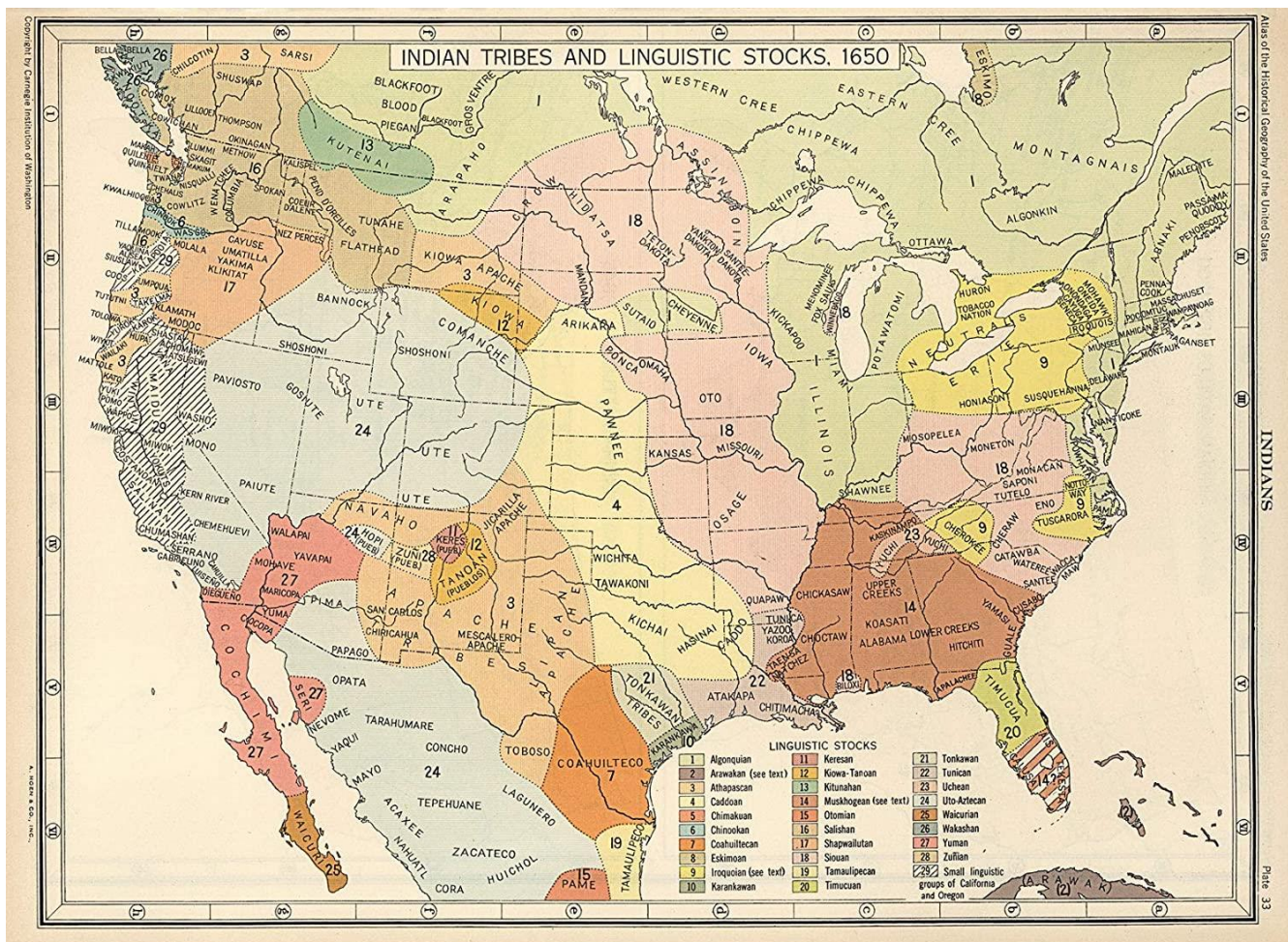


# Richard Pearis

## Infamous Frontiersman



The foothills of South Carolina was originally inhabited by the Cherokee Nation. Below is a map of the Native American tribes across North America around the time of 1650. By the time Europeans started to explore, trade and settle in our area, the Cherokee Nation had also extended into areas we now know as Georgia.

# Richard Pearis

## *Infamous Frontiersman*



One of the traders was a man named Richard Pearis. His last name is pronounced like Paris, the city in France.

Not much is known about Richard Pearis' early life, but it's said he born in Ireland around 1725.



[Click on the above image.](#)

**Find a world map. Locate Ireland. Where's South Carolina?**  
*Keep the world map up...we'll be looking for other places.*

His family immigrated to the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia.  
***Find Virginia on the map.***

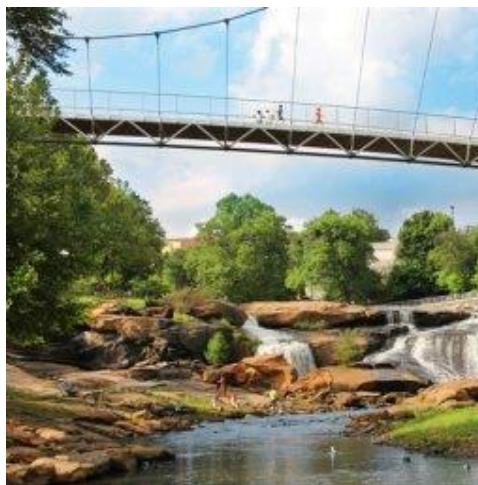
Richard Pearis was a man who kept moving. He left Virginia and moved to Tennessee (you know what to do...***find it on the map***). One way that he survived in the frontier was to trade with the Native Americans, specifically the Cherokee. He learned their language and worked as an interpreter. An interpreter helps people who speak different languages understand each other.

# Richard Pearis

## *Infamous Frontiersman*

While trading with the Cherokee, Pearis decided he liked the area we now know as the Upcountry of South Carolina, more specifically, Greenville, South Carolina. He settled down in this area and was given a Cherokee wife. But wait. Remember when we said that Pearis immigrated to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia? Of course you do, it was only a moment ago! So, what stands out to you? Who did he immigrate with? Yep! Richard Pearis already had a wife (Rhoda) and a family. However, this did not keep Richard from marrying a Cherokee wife as well.

Richard bought approximately ten square miles from the Cherokee near what we know and love today as Falls Park.



That purchase was illegal at that time. Cherokee were not allowed to sell their land to Europeans. Richard Pearis came up with a solution to that problem. He used his son George to his advantage. George was half Cherokee and was allowed, by law, to own Cherokee Land so the land was sold to George. Richard sent George to England to be granted British citizenship because he was also half British. Once that citizenship was finalized, George sold the land back to his father because it was legal for a British citizen to sell to another British citizen. This work around the system, was not favorably looked upon. What do you think about this? Does it seem tricky or justifiable?



# Richard Pearis

## *Infamous Frontiersman*

Now, let's jump ahead a little bit to the time of the American Revolution!



During the American Revolutionary War, Richard Pearis wanted to join the Patriots. However, they didn't want him fighting for their cause. As local historian, Archie Vernon Huff Jr. says, "Pearis was described by an Indian interpreter as 'a very dangerous fellow who will breed great disturbances if he is left alone, for he will tell the Indians any lies to please them.'" This reputation was also noted by the colonists. So, what does Richard Pearis do? He joined the British as a Loyalist. That means he fought against the colonists who wanted freedom from King George III. As a result, he was captured and imprisoned in Charles Town. While there, his home and businesses near Falls Park (the first saw and grist mills of the Upcountry) were set ablaze and burned down. As a way of thanking Pearis for his allegiance to the King, the British government paid him compensation for his land. Eventually, he was released from jail and he moved with his family to the Bahamas where he died in 1794. **Last time, find the Bahamas on that world map.** Now, *look up the definition of the word "infamous,"* do you think this is an appropriate term to use when describing Richard Pearis? What word(s) would you use to describe him?

# Richard Pearis

## *Infamous Frontiersman*

All right, let's recap with the help of our fantastic UHM volunteer and docent, Wynn Herbert.



### ACTIVITY:

Act as a Cherokee Interpreter. Watch the video below to find the interpretation for the three words listed.



1. Ama-
2. Iya-
3. Unega-

If you enjoy learning the Cherokee language, then by all means keep going! Share your favorite words with us by using Facebook and Instagram and #UpcountryMuseum!