

Following the Croatoan

By Roberta J. Estes

Following the Croatoan

By Roberta J. Estes
Copyright 2011

In 2010 when the North Carolina Society of Historians awarded the Lost Colony Research Group the prestigious Malcolm Fowler Award, their question was why we weren't following the Croatoan. Little did they know, we are and have been for some time. Records that touch upon the Hatteras Indians, formerly the Croatoan, have been scattered throughout many different types of records in many locations. Altogether, there aren't many.

The Colonists left us one very clear message, in duplicate. When they left Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island, they disassembled the houses and left in an orderly manner. In doing so, they also left two messages, "Cro" and "Croatoan", carved into a fort post and into a tree, in order to tell John White on his return trip where they would be found. They also left him another message, by omission. He had agreed with them that if they were in distress, they would carve a cross, the cross formee, along with any message, and there were no crosses. They were not in peril when they left. White tell us also that, prior to his departure in 1587, there had been discussion of plans to move "50 miles into the main", but his records are mute on any further locations. The Chesapeake area has been speculated, but that doesn't match with the 50 mile criteria.

John White tells us in his journal in 1590 that he was greatly relieved that the colonists has joined their friends, the Croatoan, the tribe of Manteo, on Hatteras Island. And with that, they disappear from the English records. John White was blown back to England in a hurricane, never able to return. Subsequent expeditions were sporadic and had even less success in determining whether the colonists survived or not.

White and Harriot created a map in 1585 that showed in red the various locations of the Indian towns that were discovered during their explorations. The depiction of the Outer Banks was somewhat distorted, and of course the geography has changed between 1585 and 2010 as a result of various storms, but in essence, White showed the entire island he called Croatoan as inhabited by Indians, as shown below. The outlet at the top of Croatoan is now closed so that Cape Hatteras today connects the two islands of Croatoan and Paquiwoc.



Although White was unable to visit Croatoan during his 1590 rescue trip, he reported that the colonists' houses on Roanoke Island were removed, not torn down, destroyed or burned, and there was no evidence that the colonists had left under duress. When

White discovered the "Croatoan" and another "Cro" carving, and no crosses, he knew that the colonists had left a message containing their location, as they had also agreed to do prior to his departure. White commented in his journal that he was "greatly joyed that I had safely found a certain token of their safe being at Croatoan which is the place where Manteo was born", "the island of our friends."

The 1590 deBry map (North is at right), taken from various maps drawn during the 1584-1587 voyages shows three Indian villages, one at Buxton and one in the general location of Frisco and third one slightly further south.



Later maps indicate three main Indian villages on what is now Hatteras Island, one in or near Avon, formerly Kinnekeet, 3 miles north of Buxton, one at Buxton and one at Frisco, where Brigands' Bay is currently located. The Brigands' Bay location was the last location to have an active Indian village, into the 1800s, based on deeds and other local history.

Jamestown reported that there were a few survivors, but that most colonists were dead. The Powhatan claim to have massacred them, but then a few pockets of some colonists who were reported to be slaves were also reported. None were found and it's unclear how actively they were actually sought, although at least three separate reports were received regarding colonist locations.

The Zuniga map was a spy map shipped to the King of Spain by one of the Jamestown associates. On the original map, the rivers seem to be either mislabeled or misplaced relative to Roanoke Island. Regardless, it does show that in at least two locations, English remained at that time, in addition to Jamestown. A simplified redrawing of the Zuniga map is shown below. Neither location shown is on the outer banks islands, which are not pictured on the map at all.



James Sprunt, historian, in his book *"Tales and Traditions of the Lower Cape Fear, 1661-1896"* reports that the Cape Fear Coree Indians told the English settlers of the Yeamans colony in 1669 that their lost kindred of the Roanoke colony, including Virginia Dare ...had been adopted by the once powerful Hatteras tribe and had become amalgamated with the children of the wilderness.

The next documentation we find regarding the Hatteras or colonists is the 1701 journal of John Lawson published as the book "A New Voyage to Carolina" where he visited the Hatteras Indians and reported that the "Hatteras Indians these are them that wear English dress." He then discussed the fact that they descended from white people, the colonists, and wrote the following; "A farther Confirmation of this we have from the Hatteras Indians, who either then lived on Ronoak-Island, or much frequented it. These tell us, that several of their ancestors were white People, and could talk in a Book, as we do; the Truth of which is confirmed by gray Eyes being found frequently amongst these Indians, and no others. They value themselves extremely for their Affinity to the English, and are ready to do them all friendly Offices. It is probable, that this Settlement miscarried for want of timely Supplies from England; or thro' the Treachery of the Natives, for we may reasonably suppose that the English were forced to cohabit with them, for Relief and Conversation; and that in process of Time, they conformed themselves to the Manners of their Indian Relations."

Lawson adds; "I cannot forbear inserting here a pleasant story that passes for an uncontested truth amongst the inhabitants of this place; which is that the ship which brought the first colonists does often appear amongst them under sail in a gallant posture which they call Sir Walter Raleigh's ship; and the truth fo this has been affirm'd to me by men of the best credit in the country."

Lawson also tells us that the Hatteras have "16 fighting men", which in population studies is typically multiplied by 4 or 5 to obtain the village population, which, in this case, would be between 64 and 80 people in 1701.

In 1710, the Reverend John Irmstone of Bath wrote in a letter to his superior about people from Hatteras and Ocracoke who came to get baptized. He gives no surnames, but says, "these persons, half indian and half English, are an offense to my own and I gravely doubt the Kingdom of Heaven was designed to accomodate such. They stunk and their condition was not improved by the amounts of sacramental wine they lapped up nor by sprinkling with baptismal waters."

In 1715, the Hatteras had fought with the English in the Tuscarora War and were given 16 bushels of corn due to their condition described as "very poor, being in great poverty".

The earliest land grants in North Carolina for Hatteras Island were granted beginning in 1716¹ when land in this area apparently became available for ownership². Men who

¹ Land grant information extracted from "*The Province of North Carolina, 1663-1729, Abstracts of Land Patents*" by Margaret Hofmann.

were listed as neighbors³ on the tax lists in this district⁴ were granted land between September and December 1716, as follows; Davis, Gibbs, Johnson, Rollason (Rollinson), Oneal, Callihan and Farrow.

The only earlier grant on the "sand banks"⁵ was to William Reed in June of 1711 whose grant included the "Cape Hatteras Indian towns". One William Reed was very politically active and was the Governor of North Carolina from 1722-1724. This may have been his grant which he quickly sold and/or assigned or lost. On the 1715 tax list, Col. William Reed is the county's largest landholder with 3370 acres. He is likely the man who obtained the early land grant that included the Indian Towns and he probably never even saw the land. Some of this land in Buxton was patented as late as 1760.

We know from various later records that Davis, Gibbs, Johnson and Farrow's land abutted an Indian village. In 1759, two hundred acres was granted to "William Elks and the Hatteras Indians". According to later deeds, this land abutted the original grants of Davis, Gibbs, Johnson and Farrow. The 1756 legislative proceedings leading up to Elks' 1759 land grant are recorded in the NC State Records, and tell us that the Indian village was not new, existing prior to the surveying of the land for Henry Davis in 1716.

We know that the first available land valuation list for Currituck County in 1714⁶ included many of these individuals among the 192 total. In 1716, 1717 and 1718⁷, the residents are shown grouped into their various districts and the 1720 tax list tells us the number of acres owned and whether owners obtained their land by deed or patent.

There is a 1716 entry for concealed tithables that is extremely interesting.⁸ Generally, this means that the men had slaves or family members that they should pay tax on and they did not. Looking at the names and looking at the Hatteras Neighborhood reconstruction project, this is the entire group living around William Elks. If these men

² Various portions of North Carolina were made available for land patents by the Royal Proprietors at differing dates. Some very early, mostly very large, grants were made from Virginia, but Hatteras Island was not among these early Virginia grants.

³ Neighbors were determined by being listed contiguously on the tax list and by a reconstruction of the neighborhood by using land patents and deed. Surnames were spelled variously.

⁴ Tax lists in Currituck County during this timeframe were submitted by district. Each district had a constable whose responsibility it was to visit each resident and determine the amount of land owned and other personal property upon which the resident was to be taxed. The constable lived in the district and was only assigned the residents in his particular area. These constables submitted lists, some of which were labeled with a district name. In 1718, there were two lists that were labeled with the name "bankes" included, one a larger list called "sand bankes" and a second one, smaller, but including all of the surnames of the landowners discussed, labeled "[illegible] bankes". In previous and subsequent years, these two districts were combined, but the 2 separate lists for 1718 provide us with groupings of two neighborhoods that were apparently distinct from each other in location. Reconstruction of the neighborhoods from deeds and land grants confirms this division.

⁵ Hatteras island was variously referred to as "the banks", "sand banks", "Hatteras banks", and other similar references. Fortunately, it makes land transactions on the island easy to differentiate from mainland transactions. Land patents and deeds were searched from 1663-1804 inclusive for early and original land owners on contemporary Hatteras Island.

⁶ NC State Archives Colonial Court Records, 1714 Currituck County Tax Records, Valuations

⁷ Ibid, 1716, 1717, 1718 and 1720 various lists

⁸ <http://www.ncgenweb.us/currituck/tax/1716tith.html>

had "Indian" wives, daughter-in-laws or children, they would of course not want to pay taxes on them, because white men don't pay tax on their wives, etc. But according to the court, if you were not 100% white, you had to have tax paid on you. This appears for all the world like a group being accused of this. Keep in mind this is the entire list of concealed tithables for the whole county and all of them live on Hatteras and are neighbors. We know from Job Carr's 1756 testimony and Henry Davis's 1716 land grant that references "ye Sandy banks on Cape Hatterass joining ye Indian Town" that in 1716, William Elks was living adjacent Henry Davis.

The 1716 men with concealed tithables are:

John O'Neal
William Wells
Henry Gibs
Richard Jonston
John Robertson
Fran: Farow
Henry Davis
John Macuing
Thos. Spencer So. Ba:
Bryan Callehan
John Callehan

These men were all neighbors, appearing in this order on the tax list:

John Smith, a negro
Richard Ballence
John Oneall
Wm: Wells
John Lewist
Henry Gibs
David Jones Ser.
David Jones Jur.
Richard Jonston
John Robertson
Frances Farow
Henry Davis
John Mecuing
Thos: Spencer So. Banks
Bryan Callehan
John Callehan
Edward Bony
Mathew Hanna

In 1718, the tax collector did us an immense favor and he separated the "Bankers" from the rest, meaning the men who lived on the Outer Banks islands. The rest of the tax list

lived on the mainland. The list of men who paid taxes on the "Bankes" in 1718, not just the men who owned land, were:⁹

John Oneal
John Cirk
Wm. Wells
Davd. Jones Ser.
Davd. Jones Jur.
John Maccuin
Danl. Guthree
Henr. Gibbs
Henr. Davis
William. Johnson
Fra. Faroh
John Lewis
Thos. Spencer

The list was totaled here, then the following two men added. It is unclear whether they were added to the Sand Banks list or the larger list but at the end of the Sand Banks list.

Robert Paumer
Foster Jervis Jur.

All of the 1718 men had only one tithe, so paid tax only on themselves. This indicates that they had no slaves, no males over the age of 16 and their wives were not "people of color". This certainly interesting, because many of these men were the same men who were prosecuted just two years earlier for concealing tithes. Apparently some kind of agreement, perhaps an early version of "don't ask, don't tell", was worked out, because there is no indication of concealing tithables again and these men are not claiming more than one taxable person. Perhaps they had Indians living on their land and the Indians were not to be taxed.

On the 1717 Currituck Tax Levy list, we find three Elks men, none of which owned land. There was Thomas Elkes, John Elkes and William Davis for Emmanuel Elks. In 1718, all of these men were gone except Thomas Elks who was on the insolvent list for 1717 and 1718 as well. There were three Davis men as well, but only one, Henry Davis, lived on Hatteras Island. The rest of these men, including the Elks, lived on the mainland. The Elks family is known to have owned land in various locations in coastal Carolina and a later article will detail this English Elks family. The only possible, if remote, connection is that the Henry Davis on Hatteras Island may have been related to William Davis who obviously was somehow connected to Emmanuel Elks and the Hatteras Native Elks family might have for some reason adopted the Elks surname through this connection. This is a distant logical stretch, especially since we have nothing except speculation to base this commentary on. They did not even live in close proximity, in fact, there was at least 30 miles of water between these families. We do know from

⁹ <http://www.ncgenweb.us/currituck/tax/1718tith.html>

DNA studies that the English Elks family is exactly that, English, not Native. We track them from Virginia at a very early date.

In 1720, we find this entry in the legislative notes for the state of NC: "To Anthony Hatch in Little River you are hereby directed and required for the use of the Hatteras Indyans that they may not be unprovided to serve the publick if occasions requires to deliver unto Capt. John Oneale on the banks and of the indyans aforesaid 20 lbs powder and 40 pounds shot with 100 flints if so much be instore if noe deliver as much of each kind as you have. John Oneale signs his mark in receipt."

The 1733 Moseley map shows Hatteras Indian Town in the current Buxton location along with his note "Indians, none inhabiting the See Coast, but about 6 or 8 at Hatteras who dwell among the English." The village is marked below with two little "houses" on the sound side of Cape Hatteras.



The Indian villages are marked above with numbers corresponding to the following tribes and locations: 1. Poteskeet - Currituck County; 2. Yeopim (Weapemeaoc) - Pasquotank (now Camden) County; 3. Chowan - Chowan (now Gates) County; 4. Mattamuskeet - Hyde County; 5. Hatteras (Croatan) - Currituck (now Dare) County.¹⁰

In the 1730s and 1740s, the Farrow and other Hatteras families including the Gibbs, Spencers, Stows, Jones and Walls were purchasing land around Lake Mattamuskeet from the Mattamuskeet Indians. In 1740, two transactions took place on the same day, although they were not stated to be a trade.

Currituck Deed Book 3 Deed 632, page 22 - April 2, 1740 recorded June 26, 1740 - Charles Squires, Indian, to Jacob Farrow, 100# NC money, land, [no acreage mentioned], in Aramoskeet adjoining William Browning, Joshua Wallis line, Syrpis Swamp, with Cornelius Jones, Thomas Dudley, signed John S: Squires (sic). [S: appears to be his mark]

Currituck Deed Book 3 Deed 635, page 24 April 2, 1740 recorded Aug. 22, 1740 - Jacob Farrow to Charles Squires, Indian, of Arromuskeet in Currituck County, 100#, 200 acres on Hatteras Banks beginning a the north side of Cutting Sedge Marsh, by a house that Vallentine Wallis built, the sound side, Callises Dreen, sea side, wit Cornelius Jones, Thomas Dudley, signed Jacob Farrow.

The land purchased by Charles Squires is never found being sold. It may have been lost for taxes or privately conveyed. It has been located at being in the Buxton area based on the location of Cutting Sedge from Baylus Brooks' "Hatteras Place Name" map.



¹⁰ Map and tribal village identification site from <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jmack/algonqin/moseley.htm>

In the book *Villany Often Goes Unpunished, Indian Records from the North Carolina General Assembly Sessions 1675-1789* by William L. Byrd III, he transcribed the following 1756 entry, which has since been verified against the original document:

"Job Carr about Hatteras Indian lands. I have made diligent inquiry as to the complaint of Thomas Elks indian and I find the greatest part to be erroneous...the complaint of sundry persons that came and indeavor to disposess him and the rest of the indians which is a small number for there is but (faded) man beside himself and one small boy of he male I (faded) and I have strickly examined he said Thomas Elks what pers (faded) there were that I (faded) the indians and he ansvere me none but Thomas Robb Junor and demanded of he said Robb Junor his reason of his encroachment uppon the Indian Land and Robb denied he had done it or intended to do it for he dsered no more than his one and according produced a plot and pattin for a pece of land containing 320 acres which was surveyed to his grandfather Mr. Henry Dayvis in yr 17?6 [1716] beginning at the Indian Town and rainging to the northward and for the better clearing up the matter I caused Mr Hezeciah Farrow and Capt Jacob Farrow to examine the indian boundary line...for the said indians never had any grant or patting [patent] for it as ever they were acquainted with or had any knowledg of so that I conceive they have no right to compaine seaing they have no grant or patting for any lands neither is Thomas Elks intiteled to the royelty for he is but a son in law to the late King Elks desesed and part of the Maromosceat line of indians **for the tru line of the Hatteras Indians are mostly dead.** Job Carr"

In 1759, William Elks and the Hatteras Indians are granted 200 acres on Hatteras Banks that includes the Indian Town.

In John Swanton's "Indians of North America", he tells us that in 1761, the Rev. Alex. Stewart baptized 7 Indians and mixed-blood children of the "Attamuskeet, Hatteras, and Roanoke" tribes and 2 years later he baptized 21 more. Reverend Stewart goes on to say that the "Hatteras and Roanoke Indians" are "newly arrived from Roanoke Island" to live with the Mattamsukeet.

In 1770 William Elks of Hatteras sells to Isaac Farrow 100 acres and in 1771, he sells 50 acres on Hatteras Banks to George Clark.

In 1788, Mary and Elizabeth Elks sells 200 acres of land bounded by the old Indian Town to Nathan Midgett. It does not say it includes the Indian Town.

At this point the amount of land sold by the Elks family equals 350 acres and the land granted totals 200 acres. We don't know how much was left in the deed to Nathan Pinkham, below. I expect that this was the deed for the actual "Indian Town" itself, that Mary lived there until her death.

In 1802 Elizabeth Elks pens a deed to Nathan Pinkham for the "Indian lands" if her son does not reach the age of 21. In 1823, Nathan Pinkham files that deed and margin notes indicate that all other parties are dead.

With that, the curtain closes on the records we have concerning the Croatoan Indians.

Summary

The Hatteras Indian tribe appears to be extinct as a tribe, and was nearly so by 1756. The last remnant appearance that we can trace is the 1823 deed filing. Based on the 1756 legislative entry, it would appear that the last of the Hatteras married into the Mattamuskeet Indians and the tribal remnants may have gone to live among them based on Stewart's 1761 entry. It also appears that they were significantly admixed by this time as well and as early as 1710 based on Irmstone's letter and as early as 1701 based on Lawson's observations.

Are the Hatteras really extinct, or was the tribal identity actually the only thing "dead"? Had the balance of the Hatteras assimilated into either the European or the Mattamuskeet populations, or both? If the Hatteras were already admixed with the colonists, as reported by Lawson in 1701, their complete assimilation, meaning when they were no longer able to be identified visually as Indians, would have happened rather quickly. Did they move to join their kin at Mattamuskeet? Are there any discernable remnants left? Research is underway to answer those questions.