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Many different Native American tribes¹ settled in South Carolina.

The Mississippians entered around 1150, joining the already-present Woodlands people. The Woodlands people lived in different parts of the state:

- Siouan lived east of the Catawba/Wateree Rivers and north of the Santee River;
- The Yemassee lived south of the Santee River and the Savannah coast;
- The Iroquoian lived in the western part of the state;

- The Algonkian lived around the Savannah between the Iroquoian and Muskogean.²

The Eastern Woodlands Native Americans were forest dwellers and their lives were affected by the waterways, flora, and fauna around them. Like many early civilizations, they relied on the water for transportation and fishing. The Eastern Woodlands people were the first Native Americans to have interaction with the Europeans. This interaction would lead to extreme changes in their culture.

South Carolina had three main tribes in its history:

- Cherokee (lived in the mountains);
- Catawba (Piedmont Area); and
- Yemassee (coastal area).

The Cherokee came into contact with the Europeans and considered themselves to be the "real people." The Cherokee were a powerful nation. Cherokee villages could have as many as six hundred people living in their villages. They would have a palisade around their village for protection.

The Cherokee would have two types of homes. In the summertime, the homes would be open to allow air to flow through, whereas the winter home would have thick walls made of clay and grass called daub. Roofs would be made of bark and branches called wattle.

To aid in fishing, Cherokee men would poison the fishing water with walnut bark which would stun the fish (causing them to rise to the top of the water, making them easy to be caught by the men. Men and women could be leaders of the council to make rules for their nation. A White leader would lead during peaceful times and a Red leader would take over in times of war. A holy man could be a man or a woman.

The Catawba were known as the "river people." Their villages would also be surrounded by a palisade. Their homes were considered wigwams made of saplings used for frames which they would cover with bark or mats made of grasses and reeds. They would have council homes where leaders would make the rules for their villages. The Catawba were known for their pottery which they made from the Carolina clay.

Fleeing from the Spanish governor, the Yemassee arrived from Spanish Florida (known today as Georgia), to the coast area of South Carolina. During the summer, their people would live in wigwams covered with palmetto leaves whereas in the wintertime, they would move inland to live in wattle and daub homes like the Cherokee, except they would use palmetto leaves. They ate clams and oysters. Their council could also include women. (This section is taken largely from the SC State Standards for 8th Grade essential information for students.)

Native Americans in this area were excellent hunters and also excelled at preparing the land for crops. They believed in living in harmony with nature. Fire was extremely important in their way of life. They cut trees and burned the rest to clear their land, which is known as the slash-and-burn method. They used tree trunks in building their dugout canoes. They used rocks and wood for tools used in hunting. Animal pelts would be used in creating clothes.

Women were responsible for child rearing, making the family's clothes, providing food in the form of crops, whereas, men provided the rest of the food in hunting and fishing. Women used simple hoes made of bone for tilling the land. Their food was fruits, nuts, corn, pole beans, squash, pumpkins, bottle guards, and tobacco.

Men used rocks and made them into sharp points to aid in their hunting of animals. They also used animal bones in hunting, plus bows and arrows.

Houses were made from natural resources such as animal hides and tree bark. The rolling hills and clay provided fertile soil for farming. This led the people of the Eastern Woodlands to settle into more permanent villages than their ancestors. They worked the land together and did not believe in the private ownership of land, which led to problems once the Europeans came on the scene.

The ability to be a successful hunter was a trait which was highly valuable to Native Americans. Celebrations varied among the many Native Americans found in South Carolina. In these celebrations, they worshiped Spirits but did not have idols to worship. In some celebrations, both male and female took part, while in others only the males were allowed to participate. Languages differed among the various Eastern Woodland tribes, but they all preserved their language by oral-history telling.

Once Europeans began arriving, the Native Americans started trading furs and deerskins for iron tools, weapons and guns. However, as more and more settlers came, the Native Americans began to be enslaved, cheated out of land, and hostilities among the Native Americans and Europeans began to rise.

Footnotes:

1) Edgar, Edgar, South Carolina A History, no, May/18/1998, May/18/2015, [no](#)

2) South Carolina Information Highway, SC Indians – Native Americans in South Carolina, © 2015 SCIWAY.net, LLC , May/18/2015, May/18/2015, <http://www.sciway.net/hist/indians/>

3) 2015 SCIWAY.net, South Carolina – Indians, Native Americans – Yemassee, . South Carolina's Information Highway, Jun/08/2015, Jun/08/2015, <http://www.sciway.net/hist/indians/yemassee.html>

- 4) Unknown, Town of Yemassee, Town of Yemassee, Jun/08/2015, Jun/08/2015, <http://townofyemassee.org/>
- 5) Unknown, Cherokee Houses - Dwellings - Lodges, Cherokee Houses, Dec/31/1969, Jun/08/2015, <http://www.aaanativearts.com/cherokee/cherokee-houses.htm>
- 6) SC State Standards, Grade 8 Support Document, <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Standards-Learning/documents/Grade8SupportDocument.pdf>, Aug/18/2011, Jun/08/2015, <http://ed.sc.gov/>

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Beginnings-South-Carolina-History>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Beginnings-South-Carolina-History>

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V. Burkins

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