

History Of The Albemarle Sound Reviewed

By David Stick
(A paper read at "Conference on the Albemarle Sound - Trends and Management Needs", College of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City, N. C., March 3, 1982)

Any discussion of Albemarle Sound history should begin with mention of the following: Weapemeoc - The Sea of Roanoke - Carolina River - The Bay of Albemarle - and Albemarle River. For these, in sequence, are the names by which the present - day Albemarle Sound was known to the early explorers, settlers, and map makers.

Weapemeoc was the name applied by the native Indians to the area above the sound, comprising the present counties of Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans and Chowan when Sir Walter Raleigh's colonists, under Ralph Lane, first explored the sound and its tributaries in the spring of 1585. Lane was the one who referred to the sound itself as "the broad sound of Weopomiok," and on a sketch map there is a notation in long - hand that this sound of "Weopomiok" contained "freshe water with great store of fishe."

There is irony in the fact that Lane and his fellow explorers almost starved to death as they rode out a violent storm in their open boats at the head of the sound with this "great store of fishe" swimming about beneath them. It happened this way:

The colonists set out from their Roanoke Island base in three small boats to explore the sound and its tributaries, visiting Indian villages along the rivers feeding into the sound from the north, and then moving

on up the Chowan. There, on the west bank they came to the Indian town of Chawanoac, city - sized when compared with the others they had visited, for according to Lane it was "able to put 700 fighting men into the fields." Lane took captive the Chawanoac chieftan, a man he described as "impotent in his limbs... but otherwise for a savage, a very grave and wise man." For two days Lane questioned this wise old Indian about the surrounding territories, and what he learned was enough to set him off immediately in the direction of a fabled land of mountains and gold said to be located far up the River Morotico, today's Roanoke River.

It was an ill - fated expedition from start to finish. The spring thaw had begun and the task of propelling the boats by paddle and oar was laborious and time - consuming. Worse still, the Indians residing along the river, obviously warned of the approach of these foreign invaders, had abandoned their villages and stripped them clean of all edible commodities. But even when Lane's supplies were exhausted he and his men pressed on yet another day, having resolved that if necessary they could kill two large bull mastiffs, which were used as watch dogs, and prepare a "pottage" of sassafras leaves and fresh dog meat. They reasoned that this would give them sustenance for two additional days, which Lane figured "would bring them down the current to the mouth of the river, and to the entrie of the sound" where he hoped to be able to take fish from the weirs of the Indians of Weapemeoc.

So the indomitable

Elizabethans pressed on against the onrushing current of the flooded Roanoke River until, when their final meagre reserve of corn had been eaten, emaciated and weakened in both body and resolve, they were suddenly attacked by Indians. After a brief encounter the explorers escaped without and serious injuries. It was almost dark by then, so they established a sheltered and protected campsite on shore in preparation for a rapid descent of the river at first light the following day. The dogs, companions and guardians, were called on for double service there on the bank far up the Roanoke - guard duty that night, and breakfast the following morning, their hacked up remains providing sustenance and flavor to the bland pottage of sassafras leaves.

The English explorers reached the sound two days later, and stew of dog meat and sassafras long since consumed. By then, however, "the winde blew so strongly, and the billow so great," that Lane said "there was no possibility of passage without sinking our boats." It was Easter Eve, and Lane, suddenly turned humorists, noted that his men "fasted very trulie." The next morning the wind died down and they entered the broad sound, reaching the Indian village of Chirnum near Little River that afternoon, where, as hoped for, they were able to catch some fish and stave off starvation.

If this account of Lane's Albemarle Sound expedition seems more detailed than necessary you should understand that it has been done deliberately. For in order to put the history of the sound in proper perspective it is essential to understand that for nearly four centuries since then, year after year, day in and day out, innumerable men and women - black, white and Indian - have had their own encounters with the sound. And its history is nothing more than the aggregate of all of those personal experiences since the beginning of recorded time.

Now, to a more general historical perspective.

The Algonkian Indians, the natives of what is now north - eastern North Carolina, lived both by and on the sound - and the

rivers, creeks, runs, and bays that flow into it. Almost invariably their villages were located close to the water. There they could keep their canoes, hollowed out of giant trees, in the absence of iron and tools using fire as their chisel, and sharp shells as their asse. Nearby they could set their weirs or nets, for the most part consisting of labyrinths of poles and reeds, anchored to the sandy bottom and set out in intricate patterns to entrap the fish as they migrated - the forerunners of latter - day pound nets and set nets.

The sound was important in other ways. It was political boundary, separating the Roanocs on the south from the Weapemeocs and Chawanoacs on the north.

Even more important for the Indians was its use for transportation, for the estuarine waters were their highways, and Albemarle Sound was Route A-1-A.

It was something more than half a century after Sir Walter Raleigh's last Roanoke Island colony was given up as lost that white settlers began moving south from Virginia. They located their homesteads near the sound, as the Indians had done. And as they began to establish themselves, producing crops and products for export, they were able to sail their small ocean - going craft from sound to sea through two narrow inlets, Currituck and Roanoke. Both were in constant flux, new shoals forming and old ones

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Letter To The Editor: Expanding Terms

Letter to the Editor:
A proposed constitutional amendment will be on the ballot in the first primary 1982 which reads as follows: "Constitutional amendment making the terms of members of the General Assembly four years, beginning with members elected in 1982."

I believe to vote for a four - year term would be a serious mistake and it will work against the best interests of the people.

North Carolina has a history of good, honest government. Our budget is balanced, our taxes moderate, and our credit ratings are the highest. We have in the past depended on citizens who take time from their businesses and professions to come to Raleigh to attend the state's business. They have been careful not to cut their ties with their own communities.

Two - year terms for North Carolina legislators have worked well since 1835. No good reason has been offered to justify a change.

We have heard no public outcry for such a change; this is truly an incumbent's bill. A four - year term is an idea whose time has not come.

The proposed constitutional amendment is bad legislation.

The amendment will be on the ballot in the 1982 primary off - year election. Those who file for state legislative seats will not know whether they are running for a two - year or a four - year term. If the amendment is approved, the legislators who are elected in November, 1982 will serve four years. This means that North Carolina will be the only state in the nation whose members of both House and Senate would serve four - year terms and be elected at a time different from that of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Council of State.

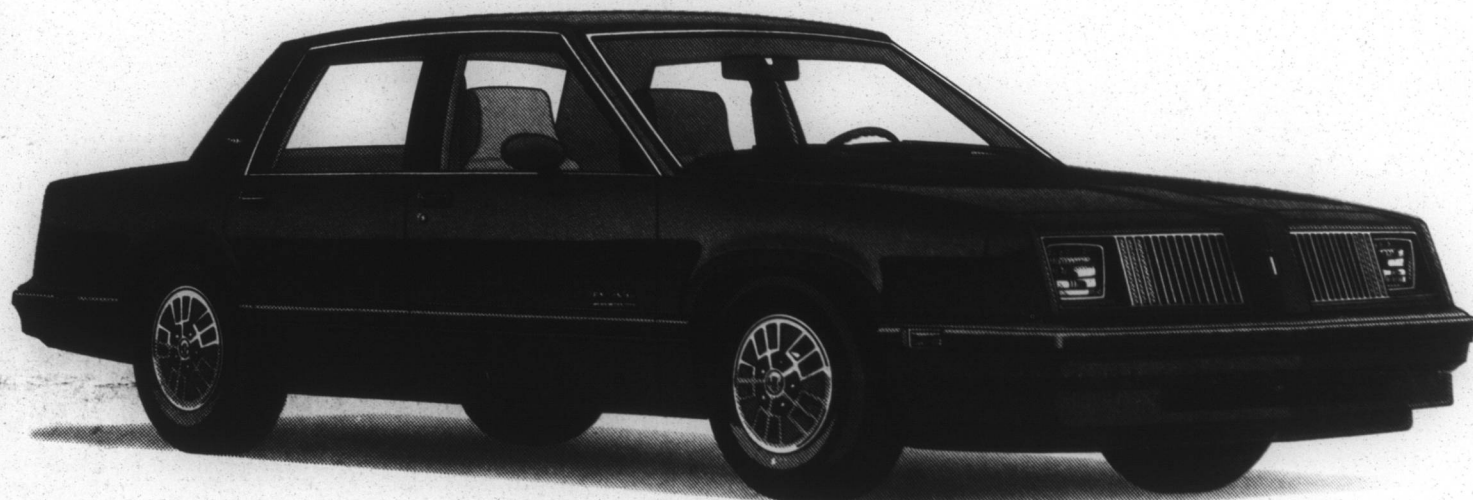
Since North Carolina is the only state whose governor does not have the veto power, the primary

check against any legislative excess is the two - year term. We need to keep the legislature on a short leash, and that short leash is a two - year term. North Carolina's legislative body is considered to be the most powerful in the nation. All the more reason why the legislators must return often to the people to communicate, to listen, and to understand the changes in the economic and political conditions in their communities. The two - year term successfully accomplishes this requirement.

A four - year term would lead to less accountability and responsiveness and would lead to a full - time legislature. As citizens we must be watchful that our legislature does not turn into a so - called professional body with lengthy annual sessions. Is there any proof that longer and more frequent sessions mean better laws and wiser public policy? The opposite is

Continued On Page 4-B

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NEWS
IN OLDS TODAY



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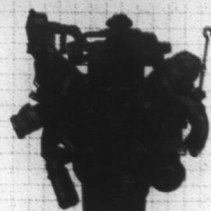
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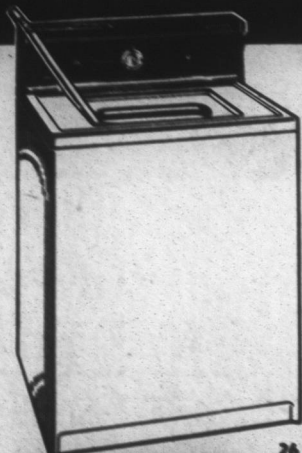
NOTICE

All flowers and containers will be removed from Beaver Hill Cemetery and Vine Oak Cemetery on March 29, 1982. Anyone having flowers or containers they wish to keep must remove them prior to this date.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Samuel W. Noble, Jr.
Administrator

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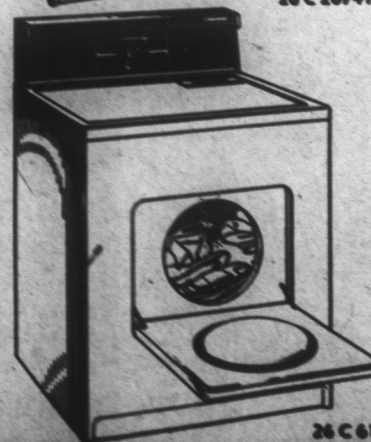


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