

Watauga during the Revolutionary War  
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## Watauga during the Revolutionary War

*Essential Question: How did the American Revolution effect the Watauga settlement?*

In March 1775, the Watauga settlement was the site of a most remarkable real estate transaction: the **Transylvania Purchase**. For several days in mid-March, **Richard Henderson** of North Carolina negotiated with leaders of the Cherokee Nation. They eventually agreed to the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals in which the Cherokee exchanged their claim to all of the Cumberland River Valley and most of Kentucky in exchange for 10,000 pounds of trade goods.

Virginia and North Carolina eventually voided the Transylvania Purchase, but it still had significant consequences for Watauga and the Cumberland Settlements. Five days after the transaction, Wataugan leaders approached the Cherokee to ask that their existing lease be converted into a purchase.

**Attakullakulla, or Little Carpenter**, was an important Cherokee chief and diplomat. He favored both the agreement with Henderson and the sale of Watauga to the settlers. Not all Cherokee liked the idea of selling their land. Attakullakulla's own son, **Dragging Canoe**, opposed both land sales. He believed that the Cherokee had to stop the growth of white settlements or the Cherokee would eventually lose all their land. However, enough Cherokee agreed with Attakullakulla for the sale to be completed. The sale of the Watauga settlement and surrounding lands is known as the **Watauga Purchase**.

Dragging Canoe and other Cherokee who opposed white settlement formed their own new towns in southeast Tennessee and became known as the Chickamauga. The Chickamauga sided with the British during the Revolution and threatened to attack Watauga and the other settlements. The Wataugans asked North Carolina for help in a document known as the **Watauga Petition**. North Carolina eventually agreed to assist the newly named **Washington District** which included all of its lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. The Washington District appointed a Committee of Safety including Isaac Shelby and **John Sevier** and built Fort Watauga to prepare the settlements for attacks. Dragging Canoe and his allies launched a series of attacks against the Watauga settlements in 1776 known as the **Cherokee War of 1776**. The Wataugans retaliated with a series of attacks on Cherokee towns. The Wataugans were also aided by information from Cherokee leaders like Nanye-hi or **Nancy Ward** who wanted to maintain peace between the settlement and the Cherokee. Wataugans also crossed the mountains to take part in Revolutionary battles including the Battle of Charleston in 1776.

In 1777, North Carolina created **Washington County** from what had been Washington District, and the Watauga Association was no longer necessary. The settlement, however, witnessed one more important event associated with the Revolution, when the

“Overmountain Men” met at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River before they crossed the mountains to attack and defeat British Colonel Patrick Ferguson at the Battle of King’s Mountain in 1780.

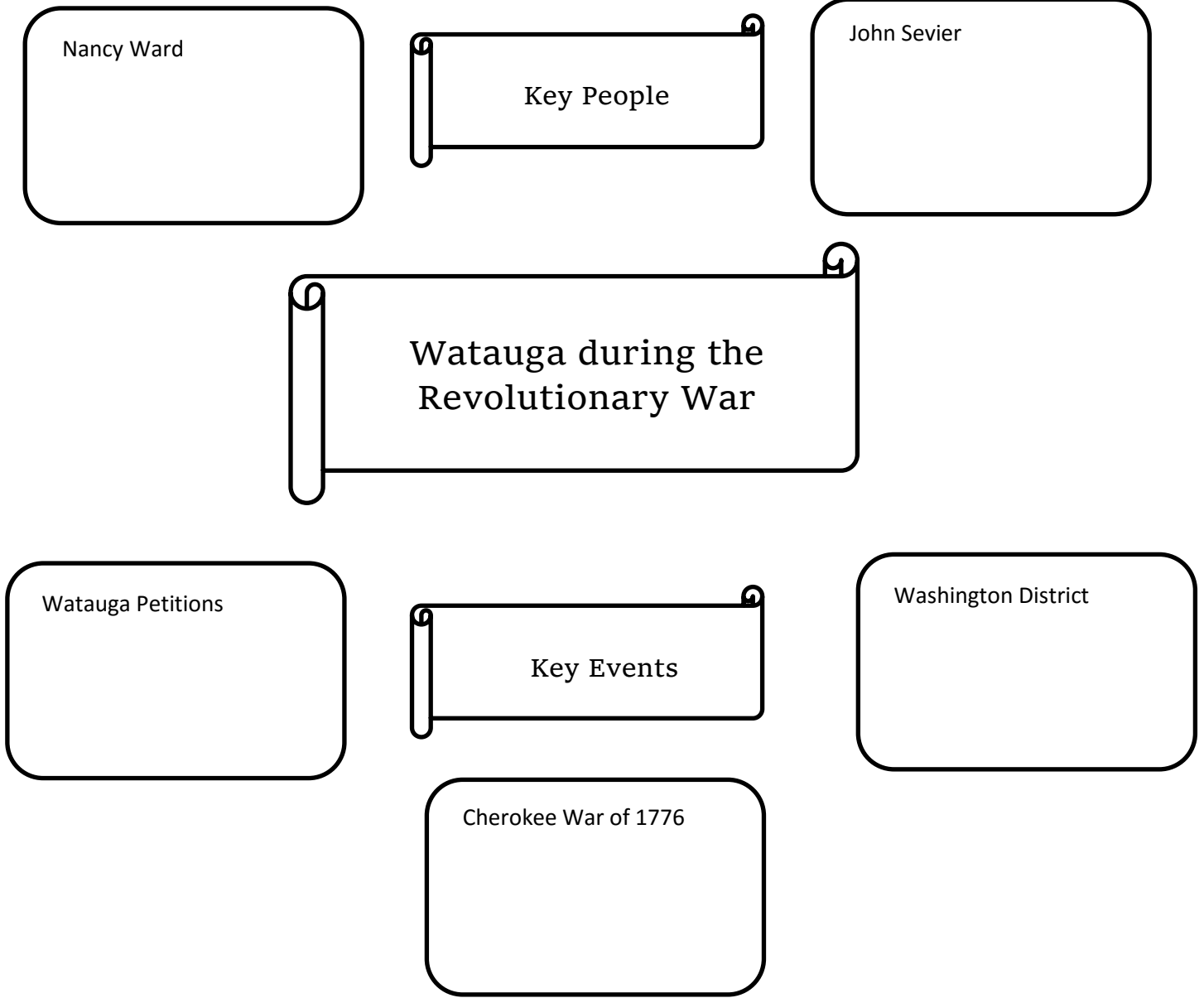
**Sources:**

Biggers, Jeff. *The United States of Appalachia: How Southern Mountaineers Brought Independence, Culture, and Enlightenment to America*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2006. Print.

Michael Toomey, East Tennessee Historical Society. North Carolina History Project: Encyclopedia. <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org>

# Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page.



I believe that the effects of the Revolutionary war on were mostly \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

# Watauga during the Revolutionary War Key

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page. *Answers will vary*

Nancy Ward- Cherokee leader also known as Nanye-hi who wanted peace and helped the settlers.

## Key People

John Sevier- leader of the Watauga settlements who helped prepare for war with Cherokee

## Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Watauga Petitions- 1776 requests to North Carolina and Virginia for annexation.

## Key Events

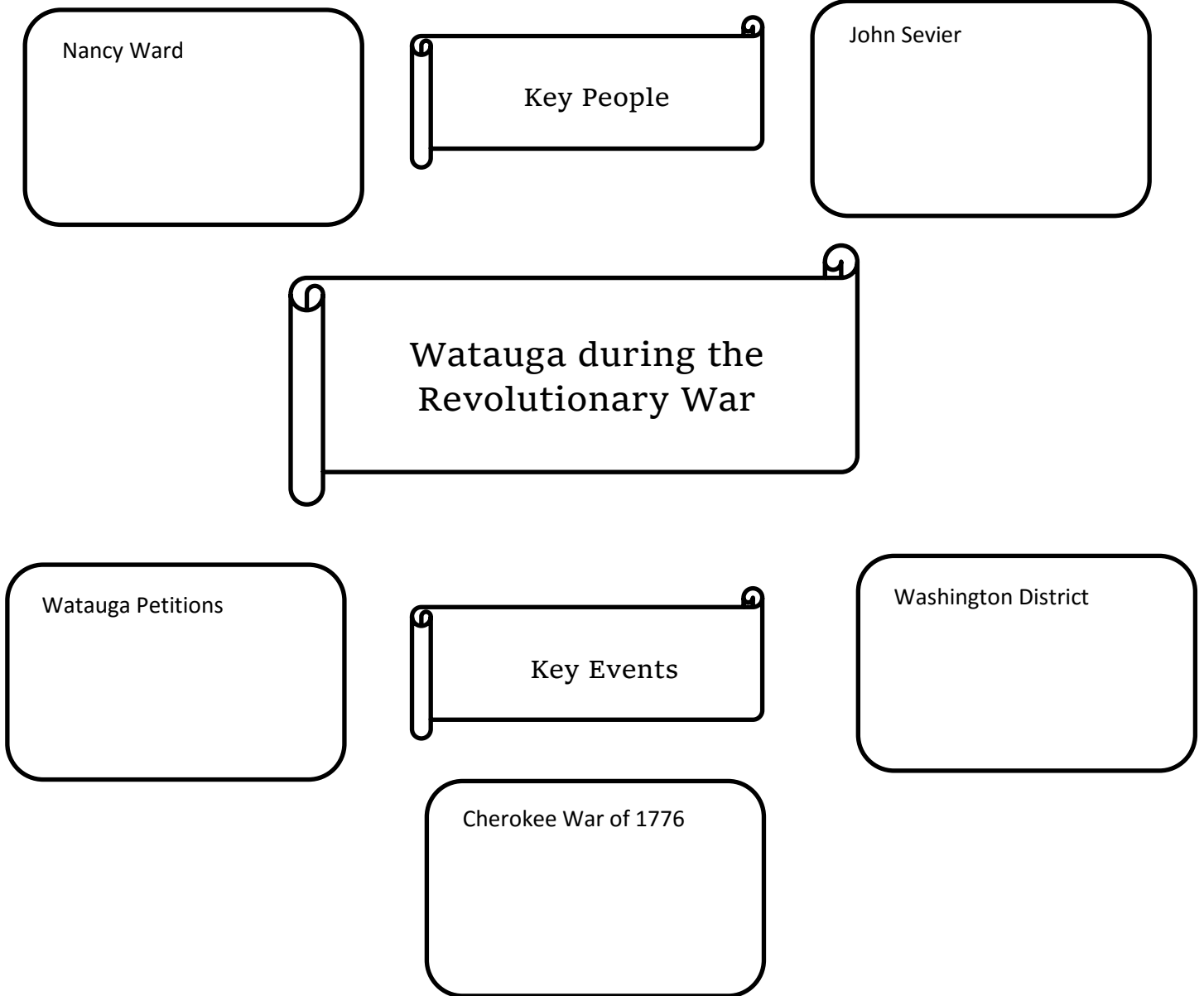
Washington District- area formed when North Carolina agreed to assist Watauga.

Cherokee War of 1776- series of battles between Watauga settlers and Cherokees who wanted to end white settlements.

I believe that the effects of the Revolutionary war on were mostly **negative** because **there was a war with the Cherokee, men from Watauga had to leave home to fight in the Revolution and Watauga lost its independence.**

# Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then write a paragraph in response to the prompt at the bottom of the page.



### **Paragraph Prompt**

Do you believe that the effects of the Revolutionary were mostly positive or negative for Watauga and its people?

***Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.***

# Watauga during the Revolutionary War Key

Complete the graphic organizer below, by filling in supporting details about each of the people or events listed below. Then complete the statement at the bottom of the page. Then write a paragraph in response to the prompt at the bottom of the page. *Answers will vary*

Nancy Ward- Cherokee leader also known as Nanye-hi who wanted peace and helped the settlers.

## Key People

John Sevier- leader of the Watauga settlements who helped prepare for war with Cherokee

## Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Watauga Petitions- 1776 requests to North Carolina and Virginia for annexation.

## Key Events

Washington District- area formed when North Carolina agreed to assist Watauga.

Cherokee War of 1776- series of battles between Watauga settlers and Cherokees who wanted to end white settlements.

### Paragraph Prompt

Do you believe that the effects of the Revolutionary were mostly positive or negative for Watauga and its people? *Answers will vary, but should be supported by text evidence.*

*Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.*

# Watauga Petition

*The renewed threat of violence from the Cherokee that accompanied the outbreak of the Revolutionary War convinced the Wataugans that they needed the protection of one of the neighboring Revolutionary states in order to survive. Therefore, they sent the following petition the North Carolina legislature.*

## **1776 Petition of the Inhabitants of Washington District**

To the Hon. the Provincial Congress of North Carolina:

The humble petition of the inhabitants of Washington District, including the River Wataugah, Nonachuckie, etc., that about six years ago, Col. Donelson, (in behalf of the Colony of Virginia,) held a treaty with the Cherokee Indians, in order to purchase the lands of the Western Frontiers; in consequence of which Treaty, many of our petitioners settled on the lands of the Wataugah, etc., expecting to be within the Virginia line, and consequently hold their lands by their improvements as first settlers; but to their great disappointment, when the lines was run they were (contrary to their expectation) left out; finding themselves thus disappointed, and being too inconveniently situated to remove back, and feeling an unwillingness to loose the labour bestowed on their plantations, they applied to the Cherokee Indians, and leased the land for the term of ten years, before the expiration of which term it appeared that many persons of distinction were actually making purchases forever; thus yielding a precedent, (supposing many of them who were gentlemen of the law, to be better judges of the constitution than we were,) and considering the bad consequences it must be attended with, should the reversion be purchased out of our hands, we next proceeded to make a purchase of the lands, reserving those in our possession in sufficient tracts for our own use, and resolving to dispose of the remainder for the good of the community. This purchase was made and the lands acknowledged to us and our heirs forever, in an open treaty, in Wataugah Old Fields, a deed being obtained from the Chiefs of the Cherokee nation, for themselves and their whole nation, which deed was for and in consideration of the sum of two thousand pounds sterling, (paid to them in goods,) for which consideration they acknowledged themselves fully satisfied, Contented and paid; and agreed, for themselves, their whole nation, their heirs, etc., forever to resign, warrant and defend said lands to us, and our heirs, etc., against themselves, their heirs, etc.

The purchase was no sooner made, than we were alarmed by the reports of the present unhappy differences between Great Britain and America, on which report, (taking the now united colonies for our guide,) we proceeded to choose a Committee, which was done unanimously by consent of the people. This committee, (willing to become a party in the present unhappy contest) resolved, (which is now on our records,) to adhere strictly to the rules and orders of the Continental Congress, and in open committee acknowledged themselves indebted to the united colonies their full proportion of the Continental expense.

Finding ourselves on the Frontiers, and being apprehensive that, for the want of a proper



legislature, we might become a shelter for such as endeavoured to defraud their creditors; considering also the necessity of recording Deeds, Wills, and doing other public business; we, by consent of the people, formed a court for the purposes above mentioned, taking (by desire of our constituents) the Virginia laws for our guide, so near as the situation of affairs could admit; this was intended for ourselves, and was done by the consent of every individual; but, wherever we had to deal with people out of our district, we have ruled them to bail, to abide by our determinations, (which was, in fact, leaving the matter to reference) otherways we dismissed their suit, lest we should in any way intrude on the legislature of the colonies. In short, we have

endeavoured so strictly to do justice, that we have admitted common proof against ourselves, on accounts, etc., from the colonies, without pretending a right to require the Colony seal.

We therefore trust we shall be considered as we deserve, and not as we have (no doubt) been many times represented, as a lawless mob -- It is for this very reason we can assure you that we petition: we now again repeat it, that it is want of proper authority to try and punish felons, we can only mention to you murderers, horse-thieves and robbers, we are sorry to say that some of them have escaped us for want of authority. We trust, however, this will not long be the case; and we again repeat it, that its for this reason we petition to this Honourable Assembly.

Above we have given you an abstract of our proceedings, since our settling on the Wataugah, Nonachuckie, etc., in regard to our civil affairs we have shown you the causes of our first settling and the disappointments we have met with, the reason of our lease and of our purchase, the manner in which we purchased, and how we hold of the Indians in fee simple; the causes of our forming a committee, and the legality of its election; the same of our court proceedings, and our reasons for petitioning in regard to our legislature.

We now proceed to give you some account of our military establishments, which were chosen agreeable to the rules established by convention, and officers appointed by the committee. This being done, we thought it proper to raise a company on the District service, as our proportion, to act in the common cause on the seashore. A Company of fine riflemen were accordingly enlisted, and put under Capt. James Robertson, and were actually embodied, when we received sundry letters and depositions (copies of which we now enclose to you,) you will readily judge that there was occasion for them in another place, where we daily expected an attack. We therefore thought proper to station them on our Frontiers, in defense of the common cause, at the expense and risque of our own private fortunes, till further public orders, which we flatter ourselves will give no offence. We have enclosed you sundry proceedings at the station where our men now remain.

We shall now submit the whole to your candid and impartial judgment. We pray your mature and deliberate consideration in our behalf, that you may annex us to your Province, (whether as county, district, or other division,) in such manner as may enable us to share in the glorious cause of Liberty; enforce our laws under authority, and in every respect become the best members of society; and for ourselves and constituents we hope, we may venture to assure you, that we shall adhere strictly to your determinations, and that nothing will be lacking or any thing neglected, that may add weight (in the civil or military establishments) to the

glorious cause in which we are now struggling, or contribute to the welfare of our own or ages yet to come.

That you may strictly examine every part of this our petition, and delay no time in annexing us to your Province, in such manner as your wisdom shall direct, it is the hearty prayer of those who, or themselves and their constituents, as in duty bound shall ever pray.

Signers—Members of the Committee

John Carter, Chn. Charles Robertson James Robertson	Zach. Isbell John Sevier Jas. Smith	Jacob Brown Wm. Bean John Jones	George Rusel Jacob Womack Robert Lucas
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Jacob Womack	Jos Brown	Adam Sherrill
Joseph Dunnam	Job Bumper	Samuel Sherrill, Jun.
Rice Durrton	Isaac Wilson	Ossa Rose
Edward Hopson	Richard Norton	Henry Bates, Junr.
Lew. Boyer, D. Atty.	George Hutson	Jos. Grimes
Joseph Buller	Thomas Simpson	John Brown
Andw. Greer	Valentine Sevier	Joshua Barton, Sen.
Joab [X] Mitchell	Jonathan Tipton	Henry Gates, Jun.
Gideon Morris	Robert Sevier	Will'm Dod
Shadrack Morris	Drury Gordon	Govers Morris
William Crockett	Richard Fletcher	Wm. Bates
Thomas Dedmon	Ellexender Greer	Ge. Hartt
David Hickey	Andrew Grear, Jun.	Isaac Wilson
Mark Mitchell	Teeler Nave	Jno. Waddell
Hugh Blair	Lewis Jones	Jarrett Williams
Elias Peeber	John I. Cox	Oldham Hightower
Jos. Brown	John Cox, Jr.	Abednego Hix
John Neave	Abraham Cox	Charles McCartney
John Robinson	Emanuel Shote	Frederick Vaughan
Christopher Cunningham	Tho. Houghton	Jos McCartney
Jas. Easley	Jos. Luske	Mark Robertson
Ambrose Hodge	Wm. Reeves	Joseph Calvitt
Dan'l Morris	David Hughes	Joshua Houghton
Wm. Cox	Landon Carter	John Chukinbeard
James Easley	John McCormick	James Cooper
John Haile	David Crockett	William Brokees
Elijah Robertson	Edw'd Cox	Julius Robertson
William Clark	Tho's Hughes	John King
John [X] Dunnam	William Robertson	Michael Hider
Wm. Overall	Henry Siler	John Davis
Mat Hawkins	Frederick Calvitt	John Barley
Christopher Cunningham, Sen.	William Newberry	

**Source: William L. Saunders, editor, *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* 10 volumes (Raleigh, North Carolina: Josephus Daniels, 1886-1890), 10: 708-**