

Catawbas allied with English

Sept 20
1992

■ Treaty of Augusta granted tribe tract after war.

South Carolina was an English royal colony in 1763 when the English triumphed over the French in a global war called the Seven Years War. The North American phase of the war is known as the French and Indian Wars.

As a part of the peace treaty, there was a meeting of the royal governors of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia, along with the chiefs of the major Southeastern Indian tribes. Many Indian tribes had fought with the French. Some tribes, of which the Catawba tribe was prominent, had fought alongside the victorious English.



Nearby history

LOUISE
PETTUS

The S.C. royal governor supported the Catawba tribe's desire to have an area of land set aside for its exclusive use, with the right to hunt over the entire colony. As a result of the Treaty of Augusta, the Catawbas were granted a tract of land 15 miles square, or roughly 144,000 acres, that would later become the eastern section of York County, the area of Lancaster County north of Twelve Mile Creek that is in the Indian Land community, and a small triangular portion about one mile deep in Chester County.

In 1763 there were some white people living on the land. None of them had South Carolina land grants but North Carolina (in spite of South Carolina protests) had granted land to whites. The area did not yet have a boundary line between the two colonies.

After the Revolutionary War (a war in which the Catawbas switched sides by fighting with the colonists against the English), numerous land-hungry veterans settled among the Catawbas. The counties of York, Lancaster and Chester were created in 1785 when the state of South Carolina began its operations. State agents were appointed to keep records of the rents paid under a system which allowed whites to lease land from the Indians.

By 1808 the legislature was aware that stricter regulations were needed. They passed an act requiring that every leaseholder have his leased land surveyed, that the leases be witnessed and approved by three out of five state-appointed commissioners, and that the terms of the leases be 99 years. The system improved somewhat but, nevertheless, by the mid-1820s the Catawbas had leased out nearly all of their land and were unable to live on nothing but the small rents.

All during the 1830s some conscientious white leaders in the Indian Land pleaded with the state government to do something about

the plight of the Indians. Also, whites wanted the state to appropriate money for the state to purchase the Catawba land to resell it to the white settlers.

In 1840 Gov. Patrick Noble appointed a five-man commission to negotiate a treaty with the Catawbas. The men were David Hutchison, Edward Avery and John Springs of York District and Allen Morrow and Benjamin S. Massey of Lancaster District. Most of the Catawbas had gone elsewhere. There were fewer than 100 Catawbas left in the Catawba Indian Land.

The Nation Ford Treaty was enacted on Dec. 18, 1840, after lengthy debate. The Indians were promised the purchase of land in North Carolina worth \$5,000 (North Carolina refused to sell the land), and \$2,500 plus \$1,500 per year for the next nine years. The whites began paying a per-acre tax until they paid off the money the state put into the treaty. This was finally accomplished in 1857, at which time the state issued grants, or titles, to the former leaseholders.

The Nation Ford Treaty was never ratified by Congress as provided under the Non-Inter-course Act of 1790 that made the federal government the legal guardian of Indian tribes in land dealings with other parties, including states.

□□□

Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Sundays.