

State of North Carolina Person County: On this 15th day of February 1843 personally appeared before me Clement H Jordan a Justice of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions Sarah Steward a resident of said County aged seventy-four years who being first duly sworn according to law doth on her oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed July 7th 1838 entitled "an act granting half pay and pensions to certain Widows" – That she is the widow of Thomas Steward late of this County and formerly of Mecklenburg County Virginia who was a soldier in the revolutionary war and who at the time of his enlistment resided in Lunenburg County Virginia. That she believes he enlisted under one Captain Dawson or Douson that she is of opinion that General Gibson [George Gibson] commanded the brigade. She is not informed what direction the Army in Virginia took but has often heard her husband speak of being on the Holston River and on the Schuylkill River, Of being at Valley Forge and of being inoculated there for small pox. She further states that he was at the battle of Guilford [Guilford Court House March 15, 1781] and at the siege of York [September-October 19, 1781], and that in the former battle he received a wound in the wrist or arm which resulted in a permanent distortion of said limb which ever afterwards prevented the regular motions of that arm.

She further states that she is of opinion that his whole service in the war would have amounted to some two or three years he having enlisted several times.

She further states upon her oath that she was married to her said husband Thomas Steward in the fall of the year 1791 by James Yancey Esquire of Granville County in this State. She further states upon her oath that her said husband Thomas Steward died on the 13th day of February 1818 leaving 7 children...

S/ Sarah Steward, X her mark

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Thomas Stewart

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Sappony Tribe (G-143)

G-143

The High Plains Indian Settlement along the North Carolina-Virginia boundary is the traditional Sappony homeland. The Sappony have inhabited the rolling hills of Person County, NC, and Halifax County, VA since the early 1700s, settling there before state lines were drawn. They helped draw the boundary line between the states in 1728 when Sappony Ned Bearskin led William Byrd's surveying party through the region.

The Sappony consists of seven main family clans: Coleman, Epps, Johnson, Martin, Shepherd, Stewart/Stuart, and Talley. The Sappony were state-recognized in North Carolina in 1911. In 1997, they were seated in the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs. In 2003, they officially changed their name from the state-designated label of 'Indians of Person County' to 'Sappony', a more accurate reflection of their history and descent.

The Indian church has always been the center of the High Plains Indian Settlement, and faith has been the cornerstone of their resilience. The church began as meeting houses on the Virginia side of the community, then Christ Church at Mayo Chapel, also on the Virginia side. The church expanded and relocated to Person County, NC with the 1946 building of the current Calvary Baptist Church. Each consecutive church in the Sappony community has provided a place to meet, worship, and maintain social ties and tribal autonomy...

The Indian school, in addition to the church, was a source of social connection, interaction, and ties for the Sappony community. The first Sappony Indian school began as one room in their church, Mayo Chapel, in 1878. Person County Schools created 'District 0', the Indian school, in 1887 for Indian students living in both Person County, NC, and Halifax County, VA. The school was built by tribal community members with the land, furnishings, and logs for the building donated by tribal community member Green Martin. By 1899, Person County Schools' Committeemen for the Indian School was made up of three men from the Indian community. In 1904, a new Indian school was built on land donated by tribal community members Ditrion and Mary Epps. By 1909, Halifax County, VA and Person County, NC shared funding for the Indian school since Sappony students lived on both sides of the state line. As they outgrew each school, the Sappony built and provided for several iterations of the school in both North Carolina and Virginia.

In 1925, they built the final iteration, High Plains Indian School, in its final location in Person County, North Carolina. Person County, NC, and Halifax County, VA Boards of Education paid the teachers' salaries; the Indian community was required to build the school. The school accommodated all grades through twelfth with the first graduating seniors of 1952. By 1958 the school had expanded to six rooms. The High Plains Indian School had its own Parent-Teacher Association, and eventually had clubs, and a student-run newspaper. The school was closed in 1962; Sappony students were then integrated into other local schools.

The tribe today continues its traditional governing structure with a total of twelve members. The tribal Council consists of one elected representative from each of the seven family clans. An Executive Committee includes a Tribal Chief, Tribal Chairperson, Executive Director, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Executive Committee helps with the daily business of the tribe. The Council establishes committees to address specific community concerns such as education, cultural preservation, membership, public outreach, and economic development...

Throughout hundreds of years of transition, Sappony people have maintained tribal and family clan bonds through commitment to community and family. Many Sappony who remained in the High Plains Indian Settlement have maintained family homes and farmlands, although they hold jobs in a wide variety of contemporary fields. Relatives who have moved from the area continue to return for annual events, such as the Sappony Heritage Youth Camp, quilting bee, and Homecoming, the year's largest gathering.

Sappony history is one of family connection and interdependence, hard work, faith, adaptability, and loyalty. It is the history of a people whose lives changed with the changing of times – from hunters and farmers of pre-contact days to trading partners with the English during colonial times, and from tenant and landed farmers throughout the 1800s and 1900s to today's contemporary Indian people in a diversified world.