. For over a period of 40 years, Draper accumulated documents written by various participants and their descendents, although he never saw the battle site. Draper based all of his geographical data on the accounts of the local residents, who in turn drew on their own personal reconnaissances and rememberences. As a result, the recent historical research revealed information which appears to indicate that roads which were not in existence at the time of the Revolution were included in his account of the battle (Bearss MS).

The earliest documentary sources which evidence the road network in the area of King's Mountain are contained in Cook's map of 1772, and Mouzon's of 1775 (Fig. 5). The Cook and Mouzon maps are essentially identical, with the Mouzon map being more detailed. These maps show a road in the King's Mountain area passing through a gap referred to as Stepps Gap. The location of this geographical feature is approximately three and one-half miles east of the Park.

The Moore-Mills Map (Fig. 2) published in 1825 by Robert Mills entails the first detailed map of the area. The map is based on a survey conducted in 1820. This map shows one principle road traversing the battleground area. The road referred to as the Rutherford Road crosses from North into South Carolina passing through King's Mountain Battleground via Hambright's Gap, and continues in a southeasterly direction to Yorkville (Bearss MS).
FIGURE 5. Mouzon's Map of 1775.
An engraved troop movement map of the area drawn by General Joseph Graham appears in J.G.M. Ramsey's *The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Bearss MS). Although not an active participant in the battle, he visited the site and discussed the action with several of the participants. In addition to locating the battleground ridge, troop positions, etc., one road is shown located to the northeast of the battleground ridge. Otherwise, the entire area is shown as wooded (Bearss MS).

As was pointed out earlier, the book upon which most of the interpretive accounts of the battle have been based has been *King's Mountain and It's Heroes*. In this book, a troop movement map (Fig. 6) shows two roads, the Rutherford Road and the Quarry Road. This map shows the correct alignment of the Battleground (Rutherford) Road passing through Hambright's Gap, but an error is evidenced in that the Quarry Road was not in existence at the time of the battle (Bearss MS). According to the map, the troop movements attributable to Ferguson's troops consist of their approaching the battleground by route of the Quarry Road and turning off onto a hypothetical path to the summit.

Basing the interpretation regarding the hypothetical approach to the summit arrived at by a compilation of data over a period of several years against an interpretation arrived at by use of a thorough and systematic research framework, a new perspective is introduced upon which a more substantive and defensible interpretation can be elicited. Therefore, by applying the data derived from the survey to the historical data, further conclusive evidence is presented which makes it possible to structure an interpretation within defined limits.

1. Historical documentation refers to a Colonial road, known as the Battleground or Rutherford Road, which crossed the area now encompassed by the Park.
DIAGRAM OF THE BATTLE OF KING’S MOUNTAIN.

FIGURE 6. Troop Movement Map by Lyman C. Draper
2. The road survey defined, in part, a Colonial road which has direct correlations with the historical record indicating that this road constitutes the road referred to as The Battleground or Rutherford Road.

3. As this road was in existence at the time of the battle, and whereas the Quarry Road was not, then Ferguson and his troops could not have approached the battleground from the Quarry Road.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the approach that was taken by Ferguson and his troops necessitated an alternate route to reach the summit, as has been concluded by Bearss (MS).

During the course of the survey, evidence of a slight road trace was located near the top of the ascent from Hambright's Gap, turning right towards the direction of the summit (Fig. 1). Attempts were made to following the trace, but due to rock outcrops it was not discernible. If a route to the summit existed, and which obviously did, it appears that evidence of a road directly emerging from the Battleground Road would represent a more feasible approach to the summit.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of a road survey conducted at King's Mountain National Military Park, the portion of the Rutherford or Battleground Road which is located within the Park boundary was surveyed its entire length extending from the northern to the southern boundary, a distance of approximately 2½ miles. The purpose of the survey was to map the location of the road which historical documentation revealed as having served as the line of approach for both the Whig and Tory participants of the Battle of King's Mountain. This survey was conducted in conjunction with an intensive historic grounds research project carried out by National Park Service Historian Edwin C. Bearss and which served as the framework for the survey. This report is intended to be utilized as adjunct to the Historic Grounds Report now in preparation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the information obtained through the Colonial road survey and the historical research relevant to historical events which occurred within the area now encompassed by King's Mountain National Military Park, considerable thought should be given to their implementation within the present interpretive format of the Park. The present interpretation of the events leading to the battle have been primarily based on a compilation of secondary accounts. The recent research has revealed new information upon which more formidable interpretations can be made. It is therefore recommended that these results be considered, and implemented to present a more informative and historically correct account of the Battle of King's Mountain.
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