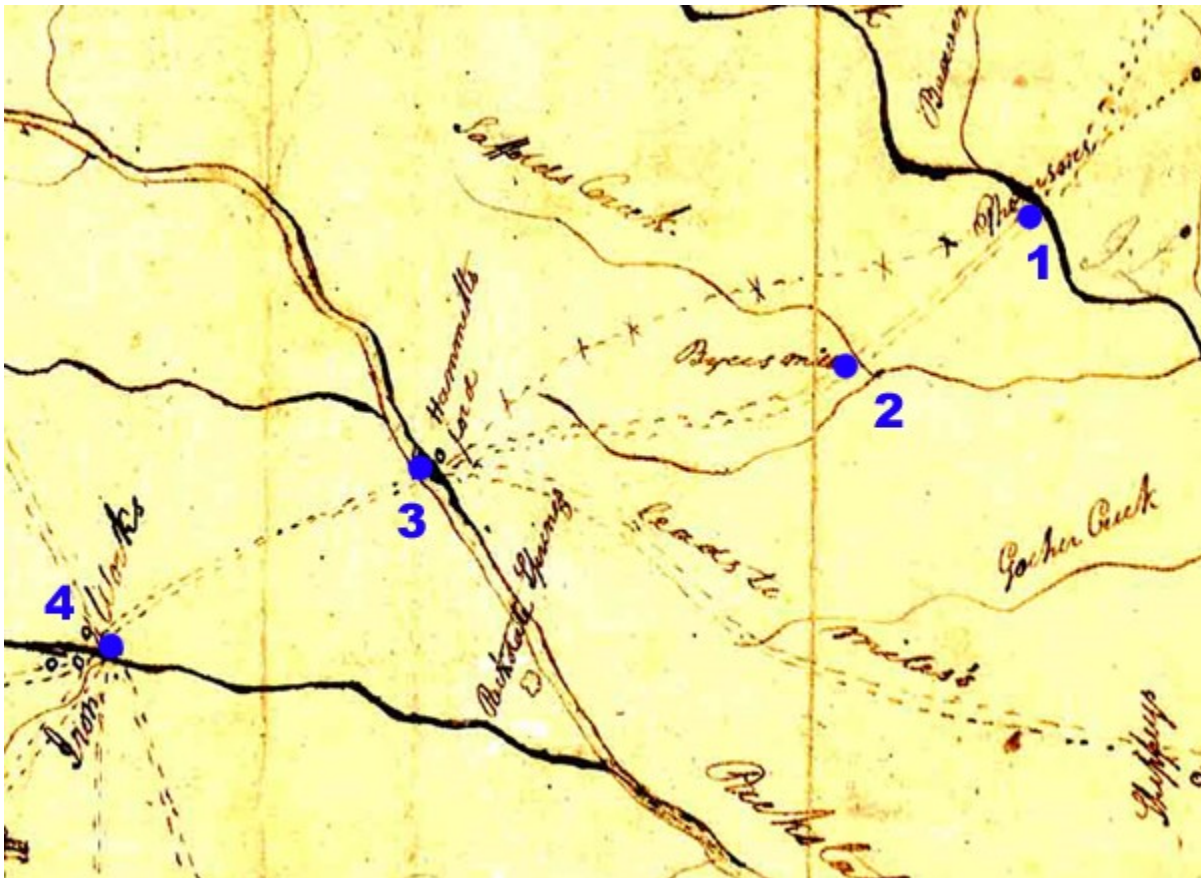


An Effort to Locate the Mill Morgan Called "Burr's Mill"

John Robertson
10 November 2010

This is a snippet from Benson's 1786 map of what would later become Spartanburg District but was then part of the Ninety Six District. I have enhanced the map image to make it easier to read the labels. The identified locations are

1. Thompson's (Thomson's, Thomason's), immediately *west* of Thicketty Creek
2. Byce's Mill (also called "Byas Mill"), only known candidate for Morgan's "Burr's Mill".
3. Hammett's Ford
4. Wofford's Iron Works



It can be assumed that little of Benson's map was actually surveyed. Since he was a local person mapping locations of significance in what would later become the Spartanburg district and county, it should be expected that he would have included all locations related to the Battle of Cowpens which would have occurred only 5 years earlier. *The mill that Morgan called "Burr's Mill" would have been shown on the map with the name by which it was more properly known at the time.* Benson was identified with the rank of captain presumably of the local militia, and could be presumed to have been aware that Morgan's "Burr's Mill" site had been used as a campsite by

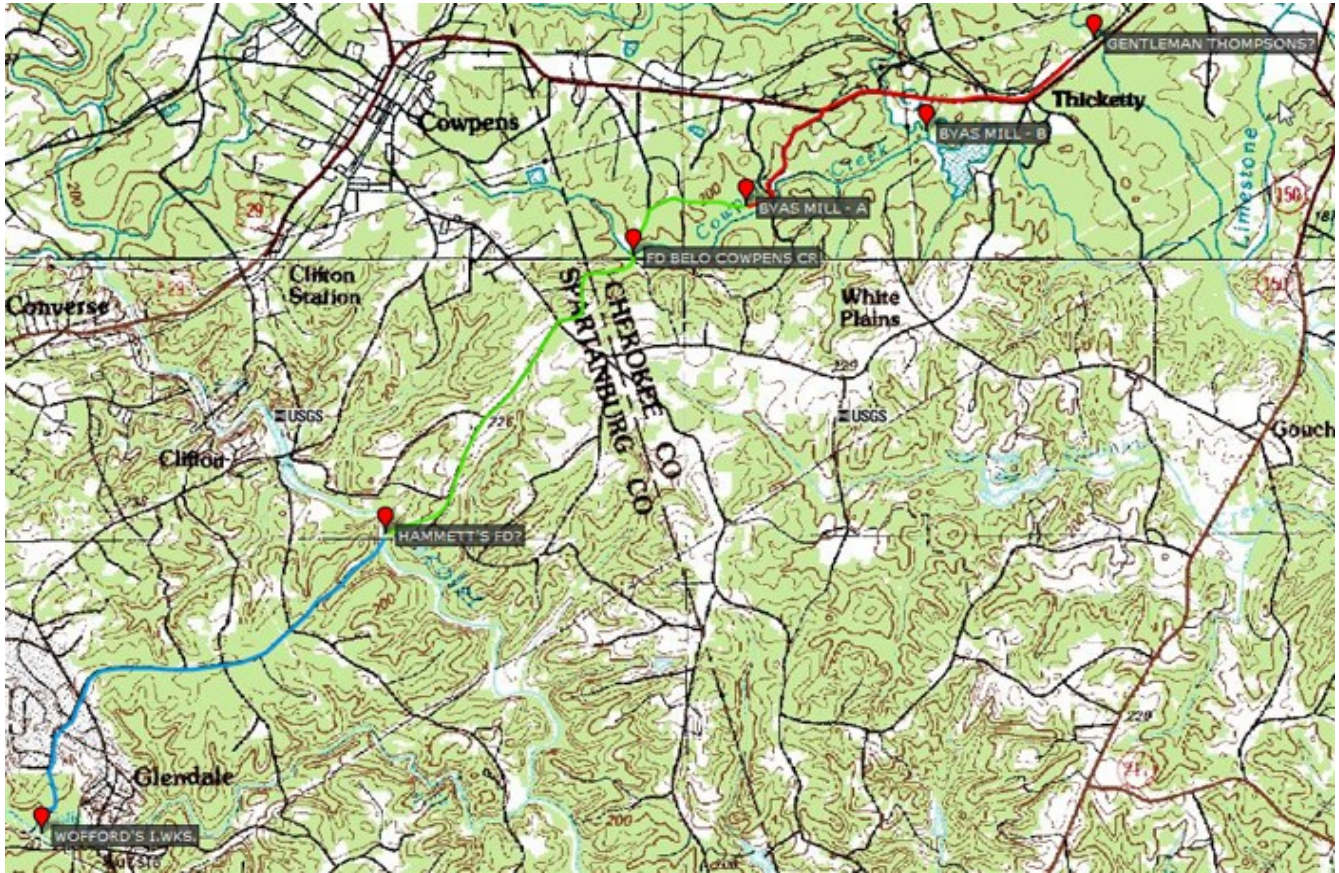
1. Ferguson who, per Tarleton, built huts there
2. Morgan, 15 January 1781
3. Tarleton, 16 January 1781

Probably the most reliable features of Benson's map would be

1. the places of note along a route of travel, including fords
2. The relative (not absolute) distances between such places of note.

We will later be able to compare Benson's route from Thompson's to Woffords with a similar strip map on modern topo maps. Such a comparison is the basis for the modern location selected as having been the location of Byce's Mill.

A snippet from an online map with additional options and maneuverability found at <http://gaz.jrshelby.com/rw-roads/thompsons-byas-woffords.htm>



The single primary source, to the best of my knowledge, for there being a mill named Burr's is that of Daniel Morgan. Morgan, in a letter to Nathanael Greene, gives his location as *Camp at Burr's Mill, Thicketty Creek, January 15th 1781*

Joseph McJunkin in his "narrative" (Draper MSS, Sumter Papers 23VV153-203):
*Morgan on hearing the message said to Barron, a little Frenchman whom he had with him, & who was asleep, "Barron, get up & go back to the Iron Works & tell Billy (meaning Col. Washington, who was there getting his horses shod, & Barron had just come from there) that Benny is approaching & tell him to meet me tomorrow evening at Gentleman Thomason's" on the **East** side of Thicketty Creek.*

Benson shows Thompson(Thomson, Thomason) to be on the **west** side of Thicketty Creek.

I have a land plat near Hammett's Ford which refers to Byce's Mill. The original surname from which the other names were derived was Buis. The plat was provided by a Buis descendant.

Benson shows that Byces is located on Saffold's Creek. I have been unable to find any other reference to Saffold's Creek, nor have I found a modern name for the creek where I believe that Byce's Mill was probably located. After the death of my 4th great-grandfather in 1771, some of his property on Thicketty Creek south of modern Gaffney was sold to William Saffold "late of Thicketty Creek".

J.B.O. Landrum in his *History of Spartanburg County*, 1900 quoted the contemporary document assigning responsibility for road maintenance as naming the mill midway between "Thomson's" and Hammett's Ford as "**Byas**" Mill.

*From Tate's Ferry to opposite Wm. Hickman's plantation ; overseer, Dan'l McClary, warner, John Fonderin. From thence to **Byas' Mill** ; overseer, William Thomson, warner, Reuben Smith. From thence to Hammett's Ford on Pacolet ; overseer, Malechi Jones, warner, William Wooten.*

Landrum, in his *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina*, 1897, footnote on p.297, does nothing to clarify the location of the mill in his summary of various local theories, but he does add a couple more variant names for the mill (Boise, Bise):

*The writer has been at a loss to know just where stood the old site of Burr's Mills on Thicketty Creek. Some of the older citizens think it was the old **Boise** or **Bise** Mill, which stood on Little Thicketty, a short distance above the Air Line Railroad, at the crossing of the Green River road. It was afterwards known as Otterson's Mill. Later as the Garrison or " Apple Jack " Turner Mill. Others think Burr's Mill stood on Big Thicketty, near the site of the Dawkin's Mill, in upper Union County.*

It is not hard to imagine that if one were unfamiliar with the multiple confused names of the mill, it might easily have been misunderstood or mispronounced as "Burr's" in the accents of the time.

The following strip maps are aligned at 1.Thompsons, 2.Byce's Mill, 3.Hammett's Ford and (approximately) at 4.Wofford's Iron Works. It can be seen that there are two possible candidates to correspond with Benson's location of Byces (Byas) Mill.

1. **Byas Mill – A.** 35.005527 -81.759142, The junction of Cowpens Creek with an unnamed stream from the north. This corresponds more closely with Benson's map in that it leads directly to a single crossing nearby of the southern stream (with an identified ford distance 0.86 miles) leading to a route to Hammett's Ford. It also aligns more than twice as closely than "Byas Mill - B" with Benson's site for the mill (0.38 miles distance). This location is 2.6 miles from Thompsons.
2. **Byas Mill – B.** 35.01295 -81.73747, The junction of Cowpens Creek with Little Thicketty Creek. This is closer to Thicketty where historically Burr's Mill has been expected to be found, but is more than twice further away from alignment with Benson's location for Byces Mill than is "Byas Mill – A" (0.92 miles distance). It requires an additional stream crossing not shown by Benson and suggests no convenient route of travel. This location is 1.3 miles from that above and 1.3 miles from Thompsons.



Conclusions:

I consider it very probable that Buis'/Byce's/Byas Mill and the long-sought "Burr's Mill" mentioned by Daniel Morgan (and by no one else) are the same mill. Benson would not have omitted a location closely related to the Battle of Cowpens, unquestionably the area's most notable historic event, in a map created of a familiar area only 5 years after the battle.

I consider that the site I have given as "Byas Mill - A" is the more probable of the two sites, but both should be considered as possibilities until a determination is made by some objective means.