

The following chapter is from:

The Archaeology of North Carolina: Three Archaeological Symposia

Charles R. Ewen – Co-Editor

Thomas R. Whyte – Co-Editor

R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr. – Co-Editor

North Carolina Archaeological Council Publication Number 30

2011

Available online at:

<http://www.rla.unc.edu/NCAC/Publications/NCAC30/index.html>

“...THEY IN RESPECT OF TROUBLING OUR INHABITING AND PLANTING, ARE NOT TO BE FEARED:” ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOHISTORY OF NATIVE COASTAL POPULATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER EUROPEAN CONTACT

John J. Mintz

Thomas E. Beaman, Jr.

Paul J. Mohler

Writing in 1983 David Phelps (1983:1) stated somewhat plaintively that, [the] North Carolina Coastal Plain has been the least known archaeological region of the state, received less professional attention, and had until recently witnessed fewer archaeological project” than either the Piedmont or Appalachian physiographic region. The same sentiment has been also echoed by (Ward and Davis) who writing in 1999 note “[T]he coastal region of North Carolina has received more archaeological attention and more archaeological dollars that any other area in North Carolina. Yet today is arguably the least understood of all the major physiographic regions in the state (1999:226).

Now some 25 years later, thanks in large part to the “rediscovery” of the region by promoters of heritage tourism and commercial development, the reverse is true. This rediscovery has resulted in a plethora of Cultural Resource Management studies which have allowed researchers to greatly increase our understanding of this once relatively unknown area. These studies have ranged in size and scope from a few acres for a public utility project to one-hundred acre plus multidisciplinary investigations of complex and intact Woodland Period village sites evincing 100s of intact subsurface features, including aboriginal storage pits, food preparation areas, burials, and architectural evidence in the form of “post molds” and house patterns.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for our understanding of the Terminal Woodland-Contact period era. The first English encounter with the Native Americans occurred when an expedition under the direction of Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe arrived off the Outer Banks in July 1584. Accompanying the expedition were the artist John White and the noted scientist Thomas Harriot whose writings and drawings of the local inhabitants serves as our first introduction to the region (Powell 1989:15-16). In fact, it is this information that allowed John White to produce a series of maps illustrating the locations of some 27 villages. Of these 27 villages, not one has been definitively relocated and investigated archaeologically, though several have been postulated as being contemporary with villages depicted on the 1585 John White map.

ETHNOHISTORIC INVESTIGATIONS

In the twilight of the Late Woodland era, two different linguistic groups occupied the Outer Coastal Plain of North Carolina, the Algonkian and the Siouan with their cultural frontiers meeting in what is now modern Onslow and Pender counties. In the southern region, a Souian linguistic group, archaeologists refer to as the Cape Fear Indians first encountered European explorers Lucas Vásques de Ayllón and Giovanni da Verrazona in the 1520s, and endured the brief Bajan colonial settlement of Charles Towne between 1661 and 1667. However, the Cape

Fear Indians had disappeared by 1725 when permanent settlement in the Cape Fear Region began by British colonists from South Carolina. In the northern region, members of the Algonkian cultural group endured coastal exploration and settlement attempts by British colonists on Roanoke Island before they too disappeared. Similar to the southern region, Algonkian populations had retreated as settlement of the Albemarle commenced by the 1650s. *Archaeological and ethnohistoric data will be used to describe these two different cultural groups before and after European contact and abortive settlement attempts-to understand how this cultural contact changed their traditional culture and ways of life.* Herein, we proposed a date range of 1584-1650 for the contact period of the North Coastal region and 1520s-1725 for the South Coastal region.

Contact period archaeological assemblages in the Northern Coastal region can be related to ethnohistoric information and studies, thus providing the relative comfort of social and linguistic identities and the use of the direct historical approach. The Southern Coastal region is less well known both archaeologically and ethnohistorically, and correlation of historic with prehistoric/protohistoric data is more difficult (Phelps 1983). Although the recent work by Herbert (2003; 2009) and others (Mintz 1996) is providing a better assessment than was previously known (Herbert 2003). As noted above the Northern Coastal region was the home of two distinct ethnic and linguistic groups at the time of European contact, the Carolina Algonquians, who resided within the Tidewater zone and the Tuscarora, on the Inner Coastal Plain (Phelps 1983). Mook (1944) and Feest (1978) have summarized the available ethnographic and historical data for the Algonquians whereas Paschal (1953) and Boyce (1978) have focused on the Tuscarora and their Iroquoian-speaking neighbors to the north, the Meherrin and the Nottoway.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS, NORTH COASTAL REGION

Archaeological assemblages generally associated with the Terminal Late Woodland and Contact period in the North Coastal region are comprised primarily of Collington Phase (A.D. 800- 1650) pottery; Collington is the phase name given to the Algonquian culture of the tidewater region (Phelps 183:36). Current radiocarbon dates for Collington Phase pottery range from A.D. 800-1650 (Herbert 2009; this volume).

The development of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore in the 1950s created the impetus for the first systematic archaeological investigation of the Tidewater region of the coastal plain. This investigation was undertaken by William G. Haag and later published by Louisiana State University Press in 1958 (Haag 1958). Interestingly, funding for this investigation was provided by the Office of Naval Research (possibly one of the first federal contacts administered in North Carolina). This study had two goals: 1). was to find evidence of the “Lost Colony” which was not realized; and 2). was to delve into the Indian past and reconstruct an occupation of the region from earliest times until the dispersal of the Indian Culture by white men; this goal was realized and laid the groundwork for future additions and modification to the regions culture history (Haag 1958:1-2). Haag and others examined, archaeologically an area extending from the Neuse estuary north to the Virginia border resulting into the recordation of some 81 sites, of which, several were subjected to more intensive testing.

One of the more interesting sites visited by Haag was the Cape Creek site (31DR1) located near Buxton. It is thought by some to be the location of the protohistoric Algonkian village of Coratan which figured prominently in friendly relations with the 1587 colony. Haag in

describing the site noted that it had the best “midden” found on the Outer Banks and had received prior visits from Porter and Harrington (1938) and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (1958:28) . As a precursor to America’s Four Hundredth Anniversary Celebration of the Roanoke Voyages, Phelps revisited the Cape Creek site and in 1984 suggested that the site may contain not only English artifacts but also English skeletons. Later investigations undertaken by Phelps, Charles Heath, and Clay Swindell uncovered numerous European artifacts (i.e., iron spikes, cooper farthings, gun flint and a brass fragment) in association with Native American artifacts thereby demonstrating that Cape Creek was indeed a contact period site, making it one of a select few that have actually been archaeologically excavated. Though, no uncompromising evidence has been discovered to date to link it to the Lost Colony.

Several other large scale archaeological surveys were under taken in the region. In 1977 a systematic pedestrian survey was completed by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill. This survey focused on portions of a six county region that bordered the Chowan River. One of the goals of this investigation was the “identification of specific archaeological sites as historically known localities” (Wilson 1977:1) To this end 122 sites were recorded with 46 dating to contact and/or historic period. Most notably of these sites was the possible location of “Chowanoak” (31HF20) the capital town of the Chowan Chiefdom first visited in the 1580s by Ralph Lane. According to Wilson (1977:17) and Phelps (1982:15) this site fits Lane’s description of Chowanoak and produced Woodland and Contact period artifacts.

The Pomeioc Project was another project whose stated goal was to locate and identify the archaeological signature of the Algonquian town of Pomeioc first visited in 1585 by members of the now “infamous” Lost Colony. The drawing by John White depicts a rather large palisaded village containing some 18 longhouses. During the course of this investigation over 6200 acres were examined by archaeologists; with the net result of one newly discovered site. Artifacts recovered from The Amity Site (31HY43), thought initially to be Pomeioc consisted of glass projectile points, glass seed beads and kaolin pipe stems parts that yield a mean pipe stem date of 1661 using Lewis Binford’s revised formula. These artifacts place the portion of the site that was archaeologically investigated in the mid-seventeenth century. Further research at the site failed to obtain data that could be used to directly link this site with the Algonquian town of Pomeiooc.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS, SOUTH COASTAL REGION

As for the southern Coastal Plain of North Carolina, South (1976) has summarized the documentation for the Waccamaw, Cape Fear, and other groups in the region, presumably correlating these with his Oak Island ceramic complex, adopted as the phase name for the Late Woodland in the southern Coastal Plain. Part of the problem for this region is a relative lack of information and insufficient excavation data, so our synopsis here will be restricted to the ethnohistoric record and very sparse archaeological information obtained by Loftfield regarding the Cape Fear Indians.

The Cape Fear Indians, a protohistoric Native American group indigenous to the lower Cape Fear region, are known to archaeologists and historians primarily from the observations and documents of early European explorers. Despite a history of contact dating from circa 1524 until 1808, little is known about this aboriginal group besides their European-designated name and geographical location. Detailed information relating to their linguistic affiliation, settlement

and subsistence patterns, social-political organization, and population is scant (Mintz 1996, 1997).

Among the numerous European explores to the lower Cape Fear region in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the most detailed accounts of the Cape Fear Indians were provided by Giovanni da Verrazzano and William Hilton. Verrazzano, a Florentine navigator who sailed in the service of King Francis I of France, was the first known European visitor to the Cape Fear region, who in an attempt to escape a storm made landfall around March 1, 1524 at or near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Soon after, he sent ashore a boat whose occupants encountered a number of Native Americans, forever known as Cape Fear Indians. Verrazzano notes that the group appeared to be friendly and “came hard to the Seaside, seeming to rejoice very much at the site of us; and marveling greatly at our apparel, shape, and whiteness, showed us by sundry signs where we might most commodiously come a-land with our boat, offering us their victuals to eat.”

Although Verrazzano’s encounter is thought to be the first, our best description of them comes from the narratives of a New England colony planted on Cape Fear River in 1661 under the direction of Capt. William Hilton. These settlers seized some of the Indian children and sent them away under pretense of instructing them in the ways of civilization and were themselves driven off. Two years later, a colony from Barbados also under Hilton’s direction, settled here but they too soon abandoned the area. In 1665, a third colony established itself at the mouth of Oldtown Creek in Brunswick County, on land bought from the Indians, but, though the latter were friendly, like the others this attempt at settlement was soon abandoned. It is thought by some (Loftfield 2005; Mintz 1996, 1997) that the location of this settlement was the Native American village of Necoies and is what was known by the Europeans as Charles Towne (Site 31BW133) which is located approximately 12 miles south of Wilmington on the west bank of the Cape Fear River. This site was investigated intermittently throughout the late 1960s-1990s and numerous aboriginal artifacts and 17th century artifacts were found in direct association with European artifacts. Unfortunately no detailed, definitive site report has been written to date. The Indian census of 1715 reports approximately 206 Cape Fear Indians (76 men and 130 women) residing in five villages along the Cape Fear River. Of the five reported villages, site 31BW133 is the only contact period site recorded in the area. While visiting the town of Brunswick located approximately two miles south of site 31BW133, Hugh Meredith in 1731 noted “There is not an Indian to be seen in this Place, the Senekas (who have always lived in amity with the English) with their tributaries the Susquehannah and Tuskarora Indians have almost totally destroyed those called Cape Fear Indians and the small remains of them abide among the thickest of the South Carolina inhabitants...”

SUMMARY

After a brief overview of the ethnographic record and what little archaeology has been completed for Contact-period studies in this region, several overarching themes for continued research is evident. Despite decades of ethnohistoric research conclusive archaeological data that, supports, expands, or refutes the ethnohistory of the region is surprisingly sparse. One explanation may be that, perhaps we are and have been too focused on searching for single nucleated villages, when instead we should be employing a derivative of what we term the Byrd/Heath model of site distribution model. Too often in archaeology, models are treated as

“plug and play devices” without using recovered data to either reevaluate to expand upon them by addressing larger issues of cultural subsistence and settlement patterns and behaviors.

It is a relatively accepted fact, that Native American communities, including the Algonkians and Cape Fear moved their settlements every so often once the local resources were diminished. A related phenomenon was observed by John Byrd and Charles Heath with the other residents of the Northern Coastal Plain, the Tuscarora, who practiced a more dispersed pattern of settlement with sites of numerous functions. Perhaps we should begin to develop a similar model for Algonkian and Cape Fear Indian sites that employs the same factors of proximity to water, soil type and elevation, thereby using these and other factors in an effort to reconsider Contact period settlement patterns and village location models.

There is also, an absence of, for the lack of a better term, ‘finished’ work for the region that could aid in the location and identification of historic period Native American village sites. According to Phelps (1982, 1984), various Indian villages in the region have been assigned State archaeological site numbers, but only based on cursory archaeological evidence. For example, survey and testing of the Chowanoc town of Ohanoak (31BR3) near Colerain in Bertie County and the before mentioned Chowanoc town of Ramushonouk (31HF1) at Parker’s Ferry in Hertford County were planned but never accomplished. In addition, locations for several Weapemeoc towns (Metachkwem, 31BR56 or 31BR49; Waratan, 31CO1; Mascoming, 31CO30) have been estimated, but each require further verification, either archaeologically or ethnographically. Another example are the archaeological remains of Chowanoc, the capital town of the Carolina Algonquian society of the same name, which were recorded as two separate sites, 31HF20 and 31HF30 with each site further subdivided into areas. Even though Phelps (1984) conducted extensive excavations at the site in the early eighties, valuable evidence has yet to be analyzed or recovered from the largest town of the most politically powerful Carolina Algonquian society. The Indiantown site (31CM13) in Camden County most certainly has information relating to culture change and acculturation of the Weapemeoc-Yeopim society from its traditional form to that of Colonial society, and Phelps (1984) believed that excavation of the site could address the causal factors of social system collapse through population reduction from disease, inadequate subsistence, and other factors, yet further excavation of the site was never accomplished.

Overall, in terms of locating and identifying Contact-period village sites, much of the region still requires comprehensive survey, whether in the form of digging in the dirt or through the copious mounds of paper records at state repositories, in order to provide not only distributional data but also site locations, which may correlate with recorded towns. It is also quite clear that we have a poor understanding of the reservation period in eastern North Carolina; what has become of the reservation tracts, though occupationally short-lived, for the Chowanoc, the Meherrin, and the amalgamated group of Matchapunga and Coree? Finally, what of the reservation tract along lake Mattamuskeet that was granted to the Matchapunga, Coree, and other tribes who were colonial enemies during the Tuscarora War? According to Garrow (1975: v) this reservation consisted of ca four square miles of marsh and low ridges along the lake in Hyde County. Phelps (1982:47) called for a survey of the southwest side of the lake in order to search for the town of Pomeioc, not even mentioning the possibility of discovering the Matchapunga reservation. In all, there are at least three reservation tracts in Hertford, Gates, and Hyde Counties that have not been afforded proper attention given their potential to aid our understanding of change and acculturation processes during the Reservation period and, thus, further Contact-period studies in the region.

Most people will agree that acculturation means the modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture, but such a meaning does not suggest a Eurocentric hold on such change. With the blending of so many native groups at and during the time of Contact, numerous tribes lost their own identity while taking on that of a more dominant society. Garrow further notes that it is quite evident from the available material that the Hyde County Indians declined in both population and social cohesiveness during the second half of the 18th century (1975:45). Interestingly, the Mattamuskeet descendents were not referred to as Indians after 1804 and were generally associated with “free persons of color” (Garrow 1975). The archaeology of the reservation tracts that are known in the region, if ever completed, may be able to address such a dichotomy.

The Indian way of life in the centuries following contact with Europeans, and especially after their possible conversion to Christianity, is poorly known, partly as a result of the neglect of the topic by scholars, and partly because the documentary record is so fragmentary. The writings of Rev. Alexander Stewart (1761/1763), an SPG missionary, allude to the fact that an effort to „civilize“ or „Christianize“ the Indians in the region (in his instance the Matchapunga, the Hatteras, and the Roanoke) was apparently underway. The presence of the missionary Giles Rainsford among the Chowanoc in 1712 also lends credence to this movement.

However, further ethnographic research is clearly warranted in order to determine the intensity of such efforts and if such efforts could have left an unrecognizable trace, save for the archaeological record, whether in the form of a meeting house or a site from which such missions embarked, like the Gatesville Landing site (31GA7), which Phelps (1982) attributes to George Fox, although this can not be verified any more because of recent disturbances.

In closing, the increasing sophistication of our understanding of the nature of cultural contact and change calls in turn for a reevaluation of the ways in which artifactual remains reflect cultural change in other aspects of native society. The concept of acculturation, or transculturation, that posits a progressive departure of a subordinate cultural group from traditional ways in favor of those of a dominant culture with which it has come into contact, has long since been abandoned in favor of a more sophisticated way of understanding cultural change; one which focuses instead on the creative reworking of new concepts, objects, and practices by both groups in contact, a process occurring whenever groups come together, regardless of their original similarities and differences. The convergence of these otherwise distinctive cultural and linguistic groups in the central coastal area of North Carolina provides an excellent opportunity to examine the prehistoric and protohistoric archaeological implications of cultural exchange and interaction. Unfortunately, it also presents us with an extraordinarily confused and complex archaeological record which, at this point, does little more than confirm the notion that the area was, in fact a cultural “frontier” in which several social, economic, and perhaps even biological interaction and exchange occurred over a period of several centuries (Mathis 1995).

REFERENCES CITED

Boyce, Douglas W.

1978 "Iroquoian Tribes of the Virginia-North Carolina Coastal Plain." In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 15 (Northeast), edited by Bruce G. Trigger, 282-289. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Feest, Christian F.

1978 "North Carolina Algonquians." In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 15 (Northeast), edited by Bruce G. Trigger, 271-281. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Garrow, Patrick H.

1975 *The Mattamuskeet Documents: A Study in Social History*. Archaeology Branch, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh.

Haag, William G.

1958 *The Archaeology of Coastal North Carolina*. Coastal Studies Series 2. Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

Herbert, Joseph M.

2009 Recent Woodland Archaeology of Coastal North Carolina. Paper presented at the Coastal Plain Symposium, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC.

2003 *Woodland Ceramics and Social Boundaries of Coastal North Carolina*. A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Anthropology. Chapel Hill.

Loftfield, Thomas C.

2005 Lost Charles Towne: Local Manifestation of World Events. *North Carolina Archaeology* 54:36-37.

Mathis, Mark A.

1995 Personal communication to authors. North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Mintz, John J.

1997 The Cape Fear Indians: Gone But Not Forgotten. *North Carolina Archaeological Society Newsletter* 7(2):1-2.

1996 The Cape Fear Indians: Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Inquires Along the Lower Cape Fear River. Paper presented at the 53rd Meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Birmingham, Alabama.

Mook, Maurice A.

1944 Algonkian Ethnohistory of the Carolina Sound. *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 34(6-7).

Paschal, Herbert R.

1953 *The Tuscarora Indians in North Carolina*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of History, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Phelps, David S.

1984 *Archaeology of the Native Americans: The Carolina Algonkians*. Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Economics, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

1983 "Archaeology of the North Carolina Coast and Coastal Plain: Problems and Hypotheses." In *The Prehistory of North Carolina: An Archaeological Symposium*, edited by Mark A. Mathis and Jeffrey J. Crowe, 1-51. Third Printing (2000). North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

1982 *A Summary of Colington Phase Sites in the Tidewater Zone of North Carolina*. Archaeology Laboratory, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

Powell, William S.

1989 *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

South, Stanley A.

1976 An Archaeological Survey of Southeastern North Carolina. University of South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology Notebook 93.

Stewart, Alexander

1763 Letter from Alexander Stewart to Daniel Burton, November 6, 1763. *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Ed. William L. Saunders. Vol. 6. Raleigh, NC: P.M. Hale, Printer to the State, 1886. 995-6. *Documenting the American South*. 2008. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 1 October 2008
<<http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0281>>.

1761 Letter from Alexander Stewart to Philip Bearcroft, May 22, 1761. *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Ed. William L. Saunders. Vol. 6. Raleigh, NC: P.M. Hale, Printer to the State, 1886. 562-4. *Documenting the American South*. 2008. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 1 October 2008
<<http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr06-0146>>.

Ward, H. Trawick, and R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr.

1999 *Time Before History: The Archaeology of North Carolina*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Wilson, Jack H., Jr.

1983 *A Study of Late Prehistoric, Protohistoric, and Historic Indians of the Carolina and Virginia Piedmont: Structure, Process, and Ecology*. Unpublished dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.