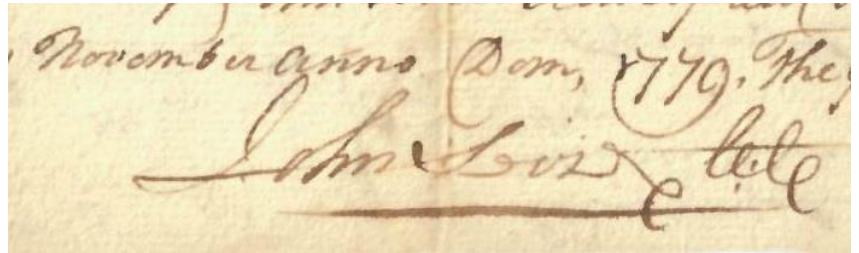
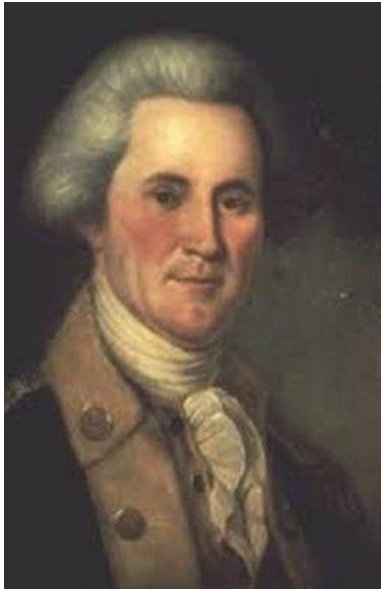


John Sevier, aka, Nolichucky Jack

By: Donna Cox Briggs
Deputy County Archivist



John Sevier's list of accomplishments is long and prestigious. He was Governor of the State of Franklin, Governor of the State of Tennessee, was elected to Congress four times, and a hero of Kings Mountain, just to name a few. Washington County is honored to have been his home for many years.

He was born September 23, 1745 near New Market, Virginia, the first child of Valentine Sevier, an English emigrant, and Joanna Goad (Good) Sevier. John Sevier married Sarah Hawkins and established the community of New Market, Virginia. John's brother, Valentine III had already moved to what is now known as Washington County, Tennessee. John visited him in 1770 and 1772 before making the decision in 1773 to move to "the mountains" of northeast Tennessee. He convinced several members of his extended family to move there, including his father, four brothers, four sisters, and their families.

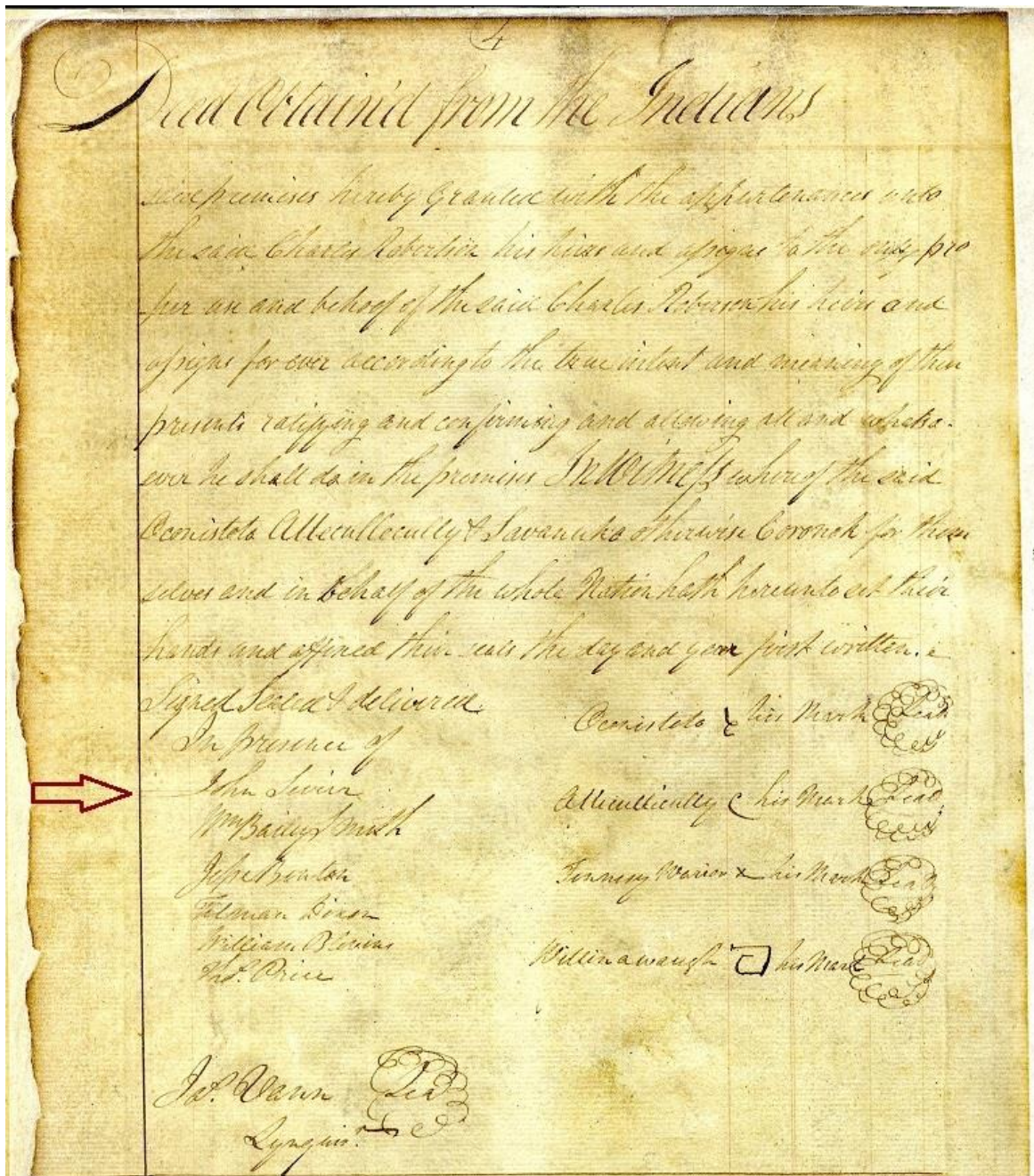
Life in the Watauga Settlement

John and wife, Sarah already had several children before they moved to the Watauga Settlement. Sarah died around 1780, leaving John with a family needing care. Later that same year, he married Catherine Sherrill.

John Sevier had been educated in Virginia and had a pleasing personality. He quickly became involved in the leadership of the Watauga Settlement, where in 1778, he became the County Court Clerk, and he served as such for seven years. Many of the earliest documents in the Archives bear not only his signature, but in most cases, he has written the entire document!

Sevier quickly became an important asset to the Watauga Settlement and was very active in the newly-formed government, known as the Watauga Association. One of the first actions of this body was to make an agreement with the Cherokee who lived in the surrounding areas. The document, an

indenture, gave to Charles Robertson, as Trustee for the Association, a large area of land, and Robertson would then would make deeds to the settlers. The indenture (deed) with the Cherokees, dated 1775, reads, in part, "...between Oconistoto chief warrior and first representative of the Cherokee Nation or tribe of Indians...for themselves and the rest of the whole nation being the Aborigines and sole owners by occupancy from the beginning of time..." Four leaders of the Cherokee and six members of the Watauga Association, including John Sevier signed what we now call the Watauga Purchase, shown below.



Deed Book A, page 4

Watauga Purchase

The signatures include John Sevier, William Bailey Smith, Jesse Benton, Tilman Dixon, William Blevins, Thomas Price, Oconistoto, Atticullicully, Tennesy Warrior, and Willinawaugh.

One of the Many Heros at Kings Mountain

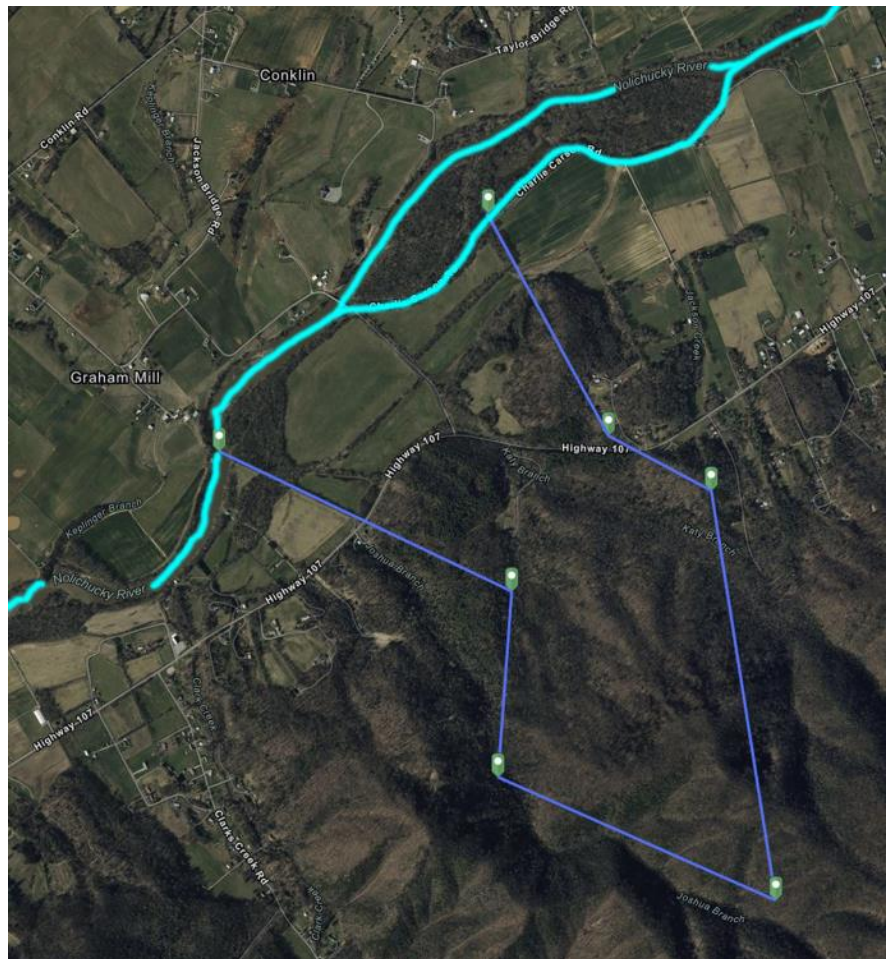
It was during this time that the colonies were battling for freedom from Britian. News spread to the settlement that the British army was heading towards an area in South Carolina, called Kings Mountain. Credit is given to John Sevier and Isaac Shelby for formulating a plan to stop them. On October 7, 1780, John Sevier and several members of the Sevier family were present at the Battle of Kings Mountain. The Overmountain Men were outnumbered by the British, 1,125 to 910. In the afternoon, the Overmountain Men attacked. Ferguson tried to lead his men out of the battle, but he was struck by gunfire several times and was killed. Shortly afterwards, the Loyalists surrendered.

Governor of the State of Franklin and Tennessee

In 1784, the State of Franklin was established, and John Sevier was elected Governor. There were opponents of the idea of succeeding from North Carolina, including Colonel John Tipton. A skirmish broke out at Tipton's home and three men were killed. Sevier and his men withdrew back to Jonesborough. In February 1788, the idea for statehood was abandoned, and, in 1796, Tennessee became a state. John Sevier was the first governor, and served three terms—all that was allowed by the State Constitution. In 1803, he was re-elected governor and he served another six years.

John Sevier's Property

Land Grant, #489 was recorded in Washington County, Tennessee, Deed Book 1, page 407 in 1784. It was around this time that Sevier was given the nickname, "Nolichucky Jack." His farm was called, "Mount Pleasant."



In 1815, Sevier died while conducting a survey of lands in the Alabama Territory. He was buried there, near Fort Decatur.

In 1889, Governor Robert Love Taylor requested that Sevier's remains return to Tennessee. He was re-interred in the Knox County Courthouse lawn in Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1922, Catherine Sherill Sevier's remains were re-interred next to her husband. In 1946, a memorial marker for Sevier's first wife, Sarah Hawkins Sevier was placed at the burial site, as the exact location of her grave is unknown.



The author at John Sevier's marker in Knoxville, Tennessee. There are inscriptions on all four sides, outlining his accomplishments.



A memorial marker for Sevier's first wife, Sarah Hawkins. She was buried in present-day Washington County, but the exact location is unknown.



Tombstone of Sevier's second wife, Catherine Sherrill, also known as Bonny Kate.

###