

CATAWBAS IN THE REVOLUTION, 1775

1. Excerpt from letter, Henry Laurens, President of South Carolina Council of Safety, to his son John Laurens, dated Charleston, 18 June 1775:

“Voted to pay 50. Catawba Indians to be taken into the Service of the Colony under the direction of proper White Men.”

~David R. Chestnutt, et. al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Ten: December 12, 1774—January 4, 1776* (Columbia: USC Press, 1985), p. 183. (See also *Journals of the SC Provincial Congress*, p. 56.)

2. Excerpt from letter, Col. William Thomson, commander of the Third South Carolina Regiment, to South Carolina Council of Safety, dated “Granby near Friday’s Ferry,” 22 July 1775 (copied into Col. Thomson’s order book):

“Mr. Chestnut¹ informs me that King Prow,² with about 50 of the Catawba’s are now at Camden on a friendly visit. Mr: Kirshaw³ & I myself are both at a loss what to do with regard to taking some of them into pay for want of Your Instructions.”

~Alexander S. Salley, Jr., *The History of Orangeburg County, South Carolina* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1978; originally published Orangeburg, 1898).

3. Excerpt from letter, Henry Laurens to Joseph Kershaw, Charleston, 25 July 1775:

“The Council of Safety have ordered me to acknowledge the Receipt of your Favour of the 8th Instant and to return their Thanks for your Assiduity in treating with the Old Men and Head Warriors of the Catawba Indians.

“Your Assurances that those People are hearty in our Interest, and your Hopes that forty or fifty of them will chearfully enter into the Service of the Colony affords the Council additional Satisfaction, and the Design of uniting them to the Regiment of Rangers⁴ is a Measure which they altogether approve of, but to be under the particular Leading and Direction of a white Man agreeable to a Resolution of the Congress in their late Session.

“The Council request you to give them immediate Notice when any Body of the Catawba’s are ready to march in order to join the Rangers, and that you will recommend a white Man well qualified to lead them in Scouts and Action. Transmit your Notice by

¹ Camden merchant John Chesnut (Chestnut) was paymaster of the Third South Carolina Regiment.

² King Prow was the chief of the Catawba Indians at this time.

³ Camden merchant Joseph Kershaw was a business partner with John Chesnut, served in the SC Provincial Congress and the Camden District militia, and was the Council of Safety’s commissioner to the Catawba Indians.

⁴ Third South Carolina Regiment, aka Thomson’s Rangers.

the Hands of such a one; the Council will give him a Commission, and dispatch him with a Letter to Col. Thomson, in whose camp he will meet the Indians.”

~David R. Chestnutt, et. al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume Ten: December 12, 1774—January 4, 1776* (Columbia: USC Press, 1985), pp. 246-247.

4. Excerpt from letter, Captain Samuel Boykin, commander of the Catawba Indian company (1775-1776), to Council of Safety, dated Granby, 16 October 1775:

“I am Sorry it was nott in my Power to comply with your directions, it was Occasioned by the Indians being very Sick one of them Died on his way home and two More at their Town, and Several More very Sick, A few days after I returned home I was taken Extreemly Ill with the feaver, or Should have wrote you before this, I was at the Catawba Town A few days Ago and the Indians has gott much better, and are willing to come down at any time you may think Proper, as the Sickley season of the year is now Over. I should be glad you would lett me know when they may be Wanted Again_by the desire of Mr. Thomas Fargason I have paid twenty five Indians Under my Command two hundred & fifty pounds which is ten pounds Each man which sum Should be glad you would pay Mr. Joseph Kershaw.”

~David R. Chesnutt, et. al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens. Volume Ten: December 12, 1774—January 4, 1776* (Columbia: USC Press, 1985), p. 471.