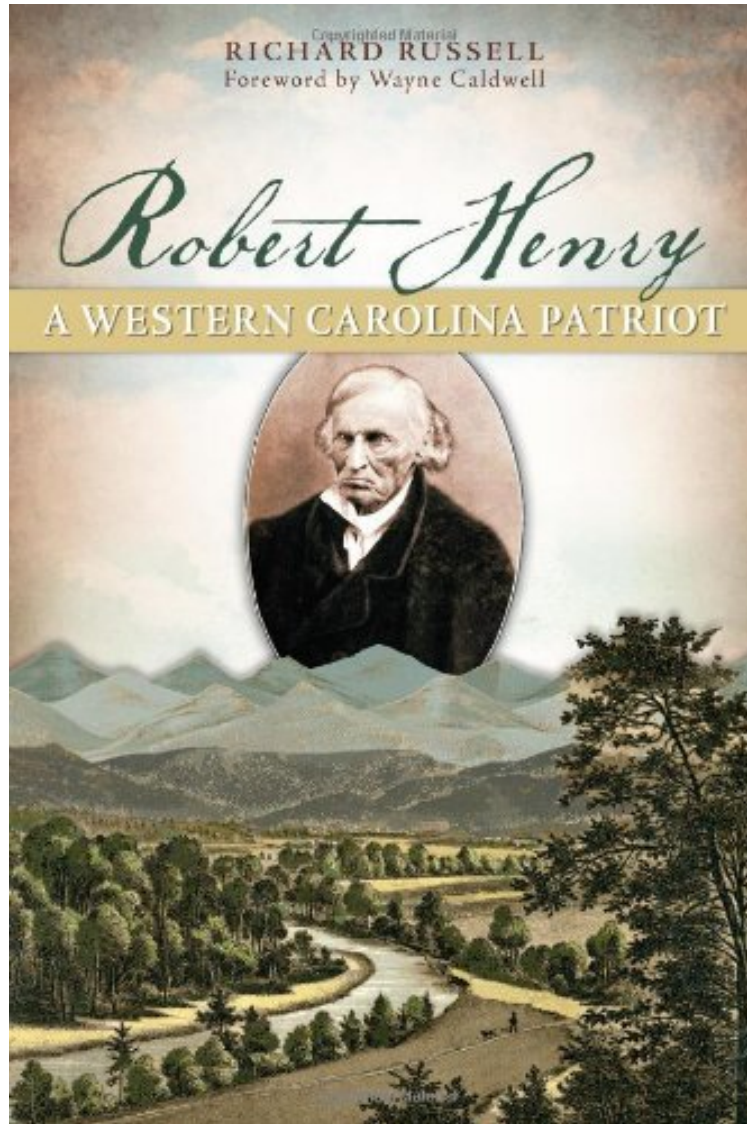


(Download pdf) Robert Henry:: A Western Carolina Patriot

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Richard Russell

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Richard Russell : Robert Henry:: A Western Carolina Patriot before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Robert Henry:: A Western Carolina Patriot:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Rick FosterFascinating and very well researched.

Robert Henry is a character more suited for fiction than nonfiction. While just a boy, he fought with the Overmountain Men at Kings Mountain and battled British troops along the Catawba River. As a surveyor, he helped mark the boundary line between Tennessee and North Carolina. He had a long career as a prominent attorney and owned the

famous Sulphur Springs resort. Yet while Henry is one of western North Carolina's most accomplished ancestors, he is also one of the most eccentric. He preferred to dress in moccasins and traveled with a walking stick nearly as tall as he. Some said he had the gift of foresight and was able to predict his own death. Join author Richard Russell as he navigates the unusual, contradictory and fascinating life of Robert Henry.

"I've got a list of Western North Carolina subjects that are crying for thorough treatment, and now I can check one off the list." - Rob Neufeld, Asheville Citizen-Times "Russell has created a "warts and all" chronicle of a remarkable man: flawed, talented, self-serving and memorable." - Gary Carden, Smoky Mountain News "Our gratitude goes to Richard Russell, who has ably and gracefully given us Robert Henry, an extraordinary man, pretty well unvarnished." - Wayne Caldwell, author of Cataloochee and Requiem by Fire "Robert Henry himself, I believe, would be pleased." - Marci Spencer, author of Clingmans Dome, Highest Mountain in the Great Smokies "An intriguing account of the western Carolinas' Henry family" - Terry Ruscin, author of Hidden History of Henderson County, NC and Hendersonville and Flat Rock - An Intimate Tour From the Author Introduction to Robert Henry - A Western Carolina Patriot On the afternoon of October 7, 1780, British Major Patrick Ferguson and his Loyalist militia of over one thousand men were camped along the high ridge of Kings Mountain near the border of North and South Carolina. The American Revolution had dragged on for four years and Ferguson had been dispatched by Lord Cornwallis to crush local resistance and gain Loyalist support in the Carolinas. While in route to Charlotte, Ferguson decided to reverse course and take a defensive stand against pursuing Rebels. Robert Henry, three months shy of age fourteen, stood poised at the base of the mountain with a courageous group of Patriot friends and neighbors known as the "South Fork Boys." The Boys had come from their homes on the South Fork of the Catawba River in North Carolina to join forces with more than nine hundred rugged fighters known as the "Overmountain Men." The mountain men had tracked Major Ferguson to the ridge top and now their forces surrounded the mountain, ready to attack. The South Fork Boys launched an assault up the northeast side of the mountain and within minutes young Robert Henry lay on the mountainside with a Loyalist bayonet impaling his hand to his thigh. The following February, recovered from his wounds at Kings Mountain, Robert stood as one of the picket guards at a location on the Catawba River known as Cowan's Ford. He observed several hundred British soldiers on horseback attempting to cross, many being carried away or drowned by the swift current. He fired until a number of British reached his chosen signal rock in the river, then ran up the bank and took refuge behind a tree. He continued to fire as long as he could. With the tree's bark being loosened by enemy bullets, Robert narrowly avoided injury and was able to make an escape. This zeal to fight for liberty may have been ingrained in Robert at a very early age. In 1775, while accompanying his father to Charlotte he observed concerned and outraged citizens meeting and deliberating the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. These boyhood experiences were surely influential and instrumental in preparing Robert for a remarkable life that spanned nearly a century. After the close of the Revolution, Robert studied law, medicine and surveying. He became an accomplished and prominent trial and land lawyer, one of the first in Western North Carolina. He was appointed an official surveyor of the boundary line between Tennessee and North Carolina. He was Buncombe County's first teacher, and also practiced medicine for a time. Using surveying experience, knowledge of the law, and contacts with Revolutionary War veterans, Robert amassed vast land holdings in North Carolina and Tennessee. Discovering naturally occurring sulphur and mineral springs on his land, he established a resort hotel attracting more summer visitors than the nearby town of Asheville. He was a landlord, a plantation owner, farmer, and a slave owner. Robert Henry has been described as versatile, a hero and brave as a lion, a philosopher and a naturalist, an historian and author, inventor, genius, and pioneer. He was said to have a phenomenal memory. Conversely, he was noted as slovenly and a bumpkin, a fraud and imposter, and has been called a liar. He was known to be "fond of the bitters" and smoking. His appearance was more of the criminal than the defender. An eccentric man, he shunned normal attire and preferred to dress in the style of the native peoples, wearing moccasins at home. At times he neglected to wear stockings when attending court. It is said he preferred sleeping on the floor rather than in a feather bed. His chief method of travel for less than a day's journey was by foot, using a large walking stick nearly as tall as himself. At age forty-seven he married Dorcas Bell Love, the seventeen year old daughter of Robert Love, founder of Waynesville, North Carolina. Robert and Dorcas Bell lived in Buncombe County, North Carolina approximately seven miles west of Asheville where they raised a large family. After thirty years of marriage the couple was legally separated and then divorced. Robert Henry was a man of legend, mystery and myth. His life was one of great achievement and one of tragic personal failure, yet his part in history remains unknown to most. A letter referring to Robert in an 1859 issue of Harper's Weekly stated, "let honor be given to whom honor is due." Perhaps this writing will aid in achieving that goal. About the Author Richard Russell is an author who has worked on several book compilations, most recently receiving the Bob Terrell History Award from the Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society and Special Recognition by the WNC Historical Association for his work on Fear in North Carolina. Wayne Caldwell is a novelist from Asheville, North Carolina. Caldwell is author of the critically acclaimed novel Cataloochee.