

DAVID HUTCHISON RECALLS EARLY SETTLERS

The following excerpt from a letter written by David Hutchison, at the request of South Carolina Governor James Hammond, dated July 11, 1843, gives a background history of the events in the Catawba Indian Land prior to the Treaty of Nation Ford in 1840. The terms of the treaty had not been carried out and Hutchison was concerned about the plight of the Catawbas who still had not been relocated or paid for the land under the terms of the treaty.

"I come to speak now of the whites settling on this Land. The boundary [of the Catawba Indian Land]...is fifteen miles square. About half of it is called good high land, but much broken with rock. The other half, or perhaps more, is the poorest kind of barren land, so that when the first sells from eight to sixteen dollars per acre, the other will scarcely bring one dollar.

"At the commencement of the Revolutionary War, there were three families* favorites of the Indians, settled on this land. The Indians gave them large boundaries, marked by water courses and roads--and they lived much in the Indian fashion, without schooling their children, as they lived five or six miles apart....

"About this time a large number of young men, chiefly from Mecklenburg County who had served six or eight years in the Army, returned home poor and penniless. A number of them had served their last tour in Sumter's State troops--privates receiving a negro, and officers in proportion to their rank; and this was their all. In the course of two years, the most of these men married. In camp they became acquainted with a number of Indians and were favorites with them. These men when married, being without means sufficient to purchase improved land, were encouraged by the Indians and whites already settled, to come and live on their land; which most of them did, purchasing from the first settlers; and thus commenced in the woods, poor in property, but rich in independence of mind. For three years they suffered all the privations of a wilderness; but it had this advantage, it taught us industry and economy. The motto was to live sparingly and work hard, and the same habits remain with us to this day.

"During this time the good land was all rented, except where the Indians lived, and they in a manner quit farming, thinking they could live on their rents. About this time, also, it was discovered that there were a number of outlying negroes, who had been with the British, and did not go away with them, but harbored in the swamp and Islands near Charleston and had become troublesome. The Indians were applied to, to hunt after them. Four or five went--remained all winter--took some, and killed others. They were invited back the winter following. They had been so well treated by the whites, that the next winter, and the winter following, nearly all of the young men went, and took a number of women with them. At this time women were all temperate, and also the men, those excepted who had been much in camp. But they came back completely changed; men and women, the most abandoned drunkards; and, if any difference, the women were the worst. But this was not all, the most of them came home with an infectuous disease which nearly proved fatal to the Nation. Doctors have told me they were not clear of it for ten years; and in that time but few children were born, and of these but a small number survived."