European Settlement in North Carolina

Section 1: Exploration and Early Attempted Colonization

- Giovanni da Verrazano – 1524
  - Commissioned by the French
  - Vessel: La Dauphine – 100 tons
  - Arrived on the Cape Fear on 21 March 1524
  - “palms, laurel, cypress and other varieties of tree unknown in our Europe”
  - Notes Indian fires on the shore
  - The Indians are friendly and eager to trade.
  - When Verrazano returns latter that years he found the coast deserted
  - The French monarch did not consider the findings of his expedition significant.
  - He approached Henry VIII of England to support another expedition, but found him consumed with internal matters

- The Spanish attempted to colonize the lowlands between the Santee and Cape Fear in 1525 when they tried to transplant 500 people, including Negro slaves without adequate provisions. Unable to find an appropriate site to place a settlement before the onset of winter, they returned to Hispaniola.

- Sir Humphrey Gilbert, with the approval of Queen Elizabeth, attempted two expeditions: the first, to the West Indies in 1578; the second, in 1583, was intended set up a colony in Newfoundland. Both failed. After Gilbert was lost in a storm on his return to England, Walter Raleigh (his half-brother) renewed Gilbert’s charter on March 25, 1584.

- Raleigh mounted an expedition that left Plymouth on April 27, 1584.
  - Navigators: Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe
  - John White, an artist, accompanied the crew.
  - Came to Roanoke Island on 4 July 1584
  - Encouraged by a friendly reception from Indians
  - Barlowe’s report to Raleigh indicated a willingness of the Indians to trade for English goods.
  - ”They took with them samples of the produce of the country and two of the natives, Manteo and Wanchese.” (Leveler and Powell, 1973)
  - Ralph Land and 75 men left to start a colony
  - Colonists left with the passing of Sir Francis Drake before a relief ship arrived
  - Second attempt – “The Lost Colony”
  - Arrived on Roanoke Island 22 July 1587
  - 117 colonists led by Gov. John White
  - White returns to England for relief after George Howe is killed by Indians while crabbing – 90 men, 17 women, and 11 children when he left
  - Attempts to return in 1588
  - Finally makes land at Roanoke Island on 18 August 1590
• All inhabitants gone, buildings dismantled, not sign of conflict, only the word “Croatoan” carved on a tree
• Attempt to search the mainland is thwarted by a storm

Likely Problems with the “Lost Colony”

- Saltwater infiltration of the water table as with the Jamestown Settlement
- Food shortage
- Conflict with the Indians
- Weather
- Need to relocate to a better site
- Captured or assimilated (going native) by Indians
- Internal conflict
- Disease
- John White didn’t conduct a proper search of the mainland

Settlements and other Failed Attempts

- Early settlement of the Albemarle Region by Virginians – population of a few thousand by 1690
- Failed efforts to establish a settlement on the Cape Fear in 1662
- Settlement of New Bern by German & Swiss in 1710
- French Huguenot settlers on the Tar-Pamlico around 1690
- The “Welsh Tract” on the Northeast Cape Fear, 1730s – north of present-day Burgaw, likely Watha area (old South Washington). The community was absorbed as new settlers moved into the area.
- Quakers – Carvers Creek, Bladen County, 1730s. Site of 1734 Quaker Meeting House now Carvers Creek Methodist Church
- Scottish Highlanders – Bladen, Cumberland, 1750s – 1775
- Brunswick Town, 1725
- Wilmington, 1733 (incorporated in 1739)
- Charles Town on the Cape Fear (Town Creek in Brunswick County), 1664 – failed
- Settlement in Cape Fear Region -1662 through 1668 – failed
- Bath, on the Pamlico River, founded in 1705 – first town in North Carolina
- The Tuscarora War – 1711 through 1712
  - Chief Tom Blount
  - Chief Hancock
  - Narhantes (Near New Bern)
  - The death of John Lawson
  - Gov. Edward Hyde
  - Col. John Barnwell
  - Indian Allies again the Tuscarora
  - The Tuscarora surrender their land and join the northeastern tribes
NOTES

I

By the 1620's, Virginia settlers had exhausted the soils near Jamestown and were extending their settlement southward to the Chowan River basin. When John Pory, secretary of the Virginia colony, explored the area in 1622 he found the Indians friendly and eager to establish trade.¹


II

In 1663, Charles II declared the grant to Sir Robert Heath of Carolina by Charles I invalid and granted the land to eight Lords Proprietors. These Lords Proprietors were Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon; George Monck, Duke of Albemarle; William Craven, Earl of Craven; John Berkeley, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Sir William Berkley; Sir John Colleton; and Sir George Carteret. On September 29, 1729, the Lords Proprietors sold their grants back to the Crown. England’s claim to a portion of the New World was based upon John Cabot’s exploration of North America during the reign of Henry VIII, and the charter granted to Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

By their charter the Proprietors were empowered to plant colonies within the limits of their grant; to create and fill offices; to erect counties and other administrative divisions; to incorporate ports of entry, towns, and cities; to establish courts of justice; to commute punishments and pardon offenders; to collect customs, fees, and taxes; to have the patronage of church livings; to grant titles of honor provided they were not the same as those in use in England; to raise and maintain a militia; to commission officers; to build forts; and to put down and punish rebellion, declare martial law, and wage war by land and sea.¹


III

Charles II wanted to rectify some of the confusion that had arisen since the reign of Charles I when Sir Robert Heath was granted administrative control of the territory between 31° and 36° north latitude.¹ Nothing ever became of Heath’s plan to settle the Carolinas. Charles I had been beheaded in 1649, and the Commonwealth that Cromwell had established did not pursue the settlement of the Carolinas with any more success than the monarchy. Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia, and friend of Charles II, had cultivated a loyalty to the exiled king in his colony. Sir John Colleton in Barbados, as well as Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, supported the royal cause. When the throne was restored to Charles II in 1660, these men and five other royal supporters became the Lords Proprietors. Margaret Hoffman explains the process by which a person acquired land in the Carolinas in her abstract of early land patents in North Carolina, Province of North Carolina, 1663 – 1729.
The mechanics for acquiring land from the Proprietors was relatively simple. Once an area was open to settlement, one had only to make an application to the representatives of the Lords Proprietors for the land he wanted. The Council then issued a land warrant (an order) to the provincial surveyor to set apart certain land, which was loosely described on the face of the warrant. The surveyor located the tract using metes and bounds, an ancient system, whereby land was related to natural barriers - the rivers, the sandy banks, the sounds, the streams. Identifiable flora, indigenous to the Carolina area, such as pines, the various oaks, maples, and dogwood were used as property corners and witness trees. Next the surveyor set down a detailed land description, reciting the courses (direction in degrees) and distances (measured in poles) necessary to find the land exactly. And finally, the surveyor was required to make a plat (a map) of the acreage surveyed. The Council then issued the land patent (a document) to the Patentee. The land warrant and survey were filed with the Secretary of the colony and eventually the land patents were recorded in bound volumes.


IV

The faulty survey of the division of the original land grants during the Colonial Period contributed to the conflict between settlers and Indians. The concept of measuring and parceling out land to individuals was an English concept that had developed after the great estates had been divided up after the Middle Ages. Common ownership of land had faded from the English consciousness. By contrast, land, for the Indians, was not a form of property in the sense that the English understood it to be. The concept of perpetual usage (as a tribal hunting ground) differs from permanent ownership. A person owned only the land that he used and cultivated. When he abandoned it, others were free to use it. The English, however, did not abide by the same standard. They also allowed their livestock to roam freely to forage most of the year. These often damaged the Indian’s crops, and threatened their harvest as settlements expanded into the interior. The English closed access to the land that they had possessed, and prevented the Indians from hunting on the same land that they had hunted on for generations. Disagreements arose between settlers and the headmen of the tribes as to exactly what land had been bargained away and what land had not. Harry Roy Merrens in his book, Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century, defines the problem with the original survey.

The defects inherent in the system of surveying according to metes and bounds were aggravated by ambiguous references to poorly defined physical features, inaccurate measurements of distances, and the use of markers such as saplings, cowpens, tar kilns, and stakes in marshes. Moreover, surveyors often failed to follow their instructions.¹

This land had assumed boundaries, and often the grant included land that was not being used by the owner.
V

Nathaniel Batts, a Virginian, built a trading post on the banks of the Pasquotank River. Trading with the Indians was so successful that five years later, on September 24, 1660, Batts purchased the surrounding land from King Kiscutanewk of the Weapemeoc Indians. Other settlers followed his example and also purchased land in this region.

VI

After the Tuscarora Wars (1711-1715) and the Yamassee and Cheraw Wars (1715-1718), the Native American population of the coastal region of North Carolina began a rapid decline to the point where in 1755 the “total reported was 365 people, or less.”¹ Most of the remaining population was situated in the northeast. The southeast, it was reported, had no native population as early as 1724.²
