

Primary Source: The Transylvania Purchase and the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals, March 17, 1775 ^[1]

The Treaty of Sycamore Shoals was a private land transaction between the Transylvania Company and the Cherokee people. It was one of the largest private land transactions in United States history. The negotiations of the treaty began in fall 1774 and concluded in March 1775. About 1,200 Cherokee people attended the negotiations. They were headed by diplomatic representatives such as Attakullakulla, Dragging Canoe, Oconostota, and Old Tassel. The interests of the Transylvania Company were represented by prominent white surveyors and speculators like Richard Henderson and Daniel Boone. The terms of the treaty "transferred" about twenty million acres of land in present-day Virginia, Tennessee (then North Carolina) and Kentucky from the Cherokee nation to Richard Henderson and the Transylvania Company. In exchange, all Cherokee people were to divide among themselves "five wagons" of trade goods valued at about £10,000. Many Cherokee leaders argued the terms and legality of treaty. Some modern sources indicate that the terms of Sycamore Shoals were never mutually agreed upon and that Henderson had illegally taken the Cherokee hunting lands.

Legal or not, the treaty's terms were favorable to white settlers. It was also very unpopular with Cherokee people that lived on or used the land. White settlers and the Transylvania Company enforced the disputed treaty with force. Each Cherokee man received much less than he could make in a year hunting the same territory from the payout of the treaty. Resistance to the treaty was strong and violence resulted. The legality of the treaty was disputed by colonial governors but not amended until 1778. The Treaty of Sycamore Shoals marked a new chapter in white colonization of lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. Many of the new settlers and land speculators came from North Carolina. Many Cherokee people, including Dragging Canoe, left the tribe in response to the treaty. They formed a new nation to the south, the Chickamauga Nation. The treaty also created violent land disputes between Cherokee people and white settlers that would last for many years after its signing and amendment.

This indenture made this 17th day of March in the year of our Lord Christ 1775, between Oconistoto, chief warrior and first representative of the Cherokee Nation or tribe of Indians, and Attacuttuillah and Sewanooko, otherwise Coronok, chiefs appointed by the warriors and other head men to convey for the whole nation ---

Beginning the aborigines and sole owners by occupancy from the beginning of time of the lands on the waters of the Ohio River from the mouth of the Tennessee River up the said Ohio to the mouth or emptying of the Great Canaway or New River, and so cross by a southward line to the Virginia line by a direction that shall stretch or hit the Holston River six English miles above or eastward of the Long Islands therein, and other lands and territories thereunto adjoining [Great Grant*] (see footnote), on the one part, and Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, of the province of North Carolina, of the other part, witnesseth that the said Oconistoto for himself and the rest of the said nation of Indians, for and in consideration of the sum of ten thousand pounds lawfull money of Great Britton to them in hand paid by the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, the receipt whereof the said Oconistoto and his whole nation do for themselves and the whole tribe of people, have granted, bargained, and sold, aliened, enfeoffed, released, and confirmed, and by presents do grant, bargain, and sell, alien, enfeoff, release, and confirm to the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns forever, all the tract, territory, or parcel of land beginning on the Holston River where the courses of Powels Mountain strikes the same, thence up the said river as it meanders to where the Virginia line crosses the same, thence along the line run by Donelson & Co. to a point six English miles eastward of the Long Islands in said Holston River; thence a direct course toward the mouth of the Great Canaway until it reaches the top of Powels Mountain, thence westward along the said ridge to the beginning [Path Deed*] (see footnote), (End of Page 147)

and also the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, rent, services thereof and all the estate, right, title, interest, claim, and demand whatsoever of them, the said Oconistoto and aforesaid whole band or tribe of people of, in, and to the same premises and of, in, and to every part and parcel thereof, to have and to hold the said Messuage territory and all and singular the premises above mentioned with appurtenances above mentioned unto the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns in severality and tenants in common, and not as joint tenants, that is to say one eighth part to Richard Henderson, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to Thomas Hart, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to Nathaniel Hart, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to John Williams, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to William Johnston, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to John Lutterell, his heirs and assigns forever; one eighth part to James Hogg, his heirs and assigns forever; one sixteenth part to David Hart, his heirs and assigns forever; his heirs and assigns forever; and one sixteenth part to Leonard Hendly Bullock, his heirs and assigns forever; to the only proper use and behoof of them, the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns forever. Under the yearly rent of four pence as to be holden of the chief Lord or Lords of the fee of the premises by the rents and service thereof due and to right accustomed.

And the said Oconistoto and the said nation for themselves do covenant and grant to and with the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns that they, the said Oconistoto and the rest of the Nation and people now are lawfully and rightly seized and in their own right of a good, sure, perfect, absolute, and indefeasible estate of inheritance in fee simple of and in all and singular the said Messuage and premise above mentioned and of all and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances without any manner of condition, mortgage, limitation of use or uses, or other matter, course, or thing to alter, change, charge, or determine the same and also the said Oconistoto and the aforesaid nation now have good right, full power, and lawfull authority in their own right to grant, bargain, and sell and convey the Messuage territory and premises above mentioned with appurtenances unto the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns to the only proper use and behoof of the said Richard Henderson & Co. according to the true intent and meaning of these presents and also that they said Rich Henderson, (End of page 148)

Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns shall and may from time to time and at all times hereafter peaceably and quietly have hold, occupy, possess, and enjoy all singular the said premises above mentioned to be granted with the appurtenances without the least doubt, hinderance, molestation, interruption, and denial of them. The said Oconistoto and the rest or any of said nation, their heirs or assigns and of all and every other person or persons whatsoever claiming or to claim by, from, or under them or any of them and further that the said Oconistoto, Attacullacullah, Sewanooko, otherwise Coronok, for themselves and for and in behalf of their whole nation and their heirs and all and ever other person or persons and his and their heirs anything having or claiming in the said Messuage territory and premises above mentioned, or any part thereof by, from, or under them shall and will at all times hereafter at the request and costs of said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns, make, do, and execute, or cause or procure to be made, done and executed, all and every further and other lawfull and reasonable grants, acts, and assurances in the law whatsoever for the further, better, and more perfect granting, conveying, and assuring of the said premises hereby granted with the appurtenances unto the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns to the only proper use and behoof of the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns forever, according to the true intent and meaning of these presents and to offer none other use, interest, or purpose whatsoever; and lastly the said said Oconistoto, Attacullacullah, Sewanooko, otherwise Coronok, for themselves and the whole nation aforesaid have so ordained, constituted, and appoint and by these presents do make, ordain, constitute, and appoint Joseph Martin and John Fair [Sevier] their true and lawfull attorneys jointly and in either of them severally for them and in their anms [names] unto the said Messuage territory and premises with the appurtenances hereby grant and convey or mentioned to be granted and conveyed or into some part thereof in the name of the whole to enter in full and peaceable possession and seizing thereof for them and in their name to take and to have and after such possession and seizing so thereof and had the lawfull and peaceable possession and seizing thereof or of some part thereof in the name of the whole unto Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, (End of page 149)

David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock or their own attorney or attorneys in their behalf to give and deliver to hold to them the said Richard Henderson, Thomas Hart, Nathaniel Hart, John Williams, John Lutterell, William Johnston, James Hogg, David Hart, and Leonard Hendly Bullock, their heirs and assigns forever according to the purport true interest and meaning of these presents ratifying, confirming, and allowin all and whatever their attorneys either of them shall do in the premises. In witness whereof the said Oconistoto, Attacullacullah, Sewanooko, otherwise Coronok, the three chiefs acoointed by the warriors and other head men to sign for and in behalf of the whole nation hath hereunto set their hands and affixed their seals the day and year above written.

Signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of

William Bailey Smith Oconistoto (His Mark) Seal
George Lumpkins
Thomas Houghton Attacullacullah (His Mark) Seal

Caseltan Brooks Sewanooko, otherwise Coronok (His Mark) Seal
John Bacon
Tilman Dixon
Valention Sercey
Thomas Price Joseph Vann Linquister

** The name "Great Grant" was applied to the large central Kentucky part of this indenture, while the name "Path Deed" was applied to the much smaller East Tennessee portion.*

From:

ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource ^[2]

Authors:

Dease, Jared ^[3]

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People:

Dragging Canoe ^[4]

from *Tennessee Encyclopedia*



Attakullakulla ^[5]

Old Tassel ^[6]

Oconostata ^[7]

from *Tennessee Encyclopedia*



Richard Henderson ^[8]



Daniel Boone

[9]

Daniel Boone [9]

from *Encyclopedia Virginia*

Savanooka, the Old Raven of Chota [10]

from *JSTOR*

Nathaniel Hart [11]

Places:

Sycamore Shoals State Park [12]

from Tennessee State Parks

For Teachers:

The Trail of Tears in Middle Tennessee Lesson Plan (Grades 9-12) [13]

from *National Park Service*

Related Topics:

Transylvania Company [14]

Primary Sources:

"II. Depositions concerning Claims to Lands under Purchases from the Indians. [April 1777–October 1778]" [15]

from the National Archives

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