

## **Dr. Henry Woodward: Indian Trader**

By Edwin Eugene Ott

20151029

Henry Woodward was a prominent colonial figure during the early settlement of the southern Province of Carolina (South Carolina). He first shows up in history as a member of Robert Sanford's exploratory expedition of the South Carolina coast in 1666. At Port Royal (near Beaufort, SC) Sanford asks for a volunteer to stay with the Coosa Indians in order to learn their language. The intrepid 20 year old Woodward accepts the task. Sanford identifies Woodward as being a surgeon in his reports. (1) Woodward was treated well by the Indians; however, in 1667 he is captured by the Spanish and imprisoned at St. Augustine. While in prison, he is treated well, is made an official surgeon, and, most significantly, learns the Spanish system of trade with the Indians. In 1668, during a raid by the English privateer Robert Searle upon St. Augustine, Woodward manages to escape and sails with the privateers as ship surgeon. After being shipwrecked in 1669, he joins the Carolina fleet which established the settlement which subsequently became Charleston.

Woodward uses his knowledge and contacts to his great advantage and becomes Charles Town settlement's principal contact with the Indians. In May 1674, Woodward was charged by Lord Ashley (2) to increase trade with the Indians, and, for such services he was to receive 1/5 of the profits. (3) He is also instructed, "You are to consider whether it be best to make a peace with the Westoes or Cussitaws (4) which are a more powerfull Nation said to have pearl and silver and by whose Assistance the Westoes may be rooted out, but noe peace is to be made with either of them without Including our Neighbour Indians who are at amity with us."

The following is a report made by Woodward to Lord Ashley on December 31, 1674. (5) Because the language and construction of the writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century can be tedious to read, I have paraphrased the report in what I hope is a reasonably accurate interpretation:

Woodward received notice in Charles Town (6) from Mr. Percivall (7) that strange Indians had arrived at Lord Ashley's plantation. He took a yawl (8) up the Ashley River to the plantation. Because no one could understand their speech Woodward conjectured they were of the Westo tribe. Woodward and the Westos settled upon a price for the Indian goods which they brought. Despite the language barrier, Woodward determined that the Westo wanted him to journey inland with them to their settlement and were eager to leave that very night.

On Saturday, the tenth of October 1764, Woodward set out in the afternoon with the ten Westos. The weather was raw and drizzling. They traveled northwest towards the head of the Ashley River. (9) Along the way, Woodward noted some tracks of Oak and Hickory forests with spacious savannas which would provide good livestock pasture. On this day, and some other days during the journey, Woodward noted that Indians had carved on trees the effigies of a beaver, a man, and a man on horseback & guns. Woodward interpreted these carvings to be signs of the Westos' desire for friendship and commerce. The weather still being wet the Indians constructed two bark covered huts for them to sleep in. Woodward said that he found the afternoon and night to be tedious, especially so

since he had not undertaken such difficult travel in a long time, his stomach was upset, and the ground was uncomfortable.

On Sunday morning, they set forth on a southwest course past the head of the Ashley River. He described the land as "indifferently good." In the afternoon, they entered a large track of Pines which continued until they came within two or three miles of the Edisto River. He described the land along the flood plain of the Edisto as being fertile. They crossed the Edisto River at a point which Woodward said is about eighty miles below the river's headwaters and twenty miles or so above Lord Ashley's plantation boundary on that river. That evening they camped about two miles from the Edisto, fed on a deer, and slept in the two huts.

On Monday morning four of the Indians went ahead to tell the Westo settlement of their coming. Woodward and the remaining Indians travelled west southwest through Pineland except for the floodplains of the many small rivulets which they passed. The day was overcast and rain fell in the evening. That night they ate two fat Turkeys and parched corn flour broth. They slept in the huts.

Wednesday morning, they followed the Edisto River upstream in a northwest by north direction without having to vary their route due to rivulets. Woodward noted that the soil was very promising and in some places excellently timbered. In the afternoon, they shot a fat doe which they divided proportionately. They camped that night along a pleasant run of the river.

On Thursday they journeyed west passing many large pasturable savannas and other promising land. They shot two bucks and a fat turkey which they ate for supper.

On Friday, they traveled southwest and saw mountains to the northwest. They used a tree to pass over the head of Port Royal River. Woodward described the river as running through large valleys of excellent land. They camped on the hills along the bank in thick woods.

On Saturday, the seventeenth of October 1674, they followed a course west by southwest over many tiring hills through which the river flowed. In the afternoon, they meet two Indians with fowling pieces (shotguns) who were sent by the Westo chief to congratulate Woodward's arrival. The chief and others waited for him at the Westo River. (10) The ridge of hills could be seen toward the northwest through which the river runs. Woodward describes the banks of the river as white chalky cliffs of one hundred feet in height. Opposite the banks was a sandy point with two or three huts.

The Westo chief and others were in the huts. The two Indians that had met Woodward earlier had a canoe to carry him across the river to the chief. Woodward was courteously entertained with a good repast of those foods the Indians counted rarities. At this point the river was very deep and of silent current, running northwest to southeast. As soon as the rain ceased, they traveled upstream about a league to the Westo town (aka Hickauhaugau) which was located on a point of the river on the western side.

Approaching the town, Woodward fired his fowling piece and pistol and was answered with a shout and volley of fifty or sixty small arms. On the shore were about a hundred Indians dressed in

fighting garb. Woodward was escorted through the crowd to the chief's house. Indians that were not able to be accommodated in the house crowded around and children climbed on top and removed the roofing in order to see inside. The chief made long speeches intimating their strength and, Woodward, presumed, their desire for friendship. The Indians oiled Woodward's eyes and joints with bear oil, presented him with various deer skins, and laid before him enough food for a half dozen people. Woodward slept in the night in the chief's house.

The next day Woodward observed the town. He described it as built in a confused manner, consisting of many long houses whose sides and tops are both artificially done with bark. Upon the tops of most houses there were long poles with locks of hair from Indians which the Westos had slain. On the inland side of the town there were two palisades and on the river side one palisade. The river bank was steep and at its foot there were at least one hundred canoes. The Westos were well provided with arms, ammunition, trading cloth & other trade from the north for which at set times of the year they truck dressed deer skins, furs and young Indian Slaves.

Woodward stayed in the Westo territory for ten days during which he observed the surrounding lands and gathered information. He described the soil as being very fruitful and intermingled with a sparkling substance like Antimony (11). The woods were abounding with various sorts of very straight timber.

Woodward learned that eight days journey up river, north by northwest from the town, were the first falls. At this point the river divided into three branches. Among the dividing branches inhabit the Coweta (12) and Cherokee Indians, with whom the Westos are at continual wars. The Indians said there was a lake forty miles northward of the town at the head of the Edisto River.

Two days before Woodward's departure, two Savana Indians arrived at the Westo town. The Savana said they lived twenty days' journey southwest of the Westos. The Savanas and Westos did not speak one another's languages, but communicated by signs. The Savanas asked for friendship with the Westos and told them that the Cusseta, Chickasaws, and Cherokees were intending to attack the Westos. The Westos expeditiously repaired their palisades and kept watch all night. (13)

During the time Woodward was at the Westo town, he was given a young Indian boy taken from the falls area of the river (present-day Augusta). The Savanas brought Spanish beads and other trade items as presents and made signs that they had commerce with white people who were not good. The Westos civilly treated and dismissed the Savanas.

Ten Westos accompanied Woodward back home along the same way that he had come. On the journey they killed much game, including two large she bears. There was a lot of rain during the journey.

On the fifth of November, Woodward swam across the Edisto River with his trade gifts upon bark logs.

On the sixth of November 1674, he arrived safely at Lord Ashley's plantation. Woodward dismissed his Westo escort without allowing them to enter the plantation. Woodward said the he expected the Westos to return in March with deer skins, furs, and young slaves.

References:

SC Historical Society (SCHS)

*Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Volume V*, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, 1897.

Footnotes:

- 1 SCHS, p. 78.
- 2 Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury; one of the more prominent Lord Proprietors.
- 3 SCHS, pp. 445-446.
- 4 Cusseta, an early Creek tribe.
- 5 SCHS, pp. 456-462.
- 6 Andrew Percivall, a kinsman of Lord Ashley and his principal agent in Carolina.
- 7 Settlement at Albemarle Point on the west bank of the Ashley River, which was moved to its current location in 1680.
- 8 A sailboat having two masts with the shorter one behind the rudder.
- 9 Woodward's description of his journey do not appear to be accurate or complete. Figure 1 suggests a possible route and location of the Westo town.
- 10 The Savannah River.
- 11 SCHS, pp. 316-317. In 1671, Lord Ashley had cautioned Woodard to keep secret any observation of gold or silver during his travels. Ashley suggested that Antimony be code for Gold and Iron for Silver. From the descriptions of the flakes described by Woodward, what he was seeing was most likely mica.
- 12 Coweta, an early Creek tribe.
- 13 This coincidental meeting of the Savana with the Westo during Woodward's visit is very interesting. The Savana are thought to be Shawnee Indians that moved from the mid-west into south Georgia. The Savana sided with the colonists in 1680-81 in a war with the Westo. The Westo were killed, enslaved, and banished. The Savana moved into Westo territory and became the principal trading partner for the colony. The Savana name would be turned into "Savannah" by the colonists.