

# LUMBES AND THE ROANOKE RIDDLE

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 English colonists who vanished late in the 16th century from Sir Walter Raleigh's "Lost Colony" on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. The colonists, including Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World, disappeared between 1587 and 1590, the years it took Gov. John White to sail from the colony to England and return.

Two historians who propound the "Lost Colony" origin of the Lumbees teach at Pembroke State University here.

Adolph L. Dial, a Lumbee, and David K. Eliades, a Caucasian, are authors of "The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians," published in 1975 by the Indian Historian Press in San Francisco, with evidence for their argument.

They write that the "lost colonists" had talked with Gov. White in 1587 about the possibility of moving 50 miles inland and that White was not worried that they had left the island when he returned in 1590. The colonists had carved "Croatoan" on a gate post. Croatoan was a place inhabited by friendly Indians, and the historians write, White was confident that the colonists had gone to live with the friendly tribe under the Indian leader Manteo.

The belief among many Lumbees is that the Indians freely accepted the colonists as full partners.

At a historic Lumbee funeral in 1966, George Lowry is reported to have said, "We took the English to live with us. There is the white man's blood in these veins as well as that of the Indian. In order to be great like the English we took the white man's religion and laws."

In 1914, the Federal government sent special Indian agent O. M. McPherson to look into the Lumbee band. After studying historical records and talking to county residents, he wrote, "At the coming of the first white settlers to what is now known as Robeson County (in the early 1700s), there was found located on the banks of the Lumbee River a large tribe of Indians speaking the English language, tilling the soil, owning slaves, and practicing many of the arts of civilized life."

Travelers in the early 1700s wrote about "gray-eyed" or "blue-eyed" Indians who spoke English and lived like Englishmen.

Special Indian agent McPherson concluded, "I have no hesitancy in expressing the belief that the Indians originally settled in Robeson and adjoining counties in North Carolina were an amalgamation of the Hatteras Indians with Gov. White's Lost Colony."

Many Lumbees seem noticeably "Indian" in the appearance of their skin and hair, but Indians come in all shades here. A dark-haired Caucasian reporter was asked by a Lumbee, "And what is your tribe?"

"Many of us can pass for Cauca-

sians, and most of us who left that area did, so we could finally break out of that caste system there, where we were discriminated against," explained Archie Lowery of Los Angeles, one of many thousands of Lumbees who have migrated to achieve economic opportunity.

The Lumbees are regarded as Indians in North Carolina, and in previous decades have encountered overt discrimination. In the not-so-distant days of Southern segregation, there were three school systems in Robeson County—for whites, blacks, and Indians—three different washrooms and three places for the races to sit in the movie theaters. There has been a long-standing tradition here that Lumbees should marry people of their own race and not "marry white" or marry blacks.

Lumbees say that there seem to be other Indian tribes mixed in their heritage, including Cherokees, Tuscaroras, and the Eastern Siouan Indians such as the Cheraw and Keyauwee.

There are some Indians here who reject the name Lumbee and the Lost Colony theory and say that they are Tuscaroras.

There are also white historians who are skeptical of the theory. "You couldn't prove that they are descendants of the Lost Colony. It may be true. It may not be. It's one of those iffy things," said Hugh Lefler, emeritus professor of history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in a telephone interview.

But, historian Dial asked, "If they didn't come from the Lost Colony, where did they come from?"

Another advocate of the Lost Colony theory was Caucasian historian Stephen B. Weeks, who wrote in 1891 of the Indians along the Lumbee, that, "their language is the English of 300 years ago, and their names are in many cases the same as those borne by the original colonists."

There are no "Indian" names among the Lumbees. And Dial contends that several of the names of the lost colonists have been found among the Lumbees. John Sampson was one of those colonists. Sampson is a common name among the Lumbees but, Dial said, is not found among blacks or whites in Robeson County.

John Brooks was one of those who vanished with the Lost Colony. While the name Brooks is a common English name, almost all the people in Robeson County with the name "Brooks" are Lumbees, Dial said. Other names of lost colonists which appear among the Lumbees include Wilkinson, Harris, Jones, Taylor, Scott, Lucas, Woods, and Sutton.

Dial said in an interview that the widespread Lumbee name of Chavis might be a corruption of Cheven, a name of a lost colonist, and that the common Lumbee name of Dial might be derived from Dare.

Some of the most common Lumbee

names are Locklear, Oxendine, Hunt, Lowry, Cummings and Bullard.

One Robeson County Lumbee said that he always looked in the telephone book in any city he visited to see if a "Locklear" or "Oxendine" was listed. If there is such a listing, he calls, confident that he has found a "brother Lumbee."

Proponents of the Lost Colony theory argue that the Indian-white group sought refuge in North Carolina swamps and that the forbidding nature of the landscape helped the group keep its identity.

The Lost Colony theory and the Lumbee seem quite well accepted among most of the 82,000-plus Indians, whites and blacks in Robeson County.

Things were not always so easy for the Indians. "The total (Lumbee) story is one of struggle to gain acceptance as Indians," Dial and Eliades wrote.

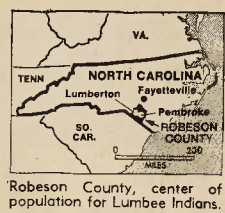
The relationship between Indians and whites seems to have been fairly harmonious here until the decades immediately before the Civil War when restrictive laws were passed against nonwhites in North Carolina. Tensions reached a high during the Civil War and the years immediately following when the "Lumbee War" wracked this Carolina swampland. Henry Berry Lowrie, the leader of the outlaw Lumber Indian Band of this period, has been regarded as a great hero of the Indians here. He disappeared mysteriously in 1872.

The Lumbees have long disputed the contention of whites and some other Indian tribes that they are a mixture of black and white. While Lumbees acknowledge that there are some black ancestors in the group, they say that the overwhelming majority of Lumbee ancestors were Indian and white.

The Indians here bitterly resisted white efforts to treat them like blacks and refused to go to black schools in the 19th century. In 1887, the Indians opened the Croatan Normal School here. The first graduate of that school, Doctor Fuller Lowry, now 96, still lives near the school in Pembroke. "We're a mixture of Lost Colony and Indian. The Indians and whites worked together and churching together through the Revolutionary War until the Civil War. That's when things got bad for us," Lowry said in an interview.

The Croatan Normal School grew and, in 1941, was renamed Pembroke State College for Indians. For a dozen years afterward it was the only state-supported four-year college for Indians in the country. Whites were admitted in the mid-1950s after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation. The name of the institution has now been changed to Pembroke State University, and the school now has a Lumbee chancellor, Dr. English E. Jones.

Of the more than 2,000 students,



Robeson County, center of population for Lumbee Indians. Times map.

about two-thirds are white, 20% Indian and the rest are black, Dial said, as he strolled across the spacious pine-studded campus.

The college has provided a focal point for Lumbee identity and has helped the tribe produce a large percentage of college graduates compared to other American Indian tribes.

The Lumbee fight to avoid being sent to interior, segregated schools and to create their own Indian college and schools has given the group an impetus and opportunity that many other tribes have not had.

Robeson County is a true tri-racial area. Citing 1970 census figures, the Rev. Bob Mangum, a Methodist minister in Lumberton, notes that 42% of the county's inhabitants are white, 30% Indians and 27% black, with Indians being the most populous group in the under-14 age group. In the last five years there has been a great increase in the percentage of registered voters among the county's Indians and blacks, in good part due to the efforts of the United Methodist Church's Commission on Religion and Race.

In recent years, Lumbees have started electing their own people to county office in force and to the state Legislature. Three of the county's seven commissioners are now Lumbees.

This is one of the few places in the country where there are large enough groups of Indians and blacks living together to act as important political allies. An Indian-Black Coalition of political leaders operates in Robeson County. One result of the coalition's effort is the election of the first non-white Democrat, Party chairman in the county's history—Eugene Burns Turner, a black minister from Lumberton.

The Lumbee fight over the centuries to avoid being labeled black, however, has made some Indians wary of too close an association with blacks.

In January, 1958, the Lumbees achieved national attention when they came into conflict with the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan had burned crosses in the yards of two Lumbee families, and scheduled a rally in a field 10 miles east of Pembroke. Both bands were armed and shots were fired, but no one was seriously injured. The Klan was routed and learned not to interfere with the Lumbees on their home turf.

People tend to keep with their own kind here. "In Robeson County we don't murder across racial lines," Barton said.

In the last 10 years there has been a great increase in the return of Lumbee professionals to this Robeson County Lumbee homeland. While there is only one practicing Indian physician here, Dial notes that the number of Lumbees in medical school has risen to a dozen. There are three Lumbee pharmacists in Robeson County, a county which had no Lumbee lawyers until the 1970s.

There are two Lumbee-owned textile factories in Pembroke, a Lumbee

## PEMBROKE VFW POST INSTALLS OFFICERS

Locklear-Lowery VFW Post 2843 of Route 1, Pembroke, NC on May 10, 1977 held their regular monthly business meeting at the Post Home. The two main items on the agenda were the installation of officers for the coming year and presentation of Special Awards.

Past Post and 8th Commander, Bobby D. Locklear, was installing officer and he was assisted by Comrade Hubert Oxendine. The following were installed as officers: Commander, Monroe F. Lowry; Sr. Vice-Commander, Jimmy Goins; Jr. Vice-Commander, Homer L. Benton; Quartermaster, William D. Oxendine; Judge Advocate, William L. Hunt; Chaplain, Archie Oxendine; Three-year Trustee, Sam Carter; Two-year Trustee, Lacy Collins; One-year Trustee, William C. Chavis; Service Officer, Buddy T. Johnson; Post Historian, Hubert Oxendine; Legislative Officer, James W. Thomas; Hospital Chairman, Josh Locklear; Public Relations, William C. Chavis; Voice of Democracy, Archie Oxendine; Health, Recreation Community Activities, Rudy Locklear; Officer of the Day, Buddy T. Johnson.

The following Comrades received the VFW Recruiter Award: Lacy Collins, Lee Ancil Maynor, Buddy T. Johnson, Monroe Lowry, William D. Oxendine, William L. Hunt, and William C. Chavis. Comrades earned this award by recruiting a minimum of 10 new members during the past year. Each Comrade was presented a Bull Dog Tie Tac and an autographed picture of the Commander in Chief R. D. (Bull Dog) Smith.

The Life Member Recruiter Program Awards went to the following Comrades: William L. Hunt, William D. Oxendine, and Lacy Collins. Also, each received a Distinguished Ornate Life Member Lapel Button.

To certify for this award a life member of the VFW must recruit and sign 10 new life members for the VFW between July 1, 1976, and June 30, 1977.

Comrade Archie Oxendine, Chairman of the Voice of

## Democracy of VFW Post 2843 and the 8th District of the VFW, was given special recognition for his outstanding service rendered this past year.

Comrade Lacy Collins won the National Aide-de-Camp Award by recruiting or signing 50 members or more into the VFW. Comrade Collins was awarded a tie clasp and will receive a National Aide-de-Camp VFW Camp.

Special plaques of recognition went to Bobby D. Locklear for services rendered as Post Commander for eight years; to Monroe Lowry for eight years as Quartermaster; and to William C. Chavis for nine years as Post Adjutant.

Any veteran interested in joining the VFW may contact any VFW member of Locklear-Lowry Post 2843, Pembroke, or call Monroe Lowry, Post Commander at 521-4169.

The Ladies Auxiliary of Locklear-Lowry VFW Post 2843 of Pembroke elected the following officers for the ensuing year: President, Daisy Demery; Sr. Vice-president, Clara M. Chavis; Jr. president, Lela Brooks Locklear; Chaplain, Katie Collins; Patriotic Instructor, Annie R. Chavis; Secretary, Sally Brooks; Treasurer, Rose Moore; Guard, Pearl Oxendine; three-year trustee, Lillian Chavis; two-year trustee, Connie Lowry; one-year trustee Annie R. Locklear.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW has had a very successful year. They have participated in many projects, such as Cancer Aid and Research. They visited the Veterans Hospital, gave aid to the burn center, aid to veterans and their dependents, also Buddy Poppy Sales and many other community activities.

Anyone seeking information concerning the Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW should contact Daisy Demery of Pembroke at 521-4388.

## Third Birthday Observed



Kevin Ray Strickland was honored on his 3rd birthday with a party at his home on May 13, 1977 from 5:00 til 7:00 p.m.

Kelvin is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Strickland of Route 1, Rowland.

The theme for the party was "The Circus Parade For Kids." The picnic area was colorfully decorated with the theme decor.

A menu consisting of hot dogs, potato chips, a circus parade party cake, drink and ice cream were served to the following guests:

Terry, Gerry, Perry Brayboy, Brian Stewart, Doreen Bullard, Enez Rogers, Raymond Oxendine, Hope, Tye and Kip Hunt and Jermie Locklear.

The honoree received many birthday gifts which he enjoyed. His favorite gift was a "Take Apart Tool Set."

Kelvin is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Silas Strickland and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Jones of Rt. 1, Rowland, N.C.

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