

# Title: Watauga Settlement

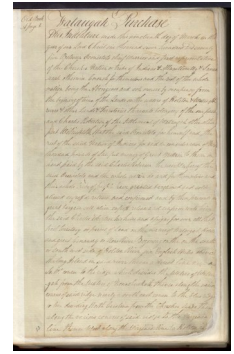
Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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**Grade Level:** 4th Grade

**Date Created:** 2017

Visit [sos.tn.gov/tsla/education](https://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education) for additional lesson plans.



## Introduction:

As Americans we recognize the 13 colonies as the origin of our country, however, as Tennesseans we seldom realize our roots began with the Watauga Settlement. By creating a (five-tab foldable, brochure, or mini-book) students will record important terminology, examine primary sources, and read, listen and speak about the effects of the American Revolution on the Watauga Settlement.

## Guiding Question(s):

1. Students will recall what they learned about the Watauga Settlement (**SS 4.25**)?
2. What were the events that led to the establishment of Tennessee's first settlement?
3. Why would it be considered a threat for the Watauga Settlers to make their own government and establish their own rules?
4. Explain the importance of the Watauga Petitions.
5. Why did the settlers of Watauga need protection?
6. Who agreed to protect the Watauga settlers and why?
7. What was the main reason the American Colonies rebelled and fought for their independence in the American Revolution?
8. How did the Revolution affect the Watauga Settlement?

**Learning Objectives:** In the course of the lesson, students will

-use TSLA primary sources, graphic organizers, and group activities to analyze and explain how the American Revolution affected the Watauga Settlement.

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## Curriculum Standards:

### *Social Studies:*

**SS 4.34** Explain using supporting details how the Revolution affected the Watauga Settlement, including:

- Washington District
- Cherokee War of 1776
- Nancy Ward
- John Sevier
- Watauga Petitions

### *Writing:*

**W.4.8.** Recall relevant information from experience or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

### *Speaking and Listening:*

**SL.4.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## Materials Needed:

- [Tennessee State Library and Archives Primary Sources page](#)
- Copy and print Watauga Images handout for direct teaching (linked later in the lesson plan)
- Printed copies of the drawing, "[Siege of Fort Watauga, July 20, 1776](#)", showing Catherine Sherrill scaling the fort wall.
- [Copies of the photo analysis sheet](#)
- Copies of an excerpt from the book *The Wataugans: First "Free and Independent Community on the Continent*, and the chapter, "The Cherokee War and the End of an Era."
- Copy of the Watauga Association Bicentennial Medal

## Background:

### [“Watauga Association”](#)

**Author:** W. Calvin Dickinson

**Source Location:** [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)

### [Watauga Association](#)

**Author:** Michael Toomey

**Source Location:** [North Carolina History Project](#)

### [Let Freedom Ring: The American War of Independence Online Collection](#)

This collection highlights a time when the area that is now the state of Tennessee was land claimed by North Carolina. White settlers and their African-American slaves moved into Upper East Tennessee in the 1770s and established their own government, the Watauga Association. By so doing, these settlers clearly defied British authority which had forbidden settlement west of the Appalachian Mountain chain in the Proclamation of 1763. Fiercely independent, these Overmountain folk and their like-minded kin in Southwest Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, and Western North and South Carolina, collectively referred to as the Southern Backcountry, had little use for distant colonial governments dominated by the British or wealthy planters.

## Lesson Activities: Introductory Activity

- Ask students to restate the following learning objective for today from the board.

“We will continue learning about the Watauga Settlement and explain how The American Revolution affected the settlement including:

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. The Washington District | d. John Sevier       |
| b. Cherokee War of 1776    | e. Watauga Petitions |
| c. Nancy Ward              |                      |

- Ask students to link what they have learned this year about Watauga; Tennessee’s first settlement and settlers (**SS 4.25**) to today’s learning objective. You may choose to hear from individual students as they recall previous lessons on Watauga, students may respond on individual white boards or students could discuss with shoulder partners.

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## Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 1

- Distribute paper and create a five tab foldable brochure or mini book titled “How Did the American Revolution affect the Watauga Settlement?”

Instructions for mini book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSjyJo8h7qs>

Instructions for foldable brochure: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7UZ6Iv8b\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7UZ6Iv8b_Y)

- Label the tabs individually:
  - 1) The Washington District
  - 2) Cherokee War of 1776
  - 3) Nancy Ward
  - 4) John Sevier
  - 5) Watauga Petitions.
- Distribute copies of the Watauga images linked below to each student and ask the students to cut images, glue them on the appropriate flap on the foldable, and add text describing what they are.
- Review/Discuss lesson terminology from the Guiding Questions section while students copy the descriptions under the correct flap of their Watauga foldable.

Watauga Images:

1. [Tennessee \(map\)](#)
2. [Siege of Fort Watauga, July 20, 1776](#)
3. [Nancy Ward, Beloved Woman of the Cherokee](#)
4. [John Sevier](#)
5. [Watauga Association Petition to the North Carolina General Assembly](#)

**Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 2:** Analyzing a drawing, [“Siege of Fort Watauga,”](#) with [photo analysis worksheet](#).

- Students will break into groups arranged by the teacher where all ability levels are represented (heterogeneous grouping of students).
- Distribute tent task cards (following this page) with group roles and allow each student to choose a role for the learning group. Tent Task Cards are located below and can also be found [here](#).

(Printing on card stock allows cards to be used over and over and helps insure the cards will stand up.)

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# The Summarizer

## The Summarizer...

- restates the group's conclusions and responses.
- prepares a summary of the group's efforts.
- checks for clarity of understanding.
- says, "Does this accurately reflect what we've done today?"
- says, "Have I left out anything important here?"

# The Presenter

## The Presenter...

- regularly contributes to the team's efforts.
- presents the group's finished work to the class.
- says, "How would you like this to sound?"
- says, "How much of what we discussed should be shared with the class?"

# The Recorder

## The Recorder...

- keeps a public record of the team's ideas and progress.
- checks to be sure that ideas are clear and accurate.
- uses charts, multiple colors, and other techniques to highlight and summarize the ideas of the team.
- says, "I think I heard you say\_\_\_\_; is that right?"
- says, "How would you like me to write this?"

# The Facilitator

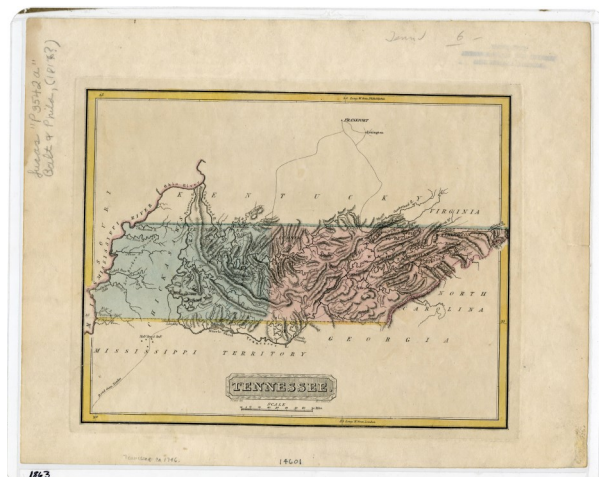
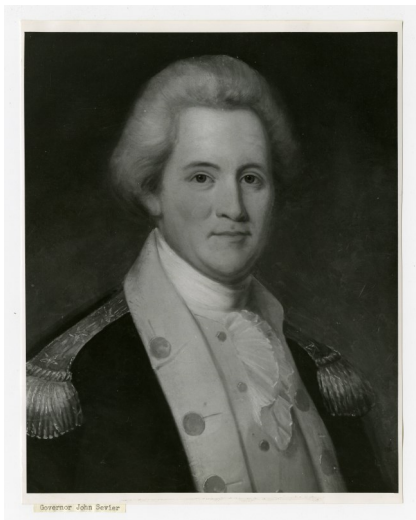
## The Facilitator...

- leads discussions
- suggests solutions to team problems.
- helps members clarify points.
- protects members from attack.
- makes sure that every voice is heard.
- says, "Let's hear from\_\_\_\_next."
- says, "That's okay, but let's get back to our task."

- Students will evaluate a drawing entitled “Siege of Fort Watauga, July 20, 1776”, and use the [photo analysis worksheet](#) to observe the image and discuss with group members key questions that lead to understanding.
- The teacher draws attention to the fact that students are viewing a drawing not a photograph as she/he moves about the classroom. The teacher will monitor the progress of each group, asking probing questions to help students clarify their thinking.
- When students complete the analysis of the drawing ask groups to present their conclusions to the class.
- Summarize the information presented from the various groups and then direct the discussion to the question at the bottom of the handout. Ask students, “Where do you think we could find more information about the people or objects in the photo?”
- Welcome student responses and build on their thinking. Present students with additional information from the sites listed under “Background Information.”

[“Watauga Association”](#) and [Watauga Association](#)

In conclusion to the lesson, students will add new information to their 5-tab foldable, brochure, or mini-book.



## Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 3—Independent Assessment: Colonization and the Revolutionary War- Introduction to the Revolutionary War

### [Readworks.org Passage](#)

Students will read the 4th grade reading passage above and answer the comprehension questions. Teachers may use this as an independent assignment, additional small-group reading instruction or as an assessment. If selected, teachers will need to create a free account with Read Works for access.

### Extended Lesson:

Show students a copy of the Watauga Association Bicentennial Medal. Read Theodore Roosevelt's quote, "They were the first men of American birth to establish a free and independent community on the continent... they successfully solved the difficult problem of self-government." Ask students to support with evidence how this coin and the phrase on it connects to today's lesson. Students can write their responses on an index card as an exit ticket, share their ideas orally with the class or explain their answer to a partner.



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# Elizabethton Star

HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT

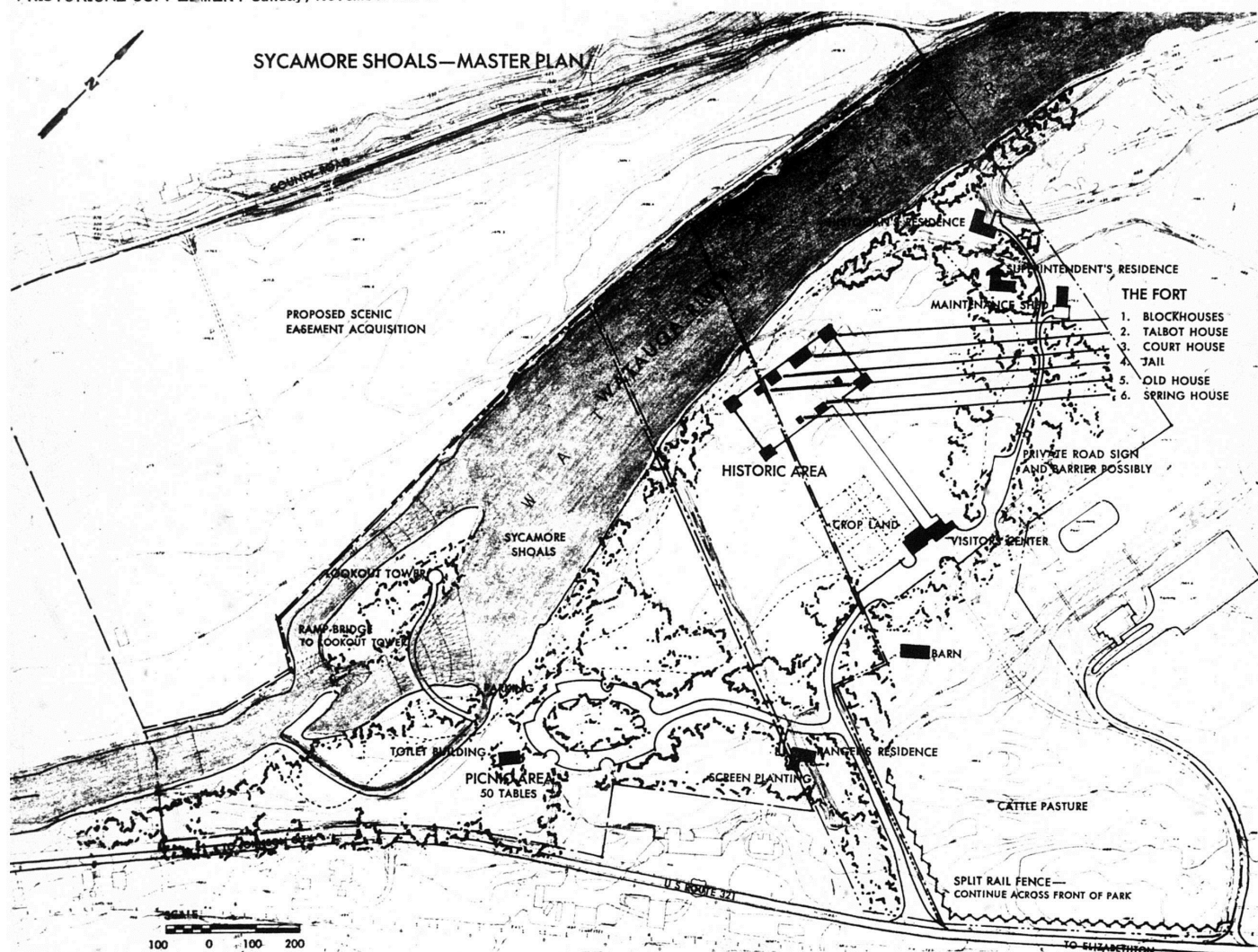
BICENTENNIAL

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1972

1772 - 1972



## THE WATAUGA ASSOCIATION



MASTER PLAN REPORT of Sycamore Shoals Historic Park prepared in 1971 for the State of Tennessee Department of Conservation Historical Commission in collaboration with the Watauga Historical Association by William Hamilton Wallace, architect and Hal T. Spoden, engineer of Kingsport. Note the Visitors Center, The Fort, Picnic Area, Ramp-Bridge to Lookout Tower and other features of the Historic Area—Hub of the Frontier.



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**PROCLAMATION**  
BY THE GOVERNOR

WHEREAS, TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO THIS YEAR THE FIRST INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT ON THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT WAS SET UP BY A GROUP OF PIONEERS IN THE WATAUGA RIVER AREA OF EAST TENNESSEE; AND

WHEREAS, THESE HARDY MEMBERS OF THE WATAUGA ASSOCIATION DECLARED THEMSELVES FREE OF BRITISH RULE FOUR YEARS BEFORE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; AND

WHEREAS, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TOOK NOTICE OF THIS ACTION OF THE TENNESSEE SETTLERS, TERMING IT A "DANGEROUS EXAMPLE TO THE REST OF THE COLONIES;" AND

WHEREAS, TOO FEW PEOPLE IN AMERICA TODAY ARE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANT PART TENNESSEANS OF THE WATAUGA ASSOCIATION TOOK IN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE FREE GOVERNMENT WE NOW ENJOY; AND

WHEREAS, WE ARE NOW IN THE MIDST OF PLANS TO CELEBRATE OUR NATION'S 200TH BIRTHDAY IN 1976:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WINFIELD DUNN, AS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM THIS YEAR 1972 AS THE

WATAUGA ASSOCIATION 200TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

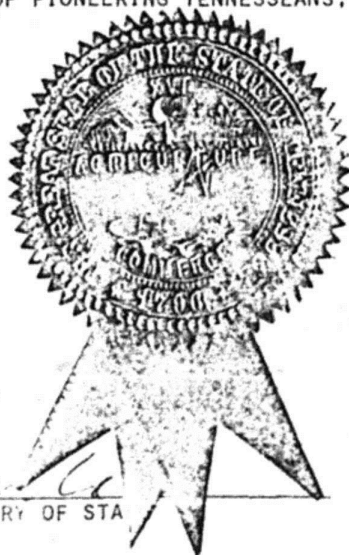
AND URGE ALL OUR CITIZENS TO RECOGNIZE THE PRECEDENCE SET BY THIS GROUP OF PIONEERING TENNESSEANS.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HERETO  
UNTO SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE  
GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF TEN-  
NESSEE TO BE AFFIXED AT NASHVILLE  
ON THIS THE 12TH DAY OF JUNE, 1972.

*Winfield Dunn*  
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
SECRETARY OF STATE





# Franklin Mint Commemorates 200th Year

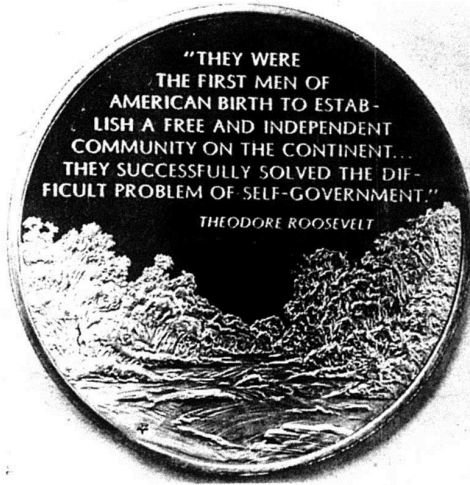
The Franklin Mint has struck a special commemorative medal to honor the Watauga Association's bicentennial as the "first free and independent community on the continent."

A handsome bronze copy, slightly larger and thicker than a silver dollar, will be presented to each member of the Watauga Historical Association and to each new member as his \$5 membership fee is received.

Almost 5,000 of the medals are now in possession of the Franklin Mint's Special Commemorative Issues subscribers throughout the nation.

The face of the medal depicts a frontier setting in which men in the foreground and women behind them are in attitudes suggesting the calm deliberations of a law-abiding community even as fields are cleared and cabins rise.

The reverse is a view of Sycamore Shoals and the famous quotation from Theodore Roosevelt



## Sycamore Shoals Witnessed Decade That Shaped Nation

Four years before the birth of our nation a "free and independent government" existed here at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River.

The Watauga Country was settled by mistake — the first settlers thought they had settled in Virginia, but learned that they were on land claimed by North Carolina.

For six relentless years they maintained in defiance of the British Crown, the Colonial Government and the Cherokee Indians, a republic in the wilderness, setting up their own judicial and civil body fashioned after the Virginia laws.

The Watauga Compact was a simple agreement to live under law and authority not available except as they were able to provide it themselves for the preservation of the settlement.

They elected five of their number "to govern and direct for the common good of all people."

It was at Sycamore Shoals on March 17, 1775, that the biggest private or corporate real estate transaction in United States history took place.

The Transylvania Company, headed by Richard Henderson, bought from the Cherokees led by Chief Oconostota, all the lands between the Kentucky and Cumberland Rivers.

Twelve hundred Cherokees — many of whom would return in war paint little more than a year later — converged on Watauga for 20 days of counseling preceding the signing of the Transylvania Purchase. The purchase price for 20 million acres was 2,000 pounds sterling and trade goods valued at 8,000 pounds.

Meanwhile, the Wataugans were acting on their own behalf and for a fifth of Henderson's outlay they bought more than 2,000 square miles of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina, lands they had previously leased. The deeds covered all or part of 5 counties in Tennessee and 5 in Carolina.

With the coming of the Revolutionary War, the Wataugans were willing to take on the British in addition to Indian problems at home.

The Cherokees had never been altogether happy with the Wataugans' presence. Goaded now by Dragging Canoe, who went up and down the nation stirring up resentment against the whites, they caught the war fever.

The largest Cherokee Band, under old Abram, struck Fort Watauga which had been built near Sycamore Shoals. Early

on a quiet Sunday morning, while the women were outside the compound milking and three men had gone to a nearby creek for water, the Indians made a sudden and final assault.

The women raced for safety but Catherine Sherrill was cut off from the gate. Leaping desperately to climb the palisade wall, she was caught by the arms and hauled bodily into the fort. Four years later "Bonny Kate" was to become the wife of her rescuer and, after a time, first lady of Tennessee — Mrs. John Sevier.

By this time Watauga Association, upon its own petition, had become Washington District.

The Revolutionary cause was growing increasingly desperate in the Carolinas and Watauga opened its arms to patriot families from beleaguered

lowlands.

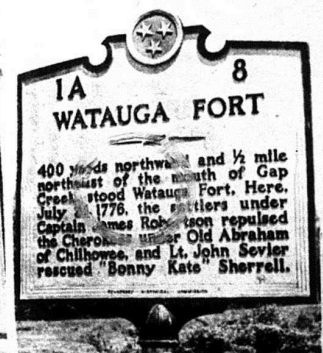
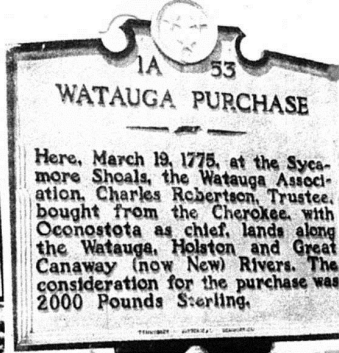
Sycamore Shoals was chosen as a rendezvous point to answer the challenge of Major Patrick Ferguson who was commanding the left wing of Cornwallis' Army. On Sept. 25, 1780, the day of the muster, about 1100 men assembled at Sycamore Shoals.

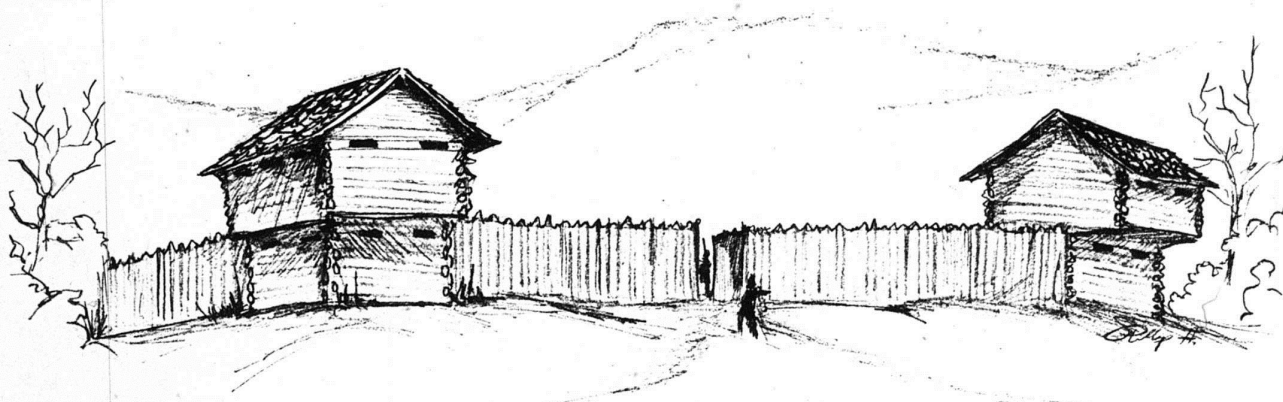
The Rev. Samuel Doak, pioneer Presbyterian minister, acted as chaplain, sending the Overmountain Men off with the battle — cry: "the sword of the Lord and Gideon." They found Ferguson's regulars and Tories atop King's Mountain and, in a battle that lasted 1 hour and 5 minutes, won a key victory in the fight for Independence.

Three times the Wataugans either bargained or fought to hold Watauga against all odds.

Holding it they held, conceivably, the future of a nation yet to be formed.

## Historical Markers Tell The Eventful Story Of Past





**FORT WATAUGA** — First permanent settlement in the West located near the town of Elizabethton, Fort Watauga was a group of cabins arranged in rectangular shape and connected by stockade walls of sharp pointed poles set firmly in the ground. Within reach of its guns were a courthouse and jail.

Blockhouses with overhanging upper floors guarded the corners. Matthew Talbot, a prominent Virginian, was among the first to acquire land under the Watauga Purchase. It is felt that his original cabin as well as the larger residence he later built were both part of the fort complex.

## Sycamore Historical Park Focal Point Of U.S. Bicentennial Celebration In State

The Sycamore Shoals project, for which the state has appropriated \$500,000 will be the focal point of the U. S. Bicentennial Celebration in Tenn.

A resolution to petition the President of the United States and the Congress to declare Sycamore Shoals the national focal point of the Bicentennial Celebration of the U. S. in 1776 was passed by the 87th General Assembly.

The Sycamore Shoals Historical Park will be built around a re-creation of historic Fort Watauga at the head of the Shoals and designated a Registered National Historical landmark in recognition of its prominence in the early frontier period of U. S. history.

Plans developed as a result of funds derived from the Tenn. Historical Commission and matching monies from the City of Elizabethton and Carter County include a number of features in addition to the re-constructed fort, one proposal being for a lookout tower reached by a ramp-bridge extending above the shoals to a small island.

A visitors center will house educational exhibits, a viewing

theatre, and administrative and historical research facilities. A 50-table picnic area beside the river is also part of the proposed development.

The possibility of additional funds from federal sources is being explored by the state, local legislators say, since Sycamore Shoals figured dramatically in two nationally historic events, the purchase from the Cherokees of a vast tract of land that included most of present-day Kentucky and Tennessee and opened the door to Western Settlement, and the rendezvous of frontiersmen to march to Kings Mountain and an important Revolutionary War victory.

The park is expected to become the focal point of Tennessee's participation in the American Revolution Bicentennial. The park area is said to be unique in that it is one of the few frontier-period sites of importance in Tennessee still in approximately its original state of preservation.

It was included in the 1967 annexation of territory by the City of Elizabethton. Actual park acreage, including the Watauga River flowing through

it, is approximately 23 acres of which half was contributed by Beaunit Corporation.

The master plan calls for a total project area of almost 90

acres and an outlay of \$1,106,700 for development and construction not including land acquisition costs.

No construction has been

undertaken as yet pending finalization of detailed plans and procedures under the Department of Conservation Historical Commission.

## Watauga Historical Association Marks Tenth Anniversary

Headed by Judge Ben Allen since its beginning, the Watauga Historical Association was formed a decade ago primarily to preserve Sycamore Shoals as one of Tennessee's most important historical sites.

The Association was chartered Oct. 15, 1962, its membership made up largely of a group of local citizens who contributed \$7,500 to make an initial purchase of 6.9 acres at the head of the famous shoals which now lie within the westward expanded city limits of Elizabethton.

In 1963 the Association produced a brochure telling the story of Sycamore Shoals' place in state and national history. A delegation of its members flew to Washington for a conference with Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior under the Kennedy administration. Udall, whose department embraces the National Park Service, provided the helpful expertise of NPS planners to produce a basic design for development of the spot.

Next year, Udall announced that it had been designated a Registered National Historic Landmark.

Meanwhile, in March, 1963,

the Tennessee Legislature had acted to provide the first public funds to be placed alongside Historical Association members' private donations. Approximately four more acres were thus added to the original site acquisition, by state purchase.

The Beaunit Corporation added another ten acres in 1964. This was of particular importance since it was the bed of the Watauga River itself, plus ten feet on either bank, and the small arrow-shaped island where the shoals begin.

The Watauga Historical Association, working through its representatives at the state and national level, and through its most persuasive spokesmen locally, had "saved" the heart of the Sycamore Shoals site. But it was no nearer a development than before.

This was to change in 1969 with the successful application for state funds allotted by the Tennessee Historical Commission.

The state's \$3,500 was matched by \$1,750 each from the City of Elizabethton and Carter County and, with the concurrence of the Tennessee Department of Conservation, the total of \$7,000 was invested

in an engineering study and architectural master plan for a proposed historical park — based in general outline on the National Park Service ideas five years before.

The detailed plan won endorsement by the state's Conservation department and a recommendation that Sycamore Shoals be Tennessee's focal point for the U. S. Bicentennial celebration.

More important, in 1971 the architects' impressively-presented design for the park won approval of Tennessee's General Assembly which appropriated \$500,000 toward its implementation. In 1972 it added an appropriation for the acquisition of the John Carter home, this year placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

While Ben Allen has remained active head of the organization during its first ten years, an original 19 directors have been augmented by ten others and there have been routine shifts among officers. Of the nearly 60 persons connected with the Association's efforts during the decade, it is significant that a majority continue their participation today. Eight of the original number are deceased.

## Legislature Would Center National Celebration Here

(EXCERPT)

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That the Congress of the United States declare that Sycamore Shoals, Carter County, Tennessee, be designated the focal point of the Bicentennial Celebration of the United States of America.