

John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of that Country, 1709*

Next Morning very early, we waded thro' the Savanna, the Path lying there; and about ten a Clock came to a hunting Quarter, of a great many *Santees*; they made us all welcome; shewing a great deal of Joy at our coming, giving us barbacu'd Turkeys, Bear's Oil, and Venison.

Here we hir'd *Santee Jack* (a good Hunter, and a well-humour'd Fellow) to be our Pilot to the *Congeree Indians*; we gave him a Stroud-water-Blew, to make his Wife an *Indian Petticoat*, who went with her Husband. After two Hours Refreshment, we went on, and got that Day about twenty Miles; we lay by a small swift Run of Water, which was pav'd at the Bottom with a Sort of Stone much like to Tripoli, and so light, that I fancy'd it would precipitate in no Stream, but where it naturally grew. The Weather was very cold, the Winds holding *Northerly*. We made our selves as merry as we could, having a good Supper with the Scraps of the Venison we had given us by the *Indians*, having kill'd 3 Teal and a Possum, which Medly all together made a curious Rago.

This Day all of us had a Mind to have rested, but the *Indian* was much against it, alledging, That the Place we lay at, was not good to hunt in; telling us, if we would go on, by Noon, he would bring us to a more convenient Place; so we mov'd forwards, and about twelve a Clock came to the most amazing Prospect I had seen since I had been in *Carolina*; we travell'd by a Swamp-side, which Swamp I believe to be no less than twenty Miles over, the other Side being as far as I could well discern, there appearing great Ridges of Mountains, bearing from us *W.N. W.* One Alp with a Top like a Sugar-loaf, advanc'd its Head above all the rest very considerably; the Day was very serene, which gave us the Advantage of seeing a long Way; these Mountains were cloth'd all over with Trees, which seem'd to us to be very large Timbers.

At the Sight of this fair Prospect, we stay'd all Night; our *Indian* going about half an Hour before us, had provided three fat Turkeys e'er we got up to him.

The Swamp I now spoke of, is not a miry Bog, as others generally are, but you go down to it thro' a steep Bank, at the Foot of which, begins this Valley, where you may go dry for perhaps 200 Yards, then you meet with a small Brook or Run of Water, about 2 or 3 Foot deep, then dry Land for such another Space, so another Brook, thus continuing. The Land in this Percoarson, or Valley, being extraordinary rich, and the Runs of Water well stor'd with Fowl. It is the Head of one of the Branches of *Santee-River*, but a farther Discovery Time would not permit; only one Thing is very remarkable, there growing all over this Swamp, a tall, lofty Bay-tree, but is not the same as in *England*, these being in their Verdure all the Winter long; which appears here, when you stand on the Ridge, (where our Path lay) as if it were one pleasant, green Field, and as even as a Bowling-green to the Eye of the Beholder; being hemm'd in on one Side with these Ledges of vast high Mountains.

Viewing the Land here, we found an extraordinary rich, black Mould, and some of a Copper-colour, both Sorts very good; the Land in some Places is much burthen'd with Iron, Stone, here being great Store of it, seemingly very good: The eviling Springs, which are many in these Parts.

issuing out of the Rocks, which Water we drank of, it colouring the Excrements of Travellers (by its chalybid Quality) as black as a Coal. When we were all asleep, in the Beginning of the Night, we were awaken'd with the dismall'st and most hideous Noise that ever pierc'd my Ears: This sudden Surprizal incapacitated us of guessing what this threatenng Noise might proceed from; but our *Indian* Pilot (who knew these Parts very well) acquainted us, that it was customary to hear such Musick along that Swamp-side, there being endless Numbers of Panthers, Tygers, Wolves, and other Beasts of Prey, which take this Swamp for their Abode in the Day, coming in whole Drovers to hunt the Deer in the Night, making this frightful Ditty 'till Day appears, then all is still as in other Places.

The next Day it prov'd a small drisly Rain, which is rare, there happening not the tenth Part of Foggy falling Weather towards these Mountains, as visits those Parts. Near the Sea-board, the *Indian* kill'd 15 Turkeys this Day; there coming out of the Swamp, (about Sun-rising) Flocks of these Fowl, containing several hundreds in a Gang, who feed upon the Acorns, it being most Oak that grow in these Woods. These are but very few Pines in those Quarters.

Early the next Morning, we set forward for the *Congeree-Indians*, parting with that delicious Prospect. By the Way, our Guide kill'd more Turkeys, and two Polcats, which he eat, esteeming them before fat Turkeys. Some of the Turkeys which we eat, whilst we stay'd there, I believe, weigh'd no less than 40 pounds.

The Land we pass'd over this Day, was most of it good, and the worst passable. At Night we kill'd a Possum, being cloy'd with Turkeys, made a Dish of that, which tasted much between young Pork and Veal; their Fat being as white as any I ever saw. Our *Indian* having this Day kill'd good Store of Provision with his Gun, they being curious Artists in managing a Gun, to make it carry either Ball, or Shot, true. When they have bought a Piece, and find it to shoot any Ways crooked, they take the Barrel out of the Stock, cutting a Notch in a Tree, wherein they set it streight, sometimes-shooting away above 100 Loads of Ammunition, before they bring the Gun to shoot according to their Mind. We took up our Quarters by a Fish-pond-side; the Pits in the Woods that stand full of Water, naturally breed Fish in them, in great Quantities. We cook'd our Supper, but having neither Bread, or Salt, our fat Turkeys began to be loathsome to us, altho' we were never wanting of a good Appetite, yet a Continuance of one Diet, made us weary.

The next Morning, *Santee Jack* told us, we should reach the *Indian* Settlement betimes that Day; about Noon, we pass'd by several fair Savanna's, very rich and dry; seeing great Copses of many Acres that bore nothing but Bushes, about the Bigness of Box-trees; which (in the Season) afford great Quantities of small Black-berries, very pleasant Fruit, and much like to our Blues, or Huckle-berries, that grow on Heaths in *England*. Hard by the Savanna's we found the Town, where we halted; there was not above one Man left with the Women, the rest being gone a Hunting for a Feast. The Women were very busily engag'd in Gaming: The Name or Grounds of it, I could not learn, tho' I look'd on above two Hours. Their Arithmetick was kept with a Heap of *Indian* Grain. When their Play was ended, the King, or *Cassetta's* Wife, invited us into her Cabin. The *Indian* Kings always entertaining Travellers, either *English*, or *Indian*; taking it as a great Affront, if they pass by their Cabins, and take up their Quarters at any other *Indian's* House. The Queen set Victuals before us, which good Compliment they use generally as soon as you come under their Roof.

The Town consists not of above a dozen Houses, they having other stragling Plantations up and down the Country, and are seated upon a small Branch of *Santee* River. Their Place hath curious dry Marshes, and Savanna's adjoining to it, and would prove an exceeding thriving Range for Cattle, and Hogs, provided the *English* were seated thereon. Besides, the Land is good for Plantations.

These *Indians* are a small People, having lost much of their former Numbers, by intestine Broils; but most by the Small-pox, which hath often visited them, sweeping away whole Towns; occasion'd by the immoderate Government of themselves in their Sickness; as I have mention'd before, treating of the *Sewees*. Neither do I know any Savages that have traded with the *English*, but what have been great Losers by this Distemper.

Source: John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of that Country* (London, 1709), 25–28.