

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.

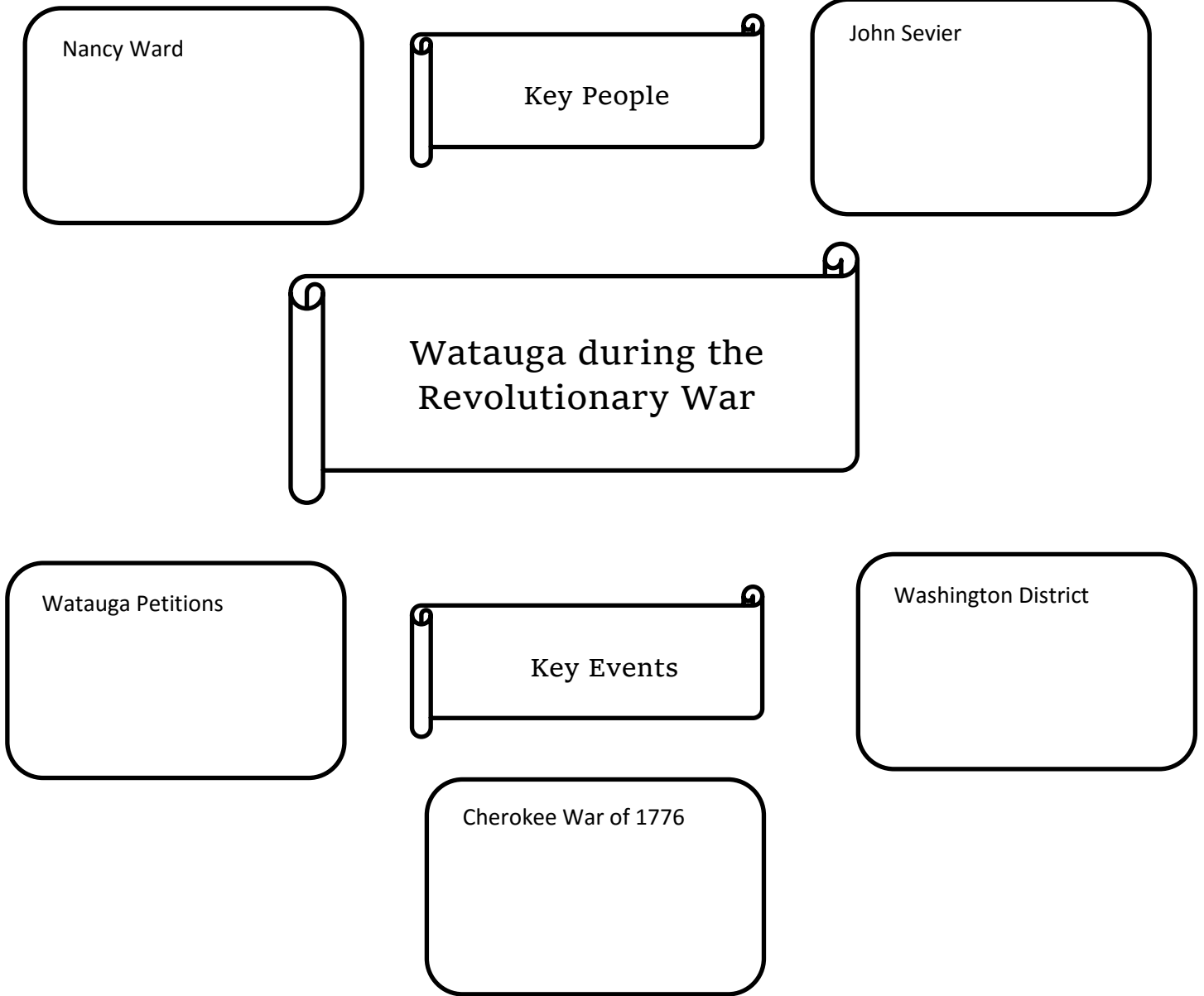
Sources:

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>

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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
_____.