The Charles Walker Carroll Collection
On The Waternee Indians 1566-1770
in the Camden Archives

An Overview of the Documents
In The Collection

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for Charles W. Carroll
This narrative on the Waterree Indians was written by Wes Tavielehiray, based on his familiarity with the Charles Walker Carroll Collection on the Waterree Indians 1566-1770, at the Camden Archives, Camden, South Carolina.

The spelling Waterree, is that of the English trader Thomas Brown in 1738; who would have known where the accent lay.

There was once a small American Indian nation called the Waterree, or Guatarri in Spanish; both pronounced probably the same. By 1566 and until at least 1600, or 1605 or longer, they lived it seems, on the Roanoke River in what is now North Carolina, at the Trading Ford on the Great Trading Path from Petersburg, Virginia to the Catawba Nation; though of course, Petersburg wasn’t there yet. In other words, from 1566 to 1600 and 1605, they lived near the present Salisbury, North Carolina. They may well have been in that same spot in 1545, when, fortunately for them, the explorer Hernando de Soto passed nearby but never heard of them.
By 1770 the Wateree Indians had died down to one man whose English nickname we know, and no doubt a small number of other individuals now long forgotten, living in the Catawba Nation. This one man was "Captain Wateree Venny," as we have his name in 1767; or "Wateree Venny," as he is called in 1765; and on March 27th, 1770, the famous historical figure, King Hagler or Nopkeha of the Catawba Nation spoke of him as "the soberest man of my Nation, Captain Wateree Vanny," and had him on that account occupied on occasion as a courier to deliver messages.

A recently published book called *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1763,* shows that it was highly unusual for the name "Wateree" and its variants to appear in our records as long as it did; notice in particular the article by Stephen Davis, the archaeologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Between 1666 and 1770 the size of the Wateree Indian population appears only once, on a military intelligence map during the Yamasee War, in 1715. At that time, their sole remaining town, on Wateree Creek in the present Fairfield County, South Carolina, could muster only forty warriors.
At about this same time, the Catawba Nation (which of course still exists today as a federally acknowledged tribe) had 570 warriors and 900 women and children in nine towns, according to General John Barnwell's head count in 1712—he may have actually drawn this estimate up in 1715. In 1690, according to the South Carolina Gazette (the newspaper in Charleston, S.C.) for May 3rd, 1760, there were four thousand Catawbas. In December 1881 the Smithsonian ethnologist, Albert Gatschet, found eighty-five Catawbas on their square-mile reservation some nine miles from Rock Hill, S.C. As far as we have any inkling, these eighty-five comprised the whole community, and Gatschet estimated that about one-third of them spoke the ancient Catawba language.

If the population of the Waterbee Indians followed the same curve as that of the Catawba Nation, there would have been about 290 Waterbees in 1690, and only six of them left alive in 1881. However, we have no indication whatsoever of any kind about the survival of Waterbee tribal identity past the year 1770, and indeed the last time we hear of the Waterbees maintaining a separate town of their
own is in a letter dated April 20th, 1744, from the trader Thomas Brown, the Englishman who bought land from the tribe, in 1735. The Waterees had moved into the Catawba Nation for the second time in 1736. If we still had the map by another English trader, George Haig, of the seven Catawba towns, done between 1744 and 1746, we would know if the Waterees still possessed their own town when that map, now lost, was drawn. Certainly they no longer had a separate town in the Catawba Nation in March of 1756 when the map of the "Catah-baw Nation men fit for war, 204" in the Dalhousie Manuscripts in Scotland, shows their towns as Nossaw & Weyoapee (60 men total), Noostee (27 men), Sucah Town (29 men), Weyan or the King's Town (42 men) and Charrow Town (56 men), all round about the site of the present Fort Mill.

S.C.

Wateree Jamie, Yemmy or Vennie would be at least the second headman the Waterees had after joining the Catawbas in 1736, seeing that we find listed an Indian called Captain Tom on June 6th, 1739; Captain Tom, a Wateree Indian, on January 3rd, 1741; and Captain Tom or
Megehe (a name similar to the Catawba word for Strong Man) on September 6th, 1749.
Two other Watereei headmen in 1741 were "Doupain" and "Jack." Megehe seems to
have been part of a delegation of Catawba
headmen who stayed in the city of Charles-

to, the late summer and entire fall of 1749,
and to have died of the smallpox or war with
the Iroquois or Shawnee, or other "Northern
Indians" on his way home.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the Watereei
Indians to the broader sweep of history may be
summed up in the observation that the first out-
post of Christianity on the mainland was the Span-

tish fort at Guatari, established by Juan Pardo
in 1566 and still there in 1572. Even as
late as 1600 one Spaniard still lived at Guata-
ri, a fife (pifano) who had a wife, presuma-

bly a Watereei Indian woman, and das hijos (two
sons).

We do not know the language spoken by the Wa-
terees except that, as Richard Tovneter tells us in
1679, it was different from that of the Waxhaws;
and, as John Lawson observes in 1701, the Wa-
terees and Congarees could not understand each
other. The old linguistic axiom has it that if two
people of different speech try to converse with each other and they persist, they are speaking two dialects of a single language; but if they give up, they are speaking two different languages. If the Waterees, like the Cheraw or Santee Indians, spoke a dialect of Catawba, their name means "river rapids"; they would be the yeh Wateree, "the people of the rapids." (Two very similar Catawba words mean "wash away" and "floating," and these have also been suggested as translations of the name.) An educated guess, but still only a guess, would be that the Waterees originated as a people at the rapids on some river somewhere, if not the Yadkin then some other in the Piedmont of the Carolinas.

Like Americans and other people today, the Wateree Indians moved about from time to time from one place to another. But, they did so, it seems, as a group, the entire small nation making the trip. The next place that we hear of them is, it tentatively appears, the present Creedmoor, NC, in southern Granville County, which county borders north on the Virginia state line. This is far to the east (by a little north) of their location when they dealt with the Spaniards. This was in 1670, when the explorer John Lederer found them there, or
at any rate found them somewhere. The historian
Brice Land argued in his book, Westward from
Virginia, in 1979, that the Waterees lived
at Creedmoor in June of 1670. Dr. Frank
T. Siebert, the aged (as he with great justi-

cation said) "advanced student" of the Catawba
and Penobscot languages, who spent his last
years in Bangor, Maine, once said in a letter
to this writer that he had wasted his money
when he bought a copy of the Brice Land book,
because Brice Land has Lederer tromping around
confusedly in 1670 in the mountains near
Hillsborough, NC, but that there were no mountains
thereabouts the last time Dr. Siebert was up
that way. Dr. Siebert failed to note that we
don't have the original of Lederer's narrative,
which he wrote in Latin, and that the mountains
in question must be a mistranslation from the
Latin for rolling hills or something like that.

From 1682 to 1770 we hear of the Waterees
entirely on or very near the Catawba River,
or, actually, from 1701 to 1770. This mighty stream arises in the present
McDowell County, NC as the Catawba River
but is consistently known, along its lower reaches
from Kershaw County, SC on down, as the
Watercon River. What's more, in 1600

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the Spaniards called the entire river the río Guatari because the road north to Guatari ran along the bank or side of this river. Probably Guatari was still at the same location in 1605 when the Spaniards were told that it lay on the road to the mountains. Be that as it may, the Wateree had left there by 1682, when their name is applied on a map to the Black or Wateree River in South Carolina. By 1701, of course, they were on the Wateree River, or the Catawba-Wateree River as we may denominate the whole stream in order to point out that its pristine aboriginal occupation ended in 1736. The first that we hear of European settlers on that river is in December of 1736, when some of the Cheraw (Soraw) Indians "cut off" (killed all the members of) an English household at Pinetree Creek, the later Camden.

Here is a map of the Catawba-Wateree River in 1775 — Mouzon's map edited to show only natural features — and years added to show the location of the Wateree Indians down through the decades. The locations given for 1566-1605, 1642 and "1732-1736" are based on surviving texts, not on maps. The location given for 1682 is purely a not very well evi-
cated guess, but it's the best one can do at this distance.

The maps following the historical overview map are each drawn from North and South Carolina Highway Department maps, edited to show only the natural features, mostly the rivers and creeks, and the Indian towns as of 1670, 1701, 1712, 1715 and 1736.
In 1670 (Beringland tells us) the low marshy lands Lederer crossed on his way to the Watac Indians, maybe been those on Coon Creek and Cat-tail Creek, now Granville County, North Carolina. Lederer tells us he was there from the 19th to the 21st of June 1670 and that the Headman there was an absolute ruler (extremely unusual in the Southeast, but not unheard of) and a grave man, courteous to strangers, who none-theless frightened Lederer badly by having three girls of another tribe killed to serve his son who had died, in the next world. (Lederer, incidentally, was a German resident in Maryland.)
On January 18th and 19th, 1701 New Style, the Englishman John Lawson stayed at the Waterese town in what later became Lancaster County, South Carolina. He found, he said, the Watereses to be tall likely persons and great pilferers who would steal with their feet, but very respectful in giving the travellers what victuals they wanted.
Shown on the following page is the approximate location on the way Colonel Barnwell marched from Charleston in the year 1711 [1712 New Style, counting January 1st rather than March 25th as New Year's Day] with the forces sent from South Carolina to the relief of North Carolina, of the Wateree Indians in 1712, in what is now Fairfield County, South Carolina near Big Wateree Creek. Richard Berestford, prominent in South Carolina politics since 1690, and South Carolina Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1707, had been in his native England for twelve months when he drew the map (on which the followed page is based) in 1716.
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