

## The Strange Campbell/Shelby Controversy and the Role of John Broady at the Battle of Kings Mountain

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Through reading the contents of a letter dated 1822,<sup>1</sup> which I found in a family album<sup>2</sup> of my uncle, Robert Bowyer Preston of Greenfield in Fincastle, Botetourt County, Virginia, I became interested in the reference it contained to another letter from James McDowell. I discovered that McDowell's letter revealed information about a controversy concerning the Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain (October 7, 1780). The controversy, which challenged the veracity of Colonel William Campbell's (1745–1781) fame as the commander-in-chief of the patriot troops, arose some thirty years after the battle. Some persons speculated that Campbell had been sitting on his horse safely at the rear of his troops during the battle rather than leading his soldiers in battle at the front, as had been officially recorded. The key challenger to Campbell's record was another officer who took part in the battle, Colonel Isaac Shelby, who later became the first (1792–1796) and the fourth (1812–1816) governor of Kentucky. Basic to the battlefield controversy was the presence of William Campbell's look-alike mulatto manservant, John Broady (also Broaddy or Broddy).

The controversy assumes importance when one considers that the Battle of Kings Mountain on the border between North and South Carolina near Charlotte is considered by historians to be a key battle that paved the way to victory for the American patriots in the Revolutionary War, much as the Battle of Gettysburg did for the Union during the Civil War in 1863. The objective student of history might well ask, "What was Cornwallis doing in the South in the first place?" To better understand the Campbell/Shelby controversy, a review of that controversy and of the Battle of Kings Mountain, along with John Broady's role, will allow the perspicacious reader and student of history to draw his/her own conclusions as to what may have occurred.

## The Controversy

It came as a considerable surprise to me when I discovered that the aforementioned letter challenged not only Campbell's role as chief commander but also his bravery and military judgment, and by none other than Col. Isaac Shelby, whose North Carolina regiment from Sullivan County had flanked Campbell's much larger contingent from Virginia at the Battle of Kings Mountain. The family album in which my search began belonged to my uncle Robert Bowyer Preston of Greenfield Plantation in Botetourt County. Greenfield was one of the early homes of Col. William Preston (1729–1783). Built in 1763, Greenfield was the birthplace of six<sup>3</sup> of Col. William and Susanna Smith Preston's twelve children, including their son Francis Preston (1765–1835), who later practiced law in Abingdon and married Sarah Buchanan Campbell in 1793 when she was fifteen years old. Sarah was the only daughter of General William Campbell and his wife, Elizabeth, a sister of Patrick Henry. (The only son of General Campbell, Charles Henry Campbell, died at the age of five.) The 1822 letter, written by James McDowell (1770–1835), was addressed to Francis Preston of Abingdon, Virginia. McDowell was a brother-in-law of Francis Preston, having married Preston's sister, Sarah, who was also born at Greenfield. The McDowells built Col Alto,<sup>4</sup> a home that still stands today in Lexington, Virginia. At the time he wrote the letter, McDowell was staying at the home of his wife's sister, Susanna Preston Hart (also born at Greenfield), and her husband Nathaniel Hart, in Danville, Kentucky. Excerpts from the letter follow:

Francis Preston, Abingdon, Virginia  
Oct. 16, 1822

...Last week I was at Danville when Col. Shelby<sup>5</sup> came to see me (as I believe he was introduced) [re] Willm's<sup>6</sup> publications and regretted extremely that his letters to Sevier<sup>7</sup> had been published considering them as the foundation or rather cause of Wms publications. He said yourself and Genl Campbell were both particularly respected by him and that you were doubly endeared to him by being the descendant of the man of all others he loved the most. That the publication had placed Genl Campbell on the highest penicle [sic] & there he was content he should remain & that he would not answer unless he was forced to do so by some further attack. If this thing were permitted to remain where it is now was that he was content however goading to his feelings some of the charges to bear it but

that if he was forced he must and would defend himself. He spoke of some of the matters of Wm Pierce. The appointment of Genl Campbell to the command & the time of drawing up the acct of the Battle to which William refers. He says the appointment of Genl Campbell to the command met his views and that he aided it with his influence and that he was the first to motion it to the officers of the expedition and that report of the disposition of the army on the day of the Battle and forces ... paper was drawn up by himself some days after the battle on their reaching the first place of safety that the report as drawn up by himself was shown to Genl Campbell who suggested several alterations and amendments which were made on the face of the paper and which he cheerfully adopted & concurred in & then the report in the form it is now seen was made by himself. I told Genl Shelby I would communicate this to William and yourself. He said I might do so as one happening between him & myself & Mr. Hart<sup>8</sup> without any intention that you should hear it. It is said that Genl Shelby has written an account of the affair and has sworn to it lately in Danville to be left behind him & that his friends are collecting testimony to disprove William's publications. At this time the current is running against Shelby greatly.

...James McDowell

Further research turned up two pamphlets by Agnes Graham Sanders Riley of Lexington, Kentucky that deal with the origins of the Campbell/Shelby controversy.<sup>9</sup> The author bases the publication of the pamphlets on the race for governor of Kentucky in which Shelby, who was seeking a second term, had formidable competition from a prominent lay leader in the Baptist Church of Kentucky. The main issue centered around the need for a strong man with military experience as governor because war with Great Britain seemed imminent (War of 1812). Against Shelby were his age, wealth, and religion. His wealth, like that of other militia leaders of the over-mountain men in the Revolutionary War, had been primarily gained from land speculation. Many had become enormously wealthy upon winning that war; they were almost to a man staunch Presbyterians of Scots-Irish descent. There can be little doubt that Shelby focused on his trump card, his military experience. The trouble was, he apparently overplayed it. Why? Perhaps he sincerely believed that Campbell did not deserve his fame as the leader of the Battle of Kings

Mountain and, once deciding that, it was natural that he would then prepare a pamphlet or “lawyer’s brief” citing evidence that all of the important decisions and actions of the battle were to the credit of others, especially himself, rather than to Campbell.

In addition, several other documents attest to Shelby’s repeated efforts to justify himself. An article signed “Narrator” appeared in *The Reporter*, Lexington, Kentucky, July 25, 1812; interviews of 1815 and 1819 by General Martin D. Hardin were published by Hardin’s son in *The American Review* in 1848; and Shelby himself published a pamphlet in 1823.<sup>10</sup> The evidence seems to suggest that early in the debate and during his gubernatorial campaign, Shelby’s focus was on his own role at the battle, but after the election was over and for many years thereafter the focus was instead on denigrating Campbell.

Imagine my delight when I found among the Preston Family Papers at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, Virginia, a letter from Francis Preston Blair to General Francis Preston of Abingdon, dated June 1823 (nine months after the McDowell letter), also discussing the controversy over the Battle of Kings Mountain. Francis Preston Blair (1791–1876) was the son of a niece of Col. William Preston, Elizabeth (Smith) Blair (1762–1818), who was once the owner of Blair House in Washington, D.C. His mother and Francis Preston of Abingdon (1765–1835) were first cousins and close in age to one another. It appears that Francis Preston Blair was named for Francis Preston of Abingdon since he used “namesake” in the letter’s signature. In Blair’s letter to Gen. Francis Preston, he praised the publications of William Campbell Preston.

Frankfort [Ky.], June 23, 1823

Dear Sir,

Perceiving by the state papers that you design publishing additional evidence disproving the charges advanced by Gov. Shelby against the reputation of Col. Campbell, I presume it will not be uninteresting to you to obtain any new details in relation to the controversy. Mr. Estill of Augusta, VA can furnish you with the most conclusive testimony of the strong impression which Major Edmunston, his step-father who was entertained of the heroic bravery displayed by Col. C at the Battle of Kings Mountain. I recently traveled with Mr. Estill from the Southern part of this state on his return from Tennessee when he repeated to me that statements he had heard Major Edmunston make & he also informed me that he had heard a Mr. Maxwell who

served under Shelby now living about 30 miles from Nashville on the road to Alabama who told him he was present and officiated at the execution of the Tories, that he did not hear nor did he ever hear of, at the time, insulting taunts said to have been used by Sevier to Campbell. You will have it in your power to inform yourself more particularly in regard to the circumstances, as Mr. Estill on his return home will pass through Abingdon with a view of seeing a brother who lives there.

You will have observed that the E[ditors] of the "Argus" and "Reporter" in giving your own nam[e] & the reply of your son, William, to Gov. Shelby's publications, have thought fit to accompany them by editorial remarks designed to anticipate their effect upon the public mind. From this circumstance you will perceive that the editors of these influential papers will do their utmost to support Gov Shelby in his injustice particularly the editor of the Argus, who by publishing Gov Shelby's reply, without giving the defense to which it was a response & by threatening you with a multitude of assailants should you put forth the vindication you have promised has sufficiently indicated as well the feeling by which he is actuated as the principle on which [he] acts. The Communicator, another paper published in this place of considerable circulation has given proofs of hostility to the cause you support. You must not however consider the attitude the editors of these leading papers have expressed as proceeding from the motive which generally rules them & desire to accommodate their sentiments to the palates of the people they are endeavoring to lead the public opinion, & the more willingly undertake as they expect support from the general inclination which the people always exhibit of identifying themselves with a distinguished fellow citizen or even a distinguished ... against an antagonist of another state. But there are private causes which operate on each & originate the zeal which has been manifested by them. The Editor of The Reporter is married into the family of the Harts. The Communicator in fact (though ostensibly) is edited by a gentleman whose brother married a daughter of Governor Shelby and the editor of the Argus is greatly under the influence of an able amiable citizen of this place who was aide to Shelby during the war who is thought as certainly to have aided him in his reply & whose brother is the reputed author of the piece signed "Narrator." You will not therefore attribute the

holy fever which the zealous editors evince for their idol Gov. Shelby as the result of general enthusiasm among the people. I doubt not but that the justice of your cause will triumph over the influence of narrow, selfish, sectional feeling. I believe that all those among us who know anything of our revolutionary struggles (Shelby's particular clan apart) look upon his conduct in regard to Col. Campbell as sacrilege and it cannot be that the people of our brave and generous state, however they might be influenced to preserve [~~"support"~~] their own, by supporting the glory of an individual who has given his honor to the public by the public stations to which he has allied them would yet be willing to mar the heroic death with a view to enhance them. They will rather, I trust, deeply resent the conduct of that man who after having enjoyed the honor & emoluments of public stations & obtained all the real advantages by an act of survivorship which the exploit of Kings Mountain would have conferred on Campbell had he lived would now use the very consideration thus desired not only to take from the great acclaim the fame which follows his recovery but would inscribe coward on the hero's urn & give the opprobrium an inheritance of shame to his posterity.

Shelby has passed lightly over his autographed letter but some of his friends here deny its existence & others say the contents would explain away the paragraph quoted by your son, William. I think it would probably be well to publish the whole & send it to where it could be identified as his own. It might be most powerfully used against him & therefore should be exhibited at full length and the contrast between it and his present statements dwelt upon so that the motive which produced his contradiction would be made to seize the public attention.

The attack threatened by the Argus will not deter you from doing justice to the cause in which you are engaged. It is a cause in which we know can be lost but in its desertion. Should the partisans of Shelby in my neighborhood pursue the subject in the public print in a way not requiring your interposition but yet describing animadversions from the effect they may appear to produce on the public mind, be assured, I will not hesitate at whatever hazard to invoke the public justice to indicate as far as I can the views of Col. Campbell & your own character and conduct should it become a part of the contro-

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versy. Nothing could give me [more] pure satisfaction than to be somewhat instrumental in bringing justice to the memory of Col. Campbell if you should believe that the peculiar interest I take in this matter it is some part increased by the kindness shown by yourself & Mrs. Preston to my mother & the tender regard you gave to the infancy of one who through life will feel the obligation.

Your aff[ectionate] kinsman and namesake

F. P. Blair

It would be worthwhile at this point to review briefly the Battle of Kings Mountain.

### **The Battle of Kings Mountain:**

Having failed to suppress the rebellion of the colonists in the North by 1780, Sir Henry Clinton, over-all commander of the British military in America, conceived a plan to sweep through the South, beginning with the capture of Savannah and Charleston. From there, the British would drive north, gaining strength along the way by drafting the many Tory sympathizers to the King who were known to reside in the South, especially among the Scots of North Carolina. To this group of soldiers would be added rebel Whigs pressed into service against their wills. What upset the grand strategy? As anyone who has celebrated the October 7, 1780 Battle of Kings Mountain would know, Col. William Campbell of Abingdon, Virginia, led 400 Virginia mountain men south to meet with other mountain men from Georgia and North and South Carolina at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga in what is now Tennessee. They gathered a total force of fifteen hundred men for the purpose of crossing the mountains to meet and destroy the equally-numbered forces of Major Patrick Ferguson, an arrogant British leader who had threatened to inflict harsh punishment on the mountain people if they did not submit to King George III's will. According to the British plan, Ferguson was to sweep the western or left flank of the British northward through the South while Cornwallis with his main forces kept to the center, and a third column moved from Charleston to Wilmington, North Carolina, along the coast. Important to a further understanding of events is the fact that Cornwallis and Ferguson were fresh from a victory over the rebel Continental forces, first at Charleston against General Lincoln, and then at Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, 1780, where they

had defeated General Horatio Gates, the “hero of Saratoga,” who for a brief time had been considered as a replacement for George Washington. Gates had retreated to Hillsboro, North Carolina, just south of the Virginia line, to regroup.

No Continental forces made up of trained army regulars were left in the South to stop the British march northward. What Cornwallis now faced, overconfidently and somewhat contemptuously, were undisciplined militiamen, “a scurvy lot of ragamuffins,” under the nominal command of rebel colonial governors rather than the Continental Congress. What leadership these troops had consisted of naturally self-selected men such as Isaac Shelby and John Sevier, both from North Carolina counties west of the Allegheny Mountains. Officially, county militia were under the command of local “county lieutenants.” A few militiamen — such as Daniel Morgan, the hero of the Battle of Cowpens — joined the Continentals under Congressional command and rose in rank as they proved their worth. The unorthodox fighting tactics of these men were especially held in contempt by the regulars, both British and American, despite the experience in 1763 of the ill-fated General Braddock. The over-mountain men in the militia had been in more or less constant warfare with the Indians since the 1750s; as a result these pioneers had become adept at unorthodox fighting tactics.

After the fall of Charleston in May 1780, Major Ferguson with just one hundred regulars set up headquarters to train his Tory volunteers in a town called Ninety-Six, South Carolina. Emboldened by British victories, the Tories flocked to Ferguson’s call to arms. They raided the homes and farms of their rebel Whig neighbors to supply the needs of Ferguson’s army. Small armies of Whig patriots, some refugees and others avengers, formed to strike back. Among the first Whig patriots to confront Ferguson were Elijah Clarke of Georgia and Col. Joseph McDowell, Jr., of Quaker Meadows, North Carolina. McDowell feared that the British were a threat to western North Carolina. Accordingly, he sent for Isaac Shelby and John Sevier of Sullivan and Washington Counties to rally volunteers from the over-the-mountain regions of the Watauga and Holston Rivers to reinforce his men at Cherokee Ford on the Broad River. For a time, they were successful, defeating portions of Ferguson’s army on the Pacolet River, at Thicketty Fort, Musgrove’s Mill, Cedar Spring, and the Wofford Iron Works near present-day Spartanburg. But their success was thwarted by the news of Gates’s disastrous defeat at Camden, and the patriots



were forced to retreat back over the mountains. As a result, Cornwallis was emboldened to order even harsher measures against all rebels: hanging, imprisonment, and confiscation of all property.

McDowell's troops, mostly volunteers who had made only a three-month's commitment, now greatly reduced in number, retreated to Rutherford and Burke Counties in North Carolina. Ferguson's army swelled to four thousand men at its peak, divided into seven battalions. He moved boldly into Tryon County and western North Carolina. McDowell retreated farther toward the Watauga in what is now East Tennessee. From his post in Gilbert Town, Ferguson sent a message to the mountain men, threatening to "march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay waste to their country with fire and sword." The message was conveyed by Samuel Philips, a captive of Ferguson, who was paroled for the express purpose of delivering the message to Philips' cousin, Isaac Shelby. It was then that Shelby and Sevier decided to appeal to Col. William Campbell of Abingdon, urging him to raise a volunteer army and to meet them on September 25th at Sycamore Flats (or Shoals) on the Watauga, a site forty miles from Abingdon. Their plan was to cross the mountains and to seek out and destroy Ferguson and his army, provided that they could amass a force of sufficient strength.

Cornwallis planned to lead his army from Charlotte to Salisbury, link up with Ferguson's corps, and eventually capture and destroy Chiswell's Lead Mines in Southwest Virginia near Abingdon. To assist in this plan, Tories and Cherokee Indians had already been incited by British Loyalists and were causing problems for Col. Campbell. Threatened on two fronts, Campbell decided to raise a force from the Virginia counties of Washington, Montgomery, and Botetourt sufficient to meet both challenges. He took four hundred men, half of his forces, to Watauga under his personal command. When the patriot forces gathered at Sycamore Shoals, the total number of troops came to fifteen hundred, nine hundred of whom were on horseback. This number was roughly equivalent to the strength of Ferguson's force, according to intelligence reports of the time. William Campbell, John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, and Joseph McDowell assembled as co-equal field-grade officers. All accounts agree that, either at Watauga or later at Gilbert Town, Campbell was elected commander of the entire force.

On September 15, 1780, the rebel troops set out for the east, crossing the mountains on September 16th. If they failed, their only line of

retreat would be to the Mississippi and south to Spanish sanctuary. Ferguson was in pursuit of Col. Elijah Clarke of Georgia, who had earlier scored a victory at Augusta and was retreating northward to join with other rebel forces. Two Whig deserters, Crawford and Chambers, brought news to Ferguson of the gathering of the over-mountain men, causing him to change his plans and attempt to rejoin Cornwallis' main force at Camden or return to his post at Ninety-Six. Ferguson dispatched two messengers to Cornwallis asking for reinforcements, but, fatefully, they were delayed in their mission. Ferguson had hoped for assistance from Major Banastre Tarleton, but Tarleton was ill with yellow fever. Ferguson also sent a request to Major Cruger for reinforcements from Ninety-Six, but a previous policy of extensive leaves for his Tory recruits had depleted the reserves there. As his options dwindled, Ferguson decided to make a stand at Kings Mountain where he confidently organized a defense so strong that "the Almighty could not drive him from it."

In the meantime, the rebel numbers had been strengthened when they were joined by South Carolina men under Brigadier General James Williams and additional North Carolina forces under Col. Cleveland and Col. Winston. The fifteen-hundred-man army of patriots traveled all during the night of October 6th. Under cover of rainy weather on the morning of October 7th, the troops were able to surround Kings Mountain and advance to within a quarter-mile of the enemy before they were discovered. At 4:00 p.m. the firing commenced. Ferguson tried to break out of his encirclement with three bayonet charges but was unsuccessful. The battle was over in one hour. The unerring aim of the mountain men with their long rifles, enhanced by their uphill firing trajectory from behind rocks and trees, as opposed to the more difficult down-hill trajectory faced by the Loyalist forces trapped on the mountain, had carried the day. Ferguson himself was killed, riddled with bullets as he made a desperate, lone effort to escape. His next in command, DePeyster, immediately called for quarters, but the surrender was marred by confusion. The first soldier raising the white flag was met with a hail of bullets. Fighting resumed until Col. Campbell called again for a cease fire on both sides. Then a group of Tories, returning from a foraging expedition and unaware of the surrender, fired upon and killed Gen. James Williams of South Carolina. Infuriated, Campbell ordered the firing on the hapless, encircled Tories to resume. His men were more than willing to comply. Their battle cry from the beginning had been "Remember Buford's

Quarter!” — a reference to the battle of Waxhaws the year before when the victorious British Major Banastre Tarleton had ordered all prisoners slaughtered. When the smoke had cleared, more than two hundred Loyalists lay dead. Fewer than thirty Patriots were killed.

The Loyalist prisoners received harsh treatment. Upon arriving at Gilbert Town three days after the battle, Campbell was pressured by a signed petition from his officers into trying certain of the Tory prisoners who were recognized as having committed atrocities against civilians. Nine were tried and hanged.

The effect of the victory of these militiamen at Kings Mountain was far-reaching. Instead of an unopposed sweep of his forces to Virginia and ultimate victory, Cornwallis was delayed for several months before he could resume his offensive. This delay gave precious time to Nathaniel Greene, Gates’s replacement, and the Marquis de Lafayette, who organized the resistance under Continental leadership that eventually led to Cornwallis’ final defeat and surrender at Yorktown.

The harsh treatment of the Tory prisoners led to a curbing of hanging and maltreatment on both sides. During the time leading up to the surrender at Yorktown, Col. Campbell’s career continued to flourish. He served under Greene at Guilford Court House, commanding militia forces there, and eventually was given a commission as Brigadier General with the Continental Army serving under the Marquis de Lafayette. On his way home from the final victory at Yorktown, he suffered severe chest pains and in three days was dead at the age of forty-five. His sudden and untimely death enhanced his fame as the “Hero of Kings Mountain.” The Commonwealth of Virginia voted him a sword, saddle, and horse in recognition of his services. Eulogies were officially published in the *Virginia Gazette* and similar periodicals in nearby states, and both Washington and Lafayette issued their own proclamations of praise. Though fame is ephemeral, nothing seemed so secure as the place of Gen. William Campbell in history. But such was not the case, as the Campbell/Shelby controversy proved.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Importance of John Broady**

Although my research into the Campbell/Shelby controversy unearthed further secondary sources that explored Shelby’s political motivations at length, one can argue that too little attention has been paid to the role of William Campbell’s manservant, John Broady, who was by all

accounts a remarkable Campbell "look-alike." Campbell himself was said to have had blue eyes and red hair, a fact that seems to have led to the whole debate. I quote from Draper:

In the beginning of the action, Colonel Campbell's famous Bald Face, a black horse, proving skittish, he exchanged him, with his namesake, a Mr. Campbell, of his own corps, for a bay animal; and Bald Face was sent to the rear, and placed in charge of the Colonel's servant, John Broddy, who was a tall, well proportioned mulatto, and in the distance very much resembled his master. Broddy's curiosity prompted him to ride up within two hundred yards of the raging battle, saying "he had come to see what his master and the rest were doing." Broddy with his coat off, and sitting upon Bald Face, unwittingly deceived Colonels Shelby and Sevier, Captain Moses Shelby, and perhaps others, into the belief that it was Colonel Campbell himself, intently watching at a respectful distance, the progress of the engagement. But Campbell was all this time in the thickest of the fight, riding his bay horse till he became exhausted, when he abandoned him, and was the remainder of the battle at the head of his men, on foot, with his coat off and his shirt collar open.

It was during that critical period of the battle, when the final rally of the Virginians had been made, and after Colonel Campbell's horse had given out, that the intrepid chief ascended the mountain on foot, several paces in advance of his men; and, having reached the point of the ridge, he climbed over a steep rock, and took a view of the position of the enemy within a very short distance of their lines, and discovered that they were retreating from behind the rocky rampart they had hitherto occupied with so much security to themselves and injury to the mountaineers, when he rejoined his men unharmed.<sup>12</sup>

And this interesting footnote:

Colonel Cleveland [another of the Kings Mountain leaders] was something of a wag. While in camp en route for Kings Mountain, the obese and jolly Colonel walked up to Campbell's markee, and seeing him at the entrance and very much resembling his servant, pretended to mistake him for the latter, and accosted him with — "Halloo, Jack, did you take good care of my noble Roebuck when you fed your master's horse? — Ah! I ask your pardon, Colonel Campbell; you and your servant look

so much alike, led to the mistake." The joke was received, as it was given, in the best of good humor, and was much enjoyed among the officers.<sup>13</sup>

Partial siblings of mixed ethnic origin were not uncommon among slave-owning plantation families, a fact usually well known among the neighbors but seldom admitted among the families themselves. Thus, it is easy to speculate that the Campbell family knew exactly why Broady and Col. William Campbell were such look-alikes.

Other footnotes quote a number of sources bearing on whether or not Campbell was riding the bay or Bald Face, along with the following footnote:

No doubt others of the sons of Africa, beside Broddy, aided in menial occupations on the campaign. It is worthy of record, that "there is a tradition in the Kings Mountain region," says Colonel J. R. Logan, "that something more than a dozen Negroes were under arms in the battle, in behalf of liberty, and demeaned themselves bravely."<sup>14</sup>

Draper quotes a certain Captain Joel Lewis of Albemarle County, Virginia, as saying: "A colored freeman, named Bowman, of his company, claimed to have killed Ferguson."<sup>15</sup>

We have no evidence that Broady discharged his duties in any other capacity than as manservant to Campbell. Yet, the fact that other blacks were reported to have fought in the ranks of the over-mountain men<sup>16</sup> suggests that Broady's role may deserve more scrutiny.

In *The Paths of Glory*,<sup>17</sup> a fictionalized accounting of her family's history, Nelly Cummings Preston, a descendant of General Campbell's wife, addresses the controversy in considerable detail. Although the conversations that follow obviously cannot be accepted as historical fact, they are included here only to provide insight into the Preston family interpretation of the controversy. Nelly Cummings Preston describes the important role John Broady played in the family of General William Campbell and later in that of his son-in-law Francis Preston, whose wife, Sarah Buchanan Campbell Preston, inherited ownership of Broady on her father's death. Broady was clearly in charge of plantation production as a sort of foreman, but at the same time he was also responsible for the work of the domestic servants. He was described as looking different from the other Negroes because he had straight hair. His first-born child was described as an albino. He was emancipated by Francis Preston in

1793 (Preston had married Sarah Buchanan Campbell six months earlier), and was granted for his lifetime a thousand acres of “good bottom land” (Broady’s Bottom near Saltville, Virginia) as a “fair compensation...for fifteen years of bondage which his Master never intended him to serve.”<sup>18</sup>

Nelly Preston records an imagined conversation between Elizabeth Henry Campbell and her daughter:

One night as John Broady was piling logs beside the fireplace, your father spoke his name. “John, listen I want the mistress to hear what I have to say to you. Betsy, for five years, I have been fighting for freedom — liberty for my country and myself. During those years I have held in the thralldom of slavery a man who is as capable of freedom as I am myself. I have not thought of John as servitor but as friend. He came with us to this wilderness, and helped us make a home. He has cared for my loved ones, when I needs must be away. He followed me into the hell of Kings Mountain unafraid. He even wears my old clothes — and near paid for that with his life. At Kings Mountain a Tory mistook him for me and shot at him as he held the horses behind the line of battle. For his Christmas present I shall give him his freedom. Understand that John.”

[Broady replied:] “It has not seemed slavery, Master Will, I am well content, but I do long to lift the stigma from Vinie and my Boy and for others who may later come. I thank you more than I can say.”<sup>19</sup>

The reference to Campbell’s old clothes bears on the “look-alike” question, and Nelly Preston continues, in the voice of Elizabeth Henry Campbell, to recount to her daughter “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” regarding the Kings Mountain campaign, citing her husband’s diary, letters he wrote to her while there, his official reports and less formal notes, interviews with Willie Russell (Campbell’s adjutant), Robert Campbell, Captain Dysart, Andy McKinnon the blacksmith, William Moore, and “even John Broady.” She found “no discrepancy in what they have to say.” She describes how Campbell’s horse, “Black Albion,” went lame and was left in the care of John Broady.

I want especially, my Daughter, that you remember this fact, because quite lately I have heard that old Col. Shelby is telling it around that he saw your father, during the heat of the battle, sitting on his well-known bald faced black horse down the

mountain side behind the fighting lines. The one he saw, of course, was John Broady, dressed in one of your father's well worn coats, holding the horse your father did not ride that day. It is also true that early in the fray, a Tory who knew Black Albion well, thought the figure was Col. Campbell and tried to kill him. When I asked John Broady about this tale and of his whereabouts, he answered me promptly. "Yes, Madam, I never got down off that Albion horse, till the fighting was plumb all over, but I did ride up the mountain fudder than Marster Will left me, 'cause I wanted to keep my eye [on] him just as you told me to do. I was right behind where the shooting was, and the Colonel was way up front."<sup>20</sup>

Farther on in Preston's novel, we are informed that the British officers seeking the Patriot commander to offer their swords in surrender hesitated before the wild, red-headed giant, coatless and hatless, with his collar loose about his neck, a thoroughly unmilitary figure. But they obeyed when he ordered the officers to rank by themselves and the privates to stack arms and sit down uncovered.

I hear that Col. Shelby now intimates that your Father could not be found at the time of the surrender, but he does not go on to tell that when your Father came from the northern end of the clearing, he came laden with the swords of the surrendered officers. Let me hasten to remind you that these swords were turned over to the proper persons; not one came home with him as a trophy of war.<sup>21</sup>

*The Paths of Glory* also tells of Shelby's misconstruing the "apology" Campbell made to him after the battle. According to author Nelly Preston, Campbell was blaming himself for not controlling his men after the surrender; Shelby thought he was apologizing for not having taken part in the fighting.

In her book, Nelly Preston provides us with an exchange between Elizabeth Henry Campbell and John Broady which might explain Broady's provenance as follows:

What can you remember of your mother, John? From what country did they bring you here?

That I do not know, Madam. I only know there were mountains touching the sky and deep dark valleys full of trees like none that grow here. In the tops of the trees there was fruit, and nuts and on some of them balls big as my head, with milk

inside and good white meat. I cannot remember cold like this, and there were animals in the trees like little men. Folks don't believe the tales I tell, Madam, and I don't talk about it any more. I do remember going in a great procession down the mountains to worship our gods at a beautiful shrine. We rode on animals twice as big as Albion [Black Albion or Bald Face — Col. Campbell's horse], slow and lumbering and I think their tails hung down in front. Now that's foolish, isn't it, Mistis?

No, John, you mean an elephant, I know...

Well, Mam, we made a procession around a lake where the temple was, hundreds of men, hundreds. In that crowd must have been bad men who hated my father. They stole me and carried me down to the sea and sold me to a ship with other slaves aboard. They called me John, for a name to answer to, and they added the other because I said it often in my prayers, and I called his name aloud to rescue me, "Baroda, Baroda" so they called me John Broady, a good enough name since I have forgotten the one my father gave me. It was a Tea Ship, Ma'am, not a slaver and they did not chain me down in the hold, as I have heard many a black man tell. They paid little enough, I reckon, so what they sold me for was just velvet lining for their pockets. Colonel, Master Will's father, bought me when the ship came in to Annapolis. That's all there is to it, except that since they have taught me of The One True God I have never ceased to thank Him that it was unto these good hands I fell. Master Will and me, we've been friends more than master and slave, and I'll serve him, and you, Madam, as long as I draw the breath of life.<sup>22</sup>

Another version of John Broady's provenance by Gordon Aronhime appears in an interesting article among the issues of the Washington County (Virginia) Historical Society Bulletin:

The first emancipation recorded in our area is one of the most interesting. The emancipated was John Broady, as descendants now spell it though he wrote his signature as Broddy. This man, who figures in Draper's celebrated *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, was our only free black who made his mark on history. The date of emancipation is surprisingly early — September 30, 1793.<sup>23</sup>

Aronhime goes on to say that Broady was freed by General Francis Preston, whose wife Sally had inherited the slave from her father, Gen-

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eral William Campbell, whose body servant Broady had been. Mrs. Preston's mother, Patrick Henry's sister Elizabeth, married General William Russell after Campbell's death. After being widowed for the second time, she freed six of her slaves in one emancipatory writ on July 21, 1795. Also, before 1800, two other members of the Broady family were freed.

John Broady was born in Virginia in 1755. He became a Campbell slave as a boy and early became body servant of the only son of that branch of the family, William Campbell, later the General. Broady lived until 1859. His wife, Milly, also a former Campbell slave, was born in Maryland in 1770 and did not die until 1885. The emancipation writ for John Broady states that this act was done "because of his service to his late master, General William Campbell, especially in the late war," meaning the American Revolution. John Broady wrote quite well, and his intelligence, good sense, and excellent memory are all clearly shown in his remarkable account of the hanging of the Tory Hopkins by General Campbell.

What are John Broady's origins exactly? Why did he look different from the other slaves? Baroda is a port city on the west coast of India in the State of Gujurat. East Indians as well as other nationalities were known to have been caught up in the slave trade. If the Nelly Preston legend is correct, John Broady could have come to America from India rather than Africa. This would have provided a respectable family explanation for his different appearance. On the other hand, it does not account for the "look-alike" status so clearly described in Draper's book, which would have been the case if his origins were in Virginia as Aronhime stated, with the added inference that he was a half-brother of Col. William Campbell.

In conclusion, Draper's 1881 book does not make clear when and by whom the Broady "look-alike" matter was invoked to explain the origins of the Campbell/Shelby controversy. Draper first learned of it in 1843, but apparently Col. Shelby was never aware of this aspect of the case and died without knowing about it. Much has been written about John Broady's true role in history, especially with regard to the Battle of Kings Mountain, beginning with his place of birth and his paternity and also examining aspects of how he dressed, which horse he was on, why he was shot at, and why he moved up closer to the battle. All of this speculation would seem to indicate that he was an important figure in

the Campbell/Shelby controversy regarding the real identity of "The Hero of the Battle of Kings Mountain." Perhaps John Broady is the key to answering the questions and assertions raised by Col. Isaac Shelby that shroud General William Campbell's fame and his place in history.

## Endnotes

- \* Research for this article was done by Mason G. Robertson, who graduated from Washington & Lee University in 1950 with a B.A. in Biology and from medical school in 1954. After internship, residency, and a fellowship in Internal Medicine at Emory & Grady in Atlanta, he returned to Savannah where he practiced medicine. Lisa Hammett, David Bruce Wallace, and Mary Holliman contributed to earlier versions of this manuscript.
1. This letter, dated about a week after the McDowell letter, was written by a daughter of General John Preston, eldest son of Colonel William Preston and inheritor of Greenfield. It was addressed to her father at Greenfield and reported what James McDowell had written to his wife at Col Alto regarding the contents of a letter he had sent from Danville, Kentucky, to Francis Preston in Abingdon, Virginia, dated October 16, 1822.
  2. Mason G. Robertson's mother, Susan Radford Preston, was born and raised at Greenfield in Fincastle, Botetourt County, Virginia. Robert Bowyer Preston, who had his own small farm in Botetourt County, was the last survivor of his generation of the Preston family to be born and raised at Greenfield, which burned to the ground in 1959. The attic at Greenfield had served as the repository for most of the historical papers of the Preston family for many years prior to the fire.
  3. According to *The Prestons of Smithfield and Greenfield in Virginia* by John Frederick Dorman, William and Susanna Preston's oldest child was born in Augusta County, Virginia, and the next six children were born at Greenfield near Fincastle, Virginia. The final five children were born at Smithfield, built in 1773-1774, now in Blacksburg, Virginia.
  4. Today Col Alto forms part of a hotel run by the Hampton Inn chain. The author of the letter was the father of Governor James McDowell.
  5. Gen. Isaac Shelby was one son of Evan Shelby. When Shelby speaks of the man he loved "above all else," he must be referring to Col. William Preston. Evan Shelby was present at the militia muster in 1783 when Col. Preston collapsed and subsequently died at the home of Michael Price near Smithfield Plantation (Blacksburg, Virginia).
  6. William (Willm/Wm) is William Campbell Preston (1794-1860), son of Francis Preston and Sarah Buchanan Campbell Preston, who later became President of the University of South Carolina and a U. S. Senator from that state. William, the grandson of both Gen. William Campbell and Col. William Preston, was active in the Campbell/Shelby controversy.
  7. The Sevier referred to was probably Colonel John Sevier, one of the over-mountain men who took part in the battle of Kings Mountain.

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8. Mr. Hart was probably Nathaniel Hart (1770–1844), husband of Susanna Preston, the fourth daughter of Col. William Preston, born at Greenfield. Their daughter, Virginia, married Alfred Shelby, son of Governor Isaac and Susannah (Hart) Shelby.
  9. The first pamphlet appeared in the *Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 2, April 1992, and was entitled “The Shelby-Campbell Kings Mountain Controversy and the Gubernatorial Campaign of 1812.” The other was published by the Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, Series II, No. 22, May 1985 and was entitled “Brigadier General William Campbell 1745–1781.”
  10. These articles are referenced in the Appendix of Lyman Copeland Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes* (Cincinnati: 1881); reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Company (Baltimore: 1967).
  11. See Draper. In his book, the entire Kings Mountain story was told. Draper gave his readers a detailed and meticulous picture of the battle based on numerous interviews and extensive correspondence with a great number of survivors of the battle. (The last survivor died in 1860 at age 100.) To this were added the recollections of the children and grandchildren of these Revolutionary War heroes. No aspect — be it the weather, date, time of day, number of footmen, horses, bayonets, typography, distance marched, diet of the soldiers, amount of sleep — escaped Draper’s attention. Where facts differed markedly, a 110-page Appendix containing complete transcripts of diaries and pamphlets allowed the reader to make a choice. It was there, in this Appendix, that the Campbell/Shelby controversy was explained.  
 Editor’s Note: In the article “Lyman Draper and the South,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 19, 1 (Feb. 1953), 20-31, William B. Hesseltine provides an analysis of Draper’s interesting professional career. He writes “...throughout his life, he (Draper) was always on the southern side,” and that, “It was Lyman Draper, hero-worshiper and patriot, who, in his own favorite expression, ‘rescued from oblivion’ the ‘hardy adventures’ of countless heroes of the southwest and sang the praises of the pioneers.... He was, in truth, a maker of heroes....”
  12. See Draper, p. 267.
  13. See Draper, pp. 267-268. This anecdote was related to Draper in 1843 by Benjamin Starritt of Fayette County, Tennessee, who was one of Lee’s Legion in the Revolution, and Lee’s and Campbell’s corps fought together at Guilford; Starritt personally knew Cleveland and had two brothers-in-law under Sevier at Kings Mountain.
  14. See Draper, p. 268.
  15. See Draper, p. 457.
  16. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage/RandomHouse, 1969, Section X, “That All Men Might Be Free”, pp. 124-144). Franklin traces the evolution of ideas on the rights of the colonists and their paradoxical role as slave owners leading up to the Revolution. As increased awareness of their own oppression grew, so, too, did awareness of their role as oppressors. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the leader of the “motley rabble of saucy boys, Negroes and mulattos, Irish Teagues, and outlandish Jacktars,” in the words of John Adams, was a runaway slave, Crispus Attucks, who at the age of 47 died leading a protest march against British soldiers at the famous “Boston Massacre” some twenty years after he had fled his Framingham, Massachusetts, master.
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The American patriots resolved their ideological dilemma by increasingly linking slavery with British colonial policy. Not until the British were defeated did the colonists truly face their own responsibility for the "peculiar institution." Thus, the apparent paradox in the rhetoric of the Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence when compared with that of the Constitutional Convention more than a decade later. On November 7, 1775, Lord Dunmore, British Colonial Governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation which offered freedom to any slave who enlisted in the British Army. The success and audacity of this move prompted General George Washington and the Continental Congress to reverse a previous policy of no Negroes, slave or free, in the New Army and to actively recruit Negroes to participate in the War for Independence in all states but Georgia and South Carolina. Franklin states: "Not only were they in regiments of the New England and Atlantic states, but they were found to be fighting by the side of their white fellows in Southern states. Hardly a military action between 1775 and 1781 was without some Negro participants." One version of the Battle of Bunker Hill credited the Negro and free man, Peter Salem, with the shooting of the British Major Pitcairn. By the end of the war there were an estimated 5,000 Negro soldiers, mostly from the North, serving with the 300,000 man American armed forces in the Revolution. Franklin points out that though "dimmed and muffled by the grim and practical realities of the war," some of the ideals which launched the Revolution survived the war and spawned an upsurge of antislavery feeling for a time. In 1783, an act was passed in Virginia freeing all Negro slaves "who served in the late war."

Editor's Note: For further reading about the recruitment of blacks to the Revolutionary cause, see: "A Slave for Every Soldier: The Strange History of Virginia's Forgotten Recruitment Acts of 1 January 1781," L. Scott Philyaw, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 109, 4 (2002).

17. Nelly Cummings Preston, *The Paths of Glory* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1961). In this historical novel, it must be emphasized that the author may have invoked certain degrees of poetic license in her rendering of the facts, especially of those colored by hearsay and family retellings. The result is a fictionalized story of the family's history.
18. Here transcribed is the Emancipation Certificate of John Broady found among the Preston Family Papers on deposit with the Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (Folder 2, Page 2):

To all whom it may concern:  
Whereas my Negro man John (alias) John Broady claims a promise of Freedom from his former master General William Campbell for the faithful attendance on him at all times and more particularly while he was in the army in the last war and I who claim the said Negro in right of my wife, daughter of the [said] General Campbell feeling a desire to emancipate the said Negro man John as well as for the fulfillment of the above mentioned promise as the gratification of being instrumental of promoting a participation of LIBERTY to a fellow creature who by nature is entitled thereto DO by these presents for myself my heirs executors and administrators, fully emancipate and make free to all intents & purposes the said Negro man John (alias) John Broady

from me and my heirs forever. As witness my hand & seal this 20th day of September one thousand seven hundred and ninety three.

Francis Preston (Es.)  
Virginia

At a court continued and held for Washington County September 20th, 1793.

This instrument of writing emancipating John (Alias) John Broady was acknowledged in Court by Francis Preston Esq and Ordered [recorded]. In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the Seal of this County this first day of October one thousand seven hundred and ninety three.

John Campbell CHC

I, Arthur Campbell presiding magistrate of the County of Washington do certify that the written attestation of John Campbell Clerk of the said County Court is in due form. Given under my hand this third day of October 1793.

Arthur Campbell

19. See Preston, p. 216.
20. See Preston, p. 205.
21. See Preston, p. 208.
22. See Preston, p. 155.
23. Gordon Aronhime, *Slavery on the Upper Holston* (Washington County Historical Society Bulletin, Publication Series II, No. 18, May 1981).