



Artwork by John Tompkins, Monroe, NC

INDIAN TRADING PATH

"Colonial trading path, dating from the seventeenth century, from Petersburg, Virginia, to the Waxhaw Indians in Carolina, passed nearby."

North Carolina Office of Archives and History

A thousand years before there was a North Carolina, Indians along the east coast had established an expansive and well-traveled system of paths and trails used for hunting, trade, travel, and occasional warfare. Indian towns and villages grew up along the path. Indians and later colonists favored the path because of water sources along the route and fords across major streams and rivers. This path was known by various names including the **Occaneechi Path**. The Eastern Woodland Indians once lived in this area in large numbers and throughout the Piedmont section of North and South Carolina. The name of our town, Indian Trail, is based on trading paths that crossed near here.

By the early to mid-1700s, the Trading Path provided European-American explorers and colonists a well-traveled route to the Piedmont for settlement and trade. They traveled by foot, horseback and Conestoga wagon from the Chesapeake Bay region of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia and from South Carolina and Georgia. Later, the Trading Path became known as the **Great Wagon Road** because of this increased traffic. Following portions of the original path, the Great Wagon Road crossed Virginia into North Carolina above Winston-Salem and into the Salisbury area. The Indian Path was not one path but many. One branch of the path led to Charlotte's Trade and Tryon streets, another thru the Waxhaws and one near this place, Indian Trail. The trading route went on through Charleston, South Carolina and eventually to Augusta, Georgia.

The history of the peoples of the Piedmont--past, present, and future owe much to this path. The 19th-century railroad and today's Interstate 85 the Path also roughly follow this trail. The Trading Path also underlies the **Piedmont Urban Crescent**, which has experienced steady growth since the late 19th century. Cities of the Crescent are the centers of government, finance, education and research, and business in the state.

Text by Roger J. Fish, Ed.D.