

Along the Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stan Knick, Director- UNC-P Native American Resource Center

A part of the mystique which surrounds Henry Berry as a Lumbee hero relates to his "disappearance." I use that word within quotation marks because it does not seem to be within the capability of normal human beings actually to disappear — literally to vanish, to become invisible. Thus Henry didn't really disappear, we just don't know where he went or what happened to him.

But his reported "disappearance" makes him seem even more extraordinary than he was in reality. This is not to say that he was anything other than extraordinary in his real-life actions here in the land of the Lumbee. But his "disappearance" added yet another dimension to his already considerable status as a hero, in part by making it possible for various stories to emerge seeking to explain how he was able to avoid being captured by the establishment.

There are a lot of stories about what happened to Henry. The *Wilmington Daily Journal* reported on 16 March 1872 that he had escaped from the area "in disguise." The *New York Herald* reported ten days later that he had accidentally shot himself while cleaning his rifle. The *Wilmington Review* reported on 21 May 1881 that he had made his escape in a "tool chest (Evans 1971:247)."

The late Rev. D. F. Lowry said in 1970 that Henry had been helped to escape by John Gorman, Adjutant General of North Carolina. Dr. Earl Lowry has said that he has in his possession evidence that Henry went into the U. S. Army and finally wound up in Tennessee.

One of the more remarkable accounts of what happened to Henry Berry was found in the *Robesonian*, and quoted in other papers. The writer

for the *Robesonian* (1873) believed that Henry Berry had escaped to the Northwest and joined up with Oregon's Modoc Indians, becoming their leader, the so-called Captain Jack. The *Weldon (N.C.) Roanoke News* picked up the story and reported (28 May 1873): "In Captain Jack, chief of the Modocs, behold Henry Berry, leader of the Lowry Band (Evans 1971:249)!"

This account of Henry's whereabouts is so fantastic that it deserves attention, if only in order to put it to rest. "Captain Jack," whose real name was Kintpuash, is best known for his part in the Modoc War of 1872-83. The newspapers of the day said he was ruthless, and pointed to the allegation that he had lured some white leaders to a "peace talk" only to murder them.

It is true that Kintpuash attained national notoriety at about the same time that Henry Berry slipped out of the national spotlight. It is also true that inspection of the photographs assumed to be Henry Berry and Kintpuash does reveal a slight physical similarity — both pictures show men with rather broad faces and high cheekbones (which could, of course, be said of a very great number of human beings).

So, could the disappearing Henry Berry have reappeared as "Captain Jack?" The biggest problem with this account is that Henry Berry would have needed to be able to fly. In the early and middle 1860s, when Henry lived in Robeson County, when he was taken to Fort Fisher to build Confederate fortifications, and then witnessed the murder of his father and brother in 1865, Kintpuash had already made himself known back home in Oregon.

Kintpuash was regularly seen

during 1862-63 in the Oregon town of Yreka. He co-signed the Treaty of 1864 between the Modocs and the U. S. government. When the Modocs were forced to relocate onto the Klamath Indian reservation, Kintpuash resisted, and eventually led a small group of young warriors back to their original homeland on the Lost River. During 1866-67, Kintpuash was often seen in Yreka, where he visited his white friends, Elias Steele and Judge A. M. Rosborough.

During this time, most Modocs stopped wearing their traditional animal-skin clothing, and instead took up store-bought European clothes. But after repeated unhappy dealings with the Indian Bureau, white settlers and U. S. soldiers, the Modoc began to fight back. Although Kintpuash wanted only to be left alone, the tide of history would not allow it. Eventually he would be brought to trial for "war crimes," and hanged in October, 1873. And even though Henry Berry and "Captain Jack" could not have been the same person, evidently they had quite a bit in common — they did not live in the same body, but they were apparently endowed with a similar heroic spirit.

The wide variety of stories which sprang up around both the exploits and the "disappearance" of Henry Berry may be seen as a testament to his heroic nature within Lumbee culture. If he had been ordinary, no one would have wanted to tell stories about him.

In the next segment we will continue our discussion of the hero status of Henry Berry Lowrie. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.



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