

Robert Henry

Bunkum *n*

1. empty talk; nonsense
 2. chiefly empty or insincere speechmaking by a politician
- [origin: *Buncombe*, a county in North Carolina, alluded to in an inane speech by its Congressional representative Felix Walker (about 1820)]

Debunk *v*

1. to remove bunkum
2. to expose or excoriate (a claim, assertion, sentiment, etc.) as being pretentious, false, or exaggerated: *to debunk advertising slogans.*

The significance of the Battle of Kings Mountain stands tall upon its accomplishments. It is belittled, not bolstered, by the boasting of neighbors and families, by the honest errors of researchers, and by exaggerated rumors of repeaters.

Lyman Copeland Draper wrote that Robert Henry in his sixteenth year was wounded at Kings Mountain with the “South Fork boys” of Captain John Mattocks. Draper used material from “Statements of Major Joseph McDowell, and Captain David Vance, preserved by the late Robert Henry, of Buncombe Co., N. C.” and narratives by Robert Henry told to Robert Gilliam widely in his book *Kings Mountain and its Heroes*.

There is **no pension file** for Robert Henry in federal pension archives. His sworn statement in Buncombe County regarding Moses Henry on 05Mar1853 was that he (Robert) was age 86. This makes Henry about **two years short** of his 16th year as of 07Oct1780. That removes some platform from beneath Draper’s work. Henry spoke of two escorts from the battlefield to his house. Henry’s **mention of Hugh Ewin** is the only occurrence in original records. Neither is there a Hugh Ewen or McEwen or Ewing. **Andrew Barry did not mention Kings Mountain** in his own pension deposition. <http://revwarapps.org/r569.pdf> William Caldwell did not recount the life saving aid to Robert Henry. **Caldwell did not even mention Kings Mountain** in his service deposition. <http://revwarapps.org/w22727.pdf>

Seventy years later, **Robert Henry**, a Lincoln County man, spoke to Robert Gillam about the action during a bayonet charge at Kings Mountain on 07Oct1780. Some soldiers under oath in court showed battle scars to the magistrates who were judging the testimony. There is no mention of an oath or of any exhibition of scars by Robert Henry. To reach the scene, the 13 year old, with his horse and his rifle, would have joined Chronicle’s militia going to Cowpens. There on Friday night 06Oct, Henry would have been among the half of the men who were the best marksmen with horses in the best shape to join the overnight pursuit. Does the recount of an event related below deserve a name placed in bronze among the heroes of Kings Mountain?

From *Kings Mountain and its heroes* p 259

One gallant young fellow, Robert Henry, then in his sixteenth year, had taken his position behind a log stretched across a hollow and was getting ready to give the enemy another shot, when the bayonet chargers came dashing along. One of the enemy was advancing rapidly on young Henry, who was in the act of cocking his gun, when his antagonist's bayonet glanced along Henry's gun-barrel, passing clear through one of his hands, and penetrating into

his thigh. Henry, in the melee \ had shot the Tory, and both fell to the ground – the young Whig hero completely transfixed. Henry was pretty well enveloped in powder-smoke but sad and helpless as was his condition, he could not help observing that many of his South Fork friends were not more than a gun's length ahead of the Tory bayonets, and the farthest could not have exceeded twenty feet, when they fired, with deadly effect, upon their pursuers, and retired to the bottom of the hill, quickly re-loading, and in turn chasing their enemies up the mountain.

William Caldwell, one of Henry's companions, seeing his situation, pulled the bayonet out of his thigh ; but finding it yet sticking fast to the young soldier's hand, gave the wounded limb a kick with his boot, which loosened the bloody instrument from its hold. Henry suffered more in the operation of extracting the bayonet than when the Briton made the effective thrust, driving it through his hand and into his thigh. Again upon his feet, he picked up his gun with his uninjured hand, and found it empty – how, he could not tell ; but supposed, as he received the terrible bayonet thrust, that he must, almost instinctively, have touched the trigger, and discharged his rifle, and that the ball must have cut some main artery of his antagonist, as he bled profusely.*

Letter of Robert C Gillam, Sept 29th. 1858, giving statements derived from an interview with Mr. Henry.

From Draper papers:

“I was preparing to fire when one of the British advancing, I stepped back and was in the act of cocking my gun when his bayonet was running along by the barrel of my gun, and gave me a thrust through my hand and into my thigh. My antagonist and I both fell. The Fork boys retreated and loaded their guns. I was then lying under the smoke and it appeared that some of them were not more than a gun's length in front of the bayonets, and the farthest could not have been more than 20 feet in front when they discharged their rifles. It was said that every one dropped his man.

The British then retreated in great haste, and were pursued by the Fork boys. William Caldwell saw my condition, and pulled the bayonet out of my thigh, but it hung to my hand; he gave my hand a kick and it went out. The thrust gave me much pain, but the pulling of it was much more severe. With my well hand I picked up my gun and found her discharged. I suppose that when the soldier made the thrust, I gripped the trigger and discharged her; the load must have passed through his bladder and cut a main artery at his back, as he bled profusely.”

After the battle on Saturday, Hugh Ewin and Andrew Barry took Robert Henry a few miles toward home on the South Fork. On Sunday they took him the rest of the way home where his mother applied a poultice to heal the wounds. Some “neutrals”, loyalists who refused to confess their opinions, questioned them about the battle at length. Then these South Fork Tories (David Knox) took the news, with more exaggeration, to Cornwallis at Charlotte.

Robert Henry testified (05Mar1853, age 86, Buncombe County NC) to support a pension application for Moses Henry heirs. The arithmetic makes Robert only 13 or 14 on 07Oct1780.

<http://www.elehistory.com/amrev/LincolnCountyMenAtKingsMountain.pdf>

Robert Henry: A Western Carolina Patriot (Paperback) by Richard Russell, 2013