

PEOPLE OF COLONIAL

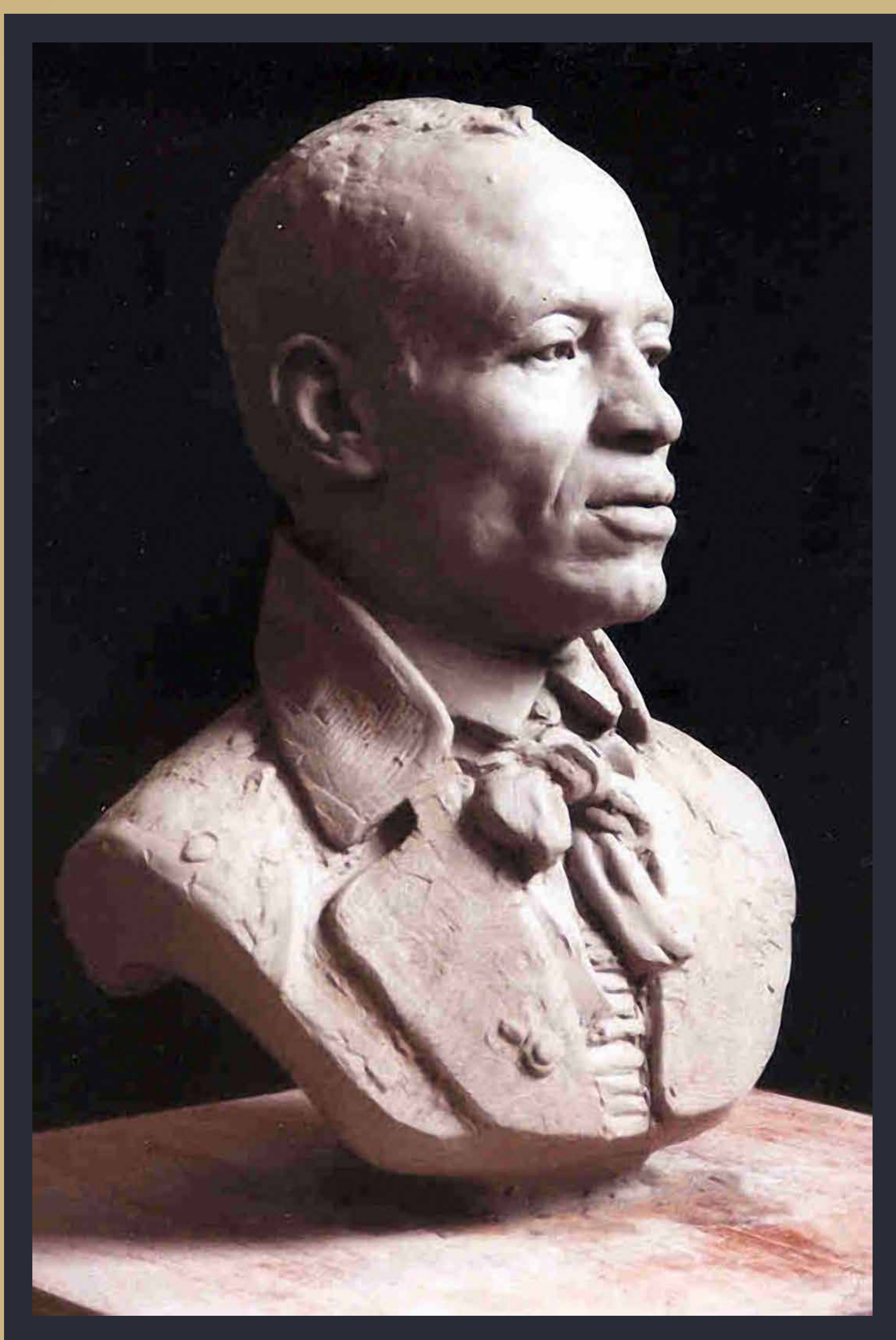
North Carolina



An exhibit by AMERICA 250 NC

REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

The fight for freedom took different forms for various communities during the American Revolution. American Indians continued to fight and advocate against the growing number of invading settlers to maintain their land and culture. Colonial newspapers show us that freedom seekers residing in NC sought independence from enslavement. Enslaved men and indentured servants joined the armies, and while not always by choice, many hoped to begin new lives in freedom. In Edenton, fifty-one women signed a resolution to protest British policies, and between 30,000 and 36,000 North Carolina men served in the rebellion throughout the war.



Bust of John Chavis, one of North Carolina's best-known revolutionary soldiers of color. Born a free man, Chavis enlisted and served with Patriot forces for three years before becoming licensed to preach in North Carolina and Virginia.

Image courtesy of Washington and Lee University.

Ultimately, the fight for freedom during the American Revolution was shaped by many different voices and experiences. Each group fought for liberty in ways that reflected their social, cultural, and political realities. Today, as we reflect on the last 250 years of our nation, these stories of resistance remind us of the enduring journey toward the promise of a 'more perfect union.'

This exhibit is brought to you by

America 250 North Carolina

and the

**North Carolina Department of Natural
and Cultural Resources**

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SWISS AND GERMAN COLONISTS

In 1710, a group of Swiss and German immigrants, led by Christoph Von Graffenried, established a settlement along the Neuse River. They named the settlement New Bern after the capital of Switzerland. New Bern served as the first permanent colonial capital of North Carolina.

*Plan of the town of New Bern,
North Carolina, C.J. Sauthier, 1769.*

Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library.



Moravians were European immigrants who belonged to a religious sect formed in the fifteenth century. Many, but not all, were German, and like many other settlers in North Carolina's backcountry, they traveled the Great Wagon Road - a route initially established by American Indians.



Moravians founded the settlement of Salem, North Carolina, in 1766.

A View of SALEM in North Carolina, Ludwig Von Redeken, 1787, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) at Old Salem.

Moravians settled in the Piedmont, near present-day Winston-Salem. As pacifists, they maintained a stance of military neutrality for the war. Even

though they did not fight, the Moravians provided provisions and shelter to both armies. Quakers, many of whom were English, were also pacifists.

Both groups were subject to fines for refusing to join the North Carolina militia until, in 1776, the Provincial Congress passed a law exempting them from military service. However, the effects of war impacted everyone. Some men did leave to fight, and women, too, faced the physical violence and hardships associated with warfare. After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in 1781, Martha Hunt, a young Quaker woman living with her husband and two small children, found herself "almost destitute" when the armies marched through and confiscated all her family's resources.



*Portrait of a Young Moravian Girl,
Johann Valentin Haidt, ca. 1755-1760.*

Smithsonian American Art Museum.

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ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH COLONISTS

White settlers arrived in colonial North Carolina as early as the 1500s. Formally established as a colony in 1710, settlers came to North Carolina for diverse reasons. Factors such as war, religious persecution, limited land, and famine prompted many people to leave their homes and move to North Carolina.

English colonists came directly from Great Britain or moved from other colonies. Some immigrants came to North Carolina as indentured servants. Individuals could voluntarily enter an indenture by agreeing to trade a specific number of years of their work – generally four to seven – for passage to the colonies. However, involuntary indentures or court-imposed servitude also occurred and could last far longer.



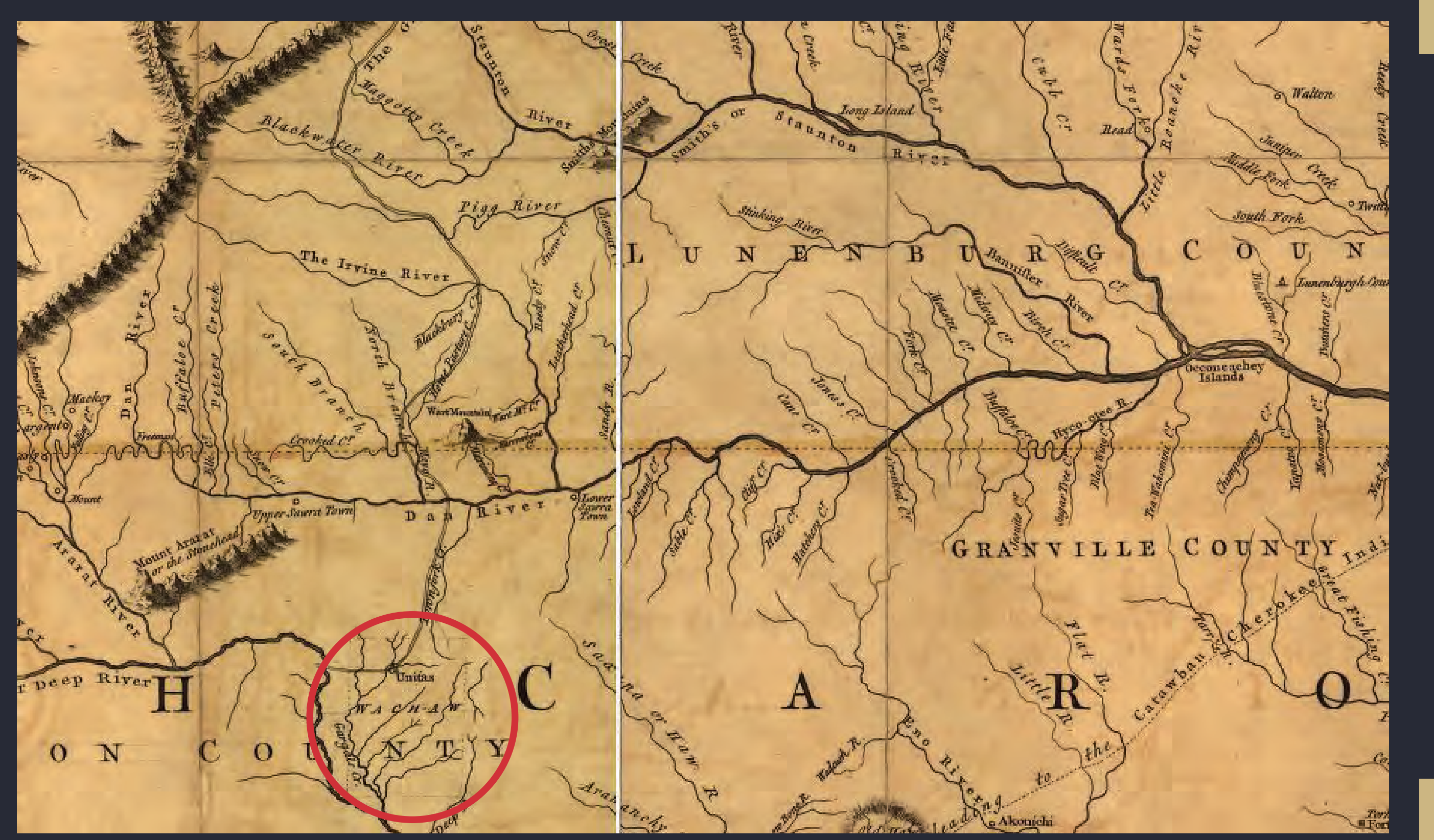
A Tailor at Work.

Image courtesy of DNCR.

The Scots-Irish were Lowland Scots who resettled in Northern Ireland in the early 1600s. They often arrived in North Carolina from northern colonies by traveling down the Great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania.

Detail from a 1755 map depicting the Great Wagon Road leading into the Wachaw (or Wachovia) settlement of North Carolina in present-day Winston-Salem.

A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland: with part of Pensilvania [sic], New Jersey and North Carolina, 1755, Jefferys London, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.



Highland Scots also settled in North Carolina in the 1600s and 1700s, often along the Cape Fear River Basin. At the start of the Revolution, many fought with the British, notably at the Battle at Moores Creek Bridge, North Carolina's first battle in the Revolutionary War.



Portrait of Flora MacDonald.

Published in *Flora MacDonald in America: With a Brief Sketch of her Life and Adventures* by J.P. MacLean, 1909, Library of Congress.

Flora MacDonald emigrated to North Carolina with her family in 1774. A noted Loyalist and enthusiastic speaker, she frequently encouraged community members to volunteer for military service. Following Patriot forces' capture of her husband at the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, MacDonald returned to Scotland.

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FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR

Not all Black people in colonial North Carolina were enslaved. Some were born free, self-emancipated, or were granted freedom by their enslavers. They worked as merchants, farmers, and artisans. They owned land and established businesses. Free persons of color, such as American Indians or individuals with dual ancestry, also contributed to North Carolina's free communities of color. At the start of the American Revolution, free people of color could and did join the Continental Army. The NC militia was a fully integrated force, and free men were subject to the draft.



Modern depiction of an African American Militiaman, Don Troiani.

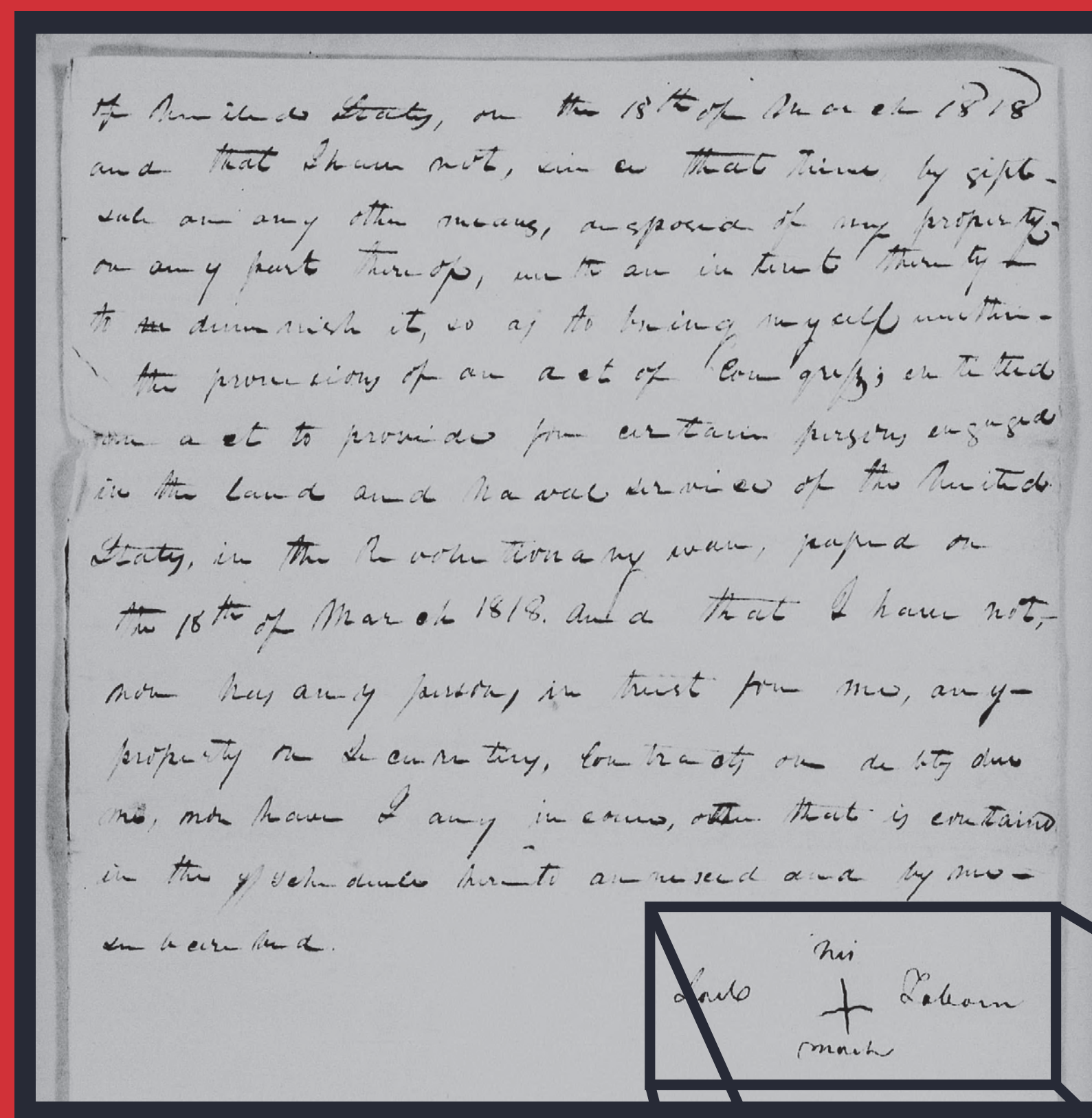
Martin Black and Isaac Perkins, two free Black men from Craven County, enlisted in the 10th North Carolina for three years. Both men fought in northern campaigns and then marched to Charleston, South Carolina.



Watercolor depicting African American and White soldiers in uniform from the Rhode Island Regiment.

De Verger, 1781, Brown University Library.

Joel Taborn, a resident of Nash County, enlisted in the North Carolina Continental Line in 1776. Identified in his pension application as "being very young and [a] person of color," he was first employed as a servant by the officers of his company before joining the armed ranks. Taborn fought at the Siege of Charleston and the Siege of Fort Ninety Six in South Carolina.



A portion of Joel Taborn's 1820 pension application containing his signature indicated with an X.

Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File S 42037, National Archives.

After the war ended, the British army transported many Black Loyalist soldiers to Canada, where they established communities. Still faced with threats to their freedom, free communities of color continued the fight for their rights.

A Black Wood Cutter at Shelburne, Nova Scotia, by William Booth.

1788, Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1970-188-1090 W.H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana.



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ENSLAVED AFRICANS

Europeans enslaved Africans and forcibly transported them to North Carolina as early as the 1600s. Many of the first enslaved people brought to North Carolina arrived from the West Indies and other southern colonies, but large numbers also came directly from Africa.



A Tobacco Plantation, published by Bowles and Carver, ca. 1745-1865, George Arents Collection, New York Public Library.

Although enslaved people resided in the Piedmont and on the western frontier, most lived in the Coastal Plains. Colonists used enslaved laborers for household duties, agricultural work, tar and turpentine production, and trades such as blacksmithing and carpentry. People resisted the institution of slavery in several ways,

including deliberately slowing down work, self-emancipation, and armed rebellion. They also found ways to preserve their identities and cultures through music, folktales, and oral traditions.

In early 1775, the Royal Governor of Virginia offered freedom to enslaved individuals who were “able and willing to bear arms” in support of the British army. Roughly 20,000 Black men, women, and children took advantage of the situation and sought out British lines during the American Revolution.



A Modern Depiction of a Black Loyalist, Don Troiani.



Chart showing the growth of the enslaved population - 1712 – 800; 1730 – 6,000; 1767 – 41,000

At the start of the American Revolution, Edward (Ned) Griffin, an enslaved man, lived in Edgecombe County, North Carolina. William Kitchen purchased Griffin from another enslaver to serve as his substitute in the war, promising him freedom after the enlistment. However, when Griffin returned in 1782, Kitchen did not honor his word and sold Griffin to another enslaver. Griffin petitioned the General Assembly for his freedom and won. In 1784, the North Carolina General Assembly declared Griffin "enfranchised and forever delivered and discharged from the yoke of slavery."

Two enslaved women working with an overseer nearby.

Published in *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* by Frederick Law Olmsted, 1856. American Notes: Travels in America, 1750 to 1920 Collection, Library of Congress.



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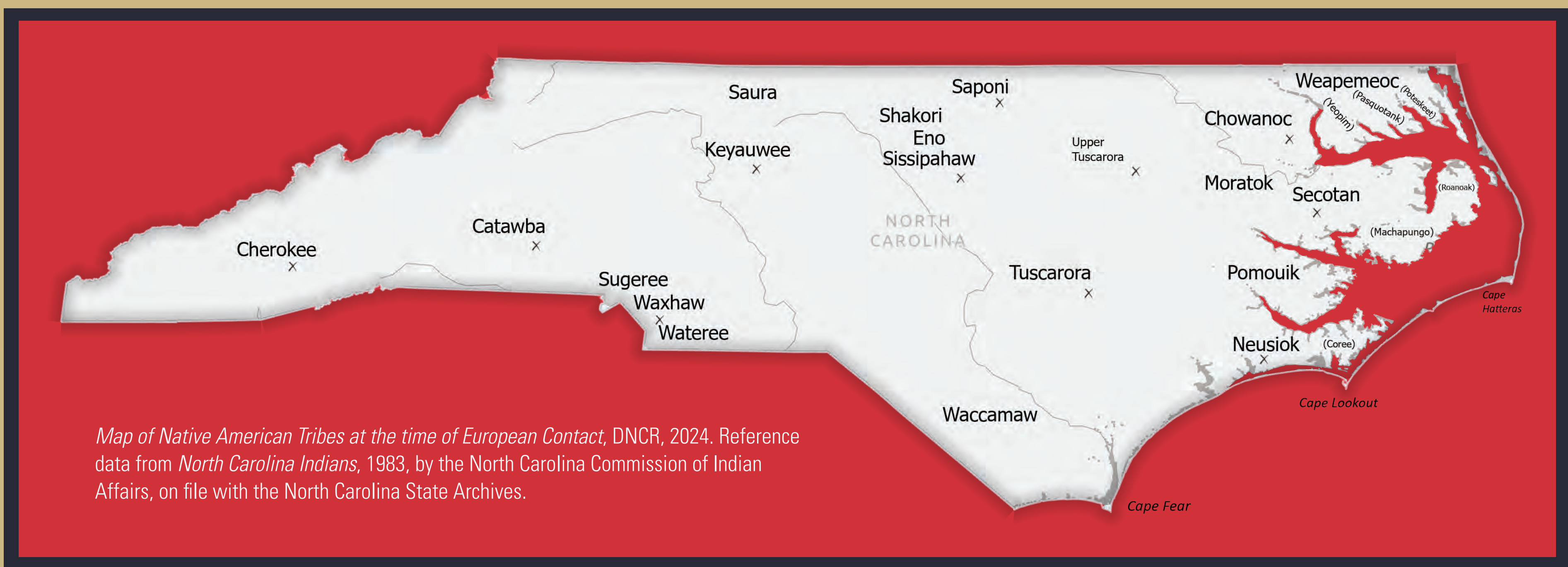
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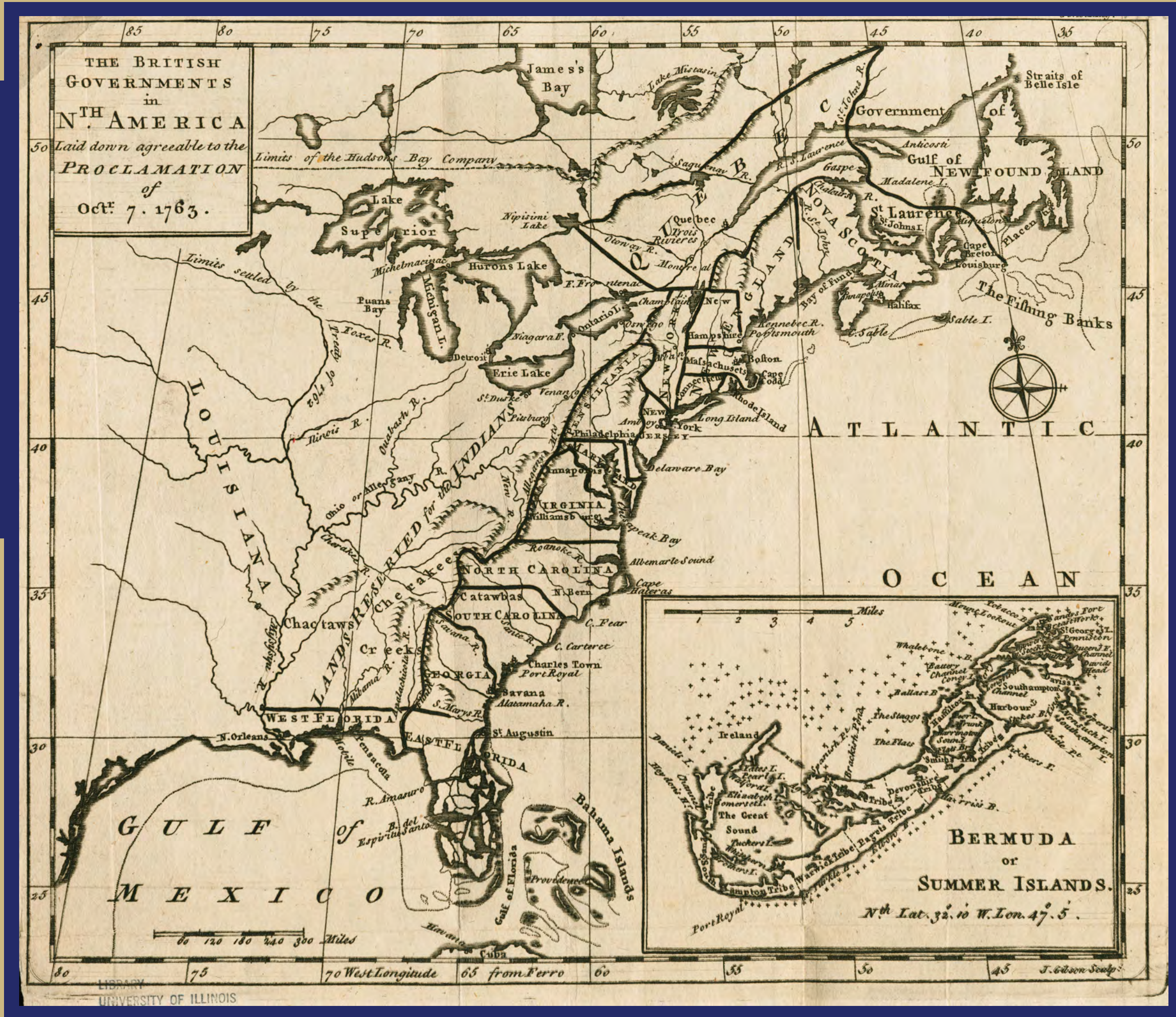
AMERICAN INDIANS

When European explorers arrived in North America in the 1500s, numerous American Indian nations already resided in the region that would become North Carolina. In the years before the American Revolution, American Indians navigated conflicts with Europeans and the devastating effects of European diseases.



Map of Native American Tribes at the time of European Contact, DNCR, 2024. Reference data from *North Carolina Indians*, 1983, by the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, on file with the North Carolina State Archives.

At the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, King George III issued a Royal Proclamation forbidding white settlement on land west of the Appalachian Mountains. However, colonists largely ignored the proclamation and continued to settle on American Indian land with few consequences.



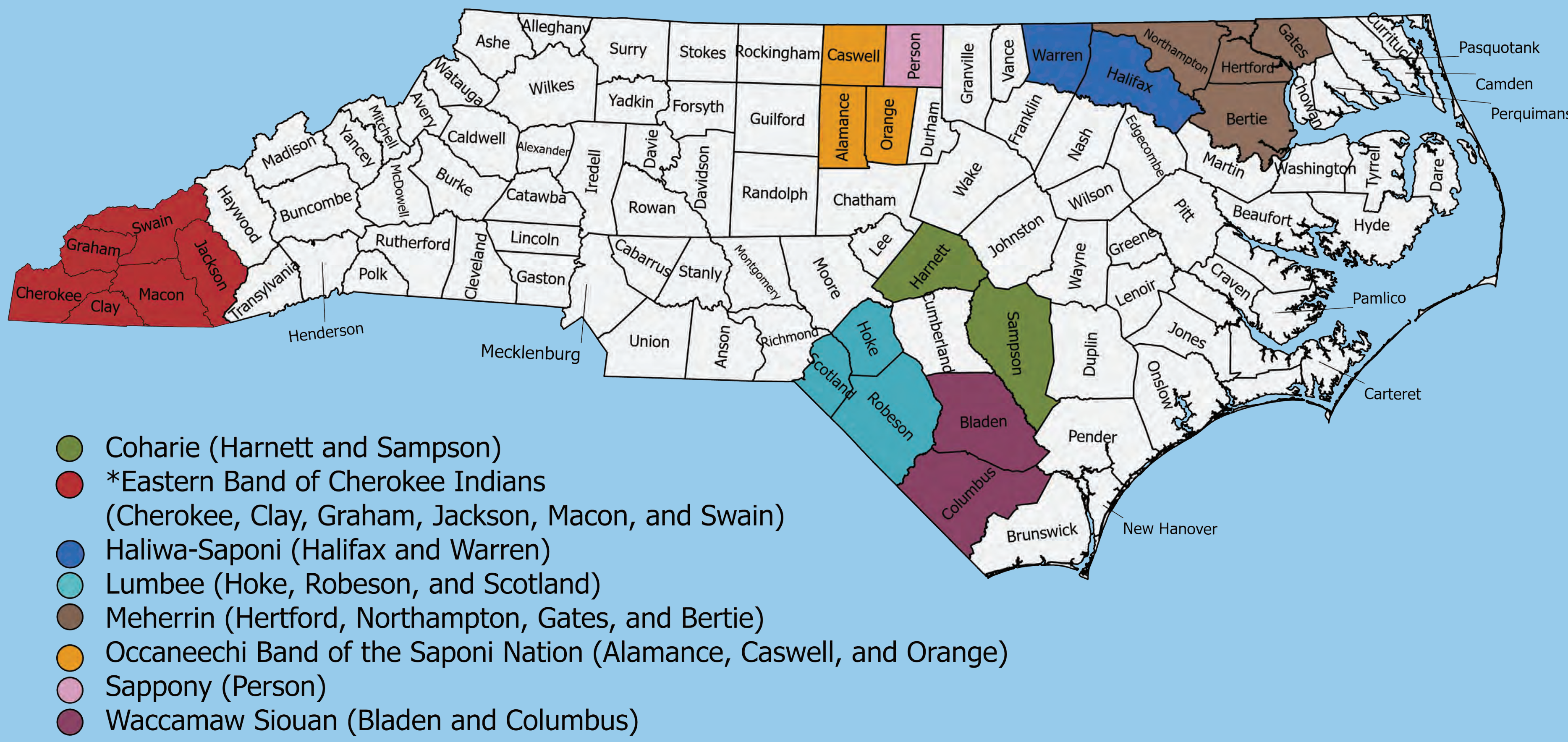
On this 1763 map, land west of the proclamation line reads “Lands Reserved for the Indians.”

John Gibson, 1763, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign University Library.

During the Revolution, individual and tribal sentiments varied. American Indian nations made decisions based on various political, social, and economic factors, including trade and existing tribal relationships. Records indicate that Catawba Indians served as scouts to support Patriot efforts, while the Cherokee Nation largely supported British efforts. Pension records, in particular, can provide valuable insights into individuals such as John Brooks, a free person of color later recognized as a member of the Lumbee Nation. Brooks served as a private with Patriot troops for four years. While living in Robeson County, Brooks applied for and received a pension for his service. Regardless of allegiances, American Indian nations felt the impact of war in their communities.

Map of North Carolina federal and state-recognized American Indian tribes, DNCR, 2024

Reference data from the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs, 2021. Federally recognized tribes indicated by an asterisk.



As of 2024, North Carolina shares geography with one federally recognized and eight state-recognized tribes: the Coharie, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (federally recognized), the Haliwa-Saponi, the Lumbee, the Meherrin, the Sappony, the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, and the Waccamaw Siouan.

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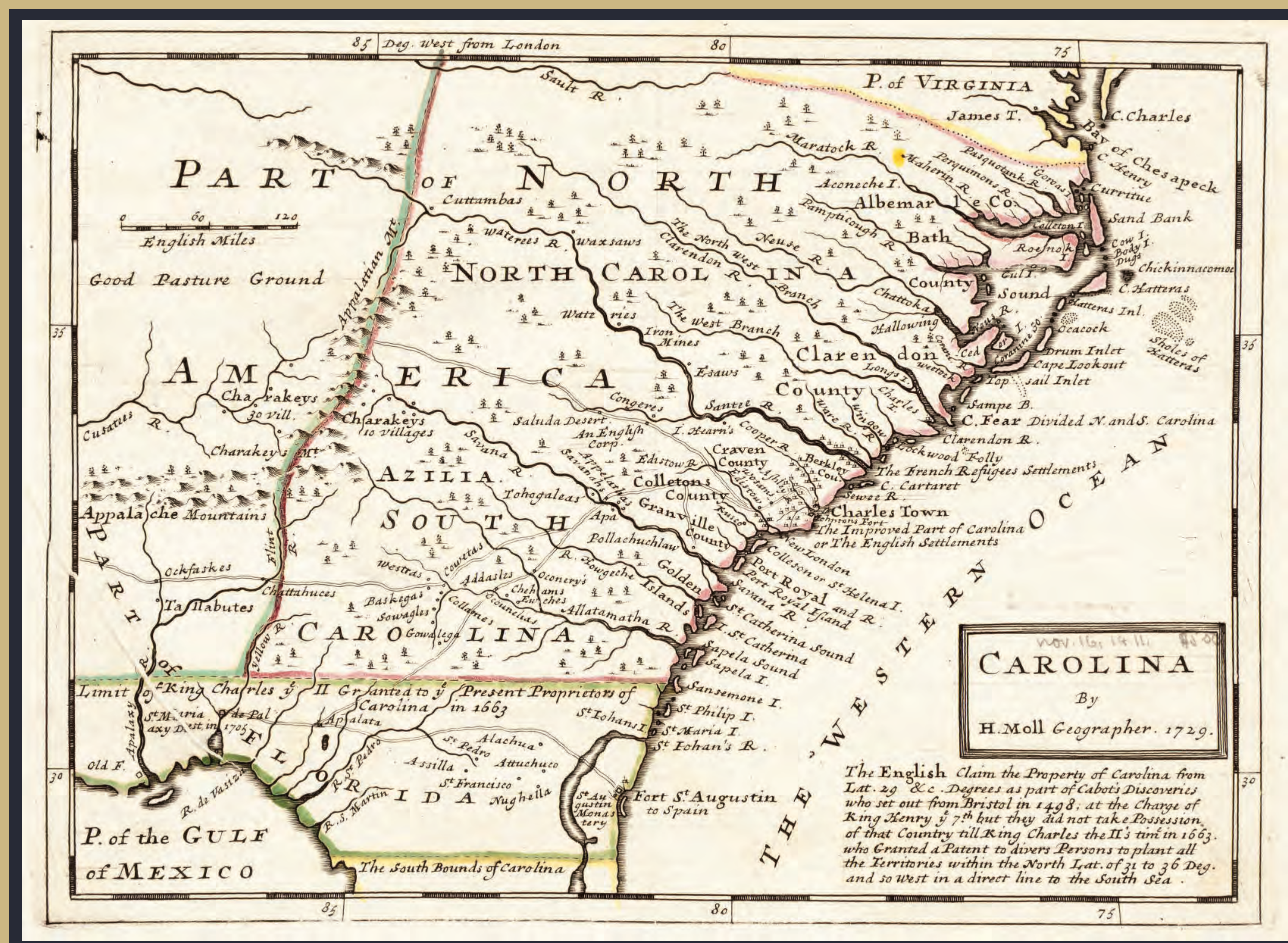


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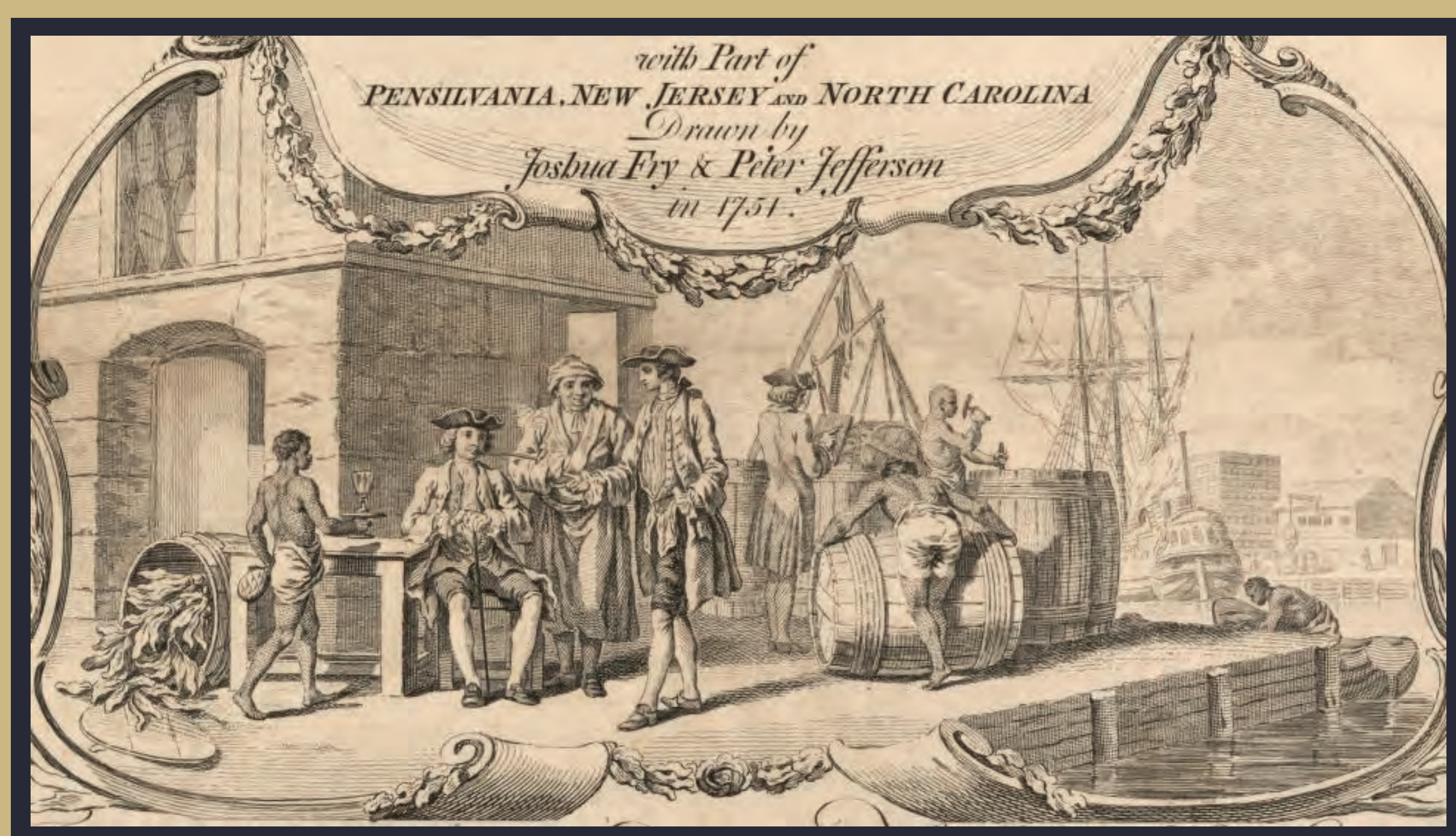
INTRODUCTION

At the start of the American Revolution, diverse groups of people called North Carolina home. Differences in culture, religion, and social background shaped their thoughts and actions during the war.

Loyalists believed the colonies should remain under British rule. In contrast, rebels, known as Patriots, fought to separate the colonies from British control. Still, others followed their religious convictions and attempted to remain neutral. The American Revolution was a complex struggle for freedom and self-determination for many North Carolinians. This exhibit explores their stories.



Map of North and South Carolina, Herman Moll, 1729, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



This detail from a 1755 map depicts enslaved men working on various tasks near a harbor. Roughly 40,000- 80,000 enslaved people lived in North Carolina at the start of the Revolution.

A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland: with part of Pennsylvania [sic], New Jersey and North Carolina, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

A wagon belonging to the North Carolina brigade of Continental troops. Drawn by Pierre Eugène du Simitière, 1777.

Museum of the American Revolution, Gift of Judith F. Hemstadt; Conserved with support from the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati, 2023.16.01.



Settlers arrived in North Carolina through ports in both North Carolina and Virginia. Many German-speaking and Scots-Irish settlers came from northern colonies. Wagons, likely similar in structure to this one, made the journey possible down the Great Wagon Road, an ancient American Indian trading route.

The eyewitness sketch of the North Carolina Continental Army Brigade marching through Philadelphia includes two women camp followers, one with an infant in her arms. A rare depiction of women camp followers, the sketch highlights how women were commonly attached to or involved with the armies and their campaigns.