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Bradford helped Catawbas, 1st to write their history

William R. Bradford, who was editor-owner of the Fort Mill Times, was also a York County delegate to the S.C. House of Representatives. Records show that Bradford campaigned for better treatment of the Catawba Indians.

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NEARBY
HISTORY

The terms of the Nation Ford Treaty of 1840 had never been carried out by the state. In 1924 Bradford supported an unsuccessful attempt for a settlement of the debt owed by the state to the Catawba tribe. He sponsored a proposed increase in the Catawba appropriation.

In 1943 Bradford chaired a House committee seeking land for the expansion of the Catawba reservation. Eight tracts of land totaling 3,362.1 acres of river bottom land were purchased. Previously the Catawbas had only 652 acres, most of it badly eroded.

In 1946 Bradford wrote a 31-page booklet, "The Catawba Indians of South Carolina," which was published by the University Extension Library Service. In 1957 a second edition was published by the S.C. Legislature.

Bradford began his account with a picture of some of the Indian relics collected by S.L. Meacham of Fort Mill, who displayed the artifacts in the local Duke Power office where Meacham was manager.

There follows an account of local tradition telling of the fierce battle between the Catawbas and the Cherokees over who would control the area between the Catawba River and the Broad River.

He tells of North Carolina promising (but not building) a fort on what was later Spratt land. The nonexistent fort, nevertheless, be-

came a part of the Fort Mill name. And Bradford wrote about the Spratt family and of Peter Harris, a Catawba Indian reared by Thomas "Kanawha" Spratt.

Bradford wrote about Catawba chief Samuel Blue and how the Catawbas became Mormon. He wrote of the pottery sales, the main source of Catawba income.

He said that Billy George, a full-blooded Catawba, looked like a full-blooded Sioux Indian (tradition says that Catawbas were an offshoot of the Sioux tribe).

Bradford listed the names of Catawba men who fought for the Confederacy and about the statue honoring them in Fort Mill's downtown Confederate Park.

In 1943 the state of South Carolina, instead of the annual appropriation of \$10,000, purchased 3,432 acres of land, most of which had originally been part of the Springsteen plantation and the Friedheim lands, all adjacent to the old reservation. The average price per acre was \$20.43.

(The present-day Galleria mall is situated on what was once part of the Springsteen plantation, a large pre-Civil War plantation owned by Richard Austin Springs.)

Bradford saw this as a giant step forward. On the old reservation there were only 20 acres of river bottom land and 6 acres of upland that could be cultivated. The remainder of the Catawba holdings were badly eroded and impossible to farm.

A portion of the small book is devoted to the history of the Catawba River, especially about the building of dams and power plants. No longer would the shad and redhorse be able to swim upstream to spawn. No longer could the Catawbas readily find all the fish, turkey and other animals that had once provided much of their diet and sustained a particular lifestyle.

Toward the end of his history,

Bradford predicts that a thousand years from now, the Catawbas will still be remembered as the tribe for which the river is named.

Bradford's pioneer history was to be followed by scholars who wrote four major lengthy books with extensive bibliographies encompassing research done at state and national archives, not only in the United States but in Canadian records and the British Public Records Office.

First there was Douglas Summers Brown's book, "The Catawba Indians - The People of the River," which lacked a publisher for some time before Mrs. Perry Belle Hough of Lancaster wrote a check in 1966 to cover the USC Press' cost to print Brown's book.

Sometime in the early 1970s USC Press sold off its remainders for \$4 each. The going price for a good copy in used condition is currently around \$200 to \$250.

Charles Hudson, a professor of anthropology at the University of Georgia, wrote "The Catawba Nation," which came out in 1970. Thomas J. Blumer's "Bibliography of the Catawba," a wonderful sourcebook of virtually every mention of Catawbas and their history, was published in 1987.

James Merrell's doctoral thesis at William and Mary, which later evolved into his recent book, "The Indian's New World," was published in 1989.

Bradford did not have vast worldwide sources at his disposal, but he did have a passionate concern for the plight of the Catawbas and an in-depth knowledge of local history.

He put his heart and his knowledge into 29 pages that capture the essence of Catawba Indian history, and we heartily thank him for it.

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