

## SALLY NEW RIVER

Witty and shrewd, she had the ability to gain the admiration of an assortment of people including her fellow Indians, an eminent architect, a college professor, and the Scotch-Irish settlers of her neighborhood.

Known as Sally, or "Aunt Sally" in her old age, she was born near the Horseshoe Bend of Sugar Creek, a tributary of the Catawba River, sometime around the year 1745.

Her mother was most likely the daughter of the famed King Haigler, best known of all the Catawba chiefs. Her father was Matthew Toole, a white man of considerable skills who was a representative of the South Carolina Council, trader, soldier, and interpreter (or "linguister").

Not much is known of Sally's youth. She managed to survive the severe smallpox epidemic of 1759, probably unscathed, since she was described as "beautiful" in youth. She was a spectator, in 1760, when the British red coats built the North Carolina fort at present-day Fort Mill. She learned to speak English "pretty well."

In 1763, with the Treaty of Augusta, the Catawbas signed a treaty guaranteeing them 144,000 acres, an area 15 miles square, in what is now portions of York, Lancaster and Chester counties.

Sally married General. New River whose real name he refused to divulge preferring to be called "New River" for a West Virginia battle in which he gained distinction by killing the chief of the Shawnee tribe.

In the American Revolution, New River, recently made chief of the Catawbas, and already an old man, served with 40 other Catawba warriors under Gen. William R. Davie of Thomas Sumter's forces.

In 1780 the feared British Gen. Lord Cornwallis' forces threatened the Catawba reservation after the defeat of Gates of Camden. New River led the Catawba women and children, a group that undoubtedly included Sally, to Virginia to stay with a friendly tribe. When the Catawbas returned from their exile they found their villages destroyed and livestock vanished. New towns were built.

The houses looked more like those of their white neighbors; two with wooden floors rather than the traditional dirt floor.

Sally New River, as queen, was entitled to wear a distinctive silver eagle ornament around her neck. Like most Catawbas, she probably also wore a silver nose ring.

A favorite frontier story involved Sally and a newly arrived Irishman who feared snakes above all else. According to the story, on a cold, snowy night in a frontier tavern, Sally shared an Indian "secret" for subduing snakes. She advised that a long limber pole be cut and carried and, if a snake should pop out, he would be so frightened he would pop back in his hole. One can imagine the glee with which the frontier people circulated the story about the Irishman, at the instigation of Sally New River, carrying a long pole through the blizzard.

Sally New River's shrewdness is evidenced in several ways. As Professor Blackburn of South Carolina College told the story, Sally with other Catawbas, was shown a magnetic compass. The professor played a trick on the Indians by

also having a small penknife in his hand, thus moving the needle. When the professor challenged his audience to do the same, Sally first attempted to move the needle with a stick and then, spying the professor's knife, brought out her flint and showed the professor she could not be easily misled.

More significant than the incident with the compass was Sally's foresight in reserving an area of about 550 acres of prime river land in Lancaster County still known as King's Bottoms. She reserved the area for "Sally New River her with other women of the Nation themselves their heirs successors, or assigns forever . . ." She had the document signed by Gen. New River, other head men of the tribe, and by four of the state-appointed land commissioners in the year 1796. The deed was recorded in the Lancaster Court House in 1808, four years after the death of Gen. New River.

A child of two very different cultures, this "remarkable personage," as Robert Mills described her, died in the winter of 1818-19 in her cabin south of Turkey Head on the banks of the Catawba River in present-day Indian Land township.

[In the above I used the term marriage because it is the easy way to designate a relationship. I didn't put this into the story but Sally, not General New River, was the one with the authority to leave the Kings Bottoms, not to all the members of the Catawba nation but, under the Catawba tradition to "the women and children." ]

(Printed in York Observer, Charlotte Observer, March 16, 1996,  
"Nearby History" column by Louise Pettus)

Deed between Sally New River and the Head Men of the  
Catawbas

"This Indenture made the 6th day of April and in the twentyeth year of the Independence of the United States of America one thousand and seven hundred and ninety six Between the head men of the Cattawba Nation of the State and County aforesd and women of the said Nation of the other part. Witnessst that the said head men of the said nation for and in consideration of Divers good causes unto them done by her the said Sally New River have granted aliened and Confirmed and by their presents do grant alien and confirm unto her the sd Sally New River her with other weomen of the sd Nation themselves their heirs successors or assigns forever all that messuages tract or parcel of Land situated and lying in a tract or parcel of land fifteen miles square to them granted by the government and now by the States, lying and adjoining the Cattawba River beginning at Thos. Greens line that Genl N. River run for him on his *corner at the River* and Runing with his line to the *Stony Lick* thence to Robert Crockett line and Runing with said line to the first fork that his line crosses of the *Whiteoak Branch* thence down the sd. Branch to that ford *where the Road crosses that goes through Kings Bottom* thence from that ford straight to the River according to the course that Branch makes before it came to sd ford thence up the sd River to the Begining Station the same being now in possession of them the said Head men and all profits and advantages whatsoever Belongeth to the sd tract or parcel of Ground and all the right title Interest (word illegible) claim and demand whatsoever of them the sd head men for the sd Nation in and to the sd tract doth Covenant and grant to the sd Sally N River herself her heirs shall be truly and Lawfully possessed of the same without any manner of contention for the above premises and shall be intitled to a good absolute and defeasible Estate of Inheritance in fee Simple AND LASTLY we the sd head men do bind ourselves our heirs successors or assigns Make good the sd tract or parcel of land unto the sd Sally N River herself her heirs with other weomen of the

sd Nation their heirs Successors or assigns against all persons will warrant and Defend forever In Witness of these presents we the head men have hereunto set our hands and afixed our seals. The day and year first above written.

Signed Sealed and Delivered  
River Seal

In the presence of  
Andrew Foster

Chas. Miller  
Seal

Thos. Spratt  
Hugh White

Seal

his

Genl New (N)

mark

his

Collo John (C) Ears

mark

his

Major John (O) Brown

mark

South Carolina) This day came before me Hugh White and being sworn as the law directs Says York District) that he signed the within deed as witness Saw the within named Indian chiefs put their marks or signatures to the same for the purposes therein mentioned.

Sworn to before me this 28th June 1808

Larn Henderson J. P.

Hugh White

Recorded April 14, 1808 in Clerk of Court's Office, Lancaster Court House.