

# THE TUSCARORA WAR

While it would seem that land was plentiful, the Native Americans built their villages on riverbank locations sought by colonists who looked for fertile soil and access to water transportation. The European settlers often cheated the Native Americans in trade and sometimes stole from them or killed them to obtain goods. To the Tuscarora, land and the animals that roamed it were not personal property, but natural resources available to anyone in need. Yet, what they personally grew belonged to the grower, and they respected that ownership. But the colonists rarely understood when a Tuscarora raiding party took their livestock, or when they set fire to the land before their annual hunts in a ceremony that often destroyed timber and farmland claimed by settlers.

At first, both sides tried to avoid armed conflict. The colonial government signed treaties with the Tuscarora designed to protect their land and to ease trade relations, but the settlers often ignored or blatantly dishonored these agreements. In 1710, the Tuscarora attempted to emigrate to Pennsylvania but were denied permission by the Pennsylvania government. The Tuscarora sought but never received from North Carolina's colonial Government a guarantee of their good behavior, a document that may have allowed them entrance into Pennsylvania. In the end, the Tuscarora were forced to remain on the frontier while more settlers displaced more people.

Shortly after the death of land surveyor John Lawson in September, 1711 (who the Tuscarora had captured), the chief Hancock organized a force of 500 warriors to drive out the colonists. The group went plantation by plantation, killing both men and women, children and adults, and often mutilated the bodies of their victims. Three days of carnage claimed the lives of 130 settlers and reduced the countryside to ashes and ruins.



In response, the governor convinced the State Assembly to pass a bill to draft all men between the ages of 16 and 60, but even this measure proved insufficient because food and weapons were scarce and because the Quaker settlers refused to bear arms. He sent to Virginia for assistance, but the Virginians would not advance their troops beyond the state line unless North Carolina would promise to surrender large parts of land along the border. Refusing to accept such political blackmail, the governor pushed for aid from South Carolina.

Without asking for anything in return, the South Carolina government sent Col. John Barnwell, a veteran Indian fighter, with a force of 30 white officers and 500 Native Americans from different South Carolina tribes. Having to travel over 300 miles through the wilderness, Barnwell didn't arrive until January. Reinforced by 50 North Carolina militiamen, Barnwell forced the Tuscarora to retreat to Fort Neoheroke in Greene County, where they eventually surrendered and released their prisoners.

This victory, however, did not end the Tuscarora War. Some in South Carolina expected some sort of repayment. And some South Carolina officers kept Tuscarora prisoners to sell as slaves, which broke the treaty that led to renewed discontent and pushed a second wave of Tuscarora attacks the following summer.

When these new attacks came, the settlers were already weakened by a yellow fever epidemic that had claimed many lives, including the governor. Still struggling to rebuild their plantations, many abandoned the colony. Some fled to Virginia; others huddled in forts to avoid Tuscarora raiding parties. The new governor, turned to South Carolina again. In December 1712, Col. James Moore arrived with 33 whites and nearly 1,000 Native Americans and won a full victory, killing over 900 warriors and effectively breaking the power of the Tuscarora.

In the aftermath of the war, the Tuscarora emigrated on their own, joining the Iroquois in New York.

