

## The Yamasee War 1715-1717



Alerted to a possible uprising, the government of Colonial South Carolina sent a party in April 1715 to the main Upper Yamasee town of Pocotaligo in hopes of settling issues and preventing an inevitable war. Hostility had been building up over the Indian slave trade and the treatment of the Yamasee from their trading partners of the British colonies. Thomas Nairne and John Wright, who were prominent in South Carolina's Indian trading system, along with Seymour Burroughs and a fourth Carolinian, planned to attend the meeting. While the English traders enjoyed a night of drinking rum, feasting, and making promises on how they would fix the Yamasee complaints, the following morning would prove disastrous.

Through the night while the colonists slept, the Yamasee debated how to handle the situation. John Wright had allegedly threatened the Yamasee with enslavement and murder, thus making them less eager to trade with the colonists. The following morning the Yamasee attacked. Two of the Carolinians were able to escape. Seymour Burroughs, although shot twice in the head, was able to make his way to Port Royal and raise the alarm. The fourth colonist made it to a swamp where he was able to hide, during which time he witnessed the torturous death of Thomas Nairne.

This Good Friday morning, April 15, 1715, began what is known as the Yamasee War, marked by many different Native tribes raiding and destroying settlements and killing colonists. In one May 1715 battle, Native attackers ambushed a militia force attempting to reach the Congarees (a hostile Indian tribe) near the Santee River, killing leader Captain Thomas Barker along with 26 of his 100+ men. On June 13, Captain George Chicken along with 120 men from the Goose Creek militia ambushed a Yamasee-allied Catawba war party, killing 40-60 Natives and scattering the rest. A force consisting of militia, volunteers, enslaved African Americans and friendly Indian nations subsequently led ruthless attacks against the

Natives (Yamasee and Creeks) closest to Charles Town, where many of the colonists had fled. This army continued to attack the Yamasee for the next two years, eventually driving most of the survivors farther south. By the end of the war in 1718, Indians had killed 7% of the colonist population, many of whom had relocated leaving the area almost vacant.

Some of the tribes refused to sign peace treaties, and the Yamasee continued to raid Carolina colonies well into the 1720s. The war ended the Native slave trade and helped South Carolina overthrow the Lords Proprietors.

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