

Clems Branch Camp Preservation

Many people support historical preservation of Clems Branch Camp. One concept is to integrate its history into a greenway trail along Clems Branch.

Those supporting preservation include:

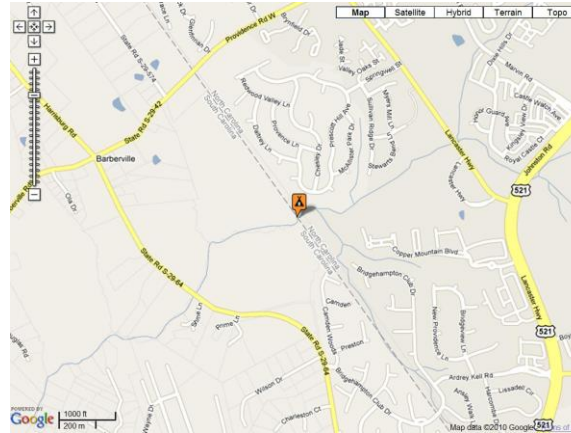
- Dr. Tony Zeiss, President, Central Piedmont Community College.
- Lindsay Pettus, President, Catawba Valley Land Trust
- Louise Pettus, retired history professor, Winthrop University, author of many history books
- Christine and Jim Williams, Lancaster County Historical Commission
- James Garges, Director, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation
- Gwen Cook, Greenway Planner, Mecklenburg Co. Park and Recreation
- Charles Baxley, publisher, Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution
- Gary Ritter, history lecturer, Central Piedmont Community College
- Dan Nance, Local Historical Artist
- Bill Anderson, software developer



Dan Nance, Gary Ritter, Jim Garges, Tony Zeiss at Clems Branch, 6 January 2010.

Clems Branch Camp Location

south of Pineville, NC and north of Indian Land, SC



Contact Information

To help preserve this rare and valuable historical site please contact:

In North Carolina:

- Dr. Tony Zeiss, 704-330-6566, Tony.Zeiss@cpcc.edu
- Gwen Cook, 704-432-1570, Gwen.Cook@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov

In South Carolina:

- Lindsay Pettus, 803-285-9455, katawba@kvlvt.org

Clems Branch History

For general historical questions, email info@elehistory.com

Clems Branch History



Patriots

*Sumter's men crossing Clems Branch
by Dan Nance, 2010*

Sumter's men return to South Carolina

Cornwallis's army invades North Carolina

President Washington's Southern Tour

Wagon Road Campground

Before the American Revolution a wagon road passed over Clems Branch. Usually wagon roads followed ridgelines to avoid creeks that could flood and stop movement. But every 15 miles or so, a small stream was needed to water horses, oxen, and livestock. Clems Branch was such a stream known for its clean water that flowed even during the hot summer months. Thus it became a convenient campground where wagon trains would pause for the night. A farmer's market developed. A mule market existed in the early 1800s. Since the state line crossed Clems Branch and the road at the same location, the campground became a well-known gateway between the two Carolinas.

Sumter's South Carolina Patriots

After the fall of Charleston to the British on 12 May 1780, the British Army quickly moved to occupy the South Carolina up-county. Fortified outposts were built at Camden, Rocky Mount, and Ninety Six. Encouraged by this development, Loyalists drove many Patriot farmers off their land. About 300–500 Patriots assembled near Tuckasegee Ford on the Catawba River in North Carolina. They selected Colonel Thomas Sumter as their leader.



Brigadier General Thomas Sumter
by Rembrandt Peale, 1796

South Carolina Governor John Rutledge commissioned Sumter to establish a regiment. On 20 June 1780, they participated in the Patriot victory at Ramsour's Mill, near present-day Lincolnton, NC. A few days later, these South Carolinians returned to South Carolina camping at Clems Branch. They sent the message that they would not submit to British Army occupation of their state. While at Clems Branch, Sumter appointed his subordinates and recruited more Patriots. Since each man had a horse, available forage was quickly consumed. About 10 days later, Sumter moved his men to Nation Ford on the Catawba River. From there, on 12 July 1780, many of them launched an attack at Williamson's Plantation against Captain Christian Huck and his men in the battle known as Huck's Defeat.

Cornwallis invades North Carolina

Lord Cornwallis's army of 2,000 redcoats invaded North Carolina at Clems Branch on the afternoon of 25 September 1780. The army started at the Crawford's plantation on Waxhaw Creek, 15 miles to the south. That evening, it camped on Little Sugar Creek, near where President James K. Polk was born fifteen years later. Cornwallis's army captured Charlotte the next day.



Lieutenant General Charles Lord Cornwallis
by Thomas Gainsborough, 1783

After the Patriot victory at Kings Mountain on 7 October 1780, Cornwallis withdrew from Charlotte to South Carolina. On the return march, his army used Nations Ford Road, a few miles to the west.

President Washington's Tour

On 28 May 1791, President George Washington entered North Carolina at Clems Branch on the return leg of his tour of southern states. Always an early riser, he began travelling that morning at 4:00 a.m. He noted in his diary how he was greeted at the state line by an honorary escort of Mecklenburg cavalymen. When he learned that the cavalymen were departing rather than returning to their home area, he dismissed them. He breakfasted at Harrison's plantation about three miles north. He wrote:

Saturday 28th. Sett off from Crawfords by 4 Oclock and breakfasting at one Harrisons 18 miles from it & got into Charlotte, 13 miles further, before 3 o'clock. Dined with Genl. Polk and a small party invited by him, at a Table prepared for the purpose. ... It ought to have been mentioned also that upon my entering the State of No. Carolina, I was met by a Party of the Mecklenburg horse — but these being near their homes I dismissed them.



President George Washington
by Gilbert Stuart, 1795

For more, read: <http://home.earthlink.net/~historycarolina/ClemsBranchFlyer.pdf>