

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

An Overview of the Documents
In The Collection

August 2006
by Wes Taulschinay
for Charles W. Carroll

This narrative on the Waterree Indians was written by Wes Taukchiray, 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 1739; who would have known where the accent lay.

There was once a small American Indian nation called the Waterree, or Guatari in Spanish; both pronounced probably the same. By 1566 and until as least 1600, or 1605 or longer, they lived, it seems, on Yadkin 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 1540, 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 Watree Jemmy", as we have his name in 1757; or "Wateree Jenny", 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 Jemmy," 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 archeologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Between 1566 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 headcount in 1715 — he may have actually drawn this estimate up in 1712. 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 Wateree Indians followed the same curve as that of the Catawba Nation, there would have been about 290 Waterrees in 1690, and only six of them left alive in 1881. However, we have no indication whatsoever of any kind about the survival of Wateree tribal identity past the year 1770, and indeed the last time we hear of the Waterrees maintaining a separate town of their

own is in a letter date of April 20th, 1744, from the trader Thomas Brown, the Englishman who bought land from the tribe in 1735. The Waterrees 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 Waterrees 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 "Cuttah-baw Nation men fit for war, 204 In the year 1756" in the Dalhousie Muniments in Scotland, shows their towns as Nassaw & Weyapee (50 men total), Noostee (27 men), Succah Town (29 men), Weyane or the King's Town (42 men) and Charraw Town (56 men), all round about the site of the present Fort Mill, S.C.

Waterree Jamie, Jemmy or Jennie would be at least the second headman the Waterrees had after joining the Catawbas in 1736, seeing that we find listed an Indian called Captain Tom on June 6th, 1739; Captain Tom, a Waterree Indian, on January 5th, 1741; and Captain Tom or

Megehe (a name similar to the Catawba word for Strong Man) on September 6th, 1749. Two other Wateree headmen in 1741 were "Donpant" and "Jack." Megehe seems to have been part of a delegation of Catawba headmen who stayed in the city of Charleston during 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 Wateree Indians to the broader sweep of history may be summed up in the observation that the first outpost of Christianity on the mainland was the Spanish fort at Guatari, established by Juan Pardo in 1566 and still there in 1572. Even as late as 1600 one Spaniard still lived at Guatari, a fifer (pipano) who had a wife, presumably a Wateree Indian woman, and dos hijos (two sons).

We do not know the language spoken by the Wateerees except that, as Richard Traunter tells us in 1699, it was different from that of the Waxhaws; and as John Lawson observes in 1701, the Wateerees 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 Saraw Indians, spoke a dialect of Catawba, their name means "river rapids"; they would be the yeh Watiree, "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 Briceland argued in his book, Westward From Virginia, in 1979, that the Waterrees lived at Creedmoor in June of 1670. Dr. Frank T. Siebert, the aged (as he with great justification 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 Briceland book, because Briceland 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 Waterrees entirely on or very near the Catawba-Waterree River; on it, actually, from 1701 to 1770.

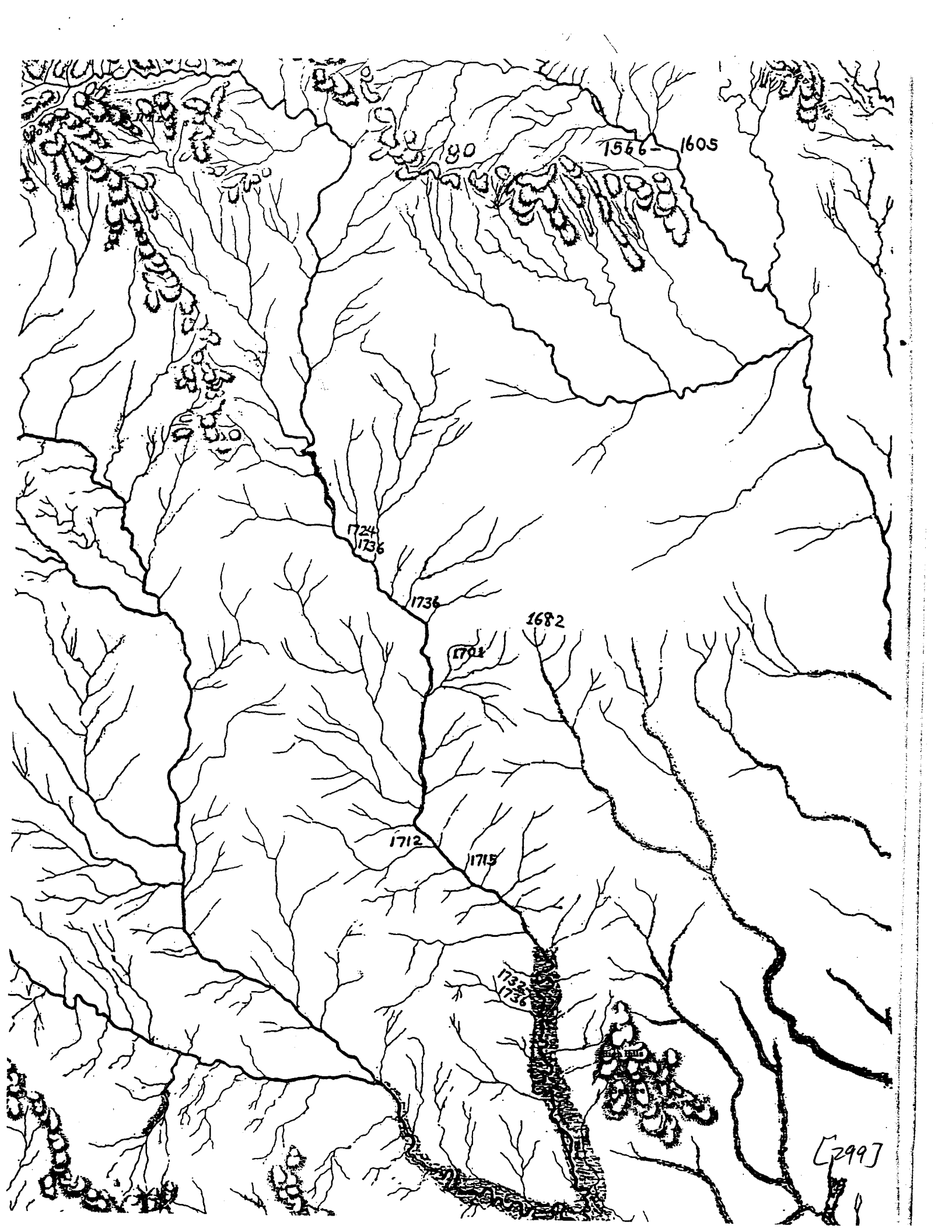
This mighty stream arises in the present McDowell County, NC as the Catawba River but is consistently known, along its lower reaches from Kershaw County, SC on down, as the Waterree River. What's more, in 1600

the Spaniards called the entire river the rio 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 Weenee 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 (Saw) 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 — Mauzon'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, 1682 and "1732-1736" are based on surviving texts, not on maps. The location given for 1682 is purely a not very-well edu-

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.



80

1566

1605

1724
1736

1736

1682

1701

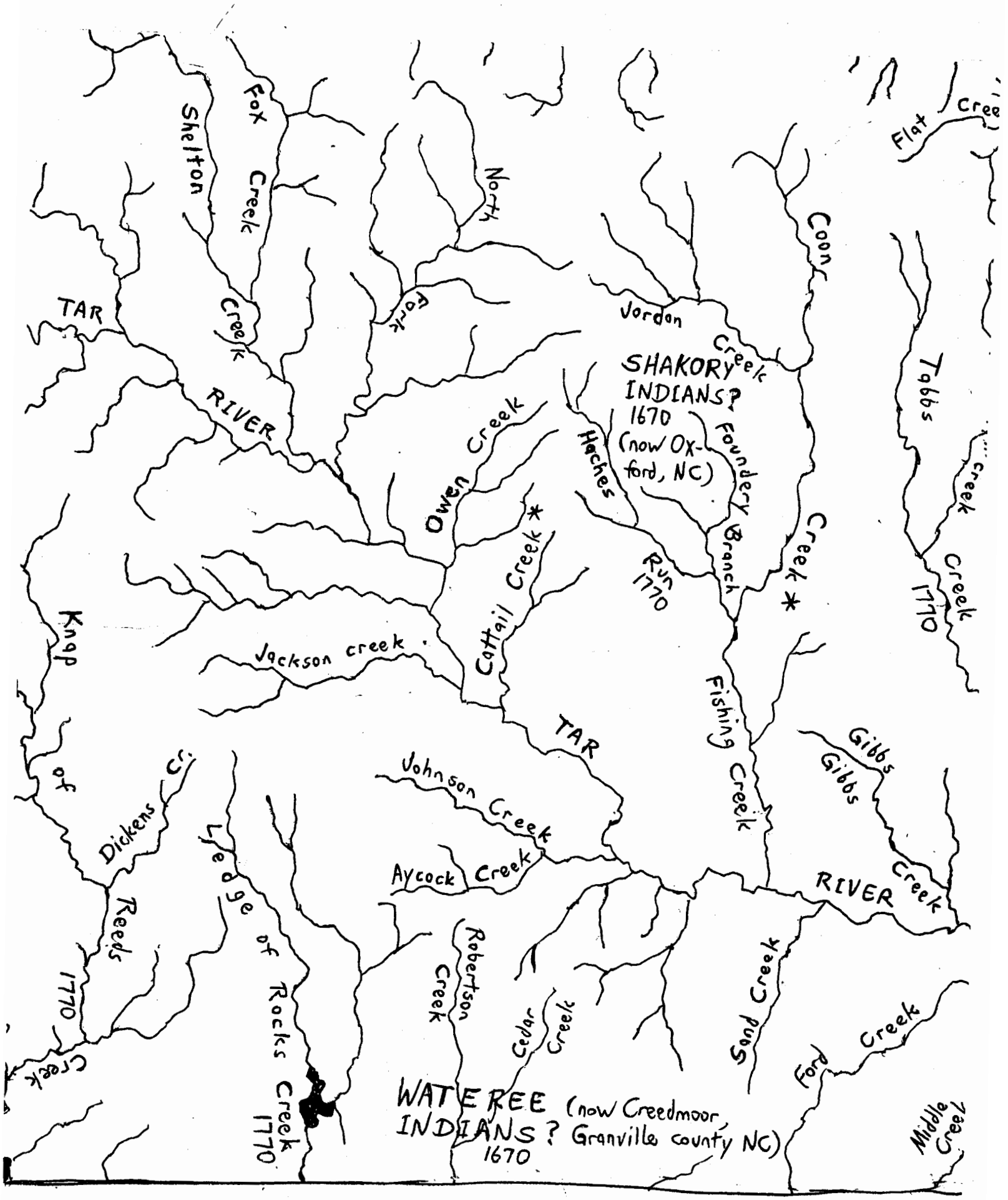
1712

1715

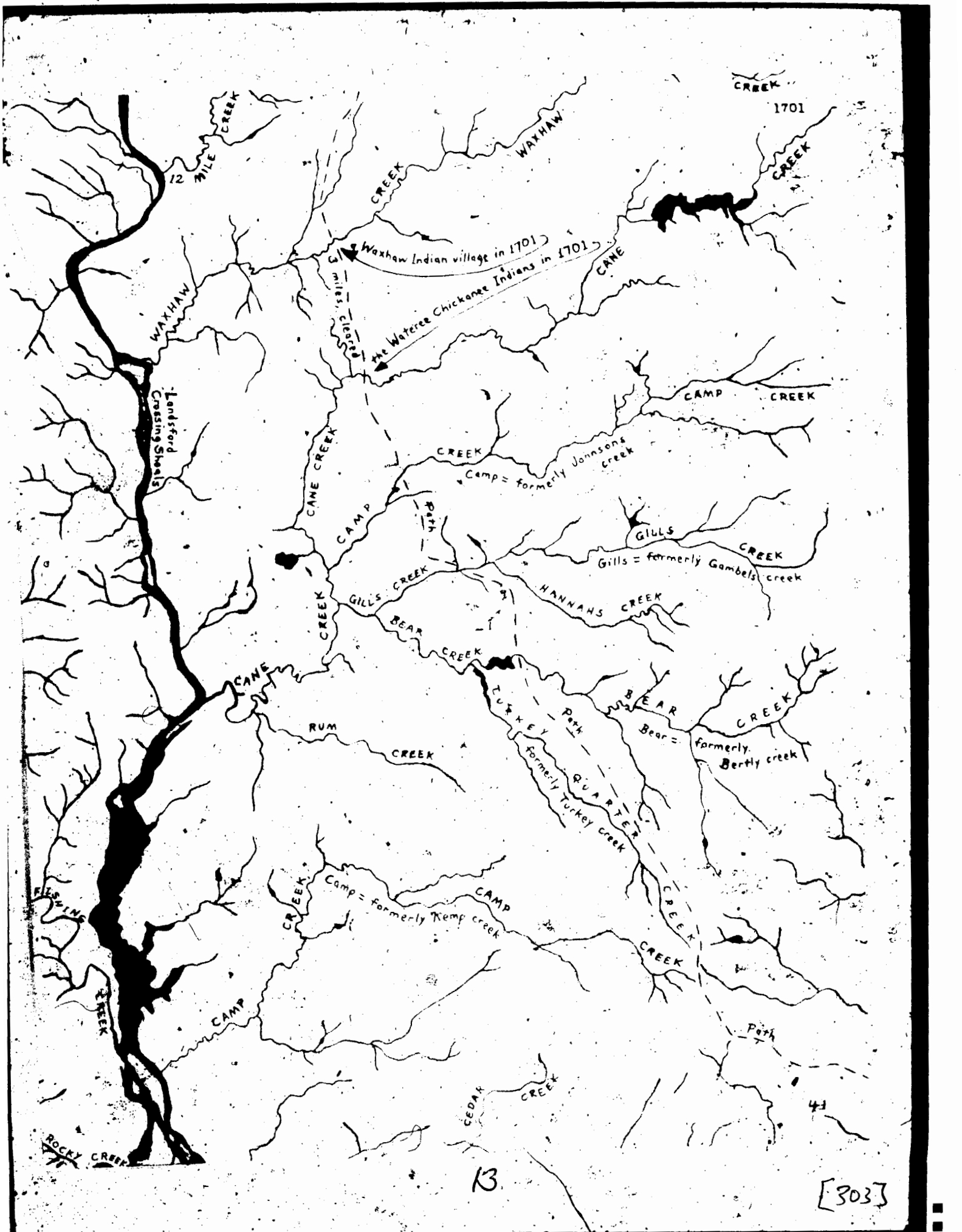
1736
1736

[299]

In 1670 (Brice land tells us) the low marshy lands Lederer crossed on his way to the Watary Indians, may've 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 nonetheless 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 Wateree town in what later became Lancaster County, South Carolina. He found, he said, the Waterrees 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.



12

1701

Waxhaw Indian village in 1701

The Wateree Chickane Indians in 1701

Landford
Crossing Shoals

Camp = formerly Johnsons creek

Gills = formerly Gambels creek

Bear = formerly Bertly creek

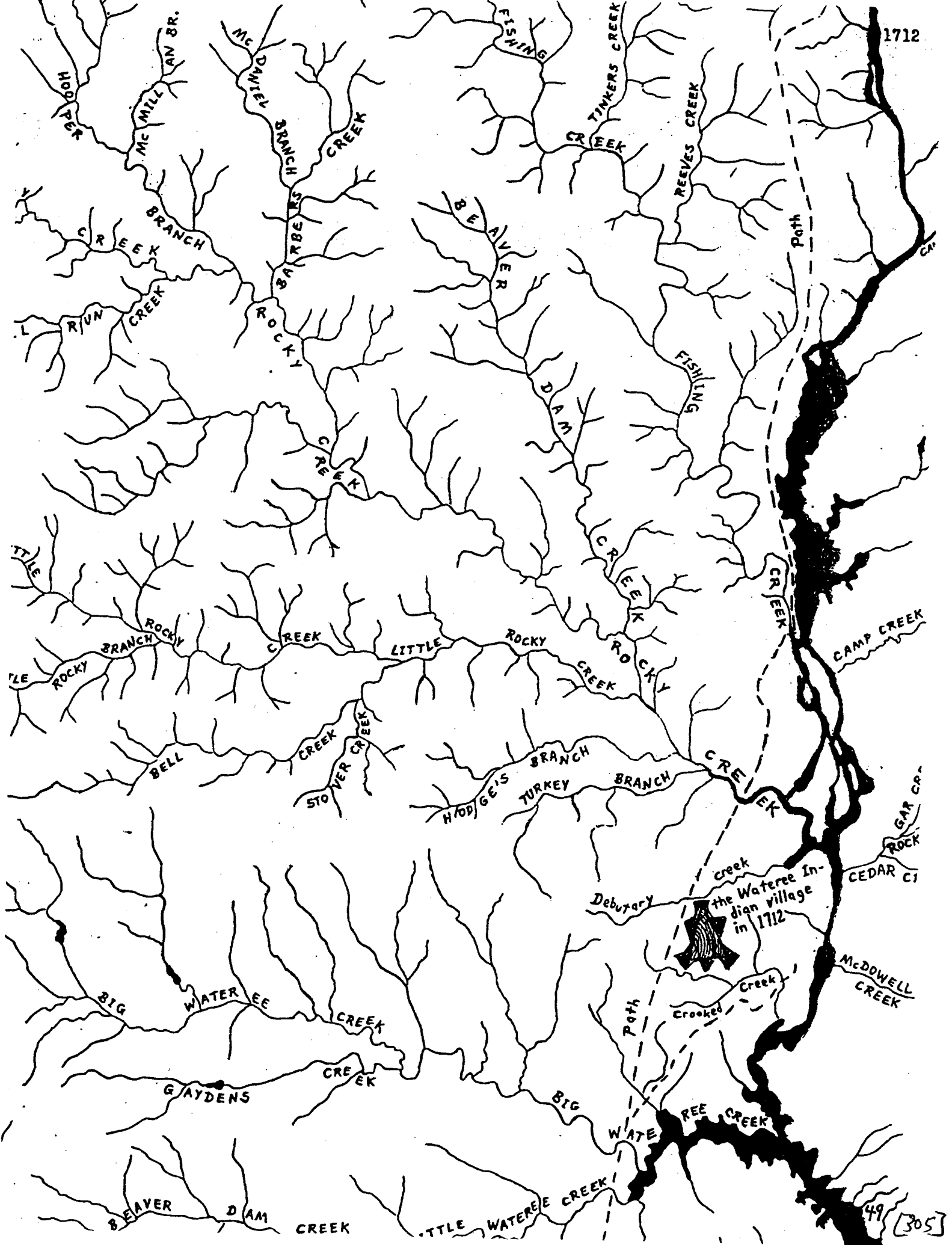
Camp = formerly Kemp creek

13

[303]

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 Years 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 Berresford, 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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