

Another Mystery—

What Happened To Colony?

By EUGENE FALLON

Ever since Plato wrote of a lost city, which he called "Atlantis," the world has been intrigued by the mystery of what happened to the metropolis—if, indeed, such ever existed. Right here in Brunswick County lies a mystery fully as great as that much-publicized settlement up in Dare County on the Outer Banks, which historians refer to as the "Lost Colony."

We speak of the more than vague references to a "James Fort" an English settlement located below Wilmington and surely in what is now Brunswick County, which was supposed to antedate 1625, and which is given authentically by both the writings of John Lawson and two ancient maps, upon which the settlement appears. This, then, is a story manly composed of conjecture, and pretends to nothing more than that.

Was there a fortification, presumably sheltering colonists as well as soldiery, located on the Cape Fear River in earliest 17th Century? And, if so, whatever happened to it? If John Lawson, whose excellent "History Of North Carolina is a standard reference work on the early history of Colonial Carolina, is to be believed there was indeed.

Lawson also dispels some of the mystery surrounding the early settlements which disappeared, leaving no trace behind them, in the following words:

"Had it not been for the irregular practices of some of the Colony against the Indians, by sending away some of the children (as I have been told) under the pretence of instructing them in Learning and the Principles of the Christian Religion; which so disgusted the Indians, that, though they had then no Guns, yet they never gave out til they had entirely rid themselves of the English, by their Bows and Arrows . . . were it not for such ill Practices, I say, it might, in all Probability, have been at this day, the best Settlement in their Lordship's great Province of Carolina."

The foregoing quote is exactly as written, along with the punctuation and the obscurities rife in early-historian styling which are familiar to all of us.

What did Lawson mean when he wrote of "sending away" some of the (Indian) children? One hopes that the colonists did not dispatch the little savages into eternity! But where else could the white men "send" the small

redskins? Surely not to England and a public school? The suspicion of wholesale murder seems borne out by the adult Indians' reaction, which, still according to Lawson's account, meant warfare with bow and arrow. And the question immediately arises if the colonists were wiped out to a man, in the sober passage: "yet they never gave out til they had entirely rid themselves of the English."

One phase of James Fort which seemed to have escaped annihilation was the "English Cattel."

In support of this, we turn to the remarkable narrative which comes down to posterity, as "The Hilton Pamphlet," being a sort of ship's log, kept by Commander William Hilton, Captain Anthony Long, and one Peter Fabian, of the voyage of His Majesty's Ship "Adventure" to American waters in Southern Latitudes, from the island of Barbadoes, B.W.I., in the year 1663.

The early portion of the log concerns the first landfalls made by the Adventure, on the coast of Florida (then held by the Spaniards) and concern this story not at all. It is the latter logging—when the ship, having turned northward up the coast, reached Cape Fear and this general vicinity—that the writing becomes pertinent, with a vengeance, as it were. And we read not only of English "cattel" in the possession of "rede aborigines," but fortunately chance upon yet another clue to the fate of the vanished colonists of James Fort, in the following passages:

"When the River (referred to throughout the document as the 'Cape Fair') comes to part, and grows narrow, there is all Chanel from side to side in most places; in some places you shall have five, six, or seven fathoms (sounds like Southport), but generally two or three, Sand and Ooze (mud?). We viewed the Cape-land, and judged it to be little worth (here, it sounds more like Wilmington), the Woods of it shrubby and low, the land sandy and barren; in some places grass and Rushes, and in other places nothing but clear sand (Long Beach, perhaps?); a place fitter to starve Cattel in our judgment, then to keep them alive; yet the Indians, as we understand, keep the English Cattel down there, and suffer them not to go off the said Cape. They (the Indians) brought aboard our Ship very good and fat Beef several times . . . We saw up the River several good places for the setting up of Corn or Saw-mills.

How long after James Fort had flourished below the Union Jack had the Writing been uncovered by the seafarers? There are only a few clues, and these of nebulous character. In 1625, the reign of King James the First terminated, and Charles the First ascended the throne of England. It seems more than reasonable to assume that James Fort was settled and named in honor of the Royal James sometime during his reign which lasted from 1603 to

1625. (It was during this reign that James Towne in Virginia made its appearance). Therefore James Fort must have been established prior to 1625, and undoubtedly antedates Charles Towne, that settlement which antedated Brunswick Towne, and was named in honor of the latter monarch, Charles of England.

What were the final hours like? Did English blood stain the Brunswick sands and color the pure waters of the Cape Fear River, while the domesticated animals ran in bewildered circles bellowing? Did a ship actually carry off the crusaders; or did frail craft, built hopefully by the land-locked settlers, sail out of the mouth of the Cape Fear to founder with all hands? Or did a pox descend instead upon the settlers, to blot them from the earth?

On two old maps, one drawn by Nicholas Shapley of Charleston, Massachusetts, who served as clerk of writs in that town in the year 1662, dying the following year; the second map was drawn by James Lancaster in 1679; both maps show James Fort lying in the almost exact geographical position. The first map is the earliest known to show the Cape Fear River region in any detail. You have heard that a "camera will not record what is not there." Nor will a map, however crudely drawn. There is, however, no records extant to show that either Shapley or Lancaster visited the region mapped by themselves. The natural assumption is that they copied other (and older) maps, maps which have since become lost or ceased entirely to exist.

And there you have the story of Brunswick County's Lost Colony; its Atlantis, which disappeared not beneath the sea, as Plato's was supposed to have done, but downed in the river of time and the sloughs of man's faulty memory. There is pretty strong proof that a settlement did exist before Charles Towne came into being. It is left to the reader's imagination to fill in the whys and the wherefores of its disappearance.

At this point the writer feels obligated to mention his debt to Cornelius M. D. Thomas of Clarence Plantation, whose excellent work "James Fort," published in 1959, furnished not only many of the facts as used in this story, but endowed the writer with enthusiasm for what he considers one of the greatest—and most interesting—enigmas pertaining to the first settling of white men along the Brunswick coastal coun-

ty. Mr. Thomas' book is available at a cost of \$5, postpaid, from the Charles Towne Preservation Trust, and a copy is on file at the Southport Public Library.

Exum Community outdid itself in the matter of Christmas decorations, with most of the lights and ornaments suspended upon yard trees. Among the more tastefully-decorated of these were found in the yards of Mrs. Elmo Mintz, Mrs. Alta Fernside, J. B. Verneen, Mrs. P. E. Brady and Ivan Bennett.

The holidays were spent very quietly in this community.

Be Wise! Advertise!



TV PLAYER CONNIE STEVENS (Surfside Six) introduces North Carolina's 1962 auto license plates which went on sale Jan. 2. New regulations concerning the purchase and use of the '62 tags are summed up in a specially prepared leaflet accompanying renewal cards which are already in the mail. Motor Vehicle Department officials strongly urge car owners to read carefully the instructions before applying for new tags. The bright new black-on-orange '62 tags must be in use by February 15.

Waterfront

In his end-of-the-year edition of The State magazine, Editor Bill Sharpe devoted considerable space to Brunswick county, and particularly to the various resort developments. There was a picture of "Bouncing Log Spring" with its new enclosure and its new name—"Boiling Spring". The following is quoted from the "From Murphy To Manteo" feature in The State:

"Ever thought you'd like to have a pretty, wide beach all to yourself? Well, the George Sloans of Ocean Isle Beach do have one. In winter time, they are the only permanent residents of the beach, and enjoy it just as much as they thought they would. Mr. Sloan is handling real estate sales on the beach for Odell Williamson, and even in the dead of winter, people knock on his door, ready to buy a lot.

"Ocean Isle, incidentally, has developed as a clean, neat beach with uniformly tidy homes. It has begun to attract small-boat fans and the ramp over on the waterway side is usually kept busy in good weather. The new ABC store is in business and, of course, is thriving. You could put a likker store at the North Pole and find customers close by. Long Beach followed suit by authorizing an ABC store.

"Several homes went up this past season, and the beach now has a motel both on the beach and on the mainland nearby, as well as a restaurant and miniature golf course. Odell handles 21 rental cottages, which shows how this beach has grown in recent years. This spring he opened a handsome new office to house his development activities.

"Ever dream back over lost opportunities? Here's one that will make some people who failed to see it real sick:

"Ocean Isle Beach, when it was known as Haile Beach, sold just before World War II for \$5,000. The beach is about 6 miles long. An ocean front lot today costs from \$2,500 to \$2,750.

"In other words, there was a time—and not so long ago when you could have bought a mile of proper ocean front for less than half the price of one lot today. Or, for the price of two lots today, you could have bought the whole island, ocean to sound, inlet to inlet.

"E. F. Middleton, when he was trading coastal property, once sold this beach for \$10,000 and that has been only about 20 years ago. "And we saw in the 25 Years Ago column of the Southport Pilot that Smith Island (Baldhead) was up for sale for taxes and \$4,575 had been bid for it. It is worth much more than \$1,000,000 today, and we doubt Frank Sherrill, the owner, would sell at any price."

Warns Of Dangers Of Bicycle Riding

Police Chief Herman Strong, taking note of the many new bicycles in Southport, had words of warning to both the boys and girls and their parents.

"Although it is not my wish to throw cold water on the sport of bike riding," said Strong, "it is a violation of a city ordinance to ride a bike on city sidewalks."

Strong added that he had received several complaints about this practice, some of which were registered by aged persons and pedestrians being bumped by bikes while walking on sidewalks. "Bikes can be dangerous both on and off the roads and streets," Strong said, "and parents should so instruct their children."

Meeting Is Held In Exum Community

A meeting at the Exum Community Building held Tuesday night featured films showing the growth of different varieties of tobacco. The meet was well attended.



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