Santee Indian Organization

The Santee Indian People of South Carolina, are the descendants of a group of a people who lived and farmed in the area of White Oak, now known as Holly Hill, South Carolina. This is information reported in the United States Federal Census of 1850.

The earliest documented information found on the Santee Tribe is from numerous books written about South Carolina Indian tribes. Some are:

* *The Indian Tribes of the Southeastern United States*; written by John R. Swanton. The book discusses several SC tribes but specifically speaks of the Santees being seen by a Spanish navigator named Ecija in the year of 1609. The tribe was seen on the river that bears its name. The tribe was reported again in 1670 by the English settling the new province of South Carolina.
* *A New Voyage to Carolina, a Journal*; by John Lawson. Lawson describes the Santee as a "a well-humour'd and affable People” and spends the night with them in early 1701. Lawson also describe the Fort Watson Mound, a burial mound created by the Santee Tribe.
* *Red Carolinians*; by Chapman J. Milling. This book mentions a report from the South Carolina British Public Records Office that acknowledges the tribe as an established group of river dwellers in 1720
* *South Carolina Indians, Indian Traders, and Other Ethnic Connections: Beginning in 1670*; by Theresa M. Hicks. This book contains census and genealogical information of the modern day tribe.
* *Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry*; by Gene Waddell. He writes of the Santee Tribes location, their interaction with other SC tribes and various settles in the year 1670. He also discussed the Santee dialect and the non-uniformity of it with other Tribes. He also tells of their trading of turkeys with the settlers and some of the foods they hunted and ate. Bobcats were one of the favorite meats.
* National Register of Historic Places, US Park Service. This agency listed the Santee Indian Mound/Fort Watson on the National register in 1969.

In later years the term Croatan Indian was used as a derogatory term to indicate mixed blood Indians. Nevertheless, many of our people claimed to be Croatan Indian because it provided the only separation available for them from the Blacks and the Whites. Evidence of this is recorded on almost all birth certificates issued by the state of South Carolina to Santee Indians, it clearly states their race. Many Indians believed they could not draw social security and were not protected by the law. People tend to identify with those who possess the same features and traits, and because we didn’t fit with either Black or White, we banded with our own. The United States racial condition during that time caused the Santee Indians to create their own school. The school was called Crane Pond Elementary School. This school was located in Holly Hill, South Carolina the same White Oak area of the 1700’s. This school educated up to the 7th grade. South Carolina State Law only allowed Whites and Blacks to be educated to a 12th grade education. This schools name was later changed to the Santee Live Oak Indian School and was closed in 1966 at the end of racial segregation. Eighty children were enrolled the last year it was open.

The Santee Tribe also created their own church in the same location as the Crane Pond elementary School in 1917. The land was purchased by a group of Santee Indians to build a “Church of God” for their community. This church building is still active today.