



North Carolina
Archaeological Society

Newsletter

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THE CAPE FEAR INDIANS: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

John J. Mintz

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.

Three Siouan-speaking groups reportedly occupied the lower Cape Fear region: the Cape Fear Indians, the Waccamaw, and the Woccon. The noted anthropologist John Swanton grouped all three under the Catawba division of the Siouan linguistic family. However, with respect to the Cape Fear and Waccamaw, he assigned them to the Pedee branch, and further speculated that the Cape Fear Indians may have been part of the Waccamaw.

Among the numerous European explorers 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. On January 17, 1524, Verrazzano set sail from La Plata bound for "Cathay and the extreme coast of Asia." During the voyage, Verrazzano and the 100-ton royal French naval caravel, *La Dauphine*, ran afoul of a severe storm. In an effort to escape the storm, Verrazzano altered course west by north and then turned west on latitude 34 degrees. He made landfall around March 1, 1524, at or near the mouth of Cape Fear River.

Soon after, he sent ashore a boat whose occupants encountered a number of Native Americans, herein referred to as Cape Fear Indians, who fled upon first viewing Verrazzano. However, after Verrazzano's group "assured with signs that we made them," they returned and proved to be quite friendly. According to Verrazzano,

the natives "came hard to the Seaside, seeming to rejoyce 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 exploration of coastal North Carolina was limited, it marks the first written documentation of the Cape Fear Indians by Europeans.

It was not until nearly 80 years later that, on October 4, 1662, Captain William Hilton sailed his ship, the *Adventure*, into Cape Fear River. Hilton, an English Captain who hailed from Charlestown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was the leader of an expedition that had come to explore the river and adjacent land. It was during this voyage that Hilton first met and subsequently purchased land from the Cape Fear Indians.

Hilton's second visit to the lower Cape Fear region commenced on August 10, 1663. Like his previous voyage, Hilton was interested in purchasing land from the Indians, this time on behalf of Barbadian land developers.

On Friday, November 16th, Hilton anchored at Cape Fear in six or seven fathom (36-42 feet), at which time several Indians came on board and "brought us a great store of Fresh Fish, large Mulletts, young bass, Shad, and several other unnamed varieties of fish." It is important to note that the Cape Fear Indians felt comfortable with Hilton, as he remarks that they had an Indian guide in their company. On Tuesday, December 1, 1663, William Hilton recorded that "We made a purchase of the River and land of Cape Fear, of (i.e., from) Watcoosa and such other Indians as appeared to us to be the chief of those parts."

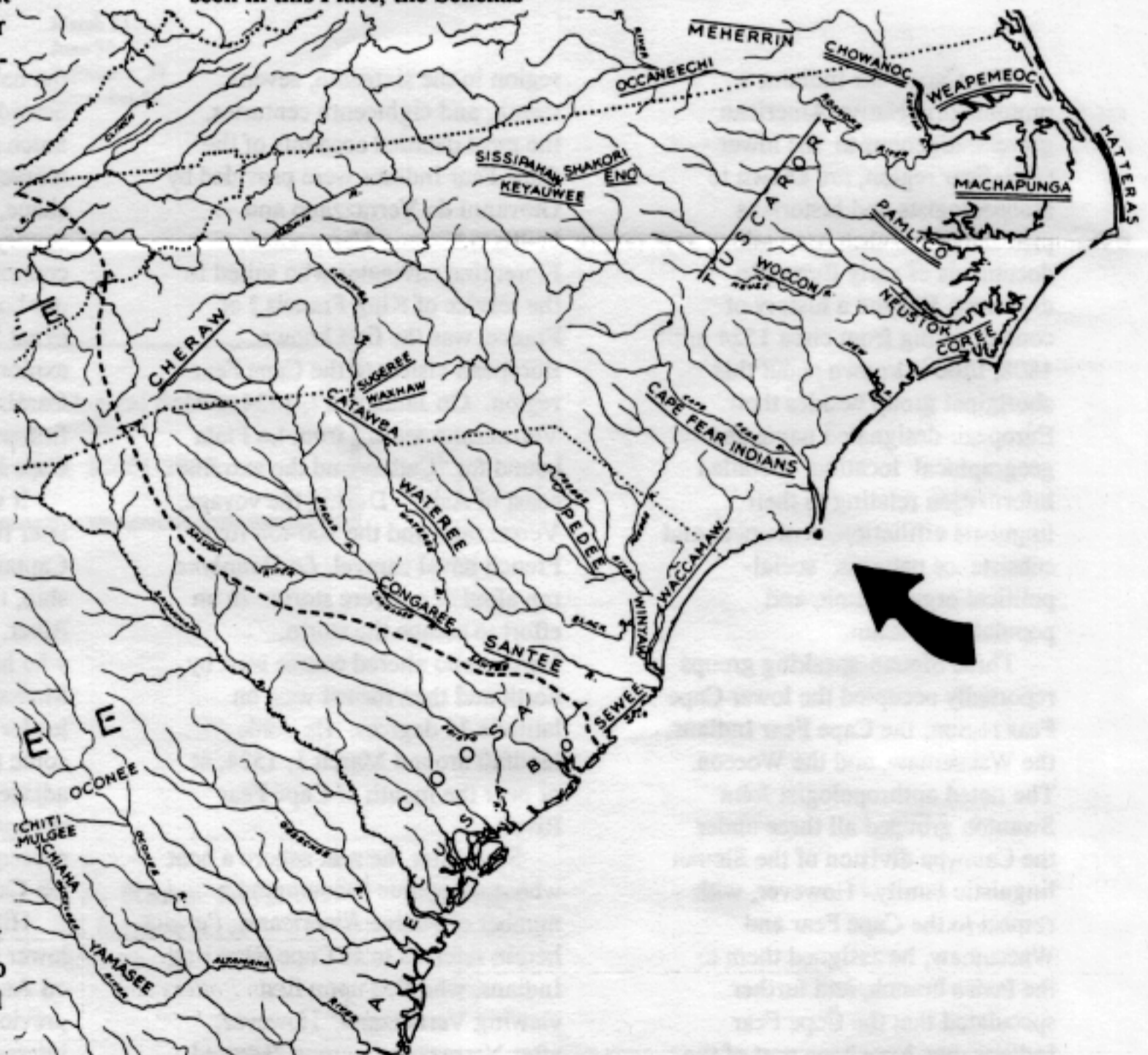
From the accounts provided us by Verrazzano and Hilton, it is known that the Cape Fear Indians practiced a hunting-and-foraging lifestyle combined with small-scale horticulture. Hilton noted that his party discovered several small cornfields. According to Hilton, "We saw several plats of ground cleared by the Indians after their weak manner, compassed round with great timber trees; which they have no way able to fall and so keep the sun from their cornfields very much yet nevertheless we saw as large cornstalks or bigger than we have seen any where else." Hilton also reports buying several baskets of acorns, maize, and salt from certain groups of Indians while traversing both Cape Fear River and several of its tributaries. Unfortunately, little is known about the population of the Cape Fear Indians. Neither Verrazzano nor Hilton give any detailed

accounts on this subject, other than mentioning that they encountered several "groups" of Indians. Hilton does mention that during his first visit to the lower Cape Fear region in the fall of 1662, he sighted approximately 100 Cape Fear Indians, who appeared to be "weak and timid people." However, during his second visit to the area, Hilton reported that they appeared to be more numerous and spirited. The Indian census of 1715 reports approximately 206 Cape Fear Indians (76 men and 130 women) residing in five villages along the Cape Fear.

While visiting the town of Brunswick in 1731, Hugh Meredith 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 having almost totally destroyed those called Cape Fear Indians, and the small remains of them abide among the thickest of the South Carolina inhabitants...."

By 1808, there were approximately 30 Indians possibly belonging to the Pedee and Cape Fear tribes living in St. Stephen's and St. John's parishes, South Carolina, under a leader known only as "King Johnny." By the end of the eighteenth century, the Cape Fear Indians had either been absorbed by other disenfranchised Native American groups or had died out.



Names and geographical locations of protohistoric Native American groups on the North Carolina and South Carolina Coastal Plain. (From *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, by John R. Swanton, Smithsonian Institution, 1946.)

Note: This is a condensed version of continuing research on the Cape Fear Indians, which was originally presented at the 1996 Southeastern Archaeological Conference in Birmingham, Alabama.

1997 North Carolina Archaeology Month Poster Set For October

The North Carolina Archaeological Society, the North Carolina Archaeological Council, and North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, are planning to recognize October 1997 as North Carolina Archaeology Month. The theme selected for this year's Archaeology Month is "North Carolina Archaeology: Lessons in Heritage Education." As part of Archaeology Month, the Society and the Council want to produce a poster commemorating the event. The poster is designed to highlight 14 recent projects around the state which have involved the public, students, and the Native American community in either the planning, excavation, or interpretive stage of archaeology.

Our goal is to make copies of this poster available free of charge to schools, Society and Council members, and will be sold at a nominal fee to the interested public. In order to achieve this objective, the Society and Council are seeking individual, corporate, and institutional donations to fund the poster. Once again, we are asking for your support. We have raised \$1,365 toward the \$4,000 needed for printing. Please make checks payable to the North Carolina Archaeological Society, and send to NCAS, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807. Please note on the check or attach a letter stating this is for the 1997 Archaeology Month poster. Any inquiries can be made to Dee Nelms at 919/733-7342. Thank you in advance for supporting this endeavor, and remember, donations are tax deductible!!!

Tryon Palace Meeting Gets Big Attendance

The North Carolina Archaeological Society (NCAS) held its Spring 1997 meeting on May 31, at Tryon Palace in New Bern. It was hosted by East Carolina University, Department of Anthropology.

Following the business meeting, the feature talks were on the ECU program at Tryon Palace by Charles Ewen, Eden House by Loretta Lautzenheiser, Tuscarora Archaeology by John Byrd, and Croatan National Forest by Mike Harmon. During lunch we had the drawing for the poster raffle. Linda Carnes-McNaughton won first prize, consisting of a life time membership to the NCAS; Clif Skinner won second prize, consisting of a full set of in-print *Southern Indian Studies*; and Dolores A. Hall won third prize, consisting of a one year regular membership to the NCAS, a signed copy of *The Mountain Potters of Buncombe County* by Dr. Linda Carnes-McNaughton, and a T-shirt designed by David Moore and Scott Ashcraft. We made \$300 for the poster in the raffle. Following lunch there were tours of the conservation lab and two field school excavation sites were open (the eighteenth century New Bern Academy and the nineteenth century Hay House).

The meeting was a great success.

Randolph Community College Archaeological & Historical Preservation Program

Randolph Community College (RCC) in Asheboro, North Carolina, has been approved to offer a new associate degree program that is unique to the North Carolina Community College System, the state of North Carolina, and the Southeast. The Archaeological and Historical Preservation Technology program was approved to begin at RCC in fall 1997 by the State Board of Community Colleges.

The new program grew out of Archaeological Technician Training classes that have been offered periodically by RCC's Continuing Education division since 1988. The success of the Continuing Education programs has established RCC as a major figure in technical training in archaeology and historic preservation in North Carolina, according to Dr. Harry Jarrett, RCC's dean of instruction. A statewide study completed by the College on the need for this associate degree program found major support from advisory committee members made up of historic preservationists/restorationists and archaeologists, predicted sufficient student interest to project a class size of 15 to 20 students for the first two years of the program, and identified more-than-adequate employment opportunities within industry and state and federal government.

The curriculum will provide courses related to the documentation and preservation of cultural and historical resources, emphasizing technical training in archaeological methods and building preservation/restoration. The program

will qualify students to assist archaeologists and historic preservationists in the identification, management, and restoration of historically significant sites. Specific tasks include data collection through field surveys, documentation, application of preservation law, and restoration/conservation activities. An Archaeological Technician Concentration under the curriculum will provide more in-depth study of professional archaeology.

The degree will require 70 semester hours of credit or 72 semester hours for the Archaeological Technician Concentration and can be completed in two years including summer sessions. The usual admission requirements for any associate degree program at RCC will be used to admit students to the program.

Under an articulation agreement, Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem will be allowed to offer the general education courses under the curriculum for students in their area; these students would then travel to RCC in Asheboro for the major courses.

Randolph Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the associate degree. For more information on this program or to apply, contact the RCC Student Development office at (910)633-0224.

1997 NC State Fair

We are planning for the 1997 NC State Fair exhibit for October 17-26. If you want to sign up early to help man our booth located in the Kerr Scott Building, please contact Dee Nelms @ 919/733-7342 for available times. You will get an entrance pass for the day(s) you work. We need your help. Thank you.

NCAS Newsletter Publication Schedule

All NCAS members are encouraged to submit articles and news items to Dee Nelms, Associate Editor, for inclusion in the *Newsletter*. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions:

Spring Issue	March 31
Summer Issue	June 30
Fall Issue	September 30
Winter Issue	December 31

NCAS Officers

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Vice-president: Bob Graham, 2140 Woodland Avenue, Burlington, NC 27215.
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Secretary: Linda Carnes-McNaughton, Historic Sites Section, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807
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Associate Editor: Dee H. Nelms, Office of State Archaeology, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807.
Executive Board Members: Scott Ashcraft, Thomas Beaman, Danny Bell, Charles Ewen, Mark McCravey, Margo Price

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