

The Robin Hood Of The Lumber Swamps

BY DR. CHARLES W. LOWRY

Throughout the 17th century the Lumbee Indians lived to themselves in the isolation of swamp and forest. They enjoyed a perfect liberty, free from all pressures connected with white colonists and settlers. They were also remote from other Indian tribes.

When the first whites arrived in what is now southeastern North Carolina, they found Indians with a culture essentially European—the Lumbees. Yet they had retained one institution which was peculiarly Indian. Private property had not made its appearance. They possessed their lands in common, without concern for boundaries and titles in fee simple.

With the coming of the Highland Scots, who swept down from the North as the French Huguenots did from the South, the Lumbees began to lay out boundaries and to acquire deeds to their lands. Without this they could not have retained the lands which their fathers had cleared and for long had cultivated.

The oldest deeds that have been located date from the 1730s. In 1732 two Lumbees received land grants from King George II of England. These individuals were James Lowrie, a Highland Scottish name, and Henry Berry, the name of an original settler on Roanoke Island in 1587 and one of the "lost colonists."

James Lowrie received a second grant in 1738 and ultimately possessed an estate of 2000 acres. Two other Lumbee ancestors who purchased land in the 1730s were John Brooks (the name of a "lost colonist") and Robert Lowrie. The first acquired a thousand acres, the second 640 acres. During the rest of the century there was a continuing proliferation of land deeds. Clearly the notion of private property had taken firm hold of the Lumbees, and some of them were becoming substantial land holders.

In 1790 the first Federal Census was taken. This Census shows the existence of at least 85 families of Lumbees, recorded under the classification "all free persons not white." Several Lumbees fought as Patriots in the American Revolution, and eight Lumbees at least are recorded as having enlisted in the army during the War of 1812.

It was in the Revolutionary period that some of the Lumbee families acquired slaves. It is believed that these slaves came from South Carolina, probably from Loyalists or Tories, and that Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," was the donor of the slaves. He often took refuge during the Revolutionary struggle at a Lumbee plantation at Red Banks.

Slaves were to become the crucial issue of America in the 19th century. At first considered in the Colonies more or less in the category of indentured servants, the overriding issue of color was slow in arising but became increasingly an inflammatory motive and notion as the controversy over slavery intensified. This sinister new element, the question of color, spilled over into the relations of whites and Indians, influencing for example Andrew Jackson, a very great man in many respects but not in this area.

The rising tide of color was bad news for the Lumbees, as for Indians in general; and this development mixed with the emotions stirred and fired by Civil War was largely responsible for the personal civil struggle of Henry Berry Lowrie and his followers against the constituted but uncivil and prejudiced authorities during and after the War between the States. The story of this undeclared war and the heroic exploits of this remarkable young Indian who was mostly white is an epic one.

It has a claim to be the American counterpart of the Robin Hood saga. And there is a Maid Marian—a fascinating young woman—in the story. It all began with the new N.C. Constitution of 1835 when by close votes, both of the delegates to a Convention and of the people for ratification, the vote was taken away from freemen of Negro blood. (The original state constitution of 1776 required voters to be freemen and to meet certain property qualifications, but made no mention of race.) From this date (1835) and event, "the darkening racial mood of the Old South" affected the civil status of the Lumbees for the worse.

The tragedy is heightened by the fact that the amended Constitution referred only to free Negroes and mulattoes. The "white supremacy" complex was illegally extended to the Lumbees and other Indians, and various oppressive measures and acts directed against them led to violent resistance and counter-measures. All this came to a climax during the Civil War, centering centrally on conscript labor beside slaves. The result was a mini-war which did not cease with the end of the Civil War. It was known as "the Lowrie War" and it continued with increasing ferocity until February, 1874, when Steve Lowrie, the last surviving member of the "Lowrie gang," was assassinated by three bounty hunters. Henry Lowrie had died or disappeared early in 1872.

This young man, who bore the name of one of the "lost colonists" and was a descendant of James Lowrie, was a natural leader of men. His courage and audacity knew no bounds, and his exploits are legendary. While it is a tragedy that such a man was doomed to respond to life at its worst, he fulfilled an important destiny for his people. He became and remains a folk hero, a symbol of pride and honor, a chieftain who would make no peace with oppression, a kind of Robin Hood, with that worthy's

gallantry, if not his lightheartedness and merry-making fame. There is also a Maid Marian in the story. Henry Berry married a young woman of great beauty and charismatic femininity, named Rhoda Strong. She is described as the most beautiful girl in the Indian community, with large, dark, mournful eyes, and a well-developed figure. She could not read or write, but she had the qualities, as old as Helen of Troy, which caused men to turn and watch her wherever she went.

Her complicity sometimes meant salvation for Henry Berry. At the time of his wedding, December 7, 1865, there had been a lull in violence and confrontation in Robeson County. The marriage ceremony was performed at the old Lowrie homestead by a white friend, Hector J. McLean. Scores were in attendance and a great feast had been prepared. Suddenly a Lt. A.J. McNair appeared at the head of a company of the Home Guard. He told Lowrie that he was a prisoner. At length the latter agreed to go, though McNair had no warrant for Lowrie's arrest. Originally incarcerated at Lumberton, he was speedily removed to the Columbus County jail at Whiteville, 30 miles away.

Here Lowrie escaped, the first man ever to do so from this jail. He apparently filed his way out of grated iron bars, with hand-

cuffs on. It was believed that his young wife was behind the escape, perhaps smuggling in the file in a cake. After this, war began in earnest. At its height five years later, the State placed a \$12,000 bounty on Henry's head, dead or alive; and \$6,000 each on the heads of Steve and Tom Lowrie, Boss Strong, Henderson Oxendine, and George Applewhite. A veritable guerrilla war raged for years. The bitterness and hatred engendered were truly terrible. This can be gauged by the arrest by the N.C. militia of several wives of the gang, including Rhoda Lowrie.

Henry Berry retaliated by threatening to pick up white wives and set a deadline for the release of the imprisoned women. The civil authorities did not like it but surrendered to public pressure and released the Lumbee wives on the day the ultimatum was to expire. If space permitted, I could recount some thrilling exploits of this gifted and indomitable young leader. Some have said he was worthy of a better cause, but not the Lumbees. They think that he saved them from being put into the same half-free "place" given the blacks. He gave them a new pride of race and revitalized their will to survive and thrive.

Each year the Lumbees give the Henry Berry Lowrie Award to the citizen who best exemplifies the highest standard of service to the community.



STATE WINNERS — Five students in the Medical Laboratory Technology program at Sandhills Community College recently won first place in the state in the annual Student Bowl Quiz sponsored by the North Carolina Society for Medical Technology. This is the second year in a row that Sandhills students have won the state quiz. As state winners, they were selected to represent North Carolina in a regional competition held in Jackson, Miss. Students taking part in the quiz and their instructors are shown here: 1-r, Jennie Little, Paul Boswell, MLT instructor, Cynthia Cook, Pat Ryan, Pat Burris and Dr. Judi Davis, chairman of the Health Science Department.

Private Business?

The Salisbury Evening Post Back in the 19th century, plutocrat William Henry Vanderbilt answered a newspaper reporter's inquiry with the statement, "The public be damned."

In these days of public relations and image-building one seldom hears such expressions of arrogance any more. But a case popped up in Greensboro this week where the administrator of the Wesley Long Hospital has been indicted for accepting \$567,500 in kickbacks from hospital contractors.

The administrator has taken a leave of absence, and a reporter inquired whether the hospital was continuing his pay during the leave.

John Thompson, chairman of the hospital board, pulled a Vanderbiltism: "It's none of your business. It's not anybody's business. This is a private hospital."

These days there is in fact, if not in theory, no such thing as a private hospital because public money has been poured into all of them, through construction

grants, equipment subsidies, Medicare and Medicaid. They may not like the strings attached but public funds make them quasi-public, and the public has a right to answers. At a minimum, Thompson should have answered the question solely because the kickbacks and the continuance of the administrator's salaries are bound to be reflected in hospital costs and the patients' pocketbooks.

Thompson's attitude was similar to that of hospital authorities in New Bern who tried to cover up financial hankypanky there by refusing newspaper access to records even though it was a public institution. They failed, and there is no way Thompson can keep the lid on during a federal court trial.

The snappishness of Thompson's reply indicates how badly he is smarting from the scandal that is enveloping his hospital. He would have been smarter to have been open in his answer. When public money is involved, it is indeed public business.

Product Safety

The Charlotte Observer If you've bought a baby crib in recent years, be assured that its bars pose no strangulation hazard. Your new hairdryer is no longer allowed to have cancer-causing asbestos in it. And your gas heater is far less likely to explode than one you might have bought a decade ago.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has regulated the safety of these and thousands of other items since its creation in 1973. Now the commission's money is about to run out, and the Reagan administration wants to abolish it.

Dangerous products cause some 30 million injuries and 30,000 deaths a year in this country. The culprits range from stuffed toys to lawn mowers, electric blankets to chain saws. When consumer groups began pushing for action in the late 1960s, responsibility for product safety was dispersed among a number of federal agencies and wasn't a high priority for any of them. That's why Congress created the commission. And despite some early bureaucratic

bungling, it has been an effective, generally efficient body.

Now the administration wants to eliminate some of the commission's powers and distribute others among other agencies. "On balance," says budget director David Stockman, "we feel the public benefits likely to be secured by the agency in the future are not likely to exceed the cost."

There's little to support that view. The commission's work has made our households safer. And its current \$40 million budget is hardly outrageous; as the New York Times points out, that comes to about one-fourth the amount proposed to modernize and reactivate the battleship New Jersey.

It is unreasonable to expect the commission to be exempt from federal budget cuts. But dispersing its responsibilities almost certainly will mean they receive less attention than they deserve. Congress should reaffirm its commitment to product safety and leave the commission intact.

Abortion Policy

The Fayetteville Times At a time when the issue of proper public policy toward abortion is getting so much attention in the United States, it is instructive that Italian voters this week voted two-to-one to continue that country's policy of allowing abortions in the first

three months of pregnancy. Italy is nominally the most Roman Catholic of all countries, and the Roman Catholic church has taken the lead in condemning abortion as a religious and moral issue. Yet, in the matter of a public policy, Italians have consistently supported a workable, humane course, a course which fits the current general policy in the United States.

Abortion will continue to be an issue of important moral and religious implications. But the public policy seems well settled. (Polls in the United States show public sentiment closely paralleling that in Italy.) Spurred by a dedicated minority, some politicians continue to try to make abortion part of the public agenda. The pressure to force a major change in public policy, to make a criminal act of practically every abortion, continues on many fronts.

The results in Italy suggest, however, that a large part of the public assents to the efficacy of current public policy. Like war, poverty, starvation, disease, and oppression, abortion is an affront to the moral conscience of many people and an assault on their religious sensibilities.

But a world which has adjusted its policy to encourage the possibility of nuclear holocaust in which nearly all the babies and unborn fetuses would die, and a country like the United States which can stand by in its riches while millions starve or are in hopelessness, has in its current policy on abortion found an acceptable public approach to another of its moral issues.

The Public Speaking

(Continued From Page 3-B) the Sheriff Department owe the taxpayers of Moore County an explanation concerning how people of this kind are protected when they are riding in patrol cars. S.O. Nicholson Southern Pines

Tourney Staff Praised

To the Editor: As a resident of Pinehurst who has had the opportunity to watch the Men's and Women's North and South Amateur Championship that has been played on the Pinehurst No. 2 and No. 6 course during the past three years, it was indeed a great thrill to compete in the Men's segment of this venerable and tradition-filled tournament.

Speaking for myself, and the many players I met and competed with during the tournament, I would like to say thank you to the Pinehurst Tournament Staff for conducting another fine tournament. Ken Schroeder, Nancy Mjolsness, Rhett Stroup and all of the Pinehurst staff made it a memorable tournament for the contestants.

Corey Pavin, the Men's champion, was overjoyed with his victory, and expressed his high compliments on the job the Tournament Staff and grounds crew at the Pinehurst Country Club did towards making the players feel at home and for providing a great golf course for the players.

Martin Juler, who has the thankless job of heading the all-important rules committee, donated two weeks of his time to help on rulings that were needed (and there were many) and should be commended for his work. The number of men and women that flew in from all over the country to compete in these events is an indication of how great the tournament is—and it is the players and tournament staff, only, that can make a tournament great. Bill Jones Pinehurst.

Applaud Action

To the Editor: Conservatives for Good Government applaud the actions of Commissioners Parker, Purvis, Thompson and Williams who voted to pass a county resolution at Monday's meeting in favor of SB451, the pre-abortion requirement bill now in J3 in the North Carolina House of Representatives.

SB451 passed the Senate recently, having its teeth partially removed. The right of parents to be informed of their child's abortion was stricken from the bill, leaving that information to be given to parents at the discretion of the abortionist. Democratic Senators Charles Vickery and Russell Walker were two who voted against allowing parents their God-given rights. The resolution by the county

commissioners called not only for the passage of SB451, but for its passage in its original form. It called for it to be re-amended, giving parents their parental rights by law.

We commend Commissioners Purvis, Parker, Thompson, and Williams for their wisdom displayed. They have, indeed, voted the will of the people of this county. They have displayed the good common sense the people wish to see. We appreciate the unanimous vote. Barbara Richie Marsh Southern Pines

Symptoms

To the Editor: I've been listening to all the talk that's going on with the Reagan administration, about the social security funds.

They are looking at the symptoms rather than the cause for the shortage of funds. When the amount of social security taxes is multiplied by the number of unemployed people who would be paying if they were employed, you have a sizeable increase in funds. Add to this the unemployment benefits paid to some who are fortunate enough to qualify for it and you have a surplus. You may say these are not the same, but if you don't have unemployed, you don't need the funds for unemployment benefits.

If our government will work on the disease and not the symptoms, they will accomplish something. They will only add to the unemployment by cutting the social security system, because a cut in social security will also cut back in spending which will cut back in jobs. It's a chain reaction.

I know our president doesn't like the social security system, because I heard a tape of a speech he made before he became a candidate for president. He called the social security system a sacred cow. He's been fortunate enough to be rich but social security is some people's only means of existing. I wonder what he'd do if his sacred cow (millions) were threatened. Mr. Reagan needs to remember the rich may have contributed more campaign funds, but the poor voted him in. He needs to be a little kinder to the ones who put him in Washington. John H. Gwyn Jackson Springs, Rt. 1

Forum Policy

The Pilot welcomes letters to the editor on any subject and the only restrictions are that such letters follow general rules of good taste, do not slander or libel anyone, and do not exceed 300 words in length. Letters must be signed and carry an address.

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Teacher Plan Running Into Roadblocks

BY BILL NOBLITT There is no way that a performance evaluation system for educators can be installed in North Carolina public schools beginning in July as mandated by the General Assembly.

Evaluation of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other professional personnel is the foundation of efforts by Gov. Jim Hunt and legislative leaders to upgrade the competency and abilities of public school people. A variety of pieces fit into the puzzle, and at least four major research and study projects are underway which are supposed to mesh, eventually, into an updated system involving teacher training colleges, testing for certification as teachers, possible adjustments in the state's tenure law, and potential phasing-in of some form of merit pay system to reward the outstanding educator while keeping the mediocre ones on a standard pay scale, if not penalizing them.

But to make any of these approaches work, it is essential that reliable information about what makes a good teacher and how to determine that be collected. Additionally, such defensible evaluation records have become necessary any time disciplinary action is called for against a tenured educator. Even though such evaluations are currently required, there is no standard procedure and that requirement is regularly ignored in many school systems across the state.

So when the General Assembly set a deadline of July, 1981, for statewide implementation of a performance appraisal system in the schools, it was done with much political rhetoric devoted to the good which would flow from the action. The State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction are now faced with the dilemma: what to do with a legal mandate at hand and no way to get the job done.

Some interests have suggested that legislators should simply be told that the deadline cannot be met, and a request lodged for extension. Others are pursuing a course designed to show progress toward designing an evaluation plan which at least begins to meet

the requirements by the law. No final decision has been made, but it seems likely that a step-by-step phasing in will be adopted in hopes of satisfying the law even though not complying with it.

At this point, a preliminary "Procedural Manual for Conducting Performance Appraisal" has been prepared. Careful reading of that voluminous document reveals that it is only a suggested outline, not a policy guide; that it affects only teachers and principals leaving superintendents and other professional people for later; that it contains page after page of research data which are supposed to show how those affected feel toward evaluation, but doesn't necessarily do so; and that considerable training, evaluation, but revision will be needed before a system emerges.

The manual itself spells out the problems: "The legislation that mandated the appraisal system allotted only one calendar year for development....If research standards and Federal guidelines are to be maintained, it is impossible...."

"The first year of this project should have been devoted to planning, conducting job analyses, writing job descriptions, and formulating criteria and performance indicators for trial instruments. Additionally, such defensible evaluation records have become necessary any time disciplinary action is called for against a tenured educator. Even though such evaluations are currently required, there is no standard procedure and that requirement is regularly ignored in many school systems across the state."

"During the third and subsequent years, evaluators should be trained and additional studies and refinements in the instruments should be made." Nonetheless, the performance appraisal manual is being sent out for a trial run, at least in some pilot school districts, while top state officials try to figure out where to go from here. The first order of business was to conduct a statewide survey of the educational establishment, involving more than 6,000 individuals. While this process brought forth some important areas of agreement and disagreement, it produced a couple of major disappointments for state officials. Teachers responded with over-

whelming enthusiasm; 92 percent of them returned their questionnaires. Principals also participated pretty well with 84 percent responding.

But local school superintendents were somewhat slower to respond with only 65 percent participating. And local school board members, the very ones who have been pressing hardest for some backup to their complaints that it is difficult to pinpoint weak teachers and take effective action, only returned 34 percent of the survey forms mailed out.

This response, say school officials, was "somewhat discouraging." And while teachers responded with vigor, Department of Instruction personnel later discovered "Another potential limitation of the study centers around action which was investigated by two officers in the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE)."

Instructions concerning how to respond to certain items in the survey were sent to participants by top officers of the NCAE. Some insiders say this destroys validity of the survey. Others argue that with so many individuals participating and with individual interest varying so widely, the survey data would not be affected.

Officially, state officials report, "There is no way, statistically or otherwise, to determine the influence of these instructions on the teachers or principals," but a copy of the instructions as to recommended answers to specific questions on the survey was included in the report so readers may determine for themselves whether the results were thrown off by the NCAE action.

A number of areas of agreement emerged, among them that principals should visit classrooms a minimum of four times each year for at least 30 minutes each time in order to prepare an appraisal for a teacher, and should not try to evaluate more than 30 teachers.

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