

THE PICTURESQUE LUMBEE

Dr. Achorn Writes of Winter Canoeing Trip from Pinehurst to Atlantic Ocean

Three Hundred and Sixty-four Miles
the Distance of This Marvelous
Wilderness Journey



HOW MANY of those who love to boat on a "little river" know that the starting point for one of the most unique and picturesque canoeing trips in this country is to be found six miles from Pinehurst. Rising in the High Sand Hills of North Carolina, forty-four miles above Pinehurst, the Lumbee (Lumber in geographies), Croatan Indian name for beautiful water, speeds Southward into the Little Pee Dee, which in turn flows into the Great Pee Dee twenty-nine miles above Georgetown, South Carolina, where the Great Pee Dee greets its ocean mother. The actual distance between these two points is three hundred and sixty-four miles.

The Lumbee and Little Pee Dee are from three to ten feet deep with a current of from two to four miles an hour. On some of the bends, or "cow faces", the tide water is going faster than this. These rivers carry open water to the sea and for streams so wild and little used, are remarkably free from serious obstructions. There are snags which might bother a motor boat when the stream is low; rarely a jam; a wind fall now and then; a tree that some hunter has felled in order to get his coon—African pork they call it—but that is about all. A man with an axe makes quick work of them. The Lumbee and Little Pee Dee are said to be the only clear water rivers flowing through the Atlantic Coast plain. They are fed entirely by springs that rise in the Sand Hills and by creeks which have been given the same kind of a start.

Out of the Spring the Brook begins,
That winds till it meets a Brother;
And the River they form flows a
thousand miles
To greet its Ocean Mother.

For the first part the river winds through a timber growth which has never seen an axe. Cypress trees twenty feet in circumference and a hundred feet high stand on the river brink, with pines that sum up ninety feet to the first limb and would do as masts for ships that sail the world around. There are no bank bushes to obstruct the view, and the river thirty or forty feet wide and bold right up to the banks, flowing rapidly for many miles through such stately timber, affords an impressive picture. In one cypress brake not far below Blue's Bridge, where the start is made, a colony of blue heron nest. The parent birds stand nearly five feet high. At the sound of voices all these great birds disturbed by the unaccustomed sight of canoes and their occupants, begin circling about; for a modern canoe never passed over this course until five years ago. Wild turkeys, hogs, deer, and other game are found in their chosen

localities along the river. Otter and raccoons are sometimes seen swimming in the water. Raccoons do not seem to understand about a canoe or a paddle that makes no sound. Bass, jack, blue bream, and a fish locally called "red robin", a variety of perch, beautiful in color which rises to the fly, are among the game fish. Railroads and sand clay roads cross the Lumbee at various points convenient for breaking the voyage as one may wish. In the North railroads follow the water courses, in the South they cross them at right angles.

History tells us that Sherman in his march northward from Charleston crossed the Lumbee at Gilchrist Bridge, just above Wagram. ¶ Blue's Bridge, where four counties corner; is also a historical structure. The descendants of the family it is named from still live in the Sand Hills and are justly proud of a lineage which dates back to the time of William the Conqueror. All the early settlers along the river were Scotch. They entered the country in 1739 by way of the Cape Fear river. Some of them came from the Island of Skye, on the coast of Scotland and still keep in touch with their kin there. Wagram, a Scotch settlement at the end of the first wilderness, forty miles below Blue's Bridge, is an interesting place to visit. It is the birthplace of John C. McNeill, poet of the Carolinas. He died here in early manhood five years ago. The McNeill plantation at Riverton, a suburb of Wagram, fronts on the river and here the brother and sister of the poet continue to keep open house after the delightful Southern fashion.

Half way between Maxton and Lumberton lies the Croatan Indian section. Here are three thousand five hundred Indians with an interesting history. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, that era of adventure and discovery, a company from England, the second colonizing expedition sent across the Western ocean by Sir Walter Raleigh, landed on Roanoke Island on the North Carolina shore and made a settlement which is known as the "Lost Colony". In 1590, only three years after the establishment of the colony, a relief expedition sent to the island found, so the legend goes, no trace of the original band, but burned in the timbers of a ruined fort was the word "Croatan". The Croatan Indians of the present day have blue eyes and coal black hair. Their odd speech, many of their words reminding one of Chaucer, the old English cross-bow in use among them, along with other characteristics and historical tokens, have led to the conclusion that they are the descendants of the "Lost Colony" crossed with the Croatans. Croatan is said to be the Indian name for Hatteras. It takes a day in a canoe to go through this reservation. One often comes upon Indian women and children fishing. "What luck?" is the call in passing; "Fish don't bite no wurth," the laconic answer. The famous Henry Berry Swamp is located on the river near this reservation. Here the Lowrie outlaws lived for ten years in defiance of all authority. Their crimes and atrocities, which have been described in a book, ceased only when the last of the gang was killed by a captive who had been tied each night to an outlaw when they lay down on the ground to sleep.

¶ Going towards Lumberton the trip on

the river averages three miles by water to one by land, though there are some "reaches" of water; long straight paths. Sometimes the river makes a bend of two miles and you could hand a kiss to the other fellow's girl across the narrow neck or ribbon of land that divides the stream. Occasionally one comes to huge cypress trees standing in mid-stream. These trees are called "dram trees", for it is said when raftsmen come to one of these they are entitled to a drink of whiskey. On the other hand these sentinel trees seem as though on guard and under orders not to let any pass except those who are worthy. As one approaches Lumberton he leaves behind the holly and the mistletoe shot with waxen balls, and finds swaying gracefully the first sprays of grey Spanish moss. This moss marks the approach to the land of flowers and ease, as contrasted, let us say, with the land of ice and industry, of our Northern tier of states. Lumberton is the only considerable town directly on the river. From this point to the sea the Government has freed the course of snags and it is safe for the use of motor boats and launches. Here the river is about one hundred feet wide. There is a bluff thirty feet high, five miles below Lumberton, where sea shells of great variety are to be found, which goes to show that the sand hills now one hundred miles back from the sea, were once the ocean shore. Bluffs like this front on the river every five or ten miles throughout the course. They make fine camping grounds. Quail are plenty on the uplands back of these bluffs. Bathing facilities are afforded on sandy points opposite the bluffs where the water is always deepest. There is no mud in this region, and there are none of the insect pests to contend with that one encounters in the Northern wilderness. Princess Ann bluff, a few miles above the town of Fairbluff, is seventy-five feet high and rises in a truly queenly manner above the surface of the river. With its natural spring and beautiful grove of pines it affords an ideal spot for the camper. Fairbluff, where one can easily get supplies, is a pretty, restful little town of a handful of people; the only thing disturbing its quietness a new bank building. Six miles by water below this point one crosses into South Carolina, and twenty five-miles further on the Little Pee Dee empties into the Lumbee and steals away its name, a thing it never should have been allowed to do, if length and size count for anything in the "right of way" of rivers. Not far below the joining of these, Driftwood Island raises its high crest, from which there is a view up and down the stream. Its slopes are as clean as drifted sand on the sea shore. It is a beautiful spot.

From Gallivant's Ferry on the Little Pee Dee to where it meets the Great Pee Dee, is one vast hunting preserve. This area is densely wooded and is so difficult for the lumberman that it will long remain the home for wild hogs, cats, fox-squirrel, deer, bear and other game. The Flats or Buzzard Reaches, so called, near the mouth of the Little Pee Dee River are a most bewildering and fascinating piece of canoeing water. They are made up of a labyrinth of "lakes" which cut across the course of the Little Pee Dee for fifteen miles. Here one is virtually afloat in a cypress forest. Many of the lakes are separated from one another by single or

double columns of tall cypresses giving the effect of a colonnade; the trees often mirrored in the waters of the lakes they separate. Trees drawn up in this fashion, along silent waterways which are without a ripple and clear as crystal, are a charming sight. The cypress is a tree of mystery. A sand island seven acres in extent in the centre of this lake region is the only possible camping ground. "Big Ratchel," a huge cypress known by that name to rivermen and others all over the State of South Carolina, stands at the lower end of these reaches, a short distance from an old landing in the swamp said to have been used by the Tories during the Revolutionary War. This tree marked the spot where those who *knew* might land.

Entering the Great Pee Dee one is borne rapidly along on its "yellow waters" toward Georgetown, twenty nine miles away. The power of this mighty river is instantly felt and appreciated. There is no mistaking the force of its eddying swirl. Soon the rice islands in the delta of the river divide the waters, and taking either channel one bowls along past plantations on these rice islands, which once upheld the wealth and chivalry of the Southland. The islands are now the winter home for ducks that fly in from the sea at nightfall to rest on sheltered waters and to feed on wild rice growing there. With the abolition of slavery and the discovery later that rice could be grown successfully on the uplands of Texas, these vast estates have fallen into disuse, and some of them have been abandoned by their once proud owners. Only the magnitude of the estates and the beauty of the surroundings created about their colonial homes remain to point the story of the past. Great avenues of live oak or lowland pine trees flank the river front or mark the approach to halls now silent. These mighty live oaks hung with Spanish moss look like so many mastodons at attention. Some of them have a spread of a hundred feet and may be twice that number of years old. Everything is interesting and beautiful. Everything points to an age that is gone never to be reproduced in this country. The temperature of this sand hill river region permits of boating and camping during much of the time, even in its "six weeks of winter." The air has a soft, rare quality. The Sand Hills average two hundred and thirty days of sunshine during the year. Here one has the chance to boat, hunt, camp and fish, in winter along one of the most beautiful waterways in this country in the least changed and oldest section of the South. ¶ Why not be one of many to live again summer days?

JOHN WARREN ACHORN, M. D.

Stories by Bion H. Butler

We announce with pleasure a series of Moore County stories from the pen of Mr. Bion H. Butler, a newspaper correspondent who has won fame on two continents. ¶ As life's shadows lengthen Mr. Butler is enjoying "halycon days" on his farm nearby, writing merely because he can't help it amid an environment of books, manuscripts, and The Open.

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