

= Henry Timberlake =

Henry Timberlake (1730 or 1735 ? September 30 , 1765) was a colonial Anglo - American officer , journalist , and cartographer . He was born in Virginia and died in England . He is best known for his work as an emissary from the British colonies to the Overhill Cherokee during the 1761 ? 1762 Timberlake Expedition .

Timberlake 's account of his journeys to the Cherokee , published as his memoirs in 1765 , became a primary source for later studies of their eighteenth - century culture . His detailed descriptions of Cherokee villages , townhouses , weapons , and tools have helped historians and anthropologists identify Cherokee structures and cultural objects uncovered at modern archaeological excavation sites throughout the southern Appalachian region . During the Tellico Archaeological Project , which included a series of salvage excavations conducted in the Little Tennessee River basin in the 1970s , archaeologists used Timberlake 's Draught of the Cherokee Country to help locate important Overhill village sites .

= = Early life and career = =

Henry Timberlake was born in Hanover County , Virginia to Francis and Sarah Austin Timberlake . The Dictionary of American Biography states that Timberlake was born in 1730 , though Timberlake 's age on his marriage license implies that he was born in 1735 . Timberlake was a third - generation American ; his grandfather had emigrated from England . Although he inherited a small fortune when his father died , Timberlake still had to support himself , and sought a military career . In 1756 , at the outset of the French and Indian War , he joined a Virginia militia company known as the " Patriot Blues . " It had embarked on a campaign to expel French and Native American raiders from the western part of the colony . Shortly thereafter , he applied for a commission in the Virginia regiment ? then commanded by George Washington ? but was denied due to a lack of vacancies .

In 1758 , Timberlake successfully applied for a commission in Colonel William Byrd 's recently formed 2nd Virginia Regiment . Commissioned as an Ensign , Timberlake accompanied the regiment on its march to Fort Duquesne , but illness kept him from proceeding . In 1759 , he took part in several minor operations in the present - day Pittsburgh , Pennsylvania area , mostly overseeing the construction of defensive works .

In 1760 , British relations with the Cherokee , which had been moderately friendly for several decades , grew sour after several Cherokee chiefs were imprisoned and killed in South Carolina . In early 1760 , the Cherokee laid siege to Fort Loudoun , a remote outpost in what is now Tennessee . The garrison held out until August of that year , but was forced to surrender due to lack of provisions . A relief column under Archibald Montgomerie failed to reach the fort after burning the Cherokee Lower Towns and being stopped at the Battle of Echoee . In spite of the garrison leaving the fort under a flag of truce , the Cherokee killed 22 of its members on their march home in retaliation for the colonists ' earlier killing of 22 Cherokee held as prisoners at Fort Prince George .

In 1761 , Jeffrey Amherst , the British commander in North America , responded with a larger invasion force , sending James Grant against the Middle Towns and sending Byrd to threaten the Overhill towns .

While Byrd proceeded to destroy the Cherokee Middle towns in North Carolina , he dispatched Colonel Adam Stephen into the Holston River valley to attack the Overhill towns . Timberlake accompanied Stephen to Long Island of the Holston (in modern - day Sullivan County , Tennessee) , where they began building a base known as " Fort Robinson " , and made preparations for a march south .

= = Journey to the Overhill country = =

On November 19 , 1761 , as Fort Robinson was nearing completion , a 400 - man Cherokee force led by Chief Kanagatucko (or " Old Hop ") arrived at the camp and asked for peace , which was immediately granted by Col. Stephen . Kanagatucko asked for an officer to accompany him to

the Overhill towns as proof that hostilities had ended . Stephen was reluctant to allow it , but granted the request when Timberlake volunteered . Timberlake was accompanied by Sergeant Thomas Sumter , an interpreter named John McCormack , and an unnamed servant . The group purchased a canoe and ten days ' worth of provisions with money Sumter had borrowed . The plan was to follow the Holston River to its confluence with the French Broad River , and then proceed to the Little Tennessee River , where the Overhill towns were situated .

Timberlake 's party left Long Island on November 28 , 1761 . The Holston River 's unusually low water levels almost immediately stalled the journey , as the party was forced to drag their canoe over exposed shoals and sandbars . The party ran out of provisions after several days , but McCormack managed to shoot a bear , supplying them with several days ' worth of meat . Around December 7 , the party explored a stalactite @-@ filled cave situated approximately 50 feet above the river . Timberlake described an incident in which Sumter swam nearly a half @-@ mile in the near @-@ freezing river waters to retrieve their canoe , which had somehow drifted away while they were exploring the cave .

On December 13 , the expedition reached a series of treacherous cascades that Timberlake called " Great Falls . " The party spent a whole day carefully maneuvering their way down the cascades only to find the Holston frozen over immediately downstream . The ice slowed the expedition 's progress , but rains on the night of December 14 thawed the ice , and the party passed through the mouth of the Holston (in modern Knoxville) into what is now the Tennessee River on December 15 .

= = = The Overhill country = = =

The deeper waters of the Tennessee River allowed the Timberlake expedition to proceed much more quickly . A hunting party led by the Cherokee chief Slave Catcher met the Timberlake expedition near the mouth of the Little Tennessee River , and supplied the weary expedition with provisions of " dried venison , homminy , and boiled corn . " The following day , Slave Catcher guided the expedition by canoe up the Little Tennessee , although the Timberlake party struggled to keep up . Timberlake recalled , " my hands were so galled , that the blood trickled from them , and when we set out the next morning I was scarce able to handle a pole . " The Timberlake party arrived in the Overhill town of Tomotley on December 20 , where they were greeted by the town 's head man , Chief Ostenaco .

After spending several days in Tomotley as guests of Ostenaco , Timberlake and McCormack proceeded to the Overhill mother town of Chota , where a number of chiefs had gathered in the town 's large councilhouse . Ostenaco gave a speech and ceremoniously buried a hatchet in the ground , symbolizing a state of peace between the English and the Cherokee . Afterward , Timberlake partook in a peace ceremony in which he smoked several ceremonial pipes with the gathered chiefs , a practice Timberlake personally found " very disagreeable , " but participated in without openly complaining .

Timberlake and Ostenaco continued southward to Citico , where Timberlake was greeted by a ceremonial dance involving some 400 Cherokee . Timberlake recalled that the dancers were " painted all over in a hideous manner " and that they " danced in a very uncommon figure . " The town 's chief , Cheulah , presented Timberlake with a string of beads and held another pipe @-@ smoking ceremony . The non @-@ stop pipe smoking made Timberlake so sick that he " could not stir for several hours . " The following day , Timberlake and Ostenaco traveled to Chilhowee , the second southernmost of the Overhill towns on Timberlake 's map , where the town 's chief , Yachtino , held a peace procession similar to that at Citico .

= = = Return to Virginia = = =

His assignment largely completed , Timberlake returned to Tomotley with Ostenaco on January 2 , 1762 . He spent the next few weeks studying Cherokee habits and making notes for his map of the Overhill country . At the end of January , rumors began trickling in from Cherokee scouts of renewed

hostilities with rival tribes to the north . Although the rumors turned out to be based on a misunderstanding , Timberlake grew anxious and begged Ostenaco to guide him back to Virginia . Ostenaco reluctantly agreed , and the party set out on March 10 , 1762 . Just before departure , Timberlake witnessed the ceremonial return of a war party led by Chief Willinawaw . The party sang " the war @-@ song " and planted a scalp @-@ filled pole next to the councilhouse door .

The Timberlake party had decided to make the return trip overland , having purchased horses from the Cherokee . Ostenaco , accompanied by several hundred Cherokee warriors , guided the Timberlake group northward across what is now known as the Great Indian Warpath , which follows the western base of the Appalachian Mountains . On March 11 , the party arrived at the abandoned village of Elajoy along Little River in what is now Maryville , Tennessee , and crossed the French Broad River the following day . A week later , they reached Fort Robinson , which the Stephen garrison had abandoned but stashed a large supply of flour . The expedition left Long Island on March 22 , continuing northward to an army camp where Timberlake had left some belongings . He was deeply disappointed to find the trunk had been looted and most of his goods had been stolen . The party finally reached Williamsburg , Virginia in early April .

= = Visits to London = =

While in Williamsburg , Timberlake and Ostenaco attended a dinner party at William & Mary College ; that evening Ostenaco said he would like to meet the king of England . Although he feared the trip would break him financially , Timberlake agreed to arrange such a trip and meeting for him . In May 1762 , Timberlake , Sumter , and three distinguished Cherokee leaders , including Ostenaco , departed for London .

Arriving in early June , the Cherokee chiefs were an immediate attraction , drawing crowds all over the city . The poet Oliver Goldsmith waited for three hours to meet the Cherokee , and offered a gift to Ostenaco . They sat for Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint their portraits , and they met personally with King George III . The Cherokee completed their return voyage to North America with Sergeant Sumter on about August 25 , 1762 . Timberlake remained in England dealing with some financial difficulties . He was appointed by Jeffrey Amherst , promoted to Crown Governor of Virginia , as a Lieutenant in the " 42nd or Royal Highland Regiment of foot . " His increased pay from this commission enabled Timberlake to pay for his return voyage to Virginia in March 1763 .

Having reached Virginia , Timberlake set out for New York to meet with Amherst to receive his commission . Not long afterward , he received notice that he was among a number of officers to be reduced to half pay . Having learned this , he left the militia and returned home to Virginia to petition the General Assembly to compensate him for his expenses for the journey , but was denied .

In the summer of 1764 , five Cherokee visited Timberlake , seeking an audience with the governor of Virginia and requesting passage to London . The Cherokee wished to appeal to King George to enforce the Proclamation Line of 1763 , which restricted colonists to east of the Appalachians , due to continuing encroachment by white settlers on Cherokee land . The governor denied their request , but Timberlake agreed to help them . He accompanied three Cherokee to London in the fall of 1764 . Not long after their arrival , the benefactor of the trip fell ill and died . Lord Halifax refused to grant the Cherokee an audience , as the trip was unauthorized . Timberlake was accused of attempting to profit off the public attention given to the Cherokee . The government sent the Cherokee back to North America in March 1765 . Shortly after their departure , Timberlake was arrested for failing to pay the debt for the last bill for lodging of himself and the Cherokee . He likely wrote his Memoirs while incarcerated .

= = Family = =

Timberlake had one child , a son , Richard Timberlake , by one of Ostenaco 's daughters , Sakinney . In his old age , Timberlake 's friend Ostenaco lived in retirement with his grandson , Richard .

= = Legacy = =

Timberlake 's primary legacy is the journal he kept while living with the Cherokee . The volume was published in 1765 , likely following Timberlake 's death in September of that year . The journal is of importance both as an ethnological study , as it contains detailed descriptions of various facets of Cherokee society , and as a historical account , as it gives insight into Cherokee political decision making and the tribe 's early reactions to the encroaching European colonists .

Along with Cherokee methods of warfare , Timberlake described their agricultural and hunting customs , religious beliefs , birth and death rites , and marital habits . He described Cherokee government as a " mixed aristocracy and democracy , " with chiefs chosen on the basis of merit. he also described Cherokee methods for building canoes and dwellings , and the general size and form of Cherokee summer and winter houses . Timberlake 's description of the Cherokee councilhouse (the central structure in a typical Cherokee village) has aided archaeologists in the location of such structures at modern excavation sites .

Timberlake 's map , entitled A Draught of the Cherokee Country , accompanied the journal . On it he located all the Cherokee villages on the lower Little Tennessee River and provided important demographic information about village sizes , populations , and leaders . Modern studies have generally confirmed that Timberlake 's map was remarkably accurate . The journal , simply entitled Memoirs , and his map of the Overhill Cherokee country have been reprinted several times . Timberlake 's Memoirs remains one of the best contemporary accounts of the 18th @-@ century Cherokee .