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THE MEHERRIN INDIANS.

North Carolina June ye 17th, 1707.

Hono^{ble} Gents: *

We received yo's containing the complaint of the Meherring Indians pretending encroachments made on them by the inhabitants of this Government &c. Upon consideration of which we thought we should not better answer yo's than by sending you the true state of that matter, being always as willing to give all reasonable satisfaction concerning our proceedings as * * * undoubted right of the Lords Propriet^r and Her Maj^{ty}^{es} Subjects of this Govern^{mt}. Of a long time before the memory of man, the Lands on the South side of that river which is now called Meherrin, was in ye right full possession of the Chowanohs In-

* This letter was addressed to the General Assembly of Virginia, and is one of the many documents in the Ludwell Papers relating to land disputes.

dians, by virtue of a grant from the Yampins Indians and no other Indians (as plainly appears by Successive Treaties of that nation by Originall Writings & undoubted Evidence,) has had any Right to any Land there to this day, & when first the Lords proprietors of Carolina, by virtue of their Charter from his late Sacred Majesty Charles 2nd took possession of this province that nation submitted themselves to the crown of England and the Dominion of the Lord proprietors & continued till about the year 1679, about which time by Incitement of the Revolutionary Indians of Virginia they committed hostility upon ye Inhabitants of this Gov'ment in violation of their treaty, whereupon by virtue of authority by their charter, open Warr was made upon ye sd. Indians, in prosecution whereof by God's Assistance, tho' not without ye Loss of many men, they were wholly subdued & had land for their habitation assigned them where they remain to this day, so that all that tract of Land on the South side of ye Meherrin River was at that time assigned into the Immediate possession of the Lords propriet^r of Carolina, as of their province of Carolina & has been peaceably by them held without any claims now thirty years, During which time ye Meherrin Indians removing themselves from their ancient place of habitation (where by virtue of a Treaty which commissioners appointed by his late Maj^{ty} King Charles 2^d they were settled,) placed themselves at the mouth of the Meherrin River on ye North side & a great part of the Tract of Land on the South Side & lying waste, some of their straglers planted Corne & built Cabbins on the Roanokes old fields & continued more & more to make their Incroachments till they became an Intollerable annoyance to her Majestyes subjects, committing repeated Injuriyes upon their stock And making frequent affrays upon their persons as far as Moratuck River, for the nessessary redressing of which growing encroachments, and preventing more mischief which was dayly threatened, & reasonably feared the Government here, (& which was the best that they in discharge of their duty could doe) held a treaty with the chiefs of the said Indians, & instead of insisting upon Sattisfaction for the wrongs already Done, were content to make only necessary provision for the safety of her Maj^{ty}'s Subjects for the future, in order to which it was concluded that the stragling vagrant Indians of that Nation Should remove their Towne on

the North Side of the River & that Towne they should peaceably Enjoy for a Certaine Tribute, which was as we believe the first title that ever they had to it, for their treaty with the Commissioners aforementioned gives them no more Right to the Land whereon they now Dwell than it would do to Land on the North side Patomock or the South side of Cape Feare, if they should remove themselves to any of those places.

It seems to us yett more Advisable and wold lend more to her Maj'tye's interest and present settlement as well of Virginia as of this province that they in force of their Afore^{ed} Treaty and for preserving their Right by their Maj'ty^{es} protection, by virtue of it should be forced to returne to the place of their former Habitation than that they should be suffered to possess the mouth of a navigable River, considering how they have hitherto behaved themselves, which we recommend to y^r consideration. Wee would not relate to you ye reasons for making the Meherrin River the Bounds, who are all very well acquainted with the Indians planting Corne without Fence, Soe that now English can Seat them without danger of trespassing by their Cattle and horses, and which the Indians, and Especially that Nation, are very ready to roving without measure, So that the question is not between the right of Louis Williams [the man claiming the ground] & the Meherrin Nation, But whether near a hundred Families of her Maj'ty^{es} Subjects of Carolina should be despoiled of their free-holds to lett a few vagrant and Insolent Indians rove where they please without any right & contrary to their agreement. We have always thought it necessary that the Indians should live together in Townes, where all their young men may be under the imediate inspection of their own Government to prevent their private mischief that may be done more safely & concealed in single & seperate familys.

Yo^r proposition concerning further settlement was in all Friendship received, but because of the uncertainty we could not proceed to make any order or provision in Answer to it till by the copies of the Depository to be taken on y^r behalf, which we hoped to receive, we might have obtained Information how far the controverted Grounds were Extended to usward, we knowing no bounds to Carolina but Wyanoke River till further informed, designing no farther to Enter into that controversie but only to

represent the Case to the Lords propriet^{rs} in order to their laing it before her Sacred Maj^{ty}, Seeing no cause to doubt of the Success in soe clear a case. To this we add that Louis Williams can't be called any new settlement, for he had Right to that Land some years agoe, and he has been hindered settling by those Indians who have dallyed with this Government from time to time by promises to depart & now at last being called to show reason of their delay, they only could alledge that they had cleared some ground for which Labour they desired Satisfaction, & Williams being willing to be in practable possession of his land at any time, agreed to pay them a Horse & fifteen Bushells of Corne * * * * all they at that time desired & the greatest part they have received and the remainder has been tendered, but upon their returne from Virginia they have refused to receive the remaining part & made a barbarous assault upon him in his own house, soe that his life is doubted off & his Familye in danger of further trouble from which we believe it our Duty to rescue him, for we can't Interpret y^r proposition to mean that in the meantime any of her Maj^{ties} Subjects ought to be left to the merciless Insults of Such Savage people, but that Every one in their respective government as they are now deemed should quietly enjoy their properties till the matter be determined, to w^{ch} we readily assent and assoom, as we know how farr you do claime, shall take all necessary order in it.

We have sent you the copi^s of such depositions as we have taken relating to the Bounds, and desire you will send us those that have been taken by you according to y^r promise. We are

Your Humble Servants,

W. GLOVER,
SAM'L SWANN,
EDWARD MOSELEY,
FRAN. FOSTER.