The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., in cooperation with Wilmington College, engaged in a joint archaeological project at Old Town Plantation in Brunswick County during the winter and spring of 1969. Brief historical background on the early attempts of New Englanders and Englishmen from the island of Barbados in the West Indies to establish settlements in the Lower Cape Fear during the seventeenth century follows.

On May 29, 1664, John Vassall and his followers landed, and the first European settlement in the Lower Cape Fear was born. From the beginning, the experience was a trying one for the small band of hardy and courageous pioneers. It was a strange and lonely world they entered, with the closest friend as far away as Albemarle and the enemy as near as the Spaniards at St. Augustine. The local natives appeared to be no threat, but all about the wilderness loomed as a formidable barrier to the fulfillment of their hopes. It was a forbidding challenge, but they accepted it and in time others arrived from Barbados, New England, and elsewhere to join the struggle.

By November, 1664, the settlement had been incorporated into a county called Clarendon.

Within two years the smoke curling from the chimneys of these modest and scattered homes could be seen for some sixty miles along the banks of the Charles River, which the settlers once more called the stream. While the settlement was primarily an agricultural community, there was also a lucrative trade with the Indians who came from great distances to exchange furs and skins for English goods. As a trading center, a village called Charles Town, the first in Carolina by that name, was founded about twenty miles upstream, on the west bank of the river and to the north of what later became Town Creek.

In 1666 a pamphlet was published in London which was intended to lure English men and women from the banks of the Thames to the banks of the Cape Fear. It was an extravagantly written publication which reported the population of the

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LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

BULLETIN

Volume XII, Number 3 Wilmington, N. C. 28401 May, 1969

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Meeting

Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. annual meeting, Friday, May 16, 1969, 8:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church. Speaker: Dr. Frontis W. Johnston, Dean of the Faculty of Davidson College, Davidson, N. C.

Subject: "The Paradox of History."

Reception following the meeting at Headquarters House. Dr. Frontis W. Johnston was born in 1908 in Summerville, South Carolina and graduated from Davidson in 1930, receiv- a Ph.D. in American History from Yale in 1938.

In 1935, he came to Davidson as associate professor of His- tory and was promoted to full professor in 1941.

He has served as President of the N. C. Literary and His- torical Association, President of the Historical Society of North Carolina, President of the Southern Conference, a member of the Council of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and a Trustee of several institutions.

Dr. Johnston has written articles and book reviews for the N. C. Historical Review, and has served on its editorial board for ten years. He has also served on the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association and the American Historical Review. He is editor of Volume I of "The Papers of Zeb- ulon Vance, 1960."

Dr. Johnston is married to the former Lucy Martin Currie of Davidson, daughter of the late Professor Archibald Currie. They have one son, Currie, now in the Air Force at Selma, Alabama; a daughter, Letitia, now Mrs. Lawrence Kimbrough, Secretary of the Davidson College Presbyterian Church; and a daughter, Martha, a freshman at Randolph-Macon College.

Dr. Johnston was recently named Davidson College's first Kenan Professor and Dean of the new Honors College.

By action of the Executive Committee of the Trustees, Dr. Johnston will be given the title of Kenan Professor effective July 1. The professorship was endowed by a grant to Davidson last year from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. To support a teacher "whose enthusiasm for learning, commitment to teaching, and interest in students will make a notable contribution to the college community," according to stipula- tions of the grant.

HISTORY BOOK RE-PUBLISHED

An interesting history of the Cape Fear section of North Carolina, which has been out of print, has been republished as a memorial edition. "Stories Old and New of the Cape Fear Region," originally published in 1956 was written by the noted Wilmington Historian, Louis T. Moore, and is on sale at the Book Department of the Belk-Beery Department Store, Wilmington, N. C. for $7.75.

This memorial edition of the book was sponsored by the Louis T. Moore Memorial Fund which was established by his family and friends at the time of his death. The fund is di- rected by Leslie N. Boney, Jr., Chairman; Mrs. Ida B. Kellam, and Henry J. MacMillian.

In commenting on the publication Boney said, "We are de- lighted that this permanent memorial could be arranged for Mr. Moore. The book was in demand as a local history source but it was no longer available."

It had been printed on two previous occasions and this me- morial edition includes certain changes as well as a photograph and biographical sketch on Mr. Moore.

As the book is sold the proceeds will be returned to the Fund and further memorial uses may be made."
Charles River settlement at the time as close to eight hundred persons.

"Reduced more by faction than necessity," according to the Governor of Virginia, Clarendon County had been completely deserted by the early autumn of 1667. Some of its people had gone to Virginia, others to Massachusetts Bay.

Looking back over the years, it is obvious that the failure of Clarendon County was not the result of any lack of Nature's bounty. Rather it was a victim of its own time and a combination of circumstances. There was good land to be had and people who wanted it. But they were not permitted to acquire it under conditions they could accept. Ignorant of conditions in the wilderness of Carolina, the proprietors dictated impossible terms of land distribution and then turned from the affairs of Carolina to the more immediate problems of war, plague, and fire. Not only did they fail to give support and encouragement to the colony, but by their unacceptable land terms, they also discouraged support from other sources. Weighted down by want and harassed by the Indians, the colonists were not able to carry the burden alone. Bereft of hope, they departed and left behind their homes and their fields to be engulfed by the lonely wilderness from which they had sprung. For the Lower Cape Fear, its time in history had not yet arrived, and it still lay many years in the future." (1)

"Town Creek is the site of the first settlement on the Cape Fear River, when a party of New Englanders in 1660 attempted to settle here. In 1661 and 1663 exploring parties from Barbados, headed by Capt. William Hilton, paved the way for a party of royalists, who in 1664, established a settlement at the mouth of Town Creek, which they called Charles Town (also known as Old Town) in the County of Clarendon. At that time the two Carolinas were divided into three counties, Albemarle to the north, Clarendon in the center, and Craven to the south. Clarendon extended from the west bank of the Cape Fear River to Cape Romain and westward to the South Seas. The first settlers were joined the following year by other Barbadians, among them Sir John Yeaman, who had been appointed their governor. These Barbadians planted cotton and exported boards, staves, and shingles. The settlement numbered 800 persons in 1666. In 1667 Massachusetts made a general contribution by order of court for the relief of the colony; nevertheless, it was abandoned in the same year. In 1670 Yeaman became one of the founders of Charles Town on the Ashley River in South Carolina." (2)

"In 1660 a number of colonists from New England attempted a settlement near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. This river was then known as the Charles. The New Englanders, who expected to raise cattle, selected lands on the banks of Old Town Creek. The colony never prospered, and before 1663 the newcomers were all gone."

"The first Clarendon Colony. In May 1664 a colony of Englishmen who had been living on the storm-swept island of Barbados entered the mouth of the Cape Fear River. These colonists were experienced planters and most probably had Negro slaves with them. Some thirty miles from the sea they selected a place which they expected soon to turn into a thriving town. To honor King Charles of England, they named the place Charles Town. As most of the colonists were farmers, they scattered up and down the river seeking good land. In less than three years their homes fronted the river for thirty miles. The second Clarendon Colony. The next three shiploads of new colonists, also from Barbados, arrived. These new colonists were in charge of Sir John Yeaman, who had sent his son to London to make favorable terms with the Lords Proprietors. The Lords decided to make the contract with Yeaman in the form of a general plan of government for Carolina. They divided their province into three counties. In the north, Albemarle was made a county. The Cape Fear country was to be the second county. This was named Clarendon. A third county, south of Clarendon, in the bounds of the present state of South Carolina, was to be formed. This county was to be named Craven. Yeaman was made governor of Clarendon and also of the lower county, which extended all the way to Florida. The other colony in the Cape Fear region was, of course, by this appointment, forced to take Yeaman for its governor. The two colonies thus united on the Cape Fear for a time. A good many families from New England joined the first colony shortly after it reached Carolina. By 1666 the total population of Clarendon was eight hundred, and a flourishing county seemed certain. But suddenly troubles came thick. Yeaman seems to have left the colony. Both he and the Lords Proprietors became so much interested in the settlement of South Carolina that they utterly neglected the Clarendon colony. Moreover, the Lords burdened the planters with

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unwise laws. In the fall of 1667 all the colonists left. The New Englanders went to Boston. The others scattered; some went to Virginia, and many to Albemarle. It is strange that the Lords Proprietors allowed so promising a colony, and one upon which at first they had spent large sums, to break up for want of a little care and of good laws.

In 1671 Yeaman was appointed governor of the South Colony, but he was shortly afterwards removed from office. He returned to Barbados where he died in 1674."

"The Short-Lived Colony of Clarendon. Very little is known about this short-lived colony. In the fall of 1665, Yeaman landed a group of Barbadians at Cape Fear, but only after losing a ship at the river's entrance. This was but the beginning of Clarendon's misfortunes. Other immigrants were shipwrecked; there was friction between the first settlers and the newcomers; the few New Englanders present made trouble; there was Indian hostility, and most significant of all, there were reports by two explorers from Barbados, Robert Sandford and William Hilton, describing the more attractive Port Royal region to the south. Consequently, Yeaman abandoned the colony, the proprietors closed the land office, and the settlers moved away—some to Albemarle, some to Virginia, and others to New England. At the time of Clarendon county's demise in 1667, there were about 800 people in the area, and, according to Yeaman's report shortly before his departure, "prospects were good.""

The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., by authorization of its Board of Directors on April 17, 1969, established the Historic Sites and Archaeology Committee. This committee was appointed by the president, the Rev. Walser H. Allen, Jr., and consists of the following members: John H. Debnam, Chairman; Dr. B. Frank Hall, Hugh MacRae II, and the Rev. Walser H. Allen, with Mrs. Ida B. Kellam and R. V. Asbury, Jr., and Mrs. Garry Stone, State Archaeologist, as consultants. Special guests at the April 17, 1969 board meeting were: Mr. Garry Stone, the State Archaeologist; Mr. William Henry, Assistant to the State Archaeologist; Dr. Gerald H. Shinn, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion and Director of Institutional Research at Wilmington College; Mrs. M. Henderson Rourk, President, Brunswick County Historical Society; and Miss Helen Taylor, Secretary-Treasurer, Brunswick County Historical Society. The board authorized the committee to become a permanent one as it had been appointed as an Ad hoc Committee on February 12, 1969, by the president until the matter could be acted upon at the next board meeting. It seems altogether proper for our Society to actively participate in this project, for our purpose in being is both educational and literary.

On Saturday, February 8, 1969, a preliminary exploratory trip was made to Old Town Plantation (owned by Mr. Hugh MacRae II) by Dr. Shinn, Mr. Allen, Mr. Debnam, and several interested Wilmington College students in an effort to locate the remnants of early colonial structures on the property. Several succeeding Saturdays were spent in further exploration, and a small number of sites were located; however, one in particular appeared to be the most promising of the group. This was a large pile of bricks and coral situated on high ground on the northern side of Old Town Creek near the point where the creek enters the Cape Fear River. Further exploration and clearing of the dense undergrowth around the site revealed it to be the remains of a building which had fortunately been undisturbed for many years. Surface artifacts, such as white clay smoking pipe stems, amber glass bottle fragments, and china and pottery shards lent credence to the theory that this was in fact a colonial ruin. Much interest in the site was evidenced by the students, and as many as twelve (12) young men and three (3) young women attended the exploration on Saturday. Mr. Hugh MacRae II generously provided aerial photographs and surveyor's plats of the property, which were quite helpful.

On February 12, 1969, Mr. Allen and Dr. Shinn met with Dr. William Wagener, President of Wilmington College, regarding the establishment of a joint committee to carry out archaeological and historical interpretations of early settlements on Old Town Plantation. Dr. Wagener appointed the Historical Archaeology Committee of Wilmington College consisting of the following: Dr. Gerald H. Shinn, Chairman; Dr. Thomas V. Moseley, Dr. Henry G. Crowgey, and Dr. Wagener. This committee was established to work in cooperation and in conjunction with the Historic Sites and Archaeology Committee of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. The two (2) committees have cooperated quite closely in the entire project.

Dr. Shinn contacted Mr. Garry Stone, the State Archaeologist, by telephone on March 4, 1969, and on March 6, 1969, Dr. Shinn was informed by letter from Mr. Stone that Dr. Christopher Crittenden of the State Department of Archives and History in Raleigh had approved of a demonstration dig organized by Wilmington College and the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., in which Mr. Stone and his assistant, Mr. William Henry, would participate. This dig was held on April 18, and 19, 1969, at the Old Town Plantation site. Since one of the functions of the project was to demonstrate archaeological techniques to student volunteers, there was no labor expense involved. The joint committee of the Society and the College was, however, expected to furnish lodging and meals for Mr. Stone and Mr. Henry. Accordingly, the Society's Board of Directors appropriated the sum of up to $10.00 for this purpose. Private donations were made by Dr. Gerald H. Shinn and Mr. Leslie Boney, Jr. Wilmington College donated $25.00. The Brunswick County Historical Society contributed $21.00. Mr. and Mrs. MacRae provided luncheon at their hunting lodge on April 18, 1969, for the entire party, and Mr. Debnam entertained the two (2) visiting archaeologists at dinner on the evening of April 17, 1969.

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The selected site was surveyed by a registered surveyor prior to the dig. A severe rainstorm hindered efforts on April 18th but, nevertheless, enough artifacts were uncovered to hold a "wash-in," or laboratory session, at Kenan Hall on the college campus on the evening of April 18. Saturday, April 19, dawned bright and clear, and was an ideal day for the work, and much was accomplished prior to the departure of the visitors that evening for Raleigh. The site has been back-filled and covered in a polyethylene covering for protection from erosion.

Some of the interesting artifacts discovered in the excavations of April 18th and 19th were: a pewter soup spoon, an opened pocket knife, a hinge for a fireplace crane, a doorlock and door pintle, Delftware and porcelain. Great numbers of carbonized handmade nails and many fragments of melted wine bottles were unearthed. The carbonized nails, melted glass, an opened pocket knife, and charred beams indicate the dwelling was burned, probably during habitation. Numerous small fragments of Indian pottery were found on the surface in the plowed field on the north of the house site. All of the artifacts discovered seemed to point to a date early in the eighteenth century, but no conclusion can be definitely drawn until the report from the state archaeologist is completed.

One of the most outstanding features of this colonial house was the center chimney which appeared to have four (4) fireplaces, two (2) of which have been completely excavated. A most intriguing discovery was made in excavating the southernmost wall of the house foundation. A piece of brown slipware and a fragment of glass were exposed _underneath_ the foundation wall. This fact possibly points to an earlier habitation. Completion of the dig will clarify this and many other suppositions.

At the northern side of the house site, surface collecting was done in the plowed field. Numerous pipe stems with diameters of 7/64th inch were collected in the ten (10) foot squares marked out by the survey team in the field. A complete pipe bowl was found on the surface in the north 179 square. This pipe bowl is almost identical to a pipe bowl discovered by Ivor Noel Hume and reported in his "Excavations at Clay Bank in Gloucester County, Va., 1962-1963," published by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 1966. Bulletin 249, Paper 52. The pipe bowl appears in figure 16 on page 26 as No. 18. Hume described pipe bowl No. 18 as follows: "Tobacco-pipe bowl white clay, with slipped surface, the bowl shape characteristic of the mid-17th century, flat heel, and roughly applied roulette line below the mouth; maker's mark V stamped on upper surface of stem. Stemhold diameter 7/64th inch, about 1610-1690." The pipe bowl discovered in the north 179 square at Charles Town (Old Town) differs only from the one discovered by Hume at Clay Bank in the fact that the Charles Town bowl does not have the maker's mark V. All other characteristics are identical. This pipe bowl, combined with the many pipe stems of 7/64th inch found clearly indicate a mid-17th century settlement at the mouth of Old Town Creek.

Wilmington College faculty and students, members of the Historical Society, and other persons who participated in the Old Town Plantation Archaeological Project:

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<td>Glendi Higgins</td>
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The author is especially indebted to Dr. Gerald H. Shinn of the Wilmington College faculty for his assistance in the preparation of this article. Without his personal interest, enthusiasm, and hard work, the Old Town Plantation Archaeological Project would not have taken place.

The interest, encouragement, and permission to explore and dig on his property generously provided by Mr. Hugh MacRae II is gratefully acknowledged.

Our president, the Rev. Walser H. Allen, Jr., was instrumental in the project in many ways, and his participation in the project and in the preparation of this article is sincerely appreciated.

Mr. Stanley South, State Archaeologist until March 1, 1969, was originally asked to serve as a consultant on the joint project and did provide an initial evaluation of its difficulties and potentialities.

**FOOTNOTES**


(3) Young People's History of North Carolina by Daniel Harvey Hill, President of the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Art, Published by Alfred Williams & Co., Raleigh, N. C. 1916.


See Also:


"A Brief Description of the Province of Carolina, On the Coasts of Florida; and more particularly of a new Plantation begun by the English at Cape Fear; on the river now by them called Charles River, the 29th of May 1664." London: Printed for Robert Horne, in the first Court of Gresham College near Bishopsgatestreet. 1666. See Hawks, Vol. II, Page 37.