

# Early transportation not so easy in the upcountry

*Waterfalls, boulders made many waterways difficult to navigate*

During South Carolina's first century, the population was centered in the Lowcountry with Charleston the center of government and commerce. Broad rivers, creeks and marshes made canoes and flatboats with sails the natural mode of transportation.

Before the 1750s, the upcountry population was sparse above the fall line — the ancient line below which there is sand rather than clay — and the use of rivers and creeks was more difficult. Waterfalls, giant boulders and shoals created many natural hazards for navigation.

Increased immigration from the British Isles and the continent, along with the upheaval of the French and Indian Wars (1756-1763), sent a rising tide of settlers into the Carolina upcountry (also called the backcountry).

In 1766, the S.C. General Assembly, then in Charles Town, pressured by the militancy of the newcomers, reluctantly ordered a mapped survey of the colony in preparation for upcountry representation in the state legislature.

Four thousand upcountrymen, at least one-half of all eligible, voted in the 1768 election. Some traveled as far as 150 miles to do so. The upcountry would henceforth cast its ballots for what were then called "internal improvements."

In the early 1800s, the General Assembly created numerous commissions composed of

prominent residents who were awarded wide-ranging authority to establish country roads, bridges, ferries and canals. Many were built but unfortunately the system was so cumbersome that each "improvement" required a separate piece of legislation.

An example would be McClanahan's Ferry, which was franchised in the 1750s and was the first ferry recorded in York and Lancaster counties. (Nation Ford, between Rock Hill and Fort Mill, is the oldest recorded crossing, but it was rocky and always forded — there was never a ferry at that spot.)

The ferry south of Nation Ford was in continuous use until 1959 when it was replaced by the Bradford and Ashe bridge on Highway 5. McClanahan's Ferry in succession was known variously as Cureton's Ferry and last as Indian Ferry although it was franchised under different names.

Robert McClanahan purchased land on the east side of the Catawba River on Waxhaw Creek in 1764. He was living on this tract when he made his will in Mecklenburg County in 1764 and left it to his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Jennet. His sons, Finny and John, inherited the land on the west side of the Catawba in present-day York County, land leased from the Catawba Indians.

When the McClanahan heirs and the heirs of Jennet McClanahan Crockett sold their 500-acre plantation in Lancaster District

to Walter Izard in 1830, they reserved their right to the ferry landing. The ferry remained in the hands of McClanahan descendants until the 1840s.

In 1824, a ferry was chartered that was between the McClanahan ferry and Nation Ford, just south of where Sugar Creek enters the river. The charter was to Dr. Buckner Lanier and John Tut Hagans.

A part of the charter read: "That a public road shall be laid out, opened and kept in repair, in the district of York, commencing at Dr. Lanier's, on the east side of Catawba river; and thence, the nearest and best way, over the said river to William Gilmore's; thence to Abraham Gill's old place, on the Saluda road (present Highway 72 from Rock Hill to Chester). And that a public ferry be established where the said road crosses the Catawba river, and vested in Dr. Lanier and Hagans, the owners of the land on both sides of the river, for the term of seven years; and that they be allowed the same rates as are now allowed at McClanahan's ferry."

Ferry owners such as the McClanahans' were required to keep up the roads approaching the ferry landing. Tolls were not permitted to exceed 2 cents for each head of sheep, goats and hogs. Passage for horses and foot passengers each cost 4 cents. A two-wheeled carriage with horse and driver was 25 cents, and a four-wheeler cost 50 cents — large sums when one considers that laborer's wages were less than \$2 a day.

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## NEARBY HISTORY



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