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JAMES GLEN, CHEROKEE DIPLOMACY, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OVERHILL FORT

By STUART STUMPF

Throughout his long tenure as governor of South Carolina (1743-1756), James Glen displayed an active interest in the extension of British influence along the southern colonial frontier. The quarrelsome, suspicious, and ambitious Glen prided himself upon his understanding of Indian diplomacy and, with his self-proclaimed successes in this field, the expansion of the empire. He held an imperialistic vision that would advance claims to the trans-Appalachian region through colonial South Carolina's trade and political relations with the southern tribes. Toward this end, the governor labored to mediate inter-tribal conflicts, as well as to establish British influence directly into the west, by constructing a fort among the principal overhill Cherokee towns in the Little Tennessee valley.¹

Despite his best efforts, Governor Glen's program suffered a series of setbacks. The failure to seize the opportunities presented by the Choctaw rebellion against their traditional alliance with the French must be laid in large measure to the avariciousness of Glen. Even more vital to the security of South Carolina and the British interest on the southern frontier was the erosion of their alliance with the Cherokee nation.²

Since the early years of the eighteenth century, the good will of the Cherokee nation had been vital to the prosperity and even to the survival of South Carolina. For their part, the Cherokee had become dependent upon English colonists for a variety of essential trade goods. Exchanging

¹ Glen was appointed in 1738, but did not arrive in South Carolina until five years later. His tumultuous career in the province is examined in M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 256-314; and by Mary F. Carter, "Governor James Glen of Colonial South Carolina: A Study in British Administrative Policies" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1951). Glen's role in Indian policy and his plan of imperial expansion are examined by Douglas Edward Leach, *Arms for Empire, a Military History of the British Colonies in North America* (New York, 1973), 224, 316-18, and by David H. Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier, Conflict and Survival, 1740-62* (Norman, 1962), 23-49.

² Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 266-69, 286-89; John R. Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier . . . 1754-1775* (Ann Arbor, 1944), 32-35.

deerskins for cloth, tools, weapons, and ornaments, the Cherokee and the Carolina traders were enmeshed in a complex network of relationships.³ By the 1740's exports of deerskins, obtained primarily from the Cherokee, were annually exceeding £30,000 sterling in value, making it South Carolina's second-ranking export.⁴ The South Carolina provincial government was anxious to secure this trade. Solicitous of the Cherokee, it nevertheless failed to devise a practicable scheme of trade regulation to prevent abuses by the traders. The recognition of their virtual helplessness in the face of frequent cheating and maltreatment of the traders made the Cherokee resentful, led to complaints to the authorities in Charles Town, and endangered the close ties between the two peoples.⁵

Always present, these misunderstandings and even instances of violence increased as the rivalry on the southern colonial frontier intensified among the colonial powers. Particularly pressing in the minds of the British and provincials in South Carolina was the possibility of French subversion among the Cherokee. Such activity not only would negate the virtual monopoly of the Cherokee trade enjoyed by Charles Town and its traders, but it also would render the Carolina frontier less secure.⁶ The strategic location of the Cherokee made it clear to the colonial government that "whoever is master of the Cherrockee [*sic*] Nation is master of the Key of Carolina."⁷ With the economic setbacks suffered during King George's War (1739-48), the failure to drive the

³ The most complete study of the total impact of the early Indian trade of colonial South Carolina is Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham, 1928). Helpful, too, is John Phillip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet: Law, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Cherokee Nation during the Early Years of European Contact* (University Park, Pa., 1976). Also by Reid, and useful in relating Cherokee law and tradition to trade and diplomacy, is *A Law of Blood; The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York, 1970). A succinct account is William Shedrick Willis, "Colonial Conflict and the Cherokee Indians, 1710-1760" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1955).

⁴ James Glen to Board of Trade, May 3, 1746, *Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1783* (Microfilm ed., 36 vols., Columbia, 1928-1955), XXII, 204. Hereafter cited as *S.C. Pub. Recs.*

⁵ Willis, "Colonial Conflict," 56, 59-70; David H. Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier, Conflict and Survival, 1740-62* (Norman, 1962), 6, 14, 36-37; William L. McDowell, Jr., ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1765* (Columbia, 1970), XV-XVII. Hereafter cited as *S.C. Ind. Docs.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, xii-xiii; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 20-21; Philip M. Hamer, "Anglo-French Rivalry in the Cherokee Country, 1754-1757," *North Carolina Historical Review*, II (1925), 303-4. The French danger was a much repeated theme in the letters of Governor Glen to the Board of Trade. See in particular his letters of September 29, 1746, April 28, 1747, February 3, April 14, July 26, 1748, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXII, 201-4, 277, XXIII, 71-82, 108-11, 172-73.

⁷ Glen to Dinwiddie, January, 1755, enclosed in Glen to Board of Trade, May 29, 1755, *ibid.*, XXVI, 222.

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Spanish from Florida, and the renewal of French activity among the upper Creeks at Fort Toulouse in present northern Alabama, the Carolinians felt compelled to pay particular attention to the situation on the Cherokee frontier.⁸

In order to bolster this alliance and to counter French influence, Glen met numerous times with the Cherokee headmen. In the late summer of 1746, Glen heard their complaints of raids by French-allied Indians. This gave him the opening which he had been seeking. He proposed: "Building a Fort for their security to be Garrisoned by Us, into *Wch* their Women & Children might retire at the approach of an Enemy. . . ." As the leaders were not at first receptive, and as he had no authorization for such a project from his superiors, the governor did not press the matter further at that particular conference. He subsequently urged upon the British Board of Trade, to which he reported, that "if we had a Fort in these Overhill Towns, as they call them, it would effectively bar the door against the French, & be such a Bridle in the Mouths of the Indians themselves, that would for ever keep them ours."⁹ Although such proposals for forts among the Cherokee had been raised since the early years of the century, Glen's overtures, coming at a time of intense Anglo-French rivalry, attracted official attention in Great Britain.¹⁰ Despite their initial reservations, the Cherokee headmen soon were also receptive to the proposal.¹¹

Through the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the Cherokee nation underwent a period of crisis in which its very survival would be threatened. The raids and more subtle forms of pressure by the French-allied and other traditional Indian enemies made the Cherokee receptive to any scheme that promised greater security for themselves. The Cherokee also began to recognize the political and economic ramifications of their almost total dependence upon South Carolina for trade and military assistance. Therefore, they grasped for alternatives or for

⁸ Stuart O. Stumpf, "Implications of King George's War for the Charleston Mercantile Community," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXVII (1976), 161-88; Norman W. Caldwell, "The Southern Frontier During King George's War," *Journal of Southern History*, VII (1941), 37-54; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 210-16, 265-77; Hamer, "Anglo-French Rivalry," 303-22. Daniel H. Thomas, "Fort Toulouse — in Tradition and Fact," *Alabama Review*, XIII (1960), 248-54; Leach, *Arms for Empire*, 211-16, 317; Glen to Board of Trade, May 3, 1749, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXII, 149-52.

⁹ Glen to Board of Trade, September 29, 1746, *ibid.*, 200.

¹⁰ Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*, 32-34; Board of Trade to Newcastle, July 22, August 13, 1747, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXII, 305, 308; Minutes of Board of Trade, August 6, 11, 12, 1747, *ibid.*, 246-47.

¹¹ Glen to Board of Trade, April 28, 1747, *ibid.*, 277-78.

means that would, at the very least, extract the greatest advantage from this situation. Finally, the nation experienced a crisis of leadership that would only be resolved by the ascendancy of the headmen from the "mother town" of Chota during the next decade.¹² Whatever factors were most decisive, the governor reported in the spring of 1747 that the Cherokee had now requested a garrisoned fort to be built in the overhills.

During the following months the initiative was lost. Despite favorable responses from the Board of Trade to Glen's proposal, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department (the Cabinet post that oversaw colonial affairs at that time), and the King's Privy Council, no immediate action was taken other than to authorize the governor to negotiate further on this matter with the Indians.¹³ Although the South Carolina Assembly favored the project, it would appropriate no more than £300 sterling. In the opinion of Glen, at least an additional £400 would be required in order to build a "substantial" fort.¹⁴ Undeterred, Glen kept up his campaign for the construction of the fort among both the English and the Cherokee even after the termination of the war with France in 1748.¹⁵

Through the early years of the 1750's several factors increased pressure for an overhill fort. The continued alarm raised by French activities in the trans-Appalachian region led South Carolina's as well as other colonies' officials to report alarmingly to their superiors.¹⁶ With both colonial powers moving to exercise their claims to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, Glen foresaw a crucial role in the coming conflict for the proposed fort:

I take the Liberty to repeat that a Fort garrisoned by Kings [*sic*] Troops near the Overhills Towns of the Cherokees which is Five Hundred Miles from Charles Town would in time render all that Country his Majesty's property as much as any part of this Province is.

¹² Reid, *Law of Blood*, 25-27; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 14-21.

¹³ Minutes of Board of Trade, August 6, 11, 12, 1747, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXII, 246-47; Newcastle to Board of Trade, July 30, 1747, *ibid.*, 307; Order in Council, August 16, 1748, *ibid.*, XXIII, 25.

¹⁴ Glen to Board of Trade, April 28, 1747, *ibid.*, XXII, 277-79.

¹⁵ Glen to Board of Trade, February 3, April 14, July 26, October 10, 1748, July 19, 1749, July 27, 1752, *ibid.*, XXIII, 71-82, 108-11, 172-73, 208-10, 380; XXV, 70-74; Board of Trade to Bedford, December 10, 1750, *ibid.*, XXIV, 33.

¹⁶ Hamer, "Anglo-French Rivalry," 304; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 18-19, 50-65; Glen to [Bedford?], March 30, 1754, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVI, 8-11.

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He held up the example of Fort Toulouse, calling it the "Halabama Fort," which gave to the French such great leverage among the Creeks, as well as a base from which to subvert the Cherokee. Finally, recognizing the difficulties raised by the often unscrupulous activities and false reports of the traders, Glen urged the importance of such an outpost for the conduct of Indian diplomacy.¹⁷ In 1754, Glen proposed an even more expansive plan that gained acknowledgement of British sovereignty from the Cherokee and cession of their lands in return for immediate protection.¹⁸

Others joined the governor's campaign. In Britain, Charles Pinckney, member of the South Carolina Council and Colonial Agent for the colony, again presented the case to the Board of Trade for the construction of the fort as it "would be one of the most effective methods of frustrating the french [*sic*] designs."¹⁹ Pinckney's representations were well received and probably were responsible for the order to Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia to forward some funds to Glen out of those advanced to him for defense.²⁰ Glen also received unexpected support for his programs from an inveterate critic of his administration, the Charles Town merchant and councilor, Edmond Atkin. In a report highly critical of current Indian policy, Atkin warned that unless prompt action was taken, such traditional allies as the Cherokee would be alienated. He analyzed the basis of French influence among their Indian allies as being derived from their frontier outposts, which provided the warriors with essential services such as maintenance of their weapons, as well as providing a place for the distribution of presents for services rendered. Atkin again emphasized the role of the outposts in regulating the activities of the traders. He held that the French were not attempting to intimidate the Indians, as these forts could be overwhelmed rather easily. Atkin strongly urged a similar system for the British. His 1755 Report and Plan was central in obtaining Atkin's appointment as the Indian Agent for the Southern District. It also confirmed the suspicions already present in the minds

¹⁷ Glen to Board of Trade, July 27, 1752, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXV, 70-71.

¹⁸ Glen to Robinson, August 15, 1754, *ibid.*, XXVII, 84-102.

¹⁹ "The Representation of Charles Pinckney," June 1, 1754, *ibid.*, XXVI, 40-43.

²⁰ Hamer, "Anglo-French Rivalry," 304-8; Pinckney to Powell, September 11, 1753, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXV, 344-46; "Further Representation of Charles Pinckney," June 20, 1754, *ibid.*, 60-71; Board of Trade to Robinson, June 20, 1754, *ibid.*, 52-55; Robinson to Glen, July 5, 1754, *ibid.*, 72-73.

of imperial administrators, such as the Earl of Halifax, President of the Board of Trade, as to French intentions in the trans-Appalachian west, as well as the view that the imperial government must take a more direct hand in these matters.²¹

From the Cherokee perspective, the early 1750's continued the period of crisis. Their long-standing war with the Creek Nation had brought devastation to their lower towns. The continued friction with the Carolina traders had led some to violence, resulting in a temporary embargo of trade imposed by the South Carolina authorities. In addition, the French tribes, chiefly the Shawnee, pressed upon the Cherokee, so that the leadership had to develop a policy that would gain a peace with their former enemies while avoiding further difficulties with the British.²² In this situation the headmen from Chota:

assumed national leadership by concluding a long-desired peace with the French Indians, by formulating a new British alliance brilliantly designed to end the Carolinian monopoly with a rival Virginia trade . . . and by shielding the murderers of traders behind protracted diplomatic maneuvers. . . . They also persuaded the British to build a fort in the Overhills to protect Cherokee women and children, before any more warriors were recruited. . . .²³

While leadership never achieved its objectives in their entirety, the construction of the overhill fort now seemed imperative. Frequently promised and much delayed, it became a symbol of the South Carolinian ability to maintain its prestige on the colonial frontier. Thus, both sides believed that they manipulated the other in order to further their own security.²⁴

Even as his goal of the overhill fort moved toward attainment, Governor Glen confronted additional difficulties. The lower Cherokee, having been devastated by the Creek raids, threatened to abandon permanently the eastern towns, creating a vacuum into which the French allies might enter. If the South Carolinians allowed their allies to suffer such treatment, their status among the Cherokee would surely fall. Glen responded by negotiating a peace between the tribes and, in 1753, built the rather crude Fort Prince George near the town of Keowee. Gar-

²¹ Wilbur R. Jacobs, ed., *Indians of the Southern Colonial Frontier; The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755* (Columbia, 1954). Particularly useful are Jacobs' introductory comments on pages xxx to xxxiv.

²² Reid, *Law of Blood*, 25-27; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 38-52.

²³ Reid, *Law of Blood*, 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27; Glen to Board of Trade, July 27, 1752, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXV, 70-74; "Further Representation of Charles Pinckney," June 27, 1754, *ibid.*, XXVI, 62-68.

risoned by a small detachment, it provided only a small measure of security, but it "showed the flag" as South Carolina's western-most outpost. Fort Prince George, nevertheless, failed to satisfy the demands of the overhill Cherokee, and it was hardly the outpost that Glen had in mind for extending the claims of empire. The frequent delays in fulfilling his stated promises were already exasperating the Cherokee leadership.²⁵

Glen's prestige declined not only among the Cherokee, but having entangled himself in numerous controversies in South Carolina, the governor had also lost the confidence of the Commons House of Assembly, the most influential Charles Town merchants, and in the mother country, the Board of Trade. The suspicious Glen must have recognized that, with his effectiveness diminished, his days as governor were numbered.²⁶

As if these troubles were not enough, the Chota headmen, the most influential of whom were Canacauchte (Old Hop) and Attakullakulla (the Little Carpenter), actively sought a regular trade with the Virginians to circumvent the South Carolina monopoly. The Virginians, for their part, hoped to recruit Cherokee warriors in their campaign to win the upper Ohio Valley.²⁷ Lieutenant-Governor Dinwiddie sought Glen's assistance in this regard. Although the South Carolina governor cooperated to a degree, sending a force of regulars drawn from South Carolina's Independent Companies to join young George Washington at the forks of the Ohio, Glen remained suspicious.²⁸ He complained of the Virginians having "busied themselves" in the Cherokee affairs "where they had no knowledge." His petulance was aroused by the fears of the displacement of South Carolina by Virginia in the Cherokee trade.²⁹ However, his views had some basis with regard to the damage done by the English colonies' failure to coordinate Indian policies. He did win a point when Sir Thomas Robinson, Secretary of State for the

²⁵ *S.C. Ind. Docs.*, xxii-xxiii; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 42-49; Glen to Board of Trade, July 30, 1753, August 26, 1754, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXV, 339, 347-49, XXVI, 106-9.

²⁶ Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 278-94; Stumpf, "Implications of King George's War," 181-83. On January 23, 1755, the Board of Trade would sign a draft resolution proposing William Henry Lyttleton to replace Glen as governor. Minutes of the Board of Trade, January 23, 1755, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVI, 132.

²⁷ Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 50-74; Reid, *Law of Blood*, 26.

²⁸ Robinson to Glen, July 5, 1754, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVI, 72; Leach, *Arms for Empire*, 317-18, 331, 337.

²⁹ Glen to Robinson, August 15, 1754, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVI, 88-93.

Southern Department, informed him that Dinwiddie had been ordered to advance a substantial sum to Glen for the construction of the overhill fort. When the Virginia governor eventually sent only £1000, Glen believed this to be insufficient. Most of Dinwiddie's money was to be used in financing General Braddock's ill-fated expedition.³⁰

In June, 1755, Glen pursued his own set of policies. Acting contrary to his own admonitions regarding uncoordinated Indian policies, the governor met with a number of Cherokee headmen at Saluda, in the South Carolina backcountry. Considering his conference essential to quiet Cherokee complaints against the long delay in building the trans-Appalachian fort, to counteract the possibility of French influence apparently growing in the town of Tellico, and to gain the cession by the Cherokee of their lands to the Crown, Glen risked the disapproval of his superiors and the condemnation of Dinwiddie. Governor Glen obtained what he believed was the cession by the Cherokee of tribal lands to Great Britain, but the significance of the transaction was greeted with skepticism by the Board of Trade. Even more damaging to his credibility were his exaggerated claims as to the strategic significance of the treaty in binding the Cherokee nation to take a more active role in the war with France. Finally, by keeping the prospective Cherokee scouts away from Braddock's campaign, Glen furnished an alibi for Dinwiddie's failed effort.³¹

The difficulties of James Glen continued. The governor had at various times estimated the costs of construction of an overhill fort at £500, £700, and still later at £3000, but by 1755 his estimate of the extensive structure — which he now envisioned as necessary — was in excess of £6000.³² Furthermore, he had apparently misled the Board of Trade by creating the impression that the funds appropriated by the South Carolina Assembly for the construction of Fort Prince George were to be used for the proposed fort. The governor likewise failed to obtain an appropriation from the Assembly. When a controversy with that body brought no funds, Glen raised only a £2000 loan by subscrip-

³⁰ Robinson to Glen, July 5, 1754, *ibid.*, 73; Glen to Board of Trade, May 29, 1755, *ibid.*, 197-98; Glen to Dinwiddie, January, 1755, enclosed in Glen to Board of Trade, May 29, 1755, *ibid.*, 218-26; Leach, *Arms for Empire*, 353, 359.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 359; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 58-61; Glen to Board of Trade, April 14, 1756, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVII, 41-57, 67-70; Glen to Robinson, August 15, 1754, *ibid.*, XXVI, 88-98.

³² Glen to Board of Trade, April 28, 1747, *ibid.*, XXII, 278; Glen to Robinson, June 20, 1754, *ibid.*, XXVI, 53; Glen to Dinwiddie, June, 1755, *ibid.*, 222-27.

tion from private citizens. Finally, with so many delays in the construction, the Board of Trade grew suspicious of his use of funds.³³

Although he still considered the funds available to be inadequate, diverse circumstances brought Glen to act. Apparently stunned by criticism of his handling of Indian affairs, and by the minimizing of the significance of the Saluda conference, he sought to justify himself. Moreover, knowledge that he was soon to be replaced may have stimulated him to move toward completion of the long-delayed project. Following Braddock's defeat, the Virginians badly needed Indian allies, but they could not recruit significant numbers of warriors until construction of the promised fort to protect the Cherokee women and children was begun. Finally, the rumors of pro-French sentiments among the Cherokee persuaded the Council that Glen must act.³⁴

In February, 1756, Glen began preparations for the expedition designed to construct the fort. The governor sent frontiersman and surveyor John Pearson to obtain information on conditions in the regions and to select a prospective site for the fort. He employed William Gerard DeBrahm as the project's engineer. A German, now settled in Georgia and a bit of an eccentric, DeBrahm had acquired training in military engineering and was employed at that moment in rebuilding Charles Town's defenses.³⁵ In keeping with his grand imperial vision, Glen informed the Council and the Assembly that he intended "a large and lasting Fort" not just one hurriedly thrown up, as had been the case of Fort Prince George.³⁶ Glen left Charles Town on May 19, 1756, and had reached Ninety-Six, in the backcountry, where he learned of the arrival of his successor, William Henry Lyttleton. The new governor discharged all but the soldiers of the Independent Companies under the command of Captain Raymond Demere. These he ordered to Fort Prince George.³⁷ The construction of the outpost — which would be Fort

³³ Glen to Board of Trade, October 25, 1753, August 26, 1754, May 29, 1755, *ibid.*, XXV, 347-49, XXVI, 106-9, 184-98; Robinson to Lyttleton, August 29, 1755, *ibid.*, 245-46; Board of Trade to Lyttleton, November 19, 1756, *ibid.*, XXVII, 166; *South Carolina Gazette*, May 6, 1756.

³⁴ Glen to Board of Trade, April 14, 1756, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVII, 40-64; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 66-84; February 16, 19, 20, 1756, Journal of His Majesty's Honourable Council, 1734-1774, XXV, 147, 152.

³⁵ February 16, 1756, Council Journals, *ibid.*, XXV, 147, South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.

³⁶ April 8, 1756, *ibid.*, 193-95; *South Carolina Gazette*, May 6, 1756.

³⁷ Lyttleton to Board of Trade, June 19, 1756, *S.C. Pub. Recs.*, XXVII, 105-14; *South Carolina Gazette*, June 5, 1756.

Loudoun — experienced yet another, although this time temporary, setback.

The replacement of Glen delayed, but did not terminate the construction of the overhill fort. Fort Loudoun, as the fort would be designated, fulfilled the primary mission intended it by Glen. It would not, however, overawe the Cherokee nation as he had hoped. As good relations between the British and Cherokee broke down in 1759 and 1760, the fort and its garrison became, in a sense, hostages. After the capitulation of the fort during the Cherokee uprising, its vulnerability became obvious and the British would not attempt to rebuild it. By this time, James Glen had returned to Britain, considered by all to have been a failure. The war that he had struggled to prevent had resulted in the destruction of the fort built to extend the empire.