

James Adair



*Adair's History
of the American
Indians*

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INTRODUCTION

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James Adair, the Man

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James Adair has been called by various writers an Englishman, a Scotchman and an Irishman—and with some basis of fact in each case. He derived from the historic Irish house of Fitzgerald. Indeed, Fitzgerald was his true name. That family descends from Walter, son of Other, who at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) was castellan of Windsor and tenant-in-chief of five of the counties of England. His descendants took active parts in the conquest of Ireland, where one of them in 1346 came into the Earldom of Kildare. Another line of the Fitzgeralds was that of the Earls of Desmond, which also descended from Maurice, the founder of the family in Ireland. The Desmond branch, under the third earl, who was viceroy of Ireland in 1367-69, became embroiled in difficulties and suffered defeat, and was captured by a native king of Thomond.

Robert Fitzgerald, whose patrimonial estate was that of Adare, inclusive of the manor and abbey of that name, is said to have been the eldest son of Thomas Fitzgerald, sixth Earl of Desmond. In a dispute over the succession to the estate of his grandfather, Robert Fitzgerald killed his kinsman Gerald, the “White Knight,” a man of great distinction. A powerful combination being formed against him, he fled (1675) from Ireland to Galloway in Scotland. There he was hospitably received as guest at various

baronial houses. He decided to change his name and took that of Robert Adare from his Irish estate in county Antrim.^[1]

“During his visit, Currie, who held the castle of Dunskey, was declared a rebel, as an incorrigible robber and pirate. A proclamation was made that whoever should produce Currie, dead or alive, should be rewarded by his lands. Robert Adare saw an opening by which to retrieve his fortunes, and watched the castle of Dunskey by day and night. At length the redoubtable robber issued one evening from his hold with few attendants, and was instantly followed by Adare, who, engaging him hand to hand, got the better of him, drove him slowly backwards and at last dispatched him outright by a blow from the hilt of his sword. Possessing himself of the robber’s head, Adare hastened to court with all convenient speed, and, presenting his trophy to the king, (as tradition says) on the point of his sword, his Majesty was pleased to order his enfestmentenfestment in the lands and castle of the rebel. His family was known as the Adairs of Portree, and when a castle was built on the spot [in Dumfriesshire] where Currie was struck down, it was called Kilhilt, from which the Adairs took designation.”^[2]

Alexander Adair of Kilhilt held the barony, so obtained from Robert I of Scotland, during the reign of James V of Scotland, and the barony was in the possession of the family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A Sir Robert Adair was a member of the public committee of Wigtonshire during the factious period of 1642 to 1649.^[3]

Sir Robert Adair, perhaps son of the above, removed from Scotland to Ireland before the battle of the Boyne, which was fought in July, 1690, he having sold his Scottish estate

to Lord Stair. It is inferable that he settled in county Antrim, where our author James Adair was born, about 1709.

James Adair is silent on the point of his parentage and birth-date; but it is probable that he was a younger son of this last mentioned Sir Robert Adair; and that, as has been the case with so many scions of noble and other houses of Great Britain, facing the vice-grip of the law primogeniture, he preferred the freedom and opportunities of distant climes.

Animated by something of the spirit of his distant ancestor, James Adair migrated and appeared in South Carolina in 1735, landing at Charles Town, in high probability.^[4]

Shortly after his arrival Adair engaged in the Indian trade, then a business more gainful than was the case in the later years of his career. In 1736 he was a trader to the Cherokees, and mentions an incident "in Kanootare, the most northern town of the Cherokee."^[5] This town was probably identical with Connutre laid down on George Hunter's Map of 1730, in the upper part of the territory occupied by the Middle Cherokees in the southwestern part of North Carolina. It seems probable that he formed a connection or traded in that section with George Haig,^[6] called by Adair "our worthy and much lamented friend."^[7] At the Congaree Thomas Brown, also mentioned by Adair (T.B.), had (1735-1747) a large trading establishment from which the Cherokees and Catawbas were supplied. Haig was associated with Brown, and Adair in likelihood had his first transactions as a trader from that post, visiting both of the tribes mentioned.

Adair's book gives evidence of the fact that he was among the Overhill (or Western) Cherokees in the Tennessee Country, whose towns were on the Tennessee (now Little Tennessee) River, and its branches. Our author, however, is tantalizingly sparing of dates in that regard. He, doubtless, came in contact with the enthusiast Priber while the latter was among the Overhill Cherokees engaged in the projection and establishment of his "red empire," in the years 1737-1743.

The same thing is true of the Catawbas. He speaks of his "residence with them," but his census of them, of the year 1743, is the only indication of the period of his stay.

In 1744 Adair transferred his residence and operations to the Chickasaw nation in what is now North Mississippi. An eastern band of that tribe had a considerable village across the Savannah River from Augusta, Georgia, in South Carolina. It is likely that Adair conducted a trade with the warriors of that village, either from the Congaree or Charles Town; and becoming measurably conversant with the Chickasaw language, sought a trade among the main branch of the tribe in the West, where competition was less keen.

It was among his "cheerful brave Chikkasah" that Adair brought his career as a trader and diplomat to peak. The innate independence and bravery of the Chickasaws appealed to him. The glorious history they had but recently made in two contests with the French and their numerous red allies under Bienville challenged his admiration. The Chickasaws reciprocated. They and Adair were well met. Theirs was a kinship of spirit. It is manifest that he,

alongside their chiefs, was their leader on bloody forays against enemy Indians, particularly the Shawnees, then in the French interest. If that were possible, he instilled in the Chickasaws a stronger dislike of the French. That age-old hatred did more and very much more to save the Mississippi Valley to the English than histories of our country have so far recorded.

About a year or two after Adair entered upon his life among the Chickasaws, in the winter of 1745-46, he saw an opportunity to extend the influence of the Anglo-Americans of Carolina and win at least a portion of the populous Choctaw nation from the French at New Orleans. This chance lay in the fact that the goods supplied the Choctaws by French traders were inferior to goods of English make; and, usually, they were sold at higher prices. Added to this were the seeds of a schism among the Choctaws. The forceful but mercurial chief Red Shoes was leader of one faction. Adair sought to reach and win him, following the violation of Red Shoes' favorite wife by a French trader from Fort Tombikbe (Tombigbee). Adair, in carrying out his plan, had the material aid of John Campbell, a Carolina trader who had been much longer among the Chickasaws and Choctaws than the prime mover himself. During the summer of 1746, with the authority and concurrence of Governor James Glen, of South Carolina, Adair made presents to the already deeply incensed Red Shoes and to his followers. The two leaders, white and red, planned a break with the French—called by the French “the Choctaw rebellion.” Internecine war was now flagrant among the Choctaws. The faction of Red Shoes attacked not only the tribesmen who remained

true to the old alliance, but also settlements of the French on the Mississippi and their commerce on the river. In acknowledgement of his leadership scalps were brought to Adair.

As successful intriguer Adair naturally expected to be rewarded by the South Carolina government. He claimed that Governor Glen had committed himself to see to the grant to Adair and his friends of a monopoly of the Choctaw trade for a term of years.^[8] Instead, Glen, it was charged, formed a company—called by Adair the “Sphynx Company”—composed of his brother and two others to conduct the trade thus opened up. The sight of three hundred and sixty horse-loads of goods passing to the Choctaw Country must have enraged Adair. His bitterness towards Governor Glen was ever afterwards manifest, often in biting sarcasm and invective.^[9] Adair attributed to this breach of plighted faith his personal bankruptcy.

Charles McNaire was entrusted by the “Sphynx Company” with the above cargo of goods, but he proved inadequate to the task. Glen appealed to Adair to help McNaire out of his difficulties. This Adair says he did on a renewal of promises of a reward, which was never forthcoming. The conjuncture of the death of Red Shoes at the hands of an emissary of the French, and McNaire’s mismanagement brought the “Sphynx Company” to disaster, not to say retribution.

“Apparently Glen withdrew his patronage of the Sphynx Company. Adair seems to charge that he turned now to prevent ‘two other gentlemen’—presumably Matthew Roche and his partner—getting recompense for losses in the

venture,^[10] whereupon a controversy arose between his Excellency and Matthew Roche, one of the partners, it seems, in the course of which the latter printed a pamphlet, 'A Modest Reply to the Governor's Answer to an Affidavit made by McNaire.'" (Meriwether)^[11] The pamphlet incorporated a letter written by Adair on some phase of the transactions. In umbrage, the Governor asked the Common's House of the province to have its committee on Indian affairs investigate and report on the controversy. This was done. The report branded Roche's pamphlet "a false and malicious paper, throwing unjust and slanderous aspersions on the governor's honor and character," and declared Adair's letter to be so contradictory of a previous one he had written as to be unworthy of credit.

"Adair's was not the only charge against Glen of his having investments in the Indian trade and of having his official acts influenced thereby. The fact of such investments is indicated by a suit brought by him which involved several dealers in the Indian trade, by his relations with Cherokee traders, such as Grant and Elliott, and by his failure to deny charges. The bad policy of this is, of course, beyond question, but of actual fraud there is no evidence." (Meriwether)

Adair was far from being satiated. He was not content to allow the contest for his deserts to thus end. He now, for the first time, turned author and wrote his own brochure or book in vindication. This he announced by way of an advertisement in the *South Carolina Gazette* of April 9, 1750:

“Shortly will be published—A Treatise upon the Importance and Means of Securing—The Choctaw Nation of Indians—in the British Interest—In which are interpreted many curious *remarks*—Concerning the History, Policy and Interest of the Nation—with—Several incontestable Reasons, and chronological observations, to prove, that the Year of Our Lord 1738 was several Years antecedent to the year 1747—To which is added—A Genuine Account—of the most remarkable *Occurences* since that Period of Time—Concluding with—Some *Scenes of a Farce*, as the same was some time ago first rehearsed in private, and afterwards acted publicly; in which are contained some comical and instructive *Dialogues* between several modest *Pretenders* to the Merit of a certain Revolt, said by them to be lately projected and effected—The whole supported by Records, Original Letters, and Living Witnesses.”^[12]

This production was announced in title form or display, but is here given with dashes to indicate the several lines and divisions. While the name of no author is given, the prospectus is unmistakably Adair’s—in his style down to the peculiar punctuation, as well as in its satire. No one else had the knowledge of the Choctaw intrigue and revolt along with the literary skill requisite. The reference to “pretenders to the merit of a certain revolt” is explained by the fact that four different traders laid claims to the honor of and reward for the Choctaw defection.

Adair petitioned the legislative body of the province for reimbursement of expenses in bringing about the revolt; but his memorial was rejected during Governor Glen’s administration, May, 1750. “With a flow of contrary passions

I took leave of our gallant Chikkasah friends," whom he had accompanied down to Charles Town. Bankrupt in purse and deeply resentful in feeling, Adair now entered upon the most trying and morally perilous period of his career in America. He was off to the Cherokees, and, we may suspect, to strong drink in association with hardy but inferior men. He seems to have made head-quarters for a time at the home of James Francis, an Indian trader of Saluda Town, then to have left for the Overhill towns with a son-in-law of Francis, Henry Foster. Inquiries from Glen as to whereabouts and doings followed after him. James Francis must have pretended ignorance when he wrote (July 24, 1751) to the governor: "I made it my business to be diligent in my inquiry after him [Adair] but could no ways understand where he was to be found or I should have gone any distance of ground to have acquainted him with your Excellency's pleasure. She [Mrs. Flood] said that he told her he was directly going to quit the country and gott a passage from norward to Jamaica."

Adair says that at this time he was tempted by the French to enter into their service. His letter to Wm. Pinckney of Charles Town, commissioner for Indian affairs, sheds light upon this stage of his career and his distraught mental condition. It was written as he was near the Overhill towns on May 7, 1751. It is of value, too, as showing Adair's raw composition—written in the saddle, so to speak:

"I last summer wrote to the Honble Council and you, each a letter, shewing the Force I lay under of going to the French; the Contents were very large and the why as uncommon, to which I refer you. Monsieur endeavored to Tempt me with Thirty two thousand Livers, which not taking

they formed Bills of Capital Crimes against me, and retained me as close Prisoner for three weeks. In short, for all the consequences of the Choctaw war. The world thinks it strange that I should be Punished both by the English and French, for that in effect that I was some [time] for the one and against the other in time of a hot war. But so it happens in Iron-age; only that I behaved like a desperado against their garrison, I should have been Hang'd & Gibbeted, for they had the plainest proof and clearest circumstances against me. Besides I need not mention their policy, envy and Trachery.

“This spring I went to the Cherokees, and saw the most evident Tokens of war, for Capt. Francis’s son and I were in great danger of being cut off by a gang of nor’wd Indians down within Ten Miles of the Nation. The evening before I left the Nation a gang of the Cherokees returned from the southw’d who killed some white men in Georgia and were concluding that night to cut us off. All night we stood on our arms; and John Hatton (who was born there and a desperate man besides) persuaded us to break off with him to Carolina, but we deferred it and the Indians the execution of their designs, yet in the narrow all the headmen of Keeokee and Istanory came with Three Linguists and Persuaded me to write to his Excellency a most Cunning Remonstrance and Pet’n which they dictated; the First Extinquating their crimes and murdering the white men and the other requesting some Swivel Guns. Several of the Traders, as they were unacquainted with Letters, desired me to write to His Excellency & Council the unhappy & dangerous situation of affairs in the nation that they might use proper measures

against the then desponding consequences, for they told me the Government disregarded their Reports; and indeed I have found the Gov't very remiss in the like affairs, and being used ill and my credit small after having served them in a continued chain of actions, I thought myself blamable to have writ because every Faulty character of Indian was rejected, yet to serve the Country I offered to Captn Francis to prove on oath all that I knew of the affair. If Carol'a designs [not] to stand on the defensive part and willing to give me that encouragement which I possibly might merit as well, in this, I should induce the Chickesaws at Augusta and many brave woods-men to engage in the Publick Service, and, if I'm not mistaken in myself, with such Brave Wanton fellows I should be somewhat remarkable. I thot I was bound to write so much on sev'l considerations.

"JAMES ADAIR."^[13]

Adair now passed practically out of public view for several years. Was he among the Overhill Cherokees, as an irregular, unlicensed trader; or was he among the eastern band of the Chickasaws engaged in writing his book?

In 1753, Cornelius Doherty, the old trader, wrote Governor Glen that "a great many of the Cherokees were gone to Chickasaws to assist them against the French." Under Adair's prompting, in order to aid his well loved tribe in their dire straits?

On Governor Glen's visit to Ninety-Six in May, 1756, Adair saw him and gives details in his book (p. 244). He also met Governor William Henry Lyttleton at Fort Moore two years later. Lyttleton seems to have made a favorable impression upon him—quite in contrast with Glen.

Adair was emboldened by the new Governor's attitude again to petition for a reimbursement of losses incident to the Choctaw affair. In so doing he was not able to refrain from tart language. This the legislature of the province was glad enough to seize upon, with result:

"April 28, 1761. A memorial of James Adair was presented to the House and the same containing improper and indecent language was Rejected without being read thro'."

Adair evidently thought that his former service followed by aid he had given to the province in its war with the Cherokees just terminated had justly earned for him better treatment. Into that struggle he had thrown himself wholeheartedly.

Due to unfortunate happenings in the western part of Virginia—the killing by frontiersmen of above a dozen Cherokee warriors, including some of prominence, as they were returning from an expedition in aid of Virginia against the hostile Shawnees, in 1756—and due, also, to subsequent mismanagement of affairs in South Carolina, war with the Cherokees was in prospect towards the middle of the year 1759, and flagrant in the winter and summer following.^[14] In June a force of about eleven hundred men under Colonel Archibald Montgomery (later Lord Eglinton) started from Charles Town to reduce the Cherokee towns and relieve the province's garrison at Fort Loudoun-on-Little Tennessee, which had been besieged by the Cherokees, aided by Creeks.

Adair in his *History* says that "having been in a singular manner recommended to his Excellency [Lyttleton], the general, I was preëngaged for that campaign"—to lead a

body of the Eastern Chickasaws. In the course of preparations Lieutenant-Governor Bull transmitted to the legislature the offer of Adair to lead without pay the eastern band of the Chickasaws settled on the Savannah River; these to act as a scouting party in advance of the troops. Of this small detachment at Saluda Old Town we get glimpses. Governor Lyttleton in his march up-country was "joined by 40 Chickasaws, 27 good gunmen, all likely young fellows. The Chickasaws were drawn up in line and received the Governor with rested arms. They were all dressed and painted in war attire. At night the Cherokees attempted to send a string of wampum to the Chickasaws."^[15] "Last night [November 17, 1759] we arrived here in five days march from the Congaree. We met at this camp twenty-seven Chickasaws, the only allies we have yet seen; they are sprightly young fellows and hearty in our cause."^[16]

The Chickasaws would have been valuable as scouts, but for some reason they were not so used. Montgomery's campaign went well in the Lower Cherokee Country, but disaster overtook it in the Middle towns. The troops "fell into an ambushade, by which many were wounded; and tho' the enemy were everywhere driven off, yet the number of our wounded increased so fast that it was thought advisable to return as fast as possible. In these covers a handful of men may ruin an army." Fort Loudoun was left to its sad fate.^[17]

South Carolina was in deep humiliation over the retreat of Montgomery to Fort Prince George. From that place (July 19, 1760) it was reported: "This morning about nine o'clock arrived here capt. John Brown, with 13 white men dressed and painted like Indians, and 43 Chickasaws, who came with

intent to join Col. Montgomery, not having heard of his return. The declaration of capt. John Brown, who, with capt. Adair, heads the Chickasaws, that are come to join Col. Montgomery, imports that the day before he left the Breed Camp, the Chickasaws advised him, if he wanted to save his life to go immediately and leave his effects to their care ... for there was no trusting the Creeks any longer who had agreed to fall on the English.”^[18]

Letters from the expeditionary force, yet preserved in the archives at Columbia, show that Captain Adair and his party of Chickasaws were bold and active, doubtless serving as scouts.^[19] In July following, the sum of two hundred pounds, currency, was included in the appropriation bill as his compensation. Adair, in 1759, was for attacking and vigorously pressing the war, but his advice was not attended to. In the meantime aid had come to the Cherokees from the Creeks under Great Mortar.

Carolina’s prestige was in eclipse, and another campaign was planned for 1761, led by Colonel James Grant, Virginia troops advancing, though leisurely,^[20] under Colonel Wm. Byrd III, to assist in the subjugation of the Cherokees in the Overhill towns. Adair’s *History* indicates his connection with Grant’s expedition, but is barren of details and it has proven difficult to trace elsewhere the part he took.

To the far-away Chickasaws, the trader turned to recoup his fortunes after the termination of the Cherokee War and his repulse in the matter of his second memorial. There was real need for Adair’s services on the part of that gallant people. The French were attempting to make a breach between them and the Choctaws. They were “in great want

of ammunition” and goods.^[21] Adair chose Mobile as mart for his peltry, after the surrender of the country by the French under the peace treaty of 1763.

Existing records testify to the fact that Adair aided the authorities in efforts to prevent the Chickasaws being debauched by rum and to hold unprincipled traders in leash. He supported the commissary of the government of West Florida, in February, 1766, in the arrest and prosecution of John Buckles and Alexander McIntosh, in a “Memorandum of some Material Heads,” in which his powers of invective did not fail to outcrop: McIntosh “debauched the Indians with rum to the uneasiness and disgust of orderly traders, the loss of their numerous outstanding debts and every chance of fair trade ... faithful to his black trust, in his Arabian-like method of plundering the Indians.... He would make a new Hell of this place, and it is hoped that he may go thru’ Purgatory properly.”^[22]

It was during this stay (1761-68) among them that the greater portion of his *History of the American Indians* was written. He left his oft-trying and true friends, the Chickasaws, in the early part of May, 1768,^[23] and went to the North—doubtless to interview Sir Wm. Johnson for materials with which to enlarge the scope of his work, his own experience and observations having been confined to the leading tribes of the South.

Of Adair in London in 1775 we have not a glimpse. Did he visit Scotland and Ireland among his kinsmen?

His closing years constitute for the researcher the most baffling period of his career. Dr. James B. Adair in his *Adair History and Genealogy* (1924) says that he settled and

married in North Carolina after his return from London in 1775. The locality and name of the woman he is supposed to have married are not given. On the other hand, Emmett Starr, the Cherokee historian and genealogist, states in a letter to the writer that Adair never married. If an inference may be indulged, it seems that it was in the western part of North Carolina that he settled—the region west of the Alleghanies, now known as Lower East Tennessee, near the Tennessee-Georgia line. There a landing on Conesauga River bore the name “Adair,” a point of transit of shipments by way of the Hiwassee after portage from Hildebrand’s landing on the Hiwassee, in a somewhat later period. Just across the state line in Georgia is the village of Adair.

Another fact adds weight to the inference: the descendants of Adair related their nativity to that region. Without doubt Adair left his blood strain among the Cherokee and Chickasaws. As those of colonial days would express it, he was too “full-habited” to have made himself an exception to the custom of traders resident among the red tribes to form alliance with Indian maidens, with resultant offspring.

Emmett Starr, in his *History of the Cherokee Indians*, 403, gives:

“1¹——— Adair

1² John Adair m. Jennie Kilgore

2² Edward Adair m. Elizabeth Martin.”

The name of the mother of these two sons of “—— Adair” is not given. Starr’s genealogical table gives the descendants down to recent times, among them those of the Mayes family. The blank in the name of the father may be supplied from a sketch of Joel Bryan Mayes, a Cherokee

chief, and chief justice of the court of last resort of the Cherokee Nation, in *Appleton's Encyclopedia of American Biography*, IV, 275: Mayes "was born in the Cherokee reservation in Georgia, October 2, 1833. His mother was of mixed blood and descended on the paternal side from James Adair, an Indian agent [trader] under George III."^[24]

Starr in a letter to the editor says: "John and Edward Adair, brothers, married Cherokees and have had a numerous progeny. Their descendants furnished the most brilliant strain in the old Cherokee Nation, especially when their blood was blended with the blood of descendants of General Joseph Martin,^[25] of Virginia-Tennessee, whose descendants have always been numerous in the Nation. Two of these, William Penn Adair and Lucian Burr Bell were the brainiest men that I ever met." Elizabeth Martin, mentioned above, was in girlhood a resident of Lower East Tennessee, at Wachowee on a branch of Hiwassee River. Her mother, Betty, was the daughter of the great Nancy Ward, the Beloved Woman of the Overhill Cherokees and friend of the white race, and her father was General Joseph Martin, agent of Virginia among the Cherokees.^[26]

Miss Skinner in her *Pioneers of the Old Southwest*, seemingly fascinated by Adair, gives 15 of 285 pages to him and his book. She attributes the arrest of Briber to Adair. "As a Briton, Adair contributed to Priber's fate.... Since the military had failed, other means must be employed; the trader provided them." This is without justification in fact. She is fairer elsewhere in her estimate of Adair, whom she called "Tennessee's first author": "His voluminous work discloses a man not only of wide mental outlook but a

practical man with a sense of commercial values.... The complete explanation of such a man as Adair we need not expect to find stated anywhere—not even in and between the lines of his book. The conventionalist would seek it in moral obliquity; the radical in a temperament that is irked by the superficialities that comprise so large a part of conventional standards. The reason for his being what he was is almost the only thing Adair did not analyze in his book. Perhaps, to him, it was self-evident.”

That Adair was a man of liberal education, for his period, seems clear. A self-disclosure is that of his applying himself to the mastery of the rudiments of the Hebrew language among the redmen whom he was studying. A curious picture that calls for an effort at visualization is that of Adair, the forest student, traversing the toilsome trail to Charles Town with peltry to trade for books. It is somewhat difficult to see him, again, at the head of a band of painted warriors faring forth along the Massac trace through the dense woods of what is now West Tennessee, or along the early Natchez trail, west of the Tennessee River and in the same region, bound for the North on a mission which was, in essence, one for the British Empire and against that Empire’s antagonist for the Great Valley of the Mississippi. Yet harder to see in the lover of erudition is the rollicking Adair, in near-abandon in a period of stress, finding “brave and cheerful companionship” with an illiterate and coarse-grained white man, the two riding carelessly along a dangerous path, singing as they went, each braced by “a hearty draught of punch,” and further companioned by a keg of rum. Wherever and however seen, his was an unusual figure,

riding, we may be sure, a coveted Chickasaw steed through vast forest reaches, silhouetted against a background of forest-green. Whether knight errant or dare-devil, or a commingling of both, he rode into mundane immortality. He has broken into every book of comprehensive biography, in whatever language, which has any sort of pretension of thoroughness.

Adair was a good diplomat in dealing with his inferiors. He was not diplomatic in his attitude towards those who were officially his superiors. An acridity of speech, an unsmooth temper and not a little vanity brought him to breach with such when he deemed himself mistreated. In an audience with Governor Glen his own words “seemed to lie pretty sharply upon him.” Adair was a good hater: of Glen, the French and the Romanists, in particular. But, as is not unusual in such cases, he was ardent in his friendships—for the Chickasaws in particular. As “an English Chickasaw,” he recognized in that tribe all that was best in the Amerind: love of their land, constancy in hatred and friendship, sagacity, alertness and consummate intrepidity.

The Book

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Adair purposed a publication of his book several years before the date of its actual London publication in 1775. In the *South Carolina Gazette* of September 7, 1769, it was said: “An account of the origin of the primitive inhabitants and a history of those numerous warlike tribes of Indians, situated to the westward of Charles Town are subjects hitherto unattempted by any pen.... Such an attempt has

been made by Mr. James Adair, a gentleman who has been conversant among the Cherokees, Chickesaws, Choctaws, etc., for thirty-odd years past; and who, by the assistance of a liberal education, a long experience among them and a genius naturally formed for curious enquiries, has written essays on their origin, language, religion, customary methods of making war and peace, etc.” It was also announced that the author was “going over to England soon to prepare for publication.” The *Savannah Georgia Gazette* of October 11, 1769, carried a similar item, of date New York, February 27th.

In October both these newspapers published Adair’s prospectus of the book, proposed to be sold by subscription. In the “Proposals” the title was displayed in customary title-form—differing much in wording from the title page of the 1775 publication:

“Proposals for printing by Subscription: Essays on the Origin, History, Language, Religion, and religious Rites, Priests or Magi, Customs, Civil Policy, Methods of declaring and carrying on War, and of making Peace, Military Laws, Agriculture, Buildings, Exercise, Sports, Marriage and Funeral Ceremonies, Habits, Diet, Temper, Manners, etc., of the Indians on the Continent of North America, particularly of the several Nations or Tribes of the Catawbas, Cherokees, Creeks, Chickesaws, and Choctaws, inhabiting the Western Parts of the Colonies of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. Also some Account of the Countries, Description of Uncommon Animals, etc., interspersed with useful Observations relating to the Advantages arising to Britain from her Trade with those Indians; of the best

Method of managing them, and of conciliating their Affections, and therefore extending the said Trade. Also several interesting Anecdotes Collected in a Residence of the great Part of 33 years among the Indians themselves,
By James Adair.

“Conditions: The Work will be Comprised in two Octavo Volumes, and be put to press in London, as soon as a sufficient number of Subscriptions are obtained, and will be printed on a good Paper, with Letter entirely new.

“The Price to Subscribers will be two Spanish Dollars, one of which will be paid at the Time of subscribing, and the other on the Delivery of the Books.

“Subscriptions are taken by the Printer of this *Gazette*.”

There is no evidence that Adair in pursuance of his purpose went to London at this time. He did go to New York in 1768 and there in the early part of the following year issued a prospectus, in like manner. While there he visited Sir William Johnson at Johnson Hall. This visit, with subsequent incidents, is shown in a correspondence between Johnson, Gage and Adair which appears in *The Documentary History of New York*, IV, 251-252, 259-262. The letters afford side-lights on our author and his book:

Johnson to General Gage:

Johnson hall Decr. 10th 1768

“Dear Sir: This letter is addressed to you at the intreaty of the Bearer Mr. Adair, who I am informed was for many years a Trader of first consequence amongst the Cherokees &c. I believe his present Circumstances are very indifferent but he conceives he has a prospect of some advantages in view from the Publication of a manuscript he has wrote on the Manners, Customs & History of the Southern Indians,

tending to prove their descent from the Hebrews, which performance shews him a man well acquainted with the Languages, and very Curious in his Remarks. His design is to go for England and (if he may be allowed) to take some Chickasaws with him, & as none of that Nation were ever there he conceives it would be for the public advantage to Shew them the greatness and power of the English.

“I apprehend that your Patronage in whatever shape you may please to Countenance his design, is his principal object. If he is worthy of it in any degree my recommendation is needless—His appearance may not be much in his favor and his voluminous Work may rather be deemed Curious than entertaining, but he is certainly well acquainted with the Southern Indians, and a man of Learning tho Rusticated by 30 years residence in a Wild Country—He thinks that I could serve him by mentioning him to you, and I hope that his importunity in consequence of that opinion will apologize for the Liberty I have taken in Giving you this Trouble.”

Adair to Johnson, of March or April, 1769:

“Sire, About a month ago, I did myself ye pleasure of writing to you, both in compliance to yr kindly request, and my own ardent inclination. And, now, I re-assume it, returning you my most hearty thanks, for your civilities and favours of each kind.

“In a great measure, I ascribe to you, my Maecenas, that ye Revd. Messrs. Inglis and Ogilvie, ye Professors of ye College, and a good many of ye Learned, here, including, in a very particular manner, the good-humourd, the sensible, the gay, ye witty, & polite, Sir Henry Moore, have taken me into their patronage; Tho’ I’m sorry to say that Genrl Gage

paid so little regard to yr friendly letter in my behalf, as not to order his Aid de Camp to introduce me when I called to wait on him. Indeed he subscribed for two Setts of my Indian Essays and History. And so do several other Gent on account of their reputed merit; for ye Learned applaud ye performance. In short, Sir, I look down, with a philosophic eye, on that, or any such, neglect as a most imaginary trifle. Especially, if what I said to a curious & inquisitive Son of Caledonia, concerning ye well-known mismanagement, & ill situation, of our Indian affairs, westwardly, should have occasioned it; For truth will prevail, when painted with its genuine honest colours.

“In ye historical part, I shall put myself under yr most friendly patronage, and yt of Sir Henry Moore, and do myself ye particular favour of writing to each of you, from ye southward, before I sett off to England, next summer. As His Excellency has not only induced ye Honble members of His Majestys Council to give a sanction to my performance, and engaged to perswade ye Commons House of Assembly to follow their Copy; But, likewise to continue to take in subscriptions, till ye Books are published, and remit me a Bill, on ye agent, at London, as soon as he has heard, by ye public accounts, of their being in the Press. I’m hopeful, you’ll be pleased to excuse my freedom of infolding, in this, a New-York printed Proposal; and that yr patriotic temper will incite You to shew it to such Lovers of letters, as frequent your Hall, in order to gain, at least, nominal subscriptions, and give a sanction to the Treatise in Europe. Likewise, yt when I do myself ye honour of writing to you,

again, you'll be so kind as to remit me their names, at London, according to request.

"I've room to be pretty certain, that four of yr learned friends here; viz, the Revd Doctor Acmodity, the Revd Doctor Cooper, and ye Revd Messrs Inglis and Ogilvie, A.M. will, thro' a true benevolence of heart, recommend me to the notice of ye President of ye Society for propogating ye Gospel, in order to obtain a missionary for our old friendly Chickosahs; and likewise, their patronage in ye publication of my Indian work. When you're writing to my Lord Hillsborough, should yr own public spirit induce you to recommend me to his patronage it would prove a great advance towards obtaining satisfaction for what ye Governmt is indebted me. That, & ye like, I leave yr own kindness of heart, which always leads and directs you, in support of a generous cause.

"Please to give my most hearty respects to yr cheerful and most promising favourite son, Sir John, to ye gay, ye kindly, & ye witty Coll Johnson, to his discreet and most amiable Lady, & their pretty little Sheelah Grah, who is ye lovely and lively picture of them both. To all yours, One by one; To Coll Class & his Lady; To ye Gent with you, &c; and to accept ye same, from,

"Great Sir Yr very obliged & most Hble Servt
"James Adair."

Adair to Johnson, New York, April 30th, 1769:

"Great Sire, Tho' I'm just on ye point of returning southwardly, by ye way of Philadelphia; yet my gratitude & intense affection incite me to send you these lines in return for yr kindness to me at yr hospitable Hall; And for yr kindly patronage of my weak & honest productions, on ye Origin of

ye Indian Americans. All ranks of ye learned, here, have subscribed to their being published in London, a half year, hence. And ye two volumes, Octavo, wh they consist of, I do myself ye particular honour, from an innate generous principle, to dedicate to you & Sir Henry Moore; For tho' he has not seen ye manuscripts, yet, on ye strong recommendations of ye Learned, he has patronised me, both here, and in ye Islands, and every where else, that his good nature & philosophic temper you'd think of. My great Hybernian Maecenas, as yo've approved of my Indian performance, from yr own knowledge and accurate observations, I'm fully perswaded, that, upon my sollicitation, you'll take some convenient opportunity to recommend me to ye notice of Lord Hillsborough, yr friends in Ireland, &c. For, you know, I came from ye Southward, on purpose to apply to yr friendly mediation, of which General Gage has taken notice, on the account, as I'm informed by the Clergy, of certain (supposed) Stuart's principles. Opposition makes honest men, only, the more intent and ther's a certain time for every thing. As ye two letters I did myself ye pleasure to write to you, from ys place, sufficiently indicate, according to my opinion.

“Please to excuse ys hurry'd-off scroll and to give my sincere and lasting respects to yr honb extensive family, one by one; and to accept the same, from
“Great Sire yr obliged, & very devoted Hble Servt
“James Adair.”

Johnson to Adair, May 10, 1769:

“Sir, I have received two of your Letters since your departure, a third which you speak of, never came to hands, but from the others I find with pleasure that you have met with the Countenance & patronage of the Gentlemen you mention & I sincerely wish they may prove of Service to you, tho’ I am concerned that you met with any neglect from the quarter you speak of however I am hopefull that the protection you have hitherto found will prove a good introduction to your Curious performance, & that its publication will tend to your reputation & Interest, to which I shall gladly Contribute as far as in me Lyes. I am obliged to you for your Intentions respecting the Dedication, which I should chuse to decline but that I would not disappoint your good intentions, tho’ I would check the flowings of a friendly pen which unrestrained might go farther than is consistent with my inclinations.

“I return you your printed proposals, Subscribed to by myself & family with Two or Three others, which are as many as I have hitherto had an opportunity of Laying them before, & the time you spent in these parts has enabled you I presume to know enough of its Inhabitants not to be Surprised that a Work of that Nature shod meet with such Small encouragement. Sir John, Col. Johnson &c thank you kindly for the manner in which you have remembered them, heartily wishing you success, & be assured that I shall be glad to serve you in your undertaking as well as to hear of your prosperity being Sir,

“Your real Well Wisher & very humble Servt

“Wm. Johnson.”