The Battle of Kettle Creek

President George Washington came from Savannah and entered the City of Augusta on May 18, 1791. Augusta was the State Capitol at this time. Governor Telfair and George Walton, a signer of the Declaration, were among other notables who met the President. Washington rode down Broad Street to the appreciation of crowds on both sides of the street. The president was feted with banquets, receptions and toasts, made just as they were in Savannah. In 1790-91 Augusta was reported to have 250 houses and a population of 1100. The President visited a number of sites including the Academy for Boys that had been founded there. Governor Telfair's home was also there, as well as George Walton's home, Meadow Garden.

About 40 miles away, a small settlement began to grow about 1765. On January 23rd, 1780 the settlement was chartered as the town of Washington in honor of the General who led the Continental Armies to victory in the American Revolution. About a year earlier, February 14, 1779, the Battle of Kettle Creek was fought 10 miles outside where the town was situated. In 2004 the 225th anniversary of the battle was commemorated.
The battle was between 700 Loyalists and Tories in the area around Wilkes County led by British Colonel James Boyd. There were 200 Patriots led by Colonel Samuel Pickens of South Carolina and Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clark, who was in charge of 140 Georgia Militia. Georgia was sparsely populated, so the British had virtually occupied and controlled the state. Kettle Creek was the stream that flowed around the foot of the hill where the desperate battle took place. Colonel Boyd and 20 British troops were killed and 22 were captured. The Patriots lost 7 killed and 15 wounded. The battle lasted a bout 3 hours and the British were routed. Colonel Sam Pickens later wrote that the battle was the severest defeat the Tories ever received in either South Carolina or Georgia. A number of the Loyalists were captured as the returned home and were hung as traitors.

Wilkes County, where Washington is located, and the area around were called "The Hornet's Nest" due to the way Patriots rose up and stung the British on numerous occasions. The Patriot Francis Marion of South Carolina was among those who led Patriots on raids and skirmished causing the British numerous casualties. The battles of Kettle Creek; Cowpens where William Washington, a cousin to the General, was prominent; Kings Mountain; and Guilford Courthouse as well as the Dan River skirmishes maneuvered British General Cornwallis, Commander of the Southern British forces, to Yorktown, Virginia. The British defeat there was the end of the War for Independence to all extents and purposed.

The town of Washington has grown through the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the later wars of the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are many antebellum homes to view and other historic sites and legends to appreciate in this 18th century town.

submitted by James Westlake , 2003