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VIRGINIA AND THE CHEROKEE INDIAN TRADE, 1673-1752

By W. Neil Franklin

Before the copper-colored aborigines of North America ever came into contact with men whose skins were lighter than their own, they well understood the meaning of commerce. Warrior traded with warrior; village traded with village; tribe traded with tribe.[1] When the explorers of the sixteenth century put in at points all along the Atlantic seaboard they almost invariably exchanged with the natives trinkets and valuables for furs and skins. With the establishment in 1607 of England's first permanent American settlement, that of Jamestown in Virginia, trade with the Indians began in earnest. For many years this was probably the most lucrative occupation in the colony. The early trade was conducted for the most part by boats which plied the waters of tidewater Virginia, of Chesapeake Bay, and, to a less extent, of the regions farther north.[2] But as the sequel proved, this coastal commerce was but a passing phase; as more and more colonists came to the shores of the Chesapeake the Indians along the coast withdrew into the interior, and colonial shipping found greater profits in other channels. By the middle of the seventeenth century Virginia's Indian trade had practically deserted the seaways and was advancing inland across the piedmont, assuming aspects which were to characterize it for the remainder of the colonial period.

Not even the early trade had been entirely dependent upon the use of vessels. From the beginning there were times when

[1]James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Nineteenth *Annual Report*, Washington, 1900), part 1, p. 235.

[2]Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington, 1906, 2 vols.), *passim;* Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States* (Boston and New York, 1890, 2 vols.), *passim.*

the supply of food ran low in the red man's wigwam; then it was that he anxiously sought out the white colonist, purchasing from him life-sustaining grain at the cost even of parting with the dressed skins with which he clothed himself.[3] But generally it was the white trader who might have been seen making his way among the Indian towns nearest the plantations, disposing of knives and beads and cloth for beaver pelts and deer skins. The natives wanted more, too, than knives and beads and cloth; they wanted what the whites had demonstrated were far superior to their own bows and arrows, namely, firearms. And so in time they acquired not only possession, but the use, of firearms, as the Virginians learned to their horror in 1622 and again in 1644, when red waves of destruction threatened to overwhelm the colony.

The first massacre taught the lesson of preparedness, but only with the second was its need indelibly impressed upon the mind of Virginia. In 1645-46 the colonial assembly ordered the erection of forts along the fall line, which was, speaking generally, assumed to be the boundary between the country of the white man and that of the native. Should the Indians desire to trade, they were at liberty to visit the fort nearest them,[4] and doubtless there was a deal of such trafficking. As to whether or not the white trader could pursue his calling among the red villages, the law is by no means clear, but that the white trader did do so, there is no reason to doubt. In fact, so many men of ill character entered the trade that the assembly in 1661 deemed it wise to confine all traffic with the natives to those persons obtaining licenses from the governor.[5] Much of this widespread interest in the Indian trade must have sprung directly from the activities revolving about the fall line forts, and about one in particular, Fort Henry.

Erected in 1646 at the falls of the Appomattox River for the primary purpose of protecting Virginia's frontiers to the southwest, Fort Henry was placed under the charge of Colonel Abraham Wood,[6] who made of this wilderness post a most important

3Alexander Brown, *The First Republic in America* (Boston and New York, 1898), 227.

4William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large; being a collection of all the laws of Virginia* . . . . (Richmond, 1819), I, 293-294, 315.

5*Ibid.*, II, 20.

6*Ibid.*, I, 315; Philip Alexander Bruce, *The Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (New York and London, 1910), II, 100-101.

center for exploration and Indian trade for at least a generation. Not without cause has Colonel Wood been dubbed "the Frontenac of Virginia."[7] It is probable that individual traders had been working their way well into the interior for several years, but general knowledge of the remote regions was scanty, else the colonial assembly would not, in 1643, have so strongly encouraged southwestern discovery.[8] At any rate, efforts toward trade and exploration—the one depending largely upon the other—remained individualistic until they felt the unifying touch of Abraham Wood.

The work of Wood is known only in part. In 1650, in company with the English merchant, Edward Bland, and a few others, the proprietor of Fort Henry made his way into the southwest as far as Occaneechi Island, located at the falls of the river Roanoke, in present Mecklenburg County, Virginia. Owing to the threatening attitude of the Indians, the party attempted to go no farther. However, if one reads between the lines of Bland's journal it seems clear enough that by the middle of the seventeenth century Virginia traders were operating rather extensively throughout this region, and that some, even then, had found their way into the Tuscarora towns still farther distant.[9] As the years passed, this expanding southwest trade fell more and more into the hands of Colonel[10] Wood, who doubtless believed that for whatever sums might be spent in the cause of exploration he would be repaid, tenfold, in profits accruing from traffic with new nations of red men. In time the parties of exploration sent out by Wood were probably scouring the distant southwest region, and it was one such party that made possible the beginning of trade relations with the great nation of the Cherokee.[11]

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[7]Clarence Walworth Alvord and Lee Bidgood in *The First Explorations of the Trans-Allegheny Region by the Virginians*, 1650-1674 (Cleveland, 1912), 34-43, sketch the remarkable career of a man about whom surprisingly little is known.

[8]Hening, *Statutes*, I, 262.

[9]Bland's journal is printed in Alvord and Bidgood, *First Explorations*, 114-130.

[10]He was made a colonel in the Virginia militia in 1656, being promoted to the grade of major-general some time after 1663, *ibid.*, 41-42.

[11]Coming from without the wilderness that lay west of Virginia's frontier, there appeared at the falls of the James a band of Indians known as Rickahecrians. It is quite possible that they sought the establishment of a trade with the Virginians (Edward Duffield Neill, *Virginia Carolorum* [Albany, 1886], 245), but the latter, with the assistance of the Pamunkeys, attacked the strangers, and although the allies were defeated, their opponents later withdrew. Some writers identify the Rickahecrians as Cherokee (e. g., James Mooney, *The Siouan Tribes of the East* [Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* xxii, Washington, 1894], 28), while others see in

Two of Colonel Wood's employees, James Needham and the youthful Gabriel Arthur, left Fort Henry in May, 1673. Straight into the southwest they went, crossing the Roanoke at Occaneechi Island, and thence to the upper Yadkin. Swinging off to the right, they made their way through the beautiful Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountains, and, clambering down the western slopes, came at length upon a Cherokee village perched on the bluffs alongside a stream whose waters probably flowed into those of the Tennessee. If, as indeed seems likely, Needham and Arthur were the first Englishmen to reach the land of the Cherokee, the latter had, however, for a long time been trading, at least intermittently, with the Spaniards of Florida. But the Spaniards had offended the mountain Indians; trade relations had come to an end; and the arrival of the Englishmen, though adventitious, was timely. Arthur elected to remain among the Cherokee, learning their language and making friends, while Needham was to report back to Fort Henry for instructions. Months passed; Arthur learned the language and made friends, but Needham, after acquainting Wood with news of the great discovery, was treacherously slain by an Occaneechi while on his way to rejoin Arthur. Then, when the latter was preparing to make the trip himself the Cherokee chieftain offered to accompany him. On the way, the hostile Occaneechi threatened to interrupt the party's progress; the chieftain and his warriors took to flight; but Arthur escaped all dangers and in June, 1674, appeared at Fort Henry. In July there arrived the chieftain and his warriors; these had, it seems, retreated back across the mountains, gone up the great valley beyond until they reached the headwaters of the James River, down which they had floated in a bark canoe as far as the Monacan Indian town, and from this they had travelled overland the few miles to Fort Henry.[12] At the fort the chieftain's party was accorded a glad welcome; happiness and merriment reigned for several days; then, when the chieftain felt it was time to return to his people, he promised Colonel Wood that he would come again "att ye

these Indians the Westo, who were prominent a little later in Carolina history (Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 1670-1732 [Durham, 1928], 6, 12).

[12]The Monacan Indian town was located not far above the site of Richmond (*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, xxiv [1917-18], 121).

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Whether the Cherokee chieftain meant to return to Fort Henry by way of the roundabout James River route, or to risk the Carolina piedmont is unknown, nor for that matter is it at all certain that he ever saw Abraham Wood again. There can, however, be little doubt that the journeys of Needham and Arthur marked the beginnings of Virginia's trade with the Cherokee, a trade which was to have important consequences, political as well as economic. For many years the trading path from Fort Henry into the southwest ran no farther than Occaneechi Island,[14] but after 1676, when the Occaneechi were crushed by Nathaniel Bacon, of Rebellion fame, the path advanced across the rolling Carolina piedmont until it reached the Catawba country, lying along the Catawba River at about the present boundary between the Carolinas.[15] Still farther went the path, until at last it found a terminus on the Savannah River, at the site of Augusta, Georgia.[16] The relation between Indian trader and trading path was perhaps analagous to that between pioneer and road; before the latter in either case was well defined the former had blazed the way. So by the time the route to the Savannah was becoming well known, the pioneer trader had ventured westward beyond the Savannah terminus, skirted the southern Appalachians, and was driving sharp bargains with the Cherokee, already introduced to Englishmen through the efforts of Needham and Arthur.[17] The route these latter two had followed to the Cherokee country seems to have been rejected in favor of the longer, but easier, path around the mountains.

Abraham Wood must have taken a keen interest in the promotion of the Cherokee traffic, although the part he played therein remains unknown. As the day of Wood drew to its close,[18] that of William Byrd I was dawning. Just two years

[13]The information concerning the Needham-Arthur expedition is contained in a letter written by Wood to John Richards, August 22, 1674, and printed in Alvord and Bidgood, *First Explorations*, 210-226.

[14]Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William* (Richmond, 1924), 65-66.

[15]J. S. Bassett, ed., *The Writings of Colonel William Byrd* (New York, 1901), pp. xviii-xix.

[16]Mooney, *Siouan Tribes*, 38.

[17]Robert Beverley, *The History of Virginia* (reprint of the second revised London edition of 1722, Richmond, 1855), 59-60; Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, 184-185.

[18]The last reference to Wood which has been found is of 1680 (Alvord and Bidgood, *First Explorations*, 43).

before Needham and Arthur tapped the Cherokee country, Byrd inherited a plantation at the falls of the James.[19] Warehouses were soon erected, in which were stored the trading goods ordered from England—beads, cloths, kettles, guns, powder, shot[20]—and also the peltry received in exchange, this consisting mostly of deer skins. Ere long Byrd was a worthy rival of Abraham Wood, and when the latter's long and strong grip upon Indian affairs was forever relaxed by death, the former drove forward until he came to enjoy admitted supremacy in Virginia's trade to the southwest. There were, to be sure, numerous individuals engaged in the Indian trade, but William Byrd I was the one great trader of his generation, towering head and shoulders above all the rest. It must have been impressive, indeed, to have witnessed the departure of one of his great caravans: a hundred horses heavily loaded with trading goods, and the valued cargo guarded by twelve or fifteen trusted servants.[21] With tinkling bells it moved slowly off along the well named "Virginia traders' path"; through forests and clearings and streams; a halt at Catawba Town; more forests, more clearings, more streams; the Savannah crossed and the Georgia piedmont reached. Although direct evidence is lacking, part of the cargo must have been carried into the Cherokee nation for William Byrd was obviously not the type of trader who would let such a glittering prize as the mountain trade go ungarnered. Certain it is that there were at this time Virginians operating among the Cherokee,[22] and that these men were connected in one way or another with the Byrd enterprise is by no means inconceivable.

Time was when Virginia had no rivals in her exploitation of the southwest trade.[23] But that time was past; the halcyon days were drawing to a close. For the first few years after the founding of Charles Town in 1670, the Virginia traders probably knew little more than that such a place existed, yet when the

[19]Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, pp. xv, xvii.
[20]See the letters of Byrd, printed in *Va. Mag.*, vols. xxiv to xxviii.
[21]Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, p. xix.
[22]"As early as 1690, Doherty, a trader from Virginia, had visited the Cherokees, and afterwards lived among them a number of years." J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee* (Charleston, 1853), 63. "According to his own affidavit, however, which he made in 1751, Doherty went into the Cherokee country in 1719 . . . ." Mary U. Rothrock, in East Tenn. Hist. Soc., *Publications*, No. 1 (1929), 6.
[23]If the Spaniards of Florida afforded any competition the English records reveal nothing of it.

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success of the new colony was assured and rich profits were found to lie in the trade for skins and furs, the trading advance of the Carolinians was remarkably rapid. In 1673 their commissioners were negotiating with the Catawba; by 1690 the Cherokee trade had begun; in 1698 one trader even reached the Mississippi.[24] But Carolina found the most lucrative trade to lie with the Indians to the south and west, and although her traders occasionally visited the Cherokee, commerce with the red mountaineers remained until well after the turn of the century, comparatively speaking, insignificant.[25] Nevertheless, Virginians were then unable to trade with either the Catawba, the Cherokee, or the tribes of the Georgia piedmont without trespassing upon territory ascribed to Carolina by the royal charters of 1663 and 1665. At such trespass the Carolinians took offense; friction was generated; a clash was almost inevitable.

It came about in this wise. In the year 1707 two Virginia traders, Robert Hix and David Crawley, were operating among the Indians of western Carolina. Returning one day to the native village which they were using as a sort of headquarters, they found that a large number of deer-skins and trading goods belonging to them had been carried away by order of the Carolina government. Hastening to Charles Town, trader Hix was able, through smooth words and the judicious bestowal of gifts, to effect a restoration of some of the deer-skins, but the trading goods were withheld.[26] The Carolina legislature even refused to entertain Hix's petition for redress.[27] If there had been previous instances of this kind, Virginia had kept quiet; this time, at least, she did not. When the matter was brought before the Virginia council in the spring of 1708, feeling ran high. Letters of sharp protest were drawn up and sent, not only to Carolina,[28] but to England as well.[29] And then before the year

[24] Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 13, 40, 46.
[25] *Ibid.*, 41.
[26] Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office Papers, class 5, vol. 1316, no. 41. This, and subsequent references to the Colonial Office Papers, are to the transcripts in the Library of Congress.
[27] Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 155.
[28] H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, 1925 to date), III (1705-1721), 177-178.
[29] W. M. Sainsbury and J. W. Fortescue, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (London, 1860 to date), vol. for 1706-1708, pp. 765-766.

was out Carolina plunged ahead and enacted a law whereby all Virginia goods brought into the colony, and all skins taken out of the colony, should bear an imposition, which, in effect, would be prohibitive.[30] When the home government, with an eye toward the wider distribution of British manufactures, declared that Virginia's trade with the tribes to the southwest should not be molested[31] Carolina, despite the plain wording of the order in council, decreed that all outsiders desiring to traffic with the Indians within her jurisdiction must first of all appear in Charles Town and apply for licenses.[32] English officialdom frowned at this demonstration of disobedience; the colonial statute was, of course, disallowed.[33] But a wide ocean lay between the deeds of Westminster and the needs of the wilderness; these early Carolinians understood nullification in practice, if not in theory.[34] And so, if the Virginia trade was to rid itself of the Carolina incubus, strong, united action of some sort seemed necessary.

Another factor tending toward the same conclusion was the attitude of certain of the native tribes themselves. Among her own tributaries Virginia could, and did, enforce obedience,[35] but such was impossible among the Indians without the colony's jurisdiction. The worst offenders were Tuscarora, members of the most powerful nation dwelling within the limits of North Carolina. Aside from their terrifying incursions into the territories of the tributaries, and their occasional assaults upon white settlers who braved the dangers of the advanced frontier, they were a constant threat to the security of Virginia's trade with nations farther to the southwest.[36] When, in 1711, the Tuscarora rose in wild revolt against their white neighbors the governor of Virginia suspended the Indian trade indefinitely.[37] Soon followed a defeat—not decisive—of the Tuscarora, with a consequent order for resumption of the Old Dominion's trade

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30 C. O. 5: 1316, no. 16.

31 William Grant, James Monro, and A. W. Fitzroy, eds., *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series*, 1613-1783 (London, 1908-1912), vol. for 1680-1720, pp. 610-613. The date was September, 1709.

32 *Cal. State Papers, A. and W. I.*, 1711-1712, p. 87. This was in 1711.

33 *Acts Privy Council*, 1680-1720, pp. 613-614.

34 Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 156. This work treats briefly of Virginia-Carolina trade rivalry.

35 *Va. Council, Exec. Journals, passim.*

36 *Ibid., passim.*

37 *Ibid.*, III, 284.

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with remote tribes, probably including the Cherokee.[38] But it is doubtful that the Cherokee, or for that matter, any of the distant nations, profited by this order for within a few months a caravan wending its way into the southwest was set upon by the desperate Tuscarora.[39] Thus the traffic with the Cherokee, with the Catawba, and with the other nations was suffering not only from the open rivalry of South Carolina, but from the flank attacks of hostile Tuscarora as well.

And, as if this were not enough, there was the growing menace of France, after 1699 seated in the Mississippi valley and, it was believed, plotting to seduce the mountain tribes from the English interest. With the hindsight of over two hundred years it is patent enough that if the French design succeeded, the Appalachians would mark the western limits of English expansion. Few contemporaries, however, could foresee any such result, but among those few was Sir Francis Nicholson, governor of His Majesty's dominion of Virginia. And not only did Sir Francis realize the gravity of the situation, he was able, also, to offer sound suggestions as to how the French threat might be met. In these suggestions he struck the keynote of Indian diplomacy: trade. As early as 1691 he had proposed the creation of a trading company, having then in mind no more than the increase of revenues and the checking of Indian incursions,[40] but by 1695, when he had become aware of the French danger, the idea of a trading company had taken on a new meaning. A company could set up trading posts among the mountain tribes, drawing the latter into an English alliance, and thus thwart the French in a most important sphere of diplomacy. Governor Nicholson's convictions were greatly strengthened, first by a conversation with some western Indians who had with them a Frenchman claiming to have been with LaSalle on his fatal expedition,[41] then by messages from the enterprising governor of New York, Lord Bellomont, urging that the French be supplanted in the trans-montane trade by a rapid expansion

38 C. O. 5: 1316, no. 129. The proclamation re-opening the trade was dated June 10, 1712.

39 The governor of Virginia to the governor of North Carolina, Mar. 8, 1713, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, William P. Palmer, ed. (Richmond, 1875), I, 163.

40 Nicholson to the Lords of Trade, Jan. 26, 1691, C. O. 5: 1306, no. 6. The home government refused to sanction the project (C. O. 5: 1358, p. 133).

41 Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 60. The meeting of Nicholson and the Shawnee took place not later than 1698.

of Virginia's traffic,[42] and, finally, by Cadwallader Jones' *Louuissiania and Virginia improved,* an essay dedicated to Nicholson and explaining in detail the organization of a company such as might succeed in carrying out the western design.[43]

In 1699, the Virginia assembly, pressed by the governor, acquiesced in the project of a voluntary trading concern, but the colonists refused to purchase stock.[44] Thereupon, the persistent Nicholson requested the home government to lay the situation before the merchants of London trading to Virginia, that they might be induced to subscribe.[45] There is nothing to indicate that the officials in the mother country acted upon the governor's request; rather, he was abruptly informed that the chief end to be pursued in Virginia was the planting of tobacco.[46] Then Sir Francis set about to arrange a conference at which the governors of the colonies from Virginia to New York might discuss the scheme for a western trade, but for various reasons the conference was never held.[47] In the spring of 1702 the English board of trade, that administrative body which kept in closest touch with colonial affairs, again went over the Nicholson proposals, but seems to have taken no definite action.[48] At this point the records fall silent; for several years they reveal nothing connected with the trading company desired by Sir Francis Nicholson. But the work of this governor, bent upon securing imperial interests through the instrumentality of the Indian trade, was by no means fruitless, and even the Cherokee trade, however remote the connection may seem, was to benefit by his efforts.

To define the status of this trade during the early years of the eighteenth century is difficult. Writing in 1701, Governor Nicholson had stated that upon inquiry he had found some fifty or sixty persons "in this Country [Virginia]" engaged in the Indian trade.[49] There is nothing to indicate how many, if in-

42C. O. 5: 1309, no. 74; C. O. 5: 1312, pt. I, no. 11.

43C. O. 5: 1310, pp. 261 *et seq.* The essay was probably worked out during the winter of 1698-99.

44*Va. Mag.*, xxx (1922), 335.

45C. O. 5: 1310, no. 2, p. 26. Nicholson's letter was dated July 1, 1699.

46Board of Trade to Nicholson, January 4 and April 12, 1700, C. O. 5: 1359, pp. 377, 397, 398.

47*Va. Council, Exec. Journals*, II, 102. Maryland's governor was stricken with fever (*Cal. State Papers, A. and W. I.*, 1701, pp. 40-41), while Lord Bellomont was overtaken by death in March, 1701.

48*Cal. State Papers, A. and W. I.*, 1702, p. 187.

49C. O. 5: 1312, pt. I, no. 20.

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deed any, of these traders were going so far afield as to visit the land of the Cherokee. But that the whole structure of Virginia's Indian trade was in a precarious condition was perceived by Alexander Spotswood, soon after his arrival as governor in the year 1710. This aggressive soldier-executive was not inclined to sit motionless and watch the trade dwindle away, so the trading company project, made so familiar by Nicholson, was now revived. Although the plan was rejected by the Virginia assembly in 1712,[50] two years later it was enacted into law. Any one might subscribe for stock in the Virginia Indian Company, to which was given for a period of twenty years complete control over the colony's traffic with Indians, at home or abroad.[51] One of the primary purposes of the company was to resuscitate the Cherokee trade, which was at a very low ebb, owing to Carolina competition and the interruption incident to the Tuscarora War. And success in the enterprise seemed more than likely, as £10,000 of stock was subscribed, the organization perfected, and a great store of trading goods ordered from England.[52] But long before any goods arrived from England, the high hopes centering around the southwest trade were dashed; in the spring of 1715 the Yamassee Indians attacked the whites of South Carolina and long months of savage warfare lay ahead. Governor Spotswood immediately prohibited commercial intercourse with the southwest tribes, a prohibition which was respected by the company, but violated by unlicensed private traders seeking swollen profits.[53]

With the close of conflict in Carolina, the right of Virginians to trade with the Catawba, Cherokee, or other southwest nations was restored.[54] The company had not lost sight of its original design; in the spring of 1717 it was preparing to send into the Indian country a cargo "consisting of no less than 200 horseloads of goods under a guard of 40 men."[55] These goods, in part at least, were doubtless designed for the Cherokee, but no further mention of the 1717 expedition occurs. The next year, how-

[50] *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia,* 1712-1726, (Richmond, 1912), p. xx.
[51] *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood,* edited by R. A. Brock (*Collections* of the Virginia Historical Society, New Series, Richmond, 1882-1885), II, 94-95.
[52] *Ibid.,* II, 141; *Journals of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations,* 1715-1718 (London, 1924), 165.
[53] *Spotswood Letters,* II, 258-259.
[54] *Va. Council, Exec. Journals,* III, 440.
[55] C. O. 5: 1318, p. 88.

ever, a company caravan made its way to the distant Cherokee, and remained among the mountain Indians the entire summer and probably autumn, too, for it returned to the Virginia warehouses only toward the end of the year. The traders brought back not only seventy horses loaded with peltry, but also four Cherokee chieftains, who insisted that the trade with Virginia should be made permanent.[56]

The re-opening of the Cherokee trade was one of the outstanding achievements of the Virginia Indian Company, which would have relished nothing, perhaps, quite so much as the exploitation of this very traffic. But such was now no longer possible. The monopolistic character of the company had aroused powerful opposition both within the colony and in England; the fight against it had been carried before the imperial officials, and in the summer of 1717 it was declared no longer to be in official existence.[57] It lived on, however, for many months, pending the settlement of its affairs, and it was during these twilight days that the great caravan had reached, and returned from, Cherokee-land. The company could not, of course, follow up its last minute success, but others could—and did. Although Governor Spotswood might observe, truthfully enough, that of all the opposition merchants only one had been interested enough in the trade to send a few goods to the "foreign" Indians,[58] this was not to say that no one was engaging in the trade. In fact, the records of peltry exported from Virginia during this period prove that the impetus given the Indian trade by Spotswood's trading concern was not ephemeral, but permanent, for Virginia shipped to England in the years following 1718 over twice as much peltry as she had exported during the same length of time in the decade from 1705 to 1715.[59] When the trade with the tributaries furnished comparatively few pelts, and before the Ohio trade had been opened, a very large proportion of all the skins exported must have been derived from

[56]The above information is contained in a letter written by Governor Spotswood to the Lords of Trade, Dec. 22, 1718. It is found in C. O. 5: 1318, p. 590, but not in Spotswood's published correspondence.

[57]*Acts Privy Council, Colonial,* 1680-1720, p. 721.

[58]This observation was contained in a communication of Sept. 27, 1718, *Spotswood Letters,* II, 301.

[59]The records are in C. O. 5: 1317, pp. 364-365, and Custom House Papers, class 3, vols. xx to xxvi.

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traffic with the tribes to the southwest, chiefly the Catawba, and, to a less extent, the Cherokee.

With the security promised by a powerful organization such as the Virginia Indian Company, trade with red nations lying far distant might be carried on with profit, but when the company was struck down and the trade thrown open to all, obstacles of long-standing loomed large indeed. The old Carolina-Virginia rivalry had become intensified during the Yamassee War. The Carolinians accused the Old Dominion of covertly encouraging the revolting red skins through a base desire to seize Carolina's western trade.[60] After the war traders from both colonies resorted to the most devious devices in order to ruin the trade of their rivals,[61] and in November, 1721, South Carolina went back to precedent and required a license to be obtained in Charles Town by all traders operating in, or trespassing upon, Carolina territory. A deal of discussion followed, apparently without decisive results, but the important fact remained that Virginia's trade with the western tribe would always evoke Carolina competition.[62] Some of the Virginia traders to the Cherokee may still have been using the roundabout route through the present northwestern Georgia; at any rate there was some complaint when this colony, a few years after its founding, ordered the Virginians to obtain Georgia licenses.[63]

The traders from the James River country might have injected more enthusiasm into their ventures had they enjoyed the support of their provincial government, but this they rarely did for many years after 1722, when there had come to an end the administration of Governor Alexander Spotswood, the greatest promoter of Indian trade that the colony was ever to know. For that matter, even Spotswood himself may have become discouraged as a result of having had so many of his plans frustrated. This would seem to be indicated by the reception accorded a delegation of Cherokee chieftains in October, 1721, the Indians hoping that trade might be built up through an appeal to the colonial authorities. It was only after inquiry

60Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 176-177.
61Board of Trade Journals, C. O. 391: 29, p. 323. Transcripts of these journals are in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
62Va. Council, *Executive Journals*, IV, 17-19; Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 204.
63*Va. Gazette*, Mar. 25-Apr. 1, 1737.

that the council learned the recently dissolved company had withdrawn its factors and goods from among the Cherokee, although this very withdrawal seemed to be the principal source of uneasiness on the part of the Indians. The answer of the council to the plea for trade was that the Cherokee would be welcomed any time they came to Virginia to exchange their deer skins for arms and ammunition, or that if any individual traders carried goods to the red men the government would support such trade.[64] Just how, the council did not state, nor is it likely that the Indians felt encouraged over the outcome of the conference.

The trade that went on between Virginia and the Cherokee during the seventeen-twenties and thirties was not sufficiently great to attract the council's attention, but it probably proved profitable to those few persons engaging therein. Caravans of from fifty to a hundred horses still made their way to Catawba Town,[65] but those going on to the Cherokee were doubtless much smaller. In the summer of 1725 a South Carolina agent found trading among the Cherokee two Virginians, William Bellew and John Ellis, and these were in the employ of one Major Bowling.[66] There are few references to the Virginia trade at this time, and it must have been quite small. The Cherokee made no complaint of its paucity, apparently because of steady supplies from Carolina. But about 1730 this trade was cut off, the Cherokee having misused certain Carolina traders. Thereupon the red men appealed to Virginia, and, if the one account of the transaction is to be believed, goods were immediately despatched, only to be intercepted by the Carolina authorities.[67]

Toward the end of 1734 there arrived in Williamsburg, the colonial capital, three head men of the Cherokee nation. Appearing before the council, they expressed their people's desire of a closer trade with the Old Dominion. Having in mind, perhaps, their former failures to win from the Virginia officials more than lip service, they requested permission for their tribesmen to settle on a branch of the Roanoke River, "that from

64Va. Council, *Exec. Journals*, III, 554-555, IV, 1-2.
65Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, 235.
66Colonel Chicken's Journal to the Cherokees, 1725, in N. D. Mereness, ed., *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916), 103.
67*South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, X (1909), 58.

thence they may enjoy the conveniency of a free trade with [the] colony." At this the council demurred, complaining that such would embroil the Cherokee with the northern Indians, who hunted in the Roanoke valley, but on the other hand the mountain tribes "may trade here with all freedom so long as they continue in peace and friendship with his Majesties Subjects. . . ."[68] Thus the native embassies might come and go, the provincial administrations change in personnel, but the Cherokee trade seemed ever doomed to neglect.

From its inception the traffic with tribes far to the southwest had been attended with difficulties. At one time it might be an Indian war; at another it might be annoying restrictions imposed by Carolina or Georgia; there was always, however, the difficulty of distance. It depended, of course, upon the route followed as to the approximate distance between Williamsburg and the home of the Cherokee. Likely enough, some few of the traders still made use of the long route through northwestern Georgia and around the southern end of the great mountain chain, trading, to be sure, with tribes along the way, but with the Cherokee as their ultimate destination. More frequented, however, was that trail which led from Catawba Town northwest across a part of South Carolina to strike the foothills and continue on into the heart of the mountains.[69] Then there were other paths, less well known, but all were alike in that they called for long and tedious travel. Contemporary writers estimated that Virginians trading with the Cherokee were forced to journey, as a rule, from 500 to 800 miles.[70] This resulted in some traders remaining among the Indians for years at a time,[71] in Virginia's trading profits dwindling to almost microscopic proportions,[72] and in Carolina's receiving additional advantage in her rivalry with the James river colony.

William Byrd II, writing in the late 1730's, expressed it as his opinion that a nearer route to the Cherokee could be found, which would cut short the distance to that nation by more than fifty per cent. If the Virginia assembly should make possible such a discovery, "Our Traders," Byrd wrote, ". . . would be

[68] C. O. 5: 1420, p. 181; *Va. Council, Exec. Journals*, IV, 343-344.
[69] Justin Winsor, *The Mississippi Basin* (1895), 168.
[70] Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, 184; Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia* . . . (London, 1724), 19. Sabin's reprint, New York, 1865, was used.
[71] *Ibid.*, 19. Natural inclinations had much to do with this, also.
[72] Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd*, 185.

able to undersell those sent from the other Colonies so much, that the Indians must have reason to deal with them preferable to all others.''[73] Byrd had little reason to expect aid from the assembly; since the days of Governor Spotswood and the Virginia Indian Company the provincial government had affected no real interest in the trade to the Cherokee, or, for that matter, in the trade to any nation. It was fortunate that the discovery of a new route was not dependent upon assembly action, else it would have doubtless been much delayed. If it may be assumed that such a path was not in use at the time Byrd wrote—and had it been in use it seems that he would have known of it—then its discovery must be dated about 1740. In that year the new trail was apparently trod for the first time by white men. These were a band of traders, their names unknown, who employed as packman a certain Mr. Vaughan. The party probably went up the Roanoke River until the Blue Ridge were left behind, and in the beautiful valley stretching out before them, they found running to the southwest a well worn Indian trail, the Virginia ''warrior's path.'' This carried the traders across the New River and the North Fork of Holston, soon after which the trail divided, the ''great path'' continuing on, now southwestwardly across the Nolichucky and French Broad rivers, and so into the heart of the Overhill Cherokee country.[74] The approach to the Cherokee from the north was much less difficult than the approach from the east, and the new route was shorter than the old. So patent were these advantages that most of the Virginia traders soon ceased to travel the ''Carolina road,'' instead guiding their caravans through the Blue Ridge and down the great western valley until the haunts of the mountain Indians were reached.

Nor was it long until others followed in the wake of the trader. Between 1747 and 1750 Dr. Thomas Walker, of Albemarle County, was busily engaged in exploring some of the new lands west of the mountains. The Inglis and Draper families, and a few associates, came with the doctor on one of his expeditions and were so struck with the country's appearance that they decided to locate on the New River.[75] About 1748 Stephen

[73] *Ibid.*, 185.

[74] J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, 64, 88; *Va. Mag.*, XXX (1922), 185.

[75] William M. Darlington, ed., *Christopher Gist's Journals* (Pittsburgh, 1893), 23; John P. Hale, *Trans-Allegheny Pioneers* (Cincinnati, 1886), 16.

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Holston settled at the head spring of the river named after him,[76] and some two years later there went up, just nine miles to the west, the cabin of the Cherokee trader, Samuel Stalnaker.[77] "Stalnaker's place," as it came to be called, was the farthest west of any white settlement,[78] and its exposed position threatened the trader's security.[79] Looked at in one way, these settlements in Southwest Virginia would benefit the trade by securing the trader's line of communication, but on the other hand, their very presence might precipitate an Indian attack in which the trade would suffer along with all else.

The Cherokee were undoubtedly disappointed when the new trading route from Virginia failed to bring into their towns any great increase of supplies. They were beginning by this time to feel the influence of France, whose settlements along the St. Lawrence and lower Mississippi rivers were now well established and whose traders were operating in parts of that vast territory lying between these two extremes, yet the Cherokee were not at all sure that French promises of a trade could be relied upon.[80] Therefore, chief reliance was placed upon the nearest colony, Carolina. At intervals, however, causes for dispute between traders and Indians arose, sometimes resulting in mistreatment of the traders. Such was the case about 1751, when a series of outrages caused South Carolina to order a cessation of all trade with the Cherokee.[81] The latter, feeling the pinch, despatched to Williamsburg a delegation which represented to the Virginia council that South Carolina had failed to carry out certain trade agreements and that she had supplied Creek warriors, enemies of the mountain Indians, with weapons of war, and intimating, moreover, that if Virginia did not care

[76] Lewis Preston Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia*, 1746-1786 . . . (Richmond, 1903), 46.

[77] *The Memoirs of Lieut. Henry Timberlake*, 1756-1765 (London, 1765. Reprinted at Johnson City, Tenn., 1927, and edited by Samuel Cole Williams), p. 38, n. 16. Stalnaker's cabin was probably near the present Marion, Va. Oliver Taylor, *Historic Sullivan* (Bristol, 1909), 20.

[78] It was so stated on Hutchin's map of 1755.

[79] The Virginia council, August 9, 1751, awarded Stalnaker £20 on account of mistreatment by the Indians (C. O. 5: 1423, p. 490).

[80] The French went so far as to promise the Cherokee that in exchange for support against the English they should be supplied with goods gratis. *North Carolina Historical Review*, II (1925), 312.

[81] John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina* . . . . (Charleston, 1859), I, 417-418.

to send supplies the French were easily approachable.[82] The intimation that the Cherokee might appeal to the French for assistance was forcible enough to cause the council to assure the delegation that traders to their nation should receive full support from the provincial government.[83] South Carolina seemed to hold the French in no greater fear than she did the Virginians, for in September, 1751, her officers were ordered to intercept any caravan Virginia might send the Cherokee by way of Catawba Town.[84] If a special caravan was sent out it probably went over the new route to the west, for nothing appears in the records concerning it. There must have been, however, an increase in the Virginia-Cherokee traffic, because Governor Glen of South Carolina proceeded to write the Virginia executive a letter couched in no uncertain terms. The danger, he said, in Virginia's course was apparent: new sources of supply would demolish the Cherokee's ancient dependence upon Carolina and once this tie were broken it would be but a short step to the entertainment of French proposals by disaffected elements within the nation. There should be no delay, then, in recalling Virginia traders from among the mountain Indians.[85]

The Scotchman, Robert Dinwiddie, was the recipient of Glen's letter. Although he had served formerly as customs collector and inspector general in America, probably residing even in the Old Dominion, it is hardly possible that the new executive knew much, if anything, concerning the highly important matter of Indian relations. He was loyal, though, completely so, and if the Carolina governor felt that imperial security was being menaced by Virginia's trade with certain red men, then there was but one patriotic thing to do, and that was to discountenance officially any such traffic. The opportunity to act was not long delayed. In November, 1752, there came to the Virginia capital the Cherokee emperor, Attakullakulla, or The Little Carpenter, along with lesser dignitaries. The presence of the emperor himself, after a long and arduous journey, was sufficient indica-

[82] C. O. 5: 1327, p. 358; C. O. 5: 1423, pp. 507-510. The Cherokee appeared before the Virginia Council in August, 1751.

[83] *Va. Gazette*, August 16, 1751.

[84] South Carolina, Indian Affairs, II, 144-145. Transcripts of some of the volumes in this series are in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

[85] The letter is printed in Logan, *Upper S. C.*, 420-422.

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tion of the pressing need of the Cherokee for supplies, and Attakullakulla admitted that the Carolina trade had been cut off, but pleaded for a closer connection with Virginia. To this plea Dinwiddie and the council listened with little sympathy. The governor stated that it did not fall within his power to force the Virginia traders to visit any one Indian nation in preference to another, and if the present situation was so serious then the Cherokee should seek to re-establish the trade with Carolina, whose location was more favorable to the exchange of commodities than Virginia's.[86] If Dinwiddie in the present instance was motivated by principles of patriotism—and it seems that he was—that side of his character is to be commended, but such should not blind the student to the fact that peace with France had been concluded but four years before, that the resumption of hostilities in the near future seemed inevitable, and that the attitude of the Indian nations in any war involving the colonies would be a factor of the first importance. Yet it took the Virginia executive a long, long while to discover any connection between the colony's traffic with the Cherokee and imperial security, and even after the discovery had been made Dinwiddie, by failing to fulfill solemn promises to the Indians, forfeited that esteem in which he might otherwise have been held.[87]

[86]See Dinwiddie's letter of December 10, 1752, to the home government, C. O. 5: 1327, p. 534. This letter is not contained in the published correspondence of the governor.

[87]A continuation of this study will appear in the next number of the East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications. [Ed.]