

Looking Back While Walking Forward

Federally Commissioned Reports

In this week's column, "Looking Back While Walking Forward," we will continue our review of federally commissioned reports on the Lumbee tribe. We will explore the reasoning behind John Reed Swanton's conclusion, in his 1933 report commissioned by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that the origin of the Lumbee tribe is mainly from the aboriginal Cheraw. I would also like to take this opportunity to look at other documentation to substantiate our descent from the Cheraw tribe. These documents were used in the Lumbee tribe's petition for federal acknowledgment to meet criterion 83.7e which requires a petitioner to demonstrate descent from an aboriginal tribe or tribes who combined to function as one group.

Swanton's report gives a historical overview of the Cheraw Indian tribe beginning in 1540 with explorers traveling through the territory of Siouan speaking tribes located in the westernmost areas. These explorers encountered the Cheraw in the middle of the seventeenth century upon the frontiers of Virginia. There was extensive movement by the Cheraw tribe toward the south due to attacks from Iroquoian tribes. According to Swanton's report, tribes, particularly the Cheraw, would reach the northern part of North Carolina. Continued movement would place the Cheraw and another tribe located in the area, the Keyauwee, in the Pee Dee River area of South Carolina. Documentation demonstrates that part of the Cheraw joined the Catawba tribe in South Carolina. They would remain a separate and distinct tribe while living with the Catawba. However, it is important to note, there is no indication that all of the Cheraw joined the Catawba. The Keyauwee would continue to live in the Pee Dee River area by themselves, and according to Swanton, no documentation exists to show their removal from the area. Thus, Swanton concluded the following:

"The evidence available thus seems to indicate that the Indians of Robeson County who have been called Croatan and Cherokee are descended mainly from certain Siouan tribes of which the most prominent were the Cheraw and Keyauwee, but they probably included as well remnants of the Eno and Shakori, and very likely some of the coastal groups such as the Waccamaw and Cape Fears. It is not improbable that a few families or small groups of Algonquian or Iroquoian connection may have cast their lot with this body of people, but contributions from such sources must have been relatively insignificant. Although there is some reason to think that the Keyauwee Tribe actually contributed more blood to the Robeson County Indians than any other, their name is not widely known, whereas that of the Cheraw has been familiar to historians, geographers, and ethnologists in one form or another since the time of De Soto, and has a firm position in the cartography of the region. The Cheraw, too, seem to have taken a leading part in opposing the colonists during and immediately after the Yamasee uprising. Therefore, if the name of any tribe is to be used in connection with this body of 6 or 8 thousand people, that of the Cheraw would, in my opinion, be most appropriate."

In his efforts to demonstrate Cheraw origin of the tribe, Swanton would discuss theories of origin of the Lumbee tribe which relate to the survivors of the Lost Colony, as well as the Cherokee Indian tribe. He discussed the fact that the Lumbee had relayed how their ancestors had come from Roanoke River in Virginia. A statement, he felt, added to the confusion of tribal origins. According to Swanton, when this statement is taken in the context of Cheraw history, it makes sense. We find, "Previous to 1700 they (Cheraw) had settled on the Dan River near the southern line of Virginia, and it is to be remembered that the Dan River and Staunton unite to form the Roanoke. They moved south . . . and established themselves on the upper Pee Dee near the present settlements of the 'Croatan'. Later we know that some Cheraw moved to Catawba country." Therefore, confusion arose, when tribal members told of their ancestors coming from the Roanoke River area in Virginia. It appears individuals would mistake the island of Roanoke with the river. Therefore, the story of the Lost Colony theory of the Lumbee, a theory that was highly promoted by Hamilton McMillan, local politician and friend to the tribe, is a paradigm and not a myth. In other words, there is a germ of truth in the story that was misunderstood. McMillan had moved to Robeson County in 1875 and tribal members had advised him that they came from Roanoke. He misunderstood that to mean Roanoke Island as opposed to the Roanoke River area, where we first find the Locklears appearing in the records at Quankey Pocosin in Roanoke River in the 1730s.

In reference to descent from the Cherokee tribe, Swanton would contend that movement by the Cheraw to Catawba county was the reason for the "traditional belief" among the Lumbee that some of their tribal ancestors went to the mountains with the Cherokee. He would further state, "Confusion of these Indians [Lumbee] with the Cherokee was probably due in part to the fact that the Cherokee have been their nearest neighbors of consequence for a long period and in part because of the resemblance between the names Cheraw and Cherokee."

Swanton published other reports on southeastern Indians, including additional publications on the Lumbee tribe. These reports would continue to reaffirm his opinion that the original members of the Lumbee descended from Siouan tribes in the southeast, particularly the Cheraw. However, as Swanton is careful to point out in his 1938 publication, this does not preclude the possibility that other tribes and other Indian individuals may have joined the tribe at different points in time.

Additional information exist that was not available to John Reed Swanton at the time, to further substantiate Cheraw origin of the Lumbee tribe. As stated, Swanton would continue to publish works reaffirming his belief of the Cheraw origin. It is also interesting to note, the report written by Special Indian Agent, O.M. McPherson, in 1915 discussed Cheraw origin of the Lumbee tribe. He too would acknowledge that the tribe was probably an amalgamation of tribes,

with the principal tribe of origin being the Cheraw.

Wesley D. Taukchiray, an independent researcher who has researched the Lumbee tribe since 1969, would uncover numerous documents to substantiate the tribe's descent from the aboriginal Cheraw. A discussion of this documentation is relevant to this installment.

The area occupied by the present day Lumbee Indians was home to a number of autonomous groups during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Other than the Cheraw, as we have discussed, they included the Cape Fear, Winyaw, Pee Dee and Waccamaw. However, our focus will continue on the Cheraw tribe. In a 1952 publication by Swanton, he placed the Cheraw population at 510 in 1715 and living with the Catawba. However, as stated earlier, there is no evidence to suggest that all of the Cheraw joined the Catawba. Further documentation in 1739 discusses the activity of the Cheraw Indians in the same general vicinity of the Pee Dee River. Documents from the 1700s document an Indian community living on Drowning Creek, located on the head of the Little Pee Dee. In 1754 there is a documented community of 300 or more individuals living on Drowning Creek. Further documentation would conclude this was an Indian community. A 1771 South Carolina Gazette newspaper article goes even further regarding this community. During one of the many incidents that occurred in the area, a convicted felon, Winsler Driggers, sentenced to be hanged, was captured "... near Drowning Creek, in the Charrow Settlement." The reference is clear as to the location of the community; that it was a Cheraw settlement denotes its tribal composition. This is most certainly the same community identified in 1754.

The next reference to this community occurred two years later. In 1773, a list was compiled and became referred to as the "The Rogues List." It is entitled, "A List of the Mob Railously Assembled ..." The list identifies twenty-one individuals and contains surnames associated with the present day Lumbee tribe. Those would include Sweet, Locklear, Chavours and Dees. No other document has been found to shed light on the list; nonetheless, it is fair to assume that it refers to some confrontation between the inhabitants and the colonial government, probably over land. The term "railously" appears to indicate a strong protest against some condition or action of government, rather than disorderly conduct. Three individuals were accused of harboring the others - Major Locklear, Recher Groom, and Ester Carsey. They seem to represent heads of households and were evidently community leaders. It is fair to assume that this is the same community as that identified in 1754 because Major Locklear, who with his brother John are ancestors of substantially all of the present day Locklears in the Lumbee tribe, was living on Drowning Creek as evidenced by a January 17, 1754 deed, from the NC State Archives, that contains the following legal description; "... on the north side of Drowning Creek and on White Oak Swamp being the place were Major Locklear now lives." Another individual on the list is identified as Thomas Groom who was at one time the holder of one of the old fields, located in the Pee Dee River area, that the Cheraw tribe had reserved in 1737.

In addition to these documents, oral tradition by tribal members, including the prominent tribal spiritual leader, Rev. Zimmie R. Chavis, discusses how his ancestors came from Roanoke River area in Virginia. It would appear Rev. Chavis was also talking about Indian descent from the Cheraw.

Lastly, it is important to note that we have always known where we came from. It would appear that non tribal members, particularly non-Indians, were always the ones questioning our origin. Because our answers did not conform to what they felt our answers should be, those non-Indians would impose their beliefs and theories upon us. Sometimes, however, this would benefit the tribe. A good example of this is the Lost Colony theory. Hamilton McMillan, who we have described as a local politician and good friend to the Lumbee tribe, would use the theory that we were descendants of the survivors of the Lost Colony, to gain political support among the tribe. In the mid-1800s questions arose as to the origin of the tribe upon our requesting both state and federal services. There was no question that we were Indian, however, it would appear to some, that we had intermarried with other races. Many felt we had intermarried with the black race, therefore making it difficult to gain any support from those in authority to provide any services to the tribe. McMillan, being the shrewd politician he was, felt he could promote the Lost Colony theory of origin and gain the support he needed. This was an ingenious political maneuver by McMillan. With folks thinking we were descendants of the survivors of the Lost Colony, therefore being mixed with white blood as opposed to black blood, he could gain the political support he needed to assist the tribe in receiving state benefits. In turn, the tribe, who at that time constituted a large block of votes for anyone seeking political office, would support McMillan's political campaigns. It is not my intention to say that McMillan was out to be deceitful. He was merely confused, as we have stated earlier. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, his efforts were crucial to the tribe's success in obtaining its own school system in 1885, as well as state recognition as an Indian tribe.

The tribal petition for acknowledgment contains this information as evidence to demonstrate tribal origin. This information would also be the reason, when recognition legislation was introduced in the US Congress in the 1980s, if successful, the legislation would have changed the name of the tribe to "The Lumbee Tribe of Cheraw Indians." It was the feeling of tribal leaders, at that time, that the tribe's name needed to reflect the tribe's aboriginal origin. This was also the reasoning for using the name with the Constitutional Assembly. It is not, as some would have tribal members to believe, an attempt to erect a political splinter group among the tribe. Lastly, the evidence demonstrates that the Lumbee tribe is an amalgamation of tribes who combined to function as one tribal entity. However, evidence clearly places a community of Cheraw Indians in the present day area of the Lumbee tribe, therefore, demonstrating that the principal tribe of origin for the Lumbee is the aboriginal Cheraw.

Next week we will conclude our review of federally commissioned reports on the Lumbee tribe.

This article was written by Cynthia L. Hunt, paralegal of the Indian Law Unit at Lumbee River Legal Services. It is taken from The Lumbee Petition for Federal Acknowledgment.

Date: May 18, 2000
LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department
PO Box 68
Pembroke, N.C. 28372
Telephone: (910) 522-1101

NOTICE OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

These notices shall satisfy two separate but related procedural requirements for activities to be undertaken by the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department.

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about June 1, 2000 the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department will submit a request to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Eastern/Woodlands Office of Native American Programs for the release of Indian Community Development Block Grant Program funds under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, to undertake a project known as NAHASDA, for the purpose of Construction of new homes on scattered sites for an estimated cost of \$1,395,000.00.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department has determined that the project will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department, 719 Old Main Road, Pembroke, NC 28372, Telephone (910) 522-1101, and may be examined or copied weekdays 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on the project may submit written comments to the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department. All comments received by June 16, 2000 will be considered by the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department prior to submission of a request for release of funds. Comments should specify which Notice they are addressing.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department certifies to U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Eastern/Woodlands Office of Native American Programs that Adolph Blue capacity as Chairman consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Eastern/Woodlands Office of Native American Programs acceptance of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and allows the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Eastern/Woodlands Office of Native American Programs (HUD) will accept objections to its release of funds and the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if it is on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department; (b) the LRDA/Lumbee Housing Department has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient has incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be repaired and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58) and shall be addressed to U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Eastern/Woodlands Office of Native American Programs, Ralph H. Metcalf Federal Building, 77 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60604-3507, Telephone (800) 735-3239. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Adolph Blue
Lumbee Regional Development Association, Chairman
Post Office Box 68
Pembroke, NC 28372
Telephone (910) 522-1101

The Gospellettes' Anniversary Sing Faith Baptist Church

Hwy. 710 South of Hwy. 74 (between Pembroke and Rowland)
Saturday, May 20th, 2000 - 7 p.m.



featuring The Gospellettes
Pembroke, N.C.



The Johnsons
Stedman, N.C.



The Singing Scotts
Lumberton, N.C.

and Willing Vessels
(picture not available at press time)
Mt. Airy, N.C.

Plate Sale

Friday, May 19th, from 11 a.m. Until
and Saturday, May 20th, from 4 p.m. Until