

Nation Ford Chronology

1652— As early as 1652, caravans on their way to trade with the Catawba Indians crossed the Catawba River at Nation Ford and passed along what was called the Great Western Trading Path, Saluda Road, or Indian Trading Path.

1670- July. Henry Woodward, went

1672—Catawbas visited by John Lederer. Said that he heard the head-men “deliver themselves with as much judgment and eloquence as I should have expected from men of civil education and literature.” Their oratory was picturesque and poetic. Belts of wampum and the calument ceremony played important parts in both peace and war deliberations.

1673—Virginia traders, records show, came down the Occaneechee Trail as early as 1663.

(Verner W. Crane, *Southern Frontier*). That year, the Charles Town government decided to send traders to the Catawba.

1685--First map drawn that shows SC tribes=Gascoyne's plat

1690s on— British saw Indian tribes as a market for British made goods: guns, tomahawks, hoes, brass kettles, knives, rum, beads, hawk bells, and cloth. The Indians offered mainly deerskins. But while British goods were inexhaustable, the deer became more and more scarce (depleted by 1715 but deerskin trade lasted for a hundred years.) and the Indians became dependent upon the British (in the year 1707 Carolina exported 121,355 skins. Also, with a few exceptions, the British traders were poor, illiterate and often in debt to the British merchants. The Indians hated them and the traders cheated the Indians.

1700—August. John Lawson landed in Charleston

December 1700--appointed by the Lords Proprietors to make a reconnaissance survey of the interior of Carolina. The only white men who had been into the Carolina backcountry were some Spanish soldiers under Capt. Juan Pardo in the fall of 1566, 134 years earlier and a few Virginia traders. Lawson traveled up the east side of the Santee, Wateree and Catawba rivers, passing in succession the territories of various tribes-the Sewee, Santee, Congaree, Waterree, and Waxhaw tribes until he came to the Catawba (Esaw and Kadapaw). Here he took the great trading path from Virginia to Georgia and followed it into North Carolina as far as Occaneechi village, near present-day Hillsboro, N. C.

(James Mooney of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian traced the route and commented that from Richmond, through Greensboro, Salisbury, and Charlotte and into South Carolina the route of the road that came to be the Nation Ford road was almost identical to the route of the Southern railroad.)

See Lawson's Journey.

1715—Indian census; 7 villages. 570 men; 900 women & children; total: 1470.

Ca 1750—Hordes of early German and Scotch-Irish settlers used what became known as the Great Wagon Road to move from Pennsylvania southward through the Shenandoah Valley through Virginia and the Carolinas to Georgia, a distance of about 800 miles. Beginning first as a buffalo trail, a great Indian Road (the Great Warrior Path) ran north and south through the Shenandoah Valley, extending from New York to the Carolinas. The mountain ranges to the West of the (1722) guaranteed use of the valley trail to the Indians. At Salisbury, North Carolina, the Great Warrior Path was joined by the Indian's "Great Trading Path." By the early 1740s, a road beginning in Philadelphia (sometimes referred to as the Lancaster Pike) connected the Pennsylvania communities of Lancaster, York, and Gettysburg. The road then continued on to Chambersburg and Greencastle and southward to Winchester. In 1744, the Indians agreed to relinquish the Valley route. Both German and Scotch-Irish immigrants had already been following the route into Virginia and on to South Carolina, and Georgia. After 1750 the Piedmont areas of North Carolina and Georgia attracted new settlers. From Winchester to Roanoke the Great Wagon Road and the Great Valley Road were the same road, but at Roanoke, the Wagon Road went through the Staunton Gap and on south to North Carolina and beyond whereas the Valley Pike continued southwest to the Long Island of the Holston, now Kingsport

1753—Christian Erwin, 30 August 1753, 400 acres. Anson County, on Catawba river and the wagon ford at the Catawba nation, joining both sides of the river. (NC Patent Book 2, p. 87.)

1763—William Willson, 19 Apr 1763, 254 acres, Mecklenburg Co., W side of Catawba river, about a mile above the Catawba ford called Christopher Erwin(s), opposite the Bigg Bottom. (N. C. Patent Book 15, p. 481.)

1763—Death of King Haigler ambushed on trading path by Shawnees.

1780—Sumter's forces camped on Hagler's Branch. "Tom Barnett & other of the Mecklenburg men had told him [Joseph ? White] of Sumter's camp on Hagler's Hill—that Sumter's men wrestled, jumped and ran foot races while there. Alex'r Walker said there was where Sumter camped. Hagler's Hill is on the right or east side of the road going to Charlotte, on the "Old Saluda Road," just south of Haglers. Br. five miles north of the old Nation Ford, & _____ miles north of the present village of Fort Mill, on the Columbia & Charlotte railroad. Hagler's Hill, Mr [Joseph F. ?] White says, was a woodland, & only cleared within his recollection early in this century—an elevated ridge or hill, with a fine convenient spring, from which a little rivulet flows to Hagler's Branch. It was an excellent grazing region on the woods grass. Indians had long been accustomed to burning over the grounds annually not only to promote grazing, but, in early times to prevent lurking places for their Shawnee, Delaware & Cherokee Indian enemies, so they could not so easily slip

upon them.

Hagler's Hill may have been a place where Hagler camped sometime, don't know about any small hamlet there. Hagler was killed towards Camden while returning from a visit to Governor Bull, with his presents, by an ambushed party of Shawnees.

Not over seven or eight miles from Hagler's Hill to Clem's Branch where the road crosses it—which is a mile or two above its mouth. Good grazing region.

Never heard about Sumter camping there—is satisfied the North Carolina line is only a short distance above where the road crosses the Branch, a mile or two at most.

(Draper's MSS, VV-11-pp 294-297)

Draper's MSS. VV-11- pp. 291-92;

1780. British soldiers visited the Catawbas to persuade them to take the side of the King, [which] alarmed their fears, by impressing on their minds that as they had sided with the Americans, they would all be destroyed. This was policy to get them out of the reach of the British and their seductive acts, & so induced New River & his people to abandon their town and retire awhile on the Yadkin, & camped on its banks above Salisbury, until the troubles were past— & staid untill, it is believed, about the fall of 1781. All went except King Prow, who though nominally King, was nearly imbecile, & no regard paid to him by his people. Rawdon with a guard visited the old King at the Catawba old town—and found him alone.

1782—The Catawba Nation sent two deputies to the Continental Congress (Philadelphia) requesting the passage of legislation to prevent the sale of their lands “at any time, to any person, in any manner in the future.” Congress evaded the problem by recommending to the legislature of South Carolina that it “take such measures for the satisfaction and security of the said tribe, as the legislature shall, in their wisdom, think fit.” [Red Carolinians, p. 254]

1796—Sally New River's deed witnessed by General New River, etc.

1799—Ferry vested in Daniel Sturgis and Thomas Spratt near Old Nation Ford on the Catawba.. Act No. 1727. South Carolina Statutes at Large, 9: 393-96. (December 21, 1799)

1799- Lease from John Bigger Sr. to Thomas Roach, Feb 1799, 30 acres. Plat shows the Nation Ford Road going through it and the Nation Ford river crossing. Land on west side of Catawba River. Road goes toward north and then curves to the west. Surveyed by John McClennahan. And Indian commissioners were: William Pettus, Thomas Robertson, Hugh White, George Massey. Indians not listed only “SCIN” [A copy of original made 12/12/54 by _____ McMurray.]

1800-1830--The Southern Frontier. Charles Hudson, p. 444: The leading edge of the

Southern frontier was dominated by the same sort of people who dominated the Old West—cattlemen grazing their herds on open ranges and people who sought to escape society, the best of whom were adventurers and poor people escaping debt, and the worst of whom were renegades and outlaws. But away from the frontier, back in the colonies, there took shape a social and economic system which later determined the contours of Southern history—the plantation. In the Old South the plantation was a large agricultural operation whose labor was under a highly centralized authority. The plantation was a kind of agribusiness whose machines were human beings.

1800—January. Daniel Smith appointed overseer of the road from the fork of the road near John Wilsons to the Indian Line on the road leading to the Old Nation ford . . .

1802—Drayton noted that the Catawbias numbered about 60 men or 200 persons, living in small villages scattered over the reservation and surrounded by white inhabitants.

1806-1834— John Springs, kept store, J & E and in 1834 it was Springs and Dinkins.

1808—Dec 15. SC Legislature passed “an act to enable the Catawba Indians to make leases of their lands for life or lives.” [Cooper, Statutes at Large, V., 576

1808—Sally New River deed recorded in the courthouse.

1826—Robert Mills notes that the tribe occupies two villages, Newtown, on the York side, and Turkey Head on the Lancaster side.

1840— A mile west of the ford are the crossroads where in 1840 the head men of the Catawba Indians ceded their last 144,000 acres to South Carolina. 88 Catawbias at that time included a family of Pamunkey Indians with 9 members.

1849, ca. “The Catawbias were mostly induced to migrate to settle in Haywood Co., N. C. but were not satisfied there--would visit and revisit, & finally after a few years all got back again, except a Catawba woman who married a Cherokee.

1871--Joseph F. White to Draper: “There are now (so said a Catawba recently Mr. White) about 80 of the Catawbias,, old & young--many part breeds among them, some quite white. The Catawbias still elect chiefs, but they are of little influence. They are not taxed-& laws of SC not in force over them. A few went into the Confederate Service—one, at least, got badly crippled. Draper’s MSS, VV-11-p 298.

1913, Oct 3. Anonymous letter from Fort Mill to the Rock Hill Herald:

A matter which should be of mutual interest to the people of Rock Hill and Fort Mill is the proposition which was recently discussed here of the advisability of urging the board of county commissioners to reopen for the use of the public the road leading to the old Nation Ford on the Catawba River, near the bridge of the Southern Railway. The distance between Fort Mill and Rock Hill by way of the ford is eight miles, while the distance between the towns by way of the county river bridge road is thirteen miles.

Just why Nation Ford was ever allowed to fall into disuse as a public highway is a matter for wonder. The ford was never known to be the scene of a serious accident during hundred years of its use and was passable at all times except during high water. About the only reason that be assigned for the abandonment of the ford is the fact that the road on the Fort Mill side was rough and that the entrance to the ford at both sides was never properly graded. These difficulties, could be overcome by the expenditure of a small amount of money. Fort Mill and Rock Hill would then be much nearer neighbors."

1960—4 p.m. July 30, 1960.

The park, located at Red River village a few miles north of Rock Hill near the Catawba River, is a joint project of the York County Historical Commission and the York County Historical Society.

Location of the park on the lawn of the Randolph Yarns mill.

Program presided over by Col. F. Murray Mack of Fort Mill, vice-chairman of the Commission...Sam B. Mendenhall, president of the historical society and Harper S. Gault, chairman of the commission.

Southern Railway contributed to the park a marker dealing with the history of the trestle and the ford.

Another marker in the park shows a large map of old roads and those now existing in the area. The map was drawn by W. B. White, Jr., chairman of historical markers for the Society.

A picnic table and benches will be provided in the park for visitors.

Mendenhall spoke on the history of the Red River-Nation Ford area.

Alexander Faris, Blacksmith, made a contract with Rev. William Blackstock XE "Blackstock" (York Co. Deeds, Book F, #386, pp. 508-12) to build a mill dam, grist mill and cotton gin on Blackstock's land on Half Mile Creek, old Nation Ford, on west side of the Catawba River. Faris was to get one acre of land at the sawmill site to use as a lumber yard with a road right-of-way into it. The mill dam was to be 10 feet deep.