



The Cherokee and the French and Indian War

“The friendship and assistance of the Cherokees are well worth cultivating”

George Washington to Col. Stanwix
June 1757

The Cherokee Nation has been associated with the British since 1674 when they exchanged deerskins and other furs for European trade goods. In 1712 they allied with the British and sent 200 warriors against the Tuscarora Indians. During the French and Indian War, they were heavily recruited by the British to fight against the French. At one time, the Cherokee nation controlled 140,000 square miles in the southern Appalachians. The English colonists needed Cherokee presence and their warriors experience to help form a barrier between them and any possible French incursions.



Battle at Fort Necessity

The first battle of the French and Indian War took place at Fort Necessity on July 3rd, 1754. It would also be George Washington's first battle and the site of his only surrender. Washington tried to obtain Indian allies but was unsuccessful.

Although the Cherokee were recruited to fight, they were not involved in this battle. Hundreds of Cherokee participated in other engagements. The war that started at Fort Necessity eventually evolved into a world war with fighting in North America, Caribbean, Europe, Africa and the Philippines.

Cherokee as Allies and Enemies

Valuable Allies

As allies to the British, the Cherokee usually concentrated more of their efforts in the southern Appalachian Mountains. They also attended British council meetings held in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Similar to today's marathon runners, both the Cherokee women and warriors could often cover large amounts of territory.

There are accounts that estimate the women could run upwards to 50 miles in one day to be present at treaties. The warriors were able to run up to 100 miles in one day. In 1756, William Gerald DeBrahm wrote about one Cherokee, *“An Indian once kept up, running a-foot, for three hours, with the Author, who kept his horse in a constant Gallop... and never left him.”* In 1761, British officer, Lt. Timberlake wrote about a trip of 550 miles where they averaged 50 miles per day on foot. In 1762, an Irish trader named James Adair remarked when they hunted deer they walked 25-30 miles.

Cherokee in Pennsylvania

The ability of the Cherokee warriors to cover such long distances made them perfect allies for the British. The Cherokee scouted and skirmished around French forts including Fort LeBoeuf (present-day Waterford, PA), and Fort Duquesne (present-day Pittsburgh). In June, 1758, at Fort Littleton (near present-day Breezewood, PA), Hugh Mercer wrote to Henry Bouquet, *“A Party of Six Cherokee Indians Arriv'd Yesterday from the Westward, they have been gone Six Weeks from thence & have lost One of their Number in an Engagement near Fort Priscisle...”* (Presque Isle, present-day Erie, Pa).

When the Cherokee returned to receive the customary compensation of trade goods, they were asked to wait.

Troubled Relations

The British did not have the goods on hand and encouraged them to wait for payment. The British interpreter at the Fort, an Indian named “Antoine” or “Anthony,” told the Cherokee they would not receive the expected diplomatic gifts for their efforts and they should go home and tell the rest of warriors not to help the British. The British began to be suspicious of Antoine. Eventually some of the Cherokee believed Antoine and went home angry at the loss of compensation for all of their trouble.

On their way home, Virginia farmers suspected them of stealing horses and cattle, and in retaliation, they killed some of the Cherokees. Avenging these deaths, the Cherokee began to raid Carolina settlements.

War and Peace

Afterwards, the diplomatic relationship between the Cherokee and British spiraled downward and resulted in the British/Cherokee war. Losses occurred on both sides and it was not until 1761 that the Cherokee and British signed a peace treaty at present-day Kingsport, TN.

A junior officer named Henry Timberlake agreed to go with the Cherokee as a symbol of good faith. Although, he did not speak their language he stayed with them recording their customs and eventually travelled with them to England to meet King George III.

Emissaries of Peace in England

Three Cherokee leaders, Ostenaco, Cunne Shote and Woyi, travelled with Lt. Timberlake and Sgt. Thomas Sumter to meet with the King of England. Unfortunately, their interpreter died enroute and it became Timberlake's responsibility to try to translate the Cherokee language. They landed in June of 1762 but were unable to meet with King George III until July. While waiting to meet with the King, the emissaries were given new clothes and their portraits were painted.

Huge crowds surrounded the group as they

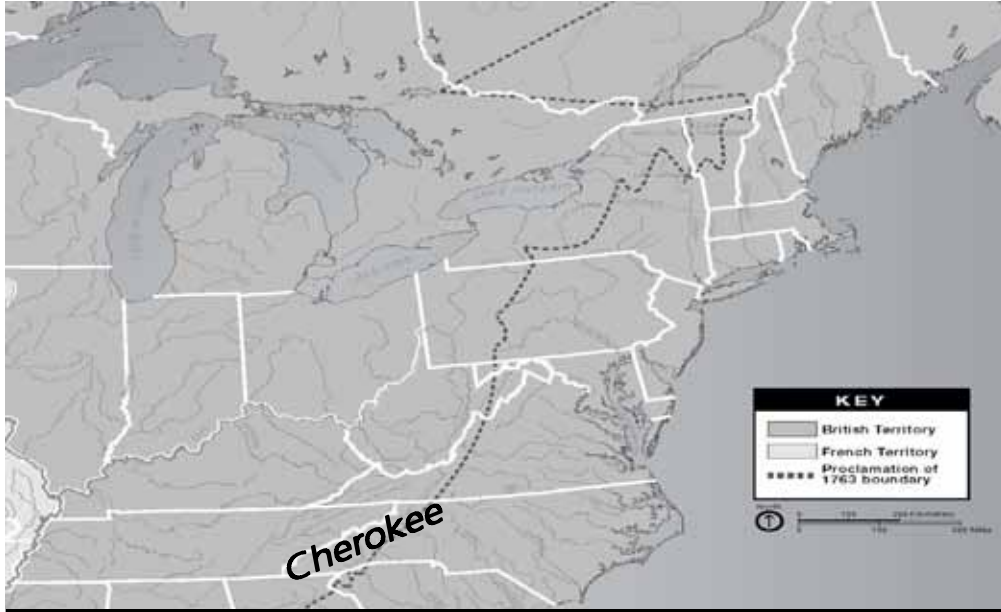


were taken to see many of the sites including: St. James, Hyde Park and Chelsea. Newspapers advertised their itinerary and 10,000 people turned out to see them at Vauxhall. On July 7th, in spite of language barriers, Ostenaco finally spoke with the King. Even though conversation was limited, the King sent back a written response to the Cherokee for later translation.

Aftermath

By 1763, the French and Indian War was over and King George III issued a Proclamation that

prohibited settlers from settling past the Blue Ridge Mountains. The settlers ignored the proclamation line and poured into this restricted area to make land claims despite American Indian protests.



During the American Revolution, the Cherokees remained faithful to the treaty and continued to ally with the British. In retaliation, dozens of Cherokee towns were burned by American soldiers and Cherokees were taken and sold as slaves.

Emissaries of Peace, the 250th Anniversary Exhibit

This special exhibit at Fort Necessity reflects upon the Cherokee role in securing the peace between the British and the Cherokee. Today, as you walk around this exhibit think also about the resilience of the Cherokee people. Despite wars, European diseases, land grabs, acculturation, and forced west during the Trail of Tears, the Cherokee people still stand strong. Today, they are one of the largest Indian nations in the United States with an overall population estimate of 280,000. Presently, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee has 13,000 enrolled members.

For More information about the Eastern Band of the Cherokee: Visit the *Museum of the Cherokee Indian* website at: www.cherokeemuseum.org

Read:

Emissaries of Peace, the 1762 Cherokee & British Delegations Exhibit Catalog, an Exhibit of the Cherokee Indian by Duane King, in collaboration with Ken Blankenship & Barbara Duncan: Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 2006

Journal of Cherokee Studies, Volume II, No. 3 edited by Duane H. King & E. Raymond Evans. Museum of the Cherokee Indian: Hudson Printing & Lithographing Co., Inc. Tennessee, 1977

Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake- 1756-1765: edited by D.H. King. Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, Cherokee, NC, 2007

The Papers of Henry Bouquet, Volume II, The Forbes Expedition, edited by Stevens, Kent and Leonard. The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Harrisburg, 1972

A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains, and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America -by Hon. Albert Gallatin. Cambridge, University Press, 1836