

Interactions between Colonists and Native Americans: Petition of Chowan Indians, Undated

Transcription

North Carolina Ss

To the Hon[o]rable President & Council

The Humble Petition of Jno. Hoyter &

Rest of the Chowan Indians in all

Humble Maner Complaineing & showing

That Wheras upon the humble Petition of The s[ai]d Indians to this Hon[o]r[a]ble Board in the time when the Hon[o]r[a]ble Henderson Walker Esq[ui]r[e] was President of the Council an Order was past that the Survey[o]r Gen[e]r[a]ll or Dep[u]ty should lay out a tract of Land for the s[ai]d Indians of six miles square. And allso another Order in the time of the Hon[o]r[a]ble Landgrave Rob[er]t Daniel Esq[ui]r[e]pursuent to the former Order.

In pursuance of the afors[ai]d orders the Dep[u]ty [erased letters] survey[o]r Viz.

Capt[ain] Luton Came & undertook the s[ai]d survey & by various Courses did

lay out a tract of Land for the s[ai]d Indians but wholly Contrary to the Intent & meaneing of the s[ai]d Order for the Petition[e]rs are very Confident that the intent of the Council was that such Land should be layd out for them as would produce Corn for their support & the petition[e]rs do say & are Ready to averr that no part or parcell of the s[ai]d Land in the s[ai]d tract Layd out will produce Corn being all pines & sands & Deserts so that they have not their Land according to the Intent & meaneing of the Hon[or]ab[le] Board

Reflect & Discuss

Why are members of the Chowan/Chowanoac nation unhappy with the current arrangement?

Why do the petitioners say they are confident the Council acted in good faith?

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neither for quality nor quantity it being not near six
miles square.

Wherefore Your Humble petition[e]rs do humbly Pray your
Hon[o]rs to take our Distressed Condition into y[ou]r serious Consideration
[torn] your Petition[e]rs may have Releife in the Premisses least
[torn]erish for Bread.

And y[ou]r Petition[e]rs shall Ever Pray &c.

John ["his I mark"] Hoyter

in behalf of himself &

Rest of the Nation

[lower left portion of page has been cut away]

Reflect on how native peoples used colonial law to retain some autonomy within systems of oppression.

The note of "his mark" in the signature indicates that this petition was dictated by John Hoyter to an English-speaking court clerk or translator. What were some of challenges Hoyter faced in preparing and submitting a petition?

What might have happened to John Hoyter and the rest of the Chowanoac nation? How might you find out more?