

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Resources of the Nation Ford Road Area

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

The Influence of Nation Ford Road in Patterns of Settlement, Commerce and Conflict, c. 1650-1920.

York County, S. C. east of I-77 and north of Manchester Creek and the Catawba River.

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary W. Edwards
Signature and title of certifying official

1/11/07
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Historic Context for this Multiple Property submission is "The Influence of Nation Ford Road on Patterns of Settlement, Commerce, and Conflict, c. 1650 - 1920." The submission examines the Nation Ford Road, a major north-south trading route, and its impact on the development of eastern York County, South Carolina.

Nation Ford was one of a series of natural fords on the Catawba River which provided safe crossing points for Native Americans. The presence of the ford led to development of trading paths which converged at this crossing point. The major trading path to the northern tribes led to Virginia and beyond. This path was being used by white traders by 1650.¹ It was known by several names, including the "Occaneechi Path," the "Catawba Path," and on Mouzon's map of 1775 as the "Indian Road."² One of the oldest documented travel routes in the southeast, it began at the James River at the site of present Petersburg Virginia, crossed the Piedmont of North Carolina, passed into South Carolina, and forked just south of the crossing of the Catawba River at Nation Ford. In the section of the route near its southern terminus at Nation Ford, it came eventually to be known as Nation Ford Road. South of the ford, it split, with one fork leading west to the Cherokee lands, and the other leading south to the Native American tribes around present-day Augusta.³ The trail provided the Catawba Indians and other southern tribes with an access route for trade and communication with northern tribes.

The date of the first contact between the Catawbas and Europeans is unknown. The route of Hernando de Soto's travels through South Carolina in 1540 is a subject of debate, but he may have passed through Catawba territory. Juan Pardo's expedition of 1567 likely passed through the Catawba valley, and his "Ysa" tribe is likely a reference to the Catawbas.⁴ Later travelers John

¹Sam B. Mendenhall, remarks at the dedication of the Nation Ford Historical park, July 30, 1960, recorded in the Federal Register August 22, 1960.

²Douglas Summers Brown, The Catawba Indians: The People of the River, University of South Carolina Press, 1966, p. 69.

³Douglas Summers Brown, "A Brief History of the Catawba Trading Path," unpublished manuscript in York County Library, Rock Hill, S. C., April 1952, p. 3.

⁴Brown, The Catawba Indians: The People of the River, p. 43.

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Lederer (1670) and John Lawson (1701) provide descriptions of the Catawbas. The greatest impact on the Catawbas, however, came from Virginia. As early as 1644, the Acts of the Virginia Assembly contain references to the trading path to the south.⁵ By 1650, a regular and profitable trade was moving down the path from Virginia to the Catawba Nation. The convergence of trading paths at Nation Ford made the position of the Catawbas a strategic one, as they could to a large degree control the flow of trade to other tribes. Pack trains of horses were loaded and headed south carrying goods such as guns, powder, shot, hatchets, kettles, fabrics, blankets, and trinkets, all to be traded to the Catawbas and other tribes for skins and other products.⁶ When John Lawson traveled to the Catawba valley in 1701 from Charleston, he observed iron pots being used by the Waxhaws and Catawbas, and he met a Virginia trader named John Steward who was living temporarily with the Catawbas.⁷ As the South Carolina settlement at Charleston gained power, a trade was established from Charleston, and efforts were made to reduce the flow of trade northward to Virginia. This change in trade patterns reduced the use of the Catawba Path for a number of years.

By the 1740s and 1750s, the Catawba Path had largely fallen into disuse when a new flow of traffic began in the form of settlers moving south. The "Great Waggon Road" from Philadelphia and other northern areas carried many of the Scots-Irish and other settlers who settled the back country of the Carolinas before the Revolution. There were a number of routes for this traffic of settlers, but the old Catawba Path was one of the most important. One of the first documented settlers in the area of the Catawba Nation was Thomas "Kanawha" Spratt. Although the date is uncertain, he settled along the Nation Ford Road about two miles north of the ford in the mid 1750s. Traveling south from Mecklenburg County, he camped along the road, was befriended by the Catawbas, and was persuaded by them to settle in the area.⁸ The friendly relations between Spratt and the Catawbas seemed to follow a pattern contrary to the strife experienced with many other tribes. Spratt invited a number of settlers to share in the land he had been given by the Catawbas. The tribal members also began entering into long-term leases with settlers, and by the early 1800s, most of the Catawbas most productive land was in the hands of Europeans, leaving the tribe in a

⁵Brown, "A Brief History of the Catawba Trading Path," p. 9.

⁶Brown, *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷Douglas Summers Brown, "The Catawba Indian Trading Path," South Carolina Magazine, January 1954, pp. 7, 17, and 18.

⁸William R. Bradford, Jr. Out Of The Past: A History of Fort Mill, South Carolina. (Fort Mill: Bradford Publishing Company, 1980), p. 10.

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declining condition. The Nation Ford Road and the crossing at Nation Ford was the chief route for movement of European settlers into the eastern section of York County.

The strategic importance of Nation Ford and Nation Ford Road was apparent during the American Revolution. The ford remained one of the principal crossing points of the Catawba River. On several occasions, it was the site of military encampments. In July of 1780, General Thomas Sumter and 500 men camped at Nation Ford.⁹ After the defeat of the British at Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780, Lord Cornwallis began to move his troops from Charlotte to the relative safety of Winnsboro. He came down Nation Ford Road from Charlotte, only to find the Catawba River in flood, making the crossing at Nation Ford too dangerous. Cornwallis camped his troops for several days at the Spratt springs above the ford waiting for the river to fall. He finally moved downstream to cross at Landsford.¹⁰

Activities clustered around the ford because of the level of traffic passing by. By 1786, a ferry was chartered by the Legislature "near a place known by the name of Old Nation Ford" to be operated by Thomas Sprot [Spratt] and Daniel Sturges [Sturgis].¹¹ The ferry was reauthorized a number of times, but the ford itself continued in use. In the 1780s and 1790s, York County appointed Road Commissioners to lay out and mark a road from Nation Ford to York Court House, and later to the Chester County line.¹² Later, a grist mill was established just below the ford. Richard Austin Springs and William Elliott White, both of whom owned land in the area, established the mill in 1832, and it operated until it was washed away by a flood in 1887.¹³

By 1840, eastern York County had become relatively thickly settled, and the Catawba Indians had lost control of almost all their land. Decimated by diseases and destitute, they were in danger of passing out of existence. The State of South Carolina had appointed Indian Commissioners to deal

⁹Brown, The Catawba Indians: The People of the River, p. 267.

¹⁰Joseph Johnson, M. D., Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South (Charleston: Walker and James, 1851), p. 347.

¹¹David J. McCord, The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, Vol. IX (Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1841), p. 304.

¹²York County Minute Books, A: pp. 142, 179, 187; B: pp. 34, 73, 117, 152.

¹³Louise Pettus, "The White Homestead," 1992, pp. 20-21; John Springs' Blacksmith Account Book, p. 215.

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with the Catawbas. Meeting at The Crossroads, just south of Nation Ford, the Chiefs of the Catawbas entered into a treaty in 1840 with the Indian Commissioners. Under this agreement, the Catawbas ceded to the state all their lands, totaling 144,000 acres, in return for a cash settlement and the provision of a reservation on the banks of the river.¹⁴ Following this treaty, the state granted lands which had been leased to their lessees, in most cases at no cost. The Treaty of 1840 was successfully contested by the Catawba Nation during a long legal challenge in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to a final settlement.

In the late 1840s, plans began for the development of a railroad to connect Charlotte, Columbia, and Augusta. The route of the railroad south from Charlotte followed closely the old Nation Ford Road. The Catawba River would be one of the largest stream which would be crossed by the line. A trestle was constructed directly over the crossing at Nation Ford.¹⁵ Two brothers, Frederick and Horace Nims of New England, were employed to build the trestle. The brothers purchased a nearby granite quarry and cut the stone which formed the pillars for the trestle.¹⁶ The rail trestle and line were completed in 1852, creating a significant impact on the development patterns in the area. Rail depots were established five miles south of Nation Ford at Rock Hill and three miles north of the Ford at Fort Mill. These depots became important trading centers for eastern York County, and these communities are today the centers for growth in the area.

The Civil War brought new importance to Nation Ford and the rail corridor which crossed at the site. The movement of troops, information, and supplies along the rail toward the Virginia front was critical for the Confederacy. Because the rail trestle on the Catawba was one of the longest spans on the line, it was vulnerable to enemy action. In the spring of 1865, as the Confederacy disintegrated, Union General George Stoneman assigned Colonel William J. Palmer's cavalry forces to destroy railroad lines in the vicinity of Salisbury and Charlotte.¹⁷ On April 19, palmer's force of 400 made its way south from Charlotte toward the Catawba trestle. General Samuel W. Ferguson, in command of the Rebel Troop and the Ashley Dragoons of the Third South Carolina

¹⁴The Treaty of 1840 is recorded in Volume II of Miscellaneous Records, p. 234, Office of the Secretary of State of South Carolina.

¹⁵Bradford, p. 13.

¹⁶Bradford, p. 13.

¹⁷The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government), Series 1, 47, part III, p. 334.

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Cavalry, had been assigned to move to the area and counter the Federal threat.¹⁸ When Ferguson's force reached Charlotte, he found that Palmer was already headed toward the Catawba. The bridge was being defended by Home Guards. A small battery had been erected on the south side of the river. It is unclear whether this position had been established previously by the Home Guards or hastily erected by Palmer's men. A skirmish ensued, and Palmer easily overcame the Home Guards. At some point during the action, the trestle was set ablaze. Ferguson's men reached the area too late to save the trestle.¹⁹ The action at Nation Ford on April 19, 1865 was significant. The loss of the trestle deprived the Confederacy of a vital link in its supply lines. A few days after this action, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and the remnants of his Cabinet crossed the river at Nation Ford on April 27 on their flight to the southwest.²⁰

The stone pillars which supported the trestle at Nation Ford were used in the reconstruction of the rail span following the war. The trestle was destroyed in a flood on the Catawba in July 1916.²¹ It was again rebuilt on the original stone pillars.

The Nation Ford and Nation Ford Road have witnessed an extraordinary span of human history. From the days of pre-history when Catawbans and other Native Americans traveled the trail and fished the river to the coming of European traders and settlers; from ancient battles between Indian tribes to the struggles of the American Revolution and Civil War; from the passage of common men to the flight of a President and his crumbling Cabinet; from the flames of armed conflict to the destruction of raging floods; from travel on foot and horseback to the coming of the railroad; from the early grist mill to the textile age. Through all these events, the Nation Ford Road had helped to shape our modern world.

¹⁸Brown, A City Without Cobwebs, p. 117.

¹⁹Summary of action on April 19, 1865 from Sam Thomas, "A Site Survey of a Civil War Gun Pit At The Old Nation Ford Near Rock Hill, South Carolina," Journal of the York County Genealogical and Historical Society, December 1989, pp. 1-5.

²⁰Brown, A City Without Cobwebs, p. 124-125.

²¹Rock Hill Herald, July 17, 1916, p. 1.

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Resources of the Nation Ford Road Area

Nation Ford Road

Nation Ford

Nation Ford Fish Weir

Nation Ford Railroad Trestle

Nation Ford Battery

Spratt Cemetery

Properties Already Listed in the National Register and Contributing in Whole or in part to the Resources of Nation Ford Road Area Multiple Property Submission:

Property	Date Listed
Springfield Plantation House	9/12/85
John M. White House	9/12/85
William Elliott White House	3/22/87

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The Nation Ford Road area includes those areas in eastern York County, South Carolina, east of I-77 and north of Manchester Creek and the Catawba River. This area includes the town of Fort Mill, portions of the city of Rock Hill, and unincorporated areas of York County.

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SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The multiple property listing of Resources of the Nation Ford Road Area was undertaken utilizing a Survey and Planning Grant from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. The 1996 grant was awarded to the Nation Ford Land Trust, a private conservation organization which is dedicated to the preservation of land and cultural resources in York County. The purpose of the grant was to identify important resources related to the Nation Ford Road so that the Nation Ford Land Trust could begin developing conservation easements or plans for acquisition of resources.

The York County Historical Commission, using a grant from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, completed a York County Historical and Architectural Inventory in 1993. This inventory was generally limited to structures, and was of limited usefulness in developing this multiple property submission. Additional research and survey work was undertaken as part of the development of the multiple property submission. Sources of information included published local histories, published works dealing with the Catawba Indians, unpublished papers and notes, and interviews.

The properties are included in one historic context, "The Influence of Nation Ford Road on Patterns of Settlement, Commerce, and Conflict." This historic context was developed to illustrate the importance which Nation Ford Road had in the development patterns of eastern York County. The individual nominations included within the multiple property submission are designed to illustrate the impact of the road and its related resources. A number of additional resources were considered for the nomination, but were not included because they had lost historic integrity, were difficult to document fully, or were not directly related to the historic context. Three properties previously listed in the National Register have a direct relation to Nation Ford Road. They are the Springfield Plantation House (listed 9/12/85), the John M. White House (listed 9/12/85), and the William Elliott White House (listed 3/22/87).

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