

## MACDONALD FURMAN VISITS THE CATAWBAS

MacDonald Furman from 1876 until his death in 1904 regularly visited the Catawba Indians. He wrote newspaper articles about the Catawbas that were printed in the Yorkville Enquirer, the Charleston News and Courier, the State, and Sumter Watchman, among others. All of the articles displayed an intimate knowledge of Indian life and great affection for many individual members of the Catawba Nation.

An article that appeared in the June 13, 1894 Yorkville Enquirer is a good example of Furman's writing. He wrote that he first stopped at the home of Jim Harris, the 35-year-old chief, a widower who suffered from rheumatism but was "pleasant" and "intelligent-looking." In his role as chief, Harris had been to Washington, D. C. once and to Columbia twice. Harris told Furman that he believed that the records would show that no Catawba had ever been sent to the penitentiary.

Next, Furman visited Harris' brother (and future chief), David Harris, 22. Furman said that David had the reputation of being the best farmer on the reservation.

The next visit was to see "Uncle Billy" George, whose age was somewhere between 85 and 90. Uncle Billy was the only Indian still living who had signed the historic Treaty of Nation Ford in 1840. He signed that document as "Captain George."

Furman said there were 120 Catawbas in 1894, 67 of them were living on the York County reservation and 28 lived in Colorado. Others were scattered in New Mexico, Texas, North Carolina and in several upcountry South Carolina counties. Two white women were on the reservation. One was married to an Indian and the other was a widow.

Furman remarked that the Catawba language was almost gone; even the chief spoke little. Uncle Billy George informed him that the Catawba word for chief was "yam-ma-rar-her". Besides the loss of the language, Furman noted that the Indian children were not taught how to use a bow and arrow.

Epps Harris, who worked as a ferryman, informed Furman that there were 7 Indians on the reservation who were full-blooded. (Furman did not say so but according to the 1900 census one was a full-blooded Oneida, Richard Wheelock, who married a Catawba girl who was his classmate in Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.)

The 67 people on the reservation lived in 18 houses, most of them built of plank. Most houses had vegetable patches around them. Furman thought the appearance of houses and gardens was similar to that of white tenant farmers.

The best-looking house was that of Rhoda Harris, widow of chief Allen Harris. The 4-room house had been built 3 years before. Mrs. Harris, age 60, had surrounded her house with fruit trees and a nice garden. She was proud of two granddaughters then attending the Carlisle Indian School.

Bob and Ben Harris and Lew Gordon took Furman in a boat across the river to Lancaster County where they showed him "some Indian springs, an old Indian burying ground, and the place where an old Indian town once stood."

Furman said he did not request any food on his visit, but various Indians served him. Dinner at one house was coffee, syrup and biscuit. Supper at another was fried meat and biscuit.

He bought some Indian pottery and was given some. He was particularly pleased with a pipe shaped like a "cooter" (turtle). He thought the pottery "showed careful and nice work."