

Carolina Indian Voice

Pembroke, NC Robeson County

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Rose Introduces 1993 Lumbee Recognition Bill

Washington, D.C.—Congressman Carlisle Rose (D-NC) introduced legislation on Tuesday that would provide federal recognition to the Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians, predominantly located in Robeson County, North Carolina. This is the third time that Mr. Rose has introduced a bill that would give the Lumbee the same privileges and recognition that federally recognized tribes have. "The Lumbee tribe has waited long enough to receive the recognition they rightfully deserve," Rose said. "The tribe has maintained a separate identity and culture as Indians and the time has come for the government to acknowledge them. This is an issue of national dignity." The 102nd Congress, the bill was introduced by the House but failed to be considered on the Senate floor due to a procedural block by opponents of the measure. "I am hopeful the third time will be the last that this issue comes up," stated Rose. "I am confident that the House will once again approve this bill, but I am uncertain what will happen in the Senate." "We've had problems with this bill because other recognized tribes are afraid that Lumbee recognition will mean less federal money for them," stated Rose. "I am sensitive to their concerns and have included a provision in the bill which would keep any funds to the Lumbee separate from the BIA."

Mr. Rose's legislation would also benefit other tribes in the Seventh Congressional District. The 1956 Act gave the Lumbee name to all Indians in Robeson and adjoining counties. However, there are Indians in this area who identify themselves as a separate group other than Lumbee. This bill would allow those groups to petition the BIA separately for recognition. Without this legislation, they are deemed ineligible for the process or the same reason that the Lumbees are restricted. The following speech by Congressman Rose was printed in the Congressional Record for January 5, 1993 in Extensions of Remarks:

"Mr. Speaker, I am introducing legislation today that would provide for the recognition of the Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians who have been put in a peculiar situation by Congress regarding their status as Indians. It is symbolic that I introduce this bill on the first day of the 103rd Congress.

Today is a day of new beginnings for our nation and for the Lumbee people. "For over one hundred years, the Lumbee Tribe has been seeking recognition from the federal government. The Tribe was first recognized by the State of North Carolina in 1885. On June 7, 1956, Congress passed the Lumbee Recognition Act; however, a sentence was added at the bottom of the bill that precluded the members of the tribe from receiving any services or benefits that other Indians received. Thirty-seven years have passed and the Lumbee's status is still unresolved.

"Mr. Speaker, there are three important points that I would like to make so that Members can understand why the Lumbee's situation is unique and deserves special attention.

"First, the Associate Solicitor of Indian Affairs for the Department of Interior ruled in 1989 that the 1956 Act precluded the tribe from proceeding through the administrative process for recognition. This ruling came two years after the tribe had submitted their painstakingly prepared petition to the BIA. Ten years had passed since the tribe began to assemble their documentation and raise funds for legal costs. The tribe obviously tried to follow the procedures only to be told that they are no longer eligible to go that route. They are placed in a position where legislative action is not a choice but a necessity.

"Secondly, eight other tribes were also ruled to be ineligible for the Federal Acknowledgment Process. Only the Catawba and Lumbee remain to be recognized. Currently, the Catawba Tribe is in the process of settling on a land claims restoration that could eventually give them recognition. Lumbee is the last tribe that needs Congressional action to become recognized. In dealing with those seven groups, no other tribe was asked to go through two processes in order to become recognized. Congress has established a precedent, and it is only fair that it be applied equitably in this case as well.

"Thirdly, I am aware that some Members are frustrated with the Federal Acknowledgment Process and would like to see it changed. I agree and support the idea that the process needs to be reformed. But because Lumbee is the only remaining tribe with circumstances that set

them apart from all others, they should be dealt with first. This tribe has been studied by the Department of Interior on three separate occasions, in 1912, 1915, and 1933, and it was concluded each time that the Lumbees were Indians with a separate and independent community. They do not need to be examined and further probed by the BIA and the staff of the Bureau of Acknowledgment and Recognition. The U.S. Government is cheating itself and its history by not acknowledging this special group of people.

"According to the 1990 Census, the Lumbee tribe is the ninth largest tribe in the nation. Because of their status as a state recognized tribe, the tribe also receives some federal services from the Office of Indian Education and the Administration for Native Americans. The Indian Health Service allows Lumbees to receive scholarships but will not give medical services to the members of the tribe. Clearly, one hand of the federal government recognizes the tribe as Indian people while the other hand does not. This tribe deserves the same rights and privileges that other Native Americans have across the land. The current system of federally recognized tribes versus non-federally recognized tribes creates unnecessary friction amongst these people. It makes the non-federally recognized people feel like second-class citizens.

"Finally, there are other Indian groups in my Congressional District that are adversely affected by the Lumbee Recognition Act of 1956. The 1956 Act gave the Lumbee name to all Indians in Robeson and adjoining counties. However, there are Indians in this area who identify themselves as a separate group other than Lumbee.

This bill would allow those groups to petition separately for recognition. Without this legislation, they are deemed ineligible for the same reason that the Lumbees are restricted.

"Mr. Speaker, we need to finish what our predecessors started. Today is the beginning of another effort to correct the injustice placed on the Lumbee people by our government. I urge the Congress to pass the Lumbee Recognition Act as written, so that the history books can be corrected and human dignity can be restored to these people and their culture."



Mrs. Reddie Lowry Chavis

Henry Berry Lowrie Was Her Ancestor As Well As Hero

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special to Carolina Indian Voice

Fair Warning! Don't scathe the name of Henry Berry Lowrie in the company of Mrs. Reddie Lowry Chavis. It may stir up her dander. The legendary Robeson County Indian was her hero. To Mrs. Chavis he was something more. Her grandpa. Her mother's father. It is recorded in the Lowrie Family Bible that Henry Berry Lowrie and Rhoda Strong were married in 1866.

The bride was 15. In the six short years the couple were together they had three children—Sally Ann "SIS", Nelly Ann "Polly" and Henry Berry Lowrie, Jr. Mrs. Reddie Lowry Chavis, is the 86 year old daughter of Polly. Polly Lowrie was just a toddler when her father suddenly disappeared in 1872. "My mama told me she remembered only once seeing her father, Henry Berry Lowrie. He'd come to his Hopewell community home one night to stay overnight. Before day the house was surrounded by men on horses...had come to capture him," Mrs. Chavis recalls. "The house had a peephole. My grandpa called out, 'Hold your guns! Do not fire until I can get my wife and children out!' My grandma Rhoda took the children and went to the Lowrie homeplace.

"It was learned later that Henry Berry summoned gang members who were already in the house with him, and they opened a door to the house and opened fire on the men, killing three." According to Mrs. Chavis, after Lowrie's disappearance, his wife, Rhoda, and her three young children settled on a small farm near Sandcut Cemetery in the Red Banks area. Some few years pass and young Henry Berry, Jr. is lured to Georgia by employment opportunities in the turpentine industry.

Then to Mississippi where he takes a wife. His sister, Polly, has met Bennie Chavis back home in Robeson County. Chavis, encouraged by Henry Jr., takes his wife, Polly, and follows the turpentine circuit in Georgia, Florida and Mississippi.

Polly gives her husband four daughters in as many different states. The last child, Reddie, is born in Meridian, Mississippi on Christmas Day, 1906. Shortly thereafter, Polly and children are abandoned. Polly cites infidelity as the cause of the separation and returns to Robeson County to live with her mother, Rhoda on the farm. Bennie Chavis takes another woman Polly takes to using her maiden name. After her divorce she never remarries.

She later bears a son. All her children take her maiden name. Several years later, she, along with her children and a male companion, fol-

lows farm work in South Carolina and North Carolina. At her death in 1909, Rhoda Strong Lowrie's farm goes to her second child, 38-year-old Polly Lowrie. Mrs. Chavis was just about three years old when her famous maternal grandmother dies. She remembers the route taken to Harper's Ferry Church, the site of the funeral.

"We children were all loaded in a mule-drawn wooden wagon. It was in the fall of the year. I can remember good as we were crossing over Lumbee River. I looked down and saw the water rushing under the planked bridge. I was afraid the bridge would collapse, and Grandma's body would fall." It was in 1919 on a farm outside Maxton that young Reddie Lowry saw "the most handsome man." Love was instant. After a short engagement to Willie Chavis, the Indian maiden went with her suitor to neighboring Laurinburg and was married to him on Independence Day, 1920.

Their lives became one of hard labor during hard times. "My husband ditched in Bear Swamp for fifty cents a day. I hoed cotton for twenty-five cents. We saw some hard times and a lot of trouble back in Hoover days when we were raising our children," she laments. "Yes, I vote in presidential elections, but have never voted a Republican ticket because Old Hoover was a republican, and he brought starvation to this land."

Mrs. Chavis learned the art of sewing from her mother who was a skilled seamstress, and who sewed for the public. The 11 Chavis children, eight sons, and three daughters, benefited from the long hours their mother spent operating the peddle driven machine. "I could make as pretty a pair of coveralls you could find in any department store." She never used a commercial pattern in creating garments for her children.

Mr. and Mrs. Chavis were able to buy a farm of respectable acreage off Highway 710 in Robeson County. Mrs. Chavis, a widow since 1969, still lives at the homeplace located behind New Prospect Church in the Prospect community. Memories of happy times in the place flood her mind. Like the time her husband bought an organ for the family and taught all 11 children how to play it. Mrs. Chavis had learned as a young child to play a banjo and guitar.

"I took no schooling for it. Common-sense taught me." She says her mother, Polly, played both instruments as well as an accordion. The Chavis sons learned string music and tuned their guitars and mandolins by the organ. The children taught themselves how to play its replacement the piano. The young Chavis sons became such accomplished musi-

cians that they were invited to perform in churches throughout Robeson and Scotland Counties.

Five of the sons were to later form a professional group named "The Chavis Brothers" and tour throughout the U.S. They performed together at a family gathering as recent as two year ago at a recreational center outside Pembroke. "There was always picking and singing taking place in our home. As long as my mother lived, she loved to hear The Chavis Brothers play music," Mrs. Chavis comments.

"The last gig I saw him cut was right here on this floor. She was 90 years old then," the proud daughter says of her mother who died in April, 1962. She was 91.

Willie and Reddie Chavis were married 49 years. Seven of their 11 children are still alive. In recent years poor health has slowed Mrs. Chavis. After she suffered the first of three heart attacks six years ago, a son and his wife moved from Baltimore to live with her at the homeplace. The family-owned farm is rented annually as it has been since 1969. Mrs. Chavis chooses to work outdoors in her vegetable and flower gardens when she feels like it. "I never was a housekeeper." Her memory is not quite clear of the exact years, but she does remember working in the handkerchief factory in Pembroke as long as it was there.

"I'd work on the farm during the day, and then after supper, go to the factory and work until midnight. Wages weren't no big pay. But a help." She is the only surviving granddaughter of Henry Berry Lowrie. The only other surviving grandchild, is her brother Calvin Lowry. He resides in Wade, NC. Mrs. Chavis admits to having little patience. Certainly none enough to sit and crochet. "Too many other things to do," she cries. She enjoys reading her Bible, a book whose wisdom she has striven to obey since 1943, the year she professed Christianity. She doesn't care much about television and regrets the day her husband caught her gone fishing and brought one to her home.

"If I'd had my way there would never had been a television put in my house." She feels television programming is detrimental to the minds of today's young people who see all the meanness on the tube and go out and try to imitate it. This past summer Mrs. Chavis journeyed to the burial site of Rhoda Strong Lowrie in Harper's Ferry Cemetery outside Pembroke. At her maternal grandmother's grave she gave pause to think of the life of this most famous woman, and to that of her legendary husband.

She knew her grandfather was no ordinary man. Even the people of his time noted many times that he had exceptional intelligence, handsome

features, incredible endurance, courage and determination, and pride in himself and his people. And though she regrets the violence associated with him and his band, she nevertheless understands that circumstances directed her grandfather and his followers onto that path. And what does she think of the mysterious disappearance of her grandfather? "I believe he was killed based on what my mother said his followers told Grandma Rhoda. That he was loading his gun and the load went off. And the reason she believed them (Followers) was that they had his gun and watch. Rhoda said that if Henry Berry Lowrie had been alive, his followers wouldn't have had either the watch, or gun.

"Rhoda was given her husband's watch. The gang followers kept the gun," Mrs. Chavis says. It doesn't matter too much to her how he died, or when he died, or where his body lies for it's dead. It's his spirit that counts. AND HE WAS HER HERO.

Celebrates Birthday

Dr. Adolph Dial, professor emeritus of Pembroke State University, celebrated his 70th birthday Dec. 13 by inviting friends to "drop in" to his residence at Pembroke. Dial is shown here with his wife Harriet; Dr. and Mrs. William H. Likins, president of Greensboro College; and Chancellor and Mrs. Joseph Oxendine of PSU.

Both Greensboro College and PSU have presented Dial with honorary doctorates. Dr. Likins presented Dial a plaque at the birthday celebration which said: "Greensboro College congratulates Adolph L. Dial, L.H.D., a distinguished educator, businessman, politician and United Methodist Leader, and wishes him a Happy 70th Birthday and many years of happiness and contributor to better understanding among people everywhere."



Shown left to right are Dr. William Likins, Martha Likins, Harriet Dial, Dr. Adolph Dial, Adrienne Oxendine and Dr. Joseph Oxendine.